

Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

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Fall 2015

The Shawangunk Militia during the Revolutionary War

Did you know that the Fourth Regiment, the Shawangunk militia during the Revolutionary War, trained on the field located at the crossroads of the Bruyn Turnpike and the Albany Post Road? Just how did this local militia contribute to the defense of Shawangunk and add resources to the Continental Army? And who were these men?

In 1776 the Continental Congress appointed a Committee of Safety to order local militias to be formed within the Continental colonies. Ulster County at that time was larger than today, and included Newburgh, New Marlborough, and Shawangunk. The Ulster County Militia included four regiments, the 4th under the command of Colonel Johannes Hardenburgh. It was the 4th regiment, operating from 1775 to 1782, that trained at our local crossroads. This militia numbered 103 officers and 761 enlisted men, including many family names that we recognize today, DuBois, Vandermark, Roosa, Terwilliger, Bevier, Fowler, and Decker, to name a few.

Before the War, able-bodied men responded to threats in the environment, but with the formation of militia units, local bodies of military response were charged with helping the Continental Army as needed. One third of all Revolutionary battles were fought in New York State and Ulster's militia men could be found in the front lines of almost all of them. Ulster County was overwhelmingly in favor of independence, and there was no shortage of volunteers.

The line of command connected the Continental Army with the NYS State Governor, Commander-in-Chief of the State Militia, or his designate. In an emergency, any individual could approach the militia directly for immediate action. The militia would respond and later work out how the men would be paid. The issue of compensation loomed large.

The Continental Army could request 1000 men to guard a site to free up the beleaguered army which was needed elsewhere or "levy" a group of men from the militia to supplement its forces; these men were cherry-picked (not all militia members were of the same caliber in terms of education, skills, character, etc.) and the local men would jump at the chance

because they would receive a bonus for joining (money, again) and payment for service in return for a short-term commitment.

These conditions triggered a certain bone of contention with Army regulars, stuck long-term in the army after receiving a one-time bonus for joining. So there was animosity between the Army men and the short-term Levies. The Levies were a manpower pool drawn from the local militias, willing to join the Continental Army for a short time and for a specific purpose.

As for the militias themselves, apart from special uses to augment the Continental Army, their primary functions included moving and guarding supplies, scouting parties, and as lookout on the frontiers.

The downside for their use by the Army was that these men had to be trained for the task. Their short service made it hard for the Army to use them well, and they couldn't be counted on during planting or harvest seasons. In general, the agricultural cycle forced the campaign to plan around farming needs and the campaign basically stopped with the onset of winter, thus narrowing the window of operations.

There was great suffering in the first winter of the Revolution but by 1782 Washington had established a thriving community of soldiers, artisans, and their families in the New Windsor Cantonment within stout log cabins to weather the winter, in preparation for the final days of the Revolutionary War. Of course, the militia men had their homesteads nearby.

There is a cherished local legend that during the War, George Washington visited the militia in Shawangunk and slept overnight at the James Graham homestead on the Bruyn Turnpike down the road, and Washington's daily journal reveals that indeed he did.

Written by Libby Ross.
Thanks to
Michael McGurty, New Windsor Cantonment
New Paltz Library
Harold Van Aken

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Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends,

At summer's end, the HSSG board has much to report. At the DuBois House, shell blasting of the dining room ceiling and installation of new wiring is complete. Work is underway to patch walls and preserve wallpaper. At the Knights of Pythias house, the dining room has been cleaned and painted. Work will begin soon on the bathroom with hope of turning on water next year! Upstairs the Pythias room was professionally cleaned and furniture and Knights' items carefully restored to proper places. Thanks **Bob Mooney** and **Hal Van Aken** for yeoman work!

We have begun to organize the HSSG office on the main floor. If you previously served on the Board and have old records, please let us know. We now have a safe place to store them. The Board has approved purchase of a large piece of glass to cover the pool table on the ground floor at the Knights' house, placed over an historic Borden map of Walkkill. Thanks to board member **Carol LeFevre** for her generous donation toward this project.

Jim Malloy's Safety Committee arranged to have fire extinguishers professionally installed in the DuBois House with a contract for inspection and maintenance. This fall, the same will be done at the Knights' house.

A new mission statement was drafted by **Libby Ross** and approved by the board. It can be found in the newsletter, on the website, and in our program brochure.

This fall we will have a basket-making workshop on September 12th. On October 3rd, the HSSG will join the Vision of Walkkill celebration. This year's Holiday Tea on Saturday, November 14th, will be chaired by **Carolyn Crowell**. The beautiful quilt donated by the Quilting Club will be raffled at that time along with other fabulous raffle items. This year, board member, **Adam Seelig**, plans to host a "men's table." Look out ladies!

Many thanks to **Carla Decker** for her generous gift of a toy Borden milk cart with horse and to **Elmer McDowell** for his financial gift toward the Terwilliger Room in the Pythias house. We encourage members to volunteer or contribute in whatever capacity you can and welcome ideas for programs or fund raising events. See below our "wish list" of items we would like to acquire.). There are many ways for members to contribute.

