

April, 2023



Lansing Historical Association Newsletter

April 20, 2023 7 PM Spring Program -- Lansing Town Hall
SALMON CREEK BRIDGE HISTORY

Our April 20 Public Spring Program will be a photographic presentation of the construction of the new bridge. Robert Parker has great photos and a good story to tell.

This will be intermixed with the story of how the original bridge was built presented by our new Lansing Town Historian Fannie Welch.

Mailing List Update

The Association would like to update its mailing list. You can choose to have Association's newsletters and future communications delivered electronically. For electronic delivery, please include your email address. If any changes are necessary, please send an email to <lansinghistorian@gmail.com>, write to us, or fill out the preference form at our web page: lansinghistory.com. In any case, having your email address will help the Association communicate with you faster and more efficiently in the future.

Reminder ⇒ Yearly membership is \$10.00. Thank you for your dues, it goes to many causes.

COVID 19

One hundred years ago thousands of people died of the Spanish Flu. It is not certain where it all began but the first outbreak was at the military base in Ft. Riley, Kansas where many soldiers were returning after serving in other places in the world.

Unfortunately, there were no vaccines or antibiotics. Victims were isolated or quarantined. They were encouraged to use good hygiene and to avoid public gatherings. Since many doctors were serving in the military, there were few who had private practices so folks were left to their own remedies.

In 2019 we were stricken with a new illness, COVID 19. We have new vaccines, we are encouraged to wear a mask and to avoid public gatherings. This is an historical event.

We would appreciate a written note from you telling us how COVID affected your life. It will be included in a COVID history file for future generations.

Please sign and send to LHA, Box 100, Lansing, NY 14882.

TEMPERANCE IN LANSING

In 1817 a Presbyterian Church was organized in Ludlowville. Perhaps it was the strenuous lives led by the early settlers which inclined them to embrace the stern doctrines of John Calvin. The early records show that to maintain a good and regular standing among the brethren, one must walk warily and circumspectly.

The first case of discipline recorded was that of a brother who was cited to appear before the Session, charged with neglecting public worship and communion for eighteen months, a neglect of family prayer for twelve, and a general levity and lightness of conduct disgraceful to a professing Christian. This delinquent brother after having repeatedly failed to heed the summons, was excommunicated. There were others who were also removed from membership in the Presbytery.

Sometime during 1828 the question came before the Session, "Is it expedient for a member of Christ's Church to retail spirits by the small measure in a grocery?" In reply P.W. said he was not perfectly clear in his mind as to the correctness of his business, of retailing spirits. He did say that he did not know how he could gain a subsistence if he changed his business.

About this time whiskey was a common beverage in every house, and it is not strange that drunkenness was deplorably frequent. There was no market nearer than Albany, about 150 miles distant, for the transportation by wagon the farmer received only fifty cents a bushel for the grain. This return would scarcely pay the cost of getting it to market, but 60 lbs. of corn converted in to whiskey s reduced to two thirds in bulk and weight and doubled in its value. Therefore, distilleries for manufacturing the raw material soon became common and did a thriving business.

No social gathering was considered complete without a generous supply of spirits in which all indulged. It was expected that every farmer would furnish his hired hands with a liberal allowance of whiskey. Soon the more intelligent and thoughtful member of the community began to realize the fact that it was, after all, poor economy to thus transform their crops of corn into crops of drunkards.

About the same time Benjamin Joy, through reading the sermons of Lyman K. Beecher, became convinced that constant drunkenness was wrong. He then brought barrels of whiskey from among the merchandise in his store into the village square and dumped the contents, to the surprise and horror of bystanders.

Throughout many long winter evenings, he made his way through blinding snowstorms and drifts to talk temperance in every schoolhouse and church in neighboring towns. Of course, there was opposition to the doctrine of tee-total-ism.

His meeting were seldom disturbed by the disorderly elements in a community.

On a certain occasion, when one of his hearers asked, "What'll we do with all our coarse grain if we do not make it into whiskey? Joy replied, "Feed it to the drunkards families."

On New Year's Eve 1827, he called a memorable meeting in the schoolhouse and formed the Lansing Town Temperance Society. Names of twelve members are known: Thomas Ludlow, Janes A. Burr, Nicholas Townley, Samuel Love, John G. Henry and Benjamin Joy. Every year afterwards the "Anniversary" of that meeting was held in the Presbyterian Church on New Year's Eve.

In 1874 an International Temperance organization was formed in Ohio. It was the first organization of women devoted to social reform that linked religious and secular through concerted and far reaching reform strategies based on applied Christianity. On December 21, 1918, the women of Lansing formed a local WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union). Mattie Beardslee, President, Lottie B. Huson, Secretary and Plene S. Moses, Treasurer.

The New Year's Eve celebrations of Temperance were held for 120 consecutive years. The last was held on December 21, 1947 just before the Ludlowville Presbyterian Church was sold and torn down.

In 1901, the Town of Lansing enjoyed the distinction of having not only the oldest postmaster in the United States, but also the oldest temperance society as well. The Ludlowville Temperance Society was organized in 1828, the same year in which Roswell Beardsley was made postmaster as North Lansing. Serving continuously under 20 presidents of the United States over 75 years, Beardsley was postmaster from 1828 until his death in 1903. Roswell's son, Franklin Beardsley, then was postmaster until 1929.

