



Historical Society Newsletter

OFFICERS: President, Mary Vetter; Vice President, Joan Rowland;

Secretary, Patty Schwartzbeck; Treasurer, JoAnn Rowland;

TRUSTEES: Dan Chertok, Ron Deutsch, Ron Feulner, Katie Finnegan,
Aida Gordon, Louise Okoniewski and Robert Roeckle

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

Volume 17, Issue 5



501(c)(3)

www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com

CALENDAR

Jan. 17, 2017 – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.

Program: *Andrea Mann* will speak about growing up in Greenfield and the children's book she wrote, **A Letter From Ginger Boy**, which is the true story of a girl and her horse growing up in the Adirondack foothills, circa 1964.

Feb. 21, 2017 – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.

Program: Ben Kemp will do a presentation on Ulysses Grant and the Irish, with an emphasis on the Irish Brigade in the Civil War.

March 21, 2017 – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.

Program: *Lauren Roberts*, our county historian, will do a presentation on **The Homestead – Saratoga County's Tuberculosis Sanitarium**.

April 18, 2017 – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.

Program: *Dave Fiske* will talk about a new book he has written, **Solomon Northup's Kindred: The Kidnapping of Free Citizens Before the Civil War**.

May 16, 2017 – Tuesday, meeting 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield Center.

Program: *Marty Podskoch* will speak about a book he wrote on **Fire Towers**.

Everyone is welcome, admission is free, you don't have to be a member to attend and refreshments are served after all programs.

Our Newest LIFETIME MEMBERS

Kelly and John Woods

Thank you to everyone that brought cookies and goodies to our Christmas Party.

January refreshments volunteers are Patty Schwartzbeck and JoAnn Rowland.

Janet Jones, Refreshment Chairperson

The Gift of Good Cheer and Good Santa Stories

by Mary Vetter

We had a fine turnout for our annual Christmas party. After everyone had a chance to visit and enjoy warm cider, coffee and a wide assortment of tasty homemade goodies, JoAnn Rowland gave everyone the chance to talk about the various Santas they had brought. One of the sweetest memories was attached to a cardboard Santa face that had been given to JoAnn as a very young child sick with pneumonia. Ron Feulner brought a couple of Santas from a collection that was started by one of his grandchildren gifting him a Santa. Jane Potter graced our Christmas tree with a Hawaiian Santa. Dan Chertok had a candy filled Santa.

The surprise of the afternoon was the reading of *The Night Before Christmas* by Pat Finnegan. While getting ready to celebrate Christmas at their house, Katie and Pat came across a copy of the story that had been given to their children by their grandparents. Pat knew immediately that reading the story should be their contribution to the festivities. According to Wikipedia, the story was first published anonymously in 1823 and later it was attributed to Clement Clarke Moore, when he claimed authorship in 1837. Some in the literary community now believe the poem was written by Henry Livingston Jr.

Despite the uncertainty of its authorship, the story has had an impact on shaping our Santa traditions. It told us how he looked and how he delivered the gifts. So it was very fitting that that story should be a part of our Santa-themed Christmas party. We are so glad he thought of it. I think we were all taken back to Christmases past where hearing that story ushered in the season.

Joyce Woodard did a lovely job of decorating the hall for our party. Thank you to Joan and JoAnn Rowland for providing the warm cider and to Louise and Tom for the coffee. Thanks to everyone for providing cookies for the event.

HISTORIAN’S CORNER

by Ron Feulner

Last month I wrote about a place near Porter Corners called Sky Ranch. The article was based on a collection of newspaper articles that I found on a website called Fulton History. This month, I will continue to write about Sky Ranch but will approach it from a more personal level. I have had several interviews, one telephone interview, and one email discussion with area residents who remember Sky Ranch, and, in several instances, the individuals had direct experiences with the place. This article will be based on those shared experiences.

I will begin with Richard Burns, a retired engineer now living in Ohio. Richard called me at my office in town hall several weeks ago requesting information about Sky Ranch. As a teenager living in Ridgewood, NJ, Richard and two other young men met a man in church whose name was Greyson Maule. Maule was also from Ridgewood, and he was the owner/director of a boys camp called Sky Ranch near Porter Corners, NY. Maule, after getting to know these boys, offered them a summer job at the Sky Ranch camp. The year was 1947, and the boys would spend the entire summer living and working at the camp.

