

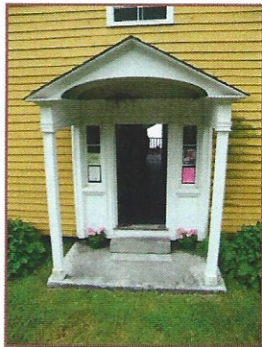
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Come visit the  
**1747 Nellis Tavern**  
 on Sunday afternoon  
 this summer. We are  
 open every Sunday,  
 June—September,  
 1:00-4:00 P.M. \$3.00



7355 State Rt. 5, St. Johnsville, NY

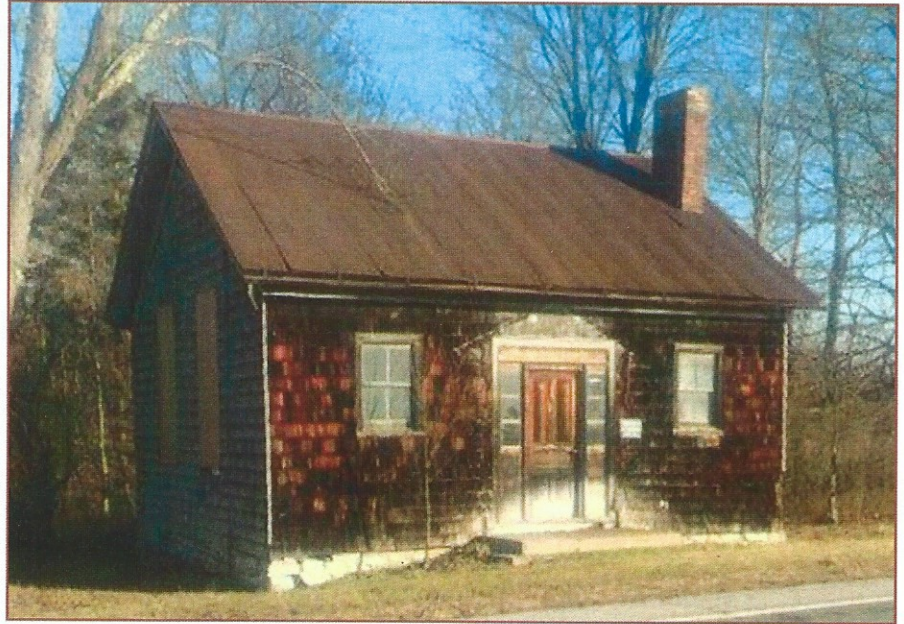
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## Newsletter

### New Turnpike School

by John and Pat Case

The New Turnpike School is one of the many schools erected in the early to mid-1800's as to be in walking distance of the families they served. The Turnpike School was also known as Saint Johnsville District 8 School in



the Settle District. The Jay Settle Farm was the I. J. Nellis Farm on the 1905 Town of Palatine Map. Other Nellis families lived in the area as well: N. Nellis on Burrell Road, W. Nellis on New Turnpike Road and P. J. Nellis on Palatine Church Road.

The 1944-1945 school year was the last year the school was open. Janet Settle Shuster, who resides on Crum Creek Road in the Town of Saint Johnsville was in the last class attending the school.

Janet is on the left in this picture with her sister Eleanor about the time of the school closing. Janet was quite a hit as she spoke about her time at the school at our November fund raising dinner at The Table in Ft. Plain.



After the school closed the ownership eventually reverted to the Muellers, the owner of the farm. The school was acquired by the Palatine Settlement Society through the Mueller Estate in 1998.

The building is structurally sound but needs maintenance on the roof, windows, and foundation. The Palatine Settlement Society is in the process of determining what should be done with this historically valuable piece of history.

## What Is a House Fort?

By Donna Reston

This article is written as a supplement to my article on Ft. Nellis in our 2015 Newsletter.

