



# HISTORIC PITTSFORD

Summer 2014 NEWSLETTER

## A LOOK IN THE BOOK

by Audrey Maxfield Johnson

An interesting picture is found on page 100 of *Images of Pittsford*. It shows young people skating or attempting to, on a rather rough surface of a pond. That pond is behind a beautiful home located at 73 South Main Street – the one that has been carefully restored and is currently for sale.



*Drakes Pond*

The house is a fine Greek Revival and contains much of the original glass in the windows. When the house was built, probably around 1847, the steps leading to the front door, went down either side of the small stoop. Mr. Frank Drake, one of the owners had them changed so that his casket would be able to go straight down to the street and not have to be lifted up and over the railing which might cause a disaster with the casket falling and the body being ingloriously dumped on the sidewalk!

Erasmus Pershine Smith and his wife, were early owners. Whether they built the house is questionable. Anna Smith, a daughter, married a man named Henry Wolcott Balenstair. Henry and Anna had a daughter named Carrie who somehow met and married the poet Rudyard Kipling. The Kiplings lived in London and while they often visited Pittsford, never lived here.

The house and lot were located on about 3 acres of land. In the picture there are no homes along what is

now West Jefferson Road, then called Croton Street, until the farm home of Acie Gillis is seen at the top of the hill. There were few homes in the background along Sutherland Street, and of course, none on what is now Stonegate Lane.

A former historian, Isabella Hart, remembers skating on this pond, but she is not in the picture because she

was born in 1900, which is when the photo was taken. She also vividly remembered collecting tadpoles in the Spring and keeping them in jars to watch them grow into frogs. The school children also gathered primroses and trilliums around that pond to be put into May baskets and hung surreptitiously on door knobs on the first day of May.

Frank and Macie Drake were the next owners and long after Frank died, Macie sold the lovely house to the Parkers in 1961. Mr. and Mrs. Parker were both professional people and spent many years in it.

There are two barns on the property. The one right behind the house was built at the same time, but the larger one was built by Mr. Drake to hold a large and cherished carriage. Houses have been built in the western portion of the original lot and the pond drained. There is no longer a place in the village for children to skate.

# 19 SOUTH MAIN STREET

by Vicki Profitt

Driving down Main Street in the village of Pittsford, one can feel the history. The four corners are anchored by three historic structures: the Wiltsie & Crump building, which was constructed in 1886; the Phoenix building and the Parker building. Just south of the four corners, the massive structure of the Town Hall, built in 1890, presides over South Main Street.

However, there's a building at 19 South Main Street that has been a fixture in the village for even longer than the Wiltsie building and the Town Hall. Constructed about 1815 as a tavern operated by Samuel Hildreth, subsequent owners have used it as a meeting place and grocery store. Many remember the building as the home of Burdett's Food Market. Today, 19 South Main Street houses Breathe yoga and Rocky Greco's salon.

Charles H. Armstrong operated a grocery store out of the building in the 1870s. In the mid-1880s, Charles sold the store to John Buckley Bacon, a Civil War veteran who was new to town and looking for a business opportunity. Buckley, as he was known, went into business with his brother, Conrad Bacon. After a short time, Conrad returned to his home in Connecticut, but Buckley remained in



19 South Main Street



Howard Rose with John B. Bacon's son Howard in wagon

Pittsford and his business at 19 South Main Street flourished.

A diagram of the structure dating to 1885 details the structure plan. The south side of the building had 1,259 square feet devoted to the store. A stairwell outside the store led to a second floor meeting room, which was used for large gatherings and as a ballroom. A dwelling on the north side of the structure was 36' 7" wide and sat quite deep on the lot. The ice house and cobblestone smoke house stood behind the dwelling, and a well and a 1,200 square foot barn were behind the store.

On September 29, 1904, the people of Pittsford were startled by an explosion that rocked the area. The smoke house behind 19 South Main Street had been converted to an acetylene gas plant. When E. T. Tracy, the clerk at Bacon's store, arrived at the building and opened the door, the buildup of gas exploded, blowing the roof completely off and severely burning Mr. Tracy. Another clerk, Charles Hinterleiter, was able to put out the flames by using a chemical

extinguisher.

In 1905, John Buckley Bacon sold the store to Phillips and Agate, who continued to utilize the space as a store. By the 1930s, Burdett's had opened their doors and remained in business for many decades, becoming the longest-running store in the history of the building.

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## ACHIEVEMENT AWARD UPDATE

by David Minor

With the possible exception of members who have only recently joined, most of you remember in past years receiving postal mail containing application forms for Historic Pittsford's Preservation Achievement Award, awarded at the annual summer members' meeting. Great effort was required in the distribution of the forms; in the interest of ease for our committee members and of economy for all, we'll be trying new methods this time around.

A visit to our website, [historicpittsford.com](http://historicpittsford.com), where members can click on the "awards" link, will provide access to the blank forms. Options will be available to members for either downloading a copy to be mailed in, or filling

the forms out online. (Members uncomfortable with online transactions may call our office and still have forms mailed to them individually).

Last year, there was only one nomination received. We'd like to raise that number this year. Also if any of you are familiar with student or scout troop members who might know of potential nominees in their groups, may inform them of nominating options. The deadline will be extended each year from April 1 to June 1.

I and my fellow Award Committee members will consider all suggestions and we thank you for your cooperation.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER - PRESERVATION MATTERS

As we emerge from a particularly harsh winter season, it is my pleasure to report the Historic Pittsford Board of Directors has been actively weathering the elements and supporting the many aspects of historic preservation that is our mission. Now that spring is upon us, you will hopefully notice the fruits of our quiet activities through the winter.

