



The FERRYMAN

Become a member of
The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.
Join the exciting exploration of local history.
A membership form is on page 3.

VOLUME XI, No. 3

DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
153 Main Street, Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522

DECEMBER 1992

CLARA MEAD EGGNOG PARTY DECEMBER 13

Taking her cue from Admiral Farragut at the Battle of Mobile Bay in 1864, and throwing all caution to the winds, Mary Oberdorf stated firmly, "Darn the cholesterol, full speed ahead!"

The remark came after Mae Pepper cautioned that the recipe for Clara Mead's holiday eggnog is "very rich."



The caution and the response came as the Historical Society was planning a special "Clara Mead Eggnog Party" for its members. The party will be held at the Mead House, 12 Elm Street, on Sunday, December 13, between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Mrs. Oberdorf, who used to be a tenant at the Mead House, and Mildred Persinger are co-chairs of the event.

Shirley Elbert, Third Vice-President and Membership Committee Chair, explained that the eggnog party was planned as a benefit of membership in the Society.

Members who have paid their 1992-1993 dues should bring their membership cards with them. Those who have not received them by December 13 will get them at the door. Similarly, members who have not yet renewed for 1992-1993 may do so at the event and pick up their membership cards at the same time.

"However, non-members are also invited, if they join the Society at the door to take advantage of this 'members only' privilege," said Mrs. Elbert.

People planning to attend should R.S.V.P. to Peter and Mary Oberdorf by calling 693-9539. This will help the Trustees and the Committee to determine about how many guests to prepare for.

Mrs. Oberdorf said that a fruit punch would also be served for those determined to resist the temptation of Miss Mead's eggnog. Mrs. Persinger added

that to complement the eggnog and the fruit punch, sweet and non-sweet hor d'oeuvres, prepared by Officers, Trustees and member volunteers, would be offered during the two hours.

Ms. Pepper, Trustee, friend and neighbor of Clara Mead, and custodian of Miss Mead's highly touted eggnog recipe, said that the eggnog parties were held every December in the Mead House for her circle of friends. "I'm glad the Society is holding such a party in her memory this year and I hope it continues the event as a Society tradition," Ms. Pepper said.

It is known that Miss Mead got the idea for the eggnog recipe from a December 1954 issue of *The New York Times*, whose crossword puzzles were a favorite pastime for her. It is presumed she held her first holiday eggnog party in that year and continued to hold this event annually for her friends for the next 36 years until her death in September, 1991. Miss Mead's recipe follows:

6 eggs separated
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup rum
1 pint brandy, rye or bourbon
2 teaspoons vanilla
nutmeg
3 cups heavy cream
1 pint milk

Beat egg yolks well, adding sugar gradually. Add rum while beating, then other liquor. Add vanilla and pinch of nutmeg. Chill several hours, adding cream and milk from time to time and stirring. Beat egg whites until stiff. Fold half into mixture. Add 3 tablespoons more sugar to remaining egg whites and beat until very stiff. Spread on top of eggnog and swirl. Sprinkle with nutmeg.
Serves 10 to 12 people (in about 25 servings).

It's clear from the above that Mae Pepper is quite right in describing the recipe as "very rich." Admiral Farragut, damning the torpedoes, won the Battle of Mobile Bay. But Society members are cautioned that, though "darning the cholesterol," they might lose the Battle of the Bay Window by going full speed ahead.

DOBBS FERRY IN WORLD WAR II: 1942 -- THE FIRST YEAR OF SACRIFICE

As our nation nears the end of 1992, it commemorates the first full year of World War II fifty years ago. The most terrible war of all time, in terms of death, injury, cruelty and devastation, World War II, finally, under American leadership, stopped the forces of genocidal Nazis aggression and Japanese military domination of Asia. And at war's end, through the United Nations, it opened the possibility of a peaceful world -- a goal still to be attained.

