



Warrensburgh Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 15 Issue 2

Summer 2010

Harvesting Ice

By Bob Knowles

Mechanical refrigeration as we know it is less than 100 years old. In fact, it wasn't until the mid twentieth century when rural electrification was virtually completed that most homes could have a refrigerator. Prior to that ice had to be "harvested" from local ponds and lakes and stored in well-insulated structures so it would last through the following fall.

WHS member, Bob Knowles, now retired from teaching history, spent his high school years working in his father's ice harvesting company known as the Plymouth Ice Company in Plymouth, New Hampshire. The last commercial natural ice company in New Hampshire, it ceased operation in 1955. Bob remembers, all too well, the details of harvesting

natural ice from a pond in the middle of winter, and delivering the large blocks of ice to residences, campgrounds, restaurants and stores all over town.

In 1992 Bob gave a talk to members of the Plymouth Historical Society about life in Plymouth and especially about working at the ice harvesting plant. No doubt the process was similar everywhere, including on Warrensburg's Echo Lake and other ponds in the area.

His comments about ice harvesting are excerpted here:

The last ice age ended within the memory of all but the younger generations. For those not involved, however, that ending went unnoticed. For those involved, its passing went unmourned. The harvesting of ice was a cold, dirty and dangerous business, as well as one of the toughest occupations. Few can be very sentimental about harvesting ice.

I remember getting up at 4:30 each morning during the harvest. We would plow the snow off the ice so as to only have quality ice, not snow ice. This was done initially by a scoop and ice skates. The ice was so

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Railroad Motorcars

Collide

(From the Post Star of May 17, 1937 and Warrensburg News)

George Lane, son of Mr. & Mrs. Walter Lane of Warrensburg, was seriously injured Saturday afternoon in a head-on collision of two railroad motorcars in a blinding rainstorm on the Saratoga-North Creek Adirondack branch of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, between Thurman Station and the Glen. He was confined to his home with a concussion, possible internal injuries, bruises and severe shock, according to Dr. J. E. Goodman of Warrensburg, attending physician.

Lane was employed as a railroad fire patrolman between Saratoga Springs and Thurman Station and was looking for washouts Saturday. After he discovered the washout he reversed his motor and headed for the nearest telephone to seek assistance to clear the debris from the tracks. He was running backward rather than to take time to turn the car around, when his car collided with that of another patrolman, Franklin Wheeler, also of Warrensburg, who was traveling northerly.

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President's Column

Greetings,

The Society's annual meeting was at Grace's on February 24th. Crystal Collier, Sandi Parisi, Mark Brown, Bob Knowles, & Jean Hadden were elected to the board. Secretary Rita Ferraro, treasurer Jackie Leonbruno, Lenore Smith, and Marilyn Hayes retired. Steve Parisi is Museum Director. Sandi is the Town Historian.

A covered bridges program was given by Jim Ligon of Thurman on March 21st at the Senior Center. A full house was enthralled by the slides and kept Jim overtime with questions. We decided to replace the Milton Avenue Bridge with a covered one.

Prologue to artifacts night, April 22nd, was Harold McKinney's talk on (RSVP) Retired Seniors Volunteer Program. The board voted to join this organization that performs many services. [If anyone has an old photo of McKinney's store on River Street, please contact us.]

Among the artifacts displayed was a large plaque that was atop the Milton Ave. Bridge for 115 years with the names of the three commissioners who acquired the former trolley bridge in 1895, two of whom were the great grandfather and great grand-uncle of member Sarah Farrar.

