DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# 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.*



Volume XXIX Issue No. 8 Summer 2020

## The Ferry in the Revolution

*By Jim Luckett*

When we last left the story of the ferry at Dobbs Ferry, we were in the early stages of the American Revolution. The ferry had carried John and Sam Adams westward on their journey to the Second Continental Congress and Martha Washington eastward to the siege of Boston.

Our saga is also the saga of one extended family. Three surnames are involved — Merritt, Dobbs, and Sneden — but they are related. By way of review, John Dobbs leased the land that became the eastern landing around 1698, and he, or his son William, started the ferry. His mother was Mary Merritt Dobbs. Her brother (John's uncle) was the wealthy William Merritt, ex-mayor of New York City. Uncle William lived on the western shore, opposite John Dobbs.

Now for the Snedens: John and Mollie Sneden took over the ferry and occupied William Merritt's former house on the west bank by 1745. It is believed that Mollie (formal name "Mary") was a daughter of John Dobbs.

This installment tells of the Snedens navigating the turbulent political waters of the era. The family split into Tory and Patriot factions, and the sole Patriot son gained control of the ferry. There was apparently no bitterness in this split. The Tory Snedens ceded control to the Patriot Snedens early in the war and ceded ownership after the war.

*The DeWint house, in Tappan, N.Y. (see map, page 2), where Washington met with the British general Guy Carleton.*

Britain's early strategy was to split the colonies at the Hudson River, then surround and vanquish an isolated New England. This failed because, despite their vast Navy, the British were never able to stop traffic from crossing the river. As the first good crossing point north of New York City, Dobbs Ferry and Sneden's Landing were vital to the Patriots, who succeeded in holding them. The crossing was apparently so well-traveled

*Continued on page 2*

*Continued from page 1*

that people viewed the communities around the two landings as one, needing only one name — "Dobbs Ferry."

Before he can carry the narrative forward, our narrator, John Dobbs, needs to answer a few open questions: What happened to him? What happened to his son William, and what happened to Cheer Hall, the house his uncle built on the west bank? The seventh installment of his imagined autobiography begins with those answers:

### *My Death and William's*

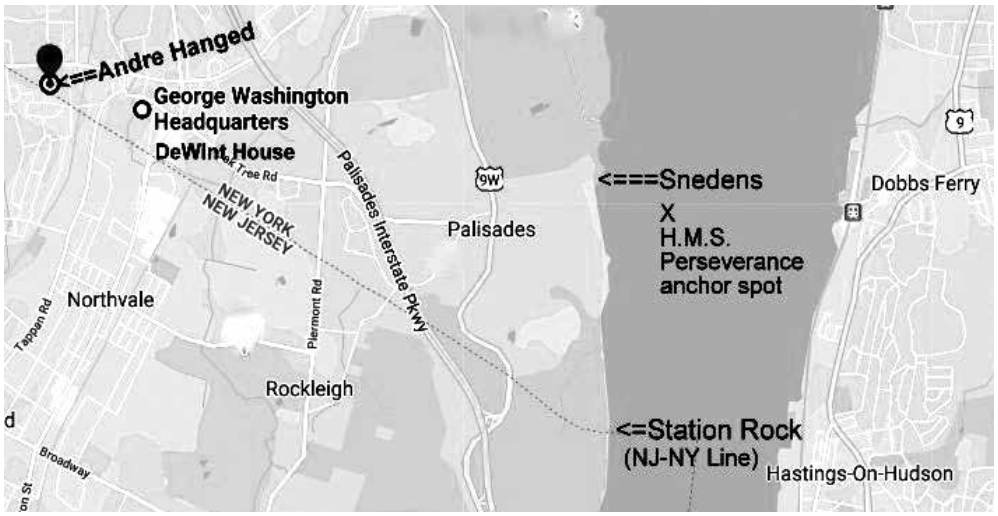
Neither my death nor that of my son William is recorded. William appears in the Town Book in 1760 among the listed tavern keepers, but not in 1761. Dobbs family historian the late Margaret Lane, my sixth-great-granddaughter, wrote that William was known to be alive as late as 1777 (age 61), but she provided no clue to her source.

