

# Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 46, Number 2

Our 46th Year

Fall 2019

## From our president

I can't believe November and December are upon us! We've had two successful programs already! Sand Lake Town Historian Bob Moore and SLHS trustee Jim Powers presented three wonderful oral histories (Bill Middleton, Doris Stacy and Frank Mantha) at the September meeting. I learned some new things about my town and loved hearing memories I knew so well.

In October we were treated to (and it always is a treat) to Michael Barrett (Executive Director of the Hudson-Mohawk Industrial Gateway and the Burden Iron Works Museum) and Meneely bells. Our own Andy Mace was able to add to the night with his experience, having played a Troy Clinton H. Meneely chime for many, many years! By the way, if you haven't had a chance to go down to the Burden Iron Works Museum, it's well worth the trip; just be sure to call ahead (518-274-5267).

December brings us our Christmas party at Berti's (the Knowlson House) in Sand Lake. Bring a covered dish to share and your memories of Christmas past. We'll also talk a bit about "Yes, Virginia" (of *Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus!*).

Have wonderful holidays and stay safe and healthy. — Jackie Tremont, President

## In this issue:

Welcome to our Fall issue, now with Pumpkin Spice! 😊 One thing that got omitted from the Summer issue (and for which we apologize) was a *huge thank-you to our birdhouse artists*: Pat Allen, Deborah Bayly, Barb Neu Berti, Aly Boyd, Holli Boyd-White, Anna Church, Chrissy Codner, Sharon Dawes, Megan Keeler, Sarah Keeler, CarolLynn Langley, Jim Powers, Karli Powers, Claire Robelotto, Stacy Schafer, Sally Spring, Judi Stone, Judy Vincent, Elaine Wilson. You can view all of them on our website!

Meanwhile, in this issue we'll take another look at two "things" that have been a part of the Town for a very long time and hopefully will continue to be a part of the Town; also a (hopefully) interesting story about something else that was around for a very long time, what replaced that and why the replacement might surprise those who are not long-time natives! All that, plus upcoming programs (now starting earlier!), some sad yet fond goodbyes...and more – inside!

## Upcoming programs

- Tuesday, November 12, 7:00 p.m.:** Eric Durr will present a program on *D-Day / Normandy*. Durr has served as Director of Public Affairs for the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs since 2007. He served 28 years in the Active Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard as an armor officer, division plans officer, operations officer, public affairs officer and civil affairs officer. He commanded a tank company, a headquarters company and a tank battalion in the National Guard and also worked as a Department of the Army civilian, a newspaper reporter. **Court Room at Sand Lake Town Hall, 8428 NY Route 66, Averill Park NY 12018.** NOTE: Immediately preceding our meeting, at 6:30 p.m. — *Horse Thieves Beware: The 171st Annual Meeting of the Sand Lake Association for the Mutual Protection Against Horse Thieves*. All concerned horse owners and all other interested or curious citizens are invited meet with us. Please help keep this historic organization and tradition alive!

- 1 **December 10: Holiday party.** Members and guests are invited to bring a covered dish to share, a canned good or other nonperishable for Doors of Hope, and your memories of Christmas past; trustees provide desserts. We'll also talk a bit about "Virginia" (of *Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus!*) and her connection to our southern neighbor, North Chatham. **6:00 p.m. at Knowlson House, the home of Ron and Barbara Berti, 42 Schumann Road, Sand Lake.**
- 1 **January 14, 2020: History of Burden Lakes.** Connor Kopcho has had an interest in history, having grown up on Burden Lake. He became fascinated in particular with the history of Totem Lodge, started doing research, and one thing led to another. He now has a lot of memorabilia from the Lodge and has expanded his research and love to the surrounding area.
- 1 **February 2020 and beyond:** Abolitionists in pre-Civil War Troy; a closer look at Tremont Calendars; saving, stabilizing and restoring barns; a new look at *Architecture Worth Saving in Rensselaer County*; and Methodist Farm history. And for our 2020 fundraiser: Think *June*. Think *farms*. Think *June Farms!* Details in our Winter issue!

