

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

October 2007, Issue 178

Share Session

A pleasant Columbus Day evening awaited a small crowd: Dot Blenis, Walt Ingalls, Harriett Rasmussen, Stephanie Ingalls, David and Judy Rundell, and Don Teator. And, even those who came out seemed a bit tired, as if Columbus Day weekend, with the accompanying events of the 75th anniversary of GCS, had tired everyone. In fact, everyone present had attended some of the GCS events, and seemed satisfied recounting the weekend's events.

So, we talked about the variety of events we had seen – the parade, vets' ceremony, history lectures (Ray Beecher, Richard Ferrioli, and me), trip to one room school house, food, memorabilia, talking (lots of that), meet the teachers, the Gedney photo exhibit (thanks, Paige), etc. It is nearly impossible to go into detail without running the risk of overdoing. Thus, allow me to cut short the details, and tease all of you who missed the weekend that you missed a momentous weekend for local and school history.

Harriett brought clippings about Moore, Tryon, and Wright families, as well as the Gedney obit. All these names tied together because of the R.E. Taylor di-

ary and his first house on Sunset Road. This led to mention, and reading of, a couple segments from the seven part series that comprised Bill Gedney's memory of Greenville, as written in the winter of 1996. This is duplicated in this newsletter.

Don brought in a 1959 aerial view of Greenville, mostly of Rt 32 between Tiberi's (close to the former Jerry's auto service station before Carelas' Lake) and Jesse's Elm Shade (near Irving Road), extending westward to the Basic Creek. The apple orchard that would become the site for the high school is one of the most obvious features of the map. Perhaps, I can duplicate that for next newsletter.

Although several GLHGers were present for my slide history of Greenville, it was suggested that I might re-present the lecture slide show for the November meeting. So, that is the main part of the November 12 program.

Till then, take care,



# GREENVILLE AND BEYOND...

The Daily Mail, Friday, Jan. 5, 1996 A5

## The Diary Of William Gedney...

This is William Gedney. I was born in Greenville October 28, 1898 in the house where Mrs. McCarthy lived and before that Joe Smith.

I'm going to put some names with places starting with Stevens' Hill (Route 26) traveling west. The first place is Sanford, where John Sanford was brought up, the father of Ruth Hook. Next place is Powell; I don't remember her first name. She had a son. He became an engineer on the West Shore and lived in Ravena. The next place Captain Jim Stevens. He started the first insurance business in Greenville and had his children--oldest James, Alice, Walter, ?.

The next place was Bert Abrams--one son. They moved out of the territory. The next place was Chesebrough--five girls and one boy. Matt painted and paperhanged. He also raised game chickens. The next place was Lou Brouilliard's the barber for years. The next place was Winne's print office, near where the liquor store was. It was a fair sized press. When the town water supply was plentiful, he run the press with a water wheel. If the water was low, he needed someone to turn the press. Upstairs, he had a gallery for taking pictures in the area. He had one son who went to Hudson.

The next building was a blacksmith shop where LeGrand Ellis, uncle to Scott Ellis, was a blacksmith for years. After Mr. Ellis, there was a Mr. Radley who lived

## Gedney Diary Continues....

in the west someplace. Next building that was my great-grandfather's workshop, the first undertaker of Greenville and first cabinetmaker. He made the first hearse. The first one he used it for was his mother. That also became John and Roe's storehouse for the store and after that became the city hall. I can remember having a couple trial cases there and they would chase us kids out.

Next door to that were a couple of tenant houses. The most memorable one was of Tom the Jap when he first came to Greenville. He run a laundry there and done odd jobs. The next place was Smith's, the dentist. The one story that sticks to mind is of the one who came from out back and wanted a set of teeth; Mr. Smith made the teeth, and put them in, and told him not to take them out. The man went home and later came back and said his teeth were missing. He looked in mouth and not a tooth was left in his plate, but he got the plate out. They had grown fast, so he had to break them.

Next to the dentist were three stores in the same building, which in later years was known as Baker's. The first one was a candy store which Bill Irving operated who took over from William McCabe who had it as a drugstore;

during the winter you used to get a plate of oysters and a soup and crackers for a quarter. Next to that was the pool hall which was quite lively at times; and then the barbershop of Mr. Brouilliard. Sanford's livery was in back of what was Baker's. They'd rent out rigs and sell their ware in the countryside. Pat Evenas who was supervisor for years took over from Sanford.

