

# Webster Crossing, NY History

By Gladys Weed



Webster

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## **MILK PLANT:**

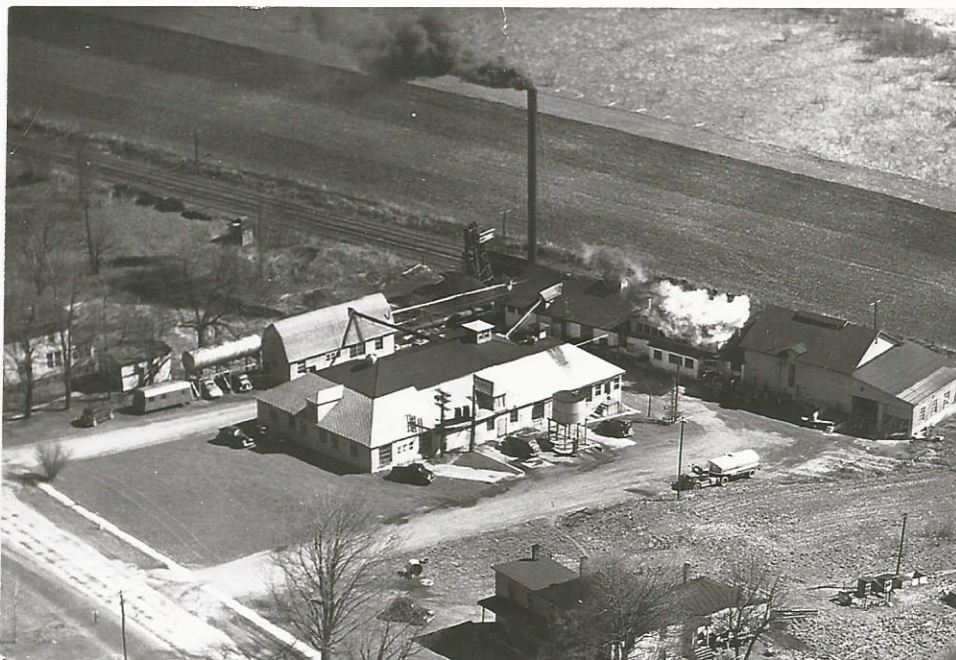
GRAND VIEW DAIRY 1934

CONESUS CO-OP bought it 1941

Closed October 1, 1966

When the milk plant opened in 1930's there were about seventy employees. At first, the milk was shipped by rail to Brooklyn in milk cans, iced down in rail cars. The cheese, powdered milk, cream were shipped by refrigerator tank cars to New York City in 1940's.

Chemists and other necessary employees were brought in to work, the milk plant became a prime employer at this time. After the railroad closed, larger tanker trucks were used to haul the milk to Nunda and Lakeville plant which also closed 10-1-1966.



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Albert  
 4-1924  
 Carl Craig, Mueland, Maynard, Arnold, Ryan, Reed, Henry  
 Burton Ashkin, Shotty May, Bob Sollyard, Ernie Miller, Milled Pierce, Howard Kerns,  
 Arnold Barham, Allyn Holmes, Paul Puckin, Gerg Rocklen

Left to Right Burton Barkins,  
Thos. May, (Don't know), Pop Fitchard,  
(Dejaret)  
Ernie Miller, Mildred ~~De~~ Pierce,  
Howard Kern, Samuel Bamhart,  
Roger Holmes, Paul Perkins and  
George ~~Richard~~ Carlson

**50th Anniversary**

**Conesus Milk Producers  
Association, Inc.**

**1934 - 1984**

A General Account of the Operation of Conesus Milk Producers Cooperative Association, Inc. Over the Past Fifty Years.

1934 - 1984

by Harold J. Shafer, President

The Certificate of Incorporation of Conesus Milk Producers Cooperative Association, Inc. pursuant to Article Eight of the Co-operative Corporations Law of the State was filed in Albany Secretary of State office March 1934. This Co-op, except for the three year period during the war, has always served the New York - New Jersey Federal Milk Marketing order.

The Co-op was originally formed because producers in the area were threatened with the loss of the New York market due to a control law initiated by the state at that time. A number of dairy farmers in the area were the organizers. Jay C. Treat was elected its first president; A. G. Walkley, Treasurer and Rensselaer Van Vliet, Secretary.

With his understanding of the dairy business and his closeness to the local farmers, Mr. Treat was able to successfully build this powerful organization of area producers. His objective and that of the Conesus Milk Co-op was to "provide the best available market and the best service possible to suit each member."

The board of Directors made an agreement for the leasing of the Grandview Dairy Creamery at Webster's Crossing on a monthly basis.

There was rapid growth and expansion of the Co-op, and it eventually owned and operated three milk plants. In 1938, the Lakeville plant was purchased from Brown and Bailey. Shortly thereafter, in 1941, the Webster's Crossing plant was purchased from the Grandview Dairy Co. In 1943, Conesus purchased a plant located in Nunda from Sheffield Farms Association, Inc. Although Conesus Co-op owned these plants, it did not officially take over the operation of the plants until 1941 when it became a marketing, handling Co-op, whereas previously from its inception until 1941, it had only been a bargaining Co-op.

