

CARRIAGE HOUSE CRIER

Wolcott Historical Society ● P.O. Box 51, Wolcott, NY 14590

Summer/Fall 2024 www.wolcottny.org 315-594-9494 FREE

*To sponsor a newsletter or offset printing costs, please contact Bob Stell at 315-594-9065 or Kara Chapin at 315-905-4268.
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THE 1ST BANKS AND BANKERS OF WOLCOTT

Before 1870, Main Street Wolcott was a quiet place. There were few enterprises other than the Northern Exchange (Wolcott Hotel) to draw visitors from outside the immediate area. The arrival of a new railroad sparked a business and building boom that lasted almost thirty years!

With so many new merchants, factories, and businesses coming to Wolcott, attracted by the new railroad and the village's location on the route between Rochester and Oswego, people needed a financial institution that they could trust with their money.

The first banking institution in Wolcott was the Banking House of James V. D. Westfall. Westfall was a member of the 160th New York Volunteer Regiment, which served the Union Army during the Civil War. Westfall enlisted with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant and by the time he was discharged he had attained the rank of 1st Lieutenant.

After the Civil War, Westfall moved to Wolcott where he opened his bank on May 1, 1870. It was located at the corner of West Main Street and Furnace Street (the latter now named Lake Avenue). He ran it successfully on a small scale for a period of time and after paying off his last depositor, he closed doors on July 30, 1887.

This did not mean the end of his banking days. He established a bank in Lyons, which he ran until 1896. In 1888, he married Caroline Page Leavenworth, daughter of Elisha and Jane Leavenworth. James Westfall died on December 12, 1897, and is buried in Glenside Cemetery.

At the same time Westfall established his bank in Wolcott, another bank was built at the northeast corner of Main Street and Furnace (Lake Ave) Street, a lot that had been empty up to this point. This, the second bank of Wolcott, was established by Willis S. Roe, A. D. Ellis, and A. Pomeroy in 1874 and the new



building opened for business on November 29, 1875.

Not much is known about A. D. Ellis and A. Pomeroy except for their partnership in the bank. Pomeroy retired from the bank in 1884, selling his interest to the other two. (After that, the institution was known as the Roe and Ellis bank until 1914, when it merged with the First National Bank.) Later, Ellis sold his share of the bank to Willis Roe's nephew, George W. Roe.

Willis S. Roe was the most active partner in the bank. A former teacher, he started with only \$10,000 and was described as strictly honest in all of his dealings. He talked to none who came to him into 'wildcat' investments and had been known to take over investments on occasion when the investor became dissatisfied.

After forty years in banking, Roe passed away on February 6, 1914 from the effects of Bright's Disease and was buried in Glenside Cemetery. The stock he held in the bank as senior partner was left to his nephew and partner, George W. Roe. The Roe and Ellis Bank merged with the First National Bank later that year.

In January of 1912, the First National Bank had moved into what is now known as Ryan's Pub. After merging with Roe and Ellis, it remained there while the Roe and Ellis building was remodeled. On March 27, 1916, they officially moved in and opened as the First National Bank.

The next one hundred years saw more changes. First, in 1959, Security Trust merged with the First National Bank. Then, in 1984, Security Trust merged with Norstar Bank. Norstar enlarged the bank and added a drive through window located across from the post

office on Lake Avenue. In 1992, Fleet Bank merged with Norstar Bank. Then Bank of America replaced Fleet Bank in 2004 and remained there until closing its doors less than ten years later.

As seen by the succession of mergers in Wolcott, the institution of banking has grown from small private banks owned by local individuals to larger regional and national banks. Banking has gone from simple money saving and lending to checking accounts, home mortgages, investments, college loans and more. But it is important to remember that everything big, even banking, once started small.

2024 WHS ANNUAL MEETING

On April 20, 2024, the Wolcott Historical Society held its Annual Meeting at the Wolcott Elks Lodge. There was a very nice turnout and the Elks prepared a delicious meal. Bob Stell, President, opened the meeting and commented on the generous monetary donations the Wolcott Historical Society had received, part of which were used towards updating office equipment.

Rosa Fox, Huron Historian and Wayne County Bicentennial Co-Chair, delivered the program, "Notable Women of Wayne County". She presented short biographies and showed us photographs of multiple women of historical significance from across the county, engaging all who attended. It was an excellent program and we thank Rosa for joining us that day.

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Semiquincentennial

2026 will mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the foundational document of the American Revolution that ultimately resulted in the creation of the United States of America. On February 24, 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law the "New York State 250th Commemoration Act," establishing a state commission to facilitate the planning and development of the commemoration of the 250th in New York State.

Local historians and historical societies are asked to consider six themes as suggestions for how their communities or organizations can begin to think about commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of this nation. The themes are: Indigenous History is New York's History, Choose Your Side, Power of Place, We the People, Unfinished Revolutions, and Changing Interpretations of the Revolution.