Every “house fort” in the Mohawk Valley was a family home named for its owner. These domestic establishments are not to be compared to Ft. Plain or Ft. Stanwix, buildings which were constructed to professional military standards and capable of housing hundreds of soldiers. Home forts were simply larger, more substantial private homes that in addition to providing protection for the family could offer shelter to nearby neighbors. The amount of fortification depended on the wealth and desires of the homeowner.

Many of these house forts included palisades and gun ports and in Montgomery County there were perhaps as many as 30 such structures. We do not know what modifications Christian Nellis, Sr. made to his property but all of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> c. historians agree that Ft. Nellis was the home of Christian. We do know that by 1780 Continental soldiers were stationed at both Ft. Nellis and the Nellis blockhouse. Information in the Haldimand Papers (Canadian Archives) provided by two rebel prisoners tell us that 10 Continental soldiers and a 23 pound cannon were in place at both the homestead and the blockhouse. This *October 27, 1780* letter from Col. Fraser to Gen. Haldimand also makes a clear distinction between *Ft. Nellis* and *Nellis, his blockhouse*. The letter does not refer to the blockhouse as a fort.

When the above letter was written, it would have been after John Johnson’s devastating raid through the Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys—culminating in the October 19, 1780 destruction of Stone Arabia and Battle of Klock’s field which was actually fought on Nellis property, just west of Christian’s home.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> revealing letter dated *April, 1781*, 6 months after Johnson’s raid, sent by Col. Jacob Klock to Gov. Clinton states that he is very worried about Ft. Nellis and Ft. Walrath because they still had operating grist mills on their property—most had already been burned. We don’t know what happened to the Continental soldiers and the cannons that were there 6 months earlier, but they may have been recalled for use at Ft. Rensselaer. In the spring of 1781 Marinus Willett had been put in charge there and discovered he had only about 150 able-bodied soldiers. In the above cited letter, Jacob Klock goes on to say that he has appointed three officers to receive recruits at Ft. Nellis (north side of the Mohawk) and if the grist mill were destroyed the residents would have to abandon the area.

Some have argued that our current building could not have been Ft. Nellis because it was located at the foot of a hill. All of the land on top of that hill was Nellis land and would have had laborers working the fields and keeping a watchful eye toward the river. It is also possible that the three pound cannon and a few of those Continental soldiers were stationed at the top of that hill. In addition, the main east/west road in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. was located south of the Nellis homestead. Sizable military forces followed established

roadways and waterways because hauling heavy military equipment such as cannon required oxen or horse teams and wagons. Johnson’s 1780 raid included 940 soldiers.

So far as I know, Ft. Nellis was never directly attacked; in fact, it was deliberately bypassed in Johnson’s 1780 raid. Whether this was because of strong defenses, whether Johnson was anxious to cross to the south side of the Mohawk knowing that patriot forces under Van Rensselaer were not far behind or whether the Nellis name played a role. I don’t know. I do know that Nellises fought on both sides of the Revolutionary War and historians say that Sir John had ordered Brant and his Indian followers not to destroy the Palatine Church (the Nellises were instrumental in funding and building this church) Perhaps this immunity was also extended to this Nellis homestead.

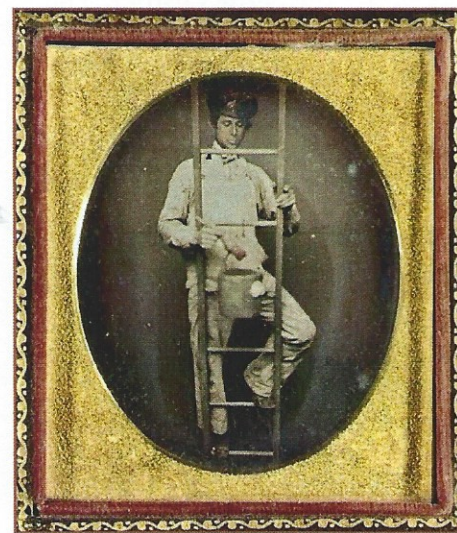
We are all hopeful that someday a cache of Christian’s papers will be discovered in a descendant’s attic or on a remote shelf in a museum or historical society that will shed more light on his life.

