**An Evening of Seasonal Storytelling**
renowned storyteller Nancy Marie Payne  
**Saturday, October 27, 2018, at 6:00 PM**  
Melville House, 2 114th Street, Troy

You will be transported back to a time before TV and radio, when a well-told story was the best form of entertainment. Enjoy cider, cupcakes and other treats while nestling into one of Lansingburgh’s oldest homes.

Nancy's fun stories are suitable and enjoyed by middle school age children through adults. Reservations are NOT needed.

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**Lansingburgh Historical Society**

**Holiday Buffet**  
**Thursday, November 8, 2018 at 5:30 PM**  
Van Schaick Island Country Club  
201 Continental Ave, Cohoes  
**Guest Speaker Vernon Benjamin**

The speaker is a Siena College alumnus and author of a two volume history of the Hudson Valley.

Enjoy the talk, buffet and a raffle ticket for Michael Barrett’s carving "Moby Dark" for $38/person. Please mail payment to Lansingburgh Historical Society, PO Box 219 Troy NY  12182-0219. Payment for reservations MUST be received by October 30, 2018.

Tickets are still available for the raffle of our carving of Moby Dark. Winning tickets will be drawn at this event along with a 2nd and 3rd drawing for a basket filled with gifts. With any questions, please call John and Mary Ellen Ward at 518 885 4295.
Identity, or Bust!

In large letters on the cornice will appear the words “Literature,” “History,” “Science” and “Mathematics” and over the main entrance, leading from Fifth Avenue, will be “Lansingburgh High School, Erected MCMX.” Busts of Washington and Lincoln will also ornament the front of the building.


For whatever reason, the busts that were ultimately displayed on the front of the High School (now the Lansingburgh Central School) at 576 Fifth Ave. would prove to be of two different men. Most Burghers would eventually forget what men those busts represented (or at any rate, when former LHS Trustee Kay DeRosa asked online, nobody could recall!). The objective of identifying them both has now been reached!

James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

books are the bees which carry the quickening pollen from one to another mind.

While probably not something the school had in mind with respect to the bust, Lowell was familiar with Herman Melville’s first novel Typee, written in Lansingburgh, punning on its title:

[September 1848] This having to do with printers is dreadful business. There was a Mr. Melville who, I believe, enjoyed it, but, for my part, I am heartily sick of Typee.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,
And all the sweet serenity of books
“Morituri Salatamus.” History of Bowdoin College.

Longfellow was, like Lowell, part of a group called the “Fireside Poets” and likewise familiar with Typee, writing of it favorably the year it was published:

[July 29, 1846] In the evening we finished the first volume of Typee [by Herman Melville], a curious and interesting book with glowing descriptions of life in the Marquesas.
**The Street** by James Russell Lowell

THEY pass by me like shadows, crowds on crowds,
Dim ghosts of men, that hover to and fro,
Hugging their bodies round them like thin shrouds
Wherein their souls were buried long ago;
They trampled on their faith and youth and love—
They cast their hope of human kind away—
With Heaven’s clear messages they madly strove
And conquered,—and their spirits turned to clay;
Lo! how they wander round the world, their grave,
Whose ever-gaping maw by such is fed,
Gibbering at living men, and idly rave
“We only truly live, but ye are dead,”—
Alas, poor fools! the anointed eye may trace
A dead soul’s epitaph in every face.

**Haunted Houses** by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the door-way, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more guests at table than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit-world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapours dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipoise
By opposite attractions and desires;
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
And the more noble instinct that aspires.

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
Come from the influence of an unseen star
An undiscovered planet in our sky.

And as the moon from some dark gate of cloud
Throws o’er the sea a floating bridge of light,
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd
Into the realm of mystery and night,—

So from the world of spirits there descends
A bridge of light, connecting it with this,
O’er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,
Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.

**Misgivings** by Herman Melville

WHEN ocean-clouds over inland hills
Sweep storming in late autumn brown,
And horror the sodden valley fills,
And the spire falls crashing in the town,
I muse upon my country’s ills—
The tempest bursting from the waste of Time
On the world’s fairest hope linked with man’s foulest crime.

Nature’s dark side is heeded now—
(Ah! optimist-cheer disheartened flown)—
A child may read the moody brow
Of yon black mountain lone.
With shouts the torrents down the gorges go,
And storms are formed behind the storm we feel:
The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in the driv-
ing keel.
MURDER! — Killed by a Hermit—Body Chopped Into Pieces and Beheaded—
Cremated in a Cabin Stove—Discovery of the Murder—Flight of the Murderer.

The details of one of the most terrible crimes perpetrated in this locality since the Canaan child murder, by Jos. Brown, reached this city last evening. The locality of the murder is not far from the scene of the Canaan tragedy, in the adjoining town of Austerlitz, in this county, and near the dividing line between this State and Massachusetts.

