

The Barber Houses of Fleischmanns

Fleischmanns is a little village with a big history featuring many big names. George F. Barber is not generally recognized as one of them. But though he likely never stepped foot in the village, Barber influenced the look and feel of the place over a short span of time around the turn of the 20th century.

George Franklin Barber (1854 – 1915) was an American architect best known for his residential designs, which were marketed worldwide through a series of mail-order catalogs. Barber plans were used for houses in all 50 U.S. states, and in nations as far away as Japan and the Philippines. More than four dozen Barber houses are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and several dozen more are listed as part of historic districts.

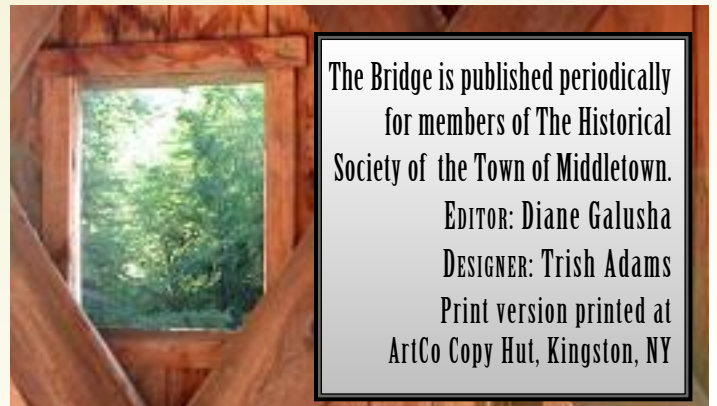
Barber began designing houses in his native DeKalb, Illinois in the late 1880s, before permanently moving his base to Knoxville, Tennessee in 1888.

His first widely circulated catalog, Cottage Souvenir No. 2, A Repository of Artistic Cottage Architecture and Miscellaneous Designs, was published in 1890. It cost \$2 and contained designs and floor plans for 59 houses, mostly in the Queen Anne style, that could be built for \$500 to \$8,000.

continued on page 4



Two doctors lived in this Barber house next to the library



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We have good news. And good news. And not-so-good news as far as our building is concerned.

Good News #1: Dean Hunter did a terrific job pulling up the old, sagging floor and beams, repairing sills and, with Jim Peters and crew, pouring a solid concrete floor. We await the installation of vinyl plank flooring later this spring.

Good News #2: Engineer Paul Gossen of Vega developed a set of plans for a modest 1,000-square-foot addition to the hall that would give us a roomy archives, small reading/research room, office, accessible rest room and lobby. Draftsman Jason Stingel of Roxbury used those drawings to produce four fine architectural renderings of the interior and exterior of the proposed addition.

In February, we received our Building Permit from the Middletown Code Enforcement Office. And then we began soliciting contractors to build it.

That brings us to the Not-So-Good News: None of the two dozen+ builders we have contacted have submitted a complete bid. Most are too busy, booked well into 2023 with other projects. We understand – blame it on Covid!

We have not given up and are still reaching out to contractors whose schedules might ease up in the next few months.

If you know a building firm that would be interested, please have them contact us at 845-586-4973 and we will send them the plans, the renderings and a spec sheet.

Meanwhile, we will get the hall back in order so that it can be used for a program or activity. Stay tuned! Thanks to the many donors who have contributed to the Building Fund over the past four years. We WILL get there! We appreciate your patience.



Main entrance and lobby



The future Middletown History Center and Nicholas J. Juried Archives.

The Juried Archives with plenty of storage and work space





continued from page 1

Customers selected the design based on size or appearance or price (Barber estimated construction cost for each design using current materials and labor costs listed in the back.) Then they ordered the corresponding plans, specifications, construction drawings and materials list, paying anywhere from \$12 to \$45 dollars. A local builder would follow the plans and secure the materials to construct the new home.

By the time his catalog business ended in 1908, George F. Barber had sold upwards of 20,000 plans, which could be modified to suit the buyer. Barber houses are characterized by features such as imposing turrets, projecting windows, verandas flanked by circular pavilions, and broad arches. Several of these designs can be seen in Fleischmanns. Once you know what to look for, a Barber house is easy to recognize.

One of them was the Sperling Cottage on Depot Street. Frank Sperling was an Austrian immigrant with a restaurant in Brooklyn and a real estate business on the side. He and wife Rose, who came from Russia, had four kids and evidently spent summers and holidays here, becoming full time residents in the early 1930s when son Bernard established a tavern known as the Cat's Meow down the street. Frank was a village trustee at one point. He died in 1941.

George Franklin Barber, 1910

#26 Barber and Kluttz's Modern Dwellings (seen on facing page) is the design for 91 Wagner Avenue, below.



The house was sold in the late 1940s to a couple who turned it into a boarding house called The Carlton. This once spectacular house has been sorely neglected for many years and now, sadly, is slated for demolition.

Other Barber houses in the village include at least three on Main Street. One is the Powell house on the west side of the library, believed built by Dr. Henry Ward Keator after 1900. Also the house next door, built around the same time by Alexander and Jane Morrison, now owned by Max Mann and Brendon McLean.

Another is a residence that's been known as the Bishop House across from the supermarket; and yet another is at 91 Wagner Avenue, built c. 1893 by George P. Doolittle now owned by Robert Sugar.

Several more are suspected to be Barber designs, the Weeping Willow guesthouse on Wagner Avenue is one — but more research is required. We'd also like to know the names of the craftsmen who built these elaborate dwellings. Crosby Kelly was very likely one of them. He built Skene Memorial Library in 1901, but NOT from a Barber design. The library's architect was Marshall Emory.

Do you live in a Barber house? Tell us about it, at history@catskill.net. Got some time? Google George Franklin Barber for images of his designs and a list of known Barber homes around the country.

Right: A Barber ad in Harper's Magazine, 1892

BARBER'S

LATEST

AND—


GREATEST



PRODUCTIONS IN
Residence Architecture,
 are found in our "Cottage Souvenir,"
 New Book, The
 Revised (1892) Edition Superbly Illustrated.
 This book is 8 1/2 x 11 in.; 180 pages, and contains over
 200 designs
 and plans of **Artistic Dwellings**
 — costing
 from \$500 to \$15,000 with reliable estimates of cost.
Hints to Home Builders
 and other information contained in this work
 makes House building truly easy and relieves one
 of many knotty problems. Price \$2.00 post paid.
 Beautiful Prospectus and Sample Pages Free.
GEO. F. BARBER & CO., Architects,
KNOXVILLE, TENN.


28

MODERN DWELLINGS




DESIGN No. 31. RESIDENCE OF MR. E. P. CLAFFLIN, ATTLEBORO, MASS. Geo. F. Barber & Co., Arch.
 COST, \$2,000 TO \$3,000

THE STYLE of this house is one much admired and will never wear out. The porch and balcony are prominent features and require tasteful treatment. The first story is weather-boarded, the second story, gables and roof are shingled. Cellar under the entire house, with brick foundation. Hard-wood interior finish, of neat design, is liberally used, and everything in the way of plumbing, glass, hardware, etc., is first-class. Site is 20 x 42 feet over porches. First story is 10 feet, second story 9 feet 2 inches, cellar 7 feet. The cost of this house was more than that given above, but for the average locality our figures are close to correct.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Sperling Cottage shows many elements of a Barber design.

Sperling Cottage (right), before the porch was taken off.

Below: Sperling Cottage, Depot St., shown in a postcard.





The former Morrison home, on Main St. was built from a Barber design

A classic interior of a local Barber house



In small country towns at the turn of the (last) century, everybody knew everybody, or was related to them. Finding a mate, therefore, was sometimes a challenge. This is a story about two local women who went a bit further afield to find love – with the same man.

Etta Palmateer (sometimes spelled Palmatier), born in 1862, was just 38 – but considered a ‘spinster’ – when she met William J. Hysham. The youngest of 12 children of William and Mary Dumond Palmateer, Etta occupied the family farm just outside the hamlet of New Kingston. And she was lonely. How she came to marry Mr. Hysham depends on which newspaper you read.

An account in the Red Oak, Iowa *Sun*, reprinted in the Delaware Gazette Jan. 10, 1900, gives this version:

“Several months ago Orson Swart, a merchant of Margaretville, N. Y., received a letter from William Hysham, of Red Rock (actually Oak), Iowa, a stranger to him, asking him to ‘please recommend a nice woman who would like to marry a solid man.’ Mr. Swart decided that Miss Palmatier, 35 years-old (sic), who owns a farm near town, would be just the person. Hysham wrote that he owned a big ranch and forwarded credentials to show that he is a man of substance and good reputation. Miss Palmatier was consulted. She was not anxious to marry unless she could better her condition but agreed to allow her name to be sent out west. The result was a correspondence between Miss Palmatier and the Iowa man, and a few days ago Mr. Hysham arrived in town and went to the Palmatier farm.”