## SLHS online

If you haven't already done so, look for us on Facebook for the most up-to-date news on meetings and events, along with other items of interest from us. Occasionally, you'll even see things you won't see in our newsletter or the web site!

Our page is getting noticed more and more! In January, we were at 370 page "likes"; in mid-April, 414; in early September, 460. As we go to press, we're at **491** (over 500 if you count other "followers")!

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

New on Facebook this past September is **Sand Lake (NY) History**, a companion group to our "Sand Lake Historical Society" page. This group will allow its members to share information and to ask or answer questions about our Town's history.

Don't forget our website, [https://sandlakehistory.org/!](https://sandlakehistory.org/)

## 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; 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; just let us know! This will supplement any notifications on the School Closing Network (local TV stations and newspaper websites) or on our Facebook page and website.

## Memorial awards

June 19, 2019: I am writing to thank you for your generosity for our Senior Awards ceremony, as we were able to acknowledge Averill Park High School student(s) for their hard work, and/or commitment to their community. Without support from community members and businesses we would not be able to provide this opportunity to well deserving students.

Thank you for sponsoring the Sand Lake Historical Society Memorial Awards in memory of deceased members.

Sincerely, Mr. Heath Quiles, Principal

July 1, 2019: Thank you for sponsoring the Sand Lake Historical Society Memorial Award! I feel so honored to receive this award. Last year, I took AP U.S. History and developed a passion for history.

This fall, I am attending UAlbany, where I will major in political science. I will also continue to study history, and I am considering minoring in history!

Thank you again for your generosity. I really appreciate your contribution, which I will put toward my tuition. This award means a lot to me because I love history so much!

Sincerely, Julia Zaremba

September 5, 2019: I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your generous Sand Lake Historical Society Memorial Award... I am truly honored that I was the recipient of this award.

First, I would like to apologize for sending this letter so late. Graduating, starting a new job, and preparing for college itself took up much of my time and attention... I graduated fourteenth in my class with a 96.4 GPA. Academics have always been one of my biggest priorities, but I also participated in clubs like the Chamber Orchestra and volunteered for the Kelsey's Promise Fund. Currently, I am at Russell Sage College as an undecided major. I am hoping to declare my major within the next year, which may be Psychology, Sociology, or Business.

...[You] have lightened the financial burden of college, which has allowed me to focus on my academics. I hope that one day, I will be able to help other students by relieving the financial burden that comes with going to college. Thank you again for your generosity. Your confidence in me is allowing me to pursue a higher education and reach my goals.

Sincerely, Noora Ahmed

## The Town Garage on Eastern Union Turnpike

...It was a cool evening. All roads leading to West Sand Lake were crowded with horses and wagons, coaches, and walkers. "Clifford has turned on the lights!" was the cry.

For the past few weeks, neighbors watched while work crews erected poles and strung wire from the Hastings' farm to the Four Corners. They had heard that Clifford Hastings had built an electric generating plant and tonight he was to close the switch.

The lights turned on and the Four Corners were aglow with light. Everyone was traveling to West Sand Lake to see this amazing event. Compared to their oil lamps and candles, this was **bright light**, and a modern marvel. People just stood there and looked with wonder...

Clifford Hastings' first job was in 1896 with the Troy City Railway, operators of the early electrified street railways, which in 1901 became the United Traction Co. Clifford worked in Troy until about 1910 when United Traction purchased the Troy and New England Railway... [Its] main power plant, a coal-fired steam electric generating plant, was built on land purchased from his grandfather Ephraim Hastings. The main line tracks were laid across Hastings' land adjacent to the Grist and Cider Mill in West Sand Lake.



With this background, Clifford decided that he could build a hydro-electric plant and supply Sand Lake with electric lights. Still employed by United Traction, all work was done in his spare time....

In 1926, Clifford C. Hastings negotiated the sale of the Wynantskill Hydro Electric Corporation to Associated Gas and Electric Company and retired from business to devote himself largely to the sphere of public service. That same year he was elected Supervisor of the Town of Sand Lake. He also served on the County Board of Supervisors without interruption for ten years.

