



## Historical Society Newsletter

### *Our 30th Anniversary Year*

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

The Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833

Volume 14, Issue 4

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

### CALENDAR

**December 21: Christmas Party, Saturday,**  
1 - 4 p.m. Share your memories: *"Where you sat at the Christmas dinner table?"* Please bring cookies to share and exchange (donation to benefit the Historical Society).

**January 21, 2014:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center. **Program:** *Elaine Handley is writing a book, Deep River, about the Underground Railroad in this area and will talk about contraband camps in the Civil War, with flashbacks to the Greenfield part of the story.*

**February 18, 2014:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center. **Program:** *Ron Feulner talking about "Greenfield Before It Became Greenfield."*

**March 18, 2014:** Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center. **Program to be announced.**

**Please send articles and/or photos for our future newsletters to**

**The Town of Greenfield Historical Society,  
P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833  
or email it to: [JJones18215@roadrunner.com](mailto:JJones18215@roadrunner.com).**

*November refreshment volunteers, Alice Feulner and Joyce Woodard, served apple cake and brownies. Please remember to bring cookies to the Christmas Party to share.*

*January refreshment volunteers are Katie Finnegan and Alice Feulner.*

*Janet Jones, Refreshment Chairperson*

### WEEZIE'S WORDS

by Louise Okoniewski

Our November 19th meeting brought together a group of 46 folks from Greenfield to Corinth, to hear Corinth Town Historian, Rachel Clothier speak about the "Great Calamity" the 1913 Floods.

Rachel began by telling us how we can relate to this catastrophe by the recent floods of Hurricanes Irene and Lee, and most recently Sandy on the New York and Jersey shores. Keep in mind that the 1913 storms occurred before the information systems we have today, TV, phones, cells, satellites, etc., yet 100 years later there is still widespread destruction and loss of life.

The 1913 flood was a national disaster that occurred in March 1913. It was a monumental storm system that started in Nebraska, down the Mississippi, to the Atlantic seaboard. It affected 15 states. Over 1,000 people died. It had major snow in the Midwest, tornadoes, heavy rains and winds and severe flooding. It rained for heavy for days, the melting snow and heavy rains were too much for the mighty Mississippi and surrounding areas.

In our region, March 1913 was a warm snowless winter, yet the rivers were frozen. The Hudson and Sacandaga Rivers were the main thoroughfare for logging in our area. The logs would be stocked on the frozen rivers waiting for the Spring thaw to send them down to respective mills. Each log had a "mark" to show which mill it was to go to. Once the rain started, the logs began moving rapidly. There were many log jams that were building up as the wood made it's way down the Hudson to Glens Falls and beyond. Workers were paid the extreme price of \$3 - \$4 a day to loosen up the logs. Over 9 feet of water was flowing over Spier Falls dam. The main thoroughfare from Corinth to Hadley was gone - washed away. Union Paper Co. in Hadley had water flowing from the lower windows. The combined power of water and logs were too much for the South Glens Falls bridge.

The bridge held up for awhile, but was wiped out. The Hudson river over ran it's banks in Troy and Albany ... the downtown streets became rivers themselves. Fires broke out from the Gas Lights that were used. Typhoid fever became an epidemic. The reservoirs in Albany were being contaminated with the dirty waters from the Hudson, that was full of dirt, debris, sewage, soils, and anything that was in its way. As a drastic measure, workers in Albany dumped bags of chlorate in the reservoir, which ended up saving a lot of lives.

After the waters receded, the damage could be seen. People's livelihoods were gone, buildings and roads disappeared. Landscapes were changed. The biggest change was yet to come, the flooding by the Army Corps of Engineers of the Sacandaga Valley. Before the Great 1913 floods, talks had begun as early as 1900 on the prospect of flooding the valley. At that time, the valley had fertile farmland, towns, and even a "resort" run by the Rail Road. After the 1913 flood, the government and the Army Corps pushed harder to have the valley flooded in order to control the Hudson River. This entailed the relocation of 26 cemeteries, and the elimination of towns such as "Conklingville." Rachel told of how the men who relocated the cemeteries were paid fantastic money, but were quarantined for months. Families were destroyed, among them the Allens and Kathans who were affluent and well respected, owning rich farmlands. The Rail Road took the Army Corps to court to fight the flooding and man-made reservoir, but lost. Lands were taken by "emanate domain." Some were paid pennies on the dollar. June 27, 1930, the Sacandaga River Valley was flooded.

