

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

Winter 2013, Issue 223

Annual Report

Good mid-winter (hoping the groundhog is wrong) to all,

It is Annual Report time again, and I take this chance to mail everyone – regular subscribers and non-subscribers – for a look back at 2012 and a glimpse ahead to 2013. (Exception: this newsletter has been emailed to those who regularly receive by email.)

I trust mid-winter is finding all in good health. One of our usual topics is weather, of course, and last year we basked in the warmer-than-usual temperatures. This year is not as warm but still above average (without forgetting that one week frigid snap.)

On to the annual report!

I have often written, “as usual”, when referring to our program-and-share-session cycle. However, this past year was a major change, a change that will probably continue until circumstances warrant otherwise.

We started the year with a share session, snuck in a few minutes of sharing during a couple meetings during the summer, and disguised a couple partial share sessions as calendar-selection programs.

I still want to encourage people to share stories, artifacts, leads, research, etc., but we will have to squeeze them in around

the programs. My reality in the recent past, as ringleader of this confabulation, was a shrinking attendance base during share sessions, to the point where I was embarrassed to schedule them as we used to do. So, for 2013, again, I am planning for a program-mostly structure.

And, feedback about last year’s programs seemed overwhelmingly positive, and worthwhile to try to replicate. (I must admit that I can always use ideas for programs, and have received a couple good ideas – mom & pop stores, for one.)

Our programs in 2012 included: Sunny Hill as classic boarding house/resort (May); Dr. Titus, Hurricane Irene (June); Boarding Houses (July); Town of Greenville photo history (August); (none in September – my trip to France); France Travelogue, and selection of photos for 2014 calendar (October); and finally, input on person to be recognized for 2014 calendar (November).

Included in the newsletter were several other significant pieces: Vanderbilt Theater (Ron Gabriele’s article); map of the Historian’s records room; Turnpikes in Greene County (Dave Dorpfeld article); articles about Hurricane Irene by Prof. Titus; copy of map indicating 95 boarding house sites; snippets from 1935 Greenville Locals – courtesy Lew Knott, and a few other pieces that caught my attention.

A usual highlight of our year is the production of a calendar. Unfortunately, 2013 is devoid of a production but the good news is the 2014 calendar is on schedule, thanks to the input from the last two meetings and from the input suggested personally. Pictures have been selected, captions are being formulated, and I hope to have the writing part done by April-May.

A bit of suspense was left hanging over us after the last meeting concerning the final determination of who we would recognize. The vote was decisive, with a clear choice. And that person is... well, the tally resulted in a tie, leaving me with a question of what to do. So, in a flash of clarity (or, something like that), and with your permission, I thought it appropriate to recognize both.

And, the GLHG 2014 Calendar's Persons to be Recognized are Dave Battini and Phyllis Beechert. I have already interviewed both and will be writing up the pieces.

The boarding house project has loomed large in my local history work. A link to my website (dteator.com) and then to (Greenville Boarding Houses) will show a page listing all the "resorts" I can find evidence for; almost all have a separate link off that page — some of them developing some details, some of them with boilerplate info. If you have info for any of them, feel free to pass it along. I'll be taking time at one meeting to show off the overview and the new work. (My most recent updates include Worldtop Acres, Happy Days, and Locust Manor.)

Also included online is the contents of paper documents in the Historian's Files, a document that you can download, even if it is fifty pages long.

Also available are all of last year's local history group newsletters.

And also available on line, but not specifically intended for GLHG attention, is a new project I took on in Dec 2012. The GCS After-School Enrichment program invited me to contribute, and I am doing a Local History class, once a month, an hour long, for six months for about eight students. Some of the content is on my home page. Just in case, these are the web sites for paragraphs above:

- <http://www.dteator.com/zResort/resortweb.htm> – boarding houses
- <http://www.dteator.com/files.htm> – Historian's files
- <http://www.dteator.com/glhg/glhg.htm> – newsletters
- <http://www.dteator.com/zASE/Week1.htm> – after school enrichment (and change the 1 to 2 for the next installment, and so on).

