

The Homespun Collage

The Newsletter of The Portville Historical and Preservation Society
Vol. 21 Issue 3

The purpose of the Portville Historical and Preservation Society is the discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the history of the Portville area in the State of New York.

PHPS Publishes 1899 Cookbook

A rare glimpse of local history has recently been published by The Portville Historical and Preservation Society.

A cookbook called Practical Receipts was published in 1899 by the Portville Philharmonic Society. This book and many photographs and items that belonged to the Marshall Maxson Family were given to PHPS by their granddaughter, Mrs. Francis Gates Eld.

The cookbook contains recipes donated by many Portville women and advertising by local merchants. It has been copied in its original form. It is a blend of common sense cooking with humorous verses that will amuse the reader. Because the cover of the cookbook was missing we have created a new one dedicated to Mrs. Emerette Maxson, the likely the owner of the book.

At the beginning of the cookbook you will find "Portrait of a Portville Family," that includes many pictures of the Maxson family, the story of their origin, and migration to their eventual home in Portville. Emerette Coon Maxson's family heritage is traced back to the early days of Portville.

The story includes Marshall Maxson's experiences with the 85th Regiment of NY Vols. during the Civil War, his survival in the notorious Andersonville Prison and his homecoming. Short biographies on the Maxson children are also included.

The book will be available at the Portville Free Library on December 1, 2007 for \$10.00. Proceeds from the sale of the book will benefit the Restoration of the Bedford Corners Schoolhouse. Stop by the library for your copy or see page 7 for book order form.

*The Homespun
Collage*

November 2007

**H.W. Wessells
GAR Post No. 85
Portville, NY**

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**The Last of the
Boys Who Wore
Blue**

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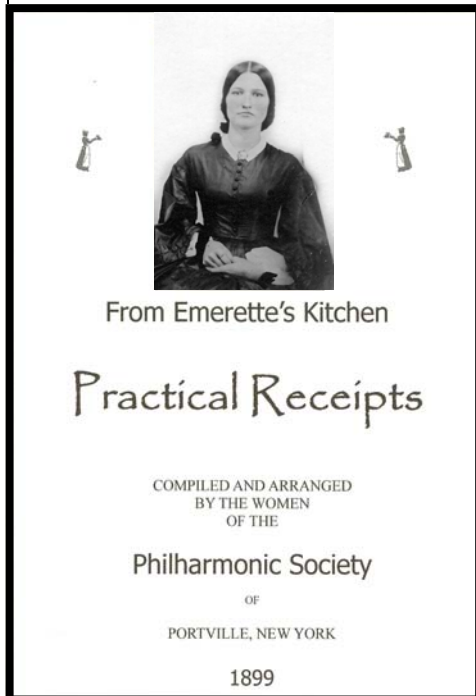
**Excerpt from our
NEW book
Marshall's Bakery**

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New Members

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www.portvillehistory.org



H. W. Wessells Post No. 85 Grand Army of the Republic Portville, New York

After the Civil War, communities and families were faced with a dilemma, how to take care of the veterans who so bravely served. Men were recovering physically but continued to have an overwhelming sense of loss and emptiness. An organization called the Grand Army of the Republic, or G.A.R., was formed to provide a place with the comfort and familiarity of their fellow comrades. Headquartered in Portville, local veterans established H.W. Wessells Post, No. 85, in 1879 for camaraderie and to honor those who had given their lives. The name of the post was selected to honor Brigadier General Henry Walton Wessells, the commander of one of the brigades under which the 85th Regiment served. He has been described as “the best of men” for bravery and gallantry.

Wessells had a long career in service to his nation. He was born in Connecticut in 1809, was graduated from West Point and participated in the Seminole War of 1837-40. He became a major in General Scott’s Mexican campaign and although wounded at Contreras, he seized the regimental flag upon the death of the color-sergeant and put himself at the head of his men. His home state honored him with a jeweled sword for his bravery.

