

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

December 2020, Issue 291

COVID #6: Turner, J. Palmer, Bill the barber

Good early December, Greenville Historians,

Here's to a safe Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year  
for you and your families!

## This month:

- \* Barber history in Greenville
- \* a barbershop building puzzle
  - \* Turner Table, part 3
- \* Welcome, Jonathan Palmer
  - \* the negative treasure

## The Greenville Barber Shop

- Flip

In reviewing the history of the Greenville Barber Shop, we first need to recognize and acknowledge a forerunner and facilitator of that town business—William Neidlinger. I do not know of an exact business name. He was just referred to as "Bill the Barber" and was the town barber in the 1920's, 30's, and 40's, located on the eastern end of Main Street (I was told he had his shop in the building that now is the site of John Kosich's Law Office). He was the mentor and teacher of my Dad, Joseph Flach, of the barbering trade.

In 1931, at 14, my Dad was an 8th grader at The Greenville Academy (now Library building). He wanted to learn a trade and became interested in barbering. He approached Bill and asked if he could come over after

school and watch to learn, as well as help out with any chores (sweeping up, etc.) in return. Bill agreed to having a young protégé, with one stipulation: he would teach him all



Tentatively identified as Bill  
"the Barber" Neidlinger;  
building on east Main Street

aspects of the business if he would agree to never open up a shop of his own in competition in town while Bill was still working. He said: "When I choose to stop, then the town is yours." Joe gave his word. After only that one year of opportunity and convenience of walking over after school, Joe was forced to stop his education with 8th grade and stay home to help run the family farm—as was often the case with country farm kids back then. However, he never lost interest or touch with Bill, and continued at every opportunity to spend time at Bill's shop. Sixteen years passed; the boy grew into a man. In that interim, he married, worked

on the farm and in the family bakery business, and successfully acquired his NYS Barber License. Joe also pursued training in the machinist trade, became a Class A machinist and, in 1941 went to work at General Electric in Schenectady, working through the WWII years on aircraft part production.

In 1947 Bill informed Joe of his intention to retire. To pursue his long-time career interest and in preparation for his own business and location, Joe persuaded his father-in-law, Phil Schwebler, to let him build an addition on Schwebler's Tydol gas station/garage on Rt.81. In February 1948, Joe left GE and opened The Greenville Barber Shop. He ran the business at that location (the Station being sold to Virgil Clow in the mid-50's) until building a new shop at "2 North Street" (the former site of Wessel's Garage on Rt. 32, next to the then Mobil) in 1963.

In November 1964, I turned 16 and acquired a barber apprenticeship certificate. At 19, I successfully passed the NYS Barber Exam, acquired my Barber License, and went into partnership with my Dad. We worked side-by-side until 2002 when I was forced to give up barbering due to



Joe and Flip, 1997

bone/joint problems with my hands that surgery was unable to correct. My Dad continued part time until 2004 when, at age 86, he became ill.

The Greenville Barber Shop was a well-known mainstay for 56 years, along with many other Greenville family-operated businesses.

—Respectfully submitted:  
**Flip Flach**

### Where Is That Building? [dt]

Further discussion with Flip, juxtaposed with the building photo with the possible Bill standing on the steps, questioned which building is shown. Is it even in Greenville, we wondered. It does not seem to be the Law Office. However, the photograph archives had this photo of east Main Street, date unknown, but seems to be earlier than any living person can remember. Thus, we think Bill the Barber's office might be the one at the end of the picket fence.

That building, plus the three afterward, have been reduced to Dorer's Law Office and the Stewart's space today. No wonder we 80 year old newbies do not recognize it.



**The Turner Table article** certainly elicited notes of surprise, appreciation, and enjoyment. A lengthy response that I had abridged for sake of length in the last newsletter has room to spread out this newsletter. Thank you, Paige, for your tribute that branches so many places in Greenville history. [dt]

### **Three Turner Tables** Paige Ingalls

1. When I was growing up, notwithstanding busy schedules, my parents, Gerald and Annella Ingalls, my sisters, Edna and Stephanie, and I had supper together every night. We ate at the big oblong Turner table in our dining room. Lacquer protected its top. We don't know what type of wood it was made of (possibly black walnut), and we are not sure how many leaves it had, but when it was completely opened up, it accommodated from twelve to fourteen people. This included two persons seated on each of the rounded ends. Since our dining room was rather small, the table would be turned diagonally when there was a large group. Fortunately, most of us were a lot smaller back then!

We enjoyed many meals at this table. If it was a family meal, it would be set with cloth placemats and napkins. The napkins were rolled up in silver plated napkin rings with our names engraved on them. (I still have mine.) On holidays and other special occasions, our mother would use a linen tablecloth. None of us knows where this table came from or who refinished it. We don't think it came from Ingalside Farm, our family's boarding house/summer resort, but it may have been brought from there to our private house before we were old enough to remember.