More information can be found in the New York State 250th Commemoration Field Guide released by the Office of State History and Association of Public Historians of New York State (APHNYS).

"Each local community and region of the state has its own unique story to tell which together tell the history of the state itself."

Membership

\$10.00 – Individual Membership

\$15.00 – Family Membership

\$25.00 – Business/Organization Membership

\$500 – Life Membership

Send to:

Wolcott Historical Society
P.O. Box 51
Wolcott, NY 14590

An excellent way to help secure the future of the Wolcott Historical Society is to donate. We are a non-profit 501-(c)-(3) corporation. Donations are tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Memories of Leavenworth

Published in the Lake Shore News June 26, 1924

Former Day Pupil Tells of Beginning of Old Leavenworth

**E.J. Cornwell Recalls the Founding and
Early History of Leavenworth Institute**

I read with interest "The Senior Chronicle" published in last week's News. The student who wrote it, of course, had to get his information from some source at second hand. It was not correct in several details.

For instance, the old wooden building that burned was the original district school, which stood facing New Hartford Street on what is now the park. I went to school there in the fifties (1850's), when "Til" Upson and Garrett Van Fleet were teachers. This school might be regarded as an ancestor, perhaps, of the present [Wolcott] high school, but it had nothing to do with Leavenworth Institute.

There were, I think, two fires at Leavenworth Institute which did some damage, but neither destroyed the building or anything like it, both being promptly put out.

Leavenworth Institute was originally built of brick, two stories high, above a basement containing two school or study rooms, two recitation rooms and with the third floor a chapel. It was fathered by the Hon. Isaac Leavenworth, who donated the site and paid for one half of the building. He was assisted, by many subscribers, who gave from \$25 to \$200 each. The building was completed and the first term of school was held in the fall of 1858, with Prof. M. H. Slee as principal, assisted by his brother, Fletcher Slee, and a preceptress, whose name I have forgotten.

I attended the first term of school and, as there was no bell in the building, I rang the

bell in the Presbyterian session room for my tuition.

In the year 1865, through the efforts of many citizens, a union school district was organized and, by consent of the Leavenworth heirs, with a promise that the name, Leavenworth Institute and Wolcott Union school should be used, the building and grounds were turned over to the new district.

I might add that Mr. Slee was called here in 1857, and conducted a private school on the second floor of what was called the "Black House," which then stood on the lot now occupied by the residence of E. H. Kellogg. Prior to Mr. Slee's coming, a Miss Marsh had conducted a private or "select" school for girls on the third floor of C. P. Smith's, now the W. D. Campbell block. These schools, both very successful, were the real beginning of Leavenworth Institute.

While I am in a reminiscent mood, a little poem comes to my mind, entitled "Twenty Years Ago," but in this case, please make the verse quoted read "seventy."
"I've wandered through the village, Tom; I've sat beneath the tree, upon the old schoolhouse grounds that sheltered you and me. But few are left to greet me, Tom, and few are left, know, who played with us upon the green Just seventy years ago."

Wolcott, N. Y., June 23, 1924.

E, J. Cornwell.



Visitors to the Carriage House Museum:
June 7, 2024



NRW Middle School Students
Make History

On Friday, June 7, 2024, fifth grade students, along with faculty from the NRW Middle School made history as the first fifth grade class to be hosted on a guided history walk by members of the Wolcott Historical Society in the Village of Wolcott.

The group visited the Wolcott Falls Park, learning where Jonathan Melvin, the first pioneer purchased land and built a mill.

Along the way historical highlights of Main Street were pointed out as the students reached the stature and fountain of "Venus Rising from the Sea", where they learned about her beginnings, and about Obadiah Adams, the earliest businessman who set up



a tavern and store at the present location of the Wolcott Hotel.

In describing the early growth and success of the village, students learned about Isaac Leavenworth and Gardner Northup's contributions. They all had the opportunity to visit the Carriage House Museum to view historical photos and archives of what they had learned on the walking tour.

The Wolcott Historical Society was grateful and pleased to host the class of 5th grade Social Studies teacher, Mr. David Hahn, who coordinated this first of many future tours.

Published 6/23/2024 in the Times of Wayne County





MEET THE BOARD

Gerald "Jerry" DeCausemaker

Jerry has been a valuable member of the Wolcott Historical Society's Board for six years. He was roped in after he was asked one year if could help set up the sound system for the Festival of the Trees.

Originally from Rochester, his family moved permanently into a refurbished farm house in the Port Bay area when Jerry was in the 10th grade, right around when the schools merged. He graduated from NR-W in 1974, and recently celebrated his 50th class reunion.

When asked what sparked his interest in history, Jerry couldn't pick out just one thing. He has always been interested in American history, New York State history and, especially, local history. He enjoys learning about how the Cayuga Native Americans once camped above Wolcott Falls, hearing the lore about the Underground Railroad activity, and about Port Bay's old hotels and tourism industry.

