

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

April 2021 Issue 294

COVID #9: Transportation, Freehold, Web

Happy Spring!

A mostly dry and mostly warm (at times, balmy) spring season has helped give most of us an extra spring in our step, especially after a grinding February. And getting outside has lifted many of our spirits.

This newsletter is another Covid one. I have a prediction – in the Notes section

This month

Ken Mabey – Freehold Memories
Flip Flach – Transportation in Greenville
Don Teator – Newsletters 1-293

Freehold Days

Ken Mabey

Memories are important to many of us as we grow older. They are a way to revisit our childhood places and people we have known, both friends and family. I lived in Freehold for most of my years up to the early teens. It is one of the places that have always seemed most like home to me.

We were living at my Grandfather Alvah Sutton's house so my Mom, Edna, could cook and help with the house while her mother, Jessie, was very ill, and died in 1938. My Dad could tend the garage if Grandpa had to go to Albany for supplies, and also helped on his relative's farms. We continued to live there until 1941 when I was four years old, and 1940 and 1941 is where my memory begins. Our neighbors were the Lacy family, and Dr. Curtis Lacy was our family physician. Mary Ellen Lacy was about my age and we often played together. Unlike today, house calls were common practice, and I have since learned Doctors were paid a little amount compared to

today, and sometimes received in kind (foods, vegetables from the garden, a cake, bread, or pie, a chicken, or eggs) if money was short. Wood's store was across the street, and also the Antus family, north of the store, and directly across from us. Leon and Howard Wood ran the store, and Ray Bennett worked for them.



Alvah Sutton and grandson Ken Mabey

The house and my grandfather's garage were the places most familiar to me. I recall people making deliveries to the house. It was a gathering place in the kitchen some mornings. Pete Keefe brought milk, "Fat" Howard brought eggs (never could understand his nickname, he wasn't fat, stocky perhaps!) Sometimes Bill Brank, who drove truck for the town, and some helpers would stop for a coffee break. The garage was where several town men would come to play dominoes. There was a card table set up in Grandpa's office with a display case of candy, and other goods for sale. Elmer Simmons, Herb Antus and Charlie Poole were some that I recall, but know that there must have been others. Grandpa was most always working, but didn't mind having friends there who were always willing to help out if needed. There was a tire rack in the office that I loved to climb through usually leaving black marks on my clothes and person much to my Mom's dismay. Sometimes Ken Ingalls would stop by and shout "where is that dirty urchin?" That always made me laugh. The garage was a busy place where people stopped for gas, an oil change or repairs. Some were Pete Raffo, Elmer Story, Harman Becker, Edgar Palmer, Lester Story, Clint Story, Lloyd Simpkins and others I don't recall being only three and four years old at the time.

Of course the real focus of this story is my grandfather. To those of you familiar with Don's calendars and photos there are several: The Sutton garage, Alvah Sutton's band, Freehold men's hunting group, the blacksmith shop with Gramp and Lonnie Hale. Grandfather started his working life as a blacksmith, and as cars came along, his shop became a garage. He and Mr. Antus built a crystal radio in the early days, my mother had told me. Musically, he and his band members played for dances at Haight's Hall. He played saxophone,

clarinet, fiddle, and chords on the piano. I still have boxes of his sheet music. He taught me to sing songs, "Turkey in the Straw," "Darling Nellie Gray" and "Old Dan Tucker". On Thanksgiving Day, 1940 we went to my Mabey grandparent's farm in Cornwallville and after dinner my two grandfather's played music together, with fiddle and piano. So much a part of life in that era was family entertainment.

Grandpa Sutton was a strong supporter of FDR, and I recall going to Jennie Parks where the polling place was in 1940, with my parents and grandfather when they voted. Aunt Jennie always served oyster stew on Election Day. It was an occasion and helped to get people out to vote. One of the men asked me, "Well Kenny, who are you going to vote for?" I said, "Wendell Wilkie." Not a good answer for a child whose Grandfather was a Democrat. Guess I was somehow fascinated by the name, and a good reason why children don't vote. It did make everyone laugh. Later my mother made sure I knew who FDR was.

