



Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 45, Number 1

Our 45th Year

Summer 2018

From the president

As I reviewed our achievements for 2017-2018, I noted that, in addition to new members, we also set attendance records! I am delighted that so many in the Capital District are interested in our local history.

Our Editor, Andy Mace, has been busy providing more historic information for you via this added issue of *Historical Highlights*, the Driving Tour of Sand Lake brochure, and hot-off-the-press *Facts and Artifacts* reprints.

The Hazel Drew project still continues with yet another book being written. John Holser hopes to have a preview of his docudrama ready in November.

Joe Ferrannini restored Hazel Drew's stone and the family plot in the Brookside Cemetery, Poestenkill.

Tammy Hathaway shared with the board the progress of the Historic Neighborhoods Project. The history of the historic homes and other structures in the Fox Mansion, Schumann Road and Glass Lake areas are being recorded.

Looking forward to seeing you in the Fall! -- *Joan Fuess, President*

Upcoming programs

1 **September 11: Heidi Hill, Site Manager for Schuyler Mansion and Crailo State Historic Sites**, will give a presentation on Alexander Hamilton, who has reentered popular culture with the production of the musical, "Hamilton." Hill will tell of young Hamilton's connection with the family of General Philip Schuyler of Albany. Serving as George Washington's aide-de-camp. He first met the Schuyler family in 1777 during a mission to Albany seeking military support from General Horatio Gates. In 1780, Schuyler's daughter Elizabeth met him again, and they began letter writing. Their relationship bloomed rapidly, and they were married at the Schuyler mansion in December of the same year. Their marriage produced eight children and ended in 1804 with Alexander's death from a fatal wound during a duel with Aaron Burr. Hill holds a degree in museum studies from the Cooperstown Graduate program and a B.A. in History from Binghamton University. She has also worked at the Clermont and Olana Historic Sites and appeared in the WMHT-TV production "Hamilton's Albany." [*Sand Lake Town Hall; 7:30 p.m.*]

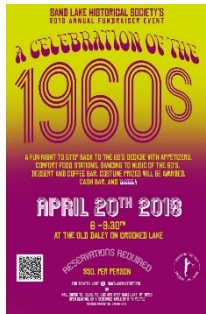
1 **October 9: Town Historian Bob Moore** will briefly bring us up to date on the Hazel Drew murder case and introduce the new Sand Lake Oral History Project. The project is a collaboration between the Historical Society and the historian's office and will begin October 11th. The remainder of the evening will be devoted to an interactive power point presentation showing old photos of the hamlets of Sand Lake, West Sand Lake and Averill Park. Audience members will be invited to tell their remembrances of Sand Lake, the way it used to be. [*Sand Lake Town Hall; 7:30 p.m.*]

Our Summer issue takes a look at...WAIT! Summer issue? Yes, something new, in celebration of our 45th year! Thanks primarily to old newspaper articles, we'll take a virtual ride from Albia to Averill Park on the old Troy & New England Railroad and show how easy it is to get "sidetracked" (just like a trolley car) as we look back on that history! That and more inside!

NOTE: Your editor's best-laid plans for the inaugural Summer issue got "sidetracked" as well...by a busy summer. Nonetheless, here it is, with the Fall (45-2) issue to come out mid-October (we hope), Winter (45-3) in January and Spring (45-4) in late March or early April!

Recent past programs and events

Tuesday, April 10: Ron Hughes discussed his book *Who Killed Hazel Drew?* at the rescheduled March meeting of the Sand Lake Historical Society. John Holser also presented on his upcoming film.



Friday, April 20: We stepped back to the 1960s at the Old Daley on Crooked Lake! Food, Dancing & a DJ, and a look back at what was happening in Sand Lake, around the country and the world. Photos elsewhere in this issue!

Tuesday, May 8: Our *Annual Dinner, Meeting and Program* was held at Church of the Covenant in Averill Park and catered by the Mess Hall! At the **Annual Meeting**, we elected four new trustees: *Holli Boyd-White, Jim Powers, Drew White* and *Tedi Toca*. Current Board members *Jane Minotti, Sue Powers* and *Rosemarie Sniezyk* all were eligible for second terms and were re-elected.

After the Meeting, our **Program** featured *Dan Berggren*, with a terrific program of traditional and original music of the Adirondacks.

Saturday, June 17: The Sand Lake Historical Society took part in the Kiwanis Summerfest with a special self-guided tour and exhibits at SLCA and Town Hall. ***Please note that copies of the tour are still available!***

Tuesday, June 12: North Greenbush Town Historian *Jim Greenfield* gave a lecture on the Defreestville and Wynantskill, two hamlets in North Greenbush. Mr. Greenfield will discuss Defreestville and Wynantskill's naming and growth from the 1600s to the 21st century, the biggest influences in the hamlets' development, and many other topics and people.

