

Hotels In Dobbs Ferry

Due to its unique location on the Hudson, Dobbs Ferry was a travel hub for the late 19th century traveler. Can you imagine there were 26 hotels to accommodate the needs of weary travelers?

Page 1 & 2



Paul Fix Did you know that a lead actor in the famous

film"To Kill a Mockingbird" was born and raised here?

Page 3 & 4

The Rivertowns Guild for Traditional Fiber Arts

has been at it again! This year they have created a gorgeous oneof-a-kind hand-sewn silk quilt that we are raffling off to benefit the Society. Get your tickets today! Pages 7 & 8



The Mead House Our beautiful Mead House is available for you to host your next meeting or event.

Page 5

Highlights of this year's activities

What an exciting and busy year we've had. Take a look at all the fun and memories we made- and check out what's coming up at the Historical Society this year!

Page 6

Time to renew your membership

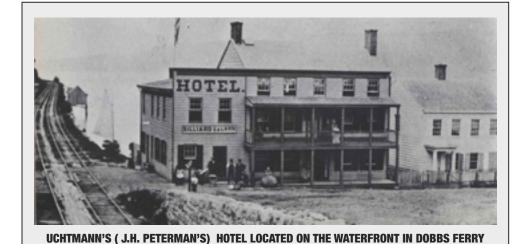
It's the fall again, time to turn back the clocks and time to send in your membership renewal!

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Fall 2010

Volume XXIV, Issue No 2



DOBBS FERRY HOTELS FROM THE BY LARRY BLIZARD

As an armchair historian, I had my curiosity piqued by recent talk about the need for an inn in Dobbs Ferry. Clearly, there are no hotels in the village at present. Were there ever hotels or inns here? And if so, where were they located? Are any of the structures still standing?

A look into the archives of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society yielded some pretty interesting facts about early structures in the village. For example, in Gordon's Gazetteer of the State published in 1836, as well as in a similar publication issued by Disturnel in 1842, only one store and one tavern were said to exist in Dobbs Ferry.

The tavern was probably the Anthony Inn, opened in 1820 at the spot now occupied by the Dobbs Diner and Mobil gas station. An 1865 book about the Hudson River by Benson J. Lossing observed that Dobbs Ferry "has been mostly built up in the past fifteen years." In general, during the period

from 1800 to 1860, the only businesses mentioned in publications concerning Dobbs Ferry are "four factories, a quarry, a coal and lumber yard, a grocery store, and two, possibly three inns." (Alice Mosley, A History of Dobbs Ferry, 1957)

By the 1880's, however, a strange thing happened. There seemed to be an explosion in hotel creation in Dobbs Ferry. In her Dobbs Ferry history, Alice Denike notes 26 hotels and saloons (one for every 200 persons)!

This phenomenon did not seem confined to this village. In his book, Last Call: a History of Prohibition, David Aerent notes that Brooklyn listed only 13 hotels before this decade, but by the end carried more than 2,000 on its roll of businesses!

What was the reason for this proliferation in hotels? Tourism and advanced modes of transportation are usually given as answers, but this couldn't have been the whole story. In addition, the hotels do not seem to be prominently featured in the various written histories of Dobbs Ferry. They seem to have been purposely ignored. Alice Denike herself seems to provide a clue when she writes "some of the hotels were little more than saloons." If that is the case, why bother with trying to be a hotel at all? Mr. Aerent provides a possible answer.

From the middle 1800's on, there was a surge in immigration to the United States. Although essential as sources of cheap labor, the newcomers were not

warmly welcomed. From pulpit to political arena, orators lamented the uncouth behavior and excessive drunkenness that proper citizens thought were endemic to the Irish, Germans, Italians, etc. who worked in the factories and cleaned the streets. Even Teddy Roosevelt, as a fledgling state assemblyman in Albany, wrote letters home criticizing the boorishness of his Irish colleagues.

Could anything be done to impart upright behavior among these immigrants? A New York assemblyman named John Raines thought he had the answer. Since the immigrants generally had only one day off a week (Sundays), why not order the saloons to be closed on Sundays? Thus, the workers would remain sober the entire day.

