



# The Ferrymen

Highlighting Dobbs Ferry and its history

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Vol. XXX Issue No. 18

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## Respected Animator Called Dobbs Ferry Home

By Seamus Breathnach

This past year saw Hollywood thrown into disarray as there was a strike by the Screen Writers Guild, which was joined by the Screen Actors Guild, bringing to a halt virtually all movie and television production. The writers went back in late September after being out 148 days, SAG reached a settlement in November after being out 118 days. That work stoppage was just three days longer than another Hollywood labor dispute more than seven decades ago.

On May 29, 1941, over two hundred animators at the Walt Disney Studios went on strike demanding a fair contract with the studio and the right to unionize. One of those animators, Chris Ishii, would eventually leave Disney and move east, start his own successful studio, and raise his family in Dobbs Ferry. The cartoonists prevailed and 115 days later, Walt Disney settled.

Kishio Christopher Ishii was born in 1919, the son of a Japanese farmer, in Fresno California. Ishii studied at the Chouinard School of Art in Los Angeles (known now



Strikers picket outside Disney studios in 1941

as Cal Arts, Valencia) and upon graduation, he went to work for the Walt Disney Studios. He worked on various 'Mickey Mouse' and 'Donald Duck' shorts and animated feature films like 'Fantasia' (1940), 'The Reluctant Dragon' (1941) and 'Dumbo' (1941). After the strike was settled, Ishii returned to Disney. Little did he know that there would soon be a major change in his life.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese army attacked Pearl Harbor, and the U.S. declared

war on Japan, officially entering the Second World War. Ishii, like many other patriotic Americans, instantly wanted to join the U.S. Army. His draft board classified him 1-A, fit for service, but in the post-Pearl Harbor anti-Japanese fear, paranoia and hostility, his draft number was changed to 4-C ("Alien or Dual National".) When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, all first- and second-generation Japanese Americans were to

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## Respected animator...

*Continued from page 1*

be detained in internment camps. There were no exceptions for people born on U.S. soil and naturalized citizens. Ishii was forced to leave Disney and was interned in the Santa Anita Assembly Center in Santa Anita, California with over 2,000 Japanese Americans who were sent to this detention center in April 1942.

While interned at the camp, Ishii put his artistic talents to good use teaching art classes. He also created a cartoon strip for the camp newspaper about a little Japanese orphan. After polling the residents of the camp for suggestions, the character was named "Lil' Neebo", a contraction of the words "Nisei boy" or "second generation boy". What started out as a comic strip grew very popular with the detainees and Ishii was allowed to draw an entire page in the publication. The character was also featured in puppet shows performed at the camp.

When the California camp was closed and the detainees were transferred to the Granada Relocation Center in Amache, Colorado, Ishii continued his art lectures and his cartooning. "Lil' Neebo" by Ishii ran in

the camp newspaper Granada Pioneer until December 1942, when Ishii was accepted for military service. When he left the camp, "Lil' Neebo" lived on through the efforts of other animators who remained interned.

For the duration of WWII, Sergeant Ishii illustrated propaganda leaflets for the U.S. War Information Office, as part of the Military Intelligence Service. He served in India, China, and Burma. His artwork also appeared in the military magazine Stars and Stripes.

During this time, he met his future wife Ada Suffiad in Chungking (now Chongqing) China. They married in Shanghai in 1946. She immigrated to the U.S. with him, moving to Los Angeles where he returned to the Disney Studios as an animator. He was also the courtroom sketch artist for the Pacific Citizen during the trial of Iva Toguri, a woman falsely accused of being the Japanese wartime radio propagandist "Tokyo Rose".

Ishii also came under scrutiny by the FBI for his association with the Nisei Progressives, a liberal organization suspected of being a Communist front. The Nisei Progressives advocated reparations for Japanese American citizens who had suffered under the wartime internments



*Ishii sketching for the Pacific Citizen*

in U.S. camps and subsequent racial discrimination.

In 1949, Ishii moved to New York City. In 1951 he studied art under the G.I. bill at the Académie Julian in Paris, France. Ishii and his family moved to Dobbs Ferry in 1952, where he and his wife Ada raised their three children, Christopher, Naka and Jonathan. Two years later, he became a designer and lay-out artist at the United Productions of America (UPA) studios, a company best known for their innovative graphic stylization. They had a strong aesthetic influence on many Hollywood cartoon studios, mostly because their limited animation was money-saving, making it perfect for TV productions. Ishii went on to become artistic supervisor of the company's New York division.

