

# Town of Onondaga Historical Society Newsletter



Tel. 315-214-2383

[www.townofonondagamuseum.com](http://www.townofonondagamuseum.com)  
[townofonodagahistorical@gmail.com](mailto:townofonodagahistorical@gmail.com)

Fall 2025

## *School Days – Part 2*

Natalie Williams-Dardaris



**Makyes Road District 1200**

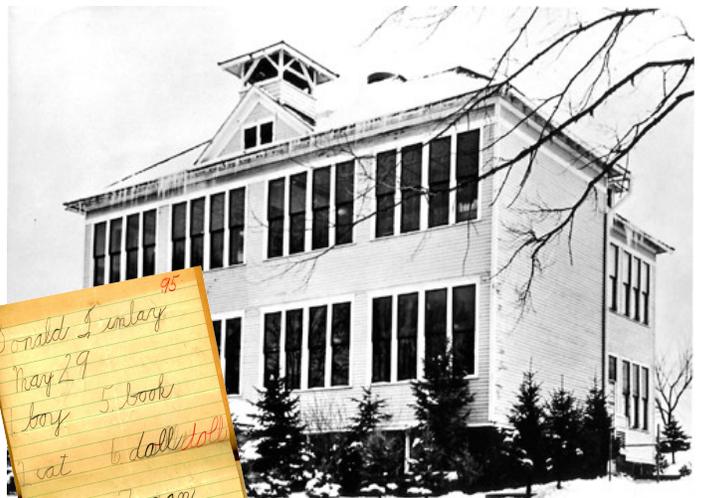
Over the years the town's children attended school buildings in a variety of forms and configurations.

The Levi Ellis home on Tanner Road was a home for the growing Ellis family, built around 1819 to replace the family's first abode, a log cabin. Weary travelers, finding few places for food and shelter on their journeys, were welcomed there as it became a tavern. Levi and Silence Ellis had a son, Albert, whom they deeded the house to in 1835. Albert had married Jane Wells, a strong advocate of temperance, who objected to the sale of liquor in their dining room. There were no schools in the area for the children to attend so Jane made the rounds of the neighbors offering to serve as a teacher. The dining room became a class room for 7 students and the days of good cheer and beer ended.

One room schools dotted the area from Navarino to Sentinel Heights and all areas in between.

The TOHS has a recording of the late Don Finlay talking about his daily walk from Tucker Rd. to the Makyes Rd. District 12 one room school, where he attended with the children of farm families. TOHS has Mr. Finlay's school book exhibiting his ability to learn and write cursive as a 5 year old in the first grade.

Mr. Finlay spoke of the variety of grades and lessons being taught in that one room. However, the teacher was not certified to teach 8th grade so Don had to make his way to the District 6 school on West Seneca Turnpike, the former Town Hall. The following year he was actually bussed to Onondaga Central School in South Onondaga where, according to Mr. Finlay, he worked hard to finish at the bottom of his class.



**Rockwell Union Free**

J. S. Partridge	To J. L. Hendrick	Ac.
Tuition 3/4 quarter	- - - - -	32/100 - \$2.90
" room and board same time	- - - - -	8/100 - 0.75
" 1 Grad Reader	- - - - -	6/100 - 0.75
July 22. 1834.	And payment Sept 2. 1834.	\$4.38
	J. L. Hendrick	

The Partridge Family Collection contains receipts that show Williams Partridge's payments for his children to attend this same school District 12 school in the 1820s. After finishing at that school, receipts show his sons were sent to Onondaga Valley Academy, where he paid for tuition and room and board as daily traveling from the valley to his home in the vicinity of the Fawn Hill Development on Makyes Road would have most likely been impossible - No transportation like today, only dirt roads, horses and carts needed for family and farm. West Seneca Turnpike curved like a snake down to the valley, then a hardy ride back up that hill, and Onondaga Creek would flood in the spring.

Rec'd of W. Partridge one of the Trustees for Dist No 12 Onondaga  
 twelve Dollars and thirty six cents to apply on my wages for tuition  
 in said District for the past summer  
 Dated Nov 30<sup>th</sup> 1831  
 Clarinda M. Lyman

Changes over time led from one room schools to buildings with several rooms housing 2 grades per room to the sprawling buildings of the elementary school stylings of the 1950s. The Onondaga Central School was a WPA project of the 1930s, combining 9 small schools and their students into one large building. When Onondaga Hill experienced their 1950s baby boom, Hill children were educated in a variety of locations including the basement of St. Michael's Church, as the new elementary school was being built and expanded. A former hill resident relayed the story of having to attend North High School to finish their education, instead of being able to attend either OVA or Onondaga Central for high school. Then the Westhill School district came into existence combining Onondaga Hill students with their counterparts in Westvale.

Subject matter taught in the schools underwent changes over the decades. The TOHS is fortunate to have recently received a gift of school books used over 100 years ago by town youth that provide a glimpse of what students of that earlier time were learning.



