

### Life on the Farm: No Place for Sissies

by Pam Haynes Johnson Kelly

My maternal grandmother and my mentor, Nina Kittle Haynes, was born in January, 1896 on the steep terrain known then as Cat Ladder farm in the Millbrook Valley. Odds were 50/50 of a winter baby surviving even under the best of circumstances, but she and her twin brother Frank lived to see adulthood.

She helped raise crops, milk cows, butcher, hunt game, pick berries and apples, as well as countless other tasks. Her siblings were 10 brothers and a sister. In her later years she said she had been a "tom-boy" and regretted not helping her "ma" more with the household chores, rather than spending her days outside. Her lifelong love for and strong connection to nature apparently started early.

It was typical for kids to quit school in eighth grade to work on the family farm. My grandmother did this, as well as working on a farm in Roxbury. She rode the "Red Heifer" train from Arena to get there. This was around 1912.

In September 1918 she met the train in Arena to claim the body of brother Frank. He fell victim to the influenza epidemic while in Army boot camp in Syracuse.

Gram married Orson Haynes in December that year and started dairy farming. When most of the small herd contracted tuberculosis, my grandparents had to destroy them and start over again. After renting a farm for a couple years, they borrowed several thousand dollars from Mr. Gould, a wealthy neighbor, and bought Forge View Farm in Dry Brook. Here is where they lived out the rest of their lives.

My grandmother's first "greenhouse" was a hole dug in

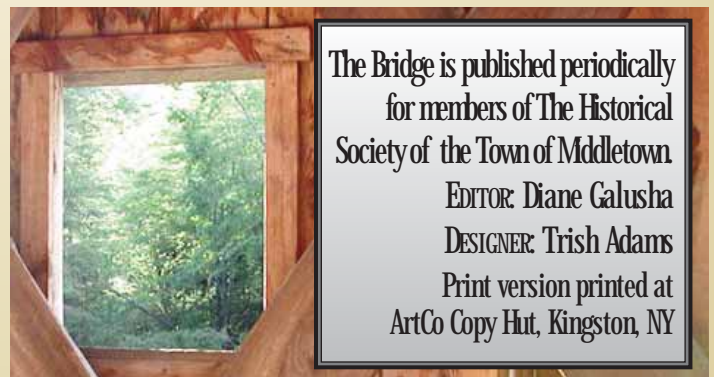


Nina Kittle Haynes on wash day at Cat Ladder Farm.

the ground, covered with a window. She nurtured seedlings, transplanted and coaxed them, into a bountiful garden. The Haynes larder was well stocked each winter.

Haying season was one of my grandmother's favorites. My grandfather drove the tractor, cutting acres of rows of grass, tedding it to dry it before baling. Various workers, men, women and kids walked behind the baler, throwing the big bales onto the trailer. When the trailer was stacked high with bales it was taken to the barn and

*continued on page 2*



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*continued from page 1*

loaded, then restacked in the hay mow.

Through these weeks families and neighbors worked together, oftentimes feverishly to stow the valuable winter crop in the barn before the rains came, often playing Russian roulette with mother nature. Full haymows were a treasure. Gram tended the acres of garden and other crops as well as working the hay fields. This was grueling work performed under the baking sun — no place for sissies.

When cauliflower became an important crop in the area, my grandparents raised many acres of the vegetable. They built a greenhouse where gram spent countless toilsome, but joyful hours persuading tiny seeds to become their cash crop.

The Kittle family grew peanuts one year, a sure oddity in the Catskills. How and why they experimented with this is lost to the ages.

Another favorite time of year was deer season. After protecting her garden and cauliflower crops from the wild deer, gram felt vindicated in shooting a nice big buck. She canned the venison for winter meals. Truth be known, she also loved shooting woodchucks who presented problems to her summer crops.

She had a very nurturing and domestic character in contrast to her rough exterior. She helped bring many babies into the world, including her sister's daughter who became her name-



ALL IN THE FAMILY — Nina and Orson Haynes, with their daughters Nina Ann, Lillian Jean, Lena, Leta, in 1960.

sake. Gram cared for the same sister later when she was dying of cancer.

