COMPLIMENTARY | OCTOBER 2020

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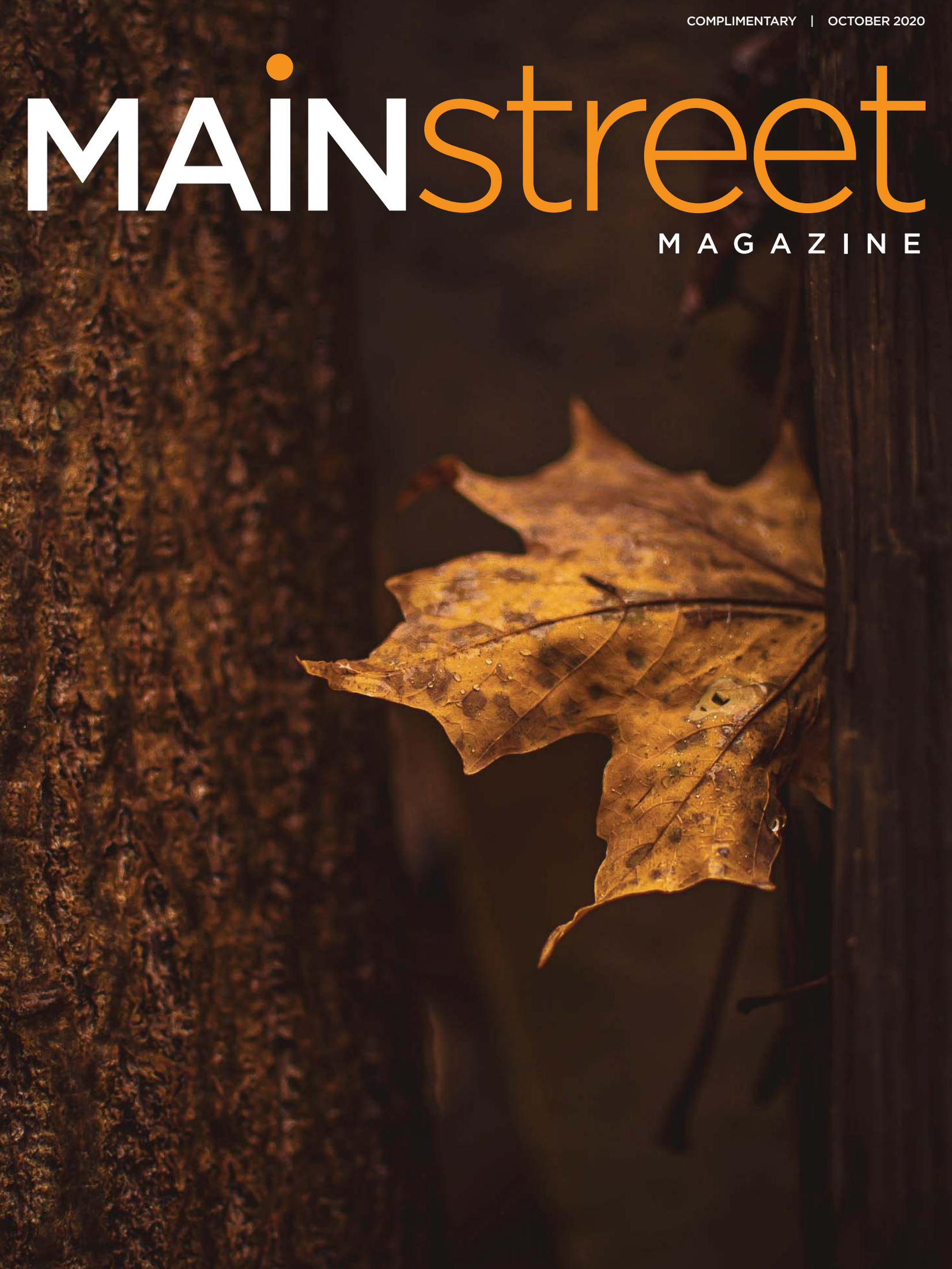


Before


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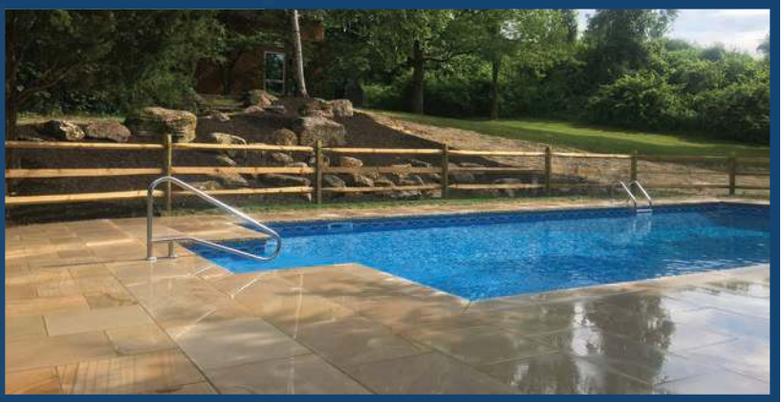

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LEARNING FROM THE PAST

At this point in this infamous year, I think that we're all quite ready for winter and a new year! So welcome fall… welcome winter even. For the last couple of months our country has been dealing with not just the pandemic; but social, racial, and political unrest across all 50 states that include peaceful protests and not-so-peaceful protests, riots, and widespread violence in certain areas; much of the West coast has literally been on fire; while much of the South has been hit by one hurricane or tropical storm after another, causing flooding and damage; and up here in our region, the cold weather came early. There are of course so many other factors that we've been dealing with this year that have been extremely stressful… and honestly I think we're getting a little burnt out from it all. I know that I certainly feel that way at times.

Perhaps then this issue is very fitting. This is our second annual "History Issue" where basically all of our stories tie into history in some fashion. So during a challenging time like we are all in right now, why not look back? Take a moment, slow our collective rolls, and examine how life was back in the day. What were the challenges that our ancestors faced? How did they overcome and persevere? Some of them faced the 1918 pandemic, but how did that affect our region? Lucky for you, we've got a story on that! Some of the protests and riots that are happening in our country right now are a reaction to racial and social injustice, which can be traced back in history to slavery. In this "History Issue" we examine the topic of slavery in our region in two articles. We also examine subjects relating to oral history, heritage, as well as knowledge and skill sets that have been passed down for generations.

There are many kids (and adults) who say that they don't care for history – they never liked the subject in school. But our collective and individualized history has shaped the people that we are, as well as the society that we live in. We are here today because of what happened yesterday. It behooves us to understand how and why things happened, for if we don't, we are destined to repeat the mistakes of our forefathers and mothers. Our local history is as rich and diverse as are our communities. And it is quite interesting to see the parallels of the ups-and-downs that our ancestors faced, that we often face in today's day and age. So let's take a lesson from them, and let's do better today and tomorrow for our children and their children.

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir

OCTOBER 2020

An autumn leaf has changed color, fallen off the tree, dried, yet it still remains as a reminder of the season's change.

Cover photo by Olivia Valentine

The History issue

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PUBLISHER, EDITOR, ADVERTISING, WRITING, PHOTOGRAPHY, & OTHER DUTIES
Thorunn Kristjansdottir publisher, editor-in-chief, and designer.
Ashley Kristjansson & **Griffin Cooper** directors of advertising.
Contributing writers: **Betsy Maury** | **CB Wismar** | **Christine Bates** | **Lindsey Clark** | **Dominique De Vito** | **Griffin Cooper** | **Ian Strever** | **Jessie Sheehan** | **John Torsiello** | **Joseph Montebello** | **Mary B. O'Neill** | **Regina Molaro**
Assistant proof-reader: **Pom Shillingford**. Photographers: **Lazlo Gyorsok** & **Olivia Valentine**.

ADVERTISING
Ashley Kristjansson & **Griffin Cooper** call 518 592 1135 or email info@mainstreetmag.com

CONTACT
Office 52 Main Street, Millerton, NY 12546 • **Mailing address** PO Box 165, Ancramdale, NY 12503
Phone 518 592 1135 • **Email** info@mainstreetmag.com • **Website** www.mainstreetmag.com

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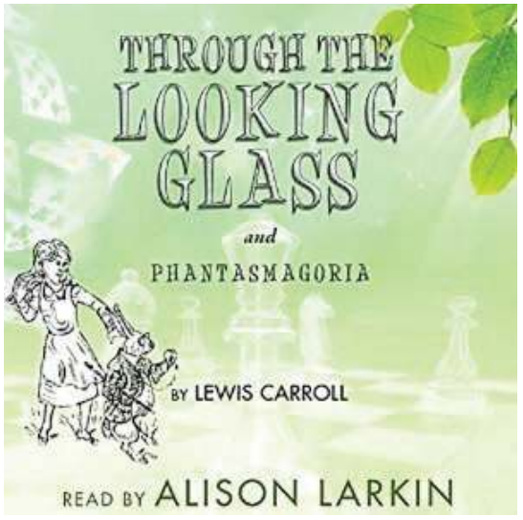
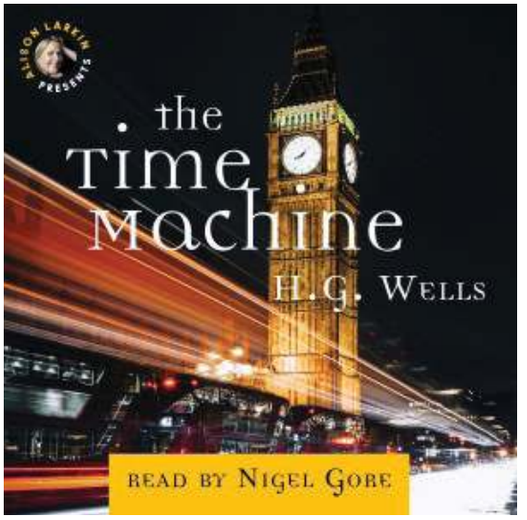




Marvelously light-footed

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

It was one of those moments beyond logic … or control. The title of Alison Larkin's wonderful, best-selling novel is *The English American*. At its very mention, in the recesses of the mind, where one's personal "Spotify" play list lies in wait, the mention of the title evoked the plaintive lyrics of Sting's *An Englishman in New York*. Without warning, the song appeared on the imaginary turntable of the memory.

"Modesty, propriety can lead to notoriety…

At night a candle's brighter than the sun."

And, now you have met Alison Larkin.

Her creative career has spanned continents and crossed oceans. Her stand-up comedy routine has enthralled audiences from the Comedy Store in Los Angeles to New York's Comic Strip to London's Soho Theatre. She is an actor, a playwright, a keynote speaker, a recording artist. She is, what critic Clive Davies pronounced in *The Times* "… marvelously light-footed."

The poignant, endearing humor of personal discovery

As fictionalized in her widely acclaimed novel, her comedic presence was inspired by the opportunity to meet her American birth mother who was living in Bald Mountain, TN. Born in Washington, DC, Alison had been adopted by British parents and grew up in England and Africa. But, Bald Mountain? There had to be some great lines in that encounter, and so there were. Alison, who had been classically trained in the theater and enjoyed success as both playwright and actor in England, moved to New York, added stand-up comedy to her portfolio, and charmed her audiences.

Her acting career has found her off-Broadway with The Royal Shakespeare Company and on Broadway with the Royal National Theatre. Alison was trained in the classical acting tradition at Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London where her career as a leading lady began.

It doesn't stop there, however. The swirling list of credits accumulated through Alison's career include feature films and creating the voices for television shows. She's attracted the attention of such directing giants as James Cameron, Robert Altman and the Coen Brothers. A woman with a delightful British lilt to her voice transformed into a Minnesotan for *Fargo*?

The response is too easy to pass up. "You betcha!"

The voice

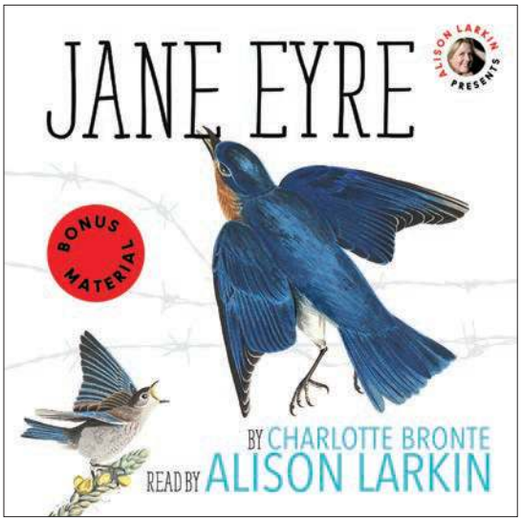
For as many audiences and critics who have marveled at Larkin's on stage presence, it is her seemingly boundless voice talent that has emerged as the key to her continued success. "I'm a great mimic," she professes – not with braggadocio but honest appraisal of a very, very unique talent. There are many professional actors who believe they have the right ear, the right tonal inflections, and the right speech patterns to be great mimics. Some come close. Many fail miserably. Alison Larkin nails it.

Her work has included voice overs for animated films and television including the PBS cartoon series *Pauline's Perilous Pyramid* and the Cartoon Network's *Mike, Lu and Og*.

Alison Larkin Presents

It has been, however, the world of audio books that has propelled Alison Larkin into a career much celebrated … a career that continues to radiate from the modest confines of her Berkshire Hills recording studio. She has become, to re-frame Sting's line, celebrated as "an Englishwoman in New England."

With her great love of British literature and the innate capacity to move between characters within a seamless narration, changing voices, interpreting lines, evoking humor and pathos, Alison has found her niche … she has gone "narrow and deep" into the creation of audio books.



Artist profile: Alison Larkin

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many behaviors, not the least of which is amplifying the ways in which people are entertained, learn, discover … and dream. "It may be that I'm just homesick for England," confides Larkin, "but reading the classics – Jane Austen, Lewis Carroll, Agatha Christie – brings wonderful literature into our lives and makes it relevant."

Her work has not gone unnoticed. With well over 150 audiobook titles to her credit, many of them *New York Times* Best Sellers, she is a voice to be reckoned with. And, from her compact studio in the Berkshires, she has been able to attract other celebrate actors to become part of the productions of her own "audio imprint," Alison Larkin Presents.

James Warwick, whose career spans the first stage production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in London's West End to starring on Broadway in *An Ideal Husband* to appearing in prime time network television shows is the voice in Alison's production of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He has contributed several readings for the collection as well as a deeply personal discussion that is included with the "…Dorian Gray" audiobook.

A brilliant actor, known to local audiences for his portrayals of a wide variety of Shakespearean roles, Nigel Gore is the featured voice on Alison's production of H. G. Wells prophetic novel *The Time Machine*. Most recently, another towering figure from Shakespeare & Company, Tina Packer, has offered her *Tales From Shakespeare* in an audiobook that retells the classic stories in a fresh, contemporary manner.

The bulk of her audiobook offerings, however, feature the talent of Alison, herself. Her presentations of the entire collection of Jane Austen classics – *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, etc. – is now available. 81 hours of lyrical reading of books that have been celebrated for 200 years.

A champion for literacy

It was Alison's keen interest in Jane Austen that led her to become engaged with the Jane Austen Literacy Foundation. The Foundation has worldwide reach, and in September hosted a writing competition with first prize including an audiobook reading of the winner's submission by none other than Alison Larkin. *The Winner* by Cathryn Goddard was crowned the best of over 220 submissions to the contest and will get the full Alison Larkin Presents treatment.

So complete is her dedication to the cause of literacy, that Jane Austen audiobooks purchased through Larkin's website trigger a donation to the Foundation.

A gathering of literacy giants

Larkin's repertoire does not stop with Austen. Lewis Carroll, Agatha Christie, J.M. Barrie, Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling. The list goes on, and so do the offerings from Alison Larkin.

The resurgence of an already active audiobook market has been spurred by the ease of accessibility to the great stories and the capacity to share them with friends and family. Larkin's website includes the exhaustive list of titles she has produced and offers links to the outlets that offer her collection to the public.

Sting's plaintive song ends with a recurring line. "Be yourself, no matter what they say." Alison Larkin has fully embraced the notion of being herself and, with understandable candor, has likely never had to wonder "what they say." Her speaking says it all and invites a worldwide audience to listen. •

Alisonlarkinpresents.com is the gateway to the array of projects and, most importantly, audiobooks that she has created and produced. In addition, audible.com presents the entire array of available titles.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work through the arts form on our "arts" page on our website.

Above: Alison Larkin. Above top, this page and opposite: Cover art for Larkin's audiobooks. All images courtesy of Alison Larkin Presents.

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friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends

Kelly Sweet, a community engagement officer at Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, says she has truly found the best job in the world. "It is a privilege to work with extremely dedicated, talented, wicked smart people, both staff and volunteers," says Kelly. "I love working with donors, funders and partners to help them make a positive impact, improving life here for everyone." Kelly also loves helping her husband on Seekonk Tree Farm, the family tree farm in Great Barrington, MA. "I grew up in the center of Hillsdale in the Mount Washington House," she says. "I love how my Hillsdale neighbors are very dedicated to the historic preservation of the gorgeous old buildings. Geography has greatly influenced our local history and affects all aspects of our lives as residents."

Karen Flynn has been a registered nurse at Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington, MA, for 44 years and is presently a nursing director for inpatient units and cardiopulmonary departments. "I moved to Copake Falls in the late 70s after getting married and have been a nurse for 44 years," says Karen. "I like advocating for people, helping them understand their medical conditions and how best to care for themselves and their families." Outside of work Karen enjoys theater and music. "My husband Bob came to the area and attended high school at Roe Jan. Bob's grandmother and her children first came to the area in the 1930s as a retreat with their church in the city. Bob considers himself a local and knows just about everyone in town. We are happy to announce that our first grandchild is expected this month!"

