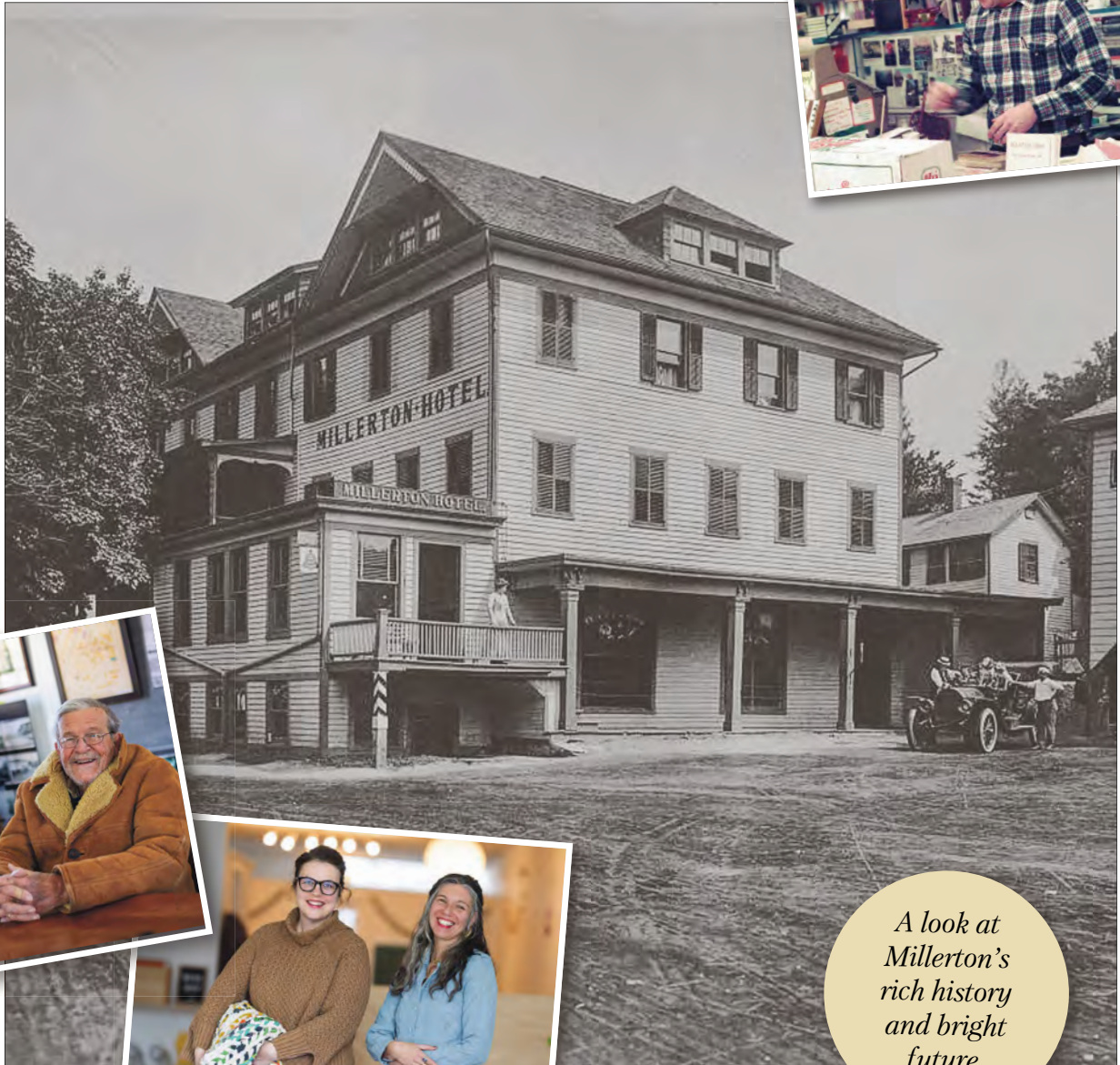


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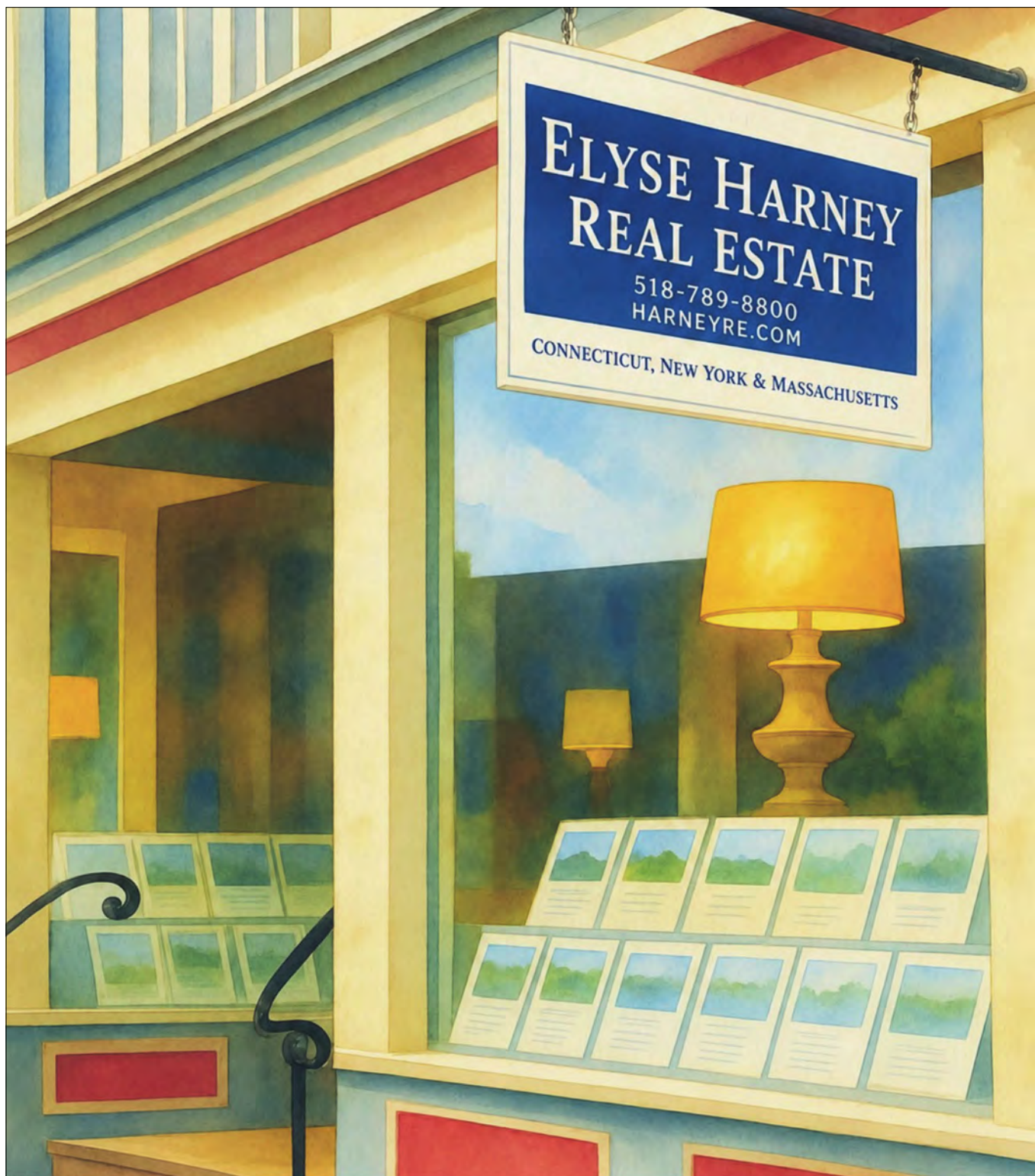
Millerton Celebrates *175 Years*



