

Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 3 Number 3 Fall 2004

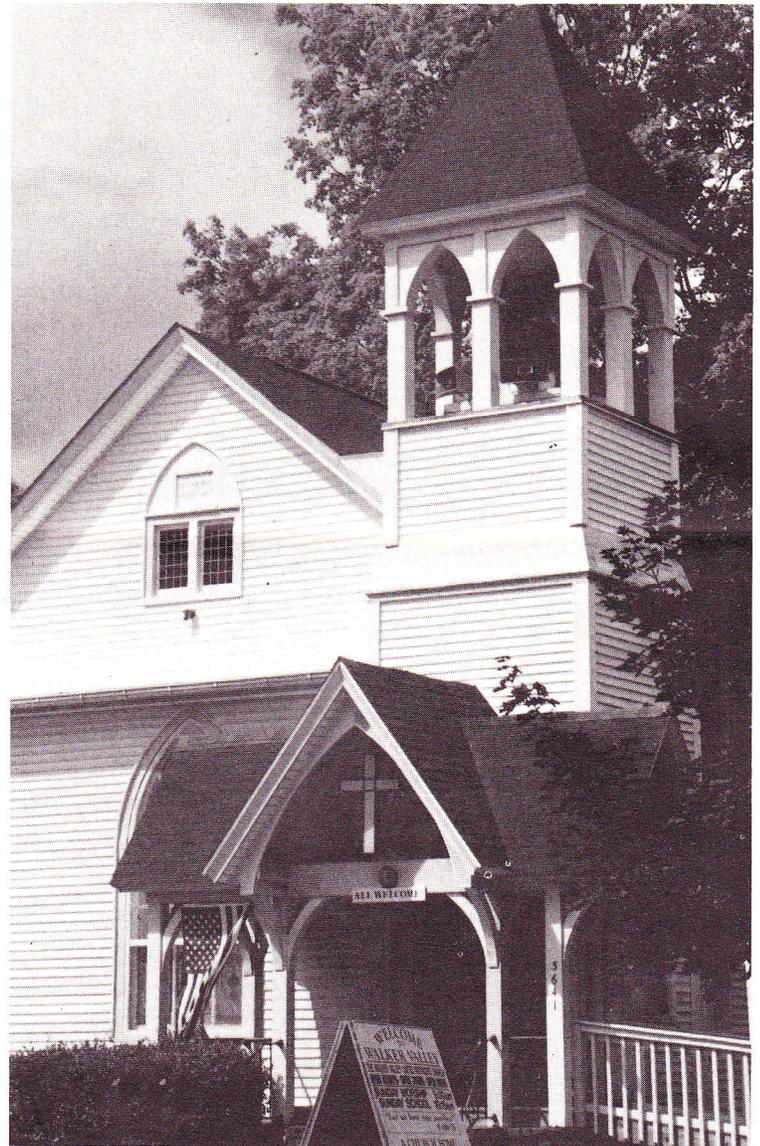
Walker Valley United Methodist Church celebrates its 150th Anniversary

Methodism officially came to Walker Valley with the building of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1854. There was a great desire by a society that was formed earlier to have a church. When James Walker Sr. died in 1853, he left \$300.00, provided that \$700.00 more could be raised to build the church. The money was raised and Jacob Walker, who owned the land where Walker Valley is now located, gave a piece of land where the church was built. He also gave land for the Walker Family Cemetery and the Walker Valley Cemetery.

An abundance of timber provided wood for the framework of the church, and there was a sawmill nearby along with four other sawmills to do the cutting. All the wood had to be dressed by hand. The building was completed in December 1854 and dedicated to the worship of Almighty God on January 8, 1855.

The cost of the church was \$1,750.00. \$650.00 was raised at the dedication service. After his death in 1870 John Walker, son of James Walker Sr., left \$100.00 for the church fund. With this and the fund formerly left by his sister Phoebe Walker, a bell was bought and used until the church burned.

