

## Home, Sweet Home!

After seven years of holding programs and meetings at borrowed spaces around town, the Historical Society of the Town of Middletown (HSM) finally has a home of its own.

The New Kingston Valley Grange generously donated its clubhouse and seven acres on Cemetery Road, Margaretville, to HSM which will use it for programming, special events, exhibits and office space.

Please know that the Grange, which has occupied the site since 1994, is not disbanding. Its members will continue to meet at the Margaretville-New Kingston Presbyterian Church.

The one-story clubhouse has a spacious rustic interior with a local stone fireplace and a kitchen. The property features a pond, expansive lawns, a small garage and a barbecue pit. A committee has been formed to discuss how to use, develop, promote and support the facility, and to explore options for long-term housing of the Society's collection of historical materials, which is currently lodged in the Middletown Town Hall.

The Cemetery Road property was once farmland that was purchased in the 1940s by Julius and Frieda Meinstein and deeded in 1950 to Stephen Meinstein. In the mid-1960s it was sold to the Catskill Mountain Chapter of the Izaak Walton League (IWL).

The IWL, a conservation and sportsmen's group which was established in Margaretville in 1927, had built a clubhouse on NYS Route 30 in 1938. (The windows had once graced Bussy's Store in the village, and the hardwood flooring was taken from the former school on Church Street that was vacated in 1937 for the current Margaretville Central School.)

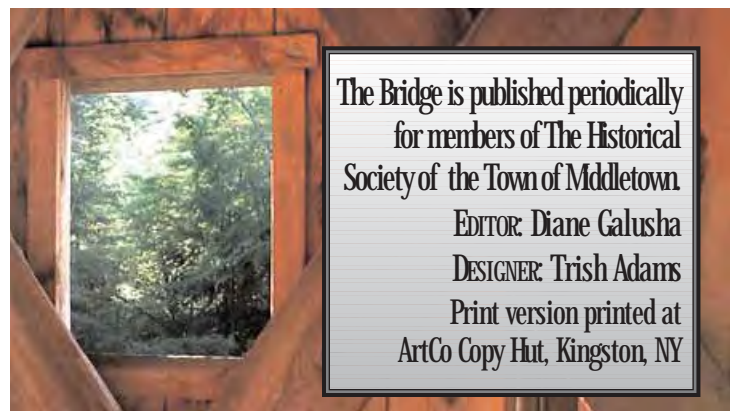
The widening of Route 30 in the 1960s prompted IWL to move its headquarters to the Meinstein farm site just up the hill, where the avid fishermen soon added a pond. A memorial stone to its founding president, F. Lee Keator, remains nearby.



When the chapter disbanded in the mid-1990s, it gave the building and surrounding acreage to the New Kingston Valley Grange, which had been established in 1968. The Grange made significant improvements inside and out. Like the IWL, the Grange rented out the building and grounds for family parties, wedding receptions, alumni gatherings and other functions.

Neighbor Ernie Bilzer continues to tap the maples on the property to make syrup.

In keeping with the welcoming nature of the hall, HSM invites the community to an open house Saturday, May 19 from 3 to 6 p.m. Finish your gardening and come on over to see an exhibit, enjoy light refreshments and tell us how you'd like to see history celebrated there!



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# Uncover the Pleasure of Treasure

by Roger Davis

What is geocaching? Geocaching (pronounced Geo-cash-ing) is best described as a high tech treasure hunt. It involves the use of a computer, a handheld GPS receiving device and the government's multi-million-dollar satellite system.

This is a game/sport enjoyed by people of all ages, especially fun for families with children. Geocaching will get you out into the great outdoors to enjoy the views, hidden parks, fabulous waterfalls, historical sites and much more.

There are 1,667,353 active geocaches and over five million geocachers worldwide. My wife and I have found 1,098 geocaches in New York State and two in Massachusetts. There are 257 hidden caches within a 23-mile radius of Margaretville. Of these, 16 are at historical sites in Margaretville, Roxbury, Delhi, Grand Gorge, Stamford, Prattsville, Gilboa, and East Meredith. You may be led to a museum, old school house or historic covered bridge, so while finding the cache, you can learn the historical significance of the area.

