SHARON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2026

Sandra Manko, Editor

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Ron Ketelsen, President

Happy Holidays, everyone!

As another year draws to a close, there is so much to celebrate - and so many people to thank! Our Oktoberfest Dinner at Sunnycrest on October 17th was a wonderful evening, with every seat filled, a delicious meal, and plenty of laughter. A special thank-you goes to Amish auctioneer Benuel Fisher for bringing such energy and fun to the festivities. Thank you to everyone who attended, donated, volunteered, and supported our art auction. Your generosity helps Ron Ketelsen, President keep local history alive! Be sure to enjoy the photos inside this issue.

Looking for a meaningful Christmas gift? Give the Gift of History! A Sharon Historical Society membership is a thoughtful way to share your love of local history with friends and family while supporting its preservation for generations to come. Preserve the Past. Inspire the Future. You'll find a gift membership form inside this newsletter - ready to help you check a few names off your holiday shopping list!

Please join us for our annual Christmas Party on Sunday, December 13th, at 4:00 PM in the Community Room at the Sharon Public Library. Bring a potluck dish to share-perhaps a favorite holiday recipe-and a wrapped gift for our gift exchange, with a $15 limit. We'll provide table service, drinks, and entertainment. Together, we'll supply the holiday cheer! **Our Annual Membership Meeting will be held following dinner that evening. This will replace the December Board of Directors' Meeting.**

As November brings the season of Thanksgiving, we are especially grateful for our members, volunteers, and friends. Your generosity, enthusiasm, and dedication help preserve our community's history and make everything we do possible. Thank you for giving us so much to celebrate this year!

Wishing you and your loved ones a wonderful Thanksgiving, a joyful holiday season, and a New Year!

Inside this issue

Message from President 1
Pump Corners 1
Top Health Resorts–1935 2
Schoolteachers 1915 2
Wall of Fame 3
Horsing Around 4
Thank you to Volunteers 5
St. John's Bell Got Upgrade 6
Old Maid's Hole 7–9
Coach Al Doig 10
Samson Block 11
Fall Foliage Train Trip 12
Oktoberfest 12
Upcoming programs 13
Give the Gift of Christmas 14

Town Pump Corners

The old harness shop stood on the southeast corner of the Rockville crossroads and was operated in turn by John Brewster, Andrew Turner, and Joseph Wormuth, This sketch is H. E. Mitchell's interpretation of how the intersection looked in the 1860s (what is now Routes 10 and 20). The pump was put to rest in 1897 when the water mains were laid. The water main passes through the old well and this was filled in by the construction at the time the main was laid down in the autumn of 1897.



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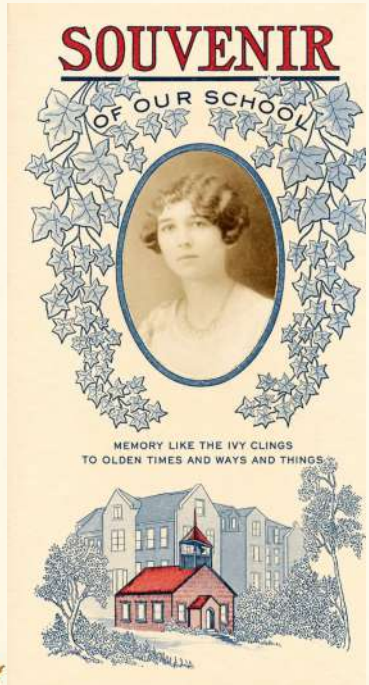
Letters *Published fortnightly by TIME Inc., Volume 11, Number 18*
September 2, 1935, 5 cents

Top Ranking U. S. health resorts:

"Saratoga Springs, New York is No. 1 U.S. Spa. The State of New York has opened seven new buildings at Saratoga, hopes to attract 25,000 spa addicts a year (Time, Aug.5).
The Glen Springs, Watkins Glen, New York is known as "the American Nauheim," is noted chiefly for plain brine and carbonated brine baths. A rangy, four-story hotel sprawls on a hill overlooking Seneca Lake, accommodates from 150 to 200 guests at a time, a total of 2,000 annually. Famed guests include: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Governor Herbert H. Lehman, Cleveland's Mark Hanna III.
White Sulphur Springs, Sharon Springs, New York, "the Baden-Baden of America," attracts 10,000 visitors yearly, names among its guests Franklin D. Roosevelt and Chief Justice Hughes. Special pride of White Sulphur Springs is unique Eye Water Spring—for sore eyes."
The article goes on the describe Poland Springs, South Poland, Maine; Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania; Hot Springs, Virginia; White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia; French Lick Springs, Indiana; Medea Hotel and Mineral Baths, Mt. Clemens, Michigan; Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas; and Manitou Springs, Colorado.
It's great to know Sharon Springs was # 3 on the list and ranked right up there with the best of them. Also the top three were all in New York State.