Next to that was Stevens' General Store. Next to that was Lym Wood's. He had candy, and articles of different kinds. It was so dark in there you could hardly see. You could buy a horsehair fur coat for \$20. He had the post office in there sometimes, depending on the politics.

Next to that was the house on the corner, there was a public penstock there. The water ran constantly with a lead pipe running to there from the spring in the cemetery behind the Main Street Garage. It also fed the watering trough which is still be the pond. Quite a few people got their water there. The water went across the road for the watering trough also.

I can remember when there was a drought and all the wells in the town went dry. The penstock didn't go dry but there wasn't enough water for the town; so they drew

water from over by Ingall's boardinghouse from a spring that feeds his swimming pool.

The house on the corner was a big white house. Mrs. Townsend lived there with two other ladies. One of them married Ford Roe; the

other married Henry Barker.

Then there's the pond. Beside the pond was Charlie Roe's. He trucked it a little, and what else I don't know. That's where the bank is now. Next was A. J. Cunningham; he was the undertaker, furniture dealer and grain dealer. He

had a three-horse team and a truck on the road in his trucking business. He also had the agency for International Harvester. Anybody who wanted anything done called on Ambrose Cunningham.

(more next week)

Next to him (A.J. Cunningham) was the house my second sister Ruth was born in. After that, Neil Avery, the druggist who took over from Mr. McCabe lived there for years. Hallenbeck, the mailman, lived there also. He later hung himself in the barn in back of the house.

Then up the hill, Mr. Botsford built the big house there. It was rumored to have cost \$3,000 to be built in 1884 or so, or that's the date on the barn. Then there were no other houses until you come to Mary Vanderbilt's, a very old house. That was the Calhoun house. This house was also the Holsenger house. My father started house there and my sister Loretta was born there.

Next to that was a house that belonged to Coonley. He was a doctor but he did not live in Greenville; the house was his summer home. He was a brother to the one who ran the hotel and had a farm down Route 32 where the riding academy is today. Another brother had a farm they called the Plattekill. He also run the hotel. Dr. Coonley had a windmill and had a tank near the top and had running water into the house. They had quite a fire and the house burned down. He wasn't here at the time. He built a new house.

After he sold the house and left there, the house burned down a second time. Then the cabin was built in later years.

A little beyond the cabin was where a tollhouse stood. I remember the foundation. The next house is Wakely's, the yellow house atop Scripture Bridge Hill. Winnie Wakely married an Earl. The next house was Ambrose Hall's. As kids, we used to tease him. He did something to his hair and it turned green.

Next was Scripture Bridge. The first bridge! I know Pat Evans put in there; then Stanley Ingalls put in the one there today. We cross the street back to Greenville. On the west side of the bridge was a little house they just tore down for the new bridge. His name was Green, I think, and a veteran of the Civil War.

We go past the Catholic Church to Crow Griffin's which was Doc Botsford's. That was the father to Henry Botsford who built the house across the street. The next house down the hill was Dr. Charles McCabe. His father was also a doctor and lived on South Street. Next was the Opera House. A company came out of Albany and would put on five plays, an exciting time in Greenville, with full houses. They'd move on after five days to the next town. We'd also had dances there.

The building next to the opera house was a firehouse. That was a little building with the fire apparatus. Next to that across the creek was the hotel barn and the hotel on the corner. Some had horses they'd hire in Cocksackie and they put them up in the barn; others had the horses brought up to Greenville and they hire a horse from

Greenville onto the next town. On Halloween, Phillip McCabe and I went into the barn where they had some pigs. We each got a pig, held their snout so they couldn't squeal, and let them in a side entrance to the hotel. That caused quite a fracas because they'd go into the dining room and they were just high enough to go under a chair and upset it. It was quite a time. Coonley was the first one I remember running the hotel. He built the house where Dr. Bott lived. His brother took over then; he had a daughter Susie Coonley. After that, Jim Smith run it a while, then Ezra Cleveland, and Harold Woodruff bought it, making a barn into a dance hall. By then there were plenty of automobiles and the hotel wasn't doing much business.

