

THE FERRYMAN

DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A WALK THROUGH TIME WITH ALICE DENIKE

by Larry Blizard

*Grab your coat and hat
(and gloves; snow is predicted)
and let's take a winter's walk through time
along Cedar and Main Streets with Alice M. S. Denike.
Alice was the village historian during the 1950s and 60s,
and during her tenure, compiled a history of Dobbs Ferry
entitled "Growth of the Village" the words of which
form a part of the text of this article.
Let's join Alice at the corner of Cedar Street and Broadway
and listen to her words.
[present day locations are in brackets]*

In the 1890s 'Hi' Golden's wheelwright shop was located on Broadway where the Dobbs Ferry Motors building is today. [Performance Auto at 397 Broadway.] Next to this was the Dutcher house below street level and reached by a steep flight of stairs. James Ackerman lived next door and then came the King house. The latter building was remodeled by Police Commissioner Garrett E. Hasbrouck in the 1930s who used it as an antique shop. H. C. Williams now owns the property, having changed the front again and altered the interior in 1946. It houses the H. C. Williams 5&10 Cent store and John Streb's real estate and insurance office [Ye Village Realty at 6 Cedar Street] This is one of the oldest structures in the village.

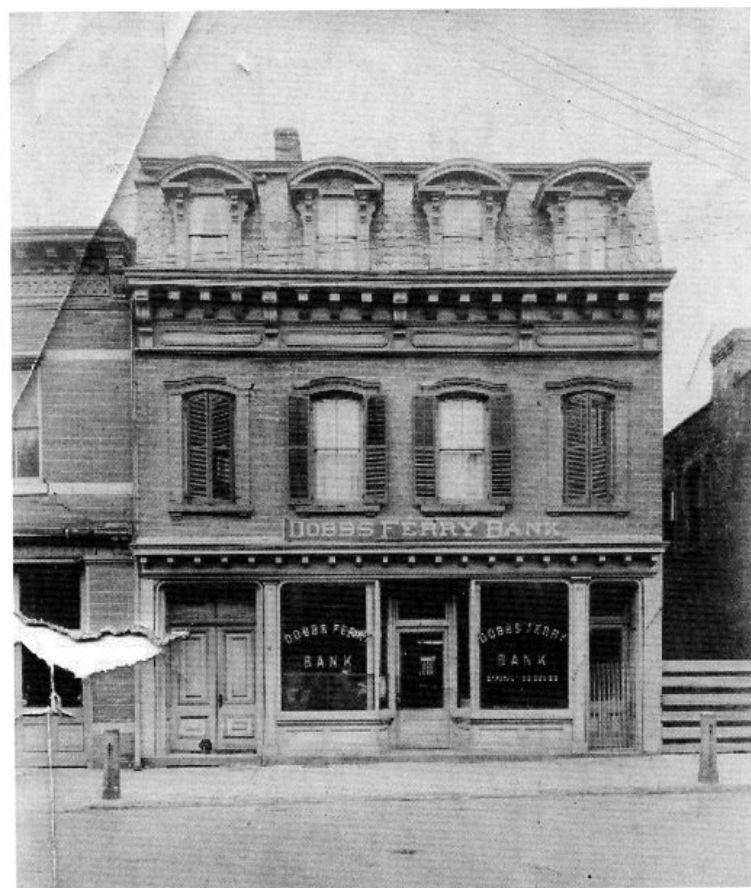
There were two houses in the valley accessible by stairs from the street. One of these was the home of Phil Dutcher, a music teacher. This was moved and raised to stand at street level beside King's. The other was a picturesque little cottage on the bank of Reilly's Brook where at one time lived my grandmother, Mrs. William Brown, and her family. My uncle, Alfred E. Brown, established his blacksmith shop in a building fronting on Cedar Street and situated to the fore of the cottage. The last occupants of the cottage were Mr. and Mrs. Percy Walters in the 1920s. Mr. Walters operated a garage in the shop which is the present location of the Cedar Hill Pharmacy [Dobbs Ferry Pharmacy at 18 Cedar Street]. One door above and separated from the blacksmith shop by a vacant lot was the first firehouse containing the equipment and fire engine (horse-drawn) of the Resolute Hook & Ladder Company, No. 1. The Pastime Club had its headquarters in the firehouse building [Allstate Insurance Co. at 14 Cedar Street]



MAIN STREET
LOOKING SOUTH,
LATE 1800'S

The building on the extreme left is still standing, as are the next two buildings. The building on the right might be the Loan Brothers Butcher Shop, behind which 15 to 20 cattle per week were slaughtered by "crude methods". (A great fire in 1915 destroyed this section of buildings.)

