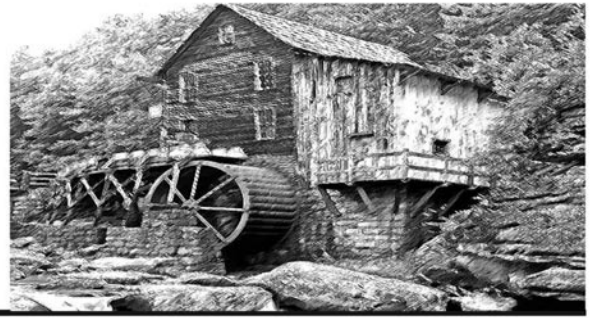


The Gristmill

Saratoga County History Journal



Preserving the History of Saratoga County

Spring 2023

Hard economic times: 1929 and today; *It was a different world then*

By Charles Hogan, PhD.

The October 1929 crash of the New York Stock Market came as a surprise to residents of Ballston Spa and the rest of Saratoga County, as it did to other Americans. Unlike the current Stock Market decline and hard economic times, which has occurred after building bad economic news, the crash of 1929 struck like a lightning bolt out of a clear blue sky. Also, unlike the current economic difficulties, the media and common citizens did not look to blame government for the problems, or look to government for the solutions.

Careful readers of the *Daily Ballston Journal*, the major source of news for most residents of the Village, would have had little inclining that a profound economic change was about to strike the nation. Only in retrospect can we see the wire service news flashing warnings of impending doom.

There is, for example, this item from two weeks before the Great Crash: the *Journal* reported on a speech given by the New York State Deputy Secretary of State in Syracuse. A.C. McNulty said that his department was going after real estate swindlers, a growing problem. He warned citizens not to give money to slick operators trying to sell them land, sight unseen (an apparent reference to various Florida land schemes). These lots, said the state official, were "often underwater."

The speculative excess, however, was presented as a law enforcement problem, not as a sign of a dangerous



Source: Chris Morley Collection, Saratoga History Center

Four years into the Great Depression, Ballston Spa looked and functioned pretty much as it had before the Stock Mark crash. Parades, such as this one in Sept. 1933, went by open shops and citizens who were still going about their lives. Times were bad, but it was not a catastrophe.

economic imbalance, which threatened the prosperity of the nation.

On the national scene, the major economic interest of President Hoover and the Congress, was debating the terms of a proposed new Tariff law. There was nothing unusual about that. Since the beginning of the Republic, the economic role of the federal government had pretty much been confined to the issues of tariffs on foreign goods and the value of the currency. People either favored high, or low, tariffs, or a strong or weak dollar. Generally speaking, those preferences split along occupational and class lines. Manufacturers and people likely to be lenders, favored high tariffs and sound money. Farmers and bor-

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Stock Market crash

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rowers, favored the opposite.

That split, and that debate, had been going on since the Washington administration, when Alexander Hamilton took the high tariff and sound money position, and Thomas Jefferson took the opposite position.

In the weeks and months before, and even after the Great Crash of 1929, the economic debate in Washington continued along the same lines, with the same arguments, and the same alignment of interests as it had since the beginning of the country. Neither body of Congress officially debated the Great Crash during the remainder of 1929. Any economic debate that occurred was on the Tariff.

During the week of the Crash, the only story on the wire services from Washington concerned the topic of lobbying. A Senate committee had been commissioned to investigate the practice, and they issued their report.

The report said that, the popular belief “that lobbyists were pearl-buttoned wainscouts,” who gained their influence at social events that they attended with members of Congress, was wrong. The article reported that “contrary to popular belief, lobbying was carried out during regular business hours by professional men, and was not connected to after hours social affairs.”

The committee expected the public to be reassured by this piece of information.

The Stock market Crash was reported on the Friday after Black Thursday, but it was only one of six stories on the top of the front page. The lead story of the day, was a football victory by Ballston Spa over Saratoga Springs. “Ballston Spa line played a strong game,” reported the *Journal*. The editorial of the day was inspired by the game, and carried the title “Football is a Builder of Men.”

Monday’s issue of the *Journal* went back to other news,

not mentioning the stock market.

