

THE FERRYMAN

DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The "Road to Freedom" Day in Dobbs Ferry

Celebrating Road to Freedom Day, August 19, 2007, Dobbs Ferry citizens, as well as many visitors to our village, commemorated the anniversary of the 1781 march. That year the American army marched from Dobbs Ferry and neighboring localities to Yorktown, Virginia, where their victory over the British Army ended the Revolutionary War and led to independence for the United States.

Beginning just over the Ashford Avenue bridge, Mayor Joseph Bova proclaimed Sunday, August 19, 2007, as Road to Freedom Day in Dobbs Ferry. Then, led by General George Washington on horseback (reenacted by Hugh Francis) and by Continental Army surgeon Dr. Alexander Dobbs (reenacted by Dr. Joe Gagliardi), and accompanied by the historic sounds of fife and drum, the crowd walked along the route taken by Continental Army soldiers when they departed Dobbs Ferry en route to Yorktown.

Marchers continued to the Irvington border, then returned to the Mead House for commemorative activities, including moving remarks about liberty's ideals by Dr. Alexander Dobbs, an inspiring address by General George Washington and a historic skit, beautifully performed by 17 young actors (mostly in the age range 8 to 14) and narrated in fine oratorical style by Ellen Klein and Linda Borkow. The performers were especially fortunate to have the expert stage direction of Maria Harris and dramatic instruction of Stephanie Karpell.

In June, 2007, ten fourth graders at the

Springhurst Elementary School, inspired by their teachers, Karen Weber and Julia Campbell, wrote historical essays on Dobbs Ferry's role in the Revolutionary War. At the conclusion of the skit Dr. Richard Borkow awarded first prize for best essay to Kaspar Hudak and Olivia Smith, and certificates of merit to the eight other fourth graders for their fine essays.

General George Washington's address at the Mead House on Road to Freedom Day was extemporaneous, and the remarks below do not capture his exact words. A few of his comments are paraphrased here.

"Thank you for welcoming me back to Dobbs Ferry. It was here in 1781 that my troops encamped here, and in nearby locations now called Ardsley and Hartsdale. General Rochambeau placed the French army close by, just across the Sprain Brook.

Our military situation was precarious. The American Army had scant resources. The British occupied York Island (Manhattan). Cornwallis's army was rampaging through Virginia.



While we were here, I received word from the French Admiral de Grasse who was in the West Indies that he could bring his ships up to blockade the eastern shore near Yorktown. With a surprise move of American and French troops from the North, we could trap General Cornwallis in Virginia. So I made the decision to march to Virginia.

It is fitting that you are remembering those great events on the very same day, August 19th. And it is fitting that you are remembering the American soldiers who bravely defended your hamlet so many years ago." RICHARD BORKOW

The Road to Freedom Walk was sponsored by the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society and the Village of Dobbs Ferry, and was made possible thanks to the passionate commitment of energy, expertise and time on the part of many persons and thanks to the generous contributions of many donors.

WE THANK OUR PATRONS :

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The Elegant Poster
Brother's Market & Sushi Bar
Richard & Linda Borkow
Bernard & Maria Harris
Larry & Ellen Klein
Karl & Bonnie Schapira

(Watch for the next issue of THE FERRYMAN which will have a detailed account of the activities of the Colonial troops while they were encamped here.)

