

Between the Lakes

A Newsletter of the
Interlaken Historical Society

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www.InterlakenHistory.org



Josh Whalen's home on Route 96 at East Covert Road, see page 4 for more on the Historical Preservation award presented to him at the April 2007 meet-

IHS July Program

OLD FASHIONED FAMILY SOCIAL

Sunday July 22, 2007

4:00 — 6:30 p.m.

The Community is Invited!

The trustees of the Interlaken Historical Society would like to invite you to join us on Sunday, July 22, between 4:00 and 6:30 p.m. for an old fashioned social dish-to-pass get-together on the lawn between the Grange Hall and the Covert Baptist Church.

We will supply grilled hot dogs with rolls and fixings, lemonade and ice tea, as well as ice cream cones for dessert. We've also been promised a dish of "Barkee's big, bad, baked beans." Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service.

Did you miss the Covert Tour? The Grange Hall, Baptist Church and Town Hall will be open for your viewing. We will also have videos running of the 2005 Plowing Demonstration and the 2006 Covert Tour.

Please drop by to eat, relax, and visit.

Thank you to

Betsey VanBenschoten and Ginny Boyes



A very special thank you to Betsey and Ginny for riding on the Interlaken Historical Society float for Olde Home Day 2007. The old-fashioned switch board and telephone celebrated our telephone operators of years gone by. See more Olde Home Day pictures on page 7.

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President's Message

Greetings!

It seems that not only farming "depends on the weather," so does this newsletter. With such nice weather we have all been busy with outdoor things. Everywhere you look hay is being made and it is still only the middle of June.

The news on the Telephone Building in Interlaken is good. We have signed a lease with the Trumansburg Telephone Company for one year which is renewable for up to five years with first refusal to purchase the building when the Phone Company has removed their equipment. We will have use of about half of the building until that occurs.

The great news is the generosity of the Phone Company and their continuing commitment to the community. The annual rent is \$1.00 (yes, that is one dollar) including utilities and building upkeep. We will mow the grass, prune the shrubs and shovel the sidewalk. Someone has said we have the "deal of the century". I prefer to think of it as the "gift of the century."

We are saddened by the loss of Louise Akins. Louise contributed over 25 years of energy and talent always with a smile and wonderful sense of humor. Among her many activities Louise worked on accessioning. Artifacts in the museums have an accession number written on them. On glass and metal artifacts, the number is written on pink fingernail polish. Each time I see that pink fingernail polish I will remember Louise.

Printing costs and postage continue to rise using an ever larger portion of the Soci-

ety's budget. We want to publicly thank the Delavan Foundation for providing financial assistance this year for the newsletters.

This spring has been a busy time preparing for Olde Home Day, the 4th Grader Projects and their annual visit to the Farmers' Museum. I want to thank every volunteer who helped with the preparation and with the events themselves. It is heart warming to have someone walk up and ask "how can I help."

The longer I am involved with the Historical Society, the more apparent it becomes that an important function of the Society is providing opportunities for interaction among members of the community. So, rather than a July Program, the Trustees are planning an old fashioned social on Sunday, July 22nd. The social will be on the lawn between the Covert Baptist Church and Interlaken Grange Hall. Members of the Grange and the Baptist Church have also been invited to join us. See details elsewhere in this newsletter. We look forward to seeing and visiting with our friends.

At right: Board President, Allan Buddle and caller Nicole Nelson enjoying the polka at the April Grange & Historical Society dance.



Donations to the Society

Special thanks for these recent acquisitions:
Mary Stilwell – Genealogy of the Denison Family
Eva Clapp Estate – Collection of papers and slides
Anne James – the Climax Apple Parer & Slicing Machine
Jimmy Taylor – Postcards & Ledgers about horse-shoeing
Phil Stannard – 1941 Assessment of Fire Relief Association for South Seneca area
Doris Tulla – Postcards & photographs of Interlaken
Ron Clark – Gleockler & Clark Family History
Phyllis Betzler – Labels from Wickes Pharmacy
Ulysses Historical Society – Wooden packing crate “Interlaken Brand Peas, Hager & Halstead”
Tom Trenchard – Wooden packing crate “John Bainbridge, Kidders Ferry”
Nellie Hay – Family photographs & news clippings

Shown below: bent and broken trees from the 1936 Ice Storm; from the collection of Nellie Hay.



