

## FATAL DYNAMITE EXPLOSION IN LAWRENCEVILLE & THE WHALEN FAMILY ALBUM

Peggy Whalen shares a story which begins with the tragic accident of her great grandfather at the Lawrenceville Cement Works in Rosendale and continues on with her family photographs showing the pleasures of life in the community. Many of you will recognize the scenery instantly! The society greatly appreciates her efforts in making this newsletter article possible. We look forward to hearing from our readers should they have information to add.

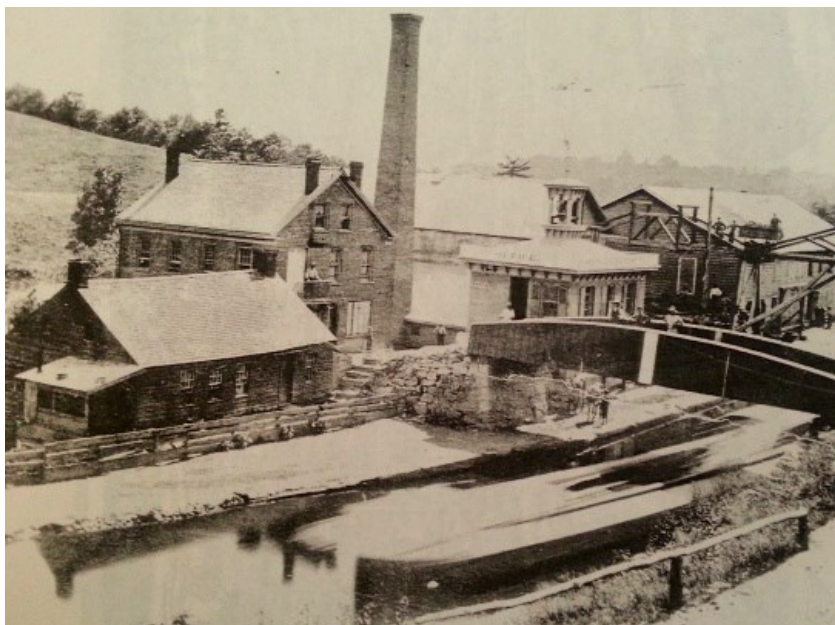
John Lynch was my great grandfather. He was born here, either in Rosendale or Kingston. His parents were from Ireland. His father was also a laborer in the cement works. John is on the 1870 census supporting his widowed mother by working as a canal boatman. I don't know much else about him. His wife was Elizabeth Whalen, born in Rosendale of Irish immigrant parents. And when this explosion killed him in 1888, they had 4 children aged 9, 5, 3, and 1. I have no idea how Elizabeth supported them after he died, but she did. I've been able to learn a great deal about Elizabeth's parents and their children, but very little on the Lynch branch.



Lawrenceville Cement Works c.1885. The location was directly opposite the Brooklyn Bridge driveway entrance to the Snyder Estate. Notice the D & H Canal directly in the foreground. This is where John Lynch was "hurled bodily into" from the kilns across the road after the fatal explosion. (Delaware & Hudson Collection, NYS Library)

### FATAL DYNAMITE EXPLOSION.

ROSENDALE, N. Y., April 20.—This evening a Coroner's jury investigated a fatal accident that occurred yesterday in the Lawrenceville Cement Company's works. John Lynch is the name of a workman who attempted to "thaw out" a cartridge such as are used every day in blasting operations. While heating the explosive, presumably to soften the gummy substance in which the dynamite was incased, a piece of fuse caught fire, and the matter surrounding three other cartridges became ignited. Two explosions followed, the cartridge which first caught fire "going off" first. Lynch was hurled bodily into the Delaware and Hudson Canal close by, and when he was taken out, still alive, by his fellow-workmen, it was seen that the unfortunate man's hands had been blown off, his legs broken in several places, the wind-pipe exposed to view, ribs broken, and the trunk generally was a mass of contusions. Lynch lingered in great agony for four hours.





# The Century House Historical Society

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[www.CenturyHouse.org](http://www.CenturyHouse.org)  
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## A MESSAGE from the President

*“Energy and persistence conquer all things”* Benjamin Franklin

If Benjamin Franklin visited Century House Historical Society, he would note CHHS has loads of energy and persistence! Just look at how much leaf raking we just did at our Fall Clean Up Day.

As I look back over 2014 at our all-volunteer organization, we’ve literally had thousands of people visit our site for events, and lectures or just a simple walk in the woods with their dog. CHHS is available for your education and enjoyment during the warmer months to anyone interested in our local history.