Rachel gave a very informative program. She showed many pictures and newspaper articles from the day. The photos of the logs, people in rowboats, destroyed bridges, Sacandaga, etc., put you at the scene. Rachel Clothier is the Corinth Town Historian and curator of the Corinth Town Museum.



*Rachel Clothier*

## HISTORIAN'S CORNER

by Ron Feulner

The museum work is progressing nicely. After a concentrated effort, I am now nearing completion of the task involving improving, labeling, and printing the photos, and now, we can concentrate on putting the displays together.

Brian Auwarter and I had a good work day on Thursday, December 5th. Brian worked on the IOOF and Mason's display, and I focused on the lumbering section. We made great progress and believe that one more session could complete those displays. Then we will be able to focus on the agricultural display.

Jane Potter shared several old cookbooks which I have added to the kitchen display.

Back in the historian's office, now that the photo work is nearing completion, we can get back to the week-to-week projects. Earl and Margie Jones have loaned us two Jones' family photo albums and Sandy Arnold has loaned us two photo albums of the Middle Grove and Porter Corners area that she rescued by purchasing them on E-bay. We will scan any of these photos that are of historical value into our collection and then return them.

Ruth Ann Assman, one of my volunteers, videotaped an interview that she did with Dorothy and Henry Rowland. We will make a CD of the interview and add it to our collection. We hope to continue interviewing other long-time residents of the Town of Greenfield in the future. Marie Ahl and Ruth Ann are working at indexing the names on two of our oldest maps. Joyce Woodard and Nancy Homiak are working on our photo collection.

I was saddened this month with the loss of one of Middle Grove and Coy Road's old-timers; Wilfred "Ted" Jones died after a short illness. He was one of the few left that gave us a window into the old time Town of Greenfield when most residents were members of families that had lived here for generations and worked at either chopping wood or small scale farming. I will miss my conversations with Ted.



*Ted Jones (left) singing at one our Historical Society meetings with John Kirk and Trish Miller.*

## WE NEED YOU !!

For \$10.00 per year, you can become a member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society! Membership dues help us preserve and maintain the Daketown School and continue with our Odd Fellows Hall museum project in Middle Grove. 2014 will be our sixth Farmers Market at Middle Grove Park, we host the Caboose day in August and hold our October Harvest Fest.

Dues help us maintain documents, pictures and artifacts, all possible through membership dues, donations and volunteers.

For \$50.00, you can sponsor a newsletter that is mailed to approximately 130 members. For \$100.00, you can become a lifetime member. We have wonderful programs at our monthly meetings ... always open to the public. For thirty (30) years the Town of Greenfield Historical Society has preserved our Town's history, please help us continue.

For more information, call JoAnn at 893-7786.

*We'd like to welcome  
two new lifetime members,  
Gary Hildebrant and Ricky Hildebrant.*

**THANK YOU**

**Louise Okoniewski**

## HOLIDAY PARTY TIME!

Please join us on Saturday, Dec. 21, 2013, from 1 - 4 p.m. at the IOOF Hall in Middle Grove for our annual Holiday Party.

There will be a time to share your story about **"Where you sat at the holiday dinner table."** Were you at the head of the table or the foot or somewhere in-between? Was the head reserved for an honored guest; like Grandpa, Grandma or Great Uncle Bob or Aunt Metilda? Or were you at the "kids table?" Maybe you are still at the kids table! Was there an extra place set for \_\_\_\_\_?

Maybe we will sing a couple of carols, but not at the table. This will be a good time to see all that has been done downstairs and maybe a peak at the upstairs. There will be plenty of cookies, goodies and hot mulled cider. We'll end the afternoon with our famous cookie exchange. The donation basket will be out.

Looking forward to seeing you and hearing your story.

**JoAnn Rowland**

PS: If you live far away, I am quite sure our president will give her recap in the January newsletter.



*Last year's cookies at the Christmas Party.*

## HERITAGE HUNTERS MEETINGS

*The following Heritage Hunters meetings will be held on Saturdays at 1 p.m., Town of Saratoga Town Hall, 12 Spring St. [Route 29], Schuylerville.*

*For information, email [melfrejo@aol.com](mailto:melfrejo@aol.com) or call 518-587-2978. Public is welcome.*

**January 18, Saturday, 1 p.m. – Tricia Shaw**, education coordinator for the Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, will tell us about the 18th century artifacts that archaeologists found after the 2011 flooding.

## MARGIE (ATWELL) JONES

by Ron Feulner

Most of you who have attended our Historical Society's meetings in the Community Center in Greenfield, have no doubt noticed an elderly, quiet, dignified lady sitting with her husband and two daughters about half-way back, just left of center, in the room. If this doesn't jog your memory, perhaps the fact that she almost always has a pleasant smile on her face will help. This gentle lady is Margie (Atwell) Jones, and she recently turned ninety.

