

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

July 2010, Issue 201

Gayhead

Another night in a two-week long hot and humid stretch of July weather greeted the nearly twenty people who came out for the Gayhead program: David & Judy Rundell, Jeannette Rose, Bob & Marie Shaw, Walter & Donna Ingalls, Sandy Noirot, Stephanie Ingalls, Charles & Mary Kruppenbacher, Phyllis Beechert, Dot Blenis, Walter Kruppenbacher, Jonathan Weil, Christine Mickelsen, Dot Hesel, Allyn & Mary Shaw, and Don Teator.

After introductions so the newcomers would know who we all were, and after complaining about the high heat of Fourth of July week, and then the steamy heat of the week after, and the forecast of more heat, we finally got around to take care of the small stuff.

Harriett is in the mending process, and we all wished her health to get back to the meetings (and all the other events of life, too).

Jeannette showed birthday cards and Christmas cards from the early 20th century that displayed a style we usually don't see today.

Dot Hesel reminded us that Community Partners is developing a plan to maintain and utilize the South Barn in the Town Park. Attention to its need of upkeep has been noted in local papers lately. If you go to <http://www.communitypartnersofgreenville.org/>, more information is available. (A personal plug: Those of us who are interested in local history have an ally in Community Partners, whose driving purpose is the promotion of local historical and natural resources.)

We took a minute to congratulate Walter and Donna on their very recent marriage. Our best wishes to both of you.

Phyllis brought in a handful of stuff. The most recent Baccalaureate program will be put into the files; a 2002 set of minutes concerning the Food Pantry is also testimony to Phyllis' efforts for the community (and a reminder that a few people persevering usually get stuff done). Phyllis also brought along an envelope from David Gumpert, with some business cards and tokens from a time ago. Thanks, David. Also included was a copy of "The History of Schoharie County and Border Wars." Thanks, again.

And, then, we turned out attention to Gayhead.

The first thing to do is to define 'Gayhead.' The center is the four corners where Rt 67 runs west and south, the Schoharie Turnpike goes east (S.T. also goes west, the same path as Rt 67, but not south like 67 does. Confused?), and Gayhead-Earlton Rd goes north toward King Hill.

The expanse of Gayhead was expounded upon. Walter K suggested that the west edge of Gayhead was the hill just west of Pine Springs, where Abner Alden had his farm. Even a bit further west, where Pleasant View Lodge, might consider itself to be Gayhead.

The east side might extend to Rudolph Weir Rd, before residents begin to feel as if they are Earlton or Athens or Sandy Plains.

The north edge would get you as far as King Hill Rd.

The south side might take you half-way to South Cairo.

And, of course, you have the side roads, like Mountain View, Joseph Kollar, Vly, etc.

It's a big enough area but once one leaves the quarter-mile center, large farms take up gobs of space without incorporating a lot of people.

And, to add a little more confusion is the fact that the south side of the Turnpike is the Town of Cairo, while the north side is the Town of Greenville.

(In the last newsletter, you received a listing of people claiming Gayhead as their residence in the Greenville 1925 census.)

We then launched into a scattershot listing of memories of people and places, which led to our usual side stories. First, at Don's urging, each attendee mentioned memories and connections to Gayhead. Overwhelmingly, the star of the collective wisdom was the existence of the Limelight. Others mentioned the Catholic Church, some the store, some Ray Waldron, and a scattering of others.

Then we left the focus to Charles and Mary and Walter, with Walter attracting most of our attention, mostly for his depth of old details and for storytelling technique.

Mary brought photos of her house, which was Charles and Walter's parents' house – changes, uses, etc. Since there were many alterations, a discussion of the nature of old housing ensued. Mary mentioned the cemetery next door, the barn complex up the road (as far as the road went, until they extended it to the King Hill Rd).

Then, the three of them pitched in stories and details, with some of us adding a few sides.

