

Historical Highlights

Sand Lake Historical Society

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A Taborton Industry

Winifred Edwards

[based on notes transcribed by Dianne Freeman from an interview with Mrs. Carl (Marie) Beck November 15, 1994]

What is a Fancy? a Mountain Fragile, a Brachen, a Powdery Cloak? a Cinnamon? You guessed it, these are ferns. In the forest and deep woods on Taborton Mountain, ferns were gathered for sale. Wreathes, roping and charcoal were some of the earliest cash crops — and part of the history — of this region. The flora included ferns, trillium, blue-bead lily, Canada Mayflower, Indian cucumber root, starflower and hobblebush. Maples and oaks, birches and beeches contrasted with the conifers. In fact, if you travel up Taborton today, you will still find the ferns, the conifers and the deep woods.

Carl Beck's father, Charlie Beck, started a wholesale business suited to this area. Beck Wholesale Florist later became the Carl Beck Corporation, and in central New York it was the Syracuse Floral Corporation. Carol handled the ferns, flowers and accessories for arranging floral pieces and funeral wreathes.

The ferns had to be kept fresh; they did not keep long. They were put into bundles. Pickers gathered 25 ferns to a bundle, 40 bundles to a box — 1000 ferns, for which a picker was paid 50¢. The ferns were put into the boxes with a layer of hemlock lining the box, then newspaper on top of the hemlock and ferns on top of that. Carl would pick them up and take them to Albany to cold storage.

The gathering of princess pine and laurel was also important to Mr. Beck. (He looked for laurel in Connecticut.) Princess pine was picked in the late fall and stored in great gunny sacks,

[continued next page]



The forest and deep woods yielded still another cash crop - ferns! Ferns were one of the earliest cash crops of the area. To get the very best, top quality ferns, it was necessary to travel deep into the woods. Fern season ran from early August through September. During this time, many pickers would camp in the woods rather than travel back and forth to their homes. Hilton Cottrell tells of some of his family members who lived in a tent on Perigo. It was a wild, beautiful area with hundreds of "fancy" ferns just waiting to be picked. On Fridays after school, Hilton's task was to take groceries to his grandfather and uncle who were "camping in the woods". He usually stayed with them for the week-end, and what fun that was, especially as a child. He laughingly tells about an owl whose presence was welcome indeed. This friendly creature usually perched on the branch of a large tree which partially sheltered the tent. After the lantern was lit at dusk, the owl would hoot from that moment until the lantern was extinguished as darkness settled over the forest. The folks looked upon this owl as a friend in the woods. — from *West of Perigo; Poestenkill Memories*, by Florence M. Hill, Troy, NY, Whitehurst Printing and Binding Company, 1979. Reprinted with permission of the author.

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Suggestions for Participation

I have items that may be suitable for display

I would be able to serve as photographer videographer audio recorder at SLHS activities and meetings.

I would be willing to explore a partnership with the Averill Park High School History Club.

I would assist with field trip plans.

I will help explore available equipment to assist the hearing-impaired at our meetings.

I would be able to tape an oral interview with _____ as my subject and would like to have a workshop to learn interview skills and techniques.

I have pictures / documents / oral history to share with the School History Study Group (other project)

The following is a list of our standing committees and chairs. Would you be willing to participate on one of them?

Finance (Stan Supkis)

Acquisitions

Publications (Bob Lilly)

Membership (Barbara Mohan)

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Ways and Means

Library (Rosemary Supkis)

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Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Bring to the September meeting or mail to SLHS, PO Box 492, West Sand Lake, NY 12196.

The fiscal year of the Society runs from June 1 to May 31. Check your mailing label; have you paid your dues for this year? If not, please check the appropriate box below and include a check payable to *Sand Lake Historical Society*.

renewal

new member!



Town Historian Resigns

After 20 years of devoted service as historian to her home town, Madolyn V. Carpenter resigned on June 26, 1995. "Miss Madolyn," as many have known her, was born and spent her single years on Johnnycake Lane in Averill Park. She has been a faithful member of Sand Lake Baptist Church since 1927, has known most long-time residents and has recorded history many of these years.

Married to C. Maurice Carpenter, she has three sons — David, Robert and James. All the boys were educated in Averill Park schools. Not to be upstaged by her "boys," she became secretary for well-known principal Mrs. Marguerite Clark and held that job for 18 years. Her duties went beyond the usual scope as she and her "boss" provided counsel and assistance to many problems.

