

Historical Society Newsletter

OFFICERS: President: Ron Feulner; Vice President: Louise Okoniewski;
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Trustees: Coral Crosman, Ron Deutsch, Robert Roeckle, JoAnn Rowland, and Vince Walsh

Janet Jones, Editor
P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833

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www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com

Calendar

March 16, 2010: Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m.
at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.
Program: Brendon Manley, a free-lance writer and one of the editors of Military History Magazine. His hobby is metal detectors, and he will talk about how he uses one to uncover history.

April 20, 2010: Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m.
at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.
Program to follow.

May 18, 2010: Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m.
at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.
Program to follow.

Our Web Site is Expanding

Take a look and contribute if you can.

- Explore the Interactive Map! Dan Chertok has been busy adding new sites to the Interactive Map. Please share with Dan. He needs your old photos. It's easy. Just call Dan or e-mail him at bmmschertok@gmail.com.
- Flip through historical photographs. You can now browse through our photo collection and please leave comments.
- Read past newsletters. They are now online in case you missed one.
- Browse our book recommendations. Look through listings of historical recommended reading and books by local authors.

Attention Local Authors

We would love to put your book(s) or next event on our new Web site as a small thank you for speaking to our group. If you are interested, please contact Thom Siragusa at tsiragusa@gmail.com or 518-322-1486.

Since our February meeting was cancelled, our March refreshment volunteers are: JoAnn Rowland, Maureen Cinadr and Nancy Homiak.

Janet Jones, Refreshment Chairperson

Ron's Ramblings

Boy! I am suffering from cabin fever, big time. It will seem good to get outside and start some spring projects. Canceling our February meeting has made it all the worse. It was a difficult decision since the schools were already out on vacation that week, so it meant that we had to use our phone-tree for the first time. (You probably remember the meeting when I passed around the sign-up sheet and asked everyone to add their phone number if they wanted to be called in case of a cancellation.) It seemed to work well on our end.

I called several people including our vice-president, Louise, who works in the Town Clerk's Office, and she said that the people who were coming in said the roads were getting quite bad. That was about two in the afternoon. I felt that if we were going to cancel, we shouldn't wait to the last minute as our speaker had to be notified and our refreshment committee had to prepare our goodies. It turned out that Nancy Homiak had made her dessert the night before, so Alice and I felt compelled to go up to her house for tea and help eat some, so they wouldn't go to waste. The rest of you don't know what you missed. Well, let's hope the weather is better for the March meeting. See you all there.

Updating Historic Sites Map in the Town of Greenfield

If you have any information, e-mail Dan Chertok at BMMSCHERTOK@GMAIL.COM or DGCLAWOFFICES@CSDSL.NET.

You may also write or call him at:

Dan Chertok
58 Ormsbee Road
Porter Corners, NY 12859
Phone: 518-893-2268

IMPORTANT – If schools are closed because of the weather, our meeting will be canceled that evening.

Finding Warren Dake's Gravestone

By Katie Finnegan

In April 2008, Ron led a Historical Society field trip to the Dake Cemetery. Pat and I were interested and decided to go. I was amazed when we got there. In all the times that I've been up and down North Creek Road, I never dreamed there was a cemetery up on the bluff. It's just a little family plot with 14 marked graves, according to Cornelius E. Durkee's unpublished manuscript Saratoga County Epitaphs. In the 1870s, over a period of three years, Mr. Durkee compiled a complete record of all the cemeteries in Saratoga County.

I was disappointed when we got there not to see the gravestone of Warren Dake. According to Durkee's record, that stone had a great deal written on it. It told how Warren Dake drowned in the Mohawk River on the day of his graduation from Union College in 1833. The cemetery is in quite poor condition. It is overgrown with woods, the ground is uneven, graves are sunken, and stones have been broken and are propped against trees. Some of the stones are very worn and difficult to read. In a way, I considered it to be a beautiful and peaceful place. You can always hear the rush of the Kayderosseras there; it's just below you down the bank.

Later on, I was talking to my dad, Donald Keefer, who is a historian and genealogist. Dad had shown me the Durkee record for the cemetery and gotten me interested in it. "I bet Warren Dake's stone is still there," Dad said. He thought it had probably fallen over and was just buried under dirt and leaves. After all, where could it have gone? So I decided I would look for it.

Pat took an old broom handle and duct-taped a big long screwdriver to the bottom of it. Now I had something to poke the ground with. I'd know it if I hit a buried gravestone. I went back up to the cemetery and started poking. First I found the stone of Tompkins Dake. That stone had fallen over and cracked apart, but you could read it. I had just about given up on Warren Dake's stone, though, when finally I hit something. It was close to the bank, and really outside what I thought the boundary of the cemetery was. When I uncovered a little bit of it and saw all the writing on it, I knew I'd found it. I'm glad it was right side up.

I cleared it off and the whole stone was there. It had not fallen over. You could tell because all the part of it that would have been underground was still intact. Someone had worked the stone out of the ground for some reason and moved it almost to the edge of the bank. I think that must have happened quite a long time ago because it was buried down about half a foot.