Elizabeth (Osborne) Sebald had two poems written before World War I by her father, Herrick "Hap" Osborne. One of them, titled "Arbor Day," was read aloud at our elm tree planting event at the Senior Center on April 30th, Arbor Day. A bridge at the outlet of Schroon Lake is named for him, as he was county highway superintendent from 1939

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Quarterly Editor

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We welcome comments, corrections, articles, pictures, letters, and reminiscences. Send to:

Quarterly Editor

Warrensburgh Historical Society

PO Box 441

Warrensburg, NY 12885

Board of Directors

Paul Gilchrist, President

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John Hastings, Bob Knowles,

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The Board of Directors meets at the Senior Center, 3847 Main Street, at 6:30 pm on the **FIRST** Tuesday of each month. Call Paul to confirm at 744-7568

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Contributors to this issue:

Bob Knowles

George Aubrey

Paul Gilchrist

Chuck Wheeler

Steve Parisi

Upcoming Events

August 4: Michael Kudish Local Railroads, at the Museum 7:00 pm

ALSO Canoe Raffle Drawing

August 8th: Sticky Wicket at Warren County Fish hatchery, Noon til 4:00

October 22 & 29: Graveyard Walks

October 24: Dinner With the Dead

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP:

216

Warrensburgh Historical Society**Website:**

www.whs12885.org

Email:

whs7396@yahoo.com

NEW MEMBERS:

Jim Sweet

Jim Ligon,

Stephen Hoover

James Black

Membership Information

Students \$5.00 Individual \$15.00 Family \$25.00 Senior (62+) \$10.00 Senior Family \$18 Contributing \$55.00 Business \$50.00 Life (Individual only) \$300 (membership is on a calendar year basis)

If you would like to join and receive the Quarterly by mail, please send a check for the amount of the membership classification, with name, address, and phone number to: **Warrensburgh Historical Society, P.O. Box 441, Warrensburg, N.Y. 12885**

NOTICE

The recording of history is an interpretive and ever changing study. Therefore, the Warrensburg Historical Society or its Board of Directors or members shall not be held liable for the accuracy or authenticity of the material herein. **We welcome and encourage corrections, comments, and additional information.**

(Continued from page 1) Harvesting Ice

thin that we had to skate like the wind so as not to fall through.

As the ice thickened, we used a jeep, but that went through once. Ice was very touchy and dangerous, but exciting and challenging. We plowed it every time it snowed. As soon as the ice was 13 inches or more thick, we were ready to cut. The crew was assembled, and we began at 6:00 a.m. A giant square was used to make sure the large "floats" were square. We sawed floats of 100 cakes of ice, each cake measuring 13" x 22" x 44", about 340 pounds. We set the saw at 12 inches, thus the ice was still connected at the bottom by an inch or so. The "header" was sawed by hand. This was the initial cut so the blocks of ice would float free.

The float was then separated from the rest of the ice by men with needle bars. Four men hit the sawed groove simultaneously, and the float was free — a large block of ice criss-crossed by grooves 12 inches deep held together by one inch of ice.

Now let's leave the float for a few minutes and go to the ice house itself. The ice house [in Plymouth] was a magnificent edifice. Its size alone was awe-inspiring. With its distinct smell of wet sawdust and damp atmosphere, a symbol of this era, it has swiftly left the contempo-

rary scene. It measured 70 feet long, 30 feet wide and 70 feet high. The walls were one foot thick, insulated with sawdust. It had two roofs, one flat and the second slightly angled, to ward off snow and rain.

Two doors, front and back (times 2), gave entrance. They were 70 feet tall in 5 foot sections. When we cut ice it went on "runs" into the back or rear of the house. The ice house [in Plymouth] was approximately 25 feet below the dam, thus gravity aided the flow of ice down the runs. The runs were multi-tiered, four in number. They went from the pond down to the ice house, a distance of approximately 100 feet. The runs were just that. A place for the ice blocks to run down to the ice house. The edges were 4 feet by 4 feet; the rest was 2 feet by 4 feet. The ice blocks were guided by the runs in their slide to the ice house.

Now, back to the pond. The float was 100 blocks big minus the hand-sawed-out header. These blocks of ice (22" x 44" x 13" or so) were floated to the loading dock, and here the second phase began.

