

# THE COURIER

Newsletter of the Lansingburgh Historical Society • Spring 2018

## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE SPRING 2018

At last spring has arrived and the trustees and officers of Lansingburgh Historical Society have just about finalized the event schedule for the season. We hope you will partake of at least some of the events and enjoy the changes at Melville House as they unfold.

As always, we welcome your input for events or suggestions. Our trustee meetings are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month from March through November starting at 7PM at Melville House. We invite any member to come

to any of these and just listen or offer any ideas or suggestions. Our open house events are generally the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month March through November from 10-2 unless otherwise noted. Come explore the house and the wonders of the attic museum and learn some interesting facts about the Burgh and the Melvilles.

This season marks our annual membership drive. Please consider upgrading your membership. It sometimes feels as though it takes more than a village to preserve this 1786 house and we most certainly need your support. Find interesting facts about the Burgh on our website or check for events on our Facebook page.

Enjoy the crocus, daffodils and tulips which are on their way.

*John Ward*

### An "L." Road.

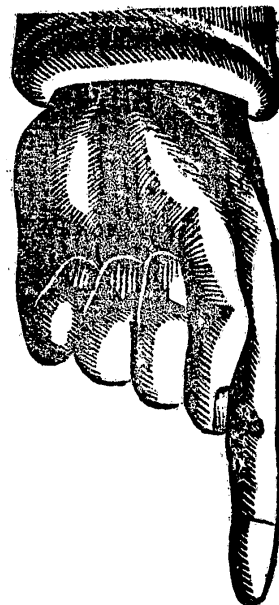
A movement was Monday set on foot working to the construction of an elevated road between Troy and Lansingburgh. The road is to be surveyed through the alley between John and Congress streets [Fourth Avenue and Third Avenue] in the 'Burgh, and several gentlemen deep in railroad schemes are said to have interested themselves in the project. *Lansingburgh Courier*. December 20, 1884: 3 col 3.

## An Up Hill Business.

Walk up,  
Roll up,  
Tumble up,  
Step up,  
Jump up,  
Climb up,  
Run up,  
Skate up,  
Ride up,  
Rush up,  
Swim up,  
Fly up  
Crawl up,  
Fire up,  
Steam up,  
Sail up,  
Push up,

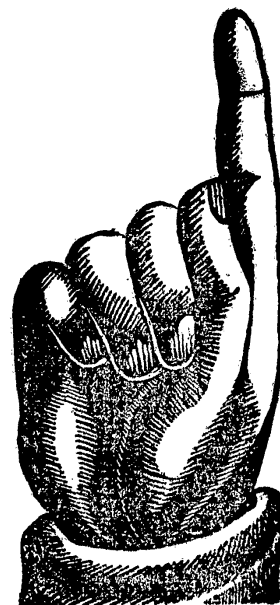
Any way so that you *get up* and *settle up*  
your Subscription Bills.

*Lansingburgh Democrat*. December 2, 1858: 2 col 4.

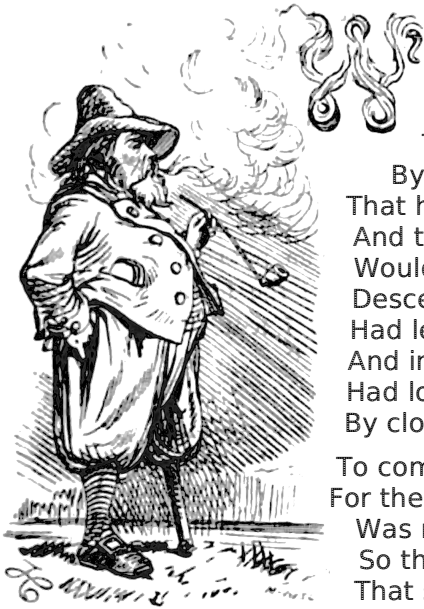


It's Spring —

**Please RENEW!**



## THE TALE OF THE WHALE



HEN Peter the Headstrong, of stubbornest will,  
Was sent out from Holland, commissioned to fill  
In New Netherland province a Governor's chair,  
The people all knew by his obstinate air,  
By the stamp of his foot and the wag of his head,  
That he meant to be minded in all that he said;  
And that naught but the soberest, solemnest fun  
Would ever find vent from this son of a gun.  
Descended from captains, he too in the fight  
Had led on to glory, but never for flight,  
And in reaching the former by acting, not talking,  
Had lost an extremity needed in walking.  
By closely observing, his people soon learned

