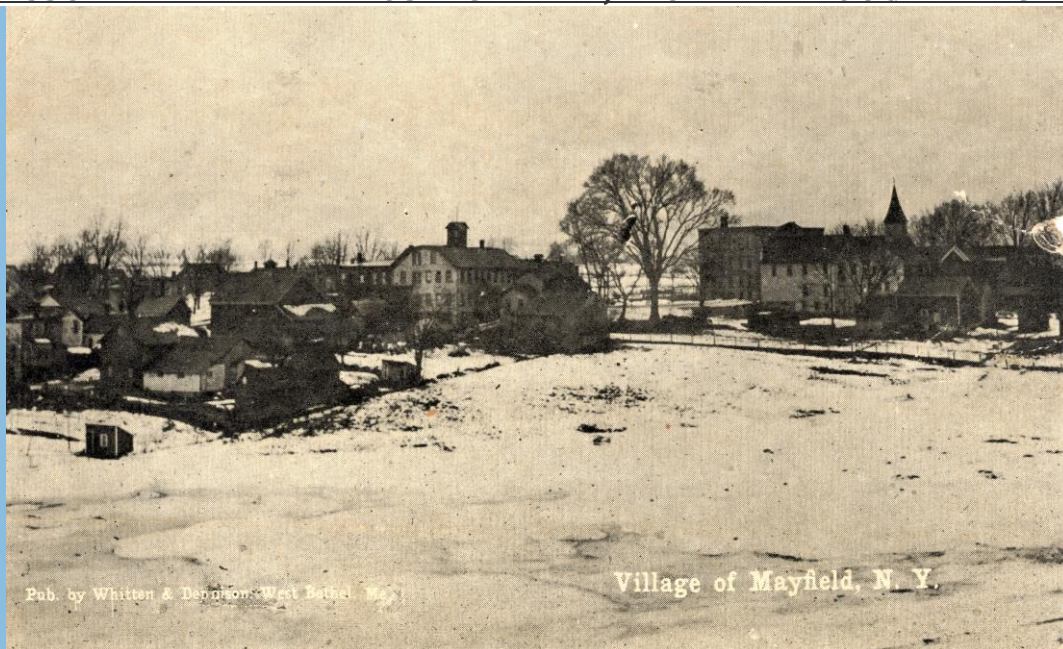


OLD BANNERTOWN'S QUARTERLY

The Story of Mayfield

ERIC CLOSE, TOWN HISTORIAN

FIRST ISSUE - WINTER RETROSPECTIVE - JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 2024



WINTER OF YESTERYEAR

MAYFIELD VILLAGE, c1900

Apparently, a picture is worth about a thousand words or so. But sometimes it doesn't even take one word to invoke the feeling of nostalgia. An image, smell, taste, or sound can teleport us directly into our memories. And just for one fleeting moment, we can feel young again. So, what are our memories worth? A thousand words? A million bucks?

No and No. They are *priceless*.

It has been a very mild winter. The safety of the ice on the Sacandaga is always hotly debated, but this year it was too dangerous for even the most hardened veterans for all but a weekend or two. Granted, for those who work in the outside conditions, this winter has been a blessing. But, as northerners, a good hard winter is good for the soul. It makes us appreciate the warm sunny summer days even more. And when the snow is lacking in our winter landscapes, an old picture like the one above can help us get a little fix of what was once the joys of winter: sledding down a big hill, riding snowmobiles and having snowball fights with the neighborhood.

In This Edition:

- Greetings & Messages
- Photographic Correspondence
- Survey Project
- Mayfield's History Tour
- Local Business Spotlight
- Ghost of The Past
- Local News

A MESSAGE FROM RETIREMENT

I would like to say what an absolute pleasure it has been in being your historian. Talking with you, learning new things, and growing with you. Now the torch has passed to a man who has a passion for history that far exceeds mine. His attention to detail is extraordinary. I am excited to learn from him.

Currently I am working on patent maps and the deeds that are attached to them. The period from 1728 to 1836 is in the works. The project brings into perspective the history of a person's property from its first patent through each deed to bring it to its present owner. A map along with the deeds are being prepared to work as a road map for the history of one's property. I would like to thank everyone for their warm wishes and kind words.



Sandy Town,
Retired Mayfield Historian

MAYFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS IN BRIEF:

The Mayfield Historical Society is excited to be hosting a "Welcome, Meet and Greet" evening for our new Town Historian, Eric Close, on Monday, April 15th, at 6:30 pm at the Mayfield Presbyterian Church, 22 N. Main St., Mayfield. Let's all give Eric a warm welcome! Attendees will learn about some of his new and exciting initiatives and Eric would love to meet you! Refreshments will be served. We look forward to seeing you there!

The 41st Annual Strawberry Festival and "Treasures in the Trunk" will be held Saturday, June 15th, from 12 - 4 pm at The Rice Homestead, 328 Riceville Road. Strawberry shortcake with ice cream and lemonade is just \$5/\$3 for children 8 and under. Enjoy live music by Ryan Matter from 1-3 p.m. Free tours of the Rice Homestead will be given. New this year: "Treasures in the Trunk", featuring vintage and new items, in a flea-market style setting. Admission is free. In case of rain, the event will be at the Mayfield Presbyterian Church, 22 N. Main St., Mayfield.

