

The Bessie Dunn Homestead in Hemlock NY



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The Bessie Dunn house in Hemlock NY circa 1900.
Courtesy of Francis and Sharon Pratt.

An early photo of the Bessie Dunn house in Hemlock NY taken circa 1900. The house is located just north of the school house in Hemlock. The people in this photo are unidentified.

This photo and information are courtesy of Francis and Sharon Pratt.

Francis Pratt writes: "I have found evidence that Bessie Dunn was married at Fort Erie to Harry M. Austin on September 18, 1907. From all local reports I could gather decades ago, she had no children, and died in this house in 1975. I know for a fact that it was then purchased at auction several years later by

William Benson, Jr. whom patched it up as a rental, and we were the first occupants here after her death, in late August 1982. In 1983 I purchased the house from Benson. Benson installed the very first indoor plumbing and toilet just before we moved into the house in August 1982, as we were forced to postpone our moving into the house while he finished up the necessary work. The 2-hole outhouse was still attached and unmolested to the back of the house; Bessie had never had indoor facilities installed. Unfortunately, when I tore the rear of the house off for renovation, in 1983, I didn't take any pictures of the outhouse and enclosed porch while it was still attached. I regret this greatly, as I have NOT come across another house in the village that still had it's "privy".

The photo of the house I include, is believed to be ours before the second story was added, apparently at some point around the building of the first school building. I base my opinion on seeing a photo (at the Livonia Library -- in the mid-80s) of the original school building just after being built (the landscaping was newly, or not quite, finished) looking north, and our house could be seen in the photo as a Cape Cod. Further proof of my hypothesis was found when I gutted much of the downstairs of the house, tore off the front porch, and had removed the siding; thereby revealing the original porch outline, and window openings identical to those in the old photo.

I discovered a small note in a newspaper associated with Harvey Dunn - the father of Bessie Dunn. They were the 2 directly preceding owners of this house. In this notice, Harvey was awarded the contract for providing meals to visitors fo the Hemlock Fair in 1894."

From the Gazette - Livonia, NY - Friday, September 11, 1894

Harvey M. Dunn has been awarded[sic] the privileges of furnishing dinners and lunches on the Hemlock Lake fair grounds both days of the fair.



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A photo of Bessie Dunn's house on Main street in Hemlock NY circa 1920. The house is located just north of the school house in Hemlock. The eave of the school house can just be seen on the right edge of the photo.

This photo courtesy of Lee Wemett.



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A photo of the Bessie Dunn - Pratt house on Main street in Hemlock NY in the autumn of 2013. The house is located just north of the brick school house in Hemlock. The house has been owned by Francis and Sharon Pratt since 1983.

This photo courtesy of Francis and Sharon Pratt.