

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

April 2025, Issue 334

Greenville Cemetery Association Board

The nicest day of the week, and of the week ahead as forecast, invited the evening's attendees: John Snider, Joyce Chase, Judy Rundell, Bill Von Atzingen Barbara Valicenti, Lew Knott, Sharon & Pat Pugsley, John Earl, Gail NicholSEN, Dennis Mower, David Tschinkel, Johanna & Robert Titus, Bill Quackenbush, Marie Harder, Roland Reissig, Eileen & Ed Volmar, Doris Philipp, Mary Lou Nahas, Katja & Paul Rehm, Barbara & Clark Ryndak, Rachel Ceasar, Amy Short, Flip Flach, Charlene & Ken Mabey, Tom Baumann, Carolyn Savery, Caroline Pollard, Stephanie Ingalls, Christine Mickelsen, Debra & Don Teator, and likely a few others who neither signed in or stuck to my memory cells the morning after.

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The confluence of two streams of activity led to this evening's program – A Local History Gem – The Greenville Cemetery.

Generally, the local history family has found our local cemeteries to be havens of bucolic peacefulness as well as havens of healing.

More particularly, I have visited my share of cemeteries, often searching for the final resting places of relatives and community members. I find comfort knowing that great-grandfather Alexander Teator is buried in Potter Hollow, that his father is buried at Stone Store Rd Cem, Livingstonville, and so on. And as president of the Freehold Cemetery Association, I have come to appreciate more fully the need of our fellow community friends and members for a final resting spot for their loved ones.

The second strand involves my conversations with several volunteer Greenvillers who undertake their role as Greenville Cemetery Association board members. They oversee the visual, financial, and functional integrity of the Town's largest cemetery. As their coun-

terpart for the Freehold Cemetery, I share similar concerns, hopes, rewards, and frustrations.

And, thus, over the course of this past year, the idea of sharing the history of our local gem while also elucidating the details of maintaining it took shape and revealed itself to the few dozen who came out for the start of the 2025 GLHG season.

First the maps. The square of Rt 32, Irving Rd, Turon Rd, Rt 26 leading into Main Street contains a little under 300 acres. Occupying almost 20 of those acres, in the far southwest corner of that block, with an entrance on Rt 32 across from the library, and an entrance on Rt 8 behind Kelly's Pharmacy, lies the Greenville Cemetery.

Nine of those acres are developed. This land is divided by graveled roadways and grassy lanes into sections, almost fifteen of them. This organization allows for somewhat easier ingress for larger machinery to access a particular spot.

Those of you knowing Greenville's history know the area was settled since the end of the America Revolution. Those of you who read Garth Bryant's series of articles on historical markers and of his search for Edward Lake know the ownership of land was greatly unsettled for the first twenty years of Greenville's existence. This is mentioned because the search for the beginnings of the Greenville Cemetery has led to a fog of possibilities.

A classic local history research resource, the 1884 Beer's History of Greene County, with its accompanying account of each town, offers no help. The Prevost Cemetery (Locust, on Maple Avenue) is mentioned, as are two cemeteries in Freehold: the Indian (Old Freehold) and the newer Freehold Cemetery. How does the largest cemetery in the Town avoid mention in a history of the area?

Digging through the maze of opportunities at the Greene County office where tax maps and deeds are stored, our GCA historian, Jack Van Auken, came across the application for the formation of the Greenville Cemetery Association. Surprising almost all of us, the formation date was 1894. Yes, 1894. (wording of association later in newsletter)

Where was the cemetery before this? Given the dates on the stones, one is left with only a single guess – exactly where it is now. The earliest dates of death in the cemetery, as one might guess, with death no respecter of humans' activity calendars, are a few years after the Town's settlement in 1781. As the wave of settlement crescendos over the next five decades, proof of their settlement shows on the cemetery monuments. Of course there are a few middle sized, and about fifteen smaller, cemeteries dotting the Greenville map outside the hamlet, all of them homes for early settlers also.

One can speculate that community members, by late 19th century, were concerned about the upkeep of their hamlet's burying ground.

Jack guesses there could have been several hundred burials on land that was not officially set aside as a cemetery. Thus, a dozen community members, most apparently members of the Presbyterian Society, were the organizers of this Association. (The wording of this legal document, found in the Greene County offices is placed later in this newsletter.)

