



Lock 52 Chronicle

The Newsletter of the Lock 52 Historical Society

Preserving and Sharing the History of Port Byron and Mentz

Fall

2020

The Ferguson Family



*Front Row- The young children- Dorothy Murray, Robert, Mary Elizabeth Murray, Buster Bonnel, Bud Murray
Second Row- Ruth, Charles, Olive, Mae, Ed Murray
Third Row- Laura (wife of Charles), Mary and Edward (the parents) Louis Bonnel (Mae's husband) Julia
Top Row- George, Edward, Edna Moyer (Edward's wife), Howard, Edna (Howard's wife), Harold, William*

In September the society was contacted by a caregiver whose client, Edwina Mae Ferguson, had passed away. Edwina never married, nor had any children, so the caretaker had offered to clean out her belongings and see that they were properly disposed of. This was the second time she had done this with her clients. The only relative she knew of was Robert, a 98-year-old first cousin of Edwina's, who lives near Rochester. By way of Edwina and Robert, she knew that the Ferguson's once lived in Port Byron, and so she reached out to see if we would be interested in Edwina's family photos. A search was made to determine if this family was from the area, and finding that they were, the society accepted the collection.

It is always interesting to see what comes in a collection such as this. Will the photos be labeled? Will they show other things like buildings in the background? Will there be some great discovery? Most of this collection was portraits and family groups, and sadly, they were not labeled. Happily, Robert was kind enough to share with us a 1923-family-group photo in which he was able to provide all the names, as he was in the group. The photo was taken by Dayharsh, so we know it was local. It is like a giant key that will open many secrets in the other photos.

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The newsletter of the Lock 52 Historical Society
For memberships, subscriptions, change of address, and other business matters, c/o Mark Emerson at mark63pb@yahoo.com

For archives donations and questions, or other matters: Contact Michael Riley at mriley20@twcny.rr.com

The Lock 52 Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation and education of the history of the town of Mentz and the village of Port Byron. The society is chartered by the New York State Education Department to serve as the local historic society.

You can find us online at;
www.portbyronhistorical.org
www.facebook.com/Lock52HS

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So who were the Fergusons?

Like a number of families, they came to Cayuga County from Ulster County in the lower Hudson River valley. They were farmers and they moved around the county between Throop, Conquest, and Mentz. Edward Ferguson married Hannah Petty, and they had seven children, one of whom was William. William married Mary Elizabeth Dowling of Conquest, and together they had ten children. William, Mary, the ten children, and their spouses, all can be seen in the photo. It is always nice to look at the faces of the people you are researching.

One of the Ferguson sons married Vesta Newkirk, who was the daughter of Lewis Newkirk and Mary Aldrich. The Newkirk's were another family from Ulster County, and they became very prominent in the local livery business, buying and selling horses, and supplying wagons and carriages. Their barn was directly across from the Port Byron hotel (Herbst Pharmacy) and next door to the Howard House.

Just to show you how the connections run, one of the Newkirk children married Harriet, who was the daughter of Chauncey and Mary Jane Wethey. The Wethey family runs deep in local history, and they are another family that moved here from the Hudson Valley.

Over the years many of the Ferguson family moved out of the area. Those who remained here are buried in the Throop Cemetery.

Submitted by Mike Riley

Welcome to Our New Quarterly Newsletter

In spite of the ongoing pandemic, it has been a very good year for the Lock 52 Historical Society. As many remained home with normal meetings canceled, our volunteers decided to put their free time to good use by clocking in over 250-hours (in a socially-distanced manner) to renovate our Library/Research room, curate the Dorothy "Chick" Walker collection, organize our Family Files and curate our artifact collection.

In the past many of you have received our annual newsletter as a membership renewal notice. However, going forward the Board felt that our members deserved more. And frankly, with all that is going on, it would be difficult to fit it all into an annual newsletter!

The Port Byron Family Tree

An Exciting New Project

This year the historic society began an area-wide family tree to seek out all those connections between families that have occurred over the decades. It is an old joke that everyone is related somehow, and this project seeks out those connections.

We started with the King family. This seemed to be the most logical place to begin as they were a founding family, and with Lasuvius H. King's 1922 History of Port Byron and Mentz, it was easy to start adding branches to the tree. We will continue to add to the tree as we research new families. There is no real method to our madness, and we never know who will be added next. For instance, when we received the Ferguson donation, we wanted to see who Edwina Mae Ferguson was and how she was a part of the community. That led to an in-depth investigation that is outlined elsewhere in this issue.

