

History of the Restoration

On June 30, 1963 Erlene Lydell of Pine Ridge Road addressed a letter to the hypothetical “Old Mill – Busti Association, Committee in Charge.” She included a donation “to be used toward the cost of repairs necessary to preserve the Old Mill Building.”

The letter continued, “I feel that any work for preservation of this building should be done with thought of one day restoring the whole to its original (if possible) water driven operable (on occasion) condition. And with this in mind, leaving all attached gears, chutes, etc., on the premises, in their present location – rescuing, cleaning, and preserving every loose scrap, gear, cog, splint, peg, nut, and bolt – setting these aside until a time when money was made available to attempt the work of restoration.

“I am in favor of complete restoration of the mill’s water powered mechanism and will pledge an additional (sum) to be paid at such time as this work can be attended to.

“It might seem feasible, at a later date to consider the possibility of displaying in the Old Mill Building other water powered devices of that era – grind stones for hand tools (now on the premises) perhaps – small saw mill, cider mill, smithy’s bellows etc. Definitely – tools used to construct such a structure as the mill and those used in the handling of grains should be sought and displayed.

“I would like to think, through public interest, contributions will be received to cover cost of restoration and that when work is complete, it can be self sustaining and still used primarily as an educational attraction.”

At the time work began, this was the earliest indication we knew of any serious interest in saving or restoring the mill. But shortly after the mill closed Stanley Weeks, an attorney and former mayor of Jamestown, had made suggestions and inquiries into saving the building and using it in some manner. Weeks was an active Freemason and his interest stemmed from knowledge of the fact that Heman Bush was central to the earliest organization of Masonry in southern Chautauqua County. The organizational planning meeting for formation of the original Mt. Moriah Lodge had been held at Bush’s tavern September 27, 1817.

The town came into possession of the mill in its acquisition of a park site. At the Town Board meeting of August 1, 1961 Joseph Gerace, then supervisor, called attention to the provision in the State Park Acquisition Act whereby the state would pay 75% of the cost of land for town parks. Earl Lawson and Willard Ayers were appointed to find several potential sites to be examined by a state representative. Apparently Ayers, Gerace, and E. Robert Bootey met with the state representative, a Mr. Batterson, and examined the mill on October 7. At the board meeting of December 29 Ayers was authorized to contact the Conservation Department to see about replacing the dam. By April 17, 1962 the town had word the County Soil Conservation Service could not help

because the dam site was not under their jurisdiction. Nevertheless on August 14, 1963 the board voted to buy the mill. On May 22, 1964 the mill became town property.

The question now was, what was the town to do with the mill and how was it to fit in with the hopes for development of the park? The first action recorded was on August 5, 1964 when the board moved to have the highway crew board up the mill and put up "No Trespassing" signs for under \$100. Perhaps then or soon after the highway department began to use the mill for storage to a minor extent, a practice continued until the restoration began.

On March 10, 1965, Earl Lawson, later to become an enthusiastic proponent of restoration, introduced a resolution that the town advertise bids for the sale and removal of the machinery and building to be completed by July 30 of that year. The resolution passed unanimously. On March 24 the Town Clerk was authorized to advertise in the Post-Journal and supervisor Gerace was authorized to draw up specifications for the job. Bids opened at 7:30 p. m. April 14.

At the April 28 board meeting it was reported that Wilbur Dennison had examined the specifications and was not interested.

It was now nearly two years since Mrs. Lydell had proposed restoration. A turning point in the plans for the mill was marked on May 19 when Margaret K. Look, then editor of the Post-Journal, published a feature article emphasizing restoration possibilities for the "old red mill." Her article state the board had considered demolition only reluctantly for economic necessity. They had, according to Mrs. Look, considered the mill as a potential tourist attraction and asset to the park with a restored dam and "meeting and dining rooms." The article shows awareness of the historical and structural nature of the mill and indicates the board had "tabled again and again a motion to demolish the mill, in hopes that others will see the possibilities in restoring it." The article closes with an appeal by the board for "aid and suggestions from individuals and organizations."

On the 26th the Town Board expressed gratitude for the article. Earl Lawson advanced a resolution which was unanimously accepted that the supervisor appoint a committee to study the possibility or restoration of the mill. Mrs. Look and Mrs. Lydell were both appointed to the committee as was Clarence Andrews. Allen Nielson and Felicia Hall were also appointed. I am told this committee never actually met.

At the Board meeting of June 9 both Mr. Gerace and Mr. Ayers reported they had received letters about the mill. It was decided a public meeting should be held and by June 23 Mr. Gerace had sent letters out to the organizations of the town reading as follows in part.

“The town Board of Busti is hopeful that the old feed mill which is on Town property in Busti can be restored as a town landmark.

“It is our thought that a group of public spirited citizens would be able to generate ideas as to the feasibility of such a project, and the means whereby it can be accomplished.

“We have called a meeting for June 30, 1965 at 7:30 PM at the Busti Grange Hall, Busti New York.”

At the meeting Mrs. Lydell reported she had written to various potential sources of funds. Paul Carlson expressed concern that later generations be left with “a mill, not a bill.”

On July 27 the Lakewood-Busti Recreation Commission met at and toured the park. The on again-off again dam was on again as Earl Lawson reported that a Soil Conservation Service (USDA) representative had toured the property and authorized surveys for that fall.

