

PALATINE SETTLEMENT SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER - FALL 2005

SAVE the DATE!
ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING
and election of officers
OCT 5th @ 6:00 pm
@ Nellis Tavern, St. Johnsville
Featuring a Presentation on the
"1839 NELLIS TAVERN INVENTORY"

9th Rhubarb Festival Held!

~ Mary Nellis Davis

One of the few, if not only, Rhubarb Festival in the Northeast, the Palatine Settlement Society again held its yearly celebration the first Sunday in June. Featuring homemade pies and other assorted baked goods, the new taste sensation, rhubarb punch was enjoyed by all!

We also added a pie auction of the winning pies from the annual pie contest. That contest had two categories: the Individual category won by Mathea Jarosenski, St. Johnsville for her Rhubarb Surprise pie and the Commercial contest won by the Old Tyme Deli and Eatery, Amsterdam.

This year we featured a Lil' Miss Rhubarb Contest, for girls between the ages of five and ten. Alyssa Swartz, age 7 of St. Johnsville won the title for this initial year. She received a lovely rhinestone crown and a fifty dollar savings bond, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Ray Draus of Amsterdam. The contest held a tie for First Runner-Up: Shannon Donahue, age 9 of Ilion and Hunter Amanda-Linn Jones, age 7 of St. Johnsville. Lindsey Boucher, age 7, from Whitesboro was Second Runner-Up. Each of the nine contestants received a crown and a gift bag filled with goodies. Mistress of Ceremonies was Kristen Draus, who currently holds the title of Miss Teen Liberty America.

Musical entertainment was supplied by "Revisions," a Barber Shop Quartet. These gentlemen have graciously donated their time and talent again to our organization.

Elizabeth Parlow of Cooperstown donated many rhubarb plants that have been resettled at the Nellis Tavern and are growing nicely. Elizabeth also provided us with a garden mule for visitors to meet. And our THANKS to Anita Smith, of St. Johnsville for donating numerous herbs and plants!

Next year will be our TENTH YEAR for the Rhubarb Festival! We hope to continue the same fun activities held at this year's festival, but we are also looking for new ideas and assistance from our members and friends!

You'll want to visit the Tavern on
Sunday, Oct 23rd
2:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Featuring the Paranormal Society
5 pm - Hear stories of hauntings
6:30 pm - See pictures & photos
Also, Prize Awarded for best
Adult Costume - Judging @ 4:30 pm
Refreshments available. \$3.00 donation is requested.



Lil' Miss Rhubarb contestants & MC 2005

Many attend "Evening at the Tavern"

Our second "Evening at the Tavern" was again a success, with attendees enjoying candlelight, a variety of wines and beers, a wonderful selection of appetizers and musical entertainment. Mark Greco of Schenectady accompanied music from the big band era through modern times on the drums. Additionally, Ron Burch entertained with 18th century music on the harpsichord. It truly was a relaxing and enjoyable event.

FORT NELLIS

by Ken D. Johnson

Amongst the many fortresses and outposts of the American Revolution were two fortresses carrying the Nellis name, one a mill site and other a blockhouse. Each site was reported as being manned by 10 "Regular" Soldiers in an October 27th, 1780 British spy's report to General Haldimand in Canada. Rufus Grider has left us with a sketch of what he believes the blockhouse may have looked like, but with no supportive evidence for his thoughts. That said, we will examine what we know.

From the testimony of Honyere Tewahangarahken (a.k.a. HonYere Doxtator), RWPA #S23019, we know that one of these two Nellis fortresses was located about three miles from Fort Timmerman. As we now that Fort Timmerman consisted of a blockhouse occupied by the family of Jacob Timmerman (William Feeter, RWPA# S13013) on Lot 15 of the Harrison Patent (The Commissioners of Forfeitures Map Collection), it seems unlikely that this Fort Nellis would have been either within Harrison's Patent or near the Mohawk River. Another reference to a Fort Nellis is by Anna "Nancy" Gramps, a daughter of "DeWalt Nellis", states within the Revolutionary War Pension application of her brother-in-law, Peter Ellwood (RWPA #W16568), that Fort Nellis was a blockhouse located within the Town of Oppenheim in Fulton County.

From maps drawn for the Revolutionary War Commissioners of Forfeitures we know that the Nellis Family, vizt. Christian, Henry, Johannis, Theobald, and William owned extensive tracts of land in Klock's Purchase which adjoined Harrison's Patent in the Town of Palatine during the war. We also know that within the Francis Harrison Patent Henry William Nellis owned a portion of Lot 8; Phillip Nellis owned a portion of Lots 4 & 10; Christian Nellis owned a portion of Lot 12, along with Adam Nellis; and William on a portion of Lot 4. The Nellises also owned parcels within the Stone Arabia, Bleeker (south of the Mohawk River), and Van Slyck Patents.

A Klock's Purchase site for the Nellis' Blockhouse seems more plausible as this patent is partially within the Town of Oppenheim. As Theobald Nellis' daughter is the only Revolutionary War survivor know to mention the "Blockhouse", one must wonder if the property on which it stood belonged to her father, Theobald Nellis. If so possible locations for Nellis Blockhouse include Lot 44 [adjoining Lot 18 of the Harrison Patent, just to the west of Crum Creek]; Lot 18 [adjoining Lot 13 of the Harrison Patent]; Lot 77; Lot 100; Lot 123; and Lot 130 of the George Klock-Nellis Patent of the Towns of Palatine, St. Johnsville, and Oppenheim.