SLHS Facebook page and web site

If you haven't already done so, look for us on Facebook! It's a great place to get the most up-to-date news on meetings and events, along with other items of interest from us and from other places and groups in the Capital District. And occasionally, you'll see things you won't see in our newsletter or the web site!

We've developed quite the following beyond our members, and the Facebook page proved a true "lifesaver" when our web site provider had server problems that prevented us from updating our web

site just as we were beginning to promote the "Big Band Gala" in April 2016. From October 2017 to January 2018, we went from **180** to **225** "Page Likes"! In early May, we were at **292**, and as of this writing in mid-August, we're at **327**!

Look on our web site for the link or go to <https://www.facebook.com/SandLakeHistoricalSociety> — "Like" us...and enjoy!

Our web site has been hosted for many years now by Rootsweb, part of Ancestry.com. Unfortunately, their entire site was hit with a major "denial of service" hacking, and the site has been down since early this year. Meanwhile, sandlakehistory.org temporarily points to our Facebook page, but we hope to have a new host soon!

Facts and Artifacts

Long-time members may recall that *Facts and Artifacts* was an early name for this newsletter. We have revived that name for use as a reprint series, bringing back and, in some cases expanding on, topics covered in the past 45 years.

Currently, there are 15 of these, with more on the way, on topics such as *1. Memories of Faith Mills; 2. Hamlets; 3. Ice Harvesting on Burden Lake; 4. World War I and Sand Lake; 5. Methodist Farm Centennial 1917-2017; 6. Tin Clapper Shop; 7. Coll Gang – Cedarhurst – Legs Diamond; 8. Schools before 1929; 9. Rensselaer Village (glass works); 10. Historical Markers in the Town of Sand Lake' 11. Sand Lake in 1958; 12. Clifford Hastings brings electricity to West Sand Lake (pending); 13. The Sand Lake Advertiser 60th anniversary; 14. Sand Lake's agricultural history; 15. Sand Lake – Mill Town; and 16. Variety Store/Young's Pharmacy.*

We will try to have copies of some or all available at meetings and events, generally at 50¢ each!

SLHS member notification list

Those of you who have shared your email address with us should be familiar with our list called "[slhs-members @ googlegroups.com](mailto:slhs-members@googlegroups.com)." This is an announce-only list to quickly get word to members regarding cancellations, postponements and/or program reminders. This is *not* a discussion list. Postings should only run about 1-2 per month, and you will be offered the opportunity to opt out. We'll also be happy to add members whose email address was not on file.

This will supplement any notifications on the School Closing Network or our Facebook page and web site.

'Open Car' Riding Was Popular In Troy Area To Visit Summer Spots

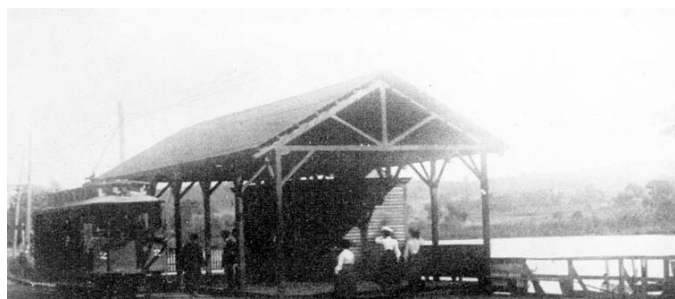
BY HERBERT A. CALKINS (from *The Times Record*, Troy, N. Y., Thursday Evening, July 12, 1945) (Transcribed, typos and all, and edited. What we didn't have room for here is just as fascinating, and you'll see it eventually on our website!)

There'll be no riding on the open cars" this summer for the reason that there are no "open cars," and in the immediate vicinity of Troy there are no railways for "open cars" if there happened to be any. "Motorneers" -- that's what they were called in those days — of "open cars" and pilots of Troy-Albany steamboats, have disappeared from the scene like the whistles letter carriers used to blow and the horns of the Friday morning fish peddlers.

In Troy "open cars," back some years ago —away back shortly after the turn of the century — were in operation/ during the summer on all of the local trolley lines. The Belt Line in Cohoes which ran past the Harmony Mills, the old Cataract House and the falls in the Mohawk River, was a particularly well patronized line on a hot night.

There were larger "open cars" in use on the Hudson Valley Railway which, operating from Waterford, northward to Mechanicville, Stillwater, Saratoga Springs, Warrensburg and other points, was discontinued Dec. 1, 1928.

Then there was the Troy & New England Railway extending from Albia through Wynantskill, Snyders Corners, West Sand Lake to Averill Park; a road that began operations in 1896 and concluded its service March 31, 1925.



