

# ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## A FUN SATURDAY MORNING FIELD TRIP

The Old Chautauqua Road that extended from Angelica, in Allegany County New York to Mayville, in Chautauqua County was the main route west for early pioneers before the opening of the Erie Canal. This road crossed Cattaraugus County and a very important section was Bryant Hill Road.

One chilly Saturday morning, a group of historical detectives decided to explore Bryant Hill Road to see if we could solve some of the mysteries of this 200 year old road. Included in this adventure were Mary Elizabeth Dunbar, Ellicottville Historian, Bruce and Maggie Fredrickson, Historians of the Town and Village of Franklinville, Lois Zendarski, Editor of THE MERCURY GAZETTE, April Zendarski who took pictures, Greg Blair, who videotaped the adventure and Allan Fish. Our intrepid leader was Mrs. Betty Hakes Hackett. She was raised on Bryant Hill in the 1930s and attended the old two-room school house located there. (See photo on next page.)

She is blessed with an incredible memory and we traveled up and down the road learning about the families who lived on Bryant Hill during that time. The historians were busy taking notes to preserve the history of Bryant Hill. We visited the site of the Hake dairy farms. It was hard to believe that there were once seven active dairy farms on the road. The group heard about the old schoolhouse and visited the ancient cemetery nearby where the graves of the early settlers were located. A great deal of preservation work has been done to save the old stones.

We stopped at the home that her family had moved to Bryant Hill from Ashford Hollow. Greg Blair is restoring one of the old Hake family homes and we heard about his restoration adventures. As we continued down the road Mrs. Hackett named other families who had lived there. Many of the houses and barns were long gone and so much history could have been forgotten if Mrs. Hackett hadn't taken the time to give us this information.

We know that there were four inns located between Franklinville and Ellicottville on this road. The early pioneers traveled with pongs (wooden-sleigh type carriers) pulled by oxen. The trip was long and especially difficult in rainy weather or winter. The settlers needed to rest, eat, warm themselves, and also find shelter for the night. Several inns had corrals and enclosures for the livestock traveling with the families. We discovered the locations of the four inns that morning. The Vinton Inn was at the bottom of Bryant Hill at the juncture of Route 242. Another inn was the Freeman Bryant Inn. At Weller Road and Bryant Hill was the missing inn. Mrs. Hackett's great grandfather had purchased the inn early in the 20th century. It had replaced one that had burned earlier. She remembers the house, now long gone, and that the rooms had numbers on them. It is possible that this is the inn referred to as the Half-Way Inn between Franklinville and Ellicottville. The final inn was the Brown Eagle at the Narrows before proceeding up Bryant Hill.

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If you missed the article on the Bryant Hill Inn that appeared in our newsletter several years ago, you can find it on our web site at [www.ischuavalleyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ischuavalleyhistoricalsociety.org). An article appears every month on our web site where new members can catch up on previous articles.

We ended the four hour tour at the Fredrickson's where we enjoyed lunch, and sharing stories and information. If you enjoy exploring and learning about history, let us know and we will inform you when we have another field trip.

