

## **Between the Lakes**

A Newsletter of the  
**Interlaken Historical Society**

Volume 48 No. 1 July 2022  
www.interlakenhistoricalsociety.org



### **14th Annual Summer Social Sunday, July 24, 2022 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.**

The trustees of the Interlaken Historical Society would like to invite the community to join us on Sunday, July 24th for our 14th annual Old Fashioned Social. This dish-to-pass event will be held on the Interlaken Public Library front lawn.

Last year we hosted the Summer Social at the building lot; this year we wanted to step back and enjoy the beauty of the library lawn.

The Historical Society will provide the grilled hot dogs with rolls and fixings, lemonade and ice tea and of course ice cream and toppings for dessert. The ice cream comes from Trimmers, so you don't want to miss this opportunity to build your own sundae.

Please bring your own table service and a dish to share.

Serving starts at 4 pm and we usually wind down around 6 pm so arrive when you can and enjoy a time of good food and fellowship. The museums will be open.

In case of rain we will move indoors. For more information, please contact the society at 607-592-3224.

### **Plowing Day 2022 It's BACK**

Plans are being made for our 2022 Plowing Day and Country Fair. Saturday, September 17th.

This year the Theme is grapes, plus all the activities you have enjoyed over the years. Tractors, animals, displays and food.

If you need a vendor or participant registration form please contact Harold Stewart at 607 279-1965.

See you there!

### **"What Middle-Sized Bears Must Expect": The joys and struggles of farm life in the 1920s**

Jennifer Merkle

In July 1941, families living in Varick, New York received the devastating news that the United States Government would be taking possession of their land, farms, and homes to make way for the Seneca Army Depot. Families spent frantic days that July packing and moving their possessions, farm equipment, and crops. Their lives would never be the same. In a series of articles, Jennifer Merkle uses family letters and journals to learn about life in Varick before that momentous summer eighty years ago.

Continued on page 4

## President's Report

Greetings from the Interlaken Historical Society! We're into Summer, finally!

We just completed Olde Home Days. We had a good crowd in town, especially for the parade.

I guess people were ready for one. It was led off by our Village Police, followed by fire trucks, three bands, and a color guard. Eddie Compton is always a good show with his big tow trucks and his ever-ready smile.

I was docent in the Farmer Museum with help from my wife, Grace, and Jenn Merkel, our newest trustee. Thanks to them and the Stewarts for preparing the building. We had close to two hundred people come through; most questions we could answer.

One new collection addition is a Dinner Bell that was donated by Donald Schmidt. It was on his parents' farm and his mother would ring it when meals were ready. It brought back memories to me - in particular the one of the school teacher who said, on one very cold afternoon, "The bell will ring in the morning if there will be school." Some High School boys tipped the bell upside down and filled it with water, which froze. Guess what?!? No rings from an ice filled bell!!

I believe the High School, at that time, was on the east side of North Main Street. Imagine a school bell being loud enough to reach across a district now days! The one-room schools were still in use for the lower grades. The closest to bells being in use these days are on some Amish farms. I've been on some farms that use air horns to relay messages!

Plans are progressing for our Plowing Day and Country Fair. We're sending out e-mails to previous participants. Should you not receive such an e-mail, or if you would

like to be involved with planning, please contact Harold Stewart at 607 279-1965. The topic for presentations on Plowing Day will be Grapes; Ruth Lucas will be speaking about starting the first Farm Winery in Seneca County and Pam Raes, who previously spoke on Drain Tiles, will share her knowledge.

Our new building plans are inching along. We are looking for grants to help us. Tax deductible donations are very well appreciated.

I trust you will all have a great Summer. Our museums will be open on Saturdays from 11:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. in July and August. Or by appointment.

If you would like to become a docent, or visit, come on out!

Thank you,

*John Hunt, President*

### **New Members**

Sharon Ricci, Lawrenceburg, KY

### **New Life Members**

Joan and Brad Purdy, Canandaigua, NY

David Tunison, Interlaken, NY

### **Recent Donations**

Dinner Bell given by Donald Schmidt, Trumansburg, NY

Sons of Veterans Ribbon given by Brian Lynn, Auburn, NY

Scouting Memorabilia, Hem Marker, and agricultural magazines, by Karen King

Book *The Lodi Flash Flood of 2018*. Written, and donated, by Holly Covert about the events during and after the August 14, 2018 flooding at Lodi Point. She donated several copies if anyone is interested in purchasing one.

