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# DUANESBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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September 2014

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### Directors Message

The Mariaville community played a very significant role in the early development of the Town of Duaneburg, and as the Town approaches its 250th birthday it is important to reflect on that history.

In the late 1700s Town founders quickly recognized the beauty and economic potential of this area located at the northern most boundaries of the James Duane land holdings. Both Mariaville Lake and nearby Featherstonhaugh Lake owe their names to the family of James Duane. The beauty remains and the community has evolved, and it is important to take a glimpse back in time to better appreciate what things were like during different eras in that evolution.

The directors of DHS set a goal to add 70 new members to commemorate our 70th anniversary this year and we are about a third of the way to our goal. Please help us strengthen our organization by joining, or renewing a membership, or perhaps purchasing a gift membership for a family member or friend. It's one of the best bargains in town! (See attached membership form)

President: Leonard Van Buren Treasurer: Howard Ohlhaus  
Vice President: Shirley Martin, Secretary: John Peters  
Trustees: John Brown, Cindy McKeon, Eamon Murphy,  
Pat Van Buren and Carl Wiedemann

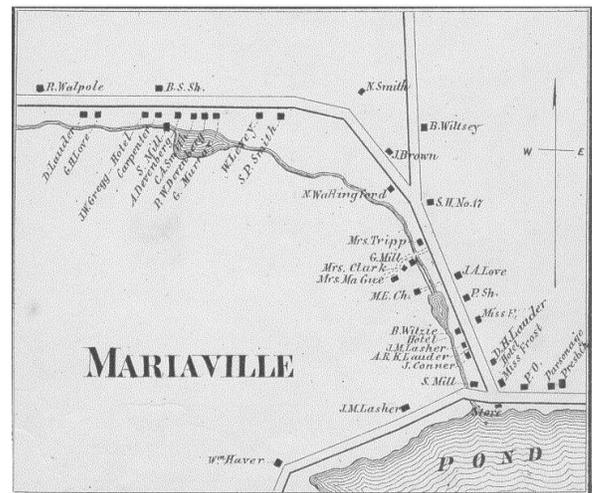
### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Directors Message  
Historical Mariaville
- 2 2014 Program Schedule  
Taking Care of the Past
- 3 The Mariaville Store
- 4 A Box of Mariaville Memories
- 5 Help Us Recruit New Members

### Historical Mariaville from Thumbnail History of Mariaville and Duaneburg by George L. Peeke

James Duane named the Village of Mariaville after his daughter, Maria Duane, whose favorite drive was up to Mariaville and to visit the George Featherstonhaughs at Featherstonhaugh mansion located on the Featherstonhaugh Lake about 2 miles south of Mariaville. This beautiful house burned in 1829. Certain parts of the house were salvaged by James M. Frost, the local surveyor or civil engineer, and used in the construction of his residence in the Village of Mariaville, now marked by a New York State historical tablet and presently (in 1992) occupied by G. Lyon Peeke, a great grandson.

Looking back, Mariaville was one of the most prosperous villages in Schenectady County, mostly because of the water power furnished by the Mariaville pond dam. This dam was built and the water rights controlled by the early pioneer Lasher family headed by George Lasher (1773-1846) and James M. Lasher (1846-1900). At the site of the dam, they erected a lumber and sawmill and a short distance downstream, they built and operated a large three story grist mill to which a majority of Duaneburg farmers brought their grain for milling. The mill was built on a side hill so that the grain could be unloaded in the top of the building and the processed flour and animal feed would end up at the bottom, requiring no elevators. The last recorded miller was a Fred De La Mater, famous for his Mariaville buckwheat pancake flour and johnnycake corn meal. This grist mill was later purchased and operated by Judge David Walpole.



Mariaville in 1866

Further downstream, two other mills were built, one a sawmill owned and operated by Mr. Devenburg, later purchased and operated by David Walpole, who also owned and operated a wood working mill turning out equipment for farmers such as stone boats, ax handles, wagon tongues and whippetrees, neck yokes, swingle trees and wheelfellys and in season used as a cider mill famous for Walpole's crab apple cider. In order to conserve water the downstream mills used second hand water and were allowed to operate only when the grist mill was grinding. Also at one time, Mariaville supported a very successful tannery, located on Batter Street just south of the village in the early 1800s.

In the early days, quite naturally, life of the country village centered around the Church, but later on, many of the Duanesburg villages organized singing schools, holding meetings two or three times a month, with a professional music teacher and accompanist. There were two hotels at Mariaville in the early days, the larger one owned and operated by Benjamin Wiltsie, which provided a fairly good sized hall for social occasions.

## Taking Care of the Past

by Leonard M. Van Buren

Did you know that there are 55 recorded cemeteries in the Town of Duanesburg? Cemeteries are our most visible reminder and tribute to the people who formed our town. Some of them are village cemeteries, others are church affiliated, but most are private cemeteries hidden from sight on old farms.

