

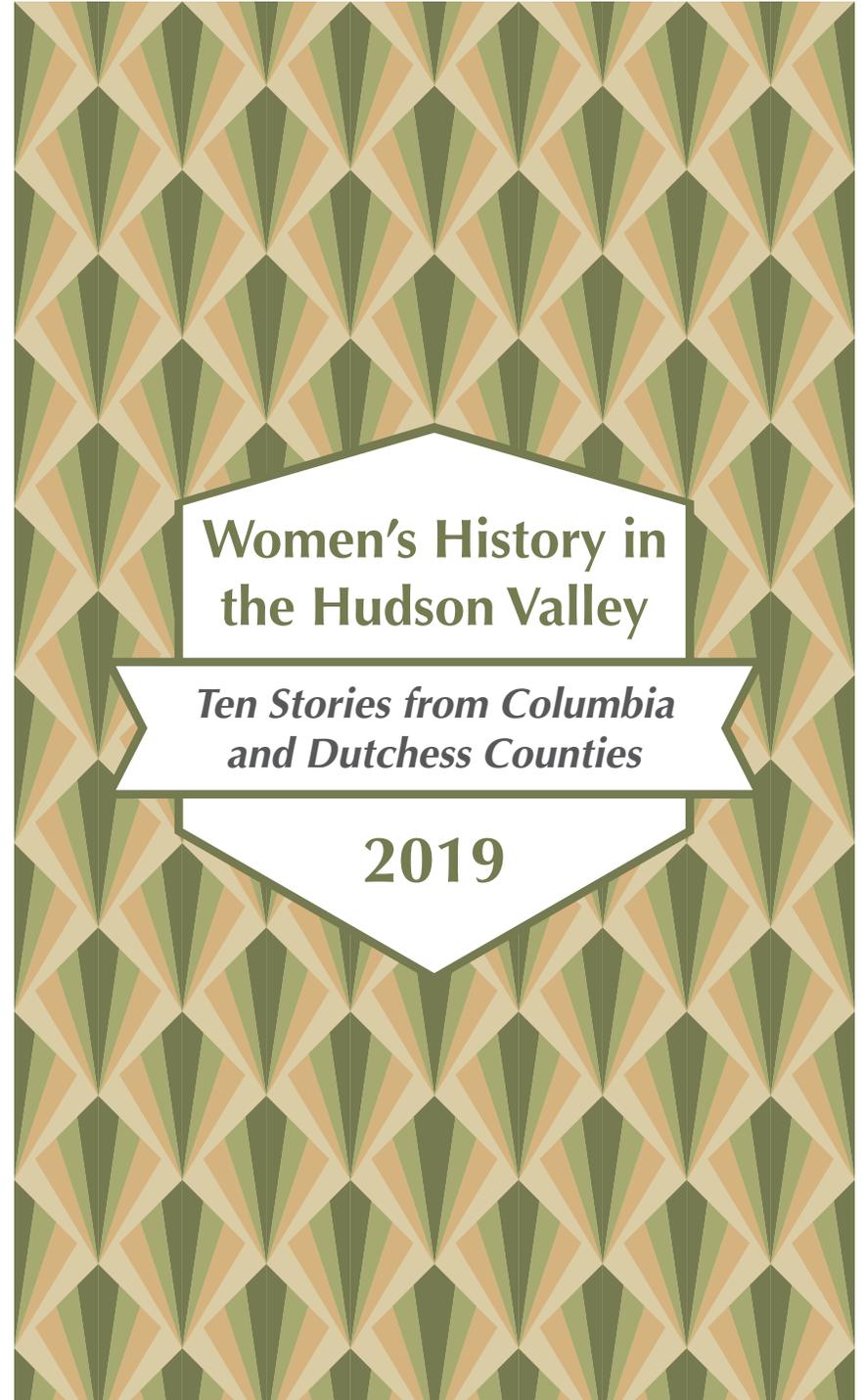


*Courtesy of*

**Assemblymember Didi Barrett**

12 Raymond Ave., Suite 105  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603  
845-454-1703

751 Warren St.  
Hudson, NY 12534  
518-828-1961  
[BarrettD@nyassembly.gov](mailto:BarrettD@nyassembly.gov)





Dear Friends,

The year 2019 is already a historic one for women in New York State. A century after the first two women were elected to the New York State Legislature – Ida Sammis and Mary Lilly – a record number of women have been sworn in as lawmakers – 70 – and achieved positions of power in state government that were held only by men. In spite of the uphill battle for the equality of opportunity, our history is rich with women who fought for a better future and made a true difference. Their impact can be seen in countless ways, even if their stories aren't in textbooks or on the news.

The 2019 volume of **Women's History in the Hudson Valley: Ten Stories from Columbia and Dutchess Counties** includes the stories of Constance W. Oestrike Rudolph, a flight nurse in World War II who braved enemy fire to save the lives of wounded soldiers; Mother Ann Lee, who brought the Shaker religion to America while facing persecution; Margaret Johnston Bard, who co-founded Bard College and held a position on its board at a time when women were not given such opportunities; and many more. We remain committed to telling the stories of women from our region who have helped shaped our world.

My office is proud to once again produce and distribute **Women's History in the Hudson Valley** in partnership with the Mid-Hudson Library District as part of Women's History Month. Please enjoy these stories of 10 women whose advocacy, strength and determination have helped make our community what it is today.

