

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

September 2015, Issue 246

Stevens Families—Sylvia Hasenkopf

A classic September day—with low 70s, a generous breeze, and a cool start—greeted a varied crowd of 25-30. From memory, but mostly from sign-in sheet, present were; Bob & Marie Shaw, Sally Stanch, Mary Heisinger, Sylvia Hasenkopf, Jack & Barbara Van Auken, Flip Flach (and Barbara for a necessary technical assistance call), Ken & Charlene Mabey, Sarah Stevens, Dave Tschinkel, Melinda Mullen, Audrey Matott, Ginny Mangold, Molly Ten Eyck, Mills Ten Eyck (from halfway across the continent), Jean Thomas, the “Thompson girls” (Barbara Tolley, Roberta Christman, Mickey Goettsche), Christine Mickelsen, and Don Teator. If I forgot you, contact me and I will try to make it right in the next newsletter.

The meeting was Stevens, Stevens, Stevens! (At least a half-dozen attendees came because of their family connection.)

Sylvia was top-notch. Mixing photos with maps with census data with deed info, she wove a story of a family that lived ordinary lives in the Greenville area at the same time several individuals were stepping into leadership roles. A good sense of audience, judging how much detail to deliver, a worthy story-telling voice all added to Sylvia’s excellent performance.

Although she admitted there might be a wrinkle in her conclusion, Sylvia forged ahead with her story basis: that Thomas Stevens (1679) is the common ancestor of the three branches of Stevens families in Greenville—Reuben, Uriah, and Peter R.

Before detailing their lives, Sylvia gave an overview of Greenville’s history, with its relationship to the wilderness, despite being only a dozen miles from “civilization” on the Hudson River. The proximity of Indians, the threat from wild animals, a world quite different from New England and eastern NY made Greenville a challenging place to settle at the end of the American Revolution. Rapid growth marked those first few decades.

Then she cautioned that Greenville was part of two different counties, was part of another town, changed its name a few times, before deciding it was today’s Greenville. Anyone doing genealogy up through 1810 needs to keep all these details straight.

Sylvia showed a couple of maps that are especially appropriate for Greenville—one showing the different patents of the town, and the other showed the lots of the Prevost patent.

One more major side note: Sylvia wears a number of hats: key player in the Cairo Historical Society (and she listed several recent highlights), keeper of the Tracing Your Roots in Greene County website and Facebook page, and the sole agent of North River Research – her genealogical & house history research business.

Sylvia and I stay in touch about Greenville matters so I knew she had completed research for one client for the Uriah Stevens line. Not too long after, I knew the Reuben line became another project. Finally, Peter R’s line was researched. And thus the program of the Stevenses’ families in Greenville became a

worthy topic for full exploration and for Sylvia to share what she had learned.

To further this evening's program, she made detailed use of the agricultural censuses that are addenda to the censuses of the 1850-1880 general time period. How many acres of each crop is mentioned, and how many pounds of this are listed, and how many animals are raised, and how many acres of types of land of the farm are noted. If not careful, this can be dry material but Sylvia used it to create a picture of each person's place in life and also a perspective of their community.

Also used were deeds showing how land was passed down, sometimes with some very interesting circumstances, inviting some quizzical looks.

Throw in the regular population censuses, as well as the established genealogies, and Sylvia painted both a broad picture as well as some detailed snapshots of people or circumstances.

Reuben's line includes Orrin Stevens from Rt 26, and many of his ancestors we have heard about because of the Pioneer Insurance Company.

Reuben owned land in the Hemlocks, as Greenville Center was known then. Reuben's father was Daniel, and his grandfather is the Thomas noted before. Reuben and wife Mary had ten children together (he dies early, she remarries).

One of the confusing aspects of this line is the preponderance of the names James and Orrin. The current Orrin's uncle was Jim, grandfather was Orrin, and I'll stop there.

Sylvia went into detail about the 1856 founding of the Village Fire Insurance Co, which along with a few more were merged into the Pioneer Insurance Company which held a central focus in Greenville into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Photos of the Hartt Store were shown and deciphered.

The personal notes included the deaths of two Stevens brothers in the Civil War, and then a full-of-life, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, young adult Orrin C. Stevens and his role of the Young Bloods of Greenville, vowing to sport full beards forever.

There were lots of pictures of Stevens Hill and the house next door, the original home site.