After the crash continued, on that Monday and the following Tuesday, the seriousness of the situation seems to have gained the attention of the editor, for he announced “Six City banks to pool to sustain stock market” bannered across the front page on Wednesday’s edition.

The general opinion, at that time, was that responsibility for the Stock Market lay, exclusively, in the hands of the leading bankers. There was also confidence that the bankers, if they put their mind to it, could right the situation.

That opinion, like the focus on tariffs, was a product of history. The Panic of 1907, the last time that the Stock Market had tanked, was stopped by a meeting of bankers organized by J.P. Morgan.

Bankers dutifully attempted to repeat Morgan’s feat of 1907 in the aftermath of the Crash of 1929, as reported by the *Journal*.

A sample story comes from October 30, which reported that “leading New York bankers were supporting the market in a co-operative manner.”

At that time most people in Ballston Spa, like most people elsewhere in the country, did not think that guiding the economy was the proper role of government.

The first national leader to even suggest that the federal government might play an active role in the unfolding drama, was Senator William Borah. He suggested, a month after the Stock Market Crash, that the Senate might investigate the causes behind the crash.

Borah’s trial balloon (which found no takers) so outraged the editor of the *Journal*, that he wrote his one and only editorial on the Stock Market crash during 1929.

On November 22, in an editorial titled “Senate and Wall Street”, the *Journal* heaped scorn on Borah’s “suggestion.” An investigation, said the editorial, would be an “absurdity.” Voicing the common opinion of the day, the editor said that “A Senate committee that couldn’t extract facts from thin air would stand little chance of throwing new light on what has happened recently on Wall Street and why.”


The Stock Market crash was the business of bankers and all that anyone else could or should do, was to encourage them to get together and straighten out the mess.

President Hoover, to the approval of the *Journal*, shared this opinion. While continuing his focus on getting the new Tariff bill passed, something he said was now especially important, considering the dire economic news, Hoover attempted to spur more cooperation among the nation’s bankers.

In the same issue that contained the editorial scolding Senator Borah, the *Journal* reported on Hoover calling in “farm leaders” for a talk in his office. The article approvingly reported this conference as “another step in the President’s plan to mobilize the forces of business throughout the country to undertake to dispel any foolish pessimism resulting from the stock market depression.”

Along with calling in the representatives of farmers, the President called in industrialists and labor leaders. The

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Stock Market crash

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story's headline was "Hoover Plan Left to Three Great Units - Industry, Agriculture, Labor to Unite Forces to Extend Prosperity." The lead sentence of the story proclaimed that, after the meetings in the President's offices, that the economic destiny of the nation "now reposes in the hands of industry, to be worked out under the directions of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States."

While waiting for the bankers to sort out the mess in Wall Street, and scorning any politician who attempted to stick the government's nose into private business, the *Journal* was not noticeably nervous about the local effects of the Great Crash.

After all, in 1929, the term Great Depression was used to describe the long economic downturn that was set off by the Panic of 1873, which either lasted four years, or twenty years, depending on the perspective of the historian doing the counting.

That Depression, which was the first international economic contraction that affected Europe as much as it did the United States, was also the period of the greatest economic expansion in the Village of Ballston Spa.

The first Great Depression was so severe in England that the country - permanently - lost her status as the world's leading economic power. But, in Ballston Spa, and much of the rest of Saratoga County, the mid 1870's saw a good deal of prosperity, as witnessed by the construction of the lion's share of substantial Victorian buildings.

As far as the editor of the *Journal* could tell, all that news from Wall Street would also spare local industry. In his end-of-the-year news review, his section on local economic news ran under the headline "Prosperous year for all industries - No serious fires." Lack of fires and prosperity went together in a mill town like Ballston Spa, since fires were the primary cause for mills to close. If they had been doing well, they rebuilt; if they had not been doing well, they went out of business.

Although this optimism would soon prove excessive, it was not entirely misplaced.