Sincerely,

Didi Barrett

Member of the Assembly, District 106







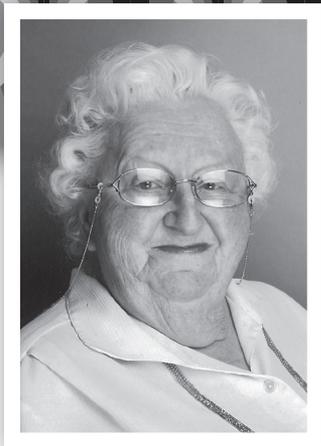
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## Dorothy Ball

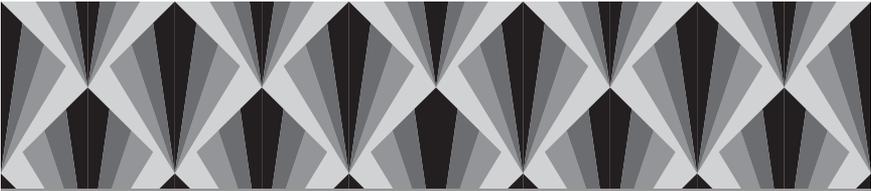
*Town of Copake*  
1926-2015

### **Farming and Community Leader**

Dorothy Ball had a lasting impact on the farming community in Columbia County. Growing up on her parents' dairy farm, Ball's entrepreneurial passion for agriculture was highlighted when she became the first girl in her school to join the Future

Farmers of America club. It also earned her the nickname "Farmer" in the senior yearbook. In 1944, Ball met her husband, Harry, a Dairy Herd Information Association milk tester who came to her parents' farm. She received her license as a milk tester later that year. After Harry came home from serving in the Army in Okinawa, they married and had four children.

It was Ball's desire to help her children and others in the neighborhood that led her to start a 4-H Club, the West Copake Lassies, in 1954. She led the group for 20 years, into the 1970s when her last child graduated from high



school. Ball continued to serve the 4-H program by judging events not only in Columbia County, but also in surrounding counties. She retired as a milk tester in 2004, after 60 years on the job. She was also an active member of the West Copake Reformed Church, which she began attending at 10 years old. Ball sang in the church choir, participated in the Women's Guild and served as deacon. Ball's legacy in the 4-H community is remembered by the Dot Ball Memorial 4-H Leader Award through Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties, which is awarded in her memory to local 4-H club leaders.