2014 was filled with “Walks & Talks” on geology (by CHHS Board member Steve Schimmrich), bird watching, Pete Seeger, the mysterious local history of one of the first electrical lines (by CHHS member Gail Whistance), and much poetry. We hosted a solstice celebration with Amy McTear, Taiko drumming with Taiko Masala, MINERS: an exhibition of site-responsive artwork curated by CHHS VP Laura Moriarty, the 24th (!) Annual Subterranean Poetry Festival, and a poetry/performance by CHHS member R. Dionysius Whiteurs in the Widow Jane Mine. We are thrilled to be able to provide innovative arts programming for our community in the Widow Jane Mine.

This year, we also enjoyed a welcome updated look to our website, thanks to CHHS Board of Trustees Member Henry Lowengard. If you haven’t stopped by lately, visit our website at [www.centuryhouse.org](http://www.centuryhouse.org)

Our upcoming Annual Meeting will include a lecture on the nearby Gomez Mills Historic Site, one of the first places in the Hudson Valley to mine limestone. I can’t encourage you enough to attend. We will have our famous penny social, as well as CHHS shirts for sale as special holiday gifts.

We enter into the last year of the loan on our property filled with enough energy and persistence to carry us into 2015.

See you at the Annual Meeting!

- Anne Gorrick





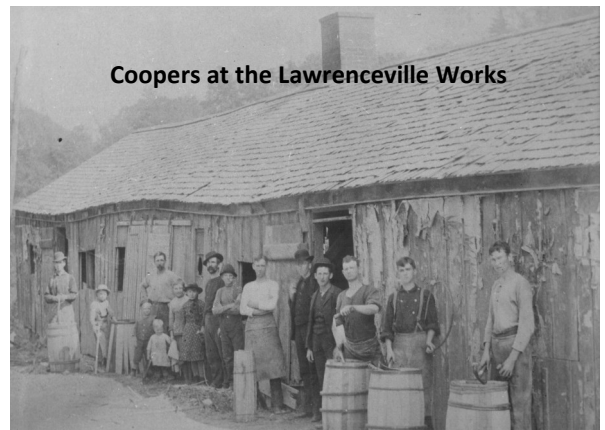
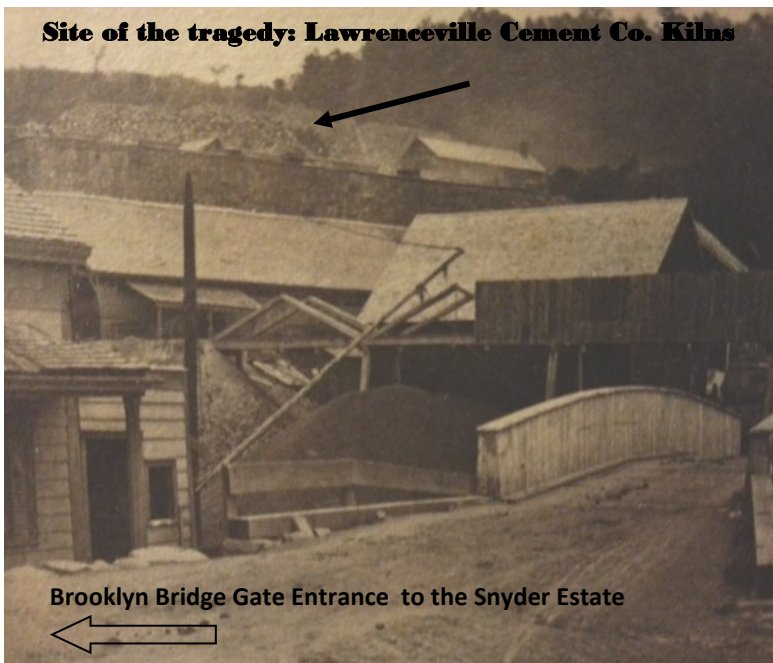
## FRYING, BOILING, TOASTING & BAKING DYNAMITE

When cold, a great percentage of the strength of dynamite is lost. In preparing for a shot in cold weather, thawing was practiced. Although directions preached that steady, dry and moderate heat was the only way to be reasonably sure of surviving the practice, The Society of Engineers Transactions of 1893 (Westminster, England) commented: It is only fair to point out that the causes of some of these wretched occurrences are to be sought for beyond the poor miners or quarrymen. It sometimes happens either that the agent for the explosives fails to impress upon the purchaser the dangerous nature under certain conditions, and to supply him with proper thawing apparatus, or that the purchaser from parsimonious motives fails to provide his men with one.