One hope is that the long stretch of winter has allowed, and allows, for some work on local history projects to be shared during the coming year, and there are many ways to contribute. One useful way is to preserve some piece of Greenville's history. This may happen by the saving of an artifact or knick-knack; however, the part that is tougher to save is the collection of memories and stories.

And thus, I urge you to audiotape or write your memories of Greenville people, events, and places. Daunting at first, this recording becomes more and more useful with the continual adding of sources. And, whatever method you choose to share our local history, it is appreciated here. Below, I have listed, by example, possible topics.

- write up your own family history, dates, stories, related material
- write about a person in the community (even better, write on a regular basis, for yourself, our newsletter, or community newspaper)

- write up a community event that is just a memory write up a community event that is current but worth noting now while the information is there. Examples: Greene County Firemen Parades;
 - the Hot Air Balloon fest;
 - the snow drags at Balsam Shade;
 - the Greenville Drive-In;
 - GCS musicals; GCS graduation programs;
 - a GCS class history;
 - Memorial Day parades;
 - Eagle Scouts in Greenville;
 - winter storms;
 - floods;
 - an organization (Kiwanis, C of C, Rotary, IOOF, Knights of Pythias, etc.)
 - a genealogy of a Greenville family
 - a house history
 - a street history (who lived where, during a certain time)
 - last of the dirt roads
 - technological changes
 - the pond area, and dredgings
 - mom & pop stores
 - indexing obituaries – loose/in newspaper
 - indexing main stories in Greenville Locals on file
 - re-reading a year, or two, or decade of the Greenville Local and present an overview
 - make a photo album – you choose the topic
 - history of a school house
 - a waterway in the Town
 - politics of a selected era
 - budgets (of town, or school)
- and I could keep adding another twenty quite easily but will spare you for now.

Our membership numbers, well..., I used to add meeting attendees with newslet-

ter subscribers and come up with a number. That result usually numbered in the 65-75 range. However, the availability to view the newsletter on line, or to receive them by email, is increasing that number, and I cannot really tell how much. Increasing the “member” number further still are the attendees who came out for one or two of the summer programs. My best guess, for now, is we have nearly a hundred followers of the GLHG.

Attendance varied greatly, with about ten in April, to nearly sixty in August, with an average of 30-35 from May to August.

This year’s schedule is taking shape to a greater detail than I have ever done before. So, if you think we should be trying other things, let me know.

For now, the tentative (and some not so tentative) schedule is:

- April – share session (Mary & Allyn Shaw with some of their antique teasers)
- May – Baumann’s Brookside as classic boarding house / resort (at Baumann’s)
- June – speaker Chuck D’Imperio, up-state history books
- July – (**second Wednesday** of month) – combine with Civil War Round Table
- August – the second annual Greenville history slide show
- September – to be determined
- October – to be determined
- November – to be determined

Somewhere in the last two months, I need to present the calendar, and get feedback about the next recognitions. If you have other ideas let me know, soon.

We will continue our second Monday of the month, Large Community Room, 7:30 schedule (should we be changing to 7 pm, what do you think?).

A note about subscriptions. Your address label has your subscription expiration date. (No date means the subscription is expired.) Anyone wanting to receive the newsletter can subscribe for \$10 for a year (usually April – November issues, plus the annual) and mailed to Don Teator, 3979 Rt 67, Freehold NY 12431. Checks should be made out to: Don Teator. Multiple years will be accepted. (The fee is to cover expenses of the mailing; I always consider people not getting the mailing to be members if you have ever expressed an interest in Greenville Local History, and I define that loosely!)

Also, if your address label needs changing, let me know. In addition to my address, I can be reached at 518-634-2397, and, for the computer literate, I can be emailed at dteator@gmail.com.

