

# Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 18, Number 2

Spring 2018

## THE BRIDGES OF WALLKILL (UPDATE)

By Libby Ross

By now, most of our readers will have either driven or walked across the handsome new bridge spanning the Wallkill River between the Post Office on the East Side and the old former American Legion Building on the West Side of the Bruyn Turnpike.

We at the Historical Society are especially pleased that the bridge has been named to honor the life and memory of our own Stewart Crowell who worked tirelessly for the public good, serving on the boards of The Historical Society, the Wallkill Public Library, and many other organizations, always looking for ways to make life better in the Hamlet.



Stewart Addison Crowell

The latest Wallkill Bridge is the third in that location. As you may remember (see Newsletter, Volume 16, Number 3, Fall 2016), the original crossing was a covered wooden bridge linking Wallkill Avenue on the eastern bank with the Bruyn Turnpike (then called Soap Hill Road) on the western. It anchored on materials from the Shawangunk Mountains: slate rock on the west, rock piers on the east, and mid-stream on a pier that can be seen to this day just north of today's bridge.



The replacement concrete bridge built in 1915 was located south of the covered bridge by a few hundred feet and cost \$24,360 to build. Amazingly Stewart Crowell's grandfather was the first to walk across the new bridge.

By the time the Ulster County Highway Department took over maintenance around 1937, the bridge needed major repairs - new walls, a new road, and new sidewalks. It took a year to complete the work and to add the iron

railings. During construction the County built a temporary bridge on the old covered bridge site.



It was a pretty bridge, painted by local artist Eugene Stevens, photographed by many, and did its job well. Apart from an awkward jag as one entered the bridge, from the west, there was always the glance at the water to check the water level over the dam, to sight any children playing in the shallows, or to appreciate the view.



Inevitably, the bridge condition deteriorated, and a replacement was necessary. The project fell under the jurisdiction of Department of Public Works, and its representatives made serious efforts to integrate community suggestions. Agreement was reached to increase the width of the road, improve pedestrian access, add new lights, and above all, to preserve the historic architecture.

The construction was completed in four months and the new graceful bridge opened on December 11, 2017. If the past is any guide, the latest Wallkill bridge should be with us until the early 22<sup>nd</sup> century.



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| Website: <a href="http://WallkillHistory.com">http://WallkillHistory.com</a> | Page 1 | Email: <a href="mailto:ShawangunkHistoricalSociety@gmail.com">ShawangunkHistoricalSociety@gmail.com</a> |
| Address: 75 Wallkill Avenue, Wallkill, NY 12589                              |        | PO Box 570, Wallkill NY 12589   |

## Events

On April 4 in the Shawangunk Town Hall, Pete Bedrossian, program director from the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor in New York's Hudson River Valley, presented a talk describing how the award known as The Purple Heart came into being. The award has a history reaching back to the waning days of the American Revolution. The Continental Congress forbade General George Washington from granting commissions and promotions in rank to recognize merit. Yet the General wanted to honor merit, particularly among enlisted soldiers, and so on August 7, 1782, he established the Badge of Military Merit, now known as the Purple Heart. The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is located right here in the Hudson Valley at the New Windsor Cantonment, where visitors may learn about four centuries of American military history. \* \* \* \*

A full house honored the **Grand Opening of the Knights Lodge and Historical Society Meeting Place on Wednesday, May 2.** Board Member Bob Mooney presented a lively presentation on the history and character of the Knights of Pythias in Wallkill. He stressed how the organization served as the most important social gathering point for men (and their families) in the hamlet. Members met every Tuesday night, and everything happened at those meetings; deep friendships formed, deals made, they took care of each other, and tithed to pay burial costs. As Bob concluded, "In the short time that we are here, we have to do good in this life." The house itself was built specifically for the Lodge, with the second floor intended for secret meetings, robes, documents, and special artifacts, strictly restricted to members. After the talk, Bob led attendees upstairs to view the once very private quarters of the Knights of Pythias in Wallkill. \* \* \* \*

### RESTORATION COMMITTEE REPORT

After a long, hard winter that has only recently loosened its grip, work has begun again at the **Andries DuBois House.** Board members Libby Ross and Karen Dale continue to focus on the kitchen, one of the oldest rooms. They have stripped the three layers of wallpaper, leaving representative squares to be covered with plexiglass. The walls themselves will be plastered by Bob Mooney and his crew before they are covered with historically correct lime-wash. The two handsome wooden window frames are being laboriously scraped of old paint layers before being repainted a close match to the earliest color. This is an ambitious plan, and the workers hope to finish by end of summer. \* \* \* \*

The **Restoration Committee**, consisting of Bob Mooney, Hal Van Aken, Alan White, Joey Vogel, Jim Malloy and Adam Selig, is under negotiation with skilled workmen who will undertake necessary repairs to the left front of the Dubois House. This essential work must be completed before cold weather sets in next fall.

