



# Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 20, Number 1

Winter 2020

## On the Home Front in Wallkill during World War II

By Libby Ross

The United States tried desperately to stay out of the “European” War. President Roosevelt issued a neutrality proclamation, sent material aid to our allies, and increased defense spending, including by November 1940 registering more than 16 million men for the draft.

The country was changing, becoming more urbanized, aided by the automobile, the train, the radio, and telephones. As the cities grew, the metropolitan newspapers absorbed subscribers from rural areas, but there was still a critical contribution that kept local papers alive and essential in those anxious times.

On January 9, 1940, the front page of **The Wallkill Valley World** reported the news that **Peter Thomas Sowa** was the first local man to be called for the draft. By 1941, even though the U.S. was not yet directly in the War, each issue of the paper reported the names of the most recent draftees, 72 of them by August, including – **Fred David Lowenbaupt, Elmer Eignor, Jacob Bogen, and Robert Lee Cerillo**, to name a few.

Everything changed with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.



The paper printed terse news of Roosevelt’s appearance before a joint session to ask for a formal declaration of war and there was no debate.

Americans responded by contributing 16 billion dollars in War Bonds, a lot of money in those times.

Throughout the war years the local newspaper reported heartbreaking accounts of Wallkill boys, including **Sgt. John T. Scott**, 21, killed in action while fighting in New Guinea, soldiers missing in action, and soldiers in prison camps whose letters home were published on page 1.

On the local front, prisoners in the Wallkill Prison contributed blood, and bound issues of National Geographic for servicemen in veterans’ hospitals. The shortage of men resulted in serious



apple picking problems: in response, Wallkill high school closed early to allow students to help with the harvest, assisted by soldiers from Stewart Field.

Meanwhile, in other news on the local front, fifteen cases of infantile paralysis were reported in Ulster County, **Margaret Edsall**, a senior at Wallkill High, was chosen Apple Blossom Beauty Queen, the **Wallkill Knights of Pythias** held a Ladies’ Night, and more than 175 people attended an Easter Sunrise service on the old Borden estate. **Mrs. George Sherwood** was named the County’s champion pie baker. Two Wallkill girls – **Irene McLinden** and **Etta Bowden** were hired by the FBI after graduation from Wallkill High, and **Mr. & Mrs. Amos Weld** celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

*Research based on archival material of the Wallkill Valley World, 1940-1944.*

Website: <a href="http://WallkillHistory.com">http://WallkillHistory.com</a>	Page 1	Email: <a href="mailto:ShawangunkHistoricalSociety@gmail.com">ShawangunkHistoricalSociety@gmail.com</a>
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**EVENTS**

On **October 2** in the Knights of Pythias House, a lively audience volunteered stories about family artifacts, including a hand-carved writing desk and items from the fondly remembered Edsall pharmacy.

\* \* \*

On **November 6**, through then and now photos, **Freda Fenn and Hal VanAken** highlighted changes on Wallkill’s Main Street, remembering Ronk’s Carriage, Gabe’s Shoes, and the blacksmith, among others.

\* \* \*

This year’s winter celebration and Board Meeting took place on **December 4** at the **DuBois house**. Members re-elected trustees **Donna Myer, Freda Fenn, and Hal VanAken for additional 3-year terms**, and elected **Kees Verhulp** to complete the term of resigning trustee **Robert Borden Reifmueller**.

The festive evening inaugurated the fully restored 18<sup>th</sup> century kitchen of the Andries DuBois House, its oldest room. The multi-year restoration reflected the removal of years of modernization - layers of wallpaper, paint, and electrification; this effort involved construction of broken walls, molding, missing baseboards, hand-mixing milk paint, adding targeted lighting, removing non-period lighting fixtures, and nails, paint, and plain old dirt from the wooden floor...a joint effort and labor of love by **Hal VanAken, Karen Dale, Bob Mooney, Libby Ross, Freda Fenn, Jim Malloy, John Ross, Paul Dale and Al White**, among others.



18th Century Kitchen

The historic jelly cupboard and Dutch kas contain kitchenware from the **Mary DuBois Wright estate**. The cast-iron stove was functional in the kitchen for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We invite the public to visit and enjoy a view of our shared past.