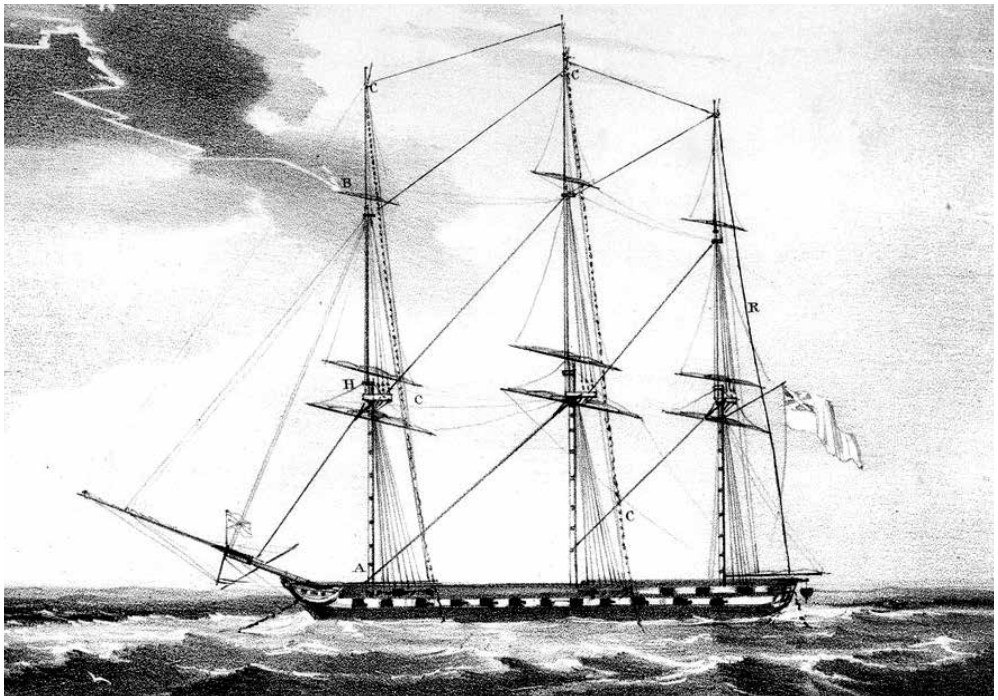
I am listed in the records of the Tarrytown church as sponsor of my grandson Abraham's baptism in 1730. That is the last known reference to me as a living person. My name appears in 1745 in the Town Book as a place name ("the overseers for the road from John Dobbs to Bronx River"), so I was probably still alive then.

### *Cheer Hall Disappears*

Also unrecorded is the fate of Cheer Hall, the house my uncle built and first occupied around 1698. It was occupied by the Snedens by 1745 and was the base for their ferry operations. For a long time, it was thought to have survived into the 20th century, but expert examination disproves this. Furthermore, a map made for the Continental Army in 1780 shows no house close enough to the river to be Cheer Hall.

The last known reference to Cheer Hall existing was in 1769, when representatives of New York and New Jersey fixed the dividing line between the states at 79 chains and 27 links south of "Snydon's House, formerly Corbet's" and scratched a line on a boulder ("station rock") at that point. (Later this was found to be slightly inaccurate, given the imprecise nature of the surveying instruments of my era.) Thus Cheer Hall was demolished some time between 1769 and 1780.



*After the meeting at the DeWint house, General Carleton entertained the American party on board the HMS Perseverance.*

### *War!*

Soon after the Declaration of Independence, war came to New York. The British took New York City in 1776. Jasper Stymetz, who had taken over my leasehold and had been the ferryman who sold dinner and a ferry ride to John and Sam Adams in 1775, left to join the Patriot cause. He survived the war but did not return to live in Dobbs Ferry.

Mollie Sneden and all her sons except John sided with the British. Please forgive a proud grandpa for pointing out that John Sneden, the lone Patriot son, was named after me (or so I like to think). At least one Sneden son, Robert, was so traitorous that he piloted British warships up the river.

Local rebels banned the Tory Snedens from the river. But the Patriots recognized that John was not like his brothers and allowed him to continue the ferry. Here is an abridged version of the notice they published.

*July 29, 1776*

*"Whereas Dennis Snyden, Jesse Snyden, William Snyden, and Samuel Snyden, all living at or near a place commonly called Snyden's or Dobbs's Ferry, on the west side of Hudson River … are greatly suspected of carrying on a treasonable correspondence with our unnatural enemies, or ships-of-war, belonging to the King of Great Britain, lying in the abovesaid river, by the great*

*Continued on page 3*

*Continued from page 2*

*opportunity afforded them in the privilege they have by keeping ferry, knowing the abovesaid persons to be inveterate enemies to the common States of America:*

*"Therefore, Resolved, That the above ... are hereby forewarned not to keep ferry, or employ any other person to ferry in their room [an old synonym for "stead"], or employ a craft on the abovesaid river, upon any pretense whatsoever …"*

Mollie and her son Dennis fled to New York City for the duration. The other Tory Snedens fled to Nova Scotia.

