

Historic Childs: In 1959, Gaines celebrated Sesquicentennial

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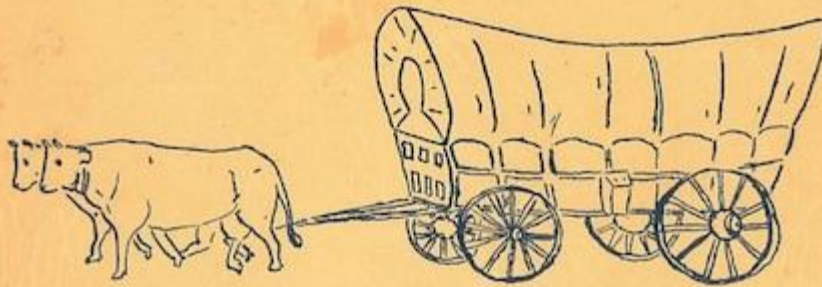
Albion Advertiser, August 1959. Photo Courtesy Orleans County Historian

By Doug Farley, Cobblestone Museum Director – Vol 2. No. 46

GAINES – In 1959, the Hamlet of Childs joined forces with a handful of other hamlets in the Town of Gaines to celebrate the town's Sesquicentennial, the 150th anniversary of its first settler in 1809. Leading up to the festivities, a Sesquicentennial Committee had been hard at work preparing a written history, as well as organizing several community events and celebrations to take place throughout the year.

The Sesquicentennial Committee was comprised of Supervisor Lester Canham, Honorary Chairman; J. Howard Pratt and Cary Lattin, Co-Chairmen; Mrs. Gerald (Janice) Thaine, Executive Secretary; Dean Sprague, Treasurer; Curtis Lyman, Program; Rev. John Minott, Donald Miles and Edwin Weeks, Program; Mrs. Harry Wilder, Hon. Bernard Ryan, and Thomas Heard, Jr., Advisors; and Miss Katharine Hutchinson, Promotion and Publicity. Sixty other town residents worked on various tasks including Antique Cars, Historical Booklet, Gaines Landmarks, Dance Committee, Auction, Parade and Floats, Midway Entertainment, and much more.

