



Haying Season in Freehold

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

April 1998, Issue 96

Share Session

Welcome back to another year of local history newsletters.

The weather, as some have commented, is some of the nicest that we can call early spring. In fact, some are cutting the grass for an early first time, and the early maples are trying to decide to come out for tax day, or wait for early May as usual.

Perhaps the nice weather persuaded some to enjoy other places than here. Coming out for the April meeting were Toot & Betty Vaughn, Jeanne Bear, Harriet Rasmussen, Carol Lamb, Phyllis Beechert, Dot Blenis, and Don Teator.

The first item was to discuss the idea of recognizing, in addition to our usual honoree, two or three other others who have been prominent in our town's history. These honorees would be posthumously recognized and the write-up would be shorter. An initial guess is that we could fit three on the inside back cover of the 1999 calendar.

Starting with a list developed at the March pot luck and adding on a few, here are some names we considered. We will vote at our May meeting to include three of these for our next calendar. Feel free to suggest other names, and if they don't get recognized this year, they will be kept on the list for the following year. If you cannot make the meeting, cast your ballot by calling me before the May meet-

ing (three names allowed). The nominees include:

Adams, Edna
Blaisdell, Tom
Blenis, Rob
Bott, Dr.
Bryant, Al
Carelas, Pete
Clark, Richard
Ellis, Phil
Ellis, Scott
Gumport, Capt.
Howard, Purl
Ingalls, Gerald
Ingalls, Warren
Ketcham, Harry

Nicholsen, Arnold
Parks, John
Parks, Marvin
Rice, Charles
Shaw, May
Stevens, James
Stevens, Pierce
Stevens, Ruth
Stevens, Bill
VanHouten, Rob
VerPlanck, John I
Weeks, Lillian
Wood, Leon
Wooster, Muriel

Next on the evening's agenda was Harriet's summary of R.E. Taylor's diary of 1865, which meant reviewing what had happened the previous year or two, pieces that were read the end of last year. Her summary for 1863 is included in this newsletter.

The last piece for the evening was Don's reading one section of Thelma Bell's printed memories from the Greenville Press. Articles like this should be encouraged from anyone who knows about some part of our town history.

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The next meeting will be May 11 and we will recognize one of our artistic residents, Phyllis Lilienthal, who will talk about her photography career and her role in Greenville.



PS Although the usual date (second Monday in March) for the pot luck dinner came and went by, we did have a well attended pot luck at the Episcopal parsonage in late March. A *thank you* goes to the usual suspects – Phyllis and Betty – as well as Dot Blenis for arranging for the late March date at the Episcopal parsonage. For some of us, it's our annual chance for a taste of elderberry pie.

R.E. Taylor Diary - 1863 ***Harriet Rasmussen***

The family sorrow which came with the close of last year is played out in the opening of the New Year, 1863. R.E. Taylor's attentions turn to the needs of his sister. On New Years Day he writes, "Went to Greenville to get Mr. Hoffman to preach Sylvester's funeral." On that same day, he takes Louisa with the new baby and two year old Howard to Oak Hill to stay with her parents until the funeral is over. The January 2 entry reads, "Went to Sylvester's funeral. There was a large attendance. More than could get in the church." This attests to the esteem in which Medusa's mill owner was held. On that day, he is laid to rest beside his four small children in the Medusa cemetery. It would be another fifty years before Sarah would join him there. He leaves six year old Charles and four year old Rose, both of whom grow to adulthood before joining their parents. Charles died in 1915 – the same year as his mother. Rose has her name and birthdate on the family stone but no death date, so it is uncertain if she is even buried there. It is also a mystery to me where older daughters Celinda and Arvelia are buried. Later diaries will reveal Celinda and her family living in Cooperstown and one supposes they are buried there. A photo album loaned by George Allen shows us pictures of two young men. They are labeled Sarah's grandsons. These are the sons

of Celinda. One is named Sylvester Rightmeyer.

By January 6, it is apparent that Sylvester's death will put even more responsibility on his 34 year old brother-in-law. The entry on that date states, "Mr. A. Campbell called at the school house to let me know he could not settle the estate of S. Lord and wanted me to do it." The following day he pens a letter to Albert Olney. The Olneys are cousins still living in Rhode Island and he apparently notifies them of the death of Sarah's husband. After noting on January 10 that "Alanson Lord waived his claim to act as administrator of his brother's estate", Taylor goes two days later to "Meet Mr. Alex Campbell at Mr. Spauldings to get counsel to know how to proceed for Sarah Lord." I know that Alonzo Spaulding was an attorney of that era and I suspect that Alex Campbell was also.

These lawyers must have advised him that he needed to be bonded. On January 16, he writes, "Went to see Asa Tanner's and Rufus Gifford and Freeman Etheridge was bale for me in the sum of \$5.00 each to administer the Estate of S. Lord." One notes that he has spelled bail like that used for a bale of hay. But forgive him this slip. While transcribing these diaries I was struck by how few errors he makes both in English and spelling.

R.E. is back to his teaching by January 5 and has barely begun to get organized in his duties as administrator when he is called on January 17 to sit up all night with Weedon Hunt. The entry on January 18 reads, "Went to W. T.

that his neighbor has died and R.E. and his friend Almeron More have been sitting up with the body, as was the custom in these early years. Perhaps that was a forerunner of today's night before viewings.

