

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

June 2015, Issue 243

O'Hara's Corners

As Snoopy might say, "It was a dark and stormy night!" And it was indeed a wind-driven downpour that greeted many at the June meeting. Those braving the conditions were: Stephanie Ingalls, Larry Tompkins, John & June O'Hara, Arlene DiBello, Walter & Donna Ingalls, Peter O'Hara & John Garofalo, Phyllis Beechert, Donna Willard, Jack Kelly and cousin, Patrick Fallon, Bob & Marie Shaw, Sam Rothe, Rachelle McDonald, more Rothe family, Audrey Matott, Orrin & Shirley Stevens, Ron Golden, Eve Jennings, Nick & Mary Lou Nahas, Christine Mickelsen, David Rundell, Sally Staunch, Mary Heisinger, and Don Teator. Not everyone signed up, and I missed a few so the total was close to forty-some.

O'Hara's Corners was the topic of the evening, a bucolic corners that nestles a mile away from my boyhood house. I have enjoyed riding through it for sixty years, and the preparation for the program allowed me to discover background that adds meaning to what I see. Sharing 130 slides as well as listening to the side stories and the audience's queries made for an enriching evening as brothers John and Peter O'Hara told their family's story.

Enclosed in this newsletter is a scan of both the 1856 and the 1867 maps, as well as my quick sketch of the corners, with letters identifying the sites of the early houses, ones still existing and at least three that do not. A careful look shows that houses A and C, two of the three houses that make up the center of O'Hara's Corners today, do not appear on the

maps, having been erected after the maps. (And I had always thought House A—Peter's house—was the old homestead.)

Located near the center of the western edge of the Town of Greenville that borders the Town of Durham, O'Hara's Corners is one of the very few intersections in the area that can boast, after 200 years, a significant presence of the family after whom the intersection was named.

After ten current slides of views of the houses and scenic vistas of the Corners, and after a few more slides of O'Hara genealogy, Peter began the narrative of Peter, Sr., who immigrated to the US, around 1799.

Born in Ballandary, Ireland, in 1775, Peter O'Hara joined a group that sought to free Ireland from English rule. The group's leaders were executed or persecuted, and O'Hara escaped the same fate by fleeing to France. He would soon realize that life in Napoleonic France was not much better, in fact, worse, and he would try his luck in the United States. Later, when he fought on the American side in the War of 1812, someone noted that he was finally able to fight the country that had caused so much turmoil in his early life.

Peter Sr married Lucretia Darbee in 1808 and they bore their first several children in what is today the Rockland and Orange County, NY area. The first Greenville-born child is recorded in 1820; fifteen children are the fruit of this marriage. Peter deceases in 1856, and Lucretia follows a year later.

Peter Jr stays in Greenville and continues the line, while brother Barnard moves to Lexington, Greene Co, NY. Although several of the siblings remain in the area, many of the others find themselves in Wisconsin and places west. The O'Hara genealogy reads like most other American families—some staying, many moving, almost all enriching the fabric of their neighborhood and towns.

The next dozen slides portrayed the several homes of the Corners of different eras, with stories of who lived where and who was related to whom. The Rothe family was well represented this evening, and that line descends from the O'Hara-connected Madeline McCarthy who marries Fred Rothe. Great-grandson Sam lives in great-grandmother's house!

And another dozen slides showed various vistas; my favorite were the two showing grazing sheep across the street from Peter's house that is now grown up into brush.

Another dozen and a half slides showed various O'Hara family members, some who lived in the area, a couple from the Midwest. The next dozen slides derived from the Hunter and Lexington areas on the mountaintop; part of the family vacationed and lived in Hunter, and Barnard built the Lexington House.

Two dozen slides were of the places in the area that are part of our lives still and not necessarily family related: Catskill Creek, Hunter Mt tower, Freehold, Catskill Mountain House, the Hedges' farm in East Durham, and so many more.

A collection of four slides showed the buildings that lay on the south side of the Catskill Creek by the Woodstock Dam on Rt 32, across from JR's Transmission.

And another subset of slides told the story of Miriam O'Hara who married a Hunter boy—John Hylan—who would become mayor of NYC from 1917-1925. Peter has many keepsakes of that era, and displayed several this evening.

We finished with a couple dozen slides of Peter's grandparents and parents from different eras.

John and Peter O'Hara, thank you for the views and history of an area of town we rarely delve into.

Other:

Don noted that the Greene County Historical Society's Home Tour in Athens was again a worthwhile event.

The ducks are out in Greenville, and not just the living ones. Grab a map and check out the Quackers. And followe them on Facebook at QuackQuackGreenville.

