

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

October 2004, Issue 152

Share Session

A cool, gray day which had faded into October darkness by 7:15 saw a baker's dozen come out: Dave and Harriet Gumpert, Connie Teator, Phyllis Beechert, Mimi Weeks, Harriett Rasmussen, Jeanne Bear, Walter Ingalls, Judy Rundell, Dot Blenis, Stephanie Ingalls, Ron Golden, and Don Teator.

The Freehold Project Dedication program was our first must-see. Front and back covers of post card duplications of an older Freehold sandwiched current photos and the program. It was a nice event which I attended, with about 100 people in attendance, with several speakers, and it was a nice small-town event.

Calendar? Aarrgghh! The calendar was not ready by the meeting. It is ready as I'm writing this, so the next meeting I will bring the calendar. I will try to have it out, at least at the Library and at Bryant's (Freehold Store also). If you can think of any other places, let me know. (Cumberland would be good but Cumbie's has always been resistant, or not easy.)

Mail orders can be sent to: Don Teator, 3979 Rt 67, Freehold, NY 12431. Checks should be made out to Don Teator. Prices are \$8 for first calendar, \$15 for two, \$21 for three, and an additional \$5 for each additional calendar after the third one, if all in the same order.

Greetings to Bob & Emma Spees in Alaska, who mail order the local history calendar. Of course, to us Greenville history fans, the Spees name is one of the early names in Greenville, commemorated on one of historical plaques.

Harriett had a photo of Ad Utter, part of the Utter clan and the connection to the Taylor diary. This photo shows Ad in his older years when he lived a hermit-like existence on O'Hara Road. Harriett also had some Mackey info, following up on the Mackey diary information from last meeting. And, Harriett also brought some ration books and directions for blackouts during WWII.

The school history books which Richard Ferriolo and his committee had worked on are in print. Paperback copies are available, for about \$20, I'm hearing.

The Lillian Joy scrapbooks were on display. She had kept scrapbooks of local and not-so-local events from the 1940s until about 1970. They are the kind of treat to sit with on a comfortable couch and browse through the local history.

Don had been to the Old Stone Fort the day before, and this museum was celebrating a History Fair, with a booklet available, and a wide variety of historical reenactment and display.

Judy contributed a photo of the Schubert Choral Club when it performed in the Methodist Church in 1933. Although I had seen the photo before, this was the first time I had seen the people identified. I think this photo will make a calendar page in the near future.

Dot brought a number of older newspapers – some Greenville Locals from the late 1960s and early 1970s, and some Cocksackie Townsmans from the early 1970s.

Don brought a copy of the October Capital Region Living, which features the Freehold Country Inn and Tommy's Hot Dog Stand. (copies enclosed)

Our next meeting (and last of the year) will be November 8. Calendars will be available (still \$5), and Richard Ferriolo promises he will make the meeting. He will talk about the newly available History of Greenville

Central School, and also remind of us of his work for the Veterans' Book.

Finally, I announced I will be taking a break from the calendar, probably for a couple of years. I need to prepare earlier, have been finding that tougher to do, and hope that I make time to get some research ready for the 2008 calendar. In the meantime, if anyone would like to keep the calendar going, I would encourage that effort. Use of photos from the historian's file are, of course, available. I feel somewhat guilty for this lapse, especially after fifteen years of calendars, but, simply, I need a break. Contact me if you, or someone you know, want to make 2006 the sixteenth calendar.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Don".

Tommy's Hot Dogs

A Greenville favorite

BY MARY BETH DECECCO

Since 1969, there has been a familiar landmark at the corner of Route 32 and 81 right in the center of Greenville, NY. "Tommy's Hot Dogs" has become a fixture in the community and is frequented by loyal customers from years back.

Owned and operated by Tommy Briggs, the business was founded by his late father-in-law, Matt Chesbro, and aptly named "Matt's Hot Dogs." For 10 years Tommy helped his father-in-law out until he decided to retire in 1986. Since Matt's sons were pursuing their own endeavors, Tommy was the most likely candidate for succession since he knew the business and had experience as a short-order cook. When he bought out Matt's corner, Tommy changed the name of the business since Matt was still operating under the original name at local events.

Though it's primarily known as a hot dog stand, there is much more to the menu, which requires an early start to the day. At 6am Tommy heads to the 8ft. x 24ft. truck he describes as "a kitchen on wheels." There, he prepares for the day by peeling and grilling onions (he goes through 50 pounds of onions every other day), making coffee, parboiling meats and getting the fryers going.

The truck opens for business at 8am and is a daily stop for many on their way to work in need of coffee and a breakfast sandwich. Other menu

items include chicken of many varieties: chicken teriyaki with onions and peppers (his most popular seller), buffalo wing chicken, BBQ chicken and Dijon horseradish chicken. Standard American favorites include hamburgers, sausage and peppers, fresh cut French fries, and of course, hot dogs. The best part, is that nothing is over \$5.

"We sell a lot of hot dogs," said Tommy, who admits that the long-time business has afforded him a good life. In the beginning, however, it was a different story for his father-in-law.

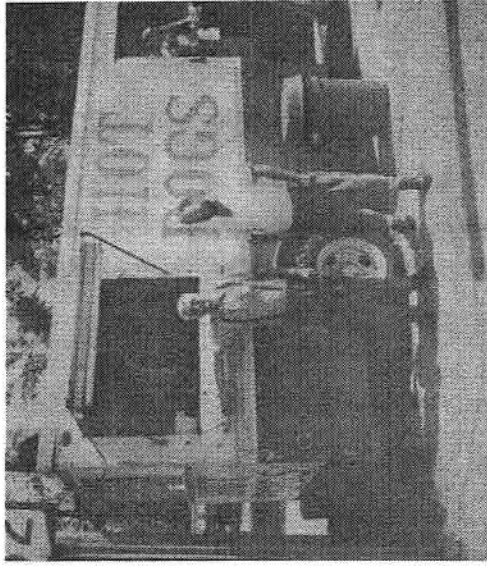
"Some days he didn't take in \$10," said Tommy, describing how Matt, who worked as a cook at the Greenville Central School district, started selling hot dogs out of the back of his station wagon during parades and other special events in the area.

