

The Colonie Historical Oracle

Quarterly Newsletter of the Historical Society of the Town of Colonie

Volume 14, No. 1

January — March 2018

The Man Who Wore Many Hats

Submitted by Kevin Franklin, Historian, Town of Colonie

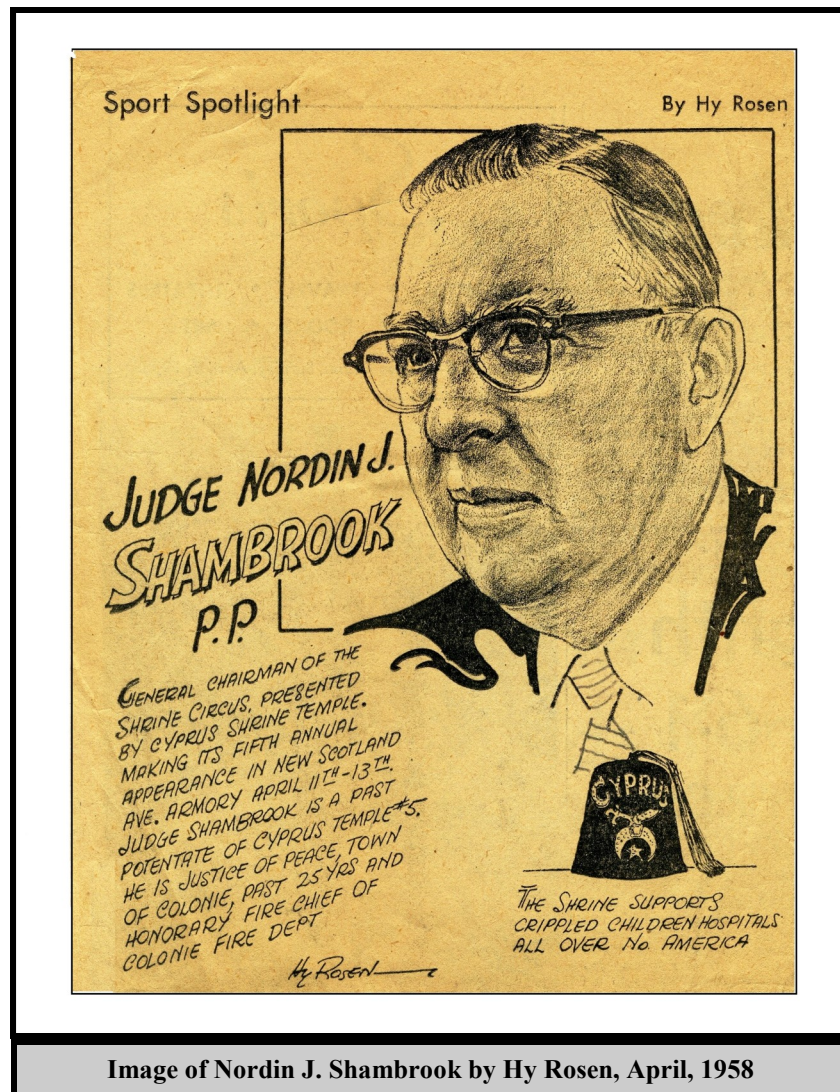


Image of Nordin J. Shambrook by Hy Rosen, April, 1958

Every so often when I gather information to write a newsletter for the Historical Society of the Town of Colonie, I run into one of those “where do I start” situations and in this instance, that proved true with Nordin J. Shambrook. There’s an old saying that when you want to get something done, ask a busy man. By all aspects, Nordin J. Shambrook fit that description. Former *Times Union* political

