# Historical Happenings



## **Dansville Area Historical Society**

Box 481 • Dansville, NY 14437 • 585-335-8090 Website: dansvilleareahistoricalsociety.wordpress.com

Email: dahs@stny.rr.com

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"Caretakers of Our Area History"

# **President's Report**

#### Dear Members and Friends.

Greetings! I'm Gerri Waight, and I joined the DAHS Board of Directors last fall. I became the interim President of DAHS in August following the resignation of Jim Snyder. Jim and his wife Jan have relocated to Florida. We wish them all the best in their new home and thank them for their many contributions over the years. As I write my first President's letter, I am reflecting on how fortunate I am to have recent past presidents available as a resource to help me get up to speed with my new duties. I look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.

DAHS has several projects remaining for 2013. Our Annual Meeting, dinner and program have been a community favorite for many years. We're looking forward to a fun-filled evening as David Gilbert tests everyone's memory for local trivia. He promises some questions that all of us will be familiar with, so come prepared to participate and win prizes.

The Christmas Program will be a great way to get into the holiday season spirit. This year we are holding our program during the Winter in the Village celebration, and we think that will enable more of you to listen to holiday music and then join the lighting of the trees ceremony. Reports on The Pioneer Park Project and on DAHS Board activities are also included in this newsletter.

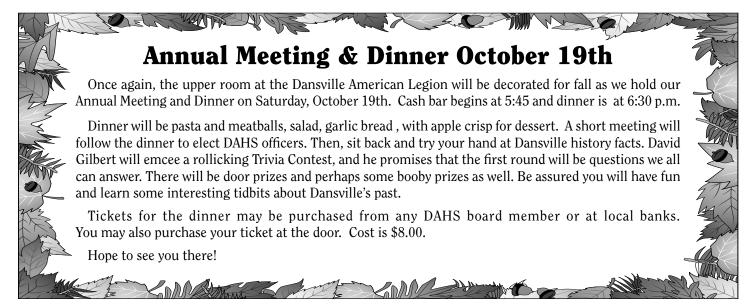
If you have not visited the museum lately, you should stop by during our museum open hours. The museum is open for tours and for research the first and third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m. Our staff will be glad to show you around or help you find displays of interest to you. There are three floors of displays full of Dansville Area History. Additional volunteers are always welcome. A committee member will be happy to mentor newcomers. Not only will you be volunteering for a good cause, but it will give you time to view the museum displays for yourself. I find more interesting things to read about or investigate every time I go through the museum.

We also have many items for sale. Our collectable Dansville buildings and landmarks, our books, and our throws make great gifts. We now have a fresh supply of throws in Williamsburg blue and in black and cream.

Don't forget to check the DAHS website dansvilleareahistoricalsociety.wordpress.com and our Facebook Page Dansville Area Historical Society, Dansville NY.

As you can see we have a busy year end ahead. We hope you will join us for our events and enjoy the history of the area.

Gerri Waight



# **DAHS Committee Reports**

#### **Membership**

We are now at 191 current members comprised of 16 business members, 16 other historical and professional groups, 77 general members, and 82 life members. Renewals will begin with the November newsletter for your 2014 memberships.

### Website Happenings

In the first 9 months of 2013, the DAHS website had over 5,600 views. Average views per day were 14 for 2012 and currently are 22 for 2013. Many of those views are by the same people who came back to the site, so that is a good sign. We have added ten new posts and six pages this year. These include bios and historical facts about our Business Members. You can read about them by scrolling down "Postings" on the home page of our website, *dansvilleareahistoricalsociety.wordpress.com*, or type Dansville Area Historical Society into your web browser.

Our popular series, "On This Date" continues. If you have missed any of these, you can type "on this date" in the search bar to find them.

Many visitors to the site, especially those who now live far away from Dansville, take advantage of the opportunity to contact us via our email: dahs@stny.rr.com. We are also on Facebook as well.