Local communities rode out the new Great Depression without the severe deprivation that affected some other areas of the country. Times may have been tough: hours and wages were often cut for mill workers and those who depended on the mill workers; but neither most of the local mills, nor the GE works in Schenectady (a major employer) closed during the Depression. One of the largest mills in Ballston Spa was the Ballston Stillwater Knitting mill. Their main product was low-end work socks. These continued to sell well during the Depression, since there was no cheaper alternative. Farmers already sold locally and they continued to find a local market for their goods. Another major mill, Brischoff's Chocolate Factory, confined to buy large quantities of milk for milk chocolate throughout the Depression, closing only in 1945, after WWII cut off their supplies of chocolate and sugar. Nobody locally starved and the streets were not full of homeless people.

We can only hope that however different the situation is in Saratoga County, between 1929 and today, that one similarity holds: that Saratoga County will continue, relatively speaking, to be spared during the next few years.

That may well be true. Government, which seemed so peripheral for prosperity to people in 1929, is now at the center of our economic world. In addition to tourism, the main economic engines of Saratoga County's economy are the state government in Albany, now linked to Saratoga by I-87, and the government-favored semiconductors manufacturing plant in Malta. The federal government has allocated funds to expand chip production, and GlobalFoundries says they will take them, no matter the economic situation. The West Milton submarine base, another government operation, is also a stabilizing factor. The post Cold War reduction in the submarine fleet is over. Talk in Washington is now about increasing the size of the fleet.

None of these factors look likely to fade in the foreseeable future.

Changes coming for the *Gristmill*

With this issue, *The Gristmill*, as it has existed since the Fall of 2018, will cease publication in its current form. However, it will be replaced by a new publication currently being planned by the Saratoga County History Center at Brookside Museum. In 2018, the current editorial team saw a need to "provide an opportunity for local historians and history buffs to publish their research in a local setting" by reestablishing this quarterly journal, originally distributed by Brookside many years ago. The History Center is now once again a vibrant institution that is in position to continue the legacy of the *Gristmill*. Several of the *Gristmill* editorial staff will continue to serve on the History Center's Publications Committee responsible for the new and expanded publication to be launched

in the fall of 2023.

I wish to thank the members of the editorial team and the volunteer authors who gave generously of their time and talents over the last five years. We look forward to accepting submissions for the new edition from our authors - both established and new. We all know that Saratoga County is one of the fastest growing areas in the State and we hope to continue to encourage our citizens to gain a deeper understanding of our past. As writers and readers, you have all played a part in making that happen, and will continue to do so in the future.

Paul Perreault, Editor

Shenendehowa Teacher Had Diverse Roots

By John L. Scherer

Margaret Simmons was born on her family homestead on Garnsey Road in Rexford on Friday, June 13, 1919. She made the Town of Clifton Park her home until her death on March 2, 2009. From 1953 until her retirement in 1981, she taught Social Studies, English, and served as Reading Coordinator at the Shenendehowa High School. She also taught Sunday school at the Rexford Methodist Church. She has been a very strong influence on her former pupils, both from high school and Sunday school. Those former students I have spoken with have a great deal of respect for Miss Simmons, and some wonderful memories. I had the privilege of interviewing Miss Simmons in 2001.

Miss Simmons was a delightful person, well spoken, very polite, a keen mind, sharp wit, and a great storyteller. She must have been a wonderful teacher. No wonder her students remember her with such respect. She was proud of the fact that she was the first person of African American descent to teach at Shenendehowa. My jaw dropped when she mentioned this. Miss Simmons is light skinned. I had seen her on several occasions, and I had no idea that she was African American.

Again, I was surprised when she told me that all four of her great grandfathers were white, some of them plantation owners. Her maternal grandparents had been born into slavery. I was fascinated with this aspect of her heritage, as I had just completed reading several books about Thomas Jefferson and the family he had by his enslaved, Sally Hemmings. Sally and Jefferson's deceased wife, Martha, had the same father, so they were half sisters.

