



# The Backbone

A publication of the Backbone Ridge History Group of  
Schuyler, Seneca, and Tompkins Counties

B E C A U S E   H I S T O R Y   M A T T E R S

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## The View from the Hector Backbone

### Reflecting on the History of American Agriculture

Presented By Dr. LouAnn Wurst

Industrial Archaeology Program,  
Michigan Technology University



**July 1, 2017 at 1:00 PM**

### Logan Community Center

Intersection of Schuyler County Road 2 & 4

Presentation followed by refreshments and slide shows

Free and Open to Everyone

Co-sponsored by the Backbone Ridge History Group and Logan Community Center

For more information contact Allan Buddle, 607 532 4213.

Backbone Ridge History Group members and friends have been active this spring and it will continue into the summer and fall. On April 29, the STEPS Organization, through their "Day of Service" provided volunteers to work on various community projects around the towns in south Seneca County. David and Judy Dresser and Meg Jastran continued with the interior painting project at the BRHG Research Center. Thank you to STEPS director Theresa Lahr for arranging the "Day of Service."

On May 7 Uncle Joe and the Rosebud Ramblers came into town. They entertained about 75 toe-tapping folks some of whom enjoyed a few square dances after enough space was cleared in the old school-house in Reynoldsville to make room for the energetic dosidos and swing your partners.

On May 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> cleanup and restoration continued at the Reynoldsville Cemetery. See page 3 for a report.

A new book is about to be published by the BRHG. The book is a culmination of about twenty years of work by Marsha Smith, formerly of the Towns of Covert and Hector, now living in Omak, Washington. Marsha retrieved and transcribed "Contributors' Columns" from the Interlaken Review from 1917 to 1942. On pages 4 and 5 you can see a picture of the cover and read the Forward by Glynis Hart, editor of the Interlaken Review from 2008 until 2016. The book will be advertised publicly and available for sale as soon as it is published. Details for purchase will also be included in the first issue of the *Backbone* following publication.

By the time you read this issue of the *Backbone*, the 28<sup>th</sup> Old Time Fiddlers Gathering will have taken place on June 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> at Lakewood Vineyards near Watkins Glen. BRHG was invited to participate with others on the 17<sup>th</sup> presenting old timey crafts and workshops where visitors can get involved. The BRHG theme is "Work and Play on the Backbone Ridge" with visitors observing and/or joining in operating a fanning mill for cleaning grain and playing games of many types including graces, pitching quoits, dominoes, checkers, cards and others all accompanied by early tunes on the harmonica.

As you see on the cover of this issue of the *Backbone*, Dr. LouAnn Wurst will return on July 1 to present a paper entitled: *The View from the Hector Backbone, Reflecting on the History of American Agriculture*. Below is a short abstract of the paper and talk:

*The Farmstead Archaeology Program has researched twenty-two of the farms in the Finger Lakes National Forest that were acquired by the federal government through the Resettlement Administration in the 1930s and 40s. These farms have yielded abundant data that questions the underlying justification for these policy actions and has larger implications for standard narratives about the historical development of American agriculture. This talk will review the results of this research and reflect on the larger implications for how we understand the development of industrial agriculture in the United States when viewed from the perspective of the Hector Backbone.*

Please join us on July 1 for the presentation which will be followed by a slide show of activities related to the excavations that took place during the summers of twelve years. A second slide show will feature photos of families from the period prior to Resettlement and structures that were demolished to make way for reforestation and grazing. The photo on the cover page of this issue is an example of the family photos.

The theme "Work and Play on the Backbone Ridge" will lead us through the summer and fall as floats are entered into the Firemen's Parades in Hector on July 29<sup>th</sup> and Trumansburg on August 26<sup>th</sup>. The theme will also be featured in an exhibit throughout the week of August 21<sup>st</sup> at the Trumansburg Fair.

Early planning is underway for a program about the Civilian Conservation Corps and its camp on Church Street in Burdett from which crews were dispatched to the backbone ridge to carry out reforestation projects. Legend has it that some of these crews were called the "Gooseberry Gangs" due to their assignment of ridding the area of gooseberry bushes which were a host to an insect that threatened pine seedlings. If you have information about the CCCs and would like to share, please let us know.

In late October or early November, volunteers expect to begin clearing brush from the Everts/Mathews Cemetery near Hector. We will be asking for assistance as that project nears.

