



## Historical Society Newsletter

**OFFICERS: President: Louise Okoniewski; Vice President: Robert Roeckle;  
Secretary: Patty Schwartzbeck; Treasurer: JoAnn Rowland;  
Trustees: Dan Chertok, Ron Deutsch, Ron Feulner, Katie Finnegan and Aida Gordon**

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

Volume 16, Issue 3



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

### CALENDAR

- Nov. 17, 2015** – Tuesday, 7 p.m. meeting at the Community Center in Greenfield Center. Program: **Marty Podskoch** will talk about his book, *Adirondack Civilian Conservation Corps Camps – History, Memories and Legacy of the CCC*.
- Dec. 19, 2015** – 1-4 p.m., **Christmas Party** at the *Chatfield Museum of Local History* in Middle Grove.
- Jan. 19, 2016** – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center. Program: **Don Monica**, of our Farmer's Market, will speak about *Maple Sugaring*, something that his family has done for generations. Many local farms would collect maple sap in the spring to make maple syrup, a practice learned from the native Americans.
- Feb. 16, 2016** – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center. Program: **Ellen Steinberger** will speak about "*Down in the Valley: Exploring the Gut.*" This area in Saratoga Springs, east of Broadway, has been home to multi-ethnic working class families for over two centuries and also was important to the evolution of the Jewish community.

**Everyone is welcome;  
you don't have to be a member to attend.**

### WEEZIE'S WORDS

by Louise Okoniewski

October 3 marked our second annual Gala and Fundraiser for the Historical Society. The nice weather brought out 90+ people that shared the evening festivities. It was a good night to get together and have some fun. Chairperson, Ron Deutsch, was busy working the phones and coordinating the website with Thom Siragusa. Robert Roeckle has the job of putting together pictures or story boards of years past.

This year he chose to profile some of the uniforms and clothing that we have stored at the Museum. He kept most of it a secret (even to me).

Rob's display included a World War 1 uniform, a wedding dress, a mourning dress, Porter Corners Baseball uniforms, and a Greenfield Fire Dept. uniform. Rob choose this display because he has applied for a grant with the Museum Association of New York. We would like to display the uniforms and clothing at the Museum, but we would need display cases, which is one of the items that Rob included in the Grant application.

We couldn't find anyone to play for us that night, but Katie Finnegan loaned us some of her CD's that included Lawrence Older, John Kirk and Trish Miller, and Joe Bruchac. It made for great background music, which everyone seemed to enjoy. The buffet was delicious and well prepared by Chef Vic of the Haven Tee Room, and complimented the night.

I can't say Thank You enough to the individuals and businesses that donated gift cards, goods and money for the auction items. Without those, we would not have an auction or be able to keep track of the bidding wars on some of the items. Thanks to Tom Merrills, Aida Gordon and Patty Schwartzbeck who took the time to visit the businesses and get the word out on our mission to keep Greenfield history alive.

Ron Deutsch deserves a big round of applause as he spends a lot of time on the phone and email telling people about us. His hard work paid off when he announced that Bill Dake donated \$10,000.00 to us! The money will be used to do some work at Dake Town School.

The Dakes have been very generous to us. After Philly Dake passed away, Gary and the Dake family donated a lot of the family history that she had so carefully taken care of, with the thought that it would be displayed in our museum. The Dake family provided the display cases that feature many of those items and tell the story of the Dake family and business. So I am sure that Dake Town School will get the attention that it so well deserves.

Ron has us booked for October 1, 2016, at the Haven Tee Room. So mark you calendar!

