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PUBLISHED BY
DECKER ADVERTISING, INC.

for Subscriptions or Advertising Rates call or write:

97 Main Street, #5, Delhi, NY 13753

607-746-2178 • FAX 607-746-6272

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The Haunting of the Historic Walton Theatre

All The World's a Stage - When You're a Ghost!

By Lillian Browne

Walton is the sort of village that struggles with its identity. On one hand, it wants to evolve into a destination for tourists, second-homeowners and business developers. On the other hand, it holds on to its past so tightly, that time seems to stand still.

A quaint quadrant comprises the village's "Magic Mile" along Gardiner Place and includes four monolith structures that are tributes to Walton's heyday beginnings. The buildings - The William B. Ogden Free Library, the Walton Theatre, the post office and the Episcopal Church are all listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In order to obtain such lofty status, the buildings must retain their original structure. The act of preserving history for history's sake, is reflective of how the Walton community is viewed. The

past has a stronghold on Walton's future.

The theater has a tumultuous history that involves fire and flood, destruction and drama.

Famed visitors have graced the second-floor balcony which has added to the building's prestige. Theodore Roosevelt gave a pre-Presidential patriotic stump speech at the theater after riding the rails of the Ontario & Western Railroad following a visit to the Delaware County Fair.

The figurative spotlight was surely redirected from any actor or performer at the theater at that time to the man who was to become the country's 26th President.

Actors, it is said, have a penchant for the dramatic, and one can imagine a self-aggrandizing performer taking umbrage at their spotlight being stolen and thereby giving further credence to

the term "drama queen."

It is entirely possible that this, or another, unintentional act of stolen limelight is what accounts for the haunting of the Walton Theatre today.

Members of the Delaware River Stage Company are quite familiar with the shenanigans of the resident ghost.

Paula O'Brien, a founding member of the performance group, has fondly dubbed the ghost "Ophelia." The ghost is playful and an attention seeker who will often pull stunts during rehearsals and productions to make her presence known.

The performers became convinced that the playful spirit must have been of the "fairer" gender in life, because of the activity that they say is associated with the ghost.

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The Walton Theatre.

Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine

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Sheltering Spirits

The Haunting of The Painted Lady

By Lillian Browne

Steps in the hallway during the middle of the night have awakened the owners of Walton's Painted Lady more than once.

The married couple slumber apart, across the hallway from one another.

She - in an expansive bedroom which includes a dressing or "sitting" room, attached bathroom and private balcony; he - in a simple, but oddly shaped, six-walled sleeping chamber.

They often quiz one another in the morning. "Were you restless last night? I heard you walking around."

The answer Scott and Karen Ingliss give one another is always the same. "It wasn't me. I thought it was you."

The Ingliss' purchased the former boarding house in 2003 and Karen quickly and expertly outfitted the exterior of the mansion in true Painted Lady fashion. A talented and intuitive designer, Karen has acquired clawed-foot, ribbon-backed walnut chairs displayed on heirloom Persian carpet; fringed, deep-button cabrioleted sofas and double-damasked patterned linens as well as a macramé of oddities, to style the home.



The Third Floor - Children Who Are Not Meant to Be Seen ... or Heard

The third floor of the Ingliss' home is rarely used, but nonetheless is ready to shelter a visiting relative or out of town guest.

It is doubtful that overnight visitors get much sleep. In addition to functioning as Karen and Scott's home, The Painted Lady acts as a museum of sorts, where curiosities and antiques take visitors back in time to the days of apothecaries; brocade fabrics; settees that held the bottoms of 16th century spinster schoolmarms ... and dolls.

The home is populated with China and bisque dolls - their porcelain faces framed with human hair and vintage attire; expertly dyed rag dolls crafted from coarse linen, and early 18th century Queen Anne wooden dolls, whitened to include glass eyes, as well as distinct fingers and toes ... and ghosts.

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The ghosts have revealed themselves to visitors at varying times and different locations throughout the home.

Karen is a civic-minded advocate for the Walton community and given her natural talent for acquiring antiques, became a volunteer for the Walton Historical Society. During the organization's 2013 Open Home Tour, during which many mansions, including The Painted Lady opened their doors for public tours to raise money to preserve local history, the ghostly figure of a young girl was spotted by a woman on the last tour of the day.

The woman, Karen explained, resisted climbing the mauve staircase to the third floor. The woman hesitated as she approached the staircase landing lined with three velvet movie theater seats. Her eyebrows climbed but her legs refused. The woman - uneasy with a wide-eye reluctance - turned with a mix of fright and disbelief toward Karen. "Did you see that?!" the woman whisper-yelled while looking down the hallway, dimly lit by bronze sconces. "A little girl just ran down there into one of those rooms!" the woman insisted.