Above: The Albia Terminal located, between Albia and Wynantskill. The water in the background was the Albia Pond, which was created by damming the Wynantskill, which was needed for area mills. The pond is now gone and just the creek flows through the area. The Troy Car shop and office was located a block from this location at the corner of Pawling and Victoria avenues. The former Terminal Tavern (tence the name) is located right between the shops and the Albia Terminal. Before the merger with the United Traction Company, riders from Troy had to depart a block or so from the UTC line and walk to the T&NE's terminal. A connection was made in 1910 so that passengers could continue on the same car from Averill Park to Downtown Troy. (Joseph Smith/Ken Bradford Collection; courtesy Gino's Rail page website)

The Old T. & N. E.

No trolley line was more extensively used during the summer than the old T. & N. E. On a hot night the "open cars" on this road were always crowded as were the cars of the "feeder line," the Albia trolleys of the United Traction Co., which conveyed patrons from the downtown district of Troy to the Albia terminus of the Troy New England.

Let's make believe that the hands of Time's great cosmic clock can be turned backwards. Let's imagine, for the possible amusement of the younger generation and to revivify the remembrance of the elder folks, that Time has slipped backwards to the summer of 1905 in Troy....

Here we are in Franklin Square waiting for the Albia trolley car. We're going out to Averill Park. Benny Van Keuren, the U. T. C. starter at Franklin Square, says the Albia car is ten minutes late.

Here comes the Albia-bound trolley car. It's crowded. Several men are standing on the top step which runs along the right hand side of the car; the left side having a cord net across it. No one gets on or off that side. We finally crowd on the rear platform.

The car goes down River to Fulton Street and then down Third Street. [It then] turns easterly into Congress Street... At Congress Street and Fifth Avenue the trolley car turns into Fifth Avenue and proceeds to Ferry Street. At Ferry Street and Fifth Avenue the car stops and the conductor pushes us away from the back part of the rear platform so he can lift up and let down a lever which drops a "backup brake" behind the rear wheels of the car. This is so if the car has to stop on the Ferry Street hill it won't slide backwards.

Sounds Two Bells.

Then the conductor gives the motor-man two bells, the car turns the corner into Ferry Street and slowly makes its way up...to Congress Street, across the "stone bridge," along Pawling Avenue and eventually, after many stops, the car arrives at the end of the line just beyond Victoria Avenue and the car barn of the Troy & tNew England Railway. Later, many years later, following the abandonment of the railway, the old barn became the property of the Hastings Ice Co.

In 1905 the Troy & New England was a comparatively new railway, it having been opened only ten years previous. Originally Its promoters hoped to extend the road to Pittsfield, Mass., but it only got as far as Averill Park.

The Troy & New England Railway ordinarily ran separate cars but frequently on holidays or when there was a picnic at Brookside Park or at Sand Lake, "trailers" were used. The "trailer" was a slightly smaller car than the regular "power" car and was attached to the latter car. There was no trolley pole on the "trailer." The "trailer" usually had a brakeman who applied the brake on the "dead" car when the motorman on the car ahead applied his brake.

Speaking of Averill Park, Fred L. Strickland, 74 Congress Street, recently sent a communication to The Record Newspapers regarding the old days there. He referred to the horse drawn stages that before the Troy & New England was built used to have their terminus in Troy at the old Gifford House in Congress Street. He recalled the days when drivers of hired surreys and coaches for the trip from Troy to Averill Park charged \$10 and tips ranged from a dollar to \$5.

Rush for Front Saet.

We get off the car from Troy and join the crowd in waiting for the incoming car on the Troy & New England. There'll be some rush for the front seat tonight but we'll try to make it. In back of the station of the Troy & New England, over across Albia Pond, is Albia Grove, a summer pleasure resort established by William Norworthy.

A wooden bridge spans a narrow part of the pond to the west of the station and across this, patrons of the park walk. The grove is all lit up tonight and aa we wait for the incoming trolley car we can hear the mechanical music of concessions there and the sound of shots from the shooting gallery.

Finally the car arrives. The crowd barely waits for the incoming passengers to alight. There is a mad scramble for seats. Even the motorman has to almost fight to get off the platform with the controller handle and the "back up" lever in one of his hands.

The conductor with a long rope switches the trolley pole around and eventually we get started. Several men are standing on the right hand step on the side of the car. Now comes the conductor. It looks like Asa Bentley; it is. Afterwards Asa is going to be superintendent of the Troy & New England.

He has several long colored pasteboard tickets hanging on a metal ring at his belt and a punch with a bell on it. Wynantskill — he takes your fare and punches a ticket. West Sand Lake — another fare and another colored ticket is punched. Averill Park — another colored ticket gets a punch.



Above: the stop at Snyder's Corners, with the Averill Park car in the background. Note "Bus to Snyder's Lake" inscription; "bus" might be a bit of a misnomer for what appears to be a typical Ford Model T touring car!

