

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

May 2021, Issue 295

COVID #10: Shopping, Gedney, Website

Spring has really sprung!
Warm air and vaccinations promises relief.

Thank you, Flip, Audrey, Orrin
for your contributions this month.

This month

Audrey Matott – Greenville Illuminated
Flip Flach – Shopping in Greenville
Don Teator – website update
Bell Removal
Historic Registers

1950's Shopping a Bustling Main Street, Greenville and a Bit Beyond Flip Flach

Let's jostle our memory banks back to the '50s when Main Street, and just a bit beyond, was THE Saturday shopping destination to gather up the family's staples for the coming week. Allow me to draw references from the "Mom and Me" journeys of this of an about 5-12 year old kid at the time to apply to what would have been the routine "trip to town" outing of many a Greenville area family.

First, we'll start our excursion with the bit-beyond destination by passing through the Rt.81/32 intersection heading south on 32 to the Greenville Frozen Food Lockers (located where Mountain View Brasserie is today). It was owned and operated by Gene Morrison, with his meat-cutter sidekick Frank Kelly in his employ. (I believe it was Pete Carelas who initially built the block building in the '40s and operated the business, along with his World-Top acres Boarding House and dairy farm). Since many farm families,

mine included, raised and butchered their own beef, pork, and chicken back then, and personal home freezers were a very rare commodity, some serious capacity frozen storage space could be rented annually at "The Lockers." (Our little '40s GE Fridge/Ice box had barely enough room for a couple ice cube trays and a package of hot dogs.) A few rented lockers would hold the year's-worth of meat supplies. While the family "chicken of the week" was being retrieved, and maybe a couple steaks or chops, Frank would slice up some cold cuts to go as well.

That accomplished, it was back up 32 and right on to Main Street to try to find a parking spot (yes, back in the '50s on a Saturday it was a crowded, busy corridor). The first walking stop was Quackenbush's Drug Store if some medicine or a prescription was needed. (It was the "Drug Store and Druggist - I don't think I heard the term Pharmacy or Pharmacist until I was about 20.) Then it was next door to the west to Flach's Bakery for some specialty treats: maybe crumb buns,

cherry tarts, apple turnovers, or other fine pastry my Gramps and Uncle baked overnight. (Yes, I was a very "round" little guy.)

Next stop: back east to the IGA Grocery of Murphy Vaughn's (Masonic Lodge building) where one would give Murph their shopping list and he would take a paper bag and



Mid-century Main Street, Greenville

walk the aisles gathering your order while you stood and waited at the register counter. Also there was Mr. Medert with his meat cutting counter in the back of the store.

(Good spot for a tangent story: when word got around that Grocery Entrepreneur Al Bryant was planning to open an out-of-town-proper, new idea, self-service supermarket, the remarks and rumblings of many were: "Having people wander through a store for themselves hunting, choosing, and handling their own grocery items - That will NEVER work !" Guess maybe it did).

Now, a little farther east was Bogen's Novelty/Gift store (to be purchased by and become Bill and Sue Von Atzingen's Von's Dept. Store). If one little guy had been very patient and behaved, he might be treated to pick out that little balsa-wood airplane, cap-gun, or other trinket to make his day even better... and if really, really good, he might talk a Mom into an ice cream soda at Kay deBus Corner restaurant and fountain located at the intersection (I did say I was "round").

To wrap up the weekly excursion for this pair, possibly across to the north side of the street to the Post Office and Cutty's Hardware store (Steven's Hardware but everyone called it Cutty's for long-time proprie-

tor Randall Cutler - site of The Tasting Lab today); and it was home with the goodies to await in anticipation for the next Saturday "Trip to Town."

Of course, there were more stores/shops not frequently visited by this Mom/Kid duo (garages, bar, bank, theater, farm equipment store, barber shop, etc. - you fill in the blanks if applicable to your own outing).

And if a timeline or name is off, feel free to adjust - possible for a 65+ memory to be a bit clouded.

