

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

July 2019, Issue 279

Flip Flach #1: Indian Fields, Family

A nearly perfect summer day—low 80s, sunny, low humidity—awaited the almost fifty who came out for the July meeting: Lew Knott, Kathy Smith, Donna Willard, Don Berkhofer, Jeff Pellerin, John Garofalo & Peter O'Hara, John O'Hara, Paul Augstein, Edna Huffman, Mary Heisinger, Jack VerPlanck, Donna & Walter Ingalls, Rachel Ceasar, Richard Ceasar, Christine Mickelsen, Stephanie Ingalls, Ronna Feit, Ken Mabey, Bob Shaw, Linda Singer Berger, Anthony Arturi, Terry & Garth Bryant, Ellen & Skip Blumental, Rosemary & Bob Whalen, George Soldner, Alice & Zan Bryant, Audrey Matott, Debbie & Rick Magee, Margaret Donohue, Bette Welter, Johanna & Robert Titus, David Tschinkel, Barbara Flach, Rich McAneny, Bill Ottinger, Judy Rundell, Barbara (?), Arlene Brown, Mary Lou Nahas, Flip Flach, Don Teator, and a few that may have slipped by.

Flip Flach presented the evening's program – Indian Fields, Greenville, and the Flach Family. And although the major part of the story occurs just over the town line, its proximity as well as the human face that Flip painted resulted into an account enjoyed by all. Although impossible to capture Flip's story-telling, the main parts goes something like this:

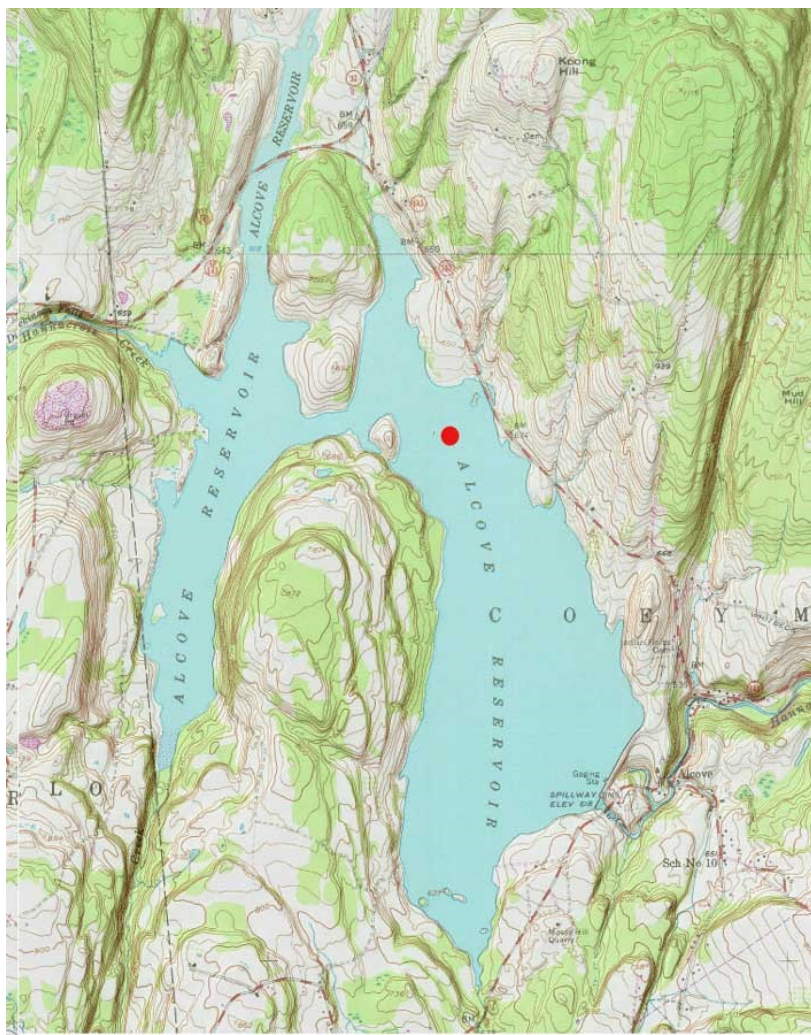
Karl & Anna Flach emigrated from Germany in 1910 to NYC. He was an accomplished pastry chef and baker. They settled and worked in the Brooklyn area for ten years. About 1920, they bought a cottage on

what is today one of the peninsulas of the Alcove Reservoir. A year later, they bought a 200+ acre farm. Here, they developed the dairy farm, orchards, garden, as well as opened a bakery on the farm site for house-to-house delivery routes. Eventually, they raised eight children—three boys (Charles, Fred, Joe) and five girls (Anna, Rose, Louise, Ida, Elizabeth).

