

Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 45, Number 4

Our 45th Year

Spring 2019

From the president

I was reflecting on all we have accomplished in the last few years. We've continued the tradition of monthly meetings September-June with speakers and have seen increased attendance. We've reviewed our internal structure, including establishing a Records Management position and undertaken an inventory of our archives and library.

There are now rotating displays in the Sand Lake Town Hall lobby. We have continued our engagement in community activities such as the Hazel Drew mystery and the Sand Lake Town Library's Amazing Graves cemetery

TORSTER BARE

FINAL TIME THE STREET HOUSE

SANGLABERISTORY.ORE

tour, and we are working with the Historic Neighborhoods project in the Glass Lake ("Glass House") hamlet area.

We have engaged local artists to decorate mailboxes and, this year, bird houses as fundraisers. Other fundraisers have been held at Crooked Lake (a visit with TR, two "themed" dances, and a "Fireside Chat" with author William Kennedy.

This year our fundraiser ventures

In this issue:

In conjunction with two upcoming events, we'll take a brief, somewhat scattered (and decidedly incomplete) look at two venues in town: one's history and survival; the other's history and revival. All that, information on those upcoming events, the significance of the number 13 as it relates to bridges in town and in the county, and more – inside this issue!

to another historic venue, Crystal Cove, for a lobster bake and dance Friday, June 7. And this year's annual meeting will take place on May 14 at Tighe's Bistro Américain, yet another historic venue in town! We hope you'll join us for both. — Joan Fuess, President

Upcoming programs

- 1 Tuesday, May 14; 6:30 p.m.: Sand Lake Historical Society Annual Meeting at *TBA Tighe's Bistro Américain*. Join us for a night of Sweets, Savories and Historical Tidbits at Tighe's Bistro Américain (formerly The Glass Lake House and Glass Lake Hotel), 2703 Routes 43 & 66, Glass Lake. Enjoy *hors d'oeuvres*, desserts and entertaining musings by Kevin Tighe. Kevin will share his culinary talents and recount the colorful historic nuggets he uncovered during the long and loving renovation of the building housing Sand Lake's newest gastronomic destination. Cost: \$15.00 per person; please RSVP by May 7. (See form elsewhere in this newsletter)
 - The Nominating Committee (Sharon Dawes, chair; Dee Erickson; Bob Moore) present the following nominees to the Board of Trustees: Sharon Dawes second three-year term to end May 31, 2022; Jackie Tremont second three-year term to end May 31, 2022; Peter Finn initial three-year term to end May 31, 2022 (position currently is vacant); Ann Winnicki initial three-year term to end May 31, 2022 (position currently is vacant); Ann Winnicki initial three-year term to end May 31, 2022 (to replace Dee Erickson, who has served two terms); and Dawn Vink to complete a term to end May 31, 2020 (she was appointed earlier this year to fill a vacancy due to resignation). Nominations also will be accepted from the floor.

1 Lobster Bake and Dance: Our 5th Annual Fundraiser will be held this year at the historic Crystal Cove Dance Hall starting at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, June 7. This beautiful, historic building has wonderful views over Crystal Lake in Averill Park to enjoy over dinner, music, and dancing. We start with small bites and a cash bar, followed by a lobster bake dinner featuring a 1.5 pound lobster with assorted salads and strawberries on lemon pound cake for dessert. (Steak will be available as an alternative to lobster.) Members have already received invitations and reservation forms, and that information is also available on our website!

Recap of past programs

- 1 Tuesday, February 12: Weather forced cancellation.
- 1 Tuesday, March 12: Rensselaer County and Troy City Historian Kathy Sheehan presented From Plank Roads to Horse Boat Ferries: Traveling through Rensselaer County in the 19th Century, an illustrated lecture on the many ways people traveled throughout Rensselaer County in the early 19th century. Using maps, letters and photographs from the Rensselaer County Historical Society archives, Kathy explored the early turnpikes, plank roads, covered bridges and the stories of crossing the Hudson River, our main highway to the outside world.
- 1 Tuesday, April 9: Tom Carroll, Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway Senior Scholar, talked about Tiffany windows around the Capital Region. The City of Troy is estimated to have more Tiffany windows per square mile than anywhere else in the world! Tom looked at the life of Louis Comfort Tiffany and discussed the history of his one-of-a-kind, legendary techniques (and those of his studio's other artisans) that led to great success in the stained glass business.

