



# Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

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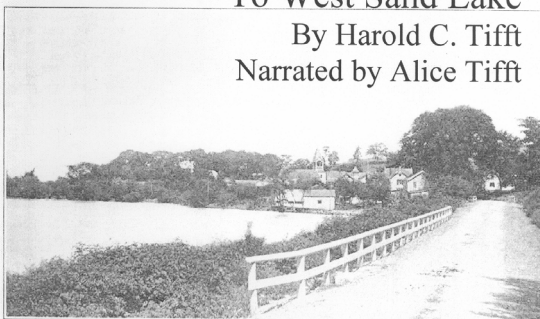
## Upcoming Programs

- **April 10:** Dr. Scott Christianson, award winning author, reporter, teacher and human rights activist will present "Sketches of the Underground Railroad in Sand Lake before the Civil War." Since 1991 he has researched Charles Nalle's life as a runaway slave who hid out in Sand Lake.
- **May 8:** Our Annual meeting will be a family-style dinner at the Lakeview on Crystal Lake with fruit cup, turkey, roast beef, mashed potatoes, dressing and gravy, glazed carrots, green beans, apple/cranberry crisp, and beverage. Social time begins at 6:30 p.m. and dinner is at 7:00 p.m. Program for the evening is Christopher Kilkenny, project director for Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc. He will speak on excavations at the State University Construction Fund Archeological Site in downtown Albany during the summer of 1999, which revealed the 1750s stockade, two 300-foot bulkheads that represent the city's earliest waterfront expansions in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a variety of 19<sup>th</sup>-century structures. Cost is \$15.50. *Please return the form elsewhere in this issue by May 1. For questions, contact Nancy W. Davis 674-2742.*
- **June 12:** there will visit to Hildene. A tour of the home will be in the morning, lunch on the patio and a tour of the gardens in the afternoon. This will be in conjunction with OASIS of University of Albany. Cost of bus, lunch and tour will be \$60.00. Watch the Advertiser for details of time and place of bus pickup and reservation information. And you will be back in time to attend the Winds and Strings concert that evening.
- **June 19:** will be a program meeting with Dan Holser giving the history of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and speaker to be announced giving the history of the American Legion Sgt. Walter Adams Post Unit 1021 in the Town of Sand Lake.

## A Journey by Postcard

### From Crooked Lake To West Sand Lake

By Harold C. Tift  
Narrated by Alice Tift



GLASS LAKE, SAND LAKE, RENSSELAER COUNTY, N. Y.

A Journey by Postcard - From Crooked Lake to West Sand Lake

Digital Presentation Courtesy of  
Sand Lake Historical Society 2006



## A Journey by Post Card...

**From Cooked Lake to West Sand Lake** — This is a series of 121 postcards with accompanying script by first town historian Harold Tift and has been narrated by his wife Alice Tift. DVD and/or VHS programs are available through the Sand Lake Historical Society for \$18.00 with postage \$1.75 for each copy.

The following note has been included in the DVD case:

*A Word about DVD's. Due to the wide disparity in the formatting of non-commercial DVD's, newer technology DVD players (2 years and newer) will be more likely to play discs like these. If you have issues playing one of these discs on your DVD player, there are VHS tapes available. Contact Mary French 518- 674-5710 for an exchange. We hope you enjoy this presentation of "A Journey by Postcard - From Crooked Lake to West Sand Lake."*

## Sand Lake Revisited

Thank you to everyone who has helped in so many ways as we have been working on the photos and text for our new book on the Town of Sand Lake. Our deadline is May 15<sup>th</sup>.

For starters you will be viewing the carousel animal rides, Faith Mills longjohns, Averill Park Post Office named in Major George Quamo's honor, and Legs Diamond's unsafe house. We hope we have whetted your appetite for more. "Hardcopies" will be here in the Fall of this year. ☺ ☺

## SLHS on the Internet

Just a reminder that we're on the Internet at:

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

See a schedule of upcoming meetings and events as well as a number of feature stories of our Town's history!

## Nominating Committee

Nominating committee members Annamae Hebert, Marion Hacker and Linda Ormsby present the following persons for trustees: Andrew Mace (reelect, 2<sup>nd</sup> term); Marion Hacker (reelect, 2<sup>nd</sup> term); Michael Middleton; and Mary French.

