

October 17, 1991

Last month's meeting opened at dusk; this month, darkness greeted the nearly twenty attendees of the October 14th meeting. For the record, those attending were T. Vaughn, J. Mangold, C. Ketcham, A. Roe, R. Lambert, B. Bogdanwicz, D. Teator, D. Teator, C. Teator, B. Gundersen, G. Boomhower, E. Adams, A. Brown, C. Martens, A. Macko, J. Bear, R. Bennett, F. Flack, and W. Maxwell.

Several announcements and reminders preceded the program.

First, the calendars are selling at a pace far ahead of last year. In fact, only fifty remain. Anyone wanting calendars should call Don Teator within a couple weeks before the calendars sell out.

Second, Arlene Brown reminded everyone of two dates. On Thursday, November 7th, "Voices From the Good War" will be presented at 7:30 pm in the Elementary's multi-purpose room. On December 9th, the GLHG program features WWII and its effect on the Town of Greenville. Also, a sheet detailing the NYS Museum's activities for WWII commemoration was made available.

The Westerlo Historical Society is hosting a slide show by Mike Devonshire on Monday, October 21st, at 7:30 pm at Woodsman Hall, South Street, Westerlo. The slides will show the efforts toward preservation of several NYC landmarks.

Don Teator read parts of Mildred (Losee) Gerni's letter about her personal connections to the calendar pictures. Her letter affirmed the worth and feeling of sharing our local history through the photo project.

Extracopies of the photo sleeve catalogue were left for the taking. Finally, we were ready for the program.

Several former and present supervisors and town officials gathered for a look back to the nature of their responsibility and to the issues of the day. Ray Bennett (late '40's to mid-'50's), Jeanne Bear (mid-'50's through the present), Fred Flack (most of the '60's), Andy Macko (most of the '70's), and Bill Maxwell (late '70's through the present) shared their thoughts and opinions on some of the following questions: Why did you decide to run for office? What were the issues of your time? What were some of the achievements of your tenure? What was your job like? How do you get input from the citizens?

Although conciseness keeps this account short, several ideas and trends are worth recounting. Several mentioned that the supervisor is often a listener and mediator on many types of decisions: septic overflows, Iroquois pipeline, road conditions, appointments to offices, water systems, etc. In many ways, the town board and supervisor handles the immediate concerns of its citizenry.

Another strongly voiced comment was the commendation of the Greenville community for its strong support and communication, especially in times of need. From the power line to the landfill, Greenville's citizens have rallied together as a strong, rural community can.

The communication of opinions from the community was, and is, an important factor of a responsive government. Whether the suggestions and demands come from the street or at the public meetings, the supervisor and town board's decisions are heavily influenced by what is said and

requested. All attendees stressed one of the advantages of serving in Greenville was the open give-and-take between officials and citizens.

Although each era has had its tough issues (rabid foxes, inadequate water system, improving town roads, junk yards, subdivision, zoning, landfill, office space, protection of its citizens), all attending recounted the worth of their service and recalled with fondness the rewards of their concern for Greenville's welfare.

As a final comment, the melding of several people representing several decades of leadership gave the GLHG a unique chance to gain a perspective of the contributions of our officials despite the politics of the moment and the occasional headaches of the job. A warm thank you goes to Ray, Jeanne, Fred, Andy, and Bill for giving of themselves one more time to share an important part of local history.

Other notes, trivia, and whatchacallits:

1. Enclosed is a separate sheet listing local history projects that may be in process or, more likely, needs a patron. This list serves as a reminder that many valuable pieces of information are out there, ready to escape forever unless some hard-working recorder saves it. This list is not the definitive list of all the projects worthwhile doing; they're all the ones I could imagine in fifteen (well, maybe more) minutes! Please give me more ideas and I'll add them to the list. I hope some of these get done, despite knowing that many of us have little spare time. Still, I'm reminded that these projects will only be accomplished if people like us think they are worthwhile.
2. Calendar correction! Drats! I hate getting names wrong. The June, 1992 picture needs the following corrections according to a couple of phone calls I have received. The woman identified as Margaret Woodruff is Marge deHeus. Also, Dorothy Price's maiden name is Miller. If this is still wrong, and/or you find more mistakes, please let me know (ignore my talking to myself on the other end of the phone).
3. Programs? If you have ideas for programs, enlighten me. The wealth of many minds will keep me from getting in a rut. If you don't enlighten me, you will continue to see more of the same.
4. Genealogical Request: Becky Kersey Saunders of 1925 Burning Tree, Derby, KS 67037 is seeking information about Abel Wakelee (died 1850, married Anise Hurd @ 1785), his descendents, and any document or written accounts that pertain to him.
5. Genealogical Request: Wanda Losee, Box 44, Alcove, NY 12007 is seeking information about D. S. Losee who was a Justice of the Peace in Surprise in 1907.
6. One suggestion forwarded to me is to have at least one of our winter meetings on a Saturday afternoon. Darkness keeps some people away. I'll get feedback next meeting.
7. Our next meeting, a share session, is November 11th. Bring goodies or projects you've been working on.
8. 1993 calendar: I'll bring the pictures for the '93 calendar to the next meeting for text information to go along with the pictures.
9. The October program was taped, thanks to Debra Teator.

Sincerely,

*Don Teator*

## House Histories

- Pick a selected house
- Do all the houses on a selected road
- Do all the houses associated with a selected family
- Identify houses with eyebrow windows
- Identify current barns
- Identify all houses of a selected builder
- Identify houses of a selected style
- Determine approximate construction dates

## Transcriptions

- Of written material (diary, letter, old records, etc)
- Of audio material (audio tape, video tape, speech, etc.)

## Taping

- Audio tape a selected person
- Audio tape members of a family
- Audio tape people with common bonds (church, graduating class, selected roads, etc.)
- Videotape selected person, melding pictures and different sites
- Make a video tape using pictures (a la The Civil War)

## Graveyard

- Locate on map the town's yards
- Map a cemetery
- Transcribe the stones in a cemetery
- Photograph the stones in a cemetery
- Index cemeteries onto master list
- Restore/preserve stones in need

## Family histories/genealogies

- Collect information on selected family
- Write history of a selected family (# of generations tbd)
- Write about the "important" families of a certain era
- Write mini-biographies of selected townspeople

## Business Histories

- Record knowledge of all mills
- Write history of a selected business
- Write history of a selected type of business
- Record employees
- Collect business records of a selected business
- Note changes within a selected business
- Write history of a building of several changes of businesses
- Write about the growth or death of selected business
- Write about the new businesses of the 1980's
- Record how Bryant's Square affected the town
- Describe how a particular business has affected the town

## Maps

- Analyze what a selected map tells us
- Compare 1856 & 1867 map to see which buildings still stand
- Compare map to today for changes

## School

- Write history of a one room school house
- Identify location of one room school houses
- Follow a selected class year
- Collect student pictures
- Collect report cards, certificates, etc.
- List teachers (yrs tenure) of GCS
- Record one's experience
- Write about the change from one room to centralized
- Write biographical sketches of students, teachers, etc.

## Social & Service Groups

Identify current groups

Record achievements of a selected group

Record programs of a selected group

Write history of a selected group: Rotary, Kiwanis, Thimble, Homemakers, KofP, Clematis, Rosary Altar, Cath. Dau. of Amer., Masons, OES, Circle B, Odd Fellows, Boy Scouts, Basic Creek R&G Club, Norton Hill Wildlife, KOTM, Freehold Impr. Soc., Volunteer Fire Comp., Rescue Squad, Freehold Lit., Ct. St. John 1412, any sports league, etc.

## Politics

Write history of a selected party

Analyze why Greenville is Republican

Record all town officials and tenures

Research what issues are discussed

Research relationship with national politics

Record changes in political organization, manners, etc.

## Religion

Identify the current churches

Write the history of a selected church

Record the list of pastors, priests, etc., of a church

Analyze trends of religion

Analyze significance of church in Greenville

## Social Histories

Record the customs of a holiday

Analyze how family life has changed

Record the toys

Record how families interacted with the community

Document the influence of a selected device - tv, refrigerator, indoor plumbing, radio, car, Colonie Mall, Bryant's store, etc.

