

# Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

Winter 2019, Issue 275

Annual Report

Good almost-Spring to all,

It is Annual Report time again. Nearly 170 of you are receiving this by email; another forty are receiving the paper copy via regular mail. (Expired subscriptions also receive this issue.)

I trust March is finding all in good health. We “stayers” moaned about the mid-November snow and cold but the rest of the winter has been somewhat, well, should I say, somewhat temperate despite the several short cold snaps.

Our 2018 schedule once again settled into our “fair weather” routine, taking off for the winter months.

The 2018 programs included:

**April:** Boy Scouts history, Troop 42, Dave Battini & Colin Tumey

**May:** Hempstead genealogy file transfer, with Jonathan Palmer

**June:** Barbara Brumell – Pleasant View Lodge resort history

**July:** Jonathan Palmer/David Dorpfeld – preserving family records/Dairy Farming in Greene County

**August:** Three Suitcases in the Attic: unintended local history, Don Teator

**September:** Greenville in the 1960s, Audrey Matott, Greenville Local

**October:** 2019 Calendar presentation, Ginny Mangold, Arlene & Lee Brown

**November:** Sylvia Hasenkopf: Third Annual: early Greenville history

A few old-timers can remember when we alternated between programs and share sessions.

Ideas for programs come from different directions: discussions at our meetings, individual discussions, programs that begged for more information about a sub-topic, or just a momentary flash of inspiration (if of my own, I must say this must be a small minority! ha)

A thank you goes to all of you who proposed ideas, or directed me to possible leads, or became a program. I appreciate the collaboration and feedback.

A **thank you** goes to **Audrey Matott** once again for her program, using Greenville newspapers to look at its past. It is a challenging enterprise to tell the older generation what their history was.

—— Looking ahead to 2020 possible programs:

Someone asked me about once about the bars and “watering holes” of our area. It sounds like a good topic to me. Wanna tackle it? (This, I think, was a John Earl idea.) And some suggested a history of the Greene County Hospital, before it left the county. (This was a Dave Tschinkel idea. Still want to do it?) If anyone reading this wants to jump in, do so. And if you have an idea, share it.

And one more: I received a request, which goes as follows:

-- “Do you know approximately when Greenville (and the surrounding area) was electrified? I was thinking the late 1920s -

As I was cleaning out a box this winter, how appropriate I found this clipping, considering Drake's 200th birthday is March 29.

*Knickerbocker News, Thurs. Aug. 27, 1959*

## Greenville Unveils Marker

# Oil Pioneer Honored



**EDWIN L. DRAKE**  
PIONEER IN U.S. OIL INDUSTRY  
DRILLED FIRST OIL WELL IN  
TITUSVILLE PA. AUG. 27, 1859  
BORN GREENVILLE N.Y., MAR. 29, 1819  
DIED BETHLEHEM PA. NOV. 8, 1880

The Knickerbocker News Photo

**NATIVE SON HONORED**—Discussing the Greenville marker honoring Edwin L. Drake, the man who drilled the first commercial oil well 100 years ago, are, from left: James C. Stevens of Greenville, president of the Stevens Agency Inc.; Senator Ernest I. Hatfield, chairman of the State Commission on Historical Observances, and William H. Donahue, chairman of the Green County Year of History Committee. The temporary marker will be replaced soon with a permanent one provided by the State Educational Department.

A quiet, simple ceremony, in sharp contrast to the turbulent, thrusting industry he helped pioneer, yesterday honored the Greenville man who was first to drill for oil in the U.S.

Colonel Edwin L. Drake, born in Greenville in 1819, struck oil in Titusville, Pa., 100 years ago today.

He was remembered at yesterday's ceremony by a small gathering of legislators, state officials and townspeople who watched a marker unveiled under the shade trees outside the town's Memorial Library.

James Stevens, president of the library board, pulled aside the wisp of cloth covering the board to show the legend.

**Legend Reading**  
"Edwin L. Drake, pioneer in U.S. Oil Industry, drilled first oil well in Titusville, Pa., August 27, 1859, born Greenville, N. Y., March 29, 1819, died Bethlehem, Pa., Nov. 8, 1880," said the board.

No more than 50 people, mothers and children in bright summer frocks among them, were there to hear Senator Ernest I. Hatfield, chairman of the Temporary State Commission on Historic Observances, Henry Werker, Greenville attorney, and William Donahue, chairman of the Greene County Committee for the Hudson-Champlain Celebrations, talk about the man who gave the country a new industry.

