



The Hitching Post

Vol. 8 No. 1

The Newsletter of the Ravena Coeymans Historical Society

Winter 2010

The Ravena Teacher Training Institute

BY MARY FARINELLI

The front-page article of the Sept. 13, 1905 issue of The Daily News opened with this large headline:

INSTITUTE OPENS AT RAVENA ALBANY COUNTY'S EDUCATORS IN TOWN

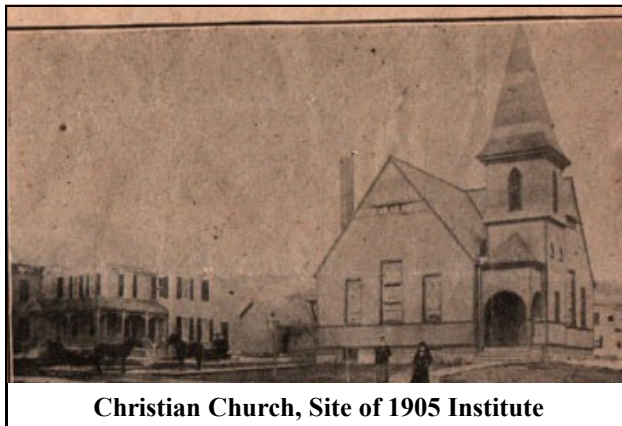
It began, "On Monday morning the trains from different directions brought bevvies of school ma'ams and school masters to our active little village. At the station [on Railroad Avenue], there was a scene of life and animation as the teachers were placed in charge of their various hosts and conducted to their several homes for the week. And there was a great deal of merriment among the fair guides of youthful ideas as they were piloted up the street by individuals who seemed appreciative of their honor."

The headquarters for the Institute was at the Christian Church, on the corner of Main Street and Mountain Road in Ravena, where the teachers registered that day. Reverend D. I. Putnam, Pastor of the church, delivered the welcoming address. On Tuesday, the group of 173 teachers assembled at the church, then separated into two sections – one remaining at the church, and the other going to the old Ravena School building right off Mountain Road.

Opening addresses were given on the topics of "experience", "teachers' morality", "the duty of mothers", and "public or private punishment for a 'laxity of morals' ". Lectures on the instruction of "primary numbers", methods of teaching geography, "Letter Exchange" work and ideas about "Unity in Arithmetic " were also given. This was not the first time that groups of teachers had gathered at some location in Albany County for the purpose of listening to professional advice from the "conductors and their

assistants" of the teacher training field.

It all started back in 1837 when the knowledge of subject matter was considered adequate preparation for teaching. Up until that time, the methods of teaching had been lectures and recitation, memorization and repetition. Then, a new approach at this time to the "art of teaching" included a deep interest in children, an understanding of the psychology of children and the use of meaningful methods of instruction, such as verbal and written analysis, discus-



Christian Church, Site of 1905 Institute

sions and personal opinions. The physical and moral training of students as well as their intellectual training was to be promoted. The first public normal school was established in Lexington, MA, where an experimental school was introduced. The teacher could apply the methods and principles they had been taught with the students in this "model" school. General observation and direction would be done by the principal of the normal school. Many of the State Colleges throughout the State opened as 2-year Normal Schools. SUNY at Albany began as Albany Normal School in 1844.

The "normal school", which emphasized the integration of subject matter and teaching methods, proved to be a very successful phenomenon. The 1882 annual report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in New York State stated that "The normal schools are turning out well-trained and superior teachers, but the number is still very small compared to the great need of the public schools ... and most of them gravitate towards the more flourishing of them". More than three-quarters of all the teachers in the state were in small country schools and few could afford to spend the time at a normal school. The Superintendent then suggested that the County needed to "bring the normal school to the teachers".

continued on page 3



**RAVENA
COEYMANS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

OFFICERS 2008-2009

President ~ Ralph Bianco
Vice President ~ David Ross
Secretary ~ Linda Peterman
Treasurer ~ William Meyer

TRUSTEES

Ralph Bianco	2011
Dave Ross	2012
William Meyer	2010
Linda Peterman	2011
Nancy Bruno	2010
Suzanne Celella	2010
Robert Halley	2012
Joe Boehlke	2012
Lucy Margiasso	2012

