

Calendar

April 2

GPS Meeting
Galway Town Hall

7:00-7:30
Social Half Hour

7:30
Business meeting

8:00 Program

Table of Contents

Page 1

April GPS Update

Page 2

Where Have all the farmers gone?
By Tom Cwiakala

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GPS Update

From Virginia Sawicki and Bonnie Donnan

What weather we've been having! High temperature records have been dropping like dominoes in a row. The fear is that this may turn into an April Fool trick on us, as well as trees and plants that have embraced our premature spring. The predictable return of even average temperatures will throw on the brakes. Remember-snow in May is not unheard of.

Our March program was a presentation by Regina Doi, Library Director, "The Galway Public Library: Then and Now." We've come a long way in a short time.

The April meeting will be "Four Centuries of Capital District Women" presented by Don Rittner, Historian of the City and County of Schenectady.

Mark the date June 4th. Carol Schweizer will be hosting our annual picnic, and Carolyn Baxter and Margie Hall will be coordinating.

If you are an aspiring videographer we are in need of someone to record our meetings. VHS tape, DVD, whatever your medium. Please let Virginia Sawicki know if you wish to help.

Our next GPS board meeting will be April 18th. As always, all members are welcome to attend.

Check out the display cases in Town Hall lobby if you have not yet seen "Brookside Museum: A Galway Retrospective". Vintage hats, copies of old photos and documents, and a bridle are of local interest. The display will be replaced by ink drawings done by "Doc Dockstader".

Correction

The photo in this space last issue should have been captioned:

*Benson Dance Hall Hermance Road
Galway, New York instead of Lake
Butterfield*

Where have all the farmers gone?

By Tom Cwiakala

Should one review the history of the town of Galway for the 20th century, one would find that the predominant occupation was farming. Yes, Galway was an agricultural town made up of dairy farms marketing milk, butter and cheese, sheep farms marketing wool, and truck farms marketing fruits and vegetables. From my recollection, speaking to some elders and milk haulers of that period, I was able to gather the names of 42 Galway dairy farmers that marketed their milk in the 1940's. Here we are in the early years of the second decade of the 21 century and how many dairy farms do I find in Galway? None. What happened?

To answer that question, I can only offer my observations and opinions, having been raised on one of the small scale dairy farms in town.

In 1947 and 1948, the U.S. Government purchased more than 3600 acres of land lying in the eastern part of the town of Galway and the western part of the town of Milton. There were many Galway farmers who were required to relocate. They were required to be off their farms by 1949 and many of them could not relocate in the town of Galway. This caused a reduction in the number of dairy farms in town at that time.

Dairy farming requires a large investment

and a lot of hard work but unlike other enterprises, the dairy farmer does not have the privilege of setting the price of his product-milk. Milk prices are set by the federal government, as milk is an interstate commerce product. This price is seldom if ever commensurate with the cost of producing milk. The current price as I write is \$18.25 per cwt. (100 lbs.) The current cost to cost to produce milk is \$21.00 per cwt. I figured there is about 11.628 gallons in one cwt. At \$18.25 per cwt that comes to \$1.57 per gallon. A quart of 2% butterfat content milk at a large supermarket sells for \$1.08, or \$4.32 per gal. I won't go into butterfat content here but I do recall milk testing over 3.5% butterfat adds to the price received by the farmer. The premium depends on the exact percentage of butterfat content. I have observed the fact that milk from Holstein cows are just marginal in butterfat content, Guernseys much higher, Jerseys high, Brown Swiss and Ayrshires good. Some large dairy farms have set up their own creameries and sell directly to the public or through grocery stores and set their own prices. One such is the Battenkill Dairy Farm near Salem, NY, where they also make their own ice cream. I find their ice cream very good. Another I have heard of is King's Ransom Farm, somewhere the east side of Saratoga Spa.

Even with the attraction of independence, fresh air, love of animals and just love of the outdoors, a review of the income to expenses ratio of dairy farming does not offer much incentive. For example, a youngster who is to inherit a 100 acre family dairy farm, graduates from high school, studies agriculture at Cornell, probably starts out with a college loan to repay.

