

# Warrensburgh Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 14 Issue 4

Winter 2009

## The Warrensburg Racing Speedway at Ashland Park

by John T. Hastings

It was 2:00 pm on Sunday, August 3rd, 1952 when the first cars lined up for the first of five time trials at the half mile oval at the Warrensburg Racing Speedway (WRS) at Ashland Park (Fairgrounds). The pace lap begins and as the cars head towards the starting line the announcer, Bob Jennings, is shouting "Comin' down now; they're lookin good.....and there they goooooo....." Les Hillis drops the flag and they're off. Doug Moon (#5) would have the honor of winning this first race with a young Maynard Baker

(#712) not far behind. Those recording the best times during the trials would get to race in the feature event.

Sponsored by the Warrensburg Auto Racing Association, Inc., (WARA) the races were being held for the first time. The total purse was \$750, with a \$20 prize given to the fastest time around the half mile track. In addition, the winner of the feature race would win a nice trophy. Nearly 2,500 spectators were on hand for this inaugural event. Twenty-two of the fastest cars in the area were on hand to compete for the top prizes. Steve Danish won the \$20 prize for the fastest time of 34.5 seconds (about 52 miles per hour). The little feature of 14 laps was won by Earl Maille, after a heated battle with Wally LaBelle. The main feature of 20 laps was won by Leo Nadeau of Schuylerville in his little Rocket 88, although given a tough battle by Al Parry of Saratoga in his S84. The purse for the feature race was \$100 plus the trophy.

There were three roll-overs, all by local drivers; Tommy Bennett (Warrensburg), Chuck Clark (Glens Falls), and Karl Duell, Jr. (Warrensburg). Other drivers

**STOCK CAR  
RACING**

**EVERY SUNDAY**

**ASHLAND PARK - - WARRENSBURG**

**SEVEN**

**Action Packed Races**

**Time Trials 2 P.M. - - 1st Race 3 P.M.**

**\$750 PURSE**

**TROPHY AWARDED**

ADULT ADMISSION \$1 — TAX INCLUDED  
CHILDREN UNDER 12 FREE

● The management reserves the right to limit entries.

*Advertisement from July 31st, 1952*

*Warrensburg News*

present, besides those mentioned above, were Roy Mallory, George Tubbs, Ken Shoemaker ("The Shoe"), Spence Parkhurst, and Ted Vogel.

Two weeks later on August 17th, the next races were held at the Speedway. Even more spectators showed up for more "spills and thrills." The biggest spill was made by John Potter Jr. (#23) of

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**President's Column**

Saddy I open with noting parental losses of two more of our Board members, Rita whose mother passed and Jackie whose father passed. Our condolences to you both.

Peter found it necessary to resign from his active involvement in the Society... but he left his mark with his accomplishments in the revitalization of the Museum and too, at our annual Sticky Wicket fundraiser. The loss of Peter's input as a Board member has already been felt.

Appointed to fill the vacancy he left was Valerie Forsythe-Chambers. She is already making her mark with progressive input and an agreeable personality as she shares the workload of your Board.

We sponsored a program on "Logging in the Adirondacks" with presenter Dick Nason. FANTASIC! and very well received by a large audience. Using very early slides and movies and actual logging gear as props he spoke from personal experience of the early history of what is probably the oldest and most enduring business of this region. The 'Graveyard Walks' and 'Dinner With the Dead' were wonderfully successful. Maria Ligon played the part of *Isabelle Cornell*, expounding on "her" museum and on how proud she is of its evolution. Valerie Forsythe played *Lizzie Keays*, a school teacher and Empire Shirt Factory worker. She shared some wonderfully interesting details of every day life as she represented so many factory working women. Sandi Parisi played *Mable Tucker*, the first Town

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

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**Board of Directors**

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The Board of Directors meets at the Senior Center, 3847 Main Street, at 6:30 on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. Society members are welcome. Call Delbert to confirm at 623-3514.

