

Those Amazing Young Men and Their Flying Machines

A collection of photographs and articles about Kelly Corners airplane builder Loren "Larry" Shultis, loaned to HSM by his son, Roger Shultis of Bainbridge, has led to some interesting discoveries about early aviators from this area.

Shultis was born in Denver Nov. 10, 1900 to Hanford and Katherine Lawrence Shultis. A child of the new century and its mechanical wonders, he became enthralled with the notion of flight after a 15-minute airplane ride in 1918 with barnstormer Basil Rowe, and decided he wanted to build his own flying machine.

After taking a correspondence course in aviation, Loren bought a set of blueprints from Edward Bayard Heath, founder of the Heath Aeroplane Company. He spent nights and Sundays building the plane while he worked in a machine and auto repair shop, and in the summer of 1922 went to Chicago to help build a plane under construction at the Heath plant, receiving three hours of flying instruction there. He returned to fly the plane he'd built from the blueprint, selling it after a total of eight hours in the air. And then he built another.

In 1928 he earned an Airplane and Engine Mechanic Certificate from the US Department of Commerce, and began spending most of his time at the Oneonta Airport. In 1929, he fabricated the wings to be applied to a Canuck body and a Curtis engine for LeRoy Tyler of Hobart. The work was done in the Maple Street Garage (most recently an art and sculpture studio) in Halcottsville.

The uncertain economy led Shultis in 1932 to take a job as Postmaster at the tiny Kelly Corners Post Office, where he remained until 1940. He moved his family — wife Irene Trowbridge Shultis and their six children — to Long Island to take a job with Grumman Aircraft Company, retiring in 1966. Loren Shultis died in 1987.

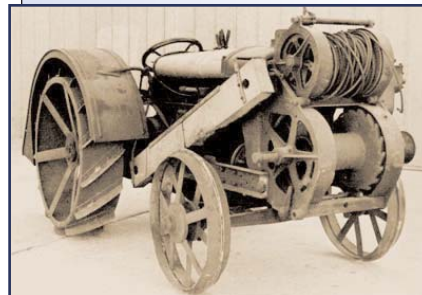
Basil Rowe, the man who introduced Shultis to the thrill of flying in 1918, was an adventurous spirit whose life reflected the development of aviation from its earliest days to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

From Muscles to Motors

The transition from horse power to tractor power in America was but one aspect of an era of rapid social change in American rural life: airplanes and automobiles, electricity and telephones, indoor plumbing and rural free delivery, refrigeration and consolidated schools.

HSM's Annual Meeting on October 17 at New Kingston Valley Grange Hall, Cemetery Road, Margaretville, will shine a light on that period when Dr. Milton C. Sernett, professor emeritus of Syracuse University, presents an illustrated talk, "From Muscles to Motors on the Farm: Henry Ford, and the Great American Tractor Wars, 1910-1930."



The Fordson tractor, first mass produced in 1918, gave farmers an affordable source of mechanical power. It also sparked a conflict in the farm machinery industry that had long term consequences.

Dr. Sernett's lecture, which begins at 1:30 p.m. and is free, will include rare images of the great tractor factories, and depictions of agricultural work before family farms were supplanted by factory farms.

The program will follow a noon luncheon and a business meeting. To reserve your place at \$15 a seat, call 845-586-4448, or email history@catskill.net.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

widespread commercial air service.

Born on Fox Hollow Road in Shandaken to Edward and Phoebe Rowe, Basil first flew in an airplane in 1914. He honed his skills as a flyer in World War I, and, like many wartime pilots, spent the post-war years as a "barnstormer," skipping from one farmer's field to the next giving rides to awed country dwellers, and performing stunt flying exhibitions at county fairs.

In his 1956 autobiography, *Under My Wings*, Rowe wrote "Barnstormers had one thing in common – they loved to fly. We lived flying, breathed it, talked it, slept it."

Rowe was also a racing pilot, winning timed contests like the Dayton International Air Races in 1924 (clocking 111 mph over a 120 mile course), and the Mitchel Field Airplane Tournament in 1925, when he bested 16 other flyers.

His daring led to predictable consequences. *The New York Times* reported on July 15, 1921, that the Haviland Scout plane he was piloting that had just taken off from Shandaken with old schoolmate Benjamin Gulnick aboard, hit an air pocket, landing in an apple tree: "The motor was torn loose and landed in an excavation for a cellar. Rowe and Gulnick escaped injury. Rowe will get another plane to exhibit at Fleischmanns."