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## “Keeping Up Appearances” at Nellis Tavern

By Ron Burch

An exhibit of architectural elements and treatments, decorated and decorative, from the historic period of Nellis Tavern is planned for the *2018 season*. Tentatively titled “Keeping Up Appearances,” the exhibit will display a variety of decorative treatments – including painting, stenciling, and graining – used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to enliven the appearance of houses and public buildings.



The exhibit will feature fancifully decorated wall components and window cornices, as well as grained woodwork and painted shutters. The exhibit is intended to compliment the wall stencil replication project, which has been ongoing at the Tavern. Stenciling in two upstairs rooms is planned for completion this Spring. The

east “parlor” stenciling, previously completed downstairs, and the upstairs rooms, when completed, will enable the visitor to experience the appearances of these spaces as they would have looked during the residency of the early nineteenth century Nellises.

“Keeping Up Appearances” will illustrate how our ancestors enjoyed brightening up their lives by brightening up their buildings, as well as their furnishings and textiles. They enjoyed filling their world with color and pattern.

## The Civil War Comes to Nellis Tavern

By Ron Burch

On September 23, historian and author Wanda Burch and singer-songwriter John Kenosian brought “Home Voices: the American Civil War Experience through Words and Music” to a capacity audience in the parlor at Nellis Tavern. Wanda, retired site manager of Johnson Hall State Historic Site in Johnstown, is the author of *The Home Voices Speak Louder than the Drums: Dreams and the Imagination in Civil War Letters and Memoirs* recently published by McFarland Books. The program at Nellis Tavern featured readings by Wanda from her recently published book accompanied by original songs composed and sung by capital district musician John Kenosian to complement the readings.

The presentation was one of a series of six “Home Voices” programs at several venues in Montgomery County in 2017. The series was funded by an “individual artist, community arts grant,” which Wanda received from Saratoga Arts.

Wanda Burch, who lives in Glen, is the wife of PSS trustee Ron Burch.

## “President Madison” Visits Nellis Tavern

By Ron Burch

On October 25, Kyle Jenks, performer and “professional interpreter of President James Madison,” utilized historic Nellis Tavern as the setting for the production of a four-minute



video trailer promoting his Living History portrayal of the fourth President of the United States. The video may be seen at <https://youtu.be/QNa7F2sGAqw>. A team directed by videographer Lisa Grace of Conceptual Images, Troy NY, spent several hours on-site filming scenes within the period context of the Tavern, as well as an interview with Jenks regarding his work as a professional interpreter. Jenks, a resident of the capital district, has long been involved with Living History interpretation and events in the Mohawk and Hudson valleys. Information on his various professional activities may be found at [www.facebook.com/PresidentMadison](http://www.facebook.com/PresidentMadison), <http://greatlittlemadison.com>, and <http://www.facebook.com/drumsalongthemohawk>.

Jenks found the period ambiance of Nellis Tavern to be an appropriate setting for scenes from the period of Madison’s presidency, 1809-1817. The Tavern’s rural character complimented the video’s setting as a visit by the President to structures on his rural Virginia estate.

## RECENT PASSINGS

We regret to report the passing of Martin Seeley (August 26, 1951—November 11, 2017). He leaves behind his wife Candy, a son and daughter and a brother and sister. The Seeleys worked hard for the Nellis Tavern doing chores, donating antique items, giving substantial amounts of money to pay for needed building repairs and taking out life memberships. At the time of his death Martin had been planning an exhibit of early coins at the tavern.

## Dues Are Due

It is once again time to renew your membership, if you are not a Lifetime Member. Look at your address label on the outside of this Newsletter to see the date of your last membership application.

