



Spindle City Historic Society

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HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

The Tree Really Branches Out

For a long time my research on Adelaide Dickey (the famous vaudeville dancer born in Cohoes) reached a standstill, with the exception of some additional programs and show dates. (See the Summer 2004 and Winter 2004 newsletters for the beginnings of this history.) Then recently, a few more clues surfaced, and I have another several chapters to the story. The story begins with Adelaide's maternal great-grandfather in the early 1800s. Joseph Chamberland (Chamberlain) was French Canadian and was in the wholesale fruit business. Earlier in life he was a stagecoach driver between New York and the Canadian border. His wife was born in Quebec and was of English parentage. Her name was Lucy Jane Jones. Together, they were the parents of six children: one boy and five girls. At the age of thirty-five, while living in Cohoes, Lucy died. Soon thereafter, Joseph remarried to provide a mother for his children and wed a Miss Labonte. Three weeks after the wedding Joseph Chamberland died at the age of 41 and Miss Labonte fled the household.

The children, Harry, 17 at his father's death, Josephine, 14 (Adelaide's grandmother), Fannie, Adelaide and Lucy Jane, 3, were left abandoned. Joseph Chamberland's brother, Magloire Charles Chamberlain (married to Catherine Delisle, who was French) entered the picture, emptied the house and dispersed the children. Harry was sent to serve in the Civil War. Josephine was left on the street, uncared for by family members. She was purportedly taken in by Elizabeth Howe, the novelist and writer. Fannie died as a child, of causes unknown. Emmaline, Adelaide and Lucy Jane are kidnapped by Magloire and Catherine and taken away. Emmaline was later found in an Irish orphanage. Adelaide was left in an orphanage in Burlington, Vermont. The youngest, Lucy Jane, was taken by Maglorie to St. David in Quebec. Harry married a Harriet VonHousen (who was Dutch) and settled in Jamestown, New York and had two children (Henrietta and Della). Josephine stayed in Cohoes and married Lester Abel of Hoosick Falls, who was a cigar maker. They resided in Cohoes and had two children who survived infancy. Lizzie Howe Abel, the oldest daughter, married Arthur A. Merritt of Worcester, MA. Lizzie and Arthur had a girl and two boys. The daughter died in infancy and the two boys (Ralph and Harry) both graduated from MIT and became civil engineers.

Josephine and Lester's second daughter, Josephine Adelaide Abel (b: 1860 in Cohoes) married William J. Dickey in the late 1870s and had five children. The oldest
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DID YOU KNOW

....that on June 25, 1895 Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show paraded through Cohoes before a crowd of thousands? Reports of the parade described a cowboy band, cowboys on horseback, ladies on horseback in buckskin costumes "who could handle their rifles", Indians whose children rode their ponies "as though they were born in the saddle", and bushmen from South Australia. Admission to see these performers, and many more, was 25 cents.

....that in 1882, Billy the Kid was sent to prison for 5 years for robbing a bank in Cohoes, and was sentenced to an additional year for escaping from prison?

....that Hugh Graham, onetime Cohoes City Historian, was president of the American Soap and Washoline Company? Graham was considered an authority on the American War of Independence, and wrote many articles on the Battle of Saratoga; some of these were published locally in the *Troy Record*. He was on the committee organizing the Halfmoon celebration in 1924, during which a replica of Henry Hudson's ship the Halfmoon was brought to Cohoes. Graham was also an affiliate of the Schoharie Historical Society and a member of the Arcola Social Club of Cohoes. He died on September 4, 1960.

....that Houlihan's Hall, located at Broadway and Johnston Avenue, was a famous spot for dancing in Cohoes? The Arcola Club staged a grand social on November 15, 1895 at the hall.

....that the Historical and Cultural Society of Cohoes was once headquartered at 58 Remsen Street? The organization moved into the building in August 1968, and had office and exhibit space on the second floor. Marine Midland Bank, and previously the National Bank of Cohoes, occupied the first floor, which is now home to the Cohoes Visitor's Center and the Spindle City Historic Society.

