

# The Town of Gorham Historical Society New Age Newsletter

Volume 9

Issue 1

January 2010

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**Website:** [www.gorhamnyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.gorhamnyhistoricalsociety.org)

**Membership 104**

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## President's Report

### Relationships – by President Steve Mumby

Several years ago I saw a wedding invitation with two draft horses and a title; “a matched pair.” Since October of 2008, three wonderful pairs on Depew Road are no more. I speak about the matched pairs of: Bill and Althea Bigham, John and Evie Lightfoote, Mollie and Richard Melious. I marvel at how these people complimented their spouse, the goodness, the charm, the “right stuff.” As we look at the next two generations in each of these three families, I think what a fine and fitting legacy to these three fine men, whose roots run deep in the Town of Gorham soil.

December 27<sup>th</sup> saw a horrific accident on County Road 18 involving a motor vehicle and a buggy transporting four of our Mennonite neighbors. It warms my heart to see the care, compassion and acts of kindness; often anonymous by Mennonite and non-Mennonite alike. This area produces some amazing people.

My last thought on relationships takes what some would call a morbid twist, but I think not. Last Sunday morning I walked through the Reed Corners Burying Ground. Five inches of snow and little traffic on Route 247 made for a peaceful time next to the little country church. I saw speaking stones (tombstones) of a school marm and a student, blacksmith and farmer and sadly a sixteen-year-old brother and a nineteen-year-old sister, dying just ten days apart.

Good and bad – circle of life.

## **Upcoming Meetings and Programs**

**The Town of Gorham Historical Society Museum is open every Wednesday from noon until 4:00. Admission is free.**

**Tuesday ,February 16, 2010** at 7:00..Monthly meeting of the Town of Gorham Historical Society at the Museum.

**Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010** at 7:00. Monthly meeting of the Town of Gorham Historical Society at the Museum.

**Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010** at 7:00 P.M. Monthly meeting of the Town of Gorham Historical Society at the Museum.

## **Newsletter Posting**

A copy of the latest newsletter is posted on our website:

[www.gorhamnyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.gorhamnyhistoricalsociety.org)

If there is something in the New Age Newsletter that you wish to share with others you can just give out the website information. You may also catch our newsletter on the Town of Gorham website: [www.gorham-ny.com](http://www.gorham-ny.com).

We would like to thank our supervisor for allowing us to do this.

## **Correction to November Newsletter**

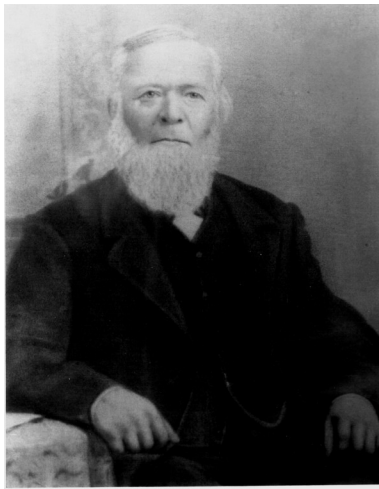
In November we ran a wonderful poem entitled "Aprons." Janet Read, volunteer at the Rushville History Room and The Middlesex Heritage Group, wrote that poem. I know that I enjoyed it very much and am glad we now know the poet.

## **Peter Melious Tool Chest**

A wonderful recent addition to our museum is a tool chest and some tools that belonged to Peter Melious. Richard Melious donated these items. In November we asked Richard and Molly to write about Peter and following is the information that we received.

"Peter Melious was a carpenter. He built barns". So said a grandson. He lived with his wife and children in the house on Robson Road just north of the Pickett school (corner of Robson Road and County Road 18. Both buildings are still there, though much changed.) He is said to have built a very large Robson barn on the Robson place--it burned--and probably many others in that area.

After Peter died, his tool chest survived in his son's barn, battered, weather- beaten, and oil stained. Paint flakes show that the box was painted black with a red baseboard all around, and the lid was black with three red panels. The few remaining tools indicate a fully appointed box including moulding planes for fancy residential work.



Peter Melious

**ANTHONY MELIOUS: 1743/44-1823.**  
(Rev. War Service, private, 8<sup>th</sup> Albany Militia).

In early public records, the name is spelled Melius, Milyas, Millius, Mellas, etc., in fact every variation except Melious. But: Anthony himself insisted on the "o". He signed his will "Anthony Melious". His tombstone reads, "Anthony Melious". Two of his sons signed his will, as executors, "Melious". The "o" was important to them, for the Meliouses were descended from very early settlers from Holland. The Melius family, no "o", were Johnny-come-laters, in the 1700s. They were Palatine Germans, poor Protestant refugees from religious persecution in Germany.