As more burials pushed the boundaries of the existing space, the search for bordering lands continued for the next ninety years (see photo).

—In 1894, Charles Tallmadge, et. al., deeded to the Trustees of the Greenville Cemetery Association (note: this reference says 1890, conflicting with the legal paper)

—In 1923, thirty years later, Jane Cowdery and Mary Gilbert Knowles deeded the next section.

—In 1927, the next transfer came from the Trustees of the Presbyterian Society.

—In 1930, more land was transferred from Helen Rundell and Israel Palmer.

—In 1948, more land was transferred from Jane Knowles Cowdery and Mary Gilbert Knowles.

—In 1956, more land, this time from the Stevens Farm Store, Inc.

—The final transfer came in 1981, this time from Marla McManus, as executrix of Ruth T. Stevens.

And it is likely that more available land is needed, either as a new purchase or as development of the ten acres still remaining although those undeveloped acres will present some challenges.

And so year after year found the cemetery visited families lying their loved ones to rest, perhaps at a rate of 30-50 a year on average, with a lower number, perhaps, in the recent decades. The exact number was a guess by some members of GCA.

A listing of all the people interred in the cemetery, or of the names on the markers, is found in a useful website, in an act of re-

search that boggles the mind. Starting about 1990, Sylvia Hasenkopf endeavored to transcribe the cemetery monuments of not only the Greenville Cemetery, not only the Town of Greenville, but of, .. drumroll.., all of Greene County.

One can start with the list for all of Greene County, at [https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/cemetery\\_records\\_greene.htm](https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/cemetery_records_greene.htm)

Narrowing, one can go to the Town of Greenville: [https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/cemeteries\\_greenville.htm](https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/cemeteries_greenville.htm)

Finally, one closes in to the Greenville Cemetery: [https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/greenville\\_cemetery.htm](https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/greenville_cemetery.htm)

The viewer will find about 4,000 entries (bless you, Sylvia). And with a little computer magic, one can search the listing for particular names. Caution: Jack announced that once a person starts, it is addicting.

One act of curiosity let to the finding of some of the earliest dates to be found on the stones. A small subset includes:  
Some of the oldest grave dates:

- Aaron Hall, b 1759; wife Emm Knowles, b 1770

- Mary Smith, 1768
- Samuel B Spees, 1770 (son/o Ben. Spees)
- Edmond Robbins, b. 1772
- Aaron Lake, 1770; wife Rebecca Tuttle b. 1782
- Dr Amos Botsford, 1780

Because I was wondering what happened to Benjamin Spees, one of the three early founders, and finding nothing, I did stumble across this:

—In Memory of Mrs. Jane Spees, w/o Benjamin Spees, Esq., d. February 24, 1812, 75 th year of her age, formerly of Milford, County of New Haven, Connecticut. Also on the left lie the remains of the above named Benjamin Spees Esq., who departed this life January 27th 1816 in the 76th year of his age—

If the writer's math is correct, the Greenville Cemetery contains a person born in 1740!

Just to give the reader a taste of what you will find, here are four lines, from Section I:

- 121. Elizabeth, w/o Amos Botsford, d. October 3, 1855, aged \_7y
- 122. Dr. Amos Botsford, b. February 13, 1780, d. August 16, 1864
- 123. Joseph C. Botsford, b. September 5, 1808, d. May 1, 1874
- 124. David Calhoun, d. August 23, 1805, aged 69y

I personally find Section II fascinating for the long list of names under a single number. A

Tax maps of Greenville Cemetery and neighbors



visit to the cemetery shows why, with the greatest concentration of tall monuments placed here, with names of family members listed. More recent trends have a person or a couple on a stone, not six to ten people as happens frequently in Section II. Sylvia's map on her web page is reproduced in this newsletter.



Three structures on the grounds

A dozen slides showed views of the cemetery – from multiple angles, from the greenery of early summer to the drabness of mid-March. The slides show a beautiful cemetery, one where an hour or two of quiet and mediation could be found, even without knowing anything of the names seen. The newsletter contains a bonus attachment of a couple of those shots for the email receivers.

Another slide juxtaposed three buildings within the cemetery confines. One was the crypt at the cemetery entrance, with info from Jack about the fossil stones that comprise it and the heavy metal doors behind it that once formed the gate by the roadside. Another building was the small white shed at the end of the straightway of the entry. The third was a sizable mausoleum in the far northeast corner.

