

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

Volume 7, Issue 7

This issue sponsored by Earl "Bud" McKnight in memory of his parents, May (Menshausen) McKnight and Louie McKnight; also his brother Lt. Edsel McKnight an Air Force P-47 pilot killed in action during our landing on Normandy in World War II.

Calendar

Tuesday, March 20, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our speaker will be Jud Kilmer, owner of Kilmer's Sawmill on Lake Desolation Road. He will speak about the history of his family and the Town of Greenfield.

Tuesday, April 17, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our speaker will be Claire Olds, retired Dean at Skidmore College. She will talk about writing our memoirs.

Tuesday, May 15, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. An *Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social*.

Winter Reminder

When the Greenfield Elementary School (Saratoga Springs School District) is closed because of bad weather, our meeting will also be canceled.

Coral's Calls

One can readily appreciate the depth of the term 'cabin fever' when one gets out for a late February meeting of our engaging members and friends on a chilly evening sufficiently after the 'Valentine's Day' storm which was kind enough to succeed an officers-trustees meeting at the Pvt. Benedict House on Feb. 6. Aside from our having an opportunity to hear an excellent speaker on the efforts and accomplishments of the oral history project being conducted under the auspices of the NYS Military Museum located in

Saratoga Springs, there were a number of other issues which highlighted our meeting, perhaps intensified by being the first business session in many weeks with the December open house plus an ice storm precluding January's date.

High on the list of this president's concerns was finding a successor to my own role, taken on (somewhat reluctantly) in the spring of 2003 with then current prexy Ron Feulner assuring me it was "only for a year" – which became three... '06-07 being my fourth. His wife Alice (at the officers/trustees meeting canvass) was also seeking 'relief' from the treasurer's duties well-performed during her tenure. Patty Schwartzbeck, our amiable secretary (the same I failed to warn about my 'snow steps' up to the house looking nearly solid in artificial light) was quite agreeable to serving another term while veep Tom Siragusa who so heroically guided the September Open House of Daketown School and other sites to all of Greenfield Elementary School's 4th graders was willing to continue in his position despite some job conflicts. So that left potential 'vacancies' looming tho' our collections person, Joyce Woodard, has again agreed to chair the nominating committee for the May slate upon which the membership must vote.

In January, I had been prepared to bring up the "caboose" issue with the Gazette piece copied and secured within clear plastic beneath my clipboard agenda but by the time our board convened I couldn't even lay hands on it (searching the fat GHS

notebook.) The tragic car fire that scorched the back of the D&H eye-catcher next to the railroad station had hardly cooled as an issue by our February meeting, however, as several spoke heartily on their concerns about maintaining historic connections while, visibly around us, the swamps, hills and side-roads of our town take on the new contours of latter-day McMansions (a term I liberally borrow from media pundits, assuming no knowledge/opinion on said construction/ architecture.) Two figures were bandied about – \$9,000 paid as part of the car accident insurance claim and a \$30-40K quote given, as I later was informed in a conversation with Town Supervisor Al Janik, for salvage/restoration of the caboose as a whole in terms of its structural integrity and preservation. These estimates were provided by a Northern Dean consultant recommended by railroad advocate Eugene Corsale. The spin emerging from earlier town board meeting reports that became our gathering's focus was that the now-costly 'caboose,' possible eyesore that it had become, would be spirited off for display in another part of the county...thus relieving the town of costs associated with its prominence.

Joyce Woodard and several others at the Community Center stood to speak in defense of the familiar landmark and opined that with a combination of volunteer help and the engagement of some expertise (supported by the \$9,000 the town had been awarded), the car could be preserved in keeping with the current tourist-visibility aspect of the historic train station and restoration of a railroad line that would ultimately connect New York City and Gore Mountain ski resort, a section of which crosses Greenfield. Vince Walsh, who had attended the board meeting where the caboose was discussed, also spoke to the issue and the town's 'image,' Incidentally, I read that the neighboring Town of Hadley is already scoping out prospective 'touring sites' in anticipation of travelers encountering freshly enchanting Adirondack vistas via rail. A petition stressing the town board's need to reconsider allowing the caboose's removal from Greenfield was signed by all present and the secretary volunteered to convey it to officials. A letter by Joan Rowland has also been circulated to the board. Al Janik, when I phoned following our meeting, offered to answer questions from our membership, possibly as early as the March meeting. He also referred me (and others interested) to records of town board exchanges posted on the web site.

Mark Russert (yes, he is related to another Buffalo émigré, the inimitable Tim of NBC TV fame) provided a wonderfully sensitive account of his charge to gather 'the stories' of military veterans (residing in the state) from any conflict regardless of their role in it, however modest they might perceive it to be. He described taped interviews and recollections that the museum has obtained as part of a growing archive – even mentioning one of World War I vintage he was pleased to recover. He spoke about the current and continuing exhibits housed in the museum and gave out brochures, offering to guide historical society members on their own 'tour' if such were to be scheduled. Having been both a teacher and one involved with historical society charges and imperatives, his presence seemed especially soothing and reinforcing to those gathered to speak out on 'saving' touchstones valued in the Greenfield community.

While I've gotten really good at the chairs (setting up three stacks of 24 no big deal), I confess to perhaps shortening avid sociability over deluxe refreshments provided by Joyce, Ann Michel and Alice Feulner with Janet Jones and Nancy Homiak ably coordinating the beverage portion as usual. I perhaps blinked the lights a bit prematurely (if not for one living on Greenwich Mean Time), convincing myself I could not fall asleep driving the short distance to Middle Grove. We look forward March 20 to hearing Society charter member and historic family resident Jud Kilmer of Kilmer Lumber share his account of growing up in the community and continuing the family business. Providing refreshment afterward will be Vince Walsh, Jane Potter and Alice Feulner (I think she likes baking better than treasuring... but I, for one, can totally sympathize with and appreciate those gustatory sensations that at least make moments memorable!) See you March 20th!