We made a rubbing of the stone and gave it to the Historical Society. We were lucky to find a frame for it at the City Mission for \$3.00 that just fit it. Pat cleaned it up and gave it a coat of poly to make it look really nice. Our son, Dan, took some pictures at the cemetery, and my dad compiled a binder on the Dake Cemetery, and that was given to the Historical Society, too. Dad researched the Dakes in the cemetery. Among the stones there are the graves of Warren's parents and grandparents. The grandparents, Charles and Anna Deake, were the first generation in Greenfield. They came from Hopkinton, R.I., and were some of Greenfield's first settlers.

Pat contacted Union College for information on Warren Dake. They were very helpful and gave us copies of two letters that had been written telling the story of his death. These letters are amazing in the detail they contain, being written twenty-two and fifty years after the event. Reading them truly brings to life a tragedy that happened over one hundred and seventy five years ago.

Warren Dake's gravestone is truly the most unusual stone I have ever seen. There are twenty-five lines of epitaph. With

its sometimes unusual spellings, ways of hyphenating words, and inconsistent capitalization, you'd have to say it's unique. But it has the power of making you feel the heartbreak of such a tragedy even after so many years have passed. I would hope that somehow a way could be found to preserve such a unique treasure. I'd like to someday see this stone stood back up in its rightful place. I think Warren Dake deserves that much.

Erected
to the memory of
WARREN DAKE
who was drowned at Schenectady
early in the morning of the 24th
of July 1833, while bathing
in the Mohawk River, the very
day of the annual commencem
ent of Union college, aged 24
years, 11 months, & 20 days,
when he was to have spoken the
hebrew Oration, and to receive
in course the degree of AB, when
his turn came in the order of
exercises, the President arose &
remarked that W. Dake was
to have spoken the Hebrew Or-
ation, a youth of promising
talents, a fine scholar, and be-
aring a high moral and reli-
gious character, but God had
by a solemn providenc (sic) this m-
orning called him to his last
account, he then called for
musick (sic), when the affecting
words were sung," I heard
a voice say, Wise (sic), Blessed are
the dead who die in the Lord &c

The following are letters describing his death.

Carmel, Allegheny Co, N.Y., July 19, 1883

Mr. Dake, Very dear Sir,

For a few days past I have been thinking of an event which transpired fifty years this present month. I now allude to the drowning of Warren Dake, who was a student of Union College in Schenectady. At that time I was a boy twelve years old and was working for his brother, Benjamin C. Dake, who was living with his parents Charles and Abigail Dake. Warren had been home staying for a few days previous to Commencement. He left home on Monday morning just at light to take the cars at Ballston for Schenectady. It was Levi Hanford's turn to carry him to the cars as we were about the same age and took turns in carrying him to Ballston. Warren when at home occupied the bedroom in the southwest corner of the chamber. The girls, Pheobe and Cynthia in the northwest corner, Levi and I slept in the large room in the east end. It was hardly light when he passed though the room we occupied with his coat on his arm, walking quite fast, As he was opposite our bed he spoke quickly, saying "Come Levi".

The Commencement was on Wednesday, July 24. It was a lowey [sic] day. Quite a number of young people from Greenfield went down to the exercises. Those I remember were Joel Gardner and

wife, Sally Deake Gardner, Pheobe and Cynthia Dake, Sarah Ann Gardner, Joel B's sister (Warren's intended), Manly James and Howland Day.

When they reached the tavern five miles north of Schenectady they heard that a student had been drowned that morning. The company remarked that it could not be Warren as he hardly ever went in swimming. On reaching the City Hotel, they were informed on making inquiry of Mr. Davis, the proprietor, that it was Warren Dake, son of Esq. Dake of Greenfield. What sad intelligence to that young and happy group who were so animated and full of joy. As they arrived his body had just been raised from the water. Every means was taken to resuscitate [sic] him, but his spirit had gone to Him who gave it twenty three years before.

Messengers were sent to convey the terrible news to the family, at that time we had no telegraph. They reached Deacon Dakes', son about an hour high, and when they saw how frail the father was, they had not courage to reveal the awful fact. There was a young woman working there and to her they made known their business. She after a few moments informed the parents.

I never saw such agony manifested before. The father walked the room and groaned, saying Oh, oh, oh. A few of the near neighbors had gathered in to mourn them. After a brief interval said the crushed in his deepest anguish "Let us have a season of prayer". It was to his God that the old saint went in his overwhelming grief for support. I was sent to inform Benj. Dake, who was mowing on the farm one half mile south west, toward Grinnell's Mills, now called, I believe Jamesville.

The corpse and sisters with their associates arrived at eleven o'clock at night. The funeral was at the house the next day, July 25, at one o'clock. Rev. Skinner of Corners, their pastor officiated, assisted by Rev. Thomas Powell of Milton. I well recollect hearing the pastor remark, "Little did I think, when I saw Warren Dake walking down the aisle last Sabbath, that I should be called upon to officiate in these solemn duties so soon, yet such are the uncertainties of life."

