This is the last newsletter of the year! Where has the time gone? Happy Thanksgiving AND Merry Christmas for those of you I will not see this year.

Mike and Diane Schleigh drove up from Grove City PA to speak with us about the old WAG/B&S Railroad last month. Mike’s presentation was well attended with at least 85 people in the audience. Mike has since sent us a thumb drive of much of the presentation, plus a few extra maps of the roadway.

Way back in summer, Rich Shear offered the museum Hamilton Shoes X-Ray Shoe Fitter. A little research tells us that it was in use at the shoe store at least by December 1932 and maybe even earlier than that. In October, Jerome Hart and his crew moved it from the basement of Hamilton’s Shoes to the museum. It took them a very short time with the lift/truck they use in their work. The X-Ray Shoe Fitter is eliciting quite a number of comments from those of us who remember using being fitted by a machine like this. It is an interesting piece of our history and we are glad to have it. FYI - It will NOT be operational!

Since our last newsletter, TRGHS participated in the Allegany County Local History Awareness Week at the David A Howe Library. The displays and the lectures were very well attended. Bill Heaney has organized this event for the past two years.

Thanks to Dave Pinney for assuring that we can turn our gas heater on this year. The thermocouple in the old heater needs to be replaced every once in a while, and Dave took care of it.

Also, my thanks this year to Marlea Robbins and Tina Wightman for keeping me company many Wednesday afternoons at the museum.

We are closed for the season now. It has been our practice to shut the water off in the winter at the museum. For the last year or two, we have not turned it off. We have a thermostat that will allow us to turn the temp down relatively low to keep the museum above freezing. Perhaps the warmer winters have helped. Are we pushing our luck? I don’t know the answer to that, but it is nice to have water when we need it.

I spoke with the Wellsville Rotary Club last month at their monthly luncheon at the Wellsville Country Club. The topic was the origins of the old book “Wellsville Illustrated”. The publisher of that booklet, G. W. Ames is frustratingly elusive, but I have a theory or two, which I shared with the club.

TRGHS has been in need of some advertising material. This month, using Vista Print, I created a simple rack card. This is basically a piece of literature telling the public who, what, where and when we are. The double sided card will go in display racks in places like the Wellsville Area Chamber of Commerce or the Allegany County Crossroads Center to help get our name out in the world.

On Saturday, Nov 4, I attended another WAG Walk run by WAG fan Chris Bigham. We started in Galeton PA at the

TRGHS Officers
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Museum Hours - Wednesdays, May 1 to Oct 31, 1 PM to 4 PM
Or Upon Request 716-498-7433
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Like Us on Facebook at “Wellsville New York Historical Society”
Thank You For Your Donations

Bradford Historical Society Vermont - Photos of Katrina Munn’s Wellsville Piano Students 1948 and 1949, Photo of the 1948 WHS Production of HMS Pinafore

Janet Carlin – A wooden bowl made by George Carthoys from a piece of wood which had been used in the Pink House. George and Hilda were caretakers in the Pink House for many years. The bowl is nestled in a basket made by Charlie and Mable Byham

Jean and Tom Colegrove - Dues and a $10 Donation

Wendy Dailey - a $25 donation for Coogan research

Hamilton’s Shoes - A 1930’s era Xray Shoe Fitter, in Memory of William Hamilton and Richard C Shear (with thanks to Jerome Hart and crew for moving it for us)

June Helmer – Obituaries, brochures and newspaper articles for our files. May share with Trinity Lutheran Church

David Hornburg - a Victor Aluminum Covered Container

Nancy Shine Monroe - A WHS 1923 Senior Class Photo Gallery, large, unframed, A 1933-1934 Men’s WHS Basketball photo with Walt Shine

Museum Purchase - an Everits Liniment Bottle for $38 - far too much, but it is Ohh So Nice - Everits Liniment made powders, pills and liniments for animals, and especially horses. The company was located about where the library parking lot is now.


Helen Seebold - Clippings from various newspapers, brought in by Kim Walsh

Marsha Sick - A 1961 Calendar Book from the Allegany County Order of DeMolay

Mike and Diane Schleigh - Mike was our speaker in October. He and Diane visited our museum and took away many little tidbits, which we were happy to share with them. They forwarded a $50 check as well as a copy of Mike’s presentation to us.

