

# Historical Happenings



## Dansville Area Historical Society

Box 481 • Dansville, NY 14437 • 585-335-8090

Website: [dansvilleareahistoricalsociety.wordpress.com](http://dansvilleareahistoricalsociety.wordpress.com)

Email: [dahs@stny.rr.com](mailto:dahs@stny.rr.com)



VOLUME 25, No. 1

*"Caretakers of Our Area History"*

SPRING 2017

## President's Letter

*Dear Members and Friends,*

2016 was a successful year for DAHS. Our membership responded very generously to our plea for funds. The roof has been replaced and looks terrific. We had several successful programs in 2016. We hosted several groups for tours including our annual 4th graders. A couple of class reunion groups stopped by to remember the good old days. Unfortunately, the weather cancelled our Christmas concert this year, but the cookies and punch were still enjoyed by those who ventured out. Typical December weather in Western New York – sunny and dry in the village and snowing ten miles away.

Plans for 2017 are ramping up. Our program schedule is being researched, and hopefully we can put out a full-year plan soon. Our open houses will continue on the first and third Saturdays each month from 10 am to 2 pm. Discussions on our next major exhibit are underway, so if you have not already stopped by for the Foster Wheeler Exhibit, you will want to do that soon. If you have topics you would like us to find a presentation on, please send us your suggestions. We have a couple of nice grants which are helping us restore objects in the museum. David Gilbert has written a book on Dansville's involvement in WWII. We look forward to publishing that. Thank you, David, for sharing your love of history with us.

Our annual Membership Drive is underway and a membership form is included in this newsletter. Membership funds help pay the annual expenses to keep the museum open. As with any home, we have utilities, insurance, subscriptions, supplies, newsletters and routine repairs with an annual estimate of \$6,000. 2016 membership brought in about \$2600. Our gift shop sales and program donations help to make up the difference. So if you have friends who would enjoy the newsletters and museum membership, please give them a gift membership or share your membership form with them.

Our monthly board meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 7:00 pm. Any member is welcome to attend the meetings. We can always use volunteer assistance. If you have an hour or two that you can donate your time and skills, we would love to have your help.

We look forward to a successful 2017. Stop by the museum during our open house hours, I'm sure you will find many interesting objects to enjoy and facts which surprise you. You can also make an appointment to visit the museum by calling any board member. Our phone numbers are on page two.

Wishing you and your family a happy Spring.

*Gerri Waight, President*



*The Pioneer Park historic marker is up and is majestic! Now that spring is here, visit Dansville's newest park on West Liberty Street. Walk the paths, view the inscriptions on the benches, and relax in the serene, yet history-filled, setting.*



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Phone: 585-335-8090  
dahs@stny.rr.com

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**DAHS Museum**  
14 Church St.  
Dansville, NY

Open 10am to 2pm  
1st & 3rd Saturdays

## 2017 Anniversaries

Compiled by David Gilbert, DAHS Curator

Here are some of the anniversaries that Dansville will be celebrating in 2017:

### 200 YEARS AGO - 1817:

- John Brail, a former Dansville resident, becomes the first settler in the nearby Sandy Hill area.
- "Lodge 306," the first Masonic Lodge in Dansville, is organized.

### 150 YEARS AGO - 1867:

- The Erie & Genesee Valley Railroad, the precursor to the Dansville & Mount Morris Railroad, is organized; it will take four years of effort to actually make Dansville's first railroad a reality.

### 100 YEARS AGO - 1917:

- By a vote of 667 to 546, Dansville citizens vote to ban the sale of alcoholic beverages, three years before national Prohibition goes into effect.
- The Sugar Bowl soda fountain and grill is founded by brothers Chris and Steve Dromazos.
- The Up-To-Date Cleaners is started by James Pappas.