Joining with two partners in 1965, he formed Focus Productions and worked as director of live action and animation. From 1975 to 1985, he worked as a freelance artist, designing and directing countless commercials, industrial, educational, live-action and feature films. His designing credits include James Thurber's "A Unicorn in the Garden," Ludwig Bemelmans' "Madeline," and the Academy Award winning "Gerald McBoing Boing." He also designed and directed several "Mr. McGoo" short subjects. Ishii directed the animated sequence in Woody Allen's classic live-action tragicomedy "Annie Hall." Ishii won two Clio Awards for his animated TV commercials.

Chris Ishii passed away in 2001 in Dobbs Ferry from an aortic aneurysm.

Sources:

*Densho Encyclopedia; Lambiek Comiclopedia; Cartoonbrew; Smithsonian Archives of American Art*



*Lil' Neebo cartoon strip*

# Native Americans Were the First Residents

By Henrietta Toth

On September 14, 1609, when Henry Hudson sailed the Half Moon up the river that would later bear his name, he was awed by its wooded shores and fertile land. The local Native Americans, in turn, were awed by what they perceived to be a large canoe, sporting massive white sails, gliding past their riverfront settlement in today's Dobbs Ferry.

The Weckquaesgeek are acknowledged as the earliest identifiable inhabitants of the region that developed into the Rivertowns, but who were they and where precisely did they live? What do we know about their way of life and what evidence of their culture did they leave behind? Where did they go as Europeans encroached on their territory?

The Rivertowns trace their roots to the Weckquaesgeek, who were members of the Lenape and Mohican tribes, which were part of the larger Algonquin confederation. They populated the eastern bank of the Hudson River—which they called “the river that flows both ways”—from Manhattan to Ossining and spoke Munsee, a language that today is largely lost.

For thousands of years, barring strife with other tribes, the Weckquaesgeek developed their customs, crafts, and way of life. They had a deep connection to nature, with the



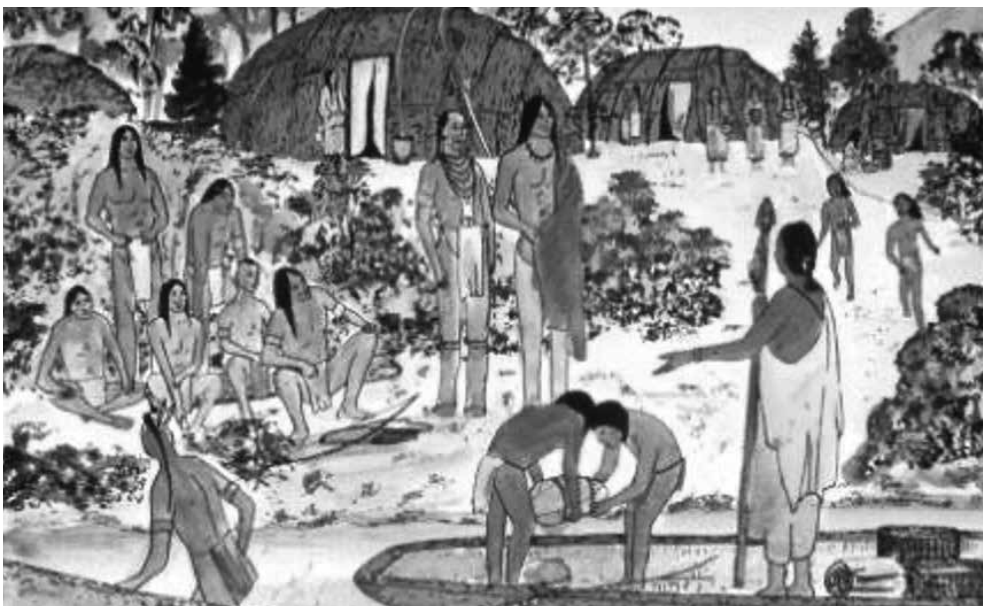
What the early settlement could have looked like — Photo: Robin Costello

river and its rugged, hilly shores, and lived with and off the land, hunting and trapping, fishing and gathering, and farming for food. They lived relatively undisturbed until contact with Europeans and the growth of colonialism altered their way of life and diminished their lands and numbers. By the early seventeenth century, the Dutch and, later, the English settled in the area farming the loamy soil as well as fishing, hunting, and trapping. In 1698, Jan and Abigail Dobbs settled on the waterfront in the village that would be named after them but was then called Wysquaqua by the Native Americans. The Dobbs built a farmhouse near the current railroad station.