At this time, all the milk which Conesus handled was processed in one of its plants, and any profits which were realized were returned to the producers instead of the individual processors, as had previously been the case. In light of this continual progress, it is not surprising that the Conesus Lake Milk Co-op became the third largest milk Co-op in New York State, and in 1943 served over one thousand members in five counties (Livingston, Monroe, Steuben, Ontario and Genesee) and handled a gross business of more than 1.5 million dollars per year.

On January 1, 1944, the management, in keeping with the objective of the Co-op, i.e. to provide the best possible market, withdrew the producers from the New York metropolitan milk market. This decision was reached after careful consideration of several significant factors which arose during the war-time demands on the nation's agricultural output as a whole, and the New York milk market specifically. Because of heavy military demand, milk for public use became scarce. In response to this development, the New York - New Jersey market was expanded to allow cream from western sources to come into the market. This was in direct competition with cream and other dairy products from the area served by Conesus. At the same time, feed subsidy payments to the farmers were lowered significantly to avoid a one cent per quart increase in the retail price of milk. As a result of these developments, producers were leaving Conesus to go to the Rochester market, and there was in general a shadow of dissatisfaction over the producers. It was then that the decision was made to take advantage of the higher prices offered in the south. For the next 3 or 4 years, Conesus shipped its milk to the southern military camps. These years were very prosperous for the Co-op.

As the war ended and the military camps gradually phased out of operation, and as the economy returned to peacetime production, the southern markets disappeared.

In 1947, the Conesus Lake Milk Co-op resumed its service to the New York - New Jersey market. In 1951, the administrator of order #27 announced that Conesus Co-op pay the administrator's price of \$4.85.



Mr. Treat passed away on May 29, 1954. Adolphe Walkley, a local dairyman and an officer of the Co-op since its formation, was named president. He, like Mr. Treat, was knowledgeable, understanding and sympathetic of the dairymen's problems. It was this background which enabled him to incorporate this "feeling" for the dairymen with the objectives of the Co-op, and as a result, Conesus continued to be a leader in the New York - New Jersey milkshed. An example of Mr. Walkley's affinity for the cooperative way of doing business can be illustrated by his stand on the bulk milk handling problem, which was not to force bulk milk handling on any producer. The producers could adapt to this new innovation in milk handling as swiftly or as slowly as they liked, or they could reject it altogether. This, Mr. Walkley felt, was one of the services rendered by the Co-op.

As the number of farms across the state decreased, so did the number of members belonging to the Co-op. The total area served, however, increased. Three more counties were added, these being Alleghany, Cattaraugus and Orleans, bringing the total to eight. The amount of milk handled also increased. It was a very difficult time for cooperatives, handlers and producers during Mr. Walkley's term in office as President from 1954 to 1965.

In 1954, Conesus Co-op joined Mutual Federation of Cooperatives. Mr. Walkley was elected a director and secretary of Mutual. It was at this time that bulk tank pickup started to increase. In this same year, Conesus Co-op signed a five-year contract to sell its milk to Arkport and Grandview Dairies. Gates Mack, a cornerstone in the organization who was very knowledgeable and involved with milk marketing most of his life, was named General Manager of the Co-op and was responsible for the smooth operation of its business affairs.

During the years 1954 and 1960, President Walkley, as Secretary of Mutual Federation, attended many hearings in New York City. He was very influential in decisions that were made in changes in the different milk orders, state and federal.

In 1961, tank trucks were purchased and the plant at Oneida was being built to handle surplus milk. The milk at this point was being sold to Grandview, Charles Cass and Borden Co.

In 1964, Mr. Edmund Cook, attorney for the Co-op, retired. He helped form the Co-op from the start and guided it along over many rough spots in the long, winding road. Mr. Cook recommended that Richard Wiles succeed him as attorney. He served until his death in 1981. He too, was recognized as a most capable milk attorney.

It was this same year, on September 26, 1964, that President Walkley retired due to ill health. He had been a great help and a courageous leader in the Co-op's progress. Mr. Walkley passed away in 1975 after a long illness.

Mr. Dean Treat, son of Jay Treat, the founder of the Co-op and secretary for several years, was appointed president. In this same year, the merger of Mutual Federation and the Metropolitan Bargaining Agency was formed, the new name being Northeast Federation. Conesus Co-op at that time was the largest single Co-op in the Northeast Federation. Grandview Dairy and Babylon Milk and Cream Companies were purchasing the milk that year.

In 1966, on October 1, the Webster's Crossing plant was closed, and Grandview Dairy increased its handling charge by two cents for bulk milk to Arkport.

It was about this time that complaints were coming from the Department of Health about sewer system in Lakeville and Nunda.

In 1968, it was voted on by the membership of the Conesus Co-op to enter into an agreement with Northeast to transfer and sell the Lakeville and Nunda plants, plus the trucks, to Northeast. The plants were to be paid for by issuing Northeast certificates of equity at the rate of five cents per hundred-weight. It was discussed at this time by officials combining milk for a more efficient operation. Milk at this time was \$5.71 per hundred-weight.

