

Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 19, Number 2

Spring 2019

Two centuries of slavery in Ulster County

On **April 3**, archaeologist and historical preservationist **Wendy Harris** presented a remarkable documentary video produced by the **Cragmoor Historical Society** entitled “**Where Slavery Died Hard**,” to open the 2019 Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner season at the Knights of Pythias House in Wallkill. Cragmoor’s President **Mary Socolof** also attended.

What follows is a short summary.

In 1626, the very first Dutch settlers brought enslaved people, imported from Dutch colonies in Brazil and Africa, to America. There were more enslaved people in New York (21,192), as listed in the 1790 federal census, than in all the New England states combined, 2906 in Ulster County alone, representing 10% of the population. Thirty years later, the 1820 Ulster County census listed 559 enslaved children. It is hard to grasp the fact that there were more slaves in New York than in any other state north of Virginia.

By the end of the 17th century, many children of the original Dutch and Huguenot settlers moved south of the original Kingston settlement to the rich lands of Shawangunk, developing and operating farms whose labor requirements were considerable. These farms were made possible by the labor of enslaved workers. The men worked in the fields, and the women in dairies, gardens, and in the houses.

The small Johannes Jansen house built in the 1750s was enlarged considerably in 1800. A female slave worked and slept in the kitchen, located in the oldest part. Wills and inventories of the period make clear that enslaved people (often not even named) were categorized right alongside farm animals and household goods.

Under terms of his 1802 will, Thomas Jansen left his slaves to his sons and grandchildren; commonly, in the process, enslaved families were broken apart, and divided among the heirs according to personal references of family members. Some owners provided for elderly slaves in their wills, e.g., leaving “a comfortable subsistence during her life” to 80-year-old African-American Dinah Van Keuran.

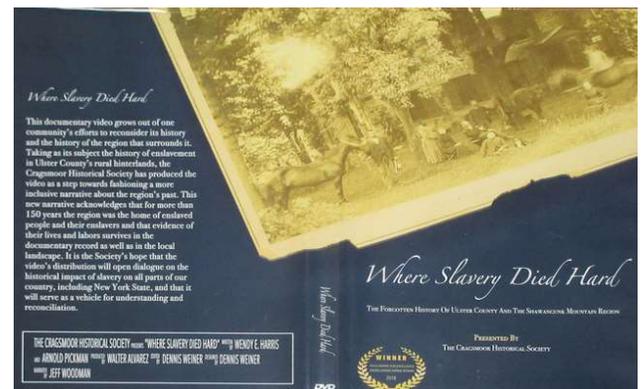
The Old Dutch Church in Brunswick Shawangunk, built in 1755, was an important social, cultural, and religious center where sermons were conducted in Dutch well into the early 19th century. The church trustees were slave owners; in 1800, 66 slave-owning families worshipped at the church.

It is probable that the gallery pews were reserved for the slaves of Dutch owners, and their presence may not have been voluntary - they were needed to carry and stoke the foot stoves enjoyed by their Dutch owners in the unheated church. Moreover, the owners rightly feared incidents of violence and arson committed by slaves left alone in farms while their owners attended church.

Slavery permeated all institutions – and property owners depended on slave labor, not only for the fields, but also for technical skills; enslaved people worked as coopers, bakers, shoemakers, carpenters, masons, and grist mill operators.

There is plenty of evidence that some slaves resisted the forced labor; whippings were commonplace, and some advertisements described individuals who had run away, identifying them by the whip marks on their backs.

The Dutch counties in farming country were the most resistant to the intensification of efforts to end slavery. In 1817, the NYS Legislature passed a law that stipulated that enslaved people who were born before 1799 would be freed in 1827. Especially in Ulster County, “Slavery died hard.”



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**SPECIAL REPORT: April 6-9, 2019
The MANY Conference in Cooperstown**

In early April, a delegation of Historical Society trustees drove to Cooperstown to attend the annual Museum Association of New York conference, and are we glad we did! For over three days, we attended seminars and heard keynote speakers representing major institutions (Intrepid – the Air and Space Museum in New York City) and small (The Martin Van Buren House in Kinderhook), and learned how these historical museums are changing to respond to a changing America.

Did you know that according to a recent survey, 78% of Americans believe that museums are among the most highly credible sources of information in our country? The historical museum tells uniquely American stories of immigrants and settlers in the ongoing creation of our nation. What a museum can do, and here we are speaking of our own Historical Society, is to tell stories through the presentation of artifacts that those who settled in our community before us left behind. We can use the tools of history to understand the past and to connect the past to the present. We can teach our children where they came from.

Here in Shawangunk and Gardiner we have collected artifacts and photographs that you, our community, have donated to our archives, some of which are on display, but many of which have yet to be exhibited. What we continue to learn is how to work with existing space – the Andries DuBois House, the Knights of Pythias House – to shore up the building, to remove modern additions to reach the reality of earlier lives, and to build a narrative based on the artifacts in our collection. Our attendance at the MANY Conference has helped us understand what to do next.