Editor's Note: This has been an outstanding year for the newsletter: so many interesting articles, and I did not have to beg for them. I think that our readers are becoming aware of our purpose, which is, and has been, to preserve the "ordinary" history of our town. The stories about the people and events that have made the town what it is.

Now I am running a little low on available articles and would like to restock my supply so if you have an article that you have been thinking about writing, this would be a good time. Thanks.

Ron Feulner

Local Indian

by Bud McKnight

Many years ago a small Indian tribe lived in this general area. The tribe was led and governed by a chief and tribal council, because the chief was not elected but was passed down from father to son, the chief had long dwelt on the subject of his successor. The chief had sired only one son and he had died while only a child. The chief was still a young man, only forty winters old, he was thinking of the future of the tribe. After many hours of thought he went to the council with his concerns. Again many hours were spent to reach a solution.

The subject of a new chief was presented to the tribal council. Many on the council felt that their son should be chief. After a series of still more discussions it was decided, they would have a series of games that included running, jumping, spear throwing for distance as well as accuracy and arrow shooting. After many hours of games and such the council was unable to decide on a winner!

Most of the games were won by two braves, Broken Arrow and Falling Rock. The council decided that the two men would be given his knife, bow and blanket and sent into the wild for one moon. Upon return the one in the best condition would be made chief.

During this time the two men were gone, hunts were made for extra meat and much food was prepared for the coming ceremony.

Nearing the end of the thirty days everyone grew anxious as to who would be in the best condition and would become their chief. Broken Arrow was the first to return and greeted by the tribe with many questions as to where he had been and how he felt. Another two days passed and no Falling Rock, it was decided to send scouts in the four directions to find the missing brave. The scouts would return in a weeks time, then the feasting and celebrating would begin. As the days passed and his friend had not returned Broken Arrow became worried. The scouts returned without learning anything, it was decided to go ahead with the ceremony.

After much feasting and celebrating Broken Arrow got up so all could see and hear him, he thanked all for their faith in him and hoped to serve them for many years. He told them all that more runners would be sent out and as long as he was chief, he would make every effort to find out what happened to his friend.

This is why as we travel the roads of the nearby area we see signs that read:

WATCH FOR FALLING ROCK

The Family Farm

by Bill Wilsey

I took over the family farm in 1950, but I have memories of 140 Wilsey Road that go back over a span of more than 75 years.



The Wilsey house at 140 Wilsey Road taken in August 1932. The man standing in the picture is Bill's Grandfather, William G. Wilsey and the little boy to the right is Arthur W. Wilsey, aka "Bill."

I was born and raised in Gloversville, but ever since I can remember, I spent my summers on the farm with my Grandparents, William G. Wilsey and Isabelle Cook Wilsey. The property belonged to my Great Grandfather, Benjamin Franklin Wilsey and Great Grandmother, Eliza Baker Wilsey before that. We are still trying to trace the farm back further. The house has been in the family for over 100 years.

The family has a lot of roots in the area. My father, Arthur R. Wilsey was born in the house in the room that is now our dining room area. He attended Daketown School and was baptized in Kaydeross Creek. My Great Grandfather, Asher Cook, was a minister in the Baptist Church in Middle Grove, before it burned down. It was located next to the Odd Fellows Hall. Asher Cook was also a preacher at the Old Stone Church, where my wife Joy and I now worship.

Originally Wilsey Road was going to be named "Wiggins Road." But Ernest Rhodes, our neighbor who was living across the road from the farm said, "Why name it Wiggins Road? The Wilsey's have been on the corner forever!" Hence, the name Wilsey Road.

I always loved being on the farm and I still do. When I was younger, my Grandfather raised cows and chickens on the farm and sold eggs. By my Grandfather's side, I learned to tend the cows, plant the vegetable garden, fix things, and putter around. There was always something to be done. I can remember the day that my Grandfather, who would only use the outhouse, decided on a very cold January day that he would try the "indoor plumbing." He decided that was much better and never used the outhouse again!

When I returned from World War II and attended college in Cobleskill, I met my bride of 54 years, Joy Irish Wilsey. She was from Hamburg, NY, outside of Buffalo. I would take her to visit the farm and she fell in love with it, too. In 1952 Joy and I were married and began our life together. We took over the egg route. Most of our customers were in Saratoga Springs. Joy and I raised three great kids on the farm.

As my Grandfather's health began to fail, I announced that I wanted the farm. Nothing could have made him happier, and made him feel better right away. He "knew where the farm was going to go."

A Request

I live at what was once the Darrow Farm at 290 Locust Grove Road. In the late 30's and the 40's this was also the site of the Darrow Farm Ski Hill and had one of the first rope tows in the country. That was in 1939, and my family and I arrived at the farm in 1974. At that time, there were still open-hayed fields and on one of the stone walls the remnants of an old truck chassis whose back wheel supplied power for the rope tow. I would really appreciate any old memories, photos, movies, memorabilia, etc., about the Ski Hill from anyone out there.

Hopefully I will put together an article for this newsletter with whatever information that might be gathered.

Thanks very much,

Bob Flynn
290 Locust Grove Road
Greenfield Center, NY 12833

To join the Historical Society send \$6 individual or \$10 family along with your name and address to the address shown below.

If you would like to write an article for the newsletter, send it to the address below or if you write it using Microsoft Word, you can e-mail it to me (the editor) at: aliron@localnet.com.

To sponsor a newsletter send \$50 along with your name and address and the wording (please print) describing whom you would like the newsletter dedicated to.

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