

They came, they saw, they settled

The original "Haalve Maen" sailed into the New World — and its replica is still afloat today.



HSM will join the rest of the State this year in celebrating the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage up the river that now bears his name.

At a February 28 HSM-sponsored program at Fairview Library, Margaretville, Kipp van Aken will discuss the 1609 voyage that led to Dutch settlement in the New World, and will tell of his experiences aboard the replica Half Moon, built and operated by the New Netherland Museum (www.halfmoon.mus.ny.us)

In "Henry's Excellent Adventure:

The Half Moon Then and Now," van Aken will talk about the original Haalve Maen — the first European ship to document entry into what we now call the Delaware Bay and River, and to explore the Hudson River to its navigable limits — and present a slide show on the full-scale, operating replica of the ship.

Kipp van Aken is the Half Moon's Chief Engineer and an original shareholder of the authentically reproduced ship which is staffed by professional and volunteer sailors and takes school groups and others on educational sails on the river. He is a descendent of three Dutch families (Kype, Cronk and van Aken) with ties to the Roxbury-Middletown area.

The first five European families to settle in Middletown were Dutch, and in their honor, Kipp will provide a brief Dutch language lesson as part of the February 28 program.

The program starts at 11 a.m. and is free to HSM members, \$2 for non-members. Snow date is March 7. For information on other events taking place around New York during the Quadricentennial, which also marks the 1609 explorations of Samuel deChamplain, go to www.explore400.com.

Make a Date with History

HSM has a host of fascinating programs planned for 2009. We're still working out the details for a quilting workshop, a program on the magnificent Grand Hotel in Highmount, and a roundtable discussion of old local maps and roads. You'll receive a complete calendar in the spring. Meanwhile, please reserve the following dates:

Saturday, May 9: "Isaac Graham's War," a slide show by Doug Odell about a Dry Brook farmer who became a "soldier" in the Anti-Rent War of the 1840s. The program begins at 2 p.m. at Dry Brook Community Hall, after the unveiling of an Anti-Rent War historic marker at Galli-Curci and Todd Mountain Roads. (See story on page 4).

Sat., Sept. 26: Margaretville Cauliflower Festival, where the History Tent will feature an exhibit on the creameries of Middletown and vicinity. Margaretville Village Park.

Sat., Oct. 10: The First Annual Catskills Forest Festival. HSM will have a display on early maple syrup and sugar making. Margaretville Village Park

Saturday, Oct. 17: HSM Annual Meeting. At 1:30 p.m., Syracuse University Prof. Emeritus Milton Sernett will present an illustrated talk, "From Muscles to Motors on the Farm: Henry Ford and the Great American Tractor Wars," a free program made possible by the NYS Council for the Humanities.

Fri., Nov. 27: Art exhibit and auction of paintings and watercolors of Middletown historic sites created by the East Branch Plein Air Painters. This is our primary fundraising event for the year, and will include music, stories and refreshments at Margaretville Commons.

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

EDITOR: Diane Galusha

DESIGNER: Trish Adams

Printed at Copy Hut, Kingston, NY

RUNNING ON KEROSENE: A TRUNKFUL

Recorded interviews with 11 Town of Middletown elders have been transcribed in a project to preserve memories of area people and events. Marcia Paden, a professional transcriptionist who lives in Schoharie, completed the job of typing an estimated 20 hours of audio conversations so that they can be easily read and researched. Her work, conducted between May and December 2008, was funded by a \$1,125 grant from the A. Lindsey and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation of Hobart.

Most of the interviews were conducted in 2005 and 2006 by Diane Galusha. They included Virginia McCumber, Howard Etts Jr., Bill Sanford, Bob VanBenschoten (interviewed by Joan Lawrence Bauer), Bill and Doris Stahl, Bill and Betty Elliott, the late Marian Connell and the late Harold Weiss, who was recorded with his daughter, Sindy Becker.

Original cassette tapes, the transcriptions on CD and printed transcriptions with photographs, have been deposited in HSM's collection, which includes a transcription of an interview with Wanda Lanzi done by Town Historian Shirley Davis. One more interview will be conducted and transcribed under the terms of the grant project.