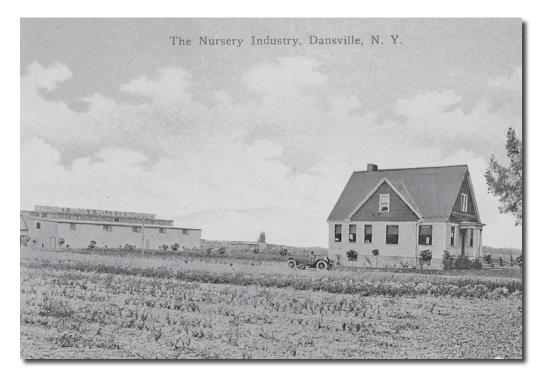
#### **Acquisitions**

The Acquisitions Committee has revamped the forms used when donations are received. Although the form is a bit longer, it will make it easier for our donors to tell us about the background of the item they wish to donate. It will also ensure a smooth process from acquiring a donation through the decision whether to accept it into the Museum's permanent collection.

The DAHS Museum has no budget to purchase artifacts. It has been through generous donations from museum supporters that we have been able to build our collection.

Currently, we are particularly looking for photos of Main Street businesses and items they sold or gave out (imprinted bags, promotional items) covering the 1920s through the 1980s with a special emphasis on the 40s, 50s, and 60s. If you have items you wish to donate, you may visit the Museum during our open hours (the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., or you can call the Museum at 585-335-8090, or you can call a member of the Acquisitions Committee: Nancy Helfrich (585-335-5743) Corky Chapman (585-335-2606) Paul Constantine (585-335-2316). Please do not drop off items if a DAHS member is not on duty.





Postcard from the early 1900s shows the office for Maloney Bros. Nursery. After the high school was built in the late 1960s, the building at 299 Main Street served for many years as the district office for Dansville Central School. Today it houses the offices of University Cardiovascular Associates.

## Jerry J. Wall

## Dansville Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient

This summer marked the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. A Dansville son and Civil War private, Jerry G. Wall distinguished himself on the third day in that battle and became Dansville's only lifelong resident to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

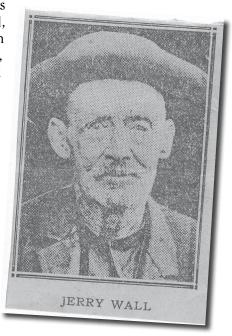
Jerry Wall was only 19 on July 3, 1863, when he captured a Confederate flag while serving in Company B, 126th Regiment of the New York Infantry Volunteers. The Medal of Honor Certificate is on display at the Dansville Area Historical Society Museum. The Medal of Honor is displayed at the Dansville American Legion.

Below is the copy and photo of an article that ran in Rochester's *Democrat and Chronicle*, January 29, 1928. Jerry Wall would die two years later in 1930 at the age of 86.

"In the thinning ranks of the local Seth N. Hedges Post, Grand Army of the Republic, there is one unassuming man who wears a Congressional Medal of Honor, the only owner of such an ornament in this section...Mr. Wall is living quietly at the home of Charles Curry in Ossian street, where he is in fine physical and mental condition, though he has always been of light physique and is now in the late eighties. The death of his beloved wife, Margaret, in 1927, after fifty-six years of married life together, left its sadness, but he is made so much of by his stepchildren and kinsfolk that he is grateful and contented.

"Dwight F. Davis, Secretary of War, recently sent Mr. Wall the following certificate: 'The United States of America, to all who shall see these presents, Greetings: This is to certify that the President of the United States of America, pursuant to Act of Congress approved April 27, 1916, has awarded in

the name of Congress to Private Jerry Wall, Company B, 126th New York Infantry, the Congressional Medal of Honor for Most Distinguished Gallantry in action in the capture of a Confederate flag at Gettysburg, Pa., July 3, 1863. Given under my hand at the City of Washington this 30th day of November, 1927."



# The Hylands of Dansville

By: Ken Holbrook

Ken Holbrook, a DAHS board member, also serves as the North Dansville Town Historian. Below is Part One of his "The Hylands of Dansville."

