

## Historical Society Newsletter

**OFFICERS: President: Ron Feulner; Vice President: Louise Okoniewski;  
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**Janet Jones, Editor**

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

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[www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com)

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

### *Calendar*

**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: Ron Feulner, talking about his new book, *Glass Factory with Histories of Middle Grove and Plank Road (including NYState Rt. 9N).***

### *WEEZIE'S WORDS*

*by Louise Okoniewski*

Mother Nature woke us up to the fact that she is in charge. I was getting used to the snowless December, however, January has been anything but. The cancellation of the January 18 meeting gave us a chance to put our "phone tree" to work. Everyone I spoke with knew the rule that when school is cancelled so is our meeting. Unfortunately, we missed Ron Feulner's program on the Glass Factory and his most recent book. I'm sure that has been re-scheduled.

The back to back to back January snow storms has me thinking what people did without the snow blowers, big plows, sand and salt trucks, that we have today. These days, we expect the town or county to be right there and do our road first. Back when, the road was cleared as soon as possible, and you shoveled your way out. When a plow did come by, you made your way down the road, maybe to work or to the corner store to pick up a couple necessities, visit with your neighbors, compare snow stories and totals before the trip home.

When I moved to Lake Desolation almost 30 years ago, we were the 10th year round family to live there. If there was a snow storm at night, the county plow may have made the mountain trip once or twice. You could walk down the middle of the road and not worry about traffic. I had to be at work at 5 a.m. back then, and I'd have to make it off the mountain with no tracks to follow. I'd travel the middle of the road with the front windows rolled down, so I could see the tree line on each side of the road – no guard rails. If I went off the road, I knew Alvie Older would be home and help me out. No cell phones either. Luckily, I always made it to work.

In the early 80's, I recall Tom and I sitting at the D & T's Pub with a couple of other locals, watching the local stations (no cable then), playing darts, shooting pool, waiting for a snowmobiler to come in, when someone from Middle Grove or Porter Corners would pop in. "What are you doing here? How are the roads?" we would ask. The roads were lousy. They came up to see if they could make it. After something to warm them up, down the mountain they would go. Ahh – the mountain was challenging back then.

Today the road is much more traveled. The plows are up frequently dropping quite a bit of salt and sand. The town and county do an excellent job of keeping our roads clear. When it's snowing 1, 2 or 3 inches an hour it may be hard for them to keep up, but they are always on the way. I, like everyone else, wait for them to come before I leave for work, and my cell phone is on, just in case.

### **Winter Frolic**

**by Louise Okoniewski**

When I was young  
Not so long ago  
My brother, sister and I  
Couldn't wait for the snow

And storm after storm  
The drifts would be high  
And Dad would build a tunnel  
For my brother, sister and I

With the best snow shovel  
And our little hands  
We carved out passages  
Throwing snowballs was in the plans

We'd play in our secret fort  
Til the sun warmed the sky  
And spring would be waiting  
For my brother, sister and I.

## Historian's Corner

by Ron Feulner

This time of year, when the icicles are almost touching the ground, and the snow banks make backing out of your driveway about as dangerous as running a red light, I find myself thinking of warmer things. Last month, I asked anyone with photos of the old swimming holes on the Kaydeross (I'm using the newer spelling) to share them with me. I received one by e-mail from Sandy Arnold, it was a photo of Sandy and her brother as children sitting on a rock in the middle of the stream. The photo was taken just below (south) of the lower bridge in Middle Grove by her father with his polaroid.

Sandy's photo brought back a flood of memories to me since I, as a child, learned to swim in the Kaydeross. My mother would pack a sandwich and the old alarm clock (no one that I knew had a wrist watch in those days, and mom had to be back in time to start supper) and we would walk down from Murray Road to the swimming hole a little ways north of the lower bridge in Middle Grove. This particular swimming hole was used by many area residents, so a worn trail led from the road past the old grist mill and behind Menshausin's house, across their pasture which was sometimes home to their bull, and on

into the woods. When you got there, the area opened up a little with a grassy bank and a narrow sandy beach. A wide plank diving board was anchored to the bank with a large boulder just north of the beach area adjacent to the deepest pocket of swift moving water.

