



# G·A·L·W·A·Y JOURNAL

PRESERVATION SOCIETY

## ~ GPS Update

~ Richard English

We were all deeply saddened by the passing of Linda Carpenter on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Linda was a dear friend, an active community member, and our dedicated treasurer for the past six years. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her. To celebrate her life, a gathering will take place at Cock ‘n Bull Restaurant on Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, from 4 pm to 6 pm. Since many GPS members will be attending Linda’s celebration, we decided to cancel the February member meeting and postpone the scheduled program until March. Please mark your calendars accordingly.

Last month, the GPS Archive Committee was awarded a complimentary assessment from Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services for New York (DHPSONY), an organization that helps history groups improve their archival facilities and procedures. Pat Sanders recently updated the board on the status of the assessment, which includes completing a detailed questionnaire and conducting several meetings between DHPSONY representatives, GPS archival volunteers, and board members. We have high expectations for this study and look forward to what should be a very valuable third-party review.

At our last member meeting, Paul Perrault (Malta Town Historian) delivered a presentation entitled “*Frozen Assets: Ice Harvesting in Saratoga County*.” The use of ice was an essential part of food preservation before refrigeration became commonplace. Techniques for ice harvesting were originally developed during the Roman empire and Chinese dynasties. While tools and equipment improved since that time, the process remained mostly unchanged: large blocks were cut from frozen bodies of water, conveyed to ice houses insulated with sawdust and straw, and then transported at time of need to ice boxes maintained by consumers and businesses. Harvesting was a strenuous and dangerous activity – horses and men would often break through the ice and fall into frigid water, a plunge which was sometimes fatal. Better equipment, including special shoes (known as caulks), saws, bars, pikes, and conveyor belts, eventually made the process safer and more efficient.

Plenty of ice was harvested in Saratoga County due to the large number of lakes. In Galway, ice was harvested from Galway Lake, Butterfield Lake, Cummings Pond, Kelly’s Pond, and the Winnick Pond on the Michelfelder property. Mike Claypool related several stories about local efforts to improve ice collection, including Norm Barrett’s use of a Model T to power a saw. By the end of World War II, the widespread adoption of refrigeration put an end to most ice harvesting activity in our area. However, a few ice houses still stand, most of which have been repurposed into garages and other storage facilities.

## Upcoming Dates

**Mar 6 – Next Member Meeting at Town Hall**  
7:00 pm Social Gathering  
7:30 pm Business Meeting  
7:45 pm Program

**Apr 12 – Next Board Meeting at Town Hall**  
7:00 pm

Please get in touch if you have an article to submit or an idea for an article: mcuffeperez@gmail.com or call 944-5843. We reserve the right to edit submissions, with the author's approval.

## ~ A Visit with Carolyn Carpenter

~ by Mary Cuffe Perez

The following is taken from a conversation with Carolyn from March, 2007. She passed away in 2009.

I can see by the light of her smile that Carolyn has been waiting. She reaches out a hand in welcome and invites me to pull up a chair close to her by the stove because she can no longer see so well.

I have come to hear what she remembers about the family farm on Bliss Road, Galway, where she grew up, from age five. Carolyn is 94, so the farm she grew up on is a long way for her to go, but she can still find her way, feeling in her memory for the paths back to those days when a farm was an island of self-sufficiency, and nothing came easy. The way was lit by stars or oil lamps, and you got where you were going by foot or horse. It was a world we would find impossibly difficult now. Our guides are those whose lives bridge the then and now. Carolyn is eager to take me there, even if her memory stumbles from time to time.



*Carolyn Male Carpenter at age 16.  
Photo provided by Don Carpenter,  
scanned by Patricia Kay*

She was the second-born of ten children; five boys and five girls. "Mother wanted all boys, she always said," Carolyn chuckles, "but didn't know what she would do without her girls." Carolyn wonders, too. The boys were too young to be of much help, and were a large part of her chores, being the oldest girl.

She does not romanticize life on a farm in upstate New York in the early part of the past century. It was stark as waking up and seeing your breath in the pit of January, then having to race out to the privy (outhouse was a "rustic" term, she tells me); hard as breaking ice out of a watering trough in -20 degrees. Besides helping her mother care for her siblings, feeding the chickens and collecting eggs, Carolyn's biggest task was washing dishes. Sounds like little enough to us today, but in 1930 pre-electricity Galway, that meant first pumping the water from the well into buckets to be carried to the house to fill the reservoir on the back of the woodstove to heat the water, then sudsing her way through plates, glasses, cups, pots, pans, and cutlery for a family of 12.

