

## 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 5*

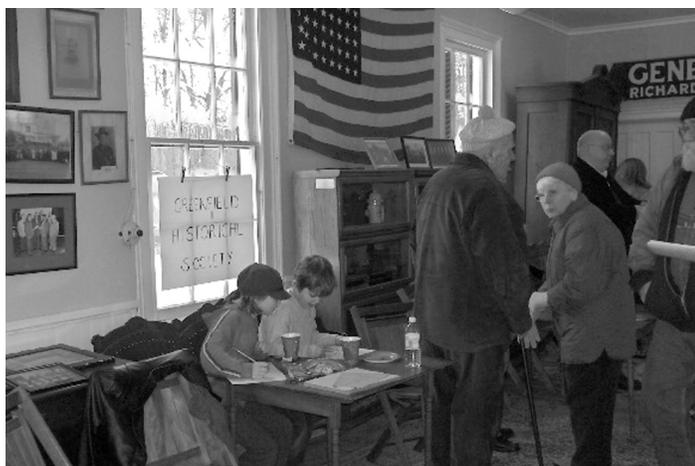
*This issue sponsored by Nancy Homiak.*

### Calendar

**January 15:** Tuesday, meeting held at the Greenfield Community Center at 7 p.m. and program to follow: *The Galway Story Quilt: History and Culture through Poetry.*

**February 19:** Tuesday, meeting held at the Greenfield Community Center at 7 p.m. and program to follow (to be announced).

*We still need articles for the 2007-08 year. If you would like to write an article for the newsletter, send it to: Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833 or if you type it using Microsoft Word, e-mail it to: [aliron@localnet.com](mailto:aliron@localnet.com). Please type in upper and lower case, NOT ALL CAPS. Thank you.*



*Christmas Party at the IOOF Hall, December 15, 2007.*

*Don and Carolyn Keefer standing,*

*Kendall and Alex Deutsch at the table.*

*(Maybe the two children will be future TOGHS officers?)*

### Ron's Ramblings

Well, it's the day after our annual Christmas party, and I'm feeling bloated and lethargic like I do the day after I make a fool of myself eating too many sweets. But, let me tell you, this year the bakers in our group outdid themselves. No one could have resisted the table full of sweet things that occupied the space right next to the gas heater, which also served to keep Dorothy Rowland's spicy sweet cider mix hot. To add to the overall holiday environment, JoAnn Rowland (who by the way coordinated this year's event and bought many of the paper products), and I spilled some of the hot cider down into the heater so the aroma of evaporating sweet cider filled the room for the rest of the day. Speaking of heat, Robert Roeckle went down early Saturday and started the gas space heater so the building would warm up by party time. Twenty-eight people stopped in, and still they couldn't make much of a dent in the sweets, so at the end, many of us filled a paper plate to take home and left a donation, which accumulated to twenty-eight dollars worth.

We also received a donation from Audrey Crandall to be used toward buying paint for the kitchen area renovation. Audrey's donation was a kind of pay-it-forward situation. It all began when Audrey gave Nancy Homiak an artificial Christmas tree that was too large for Audrey's house but just right for Nancy's. Next, Nancy sent Audrey twenty-five dollars (even though Audrey had said she didn't want anything) for the tree. Then Audrey decided to add another twenty-five dollars and donate fifty to us

toward paint. So, a big “thanks” to both Nancy and Audrey for helping with our project.

Winnie O’Connell arrived at the party with her pick-up-truck and a couple of more bales of blow-in insulation. That makes five or six bales that she has donated. She told me that she bought them on sale when they were insulating a house that they own. She said, “I guess I got carried away because I bought more than we needed, so I’m happy to donate it.” Harold and I have finished insulating the floor. (Harold had to take up a substantial part of the floor in order to install rigid board insulation between the joist.) The next step in our project will be the rental of a machine to blow the insulation into the walls and ceiling. Harold has already done the prep work of removing clapboards on the outside of the building and cutting holes in the sheathing.

Well, back to the party. This year’s theme was antique Christmas ornaments, and a number of people brought theirs to share. Each took a turn at describing them to the group. It always amazes me how these small, and in many cases, delicate ornaments can take on such human meaning. One after another, the people who brought them described how the small ornament(s) were left to them by family or in one case represented a purchase during his first year of marriage many years ago. In each case the ornament(s) meant much more than their surface beauty, as a piece of glass, would have suggested.

