

Elsie Hartmann

A Light On The Past

The West Sparta Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 8 Issue 3

WHERE HAS THE TIME GONE ?

- The purpose of the West Sparta Historical Society is to collect, preserve, interpret, and make accessible to the public the history of the town and the people of West Sparta

Inside this issue:

Upcoming events 2

The Passage 3
Family Part I

Jane Oakes Presentation 6

Old Fashioned Day 2014 8
Thank You

2015 Membership and renewal Form 10

It's been a busy summer for members of West Sparta Historical Society, and we still have more work to do. Our Cemetery Committee headed by Rick Pfaff is developing plans to improve the conditions of the four old Town cemeteries including removal of brush and trees, and resetting headstones. Our Nominations Committee headed by Howard Perry will meet this winter to plan our slate of candidates for the Annual Meeting in February of 2015. The Audit Committee under Gerri Long will also meet this winter to make sure our financial records are in good order. Linda Johnson and the Membership Committee are coming up with ideas to attract new members; one idea is to encourage people to give Gift Memberships to West Sparta Historical Society to friends and family members. Linda Johnson has also been working with Sue Noragong and the 'West Sparta Historical Society Mobile Bookstore'; you will see them at our different events selling our books, T shirts, and other merchandise. Linda has also made arrangements with Nunda Pharmacy to carry our books. The Honor Wall Committee, consisting of Sarah Booher, Dave Palmer, Diana Moffatt, Elsie Hartmann, and Fred Bundschuh met in September to discuss which family from West Sparta's past will be honored

with a display of their history in an exhibit in the Town Hall. Fred Bundschuh is also busy with the Collections Committee; he, Sarah Booher, Elsie Hartmann, and Sue Noragong have taken on the important job of cataloguing all of the historic items owned by WSHS. Sue Erdle, Jill Kalmar, Fred Bundschuh, and Dave Palmer are working on a project to create maps identifying historic sites in the town. A new Collections Care and Management Policy was developed and approved by the Board of Trustees, as was a Code of Ethics. The group is also discussing plans for the preservation and care of their collections if there should be a disaster affecting the locations where the historic collections are housed. Sarah Booher, Fred Bundschuh, and Sue Erdle attended a training session presented by 'Friends of Livingston County History', by Anna Kowalchuk in Avon NY. The topic of the session was Guidelines For Accessioning and Deaccessioning Objects'. This goes along with the Collections Care and Management Policy and helps clarify some of the legal issues involved in accepting items donated by the public to a historical society. Old Fashioned Day was a great success and the Task Force, headed by Margie Cansdale, is already making plans for the next one.

A Light On The Past

FROM OUR READERS

Lore DiSalvo, July 23, 2014

Great newsletter you did Sarah on the Paulines!!

I made a copy and sent it to a gal that knew Charlotte Johnston.

Just a suggestion in the future would you indicate Charlotte "Chickie Lee" in the photo on the Canadian Tour...she is taking a bow to the right....and please any tie in to Long Point. The organization needs all the help they can get. The reason Carl met Charlotte was Pauline performed with her at Long Point if I remember correctly...I will double check with the granddaughter.

You did a great job and very informative.

I also found J Robert Pauline as one of the judges for the Miss Long Point beauty contests back 1935-1938 is when they were held.

West Sparta Historical Society

Founded December 2006

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<http://townofwestsparta.org/content>

2014 Officers & Trustees

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Newsletter Editor S. Erdle

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SAVE THE DATES

December 18 WEST SPARTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY Trustees Meeting in the Planning Office at West Sparta Town Hall, 7 p.m.

February - TBA – WEST SPARTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY Annual Meeting. Trustee and officer elections, entertainment and refreshments.

March 14, 2015 - West Sparta Annual Spaghetti Dinner and Pie Auction to benefit Old-Fashioned Day, Noon to 4 p.m.

July 25, 2015 - West Sparta Old-Fashioned Day 10 to 4 p.m. The Park at West Sparta Town Hall.

