

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

April 1997, Issue 105

Share Session

Happy Spring to all!

The first meeting of year saw about ten of us (Harriet Rasmussen, Jeanne Bear, Dot Blenis, Ron Golden, Betty Vaughn, Connie Teator, Phyllis Beechert, David Rundell, Judy Rundell, and yours truly) coming out on a nice spring evening. Daylight Savings Time makes for some welcome light at the end of the day.

Looking back a month, a pot-luck supper was held at the Episcopal house on March 8. A thank you goes to Phyllis Beechert and Betty Vaughn for doing the main organizing. Everyone was well fed. The elderberry pie brought back memories of Ray Bennett who was unable to be with us this year.

Phyllis was "house cleaning" and brought in a couple folders worth of clippings to put into the files.

Although other items were waiting to be shared, the bulk of the meeting centered around the possible razing of the Sherrill-Vanderbilt house. Next door to us in the small community room was a community group talking about saving the house. Debbie Magee came over to our room and spent fifteen minutes talking about what this community group is doing.

I'll try to briefly summarize the history of this sequence. Late last fall, the Vanderbilt house was bought for about \$110,000, according to the Greenville Press. The current owner plans to tear down all the build-

ings on the property and level the grounds to make room for a business, the nature of which he has not stated publicly. Rumors have it that it could be a miniature golf – batting cage – food stand business.

People who object to this do so for a number of reasons – the willful destruction of a house of character, the needless destruction of a house in good shape, the improper placement of a business next to a residential section, the improper placement in front of the park, etc.

(Let me admit now my biases. I believe all of the above reasons fit, and I have written a letter to the editor of the Press to voice my opposition of the tearing down the house. In addition, I appeared with Ken Dudley on Channel 6 one chilly morning behind the Vanderbilt barns, addressing the topic of saving historic buildings. Although I favor business coming into Greenville, I think the costs to the character to the town must be weighed, and this project violates my sense of what is right for the town. I am aware, though, there are other perspectives.)

Debbie Magee continued, explaining the options the group seems to have. At this point, it appears the only viable option is to purchase the property, and then decide how to use the property if the May 1 deadline can be reached. However, the owner is asking for \$195,000, almost twice as much as he paid just a few months back. It's an ugly proposition but the group seems desperate

enough to consider this outrageous proposal rather than seeing the house's destruction.

The group is fund-raising and anyone wishing to help can call Debbie Magee, or you can call me to direct you to the right person. Phyllis suggested that the GLHG contribute \$1,000 to the cause and all of us at the meeting agreed. Individuals are encouraged to contribute.

After this part of the meeting, I suggested that the GLHG attempt to compile a list of structures it feels is important to the Town of Greenville. How the list should be drawn up or what the criteria will be still need to be defined. For now, is this a project our group wants to do?

I think a main purpose of this project could be to draw attention to those structures that we feel are important. We can do some of this in our share sessions, or make it as one of our programs. If you attend next month's meeting, bring your feedback; otherwise, let someone know and we can decide how we should proceed.

Talking about next meeting, the Carrie Ingalls diary will be the program. This is a program I intended to do last November but we got so carried away with biographical information that we never got around to it. And, over the winter, Deb and I managed to duplicate some more pictures that apply to the Ingalls diary so I'll incorporate some of those also.

For the June meeting, I'm working on a date with Ted Hilscher who wants to talk about barns. However, the second Monday is a bad date for him so I'm looking to change the date for only June, making it the THIRD Monday of June. If that is a bad

date, please let me know as soon as possible.

Don reminded everyone of Richard Ferriolo's project of establishing a history of the school district. In addition to the factual material, Richard and the committee are interested in the stories people have to tell about their school experiences. Stay tuned for more.

Harriet promised to have another year of the Taylor summary done soon but she's been more than busy later. For those who didn't know, Cas fell on some of that treacherous ice from this past winter, causing some serious problems that he is overcoming. Things look OK for now but Harriet has had her share of worries. We wish Cas a full recovery.

A reminder: The Greene County Historical Society's Education Committee has arranged five programs for 1999, held at the Vedder Library at the Bronck Museum at 7:30 on Wednesday evenings. They include:

April 21: General Nathanael Greene (past)

May 19: The Algonquin Flint Mines of Coxsackie

August 18: Old Bottles of Greene county

September 15: Dutch Architecture

October 20: Catskill Knuckle-Dusters and Pistols

Please try to support this worthy effort.

