

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

May 1996, Issue #79

Orlie & Jeanne Bear

An excellent turnout, almost 20, came out on a cool May evening, including Kathy Williams, Alice Roe, Cris Ketcham, David & Judy Rundell, Chris McDonald, Toot & Betty Vaughn, Ron Golden, Dave Dively, Dot Blenis, Gerald Boomhower, Margaret Bogardus, Joe Mangold, John Earl, Connie Teator, Ray & Marge Bennett, Don Teator, and Orlie and Jeanne Bear.

What was the attraction?

Of course, it was the program — Orlie and Jeanne Bear's personal look at Greenville. And a good time we had, for those of you who missed it. Somehow, something that sounded real simple turned into a memoryfest of names and places of the last seventy years, and a bit further for a few others.

We started with Orlie's family, starting with the great-grandfather at Potter Hollow, the grandfather on the Medusa Road just out of Norton Hill, and Orlie's father on Plattekill Road (on the tip of the SunnyHill Golf Course). Other topics included the neighbors, size of farm, and family.

At some point, we got Jeanne's family background and schooling in Hartford, CT. After college at Syracuse, she found herself in Greenville at a school that had had no art teacher for the whole year until she got there in May. She detailed some "spirited" student behavior; of course, she wasn't much older than the students.

Jeanne commented on her first few residences (one with a landlord who threatened to call Jeanne's mother if Jeanne didn't stay home at least one night a week), early impressions of Greenville, and meeting a handsome young man named Orlie Bear.

Between the two of them, we traced

them from their living in the Golden house on South Street to their current residence on Routh 81. Intermixed with this was Orlie's work history, from the farm with his father to truck driving and deliveries to buying out Pierce Stevens' farm machinery business to his own farm. Orlie related how Scott Ellis persuaded him to drive bus on a "trial basis", as well as describing his delivery business and the names of people who used to live in the area.

Jeanne talked about her work with 4-H and how membership often reflected the social forces at work in our community. In addition, Jeanne talked about school stories (with some help from Margaret) and about her kids and lessons taught to all our kids.

For those of you who thought the rest of us sat around listening quietly, well, you should know better. Stories spun off of stories that were spun off from other stories, and anyone who's ever been to our meetings knows that at least a few times we had a few conversations going on at the same time. Most of this was captured on audiotape, and some day when I get the initiative, I'll try to capture the main parts into written form. (I'm guessing more than a few minutes was wiped out from the multiple conversations; and even though I could hear most of them, the audiotape is less forgiving.)

A thank you goes to Orlie and Jeanne for acting as center stage, and recalling so much of the essence of Greenville. The only regret I have is that we barely touched on the service and volunteer activities that both Jeanne and Orlie have undertaken. Perhaps, another session like this would allow us to tackle the unfinished topics.

And, of course, this is a perfect place to put in my plea that all of us try to write down some of the memories we have from our lives. Another option would be to audio-tape your memories, either by yourself or with someone else asking questions. Much of what you take for granted can quickly become a memory that grows increasingly dim.

Other notes:

1. The next meeting will be a share session on June 10th.
2. Heeeeellpppp! I need help on captions for next year's calendar. First, what were some of the uses of the corner restaurant/IGA building that was torn down in the 1960s? Who were some of the occupants? Any information on the drugstore - McCabe, Hallenbeck, who's next? and when? And what was the May Day ceremony at the Academy like?
3. Orrin Stevens gave a presentation on the Butler tinware on May 15th at the Vedder Library. He detailed tinware history, changes, the Butler family, and presented nearly a dozen pieces of tinware. Some of you saw

the tinware during the 1990 Home Tour; Orrin's presentation made you feel like you knew what you were looking at.

4. Attention was drawn to Cris Ketcham's national service award from the DAR. Congratulations, Cris.
5. I don't say it enough but a thank you goes to Chris McDonald for her consistent PR of local history events.
6. A thank you goes to Dave Dively who presented the GLHG with a copy of the 4th grade project, a series of interviews and essays about local buildings, people and events.
7. John Earl teased us to identify something that looked like a cross of an old-fashioned toaster and a lamp missing the wick. After we were not able to guess exactly what it was, he took out the missing piece—the old metal iron that would have been heated on this device for the ironing person.
8. The Taylor Diary - 1894, as summarized by Harriet, is reprinted in this newsletter.



