



Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 42, Number 1

Our 42nd Year

Fall 2015

From the president

Although I have served as a trustee of the Sand Lake Historical Society for three years, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to the membership since I will be serving as your president for the next year. My name is Joe Ferrannini, and, even though I do not live in the Town of Sand Lake, my roots are deep in Rensselaer County, dating back over three centuries. I live in West Hoosick with my wife Anne, a teacher, and my dog Rip. I attended SUNY Potsdam where one of my majors was history. After a 20-year career in transportation, I decided to start my own business called Grave Stone Matters. Dedicated to cemetery preservation and monument conservation, something that was my passion, my business continues to preserve our history one gravestone at a time.

In 2009, then-SLHS president Mary French contacted me for advice on gravestone cleaning (see *Historical Highlights* Fall 2009). That led to the Sand Lake Union Cemetery hiring me for some resetting of vandalized monuments. Over the years, I have repaired and reset hundreds of Sand Lake's historical gravestones and monuments. While working on gravestones, my curiosity leads me to investigate who these people were, and it helps me to understand local and even national history. We must all treat cemeteries as outdoor museums and preserve them for future generations.

I serve as officer and trustee of several historical societies within the county, and hope that my knowledge and experience will help me in leading this group forward with the same excellence of our past presidents. I can be reached at 518.424.9562 or gravestonematter@aol.com. — Joe Ferrannini

2015 APHS Scholarship Thank-yous

Dear Officers + Board Members,

Thank you so much for the generous award. I enjoyed my time with the Historical Society and hope to attend and help out at a few more events this summer. I really appreciate the award and it will help for college next year. Thanks again, Elizabeth Howard

Dear Mr. McEvilly,

Thank you for generously awarding me the Sand Lake Historical Society Memorial Award. I have greatly enjoyed studying history at Averill Park, particularly in Advanced Placement Classes for the past two years. I look forward to studying the humanities this fall at Ursinus College. Sincerely, Audrey Pitcher

Upcoming Programs

- † October 13: Actor, singer, songwriter and lawyer Jack Casey will discuss *The Trial of Bat Shea*, a novel he authored based on a real murder in Troy NY in 1894. It involves politics, voter fraud and class conflict. The novel recounts how a saloon thug set out to steal an election, and how a methodical, flag-waving mob then twisted the law to extract the last final measure of revenge — a life for a life — in the name of truth and justice. 7:30 p.m. at Sand Lake Town Hall (our regular meeting site).
- † November 10 **Special Event: Teddy Roosevelt “revisits” again!** You will remember that, in April, Teddy Roosevelt (a.k.a. Joe Wiegand) “revisited” Sand Lake to a sold-out crowd at The Old Daley on Crooked Lake. That April event was filmed and will be shown in its entirety. We’ll also feature a 1989 interview with Al Coons, then-owner of the Crooked Lake Hotel. Westfield Production Company is generously providing the DVDs, which will be for sale for **\$15** to the general public and **\$10** for members of Sand Lake Historical Society. This is a great gift idea for local history buffs! The event is co-sponsored by and held at the *Sand Lake Center for the Arts*; time is 7:30 p.m. Seating is limited, and desserts will be available.

Gifts of history

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 **now only \$12.00** (including tax). *Sand Lake*, our first book, is also available for **only \$12.00** (including tax); add \$3.00 shipping, for each copy. Both together may be had for only **\$20.00!** 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 now sold out, but Marvin Bubie'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).

A set of 6 note cards for \$7.00 (tax included) is available, including: 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; and Family relaxing on their porch at lakeside cottage. The note cards are available from the Town Clerk's office.

Order information is also available on our web site. You may send an order to Sand Lake Historical Society, Box 492, West Sand Lake, NY 12196 for any of the above items.

Dues are due!

