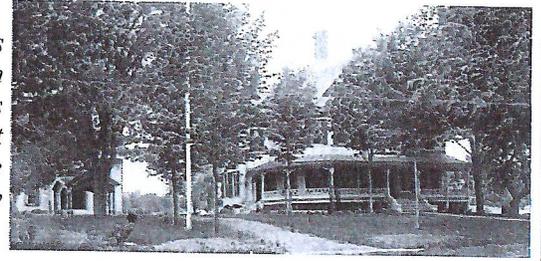


# Between the Lakes

A Newsletter of the  
Interlaken Historical Society

Volume 49 No. 2      October 2023  
www.interlakenhistoricalsociety.org

Learn more about this  
landmark home on  
Main Street and its  
connection to a recent  
donation to the  
Historical Society



## President's Report

Trust everyone had a great summer. We've been busy as the Historical Museum being open Saturdays in July and August. Met some interesting people with questions about our area and past. Also some of our members put together a display for the T-Burg Fair. We had a few special visits from people looking into genealogy.

My thought for this issue is one of our last donations. A sign was given to us, found in a barn for The Big Tree Inn. No one remembered it but Diane was up to the challenge (see her article about it beginning on page 3). So my thought was you never know what and where you might find something that can spark an interest in our past and how it affects us today. So keep your eyes open and come to us with your questions!

Our big event this year was our contra dance on September 16th. We had 50 to 60 people attend, with an enjoyable evening with the Spudz-N-Tagget musical group and Bob Nicholson caller. Everyone enjoyed donuts, cider and popcorn in the Brook Farm Barn. It was a good time to dance and socialize with our neighbors.

Plans are in the works for 2024 presentation of Plowing Day and Country Fair in September.

One last note, Walt Gable, the Seneca County Historian has major health problems and has been limited on his work. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.

Thanks to all,

*John Hunt, President*

The Historical Society was invited to participate in the South Seneca Middle High School event on September 14th. We were able to visit with students, parents and friends. Many of whom were surprised to learn the size and expanse of the collections as well as opportunities available to volunteers or students looking for community service time.



A look at the recent activities of the Historical Society Summer Social. We had a large turnout for the event with very few dishes having any leftovers at the end of the day.



**Watch your mail box**  
for the 2023 Historical Society  
annual fundraising letter.  
You will be able to designate  
Building Fund, Capital Projects  
or unrestricted giving.

### New Members

We don't have any new members this issue. Do you need a holiday or birthday gift for someone. Yearly membership is only \$10.

### New Life Members

Richard Drake, Scottsdale, AZ  
Keith Jay, Interlaken  
Dorothy Traphagen, Ovid

### Recent Donations

1917 Grand Army of the Republic Certificate appointing John Ryno to as an Aide de Camp.

Brick from J. Fitzsimons Root Cellar from Eric Thompson of Lowville, NY  
Egg Case with trays from Yvonne Williams of Interlaken  
Wood handled augers from Karen King, Trumansburg

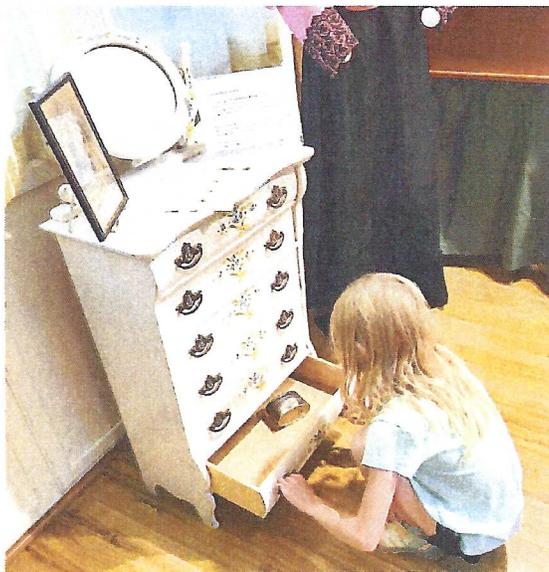


### New Museum Project Gifts

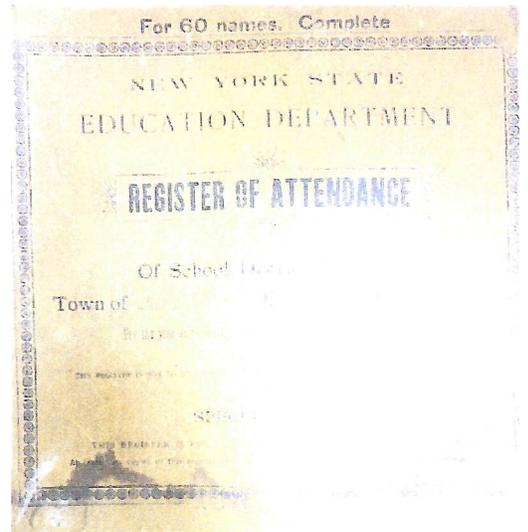
Watch for the annual fund raising letter coming in November and consider supporting the Society.