The Taxter blacksmith shop stood at the crossroads where Cedar Street meets Broadway [Broadway Arms apartment building]. On the floor above was the Conover wheelwright shop. (Actually, these were probably two separate buildings.) The Taxter dwelling was nearby [the Little Red House at 373 Broadway]. From this point west Cedar Street was lined with a stone wall. Atop this was a sod bank covered with flowers. The Hartman family, manufacturers of cigars, owned the property where the Embassy building and theater now are [Stolen Moments, at 39 Cedar Street].



THE DOBBS FERRY BANK
1890s
LOWER MAIN STREET
This building still stands, although remodeled, and is occupied by the Rembar Corp.

The business section continued through Main and Lower Main Streets and this portion was, until the more recent development of Cedar Street, known as "The Village". There was a two-story brick building at the northwest corner of Main and Chestnut Streets with Lester & Odell's Feed Store on the first floor and the Masonic Lodge rooms occupying the second. (recently, this building in its expanded state, was the Oceana Press and is presently being considered for renovation as living spaces.) North of this was the home of Village Clerk Charles G. Storm, a one-story cottage set back from the street. There was a public meeting room on the second floor of Bradley's Hall and Von Wedel's Pharmacy was on the street floor, a "German apothecary", presided over by Dr. Kurt Von Wedel and his assistant, Hanford Todd. Mr. William J. Cary succeeded Dr. Von Wedel and to this day the establishment retains the characteristics and atmosphere of a pharmacy [Cary's Pharmacy at 105 Main Street].

The Post Office was in Ackerman's News Store with Mr. Ackerman serving as Postmaster. The Loan Brothers drove 15 or 20 live cattle from New York City once a week and slaughtered the poor creatures by crude methods in their abattoir behind their butcher stores. Also to be found on this block were M. Allison's Shoe Store, Elder's Grocery Store and Ravekes Tailor Shop. In the building now occupied by Mrs. Barrett's Realty Office was first the Hemingway Funeral Establishment, then A. McComb's Confectionary Store (run by African-Americans), and then the plumbing shop of Peter Carpenter, Sr. Eltings Dry Goods Store was in the Disosway Building, and Adam Stalb Shoe Store was in the building where several years ago John Eugene Baker, Jr. had his law office. The Breckles cottage, which is one of the oldest houses in the village, was then the home of Mrs. Williams, the mother of Mrs. Samuel English. Blackmore's Dry Goods Store was in the remodeled Library Building. [northwest corner of Cedar and Main Streets].

C. C. Prime had both a barber shop and a candy store in the Gasford Building and both Prime's and McComb's were convenient to the school which was on the site of the Langenberg, Henshaw and Reader buildings. Jacob Rosenthal's Dry Goods Store was also in the Gasford Building on the corner. "Jake" traveled through the village with a pack of his wares on his back, calling out "Dry Goots!" to attract the attention of possible customers. Embree's Variety Market founded in 1871 was next door to the present Oxford Market at the southwest corner of Main and Elm Streets. M. McCullough & Son's Livery Stables were located below where the Post Office now stands.



CEDAR STREET
LOOKING WEST, 1920s
Part of the stone wall Alice pointed out is visible on the left. Also, note the RKO Embassy Theater [now Stolen Moments] and the garage [at Studebaker sign] on the right.

Lang's Grocery Store was on the southwest corner of Main Street with Herbeck's Drugstore beside it. The Dobbs Ferry Bank, situated below Harbeck's, in 1894 had a capital of \$50,000 with \$300,000 in deposits. Next to the bank was Nat Lawrence's Feed Store and then the Woman's Christian Temperance Union headquarters in the Pearce house.

Uh oh! It's starting to snow. We part company with Alice at the corner of Main and Chestnut, agreeing to meet again to continue our walk. I trudge up the hill to my house, passing a vacant lot filled with assorted vehicles, where once stood a hotel, a patch of crumbling sidewalk beneath my feet and the discarded plastic bottles of 2008 lying along the curb. One generation layers its life on top of the last, using what it can and all too often throwing the rest away.

