

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

June 2007, Issue 174

Durham Center Museum

A mostly humid, sunny-mix-with-thunderous-downpour, evening awaited the GLHGers who convened at the Durham Center Museum, a half-hour sooner than usual. Attending were Walt Ingalls, Larry & Dot Hesel, Phyllis Beechert, Harriett Rasmussen, Connie Teator, Judy Rundell, Kathie Williams, Stephanie Ingalls, Dot Blenis, and Don Teator.

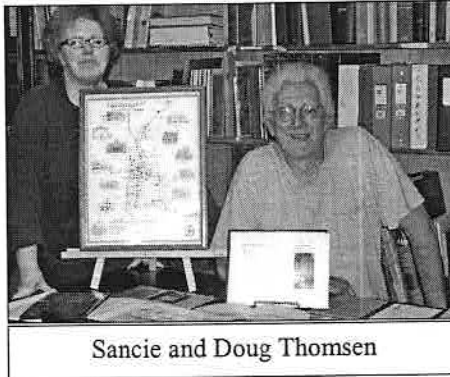
Graciously hosting the evening were Sancier and Doug Thomsen, who have been curating the last thirteen or fourteen years. Many thanks for welcoming us.

Some of you know the story of the Durham Center Museum already. The one room school house had serviced Durham Center for decades and decades. Vernon Haskins who owned the land it sat on was finally



Catskill Mountain House column piece

able to purchase it and immediately started storing his artifacts, especially many of his natural history specimens. Eventually, as people came to visit and learn what was taking shape, they would donate "stuff" that was deemed to belong to a local depository



Sancier and Doug Thomsen

instead of some distant one, or, instead of throwing it away. A theater group that Vernon befriended gave theater fundraising benefits, and the "museum" part was quickly added on to, and later the "library." Management of the museum passed along to Vernon's daughter, Vernona, before the Thomsens became caretak-

ers. Sancier admits that it took a few years for the experience to grow on her.

It was a good thing it did grow on her and Doug because they have turned a moribund situation into a resource that people again seek out for information and curiosity. The museum part still has the one room school house set up for school, with post cards and pictures of the different communities. In the center sections are tools, artifacts, statuary, garments, and a whole array of local material that would hard to find otherwise. The library section is not only a host to local collections but also a repository for regional genealogy material. The subject sheet lists the following categories:

- \*family files
- \*family bibles

- \*cemetery records
- \*card file
- \*Beer's History
- \*Borthwick papers
- \*Brace papers (Catskill, 1876-1879)
- \*Rev. & Civil War records
- \*assessment rolls
- \*correspondence
- \*census records
- \*church records
- \*Greene County records
- \*Rossi (cemetery & genealogy)
- \*Staats (Alb. & Col. Co. records)
- \*Wright family
- \*family genealogy
- \*Greene County atlas
- \*surrounding counties
- \*ledgers, diaries, clippings
- \*miscellaneous county & town records
- \*antique ephemera

Somewhere in there, the distant thunder developed into a driving downpour, and a few of us sprinted (ok, ambled quickly) for the cars whose windows had been left open because of the heat.



Newell board, Susquehanna Tpk

Even better, Sancier and Doug had pitchers of ice tea and lime-ade, as well as a bowl of fruit and a platter of donuts.

In all seriousness, we were made aware of the local history / genealogy treasure we have in our backyard. Take time to see Sancier and Doug.



statuary

Our next meeting is a share session on July 9, again at our customary 7:30 p.m. start time, and at our customary large Community Room.

Included in this newsletter is the tour guide I handed out on Greenville Day. I was trying to keep it to two pages. So, first, knowing that these two pages was all the room I had, what looks good and what could be improved? If I had ten pages, what would you want to see? Feel free to phone or email ([don@dteator.com](mailto:don@dteator.com)) or write, if you want to have some input.

Take care,

PS: Anyone wanting to contact Sancier or Doug about museum business can email: [dougsancier@aol.com](mailto:dougsancier@aol.com)

## History Walk – May 2007 Greenville Town Park to Four Corners

*These notes should be considered as talking points for this walking tour, and not as a complete history of this special area.*

Welcome to the first Greenville Day!

