

VOICES FROM THE FALLS

Historic Wappingers

By Rena Corey

Jacqueline and Luís Gonzalez who rent the house at 2590 Route 9D, say they have seen and heard nothing; not the “ moanings and crying of a man, a woman, and a child,” nor the footprints of an unknown” man on the upper floor.”

Such were the happenings reported in 1979 when members of the Wappingers Falls Visual Environmental Committee interviewed the owner of what was then, 32 South Avenue. Gerald Delaney and his daughters reported the ghostly occurrences and further reported that Ray Travis, a previous owner, had discovered three tombstones in the backyard and “quickly re-buried them.” Delaney was the Wappinger Assistant Postmaster. At one time the house had also been occupied by County Clerk, Fred Smith.

The committee, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, was very active throughout 1979 and part of 1980, documenting, photographing and detailing the architectural features of over 120 buildings within the Village of Wappingers Falls. Additionally, through interviews with the owners, they probed the stories of past occupants leaving a remarkable oral and written history. Among those who contributed to this meticulous reportage were Raymond and Elaine Bass, Alice Hemroth, Alice B. Hunt, Rita and Norman Nussbickel, Carl Relyea, Carolyn Wixson, Village Historian, and Edith Valente.

At 33 Prospect Street they learned that the property had originally housed a carpenter shop built on South Avenue “between the Presbyterian manse and the owner’s home so that he wouldn’t have to look at the manse since he disliked the minister” ; Charles McClusky, the owner of 28 South Avenue (2598 9D) related that a dentist had lived there, his chair and patients visible through the bay window, and that he, McClusky, had found a tooth left wedged between the wide floor boards.

In addition to the surveys of individual residences, the committee documented industrial buildings and historic districts including those of: West Academy Street, Dutchess Bleachery-Garner Printworks, East Main Street, Mesier Park, South Avenue and Zion Park.(A survey of Hughsonville done in April, 1974 by Cornell University’s College Of Architecture proved a poor job, with a bare minimum of information, no photographs and no interviews with owners).

In 1984 the work done by the indefatigable committee with assistance from “ the NYS Historic preservation office staff” and other architectural specialists, resulted in the National Register of Historic places registering the Wappingers Falls Historic District encompassing” approximately 90 acres and containing 130 contributing...structures.” The United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service stated that “Wappingers Falls survives as one of the most extensive historic factory villages extant in New York State.”

Through these investigative surveys we know that 18 South Avenue (2608 9D) was originally built in 1890 as the parsonage for the Baptist Church. Later residents were Mr. Flynn, a tinsmith, and Miss O’Connell, an organist, And at 15 South Avenue (2617 9D) resided Irving Grinnell’s secretary who inherited the house upon her employer’s death.



2608 ROUTE 9D

The homes of Bleachery workers and managers, village pioneers including Clinton Clapp, railroad men and retailers, are all recorded in these fascinating surveys, and are available within one book at the Wappingers Historical Society. Residents within any of the particular historic districts may write to see if their homes are listed. Address inquiries to: Rena R. Corey, Archivist, Wappingers Historical Society, PO Box 174, Wappingers Falls, 12590.

To view the 1984 National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form go to the following URL:

<http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64000601.pdf>

This is a fascinating document with a good history of the village and its architectural treasures.