

Warrensburgh Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 10 Issue 3

Fall 2005

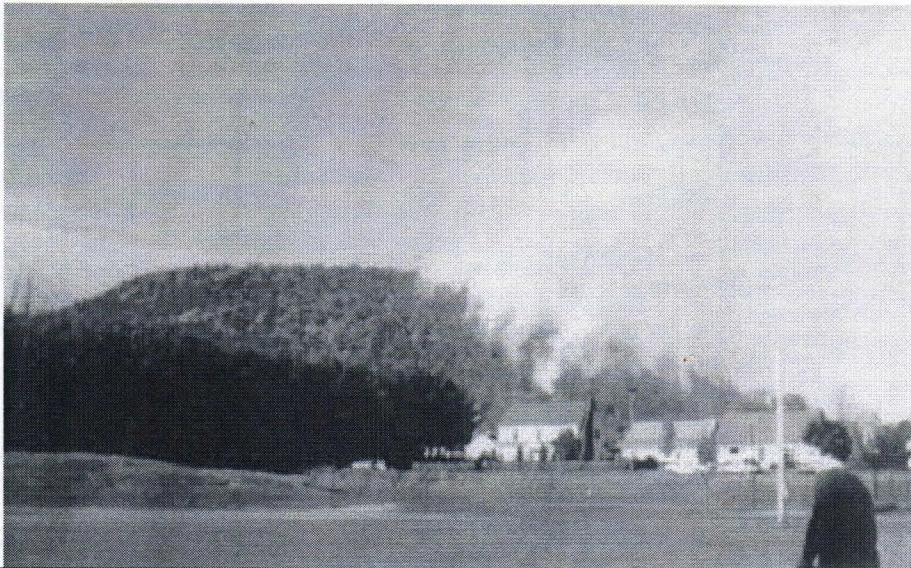
FIRE ON HACKENSACK MOUNTAIN

By Ruth Anselmo Fruda

It was Autumn in Arlington, Virginia, October 9, 1963, when I heard the announcement on the evening television news of a "raging fire burning on

naturally piqued at the devastating news happening in my hometown.

I was born and raised in Warrensburgh and graduated from Warrensburgh High. I met my late husband in college and in 1954 we were married. We settled in Arlington, Virginia and raised a family of six children (including a set of twins, the youngest, born in January of 1964).



Hackensack Mountain

Photo courtesy Ruth Fruda

Hackensack Mountain in Warrensburgh, New York, a small community in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains." As a native of Warrensburgh, my interest was

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GREEN RANGERS JUNIOR RIFLE CLUB

By Kyle Smith Graves and Jud Smith

Following the departure of Ed Bockes from Warrensburgh Central School and the disbanding of the W.C.S. Junior Rifle Club, the Green Rangers Junior Rifle Club was formed. (Junior because members under age 18)

Chartered November 24, 1954, with Judson Smith Sr. as instructor, the new club was formed. Pack Forest was the site of practice shooting. The club held many fundraisers to buy uniforms and equipment. Many members had their own target rifles and the others shared club equipment. Wednesday night was club night for practice and refreshments at the home of instructor Smith.

After the untimely death of Judson Smith Sr., in 1957, the club was taken over by



Jud Smith, Jr. - photo courtesy Chuck Wheeler

In July of every Summer we traveled north to the Adirondacks to spend a month at our Hudson River camp in Warrensburgh.

The October 10, 1963 edition of the Albany Times Union newspaper reported, "the blaze spread yesterday up the east slope, over the crest and began to burn down the west slope last night. At the foot of the west slope lies Warren Street in Warrensburgh.

Mrs. Robert Grace, a resident there, said: 'I didn't sleep a wink last night'. Tonight,

Continued on page 3

Judson Smith Jr., who had become an N.R.A. Small Bore Instructor after achieving the Distinguished Rifle Award

Continued on page 3

President's Letter

Dear Members and Friends,

At this writing summer is almost over! (I know, technically it goes to September 21 but somehow the air changes after Labor Day.) It's been a busy and hot one.