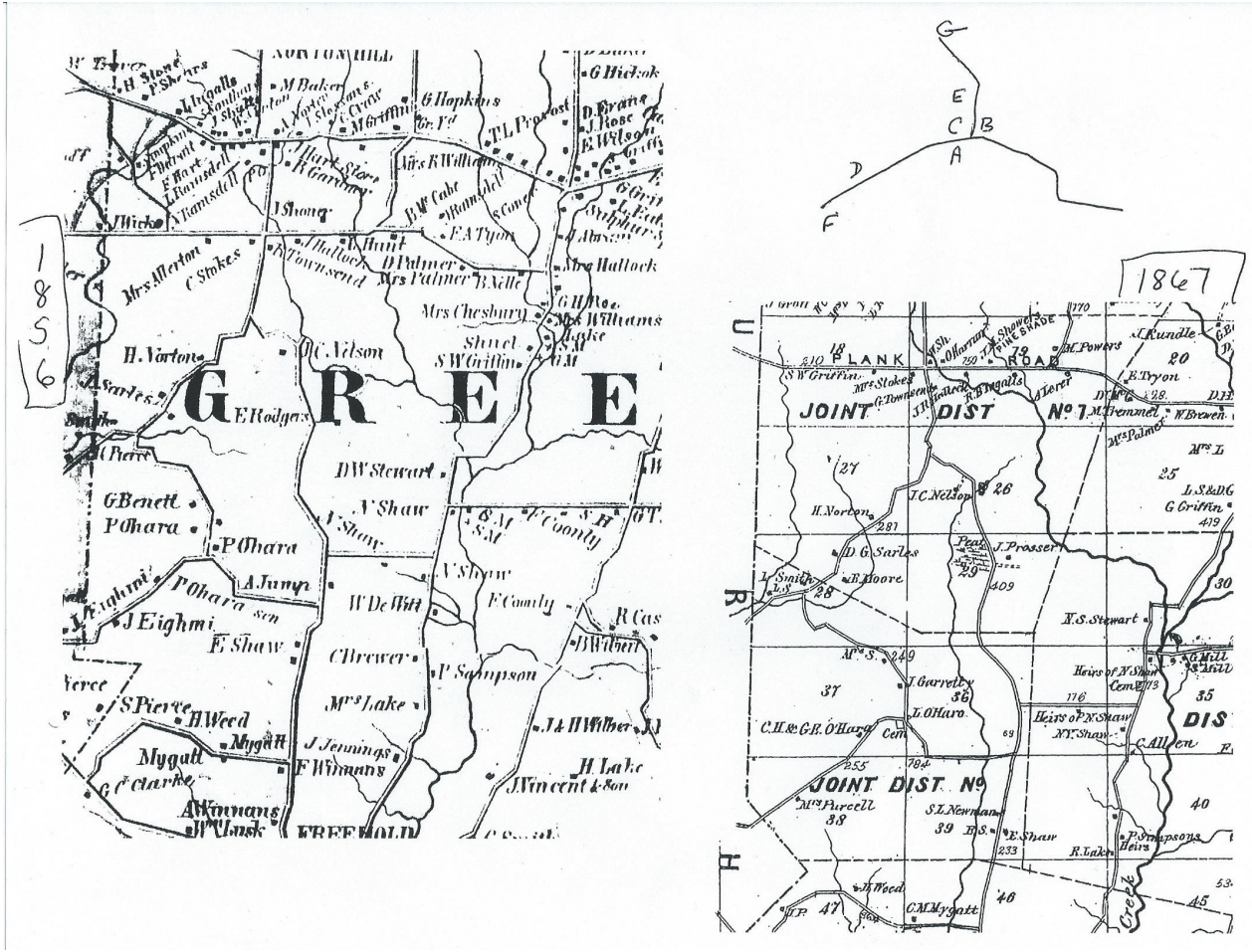
The July 13 meeting – Main Street, Greenville: Part I – will feature stories and memories of longtime and not so longtime residents. The better the stories and memories, the better the program will be. C'mon out to listen, to tell, to contribute. Flip Flach, Bill Quackenbush, Orrin Stevens, and more have promised to share stories that describe a Main Street of today and yesteryear. (Part II in August will be a slide show of some of the old photos in the historian's files of Main Street.)

The Greenville Drive-In is raising money online. For those who know how, or want to, do this, go to kickstarter.com and then search for Greenville Drive-In.

On June 26, the Library hosts Chris Gordon. The Nahases forwarded this: "*Chris Gordon is America's resident expert on all things Icelandic. He has visited Iceland over 50 times in every season across 15 years and went on to open a specialty tour company that Conde Nast Traveler named 'Trip of a Lifetime' this year. Through a visually spectacular presentation, Gordon will show why Iceland is not only the most beautiful place on earth but also the most wonderful country to ever exist, backed by a host of fun and fascinating facts and figures certain to boggle the mind.*" You armchair travelers and potential Icelandic adventurers will enjoy this.

A thank you goes to the refreshment committee—Stephanie and Christine. Much appreciated. And we had major help this month from Peter and John—excellent brownies and cookies! Thank you also.

Take care,



Emmalissa McClusky O'Hara, Josephine O'Hara, with the 1870 Homestead , O'Hara's Corners



Peter and John O'Hara's
Grandfather Irving O'Hara
with his three children:
Loretta, Arthur (father), and Kathleen,
1910

East Main Street, Greenville
Stories and memories
at the July meeting