Several other recent books on Black family history, *Slaves In The Family*, and *The Harristons* are about families with mixed background. It was obviously an accepted or at least common practice for plantation owners



Source: Author

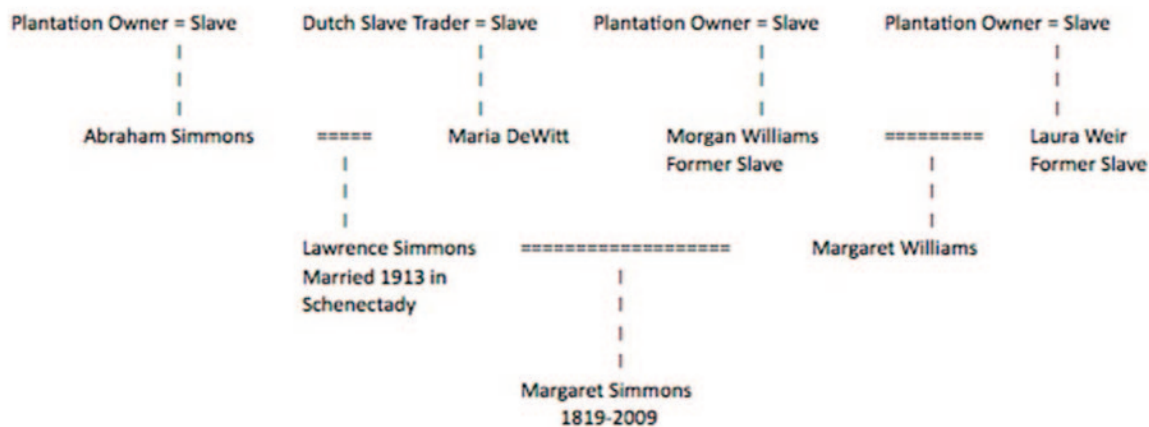
Margaret Simmons at her retirement, in 1981 with a few of her first students from the class of 1954, Shenendehowa's first graduating class. From the left are: Arthur Hayner; Edwin Faulkner, former Assessor for the Town of Halfmoon; Margaret Simmons; A. Richard Lee, former Chairman of the Half Moon Town Planning Board; and Arthur DeVoe.

to have sexual relations with their enslaved. Plantation owners would sometimes free their children that were born into slavery. Of course, the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War freed them all.

Miss Simmons' father, Lawrence A., was born near Charleston, South Carolina. Shortly after he was born, his parents, Abraham Simmons and Maria DeWitt moved to Charleston, formerly the hub of the American slave trade. Abraham's father was Jewish, and Maria's father and grandfather were Dutch slave traders who came in to Charleston.

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ANCESTRY OF MARGARET SIMMONS



Simmons

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When Lawrence was eight years old, his father who was a shoe cobbler decided to become a minister. In 1893, Abraham and his wife Maria, a schoolteacher, moved their family including Lawrence, his older sister Anna and younger sister Ethlyn to Talladega, Alabama. They traveled by train. Here Abraham entered a Congregational Church School to study to be a minister. Lawrence attended school here all the way through college. All the other Simmons children (there would eventually be seven in all) had the opportunity to attend school here as well.

Once Abraham became a minister, he would serve churches in the outlying areas of Talladega, until he became pastor of a church in Selma, Alabama. Later he and his family moved to New Orleans where he became pastor in two different Congregationalist churches. It was at the second church that Margaret and her brother were baptized by their grandfather, having traveled all the way from Clifton Park to New Orleans for this very special event.

Lawrence, met his future wife Margaret H. Williams at Talladega. She attended school there, and roomed with Lawrence's sister. Margaret was born in Jacksonville, Alabama, 29 miles from Talladega. She was one of seven children of Morgan Williams and Laura Weir. Morgan was the son of a plantation owner and an enslaved person. He had been close to his father who taught him carpentry, and he became well respected in his community. His mother later married an African American and had four or five more children, some who moved to Toledo, Ohio where Margaret Simmons visited them for the first time in 1927.

Margaret's grandmother, Laura Weir, was also the offspring of a plantation owner and an enslaved person. She became a baby nurse. Margaret has her ring and some furniture that she owned. Morgan and his wife Laura were former slaves. They started life together with a blanket, a mule and a plow. By the time they died in 1922 and 1924, they owned two farms and a house in town.

Margaret's mother began school at Barber Seminary in Anniston, Alabama, but those who sought to deprive African Americans from having an education burned the school to the ground on three different occasions. She then attended school at Talladega, where she graduated in 1902 to become a schoolteacher.