Our Sticky Wicket Croquet Tournament and Picnic was our best ever, judging by both attendance and fundraising. We raised more than \$2,400, most of which was thanks to the very generous support of Warrensburg's business community. Please be sure to thank them with your patronage.

The week following we attended the WCS Alumni Banquet at The Lodge at Echo Lake. (Echo Lake never looked as good as it does from this fine dining facility. "Alumni" of Indian Head Camp would flip!) As usual it was great seeing old friends and reminiscing about Warrensburg 50 years ago (and longer. The earliest class represented was 1939!)

Work at the Museum came to halt for both the Society and the Town crew. It was just too hot, and summer activities and responsibilities took precedence. We will resume in cooler weather. We are at the stage where we are ready to move the collection to the top floor so the Town crew can work on the main floor over the winter.

Our first venture into publishing has been deemed a success. V. P. John Hastings reported that sales receipts for Abbie's new book, *More Grandmother's Memories of Yesteryear*, have more than covered our expenses! All in less than six months!

The Society has agreed to take over the popular Graveyard Walks and Dining With the Dead events. Our secretary, Rosemary Maher, is chairing that committee. More information about that, as well as other events for the fall, will be mailed to you as dates are determined.

Lastly, I regret to inform you that Frank Bennett resigned as director last June, for personal reasons. Frank has been incredibly helpful at the Museum, distributing Abbie Hastings' new book, writing for the Quarterly, and helping out wherever he was needed. He is greatly missed.

Steve

Contributors to this issue:

Frank Bennett
Ruth Anselmo Fruda
Kyle Smith Graves
Jean Hadden
John Hastings
Steve Parisi
Jud Smith
Chuck Wheeler

Sandi Parisi, Quarterly Editor

New Members

Able Energy
Ellen & Joe Barlow
Country Road Lodge B&B
Catherine Davis Dunn
George Henry's
Glens Falls National Bank
Grace Properties
Hometown Oil Corp.
LeCount Real Estate
Nemec's Farm and Garden
Patriot of Lake George
Jerry Bruce of QVN Auto Sales
Riding High Dude Ranch
Stephenson Lumber
Stewart's Shops
TD Banknorth

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Board of Directors

Steve Parisi- President
John Hastings – Vice President
Jackie Leonbruno - Treasurer
Rosemary Maher - Secretary
Rita Ferraro
Jean Hadden
Marilyn Hayes
Melissa Morgan

The Board of Directors will meet at the Senior Center, 3847 Main Street, at 7 PM on the second Tuesday of each month. Society members welcome. Call Steve to confirm at 623-2207.

HELP WANTED

Editor Sandi Parisi continues with her threat to quit in spite of all the accolades she receives for her work on the Quarterly. You, the reader, need to continually flood her with articles so she has a backlog and does not need to tear her hair out just to fill the pages. (A big part of the problem).

Alternatively, someone with MS Publisher skills AND dictatorial powers needs to be found.

We welcome comments, corrections, articles, pictures, reminiscences, and letters to the editor. Send to :

Warrensburgh Historical Society
c/o Sandi Parisi
115 Hickory Hill Rd,
Warrensburg, NY 12885
or parisibb@netheaven.com

**The next Quarterly Deadline is
November 1st**

Membership Information

| | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| Individual | \$12.00 | Student | \$ 8.00 |
| Family | \$25.00 | Senior (62+) | \$ 8.00 |
| Contributing | \$ 50.00 | Business | \$ 50.00 |
| Institutional | \$100.00 | Life* | \$250.00 |

*Individual Only

Membership is on a calendar year basis.

If you would like to join and receive the Quarterly by mail, please send check for the amount of the membership classification, with name, address and phone number to:

Warrensburgh Historical Society, PO Box 441, Warrensburg, NY 12885.

NOTICE

The recording of history is an interpretive and ever changing study. Therefore the Warrensburgh Historical Society or its Board of Directors or members shall not be held liable for the accuracy or authenticity of the material herein. We welcome and encourage corrections, comments and additional information.

Fire – con't. from page 1

she can breathe a little easier." Photos in the newspaper showed residents of Schroon River Road who volunteered to join the battle by using rakes to attack the dried leaves that were feeding the flames.