My Great-grandfather, Squire David Walpole, was Justice of the Peace and owner of three mills on the Chuctununda Creek in Mariaville. A spired monument stands in his memory in the Mariaville Cemetery, in the beautiful setting at the edge of Mariaville Lake. Under the guidance of George Lyon Peeke, Mariaville Cemetery received excellent care. Now his daughter Jan Peeke Black and her husband Bill are carrying on the work of clearing, mowing and trimming to keep the cemetery in its stately condition.

Because of my interest in family, I began to wander through the cemetery many years ago and sadly noticed that time and weather had toppled many old markers; markers bearing names of all of those Mariaville people that I had heard of in my childhood on visits to my grandparents, Lester and Martha Walpole Van Buren. Since that time I have begun a volunteer project of uprighting, repairing and resetting countless gravestones there.

If you are one of those landowners who are privileged to have a cemetery on your property, please consider clearing, and maintaining that small piece of town history. Additionally please take photos and share them with us at [Duanesburghistorical.com](http://Duanesburghistorical.com) or on our Duanesburg Historical Facebook page.

### 2014 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Programs are held at the Bishop Scully Hall -Our Lady of Fatima Church- Delanson at 7:00PM the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month. No meetings are held in January or February.

September 15	Mark Twain/Samuel Clemens Don Coons
October 20	DHS Minutes & Memories Carole DeForest
November 17	Canal Street Station Joe Meri
December 15	Annual Christmas Party Shopping in Duanesburg Barton MacDougall



Repairing Grave Markers

# The Mariaville Store by Howard

Ohlhous

Silas Marsh, once Schenectady County Clerk and member of Assembly bought some land in 1830 from "Katie" (Katherine) Duane on the banks of Mariaville lake. He built a store, gristmill, and sawmill there. Silas Marsh was not only a mill operator, but also a grocer, a clerk of Schenectady County, and a member of the New York State Assembly.

The store was sold to Jacob Quackenbush, then in 1862 to J. M. Lasher. It is believed that Lasher and his heirs maintained ownership of the store while renting it to several eventual proprietors: In 1879 to Bronk & Bradshaw, in 1881 to A.N. Bronk, and in 1904 to George Lasher Peeke. Peeke was not able to buy it until 1937 from the heirs of William Gahagan of Brooklyn who had earlier purchased the Lasher properties.

George Lasher Peeke ran the store until his death in 1945. During the summers of the 1930s, his son, George Lyon Peeke (b 4 Jan 1909 - d 25 Jun 1996) ran a Tea Room in one section of the store when it was owned by his father. The Tea Room was a converted wagon storage area. He had an ice cream and soda fountain and served sandwiches.

George Lyon Peeke, one time Town Justice in the Town of Duaneburg, owned the store from 1945 until 1971 when it was sold to Henry Ilnicki who ran it until 1982. Edmund Petroski purchased it in 1982 and sold it several years later to David Pirrone, the current owner and proprietor.

In this circa 1920 photo this was one of the early chain of WGY Food stores with locations here in Mariaville as well as Voorheesville, Guilderland Center, Feura Bush, and in the Stockade in Schenectady as well as others.

In the photo we can see some interesting ads for the following:

- Peeke's Soda Fountain - Ice Cream Candy Soda Cigars and Cigarettes
- SOCONY Gasoline and Motor Oil - Standard Oil Co. of New York
- Choice Meats, Salada Tea.
- Free Air

The New York State Highway sign on the left says, "Mariaville Lake 1 Mile Long". I wonder where that sign went...

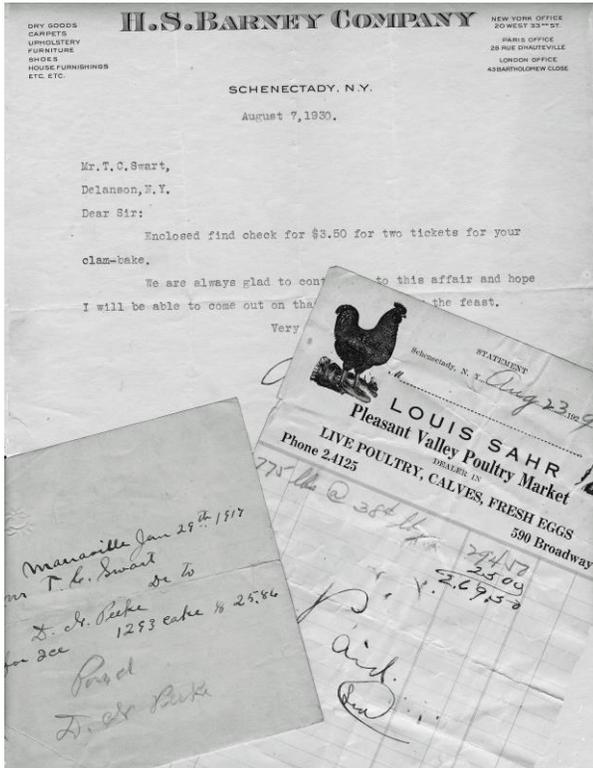


Peekes General Store – now Mariaville Lakeside Country Store

# A Box of Mariaville Memories

by Jack Brown

I recently spent some time sorting through a box that has been in the possession of the Duaneburg Historical Society for some time. On the outside of the box was written "T. C. Swart".



