

Between the Lakes

A Newsletter of the
Interlaken Historical Society

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True Potato Planter

The Humble Spud, the Vegetable That Changed the World

Monday, October 22, 2007 7:30 P.M.

Interlaken Grange Hall Covert, NY

Potatoes are often called "humble" yet they are the most important vegetable on the planet, a multibillion dollar tuber that is now making french-fried incursions into the traditional rice turf of Asia. This is the vegetable whose ability to produce at high altitudes enabled the advancement of the Andean cultures that culminated in one of the world's great civilizations, the empire of the Inca. When this Irish staple failed to produce, the resulting famine changed western history with the death and migration of 2.5 million people. In Germany, a prolific potato crop in 1915 had a role in that country's World War I plans.

Come learn about the history of this influential vegetable from Ashley Miller. Ashley is the Curator of Exhibits at Mann Library, Cornell University where she creates displays that showcase Mann's collection of rare books. She has been involved in the book arts for over 25 years as a calligrapher, marbled paper maker, printer and graphic designer. Ms. Miller has also written books and articles on growing and cooking vegetables, as well as on the history of vegetables. Ashley was our featured speaker

in 2005 talking about beans. We are pleased to have her returning.

The meeting will be held in the Interlaken Grange Hall, West Covert Road, off 96 in the Hamlet of Covert. Refreshments will be served and the public is invited for this free program.

Below: A cooperative extension agent explains potato growing to local farmers in 1938. Photo from Education & Agriculture by Gould P. Colman 1963.



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President's Message

The summer has passed so fast. Why does each one speed by quicker than the last one? If anyone has a suggestion as to how we can slow down, please share it.

In the last newsletter, I reported the good news about the lease for part of the Telephone Building in Interlaken. There is more good news. Lee and Sharon Braden have made a very generous financial donation in memory of Lee's parents Leo and Anna Braden to be used for renovation of the building. A committee is considering an appropriate acknowledgement with input from Lee and Sharon.

Renovations have been planned and submitted to Seneca County for a building permit. Work should begin soon with a goal of having the building open to the public by next summer.

Once again we are fortunate to have articles in this issue of the newsletter written by our very own community members. We all have stories to tell and we encourage each and everyone to tell his or hers. In a recent visit with Carol Serling, she told me how pleased that the Bainbridges were to sell a useless strip of land along the lakeshore to her family. Mr. Bainbridge was sick and tired of his cows falling off the cliff. The sale and subsequent fencing solved the problem.

Until next time, enjoy the newsletter and please think about sharing your stories.

Allan

Potato Salad with Mustard and Parsley

By Ashley Miller

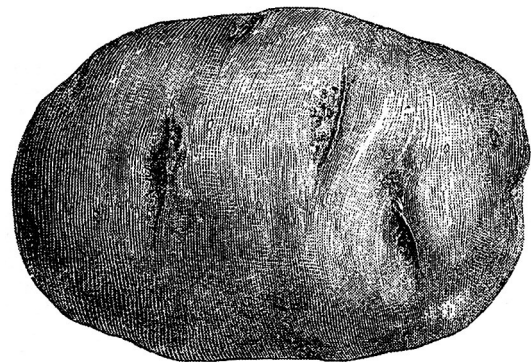
This felicitous combination of potatoes and parsley with a tangy mustard dressing is good anytime, anyplace. As well as this dish's fine flavor, another asset is its speed and ease of preparation. When I have to make a potato salad in a hurry, this is the one I make.

4 cups cubed potatoes
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Mustard Dressing

2 T. Dijon mustard
1 clove garlic, minced
2 T. cider vinegar
1/4 cup good olive oil

Steam potatoes 15 minutes or until tender. While they are cooking, mix together ingredients for Mustard Dressing. Drain cooked potatoes and add dressing and parsley. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper.



Early Ohio Potato

Welcome Our New Trustee

Harold Stewart is pleased to join the Interlaken Historical Society as its newest Trustee. Harold is a "local boy," living most of his life in the Interlaken area. Harold's parents, Bert Stewart Sr. and Mary Huff Stewart, both deceased, operated a small family dairy farm on County Road 141. When Harold, the youngest of the 10 Stewart children, left for Alfred State College in 1967, the cows were sold and his dad enjoyed a few years of well-earned retirement.