Anyone wishing to tape a local elder's reminiscences is welcome to borrow recording equipment from Diane Galusha. Call her at 586-4973. Here are a few excerpts from the oral history project:

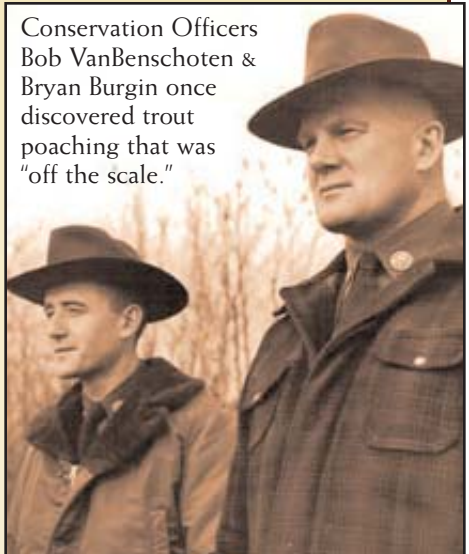
Howard Etts, Jr. (recalling Swart's store in Margaretville from the 1920s): "What I liked about the Swart Store, was there was a register in between the candy. You could go in there when it was cold and get your feet warm and nobody ever bothers you; nobody to chase you out or anything. And every once in a while somebody would drop a dime on the floor and it would roll over in this register and you couldn't get it. We would get a penny chewing gum and chew the gum all up good and sticky and we would stick it on a stick and stick it down there and get that dime. And they would never chase us out of there."

Marian Connell (recalling her efforts to photograph all area World War II servicemen, a project that resulted in a gallery of more than 400 photographs at the Middletown American Legion Post #216): "All of us teachers were fond of these boys. I remember there was one named Bus Payne. He was a senior and he was such a nice boy. And then there was another one that lived next door to him and that night before they had to go (in the Army) we all went down with their mothers and fathers and we all went, oh hugged and kissed and said good-bye. Oh, it was so sad because they were still high school boys. Bus Payne and this other boy kind of managed to stick together in their training. And they were over in Europe and Bus was killed, shot. Oh, Margaretville cried and cried. And the other boy was hurt badly and he never got to be fully rational after that. . . . (The photography) was partly because I had an emotional attachment to their parents and they were so anxious to have their picture. And it was so easy for me because by that time I had an excellent camera, and I would take pictures most anywhere.

And so I would be running around with my camera and then saying good-bye, hugging. It was a very emotional time."

Bob VanBenschoten (retired NYS Conservation Officer recalling a fish-poaching case he investigated with colleague Bryan Burgin): "We went up over Cross Mountain and down into the Beaver Kill and Alder Lake. Beautiful lake, a lot of brook trout in it. . . Below the main entrance into Alder Lake was an abandoned farm on the left and then a little ridge went up over and dropped down into Alder Lake. So, sometimes I would look for fresh tracks in an old meadow there. And sure enough, the hay was all pushed down on the one set of tracks. . . We sat there and we sat there . . . this was about nine when we sat there. Three o'clock the next morning a little bit of a car comes down towards us and I step out and stop the

car. And four local fellas; one of them was a town official, one was a farmer, one was a local fella who played the organ in a church down there and the other one was a saw mill (operator). And anyway I tried to open the trunk and I couldn't get it open. Brian tried and he couldn't get it open. I went around to get the keys for it and the driver got a hold of them before I did and he wouldn't give them to me. And Brian said to me, 'You got anything in your trunk to open to open that?' And I said, 'I got a double bitted axe.' Well, the town official in back he said, 'You might as well open it up, they're going to get it open one way or another.' So, he gave me the key and I couldn't believe when I lifted up that trunk, the bottom of that trunk was full of trout. . . Bryan's six foot five (and he held up) the string of trout and about a foot of it (lay) on the ground. And a wicker basket there (was) full of trout. Another bag, these pink bags that you get oranges and grapefruit in was full of trout. Bryan got down and he counted every single one of those trout; 147 trout they had. Bryan said, 'Can any of you give me an extenuating circum-



Conservation Officers Bob VanBenschoten & Bryan Burgin once discovered trout poaching that was "off the scale."

Bob VanBenschoten, left, joined the NYS Conservation Department in 1949 as a Wildlife Protector and worked his way up to Director of Law Enforcement for the re-named Department of Environmental Conservation. He retired in 1983. This photo, with his mentor and fellow Conservation Department official Bryan Burgin, was taken around 1950.