This is a gentle reminder that the Society's membership year runs from June 1 to May 31, so your membership might be coming up for renewal! If you're receiving this via USPS, your label will indicate the year of expiration. If it says 2015 or earlier, this is your last issue until you renew. (We'll notify e-mail newsletter recipients if you're due as well.) You will find a membership form elsewhere in this issue of *Historical Highlights!*

Sand Lake: Then and Now!

The free Smart Phone app, *Sand Lake: Then and Now*, is available to users of i-phones as well as droid devices. Simply go to the app store and search *Sand Lake: Then and Now*. The app gives you the chance to see what Sand Lake, West Sand Lake and Averill Park looked like in the 1800s. Images are being added continually!

If you'd like to share photos or if you have any questions about the app, call Town Historian Bob Moore 674-2026 x20 or bmoore@sand-lake.us

September SLHS meeting

Due to various production and other problems, this issue could not be delivered to members before our September meeting. September 8: Member and Town Historian Bob Moore updated us on the "Sand Lake: Then and Now" Smartphone app. He also talked about the Averill Park Schools Video Discovery Program (1985-1991) and showed some of the videos produced by the students, including an interview with High School English teacher Tony Butler, a "tour" of the Adirondacks in a sea plane, highlights of a July 4 Big Thunder Day celebration in Hoag's Corners, and the 1989 interview of Al Coons, then the owner of the Crooked Lake Hotel.

With the advent of portable VHS video recording equipment in the early 1980s, many schools started student centered video productions. In Algonquin Middle School, social studies teacher Bob Moore started a video club that grew into a district-wide video production program. Mr. Moore incorporated video projects into his curriculum but also convinced the administration to provide time to develop district programs that highlighted students, staff and programs. Using the available public access channel these programs could be broadcast throughout Rensselaer County to cable TV subscribers in order to build a better relationship between the community and its schools.

Over the six-year period, nine hour-long programs were produced, highlighting Local History, Business in Our Community, Averill Park District Arts Programs, Historic House Tours, Miller Hill School Reopening, and Crooked Lake Hotel Tour with Al Coons. These programs also include numerous interviews with teachers, principals, superintendents and people from the Sand Lake community. Starting in September 2015, the Sand Lake Town Historian, Bob Moore will schedule these programs to be broadcast before the Sand Lake Town Board Meetings each month on Time Warner Cable Channel 17 or 116.1. DVD copies of the programs will be available for loan at the Sand Lake Library as well as the High School and Algonquin Middle School libraries. We hope you will enjoy this look back to our community in the 1980s. (*More about the Video Discovery Program at:* <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nyslhs/ap-video.htm>)

Averill Park Raid Nets Five Members of Coll Gang

Quintet of Gangsters Taken into Custody Shortly After Their Leader Was Arrested!

The following is excerpted from *The Troy Times*, Monday Evening, October 5, 1931. It's not the sort of story one might have expected to happen in quiet Averill Park, New York...but it did happen. Enjoy this bit of history!

Coll Indicted in New York Today on Charge of Murder in First Degree in Connection With Harlem Baby Slaying—Pitched Battle at Averill Park, Shotguns Being Used By Bandits.

The five members of the notorious Vincent Coll gang of New York racketeers, arrested last night in a house on the Averill Park road after a fierce battle in which the gangsters supplemented guns with chairs in attacking raiding officers, were taken to New York today, where they will be held on a variety of charges. Those arrested in the raid, one of the most sensational in this county since the capture of four members of the Polka Dot gang at West Sand Lake a few years ago (*See the sidebar at right for more on the Polka Dot gang - Ed.*), are: Mike Redden; Florence Redden, his wife; Frank Facchiano; William King and Agnes DeLuccia. Joseph Reddan, 13-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Redden, was also taken into custody.

Coll in Custody.

A few hours before the Averill Park arrest Coll and six companions were taken into custody in New York. The Coll gang is suspected of the baby massacre in New York several weeks ago and New York authorities claim they have Coll directly implicated in that crime. With last night's arrests at New York and Averill Park the officers say all of the Coll gang are now under arrest.

