



# Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

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## Sand Lake Heritage Day

The Sand Lake Historical Society is holding its first Sand Lake Heritage Day on April 12 from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the hall corridor at the Town Library. The purpose of Heritage Day is to enable Town residents to share historic pictures, letters, deeds, Bible records, diaries or other documents with the Society, Town Historian and/or school anniversary committee. The historic material will be scanned on site and returned immediately. We will only keep a scanned copy for our records. We will also record any information or stories you have to tell us.

As part of our Heritage Day Celebration we will feature:

- a collection of antique tools;
- a Civil War exhibit of Camp Life featuring two young re-enactors;  
a display in the Library community room celebrating the upcoming 75th Anniversary of the Averill Park Central School District with Judy Long
- a visit to our local heritage book collection with Bob Lilly and Edna Pierce
- a visit to our Town Historian's office with Judy Rowe
- several other interesting items relating to our Town's history.

What do you have to share on these topics as well as so many others? The Rent Wars...Crooked Lake...Glass Lake...Burden Lake...Methodist Farm...The Merry Go Round at Crystal Lake...Brookside Park...Totem Lodge...Cedarhurst...The Glass Factory...District schools.... — *Ginny McGreevy, Committee Member*



Do you remember Brookside Park (shown here in winter, from an early 1900s postcard)?...



...or maybe a bottle of MarBERT Cola, bottled by Sand Lake Springs?...



...or perhaps you spent many a summer's day at Crystal Lake Beach (picture from a 1950s postcard)?

## ?Averill!

Somebody once asked me, "Is Averill Park named after Averill Harriman, the former Governor of New York State?" The answer is of course, "No." (*In fact, the former Governor's first name was spelled Averell. Ed.*) But this question got to me...How did it come about? The Hamlet was formerly called Sand Lake and was located on Sand Lake. But now we have Averill Park on Crystal Lake! How did it happen?

The Averill family and its descendants lived in Sand Lake from its earliest days. Was it named after the family? Where did Park come from? There were also a number of famous early settlers such as Fox, Knowlson and Horton. Why Averill!?

The answer may be found by looking at the Averill's history in the Sand Lake area. Who were they? What did they do?

The Averill family traces their ancestors back to Isaac Averill. "Isaac, the emigrant" who was born in 1685 in Milford Haven, Wales, sailed from England, landed in Massachusetts Bay and settled in Topesfield, Massachusetts. Later he moved to Preston, Connecticut and. sometime before 1748. settled in the Town of Kent, now Washington in Montgomery County.

Two generations later, on June 25, 1750, a second Isaac Averill was born in Milford, Conn.. This Isaac Averill studied medicine, became a doctor and served as a surgeon in the Revolutionary War. He married Hanna Miles, on Jan. 25, 1775. They had 12 children. Among their children were two sons, William Franklin and James Gill, who are part of our story as they were the first Averills in Sand Lake. Just when and how they came to Sand Lake is not clear, but they left their mark.

As far as can be determined, William F. Averill was the first Averill to live in the area that became the Town of Sand Lake. He was born in Columbia County on March 3, 1790. Some time in the early 1800s, he came to Sand Lake and had a farm on Teal Road. In 1829 he built and was proprietor of a stage coach house called the Phoenix Hotel on the Troy Sand Lake Turnpike. The hotel was located diagonally across from the Glass Lake Inn, not far from the Glass Factory. It was not uncommon to see 20-30 teams of horses tied up in the yard. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1845.

William Averill was active in town government. He was Town Clerk in 1825, was elected Supervisor of the Town of Sand Lake in 1827 and later served as a Justice of the Peace. William Franklin died September 2, 1839.

The second brother, James Gill Averill, was born in Flatbush, New York, on May 28, 1804. Some time later, he moved to Sand Lake and in 1827 married Clarissa

Sliter, the daughter of Clement Sliter, an early resident of Sand Lake. They had six children, two of whom -- Horatio F. and James K. -- are the main characters in the naming of Averill Park.

James Gill Averill moved to Sand Lake in 1830. Records indicate that he acquired the John Stephens store in Sand Lake. The store was remodeled into a tavern in 1830 and in the 1880s was enlarged as the Crist Crape's Central Hotel. Records also say that Clement Sliter ran the tavern that became the Crape's Hotel. Since William married Sliter's daughter, Clarissa, there has to be a connection. Did he marry the boss's daughter?

James Gill Averill is best remembered as leading the Memorial Day Parade on his horse, "Moscow," a Civil War horse that is buried with him in the Sand Lake Union Cemetery. (*SEE Historical Highlights, Volume 28, #2, Winter 2001-02*) James Gill lived until 1881 and saw the name of the Town changed to Averill.