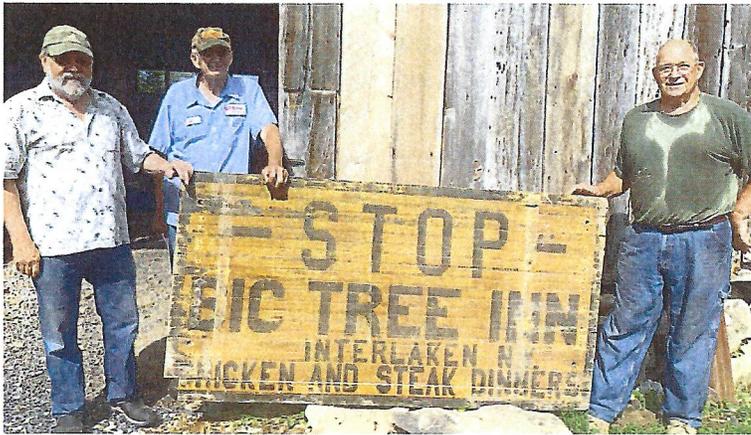
Four register of Attendance books 1910 to 1918 given by Chris Thomas of Elmira. Each volume lists the names of students, teacher, visitors and general family census for District #6 in the Town of Covert. District #6 was the area north of the hamlet of Covert. A few of the names shown: Palmer, Sprague, Wellin, VanOstrand, Hayward, Green, Harmon, Stannard, and Sutton. One year Anna Clawson is listed as teacher.



A summer visitor enjoying items in the dresser.



## If the Sidewalk Could Talk Home, Inn, Community Nursing Home



This past summer Mike and Patricia Emrick donated a large sign they found in the barn of their new home, the former Edwin Updike farm on Route 96.

Wanting to know more about the Big Tree Inn and its history, I began looking in the old newspapers using the Interlaken Library's digital search engine.\* One item led to another and before long I had a rough history of the Inn which was located in the Knight Home on Main Street.

The history of the house is closely tied in with the family, or the 'cast of characters.' James C. Knight [1810-1881] lived on Lodi Street, now West Avenue and had a store on Main Street. It was one of the buildings destroyed in the December 1880 fire. His son, Edward M. Knight [1836-1906] also lived on Lodi Street until 1891. That spring Edward held an "auction...selling their household items on [April] 15<sup>th</sup>", and his family moved to Rochester. [April 11, 1891] His family consisted of his wife Josephine, son Lewis and daughter Marian. The family did not remain in Rochester long but returned to purchase and remodel what became the Knight House on Main Street.

Looking for more information, a quick look at Patterson's *Between the Lakes, The History of South Seneca County*, contained one footnote about the house. "Samuel Almy ...built the largest house at that time between Ithaca and Geneva...circa 1890s E. M. Knight renovated the house." [Patterson page 93] Having a date to work from the search resulted

in a very different picture than the one painted by the footnote.

As noted, Mr. Almy originally built a home on the site; it was later owned by the Kinnan family. "It is reported E. M. Knight of Rochester has bought the Kinnan place on Main Street and next fall will remodel and occupy it." [December 10, 1892]

Edward Knight did more than just remodel, he built a whole new home! The former building was divided into two parts and moved. To oversee the building process, "E.M. Knight and wife have taken rooms at the Gambee [Hotel] and will spend the winter in Farmer." [October 6, 1894]

"E.M. Knight has sold part of the house ... to Davis Proper who will move it to his lot on Clinton Street. The other part is to be moved westward and converted into a carriage house and stable. An entirely new building will be erected on that site this spring." [January 26, 1895]

"E.M. Knight has the main part of the Kinnan house moved back where it will serve as a carriage house." [this piece remains on the property and is in use today as housing]. "That part sold to Davis Proper has been moved as far as the street, where it awaits good roads to be removed to his lot on Clinton Street." [April 20, 1895] A week later the paper reported, "Davis Proper has the house moved onto his lot on Clinton Street." [April 27, 1895] Which lot on Clinton Street is still being researched.

