



Kent Historical Society Newsletter

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Who Saved Otto Klug? *Investigating a 75-year-old mystery*

By Peter M. Heimlich

So-called “alternative facts” are nothing new. Here’s an intriguing example tied to a dramatic, high-profile event that happened about 75 years ago in Litchfield County.

It starts with an August 29, 1941 front page *New York Times* article, “Children Escape in Train Wreck; 2 of Crew Killed,” about a massive train wreck in Kent. Six cars carrying hundreds of campers derailed into Hatch Pond. Two trainmen were killed and a third had a leg amputated.

The article concluded with information provided by “Henry Heimlich, 21, of 30 West Ninetieth Street, a sailing counselor at Camp Mah-kee-nac and a pre-medical student at Cornell University, who was... the ‘hero’ of the accident.”

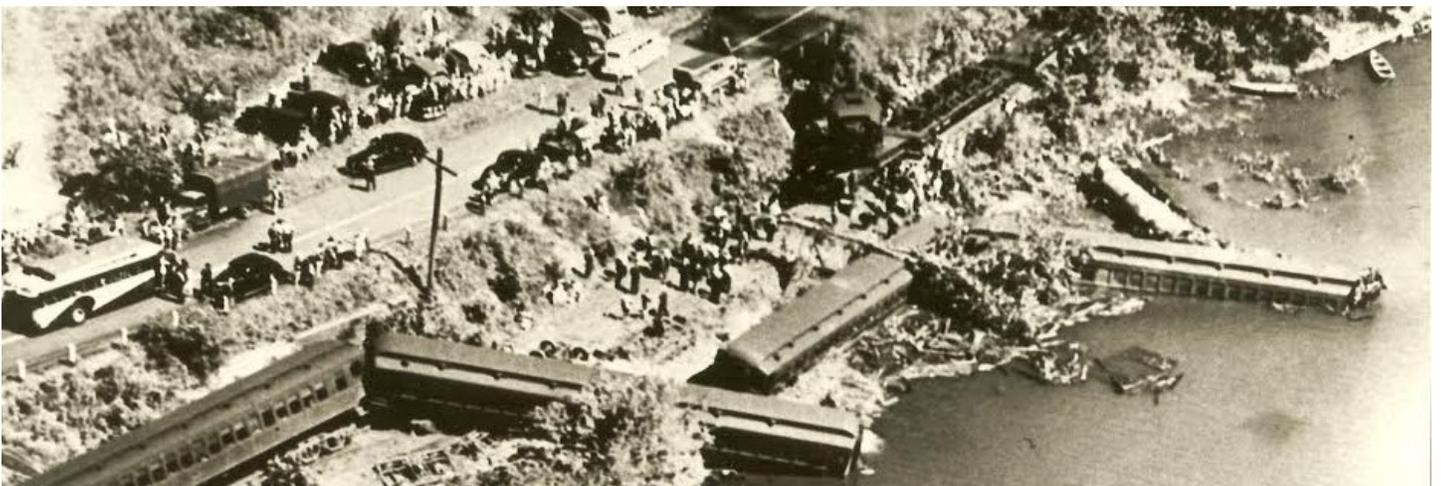
“I was riding in the next-to-the-last coach,” Heimlich related, “when suddenly there was a lurch...I ran forward and jumped

out. I saw that the engine and the first car were almost submerged and that the fireman’s leg was caught under the steps of the second car which had overturned. He was lying in about four feet of water.

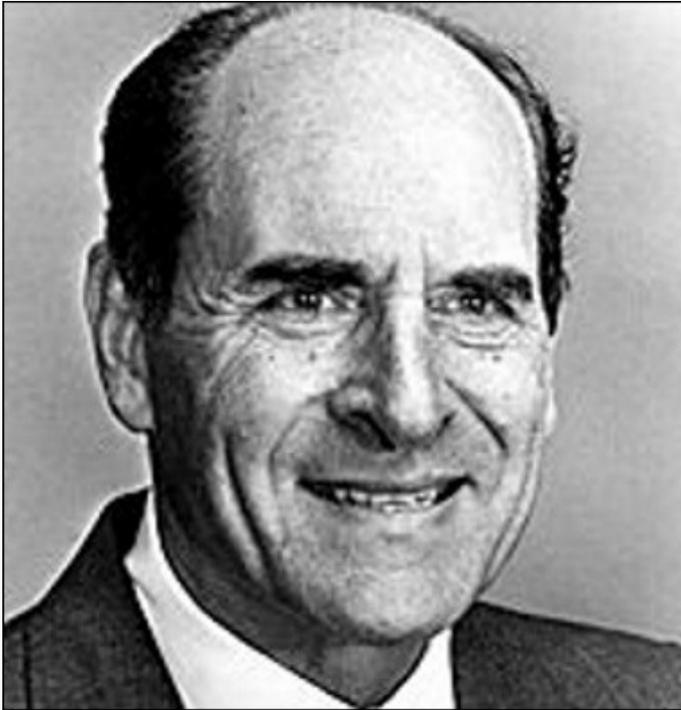
“He was floundering around, hysterical, and I ran toward him and held his head above the water...”

