

# NEWSLETTER

**LANSINGBURGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
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## **SOME HISTORY OF MELVILLE HOUSE**

Abraham VanVleek purchased lots 21, 22, and 23 from Abraham Jacob Lansing in 1772. VanVleek built a house on lots 21 and 22 and a garden on lot 23 (524-526 First Avenue). In 1784, Stephen Gorham, a merchant ship builder and first post master, purchased lot 23 from VanVleek and lot 24 from Moses Holt. Holt had purchased the lot from Lansing on Sept 20, 1776. Gorham had built a house on lot 23 by 1787, because of the different value of the property on the early Rensselaerwvch Tax List (owed by the State).

The Gorham house had a gambrel roof, English bond brick construction, with a Dutch "H" frame structure in the attic. Gorham's family was a wife, three boys, and one girl, plus two slaves. The address was Water Street. Gorham died in the late 1790's.

In 1838 Maria Melville rented the house and moved in with her children- seven at home. Her landlord was John Caswell, a gun maker. On October 3, 1839, William Knickerbacker bought lots 23 and 24 and became Mrs. Melville's landlord. When he died in 1846, the house "occupied by Mrs. Melville" was inherited by his daughter. Mrs. Melville moved out in 1847. Her rent had been \$31.25 per month.

Around the time Maria Melville was moving, the first alterations took place. The original gambrel roof was removed and much of the original first floor woodwork was replaced by finely detailed Greek revival trim and two Italian marble mantels were installed in the parlors. The address was 45 River Street.

In 1861, Knickerbacker sold both lots to Ellen Dodge who died in 1864. The two lots then were sold to John G. McMurray, a brush manufacturer.

On March 26, 1871 the two lots were sold to James H. Adams, a wealthy druggist and drug manufacturer. The 1873 Troy City Directory lists the address changed to 2 North Street (114<sup>th</sup> Street). The front door was moved to the north side and the old door on the west side became a bay window. A large porch was added to the north side, extending into lot 24. A new oak staircase was built to the second floor, and the old glass front door became the door at the back of the parlor.

River Street became First Avenue in 1886. In the same year North Street became Fourteenth Street. In 1915, after Lansingburgh became part of Troy, the US Post Office added 100's to the addresses, hence the address is 2 114<sup>th</sup> Street today.

### **LANSINGBURGH'S OLDEST CEMETERY**

Surely you've walked or driven along lower Third Avenue near Germania Hall and passed the two cemeteries at the east corners of 107<sup>th</sup> Street. The one on the northeast corner is the oldest cemetery in Lansingburgh still in existence, the Lansingburgh Village Burying Ground. The Lansing Family Cemetery which once sat on the river bank near 109<sup>th</sup> St. and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. predated it but was closed and the remains moved to Oakwood Cemetery. It began with Jacob Lansing, Lansingburgh's founder.

The Village Burying Ground dates from the 1770's. It is currently the property of the City of Troy which does basic maintenance of the property. The Lansingburgh Historical Society has permission from the City of Troy to work at rehabilitating the cemetery and it's stones, as part of a project promoted by NYS Senator Roy McDonald who hopes to secure money for continuing the cemetery's improvement. Recent and past research indicates as many as thirty-five Revolutionary War Patriots are buried in this cemetery. Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution are helping to identify those buried there so that the Patriots may be honored in the future. To date six War of 1812 soldier burials and eighteen US Civil War soldier burials have been identified in this cemetery. Some graves have no stones, many existing stones are unreadable or broken and displaced. The Society will need to develop a plot map from what we know. No record of burials has been found.

### **EVENTS AND PROGRAMS**

#### **SEPTEMBER 16, Thursday, 7:30PM, Lansingburgh Branch of Troy Public**

**Public Library (NW corner of 114<sup>th</sup> St and 4<sup>th</sup> Ave)**- Ned Pratt, President of the local chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians will present a program on Troy's endangered churches. Some of these churches may not survive, others may be reused in a way that their architectural features are not respectfully preserved. Stained glass and other elements of these religious edifices will be discussed. This program is open to the public and refreshments will be served. Note that this program will be presented at a different location than Melville House (see underlining above).

**OCTOBER 14, Thursday, 7:30 PM Melville House (note that this is one week earlier than our usual general meeting date)** Walter J. Hollien, a preservation architect involved with many major restoration and preservation efforts will lecture on Lansingburgh's historic architecture, including information and photographs relevant to establishing historic districts in Lansingburgh.

**OCTOBER 21, Thursday-** this is the date reserved for our annual **GALA FUND RAISER DINER AND SILENT AUCTION**. This is the biggest fund raising event of the year for our historical society. Even better, it's an evening of great food., an auction with something for everyone, and an ideal time to reacquaint with friends and meet folks you haven't seen recently. Let us know now about donations of items you'd like to place in the auction. More details about this event accompany this newsletter. Sign up early because already half of the available dinner reservations have been sold.

**NOVEMBER 18, Thursday, 7:30PM, Melville House-** our annual Holiday Party will be held including an auction of small antiques, collectibles, Christmas books and holiday ornaments. There will be note paper for sale which shows a winter scene in Lansingburgh in the 1870s. This party is open to the public and refreshments will be served.

### **COLLECTIONS**

Warren Broderick has made a gift of three trade cards to the LHS collection. He reports that a pair of East Lake chairs owned by the Society were recently repaired and reupholstered and placed back into the collection.

## MEMBERSHIP

Gordon Brown reports that membership renewals are lagging far behind last year at this time but a large number of people who have renewed, have done so at the sustaining or life level and we have several first time members this year. Please, if you have not renewed, send in your dues as soon as you are able. Use the form below and mail it to the address at the top of the first page of this newsletter. You can also give this form to a friend who would like to join or use it to send us a donation.

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**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_ Regular(\$5)    \_\_\_\_ Sustaining(\$25)    \_\_\_\_ Life (\$100)    Donation\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donations welcome! You may include it with your membership.