



The FERRYMAN

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DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
12 Elm Street, Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522

DECEMBER 1996

A Holiday Double Header --

First, The Annual Clara Mead Egnog Party, December 15, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

If you are a member of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, get an early start on 1996's winter holiday season by attending the fifth annual Clara Mead Egnog Party.

This now-traditional festivity will be held at the Mead House, 12 Elm Street, on Sunday afternoon, December 15, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. At last year's party, the Mead House was formally dedicated as the Society's new headquarters and home of its history collections, as were the George Speyer Archival Rooms on the second floor.

For some 36 years before she died in September, 1991, Clara Mead held holiday eggnog parties for her circle of friends, according to Society Trustee Mae Pepper, her friend and neighbor. Miss Mead's eggnog



recipe was reportedly a variation of one printed in an issue of *The New York Times* in December, 1954. The Society, to which Miss Mead bequeathed her 14-room home, resumed the party in December, 1992, to show its appreciation of her generosity. The party is now held each December as a tribute in her memory. The eggnog will be made by Ms. Pepper, and the punch by First Vice President Warren Gardner according to a Gardner family secret recipe. Trustee Terry Luckett is coordinating details of the party under the general direction of Trustee Teresa Walsh, chair of the Society's Events Committee.

The party is a members-only event. Non-members who wish to attend may join the Society at the party. Members who have not yet paid their 1996-1997 dues may do so at the festive happening.

Followed by --

"Washington Irving -- Author and Architect, or Designing a Home for the Holidays" at Zion Episcopal Church December 15, 5:00 p.m.

On Sunday, December 15th at 5:00 p.m., Zion Episcopal Church and the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society will co-sponsor their annual Washington Irving Holiday Celebration at Zion Church, 55 Cedar Street, in Dobbs Ferry. This year, following the extensive historic renovations of the 1833-34 Church building, the theme of the celebration will be "Washington Irving: Author and Architect, or Designing a Home for the Holidays."

Irving, a founding member of Zion Episcopal Church, may have been instrumental in the design of the building, having been so enthusiastic in designing his home, Sunnyside. As an exponent of the Gothic Revival in literature as well as in architecture, this early example of the Ecclesiastical Gothic Revival style in the lower Hudson Valley is a fitting setting.

The program will feature some educational background on design of the church, as well as readings

from Irving's own writings regarding the importance of architectural settings in his famous description of holiday festivities. The church will be decorated in a 19th century style and will include holiday carols sung by candlelight. Local actors will read the different selections, and after the program a reception will take place in the parish hall.

Volunteers to bring baked goods for the reception are needed. Baked goods may be brought to the Church on Saturday, December 14th, during the day, or on Sunday, December 15th, before the program begins. This has always been a popular event, and celebrates not only Irving's presence in our village, but the spirit of cooperation between the community and the Historical Society. The program is free, and children are welcome. For more information please call Rev. Richard R. McKeon at 693-9320, or Bill Blanck at 693-4964.

-- by Rev. Richard R. McKeon, Jr.

SACRED HEART TODAY: INVOLVEMENT

(Editor's Note: Here is Part IV, the final installment, of a condensed history of Sacred Heart Church in Dobbs Ferry, written by Hank Walter.)

Father Terence Attridge is the current pastor, appointed by Cardinal O'Connor in February, 1989, and reappointed to a second six-year term in April, 1995. He came to the parish after serving nine years as director of the archdiocesan Office of Substance Abuse Ministry since its establishment in 1980. It was he who established the widely acclaimed DARE (Drugs/Alcohol/Rehabilitation/Education) program. Among the awards he and DARE have won are a Presidential Award from Ronald Reagan and Iona College's Brother Loftus Award.

He also produced Pope John Paul II's "Youth in Concert" at Madison Square Garden in 1979 and he has been chaplain for many law enforcement groups. Manhattan-born Father Attridge played baseball in high school like a professional, well enough to be scouted by the Milwaukee Braves and Philadelphia Phillies. He chose instead to attend Iona College and St. Joseph's Seminary.

Father Attridge is the first pastor of Sacred Heart to have no priest assistants and to appoint a woman religious, Sister Connie Koch, O.P., as a pastoral associate. The two work as a pastoral team in all dimensions of parish life.

Religious Education Expanded

When Sacred Heart Elementary School had to be closed because of poor economic conditions and a continuing declining attendance lasting more than a decade, Father Attridge leased the school building to Mercy College for graduate studies. He also rented space from Our Lady of Victory Academy to expand the parish's religious education program -- the Sacred Heart School of Religion.