On behalf of the Trustees, we would like to thank the following who have been generous in their support of our new building:

### **Gifts**

Mary Jamison, Trumansburg  
Daneen Wassink, Interlaken  
Gwendolyn Freeman, Interlaken  
Larry Downey, Interlaken

### **Gifts in Memory of**

Lewis and Betty Morgan by Butch  
and Muriel Akers, Interlaken  
Marsha and Steve Bosman by Charles  
Bosman, Opelika, AL.  
Kitty Ritter by Walt and Mary Steesy,  
Interlaken  
Total received as of June 13, 2022  
\$6,917.52

### **Interlaken Fire Department Car Show**

Mark Your Calendars for the 2022  
IFD Car Show, Sunday, August 14.  
Firemen's Field, corner of Knight  
Street and Mechanic Street.  
Gates Open at 8,  
Bar-B-Q at Noon,  
Contact Jim Borden at 607-279-7198  
Vendors please contact Diane  
at 607-280-2099

### **Farewell to Friends**

This spring we as a community lost three lovely ladies, Kitty Ritter, Naomi Brewer and Alta Boyer-Bloom. Kitty and Naomi were classmates at Interlaken High School, graduating together in 1944.

Catherine Hagerman Ritter, Kitty, died May 1, 2022. She was the daughter of Stanley and Evelyn Wallace Hagerman. She loved history and was a part of many historical organizations. Beginning in 1991 she served as a trustee of the Interlaken Historical Society and was always willing to share with whoever asked a question. She especially enjoyed working with the clothing collection.

Naomi Craft Brewer, the source of all things relating to Ovid, Sheldrake, and Kidders died April 29, 2002, age 96. She was the daughter of Carleton and Edith Wyr Craft. She attended Sheldrake Country School attending and graduating from Interlaken Central School after the centralization of the schools in the 1930s. Naomi was a moving force in the Ovid Historical Society. As a writer, she left a legacy we can all be grateful for.

Alta Essom Boyer, died April 21, 2022, having passed the centennial mark in October 2014. She was the daughter of Lewis and Edith Lott Essom. In addition to her work with many libraries at all levels she was instrumental in the Lodi Historical Society, the DAR, and a recorder of Lodi History.

We will miss these ladies and all their knowledge of our local communities. We are very grateful for all they have left behind as future generations search for answers to questions.

**“What Middle-Sized Bears Must Expect” The joys and struggles of farm life in the 1920s**

By Jennifer Merkle

Sally Ann “Sadie” VanVleet was born in Lodi, New York in 1876. She became a teacher at the age of 16 and taught in various one room school houses in Seneca County including schools in Romulus, where she met her future husband, Varick farmer Roy VanRiper. Roy and Sadie’s apple farm on Secor Road would be included in land that the US government would take possession of in 1941 to make way for the Seneca Army Depot. Roy and Sadie raised five children and, by 1927, only their youngest Burt, also known as “Boots” was still at home.

Before email and texting, telephones and fax machines, letters were how people connected. Sadie’s letter to her daughter Grace, a nurse in Ithaca, paints a picture of day to day life on a Seneca County farm in the 1920s. While most Americans enjoyed relative prosperity in the 1920s, the Great Depression for farmers really began after World War I, due to falling prices and the need to produce even more to cover debts and the cost of living. Sadie’s letter gives raw glimpses of their hard life between her lighter descriptions of birthday parties, church news, new patterns, and the arrival of spring birds.