To get started, log on to [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) and create a free account. There you'll find helpful information, including videos. Click on Play > Hide and seek a cache > and then enter a town or state in the appropriate search box and a mileage radius. Geocaching.com will then open several pages of available caches to find within your chosen area. Each will indicate how many miles from your home base the cache is located. (Be aware that stated mileage is determined as the crow flies.) You then can select one of the choices and download it to your GPS® unit or manually enter the listed coordinates. You can choose one or several caches to add to your GPS® unit. Once you have loaded as many caches as you want you are ready to head out and find the treasure.

On the cache page you have chosen to find, you will be given the coordinates of the hidden cache, the difficulty rating for finding it and for the terrain it's in, a brief description

about the cache and possibly some information about the destination. Sometimes, but not always, you will also be given a clue to help find the cache.

Cache containers will have a logbook to sign and date when found. Some, depending on size, may contain trinkets for trading. You may take an item or not. The home rule is that if you take an item you must leave an item of equal or greater value. Not all containers are large. There are many sizes and types. The traditional container is a camouflaged army ammo can. However you may also find Tupperware containers and others that are cleverly disguised. Then there are ones referred to as micro or nano containers, which are only large enough to hold a log sheet.

Once you have found that elusive cache you sign the log inside and place the cache exactly where and how you found it. When you get home, log back onto [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com), select the cache you found and log in online. There you can also tell a little about your find and what you may have left in the cache container. The website will keep track of your finds.

Happy caching and enjoy your newly found adventure!



## Correction: Wrong Direction!



We were on the right road, but the wrong end of Fleischmanns when we identified this 1950 flood accident scene as Clovesville. Georgie Fairlie explains that this was Sollie Darling's car upended in the washed out road by the Emory Brook restaurant, more recently Evergreen, at the east end of Main Street. Mr. Darling, she says, was not hurt.

# Genealogists Welcome! More Sleuthing on April 14

Family and local history enthusiasts enjoyed a lively presentation by Sally Elliott Scrimshaw March 24, and look forward to more ancestor sleuthing with Ed Stewart and his cousin, Betty Baker, April 14. The Genealogy Roundtables, sponsored by HSM are held in the Fairview Library Community Room from 10 to noon.

Sally shared information about members of the Elliott, Squires, Wight, Long and related families. The Elliott farm in New Kingston was first settled by Sally's ancestors around 1818, and is still a working dairy farm, operated by the sixth- and seventh-generations on the land there.

On April 14, Ed and Betty will discuss Todds, Fairbairns and related families.

The Fairbairn clan of Delaware/Ulster County are all descended from John and Elisabeth Miller Fairbairn, who came from Roxburghshire in the Scottish Borders and married at Bovina in 1841. Almost all of the Todds in the area are descendants of Samuel Todd, the Revolutionary War soldier from Plymouth, CT, and his wife, Mary Dudley.

Ultimately these families connect with many local pioneer families including those of David Bouton of Roxbury, George Alton of Todd Mountain, Jonathan Baker of Rider Hollow, Abraham Canniff of Dry Brook, and John C. Keator, Jacob Craft, and Ebenezer Robinson all of Vega.



Sally Elliott Scrimshaw shared this image of her great-grandmother, Philinda Youngs Long, grandmother Marion Long Elliott, and uncle John Elliott, in the Genealogy Roundtable March 24.

## IDEAS WELCOME

If you are interested in volunteering with HSM, or have ideas for exhibits or programs, please contact

any Board member:

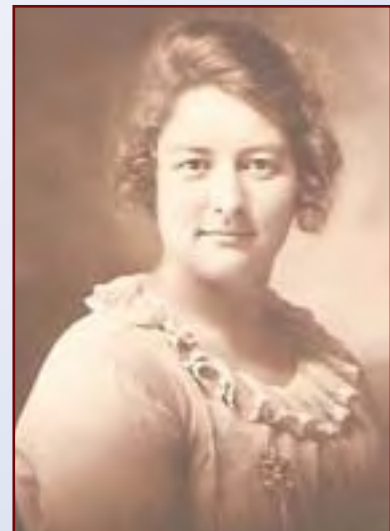
Diane Galusha,  
Carolyn Konheim,  
Marilyn Pitetti,  
Lucci Kelly,  
George Hendricks,  
Phil O'Beirne or

Roger Davis, or send an email:  
[history@catskill.net](mailto:history@catskill.net).