Asa has to be somewhat of an acrobat to climb around those passengers standing on the side step. One-man trolley cars and busses are far in the offing. Up there on the inside of the top of the front platform, painted in large letters, is "Do Not Talk to the Motorneer." The "motorneer's" grandson now runs a bus, shifts gears, guides the vehicle in and out of traffic, collects fares, makes change, issues transfers and isn't adverse to carrying on a conversation with a good looking girl, but all of this will take place forty years later when times have changed.

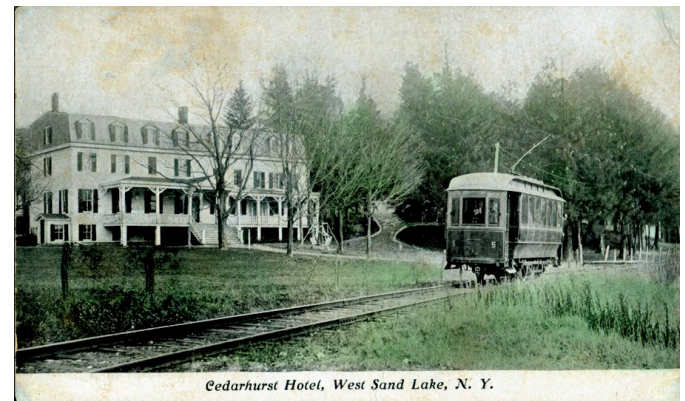
With Lawn Mower.

The trolley cars gathers speed passing Albia Pond in the right It stops at Wynantskill the trip is resumed. It stops again at Snyders Corners. Ephraim J. Peasley gets off after awhile with a lawn mower, a bag of grass seed and a basket of groceries. He says there ought to be a law about crowding cars like this. If he lives until 1945 he'll think that car was comparatively empty compared with the busses of today at rush hour.



Brookside, West Sand Lake.

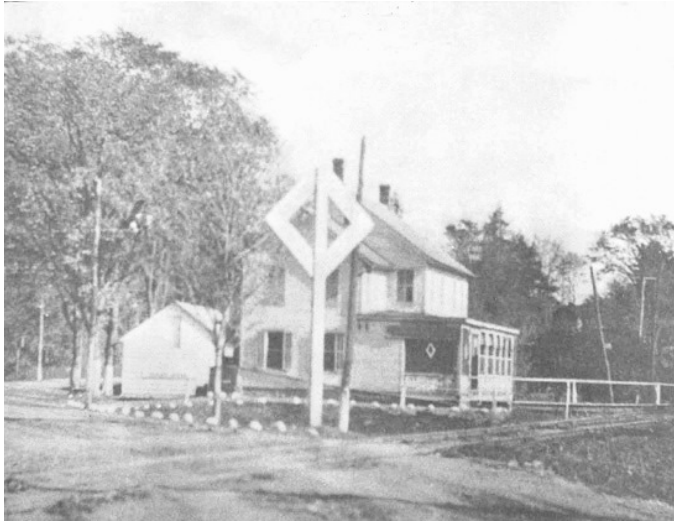
The car moves on toward Averill Park. A short distance further on, just before we pass the brick power house which is off there to the left, the car goes on to a siding to wait for the Albia bound car.



Finally there comes the sound of a humming on the trolley wire overhead. The other car is coming. Then its lights are seen as it rounds the curve up ahead. It comes straight onward, slows down, swerves

to the left and passes on the other track. Our car resumes its trip.

On we go, the night wind blowing in our faces there on the front seat. Across the high wooden trestle over the creek. Brookside Park, West Sand Lake — an old trolley car is the waiting room at West Sand Lake. [Ed. Note: more about that trestle in a separate article!] We pass MacLaren's mill, Cedarhurst, a large summer boarding house off to the left beyond the mill. The car skims the corner of a house a short distance this side of the Reichards Lake stop, then onward past the Elk Horn Hotel. That place became Journey's End years later.



This particular image of the Elk Horn / Journey's End appeared on the 1967 Tremont Lumber Company calendar!

Finally we reach the long grade that leads up to Averill Park. Starting up the grade the speed of the car begins to slacken. Slower and slower. Finally it is only going about three miles an hour. Two or three of the young fellows jump off the side step and run alongside the car. Somebody yells, "Git a horse."

Getting To Averill Park.

Eventually we reach Averill Park. To the left, just before the car enters the station, is a large wooden barn painted red— Larkins' livery stable. There's a sign on it advertising American Seal Paints. The south side of the station has a roof over it. The car goes under it and stops. Quite a crowd of persons are in waiting to board the car for the trip back to Albia.

The passengers alight and most of them make their way up the hill from the station. Several horse drawn carriages are standing about the station — the taxis of 1905. To the left, near the top of the hill, is the Park House, a large wooden hotel building with a wide porch around it. It is one of the most popular summer hotels of the district.

