

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

August 2016, Issue 253

Anita Stevens Sanctuary:  
Recollections of South Street, Greenville

I think I had estimated for Anita that 20-35 would come out for her presentation. OK, I was wrong; only 75!

Anyone who attended these past two meetings witnessed two of the most well-attended meetings in our twenty-five year history. A few of us scrambled for chairs but did not have to go to the top floor this time. Thank you to those who helped gather chairs. And I will save attendance for the end.

It was with much satisfaction that I watched Anita Stevens Sanctuary's program - *Recollections of Growing Up on South Street, Greenville*. I had been coaxing Anita the last few years to present a program once I discovered that she had indeed been contemplating and was making notes. And after some hesitancy, Anita braved the crowd and her own doubts to present a program that I call classic local history at its best. It seems we have seen a few of these lately.

Anita will claim that she wanted to pay tribute to family and town: her parents for being such wonderful parents and instructors of life; her two younger sisters especially for maintaining the business after Ruth's passing; and to a town and time that is so fondly remembered. Tribute was paid, and to herself also although that clearly was not Anita's intent.

Anita started with family history. Grandparents Madison and Ella Stevens and relatives occupied several houses on South Street. And their children—Margaret, Pierce, and William mostly followed suit.

Crossing fateful paths was Ruth Thompson, one of five girls of Ferris and Anita Thompson of Windham, four of whom would enter the resort business. Ruth was teaching at GCS, walking from her room on South Street past the Stevens' house, and you might guess the rest.

Pierce and Ruth married in 1940 and would have four girls, all of whom came out for the August program (Barbara and I are Class of 1970ers).

Anita had an amusing story or three to tell about living in the house next to the Wilsons (or the house that would become the Greenville Arms). And the big change would come when the house next door became their own house, with little clue as to how their lives would change.

The biggest change, of course, was the running of a resort, the details of which Anita detailed for the crowd. Although hard work, this life had its many rewards, both in the day-to-day life but also for the long-term training for life.

Anita detailed the efforts of her sisters Laura and Barbara, after Mom's passing, to revive a business that slowly was draining away. In the mid-80s, with help from artist Betty Lou Schlemm and Charles Movalli, they instituted the Hudson River Valley Painting Workshops, an enterprise that still exists today, with at least two changes of ownership and a minor name change.

Along the way, Anita showed photos of the town, friends, more family, employees (the



1940 East Main Street Greenville: Stevens Store almost center of photo; farm equipment building (today's fire house) in back (right side of photo); pond is out of photo on left

Simpson “girls” were more than just employees!), aerials of Main Street Greenville and of the Farm on Rt 81, artists and their work, and more.

Especially gratifying was the attendance of the sisters of Anita’s mother. It was quite a cheering section, with the fifteen seats of the front two rows reserved for family—a first. The reception afterward revealed the attendance of long-time friends, GCS classmates, former employees and neighbors, as well as the usual devotees of our local history.

Anita, you protested my promising a great program before it was actually delivered. Now you have no excuse to protest (except for your usual modesty) a worthy and excellent presentation. Thank you, and a note of appreciation for family and friends who came out to enjoy and support.

Next month’s meeting on September 13 will feature Mary Lou and Nick Nahas in their

account of Boarding Houses and Resorts of the Town of Durham. The Nahases will condense their five hour program (somehow, I think you could even take ten, Nick and Mary Lou) into 60-90 minutes.

Nick and Mary Lou set down stakes in Oak Hill about twenty years ago and have ever since been a stirrer of the pot, running their I. U. Utter store on Main Street, promoting local history of the town, instigating community events, and encouraging good will. It will be a pleasure for the GLHG to host such kindred spirits.

Other Notes:

A thank you goes to Barbara Flach and the rest of you who helped put up chairs—not a

small feat lately.