To finalize with one extra story, I think I should share Hugo's horse riding academy and barn (still standing) on Main St. south side. For \$2 you could get a 2+ hour / 4 mile guided horseback ride. Itinerary: up Rt.32 N to Irving Road, east to Newry Lane, north to county Rt.38 intersection at Richardson's well-drilling building, turn-around and back to the barn.

Ah, yes, good days!

Respectfully Submitted.....Flip Flach

Illuminating the Future of Local History

By Audrey Matott

Today, the Village of Greenville is bright in the evening and overnight hours. The four corners are well illuminated with street lights and lights from businesses and homes. Something that perhaps when we consider the history of the town, we don't often think about how it may have looked without electricity.

Interestingly enough, through a few coincidences while doing research on a separate topic, that darkness that once settled on the village when the sun went down dawned on me. I repeatedly came across the "diary" of William (Bill) Gedney and his memory of the first use of electricity in Greenville. In his recollection, he told the story of a time, around a century ago, when each shop on Main Street in Greenville was lit by a 100W bulb in the evening. The bulbs were wired together and were powered by an old car motor and generator that Gedney and friend, Ted DelaVergne, had connected together. Imagine. What might Main Street have looked like? What did it sound like?

Gedney's memories of this time came about through three separate interviews that past Town Historian Edna Ingalls Adams had with him in 1986. During the interviews, Gedney shared several stories from his life in Greenville and detailed his roots in the community. Segments of the interviews were published in *The Greenville Local* and *The Daily Mail* and, eventually, present Town Historian Don Teator transcribed the tape recordings of the interviews and shared it with the GLHG in April 1996. The interview is an illuminating treasure and stands as a testament to why recording our own local histories is so important. Even if it be only a few general or favorite memories of what day-to-day life is like, it can be a beacon between different times.

Here is the first of Gedney's stories about the first electricity in Greenville, as it appeared in Adams' Greenville Local article, **Some Early History of the Town of Greenville (Published early 1987):**

"I will close this article with the story of how electricity first came to Greenville. In the early 1920s, two enterprising and knowledgeable

young men, Bill Gedney and Ted DelaVergne, used an old car motor of Ernest Slater's to run a generator. Using this generator they made it possible for most of the shops and stores in the village to have 100 watt bulb to light up their places of business. This happened several years before commercial electricity came to Greenville."

In the next selection from the interviews, Gedney tells the story from his point of view as it was written in **William Gedney's Diary excerpts, The Daily Mail, "Greenville and Beyond," 1996 and as also documented in GLHG newsletter 78, April 1996 and the GLHG newsletter 178, October 1996:**

"Hoose had a barber shop over the corner store but Broulliard bought him out and moved it to the building by the garage. He came up out of New York. He was cutting hair by kerosene light. After he saw our lights, he wanted lights too. He wired lights up there. Then, Roe's store had gasoline lights and we had a couple of bulbs there. Then we needed a larger engine. We wired the Masonic Hall, the Knights of Pythias Hall, the drugstore and the other stores on Main Street. Stevens had a 32 volt plant of their own. We even ran a wire over to Vanderbilt's Hall, which was just beginning to have movies. That little engine kicked around! I left Ted's and the power company came in. That motor was still around and I gave it to Curt Cunningham for his museum...one of the first engines in Greenville and the first to make commercial power."

Later in the interview, Gedney went on to say:

"Pete Winnie had a string running from his print shop from a pig bladder. On the other end, he would tap onto that and talk to his wife. Around 1914, Jack Cameron bought the house where I was born, I believe, from Hegeman, and he built a meat shop just this side of the little creek. Joe Smith worked for him. All they had was ice, so when they went in with the lantern, the lantern warmed things up. I rigged a little flashlight bulb in there. We made dry cells so when they went in they could flip the switch and have a little flashlight bulb in there to light the icebox. I'd get zinc from the dumps. Ned Avery, the druggist, helped me with the batter-

ies. This was probably the first electric light in Greenville.