Dorothy Thomas - A $25.00 Donation, A short story, written by Dorothy called “Adelaide and the 8 By 10”. Dorothy’s family owned and operated the Wellsville Hotel, and she was very interested in the old Sanitarium booklet which we copied for her.

Drina Vigh - Dues and a $15 donation

Marge Vossler - Belle-Isle Candy Box - Charles A Bellisle and his wife Mary Bellisle made candy from their home at 118 Stevens Street (1950’s) A top Hat worn by Larry Vossler for the 1957 Centennial.

This months newsletter is about work that was carried out on North Main Street in Wellsville in 1930. It kind of ties in with our last newsletter regarding work the WPA did in Wellsville to contain the creek that flows down from Madison Hill. In that piece, I mentioned that there had been other projects to improve the water situation running down the hill, but did not elaborate on the work. A little update: Dean Arnold confirmed to me that the Village/Town did some major rework in the last few years which basically repeated 1935 WPA project. They reworked the culvert at the top of Madison Street and replaced 300 feet of pipe under the road. I also heard through the grapevine that work will be starting soon on the collapse of the covered creek near East Pearl and Scott Avenue.

Wishing everyone a Happy Holiday Season!
Late in 1919 the huge tangle of wires looming over the downtown area was somewhat relieved when the various utilities cleaned up the clutter and reduced the wires to a much safer level. We used the photo to the right in our book to illustrate the number of wires that connected Wellsville to the rest of the world. The wires were unsightly and could be quite dangerous.

A major public works project in 1930 made the remaining wires disappear from Main Street all together. During that work, a few nice little historical tidbits surfaced quite literally from under the road, reminding people of by gone times.

Hubert Bliss wrote a little piece for the Allegany County Democrat which laid out the rationale and scope of the project.

“Rebuilding of Wellsville’s Main Street is Expected To Be Underway Early in April - The wire, cable, tile, pick, shovel and other materials needed in widening Main Street have been ordered and the big improvement program will be underway by April 1st. No, this is no April foolin’, the plans are all made and everything will be in readiness at that time for the work to be started. When the job is completed the Main street of Wellsville, New York will be a thing of beauty instead of one of unsightly old telephone poles, poorly placed arc lights and sidewalks that resemble a roller coaster.

Streets which bristle with a conglomeration of poles and standards for lights, terrible sidewalks and various signaling devices certainly do not present a neat or aesthetic appearance. The housewife’s phrase “cluttered up” better describes them. Moreover, these ancient relics involve a serious waste of space which can ill be afforded by this city. Wellsville streets were not designed for the enormous traffic to which they must now adapt themselves.

Wellsville is not the only town or city that has been facing the same serious situation since the advent of the motor car in large numbers. No longer are sidewalks

hung near the top of the telephone poles and are of no use except to aviators who pass over the city after nightfall.

If the plans prove as feasible as they appear they should work a welcome change in the downtown section and we shall attain the poleless ideal and a street that will attract rather than detract. It will also be a boon to business for many drivers from the nearby towns object to shopping in Wellsville on account of its narrow Main Street”. (Allegany County Democrat Feb 27, 1930)

Ten new fire hydrants were also installed along Main Street. A new village sewer system was anticipated, but was not included with this project. That project happened later in the 1930’s with the addition of a new waste plant on Bolivar Road.

Havens Construction Company of Olean was awarded the contract for the 1930 project, which began at the intersection of North Main and State and worked northward to Pearl Street, keeping the street open to traffic at all times. The plan was to open the road and lay down the new water lines and conduits for electric and telephone lines. The crew would then work on the west side of Main Street to make necessary connections to the mains and wires and cut back curbing and sidewalks. It was to be backfilled as they moved northward.

Within days of starting the work, a small discovery was made:
Uncover Old Well During Work on Street Widening – An old stone well, built probably a hundred years ago, was uncovered in the street improvement program construction work today in front of the Howell House (Pickups) The well, or cistern, which has lain beneath the pavement for years, was uncovered by the steam shovel which has been in use in digging the trench which will bury new water mains and telephone conduits in Main Street.

Old residents recall that when the well was built, it was first used as a watering trough alongside the dirt road that was then Wellsville’s Main street. The well is entirely of stone construction, is about two feet in diameter, and eight or ten feet in depth.