Record how people have entertained themselves

Record where people went for entertainment

List the bands from the area

Analyze how morals have changed

Describe how immigration has affected Greenville

Verify existence of attitudes of "native" vs. "outsider"

Compare rates and nature of "crime" in town

## Farms

Identify past farms

Record a typical farm family experience of a selected era

Record the decline of agriculture in Greenville

Record the types of farming

Identify current farms

Identify the condition of the barns

Compare relative wealth of farms with non-farms

## Resorts

Identify the resorts and boarding houses

Write about the resort experience today

Interview boarders of years past

Write history of a selected resort

Write about the "guest" experience - day, week, etc.

## Other

Document manmade lakes and ponds

Research creation of roads and year placed in use

Write history of drive-in

Research geographic evidence (glacial, etc.)

Write history of area artist

Document water system history

Research worst weather events in town's history

The Greenville Local History Group invites you to become part of our program on Monday, October 14th from 7:30 - 9:00 pm in the Community Room.

Our program will be a "gathering" of former town supervisors and board members, as well as some our current ones. We hope to have a core of 5-8 people who would share their memories, opinions, and reflections about being responsible for the welfare for the Town of Greenville.

Although such a meeting could be ripe for politics, the Local History Group is more interested in the history and interpretation of what has happened. Questions to respond to could include:

*rather typical*

1. Why did you decide to run for office?
2. What were the issues of your term in office?
3. What issues were the "hot" ones?
4. In what ways was your job different than what you had anticipated?
5. What were some of the satisfactions of your job? some of the disappointments?
6. What do you see as some of your accomplishments in office?
7. How has your time in office affected your life after your time in office?
8. How did your job affect your day-to-day life?
9. How did the public perceive your efforts?
10. (Other questions may come from our circle, and you should feel to discuss aspects of being a superintendent / board member not mentioned in this letter.)

We do not see this as a political forum but neither will we discourage political sentiments you wish to convey. Our emphasis will be the past (with some current trends thrown in).

The GLHG hopes you accept our invitation to describe a vital aspect of Town of Greenville life. I will be calling you this week to confirm a decision. If you have further need of explanation, please contact me at 634-2397.

*Bennett - 46 - Jeff  
54*

*Maxwell 3 groups  
77-council 11 years / Tiberi left*

*Flack elected 64 - supervisor 69 - [changed as legislator]*

*Bean etc 28 yrs  
councilman 8 yrs*

*no town office  
family-office*

*chairman*

*Democrats*

*Nicholson  
Flack  
Cunnington  
Maxwell  
Murphy  
Crafo  
Hosman  
Tiberi  
Maxwell*



1. What is the name you were given at birth?
2. Were you named after a relative or friend of the family?
3. Where were you born?
4. Were you born in a hospital or at home?
5. What is your nationality?
6. Did your family change their name when they arrived in America?
7. Do you know the names of your family members who first came to this country?
8. Do you know why they left their homeland to come to America?
9. Where did they settle when they arrived here?
10. Where did they live prior to coming to this country? Do you know the name of the town or village they lived in there?
11. Do you know any stories they told about what life was like before they came here?
12. How did they earn their living?
13. What are your parent's names? When and where were they born?
14. How many children did your parents have?
15. What were your brothers and sisters named?
16. When and where were your brothers and sisters born?
17. What are the names of your brothers' and sisters' spouses?
18. When and where were they married?
19. Which of your parents, brothers, or sisters are deceased?
20. When and where did they die?
21. Where are they buried?
22. Where did your parents live during their lifetime?
23. Do you remember any stories your parents told you about their childhood and their parents?
24. What did your parents do for a living?
25. What were your grandparents' names?
26. Do you remember when and where they were born?
27. Can you tell stories your grandparents told you about their childhood, where they grew up, and what life was like for them when they were young?
28. Do you recall when and where your grandparents died?
29. Where are they buried?
30. What were your parents like?
31. Did you have any aunts and uncles? What do you remember most about them?
32. Where did you grow up? What do you remember about the places where you lived as a child? What were the houses like?
33. When did you get married and to whom? Where did you marry?
34. What do you remember about your courtship? Where did you go on dates in those days?
35. What religion did your parents and grandparents practice?
36. Where did you go to school?
37. Did you/your husband/wife serve in the military? Did you/your husband/wife serve during wartime?

38. Did you ever hear of anyone in your family serving in the Civil War or the Revolutionary War? What were those soldiers' names?