*Warrensburgh Historical Society Quarterly*

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**Membership Information**

Student \$8.00 Individual \$12.00 Family \$25.00 Senior (62+) \$8.00

Contributing \$50.00 Business \$50.00 Institutional \$100.00

Life (Individual only) \$250

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, PO Box 441, Warrensburg, NY 12885

**Contributors to this issue:**

Paul Gilchrist

**Upcoming Events**

**December 16** WHS Holiday Dinner Social at Grace's Restaurant (Griffin House) 6 :00 pm.

**December 5-31** Museum "Dressed for the Holidays"

**January 24** Oral History Program at the Museum "Working in the Factories of Warrensburgh" 3-5 pm

**February 24** Annual Meeting at Grace's Restaurant (Griffin House) 7:00 pm

**Welcome New Members**

Mark Bertsche

Rene L. Collard

Stephen J. O'Connor & Family

Carmen Negrón

Carol Vericker

Dick Nason

Anna May Kelly

**NOTICE**

The recording of history is an interpretive and ever changing study. Therefore, the Warrensburgh 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.**

Warrensburg, whose car lost a rear wheel and overturned three times during the feature race. He suffered a fractured left hand and severe lacerations of the ring and little finger of the same hand.

The result of the feature race was hotly disputed by several drivers due to two accidents and a caution flag. Therefore the purse was increased and paid to Smokey Stover in car 36, Wally LaBelle in car 24, Nelson Moore in car P38, Ken Shoemaker in car Five 1½, George Dalaba in car 19Jr, and Karl Duell Jr. in car KD II.

The next races were held a week later by the WARA and featured the first race with women drivers. Marge Eggleston won in car #7, followed by Pat LaBelle (24) and Florence Clark (7A). This race would be continued on future Sundays and would be known as the "Powder Puff" race.

The August 30th races had an extra attraction. Karl Duell, Jr, president of the WARA drove car 88 and Everett Frulla, one of the directors of the corporation, drove car 3S in a two lap match race. The race ended in a dead heat. Tom Carpenter, promoter of the track, challenged the two men to race again the following Sunday. Besides Tom Carpenter, other known promoters of the track were Rick Patterson, Wilbur and Beecher Baker, Ward Tower and Hank Schmidt.

On September 28th, one of the largest crowds of over 2,700 spectators was present to view the

races. The feature race, which was now up to 25 laps, was won by Spence Parkhurst. The "Powder Puff" race was now a six lap event and had 10 contenders. Marge Eggleston won the race to notch her fourth victory in this event. Patty LaBelle (#1) and June Wood (KD-2) finished second and third, respectively.

The first racing season concluded on October 12, with the 10th event. An estimated audience of 4,000 fans showed up for the finale. The feature event was a 50 lap race with a \$200 purse. Twenty-one cars started the race, but as a result of roll-overs and pile ups, only 10 cars finished. The winner was Eddy Coon of North Hoosick.

During the feature race, John Turpin, five-year-old son of Mrs. Norma Turpin, was struck by a flying wheel which came off one of the cars in the race. The wheel struck the car in which the boy was sitting, injuring his leg. An examination revealed that there was no fracture.

The 1953 season started on Saturday May 30th and Sunday May 31st. Saturday races were dirt track drivers doing a series of events driving "sprints," which are specially built dirt track racing cars. On Sunday, the stock cars were to compete for prize money. The track had been completely rebuilt with a new clay surface.

The July 5th races saw an unusual case of sportsmanship. During one of the heat races, Wally LaBelle and Tommy Bennett had tied for second place. This required a 3

lap "grudge" race. During the second lap of this race, Tommy Bennett was holding the lead when he spun out on the second turn and his car stalled. LaBelle took the lead, but when he saw that Bennett was in trouble, he went back and gave him a push to get him started and then continued the race. Bennett would "nose" out LaBelle in the home stretch to win the "grudge" race.

During the first race of the July 19th program, Maynard Baker and Art Waite "locked horns" in the second curve and both cars flipped over. Baker's car went completely over the bank and off the track while Waite's rolled over on the bank. In the consolation race, Nelson Moore got in the act by flipping his car in the third curve after tangling with Leo Neddeau.

From 1954 through 1957, I could find no information in the Warrensburg News on racing at Ashland Park in Warrensburg. Whether racing had been suspended or just wasn't reported is unknown. However, in 1958 an article appeared concerning a serious accident at the speedway.