It had snowed several inches a couple of days before our party, and I had difficulty finding someone to plow. For a while, I thought we might have to move the party back to the Community Center in Greenfield where we hold most of our meetings. But, at last, I connected with Dave Wardell, and he did a superb job of cleaning out the snow just a few hours before the party began. I should also note that the week before the party, Nancy Homiak, Harold Jones, Alice Feulner, and I went down and spent the morning cleaning the hall. Since we have been doing construction work in the kitchen area, cleaning was a little more intense this year than usual.

Coral Crosman and Harold Jones continue to work on our state grants and Ron Deutsch is working at getting our IRS designation as a non-profit organization.

I thought it might be interesting this month to say a few words about how your newsletter gets put

together and delivered to your door. First, of course, we rely on many of you to write the wonderful articles that we are becoming famous for. (Our supply is getting low. After the holidays many of us begin to suffer from cabin fever – a good time to write an article.) When we receive your articles, I forward them to Janet Jones who types them (if needed) and then sends them (via e-mail) back to me to edit. When the first editing is completed, I send them along with my “Ramblings” back to Janet. She then roughs in the whole newsletter and sends it back to me for final editing. I send it back to her, and she prints it. In the meantime, Alice Feulner gets money from Robert Roeckle (our treasurer) for stamps and picks them up at the post office. Nancy Homiak contacts Robert for updates to her member mailing list, then prints the address labels. Next, Janet delivers a box of printed newsletters to one of our houses, and some combination of the three of them get together for an evening to fold, tab, stamp, and place address labels on them. *[Editor’s note: sometimes we get extra help from Margie and Earl Jones.]* Finally, Alice makes another trip to the post office to mail them and a day or so later they arrive in your mail box.



*Alice Feulner and Nancy Homiak in the Feulner’s living room getting the one-hundred-and-sixty-something newsletters ready for mailing.*

## *Memories of the Graphite Mine Cabins*

*By J. Frank Goyette*

If you grew up in the Porter Corners area during the fifties, you probably heard of the two cabins at the graphite mine and may have even stayed at one of them once or twice. It was sort of a rite of passing for a young boy in the area to spend some weekends at the cabins. Back then, all I knew of the cabins was that the owner had died in an accident. I did not get the whole history of the cabins until I read “Porter Corners Graphite, A History of the Area” by Ron Feulner. Probably the first time I ever visited the cabins was in the summer of 1955. It was most likely with my best friends Brian Hendrie and Eddie Rudolph. I believe, we had a sense of obligation to take care of “our” property as long as we were making use of it, and we would never think of committing any acts of vandalism on the property. However, other visitors had carved their initials on everything in sight and left garbage around.

The larger cabin was one large open room with some shelves on one wall. Usually there were various canned goods on the shelves left by previous occupants. It was an unwritten rule to leave your extra cans of beans or whatever to create a food cache for any lost hungry soul that might stumble into the cabin and more realistically, to save weight on the trek out. Inside the cabin, there was a large table, a few chairs, I vaguely remember a couch, and bed springs. The front of the cabin was all windows and had a wonderful view of the valley and the hills beyond. It had a barrel stove tucked into the fireplace and a sink. The sink was a source of mystery and speculation. The adjacent stream was well below the cabin and there was no electricity to run a pump. We wondered just how the water got to that pipe on the outside wall of the cabin and into the sink.

During one of our stays, I would have to leave “camp” every morning to do chores at Horace Richmond’s farm. It was during this visit to the cabins we discovered several sections of pipe that ran up hill from the cabin. The last section was near the remains of a stone dam in the stream. The elevation of this point was well above the cabin.



