



Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 35, Number 1

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Fall 2008

From the president

Thank you to Nancy W. Davis for serving as president the past two years. She has been assuming the helm of the Town's newly formed Bicentennial Planning Committee. (*see article page 2*) Her willingness to assume the office of vice-president is greatly appreciated. Other officers are Annamae Hebert, recording secretary, Marion Hacker, corresponding secretary, and Patricia Stevens, treasurer. We welcome new trustees Christine Kronau, Patricia Stevens, Cristy Carton, Jacqueline Tremont, Judy Rowe, Patricia Robelotto, and Rev. Dr. Robert Loesch and reelected trustee Ross French. Other trustees in addition to the officers named are Gary Meislin, Andrew Mace and Edith Gundrum. Our Board of Trustees numbers fifteen.

Did you see Judy Rowe, Nancy W. Davis and county executive Kathy Jimino in Dan Sekellick's convertible with him as chauffeur, and signs made by Pat Robelotto, representing the Sand Lake Historical Society in the Summerfest parade? Or you visited us at our Kiwanis Summerfest booth. We also participated at Library Day.

This is an exciting time in our town's history and we hope you will be part of the programs and celebration.

Watch the Advertiser for publicity and we'll see you there or better yet you will be a participant!!! — *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 2008 you're due and we thank you for renewing your membership on the form below. Not renewing will mean your subscription to *Historical Highlights* will stop.

Upcoming Programs

September 7th will be the Historic Church Tour from 1:00-5:00 p.m. presented by the Sand Lake Center for the Arts, Sand Lake Historical Society and the Zion's United Church of Christ. The tour starts at Sand Lake Center for the Arts, a renovated church building originally constructed in 1835, to pick up tickets and map to begin your sightseeing journey to explore some or all of the many churches in our community. Cost is \$10 per person.

On **September 9th** there will be a covered dish picnic at Ron Berti and Barbara Neu's historic home, the Knowlson house on Schumann Road, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Bring a dish to share. Place setting, dessert and beverage will be provided. Town historian Judy Rowe will be honoring Alice Tiff and her late husband Harold Tiff, the town's first historian. And several persons have asked to see the oral history video of telephone operator Edith Gundrum and Burden Lake memories of Irene Chriss.

Saturday, **September 13th** is our appraisal day for "Antiques and Everything" (*see article page 2*).

Our **October 14th** meeting will be Rensselaer County Historian Kathy Sheehan giving an illustrated talk centering on historical signs in Rensselaer County titled "On This Site Was..."

On **November 11th** Rev. Dr. Robert Loesch (Pastor Bob) will speak on "Writing Your Life Story – Or Another Person's Life Story." This will be a practical way to supplement the efforts of persons who are recording oral histories to have another way of recording life experiences.

Meetings are at 7:30 p.m. at the Sand Lake Baptist Church 2960 NY 43 unless otherwise specified.

December 9th we will again be hosted by Ron Berti and Barbara Neu for our Christmas covered dish dinner.

2012 Bicentennial Planning Committee

The Board of the Town of Sand Lake acted on the proposal of a group of citizens and members of the Bicentennial Planning Committee, Nancy W. Davis, Mary French, Frederick Erickson, and Nancy Dunn were appointed on April 9, 2008. Thank you, Town Board!

Representatives of the Sand Lake Town Board, Kiwanis, Center for the Arts, Garden Club and Historical Society as well as others interested have met at the Kennedy Room of the Town Library. Town historian Judy Rowe has been particularly enthusiastic as a contributor of information and ideas.

Our first outing was participating in the Memorial Day parade with passengers Mary French, Flora Fasoldt and Nancy W. Davis in the '64 Ford Falcon driven by Don of Leckonby's Autoworks. Banners on the car announced our presence picturesquely. June 20th brought a group together to honor Doris Gauch and Sid Gallant for years of service to the community and hear Philip Lord speak about "Mills on the Tsatsawasa." The raffle items and door prizes donated by businesses and private donors were awarded.