“After that I left Greenville. I came back about 1920 and Ted DelaVergne and I opened the garage.”

Bill Gedney was born on October 28, 1898 and lived until August 16, 1990. Based on the time frame he depicts in these memories (circa 1914 -1920), he was probably in his late teens to early 20s when he was shining all this new light on Greenville. The National Park Service reports on their website for the Thomas Edison National Historic Park that in 1925 approximately half of homes in the United States had electricity. Not only does Gedney’s memory shed light on local history, but also on his own character. Considering his age and the technol-

ogy at the time, Edna Ingalls Adams certainly said it best when she referred to Gedney and DelaVergne as “enterprising and knowledgeable.”

Thanks to the Gedney and Adams’ interviews, there is substance to a time in local history that might otherwise only be left to our imagination and inferences. Consider the technology available now that was not available 20 years ago and how much it has changed daily life. What will historians find in 100 years when they try to imagine what daily life looked like today?

The articles of the interviews between Gedney and Adams can be found by clicking on the “Newsletters” link on Greenville Town Historian Don Teator’s website at www.dteator.com.



Community Partners of Greenville

Every so often I remind you of Community Partners of Greenville, the one existing community group in the Greenville area whose mission most closely aligns with GLHG (credit goes to Rotary, also).

Their mission statement: commitment to the protection, preservation and development of natural and historic resources of the Greenville area. I will add – Amen.

Recent projects include: local food security, improving Vanderbilt Park, maintain tradition of Greenville Day, public art, Prevost Hall, and other projects as they arise.

Two offshoots of CPOG are the Greenville and Freehold Beautification Committee.

You can support with your time and/or **tax deductible contribution**. Checks can be made out to Community Partners, P.O. Box 252, Greenville, NY 12083.

CPOG: annual meeting May 19 (Wed), at 7 pm. email info@cpog.org for more info or call Lesley Smith (518-966-4900, leave name, phone number)

Regular meetings first Wed of month at Library (starting June: outside)

Current Board Members

- William Bardel, President, Board Member
- Debra Danner, VP and Board Member
- Lesley Smith, Secretary, Board Member
- Stephanie Ingalls, Co-Treasurer
- Barbara Walter, Co-Treas., Board Member
- Brian Mulligan, Board Member
- Robin Troeger, Board Member

The Greenville Beautification Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan group made up of leaders and members from your local community. In partnership with the Town of Greenville and other community organizations, the Committee seeks to enhance Greenville spaces through various public initiatives.

The committee holds open meetings every second Thursday of each month at 9:30 am in the Greenville Town Hall.

Current GBC Members

- Ginny Mangold (Chairman)
- Renee Hamilton
- Andrea Macko
- Paul Macko
- Megan Pflug
- Debbie Von Atzingen
- Barbara Walter

Orrin's Comments to Flip's Article

In last month's newsletter, Flip's piece on Transportation in Greenville provoked several comments, one of which was written. It was too good to not share so, in Orrin Steven's quick email response:

"I love learning new history. And I have a bit to add!

"In some of the years I recall from my childhood, say 1939 -1946:

"(1) the Short Line bus would unload/load on RT 32 just South of the traffic light on the West side of the street... just East of the current Town Hall (old ins. bldg.)

Not sure what it did between unloading and reloading times I don't remember. But do remember it sitting there for what seemed like long times. This was before the "best ever" Barber Shop had opened, so the choking diesel fumes never reached my nostrils. (Side

Bar: In trucker's slang diesel fuel is known as "Motion Lotion".)

"(2) Initially, what happened the day after Labor Day was an "event in my life" I clearly recall! The traffic light was "TURNED OFF" until next year's "boarder's season"! That lasted only a couple of years.

"(3) Then it was set to blink yellow all four ways. A bit later it blinked yellow for RT 32 and red for RT 81. After 1946 when we moved away my sister and I only visited a couple of weeks each summer and I don't recall when the light was set to work "normally" full time!