Raines knew that the rich and well-to-do did not drink in saloons. They did their drinking in hotel restaurants. Raines did not want to annoy these contributors to his party. Thus, the bill he pushed through Albany stipulated that any establishment which could offer at least ten bedrooms and served food would be exempt from the Sunday closing.

Both the saloonkeepers and the immigrants were furious. For the displaced newcomer, lonely in a strange country, the saloon was a home and refugea social center as well as a provider of services such as job notices and mail delivery. Also, Sunday was the only day of the week the workers had to themselves.

Immediately, the saloonkeepers retaliated. As there were usually rooms above the bars, these rooms were divided into smaller rooms, separated by flimsy walls and furnished with threadbare cots, but nevertheless meeting the "10 rooms" rule. To meet the requirement for food, two pieces of bread with a brick in the middle were placed on the bar. This became known as the "Raines Sandwich." Thus a law conceived in prejudice was thwarted through ingenuity. In fact, Raines' law ended up setting the moralistic climate back a notch or two. The newly established bedrooms ushered in a new (actually old) business--prostitution.

Regarding Dobbs Ferry, some of the hotels probably fit the category of establishment described above. In researching later 19th century Dobbs Ferry, this author has found the names of 24 hotels during this period. Some were undoubtedly legitimate.

Of the "legitimate" hotels, J.H. Peterman's, located right beside the tracks at the railroad station, would be the first establishment to greet passengers alighting from the cars. One wonders how the guests could get any rest, considering the proximity of the railroad tracks. Probably train service was more infrequent in those days. Or perhaps they were insomniacs who frequented the hotel's billiards room prominently advertised in the photo. In any event, the hotel was described as "always seeming busy."

Further up into the village, the Hotel Meyer was probably a favored spot. It was located at the northeast corner of Chestnut and Main, now a vacant lot occupied variously by landscaping and earth moving equipment. Before being torn down, the old former hotel was in a pretty dilapidated state, according to Jean Gagliardi, who grew up in a house next to the hotel and remembered it as a child.

Another establishment with an elegant-sounding name was the Maywood Inn, which once stood on the site occupied by Chestnut Court. (numbers 1-7 Chestnut Street). Later this probably became the original family home of the Suchins, whose progeny Alvin Suchin was a leading figure in local politics during the 1950's and 60's.

At least two hotels in Dobbs Ferry were described by local historians as "summer hotels." The Hotel Bellevue was on Ashford Avenue, located halfway up a hill with its driveway entrance at what is now Briary Lane. Most likely, a number of summer activities such as tennis, croquet, hikes, swimming, etc, made it attractive to guests seeking a minivacation and an escape from the city. Also, the guests probably enjoyed watching the horse races that ran from Broadway at Wicker's Creek to Sprain Road. Guests on New Year's Day could have participated in the glass ball and clay pigeon shooting matches, a popular holiday activity on Ashford. The other "summer hotel" was the Glen Towers, opened in 1891 by Ewen Hathaway on Broadway. Prior to that date, it was the home of A. Arrent known as the Glen Tower estate. Its Gothic façade still graces the campus of St. Christopher's Academy.

Sadly, the Bellevue, like many others, has vanished without leaving even a present-day memory. However, serious history buffs can visit two locations, in addition to the Glen Towers, where original hotel buildings remain. The apartment building at 2 Main Street was built in 1834 by Van Brugh Livingston and housed the Clark and Sandford grocery store. A few years later, it was remodeled to serve as the Greenburgh Seminary. In the 1880's, Warner D. Hatch purchased the building and opened Greenburgh House as a hotel. Later, renamed the Livingston Inn, it reached its peak in the "gay nineties." In 1921, when apartment buildings came into vogue, the Livingston Inn became Livingston Arms, with apartments for ten families. It proved to be the forerunner of apartment buildings in Dobbs Ferry.

The other former hotel is at 19 Livingston Avenue. Busily reinventing itself as the soon-to-be-opened Windows on the Hudson and still remembered by many as Rudy's Beau Rivage, it was built as a home in the 1870's by Dr. James H. Pooley, a physician practicing in Dobbs Ferry. When Dr. Pooley moved to New York City in 1881, his home was turned into the Dixie Inn, described as being "popular with the theatre crowd."