Another photo's caption reported "Water from Warrensburg spews from a hose which snaked up the rugged west side of Hackensack Mountain as weary firefighters fought yesterday to contain the blaze within bulldozer lines." In a further report, Ranger Franklin Wheeler, line boss at Hackensack said: "They've got to be set. We've had 15 fires in two weeks, seven in one day. You figure it out."

Even Governor Nelson Rockefeller became involved by ordering 60 boys from Rensselaerville Youth Division Training Camp and a National Guard unit in Whitehall to be on the alert in the event they would be needed to assist in the area's forest fire situation. The Guardsmen would join hundreds of volunteers and others already on the scene. Other fires reportedly had spread to Spruce Mountain in Lake George and Lapland Pond and other areas throughout the Lake George and Lake Champlain region.

That following Summer, July 1964, we made our annual vacation pilgrimage to our camp. Imagine our sadness when we saw the charred effects of the fire that devastated beautiful Hackensack Mountain in October 1963.

It is deeply embedded in my memory and I can't help but recall that first glimpse of the mountain showing the scars of the fire even now that I have returned once again to become a proud and happy resident, living and enjoying the beautiful Adirondacks and the warm and welcoming town of Warrensburg and its residents all year long, every year.

The following statements are taken from an October 10th article in the Glens Falls Times entitled "Forest Fire Rages Near Warrensburg": "The fire started in a wooded area in the rear of the Colonial Arms shortly after 3:30 p.m. Conservation personnel and the

Warrensburg Fire Department with various equipment made a vain effort to thwart the fires, but they were fanned by a strong wind which carried them up the mountain."

"There was a time last night when residents of this community became alarmed at the pace of the fires. The rash of fires illuminated the sky for miles around and hundreds of persons lined the area to watch what was described as a picturesque scene."

"It was estimated that more than twenty acres had burned and possibly that much more would be swept by the fires before it could be contained. Late last night rangers and volunteers were digging fire lanes to catch the fire as it worked its way down the north side of the mountain."

*Another article in the **Glens Falls Post Star** on the same day quoted:*

"Teen age volunteers armed with Indian tanks were rushed to strategic locations."

"At the scene of the Warrensburg forest fire nearly 24 hours but still going strong are Ranger Franklin Wheeler who was assisted in coordination efforts by Judson Smith Jr."

"The Hackensack Mountain fire was finally brought under control with establishment of a bulldozed fire break. Volunteers plowed through dry underbrush and rough terrain with dozer and power saw."

**Green Rangers – con't. from page 1**

in the Junior Ranks. Another expert marksman, Arnold Davis assisted with the club for one year.

Every spring the club would travel to Christian Brothers Academy in Albany to compete in the state sectionals competition. The club disbanded in 1958.

The Warrensburg News

May 10, 1956

The Green Rangers Junior Rifle Club, of Warrensburg,

will complete their second year of shooting on Sunday, May 27, with a picnic at Crown Point State Park.

Through the courtesy of Pack Forest Rifle Club the Green Rangers have had the use of their indoor range.

The club was organized in November of



Badge courtesy Chuck Wheeler

1954 with Judson Smith Sr., an approved N.R.A. instructor. There were ten members, five boys and five girls, ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years.

During the first year the club conducted a tag day, food sales, paper drives, sold Christmas trees and wreaths to raise money for uniforms, scopes and ammunition, fees for membership in the National Rifle Association and Director of Civilian Marksmanship.

When the club became a member of the D.C.M. in December of 1954, they were loaned two rifles by the U.S. Army. The Warrensburg Central School also loaned two rifles, one scope and slings when the school rifle club was dispensed with.

The club held weekly practice shoots at the range and several matches with other clubs through the winter months.



Left to Right: Harry Alger, Jennie Donahue, Jud Smith Jr., Susie Alger, Brian Turner, Dawn Moon, Chuck Wheeler, and Grant Smith
Photo courtesy Kyle Graves and Jud Smith.

