

Historical Society Newsletter

Ron Feulner, Editor
PO Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833

OFFICERS: Coral Crosman, President; Deb Dittner, Vice President; Karl Zeh, Secretary; Alice Feulner, Treasurer; Robert Roeckle, Trustee; Ron Feulner, Trustee; Jud Kilmer, Trustee.

Volume 5, Issue 9

This issue is sponsored by Rosemary and Jim Smith in memory of Anna and James A. Smith Sr.

Calendar

Saturday, May 14, field trip to the Glass Factory. We will meet at the IOOF Hall in Middle Grove at 1 p.m. weather permitting. Bring your favorite insect repellent.

Tuesday, May 17, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our last meeting of the year, which will include election of officers. Meeting followed by program, **Ron Feulner will talk about his new novel, *Adirondack Justice*.** Copies of the 312 page paperback will be available for \$14.95 (with tax \$16.03). Ron will autograph copies for anyone wishing to purchase a copy after his talk.

(Out-of-towners can drop Ron a line at PO Box 174, Greenfield Center, NY 12833, and he will tell you how to get an autographed copy.)

Coral's Calls

In trying to reconstruct how our featured speaker became a “storyteller” in the newspaper’s preview and in vowing myself to write “more clearly and intelligibly” I wanted to lead off with how Todd DeGarmo, as director of Crandall Public Library’s Center for Folklife, History & Cultural Programs, was responsible for mounting an exhibition entitled “Dreaming Cows” at the time of his Greenfield presentation. Of course that is how one begins to digress... There has always been a bit of the *dreaming cow* in this poet/philosopher’s point of view, with all due respect for those cud-chewing creatures of which I have long been fond, even

spoken to aloud in my varied commutes in days of yore past our county’s dwindling herds...

Blame my addle-patedness to breathing too many paint fumes in preparing the latest siding to attire the front of this grand dame of a dwelling I’ve almost gotten brave enough to refer to as *The Pvt. Benedict House* in more optimistic moments, envisioning the brass plaque with the engraving, and “c. 1782.” For any to dispute. For a relatively recent account of life at Page’s Corners in the Town of Greenfield, I suggest you consult the Albany *Times-Union* archives for Nov. 10, 1991 in which life from this intersection is briefly glimpsed—not straight fact, mind you, but hardly fancy. DeGarmo entertained us liberally with photos of tribal clad native Americans gathering from all points of the Western Hemisphere for the grand opening of the Smithsonian’s National Indian Museum in Washington DC last September. Albeit a warm evening in Greenfield Center, it was doubtless still better to view this spectacle via lge-screen photo, condensed as it was to the colorful headdresses and beaded attire, feather festooning, remarkable faces so highlighted rather than to actually be part of that Mall crowd (as in government, not shopping center) with our *raconteur’s* anecdotes including, yes, the lines could get a little long for food despite a super parade and 20,000 native peoples from North & South America, points between. And just as I thought I spotted some familiar figures from outside the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in la Ciudad de Mexico, I was assured they hailed from the Northwest or Alaska—hey, that sounds fine; I’m for that diversity occasional migration brings to folk of all skin tones with woven straw accents.

And yes, I confess, it is all *my* fault that our annual speaker (already booked for next year!) became a *storyteller* in the newspaper's write-up, doubtless a literal translation (somewhere) of "raconteur". It simply does *not* pay to be remotely bilingual... Our refreshment chairs, Janet Jones and Nancy Homiak, distinguished themselves by bringing their own best (but no candles for next month's featured author, Ron Feulner, with a handsome new novel to his credit, very modestly celebrating his birthday April 19). If he didn't have so many kin & almost-kin in the vicinity, he might have escaped any acclaim whatsoever. Ron is of course also this newsletter's superbly gentle editor and a past president who did much to nurture membership (my chief objective being not to *scare* folk away...) He has also volunteered to lead our May 14th trek to the Glass Factory (not too far off the beaten path, we are assured), meeting at 1 p.m. at the IOOF Hall, Middle Grove, if this missive happens to fall into your hands prior to that Sat.