Uriah was the son of Solomon, and the great-grandson of our Thomas. His homestead is where Jens Lobb lives today on West Rd, halfway between Greenville Center and Rt. 32. He marries Mercy Fisher, has nine children, and had his farm detailed in the 1850 agricultural census.

Sylvia details a series of events of Uriah wooing a prosperous Leeds woman, selling and moving to Leeds, moving back to Greenville, being sued by his Leeds wife, and the homestead somehow staying in the family until the 1920s. Zilla and Hattie Stevens are two of the last of this family with the family name.

And then comes the wrinkle – Peter R. Stevens.

Sylvia detailed all her work – none of it showing an incontrovertible direct link. However, when using the censuses before 1850, and using the family histories, Sylvia is left with one choice. She believes that Peter is the son of Henry, who is the grandson of our Thomas.

He marries Mary Pierce and owns a farm on the eastern edge of Town of Greenville. Wife Mary dies and Peter marries his sister, a not uncommon happening back then, Sylvia asserts. Peter dies in 1864 and son Madison buys out his father's property.

Madison's brother Pierce marries and has one child – M. P Stevens, who marries Ella Wooster and has a son Pierce who marries Ruth Thompson and they had four lovely daughters, excuse my opinionating.

More stories of working as an undertaker, getting a substitute soldier for the Civil War draft, providing mortgage money, the Greenville Garage, the post office, and a ton more were some of Sylvia's details.

As I hinted at, Sylvia did such a thorough job that it would take a while to study the info to remember some of it. And I have obviously not been able to do that.

If you are serious about wanting to know more, contact Sylvia.

Sylvia's enthusiasm must have rubbed off on a number of people, including me. How wonderful, we mused, to document our family so thoroughly. Sylvia, thank you so much for sharing your research.

#### **Other notes:**

Our **October meeting**, on the 12<sup>th</sup>, will serve two purposes.

The first, for about 30-45 minutes, will host members from Greenville Beautification Committee of Community Partners. They want to find a **future use of the former Presbyterian Church** and will be seeking our input about possible uses, a possible new name, etc.

The second will be the presentation of the **2016 Calendar**. A one-time special pricing will be offered this evening. Otherwise, calendars can be purchased as soon as they are available for \$9 at several business (which I still need to arrange).

**A thank you goes to Stephanie and Christine** for providing the refreshments after the program.

**Ken Mabey**, one of attendees, was one of the two 2015 Ray Beecher Award winners, an award given for service to the Greene County Historical Society. Congratulations, Ken.

One Stevens noticeable for his absence was **Orrin**. (After having a terribly distracting day, Orrin confesses he plumb forgot, and had some choice words to utter about missing such an opportunity!) We are glad, Orrin, you are doing fine; we were worried about the possibilities.

**Greenville Day** is coming on October 3. There is a breakfast, a run/walk, a book sale, carnival, new fitness trial, fire department water-ball tournament, music, chili contest, pie contest, and fireworks. Do a sun dance and let's contribute to a successful day.

Check the newspaper or go online for the details.

And the auction of the ducks will be October 25<sup>th</sup> at Sunny Hill.

#### **Help needed!**

We need to **nominate a person/couple/group to be recognized**, whose placement usually sits on the inside back cover of our calendars. It is time to start fresh and generate a list, especially since our usual group of about twenty has grown to one hundred fifty.

We usually nominate living people who have given to the Greenville area, in ways large or small, above and beyond the usual boundaries of one's duties of a profession or political office.

We also have considered those living people who have brought fame or renown to Greenville, or who have achievements in the world that should be recognized.

Thus, I am suggesting you forward your nomination of a person/couple/group, and, if possible, explain three (or more) reasons for the basis of your nomination.

Deadline: let's try to submit nominations by October 20, leaving time for consideration in the October newsletter and for the November meeting.

So as to not duplicate past efforts, our

#### **Past Recognitions** are:

- Stanley Maltzman (1996);
- Orloff & Jeanne Bear (1997);
- Chris McDonald (1998);
- Leland & Curt Cunningham (1999);
- Ossie & Bunny Gundersen (2000);
- Fred & Leona Flack (2001);
- Harry & Cris Ketcham (2002);
- George Story (2005);
- the Nicholzen family (2005);
- John & Isabelle Singer (2009);
- Harriett Rasmussen (2010);
- Walter Ingalls (2012);
- Phyllis Beechert (2014);
- Dave Battini (2014);
- Dave & Pat Elsbree (2015);
- Richard Ferriolo (2015); and
- Mary Heisinger (2016).

