

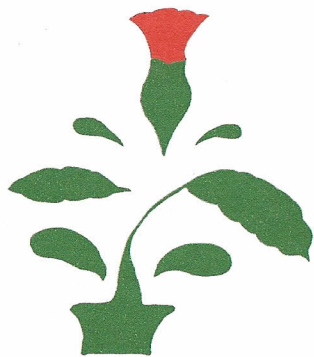
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7355 State Rt. 5, St. Johnsville, NY

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



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Newsletter

Restoration 2012: "It Was the Best of Times/It Was the Worst of Times"

by Donna Reston with Ron Burch

2012 proved to be one of our busiest and most challenging years yet. For the Building Committee (Donna and Ron) there were days of elation and celebration but also days of frustration and weariness. It started with the long-planned moving of the "cheese house" in early spring. Although adorable, this small building had more and more become a "thorn in our side." When moved from the Eggleston farm on the south side of the Mohawk River, it was placed in an area that was way too close to the Tavern. It blocked access for vehicles and for a long needed handicap parking area. In the interim, the building had physically deteriorated. When the floor boards began to give way under my feet one day as I was sorting through the lumber stored in the southeast corner, I knew that we had to do something quickly; the trustees agreed. Fortunately, since the planting season had not started yet, we were able to obtain the services of Amish builder/farmer Danny Wengard and sons. And so began what was to become a two-day dawn to dusk task on their part and some intense and very laborious pre-move physical exercise for Ron and me. Everything stored in the building had to be moved to another location (Tavern basement) to reduce its overall weight and then later, much of it had to be moved back.

When Danny finally examined the building, it was discovered that one floor beam was entirely missing and the one next to it was cracked. To avoid collapse that problem had to be dealt with before the move. Although we thought the Amish would be able to haul the building with horses, it turned out that those special pulling teams are shod differently and, therefore, can only travel on asphalt for a short distance—the Tavern was too far away. So Danny rented a small Kubota tractor which was delivered to the site on a flatbed truck by the owner of the lumberyard on New Turnpike Rd.—he also supplied the two new beams. Danny and family, of course, travelled back and forth in their own horse drawn

buggy—so we did have the great pleasure of seeing a horse grazing on the property for a bit—it seemed very appropriate.

All in all, the whole project turned out to be a very difficult one because the ground was still soggy in areas—particularly where the building had to be turned to get around the low stone wall nearby. Also, one of the 20-ton jacks, used to elevate the building to keep it level for the turn and to allow the rollers to be adjusted, broke. Fortunately, our neighbors to the west—Springers—had one and were willing to loan it to us. So the building continued to move by inches, as the iron rollers were placed underneath and constantly relocated and readjusted. One could only admire how hard these men worked!

Finally the building arrived at its new resting place and was leveled up. Although it has no permanent foundation yet, the site is gravel and well-drained and with two new beams underneath, the building is now solid—elevated on stone pillars. The final touch was having Danny drag two of our extra foundation blocks to the new site for use as permanent steps. We do need new siding on the east wall and the replacement of two windows. Hopefully, this year we can deal with these things and then perhaps open the building to visitors.

Ron and I then spent many hours leveling off the old building site and raking up the assorted debris there. An interesting aside is that within a short time after the move, plants started growing there as ground cover. The plants were unknown to me, but friend Skip Barshied came by to tell me that it was an old time weed called lamb's quarters, wild spinach or pigweed and that it was edible as a spring green and that he had picked some for himself and I should try it. I did and found it very pleasant tasting and great for salad. One wonders where it came from as I haven't seen it on the property before. Skip's book on edible weeds notes that it often takes root in recently disturbed soil or on the site of an old garden. (Editor's Note: We also have many dandelions that make great

salad greens early in the spring!) Parking for the disabled is now allowed at this site. Kees Nelis tulip bulbs were donated by Sally Nellis Kuehl and have been planted at the back edge of this area where soil donated and delivered by Steve and Judi Mihal was prepared—we are hoping for a glorious showing of these spectacular yellow and red flowers in May.

As June approached and I was eating one day at the Hungry Bear up the road, friends Bob and Nancy introduced me to a young man named Tracey Reese, a mason between jobs. We have long needed foundation repair at the Tavern as much of the original grout has fallen out over time. Tracey volunteered his services and did a marvelous job on all four sides of the building. Perhaps you saw him working outside during the Rhubarb Festival. We hope to have him back this year to do similar work on interior foundation walls. Prior to this work, Ron and I relocated a large woodpile away from the south wall and trimmed foundation plantings along the east and north walls.

