



Historical Society Newsletter

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The Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833

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DECEMBER NOTES 2020

by Mary Vetter

This December has me reflecting on Holidays past. I am sure that I am not alone. I miss the activities of the season. There are parties and dinners, plays, services and other community activities that make up the fabric of our holidays.

My grandmother Alice lived through the 1918 pandemic and I know that the illness touched her family in 1919. Her 4 year old brother fell ill and her desperate mother spirited him out of the city to save his life. She was gone for 18 months. What I've always taken away from this story is that they came back. They lost all kinds of family events but in the end the business of celebrating came back. There were baptisms, birthdays, weddings and Christmases filled with big happy gatherings.

That is my solace in this winter of our pandemic. Life seems unbearably hard and for many it is but when we come out on the other side we will rebuild our lives and the business of celebrating will rise again. Meanwhile, load yourself in the car and go out to look at holiday lights. That is one tradition that fits this Holiday season perfectly. Merry Christmas and Happy Chanukah. May your New Year be filled with health, love and harmony.

THE TOWN OF GREENFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is still looking for a few good bodies (and minds)!

Are you good at planning social events?

Are you good at working with people?

Do you have carpentry skills?

Are you good at organizing collections?

Do you have computer skills?

Do you like lawn and landscaping work?

We need your ideas and skills.

Please contact us at 518-322-5675 or email us at toghistsoc@gmail.com

If there is a check mark in this box, we have not received your annual dues for this year (June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2021).

Shop at Amazon Smile

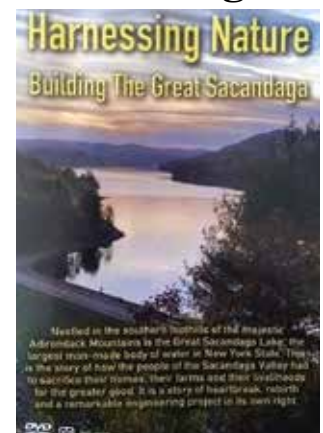
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Thanks!

“Harnessing Nature: Building the Great Sacandaga”

This DVD is an 80-minute documentary telling the story of how the people of the Sacandaga Valley had to sacrifice their homes, their farms and their livelihoods for the greater good. It is a story of heartbreak, rebirth and a remarkable engineering project in its own right. This is the story of how the Great Sacandaga Lake, the largest man-made body of water in New York state, was made.



DVDs are available for \$20. They are at the Greenfield Town Hall, or by contacting the Historical Society at P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. (Please add \$3 if you want one mailed.) *Makes a great Christmas gift!*

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

by Ron Feulner

Last month I traced the early history of the Rowell Store where the infamous 1907 fire started in Middle Grove. This month, I will continue with more about Mr. Rowell, his family, and the community where he lived.

Moses D. Rowell (the father), in addition to running his store, was a deacon in the Middle Grove Baptist Church. He was also active in an organization called the Independent Order of Odd Fellows or IOOF. As such, he donated land for the IOOF to build a new hall adjacent to the Baptist church and contributed toward the erection of the building. In 1878, the structure was completed and not only served the IOOF members in their upstairs meeting room, but the first floor was available for their sister organization, the Rebekas, to hold their meetings, and, in addition, other community events such as local court trials, suppers, and for a while, a high school.

Rowell's store adjacent to the hotel in Middle Grove may have been the only store in town for a while, but by March 5, 1879, the *Saratoga Sentinel* (predecessor of the *Saratogian*) lists under Middle Grove news, "Small store near Kilmer blacksmith shop was burned Monday night—P. Naity sold groceries—recovered most stock, insurance \$300."

Samuel H. Craig, the man that Rowell had purchased the store from died on March 17, 1880. His obituary stated, "...an old resident of Jamesville, died yesterday afternoon. He was about 50 years, and was a brother-in-law of Capt. Lewis Wood of Saratoga Springs." (It is interesting to note that one of the early owners of the hotel in Middle Grove was E.O. Wood.)

According to the Sept. 9, 1880 *Saratoga Sentinel* newspaper, "Mr. S. Early, formerly of this town [Greenfield] but lately of Batchlerville, has purchased the stock of goods in the store of M.D. Rowell and rented the store for three years. He has taken in as partner Frank Otton of Rensselaer County, they took possession September first."