Similar incidents were reported in the *Catskill Mountain News* of the period. Donald Cowan of Dunraven, who had purchased a Curtis airplane on Long Island in September 1926 intending to make some money giving rides, saw his hopes dashed the following week when the plane stalled and dropped out of the sky above the former Margaretville Fair Grounds. Neither he nor passenger James Hendricks were hurt.

Arthur Bussy, a 1926 Margaretville graduate who became manager of a company that operated Richmond Airways on Staten Island, also found himself up a tree (literally) when a too-short runway caused him to crash as he took off from a field in Arena after visiting his parents, Arthur and Adeline Bussy, Sr., in August, 1928.

Meanwhile, Basil Rowe had organized the West Indian Aerial Express in 1927, hauling passengers and cargo between Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Related Rowe, "We needed ships that could get out of and land in a field the size of a dollar bill, with change left over." Rowe was a friend of famed flyer Charles Lindbergh, who'd been hired by Pan



On the Bridge of a "Flying Clipper Ship"



Barnstormer Basil Rowe gave Loren Shultis his first plane ride in 1918. Rowe (above) is seen years later at the controls of a Pan Am "Clipper."

Kelly Corners native Loren Shultis, near left, posed with airplane owner LeRoy Tyler at the Oneonta air field in 1930. Shultis made the wings for Tyler's plane in a Halcottsville garage. Courtesy Roger Shultis

Loren Shultis, below left, and his cousin Bill Shultis at the Heath Aeroplane Company plant in Chicago, where Loren learned to fly. Courtesy Roger Shultis

American Airways to pioneer routes around the Caribbean in his legendary airplane. On one of his trips to the islands in 1928, Rowe asked Lindbergh to carry some sacks of mail, reportedly the only time 'Spirit of St Louis' was used as a mail plane.

Rowe's tiny airline was ultimately absorbed by Pan Am, and Rowe became the airline's Senior Pilot. During his first ten years, he flew a record number of hours and surveyed most of the growing company's new routes.

He rejoined the US Army Air Force during World War II, and returned to commercial aviation afterwards. He retired in 1956 and died in 1973.



Heath Aeroplane Co. July 1922

Fundraiser combines history, art and music

In an exciting collaboration, the Historical Society has paired with a group of area artists to raise funds to erect more roadside historic markers.

The East Branch Delaware River Plein Air Painters, coordinated by Halcottsville artist Alix Travis, have been busy this summer on an enjoyable task: painting and drawing en plein air (on site) several historic buildings and their surroundings.

More than 20 framed works will be offered at a silent auction and reception Thanksgiving Weekend at The Commons in Margaretville, making an ideal holiday shopping opportunity.

The event will feature entertainment and a wine and cheese reception from 3 to 6 p.m. Friday, Nov. 27 in the gathering space outside the Longyear Gallery at The Commons.

The artists have focused on the following sites for this project: the Bussy Building and the Binnekill in Margaretville; the Arkville train station and trains; the Old Stone Schoolhouse, Dunraven; the hamlet of New Kingston; the VanBenschoten farm, also in New Kingston; Skene Memorial Library in

Fleischmanns; the hamlet of Halcottsville, millhouse and pond; and the Bedell Church and vicinity in Redkill.

Please make plans to come to this festive event and claim an original watercolor, drawing or painting of your favorite historic place! Proceeds will go towards installing markers at the town's many historically important locales.

Bob Axelrod works on a painting at the VanBenschoten farm during an outing of the plein air painters group. Photo by Alix Travis.



What's Coming Up . . . Fall Programs from HSM

SAT
SEPT
26

Margaretville Cauliflower Festival

10 AM -4 PM Margaretville Village Park

In the History Tent: "When Cauliflower Was King," and "The Business of Farming – Creameries In and Around Middletown." In the new Forestry Tent: "Maple Memories" and "The Civilian Conservation Corps."

SAT
OCT
3

"You CAN Get There From Here"

10 AM Halcottsville Grange Hall

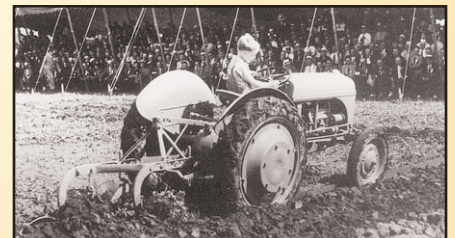
Find out about former roads of Middletown at a roundtable discussion and map exhibit, followed by a guided fall foliage walk from the head of Bragg Hollow Road to New Kingston. Free.

