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7355 State Rt. 5, St. Johnsville, NY

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

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Newsletter

Recreated Wedding and Reception

by Ron Burch

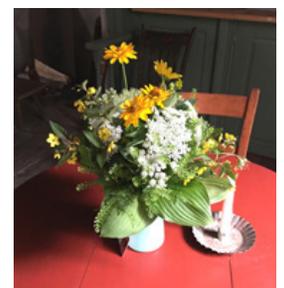
July 25, 2015, provided a warm and sunny Saturday setting for the recreated wedding of Gil and Lana Borst Martin, hero and heroine of Walter Edmonds' Revolutionary War novel *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1936). The wedding reenactment took place at the mid-18th century Palatine Church in the hamlet of the same name a short distance down river from the Nellis Tavern. Palatine Church, known as Fox's Mills in the 18th century, was the fictional home of Lana Borst's family.

Nellis Tavern, the core of which dates to the mid-18th century, was the setting for the post-ceremony "reception." The bride and groom arrived from the church by horse and carriage provided by Dan Patterson. Staffed by Tavern trustees and volunteers, the reception featured a beautiful cake by Lesha Dolan using an historic recipe and our punch as well as period music. The musicians included Marilee Urbanczyk and Sue-Ann Wheadon on Irish whistle, Carle Kopecky on oboe, and Ron Burch on keyboard. The Tavern was handsomely decorated with floral bouquets donated by Studio Herbage. The event was very well attended, and the Tavern welcomed a number of people, both reenactors and the general public, who had never before visited, or had



visited years earlier. Many commented on how great the Tavern looked and how far it had come along in its restoration efforts.

The wedding and reception event was jointly sponsored by the Mohawk Country and the Drums Along the Mohawk Outdoor Drama (DATMOD) organizations. Based on the success of the initial 2015 endeavor, a repeat event is being planned for July 23, 2016. Check out both organizations on Facebook.



More Pieces Return Home

by Ron Burch

The Palatine Settlement Society/Nellis Tavern received a major donation of Nellis family artifacts in 2015 from descendants of Aleda Mary Nellis Weaver, the last member of the Nellis family to reside at Nellis Tavern. This donation augmented a previous donation of artifacts, including portraits of the Alpha Nellis family, made in the 1990's.



Beth & Mark-Kevin Weaver, Mrs. Weaver, Inga Auber

The donors were Mrs. Thea E. Weaver, widow of Terill Milton Weaver, and her children: Inga Auber (nee Weaver), Terry-Lynn Kilkowski, and Mark-Kevin Weaver. The joint donation was made in the name of Terrill Milton Weaver, only son of Aleda Mary Nellis and Albert Weaver.

The donation includes a baby quilt, dated 1837, made for Mary Margaret Van Voast (Nellis), probably by her mother Mary Kittle Van Voast. Other items



include a bright red-and-white quilt, Mary Lizzie Nellis' framed diploma, a framed late-19th century photo collage featuring Nellis and Van Voast family images, a mother of pearl thimble holder, assorted memorabilia and a high-necked black Victorian period dress belonging to Mary Margaret Van Voast Nellis (1835-1919).

Aleda Mary Nellis (1895-1991) was the only child of Daniel F. and Viola Saltsman Nellis. Her grandparents, Alpha and Mary Margaret Van Voast Nellis acquired the Nellis Tavern property in 1887 from cousins who were descendants of the original 18th century owner, Christian Nellis. Aleda inherited the Tavern property from her bachelor uncle James G. (Jimmy) Nellis in 1945. The Palatine Settlement Society acquired the property in the mid-1980s.



A number of the Nellis family artifacts donated by the Weaver family will be featured in the Tavern's major exhibit for 2016, "Nellis Heirlooms: Artifacts from an Early Mohawk Valley Family."

