



Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 18, Number 3

Fall 2018

OUR NAMESAKE RIVER: THE WALLKILL *by Libby Ross*

Do you realize that over its course of 88-plus miles, the Wallkill River has given its name only to the town of Wallkill in Orange County and the hamlet of Wallkill in Ulster?



Its origins are New Jersey, but most of the river runs north through New York State until it joins quietly with the Rondout Creek and finally merges into the Hudson River near Kingston. Along the way, it changes character and quality, partly due to nature, partly because of damage inflicted, especially in this century, by human beings.

Shawangunk residents often view the river in their cars, crossing local bridges or driving alongside stretches half hidden by trees on high banks, or perhaps enjoying the wide view from the parking lot behind the local bank on Main Street in the hamlet. Those fortunate enough to live close to the river banks, or to kayak through navigable passages, or fish in its waters or play in shallow pools just north of the dam below the new bridge, enjoy a deeper pleasure. The river was functional centuries ago, long before the roads were built. People traveled by water and traded along the way. Prehistoric sites have been identified along the river, as well as artifacts of the Algonquins who gave the river the name Twischsawkin; spear points and arrowheads still turn up for those who know where to look. Its modern name came by way of the

Huguenots of New Paltz who originally called it the Palse River, but, after realizing that the river continued well beyond the original New Paltz patent, renamed it after the Waal river in their native Netherlands.

The greatest controversy in the river's history centered on conflicting needs – between the farmers who wished to drain sections to capture fertile land for farming and the later mill owners who wanted water power for industry, especially in the early 1900s in the new manufacturing businesses near Walden and Montgomery.

A misguided decision to site the Orange County landfill next to the river over a large aquifer, and the unfortunate emptying of fertilizers, chemicals, and other waste products into the river, have severely polluted the waters, and contributed to the reputation of the Wallkill River as the dirtiest river in Southern New York. Unfortunately, today there is no safe place to swim in the river.



In 2015 The Wallkill River Watershed Alliance was formed to reverse that course, to restore the river, and to protect this treasured river for future generations. Those of us who love the river have a stake in this project.

Website: http://WallkillHistory.com	Page 1	Email: ShawangunkHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
Address: 75 Wallkill Avenue, Wallkill, NY 12589		PO Box 570, Wallkill NY 12589

Events

BORDEN GARDEN TOUR – Saturday, June 16.

On a lovely morning in June, the house and grounds of the Borden Home Farm were at their best, as visitors enjoyed the setting and an historical lecture by Rodney Thompson.

* * *

CHILDREN’S PROGRAM – Thursday, June 14.

Thanks in part to corporate funding by **Stewart’s**, seventy-five elementary-age children from the 4th grade classes of Ostrander Elementary School visited the Knights of Pythias Lodge and Meeting Hall. The students, along with their teachers and parent chaperones, first stopped at the Town Hall Building for a talk and discussion about the Borden property, family and history. After lunch there, followed by a recess at the Town park, they walked to the Knights of Pythias building where **Board Member Bob Mooney** presented a talk and slide show about the Knights of Pythias in Wallkill and the history of the house, followed by a tour of the upstairs Lodge itself. The students responded enthusiastically by asking many questions.

* * *

AUSTRIA POST-WWII – Wednesday, September 5.

A personal and engrossing perspective by **Board member Robert Borden Reifmueller**. He described what it was like being born and living in the 1940’s in Austria when the country was divided and occupied by the US, Russia, France and Italy. His father was a US Army GI and mother a local Austrian. In later years he came to the US and took his father’s name and became a US citizen.

* * *

GIFTS TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY - This summer has brought an exceptional period of wonderful gifts that include the following:

An original 1875 **Borden map** of the Hamlet of Wallkill (one of only three), drawn by **John G. Borden**, and given to the **Edsall Family**, was donated to the Historical Society and mounted for display in the **Knights of Pythias House**.

Former Board member **Alex Hoyt** has donated significant items from the **Borden Home Farm**, including John G. Borden’s magnificent, complex wood tool chest with multiple compartments, dated 1875. The gift also included many photographs of the Borden Home Farm and the Hasbrouck stone house that became the home of John G. Borden and his family.