Restoration and work on the **Knights Lodge and Historical Society Meeting Place** also restarted this spring. For those who have not visited the house recently, there is much to admire. Kitchen cabinets are hung, stove and refrigerator installed, electrical and plumbing work completed, new floors installed and finished. This is a beautiful job, completed in time for the May Meeting and Grand Opening for this building. \* \* \* \*

**Board Members Bob Mooney and Hal Van Aken** attended the **First Annual Ulster County History Conference at the Rosendale/Marbletown Town Hall in Cottekill on April 18.** The Conference was a gathering of representatives from historical societies, historic sites, public and private historians of museums and libraries, to participate in workshop-filled presentations and discussions on archival resources and new ways to present historical information in the digital age. Local, county, and State presenters demonstrated programs that are currently available and ideas for future ones. Their attendance at this important forum is likely to help our Society find better ways to present the past to our community.

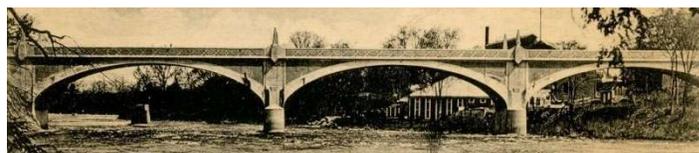
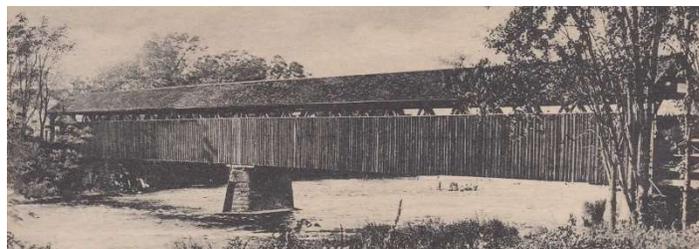


Photo by Rich Barnhart

### **Officers**

**President** Debra Wolff  
**Vice President** Libby Ross  
**Recording Secretary**  
Doris Callan  
**Corresponding Secretary**  
Donna Myer  
**Treasurer** Bob Mooney

### **Trustees**

Doris Callan  
Freda Fenn  
Jim Malloy  
Bob Mooney  
Donna Myer  
Robert Borden Reifmueller  
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,**

Spring is finally here! Thankfully, the Andries DuBois and Knights of Pythias Houses survived the winter and have opened. In January the HSSG Board of Directors met for our annual Strategic Planning Meeting at **Freda Fenn's** house (Thanks, Freda). The board voted the annual budget, planned our educational programs, and brainstormed on fund raising.. **Bob Mooney** also presented plans for restoration efforts at both houses.

This spring the hardworking **Restoration Committee of Bob Mooney, Hal Van Aken, Alan White, Jim Malloy, Adam Selig, and Joe Vogel** lent their time, energy, and skill to work at the Knights of Pythias House (see article on page 2). What exciting improvements!

Over at the Dubois House, **Karen Dale** and **Libby Ross** put in hours of work restoring the kitchen (see article on page 2) and will be moving to the next stage of the project – lime washing the walls and painting the window frames with historic colors. **Bob Mooney** will be in charge of plastering the walls in preparation.

This past winter, board member **Doris Callen** wrote a grant for the **Stewart's Holiday Match** that resulted in a \$750 donation from Stewarts. The Board will decide how best to use this donation, perhaps an event for local school children. Additionally, following a solicitation letter sent to several area businesses and organizations last fall, the **Wallkill Valley Savings and Loan Bank** met with board members **Donna Myer, Bob Mooney, Freda Fenn** and former board president, **Carolyn Crowell** which resulted in a donation of \$1000 toward restoration efforts. Congratulations to this group effort. We encourage anyone interested in making a donation to visit the website (<http://www.wallkillhistory.com/>).

Board development is a priority for our organization so in April, **Debra Wolff**, attended the Museum Association of New York (MANY) Annual Meeting in Rochester and brought back fresh ideas. In addition, **Hal Van Aken** and **Bob Mooney** attended the first annual Ulster County Museum seminar on digital archival methods (see page 2).

On a sad note. The Historical Society lost a dear member, **Ann Verhulp**, this past December. She will be missed at our meetings. Our condolences go to her husband, Kees.

In closing, we welcome members to participate in any capacity – through volunteer work, attendance at events, advising in areas of 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.*

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner  
PO Box 570  
Wallkill, NY 12589-0570

Stamp

*Please Join the Historical Society of Shawangunk  
& Gardiner*

Last Dues

COMPLIMENTARY COPY

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## Historical Society Events – 2018 PROGRAMS

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|---|---|
| <p><b>Wednesday, June 6, 6 p.m.</b><br/>Historical Society <b>Annual Picnic</b> at the<br/>Andries DuBois House in Wallkill.<br/>Bring a potluck dish.<br/>Drinks and place settings provided.</p>  | <p><b>SAVE THE DATE</b><br/><b>Saturday, November 10, 2-4 pm</b><br/>Historical Society Annual <b>Benefit Tea.</b><br/>Shawangunk Town Hall, 2-4.</p> |
| <p><b>Saturday, June 16, 10-1 p.m.</b><br/><b>Garden Tour</b> (rain or shine) at the <b>Borden Home Farm</b><br/>in Wallkill.<br/>For tickets contact Freda Fenn, 895-3986. Tickets may<br/>also be purchased at the Borden Road entrance to the<br/>Home Farm, \$15 for adults, children free.</p> |   |
| <p><b>Saturday, August 18, 11-2 p.m.</b><br/><b>Shawangunk Day</b> at Walker Valley Schoolhouse.<br/>Enjoy a Wallkill and Walker Valley<br/>Power point presentation.</p>   |   |