It was the first lap of the feature race on August 16th that Earl Maille was jammed in the pack of 20 cars jockeying for position and the lead. It was unclear whether Maille tangled with the car next to him or rather blew a tire, but his car went out of control, shot high in the air over the protective sand bank and toppled end over end, before crashing.

Maille was thrown through

the roof of his car, taking part of the roof with him. The Warrensburg Emergency Squad rushed Maille to the Glens Falls Hospital where he was treated for fractured ribs and a fractured spine, arm and (both) shoulders. Maille, 30 years of age, was from West Glens Falls. The following week, all proceeds and purses from the racing event at the WARA were donated to Maille and his family.

Other scattered articles appear through 1961, when the race track probably closed. A 1959 article tells about Robert Perry, who was one of the operators of the Warrensburg Speedway.

"Robert Perry, about 32, of Hudson Falls, was listed in satisfactory condition at Glens Falls Hospital following an alleged beating early Sunday evening at the Warrensburg Speedway. Perry is reported suffering from a possible concussion, possible cracked or broken ribs and multiple bruises around the face and head.

Perry was reported found in a dazed condition lying on a wooden platform at the auto race track. His assailant or assailants are reportedly unknown. Perry is one of the operators of the Warrensburg Speedway which conducts stock car races on Sundays. Chief Hewitt of the Warrensburg police department is conducting the investigation."

An article reported the races of August 7th, 1960 where Maynard Baker, driving old thirty-three and a third won the ten mile feature stock car race at the Ashe speedway on

Sunday. It also noted that the "Powder Puff" race was held during the intermission. The reporter states "The small attendance suggested to the reporter that there is one Sunday afternoon show that isn't getting the support it deserves. It was an excitement-packed performance and worth twice the admission price."

**Tuesday, Aug. 16**  
**8:15 P.M.**  
**Ashe's Speedway**  
**LUCKY** THE ORIGINAL AUTO THRILL SHOW  
**HELL DRIVERS**  
 the challenge to death

see   
 • Two wheel ramp racing  
 • High speed roll-overs  
 • Motorcycle maniacs — cars gone crazy  
 • 27 daring events — Two thrill-packed hours

**the atomic cannon space car**

On August 16, 1960 the "Lucky Hell Drivers" were at Ashe's Speedway. An ad in the Warrensburg News promoted the event which included two wheel ramp racing, high speed roll-overs, and motorcycle maniacs.

On July 28th of 1961 old thirty-three and a third wasn't so lucky. Leonard Baker was piloting the car which was leading the race for 19 and a half laps when his gas line broke in the twentieth and final lap. Bob Schriener of Troy would go on to win the Friday night feature event. A capacity crowd was on hand to witness an evening of

speed where several cars were clocked at over 60 miles per hour on an average turn around the half mile oval.

Do any of our readers remember the stock car races at Ashland Park? Were the races being held from 1954-57? What drivers or races do you remember? Do you have any photographs from the race track? Please send any information to John or phone him at 798-0248. Depending on the information we receive, we may run a follow-up article in a future Quarterly.

*Information for this article came from the Warrensburg News and an online site on Ashland Park done by Bill Ladabouche. Go to the following site for more information:*  
[http://www.catamountstadium.com/ashland\\_park.htm](http://www.catamountstadium.com/ashland_park.htm)

*From the September 3, 1953 Warrensburg News:*

**Wrestling Tonight At  
 Ashland Park**

*Pat O'Connor, New Zealander, considered one of the outstanding wrestlers, heads the bill to be presented tonight at Ashland Park, in the first big wrestling event to be seen in this part of the state.*

*O'Connor will have as his opponant Tarzan Kowalski of Detroit who due to his rough tactics has become known as "Killer" Kowalski and although of the "rough" class of wrestlers is also known as being one of the best in his class at the sport.*