The Little House, our organization's headquarters, is being appropriately renewed as an appealing community resource for preservation and education. New vibrant exhibits are being created to document how preservation of the Past has positively affected our Present. Landscaping around the Little House is being fittingly enhanced with plantings through a grant we are expecting to receive this month from the Junior League of Rochester Garden Club. You will notice a new 1819 twenty-one-star American flag displayed on the front porch, commemorating the year the Little House was constructed.

Over the winter, Historic Pittsford was the recipient of a generous bequest from the Mary Knickerbocker Menzie estate, a true endowment from an indefatigable woman who, along with a committed group of others, contributed greatly to those preservation matters that have protected and enhanced the community's historic resources to the benefit of generations to come. With Mary's gift, we will carry on her and our work to infuse "historic preservation" as a Core Value in the greater Pittsford.

In the recent events department, the board has successfully encouraged and/or participated with public officials to:

- Re-evaluate the environmental impact on the Village Historic District and the landmark Erie Canal of the proposed Westport Crossing plan for apartments at the Monroe Avenue canal bridge;
- Endorse the final stage of designation of Pittsford Village as an Historic District;
- Support restoration of aspects of the old Erie Canal Lock 62 behind the Pittsford Plaza;
- Highlight the historical importance of the Harwood Lane neighborhood and town-owned Janes Library estate, eligible for designation as a local historic landmark;
- Support the local American Legion Post perspective on the Veterans' Memorial.

These are just a few examples of recent actions taken by Historic Pittsford volunteer board. As always, we invite our members to participate with us as we strive to highlight the importance of preservation of historic and cultural resources. Our membership will hear much more about what has been accomplished and what we plan for the future this summer at our Annual Meeting on July Sunday July 13. Hope to see you then!

Peggy  
Margaret Caraberis  
President, Historic Pittsford  
historicpittsford@gmail.com

## HP PROGRAM - PAT GORTHY

On April 27th, author Pat Gorthy gave a wonderful discussion about her book, *Peppermint Summer*, in an event sponsored by Historic Pittsford. *Peppermint Summer* tells the story of ten year old Emily Taylor, who travels on the Erie Canal from Rochester to Lyons in 1860 to visit her grandparents' peppermint farm. Along the way, Emily meets some new friends and learns about the history of the Erie Canal. Signed copies of *Peppermint Summer* are available for sale at Historic Pittsford's Little House for \$10.



***Little House Office and Museum***  
18 Monroe Ave., Pittsford, NY 14534 / 381-2941  
Open: Wednesday and Saturday 9am-12noon  
[www.HistoricPittsford.com](http://www.HistoricPittsford.com)  
Dorothy Meusburger, Secretary



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sunday, July 13**

**HP's Annual meeting and Picnic**

Stay tuned for more information about this annual event, which is open to members of Historic Pittsford.

**Wednesday, October 22 at 7pm (location to be announced): "Murder and Mayhem in Mendon and Honeoye Falls: Murderville in Victorian New York", presented by Diane Ham and Lynne Menz**

Join us for an evening of intrigue as Mendon Town Historian Diane Ham and Honeoye Fall Village Historian Lynne Menz discuss and sign copies of their book, *Murder and Mayhem in Mendon and Honeoye Falls: "Murderville" in Victorian New York*.

**Tuesday, December 2 from 5:30 – 8:30 pm at Historic Pittsford's Little House Candlelight Night**

Our own Little House, located at 18 Monroe Ave., will once again be aglow with Christmas lights and smiling faces as we welcome visitors in for treats, history and a special visit by Mrs. Claus.

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**Historic Pittsford 2013-2014**

**Board of Directors:**

**President - Margaret Caraberis Brizee**

**Vice President – David Minor**

**Secretary – JoAnne Shannon**

**Treasurer – Maryjane Link**

Members at large: Lanie Bittner, Bob Corby, Jean France, Mark Greene, Karen Hultz, Audrey Johnson, Rusty Likely, Joe Maxey, Shelley O'Brien, Alysa Plummer, Vicki Masters Profit, Deborah Resch, Bonnie Salem, Suzanne Shaw, Peter Webster.

## PITTSFORD EXPERIENCES "TERATOGENY"

In 1880, Pittsford experienced two cases of "teratogeny" (n. the formation of malformations or biological monstrosities). On February 23, Charles Emmons found an orange with another perfect orange inside of it. Later in the year, not to be outdone by Mr. Emmon, George Farnham reported that one of his chickens had laid a stupendous egg with another, perfectly formed egg inside of it.

(taken from *Echoes of Old Pittsford* 1879-1880)

### 200 YEARS AGO....

In 1814, Caleb Hopkins gave our town the name "Pittsford" when Smallwood was divided into Brighton and Pittsford.

### Spotlight on Pittsford Ancestor: Reverend John Seeley

In January of 1900, the Rev. John Seeley of Pittsford celebrated his 86th birthday. John was born in Carlisle, NY in 1814. He attended Madison College, Colgate and after graduation, took two more years of theological training there. He was ordained in 1841 and served many churches in New York State. He preached 46 years without a Sabbath leave. During those years, he baptized 1,100 people and married 500 couples.

(from *Echoes of Old Pittsford* 1899-1900)



18 MONROE AVENUE  
PITTSFORD, NY 14534