



# A RANSOM NOTE

Clarence Historical Society Newsletter

Winter 2022

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Clarence Town Board Liaison  
Mark Woodward, Town Historian

Board Meetings are held the 1st Thursday of each month.

Meetings begin at 6:30 pm at the Clarence History Museum.

## President's Comments

As 2021 comes to a close, we would like to thank everyone who visited our museum & programs. Even though it was a shortened season due to Covid, we were still able to open & present a couple of programs. Some projects we are working on include getting the porch on the Log Cabin repaired, new and additional signage for our building and surrounding landmarks, and refurbishing the Watchman's Shanty with paint and repair work. Although we will be closed January and February of 2022, we are continuing to work on exhibits.

We wish everyone a very happy & prosperous New Year!

## A RANSOM NOTE

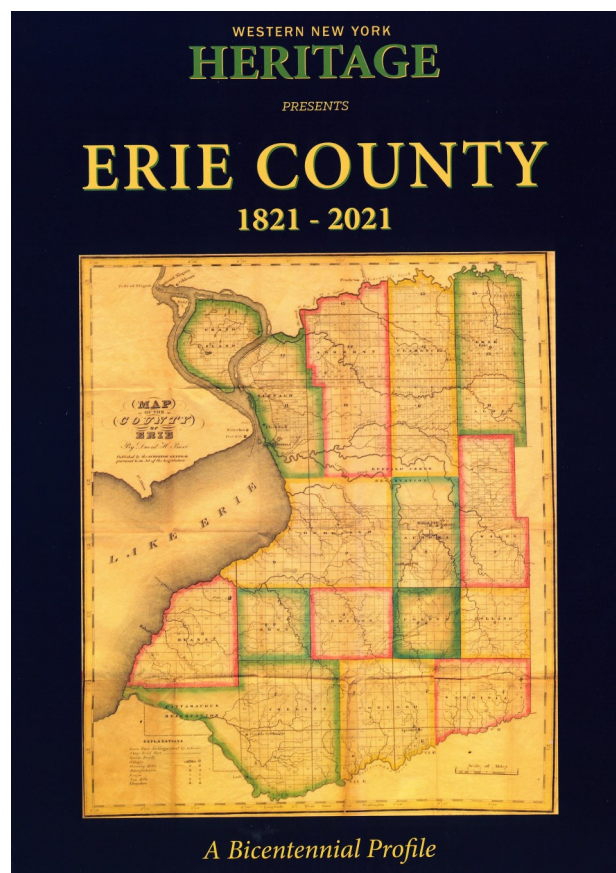
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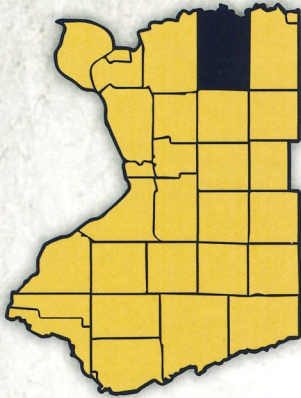
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This article was submitted by Clarence Town Historian, Mark Woodward

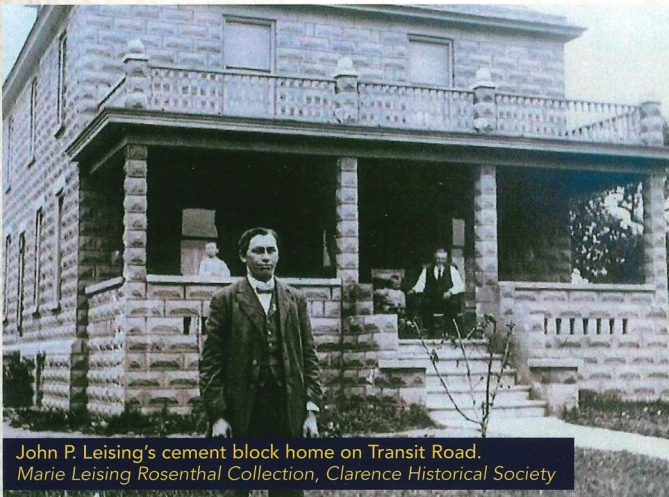


## Town of Clarence

Founded 1808

Clarence is the oldest existing town in Erie County. Asa Ransom came to the area in 1799 and opened his tavern in Clarence Hollow. In 1803, he also opened a gristmill and sawmill. Four years later, in 1807, Asa Harris opened a tavern in what is now known as Harris Hill. Today, the building is a dry cleaners on Main Street near Harris Hill Road.

