



Warrensburgh Historical Society

WARRENSBURGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 4

WINTER 1999

The Merrill Magee Auction in Warrensburgh By Ed Kreinheder

The Merrill Magee auction held on July 21, 1979 was no doubt the finest auction ever held in this area. It was managed by Wm. Doyle Galleries of New York City in a very creditable manner.

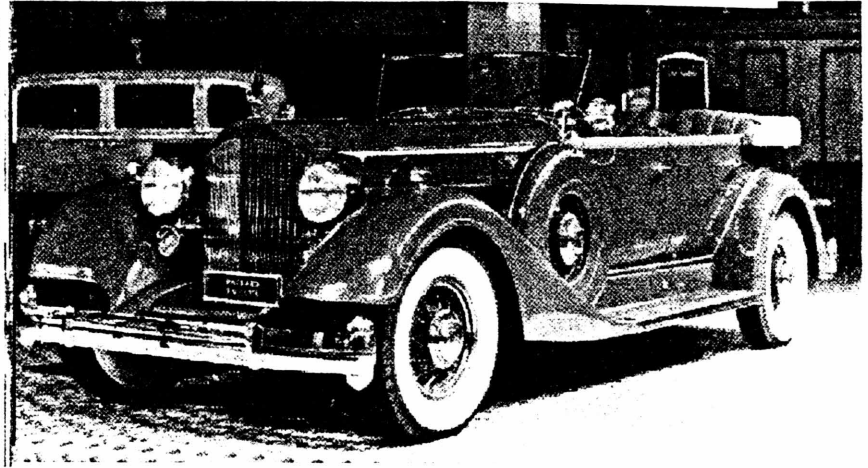
It took place on the premises of the old mansion and grounds, and represented generations of fine antiques of the Griffing and allied families of the area, and items collected by the Merrills. Mr. Magee married Mrs. Merrill in her later years and preceded her in death, and do not believe any of his items were represented in the collection.

No items were brought in as is usually done when an on site auction is held at an old mansion to enhance additions by the auctioneer or dealers. It was a straight honest auction.

There were 537 lots, and with the exception of furniture and important items many similar items were grouped in bunches. For example all the stoneware jugs, and crocks of which there were a great many, quite a few decorated, were sold in two lots, some with china, silver, etc. So there were probably several thousand items in all. Most items in the early part of the sale were in the \$150 class or less.

Although listed as No. 1 the 1934 Packard special Deluxe eight did not come up until things were well underway. This was the Phaeton or open touring car the Merrills bought in 1934. Looking at both Pierce Arrow, and Packard cars they found it difficult to make a choice but finally decided on the Packard if they could have the same leather upholstery and paint as the Pierce Arrow. This was arranged, and finally the new Packard was delivered, as ordered and presumably, they were well pleased.

The car was always garaged and chauffeur driven. When I saw it some years previous it was jacked up in a heated garage and covered with a large



1934 Packard Special 8 Deluxe Phaeton sold at the Merrill Magee Auction

cloth, and it still had the appearance of a new car.

The car was auctioned by an attractive young lady named Wendy Gold, an expert and experienced auctioneer, she was perfectly capable. It started out slowly and she laughed and said "Make me work!" Finally when it got to over \$35,000 there were only two bidders left. One was an active bidder the other hung back. I don't know what his strategy was, he waited each time until the hammer was about to drop before he bid. The bids were in increments of \$5,000. Finally it got to \$65,000 and the slow bidder waited too long. The auctioneer dropped the hammer and the car was sold. The slow bidder protested vigorously that he was still bidding. The young lady said she had given him enough time, evidently she was exasperated with him. I heard later the purchaser was soon able to

turn the car over at a \$10,000 profit. Classic cars in original fine condition are worth much more than restored ones, even if restored to near perfection.

Exceptional items in the sale that brought high prices were an 18th Century Hepplewhite sideboard at \$1900, an old Staffordshire platter depicting the 13 states at \$650, a bow-backed Windsor chair for \$725. A group of Eskimo and Alaskan Indian items grouped in 7 lots brought a total of \$5,350, tray of Rhine wines \$425, a Sterling silver tea and coffee six piece set for \$2400, two old Staffordshire Erie Canal plates \$400, a Currier and Ives print, "Edward and Swiveler \$550, an 18th century Chippendale presentation mirror \$1200, Oriental rugs up to \$2000, and a maple tester bed for \$1200. These represent very sturdy prices when you include the 10% premium charged and

(Continued Auction page three)

From the President

Fright Night, our October program wherein our guest, Catherine LaBier, recounted tales of fright and horror, was exceedingly well received by a packed house. All of her stories ended with a moral that intrigued the youngsters and evoked memories in the oldsters. John Cleveland had our table prepared in an exciting Halloween theme. Thank you to The Richards Library for the use of their facilities.

