



THE JEFFERSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WWW.thejeffersonhistoricalsociety.org

May 2023

COME ONE, COME ALL!

TO CELEBRATE THE OFFICIAL GRAND OPENING OF

THE NICHOLAS J. JURIED

MUSEUM OF JEFFERSON HISTORY

SATURDAY, MAY 20TH, 10AM TO 2PM

Judd Hall, 163 Main Street, Jefferson

*Refreshments and gift bags
on opening day*

Expect to find surprising facts and fascinating stories in the newly opened Museum of Jefferson History as you tour multiple exhibits that highlight specific areas of Jefferson history from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

In a section devoted to the agricultural history of our town, farming and maple industry tools are displayed and information is provided about the many farms that once were the mainstay of our town. But, did you know that Jefferson was once called Buttertown and that a local farm won an award for its butter at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. That award is on view along with the rocking wooden churn that produced that butter.



Perhaps you would like to find a photograph of your graduating class from Jefferson Central School and possibly a photo of your granny or your

great grandmother or grandfather's class where she or -he might have been a student at one of the many one-room schoolhouses that existed throughout the district until the 1930s. The history of how Jeffersonians educated their children is on view in the museum's school display, and one also can look at early class photographs for further information.

What was Jefferson like in an earlier time? Well, although parts of Jefferson lack current cell phone reception today, Jefferson had phone service in the early part of the 20th century for all those who had a telephone. Calls went through an operator and one Jefferson elder told about an operator who kept a switchboard in her bedroom so she could handle emergency calls in the middle of the night. But, if it wasn't an emergency, you had better not try to place a call too early or too late. Phone numbers were 3-digits that rang through to shared party lines. That didn't change until the mid-1970s when Jefferson residents acquired 7-digit numbers and joined the AT&T telephone grid. An early switchboard now stands in our museum, thanks to a donation from Bruce Van Zile.



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Message from Kevin Berner

President, Jefferson Historical Society

Last year was our busiest and most active year to date for the Jefferson Historical Society and this year our schedule of activities will be even more extensive. Now that our interior construction is completed in Judd Hall, we are looking forward to a more regular schedule of operation. The public Grand Opening will be on May 20th. I will be giving a talk on Sunday May 21st at 2pm in Judd Hall about my great-grandparents Clifford and Mary Danforth. The Fuller District schoolhouse will open on May 27. The museum and schoolhouse open each Saturday from 10-2 through September 2nd.

Our "Music and More" series features a full schedule of concerts, dance, art, and lectures. Carol Bodnar once again obtained a grant from CREATE to partially support our expenses for this series. July 8th will be Heritage Day and we will have displays in Judd Hall, a quilt show in the Maple Museum, a table on the Green, and Pete Lindemann impersonating Abraham Lincoln. That night we will sponsor the Blues Maneuver concert on the Town Green. We will host our traditional Alumni Reception on the afternoon of June 3rd before the school's Alumni Banquet.

John Ruquet, a University at Albany graduate student, is working for us as an intern cataloging some of our digital images so that they can be put online on the New York Heritage website. We have become members of the Capital District Library Council and they are facilitating this web presence. Another student connection is with SUNY Cobleskill. Wildlife Management students Jessie Magno and Rachel Olver are doing mapping projects for us on the Town Green and the Old Jefferson Cemetery.

In recent months we welcomed more volunteers to help us cover our expanding efforts on a variety of fronts, and Sara Henry and Barb Palmer introduced potential volunteers to the types of opportunities available.

For major construction projects we were especially fortunate to successfully obtain grants and donations from members. Our biggest financial challenge now is covering operating expenses such as insurance, utilities, ground's maintenance, printing, office supplies, etc. which grant agencies and groups are generally less likely to support. These have increased in recent years. Our annual late summer yard sale helps with a portion of these expenses, and we are adding a sale in June as well. While all our events are free, donations given at these programs greatly help cover the unfunded portion of their cost. Rather than charge a fee to attend events, they all are free.

