

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

August 2018, Issue 271

Three Suitcases

An overcast and wet August day greeted the nearly 35 who came out for this August meeting: John Hanke, Stephanie Ingalls, Bob Shaw, Lew Knott, Sarah Stevens, Bob & Ann Hallock, Ginny Mangold, Donald Berkhofer, Brittany Blake, Edna Huffman, Rich McAneny, Kathy Smith, Joanne Pryor, Tom & Lorrie Spinner, Bette Welter, Audrey Mattott, John Garofalo & Peter O'Hara, Sally Staunch, Ronna Feit, Marv Smith, Mary Lou Nahas, Susan Cunningham, two of my three siblings – David Teator and Phyllis Richardson, Don Teator and a couple more handfuls who escaped my memory and sign-in sheet. (My apologies to Ryan, who helped me click through the Power Point, and his family whose names have gone unrecorded.)

Local History in Three Suitcases, a bit of a tease of a title, was an attempt to capture the big brush strokes of one of my Winter 2018 projects. I finally took time to inventory the 2500 papers and booklets that had been accumulating since the mid-1930s until the early 2000s, resting comfortably in one of the fifteen unheated, unused, upstairs rooms of the old farm house/boarding house. My parents, Don and Connie, had bought the former Green Lawn Farm in 1953 and would raise their four children. My father died in 1989 and my mother moved to Good Samaritan in 2009, leaving us kids to clean out the house. And I had put the suitcases on the top shelf of a closet for safekeeping until I could get around to it, something I put off for several



Two of the three suitcases

years, then told myself I should get to it soon, and then finally gave myself an ultimatum last fall. And what a trip it was.

A couple of cautions here.

One, how one decides to keep how many and which personal papers, if at all, can be an idiosyncratic process. Three hundred Central Hudson bills tells a different story than twenty spaced-out-in-time bills and that is a different story than if there were none. I have little idea which personal papers do not show up in this collection, meaning I cannot know what my parents censored, and I suspect they did a little (or more). So, I am left with what I am left.

Second, my mini-sermon of writing your own life-story becomes even more pressing and poignant after poring over the suitcase contents. Few of us ever write own life-story, even if it is a list of notes. So if it is ever written, someone else is creating some



Connie & Don Teator
1951 wedding photo

version of the truth that may be a fraction of the truth. Would your oldest child's account of your life be one you find balanced, fair, and representative? How about if your story is told by a grandchild?

Or, by your neighbors of the last twenty years? Or, the people you go to church with? Or.... I am hoping you get the point of historiography (the study of the writing of history). If you are to be remembered, and it is not written by you (which, of course, could still be as balanced or unbalanced as the others writing the story), your story will be what is left for someone else to tell, perhaps in a way you might recognize.



Sketch of Teator house, Big Woods Road
from Stanley Maltzman brochure

My point: if this topic is meaningful to you, start making some notes, collect your photographs and papers, and distribute your findings. In this case, I am painting a picture of my parents' lives based on the holdings of three suitcases. How is that for perspective?!

On to a re-telling of some of the program.

Upon opening the suitcases in December, I would come to spend nearly fifty hours perusing the contents, pondering how to put it back together or even if I should,

spreading out the material over the kitchen tables and counter for several days, deciding what needed to be kept, putting the to-be-discarded papers in a separate folder to be decided at a later date, creating major categories, re-checking the sense of what I was doing, re-checking my sanity for wanting to undertake this project (ha), and, then, in another major decision, inventorying every single paper. (Did I mention sanity?)

In the end, I decided on the following folder categories:

- School
- Cars/Vehicles
- Banks/Insurance
- Military/Vet
- Wills
- Tax Bills
- Milk Route
- Farm & Milk
- Bills of Sale (over a thousand)
- Important documents
- Farm Inventory / Account Books (a foot high)
- Correspondence (a stack of four feet)
- A couple small boxes of keepsakes, trinkets, check stubs, etc.



Wallets and trinkets box

After showing photos of the suitcases, the next several photos showed the conglomeration I had started with.