**Cites Importance**  
Dr. William G. Tyrell, representing State Historian Dr. Albert B. Corey, stood at the microphone on the library steps and pointed out the special significance of the ceremony "because there is nothing that has changed civilization so much as petroleum for the internal combustion engine."

He described the state historic markers, one of which will be erected to Drake in Greenville shortly, as the "headlines of history."

Senator Hatfield read messages from Assembly Speaker Joseph Carlino and Senate Majority Leader Walter Mahoney who were unable to attend the ceremony.

**Lauded by Hatfield**  
"It is fitting here, in Greene County, Colonel Drake's birthplace, that the Commission in cooperation with the Greene County Committee and with the approval of the State Department of Education should erect a marker to honor the man, his birthplace and his contribution to mankind and progress," said Senator Hatfield.

Historians have been unable to discover the exact site of Drake's birthplace, but researchers are satisfied that the pioneer was born in the small country town. A memorial in Titusville also gives Greenville, N. Y., as his place of birth.

The ceremony lasted about 20 minutes and then Greenville relapsed into its customary calm after the brief reminder of its brush with history.

1930s. What about indoor plumbing? 1950s - 1960s?" —(reply back and I will keep those who reply or who want to know in the loop.)

All the year's programs were recounted in the newsletter to a degree that I hoped would serve as a reminder and recorder of the evening, with the cautionary that no newsletter truly captures an evening's breadth and depth. Those of you who attended a meeting or more can vouch for the degree of accuracy of my recounting of the meetings.

In addition to capturing the essence of meetings, most newsletters also contained photos from that month's meeting or of an upcoming meeting or from the files I thought worthwhile to share.

Note: past newsletters used to be available at [dteator.com](http://dteator.com), with a link to glhg newsletters. My website is under some repair so only those from Aug 2016 or before are accessible for now.

Your feedback about 2018's programs were most welcome and served to help me set direction for upcoming programs. Although I know what I like, your input confirms my likes or helps explore another side of local history I might not think of.

An appreciative **thank you** goes to **Stephanie and Christine** for providing the "light refreshments."

One of 2018's highlights was the production of the 2019 calendar. As always, I hope that the 50-75 hours of effort result in a practical historical artifact that shows a range of hamlets, of time periods, of new and old acquisitions, of seasons, and of buildings and people. Comparisons with early calendars shows more recognition of local history being made by those of us still making it. If that is a trend you like, or otherwise, feel free to comment.

Final figures for sales of the 2019 calendar are in. We got off to a productive start right after our calendar meeting, with Kelly's Pharmacy needing a restock about every ten days for a while. By year's end, we were al-

most \$100 in the black, a positive result we have not seen in a long time!

We thank the community spots that hosted our calendar—Tops, Kelly's Pharmacy, the Library, GNH, and Town Clerk Jackie Park in Town Hall. If you patronize any of these locations, please thank the owners or managers. And even though every sale counts, I must say that without **Kelly's Pharmacy** selling about 40% of our calendars, we would be hard pressed to continue calendar production.

So, the calendar treasury still feels warm and cozy for the moment, with enough to fund next year's calendar, a most welcome situation.

IRS rules require every non-profit to file a yearly income form. Fortunately, if I have read the directions correctly, I have filed those forms so that the GLHG has met these requirements. At this point, we have not incurred any tax liability.

The 2020 calendar is in the works, with the photo selection half done, and a chunk of the research started. If you have an idea of a photo we should use, let me know before I make final decisions.

The recognition part of the calendar is taking a different turn for one year. We have chosen to recognize GCS teachers, with the inside back covers and at least one of the monthly pages to recognize about a dozen teachers. More details later as I have them.

Membership growth is finally leveling off, with nearly two hundred members, a combination of email and mail.

Attendance at meetings this past year varied from 20 to 50, with an average of 30-35. Those of you who were regular attendees in the "old" days remember an average of 15 or so.

This year's schedule is tentatively set, and shown below. Again, the program fell into place with only gentle persuasion needed at most.



