
DUANESBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 1

March, 2023

Directors' Message

How fortunate we have been to be able to have resumed our monthly meetings. It was a season of getting back together and pursuing our interests in history through informative programs. Last year's work in the archives and on the displays in our lower level have positioned us to continue to expand the activities that the Society can host at our Research and Archive Center.

In December we were granted an Absolute Charter from the State Education Department. In preparation for applying for permanent status the Board updated its by-laws and all policies and procedures pertinent to the operation of a Historical Society. A site visit was done in October with a very favorable review of both our building and our procedures for the collection and management of our inventory.

Please check out our news article on the event that we will be hosting on Sunday, May 21st from 1-3 PM. Additionally, we are in the midst of planning a Fall Open House for Saturday, September 9th. So, mark your calendars for our special events and for our monthly meetings beginning on Monday April 17th. We look forward to another outstanding program season.

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

On display that day will be our Military Collection comprised of VFW records, uniforms, photos and personal memorabilia of our local military and mementos of the life on the home front. A brief service will take place at our flagpole at 2:30 PM

As a Historical Society, we are reaching out to our community asking for your help in making sure that none of our military are forgotten. Please share the information about this event with family and friends hoping that in doing so we will be able to compile a more complete listing of our veterans and of those who are currently in service to our Country.

We look forward to welcoming the community to our Research and Archive Center to honor our Military.



Remembering Those Who Have Served – May 21st

The Duaneburg Historical Society will hold an Open House from 1-3 PM on May 21, 2023, to remember and honor community Veterans who have served our Country and those who are serving now.

DHS Research and Archive Center

2023 Program Schedule

April 17	Cabins, Motels & ?	Bart MacDougall
May 15	Duane Family History	David Vincent
June 19	Three Men & the White House of D'burg	Steve Schrade
July 17	Annual Picnic	Schafer Park
August 21	Life & Legacy of Sheldon Jackson	Robert Stark
September 18	Early Filling Stations in the Town	Lenny Van Buren
October 16	Treasures From the Bottom Floor	Carole DeForest
November 20	Writing Down Your Family History	Ellen McHale
December 18	Christmas Eve Past Memories	Mark Collins

Please come prepared to share one quick thought or an event special to Christmas Eve. Please bring a dish to share with one another. There will be a sign-up sheet for paper products, plastic ware & beverages.

The Lost Ring Mystery

In the 1990's Earl Moon paid a visit to Delanson with his metal detector. He was on the hunt for buried treasures and this was his lucky day. He discovered a Delanson High School ring from the class of 1935. After being lost for sixty years it was still in great condition. The ring went to Schenectady where it stayed in Moon's collection for the next twenty-five years,



Delanson High School Ring – Class of 1935

Last fall Mr. Moon decided to contact the Duaneburg Historical Society to find out more about the owner. Who lost it? Were they still alive and would they or the family want the lost ring? The only clues were the initials engraved inside the ring – JWB.

Howard Ohlous, Town Historian, began an investigation. Howard determined that the ring belonged to James W. Babcock who grew up in Delanson and graduated from high school in 1935.

James was the only child of Ernest L. Babcock and Mrs. Jean Harden Babcock of Delanson. His father was a grain dealer in Duaneburg. James was a boy scout. After high school he attended Springfield College in Massachusetts and later transferred to the state teacher's college at Oswego.



James W. Babcock

In the summer of 1941 James Babcock was inducted in the army and went to Fort Dix in New Jersey for training. During the war he served for four years as a clerk typist and attained the rank of Sargent E-6. At one point he was stationed in Hawaii.

After the war James married Miss Maida A. Dutcher of Schenectady. Maida and James lived in Schenectady and Rotterdam and he worked as a tax analyst for New York State. James and Maida had no children. She died in 1986 and he passed away in 1997.

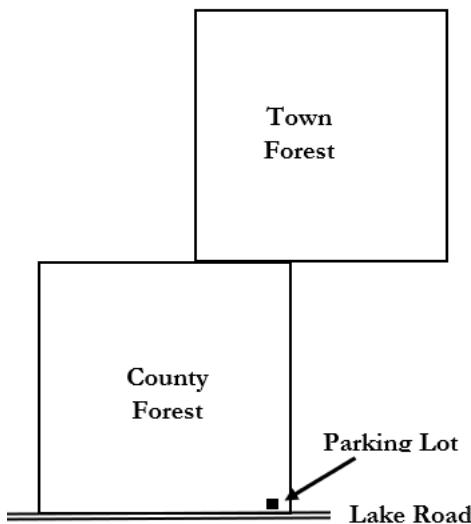
The long-lost class ring is now in the archives of the Duaneburg Historical Society after it was generously donated by Mr. Moon.

Town Forest History

By Carl Wiedemann

It's true. In addition to Shafer Park and Van Patten Mill Park, Duanesburg has a Town Forest. The Town Forest is 90 acres of undeveloped woodland two miles southwest of Mariaville. It may not be a familiar place because access is limited, but its open for public recreation. You can't drive, but there is a parking lot on Lake Road and a foot trail through the Schenectady County Forest. It's worth a visit because the Town Forest is an attractive woodland with marked loop trails and a variety of trees including oaks, hemlocks, maples, and white pines. Visitors will also see evidence of past land use including a cellar hole and stone walls. The history of the town forest exemplifies the land use history of the town.

