

STEWART WHITMAN FARM, in Ball rd., Brutus, as it appears today from the air. Main barn, on a site at the extreme right in picture, burned several years ago.



AIR VIEW OF HOWARD BALL FARM, east side of Ball rd., opposite the Whitman farm. Pictures of this feature, other than the above, were made available to this newspaper through the courtesy of the Cayuga County Farm Bureau News.

Ball and Whitman Farms Section Of 144-Year-Old Military Tract

Two town of Brutus farms that are part of a 340-acre military tract settled by Moses Dixon in 1807 are still being operated today — 144 years later — by descendants of his, Howard Ball and Stewart B. Whitman, according to a recent article in The Cayuga County Farm and Home Bureau News.

Although Storke's history of Cayuga county, published in 1879, states that Moses Dixon came into this area from Hebron, Washington county in 1808 and settled in the west part of Brutus, family records indicate that he first came to Brutus in 1801 and settled on the Oaklands, where A. C. Kiefer and Rupert Woodcock now own property. But it was in 1807, according to a deed in possession of Howard Ball, that he moved about a mile south and bought 340 acres of the military tract, which now includes the Ball and Whitman farms.

Born in Dutchess county in 1784, where his father was one of the early settlers, having come to this country from Ireland, Moses Dixon's first wife was Jenny Hopkins, who was born in 1787. Some of their eleven children were born before the family left Washington county to travel overland by teams of oxen to settle in Brutus, but some were born here on the present Howard Ball farm after the family inherited the pioneer spirit of their father, and moved on further west. According to available records some of their eleven children died at an early age, but Moses, Jr., Charles, Aaron, Edwin, Marie, Janet, Maynard, and Eugene were survivors. Moses, Jr. was the father of the late Fred Dixon who lived on the farm on the North st. rd., town of Sennett, now owned by Edson Spingler; his two daughters were Nancy and Clara. (Nancy was the mother of Earl Crocker who formerly owned Bellmath Farm in Sennett.) Edwin was a bachelor who worked one part of the original farm after it was split in two, while Charles operated the other. Charles' wife was Emily Mills and their two children were Hattie and Anna.

Moses lived to be 90 years old, passing on in 1874. His first wife, Jenny, died in 1850. His second wife was Abbie Herrick.

Janett Dixon, who was born in 1817 and died in 1899, married Harvey Ball of Auburn, whose family came from New Jersey. Three sons, Edwin, William and Francis, and a daughter, Nettie, were born to this couple. Nettie married Francis M. Barnes.

Francis Ball married Alice Treat and they, in turn, had two children, Charles and Emma. Emma married Guy Whitman and their sons are Stewart Ball and James Dorrance Whitman. Their daughter died in infancy. Thus Stewart and his brother are the grandsons of Harvey Ball and Janett Dixon.

William, another son of Janett, married Margaret Petersen of Fleming, and to this couple, three children were born, Howard Ball in 1896, and Mabel and Ruth. Mabel is the wife of Leonard Carr of Montezuma, while Ruth is the wife of Dr. R. D. Severance of Syracuse. Thus, Howard Ball is a grandson of Harvey and Janett Dixon Ball. Howard received his part of the farm from his father, William, who inherited it from Moses' bachelor son, Edwin. Edwin had stayed on the old homestead and his nephew, William, had worked the farm for him.

The other part of the original farm was worked for several years by Moses' son, Charles, who built the present brick house occupied today by Stewart Whitman and his family. Charles bequeathed his part of the original farm to his nephew, Francis Ball (Stewart's grandfather), who lived on it and worked it for his uncle.

Howard Ball, who graduated from Weedsport High school in 1915, and his wife are the fourth generation on this farm and his six children comprise the fifth generation. In 1924 Howard married Leitha VanAntwerp, who graduated from Port Byron High school in 1918. Their first child, Jeanette, was born in April, 1926. She graduated from Port Byron High school in 1945. In June, 1948, she married David LaDuke of Syracuse, and they have one child, Deborah. James was born in 1929, and works on the farm with his father. He, too, graduated from

Port Byron High school. Guy, born in 1934, is a junior in high school, while the twins, George and Martha, born in 1935, are in their second year of high school.

Born April 21, 1902, Stewart married Dorothy Shepherd, a graduate of Oswego State Teachers' college, on Oct. 22, 1927. Stewart's brother, Dorrance, born in 1905, lives in Rochester.

After graduating from Weedsport High school, Stewart spent two years at Morrisville State School of Agriculture and was graduated from Syracuse university in 1925, having taken the agricultural course there. While Stewart and Dorothy are the fifth generation on part of the original Dixon farmstead, their four children are the sixth generation. Elsie, the oldest child, was born in 1929 and in June, 1950, she graduated from the College of Home Economics at Syracuse university. In August, she married Louis Olney and they are living in Syracuse, where Louis is doing graduate work for his master's degree in the College of Forestry. Mary, the second daughter, was born in 1931 and is presently a student of nursing at the University of Rochester. Ann, born in 1936, is in her first year of high school, while David, born in 1941, is in the fifth grade in Weedsport Central school.

