

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

November 2019, Issue 283

East Greenville—Sylvia Hasenkopf IV

The perfect gray November day—45 degrees, half-hour of sun—awaited the nearly 40 coming out for the last meeting of the year: Don Berkhofer, Ginny Mangold, Cindy & Bob Lampman, Lew Knott, Bob Shaw, Deb & Rick Magee, Kathy Smith, Edna Huffman, Jackie Erickson, Rachel Ceasar, Rich Ceasar, Flip Flach, Tom Baumann, Johanna & Bob Titus, Gail Biskupich, Gail Nichol森, Eileen & Ed Volmar, Eleanor Werking, Al Hulick, Stephanie Ingalls, Christine Mickelsen, Ken Mabey, Jeff Pellerin, Bruni & Red Sutton, Bob Uzzilia, Sylvia Hasenkopf, Don Teator, and the several more who persistently escape my mental clutch!

Quick note about calendars – The last calendars are at Kelly's. If they are out, the calendar is sold out. (I am holding onto an emergency four, just in case.)

Sylvia IV

'Tis an honor to merit Roman numerals!

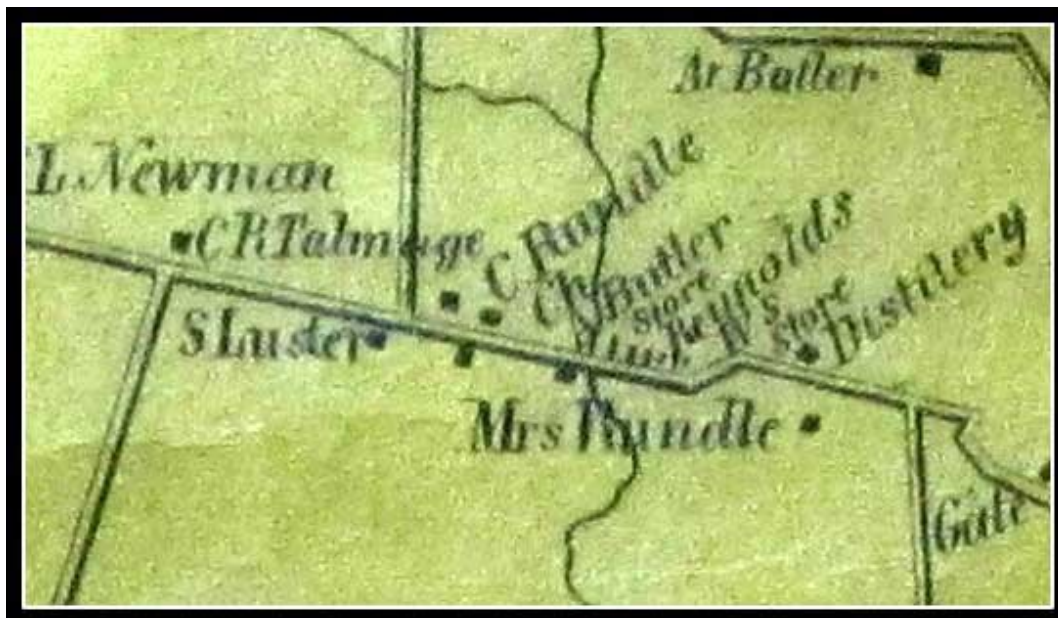
Sylvia Hasenkopf, for the fourth consecutive November, closed out our GLHG season with another worthy program. This program's idea was formulated last November, based on some research Sylvia was developing at the time. And the GLHG was the beneficiary this month of a topic that is somewhat known in its general outline but is familiar to only a few for the details. This was an opportune time to revive East Greenville, the Rundle-Butler feud, Brandy Hill, and the Butler tinware operation(s).

Sylvia's presentation, this evening, centered on two enterprising families who prospered in East Greenville. East Greenville refers to the cluster of buildings that currently or formerly populated the length of County Route 26 between Highland Rd and Scutt Rd, with the intersection of Newry Rd and Pine Lake Manor the epicenter of the district. Two maps from Sylvia's Power Point are included.

Note: the description below comes from Sylvia's presentation; without her notes, my review would be a bit hit-and-miss. Much appreciated, Sylvia. In addition to all her research, she also referenced Ray Beecher's chapter on East Greenville in *Out to Greenville*.

The first settlers from these two families, as were many others who settled Greenville, came from Connecticut. Abel Butler and wife Elizabeth Johnson came to Greenville in 1799. He had fought in the American Revolution, raised a successful family and died in 1823. Reuben Rundle first arrived to "Greenville" in 1786 before settling in East Greenville a few years later. Sylvia had us imagining what early life in this area, and any other newly settled area, must have been like.

