Historical Happenings



VOLUME 22, No. 1

Dansville Area Historical Society

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"Caretakers of Our Area History"

WINTER 2014

President's Report

Dear Members and Friends,

Another year has concluded and we hope you and your families enjoyed the blessings and pleasures of the Holiday season. Hopefully the worst of our winter weather is now past, and we can start looking forward to Spring. We have our first 2014 program scheduled for Thursday, March 27, on the DL & W Railroad.

DAHS presented several successful programs throughout 2013. We are grateful to the individuals who presented programs and to the community for enthusiastic participation. The *Bombs Away* presentation by Dave Wicks gave us an inside view of his dad's experiences as a bombardier in World War II. The program on Blum's Shoe factory drew an overflow crowd to the town hall's auditorium. Thanks to Paul Hoffman for a walk down memory lane. Dave Gilbert created an interesting (and challenging) trivia contest for our Annual Dinner. Our Christmas Concert with 78 RPM was moved to coincide with Winter in the Village and drew a good audience. We are blessed to have a community that supports the museum and history of the area.

Also in 2013, the fundraising to obtain a monument for Pioneer Park was completed. The stone has been purchased and is currently being stored. Plans are for Village workers to prepare the foundation for the monument. Stay tuned for our dedication ceremony when all is complete.

As the New Year began, DAHS focused on program and finances at our January meeting. Programs for 2014 are still being finalized, so if you would like us to develop a program on a particular facet of Dansville's past or repeat a previous program, please contact us with your suggestions. Also, if you have a program you would like to present, please send a brief description for our evaluation.

Again in 2013, DAHS's expenses exceeded our income. The cost of maintaining the building (insurance & utilities) continues to rise and now comprises more than two-thirds of our annual expense. At the same time income from member dues has declined and now barely covers the cost of the newsletter. To help offset rising expenses, we have added additional levels of membership. You will see these reflected on the renewal form. Please consider one of the new levels of membership or an additional gift to DAHS. Also, please encourage family members and friends to join our organization.

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. Take the opportunity to stop by and reminisce as you peruse our displays. One of our volunteers will be glad to show you around or help you find displays of interest. 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.

Our collectible Dansville buildings and landmarks, books, and throws make great gifts any time of year. A fresh supply of throws are available in Williamsburg Blue and, new this year, black and cream-colored throw.

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

Gerri

Gerri Waight, President, Board of Directors



DL and W Railroad Program Set for March 27

Our Spring Program this year will be the DL and W Railroad presented by Tom Roffe, Leicester Town Historian. Mr. Roffe's PowerPoint presentation includes more than 50 photographs that show the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad's growth and presence in Livingston County from the 1870s to the 1960s. In Dansville, the DL and W brought clients to the Jackson Sanitorium and later on to Bernarr MacFadden's Castle on the Hill. Many of us fondly remember the depot.

The program will be at the North Dansville Town Hall on Thursday, March 27, at 7 p.m. Parking is available and the Town Hall auditorium is handicapped accessible. The program is free, and donations are gratefully accepted.



2014 Anniversaries

Compiled by David Gilbert, DAHS Curator

Here are some of the anniversaries that Dansville will be celebrating in 2014:

200 Years Ago - 1814:

- Future U.S. President Millard Fillmore spends a few months working at Benjamin Hungerford's carding mill in West Sparta.
- Captain Daniel Shays, of Shays' Rebellion fame, comes to live in Sparta (you can find his final resting place in the Union Cemetery in Scottsburg).

150 Years Ago - 1864:

- Mary McCurdy McCarthy and James McCurdy, the last surviving original settlers of Dansville, pass away.
- The Liberty Hall chapel was completed and dedicated at Our Home on the Hillside.

100 Years Ago - 1914:

- Pell W. Foster's Power Specialty Company takes over the George Sweet Manufacturing Company in Comminsville (the future Foster Wheeler).
- Charles Mader buys the Hoffman Meat Market on Main & Exchange.
- Main Street is paved.

