



Town of Middlefield Historical Association
P.O. Box 348 Cooperstown, NY 13326
Headquarters at the District No 1 Schoolhouse,
On County Highway 35, in the Hamlet of Middlefield
May, 2012

President's message:

Warm weather came very early this year and gave us an opportunity to complete our yard work at the schoolhouse. We have been working on replacing some siding and the beam at the left of the entrance. We will continue with these projects, as well as some new changes in the planning stage.

We thank everyone for renewing their T.M.H.A. membership and remind you that the dues year runs from Jan.1–Dec.31. As a member you are entitled to a 10% discount in the gift shop and you will receive the newsletters. The board has decided that anyone not renewing their membership will be removed from the mailing list. This will start with the fall newsletter 2012.

We always welcome volunteer help for all our events, no matter how big or small the event may be. You may help for the entire event or just a couple of hours, it all makes a huge difference. Contact any board member, if you wish to help this year. I hope you can attend at least one event this year and have a look at the new exhibits. In closing I would like to thank the members and the T.M.H.A. board members for all their time and energy that makes the operation of the schoolhouse a success. **Jan Bartow, President T.M.H.A.**

Visit our new Web Site!

We have recently completed the design and construction of the new TMHA website. You can visit the site at <http://www.middlefieldhistorical.org>

Town of Middlefield Historical Association

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Organized in 1959 and granted a charter by the NYS Board of Regents in 1966. The Town of Middlefield Historical Association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

The Town of Middlefield Historical Association (TMHA) brings together people interested in history, especially the history of the Town of Middlefield, N.Y. The Association seeks to discover and collect any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area. It will provide for the preservation of such material and for its accessibility to all who wish to examine it. Further, it seeks to disseminate historical information of local significance. [Click here for TMHA membership form.](#)

School District #1 Middlefield. Schoolhouse was built in 1875.

TMHA Headquarters in School District #1 schoolhouse today.

[Check out our 2012 Events Calendar!](#)

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The web site allows easy access to our calendar of events & gift shop, as well as information about ongoing projects and membership information. Also on the site is our Photo Gallery. It is at this location which we post a sampling of photos available from our collections. Currently, photos of the rural schoolhouses in the Town are portrayed. We will be adding additional photos in the near future, so check back often. The photos on the web site are low resolution web images. High resolution images are available for sale from TMHA in either digital or hard copy format. Please contact TMHA for information tmhawebsite@gmail.com

Veterans' Memorial Project Update

The Veteran's Monument is coming ever closer to reality. We have a sketch of the monument with the engraving and have come a long way to raising the money needed. The cost of the monument is \$2,300; we have raised \$1,100. Over the next month we will be approaching veterans' and other groups to help off-set this cost. If you have not yet contributed to this worthy project, we ask you to consider making a gift to erect this monument. We would like to unveil this Veterans' Memorial at our Community Day celebration on July 8, 2012.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Les Rathbun 547-9093 or Dominick Reisen 547-4008.

Who was Bowers and why did they name a town after him? (Part 1)

By David Edwards

In the Town of Middlefield, just outside Cooperstown, where Susquehanna Avenue morphs into Otsego County Highway 52 and crosses a small bridge over Red Creek, one encounters the hamlet of Bowerstown.

The Bowers family came from Swansea, Wales in the 17th Century, settling in Massachusetts, near the Rhode Island line. The Bowers were Quakers-- prominent, wealthy, but by the time of the American Revolution, no longer inclined to be subjects of the Crown. Among the Revolutionary War era Bowers were Colonel Jerathmeel Bowers and his brother, Henry.

Colonel Jerathmeel Bowers was elected by the Massachusetts House of Representatives to the Executive Council along with other distinguished citizens, all of whom were rejected by Gov. Bernard on account of their opposition to the Crown. His brother Henry was one of the most eminent merchants of his time. He was the owner of 18 square rigged vessels, most of which were taken during the American Revolution forcing him into bankruptcy.

Henry had a son, also named Henry (b. 1747), who in 1772 married Mary Myer, daughter of a wealthy New York businessman. It was from his father-in-law, John Ray Myer, that Henry (b. 1747) inherited the large expanse of land in Otsego County that became known as the "Bowers Patent". John Myer Bowers, an only child, was born September 25, 1772, in Boston. Henry (b. 1747) died in 1800, and John Myer Bowers, Esq., became the sole owner of the Bowers Patent. On June 12, 1802 he married Margaretta Matilda Stewart, and by 1805 they were residing in their new home, Lakelands, at the headwaters of the Susquehanna River. In 1808, Margaretta M. S. Bowers' mother, Martha Stewart Wilson moved to Middlefield to join her daughter and son-in-law, became an important part of the Cooperstown social scene, and died at Lakelands 1852.

On April 18, 1761, the Middlefield Patent was issued to Gottfried (Godfrey) Miller and others. It consisted of 29,000 acres (French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York*) and became known as the "Godfrey Miller Patent". It consisted of almost all of what is now known as the Town of Middlefield west of the Cherry Valley creek.

At the time land patents were limited to 2000 acres (later reduced to 1000 acres) per individual per year. Persons who wished to secure larger areas commonly used the names of friends, relatives or employees on the application. After the patent was issued, these individuals quickly transferred their rights to the most interested party for little or no consideration. Under these rules the Godfrey Miller patent required 14 "...and others". Who these others were may have been lost to history.

