



December 2024

~Carol Schweizer

Galway Preservation Society enjoyed a video at the November meeting. Rick Reynolds, Ballston Spa Historian produced it, along with Dave Waite who did the photography. It told the story of the American Revolution in the Ballston Spa area. Several local residents of Ballston spoke on the video about different locations, buildings and residents who were involved in that war. What an interesting collection of patriots, loyalists and even traitors!

I hope you are beginning to get a bit of the Holiday Spirit. Here is a story of more recent local Galway History. For over 40 years the Galway Community Holiday Basket Project has endeavored to brighten the holiday season for children and adults of local families who qualify for assistance. In 2023 the project, with the generous support of the community, was able to give holiday baskets to benefit 335 children, adults and elders. In order to fulfill its mission, the Project relies on the generosity of individuals and businesses for support. Please consider contributing to the Holiday Basket Project today. Monetary donations can be mailed to: Greater Galway Community Holiday Basket Project, PO Box 166, Galway, NY 12074

Keeping with the message of Holiday Spirit, GPS would like to invite you all to our December meeting/PARTY! The gathering will be informal and festive. We will have refreshments! Please join us to celebrate this special season of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Winter Solstice. A few of our members have already promised to start us off with some memories of bygone celebrations, traditions and winter activities. And our veteran storyteller Bonnie has contributed the narrative that follows. You may bring an ornament or object that takes you back to family or community celebrations or simply share your story. It would be lovely if you would consider taking part in our program. But don't worry! If you are shy, just come, sit back, and enjoy the evening! Hope to see you on December 2, at 7:00 pm

Keeping Warm

~Bonnie Donnan

When I was born, I joined an extended family living in a big extended farmhouse. Upstairs, a bedroom known as the big room, was usually set up with three beds, often three-quarter size. This dormitory size room had served my grandfather Donnan's sisters, Jane, Elizabeth, and Belle. Close in age, they went to college together at the Oneonta Normal School. When I asked my grandmother Donnan the origin of a big crack in one of the door panels, she said my grandfather had been teasing his sisters, and one of them slammed it with enough force to split

the door. This room had a capped chimney porthole between two east-facing windows, evidence that the room had been heated by a stovepipe from the room below, the sitting room. Three other bedrooms on the same floor looked like they had been heated by stovepipe from the floor below, or counted simply on rising heat. And many quilts and blankets. The kitchen cookstove produced lots of heat. I do not remember a day, even in August, that there was not a fire in that stove. The daily fire consumed kitchen scraps not fed to dogs, chickens, or pigs. There was no such thing as a garbage can. My Aunt Agnes, my father and Hume's sister, commented in some of her notes what the summer canning season could be like in the kitchen. The stove stood out into the room, and a door behind it sent the heat straight up the stairs.

When my parents married, an extension on the west end of the house added another kitchen, dining room, three more bedrooms, and Glory be, central heating! A big coal furnace in the cellar certainly took the edge off Galway winter nights. I can recall on the back edge of my memory the sound of a coal delivery sliding down a chute into the cellar. I do not believe it took this Scottish clan long to wonder "Why purchase coal when we have a woodlot?" The team of horses and the logging sleigh didn't lose their job. The furnace was well fed.

My Uncle Hume was never one to pass up an opportunity to turn work into fun. Headed home with a load of firewood, the horses trotting along, the farm dogs frolicking in the snow, Hume sped the team up. It was cold out in the open. The dogs also sped up. Turning the trip into a race with the dogs, Hume started driving chariot style, the lines wrapped around his arms, popping and cracking one of the lines in the air like a whip. The dogs and the horses, catching the spirit, flattened from a brisk trot into a run. As the horses galloped, their heels started hitting the whipple trees. The whipple trees came unhooked, Hume went over the dashboard, and as he was dragged through the snow, managed to free himself from the lines. Relieved of the weight of the sleigh, the horses continued the race with the dogs. Hume found them patiently waiting at the barnyard gate when he trudged home.