

Historical Society Newsletter

Ron Feulner, Editor
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OFFICERS: Coral Crosman, President; Deb Dittner, Vice President; Patty Schwartzbeck, Secretary; Alice Feulner, Treasurer; Robert Roeckle, Trustee; Ron Feulner, Trustee; JoAnn Rowland, Trustee.

Volume 6, Issue 6

This issue sponsored by Earl and Margie (Atwell) Jones in memory of the Jones and Atwell families.

Calendar

Tuesday, February 21, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Meeting followed by program **Vince Walsh** from the **Kawing Crow Nature Center** will be our speaker with a discussion of his observations working in the wilderness, and his outdoor projects at his nature center located on Greene Road in the Town of Greenfield.

Tuesday, March 21, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield will be our business meeting followed by **Joe Bruchac** about local history, particularly as it relates to his Abenaki roots and his latest book (and he has written or contributed to many!), *At The End of Ridge Road*.

Coral's Calls

It's always "tough" to be down to the wire, try to decide whether forecasters are right or wrong (not that they ever miss, ha ha!) but with gentle advisement from treasurer Alice Feulner (in contact with folk who wanted to drive over from Galway) and Carol Bruchac with whom I'd compared notes in mid-afternoon, we took what seemed the necessary step of "canceling" our January 17 meeting...and if I felt regret, regarding my honed and printed "agenda" and the fact I hadn't been directly involved in a full biz meeting of our group since October, I had also to sympathize with those who had already prepared goodies as part of the "refreshment" detail, etc. Too intense as I can be up front of a group of (mostly friendly!) people, I had to admit it was kind of a downer not getting there at all... Along with Alice and a few others, we set to

calling folk – I was the second caller to some and when I got down to Jim Smith (who is of course related to our famous, widely-traveled as performer-speaker, Joe Bruchac), he assured me I was the third caller.

When Joe, whom I've known since the late '60s, interviewing him for the former *Schenectady Union-Star* (while my husband, J. Rene Gonzales, went back to their Ithaca days) offered photos for our usual publicity run, I said, "Sure, that will force the newspapers to give us some space!" Still, Granny had trouble combing the fine print looking for the usual disposition of our piece until I spotted the brilliant 4-col. by 12 1/2" blow-up grinning mischievously in my direction. (I clearly re-animate my media input...) For the record, **Joe** will join us on Tuesday, **March 21** to talk about local history, particularly as it relates to his Abenaki roots and how his latest book (and he has written or contributed to many!), *At The End of Ridge Road* came to be... At least while I was calling folk to alert them of meeting postponement (and sincere apologies to anyone we might have missed who ventured out – a friend with whom I usually ski on Wednesdays had assured me that roads and driveways at her end were not fit for man nor beast by 8 or so with the stuff which started rattling down around 6:30, a sleety, icy mixture here on Pages Corners) I did get to talk to a few folk such as Helen Woods who had received a tale from her one-room schoolhouse friend, Andy Kubica, whom she hopes will come east from California to overlap with the planned Daketown School alumni reunion, date yet to be set. He's the NASA engineer mentioned in an earlier column (hope I've got his title right!)

I'd also received a call from a Skidmore professor, involved with an interesting project that traces old estate foundations on college property that is in our township – stay tuned.