Margaret's parents, Margaret Williams and Lawrence Simmons, were married at Schenectady in 1913. When Lawrence had graduated from Talladega in 1903, he took the train to Savannah, where he worked his way up the coast to New York City. A friend he met at Talladega helped get him into the Sheffield School of Engineering at Yale University where he graduated with a Bachelors

degree in 1906. He then went to Lynn, Massachusetts where he worked for General Electric, and by 1907 had moved to the General Electric plant at Schenectady.

Lawrence purchased the farm on Garnsey Road in Rexford in 1909, four years before his marriage. His three brothers, who had also come to the area, helped with the farm until they signed up for World War I. Margaret was Lawrence and Mary's youngest child. She and her two older brothers, DeWitt and Lawrence H. attended the Waite Road School on the corner of Route 146 and Waite Road. Their father was a trustee for this school for several years.

Margaret then graduated from Nott Terrace High School in Schenectady, and in 1936 left home to attend college, first at Barber Scotia near Charlotte, North Carolina and then at New York University in New York City. With her degree in Social Science, she taught in Georgia for a while, eventually landing a teaching job at a high school in Greensboro, North Carolina.

In 1953, desiring to return home to upstate New York to care for sick relatives, Margaret applied for a teaching position at the new Shenendehowa Central School. At the time it was not easy for African Americans to get teaching positions in the northeast. Although she applied much earlier, by late July she still had not received a reply. The principal at Greensboro High School urged the Shenendehowa Board to make a decision. If Margaret Simmons were hired, Greensboro would need to find a replacement on short notice.

The Shenendehowa Board of Education met with Margaret who answered various questions and indicated that the salary was not at issue. She was offered the job at \$4200 a year, a considerably lower salary than the \$4500 she had been receiving at Greensboro. It was indeed fortunate that Shenendehowa's first African American was hired. She returned to her hometown and built herself a home on DuBois Lane in Rexford.

Margaret's father had died in 1949 and her mother had died in 1950. Her brother, DeWitt died in 1953, and brother Lawrence in 1976. Her sister-in-law sold her childhood home on Garnsey Road in 1979.

I asked Miss Simmons if she has had any race related problems through the years. Not wanting to stir up any old skeletons she replied in the affirmative but did not wish to discuss them. She did mention that her father's skin was so light that he was often mistaken for white, but when acquaintances discovered his African American origins they sometimes became annoyed or agitated.

Margaret Simmons was blessed with an extraordinary heritage passed on to her by those family members wishing to preserve their history. Margaret, herself, was an extraordinary person, and those people whose lives have been touched by her are equally blessed. She was the guest of honor at the fiftieth reunion of the class of 1954 held in 2004. This was the first class to graduate from the new Shenendehowa School Campus.

America's Turning Point is Advancing Toward the 250th!

By Lauren Roberts, Saratoga County Historian and Chairperson of the Saratoga County 250th

Saratoga County's 250th American Revolution Commission, also known as America's Turning Point, has had a successful first year of programming and events leading up to the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. When the commission began meeting in January of 2022, our first objective was to define the goals of the commemoration, which are outlined below:

1. Promote education and understanding of the impact the Battles of Saratoga had as the Turning Point of the American Revolution.
2. Increase Heritage Tourism in Saratoga County by offering programs and experiences that will attract visitors at an international level.
3. Improve infrastructure surrounding our historic sites, ensuring that the investment made during the commemoration has a lasting impact on historic preservation in our communities.

These goals have guided the focus of our events thus far and will continue to direct the course of our mission. In July of 2022, the Saratoga County 250th Commission had a week-long presence at the Saratoga County Fair. Our 18th century-style marquee tent held numerous exhibits and activities for all ages. Children and the young-at-heart were invited to try 18th century games as well as being encouraged to try-on replica 18th century-style clothing. Visitors were able to make their own flags by learning how to stencil designs on muslin. In partnership with the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, a short video depicting the events surrounding the Battles of Saratoga and the resulting surrender of General Burgoyne and his army was shown as well. Many living historians also enhanced the visitor experience including demonstrations by the 2nd Continental Artillery and female camp followers of the army. The crowd was also treated to a reenactment of the Sword Surrender of General Burgoyne to General Gates, which signified the end of hostilities during the Saratoga Campaign. The Saratoga County History Center also contributed displays and local history information for visitors. Despite the heat of the week, many fair-goers were able to learn about the important history that happened in our own backyard.

