GLIMPSES INTO THE PAST

EDITOR: BETTY WHITE, TOWN HISTORIAN JULY, 2007 VOL. 1 NO. 3

CONTENTS

FEATURE: THE LIBRARY
SPOTLIGHT: CUTTING HALL
WEBSITE http://www.nc3r.org/wptlib/
GENEALOGY: CUTTING FAMILY
OBITUARY JOHN TYLER CUTTING
BOOK: BESSBORO BEGINNINGS
DO YOU KNOW: ABOUT WESTPORT'S MOVIE THEATRE?

THE WESTPORT LIBRARY

The Library 1888-1907

The building you see in the picture above was constructed during the years 1887-1888. It was built by a local carpenter, David A. Clark, with the assistance of other local citizens. It sits upon the lot which had previously been occupied by the Persons Lake House Hotel that burned in 1876. According to Carlin Walker, in his book "Bessboro Beginnings" the lot was deeded to the Westport Library Association for $900, by Freeborn and Ann Page, with the provision that it was always to be maintained by the library as a park for the use of the people of Westport. The building was dedicated on July 26, 1888.

An article in the Aug. 9, 1888 edition of the Elizabethtown Post and Gazette reported on the opening:

"The Westport Library Association opened its new building on Thursday evening July 26th, 1888, and all were invited to be present, at the consummation of the good work, begun in this little town three years ago. The idea originated with the Misses Lena Barton, May Howard, Minnie Newell, Louise Prescott and the Messers. Charles Holt, Henry Douglas and George Richards, reinforced the second year by Miss Addie Douglas; Dr. F.T.DeLano, Messrs. Frank Royce, Frank Eddy, and many others too numerous to mention. By their unremitting labors they succeeded in accumulating five hundred books, to accommodate which they were generously offered the use of a room in Mr. Amos Prescott's house. In October, 1887, the "Westport Library Association" was incorporated by the State, a Board of Trustee's consisting of Messrs. L.B.Newell, Peter P. Bacon, John Hoffnagle, F.T.DeLano, Frank Eddy and Miss Alice Lee was appointed and one acre of land, formerly known as the Persons lot, purchased, on which to erect a building, suitable both for a Library and a Hall, a need long felt by the people of this town. Miss Alice Lee, President of the Association, succeeded in raising by public subscription in the town $1100 in cash and labor, all of which has been paid except $200 in labor, which will be used upon the park this autumn. Miss Lee also raised $1400 by donations from kind friends outside. The result is a beautiful slope of land, on which stands a pretty, picturesque building, 26x52 in size, designed by Messrs. Andrews and Jaques, of Boston, pupils of the famous H.H.Richardson, architect of the State Capitol at Albany, and the Billing's Library at Burlington, VT. The library will hold several thousand volumes, and the Hall can accomodate three hundred people, as was seen on the opening night, when it was full, and many came who could not be seated. Dr. F.T.DeLano presided, and after a few pleasant remarks presented the Rev. Mr. Benedict of the Baptist Church, who opened the services with an impressive prayer. Mr. L.B.Newell, Sec'y of the Assoc. gave an account of the work from the beginning, mentioning a few of the untiring laborers in the field, apologizing the he had not space of all, and ending with a gracious and well deserved compliment to Mr. Amos Prescott, who sat with the speakers, Trustees and Librarian

as did also the Rev. Father LaChance of St. Philip's Church who declined to speak owing to great fatigue. Some delightful singing followed, led by Mrs. Hitchcock, daughter of Mr. Wm. Cutting, an old resident of the town. The Hon. Richard L. Hand, of Elizabethtown, then delivered an eloquent and very interesting address appropriate in every way to the auspicious occasion, followed by a few timely and exceedingly happy remarks by the Rev. Mr. Grant of the Methodist Church, and last, but not least, came Senator R.C. Kellogg, who spoke in his usual entertaining and witty manner. The services then closed by the singing of "America" by the Glee Club, in which the large audience joined. Thus ended the ceremonies at the inauguration of the new Library and Hall, and the good work of improvement so well begun, and so ably seconded by many of our citizens, will we hope continue, until perfection shall be reached, and Westport shall be recognized, as it well might be, as one of the most attractive towns on Lake Champlain."

FEATURED WEBSITE

http://www.nc3r.org/wptlib is the place to find out about our modern day library. Their home page menu offers information about library hours, and other services available such as book clubs, public computers and audio books, information about the volumes in the collection and how to search online for something you might be looking for. There are links to the Library of Congress and also the lending library of the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System.