They were fed into a continuous conveyer - which hauled them through a shaver. The conveyer was powered by a four cylinder Whippit engine, geared down. The ice was pulled through the shaver, set at 12 inches by the conveyer, making

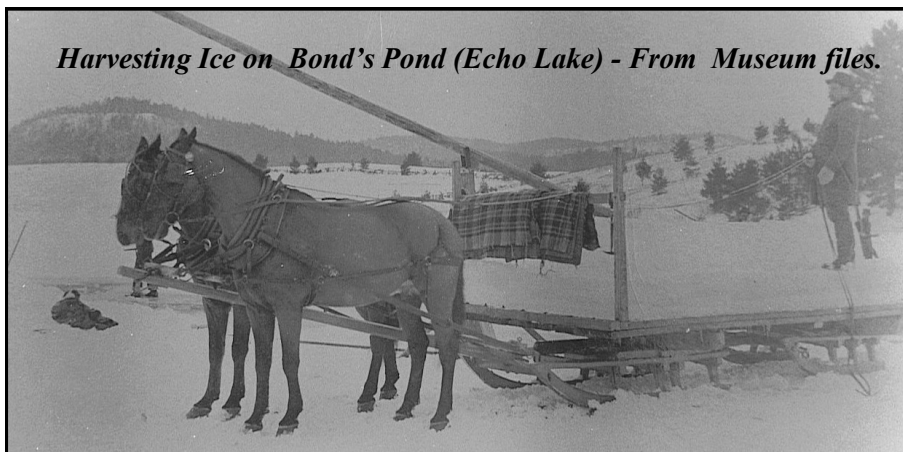
each block uniform in size, the surface cleared of gas, tobacco spit or other foul agents.

Once the header lane was clear, two men with needle bars (just that, weighing 13 pounds) broke off row after row of ice to be fed into the shaver on the conveyer. The saw now continued to saw out additional floats to feed the hungry shaver. A pump from the pond pumped water under the shaver so as to keep it clear. Men with short pike poles loaded the shaver by poling the ice into a place and pressing down on the back of the cake so the conveyer would pick it up.

As the ice cakes slid down the runs on the way to the house, they were slowed or speeded up by placing nails into the runs (or removing them). This depended on how cold it was. If it was zero degrees, the cakes virtually flew, so we would pound a few nails into the runs. If it was warm, we removed the nails. The ice, on the average, came down the runs at eleven cakes a minute at 15 to 25 mph, depending on the weather.

In the icehouse three men were working. Two were wingmen or "wingers" (one on each side). They had 6 inch pike poles. When the cake entered on the runs, they hooked it near the front briefly flipped the pike pole over, gently hit the other end (to stop it turning) and let it go. It slid, with practice, into place. The third man was the spacer. He spaced them evenly with a needle bar. These three men were critical to the operation, thus they were paid more. My brother, Joel, and I were the wingers. We wore boots with caulks imbedded in the soles, so we wouldn't slip.

We piled the ice cakes up, layer by layer. As we neared the door with each layer, we had a buzzer system to tell what we



Harvesting Ice on Bond's Pond (Echo Lake) - From Museum files.

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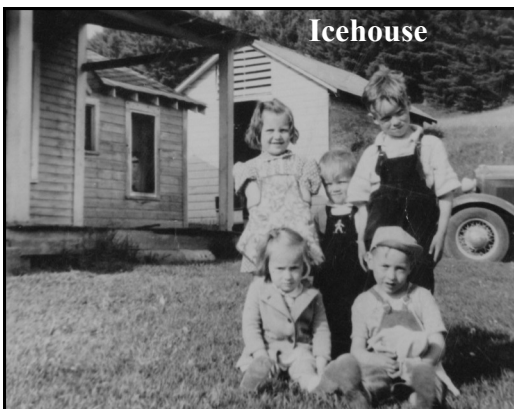
(Continued from page 3) *Harvesting Ice*

needed. My brother and I would press it. One, stop; two, to send another; three, to resume for two or three cakes, and then stop. When we finished each layer, my father would supervise the start of the next layer.

No hay was used yet. We stacked layer upon layer of ice, staggering each layer. One layer was facing one way, the next layer facing the other way. When the house was full, the doors were secured, and we waited till spring, and the start of the season which lasted until Labor Day.

That ice age is over, but tomorrow may bring another. Ice is a temporary mineral, storing enormous amounts of energy much as wood and coal. With an energy-frugal future facing us, tapping this natural energy may again become worthwhile and workable. What other areas have in the way of wind and sun resources, we undoubtedly have in our midst unharvested ice fields. That more attention has not been centered on this renewable natural resource may be the best testimony to the difficulty of this lost occupation.

