



Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 39, Number 1

Fall 2012

From the president

Your Sand Lake Historical Society has had a meaningful and varied set of programs this spring. We hope you will join us at the upcoming programs and events this summer and fall. Your attendance and support of your local historical society is important as together we keep alive the history of the people, places and events of our local community and the surrounding region.

We continue to support and share in the programs and events celebrating the Bicentennial of the Town of Sand Lake, founded in 1812, organized by the Bicentennial Planning Committee.

Recent Historical Society programs have included:

- † Troy Fire of 1862 (150th anniversary) April 10, at Sand Lake Baptist Church; Speaker- Kathy Sheehan, Rensselaer County Historian. On May 10, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, a devastating fire destroyed a major portion of downtown Troy. The fire began on the Green Island Bridge when a spark from a locomotive started a fire on the wooden covered bridge.
- † Antiques Appraisal Day was held on Saturday, April 28, at Miller Hill School. Appraisers: Mark Lawson, specializing in jewelry, coins, currency and Oriental rugs, sponsor of Antiques Road Show as seen on WMHT-TV, and owner of Mark Lawson Antiques; Nancy Toomer, specializing in glassware, china, table linens and silver, owner of House of Rose Antiques, Niskayuna; and Dennis Holzman, specializing in rare books, maps, prints, paintings, furniture, decorative accessories, owner of Dennis Holzman Antiques, Albany.
- † Hot and Cold Buffet Dinner, on May 8 at West Sand Lake Fire House and our Annual Meeting. Trustees for the term 2012-2015 were elected during the Annual Meeting: Joseph Ferrannini, Woodie Hacker and Katie Komdat. Program was on the Bicentennial of History of the Town of Sand Lake, 1812- 2012, with Judy Rowe, Historian of the Town of Sand Lake, and Mary French, vice president of our Historical Society.
- † History of St. Henry's Catholic Church, presented June 12 at St. Henry's Church
- † Introduction by Gloria Waldron Hukle and program by Frank Lukovits, Permanent Deacon.

Special thanks to our officers and trustees for their voluntary time and energy for all our activities. We invite you to attend our upcoming programs. — *Rev. Dr. Robert Loesch, President*

Volunteers needed!

The Society is seeking Volunteers for these positions:

- † Editor of Sand Lake Historical Society newsletter, *Historical Highlights* (three issues each year)
- † Ways and Means Chairperson — “shall develop policies and strategies for increasing revenues and shall promote and coordinate general fund-raising activities.”

Please contact Pastor Bob Loesch or rkloesch@aol.com

Deaths of Close Persons

We are saddened by the news that **Robert Sheehan**, husband of Kathryn Sheehan, Rensselaer County Historical Society Historian and frequent speaker at our Historical Society, passed away Monday, July 30th. And long-time Honorary Member **Katharine L. “Kitty” Mace** passed away Wednesday, August 1st.

Gifts of history

- 1 Have you found someone to give a copy of *Sand Lake Revisited*? The Society realizes a 50% profit from their sales and receives a 10% royalty for sales in other venues. The cost of *Sand Lake Revisited* is \$21.60 (including tax) and \$3.00 shipping, for each copy.
- 1 *Sand Lake*, our first book, is available for \$20.50 (including tax). Copies of both books are for sale at the Town Clerk's Office for the Society. Robert J. Lilly's book *The Wynants Kill: a small stream, but mighty* is available for \$16.20 (including tax).
- 1 And Marvin Buble's book *On the Trail of Henry Hudson and Our Dutch Heritage Through the Municipal Seals of New York State* is available for \$27.00 (including tax)
- 1 A new set of 6 note cards for \$7.00 (tax included) is available: Carousel at Crystal Lake Park; Parade at Younghan's Race Track and Fairgrounds; Summer campers "roughing it" c. 1915 at Methodist Farm at Crooked Lake; Hikers dressed 1928 style at Camp VanSchoonhoven; Victorian lady rowing her dog on area lake; Family relaxing on their porch at lakeside cottage. The note cards are available from Town Clerk's office or Mary French. Order information is also available on our web site. You may also contact Mary French (674-5710) or send an order to Sand Lake Historical Society, Box 492, West Sand Lake, NY 12196 for any of the above items.