THE RESOLUTE HOOK AND LADDER COMPANY NO. 1 FIREHOUSE LATE 1800s
In the 1920s it became Ricciardi's Grocery store.
Today, it houses the Allstate Insurance Company.



LESTER AND ODELL'S FEED STORE , 1880s
 NW CORNER OF MAIN & CHESTNUT STREET,
The Masonic lodge, known as the Diamond Lodge,
occupied the second floor.

Photo insert is Abram O Wilsea, First Master of the Lodge and a former owner of the Mead House.
In 1895, the Lawrence Brothers enlarged the structure to house their grainery and mill.
In the 1920s, the façade was enhanced; and more recently, it was the home of Oceana Press.

READ MORE ABOUT IT:

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society has begun to catalogue their book collection. The collection ranges from Dobbs Ferry history and culture over the years to Clara Mead's pottery books. We are using an online website called <http://www.librarything.com>. Here you can input your book title and search it in another library, like the Library of Congress or another website, like www.amazon.com. The catalogued book will be entered into your virtual library. Call numbers to help organize the book collection will appear and the books will be marked and labelled for easier searching.

The books can also be tagged (online) with any sort of information, like source of the donation. Anyone can use this site. It is free for collections of under 200 books. Otherwise it is a one time \$25 fee and other people can see your books. Log on today and take the tour or come and visit the Historical Society and see how it works!

History's mysteries revealed...
HENRY HUDSON:

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TRACING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOME



The Historic Home Plaque was presented to Ms. Anne Schneider by Trustee, Madeline Byrne. Anne's parents had bought the house 50 years ago this November. She supplied the Historical Society with a survey done of the newly built house. The development was called Fairlawn Homes. The property was previously known as Pete's Pond, hence, Pietro Place. The developer had built the model house just across the street from Anne. Her parents were interested in buying the house but only if it faced the golf course. The developer changed the layout for them. Now Anne has beautiful year round views of the Ardsley Golf Course.

Interested in the previous owners of your house? Want to trace your property back to the farmland or fabulous estate a century ago? As part of our new Historic Plaque Program we have identified sources of information for homeowners to access to do research on their own home.

The first place to go is Westchester County website, <http://www.greenburghny.com>. Click on GIS Maps, click on the outline of the county, and enter your address. The properties in Dobbs Ferry will have a '3' as the first digit in the account number. From here you can see your property card, tax bill, latest photograph and map of the property.

Your property card may show the date the house was built. It will show all the alterations to the house. From your tax bill or property card you can get your Section/Sheet/Block/Parcel numbers. With this information you can go the Building Department in Village Hall. Properties have folders that may have relevant information on microfiche. Plan to spend some time there.

Your next visit will be to the Land Records Division of the Office of the Westchester County Clerk. The address is 110 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd in White Plains. Walk through the courthouse security checkpoint and go upstairs to the building across the street, Room 345. The office is open Monday through Friday, from 8am until 5:45pm. Their website is <http://www.westchesterclerk.com/LandRecords.htm>. Here are property records going back to 1680.

In a large room with lots of computers, choose one. Hit START HERE button on the top of the screen and an entry form will appear. In the browse name field, enter your last name as buyer (grantee, grantor is the seller). Enter the town as Greenburgh and the document type as Deed.

Many names will appear and you need to scroll down through them to find your deed information. From the deed you will find the seller. The next step is to start again with the person who sold you the house/property as the buyer. In this fashion you will be able to trace the house through the previous buyers.

You may reach a point where there are no names appearing in the screens. At this time you need to go again to the top of the search screen and hit INDEX BOOKS. Start again with the buyer's last name, town of Greenburgh and a year range. Two numbers will be listed after the buyer and seller's

names. Enter these two numbers on the screen and your deed/document will appear.

Somewhere along the way the section/sheet/block numbers will disappear and a physical description of the property lines will appear in the deed and need to be verified as your property. The easiest way to do this is to make a copy of the description or find some starting point in the description that remains the same.

The hardest part is the time needed to follow this process through until the end whenever that may be. The print is small and the scanned copies not always so clear. Some of this process can be done on your home computer. Use the *public viewer* on the website above. You need Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher to use the site from home.