In 1855, he was in the Sioux expedition and served in the Northwest and the Missouri border until the Civil War. In March of 1862, he was transferred to the Army of the Potomac. He was promoted to Brigadier General on

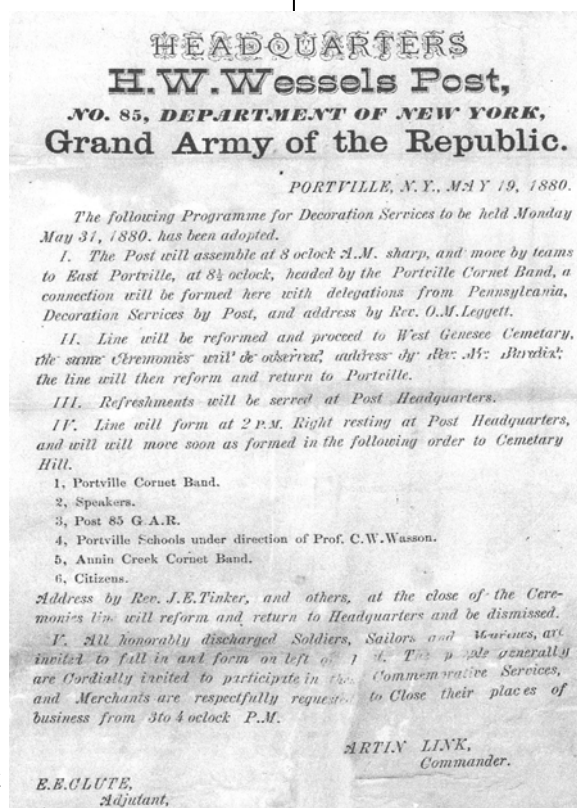
April 25, 1862 and given the command of the Second Brigade, First Division, Fourth Corps, just before the Battle of Yorktown. He served in the Peninsula and received the army brevet of lieutenant-colonel for gallantry at Fair Oaks, where he was wounded. He then commanded McClellan’s rear-guard and was involved in the defense of Suffolk, VA.

Transferred to North Carolina in May 1863, he was placed in charge of the sub-district of Albemarle. His garrison of 1,600 men, including nine companies of the 85th, was attacked by 7,000 Confederate troops and their iron-clad warship “Albemarle” at Plymouth, NC. His defense lasted four days with the enemy repeatedly driven back. Wessells finally surrendered the town and was taken prisoner along with many of the soldiers of the 85th, known thereafter as the “Plymouth Pilgrims”. Most of the enlisted men were taken to Andersonville Prison, GA. Wessells was taken to Libby Prison and later transferred to Danville, VA, Macon, GA and Charleston, GA. He was exchanged in August 1864 and became commissary of prisoners

until the end of the war.

Wessells received many commendations for his “gallant and meritorious service” during the rebel attack on Plymouth, NC. At age 55 he was not yet ready for retirement so he returned to the Northwestern frontier. He retired in 1871 and went home to Connecticut. He died in 1889 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

For more information on Henry Walton Wessells
<http://www.famousamericans.net/henrywaltonwessells/>



The Last of The Boys Who Wore The Blue

The following biographies were published in a 1933 edition of the Olean Times Herald. These men were three of the last surviving veterans of the Civil War living in Portville.

Wallace M. Skiver

Wallace M. Skiver, of Portville, was ninety-one years old on January 12, but details of his Civil War experiences are as clear to him as though they happened but yesterday.

War to Mr. Skiver is war. A battle, no matter now important it may have been to one side or the other during the Civil War, was to him just a break in the routine of things.

Ask him what battles he fought in and he will probably chuckle and tell you that he knows nothing about battles, "We were always fighting and marching and scouting. Sometimes it was a little bit worse," is the way Mr. Skiver puts it.

If one is familiar with the activities of Company H, 58th Pennsylvania Volunteers, that would be the only way to determine just what part Mr. Skiver played in the Civil War.

He joined up with a group from Eldred on October 21, 1861. He was but nineteen years old at the time. The first few months of service were devoted to scouting mainly, until March 10, 1862, the day after the historic meeting of the Merrimac and the Monitor when the 58th moved into Camp Hamilton, Fortress

Monroe, VA. They remained at the camp until May, 10, when they were ordered to advance on Norfolk.

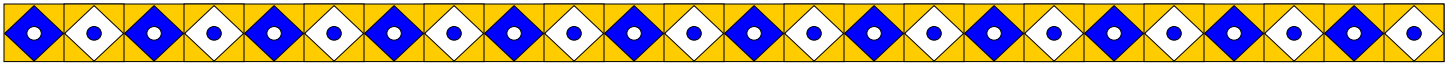


*Wallace M. Skiver
Photo from PHPS Archives*

These early days in the War were to Wallace Skiver, just turned twenty, the greatest of his life. After that, he will tell you, the story is too tiresome for him to tell and for you to listen to, although he does point with pride to the work he put in manufacturing lumber used in the bridges and pontoons which carried the army over streams during the march through Georgia.

