



# PITTS TOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER    ❧ Issue XXI ❧    Spring, 2012

## Twenty Six Historic Farmsteads of Pittstown

Cultural Resource Surveys have been completed on all 26 of the farmsteads shown below with assistance from grants that were awarded to the Pittstown Historical Society (PHS) by the Preservation League of NYS and the Hudson River Valley Greenway. Copies of the surveys are available from the PHS.

Historic preservation consultant, Jessie Ravage, who contracted to do the surveys, will be giving a talk on these farmsteads on April 19<sup>th</sup> (see our spring lecture series listed on Page 14).

**The farmsteads are listed in alphabetical order with current owners' names, followed by names of owners circa mid 1800s (or earlier)**



Adams-Brayn



Auclair-Button



Backus- Haviland



Baum-Wallis



Blanchard-Vandercook



Brownell-Gibbs



Cannon-Herrington



Cartin-Snyder



Coletti-Aken



Cornell-Manchester



Crandall-Westly



Empie-Perry



Gifford-Gifford



Gilchrist-Brownell



Giuliano-Ray



Halford-Sherman



Hess/Gilbert-Sherman



Howard-Sherman



Koch-Faulkner



Norton-Carpenter



O'Leary-Hitchcock



Reed-Reed



Schmidt-Carpenter



Skott (Don)-Gibbs



Skott (George)-Douglas



Thomas-Abbott

## A Canadian Loyalist Adventure into a Mutual American Past

*By Anne Elspeth Rector*

We live in Loyalist country – the Bay of Quinte on Lake Ontario. Many former Americans came here post-Revolution, building new communities from wilderness. My husband, Kelly Reid, descends from nine Loyalist families from America.

This past fall, Kelly and I determined to visit upper New York to research information on his fourth great-grandfathers, including Robert Clarke of Pittstown.

Carpenter, millwright and farmer, Robert Clarke, was sent north from Saratoga's Battlefield by General Burgoyne. A skilled tradesman, Robert was needed to build mill infrastructure for potential refugees. The tide was turning, and the British knew it.

Clarke's Loyalist claim helped us trace 'Scataco' (Schaghticoke District, which included Pittstown) lands he left behind. Another ancestor was Jean Richard, a Fort Hunter frontiersman and Aboriginal translator for Sir William Johnson at Old Fort Johnson. Unable to find a local researcher, I wrote Albany's Mayor's office, and our pre-trip query was kindly referred to City Historian, Tony Opalka. He promptly suggested we contact Schaghticoke's Town Historian, Chris Kelly.

In Canada, we don't have mandated historians. We have industrious volunteers and interested elders. So it was critical and delightful to find expert guidance in your neck of the woods. Chris referred us to professional researcher Rebecca Rector (no relation). She found a land mortgage by Clarke's brother-in-law (Daniel Ketchum/am). Chris dug further; locating Ketchum probates and fascinating inventories; Daniel Ketchum in Albany County's 14<sup>th</sup> militia; and brother Abijah Ketchum in 1782's regular army. Interestingly, Abijah also appears on a list of suspected Tories from 1779 (perhaps due to kinship with Clarke, who married his sister, Isabel Ketchum). Chris identified Cooksboro graves for Daniel and Abijah Ketchum (Kelly's fifth great uncles), connecting us with Pittstown Historical Society's trustee, Maren Stein. We planned a rendezvous in Pittstown on Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup>.

Our trip was fraught with wrong turns and misdirection. Then the transmission broke down in our car. Having limped in the night before, our innkeeper recommended a good mechanic. Coaxing our truck to Manney's Corners Garage, near Amsterdam, Patrick Madej immediately assured us, "We'll help you." Up on the hoist went Ontario plates, as I called the history posse to report our unfortunate delay. By noon, Manney's Corners Garage had us back on the road to Schaghticoke and Pittstown.

Schaghticoke's Chris Kelly escorted us to the Melrose home of Maren and Fred Stein. Over delicious homemade cookies, and cold cider, Pittstown historical volunteers connected my husband's past. What a reception!

Walter and Paula Auclair and Bill Morris toured us through autumn tinged lands once tilled by my husband's great-grandfather Clarke, and his brother-in-law, Daniel        *(continued on Page 4)*

(continued from Page 3) Ketchum/am, who acquired the property when Clarke left for Canada. Walter generously gifted a signed copy of Mark Jodoin's *Shadow Soldiers of the American Revolution; Loyalist Tales from New York to Canada*, and shared historical documents naming Ketchums. Bill went to extraordinary effort pinpointing ancestral lands on maps, as Chris furnished details. Maren, and granddaughter Emmalee, took us to Kelly's great-uncles' graves at Old Cooksboro Cemetery, and Jerry Davis cautiously pointed out resident bees. Maren flagged Walter's newsletter article containing an image of great-uncle Abijah Ketchum witnessing Simeon Button's purchase of a slave he had cared for. Past Old Button Road, we absorbed the lay of the land, and comprehended why Clarke would assume one challenging Canadian farm - he was used to hills!