## Elm Update

by Paul Gilchrist

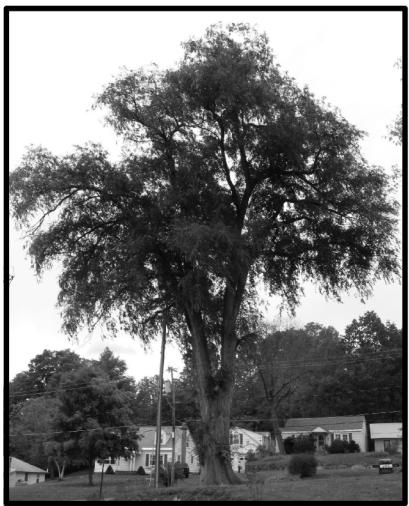
The last issue of our Quarterly identified two large elm trees in Warrensburg – one 5½ miles up at the top of Alden Avenue and one at the very bottom, 30 feet from River Street.

Elms as large as these two, that have survived the scourge of Dutch elm disease (DED), are quite rare. Rarer still is the huge elm 200 feet up the driveway to Oscar’s Smokehouse, pointed out to us by our own Delbert Chambers (who thereby attains the status of Alert Reader). Its girth is more than double that of either of the Alden Avenue elms. We are looking into whether it may qualify as a National Historic Elm. An elm tree in Yarmouth, Maine, planted in 1775, is believed to be the oldest one in the northeast, with a girth of 20+ feet.

The Richards Library recently received a private donation of two of the American Liberty Elms that were mentioned in the previous Quarterly. They are 5 years old, 8 feet tall, and have been planted on the library’s front lawn to replace trees that once stood in the same locations. These young elms are extremely resistant to DED and should grow to 100 feet or more. They represent a first step in restoring elm trees to Elm Street.

We should note that there are many smaller, much younger, elm trees in town that have grown to heights in the 30-40 foot range, with trunk diameters (calipers) of 6-9.” However, these are the old DED-vulnerable strains and it’s

unlikely they will survive very much longer, because interspersed among them are dead or dying elms that probably have infected the ones that don’t yet show symptoms, but soon will. For example, there are a number of these smaller elms along the base of the hill behind Potter’s Diner, the old Odd Fellows Hall, and the former White House Lodge, about half of which are dead or dying (and should, of course, be removed). Similarly, in the southwest corner along the back property line behind the NAPA store are five smaller elms quite close together. Two of them have died and the other three are almost certainly doomed. No doubt there are many other places around town where young elms have sprouted up haphazardly, but these vulnerable elms are rarely located where they would grow up to have the esthetic value of elms that are planted deliberately to line the streets with arches or to frame the architecture of houses and buildings, as were the elms planted more than a century ago along the streets and in the yards



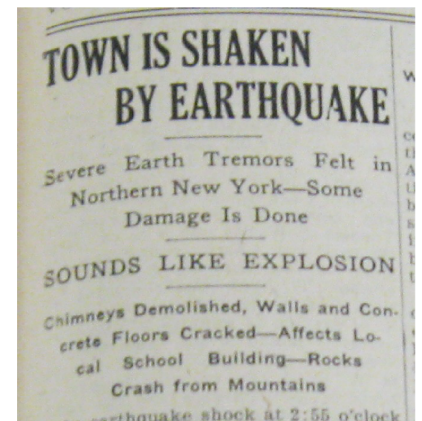
Elm near Oscar's off upper Main Street

## 78 Years Ago in The Warrensburgh News

### EARTHQUAKE!

by Paul Gilchrist

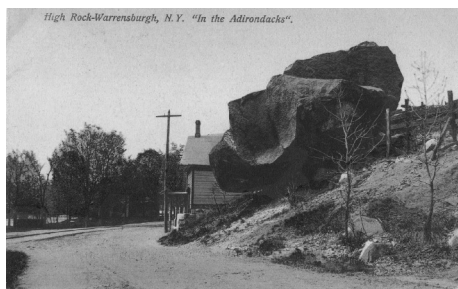
On April 20, 1931, at 2:55 in the afternoon, residents of Warrensburgh were shocked by a sound like an enormous explosion, which was followed by more than a minute of violent earth tremors. Dozens of chimneys were destroyed, hundreds of windows



shattered, concrete cellar floors split, and masonry or stone walls cracked, including the one on the high school. Sig Wachter’s heavy typewriter in the Western Union Office on Hudson Street was thrown to the floor. The fireplace was wrecked in the home of Assemblyman Harry Reoux on north Main Street. The sprinkler system in the shirt factory went off, and the machinery in the grist mill started up spontaneously, as did the planing machine in the saw mill next door. Huge boulders broke loose from the rocky face of Hackensack and went hurtling down the mountain. The large metal cross on the Episcopal

Church was bent and the cross on the Catholic Church steeple was wrenched out of position.

