



# The FERRYMAN

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DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
12 Elm Street, Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522 (914) 674-1007

SEPTEMBER 2001

## New Bronze Plaque Correcting the Washington-Rochambeau Monument Dedicated at July 4th Ceremony

In a dignified and impressive ceremony on July 4th, representatives of the Sons of the American Revolution, the American Legion, the Village and the Historical Society dedicated the new bronze plaque now covering the historically incorrect inscription on the 107-year-old monument.

The scene was far different at the original dedication, which took place on Flag Day in 1894. According to the *Dobbs Ferry Register*, the local weekly newspaper at that time, only the base of the monument was completed. The carving of the inscription was in progress and the main part of the monument wasn't delivered until months later.

Still, according to the newspaper, hundreds of local residents, out-of-town visitors, school children from neighboring villages, Civil War veterans, and firefighters gathered for the festivities.

The *Register* reported that among the distinguished guests was Adlai Stevenson, Vice-President of the United States during Grover Cleveland's second term, and grandfather of Adlai Stevenson, who was defeated by Dwight Eisenhower in the 1952 and 1956 Presidential campaigns.

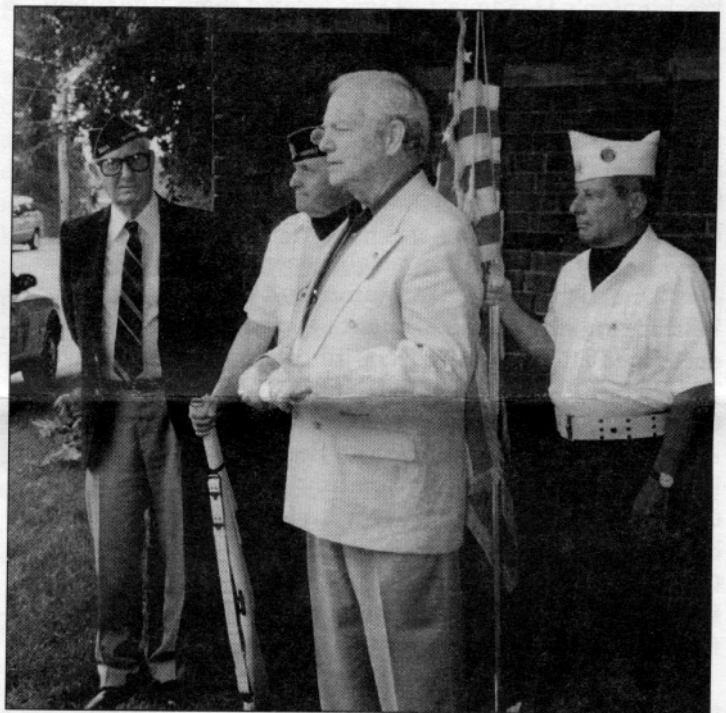


Other distinguished personages at the 1894 dedication included the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, members of the Cabinet, officers of the Army and the Navy, United States Senators and members of to the House of Representatives. And according to the *Register*, "Chauncey M. Depew, President of the SAR laid the base stone, the Marine Band

*left, above: Mayor Brian Monahan speaks with a TV reporter*



*left below: Some of those assembled for the 2001 dedication*



*Robert Stackpole, President of the New York Chapter of the SAR, told of the history of the monument and the necessity of correcting the historical inaccuracies.*

*All photos, page 1: Mary Walter*

playing a national anthem, and a man of war firing a national salute."

While the July 4, 2001 dedication of the correcting plaque was not honored by the presence of Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Powell, or other national dignitaries, Mayor Brian Monahan did very well in representing the Village, as did Village Trustees Joseph Bova, Allegra Dengler and Marcia Heffler.

Representing American Legion Post #1048 of Dobbs Ferry and participating in the ceremony were Commander William Florin, Adjutant William Rizzuto and Col. Lester Lichter. Representing the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society were Second Vice President Fred Staats, Treasurer Mavis Cain and Trustees Laurence Dengler, Gabriele Grunebaum and Hank Walter. Also present was Thomas Minozzi, the contractor who installed the correcting bronze plaque.

## Monument Dedication

History should acquit all of them well.

