

GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown



A Note From The President

As we begin a new year, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Darlene Dupre and Gloria Swanbon to our Board. Ladies, welcome and thank you for your commitment to the continued success of our society. Both Darlene and Gloria have been attending board meetings for several months now as non-voting members, and we welcome their insights as we prepare for our 2022 season. Due to the pandemic, we had another challenging year in 2021. It was difficult to plan out our season when we were not sure what the future would hold. We soldiered through though and had the property open most Sundays. However, we did close for the hurricane that wasn't. Unfortunately, we were not able to host the third-grade classes for their field trip. With the help of the AP History class at Georgetown High School we created a virtual field trip work around. Thankfully we were able to do several private tours as well as host regular Sunday visitors. We were also fortunate enough to have more visitors during our Trails and Sails events than we have had in recent history.

The shoe shop was open for tours, and we also hosted Sarah Guerin for a demonstration on shoe-making. Sarah makes custom cowboy boots all by hand using historic shoemaker's and antique tools. It was quite an eye-opening demonstration. This now means that all parts of the property (the house, schoolhouse, shoe shop and gardens) are all an integral part of our tours.

We hope you noticed our new garden installation, just inside the fence by the front door. This garden will become a Victorian cutting garden, and we hope you stop by to enjoy the unique flowers and profusion of color it will provide again this coming year.

Sadly we had to take down the ash tree on the property, as it was dying. Thank you to Derek and his team at Maribito Tree Services for the tree removal and the pruning done on the property.

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A big thank you to Max Cane for the wonderful presentation at our annual meeting. It was great to see so many young people attend. It was our first “breakfast” meeting and was very well attended.

Please let us know if you have any ideas for programs you would like to see us sponsor. We welcome and value the input of all our members. As always, if you have the time, we welcome your participation in all our goings-on. Just send us an email at - info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com. Thank you again for all your support.

Betsy Moran



Thank you to Sam Anderson and Jeff Lamoureaux for the beautiful wreaths on the museum and schoolhouse as well as lighting them up for the holiday season. They looked lovely.

Corrections Corner

Corrections from Autumn Newsletter 2021
The oldest of the bank ledgers donated to Salem Five were from The Andover Bank not the Georgetown Savings (1868) as it did not exist at that time. Thank you Dan Meader for the email in calling our attention to this oversight.

A second correction is needed as Jim Boynton was referred to as Sr. We would like to note that Jim is Jim Boynton, Jr.

If you notice anything that needs correction or clarification in our newsletter, please email us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com

The History Beneath Our Feet

By Nicholas Niedzielski
Junior at Georgetown High School

Living in Georgetown throughout my whole life, only in these past two years have I truly realized the amount of historical sites and information scattered around the town. Even right in front of my house lies the spot of the old train station that serviced the railroad that went through the town, and my neighbor’s house which was there at that time as well. This shows that wherever you are in life there are always some historical pieces that are present today that help give an insight of what life may have been like in the past. For many, these historical items would mainly include statues, museums, houses, or other artifacts but, in fact, a majority of historical items cannot be seen with the plain eye. With hundreds of years passing by, a modern historian or average town person may not even realize there is a historical artifact in their area, but you never know what could be lying under your feet. This is where modern technology and old history come together. In recent years metal detectors, and geographical data and analysis have allowed many to find historical landmarks using some tips and tricks. This was brought to my attention at the recent Georgetown Historical Society meeting in which Max Cane presented to us how he uncovers the history beneath our feet. His use of the metal detector, LIDAR scans from planes, and the use of old maps of towns or areas help him find old houses, pins, weapons, plaques, household items, tools, and hundreds of other unearthed artifacts. With the thanks to Max he has taught us how he does it, and that because of him it gives a scope into the idea that history can be right under our noses.

The whole process starts with the metal detector. Many of us have seen a person on a beach or in a park using the detector to find all sorts of items under the ground, but Max takes it to the next level. First let’s go into how metal detectors actually work: the detector itself sends an electromagnetic wave into the ground. If there is an object that comes into contact with the waves it then sends back out another electromagnetic wave called an eddy current that gets picked up by the detector. From here the item that is being scanned also has some factors



Image of an old buckle.

that will cause changes in the detection process. Geometry of the object comes into play in which circular objects compared to more square shaped objects often have an easier time being detected due to how the north and south poles are oriented and how the waves bounce off, whereas square objects have a smaller range in which the electromagnetic waves are given off. Along with the shape of the object the signal the object gives off also depends on the conductivity of the metal it is made of in which for example silver metals are more conductive than copper, copper more than aluminum, and aluminum more than iron. In addition the ability to find an item depends on the size, depth, or other signals from other targets in the area. This gives a little insight to how the process works, but before going out metal detecting, one must know the land they are on and have a general idea of the location, which is where maps come in handy.

One of the easier ways to determine where older homes, or buildings, or other well known locations would be is to find old landowner maps of a county or town. For example, a map of Georgetown in 1856 was shown during the presentation which highlighted the railroad, houses, roads, ponds, streams, and other buildings of the time. Using these old maps for one of his searches, Max took an old map of different properties and roads in an area and then compared it to modern maps such as Google Earth to see if there is a difference. In doing so he was able to discover that a road that once connected to streets was completely gone and covered in forest which also meant there were multiple homesteads lost in time. This would also help narrow down where to look for old artifacts.