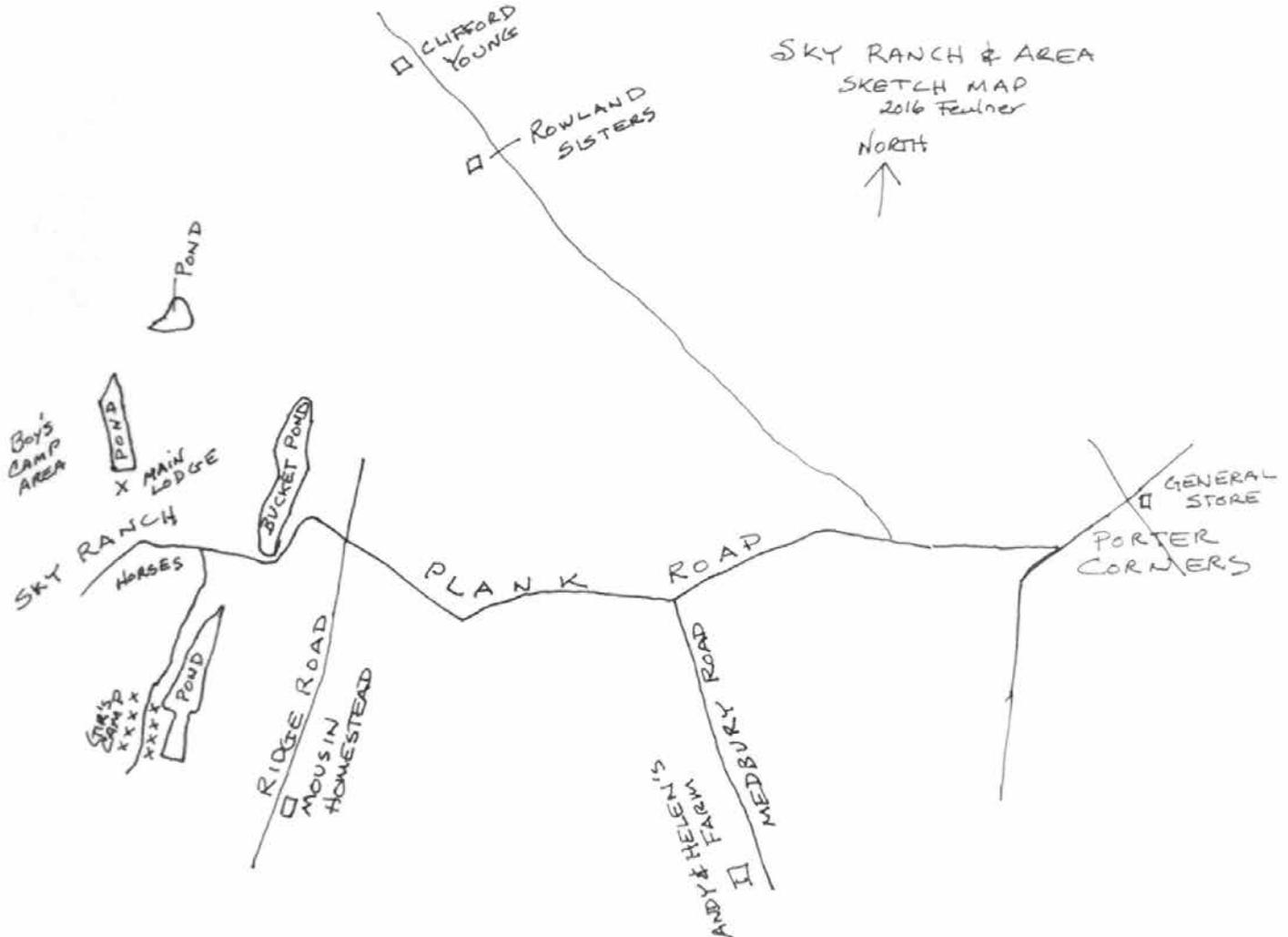
They stayed in a very rustic cabin either North or West of the boy’s camp. (Maule called it North Camp.) Richard now remembers that there were six to eight cabins, and the one they

were in was a long wooden barracks like structure. Richard also remembers brushing his teeth in the nearby pond as there was no running water in the cabin. He remembers riding around in an old ton-and-one-half Ford truck and the road up to North Camp being steep and rocky. He also remembers cutting the grass in a large field using a sickle mower.