Covering the plaque that was affixed to the monument a week before was a large flag that had been flown for a number of years over the Odell House on Ridge Road, Hartsdale. That historic house had served as Rochambeau's headquarters during the summer of 1781. Robert Stackpole, president of the New York Chapter of the SAR, unveiled the plaque by removing the flag, to the applause of the two dozen witnesses who attended the ceremony.

Legionnaires folded the flag into the traditional triangular shape, after which Mr. Stackpole presented it as an SAR donation to the trustees of the Historical Society.

Among the inaccuracies originally chiseled into the stone monument in 1894 was a statement that Washington's Headquarters was located there. The monument also wrongly asserted (in stone!) that it was there that Washington and Rochambeau, the French general whose army aided the American cause against England, planned the Yorktown, Virginia campaign. It also erroneously stated that "here, May 6, 1783, Washington and Sir Guy Carleton arranged for the evacuation of American soil by the British".

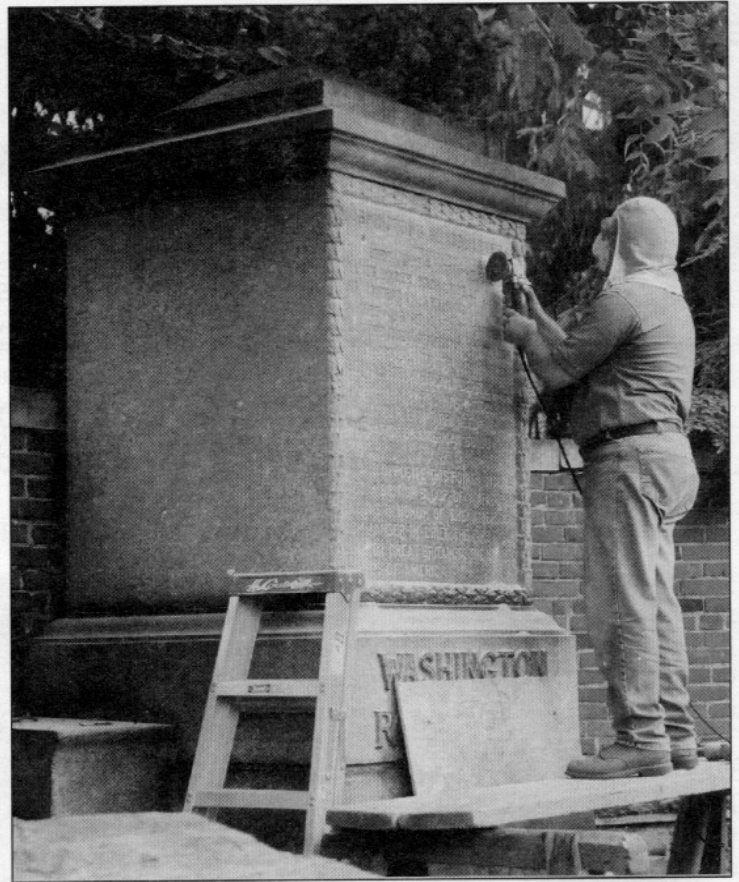
The correcting bronze plaque states simply:

"Under the Supreme Command of General George Washington, the Allied Armies of America and France encamped at Philipsburg from July 6th to August 19, 1781. The French Auxiliary Army commanded by Lieutenant General Count de Rochambeau joined the Continental Army after a 19-day march from Providence, Rhode Island. Here at Dobbs Ferry on July 18, 1781, General George Washington ordered the building of two artillery batteries and a redoubt. He also stationed the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons and the 1st New Hampshire Light Infantry as protection against British naval attacks from the Hudson River."

