

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

August 2019, Issue 280

30 Years — GLHG and Town Historian

A near perfect mid-summer day prevailed, with low 80s, full sunshine until mid-afternoon, awaited the 25 or so who attended the August program: Stephanie Ingalls, Lew Knott, Donna Willard, Bob Shaw, Doris Philipp, Gail Biskupich, Flip Flach, Margaret Donohue, Edna Huffman, Iris Cochrane, Ken Mabey, Carolyn Savery, Al Hulick, Rachel Ceasar, Richard Ceasar, Better Welter, Linda Smith, Barbara Flach, Maddy Prayto (granddaughter of Flip & Barbara), Robert & Johanna Titus, Susan (?), and Debra & Don Teator, and perhaps a couple who eluded my memory.

This August meeting was a chance to show off. First, some highlights, and then some commentary.

Greenville Local History Group – 30 Years (1989-2019)

- program structure: April through November programs (alternating share sessions ended Nov 2013)
- programs: one room school house, WWII, farming, house histories, cemeteries, our hamlets, service and social organizations, church history, school histories, town supervisors, artists, Three Suitcases, Bryant's history, South Street, Main Street, Freehold, general stores, resort visits (Sunny Hill, Baumann's Pine Lake Manor), Warren Eckler and Tom Teich, the Stevens family, Barbara Brumell, Flip Flach, Greenville Drive-In, Shelly Dobski and so on for 150 more
- multiple programs: local historian Chuck D'Imperio; local geologist Dr. Robert Titus and wife Johanna; old implements by Allyn and Mary Shaw; Walter Ingalls, Audrey Matott – Greenville history based on local, Ted Hilscher, County Historian David Dorpfeld, Jonathan Palmer
- Membership: started at about 20, steady at 50-75 pre-email era, currently at 2000
- Attendance: 15-ish average for almost 25 years; 20-50 the past several years; largest almost 100 for Bryant's program; other large audience: Stevens and South Street, One Room Schoolhouse
- Greenville Local History Group Newsletter: 279 issues – July 2019
- newspaper collection (Local: 1963ish–end; Press all; Pioneer: current)
- census transcription – 1910, 1925
- calendar – 1991-2005, 2009-2010, 2012, 2014-2019 (2020 coming); recognitions of almost 40 community members – half posthumously
- duplicate 2000 photos (loans from dozens of people)
- take 10,000 photos – buildings, cemeteries, people, events; start database
- 550 pages of negatives: numbered by page and frame
- photo slide shows: usually one per year for last decade
- notebooks & albums: 50: buildings by streets; cemeteries; school; miscellaneous
- GCS Yearbooks: 1939 to present; currently, separate editions for HS, MS, elem; have most MS, almost no elementary
- Collections: O'Hara, Felter, Bogardus, Kieffer post cards, Orrin Stevens, Pat Elsbree, and more

- diary transcriptions: Carrie Ingalls (Don Teator); R. Edwin Taylor (Harriett Rasmussen); Eleanor Goff Ingalls (Harriett Rasmussen); and several shorter works
- published sources
- artists continued: Cantarella
- collaboration with Civil War Round Table (Mary Heisinger)
- tax books: 1880s–1950
- resort information: up to 110, map
- maps
- Greenville in the wars
- interviews of residents (on tape, a few transcribed)
- Lillian Joy scrapbooks
- Planning Board history, documents
- Greene County home tours
- newspaper & magazine clippings: hundreds sorted by topic by former historian Edna Adams; hundreds more on wide range of topics relating to Greenville by Don Teator
- genealogy: Harriett Rasmussen (Abrams, Griffin, Elliott, Taylor, Utter, Tripp, Coonley, Wakely, and dozens of others as the topic arose)
- GCS history, newsletters, documents (3 folders from Lee & Arlene Brown)
- GCS history – Richard Ferriolo, et. al.
- GCS Alumni Association
- Concordia Circle contents
- “Things That Aren’t There”
- Greenville Homemakers contents

- Phil Ellis photos (many saved by Kathie Williams)
- pot luck dinners: first several years)
- Edward Drake bicentennial
- collaboration with Sylvia Hasenkopf, Nick & Mary Lou Nahas
- Sylvia Hasenkopf programs (four, last three Novembers)
- travelogues by Don & Debra Teator, Jackie & Jonas Havens, Den Mower
- support Eagle Scout projects
- and the 100s of people who have contributed
- and the several dozen more worthy deeds that could be noted
- Finishing off: Refreshments: Stephanie took over in October 2011; with Christine Mickelsen

WOW! is my first thought. And then I realize that each accomplishment has a story or three to accompany.

For example: the transcription of the Carrie Ingalls diary. In 1994, I was aware that Leona Ingalls Rundell was in possession of two diaries. After finding the first one uninteresting, I turned my attention to that of Leona’s mother Carrie. Carrie had started a diary in 1886, took a 19 year break starting after 1894, and then resumed keeping diary until her death in 1951.

I borrowed 1886 and, in a routine that would stand me in good stead for four years, I would transcribe 30-40 minutes each evening, just enough to get something done, but not so long that I resented the amount of time it took. (Remember, back then, I had a teenage son and a full time job teaching.) In three to five weeks, I would finish off the diary year, call Leona to arrange to pick up the diary of the next year, and spend 30-60 minutes asking my questions about the diary and listening to her memories, etc.