The room the woman referred to is called "The Hooker Room," and is an



Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine
The Painted Lady, on Walton's South Street, is a former boarding house and now a one-family residence where ghostly activity has been reported.

Lillian Browne/
Catskill Country Magazine

Karen Ingliss was intuitively guided to strategically place antique dolls throughout the second and third floor bedrooms.

apt fit in the home. "A Painted Lady" is a less-offensive term for a woman of ill-repute; a prostitute; a harlot; a strumpet; a fallen woman, or a lady of the evening.

A Painted Lady is also the term for a Victorian home painted nine or more contrasting colors. The home is dressed up in an eye-catching way to draw attention to its shapely architecture of alluring windows, delightful dentils and comely cornices.

Karen swears that the home spoke to her and guided her in restoration

and decoration endeavors and provides a possible explanation for the skittish apparition which, she says, is
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based on the prudish conservatism of the early 1800s - the time period in which the home was constructed.

If an unmarried woman found herself in a "delicate" condition - or pregnant - during that era, it is likely that she would have been harshly judged by her community. Sex is a subject that would have been discussed in hushed tones behind closed doors ... or not at all. Evidence of a sexual encounter, especially outside a marriage - or the birth of a child outside of wed-

lock would have been frowned upon and something to be hidden.

It is entirely possible that a little girl born to an unmarried schoolmarm who rented space in the boarding house would have been told to stay out of sight. That would explain not only the darting apparition, but the dolls placed in many of the second and third floor bedrooms - which were once boarding rooms.

A young child's ghostly visit has also been evidenced in another bedroom on the third floor. There is a reading nook, nestled in a dormer complete with a gazing window, made up as a child's bed. The youngster's bed is no more than four feet long and parallels a large four-poster brass bed adorned with a handmade coverlet, antique linens and feather and down pillows. It is the small bed that reveals otherworldly visits.

The third floor is closed off much of the time with dark cherry doors affixed with scrolled brass knobs tightly latched, lest Karen's cat Luna decides to explore. Periodically, Karen will visit the third floor to dust or to simply "check on things."

It is during those periodic visits that Karen reports that the child's bed in the dormer window is mused in a fashion that suggests someone - perhaps a small child - has taken a nap atop the bed's quilt or had been sitting on its side.

When she discovers the imprint on the bedcover, she merely smooths it over with her hand, and straightens its edges while talking to the seemingly empty room. "I see we've had another visitor," she will say to herself and to anyone or anything that might be listening. The narrow, shadow-filled hallway seems to lengthen during those times. She never lingers on the third floor and will frequently glance over her shoulder while there; not because she is fearful, she explained, but because she feels as though someone is hiding just out of sight, around a corner or under a bed, watching her.

The Second Floor - Hushed Conversations and Footsteps

The second floor of the home is where Karen notices most of the ghostly activity. The reason for that,

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Governor Issues Guidance For Agritourism Businesses

By Vicky Klukkert

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced Sept. 1 new guidance for agritourism businesses as New York state enters the fall season. The businesses, which include corn mazes, pick-your-own fruit and vegetable operations, hayrides and haunted houses, are considered low-risk outdoor arts and entertainment and are permitted to operate under New York's NY Forward guidance. New Yorkers can also visit the state's farmers markets and craft beverage trails, which have remained open with state guidance, supporting agriculture and tourism.

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball said, "As one of the nation's top agricultural states, New York traditionally comes together in the fall to celebrate the harvest - from apples to grapes to pumpkins. This year, while things may not look exactly the same on your favorite farm, I am happy to say we can still celebrate agriculture's bounty and the many family-friendly activities that go with it. With this new guidance, we hope New Yorkers will be able to enjoy some of the best of New York agriculture in a safe and socially distanced manner."

The businesses that can reopen are subject to Low Risk Outdoor Arts and Entertainment and Public Transportation guidance.

Corn Mazes - permitted consistent with Low Risk Outdoor Arts and



Kaci Anderson/Catskill Country Magazine Entertainment guidance and the following conditions:

- Reduced capacity to 33%
- Face coverings required
- Social distance maintained between individuals/parties

Local corn mazes open this fall include Hurds Family Farm, located at 2186 State Route 32, Modena; Cunningham Family Farms, 233 Hurd and

Parks Road, Swan Lake and the Fly Creek Valley Corn Maze, 1316 County Highway 26, Fly Creek. Pick a Pumpkin Pumpkin Patch in Esperance was set to announce its fall activities on Sept. 20; visit the website for more information.

