

## The Banker House, Revealed

A prime corner house and lot at Main and Maple in Margaretville is being restored to its original spacious glory. New owner Kingdon Gould Jr. says he will preserve not only this grand Victorian house, but the carriage stoop with the name "Dr. J. H. Banker" that graced the front of the building for many years.

That stoop may be a clue as to the builder of the house.

Dr. John H. Banker was born in Halcott Center in 1842. He married Anna Street (1849-1904), daughter of Dr. Sherman Street who practiced medicine first in Roxbury, then in Arkville where he lived on a large farm on the river. The Bankers had one son, Luwelwyn 1870-1932, who also was a doctor

J. H. Banker is credited with organizing a meeting that led to establishment of the first fire fighting unit in Margaretville in 1887. Thus he is considered the "founder of the Margaretville Fire Dept." He died in 1892, so if he built the handsome house on the corner, it had to be before that.

The 1869 Beers Atlas map shows the lot, without a structure on it, owned by J. C. Scott. A 1903 Sanborn insurance map shows the outline of the house, 78 feet long, with 2 porches and a separate rectangular building on the

rear of the property (probably a "cottage" found in later newspaper references).



The Banker House.

A subsequent owner of the property was Joseph Langsfeld, an Austrian immigrant silversmith who lived alternately in NYC and Margaretville. He came here with his wife in 1907, and they had two children, Hermine and Helen.

In 1928 he announced plans for a new business block he planned to build that summer on the corner of Maple and Main Streets, with two stores of triangular formation with one main entrance at the corner. The Catskill Mountain News reported on May 11 that each store would have a frontage of 32 feet with



seven-foot glass windows. "The structure will be single story 14 feet high with basement and a modern heating appliance. Mr. Langsfeld hopes to have a contract signed and excavation begin in 10 days. It is rumored that one of the apartments will be occupied as an exclusive shoe store."

Clark Haight won the construction contract. Newspaper references in the 1930s indicate that store tenants included Margaretville Electric and Gas, and Place and Goff Furniture and Undertaking business.



The Banker House at the turn of the century; with storefront addition in 2013; and today, with addition removed

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## The Banker House Cont.

The Langsfelds evidently occupied the "cottage" that fronted on Maple Street when they were in town, and rented it at other times. It appears to have housed an antique shop as late as 1938.

Harold Smith bought the store and dwelling at the corner of Main and Maple in July 1942. A masonry block addition was built onto the side of the house and storefront to accommodate Smith's plumbing business later owned by Bob Wilson and

then Jimmy Joe O'Neal. The house behind was rented to a succession of tenants.

After the O'Neals sold the property, it remained unoccupied and was then partially flooded when Irene came to town in August of 2011. The broken plate glass windows were boarded up, creating an eyesore that the Gould purchase and partial demolition has rectified. The house will be rented when renovations are completed.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FAIRVIEW!

**Fairview Public Library is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2014.**

The library, located on Walnut Street, had several predecessors. One early library had been located in a loft above a garage at a residence on Maple Street. Another was situated above L. Bussy & Co. store at the corner of Main and Walnut. Later, one was established at the former Margaretville High School building, now the Margaretville Fire Hall on Church Street.

When the library at the former high school closed in 1968, several members of the community began talking about the need for a new library. Six years later, the dream became reality. Fairview Public Library opened July 1, 1974 in four rooms in the newly renovated Fairview

House, a former Arkville hotel that had been built by Revolutionary War veteran Noah Dimmick. The library shared the stately house on the hill with the Erpf Catskill Cultural Center, endowed by financier, philanthropist and patron of the arts Armand Erpf. The Erpf Center provided space for the library without charge. That building, now more commonly known as the Erpf House, is home of the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and other non-profit organizations.

Fairview was formally chartered in September of 1974 to serve the Town of Middletown, excluding Fleishmanns, where Skene Memorial Library is located. This enabled it to become part of the Four County

Library System. The first Fairview Board of Trustees included Dawn Roadman, Margaret Gottfried, Ernst Hyatt, Margaret "Peg" Barnes and Gary Akin. Marion Connell was another early trustee who was instrumental in the library's development.

The library outgrew its 700-square-foot Fairview house facility and, in 1992, purchased the former Joe Christian house on Walnut Street in the Village of Margaretville using a grant from the Allen-Heath Memorial Foundation of Chicago. A major campaign raised the funds to renovate the Christian house, and to add a computer and periodicals room, a main stacks



Joe Christian's house was expanded to make the new library in 1994.

area and a meeting room. The addition, designed by David Hoggatt and Chris Cook, and built by Frank Flachs, was dedicated August 6, 1994.

