



Greenwich, NY

Where Chester A. Arthur walked & Susan B. Anthony talked.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2012

Writer's Block & the Historian (A Tale of Woe)

Currently, I have writer's block. More specifically, I have no idea what to write about this week. It is more like blogger's block. Is there such a thing? I think the only "cure" for writer's block is writing, so instead of succumbing to it, I have decided to write anyway. Bear with me...

On the way in to work tonight, I was thinking about writing about Cossayuna Lake, but the words weren't flowing. I'll think about that one, do some more research & write about the "Lake of the Three Pines" another time.

When I walked in the door of my office I thought I had another topic. The "above the fold" article in the *Greenwich Journal & Salem Press* is about why the Chester A. Arthur dollar coin is not circulating. But instead of writing about it I just "shared" the post on the Town of Greenwich Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/TownOfGreenwichNy>. (Which if you haven't "liked" it yet you should because it is very interesting.)



Signs that welcome people to our town on all major roads

Next, I looked through various files, binders & boxes trying to find something that sparked & crackled with inspiration. Nothing. Here I sit with nothing. I can't even come up with a good picture.

Try me next week. I'll have a good one! (I hope.)

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TOWN OF GREENWICH
HISTORIAN'S BLOG

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Writer's Block & the Historian (A Tale of Woe)

The Gale's of Galesville

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- [Carter's Pond](#)
- [Fiddler's Elbow](#)
- [Greater Greenwich Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Greenwich Central School](#)
- [Greenwich Free Library](#)
- [Greenwich Hardware Antiques](#)

Posted by Tisha Dolton at 5:16 PM No comments:

Labels: Chester Alan Arthur, Cossayuna, Facebook, Greenwich, Greenwich Journal, historian

Location: Greenwich, NY 12834, USA

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2012

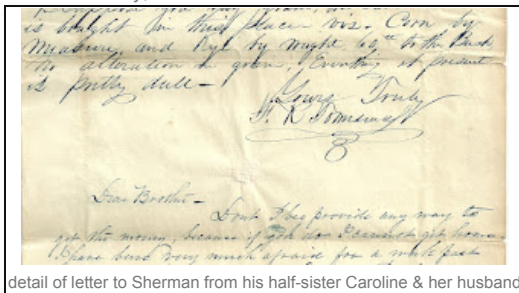
The Gale's of Galesville

My personal & professional experience with other public historians has been one of generosity. If one of us comes across a document or artifact that does not fit with our collections, we do a little research & find out where it might belong, then we send a letter of inquiry to see if anyone wants the item. If it is wanted, we ship it out for free with the idea we will pay it forward to the next public historian.

The Town of Skaneateles Historian, Elizabeth Battle & I had just such an exchange in 2009-10. Elizabeth had in her office a letter & account book that did not belong in Skaneateles. The letter is dated March 9, 1839 & is addressed to "Mr A.B Sherman P.M. Galesville Washington Co N.Y." It is from F.R. & C.M. Townsend of Troy. The account book belonged to AB Sherman regarding the late John Gale's estate.

When I received the letter I thought, "Galesville? Of course if belongs here." With just a bit of searching I was able to find a file on the Gale's in the family name files here in my office. What I did not expect to find were photographs. The images are photos of paintings of the Gale family including Amander Bryant Sherman & Caroline Matilda Gale. The photos came from a Gale ancestor in California who was in contact with former Town of Greenwich Historian, Jane Haverly from 1975-78.

Caroline Matilda b. September 17, 1818, was a daughter of John Gale, founder of Galesville (now Middle Falls). Caroline married Francis R. Townsend of Troy, NY. Caroline's sister Mary Elizabeth married Dr. John E. Newcomb of Whitehall, NY. The mother of the two girls was Remember Mary Brown Sherman. A.B. Sherman was her son from a previous marriage (Brown being her maiden name). So, A.B. was John Gale's step-son &, more than likely, executor to his estate.



detail of letter to Sherman from his half-sister Caroline & her husband

Oh, you may be wondering what the P.M. stood for after AB Sherman's name. He was the first post master of Galesville/ Middle Falls.



AB Sherman's account book for John Gale's estate

So, I must thank Elizabeth Battle for taking the extra time to find out where two random items in her office belonged. Thanks to her generosity, I now have a better idea of the Gale-Sherman family here in Greenwich.