### 75 YEARS AGO - 1942:

- Wartime rationing, including sugar, coffee, gasoline, and meat, commences in Dansville.
- The new A&P grocery store opens at 164 Main; Charles A. Reinholtz is its manager.
- Dansville's new sewage treatment plant, built in part by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) is completed.
- Construction is completed on the new highway extending from Health Street to the Dansville - Conesus Road, including an underpass with the Lackawanna Railroad.

### 50 YEARS AGO - 1967:

- Thomas Buses opens a branch office in Dansville.
- The Expressway Auto Auction is opened by Richard and David Tracy.
- The first annual Dogwood Festival is held, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, and includes a carnival held in back of the Town Hall and a parade.
- The completion of Route 245, between Dansville and Nunda, which had been first proposed way back in 1934, meant that the 22-mile drive between the two villages was now just 13 miles. (In 1971, the route became NY 436.)
- The Dansville Assembly of God Church takes over the former St. Patrick's building, while the former rectory is given to the Dansville Area Historical Society to be converted to a museum.

### 25 YEARS AGO - 1992:

- The inaugural Wayland Potato Festival is held.
- The former Craig Developmental Center in Sonyea is converted into a medium-security prison facility.
- The \$1.4 million Thomas P. Reilly Medical Arts Building is completed and dedicated.
- As an adjunct to the annual Oktoberfest celebration, the first "Greit Balloon Rallye" is held at Rotary Field and includes 35 hot air balloons. (In future years, the annual rallies would be held at the airport, and eventually be officially designated at the New York State Festival of Balloons.)

### 10 YEARS AGO - 2007:

- Downtown Dansville is included on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Jane Schryver and Paul Hoffman presented a wonderful photo program in October on Stony Brook State Park. Here's a photo that shows one of the few times the falls became completely frozen.*

## ***Thank You to Our Donors!***

### **2016 Dansville Area Historical Society Roof Campaign**

With gratitude and deep appreciation, we acknowledge and thank our donors who went over and above the challenge to put a roof on the DAHS Museum. The roof is beautiful, especially because we know it is keeping our museum collection secure. A plaque is now being designed to hang permanently in the entryway to the museum. We will be inviting you to attend our "Raising the Roof" reception and hope all our members will attend.

#### **Roof Gable - \$1000 & up**

Anonymous Matching Challenger  
Paul & Aniko Constantine  
Dansville Festival of Balloons  
Jim and Nancy Helfrich  
Mary Ann Holden  
Joanne Hoffman Rogers  
Jane Schryver

#### **Roof Beam - \$500-\$999**

Albert & Janice Hawk  
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If you find any errors in our records or in how you want your name(s) listed on the plaque, call Nancy Helfrich at 585-335-5743 as soon as possible.



*Rosie Alexander was guest speaker at the DAHS Annual Dinner Meeting and gave a splendid recounting of the history of F.A. Owen Publishing Co. and The Instructor magazine. She also shared many personal stories, including the time Johnny Cash requested permission to use a poem from an F.A. Owen book for one of his recordings. Thank you, Rosie, for such an interesting look back!*

DAHS is fortunate to have several maps and atlases that visitors can view and use to research ownership of plots. In this issue of the newsletter, David takes us back at how Dansville appeared in the 1872 atlas.

## Object Lessons from the Dansville Museum

by David Gilbert, DAHS Historian and Curator

DAHS Curator David Gilbert has undertaken an interesting project: to narrate Dansville's history via the description and interpretation of 100 objects housed in our museum.

