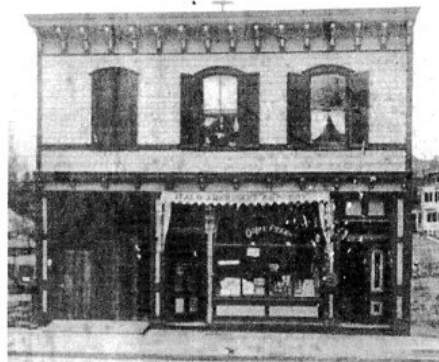


# THE FERRYMAN

DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Italian-American Grocery Store

## Francesco Ricciardi "Maestro Francesco"

By Mary S. Donovan

*One jewel in the Historical Society Archives is Filomena Ricciardi's taped interview describing her family's life, particularly her mother, at the beginning of the twentieth century. This biography is taken from her interview.*

At nineteen, Francesco Ricciardi ran away, not telling his parents his intentions because he knew he would not be allowed to go. He lived in the village of Avellino in Southern Italy, just east of Naples—an area hit by heavy taxation since Italian unification and by a blight in nearby vineyards. Prospects for an energetic young man were dim there. He made his way through France, and then boarded a ship bound for America.

Friends from Avellino had previously made that voyage and he joined some of them in Brooklyn, NY then later migrated on to Dobbs Ferry. When asked about the move, he would say, "I'd rather be a big frog in a little pond than a little frog in a big pond!" He came with two big advantages: he was literate and he had a trade—shoemaker. He set up shop as a shoemaker as he gradually learned English.

The Dobbs Ferry he came to in about 1885 had about 2000 residents, only 6 of whom were Italian. That would change markedly in the next generation; by 1920, 60% of the village was of Italian heritage.

Much of that increase can be traced directly to Ricciardi's activities.

Once he had learned English, he opened a grocery store on Cedar Street. The growing Italian community in Dobbs Ferry hungered for traditional food so their grocer augmented his local supplies with Italian delicacies, eventually traveling back to his home to import wines, cheeses and Italian meat products.

By the turn of the century, padrones began to bring groups of Italian laborers into Dobbs Ferry, agricultural and construction workers for the village's large estates. Arriving in the spring, the men were housed in barracks near the riverfront for the growing season, then sent back to



Filomena Ricciardi  
admiring the portrait of  
her father Francesco  
Ricciardi.

Italy in the fall. For the few who wanted to stay in Dobbs, the Italian grocery became the place to learn American ways. "Maestro" Francesco read English work permits or translated legal documents for them. Eventually these activities became another business—translating documents, selling steamship tickets to and from Italy, teaching English and providing citizenship instruction. He met ships, escorted the newcomers through Ellis Island, and arrange for lodging and employment in Dobbs Ferry. Eventually he became a notary public who stamped legal documents for the community.

As his means of livelihood expanded, so did his family. He married a young woman from Avellino who had come to the US with her brothers because their family had been converted to Protestantism and were being persecuted by some of her neighbors. They were married in 1899 and soon one child, then another - eventually seven were born. Though Francesco was a Roman Catholic, Mrs. Ricciardi joined the Methodist Church and was active as a member of the women's society.

The children spoke Italian at home because their mother was still learning English. Colonel and Mrs. Franklin Q. Brown, prominent citizens in Dobbs Ferry at that time, sponsored a free kindergarten for young children where Italian boys and girls quickly acquired English skills. Public schools then further facilitated the "Americanization" of the Italian children—Though early on some residents asked for classes in Italian, school officials refused to institute them for many years. The Ricciardi children received good educations in the Dobbs Ferry schools; four of them went on to college. Daughter Filomena was the first college woman of Italian descent in Dobbs Ferry; she went to Barnard on a Regents' scholarship in 1918.

As it grew the Italian community left its mark on Dobbs Ferry. The Order of the Sons of Italy was formed; later a Ladies Lodge was added. Mother Cabrini came to the village in 1914 and transformed the MacKenzie School for Boys into a school for girls—Sacred Heart Villa on Broadway. In 1923, property was purchased for Our Lady of Pompeii, modeled after a church in Calabria; the first mass there was held two years later.

*The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society has presented this brief biography as an invitation to join us at our annual meeting on September 23rd for the audio-visual program "The Italian Community in Dobbs Ferry" If you have further info to share please email us at [dfhistory@verizon.net](mailto:dfhistory@verizon.net) or call us at 914-674-1007.*

# Road to Freedom Day August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008

On a beautiful day, with music from a lively fife and drum corps, a large crowd of ready marchers led by His Excellency George Washington and his aide once again traced the route by which Continental Army soldiers marched through Dobbs Ferry on August 19, 1781. The route led from Ardsley along Ashford Avenue and then turned north at Broadway. Though the 1781 marchers went all the way up along the banks of the Hudson River to King's Ferry, the 2008 contingent stopped at the Irvington border and then continued back along the Croton Aqueduct Trail to the Mead House where entertainment and refreshments waited.