Left to right: Kelly Reid on his visit to Pittstown with Walter Auclair & Bill Morris



Kelly Reid at his great uncle's gravestone, Abijah Ketcham (1751-1804), Old Cooksboro Cemetery

Acquiring photos and facts, we began to understand my husband's ancestor's lives in context. We'll continue sharing knowledge of these families, grateful for such a genuine, generous reception. Back at home, our road trials faded away, ensuring our enthusiastic return.

*Note: Subsequent to Kelly and Anne's visit to Pittstown, Bill Morris was able to identify the farm once owned by Kelly's ancestors. Coincidentally it is adjacent to the Auclair's farm.*



This American Revolutionary War era tool chest was originally owned by Robert Clarke. Handed down through generations, it is now owned by Kelly Clark Reid (a 21<sup>st</sup> century carpenter), Robert's fourth great grandson. The chest is so heavy; it requires two strong men to lift it!

## 1788 Loyalist Claim by Robert Clarke on his losses in the American Revolution, Bureau of Loyalist Claims, Canada

### A NEW CLAIM.

Montreal,  
4th March,  
1788.

434. Evidence on the Claim of ROBERT CLARKE, late of Albany County, N. York Province.

Claimt sworn :

Says he was at Cataraqui in 1783, employed in Building Mills for Govert.

He is a native of America. In 1775 he lived in Duchesse County, but soon after he moved to Albany County. In 1777 he joined the B. Army at Bennington. After the Convention he came to Canada. Says he served with the rebel Militia 3 weeks in 1776. Last Nov. he went into the States to recover his property & is just returned. His evidence is at Cataraqui.

(26).

He owned a farm in Scataco district on the Lands of one Cook. He made a bargain to purchase 168 acres. Says he never pd. for the soil. Pd. £75 for the improvts. He afterwards cleared 50 acres. His Wife remained on it for 4 years until 1782 when she was drove from it & it was then sold. Danl Ketchum is now in possession. He values this at £200 York. The rebels took a yoke of oxen & some Cattle & Sheep from him.

Produces affidavits of Danl & Abijah Ketchum that Robert Clarke had a yoke of oxen, some Cattle & some Sheep taken from his farm in 1777 in consequence of his joining the British Army.

And affidavits of Henry Madiville & Roger Downey who value the Labour of his farm at £200 Cury.



## John E. Empie Sr.

Long time member of the Pittstown Historical Society John Empie (pictured left) died February 16, 2012 at the age of 90. He had a deep interest in history and gave a number of presentations to the PHS over the years. Most recently he gave a talk to an audience of over 80 people on his experiences as a youngster operating an 1887 Westinghouse thresher. We will miss his kindness and generous sharing with us of his many memories on local history.

The following article is printed with permission from Walter and Paula Auclair. From 1976-1977, they published with community support, *The Pittstown Centinel*, an exceptionally fine newspaper which covered a wide variety of articles of interest to the community. Several of the pieces were of great interest historically. The article below was written by Ellen Wiley on the Tomhannock Upper School. The designation of "Upper" referenced the school's geographical location (not the age of the children) and distinguished it from the Lower Tomhannock School, which was located on the other side of the village.

Ellen recalls her experiences at the school, which she started to attend at the age of six in 1918. She lived at the time on the Wiley farm on Otter Creek Road.

## The Tomhannock Upper School

*The Pittstown Centinel, August 3, 1976, Volume 1, No. 16*

*By Ellen Wiley*

In the early days of our town, Tomhannock played an important part in the development of the area. It was situated in the lower valley of Otter Creek which flowed into the Tomhannock Creek and eventually into the Hoosic River. It was an enterprising locality, as there were many small mills built along the creek, which served the local freeholders of the surrounding regions. This village was also located on the Old Turnpike Road.

### Education Need

According to records, a need for education was noted early in the development of Tomhannock. I found that in 1806 the Pittstown Moral, Political, Philosophical and Scientific Debating Society met in the schoolhouse located near Solomon Tinslar's home. Little is known of this particular school at this time.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century there were two schools, one located in the upper part of the back road to Valley Falls, and the other across from the Methodist Cemetery in the lower part of the village.

### Construction and Students

The date of the building of the upper school, District No. 10, was in 1847. In that year, the district paid N. Brownell \$340 to construct the building.

Some of the early names recorded in the collector's book of that period are Ray, Quackenbush, Brownell, Welling, Reed, Yates, Akin and Snyder. A Luvilla Sherman taught in the school in 1847. John Rowland was paid 75 cents that year to saw by hand a cord of wood for the school.

In 1867 there were some improvements made to the building, and it was stated that the district built a bridge across the stream over which the children had to pass.