### OBJECT #26:

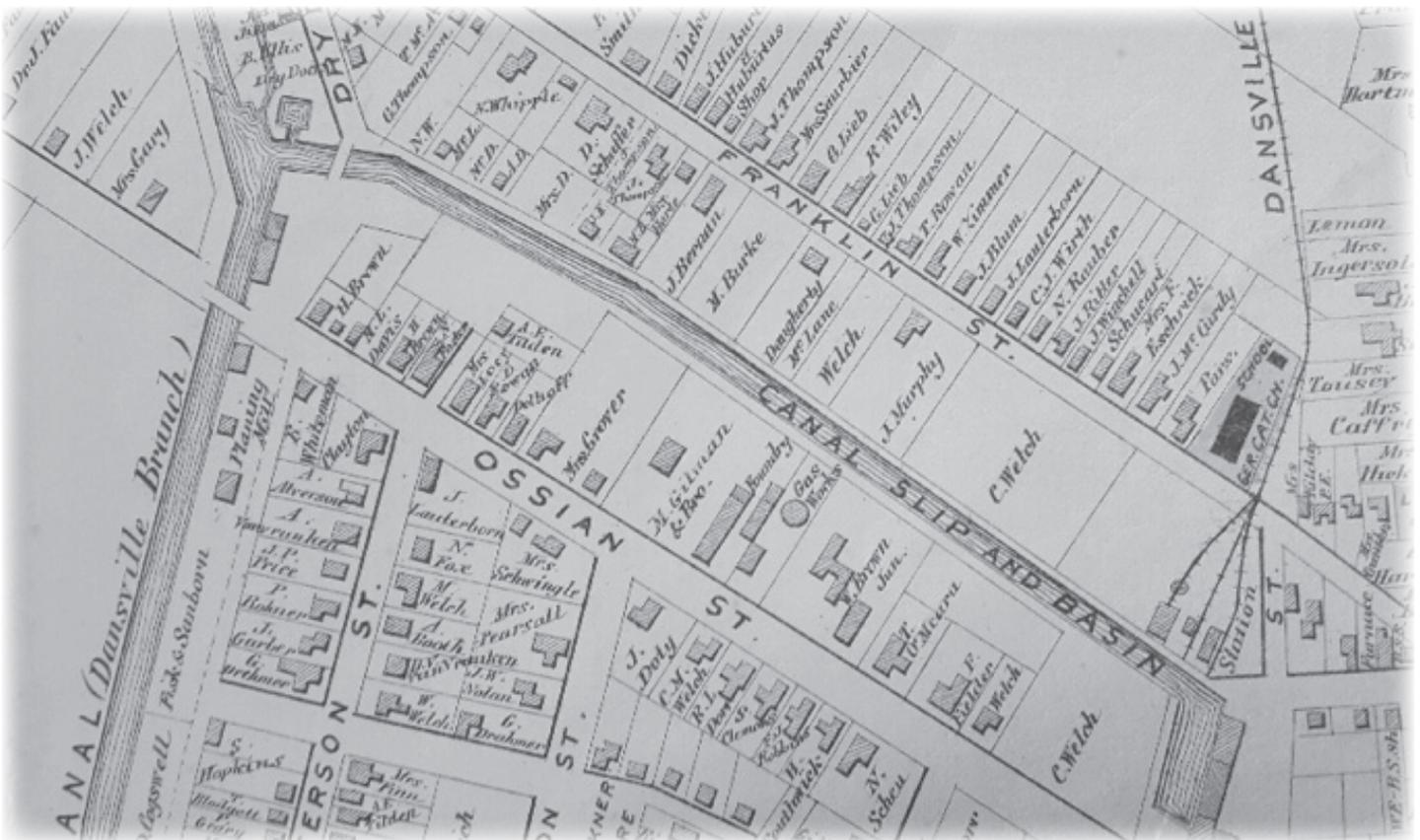
#### Map of Dansville from *Atlas of Livingston Co. New York (1872)*

We haven't yet covered Object #15 on our list which is the giant wall map of Dansville from 1857. Because of its size, it is displayed prominently in the meeting room on the second floor of the Dansville museum, one of the few walls that could accommodate its size. This was the main drawback of these large-scale property maps, which enjoyed a brief craze in the 1850s.