## 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 2007 you're due soon, and we thank you for renewing your membership on the enclosed form. We look forward to having a fully up-to-date membership list. Not renewing means your subscription to *Historical Highlights* will stop.

## From the president

### History and the people who make it!

Because Mary French and Andy Mace are compiling *Images of America - Sand Lake Revisited*, for responders to the soliciting for pictures and material, history comes alive. Visits and mail, years pass, folks move away, memories linger and brought to mind, present an opportunity! *Images* bring us together like the Society meetings and programs.

Mark your calendar for April 10th and especially for the May 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner at Lakeview on Crystal Lake. And June 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> promise to be interesting!

Welcome to meetings and continue to read announcements in *The Advertiser*. A change from tradition, the "picnic" is scheduled for September. The invitation to suggest a topic for a program is always open.

Recently hearing about the development of the local Averill Park Strings and Winds Orchestra and Sand Lake Chorale by word and music, the Society was host to Janine Budesheim, Erin Wajda, and Bob Baum. The Weeber family contributions to design, some seen at the New York State Museum, and automobile manufacture were explained with pictures by Geoffrey Stein of the museum staff. Alan Fuess encouraged participation in his talk about walking sticks with satisfying results - Right, Kitty and Bob? Some walking sticks of his collection were displayed and described for characteristics.

Remember the covered dish Christmas Party at the Knowlson House hosted by the generosity of Ron Berti and Barbara Neu when we heard Marieke Leeverink speak about Dutch barns in the Hudson Valley and Netherlands. The Dutch Barn Preservation Society was represented. The Vincents opened new doors of the Crooked Lake House in an invitation to see and hear about the change to the building. The production of "Remembering Anne Frank" was introduced at the Center for the Arts by Director Joan Fuess in October. The newly opened Towne Tavern was explained with pictures and history of the former blacksmith shop by Lorraine Dickinson with Jim Smyth and John Warren. Thanking all who willingly shared their time is a pleasure.

You may have a treasure stored at home. Appraisal Day will be a part of 2007. Plans for the Hildene and garden tour are in progress for June 12<sup>th</sup>. A centennial for the Town approaches.

Concerns about preservation of the rural setting and adherence to the master plan of the Town of Sand Lake are addressed among members. Disposition of the town building at the corner of Eastern Union Turnpike and Holcomb Road, having been a topic of a meeting in January 2005, has not been forgotten. What action to resolution?

Thank you officers, board members and volunteers for serving with me. Appreciation is extended to Barbara Mohan for taking on the role of treasurer as needed.

The meeting, intended to be brief, at May's dinner meeting, will include a vote on bylaws change. Information to prepare for this vote is included in this newsletter.

Yet gathering notes about Hyman H. Butler for an article for *Historical Highlights*, I seek recollections i.e., when the barn burned, did you shop at Butler's, and did Butler's Dairy provide milk at your home? Phone 674-2742 or e-mail [nanwd@mailstation.com](mailto:nanwd@mailstation.com).

Note: June meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> instead of June 12<sup>th</sup> allowing attendance at Strings and Winds concert.

Did you know that the glass factory burned in 1816 and a second fire in 1853 destroyed it?

Historically yours, — Nancy W. Davis, President

## **Boundless Woods, LLC: preserving Taborton's character**

*Editor's Note: John Henry and Mary E. Myers' great-great-granddaughter, Barbara Connole Boughton contacted me with photos, papers and much oral history on the Meyers family for Sand Lake Revisited. She was willing to share "Meyers Family History" with Historical Highlights readers in this issue. When she told me about the 21<sup>st</sup> Century community endeavor, "Boundless Woods LLC," I was elated and eager to make this story known. Barbara prevailed upon company shareholder Atsushi Akeru to write "Boundless Woods LLC: Preserving Taborton's Character." The two articles have given us a remarkable window of Taborton's past history of charcoal, huckleberries, family farming and summer camps to its present image of property being sought after by developers. Enjoy the American spirit that is so evident in both of these articles. Thank you, Barbara and Atsushi, your articles have made this an exciting "Taborton Newsletter."*