### Budgets and Salaries

The first mention of public money of \$163.05 was noted in 1875. Many times, there was not enough money in the budget to pay the teacher for the year, so he or she would have to wait until the next year when a new tax was levied. I wonder what some of our present day teachers would do in a case like that? Strike!! – I suppose. One hundred years ago the total expense for the little school was \$337.56 for that year.

### Memories

Today this school is gone, but it gave me my first introduction to a formal education. There were about twenty-five of us who gathered at its threshold each morning, and when the teacher came to the door ringing the old brass hand bell, it was time to go to work, and work we did. The desks were double and accommodated two students. Many times the older pupils looked after and helped the younger children. The conveniences were few and far between, and in winter the wind would blow right through the clapboards. The old black stove in the center of the room worked hard to keep us warm.

I remember one bleak November day in 1918 we were all startled by the constant ringing of the church bells in the village. We were frightened and uneasy as it was most always a signal of a fire. The teacher found it was hard for us to settle down, so one boy, the late Gordon Rifenburg, who lived just a little way across the field from the school, was allowed to go home to find out the message of the tolling bells. I am sure he never ran any faster in his life, because in no time at all he was at the door shouting, "The War is Over." Again, peace had come to the world and to our country. We were especially glad of the news as a neighbor and former student of our little school, John, Madigan, had been killed in France in that war just a few weeks before.

I think of the enjoyable walks that we had to and from school. There were many nature lessons as well as some historical ones as we hiked along the old dirt road. Each day we passed the old wood colored blacksmith shop on the corner. We often stood at the doorway watching Ed Cipperly, dressed with his heavy leather apron, form a horseshoe, a hinge, or an iron wagon tire with his strong brawny arms and hands. The bright, glowing flames of the fire in the old forge attracted our attention and kept us spellbound as we observed a craft of the past.

One day in late winter or early spring when the snow had melted very fast, the little stream which we had to cross both morning and night became a raging torrent of water. As the time drew near for school to be out, we wondered how we were going to get home. However, we did not have to ponder long, for some of the village folk got on the old party telephone line and alerted by father, who was the trustee, and informed him of our predicament. Soon we saw a team of horses hitched to the old lumber wagon coming up the narrow dirt road to rescue us. We were all joyful and thankful as one by one we hopped upon the high wagon which was to carry us across the rising stream of water.

About 1920 or 1921, the two Tomhannock districts combined and the lower school was moved up to a vacant lot in the central part of the village, now the George Geary home. Many improvements were made in accordance with state regulations, and from that time on until 1953, the students of that area attended the new improved school. Today, all of the students in Tomhannock go to Hoosic Valley Central School.



*Upper Tomhannock School, undated, collection PHS*

# Isaac Snyder's Pittstown Day Book, 1835 – 1855

*By Timothy Holt, PhD candidate, Antioch University New England*

The Isaac Snyder Pittstown Day Book was “found in collection” at the Bennington Museum. Where it had come from, who had created it, as well as how long it has been at the Bennington Museum was unknown. Just over three months ago, the Rensselaer County Historical Society (RCHS) was contacted by the Bennington Museum about transferring a small account book that seemed to relate to Pittstown. Once the book was received, research indicated that it had been kept by Isaac Snyder. The transcription of the day book was undertaken as one part of a larger service project conducted at the RCHS towards a PhD degree through Antioch University New England. The research for this article took place at the RCHS, the Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office and through analysis of the day book entries.

Isaac Snyder was born May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1811 and died on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1902 just short of his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday at the age of 91. He was married to Eliza Paine, six years his senior, who was born in 1805. They had three daughters; Rebecca, Mary and Elizabeth. Isaac outlived his wife who died in 1896, also at the age of 91. He also outlived two of his daughters – Mary, who was born in 1835 and died in 1899 at 64 years old and Rebecca, who was born in 1840 and died in 1901 at 61 years old. Elizabeth was born in 1842 and died in 1905 as Elizabeth D. Morse at the age of 63.

The dates within Isaac Snyder's Pittstown Day Book range between the years 1831 to 1855 although the entry for 1831 consists of a single entry (p. 34) which reads, “*three and a quarter days work saw mill*” next to December of 1831 for Devotion E. Williams. Given that the dates on the previous page, the same page and the following page are 1842 and 1843, this may have been an outstanding debt, previously unrecorded, which was being included in the work taking place at the time. Another entry dated 1833 appears earlier in the book (p. 6) among entries from 1836 which also seems to be back dated. From the heading on the first page of the day book “*Begun Work 29<sup>th</sup> December 1834,*” followed by dates for January onward, the period of time in which Isaac Snyder actively used this day book appears to be 1835 to 1855.