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership

William Meyer

Collections

Barbara Goetschius

Historian

Robert Halley

Research

David Ross

Publicity

Lynn Vanderzee-Christie

Programs

Lynn Vanderzee-Christie

Fundraising

Nancy Bruno

Conservation

Suzanne Celella

Museum

Joe Boehlke, Curator

Calendar

Linda Peterman

Refreshments

Robert Halley

Cemetery

Ralph Bianco

Newsletter Committee

Mary Farinelli

Joe Boehlke

Greetings,

Happy 2010, once again I wish to thank everyone for their continued hard work and support for the Historical Society. We have another very busy year ahead of us. We continually receive new items and documents which we are working diligently to preserve. These preservation measures are costly and I wish to report to all our supporters what their generous donations are achieving:

- The News Herald newspapers dating from 1800 - 1952 \$1000.00
- The rare 1786 Coeymans map donated by the Town of Coeymans is estimated to cost around \$700.00 to conserve.
- Plus the preservation of all the other numerous items that we have received.

I want to give a special thank you to Robert Halley who donated a 1700 Slave Bill of Sale document from Coeymans and it's conservation. He has been extremely generous to the Society and I wish to convey our appreciation for all he has contributed as well as all of you for your generous support and help.

The Ravena Coeymans Historical Society is becoming a well respected entity in the community by providing access to our wonderful history for many generations to come because of our loyal members and supporters. Best wishes for 2010,

Ralph Bianco
President

MUSEUM NEWS

by Joe Boehlke

Our December open house was a huge success with almost 100 people in attendance. Since then several Cub Scout groups have also toured the museum to see the new "Schools in our Community" exhibit. If you haven't seen the new exhibit we encourage you to do so. The exhibit will continue through mid 2011. My thanks to all who contributed to this Exhibit.

The museum team is busy making plans for new exhibits, reorganizing our research center and making plans for future events. Anyone interested in helping please contact the curator.



A scene from the "Schools in Our Community" exhibit.

MUSEUM HOURS

The Historical Society Museum is open every Thursday (except holidays) from 1pm to 3pm
or you may call for an appointment: 756-9395 or 756-6536



Ravena Teacher Training Institute. continued from page 1

And so they did. Two “experienced and competent” conductors went into each county with a session of one week. They located at a place “easily accessible” by the teachers of each county. By the late 1800’s, the State was able to carry Teacher Training Centers to teachers, and potential teachers. J.J. Callanan, School Commissioner of the first district in Albany County reported that objections to the Institute had “nearly disappeared” and the “people [were] satisfied and the teachers were interested and benefited”. He praised the State for their efforts to “perfect the Institute”.

Ravena was one of the first locations of a Teacher Training Institute. Early Records of Attendance show that the second week in September was one of the weeks in the school year in which classes were held. Summer sessions and multiple weeks during the year were times in which teachers were also accommodated. By 1908, a separate structure was built on the property on Mountain Road where the 1889 schoolhouse stood. The News Herald reported:

RAVENA’S NEW HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING IS CONVENIENT AND WELL BUILT
The old building a model grammar school

A description of the new building was given in great detail in the News Herald on Dec. 18 – from the placement of the rooms to the equipment inside the building. The article concluded “The details of arrangement in the new building certainly reflect the most approved and progressive ideas concerning the management of a school...the structure worthy of the pride of the residents of the district”.

Early records show that applications for appointment to instruct a Training Class were filed. One of the opportunities cited was that “Each grade room would be easily accessible to members of the Training Class, where model

