



DHS News

The Official Newsletter
of the

Deposit Historical Society

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The Deposit Historical Society

145 Second Street

Deposit, New York 13754

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Website: www.deposithistoricalsociety.org

Note: You can view our newsletters with color pictures in pdf format on our website!

President's message

Despite the losses of long-time president Smitty Axtell and genealogist Anne Parsons, the Deposit Historical Society continues to move forward in a positive direction.

Changes have occurred. In addition to electing me, Terry Raymond, as the acting president, several new members have joined the governing board. The board members have been adding new exhibits, rearranging the front bank room and the research center, and have cleaned out an unused room and have turned it into a vintage bedroom exhibit. Deposit history is of utmost importance.

Despite the main museum in the bank being closed until the July 4th weekend 2021, the research center remained open every Tuesday morning from 9:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. The research center is where donations of items can be made and family histories researched. Each donation - whether a photo, document, or artifact - represents a family treasure that contributes to the preserved history of the Deposit community.

We have renewed our monthly programs and for November 17 we have invited a group of talented actresses to perform Judith Present's historical play "Those Who Crossed Barriers" about Americans brave enough to cross boundaries that were prohibitive before they came along. The performance will begin at 7 PM with our traditional treats at the end of the program.

All of our programs and entrance to the museum are free and open to the public.

Hope to see you at the museum very soon.

Terry Raymond



Axtell at the Connecticut Spring Antiques Show,
March 2016, Antiques and The Arts Weekly photo.

Richard Smith ‘Smitty’ Axtell, Dealer, 73

DEPOSIT, N.Y. — Richard Smith “Smitty” Axtell passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, May 27, at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton, N.Y. The cause of death was confirmed by his family as complications from congestive heart failure.

Born on October 13, 1947, in Deposit, N.Y., Axtell grew up on the family farm. He attended Deposit Central High School and the University of Albany, where he got a degree in economics and library science. He subsequently got an Associate’s degree in agriculture from Delhi Ag and Tech College in Delhi, N.Y.

Axtell developed his passion for antiques from his parents, particularly his mother, who helped him go to area flea markets in 1962 while he was still in school. In 1963, he opened a shop in his family home. After finishing school in 1968, he started to deal full time and purchased an Eighteenth Century tavern and inn in Deposit. This became the home of The Rookery Bookery and The House of Axtell Antiques, a business that specialized in Americana that was still in operation at the time of his passing. In an interview he gave with Joy Hanes in 2013, Axtell noted that one of the people who was most influential in his life was Jim Cain of Roscoe, N.Y., who Axtell met at the age of 15.

Axtell was the president and charter member of the Deposit Community Historical Society and served as past president of Deposit Rotary. He was a Master Mason of the Freemason’s Lodge in Deposit and a member of the First United Methodist Church of Deposit. His professional associations included the New Hampshire Antiques Dealers Association and the Early American Industries Association.

Antique show promoter and dealer, Frank Gaglio, heard the news of Axtell’s passing as he was setting up the May 29-30 Antiques At Rhinebeck show. “The sadness of hearing about Smitty Axtell’s passing stayed with me the whole show. He ranks among the icons of our industry, along with Roger and Ruth Bacon and Lillian Blankley

Cogan. I first heard about him from several dealers and met him for the first time when I was a fledgling antique dealer. I remember that his mother would greet you at the door to his shop with a smile and elegance that stayed with her throughout her entire lifetime. As she walked me around the shop, she knew about whatever I looked at; it was easy to see that he got his knowledge and experience from his mom.

“As I got to know him better, I’d ask him to go upstairs and bring me something wonderful, which he did because that was where he kept some of his most prized possessions. One of the things I bought from him was a New York State stenciled Tree of Life bedspread, which is now in several books on textiles. Another piece was a tiger maple heart-shaped snuff box that I bought from him at the York show a few years ago, which was the last time I saw him.

“He was a wonderful addition to any antique show I was involved with. He had a volume of experience and knowledge that our business has lost. He was truly one-of-a kind, and I will personally miss him greatly.”

Newburgh, N.Y., dealers Daniel and Karen Olson shared the news of Axtell’s passing on social media. When we reached out to them, they said, “In 1971, when living in Ithaca, we discovered Axtell Antiques. We bought our first early piece from him at that time, a cherry butler’s desk that he provided a wonderful if somewhat fanciful story about the butler, the candle burns and use of the various drawers! The human element and history were given equal treatment to the object itself, a part often neglected completely. He continued to be a source for our collecting through the 1970s. When Dan went full time in antiques in the early 1980s, he was an important outlet to sell to for several years. Axtell continued to be possibly one of the few we could share ‘antique war stories’ with that for various reasons couldn’t be shared with a wider audience. In recent years we enjoyed being neighbors at the York shows, as well as several others.”

Joy Hanes took a break from moving to tell *Antiques and The Arts Weekly*, “he was a sweet man who was probably incapable of saying anything mean about anyone or anything. And he was generous with sharing his knowledge, which was encyclopedic. I learned many things from him. He also had a wonderful and dry sense of humor. He was a great dealer, and a great man.”