Sadly for our family, Grandfather Sutton died in 1942, but for those who knew him he is always in our memory. The Irish poet and writer, John O'Donoghue wrote, "there is a place where our vanished days secretly gather. Memory as a kingdom, is full of the ruins of presence. It is fascinating that in your memory, nothing is ever lost or ever finally forgotten."



Sutton Garage; right, the Sutton house; Rt 32 Freehold;

Transportation Modes In, Out, and About The Greenville Area: 1920s - 1970s

Flip Flach

From the early start-up and establishment days of the "Boarding House" era in the Greenville area in the 1920s, there was an evolution of transportation modes in association with it. The introduction of private summer / second home residences also had an impact.

Since automobiles were still a rare personal commodity then, especially for distance travel, public transportation was depended upon by downstate urban dwellers to come north to Greene County. Initially, the Hudson River Day Line Ship System played a major role. From NYC to Albany, with multiple scheduled dockings along the way, several steamships carried multitudes of passengers. The Catskill Landing was the Greene County connection where House owners would arrange arrival pickup and return departure service for their guests. More and more "farms" began to realize and seize the opportunity to augment their agricultural income, or even replace the farming aspect, with the housing of summer guests. A new fledgling industry was born.

My Grandparents, Karl and Anna Flach were one of the pioneering couples to offer bedrooms and meals, along with a rocking chair on the front porch, at their Maplehurst Farm, east of Greenville in Hannacroix. All eight of their children were displaced from their rooms in the large farmhouse to an outbuilding/shed for the entire summer to accommodate paying guests. The fee for a one week stay—transportation, a room, three major meals a day, with the rocking chair and all the fresh farm air you could breathe—\$3 (yes, three dollars) in 1925.

The new rural industry progressed well until the terrible back-to-back combination of the Depression years of the 1930s and WWII through the mid-forties. The post-war years then presented a renewed opportunity for growth and escalation of the vacation/travel industry for those still interested in

pursuing it. (My Grandparents chose not to, instead returning to traditional farming and their bakery business). Ultimately, for those willing to invest and modernize, a more "resort" atmosphere was created. Accommodation refinement, grounds beautification, and activity planning followed.

The increased comfort and dependability design of rail systems and trains, highway construction/improvements, and buses and automobiles brought about a decline in the River Ship travel. By the 1950s & 1960s, for the most part, resort guests (or "Boarders" as "we locals" referred to them), as well as the summer-home residents, drove their own vehicles to the area for their "stay." Many, however, particularly urban dwellers who did not own or drive cars, needed alternative transportation to travel here and then get around to visit our fine sites and businesses.

A more modern and convenient "travel in/out" option was introduced: Bus service. I believe I recall correctly that it was Mountain View Coach Lines that began serving Greene County, originating in NYC Port Authority and traveling north via Rt. 9W and 32 (and eventually parts of the NYS Thruway upon its construction), making multiple stops



From 1999 GLHG Calendar:

Centered in Norton Hill, Henry O'Keefe taxied the local community during the 1920s in his auto bus. Although area individuals were buying cars in growing numbers, people who had not yet purchased the newest modern technology could avail themselves to a ride from Henry, who would often go to Albany or Coxsackie, in addition to local destinations (courtesy of Edna Ingalls Adams Zivelli)

along the way, with Greenville the farthest north destination for that itinerary. At least one bus a day would arrive here midday, lay over for an hour or so and then make the scheduled return trip.

