

Cold War Shivers in Arkville

In the early 1960s, when East-West tensions were at their highest, the Cold War intruded on the peaceful Catskills, and in particular on the Arkville farm of Helmut Rosenhain.

Helmut's sister Gabrielle, an opera singer living in West Berlin, had crossed regularly into East Berlin, controlled by the Soviets, to perform with the German State Opera. On Jan. 2, 1962, Russian authorities arrested the 38-year-old on spy charges. She spent the next 27 months imprisoned before being abruptly released in March of 1964.

"Reds holding sister of Arkville man" read the Page 1 headline of the July 26, 1962 Catskill Mountain News. Seven months after her arrest, a letter from Gabrielle Hammerstein (she went by her mother's maiden name) had reached her family, telling them she was well and not to worry.

The singer was known to locals from her occasional visits to her brother's dairy farm on the Arkville cut-off road. Their father, Erich Rosenhain (pronounced ro'-zen-hyne) had purchased the 210-acre property from Raymond Murray in 1950. Two years later, he bought the former B. G. Morse farm on Morse Hill Road from Jacob Timoschuck. Son Helmut operated them both as Rosenhain Farms.

The Rosenhain family had emigrated from Germany in 1936. Erich and wife Gertrud were physicians. They ran a mental health clinic in Schwerin but the Nazis revoked their operating permit, prompting them to move to the US.



Helmut Rosenhain


They re-established their practice in Jackson Heights, Queens. Mrs. Rosenhain's mother died in Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1942.

Helmut became a US citizen at the age of 18 in 1944. He was in the Army briefly before getting a medical discharge, subsequently attending a Quaker college in Indiana and then a Mormon college (Brigham Young) where he earned his BS degree in 1949.

He apparently had a proclivity for country life and settled in at the Arkville farm for more than a decade. For years, though, Helmut relegated much of the work at the farm to Don Hosier who lived in a house across the road from the barn, next door to Helmut's own house.

During the 1950s, Erich and Gertrud Rosenhain enjoyed weekend getaways from the city at the farm. Erich died in 1959; Gertrud passed in 1983.

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“He was an oddball,” said Steve Meinstein of Helmut. “He once bought a VW bug and drove it through Afghanistan, all over. He wore barn clothes to the opera in New York. Sometimes he’d come to our house, lay down on the couch and take a nap. He spent a lot of time in Christian’s Drug Store, he was very close to Joe (Christian).”

He was also generous, sponsoring a bowling team, and donating the land for the Arkville Fire Department’s pavilion, built by Seager Fairbairn in 1960.

“He was Jewish, but he didn’t believe in religion,” recalled Steve, a fellow farmer who in 1938 also emigrated with his parents to this country from Germany.

Helmut did, however, believe in the fledgling state of Israel, and in June of 1963, while his sister was still a prisoner in East Germany, he auctioned his herd and most of the farm equipment from both farms, and moved to the new home of the Jewish people. The Catskill Mountain News reported that he was going to ‘work on a pipeline in the Negev desert’; Steve Meinstein says he became a turkey inseminator, turkeys being more practical than beef in that clime.

Ellen Mead Gray, whose parents bought Helmut’s house, remembers Helmut Rosenhain practicing Hebrew as he prepared to move. “Even as a child, he treated us as a friend.”

Back to Gabrielle Rosenhain Hammerstein: While her brother was becoming a farmer in Arkville in the early 1950s, she worked for the US High Commission in Frankfurt, the agency representing the US government in occupied Germany. Then came her arrest in 1962, and seven months later a 15-minute secret trial in which she was sentenced to six years in prison.

Gabrielle’s mother worked for her release, and when that finally happened in a prisoner swap in 1964, Gertrud was



Gabrielle Rosenhain Hammerstein being interviewed in 1964

waiting in West Berlin to take her back to New York. Gabrielle told reporters she had been beaten, hospitalized once, and subject to ‘brainwashing’ during her captivity. But she did not admit to being a ‘spy,’ in fact seemed in oddly good humor. The NY Herald Tribune wrote, “she even roared out a few sample notes from ‘Die Valkyrie’ that shoved the needle on a sound man’s gauge out of sight.”

