



# Historical Highlights

Official Publication of the Sand Lake Historical Society

Volume 50, Number 3

Our 50th Year!

Winter 2024

## From the president

The organizational meeting of the Sand Lake Historical Society was on held June 4, 1974, at the Crooked Lake Hotel. It is fitting, then, that we will be celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Crooked Lake (Old Daley's) on May 16th, 2024 – nearly 50 years to the day!

The first officers and trustees are names many of us recognize: Bob Harris, Beryl Vannier, Shirley Rescott, Joan Fuess, Nancy Kelley, George (Bob) Dunworth, Bernadette Bresnahan, Louis Leitgeb, and Judy Rowe. Within a year, 89 Sand Lakers signed up as charter members.

In this golden anniversary year, we celebrate – and thank – all those who created and sustained the Sand Lake Historical Society for the past 50 years – trustees and officers, committee heads, members, presenters, writers and researchers, organizers, and those who volunteered and brought cookies and said yes when asked. We are very grateful.

A true historian, Bob Harris saved some of his notes from those early days and his modest steno pad labelled “*Sand Lake Hist Soc 1976-77*” is now part of our collection. Bylaws and policies, debates, the budget, programs, projects and ideas, who's bringing refreshments – it's all there. The early issues of our newsletter are archived on our web site, all the way back to December 1974. Past newsletters were full of reminders to “pay your dues;” some things never change.

Please join us May 16 as we return to Old Daley on Crooked Lake to celebrate our 50th birthday. There is no more fitting place in Sand Lake for this, the place of Teddy Roosevelt, Richard Burton and Liz Taylor, big bands and high school dances – and our founding. In addition to former SLHS members, the Sand Lake Community, and lovers of local history we especially invite all past SLHS officers and trustees to come and be recognized. Sadly, some individuals may have passed away or moved from the area, but if that's you – in the list below – or your spouse or parent (or grandparent!), please join us on May 16th and take a bow.

We thank (alphabetically) John Allendorph; Lee Barnum, Joyce Baum, Robert Baum, Ron Berti, Ruth

## In this issue:

We look forward to our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala on May 16 (details inside), including a mostly pictorial look at the venue for our Gala! Also, another look at “Elder Abel Brown: Marketing Genius?”, “from the president” ... and more!

Bordt, Grace Bourdeau, Holli Boyd-White, **Bernadette Bresnahan**, Grace Briscoe, Ken Brock; Christy Carlton, Madolyn Carpenter; Don Carpentier, Rich Castle, Kristine Cipperly, Meg Cipperly, Anna Church, Alisha Clark, Christine Codner; Eva Juliette Dacier, Berenice (Bea) Danks, Nancy Davis, Sharon Dawes, Patricia Detmar, George (Bob) Dunworth; Don Edmans, Irving Edwards, Winifred Edwards, Fran (Ruckdeschel) Egbert, Dee Erickson, Wayne Evancoe. Kathy Fasco; Joseph Ferrannini, Peter Finn, Diane Freeman, Mary French, Ross French, Alan Fuess, Joan Fuess; Chester Gavryk, Arthea Gibbs, Joan Gross, Edith Gundrum, Helen Guy; Marion Hacker, Woodie Hacker, Arthur Handley, Robert Harris, Annamae Hebert, Bonnie Hellum, Linda Henchey, Timothy Hoffay, Gloria Waldron Hukle; John Kacharian, Bob Katz, Valerie Kavanaugh, **Douglas S. Kelley**, Nancy Kelley, Karen Kemp, Rebecca Hoffay Klimek, Kathryn Komdat, Megan Konikowski, Christine Kronau; Marjorie Larsen, George Leckonby, Dorothy Leitgeb, **Louis G. Leitgeb**, Mark Lewis, Anne Lilly, **Robert J. Lilly**, Robert Loesch; Andrew Mace, Katharine (Kitty) Mace, John McEvelly, Ginny McGreevy, Gary Meislin, Ada Miller, James Miller, Wes Miller, Jane Minotti, Barbara Mohan, Brian Morini, Bob Moore, Delores Morse, Iona Mosher, Betty Murphy; Barbara Neu, David Neubauer; Linda Ormsby; Lynn Patanian, Geogiana Patti, Mike Perry, Nancy Perry, Cindy Pitts, David Post, Jim Powers, Sue Powers; Clare Radz, Donald Radz, Shirley Rescott, Patricia Robelotto, **Gertrude T. (Judy) Rowe**, Mary June Roy; Mike St. Germain, Michelle Mosher Schultz, Rosemarie Sniezyk, Glenn Snyder, Michelle Sprague, Peter Sprague, Patricia Stevens,