On September 22 the Board authorized up to \$100 for boarding windows and repairing a section of roof where the standing seam metal roofing had blown off and allowed considerable decay to take place in part of the interior. The highway department performed the work that fall.

Mr. Gerace called a second public meeting with another letter to organizations which read in part:

“This mill is one of the last in existence in this area and perhaps in the State. Some believe that the restoration of the mill will inspire reconstruction of other old time buildings which in turn could inspire a healthy tourist trade.

“The Town Board submitted the Mill Restoration proposal to both County and Federal Agencies who have responsibility of administrating the Economic Opportunities Act. It is possible we may receive federal funds for the project.

“Nevertheless it would seem advisable to continue the preliminary organization and to discuss all of the ramification of this restoration. A meeting will be held at the Busti Grange Hall in the Hamlet of Busti on October 15, 1965 at 7:30 P.M.

“I believe this has a great potential for the Town of Busti.”

Much interest was evident at the meeting despite a small attendance. There was talk of flour grinding and tourist fees and a “water wheel.” Former residents had written in their interest. Already individuals and groups had donated money. Some saw that success for the project depended on volunteer workers.

On the other hand, Mr. Gerace and others concentrated on government grants. The “Chautauqua County Opportunity Unlimited Committee” had approved the application for the use of federal aid for the park, but the application had not been

approved at the federal level. Some looked to matching money from the state to double voluntary donations. Still another agency was entered in the dam sweepstakes. This time the State Soil Conservation Commission had suggested a five mile lake which presumably constituted some sort of progress over the previously dreamed 500 foot lake.

In his successful election campaign for supervisor in 1969, Mr. Gerace had spoken against the use of state funds for park development because state funded parks had to admit anyone. Mr. Gerace and many others were concerned about notoriously ill behaved hippies and motorcyclists from Buffalo. Mr. Gerace foresaw the need for the formation of a not for profit corporation.

There the record goes nearly blank for four years. Apparently those who thought primarily in terms of government money and initiative were out of ideas and the self-reliant lacked the necessary interest and organization.

In the fall of 1969 the town board decided the question could not be delayed longer. Nelson Palmer, architect and consulting engineer from Dunkirk, was asked for an opinion. On September 2 he reported that the mill interior was "very good." He suggested that the town could best make use of the mill by leasing it for a restaurant.

As 1969 drew to a close the fate of the mill was conspicuously undecided. It had survived a decade of vacancy ingloriously and precariously. It had been abandoned by an imaginative businessman, let down by a citizens' group, and more or less given up on by the most energetic politician in town. A previously inconspicuous, domestically oriented housewife was the unforeseen salvation of the mill when hope appeared exhausted.

Within months of the time Mrs. Lydell had composed her original letter and while the town was deciding to buy the mill, Mrs. John (Dorothy) Sienkiewicz (died August 30, 1994) formed a 4-H club called the Happy Belles – July 1963 confidently according to her memory, September according to Mrs. Lucy Peak's 1965-66 notes. By an application of December 16, 1965 the name was changed to Shamrocks. The club was opened to boys as well as girls and the range of activities was broadened. The 4-H had been overlooked when the letters were sent out for the meetings of June 30 and October 15, 1965.

Community service projects were among the Shamrocks' activities. In 1966 they volunteered to plant trees in the Town Park. About 1969 they improved several old and abandoned cemeteries in the town.

I could not get access to 4-H records to determine dates and details of the crucial events in 1970 and early 1971. Some time in this period Mrs. Sienkiewicz talked with Mr. Gerace about future possibilities for community service projects. The mill was mentioned then brought up and approved about August of 1970 as a project at a subsequent 4-H meeting. Probably some time in that year, definitely prior to March 24, 1971, the three mill co-chairmen who received considerable publicity for their efforts in

sustaining the project were selected: Mary Sienkiewicz, Diane Pangborn, and Louise Carlson.

This is how Mrs. Sienkiewicz remembered it in 1977.

“The phone call to Gerace was in the spring of 1969. We asked for a list of projects that would benefit the town and the residents. The three girls had chosen community improvement as Junior Leadership Projects for that year. The suggestions made by Gerace were discussed at 4-H meetings and the members found it difficult to choose. The girls chose the mill project. After choosing the project the girls attended Grange and Busti Firemen’s meetings to explain why the project was chosen, what they hoped to accomplish and asked for moral and financial support.

“At the time of the phone conversation with Gerace, he felt that the Town Board would ask for bids to demolish the mill. The girls felt that the board should be willing to spend the same amount of money on restoration.”

In February, 1970 restoration of the mill was discussed at a meeting of the Busti Grange. I do not know if this discussion took place spontaneously within the Grange or if the Shamrocks had already adopted the project and thus stimulated the discussion.

At the end of 1970 the Shamrocks approached the town board formally about their restoration plans at the meeting of December 21. The board suggested the 4-H should accumulate money and first have the roof, which was leaking badly, repaired. They should next hire an architect, Mr. Palmer or Mr. Sorg, to plan and estimate costs of restoration. The 4-H sought a promise from the board that the mill would not be demolished before enough money could be accumulated for repairs, but the board would not make such a commitment.

The earliest entry in the 4-H financial accounts made public about the mill project is April 6, 1971 when \$500 was entered in their account received as a grant from Readers’ Digest Foundation. This indicates the application was prepared some time earlier. The check had been received prior to March 24, probably in February. By now the 4-H obviously considered itself beyond the point of turning back.

