

We Have Good News!

Construction on the 1100-square-foot addition to our program hall on Cemetery Road will begin in the spring!

Helping us get to this point are two community minded foundations: The Pasternak Family Foundation which recently pledged \$50,000 towards the project, and the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation which awarded a \$75,000 grant in November.

These fantastic gifts, added to \$100,000 contributed by the Nicholas J. Juried Foundation in 2018, and more than \$100,000 that has been raised from 146 generous donors, will allow us to put a shovel in the ground in 2023!

"We are beyond grateful to Nick Juried for getting behind us from the very beginning," said President Diane Galusha, noting that the Middletown History Center will encompass the "Nicholas J. Juried Archives" in his honor.

"A State grant of \$50,000 secured by former State Senator James Seward started us off. Now Ken Pasternak and family's incredible contribution, and O'Connor's well-timed assistance are added to the solid support of our members and friends," she continued. This includes the Legacy Circle, 24 individuals and couples who have donated \$1,000 or more to the Capital Campaign. Banks, businesses and community organizations, including the Margaretville Fire Dept. and the Rotary Club, have also shown faith in the project with substantial donations. All will be recognized in the completed History Center.

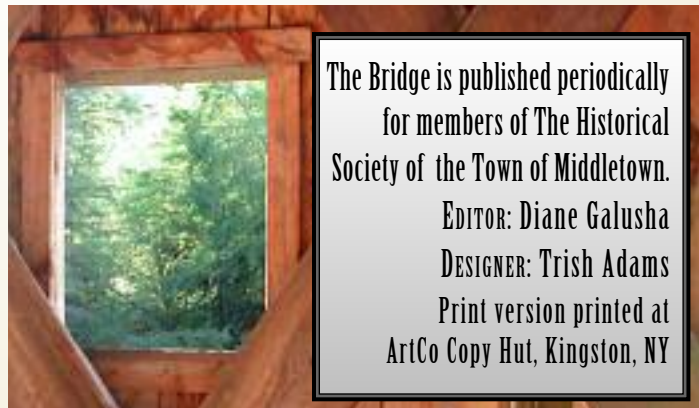
Cole and Griffin – that's Rob Cole and Gina Griffin — have been engaged to build the addition using plans developed by



engineer Paul Gossen. The expansion will house the archives with room to work on materials as well as a reading/research space. There will be an office, an accessible rest room and a lobby with some display space. The addition will be utilized year-round, while the hall itself will continue to accommodate programs in the warmer months.

Watch for updates and additional opportunities to contribute to this project which will preserve for posterity the history of Middletown and surrounding areas.

See more at mtownhistory.org.



The Bridge is published periodically
for members of The Historical
Society of the Town of Middletown.

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This is the sad story of three little girls named Eliza Rebecca Romeyn.

The first Eliza was the youngest daughter of Rev. Jeremiah and Rebecca Meyer Romeyn. Eliza was born in the Hudson Valley in 1805 and in the autumn of 1817 sickness ended her short life in Roxbury. She is buried on an overgrown hill in the Denver-Vega Valley.

The family had come to Roxbury in the 18-teens because Jeremiah, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, had been called to tend to congregations in Roxbury and Prattsville. Also, and not incidentally, his wife Rebecca had inherited from her mother (Rachel Hardenburgh Meyer) thousands of acres of Hardenburgh Patent land in the area, including in Montgomery Hollow and Vega, so there were rents to collect and lots to sell.

But back to the three Elizas:

Not long after their daughter's death, Jeremiah and Rebecca returned to the Hudson Valley. Herman Romeyn, Eliza's older brother, was a Kingston lawyer who married Ann Abeel. Ann bore a daughter in 1822 and they named her Eliza Rebecca, after Herman's sister who'd been left behind on that hillside in



The Romeyn family plot in the Old Dutch Churchyard in Kingston, where Elizas #2 and #3 are buried.

Roxbury. The second Eliza did not live to see her 8th birthday, dying in May of 1830.

