

# NNHS NEWS LETTER

Northville Northampton Historical Society

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Editor  
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## Clarence Davison was a Memorable Character

Written by Patsy Graff Suydam



When I was growing up in Northville Policeman Clarence Davison was an almost constant presence somewhere in the Village at any hour of the day. Tall and handsome, with a ruddy complexion, Clarence was Northville's John Wayne. He served for 34 years; from 1929 until he retired in 1963. The NCS class of 1963 dedicated their yearbook to Clarence "with much appreciation for his sincere interest in the youth of Northville and for his many kindnesses to them."

### MUSEUM

The Rotary has offered to paint the middle section of the museum. The paint and brushes have been purchased. They will be painting the weekend of Sept. 25th.

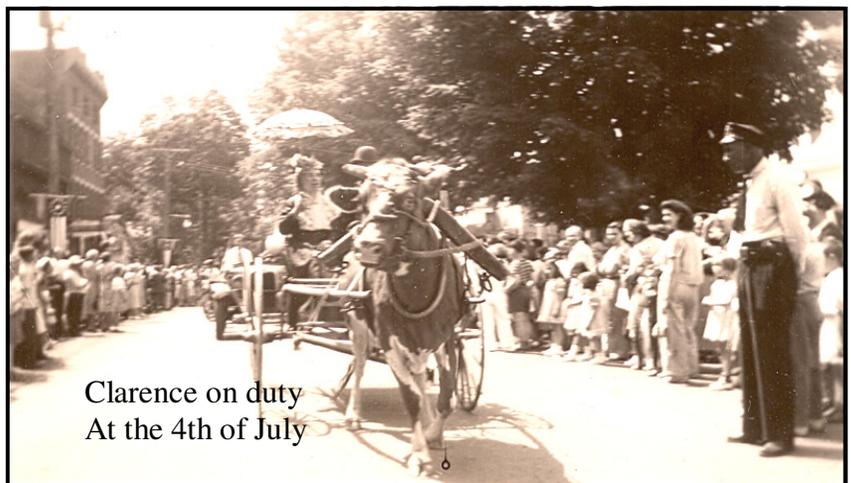
We are looking to hire someone to put a new roof on the middle section of the museum before winter.

From issuing summons to dog owners, to investigating burglaries, accidents and drownings, Clarence was "it" for Northville law enforcement. Appointed yearly, later biannually, he had an annual vacation of two weeks, during which another Clarence, named Simonds, took his place.

Today while local police might be dealing with opioid addiction, overdoses and gun violence, Clarence dealt with his community, its activities, tragedies and missteps.

One year Clarence arrested over zealous teen-age pranksters who did considerable property damage at Halloween. The offenders were brought before authorities, given a severe reprimand and released with an order to make restitution for the damages incurred.

When a Northville student found a camera on the skating pond, he turned the camera over to Clarence who discovered the owner. The student was then rewarded with accolades and \$5.



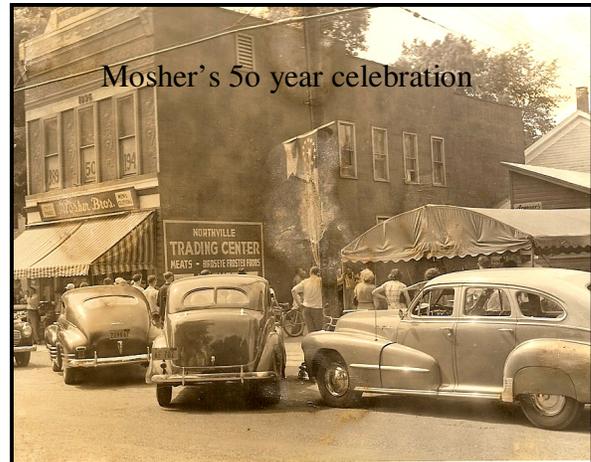
Clarence on duty  
At the 4th of July

A Mayfield driver who stopped at a dangerous intersection in Sacandaga Park to visit with a friend nearly caused a serious accident. Arrested by Clarence, he was charged with reckless driving and brought before Justice of the Peace, John Houghtaling, in the former fire department rooms.

The case aroused widespread interest in Northville and vicinity. A crowd of over 200 spectators was present at the trial which was held with a jury of six local residents. Justice Houghtaling threatened to clear the room of spectators many times because of the noise and confusion they caused. He finally had Clarence mingle with the crowd to keep order. The trial consumed two hours at which time the jury returned a verdict of “not guilty.”

