



Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

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EARLY CENTURY CHANGES SWEEP THROUGH WALLKILL

By Libby Ross

Between 1924 and 1932, President Calvin Coolidge's term of office was followed by that of President Herbert Hoover, Charles Lindbergh flew the first solo nonstop transatlantic flight, IBM was established, a 1st class stamp costs 2 cents, the Holland Tunnel opened, the 1929 stock market crash marked the start of the Great Depression, and unemployment soared.

During those years, here in the small hamlet of Wallkill, **The Wallkill Valley World** published an edition every Friday. The first page chronicled the doings of the hamlet and its environs, and the remaining pages carried regional, national and international news.

On Page 1 you could read about dances held by the Firemen to raise money for a new Ford truck, or about the Borden Farm's plans to build a new large barn that when completed would be the largest dairy barn anywhere, at a cost of about \$25,000. Or the "very fine" roof of copper shingles that was laid on the roof of the Reformed Church of Shawangunk, a "practically everlasting roof put on the historic edifice." The construction of the new medium-security prison starting in 1932 also generated constant reporting.

If, however, you wanted news of shops and services in town, you were out of luck. There were large ads, but for stores in Newburgh, New Paltz, and Kingston, not Wallkill. Now why was that?



Post Office 1930's (Dolans)

Times were changing. Cars made their early appearance, town government authorized the construction of "concrete" roads linking Wallkill and Walden, and soon after came the first auto accident between two cars from out of town; "No one was hurt but everybody was sobered."

The newspaper editorialized (possibly with self-interest):

"Town merchants must advertise. In the days of dirt roads and horse drawn vehicles, farmers usually traded at the towns nearest to them. Merchants could usually count on a certain amount of trade without any advertising effort on their part. The coming of the automobile and paved highways is changing this. Farmers with motor cars frequently follow the pavement to do their buying. They pass through towns where formerly they shopped. This need not mean the passing of the small-town store. It will mean that storekeepers must make greater effort to hold their farm customers. They need to advertise and spruce up their stores to meet the competition."



Wallkill 1960 Valley Food Store

To make matters worse for the Wallkill stores, buses began to connect Wallkill with Newburgh, New Paltz, and Kingston; they ran 3 times a day and cost 50 cents each way. Fewer people rode the trains between these towns, and in 1927 the trains ended passenger service. This also affected the postal service linked to the trains and had an impact on thousands of people on rural routes who had relied on train delivery of the mail to Wallkill. Not a happy consequence. *(Based on archival issues of The Wallkill Valley World. Next newsletter The Depression and War years in Wallkill)*

EVENTS

Galeville: A History of the Rise and Decline and Why was the subject of a talk by **Board Member Hal Van Aken** on **Wednesday, September 4**, at the Knights of Pythias House. The earliest families built their farms on land parceled from the 1709 patents; by the 1770s the farms were growing supplies for the Revolutionary War. By 1875 the small village of stores, schools, gristmill, sawmill, post office and churches that emerged to serve the farm families had reached its peak growth. Galeville was growing faster than the Basin (later Wallkill), its nearest competitor.

By 1885 the picture had changed – the Galeville gristmill was losing business to the Basin, following the effects of a flood that destroyed the gristmill and the sawmill. Something happened in 1905 that we have not yet been able to discover: in that one year, the hotel was torn down, the blacksmith shop, stores, and the post office all closed.

Major reasons for the decline may be laid at the feet of the decision to build a railroad that bypassed Galeville in favor of Wallkill, and the fateful decision by John J. Borden to buy all the farms east of Wallkill to launch his dairy industry that included condensers and milk processing stations within easy reach of the railroad that would carry his products to the NYC market. Borden also laid out the grid of streets for the hamlet of Wallkill. Galeville never recovered.

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As part of VOW activities celebrating the hamlet of Wallkill, on **Saturday, September 21**, **Board member Bob Mooney** presented “**A Brief History of Wallkill**,” on behalf of the Historical Society. The presentation included 41 pictures that highlight the story of Wallkill. The framed and captioned photos will hang in the Society’s Knights of Pythias house; this project is funded by an education grant from **Stewart’s**.

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RESTORATION COMMITTEE

On-going work by this committee continued throughout the summer on both Historical Society houses in Wallkill. In the Knight’s Museum, three broken windows in the upstairs kitchen were replaced. In the DuBois house, the 18th century kitchen is nearing completion and is scheduled to be unveiled at the Christmas party in December. Work included scraping, painting of walls, windows, and doors, removal of modern electrical outlets and wiring, and molding reconstruction.

Many thanks to **Board member Freda Fenn** for maintenance of the Dubois House gardens, to **Board member Mary Work** for donation of historic grillwork that encloses the garden, and to **John Ross** for construction of visitor stanchions.

Members and visitors are welcome to stop by on Saturday mornings to observe on-going restoration work. We welcome your comments and encourage your participation!

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DEDICATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING ROOM.

