



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.

Pioneering Pacifists

When World War I broke out, the Villards of Dobbs Ferry were in the forefront of efforts to keep the U.S. neutral.

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Garbage? Far From It

The Wickers Creek Shell Midden is evidence of Indians moving away from a nomadic life.

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History in the Bones

Underneath an 1870s mansion on Oliphant, a possible Indian burial site.

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Beloved Pharmacy

A relative's reminiscence of 'Doc' Arone and his drugstore on Chestnut and Main.

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Volume XXIX Issue No. 3

The Dobbs Family in Manhattan

By Jim Luckett

In the first article in this series, we learned that, contrary to almost all historical accounts, the Dobbs family was never on Barren Island in today's Brooklyn. That island was uninhabited and owned by one man, who was vigilant against trespassers and did not rent to anyone named Dobbs. Instead, the first verifiable home of the Dobbs family was Manhattan Island.

We brought back John Dobbs from the afterlife to tell us his family's story. He ended that first installment with the question, "So if we were on Manhattan Island, what did we do there?" Here is his answer:

The Autobiography of John Dobbs, Part 2, as Told to Jim Luckett

In 1680, my dad and my two uncles walked into the Stadt Huys (New York City's first City Hall, at 73 Pearl Street) and bought liquor licenses. My dad is identified in the records as "Walter Dopp," Uncle Ed as "Edward Meeke," and Uncle William as "William Merritt."

How old were we in 1680? Well, historians say, without proof, that I was 23 when I moved to the future Dobbs Ferry around 1698, which would make me 5 years old in 1680. All we know for sure is I was single when I moved upriver, married soon after arriving, and lived well into the 1700s. Records show I brought the last of my eight children to the Sleepy Hollow Dutch Reformed Church for baptism in 1721, and three years later I registered "WD" as the "earmark of my beasts" — a mark cut or branded on farm animals. (I may have gotten the branding iron from my father, Walter, or my uncle William.) Those may be my last two imprints on the historical record. However, there is a record in 1745 of two men being named overseers "of the road from John Dobbs to the Bronx [sic] River," but whether I was still alive, or my name was being used as a place name after my death, is open to question.

A newspaper article published right after my mom's death in 1727 said she was 104 and was survived by her sister Sarah, who

was 102 (truly remarkable life spans at the time). If we believe that, they were 47 and 45, respectively, in 1680.

Uncle William's age is the one most reliably fixed: He put his age, 39, in a legal document in 1680, a deposition concerning a transaction with Mrs. "Mary" Philipse (most likely Margaret Philipse, wife of Frederick) involving 226 gallons of rum. Frederick Philipse, of course, would later be my landlord, since in 1682 he would buy a big chunk of Westchester, including all of the future Village of



A view of Broad Street, before the canal was eliminated in 1676.

Dobbs Ferry. Margaret was quite active in business affairs in her own right as a trader and ship owner.

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As it happens, Jasper Danckaerts, the Dutch traveler, crossed the Atlantic on one of her ships, and she was on board. He didn't like her, or her ship, calling her a "miserable" person and the ship "disorderly ... so much vermin." (Though this was not a slave ship, she and her husband were active in the slave trade.)

That 1680 document marks the first appearance of my dad in the historical record, but not of Uncle William. He was around long before. Perhaps he came first, and once he was established, sent for his siblings and their spouses.

Uncle William in New York Before 1680

When the English took what was then the city of New Amsterdam and the province of New Netherlands from the Dutch by force of arms in 1664, Uncle William was there. The Dutch surrendered under the following terms: Everybody could stay, and keep their property, their religion, and their businesses, provided they signed an oath of allegiance. The Dutch inhabitants mostly signed and stayed. Strangely, Uncle William Merritt's name is on the list of people who signed, even though he was English. But a 1665 tax list of city residents does not list William or anyone else in the family.

William was definitely in New York again from 1668 onward. Proof of this is in court records. In 1668 he won a court order against one Charles Hadsal over a debt of 14 pounds sterling. Uncle William was frequently suing people and getting sued, almost always about business debts. The city was tiny — far smaller in population than today's Dobbs Ferry — but with banks nonexistent and currency scarce, business was conducted on a buy-now-pay-later basis, leading to plenty of litigation.