The Town of Clarence was established in 1808. Two years later, in 1810, William Spoor opened a second inn in Clarence Hollow, where it is claimed U.S. presidents Millard Fillmore, Grover Cleveland and James Monroe all stayed at one time or another. The building survives and is now a private home at Main Street and Salt Road.



John P. Leising's cement block home on Transit Road.  
Marie Leising Rosenthal Collection, Clarence Historical Society

## at a glance...

### *The Town of Clarence is known for:*

The oldest existing town in Erie County, Clarence had a Native American presence before white settlers arrived. Its early existence was as an agricultural community.

### *Included in our town are:*

Clarence, Clarence Center, East Amherst, Harris Hill, Hunts Corners, Millersport, Rapids, Swormville and Wolcottsburg.

### *Important people in our town's history include:*

**Asa Ransom** - Opened a tavern in Clarence Hollow in 1799 and a gristmill and sawmill in 1803.

**Wilson Greatbatch** - Developed the first implantable pacemaker in the early 1960s.

### *Our present major sites/attributes:*

**Goodrich Landow Log Cabin** - Ca. 1825 cabin, moved from Goodrich Rd. to the campus of the Clarence History Museum in 1990.

**Leising Block Home** - Ca.1909, house constructed of cement blocks made by John P. Leising. Leising invented a machine to make hollow concrete blocks and for many years remained in the concrete block business. Many area homes were built upon blocks from his plant.

### *Sites on the National Register of Historic Places:*

**Eshelman Store** - Established in 1872, it was at one time the tallest building in Erie County outside of Buffalo.

### *For more information:*

[www.clarencehistory.org](http://www.clarencehistory.org)

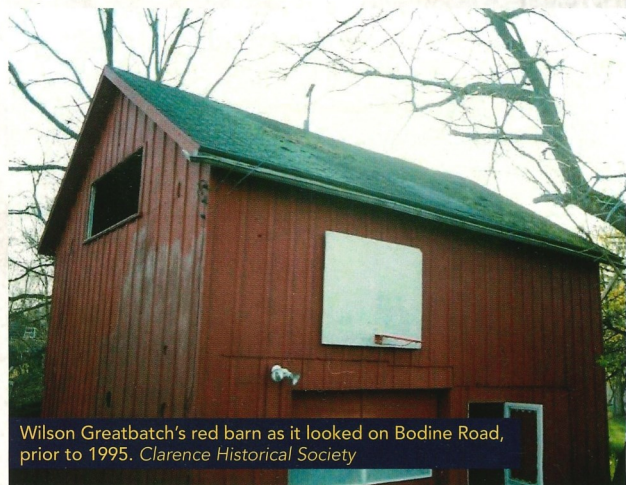


The Eshelman Building, built in 1872.  
Clarence Historical Society Press

Early settlers, many of whom were farmers, shaped the town over the next 20 years. Levi Goodrich constructed a log cabin on Goodrich Road in 1825. It was moved to the present Clarence History Museum campus in 1990, where it was restored. Businesses also made their mark on Clarence. In 1872, John Eshelmann and his nephew A.G. Eshelman opened the Square Deal general store at the four corners in Clarence Center. The building stands at the northwest corner of Goodrich and Clarence Center Road and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It currently houses the Perfect Gift store.

As the town continued to grow, many churches were established in the mid-1800s. The New York, West Shore & Buffalo Railroad began construction in Clarence Hollow in 1882 and the first West Shore train crossed Main Street two years later. A mural of a train crossing Main Street is on the side of the Clarence Bowling Academy in Clarence Hollow on Main Street near Salt Road. In 1897, Carl Landow and Carl Newman of Wolcottsburg constructed a wood-framed, hand-operated carousel. It held chariots and horses for the riders. Music was provided by a hand organ.

