

# THE SKANEATELES HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Mar-Apr 2014

Vol. 29, No. 2

Laurie Winship, Editor



## MARCH PROGRAM

### Genealogy Searching Techniques

On Tuesday, March 25 (delayed from November when inclement weather forced us to cancel,) Harold Witter will give a presentation on how to get started on a genealogy project. Based on his experiences in developing a genealogy of his family that contains over 1,000 pages, Mr. Witter will explain the references people can use to do research, other than the usual online sources. Online genealogy links are only as good as their input data, so if just one name is omitted, the searcher can be misled. Informational handouts will be available.

Please join us at 7:30 p.m. at the Museum at The Creamery. Bring a friend or neighbor! Refreshments will be served as always.



**SECOND REMINDER--ANNUAL  
MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE!**

**SEE PAGE SEVEN**



Do you know what this is? See page 2, and come to our April program to learn more about it.

**CREAMERY HOURS, JAN-APRIL**

Fridays, 1-4 p.m. or by appointment

**WEATHER-RELATED CLOSINGS**

We will notify Channels 3 and 9 if we cancel a program meeting. If Skaneateles schools are closed, or cancel afternoon and evening activities, we will automatically cancel our program. But if they stay open, and we decide it's more prudent to cancel, we will do so.

**APRIL PROGRAM--LETTERPRESS PRINTING**

Nearly every town once had a resident letterpress printer. The best known of these early printers in this country is surely Benjamin Franklin, but did you ever wonder what this traditional craft of printing entailed? Today the very word "printer" might bring up images of a mysterious plastic box able to instantly dispense color photographs or documents at a moment's beckoning, but how did printing start? Robert LoMascolo will present a lecture and hands-on letterpress printing demonstration on April 22nd at 7:30 pm. Robert, a modern day letterpress printer and designer, will briefly speak about the early history of letterpress printing, its decline in the commercial world, and finally today's challenges of carrying on this over 560 year old tradition. You will learn how type was made and books were printed with only minor changes from the Renaissance up until the 20th century. You will get to see how the craft evolved over the centuries, as well as some of Robert's own contemporary work. Finally, you will be able to try it for yourself, printing a bookmark to take home on one of Robert's carefully restored tabletop presses!

Robert LoMascolo is a freelance designer, and letterpress printer located in Union Springs, New York. He specializes in classical design and typography, and is particularly well regarded for his prolific and clever use of typographic ornamentation. After completing his masters in the book arts in the fall of 2011, Robert has built up his own printing studio by painstakingly restoring numerous pieces of historic equipment. He has achieved a certain degree of notice within the field, most recently, being highlighted in a complimentary article in the trade journal "Parenthesis." His clients consist of such prestigious institutions as The Frick Collection in Manhattan and Princeton University's Cotsen Library. Robert's limited edition handcrafted books can be found in the special collections of such places as St. Lawrence University and The University of New Mexico, as well as in the collections of many private individuals. He can often be found working in his studio, paying a visit to the Letterpress Foundry of Michael & Winifred Bixler in Skaneateles, New York, or giving the occasional lecture or workshop.

## Hemlock Island of Skaneateles Lake

by Jorge Batlle, Village Historian

Located on the southwest shore of Skaneateles Lake in Cayuga County (Glen Haven) was an island formation called an esker, a sand and gravel mound left by a stream from a retreating glacier. When the lake level was high, this area was surrounded by water. The island contained 'old growth' hemlock trees. One such tree was measured to be 150 feet tall, 39 inches in diameter and about 265 years old.

In 1847, Glen Haven became famous for its water cure. Hemlock Island was a favorite spot for guests of the Glen Haven Hotel described as a 'delightfully cool retreat - densely shaded by trees and furnished with tables and rustic seats for the benefit of picnic parties.' In 1902 artist John Barrow wrote "the Glen Haven Hotel in one form or another has had a prominent share in lake history...But I cannot help asking what it has done or what it ought to have done to save or restore the head of the lake? The woods below the hotel has never been thinned for two miles, where near the shore they were cleared for about a mile, spoiling one of the most delightful walks and roads around the lake. The really magnificent Hemlock Island has been greatly despoiled and none may now know what it was, but those who remember it." Barrow's painting of Hemlock Island is in the Barrow Art Gallery's collection.

In 1911, the City of Syracuse purchased for \$40,000 the hotel and 150 acres of surrounding land, including Hemlock Island. This was to prevent development and contamination of the City's water supply. The hotel and outbuildings were demolished and removed. In 1913 students from the State College of Forestry took a tour of the island and noted "nearly every tree native to the State and all of the common and almost all of the rare plants of the State...can be found on the property." It was also noted that about 600,000 feet of timber could be harvested on the property.

In November of 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civil Works Administration (CWA) to use Federal money to create local construction jobs for projects for parks, roads, water mains and sewer systems. Syracuse needed lumber for a CWA project, and sent a crew of lumbermen to Hemlock Island in January of 1934. To save the City about \$2,000, the trees on the island would be cut down and turned into shoring planks for sewer and water line trenches.

A story was run in the March 11, 1934 Syracuse Herald titled: *Axes Toppling Virgin Forest for City's Use*. It mentions that "seventy towering trees which gave Hemlock Island its name have fallen and the rest are marked to go." The story continues saying, "it is the only old growth forest between the Catskills and the Adirondacks..." Protests from Syracuse and Skaneateles cottage owners brought the cutting to an end. Also, the CWA funding ran out at the end of March. This may have saved a few trees, but the island's old growth forest was gone forever. Syracuse Mayor Rolland Marvin and City Engineer William Cronin can be credited with the loss, as from their offices they only thought of a way for Syracuse to save \$2,000. However a Mayor's spokesperson said, "it was the decided pleas of the Skaneateles people that the remainder of the hemlock grove be preserved..."

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**YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2014 IS NOW DUE!**

Our Jan./Feb. newsletter announced membership renewal time, and many have done so. Thank you! We need your annual support. Please, if you haven't already done so, look at the address label on this issue. Do you see 2012Y or 2013Y on the label? That is the last payment date of record we have for you. If you are a Lifetime Member or if you paid after September 2013, you need not renew at this time.

Please use the renewal form printed below, and return it to me with your payment. Be sure to include the "Office Use Only" square and your e-mail address if applicable. (We only use email addresses for program announcements or an occasional S.H.Society business subject.) Thank you.

David Bates  
Membership Chair  
[davebates3@gmail.com](mailto:davebates3@gmail.com)  
(315) 497-3446

Make check payable to The Skaneateles Historical Society and mail to David Bates, 5623 Mack Road, Skaneateles, NY 13152.

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# MAR-APR NEWSLETTER

Mar-Apr 2014 Vol.29 no.2



Jim Dougherty, Ted Prindle, and Barb Spain for indexing the 1920 U.S. Census for Skaneateles. These indexes are an enormous help to genealogy research. Our newly-trained docents: Dave Bates, Peg Bennett, Bob Green, Charlie Major, and Ann Roth. We always have room for more, so call us at 685-1360 if you might be interested.