At the beginning of the decade, Uncle William bought a house in Manhattan, and was sued the next year for nonpayment.

In 1671 my cousin John Merritt, William's son, received an inheritance from one John Hadden of Jamaica, Queens. A servant in the Merritt household also received a bequest, in gratitude for her

service in taking care of Hadden during his illness. This tells us a few things: (a) Uncle William was the kind of friend who would inspire such gestures of gratitude toward his baby son and servant; (b) Uncle William was rich enough, at 30, to have a servant; and (c) perhaps the Mer-

ritts lived in Queens before Manhattan. In the 1670s, Uncle William started appearing on the tax rolls as a Manhattan resident. He was also a mariner. In 1671 he was master (captain) of the ketch Tryall, which sailed from New York to Jamaica and Barbados. It was confiscated in Jamaica on the grounds that its owner, Rabba Couty, was a Jew and therefore a foreigner, ineligible under the Navigation Acts to trade between British ports. Governor Francis Lovelace of New York (owner of the Lovelace Tavern next to City Hall) opposed the confiscation, attesting that Couty was a citizen of New York City and that Merritt and his crew were Englishmen. The crew is listed by name. My dad and Uncle Ed were not aboard. The confiscation was upheld in Jamaica, despite Lovelace's certificate. But in 1672 a court in England rejected the premise that all Jews are foreigners and ordered the ship returned to Couty based on the facts in the certificate.

tolerance — including for Jews — was allowed to continue. (One exception: An anti-Catholic furor erupted in 1688 that will later be of paramount importance to our story.)



A 1767 map showing the Merritt farm on the right.

ritts lived in Queens before Manhattan. In the 1670s, Uncle William started appearing on the tax rolls as a Manhattan resident. He was also a mariner. In 1671 he was master (captain) of the ketch Tryall, which sailed from New York to Jamaica and Barbados. It was confiscated in Jamaica on the grounds that its owner, Rabba Couty, was a Jew and therefore a foreigner, ineligible under the Navigation Acts to trade between British ports. Governor Francis Lovelace of New York (owner of the Lovelace Tavern next to City Hall) opposed the confiscation, attesting that Couty was a citizen of New York City and that Merritt and his crew were Englishmen. The crew is listed by name. My dad and Uncle Ed were not aboard. The confiscation was upheld in Jamaica, despite Lovelace's certificate. But in 1672 a court in England rejected the premise that all Jews are foreigners and ordered the ship returned to Couty based on the facts in the certificate.

New York was outstanding among the British colonies for religious tolerance. Other colonies were founded by people escaping religious persecution, who then persecuted others. But the Dutch saw persecution as bad for business. When New Netherlands became New York, religious

Harbor and reconquered the city and province, then returned it to England the following year. The reconquest was a sideshow to a major European war that ended in a negotiated peace in 1674 that returned New York to England. While the Dutch were in control, they confiscated a ketch lying at the bottom of Westchester Creek off Long Island Sound near its western end. In the record of these proceedings it is noted that William Merritt had been the captain of that boat. In early 1676 William was spending enough time on land to serve on a committee formed to "Survey and value all the vacant Land, and ruined or decayed houses within this City, convenient or fitt to build" upon. This tells us not only that he was not away at sea, but also that he was trusted and seen to have the skills for such a task. His status was clearly rising.

Footprints in the Tax Records

Now to the tax records: The 1676 New York City tax rolls are unusually detailed. Almost everybody was taxed, not just rich people and property owners. Everyone's wealth was published: Frederick Philipse topped the list at 13,000 pounds. Some contrasting examples: The carpenter Andries Jansenwealth was put at 100 pounds,

and the cooper Andrew Bresteed's at just 50. William's was put at 300 pounds; he was a few rungs up on the wealth ladder, but only a few.

It took a skilled tradesman about 11 working days to earn one pound, so Mr. Philipse's wealth was equal to more than 40 years of earnings of 10 skilled tradesmen. Uncle William's wealth could have paid 10 skilled tradesmen for slightly under 1 year of work. Both men would get a lot richer.