*Miss Grace VanRiper  
Ithaca City Hospital Ithaca NY  
Romulus NY March 6th 1927*

*Dear, dear, dear, dear Gracie Girl:*

*I was overjoyed to get your abridged letter yesterday. but was so busy when it came I could not stop to read it, had your father read it to me. “What so busy at?” You say? Why icing and decorating Boot’s birthday cake. And I had so much else to do too. You see he had company. William Ackly, Fred Kempf, and Edwin Knodel (the little Russian from the Hawkes place). They were invited to come at eleven and at just 10 they were here Ha! Ha! Prompt. So the hour that Burt was to help me went by the board. He asked for an angel food but I persuaded him to have a pyramid cake. Of course you wish to know the particulars. Well the bottom one was two inches thick white lemon baked in one of the agate pans, two (which by the way a modification of color and flavoring for no. 1) no. two baked in the two handled roaster, brown, spiced; no. 3 blue wintergreen flavor baked in cereal pan; no 4 chocolate, vanilla flavor baked in the “girl dish”; no 4 gold (forgot the flavor) baked in Cleone’s little aluminum basin and no. 6, the summit, same as bottom, baked in “chicken”. A foot high pinned together with a willow from the top of which floated a little silk “Old Glory”. Iced all white, sprinkled with red sugar, decorated on all terraces and top and bottom with yellow and chocolate icing. Can’t you just see it? Table cloth Devaison crepe with the flag on it. Also 2 old hens, biscuits, mashed potatoes, sweet chunk pickles, canned corn and water in bluebird glasses. You should have seen their eyes when they came in and saw the table. They did justice to it all. But this must tire you, so on to more tiresome things.*

Lillie Lynd Ainsley called from Bessie's today. Asked all about you girls. You know her husband Mr Ainsley died the early part of the winter from cancer. Claude Boyer called and invited us to a farewell surprise party for Mr. Hill's people next Friday Eve at his (Claude's) house 42 Cherry Street Geneva. Yes, Mr Hill's folks leave about April first. Everyone seems to regret it so much they got a lot of new members over there. It has worried me so much because we could not go to church all winter long. I have not had any arctics so that I could. We do not run the flivver at all. No license. I could have driven some if I had any decent overshoes. But there I did not mean to write any of the real things because they are all soft stuff and you do not want to hear that. Wish you could see Boot's new lumberjack. That old heavy stuff that you talked of making knickers out of. (but it was too heavy for knickers) Plaid belt, collar, custom pocket looks real nifty, not at all home-made- looking. 14 years size. Fits his chest measures. I have a new ensemble pattern size 38 Edith got me in New York. McCall's number 4795. Haven't used it yet. Going to use it for Emily and Cleone. I have no less than 5



(including the black satin) silk dress that I can make me for least four nice dresses up. But what is the use? I will not try to make any of them without I have a corset and I don't have a cent of my own. When you get to earning money and I am rotting on this old dung hill without a cent of my own if you don't send me 30 cents and say "here buy you just what sort of wings you want for your next batch of fleas" I'll cross you off my list and go on steal some wings somewhere.

It is awful after all I have earned and dealt out to others and denied myself that now I cannot even have things so I can go to the Wesleyan Church. But there I go again! Hang it all! I guess you thought I'd talk about your undies, but I did not. I just got held up on it for I had Burt's blazer to make and so many other things to do. I am trying all the time to reduce the things in the attic. Have made quite headway in some corners.

Jim McGrane passed his civil service exams and is now at Sing Sing as full-fledged prison guard. Leo has a new radio with a loud speaker. I have not heard it yet. I complain about what I don't have but you don't know the satisfaction it is to me to know that you girls are having all those things that I have long for all my life. Music, nice surroundings, bathtubs, a chance to keep clean and wear clean clothes.

I don't know yet what I shall do about any garden stuff. It is such a hard work and so little reward for it and no chance meantime to keep things decent in the house for I can't be in two places at once.

Uncle Burt has bought him a farm over west of Seneca Lake almost directly west of here. He wants his money from here this spring. I don't know what I may have to tell

you when I write again. They are going to put a new State Road on one of the roads west of here. The Kendaia folks want it (that would be by Uncle Jay's) and the folks a mile west think they are going to have it. If the last named, I might take boarders. They soak the road men \$10 per week. But no. I could not do it. Your father discourages me on it. They can find board of the other road probably. The hogs are not fat enough to butcher yet. Don't know when they will be. Next May I suppose when the meat will get ripe easily. We got a few eggs a week or two ago and then they stopped. But they are down real cheap again and now we got 3 today. I wanted so much to send you something for your "spread" on the 27th. But I could not. The hens had yesterday were the first in a long time. They brought two in after dark Friday night. One of them sang all the time Burt was carrying her in and when they brot her in the kitchen she k-r-r-r- k-r-r-

-r k-r-r-r-d-d-d her till I sent them back with her and made them get another. Neither of them we killed would have laid an egg in goodness knows when, and then some. But they were in good rig to kill too.

