**NEWSLETTER**

**LANSINGBURGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**P.O. BOX 219, LANSINGBURGH, NY 12182-0219**

[**www.lansingburghhistoricalsociety.org**](http://www.lansingburghhistoricalsociety.org) **our web address**

[**lhssecretary@gmail.com**](mailto:lhssecretary@gmail.com) **our email address**

[**www.facebook.com/LansingburghHistorical**](http://www.facebook.com/LansingburghHistorical) **our Facebook page**

**Phone/Fax: 518-235-3501**

**April 2014**

**ACTING PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

Tired of cold, ice and snow? Need something to help redirect your thoughts to warm sun, friends from the Burgh and good food? The We Were Burgher’s Once and Young web-group is sponsoring a repeat benefit **clam steam, steak and chicken roast** at the Veterans of Lansingburgh outside pavilion on **August 16 at 1:00PM.** Proceeds go to the Lansingburgh Historical Society. This clam steam was one of the highlights of the summer 2013 for people in the Burgh and those who wish they were. Those who attended agreed unanimously that there should be a repeat in 2014, so here it is. This year the menu will offer steak or chicken in addition to clams, salads, and other delectable menu items to pamper your palate. You’re sure to meet up with friends from the Burgh, CCHS, LaSalle, Turnpike, Whipple, Haskell, Powers, St. Augustine’s and other area schools that you, your spouses, kids and friends attended. The guest of honor will be someone we all know who truly represents what the Burgh community is all about. Reservations are $45 per person for this event and are required. None will be sold on the day of the event because the Vets Club needs to know well in advance how much food and beverage to purchase. **Marcia Chalifoux** is in charge and is collecting money by USPS for reservations. Send your request, money and choice of steak or chicken to Marcia at 1108 O Street, Lansingburgh, NY 12182. Liz VanBuren and John Ward are assisting in coordinating the event for the historical society. We hope to see you there!

LHS was chartered for the first time in 1965. The dues structure that was established at the time has remained the same since then. Trustee Michael Barrett did a survey last month of the dues structure of local historical societies in our region. He reported to the trustees that LHS is well below all in our region.

Things have changed considerably since 1965. The Trustees have voted to increase LHS dues effective July 1, 2014. They also created two new categories of membership. Corporate membership is for businesses and professional organizations which choose to support our mission of telling Lansingburgh’s story. The senior and student membership is for person’s 62 and older as well as high school and college students and others who have very limited means. The new dues structure is as follows:

Regular membership $15.00 per year

Supporting membership $40.00 per year

Senior, Student membership $5.00 per year

Corporate, Professional membership $200.00 per year

Individual Life membership $150.00

Our membership year begins on April 1st. Rejoin now and avoid the increase for the year. The old rates are shown on the end of the newsletter with information on where to send your check.

The successful bidder among four who submitted bids for repair of the stone foundation and sills under the east wall of Melville House is Duncan & Cahill of Troy. Work on that project will begin as soon as weather and ground conditions allow.

We invite bids for replacing roof gutters, down spouts and a subsurface disposal system for the roof drainage on the east and north sides of Melville House. The gutters should be of a color and style that will be in keeping with the appearance of the building while providing efficient removal of the water from areas close to the building. If you or someone you know would like to submit a bid for the work, see **David Saehrig**, the Chairman of the House and Grounds Committee for details. To be considered, all bids must be in writing with the name, address, contact information, date and full description of the work to be done. We want to move ahead with this project as soon as possible so do not delay your bid. Send bids to Lansingburgh Historical Society, P.O. Box 219, Lansingburgh, NY 12182-0219.

The Lansingburgh Historical Society is chartered as an educational institution by the New York State Education Dept. As such it is subject to rules and regulations for historical societies which are set down by the New York State Board of Regents. Among the requirements for the business operations of an historical society is a periodic audit of its finances. We are currently receiving bids for an audit. If you know a CPA who has experience auditing not-for-profit organizations, please have that person contact Acting President David Marsh [davidm2444@hotmail.com](mailto:davidm2444@hotmail.com).

**EVENTS AND PROGRAMS FOR 2014**

**Saturday, April 5 9am-2pm**, we will have our 2nd annual Bake Sale at the Herman Melville House!! There will be home baked goods by our members at various prices, including some from recipes from our Bicentennial Cookbook. Bicentennial Cookbooks with Historic recipes will be for sale at 50 cents each.