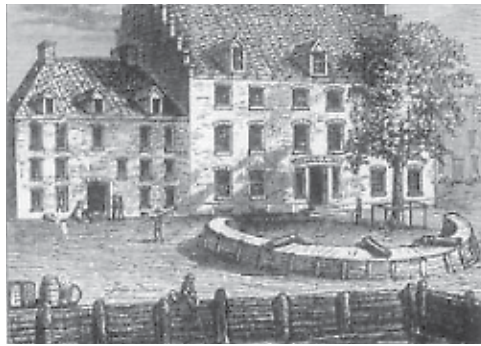
My dad and my uncle Ed Meeks are not on the 1676 tax rolls; either they were not there or they were too poor to be taxed.

In the minutes for 1677 there is a list of all the houses and vacant lands and the tax assessed on each based on value, some 500 parcels in all. William Merritt's house on "Feild [sic] Street" (location unknown) is taxed at 11 shillings, an amount indicating that it was one of the better houses in the city. Again, there was no trace of my dad owning a house or land in 1677.

A Tavern in the Family?

But back to those liquor licenses: Why did my dad and uncles buy them? There would be no reason to do so except to sell liquor at retail. In 1680, William bought a farm, on the only road running north out of Manhattan. The original owner of that farm, Wolfert Webber, ran a tavern on that spot, one that crops up many times in fiction and nonfiction, including in a tale by Washington Irving.

Uncle William, Aunt Margery, and their son John did not move to the farm. William kept a very nice house downtown on Broad Street, which he didn't sell until 1698. This suggests that my parents and my aunt and uncle Meekes ran the farm and tavern. William, though, was a merchant, a politician, and an officer in the militia. He was nominated for Sheriff in 1674, became the liquor tax collector in 1679, and climbed the ladder of political success from there. He soon had property all over town, including a mill. He was not about to remove himself from the action downtown to settle on a farm at 39. So why did he buy a farm? Perhaps one motive was to help my mom and dad get established.



The Lovelace Tavern, left, and New York's first city hall, on Pearl Street.

In the future installments I will describe the neighborhood surrounding this farm and give more evidence that we were there throughout the 1680s and until 1698. I'll also tell you about the political drama that landed Uncle William and his son in jail for a time and ultimately caused most of the family to leave Manhattan and move upriver. Some of us did remain in Manhattan, and we'll see what they did, and others moved to Barn Island (Wards Island), and we'll trace that history as well. Then we'll plunge into the 200-plus-year history of the ferry service at Dobbs Ferry and see how that evolved.

More on Those Zion Bells

We received the following letter from a former resident:

I love your articles on Dobbs Ferry, having grown up there from 1932 to 1954.

There is one omission I must point out. You had an article on the chimes at Zion Church. My father, the Rev. Charles E. Karsten, was the installer, programmer, and manager for many years. He truly loved them.

Looking forward to many more articles...

With much regards,

Nancy Karsten Iredale

Philadelphia

Letter from the Presidents

As the holiday season arrives, the Board of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society continues our mission to preserve and make available the history of our village.

This past summer we had visitors from descendants of our village's early families, Mayes and Walker. They came from Wisconsin and Maine looking for pictures and quotes from their ancestors.

From the Historical Society (serving Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown) we now have a new display case for artifacts in our collection. Visitors will see a new collection of items from our archives.

We are lucky to have a new volunteer, a library archivist, who is currently working on organizing the archives of the Garden Club of Dobbs Ferry. This village club has been in existence since 1923.

We would like to thank Joe Cirillo for his donation of lawn and landscaping services for the past year through his company, ALC.

Two Board members are helping review the photo collection of Children's Village in preparation for a Dobbs Ferry Library exhibit on CV.

If you are parents of a senior interested in history, the Society is now offering a scholarship for a student in the Dobbs Ferry School District. Please see our website for the application.

We hope to see you all at the Clara Mead Eggnog Party. Our doors will be open to anyone who wants to taste the secret eggnog recipe. Hope to see you there!