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
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[ccecolumbiagreene.org/4-h-and-youth-development](http://ccecolumbiagreene.org/4-h-and-youth-development)  
Photo: Family of Dorothy Ball



## Margaret Johnston Bard

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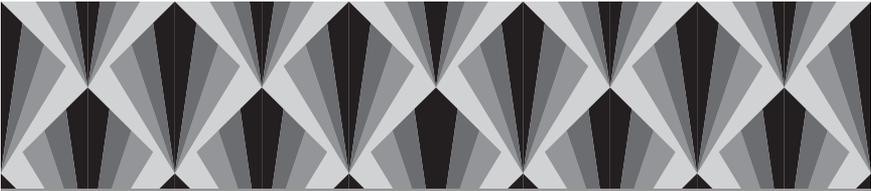
*Town of Rhinebeck*  
1825-1875

### **College Founder**

Much of Margaret Johnston Bard's life was devoted to strengthening the higher education institution she and her husband, John Bard, established – St. Stephen's

College, which would later become Bard College. The daughter of John Johnston, one of the founders of New York University, Johnston Bard would become known for her devotion to Christianity and charitable social causes.

Margaret and John, whose grandfather Samuel founded Columbia University's medical school, married in 1849. The two purchased an estate they called Annandale, where St. Stephen's College was founded in 1860. Although the position was not normally held by women at the time, Johnston Bard served on



St. Stephen's board of trustees. The college struggled in its early years, but the Bards continued to invest in it. The two later moved to England after losing their only son, Willie, and remained there until Johnston Bard's death in 1875. St. Stephen's began to flourish in the early 20th century, taking its founders' surname in 1934 and soon became a haven for artists, writers, intellectuals and scientists who fled Europe. With each student who enters through the doors of Bard College, Johnston Bard's spirit lives on.

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[thebestschools.org/magazine/john-bard-and-margaret-johnston-bard-colleges-power-couple](http://thebestschools.org/magazine/john-bard-and-margaret-johnston-bard-colleges-power-couple)  
[hrvh.org/cdm/ref/collection/bard/id/134](http://hrvh.org/cdm/ref/collection/bard/id/134)  
[bard.edu/about/history](http://bard.edu/about/history)  
Photo: From the collections of Bard College Archives



## Cynthia Hall

*Town of Claverack*  
1946-2018

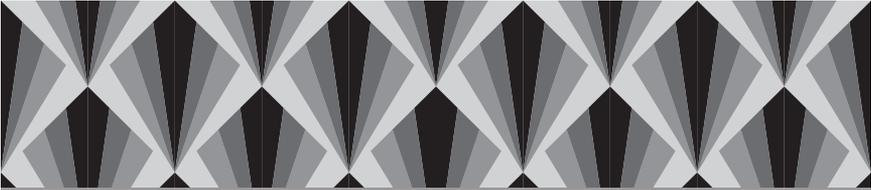
### **Educator**

Education was Cynthia Hall's passion. Between Kinderhook and the Hudson City School District, Hall spent 37 years inspiring students through both her music classes and the hundreds of concerts and events she organized in her tenure. Hall helped

her students flourish, encouraging them to develop their musical talents and to cultivate an appreciation for music and the arts as a whole.

Hall's deep passion for teaching also included advocating on behalf of teachers. She served as vice president of the Hudson Teachers Association and the chair of the Professional Standards Committee.

Hall's enthusiasm also encompassed environmental issues, and she advocated for numerous other local, state and federal issues. She was an outspoken activist for her community and encouraged others to



become civically involved.



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[batesanderson.com/obituaries/Cynthia-Hall-4/#!/Obituary](https://batesanderson.com/obituaries/Cynthia-Hall-4/#!/Obituary)  
Photo: Enid Futterman, IMBY



## Mother Ann Lee

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*Town of New Lebanon*  
1736-1784

### **Religious Leader**

Mother Ann Lee was a deeply religious woman who brought the first colony of Shakers to the United States and became leader of the religion for several years. Born in Manchester, England,

Lee was the daughter of a blacksmith whose family could not afford an education for their children, so she worked in a textile mill, like many young people at the time. Lee found spiritual refuge with a group of former Quakers known as the “Shaking Quakers,” known later simply as Shakers, because of the way they shook and danced during worship. Lee soon married Abraham Standerin in what was likely an arranged marriage and gave birth to four children, all of whom died in infancy.

