

NEWSLETTER

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December 2011

KATHLEEN TIVNAN HONORED AT 2011 GALA

David Marsh

On Thursday evening October 20 members and friends of the Lansingburgh Historical Society enjoyed the fourth and best ever silent auction and dinner fund raiser at the Veterans of Lansingburgh Hall on First Avenue. About eighty-five goods and services were offered in the silent auction. Guests were entertained with a fascinating and humorous talk about the more noteworthy Lansingburgh ghosts presented by Warren Broderick. A delightful meal prepared and served by the Veterans of Lansingburgh staff was followed by dessert, compliments of Bella Napoli Bakery and the Cookie Factory. The trustees of your historical society and the GALA committee are most grateful for your generosity and support. A big thank you to everyone who helped make this event such a big success.

During the evening Kathleen Tivnan, President of the Lansingburgh Historical Society was presented with a citation from the Rensselaer County Board of Supervisors honoring her many years of service to the community as classroom teacher and community educator in Lansingburgh, as Lansingburgh Board of Education President, as community historian and preservationist, and her service with youth theater in the Capital District..

Miss Tivnan was recognized that same evening by the Lansingburgh Historical Society members and trustees for her forty-one years of service, leadership and support to the organization. Most recently she has been President of the Society but she has held every office at one time or another..

Kathleen came to Lansingburgh in 1950 from the Wellesley, MA area where her Irish immigrant parents had been grocers. She graduated from the Massachusetts State Teachers College at Framingham, an institution founded by Horrace Mann as the first normal school in the USA. Originally established in Lexington, MA in 1839 and a year later at West Newton, MA, the normal school moved the short distance to Framingham in 1842. Now called Framingham State University it lists astronaut and teacher Christie McAuliffe (killed in the Challenger disaster) among it's distinguished alumni. Miss Tivnan holds a Masters degree from Boston University and has done other graduate work at SUNY Oneonta, SUNY Albany, RPI, and Russell Sage College.

Before coming to Lansingburgh Miss Tivnan taught fifth grade for one year at Littleton, MA northwest of Boston. She taught fifth grade for two years at the elementary school at the Squantum Naval Air Station near Quincy, MA. Her first teaching assignment in Lansingburgh was with sixth graders when those classes were first taught in the Knickerbacker Middle School Building at 107th Street.

All of us who have had the privilege to know Miss Tivnan and especially the students who she inspired and encouraged, wish her well in all her endeavors. Thank you Miss Tivnan for all you have done for this community.

RECENT DEATHS

The Board of Trustees of the Lansingburgh Historical Society express their condolences on the passing of **Frances Fagan**, mother of Dennis Fagan. They also wish to express condolences to the family of **Paul Richter** who recently passed away and had been a Life Member of the Society.

THE FRENCH BROTHERS AND FRANCIS HOGLE

David Marsh

In the late 1760's Abraham Jacob Lansing, the founder of New City/Lansingburgh, proposed a community along the east shore of the Hudson River north of Albany. He promoted parcels of land in adjacent western New England and many took advantage of the land sale. A village called New City grew on the Lansing site. Lansing also established a governance committee for the community which included himself and five residents of New City.

Among Lansing's buyers was Benjamin French, a thirty-five year old business man from Connecticut, whose parcel was north of the present 113th Street on First Avenue. In 1770 he established a mercantile business at that location and also operated a boat on the Hudson River used in conjunction with his store. In 1771 Benjamin was chosen to serve on the governance committee for New City. Shortly after an eighteen year old brother, Gershom French, also from Connecticut, joined Benjamin in the business. These French brothers were soon to transform from model citizens to local guerilla warriors.

In October 1775 King George III addressed Parliament on the state of affairs with his North American colonies. He declared those colonies in a state of rebellion, a condition which had festered through the summer and early fall of 1775. The North American colonies had established an alliance, a Continental Congress had been established to represent their collective interests, George Washington had been chosen Commander In Chief of all colonial militia, and a major battle had erupted in Massachusetts Bay at a place called Bunker Hill.

The colonies had established local committees of correspondence with broad powers to investigate, interrogate, arrest, try, make judgments, imprison, seize and sell private property and in general to act as a public safety and judicial agency in the localities where they were established. The powers of the Albany Committee of Safety, Protection, and Correspondence extended from present day southwestern Vermont (present Bennington County, VT), west to present Schenectady County, south to Claverack (present Columbia County, NY) and Coxsackie (present Green County, NY).

Communities in New England and New York drafted their own declarations of independence from British rule. Locals who supported independence were expected to sign the declaration which was used as an indicator of loyalty to the cause of independence and support of local governance in its effort to provide safety and security. In June 1775 Lansingburgh wrote its declaration. Among the signers were Benjamin French, Gershom French and Francis Hogle. Francis Hogle was twice enlisted in Col. Stephen Schuyler's militia. Once in Feb. 1777 in a Lansingburgh company and then in Aug. 1777 in an Albany company.

