

The Museum at The Creamery

THE SKANEATELES HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Sept-Oct 2015

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Laurie Winship, Editor



SEPTEMBER PROGRAM



Hop Growing in Skaneateles

September brings us a look at the resurgence of growing hops in New York State. Skaneateles had hop farms in the 1800s and the Connolly family is dedicated to bringing the art of hop growing back to this region. The Connolly's are longtime Village residents, having moved here in 1993. The family farm is known as Skaneateles Hop Farm and is south of our beautiful village on the west side of the lake. This ten-acre farm is an early entrant into the field of hop growing in our times. Tim Connolly, the farm manager, and the rest of his family are all part of this venture into the future of hop growing in our area. Come and join us to learn more about this new and widespread interest in hops on Tuesday, September 22 at 7:30 p.m. at The Museum at The Creamery.

“Great things are claimed for that quiet hamlet in the way of natural attractions, consisting of the lake itself, and its Main street, which, night and day, is the quietest and most death-like avenue of commerce to be found outside of East Syracuse.”

A Baldwinsville editor comments on Skaneateles in the *Gazette & Farmer's Journal*, June 20, 1895

Parking at the Museum

Please be aware of where our property ends and our neighbors' begins, in the apartment building next door to the Boat Museum. During the past few monthly program meetings, and on some weekends, they have had to come over to ask someone to move a car that was blocking their driveway. Our new sign will help make the boundaries clearer.



The purpose of the Skaneateles Historical Society is to conduct and encourage historical research and to collect, preserve, and exhibit historical material in connection with the Town of Skaneateles.

CREAMERY HOURS, SEPT-OCT

Fridays and Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.
Or by appointment

Does your employer give Matching Grants for donations to non-profit organizations? We receive matching funds from several donors through GE. Maybe your employer does, too! Ask if your employer has a similar program.

OCTOBER PROGRAM

Tony Mollica on Boldt Castle and the Thousand Islands



October's meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 27 at 7:30 p.m. brings us a special guest speaker, Anthony Mollica, who is an expert on many subjects, including the Thousand Islands. Although Tony is from Syracuse, he has been a long time summer resident of the Thousand Islands. Tony is a well known author with ten published books dedicated to the history of classic motor boats and summer homes of the Thousand Islands. He won the 2001 Boating Book of the Year for his book titled, *Gar Wood Boats Classics of the Golden Era*. Tony's book on the Castle built by George Bolt is a fascinating look at a piece of history from the Thousand Islands. Tony attended Syracuse University where he majored in History and Education. He married Elizabeth, his college sweetheart. They had three children, ten grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. He spent more than 40 years in the field of education and school administration, both at the high school and college level. His love of sailboat racing brought Tony and Elizabeth accolades when they won the Tallstar Class National Championship Regatta in 1963 in New London Connecticut. Back in 1976, they purchased a cottage in the Thousand Islands where they have spent their summers since. He continues to write and his weekly column for the Thousand Island Sun newspaper can be found from May through September. Please join us to hear the real story of the famous Bolt Castle in the Thousand Islands.

AMAZON SMILE PROGRAM

Do you shop at Amazon? If so, they have started a new program that donates a percentage of all eligible sales to a charity of your choice. The Skaneateles Historical Society is now participating, so all you have to do is go to:

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7339639>

and shop as usual. No cost to you, a benefit to us--what a great deal! Give it a try!

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

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Doug Hamlin

Doug Hamlin comes onto the Skaneateles Historical Society Board of Directors with a unique perspective.

In August, he and his wife Pam marked two years living on the west side of Skaneateles Lake. They moved here from the Albany area where they lived and worked for 35 years. Doug ran a software company and Pam was an elementary school teacher. So while they are newer members of the community, Doug's roots in Skaneateles are relatively deep.

His mother's (Mary Jane Fisher) side of the family goes back to just after the Civil War when his great-grandfather, Oscar Fisher, ran a small farm at the corner of Route 20 and County Line Road. The old farmhouse is still there on the northeast corner of that intersection.

Doug's grandfather was Joe Fisher, who served as a mailman for the west side of the lake (RD #1 at the time) from 1916 to 1960. The house Doug and Pam built would be on Joe's route. Joe Fisher is perhaps best known in Skaneateles history for discovering the fire that destroyed Skaneateles High School in March 1952 while visiting his mother's home on East Elizabeth Street. This distinction is a much-discussed part of the family lore.

His uncle, Jim Fisher, worked at Skaneateles Handicrafters, while his mother worked at Stott's Diner. There remains confusion to this day over whether his mother was valedictorian or salutatorian of her high school class (1952). His mom and his uncle were really proud of their hometown. They had a great upbringing here.



Doug is a history geek who loves artifacts one can see. Skaneateles offers this in many forms like the old teasel barns representing a once-booming industry, and the Charlie Major Nature Trail that contains marks of past factories.

"It's just fascinating to me that it's all still there," Hamlin said. "You can see what this place was like 150 years ago."

Website support by:



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We're happy to announce that Christine and Cary Briel of Skaneateles are now providing our website support, since our original web designer moved out of the area. You can contact Christine at 315.378.7317, or christine@cnymobileweb.com.



Gardening Report

By Julie DiBagio

It's hard to believe that the growing season is drawing to a close. Much was accomplished out back. Cleanup continued, and water plants and perennials were added. The Water Lily, having survived the winter in my cellar, provided some beautiful blooms. The nicest addition is the arrival of a retired professional gardener, Colleen Plimpton, who is a very enthusiastic volunteer with great ideas. Thanks to all who provided plants, cleanup, mowing and words of encouragement. We are always glad to accept any help with weeding and planting, or just stop to view the progress and enjoy a cool moment by the water.

