



Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 32, Number 3

Spring 2006

From the president

Upcoming Meetings -- Be sure to mark your calendars and read more in this issue about our April 8 meeting with Len Tantillo and our Annual Meeting on May 9 at the Lakeview with Bob Harris and Diane DeBlois. On September 12, Lorraine Dickinson will share with us their restoration efforts for the Towne Tavern in the hamlet of Sand Lake, which at one time was Bart Warren's blacksmith shop. And the Saturday before that we've scheduled another of our popular Antiques Appraisal Days, September 9, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. at Sand Lake Town Hall.

Cemetery Workshop -- On Friday, May 12, the Rensselaer County Historical Society is sponsoring a workshop, "Stone Strategies: Documentation & Conservation of Historic Cemeteries," at Trinity Episcopal Church in Lansingburgh with its historic graveyard as a learning laboratory. Saturday, May 13, will be a variety of activities and the history in a number of well-known and lesser-known cemeteries in the towns of the county. It is our hope several will attend, and a follow-up initiative will become a reality to determine what can be done to preserve our cemeteries. (See Judy Rowe's article "Cemetery History and Restoration of Veterans' & Civilians' Gravestones" on page 2.)

Good Job! Mike St. Germain -- At the March 15 Town Board meeting, Mike St. Germain was recognized for the glass case he designed and built for the Sand Lake Springs water cooler, which is to your left as you enter the Town Hall foyer. A great job, Mike!! And we say thank you for the Town's interest in displaying the artifacts from the Historian's and Society's collections for the persons who visit.

Library -- Nancy Davis is the librarian for the Historical Society's books, reference collection and vertical file in the Town Library. She reminds us that SLHS members may borrow books and anyone may use the reference materials and books *in the library*. Town Historian Judy Rowe also plans to make materials from her office available in this section. Check out what's there.

Nominating Committee -- Nominating committee members Nancy Davis, Mary French and Annamae Hebert present the following persons for trustees to be elected at our May 9 Annual Meeting: Annamae Hebert -- second term; Edith Gundrum, Nancy W. Davis and Gary Meislin -- first term. — *Mary French*

April program to feature artist Len Tantillo

Aware of the educational value and artistic importance of an evening featuring internationally acclaimed historical artist Len Tantillo, the Sand Lake Town Board agreed to assist with our April program. The event will be held at 7:30pm on Saturday, April 8, at the Algonquin Middle School, junction of Routes 66 & 351 in Averill Park. Admission is \$5 per person. This event is sponsored in part by the Town of Sand Lake.

Len Tantillo's style of painting is realism. He was inspired as a young artist by the masters of the Hudson River School. He is known for his historically accurate works celebrating the history of New York State, the Capital region and the Hudson Valley. He is currently painting a portrait of the 1750 Dutch Colonial home built by Daniel Winne in Selkirk. The painting was commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum and will hang in the American Wing, with an exhibit containing rebuilt portions of the original Winne House. The Tantillo family owns and operates a full-service gallery in Albany. The web site is www.tantilogallery.com.

Mr. Tantillo will give an audiovisual presentation and insight into 17th, 18th, and 19th century history in this region. His historical research is meticulous, and he is a delightful storyteller. This program will be fascinating to anyone, of any age, interested in history and/or fine art.

Advance reservations are strongly encouraged. Admission checks should be noted "*Tantillo*," made payable and sent to SLHS, Box 492, West Sand Lake, NY 12196. The evening will also include refreshments and the raffle of a signed, framed, limited-edition Tantillo print. The lucky winner could be you!

Members, please find your raffle tickets (in this issue) to purchase and to sell. Be sure all tickets are turned in for the drawing on April 8. Thanks for your assistance.

Cemetery History and Restoration of Veterans' and Civilians' Gravestones

Most of the early veterans and their families from the towns of Poestenkill and Sand Lake have been researched. The search contains their service, in what state/country they fought, their company and any other records that can be found on them. It also includes Daughters of the American Revolution and Sons of the American Revolution records and if possible those in the Federal archives. We would also like to be in contact with any family members we can find from the original search.