While supervisor, the [T&NERR] hydroelectric power plant was torn down. Clifford donated the materials to the town for the Town Barn on Eastern Union Turnpike and Holcomb Road. It is almost a replica of the old power plant and was completed in 1933...

— from "Clifford Hastings bring electricity to Sand Lake," by Robert Lilly, from *Historical Highlights*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Fall 2005, in turn based on "The Wynantskill Hydro-Electric Co.—As I Saw it Grow," by D. Robert Hastings.



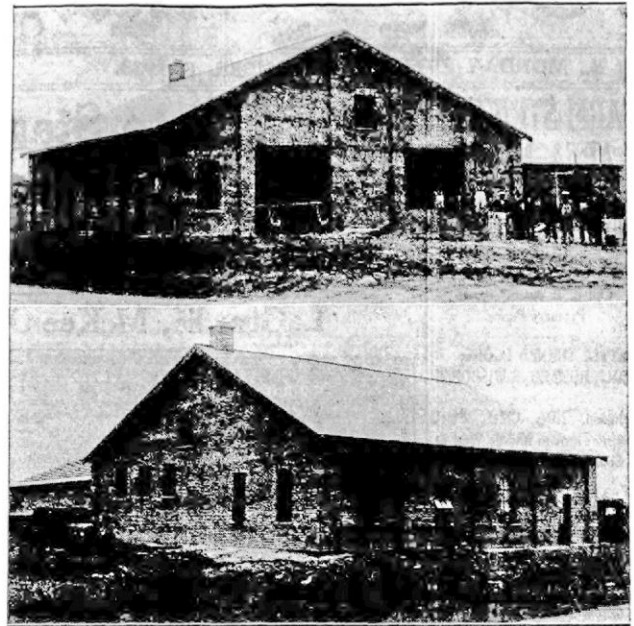
"ERECTED AS A WORK RELIEF PROJECT IN THE YEAR A.D. 1933 BY THE TOWN OF SAND LAKE. CLIFFORD C. HASTINGS, SUPERVISOR; ALBERT FLAXMYER, TOWN SUPT.; JUSTICES JAMES B. WYNNE, CLYDE B. RESCOTT, GEORGE H. CLAPPER, HENRY L. KARL;

LILLIAN B. KENNEDY, TOWN CLERK."

An article in the September 29, 1933, edition of the Troy Times read:

### SAND LAKE TOWN CARRIES ON OWN RELIEF PROJECT

The town of Sand Lake is now completing a work relief project that, beside **giving employment for three months to the heads of at least 15 families**, has attracted the attention of the State unemployment relief organization and County Work Relief Chairman Robinson as an example of what even a small community may do entirely within its own resources, with materials at hand and by its own people.



The project is the erection of a town garage, shop and storage for town road machinery and snow removal equipment. **The main building, a substantial brick structure, 58 by 63 feet in dimensions and 80 feet high at the gables, is now ready for the roof, and the foundations are laid for an addition 50 by 36 feet in size.** The main building is divided into two sections, one of which will be the blacksmith and machine shop, with space for two or three motorized snowplows, and will be heated in the winter. The other part will be used for storage of road machinery and trucks, while the addition will be devoted to storage for snow fences, lumber and other materials. The entire project is being carried out by the





solid rock foundation. It is practically fireproof and should stand for many years.

In carrying out this enterprise as a town-supported work relief project and from materials at hand for the most part, a definite need of the town is supplied at comparatively small cost. It is estimated that the completed project will cost the town from **\$2,500 to \$2,700** [\$49,377 to \$53,327 in today's currency – Ed.], though the finished structure will have a value of from **\$8,000 to \$12,000** [\$158,006 to \$237,008 in today's currency – Ed.]. In meeting the expenses, the town of Sand Lake will receive a **refund from the State relief of 40 per cent, of the outlay for wages**, it is expected that the buildings will be ready for occupancy in a few weeks. [NOTE: **Emphases** in the article above are ours. The photo on the previous page is from the November 9, 1933, edition of the Troy Times; at left, as it appears today. – Ed.]

