



The FERRYMAN

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DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY, 2004

12 Elm Street, Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522 (914) 674-1007

Jean Fritz to be Honored at the Spring Gala

One of Dobbs Ferry's most loved citizens, Jean Fritz, will be honored at the Spring Gala Dinner, to be held on Friday, May 21st at the Dobbs Ferry Women's Club, 54 Clinton Avenue at 7:00 p.m.

At a special ceremony in the Oval Office of the White House on November 14th, Jean Fritz was awarded the National Humanities Medal, which is given to people whose work "has deepened the nation's understanding of the humanities."

Nine other people were so honored that day, including Joan Ganz Cooney, the creator of Sesame Street, and novelist John Updike. President George W. Bush presented the medals to these outstanding Americans.

It was Jean Fritz's work as an historian that prompted this extraordinary honor. Since 1954 she has made history come alive for children through the books she has written. Using titles such as "Where Do You Think You're Going, Christopher

Columbus?" or "Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?" Fritz has introduced young people to the courageous and intriguing characters of our nation's past: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, even Pocahontas, are presented with their virtues and sometimes their foibles. Parents as well as children enjoy these biographies.

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society is

pleased to honor Jean Fritz at this year's dinner. Featured on this year's program will be Professor Angelo Angelis, who teaches American History at Hunter College in New York City. He will speak on "Preserving History: The Role of Local Historical Societies." Professor Angelis earned his doctorate at the City University of New York in Early American History. He is also a professionally trained chef, though he now works in the kitchen only as an avid amateur.

Please join us in honoring Jean Fritz at this Gala Dinner. Tickets are \$25 for a single ticket and \$45 for a couple. Advance reservations are necessary. Please call 674-1007 for reservations and send a check to the Mead House at 12 Elm Street by May 14th.



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Jean Fritz with Humanities Medal

The History of the Storm Farmhouse - Part Two

The article in the December 2003 issue of The Ferryman described the physical changes in the Storm Farmhouse over the centuries. This article will highlight some of the people who lived in that house

Pre-Revolutionary History

In 1662, Dirck Storm and his wife Marie, with their children came to New Amnsterdam from Holland. The Storms were dealers in fine cloth until a great depression hit after the overthrow of Cromwell in England. The family settled first in Brooklyn and probably came to Sleepy Hollow in about 1693, at the urging of their friend, Frederick Philipse. Several descendants of this couple stayed in the area and became tenant farmers on Philipsburg Manor.

Frederick Philipse III backed the British during the Revolutionary War and fled to England at the war's end. His property was confiscated and the tenant farmers were given the option to purchase.

It is unclear who the original owner of the Old Storm Farmhouse was. The house may date back to the early 1700s, so it could have been Thomas Storm (grandson of Dirck Storm) who farmed the land in the Northern Dobbs Ferry area and built the farmhouse on the corner of what is now known as Broadway and Rochambeau Avenue. Thomas' exact residence is unclear, being stated as that of Irvington or Northern Dobbs Ferry.

John Storm acquires the Land (c. 1785)

What is known is that Thomas' son, John and wife, Patience, (daughter of Andrew Gibb) and their family resided in the Storm Farmhouse. John was baptized in 1728 and married Patience in 1764. He was deeded the property and farmhouse by the New York State Commissioners of Forfeiture after the Revolutionary War. John



John Storm

was active in the Revolutionary War and formed the First Regiment of the Westchester County

Militia. He was captured and held prisoner in Sugar House Prison in New York. As fate would have it, John died on the return home after the war. Patience later married Colonel Samuel Drake in 1781.

The house passed from John and Patience Storm to their son John who was born on July 12, 1773. He married Elizabeth Jewel on August 13, 1800 and they had a child (also named John) on October 14, 1804. The second John married Elizabeth F. Close and they held title to the



Betsy Storm

farmhouse. After his death, Elizabeth sold the farmhouse and other buildings south of the farm to her son, Andrew on March 29, 1849 but continued to live there in the farmhouse. She was the last of the Storm family to reside in the farmhouse, staying there until her death on December 18, 1891.

The Farmland and House were sold

Generation after generation, the Storm family sold off sections of the farmland until all that remained was the heart of the original farm consisting basically of the area along today's Rochambeau Avenue. In fact, it is rumored that the Golio house (37 Rochambeau Ave.) was once a barn. After Elizabeth's death, Andrew used the farmhouse as the Ye Old Inn Club for a short term. Later, he sold the farmhouse with the last land along Rochambeau Avenue.

George Todd and James Taylor purchased the house and land and began to sell it off in lots in 1894. James Taylor was a local real estate and insurance dealer and also publisher of

the local newspaper, *The Dobbs Ferry Register*. At this time Rochambeau Avenue was still an unnamed dirt road. It was first unofficially named Todd Avenue. Taylor Place was yet another dirt road connecting Todd Avenue to Cedar Street. It ran through the property of 17 Rochambeau Avenue which today has a house and two garages owned by Bob (Radar) Casino. Rochambeau Avenue was officially named in 1895 in tribute to the French General Comte de Rochambeau who led French troops assisting Washington in the Revolutionary War.