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

To follow Kevin's Facebook posts and find information about JHS:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Jefferson-Historical-Society-309739662479973>

Visit our website: www.thejeffersonhistoricalsociety.org

View our videos on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvUkiAnAt_v3Vrzcz9gvBjg

Our Past Preserved in Place Names

By Susan Harwood and Bonnie Dailey

*This is the second article in a series about our town's early settlers
and the places named for them.*

Cornell Road and Cornell Hollow can be found in Jefferson, Stamford, Gilboa or Blenheim, depending upon several factors. Today, residents along Cornell Road have a Stamford mailing address, vote in Gilboa or Blenheim, are taxed in the Jefferson School District, and live on Blenheim Hill.

Following NY 10 south from Jefferson toward Stamford about 4.7 miles, Shew Hollow Road (County Route 13) branches off to the left. After 2.5 miles, Cornell Road appears, originating in the area once known as Cornell

Hollow, home to several Cornell family farms.

The third of the original Cornell homes, built around 1850, is still owned by descendants of Dr. John Cornell, one of the instigators of the Anti-Rent Wars on Blenheim Hill in the mid-1840's. *The Jefferson Courier* in

July 6, 1905 reported:

On the road leading from the [Brimstone] church south to Cornell Hollow is the old Dr.

Cornell farm. In the days when the Brimstone Meeting House flourished and the souls of people were looked after by the circuit riders of the early Methodist faith, their bodies were cared for by Dr. John Cornell, a botanic or foot doctor. His medical knowledge was original or indigenous, not acquired from books, but born in him. He enjoyed a large practice and was often called a hundred miles away to treat the sick, making the journey on

horseback and carrying his herbs in saddlebags. He raised a large family. Several of his sons were regular physicians.

Dr. Cornell was against the Patroon System established by the wealthy Dutch landowners of the Hudson Valley. In 1802, a contract, known as an indenture, had been drawn up, giving tenant farmers the right to live on and farm acres of land in Blenheim, Schoharie County, in exchange for payment of rent forever. This contract was known as the Blenheim Patent.

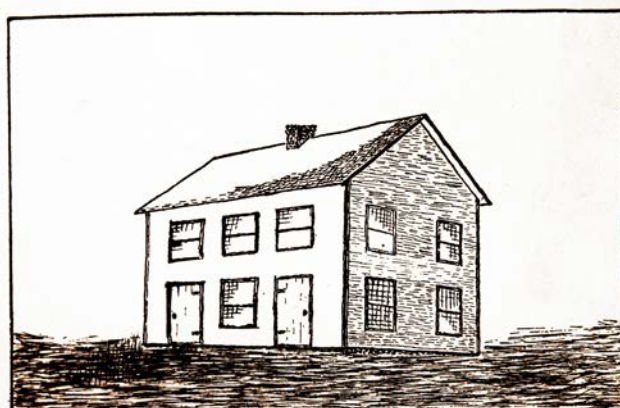
Although the English took New York from the Dutch in 1674, and colonists revolted against the English in the Revolutionary War in 1776, the Patroon System that governed the Blenheim Patent was still legal.

The first anti-rent society on Blenheim Hill was formed in 1843. In meetings held at the Brimstone Church, Dr. Cornell

spoke forcefully against the feudalistic system that held the farmers in eternal serfdom, believing that a free people must be free to own the land they had cleared

and on which they toiled. Determined to resist further rent collection and preparing for the struggles that were to come, farmers decided to disguise themselves as Indians wearing calico garments and face masks, communicating via tin horns when rent collectors were sighted.