Debra Wolff

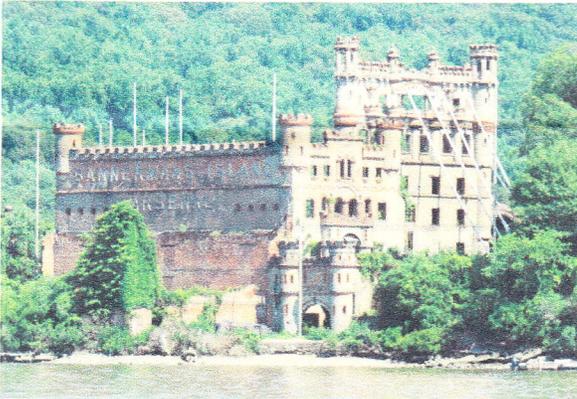
Wish List:

<i>Step Ladders</i>	<i>Dehumidifier</i>
<i>Laptop Computer</i>	<i>Bookends</i>
<i>Nice dining room table</i>	<i>Area rugs</i>
<i>Kitchen Stove - gas</i>	<i>Refrigerator</i>

EVENTS

Garden Tour - The rain held off long enough for the **Saturday, June 27th garden tour and plant sale** hosted by the HSSG, earning \$1000 in support of Society activities. Many thanks to the gardeners who offered up their beautiful gardens, to **Freda Fenn and Donna Myer** for their hard work organizing the event, and to **Bob Mooney** for leading tours of the Knights of Pythias house that day.

Bannerman Island - On Saturday, July 11, the Historical Society arranged a private tour of Bannerman's Island in the Hudson River. Around the turn of the 20th century, Bannerman bought the island for a store to warehouse military and ammunitions items and operated a successful reclamation-recycling-catalog business there. The Bannermans built a lovely home on top of the hill; it was inspiring to see how much preservation has been done on the site and in the gardens. Thanks to **Donna Myer, Debra Wolff and Freda Fenn** for organizing a great trip.



Restoration continues at the DuBois House on the back dining room, including paint scraping, plaster repair, wallpaper cleaning and protection, as well as on-going work on lawn and gardens. The Town removed 3 old trees in front and Central Hudson positioned a pole and guy wire to support electric lines on the street. After efforts to clean and restore the upper floor lodge as a permanent museum, we opened the Knights of Pythias building to the public for the first time in conjunction with the Garden Tour Day of June 27. Work continues on the first floor to complete offices for the Historical Society and for

the Terwilliger Association. We completed work on the front meeting room in time for our first Historical Society meeting on September 2.

First meeting in Pythias House On Wednesday, September 2, Trustee **Bob Mooney** presented the first program of the Historical Society in its own meeting room in the Knights of Pythias house, with technical assistance by **Hal Van Aken**. Bob described the Knights' historical national origins (an Act of Congress, signed by President Lincoln in 1864), and the building of the Knights' lodge in Wallkill in 1884. The ideals of friendship, trust, and brotherhood became the cornerstone of the organization, translated into lessons of concern for family and community.

The enthusiastic audience climbed upstairs to the original meeting room of the Knights, complete with authentic furniture and other symbols of the organization. Lee Titus, a young man in the heyday of the Wallkill lodge, spoke with affection and gratitude for the Tuesday night meetings of "old guys and young guys." The rituals of the formal meetings were followed by pinochle games where the whole family was welcomed. The Knights of Pythias, with its secret and special rituals and regalia, was an important social organization that welcomed men of all religions, from all walks of life, and helped its members through thick and thin. It helped make Wallkill a town where people liked to live.



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Stamp

Last Member Dues 2015

Jim & Linda Malloy
16 Malloy Road
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Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner - Fall Events

Saturday, September 12, @ 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Shawangunk Town Hall Community Room
Weave your own Pie Basket Workshop with Mary Bickel. Bring your own lunch. Fee: \$35. Limited to 15 people. Contact Freda Fenn – 845-895-3986

Saturday, October 3, @ 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

VOW Weekend includes **Tour of 1769 DuBois House and Knights of Pythias Museum.**

Monday, October 5, @ 7 p.m.

Gardiner Town Hall
Tribute to Historian Carlton Mabee
Presenters: Mary Beth Majestic and Libby Ross
Refreshments provided.

Wednesday, November 4 @ 7 p.m.

Shawangunk Town Hall
Early History of Jones Patent and the Tourette/Borden Mill on Borden Road
Presented by Susan Dawes and Karen Dale
Refreshments provided.

Saturday, November 14 @ 2-4 p.m.

Shawangunk Town Hall Community Room
Benefit Tea \$15, plus raffle, quilt raffle and drawing
Contact Carolyn Crowell, 895-3933
or Freda Fenn, 895-3986

Wednesday, December 2 @ 6 p.m.

DuBois House at 75 Walkill Avenue.
Christmas Pot luck Party. Bring dish to share.

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.