NOTE: The following photograph shows an icehouse at the Hastings farm north of Warrensburg during the late 1940's. Back: Jen, Don, Roscoe Hastings Front: Mary, Bob Carpenter



Icehouse

(Continued from page 1) *Railroad Accident*

The slide was located near what is known as "The Dugway" north of Thurman Station.



Frank Wheeler on his motorcar.

The slide was caused by the heavy rains of Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and a pole and dirt were dislodged and washed across the tracks. The afternoon train, the last of two daily runs on the branch, had passed earlier, however, and traffic was not delayed as another passenger train was not scheduled to pass that point until this morning (Monday, May 17).

When the two maintenance cars came together, Lane's car rolled into a ravine throwing the occupant

clear. The other car also left the rails, but Wheeler was not hurt. Wheeler thought Lane was dead and covered him with a tarpaulin, and then ran three miles to The Glen for help. Lane was later taken to his home.

Addendum

After the accident, George Lane would go on to pursue other employment and would eventually run a garage on upper Main Street in Warrensburg. Frank Wheeler continued to work for the D & H until the start of World War II when he left to work as an electrician for American Locomotives in the manufacture of tanks for the U.S. Army. In 1946 he was appointed as NYS Forest Ranger in Warrensburg until his retirement in 1973.

George Lane and Frank Wheeler were lifelong friends. Both would build homes on Fourth Avenue in the 1940's where they were longtime neighbors.

(Special thanks to Charles Wheeler who provided the information and photographs for this article.-Editor)



Wreckage of George Lane's motorcar

Elm Trees Planted on Arbor Day

by Paul Gilchrist

Two 8' elm trees, donated to the town by the Historical Society, were planted at the Senior Center on Arbor Day, just like the ones planted at the library last fall. John Burns, Jr./Sr. High science teacher, recruited four students to help with the planting. Very special thanks are due to Larry Collier for his participation; without it the project would not have been so successful. See more photos and text at whs12885.org.



Seniors Anna Brand and Cole Tennant, and 7th graders Blake Vaisey and Sarah Leguire did the honors planting the two 8' elm trees.



The team prepares the hole by mixing peat, manure, soil, and plenty of water.



Larry Collier instructs the young arborists in some finer points.

A Gal Named Harrie

By Steve Parisi

Harrie Rote-Rosen Bobbin speaks glowingly of her childhood in Warrensburg. In a telephone interview of about an hour, she described her early childhood and reminisced about Main Street. Born in 1935, she lived in the spacious apartment "over the store" then known as Kugel's Department Store at 60 Main Street (now a part of the Health Center, housing the pharmacy and dental office). Kugel's was a dry goods store, selling clothing, stationery, toys, etc.

Kugel's had been owned by Dora Kugel, who in 1930 sold the store to her nephew Harry Rote-Rosen, who worked for Dora. This was about the time he married Eva Rosenthal of Glens Falls.

In 1935 Harry entered Moses-Ludington Hospital in Ticonderoga for what was thought to be an ear infection. He died there of spinal meningitis on March 29, 1935. He never knew that his wife, Eva, was carrying his child. Only two months into her pregnancy, Eva learned of it herself only after her husband passed away.

Harrie, born on September 18, 1935 and named for her father, grew up in a loving home with her mother and aunt

Helen, Eva's sister. Both worked in the store along with their brother, Joseph, who commuted from Glens Falls.

In 1949, when Harrie was 14 years old, Eva sold the store to Fred Clayfield who continued its operation as Clayfield's Department Store. Eva and Harrie moved to Glens Falls. The store was subsequently sold to Cal Engle, local Warrensburg entrepreneur. Harrie remembered visiting her mother in the hospital when Cal and Jeannette Engle, who were visiting Jeannette's sister Gertrude, came by. A wonderful conversation about the store and earlier times ensued.