Parade again on July 4th. This time passengers Lois Thomas and Marge Deacon rode in a Rolls Royce from Sand Lake School to Butler Park.

The "Purpose Statement" awaits approval by the Town Board as is the co-chair Fred Erickson.

Volunteers can pat themselves on the back for willingness to "step forward" along with my appreciation.

On July 5th, "2012" volunteers manned a table with sign-up sheets and suggestion sheets.

The next meeting will be August 21st and input by visitors is appreciated. — Nancy W. Davis

Antiques Appraisal Day: September 13 @ Town Hall

The fall Antiques Appraisal Day at the Sand Lake Town Hall needs your participation!!! The Sand Lake Historical Society's community outreach projects rely on the income generated by this fundraising event. Each year, the Sand Lake Historical Society (SLHS) gives scholarships to graduating high school seniors and makes large donations to Sand Lake community projects that are in keeping with its mission statement: "Preserving the past..Enriching the future".

On September 13th, from 10-2 DONNA FISHER of Always Antiques, Loudonville, NY, will return again to assist SLHS in this fundraising event. TIM DOYLE and his wife SARAH LIPSKY, owners for 35 years of Doyle Antiques in Hudson, NY, will also be available. Their combined areas of expertise are many and include American and European antiques and paintings, porcelain, glassware, pottery, jewelry, swords, samplers

and needlework, toys, guns, Civil War items, early papers, books, local history and maps, and blown glass. Averill Park resident STEPHEN BETTS, a member of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, will also be on hand to give verbal evaluations on antique clocks and pocket watches. Mr. Betts has over 20 years experience with antiques and has done clock repairs for the past 10 years.

The SLHS fall Appraisal Day will also include an antique consignment sale, a document scanning service and light lunch.

Don't miss this great opportunity to discover what your attic treasures are really worth!! You may bring as many items as you like. Our experts will identify, describe and give you a verbal evaluation for only \$5 per item, 3 for \$10. Large items may be left outside where an expert will view it in place, or, you may bring a clear photo of the item to be valued.

For more information, please call Mary French at 518-674-5710.

SLHS memorial scholarship awards

Elise Kowalczyk and Eric Rosenberg were recipients of the Sand Lake Historical Society Memorial Awards for excellence in history given in memory of Henry Rowe. The following thank you was received:

Dear Sand Lake Historical Society,

Thank you so much for the Sand Lake Historical Society Memorial Award and the very generous check. I plan to be a music ed/performance double major at the Crane School of Music next year and this money will help me pay for the expensive music software I'll need for my classes.

Thank you also for recognition of my strength in history. From my history classes I've become a better writer, critical thinker and all around better student.

Thank you again for this award

*Sincerely,
Elise Kowalczyk*

SLHS on the Internet

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

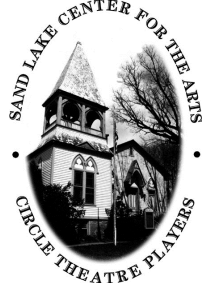
Congratulations! Sand Lake Center for the Arts is 5 Years Old!

Thank you to Joan Fuess for our feature article on the Sand Lake Center for the Arts' anniversary of being in their "own home" for five years. A more remarkable reuse of an historic building is seldom seen!! We're sure you will agree. — Ed.

The building's story began in 1808 when a group from the Alps Congregationalist Society joined some residents from Greenbush (the area where Taborton Road and routes 43 and 66 now intersect) to form the First Presbyterian Church of Greenbush. There were 37 original members. Family names were Bailey, Holcomb, Belknap, Adams, French, Ives, Woodbridge, Brown, Rowley, Benjamin, Williams, Foster, Coleman, Kirk, Bidwell, and Hempstead. Some descendants of these families still reside in Sand Lake today. The group joined the Methodist and Baptist Societies and worshipped in the Union Meeting House (now the Sand Lake Baptist Church) until 1832, when it purchased land at the intersection of routes 43 and 66 for \$1.00 from the Butts family.