In four years, I finished the transcription totaling almost one million words. And what a learning experience I absorbed about Greenville local history. And this is just one of my stories.



GLHG alphabetizing some the 50,000 Hempstead cards in 2003. Ron Golden, Betty Vaughn, and Dot Blenis facing the camera



(Photo by Lee Ferris)

PRESERVING THE PAST...Debra Teator clicks the camera's shutter to record the face of a gravestone in a Freehold cemetery while her husband Don lines up a mirror to bring out the inscription on the stone.

Digging Up Facts In Greenville Graveyards

10-27-92
MT. EAGLE
B-7

BY MICHAEL RYAN find: photographing, board with recommenda- they might have effected
GREENVILLE -- Grave- documenting and mapping tions for care and pres- me.
yards aren't so bad. out every tombstone in vation." "But, death is part of the
Permanent residents town. made of life. So death is part of

1992 Mt Eagle article about Debra and me photographing the town cemeteries.—Deb with the camera, me with the body-length mirror to reflect sunlight for the best angle.

The other **WOW!** is all of you. Although I thought of and developed a number of the ideas, so many of you helped out by assisting me, tackling a project on your own, and/or directing me to productive ends.

First of all, I thank my wife Debra for her sharing and supporting so many of these adventures. Between the darkroom knowledge and the aerial photography connection, and just the time to help out, especially during the first twenty years, Deb is the most knowledgeable of the scope of my doings.

The second thank you goes to the 16 Town Boards (two years each) who have supported my ventures and have approved an expense account that defrays some of the expenses.

And my third thank you goes to the hundreds of you who have abetted my capers. Those efforts come in so many forms.

Again, each one is a story, some longer than others.

One question of the evening that no one seemed to know was how I became Greenville's Town Historian, and getting some good answers (crazy, foolish, last one in the room, etc.) and realizing I had not asked the right question, I asked this: So, why does Greenville have a Town Historian anyway?

The short answer: NYS law requires every municipality to have a historian – every town, village, city, and county. Even the state has one. So that is why Durham and Cairo and Greene County and so on all have a historian. In fact, the failure to appoint a historian usually results in a mini-crisis in that municipality.

As to my being appointed Historian (first by Supervisor Frank Tiberi, and then Martens, Maxwell, Wickes, Cardamone, Lewis, and Macko, and each of those Town Boards), I succeeded Edna Adams who filled the position from 1980-1988.

One handout at the meeting was a list of all the GLHG programs, a file that I have attached for the online subscribers. Those of you getting this by mail and wanting a copy, call or mail me the request, and I will get a list for you.

Somewhat in closing, it has been an enjoyable and worthy 30 years, with most of the stress of my own making. (I have learned I do need some.) And I thank all of you for playing your part in my fulfillment of duty but more importantly the sharing of the enjoyment and worthiness of this venture. I admitted that I have gained entry into many people's business with the simple request: "Hi, I am the Town Historian and I would like to...." I am in awe many times at the simplicity of the request and the degree of trust I feel from so many people. It has even worked with you!



1990s aerial photograph by Debra Teator:
 Along the bottom stretches North Street (Rt 32),
 from the Westerner area on the left and the
 Sherrill house and barns on the right. The hay
 fields hold today's ball fields and nature trail.

September 8 meeting: (Library, 7:30)

The late 1980s in Greenville saw an increasing pace of residential and commercial development, leaving some community members to call for a community park. A 1970s proposal had fallen through, and many saw the opportunity for a town park was dwindling as suitable sites were developed for other purposes. Such an opportunity arose and a few community members helped spearhead the efforts that resulted into the one of Greenville's gems – a 155 acre town park. Our presenter, Debbie Magee, was one of those people and she will present "The George V. Vanderbilt Park: the Early Years." Debbie will detail the challenging path that faced her and other proponents during the 1990-1995 years of the town park. Come on out to the meeting and share your memories of those early years.

Looking back, I cannot help but think 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." My

opinion: had it not been for a handful of these people in Greenville in the early 1990s, Greenville would still wishing it had a town park (besides the pond and Norton Hill).

Other Notes:

—The 2020 calendar is at the printer, readying for the October meeting. It feels like another birthing project soon to be delivered. And it seems that the 25th calendar is no less exciting or no easier than the first – there is always an air of nervous anticipation.

—Remember last month about the request for the location of Grandma's house that had a creek and some cabins? Picture my picking my jaw off the table after two responses that identified the probable location. The Perelles lived in the house between the former Greenville Methodist Church and Hilde Tompkins on South Street, with the Greenville Pond creek flowing through the back of the property, and it had some cabins. Thank you, Lew and Anita, for one surprisingly close-to-home answer.

—One of my notes at meeting's end was a look to the future. One of our projects should be an establishment of a list of historic homes and structures, a list that, at minimum, could be used for public attention. A more important use would be sharing with town government and lobbying to find a way to prevent these buildings from being destroyed at an owner's request. More in a future newsletter.

—A thank you, again, goes to Stephanie and Christine for providing the light refreshments.

Take care,