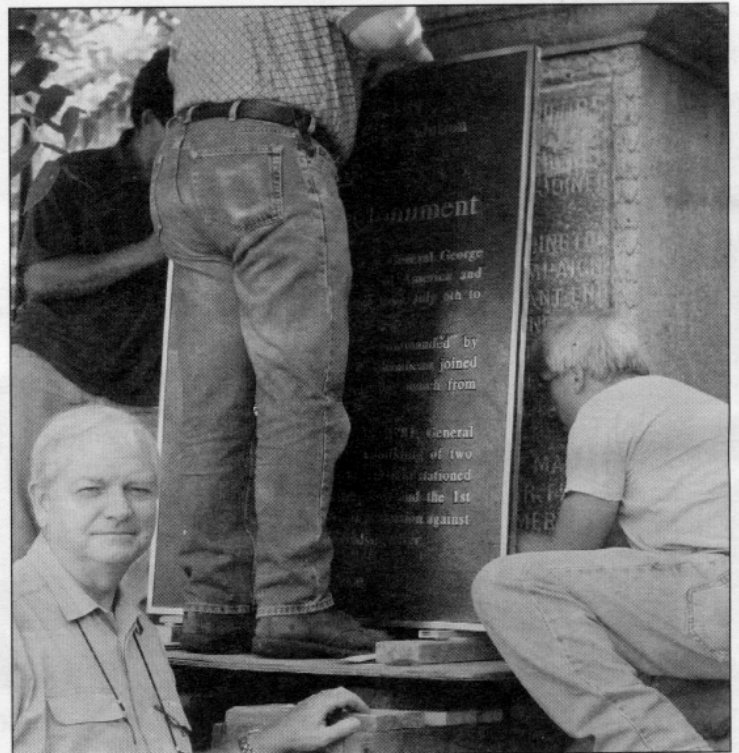
The small parcel of land on which the monument itself stands had been deeded to the Sons of the American Revolution in 1894. As the monument is owned by the SAR, corrections could have been made only by the SAR, or with that organization's permission. As Mayor Brian Monahan pointed out, this would have been a costly operation to have been made at the taxpayers' expense.

The misinformation on the monument had long been an embarrassment to the SAR and many in the area interested in local history. When the SAR approached the Historical Society and suggested that a correction should be made, the Society agreed happily. The SAR paid for both the plaque and its installation. At the dedication ceremony Mr. Stackpole thanked the Village, the Legion and the Society for their support. "The monument is no longer historically incorrect," he proudly observed. The monument is on Broadway across the street from St. Cabrini Nursing Home.

— Bill Blanck and Hank Walter



Contractor Tom Minozzi grinds the surface of the monument to allow for the cement to bond with the plaque. He wears a hood and mask to protect him from the dust.



SAR president Robert Stackpole approves the installation of the correcting plaque. The Minozzi crew apply cement that will hold the plaque permanently in place.



## Immigrants to be Topic at Annual Meeting on September 28 at Our Lady of Pompeii Hall

The new wave of immigrants into Westchester will be one of the features at the annual membership meeting of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society. Another will be the Cabrini Immigrant Services, a division of the St. Cabrini Nursing Home, both operating in Dobbs Ferry.

The annual meeting will be held on Friday, September 28, 2001 at Our Lady of Pompeii Parish Hall, Chestnut and Palisade Streets. The meeting will begin at 8:00 pm with reports on the Society's accomplishments and plans and the election of new Trustees to the Society's Board.

One of the speakers will be Donna MacNamara, Director of Community Services at the nursing home, which sponsors the Cedar Street office; also some immigrants who have made use of the office's services; adult volunteers, and student volunteers from Masters School and Maria Regina School.

A past Society program dealt with Irish immigration into Westchester and Dobbs Ferry in the 19th century, when most came to escape the potato famine.

Immigration into Dobbs Ferry from Southern Italy during the first part of the 20th century has also been an interest of the Society. The hillsides of the Village near the river, where neat little gardens of flowers and vegetables and fruits are cultivated, have been compared with the hills of river villages in Southern Italy.

There was also a significant German immigration. At the turn of the century Peter Biegen established the Hudson River Brewing Company here, and Financier and Civil War correspondent Henry Villard became one of the Village's most illustrious residents.

Much of the new immigration — "history in the making" — is Hispanic. Affecting Westchester more than Dobbs Ferry directly at this time, the Hispanic share of the county's population has leaped from 10.4% in 1990 to almost 16% — an increase of 56% in the Hispanic share, according to the Census Bureau. Another large influx was that of Asians.

