

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

Winter 2007, Issue 171

Annual Report

Good late winter to all,

It is Annual Report time again, and I take this chance to mail everyone – subscribers and non-subscribers – a look back at 2006. First, I trust you are surviving, perhaps thriving in, this bipolar winter – much above average in December and early January, with the opposite up to now.

As usual, this past year found the Greenville Local History Group still using its usual pattern of meetings, a mix of programs and share sessions. Our programs featured finding information on the North Street houses and “Things That Aren’t There Anymore.” In between was a whole of sharing, ranging from a variety of clippings from newsletters (that you subscribers share in most months) to artifacts, photos, and stories of local interest that come in from many sources.

One hope is that the long stretch of winter allows for some work on local history projects to be shared during the coming year. People contribute in many different ways. One of the most useful is to preserve some piece of Greenville’s history. This may happen by the saving of an artifact or knick-knack; however,

the part that is tougher to save is the collection of memories and stories. And thus, I urge you to audiotape or write your memories of Greenville people, events, and places. Daunting at first, this recording becomes more and more useful with the continual adding of sources.

One project that unfortunately has lapsed is the publishing of a local history calendar. The creation process is just one part, a part in which I have played a major role. One of our Achilles heels, however, is selling, and the calendar has lost money for the past several years, to the point that whatever surplus we had is almost gone. We were selling 150-200 calendars, not close to recouping our expenses. Thus, we need to find an answer to the money problem. Somehow, we need to sell more copies, or think of another way to at least break even. Contact me if you have ideas.

Our membership numbers about 70, with about 45 receiving the newsletter (I also include the Town Board), and the average attendance at meetings this past year averaged about ten to fifteen. Our schedule will continue to be the second Monday of April through November.

Looking ahead, I still can use help in scheduling programs. The program director (me, usually) for the GLHG will welcome ideas for programs, for it is the programs that tie together our share sessions. If you have an idea, please let me know.

A note about subscriptions. Your address label has your subscription expiration date. (No date means the subscription is expired.) Anyone wanting to receive the newsletter can subscribe for \$5 for a year (usually April – November issues, plus the annual) and mailed to Don Teator, 3979 Rt 67, Freehold NY 12431. Checks should be made out to: Don Teator.

Also, if your address label needs changing, let me know. In addition to my address, I can be reached at 518-634-2397, and for the computer literate, I can be emailed at don@dteator.com.

On a more somber tone, we note the passing of Orlie Bear and Lee Cunningham this past winter. Both were such keystones in Greenville's local history, whether it was the retelling of stories or the impact each had.

I hope to see you at the April 10 share session (2nd Monday of April). Come with reports of what you've been working on, or ideas that someone else might be able to use.

Until then, take care.

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

PS: I've copied an article from Hudson Valley magazine. Although Route 23 does not cross Greenville, this roadway is familiar enough to anyone who has lived here.

PSS: Although the GLHG avoids political posturing, we do try to influence the law-makers and enforcers to consider the preservation and recognition of our local history. To the degree that you feel comfortable doing that on your own, your efforts are appreciated. To be especially noted is the current revision of the town's Comprehensive Plan, and I'll be urging everyone to have a say and give input, especially as it pertains to historical preservation. I believe that April 25 is a meeting, at the High School tentatively, to gather input and share ideas.

Rolling Along Route 23

Discover more than just stunning fall scenery along this 25-mile stretch from Catskill to Windham **by Rita Ross**

While each season has its own special pleasures, to me, autumn in the Hudson Valley remains a standout. And I am not alone. Visitors come from near and far to engage in the annual rite of leaf-peeping and to enjoy an almost dizzying array of fall street fairs, craft shows, pumpkin festivals and other delights. The tricky part is deciding which direction to go in.

One good choice for a fall foliage jaunt takes you along a 25-mile portion of Route 23 in Greene County. It begins in the village of Catskill, winds through Cairo and ends in downtown Windham. Along the way, there's plenty of show-stopping scenery — you can gaze down on five states at once from one high point — landmarked buildings, art galleries, boutiques, food galore and even a Buddhist temple.

If you're starting on the east bank of the Hudson River, take the Rip Van Winkle Bridge (a.k.a. the Catskill-Hudson Bridge, which first opened to traffic in 1935) into the charming, up-and-coming town of Catskill.

