



G·A·L·W·A·Y JOURNAL

PRESERVATION SOCIETY

↻ GPS Update

by Richard English

June marks the end of the 2015-2016 GPS calendar year, during which we enjoyed several excellent programs and a consistently strong turnout by our members. After the June picnic, we will take a two-month break and return in September with a new schedule of monthly meetings. The program planning committee, headed by Mary Cuffe Perez, will meet in June to discuss a variety of potential topics and begin contacting presenters for next year. If you have an idea for a program, please contact Mary at 944-5843 to share your suggestion.

Our May meeting included a program by Courtney Burns entitled “The History of the New York State Military Museum.” Mr. Burns provided an overview of the museum (at 61 Lake Avenue in Saratoga Springs) and emphasized the prominence of New York during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. More Revolutionary War battles were fought in New York than in any other state, due to the relatively even split between Tories (loyalists) and Patriots (revolutionaries). During the Civil War, New York provided more soldiers and war matériel than any other state while also spending the most money and incurring the greatest number of casualties. In fact, the first Union officer killed during the Civil War was Elmer Ellsworth, a Malta-born man who was a close friend of Abraham Lincoln. Ellsworth died while tearing down a Confederate Flag from the roof of the Marshall House Inn in Alexandria, Virginia on May 24, 1861. New York has a long and proud history of serving the nation, and the New York State Military Museum is committed to preserving its artifacts and telling the compelling stories behind them.

Our annual picnic will be held at Town Hall on Monday, June 6th, starting at 6:00 pm (note the earlier start time!). Sue Surdyka is coordinating food and refreshments so please contact her at 882-9248 if you plan to attend. GPS will provide plates, flatware, and cups. The group activity following dinner will be a Galway historical trivia contest modeled after the game show “Jeopardy!” The questions span a wide range of local history so there should be something for everyone to enjoy.

As far as summer events, our next board meeting will be Wednesday, July 13th, at Town Hall starting at 7:00 pm. All members are welcome to attend. If you cannot attend but would like the board to address an issue or consider an item of business, please contact an officer or trustee prior to the meeting. Our next monthly member meeting will be Monday, September 12th. We will publish a newsletter in late August with details about the September program and a reminder about the date.

Until then, have a great summer and I hope to see you at the picnic!

Upcoming Dates

June 6 – Annual Member Picnic at Town Hall

6:00 pm Arrival and Dinner

7:15 pm Business Meeting

7:30 pm Group Activity

July 13 – 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

Celebration of Life Honoring Alice Bingham

GPS members are invited to attend a Celebration of Life in honor of Alice Bingham on June 3rd, 2016, from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm with a toast to Alice at 6:30 pm. Alice was a long-time member of, and a major contributor to, the Galway Preservation Society. The celebration will be held at Alice's home at 5480 Jockey Street in Galway. If you can attend, please RSVP to Mike Bingham at akd442001@yahoo.com or (518) 817-7740.

Second Annual "American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley" Conference

The Fort Plain Museum is hosting a four-day conference on *The American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley* starting with bus tours of historical sites on June 9th and 10th. Nine speakers will present a series of historical lectures on June 11th and 12th in the auditorium at Fulton-Montgomery Community College. Preregistration is required and space is limited. For more information, visit <http://www.mohawkcountry.org/rev-war-conference-2016.html>.

📌 The Preston House – Part Two

by Alan Maddaus

The history of my childhood home in Galway would not be complete without a narrative on Calvin and Margaret Preston's children and the interesting lives they led, far from upstate NY. With the exception of Charles, the eldest, born in Antwerp, NY, all were born in Galway. They were: Charles Finney (1829), James Edwin (1831), William Goodell (1832), Sophia Jane (1835), Platt Adams (1837), Maria Chapin (1842) and Calvin Walbridge (1845). Their destinies were shaped by 19th Century events including the Second Great Awakening, Civil War, opening of Nebraska and Northwest Territories, gold rushes, the Galveston Hurricane, and growth of legal rights for the mentally disabled.

Charles Finney Preston was named after Charles Grandison Finney, the 19th Century Presbyterian evangelist who resided in Jefferson, NY. Reverend Finney was a charismatic orator, associated with the Second Great Awakening, a Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian movement based on the vision of Jesus Christ's Second Coming. The movement swelled the size of congregations, the Galway Presbyterian Church where Charles Preston attended and the Rev. Nott brothers preached, a noteworthy example.

Charles Preston graduated from Union College in 1850, the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1853, and then commissioned by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions as a missionary to China, reaching Hong Kong in 1854. Proceeding to Canton, he spent two years studying the language and during the Chinese War was at Macao. In 1858, he returned to Canton and built a chapel from funds raised chiefly by his own efforts, where he preached until his last illness. He preached in the Canton dialect and translated the New Testament and a hymn book into Chinese. Charles married a widow of a missionary, Mary Brewster, in Canton, China in 1854 and they had eight children, born in Canton. He died in Hong Kong in 1877 en route to the United States with his family, leaving them in difficult circumstances, had it not been for the resources and commitment of family patriarch, William G. Preston. At the time of Charles' death William resided in Waitsburg, Washington where Mary and six children relocated.



