



Historical Happenings

Dansville Area Historical Society
“Caretakers of Our Area History”



Volume 21, No. 1

Winter 2013

President's Report

Dear Members and Friends,

Fortunately for us, our corner of the world has been spared from all the natural disasters – snow and flooding – that others have experienced. The hills and valleys of Western New York are still a great place to live.

The 78 RPM Band gave an excellent performance for the DAHS Christmas program on December 2. Those attending really enjoyed the selections although attendance was low. Our thanks to the 78 RPM band and also to Aniko Constantine and Nancy Helfrich who provided cookies and punch.

Our next DAHS program will be Thursday, April 25. David Wicks' presentation will be on his father: “Bob Wicks – World War II Bombardier Story.”

At January's Board Meeting, the Budget Committee's 2013 budget of \$11,800 was passed. This amount does cover maintenance and upkeep for our Museum building, but it does **not** cover education, restoration, or preservation costs so that we can keep our collections and Museum up to date with revolving and new displays. We are developing a membership plan to bring in needed funds.

To fund the DAHS Museum and activities, we offer memberships. We need 200 members each year, and currently we are at only half that number. As you can see, if each member can bring in 2 new members, we will certainly reach our goal! Please ask your family and your friends to join. They can use the membership form on page 9 in this newsletter. We also receive donations gratefully at any time.

The Board is enthusiastic about moving ahead with new activities, new programs, and new endeavors. We have been learning from other historical organizations through workshops, conferences, and email correspondence how to make Dansville area history more accessible to anyone, anywhere. Our Grant Committee is actively pursuing a second grant through the NYS Council on the Arts to help DAHS with strategic planning. I think you will see many new offerings and ideas – please visit us at the Museum to see what's on display. Jump in if you see an activity you would like to participate in. We have a new voicemail service on our phone (585-335-8090) and we are in touch with you via email (dahs@stny.rr.com) and Facebook and our website (dansvilleareahistoricalociety.wordpress.com). We'd love to hear from you about what you'd like to learn about from Dansville's past, or what you can share about Dansville's past.

Money is coming in slowly to complete the Pioneer Park Project. This is an excellent way to honor the pioneers that are still interred in the Park. Please help by sending just a small donation to “Pioneer Park,” c/o Dansville Area Historical Society, Box 481, Dansville, NY 14437.

Finally, as we learned on Ground Hog Day, Spring is coming!

Jim

Jim Snyder, President, Board of Directors, Dansville Area Historical Society

BOMBS AWAY!



Bob Wicks—World War II Bombardier Story

The extraordinary, true story of 1st Lt. Robert Wicks will be presented by his son David E. Wicks. Lt. Wicks was a B-24 Liberator bombardier, 15th Air Force, Italy, who was shot down on his 24th combat mission, December 11, 1944. He was saved by a Slovak family who hid him on their farm for almost five months, exposing themselves to being summarily executed by the Nazis. David traveled to Slovakia in 2004 and spent ten days with the Pavol Macina family who saved his father's life and helped him reach the Russian line.

Join us at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 25, 2013

Dansville Town Hall

For "Bombs Away:" the story of Bob Wicks in World War II

Acquisitions: November 1, 2012 – January 31, 2013

- Items for sale, bill of sale from Rounsville's Plants
- Photos, St. Mary's interior, Catholic School on Franklin St.
- Various books

Francine Warren, Dansville

- Book, "The Nursery Manual" by L.H. Bailey

Wixum McMaster, Nunda

- Three glass light shades from Main St. residence.

Anonymous

- Marble headstone for child's grave, inscribed and dated Nov. 13, 1812, found in cellar of 58 Main St. building being renovated.

Dr. Joan Flender and Andrew Starr, Dansville

- Instructor magazines, 1933-35 and 1963-65; Grade Teacher magazines 1932-33

Len and Ann Davis, Dansville

- Hardbound book, "Comic History of Dansville" by Ralph Miller, 1926

Carol Russell, Lima

We are grateful for donations of Dansville artifacts and archives. Please call the editor, 335-5743, if any acquisition information is in error or if you need a record of your donation.

DAHS Board of Directors' Notes

As we usually do at the beginning of each year, a list of your board members and how to reach them is included in this newsletter. Our board has seen a lot of "retirements" and new faces over the past year.

Last summer, **Jane Behnk** and **Sharon Harris** joined the board filling vacancies left by **Sheila VanAuken** and **Kat Sullivan**.