There resided in the town of Alford, Mass., for three years past, an old man named S. A. Vandercook, who boarded with Harrison Calkins, a farmer living in that locality. He worked out, chopping wood and doing other labor. On Tuesday last he started for a wood lot half a mile distant, in the vicinity of a cabin of one Oscar F. Beckwith, an old man about 65 years of age, who has been working a supposed gold mine, and lived alone. Since then nothing has been seen of Vandercook, and Beckwith, with whom Vandercook had some trouble, is missing, having left Wednesday when he admitted to Vandercook’s having been in the cabin Tuesday, and said that the latter had gone to Green River, and would not be back until March.

SUSPICIONS OF CRIME. Vandercook’s mysterious disappearance created a suspicion that a crime had been committed. Mr. Calkins, who had been giving testimony before the grand jury in Pittsfield, returned home on Wednesday and went in search of his missing boarder. He found Beckwith at his cabin, and he admitted that Vandercook had been there, but said he had gone away. Mr. Calkins’ suspicions were aroused at that time by the SMELL OF BURNING FLESH about the cabin. He remembered, also, a previous threat by Beckwith to kill Vandercook, as the two had had some trouble over the mine near the cabin. He organized a searching party, composed of Walter Almstead and constable Russell Harvey, and visited Beckwith’s cabin on Wednesday. The owner had fled, and A HORRIBLE SIGHT was revealed when the hovel was broken open. The shanty, a rude board structure twelve by twenty feet, was built partly under a rock. There was no furniture excepting a stove, a bunk, and two stools. The dim light from two small windows shone upon a pile of human flesh. The intestines and bowels were discovered in a basket with a part of Vandercook’s blood stained clothing, and charred bones and portions of a human skull were found in an old stove, where the murderer, to conceal his crime, had attempted to CREMATE THE BODY of the unfortunate Vandercook, whom he had killed with an ax. The remainder of the body, headless and without hands or feet, cut up in chunks, as we have stated, were found in an almost unrecognized condition.

MOTIVE FOR THE CRIME. The motive for the crime is believed to have been a business difficulty between the parties, growing out of mining privileges in which they had transactions and dealings together. Vandercook having purchased of Beckwith land, and in payment for same had given him mining stocks, which Beckwith claimed were worthless.

FLIGHT OF THE MURDERER. Beckwith, finding that suspicion was aroused at the disappearance of Vandercook, took flight on Tuesday night, using an old horse he owned for the purpose of aiding him. The horse was found on Wednesday on the Green River mountain where it had been abandoned by its owner.

THE PEOPLE EXCITED. When the news of the horrible tragedy became known the most intense excitement prevailed and hundreds of people flocked to the spot to look upon the sad work the hand of the assassin had wrought.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MURDERER. The murderer is a man about 65 years of age; stout built; red face; no beard to speak of; about five feet and an inch in height, and stoops slightly.

THE MURDERER AT LARGE. The murderer, who is still at large, is a man of bad repute. He has not only done the State considerable service for stealing, but is charged with arson in burning buildings in the vicinity of his abode, stealing sheep and fowls and committing other depredations of various kinds.

THE MURDERED MAN. Of the murdered man but little is known. It is claimed he came from Dutchess county, but of this there is no certainty. He has boarded for three years past with Harrison Calkins, at Alford, and only about half a mile from the scene of the tragedy.

THE INQUEST. Coroner Waldron, of this city, was notified, and left last evening for the scene of the murder, to hold an inquest, which was commenced to-day.

LATER PARTICULARS. The Troy Telegram of this morning throws some additional light upon the life of the murdered man whom it calls “Simon Adolphus Vander Cook.” It also informs us that he was formerly a resident of Lansingburgh, and had some connection with the “gold mine” that was attempted to be developed on the Fake farm in Pittstown. After his removal from Lansingburgh he married a young lady of Waterloo, N. Y., and his wife still resides at that place.

Drumming Up Business in the Nineteenth Century

The Queen of Cosmetics.

"The young girls were as white in the skin as Saxon maidens, but this was due to the constant use of a wonderful cosmetic which whitens and beautifies the skin and makes it as smooth and soft to the touch as satin. It is composed of the juice of the Tapa root mingled with an extract of roses. If the aristocratic ladies of the courts of Europe could obtain this cosmetic, they would doubtless purchase it at any price, and it would have an infinitely greater effect in beautifying the skin than any other their wealth could purchase, while the baneful and destructive effects of enamelling—which withers and cracks the skin—would be entirely obviated. It has never found its way to Europe, but it is well known to the Circassian beauties, whose exquisite purity of skin is due in a great measure to its use.—HERMAN MELVILLE'S VISIT TO THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS.

