



# HISTORIC PITTSFORD

Fall 2016 NEWSLETTER

## DR. HARTWELL CARVER

by Audrey Johnson

The charming home at 41 Monroe Avenue and its builder have an interesting history – known to many long-time residents but perhaps needs to be reviewed for those newer residents of our community.

The home sits atop a small knoll surrounded by trees and landscaping designed by another Pittsford son named Francis Hastings Gott. The house is a copy of one seen by its owner in New York City and is, according to two sources, constructed of brick and immediately covered with board and batten siding. The sharply peaked roofs and the scrolling edges on its eaves give this Gothic beauty a romantic look.

The house was produced by a man whose name was recognized by many railroad enthusiasts because of his connection to the transcontinental railroad. That quest became a passion to the man who lived in Pittsford in the person of Dr. Hartwell Carver.

Dr. Carver was born in 1789 to a family of old Pilgrim stock who lived in Rhode Island. The family came to Otsego, NY when Hartwell was five years old. He had very little early education but possessed a brilliant mind and attended Hamilton College when of correct age. He studied law, but did not graduate, due to “some difficulty that arose between him and one of the professors”. He then decided he would rather study medicine and went to New Haven where he presented himself to Yale where he was admitted and received his AM and MD degrees. After his graduation, he came directly to Pittsford where he opened his practice and became extremely successful in a very short time. In fact, some sources say that he was able to clear \$1000 his first year, pay off all of his expenses, establish a fine medical library and build himself a small house.

Even though Carver had an extremely large practice, he took time off to travel to Buffalo and Lockport where he and some associates opened a few mercantile businesses which were successful. He spent some time in New Orleans where he enjoyed himself immensely. In 1831 he went to London to study more medical techniques and then traveled the continent.

When he came back to Pittsford in 1853, he resumed his large medical practice, and was able to obtain a plot of land from David Sutherland and began building his home. He was extremely pleased with the results but his interest and



passion had been taken by railroads. Now we, who can fly in a plane around the world, no longer have the deep desire to have a train that can travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, but in the early years of the country, Dr. Carver felt it would be a great boon to the development of the nation. He spent a great deal of time speaking about the venture, writing letters to congressmen and prominent people. It was the time the Civil War was raging across the country and absorbing money and energy for that endeavor rather than investing in Dr. Carver’s dream.

Finally, after many years of lectures and writings and urgings, by 1860’s many others thought the idea was a great one and by 1869, the ceremony of driving the “golden spike” at Promotory Point, Utah completed Dr. Carver’s passion. Some sources say that Carver did not live to see its completion, but others say he died in 1875 and prior to that had erected the tallest and most ornate tombstone in Mt. Hope Cemetery. Dr. Carver never married and had no issue, but his mother and married sisters are buried in the same plot.

The residents of Pittsford may take pride in claiming this amazing medical practitioner and dreamer of dreams that became a reality and he was known as the “Father of the Transcontinental Railroad.” He left our community with a legend as well as a beautiful tangible structure at 41 Monroe Avenue.



# WELCOME HOME, WYBURN

by Vicki Masters Profitt

There's a grave marker in the closet! Not too many people have the opportunity to say that phrase but, in the case of James Starbuck, it was true. James had purchased a house in Westport, New York, in 2007. While renovating his new home, James located a flat, military plaque bearing the inscription, "Wyburn Litchfield Lee, QM 3 US Navy, World War I, 1893 – 1977". Who was Wyburn Litchfield Lee, and why was his grave marker at a house in Westport, New York? The search for answers was on!

The package containing the grave marker was addressed to Wyburn's brother, Gerald A. Lee, of Elizabethtown, New York. James Starbuck hypothesizes that the grave marker was unable to be delivered to Gerald Lee and somehow made its way to Carlin Walker. Carlin was a Westport postman and local historian. James believes the Elizabethtown postmaster gave the package containing the marker to Carlin Walker to track down the owner. When Carlin was unsuccessful in that endeavor, he left it in his house, which now belonged to James Starbuck. In an interesting twist of fate, Gerald Lee used to play bridge with James Starbuck's mother!

James spent several years pondering the mystery of the grave marker. Occasionally, he would search online for answers. On May 31, 2013, I received an email from James, who had located the Find A Grave memorial I had created for Wyburn Litchfield Lee. Wyburn's parents, George Albert Lee and Gertrude E. Ketcham Lee, are buried at Pittsford Cemetery in Pittsford, New York. They have a nice headstone with their names and dates. Underneath Gertrude's name it says, "Son, Wyburn L. N. Lee, 1893-19\_\_". No death date is listed for Wyburn.

