

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

August 2007, Issue 176

Share Session

Summer's closing month nears, and our August meeting met classic summer weather – crisp 80°, with an overnight low of 50°, a very welcome relief from what has dragged on much of the summer. (Is this complaint one that a person who is getting “old” makes?) Present were Carol Bryant, Jeannette Rose, Stephanie Ingalls, Harriett Rasmussen, Phyllis Beechert, Dot and Larry Hesel, Mimi Weeks, Kathie Williams, and Don Teator.

*A couple of notes first:*

*—I do know how to spell Ray Beecher's last name. My apologies, Ray, for last newsletter's mistake. (I hate getting names wrong! and thank you, Ray, for being gracious about it.)*

*—The next meeting will be a presentation about the stone arch bridges in Durham. More later.*

Phyllis drew attention to the 75th anniversary celebration of the Greenville Central School District, to be celebrated Columbus Day Weekend. Quite a schedule of activities has been created. Some note was made whether or not a post card, mailed to “Boxholder”, had been received, and many of us indicated, as of this meeting, that we had not received it. Check with the school if

you have not received the post card and are interested in the festivities.

Phyllis also contributed the memorial service flier for Alice Roe, the biographical part reproduced in the newsletter.

I think it was Carol who recognized the community's celebration of the 75th anniversary of St. John's, with mention of the variety of buildings and of the service, noting Chris DeGiovine's part in the service.

Jeannette brought in photos of Comstock ancestors (Bob's side, I believe). One of the photographs was of the male ancestor born in 1788 (who lived long enough to be photographed). Jeannette recounted many more details of the Comstocks.

Harriett updated us of her search for Lee ancestors for Pat Galea of Bolton Landing, who had the autograph book of local names. The connection between Lee and Slawson and Finch has been somewhat clarified, with Pat wanting to know more of her family history. We tried to remember which cemetery was the Lockwood Cemetery, and seemed to think it was the Westerlo Rural Cemetery, the one on the left side going from South Westerlo to Britton's Corners (the Basic Creek Rd).

And, Harriett had met with Ben Dunn who was doing family research involving the John Lowe family (Jesse's Elm Shade site) and had some success. I know Harriett is slightly embarrassed when we call her a local treasure, but she is!

Don brought out the Jump/Craw cemetery photos upon a comment by Jeannette, noting the condition many of our small, abandoned cemeteries are in (mostly involving the disappearance of stones).

Don drew attention to the Kaatskill Life cover showing nine of the cats that are gracing Catskill's Main Street. Take time to stroll Main Street and check out the fifty cats.

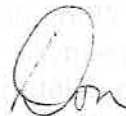
Elizabeth Laite, an Atwater relative, sent Don some Greenville material that needed a home – Ray Beecher's Out to Greenville, the 1891 Memorial Celebration of Greenville, and a few other items. One of these items is a single-spaced, three page tale of old Greenville. I've reproduced it here, and think you will get a chuckle.

Finally, Don passed out copies of the Greenville Draft Community Profile that has been developed for the Comprehensive Plan Revision Committee, of which he is a member. Before Zoning changes and suggestions are made, a look of what Greenville is and wants to become is developed. With no politics overtly meant, this document was distributed and briefly discussed to show the attendees what Greenville looks like from a planning point-of-view. We often

talk about our memories of Greenville, shaded with a variety of tints of rose, but this is a chance to see what goes on as a governmental and political process. You can check out this document on [greenvillecommunityplan.com](http://greenvillecommunityplan.com), along with other details. (If you'd like a copy, let me know, and for a few dollars postage, I can mail you a copy.)

The next meeting, September 10, will feature Nick Nahas, with help from his wife Mary Lou (excuse my spelling, just in case), who will give a repeat performance given at the Vedder Library about the stone arch bridges in the Town of Durham, of which eleven still exist. Three came from the construction of the Catskill & Canajoharie Railroad and of the Susquehanna Turnpike; the others were built by the Town Highway Superintendent, a Cunningham, an ancestor of Jerry Cunningham of Cunningham Road. It should not take more than an hour once we get started. If a couple of you would like to help with refreshments, that would be appreciated. Give me a call if you want to oversee that operation; otherwise, you will be stuck with what I consider to be refreshments. Come on out; I found it to be fascinating and worth a do-over for our meeting.

