



## Historical Society Newsletter

**OFFICERS:** President, Mary Vetter; Vice President, Joan E. Rowland;  
Secretary, Patti Veitch; Treasurer, JoAnn Rowland;

**TRUSTEES:** Ron Deutsch, Ron Feulner, John Greenwood, Mike Gymarthy,  
Louise Okoniewski, Robert Roeckle, and Patty Schwartzbeck

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

Volume 22, Issue 4



501(c)(3)

email [toghistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:toghistsoc@gmail.com)  
[www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com)

*This newsletter is dedicated to all the people that keep the TOGHS going: past, present, and future.  
Sponsored by an anonymous member of our society.*

### CALENDAR

**December 2021** – *There will be no program or holiday event this month.*

**January 18, 2022** – Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. **Program:** *Saratoga Plan – Casey Holzworth*, a member of Saratoga Plan's Palmertown Guidance Committee and staff at NYS Parks, will update us on the exciting things that are happening in the Palmertown Range and the Sarah B. Foulke Friendship Trails. This planned network of trails in Northern Saratoga County, emphasize celebrating friendship, building community, and connecting people from all walks of life to nature and to each other. If you have a friend, neighbor, or family member interested in this program please bring them along. Non members are always welcome.

**February 15, 2022** – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. **Program:** Former Saratoga Springs police chief *Greg Veitch* has written a book – *A Gangster's Paradise*. This is a history of the Gangsters of Saratoga Springs from the Prohibition era up through the Kefauver Committee hearings in the 1950s.

Everyone is welcome, admission is free, and you don't have to be a member to attend.

**Our membership year begins June 1 and ends May 31, dues are paid annually. (\$10 per household or \$100 for Lifetime Membership)**  
*If you haven't paid, this will be your last newsletter.*

### Meetings Cancellations

*If schools are closed due to weather, our meeting will be canceled. A message also will be posted on our website and on our Facebook page.*

[www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com)

[www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=town of greenfield historical society](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=town%20of%20greenfield%20historical%20society)

### DECEMBER NOTES 2021

*by Joan E. Rowland, Acting President*

Who went Black Friday Shopping? Yes, my sister and I still do because we have PJs to make for 5 kids and the fabric store JoAnn's has a good price on the material that weekend. Before the Pandemic, you had to get there and be checked out by 11 am on Friday to get the big sale prices but now they run the sale for 5 days with Friday and Saturday having an additional % off. So, off we go to get the perfect flannel for the kids now ages 7 to 18. (The 6th kid is out of college now with a full time job, so he is cut off from PJs.) I found one that was perfect for the 11 year old boy but they only had 1 yard. I ended up standing in the Queensbury store and searching for this material on my phone (on the web). None at Clifton Park – but they had it at Albany store. So, Saturday off we go to Albany to pick up the 3 yards I ordered and paid for while standing in the Queensbury store. Technology worked to my advantage this day. Now, we have to cut out and sew before Christmas.

If you were at our November meeting, you would have enjoyed the talk by Joseph W. Zarzynski with his book *Ghost Fleet Awakened. Lake George's Sunken Bateaux of 1758*. I was intrigued with the boats that they sunk and hooked down (as a storage space). He explained how he and other diving friends tried to figure out "how do you sink a boat." Many tries and they think they have it figured out.

To my delight, his book, *Lochend – Monster Hunting on the Run* which takes place in Scotland, had just arrived so we got to hear about his jogging along the lake and looking for the monster. Or driving and trying to take a photo of what could have been a sighting (only to find himself driving on the American side of the road – oops).

Normally, we have a Holiday Open House at the IOOF Museum in December, with the cookie table being a big part of the event. We decided to not push our luck with COVID still among us. Now, a new variant was announced at the end of November. I am happy to bypass the open house again this year to help keep our neighbors safe.

Our board members drop a line or two with holiday greetings. I suggested maybe we could include a Family Tradition with this note. Hope you enjoy them.