Mr. Strickland in his letter to The Record Newspapers recalls that "as many as forty rigs would be at the Park House on a Sunday. Many wealthy New York families spent the summer there."

Today the site of the Park House is vacant land. The old hotel was destroyed by fire Dec. 8, 1921.



The Averill Park station, terminus of the T.&N.E.R.R., is to the left. At the near right is the barn for the "Park House."

[Ed. Note: the "Park House" had quite the history; see separate article!]

But tonight — back in 1905 — as the people walk up the path from the railway station, the Park House is all alight. Persons are sitting out on the porch in chairs; there is the sound of conversation and of laughter. Averill Park is in its most prosperous period.



The Park House, shown here when it was known as 'Averill Park Hotel, W. Hilke, Prop.'

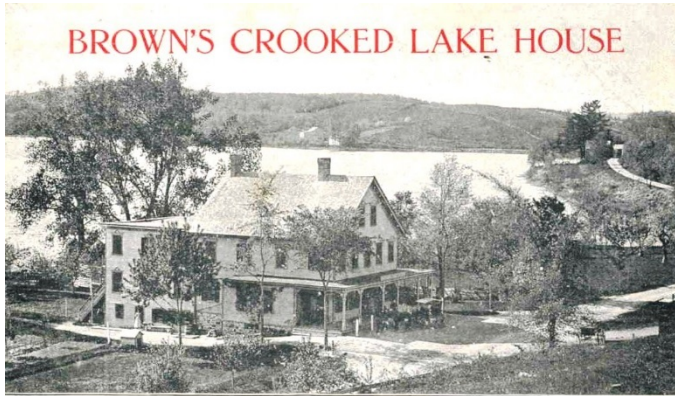
If we had gone the other way from the station and walked up the opposite hill, we would have been on "The Avenue," which extends southerly and then to the left to join the Burden Lake highway.

But most of the passengers keep on up the northerly hill and reach the junction of the West Sand Lake and Wynantskill roads. Down there to the right a short ways is Wright's drug store and across from the drug store, Gabeler's hotel. Further down the road to the right is Tilloson's hotel, later, much later, destined to be badly damaged by fire and then torn down.

Crooked Lake.

We follow the crowd across the main highway and down another road, straight ahead, to the pine grove and to Sand Lake. Later the lake will be renamed Crystal Lake. From the pavilion in the grove off to the left comes the sound of music. They are dancing there.

If we had been observant down there at the railway station we would likely have seen a cariole with words, "Brown's Crooked Lake House," on the sides of the vehicle. It was there to convey patrons of the Crooked Lake House to the hostelry.



WILLET A. BROWN, Proprietor, (Sand Lake) P. O. Address, AVERILL PARK, N. Y.

Brown's Crooked Lake House

Tonight, back in 1906, we follow the crowd to the grove and to the dance pavilion. Possibly later we rent a rowboat and take a moonlight ride on Sand Lake. It's dark down there in the grove. Up above the stars look much brighter than they do in the city.

Things look differently. Why shouldn't they; It's 40 years ago. We've got to pass through two World Wars yet and we've got to progress. But somehow with all of the progression there are old timers who would like to go back and take some of the younger folks for a ride on the old Troy & New England Railway to Averill Park.



"A glimpse of Crystal Lake, Averill Park, N. Y."

But that is Impossible. Time doesn't run backwards. The roadbed of the old railway is long since overgrown with weeds and brush. The Park House, Tillson's hotel, the horse drawn "taxis," Brown's cariole to Crooked Lake, the fair grounds at West Sand Lake, Cedarhurst—they're only recollections of yesterday.

Now let's take a brief look at some of the "news" items mentioned in the preceding article.

**[EXCERPTED FROM] THE TROY TIMES,
TROY, N. Y., THURSDAY EVENING,
DECEMBER 8, 1921
HOTEL DESTROYED.**

Averill Park Hostelry Burned—Proprietor in Serious Condition From Shock—Early Morning Outbreak—Building Was at One Time the Sand Lake Collegiate Institute—Landmark of the County.

The Averill Park Hotel, formerly the site of the Sand Lake Collegiate Institute, and an old landmark in Rensselaer County, was destroyed by fire early this morning. All the furnishings were a complete loss. The structure has a history that dates back almost a century. A. H. Boarer, the owner, purchased the hotel from the late William H. Hilke several years ago...

Sand Lake Collegiate Institute.
THIS Institution, *exclusively for Board-*
ers and limited to 36 Students, is situated in Rensselaer County, ten miles east from Albany, and the same distance from Troy, in a region of country unsurpassed for health and picturesque scenery.
 The Buildings of the Institute, erected at a large expense, are new, and replete with every convenience for a first class Boarding School for Boys.
 To the buildings heretofore in use, a spacious Gymnasium has been recently added. In adaptation and architectural elegance they are entirely model and unique. Catalogues containing full information with view of buildings, can be had at the News office and Bookstore of A. HILL, Saratoga Springs.

