

Historical Society Newsletter

Ron Feulner, Editor
P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833

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 9

Calendar

Saturday, May 20 – Rob Roeckle (Building and Grounds Chairperson) has asked for help to clean-up brush and trees around the Middle Grove **Odd Fellows Hall and carriage sheds**, 8 a.m. to noon, all hands cordially welcome.

Tuesday, May 23 (that's the fourth Tuesday instead of the third as we usually meet), at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our business meeting and **election of officers** will be followed by a program presented by **Field Horne**, author of *Saratoga Reader*. ***This will be our last meeting until Tuesday, September 19, which will start our new year.***

Correction: I hope that none of you were inconvenienced by our error in the April issue. We listed the date of our meeting as April 8, and it should have been April 18. Most of you know by now that our meetings are usually on the third Tuesday of the month unless we tell you differently. May's meeting will be an exception (May 23) because our speaker, Mr. Horne, is unable to come on the third Tuesday.

Coral's Calls

Another fine turnout was on hand for Bob Jones' fascinating account of how use of overlay of historic through contemporary maps of various intent from denoting roads, towns and tracks to topographical features can be used with computer

manipulation to uncover fascinating bits of historic lore, providing the coordinates are accurately assessed and the maps themselves somewhat reliable. Working with Greenfield maps dating back to 1856 along with early county versions and doing an intense bit of on-foot tracking, note-comparing with area residents and use of student assistants and similarly-motivated sleuths, they were able this spring to locate what appeared to be the late 18th century foundation of the Preston Denton residence on Skidmore property once part of our township. Overgrown with vines and trees, the explorers took advantage of pre-foliage conditions to both amplify and record their finds, presentation converted to laptop technology enhanced by the contemporary digital camera's ability to 'rove' quietly through a scene from 'what was,' keep onlookers spellbound, without fear of encroaching/persistent winged creatures of spring (i.e., black flies, mosquitoes.)

Jones is a Skidmore economics professor but has managed to incorporate the tracing of early communities and settlements in the area forward, through Geographic Information Systems software, bringing a fresh focus to the intertwining disciplines which force into existence the ever-shifting sands of human community based on economic needs, creature comforts and, hopefully, an altruistic bent from time to time among individuals and groups. Because the now-wooded setting of the early estate of the Woodlawn area (see pp. 168-9 of Clayton Brown's *Greenfield Glimpses*) is in pristine condition versus portions of the area embroidered with trails and other signs of current usage, he is in hopes it can be preserved that way – for a while. Our speaker was also able to share with his audience a later 19th century on-screen

“perspective” of what the area resembled in its heyday when it carried an elaborate mansion of such proportions as to make a few of the more currently-erected versions appear perhaps less lofty. The late 19th century illustration also showed a shepherd’s cottage and barn (traces of which may have been located) and other embellishments such as a famed series of carriage trails laid out by Frederick Law Olmstead.

Ever the skillful professor, our speaker was able to gradually elevate the admiration of his audience, at times in a low-key, self-effacing manner so that when he had reached the grand finale of spinning (again, slowly) the wedge of Greenfield that runs from a modest Saratoga altitude out to the Kayaderosseras Ridge, flipping it deftly on our trusty, staid wall of the community center, it was as though we were, at least intellectually, returned to some Tilt-a-Whirl vision of what could be seen from Jonsson Tower with a few more flourishes of field, road and stream thrown in for good measure... It is difficult for a writer working in a mere flat-text world to convey these moving dimensions, suggesting well more than the conventional perspective. Jones has enlisted sturdy hiking undergrads to trace sometimes challenging to dangerous, potentially tedious but surprisingly rewarding map and ground features, uncovering historic testaments to amazing old retaining walls of some height, depressions, cellar excavations and possible well remains. While he confessed downstate origins, he was eager and open to tapping the memories, tales and experiences of those who grew up in the region and to make the fascinating tools of his GIS tracking available to historical and cultural entities that might have a particular need for such an investigation – a worthy project perhaps also earning the interest and application of an undergrad willing to put that wonderful creative energy into a credit-bearing project under his tutelage. We shall certainly want to keep channels “open” between this resourceful Skidmore contact and GHS.