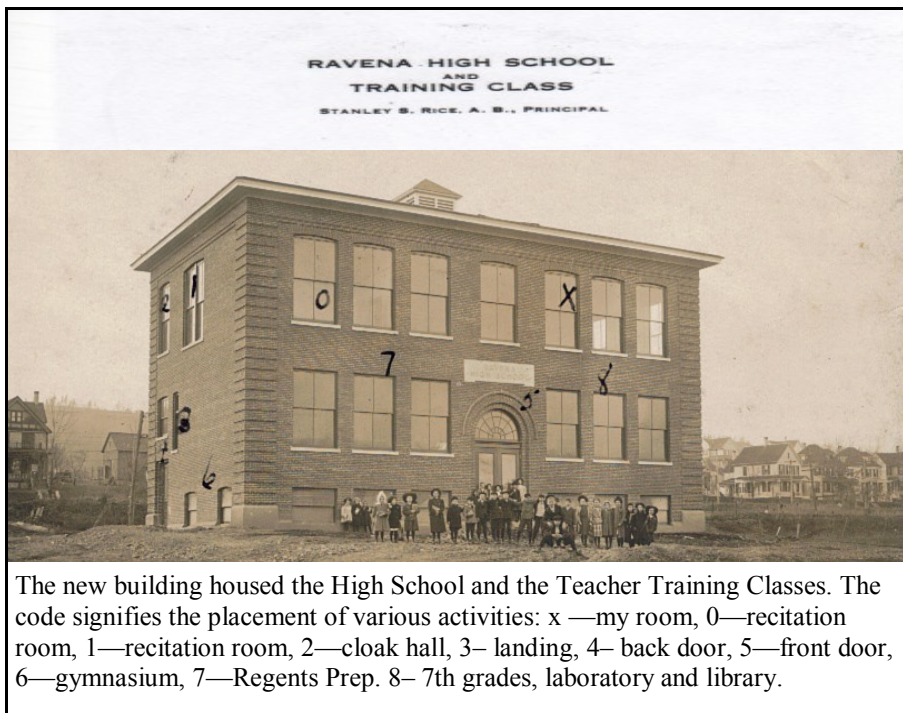
teaching could be observed. Also, the room to be set aside for Training Class work [would be] sufficiently large to allow classes from the grades to be drawn for practice teaching”. The history of teacher training institutes, in its infancy, speaks of a “model” school as being one in which potential teachers can observe classes during instruction. This means that the new High School and the older Grade School were used in tandem as teacher training resources. Perhaps, in time, the model school may have accommodated practice teaching by the students in the teacher-training program.

Another file holds the grading scores of groups of students who had taken the examinations for training class certificates. Home addresses from many surrounding towns are listed. The first Teacher Training Class of 10 members graduated in 1911 on Commencement Day. Nine more classes would follow. However, the glorious days of the Teachers’ Institute were about to end.

On December 24, 1920, area residents would awake to the astounding headlines in the News Herald of the terrible news and disastrous loss to the community:

RAVENA HIGH SCHOOL AND CONTENTS DESTROYED BY FIRE

The newspaper reported “Only the walls and basement remain of the practically new high school building which was erected in 1908 at a cost of \$15,850.” The fire was discovered by workers at 3:00 a.m. as they were going home. Fire Chief George W. Babcock was first to reach the building. The fire spread rapidly with the interior of the building being yellow pine. The tar roof added to the intensity of the flames.



The new building housed the High School and the Teacher Training Classes. The code signifies the placement of various activities: x —my room, 0—recitation room, 1—recitation room, 2—cloak hall, 3— landing, 4— back door, 5—front door, 6—gymnasium, 7—Regents Prep. 8— 7th grades, laboratory and library.

The news article recalled the cost of additional equipment for the school, the additions, improvements and new books. In the morning, visitors and searchers began to arrive at the ruins. Eighth-grade children found some of

Continued on page 4

Ravena Teacher Training Institute. continued from page 3

their books – though wet and dirty. Some of the school records and letter files were salvaged, as were “two small pictures and books”. A fence was put around the ruins. They say “a couple thousand “ people visited the site.

The News Herald optimistically predicted that the old 1889 grammar school would be “changed to meet existing conditions, and the Christian Church chapel and the fire house utilized in the reorganized school work. The principal’s office would be in the library on the 3rd floor of the grammar school building...” Everyone knew that the glory days of the Ravena Teacher Training Institute were over too soon.