John Walker also left \$2,000.00 in perpetuity, the interest to be used in keeping the grounds in a respectable condition. In 1892 new and modern seats replaced the old ones, and a steel ceiling and chandelier were installed. The church building was struck by lightning in July 1907 and burned to the ground. A rebuilding effort was started immediately. Under the leadership of James M. Walker, grandson of the original James Walker; a new



Walker Valley United Methodist Church, 2004

building was completed in 1908.

In 1964 the congregation felt the need for an addition to the church. The growth of the Sunday School and the lack of space to hold fellowship gatherings and fundraising activities prompted this decision to build an addition. Once again a dream became a reality as the people of the church and the

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Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends,

Traditionally, summer is a time when many of us shift our focus from business and schedules to families and leisure. For our Society, however, the Summer of 2004 was a whirlwind of activity with preparations for our first annual "Borden Day" on August 21st. We can now breathe a big sigh of relief as we look back on that event with tremendous satisfaction on a job *very well done!*

Borden Day was a true *community* celebration, as demonstrated by the many organizations and individuals who contributed to its success. Three groups in particular recognized and honored their strong association with the Borden legacy on this special day: the Wallkill Central School District Board of Education and Administration (including the John G. Borden Middle School Administration and PTO); the Wallkill Reformed Church (especially the "Willing Workers"); and the Wallkill Public Library.

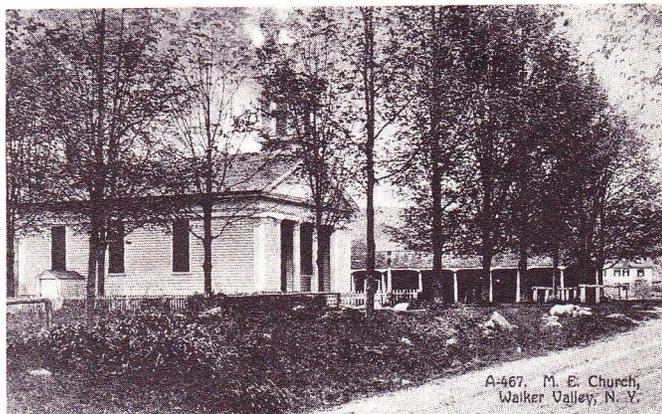
August began with a different but equally important observance of our local heritage. Prospective Eagle Scout Brian Sweeney led a dedication of the Graham Family Cemetery on Wednesday, August 4th. This cere-

mony culminated a summer of hard work by this ambitious young man, who led a team of volunteers (including several Society members), in researching and restoring this cemetery. We hope to have a complete account of this project for our December issue.

Before I close, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Shirley Orndorff, Joseph Trapani, and Anita Vandermark for their years of dedicated service as Society Board members. They have assured us that they will continue as active members, and we look forward to seeing them at our monthly membership meetings and other Society activities. I'd like to welcome our new Trustees Michael Dunnigan, Edward Weed, and Elaine Weed to the Board.

As you read this issue of the newsletter, you will see that local history is alive and well in your community! This is *your* Historical Society, and your thoughts and comments about newsletter articles, meeting presentations, and Society activities are welcome and necessary. Just pick up the phone, send an e-mail or "snail mail" note, or come to a membership meeting to contribute your ideas.

-Suzanne Isaksen



A-467. M. E. Church,
Walker Valley, N. Y.

Letters to the Editorial Staff



This is a forum for your comments and suggestions. Please send all material to:

The Historical Society of Shawangunk and Gardiner
P.O. Box 570
Wallkill, NY 12589

duboisshouse@frontiernet.net

(Letters will be printed at our discretion.)

