

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

Jan-Feb 2023, Issue 312

Family Farm, Ina Green, Class of '72

Happy Half-way Through Winter!

A wish that this newsletter finds you well, healthy, and almost thinking of spring. I suspect many of you have seen tougher winters in Greenville than the 2022-2023 version.

This month:

Flip Flach – The Rise and Fall of the Family Farm
Garth Bryant – Remembering Ina Green
Don Teator – the GCS Class of 1972
... and calendar website, donations, notes

The Rise, and Eventual Demise, of the Family Farm by Flip Flach

From the early 1800's, and continuing for more than a century, a steady surge of land purchasing, clearing, and settling for farming took place in the Greenville area. (For this article, I draw upon the stories, information, and experiences gathered from the many years of dairy and crop farming not only by my own family but also from the properties of about a 10-mile radius from the Greenville town center.)

I find that the majority of local farmhouses and barns were built from approximately 1820 –1860; of course, some were earlier yet and many were built/expanded/enlarged thereafter. Many of the folks coming to farm here had traveled from states that had been settled earlier such as Massachusetts and Connecticut in search of new, cheaper, fertile land. Others, like my own grandparents, left New York City where they had initially lived and worked upon arriving from Europe. They wanted to embark on a more peaceful, satisfying, albeit it hard, country farming way of life.

The norm for the start-up family farm was from

about 50 to 150 acres. Some contributing factors were: financial ability, property availability, personal ambition, and of course family size (the more hands to labor the better). The initial primary goal was one of “self-sustenance” – a family cow for the daily milk, butter, and cheese supply and the raising of female calves for “back-up” to ole Bossie as she aged, and with possible expansion in mind; the rearing of male calves for (sorry) butchering for the family annual meat supply, or for barter or sale; a flock of a few dozen chickens for the daily egg intake and baking use, and (sorry again) that Sunday family dinner; and maybe a few pigs and sheep to bolster the food pantry as well.

The more kids to come along, the greater the food supply need; hence, the more land purchasing/clearing/planting – to grow more crops to feed more critters to feed more family etc. Hundreds of such farms sprang up in our area over several decades.

Then, as the number and size of villages, and the shops and businesses therein, increased, along with a growing population



Harry Levers barn at
Brookside Dairy Farm, Freehold
Courtesy Don Howard

of “non-farming” residents, a “food-goods-for-marketing” industry evolved. Many farmers began to realize that there was a substantial income to be made if they could produce, and supply for sale, more than just “their own family-need amounts.”

The production race, with all its tributary activities, was on. Not only were land expansions, barn additions, herd and flock increases, and a need for more laborers occurring, but refinements for necessary storage, transportation, processing, and distribution of dairy products also followed. This spawned all facets of business enterprises, and our area had it all: logging, lumber sawmills, creameries, a hatchery, (sorry once again) slaughterhouses, horse-and-wagon transportation to be followed of course by trucking; also, other ag-related non-dairy enterprises took hold as well: vegetable farming, fruit orchards, cider mills, grain grist-mills, leather tanneries, tin-smiths, wagon-builders, blacksmiths, equipment dealers, and on-and-on.

There was a consistent, well-working harmony that prevailed for over a hundred years. Successful family farms of varying sizes dotted the landscape with many systematically increasing the volume of their operations throughout the years and generations. Investment in the modernization of all procedures

ranged from the earliest hand milking of each cow to cooling/storing/shipping in personal 40 quart cans to milking-machine inventions and eventually to bulk storage tanks and barn pipelines. Over the decades, from the 1920s on, the number of milk cows in a typical farm herd increased substantially; housing 30, 40, or many more became common. The supporting/tangent businesses associated with all farming thrived as well, and the natural Law-of-Supply-and-Demand kept local trade in check.

However, during the 1950s and forward, a major transition began to take place: Big-business commercialization offered off-farm job opportunities with good consistent pay along with better work hours and benefits (farming is not a job, but a way of life—a 24/7/365 total commitment). More career education programs began, and a strong housing boom was underway with a massive need for tradesmen.

All these factors enticed the younger generation off the farm. By the 1970s and 1980s, commercial land use and home building in our area intensified greatly causing land values to soar. The Law-of-Supply-and-Demand showed a different aspect.

The plight of The Family Farm worsened, with many of the next generation no longer interested. A farmer could sell that hundred acres of land



Summer 1940s,
on Stanton-Brown Farm, Norton Hill
Courtesy Lee & Arlene Brown

for development for more than he could dream of working out of it over the next 20 years (or maybe ever). He was just plain “getting older and less able.”