75 Years Ago - 1939:

- Foster Wheeler secures its first government contract to make boilers for Navy battleships.
- The Whiteman grocery store opens.
- Lynn Pickard is elected Town Supervisor.

50 Years Ago - 1964:

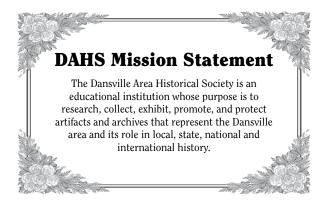
- Barber Conable Jr. is elected to his first congressional term.
- Dansville's first coin-operated car wash opens.
- The last area "one-room schoolhouse," in Kysorville, is closed.

25 Years Ago - 1989:

- The manufacture of Ra-Pid-Gro in Dansville is discontinued.
- The Dansville Hall of Fame is unveiled by the Dansville Area Historical Society.

10 Years Ago - 2004:

- The Dollar General store opens on Ossian Street.
- Community Bank takes over the old HSBC building.
- Josh Weidman takes over the Wolfanger Shoe Store.



DAHS and Red Cross Chapter Exhibit Together

On March 15, the Dansville Area Historical Society and the Clara Barton Chapter No. 1 of the American Red Cross will exhibit together at the Odyssey of the Mind competition at York Central School. We have a display featuring Clara Barton and her ties to the Jackson Sanitorium.

Our exhibit is one of ten historical exhibits sponsored by individuals and historical groups around Livingston County. Livingston County Historian Amie Alden partnered with Steve Nole, Enrichment Specialist at Genesee Valley Educational Partnership (BOCES) to set up exhibits related to the history and culture of our region for the public to see during the Odyssey of the Mind competition. The all-day competition attracts about 1,000 students from 22 school districts.

Sandy Shaw and Mary Jo Marks from the local Red Cross Chapter did a tremendous job designing the table top exhibit. Hopefully, we will be able to share historical programs and exhibits in the future. The Chapter No. 1 of the American Red Cross is located at 57 Elizabeth Street and is open weekdays from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Call ahead (335-3500) if you would like to tour their museum rooms which feature Clara Barton's time in Dansville.

DAHS Receives "Get Set" Grant

At the end of 2013, we received word that the Dansville Area Historical Society (DAHS) has received a grant of \$2,931 from the New York State Council on the Arts to develop a strategic plan for our Museum.

The "Get Set" planning grant enables DAHS to retain the services of a museum specialist. Christopher S. Clarke of Rochester has been selected to assist the Planning Committee of DAHS in developing a set of goals and action steps to be implemented over the next three years.

Dr. Clarke, an exhibition developer and consulting historian, holds a Ph.D. from the University of Rochester in History and has over twenty years of experience in consulting with museums throughout New York State. His work with the Dansville Museum will include reviewing prior assessments and leading the DAHS group to create a roadmap which will prioritize efforts to preserve and share the history of the Dansville area for others to enjoy.

The DAHS Planning Committee comprises both DAHS Board members and members of the Dansville community. The Planning Committee met twice in 2012 where the groundwork was laid for application for the "Get Set" grant. The Committee will hold approximately three meetings in the next few months with Mr. Clarke. If you are interested in more information on DAHS strategic planning, please give a call to committee member Nancy Helfrich (335-5743) or Chad Schuster (335-5812).

The "Get Set" grants are one of a series of grants offered by the New York State Council on the Arts to help museums and historical societies strengthen and develop their institutions and work with their communities. These grants, administered by the Museum Association of New York, are designed to make it easy for organizations to access professional help and improve their institutions. To learn more about these grant programs, visit the Museum Association of New York's website at www.manyonline. org or contact the Museum Association of New York by email at info@manyonline.org and by phone at (518) 273-3400.