Cynthia Kehoe was the first volunteer librarian at Fairview, assisted by MCS library director Caryl Jenkins who helped with the children's room. Imogene (Jean) Patrick became librarian in the fall of 1974 and held that post until 1983. She was succeeded by Leslie Seidman (1982-84); Barbara Scudder (1985-87), Naomi Weiss (1987-2001), Christine Ossipov (2002-2004), Donna McBride (2005-2006), Ellen Verni (2007) and Diana Cope (2008-2011).

# WHERE A FLY-FISHING MASTER GOT HIS START

For half a century, the name A. J. McClane (1922-1969) was instantly recognizable by fishing enthusiasts the world over. Long-time Fishing Editor of Field and Stream Magazine, and author of 20 books, including the classic Practical Fly Fisherman (1953), Albert Jules McClane was introduced to the sport in Dry Brook as a teenager.

In 1935, he had hitchhiked to the Catskills looking for work and got a summer job on the Rider Hollow farm of Basil VanKleeck. He got to know the stream and its brook trout intimately and developed a serious interest in fish and fishing. He returned for many summers, becoming a master angler under the tutelage of veteran fishermen such as Ray Neidig, Dan Todd, Mike Lurenz, John Alden Knight, and Doc Faulkner.

Though he traveled the world over to write about sport fishing, he frequently returned to the Catskills and often penned stories of his early experiences and fondly-remembered instructors.

As Ed VanPut related in his 2007 book Trout Fishing in the Catskills, published by Skyhorse Publishing, "McClane recalled that he and (Dan) Todd (president of the Margaretville Rod & Gun Club and station agent at the D&N Railroad's Margaretville station) would ride the tracks paralleling the river on a handcart, enjoying an excellent view of the East Branch. When a number of swallows or cedar waxwings were found feeding over the stream surface, they stopped, put their rods together and started fishing . . . He often stated that the years fishing with Dan Todd were some of the best years of his angling career."



## REMEMBERING ARENA

Arena is a place that lives only in memory and photographs today. Come see what the community looked like before the Pepacton Reservoir claimed it, and hear how it felt to lose it. HSM President Diane Galusha will present "Remembering Arena: 60 Years Gone," on Sunday, Sept. 14 at 1 p.m. at the HSM Hall.

## SHARE YOUR FARM ANIMAL STORIES!

Did you grow up on a farm in the Town of Middletown or surrounding area? Do you have photos or memories of special animals – livestock, work animals or family pets? If so, the Historical Society of the Town of Middletown (HSM) would like to hear from you!

HSM is putting together an exhibit, "Animals on the Farm," for the History Tent at the September 27 Cauliflower Festival. Consider sharing your stories about favorite Jerseys or cow dogs, barn cats or horse teams. Photos, diary entries, clippings and letter excerpts recounting animal encounters or escapades from your parents' or grandparents' day are welcome too.

Call Diane at 845-586-4973 or email [history@catskill.net](mailto:history@catskill.net).



# 2014 CEMETARY TOUR



The cast, docents and directors of the 2014 Living History Cemetery Tour gathered for a photo at Sanford Cemetery prior to the June 21 tour.



Roy Moses as Sam Smith, and Fred Margulies as Ziba Sanford, shared stories of pioneer days in the lower New Kingston Valley.



John Bernhardt held his audience spellbound as he portrayed early settler Abel Sands.



It was a beautiful evening to gather with friends for a little time traveling.



Jessica Vecchione (VeccVideo), shown here filming Ken Taylor as F. Lee Keator, documented the tour, and a DVD will be available for sale in September. **Get yours for \$10 in the History Tent at the Cauliflower Festival September 27!**



Docent Tina Greene points out the imprint of The Coffin Man, an itinerant stone carver who produced the monument for George Sands, who died August 8, 1816 at age 83.

# AN EVENTFUL SEASON



A pair of HSM fundraisers found our supporters dining and imbibing in some pretty gorgeous surroundings this year. In April we gathered 'round the elegant table at Spillian, a former Fleischmann family mansion, where proprietors Mark Somerfield and Leigh Melander offered a soup and salad luncheon and an illustrated talk on the fascinating history of the house and its famous family. In July, Connie and Tom Jeffers hosted a Summer Soiree at their beautiful Victorian home, Raven's Nest, in Margaretville. That's Connie pouring some well-aged, home-pressed cider for Gary Rosa and Ros Welchman. Thank you, Leigh, Mark, Tom and Connie, and to all the guests who made both of these events so memorable.



