

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

May 1995, Issue #70

VE Day - 50th Anniversary

May of 1995 for the Greenville Local History Group meant commemorating the 50th anniversary of VE Day, a program we had been planning on since last fall. The usual number of regular members and a handful of other community members pushed the attendance almost to twenty-five.

As was true for our other WWII program, a special note of thank you goes to Arlene Brown for organizing and coordinating the many parts.

After a brief welcome and introduction of everybody present, the program opened with Arlene reading a selection that humorously reminded people of the lifestyle before 1945. Some of it dealt with technology and morals, but some of the humor came from different meanings of words.

Margaret Bogardus read selections from her diary she kept from 1939-1945 when she was a school teacher at GCS. Taking nearly a half hour, Margaret's variety of readings showed one person's perspective of this time. She and her husband Charles were operating a store and coping with rations, even while he was facing enlistment. Obviously, Margaret's account incorporates a teacher's perspective and the role thrust upon the teachers to help with the ration cards. Blackouts, practice air raids, sugar and gas rationing, weather, the death of FDR, Scott Ellis' attention to detail, worrying about relatives and friends, etc., were all parts of an era that became a defining moment in many a young person's life.

Taking time for the men's stories, Arlene alternated between the genders and the type of stories each tell. David Gumport told about his experience in the Pacific, and about his growing up years.

Edna McAneny told about her experience as a SPARS and women's contribution to the war effort.

Ray Bennett shared his experience at Saipan and Okinawa.

Thelma Bell recounted the agony her family suffered in Norway.

Pat Lambe and his brother (from England) told their stories as boys going through the London bombings. (Amazing how people can take terrifying situations and make them so humorous years later.)

Other people pitching in with their stories were Jeanne Bear, Chris McDonald, Toot Vaughn, Perry Palmer, Harriet Rasmussen, and Joe Mangold (sorry, I may have forgotten a couple names!).

Although the recounting of tales ended about

9:30, I suspected we could have gone on till midnight. We still took the next half hour to look at the collection of newspaper headlines, medals, ration books, magazines, Italian newspapers, photographs, scrapbooks, and other mementos from fifty years ago.

Don's videotape of most of this two hour program will be added to the collection of oral history of Greenville, and will be available to use.

Thus ends what may well be one of our last best chances to remember a time when history hung in the balance. The recent spate of TV specials and cable programs certainly refresh our memories but the local effect on small towns like Greenville can only be done by get-togethers like this. For those of you who care how or what people remember about what really happened during this time, this is a reminder to make some notes, write out, audiotape, videotape, somehow leave a reminder for the future.

To those of you shared and listened, thank you.

Reminders:

1. Mark your calendars for our next meeting on June 12th. Instead of a share session, we'll do our Artist of the Year Profile program. Stanley Maltzman, probably our best known local artist, will be the feature, and with him comes a chance to buy his new book on drawing nature. (about \$25, I believe) I think Stanley will talk about his career and his relationship with this area; bring questions and feel free to invite a guest or two to recognize one of our regionally known residents.
2. Another note about Stanley's book. He is having several book signings. A few of them are:
May 18 - Thurs Delmar Library 7pm-9pm
May 21 - Sun Barnes & Noble 2pm-4pm
May 28 - Sun South Westerlo* 2pm-5pm
(*at home of Anthony De Vito on Rt. 405, a few houses from the old Blue Churn.)
3. Our July meeting will be a share session. By then, we will have had three months to have worked on something.
4. You may notice a small change in the heading; in addition to the month & year, I'll list the number of newsletter it is. My figure comes from: 1989 had 7 issues, 1990 - 12 issues, 1991 - 12 issues, 1992 - 12 issues, 1993 - 10 issues, 1994 - 9 issues, 1995 - this is the 2nd issue, and 6 annual reports.

The R.E. Taylor Diaries - 1888
transcribed by Harriet Rasmussen

The Taylor Family in 1888 - R.E.-59; Louisa-56;
Howard-28; Addie-26; Isabelle-24; Dwight-20;
Mary-14.