SAT
OCT
17

HSM Annual Meeting: "From Muscles to Motors on the Farm"

12-2:30 PM New Kingston Valley Grange Hall Cemetery Road, Margaretville.

Noon luncheon followed by business meeting and free program at 1:30 p.m. "From Muscles to Motors on the Farm: Henry Ford and the Great American Tractor Wars, 1910-30," by Dr. Milton Sernett, Professor Emeritus at Syracuse University. Registration required for lunch: \$15. Call 845-586-4448; e-mail: history@catskill.net.



SAT
NOV
27

HSM Fundraiser, Art Auction & Reception

3-6 PM The Commons, Main Street, Margaretville

Original watercolors and drawings of historic sites in the Town of Middletown, done by the East Branch Delaware River Plein Air Painters and offered through silent auction. Wine and cheese reception, entertainment.



Four members of the Catskill Mountain Quilters Hall of Fame described their art in a lively HSM-sponsored program that accompanied a quilt show at the Fleischmanns Community Church Memorial Day Weekend. From left, Virginia Hull, Lesley Gray, Arlene Vrooman and Peg Barnes. A video of the presentation was produced by Roger Bobley and is available for purchase by sending a check for \$20 to Historical Society of the Town of Middletown, PO Box 745, Margaretville, NY 12455.

INFORMATION NEEDED!

HSM is mounting an exhibit on area creameries at the Margaretville Cauliflower Festival September 26. We need photographs, information and printed materials, and personal stories from or about people who worked at a creamery in Middletown or contiguous towns.

If you have photos, postcards, receipts, advertisements, signs or other information, please email history@catskill.net, or contact an HSM board member: Diane Galusha, Carolyn Konheim, Marilyn Pitetti, Andy VanBenschoten, Fran Faulkner, Lucci Kelly or George Hendricks, Jr.

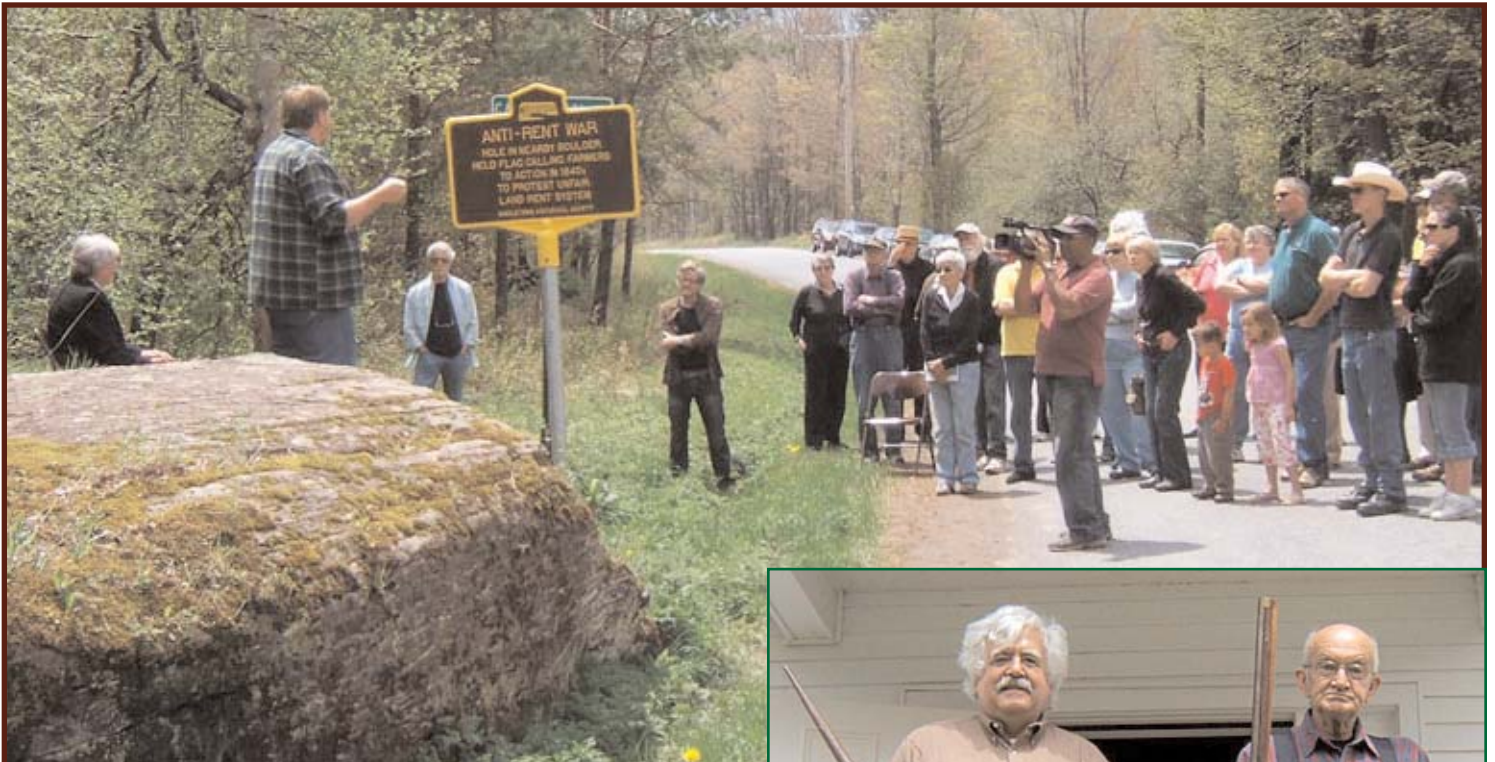
We're also looking for materials to add to an October 3 program on old roads and maps of Middletown. If you can loan photographs of early work crews, roads piled high with snow or impassable with mud; teams of horses or early automobiles traversing dirt roads no longer open, please contact George Hendricks, Jr., 845-586-3614.

