

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

November 1999, Issue 112

2001 Recognition

The last meeting of the year found us in the darkness of an Eastern Standard Time month. Attending the last meeting were Toot & Betty Vaughn, Connie Teator, Joe Mangold, Phyllis Beechert, Harriett Rasmussen, Rosemary Lambert, Alice Roe, Cris Ketcham, Dot Blenis, and Don Teator.

A few items preceded the main action. We spent several minutes about the mysterious thief taking plants from Alice Roe's gardens. Alice got a few serious suggestions and a few not-so-serious ones.

Next was Phyllis' identification list of the GCS student body picture of about 1933. Martha Turon has helped a lot, but we still have some blanks and should try to get the blanks filled as soon as possible.

A few mentioned a change in a piece of our local history – Matt's Hot Dog Stand has been replaced by a newer and shinier version. In addition, it appears to be staying in place more than Matt's did, which would come and go each day.

The main action was the selection of the 2001 recognition for the calendar. The major recognition was a close vote, needing three rounds before settling on Fred and Leona Flack. The posthumous recognitions needed a couple rounds before we settled

on Rev. Richard Clark, Edna Adams, and Scott Ellis.

We closed up shop relatively early. If the Pot Luck Dinner Committee decides to hold the March event, I'll let you know in the annual report, if the decision is made by then.

As we take the next few months off from meetings, please scout around for program ideas, as well as working up any projects you might want to work on (keep the Greenville school history project in mind).

Copied on the next few pages is the 1959 Town Supervisor's report, a mailing to the community. You can make your own judgments about the similarities of now and forty years ago.

Take care until next spring,



PS I forgot to mention in last month's newsletter that the inclusion of the Altamont Enterprise article about the life of May Kinney was meant to remind us to record the lives of people who have lived in the area most of their lives.

1959 ANNUAL REPORT

ON TOWN OF GREENVILLE

Fellow Residents of the Town of Greenville:

Once again a year has passed and I am taking time to write you my annual letter concerning the activities of our town board and certain phases of county political activity which took place during the past year.

Memorial Library Improvements and Open House:

During the early months of 1959 through joint efforts of the Town board and the Library board we were able to carry through a number of additional improvements at the Memorial Library. Among such improvements were the removal of five large truck loads of junk and debris from the library basement; sheetrocking and painting of a large basement room with installation of new electric wiring and lighting thereby getting a fine, General Purpose room which is also acting as a voting room for the Third Election District; sheetrocking of the boiler room and repairs to the concrete floors, painting of one large floor; painting and fixing up of a smaller room by a group of Boy Scouts who will use the room for meetings and headquarters; and installation of a fire extinguisher in the boiler room.

Additional work was donated by members of the town board and local volunteers in cleaning up and beautifying the library and Memorial Park and Harold Schuettinger of Freenoid donated his services in painting one side of the Library building. Mr. Lesmueller of Greenville donated shrubs and trees and supervised their planting around the pond. Care of the library and Memorial Park grounds was provided by Leland Cunningham at a nominal sum for the year. Members of the Catholic Daughters of Greenville donated a new flag pole to the library — the pole having been erected on the south side of the building. Members of Women's Concordia Club continue to raise money and work for additional library improvements among which are the purchase of new drapes and shades for the library, files, shelves and other necessities.

An Open House was held at the library on April 18th from 10 a. m. to 5:00 p. m. and was attended by more than 100 persons. Light refreshments were served and a number of contributions were received by the library board. Our town board and library board feel that the Memorial Library and Park represent an institution of which all town residents can be proud.

Improvements which are still needed at the library include painting of two sides of the building outside, painting and fixing of two smaller basement rooms for general purpose use, purchase of 3-4 doz. chairs at an estimated cost of \$4.00 each, purchase and installation of gutterpipe for the building, suitable refinishing or painting of present wainscoting sections of all library rooms and hallways. The public should also be reminded that the library contains a large, heated room upstairs which is available for rental as an office for certain types of business use — the location being excellent as a focal point in our community. Revenue derived from rental of this room would help materially in making possible further improvements to the library.