I was initially “panicked” at the notion I'd have to compose a column with “no meeting” to generate *news* but Ron Feulner, our industrious past president, current trustee, newsletter editor and experienced author implicitly assumed that this hypergraphia-obsessed person would have no trouble coming up with my usual blather, content or no, especially being “cooped” inside with the weather and having, as of January 1, resolved to *interrupt* my daily cahier-composing process which has generated sixty sizable notebooks over 21 years... Anyway, I'd wanted to pass around (at our meeting) an article about the **proposed use of tracks through Greenfield** (for which the village of Corinth has entertained a number of not-heartwarming ideas) that will enable a “ski” train or other sentimental tourers to go from the station on the west side of Saratoga Springs all the way to Gore Mountain (or at least North Creek!), like the olden days... Now, *this* prospect, as opposed to burning trash and other non-savory ideas I already witnessed and saw discontinued in glorious downtown Albany where I was once gainfully employed as civil servant... sounds like one (at least to me) that the historical society could “jump onto,” a positive bandwagon (re: those *dozen* Greenfield crossings), support what might be more ecologically encouraging, and could also get this fear-of-flurries (that's a joke) granny to the mountaintop once old enough to ski for free (do I *still* have to go downhill?) The train would give area visitors and residents a different perspective of our town. With the many railroad buffs around, maybe here's something we could all support... Meanwhile, as for a *wind farm* on the Kayaderosseras Ridge...well, if the peregrine falcon is no longer truly *endangered*...

Neighbor **Vince Walsh** will entertain us at our **February 21** meeting with a discussion of his observations working with wilderness and outdoorsy projects through his *Kawing Crow Awareness Center* ventures off Greene Road. And we can hopefully get caught up on all the “old” biz of our org which once-upon-a-time was *new*, supposedly. And just a note from yours truly on another subject, that of recording our own “local” histories – I've been asked again to coordinate a group of folk who will meet weekly at the Senior

Citizens Center of Saratoga Springs (5 Williams St.; 584-1621) and produce what will be our *fourth* publication since the first appeared in 2002. This project has been supported by special funding and Greenfield resident (and near-neighbor) Joy Wilsey has been on board since our first issue of '02, *The Senior Enquirer*. Once printed, the magazines are made available (at a nominal cost) from the center, in area bookstores and at the Saratoga Springs Public Library. I am always on the lookout for new contributors (not that we don't already have some talented veterans) and the fee is only center membership, \$15 for '06 (which includes numerous other activities and benefits...) Feel free to contact me (587-9809) if you'd like to help shape our next volume...we start Tuesday, February 14 at 3-5 p.m. If you're just reading this (and 50+ years of age) but may have missed our first meeting/s, it's hardly too late to come on board...we set aside about 20 minutes of each session to compose – a time that has proven surprisingly fruitful for participants, as well as this eager reader. Sketches (drawings), art and poetry are also welcome...

Earl Jones

by Ron Feulner

Many of you know Earl. If you're like me you know that he, at 83, remains remarkably active in the community. You probably also know that except for a brief period in his youth, he has always lived in Porter Corners, where his stepfather, Joe Doherty, ran the general store for many years.

Earl has been active in our historical society from its inception. He has served as trustee and treasurer for many years and more recently has helped with our annual audits. He currently is the man in the kitchen behind the coffeepot producing that good tasting brew that we enjoy at our meetings. Earl and his lovely wife Margie have four children, three of whom (two daughters, Janet Jones and Nancy Homiak, and son, Harold) are members of our organization.

Earl's accomplishments in the community reads like a who's who. Earl worked, during early years, for Hall's Dairy in Greenfield, but finished his career with forty-two years at the I.P. mill in Corinth. He and Margie are sixty-nine year members of the Greenfield Grange, where he has also served as treasurer. He is currently the Financial Secretary of the Porter Corners Methodist Church, and he has served as member of the

Porter's Fire Department, been a trustee of the local school district, and was a Town of Greenfield councilman for many years. In addition, he served in the European Theatre during WW Two, was player/manager and assistant manager of the local baseball team, and is currently bowling for recreation. But, you probably already knew most of this about Earl. What you may not know is that Earl was also a child hero, having saved the life of his aging grandfather, John Jones, as the following newspaper article denotes.

Young Boys Save Man in Blaze at Porter Corners

Home of John Jones and Phone Exchange Destroyed - Nothing Saved.