Add in the fact that due to a more than ample supply of dairy products from the now many producers, the milk prices paid to farmers decreased at the same time that equipment and overall operating costs majorly increased. The small-to-moderate-production farm was no longer profitable. Selling became a very plausible, and often necessary, option.

Many of those once-waving fields of hay, grain, and corn became home to buildings and blacktop. Commercial enterprises, individual housing, and housing subdivisions sprang up en masse. Other fields went unworked and abandoned, to be reclaimed by nature with brush, weeds, and trees. Farm critters became few-and-far-between.

Our Greenville area does have a fine Family-Farm agricultural legacy—from the initial settling and simple beginnings, to an extensive build-up and production period, to the final transitional slide. Time, and the inevitable change that comes with modernization, business/cultural shifts, and financial considerations eventually altered the landscape and “feel.” The few farms remaining, with their hard-working, determined, and enduring owners, should be applauded and appreciated.

As I reminisce of yesteryear, I realize, and can still visualize, what a personal pleasure and treat it had been for me to take that evening ride on our back roads (first as a kid with my parents, then on my own) to enjoy the sites of those twinkling dairy barn window lights during milking chore-time. Nearly all are flickered out now, leaving me with great memories of days past!

Contributions/Donations to GLHG

Occasionally, I receive a request to contribute to GLHG. And after a short discussion that GLHG is a low maintenance operation but, yes, there might be times when a project might benefit from financial help, I gratefully accept donations on behalf of GLHG (us). In the early years, the money went to defray the expenses of the calendar. Now that the calendar usually breaks even and the treasury starts a calendar year with enough to pay the printer, that worry has been allayed. Instead, I have been looking, and will look, for opportunities that will enhance our work. (And I accept suggestions!)

At year’s end, I would like to recognize those people who have financially donated to GLHG.

Garth & Terry Bryant continue their annual donation as they have done for nearly ten years, continuing a tradition that his mother Carol did for years. Bill & Kathie Quackenbush contributed a more than generous amount. Marla Stevens’ contribution was quite welcome. And there were a couple smaller, but always appreciated, amounts from thoughtful members.

Everyone has requested I use it for whatever purpose I see fit. When I do, I will report back to the group.

Thank you to each of you.

Please be reassured this is not a donation appeal. Your moral and vocal support is contribution enough.

I will report on the GLHG treasury next month.

Remembering Ina Green

By Garth Bryant

Early in my life I knew a woman who was born in 1882. This statement does not seem possible to me as I write this story 140 years later in 2022, but it is true. Equally amazing is that I have known tens of thousands of people in my life and many of them are lost to my memory. Yet the memory of this women who I met a few times as a boy is still quite vivid. To me her life story seems to be utterly unforgettable.

Her name was Ina Green.

She lived in a small house on the west side of Ingalside Road just south of the Albany County Line. Tough as nails and with a will of iron, she was the living embodiment of the strong self-sufficient people who settled this country and stretched its boundaries from sea to sea.

She lived in this house for more than 90 years. Her neighbor and closest friend, Art Howe, 22 years her junior, would be young Arthur to her for her whole life even though he was 77 the day she died.

She lived a life that was so filled with hard work and self-sacrifice that it is difficult to comprehend in our modern world. In spite of her limited means, this fiercely independent woman spent her entire life refusing to accept any Government assistance or private charity.

I met her when she was around 80. She was making a living sewing small articles and selling them to the boarders who walked up and down the road from Ingalside Farm. She had a small sign in front of her house advertising her handmade wares.

My mother would go see Ina after Labor Day when the boarders had left and buy up some of her leftover stock to help her get through the winter. My mom, Carol, was a very considerate person and knew that Ina would have been highly insulted to receive help but was pleased to sell her goods. My mom had a similar relationship with a number of elderly women in Town who were living on very little.

I would usually tag along. I remember my dad going also. No trip to Ina's house lasted less than an hour, with two or three hours being the norm. She was so pleased to have



Ina Green

company that she would sit and tell us stories and basically refused to let us leave.

In 1968 my father agreed to buy her neighbor Art Howe's farm land. Upon hearing this news, Miss Ina Green marched down to Art's house and told him "Young Arthur, if Zany Bryant is buying your land you tell him he has to buy mine also." It was not put in the form of a question and neither Art nor my father even thought of telling her no.

Ina Green was born in the Dakota Territory in 1882, seven years before it became the states of North and South Dakota. She was the only child of Charles and Frances Green. Her childhood stories talked of the Native American population that lived around her. To her, they were Indians. I doubt she used the term Native American in her whole life. This is the most memorable story she told of her childhood in what would become South Dakota.