In consulting the literature of the times, there were volumes of articles that detailed the "do's" and "don'ts" of handling explosives for mining and agricultural use. Fatal consequences were detailed in charts, graphs and anecdotes. One workman met his death by simply wanting to dry his trousers in front of his fire before taking dinner and had absently left the cartridge in the pocket.

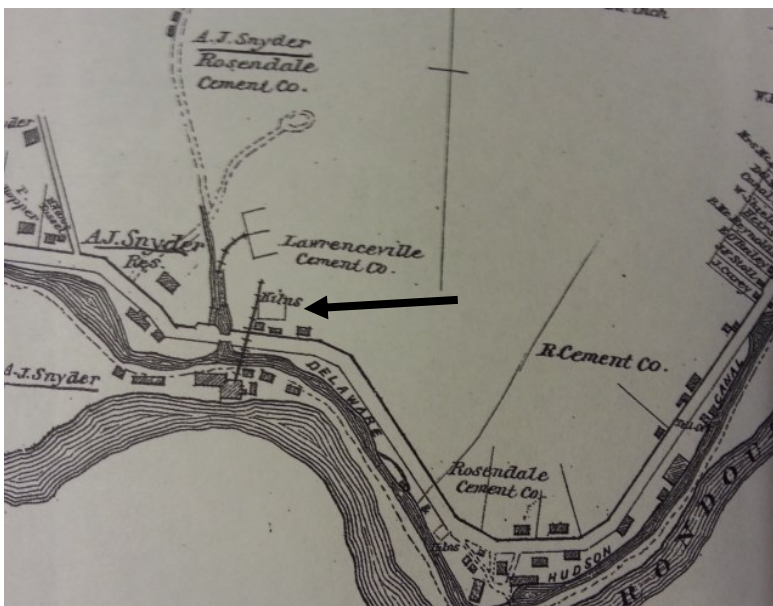
At the time that John Lynch lost his life in 1888 thawing dynamite on the side of a kiln operated by the Lawrenceville Cement Company in Rosendale, the dawn of industrial safety was taking place at symposiums held in fancy lecture halls. Authors of articles on safety consulted such authorities as the Annual Reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Explosives which was said to "lift the veil from dynamite "accidents"...so called..."

Detailed thaw house designs showed plans for keeping danger away by using hot water pipes. Engineering and Contracting (1908 Vol. 29/No. 11) goes "green" describing how manure is a good thawer "where the quarry was situated that a supply can be kept up". The explosives were set in a thaw house and covered to the depth of two feet and were said to generate good heat. Contractors on NY subway work used this method burying a box sufficient to hold three or four cases of dynamite in manure. It was then exposed as needed.



NP Ind  
4-27-1888

John Lynch lost his life by a frightful explosion at Lawrenceville, Thursday of last week. Mr. Lynch with 3 other employees of the Lawrence Cement Company, were engaged in thawing out frozen dynamite cartridges by a burning cement kiln, when one of them exploded, and the concussion caused the explosion of three others. The other men escaped with a few injuries, but Lynch was blown many feet into the air, and in falling struck on the roof of a shed and then fell into the canal. He rose to the surface and was immediately pulled out. He was terribly mangled, both of his hands blown off, and one eye out. He lived about two hours after the accident. The deceased leaves a wife and 4 small children.







These three photos I believe were taken on the same outing. The bottom photo of the woman on the trestle is my great aunt Mame Lynch. I have seen other photos of people walking on the trestle from this time period. They must have known the train schedule and walked on it when it was safe.

The woman in white in the two top photos was a friend of my aunt named Mae or Mame Donnelly. The train track picture was taken next to Joppenbergh Mountain. The other photo, with the two men is along the canal in Lawrenceville. And what is she sitting on? Something tied into the canal?

There is another photo that I have wondered about. I can't figure out what that structure is built onto the pine tree. I think it is someplace local to Rosendale. The woman on the right is probably my grandmother, Maggie Lynch. If so, the photo most likely dates before 1909, when her first child was born. The bench seems to be high enough that their feet don't reach the ground, which makes me think it may not have been intended as a bench.



