

# NNHS NEWS LETTER

Northville Northampton Historical Society

Issue 64  
December 2015  
Editor  
Gail M Cramer



## NORTHVILLE CHRISTMASSES IN THE EARLY 1900S

Written by Carlton V. Nellis circa 1970's

*Merry*   
*Christmas*

I'm sure many of you remember Carlton Nellis. He was very active in community service. During the 1970 and 80's he wrote articles for the Gloversville newspaper. Many people clipped these articles out and put them in scrapbooks. This is one of his articles where he was reminiscing about Christmases in Northville.



*One of the first holiday activities was to cut a Christmas tree. Northville, being surrounded by a forest of potential Christmas trees, finding one was no problem. The task was to find the most suitable one from the innumerable thousands of evergreens available.*

*One of the most popular was the balsam, because it would fill the home with its fragrance. The possibility of buying an artificial tree was unheard of. It would have been like "carrying coals to New Castle".*

*Just about every home had a tree; either free for the cutting, or at the cost of having someone deliver one. The churches each had a least one, or probably more.*

*With the inexhaustible supply of all sizes available, one of appropriate size would be chosen. Often, when the conifer was taken into the house, it was discovered to be larger than it appeared in the forest. This necessitated cutting off a section of the tree*

*at the base. The boughs of this cut-off were used to cover the unsightly wooden box, which was the support for the tree. This box was usually filled with coal, for ballast.*

*The tree ornaments were brought out of storage, and were inventoried. Perhaps a few would be repaired. Most likely, the collection would be increased by the purchase of a few.*

*It being before the era of electric lights; candles would sometimes be used to light the tree. These would be set in candle-stick holders. This was seldom done, because of the danger of igniting the tree.*

*Another early activity, in preparing for the holidays, was stringing popcorn for the evergreen's decoration. In preparing for this chore, much more popcorn was prepared that was needed for the stringing. The workers at the tree trimming bee would probably eat the surplus. "Snitched" corn, even without salt or butter, tasted pretty good. (continued on page 2)*



Christmas tree about 1940, in the house owned by Lynn and Pat Barnett.



Carlton ringing the bell in the NNHS Museum

## Northville Christmases continued

By New Year's Day, after the apex of the Christmas spirit had passed, the family, especially the parents, would have decided that the tree was drying out, and was becoming a fire hazard. With much less glamour that was evident when the tree was being decorated; it was stripped of its finery.

In those days, it was not set out "naked", to be collected with the refuse, to be taken to the "Christmas Tree Cemetery". Rather, it was cut into sections and "cremated" in the home heating plant.

The wooden box, which had supported the tree, was packed away empty. Being dirty with coal dust, it was not used to pack ornaments in. They were carefully packed away in cleaner boxes.

CVN

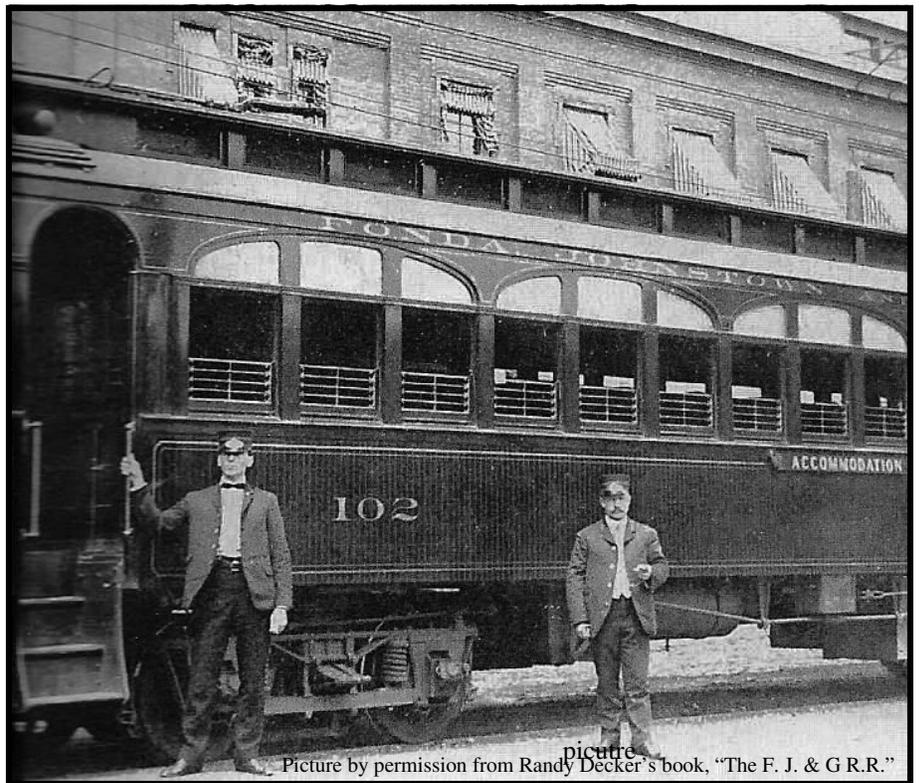
Vintage Christmas bulbs and lights



These F J & G R R hats were recently purchased by Art Simmons at a garage sale.

What a nice find this was. Thanks for letting me take some pictures of them.

Below is a picture of an F J & G Conductor and Motorman at the Gloversville station, with hats like or similar to the one on the left.



Picture by permission from Randy Decker's book, "The F. J. & G. R. R."

Train Conductor and Motorman  
standing beside an F. J. & G. train in Gloversville



When you are walking or driving down South First Street you may realize something is missing. This house was demolished this month to make way for a parking lot. It was located behind a real estate office which as some will remember, was formerly Sweet's Shoe Store.

