



THE JEFFERSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.theJeffersonHistoricalSociety.org

January 2023

Our Past Preserved in Place Names

By Bonnie Dailey

THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ABOUT OUR TOWN'S EARLY SETTLERS AND THE PLACES NAMED FOR THEM. MANY ROADS IN JEFFERSON HAVE STORIES BEHIND THEM THAT TELL OUR HISTORY!



Merchant Road lies directly across from Fuller Road as you leave Jefferson heading north towards Summit on SR 10. The road winds through fields and woods for about five miles, ending at Westkill Road. The site of the original Merchant homestead is about 1/4 in on your left. Remains of a stone foundation can still be found, but it's on private property. It sits on a rise and measures only about 10'x10'. A fresh spring runs just outside where the door would have been.

Legend has it that five Merchant sons lived in Jefferson and built homes on Merchant Road. Some Merchant houses still stand, including the first house and barn on your right and another house with a red barn that stands close to the road about a mile farther on.



Cont. on p. 9

JHS President Kevin Berner

Looks back at 2022 and forward to 2023

2022 in Review

2022 was the most productive year so far in the history of the Jefferson Historical Society. Significant improvements were completed at Judd Hall and our active programming year offered diverse events. The list below documents our accomplishments for the year.

Judd Hall

- Created a museum from scratch and opened it to the public
- Added an elevator to provide easy access to the second floor avoiding the very steep stairs
- Created an accessible entrance to the building including a ramp and new doorway
- Reconfigured the room around the new entrance by converting a previous small storage room into a welcoming open area to the main events room
- Constructed a new two-story addition with a general storage room on the first floor and archive storage on the second floor
- Replaced the building's electrical service
- Replaced all seven first-floor main room windows with energy efficient ones
- Installed track lights in the main room of the first floor

Events

- Held three art shows (a painter, a sculptor, and a photographer)
- Hosted five concerts
- Hosted three in-person speakers (caves, a local farm history, an artist's evolution)
- Hosted a Facebook Live presentation
- Facilitated several community pottery classes in Judd Hall run by the Jefferson Art Room

- Hosted Heritage Day events in Judd Hall and the Maple Museum.
- Hosted our traditional Alumni Day reception including the first public viewing of our museum
- Staffed the Fuller District Schoolhouse Museum each Sunday, Memorial Day through Labor Day for the first time.

Fundraising

- Silent auction
- Yard sale
- Holiday Boutique
- Mill Pond Inn markets (five)
- Methodist Church bazaar
- Annual appeal letter

Grants

- Nicholas J. Juried (\$100,000)
- The O'Connor Foundation (\$14,000)
- CREATE for Music and More Series (\$2500)
- Burghard Family Foundation (\$5000)
- Core Values Inc. (\$500)
- New York Council for the Humanities (\$308.60)

Social events

- Hosted community open houses with two free barbecues
- Hosted a Holiday dinner recognizing volunteers
- Received a donation of a large collection of paintings depicting rural scenes around Jefferson
- Hired a graduate student intern to catalogue our digital images and make some of them available online
- Served as a "Community Partner" allowing the Upper Catskill String Quartet to provide programming throughout the county

Visions for 2023

In 2023, we will continue our traditions of the past and expand on them. With all of the construction in 2022 our museum hours were intermittent. This spring through fall the museum will be open one day every weekend, starting on May 20th with a Grand Opening and continuing until the fall. The Fuller District Schoolhouse hours will overlap with the museum's openings. Further, I would like to see us plan the first rotating exhibit in the museum this year to offer something new to repeat visitors.

We are developing a large collection of donated materials. I would like to get caught up with cataloging the collection this summer and chip away at a large backlog of materials to be scanned.

Significant progress has been made in the restoration of Judd Hall. What remains is to refinish the wood floor in the main room and replace the deteriorated front sill.