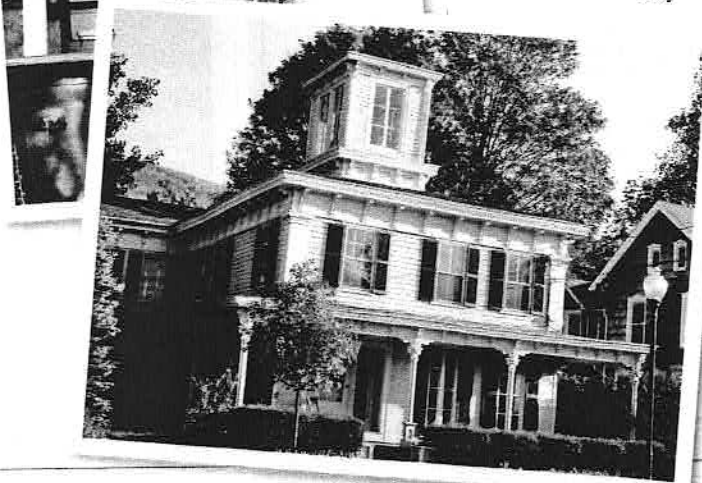
The village, which celebrates its bicentennial this year, saw lots of growth in the early 19th century. First, it became a bustling port, thanks to its location along the Catskill Creek, which flows into the nearby Hudson River. While many goods passed through, the port was kept particularly busy shipping the ice that was harvested from the area's frozen waterways to New York City. The village eventually evolved into a gateway for the tourist trade with the 1824 opening of the legendary Catskill Mountain House hotel. (After closing in 1941, the hotel gradually fell into such disrepair that the state finally took it over and burned the ruins in 1963.)

Today, much of Catskill's gorgeous architecture — from Greek Revival mansions to Queen Anne cottages — has been nicely restored. In addition to residences, you'll find impressive churches such as the Gothic-style St. Patrick's on Bridge Street, as well as beautifully maintained historic banks and buildings that reflect the town's fierce commitment to preservation.

A stroll along Main Street reveals a diversity of stores including antique shops such as **Swamp Angel** and **Flossie's Gold Mine**. Poke around awhile in Flossie's and you might find anything from a classic Ray Charles vinyl recording to a painted, mantel-sized statue of Rip Van Winkle. Several art galleries are sprinkled throughout town, while another popular art form these days — tattooing — is also represented downtown.



Postcard-perfect: Newly energized Catskill (above), a charming warrior along the route, and a Windham "painted lady"

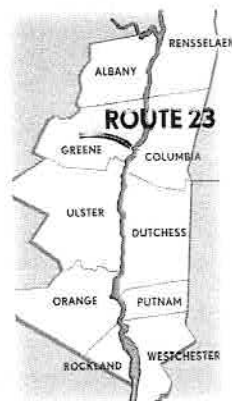


If home design is more your thing, **Hood & Co.** sells candles, towels and other furnishings. Those in search of women's clothes can browse at **Looking Pretty**.

Eateries abound, too. Locals and visitors converge for breakfast or lunch at **Bell's** café, which has a cozy interior and a classic tin ceiling complete with wooden fans. An array of breakfast specialties — I had an omelet in spicy tomato stew — can fuel you up for your daylong journey.

Other spots to stop for a bite include the breakfast-only **Garden Gate**, the **Retriever Roasters** for tea, coffee and espresso-style treats and the **Mod Gourmet Café**. **La Conca D'Oro** (it means "The Golden Bay") features traditional Italian food; for Thai, try **Wasana's**.

Catskill's nifty movie house, the **Community Theatre**, is a Main Street landmark. This



old-fashioned venue features one of those cheerfully gaudy, old-time marquees that's, alas, nearly extinct now. It shows first-run flicks and also hosts screenings of independent films. There's one more "they-don't-make-'em-like-that-anymore" establishment in Catskill: **Di Stefano's New York Barber Shop** is a splendid, classic tonsorial parlor that seems to have come straight from a movie set.

Cedar Grove, the home of Thomas Cole (a founding member of the Hudson River School of painting), along with his painting studio, are both restored and open to visitors. You might also want to stop and admire the Hudson views at **Catskill Point Park**, located at the tip of the Catskill Creek.

But I digress. There are miles to go and



Another restored Victorian house graces Windham's downtown area

millions of leaves to admire, so you'll eventually want to drive back along Main Street and continue west along Route 23.

As you head out of town, you'll spot a road marker noting the former location of an old Indian footpath — a reminder of the region's indigenous past. You'll also notice signs for the **Mahayana Buddhist Temple** in South Cairo, a possible side-trip drive of about 15 minutes. The grounds, which are open to the public, include the tallest pagoda on the East Coast, dragon sculptures, and peaceful ponds. I feel more peaceful just knowing it's there.