....that in 1895 John Philip Sousa and his band of 50 musicians, under the auspices of the 7th Separate Company, played at the new State Armory in Cohoes? Ticket prices were 50¢, 75¢ and \$1.00.

....that Bernie Heroux, a member of SCHS, is celebrating his 60th anniversary as a barber in business in Cohoes?

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Patricia Brock, Emma's Pub, Drucilla Infantino, Betti Jones, Marilyn Shea, Charles Van Decar & family, and Charles & Marianne Witherwax.*

The Lansing Legacy

Members of the Lansing family first came from Albany to Cohoes in the early 18th century. In 1708, the first farm in the southern end of the Cohoes settlement of the manor of Rensselaerwyck was sold by Killaen Van Rensselaer to Colonel Philip Schuyler. The land ran from Cedar Grove on the south along the Sault (Salt) Kill and down to the river past what is now Saratoga St. and Dyke Avenue. This land was sold to Hendrick (Henry) Lansing in 1731; in 1767 he built a house near the river and sold it to Jacob Lansing in 1774. Jacob Lansing held the property until 1822. His son William Lansing lived on the property and operated a tavern in the early 19th century.

Cornelius Onderkirk leased a farm to Jacob Fonda just north of the Jacob Lansing farm. It consisted of 136 ½ acres from the Hudson River past Saratoga St. below Newark St. to Columbia St. west to the present West End Park. The land was purchased in the early 1800s by Abraham G. Lansing, who built a residence there in 1820. The land would soon be crossed by the Erie and Champlain Canals (which were said to mar the Lansings' view of the river). Abraham G. Lansing also owned a tavern, located at the southwest corner of Cohoes where the bridge between Waterford and Cohoes was built across the Mohawk.

Other branches of the Lansing family settled at the north end of Cohoes near the falls. Two hundred acres north of the Clute farm and the Manor line (Manor Avenue) were sold by Daniel Van Olinde to Gerrit Lansing. Gerrit's son Rutger continued to farm the land in the late 18th century, followed by his son Isaac Douw Fonda (I.D.F.) Lansing (1790-1874) who had a house near the Cohoes Company Dam. The Lansings also began what was among the first businesses in the area, a saw mill near the Cohoes Company dam. The saw mill was followed by a grist mill just to the south, run by Gerrit and Rutger Lansing and later Isaac Lansing. A plaster mill was built to the south of the grist mill, which in 1823 manufactured coarse wrapping paper. The mill was later sold to Wild and Younglove.

The Lansings were involved in other aspects of early industry and business in Cohoes. Jacob L. Lansing was one of the incorporators in 1811 of the Cohoes Manufacturing Company, which would become the Cohoes Company in 1830. In 1831, a large portion of the Andrew Lansing farm, which occupied the northern section of Cohoes near Manor Avenue extending to Boght Rd. down to Mohawk St., was sold to the Cohoes Company in 1831; it would later be taken over by the Harmony Company. Three Lansings – Isaac, Abraham and Andrew, were among those incorporating the Cohoes Savings Institution in 1851.

Members of the Lansing family helped found the first church in the area. The Reformed Church of the Boght was established in 1784 following a petition by 42 people, among them several Lansings and Fondas. The church was built near what is now Baker Avenue, and was the first church established north of Albany. Gerrit Lansing was one of the first deacons of the church, followed by Rutger Lansing in 1794. Many generations of Lansings were communicants of the Church of the Boght and later the Dutch Reformed Church on Mohawk Street. Jacob I. Lansing (son of John Lansing) joined the Dutch Reformed Church in 1839 and was made a deacon in 1842. He owned a residence on the southwest corner of Remsen and White Sts. and was a wheelwright at the Egbert and Bailey woolen mill. Abraham and Dorothy Van Schaick Lansing were also members of the Dutch Reformed Church., and in 1857 Abraham was elected a church elder and member of the Consistory. In 1859, he was elected primary delegate of the church to the Classis in Albany. One of his sons, John V.S. Lansing, would, along with industrialists David John Johnston and Egbert Egberts, donate an organ to the church in 1866. James "Buttermilk" Lansing was first superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School, which later became the Harmony Hill Union Sabbath School.