Committee Reports

Membership

Our membership drive for 2014 has begun. This newsletter includes an envelope and a separate form you can use to send us your membership. (Please use both the form and the envelope.) We will list all donations in upcoming newsletters.

Fund Raising

We are aiming to produce a wooden collectible showing the Dansville Airport and balloons in time for this year's Festival of Balloons. Our Hometowne Collectibles vendor is no longer in business, and we are searching very carefully for a replacement vendor who will give us the same quality service we enjoyed for so long.

We have received a nice supply of throws in Williamsburg Blue and in Cream/Black that depict Dansville landmarks. They are still \$40 each. We're pleased we've been able to keep this reasonable price.

Something new the Fund Raising Committee is working on this year is an event that will not only bring in donations for Museum upkeep, but also be a fun family activity. If you have any ideas, or if you would like to join the committee, please give Cory Chapman a call (335-2606).

Programs

We ended 2013 with our traditional musical holiday program. Approximately 70 people enjoyed the music of 78 RPM at the Presbyterian Church Sanctuary. We joined the "Winter in the Village" festivities this year by presenting our program just before the Tree Lighting Ceremony in Church Park. Thank you to those enjoying the concert for the \$94.00 in donations to help offset to cost of the concert.

Our first 2014 program will be Tom Roffe's talk on the DL & W Railroad, March 27 at the North Dansville Town Hall. Mr. Roffe is the Leicester Town Historian and is well known for his programs on area history. Many of us remember the depot on East Hill and the DL & W (later merged into the Erie Lackawanna). This program promises to take us back in time!

We plan to have programs in September, October (at our annual meeting) and in December, but we can have a program any time we have a speaker! If you have an idea for a program, or if you are a presenter, please contact us: the Museum phone is 335-8090 or call Program Committee member Corky Chapman at 335-2606, or President Gerri Waight at 335-9640.

Pioneer Park

The marble monument has been purchased and was shipped safely and successfully to Dansville. We are working with a group of architecture students from an area college on a site plan. This will ensure that sidewalks and lights and the monument receive the best placement to honor Dansville's past citizens. If you want to contribute to the Pioneer Park fund or if you want more information, call Committee Chair Jane Schryver at 335-3121.

Then and Now - Blum Shoe Manufacturing Company

One of Dansville's most noteworthy industries began modestly in 1859 with a shoemaking business on Main Street founded by German immigrant John Blum. By the turn of the century, the Blum Shoe Manufacturing Company was one of Dansville's largest employers. In 1895 it relocated to Spruce Street, occupying the former Allen Hotel (built by Stephen C. Allen in 1873) and expanding with several additions. The business would thrive well into the 1960s. After the factory closed and the building was sold, the building fell into disrepair, suffering decades of neglect. In February 2014, demolition finally commenced and followed NYS asbestos abatement regulations. CVS Pharmacy footed the bill for the factory demolition as well as the demolition of VanHyning's Service Station on Main Street as part of its intent to build a CVS at the corner of Main Street and Milton Street.



Blum Shoe Manufacturing Company shown in its prime, with D&M train in foreground. (one of DAHS' Hometowne Collectibles)



Photo taken February 21, 2014, showing demolition of the Blum Shoe Manufacturing Company building. HazMat suits are being worn by asbestos abatement workers as they truck away interior material from the building. This photo was taken looking north towards Milton Street.

The Hylands of Dansville

By: Ken Holbrook

Ken Holbrook, a DAHS board member, also serves as the North Dansville Town Historian. Below is Part Two 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 Hyland Sr. is best known today for his role in the "battle of the canal." And, because we have been bringing aspects of Dansville's ties to the Civil War to our readers, the "Hylands of Dansville" concludes with the story of George Jr. who served his country in The Battle of Bull Run and John Hyland who served his country in covert operations, and how a Hyland left a Civil War legacy which stands today.

In Part Two of "The Hylands of Dansville," we pick up with patriarch George Hyland Sr. after the "battle of the canal" in 1844.

