



## *March Meeting*

*~J. B. Sanders*

I would like to thank Paul Perrault for his excellent presentation on the Ice Harvesting in Saratoga County.

Our next meeting will be held at 7pm on March 6, 2023 at the Galway Town Hall. No refreshments will be provided and social time will be limited. A presentation will be made by Bob Wemple, Providence Town Historian, on "The Trevett Chair Company". The company reportedly made 300 chairs a year during the mid-1800's.

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.

Thanks to Alan Maddaus, the latest version of the Archive data bases are now on the GPS website ([www.galwaypreservationsociety.org](http://www.galwaypreservationsociety.org)). These include the Collections, Photographs and Surname files. Archives are available by appointment only by contacting Arlene Rhodes or Pat Sanders.

## *Professor James Emerson Weld*

*And the Galway Classic School*

*~ by Dave Waite*

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The subject of this article is James Emerson Weld, a lifelong educator in County, as well as other schools across the Eastern states. Born in 1847, James was the son of Charlton farmer, James Hervey Weld, whose ancestors had come into Saratoga County from Boston, Massachusetts in the late 1700s.

James E. Weld was educated at Charlton Academy and Union College, graduating in 1870. As when he took his first position as an educator five years later, he was already holding the title of Professor, it can be assumed that he taught at Union during the years after he graduated.

Professor Weld's first work in education was as the principal at Charlton Academy in 1875 at the age of twenty-eight. The school had been established in 1859 by Rev. James M. Crocker as a year-round private boarding school. Weld was the fourth principal of the school, and Sylvester's *History of Saratoga County* gives this account of his tenure:

In the fall of 1875 the present principal, Professor J.E. Weld, took charge of the school. The school curriculum embraces all the studies usually taught in the academies or preparatory schools. The school was successful under the management of Mr. Crocker, but the frequent changes of teachers had detracted from its success until Mr. Weld assumed control, since which time it has improved. The attendance averages about forty scholars.



In 1881, Prof. Weld left Charlton Academy and moved on to teach at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. It was also in 1881, at a ceremony in Northville, New York, James married Frances Ella Foster, the daughter of Charlton resident Rev. William W. Foster, Sr. They were married by her father, who was assisted by her brother Rev. William W. Foster, Jr.

Weld soon left his position at Swarthmore College, and a year after their marriage, Professor Weld opened a private school in the east part of James Bell's house on the north side of East Street in the village of Galway. By 1882, Weld had moved his school to Union Hall which was on the second floor above Alphonse Cota's (some records give his surname as Cote) blacksmith shop on West Street in the village. It is not surprising that Professor Weld located his school in Galway, as the village had a long tradition of supporting educators. When Galway dry goods merchant Harvey Crouch was interviewed by Elizabeth Robb Quinby during her years of collecting details of life in the village, he told her this about the local view of education:

The people of Galway were always favorable to educational matters and saw advantages of a higher, broader, more liberal system than the common schools offered, and as few could avail themselves of a collegiate course, several competent, scholarly men were employed as private and public tutors to fit advanced pupils for college. Such men were Professors Henry, Watson, Weld, Rev. McFarlan, Miss Phoebe Briggs, Miss Paul, Clara Shurtliff, Miss S, and others.

In 1956, W. Bronson Taylor interviewed 91-year-old William Crane for his book *Stories and Pictures of Galway*. Here Mr. Crane told of attending this high school, which he called an exceptional school, where you could take any subject and were also prepared for college entrance.



Union Hall Building, Galway Village

The *Saratogian* of March 30, 1882, announced that Weld was a very fine teacher and they predicted that he would be successful in his endeavor. When Professor Weld spoke at a church social in Galway soon after the school was in session, it was reported that his speech was greatly appreciated by all of those who were present. It was also noted in the March 23, 1882, *Saratogian*, that though "he did not respond to the hearty encore, yet we live in hopes of being able to hear him again."

A year after the school opened, the May 10, 1883, *Saratogian* again reported:

"Prof. and Mrs. Weld are now cozily and comfortably settled in their new home and amply prepared to give instruction to all the boys and girls that may come under their tuition. If parents would educate their children thoroughly at a comparatively small cost, they cannot do better than to patronize our village high school of which Prof. Weld is principal."

At the end of the school year, the newspaper noted that Professor Weld was considered one of the best instructors in the area and the tuition was reasonable. The next January the newspaper reported that the school, under the supervision of Prof. Weld, was opening its winter term with "fine prospects," and had added an organ. That year there was one other addition as well, when Professor Weld's wife, Frances, gave birth to their first child, James William, in August of 1883.