One winter day, Ina's mother and father loaded her into the family wagon for a

trip to town for some needed supplies. The town was quite a long distance away. While in town it started to snow.

As they headed for home, the storm turned into a raging blizzard. The temperature plunged, the wind started to howl and visibility went to zero. As the snow piled up her father lost the trail and became hopelessly lost. In desperation, her father dropped the reins and gave the horse his head.

The three Greens huddled together in their open wagon and tried to survive. Hours later with the storm still raging, the horse came to a stop and refused to move any further. Fearing that the horse had given out, they now faced almost certain death. Charles climbed down to see what he could do for the stricken animal. It wasn't until he reached the horse's head that he could see that the horse's nose was pressed firmly against the door of their own barn.

Ina described her mother Frances as being a fragile woman. The extreme climate of the Dakotas was proving to be too much for her. Around 1886, sight unseen, they exchanged their farm in South Dakota and \$1,000 for a farm in Greenville, New York. This farm on Ingalside Road was owned by William and Bessie Green. These Greens were her distant relatives.

Ina was a young girl when they made this long migration and remembered the last part being on a Hudson River steamship. The Greens had uprooted their lives and moved half way across America to accommodate Frances's health problems.

This sacrifice was to be in vain. Her mother was accidently shot and killed on the front porch of her Ingalside Road home while hanging out the laundry. This happened sometime around 1905. A young man was shooting on the other side of the road and a stray bullet struck and killed Ina's mother.

Ina lived with her father until he died in 1919. Never marrying, she would maintain her family home through her own labor for



Ina Green's house, Ingalside Rd

the next 58 years. Her occupation was listed in various censuses as farmer, housekeeper, handworker, and one year as no occupation. This last response almost undoubtedly was the result of her irritation at some stranger coming to the home of this fiercely independent woman and having the nerve to ask her how she made a living.

I sincerely doubt there was a single day in this woman's life that she wasn't working in some manner to support herself. Indeed, her overwhelming desire to be self-sufficient drove her to do things few people her age would consider.

I have a distinct picture burned in my mind of my mom and I driving in our car and passing Ina riding on her old bike at the end of Ingalside Road as she pedaled to South Westerlo to shop in our store in the early 1960s. She would have been about eighty years old at the time.

Another thing I remember well was she had no running water in her house the entire time she lived there. By the 1960s this was quite rare.

I learned of this the hard way on my very first visit as a young boy. After a few hours of stories, I asked Ina if I could use her bathroom. She walked me to the back door. As we looked out, I remember her explaining to me the difference between the winter and summer toilet. One was built right off the

back porch, the other, which she directed me to, was on the far side of the back yard. This system was designed to deal with the twin problems of summer smell and freezing snow bound conditions of winter.

Maybe at around 8 or 9 years old, this was my first experience with an outhouse. Indeed, I had no idea such a thing existed. As the door closed behind me, it got very dark. The only light filtering in was through the crescent moon shape cut in the door. The hole in the seat seemed to disappear into the very bowels of the earth. I remember a substantial amount of confusion as to where the nonexistent light switch was and how I was supposed to flush the toilet. I emerged successful but badly shaken. From then on, I always made sure I went to the bathroom before we went to visit.

In addition to telling stories, Ina was an enthusiastic amateur photographer. She had hundreds of photos of early Greenville. She would take them out and of course they would lead to more stories. I can distinctly remember her showing us pictures from the early 1900s looking down Ingalside Road with not a single

tree in sight. Incredibly, every single tree had been cleared for agriculture.

One last story illustrates this woman's life. Very late in life, Ina's Singer sewing machine broke down. This was how she made her meager living so it was a devastating blow to her. Tom Blaisdel who was a friend of hers from South Westerlo contacted the Singer Company and told them her story. This machine was decades old. It wasn't even run by electricity but was a foot powered treadle machine.

Singer, upon hearing her story, offered her a brand-new machine for free. In typical Ina fashion she turned them down. Unable to pay for it, she was unwilling to take charity from them. In an act of corporate grace, Singer took her old machine, had the parts hand machined, and fixed and returned it to her. I am sure this cost Singer far more than just giving her a new one. That was ok with Ina, the darn thing shouldn't have broken in the first place. Ina continued to use that machine until her death at age 95 in 1977.

Notes:

A **thank you goes to Garth and Flip** for their worthy articles. I feel so pleased that others are writing. And I would be even more pleased if anyone new might consider even one article, no matter the length.

