

Warrensburgh Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 16 Issue 4

Winter 2011

A Fox in the Cottage

By John T. Hastings

Our Mystery Photo in the Fall Quarterly was a picture of the Fair View Cottage. It was located on the corner of Smith Street and Burdick Avenue and constructed for Reverend Silas C. Fox. It was first opened for guests on June 1st of 1903. The foundation stone work was done by Fred Combs. Later in 1903 the Warrensburgh News reported that the "cozy summer boarding house on Burdick Street, delightfully located on the summit of a hill overlooking the village and its beautiful surroundings, is filled with guests who are happy in enjoying the generous hospitality of their genial host."

In 1909 the house was installed with "700 candle power lamp

lights." This was the New King lighting system which "brilliantly illuminated with a beautiful white light." (Warrensburgh News) The same system was also installed in the Adirondack Hotel at this same time.

Two years later sidewalks were constructed to the cottage. It was also at this time that the house was repainted and an ice house was built.

In 1914 Mrs. Silas C. (Dean) Fox passed away suddenly after being ill only two days. Her death was a great shock to her relatives and friends. She was 68 years old. Her mother was Charlotte Dean of Stony Creek and her sister was Mrs. Lewis Aldrich of Warrensburgh. Shortly after her death Rev. Fox moved in with his son Charles and then later with his daughter Nellie in Glens Falls.

In January of 1915 a Want Ad in the Warrensburgh News noted that S.C. Fox was looking for a tenant for his property on Burdick and Smith Streets. "Would be most desirable for summer boarding house. All modern improvements, barn and outbuildings. Rental very reasonable." The following year the Warrensburgh News reported

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Bill Spencer, a hermit loved and respected

Editor's note: On February 1, 1973 the Warrensburg-Lake George News printed a letter and a cartoon from the late Paul Gurney to Kathleen Goodman, then a columnist in the newspaper. Her introduction to the letter is included here:

The story and sketch are by Paul Gurney, a former Warrensburg boy, now [1973] living in Chicago, and a brother of Walter Gurney of Oak street, Warrensburg. Before his retirement he was an architect and designed the beautiful Band Stand in Floyd Bennett Memorial Park, Warrensburg. - Submitted by Kathleen Goodman.

December 30, 1972

Dear Kathleen,

I've often wanted to tell you how much your historical column in the Warrensburg News is enjoyed - particularly "Fifty Years Ago." I'm always disappointed if it doesn't show up - albeit infrequently.

So, the mention of old 'Bill'

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Your Historical Society has maintained a steady pace of activities over the past three months. Here's a summary.

Steve Englehart gave a program on the value of Historic Preservation at the Masonic Lodge on Sept. 21st, sponsored by the Warren County Historical Society and Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH).

Ghost Tours of five historic Warrensburg buildings were conducted on Saturday, October 8th by Sally Feil and Maria Ligon of Other Realm Investigations. This was a fundraiser for your Society. Transportation was by trolley streetcar.

Our annual Graveyard Walks and Dinner With the Dead showed off the acting talents of Tom O'Dea, Debbie Toolan, Maggie Bammert, Susan Jennings, Dennis Martinez, and James Corriveau as they portrayed their historic characters from Warrensburgh's past, who temporarily surfaced to take the air and talk about their lives with current inhabitants. We thank Rita Ferraro and Rosemary Maher for researching the characters. Desserts followed the evening walks at Grace's and Maher's. The 5th grade class enjoyed an afternoon tour.

John Hastings has completed our 2012 calendar, which is now on sale at Richards Library, Toney's, Nemeč's, and G. F. National Bank.

Sandi is working to finish our Warrensburgh Bicentennial calendar. Mike Sullivan and John Cleveland are assisting her on the bicentennial book: "200 People, 200 Places, 200 Events." Warrensburgh will be 200 years old in 2013.

We regret the closing of Grace's, a virtual hangout and unofficial clubhouse for Society members for several years. The search is on for another hangout, croquet lawn, and, perhaps, a new owner to re-open and

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Quarterly Editor

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

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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 623-3162.