“He was all black and he was crying that he was afraid he’d lose his leg. Another counselor, Jack Handelsman, who is also a pre-medical student jumped into a boat nearby and rowed out to help me. Then a lot of people came and while I held the fireman up they started digging underneath with their hands, and later with shovels, to free his leg.”

A few months later, the *Times* published a follow-up item with a photo of the handsome 21-year-old pre-med student receiving an award for bravely saving the life of the train fireman.



The Hatch Pond trainwreck of 1941. Our guest author, Peter M. Heimlich, has been called an “investigative blogger,” and does original reporting on his blog, The Sidebar. He lives in suburban Atlanta with his wife, Karen M. Shulman.



Dr. Henry Heimlich, from Peter Heimlich's files: A fabulator's career started in South Kent

The sailing counselor and apparent hero was my father, Henry J. Heimlich MD, who died a couple of months ago. If the name rings a bell, it's probably because of a choking rescue treatment he first called "the Heimlich method" in the June 1974 medical journal *Emergency Medicine*. Only two years later, what had been renamed "the Heimlich maneuver" was incorporated into national first aid guidelines. Since then my family name became a household word and my father's namesake treatment has been credited with saving the lives of thousands of choking victims.

Fast forward to Spring 2002 when my wife Karen and I began researching my father's career. To our astonishment, we uncovered an unseen history of fraud that revealed him to be a remarkable charlatan and serial liar. Most shocking, he'd used nonexistent or fraudulent data in order to promote a string of crackpot medical claims that resulted in serious injuries and deaths.

In order to prevent more harm, we decided to bring the information to public attention via the press.

Since 2003, our work has been the basis for a couple hundred mainstream media reports that exposed what one medical journal called my father's "overreach and quackery."

My dad was no slouch when it came to singing his own praises to anyone in earshot and I was no exception. Most of our time together consisted of him telling me about his achievements and awards, especially after he became famous.

And that was my first problem with the train wreck story – over the decades he never mentioned it to me. I only learned about it in the early months of our research when Karen and I happened upon the 1941 *New York Times* articles.

My interest was piqued, so about 14 years ago, I decided to take a closer look.

Via public libraries in Connecticut, I obtained copies of every article I could find about the headline-making disaster. I also contacted Marge Smith at the Kent Historical Society who sent me some paperwork from their files and put me in touch with Emily Krizan, whose husband, Joseph Krizan Jr., reportedly participated in rescue efforts at the train wreck, including helping the trapped fireman, whose name was Otto Klug.

Interestingly, none of the articles and none of the people with whom I communicated said anything about any camp counselor (or my father by name) being involved in the rescue.

Instead, they near-unanimously identified a local resident named Jack Bartovic as the person responsible for holding Klug's head above water for hours. Local residents Charles Dutcher Edwards and Philip Camp were also identified as participants in the rescue.

The most compelling telling was a lengthy August 29, 1941 *Waterbury Republican* article consisting of detailed interviews with Bartovic and Emily's husband:

"Joseph Krizan, Jr., had seen the locomotive and cars topple off the track into Hatch Pond at South Kent yesterday as he was mowing the grass in front of his mother's house, just off the South Kent Road.

He and a friend, Jack Bartovic, ran toward the accident as fast as they could...Krizan was the first person to reach the scene. Bartovic didn't get into the car, because he saw a man half in and half out of the water, a short distance away at the other end of the car. It was the fireman, Otto Klug, of Seymour.

Bartovic waded in and held Klug's head above water, for his leg was caught. Later they found it had been almost severed and a doctor wanted to cut it off and get Klug out of there, but Klug said, "My leg isn't bad. I won't let you cut it off. I'll wait until the crane gets here and they lift the car off me."

So Bartovic stayed with him for more than two hours, and the crane lifted the car and then Klug saw that his leg was hanging only by flesh.