R. E. Taylor Diary - 1894

The very first day of the New Year starts off with two events of note. R.E. Taylor draws three subscription papers to get a leg for Court Van Tassell. Does this mean he is taking donations to purchase a wooden leg? And there is a Cantata in Greenville that night. Dwight takes sisters Addie and Mary.

In January, Mary, at 20 years of age, starts a new venture. Bronk Van Slyke, who is sister Addie's beau, comes from New Baltimore and takes Mary to Indian Fields where she will board and learn the art of dressmaking. She comes home on an occasional weekend when Bronk brings her. There is no mention of the family picking her up on Fridays like they did when she was teaching. Her course apparently finished, she comes home to stay on April 26th. But in July her father gives her \$5.00 to pay for lessons in dress-cutting at Hensonville. Mary does not teach at all this year.

The year does not begin on a healthy note. On January 4th, Seward Goodfellow, the hired man, is sick. By January 7th, Louisa is not well and a visit to neighbor George Cunningham finds him also sick. By the 14th, the whole Cunningham family is down with the prevailing illness. Louis does not improve and by the end of the week Dwight goes after Addie to take care of her mother. Addie is still teaching at New Baltimore and apparently can only spare a week at home because on the 17th, they get Emogene Cleveland to come and stay a few days. She is the 52 year old daughter of Louisa's sister, Ruth, who died last year. By January 24th, Louisa begins to improve enough so that R.E. can stay with her while Emogene makes a short trip to Leeds. Addie comes again on the weekend and apparently Emogene can go home because R.E. records, "Emogene would not take pay for her work." But they must still need help because Dwight goes up to Wright Street and brings Polly, brother William's widow, to stay with them.

On February 6th, R.E. writes, "We remain about the same - if anything some better, but slow." And the following day, "Louisa let Polly go and I gave her \$2.00 for her help." Remember that poor Polly has been there for two weeks. There is contact with the Zelies again in March when A. Zelie comes to qualify for Game Protector.

In February, it is time to look for some farm help and on the 22nd, R.E. writes, "Potter Cameron came over this morning and I hired him for 8 months at \$20 per month - to commence April 1st." Actually he starts by sawing wood on March 27th. By April 3rd, he is sowing grass seed and plowing. He sows the first oats (14 bushels) on April 16th. Five weeks later, Potter comes down with mumps and has to go home.

In March, Taylor seems to have quite a bit of paper work to attend to. On March 12th, "Mrs. Lyons from Cairo came to have writings done." And on March 13th, "Made 3 papers for C.B Wood in regard to his offices." (C.B. - Court - is his friend whose son, Leon Wood, once ran the Freehold Store.) On March 23rd, "Took deed to W. Winans to be executed - charged 50¢ for it - he did not pay." And in April, he finishes license papers for Mrs. Woodruff. Also, he works a difficult problem in bank discount for Miss Hattie Greene of New Baltimore.

The Ides of March brings snow and by the next morning, Taylor notes, that there are 3 inches on the ground. In spite of the snow, there is a lot of activity in the barn. Three cows have calves born and all are doing well. A few days later, the lambing begins and he starts to record the numbers being born. On April 8th, there is another 4 inches of snowfall. Nevertheless, on April 11th, he writes, "We planted potatoes, onion & peas in the garden and had several snow squalls during it - until after which stuck to it steady - 4" at 5 o'clock" The following day, "Snowing yet this morning - 6" deep."

Planting begins in earnest. On April 16th, "Potter set out the blackberry roots." April 24th, "I went after my trees to George Whites and set them." On April 26th, "George White brought 6 currant bushes - Fay's Prolific - I paid him \$2.30 for the trees and bushes." On May 5th, "I heard from my trees at Youmans Haight's & went after them - 6 apple & 2 pear trees & set them out." By May 10th, they start to plant the corn.