*One of the graphite mine cabins.*

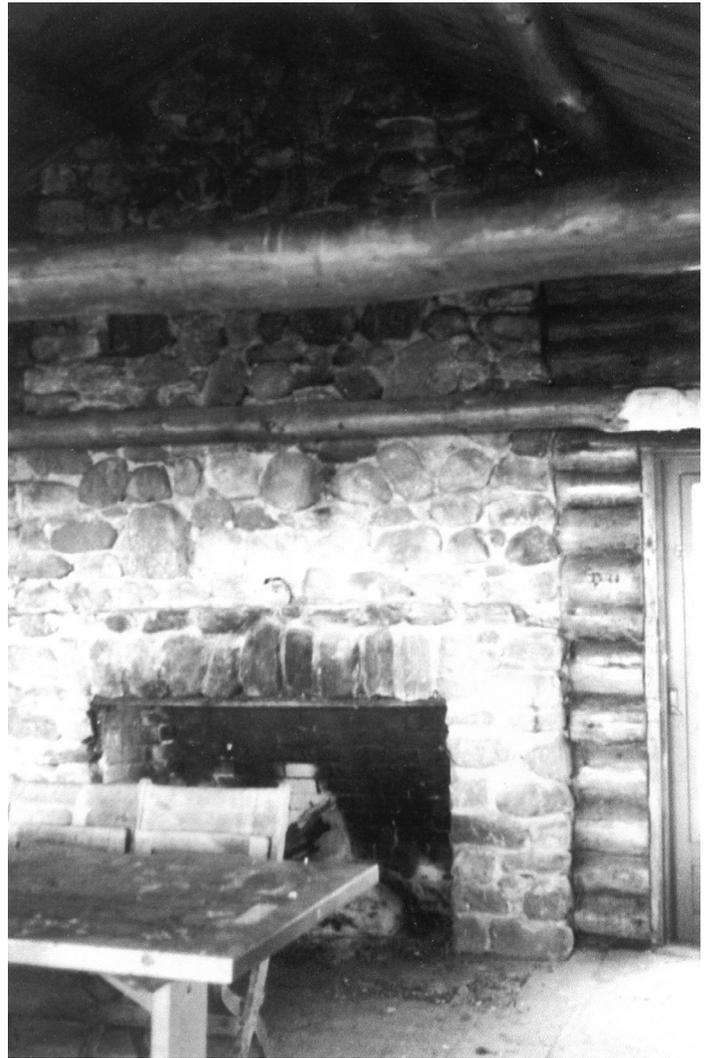
It was a real ‘eureka’ moment, we had solved the mystery of the sink! The pipe was in several pieces and had a number of splits where it had frozen through the years. It had to be connected and patched if it was to supply water to the cabin again. The next day when I returned from chores, I brought plenty of used twine and rags from the farm. After securing the pipe in the dam, we reconnected and patched the remaining sections with rags, splints and baling twine all the way to the pipe on the cabin wall. Once again, the cabin had running water under pressure.

The smaller cabin had an iron stove centrally located. I think it was a small potbelly stove, but I am not sure. It may have been a box stove. I vaguely remember a three-burner kerosene cook stove. However, there was no fuel for it. The cabin had a loft with a rickety ladder to it. We never used the loft. There was shelving or a cabinet with a few canned goods left behind by fellow visitors just like in the larger cabin. There were windows along the front with the same view as the larger cabin. One window had a broken pane. I don’t recall any furniture.

In late December 1960 during our school Christmas vacation, Brian, Eddie, and I decided to spend a winter weekend at the cabin. Brian and I would be graduating and moving on. Eddie was a year behind us so this could very well be our last adventure. At this time, I was living with the Bolducs on Lake Desolation Road. Mrs. Bolduc was always supportive of any of my adventures. She outfitted

me with her pack basket, snowshoes, and 12 gauge shotgun because I planned to hunt rabbits. I hiked in from the west, Brian, and Eddie hiked in from the east. We stayed in the smaller cabin because it would be easier to heat. Good thing we did, because there was record-breaking cold around the area. We gathered enough firewood to keep the stove going all night and cleaned a spot on the floor near the stove to place our sleeping bags. We were to take turns feeding the fire through the night so it wouldn't go out. I don't remember the topics of discussion, but I am sure we talked for a while as the wind and snow was blowing around outside. I know it was blowing because sometime during the night, I became cold and tried to slide deeper into my sleeping bag when I discovered snow on my head. The paper that we had stuffed in the broken window pane was gone and snow was blowing in through the broken window. A small drift was building at the head of my sleeping bag. It was then I discovered the fire had gone completely out! It is difficult to take turns getting up in the night when you don't have an alarm clock. We spent the day tracking and hunting, but it was a good thing we didn't rely on our hunting skills for food. We knew it was cold because the snow had that squeaky sort of crunch it gets when the temperature goes well below zero. I vaguely remember someone saying it was minus thirty degrees in Watertown that weekend, but I don't know what the local temperature was. I don't remember if we stayed a second night. It was a realistic exposure to the rigors of mountain life, and it gave me an appreciation of what the early settlers had to endure. I had a choice to go home and turn up the thermostat, but those early settlers had to rely on feeding the fire.