I am not sure I adequately thanked Garth and Terry for their presentation last time. A big thank you to both. And another thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness in providing more booklets of the town’s most recent “best seller” – The History of Bryant’s Supermarket. The Library has a couple copies to loan out, and I think I have one more copy to give away to the first person who contacts me and arranges to pick it up. I also kept one to loan.

Greenville Day is coming up in late-September. Please pitch in and support our community day.

Looking ahead: I will lead the October meeting (meetings are the second Monday, at 7:30 pm, at the Library) in my presentation of the 2017 Calendar, and Sylvia Hasenkopf will talk about a to-be-determined topic(s) in November before we take our winter break.

I encouraged the audience to appreciate what Anita presented and to use it as an example. Writing your own account of your



1954 Stevens Family: Pierce and Ruth, with daughters (l-r): Laura, Marla, Anita, Barbara

life, or some section of it, not only preserves a first-hand account as it was lived but perhaps also presents an opportunity to give shape to your memories. Besides, even though your children or grandchildren might adequately detail you and your life, I bet it will be different from what you would write and have lived.

One note that crossed between my emails with Anita was the idea that her presentation was big to-do for her, and perhaps not for me since I have been doing this for so long. I affirmed that I do not see our meetings or our projects as being big or small, a definition that could be rooted in size of audience or of my likes or what might be popular. I suggested that all projects are worth doing, and a program that draws ten people is as worthwhile as one that draws fifty or more. I have had the experience of using sources years after I first found them, had tucked them aside for another day, and had appreciated saving information that gained more significance later on. Do it, save it, share it.

I have gone to the printer with the 2017 calendar. The day I go to see Jim Gardner (for over 20 years now) in Altamont is a

culmination of the 50-75 hours of work this project takes. It feels so good to get it out of my house, with the feeling of reward and pride to come when I pick it up just before Columbus Day for our October meeting.

A thank you goes to Stephanie and Christine for providing the “light refreshments” that I keep promising in our newsletters and press releases.

I have included a few photos from Anita’s presentation. (Shhhh! You might see them in a future calendar!) And one looking ahead to the Durham Boarding House presentation next month.

I think I promised a stab of taking attendance. I admit I depended on the sign-in sheet. My mind was a-whir with other concerns at hand: Elsie Turon, Barbara Lamb, Sonia Greiner, Dawn & Nuala Hynes, Ruth Jones, Great & Per Heidenberg, Clay and Debbie Beatrice, Phyllis Beechert, Marilyn Snow, Su & Bill VonAtzingen, Kathy Smith, Bella & Jerry Adinolfi, Rachel Ceasar, Flip & Barbar Flach, Margaret Donohue, Bob & Marie Shaw, Nick & Mary Lou Nahas, Stephanie Ingalls, Joanne Baumann, Paula Malone, John & Kathy McAneney, Allen Totzeck & Aileen Hesel, Bill Quackenbush, Barbara & Jack VanAuken, Audrey Matott, Sarah Stevens, Christine Mickelsen, Bette Welter, Mary Heiseinger, Carolyn Savery, Robert Tauckus, Paul Augstein, Hilde Tompkins, Ken & Charlene Mabey, Bruni Sutton, Anita & David Sanctuary, Garth & Terry Bryant, Lew & Susan Knott, Eleanor Lane, Roberta Christman, Barbara Thompson Goettsche & John Goettsche, Claudia Lane, Mills & Molly Ten Eyck, Wayne Lobb & Barbara Stevens, Laura Stevens, Marla Stevens, Mae Murray, and Don Teator.

If I missed anyone and you want recognition, let me know.



Stevens Farm on Route 81, about one mile east of four corners



MLNahas: "Elm Rest was started in 1918 by Hattie Brand in her farm house in Oak Hill. She took in thirty to thirty-five guests at a rate of \$7 per person per week. Today, while the main house is gone, one of the annexes is a private home and the large house on the original site is called Catskill Mountain Retreat." This and much more will be shown at the Sept 12 meeting