



# The Ferryman

*Fostering an awareness and appreciation for the history of Dobbs Ferry and all the people, noted and humble, who transmitted the good things of the past to the present and the future.*

**Do you remember Dobbs Ferry during the 1970s?**

*Ever wonder what was happening in the "groovy 1970s" in our village? Take our quiz and see photos of our fun filled event that are sure to make your disco ball spin!*  
**Page 6**

**Theodore Roosevelt**

*Did you know this famous Rough Rider was a frequent visitor to our village in his youth and learned his shooting skills in the woods of Dobbs Ferry!*  
**Pages 1, 2 & 3**



**The Birth of a Neighborhood**

*Did you ever wonder how the neighborhoods and streets of our village came to be built and settled? Take a look at one lovely area of town, Villard Hill, and the titan of industry in whose honor it was named.*  
**Page 5**



**A Call for Heroes**

*An old corroded pipe has brought us a world of trouble. We are asking for help from the whole community. Can you please lend us a hand?*  
**Page 8**

**The Mead House**

*Our beautiful Mead House is available for you to host your next holiday party, shower, meeting or event. Come see all we have to offer!*  
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## TEDDY ROOSEVELT IN DOBBS FERRY



©1998 Theodore Roosevelt Collection  
 Harvard College Library

During a "quiet" summer in Dobbs Ferry in 1872, Theodore Roosevelt's life was transformed.

Sometimes, when the news reports seem especially disheartening, when item after item details corruption and moral lapse in high places, lack of progress in peace talks and economic chaos, I think it would be nice to have a visit with Theodore Roosevelt. The sight of Teddy striding into the room flashing his famous toothy grin, light bouncing off his trademark spectacles, would, I feel certain, banish my sense of futility. Eagerly I would fall in behind him, as did masses of the downtrodden over a century ago. Ol' Teddy would set things right!

As a matter of fact, had I been a resident of Dobbs Ferry in the summers of 1871 or 72, I might have encountered Teddy in person on our village's then-dusty streets.

For Teddy and his family were among the well-to-do city folk who, each summer, sought relief from the unhealthful environment of New York City. For these souls, verdant lawns, awning-draped mansions, and tennis, croquet, and strolls along the river were welcome relief from a tuberculosis and whooping cough laden winter. Villages like Dobbs Ferry became prized destinations.

But the Teddy Roosevelt who arrived in Dobbs Ferry with his parents and siblings in the summer of 1872 (their second in the village) bore little resemblance to the Colonel Roosevelt of the charge up San Juan Hill, the hunter of big game, or the spellbinding orator of the convention halls. At this time, Teddy was thirteen years old and was experiencing a rapid increase in height. A winter of intensive workouts in a home gym succeeded in "expanding his skinny chest by degrees perceptible only by himself,"

*Teddy (left) with his cousins in the winter of 1873 following his summer in Dobbs Ferry, and shortly before college (below).*



Teedie, Elliot, Cousin Maude Elliot, Corinne, and Cousin John Elliot  
Dresden 1873

according to Edmund Morris (one of his biographers).

Morris further describes the teenage Teddy as “a grotesque flower of adolescence, offensive to eye, ear, and nostril.” (Obsessed with taxidermy, Teddy often reeked of noxious chemicals.) Morris continues: “Snarling teeth, overlong hair (childish yellow darkening to dirty blond; bony wrists and ankles, which protruded every day a little further from his carefully tailored suit. His voice with undertones of harshness, yet shrill in the upper registers.”<sup>1</sup>

And then there was Teddy’s asthma. It’s not certain when the attacks began, although most accounts give the date as around 1862, when Teddy (called “Teedie” by his family) was four years old. He would wake up in a panic, yowling and gasping for breath. His frightened parents would rush to and fro, desperately searching for any means of relieving the child’s agonized struggle. Over time, as Teddy’s attacks continued to recur, the family developed means of coping. A



*Hill Dorms. The “Hill Dorms” of the Masters School is now located where the Paton residence, “Dungled” once existed.*

transfer to the fresh air or even a hurried carriage ride to the seashore would suffice in many cases. When all else failed, giving the child a cup of strong black coffee or having him smoke a cigar would do the trick.

Little was understood regarding asthma in the mid-nineteenth century. David McCullough, one of Teddy’s biographers, has theorized that Teddy’s affliction was somehow connected to the turmoil his family experienced during the Civil War. While Teddy’s father was a staunch Unionist, his mother was from the south – Georgia, to be exact. Margaret Roosevelt’s family was planter aristocracy. Her brothers and other relatives all served in the Confederate army. Teddy’s father, fearful of the effect upon his delicate wife that going into battle against her brothers might have, hired a substitute to take his place in the army.