Now in his 26th as a teacher, **Peter Vermilyea** is the social studies department chair at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village, CT. "I love working with the students," he says. "They never fail to teach me something new and make me laugh." Peter affirms, "There's so much I love about this area. The natural beauty, the history and the feeling that you can be relatively remote but still not far from major metropolitan areas." Peter is naturally drawn to history because, as he puts it, "The past remains all around us." He recalls, "my publisher titled my first book the *Hidden History of Litchfield County*. In it, I argue that the region's history is not a big secret but rather accessible to anyone willing to explore the names and things we drive past every day."

After thirty years as a lawyer, UK-born Hillsdale resident **Toby Butterfield** was named to the list of "Best Lawyers" in the USA last year and again last month. He still possesses the same passion for helping folks, "I love helping people understand the true strengths of their legal position and the true sources of their legal problems," he says. For decades, Toby has loved to play rugby, and still does today. "I also love volunteering with others to make our communities better," he says. "In particular on Hillsdale's Hamlet Committee." Toby says he is fascinated by how much transportation governs our history and our economy. "First, it was the Erie Canal, but then it was railroads that allowed our farms to flourish in the 19th century, because they transported farmers' goods to market quickly. Bike or hike around Coleman Station just south of Millerton: its dairy farms flourished as a result of fast railroad connections."

"Reflecting is one of the things all of us – as leaders and parents – have been doing a lot of in 2020," says **Kelly Savino**, Sharon Hospital's human resources business partner. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic she thought to herself, "How can I possibly manage both my career and teaching my children with their remote learning?" With help from family, Kelly established a routine that afforded both her sons, Peter and Gregory, the support they needed for school work while she addressed evolving tasks as a member of the Connecticut hospital's Emergency Management team. While families transition children into a new era of learning, many fear the same hardships of this past spring: maintaining a balance between work and home. "I find solace in knowing I'm not alone," she said. "It is important now more than ever that we recognize, as a community, we can make it through the most challenging of times."

Jennifer Wakamatsu is a celebrated local photographer who specializes in senior photos and family portraits in our area. "I started JeniWaka Photography five years ago," she says. "I love showing my teen subjects how beautiful and worthy they are." Outside of work, Jen enjoys spending time playing, hiking, and laughing with her husband and two daughters. "I grew up in Ulster and Greene counties, then lived in Japan for about nine years before moving to this area in 2007," says Jen. "I've worked with over 50 students as part of the Mod Squad, a group of 5 to 12 graders who participate in fun photo shoots and volunteer work together. The program has become a source of support and companionship for the community. I couldn't be more proud!"

Prefabulous

Segalla's Turnkey Housing in North Canaan, Connecticut

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

The idea for this entrepreneur story began in 2011 with an article in the New York Times *about the modern, prefabricated house next to a cow barn designed by Pilar Proffitt and Robert Bristow in Lakeville, CT (see image on next page). I bought a ticket to attend a Halloween party there just to see the inside of the house. Then in July 2020 another story appeared in* Architectural Digest *about a very contemporary modular home in Twin Lakes. Both houses were actually constructed by the same company, Segalla TurnKey Housing out of North Canaan, CT. I had to learn more about modular houses and interviewed Bob Segalla who owns Segalla TurnKey Housing with his brother Chad.*

When did your father Bob Sr. start this business?

Our father owned and ran a lawn mower shop with our uncle for about 25 years and became intrigued by modular houses. He began a relationship with Westchester Modular Homes in 1979 and gradually grew into a full-time business by 1984.

What is your association with Westchester Modular?

This partnership began over 35 years ago. Westchester Modular Homes "manufactures" the houses and we do everything else. Westchester works with about 80 builders in the region, but Segalla is one of the top five that do about 75% of their volume. Their 110,000 square foot factory is located in Wingdale, NY, and they are the only modular home builders that supply Westchester County.

What part do you play?

We start by working with the owner and often their architect to design a custom home in any style, any size. We prepare the site, drill the well, put in the septic, put in the foundation, pull the permits, and supervise the installation of the home's components, which are built inside on a factory line and trucked to the site. Our subs do the plumbing, electrical, heating, painting, etc. We are really a general contractor that organizes everything except the factory portion of the house. We've built over a 1,000 houses in our area from Pittsfield south to New Milford, the Taconics east to Hartford. About 40% of our business is in Litchfield County, another 40% in the Berkshires, and the remainder in Dutchess and Columbia counties in New York.

What's the difference between a prefabricated home, a modular home, and a manufactured home?

Prefabricated is the general term for any structure built off-site in a factory. Modular is just one type. Manufactured home are also built in factories but are regulated by federal, not state and local, standards. They are completely different from a custom modular house.

Above: Robert and Chad Segalla, owners of Segalla TurnKey Housing. Photo courtesy of Robert Segalla. Below, left: A Lakeville estate with a guesthouse and pool on 15 acres built by Segalla is now for sale at $2,295,000. Photo courtesy of Pat Best of William Pitt Sotheby's International Real Estate.

What are the advantages of modular construction over conventional stick built?

Speed, quality, and expense! A modular home is built in a safety-conscious factory in a controlled temperature environment. Modular houses are inspected on the floor as construction progresses so the quality is consistent and meets state and local construction standards. You don't have delays because of weather and the house is being built while the site is being prepared. Your lumber doesn't get wet or stolen.

A modular house is built on a level plan and is weather tight. And then there is the advantage that a modular house has 30% more structural framing because it has to withstand transportation to the site, which adds strength to the house. Modular homes

Continued on next page ...

are also green because they eliminate the approximately 20% materials waste factor of conventional site built houses. Westchester Modular has only 2% waste and most of that is mulched and used by local farmers. A typical, custom modular house will typically be 15% to 20% less expensive and take less than half as long to complete as traditional construction.

How has modular construction evolved since your business began?
Structurally methods are pretty much the same. What has changed is the ability to customize the structure and design any style building. We can even build large open great rooms. Every job is custom built and clients work with us to design their own dream. My favorite project is a 15,000 square foot dormitory at The Gunnery School in English Tudor style. The only limitation is transportation. It's like putting a puzzle together.

Is there any place you can't put a modular house?
There are certain places with insufficient space. We need a clear area of 30 by 50 feet for a crane to operate. We may have turned away three or four projects over the years because of tight spaces.

Are you busy right now?
With what we're calling "The Great Migration," I'm happy to say that we are nearly booked until next summer. There's very little for sale and we are seeing a lot of teardowns to build new. Last year we were busy – but this year is our busiest yet.

Is it difficult to find a bank willing to finance modular construction?
Segalla has built a long relationship with Salisbury Bank that our clients benefit from. As construction progresses we receive disbursements from the bank and at the end it's all rolled into a mortgage for the new homeowner. It's very similar to construction financing on a stick-built project. Right now rates from Salisbury Bank are at 2.75%.

What happened to your business in 2008?
Actually that was the year that Chad and I bought the business from our father. We stayed busy throughout the whole downturn and were able to weather the storm. We were very fortunate.

How do you build to code in three different states?
You're right, the construction codes are different in each state and Connecticut is the strictest. We adhere to the specific code in each state, and sometimes communities have additional requirements. Westchester modular has code update meetings every week.

What is the all-in price range per square foot for a modular home? How long does it take?
For a standard home it would be $180 to $230 per square foot while an equivalent for a stick-built house would be $280 to $300. Once a project is completely defined it should be finished in less than six months. For example we do a lot of institutional work with private schools. If everything is accurately specified and the building is ready to go we can start in June and finish by September when the students arrive.

Above: This modular home in Lakeville designed by Pilar Proffitt and Robert Bristow is now listed for sale at $2,995,000 with 11 acres of land and a guesthouse. Photo courtesy of Elyse Harney Real Estate. Left: Bob Segalla's favorite project is this English Tudor dormitory at The Gunnery school. Photo courtesy of Segalla TurnKey Housing.

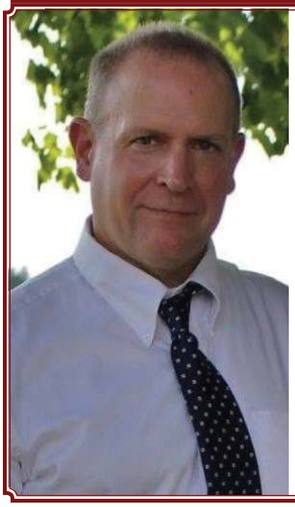
What were your backgrounds before joining the family business?
I've been here for 23 years and after college I worked as a chemist for a biotech company. My younger brother Chad joined 17 years ago – he was a marketing major and worked in Chicago. We both came home to the family business.

Why are there so many Segalla businesses? Are you all related?
I think there are about a dozen businesses owned by Segallas in the area. Our great grandfather came to the United States with four of his brothers in the 1920s from Calvene, a small village near Venice, Italy. They all settled in New York City and then moved north – attracted by the scenery that reminded them of home.

The world is such a small place. A few years ago I visited Calvene with my son and father. We were eating in a restaurant when the wife of the owner came out and hugged us. She knew my cousin Gionna Segalla from Berkshire School.

What do you enjoy most about your business?
Without a doubt it's the interaction with families when building their homes. It may be the only home they will ever build and we help them realize their dreams. •

To learn more about Segalla TurnKey Housing, you can visit them at 3 Cemetery Rd, Canaan, CT, call them at (860) 824-0019, or visit them online at www.segallas.com.



In loving memory of

David H. Valden

January 1, 1960 – September 17, 2020

It is with great sadness that the Copake community (and beyond) has lost one of its pillars. Dave, you will be missed by so many and Copake will forever be changed without you.

Main Street Magazine sends their deepest condolences to the Valden family. Thank you Dave for your years of support, kindness, and pizza.

BUTTERMILK CREAM

Biscuits

By Jessie Sheehan
info@mainstreetmag.com

Although biscuits usually make their biggest splash in November, I personally enjoy them all year round – warm weather or cool weather, breakfast or dinner. I am always on board with biscuits. I think it is even fair to say that I am biscuit obsessed, as I am always trying to up my biscuit game in an effort to make the tallest, fluffiest, tenderest and most butter-y-rich biscuits around. Over the years, I have perfected my recipe, calling for a few different ingredients or combination of ingredients that really elevate my biscuits and get ready because I am going to share all my secrets. Consider yourself warned.

Flour, leavening, and salt

First there is the choice of flour when biscuit-making. Most recipes call for all-purpose flour, but a bit of internet/cookbook research reveals that if you want a really tender biscuit (and, I mean, who doesn't want that?) then you must add a bit of cake flour as well. Though, of course, if you only have all-purpose lying around, you can use all all-purpose and I promise not to give you a hard time about that.

Next is the amount of leavening to use. I go "extra," as they say (or, maybe just I say…) when it comes to leavening and call for over a tablespoon of baking powder, as well as some baking soda. From experience, in a good way, I have learned that being a bit heavy-handed with the leavening results in the tallest of the tall biscuits – and that is my kind of biscuit (a tall one…). As for salt, I also go a bit heavy-handed in this department because I am a saltaholic and really do believe (and it happens to be true) that salt makes everything taste better (it is a flavor enhancer after all).

Fat, liquids, and assembly

Next there is the question of what fat to use when biscuit making: butter or cream. Butter makes for a more traditional biscuit, but cream makes for a wonderfully rich biscuit – with the added benefit avoiding the ordeal that is making sure your butter is cold, and then chopping it into little pieces, and then maybe putting it back in the fridge to get it cold again, etc. etc. But because I love both butter biscuits AND cream ones, I call for some of each in my recipe – and the flavor is 100% worth it, I promise.

And finally, in terms of the age-old question of what liquid to add to your biscuit dough (be it milk, cream, or buttermilk) I am definitely team buttermilk – just sayin'. Buttermilk adds a flavor and tenderness that cannot be beat and because I always have it in my fridge, it is a no brainer for me. However, if you do not have any on-hand and have no interest in running to the store and getting some, no worries. You can substitute whole milk or extra cream.

As for biscuit assembly, I like to use a food processer up until I add the liquid ingredients (the buttermilk and cream) and then I switch to a large mixing bowl and a wooden spoon (in other words, I go old school). I like to knead my biscuit dough only a bit and when I pat my dough into a rectangle, I make sure it is at least 1 1/2 inches high, as tall is my thing, as I have now mentioned too many times to count.

I like to place my cut biscuits in a pan with sides, so that each biscuit touches another (this helps them rise while baking) and I like to freeze them before sticking them in the oven, as this helps to prevent spreading (I'm against squat biscuits). Finally, I like to egg wash my biscuits so they have glossy, bronzed lids by the time they are done baking.

These are my tips, folks, and if you've made it here to the end, then you have learned a lot about biscuit making. Here's to hoping these cuties live up to all the hype.

Ingredients and instructions

2 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/3 cups cake flour
4 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup unsalted butter, chilled
1 cup buttermilk
6 tablespoons heavy cream

For the egg wash:
1 egg
pinch of kosher salt

Grease a 13-by-9-by-2-in pan with non-stick cooking spray or softened butter. Line the bottom with parchment paper.

Add the all-purpose flour, cake flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt to the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade. Cut the butter into small cubes, add to the bowl, and pulse until the mixture resembles coarse meal.

Transfer the mixture to a large bowl. Add the buttermilk and cream and, using a wooden spoon or your hands, combine the wet into the dry until a shaggy dough forms.

Lightly flour a work surface and knead the dough a few times until it is no longer crumbly and the dry and moist bits are fully integrated. If the dough is at all sticky, lightly flour your work surface again. Gently pat or roll the dough into a rectangle at least 1 1/2-inches thick to ensure a tall biscuit.

Using a 3-inch biscuit cutter dipped in flour, begin cutting out biscuits from the dough rectangle and place in the prepared pan so they are touching. You will not fill the whole pan. Collect the scraps and re-roll and cut as needed, although these ones made from scraps will not be as flaky and tender.

Freeze the biscuits, tightly wrapped in plastic wrap, for at least 2 hours or, preferably, overnight. The unbaked biscuits can be frozen for up to a week.

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

To make the egg wash, combine the egg and salt and brush the wash on the tops of the frozen biscuits. Bake for 5 minutes, decrease the heat to 400°F and bake for about 15-20 minutes more, rotating the pan halfway through baking.

The biscuits are ready when they are golden brown on top and lightly browned on the bottom. Let the biscuits sit a minute or two in the pan until they are easy to handle.

Biscuits are best eaten the day they are made, but can be stored, tightly wrapped in plastic wrap, on the counter for up to three days. To reheat, wrap them in aluminum foil and warm in a 350°F oven for 15 to 20 minutes. •

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheehanbakes.com.

Haunted houses WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW? WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

This is the month of Halloween and thinking of scary things – even in real estate. Maybe watching Lovecraft *on HBO made me wonder what real estate agents and sellers have to reveal about "unfortunate" circumstances that have occurred in a house. Is it haunted? Was there an ax murder? Did someone die from a lethal disease like Ebola or commit suicide? As it turns out the legal answer is surprising and slightly different in every state. Buyers should know to ask and find out for themselves. Sellers should be careful about what they say.*

Photo: istockphoto.com contributor chainatp

A 2018 university study discovered that 57.7 percent of the US population believes that places can be haunted by spirits. *Ghost Hunters* is now one of five paranormal shows on A&E and the Travel Channel offers *Ghost Nation*. But how does a ghost, murder, or death in a home affect real estate values? Research studies suggest that it can take 50% more time to sell a house where a grisly death has occurred at a 2.4% lower price than comparable homes. One California appraiser estimated that a well-publicized murder could reduce the price of a property by 15% to 25%. Famously the house where Sharon Tate was slain by the Manson family was torn down by its new owner in 1994, "We went to great pains to get rid of everything." In its place is a mansion with a different address. What does a seller and the property's listing real estate agent need to reveal about what is referred to as a "stigmatized" property?

Above: Look up at the third floor window to the left of the balcony where a female ghost was observed in broad daylight. Photo courtesy of Tom McGowan, Elyse Harney Real Estate.

Did you ask about the ghost?

Experienced real estate agents often have a feel for old houses and ghosts, which might be more reliable than bringing in ghost busters. One described a very recent experience with an unexplained emptying of a sink cabinet during a walk-through in a vacant house. Another noticed out of the corner of her eye a fleeting image of the deceased former owner. Thomas McGowan, an Elyse Harney Real Estate agent with 22 years of experience buying and selling old houses, related his own experience buying the Pettibone House in Norfolk, CT. Built in 1802, McGowan was instantly drawn to the three-family home. One of the renters tried to scare him off the purchase by telling him about the ghost on the third floor. When his mother-in-law from Iowa came to inspect the house she observed an old woman in the window on the third floor. "Supernatural was not part of her rule book," according to McGowan.

Later Tom and his wife Celia purchased an inn in Winsted, CT, with a moaning nurse, which drifted down the stairs and they delighted in giving haunted tours. Eventually the McGowans moved into the second floor of the Pettibone House. Every night they heard footsteps and a dragging sound above them. They remembered Celia's mother telling them the story about the woman at the window. Tom went to the third floor bedroom to have a sit-down with the spirit. The room seemed cold, but Tom calmly told the ghost, "I don't know who you are but you are welcome to stay here. Just please don't scare us." After a few nights the noises stopped. Some time after, the librarian asked if a story could be done about his haunted house for a local news article. "Who knows about this?" McGowan asked. "Oh everybody in Norfolk knows that the Pettibone House is haunted."

Don't brag about ghosts

Generally speaking, real estate laws in each state require sellers to disclose material facts about a house such as age of the roof, mold, square footage, number of bedrooms, taxes, etc. Most do not consider the seller's reasons for selling – paranormal occurrences, a notorious history, deaths, or suicides – material, but the disclosure specifics vary from state to state and are evolving.