Continued on page 4



Back Row: Instructor Judson Smith Jr., Tom McCormick, Gene Lane, Mark Webster, Grant Smith, and Instructor Arnold Davis. Middle Row: Dick Cline, Irene Fleming, Dave Steele, Heather Gilchrist, Candy Combs. Kneeling: Lynn Smith, Pete Burch, Bob Burch and Sandy Bunker. Photo courtesy Kyle Graves and Jud Smith

In April the club went to Albany for the Eastern Divisional N.R.A. Junior Rifle matches.

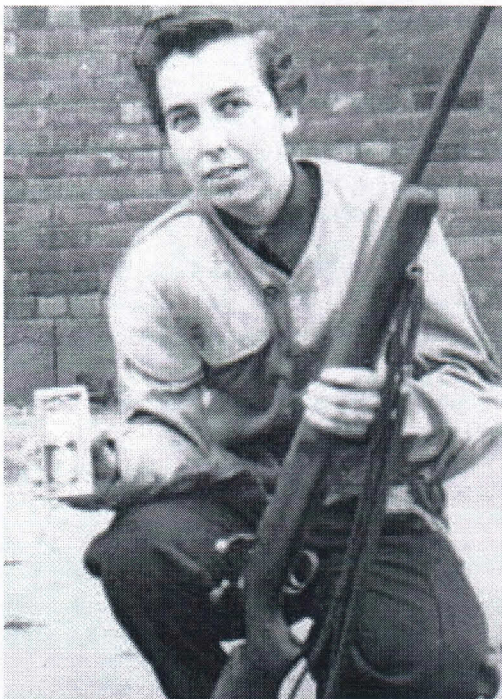
In September of 1955 the club started their fall and winter practice and in the winter the Green Rangers had matches with Pack Forest Senior Club, Schroon Lake Junior Club and Christian Brothers Academy of Albany at Pack Forest and away.

Again money was raised for the support of the club by paper drives, etc.

April 21, 1956, the club went to Albany for the Eastern Division of the N.R.A. Junior Rifle matches held at Christian Brothers Academy. Miss Susan Alger, an original member of the Green Rangers and also a Distinguished Rifleman, brought home the medal for highest girl's score.

The following was reported in the newspaper on March 11, 1956:

The Green Rangers Jr. Rifle Club met the Schroon lake Jr. Rifle Club Sunday



Susan Alger — photo courtesy Chuck Wheeler

afternoon on the Pack Forest Range for a competitive match. The Rangers won by a margin of 33 points. Scores were as follows in the four positions:

Green Rangers

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| J. Smith | 315 |
| G. Smith | 286 |
| C. Wheeler | 271 |
| R. Hastings | 253 |
| M. Webster | <u>188</u> |
| | 1313 |

Schroon Lake

| | |
|-----------|------------|
| T. Dunn | 327 |
| F. Venner | 275 |
| J. Kelley | 246 |
| J. Jacobs | 242 |
| L. Clark | <u>190</u> |
| | 1280 |

A special match was fired by two members of each team. Scores were as follows:

Green Rangers

| | |
|------------|------------|
| G. Smith | 297 |
| C. Wheeler | <u>294</u> |
| | 591 |

Schroon Lake

| | |
|-----------|------------|
| C. Welsh | 217 |
| J. Pitkin | <u>176</u> |
| | 393 |

Save Your Papers

The Green Rangers Rifle Club will collect papers and magazines on Saturday, March 17th. Anyone wishing for them to call at their house can call the instructor, Judson Smith Sr., 5021.

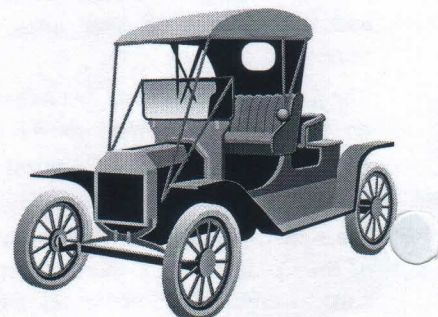


HISTORIAN'S CORNER

My How Times Have Changed

Warrensburg News July 8, 1915

"A count kept at the New Adirondack garage, Sunday, July 4, of the automobiles that passed that auto hospital, resulted in some interesting



figures. Between the hours of 12 noon and 9 P.M. a total of 584 cars passed by, averaging nearly 73 [sic] cars every hour.