*A look at
Millerton's
rich history
and bright
future.*

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Millerton's early days brought huge change to the community

The Village of Millerton was founded a decade before the Civil War during a time when railroads were transforming rural economies, the nation was expanding westward and tensions over slavery were mounting.

The first 25 years of Millerton reflected that era of rapid change, characterized by an almost overnight transformation from farmland to being a railroad hub.

According to "A Beckon Call to a Village," a 2001 history compiled by former North East Historical Society president Diane Thompson, leaders in the already-established Town of North East understood the opportunity a rail line could bring.

A meeting was held at the Wakeman House, home of local farmer Walter Wakeman, where a small group of men began laying out plans for a village that did not yet exist.

Wakeman himself played a crucial role, selling a 66-foot strip of his farm – nearly half a mile long – to the railroad. Additional acreage followed to accommodate a depot, engine house, sheds and extra track.

Civil engineer Sidney Miller is credited with bringing the railroad to what would later be known as Millerton in 1851. According to historical documents, he was so well regarded that the village was named in his honor.

On Sept. 1, 1851, the first train rolled into Millerton.

Iron production also played a key role in Millerton's early growth. In 1854, the Millerton Iron Company established a major foundry in the area known as Irondale.

By 1882, the plant employed about 150 workers and by 1890 it was producing up to 12,000 tons of pig iron annually. The raw iron was used to manufacture cast-iron products, including railroad car wheels.

Irondale grew into a small industrial hamlet with a general store, grist mill and post office.

With the railroad established, Millerton quickly expanded. In 1852, just one year after the first train arrived, the Millerton Hotel was erected on North Center Street behind what is now the Oakhurst Diner. Built by Alexander Hawley, Alexander Trowbridge and James Winchell, the two-story building catered to rail passengers and visitors.

The hotel was later acquired by A.J. Pulver, who modernized it. For roughly 50 years, it stood as a symbol of Millerton's growth before being dismantled in 1936. Its materials were salvaged during the Great Depression.

That early period saw the construction of a Greek Revival-style commercial building that housed E.W. Simmons & Co., Millerton's first general store. Opened in partnership with Harvey Roe of Spencer's Corners, the store sold groceries,

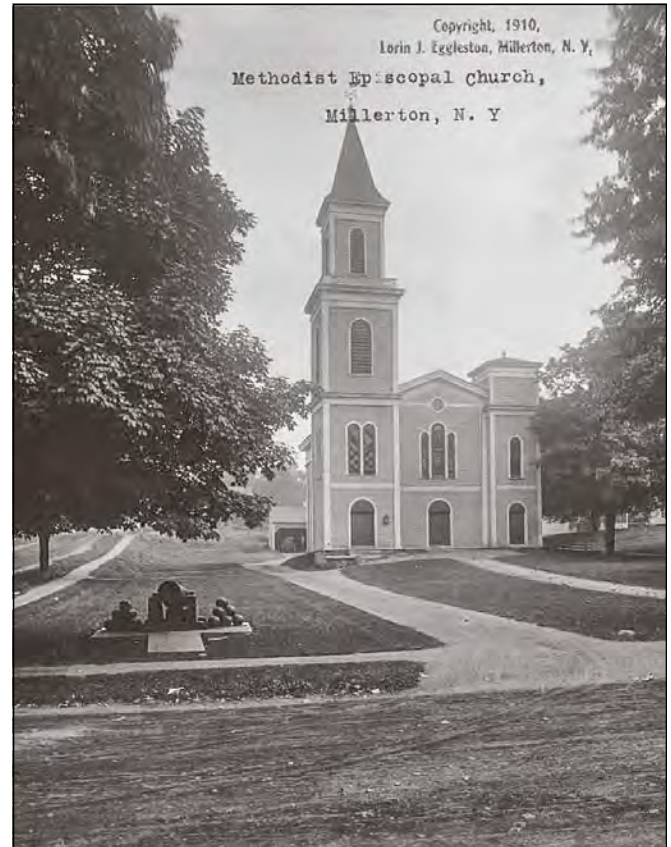


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A historical photograph depicts Millerton's Methodist church on Main Street ca. 1910.

lumber and building supplies.

By the mid-1860s, Millerton's commercial district continued to expand. In 1865, prominent builder Ambrose Beers constructed an Italianate-style carpenter shop that would later become home to Dewitt "Dewey" Husted and his wife. For 18 years, it operated as a confectionery and bakery. It later served as a sporting goods and furniture store, and after a 2008 renovation is now home to Elyse Harney Real Estate.

By 1875, Millerton was formally incorporated and recognized as a municipality. Kneeland J. Munson became the village's first mayor.

In just 24 years, Millerton had transformed from farmland to railroad outpost to incorporated village, with even greater expansion waiting in the decades to come.



**In just 24 years,
Millerton had
transformed
from farmland to
railroad outpost to
incorporated village.**



PHOTOS COURTESY U.S. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Above: The Millerton hotel on Center Street ca. 1910.
Right: two men pose with a mile marker noting the
distance from Millerton to New York City.

