

Town of Ossian Historical Society Newsletter

37th Edition

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One Hundred Years Ago - 1921

By Rhea Walker, Ossian Historian

In 1921 our country was continuing to return to normal after the Spanish flu pandemic. The Spanish flu lasted around two years, starting in 1918. There were four different waves of illness which started in March of 1918 and then started to subside by summer of 1919. It peaked in the United States during the second wave, in the fall of 1918. This wave was responsible for a great number of the deaths in the United States. The third wave of this illness occurred during the winter of 1918 and the spring of 1919 and it subsided during the summer of 1919. The world first believed that the spread had stopped by the spring of 1919. The spring of 1920 saw a fourth wave occur in certain isolated areas including New York City. New York City reported 6374 deaths between December 1919 and April 1920. Other U.S. cities, Detroit, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Minneapolis and St. Louis were hit hard and had death rates higher than all of 1918.

In April of 1919, shortly after arriving at the World War I peace negotiations in Paris, President Woodrow Wilson

became seriously ill with influenza-like symptoms. The severity of his symptoms were covered up and it was claimed he had caught a cold. Despite almost derailing the talks, he fully recovered and returned to the U.S. that July.

By the middle of 1920 the deadly strain of the flu had faded enough that the pandemic was over in many places, even though there was no declaration that the end had come.

I was wondering if the Spanish flu pandemic affected the way the residents in our area went on with their lives, whether they went about business as usual or stayed home more and took some precautions. I used local newspapers to see what their comings and goings were, selecting the time period of 1917 through 1921. I did not find anything in the newspapers that stated any special precautions were taken here and World War I was also in progress at that time and had a tremendous effect on our country. Many places banned public gatherings, shut schools, churches and movie theaters and mask wearing was widely adopted.

The local papers reported local news, the comings and going's of the citizens in the area. Around April 1, 1917

Mr. Ralph Rolison of Ossian was in Canaseraga on Thursday and Mr. Harry Fenton of Ossian was in Canaseraga on Wednesday that week also. The Canaseraga Times reported in its June 8, 1917 issue that Mrs. Sarah Pearce and Mr. Ralph Rolison of Ossian were guests of Joseph Burdict's Wednesday.

Later in the year, the Friday, November 16, 1917 edition of the Times reported that Issac Knapp of Ossian brought to Canaseraga, for shipment, Wednesday, 148 lambs for which he received \$2400. In the same paper it was written that Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Shay and family of Ossian attended church in Garwoods on Sunday. On Wednesday of that week Zephyr Fontaine and Miss Agnes Rawlings were married at the Presbyterian parsonage in Ossian on Wednesday afternoon.

A son, Vincent John, was born to Mr. and Mrs. John Barron in the city hospital at Ithaca Dec. 18, 1917. Mrs. Barron will be remembered as Marion Mitchell.

Starting off the new year, 1918, Miss Joyce Kenney, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Karson Kenney and Mr. Marshall Mitchell both of Ossian were united in marriage Tuesday at three o'clock Jan. 1st at the Presbyterian manse in Dansville by Rev. Stanley Gutelius. They were attended by Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Kenney. Following the ceremony Mr. and Mrs.

Mitchell left over the D. L. and W. for Buffalo and other points.

The marriage of Miss Thelma Linzy and Mr. Dorr Bonner took place during the week of 4/14 – 4/20/1918.

The Nunda News reported on 1/4/1919 that Lucius Fenton was home for Christmas and returned to Ithaca Monday morning where he is attending college.

The Dansville Express reported in its 2/16/1919 edition that Dr. LaMonte of Ossian has located in Canaseraga and is practicing there.

In the July 31, 1919 issue of the Dansville Express there was an article about a very pleasant social gathering of neighbors and outside friends at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Shay in Ossian Tuesday night. It is said that it was a great event of the season in that town, where the people are solidly united in everything pertaining to the social or religious welfare of the community. There were fully two hundred present, and some of them came quite a distance. Mr. and Mrs. Shay opened their commodious house in which with the spacious veranda, guests were protected from the dampness. Refreshments were served, there was music, and much visiting, as it was an occasion when the members of the Bonner and Shay families came together in numbers.