To compass his movements, wherever he turned:  
For the index that showed what old Peter intended  
Was not in his face, but the limb that was mended.  
So they watched with sly glances the silver-clad peg  
That served as a mate to his natural leg,

And whenever, in argument, down came the stump,

And smote on the floor with a resonant thump,  
Not a tongue further wagged, but, with looks mild and meek,  
The Dutchmen all listened for Peter to speak.  
Still they liked the old hard-headed, obstinate soldier,  
For than he none e'er lived who was kinder or bolder,  
And during his reign all his subjects rich gat,  
While their faces grew broad and their bellies waxed fat.

One morn, at Manhattan, this Governor great  
Sat weighing in Council grave matters of state,  
When a stout-bodied Dutchman bounced into the room,

On whose face were depicted the terrors of doom.  
"Your Highness," he said, having got back his breath,

"I have seen, God preserve us! a portent of death.  
Just now in the river that flows by our town  
Appeared a great monster, whose color was brown:  
My glass, as I raised it, was wanting in strength  
To disclose to my vision his terrible length:  
And then through his nostrils the water he threw  
So high, that it fell not in rain but in dew:  
And so swift did he rush 'gainst the stream pouring down,  
That he banked up the waters and flooded the town;  
But he's gone up the river, and much do I fear  
That tidings of woe we directly shall hear."

Then Peter called out, "Bring to me my state pipe  
And a pound of tobacco; I don't like the stripe  
Of the tale which you tell, and must presently think;  
For if at such pranks we should knowingly wink,  
The Yanghees from Hartford perhaps will come next  
With a Puritan parson, all sermon and text,  
Bringing onions and rum to Manhattan's fair isle,  
And all sorts of notions our maids to beguile."  
For two hours and a quarter he silently smoked,  
Till his Councillors doughty were more than half choked;  
Then, rising, in dignity calm and serene,  
While his face through the smoke shot a rubicund gleam,



Detail showing Walvis Eylant (Whale Island) "Novi Belgii Novaeque Angliae nec non partis Virginiae tabula multis in locis emendata." 1655.

Ich ban hier oock niet naelaren / alhoewel het eenighing was van de weegh af-  
lept / te verhalen / dat op dese Rivier in 't Jaer 1647. in de maent van Jaert/  
als doo; het groote W- water / dat ban hoben komt / de Rivier meest gheheel tot  
aen de Sap/ berfch was; anders komt het soete water by ordinaris ty maer ont-  
rent de 20 of 24 mijlen naer / ontrent de Zee-kant : twee Walvisfischen ban reer-  
ijche grootte / tot in de beertigh mijlen de Rivier op-ghezwommen sijn / waer  
ban den eenen wederom is gheert / ende om laegh ontrent eif of twaelf mijlen  
ban de Zee-kant / daerby dat selve jaer noch andere vier stranden / mehe gefant  
ofte ontkomen : den anderen bleef sitten niet verre van de groote afval Cahoos,  
ontrent dize en-beertigh mijlen van de Zee-kant; den W- viel al by wat spet-  
tigh / want niet teghenslaende die ban Rensselaers-wijk , daer een goede partje  
raen af-handen / soo was de heele Rivier / die nochtans datmael sterck aflept/  
voel tot dize weken daer nae heel tranigh / ende niet meer bedecht. Ja sommighe  
doen den W- in 't vorten lagh / inferteerden sy met stanch de Lucht foodanigh/  
dat men als het beneden windt was / wel twee mijlen ver / de lucht vernam: doo  
wat pber desen W- soo hoogh de Rivier sijn selven heeft op-gegeven / als zijnde  
in die tijdt wel in de beertigh mijlen ban alle zout ofte brack water af / soude ich  
niet konnen seggen / ten ware de groote luff tot visschen / die hem niet menighe  
te gemoet gekomen en ontmoet is / hem berlept / ende alfoo verre upt sijn sterck  
geboert hadde.

van der Donck, Adriaen. *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-  
Nederlant*. Amsterdam: Evert Nieywenhof, 1655.