Father Attridge's involvement with the larger Dobbs Ferry community took the form of becoming chaplain to the Dobbs Ferry Police Department, Fire Department and Hospital. He also asked Sister Connie to serve as the parish's liaison with the Dobbs Ferry Youth Services Council for Interfaith Youth Activities. He has also worked with church leaders of other denominations on ecumenical projects.

In the fall of 1994, he began the five seasons of RENEW, an international program designed to help parishes build a more vibrant faith community. The program's weekly themes are woven into Sunday liturgies, large group activities and small group meetings in parishioners' homes at which Scripture and the sharing of faith are experienced. Each season is six weeks long; the five seasons stretch over two and a half years.

The parish's Food for the Hungry Program, begun in 1984, has grown in the last 11 years under the dynamic direction of Lloyd and Alice Westlake into a

compassionate service of major proportions. About 130 tons of food were distributed in 1995 for the hungry in Westchester to two large food pantries, including the parish's own pantry, eight charitable organizations and two street locations in Yonkers where the hungry congregate for the parish's help. The Westlakes, assisted at various times by some 50 volunteers, collect and deliver food at regularly scheduled times in a van and individual cars. Food emergencies are handled directly person to person and immediately.

New Programs Initiated

Many new programs have been initiated by Father Attridge and Sister Connie; among them, For Mothers Only, Good Beginnings, Substance Abuse Ministry and RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, a catechumenate for adults, offering Scripture, instruction and communal support in the process of initiation into the Church. Existing activities that have grown are the Cancer Support Group, Al-Anon Support Group, Hospitality Ministry, Ministry to the Homebound and the Sick, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors and the Sacred Heart Community Group, which provides programs and trips for village seniors. In the midst of all these involving and participatory activities, the parish has grown by some 275 families in the last three years.

The Choir, led by director and organist Joseph DeSanctis, has also expanded, with 35 names on its roster now and the congregation at each Mass is now led in its singing by a trained cantor. The Sodality is still going strong, the longest-running parish group, formed a year before the construction of the church building whose centennial was celebrated last year and early this year.

Three Histories Written

Three histories have been written of Sacred Heart parish, each commemorating a different centennial: the 1933 account celebrated the arrival of the first Catholic in Dobbs Ferry a hundred years earlier; the 1962 history praised ten decades of progress since the parish's establishment as a formal community of worshippers; the current history rejoices not only in a century of praying in the parish's second church building, but in its emphasis on serving one another and in reaching out to the needy in the larger community of Dobbs Ferry and Westchester. It all started in 1833, when the first Catholic family, the Lawlors, settled in Dobbs Ferry, needing "a church" to minister to their spiritual and physical needs.

CORRECTION: The seders jointly conducted by the Greenburgh Hebrew Center and Sacred Heart Church were begun by Rabbi Lubliner and Monsignor Gerard A. Green in the late 1970s. Part III of a condensed history of Sacred Heart parish (appearing in the last issue of *The Ferryman*, September, 1996) left the impression that the seders were begun after February 1984, the end of Monsignor Green's tenure.

REPUBLICANS SWEEP DOBBS FERRY IN 1896 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The Front Page of the Dobbs Ferry Register Tells the Story



Election Day About Town

Election Day weather was all that could be desired to bring out a full vote. All day long the voters filed into Judge Lange's court room to cast their ballots and have their little say as to who should be elected. All was order and quietness and a heavy vote was cast. Out of a total registration of 404, 365 votes were polled, McKinley receiving a majority of 106. Considering the fact that this village has always been a Democratic stronghold, McKinley's majority was extraordinary. It is the first time in years that the town has gone Republican.

The most noticeable thing about the election was the active interest displayed by the Republicans as contrasted with the singular apathy of the Democrats.

In the evening the returns were received at Living-

ston Hall by the Republican Club. The hall was packed with Republicans, among whom mingled a few Bryanites. When the fact was announced that McKinley had carried the State and Wm. L. Ward the Sixteenth Congressional District, the audience went wild, shouting themselves hoarse in their mad delight.

When it became apparent that there had been a Republican avalanche an impromptu procession was formed, and with the aid of a couple of drums and a cannon, the citizens of Old Dobbs who were not fortunate enough to hear the news as it came over the wire were made acquainted with the result, and if the general satisfaction expressed was any criterion of their feelings, this village does not have a free silver resident within its borders as not a Bryanite could be found.