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 to May 31. If the number is 2012 or earlier, you're due and we thank you for renewing your membership on the form in this issue. You may also opt to receive *Historical Highlights* online. As of June 1, 2012, individual dues are \$10.00 and family dues \$15.00. You may also become an Individual Life Member for \$100.00 or Family Life Members for \$150.00.

Sand Lake BPC update

**The Town of Sand Lake is having a birthday!
1812 — "200 Years Old" — 2012**

The "Main Event" as titled by Co-Chair Fred Erickson approaches. On August 25th and 26th at Westfall Village celebrating will continue honoring the Town of Sand Lake by the efforts of all participants, organizers and everyone in attendance.

- 1 The Town motto, "A Place of Picnics, Porches and Progress" by Brandon Legg has encouraged a porch in the parade and a porch for program participants.
- 1 Excitement builds for the parade on Saturday. Follow the parade to Westfall Village.
- 1 Exhibits, games for children, pony rides and hay rides, petting zoo, Bounce House, two Trolley-car Tours, Car Cruise, Music, Military exhibit and vehicles, "Recognizing Your Own" and a variety of vendors.
- 1 Interfaith Service on Sunday, Aug 26 at 1:00 p.m. — suggesting ladies/girls in hats and gloves.
- 1 Some events of this year, you'll recall, include:
 - 1 The Supervisor's Proclamation and the Presentation to Girl Scout Troop 1243 for their Gold Award project — "Memories of Sand Lake"
 - 1 Sand Lake Center for the Arts sponsored events for Civil War and Bicentennial celebrations: Ann-Elizabeth Barnes

presentation of a "Hands on History" workshop and story of "Mumbet," a slave who won her freedom; "Freeing Charles" a lecture by Scott Christiansen; a play, *The Legacy of Human Property*.

- 1 Old Daley Inn on Crooked Lake was the site of an enjoyable Valentine Ball.
- 1 As yet, the Sand Lake Garden Club tree has not been planted.
- 1 The Scholarship for \$500.00 to a graduating senior was awarded.
- 1 The Essay Contest had two fourth grade winners.
- 1 The Self-guided House Tour, commemorative envelope postal cancellation, Victorian Tea Party, Blood Drive and Archeological Dig by Boy Scouts Troop 526 have been held.
- 1 Excitement builds for a surprising parade upcoming on the 25th and your invitation to attend is here!
- 1 The Children's Activity – Coloring book is yet available. We are ready to give the surprise gift for bringing your book to the Bicentennial Booth.
- 1 "Classy Chinese Auctions" produced some winners!
- 1 Historical articles in *The Advertiser* informed us about a variety of local history topics.
- 1 More of our history of Sand Lake Bicentennial Planning Committee for this one-time celebration for the Town's founding at the September 11th joint meeting with Sand Lake Historical Society (see program) beginning with 2008 "Kickoff Dinner."

Suggestion: bring your photographs of these events to share in reminiscing.

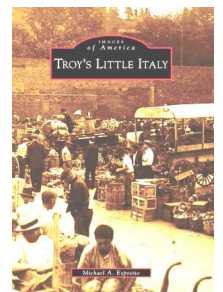
We are finding out where Westfall Village is located.

Looking forward to seeing and greeting you there. —

Nancy W. Davis, Co-chair

Upcoming SLHS programs

- 1 *Tuesday, September 11, 6:00 p.m.:* Pot Luck Dinner at Sand Lake Baptist Church. Please bring a covered dish entrée or salad. Dessert, beverages and table setting will be provided by the Trustees. The program will be a final review of 2008-2012 Bicentennial Events, presented by the Town of Sand Lake Bicentennial Planning Committee co-chairpersons Fred Erickson and Nancy W. Davis.
- 1 *Tuesday, October 9, 7:30 p.m.* at Sand Lake Baptist Church: History of West Sand Lake, presented by Chuck Viens.
- 1 *Tuesday, November 13, 7:30 p.m.* at Sand Lake Baptist Church: Mike Esposito on Troy's "Little Italy" (r)
- 1 *Tuesday, December 11, 6:00 p.m.:* Holiday Pot Luck Dinner at Knowlson House, 42 Schumann Road, Sand Lake, home of Ron Berti and Barbara Neu-Berti. Please bring a covered dish entrée or salad. Dessert, beverages and table setting will be provided by the Trustees. Program: Peg Harbour-Holland will present "Introduction to Genealogy and Resources of the Capital District Genealogical Society."



