

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

February 2021, Issue 2893

COVID #8: Dumpville, Stevenses' Turner Tables

Good Mid-Winter, Greenville Historians,

The corner has been turned—the afternoon sun lingers longer, the morning still starts late but is nudging earlier, the woodchuck may or may not have espied its shadow, and most of us are betting there is still six more weeks of winter.

Stay safe and healthy.

This month:

- *Dumpville
- *more Turner Table
- *calendar collection
- *the Stevens Sisters
- *Souvenirs
- *Notes

Dumpville

Don Teator

Rummaging through the archives the other day, I came across a button (photo attached) and a mix of feelings and memories came to mind. Remember when Greenville almost became Dumpville?

Before I launch into the topic, I should remind you, and myself, of perspective. In one of my sophomore year history classes at SUNY at Albany, the professor took parts of two days on the topic of historiography—the writing of history. Simply, what are the facts? What is the truth? And if not known, what is the most accurate version and how do we get there? We have wrestled with these questions on a political level for ever, and furiously so these past several years.

Thus, my comment about perspective. I believe that the writers of history never have the whole truth. I trust some writers of history present more truth than



others but I am always aware of different perspectives and, depending on who is in power or is the majority, the prevailing story often told can change.

I go through this roundabout rambling just to let you know that my perspective may or may not be the whole truth, and that I would enjoy hearing other

truths should you own some of them!

In 1989, the year I became Town Historian, Greene County was wrestling with the issue of garbage disposal on the county level. In the good old days, a town might pick a spot or some field and agree that people could dump their garbage there. Anyone remember the dump on upper Big Woods Road, a spot that much of Greenville used into the 1970s until it became obvious it was wrong? (When the dump closed, the neighboring properties had a huge problem with rats that vacated their former home.)

One of the two Scenic Road designations—this one for part of Plattekill Road



I recall that Catskill's dump/landfill on Cauterskill Road was filling up and that a decision should be made for the next solution. Thus, the Greene County Legislature decided to address the issue and proposed a search committee for a site that would take all of Greene County's waste. (Note: most counties took care of their own garbage although shipping it elsewhere was a common practice, even if more costly.)

The search committee, after input with all kinds of engineers, concluded with a Top Thirteen list of possible sites. Using a weighted point system, the top five sites were placed in Coxsackie, Athens, Greenville, Durham, and Durham. Whew, many Greenvillers thought, thinking siting in Greenville was not likely. However, a bunch of insightful people scanned the list and saw the charade. (remember perspective?)

Well, push came to shove, and the top two sites were deemed too environmentally sensitive. You can see where this is going and one had to wonder what kind of quality work the search committee did.

Durham saw the light and quickly had several town roads close to the proposed sites declared NYS Scenic Roads as an obstacle to siting in Durham. And after a furious, well-fought skirmish, some influential Durham residents and lawyers influenced the county legislature to excuse the Durham sites. Greenville was even more apprehen-

sive because the unsightly Gilboa powerline that obnoxiously runs through Greenville (Carter Bridge, Rt 32 by West Rd, Fox Hill Rd just north of Sunny Hill, and a swath through eastern Greenville Town) had been pushed away from Durham in the 1960s, and was one of the reasons for a very rare defeat of a Republican running for Town of Greenville Supervisor.

So, the Greenville site is announced as the primary candidate, a site bordered by Rolling Hill Road, King Hill Rd, and West Road. Loud groans could be heard from northern Greene County.

A citizen's group headed by Al Foster and Mike Buttino, and aided by many Greenville and area citizens took up the cause to block the siting of the landfill. Greenville even had the Scenic Highways clause used, with the result of two of our roads being declared NYS Scenic Highways. They still are. (photo of one of the certificates shown)

And an urgency filled Greenville residents to focus their opposition to having everyone else's garbage fill up historic fields.

The August 16 Daily Mail has on its front page a photo of the mass of protestors, mostly from Greenville, helped out by the Sunny Hill bus. And, for the record, the name Dumpville is attributed to Gary Nichol森.

I was drawn in as Town Historian to assist the effort, to quantify why the historic nature of the property would disqualify this site, a proposition that everyone in Greenville knew did not matter to many non-Greenvillers. (perspective?) To be fair, there was a sizable group of county residents that did support Greenville.

