

NEWSLETTER

LANSINGBURGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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OCTOBER 2011

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

October 13, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House. Troy resident, retired librarian and published author, Mike Esposito present a program on Troy's Little Italy.

October 20, 2011 we will have our annual GALA Fund Raiser Dinner and Auction at the Veterans of Lansingburgh Hall. Save the Date!!!

November 10, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House. Journalist, author and historian, John Warren will speak about the Poesten Kill, a stream that flows through Berlin, Poestenkill and Brunswick to Troy. Mr. Warren's talk will emphasize how its waters have served agricultural, industrial and recreational activities in Rensselaer County and the history of the lands it drains.

November 17, Thursday, 7:00PM, Melville House. The Annual LHS Holiday Party and Auction. Small antiques and collectible items, holiday books, ornaments, and LHS notepapers will be offered. Come share the fun!

New City's Role in the Aftermath of the Battle of Saratoga

By David Marsh

In April the historical society received a phone call from a man in New Jersey, the descendent of a Revolutionary War soldier, Joseph White, who the caller believed might have died in Lansingburgh. Did we have any records which showed that the soldier was buried here?

The caller had visited Saratoga National Battlefield Park and spoke with a Park Ranger. The Park Ranger searched the records of the park and found that Joseph White had been wounded (or became sick) at Saratoga.

I searched Joseph White and found a service record which indicated he had enlisted on January 1, 1777 in Capt. Aaron Haynes Co. of the 13th Massachusetts Bay Regiment of Col. Edward Wigglesworth. Members of that regiment fought at the Battle of Saratoga. Private Joseph White became a casualty there. There was a regimental hospital established at Bemis Heights, next to the headquarters of Gen. Horatio Gates, Commander of the Northern Department. From the regimental hospital at Bemis Heights,

casualties were evacuated down river to New City, where a "flying hospital" had been set up. New City was the Village of Lansingburgh.

At the New York State Archives I found a copy of a document entitled, A General Return of the Dead, Furloughed and Those Who Were Discharged the Service From the Flying Hospital at New City By Order of the Phy Surgeon General. Undated, it lists names of soldiers by unit, date and what became of them. The document is signed by W. Tillotson and has an accounting of the number of men discharged back to duty, furloughed, discharged from service, and those who died.

I consulted Dr Sander Marble, an Historian at the US Army Medical Command, asking about "flying hospitals", their locations in New York and any information available about disposition of casualties from the Battle of Saratoga. He replied that the signature on the return was that of Thomas Tillotson (what appeared to be a "W." was actually "Thos."). Tillotson was a physician in the US Army Northern Department. Dr Marble explained that a "flying hospital" was a mobile hospital, usually in tents unless and until a building could be constructed or commandeered. They were meant to be an intermediate link between a regimental hospital (which was most often in tents) and a general hospital. A flying hospital could be moved by ship or barge but was not established on a ship or barge.

I believe that Bemis Heights was the location of the regimental hospital and New City was the intermediate location on the way to Albany where there was a general hospital.

The question then is, where exactly was the location of the flying hospital in New City/Lansingburgh? I'm told that a building (still standing) near the corner of 113th St. and First Avenue was once a hospital in the period just before and during the Revolutionary War. The building was owned by a family named French. They were Tories and were forced to leave when Lansingburgh issued its Declaration of Independence. This property is less than 100 feet from the present bank of the Hudson River. Could a quartermaster have commandeered this hospital for the New City flying hospital? Dr. Marble had no answer to this but he agreed it was possible that casualties were sent by barge or ship from the regimental hospital at Bemis Heights to the flying hospital at New City before finally arriving in Albany (or being discharged or furloughed).

The story ended for Private Joseph White on November 6, 1777. His service record indicates he was sick and died on that date. I searched what we have for a list of burials in the Village Burying Ground at 107th St. and found nothing. He could have been buried elsewhere in New City. He does not appear on Tillotson's returns list with the other members of the 13th Massachusetts. It's possible his name was omitted from the return but I'm betting it was an accurate list. I believe that Private White never came to the New City flying hospital, possibly

because his injuries or he nature of his sickness prevented that, and that he died at Bemis Heights.

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!

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