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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 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.**

Upcoming Events

December 3 & 4: Saturday and Sunday, "**Christmas in Warrensburgh,**" a town wide celebration of the Holiday Season. The Warrensburgh Museum of Local History will be open 10 AM to 4 PM both days. This is our **opening reception for the new "My Dolly" exhibit.**

December 7th: Annual Christmas Social at **Lizzie Keays Restaurant**, 89 River Street (the old shirt factory building), social from 5:30, dinner at 6 pm.

For reservations contact the restaurant at (518) 504-4043 before December 1.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP:
237

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(Continued from page 1) Fox in the Cottage



FAIR VIEW COTTAGE, WARRENSBURGH N. Y.

that Mrs. Lillian Duell has leased the Fair View Cottage from the Rev. S. C. Fox of Glens Falls and will conduct a boarding house for city guests.

A public auction in early January of 1918 resulted in the sale of Fairview Cottage, along with seven other lots in Fred Cunningham's Addition pursuant to a judgment of foreclosure and sale by Attorney Lewis E. Crandall, referee. The cottage and lots were purchased by Silas C. Harrington for \$1350. Mr. Harrington had planned to buy only one lot next to his father, Samuel, but due to a lack of interest, all lots were combined and sold together. It was noted that the selling price was well below the actual value. Later that year, Mr. & Mrs. Harrington moved from their home on Horicon Avenue to the Fair View Cottage. Continuing on, the article states that Fairview cottage was built by Rev. Fox fourteen years ago when he came to Warrensburgh from Moors Junction, having been obliged to retire from the ministry due to "throat trouble." "The house was built in down East style with house and barn under one roof. It is a large and comfortable building." (Warrensburgh News)

A final note in the Warrensburgh News lists guests staying at the Fairview Cottage in 1924. How much longer the cottage continued taking guests is unknown.

Silas C. Fox was born about 1846 in Macomb in St. Lawrence County. His father was Daniel Fox (b. 1819) and his mother was Esther Dake (b. abt. 1820). He had one brother Frank and sisters Louisa, Eliza, Josephine and Esther.

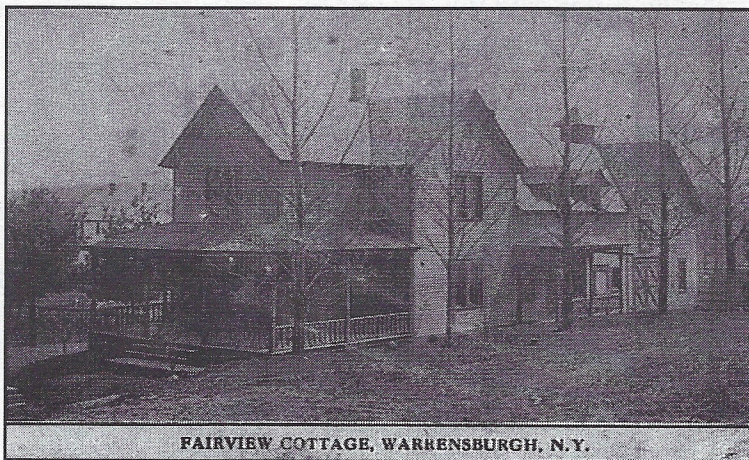
Silas C. Fox married Loisa Dean in October of 1890 at the home of the bride's parents in Creek Centre (Stony Creek). At that time Silas was pastor of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in that village. His three children, Nellie, Charles, and Robert were all from a previous marriage to Mary Storie of Antwerp in Jefferson County. In 1896 his son Charles joined the

ministry and in 1897 gave his first sermon at the Darrowsville Church. About six weeks prior to this, Charles married Sarah Wilson of Millbrook, with his father performing the services. In 1904, Nellie would marry Howard Thomson of Chestertown. Leading the wedding ceremony was her brother, Rev. C. E. Fox.

In May of 1894 Silas gave his last sermon at the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Stony Creek. The Warrensburgh News correspondent notes "...he will be missed, for he has endeared himself to the most of the people here. Wherever he may go we wish him God speed and may he lead many souls to Christ."

From here he would go to Moors in Clinton County where he would preach until moving to Warrensburgh in 1903. As mentioned above, a throat problem would limit his Ministerial duties to weddings (many at the Fair View Cottage) and occasional sermons at the Wesleyan Methodist church.

