



Historical Society Newsletter

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

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www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com

The Okoniewski family dedicate this newsletter to Barbara Okoniewski, Mom, Wife and Friend.

CALENDAR

**Feb. 17, 2015 – Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at
the Community Center in Greenfield Center.**

*Program: Show and Tell Program, members
bring an item they can briefly talk about –
anything that has a story.*

**March 17, 2015 – Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at
the Community Center in Greenfield Center.**

Program to be announced.

**April 21, 2015 – Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at
the Community Center in Greenfield Center.**

Program to be announced.

**May 19, 2015 – Tuesday, meeting at 7 p.m. at
the Community Center in Greenfield Center.**

*Program: Marty Podskoch will discuss his
book, “Adirondack 102 Club: Your Passport
and Guide to the North Country.”*

WEEZIE’S WORDS

by Louise Okoniewski

I’m sure we all know where Fort William Henry is in Lake George. If we haven’t toured the Fort, we’ve seen part of the Fort overlooking Lake George across from the tour boats, “Minnie Ha-Ha” and “Luc de Sacrement.” If you look closely you can see a cannon poised to protect the Fort in 1757 during the French and Indian War. Joseph Zarzynski gave a wonderful presentation on the 2014 Fort William Henry Cannon Study. In 1957, a group of investors came together to reconstruct the Fort and open it as a tourist attraction in Lake George. The developers needed historic artillery to add to the reconstruction and purchased nine cannons from treasure hunter, Art McKee. Mr. Zarzynski, an underwater archaeologist, set out to determine where the cannons came from. Along with volunteers, Skidmore students who are members of the French and Indian War Society, measured, photographed and researched documents on the cannons.

The cannons were found off the Florida coast by treasure hunters, Jane and Barney Crile, during a vacation in 1950. They teamed up with Art McKee to remove the 200 year old cannons from shallow water in the Florida Straights. The cannons would need to be roped and lifted out of the ocean. They belonged to a British Warship, a frigate named the HMS Looe which sank near a Spanish merchant vessel in the War of Jenkins Ear in 1744. The raising of the cannons had help from Edwin Link, an investor and aviation expert from Binghamton. Mr. Link is known for a flight simulator used for pilots during WWII, and later developed submersibles for the Navy and scientific research. Mr. Zarzynski expressed the fact that this project was the first underwater archeology in American waters.

The investors met Art McKee and purchased the cannons. Any paperwork or documentation from that purchase were lost in a fire at the Fort in 1967. However, the research of the volunteers and knowledge of the Fort William Henry officials of the cannon



*Joe Zarzynski talking about “The Preliminary Results of
the 2014 Fort William Henry Cannon Study.”*



purchase, makes these nine of the most historic cannons in the USA, according to Mr. Zarzynski. The presentation was very informative, and we were shown how a cannon is dated. There were approximately 25 members on hand, (and some welcomed new faces), who enjoyed this informative program. Mr. Zarzynski is also co-founder of Bateaux Below, a group that has preformed extensive research in Lake George. He has authored or co-authored interesting books and articles on Lake George and Lake Champlain. His book, "Lake George Shipwrecks and Sunken History," was donated to the Greenfield Historical Society.

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This year will be busy for the Town of Greenfield Historical Society. Can you believe that we will be hosting the Farmers Market for our 9th year? Last year, we had some wonderful local musicians and new vendors mixed in with those you have come to know and love. This year we hope to be even better.

We will have our 7th Caboose Day and Car Show in August, our 2nd fundraiser at the Haven Tee Room in October, and a display at the Saratoga County Fair for the 4th year.

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

by Ron Feulner

As I sit here on this snowy morning nursing a little winter cold, my thoughts drift back to one of my uncles whom I remember as being somewhat of a character. I had several uncles who could fit that description, but I will concentrate on Uncle John Bills. He was a small man in stature but wiry. Like many of his generation, he didn't have much formal schooling and worked at a number of different jobs during his life time. I guess that if I had to pick one, I would have to call him a wood chopper because that is what he always seemed to turn back to when other jobs ended. That was his fall back profession.

He first made a name for himself in the family when another of my uncles (Aaron) fell in love with John's sister. Because they were cousins, John made such an issue of the relationship that the two lovers broke it off and my uncle, Aaron, never married. However, a short time later, John fell in love with Aaron's sister, and they did marry. This sort of thing sometimes happened in those days because they lived in such a remote area above Lake Desolation where everyone seemed to be a distant relative of everyone else. Even though it was fairly common, the whole episode didn't make John a very popular member of the family.

John and his wife, Barbara, moved from one place to another in the Town of Greenfield, where they were constantly trying to better their situation as they began having children.

John could never seem to get ahead enough to buy an automobile, so he walked everywhere. He wouldn't think twice about walking from Middle Grove to Fox Hill above Lake Desolation where his brothers still lived. Barbara, on the other hand, stayed at home most of the time as most women of that time period did.