Let's start with New York State. In 1995 the New York legislature amended the real estate laws to exempt brokers from any duty to disclose that the owners or occupant of a property had any transmissible disease, including AIDS, or that the property was the site of a felony like a murder or suicide or death by accident or natural causes. This means that in New York a buyer can't sue a seller or broker for not telling them about disease or murders, although ghosts are not specifically mentioned. BUT the buyer may make a written inquiry and the seller can decide whether to respond or not. A seller cannot lie but is not forced to disclose any information.

Interestingly 1995, when this legislation was passed, was the year of peak deaths from HIV/AIDS in New York. The law states, "AIDS has been determined by medical evidence to be highly unlikely to be transmitted through occupancy of a dwelling place." One wonders if there will be COVID legislation.

Continued on next page ...

Above: Bennett College in Millbrook in 2010 certainly looked haunted. Below, left: Why are basements so scary? Photos by Christine Bates.

A famous New York court case does touch on the supernatural – the *Ghostbusters* ruling of 1991. The New York Supreme Court Appellate Division ruled to rescind the sale of a house because the owner had reported the existence of ghosts in a *Reader's Digest* article and talked to the local press about poltergeists. No one had revealed the haunting to the ignorant buyer from New York City who was unaware of the home's reputation when he signed the contract and put down a deposit. Subsequent to the case, the Victorian with a view of the Hudson river was sold to a filmmaker, a singer-songwriter, and a musician, none of whom reported seeing any ghosts.

"Stigmatized" properties in Massachusetts and Connecticut

Massachusetts is filled with haunted houses and its real estate disclosure law Chapter 93A, Section 108 goes into detail about "stigmatized" properties. Unlike New York, Massachusetts's law specifically refers to alleged parapsychological or supernatural phenomenon. Unless the purchaser specifically asks, "the fact or suspicion that real property may be or is psychologically impacted shall not be deemed to be a material fact required to be disclosed in a real estate transaction." There is no duty for the broker to either investigate or disclose murders, suicides, ghosts, or other potential stigmas. If the consumer does ask however, the real estate representative must answer the question truthfully.

Separately in 1998, legislation passed to ensure that the privacy rights of persons with HIV and the families of victims of suicide and violent crime are respected. In simplest terms, the law states that questions regarding the HIV status of any former or current occupant of a residential dwelling should not be answered by the real estate licensee, even if the answer is that the individual in question does not have AIDS or the HIV virus. The National Association of Realtors recommends that real estate agents give the following response. "It is the policy of our firm not to answer inquiries of this nature one way or the other since the firm feels that this information is not material to the transaction. In addition, any type of response by me or other agents of our firm may be a violation of the federal fair housing laws. If you believe that this information is relevant to your decision to buy the property, you must pursue this investigation on your own."

The current law in Connecticut is pretty straightforward. No disclosure is required of any non-material fact and neither owner nor agent can be sued for failure to disclose. BUT if a bona fide buyer asks the owner/agent in writing whether the property has been the site of a homicide, felony, or suicide the owner must either respond truthfully consistent with applicable laws of privacy or refuse to reply in writing. The buyer may draw their own conclusion.

Frightening neighbors and notoriety

Unlike California, which has expansive real estate disclosure rules extending to the whole neighborhood, in our Tri-state region it is the sole responsibility of the buyer to investigate the presence of dangerous neighbors, sex offenders/felons living or working in the vicinity of the residence or the history of the house. Prospective homebuyers should, at their own discretion, check with the local police department, consult the online sex offenders list, and generally Google the address and talk to the neighbors.

Real estate professionals are specifically prevented from looking into any of this as it is deemed a "transient" issue, but nothing prevents a potential buyer from knocking on doors and introducing themselves. Googling the address is also a good idea. Has the house ever been the location for a TV show? Do fans show up on the lawn? Is it famous for any other reason? One former tenant of the Hitchcock house in Millbrook, NY, said that the odd people who showed up looking for Timothy Leary of LSD fame were much scarier than the ghost of the little girl who appeared in the mirror at the bottom of the stairs. TV show *Breaking Bad* fans still track down the location of Walter White's house in Albuquerque and imitate the episode where White throws a whole pizza on the garage roof. In 2017 the owner was forced to put up a fence.

What to do about ghosts?

With quarantine and so many people working from home, reports of ghosts have reportedly quadrupled. In these stressful times some homeowners and tenants cleanse their house with sage and herbs to celebrate their new space, or clear any negative energy. Check the internet for sage cleansing kits or ask friends to refer you to a spiritual healer. Or perhaps, like Tom McGowan, you could just have a chat with the ghost. If you are thinking of selling it might be best to be silent about the ghosts. •

Christine Bates is a registered real estate agent in New York and Connecticut with William Pitt Sotheby's and has written monthly for Main Street Magazine since it's first issue. She has never seen a ghost but has been asked about them.

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A legacy of liberty: *The story of a slave's fight for freedom in the Berkshires*

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

An epitaph written by a man named Charles Sedgwick in 1829 for a family friend reads: "She neither wasted time, nor property. She never violated a trust, nor failed to perform a duty. In every situation of domestic trial, she was the most efficient helper, and the tenderest friend." This humble, if not innocuous sentiment only vaguely belies the woman who carried the distinctions throughout her life.

Those distinctions would also help that woman, known as Elizabeth Freeman, fight for the most basic of human rights that few others would have during that period in American history. Freeman, who would be known throughout most of her life as "Mum Bett" was born somewhere around the year 1744 in the town of Claverack in Columbia County, NY, as a slave. According to historians, Freeman grew up on the property of Pieter Hogeboom with a young woman named Lizzie, who historians have speculated might have been her younger sister. Hogeboom's daughter would go on to marry Colonel John Ashley, a wealthy citizen and leader of local militias during the French and Indian War. Freeman would come to their house in Sheffield, MA, much later, though it remains unclear when, how, and why.

The Ashley House

It is this house, today known as the Ashley House, that has become inextricably linked to the life and eventual liberty of Elizabeth Freeman. Colonel Ashley built the house in 1735, and spent most of his life accumulating wealth and land while becoming an influential voice within the commonwealth. Ashley would eventually go on to own more than 3,000 acres, including the property adjacent to the Ashley House called Bartholomew's Cobble, a nature preserve that today, as well as the Ashley House itself, is owned by The Trustees of Reservations, a non-profit organization based in Boston, MA.

Today, The Trustees care for and maintain more than 100 historic places and roughly 27,000 acres throughout the state of Massachusetts. The organization touts its mission as working toward "protecting places of ecological, scenic, and historic importance." The Trustees search the state for those places that remain most potentially endangered including scenic landscapes and cultural properties. The organization then allocates land stewardship resources and expertise to maintain the historic and aesthetic integrity of local places for future generations.

After having previously been a storage building for decades, descendants of Colonel Ashley bought the house in 1924. Soon after, The Trustees acquired the neighboring Bartholomew's Cobble in 1936 and, with help from the Colonel Ashley Association, the Ashley House became a historic house museum in 1960 and finally on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, the same year that The Trustees acquired the house.

Ashley himself was a fervent supporter of the American Revolution and used his influence to form a committee that espoused the ideas of the Revolution eventually writing a petition against British tyranny and a manifesto for individual rights in 1773. *The Sheffield Declaration*, also known as the *Sheffield Resolves*, was itself drafted in the upstairs study of the house. Though Ashley may have been among the first to spread the ideals of political liberty in the Berkshires, the painful hypocrisy remained in the fact that Ashley's own local influence, as well as his financial success, was built in part on the backs of five African Americans who were forced to labor at his home.

Above: Portrait of Elizabeth Freeman. Image courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society.

From Bett to freedom

"Even as late as the 20th century, the stories of locally enslaved peoples were still not being told as often as they should have been," says Mark Wilson, Curator of Collections for The Trustees of Reservations. Indeed, Freeman was one of five enslaved people in the Ashley House and despite being a footnote in the annals of American history, the inspiring story of her pursuit of liberty thankfully endures today. Though she could not read or write, Freeman was clever and known for retaining her own agency even as a slave living in the Ashley House.

Historians have said that evidence exists showing Mrs. Ashley – John's wife – was cruel to her slaves. Reportedly, one afternoon, she attempted to strike Lizzie with a heated kitchen shovel. Freeman bravely attempted to protect her by blocking Mrs. Ashley's strike but received a serious wound on her arm that never healed. Freeman would leave her wound visible for the rest of her life as testament to

Continued on next page ...

Above: The Ashley House exterior as seen from Cooper Hill Road in Sheffield, MA. Photo courtesy of The Trustees.

her mistreatment and the horrible existence enslaved peoples endured.

The path to freedom

It was Freeman's staunch courage, and an ironic twist of fate, that would lead her down the path to freedom. The Ashley House and the Colonel's own revolutionary rhetoric would set the stage for Freeman to use those ideals founded in the *Sheffield Declaration* to pursue personal liberty. Evidence suggests that, as Ashley moderated the local committee that wrote the *Sheffield Declaration* in the upstairs study, Freeman overheard these ideas as she went about her daily tasks. In particular, a phrase she heard repeatedly that would cement her resolve for freedom and espouse the plight of her fellow enslaved people:

RESOLVED: That mankind in a state of nature are equal, free and independent of each other and have a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of their lives, their liberty and property.

After mustering the courage to pursue her mission of freedom, Freeman sought the help of a locally prominent attorney named Theodore Sedgwick, a man who had helped Colonel Ashley draft the *Sheffield Declaration*. In May of 1781, Sedgwick and his legal team filed a document called a "writ of replevin" with the Berkshire Court of Common Pleas. In order to test the Nation's young constitution on the legality of slavery, it ordered Colonel Ashley to release Freeman as well as another slave in the Ashley household, a man named Brom. The Berkshire Court ruled that Freeman and Brom were not Colonel Ashley's legitimate property. However, he refused to release them from his possession.

By August 1781, the case went to the County Court of Common Pleas of Great Barrington in the case that has come to be known as *Brom and Bett v. Ashley*. During the trial, Sedgwick argued that the Massachusetts Constitution outlawed slavery. The jury agreed with Sedgwick and decided that Freeman and Brom were not Colonel Ashley's property. Both were set free and awarded 30 shillings as well as the costs of the trial. Colonel Ashley filed an appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court but dropped his case a few months later affirming Freeman's legacy as having helped bring about the of end slavery in Massachusetts.

A national hero

By winning her freedom from Colonel Ashley, Freeman became the first enslaved person in Massachusetts to win a freedom suit. After winning her freedom, Bett became Elizabeth Freeman, her first decision as an independent citizen and referendum on civil liberty.

According to historians, Colonel Ashley asked her several times to return to his home as a paid servant, but she declined. Instead, Freeman chose to take a position in Sedgwick's household as a caretaker. Freeman also worked as a prominent healer, midwife, nurse, and beloved member of the community of Stockbridge, MA. "I believe she is a national hero," says Wilson. "She didn't run away, she didn't escape, she instead became a driving force behind people using the law to seek freedom."

Freeman lived out the rest of her days not only as free as any person has the inherent right to be, she also became an extended member of the Sedgwick family. Catharine, the youngest daughter of Judge Theodore Sedgwick, was said to be very close to Freeman, who helped raise the child as her nurse. As a result, upon her death on December 28, 1829 she was buried in the Sedgwick family plot in Stockbridge, MA. She is the only non-Sedgwick to be buried in the family's inner circle, or as it is known, the "Sedgwick Pie," of the family plot. Thus the epitaph, written by Theodore's son Charles Sedgwick, for the life of a woman who defeated injustice through the use of the very constitution drafted to protect freedom without exception, may now be read in full context as we all should in the history of inequality, as follows:

ELIZABETH FREEMAN, known by the name of MUMBET died Dec. 28 1829. Her supposed age was 85 years. She was born a slave and remained a slave for nearly thirty years. She could neither read nor write, yet in her own sphere she had no superior nor equal. She neither wasted time, nor property. She never violated a trust, nor failed to perform a duty. In every situation of domestic trial, she was the most efficient helper, and the tenderest friend. Good mother fare well. •

Visit the www.thetrustees.org for more information on news and initiatives as well as to support their important mission of preservation in our area.

Special thanks to the Massachusetts Historical Society for research material. Visit masshist.org for more information.

Litchfield County and The Great Influenza of 1918

By Peter C. Vermilyea
info@mainstreetmag.com

Residents of Litchfield County opened their newspapers in the early fall of 1918 to find stories about a French army band playing concerts across the region to celebrate the alliance of the two nations in the Great War, and about efforts in North Canaan to construct a wall of honor to commemorate those serving in the war, and lists of the newest draftees.

They did not read about a silent killer spreading across the state. Wartime censors would not risk lowering morale with reports of influenza.

Still, many readers of the September 26, 1918 edition of the *Connecticut Western News* were saddened to learn of the passing of Private Arthur Caldwell of North Canaan at Camp Devens, fifty miles west of Boston. Corporal Howard B. Egleston of Falls Village died soon after, also at Devens. On Friday, September 27, Private William J. O'Donnell of Cornwall died at the camp, only three weeks after enlisting. The newspaper ascribed the cause of these deaths to pneumonia.

The Great Influenza

Pneumonia, however, is commonly caused by influenza, and Caldwell, Egleston, and O'Donnell were among the first residents of the northwest corner to die from the Great Influenza of 1918. Common symptoms included the rapid onset of chills, fever, and body aches. A gray tinge to the body was a sign the case was getting worse; a purple color in the lips or face meant a lack of oxygen and imminent death. It was not uncommon to cough up blood, nor to have a fever of 104. This pandemic has been much in the news since the onset of coronavirus (or COVID-19) in the United States in 2020, and an examination of the 1918 influenza provides both interesting parallels and significant differences from our own experiences in the past few months.

The pandemic likely began in Kansas in March 1918 and was carried overseas by American soldiers. Connecticut's first cases of influenza were reported around September 1 at the naval base in New London, likely brought from sailors returning from abroad. By September 10 there were over 100 cases, and the disease had crossed over to the civilian population. At the same time, Connecticut soldiers returning home from Camp Devens on leave brought the disease with them to cities such as Wallingford, Willimantic, Hartford, Rockville, and Danbury. Epidemiologists have traced the peak of infections of the 1918 influenza across the state from east to west over successive weeks of October 1918. Despite blips in December 1918 and February 1919, the virus was essentially gone by the end of November.

"How to Avoid Influenza"

A week after reporting on the death of Caldwell, the *Connecticut Western News* announced the arrival of influenza in the area, not with a story detailing the disease and its spread, but with a sidebar outlining "How to Avoid Influenza" and "How Not to Give Influenza." Among these were pieces of advice that would be familiar to Americans in 2020: "Don't allow anyone to breathe, cough or sneeze in your face." "Keep away from public gatherings." "Upon the first indications of cold or fever retire immediately to your home and send for the doctor." Others, such as "Avoid overwork and excesses," seem antiquated. *The Bridgeport Telegram* warned its readers about dangerous behaviors in rhyme: "You mustn't cough, you mustn't sneeze/You must keep out of draft or breeze/You mustn't laugh, you mustn't cry/And you must guard both mouth and eye."

Influenza was nothing new, which also helps explains the relative silence of the newspapers as the number of cases grew. Certainly, many Connecticut residents in 1918 remembered the very bad 1892 outbreak. What made 1918 different, however, was that it was a far deadlier strain of the disease, with a mortality rate of more than twice that of 1892. To that point, a typical flu season in Connecticut saw a death rate of 11 per 1,000. At the peak of the Great Influenza, the Nutmeg State experienced a death rate of 79 per 1,000.

The severity of the flu eventually got people's attention. By October 10, news regarding influenza shared top billing with reports from the battlefront. The *Connecticut Western News* reported 150 cases in North Canaan. Ten members from a single family in Norfolk were ill. Twelve guests at the Falls Village hotel were sick. Telephone and railroad service to many towns in the area ceased as operators and railroad men fell ill. Businesses shut down across Litchfield County and most towns closed their schools for several weeks. Residents were cautioned to stay in their homes whenever they could. If they had to venture out, they were urged to wear cotton masks and to avoid crowds. The next week the newspaper started reporting

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Above, top to bottom: Makeshift influenza wards like this in New Haven appeared across Litchfield County in October 1918. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress. Harriet Richards, shown here in an 1889 photograph, ran the influenza isolation unit housed at the Litchfield Country Club. Image courtesy of Collection of the Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, CT.

Above: A parade of Red Cross volunteers in Litchfield, 1916. Two years later the Red Cross would serve as first responders during the influenza crisis. Image courtesy of the collection of the Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, CT. Below, left: A United States Department of the Treasury poster from 1918 warning about influenza. Americans would later be encouraged to wear masks. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

on individual cases. Several pages were filled with lists of those suffering from the flu, those who had recovered, or those who had succumbed. Five residents of Falls Village and another five from North Canaan died that week alone.