The Weckquaesgeek were described as a friendly tribe and their initial interactions with the Dutch, despite a few skirmishes, were largely amicable as they traded furs, hides, and other goods with the new settlers. Conflicts between the two groups arose, however, in the mid-seventeenth century fueled by expanding colonization that generated the need for more land and resources. By the late seventeenth century, the Native American population in the Rivertowns had been lost to epidemic disease or bought, bartered, or forced off their lands.

Through the millennia, Native American culture developed from small groups of nomadic hunter-gatherers to larger clans—of hundreds or even thousands of people—living in established settlements that included agriculture for subsistence. The Rivertowns' Weckquaesgeek spent the warmer months of the year on the Hudson River shoreline, reaping the bounty from an as yet unpolluted waterway, as they fished for shad and foraged for clams and oysters, from which they made wampum. On nearby level plains, they raised crops such as beans, corn, pumpkin, squash, and perhaps tobacco.

During the winter, the tribes moved inland to valleys that sheltered them from the harsh winds sweeping off the river. In the forested hills above the water, they hunted game such as deer and black bear. Along streams—such as the Saw Mill River in Ardsley, Wickers Creek in Dobbs Ferry, and



Village scene — Photo: Neighborhood Buzz

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# Postcards Ramp Up Village Narrative

By Robin Costello

Recently, while curating an exhibit of vintage village postcards from our archives, I discovered that just like the village of Dobbs Ferry, the U.S. postcard is also celebrating its sesquicentennial (150th anniversary in America. What a happy coincidence!

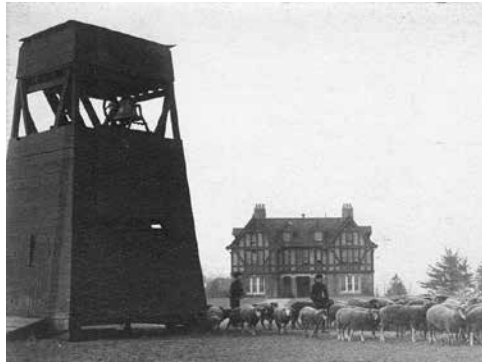
Our impressive collection, gathered from various sources throughout the years, houses more than two hundred and fifty antique postcards. They feature familiar places around Dobbs Ferry. Although sadly, some of these beautiful places have been lost to time.

The collection covers many buildings of note in Dobbs Ferry, all the major churches and the schools (the public schools, Children's Village, St. Christopher's, Masters, Mackenzie School and Mercy College). Postcards show the early hospital, the first library, and most of the major estates and mansions (Estherwood, Genehurst and Springhurst). There are beautiful landscapes included of the Hudson River waterfront, the Palisades and Gould Park.

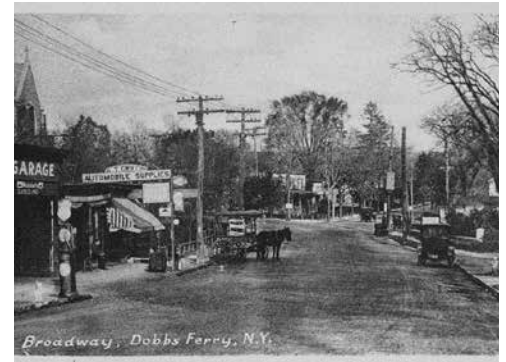
The Washington Headquarters monument is documented as well as some significant persons in town like President Charles Storm, and the Ravekes and Losee families. We find charming transportation scenes with horse drawn carriages on Main Street and of the railroad station in its early days. We are also very lucky to have photo/postcards from the 1915 school year (pre WWI).

The majority of our collection dates from the turn of the 20th century. They so succinctly convey the environs of the village during that era, truly "a picture is worth a thousand words."