This year's celebration included an historical presentation written by Village Historian Richard Borkow, directed by Stephanie Karpell and acted by an aspiring group of thespians whose names might be familiar to Dobbs Ferry residents. To indicate the spirit of the event, *The Ferryman* offers the following photos with lines taken directly from the works of the historical figures quoted.

Village Historian, Dr. Richard Borkow, played Tench Tilghman, one of Washington's aides. Borkow later held Tilghman up as a prime example of the cost of the Revolutionary struggle. At the end of the battle of Yorktown, Tilghman (an ancestor of village resident Mildred Persinger) was given the honor of carrying word of Cornwallis's surrender to the Congress in Philadelphia. Tilghman rode his horse with great speed from Yorktown to Philadelphia where his news was welcomed with great joy by the President of Congress. However, when he asked the Congress to pay the expenses of his ride, he found there were no funds available. The treasury of the United States was bare. Finally, individual members of Congress reached into their own pockets to recompense Tilghman for his ride.



General George Washington, in a letter to Col. John Laurens in Paris, written in Newburgh, NY, in April, 1781: **"we are at the end of our tether, and now or never our deliverance must come!"**

General George Washington in a letter to Governor John Hancock of Massachusetts Bay:

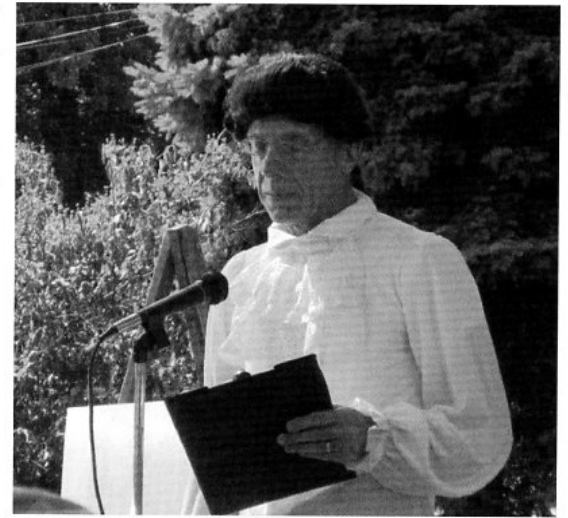
**"Head Quarters, near Dobbs's Ferry, July 8, 1781.**

**Sir, I have not been honored with an answer to my several letters of the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of May and of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup> of last month and am of course unable to form any certain estimate of what may be expected in consequence of my requisitions.**

**This puts me in rather an awkward situation, as I cannot give His Excellency, Count Rochambeau, who has formed a junction with me, an official assurance of support that I had promised upon the faith of the States."**

Trustee Larry Dengler as Alexander Hamilton, reads an excerpt from a letter written in Dobbs Ferry to General Washington, at headquarters, near Secor Road, Hartsdale:

**“Camp, August 7, 1781; The other day I applied to Colonel Tilghman for an order for shoes, for the [men]. He thought, on a general principle, it could not be granted; but I have reason to believe a distinction [will be] made ...in favor of the advanced corps ... [so I am induced to submit the matter to Your Excellency].”**



Melanie Zanakis played beautiful Revolutionary war era music.

Mayor Scott Seskin as Thomas Jefferson writing from Monticello, Virginia, in January, 1814:

**“[General Washington] often declared to me that he considered our new Constitution as an experiment on the practicality of republican government and with what dose of liberty man could be trusted for his own good; that he was determined that the experiment have a fair trial, and would lose the last drop of his blood in support of it.”**



Louis de Clermont-Crevecoeur, Officer with Rochambeau's troops played by Stephanie Karpell, described George Washington when he first appeared before the French soldiers.

**“He was about 5 foot 10 or 11, well built, with a good figure. His face was handsome and his expression modest. Although cold, it conveyed an impression of kindness and affability. He had sacrificed his whole fortune to preserve American independence. He had won the admiration of all Europe by his unselfish efforts to gain freedom for his country.”**



**M**any thanks go to Bruce Bernacchia and the staff of the Half Moon Restaurant and Arch and Marie McKellar of the Tensor Foundation for their fiscal support, to the actors and reenactors who so effectively made the past live for a new generation and to the volunteers from the Historical Society who worked so hard to present this year's celebration, particularly to Linda and Richard Borkow whose enthusiastic leadership was indispensable in this effort.

