



# MARCELLUS

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 6, Issue 1

Winter 2001

## **Frank Griffing** ... Contributed by Peg Nolan

Frank Griffing was born at Borodino in 1879, the son of Adelbert Griffing, a blacksmith, and Hatie Eldredge. His mother died when he was six years old and when he was ten years old, his father remarried and they moved to Auburn near Soule Cemetery where his father opened a blacksmith shop. In 1890 they moved to Marcellus and his father opened a blacksmith shop at 37 East Main Street. As a boy, Frank worked with his father and he made the irons that held the plates on the roof of the West Hill School.

At the age of thirteen, Frank quit school and went to work in the carding room at the Woolen Mill where he was paid \$3.60 per week for a sixty-hour workweek. He quit this job and hired out to George Stuckey for farming at \$10.00 per week for five months. Then he was hired by David Olmstead of Taunton to work on the farm and peddle milk.

He decided in 1895 that he wanted to learn the shoe making trade so he hired out to his uncle in Ithaca to make shoes, boots and repairs for his board. Then he came back to Marcellus and did some blacksmith work to earn money and go back to Ithaca. Frank was a small man and he knew he could not continue in the blacksmith work because he was not strong enough.

In 1898 Frank and his sister drove their horse and wagon to Dryden, where his grandfather had lived, and brought back the shoe-making bench that his grandfather had used for many years. Frank himself used this bench for sixty years.

In the fall of 1899 Frank opened a shoe shop with John Palmer who had a harness shop where the

old liquor store used to be. He probably was the last man to make peg shoes by hand in Marcellus. In 1900 he opened his own shoe and harness shop. As he worked until nine or ten o'clock at night, his shop was the gathering place for men to come and visit. Frank did beautiful work, he loved his trade and his product was always in demand.

He joined with Fred Williams in 1901 in a business selling wagons and buggies along with continuing his shoe and harness business. This business did very well until the Model T and Chevrolet came along. In 1902, they added farm machinery such as Milwaukee mowers, reapers, binders and plows. He sold the first LeRoy walking plow in this area.

At the Marcellus Methodist Church on February 11, 1903, Frank married Ruth Phillips, daughter of Thomas and Martha Crysler Phillips. They moved into the house across from the Catholic cemetery next to Carl Wood on West Hill. They lived there nearly seventeen years and it was there that he raised his prized Rhode Island Red chickens that he took to the New York State Fair for many years, winning many awards.

He sold his half of the business to Fred Williams in 1904 and went to work for Richard VanVranken in Geddes. He would walk from his home on West Hill to the trolley station on East Hill each day and take the trolley to Syracuse where he changed to the trolley going to Geddes. It cost \$2.00 per week for the trolley from Marcellus to Syracuse and another ten cents a day for the Syracuse trolley. His salary was \$9.00 per week.

Frank opened his shoe and harness business in the White building in 1905 and stayed at that location

until he formed a partnership with Ward Curtiss in 1917. He continued his shoe and harness business and sold and installed International furnaces at the North Street location where they expanded and sold oil cook stoves, round oak heating stoves and coal ranges.

He moved to the village in 1919 and in 1920 sold the West Hill house to Jake and Nellie Reust. His home on South Street was built in 1921. They needed more space for the hardware and in 1923 they used both sides of the lower floor, doubling the store size. Business prospered until the stock market crashed in 1929. Times were hard and they had to reduce the size of the store to one side of the building. He bought out Curtiss in 1934 and continued in business by himself until 1949 when he sold the business to Roy Webb and Ray Masters. He stayed and worked for the new owners for ten years.

Frank was Poor Master, later called Local Welfare Official for Marcellus from 1916 to 1940. After he retired at the age of 80, he wrote a weekly column for the Marcellus Observer called "Marcellus Memories", preserving a great deal of Marcellus history from 1900 on. ~

## TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP

It's that time of year... time to renew your membership to the Marcellus Historical Society. Your membership is very important to our organization and supports our many activities and preservation efforts. Please check the mailing label to see what year your dues are paid through. If it says "2000" please use the form below the label to renew today. We greatly appreciate your support! ~ The following people have renewed their membership since our last newsletter: Hollis & Nancy Abbott, Brian & Debi Abbott & Family, Mark & Lynn Abbott & Family, Dr. John F. & Eunice Calvert, Raymond P. & Christine Heer, Robert & Alice Mahan, Jim & Peggy McNally, Ruth B. Oliver, Lewis L. & Elizabeth C. Selover, Richard & Frances Smith, Joseph L. & Nancy A. Stopyro, Ethel Trendowski, Robert & Alice Waters, Dr. Bruce & Mary Widger, Chris & Renee Wiles & Family.