Paternal Line of Descent: The John Passage Family of Nunda and West Sparta, New York

Quoted From the unpublished, untitled writings of Charles Edward Passage

Introduction: The John Passage family arrived in the Nunda Valley in 1814 or 1815 and settled first on Shaw Road on the border between Nunda and West Sparta. Their lives over the generations played out in Nunda, West Sparta and Dansville. The stories of this family are sometimes stranger than fiction. While Charles Passage was a scholarly man, perhaps it was the strangeness of his family's experience that influenced Charles Passage to make his novel of life in and around West Sparta titled "Hillyear" one that was a combination of the mundane and the fanciful.

Below is the beginning of Charles E. Passage's family story as written by him. The story will be continued in subsequent West Sparta Historical Society newsletters. Except for items in parentheses labeled "Editors note" the words, spelling and punctuation are all as Charles Passage wrote them. We believe he wrote this for use in family reunions, rather large affairs which he describes in the beginning of his sixteen page manuscript. This excerpt starts on Page 6.

"In the 1930's, my grandmother, Emma Jane Duryea, recalled that as a girl she had seen the elderly, white-bearded John Passage whose birth is listed as December 6, 1787 in Greenbush, Albany County. She further recalled that people said the Passages spoke "Holland Dutch". In Warren, Herkimer County, John had married Catherine Bradt from adjoining Otsego County on April 30, 1809. Three children of theirs, born 1810, 1811, and 1813, all perished in an epidemic of 1813 in Herkimer County, after which loss the couple set out by ox-cart for new regions in the western part of the State, accompanied by brother Jacob and his wife, Catherine Schumacher. They came around 1814 to the beautiful Nunda Valley in the southwestern corner of Livingston County and, for whatever reason, acquired land, not in the valley, but on the hill to the east of it. There they prospered, owning some four hundred acres of field and forest, with ten children born in what might be termed their "second family." My grandmother understood that the land was ultimately sold to pay son Andrew's gambling debts. The house in which they lived burned long before my time, but another built on the same site stands exactly one half mile from the level stretch of County Road 34, formerly called the Shaw Road. (*Editor's note: this may not be Shaw Road which is a North to South Road while County Road 34 runs roughly East to West and is now called Redmond Road in West Sparta and DeGroff Road in Nunda*). John was allegedly buried in a small graveyard now overgrown with maple trees on the east side of the road known as "Green Street" in West Sparta township. From a visit there in the 1930's I recall that, save for one marker bearing the name of Kernehan (I think), all the stones are simple uprights without inscriptions of any kind.

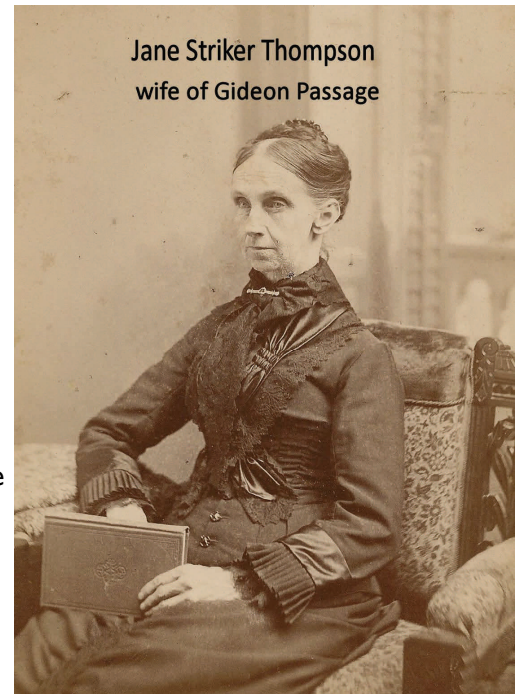
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Gideon Draper Passage Pencil Sketch

