

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

July 2020, Issue 286

COVID #1: 1980s, Churches

Good early August, Local Historians,

Normally, I would start this newsletter by listing the people who attended the regularly scheduled July (Travelogue) program. Alas, no listing, no meeting. COVID-19 has struck again.

And safety protocols continue. The Library, a public building, is not open to public meetings. Alas, again, I am announcing the cancellation of the August meeting, which would have showcased Audrey Matott reminding us what the 1980s in Greenville were like, according to the Greenville Local.

And since we are so far into the 2020 season, and seeing little hope for change, I am cancelling the rest of the 2020 programming (September through November), and hope for much better in 2021.

This interruption, however, does provide a silver lining, a pathway of local history exploration.

Instead of reporting on our monthly programs, along with the usual several miscellaneous notices, why not, I thought, prepare, for the GLHG membership, a look at topics and/or holdings that stay tucked away, either on the Historian's shelves or in members' minds.

So, here is the offer.

I will be continuing, at least through November, the monthly newsletter that will showcase some of these items and talents. I

am suggesting that if anyone has a topic, whether it be a paragraph, a photo, or a page-long feature, please consider sharing.

## **This month:**

- Don: travelogue
- Audrey Matott: learning from the Greenville Locals
- Don: church history of the GCS schools
- Flip Flach: pond dredging

So, this is COVID-GLHG Newsletter #1. Feel free to provide feedback: liked? worthwhile? suggestions to try?

And if you have a contribution, whether short or not so short, feel free to pitch in.

July's meeting was scheduled to be a Teator Travelogue. Since I did not have to get real serious about narrowing the 10,000 photos I have, allow me to present a couple memorable photos that would have certainly made the final cut. These photos came from a couple river cruises, a couple ocean cruises, and a few land tours. The full show will have to wait until next year, or after. (Egypt was canceled this past April; scheduled for December, and we just received word it is canceled again. Otherwise, I would have shared a view of Deb riding a camel with the Pyramids in the background!). For now:

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## Churches of the Greenville Central School District

Thirty years ago, January 1990, Clarissa (Cris) Ketcham presented a slide show on churches in the school district. An odd combination one might first think but Phil Ellis had inherited the slides from his father, Scott M Ellis, the principal of the school district for years. Ellis had presented the program for Rotary, I think, and when he passed away, the slides were still in the house. (It should be noted that Ellis had transferred many records to the Vedder Library previous to his death.) Phil realized the historical value when rummaged through the piles and then donated it to one of the obvious choices at the time. (Cris was an active member of the Presbyterian Church. Yes, a church that does not exist today.)

I am not sure why Scott Ellis would present such a program but I will venture a guess. Ellis was interested in Greenville history, had married an Ingalls (Elgirtha), seemed to be a details person, and wanted both a community and teaching staff that was aware of the community as he saw it. I am guessing the presentation was given in the mid-60s, based on a comment about a new Catholic Church.

Unfortunately, when Cris passed, the slides of the churches seem to have vanished. But, what I do have are the 26 4x6 notecards that Ellis, and Cris Ketcham, used to narrate the story. A card might have typing on it or it has handwritten notes. It is a good basis to for an update project.

So, here is my most generous of offers. If anyone wants to tackle a project, an update 60 years after the original, I will loan out the cards and any files I have on the churches.

In turn, you (singular or plural) will update the cards or list (computerized is an asset) and then consider how to share this information at a program in the future. If you want to update and instead leave the program to me, I would consider that a magnificent acceptance also.

This project is complicated a bit because the school district includes more than the Town of Greenville. Thus, the churches in these beyond-Greenville areas should be included. Some churches have closed; others have entered the scene.

Ellis's opening remarks, typed on two cards, went as follows:

We who are interested in the education of boys and girls have a tremendous interest in the homes in which these boys and girls reside and in the ideals of their parents. We also have a tremendous interest in the church of our community and in the spiritual programs carried on. In our school district, we have 17 church buildings in which fine programs carried on by devoted unselfish religious leaders contribute greatly to the development of manhood and womanhood among our youth.\*

The information which I will give about the churches of our central district was furnished me by members or pastors of the various churches.

I hope the information is correct but it must be kept in mind that exact information of events occurring 100 or 150 years ago may be difficult to secure.

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The \* is the spot where Ellis prepared a third card, with content meant to be inserted in his presentation. It read as follows:

If this church, if all churches shown in these slides, and if all churches in our country stood for and upheld the standards they stood for when the church buildings were erected, we would have a far happier society and conditions in the U.S.A. would be far better than they are today.

As religious standards have slipped in recent years, so have standards of ethical conduct and morality.

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Yes, and Wow, one can read a lot into the assumptions of this introduction.

—continued next page

GREENVILLE METHODIST

Original <sup>church</sup> building was at West Greenville 4 corners.

In 1856, the church was moved to Greenville and rebuilt on the lot where William P. Stevens' house now stands.

This burned on February 2, 1873. The new church was erected on the present site the same year at a cost of \$10,000.

