



VARNA NEWS

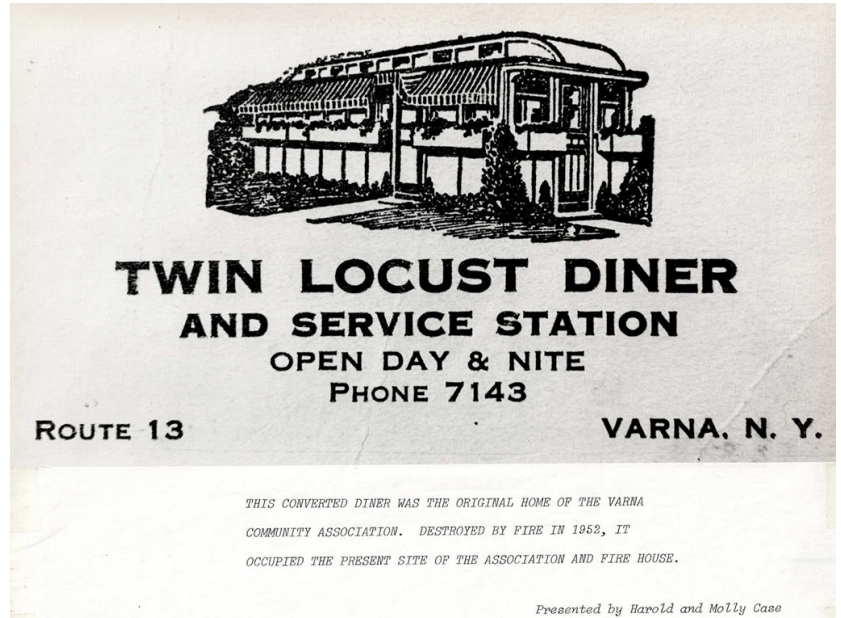
75 years of the Varna Community Association

The Varna Community Association incorporated in 1951. Starting from a conversation at a PTA meeting, the community association launched with 66 members in June 1950, and started raising funds through dinners, a summer play school, an auction, selling sandwiches at Cornell sheep shows, a carnival, shoveling driveways, and a series of talent shows.

In order to own property, the VCA incorporated in 1951 and bought a trolley car diner (pictured) on an acre with a barn.

The diner burned down in June 1953, so the VCA launched a bigger project to build a new home. All those fundraisers gave them enough money for materials, thanks to merchants selling at cost, and all the labor had to be volunteered. People loaned equipment, drew up plans, shared their knowledge, and built the building, which they completed in December 1954. 120 people giving 4500 hours of work made it possible, and the VCA celebrated with an appreciation dinner.

We'll be telling more stories of Varna history over the course of the year, many of them thanks to Louise Ranney's article in the October 19, 1957 American Agriculturist magazine, "They Did It Themselves: The Story of the Varna Community Center".



ANNUAL MEETING FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF VARNA

6PM FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

****PIZZA** **CONVERSATION** **VOTING****

If you live in Varna, you are automatically a member of the Varna Community Association (VCA). As a non-profit corporation in New York State, the VCA is required to hold a meeting of the membership each year. That means you!

Kids are welcome! Come enjoy free pizza, elect VCA board members, and discuss ideas for the future of our hamlet. Maybe dig a tunnel to Groton? (just kidding – but why not think big!)

Varna Church Update

Greetings from Varna Church. We hope everyone had an enjoyable and memorable holiday season, however you celebrated. The Pew Knitters ended the year by donating over 1800 knit and crocheted items to charity. We always accept yarn donations.

Palm Sunday and Easter will soon be here. Then, on April 25th, we will again have our Talent Night starting at 6pm. If you wish to share your talent, call Sue Heath 607-272-8919 to register. It's such a fun night and we hope you can join us. We also remember our community members who have lost loved ones recently.

Thank you to all who drop off egg cartons and small boxes for our outreach work. Don't forget the events at the Community Center. Happy Spring if it ever gets here. Winter has seemed extra long this year. -Sis Johnson

Varna Volunteer Fire Company

In November, dedicated interior firefighters of VVFC put their skills to the test during a large-scale training at the station. Working in simulated smoke conditions, our interior crew drilled in indoor search and rescue operations, escape techniques, and radio communications, sharpening teamwork under pressure.



Photo from VVFC

This training was a great opportunity for our interiors to train and practice in realistic smoke conditions in preparation for the real deal.

As a 100% volunteer service, we need YOUR help to protect our community. If you are interested in

becoming a firefighter, EMT, apparatus driver/operator, or support member, we have a spot for you! Stop by the station (14 Turkey Hill Road) between 6:30-7:30pm on a Wednesday evening or email: info@varnafire.org if you have questions. Follow us on Instagram (@varnafire) and Facebook to receive updates on our department activities and community events!

A Tribute to Susan Simmons

The Varna Community Association and its members are very saddened to have lost a vital member of the VCA. On January 5th, Susan lost her fight with health issues and went on to a higher place to join her other family and friends who have passed on ahead of her. Susan was a long-time member of the VCA, along with other members of her family. Susan lived in Varna with her family and volunteered at the community center, the Varna Methodist Church, and the Varna Volunteer Fire Company. She tirelessly committed herself to helping others and contributing whatever and however she could to the hamlet and community.