### *The Mystery of Dennis Sneden's Invoice*

A puzzling document survives among Sneden family papers: an invoice from Dennis to the local Patriot forces, for ferrying members of the Militia and the Continental Army, with horses and wagons, across the river. Given the notice banning Dennis from the ferry business, this would seem impossible after July 29, the date of the ban.

The invoice is undated, but there is a clue implying it was after the ban: It identifies some passengers as "of General Nixon's brigade." But John Nixon, a Massachusetts veteran of the battles of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill, brought his brigade to New York to participate in the defense of the city in April or May 1776. Dennis calls him "General Nixon," but he wasn't promoted to general until August 9. Moreover, there was no apparent reason for Nixon's troops to be crossing the Hudson until late September, when they were ordered to New Jersey. With the city by then occupied by the British, it makes perfect sense they would have crossed at Dobbs Ferry. So probably the services

**FERRYMAN STAFF**
Larry Blizard
Peggie Blizard
Maria Harris
Hubert B. Herring
Ellen Klein
Judith Doolin Spikes
Teresa Walsh

*General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, sent by Washington to assess the western shore from a military perspective.*

covered in that invoice occurred in late September or early October — two months after the ban. Was the ban revoked? Suspended? Ignored? We don't know.

### *Another Invoice Tells Another Story*

Here's a second story based on an invoice. The Lawrences, you'll recall from installment six, owned the Big House in Sneden's Landing and were John Sneden's in-laws. John had married Ellison Lawrence in 1762. The Lawrences were ardent Patriots, still in the Big House in 1776. John Sneden's brother-in-law John Lawrence Jr. played many important roles in Washington's army. Another brother-in-law, Samuel Lawrence, married John's sister (my granddaughter), Mary Sneden.

My daughter Mollie Sneden wasn't great about paying her bills on time. One long-delinquent bill that survives was from Thomas Lawrence, another of Ellison's brothers, for ferry-boat hardware. Mollie didn't pay, even though two of her children had married brothers of this vendor. Mollie's daughter-in-law finally paid this in 1766 — eight years late.

The Tory Snedens eventually ceded their shares in the ferry and associated real estate to John. As a result, the ferry and the Sneden land were not confiscated at war's end.

Philipsburg Manor, including all of Dobbs Ferry, was confiscated because the wealthy Philipse family had sided with the British.

### *The Ferry in the War*

Dobbs Ferry on the west bank was a strategic spot — a good place to cross the river and easy to defend. General Nathanael Greene wrote to Washington on Nov. 10, as he prepared the (futile) defense of Fort Washington and Fort Lee, twin redoubts near where the George Washington Bridge now stands. "I am sure the enemy cannot land at Dobbs's Ferry," he wrote. "The flats run off a great distance; they can't get near the shore with their ships." (The "flats" were the submerged mud flats that make the water so shallow at the western landing.)

General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, sent to assess the western shore from a military perspective, wrote to Washington in 1780 that every place between Dobbs Ferry and Fort Lee was too steep on the west bank for wagons, but

*"our next object was Dobbs's ferry which affords an easy and safe carriage, the roads leading to it from Closter, Paramus, &c, — being very level … The ground on the West side of the river is favorable for Batteries against shipping."*

There was military action on land and water around the ferry site. A blockhouse was built high on the west bank to house cannon that could assault ships on the river. Benedict Arnold spent time in it while plotting his treasonous plan to hand over West Point, writing Washington a duplicitous letter from there. His British accomplice, Major Andre, was captured at Tarrytown and hanged near the ferry's western landing, at Tappan. Before the hanging, the British sent their ship The Greyhound, with negotiators aboard, seeking to strike a deal for Andre's freedom. A diarist on the Patriot side wrote "a flag [ship under a flag of truce] came from the Enemy to Dobbs Ferry and brought a number of things from the Enemy to Major Andrews [Andre]." A diarist aboard that ship, William Smith, recorded that they anchored off "Corbett's Point," using an old name for Sneden's Landing. (Remember: all these references to "Dobbs Ferry" are about the place you now call Palisades, N.Y.) When Washington and the British general Guy Carleton needed a place to sit down and talk about the practical details of the handover of New York City, including what would happen to the enslaved people who had flocked to the British side, where was the logical place to meet? Dobbs Ferry, on the west bank, of course!