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Documentary film about railroad resurfaces after 40 years

Long before the bustling Harlem Valley Rail Trail hosted runners, walkers and cyclists, a historic railroad ran through Millerton, connecting rural towns to New York City. The eventual dismantling of the railroad was met with criticism and pushback from residents.

That chapter of local history comes alive in a resurfaced documentary film that had been tucked away in an attic in Dover Plains for more than 40 years.

Philip Milano, the filmmaker and longtime Dover Plains resident, made the film as a student project during his time at New York University.

“It took me about a month to make,” Milano said. “I played all the music myself, lined up the interviews and edited it.”

The 28-minute film chronicles the efforts to retain passenger and freight rail service between New York City and Chatham, New York in the 1960s and 1970s.

Milano was contacted last year by a former Copake Falls resident who wanted to view the film for research. Skeptical that the old Scotch U-matic cassette – a bulky, professional-grade videotape used in the 1970s – would still play, Milano agreed to ship the only existing copy of his movie out west. To his surprise, it was successfully digitized.

The video is slightly grainy with crisp audio. Footage shows the former Saperstein’s building – now Westerlind – and its famed railroad mural, along with shots of the old Sharon and Millerton stations.

In an early scene, a young Holly Nelson – co-founder of Oblong Books – stands in her store and speaks passionately about the loss of rail service and its impact on rural businesses, farms and residents.

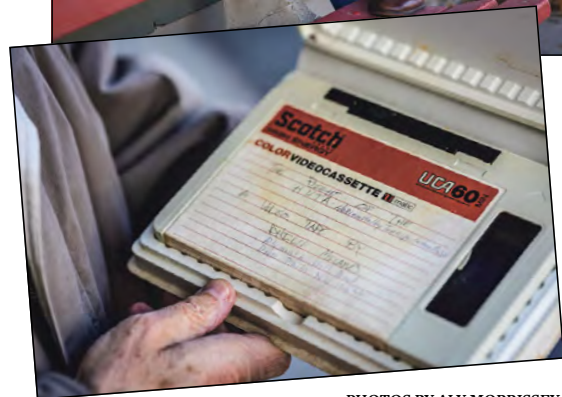
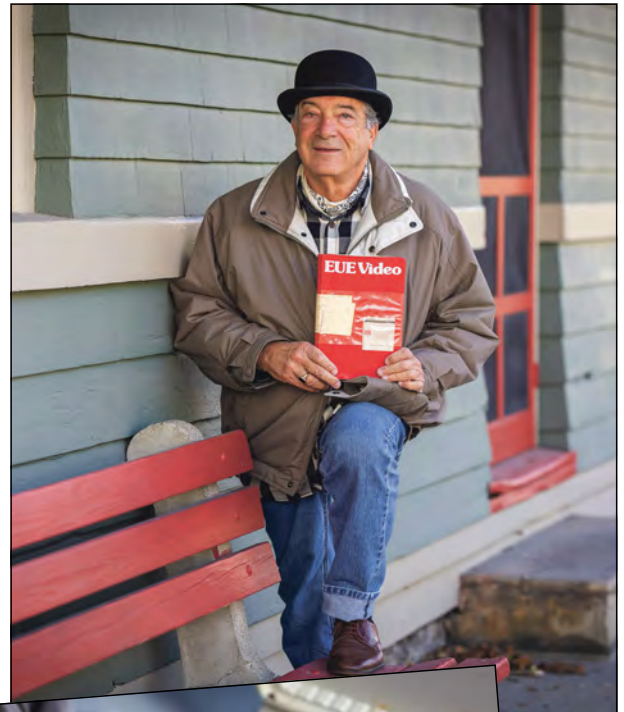
“It brings in the whole question of rural powerlessness,” Nelson said, warning that locals would soon become “highway hostages,” forced to drive gas-guzzling cars.

The late Frank Perotti, who served as the supervisor of North East for more than a decade, also appears, speaking about the loss of freight service affecting his dairy farm. “We see the loss in the economy since we’ve lost the service to the railroad,” he said.

The video aired on cable television, which was only available in Manhattan at the time. He watched the premiere from his aunt’s city apartment, surrounded by friends and bottles of wine.

“This must be what the Beatles felt like the first time they heard one of their songs on the radio,” he remembers thinking.

The film was also screened at The Moviehouse in Millerton for a one-night showing.



PHOTOS BY ALY MORRISSEY

Filmmaker Philip Milano of Dover Plains holds the Scotch U-matic cassette containing his original 1970s documentary about the Harlem Valley Transportation Association.

Though Milano didn’t pursue filmmaking after NYU, he stayed rooted in the area, opening Milano’s Restaurant in Pine Plains, which operated for 14 years. The location is now home to Back Bar Beer Garden.

Nearly 50 years later, Milano says he is content with how history unfolded. “If the trains had stayed, this whole area would look completely different,” he said. “In a way, I’m glad it didn’t happen because I still like bouncing along these scenic back roads. It’s one of the prettiest parts of New York.”

New pool and poolhouse expected to open next year

Plans for the long-awaited community pool and poolhouse at Eddie Collins Memorial Park are moving into the construction phase, with village officials aiming to open the facility by summer 2027.

The Village Board of Trustees hopes to hold a ceremonial groundbreaking in July as part of Millerton's 175th anniversary celebration. With contracts for electrical, plumbing and mechanical work now approved, construction is expected to begin in August.

The project has been in development since March 2024, when the village first unveiled plans to renovate Eddie Collins Memorial Park. Funding accelerated later that year after the village secured a \$6.4 million grant through New York's NY SWIMS capital program to construct a community pool, poolhouse with bathhouse facilities, community room and septic system.

The project received an additional boost in December 2024, when the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation awarded the village a matching grant of up to \$675,000. In March 2025, the Foundation for Community Health contributed a \$23,557 grant to help cover administrative costs associated with the project.

Then in February of this year, the Village revealed final designs for the pool. The structure is intended to withstand heavy seasonal use and support year-round community programming.

The pool design includes several features aimed to appeal to a wide range of ages, including a waterslide, diving board and water-play elements for children.

The proposed layout includes a sloped, shallow entry area with young children and accessibility in mind, a mid-depth section and a deep end designed to accommodate a diving board, officials said.

The plans also include a kitchen area that can support concessions and special events with outside vendors – a revenue stream village officials hope will offset operational costs.

The park's first swimming pool was installed in 1966 in the rear southwestern corner of the park. Over time, the high water table lifted and cracked the pool. Groundwater infiltration prevented the pool's water from heating up even on hot summer days.

