

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

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Chuck D'Imperio—Upstate NY

About twenty souls braved an upper-80s, humid July evening to listen to Chuck D'Imperio weave more stories: Orrin & Shirley Stevens, Phyllis Beechert, David Rundell, Evelyn Jennings, Margaret Donohue, Bob & Marie Shaw, Ron Golden, Stephanie Ingalls, Martha Olson, Steve Wade (an long-ago Oneonta friend of Chuck's who now lives in Colorado, or California, or someplace faraway!), Jack Long, Don Teator, and Bette Welter. And Bette was present in both May and in June. My apologies, Bette.

Chuck D'Imperio visited Greenville last June (for those with Internet access, go to [www.dteator.com/glhg/2013-06.htm](http://www.dteator.com/glhg/2013-06.htm) for that account), so we knew what we were getting ourselves into. I only wish that more had come out to hear stories just as riveting, as much fun as last year's.

Using his newest book, *Unknown Museums of Upstate New York: A Guide to 50 Treasures*, Chuck regaled the evening's audience with several, and maybe a couple more, stories about museums.

The book's structure is easy to follow. Chuck divides Upstate NY in nine sections: Chataqua/Allegheny, Greater Niagara, Finger Lakes, 1000 Islands/Seaway, Central/Leatherstocking, Adirondacks/North Country, Catskills, Hudson Valley, and Capital District/Saratoga.

On average, about five museums in each section are described more fully, usually

in a few pages, followed by a subsection of the Wow Factor, followed by the Take-Away, then the Nuts and Bolts, then Up Around the Bend, and finally From Here to There.

The end of each geographical section ends with Other Museums to Explore in the Region.

(I must admit it is great bedtime reading for me—a museum, skip around, another museum, maybe one more, and ready for light turn-off.)

(And I must admit I was keeping score to see how many of these museums I knew about or had attended.)

Chuck explained his Wow Factor. When all is said and done, he would ask the director/curator what the Wow Factor is—the one item that “causes people to say Wow when they discover it.” (pg xviii)

The starting point was the Walter Elwood Museum of the Mohawk Valley. This, of course, led to a side trip to the effects of Hurricane Irene, which roared through several of the areas after Chuck had traveled, researched, and had written. Several of the museums to be included in the book were damaged, and the publishers and Chuck agreed to delay publication a year to see if the affected museums could recover. All did. Except one.

And that one was the Walter Elwood Museum being devoured and spit out by the raging Mohawk River.

Chuck told that story, and the success story that followed. I leave it to you readers to discover the pluck and determination of Ann Peconie.

Chuck continued, telling the travails of the Slate Museum in Granville (Washington County) and how the only thing that saved the building was its stone structure.

And about the Cheese Museum in Rome, part of Erie Canal Village, and how little traffic some of these museums see.

And about the Catskill Fly-Fishing Museum in Livingston Manor in the Catskills, with a connection to Robert Redford.

And about the Drain Tile Museum in Geneva. Yes, drain tile.

And Grant's Cottage in Wilton, which is accessed by entering the prison checkpoints.

And the Kazoo Museum where Chuck made his own kazoo, which he so ably demonstrated at our meeting.

And about the fragility of so many of these museums (this is worth another chapter, and actually is part of each story!).

At the end of his presentation, Chuck asked the audience to identify other unusual museums we have visited or are local.

Someone had already read the book and mentioned the Jello Restaurant and the Purple Heart Museum.

We mentioned the Durham Center Museum.

It was an entertaining evening and the only way to recreate it is to visit another of Chuck's lectures (he had been at the Mountain Top Historical Society – Haines Fall – the Friday before our meeting), or by reading the book. I do have a copy to loan in case you wish to borrow but I would encourage you to buy a copy and support a writer that supports local history. (On second thought, there is no way to recreate Chuck's storytelling but at least the book gives us the content.)

Just for bragging rights, I ticked off the museums in Chuck's book that I have already visited: Iroquois Indian (Howe's Cave); Old Stone Fort (Schoharie); Hanford Mills (East Meredith); Trolley Museum (Kingston); Gomez Mill (Marlboro); Purple Heart (Vails Gate); and NYS Military Museum (Saratoga).

On my list to see soon was the Slater (Albany); Glenn Curtiss Aviation (Hammondsport); Salt Museum (Liverpool); Slate Valley (Granville); and Grant's Cottage (Wilton).

Of course, now there are a bunch more that I will try to see over next five or ten years.

And then there are the additional ones in the "Other Museums to Discover" section for even more research.

If I could mimic Chuck for one paragraph, it would be a Takeaway request—to write down your own memories and notes about a topic that is worthwhile noting and possibly overlooked. End of sermon!

Looking ahead to August 11, I will present, in collaboration with the Library, the third annual History of Greenville in Photos. This year's show will feature those parts of the town that usually are not featured, are not well known, or have been forgotten. So, you will not see much of Greenville, Freehold, or Norton Hill; instead, you will see a little bit of everything else. If you have a favorite "little known" spot, let me know before the meeting and I will try to include it.

It's a short newsletter for a change. I hope to see you at the next meeting.