Number of cases – and deaths

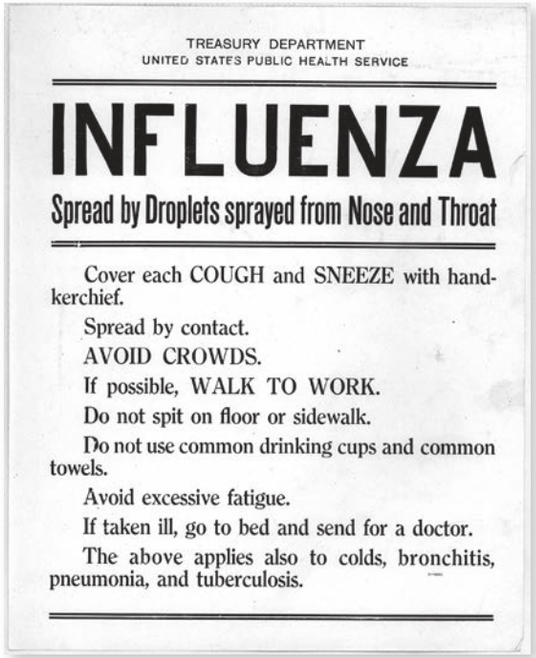
It quickly became clear that those in more densely populated areas were especially susceptible to the disease. This was confirmed by Charles-Edward Amory Winslow and J.F. Rogers, professors at the Yale Medical School, who found that death rates in large towns were as much as four times higher than in farming communities. In Litchfield County, Winslow and Rogers found that the death rate in towns like Winsted and Torrington was 25.4 per 1,000 while in towns like Harwinton, Kent, and Woodbury the death rate due to influenza or pneumonia was 6.4 per 1,000.

Close working conditions in factories helped spread the disease. This is underscored by the fact that men – far more likely in 1918 to work outside the home than women – accounted for nearly 60% of all flu deaths. Similarly, there were significantly fewer cases – and deaths – in towns without railroad service as the movement of people from town to town also moved the disease. For example, Bethlehem, Goshen, Sharon, and Warren – all towns without a railroad – had a combined population of 6,000 but saw only eight deaths.

Connecticut had a very high number of cases and deaths compared to other states, and obtaining the medical care needed for patients was made worse by the concentration of the disease in certain geographic areas, like large cities. If influenza reached a town, that locale would likely quickly exhaust what resources it had to care for patients. Local chapters of the American Red Cross heeded calls put out by their national organization to rapidly train women to serve as nurses, to dispense medications and supplies liberally from its stockpiles, and to dispatch armies of volunteers to homes where the mothers or housekeepers were sick, to, as the *Connecticut Western News* put it, "assume the management of the household."

The American Red Cross, nurses and Harriet Richards

In Litchfield, the effort to care for patients was led by Harriet M. Richards, who in 1910 had founded the District Nursing Association, an organization that by 1914 was an affiliate of the Red Cross. Richards worked quickly to secure permission to use the Litchfield Country Club, then just over one year old, as a hospital. She brought in beds, rounded up nurses, and brought in patients from across town not only to care for them but to isolate them. Miriam Hubbard led a group of women who worked daily to provide food to the impromptu hospital. Still, in 1918 there was no testing to identify cases, no antiviral medications to treat the flu, no antibiotics to treat associated infections, and certainly no vaccines. The most effective public health measure was to quarantine those who were ill. Individuals who became sick were given fluids; any other treatments that may have been prescribed were ineffective.



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Spread by contact.
AVOID CROWDS.
If possible, WALK TO WORK.
Do not spit on floor or sidewalk.
Do not use common drinking cups and common towels.
Avoid excessive fatigue.
If taken ill, go to bed and send for a doctor.
The above applies also to colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.

The devastation left by the Great Influenza of 1918

The Great Influenza left Connecticut about as quickly and quietly as it came. By the first week of November, there were no stories about the flu in the *Connecticut Western News* except the listing of those who had recovered in the "News from Nearby Towns" section. Schools reopened in most towns around November 1. The end of the war on November 11 occupied the attention of the editors and their readers. Still, it left devastation in its wake. At a national level, more Americans died of the flu in 1918 than in any of the nation's wars except the Civil War. Approximately 8,000 residents of Connecticut died, 1,700 on October 19 alone. Waterbury was the state's hardest-hit city, with 654 deaths in October. In Litchfield County, Torrington recorded 126 deaths, Winchester 53, and Plymouth 43. Across the state, public funerals were banned in an effort to stop the spread of the virus. Mitigation efforts such as this had only limited success; by the end of November, approximately 25% of Connecticut residents had contracted influenza.

Reflecting on these events of just over one hundred years ago while living through another pandemic naturally calls for comparisons. Both outbreaks were marked by rapid spread, with public health officials calling for quarantines, bans on large gatherings, and mandated mask wearing. The differences, however, may be more dramatic. Medical providers could do little to treat those who contracted influenza in 1918; in 2020 several therapeutic drugs and more effective methods of treatment were identified in a relatively short period of time. COVID-19 has hit older Americans especially hard, while the 1918 flu killed more young adults, likely a result of its spread among soldiers. We certainly don't know when the COVID-19 crisis will abate; what we do know is that it has already lasted far longer than the worst of the 1918 Influenza crisis.

While both viruses deeply impacted the state's daily life, economy, and public health, 1918 saw a much greater rate of death. In April and May 2020, 3,944 residents of Connecticut died due to COVID-19 or complications from the disease, a tragic rate of 65 per day. However, if the numbers from 1918 are adjusted to take into account that Connecticut's population in 2020 is 2.5 times larger than it had been a hundred years earlier, the Great Influenza would have been responsible for 331 deaths per day.

History provides us with a clear reminder to continue to follow the CDC guidelines for curbing the spread of COVID-19. •

Peter C. Vermilyea teaches history at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village, CT.

Hard history in northwest connecticut and the berkshires

By Rhonan Mokriski
info@mainstreetmag.com

Years ago, a colleague inspired me to look at Salisbury's local history to see if the Underground Railroad was active in our area. I immediately grew excited – between Route 7 and the Housatonic River, there just had to be a terminal here on fugitives' journeys to Canada and freedom. Last year, I began to design a course that would empower students to investigate this thesis. As I began my research, I quickly realized that the Underground Railroad was simply a chapter – one of white heroism that white folks like me loved to learn – in much more important story writ large: the history of slavery in America.

As the confluence of Covid-19's disproportionate impact on the African American community and the murder of George Floyd have most recently magnified, the history of race in America is much bigger than a celebration of the Underground Railroad, but what exactly is it? In our nation's current inflection point, I reflected on another moment of national torment and strife and the words of President Lincoln that reaffirmed the promises of our Declaration of Independence during his speech at Gettysburg; it still falls to each generation to relitigate the ideals of equality and freedom promised to us in our seminal document.

Hard history

Our country is currently locked in a tumultuous reckoning to define what it means to be an American in 2020. That dialogue is futile, however, unless we know who we are and how we got here. Everything we are saying about the past affects how we are acting in the present moment. Our current national turbulence, with all its anguish and rage, demonstrates the difficulty inherent with coming to grips with our history. History teachers need to have students confront the cumulative dark legacies of slavery and racism in history in order to have them understand how this systemic racism shapes society today.

Reflecting on what it means to be American in 2020 is uncomfortable. It is hard. As educators we need to help students sustain dialogues involving race and slavery. While it is difficult, it is also necessary to truly understand our history, and it starts in our own backyard.

For example, American historiography has typically viewed slavery as something that existed exclusively in "The South" and something that only benefited a handful of unscrupulous southern planters and their minions. Texts give an overview of the "Triangle Trade" with maps and info graphs, however, much of the history of slavery in America still remains untold. In fact, before the Civil War, slavery was practiced in every Northern state. It was entirely common for northern clergymen, merchants, and other people of wealth to enslave people. Sometimes, they enslaved entire families.

The only difference between this bondage and the more familiar one on expansive Southern plantations was scale. The goal was the same: to increase wealth and status by exploiting the labor of people held in bondage. The entire enterprise was designed to benefit the economy of America and was not confined to one region. Indeed, the enslaved of the sugar producing Caribbean were also enlisted in this endeavor.

New course

Using a project-based learning approach, my students at Salisbury School will look to change the paradigm of the way we understand the history of slavery, America, and our local community. Slavery did not only occur in faraway places and happen somewhere else; it was local, common, and not sufficiently recognized by us today.

Above: The grave of Jupiter and James Mars, enslaved in Canaan, CT. James was eventually manumitted and wrote his autobiography, *James Mars: A slave bought and sold in Connecticut.*

One only needs to consider how New England grew so wealthy so quickly. While most Salisbury residents know that our colonial and early American economy was rooted in the iron industry, we do not always consider the buyers of this resource. For example, preliminary investigation into the Beckley Furnace sale logs indicate that one of their biggest customers was the Alabama railroad. Is it inconceivable that some of the iron was used for anchors and shackles on Middle Passage ships departing from New London or Newport? Students in my course will endeavor to find out.

In addition to exploring the economic impact, we will look at primary documents and other local resources to learn about the enslaved individuals who lived in the Northwest corner of Connecticut and the Berkshires in order to make these people real. This way we can connect with their emotional histories. Ultimately, our goal will be to install a Witness Stone – a physical marker – at a location where that individual lived, worked, or prayed in order to help restore their history as well as to honor their humanity and contributions as enslaved persons who helped build our community.

We are amid a powerful historical awakening. As an educator, I find this prospect both terrifying and exciting. If teachers can empower our students to take a new lens to our history and to expand their historical irises, we can seize the opportunity to have frank discussions about what it truly means to be American in 2020, to make just choices, and to live up to the promises laid out by our founding fathers. •

Rhonan Mokriski is a history teacher at Salisbury School in Salisbury, CT.

The images on this page depict Bruce Valentine of Valentine Monument Works honing his craft as well as showing his finished pieces that can be seen throughout our region. All images are courtesy of Valentine Monument Works.

A Monumental Family Legacy:

The generational work of Dutchess County's oldest family business

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

Like the legendary painters of the Hudson River School, or the long and storied line of woodworkers in the villages of the Berkshire foothills, the pantheon of craftsmen in the Northwest Corner of our Tri-state is as sublime as the landscape itself. Carved into the deep roots of local family trees is the history of trades that underline the generational bond between skilled labor and quiet artistry. Such is the case within the hearts of the small hamlets that den themselves within our valley and have, for centuries, kept the spirit of our colonial ancestors alive through their work. In the village of Millerton, NY, the visage of a man huddled serenely over a slab of granite, gingerly stenciling names, dates, patterns and symbols in a lingering cloud of dust while soft jazzy tunes roll out of an old radio evokes the essence of the American craftsman.

A history of memorial

Bruce Valentine, proprietor of Valentine Monument Works, is a fourth-generation artisan specializing in the creation and design of cemetery monuments and headstones. While the occupation itself might seem macabre, Valentine's meticulous dedication to the faithful preservation of lost loved ones is as celebrated as the Valentine name itself within the small village of Millerton.

"This kind of work, it's what I've grown up with," Bruce affirms as he stands in his workshop eyeing his current project as would a watchmaker at the turn of the century. "This is something I've known for my entire life."

It is more than simply hours that go into Valentine's work, it is generations of artisan creation. Valentine Monument Works was founded just a decade after the American Civil War when, in 1875, Bruce's great grandfather Richard L. Valentine first came to Millerton from the Catskill Mountain Region driven by an entrepreneurial ambition to create something of his own.

"Back then, undertakers didn't only make coffins and gravestones – they were also cabinetmakers and craftsmen," says Valentine. "They were artisans in their own right and an important part of the communities in which they lived." As such, Richard L. Valentine began his journey in the Northwest Corner as both undertaker and cabinetmaker. The home on Park Avenue in which Bruce lives today is the very same that stood while three generations of Valentines established themselves as the community's most trusted family to preserve and honor the lives of those who have passed on.

"My grandfather Oliver was born in the house," says Bruce. "He eventually passed the business on to my father Richard before me." Even the house next door, now the Scott D. Conklin Funeral Home, has remained in the Valentine family throughout the decades. "My sister Jean was a licensed funeral director so she worked there with my father for years," Valentine recalls. "I can remember as a child hearing my father out in the shop around midnight with his equipment going and machines whirring, it was quite a sight to watch him work."

In truth, the lasting legacy of small-town family businesses is built less upon any form of nepotism, and more on the laborious lessons learned by observation to the point where practice becomes passion, and passion, into instinct for Bruce. "Throughout my childhood, there were constantly stones scattered around the driveway, especially around holidays of remembrance. We would be out on Memorial Day weekends setting stones from morning to night," he says. "Looking back on it now, those were some of the best times we had as a family."

Paying respect

As the torchbearer for Valentine Monument Works today, Bruce is hardly even aware of the requisite skills he has mastered let alone the process of creating a monument itself. "I was born into this kind of work," he says. "When I'm creating monuments and headstones, I feel an instinctual connection to the work. I hardly even notice the process anymore."

Much like how a painter muses over his canvas before even contemplating his first stroke, Bruce must first be able to envision the final design, usually with the help of family wishes and several other points of reference. There are normally several aspects to a cemetery monument. Typically, the individual's name, date of birth and date of death are all regular inclusions. Sometimes, individuals or families will choose to include a brief epitaph or description of the individual being memorialized.

Bruce then utilizes a rubber stencil to illuminate the image or pattern he had originally envisioned after which he uses a special pen to pick away the material covering the lettering and patterns. For decades, Valentine has employed the process known as sandblasting to engrave the final design into stone. After the stencil has been glued onto the stone and the final design chosen, the stone is then placed into a sand blast booth. Bruce stands outside the booth while he, like an artful surgeon, shapes and cuts into the stone with sand. While Bruce applies the extreme temperatures to specific parts of the monument, the letters, dates and patterns begin to take shape. With incredible precision, Valentine's steady hand delivers his patented detail by removing the polished layers of the granite to reveal what is left unpolished. Deeper sections of the stone are sandblasted more than others in order to create the contrast needed for the headstone to take shape. Bruce's sandblasting machine, though precise, cannot compare to the level of detail that the homegrown artisan's eye innately perceives. The titular monument artist then adds the final touches of detail to achieve the level of depth that has been passed down since the 19th century.

The enduring, hands-on approach to preserving the legacy of not only the line of craftsmen begotten under the Valentine name, but to those who have lived and passed in our area is the true monument to this artisan's labor of love. "Keeping families happy and comfortable during their most difficult times – that is the legacy I want to leave," Bruce says. "Both in the name of my family, as well as the generations in this community that have come before me." •

To learn more about Bruce Valentine and Valentine Monument Works, you can call (518) 789-9497 or (845) 554-4099, or visit at Park Avenue in Millerton, NY.

Housatonic Heritage: History runs through it

By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.
info@mainstreetmag.com

Above: Flag Rock. Photo: Silvia Cassano. Below, left: Clinton Church, pre-restoration, 2019. Photo courtesy of Clinton Church Restoration.

History runs through this region. It follows the Housatonic River as it flows through the towns of Litchfield and Berkshire counties. Set out in any direction, and you're bound to encounter the area's past. Because of this, in 2006, Congress designated this region as the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area.

Designating a National Heritage Area

This designation didn't happen overnight. It was the result of years of planning, studies, and advocating by organizations and individuals dedicated to preserving the area's rich history. Executive director Dan Bolognani explains the process, "National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress on the advice of the Department of Interior and the National Park Service, the results of a feasibility study, and the extent to which the area meets three broad criteria: it possesses themes of national importance; it enjoys broad public support; and it has a management entity that is ready and able to interface with the National Park Service, receive funds, execute the management and interpretative plan for the area, sign contracts, comply with regulations, and track activity."

The non-profit organization Housatonic Heritage was incorporated in 2001 to act as the management entity of the program. However, it would be several more years before Congress took action to designate the region as a National Heritage Area. "Much of my work ensures compliance. We are working with taxpayer money, which means strict compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and that's something we take very seriously. That might not sound that fun," chuckles Bolognani. "But what is fun is interacting with all the organizations and people in this area working to preserve the area's legacy and connect it to the present."

Historical themes

As part of its work as a National Heritage Area, Housatonic Heritage explores four historical themes of the 29 towns of northwestern Litchfield and southwestern Berkshire counties:

- Creating a Cultural Center explores and celebrates the history of the area's literary, visual, and performing arts and links that history to artistic expressions in the region today.
- Connections to the Land examines the extractive land use and usurpation of land from the area's Native Americans and connects that past to current efforts to restore land and the Housatonic River.
- Cradle of Industry documents the area's former manufacturing prowess in iron, wool, paper, and electricity generation.
- Pursuit of Freedom and Liberty delves into the steps toward – and away from – personal and political freedom, religious tolerance, enfranchisement, and civil rights.

Housatonic Heritage entertains ideas, proposals, and collaborations from individuals and organizations that explore these themes through three lenses. "When we consider proposals, we filter through three interpretive goals. The first is to embrace digital communication to share ideas and present information. The next is to engage youth and young adults. Last, to increase and widen the audience for our shared heritage. Our overarching purpose is to broaden engagement in our area's history and explore themes and methods that will enlarge that appeal."

Clinton Church Restoration project

One way Housatonic Heritage partners with local organizations is as an incubator, helping guide an idea from conception to birth. "We serve as fiscal agent for several heritage programs and act as their 501(c)3 as they grow and become a non-profit entity. We perform the back-office tasks, receive grants, and do their bookkeeping and donor tracking to help get organizations on their feet and running."

An example of this kind of partnership is the Clinton Church Restoration (CCR) in Great Barrington, MA. This fledgling organization is restoring the historic Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church to serve as an African American heritage site and cultural center. This church was the epicenter of Black life in the southern Berkshire community for nearly 130 years. Constructed in 1886 by The A.M.E. Zion Society, it profoundly influenced Great Barrington native W.E.B. Du Bois, possesses architectural significance, and appears on the National Register of Historic Places.

For Bolognani, the church's rebirth as a cultural and interpretive center represents a substantial advancement of nearly two decades of work with a large helping of serendipity thrown in. "Seventeen years ago, Housatonic Heritage began a partnership to create the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail. It included plans for an interpretative center that we had no site for. At the time, A.M.E. Zion Church was still a functioning house of worship. Now, all those years and moving parts later with the work of CCR, we

Continued on next page ...

