



# 2019 ANNUAL DUES

## Century House Historical Society



Your 2019 Society dues entitle you to all membership benefits for the coming calendar year

Century House Historical Society Membership Dues:

|                             |       |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Individual Membership       | \$15  | _____ |
| Family Membership           | \$25  | _____ |
| Lifetime Individual         | \$500 | _____ |
| Corporate Annual            | \$250 | _____ |
| Tax Deductible Contribution | \$    | _____ |

**Please mail your dues and ballot to:**  
**Century House Historical Society**  
**PO Box 150**  
**Rosendale, NY 12472**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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# 2018 ANNUAL BALLOT

## Century House Historical Society



The following members are running for election or reelection to the Century House Historical Society Board of Trustees. Indicate you vote for up to 2 members with a check mark or write in the names of up to 2 other society members

\_\_\_\_\_ Katy Weber \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Althea Werner \_\_\_\_\_

You may vote for any or all three of the above candidates or you may write in the name or names of up to three other Society members on the lines provided. If you cannot attend the annual meeting please sign and return this ballot to the Society prior to the Annual Meeting.

Century House Historical Society  
 PO Box 150  
 Rosendale, NY 12472

I request that the Secretary cast my ballot for me at the Annual Meeting:

\_\_\_\_\_ [Please Sign]



## Of Mines and Mushrooms

Steven Schimmrich



*Herman Knaust, aka the "Mushroom King", inspecting his crop in one of the Rosendale Cement District mines*

Today, one can find numerous cultivated mushroom varieties in the produce section of many large supermarkets – portobello, oyster, porcino, crimini, shiitake, enoki, chanterelle, morel, and others. The most commonly consumed mushroom in the world, however, and the only variety found in American supermarkets until a few decades ago, is the humble white button mushroom. But, things are not as simple as they appear. It turns out that when the white button mushroom matures a bit and starts to turn brown it's often sold as a crimini mushroom and, when fully mature, sold as a large brown portobello. Ultimately, they're all the same species – *Agaricus bisporus*.



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# The Century House Historical Society

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Rosendale, New York 12472-0150  
[info@centuryhouse.org](mailto:info@centuryhouse.org) 845-658-9900

[www.CenturyHouse.org](http://www.CenturyHouse.org)  
*Friend us on Facebook!*

## Officers

President – Henry Lowengard  
Vice-President – Laurel Mutti  
Secretary – Laurel Mutti  
Treasurer – Althea Werner

## Board of Trustees

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Anne Gorrick    | Laurel Mutti     |
| Gayle Grunwald  | Steven Schimrich |
| Henry Lowengard | Katy Weber       |
| Michael McCabe  | Althea Werner    |

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## Our Condolences



Carol A. Perez, 65, of Clintondale died Thursday October 4, 2018.

Carol was a longtime resident of Rosendale and lifetime member and neighbor of CHHS. A strong courageous mother and dear friend to many. Her big heart and open mindedness were just a few traits we could all use a little more of. For those who knew her, we can all say the world was a better place with her in it. Let her memory live on in our hearts.

Carol is survived by her daughter Andrea Perez, her son Frank Perez; her grandchildren Dominique Perez, Tamerin Perez, Jovan Perez-Torres, Alijah Perez-Torres, and Autumn Perez.

A memorial service will take place at a later date.

## Help us out:

**Become a member for 2019 - See attached dues form**  
**Come to our Annual Meeting on December 5 in Rosendale**  
**Donate money - we are a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible charity**  
**Ask us how you can volunteer - [info@centuryhouse.org](mailto:info@centuryhouse.org)**

## A Message from the President



As the 2018 winds down, it's time to reflect over my first year as CHHS President.

Thanks to all the visitors to the Snyder estate, who were enjoying the music, shooting photos and videos for their projects, playing music, walking and camping on the grounds, and educating themselves at the Museum and our walking tours. It was especially gratifying to see the number of new visitors, and I encourage all to become members of

the Society, or renew! Much thanks to the volunteers who came out to help us. This organization is all volunteer, so the more, the merrier!

This year we hosted four successful benefit events in the Widow Jane Mine, including repeat performances from Taiko Masala and Mamalama / Andes Manta, newcomers the Catskill Mountain Gamelan, and the 28<sup>th</sup> (!) Subterranean Poets Festival. Check the Century House Website for more information on these organizations and archived audio from the Poetry Festival.