Rosemary Supkis, Stanley Supkis; Tedi Toca, Jackie Tremont; Jane Van Praag, Beryl Vannier, Charles Viens, Dawn Vink; Mary Weber, Myra Wehnau, Coulman Westcott, Daphne Wescott, Drew White, Wayland (Bud) Whitney, John Wilford, Ann Winnicki, Alice Wolfe, Karen Wood, Barbara Worcester; Sanford

Young; Elinor Zaki. *[Please let us know if we've missed anyone – Ed.]*

(**Bolded names** are those listed on the original Provisional Charter granted by the Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York, Education Department, on June 27, 1975)

– Peter Finn, President

## Upcoming Programs and events

1 **Tuesday, March 12, 7:00 p.m. *History of Beer-making in Rensselaer County.*** Raise a glass (or two) as Roger Savoy of Homebrew Emporium and Emporium Farm Brewery “taps” us into Rensselaer County beer history – from early Dutch brewers, to legendary Troy beer-barons, and to today’s home- and farm-brew scene.

1 **Tuesday, April 9th, 7:00 p.m. *Trolleys, Trails, and (Maybe) Sand Lake, Too!*** Public historian and heritage tourism expert *Matt Kierstead* of Milestone Heritage Consulting will present an illustrated talk on the Albany Hudson Electric Trail (part of the Empire State Trail) and how rail trails can transform communities. He also will share his thoughts on our own Troy and New England Railway and its potential as a public trail.

1 **End of April (tentative): *Installation and dedication of New Hazel Drew “Legends and Lore” Marker*** (Taborton Road).

1 **Tuesday, May 14 7:00 p.m. *Annual Meeting.*** Election of Trustees, annual report to the membership and more!

1 **Thursday May 16, 6:00 p.m. *50th Anniversary Gala at Old Daley on Crooked Lake.*** Join us as we celebrate 50 years of the Sand Lake Historical Society. Hurray! Our theme is “Come as We Were.” Special guests to be announced. Buy your ticket, bring a friend, dress in costume, be a sponsor – Just Be There!

Sand Lake has a rich and abundant history, from pre-colonial days to the present. In the spirit of Troy’s *Victorian Stroll* and our own *Amazing Graves*, we’re asking – hoping, actually – that Gala attendees will come attired representing any era in Sand Lake’s history. You could be a pioneer settler, charcoal burner, mill worker, trolley conductor, taxi driver, vacationer, a staff member from one our many hotels, a big band player, a gangster, a party-goer from any time in the past hundred or so years – a flapper, a beatnik, a hippie, prom queen, bride or groom – whatever. Or, you simply could be you from the early 2000s! Just have fun with it! More information on page 6; tickets available at

<https://sandlakehistory.org/gala2024>

1 **Tuesday June 11, 7:00 p.m. *Heroes of the Anti-Rent War.*** SUNY Oneonta professor *Roger Hecht*, author of *Freemen Awake!: Rally Songs and Poems from New York’s Anti-Rent Movement* will present a literary history talk on the Anti-Rent War.

***Unless otherwise noted, programs are held at 7:00 p.m. in the Court Room of Sand Lake Town Hall (SLTH), 8428 NY 66, Averill Park. Watch your email, the website and Facebook for any updates on programs!***

Please note that *most* programs are “live-streamed” and recorded and may be viewed online. Direct links can be found on our website; click on “[Programs](#).” Past Programs recorded can be viewed from our website; click on “[Videos](#).”

## Past:

1 **December 12.** Our Annual members-only Holiday Gathering, @ SLCA. The evening included “Community Preservation Awards” given to Young’s Pharmacy and General Store (Miller Young); Crystal Cove (Frank Mantha); Sand Lake Center for the Arts; Dater House Antiques (Cindy Johnson); Sand Lake Merchant (Amanda Goyer).

1 Our **January 9, 2024**, edition of *Show and Tell: What’s in Your Attic? What Rabbit Hole are you Exploring Now?* was canceled due to inclement weather.

1 **February 13, 7:00 p.m.** Reenactor Clifford Mealy was not able to join us, so Pete Finn stepped in with an updated version of his 2022 program, including significant new information, on Sand Lake’s own radical, militant, abolitionist preacher, Elder Abel Brown.

## Officers and Trustees 2023-2024

**Officers:** *Peter Finn* (2025), President; *Holli Boyd-White* (2024), Vice President; *Rebecca Hoffay Klimek* (2025), Recording Secretary; *Ann Winnicki* (2025), Corresponding Secretary; *Wayland Whitney* (2026), Treasurer.