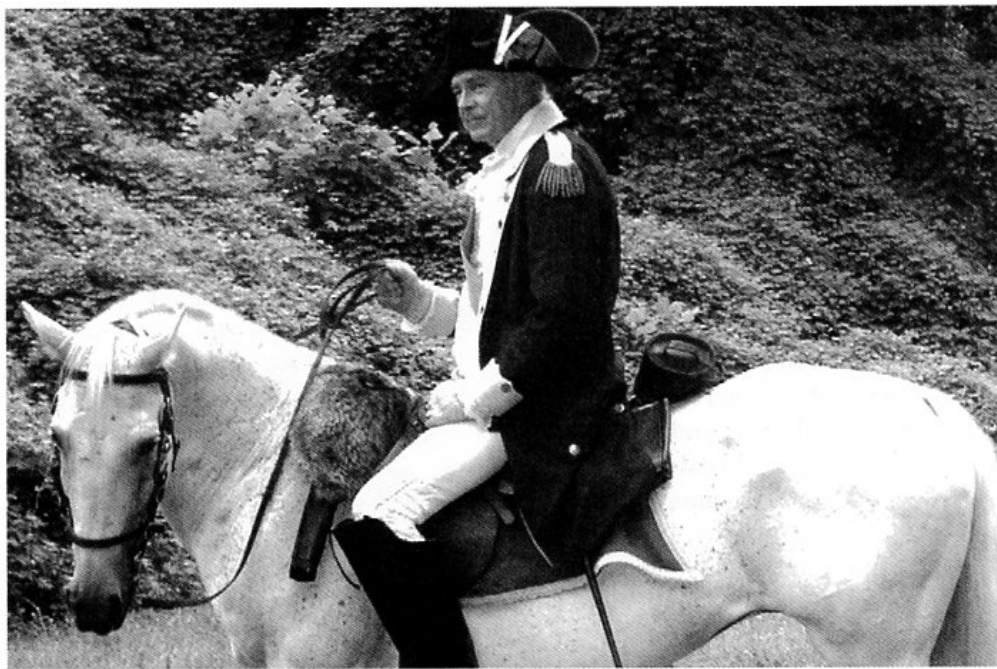
Pvt. Flohr's Time in Rochambeau's Army - 3

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society has a special interest in the diary of Pvt. Georg Flohr, a German mercenary in Rochambeau's 5,800-man French army. Rochambeau's force, after trekking across Rhode Island and Connecticut, met Washington's army of similar size in central Westchester in July of 1781. The two armies, in a mass movement, crossed the Hudson River near Dobbs Ferry and marched south to Yorktown, Virginia, where they defeated Lord Cornwallis' English army, effectively winning the American Colonies' long War of Independence against England.

The second installment of Pvt. Flohr's American adventures, published in the Sept 2005 issue of *The Ferryman*, described how the French army settled in among the inhabitants of Newport, Rhode Island for nearly a year's stay. Newport was where the French armada of 32 troop transport ships and 11 war ships dropped anchor on July 15, 1780, to help the Colonies win their war.

Pvt. Flohr's diary was a rare endeavor by a "common man" of that time. The second installment of excerpts contained some of Flohr's observations of American life, religions, food, women and "girls". It also had his lengthy description of how 20 "aborigines", including "a king", who disliked and distrusted the English, came from the Albany area to the French camp to pledge their allegiance to Rochambeau. The General gave them liquor, medallions with the King's image engraved on them, rugs and red dye. In turn, the American Indians, who "went about naked. . .", provided entertainment with wild music and dancing.

Here is the third installment of excerpts from Flohr's diary:



(HUGH FRANCIS AS GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON IN OUR "ROAD TO FREEDOM" MARCH)

"... As spring was approaching, General Washington, of the American Army, arrived at our camp to visit General Rochambeau ..."
Pvt. Flohr

"Although English army personnel were forbidden to murder Frenchmen, when the redcoats captured one or more of them, no mercy was shown. Once captives were put to death, it could not be determined if they were French or German. Understanding this, the English killed many prisoners, whether they were Germans or Frenchmen.

[Ed. note: Flohr assumed that, for foreign policy reasons, the Crown forbade the army from killing French troops who were taken captive in the Colonies. Apparently there was no such foreign policy for sparing Germans. Knowing there were German mercenaries in Rochambeau's army, the English took advantage of this, according to Flohr, to justify a "take no prisoners" practice.] **When the English captured an American army officer, they tied him to a tree naked and punctured his body with sharp sticks or knives. When they saw he was about to expire, they took straw or anything like it, wrapped it around the poor wretch and burned him alive.**

On the 6th of March [1781], a large detachment of us boarded the 11 French war ships because General Rochambeau wanted to sail to Chesapeek [sic] Bay to attack General Arnold, of the English, who was encamped in that region. We had received reports that General Arnold had wrought such barbarous havoc in the Province of Virginia that the inhabitants had fled in panic from their homes, leaving everything behind. The reports said that Arnold had assembled a corps of thuggish rogues who nailed women down through their hands and feet and skinned alive the men they caught.

We did not set sail right away, because one of the General's officers, named Mr. Derner, died on board ship and was then buried according to royal rules and regulations in the cemetery of the New Reformed Church.