In the summer of 1971 the Shamrocks and their parents entered a period of astonishing activity. Groundwork had been laid the previous fall and winter. The 4-H co-chairmen had contacted organizations seeking donations. There was a pancake supper, spaghetti dinner, and a rummage sale between April and October. Donations continued to be sought. The Willing Workers Society (another group that had been overlooked in the invitations to the 1965 meetings), Busti Firemen’s Auxiliary, Busti Fire Department, and the Peacock Landmark Society, among others, gave for mill work in that summer.

Stanley Card, father of two Shamrocks, or the 4-H children themselves (reports vary) proposed construction of a model mill to illustrate the way the restored mill was to look. This would serve on a parade float and in other displays to attract publicity. The model, 67 inches by 32 inches by 32 inches took about 200 hours to build and made use of 1,000 tongue depressors cut in thirds to simulate the shingle roof. Stanley Card and

John Sienkiewicz constructed the frame of the mill. Mary Sienkiewicz made the windows. Martha Carlson, mother of Louise, made the stones for the foundation. Diane Pangborn, Louise Carlson, and Mary Lou Carlson (younger sister of Louise) along with Linnea Pangborn (mother of Diane) broke up the tongue depressors to make shingles and put them on the roof. The rest of the Shamrocks worked with Dorothy Sienkiewicz to create the head race and surrounding land. \$50 to Green Brothers Lumber was spent for the clapboards. The project took a total of 200 work hours.

Although the mill was probably red through most of its history and at the time was believed to have been white, the model was made natural wood color on the personal preferences of Stan Card and Mary Sienkiewicz and the actual mill was projected to be restored in natural finish similarly. And so it ultimately was though later painted and stained red. Mary thought it was reasonable to conclude that at the time the mill was first built it would have been unpainted plus there were no early records of a mill owner buying paint.

The venture was extremely successful. The model was apparently started in July and finished just before the Old Fashioned Parade of the Busti Gala Days, August 28. The 4-H also had a booth at the Gala Days to show the comparison of how the mill looked then and how it was intended to look after restoration.

Not everyone was enthusiastic or supportive. The Shamrocks were told the job was too big and unrealistic, that it would require elaborate plans and architectural consultation.

The model was widely shown and won second prize in parades at Busti and first prize at Bear Lake. It focused attention on the goal at the other fund raising activities, and it served as a photo interest and story lead in newspaper accounts of the project, most notably in a large spread in the September 11, 1971 Warren-Time Mirror and Observer. The 4-H members walked the parade routes seeking donations. They even went house to house during mill restoration week.

The 4-H co-chairmen in the summer of 1970 also took a major step in rekindling adult community participation in the mill project by assembling a new committee, the Mill Advisory Board, which was designated an official Restoration Committee by the Town Board August 3. Members were Edmund Pangborn (later Historical Society president), Mrs. Donald (Linnea) Pangborn (mother of Diane), Jack Gustafson (former Busti supervisor), Mrs. Jack (Eleanor) Gustafson, Paul Carlson, Mrs. Paul (Gladys) Carlson, Norman Carlson, Mrs. Grant (Martha) Carlson (mother of Louise), Stanley Card, Mrs. John (Dorothy) Sienkiewicz (mother of Mary), Mrs. George (Sandy) Tellinghusen, Earl Lawson (town councilman), and Joseph Gerace (Busti town supervisor). Some members soon or immediately fell to inactivity, but most worked strongly for the project.

On August 3 members of the 4-H and Mrs. Sienkiewicz appeared before the Town Board. Mary Sienkiewicz presented a three page history and progress report. The

report indicated readiness to hire a reproofing job and asked for a designation of August 21-28 as Mill Restoration Week. This was granted.

The dates for the Mill Restoration Week were chosen to coincide with the Firemen's Gala Days. Although it was still not possible to enter the mill with a work crew because of insurance restrictions, some work was done on a Saturday to improve the appearance of the Mill and grounds before the Old Fashioned Parade of August 28. Interested committee members and 4-H members were there. Mr. Gerace was among the workers. The three 4-H co-chairmen were present along with Dorothy and John Sienkiewicz, Grant and Martha Carlson, Linnea Pangborn, Allen Barton, and Stanley and Naomi Card, Paul and Norman Carlson. Grass and a few trees were cut. This was August 7 and marks the very first work done specifically as part of the mill restoration effort. More trees were cut at some date in the next few weeks by Percy Allen, a Busti resident with a tree trimming business who came on his own initiative.

Starting August 12 Hatfield Roofing removed the old standing seam tin roof put on around the turn of the century, by John Ericson, tinsmith, according to Miss Sineckiwick's report. Raymond Carlson's Reliable Roofing provided the tar paper and other supplies at cost. The check was made out August 11 and I remember it was being presented when the supplies were picked up by Paul Carlson and delivered to the workmen the same day. The town of Busti paid for the labor, \$500. The first of what were hoped to be regular monthly work days was called by the 4-H on October 2.

That first day inside the mill was a monumental clean up of an enormous accumulation of dust and filth, lumber fragments and trash. The 4-H mothers and the co-chairmen served the approximately 10 volunteer workers lunch and supper at the abandoned Federated Church parsonage. Despite such problems as no running water, because of the success and enthusiasm and the prospects for good weather, the next Saturday was also set as a work day. Progress continued at a phenomenal rate, although there was no increase in the number of workers. The weather continued warm well into November so work sessions were established as an every Saturday custom.

