



The FERRYMAN

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VOLUME XII, No. 4

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

NOVEMBER 1993

COMMUNITY HOSPITAL OBSERVES ITS CENTENNIAL AT A GALA EVENING ON DECEMBER 4

"The Party of the Century" will celebrate the 100th birthday of Community Hospital at Dobbs Ferry on Saturday, December 4, at the Rye Town Hilton, Rye Brook, New York.

The black-tie event will include cocktails, dinner and an evening of entertainment by "Le Masquerade." Their "world fantasy performance" of song and dance will trace the hospital's 100 year history of service from its early days in the late Victorian period, through the turn of the century, World War I, the "Roaring Twenties" and World War II to the present and beyond. Research for part of the presentation was provided by the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.

While "The Party" gets top billing in this centennial year, other activities commemorate the hospital's milestone: a "Proud to be 100 Recognition Day" was held on October 16 and a special six month historical exhibit has opened at the hospital.

The December 4 gala will also honor three men who have had a profound impact on the hospital: Edward Ceccolini, M.D.; Armand "Chris" Crescenzi, M.D.; and Philip F. Cohen.

Dr. Ceccolini has been affiliated with the hospital since 1941 and still maintains an active practice. Dr. Crescenzi, a prominent thoracic and vascular surgeon, has been an active member of the staff since the late 1950s. Both men worked on the design and financing of the new hospital completed in 1986.

And Mr. Cohen, chairman of the board of The Oceana Group in Dobbs Ferry, is a philanthropist who has generously donated to all our local charities and non-profit groups, including the hospital.

A committee of 98 people under the guidance of Thomas E. Green, executive director of the hospital, planned the affair. Mr. and Mrs. Stone Phillips, of NBC News, are Honorary Chairpersons. Howard Barker, a Dobbs Ferry resident and theatrical and television set designer, is a consultant working with the committee to provide the appropriate "sets" that will complete the decor of the hotel's west ballroom.

The celebration is the hospital's largest fundraiser in this past decade. The Administration hopes to raise \$100,000 from the event. Individual reservations are \$150.

The fun includes a 100th Birthday Raffle. Prizes are a trip for two, airfare and hotel for seven days in Rio de Janeiro; a six-day holiday in Acapulco; a crystal fox full-length fur coat; selected jewelry by Lyle Fields; ten dinners for two; tickets to "Fidelio" at

the Met; and tickets to various sporting events. Raffle tickets are \$10 each, three for \$25.

Checks for the dinner reservations and/or raffle tickets should be made out to the Community Hospital at Dobbs Ferry.

Recognition Day

The "Proud to be 100 Recognition Day" in October not only celebrated the hospital's birthday, but also honored Mary Sirota, 100, and Eugenia Ravinsky, 101. They received "community recognition" and plaques, along with Saul Parker, 82.

In 1921, Saul, ten years old at the time, was in a "motor car" accident while visiting Dobbs Ferry. Master Parker, his parents and the chauffeur were brought to the hospital. Mr. Green found the patient register of that year and was able to show Mr. Parker the record of his progress, along with this notation: "Master Parker was well behaved."

Present, among others, were Congressman Gilman, State Senator Spano, Dobbs Ferry Mayor Marra, Greenburgh Supervisor Paul Feiner, Village Trustees, Hospital Trustees and Mayors of surrounding villages. Harold S. Klein, Chairman of the Hospital Board, presented the welcome and introduced the honorees. Dr. Martin Wertkin, Medical Staff President, spoke briefly about Drs. Champion Judson and Harold Storms, founding fathers of the hospital, both of whom were born before the Civil War.

Congratulatory letters and proclamations from Governor Cuomo, U.S. Senator D'Amato, Assemblyman Brodsky and County Executive O'Rourke were read. Blessings were offered by the Rev. Joseph Gilmore, of South Presbyterian Church, and Father Terry Attridge, of Sacred Heart Church. Keith F. Safrain, Chief Executive Officer of the hospital's new alliance with Phelps Memorial Hospital, also spoke.