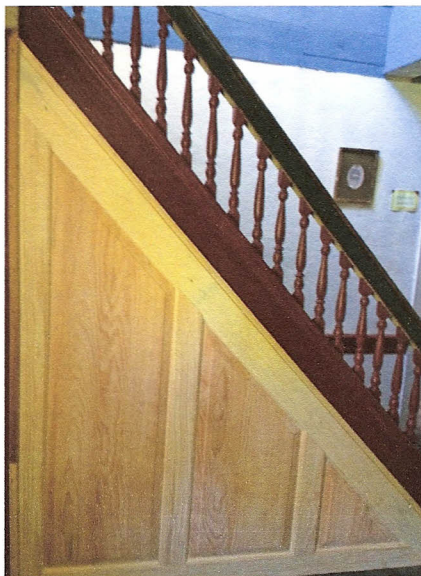
The next task was to get the south side of the Tavern painted. Ron successfully approached the Benjamin Moore Co. and received a donation of appropriate paint. In June we accepted a bid from a young painter who unfortunately just stopped showing up. After many phone calls and conversations, by mid-August, we realized we had to get someone else to finish the job. Tracey stepped in to help us out and had to do much of the more tedious trim work. Our heartfelt thanks go to him.

Karl Schmach, our general contractor, and his son spent several days this summer replacing rotten boards and caulking on the west end of the building so we could get that side freshly painted. They replaced a rotten post, railing and several porch spindles on the south side. Tracey took on that paint job, also.

Last, but not least, what would we do without the services of Leo Tomlin, our grounds maintenance man? In addition to doing a tremendous job mowing and trimming the lawn, he continues to help us expand our open space by cutting trees, trimming branches and generally being willing to do many extra little chores for us—whether helping to carry things, driving the occasional nail or screw, or picking road tossed garbage. We continue to get comments about how nice the grounds look.

So, in conclusion, we can say that we made a lot of forward progress this past year, but it certainly took a toll on many of the trustees. Besides attending regular meetings, participating in the very necessary fund-raising events, being Sunday summer docents, having to be on site to supervise and work ourselves, and to resolve unforeseen problems—it kept us all busy.

Photo: See “Evening” pg. 3.



Our “Cheese House”

When I first became involved with the Tavern as a trustee, I was told our little red storage building was a cheese house. Although I had seen enough pictures of cheese houses to make me wonder about that title, I was so busy thinking about the Tavern itself and all that building needed that I gave the name no further thought. However, as Ron and I emptied the building for its move, we began a conversation about it and took more note of its architectural aspects. We both agreed that it certainly didn't look like any cheese house that we were familiar with. Mrs. Eggleston, who originally donated the building, said that her sources had told her that over time it had been used for many purposes—boarding hired farmhands, a schoolhouse and a summer kitchen. Ron offered that it reminded him of a lock tender's house and could have been brought up from the Erie Canal. Where the title “cheese house” started, we don't know. Mary Davis offered that her ancestors did make cheese in what was their summer kitchen on her family farm. In any case, we all agree that with its plastered ceiling and walls, half chimney, built in cupboards, finished off railing upstairs and its very small size—it was never a traditional cheese house. We did decide that it is certainly first half

of the 19th Century and I think from now on we will be calling it our “little red house.” Meanwhile, the research goes on and we will keep you posted.



Dues Are Due

We still need a lot of monetary support and will for the foreseeable future as we have no endowment. There is still much to be done on the Nellis Tavern, including the basement area and, for a little extra fire safety, we need to re-install doors in the 2nd floor rooms. Restoration of the stenciled walls of five rooms is also a project that remains to be addressed.

A big challenge is the desire for a service building for a much needed storage area, permanent restrooms and indoor events. All of this would require a capital campaign.

We would also like to be able to move the schoolhouse that we own, from New Turnpike Rd., to the Tavern property so we could put it to a useful purpose and maintain it better. It could also possibly become part of the service building project.

Evening at the Tavern — 2012

Our signature fall event enjoyed its most successful rendition yet. Held at a time of day, 4–7 pm, when the sun is going down and we gradually light more and more candles—the interior of the rooms take on a glow that magically moves us back to an earlier time. A highlight

of the evening was the unveiling of the triangular recreated paneling under the hall staircase that had originally been taken when the building was abandoned. Eli Kurtz used an early photo taken by



Dick Bellinger to accurately construct the woodwork that Skip Barshied helped him install. Donna Reston painted the addition. Accompanied by the wonderful Harpsichord music played by Ron Burch, it isn't hard at all to imagine being there in the 18th and early 19th Centuries. We had about 50 people in the building—all of whom displayed an extraordinary interest in its architectural details. Many attendees didn't want to leave!