Madeline Byrne
Frank Farrington

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Judith Doolin Spikes

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The Villards of Dobbs Ferry and the Great War

By Richard Borkow

World War I began when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Over the next few days, one Great Power after another, the German Empire, the Russian Empire, France, and Great Britain, also declared war. Europe was soon witness to battlefield carnage on an unprecedented scale. Eventually the war would spread to the Middle East, the Far East, Africa, and the high seas.

The outbreak of war in Europe greatly alarmed leaders of the American pacifist movement, including Fanny Villard and Oswald Villard of Dobbs Ferry, who feared from the first that the United States might become a belligerent. They attempted to head off that possibility with



The Women's Peace Parade, in New York City, in August 1914.

strong advocacy of American neutrality and with large demonstrations in favor of peace.

Fanny Garrison Villard, the 69-year-old daughter of famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, was a prominent proponent of women's suffrage. She was able to persuade her friend and fellow suffragist, Carrie Chapman Catt, a resident of Manhattan, and later of Briarcliff and New Rochelle, to assist her in organizing a Women's Peace Party and in planning a Women's Peace Parade, which took place in New York City on August 29, 1914.

Fanny's son, Oswald Garrison Villard, who had been the principal founder and

champion of the NAACP in 1909, and who was an outspoken advocate of liberal causes, described the Women's Peace Parade in his autobiographical book, "Fighting Years: Memoirs of a Liberal Editor."



Fanny Villard with her father, William Lloyd Garrison.

He writes that his mother became the head of "a strong committee of women [who gave] expression to the sense of outrage of American women at the unholy slaughter daily reported from Belgium and Alsace" and reports that "on August 29 several thousand women paraded down Fifth Avenue from Fifty-Ninth Street to Union Square with my mother at the head. There were no bands; there was dead silence and the crowds watched the parade in the spirit of the marchers, with sympathy and approval."

Oswald Villard was able to use the two publications that he owned, managed, and sometimes edited, *The New York Evening Post* and *The Nation* magazine, as platforms to promote a national policy of neutrality.

During the two and a half years of official American neutrality, from August 1914 to April 1917, he vociferously opposed arguments favoring American involvement in the war and condemned the "preparedness" movement, led by former president Theodore Roosevelt, who urged that the United States forgo neutrality, become an ally of Great Britain and France, and declare war on Germany.

Some critics of Villard accused him of feigning a posture of pacifism and of actually being a pro-German partisan, hostile to Great Britain. The British government considered *The New York Evening Post* to be the most hostile anti-British newspaper in the United States, and in fact Villard did criticize the British for the inflexible manner in which they conducted their naval blockade of Germany, which often disrupted American commercial shipping. But he strongly denied the charge of pro-German partisanship. In an August 13, 1914, editorial in *The Nation*, soon after the outbreak of war in Europe, he wrote the following: "The Nation has always entertained and

expressed the highest admiration for the German people, but never for the Germany of the Kaiser. We have never believed that a people of essentially noble quality should be subject to the will of an autocratic king or emperor ... Never have we upheld the Germany of the mailed fist, or the autocracy of militarism; against its excesses, its encroachments upon civil rights, its assertion that it constitutes a sacrosanct caste superior to any other, we have protested in season and out of season."

The Wilson Administration tried to stay out of this catastrophic war, but was gradually drawn into it, provoked principally by the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. A German U-boat sank the British passenger ship *Lusitania* in 1915, causing the deaths of many civilians, including many Americans. Strong protests by President Wilson led to a pause in the submarine attacks. However, in early 1917 the German government resumed its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, and in February, March, and April of 1917, one American merchant ship after another was sunk by German U-boats in the waters off Great Britain.

The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, and, in various forums, Oswald Villard expressed strong disagreement with the American declaration. But his pacifist opinions did not appear in his publications after U.S. entry into the war. The editors of *The New York Evening Post* and *The Nation* did not concur with Villard and were able to maintain enough editorial independence to keep the publications from criticizing the U.S. decision to enter the war.