When I was a little older, my mother allowed me to go alone, and I spent many a lazy hot afternoon down there with my friends.

This was just one of the several swimming holes along the Kaydeross in the Town of Greenfield, and I know there were others in the Town of Milton further downstream.

Of course, when the hot days of August arrived and our parents decided that the water was "working," we were not allowed to go near the creek for fear of contracting polio. Just to make sure that we understood the seriousness, my mother would show us a picture of someone inside an iron lung machine.

I would like to stay on these memories of area swimming holes for a while, and wish that some of you would share your memories and perhaps photos with me. I can scan the photos right in your home, or if you prefer, you can bring them into the historian's office to be scanned. Give me a call at the office 518-893-7432, ext. 316 or at home 893-0620.

## Little wonder of a bird,

by Lelah Cornell

Always singing, always heard  
Tells of life among the trees  
Little breezes, softly blowing  
Telling stories to the trees  
Little waters softly flowing  
Adding life among the seas  
Little cubs cheerfully playing  
In the branches gently swaying  
From limb to limb, a squirrel is hopping  
From below a bud is popping  
Shall it become a blushing rose  
That's a secret no one knows  
And then the nights begin to chill  
The chipmunk has his house to fill  
He gathers nuts from the trees,  
Tucks them away, where they shant freeze  
The birds gather and fly away  
Hoping to meet again someday  
The trees begin to turn from green  
To the prettiest shades you've ever seen  
Red and gold and hues of brown  
Then they all come tumbling down  
All 'cept the evergreen, it doesn't change  
it's hue

When wintery frost replaces summery due  
Then the snow begins to flurry  
How the squirrels and chipmunks scurry  
To their nest in tree and ground  
Where they shall remain safe and sound  
The cubs are tucked away-sleepily waiting  
For the first warm day of spring  
The ground blanketed by the snow  
Shields those cubs as winds do blow  
Ice pulls bare branches low,  
the ice they break  
Those little cubs, they still do not wake  
Then the days begin to lengthen  
It's the very first sign of spring  
The frosty snow begins to melt  
Uncovers nest where creatures dwelt  
The ice has cleared from the stream  
As the sun upon them did beam  
Once again spring has come  
Once again the bees do hum  
The birds are all back on the wing  
In the treetops they do sing

The leaves begin to appear on trees  
Gently pampered by the breeze  
The squirrels and chipmunks start to play  
The cubs are romping bright and gay  
They grew all winter – now big enough  
to roam  
They wonder out to seek themselves a home  
As the flowers begin to blossom  
Among which the bees do hum  
Once again the season's changing  
The squirrels home he's rearranging  
Once again, the little bird  
Always singing, always heard  
Telling life among the trees  
Once again the breezes blowing  
Telling stories to the trees  
Once again, the waters flowing  
Adding life among the seas  
Once again the cubs shall play  
As the branches gently sway  
Once again a squirrel is hopping  
Once again a bud is popping  
Since this 'tis the miracle of spring  
Is it any wonder why the birds do sing.



February refreshment volunteers are:  
Joan Rowland and Nancy Homiak.

Janet Jones, Refreshment Chairperson

## Early Slovak Families

by Pauline Levo

During the early 1900's, many young people immigrated to the United States from Austria-Hungary (which later became Czechoslovakia) and settled in the Town of Greenfield. Many of them came through Ellis Island and worked for short periods of time in the metropolitan areas and later moved to the north to the more rural areas. My parents are an example of this. My father, Paul Orisek, came to the United States in 1909 when he was just 20 years old. He lived in New York City and worked various jobs (hat factory, etc.) and moved to Greenfield Center in 1915. My Mom, Pauline Krajacs, left her native country when she was just 15 years old and came to New York City in 1913 where she worked as a cook and maid for various wealthy families. She came to Greenfield to visit a friend and later married my father in 1923 in Greenfield. This is how many of our Slovak families came to live in the Town of Greenfield.