On November 12 of 1831 Herman and Ann had another daughter. She, too, was named Eliza Rebecca. Her mother barely had time to bond with her baby: Ann died November 24. Eliza #3 followed her mother to the grave in May of 1832.

Between February and May of that year, Herman lost Eliza #3, her three-year-old brother Charles, and Herman's 42-year-old sister, Julianna Romeyn Hotaling. A fearsome epidemic of cholera that swept through the US in 1832 may have claimed them.

The tragic story of the Herman Romeyn family is written in the headstones of the Old Dutch Churchyard in Kingston. Herman's father, Rev. Jeremiah, lies here. He died in 1818, perhaps of the illness that took the first Eliza the previous year. Herman's mother, Rebecca Meyer Romeyn, passed in 1844. It's likely she shares Jeremiah's monument, but it is so worn as to be illegible.

Herman Romeyn, who buried his wife and three children in this churchyard, died in 1850. His gravesite is unknown.

Information on the Romeyns was obtained from Reformed Church Vital Records, census records, Find-A-Grave, online newspapers, wills and court records, some of which can be found in Larry Zuidema's well-researched local history volumes, Master Nathaniel Mead, and Montgomery Hollow Settlement.

Eliza #1 rests on this lonely hilltop in Denver.



Our collection of documents, photographs and historic items continues to grow. Donations over the past year have included items on the Cowan, Sanford and Streeter families; others related to Arena, Halcott, Millbrook and the Denver-Vega Valley including minutes of the Vega Home Bureau; Margaretville Village tax assessment rolls from the 1930s through 50s; Stone School attendance records from the 1890s, several advertising items dating back to the 1920s, and more recent records on the development of the Catskill rail corridor from the 1970s and 80s.

A very special acquisition is a leather trunk owned by Noah Dimmick whose house we know today as the Erpf House in Arkville.

Do you have something that resonates with local history? We'd love to have a look! Call Diane Galusha at 845-586-4973, or Barbara Moses at 845-586-3630.

SPOTLIGHT

This pocketknife, inscribed with the name of its owner, Marion Vredenburg(h), was discovered by a relic hunter in June on the property of Norm and Jo Maender in Huckleberry Brook (pictured right). Marion (1921-1993) was a son of Andrew and Nellie Emma Shultis Vredenburg of Arkville. Marion married Grace Marks, daughter of Orrin and Hattie Alton Marks who owned the Huckleberry Brook farm from 1926 to 1949.

Marion, a forester and an avid hunter, must have dropped the knife while visiting his in-laws. The Vredenburgs later purchased several acres from the Maenders (pictured) and built a cabin for weekend enjoyment. The knife was donated by the Maenders to the HSM collection.

Thanks to the donors of this and other priceless items which are protected at our interim archives in the Fairview Public Library garage.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?

We have scrapbooks to be copied, letters and diaries to be transcribed, boxes of items to sort. We especially need someone to enter item descriptions in archival software. If you'd like to get involved, please contact us!

James Allaben Utter was an energetic 25-year-old at the turn of the last century when he recorded the busy days of his life in a small pocket diary. He lived in Mapledale (Dry Brook), the son of William and Mariah Dury Utter. James worked hard, played harder and took advantage of every opportunity to socialize, often getting home in the wee hours. As the diary opens, he is attending Spencer Business College in Kingston. James had ambitions of being a railroad telegrapher. City life and college chums kept him hopping.

1900

Tues., Jan. 30: To school all day at Spencers. At night after school I and LaVell and Sanford and Lions went down to the Station, I and LaVell got home at six. After supper I took the car and went down to Wills, Miss Grigory came over and she played on the piano and then we ate some walnuts and that's the night. I put my arm around her. Home at 11.

Wed., Feb. 7: To school all day at Spencers. After school I and Lyons & Crague went down to the station to see the U&D Express arrive, then to the YMCA, bowled a few games and then went for the showers. Home at six. At night I & LaVell went to the opera, play 'Held by the Enemy,'

fairly well. Home at eleventhirty. Good night.