In spring of 1845, a Sheriff and Under-Sheriff attempted to serve warrants on farmers in Blenheim, Jefferson and Fulton who were behind in their rents. "Indians" seized them and burned the

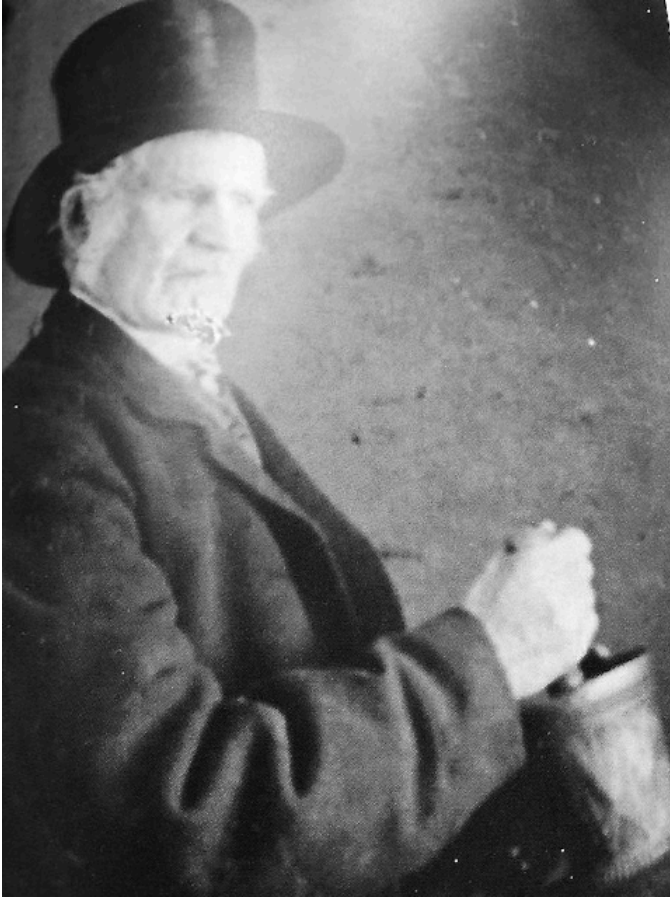


BRIMSTONE MEETING HOUSE, BLENHEIM HILL, BUILT IN 1815.

This sketch by Benjamin P. Curtis shows the original church. It had two doors that were not on the gable end of the building. It is unlikely that there are any photographs of it since it was replaced in 1854.

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Sheriff's papers. In August, the Sheriff returned with a posse that trampled fields of rye, shot and wounded a farmer, searched for Dr. Cornell at his home, and took local boys to Gilboa as prisoners.



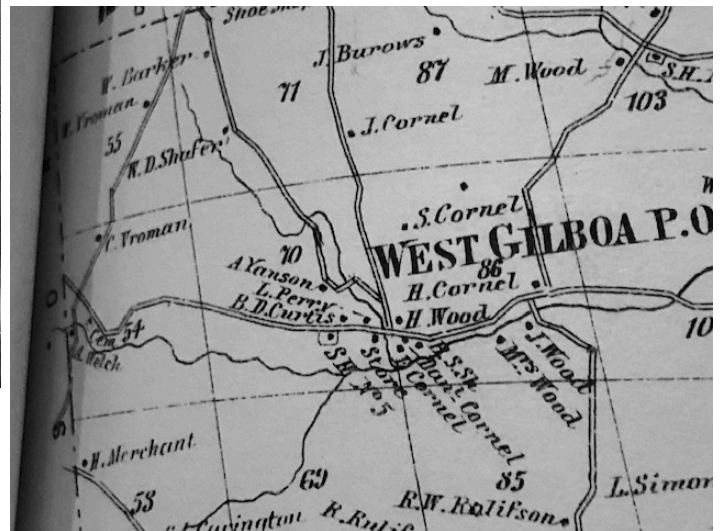
The photo is of Dr. Cornell with his mortar and pestle

Dr. Cornell was arrested by the Sheriff upon his return home from Columbia County for spreading Anti Rent news and sentiment, but his medical services were needed to treat some fifty posse members for a common "August ailment." He treated them with a thorough cleansing of their systems!