During this search I noticed some stones were down or in bad shape. The table-top stone of Revolutionary War veteran Major Frothingham came from the Boston area. These table-top stones are rare in this area. One is down and the Frothingham stone needs to be stabilized.

Some stones are unreadable. I have been involved in a project to put new government markers on the graves of Revolutionary War veterans or others needing a stone. The stone of any veteran from any war that is missing or broken can be replaced by the Federal government. Also, Saratoga National Cemetery has a memorial garden for stones of veterans whose graves cannot be located. There they will erect a stone in the veteran's memory.

I have been attending conferences on cemeteries that teach measures to replace stones and to stop further deterioration of present stones. One thing learned was to stabilize or repair standing stones in the worst condition to prevent them from breaking if they do fall and then take care of the broken stones.

I have asked for a grant to start redoing veteran or any other stones in Sand Lake Union Cemetery. Also many veterans have been found from the Lutheran Cemetery on Parker Road in West Sand Lake, which was destroyed.

A cemetery is a town's history in stone. We are forming a committee to repair or replace broken stones in Sand Lake Union Cemetery. We invite everyone who wishes to participate to contact Judy Rowe, Town Historian, or SLHS members Mary French and/or Grace Briscoe. — *Judy Rowe*

Annual Dinner/Meeting May 9th

The Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 9, at the Lakeview on Crystal Lake. Following a social time from 6:30-7:00 p.m., we'll enjoy a family-style dinner of fresh fruit cup, roast beef and turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, dressing, glazed carrots and green beans, with apple/cranberry crisp and ice cream for dessert.

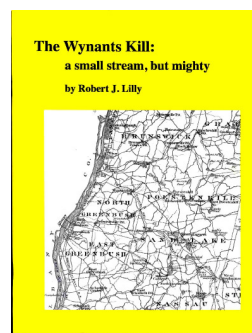
Program for the evening will be Bob Harris and Diane DeBlois presenting "Reinvention of Sand Lake as Daughter of the 20th Century: Industry and Tourism."

Cost of the dinner is \$16.00. *Please return the form elsewhere in this issue by May 1.*

Dues are due ☺

The number after your name on this issue of *Historical Highlights* is your membership date. Dues are for the year June 1- May 31. If the number is 2006 you're due soon, and we thank you for renewing your membership on the form below. We look forward to having a fully up-to-date membership list. Not renewing will mean your subscription to *Historical Highlights* will stop due to the high cost of mailing.

The Wynants Kill: a small stream but mighty



The Wynants Kill's history is a wonderful reality. *The Wynants Kill: a small stream but mighty* by Robert J. Lilly and edited by Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris Jr. is a classic reference for the Wynants Kill's water and mill activity beginning at Crooked Lake and ending at the Hudson River in Troy from 1646 into the 20th Century. It is available for \$15.00 plus \$1.20 tax from the Sand Lake Historical Society plus \$1.50 for mailing each copy. Call Mary French 674-5710 or send requests to the SLHS address. Bob has made a contribution of half the sale price to the Society. Thank you, Bob, for your generosity. And Congratulations!! Your years of work are completed and your dream is fulfilled. We are all the richer for your tireless efforts.



This sign, provided by the Sand Lake Historical Society as part of our ongoing program to identify historic sites in our town, will be placed in front of Faith Mills this spring.

My memories of the operation of Faith Mills – Part 2

By Elwin Richard (Dick) Castle

(We resume and finish Dick a.k.a. “Rich” Castle’s memories of Faith Mills. Thank you, Rich, for giving us such a vivid picture of happenings at Faith Mills.)



I can remember the Mill’s owner William D. Mahony, who lived in the mansion at the top of the hill, as a very caring individual who always wore a hat. A very distinguished gentleman, he had a chauffeur whose name was Jerry. All the kids just loved Jerry as he gave us candy and always kidded around with us.

