

Historical Society Newsletter

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OFFICERS: Coral Crosman, President; Deb Dittner, Vice President; Patty Schwartzbeck, Secretary; Alice Feulner, Treasurer; Robert Roeckle, Trustee; Ron Feulner, Trustee; JoAnn Rowland, Trustee.

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Calendar

Tuesday, March 21, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield will be our business meeting followed by **Joe Bruchac** about local history, particularly as it relates to his Abenaki roots and his latest book, *At The End of Ridge Road*.

Tuesday, April 18, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield will be our business meeting followed by Rob Jones, Skidmore Professor who locates old foundations of buildings using old maps and other resources.

Tuesday, May 23 (that's the fourth Tuesday instead of the third), 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield will be our business meeting followed by Field Horne, author of *Saratoga Reader*.

Last month I wrote an article about Earl Jones and neglected to indicate my sources. The newspaper article was provided by Earl's daughter, Janet Jones. The article that I wrote was based on an interview with Earl. (R. Feulner, editor)

Coral's Calls

Just in case we Greenfielders were getting a little too complacent, some having barely recovered from the 28-48+ hour power outage that arrived of a Friday morning (2/17) without the accompanying snow and ice that upstate NYers associate with such horrors – instead it was *merely* rain, hail, thunder, lightning, 60-70 mph winds (that really did not want to stop being at least intense for a couple days despite what Bob Kovachik promised)... Being the

descendant of one too many sea captains, such imminent storms leave me a little frayed like feeling desperately I had to get to the ATM at the train station no matter what & at the same time talking to the nice lady in the Greenfield assessor's office who was giving me parcel numbers (3 becoming 2) and an address for the Daketown School on *Old Daketown Road* and then I had to run to the land line to call her back and say 'thank you.' I had also called about securing May 23rd, the 4th Tuesday of the month for Field Horne's appearance because he is away 3rd weeks of most months... *Just in case* we Greenfielders thought we deserved a fine dry evening like the barren, frozen ground I tend not to admire, a little squall blew in to lighten things up before our Feb. 21 meeting...

Faithful Historical Society member **Vince Walsh** of Kawing Crow Awareness Center arrived a bit latish with his stuffed brood, slides, projector, screen (what's wrong with the wall, Vince?) knowing yours truly can dilate during a biz meeting with no sense of urgency... I took up Alice and Ron's time even tho' I didn't bring the treasurer's report and got all the way down to Vince before someone suggested we adjourn this *historic* meeting because, with reference to our 22-year-old designation, "*Town of*" Greenfield Historical Society: it has been found to conflict with an esoteric bit of NYS reg that suggests no org or non-profit entity might imply it is part of a governmental structure, etc., though we don't want to cut off the *good* ties that we owe to legitimate town support and cross-fertilization over the years... Fortunately, the extended Jones family was *not* present for the vote which passed unanimously, having already been recommended by the board at their 11/29/05

meeting. But I hope the miscellaneous Joneses do not form their own historical society because what would we do without these able refreshment coordinators, not to mention a host of other unique skills and talents, plus they are all *so nice*...

I also forgot the extra newsletters which were somewhat buried with the excavation of stuff from my living room to the room behind it to make space for current rehab project of the Pvt. Benedict House which our speaker who grew up in my son's class recalled as a 'stone's throw' from where he lived on Hyspot, providing you could walk on water (my perception) or on whatever intervened... Vince kept us all totally captivated with the lore of an area supremely appreciated by the 'world traveler' he is who returned to see with new eyes, ears, nose—and vocabulary, that essential link to make us all 'smarter' about what to call (and find in) our surroundings... We happened to have some fresh faces present including Florida relatives of the McCormicks who could compare the natural lore of their area near Orlando to what was described in Greenfield. And the refreshments—ably arranged by JoAnn and Joan Rowland, Nancy Homiak and Rob Roeckle—were again the supreme reward of an evening where this usual early bird (who the night before dozed through the giant slalom but woke for the paired ice dancing finales) wasn't even blinking the community center lights until after 10...

Joe Bruchac—does he need any more introduction? will join us **March 21** (7 p.m. at the Community Center) for enlightenment on his family and local history including Abenaki roots and material that informed *At the End of Ridge Road*, a recent title published. His list of awards, accolades, published poetry, fiction, articles and other inspirations makes some of the rest of us feel like we've been in idle since time began. Google up his website if you're curious but do try to join us for the performance—books available for signing. Also, if you have any influence, repress future meteorological events to a minimum around meeting dates.

For future reference, **Rob Jones** of Skidmore College, joining us April 18, will be talking about an advanced process (he will explain) for locating foundations and other portions of historic sites in the Greenfield region and has also suggested a GHS field visit at some point, date to be arranged. *More anon*...

Serepta Dake

By Ron Feulner

This month's feature is a letter written by a young woman to her lover in 1866. Before the letter, I will give you some background about whom Serepta was, where she lived, and to whom she was writing the letter.

Serepta Dake was the daughter of Ben C. Dake and his third wife, Mary Jane Carman Dake. (It is interesting that Serepta was given the same name as Ben C. Dake's first wife, Serepta Wood, who died less than two months after her marriage to Ben C. Dake). Serepta (the daughter) lived in the original Dake home, with her father and mother, which was located up a lane just north of the Daketown School (the school that our historical society now owns). Serepta's letter was written in this home, which later burned (in the late 1880's after Serepta had married and moved – her brother, Byron Dake owned it at the time of the fire). We are fortunate to have an eyewitness account of the fire that Ruth Donogh thinks was written by Edith Dake Ellsworth. It reads as follows:

"I always think of it as 'the fire,' for any I'd ever seen close-by were brush fires. How well I remember, being awakened in the middle of the night by Mrs. Carp, who in answer to Father's 'What's wanted,' shouted 'Bibe Dake's building are all afire.'