Take care,





## ALICE F. ROE

December 19, 1919—July 10, 2007



**A**lice F. Roe was born in Brooklyn, New York on December 19, 1919 to William and Sophie Roe. She attended Bay Ridge High School and occupied her residence on Irving Road, Greenville, New York in approximately 1938. There she embraced the rural setting and became an integral part of the community.

Alice worked as secretary and then executive secretary at General Electric in Schenectady for many years, making the long daily trip with her father and Hank Latham. She then joined Stiefel Laboratories in Oak Hill as executive secretary, working for Herbert and Werner Stiefel. The part of the work she liked best was dealing with international customers, many from the Middle East and Asia, and facilitating the transactions. Her grateful customers often sent her gifts and expressions of appreciation. Alice later "retired" but at age 70 came out of retirement to work at the Greene County Council for Aging. In that capacity she not only learned to use the computer, but was a major force in computerizing operations and training others in that office. These years were very satisfying for Alice. She eventually retired again, this time permanently.

Alice enjoyed many things in life, family, travel, church and Grange activities and the Greenville Historical Society. She knew and did business with the original owner of Bryants' Store in South Westerlo, long before it became a supermarket in Greenville. She was known to her nieces, nephews and younger cousins as a fun-loving person who delighted in having family around. She made summer experiences at Greenville fun, driving children to get Mamie Eisenhower bangs and all day suckers, driving the family to Sunday School picnics at Devil's Tombstone and to outings at Warner's Lake and Thatcher Park/Indian Ladder. She loved a clean car on Sunday morning, and was always almost late for church getting that Chevy or Dodge polished up.

Alice was a stalwart member of Westerlo Reformed Church, joining in the 1940s. She taught Sunday School for many years, was a strong soprano in the church choir, a member and secretary of the Ladies Aid Society, and served as deacon, treasurer and organizer of many ham suppers and other functions. She also set a well-remembered example, caring for aging parishioners such as Miss Patrie and Mrs. Florence Woodruff. She also took care of her mother, Sophie, and Anna Hollenberger in their old age. At the time of her passing, Alice was the oldest member of the Westerlo congregation.

Alice joined the Hiawatha Grange No. 1480 in May of 1946 and was a member for 61 years. She served as Master Lecturer, Lady Assistant Steward and Flag Bearer. She also served as secretary for 25 years. She was instrumental in starting the Grange Annual Bar-B-Que and actively supported the Grange Ice Cream Booth at the Altamont Fair. She loved to dance and competed in many square dancing contests with her father as partner. Until she was 86 she helped serve meals to seniors at the Senior Center based in the Grange Hall. Alice was a very dedicated Grange member and will be missed by all.

In 2002, Alice decided to leave the house on Irving Road and move to Van Allen Apartments to be closer to other seniors and her physicians. She had five very happy years in her apartment, making new friends and sharing in new experiences with neighbors there. Nonetheless, the family home in Greenville remained close to her heart.

Alice loved to travel with friends and family—going to visit her sisters Myrtle in Arizona and Martha in Florida and traveled to Nova Scotia, around the U.S., Europe and Australia. She was always game for a trip to Maine, down the Hudson, to Nashville and the Grand Old Opry or wherever a group was going. Almost always, she picked up one of the unique salt and pepper sets that, along with clip-on earrings, were her trademark. Alice cherished her independence and gave it up reluctantly.

Alice will be remembered with love and with fondness. She leaves behind her older and younger sisters, Myrtle Mortensen and Martha Hempstead, nieces and nephews, Garry, Jeanne and Thomas Hempstead, Patricia Mortensen and Barbara Sanborn and their families and cousins Albert Dayes, Jr., Nancy De Koven, Evelyn Dickinson, Beryl Halverson, Sally McManus, Doris Nemeroff, Betty Schumacher, Roy Sullivan and their families

My boyhood home in New York State was, at the turn of the century, on a small farm near Greenville, a small crossroads town; the East-West road crossing the North-South road at right angles. There were no paved roads; no automobiles; and no electric lights. A four-seater stagecoach ran through the town from Medusa, six miles to the west, to Cocksackie; fourteen miles to the east. Cocksackie boasted a station of the West Shore Railroad and was our supply point for mail, express, and freight. The stagecoach carried passengers as well as express and freight packages.

