



## Historical Society Newsletter

**OFFICERS:** President, Joan E Rowland; Vice President, Robert Roeckle;  
Secretary, Patti Veitch; Treasurer, JoAnn Rowland

**TRUSTEES:** Ron Deutsch, Cheryl Jenks, Louise Okoniewski,  
Patty Schwartzbeck, Dan Smith, Mary Vetter, and Karl Zeh

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



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

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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025** – Meeting at 7 p.m. at the Greenfield Community Center.

*Program: America 250: The Ballston Connection, by Rick Reynolds.*

**Tuesday, April 15, 2025** – Meeting at 7 p.m. at the Greenfield Community Center.

*Program: To be Determined*

**Tuesday, May 20, 2025** – Meeting at 7 p.m. at the Greenfield Community Center.

*Program: John J. McEneny (Jack and his wife Jan) Lake Desolation (Glass Factory)*

**Saturday, June 14, 2025** – *Daketown #8 One Room School House Open House. 10-2*

**Saturday, July 12, 2025** – *Car Show and Live Music in the Park – 10 – 3 Middle Grove Park*

**Saturday, August 9, 2025** – *Caboose Day 10-3 – at Kings Station Rt 9N*

*Everyone is welcome, admission is free, and you don't have to be a member to attend.*

**Our Membership year is June 1 thru May 31. Dues is paid annually. (\$10 per year or \$100 for Lifetime)**

#### Lifetime Members

Vince Walsh and family would like to “Renew their Life Membership.” Vince requests that a challenge be issued to other lifer’s to do the same. Renew your Life Membership Today.

#### Lifetime Membership Renewal:

Toni LHommedieu

*March Refreshments volunteers are Joan Rowland & Patti Veitch*

*Thank you JoAnn Rowland for the Lemon Cookies and Cake infused chocolate chip Ice Cream at our February Meeting.*

**Meetings Cancellations: If schools are closed due to the weather, our meeting will be canceled. A message also will be posted on our website and on our Facebook page**

### **Joan’s Jabbering – March 2025**

**By Joan E. Rowland, President**

How is your driveway? Layers and layers of ice/snow/ice? Ours is. We had it salted a few weeks ago but then we got the storm of Snow/Ice/Snow/Ice. I have used sand/salt at the section where we need to turn and go into the garages. This is how you know how deep this mess is in our driveway. A dirt driveway, once you get down the 4 inches.

Our February meeting was exciting and enjoyable. Ben Kemp came in wearing his Civil War uniform and portrayed his cousin Oscar Kemp. Oscar was born in Lake Pleasant, NY but grew up in Mount Pleasant (near Lake Desolation). His parents died there, and he was brought up by his grandparents. He was a glass blower and got paid by-the-bottles he made. He signed up to be a soldier for 3 years. He talked about his training and the war he experienced. Life after the war and how hard it was to get back into civilian life. GAR was created, which

Joan's Jabbering (continued)

was a Veteran's Help Group prior to our VFW and American Legion. Ben always gives us a wonderful program.

Hope to see you at the March meeting. Another great program is planned. (See insert with description, page 4.)

Shortly, the board will be having their Spring Meeting. We are always looking for people to join us on the board. Only a couple meetings a year plus helping with the fundraising events. We do need a program chair, refreshment chair, fundraising chair. Please consider joining us in a more active role. You give as much time as you wish. But as they say, "many hands make light work". Drop me a note at [jrowland25@verizon.net](mailto:jrowland25@verizon.net) if you are interested or know of someone who would love to be asked.

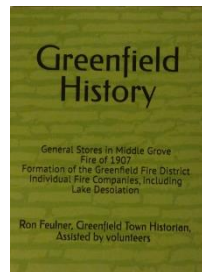


Ben Kemp as Oscar Kemp.



The bullet that hit Oscar but his bed roll was wrapped around him and a book inside which saved him.

### Greenfield History by the late Ron Feulner



is available for purchase for \$20 (cash) at our Monthly Meeting

At Community Center  
25 Wilton Road  
Greenfield Center NY

Or

At the Town Hall during regular business hours

Or

by mail by sending a check to our PO Box with an additional \$6 for postage

### Winter Activities - Tobogganing

By Duane Cornell, Town Historian

This month we will pause the story of the Alpine Meadows ski Center as I am still gathering information on the last years of its operation. I would like to thank all of those who have offered their assistance and insights into the ski center's history. I have yet to contact some of you, but I will shortly.