In the coming years, Gabrielle and her mother were occasional visitors to the Arkville area. In 1969 the News reported that they renewed their acquaintance with Mayor and Mrs. Bernard Wadler of Fleischmanns.

Unlike their sister Beatrice, neither Gabrielle or her brother Helmut married. He died in an accident in Israel in 1984, she died at age 94 in 2018.

In the intervening decades, the Rosenhain farm in Arkville has been developed for many uses. The Catskill Recreation Center occupies the former barn site.

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In late autumn of 1960, a hunter scouting deer on the shoulder of Eagle Mountain in the Town of Hardenburgh suddenly broke through the forest floor into a cave-like room. When he collected himself and looked around, he realized it was a shelter, made of balsam boughs and tree trunks covering a natural depression. The shelter's builder was still inside, a skeleton seated on a rustic couch, a hole through the side of its skull. A rusted automatic pistol by the right hand showed how this secret room in the woods had become a lonely, hidden grave.

Who was this person? For a week after the November 28 discovery, no one knew. Then Nina and Orson Haynes who lived nearby made a crucial discovery, a sodden wallet, with 98 cents in it and more: "Ort & I went in (the) head (of) Haynes Hollow against Eagle Mt and explored the cave where some hunters found a dead man," Nina wrote in her diary December 6. "We found identification: Mike Anderson, Greensburg, PA Street R-4, Social Security no: 008-7642."

They shared the wallet and its contents with Forest Ranger Franklyn Borden of Pine Hill and State Police investigator Charles Teelon. Turns out there had been a person with that name in Greensburg, but he had died more than a year ago. Or maybe simply disappeared?

A tall man with a long beard had occasionally been seen by locals in the vicinity for months prior to the discovery of the skeleton. It appeared he had been pilfering canned goods from unoccupied homes, and digging ginseng, some of which hung from a branch in the shelter. In the wallet found by Ort and Nina was a clipping, presumably taken from a sporting



Nina and Ort Haynes exploring the hermit's shelter

magazine, reported the Catskill Mountain News. It listed "about eight buyers of ginseng throughout the country. The last of the advertisements was that of a buyer named Mike Gatano of R-4, Greensburg, Pa."

Mike Anderson, Mike Gatano, whoever he was, deliberately lost himself in the wild Catskills. He had crafted a hideaway with a hand-made stove, and a cot made of "piled up rocks, poles, hemlock boughs and a sleeping bag," the News related. The door, barely wide enough for a man to squeeze through, was made of limbs covered with plastic.

The Hermit of Haynes Hollow was the talk of the town for a few weeks,

as folks speculated what he was hiding from: was he a wanted man? an escapee from a mental institution? a simple recluse? For a time, his 'cave,' once nearly invisible, attracted curious visitors who trudged into Haynes Hollow to find it and to wonder how and why a person could live that way.

The hermit's bones, unceremoniously carried out of the woods in a bag, were buried in a potter's grave in New Paltz, interment paid for by the Town of Hardenburgh. The answers to so many questions went with him.

Thanks to Pam Kelly for sharing Nina Kittle Haynes' diary and snapshot of the 'Hermit's cave.'

Moving Day!



A dozen stalwart volunteers, stepping lively between the rain drops, moved precious cargo — Middletown's history — from our interim archives at Fairview

Library's garage to the new Middletown History Center on April 13. Nearly 100 boxes and many unboxed artifacts were resettled on new sliding shelving units in

the Nicholas J. Juried Archives. We are so very grateful for the enthusiastic help of, L. to R., Gary and Barb Atkin, Ed Kluener, Joan Lawrence-Bauer, Julie Ford, Pat and Randy Moore, Gary Smith and, in truck, Josef Schoell and Eli Taylor. Not pictured: Michael Fairbairn, Janis Benincasa. Plan to attend the ribbon cutting and open house on Sunday, June 9 from 2 to 4 p.m.