On the 31st of December 1887, R.E. Taylor went to the County Clerk's Office in Catskill where he took the oath for Justice of Peace for the Town of Durham. Apparently, he was going to do it right because on January 12th, he wrote to Wm. Gould & Co. in Albany enclosing a \$20 check on Tanners Bank in Catskill for 3 Vols. of *Watts Law & Practice* and 1 *McCalls Civil & Crime Justice*.

On January 3, 1888, he delivers his daughter Addie to the school she is teaching at Sandy Plains. Addie boards there during the week and someone goes after her every Friday. That school term ends on May 9th. On May 14th, she starts teaching in South Cairo. R.E. Taylor does not teach at all in 1888.

All through the year of 1888, he is trading in Catskill where he sells butter, eggs, apples, hides, buckwheat, flour, chestnuts, beef, port, etc. He is buying butter and eggs especially from other farmers to supply his regular customers. On January 14th, he paid 60¢ toll at the bridge for 5 loads of straw. He also sends butter to Nyack, New York City and Savannah, Georgia.

January had some severe weather that year. From Jan 22nd to Jan 25th, the temperatures were 6 below; 12 below, 4 below; 6 below and on Jan 26th, there was another below zero spell. There was snow off and on during that month. But on February 28th, Dwight went after grist at the mill and broke the bobs drawing on bare places in the road. They had to be taken to Madison More who put the dash on again for 50¢. There appears to be the calm before the storm when, on March 10th, he reports "the snow melting fast. Court Wood came down and took the buggy apart and put in the hen house to paint."

March 12: Monday- Snow and blow all day. The worst drifts of the winter. staid indoor.

March 13: Tuesday- Cold and windy until near night the wind went down. I have staid indoors all day.

March 14: Wednesday- The boys have shoveled snow all day - not done yet - the worst of any snow we have had since I have been on this farm.

March 15: Thursday - They have finished opening the road today. I drove through.

March 16: Friday- Dwight has been cleaning snow from outbuildings. (This of course, was the Blizzard of '88.)

In this year, R.E. prepares a variety of documents for people and administers oaths for various offices. At the end of March, Amos Cleveland comes to make oath to his return as postmaster of East Durham Post Office. From time to time this year, he is called upon to issue summons and listen to cases. In August, he copies the electors in his voting district to sent to the State Democratic Committee. In October, he is delegate at Convention.

The house gets a new coat of paint this year. On April 26th, Court Wood starts painting it white. We know the color of the shutters because on May 2nd, green lead paint is purchased for them. Court Wood hung them on May 21st and on May 25th he received \$12.50 pay for the whole job.

On May 12th, the entry reads, "George and I have been to the cemetery and set the headstone to our little child. The Cemetery Association elected me President of the Society today." This a reference to the Winston Cemetery in East Durham, where one month old Cora Mae Taylor was buried 16 years ago in April of 1872. On May 17th, Louisa gets a call to assist in laying Mrs. Barlow out. She is the neighbor across the creek. R.E. goes to East Durham with Warren Barlow and sells him a cemetery lot. (I do not understand this entry because I have copied from Mrs. Mary Jane Barlow's tombstone at Locust Cemetery.)

In June, R.E. and Louisa take a trip to Cooperstown and that is a story for another time.

This has been a year like many before it with the men doing the usual cutting and threshing of oats and rye, drawing of hay, selling of sheep, worming of the apple trees, butchering of pork and beef, etc. The household is still at nine. Mary, R.E. and Louisa's youngest child, is now 14 years old and often accompanies her father on his trips to sell produce at Catskill. George and Belle Allen and two small children are still living there were George is the hired man. George's father dies in early October and Addie starts teaching at the school built on the corner lot of their property, at \$4.50 per week. R.E. Taylor has more frequent bouts of asthma and rheumatism, but, in general, it has been a busy, productive year.