Valuing the average car at \$1,000 this means that \$73,000 worth of automobiles passed through Warrensburg each hour. About 40% of the cars were Fords. Very few runabouts were on the road, the majority of the autos being of the five passenger variety."

In 2005 a similar count was taken for 15 minutes at 4:30 PM. During that time 226 cars/trucks passed by. Multiplying that times 4 to equal an hour, and then times 9 to get the same length of time, it would equal 8136 cars, averaging 904 per hour. (Also seen in that 15 minutes were 4 boats, 2 campers and 3 motorcycles.)

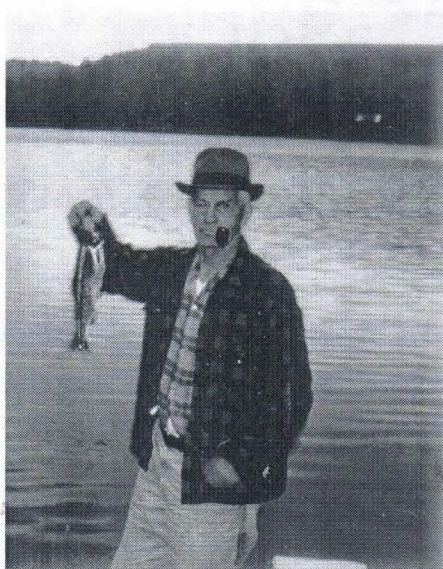
According to the National Automobile Dealers Association, the average price of a new car sold in the United States as of June 1998 was \$23,480 which would make \$21,225,920.00 worth of automobiles passing through Warrensburg each hour.



PLAYING WITH DYNAMITE

By Frank Bennett

One of the jobs that we needed to accomplish up at my parents' camp at Goodnow Flow in Newcomb, New York, was the digging of a well for water. My



"Gramp" Frank Pratt – Photo courtesy Frank Bennett

grandfather Frank Pratt was working next door on the lot that he had bought. We were staying up at Goodnow Flow and living in an umbrella tent. I was fifteen years old at the time and decided to do some more digging on our well that day.

As the day went on, the hole I was in got deeper and deeper until it got to the point where I had to put a strong pole across the top of the hole in order to pull myself out. The digging was starting to get very difficult because I was digging into what is called hard pan, which is a very hard form of dirt, almost like trying to dig into concrete.

We had a box of dynamite, blasting caps and a roll of fuse cord. Gramp Pratt had shown me how to use the dynamite earlier. He explained to me that I should only use a half stick of dynamite in the well because too much force could change the course of the water and defeat my purpose. He showed me how to cut a stick of dynamite in half and to set the cap with a length of fuse that would burn for about three minutes. Another thing he taught me was that you never store the dynamite and the blasting caps together, and if you are in the woods hang the dynamite up high in a tree because if you don't the deer will eat it up on you!

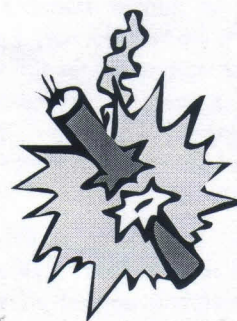
The well hole was deep enough so that I had to jump up to grab the pole in order to exit the hole. Anyway, I decided that the only way I was going to be able to dig down any deeper was to blast that

hard pan dirt to loosen it up. So I rigged up a half stick of dynamite, took it down into the well and managed to dig a pocket big enough to bury the stick of dynamite in the middle of the hard pan.

It was getting late in the day and I was tired. Gramp Pratt was still cutting brush over on his lot when I lit the fuse on the stick of dynamite. I jumped up and grabbed the pole like I had been doing before, but didn't seem to have the strength left to pull myself up out of the hole! I tried several times to get up out of the hole but couldn't quite make it! Meanwhile the fuse is burning down shorter by the second. If I had used my head I would have reached down, pulled the fuse out of the dynamite and thrown it out of the hole. Instead I panicked. All I knew was that I wanted out of that hole!