Holding them in your hands, it makes one wonder the history of these little pieces of paper (snapshots in time) and how they gained popularity so quickly in America. To set the stage, in the late 1870s there were no telephones or televisions and the newly invented telegraph was prohibitively expensive to use. All communication was done via face-to-face contact, read in a newspaper or by paper correspondence (in some places with delivery by pony express!).



Left: The sheep meadow located at the NY Orphan Asylum (Children's Village). Right: The Gateway facing north at the split of Broadway and Ashford Avenue (Note Sacred Heart Church to the left and the horse trough (currently found in Gould Park) on the right).



In 1873, postage for letters in envelopes was based on weight and delivery distance. When the average wage was \$1.00 per day, mailing a letter could cost as much as thirty-five cents. Ouch! Conversely, a one-ounce postcard costs only one penny to mail. People were willing to give up the privacy of a letter for the cost and convenience of a postcard. Similar to our email today, the postcard was a quick, inexpensive, efficient way to communicate.

Although strictly governed by size, color and other regulations (government or private issue), postcard production blossomed in the late 1800s and early 1900s and evolved through a few recognized stages:

**Pioneer Period 1873-1898:** The first government produced postcard was issued on May 1, 1873. It was a blank card, with no images, which allowed for writing on one side and the address on the other. By law only the government cards were allowed to bear the term "POSTAL CARD". It cost only one penny to mail, while privately printed cards cost two cents to mail. These were used for short messages and for mass advertising.

**Private Mailing Card Period 1898-1901:** In May 1898, Congress allows private printing companies to produce cards with the statement "Private Mailing Card, Authorized by Act of congress of May 19, 1898". The cost of mailing these cards drops to the same amount to mail a government printed card - one cent. The words "PRIVATE MAILING CARD" distinguished it from the government cards. Messages were still not allowed on the

address side. Many were printed with extra space on the front and a reduced image to allow for the sender to write a brief message. Often seen is the phrase "POSTAL CARD - CARTE POSTALE" which gave it permission to enter the international postal system.

**Post Card Period 1901-1907:** In December 1901 the Postmaster General issued a decree which allowed the words "POST CARD" instead of "PRIVATE MAILING CARD" on the back of all postcards. However, messages were still not allowed on the address side. By this time most of the cards had images on the front which prevented it as a space for writing notes. Because of the absence of space on the address side this was known as the "Undivided Back Period".

**Divided Back Period 1907-1915:** In 1907 a major change on the address side of postcards occurred. Its governing body, the Universal Postal Union, declared that cards produced by the governments of its member nations could have messages written on the left half of the address side. This change ushered in the divided back period also known as the "Golden Age of Postcards". Another type of card introduced during this time is the "real photo" postcards using the Kodak postcard camera. These specialty cameras could take a photo and print a postcard sized negative complete with a divided back and place for postage.

**White Border Period 1915-1930:** With the onset of WW I, European produced cards are no longer available. American printers had

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## Native Americans...

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the Pocantico River in Sleepy Hollow—they trapped beavers and otters.

Throughout the Rivertowns, the Weckquaesgeek traveled well-worn footpaths that linked them to hunting, fishing, and farming grounds, as well as other settlements. Ashford Avenue, today running through Ardsley and Dobbs ferry, developed from a Native American trail that connected the Hudson River with Long Island Sound. In Dobbs Ferry, the trails they traveled bisected the village: one became Ashford Avenue and the other, the Albany Post Road, the route that led north from Manhattan; later named Broadway, it connected them to settlements up and down the riverfront.

A large, central native village, and perhaps the one most recognized today, was adjacent to the current campus of Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry. Cited as a “major chieftaincy” by the Friends of Wickers Creek Archaeological Site, the settlement was called Wysquaqua and sat in a ravine by the mouth of Wickers Creek, which begins in the Juhring Nature Preserve and slopes west into the Hudson River. Native American oral history notes that the Weckquaesgeek’s brightly glowing fires there could be seen on the west bank of the Hudson River.

In the early twentieth century, the ravine became part of the 88-acre estate of Edwin Gould, second son of Jay Gould. A picturesque log footbridge was constructed across Wickers Creek. Today, The Landing, a complex of 103 townhomes, occupies this ancient site. A large, riverside shell midden, or refuse pile, however, remains as primary evidence of the Native American lives lived there.