39. What were your in-laws names? Where did they live?

40. What did you look like as a child?

41. What are your children's names? When and where were they born?

42. Describe some of your family's customs and traditions.

43. Did you ever hear that you were related to anyone famous?

44. What were some of the memorable or historical events that touched your life or the lives of your parents?

45. Who do you admire the most?

46. Have you ever been involved in politics?

47. What are your deepest values?

48. Can you share the most important moment in your life?

49. Do you know anyone who has a written history of your family?

50. Do you know of any family Bibles handed down from earlier generations?

There are dozens of other questions that could be asked. You should choose the questions that will provide information to fit the purpose of your interview. If you want to focus upon the more personal aspects of a person's life, you will want to include questions about their hopes, fears, personal views, philosophies of life, and on a larger number of life events.

Some interviews will have a special purpose, such as seeking information from someone who has conducted research into or knows about your immigrant ancestors. The following questions will help you get the information you need:

1. Where were the immigrants born and where did they reside before coming to this country?
2. Describe their hometown.
3. Why did they decide to leave their homeland and come to America?
4. Who did they leave behind?
5. What port did they sail from?
6. How did they describe their departure?
7. Who did they travel with?
8. Were there any births, marriages, or deaths en route to America?
9. Did they stop anywhere along the way?
10. What was their voyage to America like?
11. At which port did they arrive?
12. Where did they first settle once they were in America?
13. What stories did they tell about life in their homeland?
14. What customs and traditions did they bring to America?
15. Did they become naturalized citizens? If so, when and where?
16. Did they practice the same religion after they settled in America? What was that religion?

17. Did any family members follow them to America at a later date?
18. Did they already have relatives in America when they arrived?

Many people discover an interest in tracing their ancestry long after grand-parents or more contemporary relatives have passed away. If that's the case, interview close friends or associates of those deceased relatives who might recall some moments they shared with members of your family. Professional genealogists often go on research field trips to interview residents of an area who share the surname of a family that lived there several generations earlier. Rarely do they come away empty handed. One genealogist was seeking information on a man who grew up in Little Falls, Minnesota. She knew the general part of town where he had lived, so she interviewed several people who lived there. She called the local grocery, which was clearly built before his birth, and asked the owner, "Do you recall him?" The grocer's response was surprising. "The only kid I knew by that name was the meanest kid in this neighborhood. He could always be counted on to raise hell." "That's him!" she cried, "May I come and talk to you about the family?" In the end, he gave her many details about a family who had moved away many years earlier.

Oral accounts of events, dates, and names of people involved cannot stand alone when compiling a family history or genealogy. The farther back one's memory reaches, the greater the chances that what is recalled may be in error. Memory fades with time and facts get confused. For this reason, one needs to compare the information given in an oral interview with facts included in records created at the time of the event.

You might construct a chronology of the life of an ancestor or relative to see if documented events agree with what you have been told. If the majority of events told to you agree with documented evidence, the accuracy of the person you interviewed is excellent and information that cannot be verified in records is likely to be true. If only fifty percent of the events told to you agree with documented evidence, the accuracy of the person interviewed is average and information that cannot be verified in records is likely to contain some truth. Where the majority of events told to you disagree with documented evidence, oral information that cannot be verified in records should be used with caution.

There is no substitute for personal interviews with those who can supply detailed information about your family's past. Always ask for as many facts as possible, but don't ever overlook the opportunity to collect those wonderful details about your family's lives that add substance and meaning to your family history.

Preparation is the key element in every good oral interview. It's a good idea to allow the person you're interviewing to prepare in advance by giving them a list of the questions you plan to ask. Some people are afraid of tape recorders and, in their nervousness, unable to think clearly. Always remember to take writing materials with you to take down important facts and phrases that will help you recall the interview on tape after you get home. Taped interviews are preferable because they capture the feelings as well as the memories of the person you're interviewing. That tape also becomes a family heirloom that can be handed down through future generations, just as the family Bible was by earlier generations.

It's difficult to compile a list of standard questions to ask in an interview. Questions will vary depending upon the purpose of the interview and the background of the individual you're interviewing. The following list of questions is a basic guideline for conducting your interview. As the interview proceeds you will want to ask other questions to clarify something said in the interview. However, jot down those questions and ask them later rather than interrupt the flow.