

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

September 2016, Issue 254

Boarding Houses of Durham / Nahas

A near-perfect September day, with low 70s and crisp September air, made us forget the three previous sultry days we endured, as the about 35 community members arrived for the September meeting. Attending: Mary Lou & Nick Nahas, Ernie Burger, Marie & Bob Shaw, Robert Uzzilia, Sherry Baron, Donna & Walter Ingalls, Kathy Smith, Kenneth Brand, Leslie Tollner, Phyllis Beechert, Rachel Ceasar, Richard Ceasar, Carolyn Bauer, Ronna Feit, Sue & Ted Loeffler, Al Hulick, Ron Golden, Greg Fealy, Linda Marks, Audrey Matott, Stephanie Ingalls, Christine Mickelsen, Anne Keaz(?), Karen Pausin(?), Ann & Bob Hallock, and Don Teator. There was a nice turnout from the Durham area. I know there were several more who escaped both my sign-in sheet and my memory cells. If I missed you and you want the record corrected, let me know.

Boarding Houses and Resorts of the Town of Durham was the topic of the evening, presented by Nick and Mary Lou Nahas. Mary Lou did the narrating while Nick gave support and technical assistance.

The Nahases found Oak Hill about twenty years ago, and the area has benefitted ever since. Nick and Mary Lou operate the I. U. Tripp store on Main Street, just beside the Methodist Church. If you have never visited, stop in sometime on the weekends.

Mary Lou has created a Facebook page—Boarding Houses, Hotels and Resorts in Durham NY—and you can sit for quite a while learning about the resorts of the Town of Durham. It is a project that Mary Lou con-

tributes to daily so there is always a reason to peruse her site.

The Nahases are an integral part of the Oak Hill Preservation Association which holds regular meetings and has a Facebook page. I have attended a couple meetings and am reminded of a quote attributed to Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

And indeed, as many of you know from lifelong experience that it takes someone to get things going, and I know many of you reading this are that kind of person when it matters to you.

(Oops, sorry for the sermonizing.)

And Nick is on the Durham Town Board, and there must be a couple more credits to both their names.

All this to say if you attended the meeting, you are now cognizant of two more people who make a difference.

Mary Lou explained her start in this project, mentioning the Town of Greenville project. Over the past several years, she and Nick have had the privilege of sharing photos and stories with their town residents.

Mary Lou started her account with a map of the Town of Durham which includes the hamlets of Durham, Oak Hill, East Durham, Cornwallville, South Durham, Sunside, and even East Windham (check out the town line change to Windham when you travel past East Windham on your way to Windham).

A major influence on the town was the construction of three turnpikes. The Susquehanna runs roughly on 145 westward to Durham and then up CR 20 where leaves Durham to continue on to Manorkill. The Schoharie Turnpike went from Freehold out CR 67 to Oak Hill, diverging to the Schoharie Valley or crossing over on CR 22 back to the Susquehanna Turnpike. And the Windham Turnpike wound from Cairo on to Windham along SR 23, also colorfully nicknamed the Mohican Trail.

Travelers' needs would be filled along these routes, with a variety of notable examples abounding. Decades later, during the boarding house era, many of the back roads would find a farm house trying to find a way to make ends meet. Those of you familiar with Greenville's map of boarding houses realize that Durham's is similar, with a somewhat greater emphasis on the old turnpike routes.

Along the way, Mary Lou had photos, older and recent, of many of the boarding houses/resorts she has researched, with snippets of history to accompany.

She spent considerable time on Shady Glen, today's Zoom Flume complex. Proprietor Seneca Elliott would advertised the site of his business as East Durham, Durham, and even Freehold. And Harriett Rasmussen had compiled a scrap book of Seneca Elliott material, including a colorful marriage history which tickled the crowd this evening.

Mary Lou spent a few minutes on the influence of Brooks Atkinson and his wife Oriana, which could be a program of its own. And a few more minutes was taken with names taken from Beers' History of Greene County.

