



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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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, February 21, 2023 — Meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center, 25 Wilton Road, Greenfield Center. **Program:** *“Peace, Love, & Chocolate” Sundaes Best Hot Fudge Sauce* began in Greenfield in 2001 and is going strong today. Owner Katie Camarro will share highlights of the company’s 20+ year journey making our world a sweeter place. Rumor has it that refreshments will be provided by Sundaes Best. Yes, Sundaes Best Hot Fudge Sauce will be available for purchase. You don’t want to miss this meeting!

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 — Meeting 7 p.m. at the Greenfield Community Center. **Program:** *Rock City Falls: Former Milton Town Historian Karen Staulters and the Forgotten Crossroads* video will take us back to the Glory Days of Rock City Falls. We’ll learn how the community grew from its early beginnings to a time when the mills flourished and how that same community responded with the closing of the mills.

Tuesday, April 18, 2023 – (rescheduled from January) Meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center. **Program:** *The Pen is Mightier than the Sword: The Lasting Power of the Written Word* by Patricia Nugent. (See more information on page 2.)

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

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

Joan’s Jabbering — February 2023

by Joan E Rowland, President

The great northeast has been in the freezer the last couple days. Minus 12 is not my idea of crisp morning air.

We went to Stillwater to our friend’s funeral. I had taken a broccoli salad for the after food. It was in the back seat on the floor. When I got there, the broccoli looked like it had been frozen. Funny story, Anne was born 90 years ago during a huge storm. Dr. was called but did not make it until after she was born. Her kids talked about what kind of storm we would have for her funeral. Temps for Wake did not get up to zero. Funeral was 8 degrees at 2 p.m. Not even double digits. Guess she got the last laugh!

Our January meeting was cancelled. School was open but by noon, it started to rain, and temperatures were going down. We chose to keep everyone safe and have postponed the speaker, Patricia Nugent. Patricia has been rescheduled for the April meeting.

Amazon Smile will no longer give you an option to select a charity to donate to. The company has decided to discontinue this program on February 20, 2023 after offering it for 10 years. We have been a part of this for 7 of those years. It made a nice little jar of cash for us, Totaling \$95.95 over the 7 years. Thank you to all that have selected the Town of Greenfield Historical Society as your charity of choice.

Pendent: We still have not drawn for the Blown Glass Pendent that was donated by Larry Rutland this past summer. The November meeting was lightly attended so we gave people an opportunity to get in the pot for the item. December and January were cancelled. Let’s hope we can pull it at the February meeting.

It has been too long since I have seen everyone. Looking forward to the February meeting with some sweet business talk and I hear “Samples.”

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

February 2023 — by Ron Feulner

Last month, I talked about the Middle Grove fire of 1907 that started in the old store (called the Rowell Store but no longer owned by that family) near the intersection of Middle Grove and Murray Roads. The fire burned eastward destroying a good portion of the hamlet. This month I am continuing the description of that fire and including several photographs taken at the time.

The children of M. B. Rowell, aged 9 and 11, worked all day with the other volunteers and were said to have exhibited bravery which, *"would have done credit to any man."*

Eugene Chatfield (now deceased) had retired from a long career as rural mail deliveryman for the Middle Grove Post Office when he told me that he was a small baby when the fire occurred, but his mother and father often told him that when they had become aware of the fire burning in the village, they began to prepare in the event that it might reach them. They lived at the time on a farm east of the Middle Grove Cemetery on the north side of the Middle Grove Road. As I write this in the year 2021, the Chatfield farm is now a horse farm and the Chatfield house is gone.

Eugene said that his mother wrapped him in warm blankets and began gathering things that they would want to take with them if they had to evacuate, while her husband spent the day with their work horse hooked to a plow, plowing furrows around the house in an effort to create a barrier to stop the blaze and save the house if it came that far.

By five o'clock in the afternoon, the fire was considered under control. Debris from the burning houses was pushed into the cellars to prevent sparks being spread by the wind. The debris was still smoldering, and brush and grass fires were continuing to spread, but no additional homes were considered in danger.



Remains of some homes



Shaul house, only barn remaining



View from what is now entrance to the Middle Grove Park



More damage



Fire aftermath

Still burning dried grass and underbrush, the fire made its way eastward along North Creek Road and eventually reached the B. F. Wilsey residence (at the intersection of North Creek and Wilsey Roads) before being brought under control. Men worked at putting these secondary fires out until about eleven p.m. when a night watch was organized in case the fire again became dangerous.