We are well along in producing a book about Carl Skidmore, Jefferson's only battle fatality during World War I. The book will include many letters to and from Carl while he was serving in France. The Old Stone Fort Museum curator is interested in

developing a cooperative exhibition in Judd Hall detailing Carl's life and service.

Volunteers

This year I hope to increase participation of volunteers, which will allow us to expand our activities. We will need help with staffing the museum, setting up at events, greeting guests, providing refreshments for concerts, speakers and other functions, and assisting on workdays. In addition, interested volunteers can help scan and catalog our archive materials and help research materials for upcoming books, Facebook posts, and museum displays. Also, our history/nature trail behind the Fuller District Schoolhouse Museum needs periodic maintenance. Barb Palmer and Sara Henry have taken the lead on soliciting and coordinating volunteers. We have never had anyone in that role before so they will be invaluable to us.

I look forward in particular to greeting visitors to Judd Hall and the Nick Juried Historical Museum. I hope to see you when we hold our grand opening on May 20th.

Van Hubbard (1948 - 2022)

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Jefferson native Van Hubbard. As a youth Van was an active Boy Scout, reaching the rank of Eagle Scout in Troop 50. He was well-liked and active as president of his senior class, the National Honor Society, and the student senate. An excellent athlete, he competed on the varsity basketball and baseball teams, the soccer team, and ran cross country. He played in band, sang in chorus, and performed at the county music festival all four years of high school. The Jefferson American Legion Post No. 1307 sponsored his attendance as the town's representative to Boys' State at Colgate University. After graduation, Van went to Ohio State University, and then served in the Navy's Mine Division and became Commander of the Eastern Sea Frontier. More recently, he served as an Adjutant in the American Legion at the Carleton, MI Post No. 66.

In recent years, Van had been especially supportive of the Jefferson Historical Society donating a wealth of materials about the town's history including photos, family scrapbooks, postcards, and other ephemera. He was also very helpful to me, answering innumerable questions about the town's history so that it could be preserved. Van also made regular significant financial contributions to us. He would often come to see progress of the historical society during Alumni weekend visits or golf tournament outings with his cousin Jim Meagley.

19th Century Jefferson Post Offices

By Stephanie Ruquet

THE POST OFFICE IS ONE OF THE OLDEST COMMUNITY SERVICES CONTINUOUSLY OPERATING WITHIN THE TOWN OF JEFFERSON.

It began operations on March 28, 1819, with Stephen Judd as the first postmaster. Subsequent postmasters included Reuben Merchant, James Hubbard, and Charles B. Hubbell. The 19th century Jefferson postmaster who held the position the longest was Eli Boies, who served for 13 years, 1836-1849. Many remember when the Jefferson post office was in the building next to the Methodist Church, across the road from Judd Hall. In earlier days the post office was located in the house of the postmaster.

Did you know that there were also other post offices operating in the town throughout much of the 19th-century and into the first decades of the twentieth century? The earliest post office located outside the hamlet was established in 1833 in a small settlement in the northern end of the town. Named Morseville, it was in operation until 1864, with a change of name in 1862 to Rulandville. Postmasters were Daniel Morse (1833-1845), William Champlin (1845-1849), Jeremiah Ruland (1849-1862), and Sylvester Ruland (1862-1864). Renamed Morseville again, the post office served the area for only ten months in 1870 before once again discontinuing operations. Jeremiah Grant was postmaster.

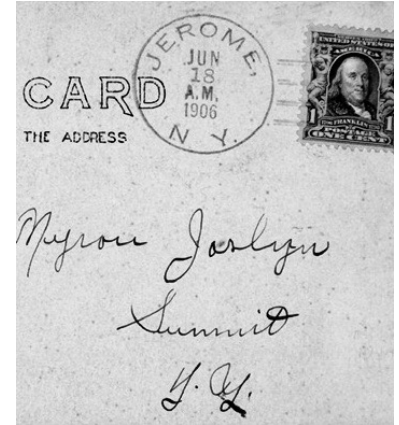
The South Jefferson post office operated out of the Franklin home shown here.