Sources:

The Albany Normal School, <http://www.albany.edu/faculty/aballard/civilwar/normalschool.htm>
Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction –1885.
 Ed.Merle Barrowman. *Teacher Education in America, a Documentary History.*
Collection of Registers of Attendance in District #1 of Albany County.
Ravena News Herald, Daily News Insert – September 13, 1905.
Ravena News Herald. December 18, 1908, December 24, 1921.
Reports of School Commissioners – District #1 by JJ Callanan – November 30, 1886.
Teacher Training Records. Ravena Coeymans Historical Society Archives
My thanks to Clesson Bush, Chuck Friday, Mary McCabe and Harry Sturges for their support and assistance.

2 0 1 0 M E M B E R S P O N S O R S

Supporting Family

Clesson & Jean Bush
 Ralph & Linda Bianca
 Joseph & Gail Boehlke
 Curtis & Denise Wilsey
 Gordon & Linda Stanton
 Karen & Andy Hess

Benefactors

Sylvia & Paul Lawlor
 Robert Halley

Patron

Bob & Ann Hallock

Supporting Individual

Karol A. Beck
 Charles F. Coons
 William R. Meyer
 Linda Peterman
 Cathy Ricciardi

2 0 1 0 B U S I N E S S S P O N S O R S

Business Benefactor

Town of Coeymans
 Village of Ravena

Business Patron

State Telephone Company

Business Sustaining

Babcock Funeral Home
 Collins & Sons Inc.
 Crossroad’s Ford/Mercury
 John T. Biscione, Esq.
 Sarah M. Biscione, Esq.
 Van Etten Excavating

Business Supporter

Bullock Utilities
 Coeymans Landing Marina
 Muellers Automotive LLC
 National Bank of Coxsackie
 Persico Oil Co.
 Peter Clouse, Esq.
 Ravena Auto Supply/Napa Auto Parts
 Ravena Barn Flea Market
 Ravena Shop’n Save
 Stanton Farms

Luciano Polverelli ~ Sharing the Love of Music

By Joe Boehlke

The beginning of the twentieth century was welcomed by Americans with a great deal of optimism. Many felt it was a time of peace, prosperity and progress and were expecting the succeeding years to be filled with bountiful opportunities. Italy on the other hand had become overcrowded, dominated by high taxes, low wages and poverty. In 1905, 323,000 Italians were ill of malaria and thousands died from the disease. These conditions did not present a very promising future for many. Vittorio Emanuele III was King of Italy, Pius X was Pope and Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States. The year 1905 would also be the first time in history that more than one million immigrants would arrive in the United States in a single year.

Young nineteen year old Luciano Polverelli was in a seminary in Rome that year, following the patriarchal culture in Italy at the time. His father had decided that he should become a priest. On August 10, 1905 Luciano wrote the following in his journal *"My father believes I should become a man of the holy cloth, but I do not share these same dreams and aspirations. See, in my country, the father is considered to be the decision maker. He tells the children what career, if any, they will have and he will arrange for these events to occur. I want more from life than sitting around all day praying. I want a family and my own band and a more adventurous life for myself."* Luciano, to have been accepted in seminary, must have had a good education so far; we also know that he was proficient in music and played the trumpet. He further writes: *"I am planning to escape from the seminary and go to America where I can have the chance to start a 'new' life. I was born to be a musician. I plan to share my love for music with others in America. I have faith 'the land of plenty' will deliver the life I so much crave."*

Fourteen days later Luciano has his departure planned. He writes: *"It is almost time for me to leave for America. I dream every night about the good life and how wonderful of an experience it will be to live in a land that so closely resembles a heaven..... When I get to America, the hard times I sustained in Italy will be a distant memory. I will have the freedom to choose my own path. I will be a famous musician and people will come from all over to hear me play my trumpet."* He goes on to discuss how he

will escape the seminary with only the clothes on his back and his trumpet. On September 10th, Luciano boards the boat he will take to begin his new life in America, and as he boards he reflects on whether he is making the right decision. In the end he decides to look forward and forge ahead with his journey. On September 20th, his journal reads in part.... *"I have been on the boat for ten days but it seems like an eternity. I am in what they call third class. We are packed in tighter than rats. The [putrid] smell makes me sick to my stomach..."* He further describes how the food is days old and many people are sick with illnesses and again he wonders if the hardships are worth it. While

he is on the boat he sits and plays his trumpet to keep his mind off the hardships of travel and he notices how his music seems to help others as well. It was common for the steamship agents to book as many steerage passengers as they could squeeze on the ships to make the voyages financially worthwhile for the shipping companies. During these times the shipping companies recorded large profits.

