

The Lancaster Legend

Vol. 8, No. 1

Newsletter of the Lancaster Historical Society

January/February 2001

THE HULL HOUSE

Only a few Federal era houses have survived on the Niagara Frontier. One of the finest is a circa 1810 house built by Warren Hull, a Revolutionary War soldier, who came to the Holland Purchase in 1804. It is the oldest substantial masonry residence in Erie County having once been part of the county's most prosperous 19th century farms.

The Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier (LSNF) is now working to restore the Hull House at 5976 Genesee Street in Lancaster. The Society plans to lead a collaborative public planning process to restore the house and surrounding farmland as a Lancaster and regional historic asset.

"Highest use is for it [Hull House] to be restored to its period of prime significance and opened to the public, interpreted as an educational exhibit."

--John Conlin, Hull House Historic Structure Report (1998)



Hull House stands as an important treasure in our region's rich contribution to historic tourism and preservation. It represents a broad pattern of our nation's pioneer history, when original colonial settlers began a westward movement following the Revolutionary War. When the British burned Buffalo during the War of 1812, people fleeing the city were believed to find shelter at the Hull farm, which was home to Hull, his wife Polly and their 12 children. It was also known to be a stop on the Underground Railroad, used by former slaves traveling between East Aurora and Williamsville to seek their freedom in Canada. In 1839, Warren and Polly Hull were buried in the home's backyard, where their grave sites still remain.

Architecturally, Hull House is a rare surviving Federal style stone structure, retaining a great deal of its original features, including doors, doorways, window treatments, wainscot and mantelpieces. There are six working fireplaces including a basement kitchen facility, which features a wrought iron crane and beehive oven. Outside, a pyramidally tiered set of stone steps leads to the front entrance. An elliptical stone archway crowns the original six-panel door and sidelights.

In 1992, Hull House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and in 1993 the LSNF acquired the property, on the condition that restoration would begin within ten years. Since then, tree plantings in front of the house have been made in memory of Austin Fox and Alice Griffin. In addition, the roof has been temporarily sealed and new gutters have been installed to preserve the property.

Now, the LSNF is spearheading community involvement to proceed with the full restoration of Hull House.

Lancaster New York Historical Society

40 Clark Street
Lancaster, New York 14086
716/681-7719

<http://intotem.buffnet.net/lancasterpast/society>

Museum Hours: Sunday, 2:00 - 5:00 pm
Town Historian: Sunday, 2:00 - 5:00 pm, Call
Little Red Schoolhouse (Bowen at William):
Hours by Appointment

Sunday Program Series: On Hold

Officers:

President: Ben Maryniak
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The Lancaster Legend:
Editor/Design: Bill Harnack

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RESTORATION PLANS

Hull House could be a wonderful Lancaster community and region-wide asset to be used for scheduled tours by trained docents; meetings of small groups and local organizations; continuing education seminars on local architectural history; and elementary school field trips with themes such as Pioneer Settlement of Holland Purchase; Daily Life in the Early 19th Century; and the Underground Railroad in Western New York. All these activities would be planned in cooperation with Lancaster's other historic sites.

Restoration plans include viable visitor areas including lavatories, electric power entry and handicap accessibility. The initial process would also involve repair and rebuilding of chimneys to serve working wood burning fireplaces; restoration of wood shingle roofs; correcting water drainage problems and addressing the settlement of the rear wall and first floor; installation of a central heating system; removal of overhanging tree limbs; and other landscape work. Second phase work would preserve Hull House's physical integrity in accordance with Secretary of the Interior Guidelines for Restoration.

After these initial preservation projects, further site and landscape details will be addressed.

THE LANDMARK SOCIETY

The Landmark Society began in 1969 when a group of citizens purchased the oldest house in Buffalo to save it from an uncertain future and resold it to a young couple dedicated to its restoration. Today, the c. 1818 Coit House stands as the city's first landmark and the Society's first accomplishment. Over the years, the Society has played a significant role in saving other important buildings. In the cause of historic preservation, the Society believes the history and architecture of the Niagara Frontier is part of the heritage of our great community and should serve as a source of pride and enjoyment for all. The Landmark Society is committed to the discovery, preservation, protection and promotion of this heritage. Current President is Clinton Brown.

For further information on the Landmark Society and its activities, contact Tony Fryer, Executive Director, 414 Virginia Street, Buffalo, NY 14201.