Continues on facing page

OF TROUT & OTHER ADVENTURES

stance why you should have 147 trout?' And the fella who owned the car said, 'Well, Mr. Burgin, I only go fishing about once a year.' But, nobody laughed. It cost them at that time I believe it was \$100 apiece civilly. We didn't arrest them; they agreed to settle civilly. . . . That was probably one of the most startling cases I'd ever been on."

Sindy Becker (remembering her family's hotel, The Roseland, and Fleischmanns night life in the 1950s): "My sister and I spent every summer of our lives up here and even would end and begin the school year in the school up here and then transfer back and forth. . . So in 1951 on a Saturday night we would first go out at ten o'clock at night. We would get dressed to the nines and then you would say, 'Should we go to the Grand or the Takanassee?' All of them had a rhumba band, an American band, entertainment, swinging bars and then when you got through at one or two hotels, then you would go into Fleischmanns where they had restaurants that were open all night long. . . We used to go to the movies. Saturday night there would be lines almost to the end of the village waiting to get in to see the first-run features. . . They had a bowling alley in town. There were two drug stores that

were open after the movies; you could go and have a soda. There was Jack's, which was a big hangout. . . . I mean you could just pick and choose where you wanted to go and there was something doing all night long."

Bill Sanford (recalling Hait's Store in Halcottsville): This was a general store, they sold everything; nails, hardware, groceries and good sewing materials. My aunt's mother-in-law, Cora Hait, was an expert seamstress, she made all kinds of fancy work and things. She had them out for Christmas time for sale. We had the gas pump in the front. Then we had a shed out there with motor oil and kerosene because a lot of people burned kerosene in those days, had kerosene stoves. . . . At one time they were getting seven gallons (of gas) for a dollar and it was 15, 16 cents a gallon. And the high test, of course, was a few cents more. But most of those old cars with the four cylinders would run on most anything; they'd run on kerosene if they had to. . . I was here in 1923 so, '24 maybe. There were not that many cars here; there was probably a dozen. Some of them only drove them in the summertime like my grandfather. They always jacked them up in the wintertime; took the battery out and kept it in where it was warm."

Come to Attention: Honoring Our Departed Vets



American Legion members, no doubt veterans of the recent world war, fired in salute of fallen comrades at Memorial Day exercises at Margaretville Cemetery in this 1949 photo taken by Ethel Bussy. Sixty years later, HSM and Friends of Middletown Cemeteries are working to compile accurate, comprehensive lists of veterans buried in all cemeteries throughout the town in time for Memorial Day, 2009.

Friends of Middletown Cemeteries will meet to discuss projects for the year on Saturday, March 14 at 10 a.m. at Fairview Library's Community Room, Walnut St., Margaretville.

This is an informal group of people interested in exploring, restoring, and preserving cemeteries, grave markers and their inscriptions. Everyone is welcome to attend and to bring suggestions for projects.

An important undertaking for this year will be to assist American Legion Post #216 in identifying and marking every veterans' grave in the of the Town of Middletown in time for Memorial Day, 2009.

Friends volunteer Gary Atkin has already mapped Margaretville and Sanford Cemeteries, pinpointing the graves of more than 200 veterans. He is currently working on a map of vet graves in the Margaretville Cemetery Annex.

If you or your organization would like to be part of this important commemorative effort by identifying and/or placing flags on vets graves at a cemetery near you, please come to the meeting or email us at history@catskill.net.

The Friends group also hopes to begin to repair several broken monuments and otherwise restore Arkville Cemetery on County Rte. 38. HSM gratefully acknowledges initial funding provided by the Town of Middletown for this project.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT MADE LEGIBLE!

Thanks to the patient, meticulous work of Innes Kasanof of Halcott, the musings of Matthew Griffin, 1845-1861, are now available for researchers.

It took Innes many months to transcribe 135 pages of handwritten diaries penned by the founder of Griffins Corners (now Fleischmanns). In it are recorded the mundane, as well as the extraordinary, details of the life of a lawyer, shopkeeper and community leader before the Civil War.

It offers rare exposure to the thoughts and actions of an "up-renter" during the Anti-Rent conflict. Excerpts from the Griffin diaries will be read at Doug Odell's May 9 program to provide contrast to the experience of a Dry Brook "farmer-soldier." (see below.)

The diaries were first discovered in 1916 by Dr. Emerson Crosby Kelly in a Main St., Fleischmanns barn owned by Charles Crosby who had died in May of that year. Parts of the diaries were excerpted in the *Catskill Mountain News* of 1945.

