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# DUANESBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 2

October 2022

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### Directors' Message

Dear Members,

We are in the midst of a very successful program year. Attendance has shown that the interest and enthusiasm for learning about the history of our town and surrounding areas is very strong. Our Barn Tour and Open House was well attended. It was rewarding to meet new members of our town and to be part of their search to learn more about the history of their homes and families that inhabited those houses before them.

Our mission is to collect, preserve, catalog and archive historically significant information and artifacts pertinent to the families, businesses and culture of our Town of Duaneburg. An important part of this is to share our collection for the purpose of research and education.

It is your dues and donations that allow us to fulfill this commitment by funding archival materials and supporting the expenses of maintaining our building. Many of our members have chosen the convenient route by becoming lifetime members at \$150. Please remember to keep your dues current and encourage your friends, family and neighbors to join us in our mission.

Our program year extends to December and will resume in April 2023. It is always a good time of interesting educational programs, great conversations about Duaneburg memories and of course refreshments to be shared.

Leonard M. Van Buren - President  
Shirley Martin - Vice President  
Howard Ohlhous - Treasurer  
Marsha Brown - Secretary  
Directors: Cindy McKeon, Carol Plue, Pat Van Buren, David Vincent, Carl Wiedemann

### From the Archives

Out of the flurry of activity on Tuesday mornings at the Research and Archive Center came a facility that was beautifully prepared to meet our guests on September 17 th . Kudos and gratitude go to Carole deForest, Shirley Martin and Paul Finnegan for the visual story of Duaneburg told through artistically displayed artifacts. Also, to Carol Plue, Marsha Brown and Sherry Schrade for crafting the displays on the main floor and showcasing the quilts on the 3rd floor.

Now we are back to the more routine behind the scenes work. However, I am realizing that nothing is really routine in the archives. Interesting items large and small are delivered to us on a regular basis and those gifts are always surprises and sometimes hold enlightening moments. Perhaps just the missing piece to the puzzle that we were looking for.

We are accumulating a significant number of items in our Military Collection. The foundation of the collection are the items retrieved from the James Duane VFW Post 2303. Recently received from residents was a WW I Army uniform, a WW II Navy uniform and a Viet Nam era uniform. Marsha Brown donated her father's (Marshall Drinon -- who fought in the Battle of the Bulge) WW II memorabilia including photos, paper notices, a diary, his Dog Tag, his prayer book and military paperwork pertinent to his time in the military. The items represent the story of all the brave soldiers who defended our freedom. We have communications from the military to Mariaville's Raymond L. Boone's family concerning his loss during the Battle of Lasell River in St. Souplet, France in 1918 and his burial in Arlington, VA.

Adding to our assortment of genealogies are two extensively researched families: Vrooman/Yauchler and the Richard Christman family. We are thankful to them for sharing their family's history with us to preserve.

Lastly, we are interested in collecting Veteran's information from all generations of our town members. Who served? Where and when did they serve? Are there photos or documents related to their service? Please help us with this important endeavor.

by Pat Van Buren

# Scenes From the 2022 Barn Tour & Open House

On Saturday September 17<sup>th</sup> the Historical Society held two concurrent events. A barn tour, led by Kim Balfour, member of the Timber Framers Guild and barn historian, started at 9:00 a.m. This was followed with an open house at the Research and Archive Center on Quaker Lane. Visitors could see a wide array of artifacts and books related to the history of the Town of Duanesburg. Both events were well attended on a beautiful fall day.