The small Village of Dobbs Ferry, numbering 5883 souls in the 1940 census, has a place in that history; indeed, it had more than its share in terms of sacrifice and suffering. This issue of THE FERRYMAN contains a brief summary of news of our Village's fighting men and women, culled from the pages of the DOBBS FERRY REGISTER during 1942. A future issue of THE FERRYMAN will summarize the 1942 homefront activities of our Village, including sugar and gasoline rationing, air raid drills, victory gardens, and the rest of the story of a river village at war.

-- by Bill Blanck and Hank Walter

When 1942 dawned over our Village, the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was still a very numbing event that had occurred just three and a half weeks previously. But the nation and the Village had become galvanized in an extraordinary war effort, despite the shock of our loss halfway around the world and the awesome realization that we were thrust suddenly into a war that had to be fought globally.

While the draft had existed before Pearl Harbor the attack greatly accelerated the pace of induction. In February 1942, 336 Dobbs Ferry men 20 to 45 years of age registered for the draft. By June the age was lowered to include 18 year olds. Like communities all across the land, Dobbs Ferry gave its men (and some of its women) to the armed services in ever increasing numbers.

Just a few weeks after Pearl Harbor, the *Dobbs Ferry Register* reported that "Fifteen Dobbs Ferry boys, the largest number to go from this village in any World War II draft call, will leave shortly to enter the United States Army."

And the calls continued all year.

The year 1942 saw three Dobbs Ferry men killed and one man was reported missing in action. Killed were Pvt. William D. Gamerota, 27; Aviation Cadet Eugene C. Verdin, 23; and Seaman First Class Joseph M. Tynan, 18. Missing in action was Seaman Warren J. Foley, 20.

William Gamerota was the Village's first war

casualty. A member of a Field Artillery unit, he died June 29, 1942 of internal injuries suffered during a truck accident in Hawaii. He was buried with full military honors in the National Cemetery, Hawaii, on July 1.

"Attending the funeral," said the *Register* in its July 17, 1942 issue, "were his brother, Sgt. Anthony Gamerota, whose company is stationed 200 miles away, and other Dobbs Ferry soldiers, among them Pvts. Anthony Annichiarico, Anthony DeFranza, and Michael Mageletti."

In Dobbs Ferry, a solemn high Mass was said for William in Our Lady of Pompeii Roman Catholic Church by Rev. Aurelio Ciantar, O.S.A., assistant pastor, Rev. Aurelio Marini, and Rev. Dr. David Ruben a professor at Catholic University of America in Washington.

Among the many letters reaching the family, according to the *Register*, "was one from his commanding officer, Capt. Leroy S. Copp. 'William had been under my control for only one month,' Capt. Copp wrote, 'and in that time, he had shown himself to be an outstanding soldier, a kind and thoughtful boy to his fellow-soldiers. He was well-liked by all of the battery. All of the men and officers extend their heartfelt sympathy.'"

William was born in Dobbs Ferry, a son of Patsy and Mary Gamerota, of 42 Main Street. He enlisted in the National Guard in October, 1940 and then transferred to the Regular Army. He was stationed in Alabama until a short time after Pearl Harbor, when his company was moved to California and then to Hawaii.

He was educated in Dobbs Ferry schools, employed by Anaconda Wire and Cable Company in Hastings, was "prominent in bowling circles and also played golf and tennis."

According to the *Register*, he was survived by his parents, two brothers, Anthony and Vincent, and two sisters, Anne and Mrs. Carl DiRossi. In a poignant observation, the *Register* said, "With her son's death, Mrs. Gamerota became the first Gold Star Mother of this war in Dobbs Ferry."

The Village's second war casualty was Aviation Cadet Eugene C. Verdin, who died in a plane crash July 29, 1942 near the Jacksonville, Florida, Naval Air Station, along with the pilot, a Naval Reserve ensign.

Eugene, while not flying the plane, was a qualified pilot with 32 hours of solo flight. The *Register* noted that "officers said he had an excellent record and had shown great promise since his enlistment."

He enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve in February, was stationed at Floyd Bennett Field in Long

Island until April, when he was transferred to Atlanta, Georgia, and then to Jacksonville. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene R. Verdin, of Oliphant Avenue. The father was President of Dobbs Ferry's Board of Education.