Where Isaac Snyder lived is not clear at the time of this writing, although the clues seem to indicate that he lived in Brunswick during most of his working years and then settled on a property in Pittstown at the age of 52, where he lived out the rest of his life. The earliest record found in the Grantees Index at the Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office for Isaac Snyder is for a ten acre parcel in Pittstown purchased in August of 1835 from Edward R. Scott, Esq. and his wife Mary Ann Scott. However, this purchase only lasted for three years, as Isaac then sold the parcel to William Link in 1838. Eleven years later, Isaac is listed as purchasing a 113 acre property in Brunswick which was a portion of the John Snyder farm originally granted by Stephen Van Rensselaer. However, Isaac owned this property for only 11 months from May 1849 to April 1850. Although there appears to be an eleven year gap in land transactions, and he owned the property for less than a year, it seems possible that this may be where he lived during those years for several reasons. Firstly, there are no other listings for Isaac Snyder before 1849 after selling the ten acre property in 1838, yet his day book indicates he continued to work in the area during these years. Secondly, as the property he bought in 1849 was a Snyder owned property, sold soon after the death of the original John Snyder by a group of people which included many Snyders, it seems likely that Isaac Snyder had been living on the family farm and purchased this parcel from the other heirs of John Snyder. In addition, the description of this property in the deed lists as neighbors; Coonrad Clum, Barnet Carr and Joseph Twogood. All three of these names are found in Isaac's Pittstown Day Book in numerous entries. The evidence would seem to have Isaac residing in Brunswick during the bulk of the years covered by his self titled “*Pittstown Day Book*”. In 1850, Isaac and his wife, Eliza, then sold this Brunswick property to Daniel Smith, leaving his location during the remaining five years of his day book unclear.

In 1863, eight years after the last day book entry, Isaac purchased a 122 acre property bordered to the north by the Troy, Brunswick and Pittstown Turnpike, to the west by “the highway,” and additionally by the lands of John A. Bornt, Hiram P. Hall, John E. Hunter, Benjamin Bosworth, Conrad



Smith, Robert Brown, and Solomon Thompson. As none of these names appear in the day book, perhaps this property is located outside of the area in which Isaac conducted his previous dealings. Perhaps, Isaac kept another day book after 1855. We do know that he owned this property until his death and that it was inherited by his remaining next of kin, Elizabeth D. Morse, and her husband, Charles C. Morse. Additionally, a third person, Hiram A. Bryan, is also listed in the surrogate court records although his relationship to Isaac is not clear at this time.

## Excerpt from Isaac Snyder's "Pittstown Day Book"

Joseph Fisher		<u>Cr</u>	\$	Cts
Nov 1835	to fronting on one pair boots		1	00
do ---	to work on bedpress		1	00
Jan 1836	Cr to mending boots		0	12
do ---	Dr to Cutting Vest		0	12
Jan 3 <sup>rd</sup> 1837	Barnet Carr	Dr	\$	Cts
	to putting in sleigh runner		1	00
<u>Cr</u>	to three sticks for ox Yokes		0	75
1844	Cr to plowing Cornground		5	50
Dr	to Cash one dollar 25 cents		1	25
do	to Cash one dollar 50 cents		1	50
do	to one Peck of Plums		0	25
do	to making Block Sleigh		1	25
do	to making Bed Stead		1	25
do	to making Sleigh Knee		0	25
Cr	to fifty six feet birch timber		0	84
Dr	to making press board filing saw		0	25
April	to putting in middle beam in harrow			31
1846	to putting in sleigh runner & two knees		1	38
	to making fork handle		0	13
	to putting in Cradle finger		0	25
	to filing wood saw		0	13
	to making hay rigging & reach		1	50
			Settle	

The day book itself is approximately eight by six inches, contains 144 pages and has a marbled hardboard cover. It records over 3,300 hours of labor, numerous skilled jobs, sales of farm products, and sundry household and farm purchases. After excluding likely alternate spellings of the same names, there are one hundred and eleven individuals listed who Isaac worked for, worked with, bought from, or sold to over the twenty plus years of entries.

The sheer variety of activities listed, as well as many of the items Snyder bought, is itself interesting, although some of the items might seem unlikely from our perspective of 160 plus years later. Isaac Snyder was certainly a "Jack of all Trades." Among the activities he notes, in decreasing order, are laborer, sawyer, carpenter, farmer, and tailor. Judging by the number of times he lists each activity, it is possible to get a good idea of how he earned his living and by extension what it took to earn a living in 19<sup>th</sup> century Rensselaer County.

(continued on Page 10)

(continued from Page 9) Although over 3,300 hours of labor are logged in the day book, much of those entries do not state what type of work was being done, but are simply listed as so many days labor. Those that are more detailed are often for agricultural work such as “hoeing” or “ploughing corn ground” and “saw filing.” Next to days spent in agriculture, the other frequent entry is for days spent filing saws and sawing various types of boards. It appears that Isaac found regular employment in the Twogood Saw Mill. Joseph E. Twogood appears to be the most frequently occurring name in the day book. The types of lumber-related items listed include; birch timber, chestnut posts, hemlock and pine boards, planks and slabs, hemlock square boards, oak, ash and hickory planks, oak joists and rough edge boards. Snyder also frequently listed lots, loads, cords, quarter & half cords, “jags” of wood, and occasionally limbs.