However, this seemed to create severe stress for Theodore Sr., a philanthropist. He threw himself into the launching of a program which would enable Union soldiers to send money home. This required great effort on his part, visiting far-flung camps and talking with groups of soldiers. (Evidently, sending part of their paycheck home to desperate wives and children was a novel idea to many Union soldiers.) As a result, Teddy’s father was away from home for long periods during Teddy’s early years.

Another theory, also mentioned by McCullough, involves a possible fear of church on Teddy’s part. He had, as a small child, been frightened by a verse of scripture. (John 2:17) “And his disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” Little Teddy thought the zeal lurked in a dark corner of the church, waiting for him, or so he confided to his mother. The fact that most of his attacks occurred Saturday night or Sunday morning may lend some credence to this theory.

In addition to Teddy’s affliction, his siblings had their own health issues. His sister Anna suffered from Potts Disease, a form of tuberculosis which destroys bone tissue. In Anna’s case, it was concentrated in the spine, resulting in hunchback and constant pain. Brother Elliot, in addition to severe headaches and insomnia, was given to strange seizures, accompanied by a rush of blood to the head and even delirium. His other sister Corinne also suffered from asthma.

Overseeing this beleaguered brood was Teddy’s mother, a woman of fragile nature who suffered from heart palpitations,

headaches and intestinal grief. She was given ether treatments for the somewhat vague maladies.

Given the extent of their maladies, it would seem that a couple of months along the Hudson would offer little relief. However, it was during this time in Dobbs Ferry that Teddy’s life, at least, began to turn around.

The Roosevelts arrived in Dobbs Ferry and settled in at the large house called “Dungled” owned by the Paton family with a magnificent view of the river. The Patons, according to one source, were cousins of the Roosevelts. “Dungled” was razed in 1928 and is now the site of the Masters School’s “Hill Dorms” and City Term School, reached by a left turn off Clinton Avenue at the far eastern end of the campus.



Teedie, Corinne, Edith and Elliot  
Oyster Bay 1876

In the city, Teddy had become obsessed with taxidermy, so he began collecting mice and other small rodents which he kept in one of the bathtubs.

Theodore Sr., observing Teddy’s activity, made a momentous decision: he presented Teddy with his first gun.

This firearm, a rather simple double-barreled shotgun of French manufacture and considered quite suitable for a beginner, made Teddy ecstatic. Now he could go after bigger game for his taxidermy projects.

Eagerly, he joined his brother and friends in the woods around Dobbs Ferry; but with no results!



*Remnant of the carriage way leading from the pond to the Paton mansion. The Roosevelts would have traveled this road.*

No matter how often he fired away, he could hit nothing. Disconsolately, he watched the other boys take his gun and, according to his memoirs, “bag the invisible.” The final blow came when the boys read aloud huge letters on a distant sign. Teddy could not even see the letters!

It was then that Teddy’s father made his second momentous decision: he took Teddy to an eye doctor, who fitted him out with his first pair of spectacles. Thus Teddy’s life was transformed as a new world opened up to him. In the words of Edmund Morris, another biographer: “Through the miraculous little windows that now gripped his nose, the world leaped into pristine focus, disclosing an infinity of detail, of color, of nuance, and of movement just when the screen of his mind was at its most receptive.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, at Dobbs Ferry was born the quintessential “TR.” The present of a hunting rifle led to a hunting trip in Africa, South America, the western

United States and ultimately to his massive and successful efforts to preserve the wilderness. The spectacles along with his grin would make him famous around the world and become symbolic of the progressive movement in politics.

Also, it should be noted that his asthma attacks began to decline around this time and would virtually disappear as he left home for college.

Today, 139 years after Teddy’s stay in Dobbs Ferry, it is difficult to find reminders of the Roosevelts’ time here. All that remains of the old Paton house is a circular driveway at the east end of the hill dorms building at The Masters School.



***Paton Pond. Located at the very end of Estherwood Avenue, where the street becomes a path, this spot was a favorite gathering place for village youth in the 19th century. Teddy Roosevelt would certainly have enjoyed fishing, swimming, sailing model boats, and collecting frogs and mice in the pond. After the purchase of the property by the Masters School, the pond became an aquatic treasure house for generations of Masters science teachers and their pupils. In the early 1970s, after recurring incidents of flooding in nearby homes, Masters drained the pond, leaving only this marshy area of tall grass. Bordering this site is a path which is a remnant of the carriage way up the hill to the Patons’. (Clinton Avenue did not extend this far).***



*This plaque, attached to a pew in the South Presbyterian Church, marks the place occupied by the Roosevelts on Sundays during the summer of 1871.*

If you follow Estherwood Avenue from the intersection to its end, you will come to what was once Paton Pond. Now an area of marsh grass and no pond, it was a favorite gathering place for children in the Victorian era. Most certainly, Teddy and his siblings would have enjoyed swimming, fishing, and sailing their model boats there.