Association of Towns Convention:

In early February town officials who attended the Annual Association of Towns Convention in New York City for the purpose of learning more about the duties of their office were Councilman Charles Mesow, Chairman of the Board of Assessors Alvin Halvorsen, Constable Charles Mesow and myself. The men listed above plan on attending this years session to be accompanied by Assessor Reinhold Schermer, Justice of Peace Howard Waldron and perhaps Town Clerk Jeanne Bear. **New Ford Truck Purchased.**

As a result of competitive bidding early in the year, the town purchased a new, heavy-duty Ford dump truck in the F-8 class for \$5500. which included an allowance for a smaller model Chevrolet 1950 dump truck. It is believed that no new trucks or heavy duty road machinery will need to be purchased for at least two years.

Road Improvements.

During 1959 Sup't. of Highways John Parks and his men rebuilt a one mile section of Henkel Rd. in the Freehold section under the Erwin program bringing to a total 26.5 miles of town highway improved under this program in the past six years. Cost to the town for this project was approximately \$3300. while the state paid \$5700. **Approximately 19.5 miles of Erwin Plan highways in the town have**

been surfaced with oil and stone and these highways have been repaired and maintained as well as possible with monies available. Oil and in some cases oil and stone layers were provided as a dust preventive in front of homes of town residents on other town highways.

Aside from the one mile portion of Erwin Plan highway just completed only four projects in the town do not have an oil and stone surface except in front of residents' homes. Three of these four projects were built by the town prior to January 1, 1957. During the 1957 session of the State Legislature a bill was submitted by Senator Erwin which would have enabled towns to secure additional state aid in putting tops on such Erwin projects which were built prior to 1957. The bill passed both houses of the legislature but was vetoed by the governor. A similar bill was introduced by the 1958 legislature and passed by both houses only to be vetoed by the governor a second time. With a new governor in office in 1959 the bill was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor but since a town budget is prepared in October for the next calendar year, no monies were provided in the town budget so that any surfacing could be done on those three projects during 1959.

As a result of providing matching town funds for these three projects in the 1960 town budget, members of the Town Board and Sup't. of Highways John Parks are planning on providing double surface treatment of oil and stone on Berkhofer Rd., and two parallel projects in the Gayhead section running from Smith's Corners and Garrison's Corners south to the County highway which connects Gayhead and Freehold. With the surfacing of these projects expected in 1960 the only Erwin project for which no provision has been made thus far for a surfaced top is the road running from Greenville Center West to Rt. 32. While this road has been treated with calcium it is hoped that some provision can be worked out as soon as possible for surfacing the 1.5 project. The three projects mentioned above total approximately 4½ miles.

Erwin Projects Scheduled for Reconstruction in 1960:

A .9 mile section of Henkel Rd. which will complete that project has been scheduled for reconstruction under the Erwin program during 1960 and also a .8 mile section of Ingalside Road which would complete that project from Rt. 81 up to the Albany County line. Sup't. of Highways John Parks and his men expect to begin tree and brush cutting along the latter project very shortly, since such operations have already been completed along Henkel Road. Fairly substantial maintenance improvements were carried on along Butler Rd., and the Big Woods Road during 1959 and elimination of a dangerous corner by the John Thurmer residence has been started.

The building of new homes and improvement of properties especially along our Improved Highways gives further testimony that road improvements are of vital necessity in improving communities.

Present Bonded Indebtedness of Town.

In making final payments early in January, 1960 on our Galion Roller, our heavy-duty Diamond T truck and a road surfacing bond issue of 1955 our total bonded indebtedness of the town is now as follows:

2 annual payments of \$2000. each on our new Ford Truck
3 annual payments of \$5000. each on our new Walters Truck
and snow plow
road surfacing bonds totaling \$36,280 which will be paid off
within four years.

The only other bonded indebtedness of the town is 12 annual payments of \$2000. each for the town building which was authorized by public referendum in 1954.

Better Days Ahead for Village Water Users — We Hope!

As a result of a tax levy on residents of the Greenville Water District in January, 1959 all indebtedness of the water district was wiped out except the annual \$500. bond which is part of a 40-year bond issue incurred by the town in 1941 when it purchased the system from a private individual. The cost of meeting this obligation is met by a \$10. service charge levied in June each year on each water user.

In getting the Assessed Valuation of the Greenville Water District reduced considerably for 1960 we expect to save district water users approximately \$400. annually in taxes on the water system.

Through the efforts of newly-appointed Water Commissioner Paul Willig and Councilman Ford Rundell a number of water hydrants have been repaired so that water mains can be flushed periodically which the State Dep't. of Health has indicated should help substantially to keep the water clear. It has been pointed out to village water users on past occasions that while the quality of water from

the new well is constant the year round and considered good it has chemical properties which produce rust particles rapidly in the old mains many of which have been in the ground for an estimated 63 years. We can only join with village water users in hoping that break-downs will be few and far between and that maintenance costs can be held to a minimum in the hope of building up a small financial reserve.