The same paper also reports a major event in Middle Grove that caused a great deal of upheaval in the small community. I first became aware of the event when, as a newly retired arrival back home in Middle Grove after living elsewhere for my career, I began doing research for one of my first local history books. I remember interviewing Pearl Jones (now deceased) in her little house across from the Methodist church in Middle Grove. The house was actually a small converted car garage. The house that was originally built on that property had burned during the 1907 fire.

Pearl was in her 90s and had lived her entire life in the Middle Grove area, and she had a very sharp recollection of early events in the community. During our discussion, she told me how Middle Grove got its name. She said, "It was originally named for a beautiful grove of pine trees that people frequented for picnics and gatherings which was located on the south side of Middle Grove Road between the IOOF hall and Murray Road (where the trailer court is today). However, when

the owner cut the trees down, the unhappy residents created a park on the other side of the road."

Pearl's description had always stayed with me, but I was never able to verify her story until doing research for this book. I came across the following *Saratoga Sentinel* article dated Sept. 9, 1880. It states:

"This place has long been noted for its fine original grove and park right in the center of the village and adjoining the [Baptist] church. A few years since this grove passed into the possession of a man who had more of an eye for the almighty dollar than the beauty of the place [Daniel Coy bought the property on April 1, 1878 from Sarah James estate. Sarah was the widow of the founder of the community, John W. James.] and the timber was all cut. On the opposite side of the road was about two acres of first growth timber, the ground however, being very rough and covered with boulders. Last season this came into possession of our enterprising townsman Nicholas Shaul. He at once offered to deed this as a public park, provided the citizens would put it in shape with a good fence around it, and he started the move with a liberal subscription himself. Being liberally sided by the citizens, now the park is enclosed with a substantial fence, the boulders removed, the rough places made smooth and a nice stand erected 40x16 feet, covered with pine shingles, enclosed on three sides, and painted, and temporary seats erected to accommodate two thousand people, with all other conveniences for the comfort of those that may congregate there, except water. This is soon to be brought and a fountain erected. No place in the country has its equal for a public park. This grove was opened last Sunday with religious services. These meetings represent all denominations, will continue throughout the week and next Sunday, and are conducted by Rev. C.H. Wyman of this place. The opening sermon was preached by Rev. G.A. Smith of Saratoga Springs, who took for his text the 26th verse of the 16th chapter of Mathew. Rev. H.R. Traver of Saratoga Springs preached on Monday and Tuesday. The meetings during the week were addressed by Rev. C.B. Perkins of Amsterdam, Rev. R.D. Grant of Broadalbin, and others."

Nicholas Shaul was clearly the hero of this community effort, but who was he? Mary Edith Dake Ellsworth in her written history of Middle Grove tells us the following about the park and the man who helped to create it.

"After the pine grove below the hall [IOOF Hall] was cut off, the hardwood groves with its sprinkling of pine, across the road was used for a picnic ground. Although privately owned, the public cleaned it up and erected a grandstand for the use of dignitaries, speakers and a band, built a stone wall for a gateway with its painted sign of Middle Grove Park. This was later replaced by one that was the talk of the town. When John Christian Shaul, a cabinet maker, cut out the

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lettering used on the archway. During the year the Sunday School sponsored a community picnic in the park. Everyone felt free to attend.”

Nick [Shaul], who lived in the house with the cupola, was an ardent Republican office holder, who was county sheriff for several years, and being a layman, who dabbled in law, was well known as a petty fogger [sic] who could ably match wits with any member of the bar in Justice Court. Having the ability of an impromptu speaker, he was called upon to welcome and introduce dignitaries at local gatherings and get a congregation in a giving mood before hats were passed to take up a collection for defraying expenses. His infectious jollity won him favors when he raised money for a community project by soliciting subscriptions. But his fee for making out one of these papers always equaled his subscription that headed the list. Although it was aid, he never made any public improvements that didn't net him a profit, he made a good showing when he supervised Middle Grove's grand side walk, wide enough for a couple to walk side by side. There was a cross walk in front of his house that connected the office part of the side walk on the south side of the road that ran down past the Baptist Church and Hall, before crossing the road at the arched gateway to the park, then on down past the stores to the grist mill driveway.