I started hollering for Gramp! He heard me and came as fast as he could to find out what was wrong. I told him I had a stick of dynamite about to go off under my feet! Gramp reached down and pulled me out of the hole. We ran about 20 feet when it blew up into the air!

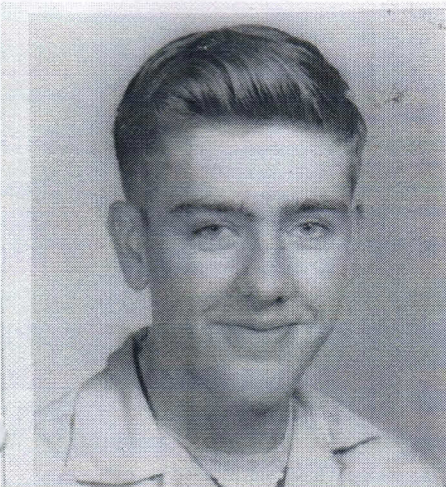
I don't think I need to tell you that my dynamiting days were over.



LOOKING FOR INFORMATION FOR FUTURE QUARTERLIES

Friday the 13th. Do you have any stories about an incident that happened on that day in Warrensburg?

Valentine's Day. Perhaps you have a love story in Warrensburg that you would care to share.



Frank Bennett at about 15.

Photo courtesy Frank Bennett

2005 Sticky Wicket



Croquet Master Delbert Chambers demonstrates correct form.

Photo by John Hastings

This year there was no question about the weather, unlike like 2004, when Hurricane Charley was expected to wash out the Sticky Wicket (didn't!). During one of the hottest and most humid summers on record, Sunday, August 14, 2005 turned out pleasantly cool with low humidity!

About 60 people attended our annual picnic at the Warrensburg Fish Hatchery, with 32 competing in the competition. That's a record! Members of Brant Lake/Hague Wesleyan Youth Group, attended the Sticky Wicket for the third year in a row.

We had four fields of play, and once again, Croquet Master Delbert Chambers kept everyone abreast of the rules of



Author Abbie Davis Hastings attended with sons, board member John and recent Quarterly contributor, Roscoe. Jean Hadden photo



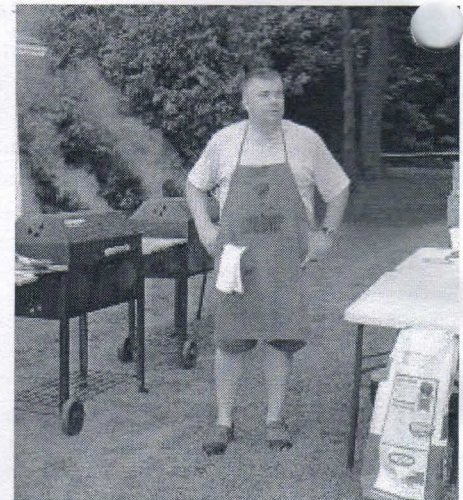
Sticky Wicket winner Arlene Kien accepts trophy and congratulations from president Steve Parisi. Jean Hadden photo

play. For the first time players were organized according to ability, so masters competed against masters and beginners against beginners.

The winner this year was Arlene Kien of Indian Lake, who achieved the perfect score of 16 in both games, ahead of four past winners who were also competing this year. It appears that Arlene, who competed last year, has been practicing!

Congratulations, Arlene!

A thank you to Delbert Chambers is in order for his role as Croquet Master. Delbert was the first president of the Historical Society after its reformation,



Brian Engle, our chef extraordinaire for the past several years serves up a mean grilled chicken. Photo by John Hastings

from 1996 to 2000. He was instrumental in creating the Sticky Wicket as a "period" event and a successful fundraiser for the Society. (In the early days, period dress also encouraged, with ladies in long dresses and parasols, and the gentlemen – well some of them – in cap and suspenders.)