Dr. Kelly gave the original diaries to the Delaware County Historical Association in 1970. A few years ago, Nancy Cannon,

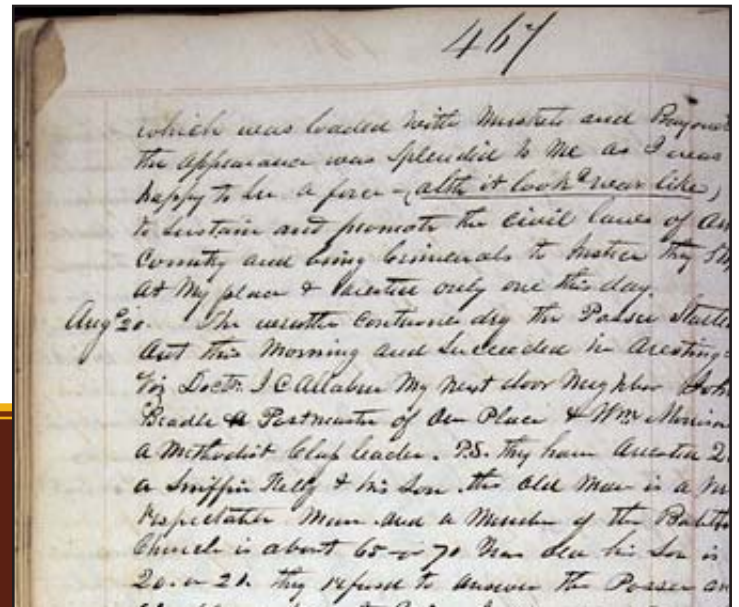
This page from the diaries of Matthew Griffin is from August, 1845, and recounts the arrest of Dr. I. C. Allaben, postmaster John Beadle, Methodist church leader William Morrison, and Sniffin Kelly and his son for disguising themselves as "Indians" during Anti-Rent agitation. "The old man (Kelly) is a very respectable man and a member of the Bapstist (sic) Church, is about 65 or 70 years old."

Associate Library Director at SUNY Delhi, digitally photographed each page of the diaries, and made those images available to HSM. This allowed Innes Kasanof to transcribe them without actually touching the fragile originals.

In packaging the diaries, Innes placed the photograph of the original page alongside her transcription so that researchers could consult Griffin's handwriting for themselves. She also provided an alphabetized list of persons named in the diaries.

The transcription has been made available to Skene Memorial Library/Fleischmanns Museum, to DCHA and to HSM. Efforts are underway to have it posted on the Delaware County History and Genealogy website.

We are indebted to everyone who has played a role in preserving this significant eyewitness account to history.



On this spot, in 1845 ...

The first of an anticipated series of historic markers to be erected by HSM will be unveiled Saturday, May 9 at 1 p.m.

The brown and yellow cast aluminum sign will mark, not a house or bridge or former mill, but a rather nondescript boulder at the intersection of Galli-Curci and Todd Mountain Roads, Highmount. The boulder features a drilled hole which, in the 1840s, held a pole bearing a flag that was used as a signal to call local farmers to action in the Anti-Rent War.

During this period, farmers were not allowed to own the land they worked, but instead were required to pay rent in the form of crops, livestock or cash to large patent holders – in this area the Livingston family, which had title to half a million Catskill Mountain acres. Agitation, disturbances and violent conflict characterized the insurrection by farmers against the land holders and sheriff's deputies who were charged with seizing cattle and property for unpaid rent.

State legislation in 1847 ultimately did away with this feudal system, and farmers were permitted to purchase the land they had occupied and developed. But the Highmount boulder remains, a symbol of this tumultuous time in our history, one of very few physical remnants of the Anti-Rent War.

Kingdon Gould who owns the land on which the boulder sits, generously contributed half the cost of the marker, made by Catskill Castings of Bloomville. Its unveiling on May 9 will be followed by a 2 p.m. talk at Dry Brook Community Hall by Doug Odell who has researched the involvement of one local farmer – Isaac Graham – in the Anti-Rent War.