Another slide showed a range of monument faces with the modern day etching showing local scenes, some even colorized. One monument is a bench to be used. Of personal note, it is of James Adams, a family friend and Class of 1971.

One slide listed the names most commonly found. Among them and the number of times found: Smith 53, Stevens 46, Palmer 33, Knowles 29, Sanford 26, Lake 24, Roe 23, Coonley 22, Baker 22, Francis 21, and Spees 19.

The presentation took ten minutes to highlight two purposes of visiting a cemetery: one is to recognize those people who played significant roles in the community (local history), and one is to remember those people near and dear to our hearts.

I chose two people, of about the twelve shown, from the Beers history section showing prominent Greenvillers. Shown was the sketch, short summary of the historical piece, a photo of the monu-

ment, and the transcription from the monument of Orrin C Stevens and Frederick Coonley.

Following, two GCA members were asked to select a monument in the cemetery. Bill Von Atzingen selected the monument that included his father's step-mother, Louise Von Atzingen (on the same stone is Bill's father and mother). Bill explained that Louise was the first of the Von to be buried in Greenville, and also explained the origins of Von Atzingen family.

Then, Jack Van Auken, having selected William Burrow, explained a mystery. For years, Jack, while attending his Episcopal Church, noted that in the peak of the west wall stood a trio of stained glass windows reading: Memorial of – William Burrows – his Munificence. Jack found a clue some years ago when, surprise, he discovered the WB is buried in the Greenville Cemetery. His monument reads:



---In Memory of William Burrows, aged 90. A native of Ireland and long resident of this Town. A man of candour, integrity and liberality. His friends will remember his generous deeds and Christ Church, Greenville, will always be a noble monument to his munificence, Obit April 23, MDCCCLXV [1865]--- Jack concluded that his William Burrows was a generous contributor to the building of the Episcopal Church. Burrows would have been in his mid-80s when the church was built on its present site on the later 1850s, having moved from the original site in East Greenville.

This concluded the local history part of the program and ventured into the purpose of the Greenville Cemetery Board – Maintenance.

For the record, the current GCA Board: Bill Von Atzingen (president), Amy Short (secretary), Deb Jones (treasurer), Jack Van Auken, Tom Baumann, Bill Quackenbush, John McAneny, John Lafferty, Jeanette Ingalls, Kevin Baumann, and Stephanie Ingalls.

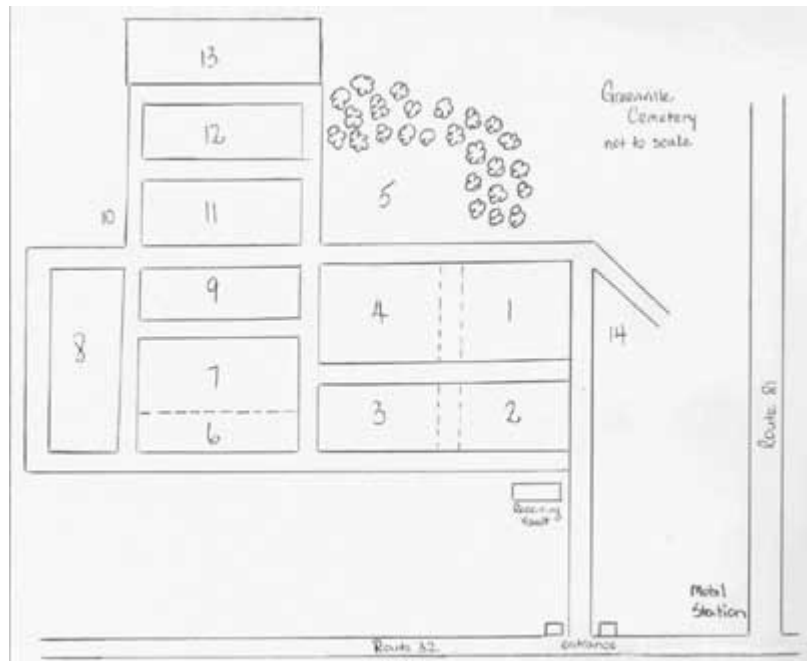
One slide summarized the various angles of responsibility:

- Good Appearance
- Financial Safety
- Wear & Tear
- Division of Cemeteries
- Public Comments

Good appearance is somewhat subjective but a tour by Jack and Don a few weeks earlier, shown in the slides, clarified some of the issues: grass mowing and edging, leaning and falling stones, aging trees, overgrown shrubs, mowing obstacles (sunken ground, debris, short monuments), roadways to be made drivable, disposal of brush and excess dirt, development of more burial spots, and water issues.

