

THE SKANEATELES HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Mar-April 2016

Vol. 31, No. 2

Laurie Winship, Editor



MARCH PROGRAM

The Erie Canal

The Erie Canal had a big influence in Central New York, both on communities that were on its route and communities such as Skaneateles that were not. Please join us on Tuesday, March 22 at 7:30 pm at The Museum at The Creamery, 28 Hannum St., to hear author and historian Michael Keene explain how the Canal opened up vital passageways that led to the advent of the major social, political, and religious movements that swept through upstate New York during the 19th century. His book, *The Psychic Highway: How the Erie Canal Changed America*, will be for sale. Mr. Keene is an affiliate member of the Association of Public Historians and a contributor to *New York History Review*, in addition to being the author of several other books.

WE DID IT!

Thank you to everyone who contributed money to our December fund drive for roof and heating repairs. We topped our goal of \$15,000 thanks to a \$1,000 matching grant challenge by Bill Pavlus that was met by Amanda Cregg. We are very grateful for the community's generous support.

Volunteers needed

We need help with a variety of activities to keep the historical society and museum running smoothly. These are all occasional jobs, none that require a constant commitment, so please consider joining us in:

Serving cookies and drinks during our monthly program meetings and other festive occasions (you don't have to bake or bring anything--we have that covered)

Maintenance activities, from changing light bulbs to cleaning windows and siding, plus any surprises that arise--and they always do!

Docents, especially during the winter months when some people leave town

Gift shop volunteers

If you're interested in helping, please call 685-1360 and we'll connect you with the right people.

APRIL PROGRAM--Chair Caning, with Brian Ackles

“I was introduced to chair caning and weaving by my grandmother, Iva Ackles. During the summer months, grandma Ackles would set up in the old apple storage and teach hand caning to the local residents. I learned hand caning from my older sister Sharla. She is a fiber artist, and caned a few of our porch rockers at camp. From hand caning, I moved on to learn how to install machine cane, as well as splint weaving, fiber rush weaving and cane weaving.



A wonderful side effect of learning how to cane and weave seats is what the process can teach you if you listen. All you need to cane or weave a chair is time, patience and understanding. Time is what you have when you weave – the process cannot be rushed. Patience shows itself when the weave becomes challenging or the cane misbehaves (or we become tired). Understanding grows with each chair that is completed - not all materials and chairs are alike.

I have been caning and weaving chairs now for more than 20 years. During the demonstration, I will be weaving a Mottville footstool that was resurrected from an old barn near New Hope. Samples of the different kinds of materials used to cane or weave chairs will be available, as well as the basic equipment needed to complete a project. “

As a prelude to Brian Ackles’ demonstration, Kihm Winship will provide a brief history of the chair, the jungle life of the thorny and tenacious rattan palm vine, the stripping of cane from harvested rattan, the hygienic benefits of cane chairs, and how some of the best cane chairs came to be made in 19th century Mottville.

Be sure to join us on Tuesday, April 26 at 7:30 pm at The Museum at The Creamery. The public is always welcome.

Eleanor Hoffman Edwards

The history of Skaneateles is made up not only of buildings and businesses, but also of the people who lived and worked here. Eleanor Edwards, who will be 100 on March 13, is a wonderful example. She and her parents, Allie and Elizabeth, and four siblings, moved here in 1926 and were always active in the community. She worked at The Krebs, attended the local elementary school and graduated from Skaneateles High School. She also worked at a local bank in the mortgage department, McLaughlin’s department store, and at Pearl’s clothing store. Eleanor is one of the longest-serving parishioners of St. James’ Episcopal Church, and still works at its Thrift Shop every Wednesday. Her father ran Hoffman’s Drug store and her brother, Norwin, was a dedicated supporter of the historical society.

She and her husband, Fenton Edwards, lived in Turkey for a time in the 1960s while Fenton was working there, and also visited Iran and Egypt.

A great number of relatives are traveling to Skaneateles for her big party on March 13, including Glenda Hoffman and her husband, from New Zealand! Glenda shared the photo at the left of Eleanor when she was two years old, being held by her mother, Elizabeth Hoffman.

Congratulations, Eleanor!

BOARD MEMBERS: President, David Bates; V-P, Bill Stinson; Secretary, Mona Smalley; Corresponding Secretary, Karen Lengyel; Treasurer, Betsy Foote; Town Historian, Beth Battle; Village Historian, Jorge Battle; Members-at-large, Dan Bangs, Julie DiBagio, Doug Hamlin, David Miller, Karlene Miller, Barbara Patrick, Joseph Spalding, Susan Spalding, Lewis Wellington, Richard Whalen

MUSEUM DIRECTOR: Laurie Winship

NEW CREAMERY HOURS

Jan-June, Fri-Sat, 1-4 p.m.

