



# G·A·L·W·A·Y JOURNAL

PRESERVATION SOCIETY

## *~ GPS Update*

*~ Richard English*

The Galway Preservation Society is one of several groups in the Capital Region dedicated to preserving and celebrating local history. Evelyn Hanna, our webmaster, maintains links to many of these organizations on the GPS website. Some groups focus on specific communities, such as the Charlton Historical Society and the Town of Greenfield Historical Society. Other groups focus on geographic landmarks that span communities, such as the Friends of Schoharie Crossing which interprets the history of the Erie Canal. Some links point to local museums that offer scheduled presentations and interactive activities, including Brookside Museum, the Mohawk Valley Museum Consortium, and the National Bottle Museum.

### 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

The next time you find yourself surfing the web, check out some of these sites and search for events that interest you. Programs are often free and open to the public. If you find something compelling, let other GPS members know about it! While GPS puts on great monthly programs, many other activities are available for those who find history exciting and relevant in our current lives.

Our next member meeting will be Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, with a program entitled “Libraries of Galway: Open Doors to Knowledge.” The program will be presented by our very own Arlene Rhodes. We look forward to learning more about a local institution that continues to touch many families in our community today.

Looking ahead, we have several scheduled programs that should be of interest to our members:

- April 3<sup>rd</sup> -- Phyllis Sleeper will walk us through the contents of the “Galway Trunk,” a collection of historic artifacts that illuminates how everyday activities were accomplished in days gone by.
- May 8<sup>th</sup> -- we will meet at the home of Mike and Alyson Bingham to witness the dedication of a marker to commemorate the historic mill situated on their property. Note that this meeting will take place one week later than usual; directions will be provided in the May newsletter.
- June 5<sup>th</sup> -- our annual picnic will be held at Town Hall with a group activity modeled after the game show “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?” Anyone who enjoyed last year’s “GPS Jeopardy!” should find this event equally entertaining.

Contact us at [galwaypressociety@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:mcuffeperez@gmail.com) or call 944-5843. We reserve the right to edit submissions, with the author's approval.*

## *~ The Centralization of Schools in Galway, NY*

*~ Tom Cwiakala, Deputy Historian*

One of the many changes that took place over the years in the town of Galway was in the town's school system. Our sources of information on this subject are Sylvester's "History of Saratoga County," 1878, John Chester Booth's "History of Saratoga County," 1858, W. Bronson Taylor's "Stories and Pictures of Galway", 1966, a summary written by Clayton H. Brown, District Superintendent of Schools, Galway area 1939 – 1966, and school records.



*Pupils of Parkis Mills School, District #7, at the southeast side of the bridge across from the school, c. 1933. Do you know any of the students in this photo? Answers, along with this photo, can be found in **Galway 1900-1949, A Photographic History**.*

According to John Chester Booth, "Shortly after the return of the settlers, at the close of the war (Revolutionary), the first school was opened in a log cabin erected for that purpose at the Major settlement." Galway had private schools in the 1800s. On May 26, 1836, the Legislature incorporated the Galway Academy, which was located on West Street in Galway Village. This closed in 1863 and has a history of its own. There were private schools in several houses in Galway, but no public high school

until 1900. In 1900, Galway Village and contiguous territory were formed into District #3, Galway as a union free school with the power to establish a high school.

On March 26, 1901, the voters approved the erection of a high school for the sum of \$4000. The size of this two-story building was doubled by an addition in the mid-1920s. The first floor of this addition was a gymnasium with a stage at one end while the second floor was a large classroom. The gymnasium was used for gym classes in the winter months, assemblies, chorus practice, band practice, dances, concerts, gymnastic exhibitions, medical and hearing exams, and movie viewing. Gym class in winter was a scaled down basketball practice, too small for home games, so Perth High School gymnasium was rented for home games and full scale practice sessions. In the mid to latter 1940s a partition was installed in each of two classrooms in the original section, making four classrooms out of two. There was also a two-story addition built in the latter 1940s on the east side of where the new section joined the old section. The principal's office was moved over into the second floor of this addition and his office was turned into a small classroom.

Stepping back in time, in 1815, the commissioner of schools divided the town into 12 districts. Over the years, the number of districts changed as needed. In 1860, there were 15 schools scattered throughout the town of Galway and Providence. In the 1939-1940 school year the districts in Galway were: #1 Jersey Hill, #2 Jockey Street, #3 Union Free, #4 Moon District, #5 Birchton, #6 East Galway, #7 Parkis Mills, #8 Mosherville, #9 Greens Corners, #10 Radley Hill, #11 Bell, #12 Kimball; plus, Providence: #1 Antioch, #2 Bark. & Ctr., and #5 Hagadorn. These districts elected clerks, trustees and collector-treasurers. Students completed grades one through eight at their rural school, then went to grades nine through twelve and graduation at the high school in Galway Village.