The festivities included tours of the hospital, free health screenings by the medical staff and treats for the children: clowns, pony rides, a "critter" petting zoo; Dobbs Ferry police officers provided child fingerprinting and tips for safe cycling and Halloween safety; and Dobbs Ferry firefighters gave rides above the hospital in the "cherry picker" basket on one of the fire engines.

All festivities were videotaped for hospital records and presentation to the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.

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John Macca, Chairman of the Retrospective Committee, views the exhibit in the hall connecting the new hospital building with the old wing. The exhibit was enjoyed by numerous fascinated visitors.

HOSPITAL OBSERVES CENTENNIAL

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Hospital History Exhibit

People at the event also witnessed the opening of a special historical exhibit that lines the hall connecting the new hospital building with the old wing. The display is open to the public from noon to 8:00 p.m. daily for the next six months and contains fascinating treasures associated with the history of the hospital. It includes:

- A 1749 textbook of surgery;
- An early 18th century stethoscope;
- The trowel used to commemorate the start of construction of the 1902 building and its cornerstone;
- The safe used by the 1906 Board of Trustees;
- A 1921 patient register;
- The contents of the 1922 cornerstone for the construction of the Fraser Wing of the hospital;
- Old-fashioned surgeon's operating glasses circa 1925;
- The hospital's death register for 1929;
- A thermometer set circa 1930;
- X-ray tube circa 1940;
- Wooden leg prosthesis circa 1950;
- Medical office furniture circa 1950;
- Hip implant prosthesis circa 1960;
- Various record books from 1893 to 1950;
- A horseshoe unearthed during the excavation for the 1984 construction believed to have been

from the turn-of-the-century horse-drawn "emergency wagon."

The walls contain photographs of many of the first doctors to work in the hospital. Large posterboards containing newspaper articles about the hospital from 1893 onward are also part of the exhibit. The articles are from the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society's microfilm of the *Dobbs Ferry Register*.

Train Wreck of 1980

There are also accounts from other newspapers about the November, 1980 train accident that occurred in Dobbs Ferry. Our Village was the first to respond and many of the victims were taken to the Dobbs Ferry Hospital for treatment and observation. The exhibit includes a copy of Lester Smith's WOR radio commentary that praised the emergency services of the hospital. Just weeks before the accident, an emergency plan had been developed by several local doctors and a mock disaster was carried out.

Mr. Green's video tape of the construction of the new hospital is also part of the display. The entire exhibit makes the viewer conscious of how great a resource the hospital is for the community and how worthy it is of community support.

-- Grace M. Reagan

Note: Grace Reagan's article on the hospital's development over the last 40 years and Hank Walter's article on the early history of the hospital will be published in the next issue.

With the Merritts, Snedens, and Dobbses --

DOBBS FERRY: THE BEGINNING

One would expect that a man with a village and a ferry named for him would leave some personal stories behind. At the very least history would tell us what William Dobbs looked like. But no. One would have a better chance recognizing one of William's animals with his initials W.D. branded on its "near thigh".

If not stories, then what facts remain? We do know that William's grandfather, Walter Dobbs, a mariner, married to Mary Merritt, emigrated from England and settled on Barren Island* on Long Island in the Jamaica marshes. In all likelihood they came as a family group with another mariner, William Merritt, Mary's brother, who married his wife Margery Lawrence in London in 1662 and then took off for New Amsterdam, two years before it became New York.

A Man of Parts

William Merritt, worth \$5,000 when he left England, was the most prosperous and the most up-and-coming of the lot. By 1671 he had left Barren Island and moved to a house on Broad Street in New York City, the first of many houses he would own. He dabbled in real estate not only in the City but on Long Island and "over the New Jersey line". Indeed, he became a man of parts, elected as an alderman, a collector of excises, a justice, and a vestryman to the Trinity Church (to which he gave 5 s., 6d. toward a steeple).

William Merritt didn't always have an easy path as he made his way upward. In August, 1689, he was "wrongfully" jailed for 21 days for some unknown alleged misdeed, but nevertheless in 1695 he was elected mayor of New York for three successive terms. While he was in office, he managed to light the city streets, at least in a fashion. Householders were required to place a lighted candle in windows facing the street.