“Mrs. Truman, the Shaul's housekeeper, donated the locust posts cut on her premises for the street lamps, that cast their kerosene light the full length of Main Street, then back in the days when no woman dared walk this thoroughfare alone after dark.”

Mr. Shaul no doubt enjoyed his day of being a big toad in a small puddle, but his pride must have taken a fall when a political opponent, after hearing Nick express his views, remarked, ‘Shaul, you know what I'd do if I had your voice and ability? I'd peddle clams.’ When Mr. Shaul married a young woman, a few months after the death of his ailing wife, church members showed their disapproval by not calling on his bride. But soon as Mr. and Mrs. Shaul became active members of the Baptist church, they felt obligated to call on and welcome Mrs. Shaul, who was a likable person, to their fold.”

Between these two sources of information, we are better able to picture the man and the community. Middle Grove with its kerosene lit sidewalks, large elm trees, and arched entrance to its new community park in “The Grove,” must have been a community friendly place to live or visit.

Clearly this new grove of hardwoods and native pines was of great pride to the small community. (It was located behind and to the west of present day Baldwin's Garage on Middle Grove Road.)

Simpson UMC's 73 Year Old Recipe!

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Henry Rowland holds the first loaf of the Simpson United Methodist Church (UMC) Fall Steamed Brown Bread Sale. Simpson UMC's steamed brown bread recipe is 73-years-old, rich in molasses and raisins, steamed in coffee cans for three hours.

The recipe originated from Aunt Pearl McKnight, who was Henry Rowland's mother's mid-wife when he was born on January 24, 1926. Aunt Pearl slipped her recipe to Dorothy Potter at her wedding shower back in the summer of 1947, prior to her August 29 wedding to Henry Rowland. As Aunt Pearl slipped her recipe into Dorothy's

hand, she said: “You might need this someday.”

Many years later, Henry and Dot started making the stream brown bread for the Farmer's Market at the church. Henry handed the steaming duties over to Jerry Clark and now to Richard Baird and Kevin Johnson.

The Rowland's unique fundraiser services the church's ministry and community members in need. People from all over the area look to purchase their brown bread because of the quality and memories.

Dot and Henry have blessed Simpson UMC by the gift that keeps on giving: Aunt Pearl's steamed brown bread recipe!



Henry Rowland receives the first loaf of Simpson UMC Steam Brown Bread Sale. Photo provided.



GREENFIELD CENTER — Dorothy M. Rowland, 94, lifelong resident of Greenfield Center, went to eternal rest on November 29, 2020, at Wesley Healthcare Center. Dorothy was born on August 28, 1926, to the late Richard and Evelyn (Rhodes) Potter in Greenfield Center.

Dorothy graduated from Saratoga Springs High School and SUNY Cobleskill. She was employed by Skidmore College in Food Service and later at Saratoga Springs City School District as the School Lunch Director for 25 years. During this time she was named to the NYS Skilled Worker Emeritus Program by Governor Mario Cuomo.

Dorothy married Henry Rowland on August 29, 1948, and they recently celebrated 72 years of marriage.

She is survived by: her husband Henry; brother George; son Dick and daughter-in-law Joan Rowland; daughter Lynn and son-in-law Tom Cumm; and son Stephan and daughter-in-law Rosamaria Rowland. She is also survived by her grandchildren: Shana Cumm and Tom Rupert; Shaun and JoAnne Cumm; Lauren and Rob Delaney; Dominique and Brandon Semzock; and Stephanie and Nicholas Chandler; and great-grandchildren: Landen, Blake, and Avery Cumm, Waylon and Eleanor

Semzock, and Emily Chandler. Additionally, Dorothy is survived by her sisters-in-law Ruth Hayes and Norma Potter; and by many nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents, Dorothy was predeceased by her siblings Frances Potter, Chester Potter, John Potter, Laura Roeckle and Jane Potter.

Dorothy was a communicant of Simpson United Methodist Church, Rock City Falls, President and 75 year member of Greenfield Grange #807, a member of Saratoga County Pomona Grange, NYS Grange, and National Grange. She was past NYS Grange Deputy for Saratoga and Fulton Counties, Co-Director for NYS Grange CWA and Assistant Director of NYS Junior Grange Camp. She was a member and past president of the NYS School Food Service Association and a member of the Saratoga County Agricultural Society as an Ad Hoc for the Culinary Department, Zonta International, and delivered Meals on Wheels for many years. As a member of the Greenfield Historical Society, Dorothy was instrumental in the restoration of the one-room school house she had attended as a child. Family, food and community were all extremely important to Dorothy.

