

The-Save-The-Lyon-Commission *Newsletter*

WATERMAN HEIRS VISIT DANA L. LYON PROPERTY



Two of the five Ira Davenport heirs who have filed suit to save the old portion of Dana L. Lyon School site visited Bath and surrounding areas in June 2004. Pamela Waterman Gale and husband Chris, of Charlottesville, Va., and Mary Waterman Lunt, with husband Bill enjoyed lunch at the Old National Hotel with members of The-Save-The-Lyon-Commission. They later toured the school site, the former location of the Ira Davenport mansion; "Riverside", The Magee House, (with special interest in the Davenport Room downstairs), Mossy Bank overlook and the Ira Davenport Hospital.

The visit brought back many fond memories for the sisters. "We spent a most delightful afternoon, and we appreciate the wonderful hospitality of the Commission members", Mary Waterman Lunt wrote.

Rosalie Niemczyk, Margaret A. Hogan and Shirley Paine represented the Commission during the Waterman's visit.

Both ladies said they would like to return for a visit later and bring other family members with them.

Just a note by Shirley Paine

'Tis true, I am a newcomer to Bath. However, that does not make me appreciate it's quaint charm any less than lifelong citizens who are cheering on The-Save-The-Lyon-Commission.

My husband first introduced me to Bath eight years ago when we came to this area to be married. Even with the view of some of the blighted areas from Hwy. 15, I told my husband "This looks like a charming little village". And it is, or, it could be.

Or, it could become just like many other small towns, North and South, whose citizens have let its heritage be destroyed for greed. Strip malls now stand in many of these places where once historic buildings stood.

Five heirs of Ira Davenport have put much money and effort into saving the historic property now known as the Dana L. Lyon site, (which they inherited through the Ira Davenport will) for the benefit of Bath and it's citizens. But they need the community's support; individuals, fraternal groups, and businesses alike. The-Save-The Lyon-Commission was formed as a local arm to help these courageous and generous women.

There are many ways to generate tax dollars on this land so valuable to the history of the village without destroying historic landmarks.

A renowned architect, Clinton Brown of Buffalo, has taken many such buildings and restored them to income and tax-paying ventures, including non-subsidized senior citizen apartments for middle-to upper- income level tenants and small business and retail centers.

In addition to ruining the historic character of this lovely old village, a strip mall on this site would create more problems for the village: an increase in traffic and with it a need for widening existing roadways, more noise and pollution. Enough already!!

Bath is at a crossroads in the village's 211- year- old history. Whether it is destroyed by greed or even worse, by apathy, remains to be seen. However, either way, the results will affect the village for years to come.

Please step forward and let the heirs know, "Yes we will stand with you. This is our heritage, and we will not let it be lost."

NEWS FLASH!!

The-Save-The-Lyon-Commission has officially received a Certificate of Incorporation as of January 2005. Donations will be deductible from that date.

THE HISTORY OF BATH AND IT'S STORIED SCHOOLS

With deep gratitude to Thomas Stackpole's "The Heritage of Bath"

Before we discuss the present site that is now embroiled in great controversy, we need to understand how the Village of Bath and its schools came to be in the first place.

In 1792, the Englishman Charles Williamson came up to the west branch of the Susquehanna River with a group of tough woodsmen. They crossed the Pennsylvania Mountains to Cowanesque Creek. Eventually, this hardy crew reached Williamsburg on the Genesee. This was to be the road that Charles Williamson, agent for Lord Pulteney, wanted to have opened into the area. It was to be called the Williamson Road.

Charles wanted to establish a capital for the millions of acres he managed for Lord Pulteney and his investors. He wanted to locate the capital on the Conhocton River where the open valley from the south end of Crooked Lake (Keuka Lake) intersected the river valley. This spot was chosen because it would provide a water route to southern markets in Baltimore and provide waterpower to run the much-needed gristmills and sawmills.

The Williamson Road was completed through Bath in 1792 and reached its present location of Dansville, N.Y.

In the early spring of 1793, Williamson's woodsmen arrived at what was to become Bath, near what is now Lackawanna Street.

The initial contingent of pioneers (most of whom were Scottish) included the leader, Charles Cameron and "Muckle" Andrew Smith, William McCartney, Hector McKenzie, Henry Towner, Thomas Corbitt (who settled Savona), Thomas Rees, Jr.(a surveyor), Alexander Ewing, William Ewing, John Metcalfe, James Henderson, Samuel Doyle, Joseph Arbour, Richard Amour, John Scott, Charles McClure, Peter Loop, Mr. Upton, Joseph Bivens and Benjamin Patterson.

Charles Williamson arrived shortly thereafter and soon his wife and children joined him in Bath.

To get an accurate picture of Bath during this time, close your eyes and envision mostly dense pine and oak woods. The only opening was along East and West Morris Streets, which had been cleared as the local section of Williamson Road.

Just think about that! Every time we drive on Morris Street, we are driving on a road that had its beginnings more than 200 years ago.

A section of trees was cut out where the First Presbyterian Church now stands. A log cabin (what else?) was constructed and became the Pulteney Land Office. It is suspected, and long rumored, that the next structure was the Metcalfe Tavern, constructed of adobe, and that building still stands. Now we come to one of the most important "pioneers" of all, and how he came to be associated with the Dana L. Lyon site on Liberty and Washington Streets--Thomas Rees, Jr.

A surveyor in the "Oulde Country", Rees joined with Williamson's "rough and toughers" and began to map out our present Village of Bath. He located the main streets, such as Morris St. (named after Robert Morris), Steuben St. (named after Baron von Steuben), and Liberty St. (named for obvious reasons after the Revolutionary War). These were the very first roads in the village of Bath.