The first area of attention after superficial clean up was the low spot in the basement under the position of the bad spot in the old roof where timbers had collapsed and large pieces of equipment had fallen. Large finds that were early fascinations included the cast iron maple toothed main gear wheel. These were standard in mills. Wood gearing reduced the fire and explosion hazard from sparks and metal on metal friction. A large, once water driven, grindstone and its heavy frame and iron casters, and one of the picturesque red oak control wheels for the water gates were other items.

The Busti firemen forced some of the sludge accumulation out of the basement with their high pressure hoses. Russell Pillsbury cleaned out the headrace pit with his clam. Floyd Proctor dug out a substitute tailrace and drainage. These efforts were all donated free of charge.

Paul Carlson located and arranged for the purchase of four of the original mill stones from Benjamin Anderson in Kiantone. On September 8 the Warren-Times Observer sent a photographer to photograph the stones. These stones have long been more or less displayed, or at least exposed, in front of the Mill porch. In February 1972 after the Society realized they could never be brought back to operating condition, Carlson suggested the Society try to return them for the purchase price but fortunately this was never acted on.

After the regular work day of October 30, a work party was held in the evening at which the porch was rebuilt. Volunteers stayed on until 4 o'clock the next morning to guard the mill against Halloween vandals. Guarding was also done the previous night and the following night and similarly was continued for many years following.

John Sienkiewicz put in temporary wiring early in the project with materials donated by Kennedy Electric, Joe DiMaio, Joe Urso, and Moffett Electric.

November 20 or 27 was an all day effort to retrieve a heavy one horse treadmill from the basement of Benjamin Anderson's collapsed barn. Weather had turned wet, cold, and snowy.

About 15 logs were donated by Paul Carlson. These were white beech. They were cut and skidded by the volunteers. Charles O. Smith loaded and hauled them. Charles Lindstrom cut them at his Cortwright Road sawmill below his cost. This was done in late October.

Ingenious techniques were often used by the volunteers. The floors were torn up enough to allow the installation of used utility poles, obtained by John Sienkiewicz, which were planted in the uncertain bottom mud and rigged with block and tackle ropes and chains and cable come-alongs to serve as primitive cranes to move and place the heavy replacement timbers as well as to sometimes help remove the old timbers.

In the first eight months twelve beech timbers from Carlson's woods were placed in the basement and one sawed hemlock timber set in. On the main level, supporting the top floor and visible to the public from the main floor, five spans of hemlock replaced one full length and 2/3 of another original timber. These were bought from Green Brothers as sawed 12 inch by 12 inch timbers then hewed down by the volunteers to match the original size of 11 inch by 11½ inch.

The sill spanning the headrace required a timber at least 31 feet long. A beech in Paul Carlson's woods appeared questionable as a source but none better could be located. Initially, after the tree was cut, the volunteers planned to hew the timber from the log in the woods to lessen the skidding weight. Green beech is extremely hard wood and this log had a twist in the grain so the hewing effort met little success. Carlson was unable to move the log with his tractors. Allen Barton brought skidding tongs another week and two tractors were used to skid the log although with the aid of the tongs, only one tractor would have been sufficient.

No area sawmill was capable of sawing a piece of that length. Green Brothers said they could come up with a method for \$25 extra. Months went by and no move was made by the volunteers to hew the log which now rested behind Carlson's barn. Finally he decided to mark and cut it out to about 14 inches by 14 inches with his chain saw. He even devised a way to load it on a two wheeled farm cart and haul it himself to the mill. Working with the tractor hydraulic power on the draw bar and with blocking, he got one end of the timber up high enough so he could fit the cart under it and chain the timber and the tongue of the cart together. Then he hooked the tractor by more chains to the end of the timber and made for the mill at a low traffic hour. There he somehow worked the timber off the cart and left it as a surprise for the other volunteers.

The saw had left an undesirable appearance but the wood was hard enough to make axe or adz trimming impractical. Stanley Card tried to sand the timber with an electric sander without success. The timber was put in place probably on February 3, 1973.

One more timber span replacement was found necessary and done August 7, 1976 in the basement. This was bought from Cornish Lumber.

Bob Schultz assumed the role of chief tenon and mortise maker and timber fitter.

Every one of the 35 windows in the mill needed replacement. Charles Nelson of Nelson Brothers Lumber, a Busti resident, made and glazed them. Some were glazed with antique rippled glass saved specifically for the project. The windows were made in the winter and installed gradually over the spring and summer of 1972. The basement and main floor each have 13 windows. The top floor has seven. The two dormers each have one.

The back addition had been stripped of all its flooring and half its joists before the restoration began. The master clutch from the time of the gasoline engine and the bolting reel hung at angles between the scattered remainder of the joists.

All remaining joists and seven retrieved from Clarence Andrews were consolidated on the main floor and oak flooring was put down. This was done in June and July, 1972. The necessary 29 additional identical joists for the top floor, all 2 inch by 12 inch by 18 feet, had to be specially ordered. It was November, 1972 before they were received and put in. The flooring in that section was completed in April, 1973.

As mentioned before, the back of the mill was not re-sided because it was in tolerable condition and the volunteers were reluctant to remove the painted Occident Flour advertisement. The first siding was removed from the mill in April 1973 and the three sides finished with new siding between then and the end of April 1974. The new siding had been on hand since August 1972.