*Continued on page 4*

# So, Who Was the First Policeman in Dobbs Ferry?

*By Alan Steinfeld and Madeline Byrne*

Sounds like a simple question. After all, in "Life in a River Village" published in connection with the centennial celebration of Dobbs Ferry, we read on page 35 that William Boyle was Dobbs Ferry's first uniformed policeman. The article goes on to say that he was 24 when selected for office and that he died in 1898. Much of this information is incorrect. The true story of the early days of the police in Dobbs Ferry comes to light upon close reading of the minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Village.

There are a couple of ways to look at the question of who the first policeman of DF was. One is that the first policeman of the Village of Greenburgh, the precursor to DF, would count as the first officer in DF. One might also argue that not until the Village of Dobbs Ferry came into existence in 1882, could there be a first police-man of DF.

On January 5, 1874, Lawrence Boyle was appointed police constable of the Village of Greenburgh and a few weeks later given handcuffs, a shield and a "police club." In March of 1874 he was re-appointed at a salary of $50 a month.

By early 1875, Lawrence Boyle was gone and in the following years a number of different individuals filled the position.

June of 1879 saw the appointment of Porter Divver to the position of policeman and it was specified that, "Said policeman to dress

*Continued on page 5*

## The Ferry...

*Continued from page 3*

There were Dobbs family members on both sides of the war. On the list of men denounced by the Patriots on the west bank there was a John Dobbs and a William Dobbs. I cannot tell you my relationship to them; our family used those two names over and over.

The most prominent Dobbs on the Patriot side was my nephew William Henry Dobbs, son of my brother William, the shoemaker who remained in Manhattan when the rest of us dispersed to points north. W.H. Dobbs was at times a spy, a pilot and a quartermaster for Washington, his name appearing several times in Washington's correspondence. In July 1778 Washington began the relationship this way:

*"[I]t is absolutely necessary that [the leader of the French fleet] should be immediately provided with a number of skillful pilots, well acquainted with the Coast & Harbours and of firm attachment to our cause. I am assured by Governor Clinton and Gen McDougal that you answer this description in every part, I must therefore request the favor of you to see me as early as possible, when I would flatter myself you will not have the smallest objection to going on board the fleet on so essential & interesting occasion."*

One of Washington's last letters to Dobbs was in late July 1781, when Washington was headquartered in Hartsdale ("Camp Phillipsburgh") with his forces arrayed between the Sprain Brook and the Saw Mill River, guarding the approaches to Dobbs Ferry (the east-bank settlement). Washington and Rochambeau had just completed a reconnaissance-in-force against the British defenses in northern Manhattan, to provoke return fire that would reveal the enemy's strength and positions. They were now planning a siege of the city by land and naval forces. Washington wrote to Dobbs:

*"Sir: On the receipt of this, I wish to procure a number of those Pilot[s that] you formerly engaged, and who are particularly acquainted with the Navigation of the Hook [Sandy Hook, at the mouth of New York harbor] & North River [Hudson River] … I should think it best for you to come by the way of Head Quarters, where you may receive any further Instructions you think necessary. As you'll naturally conjecture the reasons for this application, I must enjoin upon you not [to mention] your thoughts to any body, and as much as possible to prevent the Pilots you engage making known their business. I am your Most Humble Servant — Go Washington"*

A month later, the French overruled Washington's plan to attack New York City in favor of targeting Cornwallis's army at Yorktown, Virginia, leading to the battle that won the war. So Washington wrote to my nephew to call off the gathering of pilots for action on the Hudson:

*Chatham 28th August 1781*
*"Sir: Some particular Circumstances having produced an Alteration in my Plan of Operations — there will be no Occasion for the Services of the Pilots at present"*

The victory at Yorktown in October 1781 did not immediately end the war, but it largely ended hostilities. The business of formalizing the end and managing the British withdrawal dragged on into 1782. When Washington and the British commander needed a place to sit down and talk about the practical details of the handover of New York City, including what would happen to the slaves who had flocked to the British side, where was the logical place to meet? Dobbs Ferry, on the west bank, of course!.

Peace came, and John Sneden remained in charge of the ferry. His siblings and mother released their interests to him. And business was good. The ferry really began to thrive in the 19th century, while remaining in the family as each generation took its turn at the helm. In the coming installments, we'll learn about the heyday of the ferry, when it reached its economic zenith, becoming a link not just to the other side of the river, but also to the increasing ship traffic going up and down the river.