### Newest Lifetime Members

Casey Cornell  
Gary Dake  
Pat & Katie Finnegan  
Derek Stannard  
Sandy & Jim Wimet  
Clifford & Louise Young

## THANK YOU TO ALL THAT DONATED FOR OUR FUNDRAISER – IT MEANS A LOT TO US

Bill Dake  
 Butch Duffney.....4 cord log length firewood/delivered  
 Casey Cornell.....flag, pole & solar light for Daketown School  
 Saratoga Health & Wellness .....2-month memberships (2)  
 Tabor Ellsworth..... Greenfields Forever basket  
 Serge Shishik .....Saratoga Courage basket  
 Farmers Market Basket.....from our vendors  
 Melissa Cartier..... warm up your kitchen package  
 Dan Chertok ..... legal services  
 Tinney's Tavern..... Tinney's gift certificates (2)  
 Rosemary Jenson .....Saratoga Farmstead B&B/breakfast for 4  
 Gail Hika.....Post Café gift certificate  
 Town of Greenfield.....Brookhaven golf pass  
 Ryan Christopher ..... oil changes from Ryan's Garage (2)  
 Kevin Canale.....Haven Tee Room gift certificate  
 Vince Walsh ..... Foothills Tree Service  
 Allerdice (T.R.) .....Grinder  
 Judd Kilmer.....handmade birdhouse from the Old Mill  
 Quality Hardware ..... gift cards (2)  
 Mullholland's ..... gift card  
 The Girls at the Hairport.....gift certificates  
 Mike Baldwin ..... oil changes/Baldwins Garage (2)  
 Nancy McGrath.....oil painting  
 Eastern Mountain Sports..... snow shoe rentals  
 Kenny Briell.....embroidered vests/Briell Enterprises (2)  
 Kathy Kahl ..... gift certificates/Kathy's Awesome Dogs (5)  
 Roma Deli ..... gift certificate  
 Sunnyside Garden .....potted mum  
 Greenfield Liquor ..... bottles of wine (2)  
 Fierro's ..... gift certificate  
 In Stiches.....Daketown School mugs  
 Lelah Cornell .....homemade jams & jellies  
 Larry VanVranken.....services Cornells Auto Repair  
 Excelsior Beverage ..... gift card  
 Mom and Pops ..... gift certificate  
 Katie Finnegan ..... jams, jellies & pickles  
 Dehn's Florist..... gift certificate  
 Ron & Alice Feulner..... Ron's books/Alice's handmade angel  
 Patty Schwartzbeck .....breakfast basket  
 JoAnn Rowland..... Watkins basket/iTunes gift card  
 Kristen.....Essential Touch gift certificate  
 D'Andreas Liquor Store ..... bottles of wine (2)

## At My General's Side

Ben Kemp from the Friends of Grants Cottage, presented an informative program on Sam Willett at our October meeting. Sam, who served under then General Ulysses S. Grant, was from Argyle but living in Albany at the time that Grant decided to stay at the cottage. Ulysses S. Grant was a two-term president and had to give up his General's pension to run for President. Grant and one of his son's fell victim to a Ponzi scheme, and lost everything. In the need of money for his family, President Grant began to write his memoirs, something that he had resisted to this point. Grant started to write, and about the same time, he was diagnosed with throat cancer. The doctors wanted Grant out of the city, someplace where he had fresh air and could rest. He had a friend, Joseph Drexel, who had a cottage at Mt. McGregor Resort, then the Hotel Balmoral, which was one of the very few places to have electricity.

Grant wanted to be surrounded by his family, children, grandchildren and in-laws. He was followed by many newspaper reporters, much like today's paparazzi. The papers describe Sam Willett as every inch a soldier. Reporters would hide in the woods to get a look at the President and give a report on his condition or hoping to catch the moment that he succumbs to the disease. These distractions would keep Grant from writing his memoirs. It was hard for Willett because Ulysses was a friendly man. He couldn't speak, but would always tip his hat to the ladies and would invite people from the hotel to visit him and his family.

Sam Willett lived in a tent near the cottage, he would play with the children, take care of the little things that the family might need, but his big challenge was keeping the papers and public away from the cottage. Sam was only a private in the army, and he took it upon himself to protect the man he had a lot of respect for.