The area again had a local post office when the Jerome post office opened on September 5, 1895, with mail service three times a week. The Jerome post office was in operation until 1909, the entire time with Jerome Hubbard as postmaster.

Stewart, named for William Stewart who settled in the area in 1820, was located along the Westkill in eastern Jefferson. A post office was established there in 1886 and was in operation twenty-six

years, finally closing at the end of November 1912. Three people served as postmaster of the Stewart post office during its existence: William Wood (1886-1899), Martin L. Vroman (1899-1911), and Edwin J. English (1911-1912).



The post office in South Jefferson opened November 20, 1866, and operated for over forty-five years. It was located in the Franklin family farmhouse on the northwest corner of the intersection of Blenheim Hill Road and Cape Horn Road, the area known in those days as South Jefferson Corners. The Empire State Postal History Society website lists five successive postmasters who ran the operation during the 19th century and they were all related to each other. Lucy E. Franklin was the first postmaster and the only woman to hold the position anywhere in the town during the 19th century. Lucy served until 1882 and was succeeded by her son, George W. Franklin who held the post until 1888. He was followed by his brother-in-law, Charles G. Stewart (his wife Irene's sister,



A postmarked letter from the South Jefferson Post Office.



Charles G. Stewart, appointed postmaster of the South Jefferson Post Office on November 23, 1888.

Special thanks to Lauren Lawrence and Ardith Hamm for their help regarding the history of the South Jefferson post office.

Louisa's husband). Charles was followed by Seymour J. Pierce who was a brother of Irene and Louisa, and then George W. Franklin again. The last postmaster of the South Jefferson office was Allen D. Reed who served briefly from June 20, 1911, until the South Jefferson post office closed on January 31, 1912.

The Empire State Postal History Society website (esphs.org) features a list of all the 19th century post offices in the state, their dates of operation, and the names of the postmasters and their dates of appointment. The list was created by Thomas C. Mazza from records in the National Archives including *Registers of the Appointments of Postmasters, 1832-1971*. A digitized copy of this register can be searched on Ancestry.com. Additional information about the post offices of Jefferson can be found in Mildred Bailey's book, *A History of the Town of Jefferson*.



Allen D. Reed, last postmaster of the South Jefferson Post Office.

DON'T MISS EVENT MARCH 26

Michael Kudish, of the Michael Kudish Nature Preserve, will speak on the history of the Catskill forests. Sunday, March 26, 3 pm at Judd Hall, 163 Main St., Jefferson.

RECENT JHS EVENTS



It's HERE! Now you can ride the elevator to the top floor of Judd Hall to see the Nick Juried Historical Museum and avoid the steep stairs that was the only access point — until now.

(right) JAR, Jefferson Art Room, free events at Judd Hall this fall had kids and adults happily wrist deep in clay making ceramic flowers and also holiday ornaments to adorn a JHS Christmas tree for the green. Formal classes worked on pottery and glazes.



(left) Artist Werner Rentsch's paintings of the Jefferson area were shown for the first time ever at Judd Hall, and an enthusiastic crowd came to see them and stay for his talk. Prints of the paintings from the JHS collection are available for sale. One bestselling print is of children on the original Jefferson slide. Prints can be ordered through JHS.



The Jefferson Cornet Band had this bandstand built on the Jefferson Town Green in 1900. Several years ago, we restored the tradition of summer brass band concerts there. The Realtime Dixieland Band performed in August for a large crowd. During the intermission we continued another old-time site tradition with a free ice cream social sponsored by Stewart's Shops.



2 Scoops (across from the Town Green) plans to open Summer 2023, with a grand opening Heritage Day weekend. The pink shop is next to the Jefferson House on Park Ave. and owner Glenna Weber is planning to run it. Janes' ice cream as well as a few Perry's flavors will fill its dipping cabinets, and you can order soft serve as well as 24 hard flavors, including sorbet. The store front will have a walk-up window or you can go inside to view your choices and use a seating area in the back of the shop.