But was not all music and video; we're moving ahead with upgrading the buildings and grounds. There was significant tree work as trees and limbs were downed over the year and were trimmed back from the Century House itself to allow for painting and roof work. The damaged and rusted out bridge railings were replaced and are now much safer and ready for decades of use. Rotted out siding and eaves were replaced and repaired.

The CHHS also held its first GoFundMe fundraiser to repair the Estate's Brooklyn Bridge Gate columns - which successfully met its goal! Look for more crowdfunding efforts as we fix up the place piece by piece!

The Annual Meeting this year features a lecture by Gail Whistance on the early electrification of Ulster County and how she chanced upon its history. Be there to hear a story about something you never knew you could care about! I hope to see you there and I hope you'll join us as a member to keep out our educational, historical, and cultural efforts going!

Henry Lowengard

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**The Board of Trustees would like to extend thanks to all of our tireless event volunteers, Limber Tree Services, DeWitt Mills Fencing, Woodstock Roofing, Artistry in Motion, Bolder Architecture, RLS Enterprises, Doug Tyler and Son, George Kugler, John Hogan, Clifford Crepeau, and Rick Fritschler.**

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Century House Historical Society  
*Cementing history and the arts*

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So, what do mushrooms have to do with the Century House Historical Society newsletter? Well, it all started with Herman Knaust and his brother Henry who founded Knaust Brothers Industries. Starting in the 1920s, Herman and Henry began growing mushrooms in large, windowless icehouses along the Hudson River (the ice harvesting industry died off after the advent of electronic refrigeration leaving behind the empty warehouses). As their business grew, they eventually expanded into the abandoned natural cement mines in the Kingston and Rosendale areas (reportedly at the invitation of Andrew J. Snyder himself).

During the peak of their mushroom industry, from the mid-1930s to 1960 or so, the Knaust brothers ran a massive operation employing over 1,000 employees in the mid-Hudson Valley and shipping as much as 12 tons of mushrooms a day – millions of pounds each year! They utilized a 120,000 square foot production facility in Coxsackie to prepare trays for the growing of mushrooms, using a technique patented in 1936 (US2097766A *Means For Producing Mushrooms*). They then shipping those prepared wooden trays to the icehouses or mines to grow the mushrooms which were continuously hand-harvested between 2 to 8 weeks after watering. Each tray could produce 15-20 pounds of mushrooms after which the compost was dumped and the trays were returned to the production facility for recharging.

Coxsackie was reportedly chosen for the production facility since the mushroom trays did best with a mixture of topsoil, straw, and horse manure and Coxsackie was half way between the Saratoga Racetrack, a ready source of manure, and the growing facilities in Greene and Ulster Counties. They soon outstripped their source, however. According to an account by Walter G. Williams, of the Williams Lake Resort, reported on the CHHS website:

*“... the mushroom industry soon became so big that it really wouldn't have made any difference where they had their mixing plant because, before long, they were buying horse manure from all the race tracks in the country. From Bowie in Maryland, from Santa Anita in California, from the racetracks in New York City and Massachusetts; they brought it in by the carload.”*

The wooden trays were stacked in the mines, separated by bricks at each corner, allowing access by the locally employed pickers. The dark mines, with constant temperatures in the mid-50s and high humidity levels proved to be excellent growing conditions for the mushrooms. The crops were collected into apple crates and then shipped to the Knaust brother's canning facility in the city of Hudson.



*Stacked mushroom growing trays and workers in the East Kingston mine off Delaware Avenue*

Besides canning their own mushrooms, under the *Knaust's Cavern* brand name, they also sold their mushrooms to large manufacturers like Heinz and Campbells. If you ate mushroom soup anytime between 1935 and 1960, you probably had Knaust Brothers mushrooms since they ran one of the largest growing and production system in the world during that time period.

Mushrooms.. 3 different ways

**BUTTON**  
**SLICED**  
**PIECES AND STEMS**

*These Choice, Tender, Cave Grown Mushrooms are at the Better Stores*  
 Packed by  
**K-B PRODUCTS CORP.**

**The Campbell Mushroom**  
*How an historic delicacy is pampered*

The very finest caught the mushrooms, washed their caps, and put them into their baskets.

The famous six said to have found a new gateway to growing and sale. A post has called it "The greatest point of order."

At Campbell's we treat this famous delicacy with respect. We have assembled one of the world's most complete collection of mushroom stems, or our experimental farm near Prince George, B.C. Our plant grows mushrooms experimentally with just open airhouses to improve mushrooms once more.