The Hyland name, although familiar only to a few these days, played an integral part in the history of early Dansville for three quarters of a century. George Hyland Sr. and his sons George Jr. and John did a lot for the early growth of Dansville and helped make Dansville a thriving community. George is best known today for his role in the "battle of the canal."

# George Hyland Sr. (1803-1880) - Businessman and Canal "Activist"

George Hyland Sr. was born June 21, 1803, in the county of Leitrim, in the parish of Drumahaire, Ireland. At the age of 14 he emigrated with his father's family to America. They landed at Quebec and from there traveled to York -- now Toronto—where the family became permanent residents. Two years later George lost his father. Later on, he was quoted as saying, "leaving me all America to get my living in with nothing but my hands, my natural love of labor, and a determination to succeed in the world with which to get that living." So with a sense of humor and a desire to succeed, George took upon the duties and responsibilities that were placed before him.

For several years he went between his schooling and working on a farm. He knew that an education was very important for his future. When you consider the times, it was rare that a young man of his age would feel that a good practical education was important.

In 1820 he started to learn a trade as a hatter in Toronto. He worked diligently for three years even though, he said, "my Boss was one of those self-important, passionate, tyrannical men who think that everybody was made to yield to their wishes and whims." But in October 1824, an incident happened which caused him to sever his relationship with his boss and to leave Canada for good.

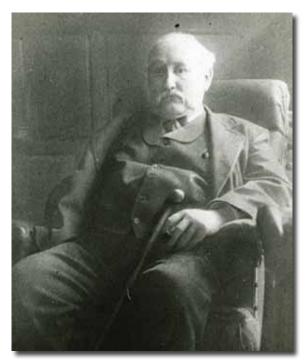
From his personal account we read: "One Saturday afternoon I was busily working on making fur bodies for ladies hats, the very fashionable. My Boss came in and after looking over my work for a few moments, in an angry tone said, 'Come here, sir.' 'I will as soon as I can leave this hat,' I replied. 'Come now sir, if you don't I'll fetch you!' he exclaimed. I knew that the time had come for a contest; but I obeyed. As I started to go towards him, he seized a heavy club, and when I was near enough to him, he struck at me with it. I caught it with my right hand, and seized him by the throat with my left. He dropped the club, and a fight ensued of no common order. We were alone, and we tugged and struggled, giving and returning heavy, damaging blows. For some time the results was doubtful but at last things turned in my favor; I gave him a blow that knocked him off his feet, and followed with me giving him a thrashing which he never would forget. "He promised, if I would let him up, to treat me better and with the respect that was due me, and he walked sullenly away, badly whipped, and as I thought a wiser man. The next Monday morning while I was working as usual, he came up behind me and before I knew it, hit me a stunning blow that nearly knocked me down. But I recovered and retreated to the other end of the shop. He followed me with his weapon, and I saw that another fight was about to happen; and it did and again the fight turned in my favor. This time I beat him nearly helpless and left him on the floor. Being scared I left him and went to my boarding house and quickly gathered up my few clothes and belongings and went to my brother's near Prescott. After this I never met my Boss again, although later on I learned he had sent two constables after me, but I had the good fortune to have escaped.

From Prescott, Canada, Hyland went to Ogdensburg, New York, with only twenty cents in his pocket. He soon found employment, and after some time working in Ogdensburg, he saved quite a quite a bit of money and went to Bethel, New York. He attended school for nearly a year while also working full time. His aim was to save enough to start a business of his own.

In May of 1829, Hyland became a resident of Dansville where he stayed for the rest of his life. In 1833 he married the widow of Jacob Sholl, who had died about 1828. Sarah Lemen was the daughter of Major Thomas Lemen, and she had two children by Jacob Sholl: a son William H. Sholl and a daughter Catherine Lemen Sholl. Both Sholl children moved to Cleveland; however, daughter Catherine Sholl was married in Dansville to Col. E.A. Scovill of Cleveland in 1845. Their one son remained a Dansville citizen.

Sarah and George had three children: a daughter, Rachel. who died at 3 years and 5 months and two sons, George Jr. and John.