Jane went to work right away and stepped in as Corresponding Secretary, replacing **Mary Jo Jacobs**. In the fall, five new board members joined the board: **Corky Chapman, Jen Howard, Ken Holbrook, Pam Soscia, and Gerri Waight**. They filled slots left by Mary Jo Jacobs, **Marie Roberts, Bettie Whitenack, Dick Whitenack, and Al Hawk**.

In December, we had a going-away celebration for **Al Hawk and Jack Jacobs** who stepped down after many years of dedication and hard work. Al joined the board in 1993 and served as President from 1995 to 2011. Jack kept us honest with his skills as Treasurer and Membership Chair for 12 years.

Our board is actively pursuing activities to engage the community in our local history and finding ways of preserving the archives and artifacts in the DAHS collection. If you would like to get involved in any way, or if you have an idea for a program or activity, give president Jim Snyder a call: 335-8909 or leave a voicemail message on the DAHS phone: 355-8090.

"DANSVILLE BREEZE"

The Only Daily Paper in Livingston County

BAYARD H. KNAPP, Proprietor

from an advertisement in 1926 "Comic History of Dansville"

The Dansville Area Historical Society

Officers and Directors, 2013

Officers

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A special thanks goes to the “heavy lifters” on the board who keep the Museum house and grounds in good repair, make sure the grass is mowed, the walks shoveled, the tents put up and supplies carried to the festivals we attend. These guys never ask for recognition, so our sincere appreciation to Paul Constantine, Dick Mark, Fred Calnan, Jim Snyder (and his son Tim).

Anniversaries Dansville Will Celebrate in 2013

Compiled by David Gilbert, DAHS Curator

200 YEARS AGO—1813

- Joshua Shepard, whose Main Street residence will become the Dansville Public Library, arrives in Dansville and sets himself up as a merchant.

150 YEARS AGO—1863

- Liberty Hall, the chapel building adjacent to the Jackson water cure, is completed.
- Future Comminsville resident Jerry Wall captures a Confederate flag at the Battle of Gettysburg, which will earn him the Medal of Honor.

100 YEARS AGO—1913

- One of the worst floods in Dansville history strikes in March, putting Comminsville under two feet of water and causing considerable damage to the Power Specialty plant; the bridge at the Williams was washed away, and many acres of nursery stock are destroyed.
- A fire destroys the Knowlton paper mill in Stones Falls, built by Andrew Porter in 1824.
- A portion of the Colonial Inn on Main Street (once the residence of Lester Bradner) is converted into a hospital, under the directorship of Dr. Frederick R. Driesbach.

50 YEARS AGO—1963

- Williams Memorial Park, donated to the village 15 years before by Pell W. Foster (the son-in-law of John C. Williams) is formally dedicated.
- The Town of Sparta organizes its first fire company.
- Golden Acres Farms Dairy (later Annis Dairy) opens in the former Eagle Hotel on Jefferson Street.
- The last train travels across the closing Lackawanna Railroad on East Hill.

25 YEARS AGO—1988

- The warehouse complex on Spruce Street, originally built during the canal era, are destroyed by fire.
- Kelly Brothers Nurseries goes out of business.
- The Home Video Center opens in the former Star Market building on Clara Barton Street.

10 YEARS AGO—2003

- Foster Wheeler in Dansville closes.
- New gazebo erected in Church Park.



Power Specialty Company, circa 1915, founded by Pell Foster. Merged with Wheeler Condenser and Engineering Company to become Foster Wheeler in 1927.

LETTERS FROM THE WAR

David Gilbert, DAHS Curator

As we continue to observe the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, let's look at some of the letters that soldiers from the Dansville area wrote back home which were subsequently printed in the Dansville Advertiser. This time, we'll be looking at letters from members of the 130th New York Infantry, a regiment that was formed in September 1862, and which included volunteers from Livingston and Allegany Counties. December 1862 found them wintering at Suffolk, Virginia. They wouldn't see any actual combat until the following spring, but, as this letter from Lt. O. O. West shows, they still suffered casualties -- from illness.

