



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
September, 2012

President's message:

We once again had a great line up of summer sunday programs and our attendance was not as good as usual for them. We want to thank every presenter for their time and thanks to all the board members that help with the programs. Fall Festival on Sunday Oct. 7th will be here soon and then we round our year with the Christmas program on Dec. 4th.

The building and grounds committee have accomplished some repairs on the building this year. We have replace a beam on the main entrance and caught up some unfinished painting.

The Veterans memorial is moving along nicely and we hope to bring that to a close this year. The dedication date will be announced in a future newsletter.

Thanks to all the members for another good year and please contact any board member, if you wish to volunteer. **Jan Bartow, President T.M.H.A.**



FALL FESTIVAL OCTOBER 7th 10 am - 4pm
Middlefield District #1 Schoolhouse.

Come one come all for fun, food, music and crafts. Schoolhouse will be open for viewing displays and photo slideshow.



Dear TMHA,

Recently I completed a research project for my College U.S History class focusing on the history of the area; specifically the area surrounding the town of Cherry Valley. Seizing this opportunity I chose to discover the past of my hometown Middlefield. I called Jan Bartow asking for the opportunity to access the archives in the museum. Between Jan Bartow and Dominick Reisen I was lent a stack of sources from the museum. I was amazed with the depth of the collection behind the scenes of the exhibits. The variety of donated information was astounding; the collection included everything from scrapbooks and journals to flags dating far back into the 19th century. Also, the collection in the library was helpful in finding any information collected by other historians. I am especially thankful for both the accessibility of the selection and the depth of the content. I received an A on my project which will be added to the collection at the museum.

Thanks to all,
Tristan Davis Fralick

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 Dominisk Reisen 547-4008.

Who was Bowers and why did they name a town after him? (Part 2)

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. Part 1 of this article appeared in the May 2012 issue of our newsletter.

The post Revolution era saw more than just roads being built. On February 16, 1791, Otsego County was created, being split off from Montgomery County. Later In 1791 two distinct events occurred that resulted in the development of one Bowerstown and the demise of another. What could have been.

“In 1791, when Cooperstown had but few dwellings, Mr. Henry Bowers caused to be laid out and surveyed by Philip R. Frey, the proposed village of "Bowerstown," which extended from the Susquehanna river to the base of the hill on the east, and from the Lake to a point about 950 feet south thereof. The map of this projected village, now in the possession of Mr. H. J. Bowers, shows that this plat of land — now represented by "the Lakelands" and 350 feet south of the road which forms its southern boundary — was laid out in 82 building lots, nearly all of them 50x130 feet, [sic., another source—Anonymous, 1907, Cooperstown Centennial Celebration-- indicates 85 by 130 feet] and in a building lot 200x260 feet for the "Manor Square" on which Mr. Bowers proposed to build, and being part of "the Lakelands," near the Lake and River. "Division street" was to be "as wide as Cooper's street," and started from the eastern termination of our present Main street. "Bridge street" was the northern boundary, and terminated on the west at the first bridge built across the Susquehanna. "Water," "Myer" and "Washington" streets ran north and south through the village. "Otsego" street ran from a point on Bridge street north, near the Lake, where the present owner of "the Lakelands" has constructed an avenue. Later on, Mr. Bowers probably changed his plans, for we do not learn that these "village lots" were ever put upon the market. It is a pity that "Cooperstown" was not originally as well laid out as "Bowerstown." The former will probably ere long cross the river, by legislative enactment, and embrace within its corporate limits all of the former, and a tract of land lying east and south of it.” (Cooper and Shaw, The Chronicles of Cooperstown).