*2103 East St, Galway,
where it all began*



ca. 1913



*The Waitsburg Mill,
with wheat fields*

William G. Preston was an adventurer and entrepreneur of remarkable versatility, energy and foresight. He was also strongly family and community oriented. William was born in 1832, in Galway, and attended the public school there. At the age of 18 he went to Tompkins County, NY, and resided for two years with an uncle, Rev. A. W. Platt, perhaps to test his interest in religious leadership. Evidently that failed for in 1852 he became a sailor and visited Europe. William traveled to the newly opened Nebraska Territory in 1854 by way of Chicago, then down the Mississippi to St. Louis and up the Missouri River. Locating at Belleview, he was placed in command of a ferryboat in 1855. Platt Preston went to Nebraska the same year, at age 17, to assist his brother with the ferry. Following sale of the boat, William built a side-wheeler designed to haul freight, relocated to Omaha and, with Platt, operated a ferry and freight service until the fall of 1858, when he turned the business over to his brother and journeyed to Colorado, swept up in the excitement of the Gold Rush. He was among the earliest arrivals in Denver and built one of the first houses there, in the gold mining town of Auraria. Platt followed him in the spring of 1860, and the brothers remained in Colorado until 1862, when they departed for Elk City, Idaho, site of the next Gold Rush.

For two years William engaged in mining with limited success while Platt started working in merchandising. It must have become evident to them that there was a decent living to be made in supply of essentials to miners, such as flour, a staple of the miner's diet. William's entrepreneurial instincts then took him to the territory of Washington, where he operated a pack train from Forts Walla Walla and Spokane, Washington to Lewiston, Idaho, circling the wagons at night for protection against raids by Native Americans and moving freight over very difficult terrain. In 1866, William travelled to Waitsburg, Washington, and soon afterward, he and Platt purchased a half interest in the Washington Flouring Mills. They became sole proprietors in 1870 and subsequently gained control of the industry, which had been founded by Mr. Wait, for whom the town of Waitsburg was named. For a number of years the mill was solely owned by Preston brothers, then became the Preston-Schaffer Milling Company which operated until 1957, maintaining mills at multiple locations.

In 1869 William G. Preston married Matilda Cox, member of an Oregon pioneer family, and they became the parents of three sons. Known in the community as Uncle Bill and Aunt Tillie, they lived in opulent style in a dwelling distinguished by a corner turret enclosed with windows to the second story, two parlors, a music room embellished with tile fireplaces and ceiling rosettes of plaster cupids and roses, a small backyard abode for the horse trainer and, for a short time, a Chinese cook which was a mark of opulence in that day. Matilda evidently enjoyed cooking. William was the first mayor of Waitsburg, a director of the Merchant Bank, and a two-term member of the territorial legislature. Among other contributions to the community was his donation of Preston Hall, now the middle school. William died at the home of his son, Charles, in Portland, Oregon in 1916 at the age of 84. He and Matilda, who died in 1927, are buried in Waitsburg cemetery.

In November 1869, Platt Preston married Laura Billups and they had six children. He was elected mayor of Waitsburg and served in that capacity through 1888. He also served in the state senate for four years and was

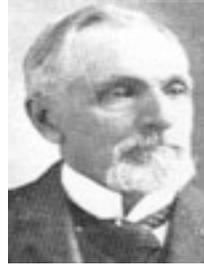
appointed penitentiary commissioner. Platt Preston died at the home of his youngest brother, Calvin, in Galveston, Texas in 1900 at the end of a trip to Mexico, accompanied by his daughter, to seek a cure for a chronic disease, possibly tuberculosis. Platt and Laura are buried in Waitsburg.



Platt Preston, Galway boy



Hon. Platt Preston



Hon. William Preston



44th NY State Regiment, Civil War



Civil War Drummer Boy



Maria Preston Stewart's Home, Waitsburg

Calvin, age 16 when the Civil War started, joined the 44th New State Regiment, aka Ellsworth Avengers, a memorial regiment named after Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth who was originally from Mechanicsville, NY, a law firm associate and personal friend of Abraham Lincoln and the first Union soldier to die in the Civil war. Calvin held the rank of drummer, serving from 1861-1864. Drummers had ceremonial and timing functions during parades, and a critical function in battle, with different drum rolls signaling action, e.g. "retreat", "attack", and "meet here". They were also stretcher bearers for the wounded. The 44th was active in some of the most important and bloody battles of the War, including Fredricksburg, Antietam, Gettysburg, the Wilderness Campaign and Petersburg. At Gettysburg, they were involved in the defense of Little Round Top, a turning point in that battle. Calvin's brother, James, a merchant, moved to Galveston in 1855. In 1862, he enlisted in the 26th Texas Cavalry, Debray's regiment, Confederate Army which was assigned to protect Texas from invasion by Union forces. After the war he was employed by E.S. Jemison & Co., a cotton brokerage. He married and had two children.