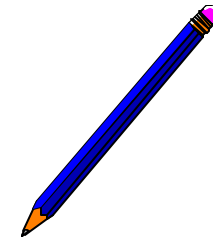
## Recent Acquisitions

*We wish to thank the following people for donating items to the museum collection:*

**Peg Nolan** for Business Card of Mrs. Pearl Parsons – Colonial Beauty Shop, Hat stretcher; **Kathy Keyes** for Wool & yarn samples, 1915 Marcellus Observer picture; **Joyce Potucek** for Picture of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Burns and Ed & Edna Bartlett; **Judy Delaney** for Cape;

**Warren Rolan** for Marcellus Pharmacy Tablets, envelope and sticker, 2 pill bottles;

**Jim & Joyce Murphy** for 1978 Cookbook by Marcellus Fire Dept. – Bishop Supply, Pencils from H.N. & W.A. Stevens Liquor store, Bishop Bldg. Supply, Snyder Appliance, Pilot Chevrolet Co., Kennedy Chevrolet, R. Walter Riehlman cookbook, Marcellus



Fire Dept. calendars 1971 & 1973, Planning schedule calendar used by village highway employee Jim Murphy, Business pencil & lead from late 1960's, Fountain pen used in 50's, Betty Long's Gift Shop pencil, Lee's Luncheonette pencil; **Dick Taber** for Old Home Day Poster. ~

### Historical Society Officers

President:	Peg Nolan .....	673-1765
Vice President:	Bruce Widger .....	673-9142
Treasurer:	Hollis Abbott.....	673-1753
Secretary:	Joyce Murphy.....	673-2528

### Trustees and Term Through

Michael Plumpton, 673-3453.....	2001
Tom Reagan, 673-3365 .....	2001
Mary Jane Domurat, 673-4896 .....	2002
Dick Smith, 673-1532.....	2002
John Curtin, 673-3660 .....	2003

The Marcellus Historical Society,  
P.O. Box 165, Marcellus, NY 13108,  
Publishes this newsletter and mails it  
quarterly to its members and advertisers.

Editor – Bill Reagan

## EVENTS SCHEDULE

*The tentative schedule of meetings,  
Speakers and events is as follows:*

**Sunday, January 14..... 2 p.m.**

General meeting.

Guest speaker: Russ Oechsle

Topic: Phillip Smith and  
Marcellus Clocks

**Sunday, February 11 ..... 2 p.m.**

General meeting.

Guest speaker: Robert Mahan, Jr.

Topic: Further history of the  
Marcellus Fire Department

**Sunday, March 11 ..... 2 p.m.**

General meeting.

Guest speaker: Bill Lang

Topic: The Real Estate Business  
in Marcellus since Verna Lang started.

**Wednesday, April 11..... 2 p.m.**

General meeting.

Guest speaker: Louis Budell

Topic: U.S. Coins

Meetings are open to anyone and are  
held at the Marcellus Fire Station  
unless indicated otherwise.

When I was a young boy we helped the neighbor pick stones out of the fields so they could plant crops and till the field the next year. We didn't have to lift the stones too high, as the stone boat was low to the ground. If the stone wasn't too big you "let it grow for a year or so." That's what we always said any ways, who knows?

When we got the boat full we took the stones to the stone pile. The horse pulled the stone boat there, as well as through the field. After we threw the stones onto the stone pile we started all over again, oh well, such is life! We always had to be careful not to break any stones because then there would be a lot of baby stones to grow up next year! ~

## **BIOGRAPHY**

### **Richard Warren Alvord**

Richard Warren Alvord, Marcellus, was born in Edinburgh, Saratoga Co., January 26, 1926, a son of Calvin and Rebecca (Gibson) Alvord. Calvin was a tanner and shoe manufacturer, and also conducted a farm. Our subject was educated in Edinburgh, worked for his father for a time, and then came to Borodino. He then came to Marcellus, where he engaged in staging, running a line from Borodino to Marcellus, and also to Marietta and Amber, for a period of thirty years. He also conducted the Alvord House. Selling his stage line, Mr. Alvord has since engaged exclusively in the hotel and livery business, of which he has the largest patronage in town. Our subject married first Esther Cleveland, and had two children: Frank C. and Lucina. Mrs. Alvord died in 1865, and he married second Eliza Chadfield, by whom he has one daughter, Flora. Frank C. Alvord is engaged in the business of supplying skins for glove manufacture in Gloversville. Lucina married Purdy Case and lives in New York City. Flora resides at home. Our subject is one of ten children, the youngest being 55 and the oldest 83, all now living. ~