Seasonably, Campbell chooses its mushrooms. The mushrooms we grow and those we buy from others are gathered from viable and healthy and gently handled in their travels.

In the dark, Men with miners' lamps in their hats pick them in the prime when the veil is slightly lifted.

Finally, those mushrooms which you appreciate have the least thing happen to them that can happen to a mushroom. Campbell's skilled staff hand them with rich cream and pasteurized grade dairy butter, season them just so, and make them into Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup.

This is typical of the care that Campbell's takes to get the very best ingredients, and to blend and cook them with skill and experience. When you taste the soup you'll know what we mean when we say:

"To make the best, begin with the best, and with extra care."

Soup: Tomato, Cheddar, Tomato, Chicken, Beef & Pasta, 7-Up, Corned, Vegetable, Deluxe, French, American, Creamed.

Above: Vintage 1950s era ads for Knaust's Cavern and Campbell's mushroom soup. The Campbell's ad states that "Men with miner's lamps in their hats pick them in the prime" indicating their origin in Rosendale Cement District mines.

Below: Woman "mining" mushrooms with a lamp on her hat.



In the East Kingston mine, off Delaware Avenue, Herman Knaust recognized that the natural air flow in the mine was not optimal for mushroom growth due to seasonal fluctuations and worked with industrial consultant Paul Sturges to build a state of the art ventilation system. The system utilized the fact that a 30 million gallon subterranean lake could provide warmer surface water in the winter and cooler deep water in the summer to heat or cool the air pumped in from outside and heat or cool the mine as needed keeping optimal temperatures throughout the year. While a significant capital investment, the system resulted in an increase in mushroom growth and quantity quickly paying for itself. A previous picture in this article shows a ventilation duct for this system running along the ceiling of the mine above the trays of mushrooms.

In the 1950s, the Knaust's mushroom business started becoming less profitable due to higher labor costs from unionization and increasing foreign competition. By the mid-1960s, it was essentially defunct. Today, half of America's mushrooms are now grown in windowless cinder block buildings near the town of Kennett Square – the current “Mushroom Capital of the World” – in southeastern Pennsylvania.



*A crate of mushrooms, ready to ship to Hudson*

As a final chapter in the Knaust story, in 1951, seeing the limited future of mushroom production, Herman Knaust envisioned another use for abandoned mines as storage for vital records and founded Iron Mountain Atomic Storage, Inc. According to the Iron Mountain website:

*“After World War II, Mr. Knaust sponsored the relocation to the United States of many Jewish immigrants who had lost their identities because their personal records had been destroyed during the war. At this time, the world was also embroiled in Cold War apprehension regarding atomic security. Both factors caused Mr. Knaust to focus on protecting vital information from wars or other disasters.”*

Underground climate-controlled buildings and vaults were built in a number of mines to preserve vital corporate records and even provide corporate executives with hotel-like atomic bomb shelters. Today, Iron Mountain has “mushroomed” into a billion-dollar worldwide company (with a facility in a mine right here in Rosendale) attesting to Herman Knaust's business acumen.

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# A Look Back to Last Season

A number of activities occurred during this past summer's season at the Snyder Estate and Widow Jane Mine. Two "Walk & Talk" events, several performances in the mine, the ever-popular Taiko drumming, the long-running Subterranean Poetry Fest, and much more (friend us on Facebook for the inside scoop and tons of pictures!).



*Professor Steven Schimmrich leading a Walk & Talk on May 13 outside the Widow Jane Mine*



*"Bowery Bob" on stage at the Subterranean Poetry Fest*



*We replaced the old rotted railings on the driveway bridge!*



*A "Go Fund Me" campaign in the fall raised money for the restoration of our famous Brooklyn Bridge Gate*



*Catskill Mountain Gamelan [Stefan Lisowski]*



*Taiko Drumming [Stefan Lisowski]*



*Mamalama Performing in the Mine*



*Repairing the Century House Roof*



*Tree Work*

[ADDRESS LABEL]

## Come Join Us!

### The Century House Historical Society's Annual Meeting

December 8th, 2018 1pm  
Rosendale Community Center  
Presents:

**Connections:  
The Honk Falls to Kingston Power Line**

**Researched and presented by  
Gail Whistance**



High-voltage porcelain insulator, 1904, R. Thomas & Sons Co., East Liverpool, Ohio.  
Found in Town of Rosendale, NY. Photo by Bruce Whistance.