FEATURED BOOK "BESSBORO BEGINNINGS"

This book is a collection of reminiscences by the author, Carlin Walker. Carlin was a native resident of Westport and these articles originally appeared in a local newspaper, The Valley News. They were collected into a booklet in 1988, and were sold for the benefit of the Westport Library Association. At last check, there were still copies available for sale at the library at a cost of $5.

GENEALOGY OF THE CUTTING FAMILY

GENERATION 1

Sewell Cutting b. 16 Aug 1786 in Berlin, MA d. 21 Apr. 1855 in Westport NY. He married twice: 1) Mary Hunter and 2)Mary Wood.

Sewell is buried in Hillside Cemetery, Westport, NY.

GENERATION 2

Children of Sewell and Mary Hunter Cutting:

1.Wallace

2.William J. b. 27 May 1807 d. 10 Sept. 1865 m. Minerva Holcomb

3. Franklin H. b.1809, d. 1868 m. Ann Tiffany

4.Sewell Sylvester v. 1813 d. 1882 m. 1)Evelina Stow; 2) Elizabeth Brown

5.Lucy C. b 1819 d. 1828

6. Daniel b. 1824 d. 1896 m. Margaret ____

7.Guy H. b. 1826 d. 1827

8. Sarah B b. 1828 d.after 1911; m. ____Hussey

9. Edward H. b. 1834; d. 1835

Child of Sewell and Mary Wood Cutting:

10. John Tyler, b. 07 Sept 1844; d. 24 Nov. 1911 m. 1) Ella Martin b.1845 d.1891 2) Beatrice Carpenter

GENERATION 3

William J and Minerva had Mary who m. F. H. Page, Helen m. a Kingsland, Lucy m. Jacob Hinds and William Franklin b. 1835, d. 1836.

Franklin and Ann had Annie b. 1845 and Mary b. 1848

Sewell Sylvester and Evelina had Gardner Stow, b. 1838; Sewell Sylvester and Elizabeth had Churchill Hunter

Daniel and Margaret had George, Francis and Addie.

John Tyler and his first wife adopted Nellie b. 1876, who was unmarried as of 1935.

SPOTLIGHT

CUTTING HALL

The Library 1908-1960

The Addition of John Tyler Cutting Memorial Hall and the Clock Tower

By 1907, the number of volumes in the library had risen to about 4000. The annual circulation of between 4000 and 5000 books necessitated a permanent librarian. A card catalog which was done by Dr. F. Hennessey was credited with the increase of library use. Since it became evident that the size of the library must be increased, the Board requested the President, Miss Alice Lee, to contact the architects to design an addition to the original building.

This new addition was designed to provide an entertainment hall and space for the Town Offices, besides the needed space for library activities. It also featured a "promenade" deck or porch. This could have provided a pleasant place for relaxing with a good book, although it is not known if that actually happened.

In 1909, the octagonal clock tower was donated by Mrs. Robert C. Black.

The cornerstone of the new addition was brought to Westport from New Russia by Ernest Barber, a descendant of Hezekiah Barber who built the first permanent homestead in Westport in 1789. A ceremony to lay the cornerstone was held in September, 1907. A newspaper account of the ceremony can be found in the Sept. 12, 1907 edition of the Elizabethtown Post. A portion of that article lists the articles deposited in the box which was cemented into the cornerstone:

-History of the Town of Westport
-Proceedings of the Supervisors of Essex County for 1906
-Latest issues of the Essex County Republican and the Elizabethtown Post, also copies of the Ticonderoga Sentinel and Essex County News
-List of the Town Officers of 1907
-List of the Village officers of 1907
-Time tables of the D & H RR and the Champlain Trans.Co.
-Circular and program of graduating exercisess of Westport High School
-Lists of officers, trustees and members of the Baptist and Methodist churches.
-Lists of officers and badges of the Knights of the Maccabees, the Lake View Grange, the G.A.R. and the Sisco Lodge.
-List of officers of the Westport Cemetery Association.
-Premium list and official score card of the Essex County Agricultural Society.
-Directory of the Rural Telephone Exchange.
-18 views of the buildings and scenery of Westport.
-Coins of 1907, one cent, five cent and twenty-five cent pieces.
-1 cent and 2 cent postage stamps of 1907.
-Master's jewel deposited by John J. Greeley for 21 years Master of Sisco Lodge.
-Circulars of the Westport Inn and Mt. Pleasant Cottages
-Card and card pocket stamped with the rubber stamp of the Westport Circulating Library.