**Trustees:** *Eva Juliette Dacier* (2025), *Joan Fuess* (2024), *Timothy Hoffay* (2026), *Linda J. Henchey* (2024), *Bob Katz* (2026), *Doug Kelley* (2024), *Megan Konikowski* (2025), *David Neubauer* (2025), *David Post* (2024), vacant (2025).



## Elder Abel Brown: Marketing Genius?

In February 2022, trustee Pete Finn presented “Abel Brown: Pastor, Abolitionist, Radical” for SLHS. Elder Brown came to the Sand Lake Baptist Church in 1841, recruited by Deacons Albert Fox and Dr. Charles Gregory – and was dismissed from the pulpit a year later for “agitating.” He went on to become the principal agent of the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society, the editor and publisher of the *Tocsin of Liberty* and its successor, *The Albany Patriot*, and a leader and organizer in New York’s abolitionist Liberty Party (which played a key role in the 1844 presidential election). [The slide image here is from the February 2022 presentation – Ed.]

Elder Brown came to Sand Lake from South Hadley, Massachusetts, where he had been “agitating” and was agent for the Western Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Pittsburgh before that. He is credited with directly assisting “up to 1,000” former slaves in their quest for freedom, including (on at least two occasions) personally escorting escapees from Kentucky and Maryland, as well as the transport of “human cargo” through Sand Lake to Vermont.

Abel Brown was many things: a radical, a militant, a writer and publisher, a minister, a speaker.

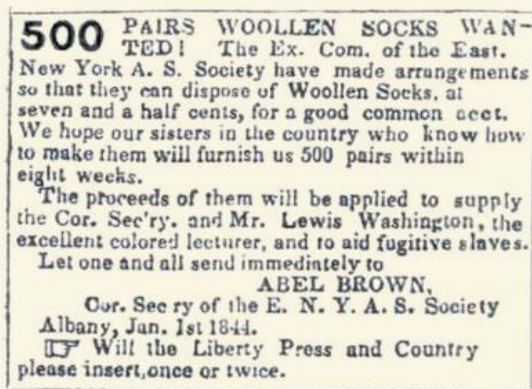
Thanks to Scott Shine’s new book, *Flee North: A Forgotten Hero and the Fight for Freedom in Slavery’s Borderland* (2023), we can add “marketing and branding expertise” to Abel Brown’s résumé. Shine’s book documents the activities of Thomas Smallwood, a free Black shoemaker in Washington, DC, whose innovation was organizing “mass escapes” of enslaved people.

Slaves were, by far, their owners’ most valuable assets. Mass escapes – a dozen or more in a single night or in groups over successive nights – made slave holders seem hapless, which Smallwood amplified by writing about their inability, in the absence of slaves,

to get their own breakfast, shine their shoes, or change babies’ diapers.

Writing under the pseudonym Sam Weller (a Dicken’s character from the *Pickwick Papers*), in the August 10, 1842 issue of the *Tocsin of Liberty*, Smallwood ridiculed a slaveholder saying that the man’s slaves had “disappeared” as if by an “under ground railroad or steam balloon” – the first documented reference to the underground railroad. As publisher of the *Tocsin* and media savvy ahead of his time, Abel Brown began referring to “the underground railroad” in print, as if it were a real thing, citing “shipments” and “cargoes” and “stations” and “routes.” The notion of an “underground railroad” took hold and became what we might call “a brand” today,

## The Underground Railroad...



... was not a railroad

... was not underground (literally or figuratively)

... and was not about benevolent White people  
rescuing poor, defenseless Blacks

representing the entire abolitionist movement. Today, over 180 years later, it remains the shorthand for anti-slavery activities prior to the Civil War and is the subject of innumerable books and movies. Thanks, in part, to Sand Lake’s own marketing genius, Elder Abel Brown. – Pete Finn

[Ed. note: The February 2022 program:

[https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location\\_id=33&id=43585](https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=33&id=43585), and the slide presentation given is available at <https://sandlakehistory.org/programs/20220208-pcf.pdf>. Pete’s February 2024 presentation is available at [https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location\\_id=33&id=58405/](https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=33&id=58405/)]



