

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

Nov-Dec 2022, Issue 311

Winter—Ponds, Vietnam, & Notes

Deb and I are back from two trip to Egypt, and what a fascinating time it was. Perhaps, we can share some of experiences in a 2023 program.

However, our absence led to a cancellation of the regular November meeting. This Nov-Dec newsletter is a trade-off.

This month:

Notes

Vietnam Memorial

Garth Bryant—Area Ponds & Lakes

Notes:

I wish everyone a safe, healthy, and enjoyable holiday season. (And then continue until Ground Hog's Day!)

This newsletter is a quasi-replacement for a regular November newsletter. And in the spirit of Covid-era and last year's winter publications, I will try to get out three newsletters this winter, an accomplishment not done before Covid. So, if anyone has an idea for an article, please consider doing so, and give me notice that a piece is coming. Next newsletter deadline: end of January-ish

PorcupineSoup vs GLHG news: I have to admit to trying to balance two masters, in a manner of speaking. Earlier in the year, I agreed to be gatekeeper for Greenville local history material for PorcupineSoup.com. For those of you not in the know, that website is a local online news source, with sections of local interest. And as the submitter of Greenville local history material, and at a rate quicker than

GLHG Newsletters, I find myself thinking that some Porc articles should be shared in the newsletter. Garth's article about Greenville Ponds in this issue is such a one.

Which leads to the start of that idea. In one random conversation, Garth asked me what was the largest body of water in the Town of Greenville. After naming the usual suspects, we realized he meant what was the largest manmade, or untouched by human efforts, body of water. (A dam counts as human influence.) So, our unanswered question is: What is the largest natural standing body of water in the Town of Greenville? In other words, if the human touches were taken away, would it still be the body of water it is today? His article will disqualify some of your choices. Please let me know your verdict.

Deb and I are back from Egypt. 'Twas wonderful and brain-popping. We will try do a program in 2023.

Calendar sales are going well enough. We will come close to breaking even. If you still

need one, visit Kelly's, GNH, and the Library. Even if you have one already, be sure to thank the Kellys and Ingallses for their support.

One calendar feature is the recognition of the service of community members. This feature

will be treated in a separate email.

As always, I encourage you to record local history. Each of us have our own perspectives. Consider writing them down, whether it is interesting stories about townspeople, or the people who lived in a particular area or street, or a story about a house, or memories



A New Greenville Historical Site

On September 17, Greenville was the epicenter of a Greene County venture – the dedication of the County Vietnam Veterans Monument.

Located on the west bank of the Greenville Pond, visitors to Greenville will find: a bronze battlefield cross, the first black granite stone that is the dedication stone, the second black granite stone that lists the names of the 17 men who died in the war, and an 80 flagpole (standing nearer the north-west corner of the pond).

Nearly twenty years ago (1999), the Northeast USA Vietnam Veterans Reunion started in Freehold, moved to Greenville, and finally decided to retire as a group in 2019. This “healing legacy” recognized the dedication and bravery of all those serving and the supreme sacrifice of these seventeen.

That weekend, and the week following, an exhibit that displayed memorabilia of

the seventeen, as well as other history and artifacts of our Greene County men, allowed visitors to see this display in the Library Community Room.

Freehold resident and GLHG member Tim Broder was instrumental in seeing the project through. I know he will point to the others doing so but being his neighbor may have influenced my perspective.

This group is still raising money to cover the costs of this project. If you are of such mind, a contribution can still be sent to: The Northeast USA Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, PO Box 326, Freehold, NY 12431.

Anyone looking to donate to the memorial can send a check made out to Northeast USA Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to P.O. Box 326, Freehold, NY 12431. An email is also available (nevietvets199@yahoo.com).

Building Greenville's Lakes

Garth Bryant

New York is a state filled with large naturally occurring lakes. Yet, when the first settlers arrived in Greenville, this area had almost none. Whether this was just chance or there was a geological explanation, I am not sure.

Regardless, most of the lakes scattered throughout our Town are

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 12, 1952

Work Begins On 35 Acre Lake On Carelas' Property

The large lake approximately 35 acres in size to be built on the Carelas property on Route 32, Greenville, was started by the owner Peter Carelas this past week. The lake will cover the greater portion of the valley just on the edge of the village section of Greenville, and will be a fine recreation area when completed with boats and fishing.

The lake will average about 4' to a maximum of 14' in depth, the dam to be constructed will be 3000' feet long, 70 feet wide at the base, and 20 ft. wide at the crest, with a 39 ft. spillway to take adequate care of any flood condition that might arise. The lake will also help the North and South Street area as the deepening of the feeder ditches will more adequately drain these wet areas that have always presented a problem to property owners on these streets.