Mike Fairbairn, Gary Smith and Eli Taylor carried boxes of historical materials to the truck, and unloaded them at the other end.



Do you have a family headstone that needs cleaning in a Middletown area cemetery? A donation of \$30 to HSM will clean a one-sided headstone; a \$50 donation will clean two headstones or a two-sided monument. Cleaning, using a safe, effective cleansing agent, will only be done during the month of May. Send a check and contact information to HSM, PO Box 734, Margaretville, NY 12455. Someone will be in touch to collect details. FMI: 845-586-4973 or history@catskill.net.



The Solar Eclipse of 1925

Did you miss (or skip) the solar eclipse on April 8? You've got 55 years to prepare for the next time this happens in New York, May 1, 2079. The eclipse will start at sunrise and reach totality at 6:07 a.m. for 59 seconds. New York City, Westchester and Rockland Counties will be in the path of totality.

A century ago, give or take a few months, area residents witnessed a total solar eclipse, marveling at how early morning turned to midnight before their eyes.

Braving sub-zero cold (it was 8 below on Saturday morning, January 24, 1925) the Roxbury Times reported that there was not a cloud in the sky when "the moon entirely covered the face of the sun for a period of one and nine-tenths minutes" at precisely 9:11 a.m.

"Many residents had secured window glass and smoked it over candles, lamps, matches or any burning article to

cast a smudge over the glass," the Times related a week later, on Jan. 31, 1925. Looking through the dulled glass (probably not recommended today!) they saw that "The sun . . . was like a golden crescent hung high in the sky while away off to the right could be seen three silvery stars that shown clearly as on a summer night in June."

Snow covered the ground which contributed to "a grayish sort of darkness . . . the corona clearly visible. . . . As the disc began to move from right to left, the darkness that had covered the earth began to be lifted like a curtain. It was just like arising in the morning and yanking up the window shade to allow the blinding rays of the sun to enter the room.

"Roxbury was fortunate in being directly in the dark belt," the report continued. "There was no difficulty viewing the eclipse from any section of town. Most found an unobstructed view without leaving their homes."

By Diane Galusha

Much has been written about Jay Gould, one of Roxbury's notable natives who earned a place in the history books by becoming the richest man in America through brilliant and sometimes nefarious means.

He was the youngest of six children of John and Mary More Gould, and the only son. Relatively little has been written about Jay's sisters. They included Anna (1829-1919), who followed a much different path than her famous, some would say infamous brother. For while he was launching a lucrative career in tanning, finance, and railroad acquisition, Anna and her husband, clergyman Asahel Hough, were toughing it out in rough and tumble Montana as Methodist missionaries in Virginia City, the territorial capital.

Rev. Hough, born and raised in Windham, Greene County, NY was a son of Theron and Amelia Hull Hough, Jr.* He and Anna married in the spring of 1855 when he was preaching at the Windham ME church. They moved to the Hudson Valley and to New York City to assume charges at various churches, and for a time provided a home to Anna and Jay's half-brother Abram as he attended business school in Poughkeepsie.

The Houghs attended the wedding of Jay and Helen Day Miller in January of 1863, and the following year, soon after the birth of Jay and Helen's son George** in 1864, Anna and Asahel were called by the New York Methodist Episcopal Conference to be the Home Missionary to the territory of Montana. Shortly before they set off for the wild west, Anna got a letter from her brother Jay with \$100 in it, "fearing our slender purse would not furnish us all the comfort we needed on such a long hard journey. Dear, kind brother . . ." she later wrote in her memoir.***

It was indeed a long, difficult and dangerous trek across the plains and into the Rockies. Gold had been discovered in Alder Gulch in 1863 spawning a new settlement, Virginia City, which in 1865 became the capital of the territory.