Raising the family!

Elsie Elizabeth Dobert Cann (February 10, 1922 – July 4, 2011) began her reminiscences in the 1990s and continued them into 2003. With the permission of her daughters, Arlene deGonzague, Claudia Briscoe and Lorraine Dickinson prior to her death, we will share from time to time in Historical Highlights, Elsie's memories of growing up on a farm in Taborton and capture her life prior to electricity, running water, central heat and the super market.

The picture is of (l) my aunt May Raver Senechal and (r) Elsie Dobert Cann, Christian soul sisters, who were honored in June 1982 for their tireless efforts of service to Zion's United Church of Christ, Taborton. How proud Aunt May was to have a copy of Elsie's memoirs and to share them with me. — Mary D. (Gundrum) French

Elsie shares “Raising the Family”

After Ma and Dad married, they lived in South Troy on Sheridan Avenue. George worked in a steel plant in Watervliet. Then Elsie was born at home (Sheridan Avenue) on February 10, 1922. Mrs. Karl (Aunt Helen's mother) was a midwife who helped with the delivery. George didn't like working in the steel mill. He was a farmer at heart. The Henry Brod place was for sale. It was up on the Kipple and Iona and George bought it. When Elsie was 5 or 6 months old, they moved in.

They worked very hard, and made a good home for their growing family. They both worked long hours and enjoyed their family. George made charcoal all his life and that is now a thing of the past.

Iona and George's faith in God followed them through their lives in their teaching and example. You could feel and see that faith. Ma would talk, telling you right from wrong. She would always say, “I have faith in your doing the right thing or making the right choices.” I never wanted to make my mother ashamed of me. I tried not to, but I'm sure I did more than once.

Some of our rules:

- Be kind
- Help your neighbors
- Your Word

Iona and George had 12 children – Elsie, LaVerne, Eleanor, Eugene, Clayton, Robert, Loren, Floyd, Marilyn, Elton, Joyce and Wayne. As the children grew up, the work for both parents increased. Dad had the gardens, butchering, haying, and making charcoal. As we grew up, the boys had to help Dad. Once we were big enough to help, we, both boys and girls, worked with Ma as well. The boys learned to cook and bake.

When it came to discipline when Dad said do something, or come to see what he wanted we would jump. Whenever

Mom said to do this or that, we didn't move too quick, but Mom was different; it also depended on her voice. We knew when she was real serious, not using her every day tone. Our worst discipline was having to sit on a chair for a long time. If you got caught sneaking off the chair, more time was added. An hour was awful and we learned to be careful. After a few long sittings on the chair you learned.

I remember we built snowmen sometimes. If Ma could spare a minute, she would come out and help us. We would put old mittens, hat and a scarf on it. Sometimes Ma would let us use a carrot and give us a pipe.

All wood was piled in the woodshed during the warm weather, so come the cold weather, it was dry and easier to build a fire. We would crowd by one of the stoves to warm up when we came in from chores or play. I remember in the wintertime running downstairs to get by the furnace. Boy, that really got hot!

Then come Saturday night – out came the round wash tub which was set up in front of the kitchen stove by the open oven door for our bath. The youngest first, then by age the rest of us (four or five of us). Later on, we got a hot water tank and a bathroom built on. What a blessing.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. During the winter on cold nights, Ma used to have round stones she would preheat up in the oven, wrap in a towel, and put under the covers at our feet so we would be warm. She always picked out rocks with no sharp edges or cracks. It felt so nice to put your feet on that warm bundle.

Ma made most things special for us, like pointing out Jack Frost's designs on the window in the winter. It made things seem a bit warmer in those cold days, I'm sure.

Like most people, each spring we would wait to find pretty Pussy Willows. When I was real small, Ma took us to special spots to see big blue violets and dog tooth violets. We called them cowslips. We had a

lot of apple trees, and when they were in blossom it was so beautiful.