At the South Presbyterian Church, a plaque marks the pew where the Roosevelts sat during church services.

One other reminder, however, can sometimes be spied peering from the corners of baby carriages or shop windows: the teddy bear.

Edmund Morris. *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*. New York, Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, Inc. 1979.

David McCullough. *Mornings on Horseback*, New York. Simon and Schuster, 1981.

Paul Grondahl. *I Rose Like a Rocket*. New York, Free Press 2004.

Theodore Roosevelt. *Theodore Roosevelt’s Diaries of Boyhood and Youth*. New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928.

Carleton Putnam, *Theodore Roosevelt: Volume I The Formative Years 1858 – 1886*. New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958.

Archives. Dobbs Ferry Historical Society

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p.52.

WRITTEN BY LARRY BLIZARD

# MEET SOME YOUNG HEROES : OUR VOLUNTEERS



*Joanne Mumbey and Morgan Wright are pictured here in front of The Seventies Timeline that they developed to highlight memorable historical events and images from that crucial decade.*

## THIS YEAR'S INTERNS

Joanne Mumbey and Morgan Wright, Dobbs Ferry High School Seniors, put their talents to work as interns for the Historical Society this spring. As a part of the end-of-school internship program, the young women spent three weeks working at the Mead House on a variety of tasks.

Using their computer skills to good advantage, they scanned many of our historical photographs into the computer, adding finding aids for quick retrieval. They organized and catalogued our extensive map collection and also collected information to answer several questions posed by several villagers. They created two display timelines: *A Brief History of Dobbs Ferry* and *The Seventies*. On several sunny spring days, they worked outside--improving the layout of the herb garden and placing identifying labels by the various herbs.

Such volunteer assistance is absolutely essential to the task of preserving and promoting Dobbs Ferry's history and we are very grateful to these young women for their efforts. We wish them well in their next academic endeavors, Joanne at a culinary school in Rhode Island and Morgan at a Long Island art school.



*Christopher Donoghue in front of one of the newly renovated staircases in the Mead House garden.*

## SCOUT RENOVATES THE STAIRCASE

Visitors to this year's Road to Freedom Celebration at the Mead House were delighted to find new stairs leading to the lower part of the garden. The stairs were the result of a year's work by Christopher Donoghue, a Boy Scout who completely renovated stairs that had fallen into terrible disrepair because of years of neglect.

Working towards an Eagle Scout award, Christopher designed steps with a gentle incline and railings to provide added support for villagers as they stroll through our garden. He and other members of Dobbs Ferry Scout Troop 24 cleared away the underbrush, carted away the remnants of the old staircases and installed the new ones on two successive weekends. Made of pretreated lumber and gravel inserts for drainage, the stairs are a very useful addition to the Mead House garden. They are as beautiful as they are functional. Please stop by to admire them!

The Historical Society is grateful to Scoutmaster Edmund Dalio, Troop 24 and especially to Christopher Donoghue for this wonderful project. We send our gratitude and best wishes to Christopher this fall as he begins his first year at Seton Hall University.

## SAVE THE DATE !

Sunday, November 6, 2011  
at 2:00 pm  
Dobbs Ferry Public Library  
55 Main Street

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society is pleased to announce that master raconteur, Jonathan Kruk, will give a presentation in Dobbs Ferry about his new book, published by The History Press, *Legends and Lore of Sleepy Hollow and the Hudson Valley*. The book will be available for sale and signing. It has been praised as "a book ...with many great

stories perfect for reading aloud to the family. And it also includes much scholarship, which will appeal to students of cultural history. Highly recommended!"

Jonathan Kruk was born an army brat in El Paso, Texas, but grew up here in Westchester on hyperbolic tales. His grandfather, Joseph A. Nowicki, Yonkers City Clerk, often stirred up tedious meetings with stories he read into the minutes, in Polish. Jonathan took a cue from his "Dza Dza" and became a career professional storyteller in 1989. Now, he performs in area schools, libraries, historic sites and, of course, tells The Legend of Sleepy Hollow every October at the Old Dutch Church in Sleepy Hollow.