County Board of Supervisor Activities

As a chairman of many and a member of approximately twenty county Board of Supervisor committees I spent another busy year and tried to devote as much time and effort as possible to fulfilling obligations connected with all committee work.

1960 Tax Rate

As you already know, the town tax rate for 1960 is approximately \$83.90 per \$1,000 Assessed Valuation in comparison with the 1959 rate of about \$83.20. Were it not for a substantial increase in the county budget for 1960 it is probable that our town tax rate could have been lowered at least \$1.40 per \$1,000. Assessed Valuation for the current year.

A sizable portion of the increased county tax rate comes as a result of the first of four annual payments toward paying off a sum of \$113,000 plus interest costs in employing the services of the Clemenshaw Firm of Cleveland, Ohio to reappraise all properties in Greene County. Supervisor James West of Jewett and myself were the only supervisors who voted against this resolution in 1958.

I voted against the resolution for a number of reasons. First of all in 1955 I had been able to secure the cooperation of 15 bipartisan, fair minded men to meet with our assessors and work toward a program of equalizing assessments throughout our township. I have pointed out to you previously that no two persons or firms anywhere will agree completely on the full value of a series of properties in our town or anywhere else but we believe that we did a fairly good job of establishing a fair market value on each parcel of property in the town and recommending to the assessors that they assess each parcel or property on the same basis which I believe at that time was about what we considered 1/6 to one 7th of fair market value.

With the backing of this group of men, our assessors, our town board and other town residents who knew what we had done I felt justified in protesting vigorously against this county proposition which I knew would cost each of our taxpayers an estimated \$5.00 per \$1,000 Assessed Valuation and which proposition would attempt to establish a fair market value on each parcel in our town and all over the county the same as we had already done—regardless of whether our town or any other town would finally decide to assess all properties at 10%, 25%, 50% or 100% of true market value at time of appraisal. Furthermore, no assurances were given at the time the county resolution for employing an outside firm to assess properties in Greene County that such records would be kept up to date, that political considerations would not be given to friends or party supporters and that adequate safeguards had been provided to cope with other serious problems that could easily arise in the levying and maintaining of equalized assessments.

1960—year for County Reappraisal to Take Effect

By June 1, 1960 the final date for town assessors to complete their assessment figures for all parcels of property in the towns The Clemenshaw firm must have submitted their figures on all properties in Greene County to the local assessors of each town.

Insofar as I have been able to learn the Clemenshaw firm intends to release such information to all local assessors sometime during March or April and will suggest that the local assessors make arrangements for printing or publishing each property's market value and suggested appraisal figure so that everyone in the town can see and compare them. I believe that it has been suggested to assessors in each town that they schedule an informal Grievance Day where taxpayers can meet and argue the pros and cons of their properties in comparison with their neighbor's properties. Representatives of the Clemenshaw firm plan on being present to help and explain and perhaps suggest adjustments for consideration by the local assessors. Then it is up to the local assessors to set forth their own final figures by June 1st, and give town residents notice of their new assessment if any changes have been made and notify them that their final Grievance Day on the 2nd Tuesday of July—every year—is the final day when they can appear and attempt to convince the assessors to lower their assessments. No assessments can be raised after June 1st according to the interpretation which has been given to me.

If it will be of any consolation to our town residents I would like to state at this time that I believe the effect of the Clemenshaw appraisal will have little effect on our town—in general. There may be some revisions upward or downward but I believe that the large majority of our town properties will remain virtually as they are. It should be remembered, however, that our present State Equalization rate of 25% (which means that the state considers properties in our town assessed at 25% of true market value) was established a number of years ago (1952) and that this figure should probably be lowered now in terms of present day market value. But this would be true of other towns as well.

I would like to point out also that if as a result of the county wide appraisal all assessors in the county should agree to assess on the basis of 50% of true market value, assuming that our 1961 budget should call for the same expenditures as our 1960 budget I believe that our tax rate would be about \$41.00 per \$1,000 Assessed Valuation instead of the present \$83. per \$1,000. Assessed Valuation so that Town residents would pay approximately the same amount of taxes as this year.