One of his fondest memories from that summer was coming down to the general store in Porter Corners (now known as Mom and Pop’s but no longer a general store). Richard said that several older men were always present in the store sitting near the pot-bellied stove, and as soon as the boys came in, the men would joke with them and try to give them a bit of a hard time.

Richard has fond memories of that summer and also remembers going back up at Christmas time that year to do some work. He thinks the lodge later burned down.

Soon after my first article appeared in the newsletter, I received an email from Jeff Gorss. He said that he and his wife had moved to Greenfield in 1970 and remembered a man, Dan Evans, whom they had met at the Presbyterian Church on Broadway in Saratoga Springs. They remembered that Mr. Evans had something to do with Sky Ranch in Porter Corners, perhaps he owned it. Later after doing a little more research, Jeff emailed me again saying that Dan Evans was



a Congregational minister and seemed to always be working on some kind of a deal concerning the ranch. At one time, the Evans family lived on Burgoyne Road. Jeff also remembered that Evan's wife's name was either Leora or Leona and that she had health problems.

As soon as one of my office volunteers, Joan Rowland, became aware that I was working on this project, she told me that she had heard family stories about her uncle, Warren "Toby" Rowland, who had grown up in the same homestead that Joan and her sister, JoAnn, now live in. Toby is now deceased, but when he was a teenager, he worked at the Sky Ranch camps which were located (as the crow flies) a short distance from the Rowland farm, although on a different road. Joan said that one day Toby came home and told his father that he had sold the camp a large number of chickens for a barbecue that they were planning. It turned out to be about half of the Rowland family's flock which meant that they would not have enough left for their own use, but a deal was a deal, and they did not go back on it. However, Toby's father was not happy with him.

Toby met one of the young girl counselors, Peggy McGowen, from New York City, at the camp, and they eventually married. Together they raised five children. Toby and Peggy continued to live in the Greenfield area for a number of years, but in 1950, they relocated to Hackettstown, NJ.

Clifford Young, a neighbor of the Rowland sisters, came in my office and told me that after reading my first article about Sky Ranch, he was anxious to share some of his memories. Clifford remembered as a young boy going with his grandfather, who did some local plumbing work, up to Sky Ranch in the spring of the year to turn water on in the cabins. He said they rode up there in a lumber wagon pulled by a team of horses. It was apparently at the beginning of their camp season because the owners were there but none of the campers or counselors had arrived yet. Clifford also remembered that his mother would hire some of the camp girls to babysit him sometime in the 1940s. He remembered thinking that those girls from the city were something special.

Clifford also remembered that much later there was a Rabbi who lived in one of the houses up there and as he recalls the Rabbi talked about plans to build an "all nations church" serving all denominations on the site, but this plan apparently never came to fruition.

Patty Schwartzbeck, a life-long resident of Greenfield came in my office where I had the privilege of interviewing her on camera. Patty is a civic-minded retired school teacher whose father and mother had a history at Sky Camp.

Patty's father was Andy Mousin. Andy's father and mother were John and Victoria Mousin, immigrants from Poland who settled on a small farm on Ridge Road a short distance from where Sky Ranch was located. John was an experienced miner who knew how to work with dynamite and was employed in the Graphite mine a short distance from both Ridge Road and the Sky Ranch. They had four children, but only three survived. Andy was the second oldest. Andy attended a small one room school near Bucket's Pond through his eighth grade, and then, like most young men of that time, left school to go to work.

His first job was at Sky Ranch which he took at age 14 or 15 and stayed until he left to fight in WWII. At the time that Andy began work, Sky Ranch was a boy's camp only. Later it also became a camp for Campfire Girls a nonsectarian, multi-cultural

organization for girls with roots going back to 1910 in America. (It was not incorporated until 1912. Today the organization is known as simply Camp Fire and encourages both boys and girls to learn and enjoy camping.)

Andy was a handyman at the camp and one of his jobs was to drive an old camp owned truck down to the rail station at Kings in Porter Corners and pick up a load of girls arriving from New York City to begin their camping experience.