Warrensburgh was above the epicenter of the most powerful earthquake to strike this area in more than 40 years, according to lifelong older residents who could remember at least three other quakes, none of which, however, had been accompanied by the sound of an explosion. Many people at first thought the explosion was the blasting of the High Rock (across the street from the Judd Bridge) to make way for the new state highway (Route



9). Surrounding communities in the area also felt the shock, but none so strongly as Warrensburgh. Fortunately, no one was injured [and there were no reports of a tsunami on Echo Lake – ed.].

State geologist David Newland said there have been many quakes, especially along the line of Logan’s Fault, which runs from Canada southward along Lake Champlain, as pressure in the earth’s crust causes the stratified rocks to adjust to the strain. Dr. Newland pointed out that the great drainage systems of northern New York (the St. Lawrence, Hudson, and Champlain valleys) originated from crustal displacements accompanied by earthquakes. Crustal movement

along the faults has resulted in rock formations on opposite sides of those valleys being of different geological ages. The Hudson valley as far south as Albany was formed by such disturbances of rock formations, but from there southward it is actually an estuary extending 100 miles into the sea beyond New York City.

Father John Delaney, in charge of the seismological observatory at Canisius College in Buffalo, said there have been three major earthquakes recorded in the northeast since European settlement.

The first was in 1663 with its epicenter near Three Rivers, Quebec. In 1775, another, centered on Cambridge MA, was felt as far inland as Lake George. A third occurred in 1925 and was felt all over the northeast. Father Delaney said the minor earthquakes, such as the one in Warrensburgh, relieve the strain in the earth’s crust in small steps, thereby averting build-up of greater pressure which would cause major earthquakes and more serious damage. He said the smaller quakes, therefore, are really a Godsend.

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 1The Richter Scale was developed in 1935 by scientists at the California Institute of Technology, so we don’t have an actual score for the Warrensburgh quake of ’31.

*This story was digested from the April 23, 1931, issue of The Warrensburgh News (which spelled the name of the town with the “h” on the end).*

## Rôches Moutonneés

### #4 in our series on glacial artifacts in the landscape

by Paul Gilchrist

Several mountains in the Warrensburg area have a very steep, jagged, rocky face on the south or southwest side, with blocks of rock debris at the base, yet have a rounded top and smooth, gentle slope on the northerly side. The explanation for this kind of landform lies with the action of the continental ice sheets that advanced and receded four times over a period of 1.6 million years, finally retreating about 12,000 years ago. During the glacial periods, the Adirondacks were buried under ice thousands of feet thick that was moving generally from the north-northeast towards the south-southwest, although in some localities it was primarily a north-to-south flow (and these slightly different directions of flow could occur over a distance of less than five miles, as exemplified in the Warrensburg area). The last glacial period is often called the Labradorean, because the glacier accumulated and spread out in all directions from northeastern Canada, which is why the flow in the Adirondack region was mainly from the northeast.

As the glacier flowed over the mountains, it plucked out angular blocks of rock from the

*Continued on page 7*

southerly sides, but smoothed the tops and northerly sides. The plucking action of the ice was especially effective when it passed over rock that already had fault lines into which the plastic ice could flow and get a better grip. One can liken this to the action of a traditional carpenter's hand-held wood plane being used to plane the end of a board. If one does not stop the blade before it reaches the far edge of the board, it will splinter pieces of wood off the edge of the board and make a mess of the job.

