



June Meeting

~J. B. Sanders

Our next meeting will be our annual picnic to be held at the Galway town hall at 6:00 pm on June 6, 2022. There will not be a Zoom portion of the meeting. Linda Bobar has a list of people who will be bringing a dish. Please contact her at 518-882-6340 if you plan to attend and the dish you wish to bring. As entertainment, we are planning to present a program featuring the restoration of the Galway barn from the Hoffman property, which was dismantled and re-built in Vermont. The program Restoration Road, follows a Vermont barn restorer as he dismantles and rebuilds the barn in Vermont, thus saving the Galway barn.

Past Imperfect

~Bonnie Donnan

I have a cousin I have never met in person. I have, in the past, met his brothers, parents, and some of his cousins at various family gatherings. We share Donnan great grandparents, and an interest in history and genealogy. John Johnson and I connected on Facebook.

John is a member of a Facebook group that is a gathering of people sharing history and photos of the Schenectady area, and he belongs to Rough and Tumble Engineers Historical Association, who just recently completed Rough and Tumble Steam School 2022. Facebook and YouTube document their classes and events.

I find an interesting connection between sharing the past electronically and through in-person instruction, programs, and archives of papers and photos. The electronics provide a documentation of events that wasn't available in the past, an index, and the availability of in-hand video in cellphones is changing, creating, and recording history as it happens.

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I still enjoy the tangible version of history, exploring old photo albums, boxes of old papers. My box of miscellaneous papers and photos given to me by family members "cleaning out" has yielded a trove of insights into the past. One was a recipe for a Cholera Remedy of horrifyingly toxic ingredients I have shared in the past. Another was a framed pair of portraits, faded, slightly foxed, labeled on the back in the familiar handwriting of my Aunt Agnes, George and Jane Davis. I snapped a picture with my phone and sent it to John Johnson via Facebook labeled "our great, great, grandparents." He returned a cleaned up, higher contrast version of the portraits, a colorized version, their birth years, and earlier portraits of the couple and their son Frank.

My latest focus from the box is an old book. It has seen a lot of use. It is worn on the edges of the cover, and shows the rippled edges of pages that have been wet. The book is filled with clippings from publications, pasted into what was apparently regarded as an old book that could be put to better use. The glue used paste the pages was wet enough to give the appearance of water damage. The clippings are expertly fitted to the pages, showing that they were probably kept in a box or envelope, and fitted on the pages by selecting the proper length to complete the depth of the page but no longer. The pieces come from various publications, varying in font size and style, but all cut to the same column width. Poetry and humor are the majority of the clippings, with an occasional story continued over several pages. I was aware of bits of the original content of the pages peeking through. The right-hand margin of the pages showed numbers, leading me to believe it had been someone's account book. Flipping to the very back of the book, the few, flat, unrumpled, pages reveal it to be a court records book! Oh no. The cases are listed, plaintiff, defendant, the justice presiding, settlement. The money amount listed would indicate that was some type small claims or civil court, settlements of debts, dating to 1821. Court records used as a scrapbook. The clippings yielded a date of 1857 in one place.

I suppose there is a point where old papers, books, and photographs lose their value to a generation. They seem no longer useful or relevant. They are discarded or repurposed. But to genealogists, and historians researching the past they are golden. As a fan of the PBS television show "Finding Your Roots" I am fascinated by people who are usually well-known personalities being shown their family trees. It is not uncommon for people to not know their families beyond their grandparents, and are stunned and sometimes moved to tears finding multiple generations of ancestors, and the stories of their people. History matters.