Silas died in Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County New York on November 9th of 1922. His cottage still stands on the corner of Burdick and Smith Streets and is currently in private ownership.



FAIRVIEW COTTAGE, WARRENSBURGH, N. Y.

(Continued from page 1) Bill Spencer

Spencer at Christmas time, having warmed up my recollections of him, brought me to making the enclosed sketch of how I remember him in his later years.

When I was about 10-12 years old - say 1914-16, I had a trap line set along the stump fences in the fields north of the cemetery and near where Bill's cabin was located. There were skunks and hedge hogs to be caught there and the line extended to Echo Lake for a crack at the muskrat population. The market for skins skyrocketed with the war in Europe and prime muskrats rose from 35 cents to more than \$2.00 each - others accordingly.

As a trap-line must be visited everyday all winter, or in season, it meant getting out of bed on many a frigid morning about 5:30 and skiing or snowshoeing the chilly course. Because old Bill's cabin was about half way along the route it was a handy place to stop, get warm and have a cup of steaming coffee with Bill. He was so very glad to have company, too, that the stop combined business and pleasure and as I look back, was a definite stimulus in my growing up.

The cabin was pretty rustic even for an Adirondack hermit. Sacks of groceries or maybe a ham hung from the ceiling beams so the mice couldn't raid them. His bunk was under the single window and near enough to the stove that you wondered why it didn't catch fire. A spark in that bundle of indescribable bedding could have smoldered for days.

He was the best natured and fundamentally happiest man I've ever encountered, sober or otherwise. His odd jobs were cheerfully and professionally performed, whether chopping wood, mowing the lawn, or cleaning out the stable. How he kept himself clean, I'll never know, but "Kid" Manzer barbered his

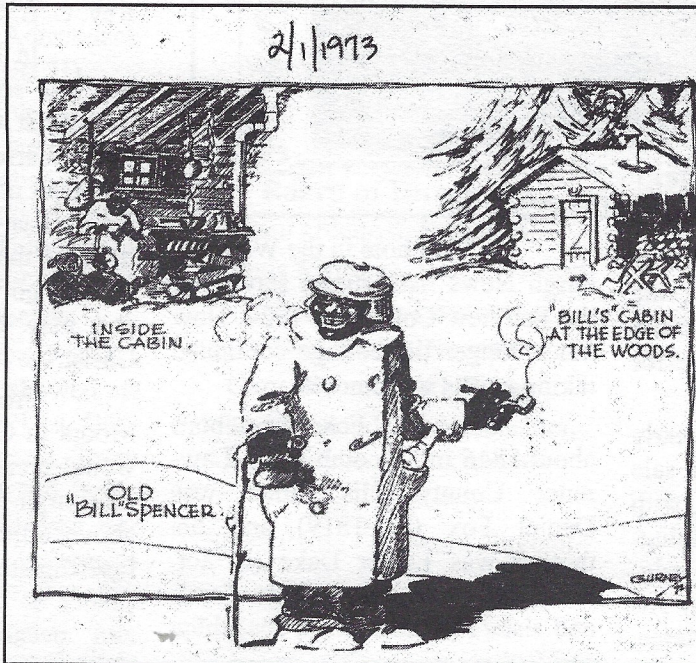
ries - of rabbits and foxes, raccoons and crows, the crafty and the wise. Almost all stories had the magic ingredient "Cayenne Pepper" - a catalyst to harmonize or harrow the homily. This was pretty entrancing stuff, even when sitting on a box in Orson Wilsey's market, with Orson's baritone rendition of "Rock of Ages" thundering in the background.

Maybe "Bill" wobbled a bit plodding home to his beloved cabin but he made it alone, or better yet, with the help of God, whom I knew he knew first hand. How did I know? - Because I saw him on his knees at a Revival Tent in the Echo Lake picnic grove and he appeared to be on firmer ground than the preacher. He also spoke of spiritual matters, sitting on his bunk in the cabin. Sometimes Mother baked a pie for him that one of us delivered. I knew he'd share a piece of it with me, - sort of like

breaking of the bread - and that is what it's all about, it seems to me.

Kathleen, if you like the sketch well enough to print in the paper, it's o.k. by me.