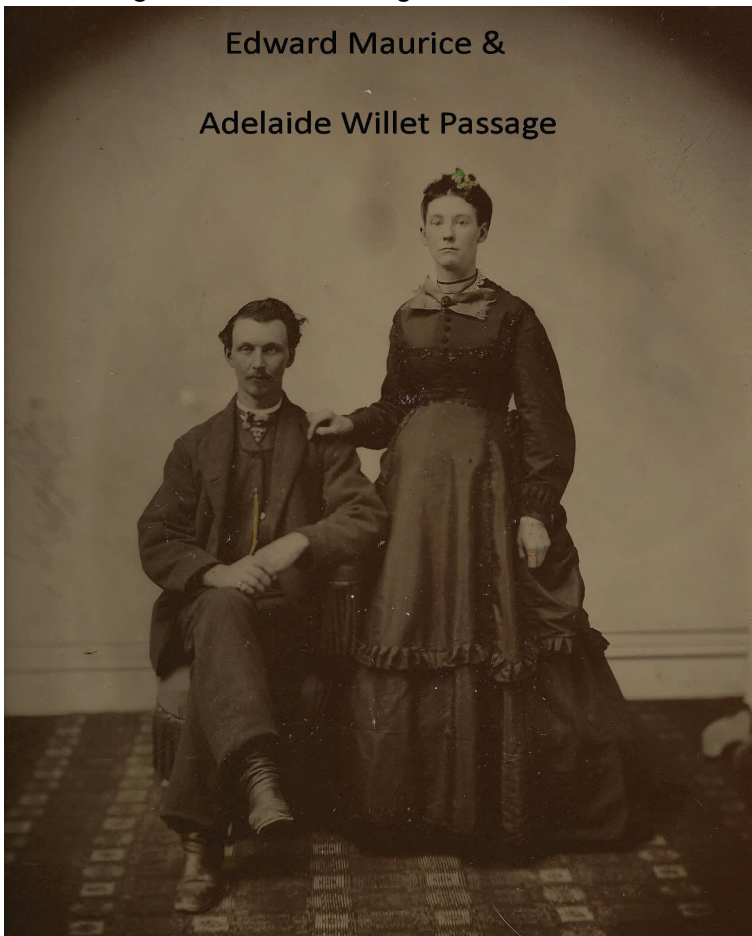
A Light On The Past

Of John's ten children in the "second family", Gideon Draper Passage, born August 2, 1820, was my great-grandfather. Family traditions about him are vague, but he owned a good farm at the northwest corner of the intersection where County Road 34 meets the Chasey Road, (*Editors note: County Road 34 is McKay/Redmond Road now and Chasey Road is now called Kysorville-Byersville Road.*) He sold farm implements, and he was prosperous. He once took my father as a small boy on an overnight excursion to Rochester by way of the barges that plied the branch canal linking Dansville with Rochester, fifty miles away. He actively supported the West Sparta Methodist Church, and in its adjoining cemetery, Oak Lawn, he was buried next to his wife, Jane Striker Thompson, 1820-1886. In 1966 I had a stone set to mark their graves.



Jane Striker Thompson
wife of Gideon Passage

My grandfather, Edward Maurice (pronounced "Morris") Passage, was the eldest of his six children. Born August 17, 1842, he married Adelaide Willet on April 17, 1867, of which marriage my father, Willett Gideon Passage, was born on March 8, 1870. The following year a second child was born to them. The doctor who was present delivered the infant quite successfully despite the fact that he was thoroughly drunk, but before leaving he fetched the wrong bottle of medicine from his kit, with the result that mother and child were



Edward Maurice &
Adelaide Willet Passage

both dead within a few hours (May 19, 1871). My father, aged fourteen months, was sent off to his grandparents' Gideon and Jane, and my grandfather was left at loose ends as a twenty-nine-year-old widower. On January 2, 1873 he took as his second wife Emma Jane Duryea, whom I term my grandmother. The marriage was the single stroke of luck and genius in his life.

I was not quite fifteen years old when my grandfather died on September 8, 1928, and I had known him only since an accident at seventy had caused him the loss of an eye. A pebble flicked by the horse's tail when he was driving into Nunda lodged in the eye, resulting in an infection. All who had known him prior to the accident agreed that a major change came over his personality as a result. Previously he had been jolly, sociable, unvaryingly warm-hearted. I recall him only as taciturn, dull and in his final years slightly senile. He had spent his life as a moderately successful

farmer on a series of rented farms in the vicinity of Nunda. Card playing twice resulted in bankruptcy, the second time in my father's second-last semester in high school. The last forty years of his life were spent on a farm which my father bought for him to which my father retained the title. He is buried in Oak Lawn Cemetery, West Sparta, between his first and second wives and a few feet away from his father and mother.