SLHS member notification list

Those of you who have shared your email address with us should be familiar with our list called "slhsmembers @ googlegroups.com." This is an announce-only list to quickly get word to members regarding cancellations, postponements and/or program reminders; it is *not* a discussion list. Postings generally run about 1-2 per month, and you will be offered the opportunity to opt out. We're happy to add members whose email address was not on file. This will supplement any notifications on the School Closing Network (local TV stations and newspaper web sites) or on our Facebook page and web site.

SLHS online

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!

Our page is getting noticed more and more! Last fall, we were at 344 page "likes" and around 370 in early January; as of mid-April, we're at 414 and counting (plus a few other "followers")!

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

Speaking of our web site, https://sandlakehistory.org/ is back online, better, secure and more stable than ever! Things are up-to-date on the site, and we're adding to it whenever we can!





Bird Houses fundraiser

Some 25 artists are painting and decorating birdhouses to support our 2019 Fundraiser. Elaine Wilson is the artist behind the one you see here.

The finished birdhouses will be pictured on our website; they also will be on display at various locations in town and at the Society's Annual Dinner in May. They will be awarded during a final silent auction at the *Lobster Bake and Dance* on Friday, June 7.

2703 NY Highway 43 Averill Park; a.k.a. Tighe's Bistro Américain

Experiencing all that is involved in being a dishwasher, busboy, food prep, meat cutter, as well as working eight years at Justin's in Albany under three owners, tempted Kevin Tighe in his mid-40s to follow his passion of cultivating his own restaurant with a French flair.

Kevin developed his own curriculum, taking professional enhancement classes at several culinary schools, including the Culinary Institute of America and the Institute of Culinary Education in

Manhattan. He
previously owned
Nature's Way Cafe in
Albany and Truffles
Elegant Gourmet
Chocolat in Averill
Park. He purchased
the former Glass Lake
Inn and has been
using his "handyman"
skills to renovate this
local historical
building.

He is fascinated by all the history of this former stage coach stop, and he "looks forward to feeding

Sand Lake, the surrounding areas and the folks just passing through."— Joan Fuess

By surviving hard times and enjoying good times I've developed a belief in fate. I can't pretend to understand it, but fate led us to The Glass Lake Inn. I approach the end of my long career with the goal of opening just one more restaurant. I want to end on a high note...my Swan Song: to use everything I've learned in a business that I've loved since being a 15 year old dishwasher in the early 1970s, to eventually doing every task it takes to run a successful restaurant.

Ironically, I never thought my "Last Waltz" would be so close to home. Most of my career was in Albany: Justin McNeil's, Nature's Way Café, McGuire's, New World Bistro Bar, to name a few. In early 2017, we had a purchase contract on a building in Albany that we planned to open Tighe's Bistro Américain in. That deal collapsed two weeks before the scheduled closing. So, there I was, all dressed up with nowhere to go.

Within a couple of weeks of the Albany deal falling through, a friend stopped by our Burden Lake home and asked if we'd be interested in looking at the former Glass Lake Inn. I had no plan at that point other than to keep looking for another property in Albany. I was caught off guard with Glass Lake Inn idea. He and I did a walk through and we considered partnering on the real estate. For personal reasons he opted out, but I was sold on it by then and took the plunge.

The water was a lot deeper than I ever could have known at the time. If anything, I've proven I would never make it as construction estimator! I thought it would take maybe 6-7 months of renovations. At the time of this writing, we're 19 months into it, with at least 2 more months before completion. Thank God my wife Janice has been there for me all along this difficult process!