Harrie took me on a stroll down Main Street, first stopping at Mike's Pool Hall, where she remembered throwing snowballs into the exhaust fan. Next was Mike's Diner and then Jerry La-Rock's movie theatre. (Curiously she didn't know it was named "Fairyland.") Eli Heitner ran a grocery store in what later became Walt Herman's souvenir and sundry store. Dorner's lived in the house next to that where Bill Dorner and his wife conducted a bakery. Gloria Dorner (now Gonzalez) was one of Harrie's friends. Across the street was Joe and Annie Levine's store in a building that is now gone, on a lot which is now Potter's Diner parking lot.

Harrie remembered attending, with her friends, summer sessions at St. Cecelia's Church and playing badminton there. It was only after a visit to her mother by a young priest inquiring about Harrie's Confirmation that Harrie's mother suggested that, since they were Jewish, she should not attend those sessions. On the other hand, when Cliff Alger happened in the store one day and asked her if she would like a Christmas tree, she got excited. This was just about the only thing she wanted but couldn't have, since she knew that Jews didn't celebrate Christmas. When Cliff returned with one Harrie's mother let her set it up in the store window, and decorate it herself. Harrie related that she was always a

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Cruising Down the River

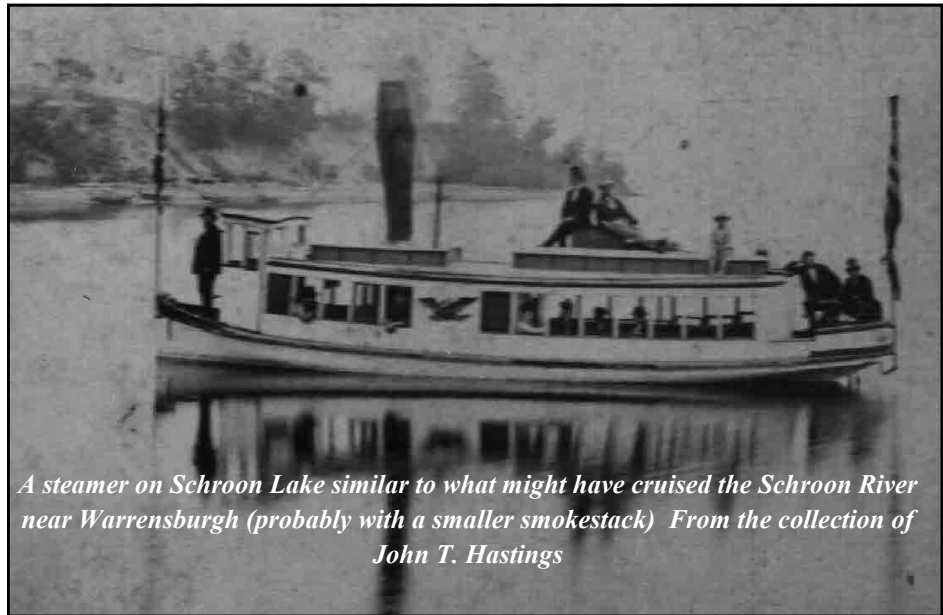
by

Paul Gilchrist

If you lived in Warrensburg about 120 years ago, you might have had the pleasure of cruising on the Schroon River in a steamboat of a Sunday afternoon. Charles Burhans had one in the early 1890s, and so did James Emerson, according to Will S. Hayes* (1879-1950). Each boat could carry about fifteen people. A channel was dredged in the shallow places, such as under the Route 9 Bridge. These boats could travel upriver at least as far as the County Home. From old photographs, it appears there was ample clearance to pass under the County Home Bridge, so they could navigate the meanders for several more miles before encountering rapids. The trip would have taken passengers past forests, farmland, pastures, and sawmills. One imagines somebody would bring along an accordion.

It's not clear where the steamboats docked, but Sheridan Prosser had a boat dock where Warren Ford is now, with ten or twelve boats for hire, which were generally all in use on a nice weekend afternoon. It seems likely the steamboats docked along this stretch, as well. The dam a few hundred yards down the river probably tempered the current, which would have been more leisurely in the summer anyway. Boating had become quite popular in those years, and there were many privately owned boats, too. There was no mention as to whether the two steamboats ever raced.