**Center: The Land Is Ours. Members and friends of Boundless Woods LLC, from left to right are Wendy Borden, Barbara Boughton, Vicki Fowler, Kate Hubbs, and John Craney displaying their smiles of victory.**

The idea to create Boundless Woods originated when an old farmhouse occupying 75 acres of land near the two Bowman Ponds came up for sale a few years ago. As many people know, Taborton is an old and well established community consisting of both summer and year-round residents who have chosen to build their home, or home away from home, around one of the two pristine upland ponds located near "Taborton Mountain" (Kippel Mountain or "Mt. Gipfel" as named by the early German settlers). The Walshes, Momrows, and others claim multiple generations of residence in this area (see separate article on the Meyers in this issue), and there is an old church, the Zion UCC of Taborton, that also serves as an anchor to the community. In addition, many families living around the pond have contributed to the life of the



community through their many summer activities, including an annual Regatta that has been held on Big Bowman Pond for over seventy years!

Given the geography of this area, the proposed land sale—one of three or four large parcels of land adjacent to the many houses located around the pond—posed a particular threat. Taborton, as it stands today, remains a community nestled within the beautiful natural landscape of lands that had “gone back to forest,” where there are literally thousands of acres of land, much of it owned by local lumber companies, that until recently had stood outside of the realm of development. However, the land grab and real-estate bubble generated by the stock market sell off of the past several years generated new development pressures and it was clear to the community that the property up for sale could be targeted for development. Complicating matters, local topography ensured not only that any homes built on this property would be visible from those living around the pond, but that much of the runoff generated from any new homes would end up in Big Bowman, affecting the quality of the water and the flora and fauna in and around the lake.

This was, in effect, a classic “collective action problem,” as many economists would describe it. Individually, many of the residents knew that such a development would adversely affect their life in Taborton (and most likely, property values as well). For

each, it made sense to contribute something towards making sure that this wouldn't happen. Yet the development-based price put the property beyond the reach of any single household in the community. As an additional challenge, any resident stood to reap the benefits of collective action so long as others stepped forward to purchase the property.

What worked in the favor of the community was its long history of common association. The lake association had already provided a strong precedent by way of a collective effort to have a “no motor” ordinance enacted by the town for Big Bowman Pond. Perhaps more importantly, there was a lot of good will, and shared memories among the members of the community so that once the property came up

for sale, local conversations erupted around the perceived threat of development. Soon, several of the neighbors who knew each other well, organized an initial meeting for the residents. It quickly became obvious that traditional solutions, such as approaching a

## Meyers Family History

land conservancy, would not work in time, given that the property was already on the market. During the meeting, the idea was then floated that if no one in the community were willing and able to purchase the land on their own, perhaps they could consider the collective purchase of the land. Each household, to the extent that they were able, would purchase a “share” of the land, at \$5,000 per share.

\$5,000 is of course a lot of money, and in our society, where traditions of individual property ownership prevail this kind of proposition was unfamiliar, and perhaps even threatening. In the beginning, the group had little knowledge of any precedent for this type of action, and the group indeed had real fears about such things as individual liability for anything that might happen on the land. Yet, here again, the resources and patterns of trust within a well-established community worked to the group’s advantage. Some stepped forward to research the insurance options. Others looked into the tax obligations of such an arrangement. The community also found concrete assistance through Lawrence Howard, a nearby resident and Sand Lake attorney who happened to specialize in issues of public and private land stewardship. It was Howard who suggested the idea of a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC); the name Boundless Woods then emerged from the community.

There was one more crisis before the deal could be completed. The group had come up with the necessary funds to make what it felt was a reasonable offer. But just before the offer was made, it heard that a major developer—not just a local builder—had offered near asking price for the property. However, this last-minute crisis only served to solidify the resolve of the community; a number of emergency telephone calls brought forward the required sum, and indeed helped the group to subsequently raise additional sums that have become part of the kitty for Boundless Woods LLC. The land does remain private, but the group intends to preserve this parcel in perpetuity through a conservation easement.