Object #26 covers the next generation of commercial cartography. The size problem was dispensed with by rendering such maps into book form. These were the county atlases, and the 1870s were their heyday. Enjoying particular success was the Beers family of New York City. They owned three publishing companies including that of F. W. Beers which published in 1872 the *Atlas of Livingston Co. New York*.

Given the wealth of information the atlases contain, these county atlases were surprisingly inexpensive to produce. Most of what was needed - the government-sponsored land surveys, along with the county tax records to show who owned what - was already available. All that was really needed were enough subscribers to ensure profitability, and they were ready to roll. By the end of the 1870s, virtually the entire United States had been mapped out and bound into books.

The atlases weren't perfect, of course. For example, if Mr. Smith owned a certain house, but he was renting it out to Mr. Jones, it was Smith's name on the map; ownership did not always signify residence. Given such limitations, though, these atlases were still a treasure trove, and with the Dansville map that appears in the *Atlas of Livingston Co.*, we can get a progress report on Dansville's growth by comparing it with its wall-mounted 1857 counterpart.



The 1872 Atlas shows the Dansville canal (running parallel to Jefferson Street and Dock Street) and the canal slip and basin (running parallel to Franklin and Ossian Streets) that terminates adjacent to the railroad tracks.

The most obvious new development on the 1872 map was the long-overdue arrival of a railroad within the village borders. Folks in Dansville had been trying to get a railroad as far back as 1832. But it wasn't until December 12, 1871, that an actual locomotive pulled into the Dansville station of the Erie & Genesee Valley Railroad, which traversed 15 miles to Mount Morris, to link up with the Avon, Geneseo, & Mount Morris line. By year's end, passengers had the option of a 7 a.m. and a 2:45 p.m. departure time. For years, the line would be plagued with financial problems, culminating in an 1891 foreclosure, a reorganization under new owners, and a new name by which it's best remembered—the Dansville & Mt. Morris Railroad.

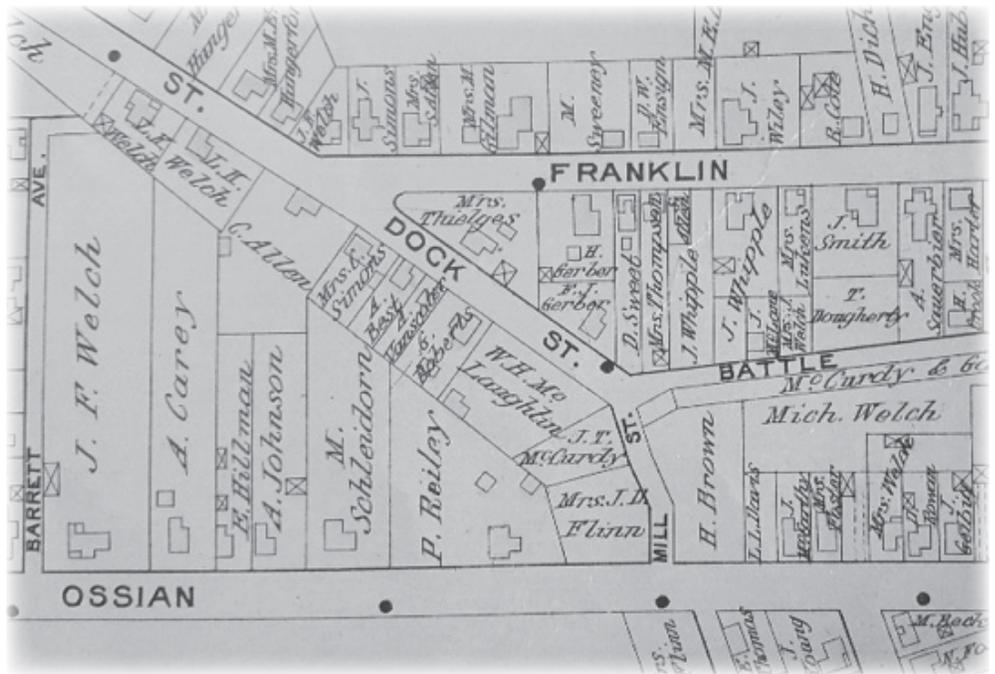
As chance would have it, the 1872 map was created during that short stretch of time when the railroad and the canal coexisted; but the old waterway was on its last legs. Even before the railroad's arrival, the canal had ceased to be a significant contributor to local commerce.