Gideon and Jane were loath to part with their grandson, not only because they had become attached to him but also because they felt a stepmother could not be other than cruel. The boy's aunts and uncles agreed, especially about a school teacher, for my grandmother taught in one-room schoolhouses and boarded around the districts. Yet when the boy was surrendered all went well. Child and stepmother were devoted to one another and were to continue so for sixty-seven years. After marriage my grandmother continued to teach school. Her pay sometimes kept the family of three alive. In busy seasons she hayed and harvested in the fields at my grandfather's side. She also "made garden" and kept a neat house.

For lack of what is now called a baby-sitter, she took the boy to school with her, and there he readily picked up knowledge beyond his years. At age six he was reading with the ten-year-olds and eagerly looking up into their faces with a correct answer when they faltered at spelling and geography. These signs of high precocity had their compensation in due time. When he was eight or nine, it was noticed that he limped, or more properly dragged one foot in walking, and he maintained that his facial twitchings were uncontrollable. Help was sought from doctors, who proved unable to help.

At last a certain "woman doctor who wasn't really a doctor" took him in hand and cured him. Her treatment, whatever it was – it must have been some sort of homespun psychiatry – also cured his precocity. Yet he did well enough in school to be sent to the four-year high school in Nunda, which in that time and place was tantamount to college in my own time. My grandmother continued to teach to pay for his five-day-a-week room and board. He learned well enough, but he also hung around with the boys, smoked a long clay pipe on the sly, and pursued run-of-the-mill amusements.

One day a boy was irked at his refusal to stay around for some project or other which was against my grandmother's bidding. "You don't have to mind her," the boy retorted, "She's only your stepmother." In consternation my father walked five miles home to ascertain the truth. More than once my grandmother had shown him the album pictures of the Willetts; some Willetts had even been common guests in the house; but he had guilelessly taken the "Aunt's" and the "Uncle's" as honorific titles, never inquiring into their meaning, and my grandmother had been unable to broach the topic of her relationship to him. Not long afterward he was summoned home permanently from school upon my grandfather's second bankruptcy. This time he had even given my grandmother's personally owned cow to the winner at the card table. From a job near Batavia, forty miles away, my father came home weekends by various conveyances and doing the last miles on foot. The travel left only a few hours for his visit, but misery of homesickness drove him to repeat these weekend jaunts until, in despair he got a job in Dansville with the new railroad. "

End Part One. To be Continued.

Early Women Doctors of the Genesee Valley by Jane Oakes

On October 19, 2014 at the West Sparta Town Hall, local historical researcher, Jane Oakes introduced the audience to newly researched information about historical figures of the Genesee Valley that are little known to many. Her focus was on early women doctors from or practicing in area communities. Surprisingly, considering the intense prejudice against the idea of women physicians in mid-1800s, there were more than a few.

Until January 23, 1849, no woman in the United States had received a medical degree. Elizabeth Blackwell, uncommonly determined to earn a medical degree, was miraculously able to enroll in Geneva Medical College (Later Hobart College) in October of 1847. After graduation she left the area to start a practice in New York City where in 1857 she and her sister Emily, who had by then also attained a Medical Degree, started the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children. The barriers to female medical students that she had broken paved the way for other women to study medicine and her practice and the infirmary played a role in educating a number of female students that came after her.

Women covered in the talk included several women who attended Central Medical College of Syracuse which operated between 1849 and 1852, (after 1850 it moved to Rochester as the Rochester Eclectic Medical College where the women met in Minerva Hall): Fidelia Warren, of York, a brilliant student who unfortunately died in her last semester of medical school; Sarah Adamson Dolley, the first woman licensed to practice medicine in Rochester; Lydia Folger Fowler the second woman in the U.S. to get a medical degree who was married to phrenologist Lorenzo Fowler of Cohocton; Rachel Brooks Gleason practiced with her husband Silas Gleason at the water cure in Elmira; and Harriet Newell Austin, Glen Haven water cure physician in Homer NY, and adopted daughter of James Caleb Jackson of the "Our Home on the Hill" fame.

