



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
www.middlefieldhistorical.org May, 2014

President's message:

Greetings All and Happy Summer to you. It appears that Mother Nature has finally made up her mind and the warm temperatures are here to stay. With warmer temperatures and thoughts of summer I can't help but think about all of the upcoming events that TMHA has on the calendar. PLEASE, take a moment and mark your calendar for all the events.

We are kicking off this year, as we normally do, with the Annual Meeting which will be held July 7 at 6p.m. at the Schoolhouse. It is at this time that TMHA officers are elected. All TMHA members are encouraged to attend. On July 13th we will be holding our 41st Annual Middlefield Community Day event. See the article below for more information on this day. We are still looking for members to help at this event and other future events as well. If you would like to help in some way, send us an email and let us know how you'd like to help out.

At this time I would like to thank the board members that are exiting for their service to our community and the Historical Association. I would also like to thank the Community and the Board for the privilege of being President for this past year, it has been a wonderful year and I have been blessed by the experience.

Wishing you and your families a safe and fun filled summer

September

President T.M.H.A.

Community Day - Sunday July 13, 2014

We hope you will consider attending community day this year. We are planning a full day of interesting events. Craft vendors will be present from 9:00 am to 4:00 and community day worship service will start at 10:30. This year we are having town-ball games, the rules and style of the game is much different than the baseball game we know today. If you would like to learn the rules, take part in a game or just enjoy watching you are more than welcome. The ladies of T.M.H.A. will have many handmade items for sale in the museum shop, along with the food booth. We will have the building open all day for you to see the exhibits and ask about them. This is a good time to become a T.H.M.A. member or volunteer, we can always use the help. The hamlet usually has many yard sales as well, so come and enjoy the day.

Dates to Remember:

July 7 - 6 p.m. Annual meeting. Election of TMHA officers will take place. All members are encouraged to attend.

July 13 - 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. 41st Annual Middlefield Community Day

August 16 - 6 p.m. "The Shenandoah Valley Campaign" - Bob Consigli will discuss this Civil War Campaign and the local regiments involved. Free open to the public.

October 12 - 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Middlefield 9th Annual Fall Festival

December 7 - 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. Christmas at the Schoolhouse

FREEMASONRY in MIDDLEFIELD by Dominick Reisen

On 23 December 1823 the men who were clearly leaders in the hamlet of Clarkesville (now Middlefield) sent a formal request to the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York asking for a dispensation to form a lodge in Middlefield. Among the men who signed this letter were Joshua L. Pinney, Sumner Ely, John Hayden, Dunham Spaulding, and Benjamin Gilbert Jr. These men comprised a strikingly intertwined group. Sumner Ely and Dunham Spaulding were both married to sisters of Benjamin Gilbert Jr. and John Hayden was destined to become a son-in-law of Joshua Pinney.

Grand Lodge issued a charter to Widow's Son Lodge of Middlefield on 4 June 1824. Membership in this lodge grew rapidly, reaching thirty-nine by the end of 1825. Those who joined the original petitioners were Daniel Gilbert, Nathan Bailey, Benjamin D. North, Angus Griffin, and Moses Rich Jr. These men set up their lodge room on the third floor of Joshua Pinney's tavern. It was very common for lodges to meet at such public buildings. Shortly after its formation, though, Freemasonry in New York State came under fire in a scandal that came to be known as the Morgan Affair. In 1826 Captain William Morgan was preparing to publish an expose' on the fraternity in which he intended to reveal the secrets of Freemasonry. Morgan disappeared, never to be found, and the story grew up the Masons had drowned him in Lake Ontario. The public was outraged at the thought that a secret organization existing in an open society could perpetrate such a deed and its members go largely unpunished. Many Lodges burned their Minute books to prevent their proceedings from becoming public.

In 1832 Grand Lodge ordered that all lodges send their Minute books and other documents to New York for safe keeping. Lodges that did not comply with this order would have their charters declared forfeit. However, Widow's Son Lodge did not follow this course and in June 1834 their charter was declared forfeit. The last membership return for this lodge was dated June 1828. Virtually all other documents relating to this lodge were destroyed.

