

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

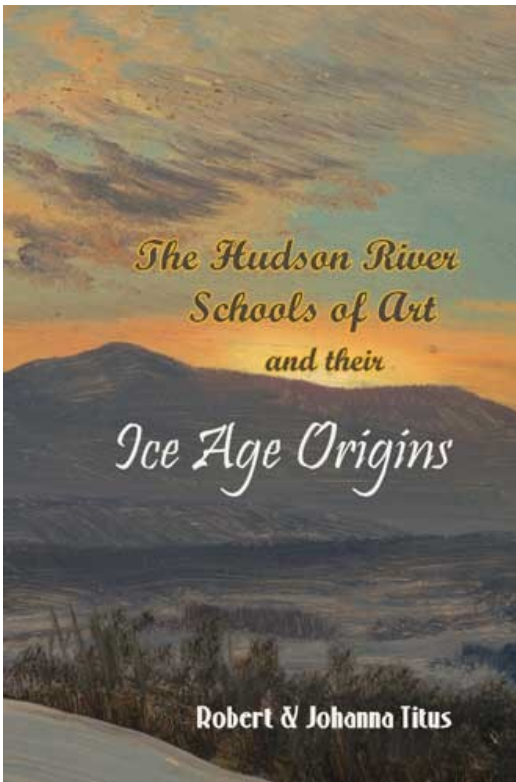
April 2024, Issue 323

Flip Flach's Canvas III

Biblical proportions were brought to mind with a recent earthquake and then, on the same day as our meeting, a near total eclipse of the sun! Is Mother Nature siding with the Greenville Local History Group? (I will leave that for you to answer for me!). Braving the elements this evening was a turnout that needed ten more chairs from the small room:

Sherry Baron, Rich Miller, Lew Knott, Connie Barrett, Emily Tembini, Anthony Chatterton, Gail Nichol森, Den Mower, Stephanie

Ingalls, Judy Rundell, Charlene & Ken Mabey, Jeff Pellerin, Barbara & Flip Flach, Christine Mickelsen, Maryann Morrison, Lori Blair, Jane Masterson & Stewart Wagner, Susan & Peter Keitel, Anta Orsino, Rachel Ceasar, Richard Ceasar, Darcy & Rich Rose, Mary Lou Nahas, Better Welter, Susan Cunningham, John Earl, and Debra & Don Teator (and perhaps a couple more even though I tried to be vigilant in getting every last person!)



Our May 13 meeting features **Johanna & Robert Titus** unveiling their new book: *The Hudson River Schools of Art and their Ice Age Origins*.

We welcome the return of the Tituses, one of our multi-program presenters, having done so in August 2009, June 2012, and June 2016.

Past talks have focused on the geology of the area. Those of you with long memories will recall that Robert was a Senior Full Professor at Hartwick College before retirement.

This program has a unique twist, one that is reflected in the title of the book.

The Tituses will argue that ice age history shaped the Hudson Valley in such a scenic fashion that it led to the inspiration of much of the Hudson River School of Art, the birth of landscape architecture in America, and much of America's early literature. In short, the Tituses argue that almost all of our Hudson Valley culture was inspired by ice age events.

The Ice Age and art!? We wait with anticipation.

An Extended Village Canvas

Flip Flach returned to continue the idea for a program(s) that he coined An Extended Village Canvas. This canvas would be shaped and colored by Flip's memories, mental images, and stories of "ex-buildings, ex-businesses, ex-entrepreneurs" that graced and inhabited the roadways a half-mile or more from the Four Corners of Greenville. And I suspect he would want me to add that the dozens of photographs enhanced his stories.

Two years ago, Part I started on SR 81-west on the town line with Durham. Selecting those structures that held meaning and those individuals that were part of a story, Flip created a narrative of a time long gone by. This was shared in the GLHG Newsletter #304, April 2022.

Although the original intention was to finish that roadway the first evening, it became apparent that Flip had enough material for another meeting. Thus, Part II was

Flip's Tour III

The tour started at Wheel Inn, proceeded down the west side of Rt 32 until Shepard's, then returned to Wheel Inn to proceed down the east side. South of, the slides generally went by order as one would proceed down the right, west intermixed with east.