The renovations to Eddie Collins Memorial Park have been a hit with residents so far. Construction on Phase 1 — regrading of the park, a new entrance and paved parking areas, a soccer field, accessible playground upgrades, new basketball courts and pavilion improvements — was completed in 2022.

Additional reporting provided by Aly Morrissey.



ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED

A rendering of the planned pool and poolhouse shows a shallow, ramped entrance allowing access for people with disabilities.



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ARCHIVE PHOTOS

Above: A truck lies on its side after losing control and striking the barrier at the “checkerboard corner” on Route 22 south of the intersection with Route 44. Right: A volunteer firefighter monitors an active blaze.



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Millerton's fire department marks 134 years of battling blazes

Millerton's volunteer fire department has spent more than 130 years protecting the village, a legacy that began after a fire ravaged and destroyed a prominent hotel in 1891.

North East Fire District Commissioner Dave Vandebogart, who serves as the fire company's historian, is himself a third-generation member of the Millerton Fire Company. He said Millerton's rapid growth after the arrival of the railroad spurred the need for an organized fire department.

At the time, building codes didn't exist and materials were much more flammable. Densely populated communities like the newly-formed Millerton could face devastation if a fire broke out and spread through the community.

That fear materialized in January 1891, Vandebogart said, when the Millerton Hotel near the intersection of John Street and Center Street caught fire. Village residents banded together with buckets to try to douse the flames, but the effort wasn't enough to save the building. The incident highlighted a need for an organized fire company with proper firefighting equipment.

The fire company officially formed in January 1892, after village trustees met at the Millerton National Bank and voted to create a local fire company. Trustees later elected to name the company the E.H. Thompson Hose Company in honor of the bank's president, who provided the venue for the trustees' early meetings.

The newly-formed hose company soon purchased a horse-drawn hose cart, complete with a 500-foot hose, wrenches and 28 pails for carrying water. An additional horse-driven cart carried nine ladders.

The fire company's first official home was a building that still stands at the corner of Dutchess Avenue and Century Boulevard in Millerton, neighboring the building that houses EcoBuilders and Moore & Moore Printing. That building was constructed in 1902 and named the E.H. Thompson Fire House to further honor the Millerton National Bank's president.

Millerton's fire department slowly grew, expanding its equipment collection until a new firehouse was necessary and constructed in 1962. That building on Century Boulevard still serves as the company's main firehouse today and is currently undergoing renovations to its exterior.

Firefighters have had to staff the firehouse 24/7 on multiple occasions during the village's history — including in 1969 when a massive snowstorm shut down Route 22 for two days and two nights.

People crowded the firehouse for a warm place to stay as the snowstorm stranded travelers and forced some locals out



ARCHIVE PHOTO

Millerton Fire Co. members monitor a fire at the Brown Cup Diner on Route 22. The diner would later be completely destroyed by the fire.

of their homes. Everyone was stuck until large snow blowers arrived from Poughkeepsie to clear Route 22.

But Vandebogart said the fire company faces more profound challenges than just fighting fires. Changing demographics in the area and increased training standards have created challenges for the volunteer organization.

"Everything is modeled for career," Vandebogart said, highlighting a shift over recent decades toward professional emergency medical services and firefighters nationwide. As that shift has occurred, safety standards and training requirements have risen across the board, placing a larger burden on volunteers.

Another challenge is attracting new members. In 2017, the Millerton Fire Company ran a program known as "Explorers," which allowed teenagers from 14 and up to participate in volunteer work at the firehouse.

But that program folded due to staffing issues, and the North East Fire District Board of Commissioners has proposed a policy limiting volunteer participation to those no younger than 16 at its regular meeting on Tuesday, April 21.

Vandebogart said the rising cost of living in the region further exacerbates recruitment challenges. As costs increase, younger generations of Millertonians have become less likely to stay in the community to build a life.

"Membership kind of ebbs and flows," Vandebogart said. "It is hard to keep young people around here."

Looking toward the future, Vandebogart said the fire company hopes to avoid having to transition to professional firefighting for as long as possible.

"We're just trying to keep it volunteer," Vandebogart said.

Millerton owes its name to a transient engineer

The arrival of the railroad in the Town of North East in 1851 is heralded as the moment Millerton came into being — ushering in a boom period for the area that transformed it from a sparsely populated farming community into a hub of commerce.

That moment was brought about by Sidney Greene Miller and his associate civil engineers in their work as contractors for the New York and Harlem Railroad. After his work, Millerton quickly grew from an insignificant hamlet in North East to the center of the town's activity within just 25 years.

The railroad's contribution to the area's growth, along with Miller's reported congeniality, as described in a 2001 history of the village produced by the North East Historical Society, led village founders Alexander Trowbridge, Col. John Winchell, Walter Wakeman, Platt Paine and soon-to-be Connecticut Governor Alexander Holley to name Millerton after the civil engineer when it was officially formed in 1875.

But little is known about Miller, beyond the findings uncovered by the North East Historical Society and some investigative work by Sarah Hermans, an amateur historian who grew up in Millerton.

Hermans said public documents on him are sparse, although she found enough to roughly map out his life from records available online.

Miller was born in New York City in 1817, where he was raised by Sylvanus Miller. An obituary for Miller when he died in 1900 said his father, Sylvanus, was a judge, and census records list his profession as "lawyer."

Miller became a civil engineer, serving as a partner of Morris, Miller and Schuyler when that company was contracted to expand the New York and Harlem railroad north from New York City to Albany. Records show Miller lived in New York City in the early 1850s when the Millerton stop was built, but he didn't stay in the city long.

Census records indicate Miller left New York State within the decade. He, his wife and three children moved to Westport, Connecticut, in 1854 and then to Virginia in 1856. There, Miller and his wife, Sarah Williamson, had three more children.

Miller and his family were forced out of their home in Alexandria, Virginia, when the United States Army seized the house to use as a hospital during the Civil War.

By 1870, the family had moved to Savannah, Georgia. Documents from Miller's life are limited, but records indicate that building railroads led him to move frequently. Within just 10 years, Miller and his family, now including a grandson, were recorded as living in Chatham Township in New



PHOTO COURTESY NORTH EAST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Sidney G. Miller, the engineer that helped build the railroad through Millerton, is the village's namesake but never lived there.

Jersey in 1880.

Miller did return to New York City at some point before his death in 1900, as shown by death records and an obituary published in *The New York Times*.

Miller was buried in Green-wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

Hermans said her research on Miller began by accident while she was researching a friend's family history. She said she thought Miller would have been a local before she started researching, but soon found out he never even lived in Millerton.