Hyland opened a hat, fur, and dry goods store and because of his industrious business habits and integrity, gained much respect and a high position among the business men of Livingston County.



George Hyland Sr.

## George Hyland Sr. cont.

Public spirited, George Hyland did what he could to build up the village and make it prosperous. He put much of his efforts into getting a sub branch, or spur, of the Genesee Valley Canal into the center of the Village. The plan for the canal was to bypass the business area of the Main Street businesses. Hyland saw a need to connect the businesses and the canal. He along with the business owners raised \$6000 to purchase a subscription to the canal and build a sub branch between the main branch and Spruce St.

In 1844, when it came time to connect the sub branch, three scows with gangs of men came to prevent it. Hyland and Merritt H. Brown had organized a group of citizens armed with pickaxes and spades. Hyland made a speech telling them not to hesitate in connecting the canal with the newly dug basin, and, if the scows were to interfere, a fight would occur. They did interfere, and a short but violent fight took place. Mr. Hyland focused his attention on the captain of the scows. He seized and subdued him, the scow gangs fled, and the branch was opened.

Thirty leading citizens were indicted for illegally tapping the state's canal and for resisting the state's authorities. But it never went to trial, and the basin became the center of the Village canal business.

In our next newsletter, we'll find out what George Hyland Sr. next turned his attention to. And, because we have been bringing our readers aspects of Dansville's ties to the Civil War, the "Hylands of Dansville" will conclude with the story of a Hyland who served his country in The Battle of Bull Run, a Hyland who served his country in covert operatons, and how a Hyland left a Civil War legacy which stands today.

## **Pioneer Park News**

Much progress has been made over the summer in securing the stone for the Pioneer Park monument. A company in Vermont (father and two sons and a daughter) will be in charge of finding the stone and cutting it. At this point, it's estimated that the base and stone will weigh about 6 and ½ tons. This is a fitting monument to honor the number of burials held in the park in the 50 years that it served as the only cemetery in Dansville.

Meanwhile, Professor Michael Rogers of Ithaca College has reported back to the committee his initial findings from the radar and metal scanning devices he used in May on the park grounds. Burial locations were found from disturbed soil. Several single graves were noted as well as some graves that likely held more than one body. It is impossible to tell if the disturbances resulted from burials or perhaps later removal of bodies. We do know enough at this point, however, to be assured that keeping the current layout of the park will not disturb the patterns he found.

Funds raised now total approximately \$13,000, and \$2,000 is still needed to install the monument. A 50/50 raffle during the NYS Festival of Balloons weekend was very successful. Dick Kreiley was the winner of \$700, and he graciously donated back \$200 to Pioneer Park. All contributions, no matter how small, will help make Pioneer Park a memorial Dansville can be proud of. Checks can be made out to Pioneer Park and sent to the

Dansville Area Historical Association P.O. Box 481 Dansville, NY 14437

All contributions are tax deductible.



Sketch of marble monument for the Pioneer Park memorial

## Letters from the War

David Gilbert, DAHS Curator

Third in a series, this letter originally ran in of the Dansville Advertiser from a soldier in the 19th NY Cavalry.

By the late summer of 1863, the folks of Dansville had more reason to feel optimistic about the war. Recent, decisive victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg marked a major reversal of fortune after the disasters at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, and an eventual Union triumph, if not assured, now seemed more likely than not. Back at home, in the meantime, Dansvillians were being subjected to the nation's first federal income tax. And in July 1863 came the first national draft as volunteer recruiting quotas no long met demand. Men between the ages of 20 and 45 were required to register -- on July 25, at Canandaigua, 110 names from the Dansville area were drawn. A man named Barry Woodruff was chosen to draw the names and, per regulations, was blindfold -- even though he was already blind. But rules are rules. Not every name drawn wound up serving; for instance,



Envelope of a letter sent during the Civil War to a Dansville resident (photo courtesy of Library of Congress Archives)

Giles Jackson, son of Dr. James Caleb Jackson, was too sick to serve (and, indeed, he died of tuberculosis in 1864). Militiamen were on hand to put down any possible rioting, as was happening in so many other places, but there was no such problem in Canandaigua.