As a carpenter, he made a variety of items for the home, farm, including wagons, sleighs, and draft animals. Apparently, wagon tongues, whiffletrees, and sleigh runners were in continual need of repair. Barn and house carpentry is also well represented which not only includes construction and maintenance, but also moving these structures as well. He also recorded boring water logs, making gates, bedsteads, bee hives, a cheese press, clock shelf, clothes bars, cutting boxes, chests, press boards and a coffin. It seems more likely that Isaac worked for farmers rather than as a farmer himself during the years in which he kept this day book. We know that he eventually purchased the 122 acre property described previously, and he is listed as a farmer in the Rensselaer County Farm Directories from 1870 until his death. Alternatively, maybe he did not record his own farming activities in this book.

Probably the most interesting entries are those related to work as a tailor. Reading through pages of labor, ploughing, wood hauling, whiffletrees, and ox yokes, the entry “*to cutting two pair pantaloons*” comes as a shock. Not only does tailoring seem out of character for the rest of the work listed, the word pantaloons seemed odd enough to demand confirmation that that was what was written there. In addition to pantaloons, he lists frocks, coats, cloaks, clothes, boot repair and hemming a handkerchief. (*It bears noting that Isaac may have been recording work that was undertaken by his wife or daughters and that he in fact did not work as a tailor.*)

In addition to these regularly occurring jobs, Isaac also listed individual occurrences of working on the road, the school house and the mill dam, as well as corking and setting ale. On a number of occasions, he also notes the use of horse, horse and wagon or sleigh to travel to Troy and on one occasion to Shaftsbury.

Next to the variety of activities, many of the items purchased are interesting in their own right. Although the bulk of these entries consist of bushels of corn and potatoes, buck wheat flour, molasses, vinegar, and turnips, plums, mackerel, cod and herring are also listed. He also lists garden seeds, muslin and thread, ink, boxes of pills, paregoric, castor oil, linseed oil and arsenic. For painting, there are entries for gallons of paint oil, chrome yellow, French yellow and white lead. Other items include hats, mittens, ear rings, stove pipe, stove blacking, soap, tallow, paper, tobacco, and a lump of chalk.

In conclusion, this article is merely a brief overview of the information contained in Isaac Snyder's Pittstown Day Book. Much of what is written seems quite familiar to the modern reader, particularly anyone who has worked as a general laborer, farm hand or carpenter. Other parts are harder to relate to today. Although no attempt at an economic analysis has been made, it is worth noting that both dollar and shilling amounts are used, as is payment by cash or note despite the fact that all the transactions have a dollar amount attached to them. It would seem that there was a transition underway both in terms of the adoption of the US dollar, and from barter to a cash economy. In this case, the transition taking place is to a market society where the use of a dollar sign is enough to indicate that dollar bills, or their equivalent, traded hands. Isaac Snyder's Pittstown Day Book, as a primary document, provides important and useful insights into the social and economic setting of Pittstown during the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As such it is a very valuable resource to the researcher some 157 seven years after the last entry was made in it. Where it resided during the majority of that time may never be known, but it is important to recognize the role of organizations such as the Bennington Museum, the Rensselaer County Historical Society and the Pittstown Historical Society in the ongoing preservation of historic artifacts and the dissemination of the information they contain.

(An annotated transcription of the day book is available at the Rensselaer County Historical Society Research Library)

This article is being published posthumously, as Ron Bachman was tragically killed in a car accident in February. Ron was a great friend to the PHS, having generously shared his extensive knowledge of Pittstown's history. His recently published book "*A Fine Commanding Presence*" on the life of his gr-gr-grandfather, Michael S. Vandercook, is without doubt the finest history book encompassing Pittstown's past as it relates to NYS and the general history of America. Ron also was a frequent contributor to the PHS newsletter. He will be missed.

## Breaking Through a Brown Brick Wall, Part II

By Ronald D. Bachman

In the Fall, 2011, issue of the *Newsletter*, I presented strong circumstantial evidence that my Pittstown ancestor Matilda Brown Vandercook (1806–92) was one of the five purported children of Jephtha and Catharine (Both) Brown. In this sequel, I offer far more tenuous evidence for Jephtha Brown's ancestry and his possible kinship with the better-documented Judge Jonathan Brown of Pittstown and the Hakes and Crandall families of Grafton. I suggest that Jephtha is a third cousin of Jonathan Brown, a direct descendant of Thomas and Mary (Newhall) Brown, who were among the earliest settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The following scenario, I believe, is completely reasonable, but it could be completely wrong.