Score of Shots.

Although more than a score of shots were fired in the Averill Park raid—all from the guns of the gangsters—no one was hit. The shooting occurred in the pitch dark house as King, Facchiano and Mrs. Redden walked into the trap prepared for them after the other two had been seized. The officers were waiting for them, and the two men were ordered to "throw them up" as they stirred embers in the fireplace. They answered by firing in every direction as the officers crouched, afraid to shoot for fear they would hit one of their own number.

The shooting stopped only when the men ran out of ammunition. As a detective snapped on a light, Mrs. Redden came from the back of the house swinging a chair. King and Facchiano also seized chairs and swung into the officers. They were quickly subdued.

Mrs. De Lueeta had been arrested as she raced from Troy in a taxicab to warn the others that the gang chief had

been taken in New York City with others of his henchmen. **Officers Crash Door.**

She told the raiders enough so they knew where the rest of the gang were. Redden was alone at "home." A Corporal of State Troopers walked boldly to the door and knocked. It opened a slit, then slammed as Redden saw who was

From the Schenectady Gazette, Wednesday Morning, October 6, 1926

As the wheels of the law began to turn for their indictment on charges of possession of burglary tools, two of four men arrested in West Sand Lake and in Delmar were identified today as having participated in robbery of the National Bank of Seven Valleys, Pa., December 15, 1925. The quartet has already been identified by post office employees as members of the "Polka Dot" gang which looted the Pawtucket, R. I., post office February 1, 1926, of \$250,000 in stamps. The Rensselaer county grand jury today considered evidence against George Garibaldi, arrested at Delmar, Frank Nolan, Charles Mead and Charles Moffette, captured at West Sand Lake, and Michael McCabe, proprietor of the Cedarhurst Hotel, on charges of possession of burglar tools. Postal Inspector Frank McCabe of this city testified concerning acetylene torches found, at "West Sand Lake, said" to be the type used to open safes. District Attorney Frederick C. Filley presented the evidence. Arraignment of the defendants at West Sand Lake will not be necessary because of the grand jury proceedings....

without. It promptly crashed in under the impact of rushing officers and the Corporal grappled with Redden, who had seized a shotgun kept handy in an umbrella rack behind the door. A bullet from a detective's pistol came close enough to Redden to take the fight out of him.

Then the officers scattered over the first floor, the lights were extinguished, and the raiders waited for King,

Facchiano and Mrs. Redden. They came in a sedan from Troy. The woman and King started for the rear door, Facchiano and a 13-year-old son of the Reddens entered the front door. Without turning on the lights King and Facchiano went to the fireplace to stir the fire. As they stooped a detective snapped "throw them up." By the time they straightened up they were shooting.

Raiding Party.

Three officers of the New York State Police and five New York detectives under Capt. Richard Oliver constituted the raiding party. The state police officers were Corp. Gaylord R. Smith and Troopers J. R. Reynolds and W. A. McDonough. The New York City officers were: Detectives Crame, Clune, Ittschner and Dolan.

The house in which the gangsters were "hiding out" is owned by William B. Gillette, an Albany artist, it was said



today by Sheriff Schneider, and the Coll gang took possession about two weeks ago.

They had been in the house only a few days before they were under the surveillance of the New York officers and Sheriff Schneider and his staff. About a week ago 16 detectives came to this vicinity from New York and four of the New York officers had been working as "laborers" in and about Averill Park getting the "low down" on the gangsters' activities.

Five other members of the gang who were about to join the others in their Averill Park retreat are believed to have escaped capture. Two of this quintet were at Hoag's Corners early last night, according to Sheriff Schneider. Deputy Sheriffs Bert Reynolds and John Clifford were watching the roads when they came upon this latter group. Two of them entered a store at Hoag's Corners and purchased soft stuff and then made inquiry as to how to reach Averill Park. The party—all men—were in the store only a few minutes and sped away in a green Packard roadster bearing a 9-Y license number.