Sincerely,
Paul Gurney



kinky head and I never heard mention of crawling things; and that is more than could be said of some of the third and fourth graders I knew, that even frequented the Richards' Library and attended Sunday school.

He was also the embodiment of politeness in the days when males tipped their hats to females and sometimes even bowed from the waist. He was a gentleman and had a gentleman's respect for the flagon. I never saw him drunk or maudlin, but sometimes his side pocket carried a thinly disguised container of "Green River" or other hydroxyl compound designed to lift man's spirits.

When encountered in this beautiful state he charmed us with what could be called "Uncle Remus" sto-



The Ishams and Their Parks

By John T. Hastings

Not many people are familiar with the Isham family and their impact on the history of Warrensburg. Not only were they one of the more important families, they have left their "footprint" in many areas.

William Bradley Isham was a leather merchant, broker and banker in New York City. He was involved with the leather business from 1849 through 1890. In the late 1800s the tanning of leather for shoes and books became a huge business in the north country. In order to obtain financing and shipments of hides for the development of these tanneries, an individual often had to go to "The Swamp" near the city. The Swamp was a location north of New York City where most tanneries were located shortly after the Revolution. Over the years, these businesses changed to brokers and merchants in the importation of hides for tanning and the exportation of finished leather, as well as the financing for the con-

struction or expansion of tanneries. As such, these businessmen controlled the tannery business in the United States for nearly 100 years.

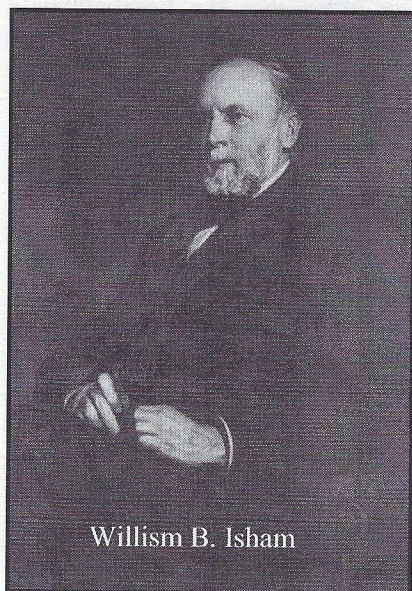
It is known that B. P. Burhans was a common visitor to The Swamp by 1837, the year after he had purchased the Warren Tannery in Warrensburgh. Having earlier experience working in the tannery business in Ulster and Greene Counties, it is likely that he was familiar with The Swamp and many of the businessmen located there much before 1837. Therefore, it is not surprising that in 1852 William Bradley Isham (1827-1909) married B. P.'s daughter, Julia (1827-1907). William and Julia's marriage would result in four sons and two daughters; Charles (b. 1853), Samuel (b. 1855), William Burhans (b. 1857), Porter (b. 1863), Julia (b. 1866), and Flora (b. 1873).

In 1864 William Bradley Isham purchased 24 acres of land in New York City along what is now Broadway from 211th Street to 214th Street and northwest to Spuyten Duyvil Creek. Forty-five years later his daughter, Julia Isham Taylor, donated a six acre parcel of the estate to the city of New York in remembrance of her father, to be known as Isham Park. She wanted the estate's views of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, the Harlem River Ship Canal, and Spuyten Duyvil to be preserved for future generations to enjoy. The land was valued at \$1,000,000 in 1911. Julia's daughter, Flora, donated her portion of the estate to the city in 1916. Further purchases in 1925 and 1927 by the NYC Parks Department would create most of what is today Isham Park in New York City.

After the death of his cousin, Clara Richards, in 1924, William Burhans Isham inherited The Elms and soon became a summer resident of Warrensburgh. The Elms was

originally purchased from Thomas Gray by William's grandfather B. P. Burhans, soon after he had moved to Warrensburgh around 1836. The property was later willed to B. P.'s daughter Sarah and upon her death in 1891, it eventually went to Sarah's sister Julia. His nieces, Clara and Mary Richards, were given a life lease to the property at this time. Although Julia lived in NYC with her husband William, they were frequent visitors to Warrensburgh and the Elms. Upon the death of Clara, the property reverted to the Isham family of William Jr..