We are excited to learn about “story vaults,” interviews with local people who tell their stories. Many of you have family stories or remember your childhood in Wallkill and Gardiner and people who are no longer with us. Expect to hear more about this from us.

Some of our learning will involve preparing diagrams, floor plans, and timelines; we must develop guidelines for conservation. Everything doesn’t have to be done at once, but we the volunteers of the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner will build on a solid foundation (literally) and we invite you to join us!

The Delegation: Debra Wolff, John Ross, Libby Ross, Bob Mooney and Kitty Mooney



COMING UP

On Tuesday, June 11, the fourth grade at the **Ostrander Elementary School** will attend a special One-Room Schoolhouse program at the Andries DuBois House, and a Knights’ Lodge program at the Knights of Pythias House, starting with a presentation on the Gayle G. Borden family at Town Hall. Rain date: **June 12**

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The **Ulster County Pool/Fair Grounds** which was once the property of the **Ulster County Poorhouse**, and burial site for about 2400 people, will be the site for the unveiling of a statue created by **Trina Greene**, a New Paltz sculptor, symbolizing the memory of an old woman buried on the grounds. The event takes place **on May 15th at 6:00 p.m.** **Susan Stessi-Cohn, the New Paltz Town Historian**, is asking that at the ceremony, residents of local towns and villages read the names of people from their area known to have been interred there.

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Graham Cemetery Project – The Historical Society will be cleaning and documenting the abandoned Robinson/Graham cemetery on Lippincott Rd. A visit was made on April 24th by Mary Work, Bob Mooney & Hal Van Aken to survey the work needed. We will be looking for volunteers to help cutting the brush, fallen trees and cleaning the stones. Contact Hal Van Aken if you can help. 845-895-3321 or hvanaken@gmail.com



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Dear Members and Friends,

Spring is finally here, and the DuBois House and Knights of Pythias house are open for activities and work projects! Last December the HSSG Board of Trustees met for our annual Strategic Planning Meeting at **Freda Fenn's** house. Thanks, Freda! The Board reviewed the annual budget, discussed fund raising and grant applications, and planned educational programs. **Bob Mooney** presented a work plan by the Restoration Committee for each property, and the Board suggested additions. It is ambitious, but we have funds to purchase material for some projects.

The Board also discussed a plan to locate and clean local abandoned cemeteries in the Town of Shawangunk and Town of Gardiner, recording who is buried in each. We realize that we need funding and training to accomplish the project. **Hal Van Aken** attended a program sponsored by a potential funder, attended by about 30 people representing historical societies and Historians in the Ulster county area. This funder has an interest in creating universal links to historical collections. Hal described our cemetery project and efforts to archive and place information on HSSG collections on our website; the funder responded with a \$5000 grant to the HSSG for the purpose. Thanks, Hal, for your work! **Debra Wolff** attended a Gravestone Cleaning class at Schenectady Community College that gave participants hands-on training at Vale Cemetery. The Board will invite the instructor to Wallkill for further training to other HSSG members. The Cragmoor Historical Association is also interest in coordinating with HSSG on the cemetery project.

In response to an application to the **NYS Council of the Arts** by **Debra Wolff**, the HSSG received a \$500 grant for professional development, which enabled board members to attend the annual Museum Association of NY meeting in Cooperstown, NY. **Doris Callen** was again successful in applying to **Stewart's** for a \$750 grant to sponsor a tour of both houses for 4th graders. This event is scheduled for June 11th with a rain date of June 12th.

Thank you everyone for your hard work, input, and contributions. As a member-driven organization, we encourage you to volunteer or contribute in whatever capacity!

Debra Wolff, President

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Come to the May 1st meeting at the Historical Society Meeting Hall (Knights of Pythias Hall) where a presentation will investigate how Wallkill became the business and government center . Evolution of Wallkill from wilderness to the business and government center of Shawangunk. The early environment, people and industries will be explored as to why Wallkill grew to become the center of business even though it was not the largest. Water power, saw mills, grist mills, railroads, Paper Mill and the Hat Factory are some of the major industries investigated. The Bruyn and Borden names played an important role.

The presentation will end with the owners of the Wallkill Hydroelectric plant showing pictures of the turbines and discussing the operation.

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.

Walkkill HydroElectric



May 1, 2019 Wednesday 7 PM – 5 Main Street, Walkkill
The “BASIN” Why did the Hamlet of Walkkill develop and what industry and businesses developed. Bruyn Turnpike, farming, sawmill, grist mill, water power, paper mill, hat factory and the railroad.

June 5, 2019 Wednesday 6 PM – 75 Walkkill Ave, Walkkill
Annual picnic at the historic 1769 Andries Dubois House
 Bring a dish to share, drinks, plates, forks, spoons provided