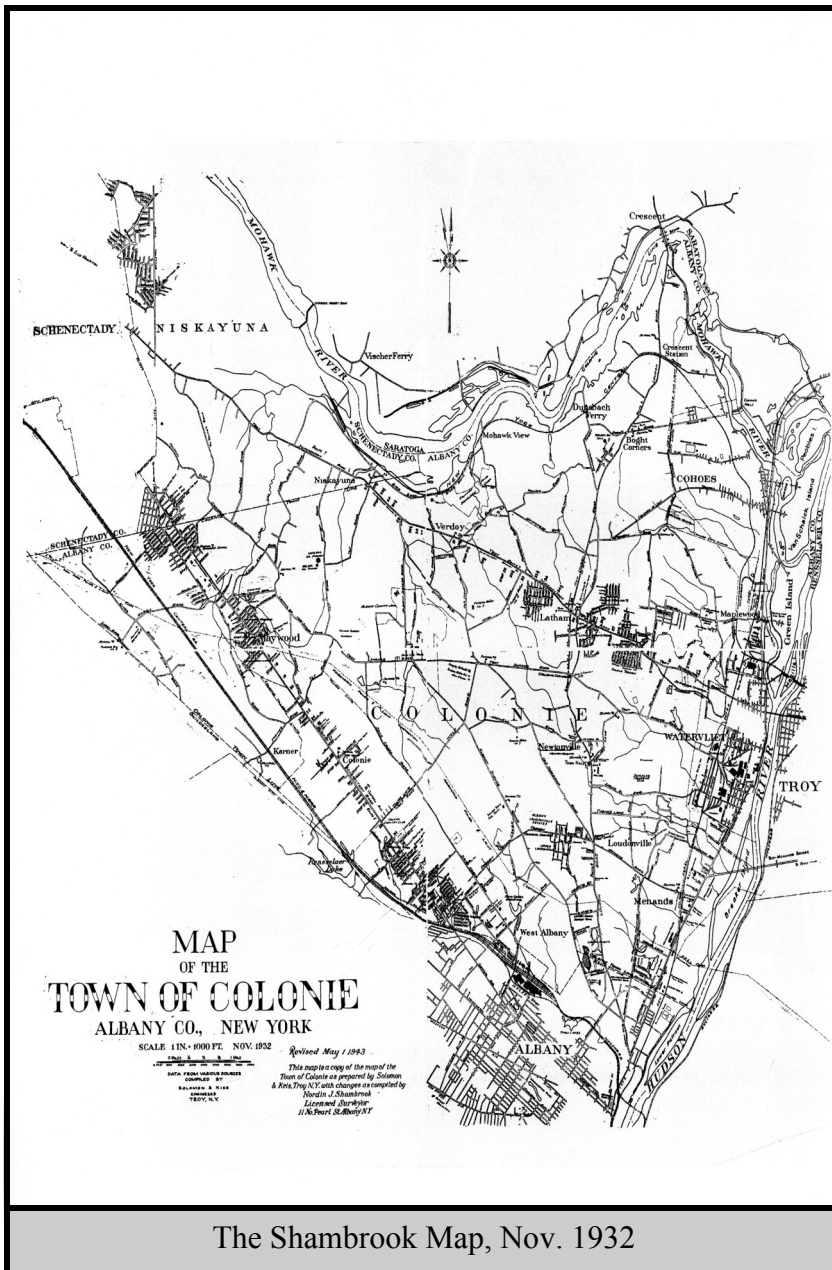
cartoonist Hy Rosen was noted for recognizing accomplished people in the Capital District area with his posts. Hy Rosen listed many of Mr. Shambrook’s accomplishments when he sketched this tribute to him years ago, probably when Mr. Shambrook retired as a Judge here in Colonie, just one of the many accomplishments in the long life of Mr. Shambrook.

In 2003, I became Historian for the Town of Colonie. There were dozens of different size and type maps of the town all rolled up. But a handful, all from the same year and of the same type printed on a thin onion skin paper were all folded identically and bore the name Nordin J. Shambrook, Surveyor. Most dated from the early 1930's. Why did the Shambrook name sound familiar? Then I remembered. On a map called the "Riverview Boulevard Park" development outlined a small neighborhood to be constructed in the south end of Menands where I live. This proposed neighborhood was surveyed by Nordin J. Shambrook August 1, 1925, just one year after the incorporation of the Village of Menands in August, 1924.

Without looking into the background of the Shambrook name at the time, I placed these maps along with many others into the map cabinet which the Town purchased to properly store them. I continued to wonder why these particular maps of Colonie were different from the rest and where they originated from. These few maps which I referred to as "Shambrook Maps" had been all neatly folded the same exact way. A few bore rusty staple marks in the folds.