1915 Rules for Schoolteachers



Ladies who wanted to teach school had to toe the line both in and out of the classroom. This is some of the stringent set of rules for teacher conduct in 1915.

1. You will not marry during the term of your contract.
2. You are not to keep company with men.
3. You must be home between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.
4. You must not loiter downtown in any of the ice cream stores.
5. You may not travel beyond the city limits unless you have permission from the chairman of the board.
6. You may not ride in a carriage or automobile with any man unless he is your father or brother.
7. You may not smoke cigarettes.
8. You may not dress in bright colors
9. You must wear at least two petticoats.
10. Dresses must not be more than 2 inches above the ankle.
11. To keep the school neat and clean, you must sweep the floor at least once daily; scrub the floor at least once a week with hot, soapy water; clean the blackboards at least once a day; and start the fire at 7:00 a.m. so the room will be warm by 8:00 a.m.

Wall of Fame

Just a few people who have contributed to Sharon in many ways!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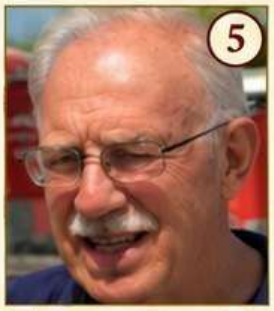
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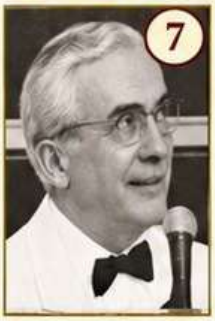
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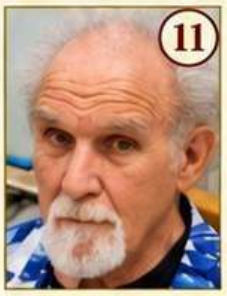
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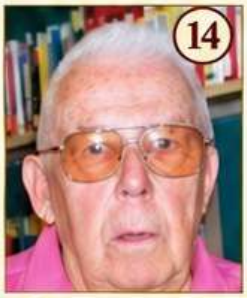
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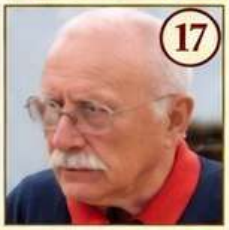
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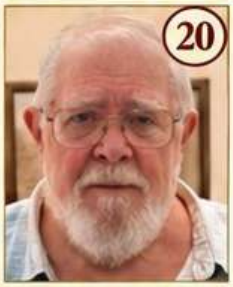
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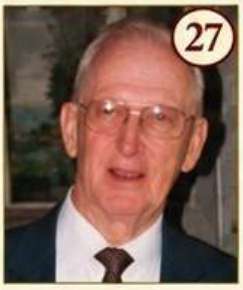
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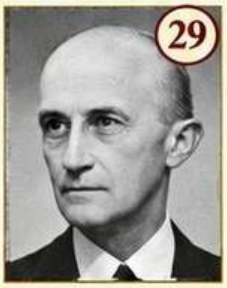
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How many do you recognize?

More to come in future issues.
(Key to photos can be found on Page 10).


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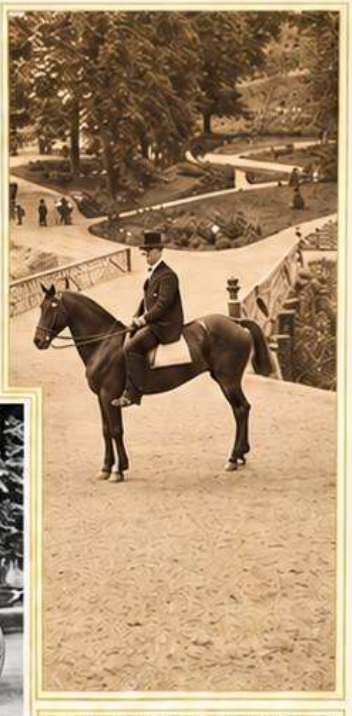
HORSING AROUND!

When visitors came to Sharon Springs, equestrian activities offered plenty of entertainment—from horseback riding and carriage rides to betting on races at the track or simply observing the fun.