Anthony was a prosperous farmer near Ghent, Columbia County along the Hudson, and a leading citizen in the area. Anthony's wife was Maria Heydorn, and the Heydorns really were Palatine German. In due time Anthony and Maria had, among other children, a son, baptized "Heinrich" in the Lutheran Church. Heinrich died, and the next son was baptized "Hendrick" in the Dutch Reformed Church.

To make a long story short: two younger sons inherited Anthony's land when he died, but Hendrick/Henry was already established on a farm near what is now the city of Hudson. His wife Lucy ("Lussy" or "Lusse" in church records) died about 1806, leaving a 3 year old son--hereafter known as Young Anthony.

In April, 1819, Henry remarried, a widow with a son a couple of years younger than Young Anthony. Later events give the impression that she was acquisitive, pushy, and protective of her own son. Young Anthony was replaced in what had always been his home. He married Catherine Bogart when he was barely 17, and in September, 1820, they had a daughter named Lucinda, after Young Anthony's mother ('Lussy').

Fast Forward: Young Anthony, wife and child, were certainly not welcome in his father and stepmother's home. In fact, they were bundled up and shipped off to deepest Milo, Yates county, where there were Bogart family contacts. They lived forever after in a

small frame house on 1 acre of land purchased for them, but not given to them, by Henry. Here Peter Melious was born in 1823 --and siblings Mary (Polly Maria in the family bible), David, Helen (Hiley), Sarah, Elizabeth, Emmaline, and Sylvester. Their father, too young when married to have developed any vocational skill, was always listed in the census as "laborer", and face it--they were really poor.

In the meantime, Henry, 2<sup>nd</sup> wife, and her son continued to live very, very well back in Columbia County. When Henry died, about 40 years after Young Anthony and Catherine arrived in Milo, he left Anthony 1/3 of his property in Columbia and Yates County and ".....his (Anthony's) beds and bedding, to have and to hold the said two beds and bedding unto my son Anthony and to his heirs and assigns for ever." Big deal! Apparently they had been Anthony's mother's, withheld all that time!!

Fast forward again: Peter and his brother David traveled to Columbia County about this time, probably to collect their father's inheritance. They were warmly welcomed by their cousins, particularly by Sylvester, whose wife was a Traver. Through her the Melious boys met and married two of five Traver sisters. Jonathan Traver, their grandfather, had been a very wealthy man, judging by an inventory of his rich possessions. His son owned land, but apparently was in ill health when the Melious boys arrived and first Peter, and then David, lived with and helped support the family. It should be noted that all these families were connected by marriage to other important families, and had many advantages not attainable in Milo, Yates County. But Peter and David, bright, good looking, honest, hardworking, obviously well brought up--poor but proud-- were accepted immediately.

Peter learned the carpenter's trade in Columbia County. It must have been here, at this time, that he purchased a beautiful carpenter's tool chest, fitted with tools made in Albany. It surely must have been his most prized possession when he moved to Gorham, Ontario County, following another Traver sister and her husband, who owned a farm just south of the hamlet. Soon the two remaining Traver sisters joined them, and in due time found husbands in Gorham: the VanArsdalls moved west, but Catherine married William Pulver and lived in Gorham to a ripe old age. The girl's mother, who moved with them, lived with Peter's family at the end of her life. Thus EVERYONE lived happily ever after!

#### POSTSCRIPT

Peter's father, Young Anthony, died in Milo, Yates County, but didn't merit an obituary, and his gravestone, if there was one, is lost. One has the impression of an unexpected death. The widow, Catherine Bogart, returned almost immediately to Columbia County and a neighbor was appointed guardian for her two youngest children in Yates County. Court papers gave the married names of the older girls:

Lucinda married Orrin Springstead in Milo. On a Springstead lot, City Hill Cemetery (the oldest in Yates County, connected to the Universal Friend) are buried 3 little daughters. Ages 3, 7, and 15, all died of diptheria within three weeks of each other. They had a son and another daughter.

Sister Mary married a Proper who owned a 135 A. farm. They disappeared from Yates County, probably moving west. Sarah married and moved to Connecticut, Elizabeth married a Springstead and moved to Rochester, and Emmaline married and moved to Buffalo.

Helen Melious Decker married, had a son in Columbia County, and died 2 years later of consumption. She is buried in the New Cemetery, Gorham.