The documentary record for Jephtha Brown is meager. He first appears by name on March 13, 1795, in the ledger of Pittstown Justice of the Peace Simeon Button, when he and Simon Waldening were fined 18 shillings (plus 16 shillings and 6 pence in court costs) for having *without Law or Right Broke and destroyed one certain Cherry Dining Tabel* belonging to John Tarbell. He is listed in only three census returns: 1800, 1810, and 1820. As mentioned in Part I, he left a bare-bones will, written in 1826; he is named twice in the Levi Sherman account book; and he submitted a narrative of his service in the War of 1812 in order to obtain a veteran's pension. These paltry sources say nothing about the origins of Jephtha Brown.

A well-preserved tombstone in the Pittstown Corners Baptist Cemetery on County Route 111 shows that Jephtha died on January 8, 1827, at the age of 52, but his place of birth is not indicated. In the census of 1880, the first to indicate parental birthplaces, Matilda Brown Vandercook reported that her father was born in Rhode Island. But Jephtha does not appear in the compiled (and quite comprehensive) Rhode Island birth records, which go back to the year 1636. It is possible that Matilda had heard her father mention his Rhode Island roots, but he may have been referring to his parents. Perhaps he actually was born in neighboring New London County, CT, but was too young to know the difference when he left the area.

How helpful it would be to find an earlier Brown tombstone of a possible relative of Jephtha's in the Pittstown Corners Baptist Cemetery, but, alas, if one ever existed, it has long since eroded away. Fortunately, an inventory of burials at the cemetery was taken some 80 years ago, and the Pittstown Historical Society holds a copy, thanks to Ellen Wiley. The inventory shows that a Joseph Brown was buried there in 1795 at the age of 27 years. Moreover, the inventory named his parents: Eleazer and Sarah Brown. Could Jephtha have been a younger brother of this Joseph Brown? In the census of 1790, a Joseph Brown was residing in neighboring Hoosick township, and he had two males under the age of 16 in his household. Jephtha would have been 15 in 1790. No Joseph Brown is listed anywhere in Rensselaer County in the 1800 census, so perhaps the Hoosick Joseph is the mystery man buried in 1795 at Pittstown Corners. If this indeed was the case, and he was Jephtha's older brother and former guardian, it would not be unreasonable for Jephtha to name a son to honor his memory. In fact, three years after the death of mystery Joseph, Jephtha named his first-born son Joseph B. Brown.

If we accept the assumption that mystery Joseph was Jephtha's brother, then we know the names of Jephtha's parents: Eleazer and Sarah Brown. The only such couple I have been able to identify are Eleazer Brown, born in Westerly, RI, in 1722, and Sarah Dye, also of Westerly. They married in nearby North Stonington, CT, in 1742 (1). Since no trace of the couple is found after the French and Indian War, some have speculated that Eleazer died in the war. But it seems equally plausible (*continued on Page 12*)

(continued from Page 11) that they joined in the large demographic migration from Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut northwest into present-day eastern Rensselaer County, NY, and died before the first census was taken in 1790. Assuming these were Jephtha's parents, his mother was close to age 50 at his birth—biologically feasible but rare. On the other hand, being the child of older parents, who may have died before 1790, would be consistent with young Jephtha's living in the household of older brother Joseph.

The evidence presented above is far too weak to conclude that Jephtha was the son of Eleazer and Sarah (Dye) Brown, and I would never have proposed such a scenario in a public forum had I not come across the following facts concerning Jephtha's son Joseph B. Brown. The tombstone of ten-year-old Nelson Brown, buried in 1836 next to Jephtha at Pittstown Corners, identifies his parents as Joseph B. and Huldah Brown. Joseph B., who would die only three years later at the age of 40, however, was buried miles away in Lake Babcock Cemetery, Grafton township. Why? In 2007, I found the following mortgage record in Troy: *On December 2, 1837, Joseph B. Brown and Huldah his wife of the first part mortgaged 15 acres and 61 rods of land in the town of Grafton adjoining land owned by George Hakes to one Foster Reynolds of the second part for the sum of \$166.00* (2). Imagine my surprise when I learned that this George Hakes was the son of Hannah Brown, sister of the very Eleazer Brown in question (3). Assuming that Jephtha was Eleazer's son provides an explanation for why Joseph B. moved from Pittstown to Grafton and settled on land next door to George Hakes: George was Jephtha's first cousin.

The same mortgage record provides another clue. The mortgagee, Foster Reynolds, was married to Huldah Crandall, who, like the Hakes and Brown families, also had roots in Stonington, CT, and Westerly, RI. Is it coincidence that Joseph B. Brown's wife also had the relatively uncommon given name of Huldah? Were Huldah and Foster Reynolds the parents of Joseph B. Brown's wife? It was common practice for financially strapped persons to mortgage property to close relatives. In fact, Joseph B. Brown's brother Sampson mortgaged a lot in Pittstown to their mother in 1837. Joseph B. may have been following Sampson's example (coincidentally in the very same year) with his wife Huldah's parents. If Huldah was from the Lake Babcock area, then how did Joseph B. happen to meet her? George Hakes, again, provides the answer. His wife, Lucy Crandall, was Huldah Crandall's first cousin once removed. Joseph B. could have been visiting or working for cousin George and was introduced to Huldah Reynolds by Lucy.