Personal side-story: From my 2 North Street (Rt. 32) Barber Shop location, I had a panoramic view of the Rt.81/32 Main town intersection. The bus would roll into town with passengers disembarking at the intersection. The drivers would then park on the Firehouse Lane between the creek next to me and the Mobil Station to await their return time. One would think "all good - no problem," except for this snag. For comfort reasons, they would leave those nasty diesel engines rev at a high-speed idle for the entire time—for heat on the cool days and AC cranking on those sweltering, humid August days. The exhaust fumes and smoke belching from those racing beasts would blanket the village proper. Good-bye clear, fresh Catskill mountain air, peace and quiet. Many of us in the "pollution-path" made a request of our town officials to contact EnCon and the bus company to demand a "fumigation cease." Although taking some time (months), eventually common sense and courtesy did prevail and buses were shut down during layover.

Another travel option unfolds: Some guests and visitors would travel up via train to the Hudson Rail Station. They would then need a way to their destination here and then to get around locally during their stay. Greenville resident and entrepreneur "Crow" Griffin met that need with "Crow's Taxi Service". I recall his "land-yacht" sized Oldsmobiles carrying "city folks" to and fro regularly.

Side-story #2: Crow's Taxi Service became so busy that he added a second car and employed an additional driver to cover the demand. Knowing the particulars of the situation as I do, I cherish this memory of the occurrence to this day. As you may imagine, a non-driving urban dweller would not be accustomed to our twisting, winding, hilly, country-road terrain. So, one afternoon when a Gentleman staying at Sunny Hill (no hills, turns, or bumps to get there) was dropped off at my Shop by Crow's assistant driver (locally

known to be a bit of a speedster at the wheel), he entered visibly shaken and pale as a ghost. I inquired if he was ok. He appreciatively replied he thought so, then proceeded to ask if there might be another mode of travel he could use to get back to the Resort. He was very cordial but relayed that he didn't care to experience another adventure quite like the ride just taken. All I could offer was that he call the resort, explain his plight, and I was sure that they would accommodate him. Still have to smile when I recall that one!

Those were the days; when the Village proper was all hustle-bustle from Memorial Day to Labor Day. It was said that our area population more than doubled May - September in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. I must add of course, that the Generational Resorts still operating and flourishing here today obviously far exceed the size, guest volume, quality accommodations, and activity offerings of the times addressed here. That has been accomplished through family dedication, hard work, skillful management, massive financial investment, modernization, and major adjustments to the vacation environment encountered over the decades.



Photo and text from John Earl:
Hudson Transit Lines (Shortline Bus Co) of Mahwah, N.J. had a daily run from N.Y. C. Port Authority Bus Terminal to Greenville. It ran every day leaving P.A. about 8:30 am arriving at Main St. about Noon and then going up to Shepard's to lay over until 3:00 for the return trip. The regular driver was a Mr. Yost. We did his run for him when we were in training while he cushioned, (sat on the seat opposite the driver). The layover was by the ball field. There was a sign on the south side of the large corner hall building, dining hall/dance hall.

From ships, to trains, to buses and cars, to property booms and busts, to business entrepreneurs, and the many significant

transformational changes, the Greenville area has undergone an interesting last 100 years.

End of Flip's article

A Dream Becomes Reality

Don Teator

Finally, every issue, all 293, of the Greenville Local History Group Newsletters are online.

I had longed to give easy access to past issues of the Newsletter to our local history community. As the years had rolled on, distant newsletter issues become even more distant memories of productive meetings that had meant so much to me. Hopes of breathing new life into past issues was simply that – a hope.

Coincidentally, Vedder Library Archivist Jonathan Palmer (also Greene County Historian) had written for Porcupinesoup.com the following two paragraphs of a column about an idea I recognized only too well:

“Much like the horse, historians leave droppings. Ours are allegedly more useful than our equine counterparts, but the horse is quite fortunate that on most mornings someone comes by to shovel the stables out. Once a stall is mucked those droppings get put to good use as manure in fields and gardens — fertilizing a season's harvest with what a horse makes naturally from last year's hay.

“Optimistically I conjecture that “historian droppings” fertilize the minds of those who deign to read what we write. For better or worse the stuff we churn out invariably rings a bell with someone or gets someone curious enough to study further of their own accord. The problem is that, once our articles are deposited, nobody comes by in the morning to clean up the aftermath. My writing this article is all well and good, but once it is read and done with, it lands on a stratified pile of

“history stuff” which really hasn't been cleaned or straightened up since 1927.”