The load is even heavier on Taylor now. Besides helping his widowed sister when it is time to plant her garden and bring in hay, now he has a widowed neighbor who will need some help too. I was not prepared for his short statement on Sunday, February 8th. He wrote simply, "attended the funeral of Mrs. Mary Hunt's baby." I went back to Locust Cemetery to find out something more about this child. Sarah J. Hunt died on February 7, 1863 and was six months and twelve days old. While at the cemetery we lifted the fallen stone of Weedon and learned that he had died on January 15, 1863 at age 32 years, 7 months and 11 days. Just 21 days after burying her husband, Mary buries a child. Were the diaries being written by Louisa I am sure we would have gotten more of the pathos of this story from a woman's view. But R.E.'s style is to record the facts and seldom express the feelings.

February necessitates a number of visits to Medusa to take an inventory of Sylvester's possessions. On February 18, "Sent 6 silver tea spoons and sugar tongs to Albany by F. Etheridge to be prized." And now it comes to light that in addition to the mill, Sylvester Lord also owned a blacksmith shop. On February 24, the entry reads, "Mr. Smith called at the school house to have the Blacksmith shop and I gave him the refusal until next week, Saturday." By April 2 he has "Not yet moved into the Shop." And we don't know exactly when it happens but on July 4, Taylor gets the horses shod by Smith at Medusa.

The school term is over on March 6 and that is probably a relief because for months he will be busy paying the debts and settling the accounts of Sylvester Lord. On March 18, he sends "A letter to John Sweet in regard to toomstone for S. Lord's grave." There would be cutters, bees & hives, anvil, vise, nails, old iron, blacksmith's supplies and property to dispose of. And before the end of the year he would pay Mr. Deyo \$12.00 for Sylvester's coffin.

The somber tone of the winter is lifted a

bit on March 29 when there is a wedding in the family. In spite of the fact that it is snowy and blustering, the family goes over home to Louisa's parents to see older sister Julia married. R.E. neglects to tell us the name of the groom so we must wonder until July 11 when he writes "Clark Wetmore & Julia stayed with us overnight." Beers' History of Greene County tells us that Clark and Julia Wetmore were well known boarding house owners in the Cornwallville area. While R.E. has only three siblings previously mentioned, Louisa had sisters Ruth, Julia and Adelaide and brothers Lyman, Alfred, Almeron Eliakim and Addison. Five of these have already been introduced into the diaries and they are the ones who will play a greater role. Lyman and Alfred will have fewer references and I must confess that I do not remember any mention of Eliakim. However, as I go back over the diaries in an attempt to summarize, I may find him. He is listed in the 1855 census as being 17 years old.

It seems that every year there is one job on the mountain and this year, on the last day of May, R.E. records, "Went over the mountain and stay at Hensonville Hotel." The following day he is working at Norman H. Greys in the Town of Hunter. It would be a job of nearly two weeks but on the first Sunday there, he makes this entry. "Took breakfast at Greys and Charles and I went to the Mountain House where a fine view of the country and Hudson River can be had. Let Charles have \$1.00 cash at the Cauterskill Falls." He apparently feels he has not done justice here and is prompted to write at the end of his diary. "Memo: June 7th – Went to Mountain House from N.H. Gray's house – it sits on a bold projection of the Catskills overlooking the Hudson river & presenting the most extensive view of the country I ever saw – reaching as far as the Green Mts. East & North for 75 miles or more – the principle of objects natural are two falls – one of 160 ft fall & below another of 80 ft more and the two lakes where pickerel & other fish abound." Many of us have stood on this same bold projection and marveled at the view.

There is still not much mention of the war but, on September 13, the entry reads, "Took Louisa over home. Lent Isreal P. Utter

\$100 – one hundred dollars to pay his draft money – to be paid on the first of April next.” Isreal is a cousin of Louisa, born the same year as R.E. Taylor. Now we know how much money one needed to buy his way out of service in the Civil War.

This year R.E. adds two new items to the things he produces on his farm. In early October, he pays Alexander Lamb \$40 for 12 sheep to add to his flock. On October 28, he writes, “Took Louisa to Catskill. Sold my wool at .65 cts per lb. and did a considerable trading.” And this is the first year for raising flax. In August he “Pulled flax” and in September he “cleaned flaxseed.”

There have been changes this year, principally at the home of his sister. On October 14, he tells us, “Worked at Ramsdell’s all day on cellar & at night took my team & went to Medusa to start for Albany with Arvelia for Rochester.” It appears that he stays at Sarah’s overnight and takes Arvelia to Albany the next morning. On October 16, “Commenced raining after 9 o’clock in the morning. Paid Arvelia’s

fare and saw her in the cars & then came home through the rain – wet enough. Bought a money purse & paper & stamps & change & gave to Arvelia – Am’t \$1.95.” He does not tell us why he has put his niece on the train to Rochester. Has she gone there to work? Maybe later diaries will reveal the answer. On November 29, he pens, “Rec’d a letter from Arvelia” but he does not give us a clue as to what the letter says.

Just as some things have changed, some things are the same. In April he pays Jacob Hunt the yearly \$235 on his mortgage and William Richards comes on as hired man again. Peter Egnor helps put the 37 loads of hay in the barn. Elder Brown is still preaching at Medusa. Masonry jobs run from April 17 to November 23 for seventeen different people. And this year has gone by without one call for a doctor to the Taylor household. Addie Taylor turns one year old on December 3 but her father does not record that milestone. On that day he is in Albany seeing the Surrogate – presumably about the sale of Sylvester’s property.