In October, the 250th Commission partnered with Saratoga National Historical Park to hold a Siege Encampment Weekend at the Philip Schuyler House in Schuylerville. Throughout the weekend visitors were able to tour the newly renovated historic home, which General Philip Schuyler used as his country estate. Though burned by the British Army during their retreat in October of 1777, the house was rebuilt quickly following the fire and many elements of the structure remain largely unchanged. The British 24th Regiment of Foot and the 2nd Continental Artillery held open encampments at the property and artillery demonstrations were held throughout the week-



Source: Author

end. The America's Turning Point Marquee Tent was there, featuring activities for children as well as an exhibit researched by Park Ranger Eric Schnitzer that highlighted soldiers who had died during the Battles of Saratoga. Living historians specializing in 18th century medicine and women's roles in the military campaign were also present to interact with the public. This event aligned with New York's Path Through History Weekend, and we hope this will become an annual event to which the public can look forward each autumn.

In keeping with the commission's goal to promote education, a teacher's workshop was held at the end of October that was open to all Social Studies teachers in Saratoga County. The day-long program was held at the Saratoga National Historical Park and included programs led by the Living History Education Foundation, a Park Ranger-guided tour of parts of the Saratoga Battlefield, presentations on camp follower history and 18th century medical practices used in the army, as well as an artillery demonstration. Teachers were issued gear such as hunting shirts, tricorne hats and haversacks and instructed on militia drilling commands and how to set up an army tent. After teachers completed the training, they were invited to borrow the gear and bring it back to their individual school districts so that their students can share in the experience as well.

Along with these aforesaid signature events, America's Turning Point also had a presence at the annual Turning Point Parade in Schuylerville and the Revolutionary Run hosted by the Saratoga County Veteran's Service Agency at Fort Hardy Park.

As we turn to 2023, planning is already underway for what is gearing up to be another busy year. In late February, I was appointed to the New York State 250th Commission. While not all the commission appointments have

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Turning Point

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been made as of this date (March 2023), rest assured there is an active group of stakeholders from across the state diligently working on plans for the quickly approaching commemoration. In addition, I am a member of the regional 250th working group including commissioners from Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey. Many of these state commissioners (including myself) took part in a national conference hosted by Virginia250 and held in Colonial Williamsburg, for the purpose of convening all state delegates from across the country to work together in planning for the upcoming commemoration. There were delegates there from 34 states across the country and with moving speakers, such as longtime 60 Minutes correspondent Bill Whitaker, and retired Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, the conference was both inspiring and energizing.

In Saratoga County, our 2023 programming is already underway with our first event of the year, The Turning Point Tea Party, fast approaching. This event is geared toward students in grades 2-7 who will learn about what it

may have been like to live in the Saratoga area on the eve of the American Revolution, and what the implications of the Boston Tea Party would have meant for local residents.

In addition, the 2nd Annual Women in War Symposium will be held in Schuylerville on May 5th and 6th, featuring scholars presenting on the roles women played throughout the Revolution. New this year, a bus tour following the route taken by the Baroness Frederika von Riedesel, the wife of a German Officer who, along with her three young daughters, sought shelter in the Marshall House of Schuylerville during the Siege of Saratoga. The Baroness kept a diary during the ordeal, which was later published, describing in detail her experiences throughout the Saratoga Campaign, and her subsequent years as a prisoner of war in North America.

For more information on these events, please visit our website www.saratoga250.com and add your email to the list for periodic updates. More programs and events are being added all the time and if you would like to be a part of these commemorations, please sign up as a volunteer. The 250th commemoration gives us the opportunity to both learn more about our own revolutionary past, and to share our history with the world.