While the young prisoners were being held, the sale of a renter's farm was scheduled to take place in Andes. The farmers disguised as Indians there caused a great commotion, resulting in an officer named Steele being shot and killed. When this news reached Blenheim Hill, the farmers brought in lawyer Thomas Smith from Cobleskill to negotiate the release of the illegally held prisoners, and the Schoharie County sheriff dismissed his posse.

In January of 1847 an agreement was signed by a majority of the Blenheim Hill tenant farmers allowing them to buy their land at a fair price.

"The war on Blenheim Hill was over."



This map from 1866 shows five Cornell farms

For this article, we have relied primarily on *The Anti-Rent War on Blenheim Hill*, by Albert Champion Mayham (1906), Centennial Edition 2006 by Stonecrest Industries.



Dr. Michael Kudish and Dave Turan were our first speakers at Judd Hall for 2023. They described the Michael Kudish Natural History Preserve in Stamford and long term research on identifying the plant species of the Catskills through the examination of fossils and plant materials in bog soils. A large crowd enjoyed their presentation.



Ardith Hamm was our first visitor to the museum in a wheelchair to use our elevator to get to the museum. She is 99 years old and was brought in by her daughter Laureen Lawrence.



Easy access for everyone is available via a ramp on the left side of Judd Hall, and an elevator will take visitors to the museum on the top floor.

These two SUNY Cobleskill Wildlife Management majors are doing mapping projects for the Jefferson Historical Society for Honors Program credit. They are using GPS to map the trees on the Town Green, recording the size of the trees based on their diameters. In 2020-21, we planted new trees to fill the gaps between existing trees. Jessie and Rachel are documenting where the young, middle age, and oldest trees are on the Green. They are also mapping the graves in the Old Jefferson Cemetery north of the Heartbreak Hotel.



John Ruquet, 2nd from left, a graduate student at SUNY Albany, will be working through the Capital District Library Council to catalogue and make some of our 36,000 images available online through the New York Heritage website. With thanks to Rose Marie Burghard Pelatti of the Burghard Family Foundation for funding this valuable internship.

Continued from p. 1

Jefferson's Masonic Working Lodge 554 and the Lelia Chapter of the Eastern Star held its meetings in the former Masonic Hall, renamed when JHS acquired the building in 2017 for Jefferson's founder, Col. Stephen Judd. The Masons left a few items behind that you may not know about. Of special interest were three doors with peep holes that allowed the secretive Masons to confirm who was a member before admitting him (always a man) into the meeting room on the top floor. Come and peer through these peepholes in the interactive display in the museum.

Most women in Jefferson worked alongside their husbands on the farm, but some also were entrepreneurs who used their skills as milliners, seamstresses and tailoresses to work from home or open shops along Main Street. Examples of what they made and equipment they used are on exhibit, with thanks to Barb Palmer, Carol



Bodnar, Clara Clack, Bonnie Dailey, Stephanie Ruquet, Diane Ericson, and Shannon Finn.

Over three centuries, local men from Jefferson went to fight in wars. Some returned home, many did not. Stories about these veterans offer a fascinating glimpse into their time and history. Stephanie Ruquet researched these warriors with Jefferson connections.

Much of the history presented in the museum has been meticulously researched by

JHS president, Kevin Berner, with input from Stephanie Ruquet and with acquisition assistance from Town Historian Ingrid Zeman and Bonnie Dailey. Indeed, many local residents generously volunteered artifacts, diaries, letters, and thousands of photographs for the museum's collection, and recalled their earlier lives and families for the JHS oral history collection.

There is no doubt that this museum would not have happened without the generous and enthusiastic support of philanthropist Nick Juried. Construction to restore the building and bring it up to code was costly and Nick's support was unflinching. JHS owes him an enormous debt of gratitude for all he has done to help make Judd Hall and our museum possible.



