

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

November 2014, Issue 240

Walter Ingalls Reminisces

The day before real Veteran's Day found a crowd, mid-40s in number, relishing a pleasant November day – almost 60 and sunny, although the prediction of a “Weather Bomb” was making headlines. And as I am writing this three weeks after the meeting, the remnants of eight inches of the day-before-Thanksgiving snow are dwindling. For those winter-avoiders, you chose wisely to avoid; for the rest of us, it was winter post card scenery, and lots of it.

Coming out this evening: Donna & Walter Ingalls, and Walt's daughter Krista Haushalter, Betty McAneny, Shirley & Orrin Stevens, Elaine & Allan Wright, Marie & Bob Shaw, Stephanie Ingalls, Christine Mickelsen, Lois Rockefeller, Beverly Myers, Lew Knott, Margaret Donohue, Charlene & Ken Mabey, Ann & Dave Dence and daughter Jessica, Pat & Dave Elsbree, Bette Welter, Judy & Dave Rundell, Ron Golden, Phyllis Beechert, Katja & Paul Rehm, Mary & Allyn Shaw, Carolyn Savery, Mary Lou & Nick Nahas, Sally Staunch, Rachel Ceasar, and Don Teator, and there were more than I had time to record. If I missed you and you wish to be part of the record, let me know.

Once again, the turnout was quite satisfying, especially for (because of) a chance to hear Walter.

And what a way to end a local history season!

It had started a couple months earlier. I answered my phone; it was Walter. He had been mowing the lawn, he said, and, looking upon the town and the view of the Catskill Mountains, he was reminiscing of the many

people, events, and sights from many years. And what a shame that these memories could not be told one more time for other people to remember!

Maybe a GLHG program, maybe next year, Walter chimed in. I thought a few seconds of what my November program plans—worthy material, but material that could wait, with no offense, until next year!

So, I suggested November, Walter (in his thoughtful way) did not want to displace anyone and again suggested next year would be fine, and I more strongly counter-suggested that November was even better.

And I reminded Walter of his oft-repeated advice to take care of stuff before you can't. It was good advice, and here we were!

I had prepared for the meeting with three sessions, total of five hours, over his dining room table, some coffee, my notebook, my questions, and Walter's wealth of stories. The result was the “cheat sheet” available at the meeting, to be used for starting points or for questions later in the program. (If anyone wants a copy of it, I can mail or email it to you; let me know.)

Another behind-the-scenes part of this equation that many of you did not see was Walter's insistence that I astutely direct the program and make sure he did not wander too far afield. So, I assumed the role of lion-tamer, but reassured Walter that some wandering was allowed, probably desired, but I would use my discretion. For those of you in attendance, I hope I cracked a soft whip.

So, after introductions of the audience, we worked our way through a half-dozen topics, with audience members asking questions and sharing related memories. Knowing I cannot do justice to the evening on paper, I will outline some of the major points.

(It should be noted that Deb recorded the evening on digital camcorder, our very recent purchase for events like this. I have not tested the replay yet but will do so soon.)

The skunk in John I's

- Originally told in Maureen's telling a couple months ago but enhanced now
- Walter's candy bar that John I denied smelled like skunk
- Wool clothes that retained the odor a year later

Firefighting in Greenville

- Greenville organized in 1939
- Walter's memory mid-1930s of passing the bucket brigade, and the ensuing nightmare he had
- Pump spray test
- Firehouse near today's Stewart's, and today's Town Building
- Early responders – Powell, Baumann, Cutler, Simpson, Ingalls, Yeomans, Long, Weeks, Blenis, and more
- Fire siren
- Farm machinery building into fire-house

Growing old in Greenville

- Tougher in old days
- Walter's memory of a couple (ancient, he thought) celebrating their 50th anniversary
- People dying of conditions treatable now (his mother's high blood pressure)
- Dr. Bott
- Other doctors of area
- Ambulance was Cunningham hearse, Lee's driving through tight spaces

Early roads

- First state roads in 1920s
- Most were dirt roads
- Details of who lived where on North Rd and Sunset Rd, Norton Hill
- Old Plank Rd with wood slabs across roadway
- Shoddy construction on part of SR 81 by Catholic Church
- Early automobiles

Other

- Other lumber yards
- Walter's father dealing with politics and business
- Teamstering

