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The John C. (Johannes Christian) Nellis Inventory

This is a wonderful and revealing inventory, done for probate purposes after the death of John C. in 1839. It not only lists the furnishings in each room – it identifies those rooms either by name or direction (i.e. N, S, E, W). Names, direction and furnishings have helped us to identify uses of these areas as we proceed to interpret, refurbish and secure the Nellis Tavern’s place in Mohawk Valley history.

The original 1½ story farmhouse (ca. 1747) that later became a tavern and store was built by Christian Nellis (1697-1771). His son Christian, Jr. (1734-1808) is cited in several historical references as running a tavern ca. 1783 and later a store (most probably our current building) where he and his sons Johannes Christian (1769-1839) and Jacob Christopher (1771-1845) oversaw the ca. 1792 raising of the building roof to create a 2nd story. The ca. 1792 date of raising the roof coincides closely with the ca. 1794 date of John C.’s marriage to Anna Nancy Fox. It is possible that the expansion of the building was making room not only for additional guests but also an additional Nellis family and the increased business a store would bring.

The inventory of John C.’s estate is a pivotal one since it comes probably at the end of the tavern and store era but yet at a time when many of the original furnishings were either still in the building or stored in one of the many out buildings – such as the “16 old Windsor chairs” stored in the “old barn.”

Since we are interpreting the tavern era as well as the 1747 farmhouse, we can now say with certainty that the bar was located in the original east room of the building. Partition marks on the floor and ceiling confirm the inventory descriptions of a “bar,” “bar room,” and “bar chamber” (three rooms) located within the boundaries of the original 1747 east room.

The inventory also describes a home of wealth. The brass clock and case valued at \$50.00, an enormous sum in 1839, was located in the 1815 east end storeroom. Since everything is priced, we can learn what was considered valuable in 1839 – particularly bedding. In addition, the size of the building, the number of beds, the quantity of out buildings and the list of livestock all give us clues to prosperity and the amount of business that was conducted

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BY DONNA RESTON

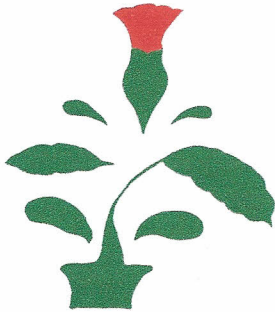
here.

I, myself, also came to an awareness of the need to interpret (if not at some future date, rebuild) the long missing 1½ story addition attached to the west end of the tavern that I had seen so often in 1880 era photographs of the building. The inventory enlightened me to the fact that this structure contained the tavern era kitchen and possibly also the store. We were all aware that the original 1747 cooking fireplace was in the cellar – but it makes a lot of sense that it would have been too difficult to run food up and down a narrow cellar stair for large numbers of guests. The inventory clearly lists only a Franklin stove (heating – not cooking), a table, 12 chairs, a sideboard, a rug and half round table in this “west” room, whereas all of the cooking implements (kettles, fry pans,

etc.), china, and cutlery, etc. are listed as in “the kitchen.” We know from photos taken after the Palatine Settlement Society (PSS) acquisition that there was a door on either side of the west room fireplace; one went right into that kitchen and the other to the “kitchen stoop.” Also, there was a door on the 2nd floor (exiting John C.’s bedroom) going directly down into this kitchen

Jo Ann Nellis Fowler owns the original 1839 will and inventory. I had heard her talking about having the document and I asked to copy it. A few months later I had some extra time and decided to decipher the text. The inventory writing was very tiny but with some effort and the use of a magnifying glass, I finally printed it up. I was so intrigued by the information that I decided to make a floor plan of the

Nellis Inventory



my original freehand sketches of the 1st and 2nd floors.

way the building was divided up (partitions, etc.) in 1839. Fortunately, Roy Thompson, a new member and architect, has volunteered to redo in professional and measured form,

ventory cannot just advance knowledge; it provides documentation and it can keep small house museum trustees from making mistakes as they proceed with restoration. This 1839 inventory (which had always been known to exist) was apparently never read. Some interior partitions had previously been removed by Nellis family members; but others were removed by early PSS trustees. Perhaps some should have been saved. Any architectural removal should certainly be photographed and documented and an old house given a chance to tell its story.

Finally, I would like to say that an in-

Group Tours Offered



Hall

* The Nellis Family Association Reunion was held Sunday, July 23, 2007, from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Nellis Tavern. A covered dish lunch was enjoyed by the attendees at noon. A business meeting was held at 1:00 PM and was followed by tours of the Tavern, given by Nellis docents.

Next year's reunion will be held on Sunday, July 22, same time, different location.

* The United Empire Loyalists of Canada enjoyed a tour of the Nellis Tavern on Monday, October 2, from 1:30 – 2:30 PM. The big red bus took more than 50, mostly Canadians, on a whirl wind tour of New York and the lands of their fore fathers. They especially enjoyed our old building as it was built before the buildings their ancestors constructed in Canada.

Sunday October 22, 2006 was the date of our children's costume party at the 1747 Nellis Tavern. Some old-fashioned games were modernized for the 15 or so children who arrived at 1:00 PM for the festivi-



ties. A scav-

enger (apple) hunt was conducted in the backyard. They had great fun with the apple (donut) on a string, eating contest. Pinning the tail (stem on a pumpkin) was another activity.