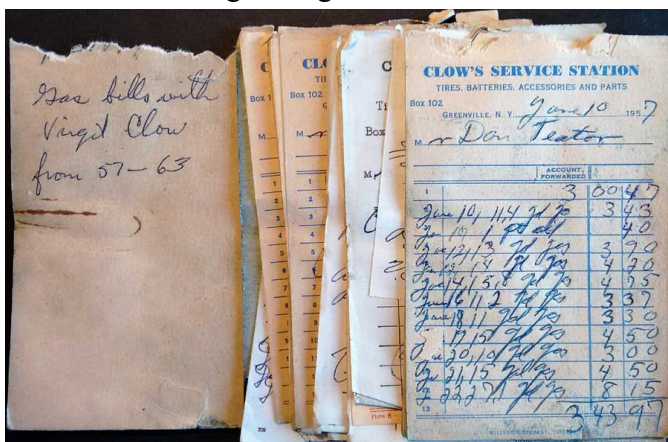
Then, I shared a little family background that is not in the suitcases but information that might explain not only my parents' collection but also my own reaction to some of the contents.

Next, ten envelopes were displayed, addressed to my father between 1942-1948 (he is 13-20 years old), almost all of them with an address in care of the farm family he is living with. My Dad's stories of the different places he lived could mostly be verified from these envelopes and contents.

I showed my parents' wedding photo, flanked by her parents (West Orange NJ, Ruth & Ninian, 25 years difference, middle class) and a photo of his mother and siblings (Durham area, Glenna, Don, Ferris, Barbara, Charlotte; rural poor). Accompanying this were screen shots of the 1940 census that shows a split family.

The next big chunk of the program was exhibiting at least one copy of a bill(s) from each business in the suitcases. Some, like Woods Store or Clow's Garage, had dozens of bills, usually stapled. Many were just a single bill or two. Anyone interested in the range of names, let me know and I can email you the list.

About a half-hour was spent showing the contents of the various folders. This ranged from the string of vehicles my father bought, the bank statements and check stubs, dozens of inter-regimental communications while serving during the Korean Conflict at



One set of hundreds of receipts—Clow's Garage

NO. 5-15
ELEMENTARY QUARTERLY REPORT CARD

Durham Central School

Pupil's name Donald Teator
Year 1939-1940 Grade 5

SUBJECTS	Quarter I		Quarter II		Quarter III		Quarter IV		Average	
	Estimate	Test	Estimate	Test	Estimate	Test	Estimate	Test	Estimate	Test
Reading, Oral	B	-	A	-	A		A			
Read'g, Silent					100	A	82			
Spelling	A	84	A	88	A	72	B	60		
English	B	90	B+	82	B	79	B	89		
Arithmetic	B	85	A	84	A	88	A	88		
Geography	B	85	B	84	A	87	A	85		
History	B	94	A	95	A	95	A	85		
Writing	B	-	B	-	B		B	80		
Music	C		C		D		C	80		
Elem. Science	B	-	-	-	A	94	A	85		
Health					B	88	B			
Dep.	B	-	A		A		B			
Absent	0		0		0		1/2			
Late	0		1		0		0			

Opposite each subject every quarter, will be found two numbers on the same line, the one expressing the teacher's estimate of the pupil's daily work in oral recitations and written tests, the other the standard reached in the formal quarterly test.

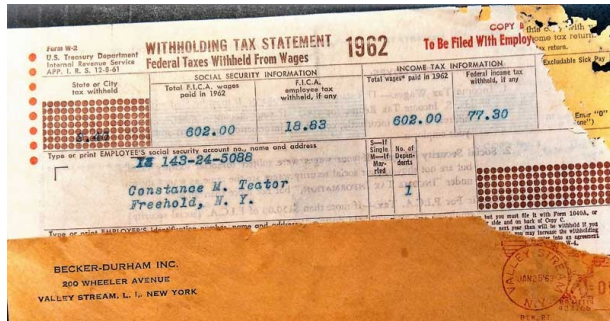
Viola M. Roe Teacher
HARDEEN SCHOOL SUPPLY, ATRAQUEE, N. Y.