For those of you who are mailed this newsletter, and your subscription is running out: A renewal for a year (\$10) can be sent to Don Teator, 3979 Rt 67, Freehold, NY 12431. (For you emailers: no cost)

The calendar sales season is past, and the GLHG calendar enjoyed another good year. With help from Kelly's Pharmacy, GNH, and the Library, we broke even this year. I would encourage you to thank the owners and staff of these three enterprises. Half of all sales came through the Pharmacy; I have appreciated the frequent help and friendly service from Quinn, Marty, and staff every time I stopped in with ten more copies.

Deb and I will be traveling in France on April 10, in direct conflict with the usual first GLHG meeting of the year. Alas, **the April meeting is cancelled and we will start in May**. I promise to not schedule any more meeting dates outside the country for this year. (I think Deb is looking at next year already.)

Some of you know **Bob Beyfuss passed away**. Although Bob and I seldom talked about local history per se, his knowledge and frequent newspaper articles of the natural life, plants and flowers and trees, sustainable practices, suggestions for the home and yard tenders, etc., seeped into local history. He was a local treasure who will be missed.

The Greenville Pioneer does its usual good work as a bi-weekly. One feature I especially like in a recent issue was a page of photos of community member who passed in 2022. **Nice idea, Mark and Pioneer staff.**

Also, PorcupineSoup still offers its vision of news and features.

GCS Class of 1972 Reunion

(The following is an adaptation of a seven minute history talk I gave for the GCS Class of 1972 at their 50th reunion.)

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The full text, with all photos, can be found at: <https://porcupinesoup.com/the-greenville-class-of-1972>. In addition, you will find the list of the 43 one room school house districts that comprise the GCSD, as well as a group photo of the class with their identification. For photos referred to in article, go to website listed above.

Good evening, Greenville Central School Class of 1972.

Congratulations on the 50th year benchmark. It is one you should treasure

I have one question for you. Why are you the GCS Class of 1972?

Although this would seem to be a rhetorical question, there is more to it than you might suspect.

Let's change the phrasing. How did you get to be the Class of 1972?

I will point out four factors, three of them obvious.

Your birthdate, of course, is an important measure. You started kindergarten together if you were born from December 1953 through November 1954. Miss the cutoff date one day too early and you are in the class of 1971; one day too late and you are in the class of 1973. And even that was nullified if your parents decided that a year delay in starting kindergarten would help in later school success.

A second factor was retention. All you started school with fellow classmates who did not graduate with you. Some were retained in elementary school and were "relegated" to another class.

Or even more stressful is being retained during high school, having spent most of one's school years with one class but finishing with another. And the same is true for people who would have been in an earlier class but they were retained and then became members of the Class of 1972.

A third factor, of course, are the moves a family makes to or from another school district. Some of you lived all thirteen years of your school days at Greenville Central School. At the other end, a fellow member of the Class of 1972 could have spent only one year at GCS. As you look back at past class pictures in the yearbooks, you can point out more than a few classmates who moved elsewhere, even though you still have fond memories of that person from when you were classmates.

The last factor I wish to bring to your attention may not be an obvious one. However, it sits in the background, so quietly, so broadly, so thoroughly that it would be easy to overlook.

Some background history first. There was a reform movement in the 1920s in New York State to improve and systematize education achievement in the state's public schools. At first, it was the urban areas that faced this call to improvement. But it would find its way into the rural areas. That's why you see so many of our area schools centralizing in the 1930s.

One photo, of the King Hill Schoolhouse, might illustrate the point.

No matter how earnest and knowledgeable teacher Miss Jesse Boyd was, or how receptive her students – Gerald Weeks, Sarah Weaver, Florence Noiroit and Raymond Losee were in this 1915 photo, it is hard to imagine this school preparing students for the 20th century beyond King Hill. No matter the memories of the drinking water pail's single dipper, the lessons taught from sharing an outhouse, or the heating of the school on a cold January day, educational and societal progress called for change.

The next photo shows the largest of the schoolhouse districts in Greenville pre-centralization. This comical pose of the students of the four room schoolhouse of the Greenville Free Academy pre-1906 indicates an improved educational situation but still needing to mirror the country's new demands. (The Academy sits on the current site of the Greenville Library.)

The next photo shows something magical happening in Greenville in 1930 to 1932. Nearing completion in early 1932, the nearly completed façade of the new Greenville Central Rural School represented a new educational world. The technology of motorized vehicles made it possible to transport students ten, fifteen miles, or more, to their school.

The next photo is an overhead shot of the Central School after the two additions of the late 1940s and 1950s. Many of you remember the meandering cross connections. And then, not pictured, is the new MS-HS, with many of you on one cold winter day carrying library books to the new school.