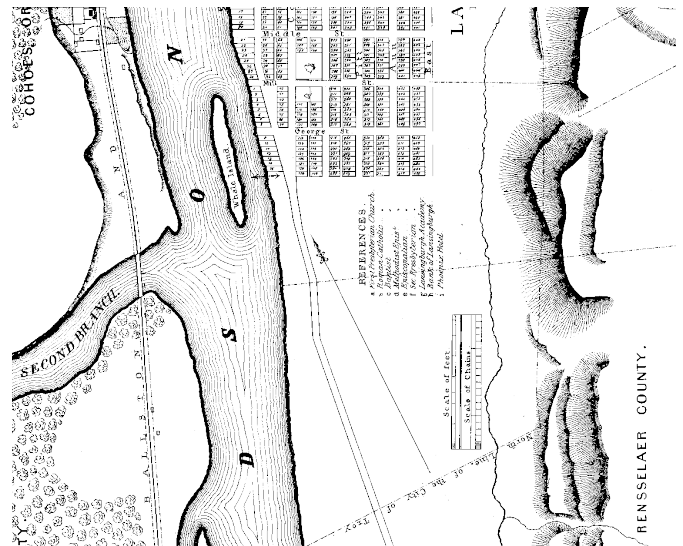
I cannot refrain from relating here, though I digress somewhat, that in March 1647, when a strong ice flow from above had made the river fresh as far as the sea — at normal tide, fresh water comes down to twenty or twenty-four miles from the sea — two fairly big whales swam more than forty miles up the river. One turned back and became stranded, later freeing itself at a spot eleven or twelve miles from the sea where four others were stranded in the same year; the other beached itself not far from the great Cohoes Falls, forty-three miles from the sea. The animal turned out to be quite blubbery, and the people of Rensselaerwijk boiled off a good quantity of train oil. Even so, the whole river, though flowing strongly at the time, remained oily and covered with grease for up to three weeks afterward. Moreover, as the carcass lay rotting, the stench infected the air to such an extent that it was noticeable nearly two miles to leeward. What may have made this whale ascend the river so far, i.e., forty miles from the nearest salt or brackish water, I cannot say, unless its appetite for the multitude of fish it encountered tempted it and thus drew it from its habitat.

van der Donck, Adriaen. *A Description of New Netherland*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press., 2008. 11-12.

To the floor of the chamber he brought down his peg  
 And steadied himself on his flesh-and-blood-leg;  
 Then looking around, with an air grand and grim,  
 Said aloud in firm tones, "Let the animal swim!"

So the animal swam 'gainst the wind and the tide,  
 Caring not if the river were narrow or wide,  
 Rushing on like the tempest, and marking his path  
 With the terrible waves of his foam-breathing wrath.  
 As he passed by Fort Orange the gunner awoke:  
 "The Yanghees from Hartford!" was all that he spoke,  
 Then opened the gates, and, with breeches in hand  
 And pipe in his mouth, rendered up his command.  
 But soon 'mid the islands off Rensselaerswyck's shore  
 The animal floundered and snorted and tore.  
 Stuck fast in a quicksand, unable to go,  
 He blew out his life in a chorus of woe,  
 While the Donderberg mountains re-echoed his pain,  
 And rolled out their thunder o'er valley and plain.

As the spring floods subsided, the yeomanry came  
 To see the great monster without any name;  
 Among them a skipper, renowned on the sea,  
 With a knowledge of fishes like Barnum, P. T.  
 This skipper climbed up on the animal's back,  
 Then wandered about on a varying tack,  
 Pulled away at his flippers, examined his tail,  
 And said to the Dutchmen, "This here is a whale."  
 As when in years later, obedient to fate,  
 The rocks flowed with oil in a neighboring state,  
 And hundreds forsook their homes, firesides, and friends  
 For the spot where the stream of petroleum wends,  
 So now from the hillsides, the plains, and the town



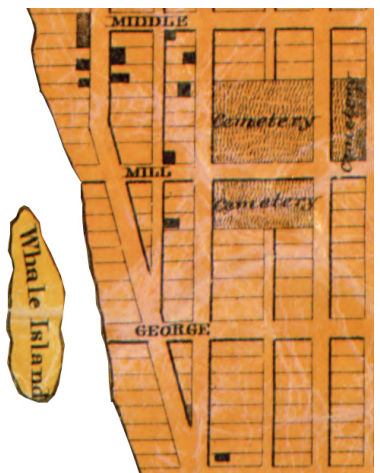
Detail from: Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "A map of the confluence of the Hudson & Mohawk Rivers with the villages and islands" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1843.