William B. Isham, Jr. soon came to love the beautiful and friendly village of Warrensburg. As a result, in January of 1925, he presented the town with a nine acre parcel of land located on Library Avenue to be used for a public playground and park. The deed specified that the area would be used in perpetuity by the town for the stated uses. If at any time part or all of the property was allocated for any other use or purpose, the land would revert to the Trustees of Richards Library. Also, the town was required to raise enough money to provide proper equipment and maintenance to carry out the intended purposes. Besides providing a recreation area for town residents, the property would also provide athletic and recreational areas for students at the nearby Union School. Soon thereafter, \$3,000 was appropriated by the Town Board for equipping and maintaining the recreation field. Thomas Smith and Charles Wheeler were appointed to supervise and initiate the construction of a skating rink. Later in the spring a quarter mile track was to be laid out on which carnivals and speed skating races may be held. The Town Board immediately ordered a



William B. Isham

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5) *Isham Park*

regulation fire hydrant installed (C. E. Porter Estate) in front of the park as a source of water for the skating rink, as well as providing fire protection for existing and future buildings.

In April of 1925 the Warrensburch News reported that the proposed name for the park would be "Isham Memorial Park" if the plans of the Town Board were carried out. At this time the town was also looking to purchase another parcel of land from Dr. James Fuller to be added to the Park and be used for tennis courts because of the level topography. Grading of the fields were being undertaken so that a football field and baseball diamond could be constructed. Discussions were also being made in regards to the possible construction of a bandstand.

By June it was reported that Isham Memorial Park grading work had been completed and the laying out of the baseball diamond and construction of the tennis courts would begin soon. Near the Library Avenue side of the field, a dam was constructed so that the football field could be flooded in

the winter for use as a skating rink. On top of the dam a cinder running track was constructed which was about 400 feet long. Commissioners were expected to soon place an order for playground equipment such as swings, slides, seesaws, etc. The old barn on the property was to be used for dressing rooms for athletes, and a shower was to be installed. Heating was to be added on the second floor for the use of skaters, skiers and other winter sports enthusiasts. In the rear of the property, commissioners were considering the purchase of a strip of land so as to provide a toboggan slide of 1,000 feet or more.

By December the first stage of the work was completed and Isham Memorial Park was ready! Park Commissioners Frank Bisbee, William Quinlan and Charles F. Burhans reported total expenditures of \$2,470.62. Over 10,000 cubic yards of soil was moved from the back of the lot to the southwest corner to provide a level plateau measuring 375 feet by 305 feet. Major contributors in the construction of the park were Rex Stone, King Gillingham, H. D. Archer, George Ellsworth, A. T.

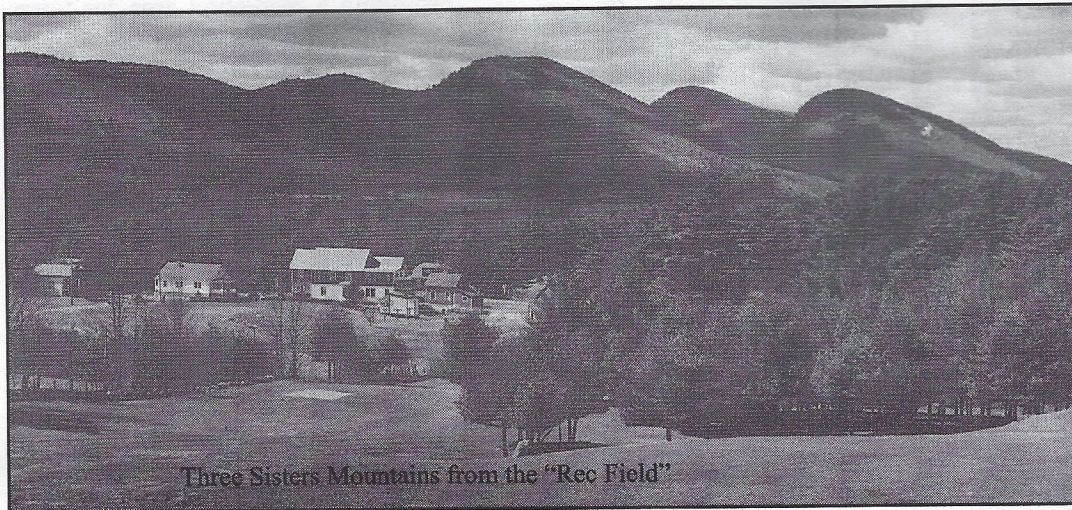
Rex Stone tractor, 26 1/2 days at \$10.00	\$262 50
Rex Stone tractor, 58 5-7 days at \$14.00	796 00
Schroon River Pulp and Paper Co. team, 47 days at \$7.00	329 00
One man loading scraper, 102 days at \$4.00	408 00
One man unloading scraper, 101 days at \$4.00	404 00
King Gillingham, grading, 25 days at \$5.00	125 00
H. D. Archer, 1 hoe	1 25
George Ellsworth, poles	17 00
A. T. Crandall, drawing ashes	28 00
D. E. Pasco & Sons, gas and oil	6 34
C. E. Porter Estate, hydrant	93 83
Total	\$2472 52
Total days worked to complete work, 120 3-28.	