Saratoga's Sam Hill

by Lauren Roberts, January 18, 2023

Lauren Roberts is the Saratoga County Historian. She is co-host of the WAMC podcast A New York Minute in History, along with NYS Historian Devin Lander. Roberts co-produced the recently released documentary Harnessing Nature: Building the Great Sacandaga, which chronicles the creation of the Sacandaga Reservoir. You can reach Lauren at lroberts@saratogacountyny.gov

Though perhaps a dying proverb, “What in Sam Hill?!” used to be commonplace as an expression of exasperation. A quick internet search will point to several possible origin stories that explain where this phrase came from but, like most internet searches, the definitive truth remains elusive. Could it be that a county resident known by this common moniker contributed to this once-popular phrase?

An article published in the 1974 book *Saratoga County Heritage* relays an interesting story about a basket maker who lived in the Saratoga Springs area in the early 1800s. His name was Sam Hill, and the story, as told by author Milford Lester, plays out like this: Sam Hill lived in Splinterville (a hamlet in Greenfield near what is now the intersection of Route 9N and Middle Grove Road), so-called for the splints used to make baskets. Sam used to walk to Broadway carrying an armload of his wares to sell to the tourists visiting the mineral springs in the summer. He was an eccentric dresser and was asked by some patrons (one of whom was an artist) of the Union Hall Hotel if he would like to have his portrait painted. While Sam was reluctant at first, he agreed when offered a financial incentive. The finished portrait was then given to the hotel, where it hung in the office until the building was demolished, upon which it was moved to the Grand Union Hotel. Upon the demise of that hotel, it made its way into a private collection.

While this is an interesting story that has been passed down through generations of Saratogians, we have very little primary source documentation about the actual man. There is a Samuel Hill recorded on the 1820 Census in Greenfield, and in 1830 in Saratoga Springs. Exact ages were not provided on these early censuses, but there is a free white male recorded as being aged between 60-69 in 1830, which could possibly be the Sam Hill in the portrait. Another source comes in a notation in the diary of Daniel Benedict (Saratoga Springs) who relays that Mr. Sam Hill died on July 2, 1835 “at an advanced age.” This diary was later transcribed by Cornelius Durkee and serialized in the *Saratoga Sentinel* in the early 1880s. Commentary added at this later date included the statement, “He was the originator of the splint basket business which afterward became very widespread.” In the aforementioned article by Milford Lester, he describes the coat worn by Sam Hill as “continental.” While it is unclear whether or not this refers to a military uniform coat, Hill could have been at the right age to have fought in the American Revolution. If he did, any record of this could not be located. Other resources consulted including land records, mortgages and estate files have not turned up any further documentation about the life of Sam Hill.



Tradition also carries down that Hill was a Native American, possibly Abenaki. There were other Native Americans living in this area, which had belonged to the Mohawks of the Haudenosaunee Nation in the not-to-distant past. By the end of the American Revolution in 1783, many of the Mohawk, who had sided with the British during the war, had already left this area. However, some Native Americans remained and found ways to survive in the new nation. One

of these ways was by continuing to produce traditional native crafts to sell to the tourists who frequented Saratoga Springs, such as baskets. Rather than letting go of their culture to assimilate into a European society, they used this opportunity to continue their traditions and pass them down to future generations. In the mid-1800s, a seasonal Indian Encampment was set up in Congress Park, where people of Native American descent would come for the season, sell handmade crafts, and give demonstrations of traditional weapons, dances, and ceremonies. Observations by tourists show that this was a popular destination for those visiting the city and it continued for over 50 years, dissolving sometime in the early 1900s.

While it may seem that this article focuses heavily on the things we don't know about Sam Hill, there is one extremely important artifact that does exist, his portrait. It is relatively rare for a portrait of a resident who was not wealthy to survive from this time period. Important context included in the painting are his clothing and the baskets he carried, giving us insight into what some of the craftsmen who frequented the spa might have looked like. Furthermore, we know that Sam Hill found a way to continue practicing a traditional craft and made a living from it, a craft that went on to become even more popular as evidenced by the splint factories that were built along Bell Brook and continued to thrive throughout the second half of the 19th century.

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation of Syracuse, NY is well known for funding thousands of historic markers across New York state and beyond. One of the marker programs they offer is the Legends and Lore Program, which recognizes that fact that not every story that relays information about a community's past can be documented through primary sources. In 2022, the Saratoga County Historian's Office received a grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation to erect a marker in Splinterville recognizing the story of Sam Hill as a Native American craftsman in the community. The marker was installed in November 2022 and is located at the intersection of Mill Road and Middle Grove Road in the Town of Greenfield, not far from where the splint factories used the water of Bell Brook to power their machines. While researching Sam Hill, I did not find any further information related to him being the originator of the proverbial “What in Sam Hill?” but perhaps his c. 1832 portrait is a better legacy of his contribution.

This article was used with permission from Lauren Roberts, Saratoga County Historian, Saratoga History Roundtable.