This version, from the Bruning, Nebraska *Courier*, tells a different story:

“HE ADVERTISED FOR A WIFE.

Miss Etta Palmatier of New Kingston, NY has just been wedded in a western city to Mr. W. J. Hysham, formerly of Red Oak, Iowa. Miss Palmatier, who is a wealthy real estate owner, decided not to live a single life any longer. Looking over the columns of a matrimonial paper she saw

the advertisement of Mr. Hysham, who wanted a wife. Correspondence opened between the young woman and the westerner. He finally paid a visit to New Kingston and the engagement was soon announced. The wedding followed closely.”

However it really happened, Etta married William April 3, 1900 in Omaha, Nebraska. His occupation that year was ‘speculator,’ probably real estate, but he was also a livestock dealer. He was 44 and had been married to Nancy Jane Pyle but the marriage had evidently broken up following the death of their only son Verne in 1898.

Not long after William and Etta married, Etta contracted an illness that finally took her life Dec. 20, 1902. In October that year she penned her will, leaving to her husband their house at Poppleton Park, Omaha, and life rights to her 200-acre farm in New Kingston. After his use of the property, her surviving siblings would receive title to the farm.

Etta’s widower continued to make trips to Middletown, no doubt staying at the Palmateer farm which appears to have been rented by Artemus “Ward” DeSilva who had moved his family (Ella Hewitt DeSilva and children) from Mill Brook to New Kingston.

On one of these visits ‘back east,’ W. J. Hysham found another bride. She was Ida Chamberlain, a daughter of James and Gertrude Chamberlain. (James, working with George G. Decker, created the mill stream we now call the Binnekill through the heart of Margaretville, where he erected a tannery at the north end of the village in 1863.)

Just nine months after Etta Palmateer Hysham passed away in Iowa, Ida Chamberlain became Mr. Hysham’s third wife in a small ceremony at her family’s home in Margaretville.

They took the trains back and forth from the midwest to Margaretville for the next several years. In 1904 and ’05, Hysham brought out carloads of horses which he sold at Walton and vicinity. In 1912, according to the Catskill Mountain News, Ward DeSilva made a trip to visit the Hyshams and do some western sightseeing.

In 1911 and early 1913, William and Ida had acquired some 400 acres in Wyoming from the Bureau of Land Management. They had a ranch there for six years before, on May 29, 1913, William J. Hysham died at age 57 of Brights disease at an Omaha hospital. He was buried with Etta in Red Oak, Iowa. At his death, the farm Etta left behind in New Kingston was sold by her heirs (Everett, Mary and Anna Palmateer) to Ward



Red Oak, Iowa, Etta Palmateer's new home in 1900

DeSilva in August 1914. Ward died in 1926, and his son Harry inherited the farm, Harry died in 1960. The Palmateer/DeSilva farm is now owned by Victor and Francine Lipko.

In 1914 Ida Chamberlain Hysham married Bert Catherman of Moorcroft, WY. He was 17 years her junior. In 1919 they moved to Idaho where they farmed near Kooskia for nearly three decades. Bert died of an asthma attack in 1948 at the age of 60.

Ida lived to the ripe old age of 94. She died at a nursing home in Grangeville, Idaho in 1965 and, like Etta Palmateer, is buried far from her native soil.

Tahoe, Idaho Mountain Rest Cemetery where Ida Chamberlain Hysham Catherman is buried.



Designed and created by Lisa Tait (Silver Top Graphics of New Kingston), the site (same url: Mtownhistory.org) expands on the one that has served us well for nearly 15 years.

The new website is searchable, too!

In addition to a calendar of upcoming events and regularly updated press releases, the website includes the popular Features and Tin Horn sections with dozens of illustrated pieces focusing on events, individuals and curiosities.

The Communities section showcases the histories of each village and hamlet in Middletown and includes a new page on the neighboring Greene County Town of Halcott, which we've 'adopted' since the primary route to get there is through Fleischmanns.

Other new elements of the site include:

- A section explaining the many preservation projects we have accomplished: *Catskill Mountain News* digitization; Civil War research; cemetery initiatives, farming history, oral history, roadside markers and school histories.

- History Corner, with a special page of images from our archives and a page of historic maps, including the NYC taking maps for the Pepacton Reservoir as well as links to eight maps in other repositories.

