

Wilson Historical Society

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WILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

To all the board, members, volunteers and our community who made this year's fair a success, we extend a very heartfelt **THANK YOU!** You chose to give up your time from holidays, celebrations, family and friends to work towards making our community event a success! Without the assistance we receive it would be impossible to hold an event of this magnitude.

To the vendors, we hope you had a great day and sold many of your wares! We look forward to you joining us again next year for our 45th annual fair!

To the public, we hope you enjoyed your day and the wonderful weather while keeping the memory of our fallen heroes in your heart as we remember what is important about Memorial Day!

Many, many deep thanks for another great fair.

*Congratulations to the
Newly Elected BOD!*

EXCERPTS FROM BOARD OF DIRECTOR MEETINGS**MARCH 2016 ~ JULY 2016**

- Francis and John attended a Bi-Centennial meeting at Royalton and got some great ideas.
- Francis suggested Ellen Colangelo speak on her book at our September 26th meeting. Approved.
- Bob offered estimates for roofing, furnace and created a blueprint he shared with the Board..
- A DAR meeting will be held May 7th at the Barnum Building.
- A painting of Dick Wilson by Robert Williams was offered and accepted by the Board
- John will set up at the Community Days at the Fire hall on May 7th from 10-2
- John and his father, Don Sinclair, were in the pole barn, and found a raccoon there ripping up the upholstery of the Cadillac. Stan Culverwell came and got the animal after Don shot it. John suggests we address the issue of all the holes around the base of the building and will contact Doug Hastings.
- Wanda found a list of members from 1997 including all the life members.
- John Thilk agreed to fix the electric plug on the NW corner of the building before the fair.
- John suggested we consider using the Pole Barn in future fairs for indoor spots for vendors.
- It was suggested that we purchase a quilted insulated warming unit to keep the chicken hot for fairs in the future.
- The addition of the 2 Barn Farm in Dansville was very successful.
- Kelsey Phillips was the recipient of the WHS Scholarship this year.
- There will be 25 ladies touring the facilities and the car museum on July 25th.
- October 24th our speaker is a former mechanic for John Deere Tractors.
- November 28th we will have an Emergency Preparedness Presentation.
- Some structural concerns with the Fittro building were voiced.

THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW HISTORY ARE DESTINED TO REPEAT IT.

Wilson Harbor

In 1846, Luther Wilson, son of Reuben, obtained permission from the Secretary of War to extend piers into the Lake. He built piers 200 feet long, one on each side of the mouth of the creek. The dredging of the channel was first done by horse power, the horses walking on a platform in a circle much like old fashioned horsepower thrashing.

The same year, Mr. Wilson built a storehouse and began buying grain and shipping fruit. He also opened a shipyard that year, and constructed for his own use the schooner, R.F. Wilson, which ran between Wilson and Oswego.

Among the vessels built by Luther Wilson and others were the following:

1846	R.F. Wilson	1847	Niagara	1848	Emblem	1849	Forest
1849	Almira	1850	Enterprise	1853	Josephine	1854	Belle Atkins
1862	Active	1863	Meteor	1863	Eurika	1863	Fleet Wing
1866	Pilot	1867	Live Oak	1875	Plow Boy	1875	Trader
1876	Union and Others						

In 1817, the schooner "Mary" was driven ashore just east of Wilson and went to pieces. She was loaded with merchandise from Oswego for the merchants of Niagara County.

In 1854 the schooner "Isabel" went ashore in a snowstorm with the loss of her cargo. Also in the same year, the schooners "Minerva" and "I.E. Riggs" were wrecked in storms.

The "Fleetwing", built in Wilson, was capsized offshore. Captain Orren Quick and crew climbed on the upturned boat and were saved. Mrs. Quick, her son and Samuel Cluck, the cook, were drowned in the cabin.

Nathan Ash was killed at the launching of a schooner in Wilson. In 1848, a Port of Entry was established and Abram Vosburgh was the first customs officer. Miles Vosburg, a grandson, was a customs officer later.

Wilson was a rendezvous for smugglers. By act of legislature, May 9th, 1867, the Wilson Harbor Co. was organized with capital of \$10,000. to further improvement of the harbor. The company dissolved in 1870 and operations suspended for a time. The government then dredged the harbor and extended the piers. Large amounts of fruit was shipped. In the 60's, a Boston firm bought 12,000 barrels or more every year. When the R W & O came in June of 1876, the business at Wilson Harbor gradually decreased.

DID YOU KNOW??