The knowledge she possessed of Baptist heritage brought her official designation as church historian on June 12, 1966. Sand Lake Baptist Church now has over 20 loose-leaf binder records of its church activities. These include unforgettable photos of Mrs. Carpenter in colonial costume, along with some fun activities she so enjoyed.

Her efforts as church historian gained the attention of Town Supervisor Sidney Gallant. He sought to expand her historical abilities to the Town of Sand Lake. Her appointment as town historian received Town Board approval on June 26, 1975. No time was wasted with formalities as she assisted in organizing the many programs of the town's Bicentennial celebration of 1976. Collecting, cataloging, storing and writing became a way of life for this amazing woman. If you scan a 1986 inventory of the office, it highlights the production in place at the 10-year mark, with collections of furniture, paintings and artifacts.

Mrs. Carpenter's efforts were acknowledged with a 1976 V.F.W. Award for Citizenship. She continued to document her research efforts and produced *Reviews and Reminiscences — A Brief History of Sand Lake* in 1979. A book, *Little Chair Horton*, gained a National Writing Award. Other awards followed — the DAR American History Award Medal, and a town-wide "Madolyn Carpenter Day," with citations received from many friends, political officials and organizations. All this along with being elected registrar and genealogist of the Fort Crailo Chapter of the DAR.

Realizing that this work required an assistant, Madolyn sought and officially got an associate in January 1985 with the appointment of Elinor Zaki. The combination of these two dedicated residents has given Sand Lake a fine historian's office. The cemetery census and genealogy they compiled jointly has been and long will be studied and researched for its tracing of family roots. Mrs. Zaki also resigned in June 1995.

We all owe our respect and gratitude to these prime examples of superior citizenship. A course has been set. **Who will follow?** — *With respect and admiration, Ross French*

Upcoming Meeting Programs

Meetings are at 8:00 p.m. at the Sand Lake Town Hall, unless otherwise noted.

SEPTEMBER 12: Shirley W. Dunn will speak on *The Mohicans and Their Land 1609-1730*; her book of the same name will be available for purchase at the meeting. **Please note: this meeting will be held at Sand Lake Baptist Church, Rt. 43, Averill Park.**

OCTOBER 10: Randy Bentley will speak and present a slide show on the "snow hole" in Petersburg.

NOVEMBER 14: Kenneth Staley will speak on "Okinawa: Then and Now." He will show slides and exhibit his book of drawings of the island. The book is from World War II; the slides are from a recent visit.

Book and library news

Rosemary Supkis

New books

The Firekeeper, a new book by local author Robert Moss, is set in the Mohawk Valley during the time of the early settlements and the French and Indian War. It centers around Sir William Johnson and the friendly relations he maintained with the native peoples of the Eastern Woodlands. The book is available at the Sand Lake Town Library.

Sand Lake Historical Society Library Collection

Irv Edwards has been the source of encouragement to Averill Park High School reunion chairs to document their reunions on videotape. In addition to the class of 1940's 50th reunion, the Society now has a video from the 50th reunion of the class of 1942. The classes of 1974 and 1979 are preparing videos of their reunions as well. At present, the videos are available for loan from Rosemary Supkis, but plans are being worked out to house the videos with the Society's collection at the Town Library.

Recent additions to the Society's book collection are:

Washington and His Generals in the Revolution
Measured Drawings of Early American Furniture — Osburn

American Samplers — Bolton
The Practical Book of Period Furniture — Eberlein
Furniture Treasury — Nutting
Old Glass; European and American — Moore

All materials in the SLHS Library collection are available to Society members at the Sand Lake Town Library. Simply choose from the Society's bookshelf and present your Library card and Society membership card to the desk clerk. Only Society members may take out Society books.



The Post Rider

*O'er rugged hills, and vallies wide,
He never yet has fail'd to trudge it;
as steady as the flowing tide,
he hands about the Northern Budget.*

The Post Office was established in Troy in 1793 or 1794. Mr. John Woodworth was its first Post Master. In those early days, letters were carried by Newspaper Post Riders. Distribution to distant points was done by Post Riders on an established route. A Post Rider carried letters to *all* locations along the route.