After Don read the 1867 Beers' write-up on Gayhead, we added:

- Jeannette remembered attending the church, which was then Catholic, a few decades ago. Originally, it was Baptist.
- The Waldrons, Ray and Larry, living on or near the corner
- Jay's store, the building still stands
- the school house near the corners
- the Will Smith house, south of the corners, Walter tells, burning to the ground because of wet socks drying out too close to the stove
- F. May Shaw teaching in the Gayhead school
- Walter had brought a bill of sale, the cost of nails per hundredweight; and the delivery to the store from the railroad
- Stanley Ingalls, then Greenville's Superinten-

- dent of Highways, maintaining roads
- the ruts of German Hill Road
- farms, milking by hand
- the road by the Kruppenbacher house finally being extended
- the Vly (Vlaie)
- boarders for playmates
- Rosemary L: hay rides with Abner Alden's horses Kit & Maude; Jay Ungvarsky's store; the Kieszkiel farm; Pine Springs & the Cravata family; and more.

(Since our meeting, the Kieszkiel barn, near the intersection of Mountain View Road and CR 67, yes, that beautiful big red barn, burned to the ground, probably from lightning, during the heavy thunderstorms during the weekend after the meeting.

Our next meeting is August 9, a share session. Bring a story or artifact.

Here's my semi-annual reminder about subscriptions to this newsletter. If your envelope has an expiration date of Nov '10 or later, you are good until the next reminder. If earlier than Nov '10, you can renew by sending a check (or cash, if you trust the mail, and it has always worked, so far), made out to **Don Teator**, to 3979 Rt 67, Freehold, NY. The price, at least for this year, is still \$5 for a year to cover postage and supplies.

The Clematis Garden sponsored a Garden Club Garden Tour back on June 16th, and those of you participated enjoyed a rare evening in Greenville. Seven gardens (mostly in the Cedar Lane & Irving Rd area), plus several at Country Estates were featured.

I've had a request for a copy of a printed account of the 1942 Spring Prom at GCS. Mary (nee Mead) Daniels was the Prom Queen and has since lost the Greenville Local feature about the event and is trying to get some record of it. Any help out there?

I have included three pages of photos taken from DeLisser's text. I will try to put a packet together in the near future. Details to follow.

Again, a thank you to Mary, Charles and Walter (and to Rosemary Lambert, who I called just before the meeting).

Take care,

Greene History Notes

A town made for history lovers

By David Dorpfeld
Greene County Historian

A few weeks ago I was invited to be a guest at a meeting of the Greenville Local History Group. The group is presided over by Don Teator, the Greenville town historian, and is very informal in its makeup and operation. Members get together on a regular basis (April through November) to talk about projects they are working on, listen to speakers and share information about Greenville's history. Attendance ranges from 10 to 15 people. It is a marvelous concept: no real formal structure — just people coming together because they love history and want to talk about it with others who share the same interest. One and all are invited.

In the time I have been writing this column, I realized I have not touched on Greenville except to recognize the local history group. It is time to highlight the town and beautiful little hamlet in my column. In 1803 it was sectioned off from the Town of Coxsackie and called Greenville. In 1808 it was renamed Freehold and in 1809 it got its present name. Greenville is bordered by the Town of Durham on the west, the Town of Cairo on the south and the towns of Coxsackie

where. The "Storm King" freighter which I wrote about in an earlier column was one of the boats used to transport farm produce like hay and fruit from the Town of Greenville to places down the river.

As time went on, farm families started to take in a guest or two during the summer. This trend was followed by the construction of boarding houses specifically built for the accommodation of summer guests. As demand for these places grew, owners continued to upgrade by adding pools, game rooms, outdoor activities and other amenities. According to Don Teator, a 1960 Chamber of Commerce Flyer listed 40 different establishments offering summer accommodations. In contrast, this year's "Greene County Tourism Guide" lists only 10 places to stay in the town. The largest, Sunny Hill — a place that continues to reinvent itself with new activities — features 100 rooms, and the smallest with two rooms is Ruby's Hotel in Freehold. Many of the large establishments that existed a decade or two ago like Balsam Shade (I stayed there once) and Shepard Farms, have closed or been turned into religious retreats.

