

COMPLIMENTARY • JUNE - JULY 2017

# ORANGE

MAGAZINE

## ORANGE OUTDOORS

36 ways to enjoy the  
summer season

PLUS CELEBRATING WARWICK'S 150<sup>TH</sup> • A TUXEDO PARK SHOWCASE

# WARWICK

## THEN & NOW

Looking back at this village as it celebrates its 150th year

Story and photos  
by John DeSanto

Historical photos provided  
by the Warwick Historical Society

**T**ake a stroll through the Warwick Cemetery and you will notice that the headstones match the street signs: Wisner, DeKay, Sanford, Miller, Welling, Hoyt, Bradner, Drew, Demarest.

It's that connection to the past that has helped Warwick become the special place it is today.

The village, incorporated in 1867, is celebrating its sesqui-centennial this year with various festivities, including parades, speeches and other events. (See accompanying story.)

But to see into your future, you must know your past.



**ABOVE:** The Germania House, circa 1915, on Main Street, is the current home of Akin's Pharmacy, at left.



LEFT: Baird's Tavern, at the intersection of Maple and Colonial avenues (the Kings Highway) circa 1900.

ABOVE: The tavern still looks much like it did hundreds of years ago.

"We were a very successful farming community more than 100 years before 1867," says Michael Bertolini, curator of the Warwick Valley Historical Society. "So our history goes back to the very beginning of the 1700s."

Warwick was not the first Orange County community to incorporate: Newburgh became a village in 1800, Goshen in 1809, Port Jervis in 1853, well after Orange County was formed in 1683 and a county-wide government established in the 1740s.

The Munsee Indians, a branch of the Lenape, were the first humans to live here.

"The old Wawayanda Path, originally an Indian footpath, came up from New Jersey, crossed the creek here and headed north toward Newburgh," says Professor Richard Hull, the Town of Warwick historian and author of several books on the area.

"From Newburgh, you could proceed by boat to Albany or New York City," adds Bertolini. "Why? Because that's the way you did it back then. The Wawayanda Path was a major route for this region and it was eventually widened and graded and it became known as the Kings Highway."

"Ten men across," says Bertolini. "That's how wide it was laid out."

The road to Goshen and the roads to New York City and Newburgh and Philadelphia all intersected here and it is also where in 1766, Francis Baird decided to build his tavern as an

inn to house travelers.

Gen. George Washington and his Continental Army and local commerce moved back and forth on the Kings Highway in those days. Washington's men once camped at the DeKay Farm, south of the village, the site of today's Sanfordville Elementary School.

So Warwick's first lucky break was geography.

"New York City was under British control for most of the war," says Hull. "So to get from Philadelphia to Newburgh, the Americans had to avoid going anywhere near Manhattan. This was the way - straight through Warwick and up the Kings Highway to Newburgh."

"The Kings Highway was both a military road and a commercial highway and when it was finished in 1735 the whole area began to settle as dairy farmers located their farms along the road," says Hull.

These farmers were tasked with keeping the road passable and it was those same dairymen who used the road to get their products to market by cart.

In fact, most of the history of Orange County and its villages is intertwined with the history of dairy farmers and the new invention that was soon supporting them: the Iron Horse.

And so Warwick's second lucky break was the arrival of the railroad.

"Warwick before 1862 was a much

**We were a very successful farming community more than 100 years before 1867 ... our history goes back to the very beginning of the 1700s.**

Michael Bertolini, curator of the Warwick Valley Historical Society

different place than after 1862," says Hull. "Because the arrival of the Warwick Valley Railroad changed everything."

"It changed everything because now the dairy farmers could ship their milk and butter to New York City quickly without it being spoiled," Bertolini says. "It put the village on the map."

"Before the railroad it took almost a full day to get milk to Newburgh, where it would be loaded onto boats," says Hull. "After the



**ABOVE:** The Dutch Reformed Church on Maple Avenue opposite the St. Anthony Community Hospital.

**RIGHT:** The Dutch Reformed church still stands, but has a lot more shrubbery.



**ABOVE:** The old Demarest House hotel still stands at the intersection of South Street and Railroad Avenue in the Village of Warwick.



**LEFT:** The Demarest House today houses several businesses and has had a porch added to the structure.

## Sesquicentennial events

A parade, musical acts, fireworks, a food-truck festival, a watermelon-eating contest and an appearance by the mayor of Warwick, England, are scheduled for the weekend of Aug. 2-6, 2017, in conjunction with the Village of Warwick's 150th birthday celebration.



The time capsule below the marker was buried in 1967 and will be opened in August on Warwick Sesquicentennial Weekend.

Warwick's yearlong celebration is being based on four themes:

- Inclusion
- History/storytelling
- Pride
- Fun, according to Mary Collura, creative director and chair of the Sesquicentennial Committee. "We wanted the plan to be very inclusive so we decided on a yearlong celebration of events," Collura says.

So every month, the calendar is packed with events from writers' workshops to art exhibits and concerts, clean-ups, tours, sidewalk sales, garden tours and parades. "Our goal is to celebrate the many facets and aspects of our community including different ages, religions and cultures," says Michael Newhard, who has been mayor for more than 16 years. "And in the process, redefine diversity."