Above, top to bottom: Dan Bolognani, Linda Cook (superintendent at Weir Farm National Historic Site / National Park Service), and Lucianne Lavin (Institute for American Indian Studies). Stockbridge-Munsee Community, pictured are members: Robert Little (Commander of Mohican Veterans) and Odessa Arce. Images courtesy of Dan Bolognani. Below, left: Keystone Arches. Photo: Diane Cote.

will have a robust program partner and the real possibility of creating an interpretive hub for the 48 sites on the Trail," explains a grateful Bolognani.

Youth get historical

"Engaging youth in heritage through projects, internships, video production, and social media is critical to what we do. These skill-building endeavors are the vehicles to students' a-ha moment with history," describes Bolognani. Young voices and feedback "are very revealing about how they see the work we do. Exploring themes such as our industrial past and topics involving Native and African American and Black history might lead us to other interests and avenues we might not have considered."

An example of this youth-centered engagement is the student internship collaboration between Housatonic Heritage, the Housatonic Heritage Oral History Center at Berkshire Community College, and the Social Studies department and Career Experience Program at Housatonic Valley Regional High School.

Using recordings and transcripts from student interviews with alumni generated in Social Studies teacher Peter Vermilyea's classes, interns create a podcast exploring common themes exposed in the conversations. According to Vermilyea, "Students in ECE United States History learn to use the tools of the historian, which includes using oral history to interact with the past. Oral history is a powerful way of making history more relevant to students. In our project, students interview Housatonic graduates from a particular decade about the experience as high school students and in the broader Region One community. By doing so, today's students learn how to sift through different perspectives on events to construct a richer, more nuanced view of the past."

Interns labor under the careful guidance and mentorship of Judith Monachina, director of the Oral History Center (see related article on page 37), and with coordination and support by Mary O'Neill, career experience coordinator (also the author of this article). They work independently to identify podcast themes, craft a narrative to bridge interview excerpts, perform additional historical research, learn the audio platform to create the podcast, and record the podcast for wider enjoyment.

Recent interns explored historical themes of the 50s, 60s, and 70s through local events and school culture during those decades. Bolognani comments, "The internship provides the perfect opportunity for Housatonic Heritage to interface with students. It challenges these young people with a variety of heritage-related projects grounded in our rich historical context and introduces students to a broad range of topics and tasks."

As far as linking the internship to career readiness, O'Neill observes, "This internship collaboration represents the best of education: authentic learning grounded in real-world experience; student accountability with caring adult support; intergenerational interaction; course content with a sense of place; and curriculum (in this case 20th century history) brought to life."

For past intern Abby Adam, the internship has been influential in her aspirations for a career in history. Now a junior at Gettysburg College, she is majoring in history with a public history minor. This past summer, she interned once again with Monachina, this time at the Oral History Center, providing a fresh perspective on how oral history is conveyed and handed down for future generations.

Broad-based support

Bolognani is mindful of his historical base. "Funded largely from taxpayer funds, we respect the wishes of the people we serve, so broad-based support for a project or program is critical." To help build that wider support Bolognani explains, "We want to help historical-based organizations cast a wider net to develop audiences that they may not have thought of or had the resources to pursue."

But developing those resources takes resources, and while Housatonic Heritage is partially government-funded, it must also raise a local dollar for every federal dollar it receives. This local skin in the game represents our area's own investment in unearthing, interpreting, documenting, and adding diverse voices to our shared history.

There are important stories to tell along roads and byways bordering the Housatonic River, and Housatonic Heritage is at the intersection of many of them. •

For more information about the Housatonic Heritage and the Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area, visit www.housatonicheritage.org.

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Do it yourself oral history *in a time of uncertainty*

By Judith Monachina
jmonachi@berkshirecc.edu

Above: Abby Adam, HVRHS intern, and Mary O'Neill, career experience coordinator at HVRHS. They are part of the oral history team. Abby was an intern while a student, and worked as our Summer Intern this past summer, while home from college.

Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* is mentioned a lot these days. He wrote the book in the 14th century and it portrays ten young people who escape the plague in Florence and shelter in a country villa. They spend their time telling each other stories. Though we do not have to escape a plague-ridden city, we do, some of us, feel rather trapped or in limbo, and for us too, it may be a time for telling stories.

It may be a time to tell our own stories, to listen to the past, or to record what we are doing right now. How are we going to school and work; are we living precariously, feeling uncertain. Are we essential workers, or not working; are we working at home? This telling and listening can be done through oral history.

Practicing oral history

A relatively new professional field, it is of course an old human practice. Oral history gives people a chance to tell their stories and to listen to the stories of others. So, how can we use it now?

Some people use oral history as a way to explore social justice, others to promote reconciliation and healing. A fundamental quality of the practice is the opening of one person's experience to another: the interviewee – or narrator – and the interviewer.

Children can interview children or adults; adults interview children. A grandparent may welcome the interest of a child. Whatever arrangement turns up in your household, you might think of it as the oral equivalent of a lovingly tended photo album. And they require a similar attention. If this is interesting to you, consider a few ideas.

Think about why you might want to conduct an interview. Is there a family member or neighbor whose story seems likely to be lost if you do not sit down and record it? Maybe you simply want to have an activity with your children that requires a bit of technology, and helps them learn something? Who will see or hear the interview? How will you store it safely?

Having settled those basic questions, have a conversation with the person you would like to interview. If your interviewee is game, you can begin to plan.

As you prepare for the interview, you may choose to have a list of questions or simply a short list of themes. Or, give the format over to the interviewee and ask: "What would you like me and others to know about you?"

In other words, interviews come in many shapes. I often start out with a biographical format, and ask a question like: "Can you tell me where you were born and a little bit about your childhood?" As the interviewer, you may guide it gently or try to channel it along a straighter course. I prefer a looser flow, and always keep in mind where the new branches of our conversation started, just in case I want to go back to the point where we took an unexpected path. It seems to me, by the way, those new paths may be the very point of an interview. And so listening is the most important act of an interviewer.

If recording and interviewing at the same time is too much, maybe a third person can hold and manage the recorder. Pick as quiet a place as possible. If you are interviewing remotely and using software such as Zoom or Cleanfeed, become familiar with its functions. You may want to do a quick dry run with the person you will interview. Ask the interviewee to pick a quiet place too.

Archiving

Again, think about storage. One archivist who ran an oral history archiving workshop for us, Margaret Cherin, urged the group to think of storage before beginning a project. Remember that photo album: a damp basement or hot attic is not where it belongs. As far as digital work goes, we always make a few copies. If you find a public archive for the work, make sure it is one that takes good care of its oral history collections. Ask your local historical society.

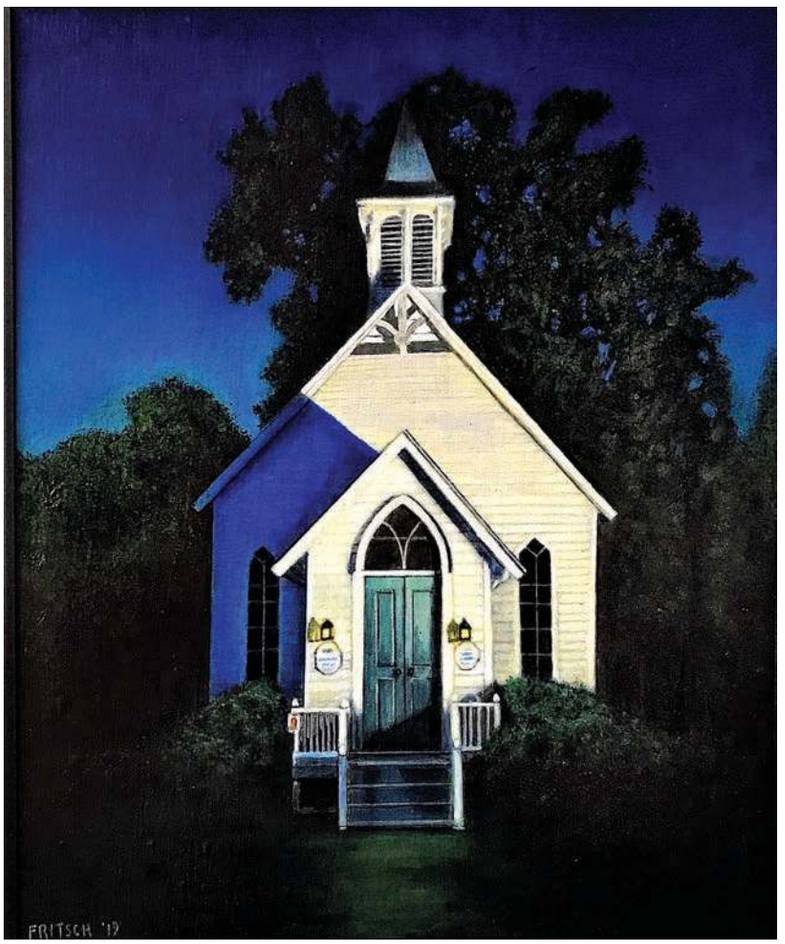
Now, students and teachers are learning new ways to engage, and interviewing one another – discovering – may be a way to break through the barriers of distance and isolation.

Telling our stories may not bring us to what we thought was normal, but it may help us to engage with one another. It may even help us frame our past and present and refigure our future. This reframing is what happened after the much more deadly plague of the middle ages, say some historians, including Gianna Pomata, a retired professor at the Institute of the History of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University, who was interviewed by Lawrence Wright for the *New Yorker* (July 13, 2020). It shook up the way people thought, Pomata told the writer. And so, after the plague came the Renaissance. •

Judith Monachina is the director of the Housatonic Heritage Oral History Center at Berkshire Community College, a project of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, based in Salisbury, CT. Learn more by visiting www.theoralhistorycenter.org. See the Do it Yourself oral history page on that site. The OHC exists to help people in the region with their oral history projects.

The Old Copake Falls Church *A story of rescue, restoration and reuse*

By Lesley Doyel
roeliffjansenhs@gmail.com



Above: The Old Copake Falls Church, painting by PN Fritsch, 2019. Below, left: Invitation to Pomeroy Marker Dedication. All images courtesy of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society.

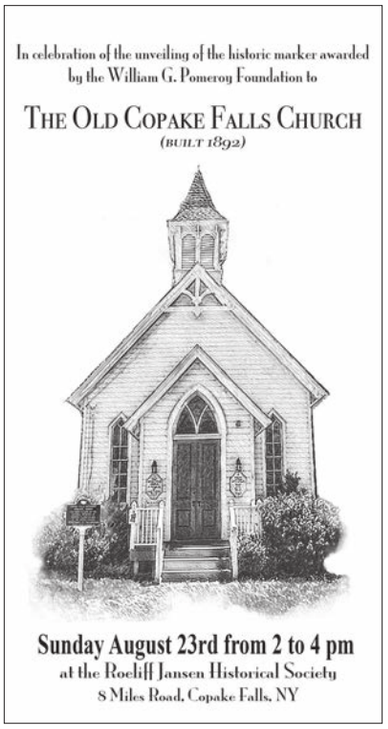
Miracle on Miles Road

The old church, which had first opened its doors to parishioners in 1892, closed those same doors in 1955. It would subsequently stand empty and unused for the next 30 years. "In 1979 the Methodist Church in Copake Falls, NY, was an abandoned and bedraggled building, windows broken, the door often left standing open, the front step littered with broken glass. Only the care of neighbors kept it from being overgrown and ruined." (*The Roe Jan Independent*, Pg. 28B, July 3, 1985).

Long-time neighbors from Copake Falls recall the indignities suffered by the building during the 30 years it stood empty. But, as life-long neighbor, Richard Barton recalled, "In spite of everything, the old building was remarkably sound, mostly needing a paint job, basic repairs, and a new roof." Copake town supervisor, Alfred Near, an early advocate for saving the former church building said, "It was always my desire that the historical society should have a home for the things given to them," and suggested that the restored building be used to "establish a little museum." (*The Roe Jan Independent*, November 18, 1982).

By 1981, the little church had begun to rise from the metaphorical ashes like a phoenix, and thanks to the vision and persistence of Supervisor Near, the local community and members of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society (RJHS), the building was purchased by the town of Copake, restored, and in 1985 became an inspiring example of adaptive reuse, housing the Roe Jan Historical Society Museum.

But before the building opened its doors once again, a committee, appointed by the Town board, oversaw an extensive restoration. The Hillsdale-Copake Garden Club began a program of plantings on the property, and inmates from the Hudson Correctional facility were brought in to paint the building inside and out. Copake Falls resident and current RJHS board member Mibs Zelley recalls how surprised these inmates were to find the structure's rear wall oozing with a viscus substance left by generations of honeybees.



Echoes of the past

The fact is that the restored church building, situated on what is still called Miles Road, formerly Mile's Grove, and recently adorned by a new Pomeroy Historic Marker, harkens back to the town's early origins and the industrial heart of the area, when the town itself was simply called Copake Iron Works.

This part of Columbia County was once part of the vast Livingston Manor, which became several separate towns, including Copake, in 1824. Early on, two major figures greatly influenced the area's industrial and economic development: Lemuel Pomeroy, who started the Copake Iron Works in 1845 exploiting the local iron ore, and Frederick Miles, who improved and expanded the works following the Civil War. Perhaps best known as producer of particularly sharp and durable 'Chilled Plows' and other agricultural tools, the Iron Works continued into the early 20th century. The New York and Harlem Railroad, with a prominent stop in Copake Falls, brought more prosperity and a larger work force to the area. These workers and their families, of different nationalities and faiths, all needed places to live and places to worship.

Tiny hamlet, three churches

By the 1890s the tiny hamlet had no less than three wooden Gothic Revival churches, serving three different faiths. The first was exceptionally

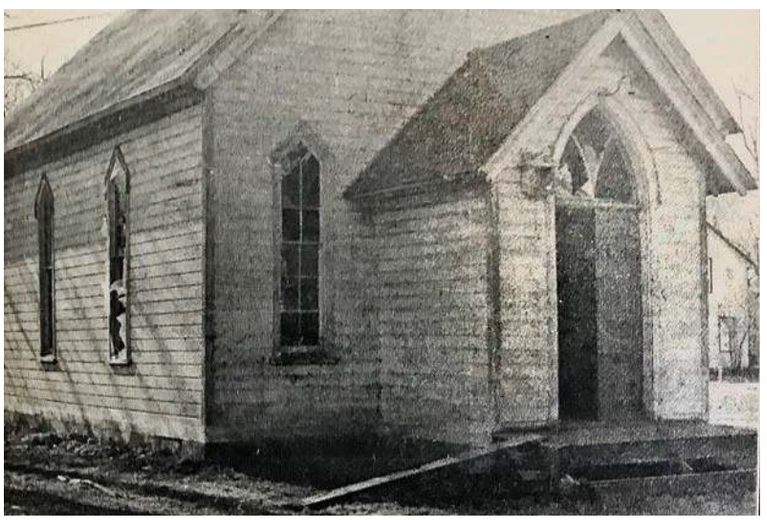
Continued on next page ...

fine Gothic structure of St. John in the Wilderness (1851) thought to have been personally designed by Richard Upjohn, noted architect of Trinity Church on Wall Street in lower Manhattan. Built on a steep rise overlooking the hamlet, this church was funded by Pomeroy family, owners of the Iron Works, for use by the more privileged members of the community. It is still an active Episcopal church, hosting musical programs, events and exhibits in the recently established Burke Hall Art Gallery.

When Irish immigrants fleeing the Great Potato Famine arrived in New York City they were greeted with "Irish need not apply." As early as 1845, when the Copake Iron Works was founded, Lemuel Pomeroy, needing laborers of all kinds, hired many Irish workers who settled in the immediate area. In 1867, the Irish community built a Gothic Style Catholic Church, named for St. Bridget of Kildare, fittingly enough the Patron Saint of blacksmiths and travelers. In 1959, when the concept of adaptive reuse was still relatively unknown and new was always better, St. Bridget's of Copake was closed, ultimately demolished and replaced by a modern church called Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church, which still thrives on route 22 near Copake Falls.

Though flourishing today, back in 1887 the Episcopal parish of St. John in the Wilderness had greatly decreased, and during the next ten years services became rare and sporadic. During the downturn of that parish's activity, the otherwise empty building was sometimes used for services by local Methodists who as yet had no church of their own. This practice apparently infuriated members of the original congregation. In retaliation, Fanny Pomeroy Chesbrough Peck and a small number of fellow Episcopalians actually locked themselves in the church to prevent it from being further used by the Methodists.

The dramatic actions of Peck and the others ignited a growing interest in the Methodist cause in Copake Falls, and led to the circulation of a subscription list to fund a construction campaign for a new house of worship. A 1906 issue of the *Copake Church Messenger*, refers to "strenuous efforts exerted, which resulted in the erection of a fine edifice on an excellent site."



Above, top to bottom: Copake Falls circa 1900, looking towards the Ironworks. The abandoned church, *Roe Jan Independent*, 1.15.1981. All images courtesy of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society.

An indenture dated November 28, 1891 between Frederick Miles, then owner of the Iron Works, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, deeded the land on which the new building was erected to the group, in consideration of the sum of one dollar. The new church, built between 1891 and 1892 at the cost of about $2,000, was described around the time of its completion as "neat and comfortable and sufficiently commodious." (*Our Building*, RJHS Website, www.roeliff-jansenhs.org). Like both St. John in the Wilderness and St. Bridget's, it was built in the "Carpenter Gothic" style, with tall lancet windows, soaring belfry tower, clad in what's commonly known as "novelty siding." The doors of the church remained open for the next 63 years.