Hayrides - permitted consistent with Public Transportation guidance and the following conditions:

- Mandatory face coverings
- Social distance required between individuals/parties
- Frequently touched surfaces, such as handrails, cleaned and sanitized between rides

Haunted Houses - permitted consistent with Low Risk Indoor Arts and Entertainment guidance and the following conditions:

- Reduced capacity to 33%
- Face coverings required

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Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine

Mannequins are positioned in the dressing room, appearing to be eternally in mid-conversation.

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she said, is because she spends a fair amount of time there. Her bedroom - the largest in the home, consumes much of the second floor and is not only spacious, but is equipped with a sitting room which doubles its length.

Mannequins outfitted in antique sheer dressing gowns are positioned throughout the room. They appear to be as a visiting sister might or a days-gone-by maid may have appeared. They lounge and stand about, posed in mid-conversation - always on the verge of revealing a well-kept secret.

Coincidentally, it's hushed conversations that often awake Karen in the middle of the night. The voices, she is certain, are not coming from the mannequins, but coming from somewhere above her head.

The conversations, she said, are no more imagined than the footsteps that she and her husband hear outside their bedroom doors in the middle of the night. She is convinced that the footsteps belong to a man.

It is a heavy step, she explains, miming a sturdy-shoed footfall. The conversations, however, are sometimes between men and women, but sometimes just between men. Though she can pick out voices and the timbred flow of conversation, she is unable to pick out specific words.

It's as if she has tuned into a radio station in which people are participating in a conversation but the volume is just low enough that she cannot make out what is being said. She has tried to debunk the ethereal conversations that seemed to be piped into her bedroom from an invisible telegraph line. At first, she thought she might be overhearing people talking while walking on Fair Street or South Street. She

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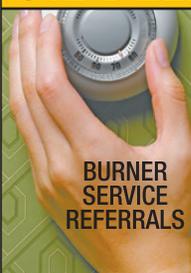
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has even gone onto her balcony during the middle of the night in search of the nocturnal conversationalists, only to discover empty streets in the sleepy village.

Though she can hear the conversation, those participating in it are unable to hear her when she calls out - "Hello? Who's there?"

Her queries often end the conversation and her words are left hanging in the air.

In those moments Karen becomes like the motionless mannequins, hands raised partially in question, partially in surrender...and never finding resolve. It's as if Karen has found herself between two worlds. One - a third-dimensional, tangible, patterned one in which the speeds of light and sound follow the rules of physics; and the other - one where disembodied conversations take place in her bedroom.

When asked whether she thought it was possible that a ghost was attached to one of the many antique objects in the home, Karen could not say. Whether the thought had never occurred to her or the mind-boggling number of acquired objects is simply

too overwhelming to consider, she seems unconcerned with how the voices, footfalls and phantom child arrived in her home but more concerned with what they might want from her - if anything.

Answers ... and More Questions

In 2016, Karen invited a paranormal investigation team into her home to see if it could be discovered what the "occurrences" were. With the use of specialized equipment consisting of: night vision video, infrared and full spectrum camera equipment, electric magnetic field detectors, voice recorders and a spirit or ghost box (which uses radio frequencies to capture electronic voice phenomenon) the team was able to give Karen some answers.

During the investigation of the third floor, the "ghost hunters" when asking a seemingly empty room who was there, were rewarded with a clear response. "Richard." The name was broadcast in a clear authoritative voice.

Richard, perhaps feeling his presence had finally been validated, fol-

lowed the paranormal investigators to the first floor where he put on an impressive but unnerving show of banging against the hand-carved oak pocket doors in the parlor.

He then further revealed himself as a shadow cast against the dining room wall by recessed lights shining through the kitchen doorway. Then he communicated through the spirit box. Though most of Richard's responses were garbled and unintelligible, his presence seemed solely to seek recognition.

"No," was the clear response from Richard about feelings or anger or intent to cause harm to Karen or anyone else in the home

"Yes," was the firm and articulate response to questions about whether Karen had refurbished and restored the home to his liking.

Karen has no idea who Richard is but has proclaimed him as a protective guardian angel of sorts.

Karen and Scott remain in the home, unafraid and unthreatened, where they continue to coexist peacefully, but inquisitively, with what remains of Richard and the young, nameless girl.



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There are several places throughout the Catskills to pick your own apples and pumpkins or cut your own Christmas trees this fall and winter. Some farms require tickets to attend. Phone numbers have been provided.

