



# HISTORIC PITTSFORD

Spring 2016 NEWSLETTER

## A PARADOX IN THE CEMETERY

by Audrey Maxfield Johnson,

When one thinks of a cemetery, most of us think about a place to honor our dead. Few consider that there is also something alive in that place.

The young, ambitious man seen here, sent a letter to the cemetery board asking permission to revisit a very old custom of tapping trees for sap to turn into the maple syrup that many of us love on our pancakes or other delicious food. He wrote that during his visits to that final resting place for residents and relatives, he discovered the venerable sugar maples that have lived there for over 150 years.

He had researched the craft of gathering sap so he knew it would not harm those giants and, in fact, might be life prolonging. He assured the members of the board that, if successful, he would make sure each of us would receive the fruits of this labor. He also assured us that there would not be tubes or hoses like those used by commercial syrup makers, but that he would use the same method discovered by Native Americans; that of a tap and a bucket.



This entrepreneur also agreed that the buckets should be unobtrusive unless folks were looking for a particular headstone near one. He carefully placed

them away from the roadways, and only one person questioned what was going on and wondered if the cemetery trustees were aware of this activity. The board members assured that individual that we knew all about it and had given our okay.

This innovative man was successful in his venture and has, true to his promise, distributed some of the results of his labors to each

of the nine members of the Board of Trustees of the Pittsford Cemetery Association in the form of sweet maple syrup.

Isn't it remarkable that something so ancient is living in a cemetery and can produce a product so desired by the people who are also alive and active? We wish to say "Thank you" to our timeless old goliaths and to an enlightened naturalist who recognized what a cemetery can give back to the living.

Do you have a friend or neighbor who is interested in preservation and/or history?

Share this newsletter with them. Invite them to one of Historic Pittsford's programs.

Tell them about our website:

[www.historicpittsford.com](http://www.historicpittsford.com) or have them "friend us" on Facebook. Invite them to become a member.



### *Little House Office and Museum*

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

Open: Wednesday and Saturday 9am-12noon

Dorothy Meusbarger, Secretary

# LITTLE HOUSE UPDATE - COLUMN RESTORATION

by Alysa Plummer

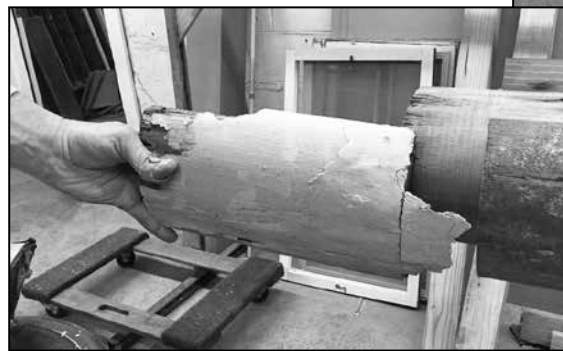
You may have noticed a single column missing (out of four) on the front porch of the Little House this winter. The column has been undergoing restoration in Jim Turner's woodworking shop at Honeoye Falls Millworks. Layers of old paint were removed and many holes in the column have been filled and repaired with a special flexible epoxy. The base of the column, severely compromised from water damage, required custom milling to replace the parts with historic accuracy.

All four columns are original to the house and are over 185 years old. According to Jim, surprisingly, the column is made from poplar wood – not a wood we would think of for an exterior application.

On closer inspection, Jim noted the poplar grain was extremely tight and came from a massive poplar tree -- at least three feet in girth. He thought it likely all four columns came from the same tree. The columns held up so well all these years as the wood came from outside the heart of the tree; items made from the dead center of a tree typically decay more rapidly.

Jim's final task is to painstakingly match up the grain of the replacement parts in the same direction as the original wood grain. "Wood moves," stated Jim. Whatever the weather, the new and the old components must expand and contract in the same direction ensuring long-term stability

The renewed and restored column should be installed sometime in May. The other three columns are scheduled for a "re-do" as well. Although this is a time-consuming project, once completed our columns should be good for another 180 years!



