

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

September 1996, Issue #83

Impromptu Share Session

The September program turned out to be a makeshift share session when the scheduled program backed out at the last minute. If it can be rescheduled for November, you will be notified in next month's newsletter. Still, the dozen or so who turned out on a humid, summer-like evening made for an interesting and lively evening.

The star of the show, as it always is this time of year, was the 1997 calendar. We took our time poring over each picture, commenting on the photo or the caption, and digressing to something that may or may not have been connected.

The calendars are available at the Library, Pharmacy, Bryant's, At the Crossroads, and the Freehold Country Store. A thank you to the owner/manager might be a good reminder that we appreciate their help.

A caution is given here to not wait too late to get your calendar from GLHG. About 70 copies are still available; when they are gone, any other calendars will have to be purchased from one of the businesses. For mail orders, \$7 for the first and \$6 for each one after will cover the cost of the calendar and P&H.

Don brought all of our calendars since 1991 to the meeting and we reviewed all the pictures of the first five years. Taken in their entirety, the seven calendars represent a good effort to distribute a useful product and some worthy local history. Although we tried to pick a calendar that was better than the others, no clear cut choices stood out so we called it a seven way tie.

A comparison of the first calendar and the newest one showed a few changes but the overall effect still remains the same. And, of course, the creation of the 1998 calendar is now underway.

Phyllis Beechert brought in the Times Union article featuring Greenville, the topic of the weekly neighborhood close-up. Also, Phyllis brought in the cover of a June Pennysaver showing a mock village with almost all the business of Greenville represented.

Rosemary Lambert contributed a brochure of the Delefield House. This building is located across from Jerry's Sunoco on Route 32 South and is usually associated with the Virano family. We debated which generation the proprietor (Mrs. H. Virano) was; after some discussion and further research the next day by Rosemary, Mrs. Virano appears to be the mother of the Ed Virano who recently died. Thus, the date of the brochure could be from the 1930s but that remains to be verified.

Harriet began what promises to be a year-by-year summary of the Taylor diary, the first of which, for 1858, is included in this newsletter. She also had a picture of LeRoy Hannay and some research notes which prompted a barrage of stories, many of which "you had to be there."

Of course, we told the requisite number of stories that related to none of the above topics and we finally dispersed about 9:30.



Other notes:

- 1— A copy of the Daily Mail article (from Chris McDonald's page) recognizing Harriet's completion of the transcription of the diaries is reproduced in this newsletter, as is the Times Union article about Greenville.
- 2— The October meeting will be a program on the Carrie Ingalls diary, showing the 1920s. We'll probably have time for a few short pieces, so feel free to bring in something.
- 3— The members present, and the input from several others, chose our community member to be recognized in the 1998 calendar, if that person is willing. More next month.
- 4— While looking at the calendars, Rosemary suggested that all the errors that we have caught in past calendars be printed up some time. I will try to have that list by next meeting.
- 5--- Deb and I visited with June Clark in NYC this past month, and June sends her regards.

The Taylor Diaries - 1858
Harriet Rasmussen, transcriber

The year is 1858 and Richard Edwin Taylor begins to keep a daily diary. He does not tell us that on December 15, 1857 that he had married 26 year old Louisa Utter. While transcribing that first year, I did not realize that they were married. When he spoke of home he was referring to his mother's house on Wright Street. Although married, Louisa was living at the home of her parents, Cynthia and Bani Utter on what is now the Makely Farm in Oak Hill. It seemed at the time that he was dating her but in summarizing this year, I realize I had missed the clues. Now that one knows she is his wife, it does not seem strange when an entry tells of his giving her \$2.00 to buy flannel for drawers. Hardly something you would give your date.

And for the next 45 years of the diaries, it is the clues which have led me to search out the facts that enabled me to rebuild the lives of the characters therein. Census records, trips to cemeteries and occasional newspaper clippings in old scrap-books have helped me to better understand the diaries and to bring the people in them alive again.