Asbury and Myers also had temperance societies. During the Ithaca Fourth of July in 1914, Lansing was represented by individual floats built by the Asbury, Myers, and Ludlowville temperance societies.

At the 1917 meeting of the Ludlowville Temperance Society, the invited speaker for the evening was Rev. S. J. Houghton of Groton. Houghton's subject was "The Relation of the Liquor Traffic to the High Cost of Living." He said, "The key to the high cost of living is the saloon."

According to Susan Haring, Benjamin Joy opened a store in Ludlowville in 1822. By 1827, Benjamin was impressed by the evils of intemperance.

At one time there were eight distilleries in Lansing and two in Ludlowville, producing 10,000 gallons of whiskey a year. Before the time of canals and railroads this was the easiest way to dispose of surplus corn. But it was soon found out that "crops of corn produced crops of drunkards."

At the time, liquor was sold by the pint, quart, or gallon in all stores and, to encourage trade, well-filled buckets stood on the counters accompanied by handy tin cups from which young and old, clergy and laymen were welcome to quench their thirst.

Is Alcoholics Anonymous the new Temperance Society?

Old Computers?

If you have vintage IBM PC computer, please let us know. These would be a PC/AT or earlier with 5-1/2" floppy drives. Louise Bement was one of the first adapters of computer technology in her classroom and as Lansing Historian. As a result, many of her early computer files are stored on now obsolete storage disks, including CP/M formatted disks from an Osborne 1 "luggable" (25 pounds!) and a Morrow Micro Decision from 1981.

The History of Highways in the Town of Lansing, by Louise Bement

Today our Lansing Highway Department is responsible for 131 roads of 92.51 miles in the town, and 45 roads of 15 miles in the village. In the winter the department also plows the 18 county roads, adding 40 more miles under their care.

We have come a long way since 1794, when the first Commissioners of Highways (also known as Pathmasters) were appointed. These Pathmasters had the job of seeing that the roadway running a mile or so on each side of a property owner's homestead was kept passable. Harris Dates remembers that his father would scrape the road for one mile on Route 34. Harris's father made him a toy scraper, and with his pony hitched up, Harris, age seven, would "repair" the road along with his dad. Scraping was needed each spring to level the roads from the axel-deep ruts caused by the muddy spring weather.

In the mid 1800's an Overseer's Warrant gave some of the essential duties of the overseer's of the roads: "Once in each month, from the first of April until the first day of December, to remove loose stones from the beaten track on every road within your district – to cause the noxious weeds on each side of the Highway to be cut down or destroyed twice in each year; once before the first day of July, and again before the first day of September; and the labor shall be considered highway work." This warrant also gave the duties of Pathmasters, one of which was to furnish the Town Clerk with a list of names of those persons that were liable to highway labor in their respective district. Those who did not do the work were to be reported to one of the justices of the peace so that they could be fined and the fines used "in making and improving the roads and bridges therein". In 1853 George Stark, Overseer of Road in District 41 sent a report of 15 names to R.J. Hedden, Commissioner of Highways, with the days assessed and the days worked. His report shows no one that had to be fined. The number of days for each name ranged from 1 to 8, with 7 men working 1 day each, the others working 4 to 8 days.

Early minute books of the Lansing Town Board show that on January 3, 1889 it was resolved that the town raise the sum of \$271.25 to pay for a road scrapper bought for the Town of Lansing. In June of that year \$800 was approved for 2 road scrapers, the building of a bridge near Asbury Station, and general road purposes to be expended by the Road Commissioner, G.H. Pierson. From these minutes it seems to be that there was no budget for the upkeep of

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roads and bridges, and that special meetings of the board had to be called whenever an expenditure was needed.

Early roads were deep in dust in summer and rutted or blocked by drifts in winter. It was not until the early 1920's that Lansing began to turn the dirt roads into firm, gravel-covered roads. In 1962 there were about 55 miles of gravel roads; today there are just 3.24 miles (5 roads).

Lansing Transportation

At one time, Lansing and Ludlowville were better served by public transportation than today. In 1927, there were two Lehigh Valley trains a day running between Ithaca to Auburn with a scheduled stop at Ludlowville. The 42 mile rail trip took 1-1/2 hours. Lehigh Valley passenger service was discontinued September 1, 1948. In 1930, one had a choice of four daily buses from Ithaca to Auburn with stops in South Lansing and North Lansing, with connections in Auburn to Syracuse via Greyhound.

Digitizing Project

Louise Bement possessed a treasure trove of video tapes and books in her office library. The videos include past Historical Association presentations, interviews with longtime Lansing residents Veda Holden and Ruby Grove, moving the school house, and several cable news segments about Lansing. We are working to transfer the VHS material to digital format to preserve this unique resource and to make it more accessible. Louise's book collection included many that have been long out-of-print, including the local histories by Isabelle Parish. The idea is not only to digitize these books, but to capture the text as well to take advantage of powerful technologies unimaginable when the books were written. **Anecdotes of Old Ludlowville** and **The Town of Lansing -- Its Beginnings** were the first books we worked on to produce new print and electronic reader editions.

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Next Association Board meeting – May 9, 2023 4:00PM. Lansing History Building

Lansing Historical Association

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Yearly membership \$10.00

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