Old maps of the area, pathmaster accounts and stories about former routes from here to there (like the road from the head of Bragg Hollow to New Kingston, where George will lead a walk after the 10 a.m. program from the newly renovated Halcottsville Grange Hall) are also needed.

GRAVE ACCOUNTING

- ✚ Friends of Middletown Cemeteries located, listed and in some cases mapped the gravesites of 724 veterans in 18 cemeteries in time for Memorial Day this year. The effort was made in cooperation with American Legion Post #216, which was given the comprehensive lists of veteran gravesites to simplify flag placement in coming years.
- ✚ Kurt Holcherr, Don Kearney, Phil O'Beirne and Ed Stewart have spruced up the Irish (aka Catholic Cemetery in Clovesville). The neglected site is the resting place of many adults and children with Irish surnames. Ed Stewart has done some preliminary research into this group.
- ✚ A project to complete an inventory of the main Halcott Cemetery on Elk Creek Road was launched in July, under the direction of Lanore Miller. Roger Davis did about half of the cemetery a few years ago.
- ✚ An updated, corrected and alphabetized inventory of the Kelly Corners (aka Eureka) Cemetery is now on the Delaware County History and Genealogy website, completed and uploaded this summer by Tina Greene. www.dcnycityhistory.org.
- ✚ A Legislative member item of \$3,000 has been awarded by Assemblyman Clifford Crouch to the Town of Middletown to make repairs to stones and grounds at the Arkville Cemetery. Volunteers are needed to do this work. Stay tuned for updates.

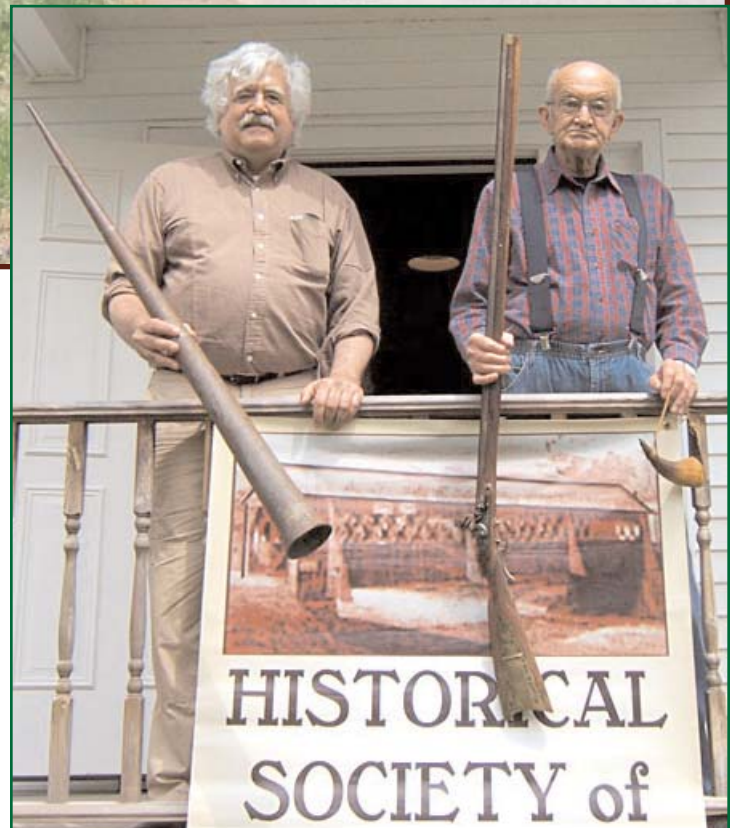
MARKING THE "BOLDER" ANTI-RENT WARRIORS



History Rocks!