Detail above from: Wade, William, John Disturnell, and William Croome. *Wade & Croome's Panorama of the Hudson River from New York to Waterford*. New York: J. Disturnell, 1847.

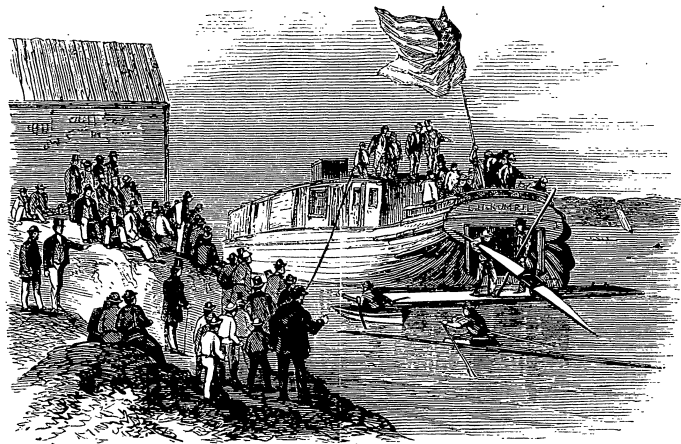


The people all came where the animal brown  
 Lay dead on the quicksand, with hatchets and saws,  
 And axes and cleavers, and meat-hooks and claws,  
 Determined to turn to their own private use  
 What before they had thought was a public abuse,  
 Prepared in great kettles his blubber to broil,  
 And try the great whale into barrels of oil.



Above detail edited from: Lake, D. J., and S. N. Beers. *Map of Rensselaer Co., New York*. Philadelphia: Smith, Gallup & Co. Publishers, 1861. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.

The Skipper Jan Symensen ruled in the roast,  
 With Borssum and Stogpens and burgher Van Voorst.  
 Then Dirck Cornelissen came in for his share,  
 As did Jansen and Claessen, — which surely was fair.  
 Govert Loockmans was there with the Criegers and Pieters,  
 And Volckertsen, Symon Pos, Teunissen Meters;  
 Jan Tyssen, the trumpeter famed for his blowing,  
 And Wolfert Gerrittsen, a master at mowing;  
 Rutger Hendricksen, ale-maker equal to Taylor;  
 Cornelis Tomassen, both blacksmith and nailor;  
 Carstensen, the millwright, Laurensen, the sawyer,  
 And Adriaen van der Donck, sheriff and lawyer;  
 Jansen Stol, who at Beverwyck managed the ferry;  
 Pieter Bronck, at whose tavern so many got merry;  
 Gerrittsen van Bergen, the owner of acres;  
 The sportsman renowned, named Harry de Backers,  
 Of whom it is told that one day out of fun  
 He killed eleven gray geese at a shot from his gun;  
 Pels Steltyn the brewer, and Jacob Wolfertsen;  
 Cornelis Crynnesen, Cornelis Lambertsen;  
 Claes Jansen van Waalwyck, Claes Jansen van Ruth,  
 And Megapolensis, a preacher of truth,  
 Who afterwards sent his son Samuel to college,  
 Where he rapidly grew both in size and in knowledge;  
 Sander Leendertsen Glen, a skilled Indian pedler,  
 And Mynderts der Bogaert, a quarrelsome meddler,  
 Of whom it is said, having got in a passion,  
 He strove to throw over in murderous fashion  
 A man whom in anger he caught by the throat,  
 As the twain were a-sailing one day in a boat;  
 Jan de Neger, the hangman, the colonie's Haman;  
 Jan Willemsen Scuth, and Jan Jansen van Bremen;  
 Antonie de Hooges, who to Anthony's Nose  
 Gave his name on the Hudson, and Andries de Vos;  
 Jan Labbadie, carpenter, native of France,  
 Who oft at Fort Orange led many a dance;  
 Gysbertsen, the wheelwright, who frequently spoke;  
 Jansen Dam, who in Council delighted to smoke;  
 Burger Joris, whose smithy stood under a tree;  
 Adriaensen van Veere, a freebooter free;  
 And Pieterse Koyemans, called Barent the miller,  
 Whose name in the manor was ever a pillar  
 Of strength, and his brothers Dave, Jacob, and Arent,  
 Who shed lustre and fame on the name of their parent.  
 Besides these, there came an unnamable throng,  
 With titles so twisted and jagged and long,  
 That were I to try to record them in rhyme,  
 I should fail in my language, my rhythm and time.  
 It would lengthen too much this unerring detail  
 To tell how by piecemeal they cut up the whale;  
 How the doughty old knights of the broadsword appeared  
 When they brought down their blades as if nothing they feared;  
 How the butchers with cleavers dealt terrible blows,  
 And the children all scattered for fear of their toes;  
 How Harry de Backers, with cracking report,  
 Kept on shooting his gun off to keep up the sport;  
 How Skipper Jan Symensen smoked and drank toddy  
 Till he could not distinguish the whale from his body;



