



The Ferryman

Fostering an awareness and appreciation for the history of Dobbs Ferry and all the people, noted and humble, who transmitted the good things of the past to the present and the future.

From brews to bibles!

Have you ever wandered down the lane off Palisade Street to the massive buildings along the waterfront? Read about the crucial parts of Dobbs Ferry's economic history that were situated in the buildings at 145 Palisade Street.

Pages 1 & 2



New arrival at the Mead House!

An unexpected gift reminds us of one of the most beloved former citizens of Dobbs Ferry, Dr. Harold Storms. Read about his life. Page 6

We need your help!

Won't you look through your archives and send us photos and papers that can assist us in documenting the experience of our village's Italian immigrants? Read all about the Italian-American Project. Page 5

Pigeon Racing?



Fortunately your Ferryman is delivered by the postman. But there was a time in Dobbs Ferry when locals trained pigeons that might carry the news. Page 4

Would you please be our "Friend"?

Have you seen our Facebook page yet? Dobbs Ferry's own Denise Wilson has done a fabulous job of posting interesting and entertaining tidbits about the history of Dobbs Ferry for all to enjoy. Check it out!



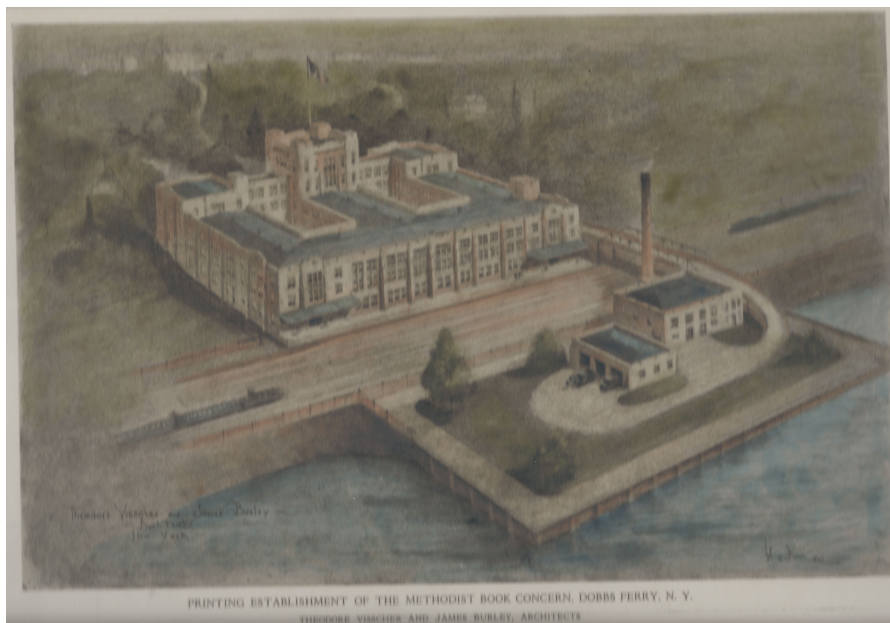
Volume XXVII

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145 PALISADE

BY MARY S. DONOVAN & CHARLES GEARD

The recent purchase of the property at 145 Palisade Street has spurred interest in that part of Dobbs Ferry. An earlier Ferryman published an article on the brewery that stood on the site from 1853 until 1920. We continue now with some of its subsequent history.



In December of 1917, cognizant of the impending prohibition amendment and distraught at the death of William Fix, brewmaster for the past 17 years, the Manilla Anchor Company closed the brewery. The building fell into disrepair and parts of it were torn down; some of the bricks were reused for construction projects such as the Gagliardi home on the Croton Aqueduct Trail.

Fortunately, another use for the site soon appeared, funded ironically by some of the "teetotalers" who had successfully campaigned for prohibition, the Methodist Church! In the early 1920s, the Methodist Book Concern bought the property and constructed a huge new building, essentially on the footprint of the old brewery.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Methodist Church had grown rapidly in the United States and developed a huge market for printed materials: Bibles, worship books, daily and weekly Bible-study tracts, church school materials and periodicals for many parish groups. Founded in 1879, the Methodist Book Concern provided these materials and became a thriving publisher, dedicating its profits to funding clergy pensions. It was this group that bought 145 Palisade to use as a printing and administrative center.