"Their home was a mud hut of one room, which 'wept freely in every storm' and kept out but little of the piercing cold that often reached forty below," wrote Anna's niece Alice Northrup Snow in her 1943 *Story of Helen Gould Shepard*. "Food and fuel were both scarce, as was every necessary of life."

In spite of the journey over treacherous routes and through hostile Indian country, thousands of hopefuls set out for Montana upon learning of the gold strikes there. It appears that in the peak years 1864-65, the Virginia City



area (Alder Gulch) had about 10,000 inhabitants, but a large percentage of these were always drifters, moving on to other mining camps or back to the states.

There are also various estimates of the amount of gold mined, which one report said was probably over \$40,000,000, most of it between the years 1863-1869.

The region was considered 'no place for a decent woman,' but Anna brought a respectable influence to bear. The Houghs started a Methodist congregation there as the population boomed.

However, Anna became sick with lung and ear ailments. So after four years in Virginia City, Asahel bundled his wife into a wagon and, driving his own team, struck out over the mountains for California. They arrived in Los Angeles November 22, 1868. Rev. Hough served churches in Sacramento and San Francisco, and later became presiding elder of southern California.

In 1880, he was named a founding board member of a new Methodist college — the University of Southern Califor-

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Ground was broken for the new Margaretville Memorial Hospital by Assistant U.S. District Judge Robert E. Wickham, Lewis Wickham, Dr. J. M. Bush, and other members of the hospital board.

Ground Broken for New Hospital Building

Ground was broken for the new Margaretville Memorial Hospital by Assistant U.S. District Judge Robert E. Wickham, Lewis Wickham, Dr. J. M. Bush, and other members of the hospital board. The ceremony took place on Tuesday, Sept. 10, at 10 o'clock a.m. in front of the new building site. The hospital will be a 100-bed facility and will include a laboratory, X-ray department, and other modern medical equipment. The estimated cost of the building is \$1,000,000. The hospital will be owned and operated by the Margaretville Memorial Hospital Association.

Cat C in Hold Meeting Tonight

A general meeting of the Catskill Mountain News Association will be held at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the Hotel Catskill. The meeting will be held in the ballroom and will be open to all members of the association. The agenda for the evening includes a report on the activities of the association during the past year, a presentation of the new year's budget, and a discussion of the future plans of the association.

The meeting will be held in the ballroom of the Hotel Catskill. The agenda for the evening includes a report on the activities of the association during the past year, a presentation of the new year's budget, and a discussion of the future plans of the association. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the Hotel Catskill.



Mrs. Wickham

CATSKILL MOUNTAIN NEWS

WATERBURY, N. Y., THURSDAY, SEP. 12, 1968

School Vote Is Community's Most Vital Issue

Editorial
Concerning the School Vote
The vote Monday by the voters of the Catskill Mountain School District on the proposed consolidation of the district with the Margaretville School District was a landmark event in the history of the community. The vote was a clear expression of the community's desire for a better school system. The consolidation will result in a more efficient and economical school system, and will provide the best possible education for our children. The vote was a triumph for the community, and it is a testament to the wisdom and foresight of our voters. We must continue to support our schools and our children, and we must continue to work for the betterment of our community.

Dr. Bush Will Be Proclaimed 'Man of Year'

The following is a list of the nominees for the 'Man of Year' award. The award is presented to the person who has done the most for the community during the past year. The nominees are: Dr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush, Mr. J. M. Bush.

Nearly the entire 1968 run of the Catskill Mountain News has been added to the New York State Historic Newspapers website, where the News from 1902-85 can be browsed and searched. 1968 had been missing until last year, when all but nine issues of the

1968 News were found in the home of Anna Blish in Margaretville. Anna donated them to HSM which had them microfilmed, digitized and posted on NYSHistoricNewspapers.org. The only missing year in the collection

now is 1925. Several months of 1917, 1920 and 1921 are also missing. The hard-bound volumes of the News are housed at Fairview Public Library. The microfilm and digital versions are protected in the HSM Archives.