It is my sad duty to chronicle the first death in our company. Hanson VanScoter, aged 19, died yesterday, Nov. 30, 1862, at reveille, of typhoid fever. The deceased was ill but a little over a week. Death came upon him so gradually and so easily that his comrades, watching beside him in his tent, knew not the moment of his departure. The reveille which broke the slumbers of his fellow soldiers, woke him from the lethargy which had for a few days wrapped his senses, into a world where strifes and bloodsheds never desolate the heart, nor fill the home circle with useless lamentations. Thus, amid the martial music of fifes and drums, he breathed his last. A faithful soldier and a devoted comrade, his funeral was attended by his Company *en masse*, officers and all, and the triple volley fired over his grave as the coffin was lowered, was the final tribute of a soldier's esteem. He was buried in the Empire Brigade burying ground, North east of Suffolk. *Requiescat in pace.*

P. S.—If our friends wish to do any real good in sending boxes to the soldiers, I would suggest to the Soldiers' Relief Societies that woolen mittens—or glove mittens, with a special enclosure for the fore-finger—will be one of the most useful and welcome articles that can be sent. These frosty December nights that are coming, when the soldier walks his sentinel's beat, are biting and benumbing to naked hands clasping the musket or rifle. There were a few sent in a box recently made up by Mr. A. J. Peck, and they had a very speedy market. They are much in demand.

Shortly thereafter, this letter was sent from another member of the 130th, whom the Advertiser identified only as "R":

The regiment has got settled in its new quarters. We had rather of a nasty time in wading from the old campground to the one we now occupy; but the boys were as plucky as ever, and stamped it through the mud without a murmur, and went right to work and put up their log shanties in double quick time. They have got their quarters very comfortable once more, and look like living again. Capt. Leach has recovered his health, and fattened up considerably; he looks like himself, and can drill the boys on double quick time as well as he could in days gone by. The company's health is not very good at present. This morning's sick report numbered 32. The rest are in good health. There are 24 sick in quarters, to 8 in the hospital. [A Civil War company usually had 100 men, so nearly a third of the company in question had taken sick.] I will give you the names of those in the hospital: C. T. Peck, Henry Williams, William McNeese, G. W. Lewis, David Laughly, John Kelley, M. Wambold and C. H. McWhorter. They are all doing well. Sergeant Allen came to camp today from the hospital, looking very well, although feeling weak. He is gaining strength fast, and will be fit for duty in a short time. Sergeant Schlick has got well, and is acting Orderly for the present.

Well, there has been another Blackwater scout, but the 130th did not have the good luck to see the fun this time; but the time will come when we will have the chance to show the

secesh devils how to hunt their holes, and if we do get a sight at them the boys will go in on their nerve. So says Co. K at any rate.

Finally, another letter from a soldier of Company K, dated New Year's Day, 1863:

Having a good opportunity this evening, I thought I would improve it by writing these few lines, to let you and the friends of Co. K, 130th, know that we enjoyed a "Happy New Year," and under the circumstances was more than the boys expected. Our Captain, (Leach) who always takes an interest in the welfare of the boys, went to the trouble and expense of getting up an oyster supper for the Co., which was cooked in the best of style, by the "Original John Dorman," who is the most robust soldier we have in Suffolk. The Co. was drawn in line in front of the mess room, after which the Capt. addressed them in a few words. After the boys satisfied them in eating oysters, the Capt. treated them to a glass of the best sherry wine, much to their satisfaction. We also had the pleasure of being introduced to Lt. Beebe, of the 13th Indiana; which Regt. Has seen service most two years, and is called the best Regt. in Suffolk.

Last Saturday evening we were overjoyed to notice the familiar countenance of our old townsman, Dr. Blake. His appearance made home but a short distance from us; we would like to have had the Dr. stay a week or two, but as his business was very important, we could not complain. [Dr. Zara H. Blake had come to fetch back to Dansville the remains of William H. Losey, another victim of "camp fever."] The Doctor at any rate had the pleasure of witnessing the 130th up in line for a Blackwater march, Sunday, P.M. [For much of the war, the Blackwater River served as the dividing line between Union and Confederate forces in Virginia.]

We started about 3 o'clock P.M., with a force of 2000, together with a battery of four pieces and about 300 of the 1st N.Y. Mounted Riflemen, the whole under the command of Col Gibbs, of the 130th. We had not gone far, when we heard a few shots; the result was, that the riflemen in the advance had taken eight "Rebs"

and six horses; one of the riflemen was wounded slightly. This wakened the boys' ideas considerably, and they felt as though they were a match for twice their number. About 7 o'clock we were halted for the night, and were ordered to keep in line, one rank allowed to lay down while the others watched; this was done without any fires until morning; the night was very cold, but we could not complain as the officers shared with us. We were countermarched early in the morning, for the Colonel was under the suspicion that they had force that was superior to ours, and thought it was best not to move forward. The boys place all the confidence they have in Col Gibbs, and would feel perfectly safe, should he lead them in battle. Since the march our officers have given us a few days rest.

The health of our company is gaining fast, having only five in the hospital, and they are doing well. Sergt. Peck returned to camp yesterday.