In Memory of Louise Akins

Louise "Lou" Akins passed away unexpectedly on May 21st, 2007. She served as a trustee of the Interlaken Historical Society for over twenty-five years. Lou was the secretary for most of these years. Just one of her outstanding and valuable accomplishments was to learn and set-up a system of accessioning the countless items that had been given to the Society, as well as keeping up with items constantly coming in. When one remembers that during this time the Farmers' Museum was opened, this was a big task. She willingly taught this method to trustees and volunteers as they came. The Interlaken Historical Society will be forever grateful for her knowledge and contributions. We will miss our friend.

Donations In Memory of Louise Akins

Jayne, Robert & Robby Thompson, Interlaken
Sharon & Lee Braden, Interlaken
Ralph & Dorothy Torrey, Newark Valley, NY
Catherine Ritter, Interlaken
Jerry & Marty Giroux, Longmont, CO
Paul & Marjorie Wyckoff, Interlaken
John & Anne Knight, Interlaken
June Bigalow, Pittsburg, PA
Mary Willers, Interlaken
Lelia Terry, Interlaken
Ruth Lincoln, Interlaken
Ladies Bridge Club, Interlaken
Ann & Allan Buddle, Interlaken
Dave & Jean Powell, Interlaken

News from Your Hometown Library

By Pat Moore

We have many new books for your summer reading enjoyment. Some of them are: *The Overlook*, by Connelly; *The Woods*, by Coben; *Simple Genius*, by Baldacci; *The Sleeping Doll*, by Deaver; *Back on Blossom Street*, by Macomber; *The Good Guy*, by Koontz; *Tumbling Blocks*, by Fowler; and *The Quilters Homecoming*, by Chiaverini, her latest in the Elm Creek Quilts series.

Our Summer Reading Program is "Get a Clue at the Library." We are doing it this year with the Even Start Literacy families with Jennifer Gray, the teacher. Any other young children are welcome also. The program will run July 10, 17, 24 and 31st from 10:00 AM until 11:30 AM at the library. Our special program closing will be Mrs. Carroll and her puppets on August 6th. Look for posters around town. We will have stories, crafts and other fun things. If you are interested in helping, *please* let me know. You can call me at 532-4341, helpers are always needed and appreciated.

Olde Home Day and our annual book sale went well, with special thanks to my son, Louis, and the other helpers. We want to thank folks for all the donations and all who bought bags of books. If someone is interesting in buying books this summer we can be of service during regular library hours.

We want to welcome a couple of new people to our library, a volunteer, Bonnie Caldwell, and a trustee, Connie Kindig.

Bonnie will be working Monday nights and Connie is now our secretary.

We also want to say how pleased we are to have a copy of *In the Shadow of Pickle Peak* by local author Marjorie Wilcox Dobblin, who was here signing her books. Marjorie graduated from ICS in 1952.

Watch for information on our third Teen Program this summer. Wendy Barrows does a great job with our teens. We are using the summer reading theme this year; it ought to be great fun! We will have many new and exciting books for show and tell at that time.



Marjorie Wilcox Dobblin talking with a visitor on the library lawn, Olde Home Day 2007.

Historic Preservation Award

The Historical Society has created a historical preservation award for a home, commercial building, or agricultural structure within the Town of Covert. Nominations for the award are accepted from the membership and general public, and are presented at the Society's April annual meeting and program. A commemorative plaque in recognition of the efforts to preserve our local history is given to the recipient.

Projects to be recognized must have been restored by the current owner, and work completed should preserve and enhance the architectural heritage of the structure as well as improve its function by today's standards while preserving the historical character of the building.

The 2007 historic preservation award has been presented to Josh Whalen for his work on his home on the corner of East Covert Road and Rt. 96, Covert.