Upcoming Events

Regular meetings
7:30 pm
at the

Wallkill Reformed Church

Wed. October 6th

Slide presentation about the Van Wyck Homestead

Wed. November 3rd

Meeting at the Walker Valley Methodist church
Rt. 52, Walker Valley

December 1st

Christmas Party at 6:30

Wed. January 5th

8,000 yr old Archeological finds in the Hudson Valley
Dave Johnson

Wed. February 2nd

Gomez Mill House

Christmas Shop

Dec 4, 5, 11, & 12

At Estelle Caswell's shop
37 Lippincott Rd., Wallkill

Borden Day

Our first celebration of the Borden family's contributions to our hamlet was successful beyond expectation despite the inclement weather. Reflecting the size of the Borden Consortium, interested participants came from as far as New Hampshire for the day to share their relationships with the company or to John Gail and daughter Marion.

A team of residents and society members designed multifaceted experiences for celebrants visiting many structures and other improvements in the nearly two-mile square "dream" community they shaped and planned.

The opening ceremony of the day dedicated a new signboard for the Middle School renamed in honor of John Gail who gave the original property and structure. Student led tours of the current building filed past displays of school history from the 1800's and 1900's. In the auditorium, historically based plays, slide shows and

lectures alternated. The gymnasium was filled with displays and collections of Borden memorabilia shared by local and visiting exhibitors. Commemorative programs, historical and Borden recipe cookbooks were among items sold. Over 200 participated in the two-hour narrated bus tours over the Home Farm grounds with presentations in the mansion, office building and main barn complemented by displays of antique farm equipment. The library displayed its collections and the Willing Workers of the Wallkill Reformed Church served an authentic Borden recipe buffet all day.

The letters and phone calls continuing to come in with offers of data, deeds, letters, and visitation appointments are encouraging to us as we seek to learn more of our internationally known and respected past residents. We eagerly look forward to next year's event.

-Alfred Smiley



The re-dedicated John G. Borden Middle School and its new bulletin board.

United Methodist Church continued from pg. 1

community came together to build this addition, which was completed in September 1966. It provided Sunday School rooms, an office, dining room, and a kitchen.

Throughout these 150 years the church has provided the people of Walker Valley a place to worship. It has provided a Sunday School for children to come to know God. Our existence as a church is to make all feel welcome and to make each individual feel that he or she is special to God, and in turn, to us - *The United Methodist Church of Walker Valley.*



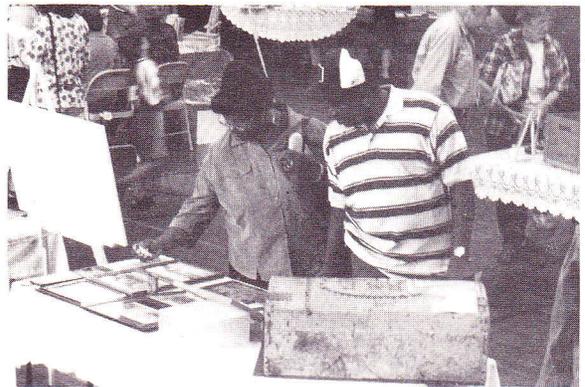
Rodney Thompson lecturing in her mansion on Marion Borden's era.



Marion Borden's personal sleigh



Borden products on display in the gym of John G. Borden Middle School



Participants viewing historical displays



Willing Worker Barbara Bedford serves lunch.



A working 1900 hay bailer



A tour group visiting one of the Borden Barns



Louis Andrews demonstrates how this 1920's gas engine runs.

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Historical Society of Shawangunk &
Gardiner

Cordially Invites you to a

HALLOWEEN SPOOK-TACULAR EVENT!