By the seventeenth century, the region comprising the Rivertowns was a growing community that was already diverse with Europeans, enslaved African Americans, and the remaining Native Americans. As the Weckquaesgeek’s lands and way of life diminished, however, they dispersed or were forcibly removed by the United States government. By the mid-nineteenth century, almost all indigenous tribes, numbering nearly 400,000, lived west of the Mississippi River. Today, the early peoples who can trace their roots to this locality belong to Native American nations and tribes in Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada.

According to the New York State Museum, indigenous peoples were present within the state as early as 13,000 years ago. Artifacts, such as small stone weapons called fluted points, have been found throughout the Hudson Valley. Farming, construction, and erosion have unearthed remnants of Weckquaesgeek culture in the Rivertowns as they developed and provide clues about the native peoples’ lives. The historical

societies in the Rivertowns hold some of these items in their collections.

The archaeologically significant site of Wickers Creek in Dobbs Ferry shows that native cultures inhabited the area as early as 6950 BCE. The abundance of shellfish, a staple of the Weckquaesgeek’s diet, may have enticed the tribe to camp by Wickers Creek. Uncommonly large oyster shells, at more than 12 inches in diameter, have been found. Prior to construction of townhomes at The Landing, archaeological digs and studies resulted in thousands of artifacts found at a Native American midden, or oyster shell heap, located about 50 feet off the Hudson River. Maintaining public access to the midden has been of concern to Rivertowners.

A small exhibit in Dobbs Ferry Village Hall details the local history of the Weckquaesgeek, the archaeological work conducted at Wickers Creek and the shell midden, and displays the relics—such as arrowheads, shells, and utensils—uncovered at these sites.

The spirit of the Weckquaesgeeks lingers over the land that they once revered in the form of landmarks and artifacts that remind today’s residents of these early dwellers.

*The preceding is an excerpt from the article *The Native Americans of the Rivertowns* by Henrietta Toth which appeared in the December 2022 issue of the *Neighborhood Buzz*.*

## Postcards...

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substandard technology and as a result, the quality of cards suffered. People lost interest in collecting. U.S. printers also looked to economize by not printing to the edge of the card leaving a white border around the image, thus giving the period its name.

Linen Period 1930-1945: Beginning in the 1930s new printing processes allowed printers to produce postcards with high rag content which gave them the look of being printed on linen. These new processes allowed for brighter dyes and quicker production times. The back remained divided, contained info about the image shown and retained the white border on the front. This type of card stayed popular well into the 1950s.

Photochrom Period 1945 to the present: Modern photochrom postcards first appeared in 1939 when the Union Oil Company started carrying them for sale in their service stations. Production of photochrom cards slowed during WWII because of supply shortages. But after the war, they dominated the postcard market. The photochrom postcards are in color and their images closely resemble photographs. These are the most popular and familiar cards available today.