Warren Hull

Phyllis J. Pankonin Hughes

Hull Family Association Genealogist and Journal Editor

Warren Hull, the son of Peter Hull and Esther Parmelee, was born March 31, 1762 in Killingworth, now Middlesex County, Connecticut. He was baptized May 2, 1762 at the Congregational Church, North Society, also in Killingworth. On August 3, 1783, he married Polly Gillet(te), born in 1765 and the daughter of Simeon Gillet(te) and Rebecca Andrews of Orange and Columbia Counties, New York.

Warren Hull was descended from the immigrant George Hull, who came to the colonies in the early 1630s from Crewkerne, Somersetshire, England. His lineage is given as follows:

Warren Hull, b. 31 Mar 1762, Killingworth, now Middlesex Co., CT; m. 03 Aug 1783, Polly Gillet(te)

Peter Hull Jr., b. 31 Oct 1738, Killingworth, CT, m. Esther Parmelee

Peter Hull Sr., b. 15 Nov 1713, Kent, Litchfield Co., CT, m. Eleanor Crane

Josiah Hull, b. 17 Sep 1676, Killingworth, CT, m. Elizabeth [—?—]

John Hull, b. 17 Dec 1644, Killingworth, CT, m. Abigail Kelsey

Josias Hull, bap. 10 Nov 1616, Crewkerne, co. Somerset, England, m. Elizabeth Loomis

Mr. George Hull, m. 27 Aug 1614, Crewkerne, co. Somerset, England, Thamzen Michell

Thomas "the Younger" Hull, m. 11 Jan 1572/73, Crewkerne, co. Somerset, England, Joan(e) Peson

Richard Hull, will proved 06 Jun 1559, Crewkerne, co. Somerset, England; m #2 Alice [—?—]

Warren Hull served in the Revolutionary War as a Private in the Massachusetts Line. In 1779 he enlisted at West Stockbridge, Berkshire County, Massachusetts and served for nine months in Capt. Wales' Company, Col. Thomas Marshall's 10th Regiment, Massachusetts Line, under Brigadier General Patterson. In 1780 he was a volunteer in Lt. [poss. Marriam] and Capt. Ford's Company, Col. Brown's 10th Militia Regiment for three months. In 1781, he served in Capt. Hickock's Company, Col. Sears' Regiment; he was detached from this

company and then served under Col. Marinus Willett for three months. Warren Hull participated in the Battle of Johnstown. He was discharged in 1781 and received a pension for his Revolutionary War service in 1832; the application number was S22841. Warren Hull and his wife, Polly, both died in 1838. They had been married fifty-five years and are buried in the small family plot behind their home in Lancaster, Erie County, New York.

Warren Hull resided in a number of different areas. Besides Killingworth, he also lived in New London (now Middlesex) County, Connecticut; West Stockbridge, Berkshire County, Massachusetts; Otsego, Otsego County, New York; Eaton, Madison County, New York; Bloomfield, Ontario County, New York; Lima, Livingston County, New York; and lastly in Clarence and Lancaster, Erie County, New York.

Warren Hull and his family came to the Holland Land Purchase in 1804 and he built his home in Lancaster in about 1810. Located at 5976 Genesee Street, it is one of the finest of only a few Federal era houses on the Niagara Frontier to have survived to the present day.

Warren and Polly (Gillet[te]) Hull were the parents of the following twelve children:

- i. Polly, born August 1, 1786; died 1863 or 1868; married Daniel Lewis.
- ii. Rebecca, born February, 1788; married (1) ? Mighills, (2) ? Tyler, (3) ? Smolley/Smalley.
- iii. James, born November 29, 1789.
- iv. Anna, born 1791.
- v. Maria, born 1793; died 1810; married (1) Ezra Sheldon, (2) ? Walling.
- vi. Edmund, born December 22, 1794 or 1795, New York; died 1852; married (1) Eliza Garrett, (2) Erevilla Churchill.
- vii. Justus G., born February 13, 1797, New York; died December 30, 1863, possibly in Grant County, Wisconsin; married Harriet Bevens, December 29 1819.
- viii. Sophia, born 1799; died 1866; married Eben/Eber D. Howe.
- ix. Miranda H., born 1802.
- x. Minerva, born 1804; died November 24, 1830.
- xi. Aurelia/Aurilla, born October 10, 1805; married (1) ? Reid, (2) Robert Upton Wheelock.
- xii. Vilera, born 27 October 1807 or 1808; died 1831; married William R./H. Conley.