Len Utter and other members of the Stone Schoolhouse Association Board welcomed visitors to the 1862 Dunraven schoolhouse during Headwaters History Days June 7 and 8. Fifteen historic sites were open in Andes, Roxbury and Middletown, including Hubbell Homestead, where Bill Johnson and Hubbell family members got the venerable sawmill operating to the delight of tour goers.



Ben Bath, an ethnomusicologist with a deep interest in a wide variety of sacred musical traditions, shared his research into the theology and music of the Old School Baptists at a June 6 program at HSM. Jim and Louise Campone were among audience members who got into the spirit and sang along. Read Catskill Mountain News reporter Trish Adams' account of this stirring program on the Tin Horn page of our website.

Lynda Carroll of the Public Archaeology Facility at Binghamton University examines points and other artifacts brought by John Hoeko (center) and Joe Hewitt following Lynda's April 26 presentation about an archaeological dig in Arkville that uncovered evidence of Paleo-Indians along the East Branch.

## Sanford Siblings Recall Life On The Farm

On a recent summer afternoon, three of six children of Myron and Lucy Dougherty Sanford got together to reminisce about growing up on a farm in New Kingston. Mary Sanford Davies, born in 1923; George Cornelius Sanford, born in 1926, and Betty Sanford Schebesta, born in 1937, shared stories, along with Doris Evelyn Cowan Sanford, George's wife.

Myron's father was Cornelius Jones Sanford, who developed a farm adjacent to one established by earlier Sanfords on what is now Tuttle Road. Myron took over his dad's farm and, according to son George, "was a hard working, conscientious man. If a neighbor had a problem and needed help, he was one of the first to be there. He was the neighborhood butcher, and was one of the first in the valley to have a hay baler and would help other farmers with the haying."

Myron was a trustee of the Thompson Hollow School where Mary, George and brother John went to school. Teacher Josephine Lockwood lived with the Sanfords for a time. Miss Sweeney, Miss Tracy and John Norton were other teachers.

The Sanfords, like many of their neighbors, grew cauliflower and Brussels sprouts to supplement income from milk. George and Mary often sat side by side on the horse-drawn cauliflower planter, setting seedlings into the dirt, row after row. "And after chores at night, we'd sit around the kitchen table and pack sprouts in baskets, the nicest ones on top," Mary related.



"Mother made all of our clothes, a lot of them out of feedbags," said Betty. "I did have a few skirts made of my brothers' old pants. Mother always had a big garden, raised berries, and did a lot of baking – she made all the bread for the family. And she canned meats and vegetables, that's what we lived on in the winter."

They learned to drive on the tractor that came after the horses, and raised chickens and lambs and sold them to boarding houses. Fun? They listened to "Oxydol's Own Ma Perkins" and Dodger ballgames on the battery-powered Atwater

Kent radio. They went swimming at Meeker Rocks in the East Branch in Dunraven, and in the winter, they let the horse tow their hand sleighs to the top of the hill and rode them all the way down to the road, a long, exhilarating trip they could only manage twice in a day.

These and many other memories of the Sanfords and their community have been preserved on tape as part of HSM's ongoing oral history project.



George W. Sanford Myron G. Cornelius Sanford  
George C.  
4 Generations

Top Photo: Half of the Sanford siblings, children of Myron and Lucy Dougherty Sanford, shared their memories of growing up on a farm in New Kingston as part of HSM's ongoing oral history project. L. to r., George Sanford, Betty Sanford Schebesta, and Mary Sanford Davies. Not present were John, Myron Jr. and Marie Sanford Stachnik.

Bottom Photo: Four generations of Sanfords are shown in this image from a family album. George C., the little boy in white, grew up to be a Baptist minister, and is shown in accompanying photo with two sisters.

# A challenge for our readers

Do you remember Fanny Brice? Star of burlesque, radio and film, she was a singing comedienne who is remembered for the songs "Second Hand Rose," "My Man" and many others. Her tumultuous life story was showcased in "Funny Girl," and was chronicled locally in a recent Open Eye Theater production, "One Night with Fanny Brice," starring Patricia Dell. We've heard stories that Fanny Brice may have performed in Roxbury, or spoken at Margaretville school. Can anyone confirm that?