Non, je ne regrette rien (No, I regret nothing, a homage to Édith Piaf). I now believe Tighe's Bistro Amércain was destined to land in the former Mechanic's Hall that the Fox brothers built in 1845. This is where I should finish my career. /Ed. Note: Circa 1845, brothers Albert R. and Samuel H. Fox, owners of the Glass Works, built Mechanics Hall, a large building to house workers without local

homes. Years later, after the factory closed, the building was divided into two separate structures. One part became a private home; the other since has been a hotel and/or bar and restaurant. The image here is from the Joseph Hidley painting of Glass Lake Village./

I've been over the rainbow and back and realize there is no place like home. From being a hard-knock guttersnipe on the streets of Yonkers (who never formed a strong sense of "home"), to putting so much blood, sweat, tears, hours, dollars, and stress into a building about which so many people thought, "just knock it down and build new," I finally feel "at home"!

— Kevin Tighe

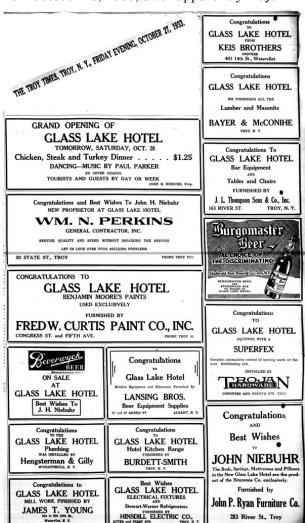
"RIGHT at our very doors, as it were, we have a summer resort that bids fair in time to become exceedingly popular. With the opening of the new railroad it will eventually come into greater prominence. We refer to Sand Lake. Its elevation is over eight hundred feet above the Hudson. The air is pure and bracing. The drive from Troy is charming. It is just the place to send your family for the summer, and the Glass Lake House, Jonas McChesney proprietor, will furnish excellent accommodations and a generous table.

Terms are reasonable, special rates being made for prolonged stay. Fine boating and good fishing. Take a drive to Sand Lake some day and canvass the merits of the place, not forgetting to call upon Landlord McChesney of the Glass Lake house." – Troy Daily Times, 1890

Less than a year later, a late August storm threatened the Glass Lake House, sending guest scrambling up to the second floor to avoid the flood waters! That storm did tremendous damage to property all along the path of the Wynantskill and in a number of surrounding areas.

By 1926, Steven Keeler was offering an "ideal place to rest. Chicken and fish dinner Sunday."

On October 28, 1933, after apparently major



renovations, proprietor John H. Niebuhr held a Grand Opening of the Glass Lake Hotel, offering a "Steak and Turkey Dinner" for just \$1.25, along with dancing and music by Paul Parker (no cover charge)! Most of a page in the *Troy Times* newspaper was devoted to



congratulatory ads from various local merchants, contractors and suppliers. Less than four years later, there was another Grand Opening, for a Banquet Hall!

The year 1946 saw Harry Fink as "owner and manager" of the "New" Glass Lake Hotel. By 1949, Marge and Gene Starosta owned the Hotel, offering "Dancing Every Saturday" in the "Margene Room"! In 1960, then-owner of the Hotel Anthony J Schepis, also an AP&SL volunteer firefighter, was electrocuted while fighting fire near first dyke at Burden Lake.



By late 1962, the venue had become "Glass Lake House", still featuring full course and *a la carte* dinners and weekend entertainment. The name "Glass Lake House" seems to have stuck until some point in the 1970s, when it became "Glass Lake Inn" (as seen in this circa 1978 photo; note, however, that some late 1950s and early 1960s newspaper articles also refer to "Glass Lake Inn"). Note that, by the time of this photo, the building's façade had received substantial alterations, including removal of the front porch.

That's pretty much how it looked when it closed some years later, remaining so until Kevin purchased it two years ago. Hopefully you can join us as he brings us up-to-date on May 14!

