
DUANESBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Volume 7, Issue 1

February 2019

Directors' Message

The last several years have been a whirlwind of activities from fund raising, breaking ground, witnessing our building develop from designs on paper into the reality of a Greek Revival structure so familiar to our town. In the midst of that activity and productivity, our membership and interest in our history has grown. Check out our 2019 schedule and join as we continue the tradition of providing evenings of high interest programs about local and regional history presented by knowledgeable speakers.

Now that our new Research and Archive Building is completed, the real journey begins. We will continue to organize accessioned materials, store them in appropriate archival containers, and develop proper finding aids to facilitate their use by researchers. In addition, our lower level has offered us an open space to design areas of display. As any home, the chores of keeping the building and grounds maintained is ongoing. Please consider offering your particular talents that are needed for the sustaining needs of our archives and our building.

The Duanesburg Central School will hold Duanesburg Day on Saturday April 6, 2019 at the High School from 12-4. Bus tours will be available at 1 o'clock to Christ Episcopal Church with a talk by Bart MacDougall and the Quaker Meeting House with a talk by John Peters. This year you will need to make a choice of one.

Additionally, that day from 12-4 stop at the Research and Archive Center to test your detective skills in a "History Hunt." Search for clues in displays of archival documents and photographs to answer questions about the history of Duanesburg's various communities. Bring your children and grandchildren. It's designed for all ages.

Leonard M. Van Buren – President

Shirley Martin – Vice President

Howard Ohlhous – Treasurer

Marsha Brown – Secretary

Directors; Eamon Murphy, Cindy McKeon,
Pat Van Buren, Carl Wiedemann and David Vincent

2019 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

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

March 18th – **The Archive & Research Center: From a Dream to Reality** - Howard Ohlhous

Blacksmithing& Its Practical Usage For Today - Bryan Salisbury

April 15th - **Lime Kilns in Carlisle** - Chris Keefer

May 20th - **Delanson of the 1950's** - Bart McDougall

June 17th - **The Life and Times of Two Indian Girls – Kateri and Catherine** - Lori Runnels

July 15th - **Annual Picnic at Schafer Park**

August 19th – **The Duanesburg Death Trap** - Carl Wiedemann

September 16th – **A Childs Guide to the Normanskill** - Bob Sutton Jr.

October 21st – **Town of Duanesburg - Remember When?** - Leonard VanBuren

November 18th - **Collecting Cultural Heritage Information: A Youth Project for the Duanesburg & Mohawk Region** - Ellen McHale

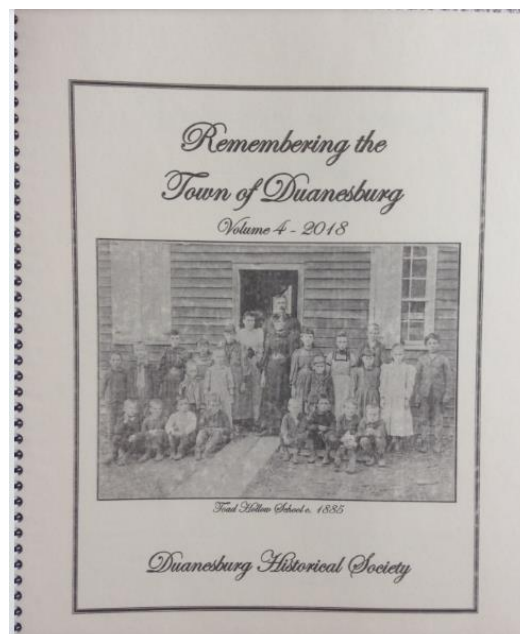
December 16th - **Christmas Party and Sharing Christmas Memories**

*“For it is good to be Children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its’ mighty founder was a child Himself.”
A Christmas Carol ~ Charles Dickens*