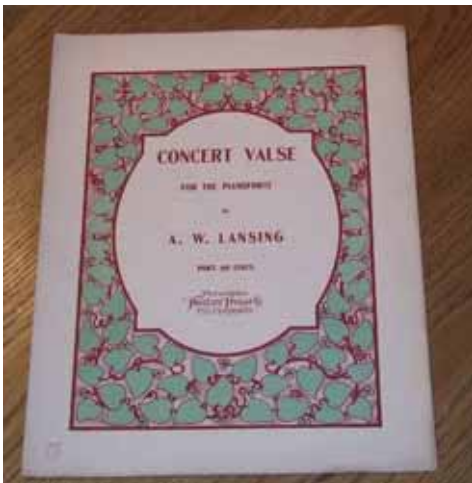
Lansings were among the leaders in improving community life in Cohoes. Jacob J. Lansing was instrumental in starting a fire company in Cohoes in 1851. In 1852, the Mohawk Company, with Jacob Lansing as foreman, built a new firehouse located near the Cohoes Company Canal. Jacob Lansing would become a village trustee that same year. In 1855, the Cohoes Waterworks was incorporated, and among the Commissioners was Andrew D. Lansing. The group established agreements with the Cohoes Company for the use of waterpower, and the Cohoes Company was authorized to take stock in the waterworks. Property on Prospect Hill owned by Abraham Lansing was selected as a site for a new reservoir, which would contain 3 million gallons of water on two acres. Groundbreaking took place in 1857 and construction was completed in 1858. Sunset Park now occupies the site.

The Lansing family legacy also continues in Cohoes in the names of city streets, in Lansing Park, and the Abram Lansing Elementary School.

Abram W. Lansing

Abram Winne Lansing, the only son of Egbert Winne Lansing and Helena Douw Fonda Lansing, was born in 1861 at the Lansing Family homestead on North Mohawk Street in Cohoes. Egbert Lansing was a prominent and public-spirited citizen of Cohoes; he would share with his son this interest in civic activities and service.

Abram was educated in Cohoes public schools and attended Albany Academy. He went on to Williams College, graduating in 1883. He was musically gifted, with interest in both vocal and instrumental music. He was among the best-regarded pipe organists in the region playing liturgical and sacred music. He was also a prolific composer of music, with more than 150 of his compositions and renditions published through leading music publishing houses in New York City, Boston and Philadelphia. Among his best-known works are "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah", a duet of soprano and baritone; "The Earth is the Lord's", a baritone solo; and "fear Not O Ye Israel", a chorus. He also wrote many polkas and other songs. In 1908, his anthem "I am the Alpha and Omega" was selected the winner over one hundred other competitors in a contest sponsored by the Tullar-Meredith Company of New York. The work was cited for its "rare harmonic beauty and depth of dramatic expression, unrivalled by the other submissions." His genuine harmonic imagination, a rare gift for melody, and distinct musical impression set him apart.