One of their major business was fruit growing and the resulting distilleries. Later records from the 1800s show thousands of barrels of fruit grown and a large production of hard apple cider and brandy, a fact that still is reflected in Brandy Hill appellation of this area.



1856
Geil
Map

Courtesy:
Sylvia
Hasen-
kopf

Horizontal line: today's CR 26;
vertical lines represent, left to right: Highland Rd, Newry Rd, Scutt Rd;
Squiggly line: tributary of Cob Creek, crossing Newry Rd and Rt 26

The Rundles, in addition to the distillery business, also operated a hotel in East Greenville.

The Butlers became involved in the tinsmithing business, a fact confirmed in Sylvia's findings in the NYS 1820 Manufacturing census. Sylvia gave a short ten minute explanation of the importance of tinware in early NYS history and how the Butlers were a significant player in this business, one of two in Greene County in this census. Tinware, and the Butler tinware, could easily be a program by itself, and Tom Baumann, whose house sits on the site of one of these program families, brought several pieces of tinware to show. Thank you, Tom.

Side note: Both families were instrumental in the construction of the early Episcopal Church in East Greenville, with expenses given in some detail by Sylvia. When it closed in favor of the construction of the current Episcopal Church in Greenville, it has long been reported that the structure was moved, or rebuilt, by the Vanderbilt family. This "new" building in town became locally known as the Vanderbilt Theater, the cultural center of Greenville for many years. Later,

this building served as a movie house, then the NAPA building, and then finally as the pink hulk torn down in the 1980s to make way for Cumberland Farm.

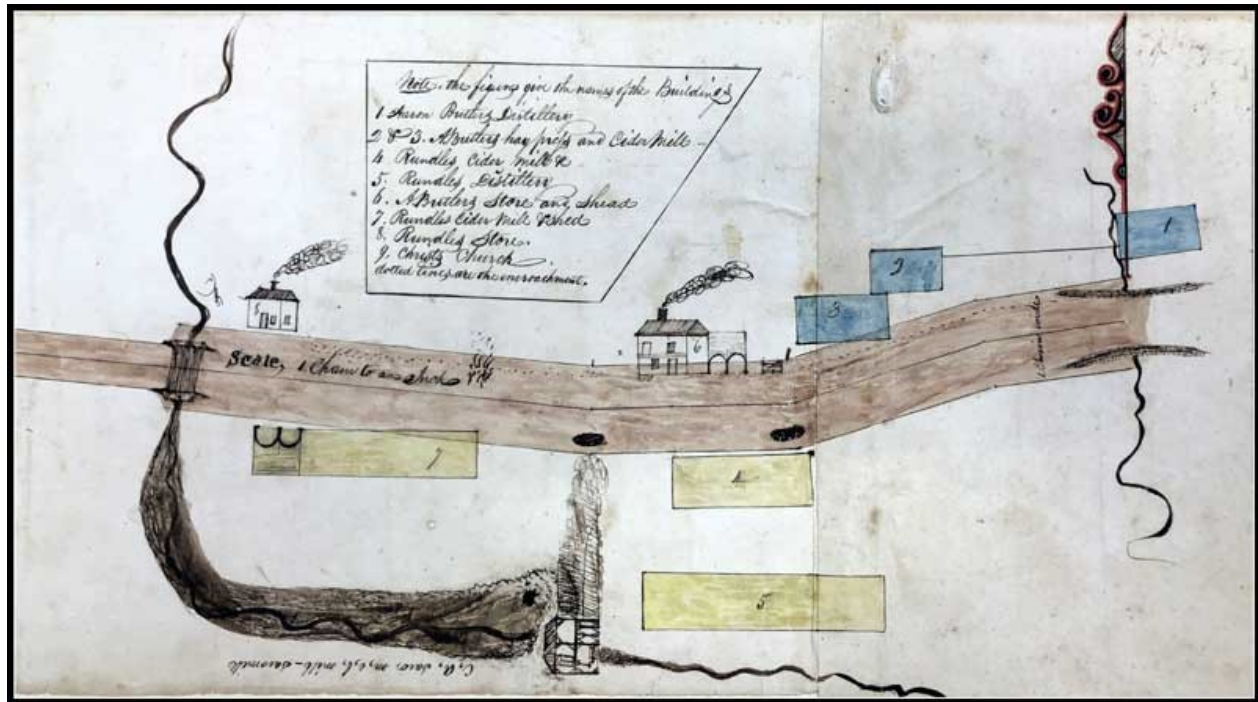
Back to business.

All of this family history is a success story whose details cannot be fully captured in this newsletter. Perhaps, Sylvia will document this in one of her columns, if not done already.