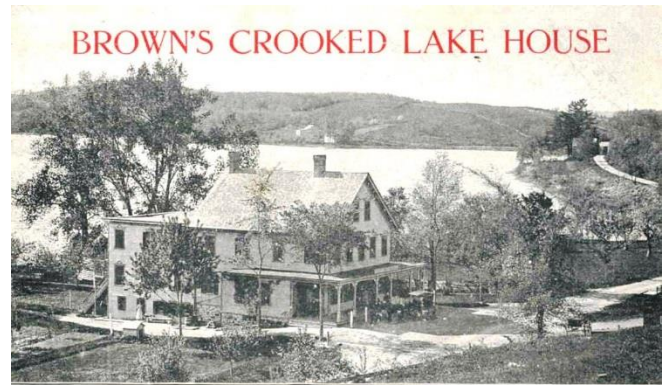
## Crooked Lake Hotel: The romance continues

By Pete Finn

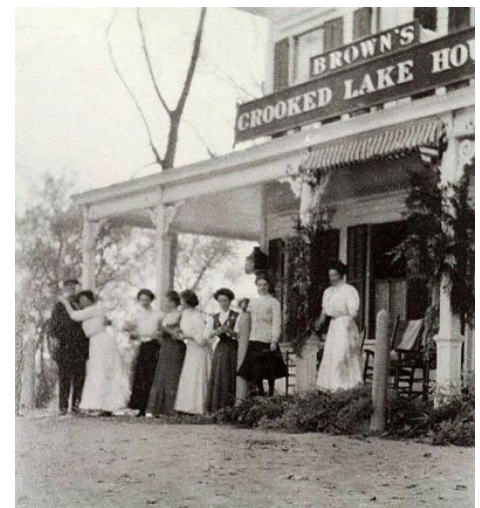
The Crooked Lake Hotel – now Old Daley on Crooked Lake – began in the early 1800s as a stage coach stop, Philip Upham's tavern, along the plank road from Albany to points east. The building burned in 1850 and was rebuilt by James Mosher. In 1881, it was bought by the Brown family and became Brown's Crooked Lake House.

The Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute used Brown's as a site for summer survey programs and was "filled to the brim" for a month with up to 80 engineering students. But Brown's most famous guest was Theodore Roosevelt, who, as Governor of New York, would bring his family to Crooked Lake for the summer and commute back-and-forth to the Capitol in Albany as needed hotel (at right are signed portraits of Teddy and Edith presented to the Browns –Ed.). In a 1969 *Times-Union* column, Edgar Van Olinda wrote: "As a matter of record, [the hotel] was one of the last places the vice president visited before he went to Washington to become president of the United States following the tragic assassination of President McKinley in Buffalo, N. Y."

The Minahan brothers leased the Wendell Inn in 1905 and purchased it a year later. They hosted Eleanor Roosevelt for lunch when FDR was governor.



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SAND LAKE, N. Y. Superior table. House thoroughly renovated. Excellent fishing. First-class accommodations. Delightful home for the summer. Electric road. Telephone. Terms moderate. 'Bus connects with electric cars at Averill Park daily 10 a. m., 12 noon, 3 p. m. and 5:30 p. m. Sundays every two hours commencing at 10 a. m. For circular address, W. A. BROWN, Prop. 6-7-s,tu,th







Alpheus Winbert "Al" Coon, Jr. and wife Theresa acquired Crooked Lake in 1935. Al, ever the engineer, set about to upgrade, expand, renovate and modernize the place. (A May 1932 *Troy Times* newspaper article remarked about a newly added *Dance Palace* "...constructed so that cooling breezes from Crooked Lake blow through it at all times, making it one of the most comfortable as well as one of the most attractive places to enjoy an evening's dancing during the warm summer months." The newly re-christened *Crooked Lake Hotel* became a popular site for the big bands of the era in programs beamed across the country on radio; among them Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Les Brown (and His Band of Renown), Benny Goodman, and Guy Lombardo. (Newspaper ads by the local Musicians Union noted that only union orchestras were employed!) The basement rathskeller was a speakeasy.

A motel was added around 1955. A year later, fire destroyed the garage opposite the hotel (*at right in the image on this page -Ed.*). Thankfully, firefighters were able to protect surrounding structures, including the motel units, from damage; loss was confined to the garage and some vehicles and equipment inside. In 1967, fire broke out in the kitchen during a fundraising dinner; damage was minor, and one firefighter only slightly injured!

An enclosed pool for year-round swimming was added in the early 1960s. It was removed years later due to extensive storm damage.

Well into the 1970s, Crooked Lake was a popular restaurant, motel and event venue, hosting vacationing families, weddings, parties, and proms. Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were regular guests in the early 1960s, traveling from New York by seaplane and secretly ensconced in the "remote country" hotel.