Approximately 400 feet of dam has been completed and the construction work is being done by the Greenville Excavators. The plans have been approved by the State of New York Public Service Commission, Supt. of Public Works, based on the Plans and specifications submitted by Mr. Milton Bingham, Licensed Civil Engineer of Albany who is handling the Engineering for Mr. P. Carelas. It is anticipated that the work will be completed in April 1953, after which at the proper time the lake will be stocked with bass and similar fish, by Mr. Carelas.

Mr. Carelas plans to start the construction of a private Golf Course on his property as soon as the lakes is completed. Both of these projects will be wonderful assets to the community.

man-made. Indeed, it is an interesting question as to which is Greenville's largest natural lake. I welcome everyone's thoughts on this although I caution that many of the lakes that come to mind are not natural at all. This is the story of how some of them were built.

Upon arrival in 1781, our forefathers quickly started to build ponds for mills and countless live-stock watering holes. The construction of recreational lakes would have to wait another 150 years.

One of the very first constructed was the Back Lake at Pine Lake Manor. This lake was constructed around 1930 by the Schirmer family around six years after they bought the farm that would become their resort. It would serve as the resort's swimming facility complete with float, slide and diving board until the construction of their pool in 1961.

Another very early lake was built just up the road at Rainbow Resort by Walt Birmann, Sr. in 1935. This lake which is now part of the 12th and 13th holes of the golf course was named Lake Otto after Walt, Sr.'s father.

This lake was given one of NY State's first Farm Fish Pond licenses when Walt, Sr., an avid outdoorsman, began raising fish. Walt, Jr. remembers his dad built it using an actual steam shovel borrowed or rented from the Town of Greenville. The Birmanns, both Walt, Sr. and Jr. would continue to construct numerous ponds for their resort and later their golf course. They would stock these ponds with a variety of fish species transplanted from other fish ponds.

For the most part though, lake construction in Greenville took a long pause in the late 1930s and 1940s as the combination of the Great Depression and WW II made it nearly impossible.

It wasn't until WWII ended that lake building started again. At that time, four men would spend the decade of the fifties building lakes and forever change the face of Greenville. These four were divided into two separate two-man teams.

The first was Billy Carelas and his brother-in-law, Martin "Ned" Doorly. The second was my Uncle Louis "Bud" Young and Roy Ross. These two groups were competitors in the same business but their relationship was more complicated than that. When needed for a big job, they worked on each other's projects regardless of who had the contract.

The Carelas family was in the resort business. They ran the large resort on top of the hill south of Town. The many resorts in the area competed with each other for guests. They were constantly adding

amenities to make their resorts more desirable. Some decided that a lake for swimming, rowing, and fishing would be a draw.

Billy and Ned decided to build the large lake south of Town for the family resort. Long known as Carelas' Lake, this lake is now known as Lake Barbara. The spectacular view of this lake as you drive up the hill south of Town is one of Greenville's finest. It is one of the largest lakes ever built in Greenville.

It was such a large project that they hired my Uncle Bud to help in its construction. A few things stand out about Carelas' Lake. First, the name of the resort was changed to Carelas' Lake Resort after its construction. This is a clear indication that they believed having this lake at their resort was considered a major selling point.

Second, there was a round island in the middle of it. This collapsed and disappeared some 30 years after its construction. I remember calling my Uncle Bud and teasing him if the warranty was still in effect.

The third thing that always struck me as odd was that the stream that runs through Greenville was diverted around the lake, not into it, even though it would have greatly simplified the filling of the lake. I always suspected, but cannot prove, that the reason for this design was that all the homes in the village upstream had their septic systems flowing into the stream and they wanted to avoid this water source.

Billy and Ned also built a number of other lakes in the area. One of these is Johannesen's Lake on West Road. Before learning that they built this, I was going to guess that this lake was the largest natural lake in Greenville. I'll have to come up with another guess. Billy and Ned built this one in the late 1950s.

In the early 1950s they built Lake Anna on Irving Road for the Birmanns. Lake Anna is named after Walt Birmann, Jr.'s grandmother.

This pair also built the lake on the corner of CR 26 and Newry Road for Pine Lake Manor in 1959. This lake is known simply as the Front Lake. Tom Baumann explained to me that this lake replaced a low swampy area. This lake is my personal favorite in the whole

Town. The way it sits on its immaculately manicured lawns between the two roads with the resort buildings in the background seems perfect to me. I admire it every time I go by.

The large body of water directly across the road from Front Lake on the south side of CR 26 was actually built earlier, around 1955. The eastern part is owned by Pine Lake Manor. The western section that is right by the road was owned by the Welter family for their Maplewood Resort.

After the lake's construction this resort's name was also changed. It became Maplewood on the Lake. I have not been able to pin down who had the excavating contract for these two lakes. Roy Ross's name however has come up in connection with their construction so it is very likely it was some combination of these same four men.

