



The FERRYMAN

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DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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APRIL 1999

New Vistas Opened By Women Topic At April 30th Gala

"New Vistas Opened by Women" will be the theme of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society's Annual Spring Dinner Gala at Fellowship Hall of South Presbyterian Church on Friday, April 30th at 6:00 p.m.

The panel of Dobbs Ferry women includes Village Administrator Margaret Slavin, West Point Cadet Cathleen Quinlan, her sister, former U.S. House of Representatives Page Kristen Quinlan, Junior Firefighter Chief Lisa Hogan, former Volunteer Ambulance Corps Captain Margaret Moynihan, Chamber of Commerce President Celeste Meneses, and School Board Member Carol Howe. The panel will be moderated by Dr. Frances T. M. Mahoney, Division Chairperson, Social and Behavioral Sciences, at Mercy College.

The price of admission to this year's gala is \$18.00, which includes a delicious meal prepared by the same great chef who catered last year's memorable dinner.

After the Panel Presentation the audience will have the opportunity to submit questions or observations to the participants. There will also be a raffle with numerous prizes donated by area merchants.

While the Gala features new vistas opened by women, there were exceptional women in the past. One of the leaders against gender discrimination was Fanny Villard, whose story is recounted by Jean Fritz in this issue of *The Ferryman*.

In the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century, when Dobbs Ferry was mostly farmland, women worked beside their men in the fields with the additional chores of spinning, weaving and food preparation thrown in. Even so, Molly Sneden found time to operate the ferry from the west side of the river before the Revolution.

During the Civil War, Theresa Conlin left the village to nurse her soldier husband, stricken with typhoid. Then, for the duration of the war, she ministered to soldiers in hospitals, camps, and even on the battlefield. For the rest of her life she suffered

the effects of badly frozen feet from the Shenandoah campaign.

With the urbanization of Dobbs Ferry, in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, jobs open to single women included clerking, shopkeeping, nursing and teaching. Most married women became homemakers and depended upon their breadwinning husbands.

There were exceptions. Violet Pearce, after the death of her police officer husband in 1939, found herself a single mom with two children to support. During the depression years she luckily found work as a switchboard operator.

Women in World War II

During World War II, village women served in all branches of the armed services. Florence Lester MacNamara, for example, later to become Elementary School Principal, was a Marine; on the home front women were employed by Anaconda Copper manufacturing cable, by North American Phillips and Sonotone producing electronic equipment, and by Stauffer Chemical manufacturing the components of explosives. The work was often dangerous.

At the end of the war, many of these women returned to the traditional role of homemaker in a single income family. Still, many returned to work to help send their children to college.

Relatively few women were in the professions. The exceptions were: the many teachers in the Dobbs Ferry school system, Doctors Katherine L. Friedman, and Sumi Koidi in medicine; Luba Eiler in law; and Debbie Reiser in architecture. Only recently have all jobs and professions been fully open to women.

Women have also moved into positions of authority not previously attainable. Elizabeth von Bernuth, Joyce James, and Gisela Knight were elected as Village Trustees. Ms. Knight later became Dobbs Ferry's first woman mayor. Today Dobbs Ferry has a woman Village Administrator, a woman Building Inspector, and a woman Judge, as well as four women serving on the Village Board.

-- Bill Blanck

A PIONEER OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION: FANNY GARRISON VILLARD, OF DOBBS FERRY

-- by Jean Fritz

Dobbs Ferry resident Helen Garrison ("Fanny") Villard, suffragist and pacifist, formally established the "Women's Revolution" in the river towns when, in 1909, she was elected president of the Hudson Valley Suffrage Organization. She was 65 years old.

Widow of the financial titan Henry Villard, and owner of Thorwood, one of the largest estates in Dobbs Ferry, Fanny always had been a crusader and would remain one until she died in 1928 at the age of 84.