The names of the patents were commonly referred to by either location or the name of the first person listed on the patent application. Godfrey Miller is a historically obscure name, so it may be assumed to be a place holder name. The possibility exists that there were two main patent owners, and they agreed at a later date to split the 29,000 acre patent essentially in half. One possible original owner is John Ray Myer of New York City. He was a very wealthy landowner, owning a large portion of Wall Street and William Street in New York City. His family had a history of extensive land dealings in Harlem. In addition he had married Anna Crommelin, a niece of the most wealthy banker in Amsterdam, Holland.

At some point prior to 1791 John Ray Myer somehow came into possession of approximately 15,000 acres of the Godfrey Miller Patent, roughly the southern half of it. It included about one and one half miles of the eastern shore of Otsego Lake above the outlet, and the eastern shore of the Susquehanna River downstream for about six or seven miles, and extended east to approximately the Cherry Valley creek. As a result of marrying John Ray Myer's daughter, Mary, Henry Bowers (b. 1747) inherited the Myer property that became known as the "Bowers Patent". On the death of Henry in 1800, the land passed to his son John Myer Bowers, ESQ. Other sources (Staats, E. Pomeroy, comp. 1961.) indicate that in the 1802-1805 period John Myer Bowers owned 18,000 acres in the area. The property was gradually subdivided throughout the 19th Century.

In the late 1700's, a road ran south to Cooper's Town along the eastern side of the lake. A crude road also ran from Cherry Valley along the Cherry Valley Creek, terminating near the hamlet of Middlefield. Around 1791, this road was routed over the mountain, around the end of the Vision, and down to the general area where Woodside Hall now stands.

In the late 1700's, a road ran south to Cooper's Town along the eastern side of the lake. A crude road also ran from Cherry Valley along the Cherry Valley Creek, terminating near the hamlet of Middlefield. Around 1791, this road was routed over the mountain, around the end of the Vision, and down to the general area of where Woodside Hall now stands. The road terminated smack dab in the middle of the proposed village of "Bowerstown" that Henry Bowers was having surveyed and laid out into building lots. In 1794 a State Road was laid out between Albany and Cooper's Town that may have incorporated some or all of this Middlefield-Bowerstown Road. Conveniently, all roads led to Bowerstown.

At some point after 1791 John Nichols leased a tract of land, made the first clearing, and built the first home on the Bowers Patent, near the outlet of Otsego Lake. This house burned down in 1802, just as construction of the new John Myer and Margaretta Matilda Bowers home, "Lakelands", was beginning. The home was completed in 1804, and the Bowers first occupied it in 1805, after living in Judge William Cooper's Town for a short time. If one drives across Estli Avenue today and stops at Main Street, Lakelands is the yellow house across Main Street and a little to the left.



"Lakelands" ca. 1963 Photographer E.P. Staats

Dave will continue with Part 2 of "**Who was Bowers and why did they name a town after him?**" in the next newsletter.

SUMMER SUNDAYS 2012

Old Middlefield Schoolhouse: 1-4 p.m. All are welcome. Co. Hwy. 35 off St. Hwy. 166, six miles east of Cooperstown

July 8 - 39th Annual Middlefield Community Day 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

39th Annual community festival including Worship service, a chicken BBQ, Small Town Big Band.

This event features our **Marketplace** - a group of over 30 vendors including: crafts, local produce, and historical associations from the area. There will be plenty of food and live music.

The Middlefield Youth Commission will host children's activities on the District #1 School playground. The District #1 Schoolhouse will be open to unveil TMHA's newest exhibits.

Download the **Vendor Registration Form** at <http://www.middlefieldhistorical.org/public-documents>

July 15 - Bottle Program 1 - 4 p.m. Bottle Collecting with Matt Carr Matt's presentation will be on how and where to dig for bottles. He will also have his bottle collection on display for us that day.

July 22 - Walking Tour of Middlefield Hamlet Historic District with Dominick Reisen 1 - 4 p.m. Historian Dominick Reisen, author of *Middlefield and the Settling of the New York Frontier*, will host a tour of the Middlefield Hamlet Historic District. Among the various Federal and Greek Revival houses making up the district, Reisen will discuss sympathetic alterations which, although not technically restorations, are in keeping with the overall style of the community's architecture.

July 29 - Annual Meeting 1 - 4 p.m. Annual election of officers.

August 5 - A Look at Beekeeping 1 - 4p.m. Members of the Leatherstocking Beekeepers Association will be on hand to show beekeeping equipment and discuss issues related to modern day beekeeping. A glass enclosed observation hive will be available for viewing but free range bees will NOT be flying. Honey will be for sale.

August 12 - Treasure hunting with a metal detector 1 - 4 p.m.

August 19 - Open House at the Schoolhouse 1 - 4 p.m.

August 26 - The Civil War 1 - 4 p.m. Join us as we continue our annual review of the effects of the Civil War with an emphasis on local issues-- recruiting, letters home, deaths and burials during 1862. Local Civil War buff Bob Consigli will talk on the background and effects of the Emancipation Proclamation