THE INTER-STATE REGATTA AT TROY, N. Y., OCT. 8TH, 9TH AND 10TH—LAUNCHING THE SHELL-BOATS FROM THE MUTUAL BOAT CLUB HOUSE.—SEE PAGE 103.

## INTERNATIONAL REGATTA AT TROY.

THE boat-house of the Mutual Boat Club of Albany, from which the competing crafts were launched at Troy, is a curiosity, being made of the hull of a canal-boat. The bow contains parlor, sitting-room and dressing-room; the stern serves as boat-house, and, through the kindness of the Mutuals, was used for housing the boats of all competitors. The illustration shows the method of launching the shell-boats for the single scull races on the third day. The competitors in this race were Tyler, of Boston; Smith, of Atlanta Club, New York; Randall, of Portland; and Piepenbrink of Albany; and they held well together as far as the flag-boat, from which point the struggle was between Smith and Randall, the latter winning in consequence of a foul. Our illustration includes a view of the grand-stand, on Whale Island, and the railroad-bridge across the mouth of the Mohawk River [Between Green Island and Van Schaick Island].

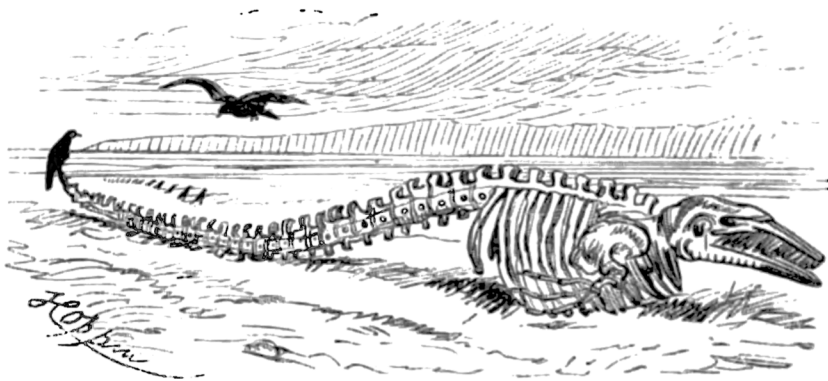
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.*  
 November 2, 1867: 101, 107.

How Mynderts der Bogaert got into a fight,  
 And was whipped by Van Porg, to the people's delight;  
 How Jansen Dam swore, and how Labbadie capered;  
 How Neger, the hangman, got sulky and vaped ; —  
 These matters are treated by Munsell's grave pen,  
 In his volumes of Annals, now numbering ten.