- Antiques
- Greenwich on Adirondack.net
- Old Saratoga Happenings
- Over Time Antiques & More
- Town of Greenwich
- Union Village LTD
- Washington County Historical Society

Posted by Tisha Dolton at 5:19 PM No comments:

Labels: AB Sherman, Battle, Brown, Gale, Galesville, Greenwich, Haverly, historian, John Gale, Middle Falls, post office, Remember Mary Gale, Sherman, Skaneateles, Townsend

THURSDAY, AUGUST 30, 2012

Strike!

On a recent trip to Massachusetts, I visited the Lowell National Historical Park in the city of Lowell <http://www.nps.gov/lowe/index.htm>. I love old mills, as does my mother & daughter. One particular mill is the Boot Cotton Mill where they made cotton cloth on large, mechanized looms. In the "Mill Girls" exhibition nearby there is some talk about the strikes that occurred in Lowell. This got me thinking about the Dunbarton here in Greenwich & their one strike...

In October of 1937 a union was formed at the Dunbarton in Greenwich. (The Paterson & Kearney, NJ & Anniston, AL plants were already unionized by this time.) A 10% wage increase was agreed upon in May 1938, but was revoked in February 1939 after the US & Great Britain signed a reciprocal trade agreement. This made imported linen thread cheaper, thus hurting the market for US produced thread & twine. Both NJ mills strike & shut production down.



After an unenthusiastic strike meeting the day before, only about 20 workers picketed the mill on February 13, 1939. Estimates have Greenwich strikers at 12. Nine days later only about 10 workers were striking. A February 25th meeting has workers severing ties with the Textile Workers Organization & forming an independent union. By mid-

March all workers were back at the Greenwich mill. Workers at both NJ mills were still out on strike.

The NJ strike ended on April 19, 1939. Workers gained some ground with the wage reduction changed from 10% to 7%, essentially giving all workers a 3% raise from pre-May 1938 wages. Greenwich's independent union was recognized by the National Labor Relations Board (NRLB). 40-hour work week, time & a half on Saturday, one week vacation, & no pay reductions for one year were also approved. The Union hosted a party at the White Swan Hotel on October 14, 1939. Dinner was brought to the boiler room for Sam McCune, the only employee left on duty that night!

For more information:

*Ruddock, W. *Linen Threads and Broom Twines: An Irish and American Album and Directory of the People of the Dunbarton Mill Greenwich, New York 1879-1952*. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1997.

^ Reciprocal Trade Agreement: <http://www.washingtontraderreport.com/RTAAcanada.htm>

Posted by Tisha Dolton at 6:34 PM No comments:

Labels: 1937, 1938, 1939, AL, Bootts Mill, Dunbarton Mill, Greenwich, linen, Lowell, NJ, Odd Fellows, raise, Sam McCune, strike, Textile Workers Organization, union, White Swan Hotel

THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 2012

Fascination with commemorative plates

I'm not sure why I am fascinated with commemorative plates. You know the ones I mean. Your grandmother may have had a few displayed on the wall in one of those metal, spring things... Or maybe they were in the back of the china closet. My grandmother had a few that I have inherited. Some I may not keep because I don't really have a connection to them, but others will be bound for display.

The Village of Greenwich Sesquicentennial committee decided to have a commemorative plate made for the 1959 event. It was produced by Kettlesprings

Kilns in Alliance, OH. Kettlesprings Kilns began in 1950 to create a plate for Alliance's bicentennial, & grew from there. They still produce commemorative items like plates, mugs, tiles & bells (<http://home.earthlink.net/~kettlesprings/products.html>).



Greenwich Sesquicentennial plate 1959

Our plate is green, of course, with the sesquicentennial logo in the center. Around the outside are various buildings in the town. Notice the tiny witches between each building.

- White Swan Hotel (1851)
- Upper Dam (1860)
- Stevens & Thompson Mill
- Mowry-Blandy House
- Dorr Park & Van Ness House
- Greenwich Central School (1927)
- temporary home of Susan B. Anthony*

You might think that I like these plates simply because of my interest in local history, but I think it's more than that. There is the sentimentality associated with my grandmother, but there is also the design element. I love toile[^], a French fabric, usually linen or canvas with pastoral scenes printed on using one color. My favorite is red, but more often found in blue or black. These plates remind me of toile.



Typical toile (in my favorite- red)

Well, I guess I do know why these plates fascinate me after all!

* I'm assuming this is the house the Anthony's moved to after the Panic of 1837, when they lost their home in Battenville.