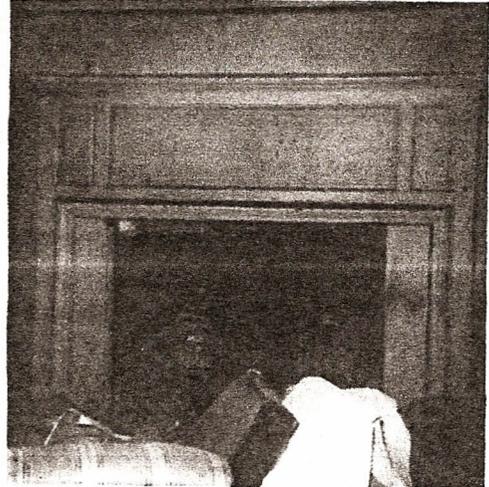
From Volume Six of the Public Papers of George Clinton arises another possible site for one of the Fort Nellises in a 1781 letter from Jacob Klock to then Governor George Clinton. This reference states that there were after the destruction of 1780 only two working grist mills left within Klock's Militia Beat, they being at Forts Nellis and Walrath. This would tend to point towards a tract of land with a stream passing through it; however, it is conceivable that the mill was animal or wind powered, but those were not commonly used within the Mohawk Valley. Of the known Nellis lands being either transected or adjoined by a stream of any significance are: Lot 10 of the Harrison Patent owned by Phillip Nellis; Lot 1 of the Klock Purchase owned by William Nellis; Lot 14 of the Klock Purchase owned by Johannes Nellis; Lot 51 of the Klock Purchase owned by Johannes Nellis; Lot 77 of the Klock Purchase owned by Theobald Nellis; and Lot 130 of the Klock Purchase owned by Johannes Nellis. These are but some of the possible sites for a "Fort Nellis Mill". Or, the structure guarding the said Mill could have been a blockhouse.

As of this time we are left to wonder where these two Nellis landmarks were located. Hopefully as our ability to locate and thus study obscure historical manuscripts, one or more documents will be found to clear the mud from the water.

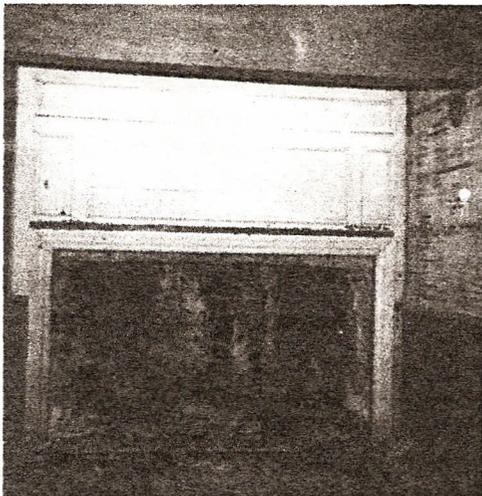
Christian Nellis' Paneled Fireplaces

Most PSS members and visitors to Nellis Tavern (within the past 35 years, that is) will not recall the formal, paneled fireplace walls in the main rooms of the original 18th century house. Luckily, what remained of the 18th century paneling was photographed about 1970 before it subsequently disappeared, and these photos are retained within the PSS archive. Each chimney breast sported an elegant arrangement of raised or "fielded" paneling, variants of designs popular in the mid-eighteenth century which were inspired by designs published in English pattern books of the day. The finished product would have resembled the paneling in Ft. Johnson (1749) and Johnson Hall (1763).

The west room fireplace was surmounted by an arrangement of three panels and a heavy cornice, and the wide mouth of the firebox was surrounded by molding with mitered corners. The 1970 photo indicates that the firebox was at some time made smaller, and side panels were inserted.



The fireplace in the east room, or tavern room, marks the original east end of the mid-18th century structure. Its paneling was somewhat more formal, with an arrangement of five panels above the firebox, which was framed by molding. Although not visible in the photograph, there was a heavy molding where the chimney met the ceiling beam, as indicated by the presence of



bare wood where the molding had been. Elsewhere the surfaces were painted. Paint layers, or the lack of them, as seen in the photos, indicate that originally each fireplace possibly lacked a mantel shelf, which was not all that unusual for the 18th century.

Based on wear marks and paint deposits, it's possible that in the tavern room at least, a paneled closet wall extended north-south across the room along the plane of the front of the fireplace. Subsequent changes in room arrangement, and the addition of the east extension to the building in the early 19th century, would have resulted in the loss of the paneled wall, except around the fireplace opening.

More cautious analysis is needed to determine the placement of such walls, if they existed, and how they might have looked. Based on a study of wear marks, nail holes, paint layers, and those invaluable photographs, however, it should be possible to reproduce the 18th century fireplace paneling, at least to its 19th century configuration as shown in the images. Replacing this woodwork would add much to the historic interpretation of the structure's interior.

(Ron Burch 11/04)

Celebrating our **10th** Annual
RHUBARB FESTIVAL
Sunday, June 4, 2006

And WATCH FOR OUR
Theme Dinner & Evening at the Tavern
Spring 2006 Fall 2006



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