At Alfred Harold met Barbara Bende, from Monticello, NY. They were married in August 1968, and have lived in Interlaken since 1972. Youngest son Tim, wife Suzanne and son Dakota live in Interlaken. Charles, the older son, lives in Laurel, Maryland with wife Joanna and children, Emily and Evan.

Harold has worked in the agriculture field, keeping him close to the land for which he cares so much. He is currently with Old Mill Troy, Inc. that is based in North Troy, Vermont. He is a customer service rep, serving the NY and PA areas for the last 14 years. Some might recognize other companies where Harold enhanced his Ag knowledge: Agway, E. E. Miller and Son, Beacon Milling Co./Cargill, and Nutrena Feeds.

Harold is a member of the Interlaken Central School Class of 1967, AAS degree from Alfred State College. He was a Future Farmer of America member 1964-67 and president 1966-67, NY Star Chapter Farmer Award 1966, National Sr. Honor Society 1965-67 and Boy's State 1966.

Welcome Harold!

Donations to the Society

Special thanks for these recent donations:

Lee & Sharon Braden – platform scale

Susan Ellis – platform scale

Barbara Ahouse Coulters – lap quilt

Bob Donnelly—Postcard of Sheldrake House

Elizabeth Pearsall—Academic diplomas of Elizabeth Schmidt and a 1953 Interlaken Review.

Phyllis W. Wilkinson – bell from Sigmund VanDoren's Model Railroad and a newspaper clipping about that model railroad

We are also grateful to Tom and Betsy Salm, Margaret Huckle and Neil Young for the generous financial gifts they have made to the Society.

Bell from S. VanDoren's Model Railroad. A picture of the train and a copy of the article are shown on the display board in the front window of Hubbard Heating & Plumbing.



News from Our Library

by Pat Moore

Fall is upon us...how about "falling" into some good books! We also have DVDs, Books on Tape and Books on CD.

We want to thank Wendy and Glen Barrows for the great job they did for Teen Night, based on the game CLUE. We had about thirteen teens and they had a grand time. Pizza, soda and cookies were donated. Prizes were given for special things. It was a fun evening. You can see all the detectives in the photo below.

Children from school will be coming for our Pre-K classes which start at the end of the month. Chris Carroll will be the reader for the first few months.

Here is a list of some of our new items: *A Wrongful Death*, Wilhelm; *Someone to Love*, Deveraux; *On Chesil Beach*, McEwan; *Because They Hate: A Survivor of Islamic Terror Warns...*, Gabriel; *Silence*, Perry; *The Water's Lovely*, Rendell; *Justice Denied*, Jance; *What Matter's Most*, Rice; Betty Crocker's *Healthy Home Cooking*.

We now get 40 DVDs from the Finger Lakes collection on loan. A DVD (and movies) can be checked out for 5 days; if you are overdue the fine is \$1.00 per day.

Have a good fall.



Follow Up File

In the July issue of this newsletter we printed a picture of two young people in front of Storath's store on Main Street. The editors knew the name of the young man, Frank Bassette, but did not know who the young lady was.

A phone call from Helen Hausner Bassett answered the question. The young lady is Lorraine Slaght Delvecchio. Lorraine's sister Thelma Slaght married Helen's brother Heber Hausner.

Thank you Helen for updating this information.

Following the Covert Historic Tour of 2006



the materials and a description of the event were submitted to the Upstate History Alliance for their Award of Merit program. In March we were notified that the Interlaken Historical Society had been honored with an Honorable Mention certificate.

This is the second time our Society has been honored by the UHA; the first time the Covert Family book by Fischer, Patterson and Covert won an Award of Merit.

Families and Farming on the Backbone Ridge

Thursday, November 15, 2007 7:30 P.M.
Ulysses Historical Society Building
South Street, Trumansburg, New York

Since 2000, the Finger Lakes Farmstead Archaeology Project has generated an enormous amount of data that challenges common historical reconstructions of the slow but inevitable decline in farming to the point that the families stranded on “submarginal” farms had to be rescued by the Federal Government’s Resettlement Administration. Contrary to the notion that hillside farmers were struggling to make ends meet and barely surviving, we have found that people on the Backbone were building new houses, improving their property, and buying expensive consumer goods throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. In this talk, I want to discuss another, although related aspect of our research. Our data shows that successful farming entailed more than simply what crop was produced, and involved issues of land, labor, and family structure. To make these points, I want to focus on the personal stories of several neighboring farms on the Backbone Ridge.