Another subscription choice is to receive the newsletter by email, thus saving you the \$10 per year cost. The email has most of what is on paper. (If you want to receive the email newsletter, email me, and I will add you to the list.)

Another electronic “subscription” method is to go to the web site address indicated earlier.

I will not be offended if you choose to save \$10 and go the electronic route; the content will be the same, for the most part. No matter what you decide, I will continue to print a paper copy, and I hope that you keep in touch by any of these methods.

I hope to see you at the April 8th share session (2nd Monday of April; 7:30 pm). Come with reports of what you’ve been working on, or ideas that someone else might be able to use. Mary & Allyn Shaw will bring a few of the antiques and have us guess what it is, as they have done several

times before. Feel free to bring an object or two you have to supplement the Shaw collection and see if you can stump us.

One more note: The Civil War Round Table, under Mary Heisinger’s leadership, meets the second Wednesday of every month. The February 13 meeting is still to be set; call her (966-4832) or email (Kler98@aol.com). The same is true for the March 13 meeting.

OK, one more note. I have copied Hudson Valley Magazine’s book review of Dr. & Johanna Titus’s new book*. I would encourage you to read, at least, a few chapters of his book, and a purchase of The Hudson Valley in the Ice Age would help support a local author, and Robert and Johanna have supported us.

Other quick notes: Sewer in Greenville? If it happens, it will be historic.... and I am watching for a zoning ordinance to be presented to the public sometime soon. The history and background of this topic since 2000 is certainly an “interesting” one... and there was a nice restaurant write-up in the Greenville Pioneer about the new restaurant Hamlet (the former Old Country Inn), in Freehold. Of course, keep on frequenting our other eateries.... And...

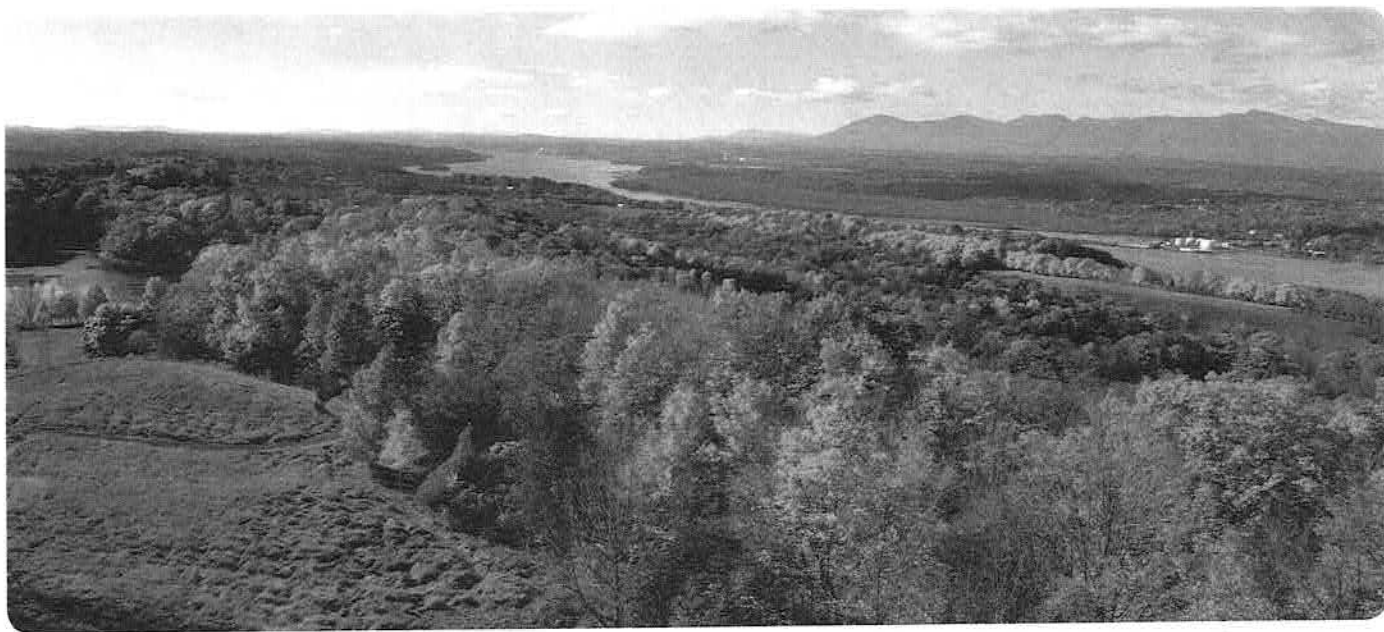
Really, one last note. Our membership list diminished by one with David Gumpert’s passing. I enjoyed Dave’s stories and appreciated his (and Harriet’s) documentation of the Gumpert influence on Greenville. Our thoughts go with Harriet.