Grant started to write his memoirs in 1884 and was into the second volume before he moved to Mt. McGregor, but as he become more ill, he needed to finish them. He was at the cottage for six weeks before his death. Publisher, Mark Twain, visited President Grant a few days before his death and told him that he had 100,000 copies of his book that were preordered. Grant passed away on July 23, 1885. His General's pension was reinstated just before his death.

Grant had a lot of respect for the veterans. The Grand Army of the Republic was the largest veterans organization of the Civil War. It was an integrated group with African-American soldiers who fought in the Civil War. President Grant had respect for all soldiers and would make time to see any veteran, even Confederate Vets, whom he had sympathy for. Grant was never happy that the common soldier was never recognized.

Grant's funeral was August 8th, 1885 in New York City, the largest funeral procession in NYC. He is buried in one of the largest Mausoleums in the world. Grant would not have approved of this, but had no say.

Sam Willett's tombstone is in a plot in North Argyle. He probably went back to Albany and then to Argyle and continued his trade as a shoemaker.

Grant's Cottage was opened as a museum five years after his death. 130 years later everything remains the same at the cottage.

*Note: Ben Kemp is a staff member at Grant's Cottage. He had a display at our Caboose Day this past August and was very busy. He suggested that we visit Grant's Cottage in 2016 as group. This was one of the busiest years that the cottage has had. He encouraged all of us to go to the cottage, even if it's just for the view.*



*Ben Kemp talking about "At My General's Side to the End," a program about Sam Willett, a Civil War veteran who stayed by Ulysses Grant's side as he was dying of throat cancer at Mt. McGregor.*

## HISTORIAN'S CORNER

by Ron Feulner

Sometimes the deadline for another newsletter rolls around so quickly that it catches me off guard, especially when I don't have a single idea in my head about what I will say.

I recently received a request asking if I knew anyone who could give a talk about stone wall fences. I did not but suggested that another person that I know might be able to help.

Later, I was thinking about stone wall fences and all the information they contain. In the first place, they tell us about the geological history of the land. There are many areas where you do not find any stonewall fences, and it is not because the farmers there were too lazy to build them. Rather, it is because the soils in that region have no stones.

My friend Harold once told me why we have so many fences in Greenfield. I can't remember his exact words, but it went something like this. God created the world in six days and on the seventh day, He created Greenfield because He needed a place for all the left over stones.

As colorful as this account is, I don't think it would gain much acceptance in the geology department of a university. Geologists have good evidence that about a million years ago a continental glacier formed over much of North America and lasted until about 10,000 years ago. This thick ice sheet (in places a mile thick) didn't just blanket the land, instead it was a dynamic force that moved and ground chunks of bedrock from their original location, rolling, grinding and tumbling them until they came to rest in a new location when the ice finally melted. These stones ranging from pebble sizes to great boulders were left along with ground up sand and clay soils in a mixture that later Greenfield farmers tried to grow their crops in. These early settlers pulled and pried the larger stones out of the ground and moved them to the perimeters of the fields.

Every year frost heave would raise a new set of cobbles and boulders that would have to be dealt with leading some to believe that the soil was actually growing a crop of stones annually. Stone boats were designed that could be pulled behind a team of horses or oxen. The stone boat was a flat surface made of heavy planking and turned up on the leading edge like a toboggan (later some farmers adapted the hoods from 1950s era cars to be used as stone boats). Stones could be rolled onto the boat using muscle power

and occasionally a steel bar for leverage, then hauled to the edge of the field and unloaded. Sometimes the stones were just thrown on a pile, but more often the ingenious farmer would use them to build a wall to keep his livestock in or out of the field.

If you are paying close attention, you remember that earlier, I mentioned that some areas have stone walls and other areas do not. The reason for this depends on the glacier again. The glacier covered most of NY state except for a small section of land in the western part (those who have traveled in southern states may have noticed that few stone walls exist in those areas). Why then do we have stone wall fences in most areas of NY but not all. There are several reasons for this, but the most common is that in some areas the glacial soils containing stones (glacial tills) were later covered with a thick layer of soil with no stones in it.

