

## The Rondout Formation

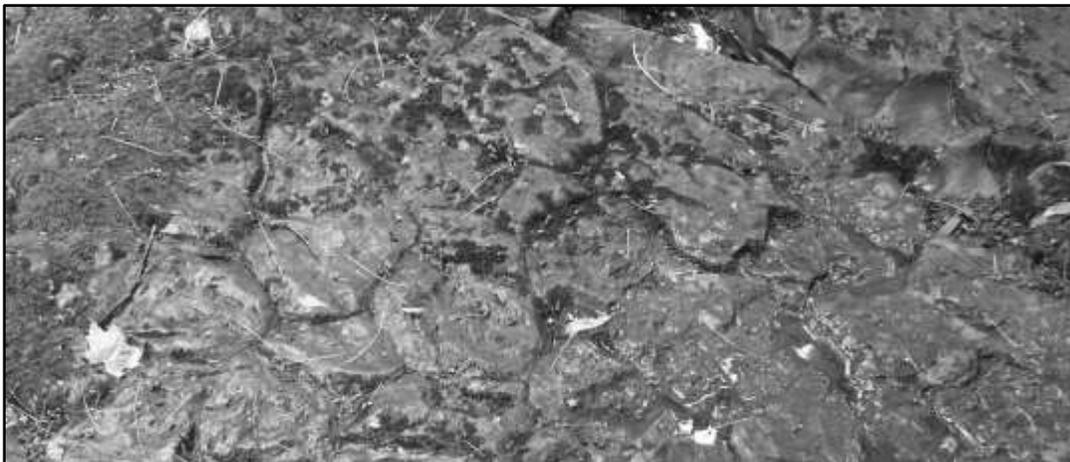
Steven Schimmrich

Picture yourself floating in a tropical sea. Beautiful blue skies above with puffy cumulus clouds and warm, clear azure water below. Warm, gentle trade-wind breezes blowing. A few feet under the surface, you see a white sandy bottom teeming with marine life. Structures that look like coral; branching, twig-like structures rising from the seafloor; stalked, flowery organisms with feathery appendages; shelled animals attached to the reefs; strange-looking arthropods crawling about; and even a few small fish darting past. All are familiar, yet somewhat different from what you would see today.



*University of Michigan Museum of Natural History – Life Through the Ages Diorama*

As you drift closer to shore you see an extensive tidal mud flat. The tide is out and the mud is dried and cracking in the hot sun. The air is arid and desert-like. On the shoreline, you might see a little green from plants, but nothing more than an inch or two high. Most of the land is a barren waste of rock and sand with no sounds other than the blowing wind.



*Mud cracks preserved in local bedrock near Rosendale*

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# The Century House Historical Society

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

## Officers

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

## Board of Trustees

Henry Lowengard	Steven Schimmrich
Michael McCabe	Katy Weber
Laurel Mutti	Althea Werner

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## A Message from the President



The icy stalactites and stalagmites in the Widow Jane Mine have melted, and it's time for a new year of activities at the Snyder Estate!

We ended the year with a fascinating lecture by Gail Whistance on the serendipitous history of Ulster County electrification, as revealed by fanatic electric insulator collectors.

Over the winter various projects were worked on, thanks to the tireless efforts of site coordinator and treasurer Althea Werner. There's a

new gazebo and landscaping, and portions of the actual Century House are being primed up for the upcoming Wallkill Valley Land Trust House Tour, which takes place on June 1. If you haven't visited the estate recently, you're in for a few pleasant surprises!

This year's benefit performance schedule brings back Taiko Masala (July 16), the Catskill Mountain Gamelan (August 11), Mamalama y Andes Manta (August 24), and the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Subterranean Poet's Festival (September 6). A new addition to the performance schedule is a kind of musical extension of the Poetry Fest, the Poet Rock Event, curated by Christopher Funkhouser, which takes place July 6.

Henry Lowengard

## Our Condolences



**Anita Williams Peck** passed away on January 26 of this year.

Anita was a native of this area and operated the Williams Lake Hotel, a local resort founded by her grandfather Gustave Williams in 1929, until it was sold in 2006 to Hudson River Valley Resorts.