Lastly, in a major donation, and according to personal wishes and terms of her will, beloved and long-time benefactor **Mary DuBois Wright** has granted to the Historical Society first choice of the contents of her home on River Road for furnishing the Andries DuBois House with period-accurate furniture and artifacts for the kitchen, dining, and family rooms.

Members of the Collection Committee, **Hal Van Aken, Freda Fenn, Libby Ross, Alan White and Bob Mooney,**

met at the Wright home with long-time friend **Joan McAdam** several times to sort and assess materials that properly fit our mission, including papers and documents of interest. We also thank **Sanford Levy of Jenkinstown Antiques** who helped assess the house contents and guided our choices. Items chosen include Mary’s schoolhouse clock, a large loveseat, dishes and crocks, a Eugene Stevens painting, a silver-plate set, and a small fire-proof safe for document storage which has been moved to the Knights of Pythias house office.



Eugene Stevens painting – Wallkill River

Some of the other items that will be used to fill the DuBois House dining room:



Oil Lamp (converted to electric)

12 wicker chairs and dining room table from the late 1800 period, a large painting circa 1880’s, many dish sets, tea sets, silverware, knives, lamps and candle holders, serving platters, glasses and many more items of the late 1800’s.

It is difficult to overestimate the value of this significant inheritance to the Andries DuBois House. This donation will set the character of the house museum and directly reflect the DuBois family history for future generations of visitors. * * *



Eugene Stevens Painting of the covered Bridge over the Wallkill River - Donated by Lisbeth Tucker

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
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,

The summer is over but work on the Andres DuBois house and the Knights of Pythias house continues into the Fall. At the DuBois house **Libby Ross, Karen Dale, and Bob Mooney** have been working on the kitchen area, with the goal to restore it to the late 18th century era. Plan on attending the December 5th Holiday Party so you can see the progress! At the Knights House, the large Borden Map was mounted and placed over the old pool table, and the Knights of Pythias sign that was in the cellar was mounted and placed over the front doorway.

On June 14th, the Fourth Grade Class from Ostrander School visited the Knights House for a tour and talk, funded in part by **Stewart's Holiday Match Program**. Two days later, on Saturday, June 16th, there was a Garden Tour and talk by **Rodney Thompson** at the Borden Mansion. Thanks to **Freda Fenn** and **Hal Van Aken** for their hard work arranging and advertising this event. On August 18th, **Hal Van Aken** and **Jack Weed** provided a slide presentation on Walker Valley and Shawangunk in Walker Valley at the Walker Valley Schoolhouse.

On September 5th, board member **Robert Borden Reifmueller**, gave a fascinating talk on Austria during the post-WWII era. Despite the 90-degree heat, those who attended had lots of great questions.

Upcoming presentations include one on Las Villas of Plattekill and Ulster County on October 3rd and one on antique bottles scheduled for November 7th. Upcoming events include the Annual Benefit Tea on November 10th and the Annual Holiday Party on December 5th at the Andries DuBois house.

In closing, we welcome members to participate in whatever capacity they can – 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



Wallkill River & Bridge Painting by Board member Freda Fenn

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

Historical Society Events – 2018 PROGRAMS

<p>Wednesday, October 3 at 7:00 p.m. The Villas of Plattekill by Ismael “Ish” Martinez Jr. Comprehensive historical retrospective on Las Villas of Plattekill and Ulster County. At the Knights of Meeting House, 5 Main St., Wallkill</p>	<p>Saturday, November 10 at 2-4 p.m. Annual Tea to benefit for the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner. Lottery, door prizes, entertainment. Wallkill Town Hall Community Room</p>
<p>Wednesday, November 7 at 7:00 p.m. Antique Bottles presented by Paul DiMarco Age identification and value, where to find them, how to clean them. Bring your antique bottles with you for insight on what you have.</p>	<p>Wednesday, December 5 at 6 p.m. Holiday Party For Members and Friends at the Andries DuBois House 75 Wallkill Ave, Wallkill NY Potluck, with drinks provided.</p>
	<p>"Starting with the Spring 2019 Newsletter email will be used to distribute an electronic version that can be printed or viewed."</p>