

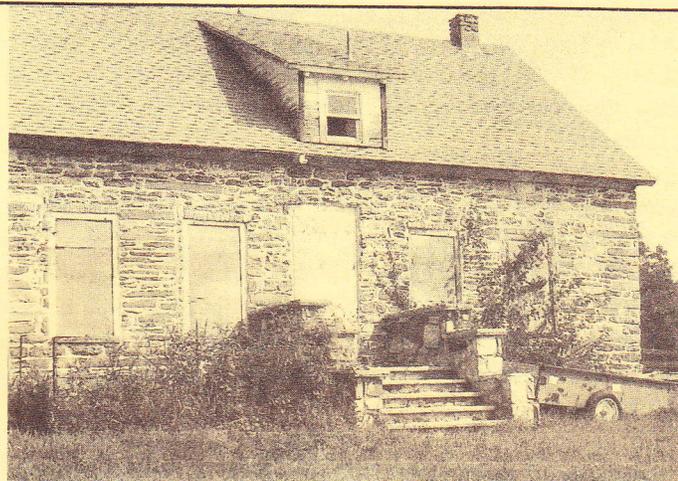
Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 5, Number 3

Fall 2007

Hidden History - The Walstein Childs House in Shawangunk



THE WALSTEIN CHILDS HOUSE

Hidden from public view on the western edge of Wallkill Correctional Facility property in Shawangunk is a stone house that sits on a tract of land conveyed to David Mulford in 1776 by Charles Clinton (brother of the Governor). Carved into a slender horizontal stone on the front façade is the date 1763. The date was likely carved by the Mulford family, but the original builder of the house may have been a tenant farmer. Even today the homestead is surrounded by a complex of working farm buildings: a large red barn, a second farm building with animal stalls, a former workers' house that may date back to the 1940s or 1950s, and acres of open fields.

The house remained in the Mulford family until purchased by Walstein Childs in 1876, a year after his marriage to Margaret Hasbrouck. An addition was constructed at the rear of the house in the second half of the 19th century, probably after the Childs purchase. At that time the homestead contained 130 acres devoted to general farming "kept in fine order and equipped with every modern improvement." Childs was elected supervisor of Shawangunk in 1885 and served for eight consecutive years. The house was occupied by members of the Childs family until 1946, when it was purchased by Orma O. Healy. She sold the house in 1950 to Edwin and Virginia Abrahamsen,

parents of Kris Pedersen, Chair of the Planning Board, Town of Shawangunk. Ownership subsequently transferred from Bernhard and Erna Thieben to Dr. Wallace Karutz to Lee Titus who sold it to the Wallkill Correctional Facility in the year 2000. The Walstein Childs House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 3, 2003.

A number of surviving features date from the original construction of the house: the wide rough-hewn floor boards, deep window sills, the staircase, the fireplace surround and historic iron fireback, a Dutch door with original hardware, and a chimney made from Wallkill River mud bricks. The building itself is constructed of fine Dutch stone masonry, with later repairs made in an Italian masonry style.

Today the stone house rests shuttered and empty with an uncertain future. Around it, the Wallkill Correctional Facility manages a thoroughbred horse farm and inmates care for 35-50 retired racing horses that are given a graceful ending to their strenuous careers. When a horse dies, the animal is buried nearby and the inmates plant a tree over its grave. The landscape near the stone house is dotted with these trees.

The red barn nearby may be of the same vintage as the stone house, with massive hand-hewn beams in evidence, but it has not been in use since acquired by the Facility, and has deteriorated to the point of being placed off limits. Another substantial farm building near the stone house, originally used to stall cows and hay, is currently in use as a classroom for the horse farm. Although the chapter appears to be closed for the Walstein Childs House in our time, the slow tempo of farm work continues around it.

(We thank the Wallkill Correctional Facility for a tour and helpful information on the current status of the Walstein Childs homestead.)