Before Jerry joined the WHS, he was already active in the local wrestling programs. When he moved to Wolcott, there wasn't a football or

lacrosse team to join. Knowing he had to do something physical, he joined the wrestling program in 1971 and the seniors on the team showed him the ropes. He continued wrestling at RIT and after graduating with a business degree, worked for Durkee Foods.

Grateful for the legendary mentors he had as a student and young adult, Jerry has become a mentor himself, both as a coach and as a tutor for students. "I really respect family and history and sports," he said during the interview. "I just want to use sports to get kids to reach their highest potential." He has been coaching the high school wrestling team since 1981 and is very proud of his athletes, winning league championships and sectional titles, and many participating in state tournaments. In early January, you may see Jerry with his wrestlers taking down the trees in Northup Park after the Festival of the Trees is over, like they have done for many years as a service to the community.

This year on April 13, Jerry was inducted into the NR-W Athletic Hall of Fame along with four others, and last year he received the Section V Terry Robert Justice Award, recognizing his 44 years of outstanding service to high school wrestling. Congratulations Jerry!

2024 Festival of Trees!

Save the date! This year's tree lighting ceremony will be held on
Saturday, December 7.

If you have any questions or would like to participate with a tree of your own, call Linda Shippers at
315-594-2765



The Mystery of Mrs. Northup

One day in March of this year (2024), Wolcott Historical Society Vice President Cyndi Fowler was dining with Susan Sharp, wife of Mark Sharp (the son of Barbara and the late James Sharp of Huron). Cyndi was telling Susan about how she became involved in the Northup Carriage House Museum and the name “Northup” tickled Susan’s memory. Susan then relayed the memory of an outhouse-turned-shed on her in-laws’ property, which was lovingly referred to as “Mrs. Northup.”

Susan confirmed this information with her husband, Mark, who remembered it being there for all of his life. The now storage shed was moved to Huron by the Sharp ancestors, who had resided on West Main Street not far from where the Northup family once lived. *‘There is a story here,’* Cyndi thought. So, in July after some initial sleuthing, Cyndi kidnapped Wolcott Historian Kara Chapin and together they went to Huron to interview Barbara Sharp in her beautiful home on Sodus Bay and to search for ‘Mrs. Northup.’

Barbara married James G. Sharp. James and his brother Dave E. Sharp were lifelong farmers in Huron under the name Ji-Meva Farms, primarily in apple production. James and Dave were the sons of William “Fletcher” Sharp and Ruth Gatchell Sharp.

Fletcher Sharp worked at Kodak for many years after graduating from Michigan College. Fletcher was the son of Dempster Sharp and Lillian Richardson Sharp. The 1925 New York Census has the Sharp Family living on 41 West Main Street in Wolcott right next door to William J. (brother of Lillian) and Nettie L. Clapper, which also would have been not too far from the Northups.

Barbara had been told that Mrs. Northup was a “very modern” woman. She was one of the first women to drive a car in Wolcott, but she did enjoy having a chauffeur drive her to the bank and other places around town.

Fletcher built the Sharp’s first cottage off of Lake Bluff Road on Sodus Bay in the mid-1970s. Barbara was not sure when the outhouse-turned-shed moved to its current location at the Fletcher house, but said it was probably a “Ruth and Fletcher project.” However, it definitely did come from the Northup residence, once located where the Pit Stop is now.

After finishing their conversation with Barbara, Cyndi and Kara explored a little way down the drive and found ‘Mrs. Northup,’ a cute little pale green shed with wainscoting paneling and fancy circular window in the rear. Although there are still some details to be filled in, the mystery of Mrs. Northup has been solved!



President's Message

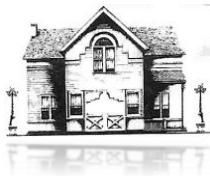
Since the last *Carriage House "Crier"* (Winter '23-'24), the Wolcott Historical Society's board members and other key players remain attentive to activities that keep in mind a vision of what the society should be for its members and the community. Renovations to preserve the museum were completed this summer with donations from members, Bob and Cyndi Fowler, and included repairs to the porch roof, a refinished front door, and a new storm door.

Through additional outreach this year, new members and visitors have emerged and many generous donations have been received. Thanks to George McGraw's generous designated contribution, we have a completely new computer system, printer, and book scanner, allowing us to connect to the internet. A special thanks to Austin Fowler for his expertise in the selection and set up of the new system. This will allow us to archive and index materials, as well as communicate with members. Our new email address is **WHS1810@hotmail.com**.

As more outreach is done, new people among the public and various vicinity groups will continue to emerge and participate in dialogue and involvement within in the society and the museum – one contact leading to another, and so it goes. A warm thank you goes to our docents for making this summer season at the museum a success.

Bob Stell
President

If you have an interesting story or photograph about growing up in Wolcott and would like to share it, we would love to include it in an upcoming newsletter.



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