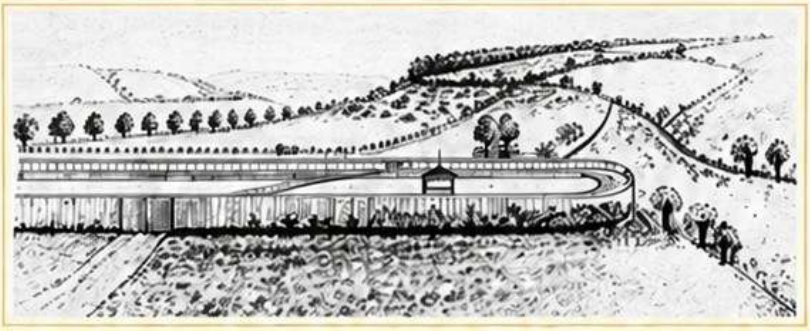


















With Heartfelt Thanks

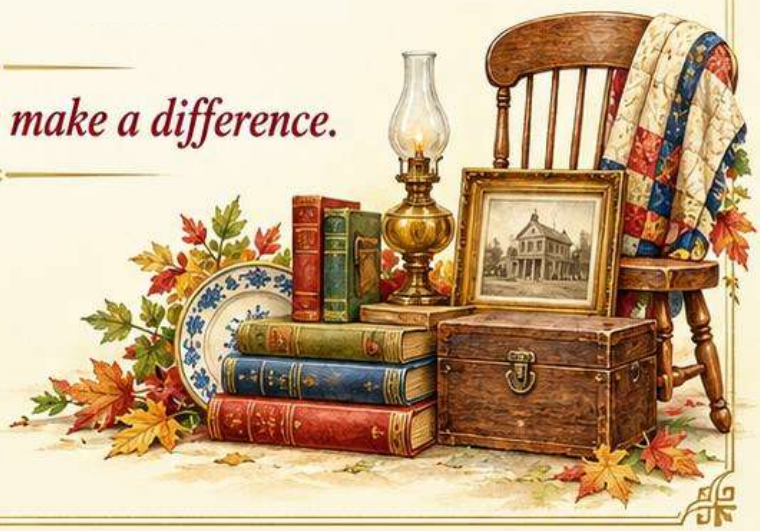
To the volunteers who make it all possible

Thank you to many people who make Historical Society events a success. Each person pitching in helps to make the museum and grounds look good and the organization to run smoother. Harvest Festival was a great success and that is attributed to the many people who helped to get ready for the busy weekend as well as the museum receptionists who volunteer all through the season.

- **Oliver Kindling** installed barriers in all the shops, also helped with the front step of the ice cream shop, painting and installing the counter seats and cutting the seats for the ice cream chairs.
- **Joyce Slater** spent several days sorting, organizing, and pricing items for the "boutique sale" held at the Roseboro Hotel, as well as recovering the seats for the ice cream shop counter.
- **Steve Andersen** for mowing and trimming the grounds and filling the woodchuck holes beneath the buildings.
- **Matt Wolf** for power-washing the moss from the barn and outhouse. Removing the moss may also prevent further damage to the shingles.
- **Carol Vacca** and **Caroline Bade** for helping with the boutique sale and completing the final pricing.
- **Walt and Sandy Manko, Barb Cousineau, Regina Wolf, and Oliver Kindling** for staffing the museum throughout the Harvest Festival weekend.
- **Pauline Brown** for coordinating the volunteers who served as receptionists. Pauline does this all summer and this is a great asset to the museum running smoothly.
- For all the receptionists who willingly agree to staff the museum during the summer season.
- And last, but not least, to **Ron Ketelsen**, President of the Sharon Historical Society Board of Directors, thank you for all you do—gardening, painting, carpentry, Zoom programs, and on and on. Ron is the leader who brings everything together and makes us a success.

Your time and talents make a difference.

