

That “Dickson Home” Brew



When John Benson tried a new beer from Catskill Brewery in Livingston Manor he found it a “solid brew.” Truth to tell, though, he was more taken with the story behind the label of the imperial stout named “The Dickson Home.”

Told that the dark brew was named after a house that had floated down the East Branch while being moved from Arena ahead of advancing Pepacton Reservoir waters, John decided he had to know more.

So the retired social studies teacher from Susquehanna, PA took it upon himself to learn about the NYC water system’s Catskills reservoirs, the lost hamlet of Arena and in particular the Dickson house. Finally, he and fellow retired teacher Dave Williams took advantage of the drought in November to find the site of the house amid the foundations and bluestone sidewalks exposed in old Arena.

This was Katharyn Dickson’s lovely home in Arena. NYS BWS photo

The big handsome house on the hill at the edge of town belonged to Katharyn Dickson (1892-1972). She was married to Edward H. Dickson (1871-1930) and had two children, Edward H. Dickson (1915-2011)

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and Elizabeth Dickson Sanford (1917-1995). Katharyn was widowed at a fairly young age, ran a general store in Arena, was postmaster, and owned the water company.

The house she lived in in Arena was indeed moved in the autumn of 1955, but it didn't float down the river. Far from it: It actually became mired in gravel and was stuck for a time during high water until it was eventually freed and ultimately placed on a new site in Dunraven where it remains 70 years later, though minus its gracious wrap-around veranda.

Back to that beer.

Mike McQuiston, head brewer at Catskill Brewery, explains that they like to localize the names on their beers and ales. The story of the Dickson house move struck a chord. "It's one of those tales that feels like it could only happen in the Catskills, and is a great reflection of the history of the reservoirs. The story is also emblematic of the hard scrabble nature that life can take up here."

The beer was most recently available from November 2023 through roughly the end of the winter season in early 2024. "It has been brewed a few times over the years, but the most recent version was a 9.2% alcohol imperial stout brewed with the addition of cocoa nibs," says McQuiston.

Or, in brew-speak, "[The Dickson Home is a] full-bodied Imperial Stout, has a smooth and balanced mouthfeel along with aromas of dark chocolate and molasses, complemented by the rich essence of coffee and toasty grains"

Pat Sanford Moore, an HSM trustee, isn't sure her grandmother would appreciate the dark beer, but others in the family enjoyed it. John Benson said he did

too, but the real pleasure was in the pilgrimage to Arena and imagining the Dickson house as it was before the waters rose.



This clipping from the *Walton Reporter* showed the house stranded on a gravel bar. Heavy rains threatened to flood the house but it escaped disaster to be relocated in Dunraven.

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John Benson, right, with friend Dave Williams, traveled to the barren Pepacton Reservoir from Susquehanna, PA to see where the Dickson house once stood. The label (right) for Dickson Home Imperial Stout made at Catskill Brewery in Livingston Manor.



Kathryn Dickson is at the reins in this image, courtesy of Pat Moore.

This article, abbreviated for the Bridge, was originally published in the Catskill Mountain News on the occasion of Fran Faulkner's retirement as Postmaster of New Kingston in December 2005. Author Trish Adams has long served as designer of this newsletter.

Postmaster Francis A. Faulkner handed over her official duties last Thursday, retiring after 18 years as Postmaster and more than 50 years of holding various posts at New Kingston command central. Anyone will tell you that, as postmaster, Fran would stay late or skip lunch if you needed her. Or that she'd put that extra 20 cents on your letter when you miscounted.

Or that she'd take the mail outside to older patrons who couldn't hop out of their sedans like they used to. Or that she knows how to deliver a letter addressed to "Dad." Fran "sets the bar pretty high," as one friend puts it. "So her standard then becomes the norm for how we all treat each other."

With her in the post office for more than 20 years has been faithful Postal Clerk Barbara Condon, who is also going to retire later this month. "We were here together and we wanted to leave together," Barbara says.

Frances Mayhew Faulkner's lineage in the valley runs deep: Her mother, Laura Sanford, grew up here and brought her children up during the summers.

