

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

Winter 2005-2006, Issue 163

Annual Report

As has been traditionally done, this annual report reviews this past year, 2005, and gives a glimpse ahead. I'm usually writing this report a bit later in the season (I'm beating the postal increase, especially since I have a couple hundred pre-stamped envelopes) so I can't comment on the nature of the winter we had. Instead, I hope that you enjoy this winter season as much as possible, or, at least, tolerate it.

A look back at 2005 found the Greenville Local History Group still using its usual pattern of meetings, a mix of programs and share sessions. Our programs included a look at the 1910 census, a visit with Doug Stanton and his daughter Heidi, and a recognition of Richard Ferriolo's local history efforts.

Mingling around the programs were our share sessions, our chance to show off stuff we have found and done. Those of you who subscribe to the newsletter know these details as well as the copies of odds and ends covered by the monthly issues.

The 2005 calendar represented our efforts of presenting photos of local history to the community. This project is perhaps our most visible effort, and overwhelmingly the reaction to the calendar is a positive one. Having said that, I do have one regret, no matter how self-induced it is, and that is the absence of a 2006 calendar. I also foresee my furlough to include the 2007 calendar, with intentions of resuming for 2008.

Should you, or someone you know, want to fill in as the creator or helper for the 2007 calendar, let me know (before May 2006). I will lend whatever resources I can, if needed.

Before the resumption of the calendar, the finances of the calendar should be reconsidered. We used to break even, but the last several years has seen a loss, an outcome that needs to end. Options include raising prices, more actively find buyers, or postpone publication until we, or some other group, can find a break-even or profitable mark.

One hope is that the long stretch of winter allows for some work on local history projects to be shared during the coming year. People contribute in many different ways. One of the most useful is to preserve some piece of Greenville's history. This may happen by the saving of an artifact or knick-knack; however, the part that is tougher to save is the collection of memories and stories. And thus, I urge you to audiotape or write your memories of Greenville people, events, and places. Daunting at first, this recording becomes more and more useful with the continual adding of sources.

One project I'd still like to see us start this coming year would be a walking tour brochure for the hamlet of Greenville. (I think I have written this a few times.) Put your thinking caps on for the kind of details

and/or structure of information.

Our membership numbers about 70, with about 45 receiving the newsletter (I also include the Town Board), and the average attendance at meetings this past year averaged about twelve to fifteen. Our schedule will continue to be the second Monday of April through November.

Looking ahead, I still can use help in scheduling programs. The program director (me, usually) for the GLHG will welcome ideas for programs, for it is the programs that tie together our share sessions. If you have an idea, please let me know.

A note about subscriptions. Your address label has your subscription expiration date. Anyone wanting to receive the newsletter can subscribe for \$5 for a year (usually April – November issues, plus the annual) and mailed to Don Teator, 3979 Rt 67, Freehold NY 12431. Checks should be made out to: Don Teator.

Also, if your address has changed, let me know. And, if you'd rather I address your mailing label differently, let me know. In addition to my address, I can be reached at 518-634-2397, and for the computer literate, I can be emailed at don@dteator.com.

Reproduced in this newsletter is a town history written by Ariel Smith Weeks Ingalls (1966) and revised by Walter Ingalls (1999). (A major source appears to be Beers' history.)

I hope to see you at the April 10 share session (2nd Monday of April). Come with reports of what you've been working on, or ideas that someone else might be able to use.

Until then, take care.



PS: The pot luck dinner was a nice tradition when we did it. For now, there are no organizers. Let me know if you, or a group of you, want to pitch in. We'll try to spread word by phone if it happens.

PSS: Although the GLHG avoids political events, we do try to influence the law-makers and enforcers to forward local history preservation and recognition. To the degree that you feel comfortable doing that on your own, your efforts are appreciated.

during the French and Indian wars. He came to the town of Greenville in 1794, having previously resided in Catskill. The house now standing was built at this time, followed by tenant houses, a grist and saw mill, a bark mill and a real estate office where he disposed of portions of his land at reasonable prices- three to six dollars per acre. He was a public spirited man, building roads and becoming interested in the religious and educational needs of his neighbors, allowing their children to attend the school organized for his family.

Major Prevost was personally acquainted with many of the great men of his day: a one time partner of Alexander Hamilton; Aaron Burr was, at one time, his legal advisor, presumably at the time Burr was an itinerant lawyer out of Albany. Aaron Burr's aunt was Theodosia Prevost and may well have been of the same family.