Sadly, his parents had visited him just three days before his death in Jacksonville. They were on their way west and had stopped in Ohio when they were informed of his death.

Young Eugene graduated from Dobbs Ferry High School in 1936. He was president of his graduating class and was active in varsity football and dramatics. He graduated in 1940 from Wesleyan College where he took part in skiing, tennis and squash and was a member of Alpha Delta Phi fraternity.

The body was sent from Jacksonville to repose in Edwards Funeral Home on Ashford Avenue. The funeral was held at the Summerfield Methodist Church, with Rev. George Feare, pastor, and Rev. John M. Pearson officiating.

Surviving besides his parents were two brothers, Andrew F., of Toledo, Ohio, and Douglas F., who graduated from Dobbs Ferry High School in June and was expected to enter Wesleyan College in the fall.

The third Dobbs Ferryman killed in action was Seaman First Class Joseph Martin Tynan, the *Register* of December 4, 1942, reported. Young Tynan, only 18 at the time, was aboard either a destroyer or an escort ship when he was killed in action. The Navy Department asked his parents not to divulge the name of his ship or station "to prevent possible aid to the enemies."

Joseph was born in Dobbs Ferry in 1924, moved with his family to Hastings in 1940 and then to Port Chester in September, 1941. Four months later (and a month after Pearl Harbor), when he was still in his junior year at Port Chester High School, he enlisted in the Navy. He completed his basic training in

Portsmouth, Virginia and joined the Pacific fleet.

Prayers were said for him in Sacred Heart Church, Dobbs Ferry, and Our Lady of Mercy, Port Chester. Besides his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph M. Tynan, he was survived by a sister, Helen, and a brother, Colin, of Port Chester; an aunt, Mrs. O'Shea; an uncle, Edward J. Tynan; and a grandfather, Michael J. Tynan, all of Dobbs Ferry.

Missing in action in the Manila Bay Battle Zone was Seaman Warren J. Foley, according to the March 14, 1942 issue of the *Register*. Warren was the son of Mr. and Mrs. John Foley, of 130 Palisade Street. The elder Foley was employed by the Village Sanitation Department.

Warren was one of the first Dobbs Ferry boys to enlist. A graduate of Dobbs Ferry High School, he joined the Navy in October, 1940 and served "in a wide area of the Pacific, including Guam, Hawaii and the Philippines" in the year before Pearl Harbor.

While no word of his death or injury was reported to the parents by the Navy, Warren was in the Manila Bay area at the time U. S. Forces surrendered and the *Register* speculated that "it is possible that he is being held by the Japanese as a prisoner of war."

The first person from the river towns area killed in action was Army man Matthew Smith, 26, of Irvington, son of the late Irvington Police Chief Joseph Smith, according to the May 1 issue of the *Register*. He died on the island of Kauai, Hawaii. He had several relatives in Dobbs Ferry, according to the paper, including two uncles, William Dawson, of Mohican Park Avenue and Samuel J. Dawson, of Main Street.

These war tragedies happened far from Dobbs Ferry, but they occurred in a Village context, affecting many families, neighbors and friends. Indeed, the entire Village felt the impact.



Cartoon reprinted from
Dobbs Ferry Register of
August 28, 1942

MAJOR DRIVE BEGUN TO DOUBLE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

A major drive is under way to double the membership of the Historical Society.

Shirley Elbert, Third Vice-President and Chair of the Membership/Volunteers Committee, said, "Our Committee has been charged with the task of increasing our membership to 800 by the end of our fiscal year, next June 30. We intend to do it."

The first element in the drive is a letter that went out at the beginning of November to current members, urging them to renew their membership as soon as possible, Mrs. Elbert said.

The second element is this appeal in this issue of *The Ferryman* to non-members, asking them to join the Society and help in preserving local history in Dobbs Ferry. *The Ferryman* is mailed to all 3,800 households in the Village.

A third element, Mrs. Elbert added, is providing specific "benefits of membership" as incentives for members to renew memberships and for non-members to join the Society.

