Notables

Golden Age Club organizers
Minnie Borneman & Edna Hogan

Board of Directors
First Board (1955)
Norman L. Ritche, President
Rev. Paul Hydon, Vice-President
Minnie Borneman, Secretary
Fred W. Dunson, Treasurer

Claude van Wie, President (1959-1960)
Robert Gass, President (1976-1988)

Executive Directors
Marjorie Vokes (1961-1970)
Sylvia Newcomb (1984-2002)
Bill Davis (2002-2010)
Lois Celeste (2010-present)

In its first 60 years, the members and staff of the Adult & Senior Center of Saratoga collected photographs, newspaper articles, minutes, newsletters and mementos of the Center’s rich life. Early member Sabra J. Hook, perhaps the archive’s original organizer, stamped several items.

At the request of Executive Director Lois Celeste, Skidmore College’s MDOCS program supported five students – Phoebe Radcliffe, Eli Ruben, Natasha Thaler, Rebecca Walker and Tracey Wingate – as they drew on these materials to develop a history of the Center and to create materials for this exhibit and a short film on the Center’s past, present and future. Faculty Crystal Dea Moore (Social Work) and Jordana Dym (MDOCS/ History) advised this part of the Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project, http://ssmp.skidmore.edu

The Adult & Senior Center of Saratoga
5 Williams Street
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
In the 1940’s, the concept of community centers designed for seniors -- “Golden Age Clubs” -- in the US. New York State senator Thomas C. Desmond was a leader in this movement, who championed the “Age of the aged” and “oldsters” “rebelling against idleness, learning new tricks, & changing our economies.”

By July, the Club was airborne with 48 charter members, including co-pilots Edna Hogan & Minnie herself. The Club set out to serve seniors 60 years (soon 50) and older because (as she wrote) “we oldsters have a job to do. And do you know, we can be very potent in our community and in our country – for good—if we learn how to work together to achieve that goal.”

In 1955, Saratoga Springs seniors and community organizations met at the Saratoga Springs Public Library, Veteran’s Home and other locations to plan. Mrs. Minnie Borneman sent a letter to senior citizens inviting them to meet on March 28, 1955 in the office of Saratoga County Health Association to explore forming a Saratoga Golden Age Club.

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In 1958, the Senior Center, Inc. incorporated to be able to purchase a home, 162 Circular St. and laid down a mission: “promote the best interests of the seniors” of Saratoga Springs & Saratoga County.

By 1964, its fifth anniversary, the Center was open 5 days a week, 10am - 4pm, offering a “variety of programs… [so] each person is able to find some activity of interest.” The list included ceramics, painting, chair-caning, rug-hooking, card playing, billiards, singing and sewing. plus events from hobby and flower shows to dinners, picnics, field trips & weekly film screenings. Today many (not all) activities continue, with Tai Chi, dance, and other mental & physical activities.

But they do so in a new home. By 1969, with the initial mortgage paid off, and the center – serving around three dozen of its 300 members a day under the leadership of Executive Director Marjorie Vokes, sought a new home. Robert Gass, a life-long Saratogian and Center Board President, spearheaded funding and building a new Senior Center at 5 Williams St. Today, the Center supports many activities and over 1200 members.

FOR just as I approve of a young man in whom there is a touch of age, so I approve of the old man in whom there is some of the flavor of youth. He who strives thus to mingle youthfulness and age may grow old in body, but old in spirit he will never be.

—Cicero