George Hyland Sr. (1803-1880) - His Later Years

The years between the opening of the canal (1844) and the extension of the Erie railroad were a prosperous time for Dansville. Hyland Sr. saw an increase in the hauling of freight and supplies between Dansville and Wayland because Wayland had the closest railroad depot. So, in 1852, he and John Hess started the movement to build Plank Road to move goods to the rail lines. It was able to stay in business for thirty-years.

In 1845 George purchased the American Hotel which burned down in the Main Street fire of the spring of 1854. He and his sons rebuilt the property and named it Hyland House. The property remained in his possession until his death in 1880, when it was turned over to his son George Jr.

George Hyland was first a Whig in politics, but he joined the Republican Party soon after it formed. In 1860, he received a unanimous nomination in the Republican County Convention and was elected to the State Assembly. In 1865 he was appointed postmaster, but because of his free and open criticism of President Johnson's administration, he was dismissed.



George Hyland Sr.

George Hyland, Jr. (1834-1896), Civil War officer and public servant

George Jr., the eldest son of George and Sarah Lemen Hyland, was born Dec. 27, 1834 and died June 12, 1896. He followed his father's footsteps by working for his father and going to both common school and then the academy. As a youth he acquired a military education and discipline as a member of the old Canaseraga Light Infantry. which at the time was considered to be one of the crack military companies of the state. When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted as a private, and when Co. B., attached to the 13th N.Y.V. was organized, he was made first lieutenant. He was then promoted to Captain, eventually being promoted to Major of the regiment. At the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862, he was slightly wounded by a piece of shell but never left his command. He showed bravery and courage, and it was said that when he gave the order to charge, he was first in to battle. In a second battle he was more seriously wounded in the head and never fully recovered. He was mustered out in Rochester in 1863 and lived in Rochester for a period of time.

When Col. Hyland returned to Dansville, he was elected Sheriff of Livingston County and served a term of three years. He was also the Republican State Committeeman for this Congressional District and in 1869 and 1875 was a member of the Governor's staff as Inspector of the National Guard. While living in Rochester, he had become a member of the famous Alert Hose volunteer fire company. He gained experience and knowledge as a fireman which was of great value for the newly formed Dansville Fire Department. In 1874, he was made first foreman of the Union Hose Company and the first chief engineer of the Dansville Fire Department.





On April 5, 1971, demolition was beginning on the Hotel Dansville. Just below the man and bucket, and also behind the fire escape, the name "Hyland" was still visible, denoting the original owners. Today, the Community Bank building occupies that corner. (Photo by Wilfred J. Rauber)

John Hyland (1837-1900), adventurer, politician, public servant

John Hyland, the younger son of George and Sarah was born January 27, 1837, and died February 15, 1900. He spent most of his life in Dansville except for a three year period when he went to California and worked for a mining company and then for the Wells Fargo Express Co. delivering mail through Indian country on horseback. This last job appealed to his love of risk and adventure. Then he enlisted with the renowned surveyor Gen. Frederick Lander as a scout, when they were mapping roads across the mountains between California and Nevada. He received commendations from Gen. Lander for his valuable scouting service, having been engaged in many fights with the Indians.

When the Civil War began, Hyland was offered a commission to join Lander's troops in the field, but he turned it down deciding his place was at home with his father and mother since his brother was already fighting in the war. Several times during the war, Gen. Lander solicited him to make dangerous trips though the rebel lines, the exact reason was never known. Then under a commission from NY Gov. Edwin D. Morgan, who also served as Major General of the Department of New York from 1861-63, Hyland, along with Dansville's A. O. Bunnell, traveled to Virginia to relieve some of the wounded and sick soldiers after The Second Battle of Bull Run.