William Mahony, above, with Peter McCarthy founded Faith Knitting Company in 1897. He was president of the company and also president of the Board of Education and instrumental in forming the Averill Park Central School District.

I remember Mr. Arthur Butler, who I believe was vice-president of the Mill until Mr. Mahony passed away and then became president. A quiet man who lived on Orient Avenue. A man that cared about his employees and would help in any way if you had asked. My Dad and I also worked for Mr. and Mrs. Butler at their home doing odd jobs. They were both special people.

If you had worked in the Mill chances are that your mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, nephew, niece, grandmother, grandfather or cousin all worked there at one time or still worked there with you. Nearly every member of my family worked in the Mill. My Dad fired the boiler there for nearly 40 years. I can still hear the steam whistle blow at noon and at 6:00 p.m. Living nearby, I remember washing my car and then my Dad would be stoking the boiler and the black soot would start falling and my car would be all black specks. Needless to say I wasn’t a happy camper, and the people that just hung their laundry out to dry weren’t, either!

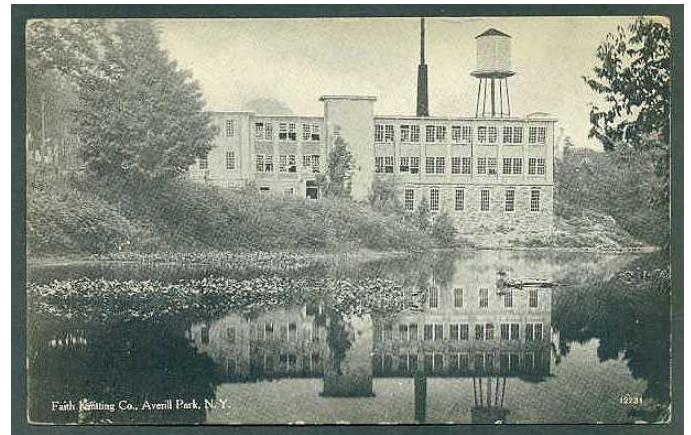
Below: Faith Mills picnic at Glass Lake, 1954.



People that worked in the Mill were all great people. As I said a lot of them were related and were all there doing the same thing – working to raise their families and just trying to make a living.

My dad, Leroy K. Castle, Sr., also called “Gip” or “Pop,” would have to make his rounds through the Mill and then go to the lower mill. There were different keys throughout the Mill where he would go and would have a clock strapped on his shoulder, and I believe about every three hours he would punch his clock with a key located at different stations throughout the upper and lower mills to show that he checked each section for fire, intruders, etc. We would play in the Mill and knew about when he was going to come around and we would hide until he went by. We were very careful not to touch the machines or do any harm to anything, as we knew the importance of things staying the way they were left, (except for a few wax rings around Halloween).

The boiler was fired by hard coal. The mill trucks would go to Troy to the train yards off First Street and would get loads of coal that came in by train and would dump them in the coal bin, which was located just outside the door that now is the entrance to Signature Stones. There was a small alleyway about 6 feet wide and about 20 feet long between the entrance and the coal bin. As the trucks pulled in the Mill, they would come in the driveway and would first pass the turbine room on



the right, then the steam room, then by the boiler room in the cellar on the right and the smoke stack on the left and then to the coal bin on the right. This part of the Mill has been torn down, but, looking at the entrance to Signature Stones, about 6 feet out is where these rooms were located. The 20-foot alleyway led to the boiler room.

If you drive past the entrance to Signature Stones today you can see the stances for the water tower and next to that was the garage for the Mill trucks on the left. On the right is a work shed; down over the hill you can still see the pump house that pumped water to the Mill from the creek behind the Mill. At one time there were a couple of machines that were run by water power, I believe the washing machines.

Many people fished that creek and caught some great bullheads, walleyes, pickerel, bass and all kinds of fish. Once in a while they would lower the water level, and I remember catching some big fish by hand.

