Town of Horicon Historical Society

horiconny.gov / horiconmuseum@yahoo.com | Box 51, Brant Lake, NY 12815 | 518-494-7286

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!

Thank you for your support to the Town of Horicon Historical Society. Our member generosity, 450 friends encompassing 19 states, helps us continue to preserve our extensive collection of artifacts.

Thank you also to the Community Fund for Gore Mountain Region for two grants totaling $2000. We purchased computer software for the digitization project. The goal of this process is to enable on-line viewing of our entire collection. Cabinets and archival materials have also been purchased.

The 1881 Union Church Renovation Project (Historical Society Museum Annex) in Adirondack continues. The Town of Horicon has received a formal award notification for a $100,000 New York State Grant. Construction of the foundation will commence as soon as the funds are released. Rucinski Hall Architecture is finalizing bid documents for all rehab work to be done above the foundation. Thank you to N.Y.S. Senator Betty Little, Warren County EDC President Edward Bartholomew, Town of Horicon Supervisor Matt Simpson and the Horicon Town Board for helping to secure the grant.

Mark your calendars for the 3rd Annual Adirondack Shindig Fundraiser on Saturday August 13rh.

We tried something new this winter! On January 30th, at the Horicon Town Hall, we hosted a Pot Luck dinner and comedy movie featuring Ma and Pa Kettle. The free event was a huge success with approximately 60 folks in attendance. We are in the process of creating a series of unique programs during this year.

If you want to know more about the Historical Society or play a more active role in it, please come to any Society meeting which is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:00pm at the Town Center. Everyone is welcome at these meetings. Your ideas, suggestions and input are what we need to keep our museum relevant to the community.

Do You Know? From our last newsletter

What year did the first Seaplane land on Brant Lake and where did it land?
Answer: August 17, 1921 at Palisades Hotel

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Town of Horicon Historical Society Newsletter is published for the dissemination to Members, Supporters and County Historical Societies.

We welcome comments, corrections, articles, pictures, reminiscences & letters to the editor.

Birds
John H. Smith
1923 - 1999

My father-in-law, John Smith, enjoyed life in the Adirondacks on his Pease Hill Road family home. We looked forward to Sunday Dinners at the homestead where after dessert John would read us his latest poems. One of my favorites is "Birds" written in the 1960's

Sylvia Smith

I have a secret love affair
With birds of every hue
One never fails to please me
As he comes within my view

The tiny little hummingbird
With speeds approaching jets
Derives its superb energy
From the nectar that it gets

The friendly little chic-adee
So cautious of a cat
With-stands winter's harshest storms
With built in thermostat

Some folks abhor the Blue Jay
Though he's beautiful to see
His egotistic attitude
Makes others 'round him flee

The Evening Grosbeaks pretty coat
Of yellow, white, and black
Makes one lonesome when he leaves
And pray he'll hurry back

The Robin struts with inward pride
Upon your curried lawn
He is always first and foremost
To arrive at dewy dawn

Woodpeckers aren't such beautiful birds
Though some folks disagree
If it weren't for noisy Woody
Grubs would soon destroy your tree

Orioles nest every year
In our stately, ghostlike birch
One can't describe their beauty
As they fly or proudly perch

Starlings should not be ignored
Though pesky they may seem
If Mr. Starling quit his job
Bugs would rule supreme

The Crow was blessed with intellect
That culprit in the corn
For every one a farmer shoots
A dozen more are born

Who among us wouldn't miss
That wily Whippoorwill
As he sends forth his love call
To a mate on yonder hill

The Hoot Owl fascinates me too
With eyes so round and bright
He destroys the pesky rodent
In his never ending plight

The graceful Hawk that soars high
Deserves the thanks of man
For killing mice and rats and snakes
As often as he can

That darling little Blue Bird
I sure hope he is here to stay
For he eats his weight in insects
Each and every day

All Swallows are a pretty lot
And oft in pleasant weather
You'll see them play their favorite game
Of drop and catch the feather

The Cedar Wax Wings glossy coat
Makes one desire to touch
But he was made to beautify
And that he does so much