Sand Lake Town Board with Commissioner of Highways Albert Flaxmayer in charge of the construction under the supervision of Supervisor Clifford C. Hastings, who laid out the plans for the buildings.

When the town invested in modern road machinery and snow removal apparatus, the Town Board was faced with the need for some centrally located storage place and two or three years ago the Board purchased about an acre of ground at the intersection of the back road from Averill Park to Crooked Lake with the Glass Lake town road, about half a mile south of the village of Averill Park. Faced with the problem of work relief for unemployed citizens early this summer the Board decided the time was ripe for undertaking the building project and authorized the enterprise.

Supervisor Hastings negotiated the purchase of the abandoned power house of the old Troy and New England Railway, a large brick structure on the banks of the Wynantskill at West Sand Lake. A gang of men was set to work July 10 razing the building, cleaning the brick and salvaging the lumber and materials, which were transported to the new site, about five miles distant. This part of the work was completed in about two weeks at a cost of approximately **\$500**.

The construction of the new building was begun about August 1 by a crew of **14 men**, including five or six unemployed masons in the town. **Every dollars worth of new materials needed, except about \$35 for steel reinforcements, was purchased by the Board in the town or from local dealers.** Approximately **150,000 bricks were salvaged**, cleaned and relaid in the walls of the new building and the supporting pilasters or wall supports, **8 by 24 inches base dimensions**. The building, now among the more substantial structures in the town, is on a

**The following is strictly the opinion of the Editor and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Sand Lake Historical Society**

"[It] should stand for many years..." Indeed it has, for the most part, over the past 86 years at its current location, but largely unused for well over a decade.



The "center section" was torn down some years ago after its roof failed. Graffiti currently "adorns" part of the now-exposed western face of the main building.

Atop that building is a crumbling chimney. Aged shingle tabs from a failing roof litter the pavement in front of the building.

A still-useful structure — a landmark in its own right, and one that represents so much of the history of Sand Lake and its people — patiently awaits a new caretaker. Perhaps one can be found before it's too late!



## Sand Lake Association for Mutual Protection Against Horse Thieves 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

### Times Are Dull For Horse Thief Society

...There still are a surprising number of horses in the town but they seldom are stolen. Just recently a member reported that a horse on his farm disappeared. The younger members of the society were delighted. After 25 years of no business it looked as if there was going to be some excitement. The horse turned up in the wrong pasture and all the fun was spoiled...

The purpose of the society is still to find or replace horses owned by the members and if a horse cannot be found or replaced to reimburse the member to three-fourths of the value of the stolen horse.

In the old days if a horse was stolen the directors met and appointed riders to travel through the territory on horseback looking for the stolen horse. A reward also was posted and the county sheriff's office notified. Riders were paid by the day.

In case a horse is stolen in Sand Lake now, the society has figured out how the search will be carried on. Riders will be appointed but they will travel by auto and will be paid by the mile.

Now go ahead and steal a horse in Sand Lake!

...Now and then a member suggests that the group should disband. The suggestion is always vigorously voted down. As one of the older members remarked today: "The fellow who asks us to disband ought to be shot like a horse thief."—*The (Troy) Times Record*, Tuesday Evening, January 10, 1950

The above excerpt is from an article reporting on a meeting marking the 101<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Sand Lake Association for Mutual Protection Against Horse Thieves. The organization was formed by an Act of the New York State Legislature on April 7, 1849. Notices announcing the first meeting were posted at several public places throughout the town. That meeting, called to elect officers, was held on April 28, 1849, at 2 o'clock at William Sliter's Inn in West Sand Lake.

The purpose of this organization was to help recover stolen horses of its members and the apprehension of said thieves. Founding members included many prominent names in Town history: Jacob Hegeman, Andrew Link, Burton A. Thomas, Coonrad Snyder, Henry D Uline, Jacob I. Vosburgh, Harman Westfall, Philip G. Hayner, David Fellows,

George Uline, William Hegeman, and Wynant Youngmans. The original boundaries of the organization included what is now Sand Lake, North Greenbush, East Greenbush, Poestenkill, the City of Rensselaer, and parts of Nassau, Schodack, Brunswick and Troy.