Traveling to the high school was either by foot or by catching a ride with one of the few automobiles in town. During the early 1940s, it was difficult to find teachers for these rural schools. The idea of centralizing rural schools started back with Miss Lou Messinger, who served as district superintendent for Galway from 1912 to 1931. Charles H. Field, who served as principal during the period of 1931-1934, wrote his master's thesis on a proposal for the centralization of the Galway area. After the necessary formalities with the State Education Department, voting on a proposal to centralize took place on June 1, 1949. The results were: Yes votes, 482; No votes, 172, and the proposal was adopted along with a seven member board of education.

*The idea of centralizing rural schools started back with Miss Lou Messinger, who served as district superintendent for Galway from 1912 to 1931.*

With the closings of the outlying school districts during the 1930s and 1940s, space for the students became a problem. On June 12, 1950, and on March 8, 1951, two proposals and bond issues totaling \$584,000 were approved for a new building plus an 18-acre site on Route 147. Until the completion of the new building in September, 1952, classes were held in 14 locations. The old high school building was used until 1958 for grades K through 4<sup>th</sup>. By the mid-1950s, space again became a problem. An additional 93 acres of land was purchased by approval of the voters. A bond issue of \$650,000 for a new 16-room

elementary school addition was approved by the voters on September 26, 1956. This addition, upon completion, was named the Joseph Henry Elementary School. By 1966, after a bond issue of \$1,120,000, the facility was made nearly twice its size to accommodate the growing number of students.

In retrospect, it seems the necessary progress of education in Galway took place quite timely. Dividing the town into districts served well at the time because it made a school house available within a reasonable distance of each family, a distance that a child, kindergartener through teens, could handle. By the mid-40s, motorized transportation became more available, attendance in the rural schools declined, and by the end of the 40s, the time was right for centralization to take place.



*Galway High School Orchestra, 1940. Can you identify any of the young musicians in this photo? It's taken from **Galway 1900-1949, A Photographic History**.*

## *~ The Girl from Gloversville*

*~ Story by Carol Michelfelder Schweizer, poem by Mary Sanders Shartle*

June's mom drove her to Galway.  
She wore felt hat, gloves, high heels,  
a new wool dress for her interviews  
with the school board. But it was harvest time.  
The board — mostly farmers. No time  
to schedule meetings with a prospective teacher  
In some dry room somewhere.

Twenty, petite, blond, pretty,  
she marched off to Frank Holsapple's.  
He was harvesting corn.  
There was nothing for it but to hike into  
the field. Hat, heels, gloves.  
Same at Jimmy Donnan's place  
and he was three fields over.  
You do what you have to do  
to get the job even on a hot September day.

Finally showed her marks  
from Albany State to Mr. McChesney  
at the feed store.  
"I see your grades weren't too high," he said.  
She winced.  
"I figure anybody who has to work  
harder remembers longer."

Hat, heels, gloves – June,  
disheveled, got the job,  
part-time at first. Room and board  
seven dollars a week with Jane and Harry  
Stewart. Taught high school sciences,  
married Ed Michelfelder.

There's a tree in front of Town Hall  
planted in her memory for the roots  
she put down in Galway, the kids she raised,  
the kids she taught with the same  
high spirits she waded into those cornfields with  
in hat, gloves and high-heeled shoes.



*June Blowers of Gloversville,  
September 1935,  
from Galway 1900-1949,  
A Photographic History*

*The Girl from Gloversville appeared in  
Story Quilt: Poems of a Place, and is  
used here with permission of the  
Galway Public Library*

## *~ Serendipity*

~ James Donnan

The piece below is excerpted from a longer article that appeared in a back issue of *Glowegee Scrolls*.

Recently, Hazel Sanders and I were asked to talk with the fourth-grade pupils in the Galway School about how things were when we were young and when we went to school. “Change” was the subject of the day but the real surprise was the room that was to accommodate our discussion. We were to use the elementary cafeteria but there were no chairs set up as our time approached. I asked where we were to meet, doubting that room was ready for any classroom experience. I was assured there would be two chairs – one for Hazel and one for me, and I also noted that chairs were brought in for the teachers. Four sections of the fourth grade came in and promptly set on the floor up front!

When we were introduced, I told them I was sixty years old which brought a murmur through our audience, like nobody gets that old. It also brought about an assumption that I knew a lot about history from personal experience; for sure, the Galway fire and what started it. Perhaps I knew about the landing of the Pilgrims or even maybe Christopher Columbus and his three ships!

The discovery that I made, because I never really thought about it, was that there is an age that doesn’t need chairs. It sure saves a lot of work and it is kind of “chummy” with the kids gathered ‘round the floor.

Oh, yes, the first “change” I mentioned was that when I went to school we had chairs to sit in. I don’t ever remember sitting on the floor in school, but the remembering might have something to do with being sixty years old.

**Galway Preservation Society**

Post Office Box 276

Galway, NY 12074