Ed resides in NYC but is deeply connected to the Catskills through his paternal grandmother, Irene Todd, a native of Hardenburgh. He's been a lifelong visitor to Dry Brook, frequently at the home of his great aunt and uncle, the late Harold and Evadine Todd Garrison. Ed now maintains a home on Chris Long Road in Arkville on what was the Garrison property.

Betty Baker, former Hardenburgh Tax Collector, has been collecting and making sense of the town's history for decades. She and husband Larry, a retired fire observer and DEC employee, live off Todd Mountain Road.



Irene Todd, c. 1918. Photo courtesy of Ed Stewart.

## History, Rising: Join the Dear Departed on June 30

It's ironic that one of the best views of Pakatakan Mountain is from the Margaretville Cemetery, whose occupants can't really appreciate it, seeing things, as it were, from a different perspective since they've left the land of the living.

You are invited to drink in that view, and to hear from a few of the dearly departed, in a living history tour of the cemetery Saturday evening, June 30. Eight men and women from the past, portrayed by modern-day community members, will tell visitors about their lives, loves, and losses in a unique guided tour of the park-like cemetery, located on Cemetery Road, just off upper Main Street.

This unique event is a fundraiser for HSM: \$10 for adults, \$5 for children eight and over. In case of rain, it will be held on Sunday, July 1.

The twilight tour (6-8 p.m.), led by costumed docents, will introduce you to people like Orson Allaben, considered the prime mover behind the development of the Village of Margaretville, a physician, politician and vocal opponent of the Civil War; Erastus Clute, legendary steersman on Delaware River log rafts; J. Francis Murphy, noted landscape artist who helped found the Pakatakan Artist Colony in Arkville; and Margaret DeSilva, millinery store manager who, with her lawyer husband, perished in the flu epidemic of 1919, leaving two small daughters.

Players will dress in appropriate costume, appearing with the tools of their trade. Docents will offer tidbits about other cemetery occupants during the pleasant walk on mostly level terrain. (Carts will be available for those with mobility issues.)



Margaretville Cemetery's "rooms with a view" (above), the "bench stone" of John Francis Murphy and his wife, Ada, both artists (right). Stone for baby Alice Joy Bloodgood (below) has a lamb motif, common for infants and children.



## In a Blaze of Glory

There's nothing like a gigantic fire – especially one half way up a mountainside – to bring out the gawkers.

When the Briarcliff Lodge on Margaretville Mountain went up flames in January, 1927, the *Catskill Mountain News* reported that “The whole valley to the north and east (was) brilliantly lighted, and cars gathered from miles before the ruined building had burned itself out.”

It was a pretty spectacular structure, to be sure. Built around 1908 by Mary MacKrell who purchased the property on what is now Swart Road from Augustus Albers in 1906, it was intended as a sanitarium but that apparently did not materialize.

William A. Boyes, his wife and family ran a farm in the area that is now Fair Street and Route 28, Margaretville. They raised vegetables for the summer hotels and boarding houses. After the Delaware & Northern Railroad built its shops in that vicinity around 1907, the Boyes clan gave up farming and got into the hotel business, first managing the Pocantico Inn on Main Street, then up the hill at what became known as Briarcliff Lodge. It accommodated as many as 75 guests, and welcomed locals to “Join the Briarcliff Lodge Dancing Club” every Friday night.

On a bitterly cold January night in 1927, an overheated chimney ignited the third floor. Firemen had a hard time reaching it over “the vexatious road,” and found the reservoir on the property frozen. Snow on the roof of the large barn near the building saved it from burning; the barn still stands, near a partial foundation wall, and a concrete walkway lined with an iron railing that are that remains of the Briarcliff.