We'd love for you to become a member of the historical society. Bring your talents and join us, whether it be as a tour guide, as a worker on the lovely flower gardens, or sharing in the maintenance of our buildings and grounds. We welcome any time you can share with us. Memberships support the society and are only \$8 per year for the entire family and includes our quarterly newsletters! Email us at mayfieldhistoricalsociety@gmail.com and we will send you out a membership form.

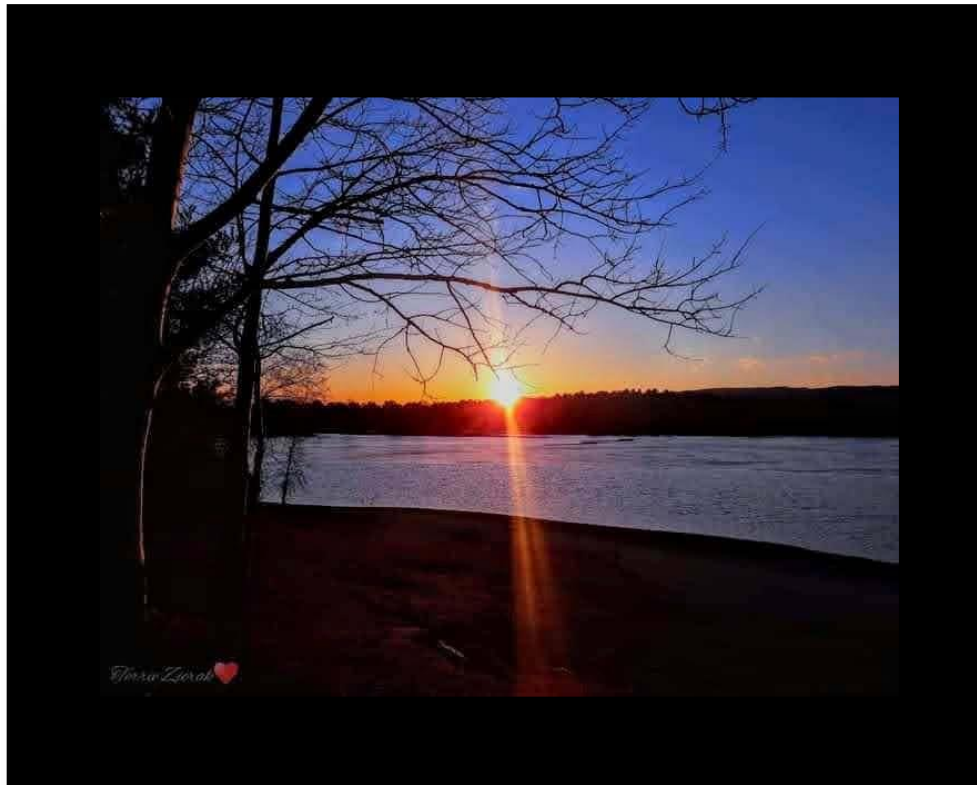
Our 2024 Season is almost upon us. We can't wait for you to "Take a Step Back in Time" and unearth Mayfield's history with the Mayfield Historical Society at The Rice Homestead. "Like" us at www.facebook.com/ricehomestead!

Hope to see you all soon!

Bob Suits
President,
Mayfield Historical Society



Rice Homestead, April 1936



Standing back upon this shore...

Mayfield Lake...

Memories of my childhood flash before my eyes...

Coming home to Mayfield from Maine...

Daddy was in Korean war...

We would walk to the Mayfield Beach along the dirt road past Mr. Parkers house...

Long lazy days of summer...

Swimming with all the neighborhood kids...

~Terrie Zierak, Mayfield, N.Y.