LouAnn Wurst received her PhD from SUNY Binghamton in 1993 and is currently Associate Professor and Chair of the Anthropology Department at SUNY College at Brockport. Her research focuses on issues of class, ideology, and gender in the 19th century. She is currently working on a pro-

ject located in the Finger Lakes National Forest to examine how farm families dealt with the economic transformations of the 19th century through the Great Depression.

The Program is sponsored by the Interlaken and Ulysses Historical Societies, the Trumansburg Philomathic Library and the Backbone Ridge History Group.

The Backbone Ridge is generally the north-south strip of land at the highest elevation that separates the Cayuga Lake and Seneca Lake watersheds. It encompasses a large portion of the Finger Lakes National Forest in both Schulyer and Seneca Counties.

More News of our Neighbors

Ovid's Antique Road Show - Oct 15, 2007 at the Ovid Historical Society Museum, 7:00 P.M. You may bring up to 3 items to be appraised for only \$ 1 by Steve Wagner of Caywood who has been in the antique business for many years. There will be a 50/50 raffle and refreshments. See you at 7203 South Main Street next to the Covert Funeral Home.

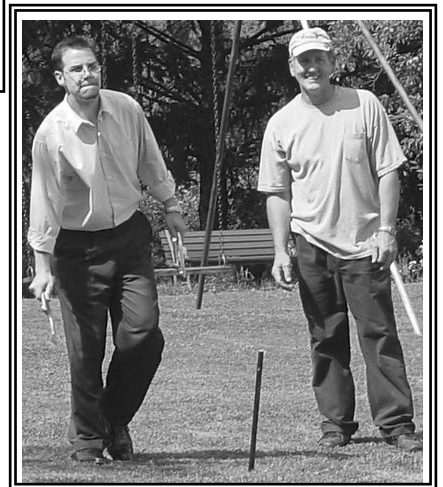
NYS Agricultural Experiment Station
Dr. Kurt Jordan will be presenting “Seneca Iroquois Plant and Animal Use in the Geneva Area, 1688-1779,” at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 16. The talk will be held in the auditorium on the second floor of Jordan Hall, at 630 W. North Street in Geneva. The talk is presented by the Frank E. Lee Library, in conjunction with the 125th Anniversary of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station. Dr. Jordan will be giving a similar talk the same evening at the Geneva Historical Society, at 7:30 p.m.

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Our first annual Social was held at the
laken Grange Hall and the Cove
conversation and laughter filled
The Grange, Church and the o
coolness and interesting viewing
and delicious dishes to pass. A g
enjoy the fine folks that live in th



Old-Fashioned Community Social

July 22, 2007



held on the lawn between the Inter-
Covert Baptist Church. The hum of
filled the summer Sunday afternoon.
The old Covert Town Hall provided
refreshments. Ice cream topped off hot dogs
and lemonade. A good reason to get together and
enjoy this beautiful area!



Missing since the Social

Deviled Egg Platter
If you took one home
by mistake please call
Ann Buddle at 532-
4213.

Thank you to everyone
who planned, set-up,
attended and helped
with cleanup.

POTATO KING

by William Walker
Interlaken, NY

On December 7, 1941, we moved to our newly-purchased farm. It was located in the northeast corner of Steuben County in western New York State. My parents, Helen and Ward Walker, had bought it primarily for a home. It consisted of a good sized fourteen room house, a gambrel roof barn, a 2 car garage and several out buildings. It was situated on 40 acres of land, through which the upper Cohocton River flowed. The soil was a rich dark loam, ideal for corn, hay and other crops. The up-land was a gravelly loam and was ideal for dry beans, grains and especially potatoes. In the spring of '42 a neighbor gave us a basket of seed potatoes to plant in our garden. He said if we planted them at the end of April, we would have small potatoes for the 4th of July. We followed his instructions. On July 4th we dug enough potatoes to mix with new peas. The combination was delicious and I still enjoy potatoes any way in which they are prepared.

By 1945, my father had purchased the farms adjacent to each side of our farm. We now owned 168 acres of farm land. My dad was working nights at a defense plant in Dansville, NY, but we had started farming and had also added sheep, chickens and cattle to our place. Mother made about 30 to 40 pounds of butter a week which was in great demand because of the war rationing.

When the war ended, the defense plant

returned to its regular hours and my father's night shift was eliminated. Because of this change, he made a decision to make farming his main occupation and livelihood. At the same time the 4-H club just north of us asked me if I would like to join their club. The group consisted of eight members, older than me, yet I knew them from riding together on the school bus. The 4-H club was very active, both in group projects, and money raising. The two leaders were especially helpful with our projects. Through the years we sold seeds, light bulbs, magazines and collected newspapers, etc. With the money earned, we took field trips, sent members to club congress and built a baseball diamond.