More places with helpful information

Local historical societies may have more information on previous owners. The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society (<http://www.dobbsferryhistory.org>) at 12 Elm Street, the Hastings-on-Hudson Historical Society (<http://www.hastingshistorical.org>) at 407 Broadway, or the Irvington Historical Society (<http://www.irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org>) at 131 Main Street will be helpful in researching your questions. The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society has microfilms of old newspapers which you can browse. At the Irvington Public Library, the Friends of the Library helped put *The Irvington Gazette* online. It is searchable on the library's computers.

The Westchester Archives and Westchester Historical Society located at 2199 Saw Mill River Road in Elmsford (<http://www.westchesterhistory.com/>) is open to the public for research on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am to 4pm. Here are atlases, deeds, estate records, maps and other tools for genealogical research. Here I found a map of the housing development in Hastings that dated back to 1911. Some of that property is now in the village of Dobbs Ferry.

In the Dobbs Ferry Public Library you can use one of the public computers and access information from <http://www.Ancestry.com>. Another useful tool for genealogical research, it also has the US censuses online. You can find out who was living on your property by looking at the Federal census taken at that time (every 10 years). The Westchester Archives has the New York censuses taken in 1905, 1915, 1925. With time and good reading glasses you can find lots of information on your property.

THE FRED STAATS MEMORIAL FUND FOR EMERGENCY REPAIRS



Dobbs Ferry resident Fred Staats died in October. As a longtime trustee of the Historical Society, Fred Staats was the head of the House Committee when the Mead House became the Society's headquarters. This was a *working*, not an honorary position. When the sewer pipe broke, when the plaster fell from the ceiling, when the furnace refused to heat, we called Fred. He served as maintenance overseer, handyman, snow shoveler and general dispenser of wisdom and calm in the midst of many hectic emergencies. We always knew that we could count on Fred either to fix a problem or to point us to the expert we needed.

In honor of his years of steady service, the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society has established the Fred Staats Emergency Fund which will be used to respond to the same kind of household emergencies that Fred dealt with so many times. Please send your TAX DEDUCTIBLE contributions to:

Fred Staats Emergency Fund
Dobbs Ferry Historical Society
12 Elm Street
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

HELP WANTED:

Volunteer to help
maintain our
photo archives.

No experience necessary!

We collect historic photos of Dobbs Ferry. We document their contents, determine keywords for their retrieval and archive them for posterity. This is how we make our collection available to inquiries, both from within our community and beyond. Can you volunteer some time to help us with this project?

MORE HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS:

The grounds around the Historical Society's Mead House are beginning to look old. But with the help of the Garden Club of Dobbs Ferry, they will look even older.

The Garden Club of Dobbs Ferry has decided to help bring the Mead House back to its former glory by renovating the gardens. Because the building houses the Historical Society it was decided to renovate the gardens back to what they would have looked like when Clara Mead's parents purchased the house in 1917.

The Garden Club turned to Mary Gerber, a landscape designer based here in Dobbs Ferry. Mary had started out several years ago as a volunteer on the Mead House grounds. She developed a historic planting design circa the early 1900s. Featuring plants used at that time she presented a design to the Garden Club and then to the Board of Trustees at the Historical Society. With some small changes the Trustees approved the plan.

This fall the first part of the design has been completed. In front of our newly painted porch stairs the first group of plants has been installed. Some of the shrubs that were in the front of the house were moved according to the planting design to other parts of the garden. Some were moved to fill in gaps in the back of the property.

Mary Gerber continues to donate her time and efforts to the Mead House grounds by involving the Master Gardeners of Westchester. They planted daffodils on the grounds. Keeping with the historical theme, the daffodil, named Fortune, is circa 1917.

The complete design is currently part of the Historical Society's archives and available to anyone who would like to see it.



(L to R) Master gardener Claire Cornish, Mary Gerber, Erna Capetanopoulos with Madeline Byrne, (Landscape Chair) in our garden

Pvt. Flohr's Time in Rochambeau's Army - 5



The Ferryman has been publishing excerpts from the diary of Georg Flohr, a German mercenary in Rochambeau's 5,800-man army. That army, sent by France to help George Washington in the War of Independence against England, was quartered in Rhode Island from July, 1780 to June, 1781.

In the fourth installment of excerpts, published in the spring, 2008 issue, Pvt. Flohr recounted the month-long march of the French army across Rhode Island and Connecticut into New York to team up with Washington's army in central Westchester. In this fifth set of excerpts, Flohr tells his version of the story of Major John Andre's capture, a story he probably picked up in Westchester some nine months after the English spy was captured and subsequently hanged. Some of his details obviously are not historically true, but make for interesting reading.