The future plans for Boundless Woods remain open. This community-based “company” is currently enjoying a steady-state in preserving and visiting the land that it owns. But regardless of its future actions, its broader hope is that the efforts of this community can serve as a model for others on the Rensselaer Plateau and in Sand Lake who wish to preserve the natural and historical character of this region. The broader tide of development may be difficult to hold at bay, and there are, without doubt, those in this region that stand to benefit from economic redevelopment. Nevertheless, the members of Boundless Woods LLC wish to convey a sense of hope that there are real and vital options for preserving our communities and our heritage through strategic interventions. It’s amazing what you can do if you work together.

The Meyers’ homestead was built in the 1850's. It was owned by John and Hannah Schriener. My great-great-grandfather, John Henry Meyers (Hiram Meiers, 1840-1906), left Germany because of the persecutions of German and Dutch citizens, and he settled in Schenectady. He was a blacksmith and hammersmith. Because of his experience in Germany he was disgusted with the idea of slavery. John Henry enlisted as a Private in the Union Army in August 1862 at the age of 21. He was with Company K, 7th Regiment, New York Volunteer Heavy Artillery. He served as a blacksmith and was with the Heavy Artillery Division, presumably because he could manufacture and repair things. John Henry was captured by the Confederate Army at Petersburg, VA in June 1864, and was a prisoner of war for nearly a year. The war ended in April 1865 and he was returned in May. His trade as a blacksmith kept him alive as a prisoner. If you've read any Civil War history you know that prisoner of war conditions were deplorable, but I imagine he survived because he was useful. John Henry mustered out of Company K in Baltimore in June 1865 and was transported as far as Yorktown, NY where he and other soldiers walked the rest of the way home up the Hudson River. Enlisting in the army earned the German and Dutch immigrants their citizenship. John Henry Meyers was made a naturalized citizen in October 1864 - 100 years before I was born! I have his citizenship paper. He returned to Schenectady, but wasn't as healthy and strong as he was before being a prisoner.

Meanwhile, up here on the mountain, the Canadian logging industry was logging down through the Champlain Valley, Green Mountains, Berlin, and Taborton Mountain (formerly known as Georgetown). Clear-cutting of the mountain provided an opportunity for the German/Dutch immigrants to lease/buy land cheaply on the mountain. Henry Meyers (as he was known) began leasing this house in the 1870's. He worked for the logging industry on the mountain, and cut ice on the lake and sold it. As the community grew, he returned to being a blacksmith and he built a forge near what is now the intersection of Lawson and Taborton Rd. Remains of the stone foundation still exist (but you wouldn't know you were looking at anything, if you didn't know it was there). He worked repairing wagon wheels, shoeing horses, forging chains, kitchen and farm tools, hooks, hinges, anything made from iron. Henry made the strap hinges that are still on our barns as well as the boot scrape outside our side door. Henry was a member of Colonial Lodge No. 16 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in Albany, and Brother Henry was later admitted to the Sand Lake Lodge. It was (still is?) a secret society doing benevolent works. The IOOF was founded in 1835 and conducted its business in German until 1892. According to the May 1899 Constitution and

By-Laws, the Lodges, "meet in Friendship, transact our business in Harmony, and depart in Peace. Political or religious disputes are never permitted among us... We hold Honor and Truth as our motto; Charity and Benevolence our cause; Friendship and Peace as our standard; Love and Unity our shield." Henry sent to Germany for his soon-to-be wife, Mary Elizabeth Sauerbrei (1852 – 1916). She sailed out of Bramen Harbor and he met her in New York City. She had her mother's fine spinning wheel with ivory posts, and a large roll top trunk, which carried the rest of her possessions. The heirs of the Meyers family still have these family treasures.

Henry and Mary had four children: Anna, Cora Louise, Emma Gertrude (my great-grandmother), and August Louis ("Uncle Gus"). Henry bought the farm from John Schriener in 1882 for \$1000. (I have the deed) Mary was the first Sunday school teacher at the Taborton Church. The children had to learn Bible verses in English and in German. It was a tradition that the Sunday school students gave Mary plates of cookies for Christmas. My mother displays two porcelain plates given to Mary by one of her students, May Raver Senechal. One of her other students, Luella Gundrum Shoemaker, 98, still goes to the Taborton Church and tells me about my great-great grandmother.