In 1835 the building was constructed on that property by Jacob and Squire Deitcher and Co. of Troy. The building was subsequently enlarged and repaired in 1851-54, and a manse built in 1870-71. In 1890-91 a wing, bell tower, and stained glass windows were added. Renovations were made periodically to accommodate the needs of the First Presbyterian Church congregation until the building was sold to the Town of Sand Lake. At that time the manse and barns were torn down to make room for a parking lot. The building was refitted and dedicated in 1972 to serve as the Town Hall.

Thirty years later local government had relocated to a larger facility. The lovely old church building had fallen into disrepair when along came Joan Fuess and her dream of a home for Circle Theatre Players! Here was a building in need of serious repair and the community came forward. Volunteers dropped by to see what



they could do, workmen generously gave of their services and donated materials. Sand Lake Historical Society's first President, Bob Harris, volunteered to build a storage barn and in three weeks accomplished the feat with the help of 50 some workers. Sometimes a person would drop by just to say that they would come and listen to Irene Nash as she practiced the organ for Sunday services when the building was still a worship center.

Sand Lake Historical Society (SLHS) was one of the original donors and presented us with a second donation of \$1000 as the renovation project exemplified the Society's mission statement: "preserving the past — enriching the future." We preserved the building itself and painted it in appropriate colors for the time period. The organ went to a private collector. The lovely tin work and the stained glass windows remain. Hymnals were found in the attic marked "Property of the Second Street Presbyterian Church" and were carried to the Bahamas by Dale Langford for use there.

The Art Center's metamorphosis has been an incredible journey. From the beginning Circle Theatre Players proposed expansion of their mission: To enrich community life by providing opportunities to work together discovering, appreciating and creating excellence in theater, the performing arts, and the visual arts.

Today, now known as the Sand Lake Center for the Arts, we offer a full season of award-winning shows by Circle Theatre Players, concerts and workshops by regionally and nationally acclaimed artists in our Squire Jacob Coffeehouse Concert Series (named for the original architects Jacob and Squire Deitcher), a rotating art Gallery, youth programs including ballet and movement by the School of Creative Arts, and a full series of youth enrichment

workshops in the summer. The facilities provide a great space for weddings, parties and corporate and community meetings. We are collaborating with the school district and our most recent collaboration with the SLHS will be the Historic Church Tour in September. We look forward to participating in the Hudson Fulton Champlain Quadracentennial and our town's Bicentennial celebration. For an overview of all our activities, please visit our website at slca-ctp.org. As the Rensselaer County



Sand Lake Center for the Arts Dedication Ceremony. At the dedication ceremony on October 18, 2003, town supervisor Steve Robelotto is handing Center for the Arts president Joan Fuess a 25-year lease from the town to use the former Sand Lake Presbyterian Church and later town hall for the Center for the Art's new home.

slogan says "life looks good from here."

Our building is written about in David J. Pitkin's book *New York State Ghosts* in an article entitled "A Last Sermon". Town Historians Judy Rowe and Madolyn Carpenter were upstairs reading through old documents when the building was being converted into the town hall in 1972. "They heard the church's front doors open loudly, and then footsteps were heard walking rapidly down the aisle and toward the rear of the sanctuary. Then there was silence. Maybe we imagined the sound, Judy thought, and the two resumed their work of reading. A half hour later footsteps were again heard and again the slamming of the church doors." The doors were locked and the keys had not been disturbed. Again the sounds repeated themselves and the "ghost" followed the same path.

Today the ghost or ghosts seem to have left, as no one hears them anymore or do they?



Sand Lake Center for the Arts. This building undergoes a magical transformation each time it's used.

Enjoy Renovation Remembrances with us!!