**Onondaga Hill Elementary circa 1950s**

From the 1913 *General Hygiene Revised* textbook by Dr. Frank Overton, who was the NYS Dept of Health Sanitary Supervisor-

“Teaching the Care of Health – A little child learns a great deal about the care of his body from his parents. When he goes to school, he learns more about its care from his teachers and from the books he studies. Later in life he learns still more from the advice of doctors, from public lectures and from articles in books, newspapers and magazines.

Public schools are among the best of all means for teaching the preservation of health. Most states now have laws that every public school shall teach its pupils how to take care of their bodies. If all boys and girls will learn to do their part in the promotion of health, the next generation of men and women will be a vigorous, happy race. Colds and tuberculosis will be as rare as leprosy is now. Nearly all will live to a ripe old age, and sickness and pain will be almost unknown.”

# Member Memories

As the days get shorter and cooler, I think of my Grandpa Emil Kreis, whose birthday is approaching and whose house we now reside in. We have been here for 42 years now and I remember him so well living here and the stories he would tell us. His family has been here since the 1800s and raised Black Angus cows, potatoes and chickens alongside eleven children. There were many a hired man who also worked here over the years helping him in his fields. At harvest time I can't help but think of the farm families nearby that have either moved on or passed away. Many of them had helped him raise barns and animals and came here after long work days to share a glass of hard cider in his old dirt floor cellar.

Some of the names of those that I know of that are still near are t,he Luchsingers, the Wadsworths, the Rohes, the Tildens, the Robinsons, the Abbotts and the Fishers. I just wanted to state the names of the others he spoke of, that all came here to settle so many years ago and started their own family farms. They came, my Grandfather said, because it reminded them of the forests of Germany and the hills of Switzerland. Many came together. They forever changed the landscape here with their tractors and labor. They hunted the deer, the wild turkeys, and pheasant and even fished in some of the streams. They gathered the wild berries making pies and jams to celebrate at their picnics and barn dances. Their kids went alongside his children to one room schoolhouses built by these men. As I walk the roads of Abbey, Norton, Makyes, and Bussey I think of the Nortons, who used to have a great maple sugar business, the Shelanbargers (sp.?), the Abbeys, the Schwartz's, the Frys, the Hays, the Kellys, the Sanfords, the Yennys, the Rouses, the Rhineharts, and the Hahns. A few of these senior men I actually met when I was a little girl and came to play here with my cousins. Forgive me if I missed some farther down the local roads; these were the ones my Grandfather mentioned.

I tried years ago to ask them all to speak of their stories at the Town of Onondaga Historical Society but they were very private people. I'm glad they shared them in this cellar with each other though. I miss those small farms and the people that lived on them. I have not forgotten you, and I give a toast to them now just naming names. Let us not forget them.

Cheers and Happy Harvest to the great families of Onondaga Hills' yesteryear!

*Susan Kreis Tooley*  
10/9/25

We are sad to announce the death of a founding member of TOHS

**Dick "Bud" Houser**

Dick was a Korean War Veteran and had a lifelong dedication to Walnut Grove Cemetery and to the history of our town.



## FROM THE GIFT SHOP

## CHRISTMAS WISH



Do you know where we are? Many people are unaware of the location of the Town of Onondaga historical museum. We are located at the end of the left side hallway as you enter the Town Hall.

Our museum comprises 2 rooms for public use. One is a display room with many historical artifacts as well as the gift shop. The other is a research room with files of information on all aspects of the town as well as boxes of photos and books.

A recent addition in our gift shop is Dr. Richard Giarrusso's brochure entitled Hattie Farrar's Bank. It deals with the history of stoneware potteries in Syracuse. His decades long interest in stoneware has led him to study, collect, and write on this area of Americana.

So find us in the Town Hall and stop in to browse through our other books and miscellaneous items that are for sale in the Gift Shop.

Janice Pellegrino

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### ADDITIONS TO OUR COLLECTION

Mary Lou Michalec, Curator

**Al Sorensen**

\*Legal Papers

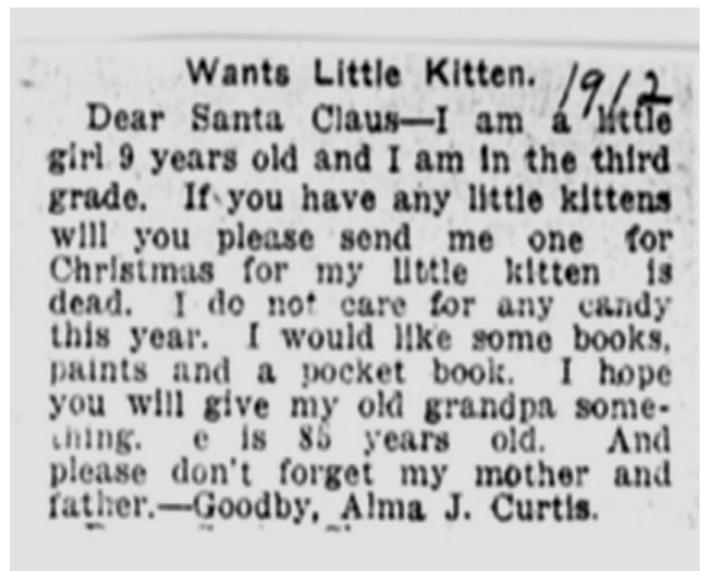
**Judy Carpenter**

\*Ledger of Minutes, Cityview  
Garden Club

We at TOHS want to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the wonderful members who make our organization so special.