Two of the sons of James Gill Averill and Clarissa Sluyter (Sliter), his wife, were born in the Town of Sand Lake. They led interesting lives and became prominent lawyers in New York City, as well as having homes in Sand Lake.

**Horatio F. Averill**, the oldest son of James Gill Averill, was born in Sand Lake in 1834. He received his early education at the local Sand Lake Academy, At the age of 15 he left school and



was employed in Troy at the law offices of David Seymour, who was a cousin of Governor Seymour. Horatio read law in Troy for six years. He was admitted to the Bar in 1855, then moved to New York City and worked in the office of Clark & Rapals.

During his stay in New York City, he often came back to Sand Lake. On one of his visits he became involved in a run-away slave episode that is famous in Troy's history. In 1859 Charles Nalle, a slave, ran away from his owner in Virginia and ended up working at the steam saw mill in the mountains of Sand Lake. Horatio Averill communicated with Nalle's owners in Virginia

and arranged to have him arrested. In 1860, Nalle left Sand Lake and was employed as a coachman by Uri Gilbert on 2nd Ave in Troy. In April, Averill, as counsel with the agent of Nalle's owners, had Nalle arrested and jailed. The story caused a great outpouring of sympathy by the citizens of Troy. A great crowd gathered before the United States Marshal's office. When Nalle was brought out to appear before Judge Gold, he was rescued by the crowd, taken across the river and escaped. It is reported that Averill, upon seeing the spirit of the crowd, went to the livery stable, rented a rig and left Troy for Sand Lake as rapidly as possible. He was never afterwards welcomed in Troy.

In 1864, Horatio moved to West Virginia and founded the Averill Coal & Oil Co., which was a development of some 5000 acres of coal and oil lands in the great Kanawha River in Putman County, West Virginia. Among his associates were his cousin, William Averill and Henry J. Raymond of *The New York Times*. Horatio's obituary credits him as founding Raymond City, West Virginia. In 1867, Horatio Averill sold his interest in the Averill Coal & Oil Co. and returned to New York City. He was an eminent counselor of law and was admitted to practice in the Circuit and District Courts of New York State and the Supreme Court of the United States. Although living in New York he returned regularly to Sand Lake and lived at his Sand Lake home, Sunset Lodge, on Burden Lake Road.



**James K. Averill**, Horatio's younger brother, was born in Sand Lake on October 12, 1846. He was a student at Yale in 1865, but temporary illness and strained finances caused him to drop out. He spent a year as a teacher in

Berlin, NY before entering Columbia Law School. James Averill graduated in 1869 and was admitted to the bar in Troy the same year. Between 1869 and 1873 he practiced law in New York City with his brother, Horatio. He then practiced alone in New York City for 4 years before he returned to Troy. From 1877 to 1883 he was in partnership with Albert Wooster, then district attorney of Rensselaer County. He worked in Troy and had his home in Sand Lake.

The development of Averill Park that led to its present name all began in the 1870s. It can only be guessed when Horatio Averill first had the idea of developing the land around the Hamlet of Sand Lake. But in the late 1860s, he was involved in a new railroad project that proposed a steam railroad be constructed from Albany and Troy, running directly through Sand Lake Village to the Hoosick Tunnel and on to Boston. The Hoosick Tunnel was then under construction, and his hope was to capitalize on this. A stock certificate, dated March 1870 for the Albany, Sand Lake and Stephentown Railway Company for two shares, is made out to Eber W. Carmichael, and is signed by two prominent Sand Lake residents, Albert R Fox , President, and Horatio F Averill, Secretary. The steam railroad was never built, but an electric trolley line was built in 1895.

Horatio Averill began purchasing farms and large plots of land in the vicinity of Sand Lake. In 1874, he commissioned Burton Thomas to lay out a subdivision on a 75 acre plot at the south end of the village. The subdivision was named "Interlachen Park." This parcel was located on today's Burden Lake Road and Prospect Avenue.

In 1875, William F. Scram, head of the Scram Collegiate Institute, died and this famous local school



closed. Horatio Averill purchased the Institute and it was renovated into the "**Averill Park Hotel**," which became a well-known summer resort located near a large grove with boats and fishing on Sand Lake. Daily stagecoach service was available from Troy to the Hotel. The Hotel was also the office for the Troy Sand Lake Telephone Co. and had a connection to the A.P. Knowlson Drug Store in Troy.

With this increase of activity, the need of a post office at Sand Lake grew. A search of the United States postal archives found that an application for a new post office to be named Sand Lake Mills at Rensselaer County was made, but no copy of the application was discovered. A post office Site Location Form was on record and a copy contained the following information. The proposed office to be called Sand Lake Mills, is crossed out and the name "Averill" substituted. It would be located on postal route 6224, which extended from Troy to West Stephentown. This route was operated by Henry D. Sharpe. The form was signed and returned by Albert Horton, proposed Postmaster, and certified by H. Lester, Postmaster of Sand Lake, on March 9, 1880.