Along one wall of the museum is an 1856 map of Schoharie County, informational posters, and a monitor showing videos about Jefferson, Judd Hall and the Schoolhouse.

If you have any historical documents, photographs, letters, diaries or other information that informs Jefferson's past, please contact Kevin Berner. He will be happy to copy and preserve your documents in the JHS archives, and return the originals to you for your family records.



Above: Part of the Agricultural display shows tools that were used by farmers to harvest hay for their cows and horses.

After May 20th, the museum will be open on a regular basis every Saturday from 10-2pm through September 20th, and after that by appointment. As with all Jefferson Historical Society events, entry is free.

A Tale of Two Jeffersons

&

The Midnight Ride of Stephen Judd

By Stephanie Ruquet

In 1828, Dr. Samuel Watkins (1771-1851) inherited his brother John's share of 350,000 acres at the southern end of Seneca Lake in western New York State. Originally from New York City, Watkins spent the rest of his life developing the area of his adopted home—building roads, shops and residences, mills, a hotel, and even a park—in the area surrounding the stunning beauty of one of nature's wonders which was then known as the Big Gully. In 1852 the village on the shore of the lake was named in honor of Watkins who had died the previous year. The village of Watkins straddled two towns, Dix and Reading, and was at the time located in Chemung County. The Chemung County of the early 19th century was split in two in 1854 creating present-day Chemung and Schuyler counties, the latter county the present location of the village of Watkins, since 1926 known by the name of Watkins Glen.

You may wonder why you are reading about the history of a community 160 miles from our town. The village of Watkins was originally incorporated in 1842 and named *Jefferson*, according to several sources including the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (britannica.com). During its decade of existence as Jefferson, the village had a hotel named the Jefferson House and newspapers with Jefferson in their titles: the *Jeffersonian* (1841-?) and the *Jefferson Eagle* (1851-1852).

At some time during its existence, the western village of Jefferson or its post office apparently had an issue with mail being delivered to the wrong "Jefferson, NY." In the section about the history of the town of Jefferson in his book *History of Schoharie County, New York* (1882), author William E. Roscoe wrote:

Several years after [the founding of the town of Jefferson in 1803] an effort was made by the citizens of a village bearing the

name of Jefferson, in the western part of the State . . . now Watkins, Chemung county, to change the name of this village [i.e. our town of Jefferson] and postoffice [sic], as mail . . . was forwarded to the one office, that was intended for the other, and caused no little trouble. Petitions were sent to the Legislature and Post Office Department from the western village, and counter ones were sent from this place, among which, was one drawn with a map attached representing the village [i.e. our town of Jefferson] to be a respectable sized city, with a large park, and various public buildings, proving the western name-sake to be but a little hamlet by the side of it. (p.143)

The Post Office Department decided in favor of our town's name remaining Jefferson, according to Roscoe.

In more recent writings about the history of our town by Dr. Richtmyer Hubbell (1843-1918), newspaper articles by his grandson Charlie Hubbell (1897-1991), the history written for the town's sesquicentennial in 1953, and even Mildred L. Bailey's *A History of the Town of Jefferson* (1976), the story of the two Jeffersons became mixed up with the story of the 1803 incorporation of our Jefferson. The gist of these histories relate that a town in the western part of the state also wanted to name their community Jefferson, so Colonel Stephen Judd (1757-1821) made an overnight ride to Albany to "secure" the name of Jefferson for our town. But as shown by the 1842 date of the incorporation and naming of the Chemung County village of Jefferson, the two stories were not contemporaneous at all.