Wishing you a joyful holiday season.



# BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

## *Please Patronize These Services*

### *Attorney*

**SAM BEARDSLEY, LAWYER**  
EXPERT LEGAL SERVICES: DIVORCE,  
ESTATES, WILLS, TRAFFIC  
7106 S. Salina St., Nedrow, NY 13120  
315-469-3232  
email: sblawyer@twcny.rr.comz

### *Food*

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4221 Fay Road, Syracuse, NY 13219  
315-487-0647  
Located at the former Morey's Mill  
[www.THECIDERMILL.US](http://www.THECIDERMILL.US)

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5062 Onondaga Rd., Syracuse, NY 13215  
315-488-2632 [www.marcellusnursery.com](http://www.marcellusnursery.com)  
email: MARNURSERY@aol.com

### **DAGUE LAW OFFICE**

Raymond J. Dague, Esq.  
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW  
4874 Onondaga Rd., Syracuse, NY 13215  
315-422-2052  
[www.DagueLaw.com](http://www.DagueLaw.com)

### **GREEN HILLS**

GROCERIES, MEAT, PRODUCE, BAKERY,  
DELI & PREPARED FOOD  
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315-492-1707  
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**"AFTER GLOW TAROT"**  
CLAIRVOYANT READINGS  
4905 Grolier Road, Syracuse NY 13215  
315-925-1243 text only  
email: AfteGlowTarot@yahoo.com  
After-Glow Tarot on Facebook Page

### **THE WALSH LAW FIRM**

D.W.I. & TRAFFIC MATTERS  
5108 Velasko Rd. Syracuse, NY 13215  
315-579-3117  
email: syracusedwiattorney@gmail.com

### *Funeral Services*

**BUTLER BADMAN FUNERAL  
HOME INC.**  
FUNERAL & CREMATION SERVICES  
4504 W. Seneca Tpk., Syracuse, NY 13215  
315-492-4264 email: [butlerbadman1@aol.com](mailto:butlerbadman1@aol.com)  
[www.butlerbadmanfuneralhome.com](http://www.butlerbadmanfuneralhome.com)

### *Physician*

**"MY COUNTRY DOCTOR"**  
PERSONALIZED PRIMARY CARE  
INCLUDING HOUSE CALLS, WOUND  
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315-396-8185 – [www.mycountrydoc.com](http://www.mycountrydoc.com)  
email: [pferenchak@gmail.com](mailto:pferenchak@gmail.com)

### *Automotive*

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315-218-5177 – [www.valleyautopro.com](http://www.valleyautopro.com)  
email: [valleyautopro@gmail.com](mailto:valleyautopro@gmail.com)

### *Garden Center*

**SOLLECITO LANDSCAPING  
NURSERY**  
HARDY SUSTAINABLE PLANTS – some  
with historical ties to the Town of Onondaga  
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315-468-1142 [www.sollecito.com](http://www.sollecito.com)  
Visit Sollecito Landscaping Nursery on Facebook

### *Real Estate*

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344 South Warren St. Suite 202  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315-497-6500  
[www.Mytowncny.com](http://www.Mytowncny.com)

### *Dentists*

**CARROLL DENTISTRY**  
THOMAS J. CARROLL, DM  
5110 Velasko Rd., Syracuse, NY 13215  
315-474-4232 Fax: 315-474-4249  
[thomascarrolldmd.com](http://thomascarrolldmd.com)

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315-488-4261 [www.gasparinilandscaping.com](http://www.gasparinilandscaping.com)

### *Wine & Spirits*

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RETAIL WINE & LIQUOR SALES  
4800 McDonald Rd., Syracuse, NY 13215  
315-475-0227  
[www.shadybrookliquors.com](http://www.shadybrookliquors.com)

## *Thoughts to Ponder*

Submitted by Richard Giarrusso

### *Groucho Marx – Hosting "You Bet Your Life"*

Groucho: (to guest) "It says here, you're a tree surgeon. Is that right?"

Guest: "Yes I am, Groucho."

Groucho: "Did you ever fall out of one of your patients?"

**DUES TIME** – If you haven't paid dues, now is the time. Fill in the form below and return it to the museum. Check your mailing label for date and fill in the year below.

*Town of Onondaga Historical Society Membership Dues*

Membership Year: 20\_\_\_\_ Jan. - Dec.

Annual Dues

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Individual: \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Life Membership: \$200.00 \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Renew: \_\_\_\_\_ New: \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail form to: TOHS-Membership, 5020 Ball Road, Syracuse, NY 13215



Think of the Museum store for  
great gift ideas!



Town of Onondaga  
Historical Society

**TOWN OF ONONDAGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
5020 BALL ROAD  
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13215**



**Please check your mailing label to see if your dues are up to date. If the date underneath your address is not 25 or \*(life member) your membership has expired. Please send in your dues and bring your membership up to date.**