**W**e gratefully acknowledge those that contributed photos of the day's events for this article : Elizabeth Everett, Liz Otomo, Ellen Klein, and Allegra Dengler.

# FIXING YOUR OLD PHOTOS WITH PHOTOSHOP

BY GERRY MOONEY



YOUNG CLARA MEAD

DO YOU HAVE OLD PHOTOS  
THAT HAVE GOTTEN DAMAGED  
OR TORN, OR HAVE SIMPLY FADED  
OVER THE YEARS?

WITH A COMPUTER AND ANY VERSION OF PHOTOSHOP OR  
OTHER IMAGE EDITING SOFTWARE, YOU CAN BRING BACK  
SOME SPARKLE TO THOSE  
PRECIOUS PHOTOS.

THIS STEP-BY-STEP PHOTOS REPAIR LESSON USES THE  
TOOLS AVAILABLE IN PHOTOSHOP CS3, BUT  
SIMILAR TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE IN MOST  
IMAGE EDITING SOFTWARE.  
YOU'LL ALSO NEED A SCANNER.

## THE RAW SCAN

- **Scan the image at 300 dpi (dots per inch) or higher.** For retouching, even black & white photos should be scanned in RGB (color) mode. At the very end you can convert back to grey scale if you wish.
- **Duplicate and save your image.** That way, you can always go back to the original.
- **Open your copy in Photoshop, and adjust the overall contrast.** Two simple adjustments that work well for this are called Auto Levels and Auto Contrast. You find them under Image > Adjustments. Try one or the other, and remember you can undo any change you don't like with Cmd -Z on the Mac or Ctrl-Z on the PC.
- If you get a result at this stage that looks interesting but too pronounced, Photoshop has a good trick for that. Once the adjustment has been made you'll find under the Edit menu a Fade option that will automatically be named for the adjustment you just made. If you used Auto Contrast, for instance, the Fade command would automatically say Fade Auto Contrast, etc.
- **Choose the Fade command** and you'll see a percent slider that will allow you to further refine the adjustment you just made, as well as a pull down menu of blending modes, which you can ignore for now.
- **Click the preview box** to see your photo change as you drag the slider. At this point, if your photo was in good shape to begin with, you may be happy with your results. But if there are rips, stains, and specks of dirt or other damaged, take heart! There's lots more you can do with just a little knowledge!

### TO IMPROVE THIS PHOTO:

Crop off the white border to minimize the corner damage.

- Select the crop tool and drag a rectangle over the photo. Once drawn, the edges of the rectangle can be adjusted by dragging. Hit enter or return and the photo is cropped.

Next improve the contrast.

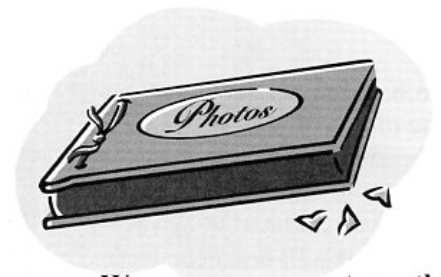
- Under Image>Adjustments select Curves. A box with a diagonal line appears. Click and drag on the diagonal line and see your picture change. You can click and drag it from more than one point. Use curves sparingly and you can really perk up a faded image. Remember, you can Fade Curves if you think you overdid it.



MAIN STREET SNOWSTORM—"BEFORE"



A PHOTO OF THE MEAD SISTERS  
ON THE LEFT THE "BEFORE" PICTURE-  
ON THE RIGHT "AFTER" RESTORATION



We encourage you to go through  
your old photo books & share your  
old photos of Dobbs Ferry with us

## PAINTING IN THE DETAILS

- In general you should avoid painting with the regular paint brush tool because the brush strokes will stand out in relation to the photographic imagery. However, the Stamp tool and the Healing Brush will actually "paint" with existing pixels rather than just color.
- To fix the torn bottom left corner, zoom in to see the area in more detail by selecting the Zoom tool ( magnifying glass) and clicking once or twice in the corner to see the damage better. The Stamp Tool is perfect for this kind of repair because we can use the existing image area of snow, and since it's rough, irregular texture you won't even notice the repair.
- Once zoomed in, select the Stamp tool. It requires a brush size. If you've scanned at 300 dpi or higher you'll want a brush at least 50 pixels in width. I've scanned at 600 dpi so I'm using a 100 pixel brush with a soft edge so my brush strokes will have a soft edge, like spray paint. Holding down Option (Mac) or Alt (PC) I click in an adjacent area that has the snow texture I want to "paint" with, and the brush cursor changes to a crosshair. This selects the target pixels. Now I simply paint with the Stamp tool and the torn corner has disappeared!
- Next, move around the image while zoomed in and fix the stains and specks in the snow. It's good to start with general fixes and move toward the details. While working zoomed in, periodically zoom back out to check the "big picture" and see if your brush strokes are blending in. Remember, Photoshop has a history palette that records every change you make and allows you to return to any previous state. To find it, look under the Windows menu and click on History. Click down the list of entries to see your own step-by-step progress.