During this year, Taylor, now 29 years of age, is working as a mason building cellar walls, steps, chimneys and foundations. When the work is plentiful he hires his brothers, William and Charles. They also work inside the houses, lathing, plastering, browning and hard coating. Houses worked on this year are those of Lewis Sherrill, Thomas King, George Wilbur, David Turner, Ezra Cleveland, Abijah Pratt and Ezra Griffin. And David Hickok hired him to work on the parsonage from August 2nd to August 19th but he does not tell us what parsonage that is.

A rainy June hurts his mason work this year. On June 23rd he goes to three different jobs and none are ready for him. He expresses disappointment but uses the time to cut wood at home and hoe corn for his brother-in-law Ezra Cleveland.

He has done some work for the M.E. Church in Greenville and there seems to be a problem because he can not get his money from J.C. Collins and Hamilton McCabe. We know that the Methodist Church was moved from West Greenville at the West corner of Ingalside Road in 1857. A new foundation was obviously needed on the spot where Dave Gumpert's house now stands.

And now we know that R.E. Taylor did the job for \$143.79. By December of this year he goes to Oak Hill to confer with lawyer Mattice. We will learn more about this in the 1859 diary. I am certain he had not foreseen a problem when he attended the dedication of the M.E. Church on January 7, 1858.

In February, Elder Southwick starts a Singing School and that becomes a part of R.E. Taylor's social life. He also goes to ☩ regularly. This symbol was a puzzle at first but, after a time it became apparent that he was referring to the Masonic Lodge (Lyman Tremain Lodge in Oak Hill). On July 5 of this year, there is a Masonic celebration at Durham with 60 or 70 Masons attending.

Taylor attends church in various towns and mentions Mr. Warner of the Christian Society, Elder Spoor at Medusa, Sellack at Oak Hill, Rev. Lawyer at Wright St., and Rev. Wells of Greenville. Apparently, the services at Wright Street are held in the schoolhouse.

Fall comes and he notes that he has seen a comet in the east at 4 a.m. on the 14th of September. He sees one in the west on September 17th but the plainest of all is on October 5th.

Mason work is scarce as cold weather sets in and by November 22nd he is teaching school at Greenville District #1. Since the diaries are just starting, we do not know if this is the first year he has taught. I suspect so, because he receives an offer this November to teach in Suffolk County. His number of scholars increases from 19 in the beginning to 50 on December 16th.

Part of the teacher's salary is his board and to get this he is to take supper and stay overnight in the home of one of his students. Rarely is it two nights in the same bed. (I have compiled a list of the homes he slept in from November 25th until December 30th of this year.)

This diary introduces some members of the family whose names will appear many times over the years. Sarah Taylor Lord is his only sister. Her husband is Sylvester Lord the mill owner at Medusa. William and Charles are his brothers who sometimes works for him doing masonry work. Almeron is the 22 year old brother of Louisa. Her youngest siblings are twins, Addison and Adelaide Utter. Ezra Cleveland is the husband of Louis's oldest sister Ruth.

The year ends with a party at Oak Hill on Christmas Day for Addison and Adelaide who are now 17 years old.

The Richard Edwin Taylor Diary (1858-1902) 8.28.96 C-DM

In 1858, Richard Edwin Taylor began keeping a diary and continued until 1902. This diary was preserved for many years by his granddaughter Ethel Lawton, and upon her death was passed on to her nephew George Allen, who donated it to the files of Town of Greenville historian Don Teator.

All 45 volumes of this diary have now been transcribed, a five year project of Harriet Rasmussen of Greenville. Starting in 1991, Harriett transcribed in longhand, making additional notes in her margins. Battling two years of cancer treatment, she confesses that the diaries gave her a focus during those tough times. Finally on June 14, 1996, the last volume of the Taylor diary had been transcribed.

Richard Edwin Taylor was the son of Owen and Phoebe (Haddeman) Taylor who had migrated from Rhode Island to Westerlo, NY and eventually to Wright Street, Town of Durham, possibly because of the Purinton family, old friends from Rhode Island who had earlier moved to Wright Street.