The Shambrook maps of Colonie are very detailed, naming each street that existed in the Town in the early 1930's. They included locations of municipal buildings, schools, churches and other prominent structures or facilities within the town. Trolley stops of the *Schenectady Railway Company* are clearly marked on both Central Avenue and the Troy-Schenectady Road. The Shambrook Maps of Colonie seemed to be the first produced of the town since several mid-19th Century maps of the old town of Watervliet were made well before Colonie was founded in 1895.

There are two incorporated villages within Colonie. The first to incorporate was the Village of Colonie in 1921. Both villages incorporated areas roughly defined by their respective school districts at the time. In the Historian's reference library is a quaint privately published booklet about the history of the Village of Colonie written in 1998 by Colonie Village resident Marjory M. Laymond. Also in the reference library is a unique early Colonie telephone directory published in 1938 by the Colonie Village Volunteer Fire Company. Both of these publications mention the name Nordin J. Shambrook, and it is in the telephone directory of 1938 that contains a history of the Colonie Village Fire Department, called the Kiliaen VanRensselaer Volunteer Fire Company, of which Nordin J. Shambrook was its first Chief. This telephone book also originally held, stapled inside the back cover, the Shambrook Map of Colonie.



The Shambrook Map, Nov. 1932

The Village of Colonie included the very busy corridor of the Albany and Schenectady Road, known today as Central Avenue. The historic importance of this road was a catalyst for the creation of the Village of Colonie and the growth of the Town of Colonie itself. Looking back at the history of this important link between those two cities we have to turn the clock back into the middle of the 17th Century when Schenectady was a frontier settlement along the Mohawk River. Today's Central Avenue was established as a toll road in 1797 known as the Albany and Schenectady Turnpike replacing a much older path called the King's Highway, described here by local historian John Wolcott of Save The Pine Bush organization:

"The former main road through the Pine Bush was opened as a wagon track from Beverwyck (Albany's old name) to Schenectady in 1662. Both the Indian Path and the new road were called "het Maquas Padt" in Dutch (that is to say "The Mohawk Path") from at least, 1660 to about the end of the century. Later in the 17th Century, after the English conquests of New Netherland, our road to Schenectady was officially called The King's Highway."

For the next 100 years the Albany and Schenectady Turnpike provided a well-traveled link between Albany and Schenectady. By the early 20th Century horses and carriages slowly gave way to automobiles and the expanding availability of electricity powered trolleys throughout the Capital District including along Central Avenue. The Trolley's and their "stops" along Central Avenue would even lead to persons and businesses using the stop numbers as their mailing addresses. WWI would end and Colonie continued to grow including what would become the Village of Colonie. Marjorie Laymond describes the founding of the Village of Colonie in 1921:

"On March 2, 1921 the Village of Colonie was incorporated. The first board of trustees meeting was held four weeks later at the Colonie Village Schoolhouse at 8:00 PM, Wednesday, March 30, with Mayor Charles H. Collins presiding over the Board of Trustees. That night the Village government borrowed \$500.00 for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the incorporation, created the office of Police Justice, set a tax rate of \$3.00 per \$1,000 assessed valuation, and established the first Village budget at \$1,285.00 and the Village was in business."

By 1931, Colonie Village's first volunteer fire co. was formed. Organized on Sept. 21st, 1931 and named the Kiliaen Van Rensselaer Volunteer Fire Company, its first Chief was Nordin J. Shambrook, appointed by then Mayor W.R. Brind and members of the Colonie Village Board. The volunteer company was officially formed on paper but it needed both a fire truck and a building to safely house it. Things moved rather quickly, perhaps bolstered by the energy of Colonie Village resident Nordin J. Shambrook. Land was purchased for the erection of a new firehouse and the trustees of the fire company traveled to Tarrytown, N.Y. to view an Ahrens-Fox fire engine.