An Event Full Year-2015

by Donna Reston & Ron Burch

Early in the spring Rich Strunk of Windy Hill Restorations agreed to install the 2nd floor doors in the Tavern that Ron and Donna had paint primed the previous fall. This was a very painstaking job as with all of the Tavern projects—no door opening measured exactly the same. Each door was carefully shaved and planed so that it could be hung to swing freely and grooves were cut to install hinges on the new doors. Rich also agreed to install the missing cherry balusters, made by Eli Kurtz, in the upstairs railing. In order to install them the whole railing which had been mortised and tenoned had to be dismantled. In the fall one of Rich's employees secured the cellar door which involved masonry work under and around the door frame.

In May we hired an elderly Amish couple, Rudy J. and Lavina Byler, to come and strip the large Nellis Family chest of drawers featured on the front of last season's Newsletter. Over the years it had been painted yellow over original varnish and then re-varnished with a mahogany stain. It was a massive messy job to get the piece back to its original surface. The chest was so heavy and it had been so difficult to get it upstairs to begin with that we realized the best idea was to cover floors with plastic and cloth tarps and have it worked on "in situ." Ron and Donna were aides in the process, playing "step and fetch." Donna then spent the next three weeks gradually repairing, sanding and varnishing. The chest is now a handsome piece of furniture—made of cherry and tiger maple woods and one of the centerpieces of the Nellis exhibit.

In the meantime Ron was designing a handsome exhibit poster, framing early photos so they could be hung and printing and framing exhibit labels. He also did the pickup, cleaning and repairing of a wonderful antique display case, donated by Jim Sancho of Settlers Block Antiques, which works well for the Nellis Heirlooms exhibit.

Donna and Ron continued to work on the exhibit setup which was well received and viewed by many over the summer as they pulled things together. They decided to have a two-day event on September 26 and 27 so that we could share with the public some very special and valuable Nellis family artifacts that we borrowed for that weekend only. Donna slept overnight in the building to perform "guard duty." It was quite cool that night but a fire in the small woodstove was a good addition. We intend to re-install the exhibit for the 2016 season with some new items.

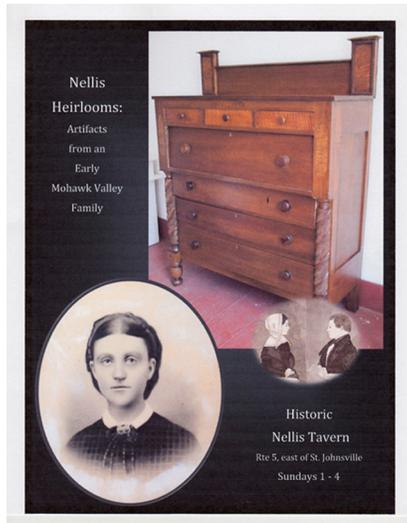
Late in the fall we began working on our red building which we had moved to the back of the property a few years ago. John H. Byler added clapboards on the east side and replaced clapboards as needed on the other three sides.



Nellis Heirloom Exhibit

by Ron Burch

“Nellis Heirlooms: Artifacts from an Early Mohawk Valley Family” returns to exhibition in 2016 in the Tavern ballroom/gallery. The exhibit, first installed in 2015, features a variety of objects—most of them made in the Mohawk Valley—used by branches of the Nellis family in the 18th and 19th centuries. The exhibit for 2016 will be augmented with recent donations from descendants of Aleda Nellis Weaver, granddaughter of Alpha and Mary Margaret Van Voast Nellis, who acquired the property in 1887. Aleda was the last Nellis as well as the last person to reside in Nellis Tavern/homestead.



A portrait of Aleda's aunt, Mary Lizzie Nellis, is featured on the poster announcing the exhibit and is among several Nellis family portraits included in the exhibit.

A cherry and tiger maple chest, c. 1825-1830, also featured on the exhibit poster, probably was made in Herkimer County and belonged to David and Barbara Small Nellis. It might have

been a gift from her parents when David and Barbara were married in 1829.