Five months later, "E.M. Knight and family are now occupying their new home on North Main Street." [September 28, 1895]

*1900 photo of the E.M. Knight home.*



The story of the family and its home changed in late 1906. "The death of Edward M. Knight occurred early Monday morning, December 3, 1906 at his late residence on North Main Street." [December 7, 1906]

Following Edward's death Mrs. Josephine Knight sold the home. There are multiple sales listed in the Seneca County Grantor indexes with Josephine's name, including a 1910 sale to Isaac C. Edington [Book 129 page 151] Only once in the 1909 to 1912 time period is she the grantee/buyer. "I.C. Edington has sold the Knight home back to Mrs. E.M. Knight, possession to be given May 1<sup>st</sup>." [March 8, 1912] This is indexed as Book 131 page 407.

By 1920 Lewis Knight and his family are living with his mother Josephine. 1920 Covert Census: Josephine is shown as head-of-house with son Lewis, Maude (his wife) and their daughter Pauline. The home is noted as owned but mortgaged.

Enter the Big Tree Inn. Various comments appeared in the paper regarding the new enterprise on North Main Street.

MAKE RESERVATIONS	PHONE 13-24
<b>BIG TREE INN</b>	
Interlaken, New York.	
SPECIALS:	
Fried Oyster Suppers	
Chicken Salad Luncheons	
Steak Smothered with Onions	
Chicken and Steak Dinners	

"At his home on North Main Street, Interlaken, on May 15<sup>th</sup>, L. J. Knight will open a restaurant similar to Krebs's at Skaneateles." [May 9, 1924] "L.

J. Knight will make a specialty of steak and chicken dinners—not a restaurant as announced last week. He opened the place yesterday." [May 16, 1924] These were followed by reports of the events that were held there.

"Mrs. R. R. Kingsley, of Ithaca, N.Y., gave a luncheon to thirty-one of her friends, at Knight's Big Tree Inn, Monday afternoon." [July 11, 1924]

As part of the wedding announcement for Charlotte Strong and John Freestone a number of pre-nuptial events were listed, "a luncheon at the Big Tree Inn" given by Miss Ursula Denison. [August 8, 1924]

Tuesday, September 2, 1924 Louise Wheeler Case married Leslie Melville Travis, at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. Fred Case. Miss Case is the granddaughter of Mr. O.G. Wheeler. "At three o'clock a reception was held at Big Tree Inn at which time Mr. and Mrs. Travis received about 125 of their friends. The Inn was attractively decorated with garden flowers and in the dining room the table was beautifully laid with a large center piece of lavender and pink old fashioned flowers." In addition to the reception at the Big Tree Inn, "Miss Leonard entertained at a luncheon" for Miss Case. [September 5, 1924]

"Gen H. H. C. Dunwoody of Washington came up this week to celebrate his 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday anniversary, giving a dinner at The Big Tree Inn last evening and then taking the evening train for New York." [October 24, 1924]

That same issue, and the weeks following had ads noting specials of Fried Oyster Suppers, Chicken Salad Luncheon, Steak Smothered with Onions and Chicken and Steak Dinners. Encouraging guests to "make reservations."

"The evening Bridge Whist Club are being entertained this evening at The Big Tree Inn." [October 31, 1924] It appears that the Inn was closed during the winter and spring months.

The May 15, 1925 issue carried the announcement that the Inn would be open to the public on Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day, 1925.

The following week, May 22, 1925 carried the obituary for Mrs. Josephine Knight, widow of Edward M. Knight. It noted that death "came very unexpectedly at her home in Interlaken last Monday evening. She leaves one son, one daughter, Lewis J. Knight and Mrs. W. S. Burr of this place."

With the reopening of the inn events were again noted in the papers. The [Trumansburg] *Free Press and Sentinel* on June 12, 1925, carried the announcement of the marriage of Blanche Holton to William E Georgia. Prior to the wedding several parties were given for Miss Holton. Miss Grant entertained at a luncheon and Dr. and Mrs. Gould gave a dinner for the bridal party both at The Big Tree Inn.