(Quick side note: Indian Fields hamlet was located in the upper half of the right hand lobe of the reservoir [seen from Rt 143, not Rt 32]; Stephenville was located near the dam wall area, with parts of it still existing as what we know as Alcove.)

The farm was located on what is today Albany County Route 111, the piece of road that connects the intersection of Hillcrest and Greene County Rt 38 (the road that comes from Shepard's Resort) and the hamlet of today's Alcove. (The Greene and Albany County border is near that CR 38 intersection.) Halfway up the long straightaway over the county line sits a farm, the farm that Carl Flach would buy and run. Most of the buildings still stand.

As bad luck would have it, the City of Albany, in its search for water, determined that this area would serve as a supply for its water. The reservoir-to-be area seen from Rt 32 and Rt 143, and more, was seized by eminent domain, the buildings of the two hamlets and surrounding area razed, the dam built, and water filled what would become the reservoir, all of this happening during 1928-1932.



In between are all the details of people being uprooted, some of them life-long residents of that area. Although this project was devastating for many, it was, ironically, a savior for the Flach family during the Depression. Flip's details of these side stories captivated us this evening.

The Flach farm lay outside the immediate reservoir boundary but the City Water Commission wanted to maintain the cleanliness of its water, something that farming, even seeming far enough away, would compromise. Carl negotiated with the Commission that if he were not to pasture his cattle (with the resulting waste products), he could keep his buildings, which was the same deal he negotiated with and for his neighbors.

Carl still had bills to pay, and the early Depression was being felt. Carl's mortgage of \$12 a month was quite a burden. But, true to form, after querying and negotiating the City authorities, Carl hired himself and his horses as teamsters to haul material for the building of the reservoir—\$1 for Carl, \$.50 for each of the two horses. Total—\$2 a day, for six days. Yep, \$12 a week paid the mortgage and the other days of the month went to his other expenses. Carl was almost doing better than before.

Then, an inquiry from an uppity-up resulted in a couple of city friends to “camp” along the creek in back of the house, out of sight, not to be mentioned. Of course, this is Prohibition time and everyone realized that a still was being operated and would continue until it was found out a few years later. In the meantime, Carl made \$12 a month for this permission. More money.

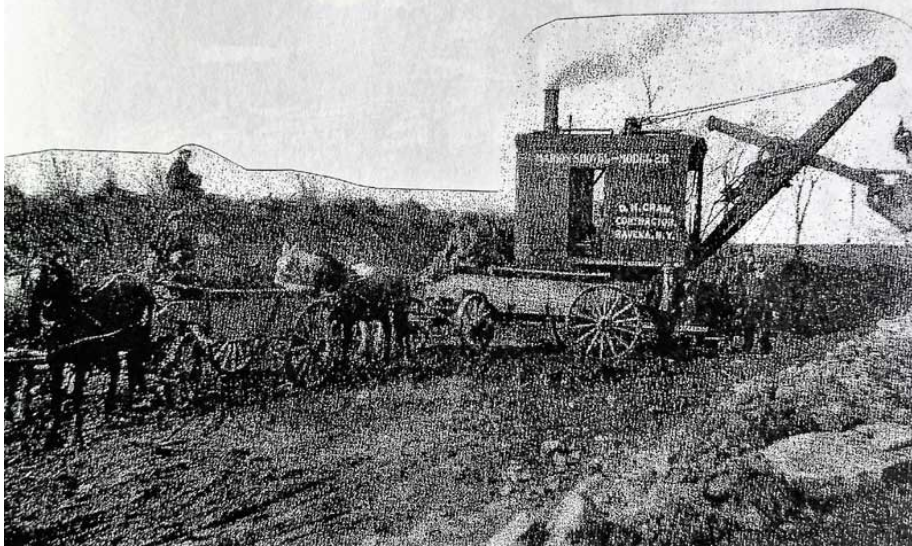
Karl's profession, as noted before, was bakery and he had started a business on the farm.