R. Edwin Taylor married Louisa Utter, daughter of Bani and Cynthia (Stannard) Utter, on Dec. 15, 1857. His diary starts upon the

new year and in it, we follow his life as he records it, from age 29 until 73. He was a mason, a school teacher, a farmer, a peddler of farm produce, a seller of W.S. Coler Bonds, a boardinghouse owner, and a salesman for cemetery monuments, school books, Watertown wagons and mowing machines. He was a staunch Democrat who served for some years as Justice of Peace. He was sought after because of his academic ability to write and figure and make out records and documents.

Through the diary, we get a glimpse of our own local history because this man has told us to whom he hired out as a mason, the many one-room schoolhouses he taught at, and who the mill owners, the blacksmiths, and butchers of that time were. We know his neighbors, hired men, the customers for his crops, his travels, his religious and social life, and about the frequent deaths. And woven through it all are the effects of a growing family. There were six children, five of whom grew to adulthood and outlived their parents. In time, the family would include 13 grandchildren.

Taylor's diary also served the purpose of an account book. In it,

he faithfully recorded prices and expenditures for each day. It gives us a picture of how little actual cash changed hands or was even needed in those days.

Why R. Edwin Taylor stopped writing in 1902, we do not know. Although his health was declining, Taylor lived until 1909 and is buried in the Winston Cemetery in East Durham.

Although Harriett is quite modest about her efforts, the local history community applauds her completion of a project that tells us the day-to-day life of a local 19th century family. As she has progressed, Harriett has produced a number of annual summaries for the Greenville Local History Group meeting. For further information, contact Don Teator or Harriett Rasmussen.



HARRIET RASMUSSEN of Greenville, who transcribed the 45 volumes of R.E. Taylor's diary in five years. See article on diary for more details. The Greenville Local History Group meets at Greenville Memorial Library community room 7:30 p.m. Great place for new residents to learn about the Town of Greenville and Beyond.

Tourists drawn to quiet, rural Greenville hamlet

By FRANCES INGRAHAM 6/23/96 ATU
Staff writer

Tourism has been the chief economic asset of the hamlet of Greenville since shortly after World War I.

The hamlet, located in the Greene County town of

Greenville, has long been a popular summer destination for week-enders and vacationers from downstate, who favor the cooler woodsy climate and fresh air carrying the scent of wildflowers and sweet grasses.

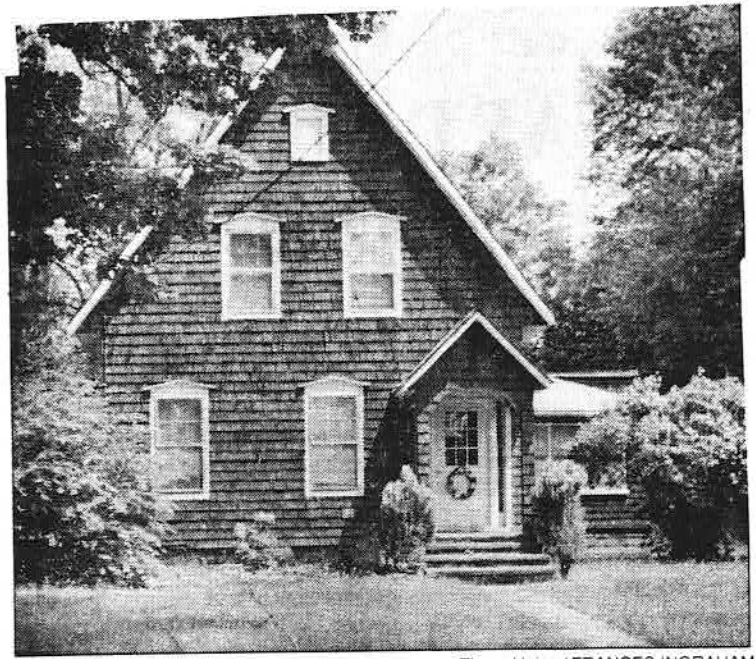
But Greenville is as popular in winter for those who like to ski and snowmobile as it is with leaf-peepers in the fall.

There are a few subdivisions. Town officials are careful not to overdevelop the bucolic rolling hillsides, retaining much of the rural character responsible for its economic well-being.

