

# Historical Happenings



## Dansville Area Historical Society

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*"Caretakers of Our Area History"*

SPRING 2016

## President's Report

### *Dear Members and Friends,*

Well, winter is coming to a close, and for the most part it was a gentle winter for Dansville.

Our last newsletter included membership renewal information. As of February 18, 31% of our members have submitted their renewals, and we thank them for their rapid response. The renewals included \$845.00 in additional donations which are greatly appreciated. Your membership level and expiration date should appear on the address area of your Newsletter. If you have not renewed, we hope we will hear from you shortly. Our summer newsletter will be sent only to current members, which includes life members. Later in the newsletter is a list of donors as of the end of February.

During February, we purchased the new computer equipment and software using the Challenge Grant funds. We purchased a Lenovo Laptop, docking station, monitor, and projector. We also have a color laser printer coming in the near future and have updated to Past Perfect 5 software for museum documentation of items in our collection. Our next step is to start loading all the items we have on index cards, making research much easier. Anyone wishing to help key data would be greatly appreciated. Just call any board member or return the membership form.

The Foster Wheeler Exhibit has been a favorite. Visitors are still making special visits to check for family and friends on display. Many former workers are enjoying the reminders of their time there.

Jeff Miller is our liaison with the High School History Club. The display cabinet at the school has been updated with different artifacts. It is important to bring the local history to life for the youth of Dansville.

Corky Chapman and the Program committee are working on the 2016 Program presentations. Our first program of 2016 will be April 9 on balloonists in Western New York. We're always interested in presenters who have Dansville history to relate. If you have topics or presentations which you would like to have us set up, please give us a call or email.

The House and Grounds committee is working on getting quotes for the roof. Soon the spring cleanup will need to be started.

Be sure to check out the recent postings on our Facebook Page. Jane Schryver has posted some interesting photos from years gone by.

As always, if you have time on your hands and would like to enjoy some Dansville history, we can use volunteers in many capacities or come visit us for a tour. We are open the first and third Saturdays each month from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Don't forget about our Gift Shop. We have great items that will be treasured by those with Dansville memories.

Hope to see you at the museum soon. Enjoy the arrival of Spring.

*Gerri Waight, President*

### *DAHS Spring Program:*

## **The Flying Allens: New York Balloonists For More Than 100 Years**

*Presented by Greg Livadas*

**Saturday, April 9 • 2PM**

North Dansville Town Hall • 14 Clara Barton St., Dansville





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P.O. Box 481  
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**DAHS Museum**  
14 Church St.  
Dansville, NY  
**Open 10am to 2pm**  
**1st & 3rd Saturdays**

## 2016 Anniversaries

*Compiled by David Gilbert, DAHS Curator*

**Here are some of the anniversaries that Dansville will be celebrating in 2016:**

### 200 YEARS AGO -- 1816:

- Rufus Stone, after whom Stone's Falls would be named, moves to the Dansville area from Onondaga County with his family. He will build a sawmill on Mill Creek, as well as an oil mill (making linseed oil, a vital component in paint).
- The community of Bisbeetown in the town of Ossian was founded by Luther Bisbee.

### 150 YEARS AGO -- 1866:

- Clara Barton comes to Dansville for the first time, as part of one of her lecture tours. She gives a talk (December 11) on her experiences in the Civil War. Ten years later, she will return to Dansville, where she will take up residency from 1876 to 1886.

### 100 YEARS AGO -- 1916:

- Claire Bateman, seller of Dodge automobiles, moves his dealership from Scottsburg to Dansville. Bateman will sell Dodge and Plymouth cars in Dansville for the next 44 years.
- The Carso paper mill begins operations, succeeding the former McNairn mill on Knox Street. The Carso mill would make the tissue paper base for waxed paper.
- President Woodrow Wilson makes a whistle stop at the Lackawanna Railroad station (November 1) as part of his reelection campaign. He would win the election, but only carried Dansville by a 586-546 margin over Republican Charles Hughes.