Very little is to be found in the recorded history of the village regarding hotels. Perhaps the interweaving of hotels, saloons, liquor and prostitution seemed somewhat unsavory to those who preserved records of the past.

Interestingly enough, the only nod of recognition to this aspect of village history came from the Dobbs Ferry Woman's Club. Sometime around 1980, the members put on a play at the club – a comedy set in the Uchtman's (Peterman's) Hotel around the turn of the 20th century. It involved a group of "ladies of the night," one of whom was played by our very own Clara Mead.

Here is a less than definitive list of hotels once thriving in Dobbs Ferry. They were found through advertisements in old newspapers and listings of businesses and other articles. It is also possible that the name of a hotel could have been changed as owners changed, thus making the list shorter. On the other hand, more research could make it longer. Street addresses were usually not given in the advertisements.

Anthony Inn
Dixie Inn
Glen Towers Hotel
George Knox Tavern
Greenburgh House (Livingston Arms)

Hauptman House
Helliham's Hotel
Hotel Bellevue
John Meyer Hotel (Main Street)
John Stadelmeyer Hotel
John Wiederhold's Hotel (1888)
Maywood Inn

Mrs. McCrane's Hotel
Oakumville Hotel
Ogden House (1888)

Otto Pape Hotel (Main Street)

Peterman's Hotel

Resolute Hotel (1888-90)

The Woodlands Hotel (1864)

Tom Smith Hotel (Main Street)

Uchtman's Hotel

Union Hotel

G. W. Wilsea Hotel





A Tribute to Paul Fix BY LARRY BLIZARD

Do you recognize Paul Fix? He was one of the busiest character actors in the movies from the 1930's until the 1980's, appearing in over 400 films!

Paul Fix. His name might not strike a chord but his face would certainly stir the memories of 1930-1980 moviegoers. For Paul Fix was one of the busiest character actors in the movie industry during that period, appearing in about 400 films, probably a record for a supporting actor. A secret of his success was no doubt his tremendous versatility. Unlike many supporting actors who basically played different versions of the same character, Fix was able to successfully handle all manner of roles: western gunslingers, villains, soldiers, convicts, cowboys and Indians, sailors, gypsies, pirates, engineers, musicians, romantics, femaleshow many actors do we know who can play cowboys, Indians and females? Later in his career, he portrayed judges, doctors and sheriffs.

Among those roles, Paul Fix listed

his favorites: the stricken passenger in *The High and the Mighty* (1954); Liz Taylor's father in *Giant* (1956); the academic grandfather of the devilish girl in the first *Bad Seed* (1956); and the courtroom judge in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962). Paul's last film was *Wanda Nevada* (1979) starring Brooke Shields. Besides movies, Fix made many television appearances mostly in guest roles. He was Dr. Mark Piper, chief medical officer of



Photos of Paul and his humble beginnings in Dobbs Ferry: as a young man in the navy; his father's place of business; and a Fix family portrait.

the USS Enterprise, in the second pilot of *Star Trek*. (This role was later taken over by DeForest Kelley). The TV series in which he found a permanent niche was *The Rifleman* with Chuck Connors, which ran from 1958 to 1963. Fix portrayed the mildmannered yet tough sheriff Micah Torrance. Fix said in 1981 that he was still getting fan mail from all over the world for his part in this series. Paul Fix died in 1983 leaving a daughter

Marilyn (wife of Harry Carey, Jr., son of one of the first great western stars), as well as grandchildren and greatgrandchildren.