Brown birds of many types
Abound in numbers great
Their songs begin in early dawn
And end in evening late

The Goldfinch with such dainty form
Adorns the autumn sky
Who without perverted mind
Could them their lives deny

The Nuthatch in his search for food
Is somewhat of a clown
He travels with agility
On trees while upside down

Cowbirds are a haughty lot
Whom I treat with respect
For in my garden do work
That I, myself neglect

That chubby, cheerful Junko
Is a sight for all to see
As he feeds on bread and suet
With his friend the chick-a-dee

Brant Lake wasn't always the beautiful body of water we enjoy now. The fishing, swimming and boating as well as its beautiful, serene areas where one can stop and get the feel of a simpler life of times long gone, are the result of hard work and determination of the owners and residents of the late 19th century. The lake then wasn't so pleasant. The lake was part of the local logging commerce of the Adirondacks. Trees were cut down and skidded to the shore of the lake then floated down the "lake" to the mill. The waterway was really not much more than a large stream. The shores of which were strewn with rocks, trees, stumps and other debris.

This was very hard work and was very dependent on the weather to keep the water high enough to float the logs. People living close to the water often were faced with low water levels that stopped them from using their boats. Low water levels created real problems for the area both economic and recreationally.

In the summer of 1899, the State declared the stream to be a public waterway for the transport of timber and lumber. The upper dam on Mill Pond and booms were to be constructed to create a waterway of at least 20 feet across.

The Dam Repairs

During the summer of 1907, local residents and property owners under the leadership of Mr. Abel Crook, assembled to deal with the problem of the lake level and the deplorable condition of the lake. This group met to consider the ways and means to maintain the lake at a proper level. The members of the committee were asked to each contribute funds or labor to get the dam project started. Most of the members gave $100.00, four gave $50, and two $25. Town residents were asked to provide labor.

The work on the upper dam began in the fall of 1907. Mr. Samuel Baker, supervisor of the Town, was asked to purchase the materials and to hire labor for the project. His first statement of cost sent to Mr. John Blanchard on October 21, 1907 included: Cement - 125 barrels @ $2.25 each - $281.25, Dynamite and fuses - $3.80, 5 men hauling cement from Chestertown - $62.50, Water pails, shovels, nails, tar paper and the sharpening of drills - $21.61, 5 days with team - $20, Wages paid, 15 men @ $1.50/day, 4 men @ $3.50/day - $337.75, additional expenses, finishing dam and stationary for Assoc. - $309.54.

When the dam was finished, Mr. Judson Smith was hired to care for the dam at a salary of $450 a year. His job was to maintain a satisfactory level of water in the lake and to provide a reasonable amount of water needed by the saw mill.

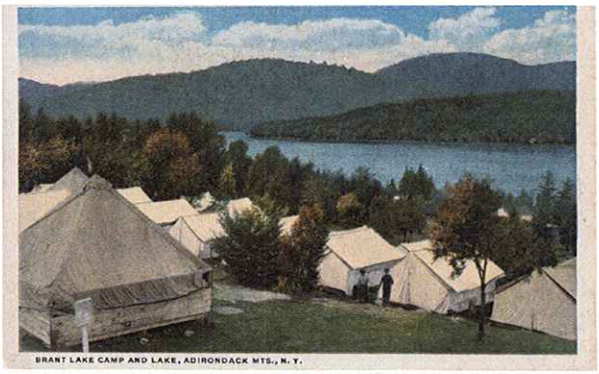
The construction of this dam for only $1036.45 was one heck of an investment that has had a return valuing in the multi-million dollar range. The tourism, fishing, boating, and other recreational opportunities all developed rapidly as did other commerce and real estate development.

This year that lowly little dam is scheduled for a refurbishment including an up-to-date water level control system. When the County replaces the bridge that was removed last fall making the dam more visible, it will again revert to a largely obscured existence. But it's there, largely unappreciated and forgotten. So thank Mr. Crook and the others who took it upon themselves to build something so crucial to our town and the residents who live and vacation here and give thanks to that sturdy little dam.