From the December 3rd, 1925
Warrensburch News

Crandall, D. E. Pasco and the Schroon Pulp and Paper Co. Future work would include tree planting and seating for the public.

A later article in the Warrensburch News noted that the "Isham Memorial Recreation Field and Public Park" on Library Avenue had received a top dressing of soil and planting of grass seed (June 30th, 1927). A June 1928 article notes that the baseball field and tennis courts would be laid out and constructed later that year. Also, the town board was planning on moving the McNutt fountain from Park Square to the recreation field.

So the next time you go to the "Rec Field" to leave your footprint, remember the name William Burhans Isham, who left his "footprint" here over 85 years ago.



Three Sisters Mountains from the "Rec Field"

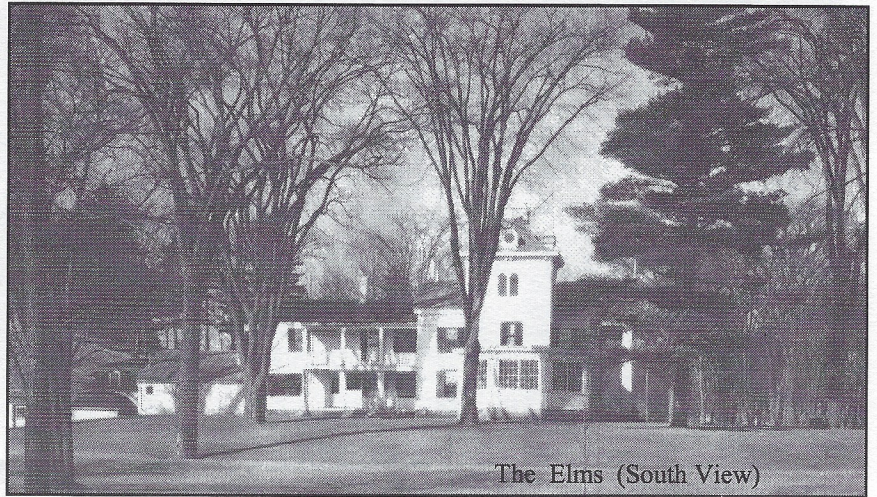
The Elms

By John T. Hastings

The Elms was originally the home of Thomas Gray when he was a partner with Benjamin Peck Burhans in running a store at the location where George Henry's now stands. At some time after moving to Warrensburg, around 1836, Mr. Burhans purchased the Elms and moved his family there. He made extensive alterations and additions to the property at this time.

Upon his death, Colonel Burhans willed the home to his daughter Sarah and she in turn left the property to her sister, Julia Isham, who gave a life lease of the place to her niece, Miss Clara Richards and her sister Mrs. Mary Kellogg. (Mary and Clara's father was Col. Samuel Richards, Civil War veteran and their grandfather was Peletiah Richards, early pioneer in Warrensburg). The two sisters also made additions to the building during their occupancy.

Mary Richards Kellogg died in 1918 and her sister Clara passed away in 1924. At this point ownership of the property reverted to William B. Isham, Jr. From then until the late 1940's, it was used a summer home for various members of the Isham family.



In January of 1948 a fire gutted the attic and resulted in \$25,000 in damage. At this time it was the summer home of Hannah B. Isham of New York, widow of William B. Isham.