Why does the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society pay tribute to Paul Fix? Because, last spring as we researched the history of the old brewery, we discovered that Paul Fix was born at 145 Palisade Street on the Manilla Anchor Brewery's estate, where his father, Wilhelm Fix, was brew-master. Wilhelm (or William as he was known here) and his wife, the former Louise C. Walz, migrated from the Black Forest area of Germany to New York City in the 1870s. When the Anchor Brewing Company took over Peter Biegen's brewery in Dobbs Ferry (1885), Wilhelm became the brewmaster and the couple took up residence at 145 Palisade Street. They proceeded to have six children, four boys and two girls, with Paul being the youngest by six years. Paul had a

vivid imagination and was said to have played by himself a lot. However, two village old-timers, (no longer living) Joseph Delmerico and Jess Pearce, recalled playing with Paul virtually every day, mainly cowboys and Indians in the woods near the brewery. Also, they could get "a penny a rivet for hammering rivets out of beer barrels," according to Pearce. The play sessions would invariably end with the three of them stealing into the brewery, where they might be rewarded with a few sips of beer. The tranquility of Paul's life was interrupted at the age of 13 or 14, when his mother died; then, two years later, his father died at age 62. Some accounts attribute the closing of the brewery to the death of his father, the brew-master. (Other accounts hold the onset of Prohibition to be the factor leading to the overall demise of brewing.) Paul left Dobbs Ferry to live with his two married sisters, first, with the one in Yonkers and then the second, in Zanesville, Ohio.

Paul's first acting success occurred in the Navy during World War One. Stationed in Newport, Rhode Island, he was selected for a supporting role as one of six females in a show put by the Navy Relief. The show was *HMS Pinafore*, and played for several weeks in Providence, Rhode Island and later Boston.

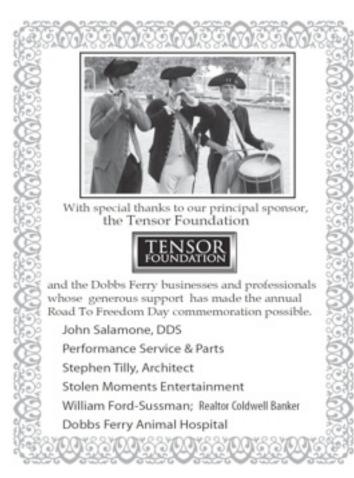
After the war, Paul married his Zanesville sweetheart, Frances Harvey. Uncertain as to what he wanted to do, but determined to find a warmer climate, Paul and his new bride settled in Hollywood. There he began writing and acting in local plays where he met another young actor, Clark Gable. Together they were in twenty plays in Pauline Frederick's (an early stage star) company. Gradually they began to get roles in the film industry, first in silent films and then talkies. Paul's silent movie roles were usually uncredited; his first recorded part was in the 1928 film, *The First Kiss*, with Gary Cooper and Fay Wray.

In 1931, Fix played with John Wayne in *Three Girls Lost*, Wayne's first film. They went on to make 26 films together. At the suggestion of Loretta Young, Fix coached Wayne behind the scenes, and Wayne's influence was important in helping Paul land roles beyond that of villain. Legend has it that Paul taught John Wayne to walk western-style: Wayne copied Paul's rolling gait, which became Wayne's trademark.

As a writer, Paul Fix is credited with three screenplays: *Tall in the Saddle* (1944); *Ring of Fear* (1954) and *The Notorious Mr. Monks* (1958). During most of his career, Fix was most identified with western roles. He was known for driving a black 1960's Cadillac with longhorns attached to the front, and personalized license plates reading PFIX. Paul Fix died of kidney failure on October 14, 1983. He was buried in Santa Monica, California, where he made his home. The only trace of his youth in Dobbs Ferry is his name, which he is reported to have inscribed on a wall in the basement of Sam's Restaurant. Maurice, the owner, is trying to locate it for us.

RECAP ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM:

On Sunday, August 1, 2010, Dobbs Ferry citizens of all ages enjoyed the fifth annual celebration of Road to Freedom Day in our village. The celebration began with the Road to Freedom Walk, which commemorates Washington's bold 1781 march from Dobbs Ferry to the decisive American and French victory over Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. After the walk participants gathered on the lawn of the Mead House where extremely knowledgeable Revolutionary War reenactors engaged and entertained a very appreciative public. The reenactors included Lamb's Artillery Company, Morgan's Riflemen, the fife and drum trio of Erik Lichack, Matthew Skic and Peter Cutul, and storyteller and balladeer, Tom Hanford.