A successful business woman, active community member, tireless volunteer, and gracious philanthropist, she will be missed by many.

## Our Condolences



**Thomas Robert Simalchik** passed away on December 8, 2018.

Thomas was a Danbury resident and one of his passions was exploring abandoned mines, including those in the Rosendale Cement District.

The Simalchik family had asked for donations to the Century House Historical Society in lieu of flowers.

**If anyone is aware of any CHHS Members passing away, please let us know.**

## Welcome to New Members!

Joan K. Creeden, Rosendale, NY  
Bill and Kelly Merchant, High Falls, NY

Thanks for your support!

## What We've Been Up To...

In addition to the never-ending maintenance of the site, a number of activities occurred in the off season at the A.J. Snyder Estate.

A Founder's Memorial Gazebo was erected by Tom Manganaro from Artistry in Motion of New Paltz along with some landscaping work around the pond thanks to a donation by A. Werner.

Stones around the gazebo and pond were collected from the grounds and the large gear at the base was retrieved from the original cement factory by the late Dietrich Werner.

A photo of the gazebo is featured on the back page of this newsletter. More to come before it's fully completed.

A lot of work has been done in and around the Century House itself including general repair work, roof and siding work, interior work, and even tree work surrounding the house. We don't have the funds to do everything that needs to be done to stabilize this historic structure so any help is greatly appreciated.

Work has also begun on finally repairing the bridge abutment damaged in 2011 by Hurricane Irene thanks to repair money from FEMA.

*Continued from page 1*

It's 420 million years ago, near the end of the geologic period geologists call the Silurian, and you're floating over what will become the modern Hudson Valley Region of New York. At the time, due to plate tectonics and drifting North America, New York was in the hot and arid subtropical belt of the Southern Hemisphere. As sea levels fluctuated over a few million years, the area that's now Rosendale was alternately covered by a shallow subtropical sea of varying depths or drying out along a shoreline.

How do we know this? Because the rocks under our feet tell us the story if we learn how to read them. Ulster County is underlain by many different layers of sedimentary rock that records changes in the environment, and changes in life on Earth, over hundreds of millions of years of geologic time.

Limestone, full of marine invertebrate fossils, formed when we were covered by seawater. A slightly different type of rock, closely related to limestone, formed when the water was shallow and periodically dried out. This rock sometimes shows preserved sediment ripples and mud cracks, but few fossils. Geologists call this rock dolostone.

Limestone is a very common sedimentary rock, typically gray in color, and commonly seen on the side of the road in the Rosendale and Kingston area. It's made of the mineral calcite which is composed of calcium carbonate or  $\text{CaCO}_3$ . This is essentially the same mineral that marine invertebrates use to make coral reefs and hard shells. Dolostone, on the other hand, is composed of dolomite, a mineral where the element magnesium replaces some of the calcium making  $\text{MgCa}(\text{CO}_3)_2$ . In our area, this leaves a rock which is a bit harder and more resistant to weathering than the limestone and some clay mixed in the rock allows it to weather into an orange-brown color rather than gray seen in local limestone. Once you train your eye, it's easy to distinguish these two rocks in the field.

In the Rosendale area, alternating layers of clay-rich dolostone and limestone from the Late Silurian Period form what geologists call the Rondout Formation (a formation is a named and recognizable unit of rock). For our story, three important formally-named Members make up the Rondout Formation. They are, from top to bottom:

**Whiteport Dolostone Member**  
**Glasco Limestone Member**  
**Rosendale Dolostone Member** } **Rondout Formation**

Note that there are two dolostone members, an upper and a lower, separated by a layer of limestone.

It turns out that the dolostone members have some clay and other impurities in them yielding the perfect chemical composition to make a natural cement. All you have to do is take chunks of the rock, heat them in a kiln for a bit, and grind them into powder. Add water and voilà, instant rock. When this was discovered around 1825 in High Falls, these dolostone members were called the lower or black cement rock (Rosendale Dolostone) and the upper or gray cement (Whiteport Dolostone). The Glasco Limestone was called the Middle Ledge (or, more informally, the "Bastard Limestone" since it was useless to the cement miners).