My first year in the club, I chose gardening as my project. I took exhibits to the county fair and won blue and red ribbons. I was soon caught up in the enthusiasm and excitement of the other members. Their fathers were potato growers and thus their projects were also the same. My father also planted a few acres of potatoes which produced a good profitable crop. I quickly changed my project from vegetables to potatoes. The next few years I planted two acres of potatoes each season. I would pay my father for preparing the land, planting, cultivating and harvesting. I would keep a record of my costs and materials. When there was a profit it was deposited in my account at the local bank.

I also set up a display each year at the Hemlock and Caledonia fairs. I entered two varieties: Katahdin and Kennebec. We grew both varieties. We had a contract with the Schuler Potato Chip Co. They preferred Katahdin for chipping. My mother preferred others for cooking and baking.

In the summer of 1949, our county 4-H leader, Mr. Ace, visited our club to look at our projects. He commended me on my outstanding exhibits at the local fairs and



asked if I would consider preparing a display for him to take to the State Fair at Syracuse. This consisted of 15 samples of my best Katahdin potatoes of uniform size. (The local fairs required only 5 specimens to be displayed.) I was very excited about being asked to provide this display and spent several days hand digging, washing, cleaning and sorting to find 15 perfect potatoes. I wanted my display to be as perfect as my potatoes.

I set up a test display on our kitchen table. Then I would invite my mother and father to judge them. I would replace one or two which looked smaller, larger or had a slight defect. The judges were experts and were critical of the slightest defects. When I

was completely satisfied with 15 perfect potatoes I wrapped them individually in tissue and they were ready for Mr. Ace to take to the State Fair. I did not attend the fair, but on the day of judging Mr. Ace telephoned and told me that I had won 1st place in the Katahdin class, but nothing else was mentioned.

On the last day of the State Fair in Syracuse, Mr. Ace telephoned again to say that my display had won the highest award for "Outstanding Potato Exhibit" at the fair, and he was taking my display to Chicago for the National 4-H and Future Farmers exhibit.

At the Chicago fair, my display was chosen again as "Outstanding" This award entitled me to be chosen as 4-H Potato King of the United States. The award consisted of a fifty dollar savings bond, 200 pounds of certified seed potatoes, and a trip to the 4-H summer congress at Cornell University. It was four days of education and fun, and I met many new friends which enriched my life. I completed my high school education. My father and I continued growing potatoes and managing our dairy consisting of 35 cows.

At age 22, I was drafted into the service (Army) and was sent to Germany, where I spent twenty months of duty. Upon my return, my father had ceased raising potatoes, and had sold the dairy. I returned to school, at Alfred State School of Horticulture. I never returned to farming.

Continued on page 10

I often think about the potatoes that we raised when I am standing in a super market, looking at bags of potatoes which are of poor quality; green, bruised, and often times rotting. I find that Yukon Gold are usually a good quality potato today, as are the potatoes that I purchase at local Amish farms.

My wish and hope is that we might return to the era of rewarding farmers for producing quality products.

This potato scoop was donated to the Historical Society for our Farmers' Museum by James White.

The 4-H sign shown on page 9 was given by Art Poulsen.



The overflow from the pond went into a wooden water trough one foot high and 10 feet long, where the sheep, cattle and horses could drink leisurely, since the trough was always full. The overflow from the trough went to start the east branch of Sheldrake Creek, which joins the west branch just north of Kelley's Corners. The west branch originated north and west of Townsendville.

As the Townsendville Road was improved and became busier, the Knights decided to move a portion of the first house up nearer the road. They added a new addition to the older portion where it now stands. The front door is about 70 feet east of Townsendville Road.

The first barns were located on higher ground about 1200 feet from the springs. About 1900, my grandfather Archibald Knight decided that the barns should be nearer to that unusually good water source, so he hired Julius J. Kellogg of Trumansburg and crew to build the present barn labeled "A. Knight 1901."



The 1901 Knight barn is a familiar landmark on Townsendville Road.

THE KNIGHT SPRINGS

by John Knight

Benjamin Franklin once wrote "We will only know the worth of water when the well is dry." The Knight Springs have flowed bountifully in dry years as well as wet years. They have never gone dry in my lifetime.