After the war, John Hyland became heavily involved in Livingston County politics as a leader and counselor for the Republican Party. He was sought after by other counties for advice and assistance. He was Dansville postmaster under three Presidents: Grant, Hayes, and Arthur and could have held other offices if he so desired. After his father's death in 1880, he put more effort into the family businesses and politics. John was described as "a plain, blunt man," but a very humane and always a kind and helpful friend of the poor and distressed. It was written that he was a very thoughtful person and was known to have visited and helped people who were in distress, even to the point that he would take them food or money and even sit with them while they were dying. He was a very well-liked man and showed compassion for both its people and the village of Dansville.

The Hyland House

In 1872 the Hylands built the four-story Hyland House. Standing on Main Street at the intersection of Ossian Street, the Hyland House long held the reputation as the "finest hotel in Western New York." George Hyland Sr. and his sons purchased vast amounts of land in the west for logging. making them one of the wealthiest families in the state.

As the 1890s came to a close, Dansville's Seth N. Hedges G.A.R. Post was struggling to raise funds for a monument to honor its Civil War soldiers. John Hyland stepped in and pledged to duplicate any sum that might be raised. With his promise, the project went forward and plans shaped rapidly. John Hyland, unfortunately, died in February 1900 before concluding his agreement to match the funds raised, but in his will will he provided, "I give and bequeath to Seth N. Hedges Post, No. 213, G. A. R., of Dansville, N. Y., the sum of \$3000... to be used by them in the erection of a soldiers monument, conditioned, however, ... that the said monument be erected on Ossian street...at the angle of said street in front of the Samuel Welch house and Readshaw Mill property."

With that generous gift, the Soldiers' Monument came to be and still stands at the corner of Ossian and Spruce Streets.

After John Hyland's death, the Hyland House Hotel continued operations and was purchased in 1920 by the Foster Club, a group of Power Specialty employees, who renamed it the Foster Hotel. By the 1940s, owners were Mr. and Mrs. Charles McCray, and it was named Hotel Dansville. In 1971, the Hotel was demolished to make room for a Dansville branch of Marine Midland Bank (now the office for Community Bank).

It's too bad that neither George Jr. or John Hyland married to carry on the family name. One can only wonder how things might have changed in Dansville if they had had children to carry on the family tradition.



The Hyland House hotel in Dansville as it looked circa 1900. This replica is one of DAHS's Hometowne Collectibles and is available for \$15.00. It can be purchased at the Museum or online at the DAHS website.

The Dansville Area Historical Society Officers & Directors, 2014

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Our thanks and best wishes to Fred Calnan who stepped down from the Board of Directors at the end of 2013 after many years of service. We're keeping your seat warm, Fred, just in case you miss being a part of history!!

Name That Year

At this year's Annual Dinner, our own David Gilbert emceed a rollicking Dansville Trivia Contest, with prizes going to the biggest scorers. Part of that contest was a game called "Name That Year," in which three local events were offered, and you had to guess the year in which all three events occurred. If you weren't there, too bad (we saved you a chair), but here's a chance to play the game. How close can you get to the year in which...