FIND THE FARMERS IN THIS PICTURE



Some of the farm families who participated in the HSM-sponsored "Face of Farming" art and oral history project gathered for a reception to view their portraits in October. Sally Elliott Scrimshaw (left) chatted with the Gray family (from left Jackie, Jim, Jason and Joyce), whose portrait is on wall in background behind Roy Scrimshaw. Jean Darling is pictured in rear of photo. Artist Ellen Wong (shown below with farmer Sally Fairbairn on the right at the Cauliflower Festival), produced the portraits, along with video footage and audio interviews, with funding from the Roxbury Arts Group's Community Arts Program and from the O'Connor Foundation. If you missed the exhibit at its two screenings last year, you'll have another chance this summer, when the work will be exhibit at Delaware County Historical Association.

WANTED: THE STUFF OF HISTORY!

HSM needs your help! Can you provide any of the following?

Creameries: Photographs, information and printed materials about the business of dairy farming, including local creameries. If you or a family member worked at a creamery in Middletown or contiguous towns, or if you have photos, postcards, receipts, advertisements, signs or other information, please email history@catskill.net, or contact an HSM board member (see box at right).

Displays: Area residents with historical collections who would like to exhibit artifacts or memorabilia in the display case at the Town Hall are invited to contact Town Historian Shirley Davis (586-4618), who can assist with arranging the display.

War Times: Do you have an ancestor who served in World War I? We are looking for information and memorabilia about Middletown in the "Great War." Please contact us!

Maple history: HSM will have a display on the history of maple sugaring at the first-ever Forest Festival to be held in Margaretville October 10, 2009. If you have vintage buckets, barrels, spiles, photographs or advertisements, please contact Andy VanBenschoten, 845-586-4283.



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www.margaretville.org/tfc/middletownhist/index.htm
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2008 IS HISTORY— AND WHAT HISTORY!

Peering into the past at the 2008 Cauliflower Festival was Dale Trethaway of Roxbury. She brought some jewelry to the History Tent for appraisal by antiques expert Bob Connelly, who then showed her how to examine the piece for authenticity. The 2009 Cauliflower Festival will be held September 26 in the Margaretville Village Park.



Howard "Bonnie" Etts Jr. (below) tells it like it was on a walking tour of the Village of Margaretville last summer, sponsored by HSM. Bonnie told folks about his family's meat market, which once occupied the store across Main Street on the left.



Have you discovered the *Catskill Mountain News* (1902-37) on line yet? Check out www.history.catskill.net, or go to Fairview Public Library in Margaretville where you can search, read and print vintage news articles to your heart's content on a dedicated computer and printer. Shown with the library's new equipment are Teddy Margolies of Fairview, Diane Galusha of HSM, and Dick Sanford, publisher of the *News*.

"'Tis Not Safe for a man to Express an Opinion"

Thus wrote Matthew Griffin, a lawyer and justice of the peace in the hamlet that was named for him (and later came to be known as Fleischmanns), during the heated climax of the Anti-Rent War during the sweltering summer of 1845. Griffin was a staunch supporter of the rule of law, and thus the sanctity of the rental indentures signed by farmers who agreed to pay large landholders rent in the form of hens or wheat or labor. Griffin therefore was considered an "Up-renter" at odds with his neighbors who opposed the system ("Anti-" or "Down-Renters"). He even rode in posses searching for the vigilante calico "Indians," but once the Undersheriff Osman Steele was shot on August 7, 1845, and posses became more numerous and more aggressive, a tone of ambivalence and even sympathy for the insurrectionists and their families "Mourning the loss of their Husbands and Fathers," crept into Griffin's private accounts. (See "Eyewitness Account" inside this issue.)

August 17, 1845

The country is in great commotion. Prisoners are daily apprehended & I say, "God be on the side of justice."

August 28

This day I accompanied the under Sheriff in pursuit of one of the prisoners. Left my horse on the way and proceeded 6 miles on foot cross lots, hedges and ditches, etc. Succeeded

THE 42¢ POST

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in arresting the prisoner. Captured him with pistols in hand. Upon threatening his life if he did not surrender, he finally yealded and came along with us. . .

August 29

Found the under Sheriff with 14 men out again. Saw the prisoners, 9 in number, brot out, put in a wagon, and gard-ed off for prison.

August 31

Received the proclamation of the governor yesterday declaring the County in a State of insurrection. I now sit up and read the proclamation and a well written peace it is. So troops are now at the Capital. Have elected their officers and will take up the march tomorrow. . . People are hunted like foxes from their holes.

For more on this fascinating period in our history, read *A Free Soil, A Free People*, by Dorothy Kubik, or *Tin Horns and Calico*, by Henry Christman.