To meet the needs of the newcomer groups, the St. Cabrini Nursing Home opened an Immigrant Services Office in December 1998 at 21 Cedar Street. The choice of expanding its overall mission in this way was a natural one. St. Frances Cabrini, a native Italian, founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Italy in 1880. She and her nuns came to the United States in 1889 with a specific commission by Pope Leo XIII to serve Italian immigrants to America.

In the next 28 years, Mother Cabrini established schools, orphanages and hospitals in several U. S. cities and towns. After becoming a U.S. citizen in 1909, she came to Dobbs Ferry in 1914 and founded an orphanage which later, in 1928, became Sacred Heart Villa, a Catholic girls' boarding school, across the street from the Washington-Rochambeau Monument.

Learning that the Archdiocese had not heeded the requests of the growing numbers of Italian-born people in



*The Cedar Street office of Cabrini Immigrant Services*

the Village for a church of their own, Mother Cabrini asked for and received permission to have an Italian chaplain offer Masses in the orphanage's chapel for the immigrants. That was the forerunner of Our Lady of Pompeii Church on Palisade Street, which opened eight years later.

Sadly, Mother Cabrini died of malaria in Chicago in 1917 at the age of 67. She was the first immigrant to America and naturalized American citizen to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church as a saint. That ceremony was conducted in 1946 by Pope Pius XII.

In 1973, Sacred Heart Villa's building was demolished to make way for the St. Cabrini Nursing Home. Fittingly enough, the church, mindful of her life's work among immigrants, designated St. Cabrini as the Patroness of Immigrants.

Services available at the Cedar Street office include language instruction, help with immigration forms, referrals to immigration lawyers, food and clothing services if needed, housing and employment referrals, an annual health screening and after-school help for immigrant children. The office has 19 volunteers — 11 adults and 8 teenagers. The Director is Sister Roselle Santavasi.

The Office had a foreign client base of 517 during 2000, serving Westchester immigrants living mostly in Yonkers and the four Rivertowns. That client base does not exactly mirror the actual immigration into Westchester, but it does parallel that inflow.

The people seeking help from the Cabrini office in 2000 came from 70 different countries on six continents: about 60% from nations in Central and South America, the Caribbean and Mexico; 18% from Europe, mostly from

Balkan countries; 16% from Asia, mostly India and Pakistan; 6% from Africa; one person from Australia; and seven persons from Canada, including Society Treasurer Mavis Cain who, after living in Dobbs Ferry for almost three decades, was recently sworn in as a U.S. citizen. Ms. Cain, who found the experience of becoming a citizen "fascinating and exciting," will be coordinating the immigrant program at the annual meeting. See separate article in this issue by Ms. Cain about her experience.

Audience members whose parents or grandparents were immigrants to Dobbs Ferry will be asked to participate, if they wish, by recounting the experiences of their forebears and the reasons for coming to Dobbs Ferry. Those who plan to attend are urged to bring relevant photos and papers that would illustrate immigration of 25, 50 or more years ago. Of historical interest are comparisons of past and present immigration. The documents and photos will be made part of an exhibit at the meeting. Please identify each of your contributions with your name, address and phone number.

At the business part of the meeting, seven candidates for the Board of Trustees will be named by the Nominating Committee. These candidates are incumbents Mavis Cain, Maz Hogan and Fred Staats for three-year terms expiring September 30, 2004; new candidates Dr. Mary Donovan, Rev. Richard McKeon, and Brian Wright for three-year terms; and Pam Strachan for a one-year term expiring September 30, 2002, to fill a vacancy created when a Trustee moved out of the Village.

Dr. Donovan is Adjunct Assistant Professor at Hunter College, teaching world history. Her other specialties are women's history and 19th century American history. She has also taught courses in African-American history, the British Colonies in America, and the American Revolution. Dozens of her articles have appeared in history journals and she is the author of several books. Among her positions before she came to Hunter were director of the Black Women's Oral History Project and director of the Episcopal Women's Oral History Project.

The Rev. McKeon is rector of Zion Episcopal Church. Every December for years, he has conducted an annual history-themed Washington Irving Holiday Celebration in conjunction with the Historical Society's annual Clara Mead Eggnog Party. Washington Irving, a mainstay of 19th century American literature, was a founding member of Zion Church, established in 1833.