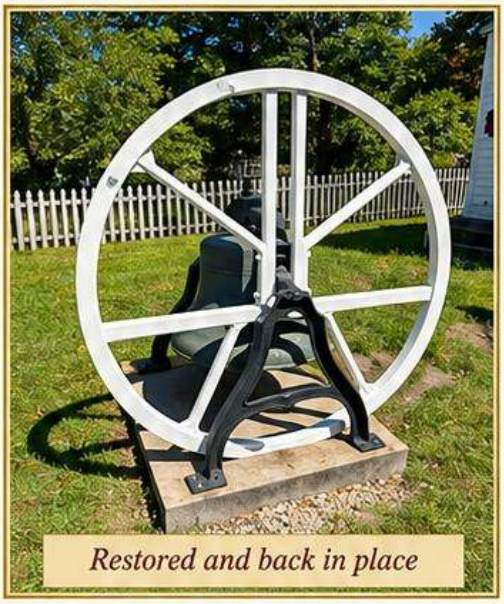




A New Chapter for an Old Bell

Restoring the St. John's Lutheran Church bell

Thanks to Oliver Kindling, for his expertise in refurbishing the wheel and frame which holds the bell in front of the Chestnut Street one-room schoolhouse, things are looking better at the museum property. The bell originally came from St. John's Lutheran Church which was once an active congregation on Route 10 , south of Sharon Springs. The wheel had been painted and fixed a few times over the past several years, but this time it needed serious restoration. The wheel had sat in a groove where leaves and water collected and it did a lot of damage to the structure. Oliver repaired the wheel and also fixed the housing so the water didn't collect below the wheel and do further damage. Walt Manko met Oliver with the tractor and front-end loader on October 5, 2026 and the two of them put the bell and wheel back up. Thank you Oliver and Walt. It looks great guys!



Restored and back in place

Thank you, Oliver and Walt. It looks great!



Before restoration









The Old Maid's Hole
Sharon Springs, New York

By Homer Martin, grandson of Dr. Herbert L. Odell (1859–1940)

Dr. Odell was a prominent physician in Sharon Springs from 1892 to 1933.

My brother Odell Martin and I had heard a family recollection about it. How our grandfather, Dr. H. L. Odell, and one or two others had entered the "hole" uptown and emerged where the stream comes out behind the Hungarian Hotel downtown.

The little stream from Bowmaker's Pond flowed under Old Route 20, near the foot of the hill to the railroad station and about half way across the field toward New Route 20, where it entered the Old Maid's Hole.

These holes, sometimes called sinkholes, were made many years ago by the action of water wearing away limestone rock. Possibly when the glaciers receded. It is still going on. There's a place over the small hill west of Leesville where an elm tree has been sinking. Back in the 1930s I could see the base of the tree. Now the branches are close to the ground.

Back in 1932 or 1933, Odell and I decided we would try to see where grandpa had gone. We put on some old clothes and with some candles, matches, flashlights and rope, we started out. Two greenhorns spelunkers??

We approached from the town side with the stream coming on our left. As we walked toward the hill the water turned that way and down a gradual crevice which was about 3 feet wide, 40 feet long, dropping about 15 feet. Here the water had disappeared; we could hear it but couldn't see it.