2. We believe our mother purchased the Turner table that now sits in our dining room sometime in the 1970s. [See photograph] This table is smaller, oval in shape, more to scale for the room, and "fancier," or at least less utilitarian appearing than the



table described above. There are drop leaves on each end. Its four leaves that are of the same wood as the rest of the table. When fully opened up, the table can accommodate ten, with one person seated at each end. We do not have to turn this table diagonally when it is fully opened. Unfortunately, none of us remembers where our mother got this table or who refinished it. (Two local possibilities: Darius "D.H." Rundell or Walt Smith.) If only the tables could talk, who knows what tales they would have to tell us?

3. The third Turner table our family possesses was given to me by my great uncle Scott M. Ellis. He was married to my great aunt Elgirtha Ingalls. I believe her sister, my great aunt Leona Ingalls Rundell (wife of the aforementioned Darius "D.H." Rundell), was instrumental in arranging this. At the time, the table was stored overhead in the barn behind the Ellis house on South Street in Greenville, where Aileen Hesel now lives.

Uncle Scott gave me a handwritten (printed) note with the table, dated December

21, 1974. It contained information about David Turner, who built the table. He wrote that, per Mr. Turner's grandson, Le Roy Ellis, Mr. Turner "built about 170 extension tables of various lengths," and he "built and lived in a large home on Maple Avenue [outside of Greenville]." (Le Roy Ellis was Uncle Scott's father.) According to the note, the table was being given to me by his son, Philip T. [Turner] Ellis, a great great grandson of David Turner [and my father's second cousin]. It also directed that "After [the] table has been refinished, please type [the information provided] on a card and tack it underneath the table." I am fortunate to have the provenance of this table.

We have loved using our Turner tables through the years. Since the tables are around one hundred fifty years old, they are somewhat "temperamental" and tend to stick when we pull the box-like extender apart to add and subtract leaves. On many an occasion, I have crawled underneath a table in order to ensure the middle leg remained at the center of the configuration.

On a final note, this being the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Turner table has helped Stephanie and me stay safe when I visit her from my home in New York City. Per CDC recommendations, we wear face coverings (masks) whenever we are around one another, and we are able to sit a full six feet apart when eating our meals at the table, maintaining social distancing.

Paige Ingalls  
Greenville, NY  
November 2020

### **More Turner, the Last of Turner**

Although I have immensely enjoyed this spotlight on Turner, I will "turn" to two last Turners before leaving the topic for awhile, unless some woodworker wants to do an examination/study.

**Garth Bryant** writes: We also own a Turner Table that extends to over 10 feet. My parents acquired it in the 1960s in a private purchase from someone in Norton Hill. The name is lost to us.

And an apology is owed Connie Chatterton Barrett. Connie had sent me copious material and photos early on about her Turner Table, enough that I made a separate folder for her emails. And then I forgot the set-aside folder two weeks later when I started writing the newsletter article. (embarrassed emoji) So, allow me to acknowledge Connie's possession of a Turner Table and I have spliced some of the major comments of the several emails I have.

### **Connie Barrett:**

Our Turner Table (**photo below**) has never been refinished. Some cigarette marks remain. My father bought it back in the 40's or 50's with leaves. The leaves are unfinished but of the same wood as the ends (perhaps butternut?) and a chair seems to fit fine under.

The Table has eight leaves. The Turner Table came from Len Palmer, according to my brother. I am sure he had connections from farmers who may have had it. Only 2 leaves match the table wood. We believe the other six are unfinished pine or other wood.

[dt: The emails held more content but on other topics.]



## The Treasure Center

Quick. If there is ever an emergency that threatens the records room, someone please rush (safely, of course) to the records room, go to the end of the first shelf, bottom shelf, and grab the black binders. For in them lies perhaps the most important records in the Historian's Archives.

Fifty pages per album, eleven albums, much of the duplicated photographic archives lie in these books.

The collection started almost as soon as I became Town Historian in 1989. With Debra's assistance as photographer and darkroom technician, we held community meetings where Deb, with her copying stand, would shoot a photo of the photo. Or, we invited ourselves into someone's house, borrowed photos to take home, duplicated them in Debra's dark room, and then returned the photos. All so 1990ish.

There was no such thing as digital. And even the beginning digital was a brave new world where one had to judge if it might have value in duplications. (Eventually, as everyone with a smart phone knows, that time did come.)

So, the first canister of film was dropped off to one of our local drugstores or stores, we waited a few days, and then picked up the spent canister, the developed photos, and the negatives. (I am assuming I do not have to explain negatives; if so, please google.)

Then the question of how to protect, preserve, and access these photos and negatives in the future. I admit, after researching the best sources I knew of, I created the system I used all the time up till the digital age.

Armed with research and a plan, I bought stacks of archival negative pages. The first roll of 24 or 36 negatives were placed in Sheet #1. I marked the sheet with the accompanying number. (The photograph shows page #71.) On to page two, or to hunt for other photographs.