Tavern and School.

Years ago the tavern was known as the Sand Lake Hotel. Almost eighty-five years ago the hotel was built. It was first operated by Theodorus Gregory. A few years later the structure was badly damaged by fire, but was rebuilt and soon after sold to Franklin Shaw. The latter disposed of it to Daniel M. Gregory, whose son Elias conducted the hotel for more than five years. Several other proprietors followed Mr. Gregory, and [in 1852 the building became] the Sand Lake Collegiate Institute. This school was conducted for more than twenty years by William H. Scram.

Again a Hotel.

After the death of Principal Scram the building was again converted into a hotel with Willard Griggs as the proprietor. The latter sold the property to Horatio F. and James K. Averill, who in the early eighties formed The

Averill Park Land Company, giving the village of Averill Park the name by which it is known to-day. The Averills conducted the tavern for a number of years, and after their death the estate continued to lease the property for hotel purposes. It was about twelve years ago that the late William H. Hilke purchased the property and continued the hostelry until it was purchased by the present owner....

The ad above for "Averill Park Hotel" bears a closer look, given a fascinating connection to Albany. The ad, from the *Albany Evening Times*, June 21, 1879, reads as follows:

SUMMER RESORTS.
AVERILL PARK HOTEL,
 Sand Lake, Rensselaer Co., N. Y.
 Ten miles from both Albany and Troy. Seven hundred feet above the waters of the Hudson. Park of forty acres, extensive lawns, large shade trees, and beautiful groves. Fine driving, boating, fishing and mountain air. Daily stage from Troy House, Troy, and from the Resmore, Albany.
OPENS JUNE 25th, 1879.
 Terms: \$10 to \$12 Per Week.
 SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS for the SEASON.
 Western Union Telegraph Office in Hotel.
 Fishing Tackle, Bait, &c., furnished.
 J. B. ADAM BLAKE, Proprietor.

AVERILL PARK HOTEL

Sand Lake, Rensselaer Co, N. Y.

Ten miles from both Albany and Troy. Seven hundred feet above the waters of the Hudson. Park of forty acres, extensive lawns, large shade trees, and beautiful groves. Fine driving, boating, fishing and mountain [illegible]. Daily stage from Troy House, Troy, and from the Kenmore, Albany.

OPENS JUNE 25th, 1879.

Terms: \$10 to \$12 Per Week.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS for the SEASON.

Western Union Telegraph Office In Hotel

Fishing Tackle, Bait, &c, furnished

168 ADAM BLAKE, Proprietor.

--Albany Evening Times, June 21, 1879

The name Adam Blake is the key here. Adam Blake, Jr., was the adopted son of a freed slave who had become extremely prominent and respected in Albany, as did "Junior" in his own right. From "Friends of Albany History," via "Hoxsie"
http://hoxsie.org/2012/03/01/adam_blake_hotelier/:

An Albany Family Story; a Rise to Fortune from Slave to Hotel Mogul.

Adam Blake Sr. was born about 1773 in an area south of Albany (possibly New York City) and brought to Albany as a slave by a local merchant Jacob Lansing as a young boy to serve the Van Rensselaer estate. (In the NYS 1790 census, there are 15 slaves listed on the estate.) As an adult, Blake was manager of the household staff at Van Rensselaer Manor, home of the Stephen Van Rensselaer III (the "Last Patroon"). In 1803 he married Sarah Richards in the Dutch Reformed Church (now known as the First Reformed Church) on North Pearl St. (Notably, this was the same church attended by Alexander Hamilton while he was in Albany and there is no doubt their paths crossed.)

The relationship between Van Rensselaer and Blake appears to have been more than slave and master. Blake was a trusted confidant, yet Van Rensselaer didn't free Blake until about 1811 or later, despite the fact that Blake had married a young woman, Sarah Richards, probably another Van Rensselaer slave in 1803. In later years Van Rensselaer confessed deeply regretting his failure to free Blake at an earlier date, but made no explanation.) Nonetheless, when Van Rensselaer died, Adam Blake led his funeral procession.

After becoming a free person of color Blake continued in the employ of Van Rensselaer although his obituary refers to connections with Governor DeWitt Clinton. Blake enjoyed a position of esteem throughout the Albany community, among both White and Afro-Americans citizens; he was, by all accounts, a very elegant (he was called the "Beau Brummel of Albany", intelligent and charming man.

He and his family lived in the 100 block of Third St. between Lark and S. Swan, on land that was previously part of Patroon holdings (probably given to him by Van Rensselaer) and owned several adjacent lots. Blake was a major figure in the Afro-American community in Albany, involved in the first African school in Albany in the early 1800s. He was immersed in abolitionist activities; he was one of the notable speakers during the 1827 Albany celebration of the abolition of slavery in New York State and was a key figure in the National Colored Peoples Convention held in Albany in 1840.