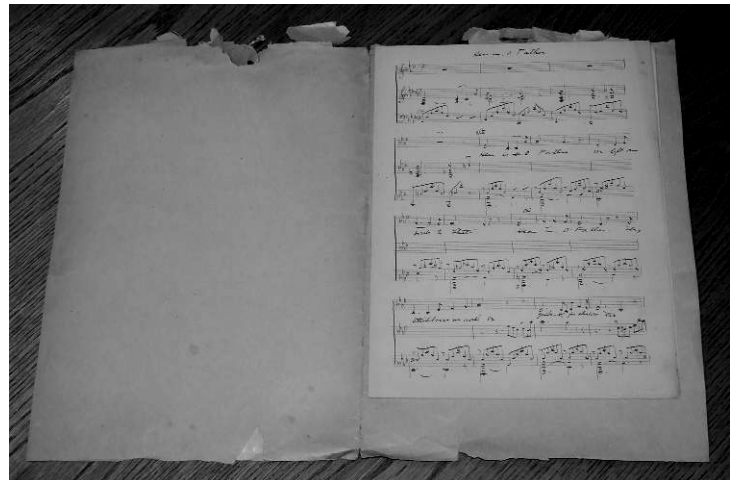


Abram Lansing was a leader in many musical organizations in the region. He was Director of the Cohoes Philharmonic Society and of the Cohoes Community Orchestra. He also directed the Hudson Choral Society and the Ballston Choral Union. He served as President of the Diatonic Club of Albany, an organization of musical professionals, and in the years 1897-1899 was the Director of the Round Lake Musical Festival, a highly-regarded music festival of the time. Lansing was at various times the organist for the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Albany and the Silliman Memorial Church of Cohoes. In 1917, he was appointed a city school commissioner, a post he held until 1921. He was supervisor of music education for the Cohoes Public Schools and led the Cohoes High School orchestra and Glee Club. His community activities included membership in the Cohoes Lodge No. 116 of the Free and Accepted Masons, the Cohoes Board of Education and the YMCA.

Abram Lansing, who remained unmarried, attended many social events with the Mayell family, who were overseers of the Lansing Family property on North Mohawk Street. Barbara Mayell recalls spending many hours at the Lansing home as a young child. She and her sister were instructed not to play on "Uncle Abram's" piano or disturb his desk where his music was placed. Abram Lansing owned a Hupmobile, but he was not a skilled driver; for out of town trips he was often chauffeured by Egbert Mayell, Barbara's father. For travel around Cohoes, Lansing's vehicle of choice was a high wheel bicycle.

Abram Lansing died in January 1928 and is buried in Albany Rural Cemetery.

The Spindle City Historic Society is fortunate to have in its collection a generous donation from Barbara Mayell of Mr. Lansing's leather briefcase and 16 pieces of music he wrote. Among these is one unpublished composition, "Hear Us O Father", with the music score in Lansing's own hand.



Many thanks to Barbara Mayell for her generous donation and reminiscences of Abram Lansing.

the importance of the church in the cultural and social lives of Russians in Cohoes.

The tour concluded with a visit to Sts. Peter and Paul Church, established in 1906 by Ukrainian immigrants.



Stephan Maswish, a parishioner and cantor for the church, explained the history of the church and its traditions.

The day also marked the debut of a new SCHS tour brochure featuring the histories of the churches of Cohoes. The brochure is available at the Cohoes Visitor Center.

For more about the history of the city's churches, see the article on Sacred Heart Church on page 6 of this issue.

Cohoes High School Art Show Opening



The evening of May 5 was the opening reception for the Cohoes High School art show at the Visitor Center. The work by student artists included paintings in acrylic and oil, drawings in pastel and pen and ink, sculptures and mosaics. This was the 5th year SCHS has hosted the reception. A preview opening of the show was also offered in the afternoon



to participants in a downtown walking tour. Thanks to Cohoes High School art teacher JoAnn Johnson and all the students who participated. The exhibit was up through May.

Founders' Day

The City of Cohoes declared May 19 Founders' Day, in commemoration of the anniversary of the date that Cohoes became a city in 1869. SCHS participated in several Founders' day events, including the city beautification and ribbon-cutting for new park equipment at Lansing Park. Despite showery weather, members of SCHS picked up trash in the areas around Locks 14, 15 and 16 of the enlarged Erie Canal as part of the citywide cleanup effort. For the ribbon-cutting ceremony, SCHS was invited to give a brief account of the history of the Lansing family and their contributions to Cohoes. You can read more about the Lansings on pages 2 and 3 of this issue of this newsletter.



At the park ribbon-cutting ceremony. Participants included Cohoes Human Services Director Danielle Legace, County Legislator Gil Either, Common Council members Charles Feeley, George Primeau and April Kennedy, Mayor John McDonald, SCHS First Vice President Daniele Cherniak, the Cohoes High School choral group the DCs, and a group of young playground patrons.

