



# Wilson Historical Society

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FRANCIS GALLAGHER

## 1813 British Burning of the Niagara River Region

*Old Fort Niagara \* Youngstown, NY \* Wilson, NY*

*\* Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada*

**Thursday, December 19, 2013**

**PART 1** Join us for a collaborative multi-community Bicentennial commemoration!

5:00 AM **The Capture of Old Fort Niagara Reenactment (at OFN)** Brief Commemoration Ceremony

6:00 AM **Public Community Breakfast at the Bistro in Youngstown, NY**  
Limited number of tickets (\$10.00) goes on sale in November at village and regional locations.

7:00 AM **British Reenactors Lighting Symbolic Fires & Explanation of the Capture of Fort Niagara** to 8:45 AM

**Niagara County Historical Society 1812 Program** Power point presentation @ St. John's Episcopal Church

**Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada** Short video of "Niagara Burning" @ St. John's Episcopal Church

### **PART 2 War of 1812 Educational Programming for Students Only**

Attending from Four Local School Districts: Wilson Central Schools, Lew-Port Central Schools, Stella Niagara Education Park and Wheatfield's Tuscarora Elementary

\*9:30 AM **School Buses Arrive at Old Fort Niagara**  
Interpretative Program about the Capture of the fort

\*11:00 AM **School buses bring students to 4 assigned Youngstown Learning Center Locations**

\*12:00 PM **Student Bag Lunch – at their assigned Youngstown Locations**

\*12:15 PM **Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada** Short video of "Niagara Burning" - showing simultaneously at all 4 locations

\*1:00 PM **Closing of the Day's Students' Historic Legacy Events**

**EXCERPTS FROM BOARD OF DIRECTOR MEETINGS****JUNE 2013 ~ SEPTEMBER 2013**

- Annual Meeting was held on June 24th, 2013. A motion was made by Don Burrows, seconded by Diane Muscoreil, to have the Secretary cast one vote for the Slate of Officers nominations presented for the 2013-2014 year. Carried. (Officers listed on page one)
- Lumber for the roof has been delivered, and the metal will come next week. On a motion by Wally Goodman, seconded by Judy King, Nate Vanderbeck was to be contacted as a consultant for the roof project. Carried.
- Bob Cramer reported on new vacuum cleaners for the Barnum Building.
- Bob Hull will speak to Gary Pettit about the WHS Veterans Memorial which need to be fixed.
- The Barroom Buzzards will be hired for the 2014 WHS Memorial Day Fair on a motion by Bob Hull, seconded by Judy King and carried.
- A motion was made by Wally Goodman to give Richard King a life membership in the society in thanks for all the work he has done. Seconded by Bob Cramer, carried.
- The willow tree on the property line with Mrs. Swan will be taken down in response to her complaints. Quotes should be brought to the Sept. 23rd regular meeting.
- The cornice on the Band Shelter needs replacing.
- A more permanent labeling for the Memorial Trees need to be found. A map of all the trees was created, but cannot be found.
- Julia Godfrey is donating a quilt to be raffled off for the Memorial Day Fair 2014. There was a discussion on how to market tickets and where to display the quilt. Wanda Burrows offered to check on ticket printing and the possibility of getting a photo of the quilt on the tickets.
- Kathy Stewart asked to hold a County Christmas Vendor and Craft Fair in the Barnum Building on Saturday, November 2nd from 10:00 am until 5:00 pm. She would like it advertised on our sign. Motion made by Judy King, seconded by Wanda Burrows to approve the request, passed. A \$100 deposit if required. Dan King will open the building for setup at 8:30 am, and Kathy offered to sell quilt tickets at this event.
- Judy King announced that Pam Groff is now a life member.
- Bob Cramer will give his chalk talk demonstration at the Royalton Historical Society November 15th.

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“November always seemed to me the Norway of the year.”

### In Memorium

**EDWARD CHARLES ALLGEIER**, affectionately known as “Smilin’ Ed” and Gandpa. He was born in 1924 and lived his entire life, up until five years ago, on the family farm at 2987 Wilson Cambria Road. He worked the farm his entire life and loved the outdoors. He grew strawberries, tomatoes and grapes and was very active in the community.