She noted that providing membership benefits is a key recommendation of the Society's *pro bono* fund-raising/membership consultant. "We are fortunate in having Martin Greenberg giving us his time and advice on fund-raising and membership drives," she said.

So far, Mrs. Elbert's Committee has discussed providing as "benefits of membership" special programs, video shows, exhibits, lectures, historic house tours and a unique series of "round table" reminiscences of Dobbs Ferry history by residents with rich memories of our Village life and people.

One Committee recommendation already approved by the Board of Trustees is the December 13th Clara Mead Eggnog Party in the Mead House. The event is being co-chaired by Committee members Mary Oberdorf and Mildred Persinger. (See separate article in this issue.)

Categories of membership have been simplified, the basic two being "Individual Adult" for \$10 and "Family" for \$15. Members who wish to donate more have their choice of category among "Contributing" for \$25, "Friend" for \$50 and "Patron" for \$100 or more. There is also a "Student/Senior" category for \$3.

The membership form for new and renewing members had additional blank lines for a "Mead House contribution" and a "Newspaper Microfilming (Indexing) Project contribution."

The membership year, recommended by the Committee and approved and implemented by the Board of Trustees, runs now from October 1 through September 30.

Printed by Morgan Press, Dobbs Ferry

IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER, PLEASE JOIN US FOR EXCITING PROGRAMS OF DOBBS FERRY HISTORY

Dobbs Ferry Historical Society

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ (eve.) _____

Please make check payable to and mail to:
DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
153 Main Street (Library Building)
Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522
Tel. (914) 693-7766 (24-hr. answering)

MEMBERSHIP [] New [] Renew
 Patron..... \$100.00
 Friend..... \$ 50.00
 Contributing..... 25.00
 Family..... 15.00
 Individual Adult..... \$ 10.00
 Student/Senior (over 60)..... \$ 3.00

Membership contribution \$ _____
 Mead House contribution \$ _____
 Newspaper Microfilming Project contribution \$ _____
 TOTAL enclosed (TAX DEDUCTIBLE) \$ _____
 My employer's matching contributions form is enclosed.

For office use

Date paid	Date received	[] New [] Renew	Last prior	Date entered	By	Date deposited	[] Cash [] Check # _____
-----------	---------------	----------------------	------------	--------------	----	----------------	-------------------------------

Annual Irving Celebration, sponsored by Historical Society and Zion Church presents "The Changing Face of St. Nicholas" on December 6



"The Changing Face of St. Nicholas" is the theme of the third annual Washington Irving Celebration to be held at Zion Episcopal Church, 55 Cedar Street, on Sunday, December 6, St. Nicholas Day, beginning at 4:00 p.m.

The celebration, now already a "young tradition" of the Village and very popular in its first two years, is jointly sponsored by the Church and the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.

"Children, as well as grownups, are welcome to attend the event, which will be followed by the Church's traditional holiday reception and wassail punch," Rev. Richard R. McKeon, Jr. said. Admission is free.

The program will demonstrate the influence of Washington Irving on the modern celebration of Christmas, according to Bill Blanck, president of the Society. He said that members of the Society, as well as the Church, and the community at large, are volunteering to bring baked goods for the reception, to decorate the Church the day before the event in nineteenth century manner, and to sing during the program.

Father McKeon noted that the event is not a religious service, but an annual "opportunity to celebrate Washington Irving's historic presence in our community and to provide a holiday party for the Village.

He said that Irving was "instrumental in bringing about the celebration of Santa Claus as we know him today. Originally a rather dour churchman of the 4th century, he has been transformed into the modern jolly Santa Claus in large part because of Irving's love of Dutch customs and his popularization of European holiday traditions in his writings."

The program will include readings from Irving's works, historic sketches on the evolution of modern Christmas traditions, carol singing, period costumes, a dramatic reading of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" (written by Clement Moore, a contemporary of Irving) and a visitation by St. Nicholas, old and new.