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Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends,

By the time you read this, our 4th Annual Borden Day will have come and gone. Hopefully, many of you came out to enjoy the day's activities, whether it was taking a narrated bus tour to the Home Farm, being chauffeured in a vintage auto, meeting your friends at the Wallkill Reformed Church for a special Borden luncheon, or finding a new "treasure" at the Popp's Park yard sale. Every year there are favorite experiences to repeat and new ones to try, but everyone enjoys the day's festivities – even our hard-working volunteers!

This year our theme was "150 Years of Borden," covering not only John G. Borden and his family in Wallkill but also Gail Borden, John's father, who established this remarkable dairy heritage. To assist us in our educational efforts, we were joined by representatives of the Amenia Historical Society from Amenia, Dutchess County, New York. The Hamlet of Wassaic in the Town of Amenia was the location of a milk condensing factory opened by Gail Borden in the 1850s.

Speaking of our volunteers, I want to thank **Alex Hoyt, Al Smiley, Doris Callan, Karen Dale, Paul Dale, and Freda Fenn** for their commitment to orchestrating this successful event for our Society every year.

On September 15th, Amenia will celebrate Amenia Community Day in Wassaic. Just as Amenia historians participated in our Borden Day, we will be there to assist in their effort to tell the Borden story in New York. I hope you will come out to Amenia and join in the festivities. If you can't make it, we will have pictures and a brief story in our next newsletter.

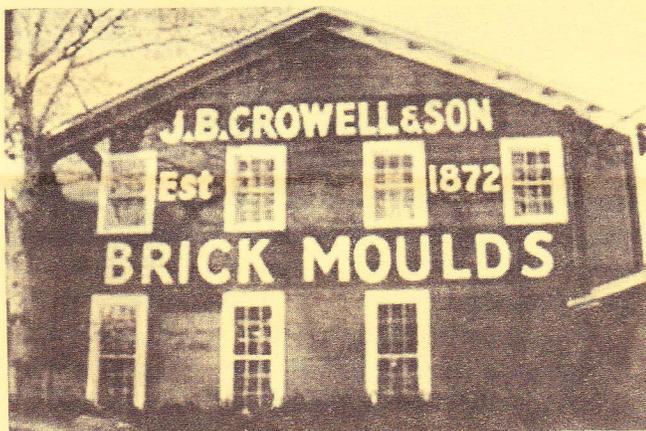
Speaking of cooperative efforts, discussion is going forward about visits to other historical societies and museums. We will have "sign-up" sheets at the September and October membership meetings to gauge interest in visiting specific sites. Under consideration right now are the Bevier House (home of the Ulster County Historical Society) in Marbletown, the Van Wyck Homestead in Fishkill, the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, and the Century House Historical Society in Rosendale. Suggestions of other sites also are welcome. Once we have an idea of our members' interest, we will make arrangements for special "behind-the-scenes" tours and transportation.

Last but certainly not least, I'd like to welcome **Loretta Miller** as our new Corresponding Secretary. Loretta is taking over for **Iris Bellarosa**, who has decided to take a well-earned break from Board meetings and officer responsibilities. Thank you, Iris, for all your hard work and dedication to the Board; and thank you, Loretta, for accepting this new level of commitment to the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner.

Suzanne Isaksen

Meeting Highlights

Historical Society Excursion On Wednesday, May 2, at 7:30 p.m. about 25 members of The Historical Society visited an unusual historical site in Wallkill, the Crowell Brick Mould Factory, a large wooden structure on the banks of the Dwaarkill creek. The factory has been in business continuously for 135 years and is the oldest commercial site in Ulster County. The business is managed by Wendy Crowell Sutherland, the great-great granddaughter of the founder, and daughter of the previous General Manager, Jim Crowell. "When a crisis hits, he [Jim] knows the answers to the problems – he's the pinch hitter. I'm the 5th generation, the first woman and hopefully not the last," says Ms. Sutherland. "When I first went down south [to their customers], the men wouldn't even look at me. They would talk to my father. Now they do, or they don't get the brick molds!"