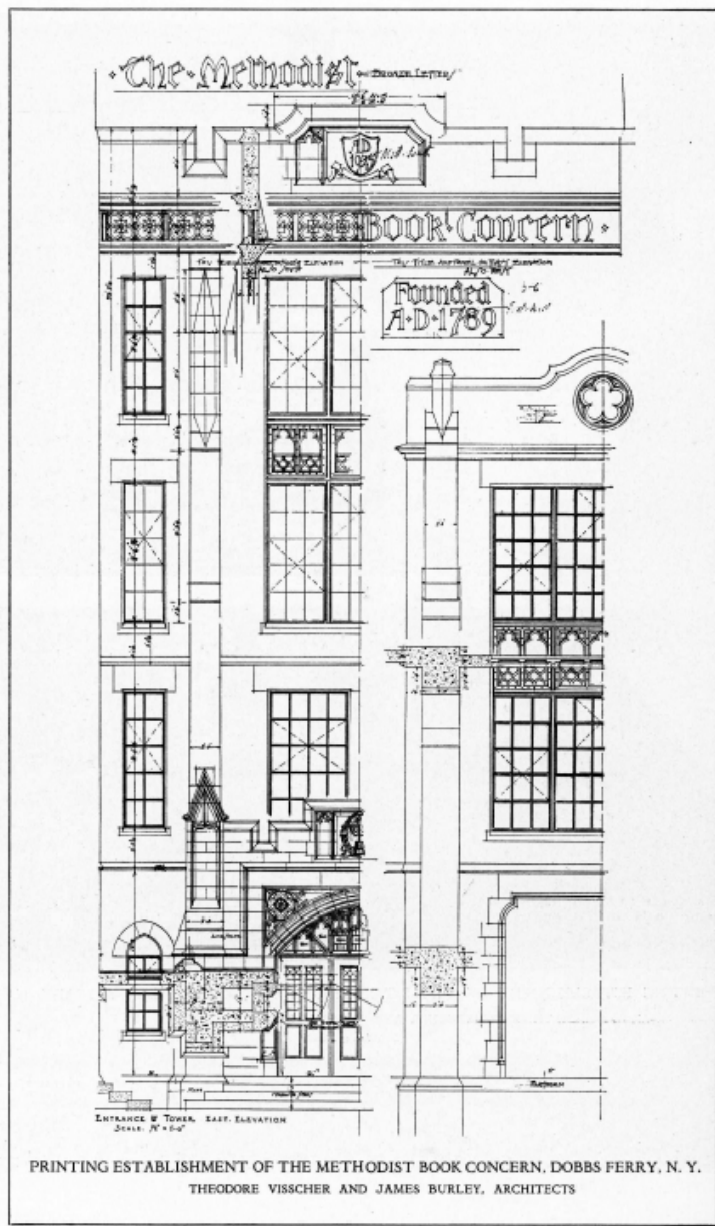
Designs for the new building were extraordinary as the exhibited diagram indicates. Architects Theodore Visscher and James Burley used concrete walls and foundations to withstand the thrust and stress of the massive printing presses in action. Imposing decorations on the exterior façade conveyed the Concern's seriousness of purpose. A *New York Times* article estimated the original cost of the project at \$1,000,000.

At the October 18, 1927 dedication, New York Bishop Luther B. Wilson presided over a large gathering of clergy and citizens who sang hymn composed for the occasion:

"And let those learn, who here shall meet,
True wisdom is with reverence crowned,
And science walks with humble feet
To seek the God that faith hath found."