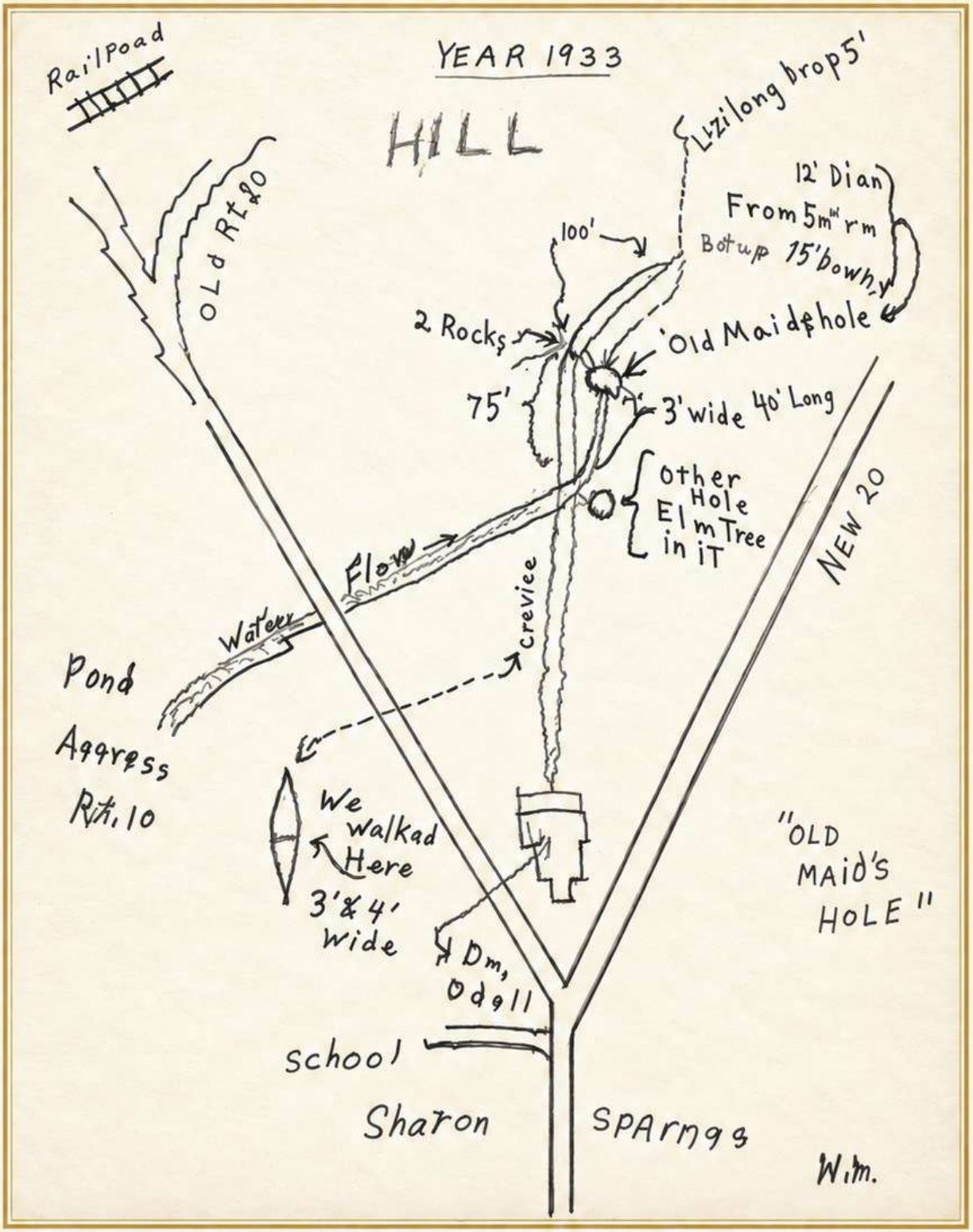
This crevice ended in a room shaped like a round silo and about midway between top and bottom. The sides were quite straight. Finding a place to fasten our rope, we worked our way to the bottom. It was covered with debris. Looking around we started digging at a spot opposite our rope and to the left. This opened a passage about 12 feet long and dropping 4 or 5 feet. This came out in a passage toward the hill and to the right. This had a smooth dirt floor. Starting standing, after about 100 feet the ceiling met the floor. Back in the passage we looked the other way, to the left. Here our lights showed the passage came together 30 feet or 40 feet above us. Later we learned it did the same about 30 feet below us. We were walking on dirt covered stones wedged in the crevice. Immediately before us, a large rock stuck up from the floor about 20 inches. Above it was another huge rock (I would guess about 2 tons). This had a point about 6 inches from the lower one. We couldn't quite crawl through. So back through the passage, into the sinkhole, up the rope and back to the barn.

At that time, Dr. Odell lived on the point between Old and New Route 20. The next day with a hammer and chisel we went back to the sinkhole. Carefully chipping off the point of the upper rock, we crawled through. Standing we moved along about 75 feet when on our left was another sinkhole. This was 14 feet in diameter and some 35 feet high. We kept traveling along the same big crevice till I figured we were about under Grandpa's house. All this time we were on dry dirt smooth floor and could hear water under us but never saw it. Some places there would be a hole in the floor and our lights showed the bottom of the crevice. Now the ceiling came down to the floor. This time we took our rope and left. Grandpa must have found more openings. We never tried again!!!

Homer F. Martin

Mapping the Old Maid's Hole

Homer Martin's 1933 sketch • Sharon Springs, New York



Map drawn by Homer Martin in 1933, when he and his brother Odell Martin went down into the Old Maid's Hole to "investigate".

The Old Maid's Hole

Caverns, Waterways & Local Recollections

Old Maid's Hole - What we commonly call today, the Old Maid's Hole, was previously known as Best's Cavern and also the Tyler Hole. Old Maid's Hole is located in the Village of Sharon Springs on the south side of Route 20, just to the west of the motel. It was called Best's Cavern because it was located on the Best farm. The underground stream goes under Route 20 and heads in a northeast direction until it spews out of the hillside "downstreet" just to the south of the present-day Beekman 1802 Mercantile below the old Klinkhart homestead. Through the years, people have explored the underground chasm, and on occasion, it is said ducks were put in the hole by Route 20 crevasse to see them come out of the hillside where the water surfaces. The water is an overflow from Bowmaker's Pond and drains through the school property. Several times over the years, dirt, debris, and silt have blocked up the above-ground entrance which has caused flooding of Route 20 in front of Sharon Springs Central School. Today, the Village and the New York State Dept. of Transportation have the responsibility of keeping the opening clear to avoid flooding.