George Hendricks, Jr. and Dorothy Kubik (seated left) spoke to a rapt audience of history lovers at the dedication of the first historical marker erected by HSM. Located at the intersection of Fleischmanns Heights, Galli Curci and Todd Mountain Roads, it marks the site where a flag atop a tree trunk that was set in a hole in the boulder at left protested the feudal landholding system of the early 1800s. More markers are in the works this year for New Kingston and the Hubbell Homestead Farm in Kelly Corners.

A program that followed the Anti-Rent marker unveiling May 9 featured a talk by Doug Odell about an anti-rent ancestor, and a display of period artifacts, including (at right) the anti-rent war horn held by Andy VanBenschoten and the musket held by Larry Baker.



Our growing collection

HSM is fortunate to have received many interesting donations for our archives. Recent acquisitions include an 1862 Assessment Roll for the Town of Middletown; photographs and news articles relating to the Kelly family and boarding house in Kelly Corners; and an important collection of negatives from the *Catskill Mountain News*, donated by former Editor Alton Weiss.

Our collection is small but growing, and we would like to establish a committee of volunteers to organize and catalogue it. If you have, an interest in old documents and memorabilia, some time to contribute, and a commitment to seeing Middletown history preserved, please contact Diane Galusha, HSM President, at 845-586-4973; cybercat@catskill.net.

We hope to arrange a training session for volunteers in the near future.

HSM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Voters once gathered at annual Town Meetings

by Mary Sive

Diaries are among the most useful documents for historical research. Mixed in with plentiful data about weather and farm and home chores, we sometimes find surprising information.

That certainly was true of the record kept by a Halcottsville woman, Jennie McKenzie Hewitt Doland, from 1877 to 1928. The little volumes, the gift of Jennie's descendants, may be found at the Delaware County Historical Association (which can also supply a summary on CD).

While reviewing this diary, the seemingly innocuous remark "the men went to town meeting" set me wondering: I had heard of New England town meetings, but in New York? I checked with Middletown Town Clerk Russell Schebesta, who pulled out some old records, and, sure enough, to the surprise of both of us, there were the minutes of "town meetings" in the Town of Middletown.

Curious, I decided to investigate further. Research at the State Archives in Albany and the New York Public Library revealed that, indeed, town officials in New York State were chosen at annual town meetings in the spring until the early 1900s. Biennial elections in November, as we now know them, came in gradually. In fact, the term "town meeting" only disappeared from the laws of the state in mid-20th century.

I presented my findings to the annual Conference on New York State History in Plattsburgh in early June. Who would have thought that a diary kept by an ordinary person could lead to significant knowledge about the political history of the entire state?

Here in Middletown a special Town Meeting in 1905 to vote on a \$20,000 bond issue took place not long after local elections shifted to November, but what made it special was that "The Ladies

May Vote," as the *Catskill Mountain News* headlined its May 12, 1905 story. "Anyone who pays taxes, man or woman, may vote," the paper informed its readers, reassuring (the ladies?) that "The ballot is very simple." (A state law giving women limited voting rights had been passed in 1901). "The gathering of all the voters at Margaretville will recall old times."

Get Involved!

The HSM Board needs you! If you'd like to be more involved in suggesting, promoting and producing programs and projects on Middletown history, consider joining the Board of Trustees. Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting October 17. You must have paid your membership dues for 2009-10 by Oct. 1, and be available to attend at least eight meetings per year. For more information or to attend an upcoming Board meeting, call Diane Galusha at 845-586-4973.



THE 44¢ POST

THE 44¢ POST is a feature exclusively for members who receive *The Bridge* via e-mail. Because your newsletter requires no postage or label, you get an "extra!"



The unidentified people in these photos from the Lena McCann Collection donated by Robin Bruck Tanner and Lucci Kelly, had the right idea when it came to enjoying summer. Many photos in the collection are of the Kelly Farm Inn, whose proprietors, W. G. "Grant" and Lina Kelly, welcomed city visitors to their Kelly Corners boarding house.