Gram said she felt rich when she saved up enough money to buy several yards of flannel, turning it into diapers and blankets for her babies. Chicken feed bags were utilized by her and other area woman to make clothing as well as other household items. Retirement years saw her teaching younger generations the art of piecing and quilting. Gram's sewing talents have a permanent place in the Catskill Mountain Quilter's Hall of Fame at the Erpf House in Arkville.

Did I mention she gave birth to four daughters, Lena, Leta, Jean and Ann? Along with the farm work she washed

clothes on a wash board, and in later years had the luxury of a ringer washer. She ironed with a heavy "sad iron" heated on the stove. Ironing linens for the Gould family as well as selling chickens, eggs, beef, milk, cream and her homemade butter helped supplement her income.

No matter how long her work day, she found time to keep a daily diary. The weather was noted each day along with crop information, farm activities and family births and deaths. "March 19, 1950: Lena had a baby girl 12:07 a.m. Wt. 7 lbs." She logged me into her diary on that date, 67 years ago. I feel blessed and thankful to have been a part of this woman's life. I miss her.

## HSM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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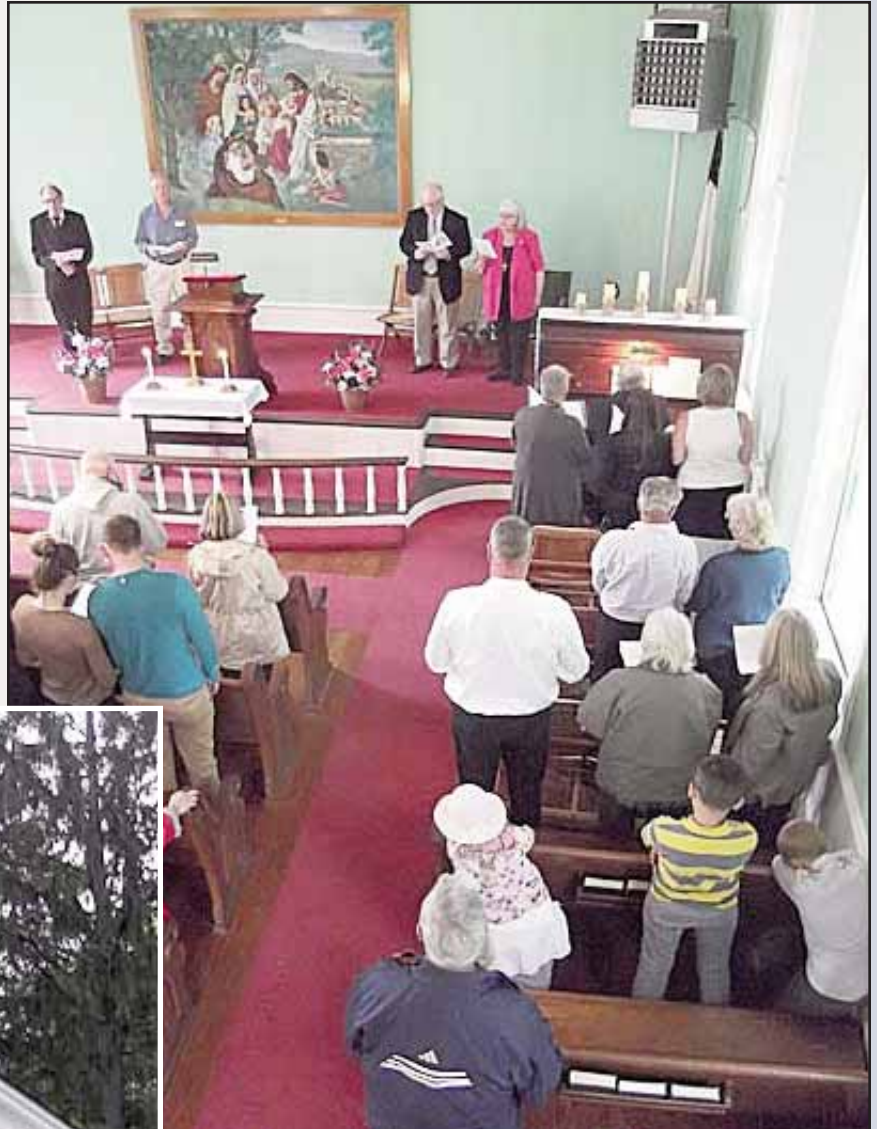
Community members, former residents and history lovers came together June 4 to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the Dry Brook Community Church.