From Galway, Professor Weld and his family went to Bennington, Vermont where he became the principal of their high school for six years. Bennington's first high school had been built in 1875, only a few years before Weld arrived.

In Vermont, the couple had two more children, a pair of twin boys born in January of 1888 named Arthur Francis and Ralph Foster.

While in Vermont, he joined the Vermont National Guard where he became a first lieutenant. Later being promoted to captain. On September 6, 1890, Capt. James E. Weld, Co. K. "Bennington Rifles" First Regiment of the Vermont National Guard tendered his resignation and was honorably discharged. The Commander-in-Chief, William P. Dillingham gave some final thoughts on Weld and his service, saying that in the short time he had been with the National Guard, he had demonstrated his worth as an officer and had won high regard from all. During his years of service, he obtained a reputation as an authority in rifle practice. As Weld was moving permanently from Vermont, the Command gave him their best wishes for his future welfare.



*Griffin Institute, Round Lake*

In June of 1890, Weld left Bennington when he was elected principal of the Round Lake Academy, in the Saratoga County village of Round Lake, New York. Also known as Griffin Institute, this co-ed school was established in 1887 as a seasonal academy that offered programs in science, art, languages, music, and history.

Prof. Weld was reported as having success in running his academy in September of 1891, even leasing the Burkham house from Dr. Griffin for boarding. During the following years, the academy continued to grow and prosper, with one example reported in the March 6, 1894, *Troy Daily Times*:

Electrical, telegraphic, chemical and physical apparatus have been added to the equipment of the Griffin institute, a contribution from the regents, as a supplement to Professor Wilson's bequest of more than 600 volumes. The library of this academy now numbers nearly 2,000 volumes and is said by Professor James E. Weld, the principal, to be the largest and most thorough library of any village academy in the state. It is a free circulating library open to all of the residents of the village.

In 1896 Weld left Round Lake and moved his family north when he took employment with the Saranac Lake Union School, a position that he held for the next twelve years. Chartered by the New York State Board of Regents in 1893, it was not until the year that Professor Weld became principal that additions made to their library and science laboratory opened the opportunity for it to become a full high school. Along with being principal, Professor Weld also taught science and organized the Cadet Corps. The Weld children took advantage of the school during their years in Saranac Lake, and Jamie William Weld, James and France's oldest son, in 1900 was one of fourteen graduates in the fifth graduating class of the High School.

In a newspaper advertisement that appeared in the July 17, 1902, *Adirondack Enterprise*, the school was promoted as a place where "Young men and women desirous of preparing for college or of acquiring a practical business education are particularly invited to note the advantages offered by our High School."

That year the school offered three courses of study: The Classical, which prepared the student for a classic or science college program; a Regents course or a Commercial course which included instruction in bookkeeping, penmanship, and typewriting.

In a surprising turn of events, in 1905, Professor Weld was charged with incompetency and ungentlemanly conduct before the Saranac Lake Board of Education. These complaints were brought against him by eight or nine teachers in the Saranac Lake School, nearly all of whom were reported to be leaving the school. Mr. Coates, an attorney representing the parties bringing the suit, said in the *Malone*

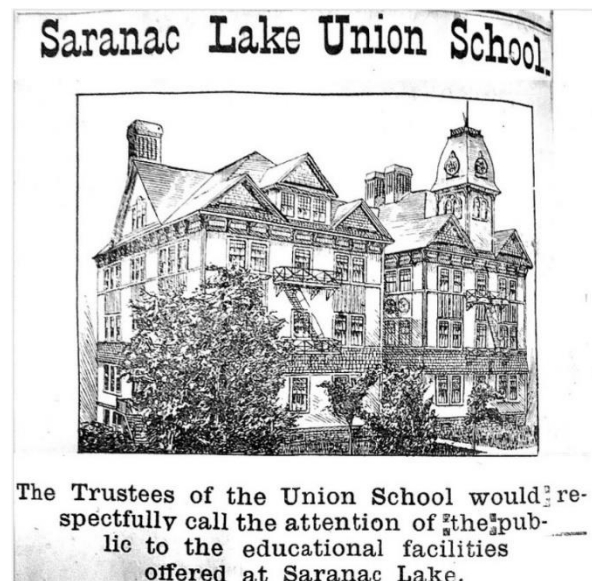
*Daily Times* that it was vital to the interest of Prof. Weld to “have the thing sifted to the bottom and the High School sided with Professor Weld, signing a petition where they expressed their confidence in him and stated that he had been unjustly accused of ungentlemanly conduct and incompetency. These allegations were soon dropped, and he blame placed where it belongs.” The students of Saranac Lake was exonerated of all charges.