Lee and other Shakers



faced persecution in England for their beliefs. Seeking religious freedom, Lee, her husband and a group of Shakers set sail for America, first settling in New York City before relocating to Watervliet. Although the group still faced persecution, Lee persisted in spreading her beliefs. Lee recruited members from New Lebanon, among other northeast communities. She became known as Mother Ann, and her followers believed that she was the second coming of Christ because she was thought to have embodied the female half of God. Lee's hardships, however, left her ill and frail, eventually leading to her death at the age of 48. According to the Shaker Heritage Society, although Lee died "before she was able to see her dream of a perfect religious society come to fruition, her successors worked hard to finish the work that their beloved leader set out to do."

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[home.shakerheritage.org/happy-birthday-ann-lee](http://home.shakerheritage.org/happy-birthday-ann-lee)  
[womenhistoryblog.com/2008/12/ann-lee.html](http://womenhistoryblog.com/2008/12/ann-lee.html)  
[libertymagazine.org/article/ann-lee-a-woman-of-great-faith](http://libertymagazine.org/article/ann-lee-a-woman-of-great-faith)  
[britannica.com/biography/Ann-Lee](http://britannica.com/biography/Ann-Lee)

Photo: Find A Grave, database images (findagrave.com: accessed 14 February 2019), memorial page for Ann Lee (29 Feb 1736-8 Sep 1784), Finda A Grave Memorial no. 610, citing Shaker Cemetery, Colonie, Albany County, New York, USA; Maintained by Find A Grave



## Martha Gold Reifler Myers

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*City of Poughkeepsie*  
1910-2006

### **Education Advocate**

Martha Gold Reifler Myers was a pioneer of higher education in the region. She worked tirelessly toward the creation and eventual success of Dutchess Community

College. Reifler Myers graduated from Cornell University with a degree in mathematics and physics. She served on the Poughkeepsie Board of Education and the board of trustees at Vassar Brothers Hospital, as well as chaired the Vassar Brothers Hospital Nursing School Committee board, from which she resigned in 1957 to found Dutchess Community College. When discussions first began in the county to form a community college, there were only 40 in the United States. This followed the establishment of the State University of New York



in 1948, and two years later, the state's first community college opened in Middletown. This captured the attention of local citizens, including that of Reifler Myers. She was also struck by findings that only 5 percent of high school seniors were going to college in New York.

Reifler Myers believed that the community should provide the opportunity for its residents to be educated. She was appointed secretary of a committee to investigate and study the advisability of establishing such an institution in Dutchess County. Although the process took several years and faced many challenges, Dutchess Community College opened its doors in 1958, thanks to Reifler Myers' tireless dedication. She regarded the college coming to fruition as her finest achievement.

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[newspapers.com/clip/21194161/poughkeepsie\\_journal](http://newspapers.com/clip/21194161/poughkeepsie_journal)  
[sunydutchess.edu/aboutdcc/history.html](http://sunydutchess.edu/aboutdcc/history.html)  
Photo: Dutchess Community College



## Alice Bradley Neal

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*City of Hudson*  
1827-1863

### Writer

Alice Bradley Neal's talent for writing was showcased at an early age when she began sending material to periodicals while still a teenager. Born Emily Bradley, she wrote under several names, beginning with

Alice Gordon Lee after her sister wrote her asking that her birth name not be published before the age of 18. Although plagued by illness, including severe eye problems and occasional blindness, Neal pursued her passion throughout much of her life. Her writing eventually caught the interest of Joseph C. Neal, editor of the Philadelphia-based magazine "Neal's Saturday Gazette."