## PATRICIA GOODENOUGH PLACE ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTATION PROGRAM

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of Historic Pittsford, the Board of Directors has issued a resolution naming its award winning Architectural Consultation Program in honor of Pat Place.

This action recognizes Pat's significant contributions and commitment to historic preservation over decades of leadership and participation in preservation activities in the village and town. Pat served as President of Historic Pittsford numerous times and served on its Board for over 30 years. She worked tirelessly on strategic initiatives including the survey of hundreds of village and town properties and the completion of the first National Register application submitted by the Village. She was instrumental, with others, in establishing the Architectural Consultation Program, in partnership with Bero Architecture, to make expert advice available to homeowners wishing to maintain the architectural and historic integrity of their properties. All who utilize the Patricia Goodenough Place Architectural Consultation Program will benefit because of her dedication and deep understanding of the importance of historic preservation.

*(For more information about the Architectural Consultation Program, contact Bonnie Salem, Historic Pittsford Board member, at 586-2764 or bsalem@rochester.rr.com)*

## A TREASURED GIFT

*by Audrey Maxfield Johnson, Historian  
Town and Village of Pittsford*

The Pittsford historian's office has recently received a valued collection from a lifelong Pittsford resident in the form of programs of Pittsford school's graduation from the years 1914 through 1985. They were made available to the office by Walta Williams Parfitt, daughter of Gertrude Frances Lusk Williams. These programs were in the collection of Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Parfitt felt, and rightly so, that they belonged in Pittsford's history.

Gertrude Frances Lusk Williams was born in 1902 in Pittsford, New York, where she spent her whole life. She was a member of a very long time Pittsford family, in fact probably the first family to settle in this part of western New York State. She was one of the daughters of Harry S. Lusk and Alice Olivia Lincoln Lusk. There were four sisters and a brother in Harry and Allie's family.

Gertrude attended District 1 in the Pittsford system. It was right across the road from her family's farm home at 1 Mendon Center Road – the home that was completed about 1810. She loved learning and was a teacher for a short time after she finished her education at that school and the high school on Lincoln Avenue. After graduation, Gertrude attended Rochester Normal School, as did two of her sisters, and she taught fourth grade in a Rochester school. She made lifelong friends there, and with a group from Caledonia, she went to Europe. When she came back to the United States, she met and married Laurence Babcock Williams in 1927 and moved to the village where she and her husband lived for the rest of their lives. Early in their marriage they lived on Washington Ave., then moved to Lincoln Ave. right next to the school and then later she moved to the white house at the corner of Sutherland Street and Monroe Ave.

Mrs. Williams was very involved in the community and could be seen on many days walking to her church, or a social event, or taking care of her house and yard. One of her favorite annual activities was to attend the yearly high school graduation ceremonies held at the end of June. She did not go back as far as 1914, but somehow acquired programs from those early years.

After Sutherland High School was built in 1955-56, graduation exercises were held outside on the east lawn. Mrs. Williams would walk up the street early enough to make sure she had a good seat, watch each graduate receive his or her diploma, and listen to the addresses often given by visiting dignitaries. Sometimes the weather was not good, but the exercises were held anyway. As classes gained in size, a different venue was found and Mrs. Williams did not attend those held in the Eastman Theater or the Blue Cross Arena, but somehow she collected the programs up through 1985.

The special factor about these programs is that every graduate is named – some with first, middle and last names. It is a wonderful concise history of the residents of the community from 1914 through 1985! One doesn't have to search directories or censuses to find names of young people who lived in and attended Pittsford schools. It even denotes the names of those youth who opted to join the military prior to their graduation.

Many thanks are owed to Gertrude Williams and her daughter, Walta, for saving these small historical treasures. The historian will be forever grateful!