The poster also features a pair of small watercolor portraits of David and Barbara Small Nellis painted in 1850, most likely in Herkimer County. The artist's scrawled signature is almost indecipherable; it's possibly “B. Loves” or “B. Lauer.” (See Palatine Settlement Society Newsletter, Winter 2015)

The exhibit showcases several colorful Nellis family quilts. Furniture in the exhibit includes a decorated blanket chest from the early 19th century.

The artifacts exhibited in “Nellis Heirlooms” include pieces from the Nellis Tavern collection as well as loans from Nellis family members and people in the area who possess items with a Mohawk Valley Nellis family provenance.



Bus Tour

by Ron Burch

Historic Nellis Tavern was one of several historic sites in the area belonging to Mohawk Country that was visited by post-conference bus tours on Sunday, May 3, 2015. The tours wrapped up a weekend conference, “The American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley,” sponsored by the Fort Plain Museum.

Tavern trustees and volunteers introduced excited attendees on two buses from across the country and Canada to the Tavern's social and architectural history. A second annual conference is scheduled for June 10-12, 2016. Nellis Tavern is pleased to be able to participate in the event.



Evening at The Table

by Ray and Joan Draus

On Sunday, November 15th, supporters of the Nellis Tavern gathered for a unique, historical dinner. The dinner was held at “The Table at Fort Plain” restaurant.

The menu featured Palatine cooking using recipes from the 1750's. Chef Aaron Katovitch gave a talk about the history of the Palatines coming to this area and their cooking traditions. The settlers used “gumbis pots” to stew pork, cabbage and apples, which Chef Aaron recreated. The menu also featured corn meal with pickled ingredients such as eggs, carrots, beets, and kohlrabi. Desert consisted of a baked apple dumpling with sweetened cream.

Chef Aaron and the dinner were complimented by many of the happy attendees. The Trustees would also like to extend our personal “thank you” to Aaron for his hard work and creative efforts in support of the Palatine Settlement Society.

The door prize consisting of a basket featuring many items from the Nellis Tavern's gift shop as well as a bottle of wine and glasses was won by Karen Nabors.

Be a part of this year's fall event “Evening at the Tavern” to be held Saturday, September 24th, 2016, 4:00-7:00 P.M. at the Nellis Tavern. In addition, consider becoming a member of the Palatine Settlement Society, if you aren't already.

Volunteering

by Judith Mihal

Understanding how everyone wants us to volunteer for every organization, I never realized how easy it could be done with pleasure and accomplishment besides. I am a member and trustee of the Palatine Settlement Society. When I purchased a house in which Elisabeth Nellis lived most of her adult life, I found out that she was a cousin of the founder of the Nellis Tavern, Christian Nellis. I am learning that I love history and want to be a part of this tavern in her honor.

First it was helping to open the tavern in the spring by cleaning and polishing furniture, then helping to organize events and last year donning gloves to plant 3 pear trees (2 Nel-



lis pear and 1 Seckel pear) donated by Karen Elmasry, a Lifetime Member from Connecticut. I have worked in the gardens weeding and helping remove a tree that had fallen in our herb garden. I didn't have to be highly qualified. I just used my everyday skills, totally enjoyed the involvement and

learned so much in the process.

Volunteering is fun and everyone could be a part of this experience. It's as little as one morning or afternoon a year, or as much as you would like to be involved.

We make it enjoyable and sociable. We sure could use the help and to top it off, most of it is during the good weather. Join us and volunteer for one of the projects on our list. It makes your heart feel good and it's fun.

Palatines to America: Presentation by Ronald J Burch

by Ron Burch

On May 2, 2015, Tavern trustee Ron Burch spoke to the New York chapter of Palatines to America at the Johnstown Holiday Inn. His PowerPoint presentation concentrated on the architectural history of the Tavern structure, the core of which dates to the mid-18th century.

The Tavern was enlarged early in the 19th century when the Mohawk Turnpike (now basically State Highway 5) was chartered. The structure's outward appearance is that of a building from the War of 1812 period, but the western two thirds of the main floor, the building's core, is relatively unchanged from the mid-18th century French and Indian War period.

Ron retired in 2010 as curator of art and architecture at the New York State Museum in Albany.

