

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

August 2004, Issue 150

Share Session

A classic August evening, for a change, greeted a lighter than usual turnout – Carol Bryant, Dot Blenis, Phyllis Beechert, Harriett Rasmussen, Mimi Weeks, Kathie Williams, Betty Vaughn, Sue Von Atzingen, Stephanie Ingalls, and Don Teator.

The major part of the meeting was spent viewing a videotape Carol had brought (and donated to the files): A Kaaterskill Profile, a 20 minute video about the history of the Catskill Mt. House area, covering the background and history of tourism in the Kaaterskill Clove, today's Rt. 23A from Palenville to Tannersville. Almost nothing exists of this place where the rich and famous went over 100 years ago.

We talked about our memories and associations with the Mt. House, with only a couple of us who knew, however distant, of someone who vacationed there. More likely, we were aware of its demise. Today, it is still an experience to visit the site where it stood and imagine the goings-on of that era.

Also mentioned were the other two major hotels – the Kaaterskill Hotel and the Laurel House, both ghosts of mountaintop history.

Of course, the tie-in to Greenville is the tourism thread – how people went to vacation in the country, and, with the advent of the auto, how our area changed in that 1910 to 1960 era. It's almost a shock to talk about our tourist era as a thing of the past. Even though we still have a handful (a small hand) of resorts left, what we knew as the boarding house era is recognizably past.

A second part of the evening was the showing of the share items. Don brought in a photograph of the classes of the Greenville Free Academy of 1929-1930 (during a May

Day celebration), along with a photograph of the new building's secondary classes (1932-1933). Also shown was the 1936 playbill of the senior class production, "Girl Shy", which included the cast as well as the advertisers of that year. Don also showed a copy of the 19 June 1935 Greenville Local "Special Tercentenary Educational Edition." This was a useful issue for school history.

Phyllis had brought in a folder of items: the 2004 "The Wall That Heals" ceremony sheet, the 1942 Graduation Exercises sheet, a 1942 GCS music and art exhibit list, a list of employees at GCS for the 1950-1951 school year, her own Pledge to buy War Savings Stamps and Bonds, the 2003 Balloon Festival newspaper, and a Xerox of the "School Memories" booklet of 1923. Thanks, Phyllis.

We also noted Curt Cunningham's letter to the editor, where he notes his memories of growing up in Greenville, which elicited many comments. Many of you saw it, but I reproduced it in this newsletter for those of you who did not. Of course, you know that I will urge all of us to record our memories.

The last piece of the evening was Harriett's reading from her notes she took from Eleanor Goff Ingalls' diary of 1935, which will probably be reproduced in the next newsletter.

The next meeting will be September 13. I'll have a piece or two to show, as well as the rest of the One Room Schoolhouse videotape.

Take care,



Where has Greenville gone?

To the Editor,

Here we are in the 21st century. Have gone to several Town Board meetings and Pulse of the People meetings. Just sat back, watched and listened. "Where has Greenville gone?" I have lived in Greenville all my life, my family dates back to the first settlers in the town. Times sure have changed. While working around my place of business and mowing the lawn, I began to think about Greenville. I'm only in my early 60s, but I can remember a great community. I would like to know how many people having so much to say about our great place to live can remember playing basketball at Dr. Bott's, baseball, basketball and football behind the local funeral home, Capt. Gumpert leading the Memorial Day parade, his fishing contests at the Greenville Pond, ice skating on the pond, the hockey games at night after the "little kids" have gone home, waiting for Mr. Cunningham to finish snowblowing and shoveling the pond so that they might skate. (Happy 91st birthday, Mr. C.) Can anyone remember the town people, along with the highway crew, blasting the ice on the pond after a winter flood so the kids could skate? The Yankee vs. Dodgers baseball games on the front lawn of Marshall "Butch" Baker's home, even a broken window or two, also the bond fires and marshmallow roast around the pond, the manger scene at Christmas time. I can't remember kids saying there wasn't anything to do.

Then again, Bill the Barber's shop next to the Main Street Garage with Gordon and Evy and their crew, Nort, Lester and Wolfie, Bogdan's Department Store and then Von's Department store. Didn't need to know the size, Bill Von did. The I.G.A. Store with Bill and Murphy Vaughn, drop off a list and pick up your groceries later, all bagged and

ready to go. The Quackenbush Drug Store and Soda Fountain, wire-backed chairs and little tables. Also Hugo's Riding Stable with Kate and Hugo leading the trail ride from the middle of town. You had to watch where you walked after a trail ride. John Parks and then Walt Cameron as highway superintendents helping families out when they needed it, because it was the right thing to do. The Corner Restaurant with the pinball machine in the back. How many hours spent there? Gus Baker's Bar and Restaurant, and then Mrs. Hynes with Skip behind the bar. Great food. The round table with Bert Butler, Merritt Roe, Charlie Schirmer, Capt. Gumpert, Pa Vaughn, all the fish that were caught and big bucks shot. Every year the fish got bigger and the racks larger.

The Post Office with Cutty and Evelyn running the store. During the summer you couldn't get through town between 8:30 and 10 a.m. with all the summer boarders in town. Route 32, 81 and 26 were more like a hiking trail than a highway with the people walking from Shepard's, Balsam Shade, Jesse's Elm Shade, Baumann's Brookside, Ingal-side, Pine Lake Manor, Welster's and Birmann's, and the other resorts to Greenville.

The Vanderbilt Theatre with Elsie Roe selling tickets for 35 cents and Morris Wolfort taking them and selling popcorn for 15 cents and soda for 10 cents. The people lined up in front of the Pioneer Building for the second show. There was a Saturday afternoon cartoon show, the western and of course The Rocket Man.

The Greenville Fire Co. baseball team. Who could miss a game between Greenville and Oak Hill on a Sunday afternoon, the locals playing the summer resorts in softball? Can you remember? Carelas' Bar, Paul's Tavern, The Cabin, Breezy Knoll, Kuhne's the Rainbow Lodge with

the large Rainbow on the roof seen for miles, spaghetti at the Blue Inn on Thursday night with Steve and Ellie, The Clearview Speedway in South Westerlo with stock car racing and even professional wrestling on occasion. The buses arriving on a Friday evening with Crow's Taxi waiting to take the people to the local resorts and East Durham. Politics, too. Who can forget the supervisor races between Fred Flack and Carl Barkman.

"Great Times" Bob's Mobil Station on the corner, Freda's Dress Shop, the telephone operators next to the Pioneer Building, meeting Theresa Brewer in Flack's Bakery, Bill's Mobil and Coffee Shop in Freehold, John I's Store in Norton Hill, Clow's Service Station in Greenville, Mary's Restaurant, the Rotary Country Fair, the minstrel shows, Mrs. Roosevelt's visit, even the American Legion Post building a house for the Van Zandt family on Route 81 when the state took their home for the new 81.

There were so many great times and things accomplished by the community.

How many of these people with so much to say about our great community on what we can do and not do with our own property can give the name of the Union officer from Greenville killed at the Battle of Gettysburg and buried in the local cemetery?

I probably have rambled on long enough. True, in what you may say, we can't return to the past. We have had a great run. I can't say what the future will bring, but for the ones who want to tell us how to use and what we can do to our own property, we seem to have been doing just fine before you came on the scene.

Written by a person who just loves Greenville.

Curtis A. Cunningham
Greenville