"I was delighted and shocked to find out that he was actually a 'city person,'" Hermans said.

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Main Street bustles with new businesses this summer

Millerton's Main Street has weathered its share of booms and busts over the past 175 years. But in 2026, the downtown is buzzing once again, fueled in no small part by a wave of new businesses that have opened their doors.

The storefronts run the gamut: Rosemary Rose Finery, Jones & Daughters, and Dutchess Trading Company have jewelry and home goods on offer. Tri-Corner F.E.E.D. and Pasture Kitchen keep the community fed with an emphasis on locally-sourced products. Candy-Os and the T-Shirt Farm have combined into a one-stop shop for sweets and fabrics. Muanjai Tea is bringing a new flavor of café to the area, and Black Rabbit Farms will be the town's first purveyor of recreational cannabis.

Sitting side by side on Main Street's curve, Black Rabbit Farms and Muanjai Tea will be the newest businesses on the block. The respective owners expect to open this summer.

Black Rabbit Farms owner Douglas Broughton has been cultivating marijuana since the 1990s, but its recent legalization led him to pursue a retail space. He found a location in

the former Demitasse space at 32 Main St.

The tea shop, the brainchild of Kanchisar Jiradhanaiphat and John Schildbach, will offer Thai tea classics such as pink milk, but Schildbach was quick to clarify that "this isn't going to be a bubble tea shop." The menu will also feature Thai tea ice cream floats, lattes and matcha drinks.

Muanjai Tea is taking over the former Candy-Os space. It became available after Candy-Os owner Gillian Osnato decided to combine her inventory of sweets with the T-Shirt Farm, her other business on the block. "I was skeptical about how to merge them, but I think it worked," Osnato said. "There are two different sets of equipment, and each has its own set of challenges, but everyone seems to be excited."

Then there's Jones & Daughters, a boutique offering apparel, jewelry, home goods, and gifts next door to the Moviehouse. It opened last month in the former Geary Gallery Space. "We wanted to create a place to shop that felt as thoughtful as this community," co-founder Constance Edwards said. "The perfect outfit, something beautiful for your

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home, a gift that actually means something.”

More jewelry and artisan goods are available at Rosemary Rose Finery. Founder Jessica DeCarlo Lee moved into the space in May. She shares it with Meg Musgrove, who runs Common Place Craft Workshop. The result is a combination workshop and retail space that has received rave reviews and return customers. Herbal medicines, screen-printing, and pottery are among the store’s offerings.

Millerton’s recent business growth is becoming increasingly visible. After opening last year, local market Tri-Corner F.E.E.D. and farm-to-table restaurant Pasture Kitchen continue to thrive.

Tri-Corner has carved a niche in a town in need of groceries. It offers farm-fresh meats, seasonal vegetables, prepared foods, coffee and baked goods. “We really want to reduce barriers for people to be able to afford nutritious, local food,” said Blake Myers, director of food programs at the Tri Corner F.E.E.D. Market. “Anybody can come in and shop.”

Pasture Kitchen, formerly Tallow, survived a rebrand on the strength of its expanded and locally-sourced menu. The restaurant blends popular classics like burgers and chicken sandwiches with steak frites, burrata salads, and a rotating wine selection.

But while some new tenants were drawn to Millerton’s rising profile, others are interested in preserving its history.

Some are longtime residents interested in preserving and repurposing the town’s iconic buildings — like Jason Jobson, Richard Lambertson, and Christophe Pourny of Dutchess Trading Company. They opened in the old Terni’s storefront in 2024, renovating the space to preserve one of the town’s most historic structures.

The trio has converted the mirror-lined space — which has served as a cafe, boarding house, and tackle shop over its hundred year history — to a home goods and gifts store. “We love the town because there are so many people that have been coming here their whole lives,” said Jobson. “We get a lot of people from the Berkshires, too,” added Lambertson. “They come up Route 22 and stop for lunch.”



Meg Musgrove, left, and Jessica Rose Lee opened Rosemary Rose Finery on May 1.



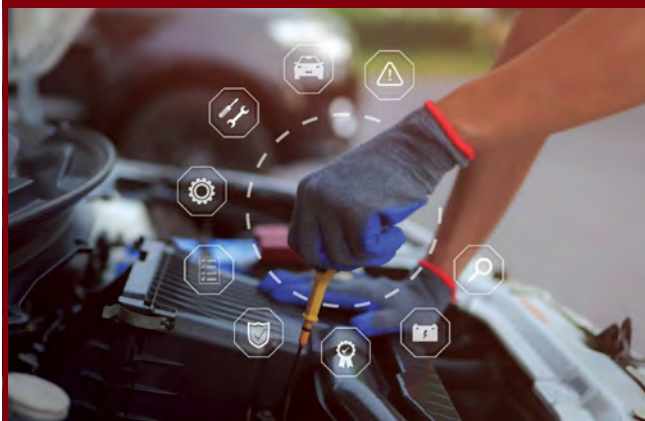
PHOTOS BY ALY MORRISSEY

Shoppers crowd Jones & Daughters’ new space on Millerton’s Main Street for the boutique’s grand opening on Friday, May 29.

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Oblong Books marks half a century; remains a downtown fixture

As Millerton celebrates its 175th anniversary, one of Main Street's most enduring institutions continues to shape the face of Main Street. Oblong Books, the independent bookstore that has served generations of readers, remains a cultural cornerstone of the village 50 years after opening its doors.

The store officially celebrated its golden milestone in August 2025 with a "good old-fashioned block party." Hundreds turned out for the family-friendly event featuring live music, food trucks, raffles and entertainment.

Second-generation co-owner Suzanna Hermans, daughter of Oblong's founder Dick Hermans, said the event was more than just a party.

"We wanted to celebrate our friends, neighbors and generations of customers who have kept us here for 50 years," she said. "It's a thank-you to the people of Millerton, in particular, without whom we'd never be here."

The store's history was highlighted and celebrated leading up to the birthday bash.

Oblong co-founder Dick Hermans originally opened the store in 1975 with a vision of creating a welcoming space for lovers of good books and music. With a \$10,000 loan, he and founding partner Holly Nelson opened their first 400-square-foot shop on Main Street — now home to the soon-to-open Black Rabbit dispensary.

As the business grew, Oblong expanded into Harold's Apparel — now Cottage+Camp — in 1981, and eventually purchased its current building. To this day, staff remember walking the books across the street by hand during the move.