The classic country church at the confluence of the Todd Mountain and Dry Brook streams has been a source of comfort and support to the people of the valley for 150 years, and so they gathered to mark the anniversary with prayer, song and fellowship.

Built as a Methodist-Episcopal (ME) Church, the meeting house was constructed on land donated by Lysander and Carolyn Tubbs in 1887. Lumber for the edifice was likely sawn at the Lysander sawmill across the road, and the structure framed on the ground and raised, like a barn. A bell tower was included, but it wasn't until 1956 that a bell — from the Arena ME Church that had been demolished for the Pepacton Reservoir — was installed, hoisted into position by a Town of Hardenburgh road crew.

A JOYFUL NOISE — Congregants (right) sang and shared fellowship in the Dry Brook Community Church on June 4, as people in that valley have done for 15 decades. Below right, Historian Betty Baker and Mike Kudish examine an intriguing map.

Historian Betty Baker organized the anniversary service, which began with the tolling of that venerable bell. A social hour followed in the adjacent community hall, built in 1941. Betty put together historical exhibits showing what a full and active life the little church in the valley has led.







NEWS AS HISTORY — Clarke Sanford, who purchased the *News* in 1904, is shown above in his office on Bridge Street where he also operated a car dealership and garage. Dick Sanford (inset above), who recently retired as publisher of the *Catskill Mountain News*, spoke about his family's long association with the *News* following an August 12 HSM presentation on the newspaper that has been recording the community's history since 1902 (1863 if you include its predecessor publications, the *Margaretville Utilitarian* and the *Margaretville Messenger*).

### WRITE ON!

Young Jack Glaser used an old fashioned 'tablet' to express himself during a visit to the Old Stone Schoolhouse in Dunraven during Headwaters History Days in June. Roy Todd was schoolmaster for the day.





ONCE UPON A PONE — Connie Jeffers, left, prepared both a July 9 program on women's roles at the turn of the last century, as well as a buffet of edibles made from the *1886 Women Suffrage Cookbook*. A condensed reproduction of the cookbook, produced by designer Trish Adams (right, holding muffin), is available for sale. Contact the Society if you would like a copy (\$5).



MY MAMA VOTES! — Owen Williams (below) got into the spirit of the day on July 26 as a crowd of 21st century activists marched down Margaretville's Main Street to remember suffragists of 1917. The Suffrage Parade, organized by HSM, concluded at Open Eye Theater where characters in the new musical "Seneca Falls" introduced themselves, and a film about suffrage martyr Inez Milholland was screened.



THE ROAD BOTH TRAVELED — A detail from "Road in Fleischmanns 1915," a painting by Kentucky artist Paul Sawyer, who lived for a time in a former chapel on the Skene/Emery estate in Highmount. Sawyer was one of many colorful characters introduced to a standing-room-only audience in a presentation by Diane Galusha, "Before Belleayre: A History of Highmount." The program was presented again on September 9.



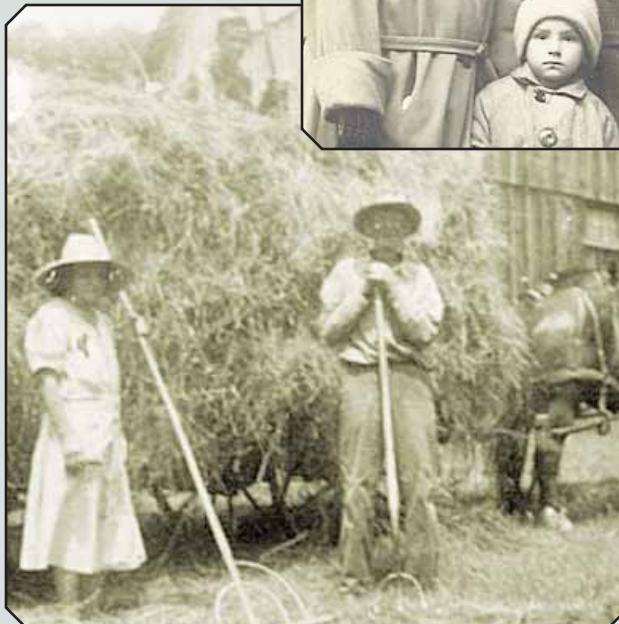
by **Amy Metzner Grois**

Bruno and Sophie Metzner ran one of the last known non-mechanized dairy farms in the region without electricity or phone, drew all water from a gravity fed spring and used only horses for farm work well into the 1960s.