(Note: quotation marks are key to hearing Flip's words.)

Allow me to digress.

Where is the entry point into Greenville?

Flip and I pondered. We had originally contemplated starting at Irving Rd but that obviously missed the commercial hub at Bryants. We mused aloud and worked our way to the Albany County line at Balsam Shade before agreeing Shepard's should be in the program. Further discussion, and family history, took us to Wheel Inn. Many of you will recognize the spot because it is the curve, about a mile north of Shepard's, that might be driven at 55 mph but usually is not, and definitely not when road conditions are compromised. On the way back to Greenville from Albany, a driver rounds that corner and can almost coast back to the Four Corners.

shared in GLHG Newsletter #307, July 2022, starting at St John's and finally finishing with the Four Corners.

PorcupineSoup versions can be found:

Rt 81: Town of Durham line to Catholic Church

<https://porcupinesoup.com/flip-flach-s-canvas>

Rt 81: Catholic Church to, and including, Four Corners

<https://porcupinesoup.com/flip-flach-s-canvas-ii>

This April meeting saw the resumption of this series. Don gathered photos and made a PowerPoint presentation to accompany Flip's narration.

This month: The plan was for Flip to narrate his memories of State Route 32-north, starting at Wheel Inn and working back to the Four Corners. As you will see, we made a good dent, with another meeting

And back to the start.

Wheel Inn was operated by the Winne family. The main house, now Cooper Estate, sits on the west side of the road. Somewhat easy to not notice are the buildings on the other side of the road – more motel units, utility rooms. And not seen from the road is a large lake, a feature of Garth's article about the Lakes of Greenville. (not to be confused with the Lake Family of Greenville).

Directly behind Cooper Estates is a modern day residence built by a Winne, better known by some as the husband of one of the Philips (of Ravine Farm) daughters.

Down the road a few hundred yards, on the west side, an unobtrusive driveway diverts on the right side and seems to cross a long way across an open field. Unknown to me before this slide show was this was the residence of Flip's parents for 40 years.

In Flip's words:

"Green Acres, it was called that when I was a teenager, was purchased by the two brothers, Alfredo and Dante Passuite (sp?) from Brooklyn. They told my dad they were both chefs and de-

Former Wheel Inn



cided to come up to the country and invest in a place to try to run it as a little resort. There was five cabins of various sizes and there was a main house with the kitchen and a big dining room. Unfortunately, they weren't familiar with Northeast winters. They left after the first season, not knowing water pipes should be drained, and expected to return in May in turn-key shape. Of course, anything with water, including toilet bowls, froze and broke. They ran the resort in the early 1960s before ceasing operations.

“When my parents Joe and Elizabeth Flach purchased the eighty acres farm in 1968, the big house had burned, the barns had tumbled down, and several cabins were left standing. My parents hired a friend, Clarence Fields, who was a retired farmer and carpenter from Lambs Corners. He built right on the foundation of the old main house a modern ranch-style, single-story house. My parents moved there in 1970. With my father’s passing in 2006, my mother sold it and moved just up the road to Cooper Estates, the starting point of this program.

“Back to Green Acres. The one brother/owner left to return to NYC. The other, Alfredo, must have expressed an interest in keeping an acre up on the road and building a restaurant. So, my father bought the 79 acres, leaving Alfredo one acre, which today is the site of the long block building that looks like an apartment use today. It is located beside that long driveway that went back to the old Green Acres.

“So, Alfredo operated Alfredo's Pizza and Pasta for many years because. I remember in the 1970s running over and enjoying his excellent pizza and Italian fare. I cannot recall when he left but sometime in the mid-1970s, new owners opened Wine in the Woods, a new up-and-coming trend that lasted a couple of years.”

(Don remembers Wine in the Woods, his foray in “cool” stuff and quaffing his first rose – Mateus.)

Catching up with the east side, we return to Wheel Inn and follow Rt 32 back to town but looking left (east).