Joseph B. Brown was buried in Lake Babcock cemetery, some eight miles from Pittstown Corners, where his 10-year-old son Nelson was buried three years earlier. Foster Reynolds, possibly Joseph's father-in-law, lies nearby. Joseph's relationship with the Reynolds, Crandall, and Hakes families is a key element of the hypothesis that Jephtha Brown was descended from Eleazer and Sarah (Dye) Brown of Stonington, CT.

Additional evidence for the present scenario is the fact that Eleazer Brown's first cousin Simeon Brown named a son Jephtha (b. 1758 in Stonington, CT). No other Jephtha Brown has been found in contemporary census or other records anywhere in the U.S. Was the Pittstown Jephtha named after his Stonington cousin? Or were both named after an unknown common ancestor?

Finally, if the present scenario is correct, then Jephtha was a third cousin of Jonathan Brown, who settled in present-day Rensselaer County before the Revolution and held several prominent public offices, including justice of the peace, judge, sheriff, and state assemblyman. Jonathan Brown, and perhaps my ancestor Jephtha, as well, descended from Thomas and Mary (Newhall) Brown, who were among the first settlers of Lynn, MA. Their sons Thomas, John, and Eleazer relocated to New London County, CT, ca. 1680 (4). Jonathan Brown was a great-grandson of John, and, if the present scenario is correct, Jephtha was a great-grandson of Eleazer. Many of the early settlers of the Pittstown vicinity originated in New London County and Rhode Island—the Haskin, Eddy, Avery, Crandall, Hakes, Button, Sherman, Hewitt, and Brown families, to name a few. I believe Jephtha Brown belongs in their number.

(1) Everett Hall Pendleton. *Brian Pendleton and His Descendants, 1599-1910* (Washington, DC Privately Printed, 1911) p.70.

(2) Rensselaer County Mortgage Book 34, pp. 336-37.

(3) Pendleton, 1911, p. 71.

(4) Cyrus Henry Brown. *Brown Genealogy of Many of the Descendants of Thomas, John, and Eleazer Brown, Sons of Thomas and Mary (Newhall) Brown of Lynn, Massachusetts, 1628-1907* (Boston: The Everett Press Company, 1907), p. 7.

# Simeon Button Justice of the Peace Ledger, March 13, 1795, page 86

*infectious wood 11*  
*John Terbell*  
*Jephtah Brown*  
*Simon Waldening*  
 Justice - 7/6  
 G. Eddy 6/  
 Exec. issued 7 April 1795  
 Delivered plaint

Trespasse 13 March 1795 -  
 Def't brought by warrant 13 March 1795 by Gilbert Eddy  
 Constable fee 6/ Plaintiff Notified of Trial - -  
 Plaintiff declared that on the 12 day of Jan'y 1795 the  
 Defnd't without Law or Right Broke and destroyed one  
 Certain Cherry dining Tabel to his damage 2<sup>00</sup> - -  
 Defdts pled Not Guilty and after having fully heard the  
 parties there please and Evedinces in the premises and duly  
 Considering the Same Give judgment against the defdts  
 for the Sum of ----- £0.18.0  
 Damages & the Costs of Suite which was Taxed at 0<sup>00</sup>16.6  
 Before Simeon Button Justice of the peace

**John Terbell [Tarbell] vs. Jephtah [Jeptha] Brown, Simon Waldening**

**Justice's fee 7/6 [7 shillings and 6 pence]**

**G. Eddy's [constable] fee 6/ [6 shillings]**

**Execution issued 7 April 1795**

**[money] Delivered [to the] plaintiff**

**Tresspass 13 March 1795**

**Def't. [Defendant] brought by warrant 13 March 1795 by Gilbert Eddy constable fee 6/ [shillings]. Plaintiff Notified of Trial - - Plaintiff declared that on the 12 day of Jan'y 1795 the Defend't without Law or Right Broke and destroyed one Certain Cherry dining Tabel to his damage 2 pounds, 0 shillings, 0 pence - - Defdts pled Not Guilty and after having fully heard the parties there please and Evedinces in the premises and duly Considering the Same, Give Judgment against the defdts for the Sum of ----- 0 pounds, 18 shillings, 0 pence. Damages & the Costs of Suite which was Taxed at 0 pounds, 16 shillings, 6 pence.**

**Before Simeon Button Justice of the peace**

## SCHEDULE OF SPRING MEETINGS

All lectures will be preceded by a brief meeting of the Pittstown Historical Society. Meetings are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served following each lecture.