In the summer, pointing out the big puffy clouds that would look like a dog – no a horse – or maybe a sailboat. We would lay in the yard on our backs and see what we could find in the clouds. Ma getting a little rest, and we enjoying every minute of her being with us.

When we had a chimney fire in the living room stove (which happened a couple of times each winter), Ma would grab a blanket and us and set us at the end of the walkway. She would wrap the blanket around us, then went back inside and when it was burnt out, she would bring us back in. That way she knew we were safe.

I remember Ma playing the piano. It was beautiful. I can still remember her playing *Star in the East* and several other pieces.



Ma and Dad always tried to make our Birthdays special. Ma would have a cake, or sometimes another dessert. All year long, she would be making small things to give us on our birthdays. She would embroider little aprons for us girls sometimes. I remember her ordering things from the Montgomery Ward catalog, too.

In the fall she picked a few ferns to sell, and she would take LaVerne, Eleanor and myself with a blanket to the spot in the woods where she could pick the ferns. Leaving us on the blanket, she would go pick ferns, always within talking distance. I don't know how many she would pick, but looking back I guess every bit of income counted.

In the winter, when there was ice, Dad would bring some in the house, crushed. He put it in a large dishpan. Mom would have cooked some ice cream and put it in a large kettle with a handle and cover; that was set in the dishpan of ice and a little rock salt was added. Mom would turn the kettle of ice cream mixture around and around, stopping to scrape the ice cream down to the center. They kept turning until all the liquid was ice cream. Delicious!

Ma made such delicious food. Some of my favorites were pot roast and all the trimmings, kuchen, pie, cake, ice cream, lettuce or dandelions in sour cream. Ma would make us hard candy or fudge sometimes as a special treat. Ma's potato chips were something and home made doughnuts! Wild strawberry shortcake and on and on...

Mom made us tables and cupboards from orange crates. She made us girls doll clothes and doll quilts. Eleanor and I had dolls finally, but before we did, we would wrap up a chunk of wood. She tried to make balls for the boys to bat around but they never lasted long. She made beanbags and that button on a string that you could make spin by moving it in and out. We had some toys that Ma had when she was small. We had her little trunk, and iron stove, dolls and doll clothes. I can still see them in my mind, little old-fashioned dresses, hats and corsets, shoes, and every kind of clothing. We played with them and ruined them after a while. Seems like we had a swing now and then. A proper place to put up a swing couldn't always be found. Then again, maybe we would have one until we fought over it. We never had bikes that I remember. I'm sure later they had "fixed up ones". It was had to ride between all the rocks, horses leaving manure and their large footprints. We had what was called Big Little books or something like that. My favorite was Little Orphan Annie.

I remember when any of my younger brothers or sisters fell and hurt themselves and started crying, if Dad was there, he would say, "Crawl over here by me - I'll fix it". Then he would examine each leg or arm thoroughly by bending it to make sure it was okay. By the time he finished, everything worked fine and they were laughing as all of us were by then. Then Dad would hug him or her. The so-called injury was long gone.

When one of us had a loose tooth, Dad would wait just so long. We would be playing with that tooth for days and then Dad would say, "Let me see how loose it is". Well he'd wiggle it just a bit too hard and out it would come. It was just about out anyway, but after a while we got smart and learned not to let Dad check our teeth.

Ma was always busy. She made quilts, comforters, and all our clothes, and mending! That was never ending. When we were all grown and on our own, Ma made wedding cakes. She made all our wedding cakes except for a couple of us and for many of her grandchildren. She also made many Birthday

cakes for the family She did leather work and many other crafts.

In the spring Dad would make us whistles. They were made from some sapling when the bark was on. He'd fix it up so that the whistle would slide back and forth to make different sounds. He always told us we needed to keep them wet. We tried, usually with our spit, but ended up drying out and then we had to wait until the next spring.

Ma made all our clothes; back then all babies were dressed alike, boys and girls in little gowns. I remember we had button-up shoes. All the material was real heavy, not light like today. But then the winters were colder and we only had two stoves so you had to dress warmer. Boys wore short pants, and didn't wear long pants until they got older. I remember the first time LaVerne wore long pants was for his confirmation.

