



↗ May Meeting

~ J.B. Sanders

Our next meeting will be held at 7 pm on May 2, 2022 at the Galway Town Hall. No refreshments will be provided and social time will be limited due to Covid concerns. The May meeting will start promptly at 7 pm with a business meeting that includes the election of officers. After the business meeting will be the program for the evening, "Burr House: A Picture Tour" Presented by Arlene Rhodes and Pat Sanders. The home is located on Crane Road in the town of Galway. The Joel Burr family were the original settlers of the property, but owners down through the years have included the Baker, Cook, Michelfelder, Sturtevant, Winnick, and Flinton families. The presentation will include photographs of the recent exterior and interior as well as information about the families that lived there.

We are working to jointly present the program live at the Galway Town Hall and via Zoom for those who may wish to view the program remotely. Anyone wishing to join our meeting via Zoom should sign-in to the waiting room about 6:50 pm as the presentation should start promptly at 7:00 pm. The Zoom meeting number is 294 161 5132. Logging into this meeting number will admit you to a waiting room until I connect you to the meeting. I will send an email to everyone that I have email addresses for with a reminder of the upcoming Zoom meeting a few days before the meeting. I recommend that anyone wishing to install Zoom on your computer should go to Zoom.com and download the free version of Zoom. If you would like information about accessing the Zoom meeting you can go to <https://www.seniorsguide.com/technology/a-step-by-step-guide-to-zoom-meeting/> or the Zoom website. If you still have questions or need additional information, please contact me on 518-882-6239.

We are looking for volunteers to participate on the Membership Committee and Plaque Ad-Hoc Committee. Please call me on 518-882-6239 or email me at jbsanders44@me.com.

↗ The Sturtevant Farm on Crane Road

~ Arlene Rhodes

Cortland and Mildred Sturtevant and their children Jane and Dixon moved from Schenectady to the Crane Road farm early in 1953. Sturtevant was not a farmer; he had worked as plant manager for Sealtest Ice Cream. The Sturtevants had always dreamed of buying a farm; an inheritance allowed them to

follow their dreams. They looked at several farms in the Hudson River Valley before purchasing the 200 acre farm from the Michelfelder family.



Sturtevant Family 1953 Mildred, Cortland, and Dixon and Jane

Sturtevant hired Johnny Vevia, who knew the farming business, as his first hired hand. Johnny and his wife and two children came to live in a two-bedroom apartment in the spacious farm house.

And so the transformation of the farm began. Year by year they implemented new practices while neighboring farmers, accustomed to traditional methods, watched with a certain amount of skepticism. In 1955 a pole barn was added just behind the old barn complex. A four-stall milking parlor and milk room were constructed in a new steel and concrete building. A stainless steel, bulk milk storage tank provided more efficient refrigeration than keeping milk cans in a cold water reservoir. Drainage tile was buried in the field across Crane Road in the fall of 1959, finally making that field tillable.

A barn fire in 1961 led to a major change in farm operations. The original barn complex, full of the summer's hay crop, some of it damp, started a fire in the lofts. All the buildings were lost. Fortunately, the livestock were saved as were the milking parlor and milk room.



Sturtevant Farm, 1953

Following the fire, a new free-stall barn was designed and built by Cortland Sturtevant and his partner John Wilcox with help from Dixon and many others. In free-stall barns the cows are free to move about whereas traditional stanchions restrict the cows to their own space.



Free-stall barn, 1961, Cortland on the left and a visitor

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The first free-stall barns were built on the West Coast in 1958. During 1962 several universities, including Cornell, sponsored bus tours to the Sturtevant farm. People came to see the first free-stall barn in the US outside of California. Former Governor Thomas E. Dewey visited the farm.

Sturtevant kept a herd of 60 Holstein Friesian milk cows. He tried raising pigs once, and once was enough. Field crops, including alfalfa, trefoil, timothy and other grasses, were raised to feed their stock. It was necessary to rent property up and down Jockey Street for raising extra crops. Much of their own farm was wet and rocky.

In the early years on the farm, they produced grass silage only but later converted to corn silage. In 1967 a trench silo was constructed with the roof using trusses. The corn silage was sealed under an airtight cover of black plastic.

Cortland and Mildred Sturtevant did all they could to stimulate the interest of their children in the farm operation. Each was given a calf to raise and, going forward, to receive all profits from the cow and its future offspring to save for their education. Jane's Clova was one of the highest producers of any cow on the farm. Dixon's Gretchen had a unique personality. She didn't want to stay with the other heifers and kept breaking out; when they put her with the cows, she did the same. During the summer Dixon was encouraged to stay with Gretchen during the day where he often enjoyed time lying on her back as she grazed here and there.

The Sturtevants hosted many gatherings in the large, formal room at the west side of the house. Relatives from both sides of the family came for holidays and other special occasions. During winter both young and old enjoyed skating on the farm pond and sledding down Sheep Hill, a glacial esker, in the field south of Crane Road. In their later years, Mildred's parents moved to the farm. An apartment, the third living space in the big, old house, was created by remodeling the north wing, including the removal of a Dutch oven.

After living on the Crane Road farm for seventeen years, the Sturtevants sold the place in 1970.

Many thanks to Dixon Sturtevant for providing photos and information about the farm where he grew up. Note: a portion of the Sturtevant farm was land owned by the Burr family starting in 1803. The Burr Farm on Crane Road is the program at the May GPS meeting.

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