Wilson once had a close connection with Buffalo State Hospital. The catalyst for this connection began in the early 1900s. Changes in the treatment philosophy of mental patients as well as an increasing number of institutionalized patients caused the hospital to seek more land and living space. Around 1908 progressive minded administrators came up with an idea to lease a 36 acre farm along Lake Ontario. The idea was proposed to and accepted. The property they settled on was owned by L.A. Dwight and was located in the village of Wilson at 81 Lake Street not in the Roosevelt beach area west of 12 mile creek as previously believed. The confusion over the exact whereabouts is possibly because The Dwight's did own land west of the village in the Roosevelt Beach area. However more recent research conducted by Dr. James Boles and Melissa Royer from The Museum of Disability History indicates but the main farm and cottage where patients lived and worked was in and around the Lake street address. The Lakeside Colony has also been referred to by at least three different names over the years, two of them being Lakeside Colony and Lake Farm. This may further reason for the confusion.

Part of the reformist views mental health treatment included getting patients outside away from urban areas and into the fresh air of the countryside. Patients did not just go to countryside and sit idle. Doctors and administrators believed that giving them meaningful work to perform as well as recreational pursuits such as fishing in nearby Lake Ontario would aid in their recovery. Indeed, many did recover and found work at nearby fruit farms in and around Wilson. Thus began a very successful four year relationship between Wilson and Buffalo State Hospital.

Surplus vegetables and fruit produced both at the farm and cottage was used to help feed the patient population at the main hospital in Buffalo. From October 1, 1911, to September 30, 1912 the value of vegetables and fruit produced at the farm totaled approximately \$894 dollars. As a result of this relative success, in 1910, after the second year of lease, the hospital board of managers recommended purchasing the Wilson Farm for the sum of \$6500 dollars. In addition to the practicality and economic benefits of the Wilson farm annex, the location's fresh air and recreational opportunities was also touted as a viable treatment option for many of the patients. The following is an excerpt from the Fortieth Annual Report of the Buffalo State Hospital to the State Commission in Lunacy for the fiscal year ending September 30th, 1910.

The Splendid results obtained from the renting of the farms at Wilson are most encouraging, both in the physical and mental improvement observed in the patients, and also in the returns to the hospital of the farm and garden products, which amounted to the value of \$733.95. The purchase of this farm of thirty-three acres for the sum of \$6500 to be used as an annex to the State Hospital seems very advisable. The committee cannot but feel that the benefits derived by the patients will far exceed the money value of the purchase.

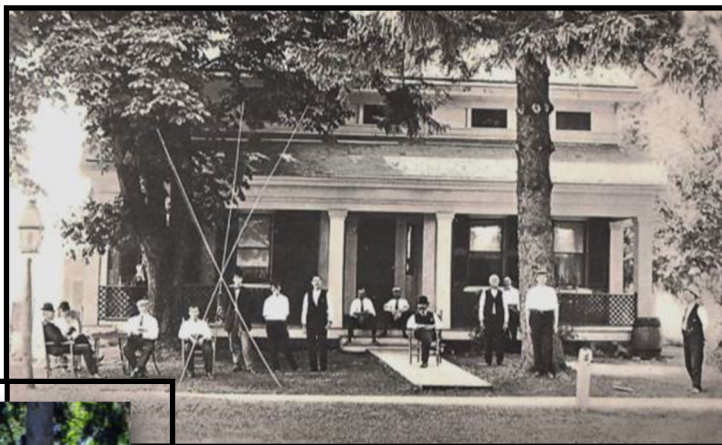
In 1911, Dr Hard, superintendent of Buffalo State Hospital reported to the state legislature that the cottage life in Wilson directly contributed to the improvement, recovery and or discharge of forty-two patients who otherwise would have made little headway. He attributed the success to the comparative freedom, fresh air and its large country advantages. Convalescent patients would come for two weeks at a time in the summer months where they would stay in the old stone house. Originally the farm was meant as a summer-only retreat but in 1909 the colony was kept open the entire year due to overcrowding at the main hospital. It is reported that 77 men and 74 women stayed at the colony that year. It is not clear if this was just for 1909 or if the year-round occupation became the practice.

For the next two years the hospital's Board of Managers kept trying to get State approval to purchase the farm and cottage in Wilson. However, by 1913, they decided to abandon the plan because Wilson had begun to grow and develop resulting in a loss of some of the peace and quiet which was a large reason for the original appeal of the experiment.

If you want to know more about history of The Wilson Farm Colony and Buffalo State Hospital, The Museum of Disability History located at 3826 Main St, Buffalo just east of Bailey <http://museumofdisability.org/> has just published a book titled, *Buffalo State Hospital: A History of the Institution in Light and Shadow* It includes a good history of the Wilson Farm Colony. In closing, I would like to thank Dr. James Boles from the Museum of Disability History for his assistance in the writing of this article.

Submitted by Francis Gallagher

Wilson Town Historian



81 Lake Street Then and Now

1909 and 2016

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UPCOMING EVENTS

August 14th
Car Show/Summer Concert with the Sanborn Band

September 26th ~ 7:00 pm
“A War of 1812 Survivor” Discussion with author Ellen Colangelo

October 24th ~ 7:00 pm
Don Halstead ~ John Deere Mechanic

November 28th ~ 7:00 pm
NYS Citizens Disaster Preparedness