Or by appointment

Please note we are now open on Saturdays throughout the year!

We'd like to thank all of the businesses who support us by buying advertising space in our newsletter. They help make it possible to continue our mission of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting Skaneateles historical materials.

Membership Chairman's message

from David Bates

Dear S.H.S. member:

As you may recall your Skaneateles Historical Society sent out a membership letter in January of this year. We asked that membership dues be sent in "at your earliest convenience." The goal is to gradually get members renewing each January. Some of our members do this as a matter of course; others prefer to renew at the same time each year, and still others forget altogether and only spring into action when seeing a reminder. All of these scenarios make our records-keeping complex and difficult to track.

It is my suspicion that many do not know their last subscription date. If you have a question as to when your membership comes due, please contact me. If you receive a paper or "hard" copy of this newsletter in the US Mail your address label on the cover page reflects the year you are paid up for.

My home phone is 315.497.3446, and there is an answering machine. My regular mail can go to: David Bates, c/o The Creamery, 28 Hannum St., Skaneateles, NY 13152. Or you can email me at davebates3@gmail.com

We cannot say this too often: Our existence depends entirely on memberships, donations, and contributions. We need you to provide the best possible museum facility and programs.

If you recently renewed as a result of our January membership letter, we thank you once again for your support !

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

U.S. flag with 35 stars from 1863, after W. VA joined the Union

Memorabilia from Mingo Lodge, one of our older homes on West Lake St that is being demolished

DVD of interviews with farmers from the area, by Dr. Bruce Widger

Record Book of the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Formation of the Lake View Cemetery Association by E.N. Leslie, 1871; transcribed by Jorge Batlle, 2016

The Skaneateles Historical Society 28 Hannum St. Skaneateles, NY 13152 315-685-1360

www.skaneateleshistoricalsociety.org

skaneateleshistoricalsociety@verizon.net

A History of 100 West Lake Street (Mingo Lodge)

Jorge Batlle, Village Historian



Richard Talcott purchased approximately 224 acres of land on the west side of Skaneateles Lake from G. Thorp in March of 1823 for \$6,000.00. Talcott built a very handsome mansion on the land. In 1835 he sold 7.8 acres to Arthur Mott, and in 1836 sold the remaining acreage and the house to Richard De Zeng for \$12,000.00. De Zeng later sold off 108 acres to F.M. Potter for \$9,226.75. There were other sales of small portions of this land to James Canning Fuller and F. M. Potter. In January of 1866 Potter sold to G. Sharkey 108.55 acres and another parcel of 7.85 acres. In 1868 the Internal Revenue Service sold off Sharkey's interest for his attempts to avoid tobacco taxes at his business in New York City.

Historian E.N. Leslie says that the Robbins family received the land in 1870 via a \$1,000.00 land contract and in 1876 Daniel Robbins purchased 183 acres and a second parcel of 7.85 acres for \$10,588.24. Robbins was an apothecary's apprentice at Olcott & McKesson in New York City. After Olcott's death in 1853, he became a partner and the firm was named McKesson & Robbins. At that time the company was distributing pharmaceutical products by covered wagons in 17 states and territories. They did a brisk business stocking medicine chests aboard trade ships, and in the Civil War, they provided material for the Union Army. The 183-year-old company is still in business.

According to an article in the August 13, 1896 *Skaneateles Free Press* there were two structures on the land - the main house and the annex. The article says that the main house was built about 30 years ago (1866+/-) by Mr. Robbins, who used it as a summer home. The annex is said to have been started in 1878 and completed in 1883. The annex was where the "children were domiciled." These two houses and the "13 acres of beautifully kept grounds is called Mingo Lodge."

The "Mingo" may have been an independent group of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, sometimes called the Ohio Iroquois., who migrated west to Ohio. In 1937 the federal government recognized these people as the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma. The term "Mingo" comes from the Algonquian word *Minque* meaning stealthy.

Over the ensuing years this property was used for co-operative housekeeping in 1897, summer retreat, weddings, and overflow lodging for events at neighboring Roosevelt Hall. In 1910 the property and houses were sold at auction for \$21,000.00. Each house was advertised for \$15,000.00. At that time the main house was called "Mingo Manor" and the annex as "Mingo Lodge." In 1945 the *Skaneateles Press* used the name "Westgate" for the original main house of the Robbins estate (now 103 West Lake Street).

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This photo, hand-labeled “The Skaneateles Yacht Fleet. Photographed Aug. 10, 1868” had been evaluated by West Lake Conservators so we can apply for a grant to have it stabilized and conserved. It is the oldest photo we know of showing boats in the lake; if we are awarded this grant, it can go on display. We won’t be notified until June, so watch for future updates.