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DESCENDENT OF WARREN HULL

Editor's note: In all honesty, I was looking for "filler" for the rest of this issue when I received, totally coincidentally, this email from John B. Lester, M.D., a direct descendent of Warren Hull. This led to an exchange of email and contact with Phyllis Hughes, the genealogist who wrote the preceding on Warren Hull. All this happened within a 24-hour period. Times have changed a bit since Warren's time! I find the following email from Mr. Hull's descendent worth sharing:

I am a descendent of Warren Hull. When can the Warren Hull House be toured? I live in the Kansas City area. Thanks. John B. Lester

Yes. My ggf was Ferdinand Hull. His dad Justus G.Hull, was a brickmaker in Buffalo until he moved to Wisconsin. I recently joined the Hull Family Assn. The expert in all this is Phyllis Hughes, the Assn Genealogist: She wrote a book which included Warren Hull as a Revolutionary War Patriot.

...The amazing person in this circumstance was Warren Hull of Lancaster, NY; as a very young man he joined an army that could hardly be called an army; he survived Johnstown. Somehow. How many of us would actually volunteer for such a thing today?...

I will copy this to Phyllis. Best regards. John B. Lester

I practiced medicine for a long time and I thought there were pressures in that situation; I can hardly imagine what it would be like to face your kind of deadline! [Editor's note: *medicine? no, I think you win on pressure...*] Phyllis no doubt will give you extremely valuable information when she gets home; waiting for her response will be well worth it: she puts great stock in being completely truthful and accurate. I am presently figuring out how to fly to Buffalo, visit Lancaster and Niagara Falls, then take the Amtrak to visit friends in NYC! As to gaining entrance to Warren Hull's house: What do you suggest?—volunteering for something?—going with a reporter (such as yourself)?—picketing?? ... In my limited experience, local history is much more vibrant than the canned stuff of junior-high textbooks, and it is much more revealing. I deduce that Lancaster is now a blue-collar community with a long and proud history. I am copying this to Phyllis Hughes and to Elizabeth Edwards, who is also believed to be a descendent of Warren Hull. Warmest regards. John B. Lester, M.D.

Dear Mr. Harnack. Terrific. I haven't seen Phyllis' book about Warren Hull but I'll bet it is accurate and very good reading. Personally I can hardly wait to see the Warren Hull House. So many fireplaces: that alone would have to be worth a look.

I have seen some *Lancaster Legend* issues on the Net (a nice, nice publication), most recently concerning the murder or suicide in Bowmansville. It just had to be suicide—guilt from shameful behavior, a drinking problem, nutty thinking (that law enforcement was after him), guilt about how he had treated his wife and (?)daughter and his neighbor's wife (whatever he did or—less likely—did NOT do); some degree of anesthesia from the alcohol—and, really, what kind of murderer would let his victim wander around for a while? (Even OJ knew better than that!!!!) DNA should clarify the whole thing. Need to check out the blood on the doorstep and don't forget the socks and gloves! It was a suicide! Best regards. John B. Lester

pan american exposition centennial

As editor of this publication on a part of WNY history, and as a webmaster whose web sites include LancasterPast and wgrz.com (Channel 2's web site), I am in awe of Aaron Heverin's Buffalo History Works, and its section, A Souvenir from the Pan American Expo. With his consent, I have added a page at wgrz.com incorporating his wonderful content, with links to the official Pan Am 2001 Centennial site, which is also nicely done. Just click on the icon at wgrz.com.

did you know?

The clock in the Town Hall and Opera House was started July 15, 1897 (exact time is scratched into the clock frame). During 1891, a committee was organized to consider “the necessity and advisability of building a Town Hall” and voters approved the project June 28, 1892, 149 to 89. Ironically, the Town Hall site was acquired almost a year before Lancaster’s catastrophic fire of April 9, 1894, cleared the land. A lot was offered for sale May 8, 1893, by the DF Clark estate and purchased by the town for \$7000. Excavation started August 27, 1894, and the first floor was used for a town board meeting on September 30, 1895. Construction was ongoing right to early 1897, so most dates for completion are wrong.

The first village Christmas tree was also the first use of electric lights in an outdoor display in this area. On December 24, 1914, a choir sang “Stille Nacht” and the Lancaster Band played — the lights were left on for two entire hours!

Grand Reopening of the Museum

Please join us for the Grand Reopening of the Clark Street Museum, home of the Lancaster New York Historical Society. There will be a brief ceremony and refreshments from 2 until 5 pm. Come meet our President Ben Maryniak and the board members. Kira Harnack will provide cello music. Mike Igoe, Channel 2 Consumer Reporter, will be there to join in the festivities. Please stop in and celebrate the re-birth of the Fanny Potter house, once the Lancaster Library, and now our Wonderful Home.

--Editor



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