Fran grew up in Tenaflly, N.J., studied briefly at Pembroke College (the distaff arm of Brown University) and then did a very practical stint at Katherine Gibbs school in New York City "because my parents wanted me to have something solid to fall back on."

But Fran's fate as the quintessential New Kingstonite was pretty much sealed in the summer of '46. "M.J. [Myron] Faulkner was postmaster then and he asked my mother if one of her girls wanted a summer job, helping in the store and the post office. I signed right up. I think maybe I made \$60 those two months," says Fran. (This was the summer between her junior and senior years of high school.)

High school student Frances Mayhew (inset) spent the summer of 1946 working in M.J. Faulkner's post office and general store. She was a perfect fit for the porch, the post and the New Kingston Valley. Photo by Dan Flanagan; 1946 photo from Fran's collection



Just back from the war was Doug Faulkner who helped out in the store and with feed deliveries. The country boy-turned-Marine regaled Fran with his tales of the high seas and war time service in the Pacific. Fran finished high school and went off to college, but not for long. Fran and Doug were married in 1949, and since Doug had graduated to Postmaster by then, the young couple managed to buy the post office and general store in 1950. “We scraped together 360-some dollars, I think, to put in the till and we were in business,” Fran recalls. They fixed up the upstairs as their apartment and had their first two children, June and Lee, in 1950 and 1952.

In Fran’s Post Office there are the original post office boxes from the 1850s, a counter from the original store, fading ink on fanciful postal papers and orders — many of them from the mid-19th century, when the New Kingston mail was carried twice a week into Margaretville. There’s a *laissez faire* lending library that Fran keeps going, along with (probably priceless) antique toys from Fran and Doug’s own extensive collection. For almost every item, Fran can tell you which local farmhouse it came from. (And) she doesn’t just know the architectural details inside an old farmhouse, but who lived there, what they did, who inherited that property and how and why they used the house in a different way.

That made her the perfect engine to drive the Comprehensive Historical Resources Survey of the New Kingston Valley, an exhaustive undertaking completed under the aegis of research consultant Jessie Ravage in May 2004. Ravage worked closely with Fran and historian and fellow New Kingstonite Shirley Davis.

Fran and Doug found their own true home in the Birdsall house next door to the post office: Isaac Birdsall was

Doug’s great-grandfather, an early postmaster and very much the hub of New Kingston life in the mid-1800s. Fran and Doug moved there in 1965 and began restoring it, and got an extra bonus in Glen, their last child, born in 1966.

Now filled with carefully chosen antiques, flowers everywhere (and Willy the cat anywhere he wants), the house is homey, welcoming and a living history text all at once. Over the years, Fran and Doug compiled a one-of-a-kind collection of pottery as well as tins, toys, and beautiful, hand worn tools. Much of the pottery collection, with examples from virtually every one of the 40-some pottery centers in New York State, was donated to the Farmer’s Museum in Cooperstown.

Like almost every hamlet in the Catskills, New Kingston has several demographic groups. There are natives, newbies, and the families who’ve been around so long no one remembers

when they showed up. From those subsets, most towns will calcify into firmly segregated camps. But Doug and Fran have always been an open door, rather than an entrance exam, for New Kingston newcomers. “Anyone new, she would introduce them to everyone,” Dave Burrows says. Ex-Manhattanites, corporate runaways, artists — most of whom would seem to have nothing in common with homegrown locals — soon find themselves part of the gang.

Fran and Doug loved to travel and visited all 49 states when that’s how many there were. After Doug passed away in May 2002, Fran was still determined to make it to that 50th state and offered to take all of her children to Hawaii last year. “None of them said ‘no!’” Fran grins. Nor are her travelling days behind her.

“A customer gave me his magazines and brochures to recycle and there was a brochure for the QE2,” tells Fran. “And I thought, what the heck, I’ll take a look and there was this cruise through the Pacific, with stops in American Samoa and New Caledonia — the exact places Doug had served in the war as a Marine. Well, I thought, ‘I’ve got to go!’” As she set about planning this adventure for mid-January with daughter June, it occurred to Fran that this break might make a good transition into retirement.