Included in the festivities will be the Saturday, Aug. 5, digging up and replacing of a time capsule that was placed in the ground 50 years ago during Warwick's 100-year anniversary.

The time capsule, buried in Veteran's Memorial Park, is a "torpedo-like tube" donated by Jones Chemical in 1967. It will be replaced by a new one conceived by local architect and designer Dave Brandt.

Red Umbrella Tours, a walking tour of the historic village, are being led every third Sunday by Michael Bertolini, the Warwick Valley Historical Society's curator.

Free community dinners are being offered every second Saturday (except in July and August) at the Warwick Valley Community Center and Second Sunday Conversations, a series of informal talks, are also underway.

"Warwick is a destination with a bustling Main Street that attracts a lot of attention," says Collura. "So there are lots of groups within Warwick to include."

For more information: [warwick150.org](http://warwick150.org).

- John DeSanto



**LEFT:** The Warwick Valley House on Oakland Avenue circa 1895.

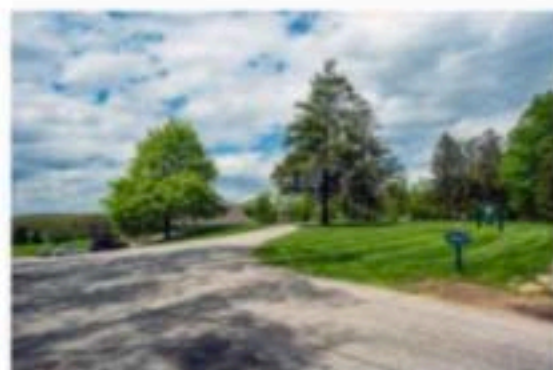
**ABOVE:** Today it is known as the Warwick Dispatch Building.



**RIGHT:** The old Railroad Station stood at the intersection of South Street and Railroad Avenue.

**ABOVE:** The old railroad station still occupies its site on Railroad Avenue, but now a real estate company is inside.





LEFT: The Red Swan Inn was one of the biggest hotels in the region.

ABOVE: The site of the former Red Swan Inn is now the Warwick Valley Country Club.

railroad, the milk could get to Newburgh in under two hours. That was a significant improvement.

"The milk would go 11 miles by rail from Warwick to Greycourt Junction in Chester, where the Erie Railroad was located, and then it was transferred," says Hull.

Eventually the tracks would be extended farther south and branch lines were added north and the railroads superseded the dirt roads for almost all long-distance commerce.

At almost the same time, the Civil War began in 1861 and, to Warwick's good fortune, the Union Army needed milk for its soldiers.

The Gail Borden Company, operating as

the New York Condensed Milk Company, knew exactly how to get it to them and developed a process that condensed the milk so it wouldn't spoil while being shipped.

"Fortunately, or unfortunately, people around here made good money providing milk to soldiers," says Bertolini. "Some people even got rich."

"And the Union Army was able to provide its soldiers milk in tin cans, which was important," says Hull.

With all the commerce, the village changed dramatically in the five years from 1862 to 1867, when it was incorporated.

"Previous to that, there was certainly a community here, but it was a loose community," Bertolini says. "But by now buildings began to be built. Wooden buildings at first because of the large number of trees around."

"Mostly made of board and battens, shingles or clapboard," Bertolini says. "Post and beam construction."

"By 1867 there was a commercially vibrant Main Street," says Hull. "But the railroad resulted in the re-centering of the business district. Initially it was located near Baird's Tavern, where the road to Goshen and the Kings Highway to Newburgh met. But with the arrival of the railroad, the businesses began moving south down by the railroad station."

What was life like back then?

"It was a hard life," says Jean Beattie

May, the Village of Warwick historian. "Life expectancy was short and most people died in their 60s."

"But they had fun," she says. "Fishing, hunting, picnics, dance halls - and they usually had people over for dinner."

The village now boasted a railroad, to go along with the Kings Highway and the roads to New York City, Philadelphia and Goshen.

"And because we were at a crossroads, there were many hotels," says Bertolini. "There were also churches, saloons, banks and even a warehouse in the village. Social life was very important."

"The Demarest House was very popular because it was located across from the railroad station," says May. "It was famous for its oysters that were shipped by railroad, of course, up from Staten Island."

Horse power ruled the farms and provided transportation.

"Farming was tough work that required long hours," says Bertolini. "You needed a lot of manpower and a lot of horsepower to run a farm. The horse was king."

When the Civil War ended, business continued to boom as New Yorkers flooded into the village via the railroad, liked what they saw and arranged to spend their summer vacations in the mountain air.

And so Warwick was ready for yet another big break. "We had seven hotels and a bunch of boarding houses and suddenly it wasn't

**Life expectancy was short and most people died in their 60s. But they had fun. Fishing, hunting, picnics, dance halls ... "**

Jean Beattie May, village historian



**ABOVE:** The former St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church.

**RIGHT:** The old St. Stephen's Church now houses the Warwick Assembly of God.



enough," says Bertolini.