One notices a sinuous driveway leading to a picturesque house, disappearing behind bushes as one continues driving. This was owned by Yvonne & Gordon Simpson Jr. He was a professor in Albany, a generational change from his parents’ ownership of Main Street Garage, a longtime landmark now replaced by Stewarts. This evening, serendipity ruled when Lori Blair, a GLHG member, confessed she now owned that house. When or who built the house is not remembered.

Staying on the left side: The next house down has a small building out front that looks like a gift shop. Indeed, it was.

“When I was teenager, the Nunziatos lived in that two-story house. They had that small souvenir shop building right one the road, with a nice bay window, on Rt 32 thinking they could sell things to people walking up from Shepard’s.”

“The next house south was that of the Dodane family. Paul Dodane operated Paul’s Tavern across the street from this house. Today, large bushes obscure a good view of the house from the front.”

The next house south was that of Ernie and Eleanor Moak. “I remember seeing it constructed in an open hay-cornfield when I was a kid. It was on the Shepard Farm. They were Mrs. Shepard’s nephew and niece. They came down to help run and eventually took over Shepard’s full management. They had that beautiful home built. I remember seeing it constructed. After that, we are to Shepard’s proper.” But first, a return.



Alfredo's, block building on the one acre; long driveway leading to other 79 bought by Flach; originally Green Acres property

The tour takes us back to Green Acres and that long driveway and head toward town. A driveway to an empty spot appears, as if something had sat there. Paul's Tavern was the building/business that occupied that spot and was razed years ago. Flip remembered little of it. Paul Dodane operated it while living across the street. This strikes some people as odd because there was, and is, a residence behind the Tavern site. Again no memories from Flip. A couple in the audience remembered going there for bands and music, and it seemed to be a busy place.

Just south of that, one will see a fifty foot wide clearing, both sides of the road – the Eastern Texas pipeline. Flip told about this pipeline and the Iroquois pipeline, the difference between the two, and the convergence of the two near Kudlack Rd.

Continue down the road on the same side: The house that was Sonny and Anna Richardson's was built nearly 70 years ago. Flip remembered a trailer adjacent to the property where Mrs. Richardson's mother and step-father lived for a while.

Next place toward town was Helen and Lew Brown's house. Flip was not sure if the road-front acreage came from the farm south or the farm north but that land splitting is very typical of mid-century property.

Just past Helen Brown's is the Boy Scout roadway to acreage that was donated by Helen Brown. Actually, the land is donated to the Boy Scouts' sponsor, the American Legion, I believe.

The next place downhill appears to be part of Shepard's, and it now is, but at one time it was the large Palmer farm, with the pillars in front. Today, it awaits revitalization. The barns are long gone, and it is possible that the Richardson and Brown properties were split off of this farm.

A long driveway to the right appears, slinks downward to the dip and then rises and seems to meander out of sight over the hill. A Google Map search will show you a solar array on top of that hill.

Our tour's next stop is Shepard's. Although it was its own little world and thousands of people had the experience of vacationing and working there, we found it amazing how little has been written to record the history.

Palmer Farm, today part of Shepards



Flip's memory:

"My dad took me there as a kid to see the cows at Gus Shepard's farm. He was a good farmer and had a lot of acres, near 200 total on both sides of the road. He had the dairy cows and the young stock which he kept when he decided to go into the resort business. Then he used his own farm product at the resort and still continued to ship milk.

"Step by step, the main house got full of guests and all was going well. Gus then built the annex, a two story building which is now being refurbished by John Dolce. Beyond that were the tennis courts, and beyond that came Keating Knoll. Mrs Shepherd had that building built after Gus had passed away and she married a man by the name of Keating. They built that long narrow building, maybe a 10 or 12 unit motel, and I remember the sign on the lawn Keating Knoll.

"On the other side of the road was a two story building for guests, called Colonial Manor, not to be confused with the resort halfway to South Westerlo. That building had a large wing on either side, and both have been taken down. Then you come down to the barn that is under renovation today.

"Then you come down to the recreation hall and again I remember seeing the big plate glass windows that they put in in the 1960s. When people drove by, they could see inside, see the band and the people dancing shoulder to shoulder. You couldn't fit another person in there.

"This building had a stage and used it as a movie theater screen, and each night was a different activity. It was busy all the time."

