

Between the Lakes

A Newsletter of the
Interlaken Historical Society

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Sonnenberg Mansion www.sonnenberg.org

April 26, 2021 7:00 pm Via ZOOM Rational Dress, the American Costume and Bloomers: What's the Difference?

Please Join us for our second Zoom program on Monday, April 26, 2021, 7:00 pm.

One of the current fashions in women's clothing is a long loose tunic over long pants. During the 19th century, a similar costume, developed at a water cure in Central New York, shocked the nation. What's the difference between this original dress and the Bloomer costume? Why was it seen as promoting women's health and economic opportunities? Why did it fall by the wayside, only to reappear a generation later? A fascinating look at an iconic women's fashion.

Jane Oakes has been involved with historic education for over forty years. She taught classes in open hearth cooking, nineteenth century schooling and historic architecture for Genesee Country Village & Museum, NY. Her research into local history has contributed to the placement of two structures in Livingston County onto the National Register of Historic Places. She has been a Revolutionary War, French and Indian War, and American Fur Trade Era re

-enactor and holds a BA in Theater with a minor in Anthropology, and an MA in History. Her presentations are lively and engaging, leading to consistent requests for return engagements.

For additional information on joining the ZOOM meeting, please contact the Interlaken Public Library at 607-532-4341 or director@interlakenpubliclibrary.org

A Tale of Three Mansions Part

By Barbara B Stewart

The time has come to visit our third mansion and hopefully, tie them together! This mansion you will be able to visit in person and enjoy year round. Our third tale takes us to Sonnenberg Gardens in nearby Canandaigua New York. Of the three mansions we have learned about, this one was the first I had the pleasure of visiting. I have returned many more times with out of town guests, garden clubs and other groups.

Fredrick Ferris Thompson and his wife Mary Clark Thompson (whose father was Myron Holley Clark, was Governor of New York State in 1855) purchased the property in

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President's Report

Greetings. It is enjoyable to be into March with warmer temps, snow melting, longer hours of sunlight and with robins and blue birds around. We've had cold and wind, but no extra-long periods of bitter weather. Speaking of birds, it will soon be time for the snowbirds to return.

Diane Bassette Nelson has asked to step down as a trustee. She has been on the board since June, 2001. Always ready to go, a gold mine of history of the area, editor of our newsletter, looking ahead to be prepared for tomorrow, whether window displays, programs for the summer, and sharing vision about our own building for the society, these are just a few of her passions. She will still be around enjoying retirement and some travel, and also, continuing to work on the newsletter. Thank you, Diane, for your hours, both in public and behind the scenes, in our community.

Jennifer Merkle has been appointed to fill the open trustee position. See her biography on the next page.

Covid-19 is still a threat and still spreading. Three vaccines have been developed which is helping to cut that threat and relax regulations.

We had a zoom meeting in January which had a large participation. It was presented by Walt Gable, our county Historian, on the Underground Railroad in southern Seneca County. We look forward to doing more Zoom type programs in the future, but

still do some in person presentations depending upon the topic.

While we are still working on plans for a new building, remember your tax free donations will help this come true.

As restrictions are eased, we look forward to being able to go to larger gatherings. At the rate things are going, we trust to have a Square Dance in September at Brook Farm.

Enjoy the upcoming warmer days and getting outdoors for longer periods. Thank you for your memberships.

John Hunt, President

New Members

Shirley Boyes, Trumansburg

Beth and Mark Bevars, Interlaken

New Life Members

Mary and Thomas Day, Interlaken

Gwen Freeman & Dani Wassink, Interlaken

Recent Financial Donations,

General Use and Building Fund

John Daly, Ashurn, VA in memory of twin brother Dan.

Nancy DeMarte, Sarasota, FL in memory of Nelle Bradley

Brian E Smith, Foxboro, MA in memory of David Powell

Bill Gates, Ovid

Frank Zwolinski, Santa Rosa, CA in memory of Agnes Zubris Zwolinski

Casey Gluckman, Port Townsend, WA in memory of Elizabeth Case Gould.

Gwen Freeman & Dani Wassink, Interlaken

Welcome Our New Trustee

Jennifer Merkle is a high school special education teacher at TST BOCES in Ithaca. Originally from Fairport, she moved to the Village of Interlaken in 2016 after beginning her career in Boston and then living in San Diego and Ithaca for many years.