Krizan and Bartovic told their stories as they watched the wrecking crew working on the derailed trains in the late afternoon sunlight that slanted off the green quiet hills.

In a March 25, 2003 e-mail, Marge Smith wrote me: "Emily Krizan stopped by here today with some thoughts for me to pass along to you... (She got into a discussion with Marge [Edwards]) Richards, who is sure that her husband was the one to hold up Klug's head. But we feel positive that several people had that task, as the poor man was in the water for many hours. Emily and her husband had a dear friend named Jack Bartovic (no longer alive), who also held up Klug's head. Many years later, Klug knocked on Jack's door and came in to thank him for helping to save his life. Jack said he remembered Klug begging them to save his leg because he could feel it."

At the time I also interviewed Jacob "Jack" Handelsman – the camp counselor my father told the *Times* reporter had "rowed out to help me." Dr. Handelsman, then a prominent surgeon at Johns Hopkins, said he never heard anything about my



Rescuers at Hatch Pond, from the KHS archives. Public domain photo.

father being involved in the rescue. He also didn't remember anything about a rowboat. When I asked him about my father getting the award for bravery, he expressed surprise because my father never told him about it.

My father's 2014 memoir recounted the Hatch Pond train wreck in which he portrayed himself as a lone hero who had "been in the water (with Klug) for two hours" until "police and medical personnel finally arrived." More recently, his obituary in the December 19 *Wall Street Journal* repeated the 1941 *New York Times* version about how my father "held up the head of one of the train workers until help was able to arrive."

In the course of corresponding with the *Journal* about the apparent roles of Jack Bartovic and other area residents, I again reached out to the Kent Historical Society. That resulted in a gracious invitation to write this article which I hope generates more information from readers. To get the ball rolling, I composed and uploaded this page to my website that includes all articles and related information I've obtained:

<http://medfraud.info/OttoKlug.html>

Do you have more documents and/or information to share? If so, please contact me and/or the Kent Historical Society.

The Frontier Experience

By Mike Everett, President of the KHS

The KHS's theme for 2017 is the 18th century and the settlement of Kent. In planning the exhibit, we realized that it's a large, fascinating subject, and so the KHS decided to delve further with our general programming, too. So each Sunday Series this year ties into Kent's origins. In addition, we're co-sponsoring a three-part discussion series with the Eric Sloane Museum on Noah Blake's cabin at the museum, and how it illustrates changing attitudes toward the remote past: These three events are titled "Reading the Land: Noah Blake's Cabin in Context."

The KHS Sunday Series began with "Howling Wilderness," a talk I gave on January 22 (see below). This will be followed by four more lectures, all of them at Kent's Town Hall at 2:00 p.m.

- March 19: "Rods and Chains" by Michael-John Cavallaro, historian and author, will celebrate the life of Edmund Lewis, the intrepid surveyor who mapped Litchfield County;
- May 21: "Foods of the Founders," presented by Lola Chen, Museum Educator at the Wilton Historical Society, which will illustrate an often-neglected aspect of daily life in the colonial period -- the aspects of material and daily life that were so different from today;
- September 17: "The Puritan Religion and

Jonathan Edwards" by Thomas Key, an instructor at the Taconic Learning Center, will deepen your appreciation of a key theological figure of the time, who embodied the transition from the unbending strictness of the earliest Puritans to a more flexible, modern view; and,

- November 12: "Northwest Connecticut Furniture" by Roger Gonzalez, a KHS board member and an authority on colonial furniture. Anyone who is curious about the furniture of the era is in for a treat, since Roger's expertise in the field is legendary.

Collaboration with the Eric Sloane Museum

Our co-sponsorship of the Eric Sloane lecture series represents an ongoing effort to build ties with the other museums that make Kent their home, and the 2017 focus on the colonial era seemed like an unusual opportunity to do just that. And since I'll be giving these Eric Sloane talks, coordinating with the Historical Society was very efficient!

Sloane was an American landscape painter and author of illustrated works of cultural history and folklore, as well as a resident of NW Connecticut.



KHS President Mike Everett delivering his "Howling Wilderness" talk at our Sunday Series on January 22. Mike explored Puritan attitudes toward nature, and contrasted them with the Indians' more sustainable, ecologically oriented way of using the land very lightly. A packed audience of 74 or so suggests that there's plenty of interest in Colonial Kent. Photograph by Lynn Mellis Worthington.

