

Historical Society Newsletter

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

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

Volume 11, Issue 5

www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com

*This issue is dedicated to Martha Smith Older, who will celebrate her 100th birthday on Jan. 20, 2011.
Sponsored by Ruth Rowell Donogh.*

Calendar

January 18, 2011: Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.
Program: Ron Feulner, talking about his new book, Glass Factory with Histories of Middle Grove and Plank Road (including NYState Rt. 9N).

February 15, 2011: Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.
Program: Teri Gay, former Malta town historian, will do a program about the book she wrote: Strength Without Compromise – Womanly Influence and Political Identity in Turn-of-the-20th-Century Upstate New York, about the woman's suffrage movement and concerns women of Saratoga, Warren and Washington Counties.

March 18, 2011: Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.
Program: To be announced.

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



TOGHS Christmas Party, December 21, 2010

WEEZIE'S WORDS

by Louise Okoniewski

The threat of snow on December 21 didn't keep 20 hearty folks from the annual Christmas party at the Community Center. There was some confusion as members thought we were having a party, but Ron Feulner surprised us with a meeting. Ron made it short, I'm not sure if that was his intention, or if it was the expression on some of our faces. We did cover the "Call List" so in case of bad weather we can let members know of a meeting cancellation. Ron Deutsch and Dan Chertok are still working in the 501 3-C, hopefully it will be finished early this year.

Nancy Walker gave a wonderful performance at the Grange on December 4. About 100 guests showed their support for Nancy and the release of her CD, "True Colors." Nancy was surprised by the successful turnout, and those in attendance were impressed by Nancy and her songs of Greenfield. Nancy would like to apply for a grant and have a concert series at the Grange which would include all types of music, not just folk – stay tuned!

After the meeting members shared stories of Christmas and holiday memories. Some read a favorite poem. But the life experiences from members, to me, were the most interesting. Alice Feulner remembered being a foster child and attending a Christmas gathering at the Methodist Church. On the tree were presents for the children, and one doll in particular caught her eye. A little girl, one of twins, said that Alice would not get that doll. Alice thought why don't they get the two dolls that were alike on the tree, just like them? When the presents were handed out Alice received a box, but she did not open it. She was very sad because she wanted that doll. In the end the doll was left and it was for Alice! The box contained beautiful hand made clothes for the doll! I think we know the moral of this story!

Louise McCormick remembered her Christmases in Germany. There were 11 children and they lived in a house on a farm which her parents worked so they could live there. Four of the children were lost in the war. One room in the house they could not go in, except at Christmas. It had the

most beautiful tree with real candles and angel hair. The candle light glowed through the tree, and a present was under the tree for each child. She always received the same doll, that she would play with and enjoy until the New Year, then it would be put away for next Christmas!!

Joan and JoAnn Rowland remembered “Aunt Pearl” and how she would cry when she read a Christmas card.

Ron Deutsch’s daughter, Kendall, remembered when her father was going to dress up like Santa, but he didn’t and then – the REAL Santa showed up!!

Ron D. recalled getting caught in the big Christmas storm in 2003. Ron, his wife Melissa and kids were visiting family in Staten Island when they (Ron) decided to go back to Greenfield in time for Santa’s arrival. Ron was sure he could out run the storm (a man thing). Needless to say, they were in the middle of the blizzard! Snow plows were off the road, not to mention the stranded cars and trucks. They plowed along a whopping 10-15 miles an hour – couldn’t stop or else! The kids were really good considering a normal 3-hour trip took 10 hours!! They pulled up to the driveway at 12:05. Santa was also caught in the storm. They made their

way down the long unplowed driveway, and the kids were able to nestle in their beds and visions of Santa were in their heads.

Skip Ballou remembered sledding down a hill on a home made jump with a friend in Schenectady. The sled was borrowed and the skis broke after a couple of rides.

After the stories, it was time to enjoy the delightful homemade cookies, candy, breads and other goodies. Ron Deutsch and family brought some great Ziti Alfredo, as Ron was thinking that it was a pot luck supper. Maybe next year! Members took home the leftover goodies making a donation to the Historical Society.

It’s nice to hear the stories that people remember about Christmas, or the holiday season. The simple things made great memories; cutting down the tree and decorating it; the smell of a big dinner that mom has been worried about for a week; playing outside in the snow; being lucky enough to have family to share the day with; hanging lights outside; I could go on and on. Let’s not lose the simplicity of the season where a smile and a Holiday greeting to someone can make a memory.