*The author lecturing at the Widow Jane Mine in Rosendale. Next to him is a pillar of mined Rosendale Dolostone (mine entrance by his hand) and above his head is an ancient reef in the Glasco Limestone.*

Tens of millions of years after the Rondout Formation formed, subsequent mountain building events folded these layers in various ways all up and down the Hudson Valley. That's why some of the cement mines in the area are horizontal, others are steeply dipping down into the earth, and yet others are completely vertical. The miners were simply following the tilted and folded beds of Rosendale and Whiteport Dolostone as they ran into the earth at varying angles. It's also why some mines are "double-decker" – they mined the Rosendale and Whiteport Members but left the Glasco in between to separate them.

For well over 100 years, local roadside rock outcrops and publicly accessible mines like the Widow Jane at the Century House, have been visited by innumerable geology students and professionals on field trips from colleges and universities throughout the Northeast. These gray rocks we pass every day tell a story of what the Earth was like in the Silurian and Devonian Periods of geologic time hundreds of millions of years ago, show the evolution of life through time recorded by the fossils entombed in these rocks, and provide evidence for drifting continents and several massive mountain building events that changed the face of eastern North America.



*Relatively horizontal cement mine in the Rosendale area. Columns are composed of the Whiteport Dolostone (which was mined out here) and the roof is a different limestone found above the Rondout Formation (Manlius Limestone Formation).*



*Examples of steeply dipping (left) and vertical (right) cement mines found in the Rosendale area. The miners followed the folded layers of Rosendale and Whiteport Dolostone. Today these mines provide a unique three-dimensional picture of the local geology.*

# CALL FOR MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS!

Hello all! First, thank you for your support of the Century House Historical Society!

## A call for members

**Have you renewed yet for 2019?** Please check your mailing label for your membership category in brackets after your name. If it says [LIFETIME], [2019I], or [2019F], you are up to date - thank you so much! If your membership has lapsed, we'd love to have you back.

**Invite your friends too!** You'll find two copies in this newsletter of the **membership application**. One is for you if needed; we hope you'll pass the other (or both) along – or perhaps use it to give a membership as a gift. Do encourage your friends to visit the Snyder Estate and <https://www.centuryhouse.org/>! Or look us up on Facebook and share our events from there. Later this year we hope to add online membership renewal to our website as well.

## What are the benefits of membership?

- **Free entrance to the Snyder Estate:** We ask all non-members to donate \$5/person or \$10/family per visit.
- **This newsletter:** Note that you can also sign up for our email list (just email your address to [info@centuryhouse.org](mailto:info@centuryhouse.org) or include it on your membership application) to receive occasional notifications of upcoming events – but this is the space to watch for engineering history, Silurian corals, Society news, and more!
- **NEW THIS YEAR, a 10% discount on merchandise:** We have lots of new items at the museum store, including travel mugs, sweatshirts, T-shirts, and more!
- **NEW THIS YEAR, a discount on online ticket sales:** We will be rolling out advance ticket sales to our benefit shows this season, and members can receive a \$5 discount per ticket: \$15 instead of \$20. (Please be patient with us as we work out the details, but we're excited about this opportunity! Sorry, we can't apply the discount to tickets purchased at the gate.)
- Best of all ... knowing that you are **doing your part** to keep the doors open and good things happening at the Snyder Estate! *Your contribution makes history!*

If you've been waiting for a reason to renew - or to invite a friend - there's never been a better time to join the Society.

## Get involved!

Your tax-deductible contributions are always appreciated, and you'll hear more soon about specific upcoming projects. But there are lots of ways to help out the Society besides sending us money. Send the board a message at [info@centuryhouse.org](mailto:info@centuryhouse.org)!