Biographical Sketch of Mayfield's Own

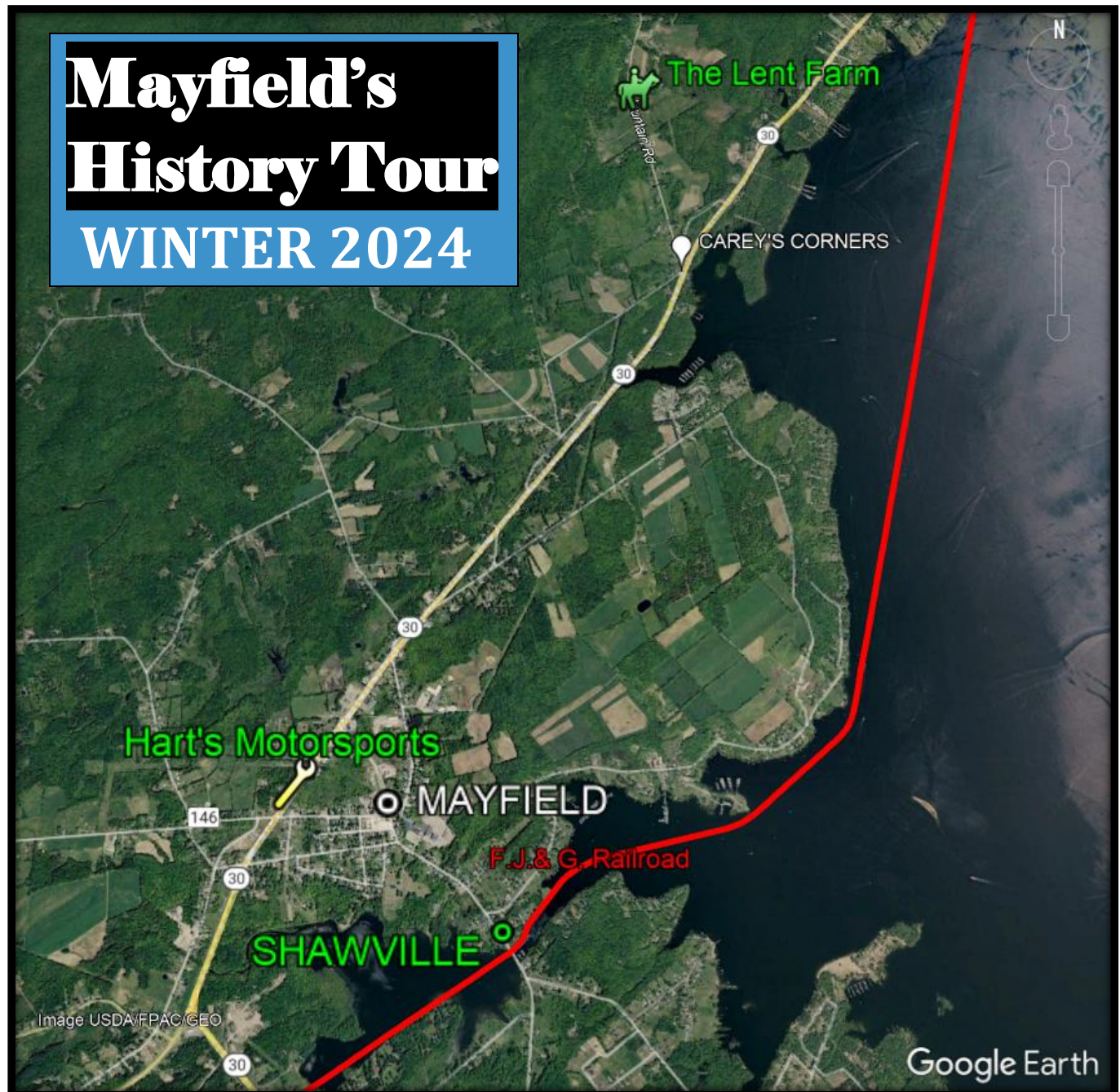
Would you like to be interviewed for a town history project?

*Capture details about your life in Mayfield to be stored in our historical archives.
Preserve a piece of yourself for generations to come!*

For more information, send an email to historian@mayfieldny.org or get ahold of me, Eric Close, through Facebook.

Tomorrow, today will be yesterday. If we don't take time today to write things down, then tomorrow, we won't have a yesterday to remember...

Mayfield's History Tour WINTER 2024



Come along for a quick tour of some of Mayfield's history. For the winter of 2024, the former community of Shawville has been examined. About half of this hamlet lies below the Mayfield Lake which was created in coincidence with the Sacandaga Reservoir. A visit was paid to Hart's Motorsports to see if they were hiding all the snow—which sadly, they weren't. Once this short-lived winter began to thaw, we checked in on the Lent Family's maple syrup operation.

When Phlan Hart rode his motorcycle through the halls of MCS in 1974, it was pretty evident that he had a passion. It was a passion that may have been discovered while growing up in his father's Mobil Station on the west end of Main Street in the Mayfield Village. And it is a passion that has been clearly passed on to his son, Richard "Dick" Hart--the owner of Hart's Motorsports.

Local Business Spotlight



HART'S MOTORSPORTS
EST. 2001

Mr. Dick Hart does service work and sells parts and protective gear for all kinds of motorsport vehicles: dirtbikes, motorcycles, snowmobiles, ATVs, etc. He is a wealth of knowledge and insight; as he has spent his life riding, racing, repairing, and rebuilding just about anything you could imagine. If you come into his shop on the corner of West Main and Route 30 with a problem, he will find a solution. If you're looking for a part that he doesn't have, he knows where you can go to get one. He provides the quality of service that you can only find in a small town. If you don't believe me, check the reviews online--they're a five-star average.

a full-fledged family function. Kim and Phlan "grew up" in the shop, pumping gas and helping service cars. Meanwhile, Marilyn and Milt did whatever was necessary to keep the shop running whenever life, mother nature, and bills had to make the call. They went above and beyond, with Milt even going out in the brutal cold of winter to start cars for people.

Using the station as his base of operations, Phlan started Hart's Towing Service and has been faithfully serving this community since 1978. That business, along with his racing career inspired another generation to follow suit.

Family tradition at Hart's Motorsports began in August of 1952, when Milt Hart and his father Harvey bought "Dutcher's Filling Station" from Florence Dutcher. The late proprietor, Kenneth Dutcher, suddenly died that June, prompting the sale of the business. Milt took over management immediately after purchase and put himself on the map at "Hart's Filling Station."

Milt married Marilyn Herrick in 1955. Not long after, their two children Phlan and Kim came along and grew Hart's Station into

In the waning years of the Mobil Station, Marilyn passed away (1997) and Milt went into semi-retirement. Phlan continued running his towing business and his son Dickie started working on motorsport bikes at the station. Milt then entrusted his grandson to carry on the family legacy.

Since 2001, Richard "Dick" Hart has built up a business that is certainly widely known, well respected, and wildly appreciated by his customers.