## UPDATE AND CALL FOR HELP AT THE REYNOLDSVILLE CEMETERY BY ALLAN BUDDLE

After several years of spring and fall weekend adventures, the wooded Reynoldsville Cemetery has been restored to a special place where family can return safely to honor those members who preceded them through life beginning at the time of settlement here.

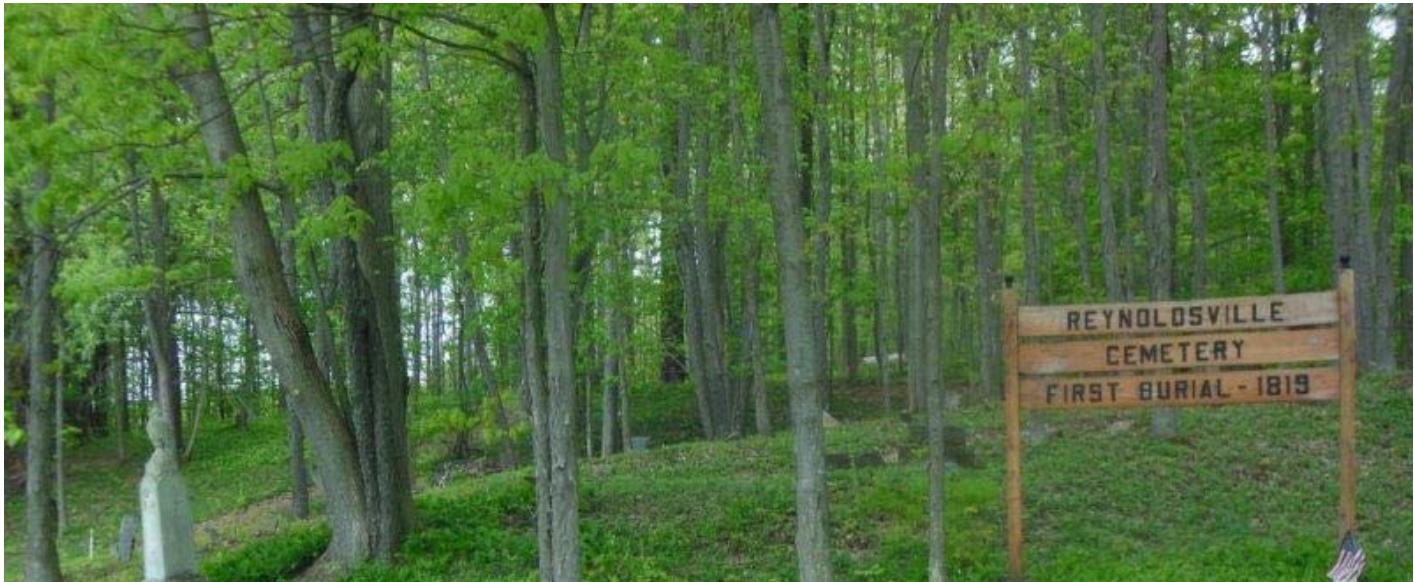
Along with periodic efforts to dignify the condition of some of the headstones, there is a need for about six individuals with weed-eaters to spend half a day each, in spring and fall to trim the cemetery. If this can be accomplished, the current condition of the cemetery can be maintained indefinitely.

If you have a family member interred here, or if you just want to honor those who do and can help, please contact me at 9176 County Road 142, Interlaken 14847, or 607 532 4213, or [orchardland@zoom-dsl.com](mailto:orchardland@zoom-dsl.com). Another way to reach us is through the Backbone Ridge History Group website: [www.backboneridgehistorygroup.com](http://www.backboneridgehistorygroup.com). A list of interested individuals will be created and contacted in the fall.

Thank you to those who came out to help with the cemetery on May 19 and 20, including Mark Smith, Mark and Sharon Ricci, Sandra Bradford, Bill Sebring, David Smith, Harold Bush and his sister Elaine, both descendants of the Dean family, and to Doris Pike who along with her sister Nancy, maintains the records of the cemetery which are changing each time another long-forgotten stone is discovered.

Thank you also to Jane Ike, Hector Town Clerk, for securing 25 new flags which have been placed on the graves of veterans beginning with those from the War of 1812. The old flags that were replaced will be retired in an appropriate ceremony at the American Legion in Odessa on June 27<sup>th</sup>.