Henry died in 1906 leaving Mary to support herself and the farm. She applied for a widow's pension for Civil War veterans and was granted a pension of \$8.00 per month in 1908, which was later increased to \$12.00 per month. Mary had to prove that her husband was, in fact, in the war and we have many letters and an affidavit from fellow soldiers. I have the pension paper, which is stamped by Secretary of the Interior James Rudolph Garfield, who was the son of President Garfield. Mary also raised money by selling off small

*is entitled to a pension under the provisions of the Act of June 27, 1890, at the rate of Eight dollars per month, to commence on the fourteenth day of February 1908, and to continue twelve dollars per month from April 17, 1908 during her widowhood.*

parcels of land and lakefront for people to build camps on Big Bowman. I have a stack of papers that are wrapped together with string and marked, "deeds from campers". She sold the land for \$1.00 per foot. I have deeds from the sale of five parcels along the eastern side of the lake. More parcels were sold, but some deeds wound up with a surveyor and never returned.

Henry and Mary are listed in the 1880 census with their oldest child, then four-month-old Anna. Years later, Anna eloped with Charles Hood and moved to Brooklyn, NY. They had met at the Saratoga races. Charlie was a

New York fireman. Anna and Charlie had three sons, Charles, James, and Fred. Jimmy also became a New York Fireman. Charlie and Jimmy married and lived in Brooklyn with their wives, Dot and Adele. They spent summers visiting the home-place in Taborton and enjoying Big Bowman Pond. Jimmy and Adele built a camp on Taborton Road where they spent summers and weekends (698 Taborton Road).



**Above: John Henry Meyers' Family c. 1895. Front row from left to right are August, father John Henry, mother Mary Elizabeth, Emma; back row Louise, family friend Elizabeth Reinke, and Ann Meyers.**

Next came Cora Louise, born in 1883, who married James Quinn. He was called "Gentleman Jim" as he was never out of a full suit, shirt and tie, even to sit home on his rocker. They lived in Brooklyn also and had one child, Olive Quinn Baker. Louise wanted a camp on Big Bowman, so brother Gus sold her a parcel for \$1.00. Fred Rendert built that camp in the 50's. Grandniece, Peggy Momrow Connole and her husband, Joe, (my parents) purchased it in 1965.

Emma, my great-grandmother, born in 1885, married Christian Joseph Momrow (Chris, born 1881), a Taborton man. He was one of 12 children of Fred and Mary Momrow (Chris' siblings include Fred, Conrad, John, Hattie, Lena). Mary died of tuberculosis when Chris and a younger sister, Lena, were very young. While the older children could help Fred on the farm, Chris and Lena were left on a wall in Berlin for someone to take them in. The pastor took them in until they were old enough to be indentured. Nick Teal took Chris in until he was 16, at which time he went to live with Ed Rendert's family. Ed had the Ford dealership in Averill Park. Chris had earned \$800 and went to Brooklyn where he bought a wagon and a team of horses, and established a business called Mountain Ice. They cut the ice on Lake Hopatcong in Northwestern New Jersey. Chris' brother, Con, and many other Taborton men went to Brooklyn to work with Chris and the ice business. Adam Schumann from Sand Lake also had an ice and coal business in Brooklyn, as well as Pete Young. Chris and Emma were married in the living room of the

Meyer's home in 1905, which was decorated with princess pine garland.

Emma returned with Chris to Brooklyn and they had 3 children: John Henry, Arthur Christian, and Alma Louise. The three children spent summers with Grandma Meyers on the family farm when there were outbreaks of chicken pox and measles in the city. Chris and his two workmen sold ice and bags of coal up and down the streets of Brooklyn. Iceboxes were the only means of cooling and coal stoves were the choice for cooking. That business grew into Momrow Coal and Coke, a well-established coal and oil business, as well as appliance store, for the two sons, John and Arthur, who owned and operated the business until their deaths. John married Esther and had one son, John Jr.. Arthur married Margaret McCusker and they had two daughters, Mary Ann Mathews and Margaret (Peggy) Momrow Connole (my mother). Emma and Chris' daughter, Alma, married Fred Rendert and they lived in Menands with their son, Richard. Fred owned and operated Rendert Lumber Company, and he was also the building inspector in Menands for many, many years. Fred built many houses in the area, including a number of homes and camps on Big Bowman and the Berlin Fish and Game Club. Alma just celebrated her 97<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 23, 2006.