Father McKeon said that actors and actresses, as well as others, from the river towns area have expressed interest in participating, including George Page, William Prince, Michael Storm, Augusta Dabney, Mark and William Cassella, Agnes Greisar and Gregg Rice. Members of the St. Nicholas Society of New York have been invited to attend.

Washington Irving was a vestryman of Zion Church and a founding member of the parish in 1833.

REPAIRS STRENGTHEN THE MEAD HOUSE

--by Sylvia Brownshield

The handsome house at 12 Elm Street that the late Clara Mead bequeathed to the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society is being transformed into the Society's headquarters and the new home of the Society's historic collections.

The first step that had to be taken was extensive repairs on the roof. Renovations and repairs of the basement and ground floor have been completed in the past month.

Shortly after eight architects and construction experts made separate inspections of the building in October, November and December of 1991, steps were taken throughout 1992 to follow many of their recommendations.

Bill Blanck and Fred Staats co-managers of the house during the summer, were fortunate in obtaining Dobbs Ferry architect Stephen Tilly, who volunteered to make an analysis of the repairs needed and finally to supervise the masons, carpenters and plumbers.

In stabilizing the structure of the Mead House, deteriorated structural members were replaced or repaired, new structural supports were installed, and masonry walls consolidated by repointing and replacement of missing bricks. Cement blocks from floor to ceiling reinforced the chimney.

Under the northeast corner of the dining room part of the existing foundation was demolished and a massive new concrete footing was poured. Sagging floor joists were jacked up and new permanent supports installed.

-- continued on page 6

**COMMUNITY HOSPITAL ARRANGES
\$500 DONATION TO SOCIETY**

Society President Bill Blanck and Thomas E. Green, executive director of the Community Hospital at Dobbs Ferry, have worked out tentative plans for a \$500 donation in the name of the Hospital to the Society for researching and writing the history of the Hospital.

The history would be published in a souvenir journal next October when the Hospital will be celebrating its centennial, both men said.

Mr. Green noted that Dobbs Ferry and the surrounding villages "have enjoyed nearly 100 years of quality health services. I thank Bill Blanck for suggesting -- quite appropriately -- that the Society write the history of that century of service."

Mr. Green, in a brief talk to the Society's Board of Trustees at its November meeting, also informally proposed that the Hospital and the Society join forces in a major fund-raising event in the fall of 1993.

**RUSTY RUSSELL, HISTORICAL SOCIETY
JOINTLY RECEIVE HONORABLE
MENTION FOR MEAD HOUSE VIDEO**

The Lower Hudson Conference Historical Agencies & Museums awarded Dobbs Ferry Historical Society Trustee Rusty Russell and the Society an Honorable Mention award for his video "12 Elm Street: Clara Mead--A Life in Dobbs Ferry". The video, in the Conference's Public Program category, was a study of Clara Mead and the 140-year-old family home which she bequeathed to the Historical Society.

**DONOR OFFERS
\$5,000 MATCHING GRANT**

A good friend of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society has offered to give the Society \$5,000 as a "matching grant" to establish a fund that will develop the Mead House as a "history center."

The "matching grant" concept requires the Society to raise at least an equivalent amount on its own. The friend also requires anonymity in the Society's own fund-raising and publicity efforts to match the grant.

Fuller details of the donor's wishes, the name of the fund, plans for the Society's matching fund-raising efforts, etc., are being worked out and will be announced in the future.

REPAIRS STRENGTHEN MEAD HOUSE

(continued from page 5)

"Basic repairs are done, but more needs to be done, of course," says Fred Staats, First Vice President and House Committee Chair. "For the present," he added, "we need volunteers: painters and paper hangers; handymen and women for interior and exterior maintenance; workers to rake leaves, clean the gutters and do other chores in the house and around the grounds."

The cost of paying for the professional construction work has exceeded the \$10,000 included in Miss Mead's bequest. The Society is developing a fund-raising drive specifically focused on the Mead House and scheduled to begin in the next few months.

DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

153 Main Street (Library Building)
Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dobbs Ferry, NY
Permit No. 15

Resident
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522