Closing Remarks

In closing our yearly business transactions with all current and outstanding bills paid up to date—Dec. 31, 1959, I am happy to report that we have a year end balance in town Highway Monies of approximately \$5,500. of which we estimated \$3,000 as an unexpended balance and applied it against the 1960 town budget. We have almost \$4,000 as an unexpended balance in the town General Fund.

Members of our town board are deeply sorry to lose the services of Justice of the Peace Clinton Story who submitted his resignation in December. Mr. Story has served as a sincere and devoted public servant in fulfilling the duties of his office. We welcome Howard Waldron as a replacement for Mr. Story for the calendar year of 1960.

I wish to take this opportunity to express deep appreciation to the many town residents who have seen fit to support me for the position of Supervisor once again and I feel certain that all other candidates who ran appreciate the support given them. Furthermore, I would like to encourage members of both parties to constantly seek out and try to interest capable persons to run for all positions in public office and to promote policies of recognition and fair play for everyone. May I extend best wishes for an abundance of good health, happiness and prosperity in the New Year to you and your family.

Most sincerely,
Arnold Nichol森

In accepting the Chairmanship of the Greene County Board of Supervisors for the year 1960, a position which has never been held by a Greenville Supervisor at least in modern decades and which affords our town a certain amount of recognition and prestige I presented the enclosed message to the Board of Supervisors and thanked the majority of Supervisors who saw fit to support me for this important post.

Fellow Supervisors, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Soon after the last Election I was approached by representatives of the Democratic Supervisors and asked if I would accept the position of Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for 1960 if it were offered to me. At the time I had not even considered such a possibility and at no time have I sought the position. I thanked the men who presented the proposition and said that I would think it over carefully and render a decision probably some weeks later. After discussing the matter further with a fair number of persons from my town and other towns whom I regard as clear-thinking, unbiased individuals and after giving the matter much additional consideration due to the many factors and implications involved I felt that I would accept the position providing that I were reasonably as-

sured that a majority of supervisors would back me knowing that I have been and will continue to be a staunch advocate of fair play for everyone in every phase of government.

I am a firm believer in our American form of government which is based on the two or more party systems and I believe that each party needs to have organization in order to promote its interests and its candidates. However, I recognize, as I believe that most people do that if one party remains in power too long or tries to assume and gain too much power and too much control that rapid strides can easily be made toward dictatorship policies. I believe very strongly that most people have their own ideas of what persons elected or appointed to political office should do or not do politically or morally and I firmly believe that the

very large majority of people throughout our entire United States - regardless of political affiliation - believe in the concept of fair play for all. It seems, however, that my realm of political thinking is in direct contrast to one or perhaps even a considerable number of important persons in the Greene County Republican organization.

I have stated publicly on a number of occasions in the past that I adhere rigidly to the policy that if a town is entitled to improvement of one mile of county road within its town and to perhaps two jobs of one category or another for persons within its town despite the fact that politically its supervisor or other individuals with prestige are in a position to get ten times that proportion of patronage at the expense of other towns and their constituents that I consider it a severe injustice for such a supervisor or influential persons to achieve favors in that manner. And yet I continue to find persons in our Republican county organization who adhere to and try to promote such policies. I wish to emphasize at this point that I have been reminded on hundreds of occasions during the past six years that both parties have used, are presently using and probably will indulge in such practices for many years to come.

If my neighbor's father lied, cheated and stole for years and years, I cannot bring myself to believe that he or his son will do likewise until he has proved by words, action and deeds that he is so inclined. Perhaps I am wrong but I would have to be told so by a considerable number of unbiased and free-thinking persons living in our county or elsewhere in America before I could revise my thinking. Fully aware that two of our great leaders - our great President Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon have been placed in their positions by a vast political machine I consider them outstanding Americans and Republicans who through their words, actions and deeds are dedicated to a policy of recognition and fair play for people everywhere regardless of size, nation, creed or color. I have tried all my life and for the past six years politically to adhere to such policies as a proud member of the Republican Party. And if, as has been suggested by one or more self-styled members of the Greene County Republican organization an attempt is made to have me thrown out of the Republican Party for adhering to a policy of fair play for all I will challenge such person or persons to issue a public definition of what constitutes a 'good Republican.'

If such a definition should be forthcoming I would expect that it will contain information other than the fact that a good Republican is someone who does what he is told to

and when to do it by a handful of organization men who like to consider themselves spokesmen for the Republican people of Greene County.

