



Historical Society Newsletter

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

Janet Jones, Editor

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

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www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com

Calendar

- April 17:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the **IOOF HALL IN MIDDLE GROVE** to show it off and talk about the items in our collection.
- May 15:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.
Program: Caperton Tissot, the author of *Adirondack Ice, a Cultural and Natural History*, will speak about her book, which deals with all aspects of ice, from ice storms to harvesting ice.
- June 10:** Sunday, noon - 4 p.m., **Greenfield Business Association Car Show**, Middle Grove Town Park.
- June 29:** Fridays through October, **Farmer's Market**, 4 - 7 p.m., Middle Grove Town Park.
- August 11:** Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Caboose, Cruisin' and Cookout Day located on NYS Route 9N in Greenfield Center

If you have any questions/suggestions/comments on anything having to do with the Historical Society, please contact Skip Ballou at 518-378-5653 or email: emb0744@hotmail.com.

Coming soon – you'll be able to pay your dues online at our website – more information to follow.

IOOF Hall Visitation Hours

The IOOF Hall will be open for visitors, please call ahead to make an appointment.

Joyce Woodard – 893-7638 or Ann Michel – 306-6632

Notice: A vote will be taken at both the April and May meetings on our revised Constitution. Also the revised Bylaws will be voted on at the May meeting. (The Bylaws only needs to be approved at one meeting.) Copies of both are posted at the IOOF Hall in Middle Grove and at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.

WEEZIE'S WORDS

by Louise Okoniewski

I'm sure we have all driven down Lester Park/Petrified Sea Gardens Rd. and have wondered about the signs by the road. Little did I know that this is a significantly unique place that has visitors from around the world.

Richard "Dick" Lindemann presented a very enthusiastic program on the Lester Park fossils to a full house. The rock unit known as the Hoyt Formation is named for DeWitt Hoyt who operated a quarry and limekilns on his farm. He burned limestone in the kilns to produce a product that was used in making mortar and plaster for building in construction. The earliest reference to the dark blue to black limestone particles known as ooids and to the "cabbage head" fossils dates to a paper published in 1825 by the Saratoga Springs physician, Dr. John Steele, who is best known for conducting early chemical analyses of the spring waters. Specimens of the curiously-shaped rocks in the Hoyt Limestone have been collected and studied by geologists ever since the days of Dr. Steele in attempts to determine, first if the "cabbage heads" are simply rock concretions as opposed to being the fossils of some sort of organism, and secondly, if they are fossils, what kind of critter made them.

For nearly 60 years, the Lester Park "cabbages" were not known to exist anywhere else on Earth. But then in 1882, a United States Geological Survey paleontologist by the name of Charles Walcott discovered similar fossils in the lower rock layers of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. At that time, Walcott's USGS assignment was to measure the depth of the canyon and the thickness of its rock formations from the rim down to the Colorado River and to collect rock specimens and fossils from each formation. Walcott had first seen, and become familiar with, the Hoyt Formation "cabbages" in 1977 while collecting fossils in the Saratoga vicinity for James Hall who reined as the director of the New York State Museum from 1843-1898. Although the Hoyt and Grand Canyon fossils were not exactly the same, they were similar enough to convince Walcott, Hall and other paleontologists that they were the remains of the same kind of extinct critter,

even though they had no idea what kind of organism that may have been.

All of this changed in the 1970s when “cabbage head” shaped colonies of bacteria and algae were discovered alive and growing similar structures in the shallow tropical seas in places such as Florida, the Bahamas and western Australia. That is why these fossils of Lester Park are unique to us and why geologists and their students from throughout the world visit them. It all started here in Greenfield.

Footnotes: Richard Lindemann is an Associate Professor of Geosciences at Skidmore College.

Lester Park was named for Willard Lester, Esq., who donated the 3-acre parcel to the New York State Museum for historic preservation and scientific research in 1914.

One of the Lester Park “cabbages” is on a one-year tour of European museums and universities.

Rocks from the Rowland’s Hollow quarry are in the wall of the North Milton Cemetery as well as the foundations of some Greenfield buildings including the old Odd Fellows Hall at the corner of South Greenfield Road and Route 9N.

A field trip to Lester Park may be in our future, led by Mr. Lindemann. Stay tuned!

D.A. Collins Construction, the current owner of the former Petrified Sea Gardens, is working to make that an educational site.