**Thursday, April 17th 7pm** at the Herman Melville House, Warren Broderick will speak on "No Mortal Eye Can Penetrate”: Louis Ransom’s Commemoration of John Brown In 1857 an obscure portrait painter named Louis Ransom opened a studio on busy Genesee Street in downtown Utica. Three years later Ransom would stun his friends and others from central New York when he completed his life-size and life-like depiction of John Brown being led to the gallows. During his life Ransom resided in four states; in New York he called Salisbury, Little Falls, Utica, Lansingburgh, and Stratford his home. The presentation will concentrate on the John Brown painting and its controversial history in some detail. The landmark depiction of Brown on the Charlestown jail steps became the favorite image of Brown among abolitionists, in part because of Ransom’s controversial inclusion of Brown “kissing the Negro baby.” The painting’s history following its completion was most noteworthy. Its brief exhibition by P.T. Barnum in New York City in 1863 led in part to the onset of the infamous draft riots. The scene on the court house steps in 1859 is now known primarily from two lithographed versions of this painting created by the firm of Currier and Ives. The monumental painting is believed to have been destroyed. Yet thousands of Americans associate Brown’s martyrdom with the often-reproduced Currier and Ives image, derived from Ransom’s painting. Research conducted in a number of original sources has revealed much new information on Louis Ransom and his work. In a collection of family photographs in an upstate New York historical society a previously unknown signed mounted photograph of John Brown, bearing a cryptic inscription, was discovered. Determining how this photograph was obtained by the artist, and deciphering the meaning and origin of the inscription, constitutes another intriguing aspect of the Louis Ransom story and the “afterlife” of John Brown. Warren F. Broderick resides in Lansingburgh and is an emeritus archivist at the New York State Archives. He is also a member of the Lansingburgh Historical Society.

**Thursday, May 15th 7pm**, at the Herman Melville House, Scott Christianson, author, scholar, and human rights activist, will speak about his book “Freeing Charles: The Struggle to free a slave on the eve of the Civil War. His book tells about the life and rescue of captured fugitive slave, Charles Nalle from his enslavement by the Hansborough family in Virginia through his escape by the Underground Railroad and his experiences in the North on the eve of the Civil War. Scott specializes in American History and he has also held positions in the criminal justice system.

**Saturday, May 31st 9am-2pm**, we will have our Porch Sale at the Herman Melville House!! Rain or shine, sale is held inside & under cover. Hundreds of antiques and collectible items priced from 25 cents to $25! Kitchen and household items, local post cards, antique & collectible glass and china, antique tools, collectible soda, beer & medicine bottles, quality modern gift items, hostas, lilies & other perennial plants, No junk!!! Proceeds benefit the historic 1786 Herman Melville house restoration.

**Saturday, August 2nd 9am-2pm**, we will be hosting our 2nd Annual Inaugural Herman Melville Birthday Party which will be held at the Melville House, located on the corner of 114th Street and First Avenue in Lansingburgh. John Bryant, Professor of English at the Hofstra University & secretary of the Melville Society will speak on Herman Melville. He has published many books including: “Melville and Repose” (Oxford), “The Fluid Text” (Michigan), “Melville Unfolding” (Michigan), and the “Longman Critical Edition of Moby Dick”. He is also the editor of “Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies and of the Melville Electronic Library.” The Melville House and attic museum will be open to visitors all day. Books on or related to Melville will be on sale. The festival is free & open to the public. A sandwich platter, along with a birthday cake for Herman Melville, will be served. Bring a birthday card for Herman, if you like, & we’ll display it! Attendees are encouraged to dress in period clothing. There will be a coloring contest for children & door prizes for best Victorian outfit. Donations are welcome.