Removal of the old cucumber flooring on the main level in the original part of the mill began in June 1972. The new oak flooring was put down, the job being completed in August. This excluded the section where the stones had been. This floor has only been replaced in the winter of 2012-2013.

It was necessary to replace 12 joists on the main floor. The top floor was replaced from May to July of 1973. Fifteen joists had to be replaced there. The basement flooring was replaced in early August 1976.

Roofing was the only major construction work that was hired done in the early years. The installation of roll roofing in 1971 has been described above. On April 1, 1975 Blaisdell Brothers began putting on a wood shingle roof. The shingles had been bought from Shop Rite Building Supply rather than being specifically made as was earlier planned. The job was finished April 18. A grant from the Peacock Landmark Society paid, in part, for the work. The dormers were also sided in April 1975.

In November 1972 the Society took an opportunity to buy the original leather travel trunk that once belonged to Heman Bush. They also bought and placed a guest book for visitors to the Mill that tabulated traffic there for many years.

At the February 12, 1972 meeting the organization learned that a mill in Hamilton, N. Y., very similar to ours, would be up for sale in November. DeWarren Barton, Edmund Pangborn, Paul Carlson, and Bob Schultz were appointed a committee to travel to the mill and examine the equipment with an eye to possible purchase. The mill was owned by Floyd Brown, known as the Bigley Mill, located on the Chenango River. The committee reported favorably at the May meeting. At the November 1 meeting the group moved to buy what equipment and machinery it could for between \$350 and \$500. On November 4 Busti Historical Society members were present to bid. Stones and equipment from Brown's mill were purchased and removed by the volunteers. Busti Used Auto Parts provided the truck for the transportation of the heaviest equipment. Allen Barton and Ed Pangborn also hauled with their trucks.

The Society members were beginning to experience some fatigue. At the April 2 work meeting only two appeared, down from the previously typical five or six.

On May 18, 1972 the Fenton Historical Society had asked for a spokesman each from the Shamrocks and the Historical Society to speak at their annual dinner meeting. Norman Carlson and Mary Sienkiewicz were initially designated but at the last minute, Bob Schultz had to substitute for Mary. Mary did address the official historians of Chautauqua County on October 7.

At the May 1972 Historical Society meeting the group had agreed to use the Mill as a museum until we had a more suitable museum building. Already at that time Mrs. Sienkiewicz had made overtures to James Larson, owner of the neighboring barn and former church and school. She had found him uninterested in selling the building. In May 1973 the Shamrocks and some of the adult women began the establishment of the

museum room in the back room on the main floor of the mill. June and early July were spent mostly in preparation for the Busti Sesqui-Centennial, July 8 – 14. The mill and its restoration were shown off to over 3,000 visitors and a rich and full variety of displays of Busti history were installed. The mill was open all seven days, nominally from noon until 10 p. m. but visitors were admitted from about 11 a. m. and closing was often around 11 p. m. On Friday Mrs. Sienkiewicz left at midnight. The Sesqui-centennial produced a great boost in public appreciation for the mill and restoration project.

By April 1973 re-siding of the mill had started, the front first. The new clapboards were soaked in a trough of linseed oil and dried before being put in place. This was calculated to give a nice appearing and long lasting natural finish.

The work crews were involved in removing the old siding from the Mill and beginning to replace the floors inside the Mill. Money was short. The 4-H contributed substantially.

By August 1973 first the top floor was installed and the west side of the Mill had been resided.

Some time in August gas was piped in to a small heater in the back room to protect the museum artifacts from moisture and condensation.

September 22, 1973 the Society picked up the Brightman portable stone mill. Bob Schultz later restored it. It served as a major demonstration of grinding in the years preceding completion of the actual Mill machinery. It was also displayed for a number of years in the 80's at the Chautauqua County Antique Equipment Show.

By the end of 1973 the re-siding of the west side of the Mill was completed and the east side started.

By the end of 1973 \$2,300 had been spent on Mill restoration. The siding had been nearly completed, the floors nearly completed, and all the windows had been replaced in the mill plus all needed spans of timber framing. In 1973 the Society estimated between five and six thousand people had gone through the Mill. The Society had been able to deposit over \$9,000 in its account. The Busti Shamrocks had contributed \$500 in that year.

Late in February, 1974 the Society went on record with the hope to have the Mill restoration completed by the 1976 Festival.

By the beginning of May 1973 the gas heater in the museum room of the Mill was hooked up and running. At that time the newspaper collection project with a box at the dump station then at the park was discontinued as insufficiently profitable.

Cedar shingles ordered for the new roof had been received and stored inside the Mill.

In July 1974 wiring was done in the museum room and the curtains were made and put up.

On October 2 a bid of \$1,375 from Blaisdell Construction was accepted for putting the shingle roof on the Mill.

January 11, 1975 The front turbine was taken out and an inclined plank apparatus set up for sludge removal. On February 6 a "dirt elevator" was rented but on March 1 a ramp was made and the tub and track mechanism created. Sludge continued to be removed by this device at least through the end of the year. In June a floor was discovered.

On January 11, 1975 the front turbine was raised up out of its housing and examined.