1873 would be the last year that canal tolls were collected in Dansville. In 1878, the entirety of the Genesee Valley Canal was closed by the state. After that, the canal met the same fate as any other neglected body of standing water: it became a stagnant, mosquito-infested stinkhole, and what was once desirable canalfront property became a whole lot less desirable.

“Canal” became, figuratively speaking, a four-letter word, and even Canal Street would eventually be renamed West Avenue. Bit by bit, of course, the ditch would be filled in, and now, save for a couple of seemingly out-of-place street names like Quay and Dock, one would scarcely know there was ever a canal here at all.

On the 1857 wall map, it was the “Dansville Water Cure.” By 1872, “Our Home On The Hillside” was in its full flower of success; the original building had been expanded, with the adjoining Liberty Hall chapel building connected by an enclosed corridor. Also, several surrounding cottages—Ivy, Terrace, Hollyhock, and Clover Nook—had sprung into being.

Not too far off from the resort sat the Dansville Seminary, Dansville's first attempt at a post-grammar-school facility of higher education. (The street upon which it sat was known as Seminary Street; now it's Health Street.) Founded in 1858, the Seminary would soldier on for some 30 years, almost all of which was spent at or near the financial brink. But until the Union Free High School was opened in 1888, the Seminary was where Dansville's young people would go to receive what we would now call a high school education.



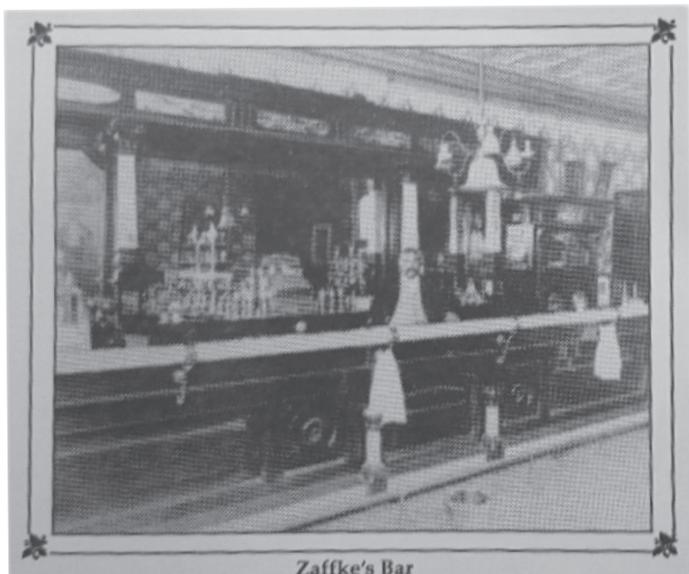
*By 1902, the canal is no longer is evidence and is replaced with Battle Street. Mill Street now exists and connects Dock Street to Ossian Street. (From New Century Atlas, Livingston, New York (1902)*

The physical expansion of Dansville had slowed down some since the canal era; other than Seminary Street, there weren't many new streets in town in 1872 that weren't present on the 1857 wall map. On the west side of town, Franklin Street still marked the village limits although with the greater attention that the railroad would bring, that would soon change. There were still a number of mills along Mill Creek, although not quite as many as on the 1857 map. The paper mill was still at the end of Knox Street, next to a large plot of land still owned by Dr. James Faulkner, now in his eighties; at this point, Washington Street stopped at South (Clara Barton) Street. The Stone Mill on Quay Street was now owned by Jesse Angell, and on Main & Gibson, good old Benjamin Readshaw was still operating his grist mill as he had since 1840, supplying graham flour for the health resort. Readshaw passed away in 1883, and his son Edmund took over the business. A little farther down the street, George Hyland was running the old pail factory.