Greene County

- Boehm Farm, Route 26, Climax, 518-731-6198 - Apples & Pumpkins.
- RSK Farm, 13255 Route 23A, Prattsville, 518-299-3198 - Pumpkins.
- Veeder's Tree Farm, 1235 High Hill Road, Earlton, 518-731-8585 - Christmas Trees.

Delaware County

- Donnelly Farm Stand, 5709 East Riv-

er Road, Walton, 607-865-5036 - Pumpkins.

Echo Hill Farm, 4700 County Highway 5, Bovina Center, 607-432-6589 - Christmas Trees.

Hawley Christmas Tree Farm, 4528 Peakes Brook Road, Delhi, 607-746-3543 - Christmas Trees.

Hillhaven Farms, 2 Hobart Road, Stamford, 607-652-2274 - Christmas Trees.

Holley Hill Farm Stand, 269 County Highway 23, Walton, 607-865-8609 - Pumpkins.

Maplewood Farm & Orchard, 596 Miller Ave., Bovina Center, 607-746-6339 - Apples and Pumpkins.

Robson's Christmas Trees, 2425 Jim Lane Road, Bovina Center, 607-832-4306.

Whiskey Hollow Pumpkins and Produce, Maple Avenue, Hobart - Pumpkins.

Otsego County

Fly Creek Valley Corn Maze & Pumpkin Patch, 1316 County Highway 26, Fly Creek, 607-538-5748 - Pumpkins.

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Schoharie County

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Diehl Farm Market, 621 Gabel Road, Callicoon, 845-807-3131 - Christmas Trees.

Majestic Farm, 134 Majestic Road, Mountain Dale, 845-241-7488 - Apples

Ulster County

Apple Hill Farm, 124 Route 32 South, New Paltz, 845-255-1605 - Apples & Pumpkins.

Balsam Ridge Christmas Tree Farm, 288 South Street, Clintondale, 845-721-4195.

Bell's Tree Farm, 647 Mettakahonts Road, Accord, 845-626-7849.

Christmas Tree Lane, 9 Christmas Tree Drive, Wallkill, 845-895-3536.

Clarke's Family Farm, 2086 Route 44/55, Modena, 845-901-7442 - Apples.

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Dressel Farms, 271 State Route 208, New Paltz, 845-255-0693 - Apples.

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Family Christmas Trees, 16 Firehouse Road, Big Indian, 845-254-4311.

Hurds Family Farm, 2186 State Route 32, Modena, 845-883-7825 - Apples, Pumpkins & Christmas Trees.

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Saunderskill Farm Market, 5100 Route 209, Accord, 845-626-2676

- Apples & Pumpkins.

Split Rail Nursery, 346 Mahoney Road, Milton, 845-795-5643 - Christmas Trees.

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The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has issued a full slate of guidelines for the agricultural industry, including guidance for farmers' markets and for its food and beverage producers. All guidance can be found at agriculture.ny.gov/coronavirus.

