

# B'VILLE PHOTOS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

**A**t last, Sue Ellen McManus is saying Wednesday, Baldwinsville has its own historical picture book.

Praise the Lord!

"Greater Baldwinsville," one of Arcadia Publishing Co.'s "Images of America" vintage photographic series, comes out Monday. Sue Ellen McManus got the job done, with 200 historical photographs from the Onondaga County village and its environs.

Sue is village historian and director of The Museum at Shacksboro Schoolhouse at 46 Canton St., Baldwinsville's history archive. She's been in our town since she came to Le Moyne College from her native Rochester as a freshman.

The author starts her book tour at 2 p.m. May 16 at the Onondaga Historical Association in downtown Syracuse.

Sue admitted relief the project's done. She explained virtually all the pictures in the 127-page paper book, which sells for \$21.99, came from her museum's archives.

"We have one strong collection," Sue says. "We're blessed with great images."

Those images range from a picture of one of the Baldwinsville area's natural gas wells, which once supplied the city of Syracuse, to shots of canal boats; the village's tobacco industry; and a neat photograph of employees of a pioneer local industry, The New Process Raw Hide Co., from 1888, ancestor of a company that's still among us. The company's first product was a leather-covered canoe, according to Sue.



Museum at the Shacksboro Schoolhouse

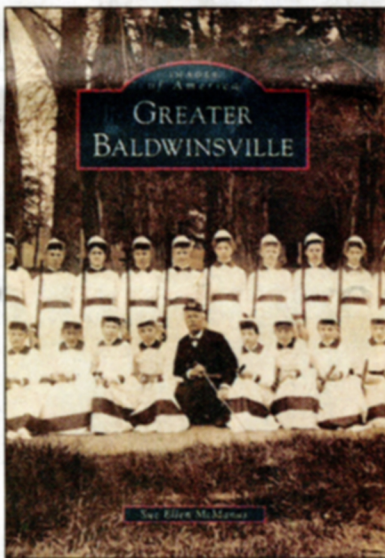


Management relocated the works to Syracuse after a fire in 1898.

We're introduced to Baldwinsville's interesting history of natural gas, a topic that's flared again recently with the argument over gas drilling in New York state, out of the so-called "Marcellus Shale." The state has put some restrictions on "hydrofracking," a method of raising the gas to the surface from cells deep in the earth.

One of the book's images shows a driller named Gustav Leopold who came to Baldwinsville and bought numerous wells in the area. This 1896 picture shows a well site on the Munro farm, at Oswego and Oneida streets. Sue says most of the wells were capped when the supply of gas faltered in the 1930s.

Another photograph shows a gas derrick rising next to the Baldwin Canal, where natural gas provided heat and fueled the furnace at American Knife Works, a company that closed in 1960. The Baldwin Canal was covered in 1965, after the state's Barge Canal was completed through the village in 1915. Construction of the Barge required removal of



**A NEW BOOK** by Sue Ellen McManus will detail the history of the Baldwinsville area in pictures. The cover is a photograph of a group of young women who were trained by Union Army veteran John M. Scoville as a skilled precision drill team called the Fair Light Guard. They organized for an 1888 fundraiser for Grace Episcopal Church.

an entire village street.

Tobacco was Baldwinsville's main cash crop for almost a century, according to "Greater Baldwinsville," beginning about 1845. The book includes several pictures of the crop — which needed intensive labor — and tobacco farms and farmers.

**GUSTAV LEOPOLD** (*sitting*) and his drilling crew in Baldwinsville. He was a well-known driller who was recruited from the oil fields of Pennsylvania to come to Baldwinsville. Gas well drillers are (*from left*) Emory Green, Lon FAVOR, Leopold and Jim Pickard. Leopold purchased a residence on Canton Street and for years had a well on the property that supplied natural gas to the home. The local supplies of natural gas were depleted by the 1930s.

The book does not mention a severe blow to Baldwinsville archives that occurred at the death of historian Tony Christopher, who kept his collection in a private museum. The Christopher archives, both pictures and objects, were sold by the family and moved to California.

Shacksboro Schoolhouse was an active place of education on outer Canton Street. It closed in 1952 and was moved to the present site and reopened as a museum by McHarrie's Legacy, Baldwinsville's historical preservation organization, in 1976.

In addition to the OHA appearance, Sue has scheduled signings of the new book June 6 at the museum; June 12 at Shacksboro (during the annual Peony Fest); June 17 at the Baldwinsville Public Library; July 10, Mercer Park, Seneca River Day; and July 18, at rededication of cornerstone of Lysander Union School, Lamson Road.

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