Sat., Feb. 10: To school at Spencers in the forenoon. Afternoon I & Crague took the car to K Point, skated across the river to Rhinecliff, saw a wedding drive into the station with the cab trimmed up and the old shoes hanging underneath. Skated back to Kingston & took the car home, got home at six oclock. At night wrote some letters. To bed eleven thirty. The ice cracked like a pistol coming back.

Sat., Mar. 17: Went to school in the forenoon, afternoon I and Miss Miller went to the matinee in Kingston Opera, after the play walked down home with her. At night I went down and got her again and we went to the show at night, plays 'Prince of Liars' and 'The Black Flag.' I got home at twelve oclock, had a fine time.

Mon., Apr. 2: To school all day at Spencers. At night I was up town sporting around with the boys, home at ten.

Wed., May 2: Plowed on the flat by the church, at noon went to the post office. Got my lesson in bookkeeping from the International Correspondence School, at night worked on them.

Sun., May 6: In the forenoon I and Milly went way back in the hill for a walk. Got back to the house at one oclock just in time for dinner. After dinner I & Milly went in the parlor. After supper I hooked up and drove up to Alder Lake to see Martha, got there at dark, to bed at eleven.

Mon. May 7: In the forenoon I & Abel & Samuel Shaver took the boat and sailed across the lake and went on the hill and picked all the wintergreen berries we could eat.

Mon., May 21: In the forenoon worked at my studies in bookkeeping, ... went out and helped Looman Brown draw manure till dark, came in and worked at my studies till ten.

Mon., May 28: In the morning got up at five and at six started for Pine Hill to take the train for Kingston to attend the Buffalo Bill show. Started for home at six oclock, a drunken mess on the train. I got acquainted with Miss Ballard. Home at 12 oclock.

Thurs., May 31: In the morning Looman came down we hooked up the horses went over in Millbrook to Jealeal(?) Greens to raise his barn.

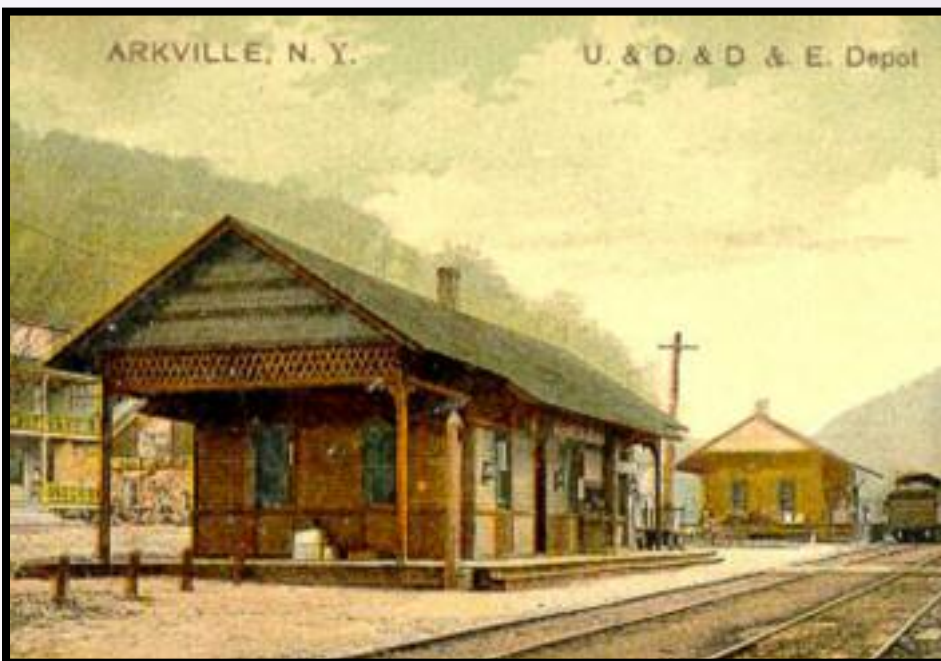
Sat., June 16: In the station all day at Arkville and then I and George Wright went up to the M. E. Church where there was an ice cream festival.

Tues., July 3: In the station all day, at six oclock sent my first message to NY City, the first message I ever sent.

Mon., Sept. 10: In the station all day at Roxbury. At night was out walking with Miss Mary Dietrich.