Colonial greeters Maxine & Richard Christman



Magnificent quilts on display



Kim Balfour explains barn frame joinery



Barn Tour registration and book sales



An eclectic display



An interested audience



Artifacts from the North Mansion

# Spontaneous Combustion – Barn Destroyer

It is noticeable that a larger number of the burnings of barns is mentioned in the periodical press in the summer than at any other time. Some of the fires are undoubtedly caused by lightning, the moist vapor from the uncured hay making a favorable conductor for the electric fluid. But there are barn fires which cannot be attributed to lightning, to lighting of matches, to light from lanterns, nor to the invasions of careless tramps. It may be that the spontaneous combustion of hay is as possible as the spontaneous firing of cotton waste. All fibrous material when moist and compressed and defended from the cooling influences of the outward air, is subjected to a heating similar to that of fermentation; and in some instances, the degree of heat is sufficient to cause actual, visible combustion. In the case of recently “cured” hay the danger is as great as, in similar circumstances, other materials may be. Frequently the grass is cut in the early morning, while wet with dew; is turned twice during the day and gathered and packed in the “mow” or the “hay” before nightfall, with perhaps a sparse sprinkling of salt. Such a compressed mass of fibrous, moist matter will heat. How far the heat will go toward generating a combustion may be inferred from a foolish trick which the writer witnessed several years ago.



Headed for the barn

A large meadow of hay had been cut, cured, and coked, previous to removal. A shower threatening, the coks were covered with caps of canvas and left for the night. While getting the hay in the next day, one of the working men dropped an unlighted match from his pocket into a cock of hay, and in a few minutes it was ablaze. It afterward was ascertained that he had spoken of the warmth of the hay as he lifted it on his fork, when a companion remarked that it might be hot enough to light a match, on which he put a match into a rick, and before they had passed on five minutes this rick was on fire.



The photo above shows loose hay being loaded into a barn. Mechanical hay balers were not invented until the late 1800's

Everybody conversant with farm life, where hay is a permanent and important crop, knows that for weeks after getting in the hay the barn is warm when the doors are opened in the morning. There is an amount of heat that is absolutely unpleasant when the thermometer outside registers sixty degrees, but which is quite welcome with the outside temperature of forty degrees. This barn heat is undoubtedly from the moist hay, compacted and enclosed. The cure for the possible spontaneous barn burning would seem to be a thorough curing – drying – of the hay before it is housed. We dry all our herbs and some of our vegetables without injuring their peculiar and individual qualities. There is no reason why hay or other fodder material stored in large masses should not be rendered equally innocuous to the influence of heat by thorough drying.

Knowersville Enterprise 1884

# Duanesburg Memories

William Weaver (1841-1930) was born in the town of Duanesburg on a farm at the corner of Weaver Road and Schoharie Turnpike. The farm was purchased by his father, Jacob in 1830.

During his lifetime he served as overseer of the poor for 19 years, was postmaster at Quaker Street, for 14 years, and taught school for 16 years, and was school trustee. In 1929 he was interviewed by a correspondent for the Cobleskill Index newspaper. The following are excerpts from that interview:

William Weaver Sr of Duanesburg will observe his 88th birthday anniversary tomorrow. He is the last of a family of five sisters and four brothers.

"It seems impossible that there has been such a development since I was a boy. There were no mowing machines or reapers in the neighborhood in those days. Grain was threshed with flails, or by driving horses over it. We spent the whole winter threshing grain. People seemed to be more contented in those days, and they were far more neighborly. If a man was sick, and too poor to hire help, the neighborhood turned out to sew his grain, or harvest it."

"When I first attended school as a boy the schoolhouse was made of logs. I remember hearing my father say that when he was a boy there were no native teachers here. They all came from Massachusetts."

"I remember," said Mr. Weaver, "seeing long strings of covered wagons, drawn by oxen, on route to Ohio. Ohio just then began to be settled on a large scale.

Before the railroads were developed to any extent, droves of turkeys and hogs, two or three hundred in number, used to go through Duanesburg over the Cherry Valley Turnpike, on the way to Albany, which was the market center. I once asked the driver of a drove of turkeys what they did when night comes, and he told me that as soon as it was twilight the turkeys would take to roost in the nearest trees.