In the 1970s, Eric Sloane built a replica of an early 19th century building lived in by Noah Blake, who described it in his 1804 diary that Sloane studied in great detail and turned into a book: *Diary of an Early American Boy*. The cabin now stands (and needs to be restored) on the grounds of the Eric Sloane Museum on Route 7, just north of town. In its simplicity, this structure represents an essential aspect of life on the frontier, but it also offers an occasion to reflect on the many tasks and challenges that hardened early settlement life in western Connecticut.



Eric Sloane in front the Noah Blake cabin shortly after it was completed. Photo from the Weather Hill Farm's blog.

The three or four “Reading the Landscape” talks and conversations will take the cabin as their starting point, but then branch out to the frontier experience -- the effort of early settlers to establish a homestead, to use the land to survive and prosper and to find the material for building all the structures needed. Eric Sloane’s cabin can be seen as an actual first dwelling, but also as a metaphor for the act of ordering the landscape into an English farm -- by then, a New England farm.

Upcoming Lectures at the Eric Sloane Museum

The Friends of Eric Sloane Museum are initiating a program to restore this unusual cabin. They hope to raise sufficient funds to aid the State of Connecticut to rebuild it in 2018. The talks intend to draw attention to this effort, and they are jointly sponsored by the Friends of Eric Sloane Museum and the Kent Historical Society. No admission fee is required, but all are urged to buy a copy of Sloane’s *Diary of an Early American Boy*. The talks will be held at the Eric Sloane Museum starting at 9:00 a.m. on May 6, May 20 and June 3.

Noah Blake’s Cabin in Context and as a Symbol of the Early Settlement Process.

May 6, 9-10 am: **Nature**

This talk will explore ideas about nature, conflicting attitudes toward farming and changing ecology. The actual location of the cabin will lead to a consideration of where a homestead should be sited. And the session will end with a brief outline of current natural factors in planning.

May 20, 9-10:30 **Geometry**

It’s hard to capture the colonial era without knowing the process of acquiring land, buying land and speculating in land, from 1740 on. The cabin focus will be on clearing the woods, the establishment of a farmstead, the types of structures needed, and the significance of proximity to town and meeting house. The session will end with a brief mention of how conventions and early regulations and the geometry of ownership we know.

June 3, 9-10:30 **Built Form**

Building the initial cabin led to a bigger and more significant house. We’ll examine vernacular and domestic architecture, and how houses and their siting are status symbols. The symbolic significance of Noah Blake’s cabin will provoke some reflection, too. The session ends with thoughts about how the first efforts on our frontier affected land use patterns that persist, and the value we put on historical retention.

Our Donors Give Us So Much

With great appreciation, we list the following businesses, organizations, foundations, and individuals that provided funding for the Kent Historical Society's programs and events, or awarded grants to KHS toward the restoration of Seven Hearths in 2015.

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Kent Lions Foundation
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Grateful Thanks

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Built on Bequests

Modern donors recognize the value of having their surviving assets continue to foster their goals. In this spirit, we hope you'll consider making a bequest to the Kent Historical Society. By including a bequest to the Kent Historical Society in your will or living trust, you are ensuring that we can continue to celebrate and preserve Kent for years to come.

Your gift also entitles your estate to an unlimited federal estate tax charitable deduction. You can use a wide variety of assets to fund a bequest, including cash, appreciated securities, real estate, tangible personal property, securities, and even closely held stock. Please give us a call at 860-927-4587 to discuss it with us.

Curator's Corner

A Legacy to Remember

By Marge Smith, Curator of the KHS



Shown here is part — just a portion — of the material donated to us by Marie Camp. Not quite visible on one of the background shelves are some very old planing tools donated by the Peet family, which will be the subject of another Curator's Corner.

One of Kent's most dedicated historians has left the KHS a truly remarkable gift. Marie Neels Camp passed away last April, aged 97. At the time, even though she was recovering from a bad fall, she was in the process of turning over much of her life's work to the society. She and her daughter, Dianne Lang, had previously made many trips to Tallman House, her little red pickup truck loaded with boxes and binders, books and maps, and much more! We scrambled to find room for what turned out to be just half of the iceberg – a process well worth the effort because of the value of the meticulously collected history she was donating.

After her passing, with Dianne under pressure to clean her mother's house out for sale, the KHS Collections Committee (Charlotte Lindsey, Nancy Schaefer, Patti Case and myself) began to meet there in order to do a preliminary sorting. We had realized when going through the boxes she had delivered to us that she had not only researched Kent history, she had also studied New Milford, New Preston, Sherman and Gaylordsville, among other towns! With Dianne's approval we decided that some of the treasures would be better off archived in those towns, but not before we checked everything carefully first.