A slide show of photos from the weekend, can be seen on the Pictures Page of the Backbone Ridge Website at the address above. A couple of the photos follow.



## FOREWORD TO “THE CONTRIBUTORS’ COLUMN, HISTORICAL ESSAYS PUBLISHED IN THE INTERLAKEN REVIEW 1917-1942” BY GLYNIS HART

### Foreword

In 1887, a young man named Thomas Hause began a newspaper, The Saturday Morning Review, in the small village of Farmer, in the town of Covert, Seneca County, New York. The little village on a ridge between two lakes, Seneca to the west and Cayuga to the east, was renamed Interlaken in 1904, and Hause, who had changed the name of the paper to the Farmer Review, renamed it again. Since that time, “the only newspaper that cares anything at all about Interlaken” has been in continuous publication. As of this writing, the Interlaken Review is approaching its 130th birthday in 2017.



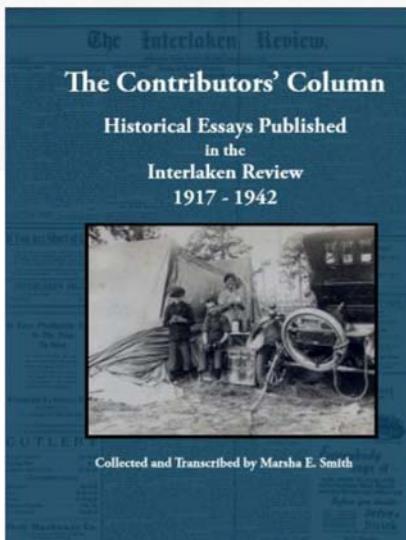
*(Thomas P. Hause also served as the mayor of Interlaken from 1909 to 1911, was president of the local school board in 1897, worked as second assistant foreman in the local fire department – Cataract Engine and Hose Company No. 1, and was master of the Farmerville Lodge No. 183 in 1901. After his death in 1929, assistant editor Fred Blauvelt and his wife Lillian incorporated the paper.)*

As the editor of the Interlaken Review from 2008-2016, and also of the nearby Trumansburg Free Press and the Ovid Gazette, I witnessed the strong sense of community these small towns keep alive. It is still possible to find a gathering of gray-haired wise-crackers solving the problems of the world on the bench outside the coffee shop in Trumansburg; to find people in the Interlaken diner arguing passionately about the best way to fix the water tower, to see school children waving cheerfully to their local policeman. This region of New York- the Finger Lakes- was settled by Europeans relatively late, with most white pioneers arriving after 1789 to settle on military lots, designated as payment for Revolutionary War service. The descendants of many of these settlers are still here. The past is not far away.

These columns, transcribed meticulously over many years by Marsha Smith, capture the Interlaken community’s sense of the past as well as the warmth and fun of its long time dwellers. The writers, good friends or close acquaintances, trade good-natured corrections and share some of their memories. They were interested

**FOREWORD TO “THE CONTRIBUTORS’ COLUMN,  
HISTORICAL ESSAYS PUBLISHED IN THE INTERLAKEN REVIEW 1917-1942”  
BY GLYNIS HART**

in the history of the houses and old mills, in their towns’ contributions to the Civil War, in local and- when World Wars intruded- international issues. Some of my favorite stories in the book are in Herman Smith’s accounts of his adventures in Kansas in the 19th century, and the automobile trips Smith and his friends assayed after automobile travel became possible. The world was bigger then, the towns smaller. But we humans have not changed much if we can still appreciate a good yarn and the twinkle in the eye of a narrator who brings it all together.



-Glynis Hart  
November 2016

**ADDITIONAL INFO FROM THE SOD FARM MYSTERY PHOTO  
BY ALLAN BUDDLE**

The April, 2017 issue of the Backbone contained an abundance of photos and a story that partially solved the mystery. A number of folks think that the sod probably came from many different locations. Some locations may have been planted to trees afterwards because the amount of soil that was taken with the sod would probably not leave enough to support a crop, even pasture grass. Dick Compton has since provided some additional information that expands on the trucking aspect in the area.