In the end, to cut a long story shorter: persistent public pressure and protest, the search for a better garbage transfer system, an upcoming election, and a clear sense of the unfairness of the process led to a series of events where the process was closed down. But for two years, one facet of Greenville life was intensely focused at a level seldom seen in Greenville (think drug rehab at Better Days, the recent solar farm proposals, the zoning proposal debacle of the early 2000s, etc.).

When you are local and feel the pain that is of someone close to you, or is you, we realize that sometimes outside forces “dump” on us and demand time and attention we should have been able to give more productively to family, friends, and community.

So, the Dump pin is a simple reminder of not so simple times, and I know some of you were here in 1989-1990 to be part of it. Thus my rueful grin when I came across this artifact.

Turner Table—One More Chapter

In the flurry of Turner table confirmations, I had not published one family’s account that attests to the pride in having a Turner table. So, here are some “Stevens” accounts, with **Anita Stevens Sanctuary’s** tale starting off.

**

Our mother [Ruth Stevens] was an active collector of antiques of all kinds, and she appreciated the woodworking talents of Mr. Turner. Over the years, she purchased four tables, and now my daughter, Laura Navarre owns two of them.

The large table is the first one. When it was at Greenville Arms, it fit perfectly in the circular part of the “piano room” located to the left as we entered the front door of the house. I remember various single people who stayed with us throughout the years having their meals in that sunny corner of the house. From there,

the table was shipped to Dave’s [husband] and my apartment in Boulder, Colorado, and it followed us during our moves to Arvada and Broomfield, CO, then to Kingwood, Texas and on to Bemus Point, NY. Of all of the furniture pieces that Laura remembered, the Turner table was top on her list of things that she wanted for her own home, so off the table went to her house in Denver and now Littleton, Colorado.

It is a very happy table that continues to function as a daily family gathering place. Traveling from Greenville to Colorado to Texas to New York to Colorado, it witnessed many celebrations and heard a lot of conversations!

The second is the smaller table. I remember it being in the sun room extension of the Greenville Arms kitchen, and it was our family’s dining table when the formal dining room was occupied by Greenville Arms guests. Mom did her bookkeeping and took reservations while at that table, and when someone drove into the parking lot, she checked her reservation list in order to welcome people by their first and last names. When it was time to serve desserts to the guests, this table saw a lot of pies and cakes. Mom didn’t have the original leaves, so she purchased a set of unmatching ones.

When Dave and I moved to Texas, we had a formal dining room in addition to an eating area in the kitchen. So, Mom gave me this Turner table for our dining room. It was perfect with a table cloth, and when extended, we seated 10 people comfortably. You can see a line of indent-



Anita/Laura’s smaller and well-worn table



Marla's much used Turner Table

ed marks on the right side of the photo, and on the underside of the table there remains a series of circles that resulted from a previous owner using a hand-crank food grinder. (In its place in the Greenville Arms kitchen went yet *another* Turner table that is in Barbara's home now.)

So, this table traveled from the Greenville Arms kitchen to Colorado to Texas, back to New York, then to our son in Bozeman, MT and finally to Littleton, Colorado. It resided in our daughter's sun room and it functioned as a homework table, a puzzle and game table, and when there was a lot of company, it provided additional seating for meals. It was replaced by a similar table from Aunt Laura's estate. Now, it's happiest months are during November and December when Christmas gifts are wrapped in the storage room...holiday paper, ribbon, tape, labels, boxes...the table smiles.

I do hope that Laura's sons appreciate the history of the Turner tables and will give them next chapters of stories.

-Anita

And a note from daughter Laura:

"I have wonderful memories of the family having discussions about various topics during meal times at the Turner table. Now, I am happy that the next generation is taking time to create simi-

lar memories during our dinners together at the same table."

And from Barbara:

Here are two pictures of my Turner Table along with four caned chairs which were Grandma (Ella) Stevens' kitchen chairs from the Stevens house across from Randall's on South Street. I have 6 leaves and when extended, my table seats 10-12. The wood is walnut.

We had a "back room" (former sun porch) off the Greenville Arms kitchen and there was always a Turner Table there. It provided great work space! Mom took care of reservations and mail and kept the books by hand at that table, often with my son, Steven, on her lap.

We also gathered with friends around the Turner Table in the back room when guests were using the front living rooms. When one of us married and needed furniture, Mom would supply a Turner Table.