The main house, facing east/west on East Covert Rd., was erected around 1830, and has been under restoration by Josh for the past eight years. It continues to be a work in progress. Wherever possible, the original woodwork, doors, windows and flooring have been preserved. The original floorboards in the upstairs hall are over 20" wide. The portion of the home which faces Rt. 96 is believed to have been an existing building, possibly from the Pratt property across the street, which was moved to its current site and attached to the original structure. The asbestos siding has been removed, windows and entries restored, and

News of our Neighbors

Ovid Historical Society

July & August the Society Museum will have displays of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, the Black Diamond, the Peanut train, the Sodus Bay Railroad and much more. Open Thursdays & Saturdays 10 to 2. Museum is at 7203 Main Street, next to Covert Funeral Home.

Lodi Historical Society

Harry McCue, Artist retrospective, date to be announced.

Thursday, August 23 at 5 pm: Community Picnic at Lodi Point, dish to pass, with Lodi Library, Auxiliary and Town officials.

the original clapboard is being painted a Williamsburg green. When Josh purchased the home it had a total of 17 rooms. He currently has renovated five bedrooms on the second floor, as well as the downstairs living area. Surrounding the home is an assortment of beautiful gardens.

When the restoration is completed there is a possibility that the home will become a bed and breakfast catering to the winery tourists.

We congratulate Josh for saving this Covert landmark.

2008 Calendar Pictures Needed

The publications committee has begun working on the 2008 Historical Society Calendar and we need helping finding pictures. One of the goals of the Historical Society in printing the calendars is to bring you a variety of pictures on different topics over a larger span of years. There are approximately 2,200 photographs in the Society collection and we will continue to use many of them for the calendar. What we don't have in the collection are pictures from the mid-20th century.

We are looking for pictures of celebrations (holidays, reunions, Main Street when the ICS Art Club painted the windows, etc.), pictures of the businesses in Interlaken, Covert or along Route 89. We are especially looking for pictures of the gas stations in the community over the years, or the restaurants, or maybe you have pictures from Memorial Day at one of the cemeteries? The response we received in 2006 for pictures of military personnel was wonderful so we are hoping you will look at your own photographs again to see if you can help us.

When you are looking at pictures, look beyond the main subject. What is in the background? This photograph of the front of Storath's store on Main Street is actually part of a larger picture of two students on graduation day 1942.

We are hoping you will look at your own photographs again to see if you can help us with any of these topics, or perhaps you have photographs that we haven't listed. The Historical Society would be happy to make copies of your photographs for our collection. To contact the Historical Society call Ann Buddle at 607-532-4213, you may email the society at museum@interlakenhistory.org or leave your photographs at the Interlaken Library. Please be sure to include any information on the people or events pictured as well as your name and phone number so we can return your photographs. If you would rather not leave the pictures, we can make arrangements to meet you and scan the photographs.



Remembering Olde Home Day 2007

Below: Mayor Bill Larsen cuts the ribbon, officially opening the *Interlaken Memorial Garden* at the corner of Main and Railroad Avenue.

At right: Mary Willers talks with visitors near the Historical Society 1950s business display. If you missed seeing the table and memorabilia on Olde Home Day, stop at the display window at Hubbard Heating & Plumbing to see the items.

2007 Local Businesses were shown on the new display board given to the Society and the Library by Walt Steesy.



Left: Marty Schlabach talking with visitors at the Farmers' Museum.



Right: Luke, the Buddle's Belgian draft horse had visitors wanting to talk horses and pet him during the morning.



Lower right: using photographs from the Historical Society collection Interlaken Grange recalls buildings from the 1950s and 60s.



Fourth Grade Visit to the Farmers' Museum June 2007



The three South Seneca 4th Grade classes visited the Farmers' Museum on June 11th to learn about the planting and harvesting of wheat in the 19th century. They learned about preparing the soil, planting the seed, harvesting the crop and processing it. Although there were several hands-on exercises, the flail may have been the favorite. Each teacher received a booklet with photos, information and many questions to extend the learning experience.

Shown above: Allan Buddle pointing out a grain cradle made in the Nivision Grain Cradle Factory between 1850 and 1873.

At Right: Kari Lusk demonstrating the use of a cyclone seeder for broadcasting wheat seed.



Above: Always a favorite with students and adults the Fanning Mill was used to separate the grain from the straw, chaff and weed seeds.

Right: Sally Hubbard demonstrates one of the many steps in harvesting wheat in the 19th century.



