



The Grannytown Gazette

The Newsletter of the Alden Historical Society

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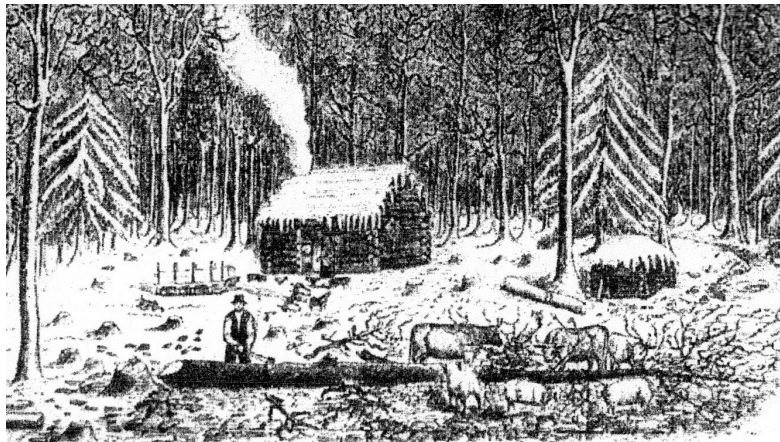
Kris Rogers

Keeping Warm in 19th Century Alden

When we feel chilly this winter we'll just crank up the heat in our homes or cars and carry on with our activities, but what did the early residents of Alden do in our chilly, windy, snowy Western New York winters? How did they stay warm when so many of them had so little?

The earliest settlers, who settled in the early eighteen hundreds, primarily came from New England, so they were used to cold winters, but after traveling across New York on narrow trails, too narrow for a wagon, with just a cart to carry their belongings, they would arrive here to a wilderness. There were no frame houses ready for occupancy clustered around a village green. (Thomas Farnsworth built the first frame house in 1821.)

The first order of business was to clear a plot of land and put up a log structure. The size of the cabin depended on the size of trees on the property and the strength of the settler and his family. Some cabins were 16 by 18 feet, many smaller, and about 7 horizontal logs high.



The small size, though crowded, was advantageous in the winter as it was easier to heat. The logs were chinked to fill in the gaps, and to keep out the wind..



Next would have been the construction of a fire-place out of rocks found on the property. This would have been used for cooking, and in the colder months, a source of heat. The heat from the fireplace did not reach the corners of the room. In the winter, the early settlers would stay as close as possible to the fireplace day and night, remembering to bank the coals at bedtime so the fire could be built up in the morning.

It helped to bundle up, even in the cabin. Woolen stockings would be worn; shawls; long johns; layers of petticoats, some flannel, under long skirts; and even stocking caps were worn. It helped to wear heavy nightclothes at night, and to pile on the quilts and coverlets. Three or four children to a bed was not just because of a space issue, but, especially in the winter, it was to stay warm by sharing body heat.

(continued on page 2)

Keeping Warm in 19th Century Alden (continued from page 1)

Those who had brought a bed warmer from home had a means of warming the bed before getting in. The bed warmer was a copper or brass pan attached to a long handle that could be filled with heated rocks and passed over the bottom sheet, beneath the quilts. A soapstone worked better. It could be heated in the fire, wrapped in rags to prevent burns and placed under the covers at the foot of the bed. Heated rocks, wrapped in rags, could also be used.. In bitter conditions, people often stayed in bed as much as possible to stay warm.

It helped to consume warming foods like soups and teas. Often a stew simmered on the fire all day, and bread was baked, both slow-cooking processes which kept the cabin warmer. It also helped to burn candles, and later oil lamps, not only for light, but also for heat.

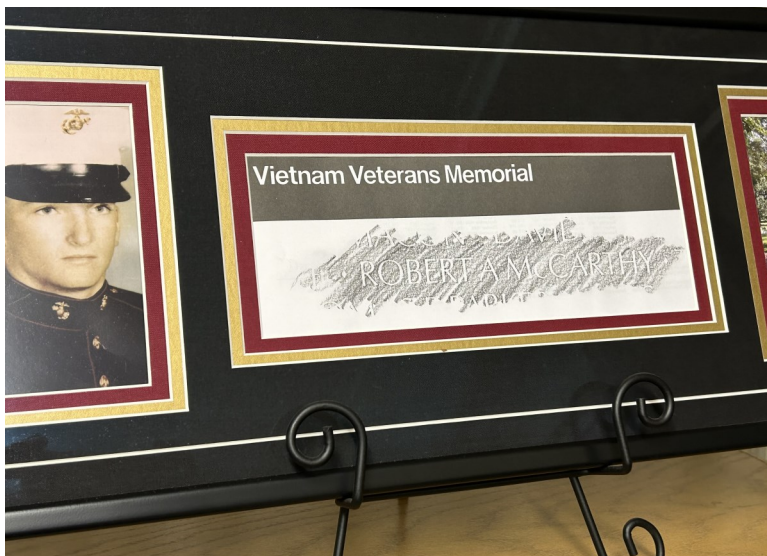
In the mid 19th century, cast iron stoves became available to those who could afford them. They were more efficient than the fireplace, throwing off more heat. Usually the family first purchased a cast iron cooking stove, and would gather around it in the cold winter months. Smaller pot-belly stoves could be used to heat separate added on rooms, and were used in schools, churches and stores.