Later, Main street was widened, and the well came into use as a water supply for fires. A similar cistern at the intersection of present Madison and Main street and another at Cummings Place and Maple Ave were used for the same purpose.

On some occasions, water was drawn by the old hand pumpers from the Genesee river. Years ago there was also a well in front of the present Fassett House.” (Wellsville Daily Reporter May 5, 1930)

While Publisher Bliss at the Allegany County Democrat good humoredly complained about the noise of the steam shovel tearing up the road in front of his office, he was also given a topic for a short story when it was discovered that just three feet under the old pavement, the steam shovel was actually excavating a layer of tan bark that was placed there in days past to fill in a low spot in the road. He and the many onlookers marveled at how well preserved the tan bark was after at least 50 years in the ground.

In the middle of May, as the construction crew was working in front of Rockwells, the old water main burst (or bursted as the WDR wrote) “spraying water 30 or 40 feet into the air”. (WDR May 14, 1930) While water use was not expected to be interrupted during this project, this unexpected eruption shut down the water supply to Main Street residents and stores for about an hour and a half.

Another surprise awaited the crew as reported in the June 22, 1930 Wellsville Daily Reporter.

“Ancient Wooden Mains Are Found – Yesterday, Contractor Merle Havens of Olean was attracted by a wooden water main which supplied Wellsville in another age and which the contractor estimates is 100 years old at least.

The wooden main, now badly rotted and crumbling, lies parallel with the new main for some distance and Mr. Havens supervised the unearthing of several lengths. The “mains” were also found...of solid wood in varying lengths of about eight to ten feet, and are now but six or eight inches in diameter. The long tube was drilled in solid trees by means of gigantic augurs, old residents say.

The lengths of the wooden pipe were crudely trimmed and branches several inches in length remained projecting from the “mains” They were linked together by iron clamps. An old pine knot was in use as a plug for a “valve” or hole in the wooden pipe. Among other finds was a piece of a deer horn in the excavation, picked up by workmen.”

When all was put back together, the wider streets made it easier and safer to park more cars in a diagonal parking manner, and maintain a good flow of traffic at the same time. Heavier traffic and larger trucks kept the parking patterns evolving!

But one thing we can say is that the look of Main Street was permanently changed for the better without the telephone poles cluttering up our sightlines. We take it all for granted now!

TIDBIT - Parking meters were not yet a ‘thing” in 1930, the first parking meters in the USA were installed in Oklahoma City in 1935, so our residents got a break of a few years before Wellsville caught the pay to park fever. Wellsville’s parking meters were installed by the end of 1941.
I would like to support the preservation of our local history by becoming a member

NAME (s) __________________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS __________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
PHONE   __________________________EMAIL ___________________________________________

Would you prefer your newsletter emailed to you?    _____ (Make sure you fill in E Mail Above)

Family membership is $15.00 per year.  Individual membership is $10.00 per year.   (circle one)

I would like to add $ ______ for ongoing maintenance and restoration projects at the museum.
The society is a 501C3 organization – all donations are tax deductible.
A new photo has recently surfaced for our files: The back of this undated photo lists the names of the occupants of the carriage as:

Semantha Duke, William Duke Jr. (though I believe it is Grant Duke). It says the man with the white beard is William Duke Sr and finally, the man with the Dukes is a family friend by the name of Harry Rhodes.

HARRY RHODES! Well we have been looking for a photo of Harry Rhodes like - forever!

Harry (no relation to me, at least that I know of) was born around 1845 in England and came to the USA prior to 1880. We can find him in the 1880 Census in Livingston County, NY, where his son Ernest was born in 1879. Moving to Wellsville about 1882, he established himself as a painter and decorator and became involved with the Genesee Steamer Company, which became the Genesee Hose Company.

In 1883, he opened the Rhodes Restaurant on North Main Street, and by 1884 he was running for Chief of the Wellsville Volunteer Fire Department.

Harry left Wellsville for Utah, but returned to town in 1893 with some ideas for a new City Hall Building that would contain the Fire Department as well. His plan (or a similar plan) for the new City Hall became a reality in 1895.

Our newspapers often used the word “irrepressible” before Harry’s name, and his adventures and endeavors were all over the newspapers, but we had no photo of him. Good things come to those who wait!