Major Prevost donated the ground for the Presbyterian church and the Greenville Free Academy with the stipulation that it could be used for no other purpose. His daughter, Mary Ann organized the first Sunday School in the town, held in a barn with wooden blocks used for seats.

In the memory of many still living, there was a two story unpainted frame house by the lane going into the estate which was occupied by the slaves. In 1810 there were 17 slaves in the Town of Greenville, 10 of them belonging to Major Prevost. The markers for their graves have long been obliterated in the outlying fields. A room in the cellar of the big house provided a place of confinement for punishment.

Major Prevost and his family are buried in the Prevost cemetery. In more recent years two maiden ladies, daughters of Theodore Provost, his grandson, have been buried there.

In the summer of 1781, Benjamin Spees, Edward Lake and Eleazer Knowles left their homes in Connecticut on horseback, crossed the river at Hudson and made their perilous way through the forest to where Greenville now stands. Locating their lands, they returned to Connecticut and the following winter came with their families and a few others to build their homes.

Eleazer Knowles built his cabin on the east brow of Budd's Hill where he had purchased 600 acres of land.

Benjamin Spees purchased an equal acreage to the north and moved into a log cabin built by a Tory squatter. His descendants became the distaff side of the present Cunningham family.

Edward lake bought land on further north, all purchases being from the Prevost Patent.

Soon their neighbors were Abel Wakely, Abram Post, Japhat Collins, Edward Wooster, David Hickok, Aaron Hall and others. In the eastern end of the town we find Reuben Rundle, Henry Weber, Simeon Losee, Obediah King, and Denis Blenis. In the vicinity of Norton Hill lived the Nortons, Leets and Slawsons.

In 1793 Jacob Ingalls settled, coming from Massachusetts to the Town of Westerlo, made a clearing and built a log cabin, 1 1/2 miles north of Norton

The History of the Town of Greenville

When Henry Hudson came up the river of the mountains which bears his name, the land now occupied by Greene Co. was inhabited by a sub-tribe of the great Algonquin Nation, the Lenni Lenapes or Delawares as they were afterward called.

Hudson called them a "loving people" and their continuing war with the Mohawks and the Iroquois tribe from central New York helped in keeping peace for the early Dutch and English settlers.

Freehold was once the site of an Indian village. The flats 1/2 mile to the south afforded an excellent place for an encampment and a lake to the west was an added attraction. The burial place for their dead was located on a point of land overlooking the lake. The burial place of the Indians was desecrated when the settlers used it for a cemetery and all traces of their graves have been destroyed.

All but a few of the Indians were scattered by an invasion of the Mohawks in 1616 and remaining stragglers disappeared with the first tide of white settlers. Traces of their occupancy, stone axes, flint and other implements have been picked up in the fields in the vicinity.

Few settlers went far back from the Hudson River and it was not until 1750, 150 years almost after Hudson's voyage, that Godfrey Brandow became the first person to live in the Town of Greenville. He came from near Saugerties and located on 800 acres of land, which became part of the Seabridge farm in Freehold [opposite present day Hendersons]. He was well supplied with agricultural implements imported from Holland and in ten years time he had a well stocked farm, clearing the land from a forest of oak, hickory and maple.

With him came his wife, the former Catherine Overbaugh, and two sons and two daughters. Their nearest neighbors were his wife's relatives living in Sandy Plains. A daughter, born to them in 1751, was the first white child born in the town. Their oldest daughter, Maria, married Stephen Lampman, the second settler, this being the first marriage in the town. He came from Coeymans by ox team the winter of 1759-1760 [240 years ago] and settled on 200 acres of land building a house which became a shelter for many travelers on the only road from Greenville to Coxsackie. Later it became a place for night school and religious meetings. This community became known as Brandy Hill for the manufacture of cider and elderberry brandy made there.[Pine Lake Manor]

The third settler was Jacob Bogardus, coming from Coxsackie in 1772 and taking up land from the Coeymans Patent. Due to hostile Indians, the Revolutionary war, (in which he was a minute man) and uncertainty of land title, it was not until 1783 that he brought his family; his wife, two girls, and two boys, and settled on the land held by the Bogardus family well into the 20th Century.

Most of the town is part of the Prevost Patent granted by the King of England in 1764 to Major Augustine Prevost for his services in the English army

Hill. There he lived until 1841, and was buried in Prevost Cemetery. The farm was occupied by an Ingalls until the death of Henry Ingalls in 1958.