Everyone old enough had to help pick berries, apples and cherries. Then we had a few bushes of currants and gooseberries. Berry picking was part of our summer work. We picked huckleberries and Dad would take them to the city to sell. He also, for a few years, supplied Flubacher's Bakery with huckleberries. I'm not sure what Dad was paid but we kids got 1 cent a quart.

One thing, you could tell who picked huckleberries and who sampled them. Open your mouth and you could be found guilty - Dad would say "No wonder you didn't pick too many - you ate them all!" We saved our berry picking money for the Church Picnic. It only added up to a quarter but we didn't care. It was a start and come the day of the Picnic, Dad gave us more than we had earned.

For a few years Dad had a car. I remember Dad taking us to church in it and sometimes everyone had to walk back home (because he had things to do at home). Dad would pile as many kids in the car as he could. The older kids stood on the running board. I'm not sure how long we had the car. Then Dad got a truck, and the Gene used it. New truck, Dad and Gene are no more.

Chores

Here are some chores all us kids had that most don't do today:

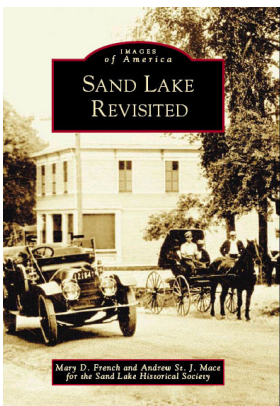
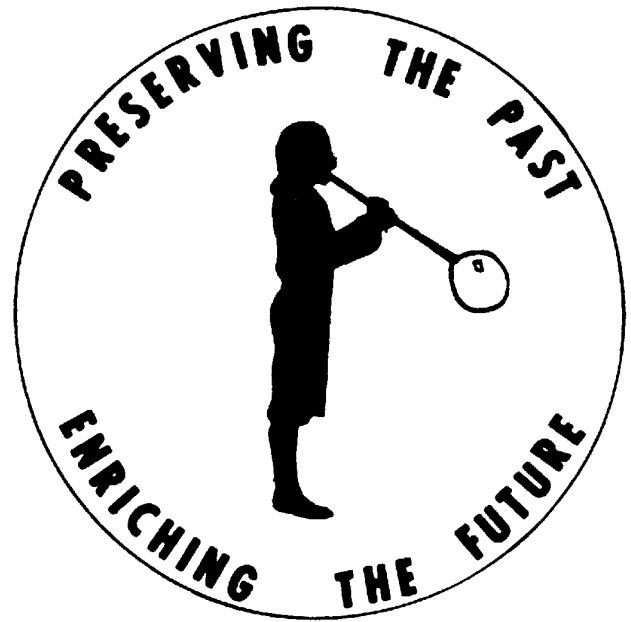
- Fill the wood box
- Fill the reservoir (holding water part of the stove)
- Fill the oil lamps and keep the lamp chimneys clean
- Turn the milk separator
- Wash the separator
- Help churn butter and work it
- Feed the animals
- Help milk the cows
- Haying
- Pick berries
- Weed the garden
- Pick potatoes and other vegetables
- Gather eggs

**Sand Lake Historical Society
Trustees 2012 – 2013**

(term ends)

Rev. Dr. Robert Loesch, President (2014)
Mary French, Vice President (2013)
Christine Kronau, Recording Secretary (2014)
Bonnie Hellum, Corresponding Secretary (2013)
Jacqueline Tremont, Treasurer (2014)

Joyce Baum (2014)
Robert Baum (2014)
Gloria Waldron Hukle (2014)
John (Mac) McEvelly (2014)
Barbara Neu (2014)
Patricia Robelotto (2014)
Judy Rowe (2014)
Joe Ferrannini (2015)
Woodie Hacker (2015)
Katie Komdat (2015)



<http://sandlakehistory.org>

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Historical Highlights

Robert Loesch, Interim Editor
Andrew Mace, Publisher



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Sand Lake Historical Society
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West Sand Lake, New York 12196



Sand Lake Historical Society

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Give this slip to someone you know to become a member.



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