Henry and Mary's youngest child was August Louis. He was born in this house on December 30, 1889 and lived his entire 91 years here. He burned charcoal for a living, picked blueberries and had a taxi service bringing people from the city or the trains out to their summer homes on the lakes (photo 1922), and bringing mountain folk into Troy or Albany. During the summers, sisters Louise and Anna came up from Brooklyn to pick the blueberries (huckleberries). Gus had the kids (John, Arthur, Alma) put small pieces of paper in the four corners of the berry baskets so the berries would not spill out. Gus took the berries to Albany market where he sold direct to a baker and other merchants.

Gus was a great friend of George Dobert, who also made charcoal, and they helped each other with the pits. George's son, Loren Dobert, still makes charcoal at his house up the mountain a couple of miles. I have six bags of Gus' charcoal, as well as a couple of his charcoal rakes. It's a pleasure to own a number of Gus' farm tools, including several scythes, with which he cut the front and side meadows well into his 80's. I have many wonderful memories of playing croquet on his oval lawn in between the driveways, while Uncle Gus rocked in his rocker handmade from saplings. He had a wonderfully full and jolly laugh, and he shook like a bowlful of jelly just like ol' St. Nick himself.



Gus married at age 51 to Florence and they had no children. Uncle Gus and Ray Manning built one of the barns together. It housed the first fire engine that Taborton had, long before there was an organized fire company. Harold Anderson was in the car/truck business and he donated a used fire truck to serve as Taborton's first fire engine. The Anderson's were long-time summer residents. They had a camp on Big Bowman, which was torn down, and Fred Rendert built them a new one.

When Gus Meyers was getting on in years, he sold the farm to his nephew, Arthur Momrow, with the understanding that Gus would live out his days here. Arthur died suddenly shortly thereafter. His daughters inherited the property, and Peggy Momrow Connole bought her sister's share. Peggy and her husband, Joe, renovated the house somewhat as it needed to be rented (a second bathroom, updated kitchen). The house was rented to several families over 25 or so years. My parents no longer wanted to be landlords and we all wanted to keep the property in the family. My husband, Douglas Galbraith Boughton (a relation of Dr. Smith "Big Thunder" Boughton), and I lived on Big Bowman, on property adjacent to my family's homestead. We sold our house on Big Bowman and bought the family farm from my parents. We moved in here in October 2005 with our first son, Cole Joseph, who was born in November 2003. In January 2006, August Edward was born, a namesake for Uncle Gus. Doug and I are thrilled to be living on the family farm and raising the 6th generation.

While Arthur Momrow owned the property, the Taborton Church contacted him and asked to buy some land to expand the cemetery. Arthur wanted to donate an acre of land to the Church, but he died before he could do so. When his daughter, Peggy, inherited the property she knew of her father's wish, so she deeded an acre to the Church for the new part of the cemetery. Her husband, Joseph Connole, my dad, was buried there this past December 30, 2006. It's nice to have him just up the hill from us on family land. I'll be making my way up there too, but hopefully none too soon.

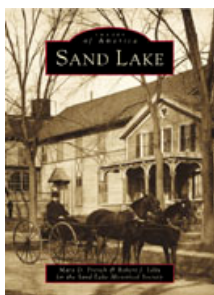
Here's some Bowman trivia: Lawson Road used to be called Henry Werger Road. Henry Werger was an original occupant at the end of the road. Lawson Road is called Henry Werger Road in some of the deeds that I have from the early 1900's. I don't know when the name was changed. — Submitted March 2007 by Barbara Connole Boughton, great-great-granddaughter of John Henry and Mary E. Meyer



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Historical Highlights  
*Mary French, Editor*  
*Andrew Mace, Publisher*







# Sand Lake Historical Society

Membership Application

Annual Dinner/Meeting

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Dinners (\$15.50 each) \_\_\_\_\_ Dinner Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership: Join / Renew**

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

\$3 per student (13-22) \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 per individual \_\_\_\_\_ \$8 per family \_\_\_\_\_

**Grand Total enclosed:** ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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