Basic Creek runs through the hamlet, providing favorite swimming holes, plus fishing spots for bass and trout.

Greenville was once the center of an agricultural area rich in hay. Dairy and beef farms would follow in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Only a few working farms remain.

In addition to hotels springing up in the 1920s, more than 36 farms were converted into tourist homes, according to old newspaper accounts. In the height of the summer season during this time,



Times Union / FRANCES INGRAHAM

Continued from H-1

GREENVILLE: Hot spot in summer, winter

almost every home in the hamlet took in a few boarders.

As tourism grew, from the 1930s through the '60s, large farms continued to dwindle or be transferred over to new ownership.

"I moved up here from Brooklyn 30 years ago," said Lou Spinelli, owner of Mary's Family Restaurant on Main Street, diagonally across from the post office. "I originally came up here just to hunt deer and small game and decided to buy a beef farm. But with the declining market for beef, I decided to buy this restaurant. This is a great quiet rural community to live in and that's the reason why most people come here."

"You can't beat the scenery and there's just about anything you need within a short distance, and Albany is only 23 miles away," he said. "I think this area is fast becoming the Westchester of Albany."

Situated in the northern foothills of the Catskill Mountains at the intersection of Routes 81 and 32, the hamlet is a hub of commercial activity for a couple of blocks in each

direction, with more than a dozen resorts, motels, bed & breakfasts and boarding houses within a mile-and-a-half radius beyond.

Bounded by the Greene County towns of New Baltimore to the east, Cairo to the south, Durham to the west and Westerlo in Albany County to the north, Greenville is easily reached from Albany by taking either Route 32 west through the towns of Bethlehem, Coeymans and Westerlo, or the state Thruway south to Exit 21B (Coxsackie), south on Route 9W to State Route 81 west.

There still exists a rich mix of fraternal and service organizations that take part in the the annual Christmas Tree Festival and Memorial Day, Labor Day and St. Patrick's Day parades.

The Irish American Heritage Museum is in East Durham, less than 10 miles away.

The hamlet is the seat of the town, which also has its own chamber of commerce to promote businesses and tourism.

In addition to a strip mall, there

are few department stores, library, restaurants, barbershop, beauty salons, video store, ice cream parlor, gift shops, hardware store, funeral home, gas stations, banks, convenience stores and medical facilities.

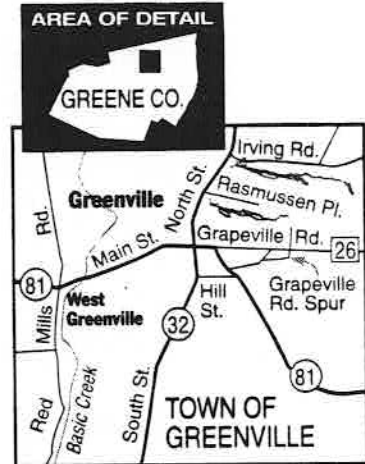
A 152-acre park is slated for completion for next summer, according to town Supervisor Chris Martens.

It wasn't until after the Revolution and construction of the Coxsackie-Greenville-Oak Hill Turnpike in 1806 that the area began to be settled. Architectural styles abound, from colonials and saltboxes to Victorians and Greek Revivals.

There also are churches, a mill house, residences and an inn that dates back to 16 years before the town's incorporation in 1809. Several buildings in the hamlet, including the village square and pond, were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

Thursday night concerts are a regular feature in the wooden gazebo in the village square.

Greenville is situated on an early 7,000-acre land grant to Swiss Maj.



Times Union

Augustine Prevost, for his services in the French and Indian War.

POPULATION: 1990 census: 3,135.

POLITICS: The Town Board is predominantly Republican.

TAXES: Residents pay a rate of \$64.16 per \$1,000 of the assessed value for town, \$60.2 per \$1,000 for county and \$220.87 per \$1,000 for school.

SCHOOLS: Children attend Greenville Elementary School for grades K-6 and Greenville Central School for grades 7-12.

HOUSING: \$50,000 to \$250,000.

EMERGENCY SERVICES: State Police, Greene County Sheriff's Department, volunteer fire department and Albany hospitals.