

NNHS NEWS LETTER

Northville Northampton Historical Society

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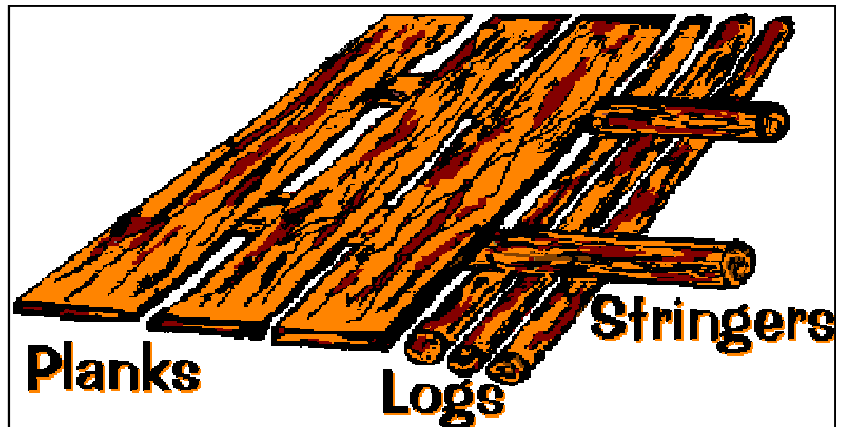
ROADS AND STREETS

In the Town of Northampton and the Village of Northville

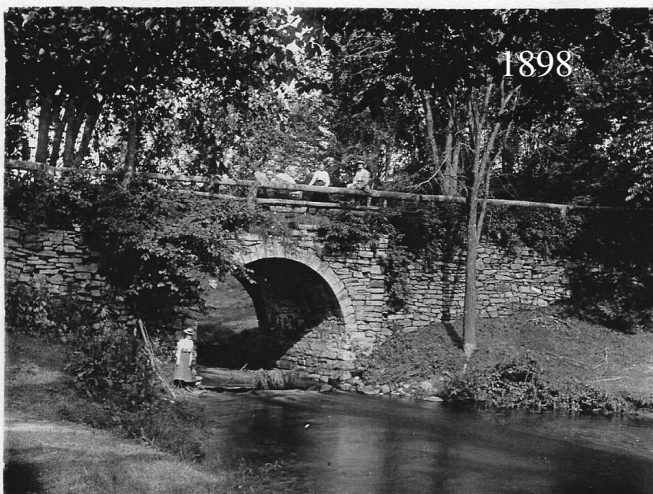
The first “roads” were narrow trails made by the hoofs of the Indian’s horses. Later as the horse and buggy days came along, those paths widened to accommodate the buckboard wagon, and stage coaches. Plank roads were the first improvement for traveling. Thick wooden planks were laid on sills to keep vehicles out of the mud. In 1849, a plank road laid out between Amsterdam, thorgu Broadalbin to Fish House. In 1850, a plank road was extended to Northville by the Northville and Fish House Plank Road.



The improvement of roads allowed for daily stage coach trips to carry the mail and passengers. Some of the roads were “toll roads, with barriers to prevent the passing of anyone that didn’t want to pay. A “Keeper” lived in a house nearby and collected tolls at the gate.



STREETS IN THE VILLAGE OF NORTHVILLE



August of 1794 a road was laid out that began at the “old fording place” at the river and ran east, crossing Main Street where the Methodist Church now stands. It’s name was Grove Street and ran along what is now the south side of our school soccer field, then continued on what is now Washington Street .

In 1797, Calvin Young, Commissioner of the Town of Broadalbin, surveyed and laid out a road running north and south, now the present Main Street. Bridge over Hunter’s creek where this road began. Because of it’s shape, it ws called ‘Hog back’. The bridge is gone, but the name has stuck.

When roads and streets were first laid out in our area, they were dirt. The condition of the roads or streets depended a lot on what the weather was. My mother told me that it was hard to ride her bicycle on the muddy streets. One time she was riding on the sidewalk and got stopped by the local police and was told she had to ride in the road. She told them that it wasn't possible to ride in all that mud. That was probably about 1925.

According to records I found, the streets in Northville started to be paved around 1910.

The first street to be paved was North Main and Reed in 1910 at the cost of \$4800..

1911 South Main to Center

1924 South Main to Gould Hill for \$11,000.

1932 North Third Street to Reed for \$1000.

1934 Gould Hill

1935 Prospect Hill for \$999.00

1936 South third to Center and Center to South Main.

1940 All streets not paved should be graded and oiled. (The oil and sand made a "tar") This creating a semi permanent paving.

Do you remember when the streets were re-tarred and our parents would tell us not to walk on the roads that day? On hot days the streets would soften and tar would stick to your shoes. Some even chewed it like gum.

There were dirt gutters along each side of the street. Children would play with their trucks and cars, leaves would be raked to the gutters and then would be burned there. What a wonderful fragrance that was.

Did you know that Macadam roads were so named because John Loudon McAdam pioneered the construction of a new method for paving roads? This method mixed heavy oil with stone which was spread on the road hot. When it cooled it was very durable.



