



Madison County Genealogical Society



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October Program by Gloria Hintz

August 17, 2002. That was the date of the 250th Sarah Wells and William Bull family reunion and picnic. It took place at their old stone farmhouse just off the Sarah Wells Trail at Route 51 and about four miles northeast of Goshen, New York. A good half mile from the farmhouse is the burial ground where Sarah Wells and William Bull peacefully rest.

Not being a member of this illustrious family, I was honored to attend by special invitation.

It was a hot summer morning. Families parked their cars off at the side of the grounds and came to find places at tables under the open tents. We chatted pleasantly with one another until Michael Brown, a family descendant and dweller in the stone house, took our attention via P/A system and lead the family in the table prayer. Only then were we free to delve into the delicious ham and cheese sandwiches, rosy plums, golden nectarines and plenty of water.

Some 400 people had gathered as was the family's annual custom. Following the luncheon, recognition was given to the person who had traveled the farthest, the oldest person present and the youngest person present. There were also questions such as "Who has information on the Beasley branch of the family? Or the Congleton branch?" They would then be matched up to assist one another in their queries.

One long table contained well arranged materials of family history. It was under the care of a family archivist who stood ready to assist anyone with questions and enquiries. Another table sold caps, t-shirts and coloring books featuring the stone farmhouse. A generous booklet of family history was also available.

Back in the 1700's Sarah Wells was a orphan child in New York. Her parents died on the way to the New World. She was adopted and raised by a Mr. and Mrs. Denn who lived on Staten Island.

When Sarah was 16 years of age. Mr. Denn decided to settle in the area of Goshen. A boat was loaded with household goods. Young Sarah, two white men as carpenters and two Indians for guides were send up the Hudson River to land near present day Goshen.

The carpenters hewed down enough trees for a generous rude cabin. Sarah was then in charge of unpacking the household goods and finding a place for everything. She did very capably.

Mr. and Mrs. Denn joined them some weeks later. No one was happier than Sarah to see them. They were the only parents she had ever known.

William Bull was born in England. When he was quite young, his father moved the family to Ireland. Here young William eventually apprenticed to become a stone mason/builder.

Seeing more opportunity in the New World, young William emigrated to America. He was invited to work at his trade of stonemason/builder in the area of present Goshen, NY.

It was inevitable that William and Sarah should meet and marry. It was William who designed and built the stone farmhouse that was completed in 1722.

The house is literally built on a rock and has a spring in the lowest floor that runs continually. It is comprised of three stories of 11 feet each. The steeply pitched roof is covered with wide oak staves.

Some years ago the Bull family formed an association and purchased the house so it will ever remain in the hands of the family.

William and Sarah had 12 children who in turn had 98 grandchildren. The male grandchildren, with one exception, fought for the colonials. George Bull was unable to renounce his loyalty to King George III of England. This Mr. Bull went to Canada and became a captain in the king's army. After the war, George settled in Nova Scotia where many of his family live today.