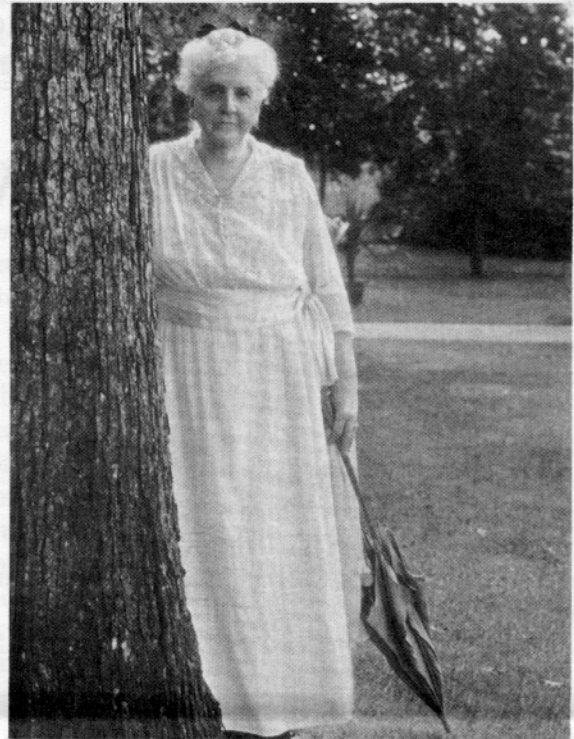
One of her early role models was Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Cady Stanton. Fanny was only three years old in 1848 when Lizzie, with the help of four reform-minded friends, called a Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The women listed their grievances and presented a declaration of women's rights which included the boldest demand of all -- the right to vote.

Fanny grew up in an open-minded Boston family, the daughter of the renowned abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison. Lizzie was not so fortunate. She was born in 1815 in Johnstown, N.Y., the first girl in a family that would soon be limited to girls. Lizzie's father, Judge Cady, yearning for sons, was disappointed. Lizzie understood that she was "second best" but perhaps she didn't realize how hopeless it was to be only "second best" until the day she sat in her father's office, listening to his clients complain. Her father, she noticed, never seemed able to help the women. That day a widow, Flora Campbell, came for help, received none, and Lizzie became especially angry. There was Flora who with her own money had bought the family farm, and now she was watching the farm go to wrack and ruin. Her son had inherited the farm from his father and he didn't care what happened to it.

"What could be done?" Flora asked.

"Nothing," Judge Cady replied. "This is the law."

When Lizzie protested after Flora had left, her father showed her the law as it was written in his law book.



Fanny Villard at Thorwood in Dobbs Ferry

In that case, Lizzie said, she'd have to cut that law right out of his book.

Judge Cady shook his head. She could cut the law out of every book in existence, but that wouldn't change a thing. The law was made by legislators in Albany and only they could make laws and change them.

Whether she realized it or not, Lizzie's life work was laid out for her then and there. She received no support for her views until as a young lady she began visiting the home of her cousin, Gerrit Smith, a reformer and dedicated abolitionist. Here, with like-minded people, she could speak freely. Here she met Henry Stanton, her future husband. And here she probably met William Lloyd Garrison, who would become a friend and inspiration.

Mr. Garrison was the antithesis of Judge Cady. He didn't seem to take particular pride in the fact that six of his seven children were boys. Only Fanny, the youngest, was a girl, yet she was the one who proofread his articles on abolition. William Lloyd Garrison, a gentle man at home, was a fire-breathing radical when

it came to slavery . He would not compromise. Slaves should be freed NOW, not tomorrow or the next day. ALL slaves. Once he even burned a copy of the U. S. Constitution in the town square because it permitted slavery.

When his path crossed Lizzie's, in Boston, it was a foregone conclusion that he would support her ideas.

Mr. Garrison, who favored freedom for everyone, welcomed this new women's movement and it became another topic of discussion in the family. As soon as Fanny was old enough, she joined it.

Ups and Downs

Fanny's life was one of ups and downs. When she married Henry Villard (1866), her fortunes rose and fell with his. In Horatio Alger fashion, Henry stepped up from Civil War correspondent to international financier, convincing German investors to back the construction of railroads in the West. When he was caught in a financial panic, Fanny adjusted her style of living. When he was doing well, she of course also prospered. In addition to their Fifth Avenue home, they bought a luxurious country house in Dobbs Ferry on what is still known as Villard Hill.

Fanny was popular in the community even if some people disapproved of the fact that she would not join a church. She could never forget her father's anger at the lackadaisical attitude the religious community in general took over slavery. But she did interest the women of Dobbs Ferry in the women's movement. In 1909 she formed the Hudson Valley Suffrage Organization; its first meeting was attended by seventy-five women.

