



University of Illinois geologist Harold R. Wanless (1898-1970)

Many of America's early geologists travelled to the Rosendale area to visit and study the wonderful rock strata and fossils exposed in the numerous cement quarries and mines operating here. The bedrock of this area was deposited during the Ordovician, Silurian, and Devonian Periods of geologic time reflecting an ancient environment some 400 to 450 million years ago – a time when this area was covered with a shallow subtropical sea as attested by the fossils of corals and other invertebrates.

The rocks in this area are also deformed – folded and faulted – reflecting the occurrence of ancient mountain-building events. The deformed rocks now seen at the surface were bent and broken deep underground as Himalayan-sized mountains rose to the east in what's now New England. Hundreds of millions of years of erosion brought them to the surface (or near surface) where they're visible today.

Much of what we know today about the geological history of this area was worked out from patient field studies by these early geological pioneers.

The 1920 Wanless Report

by Steven Schimmrich

Harold R. Wanless had a long and successful 44-year tenure as a geologist with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is remembered for his extensive mapping work with the Illinois State Geological Survey of Pennsylvanian-age (300 million year old) rocks which showed cyclical sedimentation and are now known as cyclothems.

Dr. Wanless, however, also has a connection to Rosendale, New York. Back in 1919, as a graduate student at Princeton University (where he earned his BS, MS, and PhD degrees), he visited the Rosendale Cement District and produced a report in 1920, which later became his master's thesis, of geologic studies in our own backyard.

For decades, this report and others on the geology of the Rosendale Cement District lay deep in the bowels of the Princeton University Geosciences Library until a few years ago when the late Dietrich Werner and Dr. Kurt Burmeister (currently at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA) traveled to Princeton to copy these reports for the Century House Historical Society archives.

One of the most exciting things about these reports are the extensive photographs (which were scanned and are now available electronically) and historically interesting maps, cross-sections, and drawings.



What the well-dressed field geologist wore in 1920

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The Century House Historical Society

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*Volunteers
building a
new stage
for the
mine!*



A Message from the President

Dear Friends and Members:

I write this after 187 people enjoyed the Widow Jane Mine with music and song with at the Summer Solstice. Haunting, contemplative voices sang from underground, the mine's coolness felt on a hot day. It was a terrific event at which to stop and think for a moment about where we are and where we're going.

So far this year, we have welcomed hundreds of people to Century House and the Widow Jane Mine. Our visitors have included a group of students from the Mountain Laurel School. A most helpful group of volunteers turned out for Clean Up Day in May (accompanied by our new "house band" the Rosendale Improvement Association Brass Band and Social Club – see them play at the upcoming Ice Cream Social led by member Wayne Montecalvo). The New York State and Pennsylvania Canal Societies brought a large group in April, and we had a group of scouts spend an overnight and do some much needed work on the trails.

Century House has been featured in articles in our local events calendar *All About Town*, and in the July issue of *Hudson Valley Magazine*, and our Sundays in the museum have been crowded.

The joint is jumpin'!

We look forward to Taiko Masala (a traditional form Japanese drumming) on July 14th, Dada Spill (a multi-media performance and installation about the cement industry), the famous Ice Cream Social on 8/11 which is free for members (Not a member? Become one at the event!), and the Subterranean Poetry Festival will be on 8/25.

Before our summer seasons of events began, we noticed that the stage in the mine needed a little TLC. Volunteer Peter Genovese (also, my dear husband!) banded together a crew to address the repairs. Further demolition showed that the stage needed a complete rebuild. As they were working one day, a rare white peacock strolled through, an example of the magic of the mine. I'm always amazed that when we've got difficult jobs, invaluable friends and members turn out to help.

Speaking of which, we are about two years away from paying off our loan on the property, and the excitement is mounting. At that point, we'll be able to direct our valuable resources toward some much needed care of the buildings instead of making loan payments. Perhaps there is an angel (angels?) among you that can help us reach our goal of loan payoff sooner? We're about \$36k away. Just saying. We can always use your help.

In other news, we expanded our Board of Trustees from seven to nine members. So we welcome a bevy of wonderful new board members: Laura Moriarty (artist and Gallery Director at R&F Paints), Mau Schoettle (fiber and installation artist), Lea Kelly (artist and neighbor), and Steve Schimmrich (Geology Professor at SUNY Ulster).

Hope to see you at one of our events this summer, or drop by the museum on a Sunday.

See you then!

– Anne Gorrick

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Back to Harold Wanless... For a period of about a decade, between 1915 and 1925, students in the *Practical Geology* class at Princeton University, taught by Professor Gilbert Van Ingen, travelled to Rosendale (a two-day journey by car) to spend two weeks studying the geology of the Rosendale Cement District. Students would study and map the rock strata, take dozens of photographs, collect and identify fossils, and write detailed reports on their findings (copies of which now reside in the Century House archives).

Besides the interesting information about the local geology and scores of fascinating photographs, these reports are a treasure trove of early-1900's historical information. As Wanless wrote in his 1920 report as a student:

“At present the Rosendale Cement district is a rather poor district, as its chief source of income has been cut off with the downfall of the Natural Cement industry in its competition with Portland Cement. It has lost its industrial importance ... so the district is at present occupied mainly by former hangers-on of the cement industry, who make a small living out of small farming and gardening, summer boarders, etc.”