When Adam Sr. died in 1864 at the age of 94 his obituary said "...he was in all respects a remarkable man..." and "...always commanded respect by that high order of good

breeding and courtesy towards all for which he was proverbial."

Blake's son, Adam Jr. was adopted – we know nothing of his birth parents or antecedents. He was raised at the Van Rensselaer Manor, where he received his early schooling by the side of the Van Rensselaer children. He would become one of the most successful businessmen and entrepreneurs in the 1800s in Albany of either race. While in his 20's he worked his way up to the position of head waiter at the famous Delavan House on Broadway. Blake rapidly built his reputation as a restaurant proprietor with the opening of his own restaurant on Beaver and Green Streets in 1851. Over the next 14 years he opened two more establishments, first on James St. and the next on State St., each one more upscale. His restaurants were favorite haunts of the young swells, NYS legislators, and diverse governments of all stripes. He catered private parties, assemblies, balls and picnics. Young Blake appears to have been a naturally genial, gracious and discreet host. We have a vision of a man who could cater an elegant reception for Albany's society women or organize a backroom dinner for politicians with equal ease.

In 1865 Blake secured the lease for the Congress Hall Hotel, adjacent to the Old Capitol on the corner of Park St. and Washington Ave. This was a fabled landmark (Lafayette stayed the night during his 1824 Albany visit), but fallen on hard times. He acquired 3 adjacent buildings (Gregory's Row) combined them with the Hotel, and spent a large sum furnishing it in a sumptuous fashion, The Hall was a lucrative concession – its location was favored by legislators and other politicians for lodgings, meals, receptions and meetings.

In 1878 the Hall needed to be demolished for the new Capitol building; Blake received \$190,000 compensation from New York State. He used the money to open a large hotel on N. Pearl St. that remains today. The hotel was built for Blake by the son of the late Dr. James McNaughton (former president of the Albany Medical Society) on land they owned; it was named the *Kenmore* after the small village in Scotland in which McNaughton was born. The hotel was designed by Ogden and Wright, leading Albany architects, and no expense was spared. *Not one to let the grass grow under his feet, while the Kenmore was under construction, Blake took over the management of the Averill Park Hotel across the river for the summer of 1879. [Ed. Note: emphasis mine.]*

He was known as a generous man "who never turned away a stranger or neighbor in need." In 1881 beautiful glass window was dedicated his name in the Israel African Methodist Episcopal Church on Hamilton St (the oldest Afro-American church in Albany, established in 1828.) Adam Jr.'s activities in the Abolitionist movement are not documented as are his father's, but the Blake family house on Third St. was situated directly behind that of Stephen Myers on Livingston Ave., leading figure in Albany's Underground Railroad. It is improbable to think that neither father nor son was not involved in the Railroad.

Unfortunately, Blake died an untimely death in 1881 at the age of 51. He didn't really get to revel in his success. At the time of his death his private fortune was estimated in excess of \$100,000, an astonishing sum for anyone, let alone the son of a slave. For the next seven years the Hotel was managed by his widow, Catherine, who was equally good at business, accumulating real estate all over the Albany, including 2 row houses on Spring St. near Lark St. that stand today When the lease on the Kenmore Hotel expired in 1887, Catherine left the hotel business, selling the furnishing and the Hotel's goodwill for a tidy sum to the new owners. While the Blakes were involved with the Kenmore, they lived on Columbia St.,

but when Mrs. Blake gave up the Kenmore, she moved to First St to an elegant townhouse (that also remains today), between S. Hawk St. and S. Swan St., taking her place among the other wealthy families of Albany, just above the Ten Broeck Triangle.

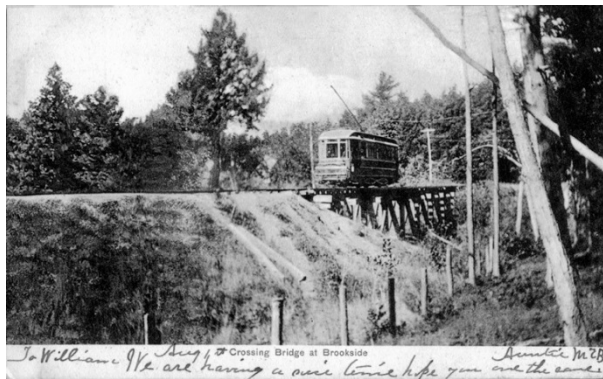
THE TROY TIMES, TROY, N. Y., THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 24, 1921.

TRESTLE BURNED.

EVIDENCE OF GASOLINE ON T. AND N. E. ROAD.

Bridge Over Wynantskill at Brookside Park Destroyed by Fire Early To-day—Traction Company Officials and Sheriff Find Evidence of Incendiarism—...