James Caleb Jackson's wife, Dr. Katherine Jackson trained at Blackwell's New York Infirmary for Women and practiced with Dr. Jackson at the Dansville water cure facility. Fidelia Jane Whitcomb Day was registered by the Eclectic Medical Board in 1881 and had a very popular practice for ten years in Nunda. Dr. Cordelia Greene studied at the Cleveland Medical Clinic and bought the Castile Water Cure from her father's estate; eight other female medical students studied with her. One, Clara Swain, after attending Medical College started a hospital in India that still exists. (She is featured in Irene Beale's book *Genesee Valley Women 1743 - 1985*). South Dansville's Phoebe Oliver Briggs attended Medical College in Philadelphia and became a missionary doctor; living with many hardships she was known as the Medicine Woman to the Otoe Indians. Other area women, Helen Delowry Fiske, Helen Hershey Landis, and Celia Hartman attended the Philadelphia Electro-Pathic College for Electro Therapeutics.

Jane's talk was filled with interesting anecdotes about these women and their experience trying to be of service in an extremely male oriented profession and anti-female doctor atmosphere. In her very engaging style, Jane spoke of the state of the medical profession, medical education and the ludicrous measures taken to "diagnose" women's ailments in a time when Doctors were not allowed to see and sometimes did not touch their female patient's bodies.

A Light On The Past

Page 7

The presentation was warmly received by an audience of 21 persons. Thanks go to Jane from West Sparta Historical Society for the privilege of hosting this history making presentation. Our appreciation also goes to Darlene Baird and Sarah Booher for refreshments served after the program. Also our gratitude goes to Paul Hoffman for technical assistance with the power point presentation.



Left—Audience members came from West Sparta and surrounding communities to hear Jane Oakes' presentation on local women doctors of the 1800's.

Below— Phoebe Oliver Briggs grew up in the house on the right in South Dansville, but lived in the dugout shelter on the left when she served as a doctor to the Otoe Indians of Kansas and Nebraska in the 1870's.