"I was one of the family that watched those blazing buildings from our side stoop. The formation the flames as they rolled toward the sky, caused me to remark, 'It looks like a ship.'

"Father was greatly perturbed, he was afraid Uncle Byron, whose family was away, might have had an accident and perished. But when he got to the fire, a neighbor told him he'd talked with Byron, the afternoon before, as he was on his way going North to stay over-night.'

"The day after the fire, we went from school with our teacher, Mrs. Bishop (Hank's wife) and saw the piles of smouldering ashes. All that was left standing, was the brick fireplace with its tall chimney and the brick smoke-house.'

"Later we saw Mrs. Carp, who told us that nights she couldn't sleep she'd get up and look all around to see if everything was all right outdoors. Sometimes she saw a fire way-off, but this was the first one she'd ever seen close by. After arousing her household,

she rushed up to our house in her night-gown and bare feet. She didn't notice any stones on the way up, but how they did hurt her feet going back.'

"Her son, Fred, remembers this fire was the first summer - he thinks it was June - after his Father, Albert Carp bought, and they moved to the Sam Carman place in 1888. We never knew how the fire started."



Original Dake home that burned on Daketown Road near Daketown School.

Serepta's letter, which follows this introduction, was written to the man whom she would later marry, Charles Edwin Smith. It is clear that Serepta was well educated (she had attended the Jonesville Academy in Troy and was a schoolteacher before she married). It is also apparent that she had much affection for the young man she was writing to. It is unclear why he was away although it sounds like he may have been attending school. (R. Feulner, editor)

Serepta's Letter

Home, Dec. 30th, 1866

My dear Charley,

It is a fine clear day and I am in fine spirits; probably owing in part to the dear good letter I received from you last night and the assurances of affectionate remembrance it contained. I mailed a letter to you only yesterday but I can not resist the present impulse to write and give expression to the love and joy felt in my heart.

The roads are drifted too badly for us to go to church today so I have employed the morning in

writing to my good friend, Charley Mosher - and in reading the papers: and now I am going to give the afternoon to holding intercourse with a dearer and nearer friend than any other.

Your last letter did me a great deal of good. The three cents and your time could not be better invested if we are to judge by the amount of happiness bestowed. But Charley, dear, much as I prize your letters, I prize your presence more. What did you mean by saying you would see me sooner than I expected - are you coming home before long? I would like to see you but if you are receiving the worth of the money and time spent where you are I do not want you to come home any sooner on my account. We will consider the future advantage and comfort more than the present enjoyment. I am afraid it does not agree with you to apply yourself closely to study and if it is injuring your health dearest do not stay another week. You know how our taste in respect to some culture - to reading and study are the same and we can give our spare time to such pursuits - spending our evening in a manner both pleasant and improving. We can gradually get the works of the best authors and by their aid enrich our minds, cultivate our hearts and adorn our home. What a place of good cheer our home shall be - filled with contentment and love. Oh, Dearest - your little girl will try to make you happy and she is sure you will be. But I must put up my pen and leave you and the pleasant anticipations I was forming, to go below and help get supper now.

Monday night -----

I guess you will think I was a long time in eating my supper! The truth is I was not feeling very well last night and instead of resuming my letter after tea I went directly to bed. I only changed the form of my exercise though and instead of writing to you I thought about you. You occupied my mind and filled my heart just the same. Today, I have spent the time in school and came home rather tired, as usual but my spirits have been refreshed by perusal of another letter from you which Warren got from the Office today. It was written the 26th and only reached me tonight. The deep snows prevented the trains from getting into Ballston by Friday and Saturday (until night). When you come home I want to make up for all these delays and irregularities of the mail and see you seven times a week and get a loving kiss each time. I must bid you good night now. My Dearest Charley, [you] must excuse brevity this time as I am writing up stairs and the

cold forbids my sitting up longer. What it lacks in length I will add in love,

*Ever Yours
Sarepta*

P.S. Tuesday Morning, Jan. 1st,

You said in your letter which I received last night that you thought you would be home in a month. Did you mean to stay or to make a visit? You can't finish in that time, can you? Before closing permit me to wish you a "Happy New Year" not in form merely, but with all sincerity. Be a good boy and accept an abundance of love from your own little girl.

S.

Serepta's letter and much of the background material were sent to us by one of our very active

members, Ruth Donogh, who lives in the state of Washington. Ruth lives too far away to attend our meetings, but this has not prevented her from remaining active in our organization in other ways. Ruth is a descendant of Sarepta's and has done much genealogical research of Serepta's family. Ruth also states that our long time member and past president of our historical society, Bob Dake, is a direct descendant of Serepta's younger brother, Starks Dake (see April, 2002 newsletter, page 2, for more about Starks).

The Warren that Serepta makes reference to is Warren Wood Dake, Serepta's older half-brother.

Ruth sent three letters written by Serepta, and we will include the other two with more background in future issues of our newsletter.

Ruth has written two books about her family's history and is putting the finishing touches on the third.

*Become a member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. Fill out this form and enclose \$6.00 for individual membership or \$10.00 for household. **If you send more it will be considered a donation.** Other types of memberships are also available (lifetime, corporate, etc.) just call and ask (893-0620). Our membership year begins in September 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: Greenfield Historical Society.

Type of membership: Individual _____ Household _____ (please indicate how many persons ten-years-old or older are in the household). _____

Name (please print) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Amount enclosed _____ (\$6 individual or \$10 household) Date _____

Areas of interest to you _____

Note: 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 free copy of our newsletter along with information on how they can join.

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

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