(more next week)

Across the street from the hotel was the corner store. There was a man named Bentley who ran it, but I don't remember him or the store being operated at that early. Will McCabe had it after that; he also had a tinsmith shop upstairs. The house that went with the store, Wilbur has an apartment house.

Next to that was a little building that still stands there; the roof line still comes out and covers the porch. That was Philo Irving who had watch repair and clock repair. Next to that was the building

whose roof came out just like the one mentioned but was taken off at a later date and made with glass windows in it. Square McCabe run a tinsmith shop there. He hired several men to make tin ware and had the wagons loaded with tin ware and they'd go out and all over the country and all over the mountain to sell the tin ware. They'd stop to all the farmhouses and trade stuff and bring back old iron, and stoves and hair, and bones. He did quite a thriving business for many a year. Will Irving later moved there with is ice cream store. When Irving bought the store, it was he who remodeled it with the plate glass. When he did that, Sanford opened up a candy store where Irving had just move out so we had two candy stores in Greenville. Square's had a son who later run the corner store. Next to that was the drugstore, McCabe run the drugstore; he was the pharmacist and he was the brother to Charlie McCabe, the doctor. The lodge was upstairs. The drugstore also had a telegraph. At that time there was no connection from the outside with Greenville by telephone. The village had a telephone but no long distance. The telegraph message would come from Cairo and the message then relayed to whomever it was meant for.

Next to that was John and Ed Roe's general store. Over that was the Masonic Lodge. Next to that was my grandfather's house, Reuben Gedney. There was a big barn in the back with horses and horse stables. He had an ice house and the slaughter house. He also kept cattle and drove them to Cocksackie to the paddle boats which went to N.Y. City. This was before refrigeration so everything going to NYC had to be alive. He'd keep the cattle in the field beside the house, and when he had enough, he'd drive them to Cocksackie onto

the boats. After he retired, my father built a small butcher shop from which he peddled meat as my grandfather had until he sold out. I believe Jim Smith had the butcher shop built over to a house and that's where Ted DelaVergne and his wife my sister lived when he was running the garage. The next house was where I was born.



Looking West from Village Square, Greenville, N. Y.

THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN the view from Greenville's four corners, looking westward out West Main Street (today's Route 81). Cunningham's is on the right; the Vanderbilt Opera House (today's site of Cumberland Farm) juts out on the left.

DON TEATOR photo

Across the street, up on the hill a little bit, on the bank, belong to my grandfather and he had a sister who lived there. After that, Mrs. Finch lived there and brought up her granddaughter Lizzie Finch. When you turn the corner on 81, that also belonged to my grandfather but Charlie Sanford bought it; his wife Fannie was an aunt of mine. The next house was Ed Chesbro's. He worked around town, dug all the graves and a great man for sawing up stove wood.

The next house was Bogardus, the shoemaker. The next house was Seaman, and they had one daughter where Dr. Bott lives.  
(more next week)

Hoose had a barber shop over the corner store but Brouliard bought him out and moved it to the building by the garage. He came up out of New York. He was cutting hair by kerosene light. After he saw our lights, he wanted lights

too. He wired lights up there. Then, Roe's store had gasoline lights and we had a couple of bulbs there. Then we needed a larger engine. We wired the Masonic Hall, the Knights of Pythias Hall, the drugstore and the other stores on Main Street. Stevens had a 32 volt plant of their own. We even ran a wire over to Vanderbilt's Hall, which was just beginning to have movies. That little engine kicked around! I left Ted's and the power company came in. That motor still was around and I gave it to Curt Cunningham for his Museum...one of the first engines in Greenville and the first to make commercial power.

In the winter, Sanford's and Bill Irving made ice cream. And we had to have ice houses. In the winter, we had to fill the ice houses. The ice came from Lester Cunningham's pond and the pond by Galatian's Mill. The ice was cut by hand and made a lot of extra work. The ice would be covered with sawdust and kept very well.