Large numbers of American troops joined allied French, British, and Dominion (primarily Canadian and Australian) forces in France in the late spring and early summer of 1918. In June and July, the German Ludendorff Offensive was checked by the allied armies. In August the allies began a Hundred Days Offensive, which finally brought victory in the Great War. The Hundred Days Offensive compelled German forces, after four years of stalemate on the Western front, to retreat from all of their French and Belgian trench lines, and ultimately led to the

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Not Just Garbage

The Wickers Creek Shell Midden Is the Rivertowns' Oldest Built Feature

By Tom Morrison

“Shell mounds, like the one at the Landing in Dobbs Ferry, are nothing but garbage dumps. They are leftovers discarded by Indians after feasting on the good part.”

I have heard that sort of appraisal a few times, and agree with it — if a long string of caveats is added.

For one thing, shell mounds, or middens, signify climate change, although a happier one than what we're dealing with today. They became common beginning about 8,000 years ago with the melting away of the last ice age. Rising sea levels primed the Hudson River as suitable for oysters. And people could settle down and concentrate on the resources that were easily available. As such, the Wickers Creek Shell Midden testifies to the region's gradual transformation from nomadic to a more settled pattern of human habitation.

The midden is made up of layers from successive visitors over thousands of years, as though to certify this as a special place. One archaeologist speculates that outer layers of shells may have been a way of messaging to others — “this is what we found; now see what you can do.”

One of the most diligent students of the

Wickers Creek Shell Midden was the late Hans Schaper of Hastings. He emphasized that only further excavation, which was not allowed, could have established whether the mound is of a “kitchen” variety, consisting of camping debris left by roaming bands, or a “processing” one, with a focus on the supplying of oyster meat for base camps, bartering, or tribute obligations.

Another perspective is from Karen Hartgen. As president of the New York Archaeological Council, and using data from the Landing developer's archaeological study, she wrote: “The samples from the shell midden ... provided mammal bone, fish bone, nut fragments, other shell fragments and charcoal. Thus the ... shell midden portion of the site has yielded new data which could provide new interpretations on subsistence in coastal New York.”

One of the most intriguing finds is by Mark DiMiceli, an artifact collector from Irvington. He has shown “clay baby” effigies, broken in two, that he reports he found in the midden.

Does anything else suggest ceremonial activity in the proximity of the midden? Steve Yarabek, a former Dobbs Ferry

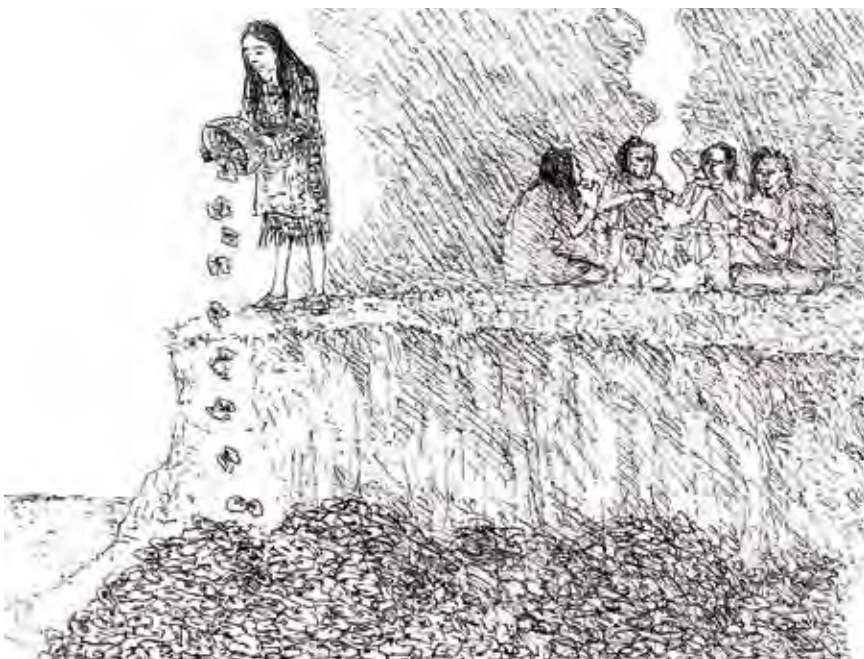
Planning Board member, recalls that one of the Sisters of Mercy, the order that used to own the property, told him a Native American burial site was uncovered about 400 feet east of the shell mound. Also, Schaper argued that postholes found in a now destroyed part of the larger Wickers Creek site could indicate a burial scaffold. (Others argue for a drying rack or a fortification fence.) Finally, Jim Tobias says an archaeological communiqué regarding the outskirts of the shell mound describes “a ceremonial fireplace for a sacred fire in which ashes and charcoal are later moved ... which would indicate that this fireplace is near burial sites.”

