

## Bonnie Hays - Palmyra, Believe it or Not

MY NAME IS BONNIE HAYS AND I'M THE ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR FOR HISTORIC PALMYRA. HISTORIC PALMYRA NEEDED SOMEBODY TO WORK WITH THE BOARD AND TO WORK WITH THE VISITORS, SET UP NEW PROGRAMS, AND THAT IS WHERE I COME IN, TO DO MORE ADVERTISING, TO SET UP NEW POLICIES, AND TO GET IN AND WORK ON THE MUSEUMS.



*WHAT SOMETHING DRAWS YOU, SOMETHING CONTINUES TO DRAW YOU INTO THE HISTORY OF PALMYRA.*

I LOVE THE HISTORY OF PALMYRA, I REALLY LOVE THE HISTORY OF PALMYRA, PALMYRA'S HISTORY IS LIKE NO OTHER. I TELL EVERYBODY THAT THIS IS LIKE THE WEST BEFORE THE WEST BECAME THE WEST AND THAT THIS WAS THE FRONTIER AND THAT PALMYRA'S HISTORY, IF IT DIDN'T HAPPEN ANYWHERE, IT HAPPENED HERE FIRST. AND IT JUST IS A CREDIBLE PLACE, WE HAVE SO MUCH HISTORY AND CONNECTION TO SO MANY FAMOUS PEOPLE, WINSTON CHURCHILL, MR. ISAAC SINGER, ADMIRAL SAMPSON, HENRY WELLS OF WELLS-FARGO, WE JUST HAVE A GREAT MANY SOURCES AND INTERESTING PEOPLE. INVENTORS, WRITERS, POETS, IT'S WONDERFUL.

*WHY DON'T WE TACKLE THE TOWN'S HISTORY BY ERA AND I GUESS WE OUGHT TO START EVEN BEFORE THE CANAL WITH A FELLOW NAMED SWIFT.*

YES, GENERAL JOHN SWIFT. HE WAS OUR FOUNDER. GENERAL JOHN SWIFT WAS A YOUNG MAN OF 15 WHEN HE JOINED THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND THEN AFTER THE WAR HE CAME OUT COMMISSIONED OFFICER AND HE TRIED TO SETTLE HIS FAMILY AND SOME OTHER SETTLERS IN PENNSYLVANIA. IT DIDN'T WORK OUT VERY WELL AND THE MENNONITE WARS OCCURRED, THERE WAS A TERRITORIAL PROBLEM, SO SWIFT WITH A MEMBER OF THE SURVEYING TEAM OF PHELPS-GORHAM CAME UP HERE. GENERAL SULLIVAN HAD SAID WHAT A WONDERFUL AREA THE GENESEE VALLEY WAS, HOW RICH FOR AGRICULTURE, IT WAS JUST A BEAUTIFUL AREA, LOTS OF WATER, LOTS OF LIVESTOCK AND FISHING AND JUST ALL KINDS OF THINGS THAT WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR SETTLING. AND HE CAME UP HERE AND SETTLED IN ABOUT 1789.

*IN 1789, THIS WASN'T EXACTLY AN URBAN METROPOLIS.*

NO, IT WAS NOT. IT WAS LITTLE ROADS FULL OF STUMPS. THE WATER WAS THE GANARGUA CREEK AND ALSO RED CREEK WHICH WAS CALLED, WE CALL IT MUD CREEK NOW. IT WAS JUST A WILDERNESS AND THEY HAD TO SETTLE THE WILDERNESS. AND JONATHAN SWIFT WAS A MILITARY MAN WHICH WAS VERY IMPORTANT BECAUSE TO LIVE AND SURVIVE IN THE KIND OF WINTERS THEY HAVE HERE, OR THAT THEY USED TO HAVE UP HERE, YOU REALLY NEEDED DISCIPLINE. AND IT WAS VERY TOUGH.

*OTHER FOLKS FOLLOWED HIM BUT THE THING THAT REALLY PUT THIS PLACE, NOTICEABLY ON THE MAP WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CANAL?*

WELL, YES AND THE CANAL WAS REALLY BUILT FOR A REASON. THEY WERE ON THE MAP BECAUSE THEY HAD A LOT OF FACTORIES LIKE, SMALL FACTORIES, NOT LIKE WE HAVE TODAY BECAUSE THEY CERTAINLY DIDN'T HAVE ANY EQUIPMENT BUT THE KIND OF ASHERIES THEY HAD, THEY HAD MALT HOUSES, GRAIN MILLS, LIVESTOCK, THEY HAD A LOT OF PRODUCE AND ALL OF THESE THINGS NEEDED TO BE SHIPPED. THEY HAD TO GET MONEY OUT, OR IN FROM THE SUPPLIES THEY SENT OUT AND ALSO THE THINGS THAT