*Phlan, Milt, and Dick Hart
in front of the shop.*



*Hart's Filling Station.
Proprietor, Milt Hart c.1952*

The business and all its prior forms span four generations of the Hart family. Aside from Dick, his father Phlan, grandfather Milt, and great Grandfather Harv, the business has also played a formative role in lives of Dick's younger brother and sister--PJ and Sammy. PJ, of course, racing anything that moves; and Sammy following in the entrepreneurial spirit with her famous candy stand that used to be in the shop. Dick has also had the great joy of being able to share his passion and fun with his beloved daughter.

This time of year, business should be booming at Hart's Motorsports. However, a lackluster showing of winter weather has put a damper on the usual excitement. A very mild and temperamental winter has all but killed snowmobiling this year. The lake ice never got thick enough for a long enough period to risk the thrill. With the ground thawed and the lake ice broken up and melting fast, we'll have to save our snowmobiling hopes for next year. Regardless, the doors are open, and business keeps forging ahead. If you don't ride, race, or repair, the best way to help support the business come wintertime is to pray for snow, snow, snow!!!

HART'S MOTORSPORTS

58 W. MAIN STREET, MAYFIELD, N.Y.

(518) 661-PART

<https://www.facebook.com/richard.harts.motorsports/>

EDITOR'S MESSAGE



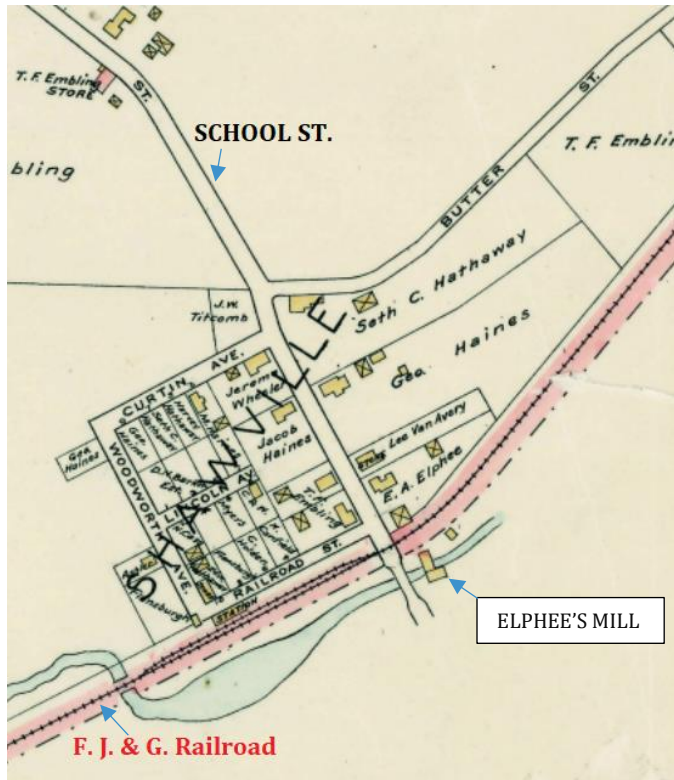
ERIC CLOSE
MAYFIELD TOWN HISTORIAN

WELL, FOLKS! NEARLY THREE MONTHS INTO SERVING THIS COMMUNITY AS TOWN HISTORIAN, AND IT IS GETTING MORE FUN AND INTERESTING WITH EACH PASSING DAY. I HAVE FOUND GREAT JOY IN SPEAKING WITH MANY OF YOU; NOT ONLY ON THE WEB, BUT AS WE CROSS PATHS IN PUBLIC. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK BOTH THE LENT FAMILY FOR HAVING ME AT THE SUGAR HOUSE AND ALSO DICK AND CAROL HART FOR ENTERTAINING MY DEMANDING WISHES DURING A VERY BUSY TIME! FINALLY, I OWE TWO OF MAYFIELD'S FORMER HISTORIANS, NANCY DIETCH AND SANDY TOWN AN ENORMOUS DEBT OF GRATITUDE. MY SUCCESSES THUS FAR HAVE BEEN BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THEIR PERSISTENT WORK AND CONTINUED COLLABORATION.

THANK YOU !

A Ghost of the Past

SHAWVILLE



Shawville was a little hamlet that sat within the village limits of Mayfield. But today, it mostly sits in the pages of history.

The location of Shawville was along School Street between the intersections of Butter Street (Lakeside Drive) at the top of Shaw Hill and the Mayfield Creek below to the South. On the creek were a few mills and the Shawville station on the F.J.&G. Railroad System. There were a few dozen houses that occupied a few streets; and there were a couple of stores. However, all that remains in the present day is School Street and Curtin Ave. After the Reservoir was installed in 1930, the bridge was destroyed and rebuilt on higher ground, several homes were demolished or moved, the railroad torn up, and Haines Street was built through the property of George Haines.

There had been residents and industry at this location for well over 100 years prior to the



Looking westward at Elphee's mill on the Mayfield Creek at Shawville. Mayfield bridge in center, and F.J.&G. Railroad bridge in background. Mill built by Abraham Romyne after the Revolution. Same site of original mill built by Sir Wm. Johnson in 1773, burned during revolution.

death of Shawville's namesake Captain William Shaw in 1892. Where School Street crosses Mayfield Creek is one of, if not, the oldest settlements in town. In 1773, Sir William Johnson built a mill on the creek to encourage settlement in the area. That original mill was burned during the Revolution by a party of Mohawk raiders on June 2, 1778. After the war, Abraham Romyne rebuilt a mill on the same site using the original millstones. The Romyne's mill, later acquired by the Elphee family in the 1840s, stood until the flooding of the Sacandaga Valley in 1930. After the death of Captain Shaw, who resided in the stately home atop his hill, much of his estate was dispersed and subdivided which allowed for a short-lived boom in that area. The settlement was greatly decimated by the Sacandaga and Mayfield Reservoirs, completed in 1930.