For a few years, the Methodist Book Concern at Dobbs Ferry prospered. Printing contracts expanded; over 600 workers were hired to maintain the business. Total publication sales were almost \$5,000,000 in 1927, though that work was divided among three different plants. Then the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in 1929 and the ensuing financial depression took a heavy toll on religious book publishing. Subscriptions to church papers dwindled; small churches cut their Christian Education budgets. In the summer of 1940, the Methodist and the Southern Methodist Churches united and merged their printing facilities. In 1941 the Dobbs Ferry plant was closed and its departments moved to another plant on Long Island.

In early 1942, the North American Philips Company purchased the property for \$400,000 to be used for the manufacture of electronic products for the war effort. The company hoped to employ about 700 workers. Philips was particularly involved in radio wave technology and sound recording devices that could be used with various weapons systems.



These designs were printed in The American Architect, September, 1926.

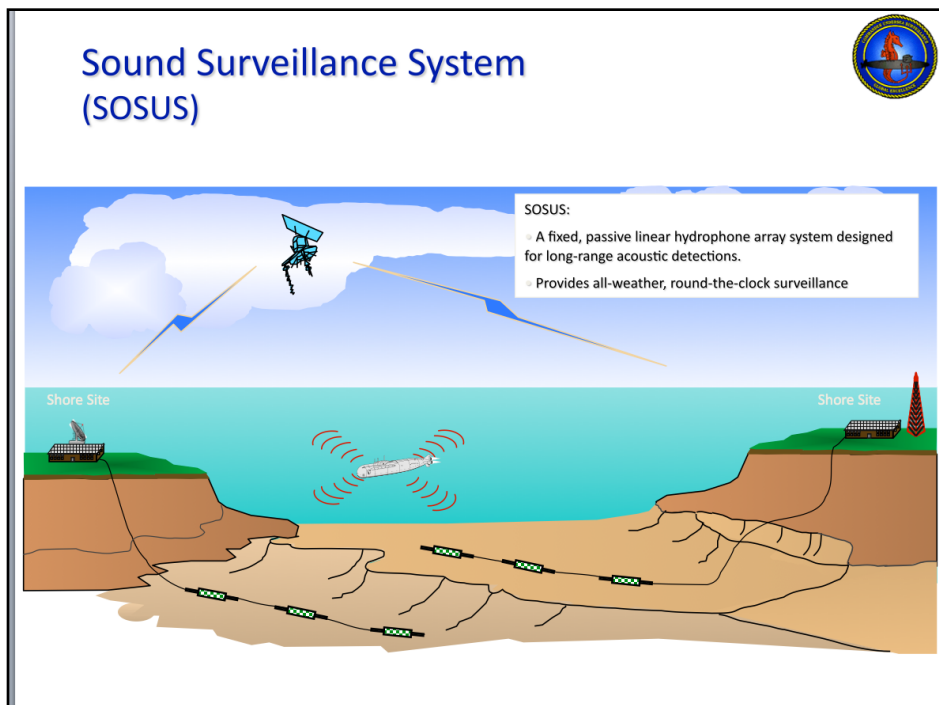
In 1951 Columbia University in conjunction with the Office of Naval Research established Hudson Labs to work on undersea sonic detection. Hudson Labs moved into the former Philips site, which was chosen because it was a solid reinforced-concrete building with a heavy floor and multiple large accessible spaces for loading and storing machinery.



USNS Josiah Willard Gibbs

The work began with a group of four scientists from Columbia, a manager, assistant manager, and four mechanical and electrical engineers. Some of the oceanographic research was conducted aboard a former seaplane tender, the Josiah Willard Gibbs, that traveled back and forth from New York to an area centered along the mid-Atlantic Ridge where they sought to develop a means to measure underwater ambient noise. The ultimate aim was to make possible long-range detection of submarines.

The development of the Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS) continued at Hudson Labs. Hiring increased until 1968 when the work force peaked at about 300, including more than 30 scientists with PhDs and an annual budget of about \$8 million. At that point, Hudson Labs was one of the largest employers in the Village of Dobbs Ferry. Then, with very little notice, the operation was closed suddenly in 1969. A spokesman for the Office of Naval Research in Washington said that the Navy now had the “in-house expertise” to do its own work in oceanographic research, including acoustical studies.