"One tidbit: Some people might recall the Catskill Mountain Hotshots, a local band. Louie Layman was in it and others I do not remember.

John Earl, with Shepard Farms
car roof carrier



(Side note: Earlier in the evening, John Earl was seen lugging some piece of wood in, looking something like a pallet. It turned out to be the car roof rack used to carry suitcases and more, with the name Shepard's Farm on. What a find!)

On the east side for some way back and some ways in front, on the east side, is two arrays of solar panels, a landscape that now shouts Shepard's Corner!

The solar array downhill from Rt 405 covers the old ball field, set in a cow pasture but remembered for its stands, many times packed with spectators during a game.

More memories of Flip:

"The Shepard ball field east side and south of County route 405 used to be the south pasture as it was called for the cows.

"Gus decided they needed activity for their guests. Others like Sunny Hill had an excellent ball team and Pine Lake was led by Reinie Schirmer who was an excellent ball player. With Baumann's Brookside and also Colonial Manor up over the hill, they actually developed a league for the guests of the different resorts. Shepard's had a wooden grandstand all bolted together with carriage bolts. The resorts held weekly games, sometimes more often, playing home and away on a rotating basis.

"The games were enthusiastically watched and became a Greenville thing to do. County Route 405 which goes up at a nice grade and gave you an excellent view. When the stands were full, the locals would line up in their cars on both sides of the road and watch from their cars or the embankment or stand alone.

"My dad took me to some of them because he loved softball and baseball. The biggest game ever was that championship game, I don't remem-

ber the year, but the town of Greenville practically shut down. Word got out that there were these crack-jack ringers as we could refer to them as best players out of New York City that Mrs. Shepard had staying there.

"Oh my goodness, it was just crowded shoulder to shoulder. My Dad did a rare thing and closed his business for that afternoon. He picked me to see the players out of New York City. We had never seen fast pitch like that before, pitching the windmill, as they called it. I remember the cars lined up along the ditch line and impeding traffic."

Going under the light at the four corners and looking rightward up the hill stands Swami Bruce's SVR Buddhist center. He has been there since the late 1980s and was featured in our 2021 calendar.

Before that, it was farm complex first owned by a Rundell family and more "modernly" by the Webb and Marie Jennings family. Where the temple with the dome stands today was, as Flip, recalls:

"... a beautiful hip roof multi-story barn where we played basketball. Webb worked maintenance for the Shepards. Meanwhile, they had a big farm house of a dozen rooms. When Gladys and Gus were full they would send guests to the Jennings for overflow bedding rooms. The guests would walk down to Shepards for the entire day and evening activities, and meals. "

The Jennings branched out and made their house their own resort, House on the Hill, "with support from the Shepards. There was no abrasiveness between the two and remained friends."

The Jennings' son Wayne and wife Donna built a new house on the farm property on what is now Jennings Road,

Garth Bryant, in anticipation of the meeting, recalled that Shepards operated a ski run on the hill below House on the Hill for one winter. And he called that there was a lighted pathway winding diagonally across the hillside to connect the two resorts.

Next on the tour was the farm/resort complex of Balsam Shade, starting with Burdett and Evangeline Griffin, today run as Ararat Youth and Conference Center.

They started much like the Jennings, as a farm and then taking overflow from Shepards before finally operating on their own.

Flip again:

"The dairy farm hayfields were roughly 100 acres on each side of the road. They started taking overflow guests just to sleep in their main house and

Former Balsam Shade barn; distinctive birds



discovered it was more lucrative than farming and yet Burnett loved it so he did continue farming. His son Eddie stayed with him and ran all the farming activity. Step by step they put in a recreation hall, then a two-story annex, building motels in the back. When son Ed married, he and wife Mary worked in the business, with Ed liking the farming and Mary becoming the business end. Then their daughter Jyl and husband Len DeGiovine took over. Today, Len owns the east side of the former resort property, the other half is the Ararat Center.”

The tour continues on the east side of the road below the Griffin house. The next house is Ed Brown’s attractive colonial house with gingerbread molding. In the 1960s, it appeared that golf was the up and coming sport. Mr Brown teamed with Mr Willig to open a golf cart service. Dozens of carts lined the driveway waiting to be serviced in the multi-bay garage beside the house. Bette Welter’s husband Bob worked there for years as chief mechanic. At some point, the business expanded and it moved to Columbia County.

