



HISTORIC PITTSFORD

autumn, 2009

NEWSLETTER

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Edited by Karen Hultz

Statement of Purpose

Historic Pittsford is a not-for-profit organization chartered and incorporated under the New York State Department of Education. Committed to the preservation of Pittsford's rich heritage of nineteenth and twentieth century architecture and the special character and sense of place it has provided, Historic Pittsford also faces the complexities of Pittsford today.

POWDER MILL PARK – HOW IT CAME TO BE

By Audrey Johnson

A young entrepreneur named Daniel Curtis Rand came to this part of New York State in 1853, seeking a site to establish a business he had learned from his sister, Miss Lucia Rand. Miss Rand had owned a powder business in NC. Daniel had risen to an executive position in that company and decided he wanted to establish his own.

While visiting relatives in Honeoye Falls, he met Mortimer Wadhams who operated a grist mill at Railroad Mills. Daniel discussed the problem of finding the correct site – one that would have access to water, shipping facilities, and it must be secluded.

A powder mill could be a dangerous enterprise and it could not be located near a settlement. Daniel wanted hills too, and when he came upon the section near Irondequoit Creek, not far from Wadhams, with one great hill within a natural amphitheater, Daniel knew he had found the perfect place.

Wadhams joined Rand in the business and it became the Rand & Wadhams, Manufactures of Mining, Blasting, and Sporting Powder Co. (In 1900, it became the D.C.Rand Powder Co.)

Daniel had learned much of the dangers of powder explosions and he was extra careful about safety. He built several mills, one for each step in manufacturing the powder and they were widely spaced about the base of the hill. Rand believed that if powder was handled in the correct way, accidents could be avoided. Wooden pegs were used in the construction of all buildings and a little wooden railway connected the buildings, running flat cars with wooden wheels. This would prevent any sparks that might ignite the explosives.

Daniel married his partner's daughter, Stella and they lived in a large home that Daniel had

built on the highest hill. The couple had four sons and three daughters and many remained in the Pittsford area.

In 60 years, only two serious accidents occurred. One of these was when the press building caught on fire and two men were burned. The other was when the mixer blew up and an explosion rocked the countryside. In the



words of Samuel Rand, that explosion “blew up the tenant house, broke all of the glass in our house and upset every pail of milk”. It was at that time that a plank from the house was blown high in the air and landed in a large elm tree. That became known as “the Plank Tree” until it was cut down in 1961.

D.C. Rand Powder Co. was operated by his sons until 1910 when two of the brothers decided to move the business to PA since much of the powder was shipped to that state for blasting in the coal mines. Rumors throughout the years have said that powder for muskets in the Civil War was produced here, but the family has stated that the powder was too coarse for muskets.

The property was sold to Monroe County to be developed as a county park about 1930. The homestead known as “Oakridge” was torn down about that time as well. For a while a small building and the waterwheel were left standing becoming a great attraction to visitors at the park. A ski jump was also used by skiers learning the art of jumping and beginners are still instructed on a small hill in the park.

HISTORIC PITTSFORD'S ANNUAL MEETING

Historic Pittsford's annual meeting was held on July 19 on the front lawn of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford. Lemonade and snacks started the evening, along with tours of the inside of the church. A pot luck supper and the business portion of the evening followed.

In John Parker's absence, Audrey Johnson presented this year's Historic Pittsford Preservation Achievement Award to Karen and Paul Zackman and Dan and Millie Traina. Jean France then presented a special award to Pat Place for her years of dedication to Historic Pittsford and presented her with a beautiful painting of the barns on Jefferson Road that she worked to preserve.

Four new members were added to the Board: Vicki Profitt, Deborah Resch, Mary Scheuerman and Bonnie Salem. The Board's slate of officers remained the same. The evening concluded with a slide presentation of the fire and reconstruction of the church given by David Ferris and the Rev. Bruce Boak.



MEET THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Vicki Profitt is a native Rochesterian who lives in Pittsford with her husband Charles and three children. After graduating from SUNY Geneseo, Vicki worked for many years in the children's book industry. She volunteers at Jefferson Road elementary and is a member of the American Legion Rayson-Miller Auxiliary. Vicki is very interested in local history and genealogy and is currently researching the Civil War soldiers of Pittsford. Her blog, at www.illumhistory.wordpress.com, details her Civil War soldier's project.

Deborah Resch was born in Kingsport, TN, but her parents were originally from Rochester. Before her birth, Kodak transferred Deborah's father to Tennessee. Many years later, Kodak transferred her husband to Rochester. Deborah is a direct descendant of Hamlett Scrantom, the first settler of Rochester. Deborah has worked at RIT in the Cooperative Education and Career Services Office for over 20 years. She has two grown children.