The society was and remains proud of the record of finding stolen horses if not the thieves. On the occasion of its centennial in 1949, then-director Merrill A. Zweig notes that, in its entire history, only two horses had *not* been recovered by the riders of the group!

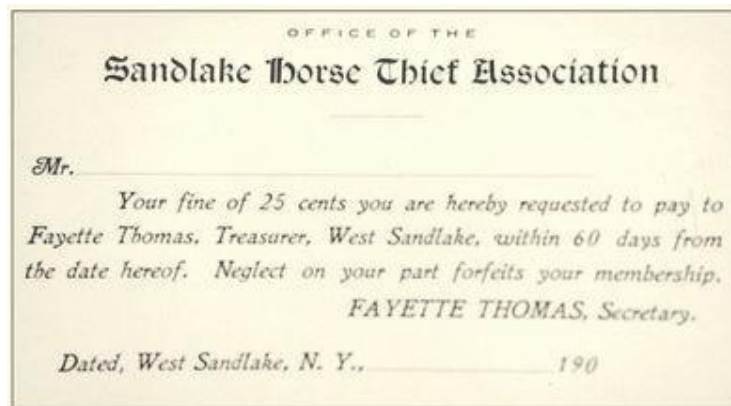
Zweig further noted that the last case of horse stealing in the area was actually not so long ago. He stated that the records showed a horse was stolen about thirty years ago. It was recovered and he believed the riders found the animal in East Greenbush. (Some quick math determines that it has been around 100 years since the group has been "called into action"!)

Sand Lake's is not the oldest such organization. The *Saratoga County Society for Detection of Horse Thieves* was formed in 1818; the *Schodack, Stuyvesant, Kinderhook and Chatham Society for the Detection of Horse Thieves* in 1824.

Most such organizations have long disappeared. The [Westchester County] Mutual Association for the Suppression of Horse Stealing was formed in 1815 (and, at one point, boasted of Washington Irving as one of its members!), but they disbanded in 1874.

The *Red Hook Society for the Apprehension and Detention of Horse Thieves* claims to be the oldest such organization, having been formed in 1796; as with Sand Lake, they, too, are still active! At their 2016 meeting, a resolution was passed to "discontinue notifying members using U.S. Mail. Surface-mail notifications will no longer be made, instead members will be notified by email only." Notably, that group continues to award annual scholarship to a deserving graduating high school senior interested in studies in the equine field.

These days, the Sand Lake Association for Mutual Protection Against Horse Thieves is little more than ceremonial in nature, but it continues to be a wonderful tradition that, hopefully, will continue for some time to come. The group will meet briefly on Tuesday, November 12, 6:30 p.m. at Sand Lake Town Hall. Please note: no "delinquent" members will be assessed fines, nor will memberships be forfeited for lack of such payment!





## Old mills...and old model homes...

Most of our membership is, of course, local to the Town of Sand Lake and travels frequently in, about and through the various hamlets. You've probably ridden or driven west hundreds of times toward the hamlet of West Sand Lake, likely paying scant attention to a group of three small houses on the south side of Route 43, more or less opposite the entrance to 43 Mall. But those three houses have an intriguing history, mostly related to the plot of land upon which they sit.