Mr. Wright is a life-long resident of Dobbs Ferry. He is a writer in the advertising field. He and his wife, Jane, and their three children live on Temple Road. He has an abiding interest in the Village and its history, believing that only by making Dobbs Ferry's history more accessible to new generations of residents can the Village's unique character be preserved.

Ms. Strachan is a librarian at Irvington Public Library. For some years, the Society's archives have benefitted from her library skills. She also teaches piano and is the organist and choir director at Zion Episcopal Church.

—Hank Walter

## A Thank-you for Sister Roselle

Sister Roselle is the director of the Cabrini Immigration Services Office on Cedar Street in Dobbs Ferry. She has smoothed the way to citizenship or permanent residency for over 500 of us during the year 2000.

Those of you who were born here may have no idea how nerve-wracking it is to fill out countless forms and then wait, wait, wait for the crucial interview.

Many of my foreign-born friends chose to hire expensive lawyers to help them through the process. I didn't. Instead, I phoned Catholic Charities of New York, known to offer services to immigrants. When I gave my address as Dobbs Ferry, I received my first piece of good advice: "Go straight to Cedar Street!" The Cabrini Immigration Services Office was virtually right in front of me!

The office was humming. Small Hispanic children were being amused by Dobbs Ferry teen-aged volunteers. A teen-aged neighbor of mine, Emily Weber, of Southlawn Avenue, was one of them. The children's parents were having an English lesson from Sister Roselle. A young man from Brazil was getting advice and instruction from Olympia Cosentino, of Draper Lane. Olympia is a volunteer who gives English lessons three days a week.

When my turn with Sister Roselle came, she helped me with the formidable forms, gave me the "school book" of American history and even told me what subway to take down to Federal Plaza for whatever time I might be called for an interview. The best advice was to "listen hard when the names are called out, because if you miss your name when it's called, you have to start all over again." I actually saw some poor man, whose name was mispronounced, miss his call and he was told he had to repeat the process from the beginning.

I thought how much easier all this is for me, an Anglophone, than for most immigrants whose mother tongue is not English. After my interview at Federal Plaza, a tiny Chinese woman came up to me asking, "Was it terrible?" I tried to give her the assurance Sister Roselle had given me in Dobbs Ferry.

I did miss one test question. (Not the fault of the "school book" Sister Roselle had given me.) Do you, dear friends of the Historical Society, know who said, "Give me liberty or give me death!"?

— Mavis Cain



Sister Roselle, Director of Cabrini Immigration Services



# Why The Trolley Didn't Stop Here

A hot topic in the Summer of 1901 was the possibility of a trolley line connecting Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry to the Hastings line bound for Yonkers and New York City, where riders enjoyed fares costing a few pennies. Ordinary citizens who could not afford an automobile or fine horses could look forward to the benefits of cheap transportation and frequent service. It would mean new options for both employment and outings. But, squashing that possibility, Senator J. Irving Burns of Yonkers introduced a bill which the State Legislature passed, prohibiting the extension of the existing trolley line north of the Yonkers-Hastings border.

In response, the editor of the *Dobbs Ferry Register*, J. L. Taylor, led a valiant fight to petition Legislature to repeal the act. He wrote: "The ordinary citizen has some rights in this matter and the trolley is his 5c automobile. . . Every citizen who owns property, every citizen who pays rent, every citizen who wants to take his family out for an airing holidays, every citizen who desires to see our village develop should sign this petition and aid in destroying this 'Chinese Wall' surrounding our village.

"If our wealthy, philanthropic citizens want to do good work by the creation of public libraries, etc., let them first prepare the people to enjoy these beneficial institutions by developing a healthy body and brain. . . Many poor mothers with sick infants have no other way of giving them an airing, and in this manner the trolley is a blessing. These mothers should see that their husbands sign this petition." *Dobbs Ferry Register*, Nov. 22, 1901. Though the petition contained 490 signatures representing \$693,500 in property value, (*Dobbs Ferry Register*, Nov. 29, 1901) the trolley never came to Dobbs Ferry.

