

A Quarry Caves In Steven Schimmrich



Joppenbergh Mountain from the Rosendale Trestle Rail Trail [Photo Credit: The Bicycle Depot, New Paltz]

Two iconic landmarks in the village of Rosendale are the Wallkill Valley Railroad trestle across the Rondout Creek and Joppenbergh Mountain at the edge of town. The trestle is now part of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail and Joppenbergh is owned by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust – both open to the public for recreational use and great places to ride your bike or take a peaceful walk.

Joppenbergh wasn't always the quiet wooded property it is today. Back in December, 1899, a few days before the new millennium was to begin, it was a bustling place. In the wider world, President William McKinley was in the White House, the Spanish-American War had just ended but the Philippine-American War was ongoing, the Boxer Rebellion started in China, and the Gay Nineties was merging into the Progressive Era of American history.

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The Century House Historical Society

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A Message From the Past President

Dear CHHS Volunteers, Members and Friends:



At the Annual Meeting in December 2017, I formally stepped down as President of Century House's Board of Trustees. I am thrilled to welcome Henry Lowengard as our new President.

I've served on the CHHS board for 14 years, as President for eight years (after founding President Dietrich Werner passed away in 2009). It's been a great experience shepherding CHHS's growth during this time. For an organization to stay viable and energetic, it's so important to have new input and ideas. I know that Henry will bring this all to CHHS. He's a tech expert as well as a musician and sound artist – all gifts that will allow CHHS to move forward.

I want to give 10,000 thanks to all our volunteers, members and friends. We continue on this all-volunteer adventure with your help.

Anne Gorrick

A Message from the Current President



Greetings, Century House Historical Society visitors and patrons!

I'm Henry Lowengard, the new president of the Board of Trustees, I thought I'd take this opportunity to introduce myself to you.

I enjoyed going to concerts in the Widow Jane Mine and hiking the grounds of the Snyder Estate, and this eventually evolved into joining the CHHS Board in 2014. Since I'm a computer programmer,

I rebuilt the *CenturyHouse.org* website. Long-time president Anne Gorrick remains on the board, and thanks to all the board members and volunteers for helping me out!

The never-ending winter of 2018 took its toll on the site with a number of trees and branches down. Fortunately, no buildings had any damage.

This year, the CHHS is again presenting a number of concerts:

- Taiko Masala is returning on July 15th, bringing their huge drums for traditional Japanese music and dancing. It's a real spectacle!
- The Catskill Mountain Gamelan, a Kingston-based group, will be playing on August 12th, with new and traditional Indonesian Degung and Slendro music and songs played mostly on gong-like instruments.
- Mamalama with Andes Manta will be back on August 25th, with some new music that will be part of an opera-dance piece.
- The 28th Subterranean Poetry Festival returns on September 8th, again curated by Chris Funkhouser.

The museum will be open as usual during the season, Sundays 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

There will not be a new outdoor sculpture show this year, but a few pieces from last year will still be onsite.

You can see bits of the Widow Jane Mine in the movie "The Strange Ones", which was released January 5, 2018. The mine is being used for a number of music projects this year, contact us if you want to use it as a film location or reverberant space, at info@centuryhouse.org.

There's a big checklist of work to do at the CHHS, please help us out with a membership donation! The Society is an all-volunteer organization, but a lot of work requires actual funds! Donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law, and we thank you for them!

Enjoy the site, the history, and the events this year!

Henry Lowengard

Century House Historical Society
Cementing history and the arts

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Here in Rosendale, mining for natural cement was in full swing. In 1899, the district was producing over 9 million barrels of cement each year which provided over 50% of the nation's supply of natural cement. The area around Joppenbergh reverberated with the sounds of industry: the chugging of steam-powered equipment, the clanging of tools, the banging of rock, the whistle of trains crossing the Rosendale trestle, and occasional explosions as the noisy miners extracted rock from the inside of the hill.