38 Old Route 66 Averill Park; a.k.a. Crystal Cove

By the mid-1890s, Averill Park and surrounding areas had become the "Coney Island of the North"! The area's many lakes (not the least of which was the recently renamed Crystal Lake, formerly Sand Lake) provided welcome relief from summer heat, and many folks took advantage of the new "Troy & New England" trolley from Albia. A fair number of Troy and other residents were building summer homes, and a number of hotels catered to vacationers. The Averill Park Land Improvement Co. was doing a fair business selling land for houses and other purposes.

One such land purchase, in 1896, was a large parcel at the southern tip of Crystal Lake (renamed from the rather drab-sounding "Sand Lake"). What was to become Crystal Lake Park started out with a "pine grove" and a medium-sized open pavilion. A larger "dance hall" was added soon after.



Pine Grove and Pavilion, Averill Park, N. Y.

There are many good drives leading to and from this city and other lakes and resorts beyond, and extensive improvements to these are being made or are in contemplation under the state good roads laws. Work was begun this week on a stretch of about two miles of road leading out of [Troy] from Albia to Wynantskill, which is to be macadamized, and surveys have been made for similar improvement to the Troy road leading out of Averill Park to the tollgate at King's, and also from Crape's Hotel to the tollgate, along the road on the opposite side of the lake...

Work was begun last season on a driveway which is to follow the shore of the lake, and it is doubtful if, when completed, a more beautiful drive could be made. The pine grove at the lake is an alluring spot in the hot summer weather. The grove extends down to the very edge of the lake on the whole south and east borders, being trimmed and cleared and fitted with seats and swings and a spacious dancing pavilion, with various other facilities for amusement usually found at a pleasure resort. The afternoon and evening concerts by Doring's Orchestra are daily enjoyed by large numbers, and the cool shades of the grove form an ever-inviting spot.... – *Troy Daily Times*, Friday Afternoon, July 18, 1902



With the opening of Crystal Lake Park on Friday (Memorial Day) the 1919 season will be formally ushered In. This miniature "Coney Island" proved a big success last year, but this season the management has planned one of the best amusement and picnic parks in this section of the state. In addition to the "merry-go-round" and pony track and other concessions, which have always been a big treat to the voungsters, many new ones have been added. The dance hall has been put In excellent shape and the "jazz" patrons will be taken care of by A. LeRoy Magill, proprietor of Proctor's Dance Studio. Since "jazz" music is all the rage among the dancers this season it will be "jazz" music that they will get and this will be furnished by an orchestra selected from among Troy best musicians. Dancing will be in vogue at least three or four nights each week. - Troy Daily Times, Friday Afternoon, May 28, 1919

In terms of amusements, arguably the best was yet to come! The Louis Bopp-manufactured carousel that had begun its life at Sulzer's Harlem River Park, relocated in 1908 to New Rensselaer Park in Lansingburgh and then to Ford Park in Green Island around 1922, was moved the 20 miles to Averill Park via the [former T&N.E.R.R.] trolley line. It was to remain at Crystal Lake Park until 1960, when it moved via U-Haul truck to its final home at Halfmoon Beach, Crescent.

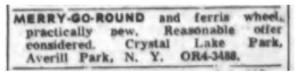






The carousel was subsequently damaged in flooding on the Mohawk River; ultimately, it was broken up and the animals sold off. It is worth noting that at least three carousel animals (that we know of; hopefully there are more) survive to this day, including "Mascot," another horse named "Averill" by its restorer, and an elephant in the collection of the American Folk Art Museum!

The carousel was replaced briefly at Crystal Lake by a smaller merry-go-round and ferris wheel, which remained only a couple of years before being put up for sale. A classified ad in the March 31, 1963, issue of the Albany *Times-Union* brought a response from a family in nearby West Sand Lake, and their purchase formed the basis of Bradley Park!



