

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

June 2023, Issue 315

Egypt and Sundry Topics

## June Topics

Egypt  
Upcoming Programs  
Fourth Grade at Potter Hollow  
Historical Markers  
Prevost Hall  
Pat Elsbree  
Other Notes

Enjoying a pleasant, almost-solstice evening were: Jeff Pellerin, Doris Philipp, Janice & Dave Tranberg (from Delaware), Bette Welter, Dot Hesel, Aileen Hesel, Pat Elsbree, Rich Ceasar, Bob Shaw, Christine Mickelsen, Stephanie Ingalls, Garth Bryant, Charlene Mabey, Flip Flach, Debra & Don Teator, and maybe another one or two who evaded my memory.

Suggestions over the last few years have asked for a travelogue program. Finally, I relented and June was a re-telling of the Teator trip to Egypt in November 2022.

Deb and I gathered about eighty photos (of the 1800 taken) to try to capture the mind-popping wonderland experience our trip was.

*Ancient Wonders: Cairo and the Nile River* is the catalog name of the cruise we traveled. The chronology, in short, was four nights in Cairo, eight on the Nile, and one last night in Cairo.



Trip Map: Cairo, flight to Luxor, sail to Aswan and back, flight back to Cairo. Alas, extensions to Petra and Alexandria not included

## Lunch with a View!



The evening's program retraced our itinerary in much the same way we enjoyed the journey. The reader can follow along in more detail by linking onto the travel company's website for this route: <https://www.vantagetravel.com/ourjourneys/deluxe-small-ship-cruises/africa-small-ship-cruise/egyxx/2023/itinerary>

However, instead of following chronology, this report will list several highlights as Deb and I remember them. And I will spare you many of the details of history, assuming that most Google users can find them easily enough if the desire strikes. Instead, photos, memories, and major details comprise this mini-report.

### Highlight #1

The iconic image of the trip, even from a non-traveler's point of view, has to be the Giza Pyramids, the Grand Pyramid being the most famous. Its base of four sides, each about 750 feet long, and its height of 450 feet tall today (its lost cap added thirty feet) tower above the plain. The pyramid's occupant is Pharaoh Khufu (although historians hedge on certainty!) who lived about 4500 years ago.

Three wow moments:

**One:** Standing next to the Grand Pyramid, reaching and touching it, and deciding how to climb any, or none, of the two million+ blocks of stone. After all the videos we all have seen, imagining the movement of all those blocks of stones boggles the mind.

**Two:** Even though downtown Cairo is ten miles distant from the Pyramids, the metropolitan area spreads out, almost touching the Pyramids. Most of us, even at our age, could walk from the Grand Pyramid to the edge of residential communities in fifteen minutes, less for you fast walkers. The juxtaposition was striking.

**Three:** Some lucky, and well placed, restaurateur has the right to have the only restaurant with a view of nine pyramids. Deb and I sat there eating an ordinary lunch that was made wonderful with the view. One photo shows that.

**Second Highlight**, maybe first for me, was the Valley of the Kings. The mind-popping part? The tombs for the Pharaohs were not Pyramids but "caves" dug into the mountain-side!

## In Tut's Tomb



The Wow moments:

**One:** the Valley of the Kings lies four hundred miles south of Cairo in Luxor. A reader of Egyptian history will note the Egyptians were invaded and they retreated to Luxor, making Luxor a grand center of history.

**Two:** The Pharaohs coming after the Pyramid Pharaohs, and sited in Luxor, realized that if they wanted their tombs to be disturbed, they should keep on building pyramids. So, they stopped doing that, which leads to...

**Three:** The site of the Valley of the Kings lay in a mountainous area across the river from all the Luxor temples. So, one drives toward the mountain, like going up Cunningham Rd or the Maplecrest Rd or any number of such roads leading to the bottom of the peak of the Catskills. And then take a side road that snakes a little closer to the base of the mountain. Finally, take that last donkey-cart path that meanders around some corners, and, Voila! Over the course of a couple miles, at least sixty-five Pharaohs are buried, each tomb an engineering feat, which leads to...

**Highlight #3:** The tombs of the Valley of the Kings.

Wow moments:

**One:** the visitor center exhibited a 3-D diorama where the known sixty-five tombs are. It looks like a honeycomb of shafts of varying lengths and steepnesses, side rooms, ending hallways.

**Two:** We toured four of the tombs. The engineering was astounding. First, the rough miners came in and dug out the space needed, a major feat in itself. Two, the shaft finishers came in and got the final dimensions done, leaving striations on the walls. Three, the rough plasterers then plied their trade and plastered all the surfaces, utilizing the striations as a grip. Four, the final plasterers arrived putting on a smooth coat. Finally, the carvers and engravers drew and painted all the designs. I shake my head even thinking about it.