Many originally thought that this bill was sponsored by the NY Central and the Hudson Railroads, but the bill actually was passed at the request of large property owners from Yonkers to Mt. Pleasant. Those who supported the bill were landowners who wanted to preserve Broadway for "their own (carriage) driving and automobil- ing and to drive in peace, undisturbed by the noisy, disagreeable electric cars" (*Dobbs Ferry Register*, Nov. 29, 1901). They also raised \$25,000 to further the measure (today's equal of about \$500,000). ([www.westchesterlibraries.org/cost\\_of\\_living\\_calculator](http://www.westchesterlibraries.org/cost_of_living_calculator)).

The line would have extended the then-existing Hastings trolley line north on Broadway to Livingston Ave., Dobbs Ferry, to Main Street, to Cedar St, to Ashford Ave., to Saw Mill River Road, Ardsley, returning to Yonkers. (*Dobbs Ferry Register*, Nov. 29, 1901). There was a variety of strong opinions involved, from those who saw the trolley as a class issue, to those who wanted to preserve the beauty of Broadway, to those who felt that it would help or hurt business and growth, or those con-

cerned about the general economic recession in the Dobbs Ferry area, to the financial terms of any trolley franchise.

Many affluent families owned or rented summer residences in the Rivertowns - to escape the heat of New York City. This was the era of John D. Rockefeller, Jay Gould, Louis Tiffany, Louis Untermeyer, and Henry Villard, and inevitably there were differing interests between the summer residents and those here year'round, interests often based on economic or cultural differences.

Meanwhile, in 1903, Senator Charles McClelland introduced another bill in the Legislature amending the Burns act to except that part of Broadway in Hastings, Dobbs Ferry and Irvington.

In addition, he believed that the Burns act was unconstitutional and asked the attorney general's office for an opinion. Local lawyers and leaders supported his belief, and were pleased to hear the Attorney General's office declare the Burns act unconstitutional. These leaders were members of the Dobbs Ferry Improvement Society, (also known as The Trolley Party), and had already begun collecting Consent Papers from property owners along the proposed route, which was one of the constitutional requirements, along with the consent of the Board of Trustees.

The President of the of the Village then was Charles E. Storms, whose son approached the Trolley Party's lawyer, H.B. Woods, to borrow the Consent Papers, ostensibly for use in soliciting additional support. On the condition that they be safely returned to him, Woods agreed. But, the papers were never returned, despite his repeated efforts to retrieve them. The *Register* doesn't tell us why this happened, and after so much time, one could suppose that it was to guarantee their safekeeping.

In 1904, one week after the Burns opinion, the Attorney General recalled the previous opinion and called the Burns act legal. He explained that the earlier opinion had been written by a deputy in the department.

Another procedure that could be used to bring the trolley to the village was redress to the courts, which involved an application for the

appointment of a commission of three, whose report would then be considered and confirmed by the courts. That was all that was necessary in law to override those opposed to the coming of the trolley. This is the path that the village Trustees now favored.

The Board of Trustees met in an open meeting for all to witness the resolution to proceed with the trolley, and see it unanimously adopted. A few days later it appears that a special, secret meeting of the Trustees occurred without President Storms. Those trustees rescinded the previous trolley resolution. Four of the Trustees who previously voted for the resolution, now reversed themselves. The



Charles E. Storms,  
twice-elected President  
of Dobbs Ferry

President believed that those Trustees should appear at a meeting to explain the reversal of their positions to the citizens. Three of the four failed to attend.

"The very men who had been shouting trolley for the past two years . . . are openly opposing the granting of this franchise, charging bad faith, etc. because it is not their scheme." (*Dobbs Ferry Register*, March 16, 1906).

Obviously, there was a complex scheme of maneuvering that few knew about. One of the more creative moves was described in a threatening letter to the Hastings Board of Trustees from an unidentified organization in Dobbs Ferry. Of course, the Dobbs Ferry trolley line would be possible only if the Hastings Trustees agreed to grant a franchise to a trolley company to continue its line up Constant Street and Broadway through their village to the northerly limits. If Hastings Trustees refused to extend their tracks, the letter threatened to institute proceedings to stop Hastings trolley traffic from crossing the Rowley and Hastings Bridges, by exposing that these bridges, as properties of the town of Greenburgh, had never been granted a franchise by the township. The letter was judged unimportant by the Trustees ("considering its impertinent insolence") (*Dobbs Ferry Register*, January 26, 1906)