Uses of Crystal Lake Park varied greatly over the years. Along with countless group outings and picnics, the Averill Park-Sand Lake Volunteer Fire Company held "field day and firemen's tournaments" from the late 1930s at least through the 1960s. Other events included birthday parties such as one "given in honor of Sylvester and Jacob Weiss of [Averill Park] and

Charles Marble of Troy Monday evening at Crystal Lake Casino. Music for dancing was furnished by the Poestenkill Hill Billies' Orchestra...." (*Times Record*, September 17, 1939) 1941 saw "moving pictures" shown on Sunday evenings through the summer.

In 1946, the Park featured a "Sunday Dance 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.", along with amusements, swimming and boating, and lunch. Note that the Park remained open "through Sept. 15th" and "Open Evenings after Labor Day"!

Activities continued to taper off with the "amusements" during the 1960s, although the beach remained a popular local summer destination. There was

4:30 to 7:30 P.M.

By request we have brought back that popular record-breaking canteen band.

SOLID SEVEN
GENTS 50c LADIES 35c

WHY NOT BRING THE FAMILY AND ENJOY OUR Merry-Go-Round

BATHE AND SWIM IN OUR CRYSTAL LAKE
ENJOY LUNCH AT OUR LUNCH BAR

BATHING - BOATING

Take Glass Lake Bus to Averill Park for a Day of Rest. Hourly Bus Service.

Will Be Open Thru Sept. 15th. Open Evenings After Labor Day

CRYSTAL LAKE

Averill Park

MUSEMENT PARK

also a brief "celebrity sighting" in 1964, when incumbent U.S. Senator Kenneth B. Keating arrived via helicopter as part of a Republican Field Day at the Park. (Challenger and ultimate winner Robert F. Kennedy appeared via a motorcade in West Sand Lake that same afternoon!)

There was what might have seemed at the time to be "one last hurrah" for the old Dance Hall, which had been used only sporadically since the early 1960s for record hops. 1967 saw the "Summer of Love"; it also saw Dr. Richard Kimble and Lt. Gerard finally catch up with the "one-armed man" on TV's *The Fugitive*. But it looked to be a tough third year for the Lyric

Theater Workshop, as circumstances forced them out of the Averill Park High School. Then director Jack Smead lit upon the now-unused Dance Hall at Crystal Lake Park and receptive owners in the Mantha family. With a miniscule budget, only one paid staffer, and the kind of enthusiasm and optimism usually seen only in Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney movies of the 1930s, the Dance Hall was turned into a "theater in the round" (actually, with the audience on three sides of the stage) by begging, borrowing and/or improvising.

It all ended up being quite successful, with productions of *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Where's Charley?*, *Oliver!*, and *The Boy Friend*; one-act musicals *The*



Telephone and The Lowland Sea; and three one-night musical revues. Subsequent years saw the group return to the APHS Auditorium, but they adopted the name "Crystal Theater" in tribute to the 1967 season! [Above: Times-Union photo by Fred McKinney]

Times change, people change, venues change and adapt! More recent years saw continuing decline in use of the beach at Crystal Lake, given access to area State parks and increased popularity of backyard swimming pools. The rides are long gone, and the beach is no longer open to the public.



These days, Crystal Cove remains as a popular wedding, banquet and party venue. Of course, it is also the site of our upcoming *Lobster Bake and Dance* on June 7th!

13 Bridges

Two new exhibits at the Rensselaer County Historical Society (rchsonline.org) in Troy should be of interest to anyone living in the County. From Country Drives to The Grand Tour: Travels To and From Rensselaer County runs through December 21, 2019, and features some items from the Sand Lake area. Bridging Rensselaer County: Two Centuries of Crossing the Hudson runs through July 27, 2019, and it is equally deserving of your attention, with information on the 13 bridges that cross the Hudson River from Rensselaer County!

Coincidentally, the Town of Sand Lake also can boast of 13 bridges on public roadways in the Town! They are as follows (year built or replaced in parentheses): 1st Dyke Road (1950), over *Burden*

Lake; Taborton Road (1935), and Rt. 66 at Sand Lake (2004), both over Horse Heaven Brook: three on Rt. 43 east of West Sand Lake Village (1998), two on Burden Lake Road (2002), one on Eastern Union Turnpike (2012), one on Garner Road (1950), one on Johnnycake Lane (1920), one on Stop 13 Road (1950), and one on Thais Road (1938), all over the Wynantskill.



name, your dues are due! Our "fiscal" and membership year runs from June 1 through May 31.