Halloween Dinner

On the crisp fall evening of October 29th, "spirits" were running high at Saltsman's Restaurant in Ephratah. The Palatine Settlement Society was hosting a Halloween Dinner

Gathering to benefit the Nellis Tavern. Costumed patrons dined on Saltsman's famous fried chicken and juicy steak. A relaxed, congenial atmosphere prevailed throughout the evening and was enjoyed by those in attendance. Why not come join us and be a part of the next benefit dinner scheduled for April 29th! Don't miss out!



Ghosts, Specters and Spirits at the Nellis Tavern

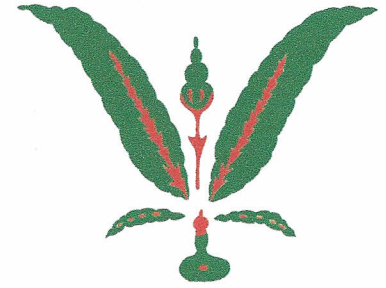
On Saturday, September 17, 2006 from 12:00 to 6:00 PM the Mohawk Valley Paranormal Society in conjunction with the Palatine Settlement Society (PSS) put on a Ghosts, Specters and Spirits program at the Nellis Tavern. Amongst the many things to do there were various pictures of spiritual beings from sites all over the area and palm/tarot card readers. There was a station set up with hand made jewelry by Jacquie and knick-knacks like stickers, body sprays, Herkimer Diamond quartz crystals, rings, bracelets, earrings and other items. In another room there were books on tarot and several other psychic approaches. The three main psychics were Gigi Miner, a.k.a. Ladyfogg tarot consultant; Judy Thierry, psychic advisor, reiki master and metaphysician; and Bettina, a psychic and intuitive card reader.

The food spread was vast and in-

cluded cookies, donuts, punch, hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad, cream of broccoli soup, water, soda and coffee. All the food was homemade by PSS members. This event also included a photo exhibit by the Paranormal Investigator Society from 5 to 6 PM. The admission was \$3 and kids 12 and under were free. This event helped to repair the 1747 Nellis Tavern. This event truly brought out your investigative side and helped you learn about your future as well.

By: Maisie Orsillo

Editor's note: Maisie is one of our new members, a young student from Fort Plain. She also helps out at Ft. Klock.



Membership's up for the Society!

We had a great year for membership in 2006 with 50 Active and Supporting memberships in addition to the 32 Life memberships already on board. Four of those signed on in 2006. We also had 8 people join as organizations and one youth member. We thank you all for your support.

In addition, several hundred folks spent an hour or two at the Tavern, some on more than one occasion, partaking of the fun and festivities, touring the building and grounds and lending a hand when needed. Their contributions, financial and social, added much to the fulfillment of our goals for the preservation of that fine old building.

Our dream continues to be that even more of our supporters, both members and non-members, will find the time to attend our activities and volunteer their time, talent, and energy to assist the trustees as the work progresses in restoring the Tavern to the 1835 era.

We know our project will be completed. Your help this year, and in the future, will make our dream come true so much faster.

Please send us your membership when you can. Please come to the Tavern

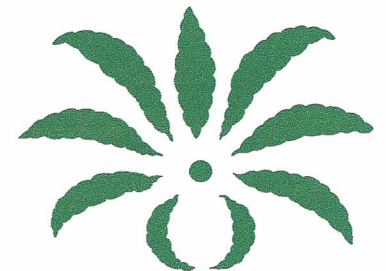
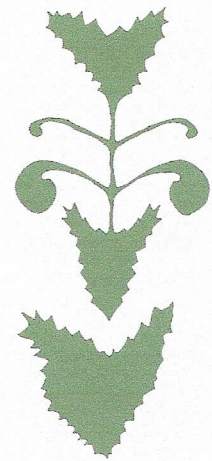
and ask what you can do to help. And please let us know your thoughts and impressions of what has been accomplished and what we might do in the next phases of restoration.

May we have your E-Dress?

The Palatine Settlement Society plans to send out at least two newsletters like this each year. And, on occasion, we send a post card to let you know about some upcoming event.

Each of those mailings cost a bit of money, of course. So, we would like to try using the e-mail method of sending you special notices from time to time. We intend to keep them few and far between. We will use a "blind copy" method of addressing the messages so your e-dress will not be sent to everyone on the list.

What we need from you, of course, is your e-mail address if you have one. If you would be so kind, please include that on the membership form if you decide to join for 2007. And even if you are not joining this year, but would like to stay in touch, would





1747 Nellis Tavern

Palatine Settlement Society
PO Box 183
St. Johnsville, NY 13452

website: www.palatinesettlementsociety.org

Newsletter



ANTIQUE SHOW to be held March 17, 2007

The Palatine Settlement Society will hold its indoor antique show at the H.C. Smith Benefit Club (located in Klock Park), 538 Crum Creek Road, St. Johnsville, NY, on Saturday March 17, 2007, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Donna Reston is Show Manager and can be reached at (518)

843-1601. At least 25 dealers have signed up for this event.

Admission is \$3.00 and there will be an appraisal booth with a charge of \$5.00 for 2 items. Refreshments will be available.

This is one more chance for you to help fund the restoration of the Historic 1747 Nellis Tavern.