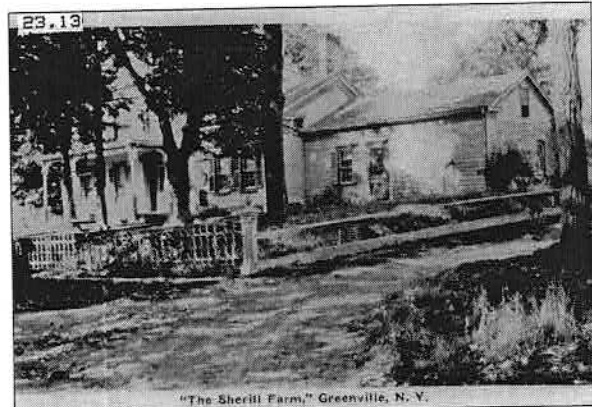
Although Greenville never changes, the accumulation of alterations has created a different Greenville than our "oldtimers" can recollect from their young days. Our walk south from the park is reminder.



Jesse's Elm Shade, Greenwood Apartments  
Adjoining north of park entrance

Immediately north of the park, when standing at the park's entrance, one sees a string of attached motel units, now apartments. Missing is the central building, the former Jesse house. Once a farm house, Jesse's Elm Shade drew guests in the early and mid-century until it was razed in the 1980s. This historical marker notes Benjamin Spees as one of the town earliest founders (along with Lake and Knowles).

From the park's entrance, one's eyes note the barns. These barns were the



Sherill / Vanderbilt Farm  
In front of North Barn, on Rt 32

accompaniments to the Sherrill/Vanderbilt house that operated as a prosperous farm until the 1970s. Shown below is a post card photo of the house from the early, which stood until it was razed, along with the nearby outbuildings, only a few years ago. The park's 156 acres were the agricultural fields of this farm.

The properties across the street, up to Irving Road, are relative newcomers to Greenville.

The yellow house below the park entrance, built in 1978, occupies the site of the tennis court of Lewis Sherrill and the Knowlton (next).

Next, on the same side, sits the classic white clapboard farm house this side of the Westerner is locally known as the Knowlton, named after the Knowles family who owned it. Charles Knowles

was an influential, prosperous landowner in the 1870s and 1880s who kept his "summer house" as he lived in Albany.

The buildings across the street are 20th century "newcomers."

The Westerner is a relative youngster, and the two houses forming the Westerner square are Irving properties. The Irving residence is considered by some to be the oldest house in town.



Talmage-Atwater-Baumann House  
View from south, rear

The Baumann house is one of the town's oldest houses. The historical marker notes it as the Talmadge & Atwater house.

Below the Baumann house is a newer, colonial white house with green shutters was built about 1940. It was lived in for many years by the O'Keefe family.

Back to this side of the street is the Stanger house, next to the Irving houses. It is another of Greenville's older houses, dating to mid-19th century.

South of us, from Westerner to the creek (and school driveway) is a string of house left mostly unchanged over the

past one hundred years.

Across the street, the brown-shingled, end gables facing the road was the residence of the Clark family while Richard Clark served as the Episcopal minister during the 1960s and 1970s.

Next to that was the Manse, serving Rev-



View from the upper school driveway, to  
Powell house and beyond

erend Van Dyke in the early 20th century.

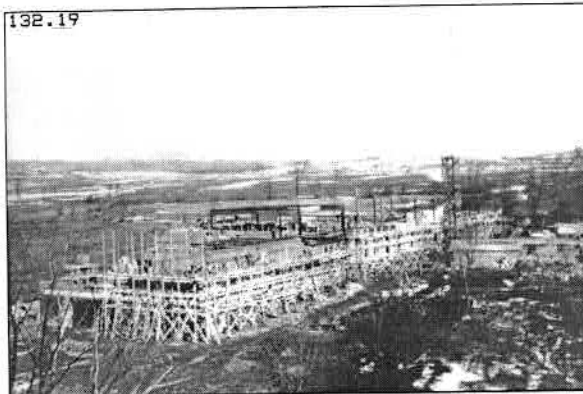
Next, the "Powell" house (left, two houses before creek), was a stately residence that had a three story tower. "Doc" Wasson lived here.

The last house before the creek across the school is a classic Victorian rural building known locally as the Vaughn building, which became divided into apartments.

We cross the bridge over a small creek which originates in the fields uptown (in the Bryant's and "Balsam Shade" area), large enough to cross Rt 32 just above the resort by the driveway to the park and winding its way through the park before crossing Rt 32 again here.

We cross the bridge, and dominating the

view from here is the Scott M. Ellis Elementary School.