In other biz, I was the only officer present but the head of our nominating committee, Joyce Woodard, reported to me on ‘progress’ made with our annual election of four officers and three trustees to take place on the **fourth** Tuesday of this month, *May 23rd*, with **Field Horne**, Saratoga historian of considerable fame and noted author/editor, as featured speaker (at the Greenfield Community Center, 7 p.m.) Assisting Joyce in her

endeavor are Mary Max and Margie Jones. Earl Jones and Karl Zeh are handling the internal audit, also due before year’s end. I was grateful to Tom Siragusa for offering to act as ‘point person’ for activities focused on the Daketown School as I had to confess that too many projects on my plate had disabled my not overly able brain... Thanks to refreshments folk (including a cookie-cake a niece made for Jim Smith’s 39th birthday – again): Louise McCormick and Rosemary Smith. Also, belated thanks to March refreshment servers, Kat Paradis, Rob Roeckle and JoAnn Rowland. Joyce Woodard and Vince Walsh will provide May goodies – hope to see you all then! And thanks, for all your support and encouragement during this busy, dense year... *including* committee heads: Nancy Homiak, membership; Janet Jones and Nancy, refreshment coordinators; Deb Dittner, our excellent vice president for (at least) 2001-2006 and program chair to whom we owe a great deal in her zealous and untiring struggle to balance home (a vintage one of Greenfield), career and family ... also, Patty Schwartzbeck, secretary (who kindly offered her home for our o/t meeting while I was hosting construction invasion here...tho’ I took rain check); assiduous treasurer Alice Feulner; Ron, her fine editor/writer husband (and trustee), and trustees JoAnn Rowland, Rob Roeckle (buildings and grounds chair). Helen Woods confessed to getting into the archives/collections area without fully realizing what was in store for her though she has lots of energy and ideas, recall from growing up in the Daketown area.

Surprise in the Kayadeross

By Greg Schwartz

Back in the fifties, nobody in Greenfield had a swimming pool except for the Dake’s up on the hill. Therefore, during the hot days of summer if one wanted to cool off, options were limited. The simplest was donning your suit and spraying off with the hose outside the house. This cooled you off.....for a minute. But during that minute, the 33 degree water temperature initiated heart failure, hypothermia and acne. Another option was bothering Mom (if she drove) or if you were really brave, bothering Dad to take you to a nearby swimming hole like the Sheep Dip or better yet... someplace like Round Pond. Lake George was NOT the place to go swimming as the water was just as cold as aforementioned hose water. Also asking

Dad, while he was in the middle of fixing something he wasn't particularly joyous about fixing, was down right hazardous to your health. Remember those were days before children's advocates, Child Protective Services, and lawyers. So about the only real viable option was getting on your bike and pedaling the couple miles up Route 9N and over Bockes Road to the Kayaderos Creek.

Once you parked your bike, you had another 1/4-mile or so walk to get to the "Hole."

The "Hole" had most of the things that a good swimming hole should have plus a couple more. Yea, the water was cold (about 34 degrees but it felt like 84 degrees once you got wet). Also years before some benevolent souls had placed a couple lengths of railroad track across the creek. We he-man twelve year olds had no problem catwalking out to the middle and then diving headlong into the deepest part which was all of five feet. That was how you got wet without contracting heart failure, hypothermia and acne. Had to be that one degree water temperature between the water hose at home and the creek.

The pool itself wasn't all that big either. A couple strokes from those powerful pipestem arms easily propelled one from one side to the other. Of course, that got one cooled off..... and bored. Just downstream from the pool along the west side of the stream bank was a pit of some of the blackest, slimiest mud. Wonderful for a mud fight!!!!!! Again, strictly for the boys. Once in a while, one of the girls would get "accidentally" hit with a mud glob the size of a dime. This would elicit foul looks from the offended young lady. Nowadays same "young lady" would spend good wages for a whole faceful of the same mud. Go figure.

But even mud fights don't hold the attention of young knuckleheads for very long. Cooled off and skin properly conditioned, a little exploring was in order. For unknown reasons, creek exploring always started by going upstream. Until now, going upstream was never even questioned. One could easily go downstream. Maybe walking in the creek was easier; less rocks. Maybe less overhanging tree limbs and brush. But it seems we always went upstream.

This day was no different. Creek exploring involved looking around for "things." Cool things. Fishing lures caught in trees, live fish, dead fish, live animals, dead animals, old tires, car parts, anything. Anything also included beer cans.