### 75 YEARS AGO -- 1941:

- The Dansville High School adopts "Mustangs" as the nickname for its sports teams. The name was suggested by A. F. Ritter in response to a contest sponsored by the *Genesee Country Express*.
- The Dansville Lions Club is organized, with Thomas H. Bowes elected its first president. It was Dansville's third men's service club, joining the Rotary Club (founded in 1922) and the Exchange Club (founded in 1929).

- Daniel Blum, last surviving son of John Blum, dies on January 3 at age 83. As owner of the Blum Shoe Store, he was the oldest active businessman in the village.
- The Rainbow Grill restaurant is opened by Steve and James Dromazos.

### 50 YEARS AGO -- 1966:

- The worst area blizzard of the 20th century strikes on January 30, lasting three days and paralyzing traffic and business for several days. Local schools are closed for an entire week.
- Ralph Clements dies at age 80. A participant in the Dansville school system for 47 years, he was a former principal and Dansville Central School's first athletic coach.
- Governor Nelson Rockefeller visits Dansville in August to inspect the Wayland bypass of the Genesee Expressway, the first completed portion of what is now Interstate 390.
- The new Dansville Senior High building (built around what used to be the school system's bus garage) is dedicated in November.
- 17-year-old Mary Kay Fries becomes New York State Junior Miss.

### 25 YEARS AGO -- 1991:

- The Great Ice Storm of 1991 strikes on March 3, encasing all of western New York in ice, shattering tree limbs and downing power lines. Some places are without power for four days.
- The Livingston County Correctional Facility opens in Sonyea.
- Dansville's Arby's restaurant opens.

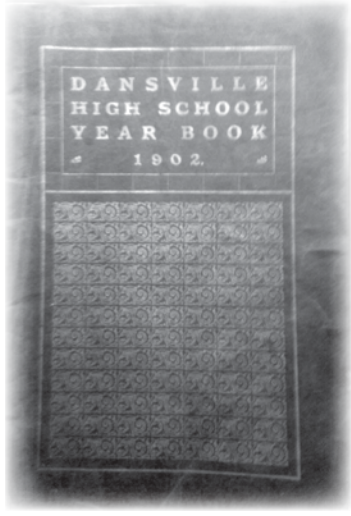
### 10 YEARS AGO -- 2006:

- The former general store building in Scottsburg is destroyed in a fire.
- In the first step of its eventual expansion, the Dansville Public Library purchases and tears down the old Wilcox Auction building (originally the W. T. Grant department store, built in 1958).

# Object Lessons From The Dansville Museum

By David Gilbert, DAHS 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 #49: *Dansville* *High School* *Yearbook (1902)*

The *Danua*, the annual yearbook of the Dansville High School, made its official debut in 1926. (So far, I haven't been able to track down who, specifically, gave it its name.) It wasn't the very first yearbook, though; a few others had been published, on an

occasional basis, in the early years of the 20th century, starting with this one from 1902.

In reality, this yearbook was the school-year-ending issue of the *DHS Mirror*, the monthly student newsletter written by the editorial board (which, in 1902, consisted of five boys and two girls) and printed by the *Dansville Breeze*. Like any periodical, the *Mirror* relied upon paid subscriptions for its sustenance, and, judging by comments in the yearbook, most of the time it was barely scraping by, which probably accounts for the scarcity of surviving copies.

The first issue of the *Mirror* came out in February 1900 when the high school itself was barely in its teens. Included in the *1902 Year Book* was a section titled "Alumni Notes," providing updates on former students, going back to what was presumably the first graduating class, the Class of 1890. So, for example, we learn that Edward T. Fairchild (Class of



Dansville High School graduating class of 1902 (from the 1902 Year Book)

'90) was practicing law in Milwaukee, that Ruth Sandford (Class of '97) graduated from Albany Normal College, and that future Dansville Hall of Famer Nicholas Noyes (Class of '01) was a graduate of the Lawrenceville Preparatory School. Sadly, there were also two deaths to report, both of them young women who couldn't have been more than thirty, to remind us that, back then, dying young was still all too commonplace. (The average U. S. life expectancy in 1902 was a good 25-30 years lower than what it is now.)