Palatines to America National German Genealogy Society promotes the study of Germanic immigration to North America and is based in Columbus, Ohio. They publish information of general interest and provide a means for members to exchange information and share research.

Several attendees toured the Tavern in the afternoon and were quite pleased to see what they had just learned.

2016 Future Events for 1747 Nellis Tavern

March 5 Saturday—Annual Antique Show, Arkell Museum, Canajoharie 10:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.; \$5.00

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

Ongoing event—**Nellis Heirlooms: Artifacts from an Early Mohawk Valley Family**

June 5 Sunday—20th 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 9—Tour, private group

June 10 Friday—Revolutionary War Tour in conjunction with **Ft. Plain Museum Conference** June 9-12

July 23 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

September 24 Saturday—Evening at the Tavern 4:00-7:00 P.M., \$15.00

(Sunday **July 24**—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)

Rhubarb Festival

by Donna Reston

In June, our Annual Rhubarb Festival was so successful and well attended, we ran out of whole pies too early. (Will you help by baking pies to donate this year for our 20th Festival?) Jim Reston once again paid for the tent rental; that tent has been extremely important with the variable weather, whether rain or too much sun. Kevin Alexander and Gary van Slyke each entertained with their wonderful music. The pie contest was organized by Gloriann Steciak and judged by Deborah Mosher, Dan Clement and Janice Merena. The rhubarb pie winners were 1st

place—Kim Travis, 2nd place—Carolyn Lull and 3rd place—Christine Burst. Christine also took 1st place in the strawberry-rhubarb pie contest while Joyce Harrington took 2nd and Liam Brooks took 3rd place with his gluten



Christine Burst

and dairy free version. Thank you to all who donated rhubarb pies and other baked goods and helped serve the attendees.

Gary Aney once again demonstrated our barn loom to many visitors who also toured the upstairs rooms of the Tavern.



Thank You

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

Corporate:

- Montgomery County Local Tourism Grant Funds toward wedding reception, actors, etc. - \$1150
- Jim Nellis - \$7000 plus Apple matching gift of \$7000
- Stewart's Shops Holiday Match - \$250

Business:

- Doris Dempsey & James Dempsey—garden work, flower arrangements from Studio Herbage
- Joe & Audrey Fowler—electric donation
- George Heigel—antique appraisals
- Jim Sancho—antique display cabinet
- Rich Strunk—hanging repro doors, installing balusters, mending cellar door; Windy Hill Restorations
- Wallace Schmidt—antique appraisals
- Leo Tomlin—fantastic grounds keeper

Monetary Donations:

- Peter Betz
- Jane Button
- John and Patricia Case
- Dr. Daniel Clement
- Martha Dieter
- Peter Ferguson
- Garry & Lucretia Finkell
- Nancy Nellis Hodgson
- Denis Jones
- Sally Nellis Kuehl
- Nancy Nellis
- Peg Schutze
- Robert & Mary Ann Van Gorder—in memory of Ethel Nellis Barshied
- William & Susan Watkins

Special Donations:

- Weaver family donation: artifacts from the Van Voast-Nellis family (last Nellis Tavern residents) in memory of Terrill Milton Weaver. Donors:
 - ~Mrs. Thea E. Weaver
 - ~Mark-Kevin Weaver
 - ~Ms. Terry-Lynn Kilkowski
 - ~Ms. Inga Auber
- Gary Aney—weaver
- Willis Barshied —many contributions
- Re-enactors donated time for period wedding:
 - ~Maxine & Rich Christmas
 - ~Roger Garrison
 - ~Shari Yaddo
- Karen Elmasry—3 pear trees
- Dr. James Reston—19th c. Mont. Co. quilt; rental of tent for Rhubarb Festival

Recent Passings

Anita Smith, former town and village historian of St. Johnsville, passed away in 2015. Her memorial service was held on July 26, 2015. She was one of the Palatine Settlement Society's greatest supporters. Please read a typical letter to us from Anita:

12-23-12

Dear Friends,

Another great newsletter. We had an archeological dig when the organization started. I hope that this information was passed on to the present officers. It might help with determining the foot print of the site.