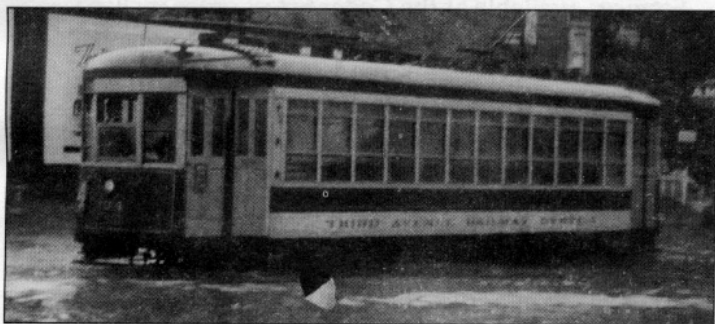
Meanwhile, Charles E. Storms, former village president, and then-president of the bipartisan Citizens League received a letter from the trolley company which read, in part: "We would like very much to grant your request and to offer some encouragement regarding an extension of the lines of the Union Railway System into the territory with which you and your friends are associated, but under existing financial conditions, and with the present situation so far as surface railroad properties are concerned, we regret to say that it is impossible for us to consider the question of further extensions." *Dobbs Ferry Register*, February 21, 1908.

So ended years of struggle over best-laid plans.

In the March 1908 election, Democratic and Republican representatives of district committees met informally and unanimously agreed to offer Dobbs Ferry a bipartisan ticket at the upcoming village primaries. (*Dobbs Ferry Register*, March 16, 1908)

Quiet descended over the village for a time.

- Helen Kirkpatrick



This is one of the trolleys on the Yonkers line destined never to travel the streets of Dobbs Ferry.

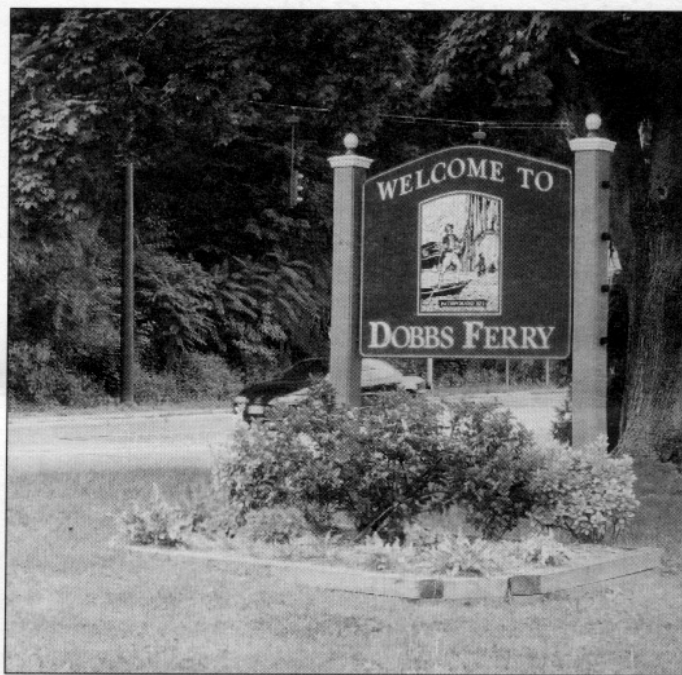
## Signs at Irvington, Ardsley and Hastings Borders Depict Dobbs and His Ferry

Artist Jon Nielsen's rendition of the early ferry operated by the Dobbs family is familiar to most Village residents. It appears on the masthead of this newsletter, *The Ferryman*, on the throw made available by the Historical Society, and now on three handsome signs at the boundaries of the Village.

Those instrumental in this welcome addition are Mayor Brian Monahan, Trustees Joseph Bova and Marcia Heffler, Village Administrator Peggy Slavin, members of the Beautification Committee chaired by Erna Capetanopoulos, teacher Cathy Winrow, representing the schools, and many others.

The three signs cost \$7,305.

The history of the ferry and its operators has been told in past issues of the Society's newsletter, *The Ferryman*.



One of the new signs at the village boundary at Ardsley.



After a heavy rain, this trolley didn't go anywhere.