When you go to turn up the thermostat this winter, remember Alden's early settlers and be grateful for our modern conveniences.

~ Karen Muchow, Alden Town & Village Historian



Curator's Corner



I was a senior in high school (1969) when Bobby McCarthy was killed in Vietnam. He had only been there a few weeks. As I recall, he was not quite 19. The war had been raging for several years and the nightly news was filled with photos of the jungle and of body bags being shipped home. When we got the news at school that Bobby (from the class 1968) had been killed, I went to the principal's office to ask if I could lower the flag outside to half-mast. Mr. Reed told me no, that he had to have permission from the school board to do so. I was furious but being the good little obedient girl that I was, I said nothing. Instead, I continued to write to several boys who were serving in Vietnam until they came home.

The picture here is of a rubbing of Bobby's name from the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, DC. I obtained this from the estate of Dennis McCarthy over this past summer. We also have copies of the letters that Bobby wrote home in our archives. The picture is in our Military Room.

~Kris Rogers, Curator

A Note of Thanks

We would like to express our gratitude to the Historical Society of the Town of Clarence for donating a large surplus display case to the Alden Historical Society for our Heritage Center. It features glass shelves and lighting and is presently located in the Davis Room. We will be sure to put it to good use.

~Christopher Gust





Happy Holidays from all of us at the Alden Heritage Center to all of you. We cannot thank you enough for your generous support throughout the year. We also need to thank the Town of Alden for their support and maintaining the Center and Henske Road School House.

We are sad to say goodbye to two of our long time Trustees. Elouise DeFilippo, who has stepped down, will be missed but promises to stay involved. Jennifer Strong will also be stepping down as a Trustee, but we are happy to announce that she will be our Society Historian. Karen Muchow will remain our Village and Town Historian. With the change in our board, we will be welcoming two new Trustees: Terri Retzlaff and Kyle Kavanagh. Welcome to the team. Have a wonderful

Holiday and if you have not renewed your membership, please consider doing so. It is a small amount to help maintain and preserve the history of your hometown. Annual dues are \$12 per person, \$20 per couple, \$25 per family and \$50 per business.

~Sue Galbraith, President

ACS 4th Graders Visit Heritage Center

During November, the Alden Historical Society welcomed to the Heritage Center five fourth grade classes from Alden Central School. Each class participated in a 90-minute session, starting with the presentation of nine different artifacts to give an overview of the history of Alden, including an arrowhead, a fossil, schoolhouse, train engine etc. Volunteer instructors then took the students on a tour of the Heritage Center and ended the session with a bathtub scavenger hunt. The students (and their teachers) all seemed to enjoy themselves with this unique opportunity to learn about the history of the local community. We thank the fourth grade teachers from Alden Central School for their participation and our guest instructors, Elli DeFilippo, Terri Retzlaff, Kris Rogers, and Jean Weisbeck.

~Kris Rogers



Photos supplied



Holiday Open House December 7

Winter 2024



The Alden Heritage Center will be fully decorated for the Holidays during our Annual Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 7 from 11 am until 2 pm. All are welcome to have a look at our vintage ornament displays and enjoy some Holiday Cheer with cookies and candy canes. We will also have docents available for tours and unique gifts available for sale for your favorite Aldenite.



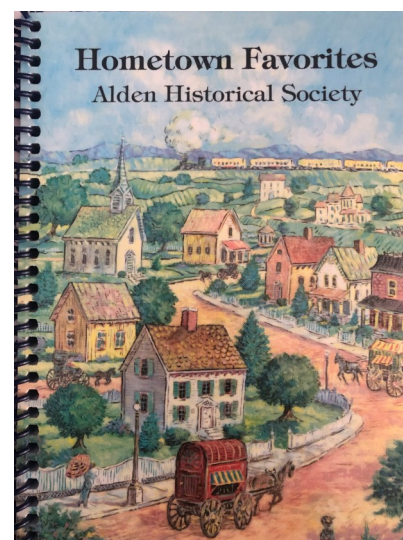
A Holiday recipe from the Alden Historical Society's *Hometown Favorites* cookbook.