The two married soon after they began corresponding, with Joseph asking that she keep the name Alice. The marriage, however, was a short one, as Joseph died just seven months after they were wed.



Neal took over her husband's magazine and submitted material such as sketches and poems to other publications to supplement her income. Her first children's book "Helen Morton's Trial," was published in 1849 and its sequel, "Watch and Pray; or Helen's Confirmation," was published two years later. Neal's first adult novel, "The Gossips of Rivertown," was published in 1950 and serialized in "Godey's Lady's Book," in which many of Neal's writings appeared.

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[readseries.com/auth-dm/haven-bio2.html#note](http://readseries.com/auth-dm/haven-bio2.html#note)

Photo: Public domain



## Constance "Connie" W. Oestrike Rudolph

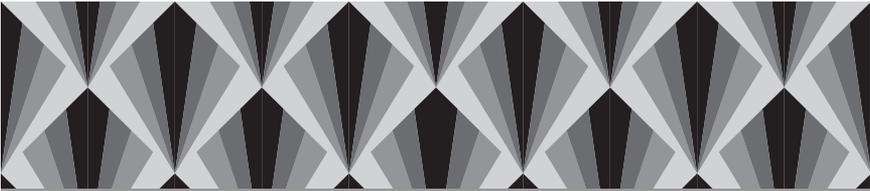
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*City of Poughkeepsie*  
1921-2006

### **Flight Nurse**

Constance Oestrike Rudolph received numerous honors, plaques and medals for her

heroism during World War II, where she served as a flight nurse and participated in more than 700 hours of overwater flights. Oestrike received her nursing degree from Vassar Brothers School of Nursing in 1942. After graduating, she volunteered as a nurse in the U.S. Army Air Corps before being accepted for flight nurse training. She was assigned to duty in the Pacific Theater at Biak in the Dutch East Indies and flew evacuation trips from Guam, Manila, Okinawa and Bataan, among other locations. "The World War II flight nurses were the first to evacuate men



from combat zone,” Oestrike said after attending the dedication of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in Washington, D.C. “Wherever they were fighting we were there to take care of them and evacuate the seriously wounded.”

After Oestrike was honorably discharged in 1946, she continued to help others. She was a staff nurse with the U.S. Public Health Services hospitals in Norfolk, Virginia, and Staten Island, New York, as well as a staff nurse in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, during the polio epidemic in 1949. Oestrike’s selflessness extended to community programs. She was a Girl Scouts leader, active in school and church programs – she frequently visited history classes to share her experience – volunteered with the Red Cross blood banks and consulted for the Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program.

articles.courant.com/2007-01-02/news/0701010612\_1\_staff-nurse-flight-nurses-training-charge-nurse  
legendsoflightnurses.org/Uploads/Nurses/OtherInfo/Constance%20O%20%20Rudolph2.pdf  
Photo: legendsoflightnurses.org



## Toshi Seeger

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*City of Beacon*  
1922-2013

### **Environmental Activist and Filmmaker**

Toshi Seeger was instrumental not only in her husband, folk singer Pete Seeger's, career but also in bringing attention to environmental issues in the Hudson River Valley. Seeger co-founded the Hudson River Sloop

Clearwater organization, which works to preserve and protect the Hudson River, its tributaries and similar bodies of water. The organization began when the Seegers built "Clearwater," a replica sloop of those that used to sail the Hudson, as a starting point to clean up the river. Seeger also had a strong hand in forming Clearwater's Great Hudson River Revival concert, which raises money for the organization. Seeger worked to ensure the festival welcomed everyone by making it wheelchair accessible and having sign language interpreters, as well as



implementing a recycling program. Seeger was also involved with other local activities, such as the Beacon Sloop Club, where she could be found whipping cream at its annual strawberry festival.