As I mentioned before, I was living with the Bolduc's on Lake Desolation Road. My sister was living in the Rodgers' foster home in Porter Corners. It was probably February 1961 when I decided to visit her. There had been a heavy snow the day before, and all the trees were bending over under the strain. I had made this trip several times before, and it usually took only two or three hours following the trails that I knew went by the cabins. It was about four miles as the crow flies. I set out on snowshoes around noon and headed along the trail. The snow-laden trees had bent over into the opening that was the trail making it difficult to follow. I decided to



*The fireplace inside one of the graphite mine cabins.*

walk parallel to the trail because I could make better time. Boy, did I make good time! The only problem was the sun was setting and I didn't know where I was. I must have gone too far north otherwise I would have intercepted the trail. So with the sun setting in the west, I headed south. It was dark when I came to a stream. Mrs. Bolduc always said, "If you get lost, follow a stream downhill." After following the stream for a while, I saw lights in the woods. It was probably about 7:00 p.m. I headed toward the lights. They were coming from the large cabin. I was saved. As I approached the cabin, it sounded like a large group of people inside. I had heard a church group from Albany had taken over the cabins, and I assumed that these people must be from Albany. I was cold and tired and maybe I could get warm and a cup of coffee. As I approached the door, I could hear young and old voices. There was quite a buzz of activity inside. I knocked on the door, and the world

fell silent. Pin drop silent! I knocked again, and it was still silent. Maybe they had been telling ghost stories, and I was knocking on cue. I hollered hello and finally the bravest of the brave inside opened the door. It looked like it was a group of scouts with a few men. I don't remember my exchange of words with the brave one, and I probably was not direct enough with a request to rest and get warm because he never asked me in or showed any concern about me. He didn't even question what I was doing in the middle of the woods late at night in freezing temperatures. I was on the trail again so it didn't really matter. As I shuffled away from the cabin on the snowshoes, the first thought that came to mind was "yep, they're from Albany." Then I remember thinking that I must have scared the daylighters out of them. I almost laughed aloud all the way to the Rodgers house. Not only is it a night that I remember, but I bet everyone in that group remembers it to!

I recently talked to Brian, and he reminded me of a time when we were washing the windows and floor of the cabin when a man claiming to be the caretaker stopped in. Until Brian reminded me of this event, it had slipped my mind. The man was surprised at our activity of course. Once he knew we had no malicious intents, he gave us permission to be there. His permission removed our sense of innocence about being there (trespassing) and it put a damper on the fun of overnight outings. This may have been our last visit to the cabins.

Feeling a little homesick for the mountains after ten years or so of living in Connecticut, I took a motorcycle ride north. My last stop was the cabins. The trail in was much improved, and I was able to ride right up to them. As I looked around, the cabins worked their magic, and all the great memories of our boyhood adventures came back. What a feeling of happiness! I really don't know how to express what I felt as I walked around the site. In my mind's eye, I could see the events I remembered most, and it really did make me feel good about being there again. I took several photos before leaving but could only find these two. Even now when I look at these 37-year-old photos, those joyous memories come alive again. I hope they will trigger similar memories in anyone familiar with the Graphite Mine Cabins.

## *JoAnn Rowland's Buffalo Chicken Dip*

1 - 8 oz. cream cheese  
 1 - 10 oz. can chunk white chicken, drained  
 1/4 - 1/2 cup buffalo sauce (hot sauce)  
 1/2 cup ranch dressing  
 2 cups (8 oz.) Colby Monterey Jack cheese  
 (shredded)  
 Tortilla chips for dipping

Spread cream cheese in shallow ungreased 1 quart baking dish. Layer chicken.

Combine buffalo sauce and ranch dressing. Spread over and sprinkle with cheese.

Bake uncovered at 350° for 20 to 25 minutes or until the cheese melts. Makes 2 cups.

*JoAnn made this dip for our Holiday Party on Saturday. Everyone thought it was really good, so Alice asked for the recipe. We hope JoAnn doesn't mind that we publish it!*



*Patty Schwartzbeck at the Christmas Party (you just can't keep a book out of a retired teacher's hands).*

*Next to her is the gas heater warming Dorothy Rowland's spicy sweet cider mix.*

## Membership Application/Renewal

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 (518 893-0620). 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 10-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 describing whom you would like the newsletter dedicated to (please print):

\_\_\_\_\_

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**

**P.O. Box 502**

**Greenfield Center, NY 12833**