Six Syracuse altar boys returning from an outing at Lake Pleasant crashed their car into a tree. The boys were dragged from the car just before it burst into flame. One boy succumbed to his injuries. Clarence investigated the accident. The next year he investigated an accident that killed a 6-year-old boy on a bicycle.

When Mosher Brothers Grocery Store celebrated 50 years of business, a crowd of several hundred people attended and were served refreshments along with live dance music. Due to the heat and an excessive crowd, the music was moved to the sidewalk. Within a short time a square dance was in progress and Clarence was called upon to direct traffic. He also provided police protection and handled traffic for the St. Francis church “Bazaar and Lawn Festival” which was held on the Village Green filled with a variety of booths.

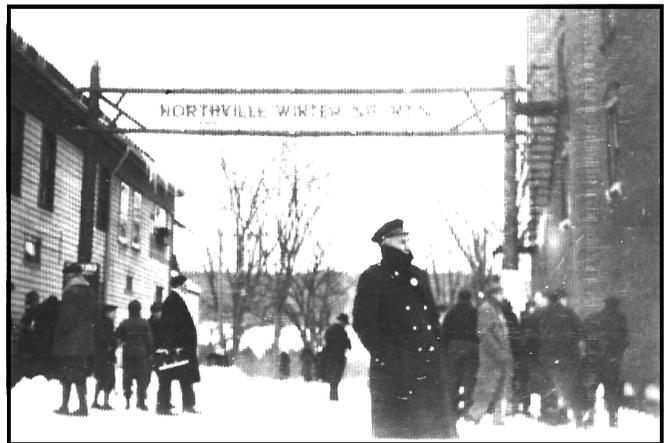


One year the Second Grade of the Central school studied firemen and they made a trip to the Northville Fire Department where Fire Chief Glen Duncan explained the workings of the fire engine. Clarence showed them the jail. It was a large steel barred cage with a steel plate floor and top, containing four bunks. Students were brought back to the school on the fire engine, accompanied by Fire Chief Duncan and Police Chief Davison.

For many years Clarence was a member of the Boy Scout Review Board. Scouts earned merit badges in activities such as carpentry, electricity, pioneering, cooking, firemanship, and bird study.

When a Civil Defense Auxiliary was formed for the Town of Northampton, Clarence, as “Chief of Police,” supervised an auxiliary police school.

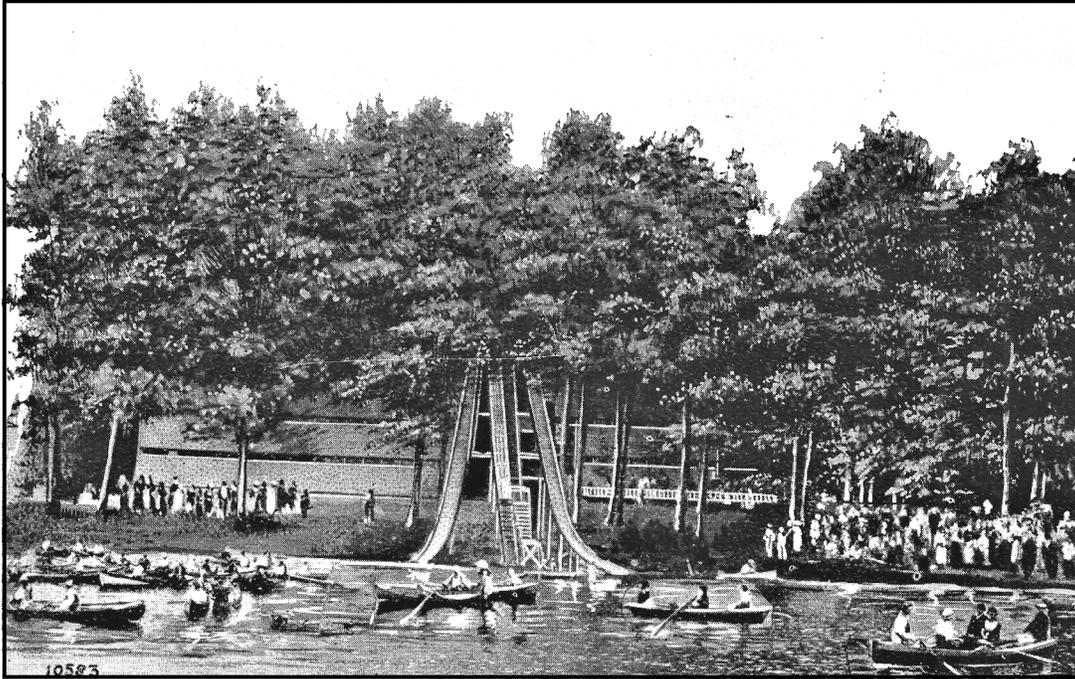
Clarence married Edith Sweet when he was 22 years old. They lived in Gifford’s Valley and later in Northville. Their only child, Martha, was valedictorian of her senior class at NCS and later became a teacher at NCS. Born in Wells in 1910, Clarence passed away in 1969 and is buried in Northville’s Prospect Hill Cemetery. Clarence Davison was a memorable character indeed.