**Saturday, August 16 1pm**, is our 2nd Annual Clam Steam & Steak and Chicken Roast which will be held at The Lansingburgh Vets Club Pavillion. It is jointly sponsored by We Were Burghers Once and the LHS. All proceeds benefit the LHS. Raw clams, hamburgers, hotdogs, sausage & peppers, clam chowder, beer, and soda will be available through the day. Dinner consists of steamed clams, ½ barbequed chicken or steak, baked potato, corn-on-the cob, watermelon, tossed salad, rolls. You may bring munchies, salads, or desserts to share. There will be a 50/50 raffle. Cost is $45 (in advance) for each reservation. Mail reservation request with payment to: Marcia Chalifoux at 1108 O Street, Lansingburgh, NY 12182. You must state a preference for steak or chicken for each reservation and only paid reservations are accepted. This will be a big event and tickets may sell out early. Contact Marcia Chalifoux @ [mchalifony@aol.com](mailto:mchalifony@aol.com) or more details. This promises to be a fun filled afternoon with opportunity to renew old acquaintances, catch up on what’s new, talk about the time you tried to fill the well at the old Lansingburgh High School, etc. Hope to see you there!

**Thursday, September 25th 7pm** at the Herman Melville House, Steve Muller, local historian and author, will speak on his book “Troy, New York and the Building of the USS Monitor”. The USS Monitor was the first ironclad warship commissioned by the United States Navy during the American Civil War. Steve Muller was a U.S. State Department Foreign Service Officer for 26 years. He specialized in international economic issues, including international trade, commodities, and energy. After retirement, he worked for 12 years as a reporter for a group of electronic newsletters covering the electric utility industry. He moved to Troy ten years ago and became interested in Troy’s industrial heritage. He is on the board of the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway. Steve grew up in the Chicago area. He received his BA in Economics from Dartmouth College.

**Thursday, October 2nd 7pm** at the Herman Melville House, Don Rittner, local historian and author, will speak about Famous Inventors of the Capital District. Don Rittner is a historian, archeologist, environmental activist, educator, and author living in the Capital District, Schenectady County, New York; in December 2004, he was named official Schenectady County Historian, responsible for providing guidance and support to municipal historians and serving as a conduit between the State Historian in Albany and the local historians in their counties. Shortly after, he was named the official Schenectady City Historian as well. He has published 30 books in history, science, and technology, including a book on Lansingburgh which is available for purchase at the Melville House.

**Thursday, October 16th 6pm** at the Herman Melville House, Tom Martin, author & blogger, will read his fiction novel, “Murder in the Burgh”. November 22 was a sad day for many Americans, but there was another November 22nd in 1886 & it takes the combined efforts of Chester A. Arthur, Herman Melville, & Theodore Roosevelt to solve a 50 year old murder mystery. Herman Melville is a 19 year old boy who wants to go to sea & write about it, but he’s stuck in Lansingburgh, NY. He must solve the mystery of stolen rifles & the murder of an abolitionist so his family can keep their home. Tom Martin was born and raised in Lansingburgh, NY. He lived in the house where many of the scenes in his book take place.

**Friday, October 31st 6pm** at the Herman Melville House, we will be hosting our annual Halloween party. Warren Broderick will discuss some “Urban Legend” ghost stories of the Lansingburgh area. There will be a door prize for best costume.

**Thursday, November 13th 6pm** at the Herman Melville House, we will host our Annual Holiday Party. We will auction a number of items that are suitable for holiday gift giving: small antiques, collectibles, Christmas books, and holiday ornaments. All proceeds will be used toward the Melville house preservation fund.

**Thursday, November 20th 7pm** at the Melville House, Gary Robusto, founder of Tri-city NY Paranormal Society will speak on Paranormal Research…details to come…

The meetings are open to the public and refreshments will be served. For further information on these events, call the Society at 986-2285 (Jenny) or 235-3501 (recorded message), or consult the Society’s web site at <http://www.lansingburghhistoricalsociety.org/> or email us at [LHSsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:LHSsecretary@gmail.com). Also, check out our Facebook page!

The following article by David Marsh will continue in future editions of the Newsletter.

**THE TRACYS: WEALTH, PHILANTHROPY AND SCANDAL**

**DAVID MARSH**

You will recall an earlier article in our Newsletter about Keating Rawson, the Irish immigrant who established a malt house and tannery in Lansingburgh, was instrumental in bringing the Roman Catholic Church to this region, and purchased the land at 107th Street for the Old Catholic Burying Ground. Rawson had a business partnership with John Tracy, another Irish immigrant. In 1820 Tracy married Sara Rawson, Keating Rawson’s daughter. The couple lived briefly in Manhattan, but established themselves in Lansingburgh where John Tracy expanded the malt house business. He continued to have business connections in NYC, selling malt to a number of brewers in the Hudson Valley region.