It is only fair to point out that there were some who hoped an amicable settlement could be reached between the King and citizens of his colonies before hostilities spread further. Gershom French is said to have been one who hoped for peaceful settlement. Soon loyalties became clear as neighbors and friends debated the issues. Benjamin French was exposed by Whig (Revolutionist) neighbors for his Loyalist leanings. The French property was seized by the Albany Committee Of Safety and the brothers went into hiding. The French brothers and Hogle avoided arrest at the start but became part of an underground guerilla band, living on the remote farms of Loyalist friends, traveling about at night or disguised as Native Americans (Indians). They stole arms and ammunition, other supplies, gathered intelligence, communicated information in the Loyalist network, and tried with some success to recruit Loyalist combatants.

John Peters, a Loyalist from Vermont, was recruited by Gen. John Burgoyne to raise a regiment of New York and New England Loyalists to serve in the Queen's Loyal Rangers. That unit joined others at St John's, Quebec for an invasion down through the Champlain Valley. Francis Hogle and Gershom French are reputed to have raised more than 200 men (most probably from the guerilla network) to meet and assist Burgoyne at Saratoga. As things turned out, half of the recruits disappeared, Hogle got separated from the unit and lived in the woods with a price on his head for several months. He eventually was captured, tried

and imprisoned in Poughkepsie. He escaped while he and about 200 other prisoners were being moved to New England. He went to Canada and joined the Queen's Loyal Rangers in Quebec.

Gershom French, already a member of the Queen's Loyal Rangers, fled to Canada after the Battle of Saratoga. He was commissioned as an officer in the Kings Royal Regiment of New York. As the war came to a close he was given a large tract of land in payment for his loyalty to the Crown and his service in the war. The farm land is in the St Lawrence River plain near present day Cornwall, Ontario. In 1809 he married Elizabeth Falkener, a widow, at St Gabriel's Presbyterian Church in Montreal, PQ. He was the first white man to explore and map the region between Ottawa and Lake Ontario. His maps were used in planning the Rideau Canal (now called the Rideau Waterway) which links Lake Ontario to the Ottawa River and the City of Ottawa. It's the oldest canal system in North America and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Gershom French died in Coteau du Lac, Soulanges, Quebec in June 1831 at age 78 and is buried in the same town. He is commemorated by the United Empire Loyalists Assn. of Canada which celebrates those who served the King and the Loyalist cause in North America.

Benjamin French continued to fight with the Queen's Loyal Rangers. After the war he returned to New York State. He is said to have died and was buried here but the location is not known.

Benjamin and Gershom had two brothers Charity and Jeremiah who also owned property in New York which was seized and sold by the Albany Committee of Safety. Jeremiah served in the Queen's Loyal Rangers and was commissioned a Lieutenant in the British Army. He lived out his life in Canada and is also commemorated by the United Empire Loyalists Assn. Nothing is known about the fate of Charity.

Francis Hogle wound up in Canada and was rewarded for his efforts during the war with land grants and commemoration by the United Empire Loyalists. He had other Loyalist family members who also fled to Canada.

The French property at 113th Street is said to have been used as a hospital at some point. It has also been reported that it was used to care for Hessians. Hessian troops served with the British at the Battle of Bennington in August 1777. Historical and genealogical records show that most of the Hessians who served at Bennington/Walloomsac stayed on in Vermont. It's possible some were in the retreat back to Albany (through New City) and were cared for in the hospital at New City.

Another possibility is that Hessian prisoners following the Battle of Saratoga may have been cared for in the hospital at New City. When the defeat at Saratoga took place on Oct. 17, 1777, Hessian prisoners of war were marched starting on Oct. 17 back to Boston (actually it was Cambridge) where they were supposed to arrive on Nov. 7, be put aboard British ships and returned to Europe. As things happened however, the ships were never allowed into Boston Harbor so the Hessians were marched back to Virginia after the surrender at Yorktown. The routing that the Hessian prisoners were to follow included Stillwater, Schaghticoke, New City (on Oct 20), Greenbush, Kinderhook, Nobletown, MA and then back through Massachusetts. Since New City was on their routing, it's possible that wounded Hessians from the Battle of Saratoga were cared for at the New City hospital. All of this is speculation of course but guided by what we know about where Hessians fought in the area near Lansingburgh.

This is also a convenient to recall here the article in an earlier LHS newsletter this year in which New City was mentioned as an intermediate "flying hospital" destination for American wounded from the Battle of Saratoga. The dates on Surgeon General Tillotson's report follow by just two days the date in which Hessian prisoners were marched through New City.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM YOUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership year begins in April. People who join in January, February, or March extend their membership through the next membership year. Consider upgrading your regular membership to a sustaining membership or either of those to a life membership. Encourage your friends to join.

Regular Membership is \$5.00/ year

Sustaining Membership is 25.00/year

Life Membership is \$100

Donations are welcome at any time!

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Donations welcome! You may include it with your membership.

