

The Log Cabin

by Lynne Belluscio

The phone call came on Monday. The log cabin was being razed and if we wanted to get samples of the logs to send to Cornell to the dendrologist we'd better get there pretty quick.

I called George Pursel right away. "Get your chain saw. The cabin's down." In the meantime, someone stopped by the Museum. "I had to stop and tell you that they're taking down the cabin." "Yeah, I already know. I'm on my way up there to meet George to get some log samples."

We knew it was coming. The cabin had been condemned. Since the fire in 2005, I had managed to get people from the state, some archaeologists and others from the Landmark Society to come take a look. Most everyone agreed, it was in such bad shape and the logs were so rotten on three sides, that there really wasn't any hope.

I called Carol Griggs, a dendrologist from Cornell. She came over and took some corings. She wrote: "The species are identified – the roof plate is maple, the logs are all elm (which to the naked eye looks very much like the ash that we thought while coring) and the shingles are hemlock. For dating, elm unfortunately does not have a good chronology due to the Dutch elm disease . . . I do have historic elms and may be able to find a cross between the cabin logs and a chronology built from those samples. The modern maple chronology we have is barely over 100 years old, so the roof plate will not be immediately datable."

And so we waited for her findings: "I have looked at the elm data against the current New York hemlock chronology (AD 1506-2006) plus a Phelps building's elm chronology that is also dated according to how it fits on the hemlock chronology and with comparisons to both those chronologies the outer complete

ring of the LeRoy cabin's samples look good at 1814. With an incomplete rind at the end, the trees would have been felled in the late spring/early summer 1815 and the cabin built soon after that." She added, "if you can cut me 1 section from the ends of 5 to 10 logs when the building is taken down, the additional measurements will allow us to make a really good elm chronology and the more we have the better we can date that species." So the demolition of the log cabin will provide some very important information.

The dates of the logs confirm the story of the cabin that was published in the architectural history of Genesee County. Gilbert Hall built the cabin in 1815. He had come to the area from East Bloomfield in 1799. He and his wife Mary had ten or eleven children. Gilbert died in 1829. His wife died in 1858 and both of them are buried in the old cemetery on East Main Road. Their son Martin sold the cabin in 1847 to his sister, Mary Ann Rowen. She sold the cabin to Ephram Alexander in 1849. It was sold again to Royal Salisbury who may have been a relative of Martin's wife Eveline Salisbury.

Daniel Harris owned it in 1856 and he sold it to Jacob Heimlich. Although one county history mentions that John Heimlich was born in the cabin in

1815, the Heimlich family did not come from Germany until the 1850s. Len Heimlich always claimed that he was born in the cabin, which is probably true. John Leonard Heimlich was born October 30, 1861. His son, was born in 1889. The Sprague family purchased the cabin in 1960 from the estate of J. Leonard Heimlich and the Spragues were still living in the cabin when it burned in 2005.

Through the years, everyone has wondered what was going to happen to the cabin. It had been offered to the Genesee Country Museum a long time ago, but the Spragues wanted a lot of money for it and upon close examination,

the cabin was not in good shape even then. After the fire, I met with a house mover, who told me, that if money was no problem, they could move it, but the logs would disintegrate.

Historians were interested in the cabin because at one time it was thought that it had witnessed the military evacuation of Buffalo during the War of 1812, but when the dates on the logs came back, its historical relevance disappeared. So another landmark has disappeared. The ironic twist of fate, is that log cabins were never built to last forever. This one just lasted a lot longer than the others.



LeRoy Historical Society

Barbecue

Chicken 'n Ribs

Sunday, Sept. 20th

Trigon Park, Le Roy, Noon Til Sold Out!

Chicken BBQ - \$8.00 • Chicken 'n Ribs - \$9.50

Take Out Dinners Only, Curb Service Available

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