Two miles north of Greenville, and across the Greene-Albany County line, was the even smaller town of South Westerlo. Mail, express, and freight was delivered to South Westerlo by a smaller stagecoach that connected with the mainline coach at Greenville. South Westerlo had no exchange of activities with its mother town of Westerlo five miles farther to the north. Individual travel between towns was practically non-existent because of the condition of the roads - so rocky and rutty and often so deeply muddy that a carriage ride to an adjoining town was an ordeal. Unavoidable trips were usually made on foot, often through the fields instead of on the road.

The mainline stagecoach left Medusa early in the morning, arriving in Greenville around 7:30 and in Cocksackie around 11:00. On the return trip, it left Cocksackie around 1:00 P.M. arriving in Greenville around 4:30 and in Medusa around 6:00. Pertinent to our story is the manner in which cargoes were transferred between the two coach lines. The South Westerlo coach would arrive in advance of the mainline coach and would take up a waiting position some yards to the east of the Post Office. The mainline coach would pull up in front of the Post Office and the mail pouches would be handed to the Postmaster. Then the passengers would be helped out, after which the express and freight packages would be unloaded and placed on the flagstone platform in front of the postoffice; the packages for Greenville in one section and those for South Westerlo in another section. Packages from Greenville for points west would then be loaded; after which the driver would receive the mail pouches from the Postmaster, would mount the coach and drive away out the West Road with a cracking of whip and a clatter of wheels. The South Westerlo coach would then pull up in front of the postoffice, would load its packages, receive its mail pouch, and drive away up the North Road. All a very orderly and seemingly foolproof arrangement.

The elite ladies of Greenville were all members of the Concordia Circle, an avowed literary group but a group not averse to discussing any current subject of interest in the town, of arriving at a determination, and of going home and so informing their husbands. If a husband disagreed, he was cajoled, outtalked, browbeaten, and harried until he agreed to take the desired action. As a result, Greenville was a Prohibition town; so dry that it might be better described as arid - even parched. South Westerlo, over the county line, having no Concordia Circle, was wet - very wet.

Some twenty years earlier, and before Prohibition, one of the more promising young men of the town had acquired a taste for liquor and had committed a minor crime for which he was remanded to the county jail; partly for punishment but mostly for his rejuvenation. While he was in jail he learned a trade and, after his release, he was a responsible citizen of the town for a considerable time. Finally he started backsliding and, at the time of this story, his was a sad case. His almost daily routine was to walk to South Westerlo, spend most of the day doing odd menial jobs in return for some very bad liquor. He would then start to walk home, drinking the liquor on the way - sometimes reaching his shanty and sleeping on the floor because he couldn't make the bed; sometimes spending the night in a ditch or alongside a stone wall.

\* Local pronunciation: Cook Socky'

Four of the leading citizens of our town decided they would enjoy an occasional friendly game of poker. However their wives were members of the Concordia Circle and the Circle was staunchly opposed to card playing, therefore each of the four wives refused to allow the game to be played in her house. What to do? One of the men, whose house was built on a lot of considerable depth, employed the town carpenter to build a 12' x 12' cabin at the rear of his property. Here the men enjoyed a frequent friendly game. They, however, never thought to clean the cabin and the wife, who never publicly recognized its existence, wouldn't allow the hired girl to clean it. Because of this the cabin soon became facetiously known in the town as Cobweb Hall.

After several enjoyable sessions in Cobweb Hall, the four men concluded that their pleasure could be enhanced by some liquid refreshment. But where to get it? Suddenly an idea: At hand was a gentleman making regular trips to South Westerlo who might, for a modest liquid remuneration, serve as a courier to deliver their desired supply of refreshment. This would assure the courier's having a supply of liquor of better quality than that to which he was accustomed and without the necessity of doing menial tasks and it would insure a regular supply to Cobweb Hall. The Justice of the Peace was consulted and he, after the promise of an occasional libation, pronounced the plan legal in all aspects. The courier, when consulted, was promptly willing. He was equipped with some warm clothing and especially with a warm overcoat into which had been tailored, on either side, an extra-deep pocket capable of holding a quart bottle of Scotch. Arrangement was made with the source of supply in South Westerlo to fill the deep pockets; to give the courier a modest size bottle for his personal use; to point him in the direction of Greenville; and to give him a push.