Over the past five years, the excessive cost of changes in the sewer system, the increased cost of transportation and the changes in milk orders and economics made it impossible to continue as an operating Co-op.

It was a difficult decision for the manager and directors to make, but it was felt that it was in the best interests of the producers, in protecting their financial interest in Conesus certificates, that we cease being an operating cooperative and close the Lakeville plant. Thus, we became a all-bulk milk cooperative with Northeast handling our milk. So

December 31, 1970 closed the history book of Conesus Milk Producers Cooperative as an operating plant, and we became a bargaining cooperative.

As Conesus Co-op ceased being an operating cooperative and became a bargaining Co-op, the issuing of Conesus certificates also ended. The Cooperative started issuing certificates to the producers in 1939 for five cents per hundred-weight of milk. These certificates were paid at the end of each four years with interest of 10%.

Dean Treat, who had been president since 1965, retired in May 1970 due to ill health. Dean had to make many important decisions during his five-year term as president. Harold Shafer, treasurer for fifteen years and a director since 1946, was named president.

Nedco-Northeast handled the Co-op's milk at Nunda from 1970 until 1975. In 1973, Nedco and Dairylea formed the Common Market Association. On November 15, 1975, The Board of Directors voted to withdraw its affiliation with Nedco.

On January 1, 1976, Cuba Cheese and Elmhurst Milk and Cream started hauling Conesus Co-op's milk to their receiving plants at Cuba and Prattsburg as per contract for five years. Price of milk at this time was \$9.05.

On January 1, 1976, due to changes in the New York milk marketing order, hauling charges increased fifteen cents per hundred-weight, and transportation differentials increased to 1.5 for each ten miles of hauling further than 201 - 210 mile zone. The milk advertising and promotional referendum came to a vote again and was approved by a large percentage. The support price was raised from 75% of parity to 80% by the Department of Agriculture, taking effect April 1, 1978.

The entire Cooperative was saddened by the death of Gates Mack on August 28, 1979. Gates had been General Manager from 1954. He devoted his entire professional capabilities to the best interests of the Conesus Cooperative.

Thelma Arnold, bookkeeper in the office for thirty-five years and knowledgeable in the operation of the Cooperative, was appointed General Manager and Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. Thelma knew she had a big job to do following Gates Mack, but she was determined to keep the Co-op going as in the past. Theresa Kellogg, Charlotte Irwin, Grace Holmes and Dorothy Sharpe were very helpful to Thelma in making this changeover.

Pat Essler, a field man for Conesus Co-op for forty years, retired on September 1, 1979. Pat was dedicated to his job and was well-liked throughout the milk shed. Roger Rawleigh, who had worked for the Co-op for twenty-five years as truck driver and plant manager at Nunda, was appointed on September 1, 1979 to succeed Pat as field man.

On May 2, 1980, Fay Kelly passed away. He was elected a director in 1960, and was appointed by the Board of Directors in 1970 as treasurer. Fay was honest, loyal and dedicated to Conesus Co-op. The Board appointed John Barber to succeed Fay.

On August 28, 1980, the office of Conesus Co-op, after serving the business in the old milk plant in Lakeville for forty years, was moved to 65 Big Tree Street, Livonia, New York. This was a welcomed change for all those who worked in the office.

Attorney Richard Wiles, successor to Mr. Cook, passed away on April 28, 1981. Mr. Frank Alois was appointed to succeed Mr. Wiles.

Due to an amendment to order #2 of milk marketing, the cost of transportation was increased eleven and twelve cents to Cuba and Prattsburg. The amendment allowed the hauler to charge the producer the total cost of transportation from farm to first place of delivery. This went into effect on September, 1, 1981.

The Board of Directors renegotiated a new five-year contract with the sale of milk to Cuba Cheese and Steuben Foods, effective January 1, 1981 through 1985.

On February 4, 1982, the Cooperative lost another one of its officers, Mr. Jerome Emerling. Jerry, as we called him, was Second Vice-President and served on the Board of Directors for seven years. His knowledge and advice were highly thought of.

The Board of Directors, on May 22, 1982, passed a resolution to pay to the producers three cents per hundred-weight of milk from the Co-op's earnings during 1981 and 1982.

On September 1, 1982, another one of the Co-op's highly respected field men, Mr. Ken Wolfanger, retired. Ken worked for the Cooperative for forty-four years. He was a dedicated employee and was well-liked by all the producers he served. David Irwin worked with Ken from February 1 until Ken retired. Dave was appointed field man on September 1, 1982 to succeed Ken.

A resolution was passed in May 1983 to pay producers three cents per hundred-weight, money to be used from Co-op earnings during 1982 and 1983.

The Board of Directors, after debating the issue during several meetings, voted on February 5, 1983 to adopt a stop charge of \$4.00 per stop to pick up milk. This is to be part of the cost of transportation. The Board has had to make many important changes during its period of operation. This was a change the Board did not like to make, but due to competition and economics, it was considered in the best interests of the Cooperative. Market Administrator price, \$13.35.