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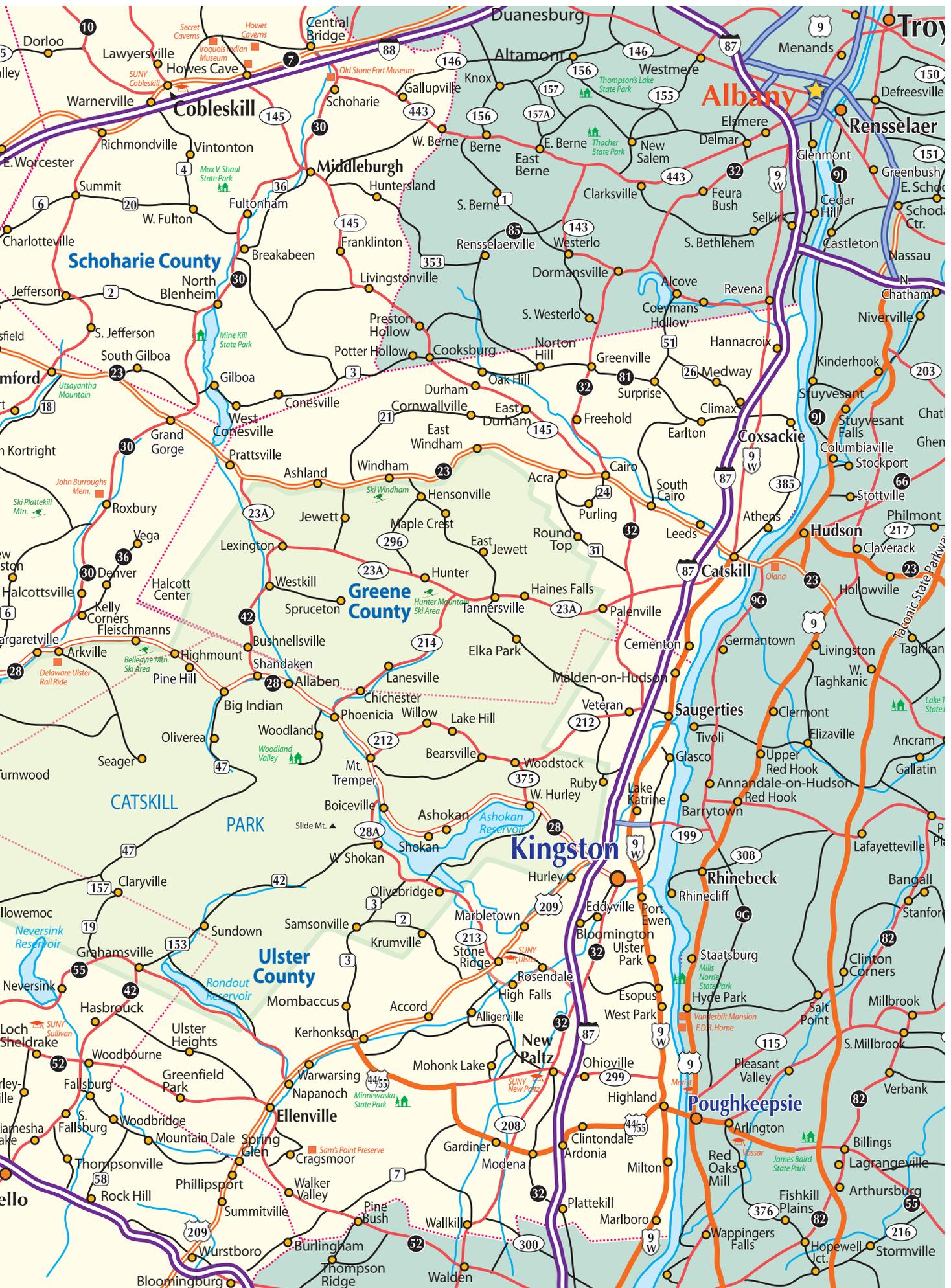
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Delaware County Is a Great Place To Live, Work and Play



By Ray Pucci

DELHI - Those who call Delaware County "home" have chosen to set down roots here because this is a special place of extraordinary beauty and a culture that has its priorities in or-

der. We work hard to preserve our wild spaces, protect our natural resources, create an innovative infrastructure, and we cherish the big sense of community that comes from living in small towns.

Whether you're a resident for generations or only a few months, or just thinking about living here, we are thrilled that you are part of our community. Retirees enjoy our compact villages with nearby shops and services. Families value our safe neighborhoods and our highly-rated schools and colleges. Adventure-seekers explore the tremendous variety of outdoor experiences. Housing options are varied, from stately Federal-style homes to elegant Victorians to contemporary ranches to maintenance-free townhouses. And our neighbors are welcoming. Civic clubs, service organizations, and places of worship open their doors to newcomers, and there are plenty of community activities to bring people together.

Our local food culture is outstanding,

whether you're dining out or picking up local produce for a home-cooked meal. Outdoor enthusiasts can choose to hike, ski, bike, fish, paddle, and much more - just minutes from their front doors. History and art lovers enjoy our many varied museums, galleries, performance centers, and theaters that will, we are sure, will reopen again.

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Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine

The dressing rooms in the basement of the Walton Theatre are sites of frequent, unexplained activity.

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As an example, obvious incidents of strangeness, Paula said, occur in the ladies' restroom on the main floor of the building.

During rehearsals the actors would discover the mirror that hangs above the sink lying sideways on the floor. It never came crashing down. Rather, it appeared to have been purposely placed on its side, time and again.

Female actors have also chastised one another for entering the ladies' room while it was occupied, seeming to wait impatiently to use the facilities, pacing about, only to leave the bathroom without a word. Each time this occurred other performers would swear that they did not enter the bathroom, nor was anyone else in that part of the building.

Female moviegoers have reported similar incidences to theater staff

along with complaints that someone was staring at them through spaces in the stall construction.

Other complaints include howling from somewhere inside and "just above" the bathroom; and heavy footsteps in the east side of the balcony that sound like children playing an impromptu game of football.

A disembodied blob of light will seek out an actor if they are alone in the building and sit in front of and upon that person, as though it is trying to hug or otherwise make contact. Paula has experienced this phenomena several times in different parts of the building.