*For further information about the meetings, contact:  
Constance Kheel (518)686-7514 or email: [pittstownhs@gmail.com](mailto:pittstownhs@gmail.com)*

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### **March 15: Let Loose the Dogs of War: New York in the American Civil War**

Robert W. Arnold III will present a talk on New York's significant contribution to the Civil War (including Pittstown's contribution). Arnold will tell how NY supplied more men, money and material in the Civil War than any other state. He will also examine the lives of individuals in the political, social and military contexts of the war. Arnold, a career public historian, is retired from the NYS Archives. He is a teacher and has lectured extensively throughout the Capital District.

*The meeting will be held at the Pittstown Town Hall in Tomhannock at 7:30 PM*

### **April 19: Historic Farmsteads of Pittstown**

Historic preservation consultant, Jessie Ravage, will present a slide show on Pittstown's historic farmsteads. Ravage will focus on the agricultural history of these farmsteads, including the use and construction of their buildings, how they relate to each other, and the changes in ownership from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ravage, who was contracted by the PHS to document these historic farmsteads, is a researcher and writer specializing in central New York State agricultural history.

*The meeting will be held at the Pittstown Town Hall in Tomhannock at 7:30 PM*

### **May 17: A Discussion on the Architectural and Cultural Significance of the Cadman-White-Handy House, Westport, MA**

The history and evolution of the Cadman-White-Handy house is the subject of a talk by architectural conservator and historian, Eric Gradoia. This talk will explore the present value and importance of the circa 1710 dwelling recently acquired by the Westport Historical Society. Gradoia will also relate the significance of the house as it applies to local history and our country's cultural heritage. Gradoia is an Architectural Historian with the Albany firm of Mesick, Cohen, Wilson & Baker Architects.

*The meeting will be held at the Pittstown Town Hall in Tomhannock at 7:30 PM*

### **June 21: Clara Barton, Angel of the Battlefield**

Phyllis Chapman, an area historic interpreter and museum educator, will give a presentation on Clara Barton. Chapman will appear in costume as Miss Barton, and bring artifacts, reproductions, and photographs for an interactive program on Barton's services on the battlefields of the Civil War. Chapman will demonstrate and describe medical procedures and practices of the time, as well as Barton's personal history and experiences on battlefields. Chapman has been an historic presenter for over ten years.

*The meeting will be held at the Pittstown Town Hall in Tomhannock at 7:30 PM*

## Looking for Civil War and War of 1812 Information Relating to Pittstown

As part of an effort by Rensselaer County Historical Society to recognize the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War, we are assembling information about Pittstown's participation. We are looking for people with ancestors who were soldiers or in some way involved in the Civil War. We are also looking for information about Pittstown's involvement in the War of 1812, since this is also an anniversary year for that war.

Please contact us at [pittstownhs@gmail.com](mailto:pittstownhs@gmail.com) or call Trustee Maren Stein at 663-5230.

### Excerpts From the Lansingburgh Gazette

**August 22, 1844:** Fresh Swedish Leeches – Just received a fine lot of fresh and healthy Swedish leeches for sale by L. W. Fowler, M.D., Druggist

**December 26, 1844:** Dancing. Mr. S. H. Vandercook begs to give notice that he will open a School at the Phoenix Assembly Rooms on the 2d of January next for the purpose of teaching the polite accomplishment of Dancing, where all the new Quadrilles, Waltzes, et. Etc. will be introduced. Hours of Tuition for Ladies, from 3 to 5 o'clock P.M., for Gentlemen from 6 to 9 o'clock P. M.

**January 30, 1845:** Execution of Miller. William Miller, recently convicted of the murder of Geo. West, was executed in the hall of the County Jail at Troy on Tuesday last at 20 minutes to 4 P.M. The Execution was witnessed by the Judges of the Court, the Sheriff and his Deputies, two physicians, the Roman Catholic Priest, and a jury of twelve citizens. The unfortunate man died with pronunciations of innocence on his lips.

## Join the Pittstown Historical Society

### Visit us at: [Pittstown.us](http://Pittstown.us) or [PHS@pittstown.us](mailto:PHS@pittstown.us)

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**Make checks payable to: Pittstown Historical Society,  
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The Pittstown Historical Society is a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt not-for-profit organization, dedicated to collecting, documenting, and preserving local history.

Contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Annual Dues** (*please check one*)

**\$10 Individual**       **\$5 Senior** (65 & older)

**\$25 Supporter**       **\$50 Benefactor**

**\$15 Business**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total** (enclose check for this amount)

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*Raymertown Missionary Society, Lutheran Church, undated, collection PHS*

Back row left to right: Carrie Gibbs, Carrie Cushman, Minnie Gibbs, Hettie Egan, Lottie Nible, Libbie Robbins, Freddie Carr, Anna Lawton, Nellie Barry, Justa Williams, Mary O'Hare

Bottom Row: Addie Williams, Carrie Eycleshymer, Grace Smith, Cornelia Williams, Georgie Agen, Allie Twogood, Alta Eddie, Satie Hayner, Edith Twogood



## PITTSTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 252

Valley Falls, N.Y. 12185

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