One might feel that geologists made a mess of the job when they came up with a term for this particular landscape feature that has been given the name "*rôche moutonnée*," which clumsily translates as an abbreviated form of a French phrase meaning "a rock shaped like the head of a sheep." This refers to the profile of the mountain, which has a smooth northerly up-slope, like the back of a sheep's neck, a rounded top, like a sheep's head, then drops straight down and levels off, like the forehead, eyes, and snout of a sheep's face. *Sacré bleu!*

To see three fine examples of *rôches moutonnées* in profile, one need go no farther than Sanford Street by the town recreation field for a good view of The Three Sisters, their steep, rocky faces looking south. From Route 418 beside the old pulp and paper mill, one can get a closer profile of the Sister that doesn't have a name; it's the one closest to the Hudson, right across

the river from Thurman Station.

[Shouldn't something be done to give this fine old mountain a name – an identity? It's really quite

awkward to always have to refer to it as "no-name" mountain.]

For another excellent example, just across the Thurman Bridge is the huge, rocky south face of Sugarloaf Mountain, which one can see in profile from Main Street, just to the north of the NYS Highway Dept. Better yet, drive up Athol Road in Thurman, turn left onto Cameron Road and go a very short distance to find the view shown in the photograph below. Of course, we hardly need point out Mt. Hackensack with its steep, rocky southwest face; likewise, the rocky face of Moon



*Profile of Sugarloaf Mountain from the top of Cameron Road, very near its intersection with Athol Road*

Mountain is on the east side of River Road a short distance north of the golf course.

**Erratics** are rocks and boulders of various sizes, from small to enormous, that were carried along by the glacier and deposited far from their places of origin. The rocky southerly faces of *rôches moutonnées* were obviously a primary source of erratics, which were plucked off and abraded and often smoothed by the glacier before being deposited on the landscape perhaps hundreds of miles whence they originated.



*Steep, rocky south face of Bald Mountain, western-most of The Three Sisters (it's the one in the middle as viewed from the recreation field). The boulder in the lower-right of the photo is an "erratic," carried and deposited by the glacier from somewhere to the north. The photo was taken 5½ miles up Alden Avenue.*



### Mystery Photo

#### Places in Warrensburg's History.

**Can you identify this house? or where it is or was located? or any of the previous owners? Contact John at 798-0248 with your answer or email at [jthastings@roadrunner.com](mailto:jthastings@roadrunner.com). The photo in the last Quarterly was the Ed Noble farmhouse near Echo Lake (circa 1920s). No one was able to correctly identify this location.**

**Warrensburgh Historical Society 2010 Calendar  
Additional copies can be purchased from these locations: Nemecs, Jacobs & Toney, Glens Falls National Bank, Richards Library, & Museum.**



#### Editor's Note: Masthead

As you see, the Quarterly has taken on a new look with a different masthead. Please let us know what you think. Only one person responded to the masthead in the last Quarterly and this was a negative response. What do you think? Send your comments or ideas to John at 798-0248 or email at [jthastings@roadrunner.com](mailto:jthastings@roadrunner.com). The current masthead shows the Adirondack Hotel and trolley sometime after 1901.

Historian. She told us of her long time interest in the history of Warrensburgh and some of the interesting requests she's had from people seeking information. Dennis Martinez played *John "Jack" Smith*, the man that brought electricity to Warrensburgh by building a power house on the river. John Gable played *Lewis Thomson*, a self made man and he's sure to let you know it! Some hundred years in their graves hadn't lessened the rivalry between these two men as they continually threw barbs at one another. Even at "Dinner" they didn't contain themselves as Jack presented Lewis with a one hundred year old unpaid bill for electric service. Doug Goetsche, played *Ebenezer*, our Graveyard Guide. This guy has his role nailed! He has the ability to make our 'newbie' actors comfortable in their roles. Thank you Filomena Riviello, professional actress and teacher, for your guidance and support.

And finally, I acknowledge Rita Ferraro and Rosemary Maher for their coordination of this very successful program. Their efforts were so expansive that the program simply would not have the success it did without them.

I hope to see you at our annual Holiday Dinner Social in December and of course the Annual Membership Meeting in February. And, stop by the museum in December as it will be "Dressed for the Holidays".

Finally, on December 5 from Noon til 3:00 pm, John Hastings will be at the museum signing his just published book [Around Warrensburg](#), a must have.

In you service-  
-Delbert