One of Howard Ball's prized possessions is a silver cup, won by Moses Dixon for showing oxen at the first fair and cattle show ever held in Cayuga county. The fair was sponsored by the Cayuga County Agricultural society, which was organized on Feb. 4, 1818, at the home of Amos Adams in Scipio. The fair itself was held on Oct. 20 in a field on the farm of William Bostwick, south of the Court house in Auburn. According to Storke's history, "Twenty-five prizes were awarded, consisting of silver cups and teaspoons, of the aggregate value of two hundred and thirty-one dollars." On one side of Howard Ball's cup is the following inscription:

"Honourable Testimony From the Cayuga County Agricultural Society" Engraved on the opposite side of the cup is the recipient's name, "Moses Dixon." On the bottom of the cup are the names of the silversmiths, "Graves & Fitch." Directly under the name is a sheaf of wheat, their trade mark. On the opposite side of the base is the word, "Auburn." On the other sides of the base are the dates, "Oct. 20," and "1818."

Records of the First Presbyterian church of Weedsport, show that Moses Dixon and Peter Douglas gave \$1,200 toward the purchase of land for the present church edifice which was erected in 1856 after fire destroyed the original building in 1855. At that time the church stood on the site now occupied by St. Joseph's Catholic church. The history of the church contains this statement, "In consideration of their generosity, a pew, or slip, as it was then called, was deeded to each of them and to their descendants."

Today Howard Ball's farm consists of 144 acres but he also owns another one in the town of Mentz which was another Dixon farm, settled by Fayette Dixon, a brother of Moses. Howard, in addition to a good grade herd of 28 milking cows has a farm flock of 150 hens. He raises annually about 60 acres of wheat, has from 30 to 40 acres of corn, 12 acres of soybeans and plants about 35 acres of oats. Mr. Ball is one of the few farmers who, after starting in with soybeans as a cash crop, has kept up their production. The variety he grows is Mukden and for the past fifteen years he has used the high protein soybeans to mix with his corn, oats, and wheat for a home-grown dairy ration, and has not bought any commercial feed in that time. He has his own feed grinder and is quite independent of feed dealers for his dairy

feed. He also has a 30-acre woodlot and has his own saw mill. The balance of Mr. Ball's farm is used for rotated pasture because he can plant practically every acre, except the woodlot. Almost every winter he taps the sugar maples in his woodlot and makes syrup. While his maximum yield was 350 gallons, he averages 200 yearly. On the rich bottom land, his father, William, used to grow sugar beets for a sugar refinery in Lyons. This company used to send a crew of Italians in to pull the beets every fall. His father also used to grow seed corn — old fashioned, long eared, reddish-yellow flint — for which farmers came from far and near to buy for their spring planting.

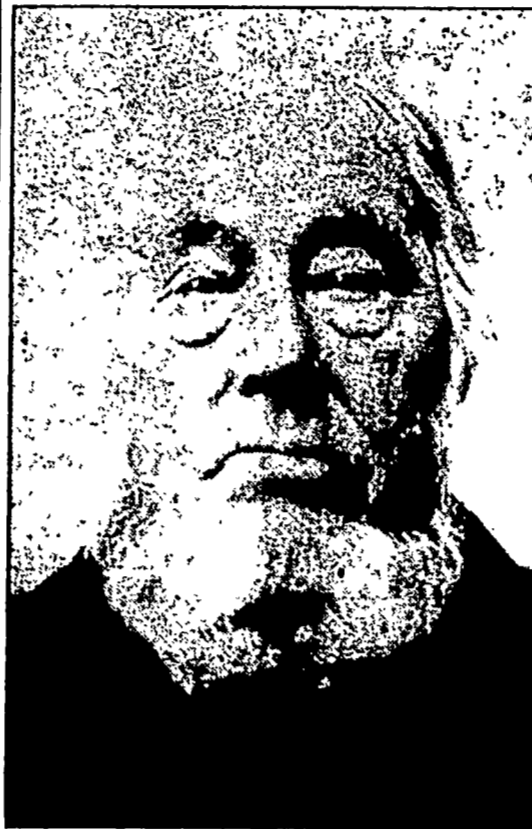
Howard has been a member of the Farm Bureau for many years and also the First Presbyterian church at Weedsport. The milk from his herd is now sold to the Netherlands company at Syracuse. His hobbies are hunting in the Adirondacks and fishing in northern Ontario in Canada. Howard told us about the original Clinton ditch which ran right through the north side of his farm. This he said was a great boon to the early Dixons and other families nearby. The second canal, or the Erie, was just north of the original "ditch" but it was not used so much because of the competition of the railroad when it went through Weedsport. Howard, however, remembers seeing his father load 4 ft. cord wood from the bank of the Erie Canal on to boats which were tied up along the shore.