The information about Wyburn's grave marker was intriguing. Who was Wyburn, and why wasn't his marker on his grave? This promised to be an interesting story. I was already familiar with Gertrude Ketcham Lee. The Ketcham family was a big name in Pittsford. They even had a road named after them! Surely we could learn something more about Wyburn.

Wyburn has proven to be as much a mystery as his errant grave marker. He was the third of George and Gertrude Ketcham Lee's four sons, and was born April 22, 1893 in Buffalo, New York. Wyburn's father, George Lee, had risen to prominence in the 1890s as a shrewd and calculating financier. The family lived in luxury as George, known as the "Sodus Boy Financier", spent money lavishly. The Monroe County Mail in 1899 noted that George had purchased "the table on which the Declaration of Independence was written". By 1900, Wyburn and his family were living in Sodus with his paternal grandparents, William and Lucy Clark Lee, quite probably to escape the notoriety of George's alleged underhanded dealings on Wall Street. When the Great War arrived, all four Lee brothers – Merwyn, Gerald, Wyburn and Lowell – served in the military. Wyburn's

abstract of service shows that he enrolled at the recruiting station in Newport, Rhode Island, on May 11, 1917 as Quartermaster 3rd Class. He served at the Newport Naval District until June 4, 1918, when he became a member of the Naval Auxiliary Reserve before officially transferring to inactive service on February 9, 1919. The July, 1918 issue of The Rural New Yorker magazine features a photo of the service flag hanging in the window of George and Gertrude Lee's home bearing four stars, one for each son serving the war effort. All four Lee brothers survived the war.

Following his military service, Wyburn lived in the New York City area, and was employed in several different occupations through the years. The 1930 census record shows Wyburn married to a woman named Phyllis, but by 1940 they were divorced. It is unknown whether Wyburn and Phyllis had any children together.

Little other information about Wyburn's life was found. Wyburn Litchfield Lee died August 26, 1977 in Palm Beach, Florida.

That brings us back to Wyburn's grave marker. Someone ordered the marker from the U.S. government, who shipped it to Gerald Lee in Elizabethtown. Carlin Walker became the unofficial keeper of the grave marker shortly thereafter. In 2007, the torch was then passed to James Starbuck. In spring 2016, James sent the marker to Beth Knickerbocker, secretary of the Pittsford Cemetery Association. Beth coordinated the effort to install Wyburn Litchfield Lee's military grave marker in the family plot at Pittsford Cemetery this past August.

The mystery of Wyburn Lee isn't completely solved, though. Burial records show that Wyburn had permission from the plot owner to be buried at Pittsford Cemetery, but the records don't definitively show that he is,

indeed, interred there. Perhaps in a few years I'll receive an email from someone that begins, "While cleaning my house, I found an urn containing the remains of Wyburn Lee." If that is the case, we'll have the spot all ready for him.

The Pittsford Cemetery Association (PCA) took on the initial financial responsibility of paying for the marker installation for this World War I soldier. If you are so inclined to honor Wyburn's memory, please send a check payable to "Friends of Pittsford Cemetery Association" to 155 South Main Street, Pittsford, New York 14534 and note "Wyburn Lee" on the check. The PCA will utilize the funds to pay for the marker installation. Any additional monies received will allow the PCA to continue their fine upkeep of the cemetery and the graves of its eternal residents. For additional information about the Pittsford Cemetery Association, please visit [www.PittsfordCemetery.org](http://www.PittsfordCemetery.org).

*Thank you to CAPT Steven F. Momano, USN (Ret.) for his assistance deciphering Wyburn's military abstract of service and a special thanks to James Starbuck, who worked tirelessly to ensure that Wyburn Litchfield Lee's grave marker found its rightful home.*



# SPOTLIGHT ON EAST ST. CEMETERY

by Karen Hultz

It is hard to miss Pittsford's largest cemetery. Starting at East Ave. and straddling both sides of Washington Rd., Pittsford Cemetery was established in 1842 and still accepts burials today.

It is also easy to find Pittsford's oldest cemetery. Started in 1789, the Pioneer Burying Ground is located at the intersection of S. Main, Mendon, Stone and Mendon Center roads. Reading the names of Pittsford's ancestors on the stones is a nice diversion while waiting for the light to change.