Until then, take care.



*article also available:

<http://www.hvmag.com/Hudson-Valley-Magazine/February-2013/Ice-Age-in-the-Hudson-Valley-A-Geographical-History/>



Ice Capades

Journeys into the Hudson Valley's past — the way, way past, that is **By David Levine**

When you or I stand upon the great lawn at the Vanderbilt Mansion in Hyde Park, we picture ourselves living the grand lifestyle of fin de siècle Hudson Valley aristocracy, of opulent balls and market-rigging business deals held amid the stunning landscape of river and mountains. When Johanna and Robert Titus stand on that same lawn, they picture something a bit different. In their minds' eye, they are knee-deep in water, at the edge of a vast lake that stretches from the middle of the eastern Valley counties to the middle of the western ones, and from somewhere near Glens Falls all the way to the Atlantic Ocean (which is about 100 miles further out and 400 feet lower than it is now). The couple also envisions gigantic glaciers, which cover the continent from mid-Long Island, through Chicago and Omaha, to the Dakotas, Montana, and the Great Northwest — and are in the process of melting back to the Arctic.

The Tituses, you see, are standing at the Vanderbilt Mansion circa 15,000 years BP (the geological term meaning “before present”). Robert has a Ph.D. in geology and teaches at Hartwick College; Johanna has a master's in molecular biology and teaches at SUNY Dutchess. You may know them as columnists for *Kaatskill Life* and other newspapers. They recently published a delightful book called *The Hudson Valley in the Ice Age: A Geographical History and Tour* (Black Dome Press, \$17.95). Part popular science, part travelogue, it is that rare science book that is both challenging and entertaining. Readers learn about arcane geological formations like moraines, alluvial fans, and rock drumlins. Better yet, they discover where to find the remnants of these formations via

hikes and drive-bys at dozens of easily accessible spots around the Valley. Consider these locales postcards from the ice age.

We asked the Tituses to pick a handful of their favorite locations where interested parties can launch their own geological time travel. Once you start, our beautiful Valley will never look quite the same again:

Ice age evidence

The view from Olana (top) shows a section of what was glacial Lake Albany. Bottom row (L-R): FDR's Springwood is perched on the edge of an ice age delta; the High Falls spillway in Greene County once drained a glacial lake; Patterson's Pellet in Minnewaska State Park, a glacial erratic

1. The floor of glacial Lake Albany That's what the previously mentioned lake is known as, and the site of the Vanderbilt estate is just one of many places where you can easily imagine the soft, flat lake bottom. “Get used to the idea that anytime you see flat landscapes, you may well be literally on the floor of the lake,” Robert says. The thruway south of Kingston, for instance, was built on such a flat stretch of land,

which is the result of deposits left behind as mud on the floor of the lake. "Flat isn't all that interesting, until you realize you are at a lake bottom," he says.

