

# NEWSLETTER

**LANSINGBURGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
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November 2010

## EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

**NOVEMBER 11, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House-** “An Evening with John Connors”, John Emmett Connors, local artist with international training will have the opportunity to demonstrate how his philosophy for artistic expression, his personal story and his passion for historic places come together in his artwork. We will see Lansingburgh through his artistic eye as he presents both established landmarks and lesser known places that are the heart and soul of Lansingburgh and Troy.

**NOVEMBER 18, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House-** our annual Holiday Party will be held including an auction of small antiques, collectibles, Christmas books and holiday ornaments. There will be note paper for sale which shows a winter scene in Lansingburgh in the 1870s. This party is open to the public and refreshments will be served.

## SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION IN LANSINGBURGH

Written by Kathleen Tivnan

The people of Lansingburgh have been concerned about education for their children since the settlement was established in 1770. A Dutch School was opened in 1771, but soon English became the common language. The Lansingburgh Academy's first building was on the west side of the Village Green in 1795. The Academy's charter in 1796 was signed by John Jay and DeWitt Clinton. A copy of the charter is in the library branch in the Academy today. The first building was soon outgrown. A new building was constructed on the corner of Hoosick and John Streets (113<sup>th</sup> St. and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue) in 1820. Among the remarkable headmasters was Chauncey Lee who wrote the first arithmetic book using the decimal system and the dollar sign. Boys and girls went to the academy and studied the same subjects, but in separate rooms.

In February 1799, M.E. and A. Sketchley opened a boarding school for young ladies in an “elegant house” at Richard and John Streets (117<sup>th</sup> St. and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

In 1818, William Powers opened a private school. He had come from New Hampshire and was joined by his bride, Deborah. He left teaching to establish an oil cloth factory, but the Powers family stayed interested in education.

Free School #1 was begun in 1820. It was on the west side of Whipple Street (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue) south of Hoosick (114<sup>th</sup> Street). It existed until 1846. The building was burned down in 1897.

In 1840, the Hudson Female Seminary was begun on Ann St. at Market St. (6<sup>th</sup> Ave. at 115<sup>th</sup> St.). The cost for girls was \$150 which included board and room. The building is still there as an apartment building.

The Comstock School was opened in 1845 at the corner of Whipple and Market (5<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 115<sup>th</sup> St.). It was an elementary school. In 1854 Mrs. Powers helped pay for an addition to hold a kindergarten, one of the first in the area. Later the school became the Board of Education building until it was moved in 1910, north near Stewarts, where it still exists. The site of the Comstock School became the new Lansingburgh High School.

In 1849, a Colored School was established between Hoosick and North Streets (113<sup>th</sup> and 114<sup>th</sup>) and Congress and John Streets (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues). The students didn't stay separated long. They were entered into the other schools.

In 1847 the State Legislature passed a special act permitting District Number 1 of Lansingburgh to raise by taxation a "sufficient amount of money to pay teachers and other expenses". Ten years later the Comstock Plan became state law for all public schools.

Lansingburgh was growing and new schools were needed. Two were built in 1860. The Leonard School named for Dr. Frederick Leonard, was built in John Street (4<sup>th</sup> Avenue) as a middle school. It was used until 1937. It is now an apartment house.

The Spiegletown School was the second 1860 building. It served the area until 1962 when due to merger, all children went by bus into Lansingburgh schools. The building was sold for a business and is still used.

The Fourth Ward School was opened in 1870. Also known as the Batestown School, it was on the west side of Whipple between Van Schaick and Gould (5<sup>th</sup> Ave and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sts.). Many will remember the building as Carrier's Ice Cream Shop. Today it is a church.

Note: Lansingburgh streets and avenues changed their names in 1886 to numbers. The US Post Office added the 100's to street numbers in 1915 due to confusion with Troy streets after we unified.

The story of Lansingburgh's schools will continue in future editions of the Newsletter.

### **THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED OUR GALA**

The Fund Raising Committee and the GALA Committee wish to thank everyone who supported the best ever fund raiser which Lansingburgh Historical Society has ever experienced. This year it was more important than ever to raise money for the many

projects which we need to continue. We will receive no additional money from New York State this year although we do have a request pending for funds to help rehabilitate and clean up the Village Burying Ground and the Old Catholic Burying Ground. About \$7300 was raised from the GALA. Lots of treasures were offered for bid and many people took advantage of the bargains. We enjoyed a fine meal and learned more about our two oldest cemeteries. Thanks again for a job well done!

### **APARTMENT FOR RENT**

As many of you know we rent two apartments in Melville House to offset taxes, utilities, insurance, and maintenance of Melville House and grounds. Renovations, painting and floor covering are nearing completion. We are searching for a tenant for this one bedroom unit which has a renovated bathroom. If you know of someone who might be interested, have them call Kathleen Tivnan 518-235-7647 or send a note to our email address [lhssecretary@gmail.com](mailto:lhssecretary@gmail.com). If you email be sure to give us a means of contacting you by phone.

### **NEWS OF THE CEMETERIES PROJECT**

We are in the process of making preliminary plot maps of the three sections of the Lansingburgh Village Burying Ground. As many of you learned at the GALA, we have never been able to find a plot map so we started from scratch establishing sections, rows, and locating visible stones. Digital photos have been taken of the stones we can read and these are being placed in a catalog of stone with their location and inscription information. Many gaps (places where no stone is visible but where there may have been one) exist in the cemetery and we are investigating the use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) to locate any stones which may have toppled over and sunk into the turf. This is a common practice in cemetery restoration projects. Any stones located will be dug up in the future and cataloged with those we have already identified. Gordon Brown has put a tremendous amount of work into acquiring the service records of soldiers from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the US Civil War. Stones are being ordered from the Veterans Administration to commemorate these Patriots and heroes.

All of our work has been voluntary and no money (except for paper and incidentals) has been spent. Our grant request submitted through Sen. McDonald has not been approved so far and is not likely to be considering New York's dire financial condition. Repairs of the fence will be expensive. We need signs for both the cemeteries and as row markers. The sidewalk pieces need to be dug up and reset. We are seeking help from local CBs (US Navy Construction Battalion) men for this phase. All in all we need money for the things we can't accomplish with volunteer help and material. We have however accomplished a lot in just one year with no money.

### **HELP NEEDED!**

Your historical society again needs the assistance of someone who has word processing skills in WORD (Microsoft Office) and also has a color printer. This is for an ongoing project that requires work five times during the year. Someone will share existing software materials with you. The society will reimburse your expenses for materials. Let us know about your interest in an email to [lhssecretary@gmail.com](mailto:lhssecretary@gmail.com).

**MEMBERSHIP**

We welcome your membership in the Lansingburgh Historical Society. The cost is still just \$5.00/year. Consider joining at the sustaining or life level. Memberships received during November and December carry through the next membership year. Our membership year begins April 1<sup>st</sup>.. Donations are always welcome. Use the form below and mail it to the address at the top of the first page of this newsletter. You can also give this form to a friend who would like to join. Please be sure to include an email address if you have one. It saves LHS money.

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Donations welcome! You may include it with your membership.