

Historical Society Newsletter

Ron Feulner, Editor

P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833

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

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Calendar

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2-4 p.m. a Holiday Open House (in place of a December meeting) will be held at the Odd Fellows Hall. The theme this year will be *An Old Fashioned Christmas*. Members and guests are urged to bring holiday cookies and treats to share.

Tuesday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Meeting followed by program to be determined.

Please Note: Our membership chairperson tells me that most of you have paid your dues for the current year, but a few have forgotten. To jog your memory, we are placing a circle near the return address on the last page. If a red "X" appears in the circle, it means, that according to our records, you have not yet paid. The January issue will be sent to only those who are up-to-date with their dues. If you feel a mistake has been made, please contact us.

A Note from the Editor:

I wish to thank all of you who have sent me articles for the newsletter. Now I am in the position of having to ask you to be patient if you have sent an article, and it has not yet appeared in the newsletter. Usually, I am wondering where the next article will come from, but recently, I have received a number of them, and it will take several issues to catch up. I am still accepting articles. If you have one, send it to me at the return address on the last page, or e-mail me at aliron@localnet.com.

Ron Feulner (Editor)

Coral's Calls

Holidays Greetings – altho' according to the merchandise media trackers, it is now again OK to say 'Merry Christmas!' And "Happy Hanukah" (if only I could spell it), Joyeux New Year and a festive Winter Solstice! Yours truly got so casual and laid back at our 'telling of' Turkey Times Past with the pros in attendance from the *Daily Gazette* and newly-charged program person Lynn Wochinger (ignore their spelling of her surname) ably dispatching tidbits of 17th Century beginnings and 19th-20th century foundations of the great Thursday in November...my own personal take on the holiday is, however, now that current generations installed in the 'work-place' have possibly *lost* the art of cooking/baking, perhaps even *family*-featuring... that 'shopping' has become the succeeding focus – hey, we need to feel *successful* at something, right? And if you happened to catch on TV (if not in person), the frenzied mob bursting thru an opened big box door at midnight or whenever, a person even paused to assist a young gent back to his feet...

Why, isn't it all wonderful to contemplate? I hope at least some of you caught the nice feature that Lee Coleman captured from our intimate gathering with Bruce Squiers' most able photo of Lynn as our chair on the front page of (Saratoga Cty) Local section on Weds., Nov. 22 – below the fold but still a 'prime' spread as daily rag coverage goes... Having once had gainful employ in this trade (if decades ago) I could not help but again be impressed by what Lee was able to do with his myriad notes of our evg. Even tho' one or two new relationships were established amongst us, kin-wise, the general drift was entirely on target and I thought it made for a nice record of our gathering. Perhaps we all need to be reminded

that *l'histoire*, 'history,' the *story* is created by the victors, in any event. (Or so I've been informed, more than once.) The snowstorm of '71 was remarked upon by several in our group, including Patty Schwartzbeck (I myself recalled it well, being broke, shelves bare and traveling to Schenectady from Clifton Park with then small daughter Heather, our running out of gas on an unplowed street not far from my Mom's). I noted the 'generalization' evolving among our 17 participants in a sprawling circle I'd started to create (before Ron and Alice Feulner arrived, said 'whoa, that's enough chairs!') was an idea that, no matter how recently a family might have 'immigrated' or from where, they soon learned a feast was to be accommodated, 'turkey' the main course even if there might be lasagna on the side – oysters to start or whatever. Then up and says Frank Max in a quiet manner that did not betray any sense of deprivation, toward the end of our round, "I don't know – we didn't celebrate Thanksgiving. We never had turkey." As the statisticians would be quick to remind: *beware* the 'small sample' and the dangers of generalization from mere isolated vignettes. For some, Thanksgiving brings painful reminders of events people prefer to recall in moderation – such as Mary Max's first husband's (Jim Mitchell) last trip up to the Adirondacks. Jim and Mary were our neighbors of many years, most fondly recalled for their outgoing warmth and generosity toward the Gonzaleses, newly-arrived at Page's Corners in the fall of 1976. I wish I could say I was as 'good' a neighbor now...

In other business, make sure you've got Sat., Dec. 16 on your calendar, 2-4 p.m., for our annual Open House at the former Odd Fellows Hall in Middle Grove. Bring a sweet treat to share (or, if you must, something *healthy*) but no one will check at the door if you arrive empty-handed – not in *this* most generous and friendly group. Joyce Woodard reported on progress in cataloguing more recent acquisitions and will have an opportunity to compare notes with Janet Jones and Nancy Homiak at a 'heated' hall in December. Then archiving, akin to those chipping flocks gathered in my locusts the other day, will have to wait for the sun's northing rays before we can return to museum tasks. Looking back over the calendar year (as opposed to the historical society one or the federal fiscal one or the state sales tax one – or any other you might celebrate, not to discount Chinese New Year...in our diverse culture) yours truly has some regrets over not quite knowing the

status of our supposedly imminent charter from the NY State Education Department or the whereabouts of our Farley grant – we'd be nearly going for perhaps a third one now if it all weren't so paper-bound and we being few in number and simpler in means... I deftly, while leading a meeting, can 'skip over' the *mea culpa* that weigh this here executive BUT all I need see is a smile from Janet Jones, Earl's readiness to figure out which door needs to close first at the Center, Gertrude gently inquiring about the portrait donated – and, yes, all those bright-faced youngsters back in September from Greenfield Elementary School's 4th grade – not to mention the number of tours venerable town historian Mary DeMarco and astute newsletter editor Ron Feulner have been able to arrange and thus share a part of our heritage here to feel we cannot close out 2006 on a 'down' note. Hey, we're doing our best with what we have...and was it a logger (for which this region is well-known) or a poker player who coined the phrase: "Let the chips fall where they may..." LET ME know in December...while the sun still shines.