Keeping with the theme of winter activities, we will explore an activity that was popular in the 1800s. There were two different toboggan slides built in the Woodlawn Park area. The town map from the 1880s looked a bit different than it does today. The southeast corner did not have the jigsaw puzzle-looking piece missing from where Skidmore College is, it was a 90-degree corner. Although that little piece belongs to the city of Saratoga Springs today it was part of the Town of Greenfield.

Most of the history of Woodlawn Park and Glen Mitchell area mentions Saratoga Springs as the location but according to Laura Wiess from the Saratoga Room at the Saratoga Springs public library those areas were all or mostly in the Town of Greenfield. Woodlawn Park was a palatial 1300 acre estate built by Judge Henry Hilton in 1876 that featured a large stone mansion known as "The Mansion" and a smaller mansion known as "The Wayside". There were several cottages and lodges for guests and staff, two stables and a sheep barn as well

## Winter Activities - Tobogganing (continued)

as 25 miles of carriage roads and an oval track that hosted horse and bicycle races. The toboggan slide was built later for the enjoyment of the Saratoga elite.

The sport of tobogganing was brought to the United States from Canada in the early 1880s. Members of the Saratoga Snowshoe Club, who were the affluent and influential people of the area, would venture north to Montreal to attend the annual winter carnivals that were held there. It was at the slopes of Mount Royal that they experienced the thrill of the toboggan slides and decided they would build one for themselves closer to home. The first slide was built around 1883 at Woodlawn Park and was 50 feet tall with two chutes separated by a staircase. One chute was for sliding down and the other was used for your toboggan to slide on as you pulled it back to the top as you climbed the stairs. Lanterns were hung on stations along the length of the slides to illuminate them for nighttime tobogganing. The chutes were pitched at a 23-degree angle and covered with ice blocks and dressed with water creating a very slick and smooth surface and it is said that you could reach a speed of 50 feet per second, which is approximately 34 MPH. There was a building where you could warm yourself by a stove and get refreshments. As the popularity of the sport grew the Woodlawn Park Toboggan Club was formed in 1884 and was believed to be the first of its kind in the United States. The club had reached a membership of 226 members by the end of the 1885 season and was comprised of 140 men and 80 ladies from Saratoga Springs, Troy, Ballston, Schenectady and as far away as Massachusetts and New York City. The club changed its name to the Saratoga Toboggan Club



Toboggan Run - 1885

and had annual dues of \$100, (that is \$3000 in today's money), and only accepted applications from wealthy socialites. A new slide was built in 1886 about a half mile from the original one in the 47 acre Glen Mitchell driving park and gun club property that was either part of or next to the Woodlawn estate. The new slide was 80 feet tall, 2650 feet in length and had three chutes totaling 20 foot wide. It was said you could see the mountains of Vermont from the top of the platform. As with the previous slide, it was illuminated with lanterns for nighttime enjoyment but unlike its predecessor you did not have to tow your sled up any stairs, you rode to the top in a carriage. There was a pedestrian bridge over the three chutes about halfway down so you could safely cross over to the clubhouse or watch your friend's wiz by under your feet. The clubhouse was run by William Worden, who was the proprietor of the posh Worden House in Saratoga, and was a welcome amenity where you could get warm and have some refreshments.

As with any social event in Saratoga, high fashion was also to be found at the toboggan slides. Garments of fine merino and fleece were worn over flannel underwear and capped off with a satin hood, knit hat or long stocking cap with a tassel or pompom. Many wore special insulated boots with capped toes to protect them from the hard ice and keep their feet warm. The toboggans also were dressed to the nines with padded cushions and blankets and often sported a distinctive paint scheme. It was not unusual for the toboggan to match or compliment the fashion of its owner.



The Saratoga Toboggan Club did not last much past the turn of the century. There were other toboggan slides built in the area for the less affluent population and they lasted into the 1930s when alpine skiing took over the winter sport scene.