**From family history written by Beatrice Greenwalt**

Earl Stout Terry, 1<sup>st</sup> child of Bessie and Grover Terry was born April 27, 1919 on his parent’s farm. He went to the one room school on the town line road, District #2 and finished his schooling by graduating from Ovid Central School. He helped his father on the farm. At age 17 he purchased a truck and being self-employed, hauled milk in cans from farmers to the creamery in Watkins Glen. He hauled logs from the Wilmers Wilson farm to Nedrow, New York, near Syracuse. Earl hauled hay and straw to duck farms on Long Island, and to Staten Island, New York City and New Jersey, and even hauled loads to Madison Square Garden in New York City for the circus animals. Three more trucks were added to the Terry’s Trucking Company. Grapes were taken to Fredonia, New York for Welch Grape Juice and Jelly. Earl hauled loads of peas, beans and vegetable from his father’s farm to the canning plant in Interlaken. When Sampson Naval Base was built, Earl had three trucks hauling sod rolls from Hector to be laid on the training fields. After the base was completed Earl, then tired of long distance driving, sold his trucks and went to work for the U. S. Government as a driving instructor for the recruits, teaching them to drive the trucks loaded with troops, supplies and ammunition.

## BACKBONE RIDGE HISTORY GROUP'S INFORMATION UPDATES

Webmaster Dan Huston has added several items to the website since the last issue of the *Backbone*. The website continues to be a source of communications related to the history of the Backbone Ridge and surrounding communities. One of the items is a new page entitled "Community". The first entry here is the historical records of the Searsburg Christian Church Ladies Aid Society. The church is celebrating their bi-centennial this year.

### MAIL BAG

Criss Onan's message is below, followed by messages from Ellen Stevens-Wilson and Charles Fausold:



JUST FOUND YOUR WEB SITE REFERRED TO ME BY CHARLES FAUSOLD. AM EXCITED TO FIND THE TOWNSEND DIARIES. HE WAS A TWO YEAR YOUNGER BROTHER OF MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER, WILLIAM WALLACE TOWNSEND. MY FAMILY OWNED WILLIAM WALLACE TOWNSEND\`S FARM JUST NE OF LOGAN UNTIL THE 60s. MOST OF IT IS PART OF THE FOREST NOW.

YOU WILL FIND AN INFORMATIVE THREAD OF COMMUNICATION PERTAINING TO BUDD\`S CORNER AND FAUSOLD ROAD ON FACEBOOK RIGHT NOW. IT STARTED WITH CRISS ONAN POSTING ABOUT THE NEW SCALE HOUSE BREWERY.

CRISS INITIATED A FACEBOOK POST ON THE HISTORY OF FAUSOLD ROAD WHICH QUICKLY EVOLVED INTO A FAR-RANGING DISCUSSION AMONG A WHOLE GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH CONNECTIONS TO THAT LITTLE NEIGHBORHOOD. LOTS OF MEMORIES AND MORE THAN A FEW PHOTOS. SOME OF THE INDIVIDUALS WONDERED ABOUT OTHER LOCAL HISTORY SOURCES, SO I POINTED THEM IN THE DIRECTION OF YOUR WEBSITE.

### THIS MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO



Can anyone identify this tree species and how it would have been or perhaps still is used?

There is an interesting connection that will be shared in the next issue of the *Backbone*.

**LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO**

In the April 2017 edition of the *Backbone* there was a photo of a "ContrapTION" with a question- "Why might it be important to some of the farmsteads on the Backbone Ridge?" The "ContrapTION" is a Delco Plant, and with a small gas engine it generated DC Electric for lights and small horsepower motors used on the farm and in the home. The electrical charge was stored in a bank of batteries from which it could be used until the charge was depleted. Then the gas engine would be started again to recharge the batteries. In addition to light bulbs, some examples of use would have been for cream separators, feed grinders, washing machines, refrigerators and water pumps.

In an interview with Mary Louise Swick Stilwell, we learned how the Delco Plant was used on Chicken Coop Hill, less than a mile outside the area that was eventually purchased by the Resettlement Administration.