Eddie was a member of the Masonic Order for 66 years. He was a member of Charlotteville Lodge #73 and Past Master of Ontario Lodge #376. He cared about the outdoors and belonged to the Wilson Conservation Club. He and his wife, Marilyn, were active members of Exley Methodist Church in Wilson. A member of the greatest generation, he was a World War II veteran serving in the Pacific from 1944 to 1946 on the USS Keller. He was an active member of the American Legion and participated in the Wilson Memorial Day service as a member of the Honor Guard every year through 2007. After the war he joined Oldbury Chemical in Niagara Falls. After a 30 year career, he retired from Hooker Chemical in Niagara Falls. He continued working for several more years at Waste Management in Lewiston.

Ed always had a smile and a positive word for everyone. During his last five years at the Landing in Brockport, he was known for having a “joke of the day” and sharing it with those at his dinner table.

Eddie was married to Marilyn (Kayner) for 62 years until her death in 2009. He is much loved and will be greatly missed by his family; his daughter Kathy and husband, Ken Fuller; his son Mike and wife Carolyn Allgeier; grandchildren Scott and Todd Fuller, Jackie Ryan and Kiki Allgeier, and seven great-great-children. In lieu of flowers, friends may donate to a charity of their choice.

#### GREENWOOD CEMETERY WREATHS

Freshly made Douglas Fir Christmas wreaths will again be offered by the Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Committee this year. The wreaths will be placed early in December and be removed them in spring. The cost of this service is **\$25.00**. Orders must be placed and payments received **no later than Wednesday, November 25<sup>TH</sup>**. For more information, please call the Town Clerk's Office at 751-6704.

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I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ wreaths @ \$25.00 to be placed in Greenwood Cemetery.

Name of person or family where wreath is to be placed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to the Town of Wilson. Mail orders should be addressed to P.O. Box 537, Wilson New York, 14172-0537. No orders will be accepted after November 27th,2013.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Did You Know?

Have you ever driven by the little log cabin on Chestnut Road near North Road and wondered about its history? Does it have a story to tell or not? Recently, I stopped by to ask the owner Toby Mansfield, this very question. The house has a long history of continuous occupation by a number of different residents, and is intriguing for the fact that it is still standing and in great condition after nearly 190 years! This makes the little cabin arguably one the oldest homes if not the oldest in Niagara County. There are some that say Reuben Wilson's home in the village of Wilson is older, dating to 1818 possibly 1825. However, the original cabin was added on to and the walls were hidden by the additions and modifications over the years. There is nothing to be seen of the original home. If the determining criteria is for the structure to look as close to its original appearance as possible, then the Smith cabin on Chestnut wins. Settling this issue would ultimately would depend on when Smith built his cabin on Chestnut Road. No exact dates exist for either house. For the record, the historical marker in front of the little cabin on Chestnut shows a date of 1823.

According to Mansfield, Jesse Smith acquired the land in 1823 from Wilhelm Willinks, one of thirteen Dutch investors who made up The Holland Land Company syndicate. At this time, the United States was actively encouraging speculators to purchase large tracts of land in order to raise cash and to encourage westward expansion. Although the deed and title search don't show Smith acquiring the property until 1833, it can be assumed that Willinks, as was the custom held the note or mortgage until Smith had paid in full.

Census records show Smith was a farmer who was born in New Jersey in 1802. At some point before 1823, Jesse migrated to Western New York and acquired the land on Chestnut and built his cabin. However, not much later, Smith moved again, purchasing 150 acres in South Wilson on what is now Willow Road. Exactly how this transpired is a little cloudy. There is a record in the Niagara County Clerk's office of a deed conveyance of 150 acres of land by "another Jesse Smith of Jefferson County, NY and Polly, his wife, dated February 1, 1836 in book 21 of deeds. There is also a reference in the *Lockport Daily Journal from May 16<sup>th</sup> of 1885 that refers to this transaction. This fits the timeline of Smith selling the cabin and property to Anson A. Boyce, a prominent lawyer in the early days of Lockport in 1836. The cloudy part is who was Jesse Smith the seller and how did he come to acquire land in Niagara County while living in Jefferson County? Genealogy research indicates that Jesse Smith of Wilson was not his son. Perhaps he was related in some other way, but the records are difficult to interpret due to sheer number of Smiths to sift through.*

From this point it appears that Jesse Smith and his wife Hannah moved to Willow Road built a house, had eight children and began farming at this location until he passed away in October of 1884. Getting to this point in the story required some detective work and making an assumption or two.