Then, Rees laid out the two public squares, called "commons" in that area--Pulteney, on the south end, and St. Patrick's, on the north end. Pulteney Square is still in existence and remains relatively unchanged. St. Patrick's Square (named because of the many Irishmen who also came over and carved out Bath) was intact for sometime, but with advancing development and the need to connect with Hammondsport and the "Crooked Lake", that Square was bi-sectioned with four corners of parkland now present by: the apartment building; by the Information Booth and the Dana L. Lyon School; by St. Thomas Episcopal Church; and by the Centenary Methodist Church.

In later years, out of respect for the first president of our country, St. Patrick's Square was changed to Washington Square. In that West Washington (Blvd.) St. and East Washington St. commemorate our first president, there are many of us Bath "purists" who would like to see "St. Patrick's Square" reinstated.

Rees then numbered the building lots with the cooperation of a corps of assistants. As a result, Bath became a well-designed community, much as it is today. Under the direction of Rees, the flourishing community of Bath evolved with businesses established, churches built, and a school building erected. The village continued to grow rapidly into the early 1800's.

The first log school house was erected circa 1800 on Pulteney Square, near the former American Flint Glass Workers Union Hall (now a Teen Dance Center). However, before that, a schoolmaster (Robert Hunter) was hired as early as 1793, and classes were held at an unknown location.

The Pulteney Square log school house was torn down to make room for a jail in 1808. The school then moved to a small frame structure near where the present Steuben County Clerk's Office is located. Fire destroyed the building in 1811.

In 1813, a third school building was opened on the Townsend property on Steuben Street and called The Old Academy. In 1824, this building also burned down. The Red School House (the fourth building) was erected on the same site in 1825. This building burned to the ground in 1849. Sometime between 1824-26, building number five was constructed on the site of the Old Grange Hall on Pine St.

In 1846 the Haverling Union School District formed, named after Adam Haverling's bequest of lots located adjacent to Thomas Rees's well laid out St. Patrick's Square.

In 1848, the Haverling Union School opened (on the later Dana L. Lyon site)-also called "Haverling Academy", but burned in 1866.

In 1868, the school was rebuilt on the same site.

In 1901, a separate building called the Primary Annex, was built for primary grades next to the old Haverling Academy at Liberty and Elm.

In 1922, the Primary Annex and the old Haverling academy buildings were connected.

In 1923, the old Haverling Academy is replaced by a new addition now referred to as Haverling High School.

In 1953 the Haverling Jr.-Sr. High School was built on Ellas Ave. and the Liberty St. site became the Haverling Elementary School.

In 1961 the Vernon Wightman opened at Maple Heights.

In 1963 additions were made to the Jr.-Sr. High School and a cafeteria was added to the Elementary School on Liberty St.

In 1978 the Elementary School was renamed the Dana L. Lyon Elementary School.

What a rich, rich, history of Education being provided here in Bath!!

What a rich history of planning and vision from Charles Williamson, Thomas Rees, Jr., Adam Haverling, and Ira Davenport, Jr., among many, many others whom we will mention in forthcoming newsletters.

Will you be a volunteer?

To paraphrase the U.S. Army, the Save-The-Lyon-Commission is looking for a few good volunteers to help stuff envelopes, correspond with businesses, speak to civic organizations, etc. And, of course, we do need your donations to help us pay for mailings and other essentials. All donations, large or small are greatly appreciated.

Please complete the form below and mail to:

Save-The-Lyon-Commission, P.O. Box 83, Bath, NY 14810

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Yes, I support your efforts, and would like to volunteer my time by:

___ Assisting with mailings for fund raising.

___ Organizing a fundraising event with neighbors and friends.

___ Assisting with a professional fundraising brochure to send to businesses and corporations.

___ Creating or assisting with maintaining a professional web site with up to date information concerning The Save-The-Lyon Commission.

___ Assisting the Sec. and Treas. with correspondence.

Other-- Please list _____

___ Yes, I support your efforts. However, currently I cannot volunteer my time, but I am enclosing a donation for producing newsletters, public relations brochures and other expenses.

How Can I Help Preserve ?

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Web site posts the following suggestions for helping citizens preserve America's heritage. The village of Bath and surrounding areas are a great place to start.

1. Explore your family's history. Show your kids the places where you went to school or where you were married; take your parents to a place that is important in your life.
2. Walk or bike. Getting out of your car allows you to appreciate the buildings and parks that make up the place where you live, and you'll also have a much better chance of catching up with your friends and neighbors.
3. Shop on Main Street. Traditional commercial districts have appealing buildings-look up and admire the architectural details of the upper floors.
4. Tour your hometown. Visit an historic site, the local historical society or an area museum. Check the events calendar in the newspaper or on the web. Then, go to one of the street fairs or ethnic festivals in your area.
5. Read all about it. Every community has a book about its local history, and many have more than one. They're available at the local library (often a historic place itself) or at the historical society.
6. Entertain yourself surrounded by history. Attend a live performance or a movie at an historic theater, or eat at a restaurant in an historic building. If you like the atmosphere, tell the owner or the host.
7. Join an organization - even better, more than one - dedicated to preservation. The National Trust for Historic Preservation's web site @ www.nationaltrust.org is an excellent place to start.
8. Sleep in an historic place. There are historic inns and B&B's across the country; many of the best are members of preservation organizations.
9. Ask your neighbors about your neighborhood. Talk to people who've lived on your street longer than you have. Find out what they remember about living there, and some of the people who have moved on.
10. Visit some sacred history. Old churches are vital to a community's history, and often have some of the area's most unique architectural qualities.