This invaluable cosmetic, carefully and accurately prepared from the Tapa root and other ingredients by Miss Ladero, a native, is now offered for sale in bottles, 2s., 4s., and 6s. each.—Sent to any Railway Station in the United Kingdom.

Address—MR. COOPER, 181 Fleet Street, London. Please write for testimonials. A 6s. bottle is a beautiful birth-day present for a young lady.

Advertisements that are incomprehensible, off-putting, or exhibiting questionable taste clearly predated film, television, and the Internet! Were the two above ads that made use of alleged cannibals to sell their products successful in their sales campaigns, one wonders? The ad for the “Queen of Cosmetics” devoted more than half its space to a purported quote from “Herman Melville’s Visit to the Marquesas Islands.” In the example above, his surname is misspelled; the original 1846 British title of Typee (Narrative of a Four Months' Residence among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands; or, A Peep at Polynesian Life) is given incorrectly; the passage between quotation marks does not in fact appear in the book at all!

An actual passage from Typee:

The Lansingburgh Historical Society has a number of items in its collections relating to the six cent Herman Melville Moby Dick Commemorative Stamped Envelope from 1970, and the twenty cent Herman Melville stamp from 1984. LHS recently acquired some sheets of French Polynesia’s 78 franc stamp from 1992, issued for the 150th anniversary of Herman Melville arriving in Tahiti in 1842 (during the years the family was in Lansingburgh). The stamp has the names of several of his books, and depicts the two novels written in Lansingburgh, Typee and Omoo, standing open.

Whale Tale carving Raffle! In the past, Michael Barrett’s woodwork has been raffled at LHS’ Burgher Bash or Christmas Party events, affording the opportunity to win only to those attending those events. While we would like people to attend as many of our events as possible, the opportunity to buy tickets for a chance to win this item has been widened considerably. Interested? Get in touch with us!

New Merchandise!

Following our first ornament of the Melville House, there is now one depicting the Lansingburgh Academy - we hope you’ll like it! It can be bought during our open houses and special events, and will be available at our table at the Troy Victorian Stroll.
LANSINGBURGH—THE WILD MAN OF THE WOODS—WHO IS HE?—Directly East of Rensselaer Park, in the bosom of the hills, is a deep gorge down which dashes and leaps the stream which forms the outlet to the lakes at Oakwood. Frowning over this gully is a shelving of rocks known as Table Rock, the whole forming a scene of picturesque and romantic beauty. This gulley extends back as far as the former Northern bounds of the Cemetery, and is just such a spot as would naturally be chosen as the retreat of gnomes and goblins. However, until within a few days the only attraction about the place was its picturesqueness; but it has suddenly become invested with a romance that is exciting enough to warrant our story. A few days since, the schoolboys who are constantly rambling about the hills came home breathless and with their hair on ends, and told of the singular appearance of some person whom they had met in the above locality, and whom they described as a “wild man.” The children were only laughed at for what was supposed to be their credulity; but they were positive in their story, and described the object as frightful in appearance and action. They admitted nothing supernatural, but said he appeared like a crazy man, and was in a semi-nude condition. They didn’t take a very long look at him, as at his appearance they were in something of a hurry to get home; they were not afraid, oh no! but—well they haven’t been on the hill since. Shortly after, their story was sufficiently substantiated by the appearance of the strange man near the old Bacon house, under the hill, where by the most hideous yells and grimaces he frightened the occupants nearly out of their senses. They at once reported the facts to the police, two of whom repaired to the spot, and after a while succeeded in obtaining a sight of the stranger. The police at once gave chase, but the pursued ran like a deer and disappeared, and they were unable to discover his whereabouts at that time. He has since been seen, sometimes in a state of nudity and at other times partially clothed, and with a large knife in his possession. A small fire supposed to be used by him has frequently been seen at the point about which he seems to wander. He is undoubtedly an escaped lunatic, whether from Marshall Infirmary or some private place of confinement we are at a loss to determine, as no such escape has been announced. His manner of subsistence has not been discovered, although some declare they have seen places dug out in the earth where he had apparently made his resting place. Certain it is, he has haunted the locality for a week or more, and it seems very singular that he has neither been captured nor discovered by his friends. The people at the Bacon place have added two or three male friends to their family, as they were too much frightened by the presence of their mad visitant to remain alone.—George Storms reports at the police station, that a small mare is hanging by the neck in the woods near the Bucklin farm. Her throat has been cut. He considers her to have been an animal in good condition, and worth from $100 to $150. Who is the owner? Perhaps she is the steed of the wild man. Troy Daily Times. December 10, 1870: 3 col 1.