## 75th Anniversary Celebration: Averill Park Central School 1929-2004

Judy Long, task force chairperson, has announced plans for the upcoming 75th anniversary celebration. Festivities will begin in September 2003 and continue with an event each month through June 2004. Memorabilia is being collected for display in the showcases at the High School during the scheduled events, and each month visitors will be able to take a trip down memory lane with classmates and friends.

The focus of monthly events includes faculty members, sports, veterans, music (plays), art, proms, women's limitations and rights. A video, comprised of collected photos, memorabilia and scheduled anniversary activities, will be presented and available for purchase.

We ask your help to complete this historical documentary of the first 75 years of the Averill Park Central School. Documents and pictures from the 1930s and 1940s are especially needed. Old 8mm movies of the 1950s would also be appreciated, as would multi-generational family pictures of students who attended the school. Materials for the displays can be copied and returned to the owners on the spot at Sand Lake Historical Society Heritage Day on April 12 (*SEE* page 1), or donated if desired.

Anyone having items relating to the school district is urged to go to Heritage Day, or to contact Judy Long either by going to the Averill Park High School main office from 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday-Friday or by calling Judy at 674-7024. — *Grace Briscoe, Task Force member*

### Bells revisited

In the last issue, under the Saint Henry's bell, was the question "Does anyone know the reference of the inscription *Franciscoi, Albanienski* that was on the 1881 Meneely bell? One of our members, Jonathan Clement, came up with the possible answer. The Right Rev. Francis McNeirny was Bishop of the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese at that time.

We also received the following letter via our web site:

*I just happened upon your website and thoroughly enjoyed "touring" the bells. The bells are certainly a treasure!*

*I thought you might like to know that Edward L. Kehn (1870-1943), my great-uncle and a foreman and installer for the Meneely Bell Foundry in Troy, owned property on Little Bowman Pond in Taborton in the early 1900s (c.1915 I believe). It was he who kept the ledger of Meneely bell installations, which is now part of*

It would appear that it must have been Albert Horton who changed the name. With the paperwork completed, a new Post Office was established, named the AVERILL Post Office and was dedicated May 31, 1880, with Frank Pettit as the first Postmaster. (What happened to Albert Horton?)

With the activity connected with the Interlachen Park subdivision and the promotion of the Averill Park Hotel, a new application was made and the name of the Post Office was changed to "AVERILL PARK" in 1882. So it appears that the post office and the village was named after Horatio F. Averill, as a result of his efforts to develop the area.

Horatio Averill had accumulated about 479 acres of land surrounding Sand Lake at an expenditure of \$150,000. He died at his residence, 45 East 76th Street, New York City, on May 14, 1887, and was buried in the Sand Lake Union Cemetery. After his death, the mortgages on these lands were foreclosed. His brother, James K. Averill, took over the management of the lands and proposed to convey them to a land improvement company with a capital of \$100,000. He offered creditors the opportunity to invest in the Averill Park Land Improvement Company, to share in its benefits and to obtain payment of their claim, which otherwise would be worthless. The stock was almost certain to be worth more than its par value.

To induce these creditors to invest in the Land Company, James Averill pointed out that the survey for the Troy & New England Railway was completed and



Troy and New England Railroad Station, Averill Park, N. Y.

road work would begin within the next few months. Its completion would increase the value of their holdings. James Averill was also the principal backer of the Troy & New England Railway, which was completed as far as Averill Park in 1895.

With James Averill's continued interest, The Averill Park Land Improvement Company was incorporated in 1896. James was the principal shareholder along with a number of Troy businessmen. James K Averill died in 1900. The Land Company continued operating into the 1900s but was in continuous financial trouble. It is sad that James's wife, Rebecca Jane Davis Averill, spent her final years paying off the family debts. — *Bob Lilly*

*an exhibit at the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway and also the online database.*

*In 1937 he sold the property to his brother William Kehn, my grandfather, who built the stone house which stands just past Zion's Church Hall. The building next to the stone house was originally a tool shed on the property but was obviously improved upon over the years. It had been owned by Kehn family members until quite recently. Just a little bit of trivia that I thought you might enjoy.... — Lynn Carey Grice*

## **Note from the President**

What joy it gives to look forward to the forthcoming activities featured in our Historical Highlights. I hope to see you at the Heritage Day on April 12. We also look forward to the erection of our Glass Lake / Glass factory historical sign, displaying the Sand Lake Springs water cooler in its new glass case and being able to display the glass cane from Lillian Nash, which was repaired by Heidi Miksch. Heidi will also be our annual meeting program speaker.