Or, just pop in and grab a good cup of coffee if ice cream is not for you. 2 Scoops will offer exciting ideas that add flavor to our town green: maple hot fudge, fresh waffle cones, and local berries and much more!

LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENING ON MAIN STREET!

Jefferson Openings for 2023

JAR Jefferson Art Room plans to continue pop-up programming in both clay and other mediums as it works towards renovations on its future home at 166 Main St, now with electricity and a kiln! Check into instagram's JeffersonArtRoom page or email MarthaHacklin@gmail.com to stay connected.



Middle Brook Mill at 170 Main Street opened in December 2022. The partners installed a stone grist mill and kitchen facilities to create a variety of flours, breads, crackers and other products from heritage grains grown, for the most part, in NYS. They plan to open a small café there in the near future. To learn more, visit its website, www.middlebrookmill.com

607Sweets is operating out of 170 Main Street. You can order items from Lana's website, 607sweets.com.

Another Civil War Soldier from Jefferson Buried in Arlington National Cemetery: Private Peter Wayman

By Stephanie Ruquet

For the previous issue of the JHS newsletter, I wrote an account of the journeys of Pvt. Joseph Long's body to its final resting place in Arlington National Cemetery. Pvt. Long is the only Civil War soldier from Jefferson buried there—but he wasn't the only Civil War casualty from Jefferson who was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. In 1864 another soldier who is listed on Jefferson's Civil War monument in Evergreen Cemetery was interred at Arlington, albeit briefly.

Jefferson-born farmer Peter Wayman enlisted in the 144th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment on August 31, 1864, and was mustered in twelve days later. The short time he was on active duty with the regiment, the 144th was encamped at Hilton Head, South Carolina, involved in expeditions and skirmishes in that area. The year Peter Wayman enlisted, the men of the 144th's original complement were due to be discharged as their "hitches" were up. Some reenlisted and new recruits filled the gaps caused by the departure of those who had been discharged. There were actually more enlistees and recruits than was needed so 159 of them were transferred to the 1st New York Volunteer Engineer Regiment.

Peter Wayman was one of those. He was due to be transferred on October 6, 1864, but instead an ill Private Wayman was in Mount Pleasant General Hospital on Meridian Hill in the northwest quadrant of Washington, DC. The 1618-bed hospital, built in the winter of 1861-62, was one of over two dozen in DC caring for sick and wounded Civil War soldiers. Only two months after he enlisted in the army, Private Wayman died in Mount Pleasant

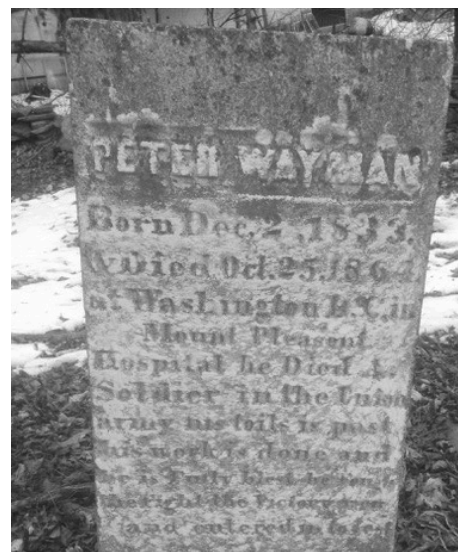


Photo credit: Karen Cuccinello

General Hospital* on October 25, 1864. The cause of death, as listed in the burial register, was *phthisis pulmonalis*. Today we know the disease as tuberculosis. Nineteenth-century America knew it by another name: consumption.