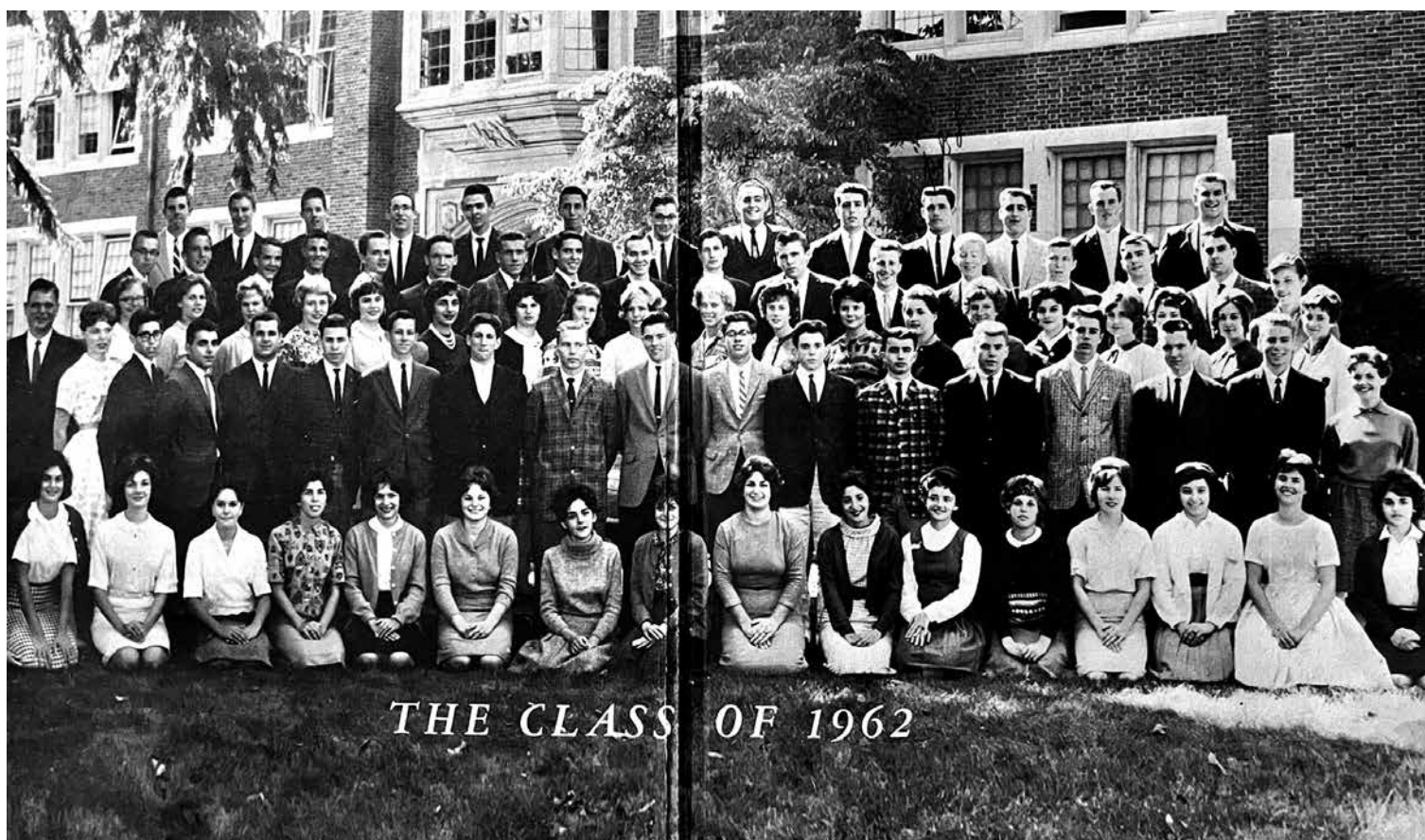
In the 1990s, the advent of ecards and email started the decline of postcards popularity, and today’s postcards are purchased largely as souvenirs and by hobbyists. In an ironic twist, most of the postcards mailed these days are for advertising purposes – just like they first were in 1873.



*The Dixie Inn stood at the corner of Livingston and Broadway today the site of a vacant lot*

Please enjoy this selection of beautiful postcards from our archives and look for the mobile version of our vintage postcard collection exhibition which is scheduled to appear throughout the village in the new year.

*(Historical information source: The Smithsonian Institute)*



*Class of '62 yearbook photo*

## Class of '62, Reconnect, Reflect... At High School Reunion

*By Teresa Walsh*

Class reunions are designed to bring people together who have not seen each other for a long time, to reminisce about the good old days, and to bring one another up to date on what has happened since they last met.

The 61st reunion of the Dobbs Ferry High School Class of 1962 (Covid ruined the plans for the 60th) was no exception, as 27 former classmates and three spouses came to play catchup and swathe themselves in the cocoon of days gone by.

Plans began in earnest last February as the three organizers of the reunion, Mark Biel, Corinne Burns Bruno and Dan Lockett, reached out to classmates through emails, phone calls and social media postings to ensure that the event got off the ground. "We needed to get off our couches and come see one another," related Bruno via an email interview from her home in Italy where she has lived for more than 50 years.

Since the group is older and its needs have changed, it was decided to hold the reunion in a nearby hotel. The Hilton Garden Inn in Rivertowns Square fit the bill. In 1962 in the area near where the Inn is located was Hubie's, a hamburger stand, and not much else. To arrive there one traveled along an old dirt road, used for dumping, that cut through woods where the Hunter Run and Walden Wood townhouses now stand.