As the closing of Hudson Labs was made official, a small group of the scientists there formed a private company, Ocean and Atmospheric Science (OAS), to continue to develop an undersea Defense Early Warning System on a much more limited basis. The group had a tugboat moored at the dock on the Hudson that was for research off the coast of Long Island and for demonstrations for school children in the Hudson. OAS folded in 1980 but the property was not sold until 1981.

The Oxford Market and the Westchester Pigeon Club

By Peggie & Larry Blizard

The Oxford Market, operated by Albert Weiss (Al), opened its doors at 100 Main Street sometime around 1889. The building is shown on a map dated 1860, drawn by M. K. Couzens, but we found no record that tells what business was there prior to 1889. The Oxford Market became known as a purveyor of meats for the wealthy estate owners as well as the summer residents who flocked to Dobbs Ferry to escape the city.

The old grey barn in the back of the main building, abutting the aqueduct, first appears on an 1881 map at the Historical Society. Though earlier maps do not include outbuildings, they would have been necessary to house animals and to be used as privies (toilets).

In the 1860s the Loan Brothers were butchers who supplied meat to at least three butcher shops in Dobbs Ferry. More research is required to determine if this enterprise was continued under another name after the 1880s. But "until the end of the '80's, the Loan Brothers had a virtual monopoly on the butcher businesses in Dobbs Ferry and Irvington," wrote Senator Charles P. McCelland in his autobiography.



Local historian Alice Denike stated, "Once every week, they drove up from New York City from 15 to 20 live cattle and killed them in very primitive slaughter houses in the rear of the butcher stores." It is probable that Albert Weiss got his meat from this source and may well have kept the cattle in the barn behind his store.

When we moved to 12 Chestnut Street in 1979, not only was the market still in operation but the pigeon coop was still active on top of the barn. It was possibly sometime in the late 1980s when the market closed for business, probably falling victim to the convenience of the Grand Union supermarket with its spacious parking lot.

The pigeon coop had been placed atop the barn after the 1928 formation of the Northern Westchester Pigeon Racing Club. The use of homing pigeons to deliver messages across enemy lines during World War I had spurred popular interest in training and racing such birds. Local racers included Luke (father) and Peter (son) Bottiglieri who owned the barn in the 1960s and used it to house the pigeons and store the gear. We have not been able to find when the club folded and removed the coop from the roof. What became of the pigeons once the coop was taken down is a mystery. However, we are certain that their descendants spend time sitting on top of our house at 12 Chestnut and help themselves to our bird feeder.



The Italian-American Project

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Dobbs Ferry became the destination for a large number of Italian immigrants. Italians came as laborers on the large estates that made up much of the village. Possibly partly influenced by the local presence of the convent founded by Mother Frances Cabrini, Italians continued to settle in this area until the drastic curtailment of immigration in the early 1920s. Second- and third-generation Italian-Americans continue to have a distinctive presence here and their heritage should be documented.

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society has a major collection of taped interviews of many of the first- and second-generation Italian-Americans who lived in this village. The interviews were conducted in the 1970s by local volunteers and include such names as: Marziale, Ricci, Ricciardi, Rizzuto, Staffiero, Tisi, Voulgaris, and Yazzo. Among these interviewees are Filomena Ricciardi, who was the first Italian-American female graduate of Dobbs Ferry High School to attend college, and Father Anthony Ciriame (known as "Tough Tony"), pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii Roman Catholic Church for over 25 years. Also included in our archives are records from Va Pensiero and Vittorio Veneto Lodges of the Sons of Italy in America.



Angelo Daino & his bride

Photo from Historical Society Archives

We would like to mount a major exhibit of the Italian-American experience in Dobbs Ferry but we need your help!

