

Historical Society Newsletter

Janet Jones, Editor

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

OFFICERS: Ron Feulner, President; Tom Siragusa, Vice President; Patty Schwartzbeck, Secretary; Robert Roeckle, Treasurer; Coral Crossman, Trustee; Vince Walsh, Trustee; JoAnn Rowland, Trustee

Volume 8, Issue 1

This issue, sponsored by Ruth Donogh, is dedicated to Martha Older and in memory of Lawrence Older.

We will begin our year by changing the date of our first meeting. As you are probably aware, we usually meet the third Tuesday of the month but because of primary day, we are meeting this month only on the fourth Tuesday, we have had to change the meeting date to Tuesday, September 25. We will also have a pot-luck dinner before the meeting (bring a dish to pass and your own table setting). The dinner will be at 6:00 p.m. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. In October, we will return to our regular schedule of meeting on the third Tuesday.

Reminder that our year of meetings begins in September so everyone's membership renewal is due (unless you have recently paid). We have made it easy to renew your membership (or become a new member) by filling out our membership application contained in this newsletter and mailing it with your dues (if you prefer to keep your newsletter intact, you may copy the necessary information on another sheet and send it). We will also accept memberships at our meetings. The only requirement to become a member is an interest in local history (residency in the town is not required). We hope to have another good year, and we need you as a member to help it happen.

Calendar

Vegetable Stand: Wing Road CSA farm will operate a roadside vegetable stand at the IOOF Hall every Monday from 4:00 - 6:30 p.m. during harvest season.

September 15: The historical society will have a garage sale at the IOOF as part of the town wide garage sale.

September 25: 6:00 p.m. Pot-luck Dinner (bring a dish-to-pass and your own plate and silverware) meeting at 7:00 p.m. Both at the Community Center next to Town Hall in Greenfield Center. *(Normally we meet the third Tuesday but because of primary day we are meeting this month only on the fourth Tuesday.) Program: Mini-Antique Show – please bring an antique (100 years old or older, spouses not acceptable), to show and tell. The federal government defines an antique as something 100 years old so search your house for something dating back to 1907 and easily portable. These antiques will be on display during the evening. Please bring an identifying sign (3x5 card) with your name, the name of the article, and its date. Be prepared to give a brief explanation.*

September 26: 4th Grade Class from Greenfield Center School will visit Daketown School and IOOF Hall.

September 29: 10:00 - 2:00 p.m. Open house at the Daketown School.

October 6: Field trip to Glass Factory led by Ron Feulner. Meet at IOOF Hall in Middle Grove at 1:00 p.m. weather permitting.

October 16: (Third Tuesday), meeting at 7:00 p.m. and program to follow.

Ron's Ramblings

Hi – hope you all had a good summer. It seems strange for me to be sitting here again at my computer trying to think what to say to you as your new president. I, for one, am missing Coral's hard work and dedication as president over the past four years. Until you step in her shoes, you can't know how much she did for our organization. I guess that it was the thought of working with so many of you on a day to day basis that won me over, and in a moment of weakness, caused me to say that I would sign on as president again.

Perhaps it is appropriate for me to explain how I view this organization and my role as president. I view it as your organization. Each of you bring a little something different to it. Each of you have your own individual interests and talents; each of you can bring something unique. How all this adds up determines the direction that our historical society will take as a whole. As president, I see my role as a coordinator or facilitator of your efforts and interests. I'm the guy who calls you on the phone and asks you if you can help out with this or that. Sometimes, I only need ideas, but at other times it may include a little muscle. The point is, I need all of you in order to make this organization work. I view it kind of like an Amish barn raising. A group of men and woman show up with their individual abilities and talents, and at the end of the day, they can look at something beautiful that they have created together – something that not one of them could have done alone. That's my take on our historical society. At the end of the day, it all depends on how well we work together.

With this view of our organization in mind, I would like to tell you about the many things that have been going on over the summer. The efforts put forth by a number of members over the summer has been overwhelming. Sometimes I feel like a rodeo cowboy on one of those big bulls; I don't know which way we're going next, and I'm just trying to keep up with it all.