The detachment of the 11 war ships consisted of 18 men and their officers from each company of all the regiments, including the Regiment Soissonoise and our own Zweibrueken Regiment. We were on the war ship La Provence. The grenadiers of Soisson were on the war ship Le Conquerant. This expedition cost many lives.

When our fleet was not far away from Chesapeek Bay, we were given orders to get on land right after our ships anchored and to offer resistance to General Arnold and his men. But as the English squadron was also floating around these waters, we could not execute our intentions.

We were discovered by the English ships, which met up with us after a few days and we had to engage them around noon. There was such a mix up on both sides that nobody knew what to do. The English ships were so confused that they did not recognize who was friend and who foe. The grenadier company of the Regiment Soissonoise was in the greatest distress in this battle. In the time of six minutes, they lost 52 men. This was not sur-

prising, because the ships were so close to each other that they could fire on each other with small rifles.

[Ed. note: Curiously, Flohr did not say whether his Zweibrueken contingent suffered casualties in this battle.]

The French squadron was made up of 11 war ships; the English, of 13 ships. After the battle, each squadron, damaged as it was, limped back to its own harbor.

As repairs were being made, and as spring was approaching, General Washington, of the American Army, arrived at our camp to visit General Rochambeau and his army and to inspect the local militia regiments. His uniform was a dark blue coat with yellow cuffs and leather lapels. He wore a very large hat. "

By Gabriele H. Grunebaum
with Hank Walter.

(Next installment: the march through towns of Rhode Island, Connecticut and eastern New York to join Washington's army in Westchester, plus more of Pvt. Flohr's social observations and commentary.)

Annual Meeting Program features Bannerman Island

An inside view of Bannerman Castle is the subject of the Historical Society's Annual Meeting on October 4th at the Mead House. **The speaker will be Thomas Johnson** who grew up in Dobbs Ferry and graduated from DF High School. He has a penchant for art and now teaches the subject in the Irvington High School.

His great love of the river led to his interest in Bannerman Island, a small piece of land in the Hudson River that had been an ammunition storage facility for the owner of an Army and Navy store in New York City. He was one of the first to see the historic value of the property and fought for its preservation.

His exciting slide lecture will be filled with interesting history and enthusiasm for this wonderful part of Westchester history.

From his home in Peekskill, which overlooks the Hudson, Johnson can hear the whistles of the trains below. He spends his vacations traveling around the world on trains - another of his interests.

New trustees for the Historical Society will also be elected. Nominated for the board this year is Lawrence Blizard. He has just retired from the Masters School where he served for thirty years as teacher and then chair of the Art Department. He and his wife Peggy raised two children in Dobbs Ferry and live in the yellow house on Chesnut Street that was built in the same era as the Mead House. Current trustees who have agreed to stand for re-election are: Mavis Cain, Nancy Delmerico, Mary Donovan, Maria Harris, and Richard McKeon.

Members and potential members are all invited to hear this interesting program at the Mead House (12 Elm Street) at 7:30 p.m. on October 4th.



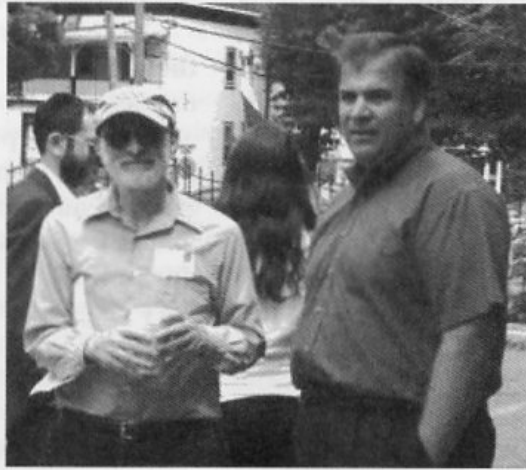
It's membership renewal time...have you renewed yet?

Will you also consider giving an "extra" bit this year?

Please help support the exciting and worthy programs we provide for the community.

We are a non profit organization dependent on our members to stay in existence. Please send in your envelope today!