- All back issues of *The Bridge* newsletter, a treasure trove of history articles

So take a break and stroll through Middletown history. It may inspire you to land on the Join/Support Us page to make a contribution towards our Operating or Building Funds. We thank you in advance!



We need someone to help post periodic web updates. Is that you? Training on this WordPress site is available. Please call 845-586-4973 if you can assist.

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It's time to mark your calendars for the 9th Living History Cemetery Tour to be held Saturday, June 18 at Margaretville Cemetery.

In addition to the one-hour walking tour, offered from 4 to 6 p.m., there will be a special early bird performance at 2 p.m. on stage at the Open Eye Theater just down the street to accommodate those whose mobility issues may prevent their enjoyment of the on-site event.

This year's tour will feature portrayals of eight people from Middletown's past. Reservations are required for both the tour and the Open Eye performance. Call 845-586-4736 after May 30 to reserve your spot.

For more information on the characters and players, visit mtownhistory.org.



Etta Mann Easman, who will be portrayed in this year's tour, is second from the left in this photo of Delaware County teachers visiting Washington, DC in 1910.

Notes from a Laundry Spotter

"... The roads were unpaved dirt roads which provided an ample amount of dust when traveled. When clothes were washed, they were hung on lines strung between trees, buildings or porch posts to dry. Therefore, it would be uncommon to see anyone traveling on the roads on Mondays out of respect for the laundry that had been hung out to dry. If one did find the necessity to be on the road on Monday, they drove very slowly and with caution not to stir up too much dust. It was wiser to stay off the roads and not stir up dust than to stir up the anger of a neighbor's wife.

"This mutual respect and cooperation with the neighbors permeated throughout the valley. I remember dad having to buy extra cauliflower plants from a distant farm in Stamford one year. After I asked to go along with him I realized that it had been a mistake. It was on a Monday and it took us an extra hour because of snail paced driving past neighbors' clothes lines. I remember this so well because dad wanted me to help him spot clothes that had been hung out to dry."

From Richard Arthur Blish's memoir, "A Day on the Farm," about growing up on his grandparents' farm, at the intersection of Big Redkill and Woolheater Roads. His grandparents were Arthur J. and Gertrude Meade Blish. Richard (born 1942), brother Marion (aka Junior, born 1938) and their parents shared the two-family farmhouse.