Remembering Duanesburg Contributors Recognized



Authors of Remembering Duanesburg Volume 4 were recognized at a ceremony conducted at the new Research and Archive Center on Saturday October 13, 2018. From left to right Bruce Barton, Wendy Manus, Wayne Blessing, Pat Clarke, Peter Watrous, Becky Watrous, Howard Ohlhaus, and Steve Schrade. Other authors not in the photograph: Marsha Brown, Anna Burnett, Norman and Frances Collins, Milton P. Davis, Jr., Carole and Will deForest, John James, Barton MacDougall, Bruce Martin, Bill Massoth, Judy Neadle, Ken Romanski, Paula Shafer, Charles Case Stoodley, Kathleen Van Buren, Len and Pat Van Buren.



Duanesburg Family History Day

Sunday, June 9, 2019
1:00-3:00 p.m.
at the new Research and Archive Center

~ A Free Event of Hands-on Fun and Discovery ~

- Dress up in early American clothing and discover how differently clothes once looked and felt. Selfies encouraged!
- A blacksmith shop was once in every community in Duanesburg. See a modern day, local blacksmith work on a coal forge and discover how everyday items were once handmade!
- Bring family heirlooms from home for an oral appraisal by an expert! Limited to 2 items per person; household furnishings only (furniture, ceramics, glass, silver, prints, posters, etc. or bring a photo if the item is too large)
- Ask an expert genealogist for tips on researching your family history!
- Enter a raffle to win an Ancestry DNA kit!

~ RAIN OR SHINE ~



The Town of Duanesburg

The following is an abridged version of remarks by George W. Featherstonhaugh to the Schenectady County Historical Society in 1906 as reported in the Amsterdam Evening Recorder. Mr. Featherstonhaugh was an attorney in Schenectady and a direct descendant of James Duane.

To invite a lawyer to give an historical address is to let the bars down for him to wander far afield with his theme, or perhaps to give it too high a coloring. Fearing the criticism of my audience, I will waive the privileges of my profession and confine myself to brevity and the truth.

Man, from the earliest period of history has been an eager searcher after knowledge of the past. The New Englander tells you of his descent from the Pilgrim Fathers and of his furniture which came over in the Mayflower. And the New York Dutchman is a poor fellow indeed who does not claim descent from Anneke Jans Bogardus. Lest you think I am overcritical, I will confess to a feeling of pride myself in tracing my descent from one of the old Dutchmen of New Amsterdam, whom I have come to regard as a very distinguished man, in as much as I hear his last name oftener spoken by our American people than that of any other personage. I speak of Rip Van Dam, erstwhile governor of the province of New York.

You have asked me here this evening to say a few words in relation to the early history of the Town of Duanesburgh; no doubt thinking that from the vantage ground of an actual residence among those green hills that I may have had the opportunity to gather up and store away some facts of interest.

About the year 1740, Anthony Duane, who had been an officer in the English Navy, came into possession of about six thousand acres of this wild land and seven years later died, having never seen these lands which were to play a part in the lives of his descendants for five generations.

By his death this land passed to his four sons. James Duane, one of these, then but a lad of fifteen, but who was destined to become one of the most distinguished men of his day, took up his residence with Robert Livingston, the proprietor of the extensive Manor of Livingston on the Hudson. The daily contemplation of Livingston's vast estate and numerous tenantry no doubt instilled into the mind of the youth the thought of similar possessions for himself, which his subsequent marriage to the eldest daughter of Livingston served to strengthen.

As he came to man's estate, by purchase and inheritance from his brothers he acquired the original six thousand acres which his father had held and then time to time by other purchases he added to them until he found himself the owner of fifty thousand acres of wild lands, which in the style of the day was called Duane's Bush. A man of untiring energy and resolution, he entered upon the actual possession of these lands.

In May 1764 he entered into a written agreement with nineteen Germans from Frankford, Pennsylvania and one from New York. Duane was to furnish each with a town lot and a farm upon which they were to make an actual entry within one year and to pay the sum of fifty-five pounds in annual payments. After the expiration of ten years, then to pay to Duane and his heirs forever on the first day of January for each lot and farm, one pair of fat hens, and for each farm render a day's labor with a team.