Just on the stroke of ten. May write some more in the morning. Should say scribble some more. Have been homesick too see some of you other kiddos for so long, I am about sick. Just the Big Bear, Little Bear and Middle Sized Bear, leaves so many places empty. Well that is what Middle-sized Bears must expect.

Much Love, your own Mommy

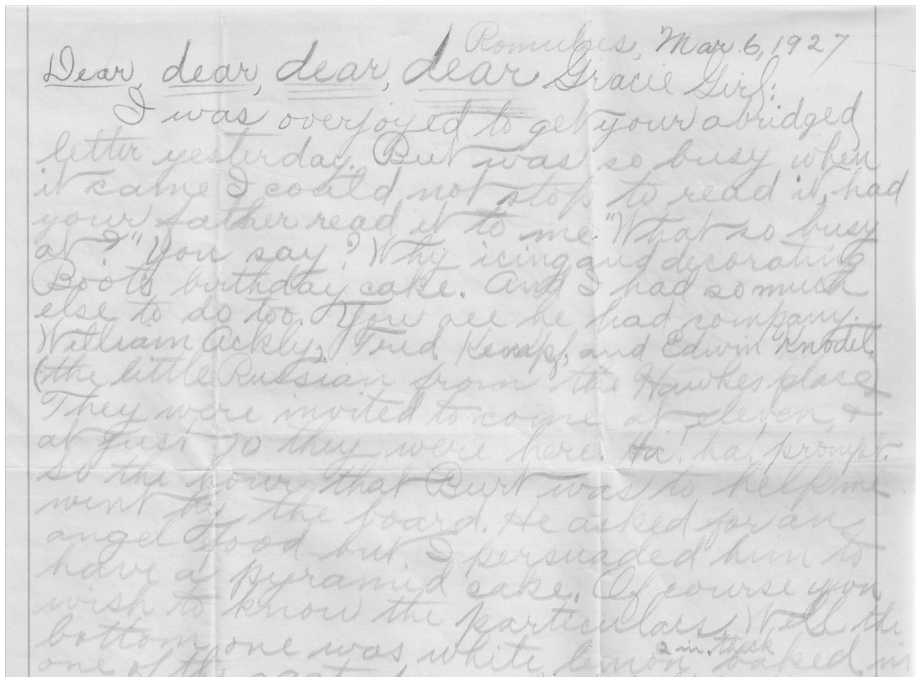
Monday AM Your Daddy is going to MacDougall's so I shall send this. No robin's yet. but Boots declares he saw a barn swallow Which I think very improbable. But he said "it had a blue back and forked tail" and we have seen several flocks of wild geese and wild ducks.

Grace, you may have the gray cloth

they gave me at the "divide". It will make you an ensemble with either sleeveless jacket or sleeveless dress. They make them both ways. Don't know if I had anything to put it with but I am sure we can find something.

He's going.

Good Bye, Mommy



### From the Collections The Old Barry Mill

In preparing for the Summer displays the suggestion was made to showcase some of the paintings in the collection. One of those was “The Old Barry Mill.” It was a gift from Artie Flagg. Her mother, Mrs. Mary C. Smalley Flagg was the artist according to the note on the back. The minutes of May 1965 note that Artie attended the meeting and gave us the painting.

Looking to know more about the painting the following items were found after a quick search on [www.fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com), and Morrision’s *History of Ovid, Seneca County*.

*The Farmer Review* Saturday, February 10, 1900 “S. C. Cassidy, of Burdette, took the contract for filling the ice house at the milk station, and put eight teams on Tuesday, drawing ice from C. S. Holton’s pond at the old Barry mill.”

*Interlaken Review* Friday, February 9, 1906, “Icemen and housekeepers are feeling better since the cold snap. Many farmers already have their ice houses filled...C. S. Holton began cutting at his pond in town yesterday and will then take a coating from the Barry mill pond, where he has a large house. The ice is now about 10 inches in thickness.”