Leased House Last Month.

Mr. Gillette said today that he leased the house on September 26 to a man who gave the name of John Lyons, who said he was a Newark, N. J., contractor. It is believed that this man was Mike Redden. He told Mr. Gillette that his son was in poor health and thought the location in Averill Park would be conducive to the boy's convalescence. According to the authorities, Lyons or Redden was introduced to Mr. Gillette by a man named Hess of Watervliet.

The investigating officers learned that Coll and Jimmy Ordrianni were at the Gillette house about a week ago and that they returned to New York after spending a day or two there.

Coll was expected to return to Averill Park today and his arrest in New York hastened the raid on the Averill Park house. The interior of the house was wrecked in the melee between the gangsters and the arresting officers. A large vase was shattered; there were two bullet holes in one of the walls of the living room; the large oak front door was splintered and the glass from the door was scattered about the front porch. Blood stains were smeared about the right wall of the living room, mute evidence of the wounds inflicted by the officers in subduing their prisoners. Several empty whisky bottles were scattered about the floors. Evidence of practically the same nature was found on the second floor.

According to persons residing in the vicinity they were not aware they had gangsters for neighbors until the raid last night. They said they noticed nothing out of the ordinary regarding the Gillette house and that as far as they knew the gangsters were living a quiet life there.

At the Rensselaer County jail today Captain Oliver said that all of the five persons arrested at Averill Park will be held on open charges pending a minute investigation of their activities since the Bronx baby slaying.

Mrs. Agnes DeLuccia was the first of the quintet apprehended last night. She arrived at the Gillette house in a taxi, in which she came from Albany. The driver of the taxi, whose name was not disclosed, answered questions of the New York detectives satisfactorily and was not held. She was overpowered in the driveway as she alighted from the cab.

Picture caption: Between two detectives, hatless, is Willie King, alias Mike Redden. Woman in rear is Mrs. Agnes DeLuccia, whose husband was arrested in New York yesterday and who was sent to warn gang hiding out near Averill Park of their danger.

Coll Gangsters As They Left Troy Jail Cell



Indicted for Murder.

Coll and Frank Giordano were indicted at New York today for murder in the first degree in connection with the baby slayings.

The raid then followed, the officers entering through doors and windows simultaneously. Redden, who was standing on the stairs leading to the second floor, was the first to notice the officers. He immediately pulled out the one light and the melee was on. Redden was subdued by Corporal Smith and Detective Dolan. Fanchianno and Mrs. Redden were not in the house at the time and the officers took up their vigil waiting their return. They drove up about an hour later. As Fanchianno alighted from his car he was set upon by Corporal Smith and Detective Clune, the detective knocking a revolver from Fanchianno's

hands.

The two men and the two women were taken to the Rensselaer County Jail, where they passed the night and the Redden boy was taken to the Humane Society. They were returned to New York today in three cars in custody of Captain Oliver and four other detectives.

"These prisoners are the baby killers," Inspector John J. Sullivan of the New York police said today as the five mounted the brightly lighted platform in the police lineup. "They are responsible for the shooting in East 107th Street. We have information that each and every one of them was in the automobile at the time of the killing."

Last night police said Coll and one of his gangsters had been identified as occupants of the car. They refused to say where they got their information because of danger to their informant.

Frank Giordano, who is nearly 10 years older than the gangster leader, actually did the shooting, Inspector Sullivan said.

Coll sighed with relief last night when he found that men who shoved pistols against his stomach as he encountered them in a hotel corridor were not members of the gang of his arch-enemy, "Dutch" Schultz, Bronx beer

baron, but only the police arresting him for murder and appeared to be perfectly at ease.

He did not seem to mind when Inspector Sullivan called him a coward in a stinging speech directed at him alone.

"Coll showed what a coward he was last night," the Inspector said. "When the detectives entered his room they searched him and found six cartridges on his person and a revolver in the room.