On September 31, 1905 Luciano writes in his journal again, this time with much joy: *"Today I saw the most beautiful lady I have ever seen in my entire existence. It was the Statue of Liberty. When I saw her, tears streamed down my face. I was in total awe. I never thought freedom looked so fine. Cheers rang through the ship when the captain announced we have arrived in America. The new land was finally in sight and 'new' lives were beginning."* The next day, on October 1st, he writes of his experience leaving the boat and going through processing at Ellis Island. Fortunately he meets all the requirements and is allowed to enter his new country and home.

Several weeks after his arrival Luciano makes his way from New York City to Coeymans. Not much is known as to why or how he ended up in the Coeymans area, but it is where he now stays to begin a new life and his dream of sharing his music.

After arriving in Coeymans he gets a job working in a grocery store, located on North Main Street, owned by Joseph Pinnola and his wife Raffaele. In a November 1, 1905 journal entry he talks about his new job. *"I have a job at a nearby grocery store working for a man who loves music as much as I do.... the manager allows me time to play*



continued on page 6

my trumpet for the customers. He says the music makes them buy more groceries....." Later in the same journal entry he writes about meeting a young woman, Marguarite who he begins to see regularly. In the 1910 census he is listed as living with the Pinnola's and during this time period he forms the Pinnola Band. On December 1, 1914 Luciano and Marguarite Morrell are married and begin their life together. By the following September, they are expecting their first child.

In his September 10, 1915 journal entry he writes: "I teach music lessons to children in the neighborhood for free because they cannot afford to pay me. I have also formed the first little boys band in Ravenna. I teach music at the nearby high school and still have my job at the grocery store. I am saving money with the hope of having my own grocery store one day. America IS the land of opportunity. I came here in hopes of having a good life and I have everything I have always dreamed about. A beautiful wife, a family in the making and I am involved in music....."

After saving for a number of years, Luciano and Marguarite eventually opened their own grocery store. They also continued adding to their family with a total of three daughters and two sons. Sadly on 19th of July 1924, just after she gave birth to her last child, Marguarite passed away from complications in childbirth leaving Luciano with five small children. The News Herald of 25 July 1924 reported that the attendance at her funeral was large and that the Italian band under the direction of Mr. Polverelli attended in body and the band played a funeral dirge as part of the funeral procession.

Although the details are not fully known, family members tell that Luciano was initially taught how to play the trumpet by his father but that he was mostly self taught. One thing we know for sure is that he was an extremely talented musician. John "Chicky" Pape, one of his students related how Luciano approached his parents and told them if they would purchase the instrument that he would teach their son music for free. Chickie also told us that Luciano could sit down and play any instrument that was handed to him; he could also sit down and transcribe music scores for any of the instruments required for the bands selections. Luciano continued teaching private lessons and music at Coeymans High School until around 1947

when the Coeymans and Ravenna schools centralized. He also formed an American Legion band and the VFW band, which continued in existence for many years.

Luciano passed away on December 28, 1954 at the age of 69. His obituary from the December 31, 1954 issue of the News Herald reads in part "Mr. Polverelli has been a resident of the village most of his life and during many of these years he has played an important part in the musical life of the community. In his early days he was the leader of what was known as the Italian Band and the Sons of Italy, which played an important part in the Assumption day celebrations of years ago. He built band quarters as part of his property on Main Street where the bands practiced.

The makeup of the band changed several times and he has been the leader of many of them. He was then hired to teach band music in the Coeymans School."

As a young man he came to America with a dream and lived the dream through adversity and tragedy. His legacy lives on in the many lives he touched with his music. A number of years ago, through the efforts of John Pape and Joseph



Campoli, the "Luciano Polverelli Instrumental Music Award" was established and is awarded "to a graduating RCS student who has made a significant contribution to the instrumental music program." Through this effort, the legacy that began in 1905 with a decision of a young man to leave his homeland to pursue his dream continues today.