*All sources for these articles can be found at http://tinyurl/DobbsLuckettNotes.*

# Remembering a Beloved Firefighter

*By Teresa Walsh*

The American Revolution was fought to break away from a king and the impositions he placed on the Colonists. With the defeat of King George III in 1781, Americans were content never to owe allegiance to a royal house ever again. However, that has never quelled the interest afforded this regal group.

Today's fascination with royalty seems to be at an all-time high. TV and other media venues continue to churn out programs like Netflix's "The Crown" and CNN's documentary "The Windsors: Inside the Royal Dynasty." The "Downton Abbey" big-screen version addresses an estate's preparations for a visit from the king and queen. And the media coverage of Meghan and Harry and baby

*Joseph Beattie, a World War II pilot, met with both King George and Queen Elizabeth (parents of the current queen) on an inspection of military installations in England.*

Archie is unrelenting. Perhaps this armchair voyeurism will be as close as most of us will ever get to crossing paths with a king, queen, … or any royal for that matter.

But not so for World War II pilot Lieutenant Joseph Beattie and his B-17 bomber crew. They got to meet England's King George VI, his wife, Queen Elizabeth, and daughter Princess Elizabeth, the current reigning Queen Elizabeth II, during one of the king's morale-boosting junkets of military installations in England. The event was captured by AP photographers.

Joe was born in Yonkers in 1917, the son of Irish immigrants, and at an early age became the family provider after the untimely death of his father. When war came, Joe enlisted in the Army Air Corps (the Air Force didn't become a separate branch of the military until September 1947) as an air cadet. A younger brother, Jack, enlisted in the Marines and was killed on Iwo Jima.

After earning his wings in Kansas, Joe was sent to Kingman, Arizona, to learn to fly the Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress. This four-engine bomber, built during the 1930s, was used in daylight strategic bombing campaigns. Upon completion of his training, Joe was assigned to the 8th Air Force, 379th Bombardment

*Continued on page 6*

## Correction

From a reader:
I always enjoy every issue of the Ferryman, including the Winter 2020 one. Just one comment about the reference to my grandfather (Dobbs Ferry's first police officer). He was William F. Boyle, my mother's father. The live wire he picked up was on the ground as a result of a thunderstorm, and he was clearing it off the area where pedestrians might have contacted it.

He left my grandmother (Margaret Kerwin) with 11 children and a 12th on the way, not 13. Interestingly, the electric company "settled" with the widow, and with those proceeds (I think $1,000) and the collection taken up by concerned citizens, Grandma was able to buy a house in Yonkers (16 Lamartine Ave.), where she lived the rest of her life. Many offspring still live in the Westchester County area — two great-great-grandsons are police officers in Ardsley.

Just wanted to set the record straight. Thank you for keeping interest in the history of my hometown alive. Peace,

— Patrick ("Packy") J. McCormick (born in Dobbs Ferry Hospital in April, 1931)

## First Police Officer...

*Continued from page 4*

in Police uniform at his own expense and attend to street lamps, light and extinguish same." While not given a uniform, the Board did buy him a "rubber suit" (i.e. rain gear) for inclement weather. He was replaced by James Elder.

November of 1881 saw the resignation of James Elder (he took a position of janitor at the Union Free School) and William Boyle, Jr., was appointed policeman, beating out L.W. Boyle and John Francis. The record reflects that Boyle was paid not only his police salary but also additional money for tending the street lamps. Mr. Boyle met his untimely death early in the morning of Sunday October 17, 1897. His obituary in The Yonkers Statesman of October 18th reports that he was electrocuted by an electric wire he found on the ground and was trying to move it to a safe place. He left his wife and 11 children with a 12th child born after his death. An email from Carol McKenna Spahn, great granddaughter of William Boyle, supplies some additional information about him. Mr. Boyle's shield was presented to the Dobbs Ferry Police Department for their keeping. William Boyle was not related to Lawrence Boyle. She believes that William is buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Yonkers but as their records from those days were destroyed in a fire, it will take some traipsing around the cemetery to know for sure.

So, who was the first policeman in Dobbs Ferry? Was it Lawrence Boyle, the first man to serve as a police constable in the Village of Greenburgh or William Boyle, the man serving in that capacity when in 1882, the Village changed its name to Dobbs Ferry.

You decide.