Not far away from us, the American army camped near West Point, which is one of the strongest fortresses in America and almost impossible to take. There it happened that the aide-de-camp of an English General [Henry Clinton, stationed in New York City] acted as a spy. The aide-de-camp, [Major Andre], approached the American camp dressed in the uniform of an American colonel. A soldier standing guard just happened to recognize the spy as the captain of his [English Army] company some years before [the American Revolution began.]

The soldier challenged the spy: "What is your business here?" The spy replied: "Don't you recognize the uniform I am wearing? I am a colonel in the continental regiment." The soldier said: "I know that uniform well and the one who is wearing it even better." "Where do you know me from?" asked the spy. The soldier said, "Ask me when it was that you gave orders to give me 100 strokes, even though I served five years of true and honest duty in your company, the third battalion of the King's Life Guard."

As soon as he heard this, the spy pulled his purse from his pocket and held out to the soldier 19 English gold pieces, saying, "Take these and I will turn back." "No," said the soldier, "I don't want your money. You are under arrest." The English aide-de-camp said, "Just let me go. Here are 36 louis-d'ors. What will you get by arresting me? You're better off taking my money and letting me go."



To this, the soldier said, "No, I would rather take my revenge and I will do so now." The spy felt sick at hearing these words and offered to give the soldier all the money he had in his pouch, which was 56 louis-d'ors. "You don't really want to wash your hands in my blood, do you?" asked the spy. To which the soldier said, "You had me thrashed many times. Now it's my turn. Just don't move, or I will strike you down and if that's not enough, my rifle is loaded with a good American bullet." The soldier called out to fellow guards [stationed around the perimeter of the camp], "Take this man. I know him well. He's a spy." At this point, the English aide-de-camp felt as if someone were already pulling him up by his hairs. The guards took him and found documents on

his person that proved he was on a spying mission to have the American Army overrun by the English Army. Within two hours the spy was hanged. [Ed. Note: Actually, Andre, an intelligence officer, was caught on September 23, 1780, and hanged on October 2, some nine days later. The plot, proposed by Andre and agreed to by General Arnold, was to have Arnold surrender West Point to General Clinton, thus securing control of the Hudson River for the English.]

The aide-de-camp would not have been hanged, if the soldiers had not found the treasonous information on his person. When the English heard that the spy was to be hanged, they made every effort to get him freed, whatever it would cost, because he was supposed to be of the Royal Family of England. [Negotiations] were no help and the spy was hanged.

Soldiers were also dispatched to headquarters [at West Point?] to catch General Arnold who had started all this treason. But Arnold and his party escaped. This Arnold was an Englishman who had previously been in English service, but deserted. Then he came to the Americans and was made a General because he was a man who knew the arts of war well. But then, because of his involvement in the plot, he was in good standing with the English. He was well received and given command of a

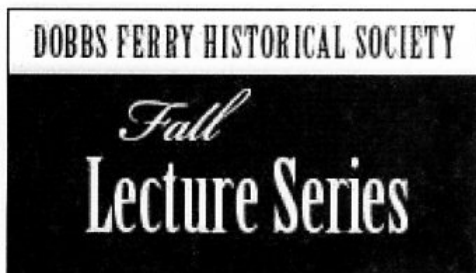
volunteer corps and again [illegible] against the Americans. He acted barbarously. Wherever he and his troop went, he scorched and burned and abused the Americans.

General Washington, who formerly also had been in service to the English, quit the English army and immediately became the top general of the Americans who followed him at all times and went with him through fire. They honor him as if he were their God.

When he learned of Arnold's treachery, Washington right away gave the order that, if anyone got a hold of Arnold again, Arnold should be torn into four pieces. Immediately, people made a life-sized wooden figure of Arnold and had it dragged by four horses through the streets of Philadelphia. They then hung it. It was announced to all that whoever captured him, dead or alive, would be well rewarded. But Arnold kept clear of them.

[Next installment: The march from "Dobbs Ferry" to Princeton and Flohr's version of a previous American victory over the English at Princeton.]