At one point, John bought a bicycle with a motor attached. As a child, I remember him running down the road with the bicycle and jumping on the seat, then releasing a clutch lever on the handlebar, which engaged the small gasoline motor, and then seeing him putt-putt off over the horizon. This contraption seemed like a big improvement over the bike that I had, and it made quite an impression on me.

The bike didn't last long, and John was back to walking again. He spent most of his retirement years living in a tiny house on the corner of Sand Hill and North Creek Roads. John was a long-time member of the Middle Grove Volunteer Fire Company. Once the whistle blew to announce a fire somewhere, John would burst out of his little house and run down North Creek Road and try to make it to the fire house in time to get catch a ride on the fire truck on its way to the fire.

We will be opening the Odd Fellows Hall Museum this year, just a few more tweaks and finishing touches on the inside and we will be ready to go. Dake Town School will be getting some repairs that were scheduled for last year, but were cancelled due to inclement weather on the scheduled work days. We will be looking for volunteers to help out with the museum so that we can keep it open one or two days a week during the summer.

And as always, we are looking for pictures of any kind. Veterans pictures are needed for our display. Any logging, early land clearing pictures will be welcomed for our Fair display. We won 3rd place for display last year!

There are many things that are done behind the scenes and volunteers that are unsung. But what keeps us going are you the members and those who may not be members, but have an interest in the history of the Town of Greenfield and support the Farmers Market or our other events. The public is always welcome at all the programs on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at the Community Center in Greenfield.

On one of these occasions, John was running down the road when a local man drove up beside him and yelled, "John, do you want a ride?" John never broke stride as he yelled back, "Not today – I'm in a hurry!"

John's last employment before retirement was working for his brother, Leonard Bills, who was groundskeeper for the private golf course on Church Street in Saratoga. (A branch of the Adirondack Trust Co. now occupies the land where the clubhouse once stood on the corner of West Ave. and Church St.) This was seasonal work and John would be unemployed through the winter months.

Leonard always owned a fairly new vehicle since he had to commute from Fox Hill to Saratoga every day. Once when he was about to trade vehicles, he made John an offer. He told John that if he would get his license to drive, he would give John the 53 Chevy that he was going to trade in for a newer vehicle. John accepted and somehow got his license. (I don't imagine it was easy for a man of retirement age to do this.) Leonard gave John the car and one of John's first trips was down to Zurack's Store (not certain of spelling) in Middle Grove for his weekly groceries. For years this had been a well-established routine for John. Every Friday night (pay day), John would walk down to the store, buy a quart of soda and drink it, buy his weeks groceries, and carry them home.

Now he had a car to drive down, which he parked in the gravel parking lot beside the store and then followed his usual routine, including walking home with the groceries. He later told someone that he couldn't see a big advantage in owning a car when you had to walk twice as far just to go back down and bring the car home.

For a while, my brother lived across the road from John. My brother had a cat, which sometimes wandered over to John's house and did something that irritated John. John being an old time deer hunter threatened to shoot the cat if it came over again. About that time, the cat got struck by an automobile. It had broken bones and appeared to be dying. My brother and his family had no extra money for a vet, so he walked over with the cat in a cardboard box and asked John if he would take it down in the woods and shoot it to put it out of its misery, since John had been threatening to shoot it anyway.

The next day John came over to my brother's house with the cat all bandaged up. He told my brother that he couldn't shoot it, so he had taken it to the vet himself.

I could go on with Uncle John stories, but I think that I have told enough for you to appreciate some of the characters that I grew up with. Someday, one of my nieces or nephews will probably be telling stories about me.

I'm sure that my relatives aren't the only ones that had interesting lives in the Town of Greenfield, and I hope others of you will share some of your stories.

A Dog Named Blondie

by Steve Stanton

It's the mid 1950s and Don and Helen Stanton are several years into their 100-acre farming experiment. With four children, ranging in age from 6 years to a new born infant boy, Michael, the family on Farm to Market Road in North Greenfield is extending its endeavor by now raising chickens, pigs and a cow or two. Although holding a full-time job with International Paper, Don's recent purchase of a tractor has led to greater gardening, especially growing sweet corn. Life was not the path down Easy Street but happiness did prevail. Little did the children know things would get a whole lot happier with the approaching summer.

On a sunny afternoon, a young boy, Donnie Griffin, came walking through the back field to the house followed by a golden yellow dog. Now behind the Stanton house were fields and then a valley filled with a pine and spruce forest. On the other side of the valley could clearly be seen the Griffin family house. There Dave and Florence Griffin had their family, three boys and a girl. The only way to drive to their house was via a dirt road, named appropriately – Griffin Road, since they were the only family residing there. This intersected near the northern end of Locust Grove Road. Dave Griffin would later buy Lola's Tavern which stood next door to the Greenfield Village Inn. As a young boy, my father, Don, would take me into Lola's with him. It was a proud moment for me to sit on a barstool and sip an orange soda served by Al the bartender, but more times than not, I was relegated to a table. Nothing remains of Lola's today which is now a green space and many of its former patrons also gone the way of time.