Historian’s Corner

by Ron Feulner

When Ruth Donogh suggested that we honor Martha Older as she turns 100 this month, I was delighted. I have known Martha as long as I can remember. My mother, Evelyn Marcellus Feulner was a life-long friend of Martha’s. My mother died August 2008, but, had she lived, she would have turned 100 this August. She and Martha attended school together and both lived most of their lives in the Middle Grove area. Mom would have been delighted that we are helping Martha celebrate this special birthday.

As for me, I probably met Martha when I was playing with her nephew, Bill Older. Bill’s father, Howard Older, was killed in WW2, and his mother died soon afterward of natural causes. Bill and his sister were taken in by Martha and her husband, Lawrence Older (Howard’s brother). One of the few places Bill, as a child, was allowed to visit on his own was our house, and he spent many hours there becoming good friends with me and my brother. Most of the time, we would play at our house on Murray Road, but on occasion, I would go home with him to Martha and Lawrence’s little house on Middle Grove Road (heading out of Middle Grove toward East Galway). I remember Martha once told me that the house was so small that you had to go outside to change your mind. I also remember Lawrence sitting at the kitchen table practicing the fiddle which was his primary musical instrument

Bill coined the nickname, “Farmer,” for my mother which is what he lovingly called her right up until her death in 2008. The idea came about when he, as a child, saw her out working in our large garden. She wore farm boots and a straw hat during those work sessions, and I guess, to Bill, she looked like a farmer.

Just as our family treated Bill as one of our own, Martha always treated me the same. We have stayed in touch through the years even after she moved to

Florida. One of my favorite stories that she shared with me occurred when she was a young girl attending the Daniels one-room school on the intersection of Young’s and Boy Haven Roads. My mother was a student there at the same time, and they had Martha’s aunt as a teacher. This school (now gone), because of its location on a long hill, provided the students a special winter treat of riding sleighs downhill. The school was situated about midway along a hill that was more than a mile long on Young’s Road, providing one of the longest sleigh rides in the area. In those days, roads were not salted or sanded so the hill would remain good for sleigh riding pretty much all winter. Students started at the top and continued down a long way past the school.

Either Martha or my mother told me that if the ride was timed right, they would be at the furthest point from the school when the teacher rang the school bell ending recess. They would then have to take the long uphill walk back to the schoolhouse. I’m sure the teacher probably figured this out and rang the bell early, but the students never knew (if she did), and they thought they were getting away with something.

Martha, I hope you are enjoying your century of memories, and we in the Town of Greenfield wish you a most happy birthday.

Before I close, I would like to ask any of you who remember spending your youthful days along the Kaydeross Creek to share some of your memories with me. I am especially interested in stories and old photos taken along the creek. If you have anything, please call me at home (518) 893-0620 or at the historian’s office (518) 893-7432.

Thanks to everyone who brought snacks to share for the Christmas Party.

January refreshment volunteers are: Joan Rowland and Nancy Homiak.

Janet Jones, Refreshment Chairperson

Martha Smith Older

by Ruth Rowell Donogh

(with help from Ron Feulner, Tom Smith and Bill Older)

This issue of the Greenfield Historical Society newsletter honors Martha Smith Older, who will celebrate her 100th birthday in January. Martha, the daughter of Charles Dake Smith and Attie Decker Smith, was born on January 20, 1911, in Middle Grove. She was later joined by two siblings, Beatrice Mildred Smith and Thomas Stanley Smith. Martha's grandparents were Charles Edwin and Sarepta Dake Smith, and Thomas and Martha Schermerhorn Decker. Martha has said that her Smith grandparent's home, on the north side of Middle Grove Road west of Middle Grove, was almost a second home to her. Her great-grandparents were Benjamin Charles and Mary Jane Carman Dake, and John Hiram and Emmalissa Gorton Smith.

I first met Martha, who is my father's cousin, at the Smith reunion at Lake George in 1996. It was hosted by cousins Douglas and Arlene Langdon. Many of the descendants of the children of Charles and Sarepta Smith attended and my sister and I had the great privilege of meeting Martha and other cousins for the first time. Martha, who was the matriarch of the gathering, related her memories of growing up in Middle Grove and of the Smith/Dake family. She has a remarkable memory. It was a wonderful time of learning and prompted me to start researching the genealogy of that line. We corresponded and she wrote many letters that were filled with those memories. They are an incredible addition to the history of these families and the Town of Greenfield.