Looking at the newest batch of graduates, probably the first thing that will strike most people is how small the Class of 1902 was. There were just twelve of them, five male and seven female. (It's hard to call them "boys" and "girls" when you look at their group photo, all dressed to the nines, the gentlemen in ties and vests, and the young ladies with their hair pinned up, all looking like Laura Ingalls' mom.) They were even outnumbered by the faculty, of which there were thirteen—all unmarried women except for the principal, E. J. Bonner. Dansville may have had itself a nice, handsome, respectable high school—one that it paid for twice, thanks to the bank failure—but clearly there were still a lot of parents who didn't think their children needed to go to it. Principal Bonner, of course, begged to differ, and on the title page of the *1902 Year Book* he offered up this plea to parents everywhere:

The People of the Twentieth Century are to be an educated people. Parents, put your children in touch with the spirit of the coming age by giving them a good education. THE DANSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL offers special advantages to the young of Dansville and vicinity. For a catalog telling all about the school, address E. J. BONNER, Principal.

Things would change, although not speedily. The Class of 1912 was even smaller—just 11 graduates. But in 1915, New York passed a law requiring students to remain in school until at least age 15. In 1936 the age was upped to 16. So, by the time of the first *Danua*, in 1926, the size of the senior class had risen to 39, and by 1939 it was 59. And in 1963, when the first of the baby boomers stood in line for their diplomas, there were a whopping 131 seniors, and the schools had become so overcrowded they had resorted to split sessions and had to hold classes in the basement of the Presbyterian Church.

Thumbing through the pages of the *1902 Year Book*, we find a mixture of the familiar and the unexpected. Included amongst the latter are the graduation speeches of the valedictorian, Edward E. Brogan, and the salutatorian, Blanche Hartman; this was possible because the *Year Book* didn't come out until July, after the June 23 graduation ceremony, held at the Heckman Opera House. (I've been



*Dansville High School Track Team (from the 1902 Year Book)*

told that the old high school didn't have an auditorium.) Then there's the Class Poem, twenty-eight quatrains of verse penned by Carleton Reynell, the class poet laureate, in which he summarized the senior experience in versified form. (Final stanza: "Three cheers for the Class of 1902/ May they win honor and renown/Those who do not think they will/Please, go back and sit down.") Finally, apropos of nothing scholastic, we have the final installment of a serialized adventure story, "Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained," in which the valiant Philip rescues his sister Lucy from the clutches of the evil Zarco.

On the other hand, then as now, plenty of attention was paid to high school sports, although there weren't as many sports to pay attention to in 1902. There were, in fact, three, and they were exclusively boys' sports. Local high schoolers had been playing baseball since at least 1895, but it wasn't until 1902 that a number of schools, including Dansville, Geneseo, Hornellsville, and Wellsville formally organized a High School Athletic League, with a prearranged schedule of games. Football was initiated back in 1898, with an inaugural match against Hornellsville that ended in a 5-5 tie; the aforementioned Nicholas Noyes was on the Dansville squad. Unfortunately, as the *Year Book* editors regretfully admitted, most of the good players, Noyes included, had graduated in 1901, and Dansville didn't even bother to form a team for the fall season. Instead, attention was turned to the newest addition to the high school sports scene: track and field. The first track meet in DHS history was held in the fall of 1901, with competitors in the running high jump, running broad jump, standing broad jump, hammer throw, shot put, pole vault, 100 yard dash, and half mile run.