Outside of her environmental activism, Seeger was also a filmmaker. Although untrained, she had a hand in making films about music from across the country and world. She also directed the television show “Rainbow Quest,” hosted by her husband, and was executive producer of the Emmy-winning PBS documentary “Pete Seeger: The Power of Song.” Seeger is remembered as the matriarch of her family and for the local environmental causes she pushed to bring into the public light.

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[clearwater.org/latest-news/clearwater-grieves-toshi-seeger](http://clearwater.org/latest-news/clearwater-grieves-toshi-seeger)  
[nytimes.com/2013/07/12/arts/music/toshi-seeger-wife-of-folk-singing-legend-dies-at-91.html](http://nytimes.com/2013/07/12/arts/music/toshi-seeger-wife-of-folk-singing-legend-dies-at-91.html)  
[legacy.com/obituaries/poughkeepsiejournal/obituary.aspx?n=toshi-aline-ohata-seeger&pid=165787459&fhid=22168](http://legacy.com/obituaries/poughkeepsiejournal/obituary.aspx?n=toshi-aline-ohata-seeger&pid=165787459&fhid=22168)  
Photo: Vane Lashua



## Lillian “Pete” Shadic

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*Town of Chatham*  
1929-2017

### **Baseball Player**

Nothing could stop Pete Shadic from being out on the ballfield. Her lifelong passion even earned her a spot in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Shadic earned the nickname Pete when

she was a child, and the name stuck throughout her life. Shadic graduated from Roeliff Jansen High School in Caryville, where she played baseball and basketball. She played baseball for the Roe Jan boys baseball team in the 1940s before her father urged her to answer an advertisement from the All-American Girls Baseball League for players. After a talent scout was impressed by her skills and a successful tryout, Shadic played for the Springfield Sallies, a travel team that took her to 26 states. It was experiences like Shadic’s that inspired the film “A League of Their Own.”



After the 1949 season, Shadic married Clifford Campbell. The two raised seven children and ran a dairy farm in Craryville, on land that would become the Taconic Hills High School playing fields. Shadic continued her passion by coaching Little League and softball teams. In 1988, Shadic was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. She was also recognized by the New York Mets in 2011, throwing the ceremonial first pitch for a Mother's Day game. She also had her own baseball card, which she kept with her to sign for fans. Shadic continued to play baseball for the Hudson Women's Modified Fastpitch League, joined by her daughter. Her athletic talents, however, extended outside of baseball to basketball, bowling and running a golf range. According to the All-American Girls Baseball League, Shadic described her experience playing for the league as "some of the greatest days of my life. I will never forget."

[aagbbl.org/profiles/lillian-shadic-campbell-pete/222](http://aagbbl.org/profiles/lillian-shadic-campbell-pete/222)  
[hudsonvalley360.com/article/campbell-leaves-diamond-legacy](http://hudsonvalley360.com/article/campbell-leaves-diamond-legacy)  
Photo: Lance Wheeler photo



## Irene Kilmer Wilcox

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*Town of Milan*  
1894-1977

### **Philanthropist**

Irene Kilmer Wilcox's generosity is well known in the town of Milan. She married Frederick Wilcox, who died in 1942, but not before he laid the foundation of what would become one of the largest forest preserves

in Dutchess County on his Milan property. After his death and the death of her only child, Frederick Jr., in a 1950 airplane crash, Wilcox decided to memorialize them by donating the 620-acre family farm to Dutchess County, now known as Wilcox Park. According to the Milan Historical Society, Wilcox said she wanted to "give happiness to people while I'm alive and can see it" in honor of her husband and son.

Wilcox's philanthropic spirit did not end there – she paid for the land and construction costs of the Milan Town Hall and left an endowment to the



town. She also paid for the refurbishment of the Rowe Church and its Parsonage, as well as an income for the church to use, which goes toward scholarships.



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[milannyhistory.org/wilcox](http://milannyhistory.org/wilcox)  
[findagrave.com/memorial/77050895](http://findagrave.com/memorial/77050895)  
Photo: Town of Milan Historical Society