A gift to the present

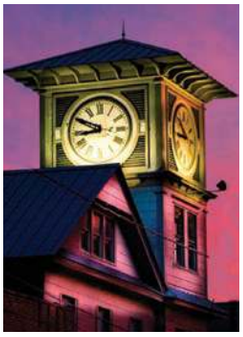
Reflecting, as it does, so much local history, the former church has become the repository of objects, documents, books, and memories. Visitors love to share stories about the building itself, and a few sometimes sheepishly admit to having been among those who threw stones at the windows.

Each year, the Historical Society hosts a rich variety of public programs. But, these days, lecturers speak from the former church pulpit to audiences seated in the original wooden pews. During Winter Walk in December the building is decked out in wreaths and lights, and the community still gathers throughout the hamlet on Copake Falls day each August. In the summer months, the "sufficiently commodious" interior becomes an exhibition space, featuring installations revolving around nearly two centuries of Roe Jan area history. Postponed one year due to the pandemic, the exhibition now planned for the summer of 2021 will be *Revived in Wood: Greek and Gothic Revival*, celebrating the nearly 20 surviving wooden churches of the Roe Jan region, of which the Old Copake Falls Church is one.

What better place for such an exhibit than a building that was so effectively rescued, restored, and adaptively reused? And how fitting that this particular building, once the spiritual and social center of its community, continues to play a central role in the present community – as a place for discovering, sharing, and celebrating the rich and varied history of the area. •

Lesley Doyel is the president of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society. For more about the history and current activities of the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society, please visit roeliffjansenhs.org. Be sure to visit the nearby Copake Iron Works Historic Site in Taconic State Park at www.friendsoftsp.org/



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FOR CENTURIES, THE MOUNTAINS AND LAKES OF SULLIVAN COUNTY AND THE CATSKILLS REGION HAVE BEEN LURING TOURISTS FOR WEEKEND AND SUMMER ESCAPES

Reflecting on Sullivan County's resort scene

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

It's the place where Jerry Lewis, Mel Brooks, and Rodney Dangerfield kicked off their comedy careers, the setting of the 1987 film *Dirty Dancing*, and a summertime destination for the stylish Maisel clan of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* fame.

The name "Catskills" was derived from the Dutch "Kaaterskill," which translates to "Wildcat Creek." Although the Catskills spans the Delaware, Greene, and Ulster Counties, many people still associate "the Catskills" name with Sullivan County.

Although Sullivan County was established in 1809, prior to its formation, its land belonged to Ulster County. Although the county lies at the foothills of the Catskills, the Jewish tourists who vacationed there in the mid-1900s commonly referred to the resort area as "the Catskills" and the moniker stuck.

An ideal locale for autumn escapes, Sullivan County offers everything from colorful foliage to waterfall hikes, kayaking, and fly-fishing. The region also boasts many farm-to-table restaurants and a vibrant arts scene. Throughout the years, there's been an ebb and flow of tourists. Let's travel back in time to learn about its history and evolution.

The rise of tourism

In 1832, when noted essayist and novelist, Charles Fenno Hoffman penned an article about a fisherman who hooked a six-pound trout in White Lake, the area began luring other anglers who were hoping for a big catch. In 1846, the first summer hotel in Sullivan County was established in White Lake. Two years later, The White Lake Mansion House made its debut. Although the historic building was abandoned in the 1970s, the building still stands today.

The railroads, which were built in the wake of the Civil War, paved the way for tourism. "The railroad tracks were like the stitches that put the country back together after the Civil War," says Sullivan County historian John Conway who reconstructed the evolution of the resort industry in the region.

"There were two prosperous eras of tourism and they were very different from one another," adds Conway. He coined the terms "Silver Age" and "Golden Age," which are commonly used in reference to the peak areas of tourism in Sullivan County. Conway has authored seven books about the area's history. His most recent book, *In Further Retrospect*, which was released in February 2020, contains a chapter on "Resorts and Recreation."

Silver Age: 1890 to 1915

Conway defined the period between 1890 and 1915 as the Silver Age of tourism in Sullivan County. Due to a rise in anti-Semitism in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the county became a destination for Jewish people fleeing Eastern Europe. Many were farmers who were eager to purchase inexpensive land. In the late 1800s/early 1900s, many Jewish families were also relocating from crowded New York City tenements to the sprawling grassy lands of Sullivan County. This was partially due to the spread of tuberculosis, a disease that affects the lungs.

Due to poor soil in the region, many farmers who planted roots in Sullivan County struggled to earn a living from agriculture. To supplement their income, many families began taking in boarders. In the 1890s, tourism became a key industry. At the time, 200 hotels dotted the region, which was brimming with scenic mountains, lakes, and lots of sporting activities.

Above: A photo of vacationers from circa 1950 at Grossingers. On the back of the photo it records that Elaine, Bess Myerson, David and Betsy Palmer are in the front row with Quintin Reynolds in the rear. Photo courtesy of William Gronwald, Volunteer, Sullivan County Historical Society

Many people believed that Sullivan County was a healing environment for those who were ill. Around 1900, an advertisement that appeared in various publications highlighted the message, "Doctors Say Go to the Mountains of Sullivan, Ulster, and Delaware Counties for pure air, water, and milk." (See ad on next page).

Since people of Jewish descent weren't welcome at many establishments, Jewish families started opening hotels that catered to a Jewish clientele and kept kosher kitchens. In 1899, the first Jewish hotel, The Rock Hill Jewish Boarding House, was established. In 1907, Kutsher's Brothers Farm House opened its doors. In 1908, two Jewish entrepreneurs purchased the Christian hotel, Flagler in South Fallsburg and converted it into a Kosher establishment.

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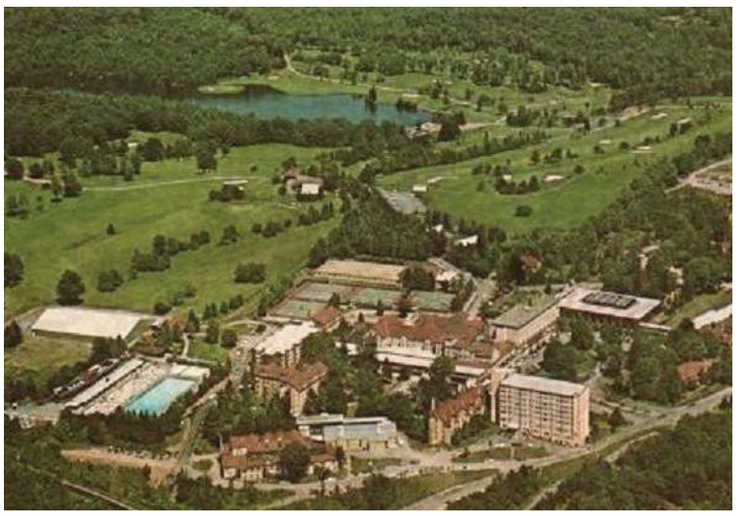

Above, top to bottom: An aerial view of Grossingers in Ferndale. In this ad, which ran in several publications, doctors promoted the region for clean air, water, and healthy living. Images courtesy John Conway, Sullivan County Historian.

Tourism continued to rise when travel on the New York, Ontario and Western Railway (O&W Railroad) was soaring. In 1914, the Grossingers, a Jewish family from Manhattan's Lower East Side, scraped together $450 to purchase a farm in Ferndale. Since farming didn't generate enough income for the family, they took in boarders. The family's matriarch, Malka, had experience as a host and cook, so she began operating a kosher kitchen. When they took on nine boarders, the family generated $81, which was a windfall at the time. By 1919, the Grossinger family moved to larger quarters. Their establishment, Grossinger's Terrace Hill House, became the most popular hotel in Sullivan County and one of the most renowned worldwide.

Since the hotels of the time didn't offer entertainment, guests of the establishments of the time traveled to nearby towns to attend vaudeville shows, music halls, and other entertainment venues.

The decline of the Silver Age era began around 1910, not long after the medical community discovered that tuberculosis was contagious. Once that news became mainstream, train usage halted, which impacted the tourism industry.

Golden Age: 1940 to 1965

The Golden Age of tourism spanned several decades, from about 1940 to 1965. With the decline of railroad travel, there was an upswing in automobile transport, which kicked off in 1908 and became more mainstream in the years ahead. Lots of larger resorts were being built at the time. Rather than sending guests into the surrounding towns for entertainment, comedians and musicians performed on site. Jerry Lewis, Jackie Mason, and Joan Rivers are just a few of the luminaries who entertained crowds during the Golden Age.

Due to the vast numbers of Jewish people vacationing in Sullivan County, the resort area eventually became known as the "Borscht Belt." The name hails from Borscht soup, which arrived in America with the Ashkenazi Jews and Slavic immigrants. The Borscht Belt era of tourism peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1953, *The New York Times* reported that there were 538 hotels and 50,000 bungalows in the Sullivan County region. There were also about 1,000 boarding houses.

The Concord Resort Hotel was another key destination of the day. At its peak in the mid-1950s, the Concord, with 1,200 rooms, may have been the largest resort hotel in the world. Its Empire Room had the capacity to seat 3,000 guests who would enjoy acts performed by Milton Berle and Joan Rivers. For one performance, Joan Rivers was paid a steep $50,000.

"On the weekends, we would travel from Manhattan and perform at a few resorts and then return to Manhattan, so we could go to school the next day," says Eddie Maligmat, a child musician of the era. Maligmat was part of *The Rocky Fellers*, a family band who signed with Scepter Records.

By the mid-1960s, many of the hotel resorts had begun closing. A trio of factors led to the demise. They include air conditioning, relatively inexpensive airfares, and assimilation of the younger generations of Jews in America. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination. In the 1970s, 40 to 50 hotels remained in operation, but by the 1980s, only five or six remained.

"There was an indication of things changing around 1965," says Conway. In 1987, *Dirty Dancing* was released. In the film, which was set in 1963, resort owner Max Kellerman said, "It all seems to be ending. You think kids want to come up here with their parents to take foxtrot lessons? Trips to Europe, that's what the kids want.'"

"Going to the Concord and other resorts were among the best memories of my childhood," says former New Yorker Suzy Vallardi who used to vacation there with her family during the 1970s.

In November, 2013, casino gaming in New York State was legalized. The Resorts World Casino opened in 2018 on the former site of the Concord. This mod destination now boasts a namesake resort hotel, lifestyle boutique hotel, casino, entertainment complex, and spa. Family fun can be had at the Kartrite Resort & Indoor Waterpark, which boasts 324 suites and a luxury lodge experience. Following the shutdown due to Covid-19, the casino reopened on September 9 at reduced capacity.

Many other attractions in the Catskill area continue to draw tourists and dwellers to the region. In the wake of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, many families fled the city and relocated upstate. It will certainly be interesting to watch what the next decade brings in Sullivan County, the Catskill region and the greater Hudson River valley. •

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150 years... or was it yesterday?

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

We feel it only fair to offer this gentle warning before you invest a few moments reading what follows. This piece is a bit different than others we have written. It draws heavily on history, reflects on those historical references and, with no subtlety intended, holds a mirror to what has become almost a cliché – "the moment we are in."

Is it political? Yes. Is it partisan? No. Is it subjective? Of course. Even hard fact reporting is subjective because of what is included and what is not. This is far from hard fact reporting.

But, is it engaging? We hope so. You'll have to be the judge.

So with that as prologue, let us please introduce you to Myron H. Dean. He is a man, slight of stature, who endured long periods of illness, but managed to recover and forge a life that had both meaning and purpose.

Myron was a bit of a dreamer. His yearn to travel included the wish that he could visit Paris … but that was never to happen. Once he had mastered the rail journey from Falls Village to New Haven and beyond, Chicago was about as far afield he would get from his home in Falls Village, CT. He counted himself lucky for the journey and celebrated every new adventure.

"Now I should like to travel some and see whether adjoining towns are like Canaan! Wouldn't I like to explore the beautiful valley of the Hudson, to see with my own eyes the great ocean, to walk the streets of New York, to climb the White Mountains and to roam over the prairies of the West? I hope that some time I may see some of these things." (June 11, 1868)

Farmer, teacher, citizen

Dean was largely self-educated, but in the system current at the time, was called on to be a contract teacher at several of the local schools, expressed appreciation for the experience and hoped the mark he had left on his "scholars," as he called them would be helpful to them in later life. He even went so far, at the end of each term, to purchase small gifts for his pupils, trying to match the gift with the person … a china cup for a young lady, perhaps a pocket knife for a young man.

Dean's primary task in life, however, was to be an accomplished farmer, raising fruit, vegetables, livestock and developing a great skill at sugaring the abundance of maple trees that dotted his family farm on what was known, during his life, as "The Barrack." Today it is known as Music Mountain out of recognition of the music festival that has been a landmark in the region since 1930.

Mostly, Myron Dean was a thinker. Unwilling to move routinely through life, he read voraciously, was involved in local politics, attended church when the weather and his health would permit, and kept an annual diary that touched on the weather, the cycle of crops, the success of his rock-strewn farm, observations made through a telescope of his own construction with lenses purchased on a journey of discovery to New Haven when he was 25 years old … and his unvarnished observations about politics and the state of the state and country.

Saved from "The Dump"

Dean's carefully handwritten diaries, each year thread bound by hand, could easily have met the fate of so many bits of ephemera that are discarded when old houses are emptied and redone. But for the inquisitive eye

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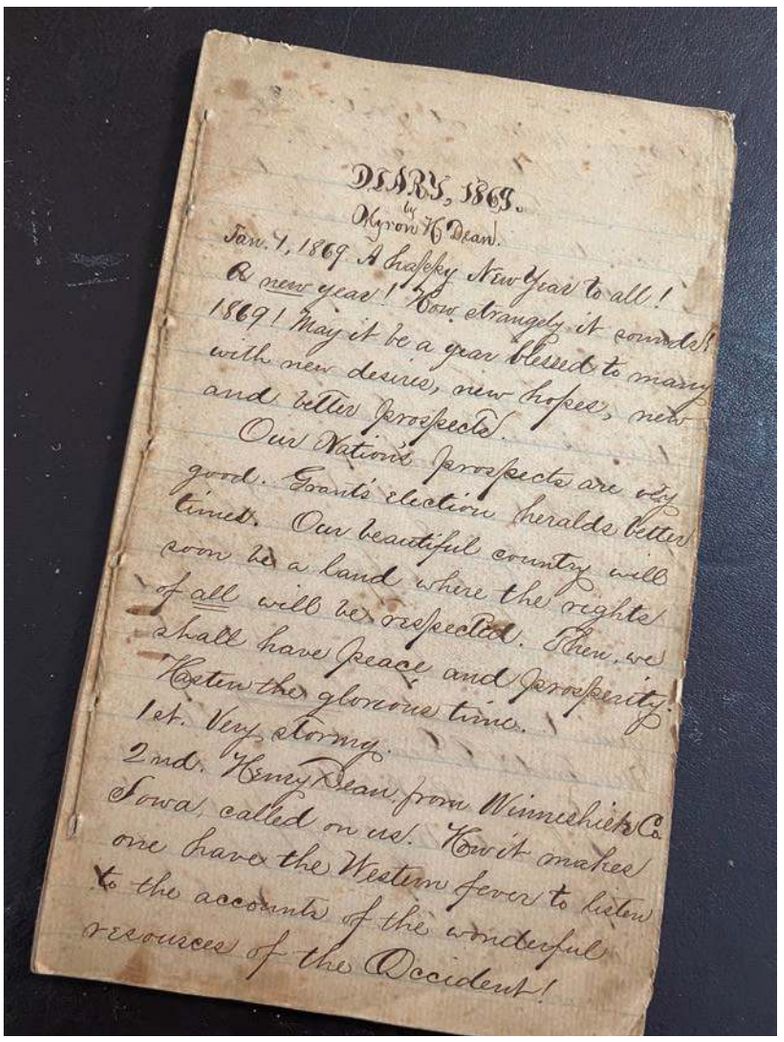

DIARY, 1869.
by
Myron H Dean.
Jan. 1, 1869 A happy New Year to all!
A new year! How strangely it sounds
1869! May it be a year blessed to many
with new desires, new hopes, new
and better prospects.
Our Nations prospects are very
good. Grants election heralds better
times. Our beautiful country will
soon be a land where the rights
of all will be respected. Then we
shall have peace and prosperity.
Hasten the glorious time.
1st. Very stormy.
2nd. Henry Dean from Winnebago Co
Iowa, called on us. How it makes
one have the Western fever to listen
to the accounts of the wonderful
resources of the Occident!

Above and next page: Images of Myron Dean's diary.

of the occupant of a house that today stands near to Dean's family home, the diaries would have gone to the local transfer station and been lost. Paper yellowed with age and ghosts of cursive writing bleeding through, they are still legible and invite the reader to a curated journey through the mind of a true New Englander.

Here are some bits and pieces of the thinking of Myron H. Dean, 1845-1931. The quotes are direct and unedited. If, with a casual read, one might find similarities to the passions and crises of 2020 in observations from 1870, then one is encouraged to smile, faintly, and recall the words of the philosopher George Santayana. "Those who do not learn history are condemned to repeat it."