Location Map



When Duanesburg was formed in 1765, the land within the town borders was owned by James Duane. The land was undeveloped with few roads and a small but growing population of farmers. To facilitate development Duane had his land surveyed and subdivided into hundreds of numbered "great lots" which were leased rather than sold.

In 1791 Duane leased great lot #113 to Stephen Herrick, a 27-year-old farmer, his wife Sarah and young son. The annual rent was 15 milled Spanish silver dollars. Herrick was also required to plant an apple orchard of 90 apple trees (one per acre). When his Sarah died four years later, Stephen remarried Sarah Seeley. The Herricks lived on the farm for the next 35 years and had twelve children.

In the 19th century farm families like the Herricks worked hard to make a living – clearing the forest, building homes, barns and fences, planting and harvesting crops, and raising their families. By the mid 1800's Duanesburg's landscape had been transformed. Most of the wild forest of 1765 had been cleared and replaced with fields and pastures. A network of roads connected farms to turnpikes which crossed the town.

By 1860, the Herricks had moved from Duanesburg. Great lot #113 was then owned by Evert and Catherine Van Auken. There was a federal census that year which reported the following statistics:

1860 Census – Van Auken Farm Duanesburg, NY - Great Lot #113

Acres of Land - Improved	80
Acres of Land - unimproved	10
Horses	4
Milk Cows	14
Other Cattle	6
Swine	5
Bushels of Oats	175
Bushels of Peas and Beans	10
Bushels of Irish Potatoes	25
Bushels of Buckwheat	75
Pounds of Butter	250
Tons of Hay	25
Tons of Flax	5
Bushels of Flaxseed	75

The census statistics above show that the farm produced a variety of crops, but ultimately it was not profitable. Farm acreage in New York State reached a peak about 1875 and then began a long slow decline as less productive land was abandoned and reforested. Evert Van Auken had a government backed mortgage. In 1879 he defaulted on the mortgage. The land became state property until 1934 when it was sold to the Town of Duanesburg for \$1.00. There was only one stipulation – the deed says the land is "for reforestation purposes only"

Today, 230 years after the Herrick lease was signed, great lot #113 has gone full circle. From undeveloped wild forest land in 1791, to fields and pastures, and today once again back to woodland, but now as a public forest.



Stone wall in the Town Forest

Herrick Homestead Sign – Duaneburg Town Forest



Last fall the Duaneburg Historical Society sponsored a “woods-walk” to visit the site of the Stephen Herrick family homestead which is located in the Duaneburg Town Forest. Walkers included the following: Carl Wiedemann, Ralph Isabella, Lenard Van Buren, Gayle Gifford, Paul Finnegan, David Vincent, Howard Ohlhous.

Site of Herrick Farmhouse

In 1791 Stephen Herrick, a farmer, leased 90 acres of forest land from James Duane. At the time Duane owned most of Duaneburg which he had subdivided into hundreds of farm lots.

Herrick’s annual rent was 13 Spanish milled silver dollars. He was also obligated to plant one apple tree for every acre he leased.

By 1801 the Herrick family had a house and barn on the land which is now the Town Forest. All that remains is the cellar hole and stone walls which once surrounded pastures & fields.

NYS acquired this property in 1879 through a mortgage foreclosure. In 1934 the state sold the land to the town for one dollar “to be used for reforestation purposes.”

Signage Courtesy of the Duaneburg Historical Society
www.duanesburghistorical.com



Believe It or Not Stories

Taken from the pages of real newspapers although some of the stories themselves seem a bit far-fetched.

The Grain Separator Invention

Connecticut Western News -1874

A Duanesburgh (NY) farmer has perfected a new way of separating grains that get mixed in growing, and it is said to work especially well in separating barley and buckwheat. It consists of thinly spreading the barley and buckwheat on a barn floor after it has been threshed and turning the fowls in upon it. They will pick out all the buckwheat before they will touch the barley. A Duanesburgh farmer lately purchased barley and buckwheat mixed for eighty-five cents a bushel, and, by the use of this invention, separated them and sold the barley portion for \$1.00 per bushel.



A Funeral Crash

New Bloomfield Times - 1880

A remarkable accident occurred at the funeral of Alonzo Van Patten, an old and respected citizen of Duanesburgh N.Y. The corpse lay in the parlor where about sixty relatives and friends were assembled. When the services were proceeding the floor gave way, and the corpse and funeral assemblage were cast into the cellar. The coffin fell upon Mrs. John Little, crushing and dangerously injuring her. Several others were badly hurt. There was the wildest excitement, but the neighbors helped the people through a cellar window. The coffin and body were recovered, and the services speedily terminated.

Quaker Street Kidnapping

- Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle -1885

One day last week, two children, a girl about twelve and a little boy of six, were found on the street in Albany. They were taken care of by the police and told a pitiful story about being taken from their home in Quaker Street by a strange man and brought to Albany where they were abandoned.

This excited such sympathy that they were sent to Quaker Street in the charge of a railroad conductor where it was discovered that the whole story was a falsehood. The children lived in Albany and had run away from home.



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: Duanesburg Historical Society
PO Box 421
Duanesburg, New York
12056