"We know very well it was his revolver, yet he said it belonged to a girl we found in the room. He stood by and allowed her to claim ownership."

"The last time you were here you had light brown hair," Inspector Sullivan remarked. "Why did you dye it jet black?"

"I'll answer that when I see my counsel," Coll replied.

Giordano described himself as an acrobatic dancer, and Inspector Sullivan identified Odierno as "a professional assassin" and charged him with having killed Joseph Mullins, a "Dutch" Schultz follower, last Friday.

Although Inspector Sullivan charged all five of the men in the lineup today with the Harlem shooting. Assistant District Attorney P. Francis Marron said he would go before the Grand Jury today to seek indictments for first degree murder against only Coll and Giordano and two other men not yet arrested.

Among those to appear before the Grand Jury, he said, would be the eyewitness, whose identity is being carefully guarded by the police.

Desperado Arrested.

Coll, a 23-year-old desperado blamed for many crimes but consistently elusive, offered no resistance when detectives surprised him at a hotel in New York where he was registered under an alias. His brown hair had been dyed black, and he had grown a mustache.

When the formal charge of murdering five-year-old Michael Vengalli last July 28 was read to him at the police station this morning, he denied it. He said he had been out of town all summer, returning only Friday.

Positively Identified.

Police Commissioner Mulrooney, however, said there was no mistake. Witnesses, he said, had identified Coll positively as one of the men in the automobile from which poured bullets that raked the "little Italy" street on which children were at play. The Vengalli boy was killed and four of his playmates were wounded. One of them was tumbled from a baby carriage. The gunfire was meant for a man lounging in a doorway. Though 60 shots were fired, the man was not hurt.

Coll had \$4,600 in his pocket. Several other members of his gang each had \$1,000 or more in currency.

The murder Friday of Joe Mullins— a "Dutch" Schultz gangster— and the bombing of a garage a few hours later provided the clew which snared Coll. The number of the license plates of the car used by Mullins' slayers and on the car used by the garage bombers were obtained. Thus it was discovered that the same machine was used in both crimes.

Discovered Car.

A policeman saw the car in a garage. Headquarters was notified and 200 detectives were thrown into the area. A man giving the name Vincent DeLucia called for the car and was arrested. On information obtained from him other arrests were made, including two women and Dominick ("Toughy") Adierno. Commissioner Mulrooney said Adierno was in the car when the baby killing was done.

Others arrested were Pasquale Del Grego, Michael Baisle, Frankie Giordano (five pistols and a silencer were

found in his apartment), Betty White and Lottie Kreisberger. Two pistols were found in Coll's hotel room.

Coll was first arrested when he was 11 years old.

Thereafter he served short terms for larceny, unlawful entry and similar crimes. Until last March, he was regarded as a lieutenant of "Dutch" Schultz, but in recent months he has been at war with Schultz, police said, over beer privileges in the Bronx.

CAPTAIN OLIVER TELLS OF ARREST

When interviewed last night by a Troy Times reporter, after the raid and arrests at the Averill Park residence, Captain Frank Oliver of the New York city detectives, who headed a force of detectives and State Troopers in making the coup, declared that they had been watching and shadowing, its occupants for some time. He said they were sent to this vicinity by Commissioner Mulrooney of the New York Police Department to work with the New York force in rounding up the Coll gang in that city and at their "hideout" here. He said they found that "a man named Hess, had rented the beautiful home of William B. Gillette, artist and nature lover, located on the Troy-Averill Park road overlooking Crystal Lake, earlier in the season." Mr. Gillette today said that Eugene Hess and family occupied the home during the summer, but on September 26 he rented it to a Patrick Lyons and wife.