Born in Germany, Bruno served in World War I and participated in the famous 'Christmas Truce' December 24, 1914 when French, German and British soldiers crossed trenches to exchange Christmas greetings during the unofficial ceasefire along the Western front. Sadly, Bruno's brother lost his life during his first week of service. This forever affected Bruno's view of war.

Bruno became a stonecutter and gravestone carver during the Great Depression in Germany. Ultimately the hyperinflation of the Weimar Republic in the 1920s led to food shortages and widespread unemployment. He came to NYC through Ellis Island and became a successful sculptor — working on several sculptures for St. John the Divine in NYC, which can still be seen today. Three years later, he sent for his wife Sophie and their four children. With WWII looming, Bruno abandoned his craft and career. The loss of his brother during WWI had so traumatized him that out of fear for the lives of his two sons he purchased a 160-acre farm on Hubbell Hill from the Hoffman family in 1940 so that his sons could be declared necessary agricultural workers and be exempt from the draft. The farming was difficult and everyone, including women and children, had to help. They barely got by.

There was also a lot of anti-German sentiment at that time so the family kept mostly to themselves on their isolated farm. A grand-daughter later related that while they were sometimes harassed for being German, they were actually very proud to be new Americans. On the farm they had a battery-operated radio which sat on a shelf above the dining table. "Once a day ... we listened to Roosevelt's broadcasts to the nation. We children had to sit as quiet as church mice and never say BOO because 'the PRESIDENT' was speaking!"



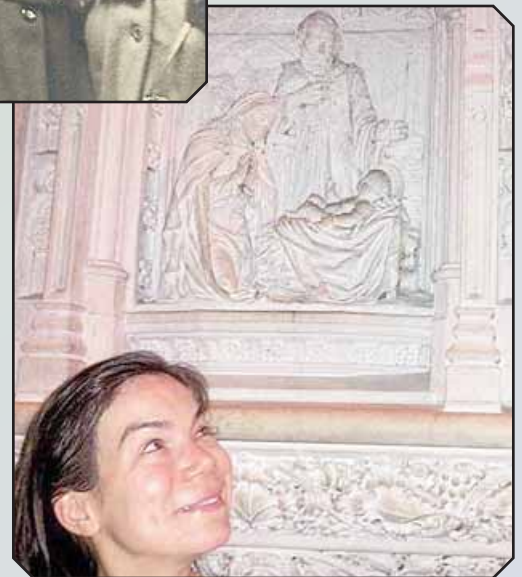
She and her siblings attended Margaretville school, walking over a mile up and down a steep rocky hill in all kinds of weather to get the bus at their friend Bill Stahl's farm.

Bruno passed in 1951, Sophie followed in 1956. They were laid to rest beneath a vivid white marble headstone in Margaretville Cemetery. Some family members claim Bruno may have carved it himself but others say it was erected as a tribute to the medium he worked in which he both loved and abandoned in favor of his family's safety.

The cows are gone from the Metzner farm now, and so is the large barn that once sheltered them. But hand-stacked stone walls continue to define former pastures. The old house still stands. It was home to this large family for 20 years; generations of family gathered there to reminisce, play pinochle and sing the old German songs. Today, the fifth generation of Bruno's family still visits and helps maintain the property, enjoying the Margaretville area for fishing, hunting and its beautiful views.

*Amy Metzner Grois, born in 1964, is the great-granddaughter of Bruno and Sophie Metzner and the granddaughter of one of the two sons who worked the farm during WWII. She lives in Mount Laurel, NJ with husband Brad. They regularly visit and maintain the family's farmland, still without electricity to this day.*

Right, Sophie and her children in NYC before moving upstate. Below left, Sophie and Bruno haying on the farm. Below, Bruno's great-great granddaughter admires his sculpture in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.