Lastly, let's turn to the last dozen pages of the 1902 Year Book, to the advertisements from the local sponsors. There's a very nice photo of the Williams flour mill at the end of Jefferson Street: "People like our XXXX best flour because of it's [sic] strength and color. It makes Most

Whitest and Best Bread. Try it." On the very next page sits a more modest ad for Readshaw's Forest Mills and its list of flour products (including something called "G-R-A-N-A Dyspeptic and Diabetic Flour"). There was one of a handful of ads that included a telephone number; telephone service had begun in Dansville as far back as 1882, but its growth was slow. And on page 43 we find an advertisement for the soon-to-be-released *History of Dansville*, by A. O. Bunnell and the *Dansville Advertiser*, "which has taken over a year to prepare at a cost of nearly \$2500." Other interesting tidbits of information we can glean from the ads:

- It cost \$2.00 to spend a night at the Hyland House hotel.
- A season pass to the Brae Burn golf links cost \$10 for Gentlemen, but only \$5 for Ladies.
- For as little as 50 cents, you could buy a snappy new "Panama Shape Straw Hat" at the Johantgen Brothers clothing store.
- E. N. Bastian's Drug Store offered "the most delicious Soda Water, Delicious Chocolates, and Bon Bons."
- Coffee "contains caffeine, which is a poison productive of headache, heart palpitation, sleeplessness, nervousness, diseases of vision, deafness, etc.," so one would be well advised to switch over to Hygienic Cereal Coffee...Hy-Co for short...made by a company co-owned by photographer and future car manufacturer John F. Klink.

The next oldest yearbook in the museum's collection is from 1907, five years after the first, and it, too, contained an alumni update page. By this time, Ed Brogan was attending the Albany Law School, Blanche Hartman was living in Missouri, and Carleton Reynell was in New York City. Another 1902 graduate, Miss Anna V. Layer, was teaching music in Bath. Remember her name, for she will be featured prominently in a future chapter.

**OBJECT #25: Illustration of Harriet Austin in American Costume (c. 1870) Donated by Harold Holbrook**

Over the years, numerous magazines and periodicals have been donated to the Dansville museum...few of which, it must be said, bear any direct relevance to the history of Dansville. ("What do I do with this old thing? Oh, I know!") Still, some of them are interesting.

One of the oldest is an 1861 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*, one of the most popular magazines of the 19th century (right up there with the *Saturday Evening Post*) and the model for all future women's magazines. Thumbing through the magazine, you get an idea of what was important to the average American woman of the period...or at least what the publishers assumed was important to them. There were illustrations and patterns for various sewing projects, including bonnets, stockings, and dresses for young girls and boys (yes, that's right: "*and boys*"). There



From Godey's Lady's Book

were embroidery patterns and needlepoint samples. If you were ambitious, there were instructions on how to build a bassinet for your baby. And if you were *really* ambitious, there were floor plans for your two-story, five-bedroom Gothic Revival dream house. There was sheet music for whichever family member played the parlor piano and short stories and serialized fiction to enjoy while you were taking a break from constructing your bassinet.

But perhaps the most popular feature of *Godey's Lady's Book* was the monthly fashion spread: the hand-tinted illustrations, found at the front of each issue, which showed what the well-to-do were wearing that season. Our issue shows a group of women, attending some sort of soiree, who look for all the world like an assemblage of walking lampshades, with waists so tiny you could almost wrap your hands around them, below which their hoop skirts flared out to the floor, so much so that it was a wonder that any two of them could reach out and brush fingertips. It's hard to believe that women wore these things day-in, day-out.

Again, this magazine really has nothing to do with the history of Dansville. But that picture in *Godey's Lady's Book* serves as a useful counterpoint to the next item on our list: the framed illustration of Our Home on the Hillside's own Dr. Harriet Austin, posing in her so-called "American Costume."



