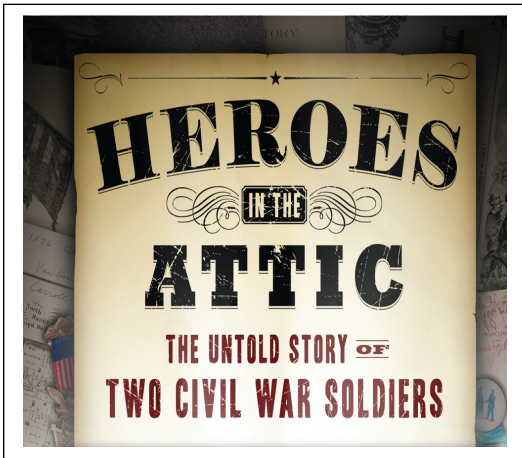


THE YELLOW WASP

Lima Historical Society

November 2025

October Presentation by Dennis Bielewicz Well Attended



In "Heroes in the Attic – The Untold Story of Two Civil War Soldiers," a talk co-sponsored by the Lima Historical Society and the Lima Public Library on October 14th, Dennis Bielewicz brought the Civil War story right here to Lima. He told of two Genesee Wesleyan College students who left school on the eve of graduation and recruited many of their classmates to join the Union Army to fight the Confederacy. As part of Company G of the 27th Regiment New York Volunteer Infantry, Seymour Hall and Benjamin Coffin fought at the First Bull Run, Gaines Mills, Fredericksburg, and many more battles from May 1861 to May 1863.

Dennis had first discovered the boys' story at 15 years of age when he found a trunk containing correspondence and newspaper articles in the abandoned Coffin farmhouse near Nunda. Once he retired from work as a school librarian, he then spent years researching Company G in libraries, museums and battlefields. He said that he takes pleasure in bringing the story back home to Lima where the boys were first inspired to follow Lincoln's call to arms. For a copy of Dennis' book go to: www.dennisbielewicz@gmail.com.

History of the Lima Public Library

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THE D.A.R AND THE LIMA LIBRARY BY JOYCE RAPP (WRITTEN ABOUT 2005)

"When the Lima Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution held its first annual meeting in 1909, Mrs. Mary Thompson, the secretary, was asked to contact Albany about "obtaining a State Library." That was the beginning of the Lima Public Library. Since one of the new chapter's goals was to work for Lima, it is not surprising then that this group provided the first books for public reading in the Lima community. Although the chapter was organized at the home of Mrs. T.W. Keating (the mother of Senator and Ambassador Kenneth Keating) on January 8, 1904, it rented temporary quarters in the town hall by October of that year. Rent was \$1.00 per month with heat and light included. But the ladies soon decided that a permanent room was needed "to preserve historical relics and to teach patriotism." Therefore, Miss Warner, the Regent, appointed a committee to be on "the look-out for a permanent room to hold meetings." Within a month, the group agreed to ask the town board for the use of the current room and "that we might use our influence for an affirmative vote." Their influence must have been mighty because the town fathers allowed them to not only use the room rent free because it (D.A.R.) had purchased a gas stove for the room." Although the chapter eventually shared the Legion room, you can still see the D.A.R on the door of the Assessor's office just inside the front door of the town hall.

During the next few years, the membership worked towards its goals: they donated \$1.40 (the profit from an ice cream and cake sale) to veterans and the many shut-ins in the village, gave prizes for the best essays by the seventh, eighth, and ninth graders in all Lima schools and in 1911, they discussed the organization of the town library. In 1955, its financial support was transferred to the town of Lima through taxes and state funding. Initially, the collection was housed in the D.A.R. room. Miss Warner was librarian every Saturday from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Dean Taylor, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Taylor, withdrew the first book. However, when circulation and the number of books increased, the library was moved to the upper rooms in the Keating Block on the south side of East Main Street. It formally opened as the Lima Public Library on December 12, 1912 with 215 borrowers. The year 1912 was also important because the library was given a provisional charter from the New York State Library Association. This included an annual grant of \$50 provided the library spend a like amount and have its books approved by the State Library. A permanent charter was bestowed in 1913. Our library would make three more moves before it settled in its present Genesee Street home. In 1916, it moved next to the Centennial Fire House, but by 1923, when its literary seams were bursting again, the library moved to a building on Rochester St. where the Community Center is now located. (continued on page 3)

LHS Calendar of Events

PLEASE CLIP AND SAVE

- Thursday Nov. 13, 2025 7 PM LHS Board of Trustees Meeting, Tennie Burton Museum. All are welcome to attend.
- Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026 7 PM LHS Board of Trustees Meeting, Tennie Burton Museum. All are welcome to attend.
- Tuesday, Feb 24, 2026 7PM LHS/Lima Public Library Meeting “The History of Livingston County” by Holly Watson, Livingston County Historian. Meeting at the Lima Public Library, 7 PM.

LIMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1850 ROCHESTER ST. LIMA NY 14485 (585-624-1050)

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The Lima Historical Society Extends Sincere Condolences to the Family of Fran Kreider

Explore Our LHS Website

As a reminder to all of our members, our LHS website <https://limahistorical.org> provides access to a substantial body of historical information about Lima, including:

- a brief history of the town
- village walking tour
- historical photos
- video on Lima architecture (“Talking Buildings”)
- previous LHS newsletters

Please take a look. Suggestions as to content and format welcome.

Mark your Calendar

The History of Livingston County
by Holly Watson,
Livingston County Historian

Tuesday, February 24: 7 PM
Lima Public Library

What's in A Name???

According to a 1938 *Lima Recorder* article regarding the name Lima:

In 1788, this whole section of the country west of Cayuga Lake bore the name Ontario County. The following year, 1789, the township of Charleston was created, and the present section of Lima was known as “Miles Gore” after Abner *Gore (sic Miles or Mighells)*, a pioneer settler. The name Lima was adopted in 1808.

Another early name was “Brick School House Corner” for reasons noted elsewhere. The cognomen “Lima” is supposed to be derived from Old Lyme, Conn., original home of early settlers here. Others contend that the lime formations of this vicinity suggested the name. However, no doubt, this was the **first town of Lima in the United States**.

An Altercation in Lima Leads to Murder in 1869

On May 30, 1869, two Lima men—Patrick Gaskin and Thomas Smith—both of whom worked for well-to-do farmer B. A. Vary of Lima—got into a heated argument after washing a herd of sheep, apparently in the rain. The difficulty seemed to have arisen when Gaskin was asked to ride back to Vary's house to pick up umbrellas for Smith and another worker named Kavanaugh. The difficulty was precipitated by the fact that Gaskin never brought the umbrellas back with him. Smith and Gaskin began arguing about that, but were initially separated by Kavanaugh. The situation quickly devolved into Smith's stabbing Gaskin with a pocket knife. Realizing how dire the victim's situation was, Smith rode bareback into Lima hopefully to find a physician, and the priest from St Rose. After Gaskin's death a few hours later, Smith turned himself into the law. The deceased Gaskin and his wife Anna Timmons were both born and married in Ireland, but moved to Lima sometime in the 1850's. Smith was sentenced to 10 years in the Auburn prison after being found guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

Interestingly, Patrick Gaskin, the victim in this sad event, is the great-great grandfather of Lima resident, Sandy Chatterton, who discovered the relationship in the course of her genealogical research on her own and husband Dale's ancestry. While she knew of the relationship to Patrick Gaskin through her father, Ray Bawden's, mother's family, Sandy had never heard the story of his murder until a chance meeting with Helen Stefano at Copytown. And although she found Patrick's wife's grave in the St Rose Cemetery in Lima, she had not found his grave alongside it. She eventually located it in the St. Agnes Cemetery in Avon, albeit without a headstone. (References: Sandy Chatterton, personal communication, *The NY Times*: June 2, 1869, p.5; Howard Appell, *The Livingston County News*: “A Violent death in Lima” year?)

History of the Lima Public Library (contin. from page 1)

According to Mabel Jenks, a Lima resident who wrote extensively about Lima history, the Rochester Street building has an unusual story. The original brick building was erected in 1875 by Robert Beale and his son, Henry. It was used successively as a town hall when the Main Street building was so busy that the councilmen were forced to meet in barns. Later, it was used as a polling place. In 1921, contractor Ben Beale, the grandson of Robert, added another room and a basement. And his wife, Mamie, was librarian for the next 41 years. During her tenure, Mamie guided and guarded the literary leanings of the Lima community...especially the young people. Hildegard Turk still remembers the scolding she received as a teenager when she tried to borrow *Peyton Place*, the current controversial best-seller that hinted at bedroom activity. Hildegard recalled, "She scared me half to death in front of everyone and then called my father. I still haven't read that book." When Mrs. Beale retired in 1962, Jeanette Erbe succeeded her. I still remember Ms. Erbe. As suburban transplants who were used to chauffeuring a large family every place but the bathroom, being able to walk to the library was a slice of heaven. And having Ms. Erbe, with her gentle smile and helpful reading advice, enlarged the slice.