March refreshment volunteers, Katie Finnegan and Lelah Cornell, served chocolate zucchini cake and cookies. April refreshment volunteers are Joan Rowland and Louise Okoniewski. Meeting at IOOF Hall.

BOTTLE DRIVE: The Town of Greenfield Historical Society will be collecting bottles to benefit the future IOOF Hall Museum, which will be located upstairs. We’ll need supplies to get this project going and your donations will help. Please call or email Skip Ballou at 518-378-5653 or emb0744@hotmail.com, for more information.

POETS WORKSHOP

Author-Publisher Coral Crosman of Middle Grove is convening an **Inter-Generational Poets Workshop** for six weekly Wednesday meetings at the **Daketown School to begin April 25**. Due to the location, space may be limited tho’ all ages and stages are urged to consider themselves creators of poetry regardless of what they may have once been told. The workshops will take place from 4 - 5 p.m.

For further info, call 587-9809 or email porpress@aol.com (slug Poets Workshop or Daketown). Coral is an active member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society which owns and maintains this historic building on Old Daketown Road.

Concert at the Greenfield Grange Sunday, May 20, 2012

Home on the Grange Concerts Presents

**“THREE GALS AND THEIR
BUDDY LARRY”**

with special guest **Sam Zucchini**

at the Greenfield Grange
17 Grange Rd.
Greenfield Center, NY 12833



Please join us for an afternoon of live acoustic music with three of the region’s top songwriters including Rosanne Raneri, Kate McDonnell and Nancy Walker. Tickets are cash only \$8 per person or two for \$15.

Music starts at 3 p.m.

For more information feel free to contact
Nancy@nrwalk@gmail.com

Special thanks to the Rowland family.

Upcoming Events Sponsored by Heritage Hunters Do You Know Who Your Ancestors Are?

Heritage Hunters, a genealogy and local history group, is now receiving dues for 2012. Yearly membership is \$15 and includes monthly program meetings, a bi-monthly 24 page newsletter, a surname exchange index and a reduced fee for the yearly Genealogy Conference. Heritage Hunters holds program meetings at 1 p.m. on the third Saturday of each month at the Town of Saratoga Town Hall, 10 Spring St. (Route 29), Schuylerville (the old brick school). Public welcome. Contact cwald36709@aol.com or 587-2978 for membership information.

Saturday, April 21 – “Indentured Children and ‘Warning Out’ ” by Loretta J. Bates, at 1 p.m. at the Town of Saratoga Town Hall in Schuylerville. She shares tales of families, how they came into the Poorhouse and were Indentured Out and what became of them. She will also talk about the ‘Warning Out’ process of forcing a family to leave a town.

Saturday, April 28 – History Faire at Cornell Cooperative Extension, 50 West High St., Ballston Spa, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday, May 19 – Lance Ingmire will talk about **“How to Research Your Civil War Ancestor”** – 1 p.m. at Town of Saratoga Town Hall

Saturday, June 16 – Erica Wolfe Burke of the Folklife Center at the Crandall Library will offer tips and instructions for exploring the 1940 U.S. census – 1 p.m. at Town of Saratoga Town Hall

Saturday, October 20 – Genealogy Conference, 8:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., at Town of Saratoga Town Hall in Schuylerville. Dick Eastman, well known genealogist and producer of “Eastman’s Online Genealogy Newsletter,” will be the presenter.

Historian's Corner

by Ron Feulner

My friend, Tom Cwiakala, from Galway wrote an article for the April, 2012 Galway Preservation Society's newsletter entitled, "Where Have all the Farmers Gone." Tom is a long time active member of that organization, and he grew up on a farm in Galway, so he was in a good position to research and write such an article. The article took me by surprise because, for some time now, I have been thinking similar thoughts about the Town of Greenfield.

When I was a boy growing up in the Middle Grove area in the 1940s, it seemed to me that there were many farms: the larger ones producing milk, the smaller ones having a pig or two and a bunch of chickens. There was a lot more open land too, pastures and hay fields were scattered along every road and hillside. We played baseball in some of them, and in others, we raced our old cars around when we were old enough to drive but not old enough to have a license. Greenfield has changed a lot since then.

Tom Cwiakala in his Galway article was able to collect the names of 42 dairy farmers that marketed their milk in the 1940s. I'll bet that Greenfield had as many or more. I can think of quite a few without even trying. Now, I don't believe there are any in either town.