After the trolleys stopped, many people who didn't live in the community would take the United Traction bus (now CDTA) out from Troy. It ran nearly every hour on the hour as many people rode it to Crystal Lake and Glass Lake to swim and to the Dance Hall and Merry-go-round at Crystal Lake. I believe that last bus out was 11:00 p.m. The bus turned around at Gifford's Market in Glass Lake. The United Traction Company paid to have the merry-go-round moved from Rensselaer to Crystal Lake to draw more people to take buses to the Crystal Lake area. The bus service was discontinued also maybe in the 60s.

I worked in the Mill in 1957 and believe my starting pay was around \$1.59 per hour. I worked in nearly all departments, wherever I was needed, for about 5 years.



Above: Mill housing along Burden Lake Road

Most people that worked in the Mill shopped locally in the village at Eastman's Variety Store on the corner of Burden Lake Road and (now) Route 43; behind Eastman's was the Grand Union store. On the opposite corner was Bunger's store, which became Zane's Market; then Barnum's News Room (great penny candy); then the A&P. Across from that was the Lakeview Hotel and bowling alley.

Below: Averill Park "Main Street" scene from 1950.



Then Silberg's Park Pharmacy where Jerry Lewis worked as a soda jerk (great homemade ice cream).** Then the post office on the corner of Route 43 and Orient Avenue next to the Pharmacy. Other businesses were Harry O'Donnell's Liquor Store, Henry Karl's taxi, Larkin's Funeral Home on Crystal Lake Road; Dreis's Hardware (where Legenbauer Gas & Oil) is today; Garstang's Garage, Marty Butler's Service Station, Craver's Barber Shop behind Bunger's and Bruno's Barber Shop behind the Variety Store, Heffner's Bar next to Legenbauer's. Back in the Mill days, the village of Averill Park thrived well.

I can remember Joe Warren would sell life insurance at the Mill. He would come once a week and collect I believe 25 cents a week back in the 1940s & 1950s. He would walk through the Mill to each customer and collect.

At one time during the War, the Mill made wool underwear and overcoat material for the U.S. government. The long underwear had button panels that opened in the back. I wore them on a few occasions and remember, Boy, how they would itch!!

Many knitting machines were placed under the main office on the hill for their government contracts and much of the overcoat material was made there.

Back in those days there were armed guards at each entrance to the Mill while they had government contracts. The bulk of this product was Thermal Knit, a soft comfortable material that came in all colors: white, pink, red, black and I believe others that I forgot.

My young days of growing up around the Faith Mills holds a special place in my heart. My Dad had to work hard to raise his family on little money, but I was able to be with him when he was home and also spent a lot of time with him when he worked. The Mill produced warm clothing and warm, friendly people. I will never forget my experience of growing up in and around Faith Mills – an experience I will take with me when I go.



H. Irving Moore and the other Faith Mills employees were each given an Army-Navy Production Award certificate along with an E Award pin in recognition of their part in the war effort.

The Mill formed a union and was there for a long time. When textile work began moving South, the union workers voted to go on strike. The meeting was held at the Sgt. Walter Adams Post. The Mill owners said that if the workers went on strike they would close the Mill. The workers didn't believe that and voted to strike.

I can still see the sign on the door. It said this Mill will be closed as of I believe maybe July. A sad, sad, day for Averill Park. Little by little, the machines were shipped out and the Mill closed. My Dad worked for about another 6 months to a year and then Faith Knitting Mills was gone, I believe July 1962. Shortly after that, a company from Seneca Falls, operated part of the Mill, then they closed and sold the Mill to the Lally Knitting Mills owned by Mr. Kenneth Lally, who was a well-known contributor to RPI. Mr. Lally operated part of it for a short time, and then I believe it was sold to Ebel Box Company and then to someone who sold auto parts and now Signature Stones.