"Farm work was by horse and by hand," Carolyn says. She remembers that they kept horses, cows, goats, pigs, grew oats and corn, and had a garden with a wide variety of vegetables for the family. There was also a beautiful apple orchard of Northern Spies, plus plum and pear trees. Her mother canned all summer and fall and Carolyn helped pick and prepare the fruit and clean the jars for canning. Always it seemed

she was cleaning and tending, mending and collecting. What they didn't grow they bought from Denison's Store in the village. Farm work was hard on everyone but as Carolyn says (a refrain I have heard from others who lived on small farms in those days) "you did what you had to do."

Even with all the hard work, the farm barely sustained the large family, Carolyn recalls, so her father took a job at General Electric and was gone much of the time. Roosevelt's rural electrification program was interrupted by World War II and didn't reach rural Galway until 1950, even though the village had power as early as 1900.

It was the era of the one-room school house and Carolyn recalls walking with her siblings to Birchton School on Birch Street in all kinds of weather. She wore leggings, overshoes, a winter-weight wool coat, and a knit cap that she always got for Christmas. Lunch was packed in a tin can that once held honey (a neighbor was a beekeeper) and it usually consisted of bread with peanut butter, sliced meat, and always jam and jelly. Carolyn used to bake cupcakes for all the kids to take in their lunches. They would often start out for school after a breakfast of oatmeal, which she says she was never very fond of.

"If it got very cold on the walk," Carolyn says, "we would stop in at a neighbor's on the way." She recalls stopping in at the Donnan farm many times. While a student at Galway High School, she worked in the Village and her wages helped the family.

Life wasn't only hard work and school though. She looked forward to playing tag and being "it." Carolyn and her brothers and sisters and sometimes a neighbor or two would play for as long as they could between chores.

Reading books and writing letters were Carolyn's passions. She read everything she could get her hands on. "People used to say that I always had my nose in a book." She read through the books in the school library, no matter what the subject. "If they printed it, I read it." Each Christmas she hoped for books instead of the perennial knit cap.

Among her favorite memories is sitting under a huge tree on the farm in the summer and reading to her brothers and sisters. "I was the flower and they were the bees," she says. "They would all gather around me and listen for as long as I would read, even when they didn't understand what was being read." They loved the quiet time together, she says, and the sound of the words.

"It wasn't just reading and the quiet times that I looked forward to," Carolyn adds. "I loved dances!" Dances were hosted by different families back then, and many were held at the Male farmhouse on Bliss Road. There would be violins and a piano, which Carolyn often played herself. Sandwiches and cakes were served and root beer made from root beer extract. "Twenty-five to thirty people would come and all ages, too, as no one had babysitters. Sometimes, someone would show up with "hooch," and that ruined the dance," she says. "My father would never stand for hooch being served at a dance."

Carolyn exhibited exceptional talents in many areas. She was Valedictorian of her high school class and belonged to 4-H where she won a blue ribbon for her knitting. She was an excellent seamstress, knitter and embroiderer. Her son, Don Carpenter, says that he never had to buy a sweater as a child because his mother knitted all his sweaters, made most of the family's clothes, and did all the darning and mending. However, when I mention that it was a "loss" that people don't mend anymore, Carolyn responds with a wry smile, "It's a good loss."

She taught sewing and chair caning for many years. She tries to explain how being a seamstress and a chair caner are connected and asks, "Do you know what I'm talking about?" I reply that I think I do, and she laughs, "I think I do, too."

I worry that my visit must be tiring her, but she insists I stay, that she is enjoying herself remembering those days. The more she talks the more she remembers. "Talking about it brings it all back," she says.

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After I said goodbye, I remembered Carolyn's words: "*Talking about it brings it all back.*"

Often we fail to ask those we are closest to about the times of their lives. We assume we've heard it all before. But in most cases we haven't even skimmed the surface. When someone shares a story from their life with you, it is a gift. It is a gift you give in return by listening.

I encourage GPS members to do this. There are people all around you – someone just down the road, someone from your own family – who has stories to tell. Listen and write them down, then share them with our membership through this newsletter. You don't have to be a writer, just use their own words. I believe these stories are more relevant to our history than all the artifacts we can collect.



*Carolyn Male Carpenter in 1997. Photo provided by Don Carpenter, scanned by Patricia Kay*

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### **It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Linda Carpenter, who passed away January 20.**



Linda was a beloved and hardworking member of the Galway community, who was actively involved in many community organizations and causes, including GPS. As her friend, Arlene Rhodes, writes:

Linda was a member of the archives committee for a few years until work and other commitments drew her away. She was a huge help in accessioning the Bryan Simmons collection in the 1990s, more than 500 photographs and several hundred paper items, which provide a record of Galway school and Village activities from the 1930s to the 1970s. For most of a year, the committee met weekly to add this valuable collection to the GPS archives. Linda shared her experience as a researcher working with historical records and documents; she was focused, meticulous and practical. But she always brought us smiles and good cheer.