“Rev. H. A. Porter of Ovid and his daughter, Mrs. Hugh Bodine, of Jamestown, were Sunday guests at The Big Tree Inn.” [July 10, 1925]

“Miss Bessie Minor entertained for a luncheon twenty of her friends at Big Tree Inn Wednesday afternoon, September 16<sup>th</sup>.” [September 18, 1925]

Members of the South Seneca Clergy Club “were entertained for dinner by Dr. Haines at The Big Tree Inn, Interlaken.” [September 25, 1925]

“Mrs. A. R. Hill entertained sixteen ladies to a luncheon last Saturday at The Big Tree Inn.” [February 19, 1926]

To draw more people to the Inn space was also rented to Joseph H. Dennee, D.C., for his Chiropractic Office. with hours on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays from 2 to 5 p.m. [October 23, 1925 and others]

It would seem that the efforts to maintain the Inn did not prove fruitful. No items were noted in the local paper for 1926 or early 1927. Beginning in March 1927 a “NOTICE OF SALE...Ithaca Trust Company against Lewis J Knight, individually and as Executor of the last Will and Testament of Josephine C. Knight, deceased...in pursuance of the judgement of foreclosure...will sell at public auction ...on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 1927” [March 11, 1927 ff]

An item on April 22, 1927 noted, “Interlaken Chapter, O.E.S., gave a farewell party Tuesday evening in honor of Mrs. Lewis [Maude] Knight and [her daughter Pauline] Mrs. J.O. Pitcher, who leave next week to make their home in Elmira.”

The following week carried the announcement that “the house and 22 acres in Interlaken, sold at foreclosure last Saturday [April 23, 1927]...went to the Ithaca Trust Co. for \$4,150.” April 29, 1927] It would seem that Lewis never owned the home, even the foreclosure auction and the Grantee volume note only Josephine’s name.

The following year John Weinigel purchased the home and re-opened The Big Tree Inn. “Interlaken extends a cordial welcome to Mr. and Mrs. John Weinigel of Tampa Shore, Florida, who have bought the Knight House on North Main Street

and will make their home in Interlaken.” [May 4, 1928]

“The Big Tree Inn at Interlaken under management of Mr. Weinigel will open next Sunday.” “A.N Fletcher of Lodi, has recently installed the “Decatur Turbine Water System for John Weinigel.” [June 1, 1928]

Unfortunately, Mr. Weinigel died in March 1929, and his widow sold the contents at auction in May 1929. “Word has been received of the death of Mr. John Weinigel, who dropped dead in New York City last week, while on his way to a subway. Mr. and Mrs. Weinigel spent last summer in the Knight house on north Main Street.” [March 29, 1929]

Mrs. Katherine Weinigel will have an auction of household goods on Thursday, May 16, at one o’clock, selling dining room suite, table, 6 chairs, buffet, crystal closet, serving set, 2 parlor lamps, 3-piece parlor set, Radiola, 6 restaurant tables and chairs to match, 2 oil stoves, beds, mattresses, stands, dishes, tables, glassware, clock, ice box, kitchen cabinet, oil cans, fireplace fixtures, 5 porch chairs, smoker set, folding auto chairs, lawn swing, 100 feet hose and many other articles. Fred Medlock, Auctioneer. [May 10, 1929]

It’s quite possible that the sign was part of that auction and made its way north to the Updike property.

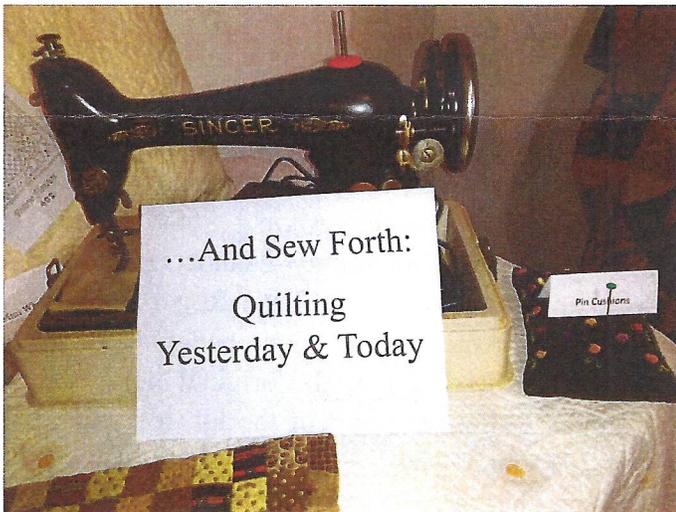
In the years following others owned the property. For a time, it was called the Community Sanitarium owned by Lorraine Aikin [1950s to 1971] and in 1972 the Community Manor owned by Howard and Iona Westervelt. Later Roger and Linda Coonradt owned the Manor. Today it is the Bixby Home. The part of the original home that was moved to the west part of the lot, it’s still on the property and served as “The Carriage House” where a number of the residents of the Bixby Home live.