Bill Irving had the first baker's bread in the Town of Greenville. Bill had a one cylinder Reo. Once a week he'd go to Albany and get

banana and stuff but he always brought out bread. Before that the women had to make their own bread every day or so. Irving did quite a business! It was quite a relief for the women not to have to make bread  
(Continued next week)

In the early days, the school didn't have athletics so every town had their own baseball team. Greenville had a very good one for a number of years. The one team we could never beat was Preston Hollow. John Sanford and Professor Cook were umpires. Usually we played on Saturdays.

Years ago our winters were more severe than they are today, more snow and colder (NOTE: Bet we broke a record this winter...CEM). The Hudson River would freeze over three feet or better. The river was lined with ice houses. The farmers from this area would work at the ice house and make big money, three to four dollars a day. They had board and room at those towns. Some even went back and forth to do their chores, go to sleep, and start over. They'd work to pay their taxes.

Normally, the men worked as an extra hand--a dollar and a half by the day, or a dollar a day for a month, or fifty cents for a boy, like me. So the ice business was quite a windfall.

We had a road commissioner. They'd get out scrapers and scrape the roads after they dried up and dig out the ditches, fill the ruts. With the good ditches, the road stayed much driver when it rained. The only time they scraped roads in the snow was when they had a warm spell or it rained, turned around cold, froze and got a crust on it. A horse might go through and throw his leg out. So they'd break the top crust off and throw it aside. Three feet of snow and it blew hard. Drifts could be ten feet deep.

We sawed wood a good many years. Farmers would want lumber, a little wood. We'd go to the farmers, saw down a few trees, saw them up, take it home, and stack it up. He didn't have to run to any lumber yard. They sawed up different lumber for different things. Tongues and wagons were made out of ash, slats were basswood which was light and strong. Ernest Slater had a portable mill and he'd move to any stand the farmers wanted him to.

Another thing that changed considerable is the stores. They used to sell kerosene from Cocksackie in barrels. I remember quite a celebration for a few days in Cocksackie. I believe it was the 100th year celebration. George Van and I had a race across the pond in a wash tub. Mine sank. There was a lot of activity for that celebration.

I've been told the town had a brass cannon for the 4th of July. One time they loaded it too heavy and it blew apart and a piece went through the hotel siding. That was the last of that celebration.

I remember them sawing wood on North Street with a team or horses on a treadmill. After that Lew Hoose had a steam engine, sawing up stove wood. Hoose ran the Vanderbilt farm and peddled milk around the village. He had a milk can and a quart dipper on a rod. You would go out with your pail and he'd dip you a quart of milk or whatever you wanted. After Lew Hoose, Henry Barker run the farm.

With no television, other things were done. In the winter time, there was a considerable amount of skating. There were quite a crowd riding down Steven's Hill. On the hill were breakers that were used for the horses going up and down the hill. It was a mound of dirt. A horse going up would have a rest when the wheels went over the hump and the driver would stop. The carriage would settle back on the hump and the horse

could catch its breath. Then onto the next one. Of course, it was great for riding down hills. When we hit them, we'd go ten feet before we hit the ground again. There was a competition to see who could go the farthest.

Pete Winnie had a string running from his print shop from a pig bladder. On the other end, he would tap onto that and talk to his wife. Around 1914, Jack Cameron bought the house where I was born, I believe, from Hegeman, and he built a meat shop just this side of the little creek. Joe Smith worked for him. All they had was ice, so when they went in with the lantern, the lantern warmed things up. I rigged a little flashlight bulb in there. We made dry cells so when they went in they could flip the switch and have a little flashlight bulb in there to light the icebox. I'd get the zinc from the dumps. Ned Avery, the druggist, helped me with the batteries. This was probably the first electric light in Greenville.

After that I left Greenville. I came back about 1920 and Ted DelaVergne and I opened the garage.

I started to work when I was 12 years old. I worked for Lester Cunningham, Ambrose's brother, for two summers. I'd rake hay on the farm on the old Spees place. I'd get there at 7, go to the creamery. He couldn't fill the can because I couldn't pick up a whole can. I'd come back and rake hay. Rush Atwater worked there also, and Norm Baker. I'd load hay. One day I was riding through the village and Lester asked Dorothy, his daughter, how she'd like a little brother to play with.