We hosted a wonderful group of people one Saturday in August whose ancestors came here from Somerest. They are now scattered all over the country, but approximately 30 people came to learn more about Skaneateles and what brought their families here. It was exciting and very satisfying to know how much this museum means to people. Hopefully we'll have more groups like this.

New Acquisitions

Unknown Museums of Upstate New York, by Chuck D'Imperio

Photo Album of Skaneateles Lake and Its Shores, circa 1892

"Wainwright" Bookcase

Skaneateles Country Club: 100 years by Kihm Winship

Old black and white Stella Maris sign

We're now on Facebook!



We're slowly entering the world of social media by setting up a Facebook page. Please friend us and check for updates. We plan on gradually posting photos, reminders of programs, etc. Let us know what you'd like to see on our page! It's under Skaneateles Historical Society.

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E.N. Leslie and the Sphinx

by Kihm Winship



In 1885, when the Skaneateles Library Association was looking for a home for the library, the Porter lot, across from Legg Hall, became available. The next year, attorney Benoni Lee died and willed the Association his lot, between the purchased land and State Street, along with his tiny brick office.

Architect Edward B. Green of Buffalo, who had just done board member Joseph C. Willetts' home, "The Boulders," was hired to design the library. While that choice was easy, the design was a challenge. The board was divided over Benoni Lee's office. Some felt it should remain intact, a memorial to Benoni Lee. Others, especially Edmund N. Leslie, thought the little Greek Revival building would ruin the library's design. Those in favor of keeping the building won.

The finished library was dedicated in 1890, but the debate was far from over. Edmund N. Leslie used his 1902 history of Skaneateles to carry his objections into the next century, calling the Lee building a "degrading and disgraceful appendage," and naming it The Sphinx.

The literature of the day did not see Egypt's Sphinx as handsome. William Turner, in his *Journal of a Tour in the Levant* (1820), said, "The face is of most gigantick proportions, and the features, like those of all Egyptian antiquities, hideously ugly."

And Leslie may not have been thinking of the Egyptian Sphinx alone. The sphinx – a creature with a human head and the body of lion – was a common gatekeeper at cities and temples all around the Mediterranean. So when Leslie saw an ugly stone structure squatting at the entry to our temple of learning – the Skaneateles Library – one can imagine why a sphinx came to mind.

In spite of Leslie's tirades, the building endured, occupied by F.E. Stone until 1933, by the law firm Weeks & Weeks until 1962, and then the Stewart Insurance Agency. In 1987, the library reclaimed the space, opened up a doorway from the library proper, and the office became the Children's Room, a lovely space. But today we can almost hear Leslie grumbling, saying, "It's still a sphinx."

Join us on the Bus to



Thursday
October 8,
2015

Cooperstown in the Fall!

A fun trip to a special place!



Historic tour of
the Village in
the AM



Delicious lunch at the Otesaga



Visit the famous Farmer's Museum



Visit the fabulous Fenimore Art Museum



Day's end at the Fly Creek Cider Mill &
spend gift certificate

We leave Skaneateles at 7:15 and with a coffee stop arrive at 10:00
Explore history of village with our guide 'till 11:30
Visit the Farmer's Museum and Fenimore Art Museum from 1:30 to 4:15
Visit the amazing Fly Creek Cider Mill for shopping and snacks from 4:15 'till 5:30 departure for home

Cost per person is just \$115
(includes a small donation to The Creamery)

Thursday
October 8, 2015
Call 685-1360 for ticket info.

Sponsored by the Skaneateles
Historical Society



Join us on the Bus to



Thursday
October 8,
2015

Cooperstown in the Fall!

Here's the deal:

Reserve your seat on our deluxe coach for \$30.00

Pay the additional \$85 (\$115 total) by Aug. 31, 2015

No refunds allowed after 8/31 but you may find a replacement

We will meet at Austin park at 7:00 and depart at 7:15 on 10/8

Fill out the form below, detach it, and make your check out to
Skaneateles Historical Society.

Mail it to us at 28 Hannum St. Skaneateles, NY 13152

LET'S HAVE SOME FUN!

Name _____ No. in party _____

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Payment amount (\$30 deposit or \$115 full ticket) _____

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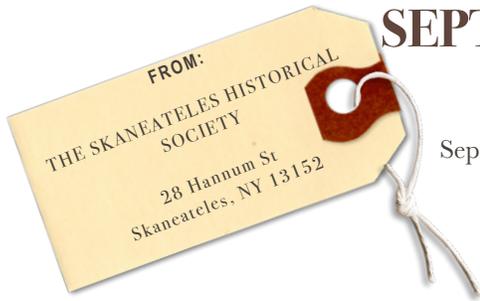
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SPECIAL THANKS

Helen Ridgeway has provided refreshments for our monthly programs for many years, and has recently retired from this service. We are so grateful for her dedication and special treats.

We still need volunteers to work in our gift shop and docents to give tours. It's only 3 hours at a time, and you get to meet all kinds of interesting people. Please call Barbara Patrick at 685-3115 for gift shop details, and 685-1360 for docent information.

We have received \$10,693.23 from our Annual Fund Drive toward our goal of \$20,000.00. Thank you to everyone who has contributed. If you haven't contributed yet, would you please consider making a donation? We need everyone's help.