The Reverend Joseph F. Flannelly purchased the Storm corner lot including the farmhouse on July 25, 1894 as a site for the Church of the Sacred Heart, begun in 1895. The farmhouse then was used as the Rectory from



Father Flannelly

1895 until 1901. Plans for a permanent rectory fluctuated until 1905 when, according to *The History of the Parish of the Sacred Heart*, "The house which was on the church lawn, where now the statue of the

Sacred Heart of Jesus is placed, was purchased by James Boyle, who had it removed westerly."

Farmhouse moved to 28 Rochambeau

The cozy saltbox, turned elegant colonial, was rolled on logs, pulled by a team of horses, to 28 Rochambeau Avenue and repositioned on the lot so that the original front of the house became the side. Though James Boyle purchased the lot and moved the house, little information has surfaced regarding the mysterious Mr. Boyle. He may have purchased the Farmhouse as an investment and rented it to Bridget (Fitzsimmons) Thornton until she was able to purchase it on February 14, 1925. James Boyle's daughter, Lucy, did stay with Bridget for a brief time in the old farmhouse.

Bridget and Ellen Fitzsimmons were two Irish emigrant sisters who arrived in America in

the late 1800s. The sisters worked on the Gould Estate as domestics. Bridget married Hugh J. Thornton, a coachman on the estate, and they had one daughter named Bridget.

Hugh died in 1910. Bridget lived in the farmhouse with her daughter and two male relatives—her sister Ellen's husband Ed Doyle and son, Ed.

Bridget sold the house to her



Bridget and Charles McLaughlin

daughter and husband, Charles McLaughlin on May 14, 1933 for her previously purchased price of \$2,500.00. The five of them lived in the house until about 1935 when Ed, Jr. married Francis McQuade. The newlyweds and Ed Senior moved out, eventually settling also on Rochambeau Avenue in 1942. Bridget continued to live with her daughter and Charles at 28 Rochambeau until her death in 1939. The McLaughlin's continued in the house until Bridget died in 1977. Then her husband, Mac, sold the house to his friend and neighbor, my mother, Theresa Bukovich-Sansevera on August 29, 1978.

—Denise Wilson

(This story will be continued in the next issue)

Further information or photos on the Old Storm Farmhouse and its inhabitants would be greatly appreciated. You can contact the Historical Society or write me directly at 28 Rochambeau Avenue, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522. Researching such a house has been very rewarding. If you are curious about the history of your home I would strongly urge you to begin the research now. A great deal can be lost in a generation.

Basic resources are available at the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, the Westchester County Land Records Division in White Plains, and the Westchester County Archives in Elmsford. Research your home. Who knows what may turn up? The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society would love to have a copy of your research for the archives!

Friday Evenings with History

The second "Friday Evening with History" was held at the Mead House on Friday, March 26th. Local resident Bruce Richards spoke about his restoration of the building that formerly housed the Dobbs Ferry Public Library.

Describing the historical research he did to chart the various stages in the building's evolution, Richards explained his decision to restore the building to its extensive remodeling in 1923, using the plans of architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. He gave us many insights into the restoration process, admitting that though he had hoped to find some interesting 19th century artifacts hidden within the walls, the nearest he came was the discovery of some bottles from the local Anchor Brewing Company.

Local residents added their memories of the building in various stages and enjoyed questioning Richards about his plans. Watch for more Friday Evenings with History next fall.

Volunteers Needed!!!

Now that spring is here, don't you have a few hours you would like to spend working in a delightful garden?

Or do you enjoy organization, filing away bits of historical information, collecting information about people and events of the past?

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society needs volunteers to

- ✓ help with the spring cleaning
- ✓ put order to the files
- ✓ weed and prune the garden
- ✓ answer people's historical queries
- ✓ duplicate video tapes

Even one or two hours/week would be helpful. If you have time to spare, please call us at 674-1007 and tell us what you'd like to do.

Do you know a Dobbs Ferry Ghost Story? We'd love to hear about it! Just call the Society.

Gabriele Grunebaum, former trustee, dies March 8 at the age of 93

In her long life, Gabriele Grunebaum spoke of herself as one of the lucky ones who escaped from Germany at the beginning of World War II. She had a law degree from the University of Berlin, was married and had two small children. With a premonition of the bad times to come, 'Gaby' had gone to England in the thirties for the births of her two children, returning to Hamburg after each birth. This important link with England was a life-saving one for her and her family. They were accepted as refugees to England and during the worst of the blitz were able to immigrate to Canada. They finally joined a cousin of her husband in the United States. Gaby lived in Dobbs Ferry from 1980 to 2001 when she moved to a retirement home in Rye.