(last installment next week)

## The End Of William Gedney's Diary

I worked for Slater, who had brought big steam traction engines. I carried the water to the boiler, in the middle of the winter when it was very cold. We started for Greenville from Coxsackie. Where the snow was, there was no problem; where there was ice, we couldn't move so I'd throw wood or whatever there was for traction. He ran it over to the Holsinger place and we sawed that off, about 300,000 feet of lumber. Ray Hunt drew it out and I'd pile it up. I was only 14. That was the year Ray Hunt got married...1913. After that I'd work for Trum Ingalls. Trum had a mill on Cheese Hill behind Preston Hollow on one of those creeks. George Croogan was firing the boiler. He hired me to tail the mill. It was all virgin oak, not a knot on it. It was all I could do to handle it. The only thing that saved me was George wasn't able to keep steam up. Trum run into Slater and asked where he could get someone to fire the boiler. Slater said what about me. Clarence Ingalls was there too. One of his sisters did the cooking, and Carrie Ingalls was up there a lot. Art Matthews was there. He usually got about \$11 per thousand. He had a dozen cricks to cross. High water would wash the bridges. He would build the bridges on a slant so the water would come down on top of them and then had no more trouble.

After that was over, I was on the truck with Slater for a year. Then Ralph Dealy was on the truck and I was the helper. I was old enough by then, worked for McCabe as a tinsmith and he thought it was a good idea if I got a license to bring stuff up to the market. There was so such thing as an operator's license then; it was a chauffeur's

license for hire. I came to Albany for my license. They had one corner in the northwest corner of the Capitol and that was the whole space for the Motor Vehicle. They'd test two days a week and, of course, we were up there on the wrong day. Will McCabe had some political pull so I went and took my test; so I had my license.

We never did take stuff to Albany but I did drive for him. I drove the truck for two years, to Coxsackie with hay or apples or whatever it was. It was a day's work for a dollar.

I left Greenville for Brooklyn and got a job in the Home for Incurables. I was the coal passer. Ted DeLaVen worked there as an electrician so I worked as a handyman. Ted got drafted for WWI and I got to be electrician. I was there for a couple of years. I got into the draft the last year. I had tried to enlist a couple of different times. I had had hay fever bad and it affected my heart. When I came down into the salt air, the hay fever left me but the heart was bad. Every time the doctor examined me, he called it a heart murmur. I got examined by some heart expert doctors, and they still turned me down. Then I went to work in an electrical gang but after a couple of days, some one recognized me and chased me out. He transferred me over to the boiler. There were 87 boilers in the place. The pipes carried superheated steam, you couldn't see it; you couldn't go past any joint without sticking a paddle in front of the joint to make sure there weren't any leaks. We only could stay in for five minutes because of the heat. We'd come out and cool off and worked in relays. It was a 30 inch steam line. I worked at that for a while but I

kept hollering that I wanted to go back to the electrical gang. I got back. We had a 25,000 horse power turbine.

I would go to different auto shops. I had it in my mind I would go back to Greenville, and if I worked in each of them, I'd know a little of each. We opened the garage in Greenville. One year Stan Ingalls was working on Rte. 26, that was the first County Road in Greenville. I fired the engine to crush the stone one fall. I left Ted and went into the Navy despite the bum heart. Six months later the war was over. I got jobs in merchant ships and then got a job running the Kraft Cheese Shop in Brooklyn. When the truck needed fixing, I was the one. I got a job thru the Masons' Unemployment. I did that a couple of years. I didn't like the city so I came to work for Otis in Albany. The depression came along but that didn't bother anything. The State Office Building was just being done and I know the generators. I worked as a helper for a while, later as maintenance. I made more money, and got married Oct. 18, 1930 to Violet Tryon of Norton Hill.

I worked in Pittsburgh for a while, didn't like it, and put in to come back to Albany as district maintenance supervisor and I retired in 1963. In the meantime, I had two sons, William Gale and Richard Tryon. My mother's name was Gale from Chesterville, which today is Westerlo. In back of Baker's was a livery stable, Sanfords. It was run for the salesman from Coxsackie mostly. Then Pat Evans ran it, he was Town Supervisor for years.

This is the end of the diary. Bill Gedney is now deceased.