Construction of new centralized school in 1931-32  
Note fields in background

Population increases dictated additions and use of community structures as classroom space until the high school was built in 198-69. The school district celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2007.



Rundell House  
originally, on school site

Across the street sits the salmon colored house. It was moved there over a two day period, partially straddling the main road overnight, to make way for the new school building. It has been in the Rundell family for nearly 90 years. Next to the Rundell house is the par-

sonage, originally a residence.

Next is the Episcopal Church. The stone to build it came from the Sanford farm from Route 26 (also known as the George Turon farm).

Just below the church is an empty spot before the cemetery driveway stood a residence, owned by Sylvester Story. Then the driveway leads back to the cemetery.

Backing up just a little, on the right side, is the small Boy Scouts building. It served as the chapel for the Presbyterian Church and was recently used as the American Legion building. It also was used as an emergency school room during the 1960s.

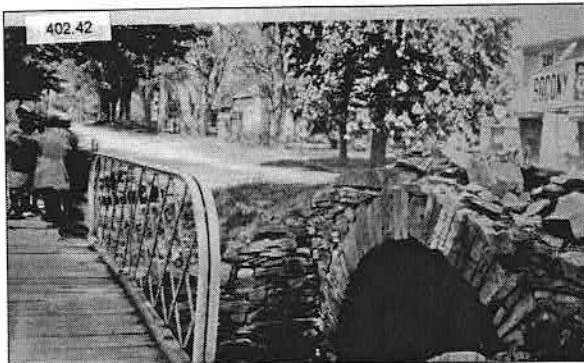
Next is The All Arts Matter – Cultural Center building. It looks like a church because it was Greenville's Presbyterian Church from the 1790s until the 1990s. AAM is currently the town's leading cultural influence.

The library building was built in 1906, with an addition in the 1990s. Originally, the Greenville Free Academy occupied the site since 1816 before it was razed in 1905. With the centralization of schools, the building has mostly been used as a public library, with other uses in its history.

It should be noted that the area from the pond to the school was donated to the town by Augustine Prevost two hundred years ago and, today, has Historic National Register status.

The realty office was Flach's barber-

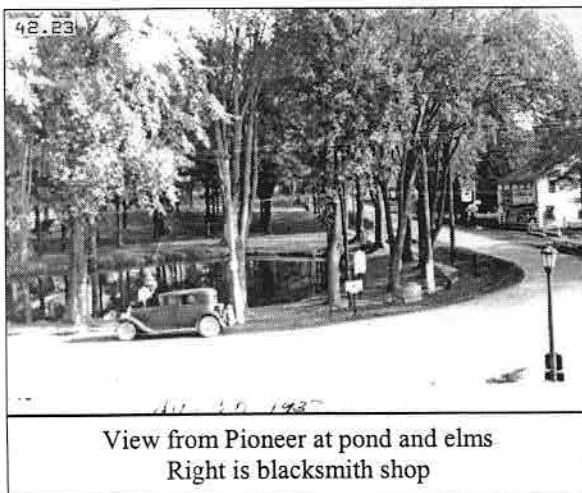
shop until recently, having been built for that purpose in 1963. It stands on the site of a blacksmith shop.



Stone arch bridge over creek  
Blacksmith shop/gas station to right; Perkowski house behind tree; cemetery entrance pillars; and Story house (empty spot by cemetery driveway)

The fire house in back is of block construction (mostly), built in the early 1940s and used as a farm machinery building.

The creek mentioned earlier crosses Rt 32 again (and not for the last time, either). The bridge was recently replaced. The hot dog stand has been a fixture since the 1960s, its first incarnation was



View from Pioneer at pond and elms  
Right is blacksmith shop

Matt's Hot Dogs.

The now abandoned gas station was a gas station since the 1940s. Before that is was a centerpiece residence, with a white picket fence, that distinguished the town's center.

The pond has been a pond longer than anyone can remember, with alterations to its banking, fountain, and outlet into the creek. The gazebo was built in 1989 was a thank you gesture from the GCS band for fundraising efforts for a trip.

The four corners is the crossing of the



Pond, with Library and Church in background  
Honor Roll erected in 1940s

state roads, 81 and 32, with the east-west road being Greenville's main street, indicating the direction that the early turnpikes crossed the town two hundred years ago.

Across Rt 81 sits the Pioneer Building, today's Greenville Town Hall, a topic for another tour.