Three more steps.

One needed Debra's darkroom know-how. Usually, before placing the negatives in the sleeves, she placed the negative strips as if on a page in her dark room, and made a contact sheet. (photo shown, also of page 71). Instead of having to look through a bright light to guess if I had found the right photo, I could find a mini-print on the contact sheet. Big time-saver.

The second was steeped in my firm feeling that a searchable database would help me, or anyone else with possession of the database, find items much more quickly. So, negative by negative, I entered information about that negative (names, key word, donor, year, location, etc.). Five hundred fifty sheets later, the database has served me well for thirty years.

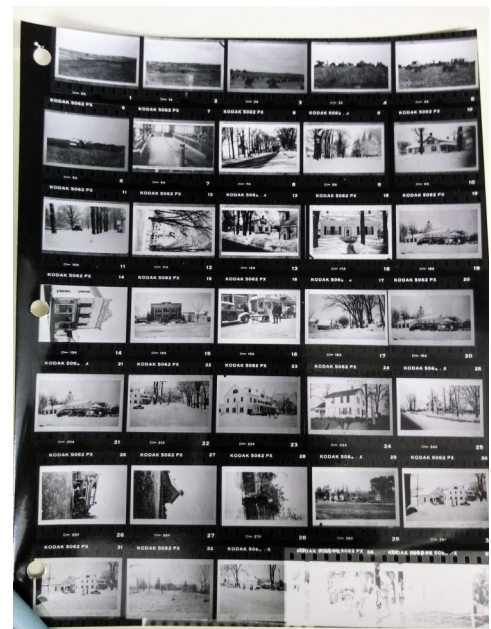
A third step was to put an identifier tag on each photo, photos that would end up in one of the photo albums. So, the negative that is numbered 33 on the negative page, on



sheet #71, has a tag of 71.33 in one of the corners. When someone asks what the picture is, I go to my database, search for 71.33 and read what I have. For example... 71.33, a building, a gas station on Rt 81 west in Greenville, the site of Mary's Restaurant as of 1990, contributed by June Clark and Don Powell. On the proof sheet, last row, third frame, in case you cannot close in enough.

So, quite thoroughly, quite methodically, I have been able to catalogue our photographic contents to my satisfaction.

Again, if any one item needs rescuing from the Archives, grab the negative folders!



### ... And Another Door Opens

I noted Dave Dorpfeld's retirement in the last newsletter.

I, and the GLHG, welcome Jonathan Palmer as the Greene County Historian as of January. He has been the Vedder Library Archivist since 2017 and has served as Deputy Historian these past two years. And Jonathan has already presented programs for the GLHG.

Ever since my first phone call from this young voice from the Vedder Library inquiring about removal of cemetery stones from some cow-stomped site in eastern Greenville, I have been impressed and pleased with the ever enthusiastically active whirlwind at the Vedder Library. And I have been even more pleased for Jonathan that the powers-that-be recognized this and will be appointing him to be County Historian. I am sure Greenville will see more of Jonathan, and I have asked if he would write a short piece of introduction/welcome for this newsletter....



### Jonathan Palmer

As of January 1, 2021 I will assume the role of Greene County Historian, and if you had told me a decade ago this is where I would find myself as a young professional in the archives field I'd have never believed it. For this appointment I have David Dorpfeld to thank, as it was he who offered my name as his replacement following his remarkably successful eleven years in the role. He has had me under his wing since I arrived at the Vedder in 2017, and has spent much time introducing me, coaching me, and facilitating my work however he was able. While I don't have an idea yet how I will end up styling this position, I do have his fine example to demonstrate to me what the position demands: an appetite for reading, a good listening ear, and a willingness to be available to folks no matter how simple or difficult the question. For those of you in GLHG who do not already know me I am a native Athenian and a graduate of Coxsackie-Athens. I did two years at Columbia-Greene, majored in American Studies at Siena, and got an Information Science Masters at UAlbany. I don't have a specific historical interest, but I feel strongly about the preservation of documentary heritage and improving collections access. With any luck I'll have the pleasure of joining Don and all of you at a meeting of GLHG "COVID permitting and the creek don't rise."

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### notes:

—Anyone remember the last newsletter you ever received for December? You would have to go back to 1992, the last year we held monthly meetings all year. This newsletter, along with January, will atone for the absence of the April and May 2020 newsletters that fell victim to early Covid cancellations. And this exchange makes the expiration dates for the mail subscribers accurate, as of January.

—The calendar selling season is almost done. A thank you to Kelly's, GNH, and Tops for their assistance with an in-the-black year, about \$100, a result better than I anticipated at the beginning. All sales help but I would be remiss in recognizing Marty and Quinn for being the epicenter of sales, about a 100 this year, a record, and nearly half of all sales.

—If anyone has a topic you would like to share, please share. Although I have enjoyed sharing a few nuggets from the Archives, I would be pleased to have you share one of your nuggets.