If you would like to contribute to this fund you may do so by sending your contribution to:

Luciano Polverelli Music Award
c/o National Bank of Coxsackie
PO Box 297
Ravenna, NY 12143.

Our thanks to Angie Bassotti, Josephine Bruno, Peggy Matheny and John "Chickie" Pape for sharing their memories with us for this article. We must also say that without Luciano's personal journal as a source, much of this information would not be possible today.

Sources:

Luciano Polverelli personal journal:
August 10, 1905 - September 10, 1915
Ravenna News Herald: Friday, July 25, 1924
Friday, December 31, 1954.
United States Federal Census records: 1910, 1920, 1930

RCHS Membership

General Member	\$10/annually
Family	\$15/annually
Supporting/individual	\$25/annually
Supporting/family	\$50/annually
Patron	\$100 & up
Benefactor	\$250 & up
Individual Life	\$100/per individual (must be 55 or above)

If you have not sent in your dues for 2010, please do so. This will ensure that you continue to receive future RCHS newsletters.

New memberships are welcome at any time.

You may mail them to:

Ravena Coeymans Historical Society
P. O. Box 324
Ravena, NY 12143
c/o Bill Meyer

Business Sponsorship:

Business Supporter	\$50/annually
Business Sustaining	\$100 & up /annually
Business Patron	\$250 & up /
Business Benefactor	\$1000 & above

M A R K Y O U R C A L E N D A R S

Sunday, February 21 2010 – 2:00 PM

Ralph Biance - “Arrowheads & Stone Implements”
Lucy Margiasso - to introduce her book “The Demise of Indian Fields, NY”
David Cornelius - “History & Culture of the Mahicans in the Coeymans Area”

Sunday, March 14 2010 – 2:00 PM

Mark Stanton - “Stanton Farms 1872 to 2010”

Thursday April 8 2010 - 7:00 PM

Anthony Gambino - “By the Shores of New Baltimore:
Its Shipyards and Nautical History”

Thursday May 13 2010 - 7:00 PM

Jean Bush & Kenneth Mabey - “Historic Places in Greene County”

Sunday, June 13 2010 - 1-4 PM

Annual Picnic (location TBA)

“No greater nor more affectionate honor can be conferred on an American than to have a public school named after him [or her].”

- Herbert Hoover

Little Red Schoolhouse Historical Society Events:

April 24 Alcove Garage Sale Day
The Schoolhouse will be open 8:00 Am - ? and have items for sale. Items can be dropped off at the schoolhouse after 5:30 pm on Friday April 23. Other arrangements, call Paul Caswell.

June 1, 7:00 pm Ice Cream Social
Professional story-teller Nancy Marie Payne will entertain guests with the story of "The O'Shawnessey's and their Trains" - free homemade ice cream and cake will follow

April 10 Road Cleanup
August 7 Road Cleanup
November 6 Road Cleanup

WITH DEEP SYMPATHY, WE
NOTE THE PASSING OF
Marvin Wolfe
Our Town Historian

Check out the RCHS Website:
<http://www.coeymanshistory.org>

Ariaantje Coeymans: Enigmatic Colonial Dutch Woman

By Lynn Van derzee Christie

On Sunday, January 10th, Karen Hess spoke about her year's research into the life of Ariaantje Coeymans to a large gathering at the Historical Society. As a docent at the Albany Institute of History & Art, Karen became interested in the full length portrait of Ariaantje Coeymans painted by Nehemiah Partridge. Since Ariaantje did not have any children, did not keep a journal, and was not written about by her husband, there is very little known about her except for the full length portrait, her impressive stone house, and her unconventional marriage. Read about Karen's interpretation of this historic portrait. Her research document is located in our Museum Research Center.



The Hitching Post
Ravenna Coeymans Historical Society
P.O. Box 324
Ravenna, New York 12143
<http://www.coeymanshistory.org>

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Published semi-annually by the Ravenna Coeymans Historical Society