Private Wayman was buried on October 27, two days after he died, in Grave Number 10-9-2a in Arlington National Cemetery. On November 18, 1864, Peter Wayman's body was exhumed. It was brought home to New York and interred in Dugway Cemetery in Charlottesville. The inscription carved on his tombstone, nearly illegible today, reads:

he Died a soldier in the Union army
his toils is past
his work is done
and he is Fully blest
he fought the fight
the Victory won
and entered into rest

**The Civil War monument in Evergreen Cemetery incorrectly identifies Peter Wayman's place of death as Mount Pleasant, Virginia. Military records clearly show the location was the same-named hospital in Washington, DC.*

Thomas Merchant (or Marchant) was born in Connecticut about 1755-1759 (records differ). He served as a Private for three years during the Revolutionary War, from 1777 to 1780. He saw action with the Connecticut Line at Germantown and Monmouth. After the War he settled in Waterford, CT and married Anna Davis. The couple had nine children. Sometime between 1803 and 1809, they moved west to the stony hills of Schoharie County. Thomas and his family were among the first settlers of the town of Jefferson. In 1810, the U.S. Census for Jefferson lists ten household members in Thomas Marchant's household, including eight children; six boys and two girls.

Thomas was a founding member of the Jefferson Presbyterian Church, established in 1809 (now the Maple Museum). Like many of the town's founders, Thomas and his sons were farmers. In 1818 he applied for a pension for his Revolutionary War service. Stephen Judd, another of our town's founders, provided an affidavit in support of Thomas Merchant's pension application.

Thomas and Anna's son Reuben Merchant married Lucinda Fuller from the neighboring farm in 1818. Reuben became a Representative to the NYS Assembly in 1837, and a Loan Commissioner for Schoharie County in 1861. He was a large landowner, and ran a "Temperance Hotel" on Main Street. We understand that he speculated in butter, and was a stockholder in the Blenheim, Jefferson, & Harpersfield Turnpike.



Merchant family members lived in Jefferson for many years. The 1856 Schoharie County Atlas shows two houses on Merchant Road with the name Ch. Merchant. The 1866 Atlas shows Ch. Merchant still in one of those houses, and J. Merchant in the other. Research indicates these residents were Thomas and Anna's grandsons Charles and Joseph Guernsey Merchant.

By the time of the Civil War many family members had moved away. An 1896 obituary of Reuben and Lucinda Merchant's daughter Maria Merchant Taylor, states that all nine of her surviving children attended her funeral, having come from as far away as Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Thomas returned to Connecticut after his wife Anna passed away in 1822, and in his 60's he married her sister Lucy. However, Lucy chose to remain in Connecticut. Thomas passed away in 1829. He and Anna are buried together in Jefferson's Evergreen Cemetery.

Today the Merchant name is no longer well known in Jefferson, but the family's presence here and their contributions to our town remain.

[1] *History of Schoharie County, New York 1713-1882*, by William H. Roscoe, 1882 (Facsimile Reprint published 1994, Vol. II, xii.)

[2] Roscoe Vol I, p.146

[3] Roscoe Vol I, pp. 106 and 109.

[4] *Obituary of Maria Merchant Taylor, 1896*,

Will you be moving in the near future? Have you changed your email address recently? Please let us know. Send your updated contact information to Jefferson Historical Society. You don't want to miss an issue of our newsletter or any announcement of happenings at JHS!!

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Maple Museum \$_____ Other (please specify) _____ \$_____

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History of the Jefferson United Methodist Church, 2019	\$5			
Slougher's Hilariously Illustrated History of Schoharie County	\$10			
Prints of Werner Rentsch paintings (Color/B&W)	\$40/25			
JHS Tee shirt: sizes M, L, XL, 2X in navy & caps	\$15			
JHS cap (black, blue, red, green)	\$15			
Postage & Handling per each item	\$5			
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The Jefferson Historical Society
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Lyle Mackey driving
the Jefferson Fire
Department's old
Larrabee fire truck
that is still used in
parades today.