**MLS: MARY LOUISE STILWELL**

**AL: ALLAN BUDDLE**

MLS: THE FARM. IT WAS A SMALL FARM, I THINK IT WAS...DAD WORKED IT ON SHARES, HE MOVED IN APRIL BEFORE I WAS BORN IN JUNE. AND HE WORKED IT ON SHARES, AGNES WRIGHT OWNED THE PLACE, HER NAME WAS AGNES WRIGHT. AND HE WORKED IT ON SHARES 'TIL, I THINK IT WAS 1939 AND THEN HE BOUGHT THE FARM. I THINK IT WAS ABOUT 120 ACRES AND HE PAID \$3500 FOR IT. I REMEMBER. AND THAT WAS A HUGE PRICE, HE DIDN'T KNOW IF HE COULD AFFORD IT OR NOT, BUT HE PAID FOR IT IN A FEW YEARS, HE HAD A FEW COWS AND A FEW CHICKENS, PIGS AND JUST A SMALL FARM.

AL: DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT HOW MANY COWS HE HAD, AND DID HE MILK WITH A...DID HE HAVE ANYTHING TO MILK WITH OTHER THAN HIS HANDS?

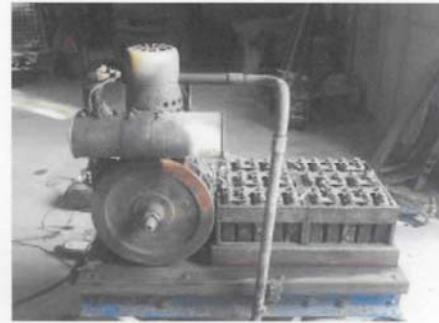
MLS: [LAUGHING]. MILKED WITH HIS HANDS. NO HE HAD I DON'T KNOW, SEVEN OR EIGHT, SOMETHING LIKE THAT, MAYBE 10. I'M NOT SURE. NOT VERY MANY.

AL: DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN ELECTRICITY CAME TO THE FARM?

MLS: YES, I DO. I WAS...THE ELECTRICITY DIDN'T COME TO OUR FARM UNTIL EVERYBODY ELSE HAD IT. WE HAD IT, BECAUSE WE WAS A MILE...THE LINE WAS A MILE EACH SIDE OF US, AND NOT ENOUGH HOUSES IN BETWEEN SO THEY WOULDN'T BUILD THE LINE. SO, AFTER DAD BOUGHT THE PLACE, I THINK IT WAS IN '39, SOMETHING LIKE THAT, HE GOT WHAT THEY CALL...I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU CALL IT...SYSTEM THAT THEY HAD 16 OR SO BATTERIES DOWN CELLAR TO RUN IT AND WE HAD TO HAVE A 32-VOLT SYSTEM. AND WHEN WE WANTED THE LIGHTS USUALLY WE HAD TO HAVE THAT GAS ENGINE GOING DOWN THERE TO KEEP, TO CHARGE UP ALL THOSE BATTERIES. WE HAD TO KEEP WATER IN THOSE BATTERIES AND IT WAS, I DON'T KNOW JUST WHEN IT WAS WE GOT ELECTRICITY IT WAS SEVERAL YEARS AFTER THAT BEFORE THEY FINALLY BUILT A LINE DOWN THROUGH THERE, SO WE HAD ELECTRICITY. IT WAS A GREAT DAY WHEN WE COULD GET RID OF OUR 32-VOLT RADIO AND GET A REFRIGERATOR THAT WORKED, AND GET A FREEZER. WE WAS VERY HAPPY TO GET ELECTRICITY.

AL: WHAT DID YOU DO FOR A REFRIGERATOR BEFORE YOU HAD ELECTRICITY?

MLS: WELL, WE PUT STUFF DOWN CELLAR TO KEEP IT COLD. AND EARLIER WE HAD AN ICEHOUSE UP THE ROAD, THERE WAS AN ABANDONED HOUSE AND THE NEIGHBORS ALL GOT...CUT ICE OFF FROM, I THINK IT WAS MECKLENBURG POND, IN THE WINTERTIME THEY'D HAVE A WHOLE BEE, ALL THE NEIGHBORS, AND THEY'D PACK IT UP THERE IN THAT ICEHOUSE, WE CALLED IT ICEHOUSE, IT WAS A REGULAR HOUSE BUT NOBODY LIVED THERE. AND THEN IN THE SUMMERTIME WHEN WE WANTED...WE HAD AN ICEBOX THAT WE PUT ICE IN THAT DIDN'T WORK VERY WELL, WE DIDN'T USE IT VERY MUCH, BUT WE DID SOME. BUT MOSTLY WHEN WE WANTED ICE CREAM WE COULD GO UP THERE AND GET A CAKE OF ICE AND MAKE ICE CREAM IN THE SUMMERTIME. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY WE COULD HAVE ICE CREAM.