Just for a sampling, I have included some of the names I remembered from the slide show: Newell Inn (on the way to West Durham), Shamrock (also Taylor's, Central), Hedges Patroon Place, Old Mill Falls, Palm Inn (Cleveland Hotel, Locust Shade), Evans Palm Inn, Sherman House, O'Shea House, Alpine House, O'Neill House, Shannon View, Erin's Melody, Tower View, Fern

Cliff, Edgewood Falls, Weldon House, Barlow (New Roxmoor), Gavins, Mullens, Carmody Bungalows, Rose Motel, Deer Watch Inn, Shapanak, Pisgah, Butts, High Peak, Point Lookout, Elm Rest, Saybrook Cottage, Wayside (Hurd Hotel, Hamburg, Knotty Pine), DeWitt's, Catskill Creek Cottage, Cherritree Inn, Keohane House, Graham Cottage, and more than my pen could scribble.

And Mary Lou had condensed her list to fit our time restrictions! I think she still had three hours left!

(I remember starting the Greenville project, thinking I might find 50-60 sites, now list 115+, and know there are another 5-10 to record. And then there are the farmhouses and village houses that took in boarders, never advertised, left no record behind, and thus are not on my list. They could easily total another fifty!)

Thank you, Nick and Mary Lou, for sharing a worthy local history program.

Notes:

The **October 10** (7:30, Library) will be the unveiling of the 2017 local history calendar.

I will begin with a slide show featuring 25 of the most significant photos of past calendars.

And then we will take a look at the **2017 calendar**. Calendars will be available after the meeting.

Pricing will be the same as it has for the past few years. It will retail for \$9; GLH-Gers can obtain a copy at the meetings or from me for \$7. This meeting will see the October special – three calendars for \$20.

I can mail calendars for those of you not close to town. Ten dollars for the first calendar and eight for each afterward to cover postage. Make checks payable to Don Teator and send to 3979 Rt 67, Freehold, NY 12431.

I will be checking on our usual local businesses that carry the calendar. In the past they have been Kelly's, Library, Tops, and GNH. Feel free to thank any of the proprietors of business that help us out. And if you can think of another business or two that

would consider carrying our calendar, let me know.

Help needed with 2018 calendar! (Yes, I am already looking ahead to 2018.)

One page that needs your input is the renovation page. Is there a house in town that has been renovated in the past few years whose improved appearance improves the neighborhood? The calendar has recognized this idea for the past several years.

Also, the calendar wants to return to **recognizing a living person, couple, or group.**

Do you know someone whose contributions to the Greenville area are worthy of our recognition? We typically look for someone(s) whose community service goes above and beyond. We also consider people whose achievements merit attention. And a reminder

that the Greenville area, of course, includes all the hamlets of the town but there are people who live just outside the town limits whose influence on Greenville is/has been a strong one.

To nominate, please forward a name(s), and at least two reasons (examples of service, accomplishments, etc.) for consideration.

Email, call, or mail your choices and I will collect them, make a list, and then ask for a vote.

Our November meeting features Sylvia Hasenkopf, with more details in next month's newsletter.

Take care,



From the 2017 calendar. This structure is still there, as are the houses on the sides. A clue: the house on the left sits on one of the corners on one of the hamlets in our town. The answer will be revealed at the meeting, or if you buy a calendar. (shameless promotion!)



One of the boarding houses in Mary Lou and Nick's slide show.
This eventually becomes the Shamrock House.
(from the Nahas Facebook page: Boarding Houses of Durham)



Interior of Dance Hall, Shady Glen Log Cabin, Catskill Mts.
10250 Pub. by S. M. Elliott, Prop. Shady Glen House, Freehold, N.Y. (Printed in Germany)
One of many Shady Glen photos in the Durham Boarding House slide show.
Shady Glen morphs into the modern-day Zoom Flume.
(from the Nahas Facebook page: Boarding Houses of Durham)