The colorful Beers map of 1867 shows the school districts of the Town of Greenville. The average length or width of a mile – about what a young person could be expected to walk – was typical for most of the area's one room schoolhouse districts.

By the nineteen-teens, the automobile had arrived in town and, in the next decade, almost two, automotive availability was broad enough to consider driving students to school. And that technology changed how schools would operate, especially with centralization.

This photo of the current school district is a wonder of sorts. The Greenville Central School District, as outlined, consists of 43 former one-room schoolhouse

districts, listed below. Many of them were like the King Hill school shown earlier. If you were to pick the one room schoolhouse district you would have gone to, you can see that this Reunion of Class of 1972 would not be possible without centralization.

Also consider that if you lived within a half mile of the present school boundary line, it would have been just as easy that your one room school district would have become part of another larger district. (Cairo-Durham, CA, BKW, RCS. Middleburgh). I would estimate that half of you fit that category.

Originally, 22 districts formed the new GCS, with many of the other 21 to join within the next decade. One district, the Rensselaerville district once had their own Academy, and kept their K-6 students until the 1970s before yielding and merging completely with the larger school.

I noted there was a large area to the west of the current district that holds special memories. Former Durham student, and Class of 1972er, Ken Brand, explained the history of the Durham School District, formed about 1938 and graduating its students in 8th grade. At that point, students in that district, mostly from Oak Hill and Durham area, went to Greenville until a merger with Cairo Durham in the mid-1970s. (Durham graduates from the East Durham area usually chose to attend Cairo.) Thus, a sizeable number of Durham students comprised GCS graduating classes until the merger of Durham and Cairo.

And that is how you became the Class of '72.

Finally, I offer a hearty congratulations to this gathering, and I hope you all see each other on your 60th.

Greenville Local History Online Resources

When one clicks on the website: (<https://vedderresearchlibrary.org/greenville-resources>) you are on the Greenville Resource page on the Vedder Library website.

As has been true this past year, one can find the links to Greenville Local History that have been available on dteator.com. (newsletter, files, resorts).

Also available are the links that show:

- all the pages of first twenty years of calendars (1991-2010)
- all the pages of next bunch of calendars (2011-current)
- the forty people the GLHG has recognized in the calendars

I hope you have visited them this past year.

Now we have an addition. I had commented/whined to Jonathan Palmer that sub-categories of calendar photos would be wonderful. If someone wanted to see all the photos that have been marked, for example, "Winter", all the winter shots would magically appear on your screen.

Well, it has come to pass. All the phrases in the photo above, when clicked,

CLICK PHRASES TO VIEW SUBJECT CATEGORIES FOR GREENVILLE CALENDARS FROM 1991 TO 2010:

Aerial Calendar Covers Freehold - Other Streets Freehold Four Corners
Freehold Main Street Greenville Academy Greenville Center Greenville Central School - Buildings
Greenville Central School - Sports Greenville Central School - Staff and Students Greenville Churches
Greenville Farms **Greenville Four Corners**
Greenville Main Street - East Greenville Main Street - West Greenville One-Room Schoolhouses
Greenville Resorts **Greenville Route 32 - North**
Greenville Route 32 - South Greenville Sports Greenville Winters Norton Hill
Other Hamlets **Source: Curt Cunningham**
Source: M. P. Stevens Glass Plates Collection West Greenville

CLICK PHRASES TO VIEW SUBJECT CATEGORIES FOR GREENVILLE CALENDARS FROM 2011 TO 2023:

Aerial Calendar Cover Freehold - Other Streets Freehold Four Corners
Freehold Main Street Greenville Academy Greenville Center Greenville Central School - Building
Greenville Central School - Sports Greenville Central School - Staff and Students
Greenville Churches Greenville Farms **Greenville Four Corners**
Greenville Main Street - East Greenville Main Street - West Greenville One-Room Schoolhouses
Greenville Resorts **Greenville Route 32 - North**
Greenville Route 32 - South Greenville Winters Norton Hill
Other Hamlets Source: Curt Cunningham Source: M. P. Stevens Glass Plate Collection West Greenville

will result in a page of photos of that topic. The one alert is that one set of links is for the 1991-2010 calendars and the next set of links is for 2011-current calendars.

The other noticeable effect is labels of varying sizes. The reason? The larger the size, the more photos there are in that category. Try clicking a large size label; try a small one.

I now can sit back and marvel at one more enhancement of Greenville local history Jonathan has helped me with. And if you try it, and like it, please let Jonathan know (archivist@gchistory.org). And you can email me, too, if you want to make my day.

Jonathan, thank you for another dream of mine fulfilled.