Our little one-room Daketown School, which we had completely restored a few years ago, has been growing more popular with area residents and organizations. I felt that we have reached a point where we need a new committee to oversee all activities at the school. I also wanted the person

who chairs the committee to be someone who had attended the school as a student. Dorothy Rowland was gracious enough to accept when I asked her. If you would like to help Dorothy or if you would like to know more about the school and the activities occurring there, you can call her at (518) 584-9078. While I'm still on the subject of the school, I should mention that Harold Jones and I went down and re-installed the stovepipe for the wood stove. We now have it safe and functional. Also, Stan Zeh took his weed wacker over on another day and cleaned up the lawn for us. Late in August, Harold Jones and I, along with my wife, Alice, went down and mowed the lawn again and washed the windows so that it will be ready for the programs Dorothy is planning this fall including an open-house.

Back to my role as president. To be honest, I had some misgivings when I was asked to take the job. While I enjoyed working with all of you when I was in that office four years ago, I did not enjoy the responsibility of maintaining an old building like our Odd Fellows (IOOF) hall in Middle Grove. I have enough trouble keeping my own home in repair. When I was president four years ago, I formed a committee to review our ownership of the hall. That committee concluded that we should try to keep the property even though it was stretching our resources to do so. They also decided that we should purchase the lot adjacent to the hall since we were then parking on someone else's land when we visited the hall. We ultimately did purchase the land and the carriage sheds that were on it. That land was the original site of the Middle Grove Baptist Church (which burned many years ago) and the carriage sheds were where the congregation parked their horses and buggies while attending service.

Now we not only own the hall which is in bad shape and rapidly becoming a community eyesore, but we also have carriage sheds that are about ready to cave in under a heavy snow load. We have some money, but not nearly enough to do the work that would be necessary to bring these buildings back to good condition. While Coral was president, she worked at finding state grants for the purpose of doing some of the work on the buildings, but after she filled out reams of paperwork and made many telephone calls, we still don't have the money in hand, however, it may still be coming.

After agreeing to be president, I spent several restless nights thinking, “What did I get myself into?” Then I decided that this is too big an issue for one worrier to take on so over the summer, I decided to ask several really good people to serve on our Building and Grounds Committee. I could have called it a “worry committee” but then I thought that I might have trouble getting good people to serve.

Everyone I asked said they would serve. I asked Vince Walsh because he is a recently elected trustee in our organization. He is also co-chair of the “Save the Caboose” committee here in Greenfield, and he is young with unlimited amounts of energy. I asked Harold Jones to be in charge of the Building and Grounds committee. (Harold is now retired but worked in maintenance for the International Paper Company, and people say that he can fix almost anything). Joyce Woodard is our Archive Committee chairperson and since our collection is now stored in the IOOF hall, I wanted her to serve. Robert Roeckle is our new treasurer and past Building and Grounds person. He probably knows the hall better than anyone else in the organization, and has kept the lawns mowed in the summer and snow plowed in the winter. I asked Stan Zeh because he has for several years donated his labor maintaining the lawn area at the Daketown School. I asked Louise Okoniewski who is also on the town’s “Caboose Committee” along with Vince and Joyce. Louise works in the town clerks office in Greenfield and has agreed to act as secretary for the committee. And finally, I asked a new member of our organization, Ron Deutsch, to serve. Anyone with the first name Ron has to be a good addition to the committee. Besides that, he has an extensive background in grant writing and organizational skills that will be a big asset to us.

Bob Hope once said, “I have hired a worrier and will pay him one-million dollars a year.” His straight man asked, “How can you possibly afford to pay him that much?” Bob answered, “That’s his worry!” I feel a little like Bob in this situation although these folks have agreed to serve on the Building and Grounds Committee (taking on our worries about the IOOF hall) free of charge. I have simply asked them to come up with a sustainable plan to save the hall. I have tried to make it clear to them that it may be necessary to sell or lease the hall in order to save it. When I told them this, I was thinking of



*Cleaning out the Carriage Shed in back of the IOOF Hall.
August 25, 2007*

the wonderful job that someone did saving the old general store in Greenfield that is now Greenfield Country Medical. There are many ways to save a building, some involve ownership, and some do not. I simply asked the committee to come up with as many ideas as they could.