My table moved from Greenville Arms to Lizzie Vanderbilt Hegeman's "cottage" next door where we lived for about 10 years. When I moved to Concord in 1991, of course the sturdy and well-loved table came right along. Over the last 30 years, it has survived four moves within Concord, including to an apartment that Laura rented for several years. I read what Marla and Anita wrote about family times and their Turner Tables and what they say couldn't be more true. I continue to use my Turner Table every day.

Thanks so much for sharing information about this local treasure!



Barbara's Table

Thirty Years of Calendars

The photo shows all 26 calendars lined up; please excuse the showing off. If there is one effort of the GLHG that the community identifies with us, it is the calendars and what they represent. Nearly 400 hundred photos, 400 mini-research projects, have, in their entirety, presented a story, a history of the Town of Greenville. What started as a presentation of twelve photos of older buildings and of people from the past has evolved into some older shots accompanied by somewhat recent photos, connoting that we too are local history. The trick is to imagine how our time will be viewed 20, 50, 100 years from now. Another aspect of the calendar is to define what is worth recognizing, especially if we are close in time to the topic. I suspect a long



afternoon looking through all the calendars shows not only several themes that span the 30 years but also captures the tidbits and variety of experiences that make up our life and community. The final pages, the recognition of people who have contributed above and beyond the usual, have taken on a life of their own. More than any group in Greenville, the GLHG highlights a few of the people who have made a difference in Greenville. We should be proud of this effort.



Souvenirs, Trinkets, and Ads

One box in the Historian's Room is filled with pencils from political campaigns, a Greenville blanket, coffee mugs with business names, calendars, and so on. Reaching into the box, elbow deep, I grabbed this pair of items. One is the rustic money bank, reportedly crafted by Palmer's Souvenir Shop in Freehold in the 1950s, about four inches high, with a slot wide enough to accept bills, the top fastened with two screws (I have never looked inside!), Catskill Mts carved on top, with the rough pine bark tapering to smooth wood. The ruler used to guide you to dimensions is from Bohne's Florist, with the back of the ruler a guide to how densely plant different seeds.

A Musing—the Stevens “Girls”:

As a young historian, I sat around many a meeting table, watching the groups of people chatting away or listening to someone tell a story about two or three women so familiarly. After wondering what the connections were, I would be told, oh, yes, Mrs Smith and Mrs Brown and Mrs Jones are the Williams sisters. A generation has passed since then and I fill those older shoes. I recall one meeting, someone talking about Mrs. Frees and Mrs. Pettit and Mrs. Langdon and Mrs. Ingalls and Mrs. Flach and telling a story as if they were connected. And being the young historian, it was “over my head.” Later I would be told they were the Campbell girls



The Stevens “Girls” - Marla, Barbara, Anita, Laura
At the GCS 75th Anniversary Celebration in 2007

(South Westerlo, Klob farm today). I think I was the only one at the table not knowing that. Now, when I hear Anita, Marla, Laura, Barbara, my first thought is, oh, yeah, the Stevens sisters or, as the politically incorrect colloquialism goes, the Stevens “girls.” To add a layer, their mother Ruth was one of the five Thompson sisters from the Windham area, four of them owning resorts.

Notes:

**Notice for mail subscriptions: To check expiration date, look at the four digit number at the top of the mailing label. The first two digits are the year of expiration; the last two is the month. 2104 would mean your subscription expires in 2021 April. To renew, or to start, send a check, good for a year, of \$10 to Don Teator, 3979 Rt 67, Freehold, NY 12431.

**Forgiveness request: I should have thanked Rich, and Flip, and Audrey for their contributions in the last newsletter. A thank you goes to Anita & Marla & Barbara for their help with this newsletter.

**GLHG has seen three rarely dated newsletters – Dec, Jan, Feb. These three complete a year’s subscription, with a bonus thrown in. I will take March off and will resume in April, just like we would do for a regular season. I can only assume, based on the information we are seeing about vaccines, that we will not meet as usual for a few more months. And given this uncertainty, I am holding off announcing a programming schedule.

**GLHG has grown accustomed that the first newsletter after November is an Annual Report Newsletter in March. Given the nature of our “new” newsletters, I will cancel that and, instead, attach (not typed out in the newsletter) a copy of the annual report that I submit to the Town Board, Greene County Historian, and NYS Historian. Mail subscribers: if you want a copy, let me know and I will arrange a copy to come your way.