This was enhanced with help from brother Fred who would operate the Main Street building in 1946. They baked from 6 pm to 4-5 am, ready to deliver to 20+ boarding houses before 7:30 in the morning—a long day.

Joe Flach opened the barber shop in 1948 at an add-on space at Joe's father-in-law Phil Schwebler's Garage (this Phil was Flip's other grandfather). Joe built his own shop in 1963 and opened it in 1964, the same year Flip started a four year apprenticeship. Today, the building is the Mangold Realty building.

Another side note: Flip talked about the physics of water delivery to Albany. It is downhill from Alcove to Albany, even though the water is flowing north. Indian Fields and Stephensville elevation of about

Chapter 8
Construction of the Alcove Reservoir
1928-1930



600' was ideal for a gravity flow to Albany's approximate 400' elevation. The new reservoir's 6000 acres total watershed (1500 water and 4500 runoff land) were the perfect conditions for a massive supply and easy delivery.

Other parts of the evening's story: another Greenville family—the Turons—also in a similar situation as the Flachs a cow drinking some of the bootlegger's hooch

- Joe Flach catching eels in the reservoir and bringing them to Gus Baker's for the eel special
- credit to Lucille Margiasso for her research on Indian Fields (anyone who wants to buy her book should contact Flip or me)
- the effects of 9-11 on current Alcove use
- Mayor Corning and "friends" using the reservoir while others were prohibited
- an early Ravana water supply before the Alcove Reservoir
- Bert Butler's colorful story of the Greenville Pond fountain

- Merritt Roe's fulfillment of duties from Gus Baker's
- the reservoir property has been used to rear the American bald eagle. Many seem to remember the five years of activity and telescope platform of DEC and the resulting 80 eaglets

Two more notes about the evening:
 We often talk about the old-time story-tellers and how it is too bad they are still not around to tell their stories. And that may be true. But, some of us have stepped, even if grudgingly, into those shoes.

This evening, we were witness to a performance by one of our modern day story-tellers—Flip Flach. We note his modesty and his sparing us of some colorful language, and at the same time we applaud his command of stories and a manner that held nearly fifty of us in rapt attention.

And second, I give all of you, and especially Flip, credit for starting the meeting without me. A computer program I have used for years seemed to not work this evening and Plan B meant going back home and creating a new file, just in time to return to Flip starting the meeting and introductions half-done. My apologies go to Flip for giving him a good scare but I must admit you all warmed the cockles of my heart for acting like it was routine.

The next meeting on August 12, at the Library, at 7:30 will feature the 30th birthday/ anniversary of the formation of the Greenville Local History Group as well as my tenure as Town Historian. The plan is to highlight the accomplishments of those thirty years—collections, people, highlights, etc. I will try to be modest but I must admit

we all have done a pretty good job for thirty years. I have no idea what the future has in store but this is an appropriate moment to assess where we have been, bask in a little self-glory, and perhaps guess where we might go.

Other Notes

**Thank you, Stephanie and Christine, for once again providing the “light refreshments” as advertised in our local papers. Much appreciated.

**The 2019 versions of the GCS High School and Middle School Yearbook have been purchased for the Historian’s collection.

**Garth Bryant has undertaken a seemingly innocent project of finding the Lake family beginnings in Greenville. Yes, those Lakes, of the founding trio that included Spees and Knowles. I am hearing the story is getting rather interesting and perhaps an accounting of this story can be told when Garth has more. Good work, Garth. I have enjoyed watching this unfold.

**A recent treasure trove was given to the files. Carol Adriance has been cleaning out her mother’s house and found a box, transferring it to the historian’s files. Inside are a few dozen issues of Greenville Locals da-

ting mostly in the 1930s, all ripe material for further investigation. I have added one more item for a winter project! And it might well be a program for next year.