Gould Hill many years ago



Here is South Main Street as a dirt street in 1898



REED STREET

Looking toward
Main Street

Circa
1930

STREETS IN NORTHVILLE

by Carlton Nellis

(excerpts from a newspaper article circa 1980)

One would have to look a long ways to a find a community with cleaner streets than the village of Northville. *(also true in 2016)* The crew of men who keep the streets so clean deserve a lot more plaudits than they receive. Whether it is the snow left by a storm, or the debris left by the July 4th Carnival; the crew is out, early in the morning, shoveling, sweeping and carting away.

It was not always so. Not that the Street commissioner, in the early 20th Century was any less active or energetic. The pace of the plowing or cleaning the streets was set by the team of horses pulling the equipment. Those horses never had any aspirations to set any speed records.

Some of the snow plows were ingenious contraptions. I recall one in particular. It was the front section of a pair of logging sleds, with a garden plow attached to one side. As it was pulled through the snow by a team of horse the plow would furrow out a trench in the snow. On the return trip, a parallel trench would be made, and the two forming a road for sleds or pedestrians.

It being the era before storm sewers; the water from the melting snow, the entire length of South Third Street, drained to the lower end. With ankle-deep slush, walking in the street was just about impossible. Fortunately, by then, the depth of snow in the fields had diminished, so we could walk in the path along the street.

It was only a couple of months, when the dirt street, which had been awash with the Spring flooding, became dry and dusty. Ellery Schoolcraft had a sprinkler water wagon, with which he would wet down some of the streets.

Some of the streets, he would sprinkle only in front of paying customers. The benefits of the wetting was very short-lived, as the dirt streets would soon dry out.



Example of a Horse drawn road sprinkler

The wooden tank of the sprinkler wagon was filled by an overhead hose, . At the retirement of Schoolcraft, George Groff took over the operation. Soon after that, because of the increase of homes in the village, and the increase use of water in each home, the village fathers became concerned of a possible water shortage, and began to frown on the use of large amounts for street sprinkling. In addition, the gradual paving of the streets of the village made the use of the sprinkler nugatory, and the village sprinkler wagon became a relic of a by-gone day.



Town of Northampton plow circa 1945

Back issues of the NNHS Historical Newsletter can be found on the Town of Northampton website.
Go to the history page.

LOST WORDS OF OUR CHILDHOOD

(Excerpts from an email sent to me)

Would you recognize the word Murgatroyd?
“Heavens to Murgatroyd” Words gone as “fast
as the buggy whip!”

The other day, a not to elderly lady said some-
thing to her son about driving a Jalopy and he
looked at her quizzically and said what the heck
is Jalopy?

Well, I hope you are “Hunky Dory” after you
read this and chuckle.

“Don’t touch that dial”, “Carbon Copy”, “You
sound like a broken record”, how about “Hung
out to dry”?

Back in the olden days we had a lot of moxie.
We’d put on our “best bib and tucker” to
“straighten up and fly right”. “Heavens to
Betsy”! “Gee whillikers!” “Jumping Jeho-
shaphat!” “Holy Moley”! We were in like
Flynn and living the “life of Riley” and even a
regular guy couldn’t accuse us of being a
“knucklehead”, a “Nincompoop” or a “pill”, not
even for “all the tea in China”.

Not so many years ago, life used to say “swell”
but when’s the last time anything was swell?
Swell has gone the way of beehives, pageboys
and the D.A., spats, knickers, fedoras, poodle
skirts, saddle shoes, and pedal pushers. “Oh,
my aching back”, “Kilroy was here”.

“Well, I’ll be a monkey’s uncle”! “This is a fine
kettle of fish”. We discover that the words we
grew up with, have vanished with scarcely a
notice from our tongues and our pens and our
keyboards.

Long gone: “Pshaw”. “The milkman did it”,
“Hey, it’s your nickel”, “Knee high to a grass-
hopper”. Well, “fiddlesticks”, “going like
sixty”. “I’ll see you in the funny papers”, “don’t
take any wooden nickels”. “Hop skip and a
jump”, “Heavens to Betsy”, “Huba huba”, “Hop
skip and a jump”, “hold your horses”. “Another
day another dollar”, “don’t throw the baby out
with the bath water”.

It turns out there are more of these lost words and
expressions than “Carter has liver pills”. This can
be disturbing stuff! We of a certain age have been
blessed to live in changeful times. For a child
each new word is like a shiny toy, a toy that has no
age. We at the other end of the chronological arc
have the advantage of remembering there are
words that once did not exist and there were words
that once strutted their hour upon the earthly stage
and now are heard no more, except in our collec-
tive memory. It’s one of the greatest advantages
of aging. See you later Alligator

Are you a Syracuse Football fan?

Did you know that one of “our own “ was a
Syracuse football star?



G. Bryan Thompson

It is believed that Bryan was the only Syra-
cuse athlete to play on four football teams for
the Orange against Colgate.

A big and fast lineman he was employed by
the Hudson River-Black River Regulating
Board since 1932 and played three varsity
seasons with Syracuse before serving one
year with the Marines in World War I.

Upon leaving the Armed Forces, the North-
ville resident returned to Syracuse and
played his fourth varsity grid campaign
against the Red Raiders.

He attended the traditional Syracuse Colgate
game while health permitted and was one of
the few graduates having the honor of
“sitting on the bench” for the annual grid tilt.
(Information from Bryan’s obituary, 1961)

Bryan Thompson is Georgia Thompson
Jacquard’s father.