"Election. James E. English elected governor and Wm. H. Barnum Congressman from the 4th District. If I were he (Barnum), I should be ashamed to show my head. Liquor and money were free to anybody who would take and vote for him. W. H's expenses to secure the election are said to have been fully $100,000. The first Dem. Gov. for 13 or 14 yrs. Liquor makes copperheads. Truth crushed to earth will rise again. Cast my first vote for Marshall Jewell for governor. He was defeated by English by 1772 majority. I also voted for Theodore Gold for Senator and Wallace W. Millard for Representative. Both were defeated. Lucky in my choice, wasn't I? I am not ashamed of the men I voted for nor of my principles either." (April 1, 1867)

"Women will vote 'ere long in these United States, in my opinion. If it is right, let them vote; if not, no. I incline to the opinion that it is right." (June 13, 1867)

A year later, Dean's indignation had begun to boil up even more:

"Women are not allowed the right of voting! I never had mistrusted such a thing before! This is an absurd injustice and I hope that not many years shall pass before it shall be a thing of the past and all shall be accorded their just rights." (May 24, 1868)

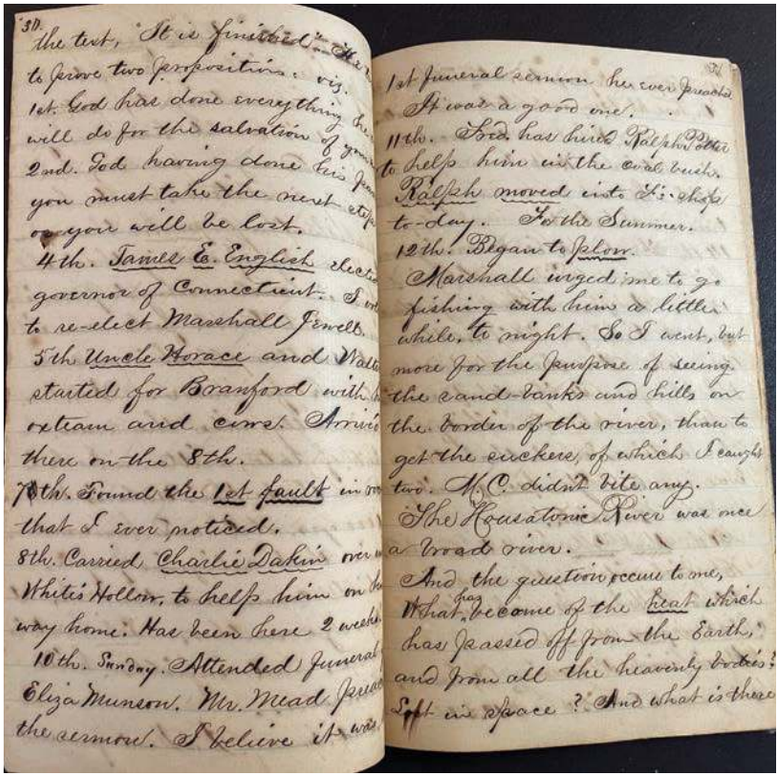
All politics is local … except when it's not

Presidential politics were a raging spectator sport long before the days when Sunday professional football games pitted cities against cities and biased voting determined which motion picture was "Best" or magazines gleefully revealed who they determined to be "Person of the Year." (Remember, it was not too terribly long ago when that title was "Man of the Year," which would likely have outraged Myron Dean).

"Impeachment has failed and Andrew Johnson is still the President of the United States. Justice demanded his conviction and by just one vote it failed. And wherefore? Has not the nation suffered enough? Must it again be bitterly taught that the Lord reigns and that justice cannot be subverted with impunity? I hope not, but may He lead this people to do right and may this country seen be pacified and united in the bonds of Christian love. But does the acquittal of the President prove his innocence? Far from it. When 35 Senators declared their conviction of his guilt and only 14 his innocence, is it probable that he was unjustly charged with crime? No! Andrew Johnson was guilty of the charges laid against him. He meant to rule alone. Claiming more power than any European despot he intended to subvert Congress and whatever might be against him, by military power, if necessary (I believe) and with absolute sway rule the country in the interests of rebels. What he will now do, we can only wait to see. And may those Senators who were base enough to sell their honor for gold, meet the just reward of their infamy by losing all the respect which the country has given them. If little criminals suffer, big ones certainly should." (May 17, 1868)

A satisfied mind

Honest government, equal rights for both men and women, regardless of color or political persuasions … and, we can't forget temperance. Those were the issues that often riled Myron Dean to the point of taking pen in hand and memorializing his thoughts.



But, truth be told, there was another side of Dean that could well be a moment of reflection for us all. Life 150 years ago looked a great deal different than it does today. For Dean, the backward glance served to remind him of the fact that in his corner of a country that was not even 100 years old, there was good reason to celebrate and to live in hope.

"We are better educated, more civilized and on the whole living in a much better day than that of our ancestors. How many, if they could, would have things now as they were in those 'good old times?' None, I believe." (June 18, 1868)

For those who find the perceptions and reflections of those who walked these roads and fields long before we came intriguing, contact with the local historical society may open doors and provide a sense of history and balance. Enjoy the journey. •

In loving memory of

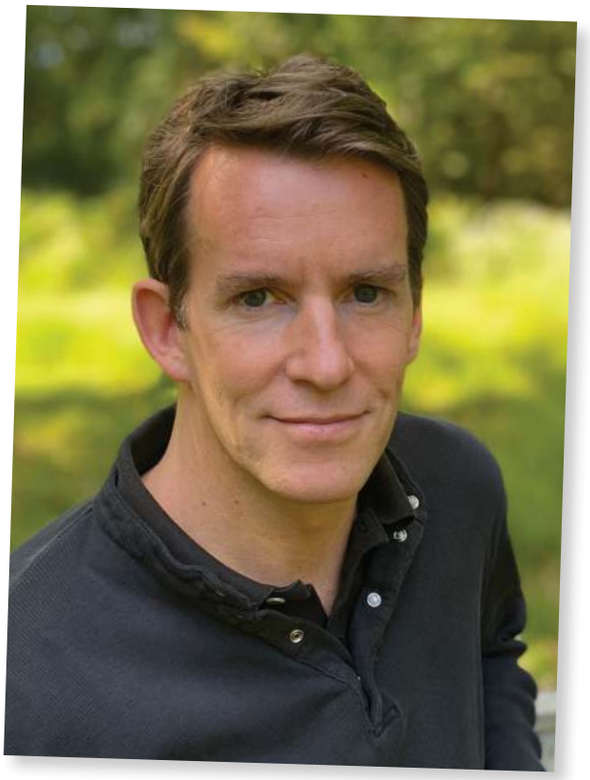
Keith Wayne Lovette

January 19, 1960 - August 27, 2020

**"I wish you nothing but blue skies and good vibes.
Always do what you know to be right."**

Keith was a Master Mechanic and Kohler Certified repair specialist. He was our Senior Generator Technician and attention to each project set him apart from others. When he was not working feverishly on repairs he enjoyed camping with his family and being a grandfather.

Bill Clegg



Above: Author Bill Clegg. Photo: © Van Scott-Clegg. Below: The cover for Clegg's latest novel, courtesy of Scout Press.

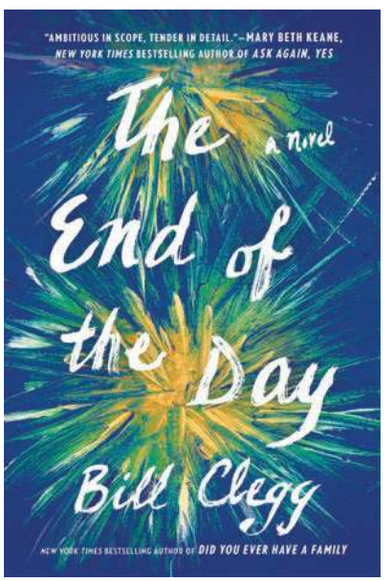
By Betsy Maury
info@mainstreetmag.com

When I wrote about Bill Clegg's first novel *Did You Ever Have a Family* here in 2015, I'd lived in the northwest corner of Connecticut for only a few years after living much of my adult life abroad. The book had been shortlisted for a Man Booker prize that year, one of publishing's most celebrated awards and I was curious about it as the story is set in a fictional town in northwest Connecticut, an area I was just getting to know. In it I saw something that captured the place and the people of the area with precision and feeling and offered unique insights into a particular sensibility here. It was for me, a distinct narrative of place.

The End of the Day

Clegg's new book, *The End of the Day*, just released on September 29, revisits the same fictional town of Wells and centers on the lives of three girls during their late adolescence in the 1960s. Clegg explores familiar themes in this book, events that become more significant over time or lose their bitterness. The book is ambitious, set over the course of about 60 years with numerous characters and lineages, all intersecting in the end but disparate through much of the book. Dana, the only child of New York weekenders, visits her family's historic estate Edgeweather in Wells most weekends throughout her childhood. Each Friday night she escapes with Jackie, her best friend from down the road, to the lavishly appointed chamber on the third floor of the estate for bonding over music, boys, horses, and river stones. Here Jackie and Dana share the kind of intimacy that characterizes intense friendships of middle school; they are unaware of others around them so complete is their world with each other.

As their friendship transitions to high school, there is a slow pulling away and a recognition that the sanctuary of the third-floor bedroom will no longer hold them perfectly in place. The July 4 picnic at Hatch Pond is the scene of a betrayal that involves Lupita, the daughter of Edgeweather's Mexican caretaker who lives in the apartment above the garage. Dana's 49-year-old regret over her actions that day drive most of the narrative of the book. There's a distant ally, an orphaned boy and a heroic surrogate mother, all of whom experience the ripple effects of decisions and choices made on that fateful summer day.



Changes while growing up

The ordinary yet life-changing events of adolescence loom large in this book as Dana, Lupita, and Jackie all tell their own stories informed by their former selves. A childhood in Wells meant very different things to each of them. As in his previous book, Wells is a place that stifles and judges but also comforts and reassures. Of the three girls living on Undermountain Road, one can't wait to get out, one was really only a visitor, and one sees a future there of perfection.

On giving birth to her first child shortly after her high school graduation, "Jackie can still remember the quiet triumph she felt as she snuggled into the stiff hospital bedding that morning. She recognize[s] that moment as the first when she felt like she'd won, that her life was enviable, one she wouldn't trade for anyone else's."

For Lupita, whose life as a servant at Edgeweather is constrained, a traumatic event leads her out of Wells never to return, providing an escape from the limitations of her static life there. And though affluent Dana has myriad life options after high school including Bryn Mawr, a trust fund and trips abroad, her spiteful action on July 4 is motivated by being sidelined by her best friend and the resentment she feels over Jackie's certainty of choices. Jackie's choice to remain in Wells with high school sweetheart Floyd fulfills her every dream; Dana knows she will never have access to that.

As in *Did You Ever Have a Family*, *The End of the Day* is filled with familiar patterns of life in the Northwest corner that will resonate with locals. Characters go to the movies in nearby Millerton, rush to the emergency room on Hospital Hill Road, and tell stories about the great elm on the town green. Jackie refers to Noble Horizons as 'the assisted living facility where most area folks end up if they live past seventy and have a house to sell to pay for it." There's even a dramatic scene at the 1967 Housatonic Valley Regional High School prom at Mohawk Ski Lodge where Dana and Jackie attend as a couple.

As a novelist, Clegg confessed to me that he's obsessed with how powerfully rumor works in a small town. Identity often becomes something fixed in childhood and remains unchanged into adulthood in places like Wells – the boy who crashed his car on the town green, the girl who won the superintendent's award. In both books the fleeting decision or petty retaliation of youth lingers long in the lives of Wells residents. Growing up in Sharon provided a fertile microcosm through which Clegg feels he's still "picking through memories," not of actual people and events but of perspectives and motivation.

The End of the Day wrestles with questions of small-town identity writ large and the human connections that bring meaning to life. The northwest corner certainly provided a perch from which to sharpen Bill Clegg's observation to bring such stories to life. •

"The End of the Day," Gallery/Scout Press. On sale September 29, 2020. Remember to shop locally at one of our wonderful bookstores!

GET THEE TO THE RE

By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

How cool is an exhibition of art that is outside at night?

How fantastic to arrive at an old farm at dusk, a sliver of a moon perched in an indigo sky – a tableau wonderful enough in itself to be the experience – the magic of the night just starting to unfold?

How amazing for an artist to transform his land and home into a statement about the precariousness of our times with this inside-out experience?

It's so cool and so fantastic and so amazing and so original that, well, you simply must go.

What's the Re Institute?

When I first learned about it, surreptitiously as usual, I knew I had to go. A friend and I found our way to The Re Institute at 1395 Boston Corners Road in Millerton, NY, on a lovely mid-summer night that started with a picnic in Roe Jan Park in Hillsdale. It was already an unusual outing, as typically the viewing of a show would precede a shared meal and discussion of the works. As we ate our salads and indulged in a soft, coral-on-green sunset all around us at the park, we could only speculate about what we might see, which of course heightened the anticipation.

We had a reservation to see the show at 8:45pm. We arrived a few minutes early, and, after parking where we hoped was the right spot because already the increasing darkness was disorienting, we put on our masks, got out of the car, and were soon greeted by The Re Institute's founder and creator of the show, Henry Klimowicz. Henry hopped off his tractor looking more the farmer than a gallery owner, and ducked inside the barn to get us each a program that listed the names of the exhibiting artists.

We talked about COVID, of course, and what led Henry to create this exhibition. "I'm acutely aware, as we all are," he explained, "of the effects of isolation and the inability to gather and touch. I would normally have shows in the barn here," he said, "but I can't do that for now, so I started thinking of what I could do instead. How could I bring artists who are in isolation together somehow?" *Together in Isolation* was hatched.

Why *Together in Isolation*?

Henry's objective for the exhibition is clearly and perfectly expressed on the Re Institute's website, too: "Objective: To continue creativity while participating in an exhibition that mirrors our collective experiences. To produce a long-term record of this time of isolation, hardship, and sadness. To find glimmers of hope."

My friend and I could see the exhibition coming to life and were eager to explore and observe. Henry led us from where we'd parked around to the front of his big barn and said, "Start here, follow the path to the pink pill – you'll know it when you see it – then cut back and work your way over around the pond. You'll finish with the works on the other side of the barn."

The 50+ works currently on display are all housed in same-sized vitrine boxes that are then buried in the ground with a solar light beside them that illuminates them in the dark. To see the show, you walk along the path and look into the boxes. And look at the surroundings. And look at the sky. And listen to the crickets and cicadas and the voice of your friend, and your own voice, and maybe, in the distance, the low voices of others. You feel grasses and branches as you move through the dark, and dew on your feet if you've chosen (unwisely, FYI) to wear flip-flops, as I did.

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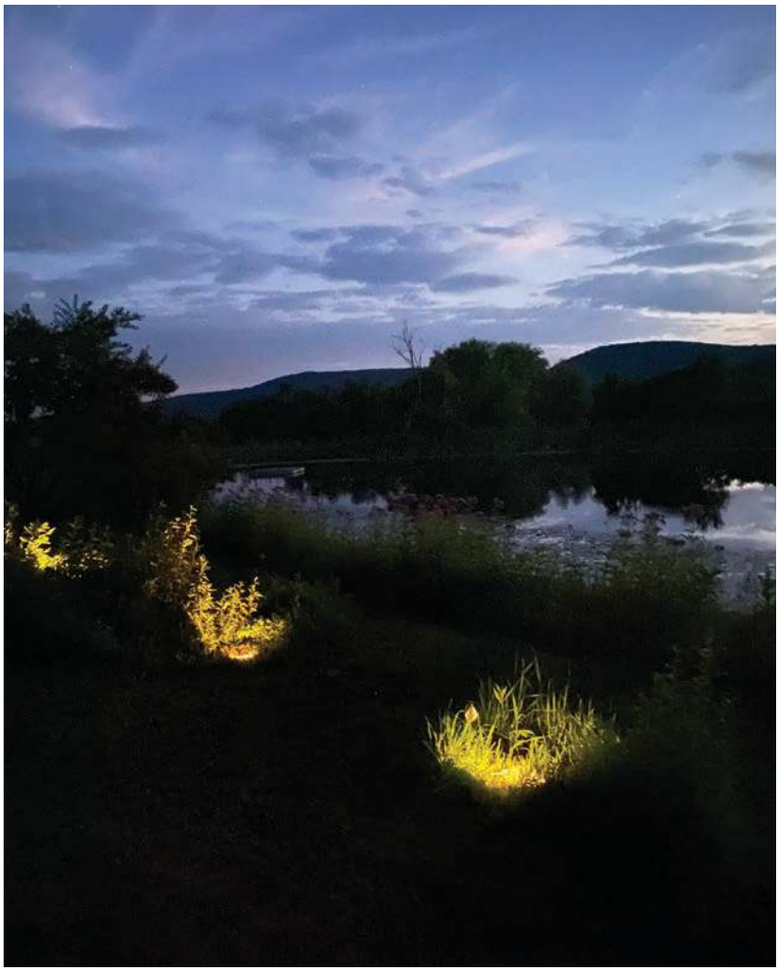


Above: The exhibition *Together in Isolation* is at The Re Institute on Boston Corners Road in Millerton. Don't miss it!

Just a couple of the over 50 pieces on exhibit at *Together in Isolation*. Above: *So?* by Cristian Pietrapiana. Below, left: *As Above* by Jeffrey Lependorf.

The effect is truly *Together in Isolation* on many levels. The boxes themselves, of course, are self-contained, their contents isolated by design and intention. What's inside the boxes is unique; trapped in time; buried. But buried alongside many other similar boxes, each beckoning with a beam of light that is a shared, collective invitation – the glimmer of hope Henry was looking for.

