



January Meeting

~J. B. Sanders

I would like to thank Pat Sanders and Arlene Rhodes for their interesting presentation on the Johnston/Ashley House.

Our next meeting will be held at 7 pm on January 9, 2023 at the Galway Town Hall. No refreshments will be provided and social time will be limited. A presentation will be made by Lauren Roberts, Saratoga County Historian, on the Saratoga County Poor House in Ballston Spa.



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. The Zoom meeting number is 294 161 5132. In case of inclement weather, the presentation will be only on Zoom.

If you haven't done so already, members should now submit their dues for the 2022-2023 year.

Stone Walls

~Bonnie Donnan

I am anticipating the coming program on Monday January 9th. I remember my curiosity, as a small child, riding by what was then a large expanse of open land with the intriguing stone walls on County Farm Road. I do not remember seeing buildings, but the walls fascinated me. Neatly piled, orderly fitted rocks. Stacked with precision and care, as level and regular as if they were made of bricks.

I grew up on one of the Galway farms that produced the dependably endless crop that never failed to appear with each tilling of the soil: stones. The freeze and thaw cycle in the soil slowly worked the stones inexorably toward the surface. The yearly task was not as great as the original settlers who cleared the land, but it persisted. Our stone walls were not walls so much as linear heaps. Nothing pretty, but it got the rocks out of the way. The amount of work and time spent on removing these stones was a task resembling a harvest, but without producing a saleable product.

In the very back of my memory we had a team of horses hitched to a heavy, flat, wooden stone boat. Small stones were picked up by hand and tossed on to the stone boat. Larger ones were rolled. The ones that lurked below the surface, iceberg fashion, displaying only a bit of the total mass at the surface, became a project in themselves. A heavy metal pry bar was worked around and under the beast, wiggling it loose. This could require more than one person. The final grunting human energy that evicted the stone, and then pried and rolled the rock onto the boat, and later, off the boat, was repeated over the field. The stones were an adversary, and when they were removed, and joined their companions hauled by earlier generations, the task was done.

Farmers who annually struggled through this back endangering drudgery would be hard to convince that, in the future, people would pay money to go to a gym and lift weights. They would be eager to adopt the contemporary version of mechanized rock picking. Front end loaders and skeleton rock grapples on tractors would be envied.

My grandfather Donnan had a visitor one day who wanted buy some rocks for landscaping. I can only imagine how stunning the request was to someone who battled stones his entire working life. "Fifteen dollars, and you can take all you want."