"Dreaming Cows," for the record, one of a goodly sum of exhibits, activities and other ventures that highlight the Glens Falls library's Folk Center, consisted of photos, paintings and drawings by Betty LaDuke whose mission to Uganda/Rwanda extended well beyond humanitarian outreach in sharing the spirit and promise of all these brilliant souls encountered in the process of nurturing the hungry. DeGarmo's next big project is unveiling a long-stored collection of native baskets brought back from the Pacific Northwest by longtime city resident, Nell K. (Pruyn) Cunningham (1876-1962). According to DeGarmo, this Glens Falls native was for many years deeply involved in library activities and support.

Late Breaking News

Our President, Coral Crossman, just received a letter from Senator Farley's office announcing that our historical society has been approved for a five-thousand dollar grant to begin work on the carriage sheds behind the IOOF Hall. Coral heard about the possibility of a grant from another society's president and applied. After the initial application was submitted, she had to provide additional information. As a result of her tireless efforts, we now have been promised the money to at least save the building from further deterioration. Thanks Coral. (The Editor)

Davis Bixby's Retirement Project

By Ron Feulner

For the past thirteen years, as a retirement project, Davis has been video-photographing gravestones at area cemeteries. To date he has three townships in Fulton County and fourteen towns in Saratoga County completed. He then transfers the information on each stone into a computer database, which is available to family history researchers (he currently has more than 100,000 names in the database.

Because of the higher cost of gas and the fact that he must travel further to cemeteries, Davis is experiencing a financial crisis (having already used more than five-thousand dollars from his personal savings). To help him meet these costs and keep the project going a little longer, our historical society passed a motion to donate five-hundred dollars to his project.

To see some of Dave's work, go to this web site:
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~nysarato/sarcocem.htm>

South Greenfield School, District #12

Memories from (Liz) Elizabeth Rogner Older

On a recent surprise visit to Ron and Alice Feulner's home, I mentioned that I had not seen anything written in the Greenfield Historical Society newsletters about South Greenfield School, District #12, and that I had attended that school for eight years. As you can tell, I was invited to jot down some of my memories of attending that school.

This school building is located at the corner of Splinterville/Middle Grove Road and South Greenfield Road. I don't know when the school first opened, but it was closed in 1946, reopened in September 1948, and then closed for the last time in June 1956. My year of kindergarten was spent at School #2 in Saratoga Springs when my family lived on a rented farm on Lester Park Road (it may be named something else now). My parents purchased the old Campbell farm (Helen Stetkar's parent's farm), and we were in Dist. #12 when I was ready to begin first grade in September 1948. A neighbor, Gertrude Pryor, was the school Trustee, and Clayton Brown was the School District Superintendent. I always found it interesting that this school reopened when I began first grade and didn't close again until I finished eighth grade.

Like many rural schools at that time, South Greenfield District #12 was heated by a big coal furnace inside one front corner of the building. There were coal bins on each side of the front entrance and you can still see the two little doors where coal was shoveled in at delivery time. Either the teacher or the biggest boy would have the job of bringing a shuttle of coal inside to the furnace. In the cold winter months the teacher would usually get there very early in the morning to fire up the furnace, and I recall a few of the older boys who lived close being asked to take the responsibility of unlocking the school and getting the fire started in the furnace early so it would be warm in the room by the time the rest of us arrived. Also, the oldest students, two at a time, would be asked to take turns carrying the galvanized pail to either across the street to Charlie and Phyllis Dake's home (they had renovated the old parsonage and began raising their family there), or to Tom and Helen Stetkar's house and get water for the day's use at the school. It was poured into a large covered water crock with a push-button spigot. That was our water for the day to drink and we had a basin to wash our hands. Our bathroom was the two-seater outhouse that is still there near the back of the building. There was a fence fastened to the middle of outhouse and extending part way down the middle of the path as boys had to use one side and girls had to use the other side. I guess the fence was just a reminder. Yes, we used the one-finger, two-finger permission request to be excused.