Other notable “guests” – residents, actually – included a mysterious “woman in white” – a ghost – who is visible in an early glass-plate photograph (see page 4 – Ed.) and “Walter the Bartender,” whose apparition has been photographed, as well.

Crooked Lake was subsequently acquired by Dalmar Tifft and Mark Hammond and later by Paul Vincent before becoming Old Daley’s on Crooked Lake in 2010. It’s been renovated again and has become a premier upstate venue for parties and weddings, and dining. It’s part of our history; it’s still here – and it’s ours! (Minahan’s Wendell Inn from early 1900s at right; Old Daley on Crooked Lake from a 2023 Google Street View below – Ed.)



**Old Daley’s on Crooked Lake** is a treasure and a gem, a place of legend and romance, and the site of many of our memories. It will be hosting **The Sand Lake Historical Society’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary “Super Gala.”** We hope you can join us, Edith and Teddy, Tommy and Benny, Liz and Dick, and the ghosts at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2024!

**2339 NY Route 43, Averill Park**

**Featuring:** Full Dinner Buffet, Cash Bar, Dessert & Coffee / Tea  
**Theme is *Come as We Were***

Attendees are encouraged to dress-up as a Sand Lake resident (or visitor) from any time in our history (think: Victorian Stroll). You could be a mill-worker, a farmer, a gangster, a trolley-conductor, a vacationer, you in high school...or just you in 2024! Tickets available at <https://sandlakehistory.org/gala2024>

If you have any images you’d like to share with us to be displayed at the Gala, please upload them at <http://tinyurl.com/4wf75ft8>



## In Memoriam

The Sand Lake Historical Society notes with profound sadness the recent passing of Shirley Larkin Butterfield.

### Military funeral

Member Dennis Urgento, son-in-law of the late Shirley Larkin Butterfield, has shared a number of images from her photo collection to our *Sand Lake (NY) History* Facebook group. Recently, he shared the two images on this page. One is a closeup of the Larkin hearse. The other, larger image shows the hearse in what appears to be a military funeral procession.

At this time, it is only speculation, but the image is believed to date from 1921 (based on the license plate on



the front of the hearse), thus it just might depict the final procession to Sand Lake Union Cemetery, where Sgt. Walter A. Adams (below) was laid to rest. Adams was fatally wounded in October 1918, but his body was not returned from France until August 1921, after which he was buried with full military honors – all of which seems to fit the presumed timeline of the photo.



The closeup photo of the hearse at right was taken for Willis D. Larkin, Sr., by J.J. Lewis, a prolific local photographer whose works graces many early 1900s post cards of the area.



## A “revolution” in SLHS telephone service!

As noted in our Fall issue, it's been a little over 74 years since dial telephone service became available in our town! For years, postal mail or some officers' telephone numbers listed in the newsletter were about the only ways for relatively quick communication.

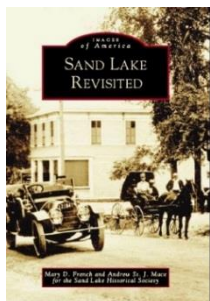
These days, if you can still obtain a print directory, the numbers listed are primarily those with “landline” service; no such similar directories exist for cell phones. With the Internet *et.al.*, many of us are less than comfortable listing personal telephone numbers publicly. But you can now contact us again **via telephone – voice mail OR text** – at **802-440-1336!**

It's a great way for members to be able to contact us, especially those who don't want to do things online.

Right now the VM greeting is: *You have reached the Sand Lake Historical Society.* [Current or upcoming program and event news will then be heard, after which...] *Please leave a message after the tone and someone will get back to you as soon as we can. Thank you!*

### Next issue...

Tentatively, we hope to feature a period news account of the capture of Charles Nalle, as well as news of a local legend and the return of a notable one-time Averill Park “resident”!



<https://sandlakehistory.org>

E-mail: [sandlakehistory@aol.com](mailto:sandlakehistory@aol.com)

Telephone: 802-440-1336

## Historical Highlights 50:3

Andrew Mace, Editor/Publisher



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Sand Lake Historical Society

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## Sand Lake Historical Society Membership Application/Renewal 2023-24

Join or renew online at [sandlakehistory.org/join](https://sandlakehistory.org/join)

or scan the QR code →→

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

Grand total enclosed: ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to *Sand Lake Historical Society*

Mail to: Sand Lake Historical Society, PO Box 492, West Sand Lake, New York 12196

**NOTE: Memberships run from June 1 through May 31; new memberships run through May 31, 2025!**

**Winter 2024**