Peter's youngest brother, Sylvester (Height 4 ' 4 ½ ", fair complexion, blue eyes) joined the 85<sup>th</sup> NYSV in February 1862 and was wounded in action at Fair Oaks, VA, in May. Apparently, according to a search of the records, he just walked away from the hospital and was never heard from again.

David, the brother who traveled with Peter, joined him in Gorham. He owned a farm on the East Swamp Road, south of the hamlet. The Gilbert Melious families are descended from David.

Peter had two sons who died ae. 1 and 3. Son Clarence moved to East Rochester and his children married and lived there. One daughter married a Koehler and lived in Geneva--they ran a boarding house near the railroad station--and two daughters, Jane and Helen, married Motts: Helen and Dilwin lived where Dick Calabrese lives now; they had one son who died in the WWI flu epidemic. Jane and Anson owned a farm on Mott Road, Town of Seneca.

FRANCIS (FRANK) married Annie Laurie Saunders. They had one daughter, Gladys, who married David Moody, a pastor of 3<sup>rd</sup> Presbyterian Church in Rochester, and 3 sons: Owen, Jay, and Cordian. Jay inherited Frank's farm, and thus his grandfather's tool chest, which languished in the barn, was rescued by the then Historian, and given to the Town of Gorham Historical Society.

Richard, son of Owen, was the last of the Melious name to live in Gorham.

## **Dr. John W. Potter and the Mineral Spring**

**By George Henry, Town of Gorham Historian**

John W. Potter was born May 15, 1821 in Vine Valley Yates County. On Aug 4, 1846 he married Mary Lucetta Cornell in Albany N.Y. After her death he married Mary Catterson. ( or Mary Catherson depending on the source).He died Jan.17, 1889 in Canandaigua NY. That is the beginning and the end of Dr. Potter's life. It is the middle that makes him interesting and a part of the history of the Town of Gorham.

Dr. Potter was educated at Alfred Academy, Genesee Wesleyan Academy and Albany Medical College. He practiced medicine in Albany County and in Glen Aubrey, Broome County. He was supposedly a surgeon during the Mexican War.

In 1856 he went to Kansas but returned and settled in Tidioute, Warren County, PA. It was during this time that the oil fields were being developed. Dr. Potter speculated in the buying and selling of land, example according to his Federal Income Tax, he made \$10,000.00 within that year. He was somehow also involved in the oil business. He became a wealthy man during his stay in PA.

While he was still in Warren Co. PA. he prepared for his move to Canandaigua. On July 7, 1866 he purchased part of lot 31 in Canandaigua and 100 acres from James and Ellen Whorral of Canandaigua near Main St.

Mary Jane Potter describes her father's reason for moving to Canandaigua in her April 20, 1869 diary as follows. "We leave this place with the intention of going to Canandaigua and building a water cure at the springs on Canandaigua Lake."

Dr. Potter made much money in the buying and selling of land in PA. and he continued to do the same in Canandaigua. During the period between 1869 and 1876 he purchased nine properties. He and his sons were actively involved in the operation of some of these farms. He was also very active in breeding of race horses and in horse racing. In 1869 his horses took first prize at the Rushville Fair and two weeks later first prize at the Reed Corners Fair.

Dr. Potter felt that mineral springs water could cure people. He often went to Burdick's Water Cure in Buffalo, to one in Rochester and the Clifton Springs Spa. On April 4 1869 he purchased for \$5500.00 from John and Elizabeth Salisbury of the Town of Gorham 40 acres plus 4 1/2 acres on the lake for the mineral springs. This included "right" at all times to go on the land to repair, take away and put down pipes running from the spring.

These 40 acres were in the northwest corner of what is now the Martin Farm on East Lake Rd. There is a small stream running through it. In talking to the people that operate the Martin Farm this is what I learned. There was/is a spring about 1/2 mile from the road. Several years ago it was dug out to form a pond. About 10-12 feet down at the bottom of the pond was a large boulder. When this stone was moved the water came gushing out. It was a vile smelling and tasting water. So we have Dr. Potter's water cure spring.

The description of the mineral springs from the Potter family genealogy by Harry G. Tuttle. "The mineral spring was about 5 miles down the East Lake Rd. The spring was not on the road, the water was piped down about a mile. It had a strong sulfur smell, there was always an accumulation around the edge of the pipe". As of Aug 17, 1869 his price was five cents a gallon.