Of course, our 9 p.m. deadline beckoned long before Walter could make a dent in his list of possible topics. Those with the "cheat sheet" know some of the places we could have gone; for those not in attendance, some of the topic unaddressed included:

- Norton Hill families – Yeomans, Goff, Stevens
- Cheese Hill, logging,
- The Blue Inn (the former Academy annex)
- Favorite teachers in school
- Stores and shopping
- New inventions, trends, and technology through the years
- Personal highlights
- How Walter filled his time as a kid (what did we do before computers, much less TV?!)
- World War II
- And a ton more

I must reinforce that we captured a very small smattering of topics that have crossed through Walter Ingalls' life. I apologize if I even dare to suggest that we captured the essence of one person's life in ninety minutes. Still, even with these caveats, many of you said that it was a classic Walter night, and if I had a hand in it, I am pleased that local history was furthered this evening.

Another caveat: If you want your story told your way, please consider documenting it, whether by written account, a set of notes, an audio tape, a video tape, or some other method that gives the future a first-hand account of who you were and what you did. Otherwise, you leave it to the second-handers to try their best (and some may do a good job).

Back to Walter's night. It should be noted that we deliberately stayed clear of biographical material as much as we could. Much of that has been shared before, especially the 2012 Calendar Recognition and the program

of Walter's 1947 Trip Across America (August 2011 Newsletter).

A **thank you goes once again to Stephanie and Christine** for the "light refreshments will be served" part of the advertisement.

Reminder: the **2015 Calendar is available at Kelly's, the Library, Tops, and GNH**. Please visit these business and thank them for helping us. And if you can, try to sell a few calendars here and there or give as gifts. With a month left in calendar season, breaking even will be close, judging from current numbers. And if you want a calendar discount, contact me.

I have a **request for input for the 2016 Calendar**. We try to recognize those people who have undertaken a renovation/preservation of a property which adds to character of the community. I have one in mind but am guessing your eyes see more than I do. What house or property is worthy of our notice? Contact me with an answer or two or three. Thank you.

November marks the end of our program year. I will get out an Annual newsletter come mid-late winter.

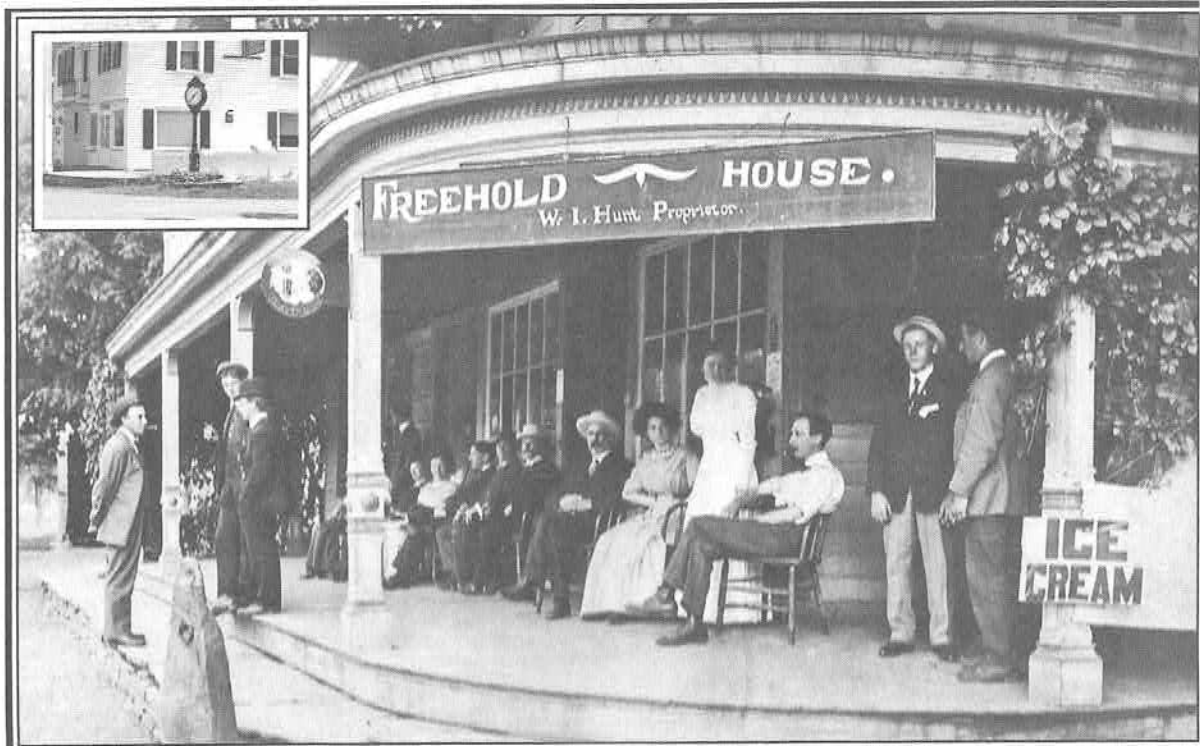
The **Civil War Round Table's December 10 meeting** (Wednesday) at the Library will feature Maxine Getty portraying Mary A. R. Livermore, an abolitionist, teacher, nurse, and suffragette.