# The Man of a Thousand Faces

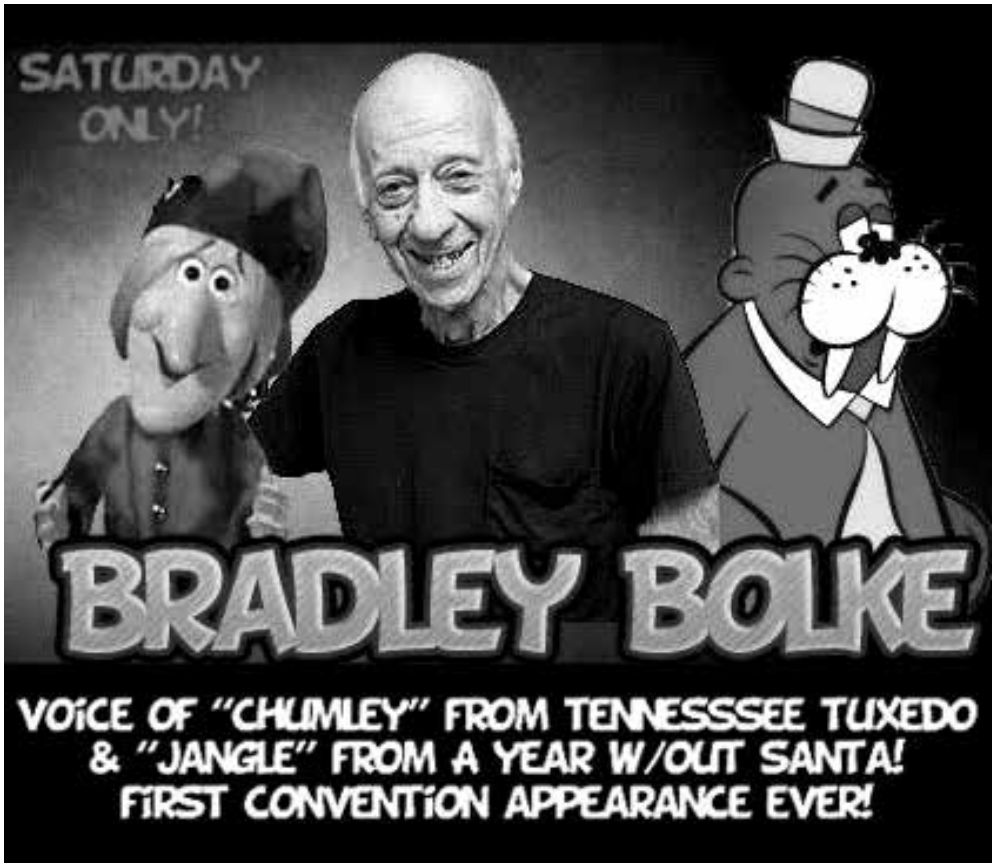
*By Larry Blizard*

For autograph collectors, trying to get an autograph from a cartoon is an exercise in futility. However, Dobbs Ferry's Bradley Bolke provided a way.

It was in December 1962 that I first saw Brad Bolke's photo on a record album. Before that, I had probably heard his voice innumerable times on radio and television. For Brad was a "voice actor," one of the best in the business, whose facility with vocal styles provided voiceovers to hundreds of commercials, in addition to bringing to life dozens of otherwise mute animated creatures.

The album, entitled "The First Family," was a good-natured spoof on John F. Kennedy and his family, who had recently taken up residency in the White House. Brad's photo was on the back of the album cover, along with photos of the other performers.

*Continued on page 7*




*Bradley Bolke, who died last year, was a local fixture for decades. Perhaps best known for the Kennedy spoof album "The First Family," he was also one of the best "voice actors" in the business, voicing a variety of colorful characters.*

## Beloved Firefighter...

*Continued from page 5*

Group, in England. Because of its limited flight range, the Flying Fortress could not fly directly from the United States to England. Instead, the crews had to hopscotch across the Atlantic via Kansas, Long Island, Newfoundland, Greenland, and Scotland.

Joe piloted his B-17G, the "Four of a Kind," on 35 missions over Nazi Germany and occupied Europe from June to September 1944. This was quite a feat given that the survival rate for a B-17 crew was low. The planes weren't pressurized, and crews had to dress in arctic parkas and use oxygen to survive the cold and high altitudes.

Joe's first mission took place during the Normandy invasion on June 6, 1944. His other targets included oil refineries in Hamburg; V-2 launch pads in France; aircraft component factories in Berlin; ball-bearing plants, railroad yards, and bridges in Munich; and docks, hydrogen plants, and airfields in France and the Netherlands. For his service Joe was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, given for heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial fight.