The "Road to Freedom" March - Sunday, August 19th, 2007



March organizer Dr. Richard Borkow and Mayor Joe Bova

**FIFE &
DRUM**



Joe Gagliardi as Dr. Alexander Dobbs-
Continental Army surgeon

Fife & drum musicians: Erik Lichack, Matthew Skic & Stanley Hull



A legion of patriots march down the aqueduct near the corner of Main & Cedar Streets



The children of Dobbs Ferry in our "Road to Freedom" skit with narrator Ellen Klein. Thanks to all the young patriots that participated : Marques Bailas, Vincent Bailas, Conor Driscoll, Kevin Driscoll, Caitlin Johnston, Wilda Marroquin, Yael Montelise, Tara O'Brien, Kristen Paspalis, Ella Rosenkranz, Alexandra Rosillo, Amanda Rosillo, Gabrielle Rossillo, Francesca Smith, Gabrielle Smith, Olivia Smith



A welcoming reception at the Mead House after the march!

Event photos courtesy of:

Denise Wilson
 Rich Borkow
 Ellen Klein

VISIT DOBBS FERRY'S HISTORIC TREASURES ON THE WEB



Samples of the rich treasures in the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society Archive Collection are now being featured on "*The Virtual Archives*," in the "Historical Treasures of Westchester County" collection. This website is a collaborative effort of the **Westchester County Archives** and the **Westchester County Historical Society**. To see Dobbs Ferry among 19 other communities now on display click on

<http://www.westchesterarchives.com/HT/muni/dobbsferry/dobbsferry.htm>.

Georgette Hedberg and her Archives Committee sifted through many pieces in our collection to choose items that both document the history of Dobbs Ferry and demonstrate the breadth of treasures that are available at the Mead House. Each featured item tells its own historic story.

- An 1897 colored calendar from the Anchor Brewing Company shows a somewhat romanticized view of the Brewery on the Hudson Riverbank along with a number of elves plying an awakened Rip Van Winkle with steins of their famous product. Alongside the calendar is a brief history of the Anchor Brewing Company suggesting "It was thought that the beer brewed in Dobbs Ferry was exceptionally good because of the water which came from Wicker's Creek collect ponds." The Calendar was a gift from Nina Pavlov.
- A photograph of Clara Mead as a young woman and an early photograph of the Wilsea-Mead House bring the era of the 1920s to life. The accompanying information traces the history of the Mead family from 1776 when Enoch Mead first settled in Westchester County and notes that Clara Mead donated her home to the Society.
- A poignant glimpse into women's lives in the early twentieth century is offered in a brief letter from Fannie Frey Grady to the President of the Board of Education, dated April 30, 1908. Mrs. Grady indicated that she graduated from Dobbs Ferry High School and from the Oswego State Normal and Training School for Teachers. Then she wrote, "I find, in going from place to place with my husband, with nothing to do very monotonous and desiring to occupy my time to advantage I would like a position as a grade teacher in the Dobbs Ferry school if it is permissible for a married woman to teach." We haven't discovered yet whether she got the job!
- Exemplifying the Society's extensive map collection is a rare photostat of a map drawn by the engineering firm of Ward Carpenter and Sons in 1878. The map was used in a lawsuit brought by F. J. Stone on behalf of his uncle, Cyrus Field, against Moses T. Odell, a local farmer who leased the Cortland Palmer land, as well as Palmer's nephews who owned the estate. Field charged that a pond created by Odell (from which he cut ice in the winter to sell) caused him to "have the chills and fever of malaria." The suit was settled when Field agreed to pay for draining the pond.

"These documents have been selected for their intrinsic value, uniqueness and/or historical relevance."

The other items displayed are 5 landscape postcards circa 1910 (printed by Leighton & Valentine Company), a program from a concert by the Mohican Glee Club on April 11, 1904, and a 1978 brochure from the Oceana Group, an international legal publisher, founded in 1948 in Dobbs Ferry. In 2005, Oceana was acquired by the Oxford University Press.

We are delighted to have these items recognized and selected to represent Dobbs Ferry. As stated on the County website "These documents have been selected for their intrinsic value, uniqueness and/or historical relevance."

Do visit this website to see more of the Historical Treasures of Westchester County !

GEORGETTE HEDBERG

Historical Happenings:

The Historical Society was fortunate this spring to have the assistance of two Dobbs Ferry High School Seniors who served as interns after their final examinations were finished. While they were with us, they catalogued several of our manuscript collections and developed finding aids that will enable us to do computer searches of the material. They produced external labels so that information in each collection box is easily accessible. They also went through several books on Dobbs Ferry history in our collection and developed and computerized a time-line of historical events in Dobbs Ferry that we hope to make available on our website soon. And finally, they sorted our biographical files and made lists of all the people about whom we have collected information.