The Canaseraga Times, 10/9/1919 edition, said that Charles Fenton of Ossian is very ill at home. Also reported was that Earl Shay has moved from Livonia to the Royal Whitney farm near Canaseraga.

The 3/4/1920 edition of the Dansville Express reported that Carl Rawlings died at Canaseraga. He was 28 years old and worked as a farmer and was married and has children. The cause of death was not given. At one time he had worked on Miss Celia Bonner's farm in Ossian and that his parents and his brother, Bernard, are now living on Miss Bonner's farm.

The Canaseraga Times stated in their Comings and Goings column dated 11/12/1920 that the Rev. Mr. Fraser, who had resigned as pastor of the Ossian church has reconsidered his resignation and has decided to remain for another year. So the pastor was both going and coming in the same column.

The Times reported in the next weeks paper that Floyd Shay of Ossian sold his entire crop of beans to Rowe and Kennedy of this place last week for \$5300. They were marketed in one day on a motor truck.

The good news is that in the Times edition 3/21/1921 it was reported that Mr. Ralph Rolison was in town Thursday and Mr. Harry Fenton of Ossian was in town on Wednesday. I was happy to see that they survived the Spanish flu pandemic

and even came to town on the same day of the week that they came to town in 1917.

Smart Millinery for Matrons



THE NUNDA NEWS, NUNDA, N. Y., JANUARY 7, 1921.

Peter DePuy's Banking House

Nunda, N. Y.

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Let us serve you.

— WE PAY 4% INTEREST —

Deposits made on or before the 3d day of any month, will draw interest from the 1st.

Sources: The Canaseraga Times
The Dansville Express
The Nunda News
One Hundred Years Ago

Arrangements are being made to celebrate in Geneseo, February 23rd, the one hundred anniversary of the incorporation of Livingston County of which Geneseo is the county seat. A committee composed of Wm. E. Dana and W. J. Wood of Avon and county Judge Doty and Supervisors Clerk Clancy of Geneseo has been appointed as a committee who will prepare a program for a days meeting that will draw many to the county seat.



The Dansville Express 2/14/1921
Death of Andrew McCurdy at 95.
Born, Ossian, Jan. 31, 1826. Died,
Geneseo, Jan. 14, 1921

Andrew McCurdy, one of the oldest residents in Livingston County, died at the house of his daughter, Mrs. J. W. Cowan, in Geneseo, at noon Friday, Jan. 14, 1921, at the age of 95 years. He had been with his daughter for some months, had no long illness, but grew weaker as

the end approached, passing away as peacefully as an infant taking its rest.

Mr. McCurdy was born in the town of Ossian, Livingston County, N.Y. January 31, 1826, on the farm where he resided until a short time ago, and he was the son of James D. and Jane (McNair) McCurdy. His education was begun in the district school, located two miles from his home, which he attended with punctuality, striving to master the rudiments of learning. In the fall of 1848, Andrew matriculated at Alfred University where his interest in and a burning desire for a scholarly education was intensified, and much of his inspiration in after life was due to his year's sojourn at the great school; early displaying evidence of a superior mind which a university training would have greatly enriched and broadened. Owing to the failure of his father's health, Andrew returned home, and with a younger brother, James, worked the farm on shares, subsequently intending to return to his studies, but receiving a portion of the homestead as his inheritance, his effort to make the soil produce as formerly quickened his interest in farming, and naturally he lost the desire for the completion of his college course, a regret for later years.

On June 21st, 1853 Mr. McCurdy married Miss Jannett Scott of Ossian, daughter of John Scott, who came from Rosburg, Scotland, in 1816. Their family

consisted of Margaret Jane (deceased), James Earle, Laurence Scott (deceased), Fred Ernest and Alice May. Mrs. McCurdy passed away of a complication of heart trouble and paralysis, September 20th, 1894, deeply mourned by family and a felt loss in the community.