Example:

Jane Doe 17 (2017, or earlier, time to renew)

or

John Doe L (Lifetime)

Jim Smith PR (Public Relations)

Our Membership year is January 1 through December 31.

## A New “Necessary” Was Necessary

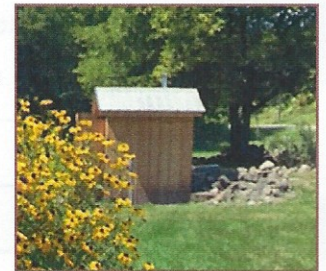
By Ron Burch

One major project of the 2017 season at Nellis Tavern was the acquisition of its own port-a-potty. The handicapped-accessible “green machine” is portable no longer, however, its appearance having been cleverly disguised by wooden walls and a gabled roof, gives it the look of a nineteenth century outbuilding.

The enclosure project was spearheaded by new trustee John Case and by volunteer Steve Mihal, whose wife Judi is a trustee. John and Steve were assisted in the construction project by a small crew of Amish carpenters headed up by Andy J. Yoder.

Most nineteenth century outbuildings, if they were painted at all, were painted a now-familiar “barn red.” The pigment was inexpensive, and when mixed with linseed oil, provided a durable exterior coating for wooden buildings. Mid-nineteenth c. paintings of villages in the northeast disclose a mixture of unpainted and red-painted outbuildings.

The new “facility” at Nellis Tavern, for now, is being allowed to weather.



## Cemeteries

By Sandy Nellis Lane

Shelley A. J. Arduini accepted a PSS donation towards a *Nellis* marker that was placed in a Nellis area in the St. Johnsville Cemetery. She also found the cemetery on Vedder Rd., across from Nellis Tavern, that contains the gravestones of Jacob Christopher Nellis (1771-1845) and his wife, Magdalena Keller Nellis (1786-1824).

# PALATINE SETTLEMENT SOCIETY

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2018

*For those interested in restoring the 1747 Nellis Tavern and preserving local history!*

**( ) Pioneer – Individual membership**

- participate in events
- share in decision-making
- receive newsletter

Annual dues \$20

**( ) Apprentice – Student membership**

Annual dues \$5

**( ) Homesteaders – Family membership**

- participate in events
- share in decision-making
- receive newsletter

Annual dues \$35

**( ) Mercantile – Professional or Business**

- participate in events
- share in decision-making
- receive newsletter
- public acknowledgement of support

Annual dues \$50

**( ) Hearth Keeper – Individual membership making a considerable donation to the Tavern**

- participate in events
- share in decision-making
- receive newsletter
- public acknowledgement of your financial support in newsletter

Annual donation \$250

**( ) Founding Father/Mother – Contributor of a substantial donation to the tavern, which can be directed to a specific restoration project**

- participate in events
- share in decision-making
- receive newsletter
- public acknowledgement of your financial support in newsletter

Annual donation \$1,000

**Complete this whole page and MAIL with your check to:**

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

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ Our membership year is January 1 through December 31.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

*\* The Nellis Tavern is in need of individuals, couples and families who are willing to help prepare for and staff tavern events, assist with maintenance and chores, distribute flyers and assist the Board of Trustees in completing the mission of the Palatine Settlement Society. If you can offer a few hours of your time, please **check all** that may interest you:*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bake pies for Rhubarb Festival      | <input type="checkbox"/> Help at fundraiser event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Building clean-up            | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Grounds clean up  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening (weeding, watering, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Scraping and/or painting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fall Building closing               | <input type="checkbox"/> Contribute to newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historical research                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____             |

**Donation:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Membership:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total enclosed:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to: Palatine Settlement Society*

## Thank You

We gratefully thank those who have donated toward the maintenance and restoration of the 1747 Nellis Tavern and grounds.