Following the reading of the above by Mrs. Caroline Halstead Royce, General John Tyler Cutting, after whom the new additon was named, spoke to the gathering. This speech, in its entirety can be found in the Sept 12, 1907 edition of the Elizabethtown Post.

A 1909 Report of the Board of Trustees of the Westport Free Library for the year ending June 30, 1909 shows that an indebtedness carried over from the building improvements in the amount of $2178.82 was entirely cancelled out by "our generous patron, John Tyler Cutting".

MANY THANKS to librarian Anne de la Chappelle for her time and graciousness in granting access to the "Historic Structures Report by Architects Crawford and Stearns and many other sources of information.

OBITUARY
JOHN TYLER CUTTING

"General John Tyler Cutting, whose death on Friday, Nov. 24, 1911, in Toronto was announced in last week's Post, was about 67 years old. He was a son of the late Sewell Cutting of Westport, where he was born, being the youngest of a large family. His mother died when he was 7 and his father when he was 10 years old, after which he started westward, fetching up before his 11th birthday on a raw prairie farm out in Illinois without a change of clothes or a cent in his pocket. He worked on that prairie farm, having the promise of $8 a month but, to use his own words, "never got anything but the promise." Later he worked in a store to pay his board while he went to school. When the Civil War broke out he was 16 years of age and he went into the Union army, where he served three years, smelling his first powder at Belmont with General Grant and firing his last gun under General Banks during the Red River expedition.

Some years after the close of the Civil War he followed the Star of Empire to California, where he joined the National Guard, eventually organizing the Coast Guard and finding himself a Brigadier General commanding the second Brigade. His adopted home section evidently appreciated his services, as he was elected a Congressman and represented his district of the Golden State at Washington, D.C. Finally coming back east, he located in New York City, being prominently connected with the Oldsmobile Company, making a moderate fortune.

General Cutting's will, dated August 17, 1911, was filed in the Essex County Surrogate's Office here November 29 and was probated Monday, December 4. The following shows briefly the disposition of his property:
First-to Nellie Cutting (adopted daughter) $750.00.
Second-to Charles H. Squier $500.00
Third-to Sarah B. Hussey (sister) $500.00
Fourth-to the United States Trust Company of the City of New York one equal third part of all the rest, both real and personal, to collect and receive the income, rents, issues, profits, dividends and interests from the said one equal third, to pay over the same unto his adopted daughter Nellie Cutting, etc, and after the death of said Nellie Cutting to pay over all of the said equal one-third of my property then remaining unto the Westport Library Association of Westport, New York, for the uses and purposes of said association absolutely and forever.
Fifth-All the rest, residue and remainder of my property and estate, both real and personal, and wheresover situated, I give, devise and bequeath unto my beloved wife, Beatrice Cutting, absolutely, who is hereby nominated and appointed executrix of this my last will.

In September, 1907, he came back to his native Westport, his return being like unto that of the Prodigal Son, in that the fatted calf was killed for the occasion, Miss Alice Lee furnishing a sumptuous repast at the Westport Inn for Gen. Cutting and many invited friends. On that Monday afternoon, Sept 9, 1907, the corner stone of Cutting Memorial Hall in Westport was laid, the building being named after Gen. Cutting because of his generous check in payment therefore.

Obituary-John Tyler Cutting, cont'd from page 4.

Last summer Gen. Cutting came back to pass the evening of his life in Westport. He married a Toronto lady and built a nice house on Barber's Point preparatory to enjoying the Champlain Valley generally and Westport particularly. He was generous with his money, among other things bringing about the Automobile carnival last July, fully intending to make it an annual event. His presence meant something doing in Westport, but he has been called to another sphere, his having been called to rest in the soil of the town he loved so well."

Elizabethtown Post, Dec. 1911

Hillside Cemetery

DO YOU KNOW?

The Library Hall Theatre in Cutting Hall was the site of the showing of many movies during the years from 1910 until 1951. During the early days, the silent films were accompanied by local piano players such as Mrs. Elmer Rice and Stella Osborne. In August, 1935, the company who also owned The Essex Theatre in Port Henry took over management of the Library Hall Theatre. They offered films Thurs. Fri. and Sat. evenings. The ad to the right is from the June 2, 1938 Adirondack Record - Elizabethtown Post. Note the cost of admission!

Library Hall Theatre
WESTPORT, N. Y.

Thurs., Fri., June 2-3—
HAPPY LANDING
Sonja HENIE, Don AMECHE

Thurs., Fri., June 9-10—
TEST PILOT
Clark GABLE, Myrna LOY
Evenings 8 p. m., 20c and 35c