

A TRIBUTE TO JERRY M BABCOCK (1944-2010)

Jerry resided in Abbots all his life except for a stint in the Army. Abbots is a hamlet located in the eastern portion of Ischua, Cattaraugus Co., NY. His extended family included most of the early settlers of the Abbots area and he “knew” them all. Absolutely no one understood the area’s genealogy as well as Jerry. It was a burning passion, particularly during the last two decades of his life.

Jerry was as far from being a snob as one could get. Over the years he openly exchanged genealogical data, old photos and papers with people all over the United States mostly via the Internet. Through such efforts a great amount of data was accumulated.

Jerry also spent many hours assembling charts of all the Ischua cemeteries, particularly the one in Abbots. These listings included parents and spouses of the deceased. Posted on this website, they became a precious resource to researchers.

My relationship with Jerry began in the 1980’s when my wife, Gerry, became historian for the town of Lyndon (next door to Abbots). We had arrived in Lyndon in 1980 and knew no one but became assimilated into the area fairly quickly to the degree my wife was appointed historian in 1982. She soon found out about Jerry who provided a lot of local data. I was making a living at that time and didn’t pay much attention to their work.

By 1988 my wife was in the moderate stages of Alzheimer’s and could no longer fully do the historian’s work so I started helping her. That began my collaboration and personal friendship with Jerry. By 2000 I was appointed historian, as my wife could no longer contribute (she passed in 2002).

Even in 1988 I could see a better way was needed to collect all the genealogical data such that queries, exchanges and research could be handled in a more expeditious manner. Whereas I’d already documented my own family genealogy in the PAF format, I decided to do so for all the Lyndon families. Obviously all the

other area families were interconnected so the file quickly spread to cover the surrounding towns.

Jerry became a major force in this effort. As I built the file, he would review the results, spot the duplications and errors and provide fill-in data. Meanwhile he typed up all the Lyndon vital records for easy reference including the Rawson Cemetery in Lyndon. We made many trips to area cemeteries and museums for new data, etc. The file grew and became an extraordinary tool for answering queries, etc. (currently contains 109,000 interrelated people).

By this time we had become close friends. We cut firewood together in his woodlot and I took him to town each Friday for groceries, etc. In 2006 I remarried to a local lady. She and Jerry would constantly ramble on about local relationships which left me pretty much out in the cold. Right up to the end Jerry continued to support my genealogy work.

Jerry now lies in his beloved Abbotts Cemetery together with the past three generations of his family. Rest well, Jerry, and thank you for all you've done for your fellow genealogists and for being my friend.

Sidney L. Emmons, Historian, Town of Lyndon, Cattaraugus Co.,
NY

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