As the glacier began melting, huge volumes of water formed. Much of this water ran off into the oceans, but in many places the water formed in large pockets (meltwater lakes) because of the lay of the land. When these lakes formed (some of them larger than the Great Lakes of today) melt-water rivers flowed into them for long periods carrying silt and clay which slowly settled to the bottom creating great thick layers capping whatever soil or bedrock was there previously. Later, many of these lakes became so full that they overtopped their natural dams and cut new channels to the ocean allowing them to either empty entirely or drastically reduce in size.

This left behind flat layers of fine grained soils with no stones in it, nothing for a farmer to build walls with. These lake bottom soils are some of the best soils that we have for growing crops and are highly valued by farmers.

This is only a partial story and highly simplified, but it may give you an idea about the history that can be read from the study of stone walls.

My own history with stone walls began when I was 10 years old and a neighbor farmer hired me to help him pick stones off one of his fields. He drove the tractor and I handled the stones. It was a hot sunny day, so I took my shirt off. At the end of the day, I went home and directly to bed. For several days, I was sick with what they called sun stroke plus I had a severe burn over most of my back. (12 years later, I developed a melanoma and had much of my back surgically removed.) When I finally recovered from the sunstroke, I went to the farmer to collect my pay, and he gave me 50 cents. This was when I learned to negotiate a wage before beginning work.

## The Tragic Fate of Johnny Shew

by James Major

Johnny Shew (Shoe), was the son of Godfrey Shew. The family had a farm at Fish House where Johnny had several brothers and sisters. John was 21 years of age in 1780, and was a Ranger in the Johnstown Militia.

Early in the war, most of the Shew Family was taken captive by the Indians, except for Johnny, and taken to Canada. They were later released.

In the spring of 1779, a blockhouse was erected on Vandenburgs Point, about 5 miles West of the Shew homestead. This blockhouse was situated to protect the Johnston and Mayfield settlements from surprise attacks, by way of the Sacandaga. After the Rangers left the blockhouse in the winter of 1779-1780, it was occupied by Solomon Woodworth, a Ranger sergeant. Early in April, four Mohawks attempted to burn the blockhouse, but were engaged by Woodworth. Although he was wounded, Woodworth also wounded some of the Indians, put out the fire and saved the blockhouse.

The Indians fled up north, taking their wounded on a trail to the Sacandaga River. In the meantime, Woodworth got together a small party of Rangers, including Johnny Shew and pursued the Indians. The following night, the Indian party camped near a spring on the east branch of Stony Creek at a spot known as Popel Knoll.

We don't know the Indians' side of the story, but we do know that two of the Indians escaped the camp when the Rangers caught up with them. The wounded were probably offered "good quarters" but were subsequently murdered by the Rangers and their guns and packs were taken. Keep in mind that the Indians and Rangers probably knew each other and were neighbors before the war.

In the fall on 1780, young Shew was working on the farm of Peter Service in Johnstown and was planning on marrying his daughter, Marie Service. In need of money to get married, John decided to go hunting and harvest some deer skins. John proceeded to the Ballstown settlement and met up with Isaac Palmatier, also a hunter of repute. Deer were very fond of chestnuts and they knew of a large grove of trees just north of (now) Middle Grove. They got an early start and by afternoon were hunting at the Grove. They were surprised by seven Indians and agreed to be disarmed. They were taken to the Indian encampment, when the Indians began to mistreat, insult and abuse John. Johnny was taken from the encampment and slain with a Tomahawk. He had a new hunting shirt, and although it was bloodstained it was taken. It would seem to me that John might have been recognized regarding the murders at Popel Knoll and that is why he was treated in this manner. Palmatier was taken prisoner to Canada and later released.