It had been my intent to detail in this column, with significant bias, the development of our current Town Hall expansion project. I was then reminded that the purpose of this publication is historical and not editorial and that any comments here made might be construed as representative of our membership as a whole. Acquiescing to this propriety, I here then offer this historical photograph of Burhan's Mansion. Once, this beautiful estate of one of Warrensburgh's most prominent forefathers, sat majestically atop the hill directly to the East of our present Town Hall. It looked down upon Main Street from the Western façade and toward the East it commanded an expansive view of the Schroon River and of the many mills that were then a major component of the community of Warrensburgh



Taking this one liberty, I quote Henry David Thoreau, who said: *"Thank GOD, they cannot cut down the clouds!"*
State of the Society...

At the November meeting of our Board of Directors we discussed the lack of active participation in this organization. Two matters were realized.

With regard to elections at the Annual General Membership Meeting that will be held on February 10th, we will be voting to fill the seats of President, Vice-President, and three Directors. At this time, nominations for Vice-President and one Director has been accepted. This by incumbents Patricia Terrell, Vice-President and LeeAnn Rafferty, Director. This will leave three empty seats including President, on a nine chair Board. If any member in good standing of this Society would have an interest in being an active participant of our Board, please let it be known to Jean Hadden, Director, 623-4504.

The participation issue is of a more general nature. Our membership approximates eighty. Of those, perhaps twenty are not local. Allowing for other specific circumstances there exists some fifty folks that could help on occasion. The fact is, most of you don't even attend our programs. The hard truth is that all active participation has been by the same five to eight members. This, from setting up chairs to writing for the Warrensburgh Historical Society Quarterly. If you would care to address this concern please call Jean Hadden or Linda Denner, Secretary and WHSQ Editor, 623-4504. If we do not have substantial commitments to increase active participation a reorganization of this Warrensburgh Historical Society will be imminent.

Delbert Chambers, President

NOTICE

The recording of history is an interpretive and ever changing study, therefore the Warrensburgh Historical Society or its Board of Directors or members shall be held liable for the accuracy or authenticity of the material herein.

Board of Directors

Delbert D. Chambers, President
Pat Terrell, Vice President
Sandi Parisi, Treasurer
Linda Denner, Secretary
John Cleveland
Leonard Denner
Jean Hadden
LeeAnn Rafferty

Quarterly Editor..Linda Denner

Calendar of Events

December 16, 1999.....Annual Christmas WHS Dinner at the Merrill Magee House Cocktail hour 6 p.m.
January 27, 2000 Board of Directors Meeting 7 p.m. Glens Falls National Bank
February 1, 2000, Deadline of the WHSQ
February 10, 2000 Annual General Meeting of the WHS 7 p.m. The Richards Library
February 24, 2000 Board of Directors Meeting 7 p.m. Glens Falls National Bank
March, 2000 Mailing of the WHSQ

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Linda and Len Denner
Abbie Davis Hastings
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Quarterly
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7% tax. However, there were bargains and sleepers there also and today with twenty years of creeping inflation the prices would be substantially higher. The custom eight 1934 Packard for example would be worth over \$100,000 and likewise the same with other choice items. All in all, it was no doubt one of the finest auctions ever held in the North country and we consider ourselves fortunate to have been able to attend. We bought some of the small lots but do not remember which.

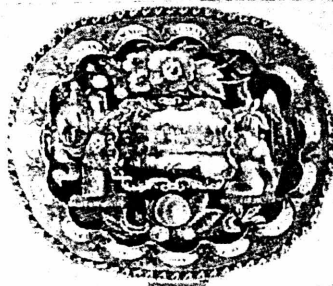
We did buy a fine cherry drop leaf table of the 1820 period, wide 20" single board top and leaves, six legs two to swing out and support the leaves. In fine condition it brought \$325. A woman in back said she was still bidding, but the auction moved fast and when the hammer went down the sale was final.

We also bought a very important document on large parchment sheet dated 1766 and being the Albany Constitution of the "Sons of Liberty". It was a lengthy document stating the Societies discontent with taxes they considered unconstitutional and other impositions of his majesty's government. This was the genesis of the American Revolution and these feelings gradually led to war with the mother country nine years later. The document was signed by 94 important men of Albany and it is printed in full in the book, "American Revolution in New York", prepared by the Division of Archives and History printed at Albany in 1926. Unfortunately the state was unable to acquire this at that time but was able to print it in full. We paid \$325 for it at the auction, proving that some of the New York City dealers were sleeping at that time. We later sold it for well over \$3,000 and it went into auction again bringing \$5,000.

We also bought another document, the commission appointing Stephen Griffing as Ensign in the 4th Continental regiment July 1, 1780 signed by Governor George Clinton. After the war Stephen settled in Thurman right across the bridge over the Hudson and is the ancestor of all the Griffings in this area. We bought this for \$45 and kept it for some time

but there seemed to be no interest locally so we sold it.