There is a fieldstone home located at 2995 Maple Road often referred to as the Jesse Smith House. It is also called Stonehaven. This home appears on the Cobblestone tour, and is a great example of The Greek Revival Style of architecture so common for the period. The house is listed as being built in 1833. The conundrum arises when one does a little research and determines that Jesse Smith does not appear to have ever lived on Maple Road or Slash road as it was once called. This was verified by looking at the 1869 Niagara County Directory and an 1875 map of Wilson that showed where residents home and farms were located.

The directory lists an Isaac Smith living on Maple Road farming 77 acres on lot 69 which closely corresponds to 2995 Maple Road. Jesse Smith is listed as living on lot 75 in South Wilson and farming 150 acres. Lot 75 is on Willow Road and 150 acres is the number of acres conveyed to Smith in 1836. There is also an Eli Smith listed on Maple Road farming 100 acres on lot 68. It does not appear that Eli Smith is related to Jesse Smith or Isaac Smith. However, Isaac Smith was Jesse's son. At this point, one can only make an educated guess and say that over the years, the Isaac Smith house mistakenly became known as the Jesse Smith house or perhaps Jesse helped his son build the home and his son named it for his father. If anyone has any further information that can clarify this, please let me know.

Probably the single most reason that Smith's original log cabin is still standing is that it was continuously occupied until at least the 1970s. It was added onto, but Mansfield has torn down the later additions in the rear of the house and removed siding that was installed over the exterior oak logs. Regarding the logs, they are rough-hewn approximately 18-20 inches square and in remarkably great condition. Inside, one can see remnants of the early resident's attempts at decorating. The logs were "wall-papered" with old newspapers from the 1800s. There was a chimney for a small stove, but evidence of a large fireplace is non-existent. On the second floor loft, one can see the original rough cut smaller size trees used for rafters. There was no basement and naturally no in-door plumbing in the original cabin. The structure is not large, measuring approximately 20 by 30, which is common for the period. Also of note and interesting is the height of the entrance door to the cabin. It measures approximately five feet in height perhaps indicating that people were smaller in stature in the early 1800s.

Although it can't be proven the Jesse Smith cabin is the oldest standing single family home in Niagara County, it is definitely the most authentic in its appearance having changed very little from the day it was constructed. Sincere thanks to the Mansfield family for maintaining an important piece of local history.

~Submitted by Francis Gallagher, Wilson Town Historian



**Jesse Smith Log Cabin**

**Interior walls (note the well-preserved condition of the oak logs and the early attempts at wallpapering with old newsprint)**



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Wilson Historical Society  
P.O. Box 830  
Wilson, New York 14172  
Editor: A. Diane Muscoreil  
dmuscoreil@wilsonnewyork.com

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

On December 8th, the Sanborn Fire Company Band will perform their Holiday Concert at 2:00 pm. This well attended event has become a real tradition in Wilson, and we again want to thank Past President Wally Goodman for continuing to coordinate and conduct this terrific program!

### **December 19th**

Don't miss our own **Don Burrows** portraying Reuben Wilson in Youngstown on December 19<sup>th</sup>! Don will be there as part of the 200 anniversary commemoration and reenactment of the British capture of Fort Niagara and the subsequent burning of the frontier including the village of Youngtown and most of everything else eastward to Newfane. Look for Don in the Red Brick Schoolhouse also known as the Youngstown Library from 9:30 AM until 1 PM. Don will explain what happened to his family and the other Wilson settlers on that fateful day as the British retaliated for the Americans burning Niagara on the Lake earlier that year.