The funeral was one of the largest and most imposing and solemn ever held in the region. Deacon Dakes' family stood very high and Warren was a particular favorite among the young people. He was very sociable, amiable, and fine looking, had a penetrating blue eye, rather reddish cheeks, brown hair. His motions were more than ordinarily quick. His speech sharp and quick, he had no equal in Greenfield, I presume was the first in the town that had completed a college course. He was to have graduated that day, to have delivered the Hebrew oration. A little event that transpired that morning made quite an impression on my childish mind. I was sent to carry the breakfast to the hired men, John Cornell and David Jones. They sat down about three rods north of the corners near Mr. Morehouse's mill. While eating Jones looked solemn and said "Look out for bad news. There is part of a rainbow in the west." It was about that time that Warren Dake was sinking down in his watery grave.

Still since [sic] the drowning of that noble, moral, and highly literary young man, every year the impression sinks deeper and deeper in my memory. Though I have lost near relatives and dear to me, none of them ever made the impression on my mind that the death of Warren Dake did. Every year for the past half century, that subject has been one of conversation and deep sorrow.

Yours Truly,
John M. Shotwell

A SECOND WRITE UP, HELD BY UNION COLLEGE,
WRITTEN BY ONE OF WARREN'S ROOM MATES.

The night previous to the Commencement, Warren Dake, who was to deliver the Hebrew Oration, came to my room & slept with me & in the grey of the morning of Commencement day, when I awoke he was up & dressing & said that he was going down to the river to bathe & asked me to go along. I told him that I had been in the night before, but I would go with him. I arose & got a classmate of mine, David L. Bryan, and Dake got one of his Horace Handy & we four started for the river. This was a little before sunrise. In going along, I proposed that we should go to the nearest point, where there was a raft & deep water, but Dake objected, because he could not swim, so we had to go about a mile down the river to where there was shoal water. Going along Dake and I walked together, I asked him why he chose the study of Law and not Theology. He replied that he did not feel himself prepared, and that he did not consider himself a Christian.

When we arrived at the place a little below the Ferry, the other three went into the water & a little after I dove in also. As I rose to the surface I saw Dake under the water struggling. He was about two rods from me and very near to Bryan. I shouted to Bryan to help Dake for he was drowning. "No" said Bryan. "He is playing". "No" I replied & that moment Bryan sprang and seized him. Dake had probably risen twice to the surface & after Bryan went to his help they rose & sank three times. As they came to the surface I could see that this was a terrible struggle, at last they sank & I ran to the fence & tore off a plank that was spiked on stoutly, how I had the strength to tear it off was always a wonder to me, & I brought it down & threw it into the water. Bryan at this moment ran and left Dake. Bryan for several weeks carried the marks of Dake's grasp. The water was about 10 feet deep & the current strong. When I first saw Dake, I should have gone to his assistance, if Bryan, who was a much stouter person and better swimmer than I, had not been so much nearer. Afterwards I considered that if I went, we would all be drowned. Handy stood all this time in water up to his breast without moving.

I dressed as quickly as I could, told them to get him out as quickly as possible * ran up to the Ferry where were standing a one horse rig & a two horse carriage waiting to be ferried over. I ran & sprang into the one horse carriage. Mr. Smith the man who was driving them had got out & gone down the river a few rods to see what the matter was with us. I ran the horse in his rig up to North College & got Dr. Jocelyn & hastened back to the river, hoping that they would have gotten Dake out & that we would be able to bring him to. But his body was not recovered until 10 AM when a heavy thunder shower came up and the body rose. A brother & two sisters of Dake coming in from Greenfield, Saratoga Co., when they arrived to attend Commencement & to take their brother home, in crossing the Ferry & seeing the crowd on the shore below, inquired why they were there & learned that their Brother was drowned.

This appalling circumstance produced a great affect, clothed the students & house in mourning, & allayed in some measure the bitter feeling of the citizens & the Commencement passed off with only a few groans & _____. Such My Dear Liz are my recollections, after nearly twenty two years & never, never shall I forget the awful strength & the terrible effort of Bryan to free himself from the death grasp of the beloved and greatly lamented Dake, than whom perhaps there was not a more amiable & worthy student in College.

I am Very Respectfully Your Obt. Severent
Leonard G. Olmstead, New York

Membership Application/Renewal

Become a member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. Send \$10 along with your name and address to the address shown below. If you send more it will be considered a donation. Other types of memberships are also available (lifetime, corporate, etc.), just call and ask (518 893-0620). Our membership year begins in September, and dues are paid annually. You may also join at one of our meetings.

Send this application form and fee to Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. Make checks payable to: Town of Greenfield Historical Society.

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

Name (please print)_____

Address _____

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 the newsletter dedicated to (please print):

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 free copy of our newsletter along with information on how they can join.

Name (please print)_____

Address _____

We still need articles. If you would like to write an article for the newsletter, send it to:
Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833 or if you type
it using Microsoft Word, e-mail it to: **aliron@nycap.rr.com (please note new e-mail address).**

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