Gaby's association with the Historical Society began with the discovery of an important manuscript. President Bill Blank had learned about a German soldier who had served under Rochambeau during the American Revolution. This soldier, Private Flor, had kept a diary that covered much of the time he spent in our area. Bill knew that the handwritten diary was in the archives of the Strasbourg Library in France. He asked Mavis Cain, who speaks French and German, to phone for information. For a fee, the library sent the microfilm of the diary which Mavis and Bill dutifully printed. BUT – they couldn't read it! It was written in German, in spidery Gothic script on pages that were faded and water-stained.

To the rescue came Gaby. Mavis had met her in 1993, through their shared love of the Aqueduct Trail. With the challenge of this translating project, Gaby became an enthusiastic Historical Society Board Member. Though she was close to ninety, during the next year she translated and typed over one hundred pages of the diary. It was a triumph for her and a gift to us. Hank Walters has edited portions of the work which soon will be printed in *The Ferryman*.

Along with her work as translator, Gaby also saw to it that the Mead House was properly cleaned and set up for events. People will remember her sitting at the entrance to greet visitors and collect membership fees, entertaining visitors with stories of her youthful adventures in Europe and indicating her fondness for Canada and the United States, especially Dobbs Ferry.

–Mavis Cain

Remembering One Soldier

During the Historical In-gathering that the Society sponsored in May, 2003, Jock Thornton brought in a letter he had received from First Lieut. James R. McCoy writing from Korea in 1952. Sadly, the letter arrived in Dobbs Ferry after the news that Lt. McCoy had been killed in action on July 3rd. We print some selections from this letter here as a reminder that history is made up of thousands of such stories of individuals trying to make the world a better place in which to live.

"Dear Jock,

Undoubtedly you realize that we are quite busy here on the line.

Our activity has been primarily centered on our immediate front utilizing both day and night to send out patrols. Daylight patrols are mostly reconnaissance and the night is used as cover for ambush patrols. . . .

Today was a most unfortunate one. One of our companies assaulted a strongly entrenched hill and suffered considerable casualties. Two officers were killed. One was a very close friend. His name is Renneman, a graduate of last year's class at the Naval Academy. He held a commission in the infantry prior to going to Annapolis. His height of 6'6" was actually too tall as prescribed by regulations for a commission in the Navy, however he was an excellent ball player and so he was accepted as a plebe. He played football for two years with Navy and then sustained an injury which prohibited further indulgence in that sport.

When it was time for graduation he wanted to go in the Army and received his wish. .

I saw the whole action from our observation post. The strength and tenacity of the Chinese on this particular hill were greatly

underestimated. It was rather a shock to see them receive such a beating but considering the circumstances the assault was bravely executed in a typical infantry manner. Renneman was one of the few to reach the top of the hill. He led his men all the way. —A fine man, soldier and gentleman. War is hell!

On all patrols we wear body armor made of nylon. Although it will not stop a rifle bullet, it will stop most pieces of shrapnel. On my first recon. patrol, one of my men had his life saved by his armor vest. Mortar shrapnel hit the man in several places inflicting minor wounds; however we later discovered a large chunk of the shell imbedded in the back of his vest directly in line with the spinal column.

The vests weigh about eight pounds and are a bit warm and cumbersome in the hot

weather. Needless to say, there are no complaints about carrying the extra weight. Just having it on one's person gives a sense of invincibility—a great morale factor. One boy threw himself on a grenade and suffered only bruises!

The hills are many and high. I've lost a bit of weight but feel in the pink. Some of the long patrols, into no man's land and behind Chinese lines, coupled with the weight of equipment and ammo are conducive to losing excess weight. . . .

Well my boy, it is long after midnight and there is still much to be done. Write soon. My best to your mother,

Jim"

Lt. McCoy was born in Dobbs Ferry on June 29th, 1929. He was graduated from Dobbs Ferry High School and Manhattan College. He had volunteered to repeat combat duty in Korea.

Killed In Korea



LT. JAMES R. MCCOY



Your Raffle Donation will help the Historical Society maintain it's home at the Mead House and provide expanded programs for the membership

Return completed tickets to the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society. Mail to 12 Elm Street, Dobbs Ferry, NY, 10522 by May 14th or bring them to the registration table at the Gala on May 21th at the Dobbs Ferry Woman's Club, 54 Clinton Avenue.

Prizes will include gift certificates from our local restaurants, the Society's popular Afghan and other great prizes donated by local merchants and Society members.

<p align="center">\$1 each, 6 tickets for \$5 FREE LUCKY BONUS - 13 FOR \$10</p> <p align="center">FREE LUCKY 13TH TICKET With \$10 donation for page of 12</p> <p align="center">FREE EARLY BIRD 14TH TICKET With \$10 for 12 through <u>May 14th</u></p>	<p align="center">EARLY BIRD BONUS WITH \$10 BY <u>May 14th</u></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p>	<p align="center">FREE BONUS! With \$10 donation for page of 12</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p>
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