In 1768 they addressed a memorial to their landlord written by someone for them and then signed - by them all. They commence as follows; "We your most loyal and dutiful tenants have lived here now three years and have not been able to raise our bread as yet. The first year the vermin destroyed it; the second year our crops froze out of the ground and our wheat turned into drips and this year at this present time, April 15, 1768, there is no sign of spring yet, whereas the snow is yet at this present time in Duanesburgh all over amongst us two feet and a half deep and so hard that there are no signs of spring."



The Church Upon the Hillside

At about this time a number of Scotch began to come into the town and settled on what is still known as the Scotch ridge. They brought with them from their native hills industry, thrift and resolution. They style themselves Camerons. Men of austere religion, to whom the solemn league and covenant were as much an actuality

They had no place of worship until about the year 1809, but met in each other's homes and, in the summer season as tradition says, held their conventions in the open air, as their ancestors had done upon the hills of Scotland under the fervid leadership of Richard Cameron.

These people succeeded where the original Germans had failed and acquired farms and built up substantial homes making for themselves and their descendants, many of whom are living there today, a prosperous and respected community.

After nearly a century and a half since the erection of the town of Duanesburgh from these wild lands, nothing today remains of the actual work of the founder, excepting the great cellar of his unfinished house and his church upon the hillside, which stands as a silent sentinel of bygone days. Unquestionably the trend of the people is away from the hills, and to the city where a life of greater ease and rewards seems to them to await them. The spirit of unrest and commercialism, which pervades all classes, mitigates against the independence and slower certainties of rural life.



The Great Cellar of His Unfinished House

Another century and much of this land, reclaimed with so much labor and sacrifice, may pass into its primitive condition or perhaps be peopled only with a sparse and shifting population, unless the people of the cities, with ampler means and educated out of their gregarious nature shall find their summer homes upon these beautiful hills where in closer contact with nature in the open fields and in the wood, they may give up for a brief time the pursuit of wealth and place, and perhaps find that tranquility of mind and body which is the secret of a long and happy life.

George W Featherstonhaugh

Who Was George W. Featherstonhaugh?

George W. Featherstonhaugh was a direct descendent of James Duane. At the time of his death in 1938, was the oldest practicing attorney in Schenectady. He was born in Le Havre, France in 1850. His father, James Duane Featherstonhaugh, one of the surveyors of the International boundary between the United States and Canada, brought him to Duanesburg as a young child. In 1866 he attended the Union Classical Institute in Schenectady and graduated a year later. He then entered Union College and graduating in 1871.

Following graduation, he studied a year in the law office of Judge Thomas Mitchell, attended Albany Law School and was admitted to the bar in 1874. After practicing law for a short time in New York City, he returned to Schenectady where he was appointed Police Justice and later elected to this office on the Democratic ticket by a large majority.

In 1882 he resigned as Police Justice and returned to his law practice in Albany for two years, and then Schenectady where he lived and worked as an attorney for the rest of his life. He lived on South Church Street but spent summers in Duanesburg at the Duane Mansion. This house was built by Catherine Duane, a daughter of James Duane, in 1812.

Membership Application

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.

Annual Dues: \$10.00 Adults \$1.00 Students

From July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

Lifetime Membership - \$150.00

Name(s) _____

Telephone # _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____
(optional – not shared)

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

Duanesburg Historical Society Research and Archive Center

The Duanesburg Historical Research and Archive Center provides the space for the preservation and access to our ever-growing collection. Please consider supporting this important project so that our heritage will remain for future generations.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is my Tax-deductible contribution of _____

Signature _____

This is a 501(C)(3) Tax deductible donation under Internal Revenue Codes
Donations are eligible for GE Matching Gifts

Please make checks payable to:
Duanesburg Historical Society – Building Fund
duanesburghistorical.com