Tobias, a member of the Moravian of the Thames Band of the Delaware Nation (closely related to the last indigenous inhabitants of the Westchester County area), also says that the fact that coyote bones were inventoried from the shell mound indicates that ceremonial activities went on there. Cheryl Claassen, an archaeologist who did extensive work up the river at Dogan Point, suspects there was some feasting event at each one of the Hudson sites.

Historians of religion and anthropologists have written much on the worldwide symbolism of shells and shell mounds. Did people who lived in intimate relationship with nature look at and experience shells in a spiritual way — in a way that supplements the gastro-economic emphasis that modern eyes see? And New York archaeologists note several examples of Indians buried in shell pits.

Catherine Walter, who was an ethno-archaeologist with the Museum of Natural History and a Dobbs Ferry resident, wrote that the Wickers Creek site's nickname, “the place of the bark kettle,” has religious overtones. She cites a description of natives in New York City who had a sacrificial ceremony presided over by a “Devil-hunter.” They would put some of their treasures into a kettle, and then put the kettle into a hole in the ground. They imagined that a terrible Horned Snake, of which they were in constant fear, would crawl into the hole and take possession of their offerings.

The Wickers Creek Shell Midden was part of a larger Archaeological Site when
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Friends of Wickers Creek Archeological Site (FOWCAS) came on the scene 30 years ago. The midden is all that was left by the Landing developer, and it was nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the only such nomination acknowledged by the Lenape themselves. It was accepted by the authorities but remains in abeyance because the Landing Homeowners Association objected.

FOWCAS and the Landing homeowners teamed up with the village to erect a plaque at the base of the shell midden. The words were chosen in consultation with Darryl Stonefish, historian of the Moravian Delaware: "The shell mound before you is a testimony to the Lenape who harvested fish and oysters which the waters produced in abundance. Share their love of this land."

it nevertheless maintains a commanding presence. It was during the excavation for the foundation of the mansion that the bones were discovered.

Fields was President of the Village of Dobbs Ferry during a greater part of the years between 1882 and 1893, as well as serving as a director of the Dobbs Ferry Bank. Most famously, however, as an insurance man employed by the Mutual Insurance Company, he was alleged to have been in charge of the "Yellow Dog Fund," a sum of money obtained by rather questionable means and doled out to legislators who promoted bills favorable to the company. When a state investigation into the fund commenced, Fields "disappeared" into the West for a time, and later reappeared as a government witness.

In any case, Fields, by all indications, would seem to have been an impatient man. When the bones were discovered, they were quickly reburied somewhere else (location unknown).

The brief article in the newspaper said they were determined to be "Indian bones." What would have indicated this? For one thing, location. According to information on file in the archives of the Historical Society, Native Americans of this region buried their dead in a sitting position facing the southwest. Warm weather and fair winds came from the southwest; therefore, the abode of Cantanvert, the "good spirit," must lie in that region, and, hopefully, the deceased individual would dwell with that spirit. The hill on which Genehurst is situated would seem ideally situated for a southwestern orientation.

On the other hand, what about artifacts? Native Americans were generally buried with some of their valued items: wampum, arrows, knives, kettles, and other such objects. There is no mention of artifacts in the article, yet it states that the bones were determined to be of Indian origin. If that is that case, there must have been artifacts. Perhaps they were

Breaking News! A Possible Native American Burial Ground on Oliphant Avenue

By Larry Blizard

While perusing 19th century copies of the Dobbs Ferry Register in the archives of the Historical Society, I came across this item: "Workmen, digging the foundation for the home of Andrew C. Fields on Oliphant Avenue in Dobbs Ferry, unearthed a large quantity of apparently human bones. Upon examination, the bones were determined to be those of Indians. The bones were reburied elsewhere and work continued."

Never mind that the incident took place in 1878; for me, as a history freak, this was big news.