As soon as a separate camp for girls was formed, female counsellors, most from New York City, were hired to work with and supervise the younger girls. Andy along with other local boys found this influx of city girls a place to find a date for weekend dances that were held in a number of local establishments including a dance hall on Lake Desolation which was built to extend from shore out over the water. Another was the Wagon Wheel in Porter Corners which during prohibition was reputed to have been a speak-easy. Lola's in Greenfield Center on Route 9N was another favorite spot for Friday and Saturday night dances.

Andy was dating one particular counselor, Ellen Norman, from Manhattan in New York City who was working summers at the camp with her sister Jean. Ellen's father had died when she was five years old, and her mother was struggling to raise her daughters.

Andy and Ellen's romance was, like so many others, interrupted by WWII. Andy was shipped overseas and fought in five major battles including the Battle of the Bulge as a mine sweeper. He never talked about these experiences and his daughter, Patty, didn't know about them until Andy was honored as Veteran of the Month by the Saratoga County Supervisors many years after his death.

Andy finished his tour of duty in Europe and returned home for what he thought would be a brief furlough before being shipped to the Pacific Theatre. During this two week period, he and Ellen were married, and to their surprise, the war ended before he had to return.

Two years after their daughter, Patty, was born, Andy and Ellen moved to a small 150 acre farm on Medbury Road, just a few miles from Sky Ranch where it all started. The farm had belonged to an elderly widow who befriended Andy and taught him how to be a bit more refined than the local young boy he was, or as Patty described it, this lady, whose name was Bertha Brower, "softened Andy up and taught him a few manners." Bertha, after her husband, Herbert, died, took in elderly people and took care of them.

Andy and Ellen lived on this farm the rest of their lives. Ellen was civic minded and by the time Patty was in 8th grade, she entered Adirondack Community College where she graduated with their first class. She then continued her education at Russell Sage and became a school teacher.

Andy died at age 89 and Ellen outlived him to 91. Patty followed in her mother's footsteps and became a teacher. She went to Plattsburgh where she graduated and spent 31½ years teaching first and third graders at Schuylerville Central School.

With Clifford's and Patty's help, I have tried to prepare a sketch map of the camps and facilities at Sky Ranch. The photos are from Patty's mother's collection which Patty has donated to the historian's office.

See Photos on Page 4

If anyone has photos/memories/stories they would like to share about Sky Ranch, please call Ron Feulner at 518-893-0620; mail to Historian, Town Hall, 7 Wilton Road, Greenfield Center, NY 12833 or email him at RFeulner@greenfieldny.org.



1946 – The lake at Sky Ranch in Porter Corners. The building in the background is believed to be the main lodge.



Campfire Girls raising the flag at Sky Ranch, circa 1942.



1943 – Group picture of Campfire Girls, third session. Ellen (Norman) Mousin is in the second row, eighth from the left. Ellen was a Campfire Girl counselor and Patty Schwartzbeck's mother.



Sky Ranch building, circa 1942.



Believed to be Sky Ranch's main lodge, circa 1942. Campfire Girls and counselor at the fire place.

TOGHS CHRISTMAS PARTY • December 11, 2016



Joan and JoAnn Rowland made Mulled Cider.



The Cookies (and other goodies) for the Cookie Exchange.



Santa display from JoAnn and Joan Rowland.



Santas from Ron and Alice Feulner's (left and far right) and Janet Jones' Santa holding tree.



Jane Potter and Lelah Cornell



Louise McCormick and her traditional German cookies – Pfefferneusse.



Alice Feulner



Earl and Margie Jones



JoAnn Rowland



Dan Chertok and Ron Feulner



Joan Rowland, Patty Schwartzbeck, Louise Okoniewski and Heidi Lampert



Katie Finnegan, Lynn Wochinger, Lynn Chertok and Nancy Homiak



Pat Finnegan, reading "The Night Before Christmas" – Tom Merrills and Louis Okoniewski



Joyce Woodard



Mary Vetter



Ron Deusch



Janet Jones

(Photo credits: Joan Rowland and Janet Jones)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL AVAILABLE ONLINE

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 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 _____

**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.
Please send articles and/or photos to: JJones18215@roadrunner.com.**



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