"(4) When I had my driver's license, recall getting the "local's" 10% summer gas discount at Simpson's Main Street Garage. Gordon Jr. and I were close play/class mates 1940 - 1946! So, Gordon Sn./Evie considered me "local" and I'll feel that way forever! Have lived 53 years in Greenville or 62% of my life!"

The Bell Comes Down

Anyone passing through Greenville on Tuesday, April 20, might have witnessed a historical moment. A very long armed boom stretched to the steeple of Prevost Hall, the former Presbyterian Church, and apparently inside the bell tower.

Community Partners, increasingly aware of the unsafe and potentially disastrous condition of the bell tower, has been discussing how to make the structure safe and hoping they would have an answer before it crashed through the church.

An answer was provided. Through one of their contacts, Gould Erectors and Riggers of Selkirk donated their services and equipment to move the 2000 pound brass bell from a very tight space.

Community Partners is discussing how to best preserve the bell for its longevity and for the enjoyment of the community. Stay tuned.



Photo courtesy of Renee Hamilton

Teator Home Page facsimile



Website Update

Don Teator

My brain has been a-churning since last newsletter.

The big accomplishment a month ago was the gathering of the 294 issues of the GLHG Newsletter in one location. That was a fantasy realized.

The next accomplishment is the creation of the Carrie Ingalls Diary web page, placed deep as a link on the Historian's Files page. Over a hundred pages of "summary" of her diaries are now available.

For those of you somewhat new to the GLHG Newsletter (pre-2000), you might not have heard about Carrie Spalding Ingalls who kept a diary from 1886-1951 with a gap of 1894-1912. I transcribed nearly a million words over a nearly five year stretch. My routine then was to transcribe, on average, 30-45 minutes a day, finish off a year, return the diary to Leona Ingalls Rundell so I could ask her my questions on what I was reading, and then borrow another year. Leona patiently endured my visits; actually, I rather think she looked forward to them. Once, she uncharacteristically but playfully poked me in the ribs with her elbow, demurely protesting my insouciance of asking her a question about some event that happened years before she was born. "How old do you think I am?" she teased, with a twinkle in her eye.

I wrote summaries for what I consider the five major eras in Carrie's adult life, trying to capture the broad strokes and some supporting details to paint a picture of her life. For those of you who waded into any of them (for the uninitiated, start with 1886-1893), you are

Local History Trivia Quiz

I had received a request for a list of Historic Register house in Greenville.

For the record:

National Historic Register

- Prevost Manor House, 1972
- Greenville Presbyterian Complex, 1985
- Henry T Botsford house, 1993
- Christ Church, 2015

Greene County Historic Register

- Prevost Manor House/Hush Hush, Rt 81
- Presbyterian Church
- Greenville Memorial Library
- Christ Episcopal Church, North Main St
- Hickok Homestead, Route 81 (Carlsen)
- Morning Mist Farm, Plattekill Road
- Methodist Church, Route 81
- Edgett Farm Cemetery (at Sunny Hill)
- Freehold Country Inn
- Talmadge-Irving House, Route 32
- Freehold Congregational Christian Church
- Spring Brook Farm, 2810 Route 26
- Phil and Barbara Flack house, Newry
- Kildael Farm / O'Hara's Corners
- Greenville Arms
- Greenville Center Baptist Church
- Fallen Wall Farm, West Road

painted what a life for a farm family could be like, albeit with nine children running around.

There are, of course, several additions pertaining to files in the Historian's collection. And I have linked several histories of the Town. And I am working on linking some of the important and/or interesting documents that pertain to Greenville history.

Although I have more than fulfilled my winter project idea, I cannot help but add just one more file.

But, if you can think of something that should be connected on the Files page, let me know.

The photo of the Teator Home page, left side, is the Local History side: one icon for the Newsletters, one for the Boarding Houses, and one for Historian's Files.