(As written in the *INDEX*—1941) Best's Cavern and the Tyler Hole - The limerock table that underlies Rockville, was at a very remote time the bed of a shallow swift moving stream of river-like proportions. The waters, in leaving this rock level flowed easterly over a series of cascades and passed over the cliffs into a seething caldron known to us today as the "Tyler Hole."

The action of glacial waters, coming later, formed the underlying caverns and provided an opening into these caverns directly under the main channel of the stream. This is the opening on the Best farm that we know today. This new intake began immediately to carry a small part of the surface stream. The volume of the surface stream slowly lessened and as a result, the channel slowly narrowed. When the volume finally decreased to an amount that could be carried by the underground intake, the surface stream bed became permanently dry.

From the "Tyler Hole" northward to the Sharon Springs basin the old channel of this stream remains to this day nearly unchanged and may be easily followed. Surface grading made necessary by building and high construction, together with natural erosion, have obliterated much of the channel between the "Tyler Hole" and the opening on the Best farm. Sections that can best be seen at this time lie north of the opening on the turnpike, and on the part of the old Feathers property that lies slightly south of Maple Street. The foundations of the Wild homestead and the Peter Lyke house were built on the solid rock of this channel bottom.

It was this stream, flowing, carrying, and building through thousands of years that filled the basin below to a considerable depth with gravel, sand and silt, and in so doing, laid down the foundation of solid ground upon which the village down around the springs was finally built.

(As written in the *INDEX* January 23, 1941) The Sharon Springs Basin - Geologically, the basin in which the lower village stands carries us back into very remote ages in the earth's history, ages that formulated the rock and soil far down beneath the ancient sea, ages that elevated these formations above the waters as dry land surface, and ages of glacial ice and turbulent rivers that moved through countless centuries.

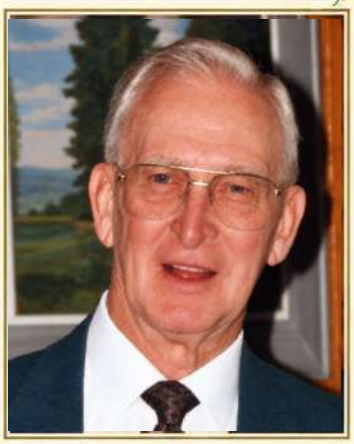
The story of this unusual specimen of nature's handiwork is written in the underlying Devonian rock formations, upon the glacier scarred escarpment that gives form to the surrounding elevations and within the stratified clay formations that underlay the entire basin to great depth. It is from this time-blotted script of the ages that we decipher this story as best we can.

From a very early and long extended period of time a body of water filled this depression to an elevation sufficient to maintain a surface level that carried the waters as far to the south as the Tyler Hole. This body of water was fed from beneath by numerous springs but mainly by a stream of considerable volume that flowed into it by way of the Tyler Hole channel. The ridge of land that impounded these waters on the north was at this period much higher than it is at the present time and extended unbroken into the hill that lies to the west. This ridge elevated the outlet of the lake to a level high above the present gorge.

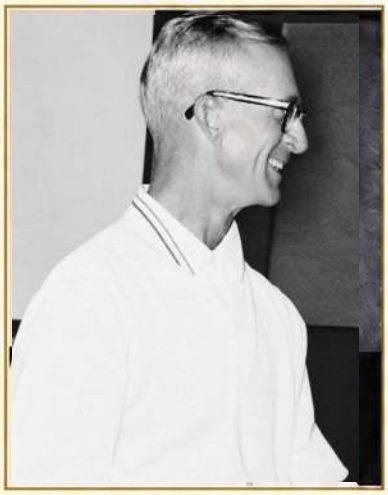
The grinding of great ice masses wore down the northern ridge and the flood of glacial waters slowly wore the outlet down through the underlying slate barrier to the harder rock level that we see today. As this outlet slowly lowered, the waters in the basin slowly subsided until finally the entire basin was left as dry land surface.

Alexander Doig

Remembering "Coach"



Alexander "Coach" Doig was a longtime resident of France Street in the Village of Sharon Springs. He died November 4, 2006. Born in Cowdenbeath, Scotland, on May 12, 1920, he was the son of James and Janet (Pitkin) Doig. He and his family came to the United States and settled in Marcellus, NY.