Oblong Jr. — a children's bookstore located next to Oblong in what was once a shoemaker's storefront — came later, as did their second location in Rhinebeck.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dick Hermans in the Oblong Bookstore on Millerton's Main Street in 1985.

Over 50 years, Oblong navigated shifts in technology, consumer behavior and the broader economy.

In the 1990s, the rise of big-box chains like Barnes & Noble and Borders contributed to a steep decline in independent bookstores across the country. Then, the emergence of eBooks and Amazon further threatened smaller shops.

More recently, bookstores are facing the threat of censorship and efforts to limit access to books.

Through it all, Suzanna Hermans says it has been the support of the local community that helps Oblong weather these industry-wide changes.

"One thing that spans the whole length of it is our incredible staff that has worked for us over these last 50 years," she says.

Since its founding, Oblong has employed more than 200 people — many of whom have stayed for five to 40 years. "Folks tend to stay a long time, which is an incredible testament to their admiration for bookselling," she says. "But we also work really hard to be a great place to work."

Over the decades, Oblong has also become a destination for top-tier literary events featuring celebrity authors, local favorites and emerging voices.

"We love our authors," Hermans says. "We've built up a reputation that you can send your best-touring authors here to the Hudson Valley and they're going to sell their books at our events."

Though much has changed over the years, the heart of Oblong Books remains the same: books, music and community.



PHOTO PROVIDED

The current home of Oblong Books in Millerton was an antiques store before Dick Hermans moved in.

Local teacher discovers generational Millerton connection

Longtime resident and former Webutuck teacher Diane Price has lived in Millerton since her family moved to the area in 1961, spurred by her grandparents' ailing health.

It would take 52 years after that move for Price to learn that her family's connection to the community dates back to its founding days — when her great-grandfather and local druggist Levi P. Hatch was considered one of the village's nine founding professionals.

The discovery began in 2013, when she read a magazine article on the village's founders and realized she had a connection to Hatch. He was Price's great-grandfather.

"He was considered one of the nine founding professionals," Price said. The discovery came decades after Price first moved to Millerton in 1961, when her father, Bill Doughty, relocated the family there to be closer to his parents, Millerton natives Roy and Mae Doughty.

The discovery, sparked by the article and later expanded through research by local amateur historian Sarah Hermans, cemented Price's connection to a community that she had been in love with since she was a girl.

Hatch arrived in Millerton by train, according to research completed by Price and Hermans, and settled in the village, where he soon met Lottie Mae Scribner, who lived on nearby Silver Mountain. The two married, though the exact date is unknown, and lived in a house on Elm Avenue — also known today as Route 22. The pair had four children.

Price's grandmother, Mae Hatch, was the youngest of Levi and Lottie's four kids. Price describes her as a talented musician who could play piano by ear despite a lack of formal lessons.

"She played for the grange dances," Price said. Mae married a Poughquag resident named Roy Doughty, Price's grandfather, and the pair also settled down in Millerton.

Roy Doughty, Price said, worked at Dutchess Auto in the early days of the automobile industry. But a stroke forced him to take a less-intensive job as a tax collector. Roy and Mae also had four children — Helen, Erma, Richard and Price's father, William "Bill" Doughty.

Bill Doughty graduated from school in Millerton in 1936 and was drafted into World War II in 1941. During the war, Bill served as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He moved to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, upon returning to the states and settled down with a resident of that town named Rita Mazur, Price's mother. The pair married in 1946 and had three children — William Jr., known as "Mike," Diane, born in 1949; and Patrick.

Bill was eventually drafted for the second time to serve during the Korean War, and his family moved from Pittsfield to



PHOTO BY NATHAN MILLER

Diane Price holds a picture of her father, Bill Doughty, in her home on Maple Avenue in Millerton.

New Smyrna Beach in Florida for about three years, Price said.

After his service ended, the '60s had arrived and Price's grandparents' health was deteriorating. Prior to the move to Florida, her family regularly made road trips from Pittsfield to Millerton to visit and care for her grandparents. But in 1961, her family moved to Millerton permanently, where her mother and father lived out the rest of their lives.

Price was 13 when her family moved to Millerton permanently. She said she already loved the community, describing it as close-knit, safe and entertaining.

"In 1961, I went to the movies and I met a boy," Price said. "I sat with that boy and my parents knew about it before I got home."

She said the community has changed dramatically since she moved here in the 1960s. At the time, everybody knew each other. The highlight of the weekend was the Friday night train bringing visitors from New York City. But opportunities in the community declined over the decades, and now many people who grew up in the area feel they have to leave to make a living.

"What industry is there?" Price said. "What reason do we have for children or teenagers or adults to stay here? Where can they work and make a decent living?" Those questions have been on her mind for decades, she said, as she watched her students and her own children grow up and leave Millerton to find work and build their lives.

Despite the anxiety, Price looks back fondly on her upbringing in the village and the community that still exists here.

"Every day is a gift," Price said. "How can I be anything but grateful for the life that I lived?"

NorthEast-Millerton Library microfilm digitization nears completion

A new initiative at the NorthEast-Millerton Library aims to digitize a collection of photographs, newspapers and other historical materials documenting the community's early history.

Once completed, the collection will be available online and will include photographs, yearbooks, newspaper microfilm and slides reflecting the area's past. The materials come from personal collections as well as archives from the Millerton News and its predecessor, the Millerton Telegraph.

Library Director Rhiannon Leo-Jameson has been overseeing the project. "It's fascinating to see what makes it in," she said. "There's lots of landscapes and scenery, and little moments from town, like children jumping rope. Those sometimes have a hand-written caption, like, 'having fun on the first nice day of the year.'"

Momentous occasions are also included — politician Robert Moses pops up during a campaign tour through the re-

gion, and Hudson Valley native Franklin Delano Roosevelt is a recurring figure. A member of his security detail was from Millerton.

The selection of what is being posted online involves a process that still relies on the discernment of the human eye. "I was surprised at how manual it still is," Leo-Jameson said. "They spot check a reel to determine the image quality and aperture, then they scan the whole reel, then they send it to a second company who will manually segment the news articles."

Once the images are fully digitized, they'll be available on the Hudson River Valley Heritage website at hrvh.org. Yearbooks dating back to 1951 from Webutuck School District and Millerton Union Free High School are already available. "There are so many names I know from working in the community," said Leo-Jameson, "and it's amazing to see how young they were."