Dad probably picked some night crawlers the night before, stopped at Atwell's General Store for a six pack of brew and proceeded to the creek for a meeting with some rogue ten-inch trout. The empty simply got pitched into the creek. Our forefathers were not the ecologically sensitive beings of today. Back then, you would have been chastising a WW II veteran still keen of mind in the art of warfare including Springfield Rifles, hand grenades and bare knuckle fighting. Best that the beer can got pitched in the creek and Dad kept happy in the art of angling.

Empty beer cans kicked by a sneakered foot underwater act in a certain predictable manner. They feel dead, worthless, empty. On this particular exploration, I kicked a submerged beer can and received feedback of a whole different nature. This can felt live, clean and FULL!!!!!! Picking it up revealed a new, untapped can of Pabst Blue Ribbon beer. Remember.... hot summer day.....he-man twelve-year-olds.....this beer is going to be drunk. Of course, none of us had a "church key." They had a lot of them in a box under the counter in Harry Atwell's store but none in our pockets. A small rock and rusted spike from a near-by fence post rendered the beer available for consumption. This was before Beaver Fever and other diseases existed. Besides, the alcohol in the beer would kill the bad germs, right??

After that beer was shared by about three or four thirsty explorers, the trip upstream continued until another, then another, then a whole bunch of full beers were found loose in the creek bottom. All cooled and available. The rock and fencepost spike were again produced. This time each knucklehead had his own PBR. If one is good, then another is better. In about fifteen minutes, thirsts were quenched and the foreign effects of the alcohol had taken full effect. Back to the mud pit!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

By the time we had finished our second mud treatment in the creek, it was time to be getting on home for supper. The bike ride home as I remember was a whole lot more "uphill" than other days. Also at the supper table, a mention was made about a "look" on my face but rapidly scoffed off to my normal twelve-year-old bewilderment.

The next day consisted of NOT going swimming. Too much work, still not feeling up to going all that way to cool off. I did find a couple quarters and proceeded up to the General Store for a popsicle or two. After making my confectioned purchases, it was out to the carved bench on the

porch to watch the corner happenings. Just then, Vin Smero arrived in his mint green Jeep truck. Three bounds and he was inside buying whatever Vin bought. However, twelve year old ears heard his tale of woe to whoever would listen about the rotten individual(s) who had proceeded the previous day to sneak into the creek by his camp and steal two six packs of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer put in the creek that morning. I also heard about what he would do if he found out who the rascals were.

Remembering that Vin probably knew about bare knuckle fighting, I decided that maybe going anyplace other than the General Store was a good idea.

On other occasions, we did go “exploring up the creek” but never found the beer bonanza we found that day. A couple years later, cars, jobs, pool tables and other interests took the place of creek exploring.

One of these days I might find myself with my son and grandson up on the Kayadeross angling for the still-roguish trout that hide in the creek. To successfully catch those trout, minds must focus on bait and technique. But if the water isn't that cold and there isn't too much brush, a little “exploring” upstream might be in order for a 50 year-old Pabst Blue Ribbon beer.

Easter Morning

By Mary Max

I remember years ago when we were young kids, my mother colored Easter eggs for us. Even though she was a hard working woman on the farm,

she always found time to surprise us on Easter. She didn't have store-bought food coloring, she used onion peels for yellow, beet juice for red and pink, and grass for green. They were the most beautifully colored eggs I ever saw. We got up in the morning, and she would say, “Oh Lord, here comes the Easter bunny running down by the barn. Hurry and go see if he left any eggs.” So out the front door we went. On the front lawn was a large (five-foot in diameter) iron tub filled with dirt for her flowers. In it was a nest made of leaves containing some of the beautiful eggs. There was also a trail of eggs all the way to the barn. What fun it was collecting all those eggs and trying to find where the bunny ran under the barn.

Christmas Memories

By Frank Max

We always had a Christmas tree but there wasn't many gifts under it as money was scarce. Mom usually made our gifts, but one Christmas, she used her egg money and had Eugene Chatfield (our rural mail carrier) order a baby blanket from Montgomery Wards. Mom couldn't do it herself because she couldn't read or write. When it came, she wrapped it up for me and told me it was a surprise and not to tell my father about it.

When Christmas morning came, I opened the package and dragged the blanket through the house singing, “I ain't going to tell Dad I got a blanket.” Dad only laughed and didn't say much, but he did say that a homemade one would have been good enough.

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