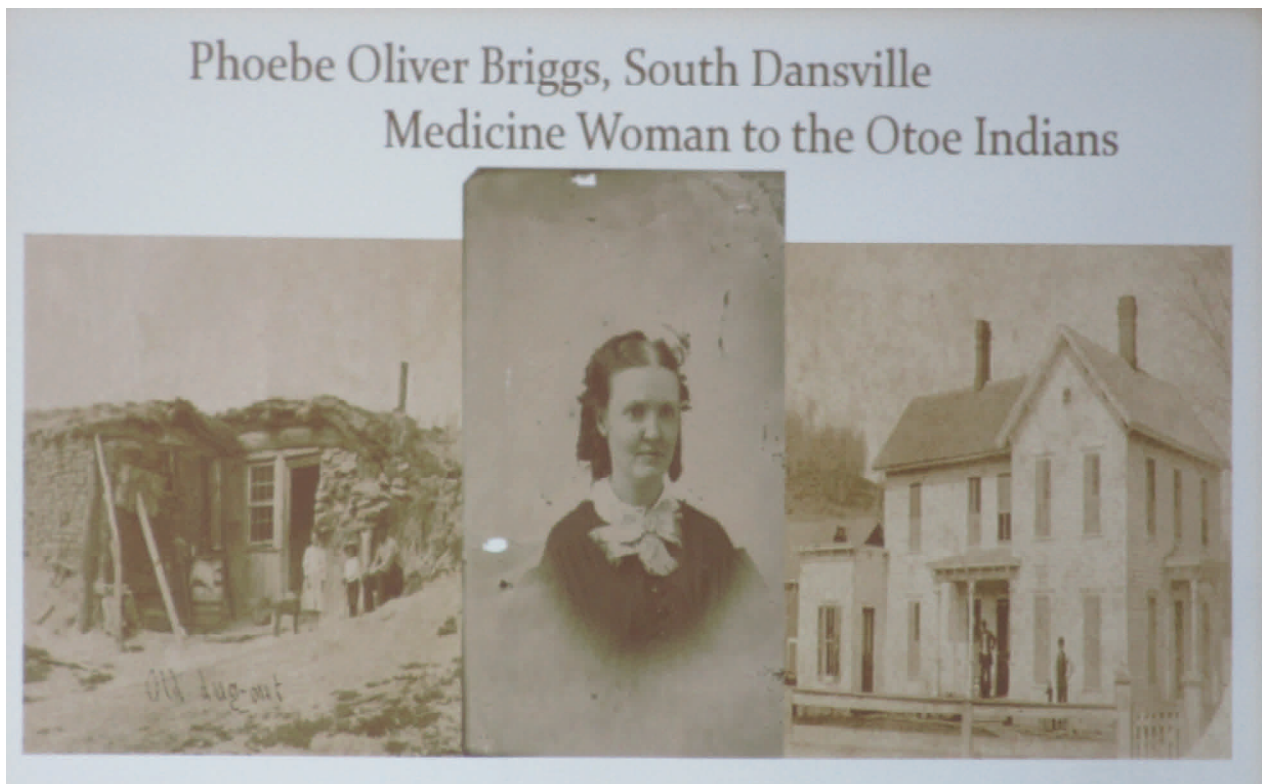


Photo courtesy of Jane Oakes

WEST SPARTA OLD-FASHIONED DAY THANK YOU!

JOINT ORGANIZING SPONSORS - Town of West Sparta, West Sparta Historical Society, West Sparta United Methodist Church, West Sparta Volunteer Fire Department.

JOINT TASK FORCE 2014 - Marjorie Cansdale, Coordinator, Pamela Perry, Secretary, Susan Erdle, Treasurer, Sarah Booher, Fred Bundschuh, Gerad Levey, Dawn Love, Rick Pfaff

FINANCIAL SPONSORS - Bickle Farms - Lewis Bickle, Fender Bender Mender – Gregory Kysor & Family, Good Earth Farm - Bob and Sarah Booher, Henry G. Everman Farms, Moffat and Sons Farm - Diana and Gene Moffat, Glen Piper, Stoner Hill Farm - Sue Erdle & Marvin Yamonaco, Sr., Sick Brothers ATV, C & S Excavating, Dansville Water Wells, Inc., Hope Valley Camp. Arts in History programs made possible with funds from the Decentralization Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Council on the Arts administered by Livingston Arts Center a member supported organization

DONATIONS & GIFTS INKIND – O'Brien's Septic, Apron's With Attitude, Community Bank of Dansville, McDonald's Restaurant Dansville, Arby's Dansville, Dansville Auto Mart, Dogwood Floral Company, Five Star Bank of Dansville, Linda Johnson, Sue Noragong, Marjorie Cansdale, Raging Winds Farm, Roger's & Tenbrook, Town & Country Agway, Two Creeks Farm, Good Earth Farm, Carol Weitzel, Jennifer & Gerad Levey.

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS – Bob Avery, Darlene Baird, Malisa Baird, Skylor Baird, Janice Bonehill, Bob Booher, Sarah Booher, Fred Bundschuh, Sharon Burr, Steve Button, Marjorie Cansdale, Susan Erdle, Judy Foster, Steve Foster, Gary Gerken, Elsie Hartmann, Janet Hartman, Jerry Hartman, Don Hayton, Linda Johnson, Adrienne Keiffer, Richard Kemp, Benjamin Kysor, Gregory Kysor, Milan Kysor, Barb Kurtz, Leon Leach, Twila Leach, Gerad Levey, Gerald Levey, Jennifer Levey, Mike Levey, Patricia Levey, Dawn Love, Don Love, Wixee McMaster, Edyth Martin, Miranda Mitchell, Emma Minter, Jack Minter, Gene Moffat, David Murray, Barbara Nagle, Lisa Neu, Rick Neu, Terry Neu, Giny Nicastle, Sue Noragong, Sean O'Brien, Charles Palmer, David Palmer, Shirley Palmer, Tom Pearson, Menzo Peck, Howard Perry, Pamela Perry, Noah Petroske-Enedy, Rick Pfaff, Chris Phelps, Robert Phelps, Randy Pike, Glen Piper, Alicia Pitre, Nate Powell, Barry Pratt, Jeremiah Pratt, Bert Randall, Jan Roth, Alan Rowe, McKenzie Rupp, Brian Shannon and Siren, Rob Smith, Jane Sprague, Michael Tunnison, Christine Veaut, Carol Weitzel, Robert W. White, Marvin Yamonaco, Sr., Matt Wolfe.