Captain Oliver said: "Diamond, who has been a frequent visitor at the residence, knew he was going to prison for two years, and secured the place from which Coll and his gang were to operate his racketeering ring game upstate while he was behind the bars. We learned that for some time members of the gang had been practicing at targets in the woods and field back of the house with machine guns and, sawed-off shotguns," continued the Captain, "and on information we had we learned that Coll was due to arrive tomorrow." The arrests of the gang in New York city and the arrival of Mrs. Agnes DeLucia, wife of "Jimmy, the Wop," precipitated action between 10 and 11 o'clock last night.

Captain Oliver said those inside refused to open the door and the officers smashed it in. Several shots were fired, he said, by both sides, but no one was hit, though the inmates put up a fight before they were subdued. The appearance of the residence today indicated that many more than a few shots were fired and that a terrific battle had raged for some time. He said that beside the six prisoners they captured two machine guns, a sawed-off shotgun, a 22-caliber repeater, four revolvers, a lot of ammunition and some targets.

The prisoners bore many evidences of the severe beating that had been given them by the officers, doubtless having in mind the fact that they were dealing with a desperate gang resisting arrest and the further fact that Diamond and his cohorts had succeeded heretofore in eluding punishment in the courts even when caught by the police. Captain Oliver stressed the difficulties encountered in watching and apprehending such a gang in a secluded and respectable residential neighborhood.

Mr. Gillette's Statement.

In a statement to The Troy Times today Mr. Gillette told how he unwittingly rented his house to the gangsters. About September 19 he said a man who gave the name of Patrick Lyons, who said he was a contracting carpenter, came to his house with a woman and a boy about 13 years of age. Lyons, who is believed to be Michael Redden, introduced the woman as his wife and the boy as his son. He said he resided at 825 Clinton Street, Newark, N. J. There was a for sale on the house, and Lyons stated that he was in the

market to buy, explaining that the boy was suffering from an affected lung and that he wished to care for him in a high altitude. Lyons leased the house for three months with the understanding that if it appealed to him he would purchase the property at the expiration of the lease. Lyons further stated that he had been camping on the banks of the Hudson above Waterford and that with the advent of cold weather he required a warm house.

As a reference Lyons gave Mr. Gillette the Dollar Savings Bank of New York. In the meantime Mr. Gillette suffered an attack of asthma and for this reason he had not as yet investigated the reference. He intended to write to the Dollar Bank.

The man known to Mr. Gillette as Patrick Lyons took possession of the house September 26.

TRIED TO ENTER RESIDENCE AT WEST SAND LAKE

Just before 8 o'clock last night Isaac McGowan was resting comfortably at his home on Sunny Outlook Hill overlooking the village of West Sand Lake, after his family had gone to church services, when he was startled by a clamor at the front door. There he was confronted by a woman, about 35 years of age, well dressed and wearing a fur short coat, who was evidently much perturbed and demanded to be admitted. Mr. McGowan refused. She explained "I've been riding around in a taxicab since before dark, trying to find Mr. Gillette's home at Crystal Lake, where my people are staying. The driver took me out to some Crystal Beach on the Schenectady Road and I've been riding all around and don't know where I am. I'm afraid and don't dare go any further. Won't you let me in and send this man away?"

Mr. McGowan told her to drive down into the village, where there are tourist places. She called the driver of a Yellow taxicab, who was in the road, gave him a \$5 bill for a taxi charge of \$4.50 and told him to get away quickly. But Mr. McGowan halted him and told him to take the woman away. She had every appearance of being perturbed and kept looking furtively up and down the highway. She pleaded with Mr. McGowan to take her to Averill Park; then down to the village, and when he repeatedly refused, begged to be allowed to sit on the piazza. Finally he ordered her off the place and she entered the taxicab and drove off toward the village. Today Mr. McGowan identified the woman, from her description, as Mrs. Agnes DeLuccia who came from New York and was trying to notify Michael Redden and the others at the Gillette residence of the capture of the Coll gang in the metropolis.