"Many years ago, I sold over one hundred barrels of apples in Albany. I had to take all pennies and half cents in pay and had half a barrel of the coins when I came home. One cent was dated 1710."

"I have often seen Colonel William North, one of the earliest Duanesburg settlers. The house he erected near what is now Duane Lake, was built in 1784. He served on the staff of General Washington in the Revolutionary War. He later served in the assembly at Albany and was also United States senator. I recall his death too."

When asked if he remembered any of the Duane family he said, "Yes, I knew Katherine Duane. She was a relative of James Duane, who received a tract of land here from his father. His

father was granted this land by King James, for services in England."

In the winter of 1864-65, I saw Charles Dickens in Albany, and heard him recite the "Death of Little Paul." I saw the body of President Lincoln when it lay in state in Albany. I voted for him when he ran for re-election, being too young to vote for him when he ran the first time. I saw "Blind Tom" the colored musician the same winter. His music was wonderful. Horace Greeley stopped here two years before the Civil War and inquired the way to Schoharie, where he was to speak at the fair."

Mr. Weaver is still very active. He does the greater share of the home work and tends to other chores. He and his son, William Weaver Jr. reside on the old homestead. He seems to progress with the times. Neither has he ever used tobacco. He said, "Work and a careful diet are what keep me in such good health."



Home of William Weaver

The interview with William Weaver was published in the on April 4, 1929. Just four months later disaster struck.

## Weaver Farm Fire

Fire completely destroyed the barn buildings on the William Weaver farm, one and one-half miles south of Duanesburgh Monday evening between three and four o'clock. The fire was of undetermined origin although it is said it was likely due to spontaneous combustion. Sixty tons of hay, partly last year's crop and some harvested this year, five tons of oat straw, 40 hens, and all of the farm machinery were burned. The damage, which is estimated from \$6,000 to \$7,000 is partially covered by insurance.

The high wind from the west drove the sparks away from the dwelling and this with the aid of neighbors saved the house. Fortunately, the cattle and horses were out in pasture. Mr. Weaver, who observed his 88th birthday last March, stated that this was the first fire at Weavers corners in 100 years. Mr. Weaver and his son William Jr. are the only occupants of the place.

Altamont Enterprise, August 9, 1929

## Remembering Duaneburg Book Sales

Thinking about doing some Holiday or Birthday Shopping? Our books, filled with research material and anecdotal accounts of the town, make memorable and lasting gifts. We have a few of Volume I available, and about 15 of Volume II. We have done reprints of both, but we are not sure that another reprint will be done. And they will never be done for \$18.00 again. Currently there is a good supply of Volume 3 and Volume 4.

For those wanting a pictorial overview of the town, Images of America, Duaneburg and Princetown for \$15.00 is an essential.

Books are available at meetings, at the Town Hall, locally by calling Pat at 518-895-2632, or by ordering on duaneburghistorical.com.

## 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 that you will consider joining.

Dues \$10.00 Adults \$1.00 students

From July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023

Lifetime Membership - \$150.00

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

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Make checks payable to: Duaneburg Historical Society  
PO Box 421  
Duaneburg, New York  
12056

## Bouquet's & Bottle Returns Benefit the DHS

The Hannaford Super Market on route 20 in Esperance selected the Duaneburg Historical Society as a donor recipient. Hannaford will donate \$1.00 for every \$12.00 Bloomin' 4 Good Bouquet with the red circle sticker sold during the month of November to the DHS. If you will be purchasing flowers for the Thanksgiving holiday, or any other occasion next month, consider this program.



If you shop at the Esperance Hannaford the chances are that you'll be passing by the Duaneburg Redemption Center located one mile east of Hannaford on route 20. Stacy Bradt is the proud owner of this local business. Consider dropping off cans and bottles and donating the deposits. Just ask Stacy or her staff to credit the proceeds to the Duaneburg Historical Society.



Find more information on Facebook at Duaneburg Redemption Bottle and Can Return