Saturday October 23, 2004
At 7:00 PM

Osiris Country Club
Lake Osiris Rd. Walden, NY

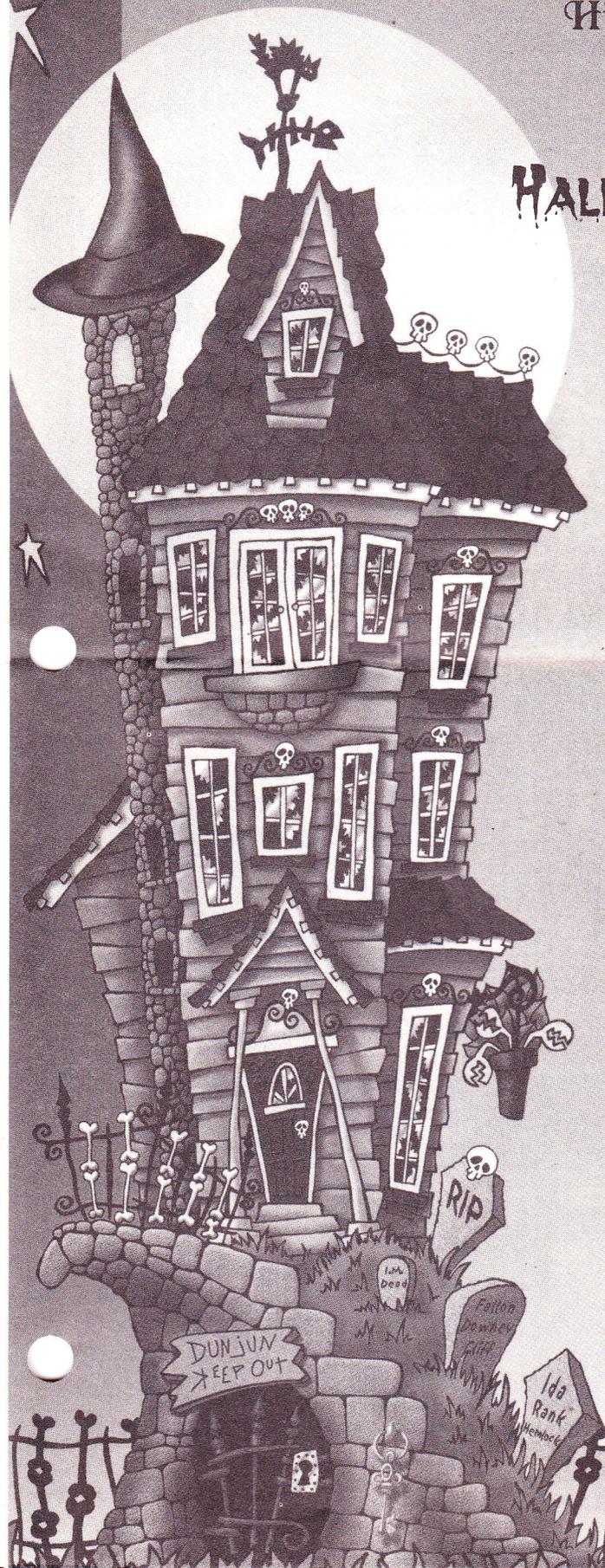
Dance the night away
It might be scary
It might be a fright
But it's sure to be a fun night

Come as your favorite ghoul!
DJ - Food - Prizes - Raffle

\$35.00 per person - Cash Bar

For tickets contact:
Freda Fenn 895-3986
Kathy Antonelli 895-3413

Tables of eight may be reserved
Costumes optional



School History Playlet at Borden Day

An interesting addition to Borden Day was a playlet performed throughout the day in the Auditorium of the John G. Borden Middle School. Historical Society members Estelle Caswell and Doris Callan researched the school's history and presented a playlet outlining the founding and growth of the Wallkill School District from the one-room school house to the centralized school system. By 1875, the Town of Shawangunk was divided into 13 school districts with an enrollment of nearly 1000 students. The John G. Borden brick school



Cassie Myers

building was built on property donated by John G. Borden and built by Marion Borden Halliday in 1922. Over the years, the one-room school houses were dissolved and the district became centralized in 1938. It wasn't until 1955 before the last one-room school was closed. The playlet was given in memory of Hazel Ronk, a teacher who was with the district since 1943. Teachers were played by Patricia Myers and Nancy Oldrey. Students were played by Cassie Myers, Kate Oldrey, and Brenna O'Boyle. Michael Oldrey played Mr. Robinson. The audience also learned of the changes in the Pledge of Allegiance that took place from 1875 to 1954.



Patricia Myers, Estelle Caswell, and Doris Callan