The Greenville Cemetery, as do all cemeteries, come under the purview of NYS Division of Cemeteries who will inspect and audit the operation and finances of cemeteries.

And in the day of social media, the opinions of people are bandied about, with the



Sylvia's map of cemetery  
Rt 32 on bottom of map

negative ones usually drawing more attention.

For a mostly unpaid community group of volunteers, this can be a daunting task.

It should be noted that this Board is the group responsible for the operation, not the Town of Greenville, not Cunningham's Funeral Home. Recent trends have indicated that this Board can use all the help it used to receive and then more. And here is why.

### Finances (Expenses)

The Board, on average needs about \$30,000 a year to pay expenses.

- Grounds maintenance – 15,800
- Insurance – 2300
- NYS fees – 5500
- Payroll – 5000
- and future improvements are not even figured in

### Finances (Income)

Plots sales are the major source of income. It has varied widely, with two recent consecutive years showing \$4,000 one year and \$17,000 the next. A relatively small investment fund of about \$15,000 is a rainy day fund, the math says it is good for a half-year.



## I want to support the GCA's work to maintain the Greenville Cemetery

With your donation, we can continue to provide the necessary maintenance to ensure the Greenville Cemetery remains the beautiful and serene resting place for so many of our loved ones.

Enclosed is my check payable to the Greenville Cemetery Association to support the Greenville Cemetery.

### Donation Levels:

☐ \$10    ☐ \$25    ☐ \$50    ☐ \$100    ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form and your check to:

Greenville Cemetery Association, PO Box 26, Greenville, NY 12083

GCA finances are critically low.

And thus the GCA, for the first time, is appealing to the community for donations, likely to be made on an annual basis. Recently, a town-wide mailing explained the history of the cemetery and Association, the duties of the Association, the need for funding, and the reason to donate now.

I know some of you receiving this newsletter have already seen the mailer and have contributed and GCA is appreciative of your support. For those of you out of town, this informational alerts you to the need.

Copied below are two segments of this letter:

**Why does the GCA need funding?** All of this work requires funding. Until now, the GCA has accomplished this work without seeking outside financial help. However, the GCA has arrived at a moment where it is unable to cover the financial needs of the cemetery and necessary improvements are mounting. The funding the GCA receives from fees for interments, sales of plots, and donations from family and friends of the deceased, while helpful, is not adequate to continue the high standards of maintenance to preserve

this sacred space.

**Why donate to GCA?** As a member, or former member, of our Greenville community, you likely have family and friends laid to rest in the Greenville Cemetery. You understand the importance of honoring the memories of those we love, and those who served us in the military, and you are committed to preserving the Greenville Cemetery as a dignified and respectful place for reflection and remembrance. The Greenville Cemetery is a significant part of our local history, and your support helps preserve this valuable cultural legacy and sacred resting place for future generations.

---Thank you in advance for your consideration and support

---The Greenville Cemetery Association

An important note must be added here. Failure to raise enough funds means running short of money to pay bills, resulting in a practical bankruptcy. The immediate consequence of this will be the turnover of maintenance to the Town of Greenville, to be paid for by taxpayers of the Town, something that happened to the Locust Cemetery in the 1990s.

The other key ingredient is for a cohesive group of volunteers to oversee the management of the cemetery. That group is in place for now, and many thanks are extended to this Board. More volunteers are always needed – contact any Board member, or email the Board: [GreenvilleCemeteryAssociation@gmail.com](mailto:GreenvilleCemeteryAssociation@gmail.com)

And thus our evening ended with the hope that the goals of the GCA Board and the Town Historian were mostly realized – to share the local history gem the cemetery is and to alert the community that a community effort is needed to continue private management.