The pastor of the local church and the ladies of the Concordia Circle had great faith in evangelical services. In the Fall, after the urgent work on the farms was completed and before the winter snows blocked the roads, an out-of-town spellbinder would be hired to preach hellfire and salvation each night for a period of two or three weeks. The ladies, bless them, now focused on all the derelicts and backsliders in the town and tried to bring them into the fold. What better subject than the Cobweb Hall courier? So it is not surprising that, a couple of nights later, who should arrive, supported by two ladies, and occupy a rear pew but the rather bewildered and bleary-eyed courier.

The communion service was in progress, the sacrament being given to those recently converted as well as to the regular communicants. Materially our communion service equipment consisted of a large circular silver tray on which was superposed a slightly elevated coverlike silver frame containing a large number of small recesses into each of which was placed an individual communion glass. The glasses were filled with the consecrated wine and the pastor would then pass along the aisles and each parishioner would take a glass. The courier became deeply, though foggily, interested. He noted the technique of each celebrant: the men, with a toss of the head and hand, taking the sacrament in one gulp; the ladies sipping elegantly with upraised pinkie. The dear ladies at his side were pressuring him; his throat felt parched; so he agreed that he would like to be saved and take communion. He found the wine much blander than his usual drink but it would do; and the ladies rejoiced.

The townfolks who assembled at the postoffice to await the arrival of the stagecoach noticed that, at fairly frequent intervals, there was, among the few packages consigned to South Westerlo, a barrel of bread. This aroused considerable idle curiosity as every housewife baked her own bread and no self-respecting housekeeper would permit a slice of "boughten" bread on her table. But the barrels continued to arrive.

One rainy night, when the stagecoach was belated by bad roads, a heavy load, and the necessity to frequently change horses, the coach arrived after dark and unloaded in the murky light of kerosene lanterns. Among the cargo was a barrel of bread which was set on the platform in the South Westerlo section - several onlookers saw it and laughed. Presently the mainline coach pulled away and the South Westerlo coach took its place. The driver turned to the platform to load the barrel of bread... IT WAS GONE!!! Though several people had seen it arrive, no one saw it leave. A quick search availed nothing. The Postmaster came out with the South Westerlo mail pouches and the driver, conditioned by "Neither rain, nor snow, nor gloom of night, etc." had to leave without the bread. While this incident was the subject of conversation for several days, the enigma was not solved for a very long time.

About a week later, the town painter and paperhanger was engaged in painting a barn in the northeastern quadrant of the town and, on stopping work in the late afternoon, he decided, as the weather was fine, to go home crosslots instead of by the road. As he was passing through the woods back of the cemetery, his footsteps muffled by the mossy ground, he thought he heard a voice and he stopped to listen. He heard, in blurred tones "This is my blood that was shed for you. Drink ye all of it. Do ye this in remembrance of Me" - the communion service. Quietly he advanced toward the voice. He saw: an empty barrel; some very moldy loaves of bread; and the courier who was seated on the ground with his back against a tree; with his legs spread apart and, between them, supported in a series of holes in the moss, bits of broken bottles each filled with Scotch from one of the bottles at his side. The recent convert was apparently taking communion for all his fellow converts as he was alternately tossing one off and sipping one elegantly with elevated pinkie. His tongue was becoming thicker and thicker. What to do? The painter reasoned that to set the courier home to his shanty would require help and the story would be out to the detriment of the courier. If he was home, he would probably sleep on the floor and, as the night was not too cold, he could as well sleep in the woods. So the painter quietly withdrew and, to his everlasting credit, never mentioned the incident until months later and after the death of the courier.

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In Greenville today there are electric lights, a bar, a liquor store, paved highways, and hundreds of automobiles. The women have the vote; the ladies play bridge with liquid refreshment; and the husbands complain. The stagecoach is a station wagon and the mail carrier makes the round trip in a couple of hours.

The settings and characters of our story have all been gone for many years except the church, the cemetery, the woods, the Concordia Circle, and Cobweb Hall, which, except for a long-ago brief splotchy interlude, that cannot be related in this family narrative, has been the prosaic storehouse for lawnmowers and garden tools.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI!