



# Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 17, Number 2

Spring 2017

## PRISON KIDS

by Suzanne Law Hawes and Nancy Henzel Clarke

### Growing Up on Wallkill Prison Land in the 1940s and 1950s

Nancy Henzel Clarke's family lived in a two-family home on Rt. 208, across from Bennett's Texaco gas station, from the 1940's until 1955. Her next-door neighbor and best friend was **Suzanne Law Hawes**. Other nearby prison families with children were the **Sheeheys**, **Wickners**, and the **Kazimers**.

Nancy Henzel Clark remembers those days: "My childhood memories, growing up on prison property, are happy ones. An important benefit of living where we did was learning to appreciate the wonders of nature and observing the prison's 900-acre working farm first hand. Was it frightening when the 'escape' siren sounded? Not really. Mom said the escapee wanted to get far away from prison property and wasn't interested in coming to our house to call. One time they caught an escapee hiding in the apple orchard near our house and we kids had just delivered food to a guard friend on duty in the same orchard. The inmates of that era were rarely hardened criminals, most were first offenders. A crew of trustee inmates would regularly mow our lawn, tend the golf course and perform general maintenance work at our home. Occasionally a mounted guard would let us sit on his horse as he escorted his men on the property. Happy days in a beautiful place...the spectacular Wallkill Valley."



Sue Hawes and Nancy Clarke in the 1940s

**Suzanne Law Hawes** also recalls "the happiest times of my life. A beautiful home, camaraderie of age mates, freedom of space and adventure. Who could ask for anything more? Norb, Marie, Dick and Nancy were our close neighbors and our fathers were employed by the prison. Despite the advent of WWII, blackened windows and sirens, and fathers leaving to respond to escapees, we were relatively unaffected. But we were affected by the rhythms of prison life. Norb Henzel left to teach in the day; John Law, as recreation director, had a recreation role in the evening hours. Hence the Law dinner hour was at 3:30 PM before he left for work for the 'four o'clock count'."

"Our one-room school house in New Hurley was our initial introduction to school; later we moved to the consolidated school in town that required bus transport. Previously, despite gas rationing (we had a C gas ration card for nonessential driving), our parents drove us to our school. It was a building with a furnace smack-dab in the middle of the room, outhouses that were turned over routinely at Halloween, a pump to provide water to heat for lunch and whatever Army surplus was sent for food - peanut butter and grapefruit sections - and only hooks for our outwear with no closet space or lockers. Our teacher, Mrs. Hazel Ronk, kept all grades children on their toes. We learned how to use stylus pens and inkwells, the Palmer method as well as listening to the older grades recite. She was amazing!"

"Life at home meant staying in during blizzards, huddled around the big living room fireplace doing puzzles, listening to the Lone Ranger or playing games. No TV or Internet but radio for favorite programs; the outside world wasn't too much with us, other than to know that a war was on. It was only seeing the movies - far distant and infrequent - in Walden - where we saw RKO news and the effects of war."

"The surrounding property was a winter wonderland for cross-country skiing and snow-drift tunneling that kept us outside all day long. The house property was so situated that we had a pond, beef cattle in the back yard, and amazing areas to explore." (cont. on p. 2)

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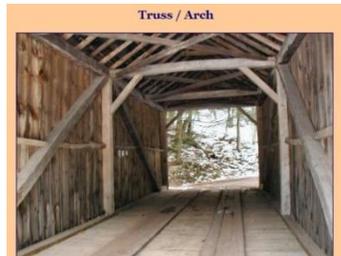
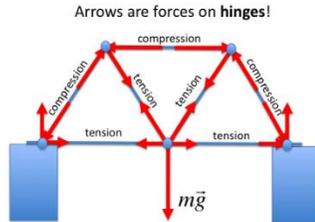
## Events

Wednesday, April 5, 2017 7 PM

The original presentation by **Donna Freeland** from the “**New York Covered Bridge Society**” was cancelled at the last minute due to illness.

However, **Harold Van Aken** put together a presentation on the History of our local Covered Bridges in Ulster and Sullivan Counties covering:

What’s a TRUSS and how they work? Why did the US build bridges of wood instead of stone? Invention of types of trusses from 1804 to 1860.



Truss / Arch

Existing local covered bridges and their truss design with King Post, Queen Post, Burr Arch, Long Truss, Town Truss, Lattice Truss and their inventors who patented their design.

### KING POST DESIGN

Existing Covered Bridges: Perrine, Halls Mills, Livingston Manor, DeBruce, Beaverkill, Arkville, Hardenburgh, New Paltz, and others



PERRINE BRIDGE



ASHOKAN



LIVINGSTON MANOR



WALKILL

Covered Bridges no longer here: Walkill, Galeville, Bruynswick, Tutletown, New Paltz, Halls Mills, Claryville, Parkston, Willowemoc, Turnwood, Woodbourne, Bridgeville and others



GALEVILLE



BRIDGEVILLE FIRST BRIDGE IN NY

(cont. from p.1) **Prison Kids**

“Mind you, this was during the war and we did not have freezers. So, canning and preserving food from our large back yard garden was essential, plus going to ‘cold storage’ to freeze the rest of our food supply. We would take trips to the IGA in Walkill – an all-in-one store with a butcher, plus barrels for loose grains etc. Food stamps were the order of the day. Our childhood living on prison land was our Walden Pond.”

## Restoration Committee Report

During the winter, little work could be done on either the DuBois House or the Knights of Pythias Hall. Now that spring is here we will get back to the business of repairing and restoring both places. Recently we installed a new State Marker in front of the DuBois House. This replaces the previous one which had become shabby over the years, as the paint had peeled from the lettering. In addition, Adam Seelig constructed a new Little Library which was installed by the committee this spring. The Library has books for children and adults and has already seen quite a bit of use.

The big issue this year is repair of the DuBois House front wall, including repointing brickwork, rebuilding window frames, and stabilizing the interior wall of the One-Room School House exhibit room. Major damage to the building front occurred as water deteriorated the wood, bricks and interior plaster. We have prepared a bid list of work needed to be done which the Board has approved. This will be an expensive undertaking and we will need to raise funds for the project and search for grants to help cover the costs of repairs. -- Bob Mooney, Restoration Committee Chair

## Saturday, April 15, 2017

The Andries DuBois House was the site of a great gathering of local organizations with overlapping interests, hosted by the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner. Members of the **Walden Historical Society** and the **Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture**, more than 50 people, showed up on a bright early spring morning to visit and tour the Andries DuBois House (1769), followed by a tour of the Justice Banks House (1772), courtesy of Trustee **Alan White**. After a congenial lunch at Rob's



HVVA MEMBERS

pizza, the group reconvened at the Knights of Pythias House (C1890) to continue the tour. This ambitious program was part of the Historical Society's ongoing educational programs, in this case to benefit like-minded preservationists of local history.

## Officers

<b>President</b>	Debra Wolff
<b>Vice President</b>	Libby Ross
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	Doris Callan
<b>Corresponding Secretary</b>	Donna Myer
<b>Treasurer</b>	Bob Mooney

## Trustees

Doris Callan  
Freda Fenn  
Jim Malloy  
Bob Mooney  
Donna Myer  
Libby Ross  
Harold Van Aken  
Alan White  
Karen Wohlforth Dale  
Debra Wolff

## Publications

Libby Ross, Doris Callan, Freda Fenn, Bob Mooney, Hal Van Aken

## Standing Committees

**Programs and Education:**  
*Freda Fenn, Donna Myer*

**Fund Raising:** *Trustees*

**Membership:** *Bob Mooney*

**Publicity:** *Hal Van Aken*

**Restoration/Bldg Maintenance:**  
*Bob Mooney*

**Finance:** *Bob Mooney*

**Archives and Collections:**  
*Hal Van Aken*

**Publications:** *Libby Ross*

**Webmaster:** *Hal Van Aken*

## Letter from the President

Dear members and friends,

At last - the long, cold winter has passed. Spring is finally here and HSSG is ready for another year of projects, interesting educational events, and community involvement. The HSSG board had its annual strategic planning meeting on January 28, during which we welcomed new board member, **Donna Myer** who took the place of **Adam Seelig**. Many thanks to Adam for his work on the board the last 3 years and for lending his woodworking talents to several projects. He plans to keep actively involved with HSSG!

During the planning meeting, we approved the annual budget and collected effectiveness evaluation surveys from board members. **Hal Van Aken** presented a website privacy policy which was discussed and approved with additions/corrections. To submit an application to the Better Business Bureau Charity Accountability Program (<https://www.bbb.org/new-york-city/charities-donors/participate/>), we plan to work on a Conflict of Interest Policy and a board policy on Measuring and Assessing Effectiveness in meeting its mission. The Annual Report, part of that application process, will be posted on our website.

**Bob Mooney**, chair of our Restoration and Maintenance Committee, presented project ideas for the Andre DuBois and Knights of Pythias Houses. Our priority is to obtain estimates for repair of the front window of the DuBois house. **Karen Dale** and **Debra Wolff** will lead the charge for grant funding. Priorities at the Knights house include handicap access to the side door and bathroom as well as demolition, cleaning, and painting of the kitchen.

On Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, members of the Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture ([www.hvva.org](http://www.hvva.org)) will be guests of HSSG and tour the DuBois House and Knights of Pythias house, along with a walk around the village of Walkkill. **Freda Fenn** also plans another fairie house workshop. Stay tuned for dates and times.

On a very sad note, HSSG mourns the loss of our long-time member, supporter, and friend, **Elaine Terwilliger Weed**, who passed away on March 27, 2017. Elaine always had a smile on her face. She and her husband **Ed Weed** spent many happy hours collecting photos, books, desks, etc. to set up the schoolhouse room display at the DuBois house. HSSG will miss her!

In closing, we welcome members to participate in whatever capacity – through volunteer work, attendance at events, advising in areas in which you have expertise, donations of artifacts or photos, recruiting new members, or making a financial donation. Remember, HSSG is your organization and is committed to preserving the rich local history of the Shawangunk and Gardiner area.

**Debra Wolff – President**

## Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner Mission Statement

*In one of the oldest settled townships in the U.S., The Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner preserves historic buildings, stories, records, and artifacts. We share them with the community through absorbing and inspiring programs, strengthening a shared understanding of local history.*

*FREE COPY - Compliments of the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner. You can join the Historical Society at <http://WallkillHistory.com>*

**Last Dues**

**Saturdays 10 am to Noon**

Come visit the Andries DuBois House and get a tour or come to help repair and restore the Historic 1769 House. We need painters, carpenters, electricians, landscaping, gardeners and anyone who wants to help. A member will be there most Saturdays until October. Come HELP!!!! 75 Wallkill Ave, Wallkill

**Wednesday, June 7 at 6 p.m.**

**The Historical Society's Annual Picnic**

Drinks provided. Bring a covered dish to share. This is always a wonderful time to share time and food with your friends and neighbors.

**Location:** Lawn of the Andries DuBois House 75 Wallkill Ave.

**Wednesday, May 3 at 7 p.m.**

**"Echoes of the First World War"**

How the Town of Shawangunk participated in the First World War. Presenter: **Matthew Thorenz**, Wallkill Public Library's very own archivist and historian. Letters, service records, and images from the New York State and National Archives will provide eyewitness accounts of the impact of the Great War on the Town of Shawangunk and its residents. Hear stories of the men and women who lived through the "War to End All Wars".

**Location:** Shawangunk Town Hall 12 Central Ave.

**DUES. Have you paid your 2017 dues?**

Check your mailing label to find out last-paid dues.

**Mail dues to:**

The Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner  
 P.O. Box 570,  
 Wallkill, NY 12589-0570.

**Dues and donation can now be paid at the website**

**[HTTP://WallkillHistory.com](http://WallkillHistory.com)**

**(credit card or PayPal)**

**Individual: \$20, Family: \$30, Supporting: \$50.  
 Business: \$50, Patron: \$100, Benefactor: \$250**