THESE ARE ONLY A FEW  
SUGGESTIONS FOR  
REVIVING YOUR FAMILY  
TREASURES.  
FOR A MORE COMPLETE  
GUIDE, GO TO  
OUR WEBSITE:

[WWW.DOBBSFERRYHISTORY.COM](http://WWW.DOBBSFERRYHISTORY.COM)

AND CLICK ON PHOTOS  
AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

GERRY MOONEY HAS  
PROVIDED  
EXTENSIVE INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR PHOTO REPAIRS

THE SAME PHOTO OF MAIN STREET - "AFTER" A FEW CLICKS!

# THE MEAD HOUSE

## BIG CHANGES OVER THE SUMMER

Thanks to the response of many people with contributions to the Mead House Preservation Fund, the process of restoring Mead House has begun! Painter Steven Ivkovic and his crew replaced damaged beams across the front and side of the porch, and then replaced the columns that supported the beams when they found extensive damage there. New flooring and several coats of paint add to the improved appearance. The bill for these desperately needed structural and cosmetic improvements: \$16,900.

Above the porch, carpenter Stewart Norman is replacing the old railings with new ones. His work has been delayed by a catastrophe within the house: the third floor staircase pulled out of the wall and had to be re-anchored. Historians will be interested to know that while Stewart was doing that, he found a signature under one of the steps, possibly that of the original builder.



We welcome all village residents to visit Mead House to see how contributions have been used in the first step of the process. Visitors will also see other major changes made over this summer. One Boy Scout, Ben Hord, offered to paint the East fence to make it more attractive for the Road to Freedom celebration. He got the job done and the yard looks much more inviting. Adding to that appearance were lovely baskets of flowers that the Garden Club of Dobbs Ferry hung from the Mead House porch.

Behind the house, four senior interns from Dobbs Ferry High School cleared out a massive bunch of weeds and, with the help of some women from the Garden Club, transformed the jungle into a lovely herb garden. They also trimmed numerous bushes around the property and planted marigolds along the garden edges. The high school interns also labored mightily inside the house. They organized and catalogued several files as well as the collection of pottery made by Clara Mead. They rescued a map case from the basement and installed knobs and labels on the drawers.

And finally, a sign contributed by the Garden Club of Dobbs Ferry proudly proclaims that the house is home to the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society. This fall the Garden Club is also redesigning the garden in front of the house as a historical garden in the style of the early 19th century.

Though it is exciting to see these improvements, a heavy cloud still hangs over the house. The upper exterior must be painted to match the sprightly yellow of the first floor, and rotten sills and gutters replaced. The foundation must be strengthened; the house is noticeably shifting eastward. Inside walls need to be replastered and painted. Our estimates in hand show that we'll need \$50,000 to complete the next phase of the restoration process. That is the goal that we need your continuing help to reach.

*THE MEAD HOUSE IS A TREASURE FOR THE ENTIRE VILLAGE. PLEASE ADD A GENEROUS DONATION TO THE PRESERVATION FUND WHEN YOU SEND IN YOUR ANNUAL DUES.*

### DF Historical Society 2008 Fall Lecture Series

Dr. Eugene Boesch to return!!!

Last May at Mead house we had a standing room only audience for a lecture by Dr. Eugene Boesch on the pre-history of this area. Because of so much interest and the lateness of the hour, Dr. Boesch agreed to return to finish his lecture and will do so on **Friday November 21<sup>st</sup>** Our other lecture for the Fall will be on

**Friday December 12<sup>th</sup>** Dr. Salvatore Primeggia will speak about the Italian immigrant experience in the area. Dr. Primeggia, who is professor of Sociology at Adelphi University, has written extensively on the subject and is a well recognized authority. Both of these free lectures (sponsored by the NY Council for the Humanities). will be at the **Dobbs Ferry Community Center on Palisade Street at 7:30 pm .**

### Annual Meeting Features Italian Community in Dobbs Ferry

"The Italians in Dobbs Ferry: Portrait of a Community," will be the program of the Annual Meeting of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society which will be held on **September 23rd at 7:30pm at the American Legion Post 1048 on Palisades Street** All members are urged to attend and non-members are welcome to join us for this interesting program.