## Ice Crosses on Butterfield Lake

~ as told to Mary Cuffe Perez by Virginia Sawicki

As Richard noted in this month's Update, the January program "*Frozen Assets: Ice Harvesting in Saratoga County*" drew some lively participation from the audience. Stories were shared of ice harvesting days on local ponds and lakes. One of these was told by Virginia Sawicki about the tradition of erecting an ice cross during the Ukrainian celebration of Epiphany, which her grandparents recreated on their Galway farm.



*The above photo was copied from the internet to serve as an example of the ice cross used in the Ukrainian Blessing the Water Ceremony.*

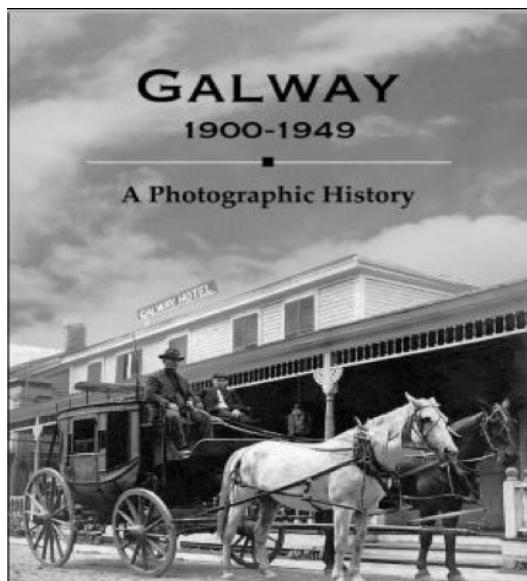
In the early 1900s, Virginia's grandparents emigrated to New York City where they settled among other Ukrainians in the Lower East Side. Many of these immigrants had been farmers in the Ukraine, so when a realtor canvassed the neighborhood with farms to sell in the upstate community of Galway, he found many willing buyers; among them, Virginia's grandparents. "I think," Virginia says, "they must have bought the farms sight unseen because they wouldn't have had the money to make two trips from New York City to Galway. Virginia's grandfather, Onufry Sawicki, and her grandmother, Paraskevia, bought the farm on Butterfield Lake off Crooked Street, settling among other Ukrainians who probably bought farms from the same New York City realtor. They operated the farm in the 1920s and 1930s, and in addition to farming, the Sawicki's rented out boats and small cabins on the lake, and even built a dance hall. Because the nearest Ukrainian church was almost an entire day's trip into Amsterdam, Onufry helped found a Ukrainian Catholic church on Union Mills Road, located between Galway and Broadalbin.

It was a tight-knit community that wanted to preserve the religious customs of their homeland. For Ukrainian Catholics, the main feature of Epiphany (pronounced "Yordan" for the River Jordan) is the Blessing of Water, a symbolic reference to the water used to baptize Jesus. In the Ukraine, it was customary for parishioners to trek to the nearest body of water to conduct the ceremony, with an ice cross serving as the centerpiece. Virginia's grandfather recreated this sacred tradition in Galway by cutting a cross out of the ice on Butterfield Lake and standing it up by the lake edge to be blessed by a priest who travelled to the farm for this sacred event.

This ceremony, Virginia recalls hearing, drew many of the Ukrainian community to their farm to be part of it. The small Ukrainian church was the center of all news and social events among the community and even without telephones or other means of communication, everyone knew and everyone came.

## *~ Galway Photographic History Book*

Another remembrance of life on the farm by Carolyn Carpenter, as well as more about the Sawicki farm on Butterfield Lake, are among the many historical events, people, and places depicted in “*Galway 1900-1949: A Photographic History.*”



In addition to photographs, the book contains a fount of history about Galway during that time period. It is beautifully written and designed and a “must have” for anyone who is interested in what life was like in Galway at that time, a light also onto what life was like for many upstate farming communities. It’s a great way to journey through the past, and a valuable research tool.

You can pick up your copy at the following locations:

- ~ Galway branch of the Ballston Spa National Bank
- ~ Galway Town Hall
- ~ Waterwheel Village, Route 29
- ~ Providence Town Hall
- ~ And, of course, we'll have books at future Galway Preservation Society meetings.

Checks payable to Galway Preservation Society, \$40.

There is also a book order form on our website if you would like to order a copy to be sent by mail to you or a friend. [www.galwaypreservationsociety.org](http://www.galwaypreservationsociety.org)

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