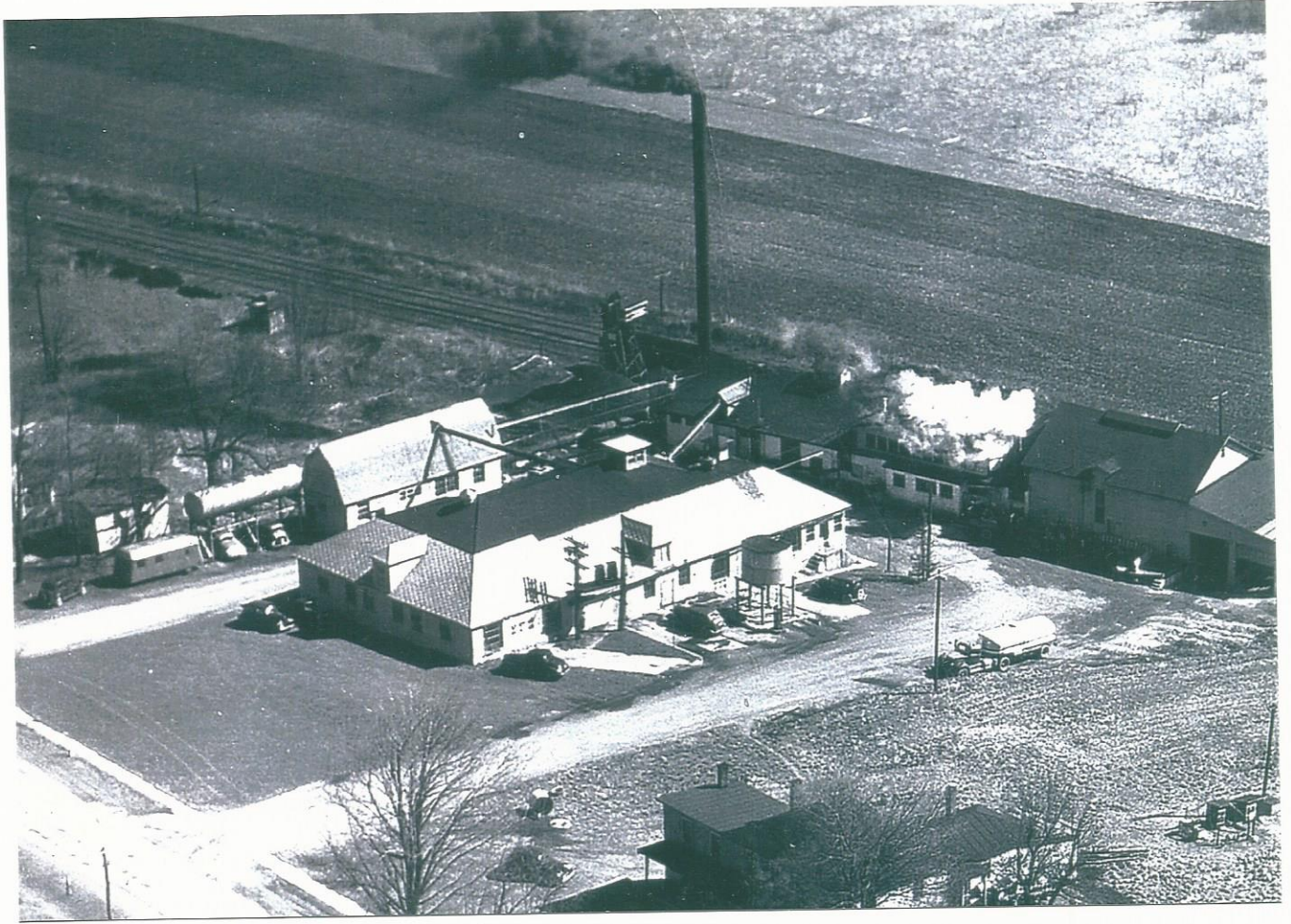
Carl Riley, a director for thirty-two years and First Vice-President for most of those years, resigned on April 23, 1981. He was named by the Board of Directors as a Director Emeritus. Carl passed away on February 10, 1983. He will always be remembered by those associated with the Co-op for his untiring interest and dedication in working for the Cooperative among the producers in the Southern Tier area.

In the fifty years of its existence, Conesus Milk Producers Cooperative has served its members well. The officers and management have dedicated themselves to achieving the best for the producers. An annual increase in the amount of milk handled, as well as a consistent score of 90 and above in U. S. P. H. inspections proves this. Many directors and employees, living and deceased, have contributed years of service to the success of the Cooperative. It was and is a friendly family operation. The future of dairy farming is uncertain, but milk and milk products are still necessities to good health. Conesus Milk Producers Cooperative will continue to strive for the best interests of the dairymen.





Milk Plant before Cheese Factory was added.







Front: Richard McKENZIE  
Arnold DUEPPENGIESSER  
KARL Schrier

BACK: GERAID PEASE  
Erwin Tullar  
JACK POTTER  
JIM KRENZER  
ALVIN SAMPSON  
RONALD HOLCOMB  
Mildred Moulton  
JOHN CARTER





Aerial View of  
Webster's Crossing circa. 1945



## Pvt. Thomas VanScooter

Civil War Soldier  
Pvt. Thomas VanScooter  
136<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry

### Report of the Adjutant General:

VanScooter, Thomas—Age, 25 years. Enlisted, August 27, 1862, at Sparta, to serve three years; mustered in as private, Co. I, September 25, 1862; mustered out with company, June 13, 1865, near Washington, D.C.