GRANDMA WALTER'S CHRISTMAS COOKIES

Shirley Kocher

1 heaping c. light brown sugar	2 tsp. baking powder
$\frac{3}{4}$ c. margarine	1 tsp. baking soda
$\frac{1}{4}$ c. milk	1 tsp. salt
2 eggs	$3\frac{1}{2}$ c. flour
1 tsp. vanilla	

Mix powder, soda, salt and flour; set aside. Cream sugar and margarine. Stir in milk, eggs and vanilla. Add dry ingredients. Roll out on floured pastry cloth and cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Lightly grease cookie sheets. Bake at 350° for 7 to 8 minutes or until light brown on bottom.



In Memory...

The Alden Historical Society was saddened to learn of the passing of Ruth Davis on July 17 at the age of 99. Ruth was the curator for the Society's collections for over twenty years. During her tenure, she cataloged and organized the collection, especially the archives that had been neglected. Ruth was the driving force behind the back addition which greatly increased our display space. That room was named in her honor when she retired as curator. Our condolences to Ruth's family and friends.



Upcoming Programs



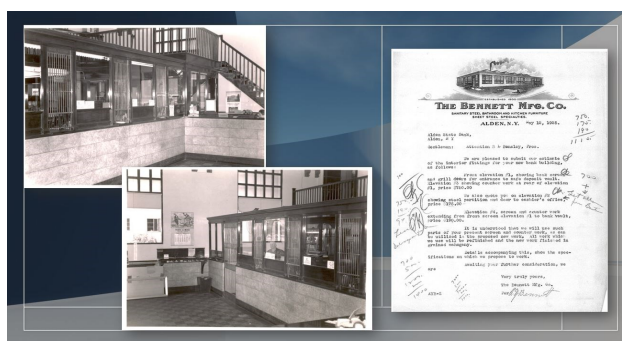
Programs are held at the Alden Community Center, unless indicated otherwise, and begin at 7 pm.

December 12: We welcome back popular educator and speaker, Greg Kinal, for a detailed look at the Erie Canal on the eve of its bicentennial. This program takes the audience from the first ideas of a canal to its building, the problems faced and how the canal changed America.

January 9: Author John Zach will join us to speak about two of his books: *The Day the Buffalo River Burned: The Incredible Story of Stanley P. Spisiak, Buffalo's First Environmentalist*, and *Built to Burn, The story of the 1954 Cleveland Hill School Fire*; the deadliest school fire in NY State history.

February 13: TBD (Please see our Facebook page and the Alden Advertiser for details.)

Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner



The Society held its Annual Membership Meeting & Potluck Dinner on Thursday, November 9th. After a delicious dinner, Sue Galbraith, Christopher Gust, and Sue Schumacher were elected to the Society's Board of Trustees and Terri Retzlaff was newly elected after long-time trustee, Elli DeFilippo chose not to return to the Board. Further, Trustee Jennifer Strong vacated her position on the Board to become the Society's historian and Kyle Kavanagh was elected to fill the remainder of Jennifer's term. Welcome, Terri and Kyle! A short program on Alden State Bank's return to the building it occupied from 1925 to 1963 concluded the evening.

October Program - New York Glass Works

We thank everyone who attended the informative presentation by Karen Muchow and Kris Rogers on October 10 about one of Alden's first industries, the New York Glass Works. The factory was established at the east end of Railroad Street by Vernon Pancost in 1900. There were two furnaces in operation and as many as 75 glass blowers were employed. In 1913, the factory closed and several attempts to reopen it failed as natural gas became too expensive.



Thank You, Elli DeFilippo and Jennifer Strong, for your long-time service on the Alden Historical Society's Board of Trustees.

Heritage Center Closed for Winter Break

Winter 2024



The Heritage Center will not be holding Open House hours during the months of January, February and March in order to continue inventorying the collection and updating the displays for spring. We appreciated your visits this past year and look forward to showing you something new in April.

If you have questions, please call Town and Village Historian Karen Muchow at 716-937-6400 for answers and appointments.

We hope to see you Saturday, April 5, 2025 during our regular hours from 11 am to 1 pm and the following first and third Saturdays through December .

Donations Received - Thank You!