Dr. Potter's dream of a water cure spa did not advance beyond the finding of and piping the spring water to the road and his house.

Source material

The Potter Descendants of Avery Potter, James G. Potter and George W. Potter By Harry G. Tuttle.

Record of deeds-- County Archives

Ancestry. com

### **Millstone Wanted**

The Town of Gorham is looking for a real millstone to add to the new park in the Hamlet of Gorham. If you have one you would like to donate, please contact Joan Hoffman at 585-526-5443

## TWINS - All in the Family



Florence & Frances Holley

*The following is an newspaper article from the Chronicle Express, Penn Yan, N.Y., January 9, 1975.*

### **Rushville Sisters, 80, Tell Pros and Cons of Being Twins**

Identical twin sisters of Rushville recently celebrated their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary.

Mrs. Sterling (Frances) Blair and Mrs. William (Florence) Ward, daughters of the late Mr. and Mrs. Elton Holley, were born December 29, 1894 in Rushville. They resembled each other so closely; even their parents found it difficult to tell them apart.

As children the twins liked to dress alike and played tricks on people by switching identities. They said that Frances's marriage was the first time they wore dresses, which were not similar.

After high school, Florence attended the Warren Conservatory of Music, but Frances stayed home and in 1916 was married to Sterling Blair, owner of a farm in Middlesex Valley, approximately three miles distance from the Holley home.

Mrs. Blair said, "Sterling Blair was a direct descendent of John Blair who came to the area as a surveyor after the French and Indian War in 1784. The present Blair farm is part of the 1,000 acre tract he accepted in exchange for his services."

Mrs. Blair has three daughters, Mrs. H. Arthur (Evelyn) Parker of Windsor, Conn., Mrs. Remer (Eleanor) Hilton of Stanley and Mrs. Harold (Florence) Middlebrook of Penn Yan, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

In 1920 Florence Holley became the bride of William Ward of Reed Corners. The couple moved into the double house on the Holley homestead, where they spent their entire married life. (Located on Dunton Road.)

Mrs. Ward says that the original farm was bought by the Holleys in 1800 and that she is the fifth generation to live there. The Wards eventually bought two more farms and worked 400 acres.

Although the Wards had no children, the Blair daughters spent vacations with them and were brought up to think of Mr. and Mrs. Ward as their second parents.

After Mr. Blair died in 1968 and Mr. Ward in 1970, the twins decided to live together again. With neither twin wanting to give up her home, they did what they had done in childhood- made a compromise. Six months of the year are spent at the home of Mrs. Ward, where there is a large vegetable garden. Winters are spent at Mrs. Blair's home, where she refinishes furniture and canes chairs.

Always a bit more adventurous (she was the one to drive the horse as a teenager), Mrs. Blair drives them about in the car.

Knitting is Mrs. Ward's hobby. Whenever a new baby arrives in the neighborhood, there is always a pair of booties of the appropriate color waiting. This winter, she knitted 60 pairs of mittens.

When the twins were approximately 11 years old they wrote the following article for the Rushville paper on being twins:

**The following is written by Frances Holley, Rushville**

People ask me if I wouldn't rather have my sister younger or older than myself instead of the same age. I always say I like her best the way she is. They don't stop to think of the advantages of having a twin.

I have someone to share all my work and usually I can get the half to do that I like best.

Having our clothes alike is a great advantage, for then if I tear my dress I can change by accident, of course, and get the whole one.

With stockings, it is the same way. A twin need never wear holes in her clothes if she gets up early enough in the morning. One of us is a little larger, I won't tell which, so she bursts the buttons off and tears out the buttonholes. This makes one new dress necessary, but because we dress alike we can each have one.

It is such fun when we go away to have people get us mixed. I can always find out her secrets. It happens that I am to go on a visit and my sister is unable to go with me, I can take all her clothes and no one is the wiser.

So you can see it is nicer to have your sister just your own age if you have only one sister, and if you have more than one sister, it must be a great deal nicer if they are all your own age.

**The following is written By Florence Holley, Rushville**

Although twins may be generally supposed to lead a jolly sort of life, yet there are things about it that are really drawbacks.

We are always getting our clothes changed, sometimes to our disadvantage; if I try to keep my dress clean and Frances gets hers dirty, I always get the one that is dirty.

When I go away, she always goes with me-I can never go alone. And if she plays any tricks or is naughty, I am taken for her.

Sometimes I am punished and have to take her whippings and go to bed, too, when she is naughty, for the blame is left on me.

When I do a kindness to other people, they are always taking her for me and praising her for it.