Most of us probably remember this as the Blower's family home. The parents; Gordon and Bessie and their children, Bessie, Marilyn, Gordon Jr., and Hiram.

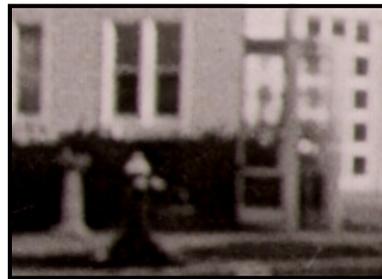
According to an article written by Carlton Nellis, the house was originally owned by John Brownell. Mr. Brownell owned a bottling works. He was in business with his brother Lewis. John later bought his brother out. (See NNHS August 2014 newsletter for more detail about the Brownell brother's bottling business).



## SOME OTHER THINGS THAT ARE MISSING



Besides this gas station which is missing what else do you notice is no longer on the corner of Main and Bridge Streets? If you haven't already noticed, it's the water fountain and the telephone booth.



The telephone booth was so handy for kids to call home asking Mom or Dad to come and get them. As I remember (illegal as it probably was), kids could dial the number, it would ring and when the person answered the telephone, the operator would ask for your dime. What the kids would do was shout into the phone, "come and get me" and hang up with out paying their dime. The party (mom or dad) would hear that and get the message.

How many stories could be told concerning this telephone booth? What do you remember?

How did that era live without cell phones and smart phones???? But they did!! Here is that phone booth today. Thankfully it wasn't trashed. It now resides at the William Coffey Studio on Third Street. He has placed a Christmas tree inside the booth for the holidays.



# NORTHVILLE TRIVIA

Back issues of the NNHS can be found at [townofnorthampton.com](http://townofnorthampton.com)

Some newsletters didn't make the list, but will soon be added.

Unfortunately dates of newspaper articles in scrapbooks were not all recorded.

## BOYS URGED TO STOP PRACTICE

Postmaster Says That Present Tactics Must Be Abated.

NORTHVILLE, Jan. 29.—The postmaster wishes to call the attention to the persons who are making the lobby of the postoffice a place to gather and it is reported to him that the conduct of some of the persons visiting the office are certainly rude. The tearing up of waste paper and spreading over the floor, besides locking the outside door that prohibits patrons of the office who have lock boxes from getting their mail. The matter of patrons getting their mail on Sunday was one of the accommodating features of the postmasters acts, but unless the habit is stopped, he will be obliged to keep the door closed all day, while heretofore the lobby of the office has been open from nine o'clock in the forenoon until seven in the evening..

Village President George E. Van Arnham, backed up by the village board, issues a warning to all boys who have a bicycle to keep off the sidewalks. The officials of the village do not want to arrest or fine any boy, but this law will be strictly enforced. A village policeman will be appointed soon who will enforce this and also keep children with coaster wagons off the main streets. 1919

I wonder why just boys were warned? My mother told me that she was riding her bike on the side walk when she was a teen and was told by the constable to get off the sidewalk. She said the road was muddy and had ruts, so it was easier to ride on the sidewalk. She was about 9 years old when this article was written.

## CONSTRUCTION PLANS FOR CENTRAL SCHOOL SENT TO CONTRACTORS

Plans and specifications for the construction of the new Northville Central school have been completed and mailed to a large number of contractors in this section of the state. Other plans and specifications for the heating, ventilating and wiring contracts have also been mailed to various firms. It is expected a number of contractors from Gloversville and Johnstown will submit bids upon the job.

Taxpayers in the central district, which includes schools in Fulton, Hamilton and Saratoga counties recently authorized a bond issue of about \$290,000 for the purchase of land, construction and equipment of new central school. The project is one of the largest started in Northville in recent years.

Date of article unknown but the building of the school was in 1933.

## INDIANS VISIT SPORT ISLAND

Played Game Of LaCrosse And Attracted a Large Crowd.

NORTHVILLE, Aug. 18.—The band of St. Regis Indians which has been at Speculator taking part in the Old Home Week celebration last week was in the village today. The Indians played a game of La Crosse on Sport Island and attracted quite a crowd, as the game was new to most of the people at the Park.

## Second Smallpox Case in Northville

A second case of smallpox has been reported to the health authorities, in Northville. This case is that of a son of Bert Barney, who occupies the upper flat in the John A. Willard house in Third street.

Reports from the home of Mr. and Mrs. Delbert Travis, where another case is said to exist, indicated that the patient, their young son, is getting along in good shape, although confined to his bed.

Ever wonder when the Serfis Glove company started business in Northville? Remember they set up a glove shop in the old Union Free School house where the municipal building is located now.

## SERFIS CONCERN PROVES STORY IN THE HERALD

Glove Manufacturers Will Move to Northville on Jan. 1; To Use School

Officials in the Serfis Glove company, 118 South Main street, yesterday confirmed the story carried by The Morning Herald on November 19, it would move to Northville about January 1. Through arrangements completed with the Northville Board of Education and the Chamber of Commerce there, the firm has secured a long term lease on the old Northville High school building.

Various alterations to the building are being made by Bert Benson, Northville contractor. Plumbing and heating contract was awarded to Allen & Palmer and the electrical work to H. L. Barker of Northville. The contractors were hired by the glove concern under an agreement reached with the village officials.

The larger part of the company production has been handled in Northville for some time. The company started business here 15 years ago in the old Kathan garage on South Main street. The firm at that time consisted of William S. Richmond and Herman Serfis. Then Mr. Serfis' brother, Charles Serfis, entered the partnership and the plant moved to 146 Spring street. Later the firm moved to 7 West Pine street, then purchased an interest in the old Littauer building, 118 South Main street.