On October 2, the Historical Society Meeting Room was dedicated to Historical Society member **Ann Verhulp-Watson** (1947-2017). Born in a small town in NE England, daughter of a factory worker, **Ann** once danced Irish and Scottish dances before Queen Elizabeth during a royal visit to the Newcastle area! Her romantic story was to marry a Dutch boy – **Kees Verhulp** -who had once been a pen pal to her youngest brother. They were together for 52 happy years. The couple settled in Holland and Ann miraculously learned to speak Dutch in 4 months!



The tragedy of her life was the premature death of twin sons, and there was not a single day that she did not think of that loss. Later there were two daughters and her girls were her life. She was devoted to her husband Kees who made his career

in international engineering and construction; Ann accompanied her husband to 35 countries, and lived in England, The Netherlands, East Germany, Argentina, Singapore, Malaysia, and her last 10 years in the U.S. Ann always gave back to the local community, including voluntary nursing for terminally ill cancer patients in hospice in Singapore for years. She was keenly interested in local cultures and insisted on living among local people and not in ex-pat compounds. The couple retired to the U.S. where she retained her interest in local history and became a devoted member of the Historical Society. Her quiet presence will be memorialized in the plaque that dedicates the Historic Society Meeting Room to her memory.

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Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends:

Fall is here and it's time to make headway on projects before the snow flies in Wallkill. With that in mind, board members and volunteers have been busy putting the finishing touches on the Andres DuBois House kitchen in preparation for the December holiday party. Ideas for lighting and other display installations were gleaned from the board's field trip to Hill-Hold Museum in Campbell Hall, NY last May. If you haven't had a chance to tour this charming house and outbuildings, I would strongly suggest you take a trip down there.

June found us once again providing tours to the 4th grade class. The Knights of Pythias House was packed with 4th graders, teachers, and parent chaperones. Students were given a tour by **Bob Mooney** and a quiz to bring home. Thanks to **Stewart's** for their generous grant to make this happen. At the end of the tour, students enjoyed a tasty ice cream treat from **Stewart's** served by **Freda Fenn, Debra Wolff, and Parker Wolff.**

On Saturday, Sept 21st, **Bob Mooney** presented "A Brief History of Wallkill," at the VOW tent based on 41 photographs that highlight major events in the story of Wallkill. The remainder of the **Stewart's** grant funded the frames and the exhibition will hang permanently in the Knight's house first floor.

At our October meeting the Historical Society will dedicate the main meeting room at the Knights of Pythias House to **Ann Verhulp-Watson**, a long-time loyal member (see related article, page 3).

Board member **Robert Reifmueller** has announced his retirement from the Board and we thank him for his service these last years. We are currently looking for a Gardiner resident to replace him. Let us know if you are interested.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed skills, hard work, and donations. As a member-driven organization, we encourage you to volunteer or give in whatever capacity!

Debra Wolff, President

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.



The Heart of the Town, Wallkill, N.Y.

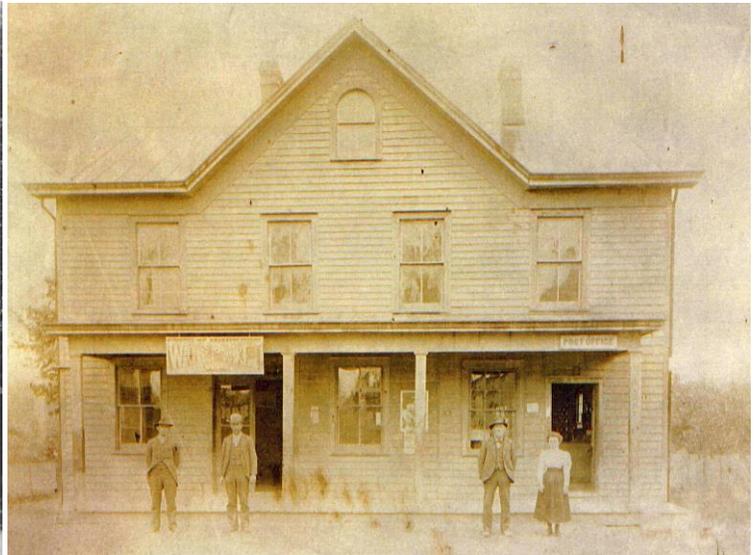
Basin Looking North from Bruyn Turnpike



Phinney House



Ostrander Blacksmith on Jansen Lane



Post Office / Masten / Dolans



Valley Food Market - Burned in 1970

Wednesday, October 2 - 7:00 p.m.

The Basin (Wallkill): 1875-1910

A close-up look at stores and businesses and services of Wallkill Avenue (Main Street).

Knights of Pythias House, 25 Main Street – Refreshments

Wednesday, December 4th – 6:00 p.m.

Annual Winter Party at the Andries Dubois House.

Presentation: Display of the restored 18th century kitchen

Potluck – drinks provided. Bring a dish to share

DuBois House - 75 Main Street, Wallkill