Margie, like most of us, has a story to tell. She has lived all her life within a few miles radius in the Town of Greenfield. As a youngster, she lived with her parents, two brothers and one sister on a farm just north of Greenfield Center.

Like other young girls of that era, Margie was prepared from birth to become a housewife and mother. No one ever asked her what she wanted to do with her life – the question was meaningless in her world – she would become a housewife and mother like every other woman in her family.

Greenfield at the time was peppered with small nearly self-supporting farms like the ones that Margie grew up on and her parents and grandparents before her. These farms typically had milking cows, a few horses (before the 1940s and 50s, when tractors first became available and affordable), some chickens, and always a couple of pigs which could be fed table waste until they were butchered in the autumn. The farms of this period in Greenfield were so efficiently run that almost nothing went to waste.

Margie's father, Roy Henry Atwell, along with his father, Charles Henry Atwell, ran the family farm on what is today's NYS Route 9N, north of Greenfield Center. In the barn on top of the hill, they had milking cows, and sold their milk in Saratoga Springs and to Brookside Dairy (H.L. Hall & Son). In the barn behind Roy's house, they had three horses, some cattle, and an assortment of chickens and pigs.

Margie's grandpa, Charles, after working hard on the farm all week, would sometimes hitch the horse to the buggy and drive to Corinth on a Saturday night to do a little socializing and have a few drinks. Sometimes, he had a few too many, and the horse would tire of waiting for him and return home alone. When this happened, Margie's father would have to drive the horse back to Corinth and pick up his father.

The men-folk of this period had occasional breaks from the rigors of farm life, but the women had few. Other than church, and occasional visits with neighbors and relatives, women were kept busy feeding animals, working in the garden, cooking, washing, and raising children.

But Margie, unlike her mother and grandmothers before her, felt differently about farm life. Even though she had never known anything but the farm, she just didn't like dealing with animals. She would often trade



*Alice Feulner and Margie Jones*

chores with her siblings – she would do anything in the house so that she wouldn't have to put her hands under a warm laying hen and feel around in the straw for fresh eggs or feed and water the pesky calves who liked to butt her with their hard heads. She even failed at riding a pony once when it decided to lie down and roll over with her on its back. But, the final straw came when she sat on a pile of hay to watch her grandfather kill a turkey for their Thanksgiving dinner. Margie fainted and slid down off the pile, and from then on would pass out anytime someone was hurt or even yelled at. It was apparent to everyone that Margie wasn't cut out for life on a farm.

In school, Margie took guitar lessons for a while and developed a taste for country western music which she later passed along to her two daughters, Nancy and Janet. She enjoyed the many visits with relatives. There was grandma, Jessie (Merton) Atwell, who lived next door and always had a surprise for Margie – either something special to eat or a toy to play with.

Margie's other grandparents, Grandpa Davis Henry Humes and Grandma Mary Elizabeth (McElroy) Humes had a farm on Sand Hill Road. Margie's grandfather, Davis, would sometimes lift Margie up off her feet until she could reach in a little trap door in the ceiling that accessed the attic, where she always found a piece of candy hidden. Her grandpa, Davis, died abruptly from a heart attack while trying to run down an errant farm animal when Margie was five-years-old. After that, they visited her grandmother every week.

Margie's cousin, Norma, lived just down the road from her grandparents on the corner of Sand Hill and Coy Roads. Margie often stayed over with Norma and remembers sleeping in a little bedroom upstairs where the ceiling slanted down almost to the floor.

Often, at large family gatherings, there would be a distant relative by marriage – a boy about her age named Earl Jones – but she paid him little attention. She even knew him at school where they were in the same grade.

*continued on page 4*

Then, about the time Margie and Earl were both graduating from high school in June of 1941, America was keeping a close eye on the war in Europe, trying to decide at what level to be involved. On December 7th of that year, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and we had no choice but to enter the conflict. During high school, Margie went to work for Dr. and Mrs. Rockwell in Saratoga Springs using the talents that she had learned at home to look after the couple's children. After high school, she worked as a seamstress sewing garments at Van Raalte's in Saratoga.

Earl and Margie began going to dances at people's homes, and on March 27, 1943, Earl and Margie were married in Saratoga Springs and moved in with Earl's mother, Viola (Jones) and stepfather Joe Doherty behind the store in Porter Corners. They were still living there when their son, Harold, was born and later when Earl was drafted into the army.