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New Water Department building expected by summer's end

Nearly 18 months after a fire destroyed Millerton's Public Works building, which housed the Highway Department and Water Department, construction is expected to begin within weeks on a new Water Department facility and pumphouse.

The new building would restore the village's full water pumping capacity and allow officials to end the state of emergency declared after the fire. Village officials are also planning a separate Highway garage, with details of that project still being finalized.

Fire project manager Caroline Farr-Killmer has been in charge of replacing the building since the fire destroyed it. In June, she said construction could begin on the new Water Department and pumphouse once the plan is approved by the Dutchess County Department of Health.

Millerton Mayor Jenn Najdek said she expects construction to start as soon as the designs get approval from the health department.

Officials described the new Water Department building as an urgent need. Farr-Killmer explained the village's water system has been functioning with just one operational well, causing concerns about potential water shortages at that wellhead and its longevity. The village cannot operate the second well until it is enclosed in a structure, Farr-Killmer said.

Najdek originally expected Board of Health approval to come in early June, but as of Thursday, July 9, the plans are stalled as health officials deliberate the plans.

Despite the stall, Najdek doesn't expect the project to affect Millerton's plans for the week-long celebration of Millerton's 175th birthday set for July 11 to 19.

Since the fire last winter, property restoration firm BELFOR has been working to clear and prep the site for a brand new set of buildings.

Farr-Killmer explained the Water Department building, which will house one of Millerton's municipal wells, must now be a separate structure from the Highway Department building due to environmental and health regulations. Municipal wells require up to a 200-foot buffer from other structures to prevent drinking water contamination.

In the weeks after the fire, Farr-Killmer visited the charred building almost daily and documented damage to the structure and inventory. She said the fire itself was only the beginning, and pointed out that navigating insurance, rebuilding plans and deadlines have been hidden challenges.



PHOTO BY ALY MORRISSEY

Millerton's former Water Department building, ravaged by fire, as it awaited demolition in summer 2025.

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Irondale Schoolhouse: a piece of living history

A one-room schoolhouse sits on Main Street along the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, offering an opportunity for locals and visitors to step inside a piece of living history.

The Irondale Schoolhouse that now sits in downtown Millerton was not originally located on Main Street. The building was first constructed in 1858 along what is now Route 22 in the Irondale section of town, defined by Irondale road and the Old Mill that still sits along Webatuck Creek. At the time, the schoolhouse was one of 14 that served the Town of North East's children.

Starting in 2015, the building was disassembled and moved — piece-by-piece — thanks to the efforts of a local organization called the Friends of the Irondale Schoolhouse and a Millerton resident that has dedicated much of his life to

“It was in dire straits. Right on the road, but beautiful. I remember thinking, ‘Wouldn’t that be a great building to move into the village?’”

Ralph Fedele

the community and preserving local landmarks.

That man is Ralph Fedele, a revered figure in the community both for his efforts to restore, maintain and educate people about the former schoolhouse and for more than a decade serving on the North East Town Board.

Fedele moved to Millerton from New York City 37 years ago, in 1988, and has since worn many hats – volunteer, historian, advocate, elected official – yet he still doesn't believe he's earned that title.

“I'm a transplant,” he said matter of factly. “I'm from the city.”

Years after settling in Millerton full time, Fedele was driving north on Route 22 when he spotted an old, classic building and couldn't stop thinking about it.

“It was in dire straits,” he recalled. “Right on the road, but beautiful. I remember thinking, ‘Wouldn't that be a great building to move into the village?’”

That moment would eventually turn into Fedele's lasting legacy.

Fedele joked that people may have thought he was crazy during the lengthy restoration. “I was a tyrant,” he said with a laugh. “I really made sure that we were able to get it done.” The effort required coordination with the state, the county, village and town officials, and his newly assembled nonprofit board.

As a self-proclaimed history buff, Fedele didn't stop at the restoration. He found a list of students in old records and did what any determined historian would do. He opened the telephone book and started making calls.

Eventually, he tracked down one of the schoolhouse's original students – Mary (Mechare) Leitch – who, at the age of 101, returned to the building after renovations were complete.

“It was a marvelous time,” smiled Fedele. “I was so happy to see her.”



PHOTO BY ALY MORRISSEY

Ralph Fedele sits at a desk in the historic Irondale Schoolhouse, which he led the effort to relocate to downtown Millerton.



PHOTO PROVIDED

North East Town Supervisor Chris Kennan, left, and Mary Leitch, who was the last living Irondale Schoolhouse student until her death in 2025.

Leitch died on Dec. 24, 2025, at the age of 103.

Leitch was born in Millerton in 1922 and grew up on Winchell Mountain in the hamlet of Irondale. Her early schooling was at Irondale's 1858 one-room schoolhouse until it closed in 1930. She was proud of having been the last person to attend the school. From the third grade onward, she attended school in the Millerton school district.

"If you sit still, you will rust," was a favorite Leitch saying, perhaps inspired by the Irondale district and the area's iron industry.

Leitch delighted in the outdoors and in the company of animals and people, caring for many dogs—especially Jack Russells—and cherishing the horses that were part of her long, vibrant life. An avid sportswoman, she enjoyed deer hunting and fishing, keeping her licenses current right up until her passing. She was a longtime member of both the Jack Russell Club of America and the Dutchess County Professional Horsemen's Association.

In 1958, she married William "Billy" Leitch of Millbrook, a professional horseman, sharing a love of the sporting life and enjoying active membership in the Millbrook Hunt Club. Billy pre-deceased her in 2015.



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Millerton Moviehouse marks 120 years with structural upgrades

There are a handful of buildings that have stood the test of time over Millerton's 175-year history. But if there's one that stands out as a singular representation of the town, it's the Millerton Moviehouse and its iconic clock tower.

Built in 1903 as a grange hall, it was soon converted into a movie theater with a second-floor ballroom. It was one of a handful of buildings that came to define the town in the following decades, standing tall across the street from the Episcopal Church and Millerton Inn, next to Terni's, and up the hill from Millerton's train station.

When a fire destroyed the local department store and other storefronts on the north side of Main Street in 1955, the Moviehouse became a landmark that represented the village's early history.

It fell into disrepair in the 1970s and was briefly run as an adult theater. Marian and Carr Ferguson bought the theater in 1974, hoping to revive its status as a first-run theater and remove the pornographic element. Their four teenage daughters ran the theater for two years before the Fergusons sold



PHOTO BY GRAHAM CORRIGAN

Wooden beams made from tree trunks comprise the load-bearing structure under Millerton's Moviehouse.

the Moviehouse to Carol and Robert Sadlon in 1978.