Martha, Mildred and Thomas were raised on their parent's farm located on the northeast corner of Boy Haven Road in Middle Grove. She tells of helping her father. I will quote from one of her letters. "As we came from the fields with a load of hay there was a beautiful bubbly spring beneath an elm tree. We would halt and drink to our hearts content. Then [we'd] go on to the barn to unload the hay. We had two big hay forks to help us unload. I would hitch the team of horses to the rope which pulled the hay fork and when dad had the hay fork properly set and locked into a bunch of hay, he would holler to me 'Ready' and I would drive the team pulling the fork load up into the hay mow. When it was where they wanted it in the middle of the mow, whoever was moving it, putting it where it needed to be with a hay fork by hand, they would yell 'Whoa' and dad would trip the fork to drop the hay with a rope that he used to pull the fork back down. I would unhook the horses and drive them back for the next fork full. It only took six or so hay fork loads to unload a whole wagon load of hay but the boys in the hay mow had to push it where they wanted it to fill the barn in a neat way. When that was finished, dad would say to mother or to me – now we need some switchel to drink." Martha describes switchel as a mixture of sugar, ginger and cider or cider vinegar.

Martha's early school years were spent at the Daniel School on the corner of Young's Road and Boy Haven where her teacher for the first seven years was Nellie M. Smith, her Aunt Nellie. She went on to high school in

Ballston Spa. She recalls carrying a two-quart pail of milk to her grandparents and placing it on the table on their back porch before catching the trolley to school. She wrote that it cost her dad \$4.00 every eight days for a ticket book to pay her fare. She passed her regents in 1927 and by the age of 19 was teaching school.

On October 9, 1931, in Greenfield Center, Martha married Lawrence Eugene Older, the son of Benjamin Franklin and Martha Lane Older. She writes that the first nine years were very difficult because of the depression but during that time they built their own home, which was located about ¼ mile west of her grandparent's home in Middle Grove. Two children were born to them, Martha Edith, known as Edie, and Lawrence Charles, known as Larry. Martha and Lawrence took in his brother's two children as well, as both parents died and they raised them as their own. During this time she was elected a trustee for the Greenfield School District and served for 11 years. She was active, as well, in the Methodist Church in Middle Grove, serving as church organist for many years, and caring for her parents and others who were ill.

In 1974, Lawrence, Martha and their son, Larry, departed for Florida to retire. Lawrence, who did not read music, had a natural talent and was known as the "Last of the Adirondack Minstrels." They traveled throughout the Northeast where Lawrence played and sang the music he had learned from his family and collected from other sources. He was invited to perform at the famed Newport Folk Festival. Martha traveled with him and would sometimes sing in accompaniment.

Martha has made several trips back to Middle Grove and in 2008, she and her son, Larry, flew again up to Albany and then travelled on to Lake George for another reunion of the Smith cousins. Martha's health and stamina amazed us all. Tom Smith had located the Dake cemetery and viewing it was remarkable. Martha and the rest of us had the pleasure of seeing the Dake schoolhouse and the Middle Grove Methodist Church as well as the IOOF Hall. We were impressed with the work the historical society has done to preserve the history of the Town of Greenfield.

Martha, who had a stroke more than a year ago, has recovered to some degree and continues to live in her own home in Lake Hamilton, Florida, with her son, Larry. There are numerous family members close by, including her daughter, Edie, and her grandchildren. She has touched many lives this past 100 years and is loved by family and friends. Her generous contributions to the genealogy of this family will live on. She is an outstanding woman with the same strong pioneer spirit that brought our forebearers to the Town of Greenfield.



Martha Smith Older in 2008 (left) and in 2011 (right).

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Become a member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. Send \$10 per **household** 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 June 1, 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 Print – Please indicate how many persons 10-years-old or older are in your household). _____

Name _____

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 it 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 copy of our newsletter along with information on how they can join.

Name _____

Address _____

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@nycap.rr.com.

Updating Historic Sites Map in the Town of Greenfield

If you have any information, e-mail Dan Chertok at bmmschertok@gmail.com or dgclawoffices@cstdsl.net.
You may also call (518-893-2268) or write him at: Dan Chertok, 58 Ormsbee Road, Porter Corners, NY 12859

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