The other individual who helped make the Sticky Wicket a success is Brian Engle, who has offered his service, time and equipment



A-Team competitors include past winners Delbert Chambers, Kyle Stonitsch (behind Delbert), Raymond Whalen (right) and Al Leger (second from right). Jean Hadden photo

to grill the many chickens that are the *piece de resistance* of our picnic. And last but certainly not least are those of you who also contributed to the picnic, from salads to desserts.

A hearty thanks to all of you!



Attendees included visitors from Clonmel, Ireland, Donald and Claire Binchy and their children Emily, Donnacha and Ronan (Opposite side of table and front right), who were guests of Society secretary Rosemary (and Bill) Maher. Jean Hadden photo

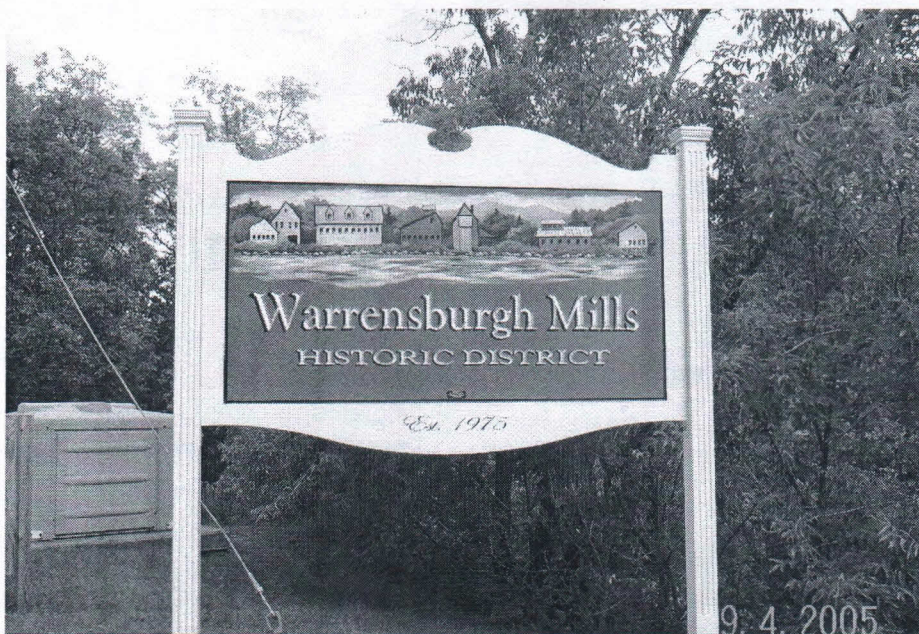


Attendees enjoying the feast and cake made by Abbie Hastings which featured a croquet theme. Photo by John Hastings

NEW SIGNS FOR HISTORIC MILLS DISTRICT

This past August Warrensburg Beautification Inc. installed two signs, one at each end of the Warrensburg Mills Historic District. These signs were

This district was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 18, 1975, as described in the following article from the Warrensburg Historical



Sign at the Osborne Bridge on Route 418, at the start of the Historic Mills District.

Photo by Steve Parisi

created by K.D. Wheeler and paid for with funds from the Warren County Hotel Occupancy Tax allocated to the Town of Warrensburg specifically for tourism promotion.

Society's newsletter, **Publick Occurrences**, dated December 1, 1975.

NATIONAL REGISTER ACCEPTS MILLS DISTRICT

...The National Register is maintained by the National Park Services. Inclusion on the Register is gained only after an area has been deemed historically significant.

A considerable amount of preliminary work was necessary to satisfy the demands of the New York Division of Historic Preservation, that first nominated the area to the National Register.

This necessitated an inventory form for every structure in the area, a black and white photo of each building and a series of maps and other pertinent information.

Many members of the local society were active in this preliminary work of research and documentation, not to mention the typing and collating also needed.

The Warrensburg Mills district



View from the start of the Mills District looking across at the Shirt Factory.

Photo by Steve Parisi.

encompasses the River Street area from the Osborne Bridge to the Woolen Mill Bridge. It takes in both sides of the Schroon River.

The area includes the Emerson Sawmill (no longer standing) and the old grist mill as well as many other historically significant structures.



Sign at Woolen Mill Bridge, Milton Ave. & Rt. 418.