We are creating this project on Ancestry.com. Many of us use this platform for our own family genealogy work, and it has the most resources to help compile a history fairly quickly. If you are an Ancestry.com user, just look for the Port Byron (NY) Tree. If you are using another platform and want to know what we have, send us a note so we can help you out.

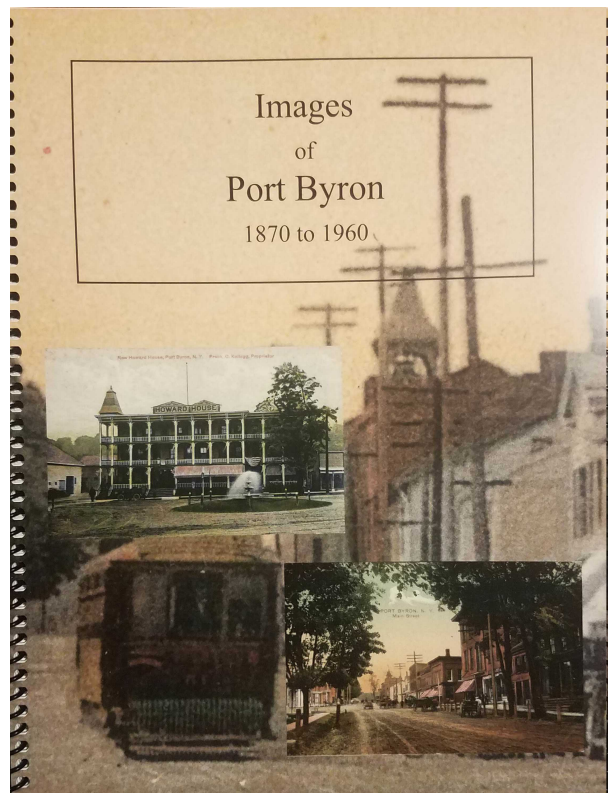
As I write this in mid-November, we have 1,491 names on the tree. In addition to this column, you can keep up with this project on our website blog, where we will post our latest addition.

If you have thought about starting your own tree and really don't know where to begin, send us a note. We are here to help you get started. Genealogy is the largest hobby in the world and it can be great fun to learn about your ancestors.

Our New Book

This past summer we were excited to print our new book, **Images of Port Byron 1870-1960**. The book is a photographic trip through the village, using some of the two-hundred-postcards that have been sold throughout the years, and other images found in the society's collection. In addition to the many photos, there are short histories of the village, the downtown, the canal, the trolley system, and mincemeat production.

The cost is \$20.00 plus \$3.00 if you wish it to be mailed. You can also find it on sale at Herbst Pharmacy.



You can help with the printing of this newsletter by sponsoring an advertisement.

Digitization Project

This summer we received a generous gift from the Mills family that allowed us to digitize and make available Port Byron's historic newspapers from between 1840 and 1950 (not all the years are covered in the 1800s.) These papers include the Port Byron Chronicle, the Port Byron Herald, and the Port Byron Gazette. We are always on the lookout for any and all old Port Byron newspapers to add to this worthwhile project. And this fall we were able to add the old Orange and Black school newsletter from the 1920s and 30s.

Finally, we have just submitted to Advantage Preservation the full twenty-year library of the InPort newspapers. We hope to have these uploaded by February 2021.

All these papers, and a lot more, can be found on the Digital Collection page on our website. We invite you to take a “digital walk” through these remarkable records, and we are sure you will find some very familiar names!

Regina Gates Notecards

One of the happy by-products of the Pine Street reorganization was our re-acquaintance to our collection of Regina Gates' oil paintings. Many remember Mrs. Gates as their beloved Port Byron art teacher. The fundraising committee decided to honor Mrs. Gates and her beautiful landscapes, still lifes, and seascapes, by offering sets of ten notecards at a price of \$15.00. These notecards can be purchased by accessing our Website Store or by contacting Joyce Biss at 315-480-5733. These sets make meaningful holiday gifts!



Lock 52 Historical Society of Port Byron, NY

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Make out Check and mail to: Lock 52 Historical Society of Port Byron, c/o Mark Emerson, 94 Halsey Street, Port Byron, NY 13140. Paypal is available on the website.