This building was erected in 1873.

Steeple struck by lightning about 30 yrs ago and rebuilt by Jerry Goss.

Anyway, the list of churches included, with a card-side of spaced notes, probably taking a minute for each:

Greenville – Presbyterian  
Rensselaerville – Presbyterian (two cards)  
Freehold – Congregational Christian (two cards)  
Medusa – Congregational Christian  
Rensselaerville – Episcopal  
Rensselaerville – Baptist  
Greenville Center – Baptist  
Norton Hill – Methodist  
Greenville – Methodist (photo included)  
Grapeville – Baptist  
Lambs Corners – Methodist  
Greenville - Christ Episcopal  
South Westerlo – Congregational Christian  
Greenville – St John's (two cards)  
Alcove – Full Gospel  
Medway – Congregational Christian (two cards)  
Dormansville – Methodist  
Durham – Methodist  
Durham – Presbyterian

So, as I see it, the project would be at least two-fold.

**One:** List all the churches coming into our area since the 1960s, include any major notes about “then” churches, note the ones that have gone out of operation with possible description of current use, etc. It seems 30-60 seconds of presenting

during a meeting is sufficient but the files, of course, would accept more if found.

**Other considerations: 1-** Did Ellis miss any churches? Greenville, at one time, accepted students from the Durham building before that district voted to merge with Cairo. The western end often went to Greenville and the eastern end usually went to Cairo. Thus, Ellis included Durham. However, he does not include Oak Hill.

**2-** Several “new” churches make up the Greenville scene and should be noted. I am not familiar with much of the area outside of the Town of Greenville.

**3-** There are some churches not mentioned by Ellis but had existed and then gone out of existence before Ellis's listing. Should we include East Greenville, King Hill, Oak Hill Dutch Reformed, the first Greenville Methodist, etc?

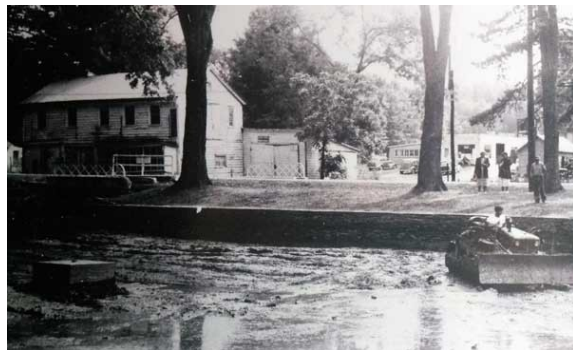
**Second:** Photos, current or “old”, should be taken for use in a digital program.

This is a worthy project to be undertaken. I would be most pleased to delegate this one, with the offer to help with what I have. I will even give you (individual or group) the winter to think about, unless someone notifies me earlier, in which case I will let everyone know.



Venice: the last stop of the Istanbul to Venice cruise. Such a distinctive part of the world. Supremely touristy unless one wandered away from the main stops. A favorite memory: water taxi boating through the city via its canals on its way to Murano and Burano, north of Venice.

Villandry: from our Loire Valley-Burgundy-Paris trip. The Loire Valley was dotted with luxurious chateaux, one of which was located mid-Loire at Villandry. The chateau itself was worthy enough but it was the gardens that amazed, with this photo showing only a piece of one of the world's most famous gardens.



One of the 2021 calendar photos will be this one of the 1949 pond being dredged. A request to Flip Flach for any info resulted in this nugget!

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On the dredging photo - - notice the beautiful laid up cut-stone surround wall. It was perfectly maintained by A.J. Cunningham, then Lee, for decades....

only to be ripped out and discarded in hours by track-hoe and replaced by ugly "Rip-Rap" as it is called.....boulders and weeds!! I stood at my barber chair in the window and watched in horror - - might guess I was not a fan of that move. I was told that "individual man hand repair was out of the question - - if a machine doesn't do it, it doesn't get done". In addition, I remember hearing of, and seeing an old photo of, a "bucket-brigade" of men cleaning out the old culvert of the creek leading into the pond next to Wes-sels. At that time, a 6 - foot man could stand under there when cleaned out - - old-timers told me that it was an annual joint chore done by the towns-men volunteers to keep the creek-wash debris cleaned out and open flow in that bottle-neck.

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March was to have been Flip's Stuff That Is Not There Anymore program. This memory is but one of many that Flip has stored away. One of Greenville's master memory-tellers, Flip will continue to have a place on our agenda as long as he is willing.

## 1980s Greenville by Audrey Matott

As I look back on 1980s Greenville through The Greenville Locals, it is an exciting, interesting and sometimes somber decade. As I was born in 1985, I start to look back at local history through my own memories as well. I am delighted to share these findings and memorable moments that really don't seem so long ago and they are certainly never far away.

Some of the highlights from the 1980s include businesses and buildings of old and new, active community groups and other significant and sometimes odd or tragic happenings.