(From the Dobbs Ferry Register Nov. 6, 1896)

MAYOR NANNA VIDEO DRAWS BIG CROWD TO ANNUAL MEETING

Members of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society jammed the Parish Hall of Our Lady of Pompeii Church on September 27 to watch a video-tape of former Mayor John Nanna discuss Village events and his accomplishments between 1959 and 1979.

The video program featuring Mayor Nanna dealt with the acquisition of the Juhring Estate (for Village open space), the railroad station and the cemetery on Ashford Avenue; building Memorial Park; and closing the waterfront dump, which later became the Village's Waterfront Park.

The former Mayor, a Republican, attended the

meeting with his family and covered material not included in the video history.

Those who attended the Society's annual meeting that night also elected six Trustees for three-year terms, and three non-Trustees for one-year terms on the Society's Nominating Committee.

The six Trustees elected by the members are: incumbents Jean Fritz, Virginia Gagliardi, Julia Rockiki, Mary Walter and Ray Willsea; and non-incumbent Harriet Kessler.

The three non-Trustees elected to the Nominating Committee are: Faye Delmerico, Peggy Coffey and Demarest Romaine.

The Berthier Journal -- When the French and American Armies Joined in the Dobbs Ferry Area

On July 6, 1781, the French and American armies joined in the Dobbs Ferry area. Here they would remain until August 19, 1781, when they would begin their historic march to Yorktown, Virginia and win the decisive battle of the American Revolution.

Before coming to the Dobbs Ferry area, the French were encamped at Newport, Rhode Island. A French officer, an aide to the French General Rochambeau, Alexandre Berthier, kept a journal.

Dobbs Ferry Historical Society Trustee Mavis Cain has translated his journal entries from the original French, covering the time they left Newport until they departed the Dobbs Ferry area on August 19, 1781.

This is the first installment of a series that will be published successively in *The Ferryman*.

Note: The journal entries are combined with letters to a friend in France. The translation begins with one of these letters, written at the time of Berthier's arrival at New Port with the French military under Rochambeau.

New Port is inhabited by Tories for the most part. And since the English had spread such negative ideas about the French, we were ill-received at the beginning. However, things changed. Each officer was soon received as one of the family in the home where he was billeted and the Tories and the French became friends. We can thank the quiet disciplined behaviour of Rochambault's army for this change of attitude.

This island of four leagues in length and one and one-half in width, has some superb roads and beautiful homes, all inhabited by honest families living from their labours in a simple way. Each family quietly follows its own religion without any prejudice against others. The young women look fresh and pretty due to the honest sobriety of their lives and to the climate, which is very healthy. The thought of man as a seducer does not occur to them so they enjoy an extraordinary freedom. The parents freely permit them to be alone with young men and the girls are glad of the freedom to make their own choices for their future happiness. When two young people are attracted to each other they inform their parents and from then on they are continually together. They spend half the night talking while their parents are in bed. The young people do not take advantage of this freedom or the confidence of their parents. In Connecticut it is even the custom for two lovers to retire during the day or even the evening and spend several hours alone in bed. This is called Bundling. I have often walked in on such couples without causing any embarrassment. But after marriage young women become as cautious and circumspect as they once were free and open. Once she

is a wife, the young woman devotes herself only to her home, her husband and her children. You must admit, my dear friend, this is not always the case in France.

We French officers enjoyed the free ways of young unmarried women, thinking it was due to our natural charm -- but felt foolish and duped when we suddenly came up against a stone wall. Those who surmounted the wall only did so through dishonest means and false promises. This kind of behaviour was unknown before our arrival.

June 9. The army received orders to leave New Port -- one division being sent one day -- and the other the next. We were to camp at Providence 25 miles away. Camp was made just outside the city, on the road to Hartford. The right flank was based here and the left flank on the Providence River.

Monsieur Choisy stayed behind with 400 French troops and 1,000 Americans to protect our squadron and to occupy New Port. Our whole artillery was based here.

Providence is a small secondary city, well settled and soundly constructed. It is a commercial center in times of peace because of easy access to shipping. It is the residence of the Governor of Rhode Island. The army stayed here until the 18th when the rest of the convoy arrived. Military marches were conducted to train the troops and wagons were prepared to carry baggage and tents for the men and officers as well as one for the staff and one extra for each regiment -- to a total of 12. Knowing how difficult it would be to forage and find housing for the staff of the army as well as establishing the headquarters, we decided to march in four separate divisions between which the artillery was divided. -- *Translated by Mavis Cain*



HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS ELECTED

The newly constituted Board of Trustees elected its officers at its reorganization meeting on October 9, following the annual membership meeting and Trustee elections on September 27.