The Sesquicentennial Town of Gaines



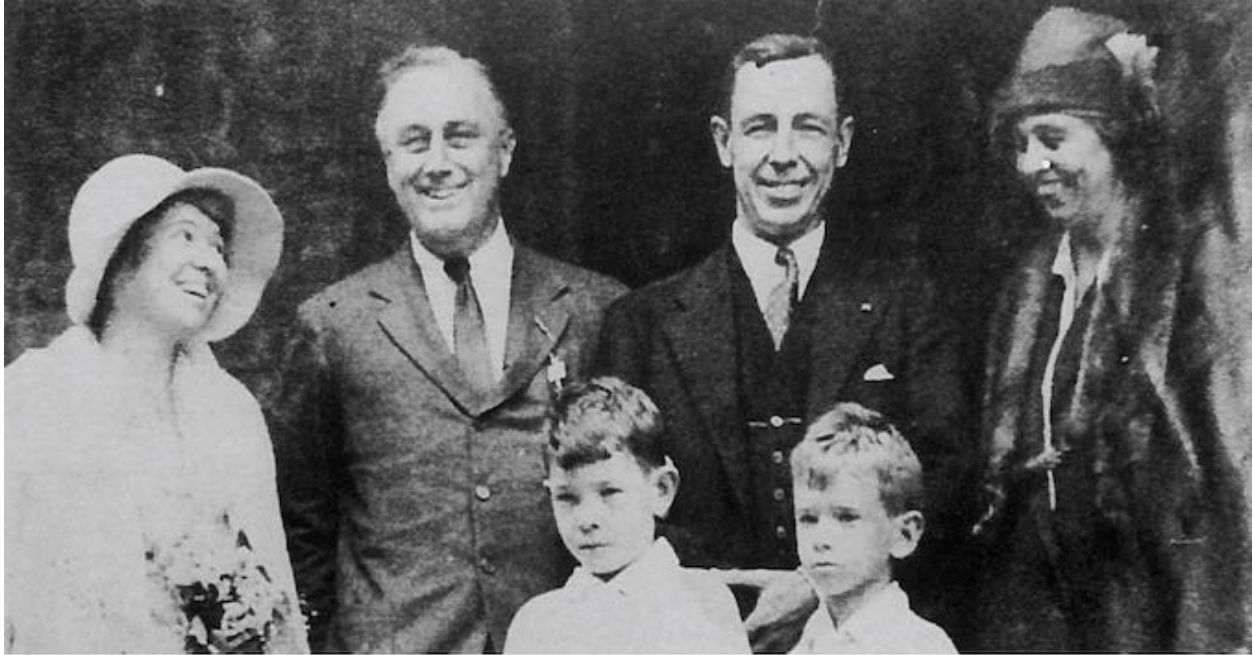
1809

1959

Gaines Sesquicentennial Publication, cover sketch by Mrs. Walter E. Mack

The Historical Booklet Committee presented the following dedication to their 32 page Sesquicentennial Publication:

“We wish to dedicate this booklet to your pioneer fathers and mothers who came into the Town of Gaines when it was a trackless wilderness and carved from that wilderness, our roads, our schools, our churches, our farms, our civilization – a righteous heritage of which we should be justly proud.”



Harriet Fitts Ryan, wife of Bernard Ryan, Chief Judge of the NYS Court of Claims, was called upon to write the sesquicentennial book's Foreword. (The Ryan family is shown above in the 1930s with Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt who made occasional trips to Gaines to visit the Ryan family.) Mrs. Ryan, originally from Mobile, Alabama, served the Sesquicentennial Committee as Hospitality Chair. Her Foreword to the publication follows:

"On a hot Fourth of July in 1921, I first set foot in the town of Gaines. I had thought my new home was in Albion, New York. But I was told in no uncertain terms, 'You live in the Town of Gaines.'" It was some time before I began to understand that the Town of Gaines was a township and to realize the miles encompassed therein. Gaines Village, Childs or Fairhaven, East Gaines, West Gaines, Gaines Basin, Five Corners, Eagle Harbor – it was some time before I realized that all of these constituted the Town of Gaines. However, in short time I realized the beauty of the homes and roads and by-ways of Gaines and the fine character of her citizens; and I felt proud to be an adopted daughter.

The beauty of the homes and the roads of Gaines is a direct inheritance from those who made the long trek over hill and stream from Massachusetts and Connecticut and settled these parts. They were the ones who planted the trees that were to grow into stately beauty and make travel on the Ridge the delight it is. God made the Ridge – mere man could have never given us the Ridge – but it was the early settlers who had the vision to set out the trees that would give shade and comfort to their descendants. They were the ones, also, who gathered stones from fields and lake and, with their own hands, erected the cobblestone houses of Gaines.

These cobblestone buildings, the fame of which has spread from coast to coast, are the pride of every resident of this vicinity, the envy of every passing traveler. Men and women of strength and determination were those pioneers – strong enough to journey by oxcart into a far country, determined enough to settle that country and make it a fair land. Men and women of vision and courage – vision enough to look to the future, courage enough to face the present. I, who can claim no descent from those sturdy men and women, am proud of what they did in those far-away days, am proud of the Town of Gaines. I am proud that my husband has lived all of his life in Gaines and that my sons are her native-born.