The reunion, held over three days this past October, included a first night meet up over appetizers and soft drinks, several breakfasts and a dinner held on the event's final evening. Side visits to the historical society, and to the high school to meet up with members of the class of 2024 and Principal John Falino, were also in the offering. At the high school, the group fielded questions from the current seniors about life in the village in the 1950s and early 60s, the Vietnam War, and other pertinent milestones from the decade. Bruno, who thought the

students would be bored listening to the alums, said that she was impressed by their interest. At the historical society, the group perused the archives and treated the society members who were on hand to a heartfelt rendition of the school's alma mater.

There was also lots of time for sitting and chatting. And for walks around the village, along the Croton Aqueduct, and through the halls of the high school.

A look inside the 1962 Periauger yearbook provides a glimpse of the early lives of these graduates. A bygone world where home economics, driver's education and typing were part of the curriculum and twirling and the business achievement and sewing clubs were popular extra curriculums. Pictures of boys in suits and ties and girls in skirts and sweaters populate the pages. Senior class photos, complete with bios full of future plans, dreams, and aspirations that

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## Class of '62...

*Continued from page 6*

only those ready to be thrust out into the world would dare share, serve as the book's centerpiece. Where each year, from the class of '62's freshmen to senior, is broken down, highlighted, and recorded.

According to Bruno, it was fun growing up in Dobbs Ferry and going to school there. It was "HEAVEN" she wrote. She described an easier time where everyone looked out for one another, where parental supervision of kid's downtime was different than today. Where everyone walked everywhere, to friends' houses, sporting events, to school. It was a time where safety precautions, such as seatbelts, were nonexistent and where everyone piled into cars after team wins for victory laps through the village and neighboring towns.

She described buying candy cigarettes, wax lips and jacks at the Five and Dime on Cedar Street. She wrote of building forts and planning trips up the Hudson on rafts as only school children would. She recalled ice skating at the Ninth Hole of the Ardsley Golf Course from morning until evening with nary an adult in sight. She shared memories of wishing for snow days that rarely ever happened and going to the movie theater on Cedar St. to watch a newsreel, several cartoons and two movies, all for 25 cents.

Describing the teenage age years and time spent at the high school as only an insider could, Bruno wrote of sock hops in the old elementary school on Broadway and dances in the high school gym. A time of pep rallies and rooting for all the Class C sports teams. A time where football was king, of joining the chorus, the drama club. Of learning to drive in school. Where hall monitors made sure there was no running and yelling in the halls (and no one went the up the down staircase.)

Of wearing the Pep Club uniforms, those



*Members of the classes of 1962/2024 in the high school gym — Photo: Corinne Burns Bruno*

itchy, scratchy, woolen Bermuda shorts that chafed one's legs. Of the ugly blue gym uniforms and dress codes where girls weren't allowed to wear pants.

She recalled having hotdogs and ice cream sundaes at the Liggett's Drugstore counter on Cedar Street, eating French fries at the diner, and partaking of the best ice cream and limeade at Bartels on Main. She wrote of eating lunch in the school cafeteria and of the delicious apple crisp that the lunchroom ladies served up hot from the oven.

Of going steady and wearing your boyfriend's ring on a chain around your

neck. And submarine races down at the river and on Villard Hill with the police knocking on the car windows sending everybody home.

A time of joking with friends and not being politically correct. Of teenage pranks of making giant airplanes out of issues of the New York Times and launching them out the school windows. Of dangling chairs out the windows by the pull cords and purloining all the drinking straws from Hubie's hamburger stand (they were eventually returned).