One of the red letter days for the family came in 1883 when the Northern Pacific Railroad (headed by Henry Villard) completed its line making it part of a rail system covering the entire continent and opening the Pacific Northwest to massive economic development. All the Villards, including three boys and an older sister, rode in Henry's private railway car, along with General Ulysses Grant and President Chester Arthur. There was a celebration at every stop, and at the end the "golden spike" was driven to mark the historic occasion. (According to the second son, Oswald, however, the spike was not golden at all, just a dirty spike that had been used in the building).

Fanny's life was touched by the death of

various members of the family. Her father, William Lloyd Garrison, died at Fanny's home in New York in 1879. Her youngest son, Hilgard, who was a favorite of all the family, died when he was only seven years old of what was thought to be a ruptured appendix. And her husband, Henry, died in 1900.

From that time until her death in 1928, Fanny devoted her life to social and philanthropic causes. Happily, she lived to see the Nineteenth Amendment adopted in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not live to see this, but her daughter, Harriet Stanton Blatch, worked closely with Fanny for suffrage, and later for world peace.

Indeed, before the women's issues were quite settled, Fanny threw herself headlong into the drive for peace. Many Americans were afraid that President Wilson would take the country into the European war in spite of his promise not to do so. Some were asking for a referendum before America went into any war. Not Fanny. She would outlaw war altogether if she could. She founded the Women's Peace Society and went to Washington and marched to protest war.

How to Keep Peace?

After the war was over, the question was: How to keep peace? How to insure that there would never be a second world war? Disarmament was the only way, Fanny believed. In 1921 she led 2,000 women in a march up Fifth Avenue in New York, all waving banners, urging disarmament. Like her father, Fanny did not believe in compromise. "We advocate not the reduction of armaments," she said, "but their abolition. This means doing away with the armies and navies of the whole world."

Among the many organizations which Fanny Villard supported (and in many cases led) was the New York Diet Kitchen, responsible for the quality of milk distributed in New York and for the care of mothers and babies. She was on the Board of Directors of both the Dobbs Ferry and the Tarrytown hospitals. She was active in encouraging higher education for women. When she died in July, 1928, she was eulogized in publications throughout the nation.

The Dobbs Ferry Register wrote: "It will always be a source of pride to Dobbs Ferry that Fanny Garrison Villard lived here. It will

always be a joy to recall that we have stood close to a light that has cast its illumination into many a darkened corner of the world."

The service for Fanny Villard was held in her Dobbs Ferry home. She is buried beside her husband in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

A SON'S TRIBUTE TO FANNY VILLARD

Fanny and Henry Villard had four children: Helen, Harold, Oswald and Hilgard. Oswald became the editor, publisher and owner of the weekly *Nation* and the daily *New York Evening Post*. Here are excerpts of what he wrote after his mother died:

"Wherever she went she carried with her the Garrisonian sense of having some personal responsibility for injustice and wrong . . ."

"Always she was in her person a dainty aristocrat, dressing with exquisite taste and never with extravagance -- an aristocrat in her fineness but entirely a democrat in her views and in her

heart. Fear of the mighty and powerful she never had. She met all who came her way, whether laborer or crown prince, [editor: literally!] with a naturalness, a warmth, a disarming friendliness that had nothing to do with social conventions. Certain of the triumph of every cause to which she gave her devotion, she was incapable of compromise, without being either a bigot or narrowly puritanical . . ."

"Always the fact remains that hers was a lovely and inspiring presence. Men who had come to scoff at suffragettes went dumb when this advocate arose who combined in herself every one of the womanly qualities."

*(Editor's Note: This article by noted writer/historian and Society Trustee Jean Fritz, is the third in a series about women's rights. See **The Ferryman** issues of June and September, 1993. This article is also an introduction to a future series about Henry Villard, Civil War correspondent, financier, railroad builder, and first CEO of General Electric.*



Thorwood was the mansion owned by the Villard family until 1933, a period of forty-eight years. Architects McKim, Mead and White reconstructed and enlarged the original three-story brick structure which Villard had purchased from the Cochran estate.

When the Villards moved in, it was a working farm, complete with horses, cows, chickens and ducks. The mansion was situated on a twenty-acre tract which was

later enlarged when Henry Villard purchased an additional eighty acres.

After the death of Fannie Villard, the mansion and one hundred acres of land were purchased by New York Daily News publisher Joseph Patterson, who demolished the mansion and all other structures for real estate development. His advertising described the project as "Villard Hill" and one of his ads called it "an earthly paradise".