* Excerpted from "More Reminiscing," by Mr. Will S. Hayes, a paper from Linda Bassarab, December 1995.



A steamer on Schroon Lake similar to what might have cruised the Schroon River near Warrenburgh (probably with a smaller smokestack) From the collection of John T. Hastings

SPECIAL POST SCRIPT

On May 6th, your President received a call from Cheryl Kenyon, President of the Chamber of Commerce, announcing that the Chamber has named the Warrensburg Historical Society its Citizen of the Year!

This is very gratifying as a recognition by the community of the efforts and work that so many members of the Society have contributed to Warrensburg. It's indeed a pleasure for us to accept this compliment.

The Chamber will host a dinner on June 18th at Grace's to make their award to the Society. Information about menu choices and price will be forthcoming soon. Watch for it in the Adirondack Journal.

RAFFLE

The Warrensburg Historical Society will be selling raffle tickets for a

12 Foot

Raddison

Canoe

Including Paddles

Tickets:

\$3.00 each

or

2 For \$5.00

Tickets available from WHS members or at the Museum Wednesday and Sunday, 1-4 pm.

Proceeds to benefit the WHS Museum Fund

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

January 29, 2010

To the Editor:

I am a native of Warrensburg & my sister, **Louise Aubrey Kurth** of Kenmore, N. Y. gave me some of your Historical Society Quarterlies. One of them, Volume 4 Issue 4, has an article about the **Warrensburg Racing Speedway**.

At the time of the races, I lived about a block away on the corner of Thompson Ave. and Third St. at 16 Thompson St. I don't know much about it from 1951 to 1955 [since I] was in the Navy and would only have seen some races when I was home on leave. What I do remember is going to the races [of] older cars and maybe a PU truck race. I remember they were having so many accidents on the turns and the track was getting to be [such] a mess, they stopped the races. After a year or so, they had motorcycle races. That didn't go over very well and [they] stopped that also. After a year or so they started racing what I would call miniature "Indie" race cars. That was a big hit till one fateful day. It was before the races had started, and the drivers were warming and tuning up their cars. One car came around the south turn where the horse stables were and was nearing the grandstand when he broke down. They had an auto wrecker on standby near the horse stables. The wrecker driver was supposed to be licensed to be on a racetrack; "He wasn't." He pulled out and parked cross-way of the track. They also were supposed to have personnel to go to flag down the oncoming drivers; "They didn't." The driver came around the turn wide open and hit the wrecker broadside. They rushed him to Glens Falls [Hospital] where he died if he was not dead before he got there. The track was sued and it lost its license to have races there. I also think the wrecker driver was in some legal trouble.

I can't give you a date on these things, other [than] I got out of the Navy in April of 1955 and moved to Gansevoort N. Y. in the spring of 1960.

George Aubrey

February 22, 2010

To the Editor:

First-

I have one possible story you might like to print plus some trials my sister and I had squeezing the capsules of coloring in oleo during the war in 1943-1945. **Sandi Parisi** asked for any stories on that.

In 1937 or 1938, Warrensburg and Lake George had a joint **pageant**. The cast were Warrensburg residents and the place where it was held in Lake

George was next to the school on Rte, 9 in the bowl like field where ball games were held.

They had harness races (trotters and pacers) at the fairgrounds on Sunday afternoon. It was as I remember in early summer. After the races, most of the people left, but there must have been about 20 [people] who didn't. As I was just 5 or 6 years old, some of this is kind of hard to be exact. I asked my father, **Newman Aubrey**, a local business man, why weren't we leaving. He told me a man is going to talk and is asking families to volunteer to be in a pageant. My father volunteered our family and my mother, **Dorothy Aubrey**, made us all outfits of frontier style. All the other "actors" had similar style [cloths]. They got a bunch of wagons, all except one was horse drawn. They were covered over with canvass like the covered wagons of old. The one wagon not horse drawn was pulled by a team of oxen driven by **Nat Menshausen**. I was allowed to ride on the seat next to him (I lived just around the corner from the Menshausen's on King St.). The wagons assembled on the street in back of the school and proceeded down on to the field and circled around in a circle as in frontier times. It started late in the afternoon and after the wagons were set, a campfire was built and a cast iron cooking pot was set up over the campfire. I don't remember what was cooked; stew I think. I remember we had a tin cup & tin plate and a spoon. There was a cow there and **Nat Menshausen** milked the cow. My mother let me have some fresh milk right from the cow. By this time, it was quite dark and with the covered wagons and the camp fire, I thought this was great for a little tike like me.