Today, the Shaw home sits as a monument, not far from the other monuments to what "once was." The historical markers on the School Street Bridge mark the locations of both the old mill and the dam that created Mayfield Lake. When the water is low, remnants of Hathaway's store, the train depot and the railroad bed can be seen. It serves as a powerful reminder of what was given up for the Lake. Homes, businesses, farms...an entire way of life, lost beneath the crystal blue waters.



NOW GONE: Present site of the Mayfield Lake, looking west. The F.J. & G. Railroad runs across the landscape. Left to right: Railroad bridge over the Mayfield Creek, Shawville Station, and David Hathaway's store.

However, there is a very old and very dark piece of history on Shawville Hill that has survived and been passed down through the generations. The fact is that prior to the Civil War and William Shaw's influence in the area, Shawville Hill used to be called Ni**er Hill.

In the early part of the 19th century, slavery was practiced in Mayfield. New York State Legislation passed in 1817 that banned the practice of slavery within state boundaries. It was effective that on July 4, 1827, all slaves still in bondage would be emancipated by law.

. The town of Mayfield has records of some slaves being born in bondage. According to census records, there were two reported slaves in 1800. In 1810 there were 27 slaves, and by 1820 there were five. Most of the slaves worked the farms owned by Dutch farmers of the Sacandaga Valley, as confirmed by wills being probated during that period.

The infamous hill got its name because local slaves used to congregate at this corner. *Who* were the slaves? That is currently being researched. It is known that at least two farms on Butter Street were worked by slaves and at least one more on Vlaie St. (Vandenburgh Point Rd.) in Munsonville.

Across from the old Shaw house used to be what was called the Ni**er Hill School. It was destroyed by a storm in 1893 and the Union Free School was subsequently built on the present site of the High School.

This history is grim, but it is indeed *our* history. *Our* being *we, the people*. It would be a dishonor not to tell the story of the slaves of Butter Street. We know that they existed, but we may never know *who* they were, *what* their trials and tribulations were, and *what* happened to them after emancipation. Lest we forget



Looking north toward Shawville Hill from south of the Mayfield Creek

LIVING HISTORY

"BRIGHT SUNRISE FARM"

LENT FARM, EST. 1918

In the late winter season, the weeping maple trees beckon for someone to happen by and tap into the delicious potential. Making maple syrup is a long and tedious process. But, for five generations of the Lent family, it is a labor of love.

No! ... That building isn't on fire, that is Lent's Sugarhouse and what appears to be smoke is steam—born from the boiling process that cuts raw sap down into maple syrup. The sugar house is just up the road from the barn on the Lent's Farm. If you're not familiar with this place, it occupies both sides of the Mountain Road almost a mile north of its intersection with State Highway 30 at Carey's Corners.



Lori drawing syrup from the evaporator

Hundreds of yards of tubing lead from the sugar bushes on the uphill side of the farm down to a collection reservoir where it is pumped into the sugar house. The tube collection system eliminates the laborious effort of collecting and transporting buckets of sap to the sugar house. It takes a lot of sap, too. About 40 gallons of sap is boiled down to make one gallon of syrup. There are 2,700 taps drawing sap in Lent's sugar bush this year, and each one can be expected to produce about a quart of finished product throughout the season.

The natural flow of the sap through the trees can yield immensely if the weather conditions are right. Sunny, 40-degree days, freezing 20-degree nights, and a west wind are regarded as the best conditions. The sap collection window can last a solid month or so,

with the color darkening and quality waning at the tail end of the season. This year had an early start in the first week of February, and by mid-March the season was about over with. It was another successful year added to the nearly 170-year-old tradition in that sugar bush.

Lent's Sugar House was built in about 1984 by Howard Lent and his son Edward. They have both long since passed away, and the torch has been passed on to Edward and Sharon's children, two of whom continue the operation.

Lori Bumpus and her husband Scott live in the old farmhouse and do their diligence to maintain the farm. Lori's brother Ed Lent and his family live nearby on the hillside overlooking both the family's farm and high over the Great Sacandaga Lake. All their genial faces can be found working hard not only in their demanding day jobs, but all over the farm, too. During the late winter, they are never too far from the steam plume bellowing from the sugarhouse.



Howard Lent and son Joe, 1940s

The Lent Farm remains one of the few active farms in the town of Mayfield. Agricultural traditions there date back to the early 1850s and have spanned a variety of crops and products. The farm sits on lots 18 and 19 of the Claus patent, and at its peak, contained about 150 acres. A lot of the early county deeds are lost, but the original owners of the land appear to be the Christie family—who were among the area's first settlers. The Christie heirs sold the undeveloped land to the Knapp family, who established and operated a homestead farm there for over 60 years. According to tax records, George Knapp built the old farmhouse in 1856.