# CHUTES THE CHUTES

Aka Shoot the Chutes, Toboggan Slide  
At Sacandaga Park

The first of this type of amusement ride was built by J.P. Newburg in 1884 down the side of a hill at Watchtower Park in [Rock Island, Illinois](#). The ride traveled along a 500-foot (150 m) greased wooden track, skipping across the Rock River at the bottom. It was then poled back to the ramp by an on-board ride attendant. Newburg took this unique ride concept next to Chicago, where more flumes were built and the rides grew in popularity, including in Sacandaga Park..



The back part of the Chute-the-Chutes, showing the start of the slide ride

The **Chute-the-Chute** ride was a favorite entertainment in the Sacandaga Amusement Park. It was located on the west bank of the Sacandaga River, behind the Pines Hotel. I find evidence in a newspaper of it existing in 1898. A flat wooden boat or sometimes called a toboggan, was used to transport the riders down the long greased ramp where it projected out into the river and skimmed across the surface of the water. The bottom of the ramp curved upwards, causing the boat to skip across the water until it came to a stop. The river at that point was quite shallow, so when the toboggan stopped, the rider or riders safely exited the boat. The boat was guided to a landing by a boatman, who then returned the boat to an elevator which lifted it back to the top of the ramp. The bottom of the boat/toboggan was wet down before the next ride. It was a thrilling ride and mostly safe, but there are stories that attest to some accidents, mostly not serious, but some of which caused serious injury and the death of a teenage boy. The articles below were taken from several newspaper articles on [Fultonhistory.com](http://Fultonhistory.com).

*Miss Sadie Rouke of Watervliet, while coasting down the shoot-the-chutes at Sacandaga Park, collided with a boat. Miss Rourke started down the chutes lying on the toboggan, face downward. When she had sped half way down the chute, she observed the boat which was in direct line of the chutes. Her friends, who stood on the platform above, noticed the boat at the same time and shrieked to the man. She hit the boat broadside, but was not seriously injured.*

*John Cridland of Johnstown was cut over the right eye at Sacandaga Park yesterday afternoon by being struck by a toboggan which he was placing on the elevator which hoists them to the top of the chutes. His shoulder was slightly bruised. (1903)*

*In regard to recent accidents and criticisms of the Chute-the-Chutes safety, Manager Fred Wilson of the park states that 3 men are kept constantly on guard at the chutes, two men located at the top as starters and the third watching the lower end.*

*Several girls staying at the Adirondack Inn were indulging in the toboggan chutes and after several trips down with safety, they decided to take one more ride. When they were half way down the incline a rowboat suddenly shot past the chutes and the occupants of the toboggan struck the boat fairly in the middle. All the girls were thrown out and besides a severe shock, were subject to minor bruises.*

*Owing to the accident on Wednesday at the toboggan, the management has marked off the river in front of the chutes with flags, which will guide persons using rowboats there, to cross with safety.*

*Frank J. Blood was injured while shooting the chutes at Sacandaga Park and was seen limping with the aid of a cane and an arm in a sling. Mr. Blood was about midway down the incline when an intoxicated individual in a boat, rowed directly in front of the foot of the chute.. A collision was inevitable. Mr. Blood received a bad laceration of the foot and his left wrist was sprained, besides other numerous bruises.*

*Hiram Mills age 17 died in Gloversville Hospital with a crushed skull and fractured neck suffered at Sacandaga Park. Mills dove from a chute-the-chute boat as it entered the water, and struck some submerged object. 1923*

*BUYS BUILDING Alex Joseph, of Utica, has purchased from the F.J. & G Co. the bath house and the chutes located on the river bank near the Pines Hotel, which he will raze and move to his lot on the Mountain Road, where he will erect a cottage. Mr. Joseph was a former resident of this vicinity and for some years operated a fruit store and restaurant at Sacandaga. He is now engaged in the manufacture of suction pumps in Utica and for the past three seasons has spent the summer in the Canfield house on the Mountain Road. 1929*