**BEST OF LUCK, RALPH**

With this issue of the Greenville Local, Ralph Yeomans lays down his pen as editor. To say that this is a sad moment is a great understatement. Ralph has been the Greenville Local to all his readers and to us, his publishers. A man of his kindness, generosity and public spirit, can not leave his post without his absence being felt by everyone whether they knew him or not and there are few, who did not know Ralph. He has worked all his life for others, giving of his time and effort to help others and working to build a better community for everyone. The Greenville Local has been Ralph's voice speaking out for the good, helping those who need help, patting those on the back who have done a good job. Seldom did he criticize, never did he scold and his greatest fear was that he would hurt someone by what he wrote. Six weeks ago Ralph slipped physically and has been unable to snap out of it. Hoping and praying that he would get back to his old self again and fearful that any move by us would retard his recovery, we have delayed any action as to his position. Mrs. Gordon Simpson, Ralph's best friend, has given him a helping hand during the past weeks, always with the hope he would be back. We owe Evelyn a great debt of gratitude for helping us get the "Local" to you each week and we want everyone to know how much we appreciate all she has done.

Last week Ralph told us he just couldn't do the job anymore. Upon the advice of his doctor, pastor and friends, we have let Ralph quit. But we are not quitting Ralph and we hope none of you will quit Ralph. He needs every friend he ever made. Visit him, tell him what you think of the job he has done, invite him out, do anything that will bring pleasure to a fine old gentleman. He has no one but you, his friends.

To you, Ralph, we can only say 'Thank you' from the bottom of our hearts and may God bless you and bring you peace and quiet of both mind and body in these late evening days of your life. Well done though, good and faithful servant.

We are fortunate in securing as your new Editor, Mrs. Elsie Roe whom you all know and who will take up the pen that Ralph has put down. We appreciate your patience during the past few weeks and know you will assist Mrs. Roe as she gets into the swing of being your editor. Her telephone number is 5-5356. Keep it ringing.

My cleaning  
of the boxes  
produced  
this clipping.  
People ask  
questions that  
everyone knew  
the answer to  
when it  
happened.  
Wait a few years  
and everyone  
is scratching  
their heads.  
So, here is the  
transition of the  
Local to  
Elsie Roe,  
who did this job  
until 1963.  
Question:  
who took over  
from her?

We will continue to meet the **second Monday of the month**, at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. For now, the *tentative* schedule is:

**April:** a history of the Far Hill Nursing Home and Greenville Medical Center – Shelly Dobski

**May:** Greenville of the 1970s – Audrey Matott (Part 3)

**June:** Freehold Congregational Church (meeting at the church)

**July:** Storyteller Special – Flip Flach (Part 1)

**August:** GLHG History: 30 years, birthday cake

**September:** History of Town Park – Debbie Magee

**October:** 2020 Calendar

**November:** Fourth Annual Sylvia Hasenkopf (topics tba)

**Note:** Remember to support other area local history groups. On Facebook or online, you can find the Cairo Historical Society, North River Research, Town of Durham Boarding Houses, Greene County Historical Society, Mountaintop Historical Society, Durham Center Museum, and more.

Notes about subscriptions.

Email newsletters: **No cost**. And forward as you desire.

**Mailed newsletters:** \$10 per year. For those of you who use this method, look at the address label, and the four digit number above your name gives expiration info. The first two digits is the year, the next two digits is the month. (So, 1906 means your paid subscription expires in June 2019.) (Ignore this paragraph if you use the electronic method only.)

Anyone wanting to start or to renew a *mailed* subscription should send \$10 for a year (if by check, made out to Don Teator): 3979 Rt 67, Freehold NY 12431.

A few of you receive both email and paper.

Also, if your address label needs changing, 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 [dteator@gmail.com](mailto:dteator@gmail.com).

Whichever way you use to keep up with local history, the content is almost always the same, with a very occasional extra segment in the email version. And the original color photos are reproduced in color in the digital. Even if all the paper mail subscribers were to stop, I will continue to print a paper copy for the records. Technology is wonderful but changes create a re-examination of how to preserve documents and photos. (John Palmer, Greene County Historical Society's Vedder Library Archivist, advised us at this past June's meeting.)

## Notes:

With a bit of wonderment and pride, I realize **thirty** years has passed by since I first became Town Historian. I will expand more at our August meeting.

Many of you know I favor **black ink drawings on the calendar cover**. These sketches can be original or, many times, found on note cards or holiday cards. I am looking for one that shows the GCS building, today's elementary building. If you can find one, and can be reproduced on a calendar, let me know.