- **Maintain and improve the Snyder Estate:** Do you enjoy planting flowers? Scraping paint? Attacking brush? Washing windows? Email us with your interests, and one of the board will get back to you about current tasks around the property.
- **Help out with events:** Could you greet museum visitors? Park cars or take tickets at concerts? Staff our table at Rosendale Street Festival? You'd be joining a great team of volunteers!
- **Donate items:** Do you have extra brushes and rollers from a painting project? Unwanted garden plants? A working printer, scanner, or copier gathering dust? Rakes, ladders, shovels, or other tools you're downsizing? We probably have a use for them at the Snyder Estate!
- **Share your advice and professional knowledge:** Have you worked in an archive? Designed an exhibit? Curated an art show? Organized a capital campaign? Applied for grants? Assessed an historic building? Driven a horse-drawn carriage? There are many longer-term projects and goals for which the board welcomes your perspective and talents, as we assess next steps and priorities in carrying out our mission.
- **Spread the word:** Invite your friends and neighbors to become members. Bring someone new to the museum or a show. Share our events on Facebook and beyond. Wear and carry your CHHS swag (there's lots of great new stuff in the museum store!) on adventures near and far!
- **Help us collect and share Rosendale cement stories!** Do you have a local memory to share? An interesting image or artifact to pass along? A cement industry question to which you're seeking an answer (we'll do our best)? We'd love to include your contributions in our newsletter or incorporate them into future interpretive displays.

The Century House Historical Society is an *all-volunteer organization*. Everything we manage to accomplish is thanks to the hard work, vision, and energy of our members and supporters. Thanks for being part of this effort with us!

Sincerely, Laurel Mutti, your Secretary



# 2019 ANNUAL DUES

## Century House Historical Society



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

### Century House Historical Society Membership Dues:

Individual Membership	\$25	_____
Family Membership	\$50	_____
Corporate Annual	\$250	_____
Lifetime Individual	\$500	_____
Tax Deductible Contribution	\$	_____

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



**Sunday, May 12**  
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**Season Opening of the CHHS Museum**  
*Come to the Geology Walk & Talk at 1:00 pm*

**Saturday, June 1**  
11:00 am – 4:30 pm

**Wallkill Valley Land Trust Tour of the Century House**  
*See <https://www.wallkillvalleylt.org/> to register*

**Saturday, July 6**  
4:30 pm – 6:30 pm

**Chris Funkhouser Hudson Valley Poet Bands Show**  
*Watch Facebook for more information about our lineup*

**Sunday, July 14**  
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Taiko Masala Japanese Drumming**  
*Awesome drumming in the mine, our most popular event!*

**Weekend, July 20-21**

*Look for our table at the Rosendale Street Festival*

**Sunday, August 11**  
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Catskill Mountain Gamelan**  
*Indonesian music in the Widow Jane Mine*

**Saturday, August 24**  
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Mamalama Y Andes Manta Concert**  
*A collaboration of sacred and world music in the mine*

**Sunday, August 25**  
Time TBA

**Fishkill Fencing Meet**  
*Spectators welcome – no fee*

**Sunday, September 2**

**Season Closing of the CHHS Museum**

**Saturday, September 7**  
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**29<sup>th</sup> Annual Subterranean Poetry Festival**  
*Our longest-running yearly event*

**Sunday, October 13**  
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

**Fall Clean-Up Day**  
*Drop by and help us winterize the property*

**Saturday, December 7**  
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

**Annual Meeting – Rosendale Community Center**  
*Speaker to be announced later in the year*

**Note: For all events in the mine, please bring a folding camp chair and a light jacket.**

**The site will be closed for private events on June 8-9 and July 27. If you'd like to rent the site for a private event, please contact the CHHS.**

**Watch our Facebook page for pop-up events on weekends this summer!**

[ADDRESS LABEL]



#### Images from the A.J. Snyder Estate

*Upper Left* – The new Founders Memorial Gazebo. Read about it inside.

*Upper right* – The Century House (1809). A stop on the upcoming June 1 Wallkill Valley Land Trust historic house tour.

*Lower left* – The Brooklyn Bridge Gate, renovated last year, at the entrance to the property.