Bruno, who thinks the world of her

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### EDITOR

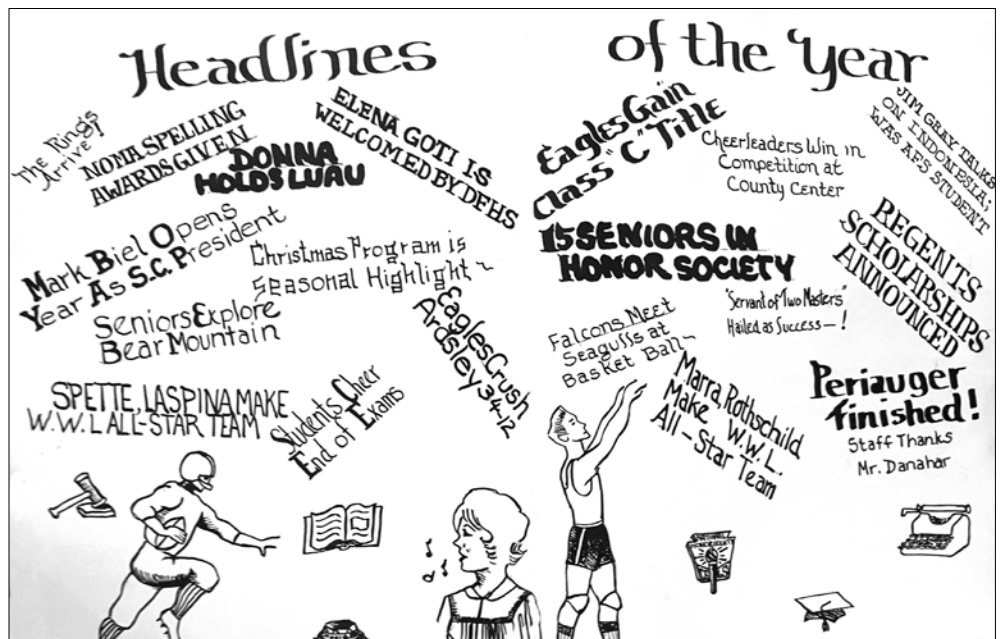
Teresa Walsh

### CONTRIBUTORS

Seamus Breathnach

Robin Costello

Henrietta Toth



*Highlights from senior year 1962 yearbook*



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# Road to Freedom Medley

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the village, the annual Road to Freedom Day expanded its lineup this year.

The celebration of the beginning of Washington's march to Yorktown and eventual victory over the British ending the Revolutionary War, included historical skits, poster displays and other highlights of the village through the years.

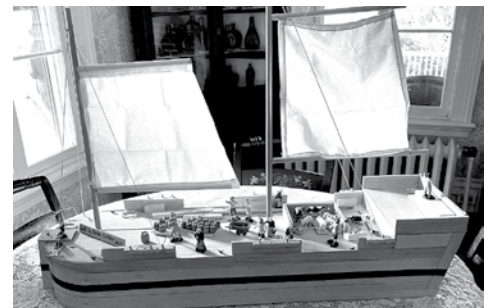
Two skits written by event chair and Historical Society trustee, Linda Borkow, were directed by Dobbs Ferry Middle School teachers Katia Marques and Sandra Hacker and performed by students Elena Columbo, Fynn Dannefer, Lucy De Maria, Tyler Goodmen, Phoebe Johnson, Elena

Mazibrada and Madeleine Patino.

The program also included an Irish sandhog's telling of the building of the Old Croton Aqueduct and a historic poster display of village streetscapes and notable residents. College student Jeremy Silber, assisted with the making of the posters.

Dobbs Ferry Historical Society member Gerard "Duke" Coffey designed a model of the periauger, a type of boat the Dobbs family used, which he donated to the Society.

A big thank you goes to the Tensor Foundation (funded by Arch and Marie McKellar) and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area for their generous support.



## THE DOBBS FERRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENTS OUR  
ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S CLARA MEAD

# Egg Nog Party

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## Class of '62...

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former classmates is saddened, that 18 of the original 83 have passed away. She provided a list of everyone who attended the reunion, and where each lived, and their occupations (stressing that many were now retired.) The former cheerleaders, athletes, club members and student leaders from Dobbs Ferry High had morphed into lawyers, teachers, college professors, entrepreneurs, ski instructors, business owners, a banker, a psychiatrist, realtors, a tv producer and a detective.

She also shared some tidbits about her former classmates. She related that Bill Espersen, Arthur Samuel, and Marie Vano Knecht have called Dobbs Ferry home all these years. That Paul Kellogg, an expert on music, is a career radio announcer in Nova Scotia and is still flourishing and that Chris Sekaer's psychiatry practice is still up and running in Massachusetts. And that Sharon Honzak and Randy Raskin reconnected at a long-ago reunion, and since married. (The couple have been faithful attendees at every reunion since.)

Each time Bruno flies to Dobbs Ferry she said that she feels like she's returning home. The class of '62 did just that, spending three days here ... in their hometown.