In the spring of 1944, Earl was sent to South Carolina for his sixteen weeks of basic training. When he finished his training in July and before shipping out, he was allowed to have visitors. Margie had never been out of Saratoga County and leaving a young son at home, decided to override her fears and make the trip by train to South Carolina with her cousin Norma whose husband had also been drafted in the army. Both of these young women realized that if they did not go, they might never see their husbands again. Margie's primary memory of the trip focused around Union Station in Washington, D.C., where she spent time waiting for a connecting train and was overwhelmed with its size, beauty, and complexity.

After Margie returned home, Earl was shipped to Boston to await his overseas assignment. Margie and another friend again made a train trip to visit Earl once more before he left the country.

Earl arrived in England and spent the remainder of the war fighting his way across France and into Germany, and Margie returned home from Boston pregnant with their second child. Nancy was born August 20, 1945, but Earl did not learn that he had a daughter until the war ended, and he came home in November of that year. His unit was on the move across Europe, and his mail did not catch up to him. He knew Margie was pregnant, but he had no idea whether he had another son or a daughter until he arrived home three months after her birth.

After the war, they moved from Earl's parent's house in Porter Corners a short distance down the road into a house of their own (they still live in this house) where two more children, Phil and Janet would be born. Earl obtained a job at the International Paper Company in Corinth where he had a long and productive career as a plant mechanic. Earl was well suited for this job, and because he was involved in machine maintenance, he had to work weekends when the machines were idle.

Margie took occasional jobs outside the home to help make ends meet, doing part time house cleaning for Phyllis Dake. Because Earl often worked weekends, Margie would be on her own when it came time for her and the children to attend church. Fortunately, the Methodist Church was within walking distance, and she and the children walking single file down the road every Sunday morning became a familiar site in Porter Corners.

Margie had never learned to drive on the farm because her father didn't have a tractor until after she was married and left home. After marrying Earl, she made one attempt to learn but, unfortunately, she did not do well.

Earl had a 1953 Plymouth four door, standard shift, which he wanted her to learn to drive. After giving her a few basic off-road instructions on how to shift from first into second and then into third gear, the two of them, with their four children in the backseat, headed up the highway toward home. When they approached a hill, the car which was severely underpowered, almost immediately began to slow down and started bucking. Earl shouted at Margie to, "Shift it down – shift it down," while Harold, their oldest son, a pre-teen, started giggling in the backseat. The car stalled and Margie, always a gentle woman, quietly made up her mind not to ever try to drive a car again. She got out of the driver's seat and never returned. From then on, when Earl was at work, Margie and the kids walked.

Margie and the four children were active in the Methodist Church where she taught Sunday school. She also was active in 4H and the women's auxiliary of the local fire company. Sometimes she would participate in quilting bees in other women's homes where she would take her youngest child with her, but wherever she and the children went, they walked.

She was a skilled seamstress, making many of the children's cloths and even finding the time to make dresses for her youngest daughter's Barbie dolls. When her second child, Nancy, decided to marry, Margie sewed her wedding dress as well as her sister Janet's dress who was also in the wedding.

Margie and Earl's children (now grown) cannot remember being disciplined, but they do remember being given a lot of instructions before going to visit relatives. They were told what they were allowed to play with and what they were not to touch. Harold, the oldest, remembers being told where he could ride his bike, and sometimes having it grounded for a week when he didn't do what he was told. But, overall, I think this gentle couple taught their children more by example than by punishment.

Both Earl and Margie are in their nineties now and both have been active in our historical society since its inception, so the next time you see Margie sitting there surrounded by her husband and two daughters, be sure to return her smile and say hello.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Become a member of The Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. **Our membership year begins June 1 and ends May 31, dues are paid annually. Send \$10 per household (or \$100 for Lifetime Membership)** along with your name and address to the address shown below. **IF YOU SEND MORE THAN ONE YEARS DUES, THE BALANCE WILL BE CONSIDERED A DONATION.** You also may join at one of our meetings. Send this application form and fee to The Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. Make checks payable to: The Town of Greenfield Historical Society.

**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: The Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833 or email it to: [JJones18215@roadrunner.com](mailto:JJones18215@roadrunner.com).**

## Updating Historic Sites Map in the Town of Greenfield

If you have any information, email Dan Chertok at [BMMSCHERTOK@gmail.com](mailto:BMMSCHERTOK@gmail.com).

You also may call (518-893-2268) or write him at: Dan Chertok, 58 Ormsbee Road, Porter Corners, NY 12859



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