The family would like to express their heartfelt thanks to Eileen Beckwith and the Home Instead caregivers who helped take care of mom over the past year. We would also like to thank Wesley Healthcare for their care and concern in her final days.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Dorothy's memory to Simpson United Methodist Church, 1089 Rock City Road, Rock City Falls, NY 12863.

Funeral services will be private. Dorothy will be laid to rest at Greenfield Cemetery. Online remembrances may be made at www.burkefuneralhome.com.



Four generations 1926: Mabel Darrow Potter, Dorothy Potter, Frances Josephine Wing Darrow, and Richard Potter



Frances Josephine Wing Darrow holding Dorothy Potter



Dorothy Potter



Dorothy Potter

Photos provided by Robert Roeckle from Jane Potter's collection

Updating Our Records

We're asking every one that uses email to send us your email address in case we are unable to do a complete mailing in coming years. We will mail to members that don't use email or still want a hard copy. Thank you — toghistsoc@gmail.com

Our Newest LIFETIME MEMBER
Perrin Dake

Due to current state guidelines, we will be unable to open the Chatfield Museum this year.

Photos of getting and storing firewood in 1904 at the Darrow Farm on Locust Grove Road.



Photos supplied by Robert Roeckle

LESTER PARK AND PETRIFIED SEA GARDENS Greenfield Center, New York

Editor's Note: I found these photos on Facebook.

Walk on the Stromatolites

Field Review by the Team at RoadsideAmerica.com **Greenfield Center, New York**

Experience the thrill of walking on a "fossilized sea bottom" next to a modern suburban road. With its own historical marker and informational signs, this part of New York state -- now identified as the tiny Lester Park -- was a shallow tropical sea 490 million years ago, when it lay south of the equator. The property was donated to the New York State Museum in 1914.

The round shapes and swirly patterns in the sea-bottom rocks are stromatolites, or "sea cabbages," formed in very shallow waters by blue-green algae. They are the oldest evidence of life on Earth. Tucked among the cabbages are fossilized marine animals such as snails, trilobites, and brachiopods. Visitors are prohibited from taking any fossils, but it's perfectly okay to walk all over the ancient yet sturdy stromatolites, as it's the only way to see them, and to get to the informational signs.



October 3, 2020

Photo taken by Maurice O'Connell (Photo used with his permission)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL AVAILABLE ONLINE

Become a member of The Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. **Our membership year begins June 1 and ends May 31, dues are paid annually. Send \$10 per household (or \$100 for Lifetime Membership)** along with your name and address to the address shown below. **If you send more than \$10 for your household, the balance will be considered a donation.** You also may join at one of our meetings. Send this application form and fee to The Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. Make checks payable to: The Town of Greenfield Historical Society. **YOU CAN PAY YOUR DUES ONLINE AT OUR WEBSITE! www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com.** Email toghistsoc@gmail.com for more information.

Click on “Store,” “Membership” then click either “Annual Membership – Household” or “Lifetime Membership.”

Please Print – Please indicate how many persons 10-years-old or older are in your household). _____ New Renewal

Name _____ I am interested in volunteering.

Address _____

Email _____ Phone number _____

Areas of interest to you _____

To sponsor a newsletter send \$50 along with your name and address and the wording describing whom you would like it dedicated to.

If you know someone whom you think might want to become a member, send us their name and address, and we will send them a copy of our newsletter along with information on how they can join.

Name _____

Address _____

**If you'd like to dedicate and/or sponsor a newsletter, send \$50 to *The Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833*, include your name, address and the wording describing who you would like it dedicated to and/or sponsored by.
Please send articles and/or photos to: JJones18215@roadrunner.com.**

Updating Historic Sites Map in the Town of Greenfield

We invite our membership and readers of this newsletter to share with Dan any historical information about an interesting person, place, structure, or event within our town. Dan reserves the right to proofread and edit submissions, but he will be very happy to add your information to our map. We are always looking for historical information to add to and enhance the map, which we consider to be an ongoing work in progress. Please email Dan Chertok at Chertok@lcyllaw.com, call his cell phone (518-321-0330), or text him.



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