He was mustered out of the service

(Continued on page 4)



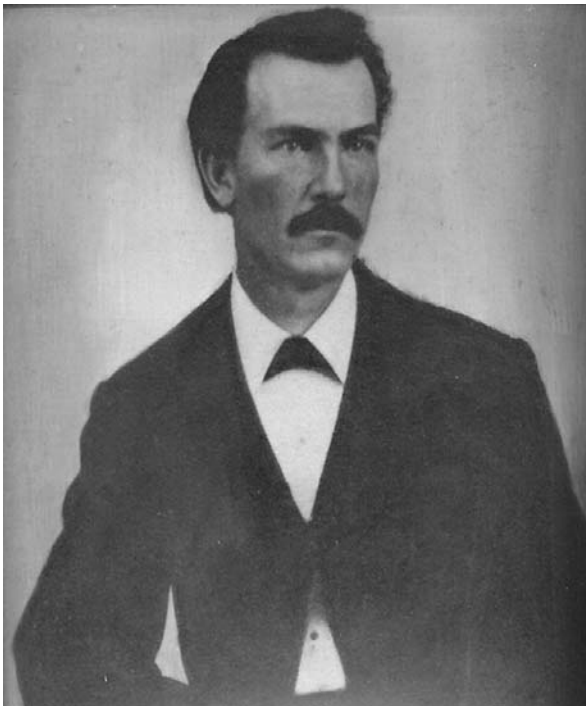
(Continued from page 3)

December 17, 1864, after more than three years.

Mr. Skiver lives now with his son on their little farm just outside of Portville on the Eldred road. His sight is practically gone. Before his eyes began to fail him Mr. Skiver completed a manuscript of his war experiences and hunting experiences after the war. This manuscript he is very proud of and the visitor may glance over it only on condition that he copy no part of it.

DeWitt Page

The 130th Infantry Regiment was formed



DeWitt Page

Our appreciation to Robert M. Fairbanks for allowing us to copy the original picture of his great-grandfather.

at Portage, N.Y. and much of its training was on the site now occupied by Letchworth Park. The

regiment included many recruits from Belfast and vicinity, among whom was DeWitt Page.

Mr. Page joined the regiment at Belfast and went South with it. After one year the regiment was changed to a cavalry unit and became known as the 1st New York Dragoon, proving to be one of the most active units in the Civil War.

Mr. Page was with the Dragoons though forty-five engagements and was present at the surrender of Lee at Appomattox.

The record of the Dragoons shows that it captured 1,533 prisoners, nineteen pieces of artillery, twenty-one caissons, 240 artillery horses, forty wagons and ambulances, 160 draught animals and four battle flag. During the activities, four officers and 155 men were lost.

Mr. Page was discharged from service at the close of the war, returning to his home.

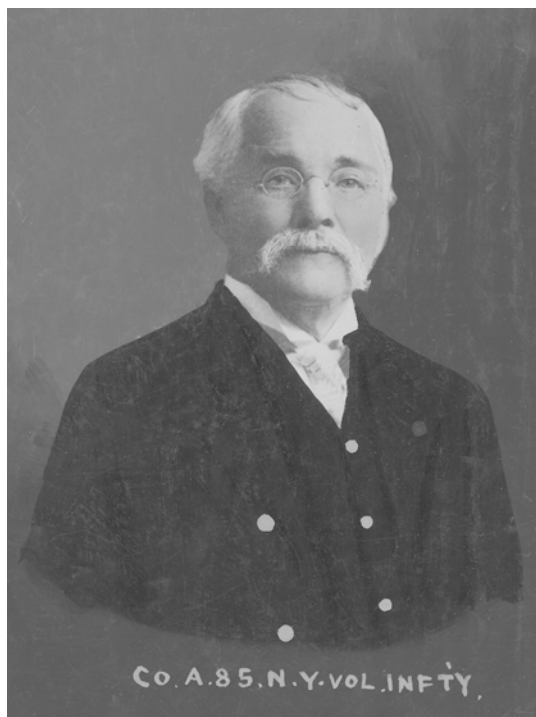
He now lives in Portville where he is a familiar figure on the streets. He is awaiting his eighty-sixth birthday, May 31.

Addison O. Burdick

Addison O. Burdick, a resident of Portville, served with Company A. 85th New York Volunteers, during the Civil War. He had four brothers in the same company.

He enlisted at Portville in September, 1862 and was sworn into the Army at Dunkirk.