Fellow Mason and Otego, N.Y., dealer, Franklin “Buzz” Hesse shared some of his memories of a friend who he had known for more than 50 years.

“At the beginning, we were often very competitive at auctions if we both wanted the same thing, but over the years, that rivalry went away, and we developed a wonderful friendship. It also came about because both of us were born-again Christians; he was like a brother in Christ to me and he felt the same way. We could talk about all the material things we loved and felt very privileged to handle. He never took that lightly and appreciated the things that came his way.

“He was someone you admired, and you believed because he was honest and truthful and knowledgeable. His passing will leave a void for a lot of us.”

Heather and Wayne Graf of Norton, Mass., submitted a remembrance of Axtell in a letter to the editor. “Our first purchase from Smitty was an unusual early tin wall sconce with snuffer at the Rookery in 1985. It still hangs in the keeping room of our circa 1780 New England cape. Wayne and I have looked forward to seeing this very special man (in bright red blazer!) and his booth filled with fine early Americana at many shows over the years. Beyond Smitty’s knowledge and passion as an Antiquarian, it was his kind and gentle soul that will be remembered and sorely missed.”

Axtell was predeceased by his parents, Moses R. and Doris Smith Axtell and his wife, Sandra

Axtell, who he met in 1986 and married in 1996. He is survived by his brothers Daniel and Sarah Axtell of Deposit and Peter Axtell and Alan Munson of Greene, N.Y., nephews Jesse and Joshua Axtell, niece Abigail Stevens, and other great-nieces and great-nephews.

A memorial service will be held at the First Methodist Church of Deposit, at 11 am on Saturday, June 19; calling hours are 9 to 11 am. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the First United Methodist Church of Deposit, 109 Second Street, Deposit, NY 13754.



Richard ‘Smitty’ Axtell, taken at the York Antiques Show a few years ago, Daniel Olson photo.

This article first appeared in *Antiques and The Arts Weekly* — June 18, 2021
Reprinted here with permission.

Anne Parsons – A Remembrance

Delivered by Kay Hoban at Anne's Memorial 4/19/2021

I am going to tell you about another destination on Anne's well-known walk from her home on Lippincott to Clark to Dean – when instead of heading to the Library she turned left on Second to reach her Research Desk at the Deposit Historical Society - her second home.

Anne was a devoted member of the Society since its inception and a member of the Board for nearly as many years. She brought to the Society a passion for all things Deposit.

I think it is also appropriate to mention she served as Historian to the Town of Sanford, a position well-suited to her passion and her skills. In one devoted citizen we had our librarian, our historian, and our research guru.

In the early 1980's the Historical Society took on the monumental task of computerizing the Museum's archive information. This was long before other institutions of our size even considered such an undertaking. Anne was key in the data entering process. Thousands of items were entered. We continue to rely on that information and are lucky that we have been able to upload it into the more user friendly programs of today. I remind you that this was back in the day that when you opened your computer all you saw was a C prompt. Most of you probably don't know what I am talking about but, trust me, it was clunky to say the least.

Thank you, Anne, for all of those tedious hours.

Becky Raymond said to me the other day that asking Anne a question about Deposit was like pushing a button – information just poured out. She was our very own Google Search Engine – the critical difference – her information was accurate and full of nuance and memories.

And her "Google" button was priceless to us as we receive countless requests for information via email, snail mail, telephone, and drop-ins. Whether the question was about people, places, or things, Anne would plunge into the research to find the answer. Perhaps she just searched her

brain, or pulled out a mysterious file drawer, or looked on the right bookshelf. If that failed, she was familiar with all of the resources the internet offered.

But of course there is never enough time to record all the knowledge and memories we gather in a lifetime. And when we lost Anne, a treasure trove of information slipped away with her.



So let's remember Anne when we pass the Library or walk by the Museum and quietly thank her. Her passion for the history and cultural wellbeing of her hometown – our hometown - will enrich us for generations to come.

Anne, may you rest in peace.

KH



TERRY RAYMOND PRESIDENT

For the past few years I was seated next to Smitty as the Vice President & Treasurer and have also kept an eye on the needs of our physical plant. Becky and I, with the help of Lars, have truly enjoyed working on the curb appeal of the museum. However, I didn't expect to be thrust into this leadership role. Thankfully, my experience at the Society made me aware of the complexities of the job and I am excited to take it on.

I bring with me 35 years of experience with the Deposit Central School where, in addition to being the Deposit Elementary School Principal and Athletic Director, I have served as an elementary physical education teacher, coach of football, baseball and basketball. I have been Section Four baseball coordinator for 14 years and am presently in my fifth year as the Midstate Athlete Conference secretary/treasurer. I am also the treasurer for the Deposit Family Recreation Group and treasurer for the Deposit Alumni Association.

So, eagerly, I say to all of you, "Let's play ball!"

KAY HOBAN - VICE PRESIDENT

It's a long story, but suffice it to say that luck – serendipity – fate – or whatever – made my husband Lars and I the happy owners of a wonderful historical home in Deposit.