Also in early 1975 the job of removing the immense accumulation of corn cobs and sludge at the front end of the pit was undertaken. Cobs from the corn sheller had been dumped in the mill basement for decades. A storm sewer built in the 1940's and later used by residents along Mill Street as a septic tank drain had long ago plugged and diverted to the mill basement. In April of 1972 the Society had this rerouted away from the Mill. Road alterations in the 1920's and in 1954 had encouraged siltation in the mill basement. The first load was taken out by wheelbarrow on January 25. This proved difficult and laborious. On February 8 a sort of make shift elevator was tried out and on March 1 a ramp was made on which a tub could be loaded and hauled out by truck or tractor. With many loads by this method the job was completed.

In March 1975 a short tramway and dump cart were built and the job of excavating the multiple cubic yards of dirt and sludge from the basement of the mill begun. Excavation continued through 1975 and perhaps later.

In July the porch roof was shingled.

Members stayed over night to protect the Mill at Halloween once more in 1975.

On April 10 members picked up culverts to use in the tail race.

The large culvert was replaced and covered for the tailrace July 10, 1976. The culvert was bought second hand from the state. John Patti did the excavation, installation of the culvert, and the back fill.

Early in August work was done on the Mill basement floor and steps were built.

Birth of the Festivals

The Shamrocks and volunteers were increasingly in need of more money for material and supplies. Mrs. Vern (Irene) Nagel of Panama had been consulted frequently early in the project about the possibility of establishing a museum. It was she who first suggested a pioneer crafts festival, deriving the idea from the Early American Handicrafts

Society which promotes such ventures and of which she was a member. The Sienkiewicz family was also familiar with such festivals and had visited some.

The 4-H had sought expert advice from the start. Among those who visited the mill in the employ of New York State were Geoffrey Stein, assistant curator, New York State Department of Education, and later David Goff (May 3, 1925-July 27, 2005), the mastermind of the well established crafts festival (established in 1965 and still running) for his Madison County Historical Society. Before his visit of February 12, 1972, Goff had strongly recommended the festival from a list of ideas given him by Mrs. Sienkiewicz in a phone conversation. The Festival must have been in mind when the Society put in an order for flax seed in April. The intent was to grow flax and demonstrate as much of the process of converting it to linen cloth as possible at some point.

The Festival was firmly planned before December 1, 1971. On December 21 Mary Sienkiewicz applied on behalf of the Shamrocks for use of the mill for a festival scheduled for October 7 and 8, 1972. The request was granted. The dates were later changed to September 16 and 17 and the Festival expanded to include both the mill and events at the Busti Firemen's Grounds. Dorothy Sienkiewicz was the first Festival chairman. John Galati helped. It included not only pioneer craft demonstrations and Mill tours but a short repeating stage melodrama, an antiques exhibit, a hammered dulcimer performance by Vern Johnson (not the same Vern Johnson who was later Society president) who had played for the 1923 Centennial street dance, a Saturday night square dance, a Sunday morning religious service in the mill, and a Sunday afternoon pony pull organized by Allen Barton. The adult admission price was one dollar per day.

The 1973 Festival with Martha Carlson chairman added a vegetable judging contest and Einar Anderson's clown and invisible dog act. Two horse drawn wagons were employed to take people back and forth to the Mill. There were a total of 71 crafts demonstrated. Jesse Robbins, then a student in Southwestern School demonstrated a printing press. There was a chicken barbecues and pony pull again. Attendance was given as 3,000. The Sunday morning church service at the Mill had an attendance of 60. The sermon was delivered by Jim Swan. 1000 people from 20 states and Belgium went through the Mill.

The Busti Festival was said to be the first historical craft festival in this area, although that claim is uncertain. (The Clymer Tulip Festival, for example, had been going on since 1953.) Many of the festivals that sprang up soon after were partly inspired by the successes at Busti but were also encouraged by Mrs. Nagel, specifically the Chautauqua County Historians' Revolutionary Crafts Festival and the Harmony Historical Society's festival at Panama Rocks (later at their grounds in Blockville).

An America The Beautiful Fund grant of \$1,000 mostly paid for the first Festival which netted just about the same amount back. Prodigious effort went into the Festival. Both the general nature or tone and many of the standard features that have characterized and made the Busti Festival unique were present from the first year. Forty three crafts displayed and 1,200, mostly local paid attendance entered the gates. The mill tours, horse

drawn wagon rides, religious service at the mill, and old time square dance at the Grange were free.

Subsequent years the attendance increased, but the proportion and even the absolute numbers of local people visiting declined for the first five or ten years. The size, variety, and profitability increased. Emphasis on the mill decreased for a surprisingly long time.

The 1973 Festival included the

In 1975, in part because of a need to dispose of inventory left over from a not as successful Festival as expected, a small, one day Apple Festival entirely on the mill grounds was held. In 1976 five events were held: a Maple Festival March 28, a quilt show June 13, the two day Crafts Festival August 14 and 15, the Apple Festival October 3, and a Christmas Festival December 12.

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Formation of the Historical Society

Once the restoration of the mill was under way in the fall of 1971, the volunteers assumed responsibility for planning the work and soliciting donations and materials partly independently from the 4-H. This happened on the job, at the meals, and at meetings specifically called. The regular workers were partly, but not entirely identical to the members of the Adult Advisory Board. Robert Schultz, John Sickenkiewicz, Grant Carlson, and Allen Barton were the most consistent volunteers who were not members of the Board. Some members of the Board were not active in the work project.

The Shamrocks wanted title to the mill property, but the Town would not turn the property over to an organization of minors.

