



G·A·L·W·A·Y JOURNAL

PRESERVATION SOCIETY

~ GPS Update

~ Richard English

Our annual membership drive is almost complete and we now have over 130 members! Our robust membership reflects a strong interest in local history and life in our rural community. Over the course of the year, our group focuses most of its attention on three areas of activity: monthly member programs, a monthly newsletter, and the cataloging of historical items in our archives. Currently, a small number of volunteers take responsibility for the day-to-day tasks demanded of these activities so that all of our members benefit from them. More hands would make lighter work for these dedicated volunteers so if you have even one hour per month to devote to our organization, please contact any board member or officer to find out how you can become more involved in something you care about.

Last month, we enjoyed a program presented by Anne Clothier, Director of Education at Brookside Museum, entitled “Celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the Saratoga County Fair.” Anne recounted the early history of the fair and explained how these events enabled people to exchange news, learn about new equipment and techniques, and demonstrate their expertise. Fairs provided a platform for politicians, performers, and local organizations seeking to recruit new members (including the 4-H and the Grange). Fairground properties also serve a valuable purpose beyond the fair itself, with military regiments employing the grounds for training and expos using the grounds when participants from a wide area need to convene (such as for dog shows, swap meets, truck shows, and balloon fests).

Our next member meeting will be Monday, December 5th, with a unique program entitled “Galway Movie Night by the Galway Amateur Movie Club of 1937.” Bonnie Donnan will serve as our moderator as we travel back in time to enjoy scenes of Galway from the 1930s and 1940s captured on film by the principal and teachers at Galway Union Free School. Free popcorn will be provided, so don’t miss out!

Our December meeting will also provide members an opportunity to donate to the Community Basket Project sponsored by the Greater Galway Community Services Association. This year the organization has made a special appeal for men’s/women’s toiletries and wrapping paper sheets, but donations of any kind are always appreciated. Monetary donations by check should be made payable to “Community Basket Project” and mailed to Food Pantry, PO Box 31, Galway NY 12074. A signup sheet for drivers will also be posted at the meeting for any members who are interested in volunteering their time.

Upcoming Dates

Dec 5 – Next Member Meeting at Town Hall

7:00 pm Social Gathering
7:30 pm Business Meeting
7:45 pm Program

Jan 11 – Next Board Meeting at Town Hall

7:00 pm

Contact us at galwaypressociety@gmail.com or visit us at
<http://www.galwaypreservationsociety.org>

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.

~ Announcements

Have a little room in your holidays for one more? “Adopt” a child or family within the Galway School District this holiday season by donating gifts to a specific child or family that you are paired with. This part of the Holiday Basket Project is especially rewarding for both giver and receiver. There are children waiting for you! Please call Phyllis Sleeper at 882-9232 (gramyankees@aol.com) or Connie Wood at 882-6684 (cbwfarm@gmail.com).

The project is only possible due to the generous donations and efforts of many organizations, businesses, churches, the Galway School, and individual members of the community. Last year, 104 families received baskets which benefitted 178 adults, 27 elderly, and 133 children. Over 300 volunteers work to make the project a success. This project represents the true community spirit of Galway!

~ The Evolution of Galway Lake

~ Ray David

Galway Lake got its start as a controllable water source for mills along Chuctanunda Creek from West Galway through Hagaman and Amsterdam to the Mohawk River. Starting sometime in the 1850s the owners of these mills formed a group, Amsterdam Water Works, and were given condemnation rights to acquire the land to be flooded. After two subsequent enlargements, the lake reached its present size of about 500 acres in 1876. It was called Amsterdam Reservoir until recently.

The final enlargement required the construction of two dams. The main dam, an earthen dam, was constructed across Chuctanunda Creek about ¼ mile before it crosses Crooked Street. The flow of water to the mills was controlled by a pair of gates built into a stone structure in front of the dam that when opened allowed water to flow through a large pipe under the dam into the creek on the other side. A caretaker was assigned to operate these gates in accordance with the needs of the mills for water. Gasoline motors were never allowed on boats in the lake because their exhaust contained oil that floated on the surface and would never be discharged through the underground pipe.

The second dam, also an earthen dam but called a dike, was built in the small bay on the east side of the lake to prevent flow to the east. There is a natural spring about 50 yards behind this dike, the water from which flows east into Ludlow Swamp, then Glowegee Creek, and eventually the Hudson River.