The wooden trestle bridge over the Wynantskill just this side of Brookside Park on the line of the Troy and New England Railway was destroyed by fire early this morning. Sheriff Selley, who was summoned to the scene at 5 a. m., stated that in his opinion the blaze was of incendiary origin. He is conducting an investigation.



The trestle at Brookside Park (Joe Connors collection)

Found Gasoline Cans.

The bridge was about 160 feet long and about thirty feet high. Thomas J. Lynch, Assistant General Manager of The United Traction Company, which controls the Troy and New England line, and E. E. Pateman, General Superintendent of the Troy Division, were at the fire this morning with the county authorities. Mr. Pateman said that several five-gallon kerosene or gasoline cans were found near the trestle and some of the burned timber is being examined to determine with what it was saturated.

Will Prevent Operations.

The destruction of the span will hold up operations on the Troy and New England line indefinitely. It was intended, to resume service on that system, with non-union employees, this week. The trestle carried only one track.

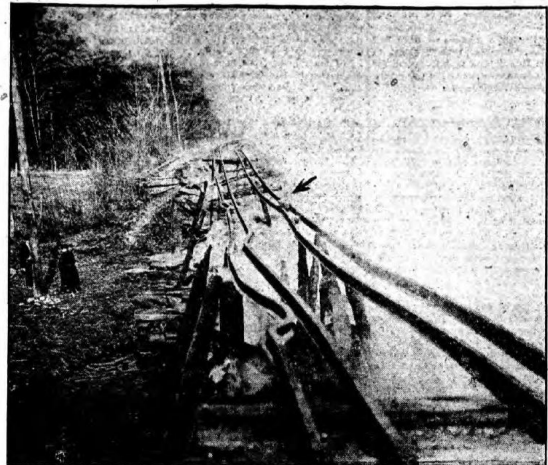
Sheriff Believes Fire Incendiary.

Sheriff Selley's view of the origin of the fire is that it was started with gasoline. He said that when he reached the scene about 5 o'clock this morning, having been called on the telephone by Deputy Morrissey, he found the air about the trestle was saturated with the

fumes of gasoline. The Sheriff declared he had been patrolling the trolley lines in the neighborhood with Deputies Morrissey, Killeen and Keenan until after 12 o'clock, and when he returned to this city there was no sign of trouble. According to information obtained by him and his deputies early this morning the fire must have been started at about 2 o'clock.

Asked if he had secured any information as to who

BURNED TRESTLE ON TROY AND NEW ENGLAND RAILWAY.



Scene of yesterday morning's incendiary fire, which destroyed the wooden bridge over the Wynantskill near Brookside Park. The arrow points to one of the several gasoline or oil cans found at the trestle.

had set the fire, Sheriff Selley said he had not and added: "But hereafter if I catch anybody loitering around those tracks anywhere from here to Averill Park I'm going to take him into custody, no matter whether I know he's in sympathy with the traction strikers or not. You can make that as strong as you want to. Nobody has any business on those lines except the Sheriff and his deputies, and I intend to see to it that nobody does loiter around there." Sheriff Selley said he had only his regular staff of deputies on patrol duty.

[Ed note: By 1921, the T & N. E. R. R. was under the control of the United Traction Company. At the time of the fire, striking workers had affected United Traction Company service throughout the area. Nonetheless, many area residents continued to support the Trolley line over a proposed bus line between Averill Park and Albia, said service proposed by Edward W. Knapp, John G. McNary and Willis D. Larkin of Sand Lake and Chester I. Wendell of North Greenbush. In fact, in May 1921, the Town Board of Sand Lake voted six to one AGAINST consenting to the bus line. Curiously, though, newspaper ads for Crystal Lake, "the ideal picnic grounds," noted the "New modern bus line direct to park from Albia Station"; so there was a bus running! Regardless of the Town Board vote, this would not be the last we'd hear of K.L.W.M. Bus Lines!]

That's just a taste of possible "sidetracking," but it's enough for this issue!]

Officers and Trustees of the Society 2018-19

Joan Fuess, President (2020); *Rosemarie Sniezyk*, Vice President (2021); *Jackie Tremont*, Corresponding Secretary (2019); *Sharon Dawes*, Recording Secretary (2019); *Michelle Mosher Schultz*, Treasurer (2020).

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In Memoriam

We note with great sorrow the recent passing of member Edie Gundrum, and our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends.



Sand Lake Historical Society
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(Please print clearly)

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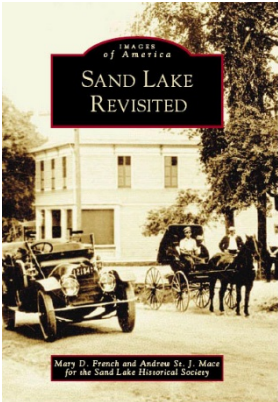
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HH 45-1 Summer 2018



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