



The Hope Farm / Greer School
Alumni Association
Newsletter



March 2014

Greetings!

This is the sixth installment of the alumni newsletter published by Tony Vaz and Peggy Mathewson Sparks, former residents of Greer School. We hope you are beginning to thaw out from the very cold winter that we have experienced. Hopefully, you did not suffer any hardships during it.

The Hope Farm Quarterly – April 1, 1929

A Brief History of the Gate House

Original Part a Well Known Landmark

The Gate House was built by the father of John Hall, a man who inherited his father's fortune in later years and died at the age of seventy-five.

The father had thirteen children, of whom John was the eldest, there being only three sons. When the property passed from the ownership of the Hall family, the ten girls worked at cooking, sewing, dressmaking and other occupations to earn a livelihood.

The root cellar, which is in the rear of the house is said to have been used as an arsenal for the storage of guns and powder in the early days. At a later date, after being remodeled, it was used for a time as a post office.

The original Hall farm was sold and later became known as Kelly farm. From a reliable source it is said that a "marrying bee" took place there at which no less than thirty couples were married. The Houghtalings, who now reside in Verbank, were married there about thirty years ago, and from them we learn that one of the sons of Mr. Hall, who is now a very old man, once knew the complete history of the Gate House but unfortunately he has lost his mind and this story has been collected from many people.

Hope Farm purchased the property on January 3, 1909 because the old school house, which also housed thirty boys and which stood where the Chapel now stands, burned to the ground and room was urgently needed, for the boys had to be crowded into the Main House.

Since then three wings have been added to the old house. The addition towards the Verbank road includes the locker room in the basement, the dining room on the first floor and a large dormitory above. On the opposite side is another wing containing a large living room and library and above this are sleeping quarters. The last addition to be built was a large kitchen over which is a dormitory. This historical and interesting building is the home of thirty boys between the ages of 12 and 16.

---Fred duBourg, 8th grade.

They Have Gone Ahead

We learned in late December, that Robert Cooper died in March 2013. He has gone to be with his Greer School sweetheart, Audrey Elizabeth Prewitt Cooper (Class of 51) who passed away in 1998.

Reunion News

As previously reported in the December newsletter, there will be an alumni association reunion on Saturday, September 27, 2014. That's just six short months away. If you are planning to attend, you are urged to start considering sending your reservation forms and payment to Mitzi and Doug Berry, 1103 Chestnut Ridge Road, Dover Plains, New York 12522. The cutoff date is August 21, 2014. If you need a copy of the registration form, contact Tony Vaz by e-mail (tonyvaz@greerschool.org) or by mailing to the return address on your newsletter hard copy.

The list of alumni already registered to attend the reunion is as follows:

Georgia King (2), Jack Rolston (2), Don Berger, John and Sandy Hudnor, Robert Kennedy (2), Harry McCandless (2), Pam Pequeno, Pat LoCasto, and Maureen Miller.

Financials

Mitzi reports that contributions are still coming in to support the newsletter and/or reunion activities (also known as "dues"). These contributions should continue to be sent to Mitzi (see her address above) and not to the newsletter staff. This arrangement may change after the reunion later this year. Details will be forthcoming in a later edition of the newsletter.

New contributors are as follows:

Diane L. Johnson	\$ 30.00
William Beer	\$ 30.00
Jim Elliman	\$ 79.00
Henry & Edna Dicker	\$ 30.00
Maureen Miller	\$ 25.00
John Rogers	\$ 25.00
Jack Rolston	\$ 50.50

Some of this money was sent along with the registration forms for the reunion.

Greer's House Parents - An Appreciation

During my growing up days at Greer, I took my house parents for granted. In looking back, I now have strong feelings of tremendous appreciation, and can see and feel their very positive contributions on our lives much more clearly and realistically.

The challenges faced by our house parents were formidable. First of all, Greer's limited finances did not allow these houseparent's to earn much of a salary. Secondly, they worked six days a week and were always on call during those days/nights. Most important, however, was the mentorship and guidance they were asked to give to from 15 to 30 students; they were, in fact, surrogate parents to all of us who came from single family homes, and this fact, in and of itself, made their job very challenging. By and large, the houseparent's I had during my 12 years at Greer did a good job, and many gave me excellent structure and guidance which was needed.

In the alumni newsletters, I would like to pay tribute to my houseparents. In this issue, I'll remember **Gertrude Sutton**, houseparent at Plum and **Nellie "Mom" Morton**, houseparent at Marcy

When Miss Sutton first came to Greer, she taught 5th grade for seven years before becoming the houseparent at Plum. My memories of being at Plum are limited other than recalling Plum cottage being for boys and girls. During the course of my two years at Plum, Greer had a fund-raising pamphlet produced. I was one of the students featured in this publication

and I remember one of those pictures being of a scene of Miss Sutton tucking



me into bed at our bedtime. Thus, I am guessing she was a very caring lady. This memory, combined with her long years of service given to Greer speak well of her patience and love for the youngest students at Greer.

Because I was older when I was moved to Marcy, I have more memories of Mom Morton. When she first came to Greer in 1925, she was actually the cook at Plum, but then moved on to Marcy in the early 1940's and was the houseparent at Marcy until her retirement in 1959. Mom gave structured guidance to her Marcy boys, but she was also fair. She took a "hands-on" to all under her charge. In addition



to being our houseparent, she was the Cub Scout and Marcy recreation leader which meant when you came home from school in the afternoon, your

charge was to be out-of-doors for the afternoon. Such memories of playing Cowboys and Indians, sledding on the hill of Marcy path or collecting "sap" during maple syrup season are still vivid memories of my time at Marcy.

