

Winter 2009

Palatine Settlement Society

PO Box 183, St. Johnsville, NY 13452

www.Palatinesettlementsociety.org

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Newsletter

The Clue's in the Closet

BY RON BURCH

Through the doorway in the southeast corner of the tavern's second floor ballroom lies an area which visitors rarely if ever see. Not that it's a secret room, but it's a space about five feet square at the foot of the makeshift ladder to the attic, and for years it has been sort of untidy and an occasionally convenient spot to stash "stuff" during an event. This closet-like space contains, however, a valuable clue to the structural history of the tavern.

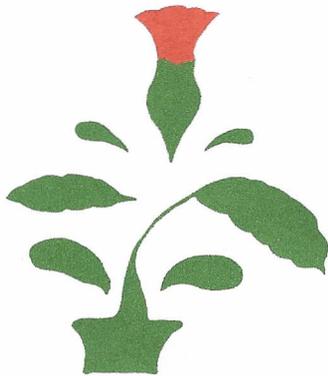
This area forms the southeast corner of the upper level of the original mid-eighteenth Nellis house. The extreme southeast corner, partly hidden by scantling nailed up to form a rough wall surface, contains the original vertical corner post of the hewn timber frame where it abuts the two-story timber frame added to the east end of the structure early in the nineteenth century. This corner post ends about five feet up from the floor, with its tenon, which was originally doweled ("trunnelled") into

the plate beam, sticking up into thin air. This exposed tenon actually indicates the original height of the second floor knee wall in the eighteenth century – a valuable piece of interpretive information, especially since it's visible and at eye level.

The second floor knee walls of Nellis Tavern were raised early in the nineteenth century to create a full height second story and align with the two-story timber frame grafted to the east end of the building (now the parlor and the bedroom above). The vertical posts were lengthened by adding about four feet of additional post utilizing a peculiar type of doweled joint called a "scarf" joint, notched and shaped to lock the two vertical timbers in place. The tavern's scarf joints are today fairly hidden behind the lath, which covers the upstairs walls, but because it was a utilitarian space, the southeast corner "closet" was never lathed and plastered. Because it abutted the additional

two-story frame, the original corner post was not load bearing, so it never was ended-out.

Today, the exposed tenon marking the height of the original plate beam is a piece of historically important structural evidence. Plans for the 2009 season include "cleaning the closet" and making this valuable clue accessible to the visitor.



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Rufus Grider

BY DONNA RESTON

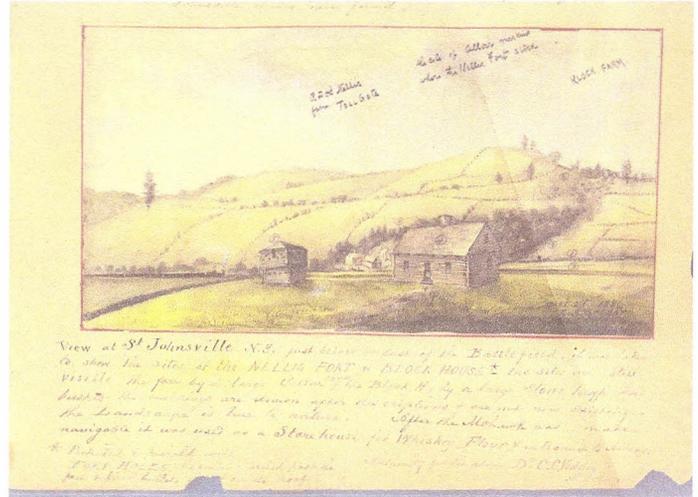
Rufus Grider was an art teacher who moved from Lititz, Pennsylvania to New York State in the latter part of the 19th century and found employment in the Canajoharie school system. He apparently became enamored with the history of the Mohawk Valley and began a systematic effort to visually record that history through research. The result was thousands of wonderful ink and watercolor drawings of existing historic buildings, old decorated powder horns, landscapes and portraits. For those historic sites and for buildings that were no longer around, he had conversations with "old-timers" who could describe buildings and point out sites of historic events. In addition to the visual record, Grider printed voluminous historic notes on most of his drawings; at times having his informants sign their names attesting to the accuracy of their verbal descriptions.

Grider apparently became famous enough in his own lifetime (he died in 1900) that the State of New York hired him to draw five original illustrations for the 1899 first edition of "New York in the Revolution" – a large book published by the State.

Our own Nellis Tavern, thanks to a recent donation by Helen Nellis of Fort Plain, NY, now owns an oil painting of the Nellis Block House and Farm House, copied by Dr. Leonard Nellis Berdan after an 1886 sketch by Grider.

For those who wish to view Grider's work - the largest collections are located at the New York State Historical Society in New York City (particularly the powder horn drawings) and the NYS Museum in Albany, which owns all varieties of his works (historical buildings, powder horn drawings, Adirondack scenes, miscellaneous views and scrapbooks). The Montgomery County Historical Society, at Old Fort Johnson, also owns some of his magnificent powder horn drawings. The Arkell Museum in Canajoharie has recently purchased a collection of Grider's work that became available on the Internet and currently has on loan from the Ft. Rensselaer Club some amazing very large size watercolors – my personal favorite being a huge portrait of the Indian Chief known as King Hendrick. The Arkell also owns Mr. Grider's original easel, discovered by Willis Barshied in the attic of Grider's former home in Canajoharie.