Al, or "Coach," as he was affectionately called, received both a bachelor's and master's degree in education from Ithaca College. Al taught school for one year in Munnsville, NY. For 32 years, he taught physical education at Sharon Springs Central School. While at Sharon Springs, he coached soccer, basketball, baseball, and cross country. He was also Athletic Director at the school, and for 20 years was both the director and lifeguard for the Sharon Springs summer recreation programs. Coach retired in 1979. Many of Sharon's youth remember Coach teaching them to make wallets and weave attachments for key rings at the Rec Center.



Al and Peg Doig

After Al retired, he worked for a couple of years doing carpentry work with Fred Leith. He played a little golf and did some traveling to Scotland, England, and Florida.

> ***"Always a gentleman and a scholar!"***

Al was a WWII veteran and a member of American Legion Post #1269. He served as treasurer for Boy Scouts Troop 17 and was a founding member of the Sharon Springs Volunteer Rescue Squad and also was fire commissioner for the Sharon Springs Volunteer Fire Department. Coach was a longtime trustee of the Sharon Springs United Methodist Church.

In 1949 Al married Margaret Colby Doig, and they were married for 57 years. They had two sons, James and Robert, and also three grandsons, Alexander Doig, Scott Doig, and Dustin Budge.

Key to Page 3

1. Lawrence "Babe" Farro
2. Left-Josh Kilmer-Purcell & Dr. Brent Ridge
3. David Cross
4. Mary Jane Bianchine
5. Tony Desmond
6. Doc Stein
7. Norman Stoddard
8. Left-Thelma Smith, Rita Cowan, Joan Hoyt
9. Patsy Nicosia
10. Tony Daou
11. Peter Cozzolino
12. Jean Bakkom
13. Avery DeLuca
14. Malcolm Lynk
15. Garth Roberts
16. Edgar Handy
17. Frank Masterson
18. Herb Vrooman
19. Everett Mereness
20. Larry Farro
21. Maureen Lodes
22. Mary Ann Larkin
23. Wesley Ullman
24. Peg Doig
25. Tony DiPace
26. Patty Everett
27. Al Doig
28. Karen Cookson
29. Harry Mitchell
30. Connie Vrooman
31. Joan Jozifek
32. Eugene Lehman
33. John Hall

Samson Block



Amiel Samson bought the property in 1894 from Mr. Bullock who had a meat market and grocery store. It was a three-story wooden building with two apartments above—Bullock's store being in the basement.

In 1905, this building was taken down and a contract was signed to build the brick building. The Rev. Edwin Armstrong, Rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, was the architect, as he was a professional architect before entering Seminary to study for the Priesthood. The upper floor of the building was a large 8-room apartment which was the Samson's home. About 1910, an addition was added to give more room to the store which was badly needed and an extra room added in the rear of the bank for a meeting room. The building was built according to specifications for the bank which had made arrangements to occupy it. This meant building and installing the concrete vault and door. Prior to this, the bank was in the Klinkhart Store. Around 1906, Amiel Samson opened the new store. Mrs. Sharpe, who owned the Mansion House at the time, offered the end of her lawn on the north side for Mr. Samson to move a part of the old store there while the building was being erected. Amiel was in business until his death in May 1944. Amiel's wife sold the property after his death and moved into one of the apartments at a house in Rockville with her sister owned.



Interior of store shows Elizabeth, Sidney, Harold, Amiel & Julia.



In addition to being used as Allen's Fruit Market, the bank and post office occupied the building until 1989 when they moved to a new building at the corner of Route 10 and 20.

Today, the 204 Main Bar & Bistro occupies the building, owned by Norm Phenix and Jim Grinchis.

All Aboard for Autumn!

The Sharon Historical Society hosted a beautiful fall foliage train trip on Saturday, October 10. Forty people joined us for a relaxing autumn outing through the scenic Susquehanna River Valley.

Departing from the depot in Milford, NY, at 11:00 AM, our group enjoyed a two-hour round-trip excursion along the Susquehanna River, past farm fields and woodlands dressed in fall color. The seasonally decorated passenger car added to the festive atmosphere as friends visited and watched the countryside roll by.

The trip brought together good company, beautiful scenery, and the pleasure of traveling by rail. We returned to the Milford depot with happy memories of a wonderful day. Thank you to everyone who joined us—a fun time was had by all!