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**Incorporation for the  
Greenville Cemetery Association**  
as transcribed by the Town Historian

We, Charles R. Knowles, Chairman, and Edgar Hartt, Secretary, do hereby certify that a meeting was held in the Village and Town of Greenville, Greene County, N. Y. on the thirteenth day of October 1894, for the purpose of forming an Association for the purpose of procuring and holding lands to be used exclusively for a cemetery

That Charles R. Knowles was appointed chairman and Edgar Hartt, Secretary, by a vote of the majority of the persons present at the Meeting,

That the names of the association who attended such a meeting are as follows, viz: Charles Knowles, James Stevens, Wm. S. Vanderbilt, Reverend E. D. Van Dyke, John H. Sanford, Madison P. Stevens, Edward Wakeley, Peter Winne, Edgar Hartt, Theodore Coonley, Henry Talmadge, David E Powell, Lorenzo Coonley

That the Corporate name of the Association determined upon by the majority of the persons who met is the Greenville Cemetery Association

That the number of the trustees fixed on to manage the concerns of the association is twelve (12)

That the names of the trustees chosen at the meeting and their classifications are as follows for one year: Henry Botsford, Edward Wakeley, Peter Winne, and John H Sanford

For two years: William S Vanderbilt, Lorenzo D Stewart, Charles R Knowles, and Edgar Hartt

For 3 years: Sylvester W Story, Orrin Stevens, Theodore Coonley and Madison Pierce Stevens.

That the day fixed for the annual election of Trustees is the first Tuesday after the second Monday in October of each year

[signature]

Chas. R Knowles chairman

Edgar Hartt secretary

State of New York, County of Greene, on the fifteenth day of October in the year 1894

Before me came Charles R Knowles as chairman and Edgar Hartt as Secretary of the Greenville Cemetery Association to me, knowing and known to me to be the Individuals described in, and who executed the foregoing Certificate of Incorporation and severally acknowledge that they executed the same.

October 17, 1894

James P Stevens, notary public

## Next Meeting

May: no May meeting

June: the Hay Press and the influence of agriculture in Greenville and Greene County: presenters Town of New Baltimore Historian Ted Hilscher and Greene County Historian Jonathan Palmer. I will disseminate details after my return from the cruise.

## Thank You, Jack >>>>>>

Jack Van Auken's enthusiasm and love of the Greenville Cemetery and the Episcopal Church shone deeply and brightly! Left to his own devices, Jack could easily have taken us to midnight talking about some of the people interred in the Greenville Cemetery. With Jack's help and guidance, a program was pulled together, a mighty fine program, I must confess.

## Historian's Records

One of my winter projects was to organize the Historian's records room. Thirty-five years of collecting and creating records has resulted in dozens of shelf feet of material. And I do take pride in that and accept all the thank you's and congratulations that are offered me.

But,... but that accomplishment would greatly diminish if one major shortcoming were to happen. And I have witnessed that shortcoming in sites that were well intentioned and thoughtful and sharing. But....

And that one shortcoming is to not know where "stuff" is. If I cannot find, for example, the Botsford file that was placed in my files in 2005, even after a couple hours of looking, I might question the purpose of my collecting. And niggling at the back of my brain as I get older is the thought of succession. At some point, the Town Historian position will pass to another dedicated soul. If that person can say – Don Teator collected a lot of good stuff, and I can find it – I will take that as one of the highest honors of my service to Greenville.

And, so, attached in the email version, is a map series to the Archives. One map is the overall map. The other six each detail the holdings of each of the six shelf walls.

I have some finishing touches to go but I would enjoy any questions or comments you have.



Jack Van Auken, Don Teator

## Notes:

—A thank you goes, once again, for another year's start, to Stephanie Ingalls and Christine Mickelsen for providing the often promised light refreshments. Your generosity, creativity, and service is so appreciated.

—Deb Teator, besides assisting as slideshow assistant, also updated the audience on news from the Clematis Club (Peter Bowden, of Hewitt's commercials fame, is the guest at the May 16 meeting, 1 pm, at the American Legion Hall) and about the artwork hanging in the gallery where we sit. Arts Around Greenville is still thriving; find the Community Partners website, or Arts Around Greenville, for more.

—The attendance for the first meeting of the year was exceptional, always appreciated. Such excellent attendance, though, does necessitate extricating chairs from the small community room, even with Rensselaerville play practice going on. Extra pairs of hands, both delivering and then returning the chairs, is much appreciated. Thank you to Den and Flip and Bill for your help. If I missed you, I abjectly apologize.