**Saratoga Toboggan Club 1884-85**

**Program for March 18, 2025 meeting:**

**America 250: The Ballston Connection, by Rick Reynolds:**

America's fight for independence about 250 years ago involved many different people from many walks of life throughout the 13 colonies. And it was the actions of people at the local level who helped make a difference in who won or lost in this struggle. Saratoga County was no exception. Yes, the Battles of Saratoga were universally important but so were the "little" skirmishes and disputes that occurred in all the local small towns. Ballston played an important role in the fight for freedom and produced a number of heroes who went above and beyond to gain us our independence. Ever hear of James Gordon? Granny Leake? George Scott? They all helped the cause of our freedom from the Mother Country. Come see the documentary film, "America 250: The Ballston Connection" to discover all about the heroes and villains of the time.

This program will be brought to you by Rick Reynolds who has been the Ballston Town Historian since 2004. He is a retired social studies teacher at O'Rourke Middle School in Burnt Hills and is the author of the book "From Wilderness to Community: The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District." In 2003, he was named the National American History Teacher of the Year by the DAR and, in 2007, he was named as a Registered Public Historian in New York State.



*Left to Right-- Withlacoochee Chapter of the Florida Sons of the American Revolution SAR President Stephen Hohman, Dick and Joan Rowland.*

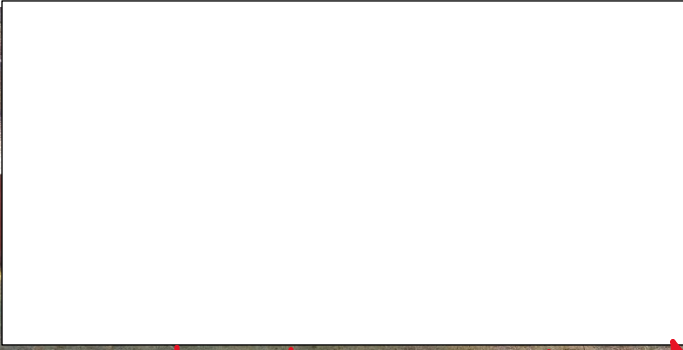
(Photo on left)

Dick Rowland was inducted into the Withlacoochee Chapter of Florida's Sons of the American Revolution (SAR). Dick is a direct descendant of Issiah Whitman, a soldier who served in the New Hampshire Militia during the American Revolutionary war and fought at Ft. Ticonderoga. (Dick's mother Dorothy Potter Rowland was Issiah descendant.)

# 1830's Carriage Barn –

## Goal Chart

Established fund to raise \$72,000



0 \$10,000 \$20,000 \$30,000 \$40,000 \$50,000 \$60,000 \$70,000 GOAL

**Currently at \$26,145**

As you know, we are in need of some maintenance for the Carriage Barn

The barn will be lifted (all 6 bays as one), put in a new foundation, and cement floors in each section. Currently some sections have dirt floors, some crushed stones and one is rough cement.

This will allow us to open the doors without lifting them to open them. We can lock from the outside instead of each door being locked inside so you have to make your way over each sections wall to get to the door.

When completed, we will be able to house the 5 horse drawn wagons and the sleigh that have been donated. We will be able to display and have the carriage barns history be viewed.

What can you do to help? Donations are always accepted. Please send a check to our PO Box 502 Greenfield Center NY 12833 or deliver it to our next business meeting.

Drop us a note with contractor suggestions. We would like three contractors so we can review their plan for us and cost involved.

Keep in touch with us to help clean out the building for renovations. Will need Volunteer Manual labor/manpower to empty this building this spring.

**Membership Application/Renewal Available online or by US Mail**

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 \$10 for your household, 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, PO 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](http://www.GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.com) Click on **“Store,” “Membership”** then click either **“Annual Membership – Household”** or **“Lifetime Membership.”** Email [toghistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:toghistsoc@gmail.com) for more information

**Please Print** – Please indicate how many persons 10-years-old or older are in your household). \_\_\_ New \_\_\_ Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in volunteering.

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of interest to you \_\_\_\_\_

**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: [jrowland25@verizon.net](mailto:jrowland25@verizon.net)**



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