Tues., Oct. 9: Husked corn all day at noon went to the post office at night went to Advent Church. Libbie Murray came home with us and I set (with) her till three in the morning.

This is likely what the Arkville depot looked like when James Utter sent his first telegraph message from there to NYC, July 3, 1900.



Mon., Nov. 12: Worked on Cat Ladder road all day till five at night, scraping out the snow that came the Friday before and wallowing through the mud driving the horses on the old road machine.

Thurs., Nov. 15: Worked on Cat Ladder road all day. Wrote a letter to Millie H. took it to PO came back the rest had all gon to church, but Will Eighmey & Wesley Alton, we ate maple sugar, drank cream and stole one of cooks pies, ate that up and went to bed at nine thirty.

Sun., Nov. 25: Home with Millie Hotchkiss all day on Shin Creek and it rained hard all day but I had a very pleasant day of it. In the evening we had pop corn and warm sugar.

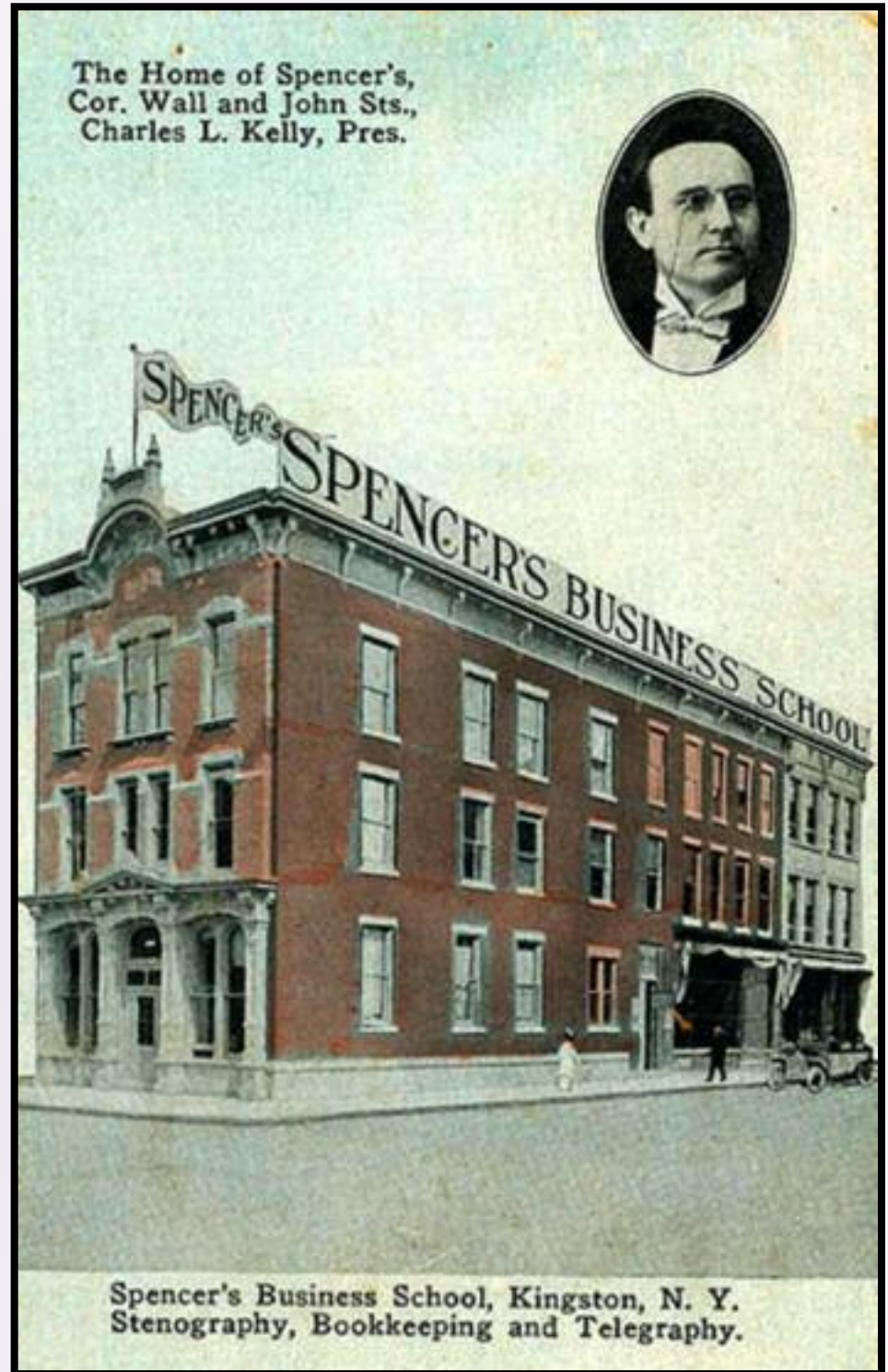
Thurs., Nov. 29: Worked on Cat Ladder road all day. Ate my thanksgiving dinner on top of the Cross Mountain road. Fine dinner, bread & cake.

