

The Huddle

By Dorothy French

An interesting name – and frequently followed by the question: how did the Huddle get its name? Someone suggested it refers to the cluster of buildings in close proximity to one another in an area near the Walworth/Macedon town lines on Walworth-Palmyra Road. Is this true?

Thanks to stories shared at our October 29, 2006, Walworth Memories program, we have this information on file about the Huddle:

- The Huddle is located in the area south of Walworth village on Walworth-Palmyra Road near the curve where the bridge was replaced in 2006. It is a few yards south of the Town of Macedon marker by Pond Road.
- The area was very swampy and the early road was made of planks. Years ago, when a crew was working on the road, they found a plank and gave it to John Traas who was the town historian. It was not uncommon to lay planks (called a plank road) or logs (called a corduroy road) as a road base.
- Betty Brown asked if anyone remembers the Hickey Farm on Walworth-Palmyra Road in Macedon where she was born. It was located in the Huddle area near the mill, west side of road. Walter Newbury owned it and used the building for hatching chickens. At one time there was a school house before it burned. A new home was recently built on the property (between the original Newbury house and Wilbur and Ruth Reybrouck's home).
- Walter Newbury had the contract to deliver U.S. mail on Walworth-Palmyra Road from Walworth village to Walworth Station. The former Ralph Allen house at 3199 Walworth-Palmyra Road (across from Nortiers) in Macedon township was a stagecoach stop and tavern; it currently is owned by Darlene and Victor Werlau. Barb Allen Wixon of Farmington claimed there was a ghost in the house!

The Mill:

- The mill was located on the west side of Walworth-Palmyra Road.
- Gordon Youngman showed 3 photos of the mill from Anna May's scrapbook.
- According to John Traas' book, Walworth, from Douglas Corners to Gananda, Isaac Barnhart was the first owner and Walworth millwright; he built the dam and gristmill in 1818. When the mill was purchased by John Craggs in 1862 it became known as Craggs Roller Mills; John also owned a mill in Pultneyville. Edson Blyth continued operating it after his uncle (John Craggs) died. After Edson's death, his son took over the management of the business and later sold it to Peter Balzar in 1930, who was assisted by his daughter, Anna B. Youngs. Anna operated the mill from 1944 (when her father died) until she retired in 1957. She only owned it a few months before it burned.
- All three mills burned at that site. They were very flammable because the dust would cling to a heated light bulb and that meant instant fire. One of the fires occurred when future fireman Stuart Huntley was a youngster; he was told to sit in his front yard and watch it but not go near the blaze. Now (in 2006) he has 65 years with Walworth Fire Department and has fought many fires.

The Mill Pond

- After the mill dam broke in the '50's, Anna wanted to rebuild it but the State stepped in. Gordon said it would cost too much to have it done according to state specifications, although it would have been a beautiful spot for a park. Gordon used to go skating and ice fishing there. Stuart said you could ice skate all the way from Walworth-Palmyra Rd. to West Walworth Road/Rolford Heights on Red Creek – a distance of more than four miles.
- Gordon said his dad, Ezra Youngman, would cut a hole in the ice in the winter time. As fast as the bullheads would jump to the surface they would be put into a pail and he would immediately take them to his mother, Ida Youngman, who fried them. However, they were still frozen and jumped up and down in the frying pan!
- During the winter, a ramp was built on the pond's edge. Channels were cut out of ice with crosscut saws. Slabs of ice, cut 2 ft. wide and 3 ft. long, were floated down the channel, loaded on a horse-drawn wagon with ice tongs, and taken to a farm's ice house. Sawdust was available for ice storage.

If you have additional information about the Huddle, contact one of the WHS officers listed on the front cover of this newsletter.



The last surviving mill in the area of Walworth known as “The Huddle”

Update information from May 2008 newsletter



Huddle Update

Editor's Note: The story in our March newsletter about the Huddle prompted several readers to send us additional information. We thank them for sharing their memories, allowing us to update our records.

Bob Wignall, former resident now living in Colorado Springs, Colorado: "I enjoyed the info on The Huddle. As I mentioned in my earlier message about the Pacific Hotel, my grandparents (John and Carrie Franke) moved to the Huddle in November 1912 to the Ralph Allen house. I assume they purchased it, rather than rented. They lived there until he died in January 1924. Probably it was sold shortly thereafter, because I believe my grandmother went to live with her eldest daughter in Caledonia. I guess you would have to look at land records for exact dates.

The interesting info from your article was that the house had once been a stagecoach stop and tavern. I never knew that. You also confirmed for me the township line. I had always assumed The Huddle was in Walworth, but when I went to check the census records for my grandparents, I found of course they were listed under Macedon, not Walworth. That was a real surprise to me."

Richard Donovan:

"The school house did not burn down (as previously indicated). My parents, Richard and Myrtle Donovan, bought the property in 1946 with hopes of turning the school house into a private residence. Due to its deteriorating condition, it could not be saved and I had it torn down. It was located in front of a metal pole barn, which is still on the property. Greg Reybrouck bought the property in 1990, according to my Mom."

Vaughn Pembroke:

"Louie Duell and his brother Ernest cut and hauled ice from the mill pond near the Huddle. The Huddle was a place for Walworth folks to stop at a tavern and get a beverage as Walworth was a dry town."



Photo of the old mill at the Huddle (April 2008)