Joppenbergh Mountain was riddled with tunnels operated by the New York and Rosendale Cement Company. It was December 19, 1899 and the miners were all anticipating Christmas and the parties planned for December 31st on the eve of the 20th century. For a couple of days, however, they had heard a few rumblings from the rocks in the mine. All were experienced with unexpected rock falls after years of mining. Concern mounted when, on the morning of the 19th, some rocks fell down the front face of the mountain at 8:00 am. The rumblings and cracking sounds grew throughout the morning, more rocks fell, and the miners wisely filed out into the cold December air and away from the face of the mountain. At 11:30 am, disaster suddenly struck.



Joppenbergh Mountain from the Rosendale Trestle circa 1890s

As recounted by the Friday, December 22, 1899 edition of the *Ellenville Journal* a couple of days later.

A QUARRY CAVES IN

Hundreds of Tons of Rocks Fall

Buildings Carried Down the Hill into the Canal

The upper end of the quarry of the New York and Rosendale Cement Company at Rosendale fell in this morning. The rock gave way four different times. The first fall occurred around 8 o'clock and was not serious. The last occurred at 11:30. This was serious.

Hundreds of tons of rocks were precipitated upon the works of the company at the end of the Rosendale bridge. Sixteen men who were in the building heard the cracking of the rocks, and made their escape down the hillside. The roof of the building was crushed in. The building itself and the tool house were carried down the hill, and filled the canal.

The boiler exploded, and landed across the road on the other side of the canal. The rocks and timbers were thrown for a considerable distance, some of them landing on houses several hundred feet away. The explosion shook the bridge of the Wallkill Valley railroad, straining it in the middle. No trains have passed to-day either way.

Several large rocks, weighing about ten tons each, struck the Wallkill Valley track, a short distance from the end of the bridge. The rails were bent like pipestems. Hundreds of tons of rocks are ready to fall. Some weigh ten or fifteen tons, while others range from one to three tons. The canal is completely filled with the debris of the buildings and large quantities of rocks.

At the time of the cave in 150 men were at work in the other end of the quarry. As soon as the first cave in occurred they stopped work and left the quarry by the lower entrance. The amount of the loss cannot yet be estimated. While work eventually returned in the upper end of the quarry, it is thought that operations can be resumed in the lower end in a short time.

Miraculously, no one was seriously injured or killed. Damages were estimated at over \$20,000. The mines, however, were completely covered over by the landslide and the mountain remained dangerously unstable making further mining in the area difficult.



Joppenbergh Mountain after the December 19, 1899 collapse

Another large slide occurred a week later on December 26 and continued instability led to the some of the mines being abandoned. The rockslide on Joppenbergh actually became a bit of a tourist attraction as word spread about the spectacular collapse reportedly bringing “swarms of gawking spectators” to the area.

So what happened? As a geologist looking at Joppenbergh it’s obvious that the sedimentary rocks (limestone) forming the hill are heavily folded, fractured, and faulted (as are most of the rocks in the Rosendale Cement District). While the traditional room and pillar mining technique used inside the hill left pillars behind to support the roof, they apparently left too much of the front face of the mountain unsupported. Freezing and thawing of ice expands fractures (the winter of 1898-1899 was especially severe) and vibrations from mining may have helped trigger the event. These things can be hard to predict and accidents like this even happen today.

As the May 8, 1907 Kingston Daily Freeman reported, the mountain continued shaking even 7 ½ years after the initial collapse:

Joppenberg is Shaking

Jacob Huben Says it Should Be Dynamited

The Joppenberg, the rocky hill at the end of the Wallkill Valley railroad bridge at Rosendale, which after years of tunneling by the old New York Cement Company began to sag, and finally closed the quarry, the face of the hill sliding across the road several years ago, is again threatening disaster. The property is now owned by the Consolidated Rosendale Cement Company. Huge boulders have been crashing down the mountainside the past few days, and the people are becoming alarmed. On Tuesday night, two watchmen were stationed on the wagon road, one at each end of the dangerous spot. Jacob Huben gives his opinion that the Joppenberg should be dynamited and laid low, thus avoiding all further danger and apprehension on the part of the people of the place, and especially those who dwell close by.

Periodic rock falls continue to the present day at Joppenbergh. In 1984, State Route 213 was moved a few feet and an earthen berm was placed at the bottom of the mountain to catch stray rocks before they could reach the highway. Having been on the hillside with other geologists, however, I can state that it is unsafe for climbing and large rocks do still have the potential to come tumbling down some day. The weathering of exposed rocks is a slow process, but inevitable. The cliffs of Joppenbergh are best observed from a respectful distance.