Bonnie Salem has been a resident of the Town of Pittsford for almost 40 years and a member of Historic Pittsford since 2002. After retiring from RIT where she served as Senior Associate Director of Cooperative Education and Career Services, she became an active volunteer, serving on the Village Comprehensive Plan committee and the Town Library Planning Committee. Bonnie is currently a member of the Town Historic Preservation Commission. She looks forward to serving on the Board and being an active member of Historic Pittsford.

Mary Scheuerman grew up in the Long Meadow subdivision in Pittsford. After graduating from Cornell, she moved to Connecticut where she worked for various companies as a Human Resources manager and sold real estate. In 1999, Mary moved back to the family home in Long Meadow. Since moving back to Pittsford, Mary has become very involved with the workings of Town government and has followed closely the schools project, the library project and the Comprehensive Plan. Mary decided to join the HP Board in hopes of finding ways to preserve Pittsford's historic character for the future.

YOU'RE INVITED

Over the past several years, Historic Pittsford has mounted several attempts at presenting an attractive and informative website. Some were more successful than others.

Now in 2009, we think we have realized our goal of providing the Internet user with a vehicle to explore information about Historic Pittsford as well as many links to the history of the Town and Village. This improvement in design and regular updates is due to the after hours work of Beth Knickerbocker. She has transformed the site into a user friendly resource where one can literally spend hours exploring the history, projects, events and programs of our community.

So, come and join us at www.historicpittsford.com.

HP is currently working on its slate of programs for 2010. Announcements about each of our programs will appear in your mailbox shortly before the program date.



Little House Office and Museum

18 Monroe Ave., Pittsford, NY 14534 / 381-2941

Open: Wednesday and Saturday 9am-12noon

Dorothy Meusburger, Secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Candlelight Night in the village of Pittsford

December 1, 4-9 pm

Stop by the Little House to say hello or buy one of Historic Pittsford's publications for a stocking stuffer.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I thought, entering my second year as president of the Board, would be easy. I had a lot of help the first year with the able aid of officers Joe Maxey, John Parker, and Peter Webster. We accomplished a lot. We had entertaining and informative programs and were prudent watch dogs over historic preservation.

However, as I enter this year I'm beginning to identify more of the challenges that Historic Pittsford has before it. Our town's comprehensive plan brings up a lot of concerns, as does the villages development plan for the former Monoco Oil property.

We applaud the progress of the Schoen Place development, but the popularity brings with it more traffic on roads that are already very busy.

Pittsford has the distinction of being one of the best places in the country to live. That brings pressure on us to be even more diligent to keep the town and village properties historically sound. We want progress, but controlled progress, no run-away development. We are watching ...

We have no authority to make changes, but the town and village boards do listen to our concerns and recommendations.

This year we have several programs in the

planning stages for members and the public. We are undergoing major and needed revisions to our office, the Little House, a mid 19th century lawyer's structure. We are continually updating our website. Please visit www.historicpittsford.com and see our accomplishments and future plans, as well as the links to the history of the town and village.

We are always looking for new members and for existing members to become involved in the workings of Historic Pittsford. Share your talents by joining one of the standing committees: finance, programs, awards, public relations, issues and nominations. Call the Little House at 381-2941 and leave a message with your name and number if you are interested.

We are also looking to add to the future projects fund. When you are meeting with your attorney or financial advisor, please think of Historic Pittsford as a worthy organization to which you can make your donations, now and in your wills. I enjoy working for Historic Pittsford, it has opened my eyes to how much we have and how important it is to keep it.

Sincerely,
Rusty Likly, **President**
Historic Pittsford

MORE ON THE BARNs

By Audrey Johnson

Pittsford has two or three barns built in the style of a Wells Truss Barn. These barns were designed by John Talcott Wells, Sr. of Scottsville, NY. The Wells design allowed the center of the barn to remain open, thus allowing the use of a hayrack. Also, the truss design was quite strong and the barn could be built of softer woods because strong woods like black walnut, cherry and oak were becoming harder to find on the farmer's land. Most of the Wells barns were built as basement barns with provisions for the dairy herd in the lower level with equipment and a granary in the space between the large barn doors on the upper level.

The barns on the poster in the middle of the second and fourth rows are fine example of a Wells-Truss barn. There is often a clue above the window near the roof resembling a "lazy W". These barns are usually gambrel style whose roofline resembles that design.

The large barn on Thornell Road was built by Joseph Thornell (originally Thornhill) when he began his farm

in 1806. The building is not of that age, but was built by him in the late 1800's. The interior, as with all truss barns is magnificent. The arches formed by laminating wood together to form arches resemble a cathedral and that barn has an interior silo. The other Wells barn is on the property of John Hopkins on Clover Street. The gambrel barn faces the street with the larger portion running parallel to the road.

(references are from Paul Knickerbocker and Daniel Fink)



The Barns poster is still available for purchase at the Little House. Posters are \$15.00 each.



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