It is the work performed by my Uncle Bud Young that I am most familiar with. His parents, Louis and Florence Young, owned and operated the Wheel Inn Resort on Rt. 32 north of Shepard's Farm. This resort is now the Cooper Estates apartments.

In the early days of WWII Bud worked as a crane operator at the Voorheesville Depot. He then enlisted in the US Navy and served in the Pacific. At war's end he went into the excavating business while his sister Frances and her husband Harry Winnie (Silver Star winner for gallant service in the Pacific) took over running the resort.

Around 1952 Roy Ross returned from his US Army service in Germany and joined Bud. One of their earliest big jobs was building the lake at Sunny Hill for Arnold Nicholson in 1953-54. This lake was named Lake Loree after Arnold's daughter, Gail Loree Nichol森, who had recently been born.

Both the Nicholsons and Bud's family remember that Arnold was concerned that a lake built on top of that hill with no stream to feed it might never fill up. He told Bud he couldn't afford to build a dry hole. Bud offered him a deal. If it didn't fill up he wouldn't get paid.

During construction they hit more than 60 springs and the lake filled right up and Bud got paid. The original design called

for a circular lake with a large island in the middle. During construction a large shale deposit was hit on the eastern side. Concern that the shale wouldn't hold water combined with Bud's knowledge that if it didn't fill he wasn't getting paid caused the design to be changed to the current horse shoe shape.

The entire project cost somewhere around \$10,000. This large job required extra help and this is another one of the jobs where the two excavating crews overlapped. Ned Doorly is remembered as helping with the excavating.

Finished with that job, Bud next built a lake for his sister and brother-in-law at their Wheel Inn Resort. This lake is located on the east side of RT 32 but is not visible from the road even though it is quite close to it.

The reason for this is that it sits much higher than the adjacent road bed and is out of your line of site as you drive by. I wonder whether the State would ever approve this now. But it was started in 1954 and no approval was required. It has sat perched over Route 32 for 66 years while millions of cars have driven by without knowledge or incident.

This lake would be named Tumble Rock Lake for a large rock formation on the back side. One of the pieces of equipment used in its construction is described as a Pippin. This term was completely unknown to me but a surviving photograph shows an excavator body mounted on the back of a dual wheeled flat-bed truck.

Bud and Roy went on to build a number of other lakes in the area. The exact order and years built are unsure but they include Max Palmer's lake on CR 403 between So. Westerlo and Lambs Corners.

This lake is currently shown on modern maps as Sherwood Lake but was always known as Max Palmer's Lake



Both photos: Lake Loree - Sunny Hill



when I fished in it as a boy. I would ride my bike to the lake and had to go through the closed gate that still kept the cows in at that time. There was a wooden dock built on the east side of the lake.

Fishing ended in this lake for me sometime in the 1960s when an extreme winter led to oxygen depletion and all the fish died. I remember going in the Spring and the surface was littered with dead fish. Many of these dead bass were bigger than any I had ever seen let alone caught.

Ownership of this lake in more recent times was split right down the middle between the two houses east and west of it. For a while my good friend Fred Becker lived in the house on the east side. During those years we would bring back live bass caught elsewhere to help restock the lake.

Further northwest of Max Palmer's is another lake Bud and Roy built. It is located at the intersection of Albany County Rts. 402 and 408. This lake was created by damming up the Eight Mile creek. This lake was built not for a resort but for an individual homeowner.

The Eight Mile Creek is a small tributary of the Ten Mile Creek. My wife's parents lived on the banks of this stream on Pine Valley Road. When I started dating her, I discovered that the deeper pools of this tiny stream are home to some remarkably large trout. This knowledge was a closely guarded secret during all the years I trout fished in Greenville.

The final local lake that this pair built, that I am aware of, was for a resort in Cornwallville. This was located at the corner of Stone Bridge Rd. and CR 20. My dad recalls that the owner of this resort was an excellent chef. As partial payment, my Mom, Dad, Uncle Bud and Aunt Thelma got a gourmet meal at the resort after the construction was done.

My Uncle would move to Arizona around 1960 and continue in the excavating business. Roy Ross would go on to a long career with B&G Plumbing. Billy and Ned's business also broke up but both stayed in the area. Billy went on to sell everything from used cars and airplanes to mutual funds. Ned stayed in the construction business. He lost his wife, Billy's sister Georgiana, very early and would later in life marry Marianne Werner who lived next to our store. What other excavating jobs these four did while they worked here are unknown to me, although I am sure there were more. If anyone knows, I would love to hear.

In the ensuing years, other contractors continued to build lakes and ponds in Greenville. But in the decade of the 50s these four men put their large and enduring personal stamp on the Greenville area and changed its look forever. The quality of these four men's work created some of the most beautiful places in Town. In their own way they were some of Greenville's finest artists.



Both photos: Wheel Inn, north of Shepard's



Tallman, or Bensen's, Pond, not in Garth's article; contributed by Mike Tallman