The headline in in the January 9, 1956, issue of the [Troy] *Times Record* read: **Grist Mill Slated For Demolition**

*A landmark of West Sand Lake more than 150 years old, the Brookner Grist and Cider Mill, will soon be torn down to make way for modern times.*

*Nelson A. Brookner, owner of the land on which the mill stands, is negotiating for the sale of the one and a half acres to the Lynwood Swift Homes Inc. and the sale is expected to be completed this week....*

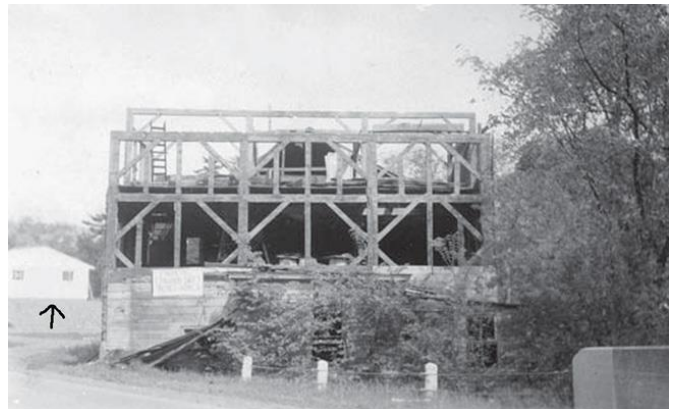


That mill, originally built by the Uhlein (Uline) family, dated to at least the 1790s, and the Brookner family bought the land from Frank Uline in 1914. It was in regular use as a grist mill and cider press until at least 1942. Notably, though, Nelson Brookner offered as late as October 1951 to have his neighbors "bring your grain and apples" for processing!

At risk of stating the obvious, it should be noted that, like so many other mills in the Town, power was supplied to the turbine in the mill by "water running down a 200 foot pipe"; that water came, of course, from the Wynantskill. Asa Delamater, who years earlier had brought feed to the mill with his father, was contracted to take down the mill, which was still largely full of machinery!



In the photo above, showing the bare shell of the mill in mid-demolition, you can see what appears to be the first of the model homes already in place (see arrow, lower left)!



As the land was cleared, Lynwood Swift Homes erected three "model homes" on the site, after which display ads ran regularly in local newspapers to advertise the homes.

It is not known what became of the Lynwood Swift company, but the three model homes eventually were finished and sold off, and they stand to this day!

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Go out Route 43 to West Sand Lake, Turn Left on Route 43, Route 180 to West Sand Lake, Turn Left on Route 43 and go 1/2 mile of north. Signs will indicate home.

**OPEN EARLY AND SUNDAY 10 A. M. TO 5 P. M.**

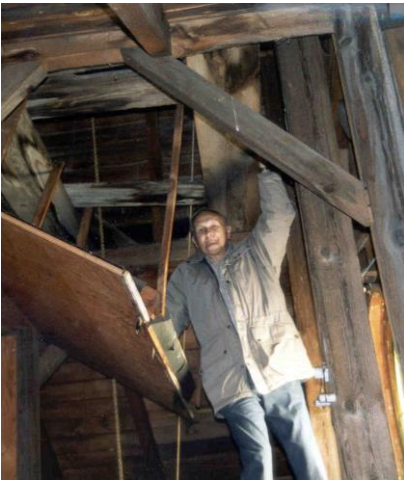
Notably, the three photos on this page actually have their own "history" of sorts! A young man named Carl Erickson traveled around Rensselaer County with his parents in the 1950s, taking photographs and also keeping a scrapbook of newspaper clippings. The photos here were taken in the winter of 1955-56 and June 1956. They, and much of the information here, were part of an article entitled "From Carl's Scrapbook: The Uline Mill, West Sand Lake, Town of Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, New York," By Walter Richard Wheeler, which appeared in the July-September 2014 *Newsletter* of The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture.

The Woodbridge 34' x 32'



**ONLY \$3510<sup>00</sup>**

## Ross French



This photograph shows as well as any how many of us remember Ross, shown here climbing the bell tower at Sand Lake Baptist Church. Ross passed away on September 13, 2019.

Ross had many roles over the course of his long involvement with The Sand Lake Historical Society: President, Secretary, Trustee among them, but also photographer, program presenter — pretty much *anything* that needed doing!

Ross was devoted to his family, his church, and to his hometown of Sand Lake as well as to the Historical Society. His is a legacy matched by few but cherished by many.

We in The Sand Lake Historical Society thank you, Ross, and we will continue to be inspired by you! Donations in his memory may be made to Living Water Church in LaGrangeville NY or to the Sand Lake Baptist Church, 2960 NY-43, Averill Park, NY, 12018.