SAVE THE DATE! NOVEMBER 7, 2010 : Historian Barnet Schecter to lecture at Dobbs Ferry Library at 2 p.m.



BARNET SCHECTER

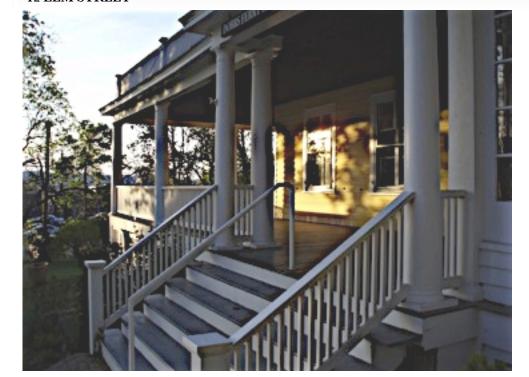
The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society is very pleased to announce that distinguished author and historian, Barnet Schecter, will give a presentation in our village on Sunday, November 7, at 2 p.m. at the Dobbs Ferry Public Library, 55 Main Street. Mr. Schecter is author of *The Devil's Own Work*, which deals with the Civil War draft riots that raged for days in New York City, until quelled by federal

troops, and The Battle for New York: the City at the Heart of the American Revolution, which describes the events that took place in our region during the Revolutionary War. His new book, George Washington's America; a Biography through His Maps, will be coming out in October. Fascinating detail about Mr. Schecter's new book is found on the publisher's website (WalkerBooks.com): "From his teens until his death, the maps George Washington purchased and drew were always central to his work — as surveyor, military leader, private citizen, and statesman ... historian Barnet Schecter has crafted a unique portrait of America's preeminent founder, interweaving twenty-six of the full maps and some two hundred additional detail views into a full chronicle of Washington's life. The maps reveal Washington's deep and abiding connection to the land and his lifelong focus on geography as a way of understanding the world... George Washington's America offers a unique perspective on history and important new insight into Washington's character and his transformation from private citizen to founding father."

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT: WWW.DOBBSFERRYHISTORY.ORG

THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

12 ELM STREET



DOBBS FERRY, NEW YORK 10522







Rates:

Single time use meetings space - \$40 Social Event (up to 4 hours) - \$250 Monthly use - \$150 per annum / or compensatory arrangement

For more information contact us at (914)-674-1007

or visit us on the web at

www.DobbsFerryHistory.org

NEED A PLACE TO HOLD AN EVENT?

The beautiful Mead House home of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society is available for use for community meetings and private events.

Built in 1865 this historic house is handicap accessible, centrally located in town and offers three spacious rooms, a newly refurbished kitchen and lovely grounds with a turn-of-the-century wraparound porch.

Club meeting, rehearsal space, birthday party, baby shower, anniversary celebration, office holiday party, you name it - the historic Mead House is the perfect place for your next gathering!

With so many complimentary amenities available for your use, it's an easy, affordable place to host your event.

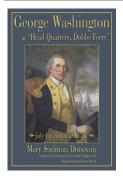
PLEASE COME SEE HOW MUCH WE HAVE TO OFFER!

- Card tables and folding chairs
- 7- piece china place settings
- 6- piece silverware settings
- Large and small automatic coffee urns
- Punch bowls and punch cups
- Audio/visual equipment
- And much more! Contact us for a full list of our amenities.



10 Reasons to Join or Renew Membership in the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society

September 1 marked the start of the new membership year. We'd like to thank those of you who have already renewed. If you haven't yet joined or renewed, please support us by becoming a member for 2010-2011. Here are some highlights of recent months made possible by the generosity of people like you:



- 1. George Washington at
 Head Quarters, Dobbs Ferry
 Perhaps you were
 among the standingroom-only crowd at the
 2009 Annual Meeting as
 Historical Society
 president Mary Sudman
 Donovan launched her
 new book, which also
 features original sketches
 by trustee Larry Blizard.
- 2. The Annual Clara Mead Eggnog Party A record number of old and new members met at Mead House in January to celebrate the New Year with lively conversation and a cup of Clara Mead's legendary eggnog.
- 3. The Spring Lecture Series In our recent scholarly lectures open to the community, we presented two engaging speakers from the New York State Council for the Humanities: Dr. David Oestreicher spoke on the Lenape, and Dr. Firth Fabend shared her knowledge of the Dutch colonial experience.
- 4. The BrewLaLa What was brewing in Dobbs Ferry? Through photos drawn from our own archives and commentary by a Biegen descendant, participants at our May fundraiser were introduced to Biegen family members and brewery workers and sampled beer as it might have been brewed 150 years ago.
- 5. The 2nd Annual House Tour People came from as far away as Brooklyn on a May Saturday afternoon, when five beautiful and historic Dobbs Ferry homes were opened to the public.
- 6. Outreach to the Dobbs Ferry Schools We have been building very gratifying links between the Historical Society and our public schools. Several examples:
- Trustee Richard Borkow's talk in 2009 to the entire 4th grade at Springhurst about Dobbs Ferry's Quadricentennial celebration



• A presentation to Dobbs Ferry High School and Middle School social studies teachers about Dobbs Ferry's role at the 1781 encampment

of the allied American and French armies

- Participation in the Colonial Day celebration of the Dobbs Ferry Middle School. A historical play, originally written for and performed on Road to Freedom Day 2007, was beautifully performed again by Dobbs Ferry seventh graders.
- 7. Road to Freedom Walk 2010 On Sunday, August 1, we commemorated the march made by Washington's troops from Dobbs Ferry to the victory at Yorktown, Virginia that won our independence. Family and friends met at Gould Park at1 pm for the salute to the thirteen states and walked the route of the Continental Army in 1781. Afterward we met at the Mead House for music, reenactors, cannon display and refreshments.
- 8. The 2010 Annual Membership Meeting On Monday, September 20, 7:30 pm, join us at Mead House for the election of officers, a presentation about the archives and a firsthand look at the stunning hand-printed parlor and dining room wallpaper and other improvements that, thanks to member contributions and a handful of hardworking volunteers, have made Mead House a more attractive space. Do note that Mead House can now be used by individuals and community groups call us for more information.
- 9. 11th Annual Hudson River Valley Ramble The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society will open its doors from 11 am to 4 pm on two Saturdays during this annual celebration of Hudson Valley history, culture and natural resources. Along with historical displays, refreshments and relaxing on the veranda, there will be audio-visual presentations at 1 pm: on Sept. 18, "The Encampment of the American and French Armies, July 4 to August 19, 1781" by Mary

Sudman
Donovan, and on
Sept. 25, "What
was brewing in
Dobbs Ferry? The
Biegen, Anchor,
and AnchorManilla
Breweries" by
Larry Blizard.



Still undecided about joining? Do you know that...

- 10. Most of our programs and all of the cost of maintaining Mead House as a home for our activities and archives depend on dues and contributions from members like you. The financial support we receive from the Village only offsets the cost of printing and mailing The Ferryman. We must raise money for everything else including the desperate need to paint the exterior of the house and shore up the side porch's decaying foundation. That's why we must appeal to our members for dues and contributions.
- If you have enjoyed our lectures...
- If you read The Ferryman cover to cover...
- If you've ever sought our help to research the history of your home or family...
- If "George Washington" on horseback sparked your child's interest in history...
- Or if you value Mead House as a repository for your local history and a centerpiece of your community...

Please help us continue this important work . Gain your membership via PayPal at our website: www.DobbsFerryHistory.org

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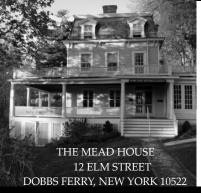
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IN TRIBUTE:

WE REMEMBER WITH GRATITUDE AND LOVE TWO EXTRAORDINARY FRIENDS

EVELYTH LEWIS

AND

LARRY DENGLER

WHOSE ENTHUSIASM AND EFFORTS ON OUR BEHALF WERE SO DEEPLY APPRECIATED AND WHOSE PRESENCE WE SHALL DEARLY MISS.

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