Sat., Dec. 22: Started after dinner for Lew Beach. Went down to Arkville, got a Xmas present for Millie, from there to the Beach, got over there at eight oclock at Millies house. Went to bed at about two oclock in the morning.

Tues., Dec. 25: Stayed with Millie all day. Guy Martin came up at noon, we had a chicken dinner at about three oclock. I & Guy dun up the chores for Mr. Hotchkiss was ailing. After chores we all went down to the Beach to a medicine show.

Wed., Dec. 26: Started for home, took dinner at L. L.s (brother Lawrence L. Utter) at Arena, got home at five oclock. After supper went up to Ozias Bakers to a kissing bee, had a grand good old time, got home at two oclock in the morning.

James Utter evidently enjoyed the company of women! In September of 1905 when he was 30, he chose 20-year-old Nina Blakeslee of Shandaken to spend his life with. They lived in Wallingford, CT, where James enjoyed a long career as telegrapher and clerk



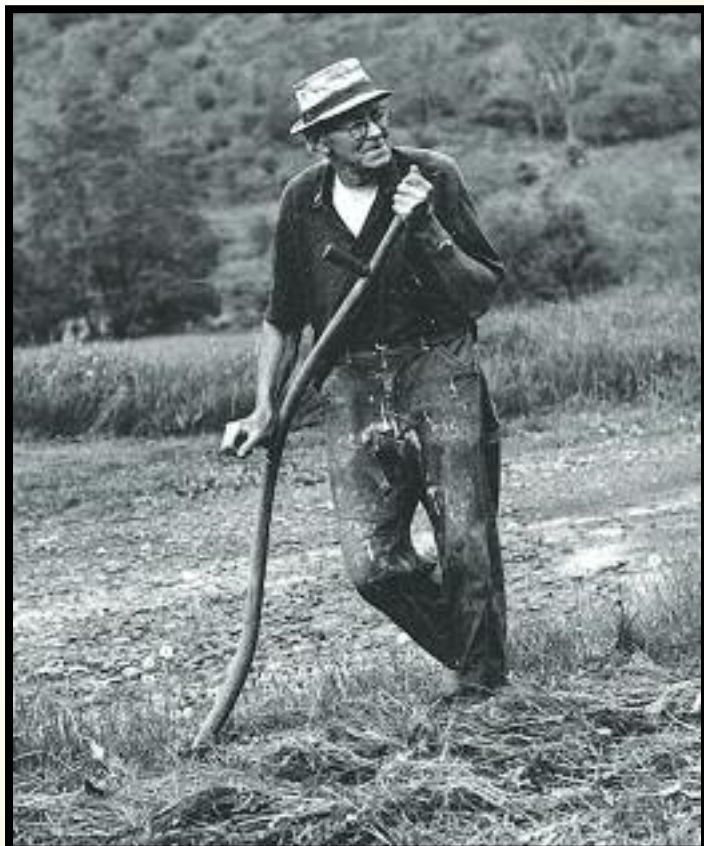
with the New York, New Haven and Hartford RR. He died in 1953; Nina lived another 20 years. They are both buried in Shandaken Rural Cemetery. Thanks to Len Utter for loaning us his great-uncle's diary for transcription.