In May, the entry on the 16th reads, "Willie & Hanford Miller pressed my rye straw today - over 7 tons of it." On May 23rd, "We took 9 bales rye - 1844 lbs. to Cairo & sent to N.Y. by cars & boat." On the same day, Mr. & Mrs. Peck of Palenville come to hire Addie to cook for them during the boarding season. I don't know if this materializes. Perhaps, because there are not the usual reports of Addie's activities at home for a

while. However, on September 17th, she starts teaching at East Durham for four months at \$30 per month.

While Potter Cameron is home nursing a case of mumps, Dwight makes five trips to Cairo with rye straw to be put on the train - 10,810 pounds in all. Poor Potter loses two whole weeks and one day of work for which he will see no pay.

On June 1st, R.E. makes a trip to Greenville to have impressions made for false teeth. On June 14th, he writes, "Dr. Smith brought my teeth here and I paid him \$10.00 for them." Imagine this home delivery of teeth. He never once mentions how these things fit his mouth.

At the beginning of June, the boarders begin to arrive one or two at a time. One man comes with a wife and baby which necessitates a trip to Cairo after a baby carriage. The rate for board is now \$6.00 a week. On a later trip to Cairo, he cashes a \$47.50 check at John Alden's store. This is the store now known as Roberts Department Store.

Business picks up and August seems especially busy transporting boarders to and from the farm. During that same month, Celinda Lord spends two weeks with them. It is the first we have heard anything about this daughter of sister Sarah in a very long time.

Also in August, R.E.'s long time friend, George B. Head, comes from Albany for a visit with old friends and neighbors in the area. On August 8th, he records, "G.B. Head and I started for a tour in the Mts. through Hensonville, Hunter, Stony Clove, to Edgewood Beach and staid at Tannersville, Roggen House, Onteora Park. Have paid .42¢ at Hunter for horse." The following day he writes, "Paid bill at the Roggen House - \$1.50 for self & .50¢ for horse. We went to the parks, Haines Falls, Cauterskill, Old Mt. House & home. Paid .50¢ for pictures; .10¢ to hostler & 10¢ ginger ale & toll." The next day, "Dwight takes G.B. head to Norton Hill to take the stage for home."

A few weeks later, R.E. writes that there is a fire on the mountain. Four days afterward, he notes, "Dry and very smokey - fire in the mountains." Apparently the forest fire is casting a smoky pall over the valley.

In October, the unsolved problems with

Joe Barlow's cattle surfaces again. Taylor is so bothered that he begins to document who has seen them. October 26th, he writes, "Four head of Joe Barlow's cattle has been pasturing on the flat by barn. I saw them & drove them off." The pasture must have been too tempting and the word spread among the herd. On the following day, "All Joe Barlow's cattle has been feeding on my barn flat and Potter & Dwight saw them. Percy drove them away." It seems the cattle are determined and the next day the entry reads, "Joe Barlow's cattle has been on the flat by the barn again. The girls saw them. As if that wasn't enough, a day later, we read, "Joe Barlow's 4 pigs came down abothering and eating apples." This last straw may have prompted a visit to his over-the-creek neighbor. But, if so, it is not mentioned in the diary.

The usual farm activities go on all year. Crops of rye, hay, apples and corn are all harvested. The shipments of butter & eggs are many. And apart from the farm, there are summons to be served and cases to be heard. R.E. is still involved in town business in both East Durham and Oak Hill. This is the year that the iron bridge in Oak Hill is built by Canton Co. of Ohio for \$1213. I don't know which of Oak Hill's three bridges this means. Possibly the one at Dean's Mill.

There is attendance at only four funerals noted although there is documentation of his cemetery lot sales. And on December 26th, he notes the death, at Catskill, of Judge Mattice - once a native of Oak Hill and a man whose advice he sometimes sought in the very early years.

George and Belle do not make many trips from Hensonville this year. They are busy with their own farm and three children.

In the earlier diaries, there is a lot of interaction with the neighboring George Cunningham family. Now, the O'Hara's are increasingly mentioned. Frank and Charles often do farm jobs and wood cutting for the Taylors. Sunday visits by both the men and women are common this year. I have made a visit to the O'Hara cemetery to learn more about the ages and relationship of these friends whom R.E. Taylor has mad a part of his diaries.

- Harriet Rasmussen, transcriber
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