We had a great time at the auction and did quite well in a business way. We wish we could have kept more of the items we bought but that was the way we made our living at that time and had to sell to be able to buy. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have attended this auction and the memory of it will survive for years.



States Series 1835 19" Staffordshire Plate

Pat's Column

As Town Historian, Pat collects items and newspaper clippings that are of note to our Society. Though a common occurrence today multiple births were a novelty in 1907. The following story appeared in the Warrensburg News of March 23, 1907.

"Twins Follow Triplets"

Nature is Again Generous to This Family Dwelling on Oak Street

If the walk on your side of the street should raise up a couple of feet do not get frightened. It's only Otto Fish, of this village, walking on the other side. Two baby girls-twins-were born to him Saturday and he naturally feels exceedingly weighty over the event. The father, mother and children, who have been named Fannie and Hattie, are all doing well.

By one, twos and threes, singly, in duets and triples has nature been generous with this Fish family. Clifford, the first born, is a chubby youth in his fifth year, Viola, Vernice and Vernon, the triplets, who changed the semblance of things most completely

In Warrensburgh, were born June 30, 1905, while Fannie and Hattie, having initiative and impulse in common, first saw the light last Saturday.

There has never been anything like it before in Warrensburgh.

As did the triplets, so do the twins beam smilingly on all comers and, moreover, they also look like winners.

Dr. James E. Goodman was the attending physician."

Warrensburgh First Methodist Church 1802-3

Judge Kitchel Bishop gave the land where the church edifice stood, a tract embracing the present plot and considerably more. The first church edifice was moved in 1840 west of John G. Hunt's Hardware Store.

In 1802 Judge Bishop bought 62 acres of land south of Hackensack Mountain. In 1807 for a consideration of \$10. He deeded one quarter acre to the trustees of the Methodist Church as long as they make sure of, or occupy it for a place of worship. This parcel is where the Warrensburgh Methodist church and parking lot are in 1999.

August 5, 1926

At the Warren County Fair (covering the area of lovely homes now behind Ashes Hotel) the Warrensburgh Odd Fellows Lodge will have Tag Day at the Fair.

Note that many Veterans are in service at the Fair!

August 12, 1926

The Trolley Company wants to quit! The same aims to abandon our Warrensburg-Lake George line.

August 19, 1926

The fountain and lamppost in the square uptown was nearly demolished last Thursday night when it was struck by an automobile. The fountain, gift of Randolph McNutt from Buffalo, was forced off it's foundation and the electric light bulb and globe were broken.



"Fright Night" storyteller Catherine LaBier entertains a packed house at the Richards Library

Book Review

Grandmother's Memories of Yesteryear
Growing up Near in Warrensburgh and Lake George in the Early 1900's
By Abbie Davis Hastings

Abbie Davis Hastings takes us on a voyage of discovery and charm as she recounted her life in and around this community. From recollections of her own birth in 1914 in a house of Coffin Street, Glens Falls, through the highlights of vivid recollections of raising her own family, the reader will find it difficult to put down this booklet of 26 pages.

School plays, winter sledding and returning home following the path of footsteps in the snow drifts, we gain insight into this simpler time. The tasks of

churning butter is clearly noted on a visit to Grandma and Grandpa Birds' Irish Farm, now Roaring Brook Ranch.

With frequent moves the family relocates to Library Avenue, Burdick Avenue, Smith Street, Harrington Hill, North Caldwell and Potter Brook Road. The Shirt Factory and Woolen Mill are active and provide employment for the family, and family pleasures are going to a picture show, playing tag and picking berries.

Abbie has fulfilled the goal of so many by recording her days with clarity and colorful images. Her style is direct and fast to read. The little booklet is peppered with family and local photographs that are add and connect us with our collective past. What a gift this record must be for her family and beyond that a must have for all of us living or sharing the memories of Warrensburgh.

The book is available at the Richards Library for a modest cost of \$6.00.

Join Us for our Annual Christmas Dinner/Social

December 16, 1999

At

Merrill Magee House

Cocktails at 6 p.m.

Dinner served at 7 p.m.

Choice of Entrees:

Roast Stuffed Pork with Blackberry Sauce

Broiled Salmon with Hollandaise

Boneless Prime Rib of Beef

Tuscan Chicken Boneless Breast with Artichokes, Loves and Tomato over pasta

Soup, salad, homemade breads, dessert, coffee, teas also gratuity and tax for the price of \$18.95 based on a payment of cash or check. Credit cards would be charged a 5% processing fee.

We need to know how many of each entrees is needed at least 48 hours prior to your dinner.

Reservations call:

Delbert Chambers 623-3514

We invite you to Participate in this publication
Submit your Remembrances, Photographs or Stories to our Quarterly
This issue is shorter than our usual eight pages due to a lack of material
Help us to fill the pages and share the experiences of our community

Warrensburgh Historical Society

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