In closing my remarks on this obviously torrid and controversial subject I would like to make clear that I would not hesitate to condemn persons in any party who seek to gain things to which they are not entitled.

A Look Into the Future:

In looking ahead I am aware of the grave responsibilities which our County Board of Supervisors faces in conducting its many and increasing duties in a creditable manner. I would like to hope, most sincerely, that political differences can be forgotten in the year ahead and that fourteen supervisors can meet and work together in a united and cooperative spirit of Christian fellowship in attaining the objectives we will all be seeking.

Among the goals and objectives toward which I would like to see progress made in the year or years ahead are the following:

1. A vigorous and continuing effort by an Industrial Committee of the Board of Supervisors to make a canvas of each town in Greene County in order to determine whether or not that town would be receptive to having industry locate in its town and if so what type; also to keep records of land sites available, buildings if any for purchase or lease; public utilities available; the names of persons or organizations who would lend physical, financial or other assistance in a program to attract possible industry. In supporting such a program which could have far-reaching significance in Greene County I would advocate expenditure of sufficient monies to enable such a committee to do a good job - realizing that localities almost everywhere are competing against each other in an effort to attract industry, that would boost the local economy.

2. I would advocate careful planning and setting up a specific program of county highway improvement concentrating on improving present county highways, eliminating dangerous curves and making other needed improvements.

3. I would encourage members of business and resort promotion groups to work in close harmony and in cooperation with the Greene County Publicity Committee in a Unified Program which has proved that it can obtain significant results, eliminate duplication of advertising, and obtain far reaching results with expenditures of less money than it cost each unit acting separately.

4. I would work toward initiation of a county bridge building program as a long-range project to be

financed in such a way as not to cause a financial burden to the Greene County taxpayer. In this connection I believe that united efforts might be made by county boards of supervisors throughout the state to persuade the state to participate in perhaps on Erwin Plan Type of Bridge Rebuilding by counties—supported by state aid. Such a project I believe has already been discussed by towns at periodic conventions of town officials.

5. It seems to me that the time is long past when we should adopt the method of purchasing gasoline for county highway use in at least two heavily used areas of the county on state contract prices—a practice which should save the county upwards of many hundreds of dollars annually.

6. I believe that the feasibility of establishing a county sales tax or a hotel tax or both should be thoroughly investigated. And I would ask that Greene County residents and businessmen everywhere not take a dim, biased or prejudiced view of such a proposal before the advantages and disadvantages of such a proposition might be made public. One thing is certain—neither of these proposals could be achieved in a hurry even though a majority of the Board of Supervisors might be inclined to go along with such a proposition.

As an occasional traveler and visitor to other cities and states I know that sales taxes are used frequently as a means of obtaining revenue. If I recall correctly I believe that Atlantic City which is a great resort and convention city has a 3% tax on rooms which I would imagine would produce many thousands of dollars each month in a very painless way insofar as the Atlantic City taxpayers are concerned. Since many thousands of visitors come to Greene County annually most of whom have extra dollars and probably spend hundreds of thousands of dollars while here it would seem to

be a logical and less painful method of collecting funds to pay part of the county tax burden. And the Greene County resident who might be paying a possible sales tax would be paying part of his share of running the County Government on a pay-as-you-go basis rather than in a lump sum around the first of the year when finances are often at a low ebb in Greene County.

7. I think that it is possible to work toward increased economy and efficiency in the operation of county government through such practices as beginning all committee meeting on time, scheduling different committee meetings on certain days in order to eliminate possible double mileage and food expenses, securing telephone approval from supervisors on certain small formalities connected with the operation of certain committees and other economy practices.

8. I would like to encourage the practice of giving periodic reports to the Board of Supervisors by chairmen of county working committees in order to acquaint other supervisors with the work of such committees. It seems to me logical to assume that fourteen supervisors elected by the people to represent their towns and conduct county business should share the burdens and responsibilities of handling county affairs.

9. I would encourage the initiation and presentation of ideas and programs which merit consideration by the County Board of Supervisors from residents of Greene County.

In closing I would like to make it crystal clear that I hold no grievances of any type against anyone with whom I have been associated or will be associated in the past or future. I look forward with faith, hope and strong convictions to the challenge that lies ahead and I pray for the eternal guidance of our Almighty Heavenly Father in achieving a new era of understanding and attaining the goals which lie ahead. Thank you all for your kind attention.

BOX HOLDER
LOCAL RFD
STAR ROUTE