On the day she retired there was the post office box full of mail, all addressed to her, all of it with postage due and all of it from numerous fictitious locations as “New Kingston Senior Citizens Center” at “One Two Buckle My Shoe Lane.”

Then the flowers started arriving. Almost all of the 18 or so bouquets were simply attributed: “From All of Us.”

A lasting gift

FRAN FAULKNER was a charter member of the Historical Society of Middletown when it formed in 2004. She was an active member for several years, sharing her interests in antiques, opening her home to a holiday house tour and helping to preserve and promote New Kingston history. When she passed away on August 25, 2021, Fran bequeathed \$10,000 to HSM. This generous gift will be applied towards the renovation of the kitchen at the Middletown History Center, enhancing our capacity for events and programs to bring our community together. We think she’d be happy about that.

If you, like Fran, would like to make tangible your love for our town and its history, we invite you to remember HSM in your will. Please reach out to any trustee, or contact us at 845-586-2400, historicalsocietyofmiddletown@gmail.com.

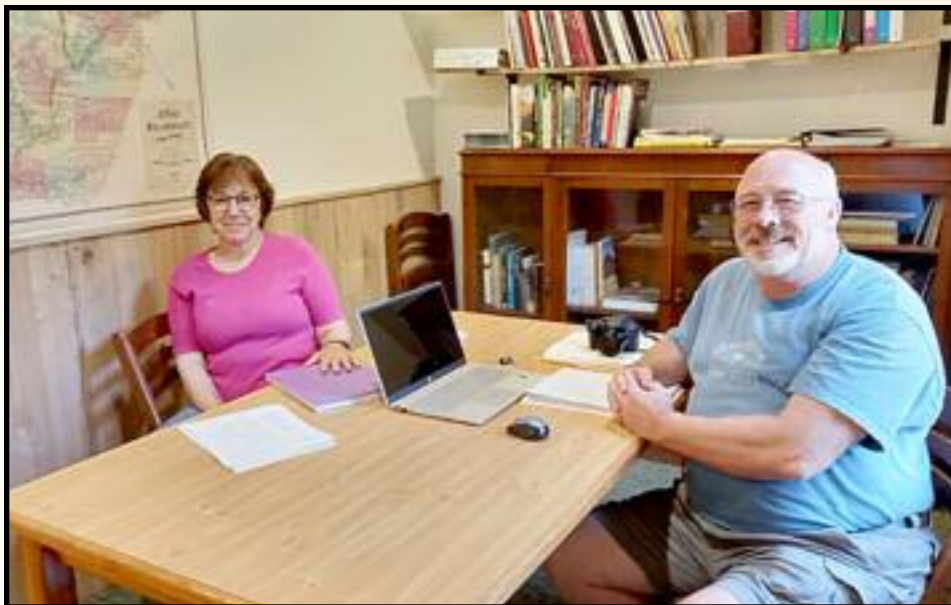
by Jeff Nick

It was late January 1977, and I was a high school sophomore in a small town outside of Erie, Pennsylvania. I was taking an American History class, and we were given an assignment to watch a new TV miniseries called "Roots" and then research and submit a family tree of our ancestors.

Several years later, as I continued my research, I uncovered many fascinating stories that were happy, sad, inspirational, and sometimes unpleasant. I also learned that a key part of my family's past was in the eastern New York area, between 1660 and 1840, where my Dumont/DuMond, Delamater, Yapple, Brink/Brinck, and several other ancestors had lived, farmed, and served our country. My wife, Jill, and I decided to drive from Ohio to New York in August to trace my ancestral connections from their beginnings in Ulster County (Esopus, Kingston, and Hurley), to Delaware County (Middletown, Margaretville, Arkville, and New Kingston), before settling in Erie County, PA.

During our trip, we visited local historical and genealogical societies, museums, town clerk offices, churches, libraries and cemeteries, including meetings with archivist Ray LaFever at the Delaware County Historical Association and Diane Galusha at the Historical Society of Middletown. The highlight of our visit was a driving tour with Diane to see the areas where my ancestors lived near Pakatakan Mountain and the East Branch Delaware River.