Lithograph of Harriet Austin

Dr. Austin was a soldier in the ongoing crusade launched in the early 1850s by Amelia Bloomer and others to reform women's dress. These people believed, and rightly so, that the steel-reinforced corsets used to squeeze women into those supposedly appealing hourglass shapes were bad for them, contorting and displacing their innards and putting undue pressure on their spinal columns. Nor were they much

enamored of those absurd Scarlett O'Hara hoop skirts, and the dozens of yards of floor-length garments draped over them. Simple mobility was a chore, and climbing stairs next to impossible. And God help you if had to go to the bathroom.

The members of the dress reform movement sought to deal with these problems by offering more practical alternative choices. Harriet Austin's contribution to the debate was the American Costume...which, essentially, was a knee-length skirt worn over slacks. She came up with it during her tenure at the Glen Haven water cure, which began in 1852 when she sought out Dr. James Caleb Jackson to ask him about one of her patients. At the time, the 26-year-old Austin was a private physician trying, without much success, to establish a practice in nearby Owasco. It didn't take much to persuade her to join the staff at Glen Haven. For the next four decades the two of them were practically inseparable. In time, James Caleb would refer to Harriet as his "adopted daughter," which apparently wasn't technically true (for one thing, Harriet's mother was still alive). Also, the age difference between Jackson and Austin was only fifteen years. But by making her part of the family and the family business, it was hoped that Harriet would achieve a greater measure of public acceptance...or as much public acceptance as any 19th-century single, female, trousers-wearing practitioner of alternative medicine was ever going to get.

Even so, she had her work cut out for her. When the Jacksons took over the Dansville water cure in 1858, one of the very first things that Harriet Austin did was to march downtown to George Ward's hardware store to buy carpeting, knowing full well the foofaraw she would cause. Did you hear...there's a woman walking around wearing men's clothes! Folks would talk about that day for years afterwards. Austin's secret weapon though was her personality. Despite the stern, disapproving-schoolmarm frown on all her pictures and portraits, she was universally described as friendly and outgoing; to know her was to love her, it seems. She became close friends with Clara Barton, and, as she did with all the female patients at Our Home, she encouraged the future Red Cross founder to forego the corsets and floor-dragging skirts in favor of the American Costume. But, like most of the women who gave it a try, peer pressure won out, and Miss Barton couldn't handle the ridicule of her friends, and that was the end of that. Dr. Austin also served as president of the Coterie, the local literary club, and edited the *Laws of Life*, the water cure's official journal.

Throughout it all, she and James Caleb Jackson remained joined at the hip. When, in 1882, Dr. Jackson retired from Our Home...turning things over to his son James H. Jackson and retiring to North Adams, Massachusetts, Harriet Austin did likewise. She died in North Adams in April 1891 at the age of 64. According to Jackson, who personally penned her obituary for the *Dansville Herald*, Harriet had suffered from "neurasthenia," one of those

vaguely-defined terms that has long since been relegated to the medical recycling bin, with the likes of “female hysteria” and “the vapours.” So, precisely what ailed her is anybody’s guess. But (again, according to Dr. Jackson) her health had never been the same after suffering some unspecified accident years before, and she was bedridden for much of that time. She was buried at Greenmount Cemetery; Dansville’s Austin Street was named for her.

It would be nice to say that the efforts of Dr. Austin and her fellow dress-reform crusaders paid off in the end. But really, they didn’t. Unlike most of the other major reform movements of the 19th century -- abolition, temperance, education reform, women’s suffrage -- the dress reform movement was a dismal failure. When Harriet Austin died, the American Costume died with her. In fact, the ideal of the wasp-waist was about to be reinforced in the 1890s with the hugely popular “Gibson girl” illustrations that permeated women’s magazines (although not *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, which by then had gone under).

Not until World War I was the tyranny of the corset finally broken, as millions of patriotic-minded women willingly gave up their steel-ribbed undergarments so that the steel could be diverted toward war efforts. Then came the Roaring Twenties, and a radically new feminine ideal: the flapper, with her bobbed haircut, rising hemlines, and frenetic dances like the Charleston and the Black Bottom that probably would have killed you if you tried to do them in a corset. On the other hand, the 20s also brought the rise in alcohol consumption and the flaunting of Prohibition laws and the loosening of sexual inhibitions. One wonders if Harriet Austin would have been okay with the trade-off.