Interest in local history on the part of the volunteers and some others in the community was growing and expanding beyond the limits of the mill project.

For all these reasons, an historical society became a concept of obvious appeal. It will be remembered that Mrs. Lydell's original June 30, 1963 letter had hypothesized an "Old Mill – Busti Association" and Mr. Gerace had spoken of the suitability of a non profit organization to direct mill restoration at least twice in 1965.

Robert Schultz was apparently the first person to openly talk of forming an historical society, although in a July 17, 1972 statement he credits "one of the people working on the mill." This was a bold concept at the time because then only two historical societies (not counting one or two school sponsored Yorkers Clubs) existed in the county: the venerable and county wide Chautauqua County Historical Society (1883) and the Fenton Historical Society (1963) in the city of Jamestown which had a population nearly five times that of Busti. Busti obviously served as an example and success story for the many small town historical societies that have since formed locally.

(There had been a Fredonia Historical Society at least from 1863 to 1867 and Jamestown's City Historian, Arthur W. Anderson had tried to form a Jamestown Historical Society in the 1930's but apparently it never actually organized. The Portland Historical Society formed March 13, 1937 but was long defunct by 1972.)

The Society was organized the night of February 2, 1972 at a meeting chaired by Mrs. Sienkiewicz at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Card on Lawson Road. All those present plus several other established supporters of the mill project were designated charter trustees. The meeting concluded at 9:15 p.m.

The original constitution and by-laws were drafted by Ed Pangborn, Robert Schultz (first president), and Norman Carlson, a committee appointed at a February 12 meeting. We used the constitutions of the Fenton Historical Society, the Busti Volunteer Fire Department, and the Lakewood Rod and Gun Club as models. We included as Article VII, section 2 a special clause limiting the definition of active membership to those attending 75% or more of meetings and contributing 75 hours a year or more to the Society. These provisions had been subject to much discussion and were included to guarantee power remained in the hands of the people most interested and active in the project but they proved to be unsustainable because there were not enough people who met the criteria.

By April the Society had \$31.50 in its treasury and it had acquired a postal address: Box 1005, Jamestown. By May the treasury was down to \$30.88 and bills were \$37.45.

In May the Society passed a resolution opposing establishment of a landfill in Busti but in June the resolution was ruled out and an amendment was proposed to the constitution prohibiting the Society from taking official positions on political issues.

On June 23, 1972 the New York State Education Department gave the Society a three year provisional charter. The permanent charter was issued January 26, 1976.

On June 7, 1972 the Society held a "Town Picnic" in the town park. Over the subsequent years it held annual picnics, many at the Grant and Martha Carlson residence. In the late 1980's it started a push to make them a revival of the original Busti Town Picnics that drew thousands between 1908 and 1950.

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The Society had been trying to get out of the practice of meeting in private homes. The June, 1972 meeting was held at the Busti Grange. The September meeting was in the Mill, itself and the October meeting was at the Community Building (now apartments).

Robert Schultz asked the town Board to transfer the title to the mill to the Society by a statement of July 17, 1972. By a deed of December 29, 1972 for one dollar, the town gave the Society the mill and 0.6 acres of land specifically excluding the dam site.

Although the primary stated constitutional purpose of the Society was “to assist the Busti Shamrocks 4-H in the restoration of the Busti Mill,” with the acquisition of the property by the Society, the project in fact became their own. Nevertheless, 4-H children came to the work meetings and helped with many aspects of the work. They also were heavily involved in the Festivals and Festival preparations for many years following formation of the Historical Society. They worked at many off site locations with various fund raising projects, promotions, and community involvement efforts. As of late 1972 the Shamrocks had raised and spent about \$1,500 on the Mill project.

Shamrock membership changed with the years. When the original three mill co-chairmen left the club the respective younger sisters stepped in to the roles of mill project co-chairmen: Dana Sienkiewicz, Mary Lou Carlson, and Linda Pangborn. Although these girls were interested and helpful with the project, they did not and no longer could play roles comparable to the original co-chairmen. Louise Carlson Harvey was in charge of Festival activities at the Apple House through 2011 and Mary Lou Carlson has remained active at the Festival to the present.

Early in 1977 the Shamrocks closed their mill account but maintained a museum fund and continued to co-sponsor the Festival. Some of the original Shamrocks from the time remained active in the project, the Society, and the Festival to various extents into the 21st century.

The mill was put on the National Register of Historic Places July 24, 1976.

By January 1973 the Society had 47 adult members and 17 junior members. A year later membership had increased to 93.

In February 1973 the Society for Preservation of Old Mills had learned about us and made contact. We joined the organization after the March meeting.

Arrangements were made in April to show one of the made-in-Busti clocks from the early 1830's at the Festival.

The meetings in the first year started at 8 p.m. or in reality as much as 20 minutes later to accommodate the dairy farmers. The May meeting possibly set a record, but not by much, finishing at 11 p.m. There were frequent special meetings and extra trustee and committee meetings in the early years.

Among the fund raising efforts large and small accomplished in the summer of 1973 was a clam and corn concession at the Firemen's Gala Days in July. The Historical Society replica mill float won the \$50 first prize in the Old Fashioned Parade.

The July 2, 1973 meeting was held in the new “museum,” the back room of the Mill. Meetings were held there the rest of the summer and reverted to the Community Building when the weather turned cold. Meals for the work crew were suspended in July but resumed later.