History of the Porter Corners Post Office

by Margie Jones

In 1866, the post office was located in the general store at Porter Corners. William Rowland was the first postmaster. From 1866 to 1909, the people had to come to the post office in the store to get their mail since there was no delivery service.

The first rural carrier to serve the Porter's post office was Guy G. Ormsbee who delivered the mail to rural families from 1909 until he retired in 1955. His substitute was his brother Roy Ormsbee. Guy delivered the mail in his car except during bad weather when he used his horse and sleigh, and in later years, he used a vehicle that he called a "snowmobile." The snowmobile was a model T automobile with the front wheels replaced by skis and the double rear wheels fitted with a track. When the snow got real deep, his wife Alahna traveled the route with him to help climb the snow banks and place the mail in the boxes. Raymond McKnight had served as a carrier starting in 1955 with an auxiliary route out of the Greenfield Center office that was 65 miles long. Ray's substitute carriers have been Ferne Ballou, Jim Hall and Randy Capasso. Ray was a faithful carrier for 30 years.

Eventually the post office was moved from the general store into buildings of its own. The first building, owned by Henry Winnie, was a small building opposite the Universalist Church (later known as the Community Hall). Mr. Winnie then built an office on his property just below his home (no date available for when it was built or when it opened). His wife Lottie Winnie served as postmaster for about 20 years. Lillie Griffin was Lottie's clerk.

Ethel Menshausen was the next postmaster from 1938 until 1957. A new building was built on the Floyd Menshausen property after Ethel took office. The office was remodeled a couple of times after that. The last remodeling included the addition of rooms built on the back and sides so that Ethel could live there after the death of her husband. Ethel's clerks were Irene Middlebrook, Leona Hendrie, Frances Young, Margie Jones and Dr. Clayton T. King.

Irene Middlebrook became acting postmaster in 1957 and continued until 1959. Betty Kanar was Irene's clerk. (Irene also served as postmaster in Middle Grove for six years.)

Betty Kanar was sworn in as postmaster on July 10, 1959. Betty had another post office built, which was completed in October 1959 and used continuously until 2006. Betty was postmaster until she retired in December 1974, a total of 15 years. Clerks for Betty were Irene Middlebrook and Ferne Ballou.

From 1974 until 1983, Ferne Ballou was postmaster. Her clerks were Janice Emmination and Donna Middlebrook.

Donna Middlebrook was postmaster from 1983 until November 2003. Donna's clerks were Mary Ann Norton and Beverly Young.

Theresa Donohue became postmaster in September 2004. The new brick post office on Allen Road opened on October 16, 2006.

The Porter Corners' post office has been in six different buildings since 1866, but all have been within a short walk of each other. Beginning in 1800, or shortly thereafter, the Town of Greenfield was served by six post offices. In 1866, the Mount Pleasant [Glass Factory above Lake Desolation] post office closed its doors, and there were only five left. With the beginning of rural route services, the post offices were again reduced to three (Greenfield Center, Middle Grove and Porter Corners), which is still the case today.

Some information for this article came from the book, "Greenfield Glimpses" by Clayton Brown. Photos came from Alahna Ormsbee, Donna Middlebrook and Earl Jones.



Guy Ormsbee, mail carrier, standing in back, Guy's car in front.



The "Snowmobile" Guy used to deliver mail on bad days.



Guy delivering mail at the Ormsbee home with horse and sleigh.



Alahna helping Guy deliver mail.



General store where first post office was located in 1866. William Rowland was the first postmaster (and undertaker).



First post office not located in the store (bottom right).



Post office below Henry Winnie's home.



Post office owned by Ethel Menshausen.



Post office after rooms built on so Ethel could live there.



Guy loading his car.



Post office owned by Betty Kanar and then by Donna Middlebrook.



New post office opened October 16, 2006, on Allen Road.

Some Porter Corners's Postmasters and Mail Carriers



Ethel Menshausen,
postmaster, 1938-1957



Irene Middlebrook, postmaster, 1957-1959



Betty Kanar, postmaster, 1959-1974



Donna Middlebrook, postmaster,
1983-2003



Ferne Ballou, postmaster, 1974-1983



Theresa Donohue, postmaster, 2004-present



Guy Ormsbee, mail carrier, 1909-1955



Ray McKnight, mail carrier, 1955-1985

*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.*

Type of membership: Individual_____ Household_____ (please indicate how many persons 10-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 them a free copy of our newsletter along with information on how they can join.

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

***Town of Greenfield Historical Society
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