

# Town of Ossian Historical Society Newsletter

## 33<sup>rd</sup> Edition

## April 2020

### Salamanders in our Cellar

by Steve Rauber

Diane and I bought our home on McCurdy Road here in Ossian in May of 1968. The house that we purchased originally was built on Rattlesnake Hill Wildlife Management Area or "Little England." It was bought by Lloyd Shay for \$5.00 from New York State. It was then purchased by Charles Perrine from Lloyd Shay for \$10.00. Charles Perrine at age 22, along with his cousin, rebuilt the house on McCurdy Road as a wedding present for his wife.

Our basement has a concrete floor. There is a 2inch space between the floor and the wall. After a heavy rain, water comes in through the seam, and remains for a few days before drying up. It is through this seam that spotted salamanders emerge and hide beneath the winter supply of wood stored there. We have seen them for over 50 years.

I know that they are able to reproduce there, as their life expectancy is 30 years. This winter I moved a piece of firewood and found

3 juveniles that were less than 2 inches long. The adults range from 6 to 9 inches in length.

A few years ago, we received a telephone call from a company that wanted to give us an estimate on water proofing our basement. I replied, "what would happen to our salamanders?" The man hung up on me. It may seem crazy to some people, but I think those salamanders were there before we moved in and they have as much right to use our cellar as we do. They are a very docile creature that enhances our home to us.

Each year there is a spotted salamander migration that takes place on a 50yard section of McCurdy Road, and another on Sugar Creek Road. This migration takes place on the first warm rain in April and again during a rain in October. Our family has been known to go to these spots and hand carry them across the road so they are not run over by cars. (No, they are not slimy). It's a small gift we can give to the species.

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This winter we found Jefferson, or blue spotted salamander in our basement. It was the first of that kind we have seen. See picture.



### **Dump Find** by Bill Walker

This story begins with my Great Grandparents, Riley C. and Emma Linzy, who owned a farm on McNinch Road of about 50 acres. When my Grandfather, Ward, decided to marry Harriet Bonner and stay on the farm, it was decided to expand the family home and purchase the adjoining farm of about 40 acres to better support the now two families. At that time in history the family farm grew what they needed, sold milk from about a half dozen cows, sold eggs and sold a hog or two for items they needed to purchase.

My Grandparents eventually took over the two farms and continued to farm until it was time to sell the cows and machinery etc. The main hay barn needed major repairs and was torn down as it was no longer needed.

When it was time to sell the farm, my brother, David purchased the main homestead as it was heavily wooded and he was and still is an avid hunter and I purchased the smaller farm that had been purchased by Riley.

Back in the day very little was wasted but a spot was always needed to throw away things not usable or repairable. As it turned out the small dump is on my wife's and my property and I used to pick through it in the spring to see what surfaced over the winter. I was doing my spring picking a few years ago and found the pictured item from the old hay barn that was torn down, a hay unloader.

The unloader was called by a few names, hay car, trolley, carrier etc. The unloader traveled along a track in the very peak of the barn to carry

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loose hay to the mow. The wagon was backed into the barn, a set of hay forks was set into a portion of loose hay and the hay was raised up to the unloader by a system of pulleys and rope powered by a horse pulling the rope and later by tractor. When the forks hit the unloader, it traveled along the track and the man in the mow would trip the forks to dump the hay and would spread out the hay before the next load came up. This proved to be a great system as prior to this the hay had to be unloaded by hand using a pitchfork.

It was great for me to find the unloader as when I was growing up these were in use and it brought back memories.



### Song Written by Ellen Dresser Derrenbacher

Ellen Dresser Derrenbacher was married to Conrad Derrenbacher. Ellen was a school teacher in a country school in Ossian and she was married to Conrad Derrenbacher. It was rumored that Otto Derrenbacher introduced Conrad to Ellen and that the marriage proposal was in a horse and buggy. Ellen wrote the song below about Ossian at age 39.

#### SNOW ON THE MOUNTAIN

We are living out in the country  
now  
Up on the Ossian hills.  
And if you've never lived in Ossian  
You've missed a lot of thrills.  
When it rains down town, it snows  
up here  
We have weather of our own.  
We have lots of friends in the  
summertime  
But in the winter we are left alone.  
Maybe you think I'm crazy  
And I don't know what I say  
When I tell you we have snow up  
here from September to May.

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For days and days the wind has blown.

It's been in a terrible rage.

The snow has drifted around us so deep it's like living in a cage.

If we try to get off the hill at all

It takes horses, shovels and picks.

So I do not think we will soon forget

The winter of thirty-six.

### **Greetings by Charles Knappenberg in 1943 for the 125 Anniversary of the Ossian Presbyterian Church**

Will you look backward with me this morning, backward over 125 years to the 29<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1818, when 20 people from this neighborhood, under the guidance of Rev. Robert Hubbard, paster of the Church of Angelica, geathered to form a Presbyterian Church.

We do not know where the geathering was held. It might have been at the home of James Haynes, or with Jacob Clendennin or at the recently opened hotel of Judge Richard Porter, in any event it was

held in what was then known as Sugar Creek, now Ossian Center.

Since history has not given us the picture, may we paint one from our imagination. On this late September day, with coloring leaves beginning to glorify the great wooded hills sourounding the Sugar Creek valley we find members of eleven families journeying to the meeting place. They have left the log houses and small clearings which marked their homes and are traveling on foot or horseback along the trails which led to Sugar Creek. They were mostly from this portion of the new Town of Ossian, as the Church founded at Bisbytown two years later was of the Methodist Denomination. We would not expect to find roads or wagons at this early date as this was only fourteen years after the brothers Richard and James Porter made the first settlement in this trackless wooded wilderness. Haynes had settled only 12 years before and Clendennin only 11 years earlier. There were no frame buildings in the town, no store and no grist mill. Richard Porter had opened a hotel the year before and a school had been tought since the winter of 1813

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by Mr. McCoy, and a saw mill had been in operation by Nathaniel Porter since 1809.

Rev. Robert Hubbard, paster of the Church at Angelica had ben invited to preside. As Ossian had but recently been a part of the town of Angelica it was natural that its people should look to Angelica and its paster, especially since there was no minister located near.

We can imagine the families arriving at the log meeting place and being welcomed by the host. Tall Chief, Laughing Sally or Yankee John local Indians may have watched and wondered. The men probably geathered in the September sunshine near the log barn and discussed the problems of lumbering and the making of shingles which were the chief industries of the locality at that time or they may have talked of the difficulties in raising their meager crops lately harvested from fields chopped from the maple woods along Sugar Creek. The question of having grain ground and transported to distant mills and the lack of roads also came in for discussion. The women on the other hand were probably in the house exchanging

experiences in making homes in the wilderness.

Then we see Rev. Hubbard arriving on this horse from Angelica 25 miles away, with his sermon and books in his saddlebag.

The record states that "There was an awakened attention to the gospel both in those who had been members in other places and in general who had never united with the visible Church. Such was the exidence of the influence of the Holy Spirit being granted and such was the desire of the influence of the Holy Spirit being granted and such was the desire of many to enjoy the ordinances of the Gospel that the time to form a Church had apparently arrived." Rev. Hubbard preached a sermon and afterwards examined twenty persons concerning their religious experience. The meeting was concluded with prayer. The family names of the twenty people were Haynes, Bayles, McCray, Porter, Vorhees, Shay, Flynn, Conkwright, Perine, Clendennin and Hulbert. Many of the names are familiar to us. Some have been long lost to the camunity. This has been typed almost as written. Rhea Walker

# HAPPY EASTER



# STAY SAFE