For my part, I had/have a website that posted GLHG newsletters of 2012-2016. Then, a hosting service fell by the wayside, my web making program was not readable on a Windows 10 update, and I was left in a dither. Almost five years have gone by before I recently secured the services I needed to restart my website and perhaps to effect some of that mucking Jonathan referred to.

First, a key ingredient came along. I bought a new printer, one that when fed a stack of papers could produce a pdf file. What if... what if... I could do that with a newsletter. I tried it. Voila!

And then the flood started. Could I link my pdf files that I email to you on the website? Yup. Could I do the same with older newsletter, everyone one of which from the beginning I have kept in binders? Yup. Oh, Wow, Hooray!

So, the laborious exercise started. I took the newsletters out of the their protective sleeves, collated them, fed them into the new printer's feeder, instructed it to make a pdf file on my thumb drive in the USB port, checked the resulting files, copied the files to my newsletter folder, placed the pages back into the protective sleeves, then turned to my computer where I wrote date and issue number, and prepared to link them to a pdf file so that if you click on the website URL, you can peruse the newsletters of the past thirty years.

Forgive me, but I am so impressed and pleased that I could pop.

My dream of making available almost 300 newsletters is now a reality. So, if you have internet, follow the link:

- continued next page

<https://www.dteator.com/glhg/glhg.htm> and you will find, starting at the top the link to the pdf file of the most recent newsletter and extending a long ways to the bottom of the page, all of the newsletters from June 1989.

Of course, I had to stop and read along the way, and there were times I could still picture the evening and/or the conversation. Some of the write-ups were rediscovering topics that I vaguely remembered covering and wishing I could find them again. The one bittersweet part of all this was the memories of people who have crossed my path over thirty years who are no longer here. I started

to list them but, even more bittersweet, I quit when the list was getting longer than I could stand.

Feel free to browse. I draw your attention to the first few newsletters that first jumped out at me.

Issue #68: Five Year Annual Report

#78: Bill Gedney's Greenville

#80: A Ride with Uncle Bud (Griffin)

#189: 20 Year Annual Report

Perhaps, more retrospective in later issues.

If you find one that you think everyone should read, or just meant a lot to you, feel free to share your find. I will be much gratified.

Notes:

Thank you, Flip, Ken, and John, for your contribution this month. If anyone has an idea you want to share, I sense there is a narrowing window of opportunity that Covid has given this newsletter. (Nooo! I am not wishing for more Covid!)

There are three "old" columns that I would so much enjoy to see and read again: Ray Beecher's Gleanings and Vernon Haskins' two columns: Woodland Reporter and Yesterday.

One of them, the Beecher series, Jonathan reveals in his column, is in the process of being reproduced on the Vedder Library website, and what a joy to see the start of this. To see this, go to: <https://vedderresearchlibrary.org/gc-gleanings>. And I await ever seeing Haskins' writing to reappear in my lifetime.

Now having the GLHG issues available has me thinking of next winter's project, unless

one of you, or a group of you, wants to undertake the labor of love, of indexing the collection by keywords, so that anyone wanting to see where Norton Hill or where Prevost is mentioned could turn directly to those newsletter instead of hopefully hunting.

2021 GLHG Schedule: Another Covid newsletter signifies we are not back to regular programming. Although I have enjoyed the angles the Covid-era newsletters have taken, I suspect many of us would rather gather once again in the Community Room for another chapter of Local History. Our ability to meet rests upon the Library opening and NYS guidance about open meetings. Although I am not taking any bets, I suspect the current style newsletter remains until at least June.

Last year's schedule is still the framework of this this year's schedule and I hope to use part of it. Until that picture takes sharper focus, I will improvise.

For now, to those of you who have been vaccinated, good for you and thank you.