Hope you have a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year. Looking forward to seeing you at the January Meeting in 2022 with Saratoga Plan as the program.

## HISTORIAN'S CORNER

December 2021 — by Ron Feulner, Town of Greenfield Historian

### *The Town of Greenfield, Saratoga County and the Oil Industry*



The Drake oil well (left) drilled in Venango County Pennsylvania in 1859 is widely known as the first oil well in America, however, many wells before the Drake well were producing oil. Well drilling was common with many recent improvements by the time the Drake well was sunk, however most wells were drilled for salt brine (source of salt).

Oil was sometimes found in these wells and pumped as an unwanted by-product, but by the late 1800s, several changes made oil more valuable.

Whaling had been the primary source for illuminating oil (lamp oil), but whales had been over-hunted and were becoming scarce, and the cost of harvesting them was increasing. Also, by the 1850s, scientist had discovered the potential for manufacturing kerosene from crude oil which was found to be an ideal replacement for whale oil. It was not as smelly, would not spoil, and was cheaper to produce than whale oil. As a result of all of these factors, the Drake well was the first to be financed and drilled for the specific purpose of making a profit from pumping crude oil. The site was chosen because of oil seepages found on the surface in that area.

The success of the Drake drilling operation quickly became a financial model for the development of the booming oil industry that was to follow, especially as oil use was expanding to fuel the growing number of internal combustion engines that would soon power America.

Fast forward 162 years to the present when a local Town of Greenfield man, Clifford Young, was rummaging through his attic which contains remnants of many generations of his family's history.

Clifford's ancestor, Isaac Ormsbee, had been a whaler in Rhode Island before coming to the Town of Greenfield, Saratoga County in 1796, where he bought and ran a farm on what is now Ormsbee Road. (Issac made the trip on foot in 17 days and recorded the experience in a personal diary.)

Isaac's son, Russel M. Ormsbee, was one of eight children and eventually took over the family farm. Russel M. was a man of many talents and interests. In addition

to farming and operating a sawmill, he became a surveyor and was involved in surveying a plank road and later a railroad that crossed the Town of Greenfield. Russel M. was also a traveler who often kept records of his travels which included excursions on the Erie Canal.

Clifford, who now lives in the Ormsbee farm house, appeared in my historian's office recently with a thick folder filled with some of his ancestors' personal papers that he had found in the house's attic. As I thumbed through the folder, I saw the usual deeds, mortgages, bank statements, and wills that a family might save, but in the middle of the pile was a handwritten document on lined paper that caught my eye.

The neat handwriting began with the words, "*Articles of agreement made and entered into between Russel M. Ormsbee & Alvin Day of the Town of Greenfield and John G. Savage & Titus D. Allen of the Town of Galway all of the County of Saratoga ... to be partners together for the purpose having for in order to obtain Rock or Seneca oil on a lot of ground leased by the said above named parties from Edward Edmonds, Geo O. Chamberlain & Hiram Tompkins lying and being in Cornplanter Township, Venango County, State of Pennsylvania ...*" (Note that the lease was for land in the same county in Pennsylvania as the Drake well but located in an adjacent township just south of the Drake well.)

The agreement goes on to explain that the purpose of the agreement is for the, "... boring of two wells of the depth of 350 feet each if necessary to obtain oil ..."

The agreement continues to explain that if oil is not found the agreement can be mutually dissolved, but if they should hit oil the partnership shall continue for the duration of the lease, and they shall share and share alike in all profits. The document also explains in detail how all accounting shall be done and how all future decisions are to be made regarding the endeavor. It is then signed by all the parties and dated the 2nd day of April, 1861.

It would be interesting to learn whether the wells were ever drilled and with what success. There is no indication that the Ormsbee family ever enjoyed great wealth from this endeavor for they continued to farm and pursue other local means of earning a living down through the years until present.

The agreement did interest me as a local historian, because I had always believed the Drake well and the following boom in the oil industry to be the domain of wealthy men and large investment groups, and I thought it had very little to do with the history of the Town of Greenfield which was a farming and lumbering community at the time. As a result, I was surprised to find that local families had tried to cash-in on the oil bonanza.

### **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](mailto:toghistsoc@gmail.com)

# TOGHS Meeting and Program – November 16, 2021



Joseph Zarzynski, Maritime Archaeologist, talking about his book *Ghost Fleet Awakened – Lake George’s Sunken Bateaux of 1758* at our November program.



Maple Avenue Middle School students helping with the Bateaux Project in 2007–2008



Joseph Zarzynski also mentioned his newest book, *Lochend – Monster Hunting on the Run*



Some of the participants at the November meeting/program (photo by John Greenwood)

*A big “Thank You” to John Greenwood for supplying Stewart’s Ice Cream Sandwiches for the refreshments at November’s program.*

## 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?**

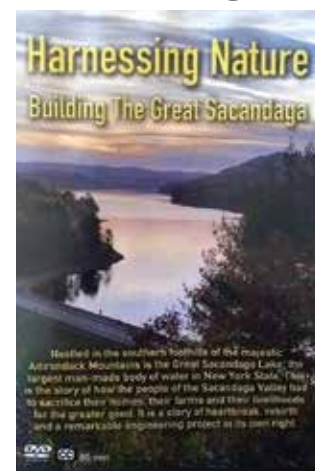
**Do you like lawn and landscaping work?**

**We need your ideas and skills.**

**Please contact us at 518-322-5675 or email us at [toghistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:toghistsoc@gmail.com)**

## “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 heart-break, 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 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.)





**Robert Roeckle shared a cookbook (created for family, by his sister Lynda, after the passing of Jane Potter) for possible use as fillers for the newsletter when needed.**

This cookbook was created after the passing of Jane Carol Potter (1943-2019)

The name *Jane* is a girl's name of English origin meaning "God is gracious".

Jane – a small innocent creature, Jane is a fun packed little bundle! She is the sweetest thing you will ever find and is definitely one of a kind! If anyone can bring out a smile, it is Jane! If your name is Jane, consider it an honor, because you will achieve a lot in life and make a lot of people happy! Jane is sure to send you away with great memories!

The recipe you have all been waiting for:



### SNICKERDOODLES

1-1/2 cups sugar	2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1/2 cup margarine or butter	1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup shortening	1/4 teaspoon salt
2 eggs	2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2-3/4 cups flour	2 Tablespoons sugar

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Mix 1-1/2 cups sugar, margarine, shortening and eggs. Stir in flour, cream of tartar, baking soda and salt. Shape dough by rounded teaspoonfuls into balls. Mix 2 Tablespoons sugar and the cinnamon; roll balls in mixture to coat. Place about 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake until set, 8 to 10 minutes. Immediately remove from cookie sheet. Makes about 6 dozen cookies.

1/2 Recipe Snickerdoodles  
 3/4 C Sugar  
 1/4 C. marg. or Butter  
 1/4 c shortening  
 1 egg  
 1/4 + 2 TL Bsp  
 1 tsp cream of tartar  
 1/2 tsp B. Soda  
 dash salt  
 1 TBS Sugar } TO ROLL IN  
 1 tsp cinnamon } 400° 8 to 10  
 3002



Jane pictured with various animals.

## A Christmas Memory, by Robert Roeckle

We always cut a tree on land owned by one or the other of my grandparents. One year we cut a scotch pine tree, from the land I currently live on, and had it fully decorated in the living room. My father realized that it was starting to lean and should be wired to the wall, but he was not going to put a hole in the living room wall or ceiling to attach a wire. So he ‘dragged’ the fully decorated tree, in an upright position, through the house to the family room addition where he proceeded to jam the tree in a corner. Ornaments had fallen off the tree on the way and as he pushed the tree into the corner, the tree topper (hand blown glass spire from family in Germany) snapped off. Not being deterred, he wired the tree to the corner so it would not fall over. I still have that spire, which has been rigged to hang upside down as an ornament.