Jigsaw puzzle of fractured rocks on the front face of Joppenbergh

Tree Work

Over the winter, Limber Tree Services was contracted to come out and perform some much-needed tree work to avoid damages to the property and structures from dead trees and limbs. Thank you for the donations made by members and friends of the Historical Society that made this important work possible. There's more to be done!



A Look Back to Last Season

A number of activities occurred during last year's season at the Snyder Estate and Widow Jane Mine. Several performances in the mine, the ever-popular Taiko drumming, the long-running Subterranean Poetry Fest, a very interesting talk by Rob Yasinac, author of *Hudson Valley Ruins*, at our Annual Meeting, and much more (friend us on Facebook for the inside scoop and tons of pictures!).



Red Kachina Secret Gong Orchestra



Audience for Taiko Masala Drumming



Nicole Peyrafitte at the Subterranean Poetry Fest



Mamalama and Andes Manta



Hard-working volunteers at fall cleanup day



Trustee Anne Gorrick and Annual Meeting speaker Rob Yasinac

Many thanks to our loyal volunteers, all unpaid, who keep everything going through their hard work and dedication.

Selected 2018 Season Events

Sunday, May 13 at 1:00-2:00 pm **Geology Walk with Steven Schimmrich**

Join SUNY Ulster County Community College geology professor and Century House Board of Trustees member Steven Schimmrich for a leisurely walk to the Widow Jane Mine where he will discuss the unique and fascinating geology of this area, point out the location of some interesting fossils, and teach you how the rocks allow geologists to visualize ancient seas teeming with life.



Sunday, July 15, 3:00-5:00 pm **Taiko Masala Japanese Drumming**

One of our most popular annual events – Japanese drumming in the Widow Jane Mine orchestrated by master drummer Hiro Kurashima and the Taiko Masala drumming troupe. Bring a folding chair and escape the July heat in the cool of the mine to listen to, and feel, the beat of the drums ranging from small hand-held drums to the massive 250 pound O-daiko.



Sunday, August 12, 3:00-5:00 pm **Catskill Mountain Gamelan Indonesian Music**

Catskill Mountain Gamelan is a Hudson Valley based group performing traditional Indonesian music. A gamelan is a set of instruments including gongs, metallophones, xylophone, drums, flute, bowed plucked string instruments, and voice.



Saturday, August 25, 3:00-5:00 pm **Mamalama with Andes Manta**

Mamalama is an uncommon orchestration of harp and ethereal voice, cello, hammered dulcimer, glockenspiel, melodica, tenor recorder, piano, tenor mandolin, drums, and choral voices. The band is led by harpist/pianist/vocalist Elizabeth Clark. Andes Manta performs the vibrant music of the Andes on more than 35 traditional instruments, including quena, charango, and panpipes. The two groups have been collaborating and will combine their musical resources in this concert.



Sunday, September 2, 1:00-2:00 pm **History Walk with Althea Werner**

Join Althea Werner, Trustee and daughter of Century House Historical Society founder Dietrich Werner, for a leisurely walk around the Snyder Estate where she will discuss the interesting history of the site from a personal perspective.



Saturday, September 8, 1:00-4:00 pm **28th Annual Subterranean Poetry Festival**

Our longest-running event. True “underground” poetry performed in the Widow Jane Mine. This year’s Festival will once-again be curated by Chris Funkhouser and promises an afternoon of avant garde literature, singing, and sounds.



The museum is open Sundays
May 13 – September 2, 1:00-4:00 pm



Century House Historical Society 2018 Events Calendar



Spring Spruce-Up Day

Museum Opening and Geology Walk & Talk

Taiko Masala Japanese Drumming

Catskill Mountain Gamelan Indonesian Music

Mamalama with Andes Manta

Museum Closing and History Walk & Talk

28th Annual Subterranean Poetry Festival

Fall Spruce-Up Day

Annual Meeting

Sunday, May 6

Sunday, May 13

Sunday, July 15

Sunday, August 12

Saturday, August 25

Sunday, September 2

Saturday, September 8

Sunday, October 14

Saturday, December 1