Edwin L. Drake?

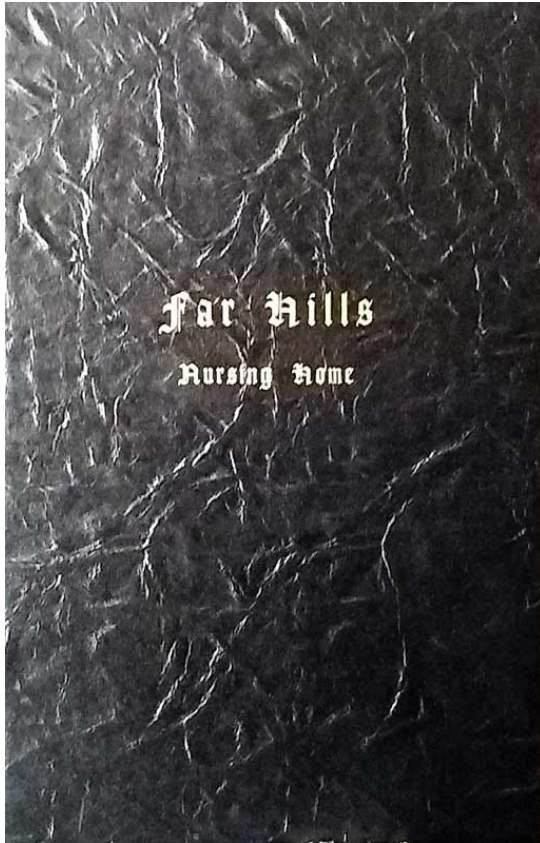
Yes, the **Edwin Drake** who is featured on the historical marker by the pond.

A half year ago, I received an email from Sarah, from the Titusville Oil Park and Museum in Pennsylvania, informing me of the bicentennial birthday of Drake. And she wondered if his hometown might help Titusville celebrate.

Indeed, we will. The Greenville Town Board approved making March 29, 2019 Edwin L Drake Day in Greenville. The approved resolution was signed by Supervisor Macko, framed, and awaits delivery to Titusville, something I will do on March 21 when Debra and I will travel to Titusville for one of their featured Drake lectures. More in the April newsletter.

I am instigating a **fifteen minute ceremony, on March 29**, a Thursday, 11:30





The black pebbly grain of the cover of a 16 page, 5" x 8.5" pamphlet tantalizes a local history explorer. Find out the contents and more at the April 8 meeting.

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a.m., at the Greenville Pond, near the historical marker, to give a five minute reminder of who Edwin Drake was and what he did, lead attendees in singing Edwin a 200th Happy Birthday, and share a piece of cake. You are all invited, along with anyone else you wish to invite.

Two gaps in the GCS Yearbook collection still stare at me. If you find a spare 1984 or 1993, please call me to plug one of those holes.

One of the pleasures of crafting the calendar is the meeting of community members for information. The Turon Homestead photo

came from Elsie Turon, which meant plying Elsie for information. Along the way, I was shown the write-up from the Turon Reunion from some years ago. It was an excellent retelling of the family history and saving of photos, and it reminded me to encourage all of us to do the same. Thank you, Elsie.

Ahem. I seem to be **missing** one of my photo albums, and I do not think I have had it in my possession for up to five years. I may have loaned the album titled: Greenville: North Street: Irving Rd to Albany Co border. If someone is able to find it, I will greatly appreciate it.

I hope to see you at the **first 2019 GLHG meeting on Monday, April 8, 7:30 pm.** Shelly Dobski contacted me a couple years ago for research on the Medical Arts building that our community helped fund-raise back in the 1960s and also for research on the Far Hills Nursing Home building. Although her intention was to create a report for a family celebration, Shelly unwittingly became an expert. And she is willing to share her findings at our April meeting. Come to the next meeting to learn and to share. I know there are some of you who have stories about either or both. If there is anyone who wants to contact her before the meeting, let me know and I will pass along the contact info.

I am looking forward to another good local history year.

Until then, take care.  
Don

**Also included:**

My scanner was busy this past year, with another couple hundred pictures added to the archives. And I still need to organize the four feet of paper I had stored in boxes over the past few years. More to show during the year. For now, you will find copies of three pieces from the boxes.