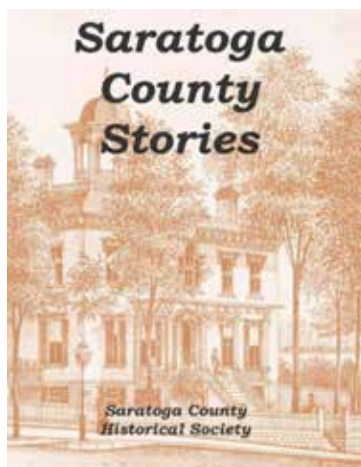
*Christmas at the Darrow house on Locust Grove Road, 1890s or 1900s.*

## A SPECIAL GIFT

Saratoga County Historical Society published *Saratoga County Stories*, a collection of essays and articles from local historians about Saratoga County. It is a great holiday gift and will delight readers of all ages with snapshots of the past and true tales of crime, heroism, and colorful personalities. The book has 58 short articles, the collection is a veritable who-what-where-when-and-why of Saratoga County history.

Purchase a copy of the book for \$18 from Town of Greenfield Historical Society or at the Town Clerk's office at the Greenfield Town Hall during regular business hours. If you are looking for a great Christmas gift, Joan will be at the Community Center on Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021 from 6 to 7 p.m. If you need to have your book mailed to you, please send a check to TOGHS, PO Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. Make check payable to TOGHS for \$18 for the book plus \$3.50 for mailing.

*Look for John Greenwood's story published in the book. If you see him, he may even autograph it for you.*



## Santa 365, by John Greenwood

Christmas for one Greenwood is a 365-day event. My youngest grandson is destined to follow in the footsteps of his maternal grandfather Stephen Toussaint, as well as Wally and Bob Gailor, Freddie Clark, and jolly old St. Nick himself. This little guy has been playing Santa Claus for the last two years and he's only in pre-school. He has all the right tools to play the part; an infectious smile, a gift-giving heart, and a well-worn Santa suit that he wears as proudly in July as he does on Christmas morning. You may have spotted Santa Jr., this summer at the Eastside Rec watching his older brother play baseball or in the aisles of Target with his family. There were multiple Santa-sightings at the Saratoga Springs Public Library, and the Spa State Park. This mini version of the real deal distributes joy throughout the year, throughout the community, because his greatest gift is the ear-to-ear smile he hands you when you least expect it. Here's wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, may you have a Santa-sighting of your own in the days and months ahead. It will do your heart good.



## Christmas Story, from Joan E Rowland

Our Mom, Evelyn Rowland, told the story of the first Christmas tree Dad, Myron Rowland, brought to her when they were dating. It was so bad that when he brought it in one door, she took it out the other door.

The last tree Dad cut down for Christmas, he did with our dog Bozo. We think the dog chose it as a tree to pee on and Dad thought that was the one he picked out for the house. It had many limbs missing. Over the years, Dad had gotten really good at drilling holes in the trunk and inserting limbs to fill the tree out. He did not bother to do this this time. (Note: This is what they do for the tree in NYC. Our Dad way ahead of the trend.)

Hope you and your family reminisce of family trees and holiday adventures this holiday season.

## Happy Holidays, from JoAnn Rowland, Treas.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a Happy Healthy New Year to all our members near and far. Remember “Jesus is the reason for the season,” and to keep up your family traditions.

For our family it's going to the Christmas Eve Service and the lighting of the Christ candle in the advent wreath. Three purple and one pink candles were lite the previous four Sundays of Advent. Advent is a time of waiting. Waiting for Christ.

Candles are an important part of many religions. As I write this we are in the season of Hanukkah, where our Jewish friends lite one candle in there menorah each night for eight nights and set it in the window. This represents the time when there ancestors had only enough oil for one night but it lasted eight.

What traditions do you have? Any that involves the light of God? Or candles? We would like to hear about them.

## 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](http://www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com).** Email [toghistsoc@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 [Dgchertok@gmail.com](mailto:Dgchertok@gmail.com), call his cell phone (518-321-0330), or text him.



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