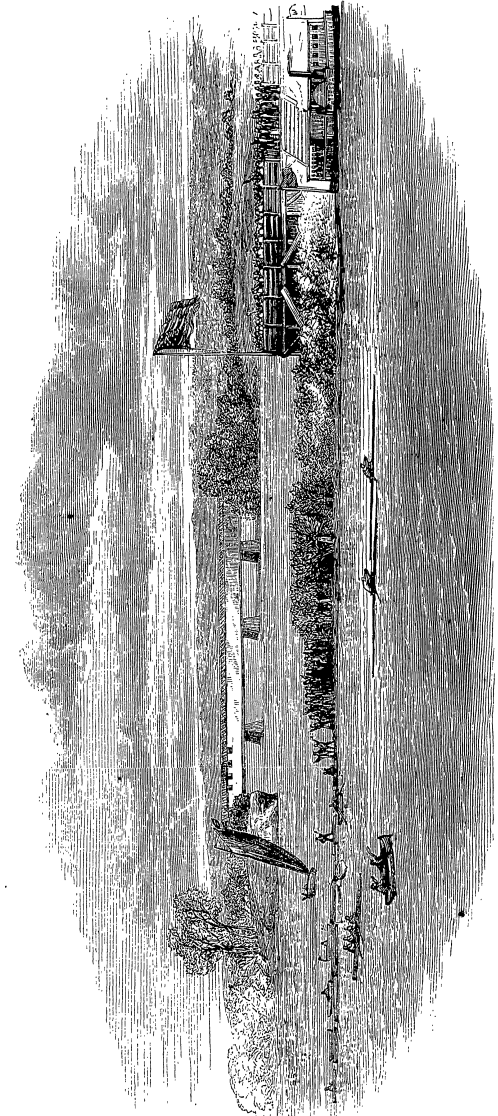
At the end of a month from the time they began,  
 The oil ceased to flow, which so freely had ran.  
 Of the whale naught remained but his carcass and spine,  
 On which crows came to breakfast and oft stayed to dine.  
 An account which was kept showed the end of this toil  
 To be seventy-nine barrels five pipkins of oil.  
 Thus light was increased, and spread through the land,  
 Springing forth from the whale lying dead on the strand;  
 And down to this day in some houses they show  
 The oil which kind Providence once did bestow;  
 For the vessels in which it was placed, like the cruse  
 Of the widow, ne'er lessened, though ever in use;  
 And the good vrouws felt certain that oil would abound  
 If the vessels that held it were kept clean and sound.

But the ghost of the whale lingers still round the spot  
 Where they tried out his blubber in caldron and pot.  
 And in spring, when the ice in the river goes down,  
 And rushes in torrents past Albany town,  
 When the water submerges the docks and the street,  
 And boats take the highway intended for feet,  
 Then often dread blows break the silence of night,  
 And the children start up with a terrible fright,  
 And mammas in their nightcaps look ghastly with fear,  
 As the sound from the river falls full on the ear.  
 Well the old burghers know that the wandering shade  
 Of the monster is roving and will not be laid.  
 And though ages have passed since he gave his last groan,  
 And no vestige remains of his vertebrate bone,  
 Still the noise of those blows, as it breaks on the sense,  
 Makes the breathing come hard, and the muscles grow tense;  
 For then in mid-river the ghost of the whale  
 Is flapping in madness his horrible tail.

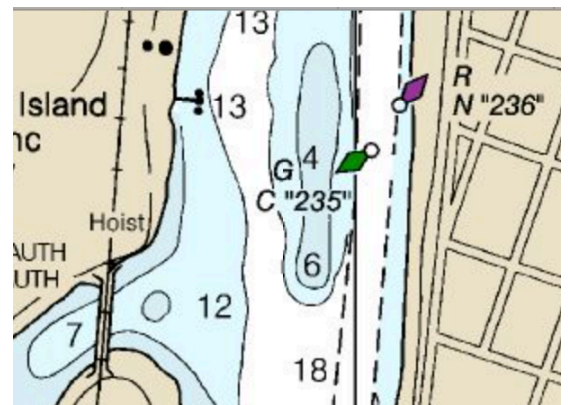
B. H. Hall.



Hall, Benjamin Homer. "The Tale of the Whale." *Our Young Folks: An Illustrated Magazine for Boys and Girls* 2(9). September 1866. 513-518.



THE INTER-STATE REGATTA AT TROY, N. Y.—THE GHOST OF THE SINGLE SKULL RACE—THE BUSH FOR THE VICTORY BETWEEN RANDALL AND SMITH.—FROM A SKETCH BY FRANK EURELL.



Detail showing submerged remnant of Whale Island from: U. S. Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Coast Survey New York State Canal System - Champlain Canal. 14th Ed., Oct. 2008.

