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PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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Calendar

December 2

GPS Meeting
Galway Town Hall

7:00-7:30
Social Half Hour

7:30 Business Meeting

8:00 Program

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Discovering Our Lost History

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December GPS Update

From Virginia Sawicki and Bonnie Donnan

A very early Merry Christmas everyone! The weather seems quite Christmasy. Salted and plowed roads already. In the spirit of Christmas we will be continuing our custom of collecting contributions for the community Christmas Basket Project at our December 2nd meeting. New unwrapped toys, books, puzzles, and games for children, **gifts for adults, children's clothing, non-perishable food and monetary donations** are all welcome. The project, supported by many community organizations, the area churches, the school, and Greater Galway Community Services Association, is headquartered at West Charlton United Presbyterian Church. Checks may be made out to WCUPC Basket Fund. Donations will be collected at the meeting.

Our November meeting was Lisa Potocar speaking on Women soldiers during the Civil War.

Charlie Kuenzel and Dave Patterson will be the speakers at the December 2, 2013 meeting. Their topic is "Life and Times of the Founder of Saratoga

Springs: Gideon Putnam."

The Galway Preservation Society is a partner with the Galway Public Library in the creation of the Galway Public Library's Digital Collection on the New York Heritage website. Links to the Galway Library Digital Collection, its landing page on New York Heritage and the main New York Heritage website can now be found on the Galway Preservation Society website: <http://galwaypubliclibrary.org/gps/> You will also find links to many community websites and links to other organizations concerned with local history.

The Town Hall lobby display is currently heirlooms and remembrances of the past from the Galway Seniors. Check out the items if you get a chance!

Metal detecting is a fun hobby and can be very rewarding from several aspects. Some do it as a means to make money through selling what they find such as jewelry and rare coins. My interest has always been discovering historically relevant items. I realized early on that living in Galway, with its rich Colonial history, could provide me the opportunity to do just that.

In the spring of 2013 when I expressed an interest in the history of Galway, Herb and Marylynn Kopper encouraged me to become a member of the Galway Preservation Society and graciously let me borrow the book "Stories and Pictures of Galway" by W. Bronson Taylor.

According to Taylor, local legend has it that General Lafayette once visited General Earl Stimson's 800 acre farm in 1824. This visit has never been substantiated or documented as fact. One paragraph became a challenge to me. Taylor wrote "We have discounted the story of Lafayette ever visiting the spring (Lafayette Spring on Stimson Farm) that was named after him. All we can say is, we hope someone will come up with the real answer". My hope was and still is that I would find something that could be linked to Lafayette. Maybe a French military button or buckle or although farfetched, maybe something with his initials or name inscribed on it.

Another interest was to possibly find some military items which may have been used by General Stimson while he served in the New York State Militia.

As fate would have it Craig and Colleen Suprenant (present owners of Stimson's homestead) were having an open house of their beautiful 1700's home in May so when I approached Craig about the possibility of searching his five acres (795 more acres to go) he was all for it since he could use whatever artifacts I found for his open house presentation.

On April 17th. My search began. Because the search of a five acre parcel is a daunting and time consuming task I knew I couldn't cover the whole place in time for the open house so I concentrated on the areas adjoining the main house and outbuildings. Of particular interest was a building that we suspected had been used as a livery for the changing of horses by the J. Parker & Co. stagecoach line. The line ran from Saratoga Springs to Utica with stops in between, one of which was Stimson Farm. This is where I found an 1800's circa horseshoe and brass buckle commonly used in horse tack equipment, clothing, cartridge box closures etc.

Just outside the main entrance to the house two 1800 to 1900 era brass door knobs were discovered as well as a "Brass Distillers Thermometer" The remains of this instrument begs the question "What kinds of spirits were being brewed by General Earl? The back plate is graduated from 40 to 210 degrees and bears the markings: 90 – 100 Blood heat, 170 – 180 – Spirits boil, 210 – Water boils

On one foray into what most likely was one of Stimson's farm fields I discovered a very large chunk of rusted metal that had me curious as to what lie beneath all that crust. After many hours of cutting through the rust I began to see markings and a date. It read "OLIVER 83.D.DS.11 S". After much research and consultation with the Farmers Museum in Cooperstown it was identified as one of the first "steel" plow ends. James Oliver emigrated from Scotland in the 1800's and was the inventor of the steel plow. This one was made in 1883.