*From Onondaga's Centennial, Gleanings of a  
Century, Volume II. The Boston History Company,  
Publishers, 1896, pp. 205-206.*

## **THE STONE BOAT...** Michael Plumpton

The stone boat wasn't a boat at all! It was more like a child's plastic sled of today. Most likely maple or oak, it was made of a very hard wood. The one I remember was about six feet long and three feet wide with a solid piece of steel curved up on the front end.

Stone boats were about six inches high including two by four runners on the bottom. Two by fours were also laid flat to form a ridge on the top of the boat along three sides, the front and both long sides.

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## OLD TOMBSTONE CARVINGS

Anyone whom has visited an older cemetery has undoubtedly seen some unusual carvings on the tombstones. The following should help to unravel some of the mystery surrounding these old carvings.

**Anchor/Ships:** Hope or Seafaring Profession

**Arches:** Victory in death

**Arrows:** Mortality

**Bouquets/Flowers:** Condolences, Grief,  
Sorrow

**Broken Column:** Loss of Head of Family

**Broken Ring:** Family Circle Severed

**Buds/Rosebud:** Morning of Life or  
Renewal of Life

**Bugles:** Resurrection and the Military

**Butterfly:** Short-lived; Early Death

**Candle Being Snuffed:** Time, Mortality

**Cherub:** Angelic

**Coffin, Darts, Father Time,**

**Picks/Shovels:** Mortality

**Corn:** Ripe Old Age

**Cross:** Emblem of Faith

**Crossed Swords:** High-  
ranking Military Person

**Dove:** Innocence,  
Gentleness, Affection, Purity

**Flying Birds:** Flight of the Soul

**Fruits:** Eternal Plenty

**Full Blown Rose:** Prime of Life

**Garlands:** Victory in Death

**Hand of God Chopping:** Sudden Death

**Handshakes:** Farewell

**Harp:** Praise to the Maker

**Hearts:** Soul in Bliss or Love of Christ

**Horns:** The Resurrection

**Hourglass:** Swiftiness of Time

**Hourglass With Wings of Time:** Time  
Flying; Short Life

**Imps:** Mortality

**Ivy:** Friendship and Immortality

**Lamb:** Innocence

**Laurel:** Fame or Victory

**Lily or Lily of Valley:** Emblem of Innocence



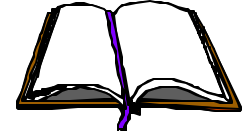
and Purity

**Morning Glory:** Beginning of Life

**Oak Leaves & Acorn:** Maturity, Ripe Old Age

**Open Book:** Bible...

Deceased Teacher,  
Minister, etc.



**Palm Branch:** Signifies  
Victory and Rejoicing

**Poppy:** Sleep

**Portals:** Passageway to Eternal Journey

**Roses:** Brevity of Earthly Existence

**Sheaf of Wheat:** Ripe for Harvest,  
Divine Harvest, Time

**Shells:** Pilgrimage of Life

**Stars and Stripes Around Eagle:** Eternal  
Vigilance, Liberty

**Thistles:** Remembrance

**Tombs:** Mortality

**Torch Inverted:** Life Extinct

**Trees:** Life

**Tree Stump With Ivy:** Head of Family,  
Immortality

**Trumpeters:** Heralds of the Resurrection

**Urn With Blaze:** Undying Friendship

**Urn With Wreath or Crepe:** Mourning

**Weeping Willow:** Emblem of Sorrow

**Willows:** Earthly Sorrow

**Winged Effigies:** Flight of the Soul

The term “**Relict**” on a tombstone means that the woman was a widow at the time of death, “**Consort**” means that her husband survived her. “**Cenotaph**” engraved on a tombstone indicates an empty grave, with the stone erected in honor or memory of a person buried elsewhere – often erected in honor of a person lost at sea. ~

## IN MEMORY OF...

Longtime society member Sidney Tuthill passed away recently. Sidney served as Vice-President eleven years and most recently as a Trustee. The officers and members of the society extend our sympathy to Mary and the family. ~

**Business Member Directory**  
**Please Patronize These Businesses**

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18 E. Genesee St., Skaneateles, NY 13152.

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Phone.....673-2255

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