We also learned something about patriotism at this school. Students took turns daily raising the American flag slowly without letting it touch the ground, and having it fall quickly at the end of the day, again without touching the ground. We began each morning, standing with hands over our hearts, looking at the American flag in front of the room and saying The Pledge of Allegiance.

This school educated students from kindergarten through eighth grade at the same time. There were little desks on one side of the room and as you grew and were promoted to the higher grades, the desks became larger. The most students we ever had there at one time were 17 and the most I ever had in my grade were four. One girl that was a friend of mine, until she moved, was Audrey Marcellus and I don't think I've seen her since grade school. The other classmate who started with me, went through all eight years with me and remained a friend through high school, was Daniel Stetkar. He was a real pal. I

envied his artistic ability. He provided me with the type of competition every student needs to keep motivated. One game we sometimes played when our work was done was flipping the pages in a dictionary with our eyes closed, pointing to a word, and then reading the word we found. I don't know why we found that to be fun.

My first grade teacher was Catherine Corcoran. I still remember thinking that she was very special and so very nice. I still remember her making little drawings and other art work. In fact, I think I was one of her pets because she was always nice to me and, for years, whenever I would play school, I imagined I was Ms. Corcoran. I think she liked me so much that she even let me help clap the erasers for the blackboard.

Ethel Parker was my teacher from second through seventh grade. She was a little older and sterner, but worked hard to teach us. We had an old pump organ in the other front corner of the room and Ms. Parker taught us many patriotic songs and spirituals that I would not have learned otherwise. Each year we put on at least one play and every child in that school took part in some way. Inez Scott often let us borrow some of her old hats for our plays. We did, at times, have a visiting art teacher and were able in that way to have some exposure to other types of art. Ms. Parker had a great interest in geography and taught us good map-reading skills with the old world globe in front of the room and the pull-down maps. I've relied on these skills all through my life.

I remember my teacher for eighth grade being a very sweet and able lady named Pauline Baldwin. She tried very hard to give us the final preparation for the New York State Regents Exam. I remember the Social Studies portion being extremely difficult. Although I passed all portions well, it was a jolt for me to get below 80% on the social studies portion as I always had good grades in class. This was an indication to me that one teacher for so many grades could not fully cover all necessary information in preparation for the regents exams.

We did not have the luxury of choosing many books from a library as the "city" kids did. Our library consisted of a large two-door metal cabinet that contained all the textbooks for the kids for all nine grades, and whatever room left may have had some storybooks for us to read. Very few new books were added over the years. Of course, we did learn and read a great deal from the Prose and

Poetry books. We memorized many of the poems over the years in those books.

We had 15-20 minutes of recess twice a day and I'm sure it must have been a time of rest for the teachers while we were running around outside to rid ourselves of energy. We had a regular swing some years and a tire swing other years always from a branch of a large tree beside the school. We also had three teeter-totters where we learned the law of physics by learning how to make the boards balance depending on which students and how many sat on either end. They lasted the whole eight years I attended. We also played our version of baseball across the street in Tom Stetkar's field. Imbedded rocks were our bases rather unevenly spaced. We didn't usually have a regular bat, more like a long thin board or stick and usually a hard rubber ball, or occasionally a tennis ball. We didn't need gloves and we didn't have any either. In the winter we'd often bring our sleds and run and jump on them and glide down the ice glazed slant in the schoolyard. With the icy glaze we didn't need much of a slope and certainly had fun.

I was very ready to move on and didn't miss that Dist. #12 School at all. I loved going to high school and having so many more opportunities that weren't available in the country school. I have to be honest. I always missed all those friends I had made in kindergarten at School #2 and that very modern facility with heat and running water and inside toilets.

The Dist. #12 school building is still standing and looks to be in excellent shape. Someone has renovated it for a home, but has kept the outside looking very much as the country school I attended.



Photo taken August 2004. See outhouse (right back).

To join our society and receive our newsletter, send \$6 (individual) or \$10 (family) along with your name and address to the address below.

To sponsor a newsletter, send \$50 along with name, address, and phone. Include information concerning whom you would like it dedicated to.

***Town of Greenfield Historical Society
PO Box 502
Greenfield Center, NY 12833***