By: Paul Holmes *The Historical Society appreciates the contributions several people made to this article, especially to Mr. David King of the Brant Lake Association and to Adirondack Country Homes Realty, Inc.*

Brant Lake Camp Celebrates 100 Years

ENTRANCE TO BRANT LAKE CAMP, BRANT LAKE, ADIRONDACK MTS., N. Y.


BRANT LAKE CAMP AND LAKE, ADIRONDACK MTS., N. Y.

Brant Lake Camp was conceived and founded by three physical education teachers from New York City who had been counselors at Camp Paradox when they decided to break away and start a camp of their own.

Three young men, Bob Gerstenzang(Karen Gerstenzang Meltzer's father), Jack Malloy and Joseph "Unc" Eberly borrowed from their families and began looking for a location for their new camp during the fall of 1916. In the course of their early scouting, they met a gentleman by the name of Fred Parker, who rented horses and carriages in the town of Horicon. Fred helped the three men find a farm owned by Dave Barlett which was about 6 miles outside the hamlet of Brant Lake. Mr. Barlett agreed to sell them his land for $5,000 and then stayed on to work for the new camp until his death two years later.

By the summer of 1917, several tents had been erected on the property and Brant Lake Camp was up and running. That first summer it had enrolled 32 campers and then began to grow steadily until the Depression.

In 1933, Joe Eberly abruptly sold his one-third share to his partners and resigned. Around 1939, Jack Molloy sold his shares to Irv Schwartz who sold them to Bob Gerstenzang some 5 years later - thus consolidating the ownership. In 1949, Bob Gerstner, Uncle Bob's nephew who had become Head Counselor and Director, was made a partner in the camp. Also that year, Bob Gerstenzang, who also owned and operated Point O' Pines with the good help of his wife Pat, as a resort for the BLC parents, sold it to real estate mogul Sam Lipman as it became a distraction from running the boys camp.

In the late 1950's Bobby G became Executive Director of BLC and with Bob Gerstenzang's declining health, his daughter Karen took over as Director, with assistance from her husband Laurie. Karen continues today as a Director/Owner and is actively involved in areas such as the camp office, trips, transportation and administration.

Rich Gersten, Bobby's oldest son, took over as Executive Director in 1988 and is responsible for the day-to-day running of BLC. Rich had held various positions at camp since the early 1970's, was the Assistant Director under Bobby G, and has been a Director/Owner for many years. Bobby G. continues to be as active as ever advising in all areas and still staying very involved in the tennis program.

Continuing in this tradition, in 2013, Max Gersten(son of Richie and Mieks, grandson of Bobby Gersten, cousin of Karen Meltzer) became an Assistant Director and will become a future Owner/Director. We were thrilled by this news as it ensures a 4th generation of the Gerstenzang-Gersten family Ownership/Directorship which will ensure the one-family legacy well past our 100th year.

Over the years, enrollment has increased to about 350 boys, with as many as 130 Senior campers, and about 65 Dance and Sports Academy girls, BLC has seen a great many additions to its beautiful facilities including the following: a large soccer field, the Robert Gersten indoor basketball arena, numerous additions to the famous Bunk L(now the KOOL complex), a fitness center, many new basketball and tennis courts, expansion of the waterfront, including a new small crafts building, an extensive renovation of the Senior Clubhouse, all new Soph bunks, a remodeling/expansion to all the bunks in camp, a girls clubhouse, the construction of an artificial turf, multi-sports athletic field with lights - among others. More recently, we have completed a total renovation and expansion of our Health Center (the former infirmary) and a major remodeling and expansion of our dining room - both upstairs and down, which now includes rustic pine paneling, a covered outdoor eating area, new sound system and more.

Special Thank You To Karen Meltzer

The Ellsworth Adirondack Reading Room

Allen and Edna Ellsworth

Recently an Adirondack and U.S. History Book Collection was donated to North Warren Central School by Randy Ellsworth, PhD, in memory of his parents, Allen and Edna Ellsworth.

Allen (Rube), son of Harold and Martha (Barlow) Ellsworth, was a lifelong resident of Chestertown and his wife, Edna (Sis), born in the Town of Horicon, north Brant Lake, was the daughter of Austin and Josephine (Bolton) Smith.