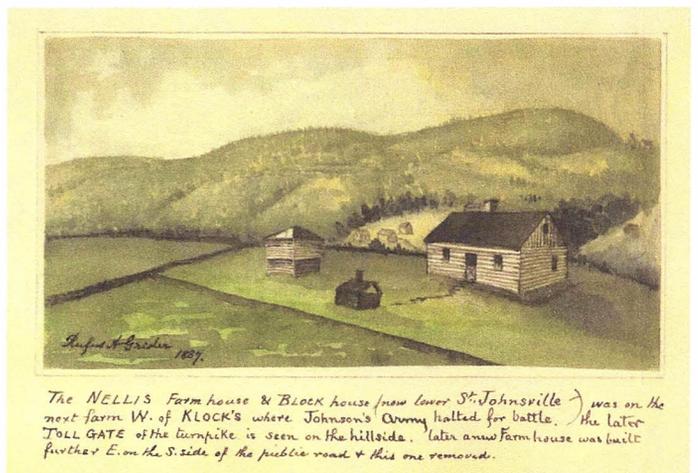
I believe that the NYS Museum plans to publish a book of Grider's drawings and Willis Barshied has recently guided several of the curators to some of the sites depicted in these drawings. They are being photographed to record what those sites look like today. The impact of all of this is to reinforce the authenticity of Grider's drawings; it is really amazing what these early historians were able to accomplish with only a horse and buggy to transport them.



BY RUFUS GRIDER



BY LEONARD BERDAN



BY RUFUS GRIDER

Evening at the Tavern

BY MAISIE ORSILLO

On September 21st, 2008 from 4-7 P.M., the Palatine Settlement Society hosted their annual Evening at the Tavern to benefit the continued repair and preservation of the 1747 Nellis Tavern.

It was a wonderful evening of quiet conversation with friends amongst candlelight, white linens, and old fashioned music provided by Mr. Ron Burch on harpsichord.

Lots of delicious food was on hand including cheese, crackers, mini-pizzas, snack mixes, breads, cake, cookies, and fruit. Wine, coffee, tea, and punch were also available.

Tours were given throughout the evening to interested attendees and the history and

beauty were enjoyed by all who were present. A 50/50 raffle was held and the winner received a wine bottle game.

About 25 people attended and the evening was, overall, a great fundraiser for the Nellis Tavern.

Thank you to all those who came out and supported the 1747 Nellis Tavern and the Palatine Settlement Society.

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

2009 Schedule of Events for 1747 Nellis Tavern

ANTIQUUE SHOW AND SALE – Saturday, March 14 – 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM held at the H. C. Smith Benefit Club, 538 Crum Creek Road, St. Johnsville. Admission \$3.00. Chicken barbeque take out available.

TEXTILE AND FIBER SHOW AND SALE – Saturday, May 9 – 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM. We will host local traditional artists and craftsmen who will demonstrate and/or sell their wares. Admission \$3.00.

13TH ANNUAL RHUBARB FESTIVAL - Sunday, June 7, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Pie baking contest will be held. Rhubarb treats and lunch available. Entertainment.

NELLIS FAMILY REUNION – Sunday July 19, 12:00 noon lunch, business meeting at 1:00 PM. Information: Mary Nellis Davis, Secretary - 315-866-2619.

MOVING FRONTIERS: EARLY TRANSPORTATION IN THE MOHAWK VALLEY - Sunday, October 18, 11:00AM— 4:00 PM. We will have an open house at the Nellis Tavern for anyone attending this biennial symposium at Fulton Montgomery Community College where lectures will be held on Saturday. Tours will be held throughout the area on Sunday. Special transportation exhibits will be on display.



1747 Nellis Tavern

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Newsletter



ANTIQUÉ SHOW to be held March 14, 2009

The PSS will hold its 4th annual indoor antique show at the H.C. Smith Benefit Club (located in Klock Park), 538 Crum Creek Road, St. Johnsville, NY, on Saturday March 14, 2009, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Dealers will be exhibiting and selling furniture, quilts, books, postcards, paintings, toys, jewelry, early brass and iron, etc.

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

All proceeds from this event will be used to support the ongoing restoration efforts of the Nellis Tavern. It is hoped that all members will attend to support this event.

The Benefit Club members, under the leadership of Paul Vacco, have

agreed to, once again, host a chicken barbeque on the premises and generously share those receipts with the Tavern. Their chicken is wonderful; it can be eaten in or taken out.

It is the great hope of the Palatine Settlement Society that the antique show will eventually become one of its best fundraising events. To accomplish this, we need the support of the community and our own members. We also need some good weather – in past years attendance has been low because of a flood and two major snowstorms, which caused a postponement. We have scheduled the show back to March to avoid competing events.

Donna Reston is Show Manager and can be reached at (518) 843-1601.