## Gladys Larkin

We also note with great sadness the passing of long-time SLHS member Gladys Larkin October 21, 2019. Long involved in our community, she worked for 11 years for the Rensselaer County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, was an active member of over 65 years of the Sand Lake Baptist Church, served as secretary-treasurer of the Sand Lake Union Cemetery Association for over 25 years and as president of the Sgt. Walter A. Adams American Legion Auxiliary in Averill Park. Donations in her memory may be made to Sand Lake Baptist Church, 2960 NY-43, Averill Park, NY, 12018.

## Townwide Garage Sale map

The print and online versions of the 2019 Sand Lake Townwide Garage Sale map also featured the locations of the 11 historical markers within the Town. Thanks to SLHS Trustee Holli Boyd-White, who developed the map, it has been re-developed into an interactive marker locator map on our website. You can see the map and the revised marker page at <https://sandlakehistory.org/historical-markers/index.html>

## New identity for RCHS

After 92 years, the Rensselaer County Historical Society has “re-branded” as the **Hart Cluett Museum / Historic Rensselaer County**. The Museum continues to bring to life the rich local history of Troy and Rensselaer County.

From their website: “In 1827. Wealthy New York merchant and banker William Howard constructed the house as a gift for his only child, Betsey Howard Hart, and her husband, Richard P. Hart, a wealthy banker-businessman and philanthropist. Six decades later, the home was sold to the George B. and Amanda C. Cluett family who resided there for 20 years. In 1910 their nephew, Albert E. Cluett, and his wife Caroline purchased this architectural gem.

In 1948 Albert and Caroline bequeathed the Hart-Cluett House to the then-Rensselaer County Historical Society.

Understanding the significance of the house, they challenged the Hart Cluett Museum (HCM) to raise funds to support transition of the property from a family home to a museum. Today, the Hart-Cluett Museum serves as a history museum both architecturally and culturally significant to American life.”

In addition to the exhibits, collections, comprising more than 33,000 items, comprise the largest local history library, archives and research center in Rensselaer County.



## Officers and Trustees of the Society 2019-2020



**Officers:** *Jacqueline Tremont (2022)*, President; *Jane Minotti (2021)*, Vice President; *Sharon Dawes (2022)*, Recording Secretary; *Rosemarie Sniezyk (2021)*, Corresponding Secretary; *Michelle Mosher Schultz (2020)*, Treasurer.

**Trustees:** *Holli Boyd-White (2021)*, *Peter Finn (2022)*, *Joan Fuess (2020)*, *Michael Perry (2022)*, *Jim Powers (2020)*, *Sue Powers (2021)*, *Ann Winnicki (2022)*, *Dawn Vink (2020)*.







Sand Lake Historical Society  
**Membership Application/Renewal 2019-2020**  
*(Please print clearly)*

New Member  Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\$3 per Student (13-22) \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 per Individual \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 per Family \_\_\_\_\_

\$100 per Lifetime (Individual) \_\_\_\_\_ \$150 per Lifetime (Family – two persons) \_\_\_\_\_

Would you prefer to receive newsletter via: Email  or Postal Mail  *(check only one)*

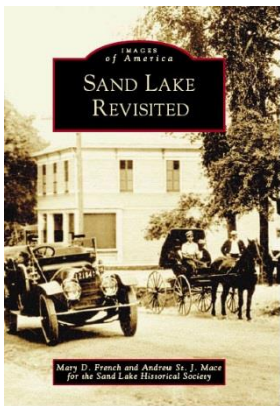
Do you have any particular historical interests or expertise? If so, please let us know:

\_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed: ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to *Sand Lake Historical Society*. Mail to:  
Sand Lake Historical Society, Post Office Box 492, West Sand Lake, New York 12196

**HH 46-2 Fall 2019 NOTE: Memberships run from June 1 through May 31!**



<https://sandlakehistory.org>  
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**Historical Highlights**  
*Andrew Mace, Editor/Publisher*



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