With an Eye to the Sky

Saratoga County residents watch for Enemy Aircraft during WWII

By David Waite

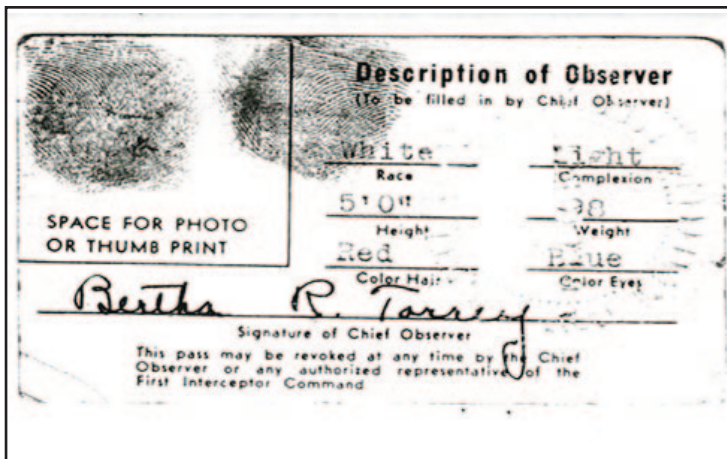
With the onset of World War II, America realized that the Axis powers of Germany and Japan had the capability to attack the United States mainland by air. In response to this threat, and to free their personnel for other vital tasks, the military called on civilians to volunteer as aircraft spotters. Along the coastal regions on both sides of the country, men, women, and children stepped up to serve, with the residents of Saratoga County selflessly volunteering to be a part of this important work.

In the months before the United States joined the con-

flict, observation posts were established across the county with the assistance of local American Legions posts. The Saratogian newspaper of September 27, 1941, reported on a meeting at the Saratoga Springs mayor's office where John J. Farrell, Deputy Director for New York's Civil Defense organization, complemented Saratoga County on how they were one of the first counties to complete the work of setting up observation posts. Mr. Farrell went on to state that "we are not trying to arouse a war hysteria. We don't honestly believe that bombings will come to our door, but our bombers are crossing the ocean every day and there is nothing to stop the reverse from happening."

When possible the observation posts were set up in existing buildings at the highest points in the county, though when nothing was available the posts had to be built. Often using local volunteer labor, the greatest cost was the heating, electricity, and maintaining the necessary telephone equipment at each location. To help cover the expense, in October of 1942, the Saratoga County Board of Directors passed a resolution to provide up to one thousand dollars for the erection and maintenance of these posts.

Posts established at the Conklingville Dam, and Mt. McGregor was manned by personnel already on the premises, while other posts throughout the county had volunteer civilian observers. While it is impossible to list



Source: Saratoga County Historian collection

Aircraft spotters were issued official ID's

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Spotters

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every observation post, some examples were Middle Grove, directed by Brenton Taylor, the Ballston post manned by Kent C. Curtis, and Corinth where Paul Goodheart was the chief observer, assisted by John T. Murphy.

In Saratoga Springs, some of the volunteer observers were from Skidmore College. Their efforts of watching for enemy aircraft from atop the State Armory in the city were acknowledged in May of 1943 when fifty students from the college were presented aircraft recognition diplomas by Captain John E. Nesbitt and 1st Lieutenant John Franson of the Albany Ground Observer Force. Some of the Skidmore students who served as observers were: Donna Losie, Anne Thurman, Marilyn Cole, Janet Alman, and Barbara Winne.

Another school group that served as observers had members even younger than the young woman from Skidmore. Some students at Galway Public School gave up their free time during and outside of school to serve their country. In the book *Galway 1900-1949*, memories from that time were recalled by Florence Turek Reedy: We had a Civilian Observation Corps that spotted airplanes traveling over Galway. Mr. Chet Abel, school teacher, and Hugo Simboli were the instructors. We went to class during study hall and were taught how to identify aircraft. When we passed our tests, we were given an armband with an emblem stating we were Civilian Observa-

tion Corps members plus a certificate. Shirley Knights and I worked together as observers. We worked a shift of two. When we spotted a plane, we would have to call a number in Albany and report what kind it was and what time it went over.

The observation post was just north of Galway Village on the Henry Overbeek farm, a location where Galway Central School is now located. Two of the adult observers at the post were Bernard Nayko and Podhajecki.