# The Lansingburgh Historical Society



At the Herman Melville House  
2, 114<sup>th</sup> Street, Troy, NY 12182

## 2018 Calendar of Events

### **Saturday, May 19, 2018**

Lansingburgh Historic Homes & Buildings  
Self-Guided Tour - Tickets, \$15, in  
advance, \$20 Day of, 9:45 AM-1:45 PM.  
Pick up tickets on Tour Day at Melville  
House

### **Saturday, June 2, 2018**

Community Clean-Up at the Melville  
House Gardens, 9 AM-1 PM

### **Wednesday, June 13, 2018**

LHS Bash, Speaker, Michael Barrett  
The Van Schaick Country Club, 201  
Continental Ave, 12047 Buffet Dinner at  
5:30 PM, Speaker at 7:00 PM.

### **Saturday, July 28, 2018**

Herman Melville's 199th Birthday Party  
Melville House, 10 AM-2 PM  
Speaker Wyn Kelley Professor of  
Literature at MIT on "Teaching Moby Dick  
in a Digital World"; Cake, Tours, \$5  
Members / \$6 Non-Members donation  
requested

### **Saturday, August 18, 2018**

6th Annual Burgher Kids' Clam Steam,  
Saturday, August 18, 2018, Veterans  
of Lansingburgh, 1:00 PM

### **Saturday, September 8, 2018**

Open House at the Herman Melville  
House 10 AM-2 PM, \$5 Donation  
Suggested

### **Saturday October 13, 2018**

Open House 10 AM-2 PM \$5 donation  
suggested

### **Saturday, October 27, 2018**

Ghost Stories at the Herman Melville  
House (Details TBA)

### **Thursday, November 8, 2018**

Holiday Party at the Van Schaick  
Country Club, 201 Continental  
Ave, 12047 5:30 PM. Vernon Benjamin,  
author of The History of the Hudson  
Valley speaking at 7:00 PM

### **Saturday, November 10, 2018**

Open House at the Herman Melville  
House 10A-2P \$5 Donation Requested

**For more information about our programs, or to request a private tour,  
please contact John & Mary Ellen Ward 518-885-4295**

## Help LHS with Amazon Smile!



“Design for Oil-cloth, drawn by Josephine H. Blackfan, Philadelphia, for D. Powers & Sons, Lansingburgh, N. Y.”

*The House and Home: A Practical Book.* Vol. 1. NY: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1896. 13.

### LHS OFFICERS

Acting President – John Ward  
Acting Vice President – Mary Ellen Ward  
Acting Treasurer – Kathy Howard  
Assistant Treasurer – Sue Busta  
Recording Secretary – Linda Segreto  
Corresponding Secretary – Kathy Fomuk

### LHS TRUSTEES

*elected 2015:* Michael Barrett, Sue Busta, Pat Dorow, Byron Moak, Chris Philippo, John Ward, Mary Ellen Ward; *elected 2016:* Kathy Fomuk, Linda Segretto; *elected 2017:* Kathy Howard, Heidi Klinowski

*What might you like to see the*

*Lansingburgh Historical Society doing?*

*Please let us know!*

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*Please visit our website*

**[lansingburghhistoricalsociety.org](https://lansingburghhistoricalsociety.org)**

*It has gone from ten pages in July 2016 to 430 pages as of April 2018!*

### Corporate

All Troy Athletic Club  
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### Members

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Rensselaer Park PTA  
Riverview Funeral Home  
Sanvidge Funeral Home  
Standard Manufacturing  
Testo’s Restaurant  
Troy Boat and Canoe Club  
Troy Irish Genealogical Society  
Verdile’s Restaurant  
Veterans of Lansingburgh  
Warren Fane Inc

Our membership year begins on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Those joining in January, February or March extend their membership through the next membership year. Consider upgrading your Regular Membership to a Sustaining Membership. Encourage friends to join! Regular Membership \$15/year, Sustaining Membership \$40/year. Student/Senior membership \$10/year. Corporate Membership \$200/year. Small Business/Professional Membership \$75/year.

Donations are always welcome!

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_ City & State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Regular \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining \_\_\_\_\_ Student/Senior \_\_\_\_\_ Corporate \_\_\_\_\_ Small Business/Professional \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Send to Lansingburgh Historical Society, PO Box 219, Troy NY 12182-0219

If you are on Facebook join us there as well at <https://www.facebook.com/LansingburghHistorical/>

**Please assist the LHS Board by suggesting names of people who might  
make good Trustees to fill vacancies on the Board!**

Lansingburgh Historical Society  
PO Box 219  
Troy NY 12182-0219