In 1907 the Saranac Lake Board of Education had a change in its members. The new board decided to change their contract with Weld, who had been engaged as the high school principal for the coming year. The change took the principal position from him as well as the business course he was to teach, allowing him only to teach a commercial course. Professor Weld responded by turning in his keys and informing the board that he would be available to perform the duties he had been contracted to do.

The May 18, 1907, *St. Regis Adirondack News* reported “A short time ago Prof. Weld, of the high school was engaged as superintendent of the Saranac Lake schools, which appointment appears also to be illegal owing to the fact that in a district of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, the school board has no authority to employ a superintendent of schools. At that time Prof. Browsell was engaged to succeed Weld as principal of the high school.



Principal James E. Weld



The Board of Education did decide to offer Weld a contract for another year, but before he could sign the contract a petition was circulated asking that he not be re-engaged. The petition rose from dissatisfaction from both the head of the school and a large number of taxpayers. To add fuel to Professor Weld's situation, charges of graft were made against him, alleging that he has falsified documents stating he was a graduate of Union College. The allegation was quickly proven false. Professor Weld chose not to continue work for the Saranac School District and he and his family soon left the area.

During his life, Frank Weld was always actively interested in the work of the Methodist church and its outreach organization the Freedman's Aid Society.

After leaving Saranac Lake in 1909, Weld took an assignment from the society to be stationed as a professor at Rust University in Holly Springs, Miss. Also at the university at that time was his brother-in-law, Dr. W. W. Foster, Jr., who had been the head of the school since 1898. Rust University was established in 1866 by the Freedman's Aid Society and the Methodist Episcopal Church. One of the oldest colleges for African Americans in the United States, it was named for Rev. Richard S. Rust, a preacher, and abolitionist who had helped found the institution.



*Students of Round Lake Academy, 1910*

Weld and his wife returned permanently to Round Lake in 1911 where he again became the principal of the Round Lake High School. In 1912 Weld was elected as a Trustee of the Round Lake Summer Institute, and also served as treasurer of the Round Lake Association and the Chairman of the Round Lake Water and Sewer Committee. Professor Weld continued as the principal at Round Lake School until the spring of 1914 when he resigned due to failing health. Weld died at his son's home in Troy in 1914, where he had gone as his health deteriorated. He was survived by His wife Frances Ella Foster, a daughter of Dr. W. W. Foster; three sons, James W. and Ralph F. of Troy and Arthur F. Weld of Round Lake; two grandchildren, James W. Weld, jr. and Frances Alice Weld of Troy, and two sisters, the Misses Ella E. and Emma I Weld of Jonesville. His funeral was held in the Round Lake Methodist Church, with a large attendance that included all his students from the Round Lake Union School. His pallbearers were the trustees of the village of Round Lake, with a quartette of local men and women furnishing the music. Surrounded by beautiful floral arrangements, Professor Frank E. Weld was eulogized as a man held in high regard and loved by all with whom he was associated. He was laid to rest in his family plot in Jonesville Cemetery.

The photograph of Charlton Academy is from the Saratoga County History Center archives, the photo of the Union Hall building is from *Galway, Yesterday, and Today*, the image of the Saranac Lake Union School came from the July 17, 1902, *Adirondack Enterprise* and the photograph of the Round Lake School children is from the Saratoga County Historian archives. The photograph of Griffin Institute is from [roundlakevillage.org/history/buildings-of-note.html](http://roundlakevillage.org/history/buildings-of-note.html), the image of Professor Weld was provided by the Lake Free Library Adirondack Room.

I want to thank Arlene Rhodes for sharing her knowledge of Galway Village as well as materials from her archives that were a major source of information for this story. I also want to acknowledge the assistance of Michele Tucker, Saranac Lake Free Library Adirondack Room Researcher who located a photograph of Professor Weld in the library collection. Other sources include *Historical and Genealogical Notes of Galway New York* by Elizabeth Robb Quinby which are held in the Galway Preservation Society archives, *Stories and Pictures of Galway*, by W. Bronson Taylor.