Affluent New Yorkers were arriving by the trainload and summer camps began to spring up. "Now it's not only a successful farming community, but Warwick becomes a successful summer resort as well," says Bertolini.

"My great grandfather Albert Maurice Hoyt owned a farm just south of town named Kilcare," says May. "People getting off the

train would find a notice saying Kilcare was the perfect place to bring a family for a country outing."

Guests were charged \$1.50 a day. Today the farm is the Warwick Conference Center on Hoyt Road.

By 1867 the village elders decided to incorporate and John L. Welling was named the first president/mayor. Several years later the village hired its first police officer, N. Roe

Bradner, whose job was to stamp out public drunkenness.

In 1869, the artist Jasper Cropsey began building his elegant house, which he named "Aladdin," just up the ridge from the Hoyt house. The workmen for the house all stayed at Hoyt's "Kilcare."

It seemed no one could get enough of Warwick's fresh air and its milk. And the situation was about to get even better for the newly incorporated village and its dairy farmers.

In 1876, the summer was hot and sultry and the big hit of the Philadelphia Exposition was something called ice cream. "Everybody went crazy for ice cream," Bertolini says. "It was an extremely warm summer and people suddenly couldn't get enough of it."

And so the milk from the region's local dairy farms continued to flow south to New York City to sustain America's sudden urge for ice cream.

Villagers planted maple trees along the northern route into town to form a canopy to shield the dairy products from the harsh sun as it made its way into the village. That road, now Route 17A, was, and still is, named Maple Avenue.

Along the southern route, oak trees were planted and is now known as Oakland Avenue.

Disaster struck in 1870, when a large section of downtown buildings burned to the ground.

"That resulted in the formation of several volunteer fire companies," says Hull. "And the buildings that replaced them on Main Street were rebuilt of brick, not wood."

By the end of the 19th century, New York City was experiencing a huge influx of immigrants from central Europe and these immigrants loved - you guessed it - dairy products.

Which resulted in another big advantage for Warwick: "The demand for milk exploded at the end of the 19th century," says Hull. "You see, the soil here is very conducive to milk production and our location along the

RESIDENCE OF MRS. GRINNELL BURT,  
WARWICK, N. Y.



LEFT: The old Grinnell Burt house – known as The Arches – became St. Anthony Community Hospital in 1938.

BELOW: The Arches is now a part of St. Anthony Community Hospital.



railroad helped that in several ways."

"The railroad could ship milk products out quickly but it also brought in limestone from northern New Jersey to help fertilize the fields. More fertilizer means more grass," Hull says. "More grass means more cows and more cows means more milk. We became a milkshed for New York City."

In addition, coal from the Pennsylvania fields was shipped to New England via the Warwick Valley Railroad tracks, bypassing the congested tracks of the metropolitan area.

The influx of New York City residents also had an impact on education.

"Farmers became richer because of all the activity and so they would send their kids off to college," says Bertolini. "We probably had more college-educated children from Warwick than any other place in New York state."

"We had common schools that took children right up until high school and we had the Warwick Institute, which was a private high school," says Hull. "This was before public school systems were in place."

Life was good.

"We had several newspapers in town and still do," says Hull. "How many places can say that?"

One of the largest hotels in New York state opened in 1901 with the construction of the Red Swan Inn on the southern edge of the village.

"It was the biggest and the best in this part of New York," says Bertolini. "It had many outdoor tennis courts and a small golf course. Remember, tennis was much bigger than golf back in those days."

The building also had one of the first elevators, a large ballroom and all types of services. "It was for upper-middle-class families and for the period it had all sorts of amenities," says Bertolini.

But a downturn in fortunes wasn't far off.

The Warwick Valley Railroad was swallowed up by the Lehigh & Hudson River Railway, which ended passenger service in 1938 due to a steady decline in ridership. The Lehigh and Hudson Railroad was itself swallowed up by Conrail, which went bankrupt in 1976, although limited freight service still continues on the line to this day.

Refrigerated trucks began coming into use in the 1950s. Their advantage was that they could drive right to the dairy barn, eliminating the need for farmers to transport their milk to the railroad depots. And trucks could deliver the milk directly to the processing plant.

Dairy farmers began moving farther upstate and highways such as the New York State Thruway and the Route 17 Quickway bypassed the area.

After being the center of regional transportation in the 19th century, Warwick suddenly found itself cut off in the latter parts of the

20th century, which was both a blessing and a curse.

"We're here, stuck in the corner of Orange County with New Jersey on our southern border and we've been left alone," says Hull. "So we've avoided a lot of problems that other communities had to deal with in the past few decades."

"We've had time to see what happened in other places and say that we don't want that," he says. "So we have been able to put zoning laws into place to avoid those problems. Having time allows you to put your problems into perspective."

"To me, the Warwick story is one of the great American stories," he says. "We are unique."

"Warwickians have a strong sense of 'place' and 'rootedness,'" says Hull. "We respect and know the past, we confidently negotiate the present, and we look to our future with courage and excitement."

"The names on those headstones, on the street signs, you can still find those families in the phone book," says Hull.

"Abraham Lincoln once said: 'How can you know where you are going unless you know where you've been.'"

"Well, we know where we've been."