THEY DIDN'T MAKE HERE, THEY HAD TO GET IN. NOW GANARGUA CREEK WAS OK, THE CLYDE RIVER WAS OK, BUT THE SURROUNDINGS AND THE TREES AND THE ICE AND THE JAMMING AND THE PEOPLE THAT LIVED ON THOSE ROUTES THAT THOUGHT THEY OWNED THEM AND WANTED TO STOP PEOPLE FROM TRAVELING BECAME A REAL PROBLEM, AND THEY NEEDED A REAL OPEN AREA TO GET THE TRANSPORT OF GOODS AND PEOPLE FROM BUFFALO TO ALBANY. THERE'S A SONG ABOUT THAT.

*THIS, DURING IT'S EARLY CANAL DAYS, HAD 2 DISTINCT PERSONALITIES. YOU HAD FAIRLY STAID, FAIRLY CONSERVATIVE BUSINESSMEN-FARMERS AND THEN YOU HAD THIS AREA WHICH HAD A FAIRLY COLORFUL NICKNAME?*

YES, THEY CALLED THE AREA AT CANAL AND MARKET STREET, THEY CALLED IT BLOODY CORNERS. THE FELLOWS THAT CAME TO WORK ON THE CANAL, THEY WORKED, THEY DRANK AND THEY FOUGHT AND THEY SEEMED TO BE A REVOLVING SITUATION. THEY PROBABLY DIDN'T HAVE MUCH ELSE TO DO. THEY WEREN'T WITH THEIR FAMILIES. THEY WERE JUST A BUNCH OF MEN THAT HAD TO COME AND WORK REALLY HARD, A LOT OF THEM WERE JUST MAKING THEIR WAY IN THIS COUNTY, PROBABLY WAS THE ONLY JOBS THAT THEY COULD GET AND SO THAT'S BASICALLY WHAT THEY DID AND THEY WEREN'T PROBABLY THE TYPE OF PEOPLE YOU WANTED YOUR FAMILY RAISED AROUND AND THEN THE RAILROAD CAME. AND IT THINK FOR WHAT THE CANAL WAS, THE RAILROAD WAS PROBABLY EQUALLY AS BAD AS ALSO CREATED THAT SAME TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT AND SO MOST OF THE MERCHANTS MOVED UP TO MAIN STREET, UNLIKE FAIRPORT OR PITTSFORD WHERE THEY STILL KEPT A GOOD PORTION OF THEIR COMMUNITY RIGHT NEXT TO THE CANAL.

*SO IF PALMYRA'S HAD A PERSONALITY SINCE THEN, WHAT WOULD IT BE?*

PALYMRA'S ALWAYS HAD A PERSONALITY. PALYMYRA'S ALWAYS BEEN VERY INTERESTING. I'VE ALWAYS FELT PALMYRA IS LIKE A LITTLE BIG CITY. PALMYRA IS CERTAINLY IN THE NEWS, SOMETIMES MUCH MORE THAN OTHERS. PALMYRA HAS BEEN A GREAT PLACE FOR INVENTORS, BIG PLACE FOR FACTORIES, WE USED TO MANUFACTURE PRINTING PRESSES HERE. THEY PATENTED 4 PRINTING PRESSES. WE MADE PERSONAL PRINTING EQUIPMENT, WE'VE HAD SOME OF THE FINEST PHOTOGRAPHERS FROM OUR AREA. ONE NAMED GEORGE ELTON WHO WON 8 WORLD GOLD MEDALS, AND THIS WAS IN THE 1870'S AND 1880'S. WE HAVE OF COURSE OUR MILITARY BACKGROUND IS JUST VERY EXCITING WITH WILLIAM SAMPSON AND SAMPSON DAYS, BOBBY KENNEDY VISITED HERE, ON HIS ROUTE, WHEN HE WAS RUNNING FOR OFFICE AND IN OUR MUSEUM WE HAVE ONE OF MRS. ULYSSES S. GRANT'S BALL GOWNS WHICH MUCH HAVE GOTTEN HERE BECAUSE SHE WAS HERE FOR A FUNCTION DURING THE ELECTION. WE ALSO HAVE OUR FLAGPOLE AND WE'RE IN RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT.