However, all this success is somewhat tainted by the reason I lured many of you to the meeting—the feud between these two families. And Sylvia pointed out that the basis of this feud may have been the proximity of these successful ventures as well as plain old human nature. As the saying goes, it takes only one bad apple to ruin the barrel. Given their business model, this could be taken literally as well as figuratively.

In retrospect, any of these disagreements could have been handled more suitably. But I guess the same can be said for any argument, even today.

So, one of the bad apples was a multi-stanza song sung by the workmen in the



Map of East Greenville: early 1800s
 Courtesy of Sylvia Hasenkopf

building of a Butler house. The song contained some derogatory things about the Rundles, particularly about a mentally challenged son and a coffin that seemed to have been bought ahead of a death. 'Twasn't pretty. A lawsuit started in the mid-1820s and Sylvia speculated did not end until the deaths of the two patriarchs some thirty years later, with a lawsuit apparently being part of every year.

Another bad apple was the new Butler house that happened to be built a few feet on the road right-away. Rundle (Rundell is the other common spelling, of course), who was contracted to fix the road, felt it was his duty to move some of the building supplies off the road. You can guess how that went.

Again, you are getting only the very short version, leaving Sylvia to detail in her columns.

Sylvia, thank you for your notes so I could make sense of what my brain was told this evening!

After the meeting, Sylvia emailed me with information she found. Abigail Rundle is actually Lewis Butler's wife, and Arron Butler's daughter-in-law. And I thought the marriage of two families was supposed to make friends.

And there was some question about which house was whose. I did not keep them straight but I think Sylvia yielded that Don Berkhofer was right about the Haight house being a Butler house. Or was it a Rundle house?

Sylvia, thank you for once again providing the Greenville community another excellent insight into our history. Your skills are among the best in the area!

Local Honor

Ed Volmar, GLHG 2020 Calendar Icon, was recently recognized by CASDA (Capital Area School Development Association) as a Friend of Education (retired teacher and mentor). CASDA's website states:

“A Greenville alumni turned English teacher in the district, Ed continued to actively support Greenville students after retirement by serving as a mentor in the elementary school to many students deemed at-risk, helping them understand the importance that education plays in their lives.

“Ed is also a trustee for the Greenville Educational Foundation, dedicating years focusing on the restoration of the Potter Hollow School House and organizing annual field trips for elementary students to visit the school house.

“Thoughtful and generous, Ed has given so much to his students, but his colleagues have benefited from his kindness as well. It’s not unusual to see him at a Board of Education meeting, networking with community members over a cup of coffee, or visiting local business establishments.”

-- Congratulations, Ed, for a worthy commitment in retirement.

A gob of notes!

+++ I will start working on the 2021 GLHG Calendar after Christmas. I have a few photos or ideas to start with (boarding house, house improvement, two community members) but the rest is still hatching. If you have a memory of a photo we have not used, let me know and I will see what I have in the files.

+++ Also during this winter, I will be the lookout for program ideas. I am always impressed by the ideas you generate. Every year, at least one or two of your ideas become programs. (see bars below) Email me idea and I will ponder.

+++ **Separate email to come in a month:** Recognitions: OK, who do we recognize in 2021? I will be emailing separately for your suggestions. Start mulling.

+++ **Separate email to come in a month:** Possible winter projects: some ideas in case you are drawing a blank.

+++ **Separate email to come in a month (or two):** a winter project: I mentioned the never-before-attempted recording of the

“watering holes” of the Greenville area.

Where did people go for a drink (legal), what kind of establishment was it (restaurant, resort, bar with some food, bar with light snacks, etc.), who were the owners, and years of operation, for starters? Email me some answers, even places that now defunct. I will compile and send it back out in a future email.

+++ **Separate email to come in a month:**

Historic house list, with the possibility we urge the Town Board to take action to protect them.

+++ The Annual Report is planned to be sent in March.

+++ 2020 looking ahead – I mentioned the future of GLHG in our 30th birthday party newsletter (August). Although I have no short-term plans, I would be pleased knowing a historian candidate or two is emerging, but also a group that steers things. We have worked hard at not being called a “Historical Society”, chartered and all that goes with that, but the reality is we are one of the more recognized historical societies in the county, even if we are quite unofficial and loosey-goosey about our stature. Something to think about for a year or two. Entering my 32nd year, I am closer to thinking more concretely about such ends.

A thank you again to Stephanie and Christine for generously providing the light (and excellent) refreshments I keep promising in the press releases. They have done this now for some years, at their own cost. The combination of local history and refreshments is nigh impossible to beat.

Take care,