The little girl who grew up in the house, Elizabeth Bell King, was still alive and living next door. She inspired my interest in all things Deposit. A few years down the road I introduced myself to Ellen Jogo and offered to help her with a book about the architecture of our historical homes – *Strolling Through Time*. We became fast friends and also collaborated on *Passing the Time with Vic – A History of Deposit, New York*.

Both Elizabeth and Ellen were founding members of the Historical Society and because of them I joined, accepted a position on the Board, and now am very proud to be serving as Vice President.



INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF

We are so proud and lucky that so many Depositonians recognized our need after the untimely deaths of Smitty Axtell and Anne Parsons. At first we were in shock but before long out of our loss came rebirth. Our new members have reenergized the Society and we are ready to continue the mission that Smitty, Anne, and all the others that went before so clearly envisioned and worked so hard to achieve.

JEANNIE GRATTA

I bought my home on Pine Street 22 years ago. I never intended to retire here but, after spending lots of weekends here and then, longer periods of time after retirement 4 yrs ago, my primary residence is now Deposit.



Because my home was built in 1806, I started to investigate the history. Through Smitty Axtell, I connected with his distant cousin who lived in the house in the 1920s. She (now in her 90s) and her daughter provided me with pictures and stories and traveled for a visit a few years ago. Through Smitty, I was able to find out about a museum board opening which fit in perfectly with my passion for history and love of this beautiful village.

JANICE MAPES - TREASURER



I am a lifelong resident of Deposit, and my husband, Rick, and I had the pleasure of raising our family in this close knit town.

Having family roots that reach back to the origins of Deposit and the surrounding areas, I have always held a deep appreciation for this town and village. In fact, my grandparents raised their family in the very building that is now the Historical Society.

After retiring from a career in financial services, I was looking for a way to contribute some time in giving back to the community. The Deposit Historical Society had a great need for new members to keep it moving forward, and I was very honored to be selected as the treasurer of this organization.

I look forward to being part of a wonderful network of people who are dedicated to making the Historical Society a “must see” for the residents and visitors of Deposit.

JANE CONSTANTINO

Recently I moved to Deposit from Long Island in February 2021. I retired from my job in October 2020 after 35 years working at a labor union in Queens.

Many people asked us why we moved up north where it's cold as opposed to moving down



south to warmer climes. The answer is that when we came up here camping, we fell in love with the mountains and rivers and the beauty of the area. Now that I am retired, I wanted to find a place to volunteer doing something interesting. My friend Diann Scott suggested volunteering at the DHS and arranged to introduce me to Smitty. The folks who volunteer at the DHS are welcoming and extremely knowledgeable about Deposit and the neighboring towns. I am not only helping out the DHS, I am also learning about my new hometown.

ED SHIRKEY

I have lived most of my life in Deposit and both my wife and I graduated from Deposit High School. I was active in high school sports, student government and the Boy Scouts of America where I attained the rank of Eagle Scout. The Knapp bank building which now houses the Historical Society Museum brings back fond memories for me as we held our scout meetings in that building in the 70's.

I attended SUNY Oswego and spent 35 years in public education teaching a variety of technology education classes and coaching wrestling. After fifteen years in the classroom, I served as Middle School/High School Principal, Director of Instruction and School Superintendent. I retired from the Deposit Central School District as Superintendent of Schools in 2016.

I am honored to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Deposit Historical Society and

enjoy educating our patrons about the many attributes and rich history that Deposit has to offer.

MICHELE SHIRKEY

Michele has lived all of her life in Deposit, NY. She resides on Route 8 on the family farmland that dates back to the late 1700's. Her famous ancestor Moses Axtell was a Minuteman in the Revolutionary War and threw tea overboard during the Boston Tea Party. Moses' family members were some of the first settlers in the Barbourville valley. The house she grew up in was rural school district number 10, also known as the Barbourville School.



After graduating from DCS, Michele pursued her education at Oneonta State and later at Cortland State. She is a retired home economics teacher, school counselor, and elementary school principal dedicating 35 years to public education

It was her love of rural life, small towns, and preserving history that lead her to become a lifetime member and volunteer at the historical society. She is enjoying genealogy searches, redecorating and rearranging the museum, and museum sitting where she can talk with visitors about our local community and its history.

Sun. Dec. 5th, @ 2 p.m.

**“A Holdrege Family Christmas”
Holiday Music & Singing**

Membership Renewal Time Again

If you are not a Lifetime member, it is time to renew your membership for 2021.

Membership rates are as follows:

Lifetime -- \$100

Annual -- \$20

Senior (55 and over) and Student -- \$10

Please submit your membership renewal promptly to Deposit Historical Society,
145 Second Street, Deposit, NY 13754.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Contact the DHS News editors for information, suggestions, or address changes...

If you have information to share with us about our mysteries, historical events, or suggestions for new articles or projects at the Museum, **or if you have moved**, mail it to DHS Newsletter editors Michael and Gail Musante at 145 Second Street, Deposit, NY 13754, or email it to one of us at gail.musante@gmail.com We will be delighted to hear from you! Thanks!!

Website: www.deposithistoricalsociety.org

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