Several of the other Rangers were taken at Canada Creek, but that is another story.

# The Town of Greenfield Historical Society Annual Gala – Oct. 3, 2015



*Louise Okoniewski and Patty Schwartzbeck*



*Ron Deutsch*



*The Haven Tee Room*



*Silent auction items and an original oil painting donated by Nancy McGrath – Lake Desolation Farm*



*Casey Cornell is donating a flag, pole & solar light for the Daketown School.*



*Basket Raffles*



*Earl Jones played on the Greenfield team & the Porter Corners Indians*



*Town of Greenfield Fire Department Uniform*



*Clothing Display from the Chatfield Museum of Local History*



*Ron Deutsch, leader of the gala, with Louise O. on left*



*Silent Auction Items*



*Alice Feulner won a door prize & was the highest bidder on the bird house built by Judd Kilmer*



*The Odd Fellow's Chairs for the Silent Auction*

# The Town of Greenfield Historical Society Annual Gala – Oct. 3, 2015



*Vince, Erika, Sylvan & Mavia Walsh, Coral Crossman, Lelah Cornell, Pat & Katie Finnegan*



*The Woodard/Capasso/Hozier Family*



*Larry & Bernice Benze, William Benze, and Kay & Wayne Youngs*



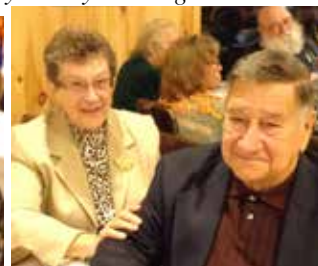
*Stell McLaren, Janet, Earl & Margie Jones*



*Audrey Crandall*



*Ron & Alice Feulner*



*Pauline & Tony Levo*



*Mary Yuhahz, Karen Reddick, Jami Hawthorne*



*Melissa Deutsch, Bruce & Barbara Hodge, Kathy Starace, and Rick Capasso*



*JoAnn, Joan Rowland, Patty Schwartzbeck Aida & Paul Gordon*



*Charles & Arden Blunt, and ?*



*Dan & Lynn Chertok, Mr. & Mrs. Tom Sadlon, Richard & Roseann Bishop*



*Dick & Joan Rowland, Kevin & Patti Veitch, Rob Roeckle, Jane Potter, Lynn & Tom Cumm, and Lauren Rowland*



*John & Karen Karadenes*



*David & Stephanie Akaka*



*Ron D., Gene & Stephanie Vetter*



*Jay & Jeannette Ellsworth, Michelle & Judd Kilmer, Tom Merrills & Louise Okoniewski and her dad, Lou*



*Michael Yuhahz, Rob Hawthorne*



*Serge & Holly Shishik Cohen and Melissa Cartier*



*Geoff Reddick and ?*



*Mavia Walsh, the only dancer at the Gala*

## 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 ONE YEARS DUES, 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)**

**CLICK ON:**



**AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS.**

**Please Print** – Please indicate how many persons 10-years-old or older are in your household). \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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 a note describing who you would like it dedicated to and/or sponsored by.**

**Updating Historic Sites Map in the Town of Greenfield**

If you have any information, email Dan Chertok at [BMMSCHERTOK@gmail.com](mailto:BMMSCHERTOK@gmail.com).

You also may call (518-893-2268) or write him at: Dan Chertok, 58 Ormsbee Road, Porter Corners, NY 12859

**Please send articles and/or photos for our future newsletters to The Town Of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833 or email [JJones18215@roadrunner.com](mailto:JJones18215@roadrunner.com).**

*October refreshment volunteers, Katie Finnegan and Lelah Cornell, served cinnamon rolls, chocolate and raspberry rugalach, confetti cake and sauerkraut cake.*

*November refreshment volunteers are Joyce Woodard and Alice Feulner.*

*Janet Jones, Refreshment Chairperson*



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