For many years Stewart Whitman has specialized in poultry and at time has had as many as 3,500 laying hens. During the past couple of years he has tried hatching egg production but found it did not give him sufficient cash return for the time spent on the enterprise and this fall he expects to house 1,100 layers. For the past 20 years he has averaged over 1,000 layers annually. While in the hatchery egg game he produced frozen broilers and roasting chicken which, he said, was a fine way to get rid of his culls and provided a better market than selling the bird at live weight prices. Up until 1945, when he lost his barn, he also had a dairy herd of about 15 milking cows. His reason for concentrating on poultry, he said, was the fact that his older children were girls which did not give him enough "homegrown" help with dairy. His farm today consists of about 176 acres, because Francis, his grandfather, purchased some additional land in 1900 and he himself bought another small tract 10 years ago.

For cash crops he grows 35 acres of hay, though at one time he grew cabbage. He usually has about 40 acres of corn, 30 acres of wheat and 30 acres of oats, which are fed on the farm. For the past 11 years he has kept complete cost accounts in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture economists at Cornell.

Guy Whitman, Stewart's father, came from a potato farm north of the Seneca river and naturally started to grow potatoes on his new farm. The soil proved to be too heavy and sweet, however, which resulted in lower yields and in scabby tubers. This farm was one of the first in this section of the country to grow alfalfa, where it was first grown about 1900, and Guy Whitman had one of the first hay loaders in the vicinity of Weedsport. Many of the old timers pointed their fingers at him when this piece of equipment was purchased, but it soon proved its worth. One of Guy's hobbies was growing English walnuts. He set two trees out in his door yard and today there are five or six bearing trees.

Stewart is a Farm Bureau community committeeman and a former member of the Farm Bureau executive committee. He is a member of Weedsport Grange and



MOSES DIXON, early settler of town of Brutus, great-grandfather of Howard Ball and great, great-grandfather of Stewart Whitman.



EDWIN DIXON, bachelor son of Moses Dixon, once owner of the Howard Ball farm.



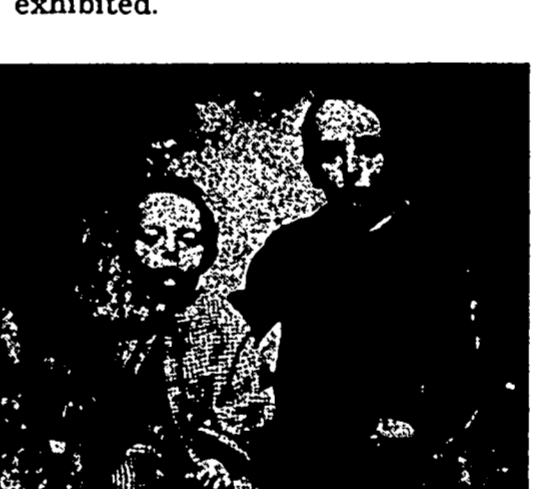
JANETT DIXON BALL, daughter of Moses Dixon, grandmother of Howard Ball and great-grandmother of Stewart Whitman.



This cup, one of the twenty-five prizes awarded at the first Cayuga County Fair in Auburn on Oct. 20, 1818, was won by Moses Dixon of Weedsport, for oxen he exhibited.



VIEW of Stewart Whitman's house in the early 1900's. Stewart is in the buggy with his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Ball.



EDWIN AND WILLIAM BALL, early boyhood picture of father (right), and uncle of Howard Ball.

served as master for two years. He is an elder of the Presbyterian church and a member of the Masonic lodge of Weedsport. He also served on the Brutus town board for a total of 16 years, first as a justice of the peace and later as councilman.

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THE STEWART WHITMANS. Left to right, Mrs. Dorothy Shepherd Whitman, Ann, Stewart and David. The oldest daughter, Elsie, is married and lives in Syracuse, while Mary is at the University of Rochester, studying nursing.



HOWARD BALL FAMILY. Standing, left to right, George, James and Guy. Seated, left to right, Martha, Mrs. Leitha Ball, Howard and Margaret.

6-Month Fire Loss Amounts to \$15

What may be a new low in property damage caused by fire in the Weedsport fire district has been set during the first six months of this year, according to a recent announcement by Fire Chief George E. Wethey. The total fire

loss in this period is a mere \$15, said Wethey.

Becomes Mechanic

Pfc. Earl D. Cummings, son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl W. Cummings of Cato, arrived at Luke AFB, Phoenix, Ariz., recently to assume duties with the 127th Pilot Training Wing as an aircraft and engine mechanic.

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