## Why are these people smiling?



What a great moment in time at the Hotel Lake Side in Halcottsville! We don't know when the photo was taken (c. 1910?), or what the occasion was, but this is a happy crowd, young men dressed for bicycling (note bikes on the porch), ladies in their straw hats. Today the former hotel is the home of Dave and Lorraine Truran. The photo is from the collection of John Burroughs' Woodchuck Lodge. The famous naturalist occasionally dined at the hotel, as did Helen Gould Shepard, who caused quite a stir when she arrived in her chauffeur driven car a couple times each summer. Earl Smith, whose parents ran the hotel from 1903 to 1910, said the Gould entourage paid the standard 25 cents a meal, and always ate pork.

## 'NEW' HISTORY ON OUR WEBSITE

Much new material has been added to the HSM website recently. Information-packed applications for 14 historic sites that are on the State and National Registers of Historic Places have been posted on the Features page of [www.mtownhistory.org](http://www.mtownhistory.org).

These include the Galli-Curci Estate in Highmount and the Galli-Curci Theater in Margaretville; Bnai Israel Synagogue and Skene Memorial Library in Fleischmanns; the Stone Schoolhouse (District 10) in Dunraven; Hubbell Farm and Kelly Corners Cemetery; the Kelly Round Barn; the Margaretville and New Kingston Presbyterian Churches; the New Kingston Historic District; the Halcottsville Old School Baptist Church; the Pakatakan Art Colony in Arkville; the Thomson Farm (actually in the Town of Roxbury, just over the Middletown line, near New Kingston); and the VanBenschoten House on Margaretville Mountain.

On the Tin Horn page of the website are several capsule histories: the 144th Regiment's experience at the Battle of Honey Hill, SC, with photos of the recent reenactment of that battle at the Delaware County Historical Assoc.; a colorful article that first appeared in the Catskill Mountain News about music in the Old School Baptist Church; a profile of the itinerant early 19th-century stone carver known as Coffin Man; and a short article musing on the occupation "feather renovator" found in the 1880 Middletown Census for a man named J. L. Thurber.

If you've attended any of HSM's programs this year, you might find your photo on the website, too. Check out the Calendar entries for post-event images.



### HSM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Diane Galusha • PRESIDENT

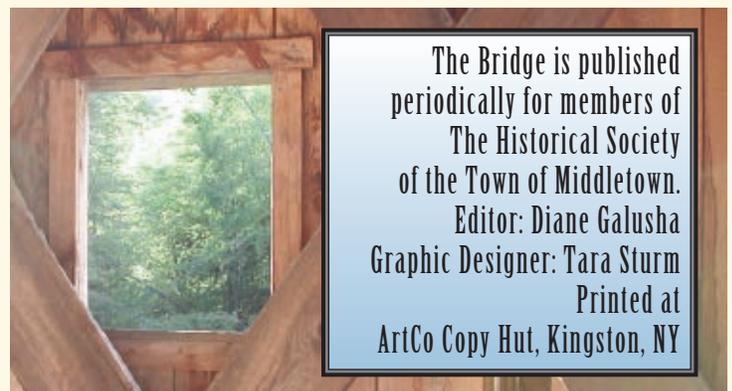
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# Thank you!

The Historical Society of the Town of Middletown gratefully accepted a \$500 donation from NBT bank to help pay for a new roof on the society's Margaretville hall. Caroljean Finch, right, manager of the Margaretville branch of the bank, made the ceremonial presentation August 7, with HSM President Diane Galusha accepting on behalf of the Board, from left Marilyn Pitetti, Jackie Purdy, Anne Sanford, Roger Davis, and Fred Travis. Not pictured: Tina Greene and Henry Friedman. Grants from the O'Connor Foundation and the Community Foundation of South Central New York were matched by HSM members and support-like NBT to secure the new roof. A heartfelt THANK YOU to those who helped with and to contractor Louis Giorgi and crew. Pictured on the roof, l. to r., are Mike Rosa.



## FIVE SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP HSM THIS FALL:

1. Visit our table at the Pakatakan Farmers Market at the Round Barn September 6 and buy a raffle ticket (or many!) for cut paper artwork made by Marsha Guthrie, a ceramic platter crafted by Ros Welchman and a half gallon of local maple syrup.
2. Renew your membership when you get that letter in the mail in September.
3. Make a donation in honor or in memory of a history-loving friend or relative. We'll provide the card!
4. Consider making a bequest to HSM in your will to ensure the preservation of local history well into the future.
5. Do you shop at Amazon? Start at <https://smile.Amazon.com> and Amazon will donate .5% of the purchase price of eligible products to HSM! Make sure you direct your donations to go to Historical Society of the Town of Middletown Delaware County.



HISTORICAL  
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\* P. O. BOX 734 \* MARGARETVILLE, NY 12455 \*