An item following the August 24, 1922 flood gave the most information regarding the location of the mill. *Interlaken Review* Friday September 3, 1922 “The flood water made a clean sweep of things down at the old Barry mill site, now owned by Frank Quigley, and many go there every day to look at the wreck. This dam was erected in 1846 and has withstood all freshets—and there had been many in the 76 years of its



life. At 6 am Mr. Quigley opened the gates, full open, although at that hour the pond was not full. Three hours later the water was five feet deep pouring over the spillway and running over the bank to the south. A few minutes later a large tree between pond and bridge had been washed and undermined until it toppled over onto the iron bridge, then tree, bridge and all went down stream and over the falls, where the iron bridge, twisted like a piece of soft wire lodged against some trees. It is not worth the time to take it out as junk.”

Morrision’s volume has a photo of the E.S. Barry & Co.’s Grist Mill, Sheldrake Creek. In the additional notes he included Lot 23.

It seemed appropriate to hang this painting above the Interlaken School display as the Flaggs had given their home on Main Street as one of the two properties being used to build the new Central School.

If anyone has pictures of the old mill it would be interesting to see them.

## Olde Home Day 2022

After a two year hiatus it was wonderful to see Main Street filled with vendors, spectators, bands, fire trucks and other vehicles, vintage and modern, and groups from so many organizations.

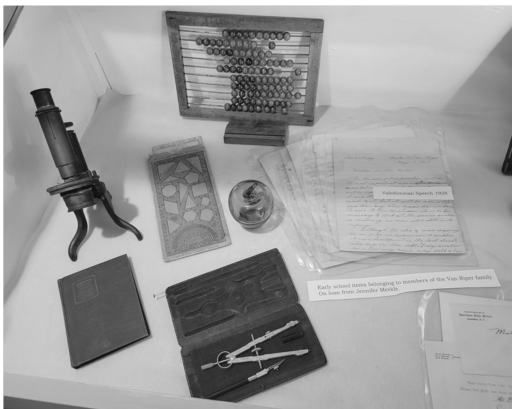
Parade pictures: 7th NY Cavalry Color Guard, South Seneca Elementary Band, Interlaken Fire Department Hand Pumper, Ovid Fire Department Vintage Truck, and Farmerville-Union Lodge with Citizen of the Year John Hubbard. .





### At the Museums

The new dinner bell is on display at the Farmers' Museum, while several paintings by Chadwick and others and educational materials at the Community Life Museum



### 2022 Citizen of the Year John Hubbard

John graduated from Interlaken Central School and SUNY Canton with a degree in HVAC. John and Sally were married in 1968.

He founded his own business in 1971, working from the trunk of his car before upgrading to a \$50 van.

John is a life member of the Interlaken Fire Department, a member of Seneca County and Finger Lakes EMS organizations, a CPR instructor, a paramedic preceptor, and has served as a paramedic.

He has been a village trustee, a Reformed Church elder, a member of the Trumansburg Sportsmen's Club, Geneva Practical Shooters, and the Waterloo Rifle & Pistol Club, and an Ovid Town Board member.

He joined the Farmerville Lodge in 2003, served as president for five years and was appointed District Deputy Grand Master of the Ontario-Seneca-Yates district. Following his term he again was elected to lead the local lodge from 2016 to 2021.

John retired in 2015 and enjoys Cayuga Lake fishing, bicycling, competitive shooting, and flying model airplanes with Bob Betzler.

He and Sally have two children, Carrie and Chad, and three granddaughters, Kathryn, Julia, and Anneliese.

*Check out the website and our Facebook page for more photos and links to items featured this year.*

## Sons of Veterans Ribbon Comes Home

Several weeks ago I received a message with a picture, did I know anything about who would have worn the ribbon? I answered and thought the conversation closed. Fast forward to Olde Home Day and a surprise visit by the owner, Brian Lynn of Auburn bringing the ribbon to the Interlaken Historical Society. Brian is the great-grandson of John C. Conover, and great-great-grandson of James Madison Conover, of Co. C 126th NY Volunteers. Brian had seen the 126th Roster in the museum several years ago and recognized the family name.