Porter Corners. June 25, [1933] (Special) - John Jones, 73, operator of the local exchange of the New York Telephone Company, was severely burned about the back of the head and face, and his home and contents were destroyed by fire of undetermined origin about 8 o'clock this morning. Ten telephone lines serving 59 subscribers were put out of commission by the fire but Wire Chief Elmer Leggett of Saratoga Springs and a large force of men were at work before the fire had died out and they expect to have full service resumed before nightfall.

Saved By Boys.

The blaze was discovered at 7:45 by Mr. Jones, who, upon opening a door leading into a shed in rear of the ground floor, was struck full in the face by the flames which, at that time, had completely enveloped the shed. He fell, head first, into the burning shed and undoubtedly would have been killed had it not been for the prompt action of his grandson, Earl Jones, aged 11, who dragged him into the adjoining kitchen.

Charles Guild, 17, son of Mrs. Eva Guild, formerly of Ballston Spa, who has been acting as housekeeper for Mr. Jones for the past six years, helped young Jones assist the injured man outside and the boys then reentered the building and aroused Mrs. Guild, sleeping on the ground floor, who, in turn, went upstairs and carried Stella Jones, aged seven, granddaughter of the injured man, to safety.

Mr. Jones later was taken to the home of a daughter, Mrs. Floyd McKnight, a half mile away, where he was attended by a physician. His recovery is expected,

although he is suffering greatly from the burns and shock.

No Water Available.

A well pump, which furnished the only immediate water supply, was in the shed, and as help could not be obtained at once, the flames spread in a few minutes to the rest of the building, the occupants, who had just time to escape with their lives, being unable to save anything, all the furnishings and even their clothing and other personal effects being destroyed.

The house, a 14-room frame structure, known as the Henry Scott place, was protected by insurance, according to members of the family.

A short time after Wire Chief Leggett had received word of the fire, he had caused an emergency line to be connected from Saratoga Springs to a phone in the Jones barn on the property and a new switchboard was sent in from Albany which was to be placed in one of the nearby houses during the afternoon.

Earl can recall going to live with his grandfather in that house (which was across the road from the present Porter Corner's firehouse) after Earl's father died. Earl also vividly remembers the day of the fire. He said that it was his grandfather's dependence on his cane that caused him to fall forward into the fire. His grandfather, partially disabled, was serving as the operator for the Porter Corner's telephone exchange, which was located on the wall of their living room. Earl said that in those days if someone in Porters wanted to place a call to someone else in the community, they would remove the speaker part of the wall phone from its hook and twist a small crank on the phone that would ring a bell on the exchange in front of Earl's grandfather. His grandfather, as the operator, would ask them for the number of the party they wished to call. The number might be 5F32 so his grandfather would plug their line into 5F on the exchange board, which identified the party line to be called, then he would use a small crank to ring three long and two short rings, which would ring on all the phones within that party line, but the sequence of three long and two shorts would tell the specific party that the call was for them.

Earl chuckled and said, "Sometimes when you picked up the speaker to make your call, you could hear someone else on your own party line already talking, then you would hang up, and try again later. If this persisted too long, we soon learned that if

you picked up the speaker part of the phone and held it against the earphone, the static feedback produced would cause the person on the line to hang up. Then you could make your call.”

While two parties talked to each other, Earl’s grandfather would have to sit at the exchange and periodically flip a switch on and say, “Waiting, waiting, are you through?” If they didn’t respond,

he knew they had hung up, and he would disconnect their lines.

Earl said, “We lost everything that we had in that fire, but we all got out alive. The telephone exchange was permanently relocated in someone else’s house, and my grandfather never worked the exchange again. He died about two years after the fire.”

*Become a member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. Fill out this form and enclose \$6.00 for individual membership or \$10.00 for household. **If you send more it will be considered a donation.** Other types of memberships are also available (lifetime, corporate, etc.) just call and ask (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: Greenfield Historical Society.

Type of membership: Individual _____ Household _____ (please indicate how many persons ten-years-old or older are in the household). _____

Name (please print) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Amount enclosed _____ (\$6 individual or \$10 household) Date _____

Areas of interest to you _____

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

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

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