Robert Russell
Glen Kegler
Jodie Logan
Judy Marshall, Dave & Candy Pursell (in memory of Ruth Davis)
Connie DeVita
Beverly Nebrich
Angelo Daluisio
Greg Grenier
Paul & Mary Ellen Werner
Stephen Overton
Marie Shattuck-Becker
Judy Swyers
Helen Creighton
Giff Swyers
Marlyn Casell
Randolph Rogers
Martha Roberts
Richard & Joyce Sojka
Laura Loehr
Keith & Michele Hoffman



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Catherine Cyrulik
Judy Hotchkin
Chris and Wendy Koelbl
Roberta Vincent

Bob and Elli DeFilippo (in memory of Ruth Davis)
Sharon Walcott

Elwood Jordans Agency
Alden State Bank

Donation from Judges Golf Tournament

The Alden Historical Society expresses its thanks and gratitude to the Judges Memorial Golf Tournament, who recently presented the Society a check for \$1,000. This donation will help the Society continue its dedicated mission to the preservation, presentation, and promotion of the rich heritage of the Town of and Village of Alden. (From left to right: Society Trustee Renee Nelson; Society Vice President Christopher Gust; and Joseph Czechowski, representing the Judges Memorial Golf Tournament.)



Winter Weather Reminder - If Alden schools are closed for inclement weather or school afternoon & evening activities are canceled, the Alden Historical Society's program at the Community Center that evening will also be canceled.

Alden Heritage Center

Winter 2024

The **Alden Historical Society's** many exhibits are located in the village at the Alden Heritage Center, 13213 Broadway, across from Alden State Bank. The mission of the historical society is to preserve, promote and present the history of Alden and its people.

HOURS:

The **Alden Heritage Center** is open to the public from 11 AM to 1 PM the first and third Saturday of each month, **EXCEPT during January and February and March.** Tours for individuals and groups may be arranged by calling 716-937-3700 or 716-392-4295.

MEETINGS:

Program meetings are generally held at the Alden Community Center on the second Thursday of the month at 7 PM. Notices will be published in the **Alden Advertiser** in advance of the program. Open to the public, these programs are both informative and interesting, often featuring a guest speaker. You are very welcome to come and share your memories and experiences about the evening's program, followed by an informal social complete with homemade refreshments, as protocols allow. In the event of inclement weather, we will postpone when Alden school activities are closed. Monthly programs for 2024 will resume on September 12.

Trustee meetings are held at the **Alden Heritage Center** at 7 PM. Meetings are held the first Thursday of the month in February, April, June, August, October and December. Trustee meetings are open to the membership.

Grannytown Gazette, Winter 2024

Christopher Gust, Editor & Layouts

Contributors:

- Elli DeFilippo
- Sue Galbraith
- Christopher Gust
- David Henry
- Kris Rogers
- Karen Muchow

Special Thanks to Carl Matthies

Alden Historical Society 2024-25 Committees

- **Membership**
- **Collections**
- **Publicity / Newsletter**
- **Programs / Refreshments**
- **Audit**
- **Buildings & Grounds**
- **Fundraising**
- **Nominating**
- **Budget**
- **Historical Markers / Signs**

Members are welcome to serve on any of our committees

Contact us at 716-937-3700 or aldenhistsoc@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New members are always welcome. Your support will assure that the Alden Historical Society will continue to grow and prosper for years to come.

Please note: The membership year is April 1 through March 31, with the annual renewal due by April 1.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

ANNUAL DUES

Single \$12.00

Couple \$20.00

Family \$25.00

Business \$50.00

Please include your
Business card

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....Email.....

Please make checks payable to Alden Historical Society

Mail to:

Membership Secretary


Alden Historical Society

13213 Broadway

Alden, NY 14004

DONATIONS AND MEMORIALS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED

NOTE: Donations are tax deductible




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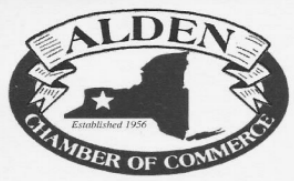
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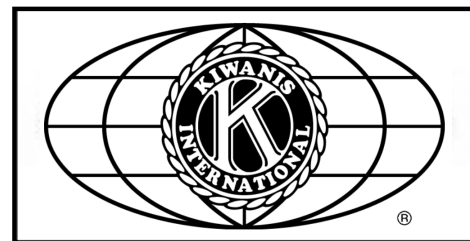
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MISSION STATEMENT

The Alden Historical Society, founded in 1965, is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation, presentation, and promotion of the rich heritage of the Town of Alden.



*Chartered by the Board of Regents
New York State Education Department*

13213 Broadway St.
Alden, NY 14004

Find us on: Facebook.com/AldenHistoricalSociety
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The Alden Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the support of our membership, the Town of Alden, the Alden community and Erie County.