Included in this newsletter are a couple of the calendar pictures, as well as Walter Ingalls pictures.

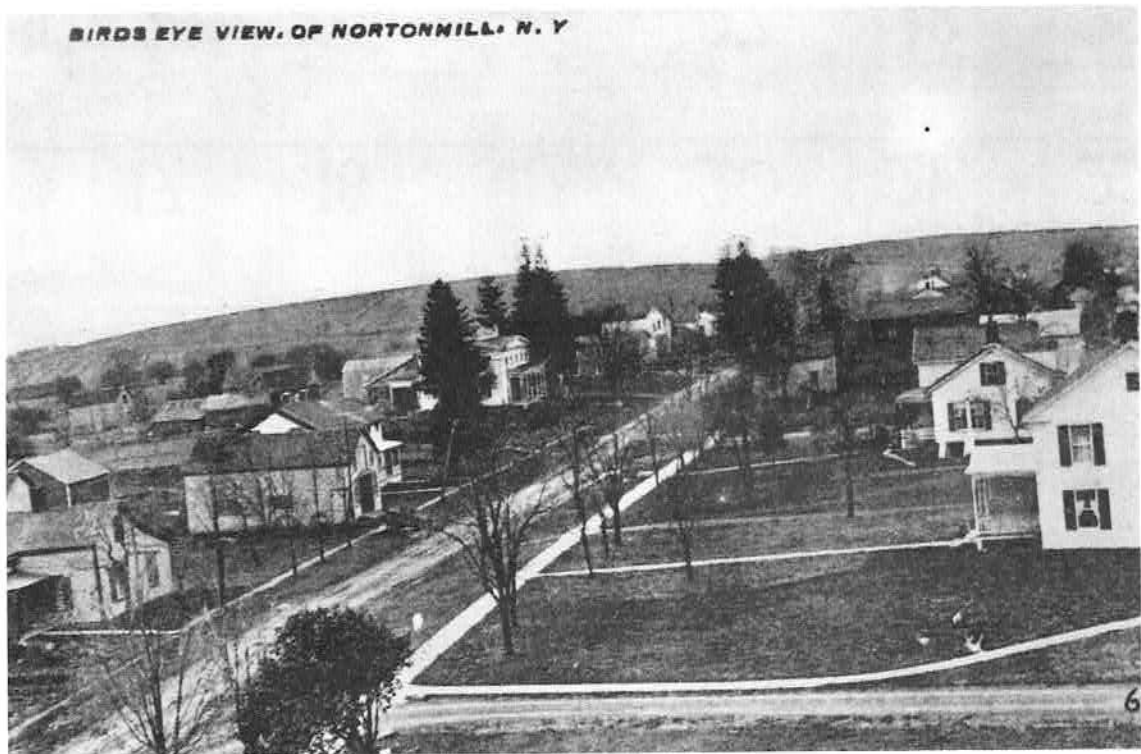
See you in April.

(Did Deb let out that we will not be in the country during our May meeting? If someone is willing to chair a meeting, I will gladly yield the gavel instead of canceling a meeting. Let me know if you have an idea.)

Take care,



September 2015 Calendar: A circa-1920 shot shows the height of boarding season in Freehold at the Freehold House, known to most of us as the Freehold Country Inn. The Parks family owned and ran the inn for most of the 20th century, and Hunt is a near relative. (photo courtesy Ken Mabey)



Walter's domain: Main Street, Norton Hill, from Methodist steeple, looking westward through town



Family Pose: Walter's aunts, dad, uncle, and grandmother