Occupation: laborer, blacksmith

Married: Martha Jacobs

Belonged to the William B. Hazen G.A.R. Post #518

### Obituary---

The funeral of Thomas VanScooter was held Monday at the church at Websters Crossing. Mr. VanScooter was a Civil War veteran and has been in poor health for some time, gradually growing weaker till Friday night he passed away.



*Erwin Cemetery*

June 24, 1943  
**Another Award**



**LT. ELWOOD KRISHER**

To Lt. Elwood Krisher, son of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Krisher of Conesus, and nephew of Lawrence and Clarence Krisher of Livonia, goes a second award for operational flights in Pacific warfare against the Japs—the first award for twenty-five operational flights, the second award for an additional twenty-five operational flights, fifty in all. He received his first medal in March.

Lt. Krisher, a member of P-38 Fighter Squadron, has been on duty in the New Guinea area for about nine months, and in the language of that section he is a "head hunter," as all flyers there with twenty-five or more operational flights are dubbed.



# Homes

Home of the Week

## Webster Crossing home reflects owner's values



**Kelly Jo Landers**

**G**ladys Weed's home at 7273 Main Street, Webster Crossing, is most unusual and beautiful at the same time.

One corner of the living room is a large bay window that faces toward the road. Just above the bay window is an outpost of the second floor. You'll need to look closely in the photos to see this detail, but it is definitely worth a second look.

In front of the living room is a tall porch with roman columns that stretch to the roofline above. A cozy rocking chair waits for her to sit and rest.

Rest is hardly what she does though. The day we spoke she had just finished canning pears, tomatoes and potatoes; decorating dolls for the church bazaar and was in the midst of cutting out a tree skirt with teddy bears dancing around the edge.

Her husband, Brenard, and Gladys bought this home in 1952 from the

See **HOMES** on Page A13



Photos by **KELLY JO LANDERS**/Livingston County News

*Gladys*



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# Home

From Page A12

Case family. The Case's owned Chase Bakery for many years in Rochester. They hadn't lived in the home, only rented it previously.

Unfortunately, the home had suffered some neglect while it was rented and the Weeds needed to do quite a lot of work on the home.

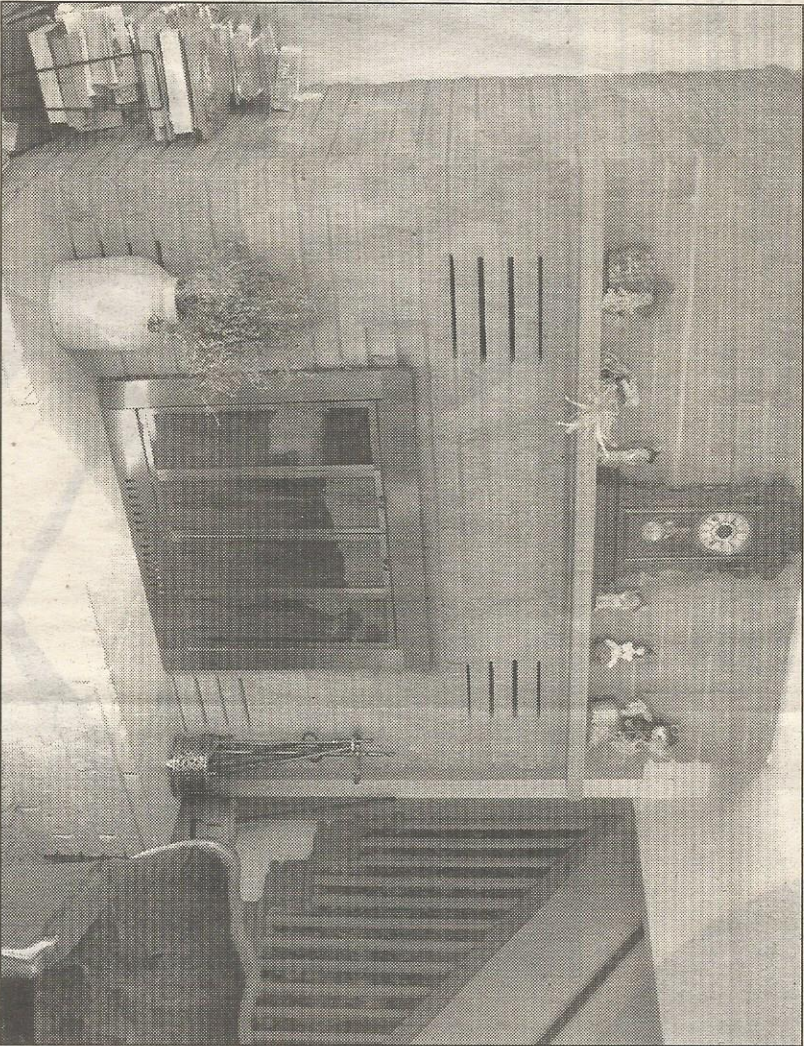
Gladys says, we just did as we were able and as we had the money. So it took many years for the home to become the stunning showcase it is now.