**Three:** We walked among hieroglyphics and sacred burial places from four thousand years ago. And the paint is still vivid in places, despite all the traffic. One end hallway was large enough and long enough to house rooms/tombs for this Pharaoh's forty children, each with their own room, each decorated and painted. And then along the main shaft were lobbies or side rooms, with niches and benches, meant for some divine mission. Do you think I was impressed!

**Highlight #4:** Sailing on the Nile

Some 130 miles separate the two ends of the larger-ship navigable Nile—Luxor and Aswan. We sailed some of it under cover of darkness but a considerable amount was done in daytime and made for exquisite sight-seeing from the top deck of our Nebu.

Dreamy images wafted by every minute, with different trees, different grasses, different types of houses, and different kinds of animals. A common sight were water buffalo tended by farmers, with palm-type trees and tall grasses, with women doing their wash on the banks of the river, and with fading views of the towns and cities as we passed by. Add to this the hum of pumps, spaced every couple hundred yards, drawing water off the river into the interior, up to three miles away.

Unworldly were the views from the ship. The Nile River, lying in the middle of the desert, was as green and fertile as the river can touch. Before the Aswan Dam, that meant flooding played a role as did the manual water pumps. Now, with the Aswan Dam in place, and diesel-powered pump available, the Nile was a two to six mile wide green strip the

length of the country. The dividing line between cultivated and arid desert was sharp. From on board (or, in Deb's case, from a hot air balloon), the foreground was green and cultivated but always in the distance was the pastel hues of desert beige and pink and yellow. It was from another world than the one I know so well. (I can only imagine what Egyptian visitors new to the Hudson River would think!)

### **Highlight #5:** The Temples

Wow moments:

For some reason, I had not realized the degree to which some people have studied and have trained as Egyptologists, able to read hieroglyphics. And, thus, every column and wall and ceiling of every temple was a textbook that our guide Mo could read. I was stunned to realize, and to think, that these "books" have been sitting here for thousands of years. And then there were the non-Pharaonic temples and sites that contained every-day-living pictures and scenes.

One of our favorite "everyday" picture stories was the way the Egyptians conveyed their animals across the crocodile-infested river (now not infested below the Aswan Dam). Tie a young water buffalo to the kayak. Its bleating would attract its mother and the rest of the herd to follow the calf. Dozens of flailing legs and hoofs afforded a much more unfriendly wall to waiting crocodiles than a single waiting calf. The drawing on the wall also showed the gods and mystic practices the people used to pray for their animals' safety. And that was but one of dozen of sketches of life at one place.

At the risk of sounding like jaded European travelers complaining about ABC (another beautiful cathedral), it could have been easy to suffer from temple overload. Fortunately, our guide paced our excursions expertly enough to let us feel the importance of each temple we saw.

I will allow you to look up the details but the temples of Luxor, Karnak, Abu Simbel, Philae, Kom Ombo, and Edfu are etched in our memories for a long, long time.

View from Nebu: Deb in one of the balloons



### **Highlight #6:** Other Favorite Memories

Wow Memories

**One:** Our guide Mo was one of the best we have encountered. He was worth more than any book we could have bought.

**Two:** I have not mentioned Cairo much. It is a city of 20 million, with extremes of social class staring us in the face. Our views were educational as well as disturbing but too many other attractions overshadow further description of this capital city.

**Three:** Seventy other shipmates also interested in Egypt – kindred spirits, positive outlooks on life, similar interests – made for a memorable cruise.

**Four:** I trusted the buggy-handling abilities of Debra. Once aboard our one-horse buggy, the driver handed the reins to me, probably a touristy offer. Almost immediately, Deb grabbed the reins and gingerly tested her way through the dusty streets. She succeeded admirably and even our driver nodded his head in approval.

The Teator heads are full of much more, but I hope this suffices for a quick view of highlights. If more is desired, feel free to call us at home for further elucidation.

## Upcoming Programs:

**July:** Garth Bryant will light up the room with his story of the Lakes, one of the three founding families of early Greenville as noted on our historical markers (Spees, Knowles the other two). What started as a quiet and innocent search for the people who lived on his current residence led to hard-earned answers, with tangents wide enough to distract Garth for a few articles for our newsletter and PorcupineSoup. Among there were historical markers, Augustine Prevost, the Nortons of Norton Hill, and more

**August:** Chuck Jesse surprised me last year with a bunch of photos of boarding houses his parents and grandparents operated – Jesse’s Elm Shade, Breezy Knoll, with an emphasis on the former. Even better, he accepted an offer to lead a program. More details in the next newsletter.