Photo by Steve Parisi

Inclusion on the National Register is prestigious for the area, according to Nat Menshausen.

Graveyard Walks

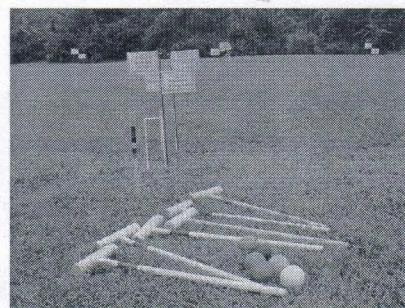
Beginning this year, the Society has assumed sponsorship of the popular Graveyard Walks and Dining with the Dead. The schedule has not yet been finalized as we go to press but it is expected that all events will be held during October.

These events were begun in 2001 as part of the fledgling Scarecrow Festival and featured portrayals of a number of historic individuals who resided in or near Warrensburg. Included in past performances were A. C. Emerson, Benjamin P. Burhans, Rebecca Wickes Burhans (his wife), Colonel Grey, James Warren, Melinda Beach Warren (his wife), Jeremiah Donohue (a logger), Rebecca Donohue (his wife), Louis W. Emerson, J. P. Bauman (shirt factory owner), Henrietta Bauman (his wife), Eugene Gibouleau, Floyd Bennett, Sig Wachter, Alice Bowles (Willie Sutton's aunt), Grace Noyes (a servant at King home), Etta Hill (proprietor of the infamous Summit House, Blanche Harrington, Sarah Hill, Davey Culver, Robert F. Hall, (Warrensburg News publisher), Minerva Richards King and Christian Moon Stewart. (Most of these have been written up in previous Quarterlies.)

Information about this year's Walks and Dinings will be announced in September.

THE WARRENSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2005 STICKY WICKET



Croquet Games and Picnic

A Thank You to our Sponsors . . .

Accommodations & Campgrounds . . . Alynn's Butterfly Inn • Bakersfield East • Budget Inn Rt. 9 Motel • Cornerstone Victorian B & B • Country Road Lodge B & B • Emerson House B & B • Friends Lake Inn • Merrill Magee House • Ridin-Hy Ranch • Schroon River Campsites

Automotive . . . Bob Griffin & Sons • CDS Motor Group • Jerry Bruce/QVN Motors • Napa Warrensburg Auto Parts • Professional Auto Crafts • Smith's Garage • Warren Ford-Mercury

Food Service . . . Bill's Diner • Brunetto's • CC Sweets • The Coffee Room • Dragon Lee • George Henry's • Gino's Pizzeria • Grist Mill on the Schroon • Merrill Magee House • Potter's Diner • Spruce Mt. Bakery

Retailers . . . Adirondack Packbasket • Barbara Ann-tiques • Brown's Shoes • Curtis Lumber • Tamarack Antiques • Toad Hill Maple Farm • D & G Hardware • John Higgins • Jacobs and Toney • Miller Art & Frame • Nemec's Sports, Farm & Garden • Oscar's Smoke House • Posies • Ray's Liquor Store • Riverside Gallery • Stewart's Shops • This That & In-Between • Tops Friendly Markets • Treasure Shoppe

Plus these varied businesses and organizations . . . Able Energy Absolute Hair • Adirondack Journal • Alexander Funeral Home • American Vacuum • Champlain Stone, Ltd. • Circle B Ranch • Community Insurance • Courtly Music Unlimited • Craig Wright Enterprises • Cronin's Golf Resort • Curves/Rays of Light • TD BankNorth • Glens Falls National Bank • Grace Property • Heidi's Clip Joint • Hometown Skillet • Hometown Oil • LeCount Real Estate • Mac the Knife Pinstriping • Maynard Baker Funeral Home • The Patriot of Lake George • Dick Pearsall • Raluca Sandler Cooper DDS • Robert J. Sweet Lumber • Stephenson Lumber • Warrensburg Chiropractic • Town of Warrensburg • Warrensburg Chamber of Commerce • Warrensburg Volunteer Fire Company

A Special Thank You to Brian Engle, Chef Extraordinaire!