SCHS also developed history timeline bookmarks that were distributed in the city's elementary schools during the week prior to Founders' Day to acquaint students with the long and fascinating history of Cohoes. The bookmarks are also available at the Cohoes Public Library.

Memorial Day Parade

Cohoes held its annual Memorial Day parade on May 24, the Thursday before the Memorial Day weekend. SCHS member Bernie Heroux was Grand Marshal of this year's parade. The SCHS contingent included a group of marchers, a 1929 Chevrolet Imperial and a mastodont.

A Short History of Sacred Heart Church in Cohoes

by Bernard Ouimet

Sacred Heart Parish is located on a small island approximately one mile in length, situated between the Hudson and Mohawk rivers. This island was known as Adam's Island for its first owner. It was later changed to Van Schaick Island for the Van Schaick family, who settled on the Island near the Hudson River.

Sacred Heart parish began as a mission of St. Joseph's parish of Cohoes. It was organized as an independent parish on June 26, 1887. Father Eugene Rey became its first pastor. The initial congregation consisted of fifty families who would assemble on Sunday in a recreation hall on Jackson Avenue to celebrate Mass. The parishioners paid for the music and hall rental. Shortly thereafter, a chapel was built on ground purchased by Father Rey. In 1889, a brick building was built to replace this wooden structure, which was later used as the school. The new brick church was first used in 1892. In 1897, Father Rey left the parish to become pastor of St. Paul's in Hudson Falls.



On the first Sunday of November 1897, Father Louis Anthime Lavigne, pastor of Schuylerville, became pastor of Sacred Heart. The church was completed during his pastorate. On July 2, 1899, the completed church was blessed by Bishop Burke. The former chapel became the school under the direction of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Paramée, France. On June 28th, 1903, the new organ was installed and inaugurated with a concert. The stained glass windows were purchased in 1904. In 1907, new pews and altars were installed. In 1909, the wooden porch was replaced by a larger one of cement blocks.

The increase in the French population meant more children to educate. The school established in the former chapel was no longer adequate. Arthur Granger drew plans for a new school, which was built under the direction of Alfred Sarrault, general contractor. The cornerstone was laid on June 26, 1910 and the building was completed and blessed on February 12, 1911. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary assumed its direction.

In 1912, under the pastorate of Father Lavigne, the parish celebrated its 25th anniversary. In 1915, Father Jules Burrick became pastor. On December 10, 1916, the original wooden church (which had served as a school and still later as a parish hall) was sold to Roulier and Chamberland. On June 22, 1924, Bishop Gibbons dedicated the grotto. In 1933, Father Raymond Robert became pastor and remained as pastor for 29 years. Father Lionel Guillaume as administrator succeeded him. In turn, Father Harvey Desautels followed Father Guillaume as pastor. Father Desautels directed the building of the new convent. Later, Father Nellis Tremblay became pastor. Under his administration, the church basement was converted into a parish hall. Father Tremblay left in 1970 to be replaced by Father Edward Leroux. A new pipe organ was installed during his tenure. Father Leroux left in 1975 and Sacred Heart Parish became affiliated with St. Rita's Parish; this became effective on July 1, 1975. By then, the parochial school had closed and the sisters had left. The former convent was taken over by the Chancery and converted into the Sacred Heart Residence, a home for retired priests. It served this purpose until 1986 when the priests left and the Daughters of Charity came to live there. Today, the school is an apartment building.

Father Fausto Stampiglia, a member of the Pallottine Order, became pastor of Sacred Heart in 1975. To extinguish the parish debt, Father Stampiglia sold the rectory, the school and a vacant lot opposite the church. The rectory was sold in that year to the Apostolate of the Suffering-Marian Center Inc. After three years, this group sold the rectory to a private family and it is now a private dwelling. On September 5, 1977, Father Mario Pacini became pastor of the combined parishes. The former school was sold and with that income, the front porch and stairs were renovated and the parish debt paid off. Today, Father John Facci is pastor.