This was all the more interesting because Oliphant is one of those peaceful residential streets that branch off Broadway as it heads south. It is a street that real estate agents love to show clients who are looking for a serene haven. Winding your way up a hill, you pass lovely tree-shaded lawns and stately homes. At the crest of a hill, one house overshadows its neighbors. This is, or was, Genehurst.

Genehurst, built around 1878 at what is now 38 Oliphant Avenue, was the mansion built by Andrew C. Fields. Considerably transformed from its original appearance and now divided into apartments,

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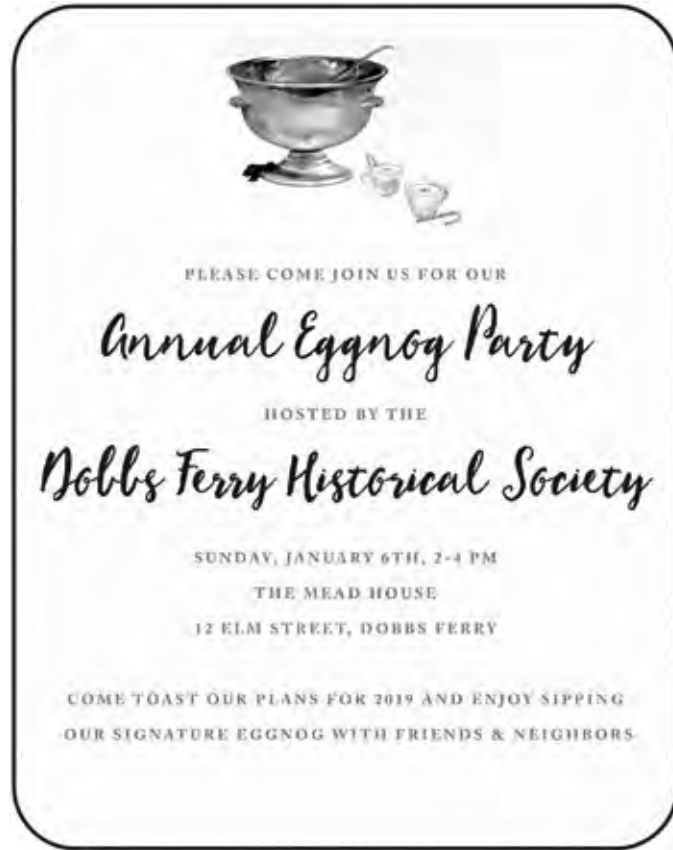
Genehurst, built in the 1870's, apparently atop an Indian burial ground.

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A Healing Brunch *by Larry Blizard*

On Sunday, October 14, a special event, in the form of a breakfast/brunch, took place at the Mead House, headquarters of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society. The occasion was the annual visit by members of the Lenape Native American people to their ancestral homeland, namely Dobbs Ferry. In precolonial times, the Lenape “nation” stretched from a large part of Manhattan Island to the Croton Lakes and from the Bronx River to the Hudson. But what is generally considered to have been their chief village was at what is now Dobbs Ferry, specifically the neighborhood known as “The Landing.”

There was also a symbolic aspect to the event. In 1627, a Lenape left Dobbs Ferry with beaver skins to sell at Fort Amsterdam (New York City). On the way, he was murdered and robbed by three of Peter Minuet’s farm servants. The avenging of this tragedy by the Lenape was the beginning of a century of troubles between the local settlers and the Native Americans. The enjoyable gathering at the Mead House was a continuation of a long healing process.



The Villards of Dobbs Ferry and the Great War

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Armistice of November 11, 1918.

While American troops had been engaged on the battlefields of France in substantial

numbers for only half a year, the cost in American lives was high. It is estimated that the United States suffered 53,000 battlefield deaths in World War I, and that almost 10 per cent of American soldiers killed in battle were citizens of New York.

On the World War I monument that stands outside Dobbs Ferry High School, the names of five men — Edward J. Condon, John C. Eberspacher, Emil Lang, Paul Schlutow, and Michael Zanni — are inscribed “in memory of those from the Village of Dobbs Ferry who made the supreme sacrifice in the World War, 1917-1919.”