The lake became a popular camping ground in the early 1900s and property owners around the lake began selling or leasing camp lots. Most of these lots were quite small, there being no zoning or building restrictions at the time. My father bought a lakefront lot on the small east bay from Mr. Owen Jeffers in 1924, two years before I was born. It turned out later that Mr. Jeffers didn't own that property, but that's another story.

By 1926, the Galway Lake Campers Association camp directory for that year listed 172 property owners around the lake. The 2015 directory lists in the neighborhood of 600 names. I think part of the purpose of this association was to collect the money the reservoir owners charged campers for putting a boat in the water. If my memory is correct, it was about \$6.00 a year.

There were trees on the land that was flooded by the lake. I don't know if they were cut first or if they just died in the water, but most of them uprooted and were piled up on the eastern shore by the prevailing west wind. The campers burned the ones that covered their beaches, but the ones that wound up against the dike were left since no camps could be built there. This was fortunate in a way because they have protected the dike from erosion by the waves.



Galway Lake in early summer ...

When we were children in the 1930s, my sister and I and two of our cousins used to walk on these stumps to get to the other side of the bay. This was a challenge to find stumps and logs that wouldn't sink when they were stepped on. Sometimes it was possible to run along a big log that was sinking, but if you were fast enough it could be done without getting too wet. Needless to say, we often slipped or had a misstep and wound up in the lake.

Also in the 1930s the level of the lake would drop continuously throughout the summer. Most of these years, by the end of August we could wade across the small east bay with the water only waist deep. Part of this was due to the needs of the mills for water. A 1937 report showed six mills still using water from the lake. The report stated that when the mills were running full speed they need from three to four million gallons of water every 24 hours from Lake Galway. But in addition to this there was a significant leak in the gate structure at the outlet of the lake. This leak was repaired at some point but I don't remember that it made too much difference.

The fact that motorboats were not allowed made the lake an ideal place for swimming. Today, small electric motors are allowed, but they are unable to go fast enough to be a danger to swimmers. The absence of motorboats also made the lake ideal for small sailboats. Sailing has become so popular on the lake that a sailing club was formed and races are held often throughout the summer.

Some concern about the safety of earthen dams developed around 1980, and an inspection of the dam at the outlet of the lake determined the dam to be unsafe. The angle of repose at the back of the dam was too steep, and in addition it had many trees growing on it, the roots of which might allow seepage to occur and subsequent failure of the dam. The result of this was an exorbitant increase in the cost of insurance. Rather than pay this, the mill owners drained the water from the lake, which spoiled one whole summer for the campers. Ultimately, the mill owners sold the lake to the Galway Lake Campers Association. The Association then repaired the dam and the gate structure, which reduced the cost of required insurance, and allowed the lake to be filled again.



... and in late summer

~ *Recipe Box*

This recipe comes to us from Betty Person, who made this delicious cake for the November GPS meeting.

Apple Cake

Ingredients:

1 3/4 cups of sugar

1 cup of vegetable oil

3 eggs

2 cups flour

1/4 tsp. salt

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. cinnamon

5 medium apples (peeled and chopped)

1 cup chopped nuts

Blend oil, sugar, and eggs. Add dry ingredients. Mix well. Fold in apples and nuts. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour or until tester comes out clean. I use a tube pan. When cake has cooled, drizzle with glaze and chopped nuts. This is also wonderful when infused with the spirits of your choice.

~ *Lillian Bills Derby: "I'm the one who takes things the way they come."*



The following is excerpted from *What We Keep: Life Stories from Maplewood Manor* by Mary Cuffe Perez. The interview project was supported through a grant from the Saratoga Arts Council in 2011.

When I visit Lillian and Gordon in Room A-127 of Maplewood Manor in Ballston Spa, the first thing Lillian asks me is, "What's new in Galway?" When I start to tell her, she tells me. She has never really left. The room she shares with Gordon is so full of keepsakes she can hardly move among them. Gordon brought very little with him when he moved into the nursing home, but Lillian has always had a hard time letting go. But the keepsakes – dolls from her collection of over 100, family photos, letters and books – are the least of it.

What Lillian has held on to are the times of her life played out in one small, rural town – the hardships of the Depression, a husband gone to war, the struggle of farm life, the children she loved and those she lost, the innumerable joys of family and a lifelong love of music. Lillian has never cleaned out the attic of her memory. It's all there. Just ask her. She can give you names and dates. That, too, is the least of it.