Bought 3,410 acres

Apparently, however, at the end of his three terms either he had had enough of New York or New York had had enough of him. In August 1698 he moved to 3,410 forested acres on the west bank of the Hudson (now Snedens Landing). George Lockhart, a New York surgeon (father of Jane or Jennet married to John Merritt, William's son) sold it to him for 353 pounds, 17 shillings.

Moving with William Merritt and his family up the Hudson was his widowed sister, Sarah Crabbe, three little Crabbes, Sarah's grown son by a previous marriage, Edward Meek, and most important to our story, John Dobbs, his twenty-three year old nephew. John was the son of Walter, who had died in 1689, and of Mary, who had immediately remarried a Nathaniel Pittman, staying on Barren Island until she died at the age of 104.

William Merritt went to the west bank of the Hudson River and built himself a large house which he called Chear Hall. John Dobbs went to the east bank of the river where he had leased 252 acres from

Frederick Phillipse and he built himself a small farmhouse near the site of the present railroad station. On the next piece of land south of John's property lived the Hyatts who had also recently arrived. Perhaps John knew them and in any case it was not long before he married Elizabeth Hyatt and in due course had two sons, William and John.

Since John Dobbs, Sr. and Elizabeth were both English, they had no intention of joining the Dutch church (Sleepy Hollow) in Tarrytown, the only church in the neighborhood. Still, for purposes of baptism, a Dutch church was better than no church. So in 1706 they bundled up William, our village hero, and traveled probably by water up the Hudson, up Pocantico Creek where they tied up their boat and walked across the road to the church. The Hudson was the main thoroughfare for the settlers and if the weather was favorable, the easiest way to go.



History books talk of periaugers (or pettiaugers), canoe-like boats dug out from tree trunks and indeed this may have been what the Dobbs family first used. But a periauger could also be a more sophisticated craft, described as a "large, flat-bottomed boat, without keel, but with lee-board, usually decked over at ends and open in the middle, propelled by oars or sails on two masts which could easily be struck."

John Dobbs' second son, John, would certainly have needed such a boat when he decided to augment his income by running a ferry across the river. This was a strategic location for a ferry, since there were always travelers going east or west and this was the first point north of New York City where roads could come down to the river, making a crossing possible. Unlike his older brother, William, however, young John probably did not make his first boat trip to the Sleepy Hollow Church. At least there is no record of his baptism at the church, perhaps because his mother, Elizabeth Hyatt, died either at his birth or soon after. But the family went on.

Five More Dobbses

John, Sr. promptly married Abigail (last name unknown) and produced five more Dobbses, the oldest being Maria (nickname Mollie) just a year younger than John, Jr. and probably closer to her two half brothers than to her own siblings who were much

*Barren Island was covered with land fill in order to build Floyd Bennett Field.

DOBBS FERRY: THE BEGINNING

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younger. Mollie has a large role in our story and although it cannot be absolutely verified that Maria Dobbs and Mollie (later Sneden) were one and the same, I will assume, like most historians, that they were. I give the Merritt genes credit for the fact that Mollie lived to be 101, almost as long as her grandmother, Mary Merritt Dobbs who lived to be 104, and her aunt, Sarah Merritt Crabbe who lived to be 102.

But Mollie is not quite ready to move to center stage. First John, Jr. has to establish his place on the east bank, farming, collecting taxes, running the ferry with his brother, William. In 1729 William married a seventeen year old Dutch girl, Lea Van Waert and by 1734 when his brother John moved to New York, William and Lea had two children, Abraham and Belitje (two more still to come). William's family, however, didn't travel to the Sleepy Hollow Church only when the children were born. William joined the church where Lea was already a member and they went as regularly as possible. Moreover, William was now the official ferryman and the settlements on both sides of the river had names: Dobbs Ferry East and Dobbs Ferry West.