Just outside the entry way to what was the barn I found an 1837 Large Cent. This coin has a hole directly in the middle and the remains of a shank on the reverse which was probably used as a button which was common in the day. The "Large Cent" earned its spot in history as it was the first coin ever minted by the U.S. on its own equipment and premises in Philadelphia. These coins were minted between 1793 and 1857. Imagine, if a person were to carry one dollar in Large Cents in their pocket they would weigh over three pounds.

Now that I met the deadline for the Suprenants open house date I decided to look across the street (Perth Road) to Les Dubb's five acre homestead. Les is a great guy and we immediately struck up a friendship as we both

have a history in the Fire service. Les gave me his permission but said "good luck" because others had searched there before me. Undaunted I immediately began at the beautiful well which is visible from Perth Road. It seemed to be the perfect place that a stage coach passenger would go for a cool drink and maybe lose an item or two. This is where I found two of my most treasured finds to date: A 1798 Large Cent which is in remarkable condition since copper becomes degraded in our Northeastern soil and many ground find "Largies" cannot even be read or their dates deciphered.

Next came something that may have been carried by Lafayette?? A "Hard Times Token" Approximately the same size as a Large Cent these satirical political coins were minted in the 1800's and carried messages of protest and other subjects. This particular one states "Millions for defence not one cent for tribute" (defence is not a misspelling). On the other side there is an engraving of the Merchants Exchange building in New York City which states "Merchants Exchange Wall St. New York. Built 1827 Burnt 1835". The Millions for defence not one cent for tribute came from a time when the French government wanted America to side with them in their dispute with England. When the U.S. balked at this, the French began to obstruct our shipping and movement on the high seas. During a trip to France to discuss this outrage our delegates were told that before we would even get an audience with those in power we would have to pay them an exorbitant fee (tribute). Ah the French .

So far I have not been able to positively link any findings to Lafayette but there are 690 more acres to search. Now if I can only get the various owners' permission to be on their properties it would be greatly appreciated.

I also want to thank the following people for permission to search their properties: Pastor Wayne Brandow for permission to search the Baptist Church and Parsonage where we discovered two Large Cents and an 1837 "Civil War Soldiers Match Safe" and a very early brass padlock made by the Yale & Towne Co.

Dusty and Arlene Rhodes for permission to search their farm and the Dockstader home site. A very nice "Indian Head" penny and an early 1900's antique auto radiator initial name plate were found on the farm.

Mr. and Mrs. Neil Goes for permission to search their ex Methodist parsonage property which has not been fruitful as of yet.

Pastor Reed of the Methodist Church property which has yet to be searched.

Mr. Bill Palmer for permission to search the sites of the old mills on the Chucktanunda Creek which will be ongoing.

Bill Keller & Betty of the Colonial Inn where a beautiful 1902 Barber dime and 1838 Large cent was found. Barber dimes pre dated Mercury Head dimes and were designed and named after Charles E. Barber Chief engraver of the Mint.

Mr. Lenny Weiss for permission to search his homestead which I believe is part of the original 800 acre Stimson farm? In September an 1817 Large cent was found but this poor old copper is in very deteriorated condition. It took several hydrogen peroxide baths just to see the date. Also a very old pocket watch was found nearby where Lenny's grandfather had died while building a stone wall. I have yet to be able to open the watch in the hopes it was engraved with his initials or some other means of identifying the owner.

PLEASE NOTE - If anyone is interested, I would be glad to donate my services in possibly finding a lost metallic keepsake such as a wedding ring or class ring etc. Also, If you would like your colonial era property to be included in this project, please contact: Ed Forner 859-9779. I am a member of the Galway Preservation Society working in cooperation with Phyllis Keeler the Galway Town Historian. And as a member of the Empire State Metal Detector Association I promise to leave your property undamaged and just the way I found it.