I couldn't help but contrast the fact that they did the work as they had the money with today's philosophy.

Today, everybody that owns a home is urged to take on a home equity loan and remodel, now.

Gladys remembers one day after church when she asked Brenard if they couldn't take down the partition that was next to the kitchen to make the room a little larger. He thought it was such a great idea that he started on it that day.

It was only after he tore into the wall that he discovered that electric and plumbing were in the very wall he was attempting to dismantle. Gladys says with a smile, it took me two years to get my kitchen put back together.



er.

They continued the philosophy of not putting anything into the home until they could pay for it over the many years of raising their family. James had been 3 when they moved in, George 6 months old, and it was later that they were joined by Mary and Virginia. As the children grew so, too, did the house blossom.

They bulldozed out the crawl

space that had been under the front of the home and enlarged it into a full room. In the process they installed a foundation to replace what were rotted out beams in that part of the house. The front room was scraped and the windows were covered with paper, in order to prepare for plastering. Brenard borrowed a machine from someone and sprayed on his own plaster.

Gladys remembers a surprise party she planned for Brenard. The room still was in its preparatory stage, and the windows were still papered. Brenard left to pick up some materials and came home to about seventy people in the house. When he asked her what was going on, she told him it was his birthday party.

It was so much fun and the men gathered in what is now the dining room and played their instruments. Everyone visited, ate, danced and enjoyed themselves. Afterwards, Brenard quietly asked her to please not do that again.

Brenard also built the beautiful fireplace that the family enjoyed thoroughly. He traveled to Pavilion and hauled the blue stone with a trailer. Quite honestly, it is the most beautiful fireplace I've ever seen. I had never heard of blue stone before, but I can see from its cast how it gets its name.

The Weeds' home saw many other social events. They would often have church suppers there before she had the dining room. They used to host a house party for everyone in in the town of Webster Crossing.

Holidays were also very special. The bay window would always hold the Christmas tree, and the fireplace mantle would be decorated to match. One year, Gladys crocheted 100 snowflakes for the tree and had snowflakes in the room.

The post office for Webster Crossing resided in the house for 17 years. The front room has long since been converted to her bedroom. But for 17 years it served as a hub for the community where people would pick up their mail and catch up on the news of the day.

It reminds me that though those days weren't necessarily

easier, they were definitely simpler. Neighbors knew one another's names and were vested in their community.

A pretty penciled drawing of the wall caught my eye. Gladys told me that her daughter had had it made for her. It featured the house, her barn, and the Model-T that used to be her car and Brenard's. The Model-T now with her son George, but she still has memories of pulling into the car and traveling with their friends, the Halsteds, and their Model-T to Hershey, Pa. to Springwater for an ice cream. What fun!

Her children have premeditated much set her up to be all on one floor now and have asked her not to go upstairs, not to lift anything heavy, etc etc. She does to take it easier, but she can just sit around, she says.

The activity she had just before I arrived is testament that sitting around is definitely not something she devotes her time to.

Gladys and her home project out my belief that homes become a part of the people that live in them and that the people become a part of their homes.

It's a connection that has existed through the years and will continue as we go forward in time. It was my pleasure to interrupt the many projects keeping Gladys busy and talk her about her delightful home

Women keep Christmas tree farm going despite plea to 'just sell everything'

# DEEP ROOTS

*D+C  
11-30-14  
Rochester-Ham*



LAUREN PETRACCA@LAURENPETRACCA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jerriane Scheiderich laughs as she talks with her employees in October. She drives three hours every weekend to help her mother keep their family's All Western Evergreen Nursery & Christmas Tree Farm going from year to year.

**KAREN MILTNER** STAFF WRITER

As he was dying five years ago, Bill Humphrey told his family they should dismantle the Christmas tree farm he had built on a dream.

His wife, Katherine Humphrey, would have none of it.

"He always said, 'Just sell everything. Sell all the equipment. You don't need to be in the farming business.' That was his suggestion," says Katherine, now 80. "Well, the two of us, we are not going to sell everything if we don't have to, because we like doing this. Our customers count on us."

Their 47-year-old daughter, Jerriane Scheiderich, usually with children in tow, travels on weekends from her home three hours away to help out.

They also continue her husband's tradition of rallying the community's teenagers to keep All Western Evergreen Nursery & Christmas Tree Farm going.



LAUREN PETRACCA@LAURENPETRACCA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Katherine Humphrey, 80, looks over a soup recipe with one of her employees, Gwen Hely of Honeoye.

See TREES, Page 23A

DemocratandChronicle.com

# ROCNews



LAUREN PETRACCA@LAURENPETRACCA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jerrienne Scheiderich walks through her family's tree farm to begin pruning on a weekend in October.



# Trees

Continued from Page 1A

## Ready for the season

There is little instant gratification in farming, and Christmas trees require an extra long leap of faith. It takes seven to 12 years before a tree reaches maturity.