Finally, the sad, barren batch of land in the middle of town seen on the 1857 wall map --that part of town ravaged in the 1854 fire -- was now mostly filled in. George Hyland's American House hotel stood on the southwest corner of Main and Ossian, although that would soon be replaced by a far more impressive structure, the Hyland House. Across the street stood the building that housed the Faulkner-owned First National Bank of Dansville, and so on down the street, all the way to the Clinton House at Milton and Main. In short, Dansville in 1872 was still a town on the rise.

# Rushbottom Cookery Cookbooks - a Treasure at \$10.00

Available for sale at the DAHS gift shop and online is *Rushbottom Cookery*, our two-volume set that is a little bit recipes, a little bit photos from the past, a little bit nostalgic look at Dansvillians who submitted recipes, and a lot of enjoyment.



Zaffke's Bar

*This photo of Zaffke's Bar introduces Rushbottom Cookery's section on "beverages" with the caption reading: Before Prohibition went into effect in 1917, the ritziest saloon in Dansville was Henry Zaffke's Bar on the corner of Main and Exchange (Clara Barton) streets. After Dansville went "dry," Sam Lanphear (who later founded the coffee Cup) converted the tavern into a restaurant.*

The cookbook was first published in 1995. The set is over 340 pages and comes in two 3-ring plastic-bound binders. Overall size is 7 x 8 ¾ inches. You can purchase at the Museum or order online at our website.

To honor the coming of spring, here are some refreshing beverage recipes. Enjoy!

## **Switchel** contributed by Betty Mitchell Minemier

Dissolve ½ to ¾ cups of packed brown sugar, 1 tsp. of powdered ginger, ½ cup of cider vinegar in nearly 2 qts. of cold water.

*I remember this refreshing drink was sent out to the men working in the fields at harvest time. My mother made it in a large stoneware pitcher and cooked it with ice "chunks." Its restorative content suggests the commercial preparations popular with athletes today.*

## **A Toast** contributed by Carolyn Wright

Americans are funny. We put sugar in a glass to make it sweet, twist of lemon to make it sour, gin to warm it for us, ice to cool it off, say "Here's to you," and drink it ourselves.

## **Dandelion Wine** contributed by Mildred Holden

2 qts. of blossoms, pour on 5 qts. boiling water, let stand 24 hours. Strain and add 3 lemons, 3 oranges, 4 lbs sugar, let stand 10 days stirring each day. Strain, put in a large bottle or jug, leave until October, then put in bottle.

[Ed. Note: The cookbook gives you two other dandelion wine recipes as well]

## **Apricot Wine** contributed by Gloria Gilbert Pike

1 lb. dried apricots	½ yeast cake
4 qts. warm water	6 ½ cups sugar
2 ¼ cups brown sugar	1 ½ cups raisins
2 lemons, sliced thin	2 oranges, sliced thin
1 Tbsp. ginger root	

Wash and dry apricots and place in large crock. Pour warm water over apricots. (Keep ½ cup of the warm water to pour over yeast cake.) Stir in the sugars, fruit and ginger. Then add dissolved yeast, mix well, Cover the crock, let stand 30 days. Stir mixture every other day. After 30 days, strain and bottle.



## *Marie Sterner Roberts* 1928-2016

Dansville and Livingston County lost a good friend and tenacious advocate with Marie's passing on November 30, 2016. She would not say this of herself, but it is true that as head of fund raising for DAHS, she brought the ideas for the wooden collectibles and the cotton coverlets to the board and kept them selling briskly for close to 20 years. Our estimate is that Marie's ideas and phone calls and perseverance netted the Dansville Area Historical Society upwards of \$30,000 to \$40,000 over the years.

