

Berlin Historical Society September 17, 2014 Meeting Minutes

The meeting commenced at 7:05 with the following members present: Norb Rhinerson, Manny and Mary Garcia, Vern Turner and Richard Turner.

The Treasurers report was not given this month. Bank statements come out on the 20th of each month so they are not available when we meet before that date.

Minutes of our August meeting were previously sent to members and friends of the BHS.



We received a gift of photos of West Berlin taken in 1896 from Clark Jillson of Butler, Illinois. There were 15 photos that were sent in digital format by e-mail. Clark is the grandson



The old white church that used to occupy a portion of the West Berlin Cemetery grounds.

The railway station as it was in 1896

of Helena Gertrude Trow, one of the people shown in the photos. Other photos were of Addie Emerson, Marcia Libby, Mary McIntosh, school children walking along the road in front of the West Berlin Cemetery, the old white church, the railway station, Hiram Ayres house, Ayres Store, Loren Robinson in front of the creamery, Gilman Emerson house, Gilman Emerson in front of the old West Berlin covered bridge, and the Worthen house.

I spent some time in West Berlin talking to present owners and trying to locate where each of the houses was/is located. I was lucky enough to locate Iris Gardner who lives in the Gilman

Emerson house which is located just off the east end of the present iron bridge across the Dog River. She identified where all of the houses were located except the Worthen house.

Further research identified several interesting facts. The railway station clearly shows the West Berlin sign that hung in front. We have a photo of a later station that identifies the village as Riverton. The first station house was built about 1896 when the photo was taken, before the village acquired the name of Riverton. This station was destroyed by fire in 1917 and a new larger one was constructed that same year. The new station was closed in 1931 and remained unoccupied until 1957 when it was sold for \$75 and moved away.

We learned about the old white church from an article in the Times-Argus by Arthur Wentworth Hewitt on August 29, 1970. He tells how beautiful the church was in its location beside the cemetery and that it was sold to the Davis Brothers to serve as a store. It was moved to a location about where the present day fire station resides across the road from the then Davis Brothers Granite Co. shed. Arthur ends his story with “thank God it burned”.

The Hiram Ayres house is still there across from Iris Gardners house, However, Ayres Store requires more research. The building that is on its location closely resembles the building in the old photo but an old newspaper article in the Vermont Standard in Woodstock dated March 30, 1899 states that “The store and post office at West Berlin, of which H. B. Ayres is owner and postmaster was burned to the ground about 1:30 o’clock Friday night March 17”. The article goes on to say that nothing was saved from the fire except a few mail sacks. The only plausible answer is that the building was rebuilt to similar dimensions as the one that burned.

The Gilman Emerson house (where Iris Gardner now lives) burned a couple of years ago and has been rebuilt. The photos that Clark Jillson sent to us were taken by his great grandmother, Geneva (Jenny) E. (Bailey) Trow who lived in this house. Clark’s grandmother, Helena Trow was born there.

Showing all the new photos and explaining them took the entire evening so our scheduled covering of Chapter 12 of A Place to Pass Through was postponed until the October 15 meeting.

One other thing that was not discussed at the meeting is that Andrea Chandler has volunteered to take care of the plantings at the Veteran’s Memorial at Berlin Corners. Thank you Andrea

The meeting adjourned about 8:30.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Turner, Secretary