James remained in Galveston until his death in 1870 at the age of 39, of an apparent stroke. Surprisingly, Calvin joined James in Galveston after the war, presumably casting aside any hard feelings related to opposing views on state's rights or slavery. Calvin lived there for 35 years, working as a druggist and receiving recognition for rescuing his family during the Great Hurricane of 1900, a natural disaster that claimed 8000 lives. During that period, Calvin joined the Texas Militia, rising to the rank of Major. He married Emmeline McWaters of Alexandria, Louisiana and they had four children. His business destroyed by the hurricane, Calvin moved to Waitsburg, Washington in 1900 where he worked for his brother as a miller and served two terms as mayor in 1904 and 1905. Once again William was there in a family member's time of need. Calvin died in 1905 and is buried in the Waitsburg cemetery.

With William and Platt well established in Waitsburg, it is not surprising that one of the sisters, Maria, would follow. When she took residence there is difficult to determine, but a book on local history states: "There were the days (ca 1878) when there was only one church in the 'burg': Methodist ... when there was only one musical church instrument, the Estey Harmonium owned by Miss Maria Preston. And many's the time we have toted that instrument from her residence and back after lifting our voice in praise."

Her brothers also were musicians. Another source of the same period mentions a quintet composed of "Miss Preston, pianist; Platt Preston, violinist; Bill Preston, cellist;" Maria Preston married Alexander Stewart in 1885. Alexander was employed as a stock man and Maria as a music teacher. They were wealthy, a circumstance that placed Maria in harm's way later in life. A 1910 description of their home provides a hint of their lifestyle: "Alexander Stewart's new mansion has been under construction for the past two years. There are 14 rooms, including eight bedrooms (chambers). One staircase, a grand affair, winds from the reception hall upwards and is designed for servants' use. The doors are bevel plate mirrors and besides the doors there are 30 other mirrors on walls, easels and hallways, so whichever way a visitor turns he will observe himself. Over the inlaid floors are spread Persian rugs, covering all the elaborate work. Celebration of the 25th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Stewart observed with their new home opening on Jan 8, 1910."

Shortly afterward, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart travelled to Idaho to stay with family members and then to Miami, Florida, where they owned property. Mr. Stewart died there in 1912, and Mrs. Stewart, who suffered from dementia, was placed in the care of his family. According to Washington State Supreme Court documents, *Re: Heffernan et al v. Butler, Mrs. Stewart*, in a "mentally incompetent" condition was placed in the care of his "relatives" who "rid themselves of the expense of caring for [her] while seizing all the Florida properties of her late husband." William came to her rescue, sending an attorney and the attorney's wife to Miami to remove Maria from deplorable living conditions, handle legal matters, and bring her back to Waitsburg in comfortable stages for care until her death in 1916. The Stewart family contested these actions; the case was decided by the Washington Supreme Court in William Preston's favor.

Maria traveled home at least once to visit her sister, Sophia Preston Hays, as reported in an *Amsterdam Evening Recorder* column dated July 22, 1907. Sophia married John H. Hays of Galway in 1862. They lived for a time on East St. in Galway Village, several houses away from Dr. Preston. Five years before his death (1885), Dr. Preston transferred title of his home and a fifty-acre parcel east of the Village to Sophia. After Sarah Preston died (1893), Sophia sold the properties to Eugene Brundige. At that time, Sophia and family lived in Saratoga Springs. Meticulous research by Pat Sanders of the Brookside Museum located a number of society page articles that mention Sophia as an organizer or participant in events in Saratoga Springs, living the life of a Victorian lady in that genteel place. She and her husband had three children. She died in 1914 and is buried with her husband in Pineview cemetery, Queensbury. In perhaps the final instance of a Preston family member leaving the Galway area to live in Washington, Sophia's daughter Margaret visited her relatives there and shortly after married a wealthy Waitsburg lumber distributor, Arthur McCoy, in 1909.

The seven children of Dr. and Mrs. Calvin Preston lived productive lives, which were influenced by events on a national scale, during a turbulent period in U.S. history. William, in particular, was inspiring in his accomplishments, as well as support of family and his adopted community. Would Galway be a different place today if he had chosen to stay?

Galway Village

Historical Marker Profile #3

Galway is home to eight New York State Historical Markers. One of these markers commemorates the Village and was awarded as part of the Galway 2000 celebration.

Galway Village was incorporated in 1838 at the intersection of the Sacandaga Turnpike (now State Route 147) and the Ballston-Hagaman Highway (now County Road 45). The Village Charter describes Galway as a square measuring one-half mile on each side (approximately 160 acres), making it the second-smallest village in the state of New York.

Despite its small size, Galway Village supported the development of several businesses, churches, schools, a post office, a village park, a newspaper, and telephone access to the wider world. Tragedy struck in 1908 when fire destroyed many homes, businesses, hotels, barns, and a livery stable. The village was promptly rebuilt and continues to be a center of activity for the Town of Galway.

The historical marker is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of State Route 147 and County Road 45, almost directly in the center of the village.

Thanks to Phyllis Keeler and Tom Cwiakala who published a detailed write-up of this historical marker in the Summer 2011 issue of the Galway Reader.



Galway Preservation Society

Post Office Box 276
Galway, NY 12074