An article about the life and accomplishments of Colonel Stephen Judd was printed in the June 22,

1899, issue of the *Jefferson Courier*. No author was credited for the story—possibly it was penned by the *Courier's* editor and publisher, Frederick L. Frazee (1872-1946). This newspaper article provides an entirely different but highly logical rationale for Judd's hasty ride to Albany:

At the time when this town [*i.e.* our town of Jefferson] was about to be organized there was violent opposition on the part of the mother town, Blenheim, and many influential men there were to defeat the measure. To accomplish this, Col. Judd was sued and had to appear before a magistrate on what was called Blenheim Ridge, now South Gilboa. At the same time men were to go from that place to Albany, the Legislature being in session, and defeat Col. Judd's new town measure.

The petition for the incorporation of our town had been sent to the New York State Legislature in January 1803, according to Roscoe. The new town was to be created by lopping off the western area of the town of Blenheim. It is understandable that some of Blenheim's citizens may not have been in favor of the plan and would try to stop it. Col. Judd learned of the scheme to thwart the new town's incorporation and made his overnight horseback ride to Albany. At this point in the newspaper account, the unnamed author becomes downright poetic:

There might have been seen a smallish black animal, saddled about 9 o'clock in the evening, and after hurried preparation, a man all energy, all anxiety, all activity mounts the animal and with a hasty good bye to his family, off with the steed through the wilderness keeping company with the dreamy hours of night, unnoticed and unattended by any savethe nag under him.

Col. Judd "reached Albany before the Legislature convened in the morning, and with his usual energy he succeeded" in getting the legislation approved that day. The bill for the new town became law on February 12, 1803. But before it did, Judd

was able to affect one major change. "Those having the matter in charge had named the town Judd, but before its final passage, he, with commendable modesty, obtained a change of the name from Judd to Jefferson." Thomas Jefferson was president of the United States at the time, and his popularity led to many villages, towns, counties and other places in the state and the nation being named in his honor.

According to the newspaper article, on Col. Judd's return journey he met his opponents on their way to Albany to defeat the measure for the new town. It was not recorded what if anything was said at that meeting, but the delegation from Blenheim was "vanquished, beaten, quite too late" according to the article's unnamed author.

A Postal Footnote to the Story of the Two Jeffersons

The original name of the settlement at the southern end of Seneca Lake was Catlin. Postal service began in Catlin in 1823. In 1829 the name of the post office and community was changed from Catlin to Salubria. When the village was incorporated in 1842 and given the name Jefferson, the name of the post office remained Salubria. The postal address of the community did not change to Jefferson. It remained Salubria until 1852 when the village was renamed Watkins, at which time the post office was renamed Watkins. This information comes from the Empire State Postal History Society website, which in turn comes from original documents in the National Archives. So, was there ever truly a conflict between the two post offices? Possibly, when that western NY village was named Jefferson.

But it certainly didn't happen in 1803.

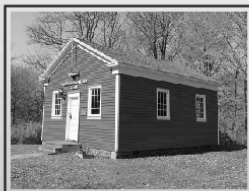
JHS Events coming up.....

Mark your calendar



FULLER DISTRICT ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

695 N. Harpersfield Road
Open Saturdays • 10am - 2pm
May 27 - September 2
• Nature Trail open year-round •



NICHOLAS J. JURIED MUSEUM OF JEFFERSON HISTORY

Open Saturdays
10am - 2pm
May 27 - September 2
Judd Hall
163 Main Street, Jefferson



These events will be held in Judd Hall, 163 Main Street, Jefferson

Grand Opening Celebration • Saturday, May 20 • 10am - 2pm

NICHOLAS J. JURIED MUSEUM OF JEFFERSON HISTORY

Sunday, May 21 • 2pm

Kevin Berner Presents:

THE LIVES OF CLIFFORD AND MARY DANFORTH

Sunday, August 6 • 2pm

WERE YOUR ANCESTORS IN SCHOHARIE COUNTY?