*\*To save space, all newspaper quotes are from the Interlaken Review or its predecessor papers unless noted otherwise. Diane Bassette Nelson, author.*



## Trumansburg Fair Display

Special thanks to  
Mary Jean Welser and Marty Schlabach for their  
work on the display and the photos.



## A look back at the Barn Dance on September 16th

Thank you to

STEPS for sponsor funding, and helping with the pop corn serving

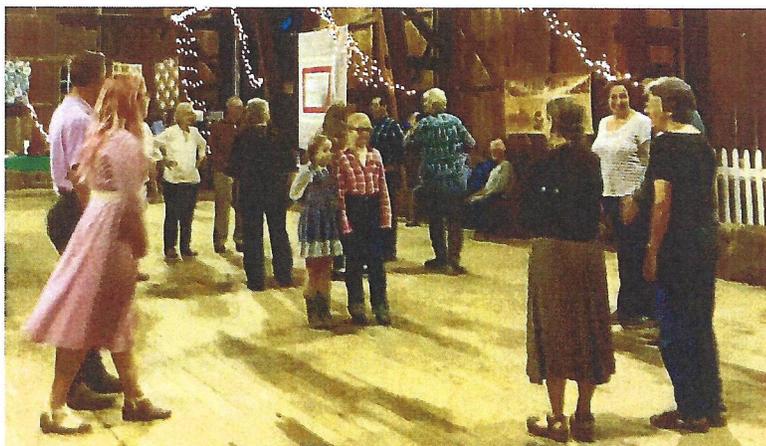
The Pumpkin Stand, Ellen Smith for the cider

The Band, Spudz-N-Tagget and Caller Bob Nicholson

John and Grace Hunt for preserving the Brook Farm Barn and all of Grace's wonderful photographs

The volunteers who helped with set-up and all the details to make the dance happen

And to all those who came to dance, visit and enjoy a wonderful evening.



## Library News

Our summer reading programming has been completed with 252 programs happening over the 90-day summer season. This year's offerings included movie nights, birds of prey from the Braddock Bay Raptor Research Center, craft projects for children, teens and adults, along with a host of others. While our village is a small one with relatively few options for educational and entertainment enrichment, the library stands firm in our commitment to provide meaningful programming to residents.

Thanks to a suggestion from a local resident, one such program hosted well-known author Joan Young. Ms. Young is a graduate of Interlaken Central School and has authored more than a dozen works, several of which are on the shelves for public enjoyment at the Interlaken Public Library. This year she graced library visitors with a short presentation on one of her many published works, *North Country Cache: Adventures on a National Scenic Trail*. Ms. Young is one of only about 20 individuals who have hiked the North Country Trail, a 4815-mile trek across the northern United States. She was the first woman to complete the trek in 2010, and one of the only individuals to have done it twice.

Her impressive achievements aside, Ms. Young was a very interesting visitor. She offered copies of many of her published works alongside a book signing at the library, speaking with visitors about her experiences. While she is very well-known for her writings on her outdoor adventures, she has also authored an adult mystery series and children's mystery series, pulling inspiration and references from our local community into her writing.

Programs such as this one would not have been possible without the suggestion of an interested resident, so please don't hesitate to reach library staff with ideas and suggestions. As always, library offerings can be found on the library website at

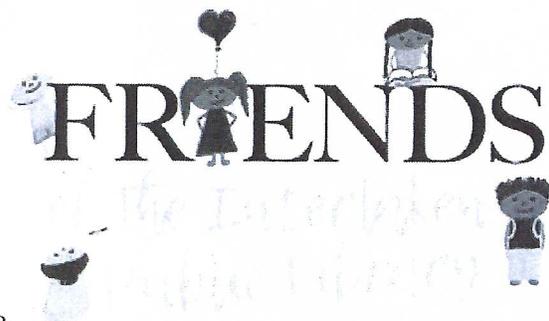
[www.interlakenpubliclibrary.org](http://www.interlakenpubliclibrary.org).