You all were so helpful with our Sand Lake book, and I know you'll be just as generous in helping with the 75th Anniversary of Averill Park School. Won't it be fun to reminisce and overhear or even exclaim, "I didn't know that!"

At last month's Trustees Meeting, Joan Fuess shared the latest progress on the Center for the Arts. And what progress they are making!! What opportunities still exist for volunteering and financial assistance!!! Your contribution is needed and is welcomed. Don't be bashful.

So many of our members are involved in these efforts. Where can your gifts of service be? — *Mary French, President*

## **SLHS members honored by Fort Crailo DAR**

At the Christmas party of the Fort Crailo Chapter of DAR, Judy Rowe was presented with a corsage and flower arrangement as well as a Friendship Quilt Scarf purchased from the NSDAR Museum shop in Washington. But the highlight was the framed certificate, which read:

*Certificate of Award presented to Gertrude (Judy) Spencer Rowe for Outstanding Chapter Advisor in all areas, most knowledgeable of chapter organization and protocol, responsible for bringing more than 100 members into the DAR, most renowned genealogist in several states, acknowledged expert on the history of the smuggling of slaves north, glass factory historian, local historian and very active in community service. Presented by Fort Crailo Chapter NSDAR this 14th day of December 2002.*

Not mentioned in the award was the New York State One Hundredth Anniversary Commemorative Plate, which Judy designed.

Judy has also received the highest award that can be presented to a woman, by the Saratoga Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution in 1997 for service in history, and the Daughters of Liberty Medal in 1999 for work in history and genealogy.

John Kacharian was presented the Chapter Award by the Fort Crailo DAR on March 8, 2003. John's noted accomplishments include:

- Historian of the Watervliet Arsenal
- Author of many articles and two books on the Arsenal's military history
- Noted authority on flag protocol and the history of the American flag
- Member of Troy's annual Flag Day Parade Committee
- Head of the judges for the annual American History contest. In this capacity, John worked closely with all the chairmen and hundreds of school children who submitted history essays, which John carefully read.

The members and friends of the Sand Lake Historical Society are so proud of these two worthy award winners and add our hearty congratulations to them.

## **Nominating Committee**

The Nominating committee of Linda Ormsby, Lena Barnum and Annamae Hebert present the following slate of trustees to be voted on at the May 13th Annual Meeting. This will bring the total number on the Board of Trustees to 15: Mary French, (2006; second term); Michael St. Germain (2006; second term); Annamae Hebert (2006); Ronald Berti (2006); and Barbara Nue (2006).

## **Underground Railroad Exhibit Center moves to Troy**

The Historical Society for the Preservation of the Underground Railroad is pleased to announce it has moved its Exhibit Center from Glens Falls to 225 River Street, Troy. To celebrate our new location, the Society will have a reception and silent auction on Thursday, May 1, from 6:30-9:30p.m. The winning bid will be announced at 7:30 p.m. The auction will feature two oil paintings by artist Irena Fleming. One is a portrait of Harriet Tubman, and the other is the first and only artist's rendition of the Rescue of Charles Nalle by Harriet Tubman. The winning bidder(s) will donate the painting(s) to the Society's Exhibit Center and will be honored with a small plaque.

For more information, see the Society's web page at <<http://www.nyhistory.com/spurr>>. You may also place a bid by calling the Society at 1-888-994-SPUR.

## Annual Dinner/Meeting May 13

The Sand Lake Historical Society annual meeting will be held at the Averill Park and Sand Lake Fire House on Tuesday, May 13. Following a social hour from 6:00-7:00 p.m., a roast beef dinner with potato, vegetable, tossed salad, rolls, beverage and dessert will be served. Cost of the dinner is \$15.00. **Please return the form below by May 1, 2003.**

Program for the evening will be Heidi Miksch, conservator at the Collections Care Center for New York State Bureau of Historic Sites at Peebles Island Resource Center. She will present a before-and-after slide presentation of the challenges done in the glass, ceramics and metal work of the Decorative Arts Conservator.

The numbers after your name on this issue of *Historical Highlights* are your membership date. Dues are for the year June 1- May 31. If the numbers are 02-03, you're due, and we thank you for renewing your membership. We look forward to having a fully up-to-date membership list and appreciate any persons who have not renewed completing the form below when you send your dues.



### Sand Lake Historical Society

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Dinners (\$15.00 each) \_\_\_\_\_ Dinner Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership: Join / Renew

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\$5 per individual \_\_\_\_\_ \$8 per family \_\_\_\_\_

**Grand Total enclosed:** .....

Please make checks payable to *Sand Lake Historical Society*. Mail to: Sand Lake Historical Society, Post Office Box 492, West Sand Lake, New York 12196



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