New owners the last several years has resulted in the clearing of brush and other improvements for a pleasant roadside view of the house.

Below the Brown house, and above also, seems to be a vast area of grown up fields. Look a bit more closely and one will find wet land, swampy land. This area was the source of the Greenville water supply, with wooden troughs going back a long time. Greenville’s issues about water supply caused the need for public water system that resulted in a village water system and the big blue tower.

Further along is a house beside the water tower. Flip did not recall much about that residence. Most of us today have done battle with the hens in the road.

Then comes the water tower and that could be a whole story into itself, to be expanded upon with the new water tower that sits mostly out of sight. The future of the large tower remains to be told.

We now venture back to the “Balsam Shade” ballfield and venture along that side of the road. However, we will skip four buildings and the driveway going to the church and turn our attention to a small and modest building that belies its importance. Known as the Lauria house to some, it was known earlier as the Willig farm with considerable acreage. And from that farm springs the existence of the five buildings north of it and the two south of it (before Tops).

Paul Willig Sr owned this large farm, extending from Balsam Shade to Bryants and probably back to the Basic Creek, Flip recounted. Flip did not remember much about this particular house and barns. However, this farm property is a good example of how Greenville development proceeded.

Next to the ballfield is a modest house, recently renovated, and Flip did not remember much about.

Next to it is a block building that Flip remembered as Fred Wiltsie’s garage and gas station. After Wiltsie came a man named Reno who often has a half-dozen cars lined up. After him came Bill Kiley who was a Volkswagen specialist before being vacant for years and now back in presentable shape. After the meeting, Flip learned that Wiltsie was a son-in-law to Willig.

Next to that came a smallish house, another of the acre or two of road frontage split off from the bigger farm, just as the previous two, and it belonged to one of the Willig sons, Art.

Then came a similar house, split off from the farm, this one belonging to another Willig son, Paul Jr.

Then there is a largish lot, with the driveway back to a church that has changed names at least twice in the last several years. The first name was Christian Life Center, it having moved its base of operation from Main Street. Flip recalls that Sonny Richardson brought forty or so acres and gave part of it for the church. Now the rest of the parcel seems to be for sale.

Finally, we are back where we started –

at the Lauria house (or whoever owns it today), originally in Flip's memory the Willig farm. It is quite an ordinary modest house, much like the four north of it who built on their acre or two.

This is one of the two kinds of development we often see in Greenville. The other, of course, is buying a whole parcel and building roads to building more houses in the interior of the lot. Think Country Estates.

South of the Willig farmhouse is two more houses visible from the road. The first is the Rasmussen house, built in the 1950s for Cas and Harriet Rasmussen. Harriet is near and dear to my heart, a productive GLHGer for many years before her passing.

The next house, another road frontage parcel cut off from the farm, belonged to Ed and Phyllis Beechert. And Phyllis was another beloved GLHGer before her passing.

At the rear of these two houses, difficult to see from the road, is a brick house that is known as the Morfesi house. They operated an antique business for a while and then Mrs M resided there a long time after her husband's passing.

The newest kid on the block is next – Tractor Supply.

Finally, before we get to Bryants proper is a small house known to many as the Al Bryant house. When new plaza owners arrived, the house was slated for demolition but plans changed and the house still stands.

"Before it was Bryant's house, it belonged to a Werner who had a daughter Barbara. He was the first TV repairman in Greenville in the '50s. I remember my dad taking our old Sylvania set over to him with all the tubes. We went in his back room of that little house and then he had shelves and shelves of all the different tubes and boxes and all kinds of things and he repaired televisions and radios in the back of that little house."

Before we move on, Flip's flat bicycle tire must be told.

"I used to ride my bicycle from Newry over to my dad's barber shop in Greenville and spend some time there with him. He would put my bike in his trunk in the car and take me home in the evening for dinner. It was just something to do on a Saturday or any day.