## HOPKINS FARM ANNIVERSARY

On March 13, Historic Pittsford celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Hopkins Farm with a program at the library which took a personal look at one of Pittsford's founding families and the evolution of agriculture in our community.

Mark Greene, a descendant of 1812 war hero Colonel Caleb Hopkins (who gave Pittsford its name) shared his family's Pittsford heritage along with photos and artifacts. Over 80 people attended this program including members of the 5th and 6th generation of the Hopkins family.  
**Happy Anniversary!**



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER - PRESERVATION MATTERS

The month of May is National Historic Preservation month and this May is exceptional because it is the 50th anniversary of the ratification of the National Historic Preservation Act. Basically, Historic Pittsford and the National Historic Trust have been on the same wavelength for 50 years, the result of which is a Pittsford community enriched by careful, thoughtful efforts to preserve elements of the past for future generations. In many respects, Historic Pittsford boards of directors and members have made a huge difference in the way our community has developed and the values we have tried to cultivate.

Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of Historic Pittsford; and this year we will view our organization through the larger lens of the National Historic Preservation Act. In many respects we are on the cutting edge of preservation, even as our community is approaching "build-out". With our full endorsement, virtually the entire Village of Pittsford will be a National Register Historic District and the entire Erie Canal, so important in our past and present, will be designated as well. The careful, detailed advocacy of past and present Historic Pittsford members has opened up so many possibilities that would otherwise have eluded us.

Among other activities, this past year we have:

- sponsored and produced some wonderful programs including a fantastic "Day of the Dead" presentation at the Pioneer Cemetery during daylight; and a terrific program on the (Caleb) Hopkins family, six generations of farming and civic leadership in Pittsford;
- secured the window display in the library for this month (May), National Historic Preservation Month;
- dedicated the Architectural Consultation Program in honor of Pat Place who embodied the mission of Historic Pittsford;
- chosen the first honoree of the Jean France Historic Preservation Scholarship, whom we will announce at our annual meeting; and
- begun restoration of the columns, front door and windows of the Little House (c 1819) partly thanks to a bequest from the estate of Mary Menzie, so important to the continuance of our organization.

As you know, as with any not-for-profit organization, we are constantly challenged to keep an informed and growing membership and face increased competition for funding to sustain programs. Of course, your participation is most welcome as you support the work of Historic Pittsford, which in my opinion, has already left its positive imprint on the community.

On Sunday afternoon July 17, 2016 our Annual Meeting will be held at Monroe's (the former Spring House) once again; but this year we will have it all to ourselves! Your board promises to hold another great event and so hope that you can attend.

Sincerely,  
Margaret Caraberis Brizee, **President**  
Historic Pittsford

## SAVE THE DATE

**Sunday, May 15 2-3pm**

**Fisher Room in Pittsford Library**

**Images of Pittsford: Sharing the stories of our community** presented by historian Audrey Maxfield Johnson and "Illuminated History" genealogist Vicki Masters Profit. Please call the library at 249-5481 to register for this program.

**Saturday, May 21 at 10am**

**Walking Tour of Pittsford Cemetery**

Led by Audrey Johnson and Vicki Profit. Meet at the cemetery flagpole. No registration required.

**Sunday, July 17 from 2 - 5pm**

Historic Pittsford's annual meeting will be held at Monroe's (formerly the Spring House) Details will follow.

**Sunday, October 30**

Day of the dead at Pioneer Cemetery. Details to follow.



18 MONROE AVENUE  
PITTSFORD, NY 14534

**2015/2016**

**HP Board of Directors**

**President: Margaret Caraberis Brizee**

**Vice-President: David Minor**

**Secretary: JoAnne Shannon**

**Treasurer: Maryjane Link**

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

**Mary Ann Clark, Mark Greene, Karen Hultz, Audrey Johnson,**

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

**Madeleine Reynolds, Bonnie Salem, Suzanne Shaw**