Regarding the boarding, Wanless states:

“Accommodations were secured at the Valley Inn, the only boarding house in town with Mrs. Schinnen, the proprietor. The food is good, the rooms satisfactory, and the rates reasonable, about \$14.00 a week for room and board.”

This report by Harold Wanless is now available electronically (with, hopefully, more to come soon). Simply search “*Final Report on the Geology of Rosendale Region, Ulster Co., N.Y.* by Wanless to read it online at [Google Books](#).

What's neat to me as I read these old reports, is that a century later geologists are still bringing students to the mines and quarries of the Rosendale Cement District to learn geology. These visitors include my own *Physical Geology* students from nearby Ulster County Community College each semester who explore the Widow Jane Mine “real-world geology classroom”.

HOT OFF THE PRESS !!!

The July 2013 issue of *Hudson Valley Magazine* features an article written with the assistance of the Historical Society.



A History of Rosendale's Natural Cement Industry

“Cementing its reputation: Modern America could not have been built without Rosendale Cement...”

<http://www.hvmag.com/>



Mrs. Schinnen's Valley Inn Boarding House (c. 1920) where geologists stayed. This is now Twisted Foods on Main street.

Planters made from industrial scrap from the site with lovely results!



Opening Day 2013 at the Museum with the Rosendale Brass Band & Social Club. Many enjoyed the special exhibit “Mushrooms to Mushroom Clouds” along with “Atomic Lemonade” refreshments.

NO WHISKY HERE!

As you may have heard, there is a distillery in Brooklyn, NY that produces a “Widow Jane” whiskey, and has used images of the Century House Historical Society’s property in their promotional materials. There was a recent article about this product in the *Bluestone Press*. We felt the need to clarify some misunderstandings in this article (which you can read online at www.bluestonepress.net), and below you can read our response.

Please note that we do NOT receive any proceeds from this product, nor have we sold water from the Widow Jane Mine to use in this product.

To the Editor and Readers of the *Blue Stone Press*:

The Century House Historical Society (CHHS) believes that it is necessary to address this article that appeared in the February 1, 2013 edition entitled “Widow Jane local bourbon whiskey”.

The label of the whiskey states “Pure Limestone Mineral Water from The Widow Jane Mine Rosendale NY”. This is likely why the *Blue Stone Press* and its readers took an interest in the product. However, as the owner and custodians of the Widow Jane Mine on the Snyder Estate in Rosendale, we wanted to let the readership know that water was not supplied by the historical society from the Widow Jane Mine for this endeavor. We’ve had members tell us they’ve purchased the whiskey, thinking that Century House got a portion of the proceeds from the use of the Widow Jane Mine name, or because Mr. Preston claims that the water used in making the whiskey is from the Widow Jane Mine. Indeed, the historical society has no commercial relationship with Mr. Preston and his manufacture of Widow Jane whiskey, and CHHS does not benefit in any way from the sales of this product. Visitors to CHHS have also been under the mistaken impression that the whiskey is made locally, but it is not.

We can certainly understand the marketing appeal of the Widow Jane; it is a charming and unique reminder of this area’s natural and industrial history. That is why we on the Board of Trustees feel it is so important to keep the property accessible to the public. It is our hope that community members who find this article interesting can set aside some time during our 2013 season to visit the Snyder Estate, the Widow Jane Mine and the Cement Industry Museum to learn more about the fascinating history of the Rosendale Natural Cement industry and its contributions to the building of the nation. Our volunteers are excited to welcome visitors of all ages to our educational programs and special events. You will find no bourbon here, but we do a slammin' ice cream social, free to CHHS members. Not a member? Become one at our website (www.centuryhouse.org)!

We appreciate your interest and invite you to learn more at www.centuryhouse.org or visit us on Facebook.

Sincerely,

The Board of Trustees of The Century House Historical Society



Some tender loving care for the Brooklyn Bridge Gates!

The Society was honored by a visit from the NY & PA Canal Societies in April.

Summer Solstice Sounds

On Saturday, June 22, Amy McTear led the Summer Solstice Community Harmonic Choir in the Widow Jane Mine taking advantage of the mine's unique acoustical properties. The event was billed as an "interactive sacred sound concert and vocal meditation to uplift personal and planetary well-being."



Photo by Anne Coleman

Scouting at the Mine

On Saturday, June 15, the 91st Sojourners, a new Kingston-based BPSA scouting troop, camped overnight outside of the Widow Jane Mine. BPSA scouts are a part of the Baden-Powell Service Organization (<http://bpsa-us.org/>) – a group which promotes co-educational, inclusive, traditional scouting to all people regardless of sex, background, race, sexual orientation, or religion. The scouts would like to thank the Century House for their generosity in allowing us to have our first ever camp-out at the Widow Jane Mine. We'd also like to say a special thank you to Gayle Grunwald for the wonderful tour and Steve Schimmrich for the engaging talk. This was a great first experience for all our campers and adult leaders alike! Check out our Facebook page!



CENTURY HOUSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

Sunday, July 14 at 3:00 pm

Taiko Masala - Traditional Japanese Drumming

Sunday, July 28 at 3:00 pm

Dada Spill - Display & Performance Art

Sunday, August 11 at 1:00 pm

Ice Cream Social - Free for Members!

Sunday, August 25 at 1:00 pm

23rd Annual Subterranean Poetry Festival

Sunday, September 15 All Day

Fishkill Fencers Tournament

Sunday, October 20 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Fall Clean-Up Day - We Need Your Help!