**Trivia Question: Marandy’s Carriage House. Where was it? What years did it operate? Who owned it? Memories of dining or working? This started when my brother-in-law asked which restaurant occupied the site of today’s Mountain View Brasserie back in the 1970s. I had a blank look, with a recollection of Steve’s Meat Market. And then I asked about the building next door. So, I will wait for confirmation from anyone. Please.

**And I had a request for information for which I have no answers. Does anyone remember Sebastiana “Pole” Perrell? The request comes from a 75 year old grandson who was 13 when he visited Grandma’s in the Greenville area, staying at the house, crossing a little creek/ditch, with cabins in the yard. The property was sold in 1963 with the family moving back to NYC. Any rabbits coming out of this hat?

That is all for now.

Take care,

This page is a copy of the very first newsletter, after the public invitation to attend the June 1989 meeting.

Dear

I'd like to thank you for your interest in Greenville's local history. The following is a summary of our June 12 meeting at the Community Room. For those of you present, please review my accuracy and remind me at our next meeting of my memory lapses; for those of you not able to attend, this should be a rough sketch of this meeting.

We introduced ourselves at the onset. Present were (using the sign-in board, if I may) Harriet Rasmussen, Bunny Gundersen, Pearl Capone, Phyllis Beechert, H. Wilson Hilzinger, Chris McDonald, Bonnie Persico, Edna Adams, and three guests, whose names I've forgotten, from the Greenville Arms.

I passed out a sheet of projects and circulated some pictures of houses I had taken in March. Most of the points from this sheet (enclosed if you were not at the meeting) were discussed; several of which invited further comment. House histories invited stories of whom used to live where; Edna Adams mentioned she had taped several people during her tenure as Town Historian; Harriet Rasmussen had already completed some work on cemetery inscriptions; Bonnie Persico explained this year's 4th grade project; the idea of setting up a Historical Society, or research room, was debated; the need for a safe storage place was emphasized; and all had stories or reminiscences to share.

When asked for other ideas, the group, for the time being, added none; if you can think of any, bring them to the next meeting. I added I had purchased the federal census of 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, and 1910; I hope to be able to transcribe these for placement in our files by the end of next summer.

The meeting shifted to telling stories, adding to the stories, and asking questions. From my perspective, the information given during this brief session is one of the types of knowledge we need to preserve in an organized way.

Before we left, we discussed the future of this one night event. The consensus seemed to be we should meet again and start preparing to preserve our town's history, as well as help others learn more about this history. Thus, a meeting was scheduled for the second Monday of July, the 10th of July, at 7:30 in the Community Room.

We hope to accomplish a few things at this meeting. **One**, I will share with the group the contents of the Town Historian's files (if Edna will let me, I'll defer to her on this one since most are of her creation). **Two**, for those of you who want to, we may want to initiate a project that will fulfill one of our goals - preservation of history or educating those interested - or at least start to form an idea what each of us might do. For those of us who like to just sit and listen, and pitch in once in a while, that's fine also. **Third**, what would a historical meeting be without some more stories of historic Greenville?

The final event was my "bribe" of pound cake and lemonade. Those of you who fell for it, I'll try it again next time, so beware.

I am heartened by the response of people who share similar goals. I appreciate and will appreciate the efforts of all who want to save a flavor of an older Greenville for the newer Greenville.

Sincerely,
John Wilson

P.S. I don't mind being the instigator of some of the early action of the group, but if someone, or a group, wants to take over the guidance of a historical interest group, please feel free to do so. I will help out when I can and want to be part of such a group. There is no requirement that the Town Historian must lead this group, even though it's in my best interests to be part of it. In fact, legally, the Town Historian cannot be an officer of a Historical Society.

P.S.S. I've tried, I believe, to keep this as informal as possible. For now, I prefer to call it an Interest Group. But should you want to head toward more formal directions, go for it. My goal at present is to make people comfortable with what we're doing; I'm afraid I would scare people away if I called for formation of a Historical Society. Besides, I need to learn an awful lot before I spout off too much myself. The point is - I'm just one of you in this and cannot, and will not, pretend to act for all of you. All of you must work for all of you.