Among Knapp's many homestead operations were sap harvesting. In 1859, George Knapp produced 100 lbs. (~9 gallons) of maple syrup, and 15 gallons of maple molasses. In 1869, they produced 150 lbs. (13.6 gallons) of syrup, and in 1879, they again produced 150 lbs. of syrup, and 10 gallons of the molasses. Among other things, the Knapps also had an apple orchard, sheep, pigs, chickens, and a dairy herd of 20 cows.

After George Knapp died in 1879, the farm was taken over by his son Benjamin, who met his untimely death in 1886. From there, George's widow Nancy owned the farm and rented some of the land out to her grandson, George, as well as William Brower. After Nancy's death, Edward and Jennie Lent bought the farm and you could say "the rest is history." Recent history, anyway.

Beginning in 1918, Edward and Jennie Lent operated a true homestead, taking advantage of all opportunities to keep the farm going. They produced poultry, beef, pork, and dairy, had a garden, and sold produce, and made maple syrup. Each operation funded the next. There never was extra spending money, but they could survive and keep going. Which was the way it was for most rural families of that time.

Ed and Jennie sold the farm in 1948 to their son Howard and his wife Dorothy, who battled through life to keep going as well. Dairy production ceased in the 1960s, but cows remain a part of the heart of the family, and you can find a few Hereford cows grazing along when you drive by. The family keeps a garden, if time and weather conditions allow; and it isn't uncommon to see a few chickens pecking about. Over the years, more effort has been directed toward the maple syrup operation. The unobstructed eastern slope of the farm has supplied ideal conditions for the sap flow. The early morning sun hits the slope and begins to thaw the trees, giving the sugar bush a great geographic advantage.

"Maple Syrup makes about three cents an hour..."

~Howard Lent

As maple syrup goes—this farm may be the most historically significant around. Driving along the Mountain Road, you will notice the historical sign memorializing William Brower's patent on his gravity flow system of collecting sap. The old stone shed by the sign was Brower's workshop—where he forged all the pieces of his system.

Traditional methods of gathering syrup involved drilling a hole in the tree, inserting the tap and hanging pales from the taps to collect raw sap. Once the pales were filled, they were retrieved and brought back to the sugar house to be boiled. In an ideal setup, the sugar house was not far from the trees.



*Center: Scott adjusting flow valve on evaporator
Right: Ed preparing to draw syrup*

In essence Brower's invention eliminated the arduous process of collecting sap by mechanizing the gathering process. It worked if the entire system had a downhill slope and revolutionized the Maple Syrup industry. Brower was a tinsmith by trade, and growing up in the mountains, brought his ingenuity to the sugar bush. Brower attained his patent in 1916, and the system was first tested in that sugar bush, and then used there by the Lents as recently as 2016. Brower brought his invention to Vermont and helped grow the maple industry there. Later, he sold the patent and returned to Mayfield.

The Brower system had its faults, but it was a giant leap of innovation. Ed explained how intricate and time consuming the process to set the system in place was. In years past, it could've taken an entire month of setup to be ready for the sap flow. The old tin tubes forged by Brower are still on hand—just in case. The tubes twist and lock together with wire loops. The entire system is hung from tensioned steel wires installed between trees at a downhill grade to ensure the sap reaches the sugarhouse. There are ports evenly spaced to allow the “gooseneck” pipe from the tapped tree entry into the system. Many of these ports end up not being used, allowing for rainwater, snow melt, and other debris to enter the system which creates problems downstream. Sediment can settle and can cake onto the pan which affects heat conductivity, and more water in the sap means more time boiling, longer hours, more firewood, and less syrup for the same inputs. Modern systems have addressed these issues, as quality control is a major concern in consumer safety. Regardless, Brower's incredible work laid the foundation for future improvements and the flourishing of an industry.

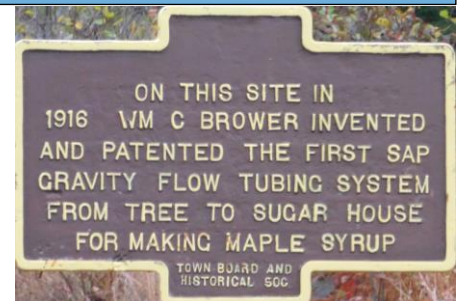
Other old equipment, such as taps, hand drills, and yokes can be found in the sugar house, too, which serves as a museum to the history there. Through long nights of boiling the relics serve as poignant reminders that, *"It could be a lot worse!!"*

The Lents use an evaporator to boil down their sap. Simply speaking, it is a big pan on a big wood stove! However, it is intricately and intelligently designed. The pan has dividers that not only create a maximum surface area between the heating element and the sap, but gravity feeds the sap through the system as it boils down denser. The dense syrup is then drawn off, filtered, sterilized, filtered again, and bottled. This system allows for more sap to be processed quicker, as the raw sap can spoil if left sitting too long.

The process of making maple syrup can seem overwhelming. It requires laser-focus and a disciplined attention span. Constantly adjusting flow valves in the evaporator, stoking the fire, and drawing off the finished product can keep one person moving for hours on end. Many hands make light work, and the more the merrier. During sap season, countless family gatherings have taken place in Lent's Sugarhouse with pancakes, homemade baked goods, fresh maple syrup, and a little bit of work from everybody. It seems that the delicious, and sticky syrup serves as the glue that holds the hearts of this longtime Mayfield family together.



Ed displaying Brower's tin tubing system. In his right hand is the tap from the tree. That flows down into the gooseneck, which flares downward into the main tube line in his left hand.