### Corporate:

- Stewart's Shops restoration grant - \$200
- Stewart's Shops Holiday Match - \$300

### Business:

- James Dempsey—flower arrangements by Studio Herbage
- George Heigel—Antique Appraisals
- Wallace Schmidt—Antique Appraisals
- Leo Tomlin—fantastic grounds keeper

### Monetary Donations:

- J & P Case - Dr. D Clement
- S Nellis Kuehl - W. Barshied
- S Lane - K Nabors
- D. Jones - D. Fenner
- J Reston - W. Lane
- M. Morse - B. Faltrick
- J. Button - P. Betz
- and the many people who leave donations and no name

### Special Donations:

- M. Schutze
- Robert & Mary Ann Van Gorder—in honor of Steve Mihal
- M. & M. Dieter
- Willis Barshied—many contributions
- John Case—building improvements
- Re-enactors donated time for period wedding
- Dr. James Reston—rental of tent for Rhubarb Festival
- Food donors for all events

## 2018 Future Events for 1747 Nellis Tavern

**March 3 Saturday—Annual Antique Show**, Arkell Museum, Canajoharie 10:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.; Admission \$5.00

**Open Sundays** 1:00-4:00 P.M. June thru September (October); tours \$3.00 (Also by appointment)

**June 3 Sunday—22nd Annual Rhubarb Festival**, Tavern, 11:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.; pie baking contest (please sign up 315.866.2619); rhubarb treats and lunch available; entertainment; food donations accepted.

**June 8 Friday—Genealogy help** in conjunction with **Ft. Plain Museum Revolutionary War Conference** June 7-10

**July 21 Saturday—Wedding Reception** for “Drums Along The Mohawk,” 4:00 P.M.; after period wedding at Palatine Church; cake and punch; period music; \$5.00

### Fall “Evening at the Tavern” ?

(Sunday **July 15—Annual Nellis Association Reunion** at John Nellis Farm, Fort Plain, NY. Lunch at 12 noon; bring a dish to pass and your own table service—Information: 518.993.2978)

## Mercantile Members

We would like to thank the following Mercantile Members of the Palatine Settlement Society for being supporters of the restoration of the 1747 Nellis Tavern:

**Heritage Meadows Farm**  
*B & B*




510 County Hwy 140  
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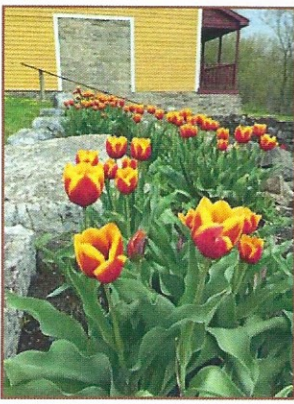


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Fax: 518.853.5443  
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**Tom Perse**  
Manager



**1747 Nellis Tavern in Spring**

Palatine Settlement Society  
PO Box 183  
Saint Johnsville, NY 13452

FaceBook: 1747 Nellis Tavern  
[www.PalatineSettlementSociety.org](http://www.PalatineSettlementSociety.org)

*2018 Newsletter*

## Our Antique Show & Sale at Arkell Museum

by Donna Reston

Mark it on your calendars! The annual Nellis Tavern fund-raising Antique Show & Sale will be presented on

**Saturday, March 3, 2018, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM** at the Arkell Museum in Canajoharie. This year's event will be managed by Ray and Joan Draus, trustees of the Palatine Settlement Society and longtime participants in the show. Donna, who initiated and managed the show for more than 10 years, will continue to participate as a dealer, in her usual space.

We look forward to the return of most of our regular dealers with the addition of some new faces. This show may be small but you can be sure that the range and quality of antiques and collectibles available for

purchase will be huge and at all price levels. Reproductions are not allowed.

George Heigle has once again offered his services to do verbal appraisals. This year the price will be \$5.00 for one item.

As usual the homemade sandwiches, soups and desserts available for purchase will be delicious. All proceeds go toward the continued restoration and maintenance of the 1747 Nellis Tavern.



2017 Show