While there is still some

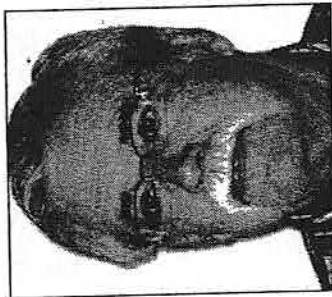
farming activity in Greenville, farms like boarding houses and resorts, are no where near as numerous as they once were. Much of the farming in the early years was subsistence farming with farm families producing much of what they needed and selling any surplus to purchase what they could not grow or make themselves. The need to purchase goods by the farm families fostered the growth of many small hamlets around the town besides Greenville such as Freehold, Norton Hill, Gayhead and Surprise. More often than not these hamlets also had a post office which helped to solidify their identities. Shortly after World War II things began to change as everything about farm life started becoming mechanized. This change required decisions by farm families about their operations — become larger to keep up with times and pay for more mechanization or quit farming. Many chose the latter.

Today, some residents find work locally with the businesses in Greenville while others take the easy commute to places outside the town. There is also a large seasonal population — people who find Greenville a pleasant place to have a second home away from the hustle

and bustle of urban life. From a history perspective, much more can be said about the early settlers, the turnpikes, the businesses and the institutions like the Greenville Academy, but that will have to wait for another column.

Reader comments: Recently I received a nice note from Betty Gustavson, a long time board member of the Greene County Historical Society. Betty has helped with the Society's home tours for over 30 years, but was unable to be at this year's tour in Windham. She says in-part, "I remember the first home tour. I cooked hot dogs in an electric fry pan at the Bronx House, Rubin Garcia's home and the Stone House in Leeds many years ago. I remember house sitting for over 20 years including 12 years ago in Windham, and I loved every bit of it." Thank you Betty for all your dedication to the Society as well as for all the other community activities you have helped to foster and support over the years.

To reach columnist David Dorpfeld, e-mail yankeedav-ed@yahoo.com or visit him on Facebook at "Greene County Historian."

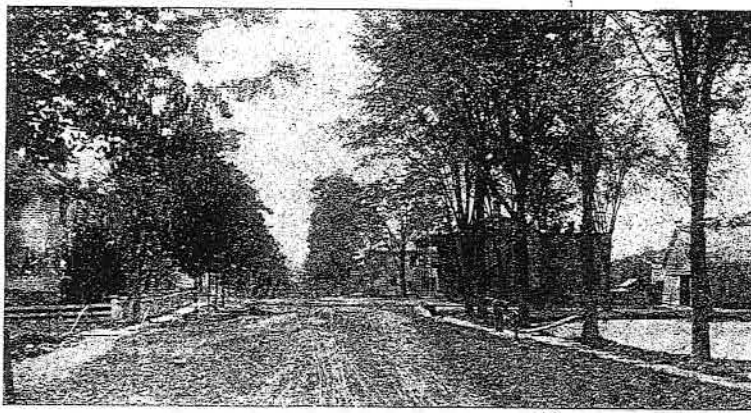


David Dorpfeld

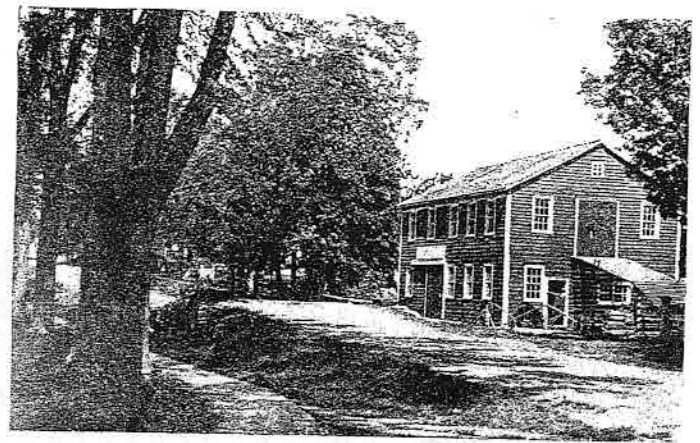
and New Baltimore on the east. On the north it is bordered by the Albany County towns of Westerlo and Coeymans.

Throughout the first 150 years or so, the history of Greenville was largely one of agriculture and tourism.