The Knights, from Israel to John J., recognized the value of this water supply and built their first house about 20 feet from the springs. They built a farm pond containing the several springs to provide water for the livestock. They placed a wooden barrel around one spring where water could be dipped for household use.

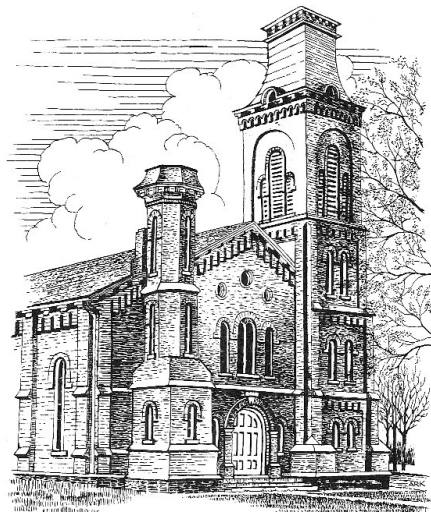
In the early 1930s several Interlaken Village Board Members came to the farm and asked to see the Knight Springs. They were looking for a source of water to augment their collection of wells and springs north and west of the village. They were impressed by the volume of flow that our springs offered. But they said that the NYS Health Dept. would have to approve the springs before they could proceed. When the man from Albany came and inspected the springs, he ruled that the barns would have to be removed, since they were about 70 feet uphill from the springs.

Arthur, my father, refused to have the barns removed, even though water sales might have meant additional income to a farm struggling as were others in the GREAT DEPRESSION ERA. Without the Knight spring-water, the Village Board developed a series of springs and wells in the Kelley's Corners area where the water could flow by gravity to the water tower on West Avenue. As the Interlaken population grew and demand for water increased, the spring supply was not sufficient enough so the Village now pumps water from Cayuga Lake.

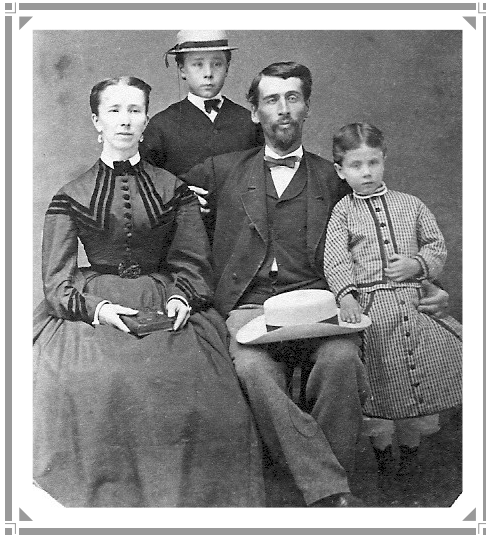
Probably the reason my Dad did not want to remove the 30 x 90-foot basement-barn with a sheep barn attached was that it was an ideal multi-purpose barn of the time. Even the coldest winter days would find inside temperatures of 40 degrees consistently. A flock of 80 sheep, 18 dairy cows plus their young stock and 6 horses supplied the heat.

When the electric line from Elmira came up Townsendville Road, it meant that an electric pump from Minor's Hardware could provide livestock water from the Knight Springs in a metal water trough and a hydrant in the sheep barn.

It may only be October but it's certainly not too early to be thinking about holiday shopping. Check out the insert for some great reading from the history shelf, or for a perfect stocking stuffer, how about note cards with pen and ink drawings by Anne Knight. Many of the cards include a historical note. The cards feature the local churches, regional landmark buildings, bridges, trains, landscapes and several of the local water falls. If you need a brochure to help with your selection email orchardland@zoom-dsl.com or check out the Society Website at www.interlakenhistory.org



The Interlaken Baptist Church is just one of the Landmark Notecards available.



The 2008 Interlaken Historical Society Calendar with over 100 pictures old and not so old goes on sale at the October 22nd meeting. You may not remember this family but check out the music and reunion pages. Many familiar faces await you. See the insert to order by mail. The calendar will also be available at local businesses. The price remains \$5.00

**Interlaken Historical Society
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www.interlakenhistory.org

Mark your calendar

Have you sent in your 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.

October 22nd: Program at Interlaken Grange in Covert, The Humble Spud. The 2008 Calendars will be available

December 1st: Newsletter items due to editors

January 21, 2007 Interlaken Historical Society
Program: Cheryl Schaefer on Wool Yarns

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