The collection got started when Marie Neels, a girl from the Bronx, met and married a South Kent farmer named Phil Camp. The extensive Camp lands straddled the Kent/New Milford border even before Kent was officially settled, in an important area called The Fairweather Grant – which you will learn about in this summer's exhibit about the first settlers of Kent.

Marie, being a naturally inquisitive person possessed of an unfathomable amount of energy and focus, decided that she wanted to learn a bit more about the land that had become her new home. That "bit more" turned out to be a houseful of information! In 1980, having raised two children, labored alongside her husband on the farm and worked as secretary at South Kent School, Kent School and the Town of Kent, as well as volunteering for her church, taking art lessons and joining several organizations, Marie paused to reflect on her years of research. Here is a transcription of a document we recently stumbled upon while sorting through yet another box of land records and genealogy notes.

As the description of the farm boundaries were rather vague after years (from the early 1880s to the present) of being handed down from one generation to the next, I started searching back, parcel by parcel, with land sold off, added

on, traded, etc., and got interested in history of the land and this section of town. Read through hundreds of deeds and copied portions thereof and drew innumerable rough maps, trying to put together this huge puzzle, going back to the early 1700s. As the Iron industry men owned some of this land at one time, read a great many of their deeds in order to ferret out the ones connected with this place. Do not know whether I'll ever live long enough, or have the strength to, or patience enough to complete what I've started but have found enough to know where our boundaries are. Some of the original deeds were given to us by Philip's father, Raymond, and are in our safe deposit box. Some others are filed with my research papers. Xerox copies are in the book, plus land record Xerox copies used in my research, and many typed descriptions. Have written some of this down for our children and grandchildren. Perhaps someday, I'll write more, God willing.

Dianne had not seen this before we did, and needless to say it brought tears and big smiles to all of us. Because God was *very* willing – giving

her almost 40 more years to continue her research, and we are grateful beneficiaries!

Marie was not content with just knowing names and dates on deeds. She need to know the ancestors, the descendants, the sisters and the cousins and the aunts of many of the people who had trod the pastures and the hillsides of her beloved Willow Brook Farm. She became a faithful genealogist, filling over a dozen binders with family trees. There are notes written in longhand, shorthand, on typewriters and computers. There's even an annotated index.

The icing on the Camp Collection cake is that it came with a sizeable cash donation to cover the cost of properly housing Marie's gift. We'll need shelving, boxes, acid free paper, etc, and are just bowled over by the family's recognition that such gifts do require sometimes-significant expenditures. It is all a truly amazing legacy from Marie Neels Camp.

A Trio of Grants to Upgrade our Archives

Like many nonprofits, we puzzle over finding more space at the Kent Historical Society. The need had become acute since we discovered that the second floor of Seven Hearths, where we had been storing the artwork of George Laurence Nelson, was a Colonial-era fur trading operation. That meant we needed to move the paintings.... But where?

Richard L. Kerschner, a Conservation Consultant on Museum Environments, steered us in the right direction. He pointed out that the basement at Tallman was dry, tight, and structurally just fine for art and archival storage.

To outfit Tallman's basement, we applied for four grants, three of which were aimed at renovating the Tallman lower floor for storage of paintings and archives. The grants were carefully structured to cover different phases of this renovation. We're happy to report that we've won three out of four.

The Society has been awarded \$4,000 from the

Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation from the Edwin M. Stone and Edith H. Stone Fund.

We also received \$5,000 for Historic Preservation from the national Daughters of the American Revolution. Once we explained the relation of the Tallman basement renovation to the fur trading post, they agreed to support us, too.

Best of all, we were awarded \$17,394 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to custom-build a storage module for the paintings and artwork. The IMLS grant is the first federal grant ever we've ever received.

The upgraded Art and Archives Area will provide excellent storage space on the society's property. It will also prevent deterioration and damage to the artwork and archives, and make them more accessible to all.

Kent Historical Society

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Kent Quiz

This month's quiz: Who flew a plane under the bridge in Kent in 1945?

Answer to the last quiz: Since the 18th century arrival of European, when was Kent most heavily wooded?

Right now is the most heavily wooded era in our history. The Europeans rapidly denuded the hill-sides, and it wasn't until the exurban era after World War II that the woods began to fill in, a process that continues to this day. Before the Europeans arrived, the Indians' more ecological light touch still resulted in more cleared areas than today, because they burned fields to plant crops, and then moved on after a few years.

Kent Historical Society

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