Marie was a selfless giver to the many organizations she belonged to. Livingston County honored her a few years ago as Senior Citizen of the Year for Dansville. She downplayed that, of course, but I think she was very pleased with the honor. We will miss you, Marie.

Marie's family has graciously named DAHS as recipient for memorials in her honor. These may be sent to Dansville Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 481, Dansville, NY 14437.

***The Dansville Area Historical Society  
is pleased to share with you our  
recent accomplishments and  
our goals for the coming year:***

***2016 Accomplishments***

- New roof for Museum.
- Presented programs on Allen Brothers Balloonists, Opera Houses in Livingston County, Stony Brook Then and Now, and a Look Back at F.A. Owen Publishing Co.
- Collaborated with Artworks Gallery and the American Red Cross Chapter No. 1 on a two-month exhibit at Artworks on “Clara Barton in Dansville.”
- Participated in the New York State Path Through History weekend in June.
- Installed Past Perfect software which allows online cataloging of our museum collection.
- Awarded grant for professional development which allowed membership and attendance at the Museum Association of New York Annual Convention and a three-day training seminar in Past Perfect software.
- Awarded grant from Genesee Country Antique Dealers Association to conserve a painting in our collection and to purchase UV blinds for windows.
- Hosted Dansville Central School fourth grade classes for a tour of the Museum, several reunion groups, as well as open hours twice monthly and on holiday weekends.
- Participated at Dogwood Festival and Clara Barton Day.
- Continued issuing a quality newsletter as well as a strong presence on Facebook and on our website.

***2017 Goals***

- Secure UV light-blocking window coverings in the Museum.
- Continue to provide quality programming and publications.
- Republish softcover version of *Castles on the Hill* by Ted Jackson.
- Collaboration with Artworks on an exhibit.
- Assess and complete porch and front step repair to Museum.
- Continue to work with the Dansville Central School and local groups to bring local history to the community.
- Increase volunteer participation to catalog online the Museum’s collection.
- Improve Museum exhibits with secure displays and descriptive captioning.
- Continue applying for grants to restore, protect, and catalog our exhibits as well as for professional development.

***Mission Statement***

The Dansville Area Historical Society is an educational institution whose purpose is to research, collect, exhibit, promote, and protect artifacts and archives that represent the Dansville area and its role in local, state, national and international history.

**Dansville Area Historical Society  
P.O. Box 481  
Dansville, New York 14437**

**Membership Matters**

*Your membership and contributions keep  
Dansville’s Museum operational. We deeply  
appreciate any donation you are able to give.*

**Membership Levels for 2016**

- General ..... \$15.00
- Business ..... \$25.00
- Silver ..... \$25.00
- Gold ..... \$50.00
- Platinum ..... \$100.00
- Life Membership \$150.00
- Life Membership  
Continuing Support  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
in honor / memory of:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Any Additional Donation:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Our membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st.** Your current membership expiration date and level can be found on your address label. If the date is less than 12/31/16, please renew today. Life Members will find “Life” on their address label.

Checks may be made out to DAHS. You may use the enclosed envelope or mail to address at top of this page. **Thank you for your tax-deductible donation!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Gift From:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please contact us about establishing a designated gift, memorial or legacy gift to DAHS.*

**We have many opportunities to volunteer at DAHS. If you can help in any of the following areas, it would be greatly appreciated.**

- Data Entry
- Giving Tours at Museum
- Clean-Up Days
- Staffing Booth at Events
- Assisting on a committee: acquisitions, programs, fundraising, website, newsletter, events

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## Dansville Central School History Club's Display Case

DAHS board member Jeff Miller once again has helped the school's History Club choose items to show in their display case at the school. The theme is toys and entertainment through the years. You can see their display at the school, or come to the DAHS Museum for a wide display of toys, children's clothes, and entertainment in early Dansville, right up to a stereo system that includes an 8-track player! We also have Dansville Danua Yearbooks from 1902 to the present that visitors can research.