...**the first hammer**....was used by the Sand Lake Kiwanis members as they began demolition of the room in the performing space and the offices, which were where the lobby is now.

...**and they came out of nowhere**....each day someone stopped by to volunteer. "I'll lay your rugs"; "I'll do your bathroom floors"; "I want to paint"; and "What are you doing? How can I help?"

...**and then**...here comes Bob Harris. "I'll build you a barn" and in three weeks with fifty some volunteers we had a two story barn.

...**remember our first fund-raiser**...The event was held in the lobby and we had no heat, no electricity, and the walls were down to their studs. So we used our car lights to let people see where to go and candles inside with the wine and cheese. And it poured and poured rain!!! It was a big success!

...**our first donors**...One of the first donors was the Sand Lake Historical Society who later blessed us with a second gift of \$1000.

...**our opening event**...We received our Certificate of Occupancy just four hours before the opening of the CTP production of *Life With Father*. The cast did not know if they were coming for a rehearsal or a show until that night.

...**our dedication and the passing of the key**....seventy-five community members graced the parking area as presentations were made from the porch. The Town Council presented the key to Joan Fuess, president, Mary Hall, Dudley Dorr and Sara Sheldon...the four who made it happen.

...**our ghost**....Legend has it and it is a published fact that the Sand Lake Center for the Arts has its own ghost.

...**the bat**....The lovely ladies of the Saratoga Junior Ballet were performing *The Nutcracker* on stage in the Performing Space when a bat graced their performance. Another time the State Troopers gave chase after a bat set off the alarm.

And five years later, here we are...a full scale Arts Center in the heart of Rensselaer County drawing people from all over the Capital Region.

"A dream is a wish your heart makes...." So goes the old song. The dreams of a permanent home for Circle Theatre Players and the development of the Sand Lake Center for the Arts, incorporating theater, music and the visual arts, will be celebrated on September 27th as SLCA-CTP completes five years in their new home, the former old Town Hall in Sand Lake. You are all invited to experience A TASTE OF SAND LAKE, featuring the epicurean delights of local restaurants: AJ's Pizzeria, Arlington House, Crooked Lake House, Lakeview Inn, LaPerla at the Gregory House, Towne Tavern, Uncle Marty's Adirondack Grille and Young's Pharmacy & General Store, the background music of the musicians from the Averill Park High School Band and Orchestra, and raffle gifts from the Albany Symphony, Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, Capital Repertory Theater, as well as many other local businesses. (See <http://slca-ctp.org> for details.) — *Joan Fuess, past president*



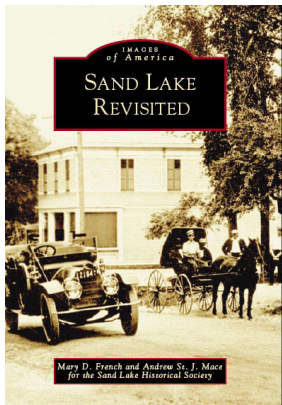
Notice the stained glass window of the Sand Lake Presbyterian Church in the "Taste of Sand Lake" logo.

Cotton House....

On August 3, 2008, Girl Scout Troop 1181 invited the entire community to the unveiling of the James Cotton Ice Cream Parlor at 9 Taborton Rd., Sand Lake. The four Girl Scouts — Alyson Gile, Tessa Laiacona, Alyx Raffo and Tori Donato — resurrected the parlor to earn their Gold Award, the highest honor in Girl Scouts.

The project was helped along by about \$5,000 in donated funds and services from community organizations and contractors. An historical marker is expected to be placed in front of the house soon. Below are a few images...before, during and after!





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

E-mail: sandlakehistory@aol.com

Historical Highlights

Mary French, Editor

Andrew Mace, Publisher



FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Sand Lake Historical Society

Post Office Box 492

West Sand Lake, New York 12196



Sand Lake Historical Society

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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

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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