To date, the committee has met several times over the summer and decided to take action to clean up the IOOF hall property and also see if they can raise funding to repair it. They attended a town board meeting and asked the town for a donation, which the town has agreed to consider providing the necessary paper work is done. They will also continue to pursue grants from the state.

In the meantime a tree fell and ripped out our power line to the IOOF hall. Trustee and committee member, Vince Walsh, owns the “Foothills Tree Service” and has used his equipment to remove the fallen tree and several others in danger of falling. Chad Jorgenson also helped Vince with the trees. Harold Jones used his trailer, and sister, Nancy’s help to remove the brush. Robert Roeckle is checking with an electrical inspector to find out what we must do to get power on again.

The committee has also come up with several ideas for fund raising to help restore the buildings. A local CSA farm on Wing Road will operate a farm stand on Mondays from 4 - 6:30 p.m.. Vince and Chad are also planning a garage sale for our benefit at the IOOF hall. Vince, Chad and Harold have cleaned out the piles of junk inside the carriage house and have removed 800 lbs. of garbage plus metal scraps. Our vice president, Tom Siragusa, has agreed to create a web site for us, and he has also agreed to

help with labor when we decide to replace sills in the IOOF hall. Robert Roeckle, as treasurer, checked on our insurance and reported to our board concerning its adequacy. Just to be safe, we have decided to increase our liability since it looks like there will be a lot of voluntary work going on in the near future.

You folks can also help the committee by sharing your ideas with them. If you would jot your ideas down and send them to the address on the back of the newsletter, the committee will get them. Perhaps it would be a good idea to place “IOOF Hall Committee” on the lower left corner of the envelope.

It is my hope that the committee can come up with a sustainable plan that we can afford. The plan should not depend on one or two people nor should it drain our financial resources. This has been my greatest fear that we might end up burning out the few people who are interested or spending all our money and still lose the building to disrepair in the end.

Before I leave this summary of our summer’s activity, I should mention some other people who have also been active. Joyce Woodard has been working at organizing our collection of artifacts at the IOOF hall. Ann Michel has agreed to help Joyce. Ann brings a lot of knowledge with her from working as a volunteer in the Saratoga Room of the Saratoga Springs Library. (Also, in conjunction with our archive committee, the board has passed a resolution creating a no loan policy regarding our archive collection except in special cases with prior board approval). Janet Jones is staying on as refreshment organizer for our monthly meetings. She is also taking over the primary role as newsletter layout person and editor. Last spring, Janet did most of the work on April’s and May’s newsletters as a practice run, and if anything, she improved the format. I will still write and collect articles for the newsletter so you can send them to me just like you have in the past, but Janet is going to take over organization of the newsletter. Nancy Homiak will still be in charge of keeping track of our membership and mailing of the newsletters with some help from Alice Feulner. Lynn Wochinger has agreed to stay on in charge of our monthly programs. JoAnn Rowland has agreed to supervise setting up and putting away chairs/tables at our monthly meetings. If you are able, please pitch in and help her. I apologize if I have left someone out,

but please rest assured that we appreciate every bit of support that you can offer no matter how small or large it is.

Because you will be hearing a lot from the Building and Grounds Committee regarding the IOOF hall, I have decided to write the following history of the IOOF (Independent Order of Odd Fellows) and the Middle Grove hall. It is my guess that we (the historical society) will be concentrating our efforts on this building for some time to come. (Much of the general information regarding the IOOF came from the Internet.)

The Odd Fellows and Their Hall in Middle Grove

By Ron Feulner (8/07)

The United Order of Odd Fellows was a well-established organization in England at least as early as 1745. No one knows exactly where the name “Odd Fellows” came from. One possibility is that prior to this organization, only wealthy aristocrats belonged to such fraternities. This organization was made up of common laboring men of England who at the time were thought to be an “odd” group to be forming such an organization.

In 1817, Thomas Wilday, an Englishman and member of the Odd Fellows, immigrated to America. Living in Baltimore, he missed his association with the English group and decided to run an ad in the Baltimore paper to find others like himself that might be interested in forming a chapter of the organization here in America. On April 26, 1819 such a group met in the Seven Stars Tavern in Baltimore, and the group eventually received the first American charter. Wilday continued to travel widely in America and set up additional lodges, all chartered from England. When he died in 1861, America had about 200,000 Odd Fellows.