"From there, he got the idea that this could work and he had the truck built," Tommy said. The original truck was a step van that was converted into a 6.5ft. x 12ft. hot dog truck. The kitchen in the new truck, which Tommy purchased in 1999 and designed himself, has been described by a few passing NYC chefs as "better equipped than their kitchens."

Today, the business is thriving. Tommy employs three people and business hours are seven days a week from 8am until 6pm or 8pm, depending on daylight savings time. His busiest month is May when Little League starts up, people start their yard work and out-of-towners come to Greene County to open up their summer homes. But, he added, October can also be very busy.

"I love what I do, but it's hard work," said Tommy.

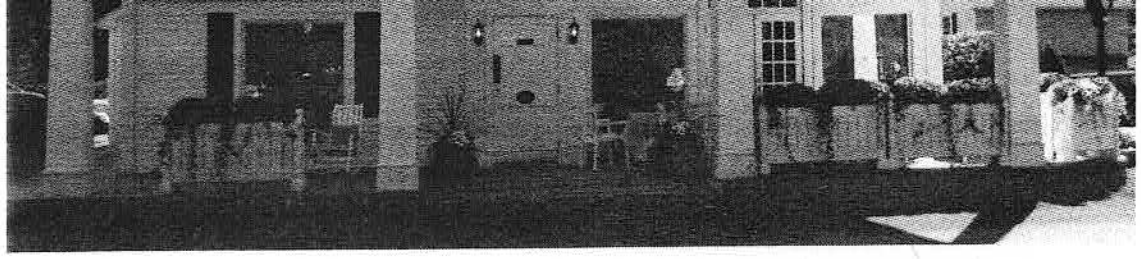
The next time you're driving through Greenville, be sure to stop at the infamous hot dog stand and enjoy some good food at low prices. ■



Third Annual

Catskill Mountain
Ginseng & Medicinal Herb Festival

Sunday, October 10, 2004



BY EMILY FEALEY

It has to taste good and look perfect!" That is the motto of head chef and co-owner of the historic Freehold Country Inn, Max Suhner. Now a fine dining restaurant in the Catskill Mountain Region of Greene County, Freehold Country Inn has undergone numerous changes.

Built in 1795, the Inn was designed as a boarding facility to house travelers primarily moving along the Schoharie Turnpike. Over time, under the direction of its various owners, a two-story addition, among other changes, was made to the Inn. In the 1860s, Dr. John Alden Parks added the picturesque Carriage House that still sits on the property east of the Inn.

In the late 1960s, the Parks family restored the front of the building to the original facade and renamed the building the Olde Country Inn. By the seventies, boarders were no longer taken in, and the building became a tavern with a few apartments above it. The 1990s marked the Inn's closure to the public.

This "hibernation" did not last long, however. In October of 1998 Ben Buel purchased the Inn and was joined soon after by Suhner. The building underwent complete renovations, restoring the ambiance of the building to its original look. Some of the original wood beams were uncovered and left exposed, which can be seen in the restaurant's bar area. The Freehold Country Inn was opened as a fine dining restaurant in March of 1999, with the Carriage House serving as a banquet facility.

"We completely gutted the building. Actually, it had had renovations over the years, but it was not structurally sound. No one had done it properly," said Terry Buel, front of house manager at the Inn.

Although Suhner's cooking resume is extensive and impressive, with credentials such as executive chef positions at the Grande Tere Restaurant in New York City and Hotel Rosli in Switzerland, neither he nor the Buel's had any experience owning and running a restaurant.

"It was just something my husband and I decided to do after our kids left. It was kind of an empty-nest thing," Terry admitted.

The lack of experience has not seemed to hurt the Inn's success or popularity. The historical significance of the building itself tends to draw a wide range of guests from all over New York State. In December of 2000 the Freehold Country Inn was inducted into the Greene County Historical Society Register.

Often described as cozy and comfortable, it

looks like a typical country inn. The interior design is modeled after the Country French look, and walking through the door is almost like taking a step back in time.

Although many people come to experience the historical charm of the restaurant, Terry insists that the main attraction is the food.

"The biggest draw is the food, because of Max," she said.

With an international menu, there is something for everyone. However, Suhner's influence is certainly felt in the menu, as his work experience in Switzerland is evident in several of the dishes. In fact, the most popular dish, according to Terry, is the Weinerschnitzel, which is a veal dish that is sautéed and breaded.

"We're also very well-known for our crab cakes and crème brulee," she added.

Freehold Country Inn attracts a larger crowd during the summer months, due in part to the Saratoga Race Track, and summer traveling in general. The colder months see their share of guests as well, drawing from local customers.

With its roots over two centuries old, Freehold Country Inn is still a fixture in the Capital Region. Enjoying its success as a popular fine dining restaurant, it is not unlikely that the Inn will be around for many more years to come. ■

The Freehold Country Inn is open seven days a week. Lunch is served Monday-Saturday 12pm-3pm, dinner is served Monday-Saturday 4pm-9pm and on Sunday dinner is served 12pm-9pm. Reservations are suggested for Friday and Saturday evenings.



PHOTOS BY EMILY FEALEY