

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”