A call from a Florida newspaper reporter early this summer revealed an unlikely connection between a long-gone Margaretville school and the First Baptist Church of Palm Beach Gardens.

Seems the church, built in 1961, harbors in its belfry an iron bell inscribed “Margaretville Union Free School Founded 1893.” The bell had not been heard in years when a church maintenance worker shimmied across a crawl space to reach the bell’s rope and lower it thru a hole in the ceiling, allowing it to be rung for June 25 services. “It was music to the ears of the congregation,” wrote reporter Sarah Peters in the Palm Beach Post.

Sarah searched for Margaretville on the internet, and found HSM, asking, “How on earth did the bell get to Florida?”

The Union Free School was a high school built in 1893 where the fire hall in Margaretville now stands. It was replaced by a larger school in 1907. The new building also had a bell tower, but it’s not clear whether the original bell was hung within it. The 1907 building was later expanded, and in 1939 was abandoned when the new central school was constructed on Main Street. In 1945, the old school at the corner of Church and Maple Streets was radically changed to accommodate fire trucks and apparatus. Exactly when the bell was removed is a mystery. But a photograph in the April 13, 1945 *Catskill Mountain News*



**BELL WITHER?** — How the bell from the Margaretville Union Free School wound up in a Palm Beach Gardens church remains a mystery, but the Kass family — a fixture of local life for so many decades — may be the missing link!

showed Max and Sadie Kass, proprietors of Kass Inn, ringing the bell, which the caption said they “bought from the old high school building in Margaretville.” The bell was displayed in the lobby of their hotel for many years. Kass Inn was sold in the 1980s and was renamed Hanah Country Resort; the main inn building that once housed the bell was torn down.

Max and Sadie wintered in Florida in the 1960s, but whether they hauled the bell down there and gave or sold it to the church has not been determined.

If you have information that might solve this mystery, please call 845-586-4973 or email [history@catskill.net](mailto:history@catskill.net).

Oddly, at the entrance to Hanah Resort’s main building on West Hubbell Hill, another old bell is prominently displayed in a stone circle built in 2003 by the Daniels family of masons. The bell is engraved “Oliverea M. E. Church, C. H. Travis, Pastor, 1892.”

## Party’s Not Over Yet! “Home Style” Fun Coming Right Up

SAT  
SEPT  
23

### 14TH ANNUAL CAULIFLOWER FESTIVAL

Village Park, Margaretville. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Old fashioned kids’ activities and an exhibit on early motive power in the History Tent. Antique Tractor Parade.

SAT  
OCT  
21

### HSM ANNUAL MEETING

Luncheon and Program: “It Ain’t Nice Fer Purty: Tales from the Age of Homespun,” by Bill Horne, author of *The Improbable Community: Camp Woodland and the*

*American Democratic Ideal*. 12 - 2:30 p.m.

HSM Hall. Reservations required. \$20.