SPECIAL THANKS: CASA – Council on Alcohol & Substance Abuse, Glen Piper for tents, Livingston County Chamber of Commerce, Livingston County Sheriff's Department, Livingston County Mounted Patrol, and West Sparta Highway Department.

SAVE THE DATE: WEST SPARTA OLD-FASHIONED DAY, Saturday, JULY 25, 2015.

A Light On The Past

Thank You Contributing Members who give extra support to the activity of the West Sparta Historical Society. Your names are listed in the membership list as **Supporters** (\$25 - \$49), **Sustainers** (\$50 to 99), **Angels** \$100 – 499 and **Lifetime**. Names in **bold** are members through 2015. Members who have recently increased their support have a *. We welcome our recently joined members who are marked with a #.

Angels

Sarah & Robert Booher*

Sue Erdle & Marvin Yamonaco, Sr *

Patricia & Gregory Kysor

Betty & Robert Minemier 2015*

Glen V. Piper

Jane Schryver & Paul Hoffman 2015

Sustainers

Edyth Martin

Howard & Pamela Kemp Perry

Joan M Schumaker

Supporters

Gail Diemoz

Elsie Hartmann

Linda Johnson

Barbara Kurtz

Gloria McMaster Juhn*

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Bill Pickard*

Jan & Gary Roth/Raging Winds Farm#

Sheila & Kevin Young/Country Corners
General Store

Lifetime Members

Sarah & Robert Booher

Family Members

Nancy Bostwick & Jim Card

Cari Durbin & Gregg Carroll 2015

Nancy & David Jones

Twila & Leon Leach 2015

Gerri & Ken Long*

Deanna & Stanley Mastin

Diana & Gene Moffat

Barbara & David Nagle

Shirley & David Palmer

Tina & Steve Sick #

Bettie & Richard Whitenack

Individual Members

Fred Bundschuh

Sharon Burr

Marjorie Cansdale

Barbara Gregory 2015

Evelyn F. Kemp

Jane Kenney

Terry Sue Mahany #

Wixumlee McMaster

Douglas Morgan

Sue Noragong

Leola Teed#

Ralph Wolfanger

Those Remembered

Harold Hartman Austin "Mush" Hartmann

Marjorie Rounselle John Rowe

Bill & Ruth Slaight Corrine Wolfanger

WEST SPARTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2015 Membership Application and Renewal

Your name(s): _____

Address: _____

Tel: Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Email Address: _____

Instructions: Check one Membership category:

Individual \$10.00 ____ Family \$15.00 ____ Business or Organization: \$20.00 ____

Supporter \$25.00 ____ Sustainer \$50.00 ____ Patron \$75.00 ____ Angel \$100.00 ____

_____ If you do not wish to join, but would like to make a gift to help the work of West Sparta Historical Society fill in the amount here: _____.

_____ If you would like to make a gift of historical documents, photographs or other historical artifact, or if you'd like to be interviewed about your West Sparta family history or home, please check here.

Details: _____.

_____ If this is a GIFT please fill in the name and address of the person receiving the gift membership here:

Name of recipient: _____

Recipients address _____

Make checks payable to West Sparta Historical Society.

Send with your form with payment to:

West Sparta Historical Society, c/o Sarah Booher

8253 Green Road

Dansville, NY 14437