[^] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toile> or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/toile>

Posted by Tisha Dolton at 6:46 PM 1 comment:

Labels: 1959, Blandy, commemorative plate, dam, Dorr Park, Greenwich, Greenwich High School, Kettlesprings Kilns, mill, Mowry, Sesquicentennial, Susan B. Anthony, toile, Van Ness, White Swan Hotel

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 2012

Lansing Prouty, Age 4

I just read an interesting article in the 2004 edition of the Journal of the Washington County Historical Society. If you have never heard of it visit their booth at the Washington County Fair next week & pick up a copy or two, or order online (<http://www.wchs-ny.org/booksncollect.html>). There are many fascinating local stories held within the pages, like the one I am going to tell you about.

In 1848, Lansing N. Prouty was a four year old boy living with his brother, George, mother, Sarah (nee Angell), & father, Franklin in Galesville (now Middle Falls), NY. That summer he came down with diarrhea, fever & cramps. The only doctor in town diagnosed dysentery. By August 26th, Lansing was dead, possibly the victim on

E. coli or amebiasis, microorganisms believed to be the common causes of dysentery.

You may be asking why I am mentioning Lansing. Well, history for me is about anything and everything. Yes, I admire people like Susan B. Anthony, or George Washington Carver because of what they accomplished. But, I study history because of all the untold stories; the people & events that have been forgotten. That is what this article represents to me, a reminder of why I am here writing this blog, why I became an historian. Lansing's story was uncovered because of a road. By the discovery of his gravestone during routine, preliminary research before & during road construction, this little boy's story was unearthed & told so that he may live on.



* <https://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&q=1054+Route+29,+Greenwich,+NY&ie=UTF-8&hq=&hnear=0x89de290d9d22da43:0xf404501248b542bc,1054+New+York+29,+Greenwich,+NY+12834&gl=us&ei=sntUPDTFYy20AHQ6cGICQ&ved=0CBcQ8gEwAA>

Posted by Tisha Dolton at 4:53 PM No comments:

Labels: 1848, dysentery, Galesville, grave, Greenwich, historian, Lansing Prouty, Middle Falls, Prouty, Washington County, Washington County Historical Society

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 2012

Don't Put Words in the Mouth of an Historical Figure

The other day on Facebook, I came across a news story posted by WRGB, our local CBS station, & I nearly posted a comment. Why did I stop myself you may ask? I didn't post the comment because I stopped & thought about what I was in the process of writing. I re-evaluated what I was writing & realized that it was reactionary &, quite possibly, wrong.

No, this is not going to be an entry about how people need to think before they write something, whether on Facebook, or otherwise (though they should). It is more specifically about how we should not assume we know a person because we learned a few factoids about their life. If you are confused, I will start from the beginning...

The headline I saw on Tuesday (8/7/12) was "Union College snags a top spot as one of the best party schools in the country! Newsweek and The Daily Beast's annual 'Top Party Colleges' list ranks Union College at #5..." My pithy reply was going to be about how alum like 21st President of the USA Chester Arthur must be so proud (sarcasm, blah, blah, blah...). Then I thought about what I have read about Arthur & his family over the years, & stopped. Just because I am an historian, doesn't know I what a person from the past would think about something that happens in the present. I might be able to speculate, but I am not a presidential scholar. I'm not Thomas C. Reeves* or Zachary Karabell[^]. Even they might not even to presume Arthur's opinion on whether Union College is deserving of the #5 Party School in the country, & they have written biographies on Arthur.

Here is what I do know, of the Top 25 Party School ranked by Newsweek, Union is one of only six schools with an undergrad population below 5,000. They are the ONLY college on this list without a single arrest for drugs or alcohol made on campus. On campus disciplinary action (DA) for drugs and alcohol was pretty high however. DA for drugs in 2011 was 129 out of 2,260 students (5.7%), which was more in league with the University of Colorado at Boulder (1,404 out of 26,530 or 5.3%). DA for alcohol was at 25.9% with 586 incidents. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/galleries/2012/08/05/college-rankings-2012-top-party-schools-photos.html#slide1>

Arthur's opinion? Who knows. As a lawyer, he was sworn to uphold the law & underage purchase of alcohol is against the law. I will say that he & his sister Mary McElroy refused to bend to Frances Willard and the Temperance Movement by continuing to serve alcohol in the White House. Arthur was fond of a drink, though I

have not read anything to suggest he was an alcoholic. Mary was a skilled hostess, & her parties during the season were well-received. I can only speculate, based on the time period, how Arthur would have felt about drug use...

For more information on Chester A. Arthur

* Reeves, T. Gentleman Boss: The Life of Chester Alan Arthur. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf. 1975.

^ Karabell, Z. Chester Alan Arthur. New York, NY: Times Books. 2004.