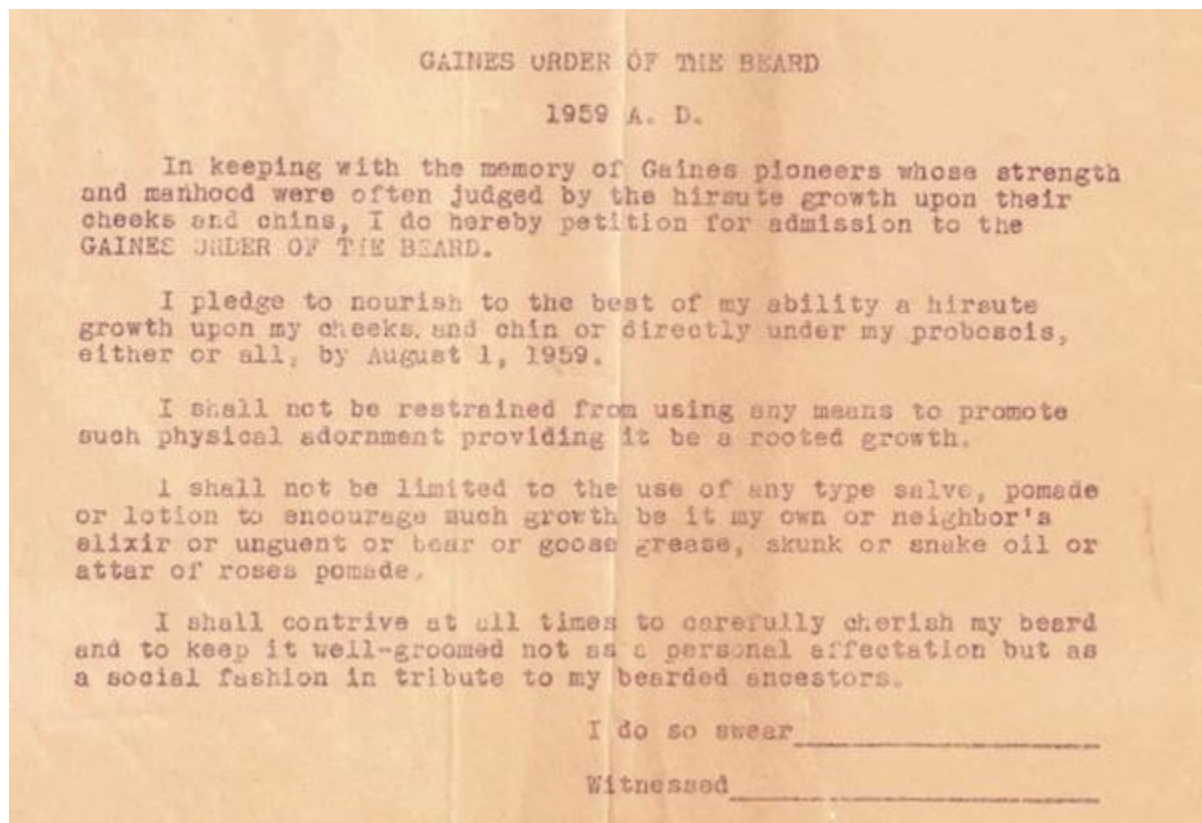
This sesqui-centennial is a tribute to the men and women who dared all and braved all, who left to us a goodly heritage. Now, let us who have come after them be worthy. Let us strive to leave behind us a community fair to behold, rich in tradition, in which our descendants will rejoice and be exceeding glad, a community that will inspire right living and the development of fine character. We have an obligation to the past and to the future. Noblesse oblige! There is more to it than two words. Let us fulfill that obligation.”



Courtesy Orleans County Historian

In those days, no historical celebration was complete without a beard growing contest. Over forty men participated in this face-lifting project and were photographed together for the August 13th issue of the Albion Advertiser.

Taking part included: (Front row) William Woolston, Theodore Schoonover, Thomas Manning, Glen Woolston, Ralph Appleton, Maynard Bannon, Gerald Thaine, David Sanford, and Everett Hobbs. (Middle row) Richard Appleton, Herbert Morrison, Paul Chappius, Richard Peruzzini, Harold Peruzzini, Peter Ricci, Wesley Bennett, James Kerridge, Colonel Ball, Dominic Martillotta, Sortman Jordan, Clure Appleton and Howard Pratt. (Back row) Jesse Downey, Carl Huthsteiner, Donald Bennett, Andrew Butz, Albert Neal, Jr., William Schuler, Terry Neal, Kenneth Drew, David Youngs, Wilbur Scroger, Royce Freeman, Wayne Rath, Gordon Miller, Arthur Gould, Richard Hill, David Vagg, Rev. John Minott, Whitney Howes and Clifford Allen.



Even registering for the beard growing contest involved some tongue-in-check humor. (Photo Courtesy Orleans County Historian)

On the day of the celebration, a gala parade took place from Childs to Gaines with floats, bands, horses, carriages and old cars. There was a historical exhibit, a horse show, church smorgasbord, Grange Square Dance and Carolyn Reed was chosen as Sesquicentennial Queen.