Shortly after entering the struggle, practically every member of Mr. Burdick's regiment was taken prisoner. One of his brothers, he recalls, spent eight months in Andersonville, one of the worst prisons of the Southern army.



Addison Burdick
PHPS Archives
Given by Virginia Burdick

Following release of the regiment, their activity was marked by expeditions up the Blackwater River, and periods at Fortress Monroe, Va., and New Bern, N.C. They also played a part in stopping one of General Lee's major attacks.

One of the outstanding memories of the war to Mr. Burdick is the occasion when he was taken violently ill of a stomach complaint. One of his brothers walked seven miles to secure roots from which to make a tea to effect a cure.

Mr. Burdick was discharged at the close of the Civil War, at Elmira.

He is now eighty-eight years old and he and his wife make their home with their son, F.L. Burdick.

Marshall's Bakery

The following is an excerpt from the new PHPS publication "From Emerette's Kitchen, Practical Receipts Cookbook".

Many of the men were sick or starving and had trouble eating the meager ration they were given. Marshall, a true survivor, created his own recipe for hoe-cakes in order to keep himself and others alive during their ordeal. The following excerpt from Presidents, Soldiers, Statesmen, Vol. II, 1899, describes his resourcefulness as a prisoner of war.



Marshall L. Maxson
Original tintype PHPS Archives

"Maxson's hoe-cake bakery kept him and many others alive, as he had cakes to sell every morning at daybreak. The supply came from the corn issued as rations daily and was exchanged for hoe-cake, as also was the wood which was used to cook them."

The Portville Historical And Preservation Society

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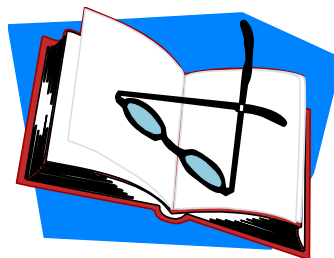
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PUBLICATIONS

Available at The Portville Free Library and by mail from P.H.P.S. PO Box 59, Portville, NY 14770-0059.

PLEASE ADD \$5.00 FOR PRIORITY POSTAGE AND HANDLING

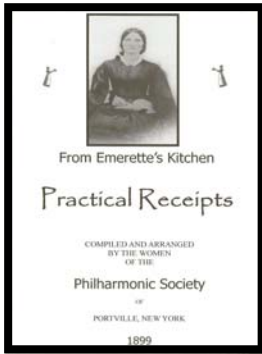
NEW! From Emerette's Kitchen, Practical Receipts, \$10.00. An 1899 collection of recipes of Portville women compiled by the Portville Philharmonic Society. Includes an additional story about the Marshall and Emerette Maxson Family, their heritage, children and the Civil War. (Mailed \$15.00)

A History of Farming In The Portville Area, \$10.00 A 71 page book of photos and information on the farms, dairies, and associated businesses of the area with a special section on Portville milk bottles and poems and anecdotes on farming. (Mailed \$15.00)

PORTVILLE GOES TO WAR, The Contributions of the Community of Portville, NY to World War II, \$15.00. A 182 page book of photos and information about the Portville men and women who served in the war with a special section on the Home Front. (Mailed-\$20.00)

The History of the Town of Portville, 1805-1920 \$13.00 A 178 page book of photos and text including information about Portville people, industries, merchants, government, etc. (Mailed \$18.00)

Portville's Architectural Heritage \$3.00 Sketches of 18 houses, churches and public buildings with information about history and style. (Mailed \$8.00)



Order your cookbooks now!
They make great Christmas Gifts!

**From Emerette's Kitchen
Practical Receipts**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State & Zip
Code _____

Please detach and mail to:

**P.H.P.S.
PO BOX 59
PORTVILLE, NY 14770-0059**

**Include \$10.00 per copy
Add \$5.00 for shipping per copy
Free gift wrapping available**

**Welcome
To Our New Members!**

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R.W. Lewis
James Rowe
James Schott
Mary Roulo Witter
Karen Wagoner

IN MEMORIUM

**Lynford L. Chaffee 1915-2007
Rupert A. Chaffee 1914-2007
Delma J. Hendryx 1925-2007
Bernard M. Reid 1935-2007**

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<http://www.portvillehistory.org>



The Marshall Maxson Family of Portville is featured in the new PHPS Publication, “*Emerette’s Kitchen, Practical Receipts*” Emerette and Marshall are pictured here with their children, from left Llewellyn, James and Alice. Photo c. 1885