The first festival was funded by a \$1000 donation from _____ and essentially broke even. Through the next year the Society was vigorously restoring the Mill and engaging in community activities but usually was hard pressed to pay its bills. In several instances the Shamrocks more or less had to bail us out. The 1973 Festival made a net return of over \$2,700 and we were freed from embarrassment.

Society members attended the venerable WJTN Radio Breakfast Party to promote the Festival in 1973 for the first time.

Also in mid September, the Society moved to return the Ben Anderson stones for a \$100 refund. Either it was never done or Anderson refused the deal. In any event, the stones are still on the grounds.

On October 27, 1973 Ted and Pat Smith hosted a party at their home on Donelson Road, perhaps a substitute for the Festival Appreciation Party which seems not to have been held that year.

We may seem to have had a piano in the Mill that was used in the Sunday morning religious service each year at the Pioneer Festival. We had sold it by November 1973 but had been given another, probably the Ahlstrom we still have, by the beginning of December.

By December 5 the Town had turned over to us the \$263.97 remaining in a Mill fund from when the Town owned the Mill.

In December repairs were made to bring the Ahlstrom piano into good working condition.

At the March 6, 1974 meeting Alex Botka showed films he had taken at the 1972 and 1973 Festivals. He donated these to the Society that same night.

By April 1973 what became known as the Hummiston Diaries from 1864 to 1884 had been dropped anonymously at our door. Dorothy Sienkiewicz type transcribed at least 590 pages of these by the end of the year.

At the June 5, 1974 meeting the meteorite was still under consideration. Norman Carlson had arranged for two teams from Cornell University, each with a \$10,000 proton magnetometer to examine the field later that month.

Also on June 8 the Society erected its mail box and went on the rural route.

There is no mention of a July picnic in the minutes for 1974. That month and the remainder of the summer meetings were held in the Mill.

In August the model mill float was entered in the Bear Lake, Pa. parade and won the \$10 second prize.

In November the meeting was back in the Community Building. A check for \$500 was received from the Town. The Society had worked out an agreement and was being paid for care of historical artifacts.

Throughout 1975 regular monthly meetings were held in the Busti Community Building.

Craft school was again held in 1975.

February 5, 1975 Randy had moved desks from SWCS to the Mill.

We were invited to the Meadville show (again?)

Discussion of moving the Festival to August and so moved. Not stated but must have been voted down.

Locations discussed for a museum were the first floors of the former Francisco's and Lawson and Wilbur stores and the basement of the Community Building. On May 7, 1975 the Museum Committee recommended erection of a new museum building.

March 5, 1975 The Festival would be expanded in the judged exhibits division to include flowers and canned goods. There would also be a junior division. There would be both horse and pony pulls and the clown with the invisible dog. There would be a religious service conducted by the Stewart Family of Wellman Road, and a Saturday night square dance in the Grange.

April 2, 1975 Members at the meeting discussed acquiring the Albert Ecklund farm (at Frank Settlement, corner of Mead Road and Southwestern Drive) and creating a pioneer farm.

In June of 1975 there were discussions and reports regarding rebuilding a dam.

It was decided to raise the Festival admission price to \$1.50 per adult. In June the Shamrocks did some work in the (old) museum).

The Society held an informal picnic and business meeting July 2, 1975 on the Swanson Property on Prosser Hill Road, Kiantone.

In May Jim Larson approached the Society saying he had changed his mind about selling his barn. In July the Society offered him half his asking price, still considered excessive, and he turned it down.

Alex Botka again donated films of the Festivals and Craft Schools. Cataloguing of the collection was again started.

The Christmas Festival was canceled for 1975.

The New York State indoor smoking act took effect in September 1975 and that changed a noticeable feature of the meetings.

At the December 3 meeting, the members moved to buy culverts for the tail race.

In a letter dated January 28, 1976 the Society got word of the granting of its absolute charter.

At the February 4, 1976 meeting the Society received word that New York State was discontinuing its office of State Historian, reflective of the diminishing support local societies that had formed only a few years earlier could expect.

The group agreed to help repair damage to the Firemen's Grounds that occurred during the exceptionally wet 1975 Pioneer Festival

The Society was asked to join the rest of Busti in welcoming the King of Sweden as he passed through Busti April 25.

At the April meeting the group moved to replace the policy of having everyone buy his own lunch at the Festival to a policy of feeding all day workers.

The group held a picnic at the Community Building rather than at the Swanson residence as planned and as done in 1975 due to inclement weather. They moved to install the culverts and build some Mill steps.

The Society decided to have the Chubb Family of Randolph provide music for the Festival dance. Ray Finch's group, which had provided this service for free in previous years, could not be contacted in time.

The group moved to construct tables out of plywood and leg kits it had bought.

On September 1, 1976 the Society moved to buy the air strip property.

On November 17, 1976 the Society sponsored a square dance in the Grange, presumably the Festival appreciation dance.

Expansions

The Society bought the three acre airstrip property across the road on February 8, 1977. It bought the 1.7 acre Jimmy Larson barn, the former Protestant Free Church and district 8 school July 10, 1979. It bought the 12 acre Nelson field May 7, 2008, and the miller house and two acres of property March 25, 2011.

September 6, 1980 Bob rented a jackhammer. He and Randy, Grant and Bruce Carlson, my dad and me tore out the concrete basement floor of the barn.