TOWN OF MAYFIELD

LOCAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Correspondents are sought for the missing communities (in red.) If you would like to contribute, send an email, or contact the editor on Facebook. The hope is to convey local news regarding nature, wildlife, public infrastructure, businesses, and public events. Discretion with respect to individual privacy advised.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <u>TOMANTOWN</u> | 12. <u>SHAWVILLE</u> |
| 2. <u>TYRRELL HILL</u> | 13. <u>MUNSONVILLE</u> |
| 3. <u>MOUNTAIN ROAD</u> | 14. <u>RED BUNCH</u> |
| 4. <u>CRANBERRY CREEK</u> | 15. <u>HIGHWAY 349</u> |
| 5. <u>DENNIE HOLLOW</u> | 16. <u>TURKEY FARM ROAD</u> |
| 6. <u>JACKSON SUMMIT</u> | 17. <u>WOOD'S HOLLOW</u> |
| 7. <u>LAKESIDE DRIVE</u> | 18. <u>BROADALBIN</u> |
| 8. <u>MAYFIELD VILLAGE</u> | 19. <u>VAIL'S MILLS</u> |
| 9. <u>RICEVILLE</u> | 20. <u>BLACK STREET</u> |
| 10. <u>BROADALBIN JUNCTION</u> | 21. <u>HIGHWAY 29</u> |
| 11. <u>ANTHONYVILLE</u> | 22. <u>PROGRESS</u> |

DENNIE HOLLOW

has had a quiet winter season. Warmer than average temperatures and very little snow prevented the snow machine riders from buzzing by in the fields. I miss seeing them having fun. Deer walked out of my backfield from Dennie Loop, up my lower driveway, crossed over Berry Road and headed north through the fields of the old Chub and Earlene Hart farmland. They were good sized deer from being able to get out of the woods and find more food. My dad always tapped the big old sugar maples in the area and loved making maple syrup and sugar. He would have been amazed at how easy that task was this spring without having to wade through snow and climb banks. I know that trees are tapped in the area but I'm not sure how good this sap has been running. One needs warm days above freezing

and cold nights in order for that sweet liquid to run and we all know we haven't had that combination very often. How nice it is to see all of our birds come back for spring so soon. Blackbirds have had some large gatherings here; a big raccoon has been wandering around looking for food and being nosy. Probably black bears are out and around now too ending their hibernation. Time to take down the bird feeder! Loggers have an early start this year for cutting firewood and I'm hoping farmers will be able to get an early start as well to help them have a longer growing season and bountiful harvest. Remember the old saying when we get some snow in March... it's called "Poor Man's Fertilizer". Don't put your shovels and snowblower away yet!

Carol Jablonski, Dennie Hollow

LAKESIDE DRIVE

Warmer than usual temperatures prevented the Great Sacandaga Lake from freezing fully this year until the first week of January. The lake would start freezing, then begin to melt, and mix in rain to boot! At the time of this report, March 2nd, we have 5-9" of ice depending on where you are with some open water here and there as well. The Great Sacandaga Lake Association cancelled one of its ice fishing contests. Food 'n Fuel is having an ice fishing contest this weekend and fishermen are in front of Vandenburg Point and Beacon Island. Pop-up ice fishing tents are being used instead of the normal heavier ice fishing houses. The water at the bridge/spillway between Mayfield Lake and the Great Sacandaga Lake has been open most days of the winter this year.

Gordon's Marina and Miller's Grandview Marina have installed marine dock bubblers this year to prevent ice damage to their docks. Ice can exert considerable pressure on the shoreline from thermal expansion, high wind on large ice sheets, and collisions of large ice floes. Docks and boats are usually not built to withstand the forces that ice can impose of them. Many years ago, someone figured out that pumping air into the water at the edge of docks and boats would keep the ice melted with the flow of above-freezing water brought up by the bubbles. These units negate the damage ice can have on docks.

Seven to nine large trees were taken down recently along the shoreline of the Great Sacandaga Lake on Lakeside Drive which has opened up a large view of the lake.

Carol Johnston, Lakeside Drive



*"Hardwood Camp,"
Tomantown, early
1940s. Not much has
changed in
Tomantown in one
hundred years...*

*Harvey Hart,
Byron Elphee,
Arch Blowers,
Ernest Kuhne,
Lee Herrick*

*Taken by an old cellar
in the orchard on the
way to camp.*



GREAT SACANDAGA LAKE REPORT

By **LOUIE STUTZKE**

FUELNFOOD.COM

Friday, January 18

Cold weather has finally arrived, and the lake completely froze over on Tuesday, and it is frozen all the way to the dam. Although I would never recommend anyone to go near that end in any conditions.

As for the rest of the lake, there is between 2.5 inches of ice up to 4 inches. The areas that were ice free Monday now have 2.5" and areas like in front of Sport Island Pub and the Campground, also down by McMurray's have the most, about 4", these areas had a little ice still left. So, it's making almost an inch of ice a day. With more really cold weather on the way this weekend we should have 5" of ice by Monday minimal on the entire lake.

Since this is essentially the first freeze the ice is the good clear black ice, which is the strongest. Not a mix of thawed and refrozen ice mixed with snow and slush like last year's conditions. With this being said: only the most seasoned ice fishermen should be out, this weekend, and absolutely no ATV's or snowmobiles yet, although I know there is always a few wild ones. (You know who you are). Also, the water level is only

about 2 feet below summer full levels, so the rocks, shorelines and trap islands are covered up good. So, if we get some more colder weather, it should shape up to be a phenomenal season although a little shorter it will be worth the wait.