Oktoberfest: An Evening to Remember

Friends and supporters of the Sharon Historical Society gathered for an Oktoberfest celebration filled with good company, hearty food, and spirited bidding. Sunnycrest Kitchen's staff served a generous buffet featuring German favorites alongside Amish country dishes, followed by delicious homemade dessert.

Returning auctioneer Beniel "Ben" Fisher brought his lively humor to the art auction, keeping guests entertained as they bid on a varied collection of artwork, including many pieces by local artists. SHS President Ron Ketelsen assisted with the auction, while Treasurer Joyce Slater kept track of the bidding as auction clerk.

Another highlight was the quilt raffle. Walt and Sandra Manko won the beautiful handmade quilt created and donated by Society member Regina Wolf. We are grateful to Regina for sharing her talent through this generous gift.

Our sincere thanks go to the Sunnycrest staff, Ben, the contributing artists, and everyone who joined us, placed a bid, or helped make the evening possible. Your participation made this fundraiser a memorable occasion and supports our continuing work to preserve and share the history of Sharon and Sharon Springs.



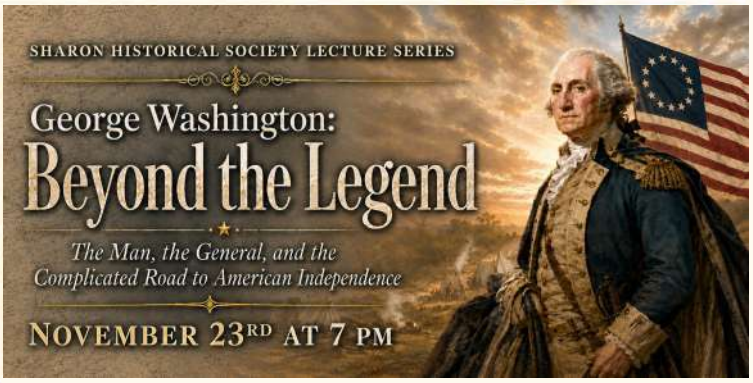






Upcoming Sharon Historical Society Lecture Series Programs

November 23rd • 7 PM



Before he was a monument, before he was a myth, before he was the face on the dollar bill — he was a man standing at the edge of impossible odds, leading a freezing, starving, outnumbered army against the most powerful military force on earth. The story of George Washington and the American Revolutionary War is not just a history lesson — it is one of the greatest tales of courage, resilience, and leadership ever told. From the disastrous early defeats that nearly crushed the rebellion, to the legendary crossing of the icy Delaware River on Christmas night, to the ultimate triumph at Yorktown that changed the course of human history, Washington's journey is as thrilling as any novel and as relevant as today's headlines. But who was the real man behind the legend? What drove him, what haunted him, and what nearly broke him? Join us for a fascinating exploration of the Revolutionary War through the eyes of the commander who refused to quit, and discover how one man's determination helped birth a new nation and reshape the world forever. **Available via Zoom only.**

December 7th • 7 PM



Remember when the streetlights were your signal to come home? Join us for a nostalgic journey through the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, when everyday life looked quite different. We'll revisit family traditions, neighborhood pastimes, and customs that have quietly disappeared. Remember the toys we begged for—and the dangers our parents never imagined? From lawn darts to chemistry sets, some favorite playthings delivered more excitement than anyone bargained for! Then it's back to school to recall things teachers and students once did that wouldn't be allowed today. Expect laughter, a few surprises, and plenty of "How did we ever survive?" moments. Bring your memories, your sense of humor, and your favorite "When I was a kid" story. Whether you lived through these decades or just enjoy hearing about them, come remember the way we played, learned, and lived! **Available via Zoom only.**

December 21st • 7 PM



Every December, the ghost of Ebenezer Scrooge rattles his chains across stages, screens, and bookshelves around the world — but how much do you really know about the remarkable story behind the story? In 1843, a young Charles Dickens, driven by outrage over the desperate poverty of England's children and haunted by the misery of his own childhood, sat down and wrote a little book that would change Christmas forever. He wrote it in a feverish six weeks, walked fifteen miles a night through the darkened streets of London to fuel his imagination, and wept and laughed alone at his desk as the characters came to life. When it was published, it sold out by Christmas Eve and moved readers to tears — and within months, productions were appearing on stages across two continents. Join us for a captivating journey into the surprising true story behind A Christmas Carol — the desperate financial pressures, the social injustices, and the burst of inspired genius that transformed one man's passion into the most beloved holiday tale in the English language, and helped reinvent our very idea of Christmas itself. **Available via Zoom only.**



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