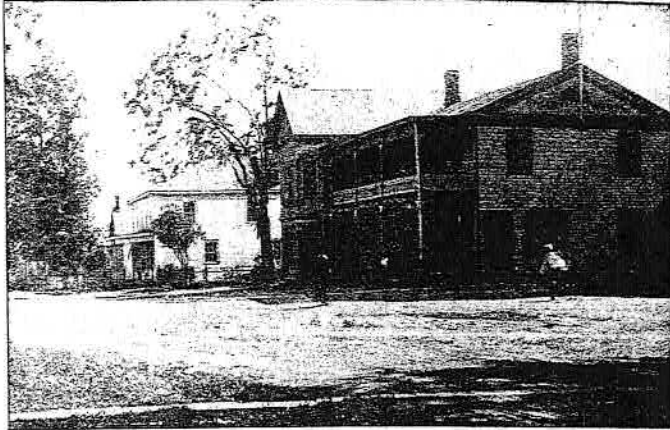
Unlike the river towns where access to river transportation was a catalyst for industries like brick making, ship building and ice harvesting, the town of Greenville was served by roads and turnpikes. This made it difficult to transport anything other than small quantities of agricultural products at any one time. Nevertheless, farmers used these thorough fares to ship any excess production from their farms to the docks in the river towns for shipment else-



