

# Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 11, Number 1

Winter 2014

## SHAWANGUNK FARM BOYS AND THE CIVIL WAR PART I

The American Civil War erupted on April 12, 1861 when Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. In response, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to "suppress the insurrection" and reestablish control. Most Union soldiers voluntarily enlisted, others were drafted, and some substituted for others.

Each Town Clerk was charged with preparing a list of men between the ages of 18 and 44, including addresses. In Shawangunk, 311 men were eligible for military service.

In 1862, Ulster County newspapers published quotas of men for each town in the county and Shawangunk, with a population of 2870 was required to provide 28 men in the first draft; one recruit for each 100 people. Ulster County as a whole was expected to provide 763 soldiers, but 147 of them were allowed to be replaced by volunteers and substitutes.

With patriotism running high, it was considered shameful in the early stages of the war to have local men drafted, and nearly 2000 men in Ulster County enlisted, many enticed by a cash bounty supplied by local governments. The vast majority of soldiers who fought for the Union were volunteers, with only about 2% serving as draftees. Six percent were substitutes, paid by draftees or local governments.

In May 1863, Congress passed the Conscription Act. Draft Boards were established and a mechanism – a wheel - designed to select recruits for the first draft. A companion state bill provided \$150 for volunteers who reenlisted and \$75 for new volunteers. Although there were major draft riots in New York City and mobs set fires in Poughkeepsie, there was no violence on the day of the drawing in Kingston.

In July 1864, the federal draft called for a half million men for replacements to regiments that had suffered

severe losses in the Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina campaigns.

Increasingly there were efforts to avoid serving in the war, with local government a willing ally. In August 1864, Shawangunk voted to raise \$30,000 to pay bounties. The bounty system led to the charge that it was a poor man's war; anyone with money could buy his way out. As casualty reports became more appalling, the price for substitutes increased to \$650 for the army and \$600 for the navy – much more in New York City - for 3 years service, and these substitutes were often newly arrived immigrants or others on the outskirts of society. Read one poster in Kingston: "Volunteer & Substitute Agency. Highest Bounties Paid! Substitutes furnished at the Office in Wall St. near the Court House" This was perfectly legal and presumably morally acceptable. In essence, it exempted rich men entirely and was far beyond the possible for farmers and laborers. Substitute brokers operated in every northern city and in less than a year more than \$12 million poured into the Treasury in draft-exemption fees.

During the Civil War, the population of Ulster County numbered about 80,000 and some 2300 local men served, the majority of them in the 156<sup>th</sup>, 120<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> (also called the 80<sup>th</sup>) Regiments.

New York State Governor Horatio Seymour authorized the formation of regiments by private citizens, and in 1862 Colonel Erastus Cooke formed the 156<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Infantry, known as the Mountain Legion. New recruits could earn a commission by securing additional men for the regiment, the more men, the greater the rank. It was common for a farm boy to enlist and sign up his friends. Company A of the 156<sup>th</sup> Regiment consisted principally of Plattekill, New Paltz, Gardiner and Shawangunk men.

*(continued, p. 3.)*

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*Letters from the Co-Presidents*

Dear Members and Friends,

It is with sad regret that I am leaving the Board of Directors as well as Co-Presidency of the Historical Society. A family illness necessitates that I be more available. I have very much enjoyed my years of watching and helping with the growth and preservation of our township's historic preservation. I hope to be working behind the scenes in doing much needed fund-raising and grant writing. My best wishes go out to you all as we look forward to the holiday season. **Toni Gagan**

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It has been a very productive year. **Freda Fenn** has presented us with interesting, informative programs; Borden Day was a huge success; and members worked tirelessly on Saturday mornings to improve the DuBois House and the Knight of Pythias building.

I will be vacating the Co-President position at the end of the year. It has been a pleasure to serve in this capacity and I will continue to serve on the board and look forward to the growth of our Society and preservation of our buildings.

With pleasure we announce our new President, **Debra Wolff**. Debra is a member of the **Terwilliger** family, newly joined with our Society, and has served on our board this past year. She lives in the Albany area, yet makes the trip to Wallkill for board meetings and events. Congratulations, Debra!

We also are pleased that **Adam Seelig**, Wallkill Middle School teacher, has agreed to serve on our board. He has restored his own historic stone house on King's Hill and is interested in the history of Wallkill. Recently he conducted a walking tour of historical structures in the hamlet with his students. Welcome, Adam! **Carolyn Crowell**



*Toni Gagan and Carolyn Crowell, Co-Presidents*

## Meeting Highlights

Another successful **Borden Day** took place on a picture-perfect day on September 28 at the Borden Home Farm in Wallkill. Adults and children alike enjoyed the experience of talks on the history of the family by **Alex Hoyt** and **Rodney Thompson** in Borden's office and the Borden mansion, walking the grounds, viewing the exhibitions in the Long Barn, and the fun of the wagon ride through the property. The Hamlet of Wallkill owes a huge debt to the Borden's and we continue to honor their contributions.