Like most GIs, Joe returned to live the American dream. He met and married his wife, Gloria, and had three children, Jayne, Robert, and Craig. The Beatties moved to Dobbs Ferry in 1962, where Joe continued his lifelong commitment to service and helping others by joining the Dobbs Ferry Fire Department's Ogden Engine Company in 1963. Joe was affectionately known around the firehouse as "Soda Pops," because he was a bit older than the other firefighters and worked as a Canada Dry salesman.

Joe's happy suburban life would come to a tragic end on December 1, 1964, when at 8:05 pm, a fire alarm was sounded. The department responded to Bramley Lane, off Hickory Hill Drive, for what turned out to be a false alarm. While investigating at the scene, Joe, who had responded even though he was not feeling well, collapsed. Efforts to revive him failed, and he was pronounced dead at Dobbs Ferry Hospital. The Company canceled its Christmas Party that year and donated the allocated funds for the party to Joe's family. To this day he is the only Dobbs Ferry firefighter to die in the line of duty.

The family moved away shortly after Joe's death. However, a graveside note left by the Ogden Company's chairman inquiring about the family's well-being would reconnect his children with Dobbs Ferry and the firehouse. Gloria had died in 1986.

The family returned to the Ogden Firehouse in 1991, where a plaque was unveiled dedicated to Joe's memory and the sacrifice he made for the residents of Dobbs Ferry. Today, his children and grandchildren, who live in New Jersey and Connecticut, stay connected with the Company.

Joe Beattie was a simple man dedicated to service to others, who even got to meet a sitting King and future Queen along the way. Dobbs Ferry was fortunate to have had him as a resident — albeit, sadly, for just a short time.

*Continued from page 6*

The Kennedys brought a style and glamour to the presidency that caught the public's imagination. Everything from John's youthful good looks to Jackie's predilection for "pillbox" hats and Halston designs was much talked about. Life magazine was at its zenith, its pages filled with anecdotes and photos regarding the family.

At some point during this frenzy, a young, unknown comedian named Vaughn Meader, during his stint at an obscure nightclub, decided to try out his J.F.K. impersonations. The audience response was electric.

From that point, it was a steady climb upwards for Meader, culminating in the production of "The First Family" album.

Although Meader was the central figure, several performers were brought in to play members of J.F.K.'s family, as well as other political figures of the time. Brad's roles included a butler, an astronaut, Nikita Khrushchev, and Senator Everett Dirksen.

The album was a fantastic success, selling 1.9 million copies in its first two weeks, on its way to selling 7.3 million. It was the fastest-selling album of its time and won the 1962 Grammy as best album of the year.

Unfortunately for Brad and the other performers, the cast had been offered a choice between a standard payment or a share in the royalties. Playing it safe, they took a standard payment. Brad was philosophical: "When you do a job, you never know whether it's going to become a classic or not." However, he did send the following note to the producers:

*"Is it too late to discuss a royalty deal? Please feel free to call my office at your earliest convenience. Eagerly awaiting your call.*
*Truly, Bradley Bolke*
*P.S. The preceding is a paid suicide note."*

A second album was produced, also including Brad. A third was in the works when J.F.K. was killed. The project was canceled.

Vaughn Meader was never able to replicate his earlier success and suffered depression, which involved problems with alcohol and drugs. Brad, however, continued to thrive in his own area.

*"Is it too late to discuss a royalty deal? Please feel free to call my office at your earliest convenience. Eagerly awaiting your call.*
*Truly, Bradley Bolke*
*P.S. The preceding is a paid suicide note."*

For about 18 years before making the record, Brad had been in acting; and, although he had touched on virtually every facet of the profession, he found himself drawn more and more into the area of animated commercials and animated cartoon films. He was the voice of Casper the Friendly Ghost, Chumley the Walrus in the animated series "Tennessee Tuxedo," as well as "Jangle Bells," about a rather dimwitted elf who worked for Santa Claus in the perennial holiday classic "The Year Without a Santa Claus" (starring Mickey Rooney and Shirley Booth).

When "Tennessee Tuxedo" was being offered as a boxed set, Brad was asked to supply a commentary to accompany the episodes. During the filmed interview, he mentioned that he would send autographed photos to anyone who mailed him a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Letters began to arrive from all over the country. It seemed that fans not only loved the characters for whom Brad supplied voices but also collected autographs.