Remembering SLHS Members

In recent months we have lost the following long-time members of the Sand Lake Historical Society — Ruth Bordt, Alan Fuess, Shirley Rescott, and Judy Rowe — all of whom made immeasurable contributions to the success and growth of the Society and to the "cause" of history and preservation in our town. Our condolences to their families and to all who knew them. Of particular note, Judy's family has asked that any *memorial contributions be made in her name to the Sand Lake Historical Society.*

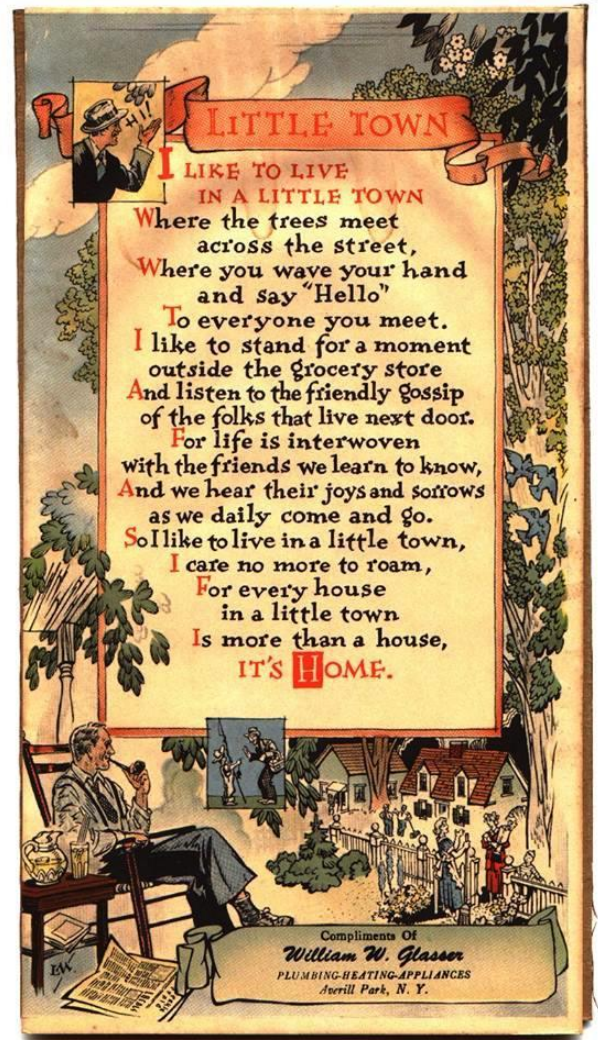
Officers and Trustees of the Society 2015-16

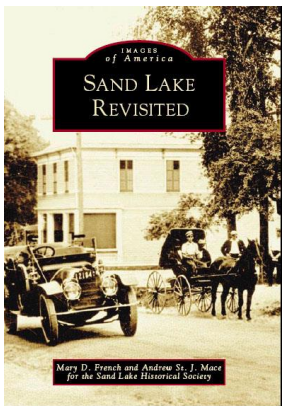
Joe Ferrannini, President (2018)
Joan Fuess, Vice President (2017)
Rosemarie Sniezyk, Recording Secretary (2018)
Dee Erickson, Corresponding Secretary (2016)
Barbara Neu-Berti, Treasurer (2017)

Anna Church (2016)
Bonnie Hellum (2016)
Kathryn (Katie) Komdat (2018)
John (Mac) McEvilly (2017)
Andrew Mace (2018)
Bob Moore (2017)
Brian Morini (2018)
Sue Powers (2018)
Mary June Roy (2017)
Mary Weber (2017)

Trade cards

So-called trade cars were very popular in the early 20th century, and that continued for some time. Thanks to his family, we have for your enjoyment one given out by **William W. Glasser** (Plumbing-Heating-Appliances) of Averill Park (date unknown; 1950s?).





<http://sandlakehistory.org>
E-mail: sandlakehistory@aol.com
Historical Highlights
Andrew Mace, Editor/Publisher



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Sand Lake Historical Society

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