Capt. Nordin Shambrook
Colonie Village Fire Chief, 1936

A little more than two months transpired and by early December, 1931, the new firehouse was constructed and a new Ahrens-Fox fire truck had been delivered. On December 12, officials held a large ceremony dedicating their new building and fire truck. The 1938 Colonie telephone directory describes the ceremony that the Village had proudly dedicated their new firehouse and fire truck:

“Starting at noon with a parade through the town in which a number of neighboring companies took part, and ending with the dedication and presentation exercises in the school in the evening with the following program: Opening prayer, Rev. Gay McChesney, Pastor Pine Grove M.E. Church; Presentation of Apparatus and Fire House by Mayor W.R. Brind to Chief Shambrook; Chief Shambrook and company take Pledge; Chief Shambrook charges Assistant Chiefs and foremen with duties; Address by Chief Shambrook; Closing Prayer by Rev. C.J. Mason, Pastor Colonie Gospel Chapel.”

The fire company history article goes on to name several dozen men as volunteers, honorary members, associate members, etc. By 1936 Nordin J. Shambrook was still chief of the Fire Company. Coincidentally, in the beginning of the 1936 telephone directory under organizers of the directory it lists Nordin J. Shambrook, Judge.

So far; beginning in 1921, we know that Nordin J. Shambrook was involved with the formation of the Village of Colonie and elected as Colonie Village’s 2nd Mayor in 1923. He is already an accomplished licensed land surveyor having started in that profession in 1906 and known to have laid out a new development in the south end of the fledgling Village of Menands in 1925. He continued in the practice of surveying for over fifty years. By 1931 he is actively involved with the founding and organization of Colonie Villages Kiliaen Van Rensselaer Volunteer Fire Co., and appointed to the position of Chief of that department by then Mayor W. R. Brind. He served as Chief of the Fire Company until 1948.

Welcome New Members!

The Historical Society of the Town of Colonie would like to welcome our newest members:

Amy Courter, Dennis Lang, Jordan Loucks, Tom and Maria Ritz, Laraine Gillette, and John L. Scherer.

Welcome Aboard!

Also in 1931 Mr. Shambrook was elected to the title of “Judge” here in the Town and holding that position continually until retiring in 1966 having heard over 40,000 cases! Nordin J. Shambrook was also married with 4 daughters, 9 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren! One would wonder with all these jobs and life events keeping him busy, did Mr. Shambrook find time for any leisurely activities? The answer to that is a resounding yes!



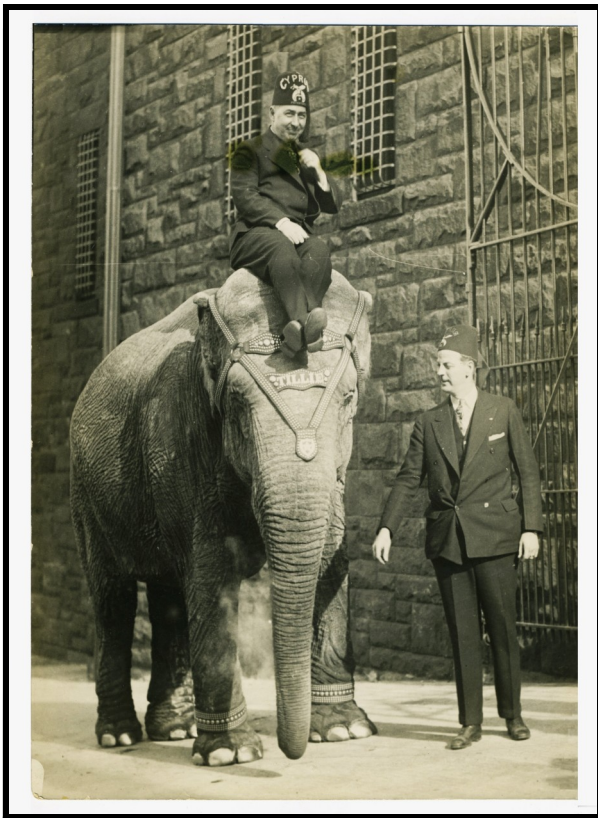
Judge Nordin J. Shambrook, mid- to late-1950's in the old Colonie Town Hall



Please visit our Facebook Page.
Just search:

Historical Society Town of Colonie

Various newspaper clippings, a Colonie Town Board Resolution and his obituary all speak of a man who led a very busy life including organizing the Shriner Circuses at Albany, a past potentate of Cyrus Temple Shrine of Albany and founder, in 1928 of the Albany Shriners Circuses, a charter member of the Colonie Exchange Club, a director of the Albany Court of Royal Jesters, past master of the Wadsworth Lodge of Free and Excepted Masons and an officer of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York until his death in 1976. The Colonie Town Board resolution also listed Mr. Shambrook as a member of the Colonie Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Rites Bodies and for several years the Master of Ceremonies at the pilgrimage to the Shriners Children’s Hospital in Springfield, Ma. The Honorable Nordin J. Shambrook is buried in Memory’s Garden, Colonie. Perhaps Mr. Shambrook’s motto could have easily been: “No excuses, just do it.”



Nordin J. Shambrook, Shriners Circus, c. 1928
Washington Ave. Armory, Albany

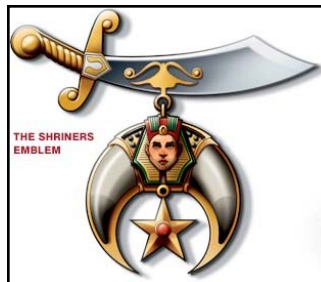
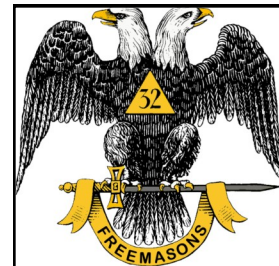
Acknowledgement: The author would like to send a special Thank You to Mr. Steve Garry, nephew of Nordin J. Shambrook, for the use of family photographs and documents used in this newsletter.

The Historical Society of the Town of Colonie

Would you like to be a candidate for the Board of Trustees?

If you are interested in a Board position, please contact Kevin Franklin, Nominations Committee:
518-782-2601

Some of the many “hats” worn by Nordin J. Shambrook:



Yes, I would like to become a member of the Historical Society of the Town of Colonie, New York, Inc. in the classification I have checked or renew my membership as noted.

My annual dues payment in the amount of \$ _____ is enclosed.

Classification	Annual Dues	Classification	Annual Dues	Classification	Annual Dues
<input type="checkbox"/> Student and Senior	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$100—\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$12.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Business	\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$250.00 & Up

Please accept my additional donation of \$ _____ as a gift to the Historical Society. *The Historical Society is a not-for-profit corporation.*

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ Zip Code _____ Home Phone # _____

Cell Phone # _____ E-Mail _____

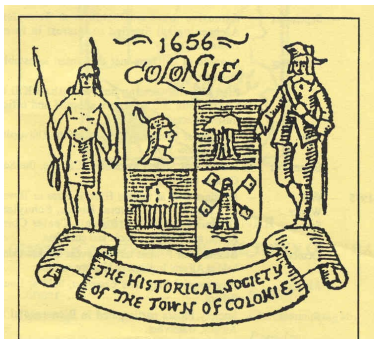
Please mail to Membership Chairperson c/o Historical Society, Memorial Town Hall, Newtonville, N. Y. 12128-0508

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE TOWN OF COLONIE

Kevin Franklin: Town Historian

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Historical Society Founded 1971

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NEWTONVILLE, NY 12128-0508
518-782-2601

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Springtime Greetings! Eventually we'll be able to enjoy warmer weather and hopefully sunshine and flowers. We've planned several historically interesting things to do this spring:

First, our 47th Annual Dinner will be held on Thursday evening, May 17th, at the Shaker Ridge Country Club. Guest speaker Susan Ingalls Lewis will talk about female entrepreneurs in Albany in the 1850's. It promises to be a very interesting topic.

On Friday evening, May 18th, the Colonie Historical Society has partnered with the Friends of Albany Rural Cemetery to sponsor a living history walking tour at Albany Rural. See the enclosed flyer for details.

Our spring field trip, in conjunction with the Friends of Pruyn House, will occur on Wednesday, June 20th. We'll be headed to Massachusetts to visit the Frelinghuysen Morris House and Naumkeag with lunch at the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge. It will be another educational adventure.

Hoping to see many of you soon at these events.

Fran McCashion, President