Reelected to his fifth one-year term as President was Bill Blanck. Similarly, Warren Gardner was reelected as First Vice President; and Fred Staats, as Second Vice President. Charlotte Frankenthaler was elected as Third Vice President and Mavis Cain, as Treasurer.

Mr. Blanck appointed some of the Society's Committee Chairs; among them, Mr. Staats as Chair of the House Committee; Terry Luckett, Housekeeping Committee; Mae Pepper, Membership; Julia Rockiki, Education; Teresa Walsh, Events; and Jean Fritz and Hank Walter as Co-Chairs of the Publications Committee.

EMERGENCY MEAD HOUSE REPAIRS OF ROOF AND STEAM BOILER COST SOCIETY \$11,300; MEMBERS' HELP NEEDED

The steam boiler in the Mead House died in October through system failure. In the same month, the autumn's torrential rains broke through the roof over the dining and powder rooms and caused severe water damage to both rooms.

Contractors were called in to make repairs, paint damaged walls and ceilings, remove the old boiler and replace it. This cost the Society \$11,300 in working capital.

The old steam boiler's so-called fail-safe mechanism failed. It had an automatic feed to provide water to the boiler as needed. Somehow the automatic feed stopped, the burners continued burning, the boiler overheated and then cracked.

The leaking roof had been weakened by last winter's blizzard and other heavy snowfalls. Water seeped through the roof and damaged walls facing Broadway in the dining and powder rooms, as well as in a small room off the kitchen used for non-archival storage of equipment. The roof repairs included replac-

ing an old gutter. In a separate contract, the walls, woodwork and stairwell bannisters were repainted.

Replacing the boiler cost \$6,700; roof repairs \$2,600; and painting, \$2,000. President Bill Blanck said, "Hopefully, the members will help us beyond their membership dues in meeting these unexpected expenses."

The membership year runs from October 1, 1996 through September 30, 1997. Members can renew their memberships either through the dues notice they will receive in the mail, or by sending in the membership coupon in this issue of *The Ferryman*. Both the dues notice and the membership coupon have space for checking off a separate contribution for the Mead House. Such contributions will be used to replace the working capital that was used for emergency repairs.

"Members can also help their Society by buying one of the handsome throws that have been so popular in the past year," Vice President Warren Gardner said. "New ones have been ordered and are now available as gifts just in time for the holiday season." This issue also contains an order blank for the afghans.

~ IN MEMORIAM ~

Dr. Joseph Gelsi

In the spring and summer of 1995 Dr. Joseph G. Gelsi was busy obtaining background material for *The Ferryman* about Dobbs Ferry servicemen killed in World War II. He volunteered to do this because he felt that we should have more warm, personal information about those who died.

While Dr. Gelsi was researching this information, he was fighting his own war -- a six-year battle against cancer.

On November 1st, Dr. Gelsi died.

Members who attended the 1995 Gala will always remember the mandolin ensemble in which he and his family played.

Dr. Gelsi earned a Doctorate of Optometry at Columbia University and was an optometrist in Dobbs Ferry for 41 years.

As a Sergeant serving in the Infantry, he fought in the Battle of the Bulge and into Germany, meeting the Russians on the Elbe.

Dr. Gelsi is survived by his wife Teresa, three daughters Teresa, Joanne, and Angela, and a son Stephen.

Cathleen R. Polgreen

Cathleen R. Polgreen, one of the founders of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society and a former Trustee, died at her home on the 2nd of September.

In 1973 she made wonderful contributions to the Centennial Book *Life of a River Village* using her finely honed professional editorial and writing skills. One of the highlights of her contributions to the publication is the history of Dobbs Ferry from 1900 to 1973. The factual writing, interlaced with humor, makes this section come alive.

Many village residents best know Ms. Polgreen from her work on the staff of the Library, the Library Board, and Friends of the Library. Her selection and maintenance of large print books and books on tape is another of her accomplishments.

Ms. Polgreen, a graduate of the New York Institute of Technology, married her husband, the late John Polgreen in 1950. With her husband, she collaborated on books dealing with space travel and science for children and young adults.

She is survived by her son John, a stepdaughter Judy Preis, and three grandchildren.