My father, along with several other individuals, was very active in establishing a local lodge of Sokol U.S.A. bringing together the Slovak people to physical education and social activities. Land was obtained on Wilton Road and a meeting hall/gymnasium was constructed and dedicated on June 3, 1923. This building still stands but it has been converted into a single family residence. The first meeting of a few of the Slovak families of Greenfield was held on April 25, 1921, with representatives from other lodges to help them get organized. Present was Josef Valik, Paul Orisek, Josef Bruchac, Apolina Bruchac and Adam Hrdlicka. (Joseph and Apolina Bruchac were the parents of Rosemary Bruchac Smith who passed away recently.) The following families were among the Charter members: John Hlavaty, Michael Fecenko, Alex Czupil, Imrick and Ernest Podesva, Paul Toman, Anton Stefo, Matus Jankovich, Simon Slama, Thomas Michalek and Frank Figuly.

A complete history of all the members of the Slovak Organization from 1921 to 1934 has been compiled from three original minute books that I have in my possession.

All are written in Slovak but I was able to obtain the help of Mary Krumal Eddy who was a member of Sokol 265. In the history, I have included a number of photographs showing the drill teams. Many of the people in the photographs have been identified but there are still quite a few that need some names. There also is a large photo, the original of which is located in the Town Clerk's Office, which shows the entire membership of Slovak Sokol Lodge 265 as of July 1923 and is included in the history. There are other small group pictures of some of our early residents.

The Sokol Hall was located on Wilton Road on a parcel of land deeded over to the group by Frank Figuly and his wife, Verona. As you entered the front door, you entered into the meeting room which also was used by the gymnasts. At the far opposite was a raised stage for bands, plays, etc. To the left of the stage were stairs to the basement area where there was a mahogany bar. As a youngster, I remember going to the Sokol Hall for all types of events. Many dances were held there and open to the public as well. Many of you may remember Mike and Steve Pasek and John Koptula who had a band that played there. District #10 school would occasionally use the stage for plays, etc. Also many showers, weddings and even some funerals were held there. The membership met at the Hall two Sundays per month for their meetings and social gatherings. The Hall also was used for gymnastic instructions and preparation for competition at drills through the area (Johnstown, Little Falls, Gloversville, etc.). Due to declining membership, the Hall was finally sold in 1965 to Vin Smero and was later converted to a single family home and additions have been made to the building. It is now known as 75 Wilton Road.

I have filed, with our Town Historian and the Town of Greenfield Historical Society, a complete copy of the history that I prepared. I also have retained a copy for myself. It would be appreciated that if any of you have time to read the history and can identify some of the people in the photographs to contact me. My e-mail is plevo@nycap.rr.com. As I mentioned earlier, I am the daughter of Paul and Pauline Orisek. My brothers, Emil and Frank, and my sister, Anna, are all deceased.

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## Letters to the Historical Society

Nov. 6, 2010

Town of Greenfield Historical Society,

Would you believe the Salinas Valley in California, that is 150 miles east to west and roughly 15 to 25 miles wide, has a Greenfield and Hudson out here – the Lettuce Capital of the World. It's the closest we'll ever come to the Garden of Adam and Eve! Keep up the good work.

Andrew Kubica

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Dec. 1, 2010

Greenfield Historical Society,

I recently purchased 37 Cohen Road, last lot before the Lincoln Mountain Forest Preserve on the left, and I was wondering what was known about it. I read what you

said about the Standish families on the map but I wanted to see if there was anything else. The seller said the standing outhouse was from days of the area's use as a nudist colony (date unknown), there are at least two squarish holes lined with stones that look like foundations but seem too small to be for homes (I don't know the dimensions and am terrible at guessing), and there is quite a lot of garbage in the stream that feeds the pond/bog/moat/whatever that is visible from the road, of the kitchen and jar variety. It might be nothing anyone found worthy of documenting and I can draw some of the more obvious conclusions, but if there's anything on record, I'd love to know.

Thanks in advance, and thanks for all the good work on the newsletters.

Charlie Dake, [ixielraketa@yahoo.com](mailto:ixielraketa@yahoo.com)

**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](mailto: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](mailto:bmmschertok@gmail.com) or [dgclawoffices@cstdsl.net](mailto: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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