(to be continued)

--Jean Fritz

2nd CLARA MEAD EGGNOG PARTY TO BE HELD AT MEAD HOUSE DECEMBER 12

The second Clara Mead Eggnog Party will be held for the members of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society at the Mead House, 12 Elm Street, on Sunday, December 12, between 3:00 P.M. and 5:00 P.M.

For years, Miss Mead held holiday eggnog parties for her circle of friends, according to Society Trustee Mae Pepper, her friend and neighbor. Miss Mead's highly recommended eggnog recipe reportedly is a variation of one published by *The New York Times* in a December, 1954 issue and was used that year by Miss Mead at a holiday party.

She is said to have held this event for her friends annually for the next 36 years until her death in September, 1991. The Society, to which Miss Mead bequeathed her 14-room house, resumed the party last year for its members in appreciation of her generosity.

Those who are not members and who wish to attend may join the Society by signing up at the registration table.

LEGION AND SOCIETY HOLD VETERANS EXHIBIT

A commemoration of the 50th anniversary of American participation in World War II was held for five days in mid-November at American Legion Hall, Palisades Street.

The event, co-sponsored by the Dobbs Ferry American Legion Post No. 1048 and the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, featured a collection of large posters from the Department of Defense outlining the history of the war, as well as exhibits from the archives of the Historical Society showing local participation in the conflict

Memorabilia on display included World War II uniforms, rifles, helmets and other gear used on battlefields and in training camps. The Society showed video tapes of interviews with Dobbs Ferry veterans who told of their experiences in World War II.

QUILTS AT THE MEAD HOUSE

Members were given a glimpse of the American art of quilt making at an exhibit held October 3 at the Mead House by the Friends of the Library Quilters.

More than five dozen quilts were shown, including the Village Centennial Quilt, explained in the program by Jean Sciotto, with a listing of persons who had designed and executed it.

Tall, professional display frames built by former Trustee Charles Baiano in consultation with master quilt maker Claudia Weiner, made close inspection of the exhibit possible. Clara Mead's interest in handcrafts was also noted in a small showing of her work.

Village Historian Judy Holzer spoke on the history of quilt making. Trustee Shirley Elbert coordinated the event.

--Mildred Persinger

MARGARITA GALLO MULLER

Margarita Gallo Muller, a Trustee of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society when it became chartered by the State of New York in 1978, died after a long illness on July 2, 1993, in Costa Rica, at the age of 72.

She was born in Santander, Spain, but grew up in Chile where she obtained a doctorate of law from the University of Santiago. She came to the United Nations in 1948 as an intern and there met her future husband, Robert Muller, of France.

In 1950 she became Chile's delegate to the UN, where she advocated women's rights on the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the UN Status of Women Commission. She also represented Chile in the Security Council on political and legal matters. From 1974 to 1978 she served as president of the UN Women's Guild.

Margarita and Robert married and lived in Dobbs Ferry for 30 years as their family grew. Margarita taught history at Mercy College, was active in the Historical Society and participated in local causes, including the campaign to save the present library building from being replaced by a modern structure.

In 1989 Robert Muller, by then Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, retired after four decades of service. He and Margarita moved to Costa Rica where he established a University for Peace, became its chancellor and continued to work toward a world community.

Besides her husband, now living in Ciudad Colon, Costa Rica, Margarita is survived by four children and six grandchildren, all of Westchester County.

Memorial services were held in August at The Holy Family Church on Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in New York City and in October at Sacred Heart Church in Dobbs Ferry.

--Frances Tahnee Neill

WASHINGTON IRVING CELEBRATION TO BE HELD IN MAY 1994

This year, due to Zion Episcopal Church's 160th anniversary celebration of its building, it has been decided to move the fourth annual Washington Irving Holiday Celebration from December 1993 to the church's actual anniversary date: Sunday, May 22, 1994.

"There are ample records of what occurred on that day 160 years ago which will allow the use of new passages from Washington Irving's writings and will provide a change of pace for all concerned," said Rev. Richard McKeon, who also indicated that the people of Zion Church are looking forward to working with the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society in planning this event.