A study was also done by the students of the Cooperstown Graduate Program about 1979 or before.

The Nellis Dutch barn was torn down in the 1930's. Some of the beams were used to build a barn on Kringsbush Road, on Lucille Christman's property.

In the early 1980's the limestone blocks & large beams of the 3 story 1830 Averill Erie Canal Store were dumped at the far western end of the property, west of the Dutch barn ramp.

Sincerely,

Anita Smith

A different view



Electrical System Updated

by Donna Reston

Another very big summer undertaking involved the total removal of the Tavern's limited electrical wiring on the first floor and cellar, replacing the system, and wiring the second floor, which had never had power before. Local electrical contractors Les Hazzard and Sons undertook the job, replacing old with museum standard metal-clad cabling, plus new boxes in the cellar and on the second floor.

Most outlets on the first floor had to be mounted in the floor because of the thickness of the stone foundation walls. Wiring the second floor was particularly important because the Society's office is located there, and because the largest room has become an exhibit gallery. There is now sufficient power throughout the building to facilitate incidental exhibition lighting, running the vacuum cleaner, and powering the refrigerator and the occasional coffee pot.

PALATINE SETTLEMENT SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2016

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:*

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

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

Please make checks payable to: Palatine Settlement Society

A Series of Moments

by David Brooks

Each of us shares the passion & enthusiasm for the past and we could all find it within ourselves to note that singular moment when it was truly realized—our *love* of history. This has been called a “sticky moment”—that one that sticks with you for the rest of your life. For some of us this occurs in childhood, for others as adults.

That singular moment for me has always been the very first experience as a child that I ran a hand down the banister at Johnson Hall. It was not until fresh inspection that it was only a “sticky moment” *because* of the strong foundation it was set upon. Those stones were laid by my father. At times, I can still see through that historical lens he gave me as a young boy to look at the world today.

When I was a child, sometimes a musty wooden box would be produced from the basement. It was a mid-to-late-19th century travel desk full of letters, documents, locks of hair, a few small photographs and a medal with red, white and blue ribbon. It was nearly all that remained of a former life—condensed into small glimpses of time.

When we went through the desk, each time there was something new revealed. By reading the letters, looking at the receipts and notes left within, a desire to discover more grew. Those hands that so carefully reached into the desk—from the small boy’s to the old man’s—felt the tangible connection to family history. Those objects connected with family stories, remembrances of my father’s own youth and as much as I learned about the life of an ancestor I learned even more about the man in front of me.

I understand that connection even more now, as I intend to impart a similar sense of place in history to my child. We each have the opportunity to create those indelible moments for others, to share our enthusiasm and passion for history. The true work of an historian is not just to research and interpret the past but to preserve it foremost in the thoughts and the *hearts* of others.

Mercantile Members

by Sandy Lane

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
St. Johnsville, NY
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www.HeritageMeadowsFarm.com

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Windy Hill Restorations

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Rich Strunk
518-673-4444

Palatine Bridge, NY
WHRestore@RoadRunner.com



1747 Nellis Tavern in Fall

Palatine Settlement Society
PO Box 183
Saint Johnsville, NY 13452

PalatineSettlementSociety.org

2016 Newsletter

Our Antique Show & Sale at Arkell Museum

by Donna Reston

Saturday March 5, 2016 is the date and we call upon our members and collector friends to attend and support the annual Antique Show and Sale at the Arkell Museum in Canajoharie. We will be having a few new exhibitors and a good showing of all kinds of antiques and collectibles, priced fairly and displayed by knowledgeable and friendly dealers. As usual, homemade food will be available, including soup, sandwiches, desserts and drinks.



2015 Antique Show

Admission is from 10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. for \$5.00, or a combo ticket for \$10.00 will allow you to also tour the museum galleries. The appraisal booth at \$5.00 for any two items is an added attraction.

Donna Reston is Show Manager - 518.843.1601.