Mr. McCurdy in politics was formerly a republican, but of late years had adhered to the prohibition principals; was interested in the organization of the local grange and served as its master; trustee for many years of his school district; and for some time was a member of IOOF Lodge of Dansville, but thinking that membership in an oath-bound order conflicted with the gospel of Christ, he applied for and obtained a card of chairperson. Though not an office seeker, Mr. McCurdy was chosen trustee of his township, subsequently was elected supervisor, serving two years, 1878-80, discharging the duties of both offices to the satisfaction of his constituents. He was an honored member of the Livingston County Historical Society to which he has contributed some papers of local interest.

Having given his life to the direction of a large farm, being a close observer of nature, from boyhood a lover of good literature, appreciating its culture value, Mr. McCurdy therefore was well informed on general history, agricultural science and current events; and from his

experience in public life and membership in various societies, he expressed his thoughts to an audience with clearance and forte and contributed freely to any worthy appeal to wherever his convictions of truth led him, of his energy and financial means.

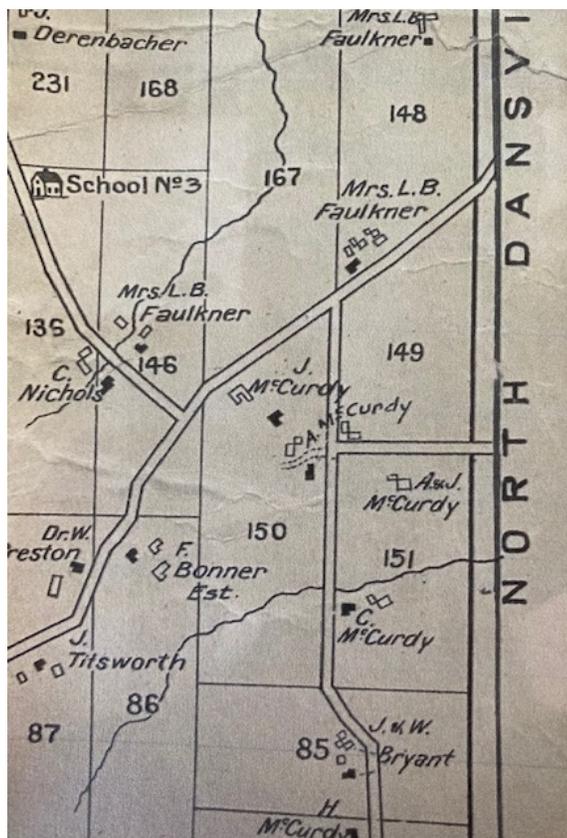
Naturally becoming interested in the history of the McCurdy family, he had visited various parts of the country and numerous relatives in search of data confirmatory of the family's eminent Scottish ancestry and of its influence on our national life, which history he once arranged for the press, but the MSS was lost.

In religious faith Mr. McCurdy was an Adventist, deeply embedded with the tenets of his church, with an abiding faith in the Bible as the word of God to sinful man; obedience to which one may obtain, through Jesus Christ, salvation by a resurrection from the dead, or a like change to the living saints at His second coming, unto immortality and eternal life and together, with all the chosen of God, to inherit a redeemed earth as their everlasting abode.

Besides the children mentioned above, Mr. McCurdy leaves ten grandchildren. Funeral services were held in Geneseo on Sunday, Rev. T. M. Carlisle, pastor of the Presbyterian church, officiating, and the remains were at once brought to this village and interred in the family lot in

Greenmount, Rev. S. F. Gutelius of the Dansville Presbyterian Church officiating at the burial.

Source: The Dansville Express



Ossian Map 1914

The road that the school is on is Rowe Rd., Mrs. L.B. Faulkner is on Ossian Hill Rd. and road that the McCurdys are on is McCurdy Road.