2. North Lake The area's many lakes and rivers are all remnants of the Hudson Valley glacier, which preceded and then was overridden by the Laurentide Ice Sheet that covered all of the northern reaches of North America. As the ice advanced, it left scratches in the rock, called striations. One of the best places to find these is along the eastern shore of North Lake in Haines Falls. "Look at the bedrock at the edge of the water, and you'll see the footprints of glaciers," Robert says.

3. The Kaaterskill Clove When deltas, like the one the Vanderbilt Mansion sits on, are carved into gorges by rivers, they are called cloves. In the Catskills, the Kaaterskill Clove — which contains Kaaterskill Falls and the Red Chasm — is an example of this; at its bottom is Palenville, which sits on a formation known as an alluvial fan. Streams from the retreating glacier all headed into this delta in a fan-shaped formation, cutting through rock, sand, and clay to create the landscape. Johanna recommends that you stop at Red Chasm. "This is a really scenic spot — many use it to swim — and you can really see how the waters from the melting ice carved the canyon," she says.

What's most important about this site, the Tituses say, is that this landscape carved by melting glaciers became the touchstone of the Hudson River School of Art. "Thomas Cole painted his first paintings there, and they figure so importantly in the cultural history of the Hudson Valley," Robert says. "And that all comes out of the ice age."

4. The Mansions The big houses built on the eastern edge of the river, including Vanderbilt Mansion and FDR's Springwood, are all positioned on ice age deposits at the bottom of glacial Lake Albany. Hyde Park rests on one of the lake's biggest deltas, and the mansions sit on the crest of that delta. "The aristocracy didn't know it, but 150 years ago [when they were building their mansions] they were following the path of the glaciers," Robert says.

They also didn't know that one day, their houses might slip toward the river valley. The houses are not built on bedrock; they sit on

soft sediments like clay. Whenever you hear of a home damaged by a landslide, usually after a heavy rain, it's the result of land like this sliding down the slope of the prehistoric lake bed. "The sediments are very prone to landslides," Robert says. "We have met people who lost homes that slid downhill, and we have visited homes to evaluate their threat of slides and had to tell them they were threatened. It is a present danger anywhere in the Valley where these deposits exist."

The Tituses say they have seen evidence of the bigger mansions installing new drainage systems to shore up the grounds on which they sit. "But there is no way to know when a landslide might happen," Robert says. "It could be 1,000 years, or 10,000 years, or in March if we get a lot of rain." He doubts the latter, though. "The land has been there 15,000 years, so I don't think there is an immediate threat."

5. The Pine Bush These days, the Pine Bush Preserve in Albany County is a foliage-covered plot of hilly, sandy soil. Just after the glaciers

retreated, though, it was a small desert not unlike something you'd see in *Lawrence of Arabia*. "All that was missing were camels," Robert says. The sand was blown in from what is now Schenectady County, which then was one of Lake Albany's biggest deltas. As the lake retreated, the sandy deposits at its bottom were blown by the west winds and dropped here, forming the dunes

and swales that have since been overgrown. "Stand on top of the dunes and imagine what the area looked like 12,000 years ago," he suggests.

There are many more spots where you can pick up the ice age trail. Along their upper edges, the Shawangunks reveal erratic striations left by the passage of ice. Frederic Church's Olana near Hudson sits atop a rock drumlin, a hill shaped like an inverted spoon bowl, which is a signature of glacial advance. "Each location has its own chapter. We suggest you pick up the book and go see what we saw," Robert says, "because it is an autobiography of our great adventures." Adventures that can take you to the dawn of your own homeland. ●

Speaking of ice...

The Tituses discuss their book at:

- **Mine Kill State Park at the Power Authority**
Off State Hwy. 30, North Blenheim
Feb. 2, call for time (weather permitting); 518-827-6111
- **John Boyd Thacher State Park Nature Center**
87 Nature Center Way, Voorheesville
Feb. 23 at 2 p.m.; 518-872-0800
- **The Albany Institute of History and Art**
125 Washington Ave., Albany
March 10 at 2 p.m.; 518-463-4478
or www.albanyinstitute.org