What caused this change? Well, first of all, some other areas in NYS still have dairy farms, but they tend to be very large covering many hundreds of acres of land and milking hundreds of cows. The small farms with fifteen or twenty milking cows are very rare in NYS, so farming is still happening in some areas but not in Galway or Greenfield. Although Tom didn't mention this in his article, I think that the soils may have something to do with it. Greenfield soils, for the most part, are marginal. They tend to be sandy, gravelly soils, with lots of stones. My friend, Harold Jones, said that God created the earth in six days, and then on the seventh day he created Greenfield because he needed a place to dispose of all the left over rocks. Consider this in comparison to the rich, stone free clay soils in the Hudson and Mohawk flood plains, and you can understand why they are still farming those areas but not in Greenfield.

This, however, is not the entire story; it is more complicated than that. As Tom points out in his article, "Dairy farming requires a large investment and a lot of hard work but unlike other enterprises, the dairy farmer does not have the privilege of setting the price of his product. This price is seldom if ever commensurate with the cost of producing milk." He goes on to mention that a few farmers like Battenkill Dairy near Salem, NY and King's Ransom Farm east of Saratoga are now trying to break this pattern and sell directly to the public.

Tom says, "Even with the attraction of independence, fresh air, love of animals and just love of the outdoors, a review of the income to expense ratio of dairy farming does not offer much incentive."

Other contributing factors that Tom points out include, "... the mandates that have been imposed on dairy farmers. The first, which occurred in the mid 1940s was the mandate through which each dairy farmer was to purchase an electric milk cooler that was sized to the number of cans of milk.... These coolers were a vat of water, enclosed,

insulated and cooled by refrigeration" Gone were the days when a farmer could cool his milk cans in naturally flowing spring water as my grandfather did on his small farm on Lake Desolation Road. Also gone were the days when, according to my mother, a local farmer who peddled his raw milk door to door gave her a bottle of milk that she later found a small fish swimming in. Apparently, he had more customers than milk and decided to increase his production by adding a little creek water.

Tom goes on to point out in his article that the early 1960s saw a switch from shipping milk in cans to storing and shipping from bulk milk tanks. This forced farmers to give up their inexpensive milk cans and install expensive stainless steel, refrigerated bulk tanks. This usually meant building a new milk house to state specification and wiring it for higher electrical use. This change forced out all the little farmers who produced only a few cans of milk each day.

These reasons that Tom pointed out and another that I would suggest involving land prices led to these changes. As the population in Greenfield grew, land became more valuable as building lots than as agricultural land. Most of the hundred acre farms were subdivided for housing and the town slowly moved away from its agricultural roots toward more of a residential base.

To verify these changes in the Town of Greenfield, I looked at the 1890 Farmer's Map of Saratoga County and Greenfield had more than 300 farms in that year. I also looked at the 1947 topographic map of the Greenfield area which shows open land (agricultural) in white and forested land in green. A good percentage of the land in the Town of Greenfield was still open in that year indicating many farms. All of this leads me to believe that there is a good parallel between what happened in Galway and what happened in Greenfield.

Another thought comes to mind. Just as all these hardships were being placed on the small farms, industries like the American Locomotive and General Electric Company in Schenectady and the IP Paper Company in Corinth were booming in those post war years. These industries were paying good wages and the automobile had improved enough so that the trip could be easily made from the Town of Greenfield without fear of too many breakdowns. The young sons of Greenfield farmers had to decide whether to stay on the family farm and work their butts off for almost nothing or take one of these high paying factory jobs.

The net result has been a transition of Greenfield from a town with many small farms to a residential town with vast areas of reclaimed forest land in between the new homes. That is not to say that farming has disappeared in the town. There are still a few left, but they tend to be hobby farms or horse farms. Gone are the days when hundred acre dairy farms dotted the township and almost everybody in between raised a pig or two and had at least one cow to provide their own family with milk. The only thing left to remind us of those days are the miles and miles of stone wall fences snaking through almost every woodlot in the town.

I should point out that while dairy farms have all but disappeared in the town of Greenfield, the dairy industry has not. Stewarts ice cream plant on Route 9N (Church Street) is still in operation employing many Greenfielders, but the milk they use comes from farms outside the township.

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 ask (518-378-5653 or emb0744@hotmail.com). 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. **Coming soon – you'll be able to pay your dues online at our website – more information to come.**

Please Print – Please indicate how many persons 10-years-old or older are in your household). _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone number _____

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 Janet Jones, 105 Ash St., Corinth, NY 12822 or email it to: JJones18215@roadrunner.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@csdsl.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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