Sara and John Tracy had five children. Edward was the oldest. It is important to note that Keating Rawson’s will had named an Edwin as a grandchild, not an Edward. It may have been that this first child of the Tracy’s born in 1824 was named Edwin at birth, but became known as Edward later in life. He is known as Edward throughout his adult life and in all of his business affairs.

In 1827 Sara Catherine Tracy was born. She was followed by Eustace Rawson Tracy in 1831 (named for Annie Eustace Rawson, her grandmother). Anna Eustace Tracy, also named for her grandmother, came along in 1832. John Keating Tracy was the last born in 1833. He died less than six months after his birth. Sara, with no “h”, is the translated Irish spelling but this same lady’s name is found in many places with a final “h”.

Sara Tracy was a student at a Sacred Heart Convent School. These were schools for young women started by an order of French nuns; the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. The first school in the eastern US was started in New York City in 1840. French language was a major part of the core of instruction. Later a school was established in Albany around 1859. The Albany school in later times became the Kenwood Academy of the Sacred Heart. It merged with an Episcopal school to become the Doane Stuart School and has separated from that merger just recently. It is unclear whether Sara attended the school in Albany or in New York City where she had Tracy relatives.

An 1839 *Catalogue of the Lansingburgh Academy* names Sara Tracy as a student. Miss Harriet White would have been her teacher and the Rev. Ebeneezer Maltbie, Principal of the Lansingburgh Academy. The Trustees and officers of the Academy in 1839 include many well known Lansingburgh business and professional men. Among them were the Rev. Phineas Whipple, Frederick Leonard M.D., Jacob Lansing, the Rev. P. F. Phelps, Elias Parmelee, and John Taylor M.D. Many of Sara’s fellow students were children of the officers and other prominent Burghers. The names include Blatchford, two Filley boys, a Knickerbacker, several Lansings, a Powers, a Treadwell, several Hawkins, and a few Yates children. Twelve year old Sara was in the company of children not only from Lansingburgh but as far away as Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Georgia and communities in the Hudson and Mohawk Valley area. The Lansingburgh Academy, which building we know as the Lansingburgh Branch of the Troy Public Library, had become well know as a place to educate young Americans. Sara would later become a teacher in the Lansingburgh Academy.

Sara C. and Anna Tracy were educated at the Albany Female Academy. It began in 1819 and was the first American female preparatory school. That institution was located near the present Academy Park, north of the present NYS Capitol and west of the present Albany City Hall. While attending the Academy, Sara lived in the home of a French professor and his wife. Sara was part of what we would call today a language immersion program. All of the instruction as well as the non-curricular activities were done in the French language. It was meant to produce fluency in the language, and also with learning European French culture, while studying the philosophy, science, mathematics, geography and literature of the time. Anna was part of a different program which emphasized the same subjects but taught them in English. Albany Female Academy was a boarding school and drew students from eastern New York State and adjacent New England. The Albany Female Academy became the Albany Academy for Girls, now part of The Albany Academies.

Anna Eustace Tracy met and married William Cagger. He was the brother of Peter Cagger, a prominent lawyer and Democrat politician in New York State. William Cagger had been a business man in Albany and later was employed at the New York Customs House. The Caggers made their home in a very fashionable part of Brooklyn. He died in 1880 while working at the Customs House.

Anna and William had one son who lived to adulthood. Their son, William, began his working life as a clerk for a glass manufacturer that produced containers for the pharmaceutical industry. He stayed with the company and eventually became the owner.

He was an avid sportsman and member of several yachting clubs. He never married. By 1895 he became ill with cirrhosis and retired from the glass business. He had income from a number of investments, some of which he acquired when his uncle Edward Tracy died in 1898, leaving him $50 000.

To be continued……….

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***IT’S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!***

Our membership year begins in April 1st. People who join in January, February, 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!

**These rates are only good through the end of June 2014! See new rates in Acting President’s Message.**

Mail to: Lansingburgh Historical Society

PO Box 219, Lansingburgh Sta.

Troy, NY 12182-0219

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**Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Mailing Address\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Email Address\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_Regular ($5) \_\_\_\_Sustaining ($25) \_\_\_\_Life ($100) Donation$\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**