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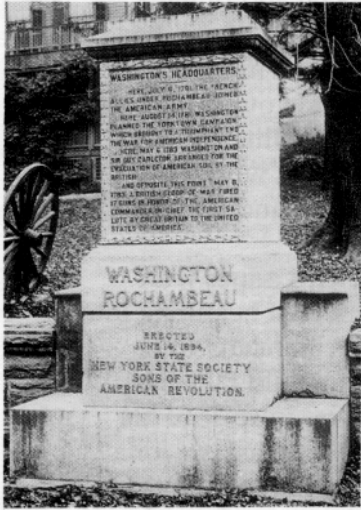
Return completed tickets to the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.
Mail to 12 Elm Street, Dobbs Ferry, New York to be received by April 26th,
or bring them to the registration table at the Gala on April 30th at Fellowship Hall,
South Presbyterian Church, 343 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry

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Dobbs Ferry Historical Society and Sons of American Revolution Agree to Correct Washington HQ Monument

Methods of correcting the historical information on the stone Washington-Rochambeau monument in Dobbs Ferry are being explored by the Empire State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, with the support of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.



No decision has been made yet by the two groups on how the several mistakes on the monument should be corrected. But the Historical Society's Board of Trustees voted unanimously at its last meeting that the monument should present information that is historically accurate. The method of correction was left open for future discussion.

The monument, on the east side of South Broadway near Livingston Street, is

owned by the Empire State Society, SAR, as is the little strip of land on which it rests.

The SAR's Empire State Society erected the monument in 1894, more than 110 years after the events described on it had taken place. In the 105 years since the monument was dedicated, historians and other writers have pointed out errors in the inscription. But nothing was done about the situation, either by the SAR or the residents of Dobbs Ferry.

Robert Stackpole, member of the Board of Managers of the Empire State Society, and president of the New York Chapter of the SAR, said "Previously unknown maps and documents and other materials have come to light in recent years that definitely contradict the inscription." Mr. Stackpole displayed some of the materials to the Historical Society's Trustees at their Board meeting on March 31st.

Bill Blanck, president of the Historical Society, said, "We agree with the SAR that the time has come to correct the monument's information. Our two groups will be conferring in the near future on just how the corrections will be made."

The monument claims that the site was Washington's Headquarters; that the French Army under Rochambeau joined the American Army here, and that Washington and Sir Guy Carleton met here to arrange for the evacuation of British troops from American soil in 1783.

Evidence indicates that Washington's Headquarters were some two miles inland at what is known as the Appleby House, about a mile away from Rochambeau's Headquarters, further inland on Ridge Road in Hartsdale (known as the Odell House).

Armies in Greenburgh

The bulk of the two armies, moreover, was encamped in Greenburgh, far from the river. As for the evacuation of British troops in 1783, evidence indicates that that was settled by Washington and Carleton in "West Dobbs Ferry" on the other side of the Hudson, near Sneden's Landing.

Mr. Stackpole has been working for years on the restoration of Rochambeau's Headquarters on behalf of the SAR. He said that Dobbs Ferry played a vital part in this phase of the Revolution, noting that the Village was on the western perimeter of the two army encampments. That western perimeter was protected against a British invasion from the river by the Second Continental Dragoons, commanded by Col. Elisha Sheldon and the First New Hampshire Light Infantry Brigade commanded by Col. Alexander Scammell.

He also said that Dobbs Ferry had redoubts whose cannons regularly engaged British ships as they came up river from New York City.

The actual text on the monument reads as follows:

"WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS

"Here, July 6th, 1781, the French Allies under Rochambeau, joined the American Army.

"Here, August 14th, 1781, Washington planned the Yorktown Campaign which brought to a triumphant end the War for American Independence.

"Here, May 6th, 1783, Washington and Sir Guy Carleton arranged for the evacuation of American soil by the British.

"And opposite this point May 8th, 1783, a British sloop-of-war fired 17 guns in Honor of the American Commander-in-Chief. The first salute by Great Britain to the United States of America."

The Historical Society's Board of Trustees adopted resolution reads:

"We support the Empire State Society, Sons of the American Revolution, in its desire to examine the provenance of the Washington-Rochambeau monument located on South Broadway in Dobbs Ferry; and in its interest in exploring ways to correct the historical information on that monument."

-- Hank Walter