Editor's note: at the April 2007 Meeting of the Historical Society, Anne James presented the Apple Parer to the Interlaken Historical Society. What follows is the text she prepared for that evening which gives the background of both the Apple Parer and the family's wish for the Society to have the item.

**A Family Treasure
George W. Brokaw's
Apple Paring and Slicing Machine**

by Anne Elizabeth James

A few years ago I bought my grandparents' farmhouse on Brokaw Road, the Brokaw Homestead. Some of you may have known my grandparents, Herbert and Ruth Brokaw. Or perhaps you knew their daughter, my mother, Virginia Brokaw James. My grandfather's grandparents also lived at the homestead. George Walters Brokaw was my great-great-grandfather. He was born in March of 1834 on the farm where he lived all his life, and he died there too, in 1907. It is in his memory, at the request

of



Anne James and her brother Alan with George Brokaw's Apple Paring and Slicing Machine, "The Climax."

mother, that I present a Brokaw family treasure to the Interlaken Farmers' Museum: George W. Brokaw's Apple Paring and Slicing Machine, "THE CLIMAX."

In a book by Donald Thornton called *Apple Parers*, published in 1997 by Off-Beat Books of Sunnyvale, California, there is a chapter called "The Climax: One Inventor's Story." It is about George W. Brokaw and his invention. May I tell you a little of his story?

Thornton refers to *The 1895 Portrait and Biographical Record of Seneca and Schuyler Counties* where it says "he [George] was reared a farmer and educated "in the district schools." Thornton adds that in addition to producing apples, buckwheat, cherries and strawberries on the 85 acre homestead, at the age of 25 in 1859, he began dealing in wagons, carriages and sleighs. In 1861 he married Cornelia Elizabeth Covert and over the years had four children." His children were Mary, Abram, Alice and Minor. Minor was my great grandfather.

In May of 1869 he was granted a patent for his apple paring and slicing machine which, according to Thornton, "many collectors believe is the ultimate in design, and one of the rarest, if not the rarest, parer around. It was his only invention or at least the only one he ever patented."

Thornton's book includes excerpts from George's journal, entries that were brief and to the point, yet wonderful sketches of his life and times. Thornton said that "the jour-

nal is a goldmine of information about rural life in New York State in the 19th century in general, and specifically one man's goal — one man's obsession — to produce what he considered the perfect machine to pare and slice apples.”

Journal entries from 1868 describe a train trip to New York City to find a manufacturer. Thornton said that most journal entries in 1869 referred to the invention, “but there also was church news and the sale of wagons.” On April 10th, 1869, he worked on the machine, but later in the day was installed as deacon and clerk of the Reformed Church. On April 19th, 1869, he set out for Washington D.C. to patent his invention. He got his boots mended for three cents, paid sixty-five cents for boat fare, another sixty-five cents train fare to Elmira, and twenty-five cents for a pocket testament. The train fare from Elmira to Baltimore was nine dollars and ten cents and it cost him an additional dollar fifty to get from Baltimore to Washington. In his April 25th, 1869 entry, he noted that he went to Metropolitan Church and saw President Grant!

After being awarded the patent in May 1869, George returned home and continued refining his invention and searching for a manufacturer for his invention. A journal entry from September 1869 noted that he pared a bushel of apples in thirteen minutes with his invention. He traveled to Fitchburg, Massachusetts in May 1870. I was amused to see ten cents spent for licorice was included in the list of expenditures for May 7th.

More poignant entries were made on August 5th and 6th, 1870 telling that the house

had burned, "with all that was in the upper rooms, buttry, kitchen and cellar... all the clothing, dishes and table were burned, also all my diaries except last years and dictionary." Thornton notes “it must have been devastating...[but] as was Brokaw's bent, no other mention of the fire was made.”

Thornton says that “by March of 1871 George apparently had given up on other manufacturers and decided to make the machine himself. In June of that year, the parer was christened ‘THE CLIMAX.’ The same hard, constant work continued as Brokaw purchased parts, refined parts, assembled the machines himself, contracted for shipping boxes and attended to dozens of other details...in between he did work on the farm. In September of 1871, the first dozen machines were completed. Over the next month things boomed, with Brokaw noting all the other parers he put together, roughly amounting to 500, and all shipments going out — by the dozens. But abruptly, and with no explanation, the excitement ended. The last entry for a shipment came only a month later...By 1872, there was no mention of the machine...Explanations of the turn of events were not given...Entries noting work on the machine were slowly replaced with details of life in general and of work on wagons, which continued for years.”

