

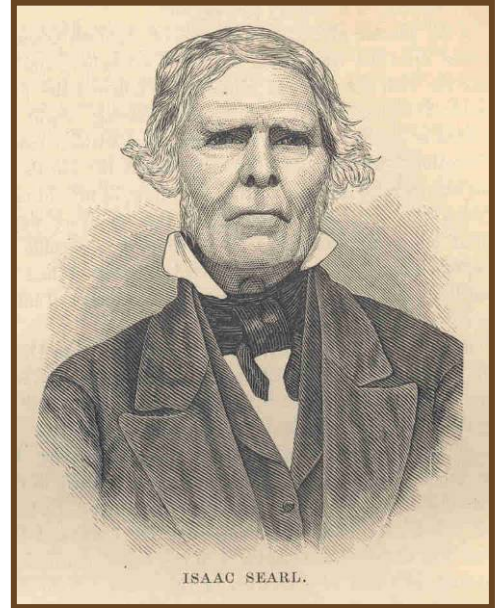
ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE SECRET LIFE OF ISAAC SEARL

Isaac Searl was born on October 3rd, 1789 in the town of Whitehall in Washington County. He was one of fifteen children of Gideon and Hannah Searl. His biography in Everts, 1879 described him as having an inbred love of truth and ever a faithful devotee at honor's shrine in all the social, civil, financial and political relations of life.

In July 1811 he married Martha Hotchkiss and moved to Warsaw in Wyoming County in 1816. In the fall of 1817 he relocated to Franklinville and lived on the ground later covered by the Globe Hotel, now the site of the Community Bank.

The following year he erected a log cabin on the north part of lot 35 and northwest corner of lot 27 in township 4, range 4. It's been written that he was "prudent and economical, a charitable giver and a prompt paymaster; the needy never went empty-handed from his door, the latch-string of which was always out to the beknighted wayfarer and neighboring pioneer."



He fathered nine children and his sons followed in his footsteps. The Searl Family was considered among the best farmers in Ischua Valley and model gentlemen and Christians. He was also a veteran of the War of 1812.

In 1837 Isaac made a profession of religion and united with the Baptist Church in Franklinville.

In 1929, Alfred Rice, a former school teacher in East Aurora, revealed a deep and carefully guarded secret to his son. Alfred was the last surviving conductor on the Underground Railroad who helped transport the escaping slaves who had sought refuge in Cattaraugus County.

Before his death he named the people in Cadiz who had participated in the Underground Railroad. They included Merlin Mead, Isaac Searl, John Burlingame and the owner of the Stagecoach Inn.

He said that runaway slaves were rafted down Ischua Creek and hidden in Cadiz by these families. At this time hiding and abetting slaves was a federal offense and punishments could include heavy fines, loss of property and imprisonment. Neighbors and family who failed to report such activity on the Underground Railroad faced these same punishments and fines, even if they did not actively participate. Secrecy was of the utmost importance to protect the members of the community who

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chose to be involved in the Underground Railroad. These secrets were kept until well into the twentieth century.

In Cattaraugus County members of the Baptist and Presbyterian Church were the most active Abolitionists and people who were involved in assisting the slaves. Isaac Searl's daughter married John Burlingame that indicated that there was a family connection with this activity.

Isaac Searl, a prominent and successful farmer, risked everything for a cause he fervently believed in – the freedom of all men. He died on April 11th, 1860 without learning that the approaching Civil War would lead to the cause he believed in.

The final accolade to this brave man was that "he left a legacy richer by far – that of a blameless life and spotless reputation and the passerby may pause at his grave and truthfully say "Here lies all that can die of the noblest work of God – an honest man." He is buried in the Cadiz Cemetery.

Information on his life was obtained from History of Cattaraugus County New York, 1879 by L. H. Everts.