A GREENVILLE STREET *the park*



NORTH STREET, FROM MAIN



NEAR THE HOTEL — GREENVILLE



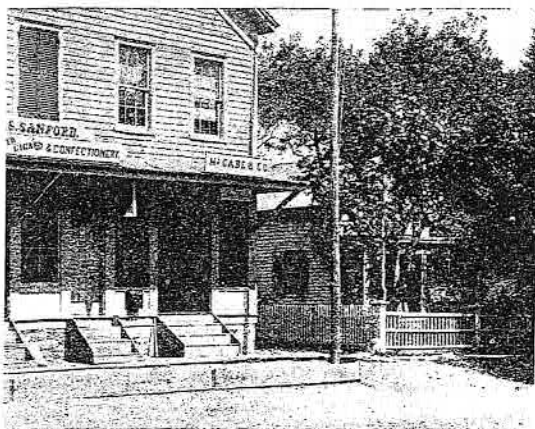
SOUTH END OF NORTH STREET



MAIN STREET — GREENVILLE



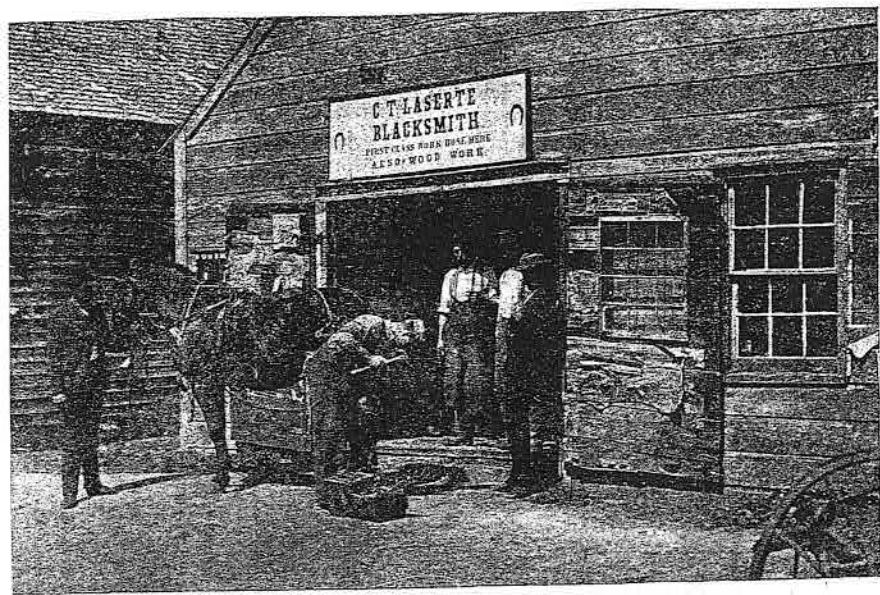
A BIT OF NORTH STREET — GREENVILLE



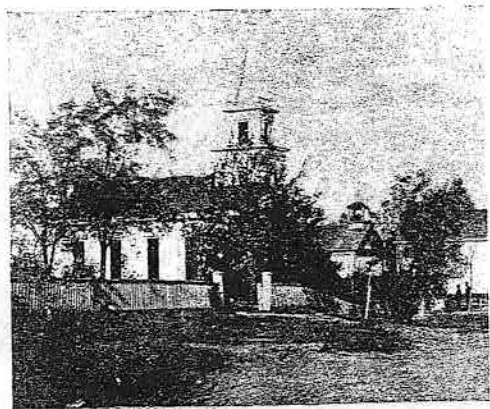
POST-OFFICE — GREENVILLE



NORTH STREET HOMES



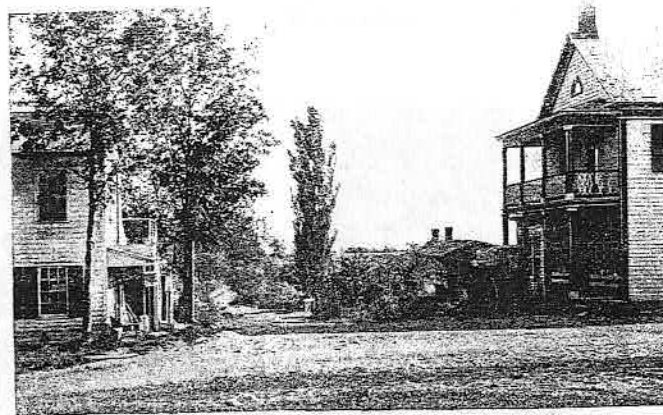
THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH



NORTON'S HILL



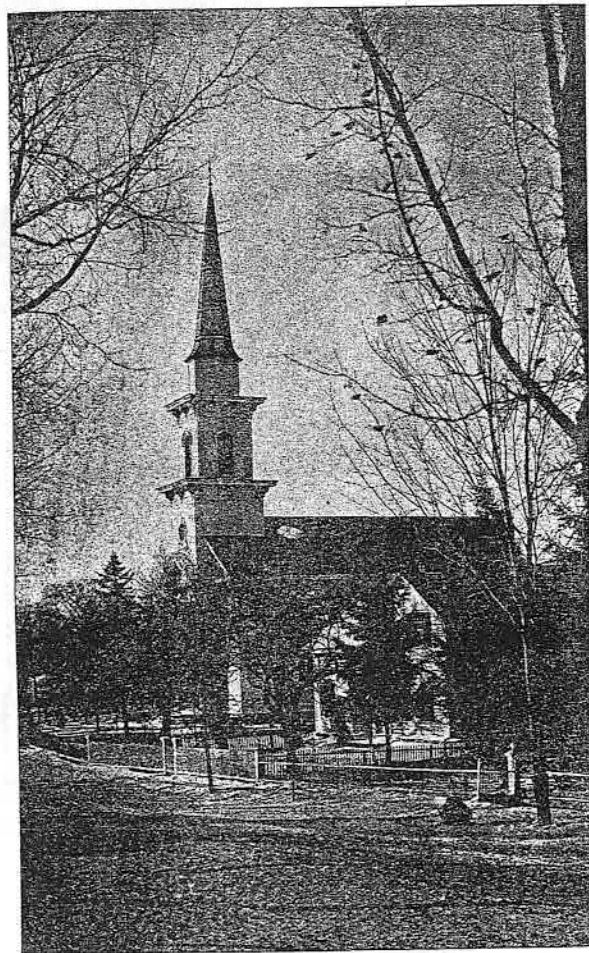
THE PREVOST HOUSE



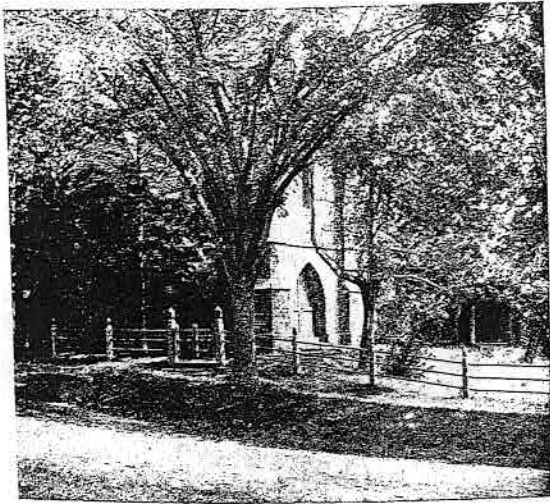
NORTON HILL — GREENVILLE



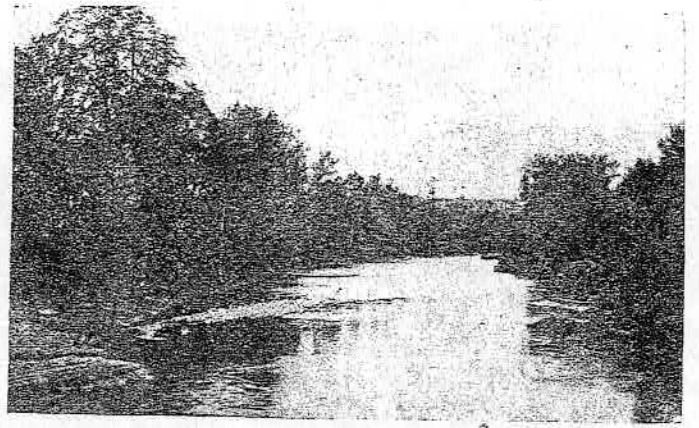
GREENVILLE CENTRE



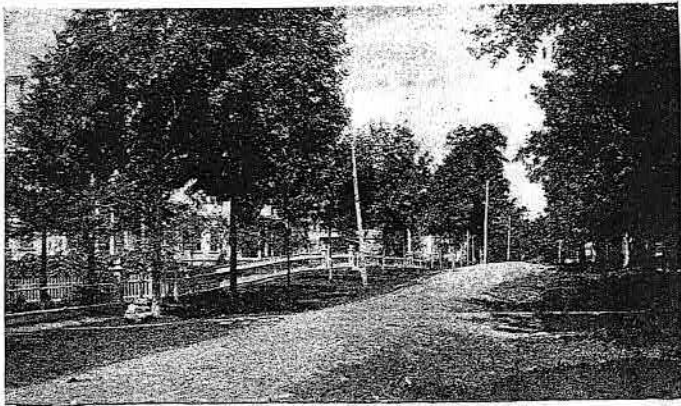
METHODIST CHURCH



EPISCOPAL CHURCH



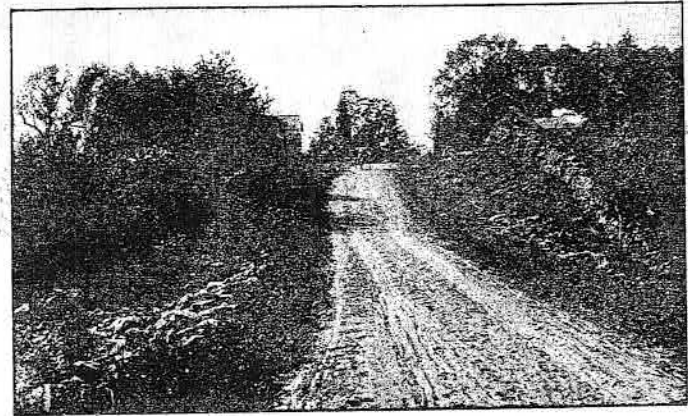
CATSKILL CREEK — GREENVILLE 2



ON NORTH STREET



ALONG MAIN STREET, FROM THE OPERA HOUSE



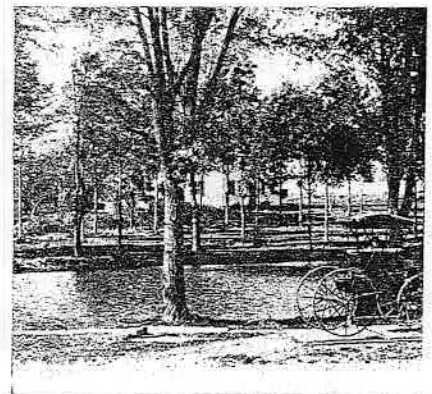
ON THE TURNPIKE — NEAR GREENVILLE



RUTH AND BOAZ



SALLY ANN



ACADEMY PARK