Her interest in family and local history led her to the Historical Society and its many resources, as her maternal line has deep roots in South Seneca County. Jennifer enjoys learning about the history of the area and researching her VanRiper, Lisk, VanVleet, and Terry family roots.

Jennifer has been volunteering at the Society helping to develop its new website since January 2019. As a Board Member, her focus will include broadening the Society's online presence, further development of the website, creating an online shop, and expanding the Society's youtube channel. She is also excited for the potential virtual programming can have on sharing our local history with a wider audience. Connecting people near and far with the history of our area is even more important during this time of 'social distancing.'



In her free time, Jennifer enjoys training and competes in several dog sports with her two dogs, knitting, and gardening.

Recent Donations

Since our last issue we have received two significant archival gifts.

One from Linda Freese with a number of items from Harry Emmons, see page 6 for more on that gift.

The second item is one of the Interlaken signs from the Lehigh Valley Train Depot. It was given by Charles Sludden in honor of his father, C.J. Sludden who was a Pennsylvania State Legislative Director for the United Transportation Union. Thank you Mr. Sludden for this wonderful gift.



The sign on the Depot in 1911.

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1863. It became their summer home. There was a 100-acre farm to the east of the property. Their main home was a townhouse on Madison Avenue in New York City.

Fredrick and Mary Thompson retained the name Sonnenberg which means “sunny hill” in German. In 1887 they replaced the original farmhouse with a 40 room Queen Anne style mansion. They chose Francis Richmond Allen (1843-1931) to be the architect for the project. He graduated from Amherst College in 1865. He studied architecture at MIT from 1876-77. In 1877-78 he attended Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. (F. Burrall Hoffman Jr., the architect for Villa Vizcaya, also studied there.)

In 1878 Francis Allen returned to Boston. It is noted that he was a Master of neo-Gothic style of building. He is best known for the Park Avenue Baptist Church on 64th Street New York City 1923.

In part 1 and 2 of this tale, I mentioned the striking black and white marble floor seen from the second floor balcony of the other two mansions. When I visited Villa Vizcaya and Ca d’ Zan for the first time it was a moment of “I have seen this before!!!”. It was a real “moment” for me to say the least. I continued to wonder if there was a connection with the families, the builders or the architects. With the research for these articles I did find some paths that crossed, but nothing definitive that any col-

laboration took place. I like to think this style of flooring was made popular because of European influence. I have had the opportunity to visit several mansions and Chateaus in and around Paris and Northern France. Almost all had flooring of black and white marble squares!! Ringling traveled aboard several times and returned with a great deal of art, perhaps the other owners traveled there as well. At some point in discussion with their builders the type and style of flooring could have been brought up. I have no proof, but I think this makes sense. If you can, please check out the mansions mentioned and the ballroom/foyer floors. Pretty amazing.

Let’s return to Sonnenberg and the beautiful gardens that grace the extensive property. The gardens were built between 1902-1919. There were nine original gardens. There is also a Lord and Burnham greenhouse and domed Palm House. The complex is considered one of the most important residential greenhouse building. Today there are also orchids, cacti and tropical plants combined with the palms. It is a beautiful place to visit any season.

The Japanese Garden has a landscape of miniature plants, a tea house and a statue of Buddha. The Sub Rosa Garden has no flowers but features a fountain and evergreens. The Rose Garden contains over 2,500 bushes that range in color from red, white and pink. Other beds vary in color. Four sunken parterres in a fleu-de-lis pat-

tern, bordered by yews and 20,000 annuals make up the Italian Garden. It is best viewed from a second-floor balcony. My favorite is the Blue and White garden. All flowering plants are blue or white with a Zelkova japonica tree in the center. (This theme can be found in many mansion gardens.) Pansies abound in a garden with a pedestal fountain in the center. Another favorite is the Moonlight Garden, blooming late afternoon releasing a fragrant bouquet. A geometric theme using low boxwood hedges, forms the quincunx pattern of five circles. The center of each circle is filled with annuals and perennials. There are intersecting walks, making for a nice stroll. This garden is called the Old Fashioned Garden. The Rock Garden is currently made up of three gardens. The Wild Garden, the Lily Garden and the Rock Garden. It was completed in 1919, but the merge has formed paths that wind through natural pockets, crannies, Alpine plants and water features. These are fed by geysers and springs. See if you can find the family pet cemetery. Through the years some important guests brought and planted many species of trees. Currently there are over 140 varieties. Most are labeled.