His love and appreciation of the Adirondacks came from both of them. His interest in books and reading primarily reflect his mother's love of the same.

Randy graduated from Chestertown Central School in 1960 and the State University of Plattsburg in 1964. He taught junior high school mathematics in Wallkill, NY from 1964 to 1966. In 1970, he graduated from George Peabody College at Vanderbilt University with both MA and PhD degrees. From 1970 to 1974, he was a teacher and administrator in the Sarasota, FL. Public schools.

From 1974 through his retirement, Randy was a faculty member and administrator at Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas. While at WSU, he held faculty ranks of Assistant, Associate, and full Professor and Administration positions of Dept. Chair(8 years), Assoc. Dean(9 years) & Interim Dean(1 year). Randy is currently Professor Emeritus of Educational Psychology and a member of the WSU Honorary Academy for Effective Training.

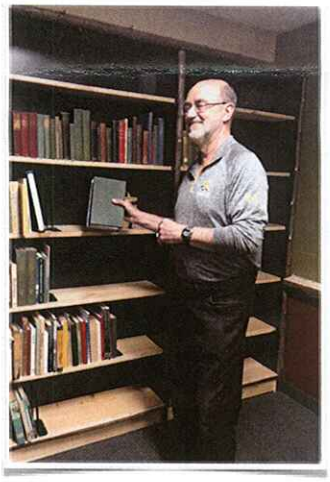
Randy is married to Cathy Razook Ellsworth and has three children; Scott Ellsworth (Lawrence, KA), and Chris Ellsworth and Sadie Salloum , both of Wichita, KA.

During all the years that he has been away, he remained in close contact with the Adirondacks. He and his brother, Don, have kept the house where they were raised on White Schoolhouse Road in Chestertown. The entire family visits each summer and typically stay at the homestead. At times they will stay with cousin Sylvia Smith in Brant Lake, especially in the off season or with cousin Nancy Tennyson in Chestertown.

The reason Randy wanted to donate his collection of Adirondack books was he felt they belonged back home in the Adirondacks where he grew up. He started collecting these books at a young age, perusing old book stores and antique shops. Some of the collection dates back to the 1800's. Randy has also donated his 250 U.S. History book collection to North Warren.

Thanks to this wonderful donation, our North Warren Central School Library has added the Ellsworth Adirondack Reading Room to house the books. Our school, the towns of Horicon and Chester, as well as the surrounding Adirondack Community, will benefit from Randy's generous donation in memory of his parents.

On March 12th an event was held to dedicate the new reading room. You can now sign out books for your reading pleasure. Enjoy the Adirondack and history book collection.



Randy Ellsworth in The Ellsworth Adirondack Reading Room

(Look out for Bigfoot!)

Educational Programs

Our educational outreach programs are expanding. Again this year, we co-sponsored with the Town of Chester an event in May that showcased our North Warren Central School's Model Organization of American States (MOAS). MOAS is a college level course offered to selected students in their Junior and/or Senior year. The students deal with and try to solve the problems affecting the countries in the Western Hemisphere. These problems range from Political, Economic, Social and Agricultural issues.

Noteworthy

The Horicon Historical Society supported the Horicon Central School Alumni celebration in August. Many photos and memorabilia came from our museum. One hundred sixty five alumni enjoyed sharing memories and stories from HCS days.

Front: Theresa Smith Hayes, Linda Smith Stemler, Betty Newton, Bob Smith, Sylvia Jones Smith, Sue Vail, Barb Jones Lafond, Vicki Gottshall Sutherland
Back: Chris Smith Hayes, Charlie Redmond, Roger Gibbs. Missing form photo: Tom Hill & Vicki Jones Monthony

Jim & Priscilla Barton Remington

Mike & Tom Hill

Bill Girard, Oldest member in attendance
Class of '41 - 93 years old

History Teacher Frank Dower,
wife Mary Jane Wilson Dower
& Barb Jones Lafond

Brother & Sister - Martin & Teresa Schreck

Science Teacher Joe McDowell