"Ophelia" must have gained enough confidence for a public debut when during the performance of the company's patriotic show in 2014, the flags draping the interior walls and balcony began to wave. It was a very still night,

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with thick air, and no fans to cool the crowds. The flags began to wave, she said, as though they were being gently swayed by an unseen hand. And then, she said with nervous laughter, that curious light shone onto the flags and the air temperature suddenly dropped - only to return to normal within the next few moments.

She was not alone in witnessing that display and though event attendees may have thought the demonstration was part of the show, the performers knew better.

The ghost seems to have a fixation with lighting. During the flood of 2006, which crippled the building and necessitated the replacement of the theater's floor, heating system and seating, a peculiar incident occurred with the safety lights embedded in the floor, stage and stairs. Power had been turned off in the building so the electrical contractor could safely rewire portions of the theater where the wires had been submerged.

Upon dismantling the stairs leading to the stage to replace the footlights, the contractor removed the light fixtures and attached wiring and surpris-

ingly discovered the light aglow - without a connection.

He just shook his head saying "No, no, no," Paula tells with laughter that accompanies ridiculous explanations of unexplainable circumstances.

Paula also tells the tale of a local newspaper reporter who was writing a story about the recovery of the theater following the 2006 flood. The reporter, on Paula's heels in the basement of the building, was remarking about the poor lighting in the former dressing rooms which are outfitted with mannequins and furniture depicting set scenes from days-gone-by.

During the tour, Paula continued, the reporter was taking photographs with a digital camera and began to have trouble with the camera's automatic focus. The reporter asked Paula to wait a moment so she could take a photo of a stored Christmas-scene set, moodily covered in cobwebs, when the reporter told her the backlighting was interfering with getting a quality photograph.

Paula told the reporter that the lights were all off in the room behind the Christmas-scene set and returned to the reporter's side to see what the problem might be. As the reporter pointed into the camera's screen to show Paula the offending light, a streak of light flashed around the room past the two women and disappeared into thin air.

The reporter confidently told Paula that a light must be reflecting from a parked car outside the building or that someone's headlights must have shown through the basement windows.

When Paula told the reporter that there were no windows in that part of the building, that it was completely underground, the reporter pushed past Paula and fled up the stairs - too frightened to remain in the basement but too scared to be away from Paula, alone in the spooky building.

As many people do when faced with the unexplainable and unknowable, Paula just accepts "Ophelia's" presence as a constant fixture at the theater.

For more information about the Walton Theatre visit waltontheatre.org.

Unveiling the Mysteries of Mycology

Cultivators Answer Call For Healthy, Gourmet Food

By Lillian Browne

Seth Friedman and Margeaux Snyder of East Meredith in northwestern



Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine
Seth Friedman and Margeaux Snyder of Greentopia Farm in East Meredith in the 'lab.'

Delaware County, have spawned a fledgling business by answering consumer demand for fresh, healthy, gourmet food - with mushrooms.

Under the Greentopia Farm brand, the pair grow thousands of pounds of blue oyster, chestnut, lion's mane, black pearl oyster and shiitake mushrooms each year, selling their savory fungi at a variety of farmers markets, farm-to-market stores that champion locally-grown foods and a regional community supported agriculture cooperative.

The mushrooms are grown in a sterile environment in three stages, taking anywhere from two weeks to two months to fruit. The short grow time ensures a freshness found only second to a home garden. The mushrooms are sold hours to a couple of days after harvesting, and while awaiting sale, are stored in automatic temperature-controlled storage.

Greentopia Farm is a 2019 startup, the brainchild of ingenuity and the reverse-engineering of traditional labor- and equipment-heavy agriculture.



Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine
Blue oyster mushrooms.

Friedman and Snyder work smarter - not harder - with a condensed footprint and controlled environment.

The mushrooms are grown year round in a three-phase cultivation pro-

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cess, starting in a bag room, moving to an inoculation room - which the pair refer to as "the lab," and finishing their growth cycle in fruiting rooms. The facility is housed in 1,800 square feet of a former factory.

Mushrooms thrive in a cool, humid environment and growth stages two and three are tightly controlled with 90 to 100 percent humidity.

The spores, seeds or spawn of each variety begin the life cycle in a sterilized "log" comprised of acidic wood chips and organic grains (in a plastic bag with an anti-pathogen breathable air filter) that serves as a substrate or base for the mushrooms to grow in. The process mimics the natural habitat of the forest where mushrooms grow on logs. Despite the notion that mushrooms grow in the dark, they in fact grow with some light similar to that of a forest's shaded understory. Mushrooms do not use sunlight to make energy or grow, like most plants.