"In all likelihood, we will return to the usual December date for the Washington Irving Celebration in future years," Fr. McKeon said.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

In the January 10, 1902 issue of the *Dobbs Ferry Register*, the Dobbs Ferry Post Office noted that it was open from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. and that "MAILS ARRIVE" at 7:00, 8:00, 9:30 and 10:00 A.M. and at 2:00, 3:00, 4:30, 6:00 and 7:10 P.M. Further, "MAILS CLOSE" at 7:50, *9:00 and *9:30 A.M. and at 12:20, *1:15, *2:30, *3:45, *5:45 and 7:15 P.M. [According to the notice, each of the asterisked hours "Carries Registered Mail."]



1973 marked the Centennial of Dobbs Ferry's incorporation. To celebrate the occasion many women of the village attired themselves in the dress of the past century. Does anyone know the young woman who modeled this costume?

OFFICERS ELECTED; CHAIRS APPOINTED

Bill Blanck was reelected on October 6 to a second one-year term as President of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society by the Society's Board of Trustees. Other officers elected by the Board were Warren Gardner, First Vice President; Fred Staats, Second Vice President; Frances Tahnee Neill, Third Vice President; Phil Elbert, Treasurer; and Charlotte Frankenthaler, Secretary.

The October 6th organizing meeting of the 18-member Board of Trustees followed the annual meeting of the Society on September 29 at which seven persons were elected by the general membership as Trustees:

Six persons for three year terms expiring in 1996: Jean Fritz, Virginia Gagliardi, Grace Reagan, Julia Rokicki, Frances Tahnee Neill and Mary Walter; one person for a two-year term expiring in 1995 (to fill a vacancy): Mary Jane Chase. Fay Delmerico, Cecil Jack and Peg Quinn were also elected by the general membership to be non-Trustee members of the 1994 Nominating committee.

Mr. Blanck also named the following Trustees to head the Society's Committees: Mary Jane Chase, Archives; Larry Dengler, By-Laws; Charlotte Frankenthaler and Virginia Gagliardi, Events; Jean Fritz and Grace Reagan, Research; Tahnee Neill, Collections; Mae Pepper, Membership, also Grants; Julia Rokicki, Education; Fred Staats, Mead House; Mary Walter, Housekeeping; Hank Walter, Publications and Publicity; and Warren Gardner, Volunteers.

THANK YOU, FILOMENA RICCARDI!

This is a belated public thank-you from the Society to Trustee Emerita Filomena Ricciardi, who donated several hundred dollars this past summer to carry our organization over the top in its efforts to match a \$5,000 challenge grant offered last year by an anonymous friend of the Society. The friend has stipulated that the entire \$10,000 be used toward making the Mead House into a History Center for Dobbs Ferry. Thanks, again, also to all the other "matching" donors.

VIDEO DELIGHTS TWO GROUPS

A videotape of the Village Centennial celebration in 1973, shown for the first time at the Society's Spring Gala last May, was replayed recently for two groups. President Bill Blanck and Trustee Barbara Pearce spoke and showed the tape at an October meeting of the Daughters of Italy, while Trustee Hank Walter was the speaker and ran the tape at a November meeting of the Sacred Heart Sodality.

Both groups were delighted, often exclaiming when scenes included persons recognized by the audiences. The video, written and produced by Mr. Blanck, was constructed of old photographs and movie film created 20 years ago. The narrator was Gloria Blanck.

Dobbs Ferry Historical Society

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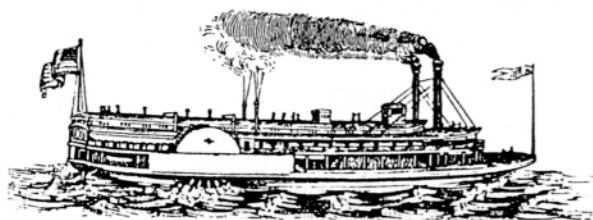
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My employer's matching contributions form is enclosed.



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 YOU WILL RECEIVE A LETTER SHORTLY.
 HAVING YOU ABOARD WILL KEEP THE
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IF YOU ARE NOT PRESENTLY A MEMBER,
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