This postcard for Spencer's Business School, located at the corner of Wall and John Streets in Kingston, dates from the time when James attended. The school offered training in typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, and telegraphy. The school later moved to Fair Street around 1918, and the State of New York National Bank relocated to the school's former locaton.

A field history hike on October 1 along former U&D tracks between Highmount and Pine Hill drew more than 20 people. The walk brought to light the now vanished world of wealth and culture that once dominated Highmount (also known as Summit and then Grand Hotel Station). Railroad historian John Duda, shown with the group, on facing page) explained the engineering of the famed double horseshoe curve that allowed steam locomotives to navigate the westbound climb. Forest historian Michael Kudish pointed out tree species that offer clues to forest succession. A hike highlight was a stop at the ruins of the Crystal Spring Water Company's trackside warehouse and loading dock. Shown on the tracks are Brett and Rebecca Barry of Chichester. Rebecca, author, editor and antiquarian book expert, was our featured speaker at the HSM Annual Meeting October 22 when she talked about remarkable rare book finds.

A slide program on the life and work of photographer Irene Mirski Fay (right) was presented October 2 by Diane Galusha to an audience of Irene's former New Kingston neighbors as well as family members and friends. Irene and her husband

Stefan bought the farm of Oscar Dougherty in 1963 and spent summers and weekends there through the 1980s. Oscar, pictured with scythe (below), was among many residents Irene



captured thru her lens at a time when the local farm economy was in transition. In New Kingston, several Long Island and NYC Jewish families, some of whom had fled rising fascism in Europe and then the Holocaust, were welcomed by the locals and made to feel at home. A link to the narrated slide program can be found in this article on our website: <https://mtown>

history.org/new-kingston-photographs-of-irene-fay-oct-1.

Images from The Irene Fay Photograph Collection c. 1960-1985, courtesy of the Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown. Gift of Janine Fay and Ann Fay Mick. The photograph of Irene was taken by daughter Janine Fay.



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CATSKILL MOUNTAIN NEWS

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MARGARETVILLE, NEW YORK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1939

ESTABLISHED IN 1863. Price—Five Cents

Four Buildings Destroyed In Arkville Fire

Occupants Barely Escape
Blaze at 2:30 o'Clock
Monday Morning

Had Little Insurance

Stiff Wind Fanned Flames
Which Were Fought by
Four Fire Companies

Margaretville Needs Experienced Surgeon

Margaretville needs an experienced surgeon to take care of the various surgical cases that arise in this section. There is a wide area here without a surgeon and the need of one is vital.

There are several excellent physicians in this and neighboring villages who would be glad to cooperate with a surgeon. If these lines come to the observation of anyone who could remedy the situation he will render the community a service.

LORD APPROVES
DIES COMMITTEE

Mercury Drops From 50 to Zero Within 24 Hours

Thunder and Lightning
Open Spring Day Which
Takes Sudden Change

Ice Stops Traffic

Bull Run and Binnecill Each
Worry Neighbors. Other
Streams Flood



THE 60¢ POST

The 60¢ Post is an exclusive feature for members who receive *The Bridge* via e-mail. Because your newsletter requires no stamp, you get an "extra"!

ARKVILLE ABLAZE

Fire on a frigid February night tore the heart out of Arkville back in 1939. It happened again 40 years later, in 1979 (pictured). HSM will present a program on this and other disastrous Middletown blazes as part of its 2023 program season. The Living History Cemetery Tour will be back (June 18 at Margaretville Cemetery) and there will be another field history program. Stay tuned to our website and the

monthly E-blast as we firm up the details. Thank you, members, for making these programs possible.

Good Food and Conversation



Phil Mones of Highmount came to the HSM annual meeting October 22 with an appetite. Trudy Sheldon, and caterer Mary Ann Todd, were glad to oblige. The yearly event allows us to catch up with folks we haven't seen in awhile. Rev. Ralph Darmstadt and John Duda of Fleischmanns did just that.