

History Isn't Old, it's New!

Presentation by Ballston Town Historian Rick Reynolds - April 2019

History is really not about the past. It is truly how the past intersects with the present and then leads us into the future. A number of examples from this presentation about places and people in the town of Ballston show how this all works.

The Sears/McKnight house, an old 1790s house on Goode Street, contained upon the death of its owner, an old desk, supposedly used at one time by a Town Clerk. An investigation of the property led to many discoveries about its residents as well as the designated property lines. Did multiple Town Clerks live there? Were the early 1800s McKnights the same family as the 1940s McKnights? The research led to as many questions as answers! Will the future help us answer some of the new questions?

Lovers Kittie Heaton, from Ballston Spa, and George Hurlburt, from Connecticut. How did they meet? Through a newspaper posting by Kittie asking for a mate! Isn't that online dating, 1880s style? And to think: those technological geniuses who "invented" online dating didn't even realize they were copying an idea from the past!

The Ballston Lake Baptist Church, on Edward Street in Ballston Lake, was originally Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church's building. While it was the latter, Father Hogan, the pastor, ran a boxing school in the basement. Pretty unusual for a priest, right? Well, what is even more amazing is that the large round sockets still in the ceiling in the basement were the supports for the punching bags that Father Hogan's students used! The past meets the present.

Hawkwood Mansion, at the corner of Route 50 and Middleline Rd., was built in 1790 for one of the rich and famous of the area, Henry Walton. Beautiful in its day, and even more beautiful and technologically advanced in the early 1900s when the Bakers owned it, it burned down in the 1960's. However, left behind were foundations of not only the mansion but of many outbuildings as well. Fast forward to today: the property is now a 246 acre passive park whose centerpiece is the story of the buildings and the families who inhabited them over the years. The past meets the present—and into the future.

Google Mail! What could that possibly have to do with the past????? A local lady passes away. Her husband wants to get into her google mail account to notify those friends of her passing.

But.... he does not know her password, a problem very common in this modern tech era. But he does know that her password was her 1 st grade teacher's name. So what do we do? Go to old yearbooks and, after some searching, we find the correct name and the correct password! The old helping us with the new.

The connections- past to present to future. Amazing!