However, on that sunny day, Donnie Griffin was trying to find a home for this dog. Weighing around 40 pounds and looking very much like a Cocker Spaniel about three years old, the children won the day and we had a new member of the family. I believe Mother Stanton came up with the logical name Blondie for a yellow dog. Blondie became an immediate member of the Stanton household chasing after the children, playing fetch and generally accepting rough-house play from the kids. At supper

time, Blondie's traditional place was right under the kitchen table. All the children would slip Blondie part of their supper as my mother would repeatedly scold us for doing so. I don't remember ever buying dog food for Blondie, it seemed she lived on whatever table scraps the family had that night.

There was however a down- side to Blondie which would always result in a very up-side for the Stanton children. Blondie was never spayed, and each fall she would go into "heat." As kids, we didn't know much of what this entailed, but we did know that every mangy male dog within two miles of the house came around sniffing for Blondie. We would try to keep Blondie sequestered but eventually some mutt would get a minute to get lucky. That being the down-side, the upside was that we would know puppies were forthcoming. Blondie's stomach would grow and her breasts enlarged over the winter. Usually for children, Christmas morning is the most anticipated day of the year, but for us, the day, usually in March, we could not find Blondie meant that she was off finding a spot to give birth. The first year we had trouble locating where she was hiding, but eventually we found her snug under the hay wagon in the hay barn with her newborns. For several years after that, Blondie would go to that same location to have her litter.

Puppy heaven existed for the next eight weeks at the Stanton's. Five to seven balls of fur were the center of attention and countless hours of play. It was the best time of the year and Blondie tolerated her brood and the Stanton children, as a seasoned mother. After a couple of months, it was time to find homes for the pups and as each one departed, it was a sad day for the children.

Like many family dogs, Blondie forged on giving us a playmate, barking at strangers and presenting us puppies. The years added up and Blondie slowed and her body grew lumpy. We knew time was not on her side and one sunny summer day, Blondie, just as we had first met her, departed this life. Along with my brother and sister, I took Blondie back down to the pine forest which she had originally crossed and under a lone full pine tree, we buried Blondie.

Several dogs have passed through the lives of the Stanton children but the memory of your first dog remains vivid and heartwarming. Good dog, Blondie.

HERITAGE HUNTERS MEETINGS

Feb. 21 – Saturday, 1 p.m. – Jim Richmond, genealogy researcher and writer, will show how his genealogical approach to local history has uncovered surprising connections of people and the events of history. He will use his current research project on the Kayderosseras Patent and the 1780 Tory Raid on Middleline Road in Ballston and Milton.

March 21 – Saturday, 1 p.m. – Lisa Potocar, author and teacher, will talk about her research on women involved in the Civil War. Her award winning novel, "*Sweet Glory*," follows the experiences of a 16-year-old girl who dresses as a young man and serves in the Union Army.

April 18 – Saturday, 1 p.m. – Jane Meader Nye will focus on the Quaker families of Saratoga and Washington Counties during the period prior to the Civil War. Her presentation will include a general overview of what brought the Quakers here and the beliefs that guided their lives.

Note: All Heritage Hunters program meetings are held at the Town of Saratoga Town Hall, 12 Spring St. [Route 29], Schuylerville. Meetings begin at 1 p.m. with announcements, followed by the program. Social time with refreshments precedes and follows the meeting. Guests are always welcome!

January refreshment volunteers, Nancy Homiak, Patty Schwartzbeck and Janet Jones, served fruit cocktail cake, pumpkin bread; chocolate chip cookies; snickerdoodles, molasses and peanut butter cookies.

February refreshment volunteers are Katie Finnegan and JoAnn Rowland.

Janet Jones, Refreshment Chairperson

If you'd like to dedicate and/or sponsor a newsletter, send \$50 to *The Town of Greenfield Historical Society*, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833, include your name, address and the wording describing who you would like it dedicated to and/or sponsored by.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE AT OUR WEBSITE

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. **YOU CAN NOW PAY YOUR DUES ONLINE AT OUR WEBSITE!** www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com

CLICK ON: [Start or renew your membership today](#) **AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS.**

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 _____

PLEASE SEND ARTICLES AND/OR PHOTOS FOR OUR FUTURE NEWSLETTERS.

**Mail to: The Town of Greenfield Historical Society,
P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833
or email to: JJones18215@roadrunner.com.**

Updating Historic Sites Map in the Town of Greenfield

If you have any information, email Dan Chertok at 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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