However, in 1843, the American Odd-Fellows had a falling out with their English brethren because in that year the English “United Order of Odd Fellows” chartered an American lodge made up of southern negroes, and the white American Odd Fellows did not agree with the decision to charter them, believing instead that the organization should

remain all white. The white Odd Fellows in America decided to break their ties with the main group in England and establish an “Independent Order of Odd-Fellows” here in America. This group remained all white until the mid-nineteen-sixties when it became racially integrated. The membership in this organization probably peaked around 1915 when there were 3,400,000 members in America.

The Odd-Fellows claim not to be a religious organization, but they do require that their members believe in a Supreme Being, and the Bible is used during some of their rituals. The organization is a secret one with each member sworn to secrecy. New members being inducted into the organization are blindfolded and placed in chains before participating in a mock funeral procession. When their blindfold is removed, the candidate is brought face to face with a skeleton illuminated by torches, and the new recruit is then invited to meditate on the meaning of death. After taking oaths, the candidate is given passwords, certain secret signs, and shown secret handshakes by the Noble Grand (headman in the local lodge), and then the new recruit becomes a first level member.

The Odd Fellows confer three degrees in addition to first membership. These three degrees are symbolized by three chain links, which stand for Friendship, Love and Truth. The letters F, L and T are often illustrated in the three links. Local groups are called “Lodges,” regional groups are “Grand Lodges,” and the national structure including Canada is the “Sovereign Grand Lodge.” The IOOF was the first American fraternal order to offer financial aid to the sick, distressed, and to orphans. It also helped

in the burial of deceased members. There is a sister organization for woman called the “Rebekahs.”

One of our long distance members, Ruth Donogh, from Washington State has shared some of her family’s history regarding the Middle Grove IOOF hall. Moses Darius Rowell was Ruth’s great-grandfather who once owned the general store in Middle Grove that most of us later knew as Roeckle’s Store or Calleniuses Store (The store burned about a decade ago and was replaced by the present day Stewart’s shop.) Moses D. Rowell was a local businessman and historian who once owned several stores in the area. He was married to Jane Stedman Hewitt, widow of Moses Hewitt. In 1872 he was listed in Boyd’s New York State Directory as having a partner, Samuel Craig, and both were listed as paper makers (perhaps associated with the paper mills that once operated near the upper bridge in Middle Grove).

In 1878 (The year that the Middle Grove hall was dedicated) Moses D. Rowell was listed as a Middle Grove merchant and also as a contributor to Sylvester’s History of Saratoga County. He was also active in the Middle Grove (Then called Jamesville) Baptist Church (the church that was adjacent to the IOOF hall before it burned, and we, the Historical Society, now own the property including the carriage sheds). Church records show Moses D. Rowell as a clerk, a trustee, and a deacon of that church. He received his license to preach in 1877. He was listed in census reports as both a merchant and a farmer. He provided land for the Middle Grove Odd Fellows to build a lodge hall (the one that we now own). Moses was a devout Baptist and wrote in the deed to the Odd Fellows that there, “shall be no dancing allowed on the property.” Moses D. Rowell’s youngest son, Moses Bentley Rowell, worked in the Middle Grove store with his father and was working there when he married Jennie Emmalissa Smith on Dec. 28, 1892. The Rowells sold the store a few years later, but at the time of the 1907 Middle Grove fire, the Ballston Journal referred to the store as the “Rowell Store” even though it was probably not owned by them at the time.

Ron Feulner



IOOF Hall, Middle Grove, New York

Wish List: Computer for IOOF hall.

Our secretary, Patty Schwartzbeck, has donated a computer and monitor to be used by our archive committee. We still need a good printer/copier. If you have one or would like to donate about \$100 for the purchase of a new one, please let us know. Thanks.

We still need articles for this year. 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: aliron@localnet.com.

Become a member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. Send \$10 along with your name and address to the address shown below. 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: Town of Greenfield Historical Society.

Please indicate how many persons ten-years-old or older are in your household). _____

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

Areas of interest to you _____

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. _____

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 _____

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