The town of Greenfield was organized in 1803, changed to Freehold in 1808 and finally to Greenville in 1809. The first highway in the town led south from the Brandow farm; that is from Freehold. This was extended north to the Lampman and Bogardus homes and soon after, the one road from Greenville to Cossackie, called the Turnpike, was built.

Among the enactments passed at a Town Meeting in 1804: it was voted that all hogs one year old and upward, to run at large, must be yoked with a yoke 20 inches long and those under one year, 12 inches long. A fine of 50 cents was charged for disobeying the order. Each owner nicked the ear of his swine in a different place or manner to designate ownership. In 1813, 14 school districts were organized.

The three large creeks in the town afforded water power for many mills at one time; a woolen mill near Freehold and a Fulling [flax?] Mill near the Scripture Bridge, plus four grist mills and 3 saw mills all on the Basic Creek. The grist mill in Freehold controlled the buckwheat flour trade while one two miles north specialized in rye flour.

The Losee mill, built in 1792 on the Losee creek was the oldest. Harry Long maintained a saw mill until 1960. The old mill had an upright saw with flutter wheel. The creek on which this mill stands empties into the west branch of the Potie Creek.

About 1820 a saw mill was built on the Jan De Bakker Creek near Greenville Center by Henry & Peter Bogardus. Thomas Place built a mill on the same Creek at Place's Corners. The outline of the dam may be seen to this day.

What we know as the Red Mills was built by Lewis Sherrill in 1847 and the building now standing is the only evidence there was a grist mill in the Town of Greenville.

Before 1805 a tannery was built in Freehold and soon another one in Newry. This one branched out into shoe making and harness making. The scarcity of hemlock bark compelled these tanneries to close as well as the one in Greenville village which stood on the site of the insurance building. There were open fields in the back [Cumberland Farms] and they provided space for the vats used in the processing of the hides.

Staves for barrels and wooden shingles found ready market in Cossackie and Catskill.

John L. Raymond established an enterprising business [opposite the Greenville Drive In]. He was a blacksmith by trade but branched out to make nails, becoming known as Uncle Nailie Raymond. Later he manufactured farming tools. The nails were of wrought iron and could probably still be found in some of the old buildings of the town.

Many of our older inhabitants recall the evaporating (apple drying) business carried on by Gardiner & Hunt in Norton Hill. The building was in the rear of their homes [1000 yards East of the Norton Hill Methodist church].

Aaron Butler came to Greene County with his father in 1799 and in 1824 opened a tin shop and store in East Greenville, on the Haight farm. Soon afterward he built a cider mill and commenced the manufacture of cider brandy. This became a neighborhood project and the name Brandy Hill clings to this locality.[Farmhouse burned in 1983] A collection of trays, canisters, and bread boxes made by Mr. Butler and painted and decorated by his daughters is owned by [Orrin Stevens]. The name Stevens has long been associated with the Town of Greenville. Reuben Stevens came from Connecticut about 1793. Land was offered him on Katskill Creek for \$2.50 per acre but he bought a partially improved farm at the Hemlocks (Greenville Center). Presumably the many branches of the Stevens family came from this man who was blessed with 10 children.

As early as 1802 a post route was established between Coxsackie and Westerlo. This route passed through Greenville. Here a post was located and soon another post was established at Newry. The mail was carried on horseback by a man named Brown, familiarly known as Brownie, he being described as a jolly old man somewhat eccentric. He became the bearer of news and teller of jokes and anecdotes. Starting with delivery once a week and soon semi-weekly, mail was left sometimes under flat stones in place of mail boxes.

Stewart Austin was the first stage driver, about 1815. In 1860 it was a daily route and there were offices at Greenville, Freehold, Norton Hill, and Gayhead. James Evans, who lived across from the Chas. Rice Place, Ingalside Road, was stage driver for many years. His daughter, Vangie, married Burdette Griffin son of Bloomer Griffin, who lived on the West Greenville four corners in a very large house. This house was formerly an Inn catering to travelers and known as the "Marble Pillar". The building was demolished about [55] years ago.[1999] Many of us remember Joe Alverson who succeeded Jim Evans as stage driver. His experiences in carrying the mail would be a history in itself of the beginning years of the 20th Century.

Population

1875 - 2031
1890 - 1951
1920 - 1362
1925 - 1394
1950 - 1613
1960 - 1859
1999 -