One of the most memorable experiences was tracing Harmonus DuMond, my 5th Great Grandfather, and following his journey from Kingston to Pakatakan, where he and his fam-



Jill and Jeffrey Nick in the HSM library during their August 14 visit. To schedule your visit to the Nicholas J. Juried Archives, call 845-586-2400, historicalsocietyofmiddletown@gmail.com.

ily settled with several other families in 1763. In particular, we saw where he likely met his tragic death on August 26, 1778 when he was captured and shot by a Schoharie Militia guard who mistook him as a spy for the Tories. It is a well-documented incident with conflicting witness accounts; however, his superior officers described Harmonus as a true Patriot spy reporting on Tory and Indian movements around the Catskill Mountains. I hope to collaborate with local historians to write an article about this unfortunate event as a part of the upcoming Revolutionary War Semiquincentennial.

A walk-through Margaretville Cemetery led to the discovery of David DuMond, Sr.'s gravestone next to Mary (Delamater) DuMond's on our last day in Middletown. That was a huge discovery as it is not documented anywhere that I have seen (and was apparently missed during the inventory of headstones done by HSM in 2008). While we were taking pictures and documenting the inscriptions,

we saw another gravestone for George H. Dumond located next to Mary, with footstone marked GHD. Who is George H. Dumond who died in infancy? Is he related to Sally Dumond or Warren Dumond buried nearby? Much more sleuthing to do!

We met so many wonderful and helpful people (and a few distant cousins!) in New York, and gained a much better appreciation for the rich history of the Catskill and Hudson River Valley regions. I have gathered a substantial amount of information to examine from our trip that will be added to the stories of my ancestors' lives.

Jeff Nick was born in Erie, PA and currently lives in Painesville, Ohio. He is a Senior Environmental, Health, and Safety Global Leader for Avery Dennison Corporation and has a BS degree in Chemical Engineering and a Master's in Business Administration. Jeff is an avid genealogical researcher and family historian who also enjoys music, photography and astronomy.

HSM marked 20 years of celebrating local history at our annual meeting November 2. The society formed in 2004 and was chartered by the State Education Department on March 15, 2005.

- Iris Mead, Margaretville Village Trustee and community booster, was elected to the HSM Board at the annual meeting. Welcome, Iris, and thanks to outgoing trustee Aggie Laub for her years of service.
- Mary McGrane of Margaretville was the lucky winner of the hand-crafted sycamore bench made and donated by Mike Porter.

- Looking for something interesting to do this winter? How about volunteering some time at the HSM archives? We have a list of projects that need doing, and will hold a training session in January. Call 845-586-2400 and leave a message if you're interested.
- If you remember Kids Kingdom (pictured below), the awesome playground that was built at MCS by the community in 1990, you'll want to watch for news of a reunion to be held in 2025. We're looking for photos, memorabilia and especially student artwork that was displayed on the playground. Let us know if you have something to share.



A Stitch in Time

Beth Waterman of Rose Mountain, Pine Hill, came to the rescue with needle and thread to sew a button on this jacket donated to the Nicholas J. Juried Archives by Sue DeBruin. The jacket, with the initials PHC for Pakatakan Hose Company, was once worn by Edmund Ashton Evans c.1900 when he was a member of the fire department. Evans lived from 1871 to 1908 when he was killed by an errant bullet while in Florida. Donor DeBruin is descended from Edmund's son, Edmund Jr. ("Bud").





THE 73¢ POST

THE 73¢ POST is an exclusive for members who receive *The Bridge* via e-mail — your newsletter needs no postage, so you get an “extra”!



Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah and a fruitful New Year to members, friends and supporters of the Historical Society of Middletown! We hope your holidays allow a bit of time to reflect on and appreciate family and community history. See you in 2025!

Businessman, Mayor, Weaver

Marilyn Mayes Kaltenborn has produced a beautiful book about the life and craft of her father, weaver Murray Mayes. The book is available for \$20 plus \$5 shipping from the author, 30 Hickory Dr., Slingerlands, NY 12159. You can read the story of the Fleischmanns businessman and civic leader in the Spring, 2023 issue of the *Bridge* newsletter on our website, mtownhistory.org. A copy of the book can also be viewed at the HSM archives library.

THE WEAVING CAREER OF MURRAY R. MAYES

— my father —