Businesses continued to flourish in the early 1900s. John P. Leising built his cement block home on Transit Road, Swormville, in 1909. This uniquely constructed house is still standing at 9980 Transit Road. Construction on another structure using Leising cement blocks began in 1911. This was the I.O.O.F. Clarence Lodge on the East Hill, in Clarence Hollow. Today, the build-



Wilson Greatbatch's red barn as it looked on Bodine Road, prior to 1995. Clarence Historical Society

ing houses a shop operated by T. Tschopp. It was that same year that the Automobile Club of Buffalo built their clubhouse in Clarence. This structure was purchased by the town in 1957. It is next to the Clarence History Museum and is also on the National Register of Historic Places.

Clarence's industries continued to grow throughout the 20th century. In 1958, Wilson Greatbatch quit his job and for the next two years worked on developing the first implantable pacemaker. His workshop was located in his barn on Bodine Road. The red barn and upstairs workshop were moved and attached to the Clarence History Museum in 1995. The museum also houses many of the early pacemakers.

## Erie County Fair 2021

Congratulations to Trustee Daniel Gamin on his prize winning Baldwin Apples and Orange Quince. Dan has been entering and winning ribbons for his apples and quince since 1981. The only year he did not enter was in 2020 due to the Fair being cancelled.

For 2021, Dan entered 1 plate of 5 Baldwin Apples and 1 plate of 5 Orange Quince from the tree's at the Clarence Historical Museum, right outside the log cabin. Dan graciously donated his blue ribbons to the Society. Way to go Dan and Thank You!



# MEMBERSHIP CORNER

Its time to renew your membership to the Clarence Historical Society!

We have different tiers to choose from:

Individual—\$15

Couples—\$25

Family—\$30

Business—\$50

Individual Life Member—\$150

You can also notate if you would like to volunteer by helping during open hours, giving tours, working on exhibits, and office help! We can always use an extra pair of hands!

You can go to our website to renew your membership or we have membership forms in the Museum and we will be mailing after the first of the year!

We would like to recognize and thank Mr. Peter DiCostanzo for signing up for an Individual Life Member! We greatly appreciate the continued support from our community!

We  
our  
**MEMBERS!**





New Exhibits Coming  
in 2022!

We are excited to announce a couple new exhibits coming in 2022! First, we will be showing off the many editions of Clarence-Oply throughout the years! Second, we are so excited and honored to be creating an exhibit to honor J. Michael Hens, the first Clarence resident killed in the Vietnam War. Peter Hens, John's brother, reached out to us in the fall to see if we would accept his brother's and father's war memorabilia and were we surprised and thrilled when we received his packages! We can't wait for our visitors to see our new exhibits when we re-open in March 2022!



**Posthumous award made to Cpl. Hens**

Cpl. J. Michael Hens, who lost his life in the Vietnamese War, has been awarded, posthumously, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Honor Medal, Second Class, with Meritorious Citation. The medal was presented to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin J. Hens Jr., 6511 Conner Rd., East Amherst, Friday (April 21, by Major George J. Stemlow, USMC, assisted by Sgt. Donald W. Preston Jr., both of the Instruction Insepction Staff, India Co., Third Battalion of the 25th Marines. Cpl. Hens has also been awarded the following medals, all posthumously: Purple Heart, National Defense Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, New York State Conspicuous Service Cross, Republic of Vietnam Service Medal, Presidential Unit Citation with Ribbon Bar, Republic of Vietnam Unit Citation with Palm and Frame, and the Combat Action Ribbon.

# Congratulations Morluski's



The Historic Clarence Church of Christ at 10678 Main St., home to Morluski's Polish-Italian restaurant, has received local historic landmark designation from the Clarence Town Board, per the request of DeRose Properties, LLC.



HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE TOWN OF CLARENCE  
Founded in 1954

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[www.clarencehistory.org](http://www.clarencehistory.org)

Facebook Page: Historical Society of the  
Town of Clarence

Email: [museum@clarencehistory.org](mailto:museum@clarencehistory.org)

“To Preserve and share the History and Heritage of the Town of Clarence, respecting our past and striving into the future.”

### Elaine’s Corner

Elaine has sent in some quotes she came across:

“Live every day as if its your last because one day you will be right!”

Ray Charles

“A woman is like a tea bag, you never know how strong she is until you put her in hot water.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

“The secret of happiness is to count your blessings while others are adding up their troubles.”

William Penn