There are several outbuildings, the ice house and the aviary and the bath house. Some areas are under reconstruction and being rebuilt. Contributions are always welcome.

The Thompsons had no children. Upon Mary Clark Thompsons death in 1923, a nephew inherited the estate. In 1931 he sold the property to the Federal Government, who built a veterans' hospital, today the Canandaigua VA Medical Center, on the adjacent farm land. The mansion was used to house doctors, their families, and nurses.

In 1972, by an act of Congress, a bill called the Sonnenberg Bill, transferred the mansion from the Federal Government to a local non-profit to restore and reopen the property to the public. In 2005 the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation bought the estate. It continues to be operated as a non-profit.

I hope you have enjoyed this tale, all the mansions are well worth a visit. I highly recommend Sonnenberg, not only is it close but will give you a good flavor of the other two. There is also a nice café and a gift shop and wine tastings of the local region. Please check the web site as to hours, restrictions, and availability of services.

I wish to thank and acknowledge the Sonnenberg web site, YAHOO and Wikipedia for their help.

Do you have photographs or other archival items that need a new home?

Please contact the Interlaken Historical Society before you toss them away.
interlakenhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
607-592-3224

Emmons Collection

Thank you, Linda Freese, long-time neighbor to Harry Emmons for the Emmons Collection. Some of our members may recall when he served as Post Master. Among the collection are several photographs which are shown here and a group of telegrams sent and received.

The telegrams included the good, the sad, and wishes from out of town. They are dated in the early 1950s.

From 1st Lieut R. Elliott, Camp LeJeune N Car 355 pm Sept 5 Faculty and Students, Interlaken Central School, Interlaken N.Y. "Dear Friends Best of Luck to all for the coming school year."

To John B Usher Jr from New Brunswick N Jer 152pm "Finally a river weekend see you Saturday Fondly Meg"

From Tucson Ariz 25 Oct to Miss Dorothy Kellogg West Ave "Tell Mom Button we had a baby girl 7 pounds 9 ounces 230 Oclock 25 Name Debby love to all Jan and Jim"

To Clarence Haskin, Railroad Ave, Interlaken NY "Will arrive in Ithaca 130 PM Wednesday. Winnie"

From Vineland N Jer 1242 PM to Merton Boorum, Interlaken NY "Dad passed away 6 Wednesday evening. Funeral 2 O'clock Saturday. Burial Vineland. William S. Boorum." Editor's note: Claude Burton Boorum died 8 October 1952.

From Clinton NY June 26, 1950 6:03 pm to Jack Huhn, Interlaken New York, "Congratulations and Best of Luck Jackie on your graduation. Sorry we couldn't be there. Love John and Della."

Main Street July 1935 Flood



Emmons Barn, North Main Street, later the Glidden Farm and then Lively Run Farm.



Library News

2021 has rung in with a bang at the Interlaken Public Library! We are open to the public for browsing, offering curbside service for those still uncomfortable entering public buildings, and have modified our programming to include virtual programs that can be enjoyed from home.

With vaccines being distributed throughout New York State, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. In the coming months, the Library has big plans for summer activities including outdoor movies, take-and-make activities for kids, creative art programs, and as always, our chair yoga program for those looking to stay healthy and centered during this difficult time.

Upcoming spring programs include beginner beekeeping with Duane Waid and a fun children's series centered around an adventurous sea turtle named Turtleby. The Library will return to its normal hours of operation come summer, with evening hours, open browsing and research available six days per week.

If you haven't done so already, consider joining the Friends of the Interlaken Public Library! Our Friend's group was created at the end of 2020 by a small group of dedicated community volunteers. Friends can join in on fun events thru the summer months, including a Mother's Day weekend virtual 5k event. Check our website for information and all the ways you can join in the fun!

www.interlakenpubliclibrary.org/friends

Chelsea Hastings, Library Director,
607-532-4341



More Emmons Photos notes from the reverse of the photos It is unknown who the author of the notes are.

Above This is the steam thresher working a Derrick with 2 forks.

Below This is the Separator...Sitting on the sacks is me recording the grain account.



Interlaken Historical Society
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www.InterlakenHistory.org

For more information on the Historical
Society events contact President, John Hunt,
607-592-3224

NOTE: the email address for
the historical society has changed:
interlakenhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

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Looking for the book order form please see the website
www.interlakenhistory.org
www.interlakenhistoricalsociety.org

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