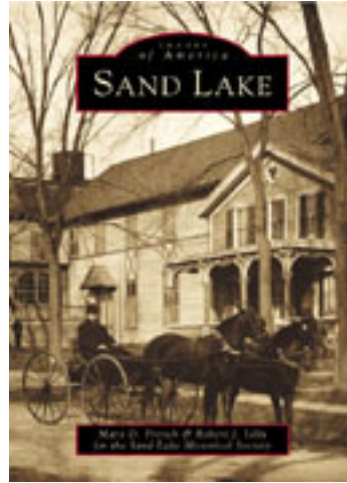
I am so pleased that I was asked to write about the Mill as it brought back a lot of fond memories that I will cherish forever. After speaking with Mr. Metzger, the owner of the Mill at present, he has plans for the Mill property. Hopefully many businesses will continue to make good use of it, and Faith Mills will continue to stand tall and always be a big part of the community for our younger generations to enjoy.

****Editor's note: There is a question whether Jerry Lewis worked at Silberg's Pharmacy when it was located at the Variety Store location or at the location where Yamaha Riders for Life is now located.**

Images of America: Sand Lake five years later

Five years ago in Historical Highlights, we announced that *Images of America: Sand Lake* had met its December 15, 2000, deadline.

"A special thank-you goes to Barbara Mohan, who was a super proofreader and even brought her printer to the unofficial editorial office at the French's home to facilitate printing the final copy. Thank you, Barbara!



"Next, a great Marketing and Sales Committee of Linda Ormsby, Joan Fuess, John Allendorph, Marion Hacker, Bea Danks and *ex officio* Mary and Ross French and Bob Lilly planned the strategy for pre-sales of the book. "...In spite of an iffy evening weather-wise, 186 persons came to the Preview Slide Show on March 13th at Algonquin

Middle School...Pianist Irving Sewell played the *Crooked Lake Waltz*, written in 1885, and brought it back to life again. Sixty books were sold, and 15 persons became members of the Society...."

SLHS on the Web

Just a reminder that we're on the Internet at:
<<http://members.aol.com/sandlakehistory/>>

Sand Lake Historical Society

[Upcoming Meetings and Events](#) | [About us](#) | [Links](#) | [Contact us](#)

Historical Highlights (newletter) -- excerpts include "The Bells of Sand Lake," "Town of Sand Lake Schools Prior to 1920," "Clifford Hastings brings electricity to Sand Lake," "Tremont Calendars" and many others

The Sand Lake Historical Society is a local history society formed in 1974 in anticipation of the Bicentennial Year, 1976. It was granted an absolute charter by the New York State Board of Regents in 1979. The mission of the Sand Lake Historical Society is to educate and promote preservation and conservation of the history and culture of the Town of Sand Lake and the surrounding area.

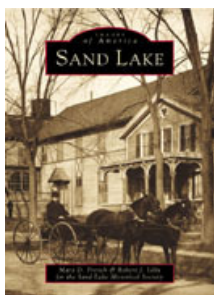
The Sand Lake Historical Society's course of action is to be involved in the community, thereby promoting the appreciation of the area's unique place in Remsen County and New York State history. Educational community projects that the Society has sponsored include

- Memorial Awards given annually to two outstanding graduates of Averill Park High School excelling in history
- Historic house plaques
- Historical markers
- Local historic house tours
- Assistance in house dating and genealogical studies
- Promotion of [publications](#) relative to the Town of Sand Lake and surrounding areas

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
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West Sand Lake, New York 12196

<http://members.aol.com/sandlakehistory/>

E-mail: sandlakehistory@aol.com



Historical Highlights
Mary French, Editor
Andrew Mace, Publisher





Sand Lake Historical Society

Membership Application

Annual Dinner/Meeting

Name _____

Number of Dinners (\$16.00 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

Sand Lake Historical Society

RAFFLE TICKET - \$5.00

LEN TANTILLO SIGNED FRAMED LIMITED EDITION
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Drawing April 8, 2006, at Len Tantillo program at Algonquin Middle School

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