If she gets her lesson before or better than I do, she is held up as a model for me and I am made to hurry and get my lesson.

Being the same age, we have to use the same books and this is a great disadvantage, for we each want them at the same time.

Once Frances was sick and I was mistaken for her and made to take some old bitter Medicine. Another time when she had a cold, I was greased all over my chest instead of her, but the grease on me did not help her cold.

In a large family one can usually pick out the one she wants to go with, but when there are only two, you have to go with your twin.

I can never have any secrets, for Frances always finds them out just pretending she is I.

If I have a dress I think is rather pretty and like to wear, I am sure to get very tired of it because I have to see another just like it every time I wear mine.

So you see Twin's life is not as jolly as it may seem and although I could not get along without "Frances, I would like it much better if she were two years older than I.

**Now, 70 years after the twins wrote this article, they both agree that there are only advantages to being twins.**

Many thanks to Vera Lambert for providing the above articles and for suggesting that we update this story with information about the new set of twins in the family.

### **New Twins in the Family**

On January 7, 2009 twin daughters were born in Geneva General Hospital to Robert (Rob) and Tiffany Gage. Tiffany is the great granddaughter of the above-mentioned twin Frances Blair. Frances Blair had a daughter Florence Middlebrook, Florence had a son Paul and Paul and his wife, Nancy are parents of Tiffany. Tiffany graduated from Penn Yan Academy. On the twins father's side, Rob is the son of Robert and Sharon Hey Gage of Gorham and he graduated from Marcus Whitman Central School. Tiffany and Rob have a dairy farm on the land once owned by his Grandparents Mildred and Wilbur Hey. The twin daughters were named Ava Mildred and Lillian Carol. Mildred is after Grandmother Mildred Hey and the Lillian is after Grandmother Lillie Gage.

Ava and Lily weighed less than 6 lbs. when they were born. Tiffany had nightly help from both mothers for about the first four months until the twins started sleeping through one nighttime feeding. Sharon or Nancy would get the babies up, changed them, and give them to Tiffany to nurse and then get the girls back to sleep.

The girls look very much alike. Lilly's wide open smile and Ava's bright eyes make it so they are distinguishable to those that are really close to them. Tiffany says family

members like it that she does not dress them alike, as it makes it much easier in identifying the twins. The girls' personality from birth is perhaps what makes them such different individuals. Lillian is sometimes called Silly Lilly because of her fun nature and Ava is very calm and happy. Both of the girls love to be hugged, they love big brother Will, they enjoy watching each other and to hold each others hand..

Written by Sharon Cornelius  
with information from Tiffany Gage.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Annual Antique Show to Benefit the Granger Homestead and Carriage Museum**

On Sun. February 14, 2010 the 11th annual Canandaigua Classic Antique Show and Sale will be held at the Finger Lakes Gaming and Racetrack, 5857 Route 96, Farmington, N.Y. from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Admission is \$5.00. Pick up a coupon for \$1.00 off at the Historical Society or download a coupon for \$1. off admission. Go to [www.CanandaiguaClassics.org](http://www.CanandaiguaClassics.org)

Refreshments will be available and there is plenty of free parking. Appraisals will be available for a fee.

Proceeds from the show will go toward the upgrade of one of the carriage barns at the Granger Homestead's Carriage Museum in Canandaigua.

For more information contact the Granger Homestead at 585-394-1472

### **Business Cards/Politics Items**

Don't forget that we are collecting business cards. These can be for past business or present businesses in the Town of Gorham. We have discovered that we don't have much political campaign material. If you ever ran for a politic office in the Town of Gorham and have any kind of campaign material we would love to have it. Please drop it off at the Museum or send them to P.O. Box 176 Gorham, N.Y.



In our collection is this picture of three Canadian soldiers. It is in a nice oval frame. The picture is unlabeled. If you have any information about these men please contact Sharon Cornelius @ [shcornelius@frontier.com](mailto:shcornelius@frontier.com)

## Membership and Donation Form

Membership is \$8.00 per person per year and renewable on the first day of each new year. If you have not sent your renewal please do so now.

For membership please send your check made payable to The Town of Gorham Historical Society to Eileen Fake, P.O. Box 176, Gorham, New York 14461. Please send your donations to the same address.

### Application for membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Membership

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ General Fund Donations

Town of Gorham Historical Society  
P.O. Box 176  
Gorham, New York 14461

Place  
Stamp  
Here



Rob, Tiffany, Ava and Lilly Gage