Jonathan earned a B.A. in English from Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA and got a M.A. in educational theater at New York University. He launched his career at the

Dobbs Ferry Library, joining a circle of storytellers lead by the late Aggie Griesar.

Returning to Dobbs Ferry on November 6th, Mr. Kruk will share secret sources Washington Irving used to establish the iconic Headless Horseman. He will tell the full stories of several intriguing ghosts known in the region, including Dobbs Ferry. Look for a short performance of a haunted history tale too. Admission is free. See you there !

*Storyteller Jonathan Kruk joins us for an afternoon of Hudson Valley folktales. Don't miss it !*



# VILLARD HILL : BIRTH OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

What we all now know as Villard Hill sits at the highest point in Dobbs Ferry. It was first owned by two brothers, Samuel and Thomas Cochrane. The brothers purchased 100 acres of land at the top of the hill on Clinton Avenue.

Sometime before 1857, two identical houses were built, one for each brother. The property around the homes was laid out as a private park by Frederick Olmstead. Thomas's house was called Dunedin and Samuel named his home Thorwood.

Thorwood was sold to Henry and Fanny Villard in 1879. A new architectural firm enlarged the home by the addition of two wings built onto the house. This was the first commission done by McKim, Mead and White.

Henry Villard died in 1900 and his wife Fanny died in 1928. In 1930 the property was sold to Joseph Patterson, the owner of the *New York Daily News*. He tore down both homes and gave the development the name, 'Villard Hill.'

From the advertisements for Villard Hill:

*'delightful homes can be completed on plots with room for ample gardens for as little as \$15,000'*

*'houses vary widely in architecture to express owner's tastes, yet all are planned to harmonize with their surroundings'*

*'All architecture must be of the Early American, Georgian, Regency or English type.'*

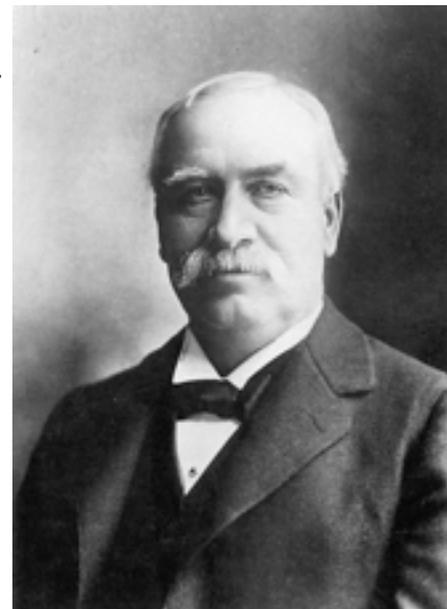
And still true today:

*'commuting from Dobbs Ferry to Grand Central is a matter of only 35 minutes.'*

BY MADELINE BYRNE



*Henry Villard - American journalist and early president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, for which Villard Hill is named. He completed the transcontinental railroad line. Early financier of Thomas Edison, he bought Edison Lamp Company & Edison General and reorganized it into the General Electric Company in 1893. He died at his summer home Thorwood in Dobbs Ferry in November 1900.*



# OUR 70s SHOW WAS A MEMORABLE SUCCESS!



*Remembering how she looked in the 70s, Sandy Walters added a baby bulge to her outfit.*



Cool 70s clothes, dynamite food, a hip quiz, folk songs, disco dancing and good fun - we had quite a great trip down memory lane recalling the 1970s at our event on June 11th at the Mead House.

Check out these photos - courtesy of Anne Marie Leone - then have a try at our quiz.

How well do YOU remember the 1970s?



*Anne Schneider, a hip chick with a great message for all of us.*



*Lilly and Howard Pobiner in full costume disco dance on the Mead House porch.*



*The winner of the 50/50 raffle, Emma Lou Sailors, left, receives the \$235 prize from Ellen Klein.*