Promoted to G.V.

One of the report cards from suitcases

Camp Kilmer (1950-1952: today, part of Rutgers University, NJ), important personal papers, the dreaded annual tax bills and claims of late payment (even a tax auction notice), payments and expenses of driving the milk can truck route for almost ten years, income and expenses of the farm (5-20 cows) and the details of mid-century farming that we have put on the back shelves of our memories, the Farm Account books (this needs more research), a box of pins & patches & small items and more.

The finale was a look at the correspondence. My father kept every card or letter sent him until age 30, and even longer. A major part of the correspondence comes during his two years of service during the Korean Conflict – keeping in touch and encouragement for the local boy/hero. I must admit I was more than touched by this part of his personal life that he kept hidden and stored away



1962 W2 forms from Becker-Durham
A little spending money?

in the back bedroom suitcases. Or, perhaps, I was not paying enough attention.

Focus was spent on the 90 letters his younger sister Charlotte (age 16-19) sent, detailing her own life and events in her household (living with an uncle since age 5). Another fifty letters (1942-1952) were from his mother, mostly when she was a housekeeper on Big Woods Rd from 1942 to early 1960s. And then there was the two foot stack of correspondence to my mother from her mother from 1951-1989 (my mother's marriage to my grandmother's death). It is just ordinary stuff in the big scheme but so much of it tells a Teator family story.

The final couple slides were scans of letters and items that fit that fit the Odds and Ends category.

By meeting's end, viewers had a chance to view the suitcases and over 200 photos. A separate fold-out poster listed the piece-by-piece inventory.

The September 10 meeting features Audrey Matott reprising her *Greenville: 50 Years Ago* program of last year with *Greenville in the 1960s*. She is basing her perspective with a study of the then weekly newspaper of Greenville, The Greenville Local, the collection of which is in the Historian's files. A thank you goes to Audrey for a ton of work I know she has done to prepare for the program. Come on out to support Audrey and to share some of your stories. Of course, just sitting, listening, and enjoying is commendable also.

EDWIN S. TOMPKINS
470 West Main St.
Catskill - New York
December 28, 1954

STATEMENT

Dr. to : Donald Teator, Freehold, N. Y.
For hauling milk, month November 1954.

No.	Name	Amount
R-4	Ditges	18.84
R-7	Montague	8.97
R-9	Berkhofer	16.12
R-15	Rose	14.92
R-16	Palmer	9.35
R-44	Haerteldt	3.36
R-46	Terplywetz	8.86
R-51	Olsen	29.99
S-6	Berkhofer	27.91
S-7	Hayden	17.82
S-8	Sulz	38.69
S-9	Rothe	7.89
S-19	Cameron	4.81
S-23	Baron	11.13
S-13	Becker	8.96
S-40	Yennie	20.61
S-61	Preisner	16.49
S-64	Austen	31.02
S-78	Ziller	26.13
S-80	Florez	33.24
		\$ 355.11 Total
Less:--		
3%	Transp. Tax	10.34
1 day	(Nov. 24)	11.49
Total Charges		\$ 333.28
60 %		199.97 Amount Payable
Less on Loan		35.00
		\$ 164.97 Check

List of farms on milk route pick-up

We made note of the passing of Dave Battini, who the GLHG recognized in 2014.

A thank you goes again to Stephanie and Christine for providing the light refreshments I keep promising in our newspaper pr. A tasty conclusion to our evening, as always.

I will be looking for ideas for programs for 2019. Feel free to share good ideas. It seems every year has one or two or three of your ideas that show up as programs. And the same goes for the 2020 calendar, which I am already mulling.

I received a notice from the Westerlo Historical Society announcing a "meet and greet" with Jerry Finin, author of a book about Dr. Anna Perkins. Perkins serviced the Westerlo area, and more, for many years in the mid-century. Sunday, September 30, 2-4, at the Westerlo Town Hall.

Take care,
Don