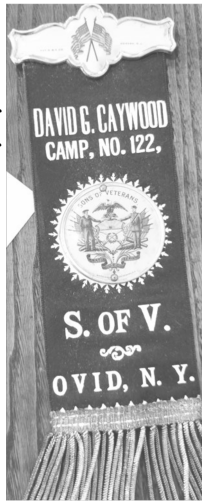
The David G. Caywood Camp Sons of Veterans was chartered in March 1896 at Ovid. That year John Conover was the Color Sergeant. The following year he was 2nd Lieutenant.

The members of the Sons of Veterans organization were all sons or grandsons of men who had served in the Union Army during the Civil War.

In December 1913 a new camp was announced, now the Sons of Union Veterans. John E. Conover was the Junior Vice Commander. With these dates, the ribbon is dated between 1896 and 1913.

John died April 17, 1935 and is buried at Ovid Union Cemetery with his father 1830-1889, and mother Letty 1830- 899.

One of the very unique features of these ribbons, and the Grand Army of the Republic ribbons we have on display, is their double sided nature. The black ribbon was worn



for memorial events, including Memorial Day parades. When the pin at the top is removed the ribbon can be turned over, the pin reinserted and now it is a bright red ribbon to be worn for regular meetings.

In 1964 Caywood Camp celebrated its 50th anniversary, and still continues today. The one change in the organization, there are now two types of membership. Legacy whereby you

prove your ancestry to a Union Veteran, and Associate members. Those who believe in the principals of the organization but do not have an ancestor.

Remarkably, the ribbon had been stored in its original envelope all of these years. The ribbon and the envelope are now on display at the museum.

Thank you Brian for this amazing piece of history.

*Brian Lynn showing his great-great-grandfather's name on the 126th Co. C. Roster.*



For those who have an interest in all things Civil War related, there are three Sons of Union Veterans organizations in our area, Ovid, Odesa and Ithaca. All have a Ladies' Auxiliary with the same criteria of an ancestor or associate member or as the relative of a member of the SUVCW.

Diane Bassette Nelson, Collections Chair

### Library News

Despite its small size, the Interlaken Public Library houses an impressive genealogy and local history collection. Curated for decades by both library staff and the Interlaken Historical Society and dedicated in 1992 as the Maurice Patterson Reference Room, dozens of visitors come each year to access materials and items of interest. This year we begin a series of projects aimed to improve the space and improve access to the collection.

The first, most recognizable, change is new bookshelves built by local craftsman Bill Updike. Following the success of the Friends of the Interlaken Public Library 2021 fundraising and the 2021 library book sale, the library board voted to spend significant funds on four large, cherry-wood bookshelves to house the books in the genealogy room.

The old bookshelves were warped, damaged, too shallow for the books they held, and large items were often left placed out of reach or easy access. Mr. Updike constructed large, custom, deep bookshelves in a beautiful cherry finish to permanently house the items in this collection.



Accessibility and discoverability of the collection has always been a top concern, and this year great strides are taking place to improve both. In April of this year the library applied to the South Central Regional Library Council (SCRLC) for a grant of \$6,000 to help fund the digitization of the *Farmer Review* and *Interlaken Review* Newspapers currently housed on microfilm rolls.

The Interlaken Public Library partnered with the Ulysses Philomathic Library in Trumansburg, and upon our award for full funding in May of 2022, began the digitization process.

With the help of SCRLC and partnering organizations, researchers will soon have access to all of the historic Interlaken and Trumansburg area newspapers from 1832 to 1999 from both Interlaken and Trumansburg library websites. Researchers will have the freedom to access the digitized, searchable newspapers from any web browser with an internet connection, and will no longer be limited to coming to the physical library or contacting library staff to search the papers.

The newly digitized materials will also be added to the NYS Historic Newspapers site, improving discoverability even further. Materials are expected to go live on our websites in the summer of 2022.

Chelsea Hastings, Library Director,  
607-532-4341

**Interlaken Historical Society**  
**PO Box 270**  
**Interlaken, NY 14847-0270**

www.InterlakenHistory.org

Dues for 2022-2023 are now due. If your label has a date prior to 2022 please consider bringing your membership up to date.

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**

**Table of Contents**

News and Notes about the Society	Page 2
Farewell to Three Friends	Page 3
What Middle Sized Bears Must Expect	Pages 1, 4-6
The Barry Mill	Page 7
Olde Home Day 2022	Pages 8-9
Caywood Camp Ribbon	Page 10
Library News	Page 11

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

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