*THE THING THAT MAKES PALMYRA UNIQUE IN A RELIGIOUS SENSE IS WHAT?*

WELL ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS IS THAT WE ARE THE LOCATION WHERE JOSEPH SMITH FOUND THE BOOK OF MORMON GOLDEN TABLETS WHICH WAS THEN TRANSLATED AND TRANSCRIBED IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED THE GRANDUM BUILDING AND PRINTED HERE. THE MORMONS ARE VERY INVOLVED HERE IN A LOT OF AREAS. THEY HAVE JUST BUILT A TEMPLE WHICH IS JUST AN INCREDIBLE EVENT THAT OCCURRED HERE IN APRIL AND THERE ARE ACTUALLY ONLY ABOUT 80 OF THEM, I GUESS THERE'S 40 MORE BEING BUILT, BUT THIS IS IN THE WORLD. AND THIS IS PRETTY INCREDIBLE. WE HAVE THE MORMON PAGEANT HERE EVERY YEAR AND THAT OCCURS IN JULY. QUITE, QUITE AN EVENT ALL YEAR LONG WE HAVE PEOPLE COMING FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AND ALL OVER THE WORLD TO STOP AND TO VISIT JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE ON A MISSION. THE NEXT THING THAT WE HAVE, AND WHY I MENTIONED THE MORMON CHURCH FIRST IS BECAUSE THAT HAPPENED IN 1820, ABOUT 1825,

ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS THE CANAL UNTIL 1830. IN 1932, RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT PUT IN AN ARTICLE ABOUT OUR 4 CHURCHES, ONE OF EACH RELIGION ON THE CORNER IN AN INTERSECTION. AND THAT'S IN RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT. WE'VE ALSO BEEN IN THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TWICE. SO THAT FOR A SMALL LITTLE COMMUNITY, IT REALLY IS VERY INTERESTING.

*LET'S SAY YOU'VE GOT 10 MINUTES OF FREE TELEVISION TIME AND YOU WANT TO TELL SOMEBODY THIS IS WHY YOU WANT TO COME TO PALMYRA, THESE ARE THE THINGS YOU CAN SEE RIGHT NOW, THIS SUMMER, THIS FALL WHATEVER. WHAT DO YOU TELL THEM?*

I WILL TELL THEM THAT WE HAVE 3 WORKING MUSEUMS RUN BY HISTORIC PALMYRA, WHICH IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION AND HAS BEEN IN PALMYRA SINCE 1843. WE HAVE THE ALLING-COVERLET MUSEUM WHICH IS ON 122 WILLIAM STREET AND STARTING JUNE 1ST OPEN ONE TO FOUR, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK AND WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS AS WELL. THAT HAS THE LARGEST HOMESPUN COLLECTION OF COVERLETS IN THE COUNTRY. WE ALSO HAVE A LOT OF THE ROCHESTER WEAVER GUILD, WEAVERS AS DOCENTS. AND THEY CAN SHOW YOU AROUND. WE HAVE A FULLY STOCKED GIFT SHOP OF PALYMRA MEMORABILIA AND ALL KINDS OF INTERESTING THINGS THERE. WE HAVE THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM WHICH IS AT 132 MARKET STREET. AND THAT IS AN OLD HOTEL BAR WHICH IS FULL OF ALL KINDS OF INTERESTING ARTIFACTS FROM WHALING CAPTAINS TO WINSTON CHURCHILL TO WILLIAM SAMPSON AND JOHN M JONES WHO WAS THE INVENTOR OF THE FIRST PRINTING, PERSONAL PRINTING MACHINE. WHICH IS SIMILAR TO THE TYPEWRITER. WE JUST HAVE THE PHELPS STORE WHICH IS WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW. AND THIS IS THE WILLIAM S. PHELPS GROCERY STORE, IT'S A GENERAL STORE. IT WAS CLOSED IN 1976, THE FAMILY HAD PASSED AWAY, THE LAST LIVING RELATIVE HAD PASSED AWAY AND IT WAS SOLD TO HISTORIC PALMYRA. THE STORE ITSELF WAS CLOSED IN 1940 AND THE THINGS THAT YOU SEE ON THE SHELVES WERE THERE IN 1940 AND PROBABLY BEFORE, THE PHELPS FAMILY OWNED THE STORE FOR WELL OVER 104 YEARS. WILLIAM PHELPS BOUGHT IT IN 1867 AND ABOVE THE STORE, OUTSIDE OF JUST THIS WONDERFUL PLACE WE'RE IN RIGHT NOW, IS A 2 STORY, 5 BEDROOM HOME WHERE THE PHELPS LIVED. AND SYBILL LIVED THERE UNTIL 1976 WHEN SHE PASSED AWAY. AND IT'S JUST AN INCREDIBLE PLACE TO COME AND VISIT YOU WOULD REALLY NEVER SEE ANYTHING LIKE THIS ANYWHERE.