Genealogy talk by Historian and Genealogist Bonnie Dailey

Opening Reception Friday, October 6 • 5 - 7pm

TRACY JACKNOW WATERCOLORS

Exhibitions: Saturday, October 8 & 15 • 10am - 2pm

Exhibitions: Sunday, October 9 & 16 • 2 - 4pm



The Jefferson Historical Society
email: historicalsocietyjefferson@gmail.com
www.thejeffersonhistoricalsociety.com

FREE MUSIC & MORE SERIES 2023



Sunday, June 4 • 2pm

BODYSTORIES:

TERESA FELLION DANCE*

Maple Museum, 221 Creamery St., Jefferson

Saturday, July 8

JEFFERSON HERITAGE DAY*

Abe Lincoln (Pete Lindeman) 11-1pm

Quilt Show in the Maple Museum 10-2

Blues Maneuver, 7:30 under the tent

Jefferson Town Green at 221 Creamery St. Jefferson

Sunday, July 16 • 2pm

ANNETTE AGUILAR, AFRO-BRAZILIAN JAZZ CONCERT*

Maple Museum, 221 Creamery St., Jefferson

Saturday, August 5 • 7:30pm

THE RUBBER BAND CONCERT*

Maple Museum, 221 Creamery St., Jefferson

Sunday, August 13 • 3pm

REALTIME DIXIELAND BAND CONCERT*

Jefferson Town Green at 221 Creamery St., Jefferson
(inside the Maple Museum in case of rain)

Friday, Saturday and Sunday,

August 18, 19 & 20 and August 25, 26, 27 • 10am to 4pm

JHS YARD SALE DAYS

Maple Museum, 221 Creamery St., Jefferson

Friday, September 1 • 7:30pm

FLY BIRDS BLUEGRASS CONCERT*

Maple Museum 221 Creamery St., Jefferson

* This project is partially funded by the Statewide Community Re-grants Program, a program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul & the New York State Legislature & administered in Schoharie County by the Greene County Council on the Arts dba CREATE Council for the Arts.



THEJEFFERSONHISTORICALSOCIETY

JEFFERSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AND DONATION FORM

Name: _____

Membership Categories (Please circle one)

Address: _____

Individual....\$15

Couple/family....\$25

Email: _____

Individual lifetime..\$100 Couple lifetime...\$150

Members get a 10% discount on JHS merchandise and are welcome to attend JHS monthly meetings on the first Tuesday each month.

Donation Opportunities

General \$ _____ Judd Hall \$ _____ Schoolhouse \$ _____ Trees on the Green \$ _____ Fund for the future \$ _____.

Maple Museum \$ _____ Other (please specify) _____ \$ _____

My donation is in memory of/in honor of _____

Please make your check out to the "**Jefferson Historical Society**" and mail it together with this form to P.O. Box 143, Jefferson, New York 12093. The Jefferson Historical Society is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Thank you for your support!

Book orders	Unit price	# Books or T-shirt size	10% Member Discount	Cost
Schools of Jefferson	\$25			
Jefferson Then and Now - Volume 1	\$20			
Jefferson Then and Now - Volume 2	\$20			
Jefferson Then and Now - Volume 3	\$20			
Maple Festival - The Jefferson Years	\$20			
Willard Rising Stewart 1988 Diary	\$20			
History of Jefferson - Sesquicentennial, 1958	\$5			
Generations Remembered - Jefferson	\$20			
Generations Remembered - Harpersfield	\$20			
Jefferson L.A.S. Cookbook, 1924	\$10			
History of the Jefferson United Methodist Church, 2019	\$5			
Slougher's Hilariously Illustrated History of Schoharie County	\$10			
Prints of Werner Rentsch paintings (Color/B&W)	\$40/25			
JHS Tee shirt: sizes M, L, XL, 2X in navy & caps	\$15			
JHS cap (black, blue, red, green)	\$15			
Postage & Handling per each item	\$5			
TOTAL				

Jefferson Historical Society
P.O. Box 143
Jefferson, NY 12093



104 Park Ave. is the building immediately east of the Post Office (the one that is now gray). The photo shows the Reed family. Mabel Faoro supplied this image image.