In addition, each young woman worked on one special project. Anna Preddy designed a herb garden for the Society that might be planted in the area directly behind the Mead House kitchen. Both girls did some weeding the garden and also searched through our photograph collection to discover what the garden looked like when Clara Mead, who donated our headquarters house, lived there. For her special project, Annie Lu designed a booklet about the Mead House that includes the pertinent facts about its history and photographs of some of the people who have lived there and of the garden that Clara Mead planted. The book was available for people at the Dobbs Ferry High School reunion brunch this July.

Annie Lu went all through high school in Dobbs Ferry, along with learning both Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese at the Chinese Language School. She leaves this fall to attend the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University. Anna Preddy came to Dobbs Ferry from England in her sophomore year and intends to return to the British Isles to study landscape architecture. It is a comfort to know that the future of our world is in the hands of such talented young women as Anna and Annie.

MARY DONOVAN



Annie Lu



Anna Preddy

OUR SPRING GALA AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

Members of the Historical Society gathered on May 19th for the annual gala dinner to celebrate the long term commitment of three wonderful couples: **Gloria and Bill Blanck, Bobbie and Fred Staats and Mary and Hank Walter.** The slide show presentation featured the many ways in which these members helped to build and sustain the Historical Society—researching and writing articles for *The Ferryman*, working with state and local officials to set up our non-profit status, caring for the Mead House and its contents, cooking and setting up for innumerable dinners and receptions and even preparing Clara Mead's famous eggnog each December. These six people have left an amazing record of preserving this Village's heritage.

The event also included a delicious dinner catered by **DeCicco's**, wine from **Rochambeau Wines and Liquors**, and our annual raffle. The Society wants to thank the following merchants whose generous contributions help to support our continuing work:

Ardsley Hardware
Boutique Wine & Liquors
Carvel/Subway (Ardsley)
Cary's Pharmacy
Cold Stone Creamery (Ardsley)
Comfort Restaurant (Hastings)
DeCicco's Food Market (Ardsley)
Dobbs Diner
Dobbs Ferry Café
Doubleday's
Flowers by Carole
Getty Station (Ardsley)
Gino's Hair Stylist for Men
Good Yarns (Hastings)
Life Cleaners
Marshall's Cheeses
Marzi Framing
Mykonos
New York Bagel Authority
Performance Auto
Reader's Hardware
Rivertown Center for Yoga & Health
Riviera Pastry Shop
Rochambeau Wines & Liquors
Salon Aridoma
Sam's Italian Restaurant
Scaramella's Restaurant
Star Bagels (Ardsley)
Starbuck's (Ardsley)
Sushi Mike's Japanese Restaurant
Tomatillo
Trinity Car Wash (Ardsley)

Another happy DF Historical Society afghan owner :

*Christopher
Columbus*

*I bought one as a
souvenir for Queen
Isabella...you know
it's the official
afghan of the
Nina, the Pinta &
the Santa Maria!*

*You are cordially invited
to our
Annual Meeting*

Thursday, October 4th, 2007 at 7:30pm

At the Mead House

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
Hear a fascinating program on the history
of Bannerman's Castle on the Hudson.

And learn about our quest to

*"Put Dobbs Ferry
on the Map!"*



THE FERRYMAN



Library of Congress/Science Source/Photo
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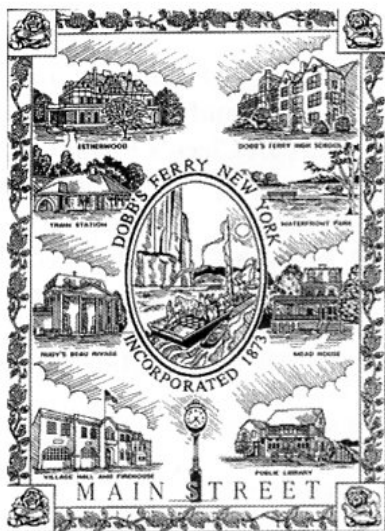
I would like to order ___afghan(s) @ \$45 each.
Enclosed is my check for \$_____ please send it to:

Name _____

Address _____

phone _____

Williamsburg blue
Cranberry red



DF Historical Society
12 Elm St
DF, NY 10522 or
phone (914)-674-1007



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