Considering the percentage of the 100 acres that is tillable, available machinery and condition, current machinery prices, available livestock prices, seed and fertilizer prices, then look at current milk prices, this youngster may decide to use his agricultural education in something other than dairy farming. Exit one 100 acre dairy farm. I believe this scenario may have been a factor in the diminishing number of farms.

Another contributing factor may have been the mandates that have been imposed on dairy farmers. The first, which occurred in the mid 1940's was the mandate through which each dairy farmer was to purchase an electric milk cooler that was sized to the number of cans of milk the farmer produced or what he she planned on producing. These coolers were a vat of water, enclosed, insulated and cooled by refrigeration and generally would fit into the existing milk house. Most farmers purchased one (and this had to take place after rural electrification) but some didn't, so we lost a few then. The early 1960's saw a switch from shipping milk to the dairies in cans to shipping in bulk. Milk cans were no longer accepted. Along with the fact that a stainless steel, refrigerated bulk tank must be purchased, and these were priced in the thousands of dollars, a new and much larger milk house with hot and cold running water and with proper electric service for the bulk tank and a connection for the hauler's bulk tank truck pump motor was required. This eliminated just about all of the two-can-a-day dairy farmers in town. Of course there were the cases in which the farmer retired or passed away, leaving no one to carry on. Most of the farms have been subdivided, houses built on the lots, and some fields have grown back into scrub woods.

Many Galway residents today who have purchased farmland keep horses for riding, some board horses, some raise beef cattle, some keep goats, llamas, some raise blueberries, strawberries, apples, trees and whatever. Some rent their open fields to large dairy farms located out of town. By large, I'm talking about farms milking 400 to 700 cows three times a day. I believe that between 2010 and 2011 the last two Galway dairy farms went out of business, leaving the town a "bedroom community" of people who commute to a job of business in one of the surrounding cities.

Should there be any other contributing factors that I am unaware of, I would appreciate hearing of them.



With permission from Ward Johanson, Mary Cuffe Perez shares the following email she recently received from him:

Remembering Galway

During my “every Thursday morning” phone call to my 80 year old aunt, I was told of a new book entitled Nothing by Name from an author in Galway. She said she read about your book in the Times Union. When my Aunt Pat described the book, I couldn’t help thinking about this elderly lady who lived on Parkis Mills Rd. I’d pass her house on my way to school. It sat high on the right, just past Mack Rd. Her name was Katie*. She used to shovel that long driveway all by herself in winter and I believe she used to chop her own wood, too. I thought she was pretty scrappy and tough. My former neighbor, Florence Reedy, is sure to remember Katie. I’m sure Katie has long passed, but the thought of her popped into my head while my aunt read the Times Union article.

I ordered your book today and can’t wait to read it. I grew up in Galway. I went through the Galway School system from K – half way into my senior year. I moved to Cohoes and completed high school there, Class of 1980. I have always thought of Galway as my home town even though it’s been 30 + years since I’ve lived there. I heard James Taylor once say just before he sang “Carolina on My Mind” that you really don’t have to have a home in a place for it to be your home. I thought this applied to me. Shortly after high school I joined the navy; spent

22 years doing that. I had many years at sea to think about things, mostly about back home.

Robert Frost always made me think about upstate NY even though he was writing about New England. I picked apples for Smith’s in Charlton, so I have a good idea where Frost was coming from in “After Apple Picking”. The two-pronged ladder and the ache in my arches from the ladder rungs through my Converse Allstars come to mind. Those baskets seemed to take forever to fill and we would usually end up having an apple fight before all the baskets were full. Boredom would creep in along the way and someone would inevitably throw an apple at someone which would set off a skirmish. Frost skipped any mention about apple fights, but I’m sure he was familiar with them if he spent any time around kids picking apples.

I now live and work in California on the Central Coast. I retired from the Navy in 2003 and now work as an Engineer/Launch Conductor for a company called United Launch Alliance that launches satellites into orbit from Vandenberg AFB and Cape Canaveral. I’m married with three children. I make it back to upstate NY as often as possible and always include a drive around Galway on my visit and frequently grab a burger at Chuck’s (the same people are working there now who were working there way back when I was in high school). It’s nice to see some things don’t change much.

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