Brad answered each request, replying with a comment in the vernacular the character used and signing in his (Brad's) own name. By now, Brad was known to the public. For example, if the request was made of Chumley Walrus, Brad wrote "Duh, okeh Mike" (or whoever) and signed it Bradley "Chumley" Bolke.

The letters were touching in their expressions of fondness for Brad's characters and their desire to make some connection with them. Brad himself was evidently moved by the outpouring of affection, for he kept each letter, along with a photocopy of his reply. Together, they make up a major portion of the Bradley Bolke archives, which were bequeathed to the Historical Society.

I finally met Brad in person when I taught at the Masters School. Brad had moved to Dobbs Ferry from New York City in 1958, and his wife, Kitty, ran the switchboard at the school. Each afternoon, Brad would come to pick up Kitty, and we would encounter each other. I found him to be delightfully irreverent, and we shared humorous anecdotes regularly. He autographed the record I had received in 1962.

While he had set up his own production company creating commercials, etc., he was active in village life. As a district leader for the Democratic Party, head of the Traffic Committee for two terms, and head of the Tenants' Committee for Sussex Hall, where he resided, Brad demonstrated a combination of seriousness and lightheartedness that was truly refreshing.

Having a sense of humor was so important to Brad that in 2004 he created the Bradley Bolke Humor Award, to be presented to a graduating senior at Dobbs Ferry High School for achievement in humor.

I last saw Brad shortly before his death, in January of last year. At a function at the Mead House, he had in his hand Volume 2 of "The First Family," which he had autographed. He had come across it while going through his files and thought I would like it. I invited him to stay, but he declined; having delivered the record, he went out the door. I never saw him again.

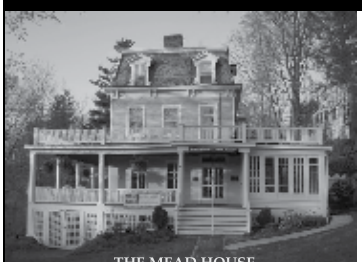
Looking back, I think that was his last autograph.

*Resources:*

*The Bradley Bolke archive; property of the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society.*

*"That Reminds Me of a Joke." Autobiography of Bradley Bolke (Introduction by Beth Himmelfarb.)*

DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE MEAD HOUSE
12 ELM STREET DOBBS FERRY, NY 10522

POSTAL CUSTOMER

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

CONTACT US BY PHONE : (914)-674-1007 EMAIL : DFHISTORY@ICLOUD.COM ON THE WEB: WWW.DOBBSFERRYHISTORY.ORG

# Remembering Bruce Platt

The coronavirus struck close to home with the death on April 13 of our trustee Bruce Allan Platt, 72, from complications related to Covid-19. Bruce was elected to our board in 2016 and became treasurer in 2018. A Revolutionary and Civil War buff, he participated in the annual Road to Freedom commemoration, often doing much of the heavy lifting, literally, involved with setup. This photo of Bruce was taken at a happier time, during the 2019 Road to Freedom march.

Before retiring in 2015, Bruce had a long career as a programmer and systems analyst for an advertising data company in New York City. He moved to Dobbs Ferry with his family in 1973 and over the years served the community in myriad ways: as an active member of South Presbyterian Church, an AYSO soccer coach, a Cub Scout leader, even a Community Nursery School bunny feeder. He was always quick to help out — but only when it didn't conflict with his bridge game. Contract bridge was a serious passion, and he was proud of attaining Life Master status with the American Contract Bridge League.

Other current interests included golf, tennis, and vacations at the family cottage in Michigan.

Bruce will be missed at the Historical Society. We send our deep condolences to his wife, Linda Jo, children, Jennifer and Jonathan, and wide circle of family and friends.

Here's a tip of our tricorn hat to Joe Cirillo Landscaping and George Keiling & Sons Locksmiths for their generous services at Mead House.

## Wanted: Your Covid-19 Reflections

The Dobbs Ferry Historical Society is documenting the impact of the pandemic on our village. It seems important as part of our mission to preserve the history of Dobbs Ferry going forward that we collect the personal responses of the community to the crisis. We welcome contributions from anyone with a connection to Dobbs Ferry. What memories and reflections do you want to share now and with future generations?

Visit our website, www.dobbsferryhistory.org, to upload text or photos, or mail them to Dobbs Ferry Historical Society, 12 Elm Street, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522. Questions? Contact us at livingthroughcovid@gmail.com.