Meanwhile, letters from soldiers continued to be published in the local papers. The following letter, dated August 10, 1863, was sent to A. O. Bunnell's Dansville Advertiser by E. Walter Lowe of the 19th NY Cavalry (which, as mentioned in the last newsletter, started life as the 130th Infantry). At the time, they were camped at Manassas Junction, Virginia, site of the two Bull Run battles of July 1861 and August 1862. The war, at least in the Virginia theater, had somewhat bogged down post-Gettysburg.

#### My Dear Bunnell -

We are encamped in a delightful piece of woods, ½ a mile south of the rail road. The majestic trees are beautiful to gaze upon, and their outstretched arms, decked with millions of green leaves, afford a most charming retreat for our boys, where they may be seen in "squads" talking about sabres, carbines and *yellow tape*: and wondering if horses could be induced to eat "hard tack" in case there should be in insufficiency of a more wholesome diet.

But I promised to take you through the windings of the 130th, so let us go back to Warrenton [Virginia], take a dish of bread and milk, pay each our fifty cents, and declare that we know it was not watered with Livingston water—but we will not quarrel with Mrs. Pollock if she does not say the "Yankees" have trodden over the grass so much that her cows wouldn't eat it, and if the milk looks thin, why, 'tis only twenty cents a quart! And she thinks blue is one of the most impressive colors among seven; for if she has seven daughters, and seven pairs of blue eyes, so if the milk is blue, the dear "critters" couldn't help glancing at the pan, though she may affirm they are very discreet, and would not smile on a Northerner for anything in the world!

Warrenton, in time of peace, contains twenty-five hundred inhabitants, five churches, a court house and jail, the latter being a massive structure, and built in 1831. The town is located on a charming spot, being on the summit of a gently

rising hill; and if should ever be settled by Northern people, it would soon become a thriving town. Here lovesick swains might sit and sigh in the shade, authors might contemplate the success of some peculiar production, and philosophers solve the great problem of the propriety of sending Greeley, the Tribune office and all it contains to the moon.

Friday, July 31st, at an early hour each company was ordered to get in line and listen to something very interesting to every man. We then were informed that Col. Gibbs had the previous night returned from Washington and with him brought the papers which changed the Regiment into Cavalry; and every man was urged to have his friend at home furnish a horse, have him prized, receive the money and send him on to camp for the writer's especial use. So you see the Government pays for the horses, yet we have the horse furnished by our friend, as long as we remain in the service. Sunday, August 2nd, Gen. Meade relieved the Regiment from Headquarters, and Monday night found it encamped at Hurin Mills, one of the most desolate holes in the known world. If you ever have traveled through Poag's Hole, you can form something of an idea what sort of a place we were in. The ground on which we were encamped was shaped like a half moon, right betwixt two hills, or rather cliffs, and it was used last winter for a slaughter yard; the miasma that filled the air was intolerable.

This was no place for Col. Gibbs—he thought too much of his boys to have them sleep on the carcasses of dead horses, so the Reg't. was ordered to this place, where it arrived Thursday morning, the 6th. The boys feel grateful toward Col. Gibbs for the pains he has ever taken to make them comfortable, both in camp and on marches. When he can have his own way, he will not let the boys march fast; when tired, his presence seems to inspire every heart with a new courage; and when he is gone only a few days, his return is ever hailed with joy. I do believe that every man in the Reg't. would follow him through the very valley of death; so much have they become attached to him. We read in history how much the French army became attached to Napoleon, how enthusiastic it grew on his approach; and though the 130th may never be known in history, tell the world of today, that the members are bound to its Commander with no less warm attachment.