A Possible Native American Burial Ground on Oliphant Avenue

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hurriedly squirreled away, so as not to make a big to-do.

A third consideration is that the burial ground, if it is Native American, seems to be at some distance from our most prominent village site, namely Wickers Creek. However, there were other villages

nearby. The excavation at Genehurst involved only a small area; no doubt future excavations, should they occur, will reveal more of the site.

This discovery of a possible burial site tells us that so much of our history is hidden away, paved over, and built over. A few years ago, while digging in our own front yard to do some planting, we

discovered, about half a foot down, a row of smooth stones, blackened by soot from a fire, the ashes of which were still there with oyster shells.

Who had that oyster roast? Native Americans? Revolutionary War soldiers? Aqueduct builders? A church group? Lacking further evidence, we can only guess. In the same manner, we can only guess at the remains unearthed at Genehurst. One thing is evident, however — our history is right under our feet.



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The Arone Pharmacy and ‘Doc’ Columbus Arone

By Patricia Arone

Patricia (Patty) Arone of Hastings married Fred Arone, of an old Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry family. Patty and Fred were involved in researching, recording, and publishing the history of both Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry and in the local history of the two villages throughout their roughly 70 years of residence. Among many other historical records of Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry, they amassed the largest known collection of photos of the villages. They were and still are well known by their generation of local residents.

Just one example of their involvement is the illustrated 82-page softcover book “Ardsley, N.Y.: The War Years 1941-1945,” which they wrote, published, and printed at their own expense. They donated free copies to “the public” on the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in the Ardsley community and school district. Fred (deceased) was a nephew of the pharmacist “Doc” Arone, as Patty explains in this brief reminiscence. Patty moved from Ardsley to Florida about eight years ago but retains ties in Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry with family and in-laws and other local residents, as well as with local history enthusiasts. Many current residents will remember their son, Matt Arone, who was head of the Recreation Department in Dobbs Ferry for many years. In May 1935, Columbus Arone purchased the pharmacy from Dr. Seitz and owned it until 1972. The pharmacy was on the corner of Main and Chestnut, where the Celtic Corner now sits.

— Judith Doolin Spikes

My husband Fred’s Uncle Columbus owned the drug store. Columbus was the “baby” of the family, and his older brothers and sister helped pay for him to go to college to become a pharmacist. They were very proud of their brother. For Italian immigrants, the Arone family did well for themselves. Fred’s father (Ferdinand) worked for the New York Central Railroad as the Ardsley station agent. One of Columbus’s brothers, Rafael, had a tailor shop in Ardsley. Brother Johnny was always mentioned as having to attend his mother’s funeral with a police escort. Nobody talked much about him. He was the “black sheep” of the family. I seem to remember it was gambling issues. The only sister was Philomena. She married Joseph Gagliardi and lived in Dobbs Ferry. She had one blue eye and one brown eye.

Columbus married Josephine Nannariello, another old Ardsley name. They had two sons. Robert studied to become a doctor in Rome, Italy. Sadly, on his trip home from Europe he became ill aboard ship. When the ship was close enough to shore, Bobby was flown to a hospital, but he passed away. My mind is a little fuzzy — I think it was polio, but I can’t be sure. Their other son, Richard, became a pharmacist like his father and lived in Elmsford for many years. Richard had four beautiful daughters.

Columbus was an old-fashioned pharmacist. He was known as Uncle Columbus to us, but he was known as Doc to everyone else in Dobbs Ferry. People



The Arone Pharmacy, at Chestnut and Main.

would come to him with their aches, pains, and ailments, and he would suggest what medicine to take. He would remove splinters, wash out something in an eye, and look into a sore throat. He also spoke Italian, so with a large Italian population in Dobbs Ferry at that time, he was very popular.

Columbus served on the Ardsley school board for many years. His election was considered a big deal at that time. No Italians had been elected to the school board before. My children adored Uncle Columbus. Aunt Josey would call Fred whenever she made a special dish that she knew I wouldn’t make and invite him for dinner. It was tripe, and I couldn’t stand the smell of it. Fred loved it, especially the way Aunt Josey made it.

That was a real trip down memory lane. I am afraid that I have lost touch with all the Arone cousins.