Susan served on the board of the VCA and was Vice Chair for more than a decade, constantly working behind the scenes to ensure that all the pieces came together to make fundraisers and events successful.

Susan was my Co-Chair when I was Chair in the early 2000's. She was my friend, but was also the one that was the first to tell me to remember some event, made me lists, called me relentlessly to remind me to not

forget something, or called to tell me I did a good job. She also was the first to tell me when I should have done something different! Susan reminded me when the newsletter was due and made sure that everything was in order. She and her sister edited the draft, and when it was printed and ready for mailing, she helped fold and label each newsletter for mailing.



Susan Simmons

For more than 40 years, Susan focused on Varna, contributing however she could to the three organizations, and also helped elderly individuals to do simple things, like balancing their checkbook, run grocery errands, arrange home repairs, or just sit and visit with them. It was just the kind person she was. - Dawn Potter, Former Chair and Current Vice Chair



At Susan's Celebration of Life

Balance and Conditioning Class Mondays, 9:30am at the Community Center

This class is open to everyone 50 or older. You can come to as many (or as few) classes as you like. Chris Dunham, an instructor from [Lifelong](#), leads exercises to strengthen core muscles and promote balance. He creates a non-judgmental atmosphere and offers alternatives to fit individual needs. Mats are provided. You do not need to be a member of [LifeLong](#). **Wear comfortable clothes and bring \$5 each week. Give it a try!**

Thanksgiving Day 2025 at the VCA

Thanksgiving morning in Varna was beautiful and sunny. Snow had fallen the night before, but didn't prevent folks from coming to the community center to enjoy our annual Thanksgiving Day Dinner. Volunteers joined and assisted in making those coming to dine feel welcome and wanted. Between Noon to 3pm, we were very pleased to provide meals to over 325 individuals. Folks could eat in the dining room, or take dinners to go.

Behind the scenes, volunteers in the kitchen worked

for two days to roast 16 turkeys, bake 35 pies, prepare squash, peel 100 pounds of potatoes, and make sure so many details were taken care of to make sure the dinner went off successfully.

Susan Simmons contacted radio station Q104 Country and was interviewed to provide a fabulous advertisement for the dinner. That interview brought several inquiries about the dinner, which were instrumental to our increased attendance. Sadly, that interview is the last one she tackled, for which we are most grateful and thankful.

One of the diners at the meal was Art Berkey, a long-time member of the VCA, a long-time VCA member, past Board Chair, and member of several VCA clubs, who celebrated his 94th birthday. The other folks in the dining room gladly chimed in to wish him a Happy Birthday.

The VCA appreciates the many donations of groceries, turkeys, take-out containers, cash, and labor to make this event so successful.

We are planning to provide the dinner, once again, this

year on Thanksgiving Day. *Art Berkey at Thanksgiving* Anyone wishing to contribute with groceries, cash, or volunteering is most welcome. Contact Dawn at 607-280-9750.

Ithaca Car Share Update

Varna's CarShare vehicle has been temporarily assigned to another location but it will be back. Visit the [Ithaca CarShare website](https://ithacacarshare.org/) at <https://ithacacarshare.org/> to learn how the program works.



Varna Community Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 4771
Ithaca NY 14852-4771

Non-Profit Org
US POSTAGE PAID
ITHACA, NY 14850
PERMIT #312

Pancakes / Waffles / Bacon / Ham / Fruit /
Coffee / Hot Chocolate and more breakfast—
February 15th, 8am to 11am! \$12.50 adults,
\$10.50 seniors, \$8 for kids 5-12. Kids under 5
eat free! Cards and Venmo accepted, 50¢
discount for cash or check.

Balance and Conditioning Class from Lifelong, Mondays at 9:30am

If you're over 50, come to the Varna Community
Center, 943 Dryden Road, for a \$5 class on low-
intensity strength and conditioning exercises.
Details inside.

Every Monday, 9:30—Balance & Conditioning for 50+

February

9—VCA Board Meeting, 7pm
15—Pancake Breakfast, 8-11am
15—Knitting Club, 2-4pm
27—Annual Meeting, 6pm

March

8—Pancake Breakfast, 8-11am
9—VCA Board Meeting, 7pm
15—Knitting Club, 2-4pm
21—Soup & Salad Supper, 4-7pm

April

12—Pancake Breakfast, 8-11am
13—VCA Board Meeting, 7pm
19—Knitting Club, 2-4pm
25—Chicken & Biscuit Dinner, 4-7pm

2026 VCA Board of Directors

Members: Laurie Foster, Mason Jager
(Secretary), Janet Morgan (Chair), Dawn Pot-
ter (Vice Chair), Simon St.Laurent (Treasurer)

Meetings: usually held the second Monday of
the month, 7pm, at the Community Center

You: Guests are welcome at board meetings.
Come and help us make plans for Varna.

Email: [Chair@VarnaCommunityAssociation
.org](mailto:Chair@VarnaCommunityAssociation.org)



The *Varna News* is published quarterly, in February, May, August, and
November. Simon St.Laurent (simonstl@simonstl.com) is the editor.