The earliest record we could find of letter delivery to the Sand Lake area was in 1799, by Aaron Oliver, a Post Rider for *The Northern Budget*, one of Troy's early newspapers. His advertisement was carried in the June 18, 1799, issue as follows:

"AARON OLIVER, *Post Rider*, wishes to inform the Publick, that he has extended his Route; and that he now rides thro' the Towns of *Troy, Pittstown, Hoosick, Mapletown, Part of Bennington, and Shaftsbury, Petersburgh, Stephentown, Greenbush and Schodack.*

"All Commands in his Line will be received with Thanks, and executed with Punctuality.

"He returns his sincere Thanks to his former Customers and intends, by unabated Diligence to merit a Continuance of their Favours."

You may note that Sand Lake is not mentioned in the list of towns, because Sand Lake was not established until 1812. The Post Rider traveled through the Sand Lake area en route from Stephentown to Greenbush to Schodack.

Interested in researching local history?

Perhaps you might be interested in doing some research on local history projects. There are many subjects that need investigation, any one of which might strike your fancy. A few subjects are listed here. Maybe you can add others.

† In 1906, Faith Mills in Averill Park installed a steam engine-driven dynamo for lighting its new mill. Was this the first electric lighting in the Town of Sand Lake? Can we trace the beginnings of electric use in Sand Lake? How about the first telephone?

† *Tin Can Alley* is an unusual street name. How did the name come about? Who knows about *Johnnycake Lane?* or *Penny Lane?*

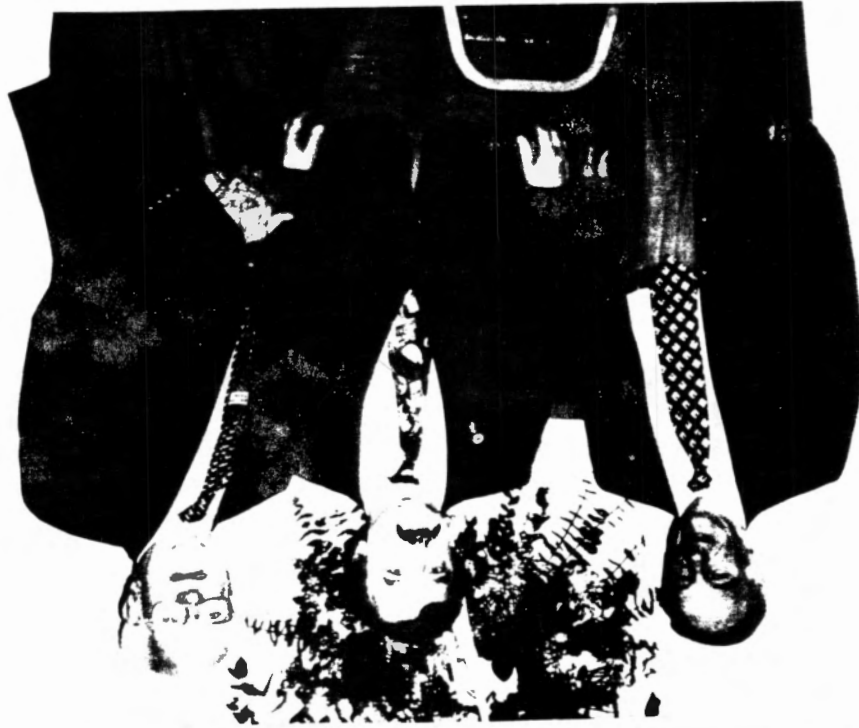
† How many homes in Sand Lake have window glass manufactured at the Glass Factory that was located on Glass Lake?

† A study of the history of Sand Lake's schools is underway. Did you go to one of the district schools? Who were your teachers? Do you have any pictures? Would you like to reminisce about school experiences and add to our oral history records?

† How many local farms sent their produce to the Troy and/or Albany markets?

[Ed. note: the above was adapted from a flyer handed out at the Kiwanis Sand Lake Summerfest this past July. See p. 2.]





Appearing below are the members of your Publications Committee: (l-r) John Allendorph, Andrew Mace and Bob Lilly. Missing from this picture is Rosemary Supkis.

NOTICE: September 12 meeting relocated to Sand Lake Baptist Church (see p. 4).

FORWARDING/ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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Historical Highlights

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