Continuing on Route 23, you suddenly have a real sense of being in the Catskills as the well known higher peaks come into view: Blackhead Mountain, Black Dome and

Thomas Cole Mountain are all higher than 3,900 feet and are now bathed in a kaleidoscope of color at this time of year.

After passing several strip malls and a roadside outdoor auction mart, you'll cruise into Cairo. And yes, it was named after the Egyptian city, but here it's pronounced "care-o." In its heyday, Cairo was a popular summer resort and a stop on the Catskill Mountain Railroad, first as a freight pickup point for hay, fruit and bluestone in the 1880s. Later came the tourists, and Cairo thrived until the advent of better highways triggered a decline in railroad business.

Arriving in town nowadays, you can grab a bite at **Marty's Place**, where locals converge to sip, chat and play pool before browsing through **Artfully Yours** and **A Gift on the Way**. Many homes here have wide, shady awnings and big front porches. All along the central thoroughfare, old-fashioned lampposts are decorated with hanging flower baskets and American flags.

Leaving Cairo on route to Windham, you'll pass businesses that include **Bernie O's** steakhouse and a retro-looking ice cream stand. Your leaf-peepers' chorus of "oohs" and "ahhs" will no doubt intensify as you reach the point where Route 23 begins a serious ascent near Windham. Many folks stop at the **Point Lookout Mountain Inn**, where its **Victorian Rose** restaurant offers everything from sandwiches to seafood and steak — with spectacular views of the landscape spreading far below. It's said that on a clear day you can see five states, and if the weather cooperates, you can dine al fresco on the restaurant's deck.

Near East Windham, Route 23 enters the 300,000-acre **Catskill Park**, with dozens of well-known hiking paths including the challenging, 24-mile-long Escarpment Trail where Rip Van Winkle allegedly took his famous 20-year nap.

But I'm not tired, I'm hungry, so I cruise into town with dinner on my mind. Downtown Windham is a welcoming four-season spot with a healthy variety of shops, restaurants, art galleries and renovated Victorian homes. Winter sports enthusiasts kick back here after a day at nearby **Ski Windham** ski center, with more than 30 ski trails and an elevation of 3,050 feet. Other activities abound during the off-season, including mountain biking, hiking, and antiques.

One of the town's highlights is the renowned **Windham Chamber Music Festi-**

val, started in 1997 by Robert Manno and Magdalena Golczewski, husband-and-wife performers with the New York Metropolitan Opera who fell in love with the region and bought a home in Windham. The summer events take place in a former Presbyterian church that dates back to 1826.

Windham's eateries include the **Mill Rock Restaurant** with a wood-fired oven, **Bistro Brie & Bordeaux**, **Zerega's Restaurant and Pizzeria** for pizza and Italian dishes, and **Michael's Diner**. **Todaro's Salumeria** sells Italian cheeses, picnic fixings, and homemade pasta.

Downtown, **Carole's Gift Emporium** sells crafts and collectibles. Explore Windham's side streets and you'll discover shops like the **European Craft Store** on Mill Street, featuring handmade wooden chess sets, jewelry and gifts.

The visual arts are popular here, too. The **Mountaintop Gallery** represents more than 40 regionally and nationally known artists. Other art stops include the **Images of the Catskills** gallery run by award-winning local landscape photographer Francis X. Driscoll. Or stop by the gallery of **Robert Cepale** who captures days gone by with his Americana paintings of old Windham.

Autumn attracts throngs of visitors for the town's craft shows, flea markets, and group hikes for leaf-peeping. Popular nearby side trips include a visit to **Windham Vineyard & Winery** on Route 10. The winery also conducts mountaintop wine tastings featuring delicacies such as chocolate wine truffles and local cheese.

When it is time to leave Windham, you can retrace your drive back along Route 23 to your starting point in Catskill. Or you might want to head home via another route. One loop choice is to continue on past Windham to East Ashland. Then head south on Route 17 to Jewett, where elegant homes that once belonged to wealthy 19th-century summer vacationers still dot the rural mountain roads. Then take Route 23A toward Hunter, where you'll pass lofty Hunter Mountain, Haines Falls and Palenville, all popular areas for hiking fans and waterfall lovers. (Note: On a recent trip, a portion of Route 23A was closed from near Haines Falls to Palenville, so double-check ahead of time unless you're hungry for another type of adventure!) Take 23A back into the village of Catskill. And remember, fall foliage only lasts a few weeks, so you may want to hit the road for another leaf-peeping tour. ■