"It was a single theater with 300 seats. There was no heat, no air conditioning," said Carol Sadlon when asked about the state of the theater when she and her husband purchased it.

The Sadlons worked hard to improve the facilities over their nearly 50-year tenure. They added heat, air conditioning, and a second screening room. In 2012, they replaced the 35mm projection systems with a digital system.

But when COVID hit in 2020, the Moviehouse was an early casualty. By November 2020, the property was on the market, and the whole concept of movie theaters was in question.

Vaccines arrived in early 2021 — and a buyer for the Moviehouse followed soon after. The new co-chairs, David Maltby and Chelsea Altman, made the purchase in February 2021 and reopened the theater as a non-profit.

Its new non-profit status allowed the Moviehouse's operators to seek grant funding. They initiated a massive renovation campaign that included redesigning both floors and adding an elevator. They also replaced the signage, and upgraded the seating this past April.

This past month, the Moviehouse received \$99,000 as part of a grant provided by the New York State Council on the Arts that will pay to renovate and stabilize the 120-year-old building.

Looking forward, general manager Jeremy Boviard has big plans for the Moviehouse's future. "What excites me about the possibilities looking forward is that we continue our positive trajectory as a regional arts center," Boviard said. "We want to reach a wide variety of demographics, and continue to grow in lockstep with the needs of our community."



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Wastewater project coming to fruition after decades of debate

Millerton's business community will soon see the completion of a public wastewater system, addressing what local officials and business owners have called a major constraint on commercial development in the community for decades.

The \$13.8 million project, which is expected to serve the core of the Village of Millerton and a commercial stretch of the Town of North East along U.S. Route 44, represents one of the largest infrastructure investments in the community in decades, and brings an end to calls for a sewer system that stretch back to World War II. Officials say the system will safeguard local waterways while creating a foundation for long-term economic stability.

Millerton trustee Matt Soleau, who has been working closely on the wastewater project and also operates a local full-service custom building firm, said in February that both residents and businesses are constrained by outdated septic systems, particularly on smaller lots where upgrades cannot meet modern health standards.

The proposed wastewater district aims to serve the core of the village, including its business district, as well as the commercial section of the Town of North East along Route 44 extending from Cumberland Farms to the New York-Connecticut border. Properties within the proposed service area currently rely on individual septic systems, including tanks with leach fields, and outdated systems like seepage pits, cess-pools and holding tanks.

Village officials said many properties are limited not by zoning alone, but by septic constraints.

"As a result, many homes cannot legally add bedrooms, create accessory dwelling units or convert existing structures," Soleau said.

Under the proposed system, most properties would retain their existing septic tanks if they are code-compliant and in good working condition. If a tank does not meet current standards, a new one would be installed as part of the project.

The existing tanks will still be used to collect solid waste, but liquid waste will travel through the municipal system to a treatment center. Treated wastewater will then be returned to Webatuck Creek.

Existing leach fields would be taken out of service and left in place, allowing property owners to reclaim that land for landscaping, driveways or ADUs.

For businesses, many commercial properties rely on old septic systems that are already maxed out, which makes it difficult or impossible to open water-heavy businesses like restaurants, cafes, salons or fitness studios.

Officials also emphasize the environmental benefits. A modern, up-to-date wastewater system will protect the natu-

ral environment, including the Webatuck Creek that flows right through the village.

Village officials say the construction phase will aim to limit disruption throughout the village and town, proceeding in targeted segments, with defined areas opened for installation, restored, and then closed before crews move on. The goal, Soleau said, is to allow normal activity to continue as much as possible throughout the process.

"Protecting the safety of our residents and visitors, preserving continuity of local businesses, maintaining access, and retaining residents' quality of life throughout construction are non-negotiable priorities," Soleau added.

The project hit major milestones this year, with village officials securing needed funding from a congressionally-directed spending grant of just under \$4 million announced in February. That additional federal funding represented the last chunk of money needed to move the project forward.

Officials expect to begin construction on the system next year, with a tentative completion date targeting 2028.

Additional reporting provided by Aly Morrissey.



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Millerton dressmaker forged path as early businesswoman

If you've driven down Main Street in Millerton, you've passed the former home and shop of one of the village's earliest female entrepreneurs. At a time when most businesses were owned by men, Mary Kisselbrack made a name for herself in the late 1800s as a well-respected milliner and dressmaker.

On April 11, 1891, train conductor George Kisselbrack purchased a 124-by-232-foot vacant lot at 54 Main St. and hired locally renowned builders Beers and Trafford to design what would become their home and Mary's business.

In a historical document, "A Beckon Call to a Village," the house was referred to as "one of the handsomest, architecturally, in the village." With gables, pointed roof lines and delicate shades of colors on its exterior ornamentation, the document noted that "no stranger passes it without an admiring glance."

Today, the home still stands, and recently operated as a restaurant called Manna Dew Cafe, which closed its doors in 2023.

Mary Kisselbrack operated her business out of the west side of her home and developed a reputation for her skill, style, and

business acumen.

"Mrs. Kisselbrack spares no pains in satisfying her patrons," an 1890s Telegram article, the village's newspaper at the time, said.

Kisselbrack's reputation earned her customers from different parts of the country — some as far away as Florida — in addition to regular clients from Salisbury, Lakeville, Sharon, Amenia, Pine Plains, Copake and Hillsdale.

"With a woman of the long experience and exquisite taste of Mrs. Kisselbrack at the head of the millinery and dressmaking business, we may be sure that our wives and daughters will be reasonably supplied with the most stylish bonnets and dresses," the article said.

In her 1905 obituary, Kisselbrack was described as a "self-made woman" who possessed "more than ordinary ability."

On Oct. 5, 1905 — just over two months shy of her 56th birthday — Kisselbrack died following a severe, three-week illness. According to an obituary that appeared in the Millerton Telegram, she suffered a fibrous tumor and peritonitis.

"While she was not afraid to die, she lamented leaving home and loved ones," the obituary said. "She talked of dying and of her funeral arrangements as calmly as if going away on a visit."



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mary Kisselbrack, left, and her husband, George.



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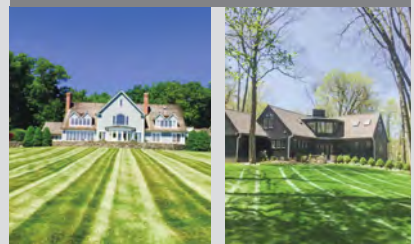
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