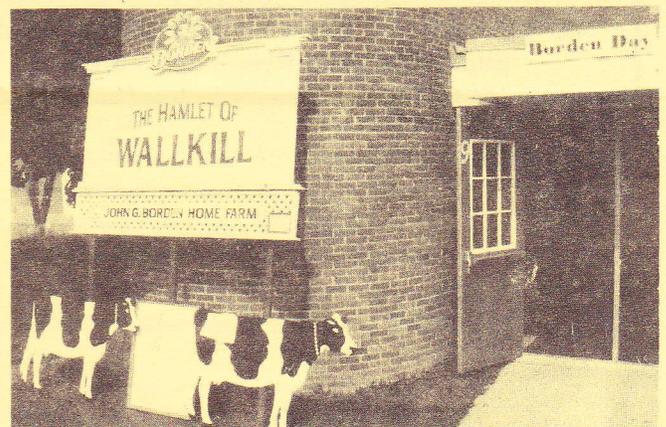
Originally, the factory made children's sleighs, but within 10 years after the first brick molds were produced in 1872, the moulds were dominating the business. The business kept going, even after the shop burned down 3 times around the late 1890s. Ms. Sutherland explained that only the brick molds are made in the factory, not the bricks. Big brick-making companies in the South are their customers; there are no brick makers any longer in the Hudson Valley.

Four hundred screws are used to construct each maple-wood brick mold, using a screwing machine that the factory has kept going since 1928. The factory produces 36 moulds a week, each custom-made for the user, depending on the composition of clay. "Our brick molds are beautiful," says Ms. Sutherland. Her factory is the only company in the country that makes brick molds.

State-of-the-art, computer-driven machines have replaced many of the earlier machines, allowing 7-8 employees to do the work of 15-20 men in earlier times, but the same pride of workmanship drives the current management.

The Garden Tour 2007 The Historical Society's second annual garden tour on June 30 was very successful. There was nothing but praise for the owners of the twelve gardens, and their presentations were spectacular. Our thanks for the many hours labor that they put into their gardens to made them so pristine. Whether big or small, annual, perennial, shrub, grasses, or vegetable, each deserved a blue ribbon. The garden tour committee of Toni Gagan, Doris Callan, Freda Fenn, Kathy, Frank and Casey Antonelli, and Jennifer Parker helped considerably behind the scenes. The Garden Tour raised \$1675 towards the restoration of the Andries DuBois House.

A Look at Borden Day (See *President's Message*, p. 2)



Up at the Borden Farm with Rodney Johnson

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner
Fall Programs/2007

Wednesday, September 5 – 7:30 p.m.

Elaine Weed: *The Thirteen one-room schoolhouses in Shawangunk* – Wallkill Reformed Church

Wednesday, October 3 – 7:30 p.m. Show and Tell:

Bring an item that has a story to tell about family origins –Wallkill Reformed Church

Sunday, October 7 – 2-6 p.m.

Silent Auction - Sangiovese Ristorante at 1776, Pine Bush - \$10/wine&cheese

Wednesday, November 7 – 7:30

Libby Ross: *On the Silk Road – from Kazakhstan to Mongolia* – Wallkill Reformed Church

Wednesday, December 5 – 6 p.m. *Pot Luck Dinner:*

Music provided by Karin Warner and her Suzuki pupils – Wallkill Reformed Church

A THOUGHTFUL GIFT A thoughtful tribute to the memory of a loved one can help support the work of the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner to serve our community. Memorial envelopes are being made available to local funeral homes for memorial contributions to the Historical Society. Or perhaps a family member or friend might appreciate a donation in his or her name instead of a present for the holidays. An acknowledgement will be sent, stating the name of the donor, but not the amount.

CALL FOR OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

Once again we ask you to check your family albums and attics for old photographs or aerial views of farms in Shawangunk. The Historical Society wants to talk to you in preparation for a project to highlight the heritage of our farming communities. Call Doris at 744-2552 if you have pictures or information to contribute.

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Historical Society of Shawangunk and Gardiner
PO Box 570
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