Early records from The T. C. Swart box

Tunis C. Swart (1875-1965) and his wife, Marguerite, and their son Raymond were residents of both Schenectady and Mariaville, eventually becoming full time residents of Mariaville. Mr. Swart was a merchant in Schenectady and operated stores at different locations over the years, mostly in the Bellevue area. He also bought and sold real estate in the Mariaville area, was active in the Mariaville Civic Association, and associated with the Mariaville Presbyterian Church.

The box contained a large number of high quality portraits (presumably of family members) from photo studios around the Schenectady and Albany area, mostly in the early 1900s. Unfortunately, many had no reference as to who was in the photos or when they were taken. Many of those photos have been returned to a Swart descendent and hopefully will be of some value to the family. That same descendent told me that the Swarts lived on a farm off South Shore Rd. A couple of "snap shots" that appear to be taken near the lake are particularly interesting, as they depict early 1900's life in the lake community and are included in this story, identities unknown.



This photo may show a mill at the dam of Mariaville Lake

As part of Mr. Swart's involvement in the civic association, he helped with the annual Regatta and Clam Bake. In this box were many records associated with that event, which apparently had its start in 1917 and went on for many years, to benefit the Mariaville Presbyterian Church and other community activities. The event included many water related competitions such as swimming, canoeing and rowing that were highly contested and drew participants from some distance according to one old newspaper article. Another article states that two State Police officers would be present to manage the crowds. A receipt for 775 pounds of chicken for the 1929 event would also indicate a big turnout.



Camp life and the island at Mariaville Lake

Mr. Swart had an interesting method for selling tickets for the event. Being an area businessman, a Mason and member of the State Street Presbyterian Church, he had many contacts and was not shy about sending two tickets to area businesses and requesting payment or return of the tickets. Letters from many of these local businesses show that he had some success with this method as many letters (found in the box) wish success for the event and that a check for \$3.50 was enclosed.

A very nicely done Christmas card dated 1917 which has a picture of the minister of the Mariaville Presbyterian Church, S. G. Parent, a photo of the altar and a reminder of the meaning of Christmas, indicates that the church was a big part of the Swart family.

Another interesting artifact in the box was a signed photograph of E.S. Ufford who wrote the hymn "Throw out the Lifeline" in 1886. On the back of the photo was hand written the first verse of the hymn dated 1905. As a Baptist minister and evangelist, one wonders how Mr. Ufford and Mr. Swart came to know each other.

On the business side of things, Mr. Swart had an interesting bookkeeping method to determine if he had a positive cash flow. A few of his early ledgers were in the box and depict on the left hand page all his suppliers of goods for a given week and how much he paid them. On the right hand page is a list of how much money he took in on a daily basis for the same week. The difference was the profit or loss for the week. For the early 1900's, he did very well, with weekly gross profits frequently in \$100 to \$200 range. Among his suppliers was an L. Golub who ran a grocery wholesale business that eventually became Grosberg & Golub Company Grocery Wholesalers then Public Service Market, Central Markets and now Price Chopper, a business still operated by the Golub family. What a small interesting world it is!

Mr. Swart also harvested ice from Mariaville Lake as evidenced by a receipt showing delivery of 1283 "cakes" of ice to Mr. Peeke on January 29, 1917 for a staggering price of \$25.86. Mr. Swart would be considered an entrepreneur in today's world.



Ice Harvesting

Although there isn't a complete story here, there are fragments of a different time and a brief view of the active Mariaville Lake community in the early 1900s and perhaps a family that helped shape its future. What's in that box in your attic? Maybe some more fragments that can be pieced together to make a more complete story? Contact me at [jbrownjr@earthlink.net](mailto:jbrownjr@earthlink.net) or the Duanesburg Historical Society if you find a fragment.

## Help Us Recruit 70 New Members for Our 70<sup>th</sup>!

The heart of the DHS is our members and their support and interest in the history of the Town of Duanesburg

### MEMBERSHIP

Choose the membership that is right for you and enjoy the benefits of supporting your Historical Society. If you are not a current member we hope you will consider joining.

Membership Fees: \$5.00 Adults \$1.00 Students

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(optional – not shared)

Membership level \_\_\_\_\_ Adults  
\_\_\_\_\_ Students

New Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewed Membership \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks payable to: Duanesburg Historical Society  
PO Box 421  
Duanesburg, NY 12056  
Attn: Membership

Visit us at [www.duanesburghistorical.com](http://www.duanesburghistorical.com) and join us on Facebook, search Duanesburg Historical

Membership runs from June to June. Please use the above form to renew your membership.

If you are not sure if you have renewed or have questions as to your current status, call Betty Vunk at 895-2118.