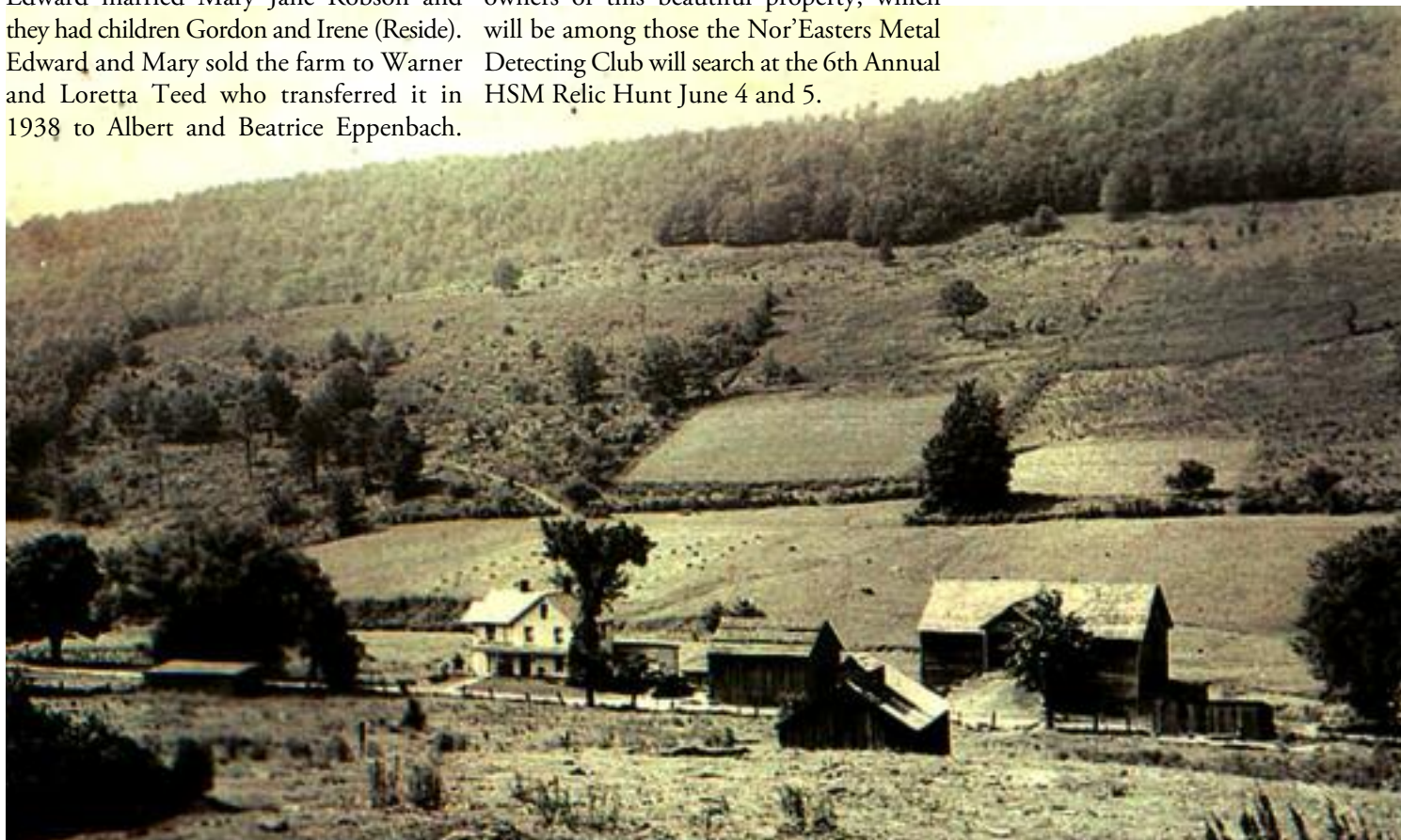


This was the Robert S. and Eunice Yapple Cowan farm in Weaver Hollow. The Cowans lived and worked here from 1865 to 1933. They built the house, which still stands, in 1889. Eunice died in 1895; Robert in 1919. He left the farm to son Edward Cowan. Edward married Mary Jane Robson and they had children Gordon and Irene (Reside). Edward and Mary sold the farm to Warner and Loretta Teed who transferred it in 1938 to Albert and Beatrice Eppenbach.

The Eppenbachs had two daughters – Joy and Gay – who were famous for riding ponies and once a bull in local parades. They milked 45 cows and took boarders, calling the operation Al-Bee Farm well into the 1970s. Diane Lanier and Sue Huot are the current owners of this beautiful property, which will be among those the Nor'Easters Metal Detecting Club will search at the 6th Annual HSM Relic Hunt June 4 and 5.

THE 58¢ POST

The 58¢ Post is an exclusive feature for members who receive *The Bridge* via e-mail. Because your newsletter requires no stamp, you get an “extra”!



WE NEED YOU!

Would you consider volunteering to help HSM with a few projects at the Archives?

- Sort and scan clippings and scrapbook pages
- Index names from tax lists, store ledgers and business journals
- Scan letters and diaries for transcription

Call or email us and we'll put you to work! Email: history@catskill.net; 845-586-4973

ALPHABETICAL LIST of Persons in Division No. 10, of Collection District No. 10, liable to a tax under the Excise Laws of the United States, by *Thos. Loring*, Assistant Assessor, and by *H. P. Ransom*, of said District, for the month of *January*, 1865.

Assessors must be particular to fill all the blanks in this form, so far as practicable, and to number all articles and occupations upon which

No. in List	NAME	LOCATION	ARTICLE OR OCCUPATION	No. in Assessor's List	CLASS
1					
2					
3	<i>Jackson, J. M.</i>	<i>Bethel</i>	<i>Assessed household</i>		
4	<i>Frederick, J. S.</i>		<i>Furniture</i>	<i>20</i>	
5	<i>Thompson, William</i>		<i>Produce</i>		
6	<i>Cahoon, David H.</i>		<i>Wool</i>	<i>25</i>	
7	<i>Phillips, J. M.</i>		<i>Finished leather</i>	<i>16</i>	
8	<i>Thompson, Frank</i>		<i>Green Receipts</i>	<i>16</i>	
9			<i>See above</i>	<i>17</i>	
10	<i>Frederick, William</i>		<i>Rifles</i>	<i>17</i>	
11			<i>Old cattle</i>	<i>17</i>	
12	<i>Rich, Abby</i>		<i>Sheep</i>	<i>17</i>	
13	<i>Miller, David M.</i>	<i>Hamden</i>	<i>Wool</i>	<i>17</i>	
14			<i>Green Receipts</i>	<i>17</i>	