Lillian was born in 1923 in Hagaman and raised on a small subsistence farm in Galway. A lot was asked of her at an early age. The first-born girl, she was schooled early in caring for her younger sister and brothers, helping her mother in the kitchen and her father with the milking. She also learned to take care of herself. As young as six years old, she walked the two miles to the one room school house on the corner of Welch and Shaw Roads, even in the worst of winter. "I remember walking between snow banks big as barns," she recalls. Right out of high school she went to work at the Ackshand Glove Factory, then Schutts Sock Factory in Ballston Spa. "Work was what we knew," she says, thinking back on a life of farming, of work in the mills and at General Electric when her husband, Kenwood, entered the service. All the while raising children -- not just her own four but foster children, then grandchildren. Because there was never enough money, she took in laundry and ironing, churned and sold butter. Non-stop work. "It's just the way it was."

In 1948 the Welfare Office contacted the Bills and asked if they would take in foster children. "Those were hard times," Lillian says. "Some parents had no choice but to give up their children to foster care until they got back on their feet." Over the years, they took in 20 foster children, from infants to teenagers, as well as children from the Fresh Air Program in New York City. "Ken never knew who would be there when he came home. Sometimes we had ten at the table."

Some foster children stayed for only a week, others for years. She smiles, remembering their faces. The Bills later adopted two of the infants, Sharon and Tisa, who were placed in their care. "All of the children accepted one other," Lillian says. "Foster, adopted, or our own born."

Lillian is a happy person, sometimes determinedly so. The good times are as close to the surface as her laughter. "We always had a yard full," she says of the gatherings of family and neighbors. "Square dances, ball games, picnics. Galway was a community that supported one another during harvest and troubles and knew how to celebrate the good times." The celebration was often to bluegrass music, played on fiddle, guitar, and banjo at the Saxon Dance Hall, Benson's, or at Fords Dance Hall where Kenwood first asked her to dance 73 years ago. She hummed music while she ran laundry through the wringer washer and churned the butter; sang the children to sleep. On Saturday nights, she and Kenwood never missed a square dance.

Lillian doesn't dance anymore. She uses a motorized wheelchair to get around. But music is still as much a part of her life as if she was still twirling the squares. She and Gordon kept their membership in the Adirondack Fiddlers Association and members of the group often come to play at Maplewood out of friendship for the two. "I make sure everyone knows when they come," she says. She makes the rounds of the rooms on her floor and calls people on other floors urging them out of their rooms to enjoy the music.

Each time I visit Lillian I learn a little more about her. When I ask how she dealt with the hardships of her life then and now with such good humor, she answers, "I'm one who takes things the way they come." But that's the least of it.

A Plow Factory

~ Historical Marker Profile #7

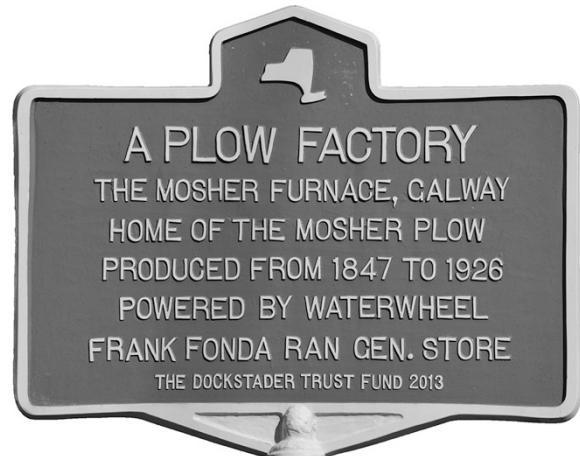
Galway is home to eight New York State Historical Markers. One of these markers commemorates one of its most prosperous early businesses.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Galway and most surrounding towns were predominantly agricultural, so plows were in high demand. The Mosher Furnace, a foundry established in 1839, began producing a quality plow in 1847 to meet this growing demand. The foundry was powered by a waterwheel located beneath the building.

Frank Fonda took ownership of the foundry in 1896, substituted a gasoline engine for water power, and added a general store. He discontinued production of the plow in 1926, but the general store remained operational. Frank's son Hawley inherited the family business, adding snappy cheese to the product line and installing a waterwheel in front of the building.

The historical marker is located in front of the Waterwheel Village country store on the northeast corner of the intersection of State Route 29 and Barkersville Road in Mosherville.

Thanks to Phyllis Keeler and Tom Cwiakala who published a detailed write-up of this historical marker in the Winter 2014 issue of the Galway Reader.



Galway Preservation Society

Post Office Box 276
Galway, NY 12074