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

AL: YEAH, WELL BACK TO THAT...THE ELECTRIC FOR A MINUTE. WAS THE THING THAT YOU HAD IN THE CELLAR, WAS THAT CALLED A DELCO PLANT?

MLS: YES, IT WAS. I COULDN'T THINK WHAT IT WAS.

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Before selecting the Delco Plant for the Mystery Photo we asked Marty Schlabach, who recently retired from the Cornell University Library, if he could find some reference materials that could be researched. As he always does, Marty provided a gold mine of references. A couple of them are listed below. For those with an interest and no computer access, please let us know and we will find an alternative way to access these documents:

**Guide to the Cornell University Cooperative Extension Records, 1915-2009**

<http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/RMA01975.html>

This is a very long document. Do a 'find on page' for electrification and you'll find where it lists rural electrification. (Need to visit Cornell University Library Rare & Manuscripts Collection to view these records.)

**Electricity on farms: an analysis of the United States by counties, showing the number of farms with electricity. 1939**

<http://chla.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=chla;idno=2944029>

**Wired help for the farm: Individual electric generating sets for farms, 1880-1930. 1989**

**Author:** Lee, Carol Anne

(This is a dissertation and might be able to be borrowed via interlibrary loan through your local library)

**Abstract:**

This study argues that rural electrification in the United States began before the 1920s and that its scope extended beyond the technical range of central station electricity and beyond the political range of public power, as illustrated by the development of self-contained electrical generating plants for farms. After twenty years of discussion about electricity in agriculture, manufacturers began marketing standardized plants after 1910; sales peaked between 1916 and 1921. By 1929 half of all the electrified farms in the country used homemade electricity.

As a technology offering a pattern of energy use that was ultimately rejected by society, individual lighting plants present a fruitful avenue for studying rural electrification, for the circumstances surrounding their construction, dissemination, and use mirrored broader national themes and trends in the production and use of electricity.

The triple themes of profit, convenience, and efficiency pervaded promotion of lighting sets. Agricultural and electrical engineers saw them as tools for agrarian reform and the modernization of rural life. Utilities saw in them devices that reduced pressure to provide immediate rural service and prepared the way for future extension of rural lines. As a small power supply, they had their most dramatic effect upon household work and the lives of farm women, and farm families used them to help improve living and production standards.

The story of individual lighting sets faltered in the late 1920s. As electrical generating and distributing technology improved and the electrical generating business consolidated, an energy vision based on the large-scale generation and distribution of electricity seized the national imagination. Economic hard times for farmers restricted purchases in the 1920s, and abruptly halted them at the onset of the Depression in 1929. The advent of national political battles over control of the nation's electrical generating facilities in the 1930s effectively ended interest in a rural electrical system based upon small-scale, individually owned and operated generating facilities.

**Links:** [Get it! Cornell](#), [Get it @ WCMC-NY](#), [Get it @ WCMCQ](#)

**Backbone Ridge History Group  
PO Box 62  
Trumansburg, NY 14886**

Trustees:

Sandra Bradford, David Smith, Rose Smith, Charlotte Dickens, Gerard Messmer, Mark Brown, Maria Kennedy

Officers:

Allan Buddle, President; Doris Pike, Vice President; David Townsend, Secretary; Erica Townsend, Treasurer.  
Newsletter Designer/Editor, Kari Milliman Gauntt; Daniel Huston, Webmaster

Trustee meetings are held at the Backbone Ridge History Research Center at the intersection of Route 96A and 414 in the Village of Lodi at 3 PM on the third Monday of each month preceded on the same day at 1 PM with a work session.

**WWW.BACKBONERIDGEHISTORYGROUP.COM**

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**Membership:**

Please note the information on the mailing label regarding your membership status. Thank you to those who have renewed! We hope that information contained in the Backbone continues to be of interest and we welcome suggestions for content related to the history of the Backbone Ridge and surrounding communities. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions or contributions of articles by mail at the address above or through the website at that address above.

**For new or renewal memberships, for an individual or household please send \$10 to BRHG, PO Box 62, Trumansburg, NY 14886**

**OUR THEME  
FOR THIS YEAR'S  
EXHIBITS:**