Yet starting All Western in Springwater, Livingston County, a part-time farm venture, was something Bill Humphrey had always wanted to do.

The operation is named for the western United States tree varieties that it specializes in. Each season, about 700 Cannaan fir, Douglas fir, Fraser fir, grand fir, concolor fir, Nordmann fir, subalpine fir and Meyer's spruce are harvested. Many are sold through wholesale channels such as local VFW halls and the Victor Christmas Tree Farm, while others are purchased at All Western by customers who come to cut their own or select a pre-cut tree.

All Western has about 20 acres of trees spread out in a few different plantations, occupying hilltops and slopes where other crops would struggle. Having plantations spread out in different spots is less convenient for work but it spreads the risk of having any singular catastrophe hit the entire crop. The rest of the family's 225 acres are either forested, managed under the Conservation Reserve Program or rented out to nearby farmers.

"My dad always said that you should save the good land for food," says Scheiderich as she prunes a citrus-scented cluster of concolor fir.

Christmas tree farming, even as a part-time venture, is labor-intensive. Scheiderich, who lives in Lee Center, Oneida County, can only help on weekends. Often her 11-year-old daughter Isabel and 17-year-old son Ted come along, as well as her husband, Stephen.

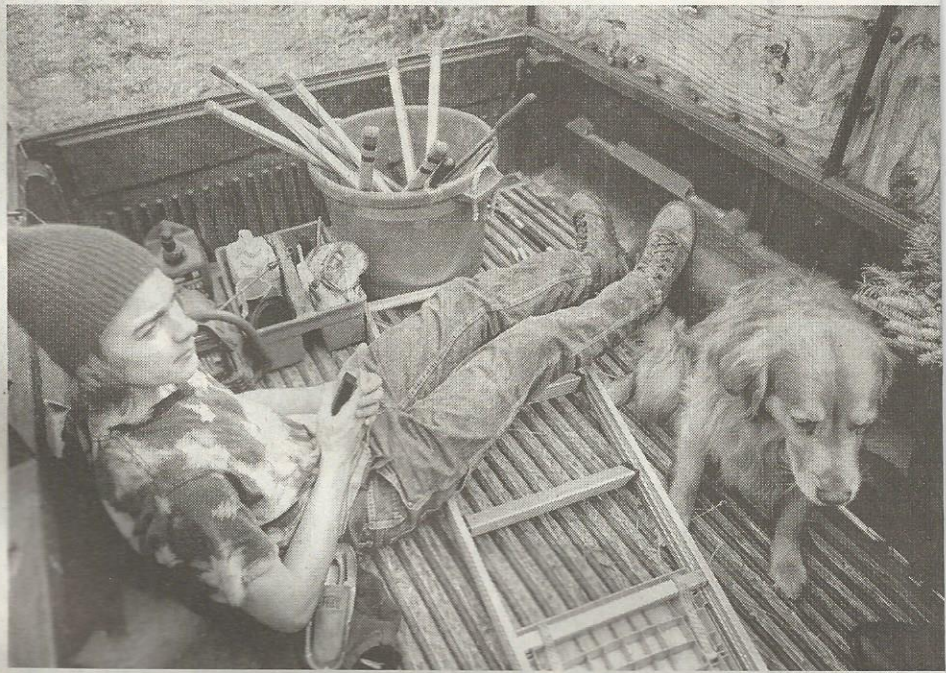
"People have no idea how much work goes into a tree," Katherine says one day, hiking up the trail behind her modest red ranch house that customers will take in the coming weeks to cut their own tree.

The season starts in earnest by April with culturing, digging and planting trees, moves into May with deconing, fertilizing and butt pruning, which prevents trees from growing too skinny and crooked. The summer months are hectic with shearing, spraying and mowing.

"It is a constant race against timing and nature. You do the best you can, but you always lose some trees," Scheiderich comments.

In September and October, trees for wholesale need to be tagged and contracts written.

For much of November and Decem-



LAUREN PETRACCA@LAURENPETRACCA/ STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ted Scheiderich, 17, sits with his dog Edger in the back of a pickup as he waits to go on his lunch break on his family's tree farm last month.



LAUREN PETRACCA@LAURENPETRACCA/ STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Katherine Humphrey, 80, holds a photograph of the last time her family was together with her late husband, Bill (right), on their Christmas tree farm. Katherine and her daughter have been keeping the tree farm going since Bill's death in 2009.

crisp as the fallen leaves she stepped upon walking briskly through an area of the farm she calls the Cathedral Pines, where Bill Humphrey's ashes are scattered.

Early on in their relationship, Bill took Katherine to this stretch of red pines that is divided by a wide straight path. Bill and his father had planted the trees when he was a boy in the early 1940s. He inherited the land after his father's death in 1966, the same year he and Katherine were married. Jerrienne was

just as her father did. On weekends, when Jerrienne cannot be on site, Katherine oversees the tree care.

Though they look peaceful and strong, these evergreens have many natural enemies. Deer, for example, rub their antlers against the trunks of the trees, inviting pests and infections. Which is why electric fencing has been erected around some of the plantations.

