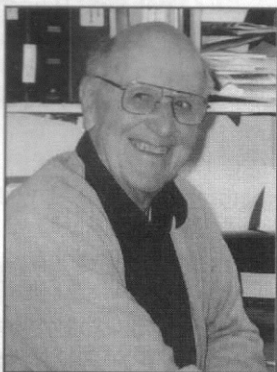


GREENSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

Saving a Town's Reflections of Itself



Henry Merrill

photo by E. Harvey

When the next history of Greensboro is written, Henry Merrill should go down as the town's own Matthew Brady who rescued from oblivion and compiled the most complete historic photo record of a locale and its people.

And like Brady, the famed 19th Century historic photographer, Henry early on worked with glass plates to preserve precious images of ordinary people engaged in everyday activities. In this case, the historic glass plates came from Hattie Willey (mother of Robert Willey of the Willey's store,) who made them with a 4x5 still camera in the early 1900s. Merrill rigged up a copying system with film camera and flash to copy the plates.

Today Henry has moved from glass plates and even film on to digital camera and computer to build up a personal library of more than 8,000 images of individuals and 1500 historical photos. Many of the photos make up the three major albums he has put together. He has donated several thousand pictures to the Historical Society.

"I have one I call 'The Old Folks of Greensboro.'" Henry says that he made it for the Greensboro Historical Society. "A lot of portraits in that one."

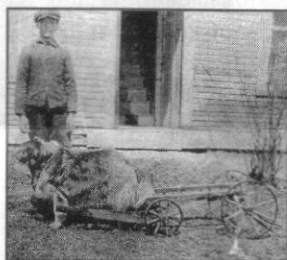
A second album of Greensboro historic pictures records the variety of activities of the town's people, like farming, logging, sugaring and other occupations. The third album features *Mountain View Country Club*. The bucolic scenes of old-time golfers in their period

costumes go back to 1897 (Henry didn't take those) and record forever what one of the nation's oldest golf clubs looked like at its birth.

Merrill's interest in the photo image began when he was 15 (he's now 86) and he sold a photograph to a Portsmouth, NH newspaper. He worked with conventional film most of his life, developing it in his own darkroom. But he took an interest in computers about 20 years ago and eventually sold off all of his chemical-related photographic equipment and converted to the digital camera.

"Digital photography is so quick and easy.

I can take a picture and go home and in 30 minutes have a full proof sheet of my pictures," Henry says. He has become the photo-source for many activities in



Lee Lumsden poses with his dog and cart.

HMerrill collection

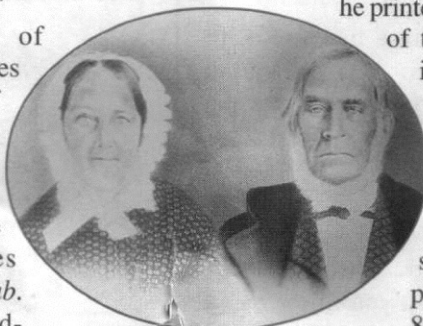
Greensboro, including Library photo exhibits, the Town Meeting

bulletin, the Bicentennial town exhibit and the Historical Society. (He has generously presented GHS with many these valuable photos.)

His historic photos date back to 1876, a time Henry believes when cameras became more readily available to the average citizen. He has spent considerable time restoring some of the old pictures, improving them when they are faded or scratched. For a time

he printed out a series of post cards of the historic photographs,

including some of Mountain View Country Club, and sold them locally. "I tried selling some photos on E-Bay," Henry said, "but it was such a nuisance." Those pictures were some of the 8,000 photos of the



Aaron & Susan Hill ca 1850

HMerrill collection

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Town's Reflections

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American West that he has taken over the years.

Henry's association with Greensboro began in 1950 when he came here to take over the Igleheart family dairy farm with his brother-in-law, Kim Igleheart. Henry, wife Mary, and their children had been living in Peru where he was chief meteorologist for an American airline. He had trained at Dartmouth and MIT.

"Mary had been coming here summers for years - her mother since 1904 - and we thought it a good place to raise a family," he said. "We've enjoyed living in Vermont. We would never consider returning to the city. When we moved here, Greensboro was basically a farming town, only a few outsiders. But, of course, there were many more in the summer."

Henry and Kim had a herd of 50 cows and also did sugaring, the latter an operation they kept going for more than 30 years. "We had some 5000 trees and in some years did 2,000 gallons of syrup," Henry said. Middlebury College was one of their big customers, buying large amounts of their "Broinla" (Brother-in-Law) syrup to give as gifts to their alumni.

The two brothers-in-law later got into the home construction business and built a number of the cottages around Caspian Lake. Henry subsequently worked for years for the Northeast Vermont Development Association.

The latest project to occupy Henry's time is updating a family genealogical chart that traces the Merrill family history from its 15th century roots in England. "We have very good family records," he says, "so I'm doing it for the kids"

Mary and Henry have been married 64 years, and have three children: Doug lives in North Carolina; Bob is an oil geologist in Texas, and Mary (Metcalf) lives right here in Greensboro. Two grandsons are in the army:

Chase Metcalf in Iraq and Keyes Metcalf in Special Forces. There are four grandchildren too.

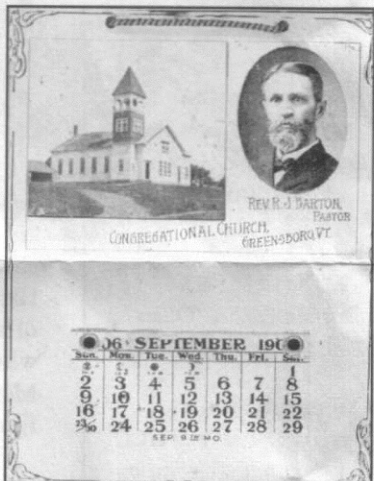
Henry Merrill is surely a local natural resource. "I probably have most of the historic pictures available in the area," he states frankly. And that is indeed fortunate for Greensboro.

- Ed Donlon with Ercel Harvey



Early Music Makers:
the Wheeler Brothers

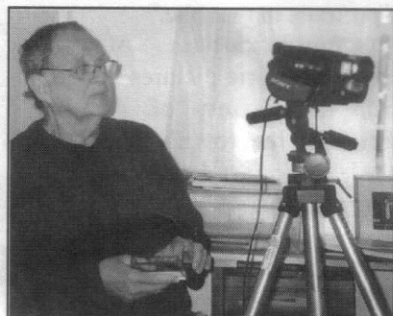
HMerrill collection



Greensboro Congregational Church and
Pastor R.J. Barton about 1906

HMerrill collection

SEPTEMBER 1906						
Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
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Donlon captures Merrill on tape.

photo E. Harvey