Unlike a mushroom's natural habitat in a forest flush with bacteria and other organisms, Greentopia Farm mushrooms are isolated from contami-



Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine

The fruiting room at Greentopia Farm where oyster and chestnut mushrooms are ready to harvest.

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nation of any kind. Mold is the enemy and high quality air filters and decontamination procedures ensure quality control.

Greentopia Farm grows wood-based mushrooms rather than those that would be commonly found in soil, compost or leaf litter.

The fast growing varieties - lion's mane and oyster mushrooms, fruit in about two weeks, while the longer-growth varieties - chestnut and shiitake take approximately two months to



Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine Margeaux Snyder of Greentopia Farm with a fruiting chestnut 'log.'

grow. Greentopia Farm currently sells approximately 75 pounds of mushrooms per week - but is ramping up to meet a 200 pound per week goal.

There is money to be made in gourmet mushroom growing - with direct whole sales netting about \$10 per pound.

Prior to starting the business, homesteading, with a passion for foraging, was a way of life for the couple. They are committed to the local food movement and their community.

The mushroom farmers have found a niche market that aligns with their values. They've chosen to become gourmet mushroom growers not just be part of their community, but to contribute to its sustainability.

The mushroom varieties are grown for culinary use and though consumers desire the unique flavors and textures as a side dish or to augment the profile of a particular dish, mushrooms are often used as meat substitutes and are being consumed more and more for their health benefits.

Future plans include a potential ex-

pansion into medicinal mushrooms.

Greentopia Farm mushrooms can be purchased at the farm at 1711 Monkey Run Road, East Meredith, by appointment by calling 718.483.4675; at the Delhi, Oneonta, Cooperstown and Callicoon Farmers Markets; through 607CSA and at Catskills Regional Harvest in Andes or Good Cheap Food in Delhi. Greentopia Farm mushrooms are also a staple ingredient for dishes served at local restaurants such as Brushland in Bovina, Table on Ten in Bloomville and Hollow in Delhi.

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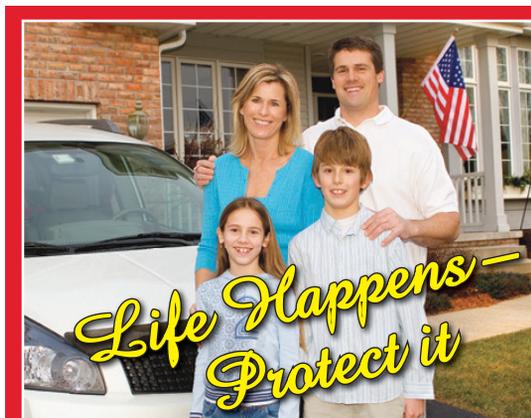
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What's Open

By Vicky Klukkert

While not all of New York businesses and attractions are open this year, there are several things to do in the Catskills this fall and winter.

Bowling alleys have been allowed to open at 50% capacity. Reservations are needed prior to visiting. For a local bowling alley, visit the NYS Bowling Proprietors Association at www.nysbpa.com and click on the Find a Center Tab.

Casinos with enhanced air-filtration systems were allowed to reopen on Sept. 9. Casinos are limited to 25% capacity and table games are not allowed unless physical barriers have been installed to separate patrons. Slot machines will be open, but social distancing of six feet must be maintained. Masks are also required.

While some museums and attractions did not open for the 2020 season, some are open or the grounds are open for hiking and other outdoor

activities.

For example, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, 218 Spring Street in Catskill, is closed, but its grounds are open. In addition, every Friday through Sunday, people can purchase Outdoor Explore Kits. Materials include information about Thomas Cole and the Hudson Valley Art Movement, sketchbook, cedar pencil, postcard, take action cards, walking directions to Catskill Creek, mini hand sanitizer, Changing Landscape activity book and crayons. For more information, visit thomascole.org/outdoorexplora.

And, the historic site opened the Pollinator Pavilion, a new public artwork by artists Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood. The open-air gazebo is



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Vicky Klukkert/Catskill Country Magazine

A view of Otsego Lake from the terrace of the Fenimore Art Museum.

filled with living pollinator gardens, hummingbird feeders, original artwork by the artists and seating for one guest at a time. The gazebo will be on the lawn until the fall of 2021.

The Landis Arboretum, 174 Lape Road in Esperance, and the Mountaintop Arboretum, 4 Maude Adams Road in Tannersville are open. They are public gardens and as such they ask the public not to pull the flowers or damage the plants, keep dogs leashed and confined to where they are allowed, stick to the trails and don't walk through the flowers, do not feed or approach animals or birds and carry out any trash you carry into the garden. Smelling the flowers, taking photos,

painting or drawing and bird watching are encouraged. If you cannot keep socially distanced, wear a mask. For more information about Landis, visit www.landisarboretum.org. For more information about Mountaintop, visit www.mtarboretum.org.