Translated by Gabriele Grunebaum with Hank Walter



OUR LECTURE SERIES CONTINUES

DR. PRIMEGGIA TO SPEAK ON THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE ON DECEMBER 12

Please join us on Friday, December 12 at 7:30 pm when we will be privileged to hear a presentation by Dr. Salvatore Primeggia, who will speak about the history of Italian immigrants in the New York area.

Dr. Primeggia, a professor of sociology at Alephi University, is an expert on the Italian-American immigrant experience. He has written extensively on the topic and is a well recognized authority. His books include: *The Italian American Experience: an Encyclopedia* (2000) and *The Saints in the Lives of Italian Americans* (1999).

Dr. Primeggia's lecture, *Tracing Italian Immigrant History to the Italian-American present*, will address the following questions: What pushed so many Italians to leave their country between 1880 and 1924? What pulled these immigrants to New York City and other American destination? How did Old World attachments shape their response to New World challenges? In his examination of these questions Dr. Primeggia will describe the impact of Italian immigration to the United States, emphasizing the Italian immigrant legacy, its cultural imprint today and its contribution to the physical and social landscape of our nation. Dr. Primeggia's lecture will be sponsored by the New York Council for the Humanities. He is one of the Council's most sought after lecturers, and we are delighted that he will be speaking to us in Dobbs Ferry. All are welcome.

Dr. Primeggia's presentation will cap a series of exciting lectures hosted in 2008 by the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society. Turnout for the lectures has been large, and the audience response has been enthusiastic and very gratifying. In March Stephen Tilly and Elizabeth Martin, noted Dobbs Ferry architects, spoke to us about the Washington Theatre, a Dobbs Ferry building with a remarkable history: in the 1930's the Barrymores performed on the stage of the Washington Theatre, which is now the location of Mr. Tilly's architectural firm. In April we heard local author Jean Zimmerman's account of highly influential women of New Amsterdam and colonial New York. Much of Jean's fascinating presentation was based on her book, *The Women of the House: How a Colonial She-Merchant Built a Mansion, a Fortune, and a Dynasty* (2006).

In May Dr. Eugene Boesch, distinguished anthropologist and archaeologist, spoke before a standing room only audience about Native American prehistory in the Hudson Valley region. As of this writing we are looking forward to hear the continuation of Dr. Boesch's presentation about the peoples of the Hudson Valley centuries ago, when he will bring us to the historic era and the earliest Native American contacts with Europeans. Dr. Boesch's upcoming lecture is scheduled for November 21. Both of Dr. Boesch's presentations have been sponsored by the New York Council for the Humanities, and, as noted above, the Council is sponsoring Dr. Primeggia's presentation as well. Admission is free.

TWO SPECIAL HOLIDAY EVENTS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



MEAD HOUSE ANNUAL NEW YEAR EGGNOG PARTY

Each year the Historical Society hosts a holiday party for its members both old & new—in honor of our benefactor Clara Mead, who bequeathed her house to be used as the Historical Society Headquarters.

This year we will gather to welcome in the new year. Please join us at the Mead house located at 12 Elm Street for an afternoon of hospitality and conversation.

Meet some new friends, see our beautiful Mead house: enjoy a cup of Clara Mead's famous eggnog (a closely guarded secret) and nibble on some delightful edibles.

Take a peek at some of the treasures from our archives; new displays of photos, letters, and artifacts of our village for all to enjoy! We welcome and encourage all villagers to attend! Contact Mead house at 674-1007 for more information.



Join us for an afternoon of fun
Sunday January 4, 2009
2 pm Eggnog party at Mead house
AND
4 pm Celebration at Zion Episcopal



ZION EPISCOPAL CHURCH ANNUAL WASHINGTON IRVING CELEBRATION

The Zion Episcopal Church again hold a special Holiday Celebration of Washington Irving. The celebration immediately follows the annual Eggnog Reception at the Mead House.

This year the theme of the celebration will be the old Dutch custom of observing a very festive New Year, a tradition that made its way with the Dutch to New Amsterdam. The church is located at 55 Cedar St here in Dobbs Ferry.

Zion Episcopal Church is the oldest house of worship in our village and Washington Irving was one of its founding members in 1834.

The event will include reading about New Years from Irving's own writings, holiday carols, and a reception to follow in the parish hall.

For more information or in the event of inclement weather please call the parish office at 693- 9320.

ADMISSION IS FREE TO BOTH THESE COMMUNITY EVENTS
Please do join us. We'd love to see you there !



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