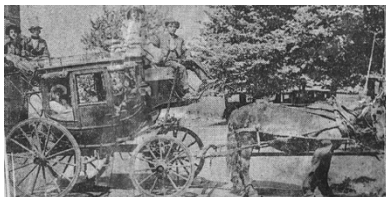
Old Lima Public Library on Rochester Street

Although the brick building was designed for future readers as well as the present, it was obvious by the mid-1960s that a larger building was necessary for the 11,000 books and the corresponding growth of readers. Fortunately, Mrs. Belle Chapin Tenny came to the rescue with a gift of \$25,000 in seed money for the new building. And when the voters said "yes" to a \$40,000 appropriation, the Moran Mill property on Genesee Street was purchased and ground broken on July 19, 1967. Ten months later, on May 19, 1968, Lima's new library, the Chapin Memorial Library, was dedicated. It was a proud day for Lima residents. A New York state flag which had flown over the state capitol was raised, a gold key was given to Mrs. Tenny and a "thank you" was said to Senator Kenneth Keating and his sister, Dorothy Keating Adams, for their gift of the large bay window remembering their mother, Louise Barnard Keating, who played a major role in organizing the first D.A.R. library. And a small plaque on the wall of the Children's Room honors Mrs. Mamie Beale, the keeper of Lima's literary morals. Barbara Wilcox picked up the librarian reins in 1970 and remained until she retired in 2005. Michelle Rohrbach was then appointed manager. The library not only increased its circulation during Wilcox's tenure but also increased its services: story hours, library programs, talking books, large print books...videos, newspapers, and a meeting place for special events are a few of its services. There are also 12 computers in the building. Since Wilcox was a proficient grant writer, three of the computers were secured by state or federal grants. Working within the Pioneer Library System, our library combines resources with libraries in Ontario, Livingston, Wayne and Wyoming counties. This affords a greater selection of books for its patrons.

The Lima Public Library has come a long way since those D.A.R. ladies wrote to Albany about "acquiring a State Library." But it isn't just about the 1500 patrons or the 26,385 book titles. It is about a high school student surrounded by reference books the night before a paper is due, literacy programs, and the folks who stop in for some quiet time browsing by the big bay window. Most of all the library is about service. It is Michelle or Sylvia or Cheryl or Sharon lending a helping hand in finding or ordering a book. It can also be help in locating the correct income tax form for a late filer or leaning over a youngster at the computer while he is trying to master the complexities of the electronic age. Small wonder that the Lima Public Library is called "the best spot in town." (Rapp, Joyce 1955 Lima Public Library website <https://lima.owwl.org>.)

1925 Genesee Wesleyan Seminary Pageant

Draws 2000 People to Lima



This was an extraordinary event in Lima's history—"the most elaborate ever seen in Lima" according to one newspaper account. It occurred on the 93rd anniversary of the founding of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, with about 150 costumed actors and notables taking part in the multi-part depiction of the history of the seminary. The pageant, written and directed by faculty member Ruth Marietta Wood, was accompanied by music from a new \$10,000 organ in the Chapel of College Hall.

The first depiction was of native American life in the area. Students dressed in native costumes, along with Native Americans from the Cattaraugus reservation, played roles in that segment accompanied by native music. The second segment involved those playing the "founders" of the seminary dressed in the tall hats and flowing dresses of the early 1800's set in a symbolic pyramid, representing the founders' educational vision. The third segment portrayed the opening of the school, with parents bringing their children to the new seminary on horses or in horse-drawn carriages, including a stage coach (see photo above) owned by James W. Wadsworth Sr. The Civil War era was depicted in the fourth episode, and the last segment showed the many nationalities (in costume) representing the student attendees through the years.

1850 Rochester St.
P.O. Box 532
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