Moles, rabbits and mice also inflict harm, as can root rot, spider mites, weather extremes and fire

ber, Scheiderich and her kids have settled in with Humphrey, as just about every minute that isn't devoted to homeschooling is needed for harvesting, baling and loading trees and taking care of customers. Husband Stephen Scheiderich joins them on the weekends.

It all comes to a screeching halt at 5 p.m. Dec. 24.

After a few quieter months of book keeping, the cycle begins anew.

### Setting down roots

Katherine grew up in a place about as far away from Christmas tree farms as you can imagine: Chihuahua, Mexico, where her father worked at American Smelting and Refining Co. She spent her teens in El Paso, Texas.

Being too short to become a flight attendant, Humphrey pursued her other chosen career path and went on to college and graduate school to become a dietitian, eventually landing a job at State University of New York at Buffalo.

While there, her father signed her up for a computer matchmaking service, and that is how she met Bill Humphrey, who came from a Springwater dairy farm.

"If Bill didn't know something, he was willing to learn it. I liked that," says Katherine, her matter-of-factness as

born a year later, and in the spring of 1968, the couple planted their first Douglas firs.

"I think Bill and I both really liked (the trees), but Bill liked them even more than I did. I really enjoyed all the Christmas tree growers," she says. "Everyone in this business, they are not our competition. Our competition is the fake tree. So, all these (people) are our friends, and we try to help each other all the time."

While Bill Humphrey built his career as an agricultural economist, his wife became a home economist at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Livingston County. Their daughter, by osmosis, became a tree farmer.

"She learned an awful lot more than I realized," says Katherine, conjuring up an image of a 5-year-old stomping in trees as she planted them with the one-row planter and Bill drove the tractor.

### Mother-daughter team

Now, the rare mother-daughter farming team has developed a rhythm to do business together.

The division of labor has clear boundaries: Katherine tackles all the inside work, from bookkeeping and writing contracts to marketing and making wreaths and swags, while Jerrienne manages nearly all of the outside work,

Although Jerrienne would gladly do without these parts of nature, she still claps and squeals in delight when a rafter of turkeys trots across the plantations. And when she drives up in the dusty Ford pickup to get her first look at the brand new gate that will allow choose-and-harvest customers to more conveniently reach their trees, her excitement and pleasure are as paramount as a child's at her first glimpse of the tree on Christmas morning.

### Hiring students

Hiring local high school students to work the farm has been apart of the All Western mission since Jerrienne was in high school. Bill Humphrey wanted to help young people learn good skills and embrace a strong work ethic.

From April through December, the crew of five to seven students devote their Saturdays to getting the trees ready. In the summer months, the schedule bumps up to three weekdays, giving the workers Saturdays off. Adult crews come in sporadically to help with work that requires heavy equipment.

"My dad would not tolerate drugs or trouble. He would look at the police reports in the papers and if any kid was arrested or got in trouble he would let them go," recalls Jerrienne.

Bill Humphrey also would not tolerate unnecessary curiosity, says Tyler Forrester, 21, a State University College at Geneseo student from Springwater who has been an All Western seasonal worker since he was 14.

"He yelled at me once when I first started working. I would ask him questions at every tree. 'I may as well shear it myself if I have to answer questions all day,' he said. So he taught me to problem-solve and think on my own," Forrester says. "Bill also would tell me to imagine that my name was plastered to my work. I keep that in mind all the time."

## Family tree

In her youth, Jerrienne never thought about whether she liked the farm and nursery work. It was just something she did, and it didn't occur to her to look for another job.

But it was clear that the farm was everything to Bill Humphrey. After a long day of work at Farmers Home Association (now the Farm Service Agency), he'd change his clothes and take care of his trees until dark.

There was never any pressure to continue in her parents' footsteps, and so Jerrienne followed her passion and studied textiles at Cornell University, then took a job at Woolrich Inc. in Pennsylvania. Eventually she married, started a family and put aside her career to homeschool her kids, though she always helped her parents out with planting and other aspects of the farm.

It wasn't until her father became ill after a fall in 2009 that Jerrienne recommitted herself to the farm year-round.

Since Bill's death, the women have let some parts of the business go. While All Western used to propagate seeds and sell the plugs (or seedlings) to other tree farms, which was Bill's passion, they now rely on seedlings produced at a Michigan nursery, using seeds from frozen storage that he purchased from other collectors.

It's tough, Jerrienne admits, but abandoning the land or her heritage is out of the question, and so despite the hardships it puts on her family life, she and her husband agree that this is the best course of action to take, for the time being.

It's too early to tell if the next generation will want to take over. She and her mother would be thrilled, but they want the kids to have the freedom to choose their own paths.

In the meantime, all is well on the All Western front. Jerrienne's son, Ted, now drives a tractor, just as his mother did at his age. Her artistically inclined daughter, Isabel, helps make crafts and other decorative products with the boughs and greens for the peak retail season.

And orders are in for seedlings to plants next spring — starting another seven-to-12-year cycle until they go to market.

"I am pretty sure this is going to be a tree farm for quite a while yet," says Katherine.