Pictured at left, from our Facebook page, a far more benign Oakwood visitor than “the Wild Man”! LHS Trustee Kathy Fomuk portrayed Lansingburgh suffragist Caroline Gilkey Rogers during the October 13th Living History: Oakwood by Lantern Light event.
Next year will be the 200th anniversary of Herman Melville’s birth. Special events are in the works by the Melville Society, the Berkshire Historical Society at Herman Melville’s Arrowhead, and other organizations, and the Lansingburgh Historical Society is no exception! Among our plans:

**Sailing Towards my Father**

A one-man play about Herman Melville’s life will be performed by Stephen Collins at the Gardner Earl Chapel in Oakwood Cemetery.

“The play chronicles Melville’s life from youth to old age, concentrating on his evolution as a writer and his complex relations with God, his parents and siblings, his wife and children, and Nathaniel Hawthorne.”

2019 will also be the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Rensselaer County Agricultural Society! Founding members from the Village and Town of Lansingburgh included Smith Germond, Wooster Brookins, Jacob C. Lansing, John G. Vanderheyden, and Thomas Turner. An announcement by the Society's President George Tibbits in the September 7th *Northern Budget* gave notice that its first public fair on October 12th-13th would "be held on the common south of Hoosick street, and east of River street in the city of Troy." The *Lansingburgh Gazette* of October 26th announced special awards at the fair made to Burghers had included $8.00 to Abner Lewis for “20 Ewes, fine wool” and “a silver cup, worth D10” to Lewis Filkin for a ploughing match. Additionally, "worth the attention and approbation of the Society," was “one extraordinary specimen” of the Pumpkin Sweet apple by Jacob C. Lansing. There were several varieties of apple named that; some heirlooms by that name can still be found today, but whether they would be similar to Lansing’s is impossible to know.

Only in 1842 did the County Agricultural Society regularly start calling its fairs "annual." Schaghticoke Town Historian Christina Kelly’s theory that the society must have failed and one later (re-)formed seems a reasonable one.

**ADDRESS**

DELIVERED AT THE

FIRST ANNUAL FAIR

OF THE

RENSSALEER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,

At Lansingburgh, Oct. 5, 1842,

BY WILLIAM P. VAN RENSSALEER,
MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

______________________

TROY: PRESS OF THE TROY DAILY WHIG, 20 RIVER ST.
1842.
By correspondence, Angelica Shirley Carpenter, Curator Emerita of the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children’s Literature, California State University, Fresno, tells LHS that the South Dakota Historical Society Press will release this fall her book *Born Criminal: Matilda Joslyn Gage, Radical Suffragist* for young adults and in 2020 her illustrated book *The Voice of Liberty* about the suffragist demonstration at the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty. Both might be of some interest to Burghers given Caroline Gilkey Rogers involvement (though she is not mentioned in either book).

“—A joint meeting of the political equality clubs of Rensselaer and Albany counties was held last evening at the house of Mrs. Caroline Gilkey Rogers, in Lansingburgh. Addresses were made by Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Mary Howell of Albany and others. Vocal and instrumental music was furnished by the Misses Le Boeuf of Albany, recent graduates of the New England conservatory of music. Mrs. Howell, Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Dr. Swormstedt of Troy were elected delegates to the woman’s state convention to be held at New York October 27 and 28. The convention will hire a steamer to go down the bay on the occasion of the unveiling of the Bartholdi statue [the Statue of Liberty].”

**LHS OFFICERS**
President – John Ward
Vice President – Mary Ellen Ward
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 Segreto; elected 2017: Kathy Howard, Heidi Klinowski; elected 2018: Toni Dickinson

Webmaster and Courier editor — Chris Philippo

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**Help LHS with Amazon Smile!**

At the LHS website’s homepage appears the above; click the button there or go directly to [https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7089102](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7089102)

Amazon will donate a small percentage of the cost of your subsequent purchases to benefit LHS!

*Please visit our website lansingburghhistoricalsociety.org*

*It has gone from ten pages in July 2016 to 650 pages as of October 2018!*

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**Calendar**

Saturday, October 27 at 6PM — Storyteller Nancy Marie Payne at the Herman Melville House. $5 members/$6 others requested
Stories will include “a historical piece from colonial times, some local lore & traditional tales; all with a seasonal theme.” Cider, cupcakes and other treats will be available.

Thursday, November 8 at 5:30 PM — Holiday Party at the Van Schaick Country Club, 201 Continental Ave, 12047
Speaker: Vernon Benjamin, Siena College alumnus and author of a two volume history of the Hudson Valley. Enjoy the talk, buffet and a raffle ticket for our carving "Moby Dark" for $38/person. Please mail payment to Lansingburgh Historical Society, P.O. Box 219 Troy, NY 12182-0219. Payment for reservations MUST be received by 10-30-18.

Saturday, November 10 — Open House at the Herman Melville House 10A-2P $5 Donation Requested

Sunday, December 2 — Table with merchandise at the Troy Victorian Stroll 10A-5P

*For details see our website or Facebook page or contact us!*
Our membership year begins on April 1st. 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/