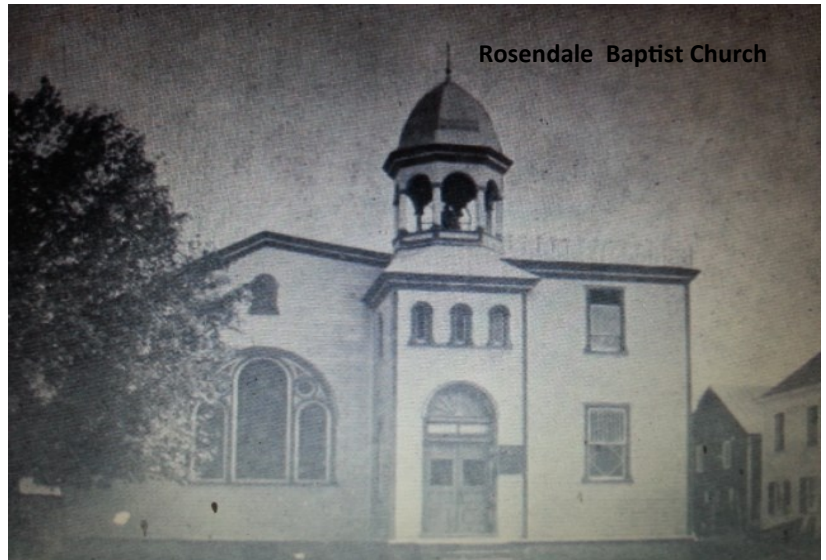




Picnic Under the Rosendale Trestle: Despite the coloration difference, I think these two photos were taken the same day; at the same picnic. I love the hair bows and the tea cups for the young girls.







The album I have is a small leather one, similar to some you have at the Century House Museum. It measures about 6"x7" with black paper pages. The cover has an Indian head in full headress burned into it with Ellenville written below. The photos seem to range from early 1900's to maybe 1920. I am not convinced that they are in chronological order. I think the album belonged to my great aunt, Mame Lynch.

This one is one of my favorites. The dome in the background is the former Baptist Church on Main Street in Rosendale, later the Grange. (This church closed in 1929. It then became the location of The Grange which was a fraternal organization of farmers. In 1972 the building was sold and became a residence as well as a venue that hosted theatre performances. The building burned during a January day in 2004 with temperatures hovering just above zero. More than 100,000 gallons of water were pumped onto the building and additional water was supplied by the mine at the end of Main Street for that purpose. Main Street became a sheet of ice. A tree and items in the front yard were covered with fanciful crystalized ice offering a juxtaposition to the devastation.) The house you can see to the right of it is the current barber shop. It is winter--you can see the snow in the street.

At first I thought these could be uniforms of some sort, but it can't find anything on-line like this. Girl Scout uniforms were different. This may be too early for a WWI ladies auxiliary type group.

Bill Brooks, the Rosendale town historian, pointed out they were probably standing in front of the shirt factory. See how the sidewalk is cleared completely and then behind them it becomes a path through the snow? Commercial properties were required to clear the snow from the entire sidewalk; residential properties weren't. I don't know who the young women are. I now think they may have been modeling something made in the shirt factory. I do know my great aunt worked there for a time.



When I showed this page of the family album to Linda Tantillo at the Rosendale library, she immediately thought of a post card she had seen of the shirt factory with the workers standing outside. But, the steps these women are on could not be from that building. In the photo on the left, my great aunt Mame Lynch, is dead center with the big pouffy hair. I know she worked in that factory, left for NJ, and returned to work there again. This looks to me like a waitressing crew at a hotel? Perhaps in town?



# MINERS:

Artist & CHHS Vice-President Laura Moriarty curated a wildly successful outdoor sculpture exhibition this season on the grounds of the Snyder Estate. So many enjoyed the opportunity to take photos along side the site-responsive works by some of the Hudson Valley's most innovative & engaging visual artists. Participating artist Michael Asbill wrote an article published in the *Hudson Valley News* this June that offers our readers more information. Great appreciation goes to Laura & all the artists! An encore is surely in order for next season!



Laura with her work in the museum



**Mother & Child, 2014**

**Chris Victor**



## INSIDER ART

# Artists to mine show in Rosendale

BY MICHAEL ASBILL

When Laura Moriarty asked me to be a part of an outdoor sculpture exhibition of site-responsive works at the Snyder Estate in Rosendale, I had to say yes. Because Laura was at the helm, I knew the show would be thoughtfully curated. The site is beautiful (especially if you like ruins and mines) and the show revolves mainly around history – all good things! Laura titled the show “MINERS,” and had this to say about the exhibition, “Each of the participating artists will ‘mine’ the property, exploring the geological and industrial history of the Rosendale natural cement region in order to create exciting new works of art.”