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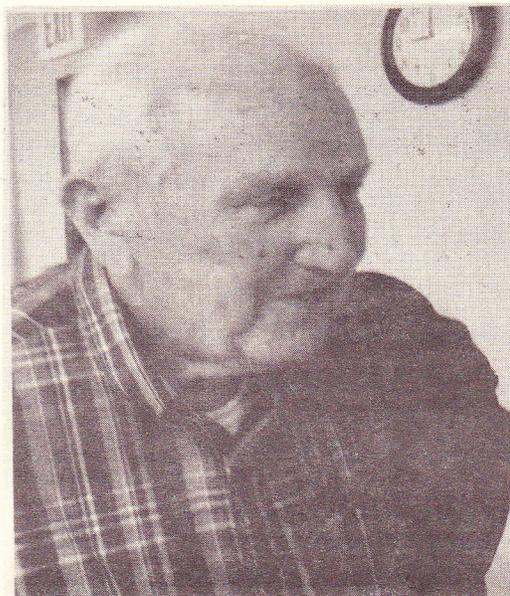
On Wednesday, October 2 at Shawangunk Town Hall, **Ed and Linden Dubin** presented a program commemorating the first transcontinental flight of the **Vin Fiz**, piloted by aviator Cal Rodgers, only eight years after the Wright Brothers first flight at Kitty Hawk. It took Rodgers 84 days, with over 80 stops along the way, included Middletown, N.Y. For his pioneering efforts, he received a medal from President Taft. He was killed several months later, when a sea gull collided with the plane, but his place in history is assured.

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### MEMORIES AND MOMENTOS OF WWII

A large audience gathered at Shawangunk Town Hall on Wednesday, November 6 for the program **MEMORIES AND MOMENTOS OF WWII**. **Freda Fenn** spoke movingly of the evacuation of herself and her young sister to the countryside to avoid the bombs falling on London during the Blitz. **Gil McCord** told how his army unit brought equipment to Europe, including vehicles that were used for the invasion of Sicily – "It was amazing how we managed to provide all the supplies that were needed." **George Low** enlisted at 18 and was trained as a combat engineer, laying mine fields and was attacked while laying a pontoon bridge. Wounded in action, his life was saved by an anonymous soldier who carried him to safety. Responding to an audience member from the Netherlands as to why he was willing to fight – "we are so grateful that you guys did that," George responded: "I wanted to do what I could to fight the Germans." For his bravery, he was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star.

\* \* \* \*



**George Low, WWII Veteran**

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**On-going restoration of the Andries DuBois House in 2013** Over the year, a hard-working, devoted crew (**Bob Mooney, Hal Van Aken, Alan White, Freda Fenn, Stewart Crowell, Mary Lou Van Aken, Jim Malloy, John Ross, Elaine Weed, Debra Wolff**), set up the Schoolhouse Room as a museum display, covered the garage with a tarp and cleaned the inside, tore down the barn and leveled the ground, cleaned the back lawn, tended the landscaping and mowing, cleaned the cellar, repaired the schoolhouse window, exposed the wide boards of the men's parlor floor and dining room, prepared a collection storage room and two other rooms and removed collection items stored elsewhere to the collection room. In addition, gutters were installed on the front and back of the house and repairs to the roof will be undertaken in the Spring.

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*(continued from p. 1)* The 156<sup>th</sup> did more travelling and engaged Confederates on more fields than any other Ulster unit. It suffered heavily from malaria, typhoid and excessive heat in Louisiana bayous, on the Mississippi, in the Shenandoah Valley, and witnessed General Johnston's surrender which ended the war. It helped restore order in the Carolinas and Georgia until mustered out in October 1865 at Augusta, GA. Although the Regiment never saw General Grant, it served under Generals Sherman and Sheridan. (See *Part 11 in the Spring 2014 issue*) Sources: "Banner & Bugles" by Will Plank/Civil War Records, Town of Shawangunk, Volume I,II,III, compiled by Ken & Alice J. Hasbrouck.)

**Historical Society of  
Shawangunk & Gardiner  
Upcoming Programs/2007**

**Wednesday, December 4, 6-8 p.m.  
Candlelight party at the Andries DuBois  
House. Wine & Cheese, favorite LPs, and  
your friends & neighbors!**

**Winter recess – See you in the Spring.**

**Boardmember Doris Callan** has received the Pine Bush Teachers Association 2013 Community Service Award for “outstanding dedication and contribution of time” to many organization in the Pine Bush area. Doris taught for many years in the Pine Bush School District. We at the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner are also grateful for the years of service that Doris has provided our society as Secretary and for her fund-raising efforts. Congratulations, Doris, on a well-deserved honor!

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**REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR DUES!!**

*Printed courtesy of Shawangunk Correctional Facility*

**J.T. Smith, Superintendent  
J. Nicotera, Instructor**

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