“Concurrently, a saw mill was built by Robert Riddle, on the Bowers patent, on Red Creek, in 1791, being the first saw mill in this part of the country, and one has been maintained there until now”. (Cooper and Shaw, The Chronicles of Cooperstown)

John Myer Bowers may not have shared his father's vision of a "village of Bowerstown". He may have had another 'vision' in mind. Immediately opposite the village we now know as Cooperstown, on the eastern side of the valley (for the Susquehanna winds its way for near four hundred miles through a succession of charming valleys,) the range of mountain terminates, heaving itself up into an isolated hummock, however, before it melts away into the plain. This rise is called the Vision and its summit is much frequented for its views, which are unrivaled in this part of the country. The ascent is easy, by means of roads and paths, and when there, the spectator gets a bird's-eye view of the village, which appears to lie directly beneath him, of the valley, and of the lake. It was on 30 acres at the base of the Vision that John Myer Bowers constructed 'Lakelands', his manor house, and it was land in the same general area that he sold to Eben B. Morehouse, ESQ. In 1829 Morehouse built the extensively embellished stone dwelling that is known as 'Woodside'. In 1836, Woodside was purchased by Samuel Wooton Beall, ESQ., of Maryland, who had married into the Cooper family.

John Myer Bowers died in 1846. His wife, Margaretta Matilda Stewart Bowers died in 1872, and her mother, who had resided at Lakelands since 1808, predeceased her in 1852. Both women had lived well into their nineties.

John Myer and Margaretta Matilda Bowers had nine children. Their daughter Martha (b. 1806) lived her entire life at Lakelands, eventually managing the family properties. Their only son remained in the area, marrying Phila Lucetta Marshall Crain of Richfield Springs and engaging in mercantile endeavors. Their daughter Anne married Fredrick A. Lee a Cooperstown attorney, insurance executive and eventual Bowers family advisor. The other children all moved away.

By the time of her death in 1881, Martha Stewart Bowers (b. 1806) had sold most of the Bowers Patent.

Meanwhile, at Robert Riddle's sawmill on Red Creek, a community was evolving. The Bowers family's original plans faded, but a more modest undertaking was growing. The Chronicles of Cooperstown (Cooper and Shaw) indicate "This locality, now embracing a number of dwellings, school house, mission church and the mills, has long been known as 'Bowerstown'."

By 1872, "Bower's Town is situated on Red Creek, about a mile south east of Cooperstown, and contains a Presbyterian Church, a school house, a tannery, a saw mill, 22 dwellings and about 100 inhabitants" (Child, p. 109).

Today (2012) the hamlet of Bowerstown contains about 35 residential parcels with 50 to 60 residents, and no commercial ventures. The hamlet consists of a few parcels on the Cooperstown side of the bridge, a few down County Rt 33 (River Road), a few on Beaver Meadow Road, and the majority of the properties on County Rt 52, commonly known as Murphy Hill.

Archaeology at the Schoolhouse **by Dominick Reisen**

This spring we had the metal detectors, Chris and Kim Altmann, authors of the book *From the Ground Up: Adventures in Metal Detecting*, employ their skills on the grounds of the playground. This team has done metal detecting at various locations in Otsego County, including four sites in Middlefield, as well as England and Florida. They are also members of a metal detecting clubs that has monthly competitions for the best finds. When they come to a site they assure the owners that all finds will be returned to the owners, but they would like first to clean up, research, and enter some finds in metal detecting competitions. They are conscientious about leaving a site as clean as when they found it, with no holes.

At the schoolhouse they found a host of coins, most of which dated from the 1920s to the 1950s, with some later pieces no doubt lost during TMHA events. They also found myriad buttons, some from as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The most intriguing find, though was a mid-nineteenth century boot plate. These items were originally used by Civil War soldiers so they would leave identifying marks where they marched. This would leave an imprint in the ground and units coming behind them would know whether or not they were in friendly territory. Intriguingly, they came to be used after the war by "ladies of the evening." The purpose was the same. A person could follow those tracks and perhaps engage the lady who was leaving those tracks.

One wonders about the explanation for such an item being found in Middlefield. One must remember there were numerous taverns and hotels in the town during this period, which meant there was a lot of travel to and fro. Presumably, it would have been left before the schoolhouse was built. It does raise certain questions about some of the more salacious aspects of life in mid-nineteenth century Middlefield and it reminds us that not all aspects of life were good and wholesome.