

# *Historical Society Newsletter*

*Janet Jones, Editor*

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

*OFFICERS: President: Ron Feulner; Vice President: Louise Okoniewski;  
Secretary: Patty Schwartzbeck; Treasurer: Alice Feulner;  
Trustees: Coral Crosman, Ron Deutsch, Robert Roeckle, JoAnn Rowland, and Vince Walsh*

*Volume 9, Issue 6*

*This issue sponsored by Donna Middlebrook, in memory of Frank and Irene Middlebrook.*

## *Calendar*

**February 17, 2009:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.  
*Program on restoring the caboose by Tony Bucca.*

**March 17, 2009:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.  
*Program on the history and natural history of the Kayderosseras by Libby Holmes.*

**April 21, 2009:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.  
*Program to follow.*

**May 19, 2009:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.  
*Program to follow.*

## *Ron's Ramblings*

In spite of competing with the wonderful Obama inauguration and a few snow flurries, our January meeting was well attended by twenty-five people. Jim Smith put on another stellar performance with just the right mix of storytelling and music. I heard one of our members say on his way out that this was the fastest hour-and-ten-minutes that he had ever experienced.



I tried to imagine the number of area people who have collectively been entertained by Jim over the many years that he has been performing locally. If all those people were in one place at one time, it would probably look like the crowd that assembled for President Obama's inauguration. The Town of Greenfield is fortunate to have been the home of such a talented and giving individual as our own Jim Smith.

On a sadder note, one of our long-time members, Bessie Thibodeau, passed away on Tuesday, January 13. She was eighty-nine. She was born in Middle Grove and lived her entire life in this area. She was a member of the Rebecka Lodge (sister group to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows whose IOOF hall

## **IMPORTANT**

**If schools are closed because of the weather, our meeting will be canceled that evening.**

*I would like to thank January's refreshment volunteers: Joan Rowland and Margie Jones. They brought carrot cake and sour cream coffee cake. Rose Smith and JoAnn Rowland also brought an assortment of cookies.*

*Refreshment volunteers for February are Alice Feulner and Nancy Homiak.*

*Janet Jones  
Refreshment Chairperson*

the historical society now owns). Upon her passing, she had arranged for the historical society to have the Bible that belonged to the Rebeckas. It is a large leather bound Bible (six inches thick and very heavy, meant to be left in one place) and inside the front cover it says, “To: Kayaderoga Rebecka Lodge 102 – By: Charles Gailor and mother Alice Gailor, dated 1923.”

As an organization, we are kind of hunkered down for the winter: not much going on except for the Historic Sites Mapping Committee. This is one project that I am still excited about. It is also a project that all of us can contribute to. Most of our members are familiar with at least a part of the town and have unique knowledge about one or more structures or places in the town whether it is their own home or place where their ancestors lived. If each of us would choose a location (old building or place where an important event occurred) and write all we know about it, we could help this committee get the project under way. Some of you, no doubt, have old photographs that we could scan and make copies of. We really do need your help with this project, and only you can do it. I have written a couple of pieces about MacMaster’s Garage and the Middle Grove School, but now I need your help with others.

Just put down what you know or can research and include a photo (if you have one) and we will put it in an upcoming issue of the newsletter. Then other people can add their knowledge to yours. I have already had two calls adding information about MacMaster’s Garage, but we still don’t have a picture of it when in operation. If you have any questions or just want to talk about a historic place in the town, call or write our committee chairperson Dan Chertoc (518-893-2268) at 58 Ormsbee Road, Porter Corners, NY 12859. Thanks for your help with this most important project. If we don’t identify these historic places in our town, they may be forgotten forever.

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## Middle Grove One-Room School History

*by Ron Feulner*

According to the words of Charles D. Gariner (circa 1915), district clerk for many years, the first school meeting was held on October 21, 1839 and was held in a small building originally used as a shop but converted into a schoolhouse. The building was nearly opposite the old hotel (the hotel was near present day Stewart’s Shop).

The one-room school built on cemetery property and shown in the photo above was built between

July 14, 1849 and the first Monday in October 1850. The site was purchased (or leased) for twenty-five dollars and the cost of building the school did not exceed \$300.

The July 14, 1849 school district meeting minutes read, “Resolved that we adjourn to the 1st Monday in October, 1850 at the new school house in district 17.” Signed by P.M. James, Clerk.

Originally this was district 21 but in October 1840 changed to district 17. More recently it was district 7 according to Greenfield Glimpses by Brown. Some of the later teachers who taught here (according to Brown) were Ethel Madison 1932-37; Maysel Ross 1937-38; Arthur L. Jones 1938-46; Ruth M. Johnson 1946-49; Catherine Corcoran 1949-53; Edna M. Bright 1953-55,56. In September 1956, the new three-room school opened behind the firehouse.

The more recent district trustees for district 7 (both one-room and three-room schools included): Ruth LaGalles, Henry Menshausen, Stanley Braden, Brenton Taylor, Elliot J. Older, William Briell, Leon LaGalles, Richard R. Roeckle, and Mary Mitchell. My mother, Evelyn Feulner, was also a trustee of this district in 1946.

The one-room school on Cemetery Hill was razed in 1957, after the new elementary school (size 33x90 feet) was built by volunteer fireman behind the old firehouse (located near the Stewart’s Shop on same side of the road). The one-room school had chemical toilets and no running water which failed to meet minimum state standards of that time, so the new school was built and the old one razed to create more space for cemetery use.