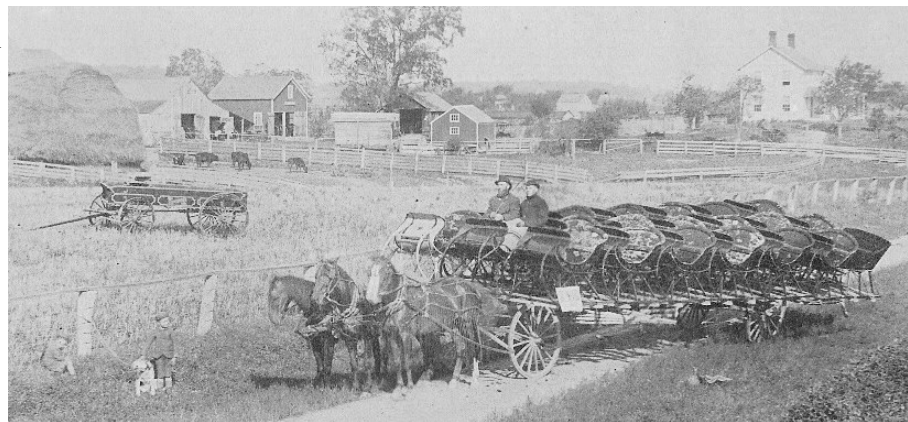
There is no mention of the invention in George W. Brokaw's obituary in the Interlaken Review of December 20, 1907:

The news of the death of George W. Brokaw at his home in the town of Lodi, yesterday morning, came as a shock to his many friends. He had been complaining for a week, but no one thought the end was so near. He was born on the farm where he died, 73 years ago next March, and for many years was engaged in the wagon business, making an acquaintance all over the country between the lakes. He is survived by his wife and two children, Minor at home, and Mrs. Thos. Freestone of this village. Funeral will be held at the home at 1:30 Saturday afternoon.

I had invited Mom's first cousin, John Brokaw, to present George W. Brokaw's Apple Paring and Slicing Machine, so the Brokaw family treasure could be handed over by a real Brokaw. He was not able to come but in his e-mail said:

If I could be there, I would emphasize just how driven George Walters was for several years to build this and build it right: the trip to Washington for the patent, the trip to New York to find a builder, and finally in Fitchburg, Massachusetts helping make sure it was done right and then the family home burns down. It seems he stayed there for a short while to tie loose ends and then knowing where his priorities were, he came home

Groton Cutters being delivered to George Brokaw dealer, at his home. The photograph was taken by Farmer Village photographer M.E. Slaght in the 1880s.



and for the most part made no more mention of the project again...For several years it was his life and maybe the name *Climax* was appropriate. Don Thornton had one of the few of these parers still around and paid one thousand dollars for it. He regarded George as one of the premier makers of apple parers. Don was at a meeting with a group of engineers at one time and showed it to them. They examined it and stood up and clapped in appreciation...I'm glad that George Brokaw finally got his recognition from the only place he would have wanted it, his peers.

Thank you Anne and all of the Brokaw/James family members for this very special item. It will be on display this summer at the Farmers' Museum.



Kari Lusk showing the South Seneca 4th graders a 19th century grain drill. See more pictures from the June 2007 visit by the Fourth Grade students on page 8.

The Historical Society

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Vision Statement

The Interlaken Historical Society wishes to preserve, celebrate and appreciate the past and present of our community in order to embrace the future.

Interlaken Historical Society
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Mark Your Calendar

July & August: Farmers' Museum open

Saturday 10 am to 1 pm.

Sundays 1 to 3 pm.

July 1st: Send in 2007-08 dues. If there is a red dot on your address label, your dues are still due. If you have sent in your dues, thank you. Your support is appreciated.

July 22nd Old Fashioned Family Social, on the lawn between the Interlaken Grange Hall and the Covert Baptist Church. See you there!

No Monday evening program, we will see you at the social.