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nia. When USC opened in 1880, tuition was \$15 per term. The school had an enrollment of 53 students and a faculty of 10. At that time, the city lacked paved streets, electric lights, telephones and a reliable fire-alarm system. Its first graduating class in 1884 was a class of three, two men and a woman.

While Anna and Asahel had no biological children, the 1880 census for Los Angeles shows them at age 49, with adopted daughter Belle Hough, age 11. Who Belle was, or what became of her, is not known.

Asahel Hough retired from the clergy in 1885 and died in 1900. Anna followed in 1919. They are buried in Rosedale Cemetery, the oldest cemetery in LA, now known as Angelus Rosedale.

*Theron Hough Jr., 1787-1892, Asahel's father, migrated to Iowa after the death of his second wife in Windham in 1874. He was in his late 70s and evidently moved to

live with another son, Romaine S. Hough. By 1880, Romaine and family moved to Sturgis, Dakota Territory where three siblings lived. Theron Hough, Jr., whose own siblings found their way to Kansas and Minnesota, stayed behind in Spencer, Iowa and died there in 1882.

**George Gould would later build Furlow Lodge way up in Dry Brook, an estate still occupied by descendants.

***Anna Hough's memoir is in the collection of the New-York Historical Society and while it has been excerpted in other books, was not available to be consulted for this article.

Sources: Alice Northrup Snow's *The Story of Helen Gould Shepard*; Edward J. Renehan's *Dark Genius of Wall Street*; Irma Mae Griffin's *History of the Town of Roxbury*; *Annual Publication of History of Southern California and Pioneer Registry*, Jan. 1, 1900; the *National Register of Historic Places nomination form for Virginia City*; census records on Ancestry; FindAGrave; Wikipedia and Britannica (USC history).

THE 68¢ POST

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Object Lesson: John Ganung's Box

This beautifully carved wooden box, donated to HSM by Iris Mead, contained a penciled note: “This box was carved by John Ganung, brother of Sarah Craft.” A search for information on the carver yielded scant details: He was a son of John R. and Emma Noxon Ganung, spent his early life in Vega, was a single carpenter in the 1905 state census of Roxbury, but is mostly absent from written accounts.

Until 1920, when on November 27 he was admitted to the Delaware County Poorhouse, becoming Record #1154. Officials there reported that he was unable to labor because of sickness and was destined to ‘remain dependent.’ They described him as ‘industrious,’ though, which makes us wonder whether John B. Ganung carved this box in the long empty years he spent at the county home, where he died May 1, 1927. It is likely that he occupies one of the many unidentified graves in the cemetery there.



Mark Your Calendars!



HSM's 2024 programming season begins May 18 with a walking tour of Main Street Margaretville focused on “Fire and Flood.” Meet at the Binnekill pocket park at 1 p.m.

A celebratory open house at the new Middletown History Center and Nicholas J. Juried Archives, 778 Cemetery Rd., Margaretville is slated for Sunday, June 9 from 2 to 4.

A series of Second Sunday programs will consist of “A History of the Denver-Vega Valley” July 14; “Silver Dollar Girls” with author Peg DiBenedetto August 11, co-sponsored by Fairview Public Library; “The Private Side of History” – readings from local diaries and memoirs – September 8; and “Exploring the Nicholas J. Juried Archives,” a tour of our archival and digital collections, on October 13. All programs start at 1 p.m. at the History Center. Admission is by donation.

Our annual meeting November 2 will feature a presentation on the “Lost Battalion” by WWI reenactor Eli Taylor.

And don't forget the 20th Cauliflower Festival Saturday, Sept. 21 when HSM will once again fill the History Tent with great stories and images from Middletown's agricultural past.