\* \* \*



Dutch Dinner - Freda Fenn Table

On **Sunday, December 15**, a memorable **benefit**, under the leadership of **Trustee Karen Dale**, took place in the **Andries DuBois House**, where 42 guests hugely enjoyed the recreation of an historic-based Dutch dinner: traditional pancakes, pea soup, Stamppot, Hachee, and apple pie.



Doris Callan Table

The Historical Society gives thanks to **Lakeview House, Mountain Brauhaus, New Cavu, Angry Orchard, Hannaford’s and Adams** for their generous contributions for the Dutch Dinner.

\* \* \*

We also appreciate generous gifts by the **Wallkill Valley Federal Savings and Loan** for the mural on display for decades in the old Key Bank, and for framing costs for a series of 41 historical photographs that will hang in the Knights of Pythias meeting room.

# Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends:

Winter came upon us with a vengeance this year, but thankfully all remains intact at both the historic **Andries Dubois** and **Knights of Pythias Houses**. We are keeping a close eye on the DuBois House roof because of leaks earlier in the fall. Inside, in the kitchen area, **Libby** and **John Ross**, **Hal VanAken**, **Karen Dale**, **Bob Mooney**, **Freda Fenn**, **Al White**, and **Jim Malloy** put in the finishing touches just in time for the annual holiday party. Framed sections of wallpaper display the different time periods of the house as well as period kitchenware and dishes. Over at the Knights of Pythias house, **Debra Wolff** and her son **Parker Wolff** rented a floor scrubber and cleaned and sealed the large meeting room floor. They also cleaned the upstairs kitchen and power **washed** the side porch in preparation for spring painting.

At our October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting members brought various antique items of interest, many with a personal story, resulting in many questions and a great deal of enjoyment. That same night, the large meeting room was dedicated to **Ann Verhulp**. A plaque on the wall records the dedication, alongside a small tile with “Ann’s Room” painted on it; wherever Ann lived throughout her life, this tile was always placed in her bedroom. Ann and her husband Kees traveled all over the world, and now the tile has a home in our meeting room. **Kees Verhulp** has agreed to fill the vacancy left when **Robert Borden Reifmueller** moved away. We wish Robert the best and thank him for his contribution to the board.

At our November 6<sup>th</sup> meeting **Hal Van Aken** and **Freda Fenn** presented a slide show of various Wallkill businesses throughout the years. HSSG has many photos and advertising ephemera from local businesses that will be exhibited in time. Our annual holiday party on December 4<sup>th</sup> had a low turnout because of the weather, but those who attended had a good time. Finally, you can read in a related article about our fund raiser this year – an authentic Dutch Dinner served at the Andres Dubois House. Many, many thanks go to **Karen Dale** for the original idea, her research of historic recipes, and leadership in making this event a reality. She also enlisted the help of table hostesses **Libby Ross**, **Toni Gagan**, **Fred Fenn**, **Carolyn Crowell**, and **Doris Callan**. A special thanks to **Kees Verhulp** for making traditional Dutch pancakes, wearing wooden shoes. Thanks to all who contributed!

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for their hard work, suggestions, contributions, and well wishes this past year. As I look around and compare how both houses looked when I first joined HSSG, I am amazed at the progress. On Saturday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, the HSSG board will have its annual strategic planning meeting at **Freda Fenn’s** house. If you have any ideas or concerns, please let one of the board members know. Remember, this is a member-driven organization and we encourage your input!

**Debra Wolff, President**

## 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  
Libby Ross  
Harold Van Aken  
Kees Verhulp  
Karen Wohlforth Dale  
Debra Wolff  
Mary Work

## 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.**  
*Bob Mooney*

**Finance:** *Bob Mooney*

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

**Publications:** *Libby Ross*

**Webmaster:** *Hal Van Aken*

## 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.*

# Dutch Dinner



**Dues are due on January 1, 2020**

**\$20 Individual  
\$30 Family  
\$50 Supporting or Business  
\$100 Patron  
\$250 Benefactor**



Dues can be paid to:  
<http://WallkillHistory.com>

HSSG  
PO Box 570  
Wallkill, NY 12589

