

# NEWSLETTER

LANSINGBURGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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February 2011

## EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

**April 14, Thursday, 5:00-7:00PM, Rensselaer County Historical Society, Stacy Draper** of RCHS will present a program at the opening of a US Civil War exhibit based on the Dargen album, a LHS collection of Civil War images

**April 21, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House- Don Rittner**, Schenectady County Historian, will speak about *The Onrust*, the first decked ship built entirely in America by Dutch in 1614. A replica of the ship was built between 2006 and 2009 by New Netherlands Routes Inc. at Mabee Farm Historic Site in Rotterdam Junction, NY.

**May 7, Saturday, 9:00AM to 2:00PM, Melville House, the Annual LHS Used Book Sale.** Quality used books and ephemera from 50 cents to \$20. Proceeds benefit the Herman Melville House restoration.

**MAY 19, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House- Jim Greenfield**, North Greenbush Historian, will deliver a talk entitled, "Defreestville and Wynantskill: A Tale of Two Hamlets". The program will emphasize places, people and events in the growth of these communities.

**June 11, Saturday, 9:00AM to 2:00PM, Melville House- the Annual LHS Porch Sale.** Antiques and collectibles from 25 cents to \$25. Proceeds benefit the Herman Melville House restoration.

**June 18, Saturday, 10:00AM to 2:00PM, St Augustine's Church Hall, 114<sup>th</sup> St. at 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. in the Lansingburgh section of Troy Antique Appraisal Day.** **Mark Lawson, Nancy Toomer and Dennis Holzman**, will be present to examine your treasures and report on their history and value. This promises to be an exciting and fun event to benefit your historical society.

**July 16, Saturday, 12:00-3:00PM, Lansingburgh Village Burying Ground and Old Catholic Cemetery, 107<sup>th</sup> St. at Third Avenue, Rededication of the Lansingburgh Village Cemetery.** This event will celebrate Lansingburgh's veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the US Civil War who are interred in these two cemeteries. Color guards and reenactment groups of units these men served with will participate in a parade and commemoration. This colorful and moving event will bring attention to Lansingburgh's place and importance in the history of the US and New York State.

**September 22, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House- Joe Ferrannini** of Gravestone Matters will speak about historic cemeteries, their restoration and preservation. Joe has done a number of cemetery restoration projects in the area.

## **SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION IN LANSINGBURGH**

Continuing the article from Nov. 2010 Newsletter . Written by Kathleen Tivnan

The three schools most people think of as Lansingburgh schools were Whipple, Powers and Haskell.

The Whipple School was built in 1866 on land donated by Jonathan Whipple, in the north part of the village on John Street at Clinton (4<sup>th</sup> Ave. at 121 St.). It held K-6<sup>th</sup> grades. It is now Stepping Stones Day Care Center.

The Powers School, built on Fourth Avenue at 11<sup>th</sup> Street, was opened in 1889. It was damaged by a fire in January 1890. It was repaired and updated and reopened in November 1908. It is now an apartment house.

Haskell School was erected in 1894. It was named for Robert Haskell, President of the Board of Education. It replaced the Fourth Ward School. It was on the east side of Sixth Avenue, between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. It was converted into apartments, but is now deserted.

In 1874 Sarah Tracy's English and French School was opened at the corner of Third Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Her family ran the Tracy Brewery on First Avenue. Sarah had returned from Alexandria , Virginia where she had helped save Mt. Vernon from destruction by Union troops during the Civil War. It was in southern territory and the troops didn't know it was George Washington's home.

During early days Lansingburgh had no high school. Students were sent to the Academy or to Troy. In 1911 Lansingburgh organized Union Free School District #1. The Academy had closed, so the building was purchased for \$1.00 and used as a high school. An addition was put on the back of the Academy; and during WW I machine classes were taught there.

The next high school was built in 1912 and served until 1967. It was on Fifth Avenue at 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Since it was such a strong building, it was refitted for younger children and opened as Lansingburgh Elementary School in November 1967. All of the sixth grades were moved there and fourth and fifth grades came and went as space was needed in Powers and Whipple. The open staircases had to be removed and new the staircases are actually inside fire escapes. It is now used as the main office building and classes are held for students seeking GED's.

Knickerbacker Junior High School was built on land donated by the Knickerbacker family in memory of Thomas and Helen Knickerbacker. Notice the memorial stone near 107<sup>th</sup> St. and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Due to the depression, federal money was available for construction jobs. Lansingburgh was lucky to get such a wonderful building. The swimming pool was never built, but a spectator gym and a large auditorium, were included. Knickerbacker held grades 7-9 and opened in September 1937.

By the 1950's much construction was going on in Speigletown, and many new students arrived. The high school couldn't hold all the students. The gym was too small for classes and league games were played at Knickerbacker. Citizens voted to build a new high school to the east and south of Knickerbacker on land owned by the district. It opened in 1967 with a gym classroom and still using the Knickerbacker gym for spectator sports. It held grades 10-12.

The elementary schools were getting old. Haskell, the newest was nearly 100 years old. The buildings had been modernized as much as possible but some of you may remember climbing down the outside fire escapes during fire drills. The Academy was opened for overflow classes and the sixth grades were moved to first floor of Knickerbacker. After several tries, the citizen voted to build two new elementary schools on identical plans. One, Rensselaer Park School on 110<sup>th</sup> Street, was named for the old Rensselaer Park Fair Grounds. The other, Turnpike Elementary School, was named for the old turnpike road that runs in front of it. RPES opened in September 1975 and TES opened in January 1976 due to construction delays. The children who transferred to these schools were amazed at the bathrooms. No more going to the basement!

The school district remained quiet for a while. The big subject was how to solve the flooding of the football field (major work was done on it in 2005 to divert a stream coming down from the cemetery). Meanwhile, Knickerbacker was getting crowded. In 1985 Lansingburgh Elementary School had been closed. The sixth grades were sent to Turnpike and Rensselaer Park. By 1990 the sixth grades were back in Knickerbacker which now held grades 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>. We needed a new library in the high school. The day of computers had arrived. In 1997 the Media Center was built between the two buildings combining both libraries. The old libraries were converted to classrooms.

A new wing, to the north, connected the two buildings. On this wing were classrooms and a music wing. The old music rooms became classrooms and 9<sup>th</sup> grade moved to the high school. Knickerbacker became a middle school grades 6-8.

By the 2000's, space became a problem again. The gym at Knickerbacker had locker rooms downstairs under the gym. It became increasingly hard to supervise plus the gym was too small for the basketball games. Back to the community. State aid and bond issue money enabled Lansingburgh to build a new spectator gym and safe locker rooms. The old high school gym was converted into classrooms making the 1967 building more up to date. The high school was now grades 9-12.

A vote taken in December 2010 determined whether EXCEL money would be spent to improve the energy efficiency of Lansingburgh school buildings. Growth goes on.

**IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME**

Our membership year begins in April. People who join in January, February, or March extend their membership through the next membership year. Consider upgrading your regular membership to a sustaining membership or either of those to a life membership. Encourage your friends to join.

- Regular Membership is \$5.00/ year
- Sustaining Membership is 25.00/year
- Life Membership is \$100

Donations are welcome at any time!

**Mail to: Lansingburgh Historical Society  
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Troy, NY 12180-0219**

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Donations welcome! You may include it with your membership.