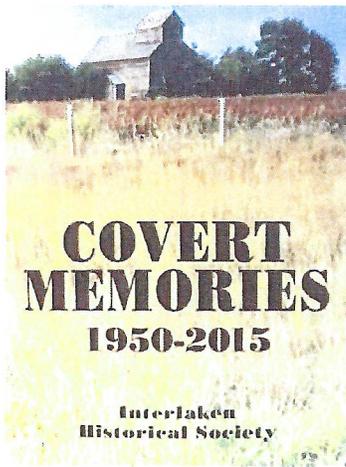


Just a reminder that Interlaken Public Library has partnered with the Ulysses Philomathic Library in Trumansburg, to bring you digitized newspapers!

We are now able to offer Interlaken and Trumansburg newspapers from 1829 to 1999, searchable from the comfort of any device with an internet connection or from your local library.

*Help support your local library, join the Friends of the Interlaken Public Library!*





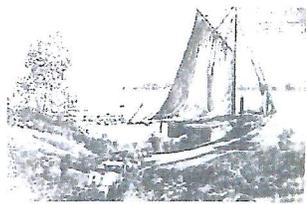
**So Good a Time**

Life in the 1870s as Documented in the Diary of Olive Evans Williams



Copyright by George B. Brown & Maurice W.

**BETWEEN THE LAKES**



The History of South Seneca County, The Town of Covert, and The Village of Interlaken (Farmerville)

**From the Book Store**

A few items that you can order from the Historical Society Book Store. Check the website for more books related to the area:

[interlakenhistoricalsociety.org/book-sale](http://interlakenhistoricalsociety.org/book-sale)

- Covert Memories 1950-2015** \$12.50  
Over 80 articles by community members celebrating our communal history, honoring the Historical Society's 65th anniversary. 2016
- Snippet From the Past** \$35.00  
Blogs celebrating the Covert Bicentennial, Diane Bassette Nelson
- So Good A Time** \$12.95  
Life in the 1870s as documented in the Diary of Olive Evans Williams, soft cover, 2010, Nancy Saultz Radloff
- The Covert Family** \$35.00  
By Fischer, Covert, and Patterson 1989. Hardcover, 680 pages. Requires \$2 extra for postage
- Town of Covert Early History &c** soft cover \$25.00  
Compiled by Wayne Morrison 1983
- Index to the Interlaken and Ovid Newspapers** \$55.00  
1822-1994 Requires \$2 extra for postage
- Interlaken Oral History Project** \$10.00  
Interviews with residents of the area 1900-1950 including the history Of the Halstead Canning Company. Softcover with photographs
- Between the Lakes** softcover \$15.00  
M.L. Patterson hardcover \$25.00  
History of South Seneca County, Town of Covert and Village of Interlaken 1978
- And Let My Memory Cherished Be** \$18.00  
Remembering the Families of the Old Covert Cemetery 2006 Diane Bassette Nelson
- Historic Images of Interlaken** \$3.50  
A Coloring Book based on historical photographs, with descriptive text.

**Postage and Handling**

Under \$10 \$3.50      \$10 to \$25 \$6.50  
\$25—\$50 \$8.50      Over \$50 \$13

Some items require extra postage.

**Mail to:** Interlaken Historical Society

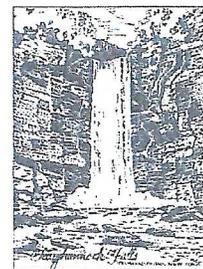
PO Box 270, Interlaken, NY 14847-0270

Questions, please email:

[interlakenhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:interlakenhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

**Finger Lakes Area Landmarks**

One package of 12 note cards and envelopes is \$3.00, or two packages for only \$5.00. See the website or our Facebook page for a full listing of which cards are still available.



**Dues for 2023-2024** are now due. If your label has a date prior to 2022 please consider bringing your membership up to date. Dues can be paid through our webpage.

Life Membership in the Historical Society is still only \$100. No need to remember to pay your dues each year!

Gifts for the Building Fund are welcome anytime. Send your check or use the QR code on our website.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Interlaken Historical Society

**NOTE:** the email address for the historical society has changed: [interlakenhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:interlakenhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)



*No event at the Brook Farm Barn is complete without flowers from Grace Hunts garden. We thank her for the flowers and the many pictures from the Dance as well.*

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

[www.InterlakenHistory.org](http://www.InterlakenHistory.org)

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**Mark Your Calendar** January 22, 2024  
For our next in person program  
For more information on the  
Historical Society events contact  
President, John Hunt, 607-592-3224

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