*Matt Turk leads guests in a sing along of 70s tunes on his guitar.*



*Laura Lynn O'Halloran looking groovy sports a cool head scarf of the 1970s.*

## DO YOU REMEMBER...

1. What happened in New York City on July 13, 1977?
2. What form of transportation first appeared in the 70s? a. Skateboard b. Jumbo Jet c. Ford Edsel d. Space Shuttle
3. Who was the only vice president in U.S. history to resign because of criminal charges?
4. Who was the lead male star in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"? a. Al Pacino b. Jack Nicholson c. Robert Duval d. Paul Newman
5. What momentous event happened throughout the US on April 22, 1970?
6. What was the moniker of the informer who supplied information to Bob Woodward in the Watergate conspiracy?
7. Abbie Hoffman was : a. The most decorated Vietnam Vet b. Bill Cosby's comedy writer c. Spiro Agnew's nemesis d. A US senator
8. Who was the longest serving mayor of Dobbs Ferry in the 1970s? a. John Nanna b. William Zemnack c. Philip Melillo d. Rolon Reed
9. Mark Spitz won 7 gold medals at the 1972 Olympics located in what city?
10. The bar & grill that preceded Double Days on Main Street was called : a. Scappy's b. the Peanut Room c. The Ferry Inn d. Cherry's
11. In the early 1970s a stalker ran through what local institution?
12. Who beat whom in the 1973 tennis match billed as the "Battle of the Sexes"?
13. What home entertainment device was invented in the 1970s? a. VCR b. 16mm projector c. DVD player d. ipod
14. During the oil crises of 1973 & 1979 despite the shortage, the price of a gallon of gas in 1973 never rose above ...?

ANSWERS : 1. BLACKOUT 2. B 3. SPIRO AGNEW 4. B 5. THE FIRST EARTH DAY 6. DEEP THROAT 7. C 8. A 9. MUNICH 10. C 11. MASTERS SCHOOL 12. BILLIE JEAN KING BEAT BOBBY RIGGS 13. A 14. \$1

# The Mead House

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 - \$300 per year

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

*or visit us on the web at*

[www.DobbsFerryHistory.org](http://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 1855 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.

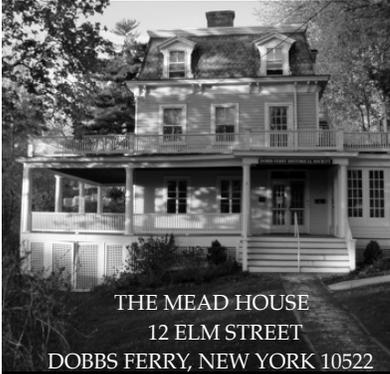
Club meeting, rehearsal space, birthday party, baby shower, anniversary celebration, office holiday party, you name it - the historic Mead House is the perfect place for your next gathering!

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.





THE MEAD HOUSE  
12 ELM STREET  
DOBBS FERRY, NEW YORK 10522

NEWSLETTER DESIGN: ROBIN COSTELLO

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# DOBBS FERRY IS IN NEED OF HEROES.

## This time, to save our house.

In August, we remembered and celebrated the patriots and heroes who fought in the war of independence. Today Dobbs Ferry is once more in need of heroes. This time to save the Mead House, the home and heart of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.

## The situation is desperate.

While doing repairs under the house, we discovered the pipe that brings gas to the house was rotting. The plumber told us the pipes were not up to code and would have to be replaced. A Con Edison investigator shut off our gas and told us since we are listed as a commercial enterprise we would have to pay for the replacement costs.

## The cost: \$16,000!

That is a sum we do not have. Of course, without gas we have no heat. Without gas we have no hot water. And without gas we will lose our resident caretaker who helps to maintain our Mead House.

## We need your help.

Without gas we will have to shut down the house and stop all the work and research that the Society does to gather our village's history that adds to the prominence and pride the village enjoys. If you have been to the Mead House lately you know that it's in the best shape ever. Many have helped financially, others with their volunteer labor to restore the House to its original beauty. It would be a shame to lose it all now. We need you and all members of our community to step up and help us save our home.

**Please renew your membership now.** If you are not yet a member, join us now. Our Hero's annual membership fee is \$50. At the same time we hope you will contribute an additional amount to help us solve our desperate problem. Give as much as you can. \$50 will be great. \$100 would be stupendous. More would be more than heroic.

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society is a valuable asset to our village. It is the repository of records, photos, maps, oral histories and much more covering our earliest days from the 18th century to today. It is open and used by scholars, educators, school children, anyone interested in our rich history. The Mead House is essential to our work and mission. Don't let it close.

**Be a hero. Please fill out the coupon and send us your contribution.**

Of course, all contributions are tax deductible. Please do it now.

**Dobbs Ferry needs you!**



*Yes, I want to preserve the Mead House, the repository of the rich history of Dobbs Ferry from the beginning of our republic to the present, for the following amount:*

- My Hero membership dues of \$50.
- And an additional amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- Please alert me to how we're doing in our effort to save our home. My email address is \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your contribution to us at:

**DF HISTORICAL SOCIETY at MEAD HOUSE**

**12 ELM STREET DOBBS FERRY, NY 10522**

Or visit us at : [WWW.DOBBSFERRYHISTORY.ORG](http://WWW.DOBBSFERRYHISTORY.ORG)