The few fishing reports I have are the Northerns are biting good, and some great size.

Tip of the week: tune up your ice fishing gear.

Friday, February 9

Happy Friday, it's been a couple weeks since the last report. The reason for that is not much had changed.

Even with the really cold weekend that followed the last report it didn't make much ice. With the really cold nights this past week and no snow cover, to my amazement, there is about 2 more inches of ice. So that being said, there is 6" in the area of Scout Island between Vandenburg Pt. Rd. And Griffis Rd. The bay by McMurray's and Lasky's have 6" as well. The beach side of Wally's across to Lakeside drive and out to Beacon Island have 5". Northampton in the campground has the most at 7". Also, the Kenyons and the Mead Islands have anywhere between 5 to 7" of ice. (Thanks, Goose, for that info.) In front of Ponderosa Pines there was also 5" of ice which I was surprised by.

To sum it up this tells me there is no less than 5" and no more than 7" on the entire lake. It's solid black ice... the best kind with not a drop of snow. The warm days haven't hurt it so after this weekend we should build more ice.

Barring any huge snowfall that will hurt the ice. We might salvage riding for a couple weeks in the end of February. As of right now though, I suggest walking out only. No snow for lube for snowmobiles, and definitely not enough ice for side x sides. There's aren't any pressure ridges, but there are some long cracks that are open anywhere between 6" to 5 feet across. So, you wouldn't want to find one of those on your 4-wheeler. With that being said the water is at spring levels so you can fish just about anywhere, including your favorite spot you like in May, and don't have to be far offshore to find deeper water. For those not familiar with the Sacandaga it's 15 foot higher than normal for this time of year.

Fishing Report:

As for the fishing, it's been great. Northern's are really loving the clear ice and bright days. The walleyes are biting well too at those witching hours. The ones who know, Know. Some decent size Perch being caught too, and as always, a few trout but slow.

Tip of the week: ...wear cleats

Friday, February 16th, 2024

Since last week the lake has made an inch of ice. The main part of lake has

6", with up to 8" in the Kenyon's. 7" in Northampton up to Sport Island Pub where there is 6" also. Same goes all the way up to Batchellerville, then all the way to Ponderosa Pines where there is 5 1/2". Off each side of Wally's Point has 6" as well. All is good solid black ice. Just the right amount of snow for lube, without making it slushy.

There are a few small heaves running in the usual spots from Lanzi's and Sinclair, also one off of Scout. They are small but still pay attention. There are blown off spots of glare ice, which will freak you out because it looks like open water but it's not.

Water is high so I rode right though the Mead Islands and didn't take Stump Alley, but it looks flat through there. The conditions are fast, fast, fast so try not to duct tape the throttle because remember there are some heaves out there.



On the ice between Munsonville and Wood's Hollow, looking NNE. Scout Island at right.
COURTESY OF FUEL-N-FOOD

Also, water is dropping 2" a day so things are going to change constantly, and the Trap Islands will eventually start poking out. SO PAY ATTENTION. (Easier said than done I know)

Fishing Report:

Fishing is excellent Walleyes should even pick up more with snow on ice, and Northerns will probably slow down a little. Perch have picked up and size is good. No reports of Trout. Enjoy our two weeks of winter.

Tip of the week: Canadiens build rockets.

Friday, March 1

Good morning, I just got back from checking out the lake. The wind Wednesday night and Thursday really tore up the ice. It opened up the shoreline at the end of Lakeside drive down to Lanzi's, and bunker hill in spots. Also, from Fishhouse north to Batchellerville is in bad shape. From what I have seen the south end of the lake is in much better shape than the north.

Check ice as you go out there is still 5-7 of ice where its good. The only good thing is the bad spots are wide open so you can see them. I would not bring any 4 wheelers, side x sides, or snowmobiles on the ice.

Do not attempt to go from one side to the other across the lake. You won't

make it, these new style sleds don't like open water, they aren't like the old ones Darin Derocker rides. Either side of Wally's Point looks good, and so does the bay off Griffis and by McMurray's.

Remember this year there is a lot more water than normal, so you don't have to go far offshore. Still check as you go drill some test holes.

Be extra cautious.

Also remember any fish you catch don't have to be brought in until 3:59 p.m. on Sunday to Fuel-n-Food or Wally's. They do not have to be alive, and you can bring them from the road in your truck or car. Heck, as nice as it is going to be Sunday maybe by motorcycle. That would be a first. One last variable is they have closed the dam, so conditions are going to change daily. Whether you fish or hang out at the bonfire at Wally's enjoy our last weekend of winter. Let's make it a great one.

Tuesday, March 12

Good morning, this will be my last report until May.

Other than trout the fishing season closes on the lake March 15th. The ice is off already, and the water is at summer levels. So not much to report only that you can put your boat in at any time you or your marina are ready so it's going to be the earliest boating season I have ever seen. My brother-in-Law Mike has already been out on his pontoon last Friday.

Also remember if you do go boating it's a law in NY that all people in a boat have to wear a life jacket before May 1st.

Fishing is great if you can get out there.

Tip of the week: wear a life jacket.