Among the popular local businesses of the decade were Bryants, Mary's Restaurant (later 80s becomes The Parthenon) Von's Department Store, Bohne's Floral Shoppe, GNH, The Kilcar, Country Hardware (Napa), True Value, Cumberland Farms, Main Street Garage, Greenville Pharmacy, Heidi's Inn, Tip Top Furniture, Lickety Splits, Variety Video, and the Hot Dog truck. Many businesses come and go while others remain today.

New buildings were constructed during the 80s that seem to be town icons today, such as the village gazebo and post office. Other new construction from the 80s included the expansion of the United Methodist Church of Greenville Norton Hill which opens Church Mouse Preschool, State Trooper Satellite Outpost, True Value (new building replaces Gus Baker's which was razed), Cumberland Farms (built after Greenville Theater/Playhouse is razed), Cunningham Museum, Greenville Saw Service, Ames, Freehold Firehouse (apparatus garage), The Pines Housing Development on Weed Road, new playground equipment at GCS, Greenville Eyecare Center, Christian Life Center, Greenville Family Health Center and Wrap N Ship.

Although there were many new business additions to Greenville in the 80s, several were lost due to fire or circumstantial reasons. Among those were the Greenville The-

ater/Playhouse, the gas station on the Spain property on 81, Gus Baker's Store, The Limelight (Gayhead), Jesse's Elm Shade, The Cabin and Von's Department Store.

Throughout the 1980s, other significant local happenings included persistent and controversial garbage removal problems (resulting in new Recycling Center and mandatory recycling by the end of the 80s), ongoing village flooding problems, town police department is dissolved and state troopers fill void, Greenville Central Elementary School is dedicated to Scott M. Ellis, NYSDOT works to improve State Route 81 west (especially notoriously dangerous intersection at Ingalside Road, Scripture Bridge is replaced, Donkey Basketball at GCS, Greenville Drive-In changes ownership to the "Greenville 11", Don Teator becomes Town Historian and Greenville Local History Group is formed.

There were many active community groups in Greenville during the 80s including the Greenville Rotary, the Kiwanis Club, and the GCS PTO to name a few.

Overall, having looked back closely at Greenville through The Greenville Locals from the 1960s through the end of the 1980s, change is consistent not just in the town's presentation but its character, and they often seem to go hand in hand.

As Greenville continues to grow new businesses, many come and go, all the while it is very clear the end of an era is happening. Businesses that were once legendary such as The Cabin and Von's Department Store are lost and replaced by modern companies and construction. Legendary local community leaders such as Len Ciufio and Gordon Simpson pass away as new business leaders emerge.

By the end of the 1980s, business was clearly bustling more than ever before in Greenville. Still, Greenville in the 80s had its share of political divides, upsets and tragedies. Of the three decades I have researched so far, the 80s is the darkest. Tragedy spared no one, young or old, and it was plentiful. There were several murders in the area during the 80s, nothing like the previous dec-

ades. Overall, the 1980s Greenville seemed like a transitional time for the character of the town. I am looking forward to looking back at the 1990s.

A few notes about the presentation:

It is presented in Google Slides, and is available to view by anyone with the link. It is a large presentation, over 300 slides. It may need several minutes to load. That being

said, I did try to be considerably selective with the clippings that I presented. It is presented chronologically by year. Within each year, the slides are usually presented as the year unfolded, although I did group related clippings together within the same year.

Enjoy!

Here is the link to 1980s Greenville:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-0paJG79BEKG0b7aI1bLZiTCVogbOHzih3lsYZFQc80/edit>

### Other notes:

A reminder about the local history on **Facebook** pages: The Greenville Local History Group (moderator Audrey Matott); Greene County History (moderator Vedder Library Archivist Jonathan Palmer); Greene County Historian (moderator County Historian Dave Dorpfeld); Cairo Historical Society (moderator Sylvia Hasenkopf); Boarding House, Hotels, and Resorts in Durham (moderator, I think, Mary Lou Nahas); and these are the close-by ones.

Repeat: For the next several months, the newsletter will be a compilation of topics I hope are of interest to the 200 members of the GLHG. If you have an idea, feel free to share: a memory or story about an incident or person or time period, etc.; your research on a Greenville area topic; a photo of an item related to the area; and on it goes.

I have no idea what the new normal is or will be but we are definitely experiencing something beyond our experience and we are watching how we and our neighbors are dealing with it. I could not help but think that, although less drastic in nature, the effect that inventions like the radio or TV or air conditioning or computer or cell phone have played. Take any one of those away at the right time, and our world would face a new normal also. Just a stray thought.



The **Freehold Church** no longer exists as a working congregation and I am told that the church will go on the real estate market. Fortunately, I have been allowed to enter the church to see what records or artifacts have been left behind that might be entrusted with the Historian's files. I have transferred a couple boxes of material. One such item, scanned for this newsletter, is a painting of the church, signed by G. Wendt.

Part of Greenville history includes the Black Lives Matter era. A march was held in July, with reports posted online and in at least two newspapers. Signs of our times.

I hope everyone stays safe,  
Don