We are only six miles from the Bull Run battle ground, where our army has twice been sorely defeated; and all around us are rebel fortifications, bearing marks of ingenuity and defiance. I was talking to a soldier who had lately visited the battle ground; he said the sight was shocking—the rain had washed the dirt off the trenches where the dead had been buried, leaving legs, arms, and heads in full view. Some were lying on their faces with their cartridge boxes still on. Oh, the horrors of war! How many hearts are left desolate, to bleed alone.

From the Station at the Junction, one has a grand view of the surrounding country. Gazing far out to the west and north-west, the eye is lost in beauty. Here rises the Blue Mountains, with their heads reaching to heaven; and are seen broad plains softly fringed with oak and butternut. Stand here and let your eyes sweep the horizon, and you will think you are gazing upon a canvas painted by a Fairy's brush. You would not dream that between you and so much loveliness slumber the mangled forms of poor volunteers. But they are sleeping there, and the grass grows on, and fair zephyrs murmur through the blossoming trees as though life and death had never struggle around the spot.

Since we have been mounted, a scouting party has had the honor of being sent out. Last night, Co. H, led by Captain Britton and Lieut. Burlison were ordered to proceed to a Mr. Cocrells a distance of three miles, and if that rebel gentleman was at home, take him; even should he happen to be found locked in the tender embrace of his wife, and bring him in double quick. The company left camp late in the evening. I suppose Co. H were sent because they ride the fastest horses your correspondent acting as high private in the rear ranks, it being his first duty since his great elevation. We marched quick time, and were not long in reaching the farm belonging to the man we sought. After surrounding an old house unoccupied, and finding nothing but a *hog*, hog is synonymous with rebel, we crossed the road and soon formed a "Yankee" chain around the house thought to contain the worthless form of Cocrell, the rebel spy. All was still save the growling of a watch dog, as Capt. Britton approached the door and demanded admittance. Soon the door was opened and a female rendered very interesting by having nothing on but a night gown informed us that nothing but women lived there; and she should think that gentlemen would be ashamed to disturb ladies in the night. "Rest assured, ladies," said Capt. B, "we have not come to harm ladies, but we must search your house."

"Oh, I know what you want, you're after my husband," said a rough voice from a bed quilt. "I don't see what on airth Abe Lincoln wants of my husband," continued she, "he has never done nothin' and he shan't go down to Washington and live on horse beef and hard tack! Now you can just go away for he ain't here and you can't find him neither;" and we didn't. We returned to camp about two o'clock, having had a nice trip, and searched the house of the rankest Secesh in Prince Williams County. It is said he shot one of our soldiers last spring and stripped him of his clothes.

Though we have a pleasant camp it is thought we shall not remain here to drill, as water is scarce, and the springs would not supply a sufficient quantity for so many horses. We have dress parade every night; and our guns are kept bright and ready to turn over when the sabres and carbines arrive. We are also to have a new uniform. In fact, everything will be new—our horses, sabres, carbines, and clothes will all be new, and we are going to teach the rebels a new song to sing. Abe furnishes the subject, Secretary Stanton sends it to headquarters, Gen. Meade sets it off in poetical feet, and every able-bodied soldier joins in the chorus. After the song has been sung, we are all coming home, and you will please tell the girls to be getting ready for a dance. Have them dress in pure white wearing a star upon their bosoms, and bearing in their hand a banner on which shall be inscribed "Victory! Welcome home ye brave Volunteers!"

We were obliged to leave one poor fellow at Warrenton, A. Hodges, Co. D, died and was buried in a grove near where we encamped. The night after his remains had been interred, I was sitting in the room where his lifeless form had laid, and penned the following lines:

Sweet may he sleep in his lone narrow bed,

He has nobly ended his life,

But, ah! When the news is sent home he is dead,

It will break the poor heart of his wife.

As in silence I sit and gaze where he lay,

It seems that his presence is nigh,

But I know that his form is fast turning to clay

And his soul has gone up to the sky.

Yours heart and pen, E. Walter Howe

## **DANSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL** SOCIETY

Box 481 Dansville, NY 14437 585-335-8090

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## **DAHS Museum**

14 Church St., Dansville, NY Open 10 to 2pm 1st & 3rd Saturdays