### Notes:

—A thank you goes to Stephanie and Christine for providing the light refreshments I keep promising. Much appreciated.

—Garth Bryant wrote a Part II to the Duffy article. I will try to include it in some newsletter as space allows. It can be found on PorcupineSoup.

## Pat Elsbree Recognition

Pat Elsbree attended this meeting, giving us a chance to personally congratulate her for a recently bestowed honor. Pat Elsbree is the 2023 Greene County Senior Citizen of the Year.

From PorcupineSoup:

“Elsbree was nominated by Amelia Scarlata. She has lived in Greene County for over 60 years and has served as a volunteer for the majority of those years. Elsbree is the mother of six children, 20 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. For many years, she was employed as a teacher’s aide at the Scott M. Ellis Elementary School.

“Elsbree has given to her community through the United Methodist Women, Greenville Volunteer Fire Co. Ladies Auxiliary, Greenville Rescue Squad, Greenville Quilters, Red Cross blood drives, Clematis Garden Club and the Asbury United Methodist Church. At over 90 years of age, Elsbree has a compassionate heart and positive attitude. “

And a link at <https://vedderresearchlibrary.org/pat-dave-elsbree> will show GLHG honored Dave and Pat in 2015.

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## Potter Hollow / 4th Grade Field Trip

On June 9, I had the distinct pleasure of viewing the GCS 4th grade field trip to the Potter Hollow School House and community. Former GCS teacher Ed Volmar has shepherded progress at the school house over the past decade, and he will note that many volunteers have aided the cause.

The field trip consisted of five stations, each lasting 30-45 minutes. The stations included: the Potter Hollow School House (directed by GLHGer Linda Mormile,

also a graduate of Potter Hollow); tin-smithing (former GCS teacher Art Thorman); early Dutch and colonial architecture (GCS graduate Gina Gundersen Blenis); timber frame construction (Ian Corcoran); and blue-grass music by local band quartet Medusa Mule (has played at Greenville Summer series, banjo picker former GCS teacher Paul Kelly).

I believe many students will remember this experience for a long time.

Thank you, Ed, for coordinating a worthwhile experience.

## Prevost Hall Community Partners Update

Community Partners of Greenville ([cpog.org](http://cpog.org)) is a “non-profit organization that was originally formed as the Greenville Citizens Park Committee to assist with the development of Vanderbilt Park. CPOG is committed to the protection, preservation, and development of natural and historic resources in the Greenville area.”

Prevost Hall, the former Presbyterian Church, is undergoing a look-over by a structural engineer paid for by Community Partners for the Town which owns the building. As a church, Prevost Hall served as one of the town’s anchors and still serves as a visual anchor for our Four Corners. For the past two decades, groups have visualized this building as a community center that might serve a number of purposes for our town. As you probably know, it has been used for Rotary's Santa event, plays, concerts, art and lectures. It could also house activities for seniors and after school programs.

The inspection has shown the bell tower, in all stages of its height, is in need of stabilization or face potential major damage and that the main roof also needs stabilization support. CPOG and the town have shared the engineering report with several contractors to develop cost estimates so that plans can be made to stabilize the building, a necessary precondition to continuing to develop events for the community using the space. Community Partners will be helping the town garner public support and grants to effect this stabilization and subsequent reconstruction of pieces of the tower, along with a road map to its effective use once again as a center of the community.

Simply put, this means that GLHG as an organization, I as Town Historian, and all of us who are interested in our local history heritage need to be part of this plan. Expect more news in the upcoming months. (thank you, Barbara Walter, for help in drafting this note)

## Historical Markers

A flurry of historical marker activity during May and June resulted in an improvement of four signs. Town of Greenville Maintenance Dept head Tim Fitzgerald and Cliff Powell detached the markers from the poles and transported them to Debra Teator in Freehold. Debra sanded the signs clean before applying the distinctive blue background coat. She finished by painting each letter with the yellow paint. Once done, Tim and Cliff picked up the signs and re-attached them to their rightful poles.

For the record, the markers:

Early Saw Mill, from the lawn of Hollowbrook Restaurant, south of the Drive -In

Greenville Academy, re-erected to a more correct spot on the Library lawn  
Early Schoolhouse, with a broken pole re-engineered, on the corner of Irving Rd and SR 32

Edwin Drake, in the middle of the shrubbery inside the guardrail dividing SR 32 traffic from the Greenville Pond

Many thanks go to sign movers Tim and Cliff, sign painter Debra Teator, and coordinator and Town Historian Don Teator