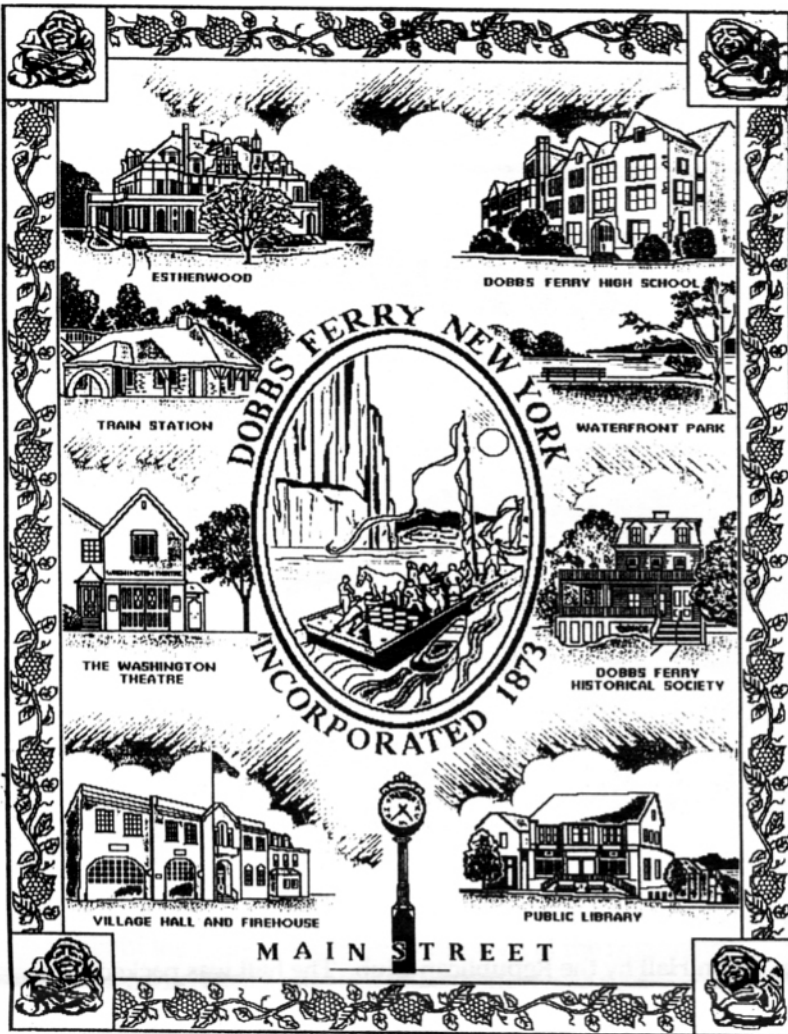


SOCIETY AFGHANS GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT

Wrap yourselves in Dobbs Ferry history! A new shipment of the Society's handsome afghans has arrived and is now available, just in time for the holiday season. The two-color throws come in Williamsburgh blue and natural, or cranberry red and natural.

The 50-inch by 65-inch throws have been very popular in the past year. If you haven't bought one yet and want one, if you want one or more as holiday gifts for others, or if you want to give one as a belated thank-you in the spirit of the Thanksgiving Day now past, please send us the order blank in this issue, along with your check.

By buying one or more of the throws, you will have a lovely and useful item evocative of Dobbs Ferry history, and you will also help your Society reimburse its working capital fund.



Dobbs Ferry Historical Society
12 Elm Street
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

I would like to order _____ throw(s) @ \$45 each. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ (number)

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Check color: Williamsburgh Blue Cranberry Red

**THE DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ESPECIALLY NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT NOW.
IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER, PLEASE JOIN US.**

Dobbs Ferry Historical Society

IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER, PLEASE JOIN US NOW.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ (eve.) _____

Please make check payable to, and mail to:
DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
12 Elm Street
Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522
Telephone (914) 674-1007 (24-hour answering)

MEMBERSHIP 1996-97 [] New [] Renew

[] Patron..... \$100.00

[] Friend..... \$ 50.00

[] Contributing..... \$ 25.00

[] Family..... \$ 15.00

[] Individual Adult..... \$ 10.00

[] Student/Senior (over 60)..... \$ 3.00

[] Junior (Students under 16)*... No fee

Membership contribution..... \$ _____

Mead House Roof/Boiler contribution..... \$ _____

Newspaper Microfilming Project contribution..... \$ _____

TOTAL enclosed (TAX DEDUCTIBLE)..... \$ _____

[] My employer's matching contributions form is enclosed.

*Persons under 16 years of age must show parent's or legal guardian's consent for membership. Thus, if you have checked Junior membership above, please provide signature below.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian Date _____ Please check one: Parent _____ Guardian _____