One other special memory was all of us being invited to come to Mom's living room each week to listen to such radio programs as "Gunsmoke" and "The Lone Ranger." In those years before the advent of television at Greer, one could use one's imagination when listening to those programs on the radio.

Thank you, Miss Sutton and Mom Morton for your selfless and kind service given to all of us.

John D. Hudnor - Class of 63

Folks We Have Heard From

Occasionally, we get e-mail messages routed through the Greerschool.Org mail server, which are then forwarded to my personal e-address, where I respond...most of the time. My apologies to those of you who didn't get responses. Here's a few I would like to pass on.

Christine Brown-Eckart 3 /17/2014 8:49 AM

Hi,
I was Tina Burroughs in the summer of 1964 when I, and my colleague Jean Hamburg, worked at Greer helping to develop the summertime recreation program. We loved the kids that were there for us with whom to play and have fun. I remember we were allowed to buy several canoes for the little lake and give canoeing lessons so anyone who wanted could go out in the canoe and know how to paddle. I was with the teen girls. Jean was with the littles at Plum Cottage. We had good times and lots of talks. Summer camp was a good change up of activity. The camp pool water was cold and everyone braved it. Hide and Seek at camp was fun as there were so many places to hide. Yes, we did have boundaries! Mrs. Mac sat on her front porch watching over the joys of camping, sometimes belting out some instructions. She could be tough and loving at the same time. I was offered the opportunity to work there after college graduation. It was so tempting. I was engaged to be married then and my husband already had a job offer in Pittsburgh. Otherwise, I would have returned. The kids and staff were awesome. Anyone out there who was there at the same time? I'd love to know how you are doing.

Ed. note: If you would like to connect with Tina/Christine, send a message to Tony Vaz and it will be forwarded to her.

Mike Skinner 2/27/2014 7:01 PM

Wow! I just thought of Greer, seeing a old Sunday news magazine photo of me, Michael Skinner. I was at Plum with Ms. Sutton. Mom worked in kit

Mike Skinner 2/27/2014 7:39 PM

Hi Tony. I and my brother were @ Greer. George Skinner @ Marcy n me @ Plum w/Ms. Sutton. About '57-'60.I was the IMPISH boy in NY Sun mag. Mike

Sabine Sienkiewich 1/19/2014 9:51 PM

Hello, my name is Sabine. I lived at Greer School for several years from 1973-1976, then I was moved to Susquehanna Valley Home in Binghamton, NY. I remember living in Treadwell Cottage...but also Rap and going to church in the chapel and going to the infirmary...the ravine...So many things. I went to Millbrook High for a few years. Seeing these great pictures brought back so many memories. How do I find out what happened to all the people who lived there when I did? I recognized a pic of Malcolm Giles amongst your photos. I live on Long Island now and was trying to find information about Greer School to share with my daughter...I was saddened to hear it had closed. Do you have any info on how I can find out about kids that lived there in the 70's like me? Susquehanna Valley Home also closed and I feel like a big chunk of my past has vanished. I was so happy to find your site and enjoyed seeing the pictures...although they are from an older time I still recognized a lot. Thank you for any information.

Charlene Campbell 1/14/2014 4:41 PM

I was in Greer school about 1945. Was there for one school year and summer, but have fond memories of being there.

Charlene Campbell Nee: Swartz

Peggy's Idea for a Future Article

Does anyone know of Greer staff or alumni who have been published? Perhaps they published a book of poems, a short story, a book of photographs, or a novel? There are two Greer alumni, & one staff member plus myself who have been published. In the 4 years spent researching, writing & editing, Hope Farm/Greer's story grew on me. I made contact with people all over the United States & often I could be found huddled over the keyboard at 3:00 in the morning. And to embellish my book, were the stories you gave me of your memories; that was the icing on the cake!

So come forward & share with us & perhaps it will encourage others to put on paper a story which is waiting to be told.

Please tell me the title & email me at pegspark59@ [REDACTED] or write to:

Peggy Sparks
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Voices In The Air

An Excerpt from **Hope Farm/Greer School -
Memories of Childhood** by
Peggy Mathewson Sparks

Now, close your eyes and let the voices in the air talk. Hear the noise of children running down the roads, the little ones heading to Plum after along school day. Hear the boys of Daisy dashing home. Do you hear their soprano voices changing? Listen to the young boys at Marcy trying to round up Francis, a raccoon or a skunk. Listen to the old trucks as the Gate House and Rap boys stir up the dust, feeling the power of the engine. Listen. You can hear older girls talking as they walk the Crest and Ledge roads off to work or back from school. Listen as the bell rings for church on Sunday and the Chapel of the Child fills with students and staff, and not a pair of blue jeans in sight. Can you hear the singing round the campfires of Camp Barbey, and the rush to jump into the pool on a hot

sweaty day? Do you hear the students on the road headed to the Res to join with others while Coach Fischer writes down their names and assigns a buddy? Listen in the auditorium to the roar of the pep rallies, the Friday night B-grade movies, the many plays and operettas, and the current events of the day.

Listen. You will hear them. They are everywhere. They left their childhood and became new leaders of the world. They own their own businesses. They became mothers and fathers, lawyers, bankers, salesmen, draftsmen, factory foremen, laboratory assistants, farmers, teachers, writers, musicians and songwriters, nurses, equestrian professionals, woodworkers, carpenters, housewives, and computer technicians. They became professors, photographers, insurance adjusters, engineers, social workers, clerks, pharmacists, language interpreters, and secretaries. They became models for Neiman Marcus. They taught in China and England. They had careers in the military. There are thousands of children who succeeded because one man and three women saw beyond their comfortable lives, encouraged others to do likewise, and made a better world for them. Once again, thank you.



There's no place like home !

- Dorothy Gale, 1939