- **A)** The Hotel Dansville on the corner of Main and Ossian is torn down; the Dansville Agway opens its new store on Maple Street; the Dansville Rotary Club holds its annual musical, a production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Carousel*
- **B)** The Akso-Nobel salt mine in Retsof collapses; the Star Theatre reopens after being closed for seven years; the Highlander Laundromat, behind the town hall, is destroyed by fire
- C) The schoolhouse in South Dansville is closed; a nationally televised treasure hunt on the grounds of the Castle on the Hill is held in a futile search for some of the late Bernarr Macfadden's supposedly buried cash; the American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps adopts a new name—the White Sabers
- **D)** Quentin Masolotte succeeds Wilfred Rauber as Village & Town Historian; East Hill is infested with gypsy moths; the Book Den opens on Main Street
- **E)** Four new businesses announce their intent to move into the old Foster Wheeler complex; Dansville's Dunkin' Donuts opens; the local singing group Band of Brothers release their first CD, *Almost There*
- **F)** Ice Cream Island opens in the parking lot of the Ames plaza; 15-year-old Natale Petti appears on the TV talent show *Star Search;* the Dansville balloon rally holds its first annual Thursday night "glow," with brightly lit balloons lined up along the middle of Main Street
- **G)** The first Wings of Eagles air show is held in Geneseo; the old Berwin paper mill on Washington Street is torn down; Bradley Cable TV offers HBO to its Dansville customers for the first time
- H) Route 245 is completed, shaving nine miles off the driving distance between Dansville and Nunda; the Chamber of Commerce sponsors its first and only September "Harvest Festival;" Mary Kay Fries wins the New York State Junior Miss competition
- I) The Salvation Army thrift store opens in the old A&P building on Chestnut Street; Livingston County's first FM radio station, WACZ—later renamed WDNY-FM—is launched in Dansville; the Foster Wheeler water tower, built back in 1922, is torn down
- **J)** The W. T. Grant department store chain goes bankrupt; the Poag's Hole landfill is closed; Dansville's three-number telephone prefix is changed from 987 to 335

ANSWERS TO "NAME THAT YEAR"

A) 1971 B) 1994 C) 1956 D) 1986 E) 2005 F) 1992 G) 1980 H) 1966 I) 1989 J) 1975

Membership Renewal

Membership Year Runs From January 1st through December 31st

Membership brings...

- Society Programs
- Newsletters
- Invitation to the Annual Dinner Meeting
- Exhibits at the Museum
- An opportunity to Preserve the Heritage of the Dansville Area

The Purposes of the Society are...

- To Preserve the History of the Dansville Area
- To encourage Community Interest in the Town's History
- To Collect, Preserve and Exhibit Artifacts, Writings and Historical Items
- To Serve the Educational and Cultural Needs of the Dansville Area
- To Maintain and Expand the Museum

Traditionally, the Dansville Area Historical Society has relied on the membership drive as our only appeal for funds to keep the Society and the Museum running. It is important to us to keep our annual individual membership fee at a reasonable cost of \$15.00. We also offer life memberships, and many long-time members have honored us with investing in a life membership. However, the upkeep on our Museum building and preservation of our artifacts now cost much more than we bring in through our memberships.

Because some of our members have asked how they can help, DAHS will now offer additional membership levels as a way you can show your support. Each year, any member -- including life members -- may choose to additionally contribute any sum to help us with the cost of running our museum. Silver, gold, and platinum memberships are welcome at any time and will be acknowledged in our newsletter. Life membership continues to be offered, and all life members are listed on a wooden plaque in the hallway of the museum. Also, please let us know if you would like to benefit the Dansville Area Historical Society in your estate planning.

Memberships are deductible under Section 501 (c) (9) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Use the form on the right to renew your membership, increase your level of giving, or give a gift membership (which includes a subscription to the newsletter). Cut off and return the form in the envelope provided, or mail to Dansville Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 481, Dansville, New York 14437.

We deeply appreciate your support.

Name:		
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Also give address and time p	eriod for any different sun	nmer/winter address
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like to make an addi	tional donation	\$
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PLEASE CHECK t		\$s and enclose

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DANSVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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DAHS Museum

14 Church St., Dansville, NY Open 10 to 2pm 1st & 3rd Saturdays Non-Profit Org. US POSTAGE **PAID**

Permit #298 Rochester, NY

DAHS Spring Program

Thursday, March 27 • 7:00 pm

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

DL and W Railroad

Presented by Tom Roffe

Mr. Roffe, Leicester Town Historian, will discuss the DL & W's presence in Livingston County from the 1870s to the 1960s. With photographs and narrative, he will depict the heyday of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, as well as the role it played in Dansville with the Jackson Sanitorium and, later on, the Castle on the Hill, and the charm of the Phoebe Snow.

Parking available adjacent to Town Hall. Handicapped Accessible. Admission is free. Donations are gratefully accepted.