Posted by [Tisha Dolton](#) at 11:19 AM No comments:

Labels: [Chester Alan Arthur](#), [college](#), [drug use](#), [Facebook](#), [historian](#), [lawyer](#), [Mary Arthur McElroy](#), [Newsweek](#), [president](#), [Temperance Movement](#), [underage drinking](#), [Union College](#), [White House](#), [WRGB](#)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 2012

I Need Some Finding Aids

By now, I'm sure, that my titles do not shock you. Most of you are scratching your heads wonder what "finding aids" are & why I need them. I will tell you.

According to the Society of American Archivist (SAA), a finding aid is a "tool that facilitates discovery of information within a collection of records" that "includes a wide range of formats, including card indexes, calendars, guides, inventories, shelf and container lists, and registers" or a "description of records that gives the repository physical and intellectual control over the materials and that assists users to gain access to and understand the materials" "that places the materials in context by consolidating information about the collection, such as acquisition and processing; provenance, including administrative history or biographical note; scope of the collection, including size, subjects, media; organization and arrangement; and an inventory of the series and the folders."*

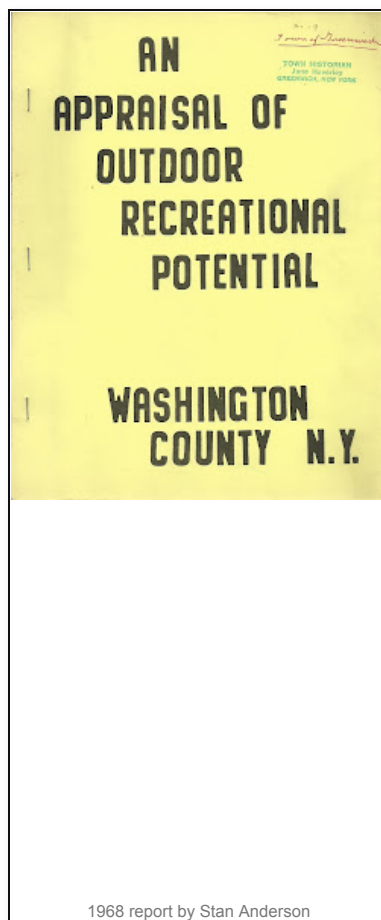
Now you know why I need some.

No? I'll explain. My office is a cluttered concoction of various materials from 5 or 6 past historians. There is little rhyme or reason. The filing system was terrible, & only slightly better now. My predecessor, Cathy Sharp Barber, did create an inventory with accession numbers and everything.

(Accessioning has to do with categorizing museum collections, & since there are objects, not just papers, I understand why she chose that route. I probably would have done that as well back in 2003, since my experience was in museums and historic sites.) But it is not enough.

I'll give you an example. I found this very interesting looking report prepared by Stan Anderson of the Soil Conservation Service, USDA in 1968. It is entitled An Appraisal of Outdoor Recreational Potential: Washington County, NY. The report is rather interesting. The opening pages discuss the history of the county & they read well. The rest of the report covers why Washington County would make an ideal place for various recreational enterprises.

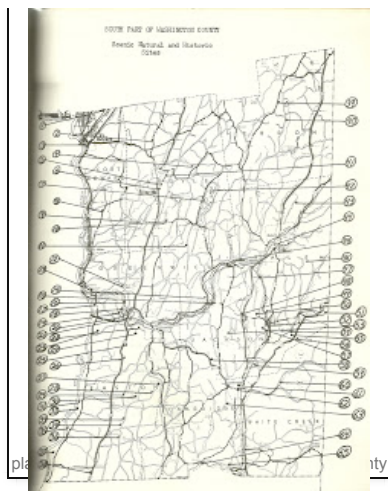
I had no idea that this report was looming on my shelves. & that means I would not be able to access it for my own



1968 report by Stan Anderson

research or to assist a visitor. Now, I am thinking like an archivist or librarian, not necessarily a historian. However, I feel it is important for me, as a public historian with a collection, to function as an archivist. Therefore... I need finding aids to help me find stuff.

Which means, I think I've found my next project! Wish me luck!



*http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DEFINITIONKEY=66

Posted by [Tisha Dolton](#) at 5:20 PM No comments:

Labels: [1968](#), [archivist](#), [Cathy Sharp Barber](#), [finding aids](#), [historian](#), [outdoor recreation](#), [public historian](#), [report](#), [SAA](#), [Stan Anderson](#), [USDA](#), [Washington County](#)

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