Four museums in Cooperstown are open for visitors - The Farmers Museum, Fenimore Art Museum, National Baseball Hall of Fame, and Hyde Hall.

Fenimore Art Museum, 5798 State Highway 80 in Cooperstown, has several permanent exhibits and four temporary exhibits. The temporary exhibits explore Native American use of shapes in their artwork, candid photographs of Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama,

photographs of gardens and master prints by Albrecht Dürer. Permanent exhibits include the Thaw Collection of American Indian Art, information about the Coopers, American fine art, letters between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr that led to the duel, and much more. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through Dec. 31.

Across the street from Fenimore Art Museum is the Farmers Museum. There people can see what it was like to live in a farming community in the

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From Tech to Baking: A Sourdough Start

By Lillian Browne

The science of sourdough bread-making is a chemistry equation which combines air and oven temperatures with humidity and a fermented “starter” of flour and water that contain flavor-developing wild yeast. Timing is also vitally important, according to Wilson Keenan, owner of Wilsons Bread, a bread and pastry bakery at 143 Main Street, Andes.

Wilson's Bread produces a line of bread, rolls and pastries - standard loaves and special orders. Keenan left the technology-in-healthcare industry in New York City to pursue baking a year ago. When he began baking he started with a conventional home oven, baking dozens of loaves per week. By word of mouth, his business quickly grew and he is currently baking about 220 loaves each week, which

are sold at a variety of retail locations throughout Delaware County and are also available for purchase through online ordering at wilsonsbread.com.

Breadmaking and baking, especially sourdough-based bread, is time consuming by nature, requiring 12 hours of fermentation to start the process. Then there is the mixing, rising, shaping and baking. The one man operation with an ever increasing customer base which includes a line of bed and breakfasts, cafés, restaurants and other eateries, has recently expanded, streamlined and upgraded the bakery.

Those upgrades have enabled Keenan to produce 600 loaves of bread per week, in addition to other offerings which include a line of pastries: croissants, sweet morning buns and lemon and raspberry cruffins, among other items.

The transition from tech to baking allowed for a crossover in skills, Keenan said. Both fields require precision, consistency and an element of flexibility. Baking is an art and provides numerous opportunities for creativity from the milling phase through the scoring phase.

The trick to making really great bread? There is not just one answer, Keenan said. “There are a thousand places to screw up and a thousand places to course correct,” he said. Just like in technology.

What sets his breadmaking apart from others is a sourdough foundation, high quality flour, specialty grains, peak freshness and an unwavering at-



Lillian Browne/Catskill Country Magazine
Wilson Keenan folds, stitches and shapes loaves of sourdough bread at his bakery.

tention to minute details.

His pastries are French - a “whole different animal than breadbaking,” he said, but similar in the need to control fermentation while creating strength, not toughness. How? By layering in butter, he said. The perfect pastry is tender but well structured.

When COVID-19 struck the country and his usual customers temporarily closed up shop, the influx of second-homeowners, here for the duration, made up for lost business. Summer customers became regular customers, and his, like other local food-centric businesses, thrived.

Though he currently bakes just twice per week, he works every day. One day for starting the dough, one day for mixing the dough, one day of baking the bread, and so on.

For more information about Wilsons Bread, for purchase locations or to order online visit wilsonsbread.com, or find them on Facebook or Instagram.

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1850s. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. The museum closes for the season Oct. 31.

The Baseball Hall of Fame, 25 Main Street, Cooperstown, is open daily. The museum is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Learn about the history of baseball. Tickets must be reserved online at baseball-hall.org.

Hyde Hall, 267 Glimmerglass Road, Cooperstown is open until Oct. 31. Tours are given on the hour between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and reservations are required by calling 607-547-5098 x1. Tour the most English country house in the United States.

The Hudson River Maritime Museum, 50 Rondout Landing in Kingston is open for visitors Friday-Sunday noon-5 p.m. The museum houses artifacts, including vessels, archival material and art, from the Hudson River's rich maritime history. For more information, visit www.hrmm.org.

All of the museums listed require visitors to wear a mask and practice social distancing. Hand sanitizing stations are set up throughout the museums.



Vicky Klukkert/Catskill Country Magazine

This statue is part of the Elegant Line/Powerful Shape: Elements of Native American Art at the Fenimore Art Museum.

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