Pittsford's third cemetery is not as well known. Sitting quietly at the corner of East St. and Park Rd, surrounded by a wood fence, is Pittsford's East St. cemetery. Started by Pittsford's co-founder, Simon Stone, who was born in 1832 and served in the Revolutionary War, the East St. cemetery was originally intended to become Pittsford's main cemetery,

but it was overshadowed by the cemetery on Washington Rd.

A relatively small cemetery, East St. is the final resting place of not only Simon Stone, but a number of Pittsford's founding families with the names of Crosier, Hughes, Martin, Patterson and Searl. Recently, the cemetery site was cleaned up, the fence mended and mums were planted as part of a 2016 Eagle Scout project.

Pittsford is fortunate to have three historic and well maintained cemeteries in its town. Take a stroll through one of them on a nice Fall day and experience a bit of town history.

*(The East St. cemetery is included in the new inventory of Historic Resources for the Town of Pittsford)*



## SAVE THE DATE!

### DAY OF THE DEAD!

Sunday, Oct. 30: 2:00 pm

Join us for Historic Pittsford's Day of the Dead on Sunday, October 30th at 2:00 p.m. as actors portray the lives of Pittsford's earliest settlers. Hear the stories of Stephen and Sarah Hinchler Lusk and how they arrived in this area. Meet Colonel Caleb Hopkins and learn why our town is named Pittsford, and discover the incredible lives of other people who resided in our community in its earliest days. The Pioneer Burying Ground is located south of the village at the intersection of South Main Street and Mendon Road. Busing will be available from the United Church at the corner of Sunset and Main. This event will take place outdoors, so please dress accordingly. In case of inclement weather, the event will be moved inside the Mile Post School, located adjacent to the Pioneer Burying Ground.

Registration is required. To register, please visit [www.TownofPittsford.org](http://www.TownofPittsford.org) and click on "Online Recreation Registration" or call the Pittsford Recreation Department at 585-248-6280. This event is free, and is open to the public.



## CANDLELIGHT NIGHT

Tuesday, December 6: 5:30-8:30 pm

Be sure to visit the Little House, 18 Monroe Ave, on Candlelight night. The house will be aglow with Christmas lights and smiling faces as we welcome visitors in for treats, history and a special visit from Mrs. Claus.



**Little House Office and Museum**  
18 Monroe Ave., Pittsford, NY 14534 / 381-2941  
Open: Wednesday and Saturday 9am-12noon  
Dorothy Meusburger, Secretary

# HISTORIC PITTSFORD'S ANNUAL MEETING

Historic Pittsford's annual meeting took place at Monroe's restaurant on Sunday, July 17. Tom Grasso, past President of the NYS Erie Canal Society gave a talk about the Erie canal, focusing on the locks that are located in Pittsford. Members enjoyed appetizers, sandwiches, salads and sweets.

During the business portion of the meeting, HP President Peggy Brizee summarized the work of HP over the past year, highlighting committee accomplishments and described HP's goals for the future. Board members whose terms were up, were all re-elected for another term. The following slate of officers was approved: President – Peggy Brizee, Vice President – David Minor, Treasurer – Maryjane Link, Secretary – JoAnne Shannon, Ass't Treasurer – Suzanne Shaw.

The meeting ended with award presentations. David Minor introduced Julia Corsetti (who wasn't able to attend) as the first recipient of the Jean France Scholarship Award. HP's Preservation Awards were presented to Tim Romeo for his work and dedication in the upkeep of Pittsford cemetery and to Ted Collins for his work in preserving Schoen's Alley over many, many years.



18 MONROE AVENUE  
PITTSFORD, NY 14534

2016/2017

## HP Board of Directors

### **President:**

**Margaret Caraberis Brizee**

**Vice-President: David Minor**

**Secretary: JoAnne Shannon**

**Treasurer: Maryjane Linnk**

**Asst Treasurer: Suzanne Shaw**

### Members at Large:

**Lanie Bittner, T.Peter Brizee,**

**Mary Ann Clark, Mark Greene,**

**Karen Hultz, Audrey Johnson,**

**Alysa Plummer, Shelley O'Brien,**

**Deborah Resch, Bonnie Salem**

# LITTLE HOUSE UPDATE

Plywood covering the front door. Columns missing. No, disaster did not befall the Little House. After 185 years, the Little House is in need of repair. The worst column has been repaired and was put back into place in July. Another column was removed and is currently being repaired by Jim Turner of Honeoye Falls Millwork.

The front door was removed in early September and is currently being repaired by John Bailey. We hope to see a newly renovated door by the time the snow flies.

Next on the repair list are the two remaining columns and one of the original windows. Historic Pittsford is making sure the Little House is in good shape for the next 180 years.



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