### **Dansville History Club Display Case**

DAHS Board Member Jeff Miller is our liaison to the Dansville High School and has been working with the High School History Club (the “Yorkers”) and their advisor Mr. Ptak. This semester, our Museum again loaned items for the display case outside the auditorium, including items youth used in years gone by: antique sports equipment, vintage toys and games, and yearbooks from 50 and 90 years ago. The History Club includes about 19 members. Club members Brandon Wadsworth and Alyssa Cox decorated the current display case. First semester, the display case featured early firefighter equipment from the museum and was decorated by Devin Mallaber and Alyssa Cox.



## **Membership Donations**

Since its inception, the Dansville Area Historical Society’s goal has been to preserve and promote area history that comes to us as archives, artifacts, and research. We do this as a labor of love for history and for our village and valley. To keep the Museum open, we ask for monetary help using the phrase, “donations gratefully accepted.”

Your gifts keep the Museum open. Below is the list of our donors to the 2016 campaign through the end of February. Life Members are also listed with the year they became Life Members. Some have been with us so long, the date was not recorded. Thank you for your commitment to DAHS.

### **Life Members** **Continuing Support**

Paul and Aniko Constantine  
William Farrell  
Jim and Nancy Helfrich  
Francine and Tom Knapp  
Jon Shay  
Sue Saylor  
James R. Vogt  
Fred and Betty Wyant

### **Platinum Level Member (\$100)**

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### **Business Members (\$25)**

Emo Home Improvement  
Beta Sigma Phi  
Rogers and Tenbrook

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Beta Sigma Phi  
Rogers and Tenbrook  
Erin and William Meter  
Sarah and Robert Booher  
Maruth Dieter  
Lisa Hartson  
Richard Mark  
Ron and Mary Kay Morsch  
Jamieson R. Steele  
Pat Anderson

### **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.

**List of DAHS  
Life Members**

2014 Sarah and Carl Wagner  
 2014 Gerrard and Norma Maltby  
 2014 Scott Hebert  
 and Randy Haywood  
 2014 Len and Ann Davis  
 2014 Francine and Tom Knapp  
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**Dansville Area Historical Society  
2016 Membership Form**

- 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 of Membership can be found on your address label. **If the date is less than 12/31/16, please renew. Otherwise, this will be your last newsletter.** Life Members will find "Life" on their address label.

Checks may be made out to DAHS.

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Send membership form and payment to:  
Dansville Area Historical Society  
P.O. Box 481  
Dansville, NY 14437  
Thank you!**

*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

**CORRECTION:** In the last issue of the newsletter, we incorrectly listed the names of Foster Wheeler retirees whose photo was on the back cover. They are Sharon Mark, Anne Amidon Nye, Sheila VanAuken, and Dave Wicks. We apologize for the error.

**DANSVILLE AREA  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

Box 481  
Dansville, NY 14437  
585-335-8090

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*DAHS Spring Program*

**The Flying Allens: New York Balloonists  
For More Than 100 Years**

*Presented by Greg Livadas*

**Saturday, April 9, 2016 • 2 p.m.**

North Dansville Town Hall  
14 Clara Barton St., Dansville, NY

*Program covers balloonists in the area,  
including the Allen Brothers' time in Batavia.*

Admission is free.  
Donations gratefully accepted.



**Remember to visit our booth at the  
Dogwood Festival Craft Fair  
Saturday, May 14,  
Church Park.**

The Museum will be open that day from 10 to 4 p.m.  
*The Foster Wheeler Exhibit continues at the Museum*

*Please renew now  
for 2016 if you  
haven't already.  
Don't let this be your  
last newsletter.*