Eight artworks are integrated into the landscape across the property. This spacing and in-between time will allow for deeper consideration and appreciation of the historic property's fields, forests, ruins and mines as it relates to the artworks and also help to reset and ground the experience for each project.

The works for the show are by some of the Hudson Valley's most innovative and engaging visual artists, including Lorrie Fredette, Norm Mangusson, Wayne Montecalvo, Portia Munson, Andrés San Millán, Chris Victor and Laura Moriarty.

Lorrie Fredette created a site-specific artwork drawn from her contemplations of the microscopic structural similarities of silicosis (a form of occupational lung disease caused by inhalation of crystalline silica dust) and cement. Fredette is known for her room-sized, floating, sculptural installations made from beeswax, tree resin and muslin that represent infection, pandemic and plague.

Chris Victor created a project in-situ. “Most of my thoughts around this piece and site revolve around what is “natural” and what isn’t,” said Victor. “I think that really there’s no separation, that’s it’s an inner divide that we reflect onto the world. I hope to make a piece that expresses this rift but is naturally unified, showing both the divide and the unity.” Victor has devoted much of his time to the study of a specific large rock and it surrounds.

Portia Munson has hung a massive photographic banner that depicts a perfectly preserved dead fox surrounded by a maze of hydrangea petals. “I found this red fox along the road near my studio, on the same day the hydrangea were blooming in my garden,” said Munson.

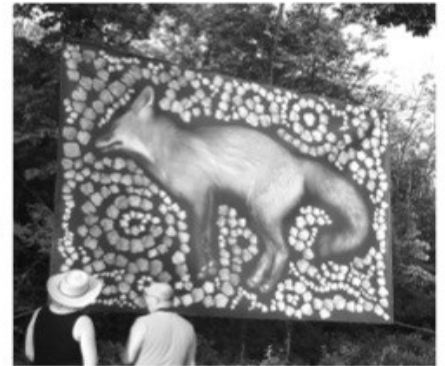
Norm Mangusson brought two of his New York State Historical Markers that contemplate hot-button contemporary issues to the Snyder Estate, including one sign that reads, “On this site stood Robert Onkos, who thought that global warming would not affect him in his lifetime.”

Andrés San Millán brought his life-size driftwood figures to the Snyder Estate. They are sourced from the Hudson River and appear to be in conversation with one another. San Millán plans to present a performance of moving figures, some human, some made of wood.

My own investigations consider the vernacular of abandoned human-made places that are taken back over by nature. I have organized and rerouted the dense vines covering a defunct power pole and tied those vines, as if they were power lines, to an invented ruin.

*Michael Asbill is an installation and public artist, independent curator and arts advocate who lives and works in Accord. MINERS will open June 29 at the Snyder Estate, 668 Rte. 213, Rosendale and run on Sundays thru Sept. 28 from 1-4 p.m. For directions to the site go to [www.centuryhouse.org](http://www.centuryhouse.org). Maps of the property with all the sculpture's locations will be available. This event is free and open to the public.*

*This is the fourth in a series of columns for Hudson Valley Weekend showcasing arts, artists' work and arts events across the Mid-Hudson region presented with the support of Arts Mid-Hudson, [www.artsmidhudson.org](http://www.artsmidhudson.org).*



Fox banner by Portia Munson, top, and driftwood figures by Andrés San Millán. Courtesy images.





### **Sekel Family Memories of the Snyder Estate**

The Society thanks the Sekel family for the donation of benches for the property in memory of their parents and grandparents. The benches were selected by the family to compliment the natural beauty of the seating area in front of the Widow Jane Mine. The family also planted a tree to honor their family. Arrangements were made for a June afternoon gathering at the place that held so many of their childhood memories. When Bill Sekel contacted the society, this is what he told us:

... I believe that the Century House (property) was the childhood home of my mother, Ethel Quick. Her parents died in the thirties and she and a few of my aunts and uncles were taken in by Camille and Emilie Bateau. My mother lived there during the thirties and forties. Emilie Bateau lived there for several more years and was living above the stables (currently the building housing the museum) when it caught fire and was rescued by Mr. Snyder (II). As a child I remember many family reunions there, fishing in the pond and walking around the grounds. My favorite place was the stables with the horses and carriages. We would visit Emilie when we could. I consider her as my grandmother. My mother graduated from Kingston High School, class of '49 and soon met my father who courted her while she was still living there. They both had such fond memories of the place. My father just recently passed away. My mother preceded him several years ago. My sister and I would like to know if the Historical Society would allow for a small gathering that would mean so very much to us.