MUSEUM'S FEATURED ITEM – GREAT OR WALKING WHEEL

by Robert Roeckle

This Great Wheel is from the original Wilsey homestead located at the corner of Wilsey and North Creek Road. It was last used by Anna Webb Rhodes, most likely in the 1960s. Anna Rhodes (March 7, 1878 – June 8, 1974) was taught to spin and weave on family heirlooms by her grandmother.

The great or walking wheel was one of the earlier types of spinning wheel. The fiber is held in the left hand and the wheel slowly turned with the right. This wheel is good for using the 'long-draw' spinning technique, which requires only one active hand most of the time, thus freeing a hand to turn the wheel. The great wheel is usually used to spin short-staple fibers (this includes both cotton and wool) and can only be used with fiber preparations that are suited to long-draw spinning.

A great wheel is usually over 5 feet in height. The large drive wheel turns the much smaller spindle assembly, with the spindle revolving many times for each turn of the drive wheel. The yarn is spun at an angle off the tip of the spindle and is then stored on the spindle. To begin spinning on a great wheel, first a leader (a length of waste yarn) is tied onto the base of the spindle and spiraled up to the tip. Then the spinner overlaps a handful of fiber with the leader, holding both gently together with the left hand, and begins to slowly turn the drive wheel clockwise with the right hand, while simultaneously walking backward and drawing the fiber in the left hand away from the spindle at an angle. The left hand must control the tension on the wool to produce an even result. Once enough yarn has been made, the spinner turns the wheel backward a short distance to unwind the spiral on the spindle, then turns it clockwise again, and winds the newly made yarn onto the spindle, finishing the wind-on by spiraling back out to the tip again to make another draw.

Taken and edited from Wikipedia



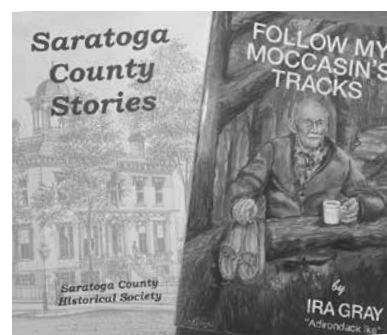
Great or Walking Wheel



Lizzie Chatfield Dake using a similar Walking Wheel

“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 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.)



BOOKS FOR SALE

We will have both the *Saratoga County Stories* (\$18) and *Follow My Moccasin's Tracks* by Ira Gray (\$15.95) for sale at the next meeting.

Thanks to the generosity of Ira Gray's niece, Sandra Gray

Loychik, we have several copies of Ira Gray's (Adirondack Ike) *Follow My Moccasin's Tracks*. These were printed in 2002 and have become a rare keepsake for anyone who enjoys old stories of life in the Adirondacks.

Pick your copy up at the next meeting or order through our P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833 with an additional \$3.50 postage and handling.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2023 PROGRAM

Sundaes Best Hot Fudge Sauce owner and Greenfield native Katie Camarro will be our guest at the February 21, 2023 meeting. She'll share a little update on what's been happening with the company that began its twenty-two year journey in the Town of Greenfield. She promised to bring along a surprise treat along with a selection of Sun-daes Best Hot Fudge Sauce for purchase. Here's a little company history taken from their website at: <https://sundaesbest.com>



OUR STORY: HOW WE GOT STARTED

Everyone who's tasted mom's hot fudge sauce has either asked us for the recipe or encouraged us to jar and sell it. We'd been considering it for two years when we came across the van you see in our

logo. We saw a black & white "for sale" photo of it one spring. When we went to look at it, we were astonished by its showroom condition. And, it was painted chocolate brown and vanilla cream!

We knew we had found the delivery/promotional vehicle for our hot fudge company. It's a 1956 International Harvester Travelall van with a straight six and four on the floor, complete with fuzzy dice. A real head-turner!

Sundaes Best Hot Fudge Sauce was born. We gave mom the very first jar from our first commercially produced batch and offered her a generous profit sharing plan. (Dad offered to keep the books.)

It's simply the very best hot fudge sauce we've ever tasted. We think you'll agree. If you do, tell your friends. If you don't, tell us.

Thanks for choosing Sundaes Best,
Katie & Jeff

CORINTH MUSEUM

Dake Dairy Products of Greenfield was the name of the business until 1945 when they became Stewarts Ice Cream Company



DAKE DAIRY PRODUCTS CO.
PHONE PORTER CORNERS 8 — PLANT AT KINGS
Greenfield Center, N. Y., Jan 1 1930
SARATOGA COUNTY

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AmazonSmile

This program has been discontinued as of February 20, 2023, by Amazon. Thank you to all that have selected us when purchasing from Amazon.

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 Dgchertok@gmail.com, call his cell phone (518-321-0330), or text him.



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