2013 Future Events for 1747 Nellis Tavern

ANTIQUÉ SHOW & SALE — Saturday, March 9, 10:00 AM–4:00 PM held at Arkell Museum, Canajoharie, NY. Admission \$4.00.

SUMMER SUNDAYS — June 2 thru September 29, 1:00 PM–4:00 PM at the Nellis Tavern. Tours. Admission \$3.00 for non-members. Members, free admission.

17TH ANNUAL RHUBARB FESTIVAL — Sunday, June 2, 11:00 AM–4:00 PM at Tavern. Pie baking contest will be held. Rhubarb treats and lunch available. Entertainment by Cosby Gibson.

EVENING AT THE TAVERN — Sunday, September 22, 4:00–7:00 PM. Admission \$15.00. Annual candlelight event with hors d'oeuvres, wine and period music. Also included will be "A Handsome Assortment: Chairs of the Turnpike Era".

(*Annual Nellis Association Reunion* will be at John Nellis Farm, Nellis Road, Fort Plain, New York, Sunday, July 21, 2013 at 12 noon. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Information — 518-993-2978.)

A Handsome Assortment

by Ron Burch

Palatine Settlement Society trustees Donna Reston and Ron Burch are working with John L. Scherer to develop "A Handsome Assortment": Chairs of the Turnpike Tavern Era," an exhibit tentatively scheduled for late September at Nellis Tavern. The exhibit will be a feature of the "evening at the tavern" event on September 22.

The "turnpike era" in upstate New York corresponded roughly with the first half of the nineteenth century. The exhibit will feature examples of the types of seating pieces which would have been found in common use in establishments like Nellis Tavern during its heyday between 1800 and 1840, when it faced the Mohawk Turnpike (present Route 5). Today, objects like these are regarded as prime examples of early American artisanship and are frequently examples of early American mass production, as well.

"A Handsome Assortment" will subsequently move to the early 19th century Grooms Tavern site in Rexford, Saratoga County.

John Scherer retired a few years ago after many years as curator of decorative arts at the New York State Museum. He is currently active on the boards of trustees of Grooms Tavern and of Schuyler Mansion in Albany. Donna is a well-known antiques dealer and former history teacher. Ron retired a couple of years ago after nearly thirty years as curator of art and architecture at the NYS Museum and currently serves on three museum boards of trustees in Montgomery County.

At right are a pair of turnpike era early 19th century bamboo-turned Windsor chairs (black-painted maple), said to have come from the historic Spraker Tavern on Rte.5 (the Mohawk Turnpike). It was torn down in the 1960s. Chairs like these were made by professional chair makers and were often purchased in sets.





1747 Nellis Tavern

Palatine Settlement Society
PO Box 183
Saint Johnsville, NY 13452

PalatineSettlementSociety.org

Newsletter

Our Antique Show & Sale at Arkell Museum Saturday, March 9, 2013

This is the date, the Arkell Museum in Canajoharie is the place and the time is 10:00 AM–4:00 PM. The admission is \$4.00, or a \$7.00 “combo” ticket will allow you to also tour the museum galleries—regular admission to the museum is \$7.00 and if you have not seen the galleries you are in for a treat. This small “jewel” of a museum owns major examples of American Art; Bartlett Arkell, the founder of Beechnut, donated most, many years ago.

Come spend the day and buy an antique! There will be antiques for you, whatever your budget. It might be a \$2 postcard or something costing in the hundreds or thousands of dollars. The show is eclectic with a full range of affordable antiques — all presented by friendly and knowledgeable dealers.

The appraisal booth is an added attraction. The charge will be \$5 for any two items.

Homemade food will be available for purchase, as usual, including sandwiches, soup, desserts, coffee, tea and other drinks.

Donna Reston is
Show Manager and
can be reached at
518.843.1601.



2012 Antique
Show at Arkell
Museum

Palatines to America National Conference in Albany, NY June 20–22, 2013

Our German Ancestors: When They Came, Where They Went will be held at the Desmond Hotel, Albany Shaker Road, Albany, NY, June 20–22, 2013 with speakers including Ernest Thode, Hank Jones, Joseph Lieby, and others. A bus trip to the NYS Library and Archives is offered. Think of all of the local historic Palatine sites you could visit, including the Nellis Tavern! For more information: Palatines to America, PO Box 141260, Columbus, OH 43214; 614–267–4700; PalatineNotes@gmail.com