Second-

In response to Sandi Parisi's article on **oleo**; It brings back memories of 1944 and 1945 when our family, my mother **Dorothy Aubrey**, a third grade teacher, my sister Louise, one of your members, me and my mother's mother, **Bertha Farnsworth**. We lived next door to **Hoffman's Bakery** on Elm Street.

Before that we lived in Bolton landing for two years, 1942 & 1943. That's when oleo came out. I remember the oleo was white & we got a packet of powder to stir in. The color was quite uneven sometimes. In 1944 they came out with the capsule. It was inside the main package and we were supposed to squeeze the pocket and knead the color evenly without breaking the outer plastic of the package. Sometimes it did [break] and what a mess. Sometimes we had as much color on our fingers and the table as in the oleo.

George Aubrey



Mystery Photo

Places in Warrensburg's History

Can you identify the above building? Or where it was located? Or any of the previous owners? Contact John at 798-0248 with your answer or email at jthastings@roadrunner.com. The photo in the last Quarterly was the store and greenhouse of S. E. Prosser which was originally (1890) located on lower Main Street, across from where the current Ford dealership is. He was primarily a florist, but sold tobacco and other supplies. Later (1912) it was located off Horicon Ave on Prosser Circle. Eventually it was owned and operated by Hugh Trenary. Sheridan E. Prosser's daughter, Clara, married Franklin Hastings (son of Mary Sage and Rufus D. Hastings). It is likely Frank got his name from being born in the County of Franklin and Town of Franklin, Nebraska, when his father was homesteading. Their children, Grace, a teacher and John A, an engineer, lived in the family home on Elm Street for many years.

(Continued from page 2) *President's Column*

to 1969. The Osborne Bridge at the foot of Elm Street, however, was named before Hap was born.

Our school relationships are growing. Science teacher John Burns arranged for four students to assist at our elm planting (see photos herein and check our website). On May 12, fifty 7th graders will visit the museum, see logging films, take a bus tour of historic sites, and climb Hackensack.

Sundry notes: the **Sticky Wicket Croquet Tournament will be on Sunday August 8th**. And be sure to either buy or sell the canoe raffle tickets you receive with this Quarterly. The drawing will be August 4th when railroad author Dr. Michael Kudish visits the museum. Our website has more info about elm trees and how to order: whs12885.org.

Paul Gilchrist, President

(Continued from page 5) *Gal Named Harrie*

happy child but this was something special to her.

Harrie learned at an early age that everyone was not as fortunate as she. She remembers seeing a friend wearing a dress just like one she had. Though she said nothing, when she got home she mentioned it to her mother. Eva explained that she had given away some of Harrie's clothes to people who might not have enough money to buy them new. Her mother was pleased that Harrie had not said anything, since it was not nice to embarrass others. On another occasion she was embarrassed for a friend whose mother scolded him in front of her for not using the right fork.

Harrie attended school at the Odd Fellows building across the street. She remembered being friends with Joan Osborne, Helen Smith, Janet Havron and Clarabelle "Boots" Frulla. As a Girl Scout she learned the proper way to set a table. Her first scout leader was Mrs. Oscar Quintal. Another activity she remembers was swimming in Echo Lake when Freddie Meader was lifeguard. She remembered Fred as a good basketball player who had been described as having the "grace of a swan."

Harrie never knew her father, but as a seventeen year old she went fishing with her uncle David, an enjoyable experience that began with breakfast at his favorite diner. She remembers thinking, for the first time, this must be what it is like to have a father.

Harrie Bobbin still lives in Glens Falls with one of her three daughters. One daughter died in 1997 in an auto accident. Her son, Jay Bobbin, is a noted film critic. She very generously granted this interview.