W. A. Boyes, 76, did not rebuild the Briarcliff. But he remained in Margaretville, where he died in 1944, the oldest man in the village at age 94.



This was Briarcliff Lodge in its heyday, postcard courtesy Lynda Stratton. See more of Lynda's amazing collection of Margaretville photos and postcards on July 25 at the HSM meeting rooms! Peter Salamin (below), whose father Walter acquired the property in the 1960s, is shown among the remnants of the Lodge.



### Research Vols Needed!

Do you have a nose for history? Got a little spare time, a computer and access to the internet?

You can help us put flesh on the bones of Civil War veterans from Middletown by researching their lives and families for an inventory project we are conducting during the war's sesquicentennial period through 2015. Much of this research can be done online. For more info, or to get started, call Diane Galusha, 845-586-4973.



### HSM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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# That Margaretville Muse

Charles L. Kneeland was one of those men who waste no time in answering the door when they hear an opportunity knocking. Born in 1841 in Franklin, Kneeland grew up in Delaware County when most people milked cows for a living. Father Williams Kneeland was a farmer (later a tanner) and mother Phebe no doubt was responsible for separating the cream from the milk to make butter, an important cash crop. Years later, after service in the Civil War, and 14 years selling musical instruments, Charles took practical advantage of his parents' early lessons to invent a better milk cooler (1883). And butter package (1892). And cream separator (1899).

When he applied for a patent for the cooler in 1881, the application stated that he lived in Margaretville. Where and why, we don't know. But he was soon manufacturing the cooler and other dairy devices at a factory in Unadilla, and by 1900 was running the Kneeland Crystal Creamery Company in Lansing, MI with

partner Guy Renyx. Charles' son Edwin was manager of the plant, which his father sold in 1903, to devote more time to improving the new big thing – gasoline engines.

Charles L. Kneeland died of a heart ailment in 1904 at the age of 62. The *Catskill Mountain News* remembering the long ago resident, carried the news in a Page 1 obituary titled "An Inventor Passes Away."

1892 ad for C. L. Kneeland's cream separator. You can see the real thing at Hanford Mills Museum in East Meredith.



**"That's Fine Butter"**  
is the verdict of every one who tastes the product of  
**Kneeland's Crystal Creamery**  
The only Creamer in the world with  
*Glass Jars—*  
*Steel Water Tanks—*  
*Perfect Finish.*  
Raises Cream With or Without Ice.  
Cut prices to first purchaser. Send for catalogues to  
Agents wanted, **Crystal Creamery Co.,**  
**42 Concord Street, Lansing, Mich.**

## THE 45¢ POST

THE 45¢ POST is an exclusive feature for members who receive *The Bridge* via e-mail. Because your newsletter requires no postage or label, you get an "extra"!



## NAVY BALLOON COMES DOWN IN RED KILL

From *Catskill Mountain News*, Oct. 5, 1928

A large navy balloon of the observation type landed on the farm of J. G. Blish at Red Kill near the village of Fleischmanns, early Tuesday morning. This was one of two similar balloons which were sent out from Lakehurst, New Jersey the evening before on practice flights.

The balloon landing at Red Kill was number 7387 and left Lakehurst at five o'clock Monday evening in charge of Chief Machinists Mate W. Russell and a crew of five.

After drifting most of the night they found their car becoming entangled with tree tops in crossing one of the higher peaks of the Catskills but managed to lighten the car enough to get over the mountains. Shortly before six they were sighted by a number of people at Dry Brook and were then near enough to the ground so that they could talk with people on the ground and inquired to know where they were. After lightening the balloon by throwing away their personal belongings they managed to get into the Red Kill valley where they came to rest on the farm of J. G. Blish. There the balloon was deflated and taken to the railroad station at Fleischmanns and the party left on the afternoon train for Lakehurst.

The sister ship which left the training station at about the same time came to rest at Bloomingdale, a few miles from the Canadian border shortly after 7:30.

Aerial naval observer coming down from a "Blimp" type balloon after a scouting tour somewhere on the Atlantic Coast. *Central News Photo Service., ca. 1918*