Accessibility

Your editor/publisher is somewhat of a traditionalist, with a particular fondness for printed materials. At the same time, there is much to be said for the electronic (PDF) version of *Historical Highlights* that many of you receive. It does, of course, save paper and postage!

There are other advantages, though, including the ability to enlarge for easier reading, as well as the ability to click on various links. Oh, and you can always print copies for yourself or others!

There is yet another advantage to the PDF version for those who cannot easily read the printed word. We

endeavor to make the PDF "accessible," meaning that it can be "read out loud" in many versions of Adobe Reader and in special screen reader programs for those who are unable to use standard print materials due to a visual or physical disability. That includes "alt text" descriptions of images.

We can make a largeprint paper version available upon request as well.

Please don't hesitate to contact us via email if you have any questions or comments or wish to change the version you prefer to receive!

New historical marker

Our newest historical marker will be installed and dedicated later this spring. Be sure to watch our Facebook page and website, as well as *The Advertiser*, for information on date and time of the unveiling!

Displays at Sand Lake Town Hall

If you're in the area, be sure to check out the Society's displays outside the Town Clerk's office at Sand Lake. The latest display is of calendars and other memorabilia related to the Tremont Lumber Company.

Dues are due!

Please check your mailing label (or the text in the email accompanying this newsletter if you receive it electronically). If your label says "2019" above your

In Memoriam

We note with sadness the passing of Life Member Betty Uline Engineri this past August.

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).



Holli Boyd-White (2021); Dee Erickson (2019; Jane Minotti (2021); Jim Powers (2020) Sue Powers (2021); (2020); Dawn Vink (2019); Drew White (2019); vacant (2019).

THE SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S 5TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

ER BAKE

FRIDAY JUNE 7TH 6PM



THE HISTORIC DANCE HALL AT CRYSTAL COVE T.L. Holl

LIVE MUSIC BY T.L. Holloway

SANDLAKEHISTORY.ORG

DINNER \$50. FOR RESERVATIONS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE

FOR MORE INFO: SANDLAKEHISTORY@AOL.COM OR VISIT US ON FACEBOOK. MAIL TO: SLHS, PO BOX 492, WEST SAND LAKE, NY 12196 518 - 674 - 5143





Sand Lake Historical Society Membership Application/Renewal 2019-2020

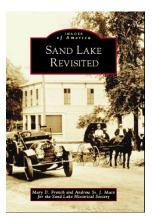
(Please print clearly)

Name		
Phone	E-mail	
		\$15 per Family
\$100 per Lifetime (Individual)	\$150 per Lifetime (I	Family – two persons)
Would you prefer to receive new	vsletter via: Email 🗆 or Postal N	Mail (check only one)
Do you have any particular hist	orical interests or expertise? If so	o, please let us know:
	Total en	closed: \$
Please make checks payable to Sand and Lake Historical Society, Post Off		York 12196
and Lake Historical Society, Post Off	ice Box 492, West Sand Lake, New	York 12196 run from June 1 through May 31!
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and Lake Historical Society, Post Off	Sand May 14, 2019, A	Lake Historical Society Annual Meeting Reservation
HH 45-4 Spri	Sand May 14, 2019, A Please return form by	Lake Historical Society Annual Meeting Reservation Please print clearly)
NameAddress	Sand May 14, 2019, A Please return form by	Lake Historical Society Annual Meeting Reservation Please print clearly) May 7, 2019, if you are planning to attend!

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

Number of Reservations (\$15.00 each) _____

Total enclosed: \$



https://sandlakehistory.org E-mail: sandlakehistory@aol.com Historical Highlights

Andrew Mace, Editor/Publisher





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