Throughout the war, over one and a half million observers manned posts in the coastal regions of America as part of the Ground Observers Corps. Each of these volunteers was schooled in aircraft identification and instructed in the procedures for reporting their observations to the military. To train new observers in the local areas experienced observers were trained and certified at regional schools. In the town of Stillwater, Allen Bassett, already an experienced observer though only a junior in high school, was selected to attend an Aircraft Recognition School in Albany. With his expenses covered by the Army, Allen spent a week being instructed by trained officers in how to teach recognition methods. The son of Captain Lewis G. Bassett, who during the war was part of the Chemical Warfare Service based out of Washington D. C., Allen Bassett completed his course and went on to instruct observers in the Stillwater area.

In Saratoga Springs, the person in charge of instructing observers was Miss Irene G. McGuire, a local businesswoman, and leader in the statewide Business and Professional Women's Business Club. As chief identification officer for the county, Miss McGuire conducted classes for both adult and youth spotters in the area. When telling of her experiences to the *Saratogian* of April 4, 1943, she noted that the high school students who took her examination "came through with flying colors."

With the collapse of the Axis powers in 1944 the need for aircraft observers ended and the Ground Observers Corps was disbanded. The countless hours of tireless observation by these volunteers were a vital part of our country's defense during World War II, a service that was estimated to have freed up 100,000 of our military personnel for other work during the war.

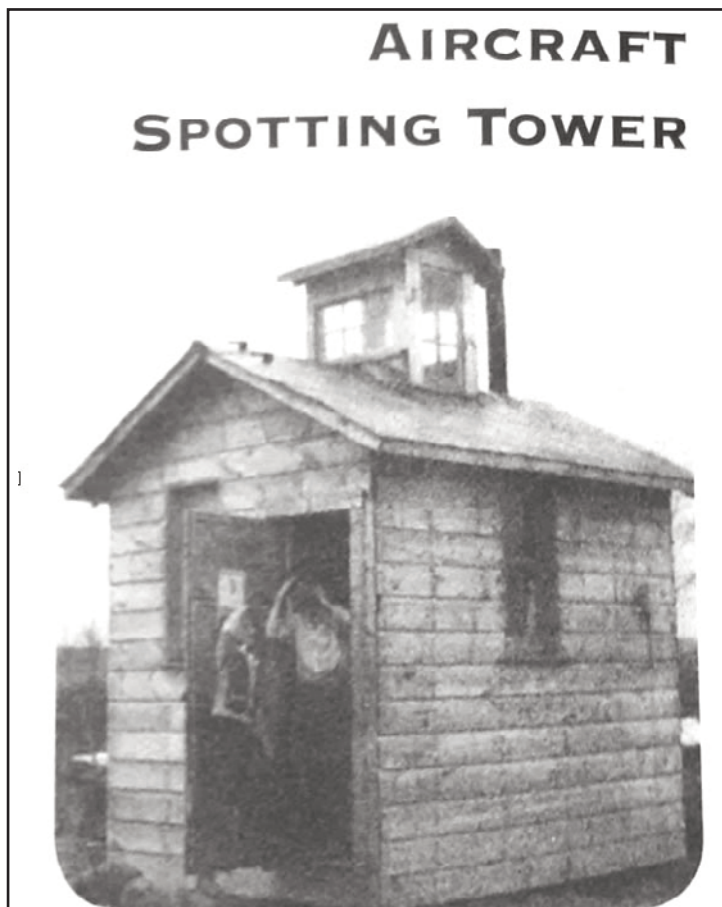
Sources for this article include Galway 1900-1949, and the online newspaper resources at fultonhistory.com, and nyhistoricnewspapers.org.

Ballston Daily Journal, January 30, 1908:

A Man in a Cake of Ice

Ice cutter finds the body at Geyser Pond. Disappeared weeks ago - Went to get medicine - Frozen in 14 inches of ice - Leaves wife and several children.

It was a gruesome find that the ice cutters made about 7:30 this morning at the Geyser Pond. Encaked in ice was discovered the body of an unknown man. The head and shoulders were frozen in seven inches of ice and above the head seven inches more of ice had been formed.



Source: Galway 1900-1949.

Galway observation post