845-586-2860



**HISTORICAL SOCIETY of MIDDLETOWN,**  
*Delaware County*

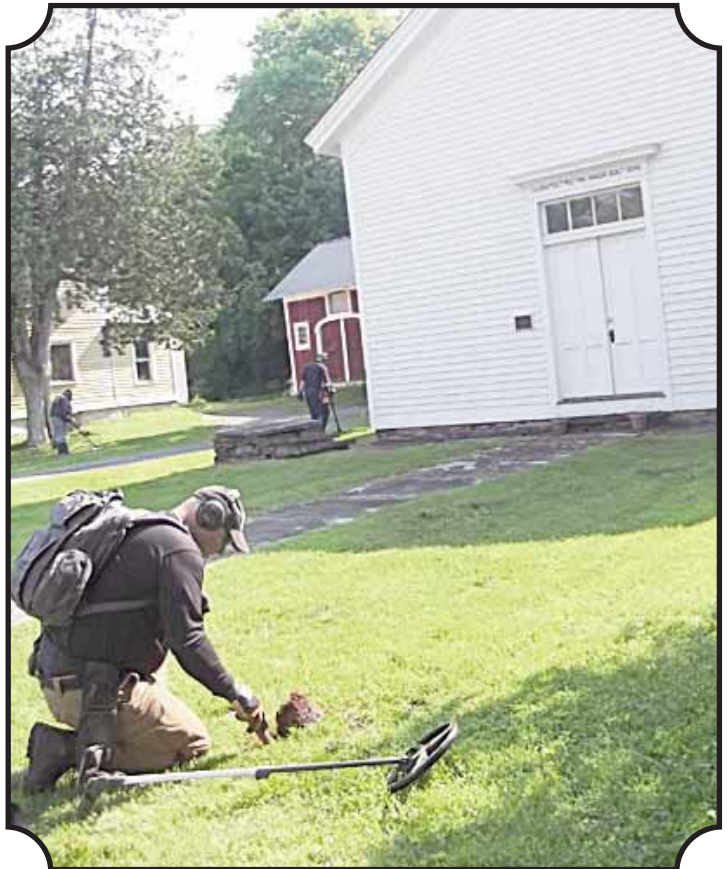


## Happy Hunting Grounds in Halcottsville



### WHAT LIES BENEATH . . . ?

An army of men and women, and a couple of kids, converged on the hamlet of Halcottsville in early June to see what might lie beneath the sod of front lawns, roadsides and hayfields. Forty members of the Nor'easters Metal Detecting Club unearthed coins, buckles, tools, toys and just plain junk that had been buried for generations. Notable finds included an unusual, large commemorative 'coin' stamped "Improved Order of Red Men," a fraternal organization, found in the yard of what was once Hulbert's Store. An 1870s filigreed belt or ladies boot buckle was uncovered at what was once the Union Hotel, now the home of Dave and Lorraine Truran. Several early coins were unearthed at the former Kelly homestead farm. Participants, who came from as far away as Texas and Florida, paid an entry fee for the chance to search this new territory. Proceeds were shared between Halcottsville Fire Dept. and HSM.



### THE 49¢ POST

THE 49¢ POST is an exclusive feature for members who receive *The Bridge* via e-mail. Because your newsletter requires no postage, you get an "extra"!

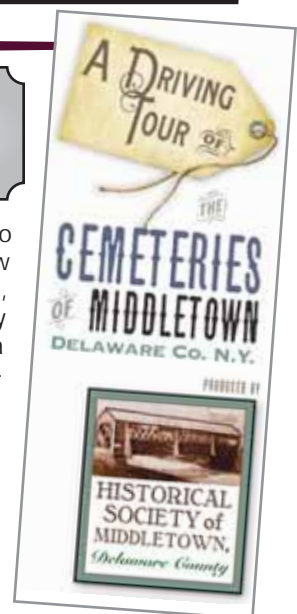
### INTERRED-STATE DRIVING

A distinctive new driving guide to nine Middletown cemeteries is now available. The beautiful brochure, produced with a Delaware County tourism promotion grant, offers a map and descriptions of Margaretville Village Cemetery; Sanford Cemetery in Dunraven; New Kingston, Halcottsville and Kelly Corners Cemeteries; Bedell Cemetery, north of Fleischmanns, and Clovesville, B'nai Israel and Irish Cemeteries just west of Fleischmanns.

History enthusiasts, genealogists, and the simply curious will find the brochure an enticing guide to the burial sites of artists, veterans, children, celebrities, community leaders and others. Visitors are encouraged to explore scenic back roads to find these havens of history, and to stop for a bite to eat and stay awhile in our town.

The brochure, designed by Trish Adams and printed by Copy Hut of Kingston, is being distributed to area lodging and dining establishments, historic sites, tourist information stations, and municipal offices.

The guide will be available at the Margaretville Cauliflower Festival September 23, when an original cemetery activity book for children will also be available. To receive the free brochure by mail, contact HSM at [history@catskill.net](mailto:history@catskill.net), or 845-586-4973.



**Amy Taylor served as docent at Bedell Cemetery during one of four Sunday Cemetery Strolls held this summer by HSM. Bedell is among those featured in a new cemetery driving guide.**