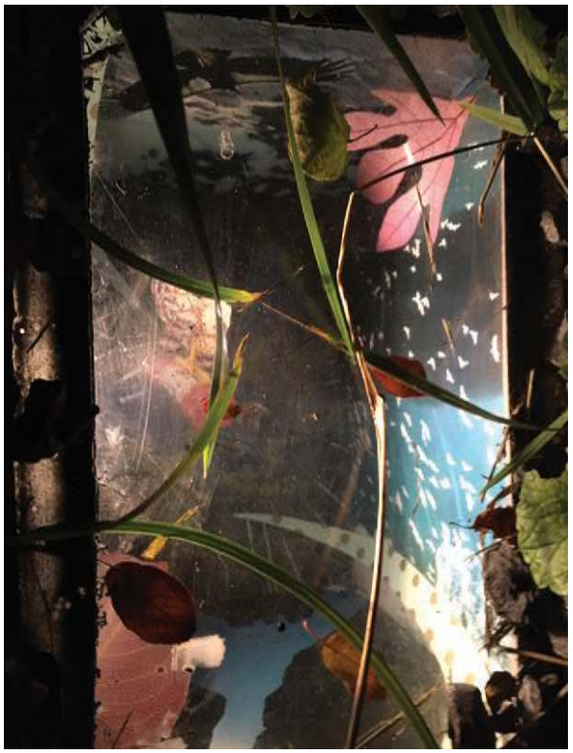
Seeing the show

Some of the pieces have been in the ground for a while, as the show opened in late April. They bear the signs of time underground…weeds have started to cover their tops, condensation sometimes blurs the work. The voices of these pieces are muted, but that seems perfectly appropriate and, for me, added to the experience. I found myself bending closer and holding back some overgrown grasses to get a better look, or moving around a piece to examine it from a better angle.

To keep visitors safe and comfortable, Henry takes reservations for individuals or small groups in 15-minute increments so that there isn't a worry about getting too close to strangers. Of course, masks are required. But the pacing of people through the show means you essentially walk the grounds at your leisure. And while the pieces are provocative and engaging, so is the property. In the dark, with the solar lights mirroring the brightest stars in the sky, the reflection of the night sky on the still surface of the pond, the temperature change taking everything down a notch, there's a very magical feel to the place and the experience. Taking close looks deep down at the artists' responses to the pandemic, stuffed into boxes with the disconcerting fear we're collectively experiencing, wondering what it's like for them, each of them, all of us, it's such a relief to be able to turn away and look up and around and be soothed by the land and sky, comforted by the darkness.

The artists and art

Who are the artists participating in the show, and how did Henry involve them? An artist himself (with a few boxes in the show, too), Henry has been running the Re Institute on his 40-acre working farm since 2010. Always a place with the intention to bring together visual artists, filmmakers, writers, composers, dancers, and outdoor installation artists to promote "new perspectives, understandings, and insights in the arts within this unique and historical rural landscape," Henry is part of a network of artists who were intrigued and eager to participate.



He's philosophical about the contributions. "I take the pieces as they come in," he said, "and it's unpredictable. Some artists have been unable to work during the pandemic; some want to do several pieces and turn in one; some aren't sure at all but then get a piece here sooner than expected. It's all fine," he reflected. "There's plenty of room for more pieces." He believes that "everyone is an artist," and so anyone can contribute (there's specific guidance on the website).

What's the trajectory for the show? Henry doesn't know for now when the show will be over. It depends, like its subject, on the pandemic. "When we can have enough people together for a closing, rather than an opening," he muses, "then it'll be time. We'll bring the boxes inside, but they won't be for sale. I want them to be a record of this unique time."

The lure and lore of the location

October is possibly the most perfect time to see the show, as there's another fascinating aspect of the property and location. It's in Boston Corner, originally part of Massachusetts, which it borders (along with Connecticut). It's an area once known as Hell's Acre because it was notoriously difficult to get to and therefore to oversee by the state of Massachusetts. Finally, in 1853, "a heavyweight championship prizefight was held that resulted in the transfer of a town from Massachusetts to the state of New York." All kinds of things happened in little Boston Corner, and exploring the lore before exploring *Together in Isolation* could make for an even more haunting experience in October. (Learn more about Boston Corner's history at www.trivia-library.com/b/history-of-boston-corner-new-york).

It was close to 9:30 when we left the Re Institute, our heads and hearts full as only art can make them. And it was very dark. And we couldn't access the GPS. So unless you want to become part of Boston Corner's magic and mystery, we suggest writing down the directions from the farm to the nearest main road in the area, Route 22, just in case.

In conclusion, this is something Henry wrote about the show that I particularly like: "We strive to record our lives and to bring meaning to the present. We do this through the production of artifact. Some of the work presented may talk directly to the experience of loss and isolation. Other pieces may be the record of one artist's present interests. Some may be a wonderful treasure that the finder/participant will be given as reward for their search." •

Learn all about the Re Institute, Together in Isolation*, how to participate if you're so inclined, and how to sign up to see the show on Henry's website, www.thereinstitute.com.*

Upstate Films Rhinebeck

Non-profit cinema showing indie, foreign and classic films since the 70s. 6415 Montgomery St., Rhinebeck, NY. (845) 876-2515. upstatefilms.org

Upstate Films, based in Rhinebeck, NY, seeks to bring the best in cinematic artistry in all its diversity to the Hudson Valley. The celebrated local independent theater began as the brain-child of three young folks who decided to start a non-profit cinema organization in 1972. Today, Upstate Films' mission is to use the power of film to expand the awareness and consciousness of our community by showcasing a variety of film forms, to support seasoned and emerging artists, to serve as a forum for discussions of local interest, and support our regional economy and artistic community. For nearly half a century, Upstate Films has served the mid-Hudson valley with theaters in Rhinebeck and Woodstock. The independent cinema's longevity, coupled with its inclusive programming brings the excitement of discovering and sharing films that expand the art of cinema to cinephiles all over the Hudson Valley by welcoming loyal audiences as well as new folks. In this new era of public gathering and social distancing, Upstate Films has experienced the very real test of the differences between the idea of private and public and the difficulties that come with gathering with friends to watch a film. Despite the obstacles, Upstate Films looks toward the community for the kind of support that will keep it a mainstay for generations to come. When the time comes again, the folks at Upstate Films encourage everyone to get out of the house and experience the art of cinema once again.

Wilderstein Historic Site

A celebrated non-profit house museum in Rhinebeck, NY. 330 Morton Rd., Rhinebeck, NY. (845) 876-4818. wilderstein.org

Built in 1852 by the Suckley family and expanded to its present configuration in 1888, the Wilderstein Historic Site is a house museum located in Rhinebeck, NY – with breathtaking views of the Hudson River and 40 acres of trails open to the public. The Suckleys were related to the Livingstons, Beekmans, Roosevelts, and other prominent "River Families," who shaped the cultural heritage of the Hudson Valley. The estate, with its exquisite Queen Anne mansion and Calvert Vaux designed landscape, is widely regarded as the Hudson Valley's most important example of Victorian architecture. The interiors are virtually untouched since they were installed and contain beautiful woodwork, stained glass, wall coverings, and furnishings. The last family member to live at Wilderstein was Margaret (Daisy) Suckley. Her extraordinary friendship with President Franklin Roosevelt is well-chronicled in the letters and diaries discovered at Wilderstein, which have proven invaluable to scholars. An outdoor sculpture show is being planned for 2021; the historic site is also planning to open the second floor of the mansion for tours in 2021 for the first time. Wilderstein will be having a virtual Tea Party benefit fundraiser on Saturday, October 3, 2020. It features an online program with a special appearance by award-winning author Geoffery Ward, sneak peak of restoration work on the second floor of the mansion, "Gin Daisy" cocktail demo, and more.

Naumkeag

Gilded Age estate owned by The Trustees. 5 Prospect Hill Rd., Stockbridge, MA. (413) 298-3239. thetrustees.org/place/naumkeag/

Owned and operated by The Trustees of Reservations, Naumkeag allows visitors to step back in time to experience Gilded Age style and splendor at this marvelous estate renowned for its elegant gardens and rare Berkshires "cottage." This 48-acre architectural masterpiece is, at its heart, a family home. In 1884, Joseph Choate, a prominent New York attorney and U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, and his wife, Caroline, designed a 44-room shingle-style summer retreat, where several generations of the Choate family lived until daughter Mabel Choate bequeathed it to The Trustees in 1958. Now a National Historic Landmark, visitors can explore the superlative gardens created by Mabel Choate and noted landscape architect Fletcher Steele. The Blue Steps, a series of deep blue fountain pools flanked by four flights of stairs and a grove of white birches, are especially noteworthy to architectural enthusiasts. Elsewhere walk through the stunningly beautiful Afternoon Garden, Tree Peony Terrace, Rose Garden, Evergreen Garden, and Chinese Garden, each of which evinces beauty while revealing the playful, inventive spirit of collaboration between owner and architect over the span of 30 years. Guests can also enjoy numerous other programs all year round. During a time when outdoor spaces are vital for social distancing and peace of mind, Naumkeag is a respite and oasis for everyone living in or visiting the Berkshires.

The Dig

Collaborative market in Millerton, NY. 3 Main St., Millerton, NY. (518) 592-1142. thedigonmain.com

Thanks to the collaborative effort of friends and family, The Dig opened on August 2, of this year on Main Street in Millerton, NY. Each owner of the market brings with them an inspired idea. Their Sunday sweet and savory crêpes are already a must-have treat and daily breakfast and beverages are available from 6:30am every morning, including fresh juices and smoothies. Fresh seasonal produce from various neighboring farms are always available and they host weekly events including Grill Night and Kids Corner. The Dig is proud to offer a space for local artists in its Sunset and Sunrise Gallery. Sustainable home goods and handcrafted gifts make every visit an opportunity to see something new. The Dig is thrilled to welcome Buddhi Witch apothecary for health and wellness needs this fall. The Dig aims to create a space that exemplifies the connection between friends, family, and neighbors. The owners say the most rewarding aspects are the conversations they have with every person who walks through the door. Making crêpes and hosting new events every week allows them to dig into the local goodness of the community. The Dig is excited to showcase new vendors and artists, create more opportunities for farmers, and share the goodness in Millerton. Check out The Dig's website this fall for the latest menus and events.

INSURING YOUR WORLD

COLLECTIBLES... How best do you insure your precious valuables? This is a great discussion point when talking about certain valuables such as paintings, jewelry, gun or stamp collections, etc. But before we speak of these insurable items, what about your home or business property; do you know if it has been placed on the Historic Registry with a State or Federal government agency? If not and you think your property has historical significance? I would recommend finding out if the property is listed on a registry. The implications at the time of claim can be amazing – you see, most Historical Registries require that a structure be rebuilt at the time of loss with the same materials that were originally used such as horse-hair plaster, chestnut beams and floorboards, laid up stone foundations, and on and on. A regular homeowners policy does not provide for such coverage, so if one has a loss and doesn't have a policy that acknowledges the requirements of the Historical Registry to rebuild with like kind and quality, the owner may find themselves in a financial bind! The same holds true for the above collectibles, these items are never covered for their "above average intrinsic values" unless they are appraised and scheduled separately. The insurer acknowledges and accepts the values set forth, so at the time of loss there is no question as to the settlement value. As we always say, people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan. So call your agent today and discuss your coverage to make sure there are no surprises at the time of loss!

STYLING WITH ANTIQUES, FINDING BALANCE THROUGH CONTRAST

In 2020 it's hard to imagine interiors without the modern influences of clean architectural lines and modern minimalism. The goal of decorating homes with antiques should not be to deny the present and categorically exclude modern design elements. The key to conceiving timeless interiors in this day and age lies in discovering a balance through contrasting textures, cohesive color palates, and a harmonizing mix of modern minimalism and classical maximalism.

To make this design process easier, start by choosing one piece, early in the process, to make other decisions off of. Browse local antique shops, or your favorite online retailer and find something you can fall in love with. Once each room has a statement piece that you cannot live without, choose objects and designs that relate well to it.

– Phoebe Eilis Rohn, @phoeberohnantiquesinteriors

THE HISTORY OF YOUR NEXT PRE-OWNED CAR

Summer is history, October is here, and so is the history edition of your favorite magazine! Like everything else that exists in the world your next pre-owned car has a history, too. For most buyers, a vehicle's history is a consideration when in the market for their next car. In today's competitive used car market prices, options, pictures, and condition are more available than ever. This is all made possible by the ever-increasing and improving digital platforms that vehicles are advertised on online. This is where most buyers can and will start to investigate the history of a car they are considering. Start with the condition of the vehicle as pictured. Look for cleanliness, damage, and anything that looks unusual or concerning. On most online listings you will find a CARFAX vehicle history report. This provides invaluable information. Look for number of owners, mileage inconsistencies, accident reports, recalls, service records, and ownership type. Everyone wants the one owner, privately owned, dealer serviced, no accident, three-year-old car! Keep in mind these are rare and expect to pay a premium. On the other hand, if a car shows a less-than-desirable history report, you may find a good bargain. Whether you found a cream puff online or a questionable bargain, it's time to check the vehicle out in person. When you arrive look for condition of paint, tires, interior, and undercarriage. Pay special attention to the high traffic areas of a car's interior. The wear on the edge of the seat and door sill will show how the previous owner cared for the vehicle. Dealers have a hard time hiding this during reconditioning and therefore it is a good indicator of how the rest of the car looked under previous ownership. A look into a vehicle's history will help you pay the right price for the right car for you!

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSIONS

Quintessential villages throughout the area create a nostalgic and refreshing glimpse of New England's history. It is through intentional preservation of character that Litchfield County, the Hudson Valley, and the Berkshires elicit a feeling of "times passed."

Historic District Commissions have been formed as a response to our community's commitment to remaining true to our origins. These groups work with homeowners who own within the district (which can be an area or specific addresses throughout town) to maintain the character and architectural integrity of historic homes and buildings, which in turn does the same for our coveted villages. Historic District Commissions typically regulate only what can be seen from the public view of a property, and improvements or repairs of like-kind are most favorably considered. Fencing, siding, windows, and additions to a home are just some of the items that could fall into the Historic District Commission's realm. Acknowledgement of modern advancements both within a property, as well as the villages, is recognized. Therefore, each application is reviewed independently by the commission when considering a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Small towns are the reflection of their communities. It is with pride that villages throughout the region parade Main Street, host events on the Green, organize runs and rides which showcase the countryside, and welcome visitors the opportunity to experience the beauty of our towns. Historic District Commissions represent the values of our citizens in offering a platform for discussion and a guide toward merging the needs of the future while honoring the integrity of our past.

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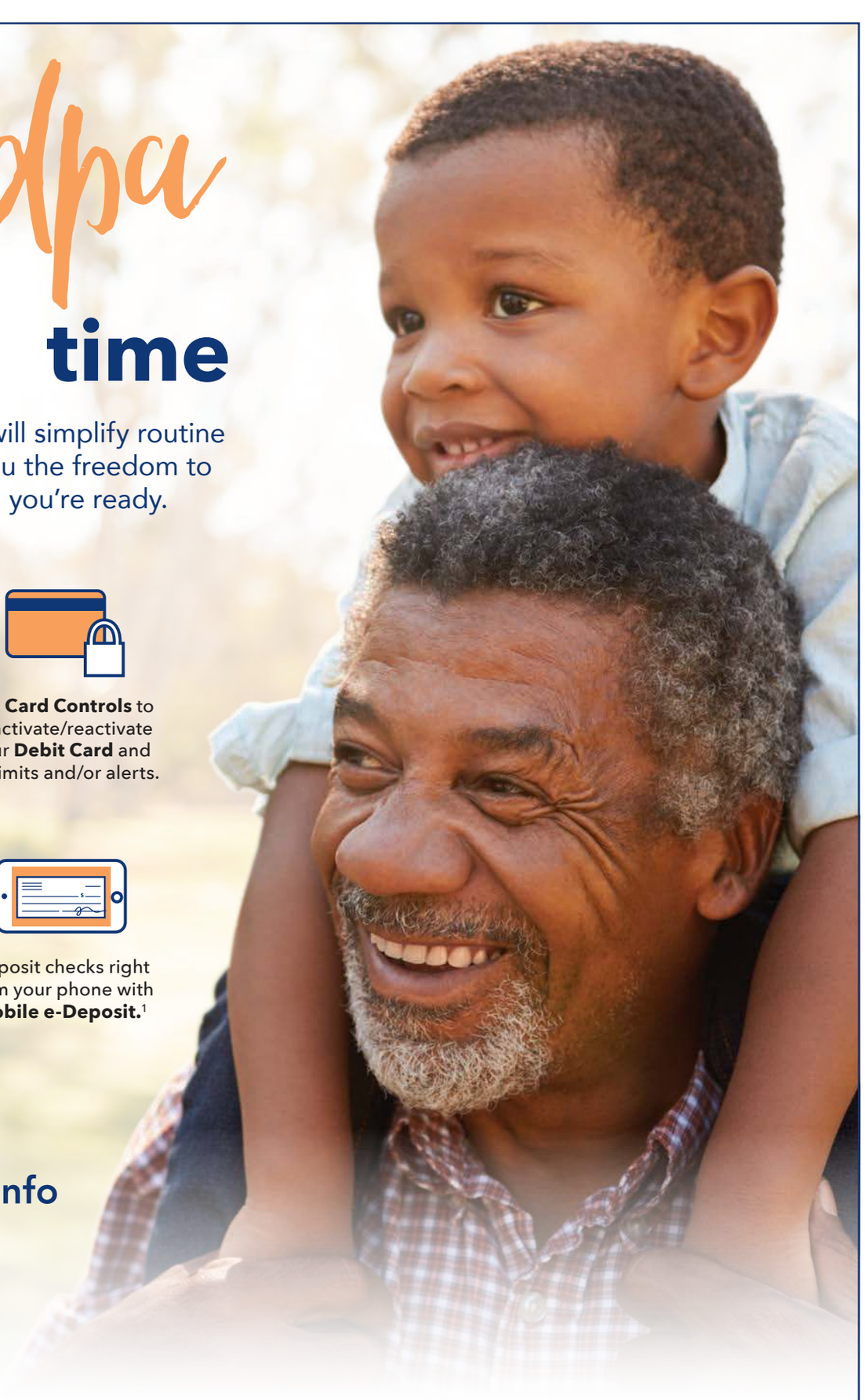

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