The following May (1949) the property was purchased by Philip and Ethel Roberts. Mr. Roberts was an industrial arts teacher in Elmira and later at the Warrensburg High School. Earlier he had run a gift shop on Cape Cod. They named their business the "Colony House." After a number of years in business they found that many people were confusing their name with the Colonial Arms and therefore renamed it "The Pillars" in 1954.

From the Nov. 25, 2011 Post Star:

Patricia Ann (Schermerhorn) Noble Terrell, 75 passed away Tuesday evening, Nov. 22, 2011. Pat was Town Historian from 1999-2005 and WHS board member. Pat was born on the top of Prospect Mountain, where her father was Fire Observer. Throughout high school and after, Pat worked at Farrar's Drug Store and Kugel's, later known as Engle's, Department Store. She taught Sunday school for years at the United Methodist Church of Warrensburg. Her cooking career began at her in-laws, "Nobles on Echo Lake" Boarding House. For 13 years, she, along with her second husband, Dennis Terrell, managed and cooked at the "Gooley Club" in Indian Lake. One of Pat's first true enjoyments was to drive a race car in the "Powder Puff" derbies at the Warrensburg Race Track. Pat was a past Grand member of the Rebecca's of Warrensburg. She also was a member of the Thurman and the Warrensburg E.M.S. Besides her parents, Orson and Linda Izena (Stevens) Schermerhorn, Patricia was predeceased by two sisters, Maxine Keith Baker and Corky Pugh; two husbands, Stanley E. Noble and Dennis Terrell.



The Pillars with Burhans Mansion in upper right.

THE PILLARS MOTEL, WARRENSBURG, NEW YORK



**Mystery Photo
Places in Warrensburg's
History**

Can you identify the building at the left? 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 picture in the last Quarterly was the Fair View Cottage located on the corner of Burdick Avenue and Smith Street. It is still present. See article for more information.

Bill's Restaurant Update

In response to the article on how Bill's Restaurant got it's name, I received two phone calls, one from Jack Toney and the other from Chuck Wheeler.

Since Jack Toney has been delivering meat & groceries to local restaurants for nearly 50 years, he has a good knowledge of ownerships and their changes. Jack related that Julia Harrington ran the restaurant before it was sold to Fred DeVries in 1966 and that she was the one who named the restaurant. However, Jack didn't know why it was named "Bill's."

Chuck remembers going into the restaurant with his (Forest Ranger) father (Frank) to obtain sandwiches and drinks for volunteers fighting a forest fire. This was in the late 50s or early 60s. His memory recalls that his father called the man behind the counter "Bill."

Is this the Bill that the restaurant was named after? And who was this Bill? The mystery continues.....

Cover Photo

The cover photo was taken from County Mountain looking west. The Three Sisters Mountains are on the far left, Hackensack Mt. in the center, and the Cooperative Extension Office and County Home buildings are on the far right. Photo by the Editor.

**At the Museum through
January 4:**

**My Dolly - an
exhibit of dolls from
fancy to fuzzy, on
loan from
townspeople.**

**We're "Dressed for
the Holidays!"
Do your Holiday
shopping at our
Book Nook!**

**Hours through
December:
Wed. & Sun. 1-4 PM
Beginning Dec. 23:
Fridays 11 AM -1 PM
Wed. & Sun. 1-3 PM
First Thursday of the
month: 6-8 PM
(Closed 12/25 and 1/1)**

See us on Facebook!

**Warrensburgh
Museum of Local
History**

(Continued from page 2) President's Column

operate the business.

WHS and the museum hosted the 4th grade class on the morning of November 21st, followed by teacher John Burns' environmental science class in the afternoon. The latter will be doing "then-and-now" research projects on ten business sites around town, presenting their reports in December.

This year's Holiday Dinner is on December 7th (Pearl Harbor Day) at Lizzie Keays Restaurant, starting at 5:30.

Your holiday gift-giving can be made easy by selecting items from our Book Nook inventory at the museum. Refer to the order form sent to you recently with the membership renewal reminder, or stop by the museum (See hours in adjoining column).

The Society has arranged with the Direct Deposit return business on north Main Street so that deposit money can be designated for donation directly to the Historical Society.

*The past is prologue, so
keep looking backwards.*

Paul Gilchrist