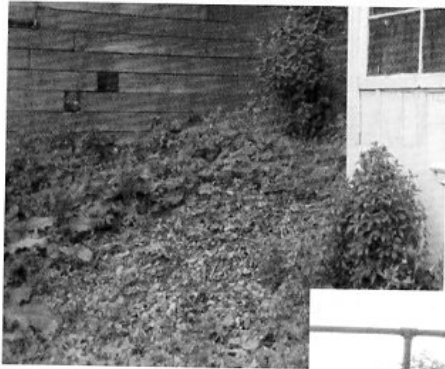
The program will focus on the growth of Dobbs Ferry's Italian population from the beginning of the Twentieth Century and include slides of some of the Italian influences on the Village. The program will also include annual reports of the president and treasurer and any business that needs to come before the Society. Six trustees will be elected. Delicious refreshments will be served.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

Our hard working Interns:  
Paul Staffiero, Lissa Dieye, Shana Samuel and Jordan Wilson



Mead house stairwell repair in progress



Our overgrown lot  
"Before"

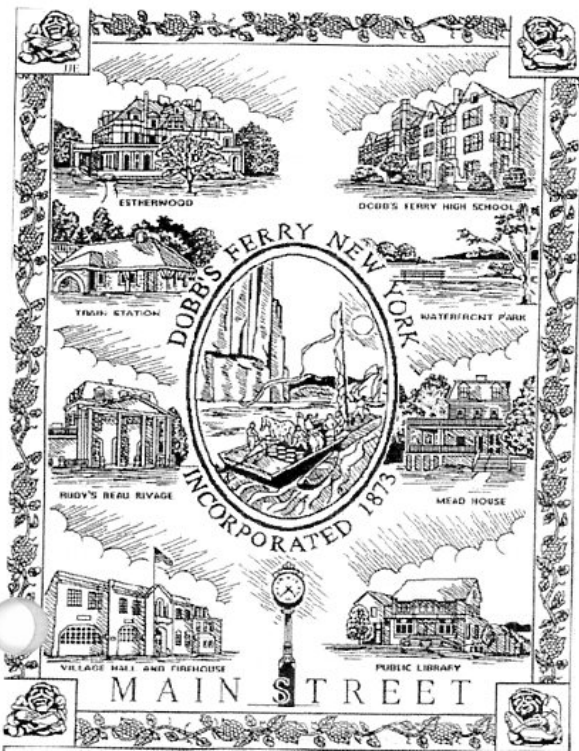


"After" - An authentic Victorian Herb Garden

WOW!



Plus a lot of hard work  
from our volunteers



## SON OR DAUGHTER OFF AT COLLEGE? SEND THEM A TASTE OF HOME!

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

Send your order to :  
DF Historical Society  
12 Elm Street  
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522  
Phone: (914)-674-1007  
Email: dfhistory@verizon.net

September always begins a new membership year for the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society. Your membership envelope is enclosed.

Here's why

## **WE NEED YOU TO BECOME A MEMBER:**

Dobbs Ferry has a unique and important history. Our settlement here is older than the USA.

And the more we all know of our history, the more we are proud of our village and our heritage

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society houses our history at the Mead House on 12 Elm Street. A dedicated group of volunteers does all the work to protect and organize our archives, to add new materials - to organize events.

## **BUT WE NEED HELP!**

## **WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**

The membership dues are modest - just \$25 for an adult membership. But the expenses of operating the Mead House are far from modest--historic houses have historic problems!

## **THIS MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IS VITAL**

Frankly we need the membership dues and just as important, we need a growing membership base to show potential major donors that

## **THIS VILLAGE CARES ABOUT ITS HISTORY**

Please join us. If you don't have time to volunteer, you'll enjoy the good feeling of helping to keep the doors of the Mead House open to students, historians, long term residents and newcomers.

## **IF YOU ARE ALREADY A MEMBER, PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!**



The Mead House  
12 Elm Street  
Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522  
Phone: 914-674-1007  
Email: [dfhistory@verizon.net](mailto:dfhistory@verizon.net)

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 2215  
White Plains, NY

**DOBBS FERRY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

ON THE WEB

[http://web.mac.com/msdonovan/iWeb/  
DobbsFerryHistoricalSociety/Home.html](http://web.mac.com/msdonovan/iWeb/DobbsFerryHistoricalSociety/Home.html)

**ECR WSS  
POSTAL CUSTOMER  
DOBBS FERRY, NY  
10522**