There is a footnote to the history of this short-lived lodge. When Rodney and Jeanne Johnson took ownership of the former Pinney Tavern they learned that when it had been inventoried for the estate of Mabel Folmsbee the third floor was still set up as a Masonic Lodge. The piece of furniture that had served as the Master's Station was give to NYSHA and now serves as the "Fiddler's Bench" in Bump Tavern. The remaining pieces of Masonic paraphernalia were sent to Grand Lodge in New York. Through the efforts of the late Mr. Johnson, himself a Mason, TMHA was able to acquire these items along with copies of all existing documents relating to Widow's Son Lodge.

CIVIL WAR PROGRAM

As part of our five year Civil War 150 year anniversary program, we will have both a presentation on a topic of interest that occurred during 1864 and a display of local newspaper items that reflect the impact of the Civil War on people in and around the Town of Middlefield.

The newspaper articles generally deal with the continuing draft and local bounties, efforts by local women to provide necessary items for the war effort, war deaths and the status of the wounded, deployments of the local regiments, letters from the field, and the impact of the War on local politics.

This year's presentation will once again be by Bob Consigli, a member of the Doubleday Civil War Roundtable group. His topic will be "The Shenandoah Valley Campaign" that took place in the valley of that name in Virginia in 1864

The presentation, free of charge to the public, will take place at the Schoolhouse on Saturday, August 16 at 6 PM. The display will be available at the same time.



Hop Farm. August Busch on left, Martin Moakler, local Hop Dealer, in background. Man on right is unidentified.



Hop pickers



Lynes Farmhouse, built in 1799, & Hop Farm. Site of present day Ommegang Brewery.

Is it time to renew your TMHA membership? Your renewal date is shown on the mailing address label

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Headquartered at the Old District No. 1 Schoolhouse in the Hamlet of Middlefield

_____ New Member 2014 _____ Renewal 2014

Name _____ Tel. No. (____) _____

Address _____ Zip _____

email address _____

Please select one: _____ Single \$5.00 _____ Student \$1.00 _____ Couple \$8.00
_____ Sustaining \$10.00 _____ Patron \$25.00

Please consider an additional gift to:

Collection Care & Acquisitions Fund \$ _____ Building & Repair Fund \$ _____

Veterans memorial Fund \$ _____ Friends of TMHA fund \$ _____

Time & Talent

_____ I will volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors. Please contact me (email/ phone) _____

_____ I/We will help with the Summer programs. Please contact me (email/ phone). _____

_____ One summer Sunday Program Committee _____ Greeter

_____ Community Day/Marketplace _____ Fall Festival/ Craft Show

_____ I/We would like to work on one of the following task groups. Please contact me (email/ phone) _____

_____ Publicity _____ Collection Care _____ Good ol' yard work

SCHOOL BELLS RING, ARE YOU LISTENING ?

Some time ago the bell atop the TMHA headquarters, the District No. 1 Schoolhouse in the hamlet Middlefield, stopped ringing. After an unknown number of years, the pull rope frayed and broke, making activation of the bell impossible.

Thanks to the efforts of Art Hubbell and his crew from Hubbell Construction the rope has been replaced. Art brought his power lift to the schoolhouse, raised members of his crew to the bell tower, attached a new rope and threaded it down through the roof(s) and ceilings. In the process we discovered an unknown interior access panel into an old covered roof that led to the underside of the bell tower.

Thanks to Art and his crew, the peal of the school bell will be heard in the hamlet once again.

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

Every Spring the New York State Historical Association hosts the state-wide History Day competition. Students from grade 7 through 12 from around the state present—written and oral, displays and web sites, drama and video—projects on a designated theme.

This year's theme was "Rights and Responsibilities in History".

The Town of Middlefield Historical Association presents an award every year for "An Outstanding Entry Focused on a Rural History Topic". Members of TMHA review the entries, observe the presentations, interview individuals and select the entry that best meets our criteria.

The winners this year—fairly 'recent' history—were Emily Cooper, Sarah Cooper and Natalie Mitchell of Schoharie High School for "The Rights of the Citizens and the Responsibilities of the Government During Natural Disasters: Schoharie County Flood of 2011".

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Address Correction Requested