Doing this is a great way to get started but the real trouble is what if there are no maps of an area, or other landmarks to base a location off of. This is where LIDAR comes into play. LIDAR also known as light, imaging, detecting, and ranging is a system mounted on smaller planes that sends down signals like the metal detector but on a much larger scale. With the proper software Max was able to download LIDAR scans from the states used for surveying land to find locations to metal detect. The LIDAR images once processed can show where trees, marshes, hills, rivers, or other geographical items are located. Looking at an upper view of LIDAR map scans, if there is a rough idea of where something is, one can zoom in and look to see if there are any irregular shapes in nature such as squares, perfect circles, or lines in which these often represent a house, or a road. Examples of this could be seen with multiple Mayan Temples being found buried beneath the Guatemalan jungle using LIDAR or Max himself finding sights of old charcoal production huts which showed up as circular mounds on a hill with roads connecting them. But Max hasn't just been looking for sights of homes and such but he also is on the lookout for other artifacts, in which he has found many.

One of the more common artifacts that Max has accumulated are buttons, which at first glance could seem unimportant but they hold so much information. Buttons can be dated which, depending on the shape, size, material, or style, they can be categorized into different time periods. Buttons with a singular hole in the shank, and made of rough bronze or brass can be dated to a range from 1700-1765, while a button with 4 holes and that is one piece of casted white metal means it's from 1800-1860. This is very crucial to also figuring out a location as if there was a finding of a house or building and a certain button was found, one could figure out how long that house was there for, and who it housed, which goes onto the next part. Buttons can also describe what type of person lived in an area. For example dandy buttons which are larger in size, hand engraved with certain symbols, and are made from silver or gold were often worn by more elite/wealthy people of the 1750's-1790's. Another example would be how there are multiple military buttons that can show

when a person fought, and what war which can be seen with different symbols meaning different things such as rank, battalion, branch, or what war that person was in. These types of items were uncovered when Max was able to find an old Revolutionary War Era homestead using the techniques stated earlier. After gaining permission from the land owners, as this was not on public land, he found items such as belt buckles, coins, buttons, utensils, and other household items. After observing these items he was able to draw conclusions which led him to believe it was a Revolutionary War era home. One of the buttons found correlated with Continental Army buttons worn from 1781-1783, and it represented the 17th regiment of Canaan, NY. Looking at the household items like spoons, other buttons, and tools, many of which were made of trimmed sheet iron pieces which was a common manufacturer in technique in this time further helped Max date his find. In the end looking at this it was concluded that most likely the person who lived in this home was a member of the 17th regiment in the revolutionary war, possibly a craftsman, most likely a tin smith, and that the house was occupied from 1770's-1810's. This was a case in which the artifacts were clear and provided a reasonable explanation but some of the artifacts Max has found need lots more research and time to figure out their relevance

One day while Max was out hunting he came upon an old, what seemed to be a Revolutionary War period artifact. It was an oval, flat, metal, engraved item that had some writing on it. At first glance the item provided some clues, such as the year 1775, the word captain, and the initials I D which at the time correlates to J.D. due to the style of writing at this time. Below this layed the phrase "Vel Mors Vel Gloria" which is latin for "Either Death or Glory," and the bottom corner included the words 9th regiment. This seems like there is enough information to find out who it belonged to but that is easier said than done. First off when researched there were multiple 9th regiments so Max had to go through all of the 9th regiments and screen through the roster of each to narrow it down. Eventually he was able to get a hold of one that provided a captain named Jonathan Danforth who matched the initial J.D, was in the 9th regiment, and served in 1775. From here, once the name was discovered, so much more was able to be learned from the artifact's. He served in the French and Indian war, participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill, camped out in Ticonderoga in November of 1776, and also led a company in the Battle of Bennington. So now what exactly was the artifact that he found? Well it was a hat plate that would be placed on the hats of soldiers, pinned in through the cloth, and secured to identify soldiers in the Continental Army. Just from this one artifact that was found in the wilderness, it was able to tell a story of a person's life and what the artifacts significance was. Not just for this artifact, but many others, Max is able to make conclusions that reveal hundreds of years of lost history.

This is just a portion of what Max has discovered in his time as a detectorist in the New York and New England area, but that thanks to him, it opened a new world up in which the idea of metal detecting has such a large historical significance. As seen, Max was able to use his knowledge of old maps and compare them to new ones to find locations to hunt for artifacts. His use of LIDAR and analysis of it allows him to scan locations and find abnormalities in the land hidden from the plain eye. And then finally with his use of corroborating information and research he can take an artifact, or a homestead and date it back to when it was around, who or what type of person resided with such, and then the historical significance of the locations or artifacts for their time. It shows that with the use of a metal detector, finding a simple button can explain so much history of an area and reinforces the idea that history is everywhere. Who knows what you can find in your backyard with a metal detector? With these approaches like Max, you may just be able to find a piece of history for yourself.

For more information visit Max Cane's blog at <https://www.fieldguidetohistory.com>



Image of a 1903 Coin



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Upcoming Events

Friends of the Library Book Sale

Drop off book donations for the sale from Mar. 30 to Apr. 6
Sale is from Apr. 8 to Apr. 11 including Sunday Fill-a-bag for \$5 sale. See library for times.

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