This day, I was riding my rickety old bike to Shepard's Corners, as we called it, and I get a flat. I was deciding whether to push it back home

Lauria—Willig Farm; smaller parcels split off



a mile and a half or push on down to Greenville a mile and a half.

I decided to continue to Greenville. I was walking the bicycle down through and I got in front of Fred's service station. He was working on a vehicle in the garage bay.

It was a hot summer type afternoon, and the garage doors were open. When he saw me walking by with the bicycle, I remember calling out, "Hey, young man. Don't you know bicycles are for riding, not walking?"

I looked over at him. "I got a flat tire."

"If you bring that right in here, let's see if we can't do something about that."

He asked me if I knew how to fix a flat. I didn't.

"You're going to learn it right now. In fact you're going to do it."

He flipped my bicycle upside down, creating a tripod with the handlebars and the seat. In a matter of seconds, off came the chain, off came the rear wheel and onto his workbench. Off came the tube.

He found where the hole was, caused by a sharp rock or piece of glass.

He pulled off the shelf this little kit, a metal kit that was very popular, now an antique. I remember on the cover was a picture of a camel; I don't recall if they were called camel patches or not. The patch was a couple inches square, orange-ish colored. It also had a liquidy type glue inside. Once I roughed up the area where the hole was, I put on the patch.

"Okay, strike a match," he ordered.

Whoosh! Up in flame went this spot, we stood back, and the flame went out.

He waited a little bit for things to cool off, and the melted orange patch was in place. He took the air compressor to test.

Chatterton House, in better days



I told him I had no money. He asked, for the first time, who I was.

“Flip Flach.”

“Are you Joe the Barber’s boy?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you get going, tell your dad and I will settle with him. I will need a haircut soon.”

He must have taken care of it without my knowing it.

This very nice gesture was one I have remembered ever since and it really persuaded me as a kid that an adult who didn’t know me would do that for me. It has lasted my whole life.

Back to the tour. We arrived at the Bryant’s complex, it was nearing the witching hour and Don decided that Bryants would have to wait until the July meeting. Not only do we have the store to mention but also all the other things going on around it. And Garth might be in the area also.

But Don had promised Connie Chatterton Barrett that the meeting would cover the Chatterton house if she were present. And she was there with brother Tony. So we skipped all the way to the Chatterton house for our last stop of the evening’s tour.

Flip remembered little or nothing about the Chatterton house so he deferred to Connie. And Connie has a ton of information that should be a program, or at least a half-program, sometime. For now, it will be a short paragraph.

The Chatterton house is associated with the Spees family, one of the “original” three who are recognized with historical markers. (The other two are Knowles and Lake.) Connie notes that the Lake name is associated with the house also.

The current site is an overgrown brush

pile since the house was razed, much to the horror of local historians. It is one of the two desecrations of local history structures of the past quarter century. (The second one will be in the July meeting.)

However, a house has stood there since about 1800. The Chatterton connection is through Connie’s great-grandmother, Anna Spees who married a Chatterton.

The next generation saw May Chatterton at the house. May is often credited with the founding of the Clematis Club

And then May’s nephew Bob, with wife Barbara and three children, anchored the history of that house.

We have reached the end of our tour of Rt 32 North for now. We now have to call it Part I, with Part II coming in July. And I think we will be hard pressed to get to the four corners, if this account is any reflection.

A wide round of applause goes to Flip for recalling so many memories of places that people of a certain age can remember. And people of different ages remember different parts.

Thank you, Flip, for gathering your memories and making it look so effortless.

Quick Notes

Recent obits: We note with sadness, and in celebration, the passing of two community members. Pat Elsbree and Phyllis Skidmore both contributed so much to our community.

Pat was a long-time member of GLHG and was selected for GLHG Recognition in 2015.

Art: Community Room Exhibitions Coordinator Debra Teator pointed to Pamela Quick’s one woman show currently displayed. And she reminded everyone that May 18 is the one day showing of a variety of artists at the Ingalls Pavilion at the Vanderbilt Town Park.

The light refreshments that I persistently promise attendees was made possible once again through the volunteer efforts of Stephanie Ingalls and Christine Mickelsen.

Walter Preisner is still progressing on his Observation Tower preservation project. This will be given fuller attention later in the year.