We are looking for family photographs that document this experience—important events like baptisms and weddings, parties and social occasions. Let us know if you have such photos that you are willing to share. Our volunteers are willing to pick your photos up and take them to our archives where they can be scanned into the computer and then returned to you.

Or do you have other artifacts—letters or diaries that preserved the immigrant experience, or brochures or goods from the old country that

continued to be important in the new world? We'd be glad to come and photograph such items to use for the display.

Could you help us put together some of the family trees of these families? Who married whom? When did Uncle Salvatore die? Which cousins were born in this country and which were born in Italy?

Please call the Historical Society at 914-674-1007 if you have any photos, artifacts or information to share. Leave a message with your phone number and we will return your call as soon as possible.

A RECENT GIFT . . .

New on display at the Mead House this year is an antique baby crib from the former home of Dr. & Mrs. Harold Storms. The crib was donated by Zemaya Jones, the last of Dr. Storm's grandchildren, whom he delivered in the Dobbs Ferry Hospital.

A descendent of the earliest settlers of Dobbs Ferry, Harold Storms was born in 1889 and raised in the village. He left to attend medical school and then returned after graduation and spent the next 40 years as the local physician. His longtime friend, Dick Caveliero who owned Dick's Cabin Restaurant on Main Street, described the doctor: "He never failed to answer a house call no matter what the hour, or the weather, was like. I always kind of see him, his coat flying, hurrying into his old beat-up car. When the car got stuck in the snow or mud,



he'd get out and walk the rest of the way. Always arrived cheerful to set the arm or leg, or deliver the baby, or do what had to be done."

Caveliero talked of the doctor's dedication. "He never sent out a bill in 40 years. It was kind of painful for him to send out a bill. And he never asked for money. His fees were always low. Low enough to be silly. I know one guy that had to chase the doctor for four months to pay him for delivering his baby, and it was a third of what he expected to pay. Way back, in 1918, when the doctor was just starting, he paid three visits to a family down with influenza, and the father emptied the piggy banks and came up with about five bucks, but the doc wouldn't take it. Said: 'Guess you need this more than I do.' There's a hundred stories like that about Doc Storms."

In 1956, while administering anesthesia during an operation, Dr. Storms collapsed. He died three days later, of overwork, some villagers claimed. After his death, a resolution from the Village Board expressed its deep appreciation for "his lifelong dedication to the good and well-being of his fellow men" and vowed to remember him "as our beloved 'country doctor' to whom his profession meant not pecuniary gain but the opportunity to give a lifetime of service to those he knew and loved."



Harold Storms never stopped to have a photograph taken but did agree to have this portrait painted by Herb Bohnert when the artist pleaded, "I'm sick and you give me such a lift."

Road to Freedom Walk, 2014

After an unbelievably cold winter, it is fun to remember last summer's Road to Freedom Walk. Featured then was the first Rhode Island regiment whose members reminded us that black soldiers were an important part of the Continental Army.





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ALEXANDER HAMILTON IN DOBBS FERRY!

Plans are shaping up for the Tenth Annual Road to Freedom Walk along the roads of Dobbs Ferry.

This year the event will be held on Sunday, August 9th. Walkers, as usual, will step off from Gould Park at 1:00 pm, carrying Revolutionary War flags and led by the fife and drum corps.

Following the Walk, we will gather on the lawn of the Mead House for a family event, including 18th century folksongs by the famed Hudson River Ramblers (storyteller Jonathan Kruk and folksinger Rich Bala) and fife and drum selections by the superb Ministers of Apollo musicians.

Featured this year will be a historical skit portraying two heroes of the American Revolution, Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton (played by Ian Connett) and his commander, Col. Alexander Scammell (played by Jonathan Kruk). The August 1781 encampment in Dobbs Ferry brought momentous changes to the lives of both men. Do plan to be with us to discover how their fates merged!



We would like to express our deep gratitude to the principal sponsors of the 2014 Road to Freedom Walk,

Tensor Foundation & the Half Moon restaurant,



& all our business contributors. Their generous support made this commemoration possible.

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