The Soldiers' Monument, at the corner of Ossian and Spruce Streets, is the most visible memorial to the Civil War in Dansville. In the next DAHS newsletter, we'll cover the making of, the almost undoing of, and the secret to this monument.

DAHS Committee Reports

Pioneer Park Committee

We are waiting to have the ground tested with ground penetrating radar to see how many are still buried at Pioneer Park. That information will help the village crew to place electrical lines, sidewalks and to help us know where to position the monument and a flower bed surrounding it. Once this is completed later this spring, we can order the monument and get the landscaping done. At that point we can set a date for a dedication ceremony. We are still actively soliciting donations to complete this project.

Jim Snyder and Jane Schryver

Grants Committee

Last year we received a "Get Ready" grant from NYS Council for the Arts, administered through Museumwise. That grant gave us a planner for a day, and members of the DAHS board and members of the community met with Sally Treanor for a needs assessment. We were recommended to apply for the next step: a "Get Set" grant. We have submitted our application for that grant. If we receive the grant, which is competitive, we will have the funds to hire a strategic planner who works specifically with historical groups. He will work with our committee on a three-year plan for the Museum. We hope to hear within the next month about this grant.

Nancy Helfrich and Chad Schuster

Locomotive at the Dansville & Mt. Morris Railroad Company Depot, Early 1900s



We sadly mark the passing of Robert F. Hart, 88, on December 14, 2012. He was a leading citizen of Dansville and represented us as Town Supervisor; in fact, he was the longest serving Supervisor in the history of New York State. Bob was owner of the Dansville and Mt. Morris Railroad, and this truly was one of his beloved avocations.

Dansville Area Historical Society Web Site

**"Caretakers of Our Area History" – 14 Church Street,
Dansville, NY 14437 – dahs@stny.rr.com**



**The above graphic is what you'll see when you enter
online:**

dansvilleareahistoricalociety.wordpress.com

**The website periodically posts "On This Date" --
photos and a writeup on an event from Dansville's
past. You can also search on "About Us" for Board
of Directors and for complete copies of the
newsletters; "Hall of Fame" for articles on historical
leaders in the Dansville community; "DAHS Items for
Sale" for articles in our gift shop; and "History" and
"Museum" for photos and graphics.**

Chad Schuster is the DAHS
webmaster. He reports:

In March of 2012 we
introduced the DAHS website
and had over 4300 views on
the site. There were 39 new
posts and we uploaded over
300 pictures, not bad for the
first year. "On this date" is a
series of posts that accounted
for the majority of those
views. That series will
continue in 2013 and will be
joined by a new series that will
focus on our business
members. We will share a
story about each DAHS
business member.

Chad also coordinates emails
sent to dahs@stny.rr.com

Membership/Donation Form for Dansville Area Historical Society, 2013 Calendar Year

If you haven't renewed a membership for 2013, it's not too late. And consider giving a membership as a gift to a friend or a member of your family. This is the only way that DAHS raises funds to provide a Museum to preserve Dansville area history. Thank you!

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City/Zip _____

Email _____

I have enclosed: _____ \$15 Individual/Family _____ \$25 Business/Organization

_____ \$15 Gift Membership _____ \$150 Life Membership (your
name will be listed on a permanent plaque at the museum.)

_____ Donation enclosed for \$ _____

_____ I would like to volunteer. Please call me. _____

Send to: DAHS, P.O. Box 481, Dansville, NY 14437

Dansville Area Historical Society

**Box 481
Dansville, NY 14437
Phone: 585-335-8090**

Return Service Requested

Board of Directors

Jim Snyder -- President
Paul Constantine -- Vice President
Mary Harris – Recording Secretary
Gerri Waight – Treasurer;
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Jane Behnk, Corresponding Sec.

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Chad Schuster, Webmaster
Nancy Helfrich, Editor
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Jeff Miller
Ed Perry
David Gilbert, Curator
Alice Burdick
Sharon Harris
Corky Chapman
Ken Holbrook
Jen Howard
Pam Socia

DAHS Museum

14 Church St., Dansville
**Open 10 to 2 p.m.
1st & 3rd Saturdays**

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

4 Things to Do while Waiting for Spring

- 1. Commemorate the Civil War Sesquicentennial –Visit the DAHS Museum March 2th or 15th. See Civil War items on display. Join us for coffee.**
- 2. Join the Dansville Area Historical Society or give a membership gift to family or friends (see page 9).**
- 3. Shop the Museum gift corner for books, collectibles, notecards, and warm coverlets.**
- 4. Put April 25th on your calendar. BOMBS AWAY!! (see page 2).**