During the years between 1850 and 1957 (107 years) countless children were taught their basics in education at the old one-room-school on Cemetery Hill. Many of today’s senior citizens remember their days at this school playing games like Annie-Annie-Over in the school yard.



*Middle Grove School (courtesy of Geraldine Brown Flynn)*

## East Road

By *Mary (Rhodes) Carlson*

Bill Wilsey recently telling me how my dad saved the name Wilsey Road, when the town was putting up signs in the sixties, sent me down memory lane. Apparently the town wanted to rename the road Whinny Road after a long ago family who lived in the area.

I had always heard it called East Road. When Cheryl Rench was little, it was Easter Road, to her, because on our spring walks looking for mayflowers, bloodroot, and early dandelions, we always saw at least one bunny scurrying off into the woods. I probably asked the adults if they thought the bunny was looking for his baskets and colored eggs.

Wilsey Road, with its beautiful trees, was a wonderland, winter and summer. Tree branches from each side of the road touched or appeared to weave together overhead forming an arch over the road most of the way. This road was loved so much by Lewis French, the John Hancock insurance man, who came around every month to collect premiums, that every spring, he just couldn't wait long enough for the road to dry up before he tried to travel it. Every spring, he would get his car stuck on the hill by Mr. Jenk's barn. He would then have to walk to our house on North Creek Road to get Dad to pull him out. Of course, Dad would always harness the team and go pull Louie out of the mud.

The road was not plowed until the nineteen-fifties, so it was our own playground in winter. On the North Creek side, there are two hills. Time, energy, and snow conditions determined if we used one hill or whether we took the long ride down both hills. When the crust was just right, the many little rises in the large open field made a challenging zigzag ride. Mike Smith, Tommy's son, who now lives near the start of that ride, recently told me how he and his cousins enjoyed the same ride when they were kids.

During the summer, Dad cut hay on both sides of the road across from the field with the great sledding. One of those fields had a huge rock where I hung out while I waited for the hay to get raked. This was where I first drove our old truck. I was so small that I could barely see out the windshield or reach the foot peddles, but Dad took care of that. He adjusted the throttle levers on the steering column and put the truck in dull low. It went so slow that he, Chet, and George (Dad's nephews) could pitch the piles of hay on the truck and still keep up with it – with me driving. Occasionally, I would get a little ahead of them, and Dad would holler for me to pull the emergency brake on. To a little girl, it was cool to pull that lever with the shinny silver button and jerk the truck to a stop. But, then came the struggle to push that shinny button down on top of the lever to release the brake, and of course, never ask for help.

Dad's best friend was Carl Stiles who lived on the old Gailor farm (now the Stutzenstein farm) on Russell Road. But to me, as a child, he lived at the end of Carl's Lane. Carl's lane ran from where it left Wilsey Road, past Carl's back door, to his barn gate. Dad and I made that walk to Carl's place many times. I usually stopped at the house to visit Mrs. Gailor while Dad went on to

the barn. She was always in the summer kitchen with her three cocker spaniels. Sometimes, I helped her bring in wood for the beautiful black wood cook stove that she had, and sometimes, we went out to her gladiolus gardens. Occasionally Mrs. Gailor or Carl would pick me some "glads." What a treat to have "glads" from the same garden that adorned some of the rich hotels in Saratoga.

Late winter was maple syrup time. Dad's brother-in-law, Dick Potter, had a syrup shanty in the back of his yard. Uncle Dick, John, Chet, and George kept the fire going that boiled down the sap into syrup. I loved the smell of the boiling sap, and many times I had to be told to get back away from the heat of the fire.

Dad, with the help of the boys, tapped the trees and hung the buckets. During my days off from school, I always helped gather the sap. The horses were harnessed and hitched to the sleigh. The sleigh was loaded with empty milk cans [large two or three foot tall cans used for the transport of bulk milk before tanks were used] which had been saved for this purpose. As soon as everyone was ready, up East Road we would go stopping every little way to empty the sap buckets (that were attached to the large maple trees along the road) into the milk cans. When the cans were full, off to the syrup shanty, we would go, to empty the sap where it would be boiled down.

A favorite treat for all of us was to pour hot syrup over the snow, watch it harden, and then eat it. We called it Jack Wax, and I can still see the horses' bellies deep in the snow, smell the syrup, and see the shine of the syrup running over the plate of snow while making Jack Wax.

Even today, when I drive west on Wilsey Road and suddenly come out of the trees at the top of the hill where I can look ahead at the mountains and sky, it is a wondrous moment for me. An even better experience is being the first one to drive the winter wonderland after a new glistening snow covers the road and hangs on to the arch of trees over it.

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**Saturday, January 10, 2009 – 6:03 p.m.**

### **The Older Family ...**

Hi. My name is Kathryn Sharp Cloutier and I am Alice Kathryn Older (Sharp)'s daughter. I recently got a copy of your March 2008 Historical Society newsletter. It was forwarded to me by my father.

I read the whole article with much interest. I briefly knew my Grandpa Older (Lawrence Older) since they had moved to Florida when I was very small. But I do recall going outside with him when he wanted to smoke and talking to him and even a few songs here and there. It wasn't until after he passed that I fully realized how talented he was. My mom (understandably) doesn't talk much at all about when she was little, and this article really filled in a LOT of questions I had. I do remember his funeral, being my first time experiencing death in the family, and my mom showing me where they used to live and where her parents are buried behind the church she got married in. So, thank you for telling Lawrence Older's story, and for filling me in on my own family. It means a lot to me.

– Kathryn Sharp Cloutier

## 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\_\_\_\_\_

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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):

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***We still need articles for the 2008-09 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).***

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