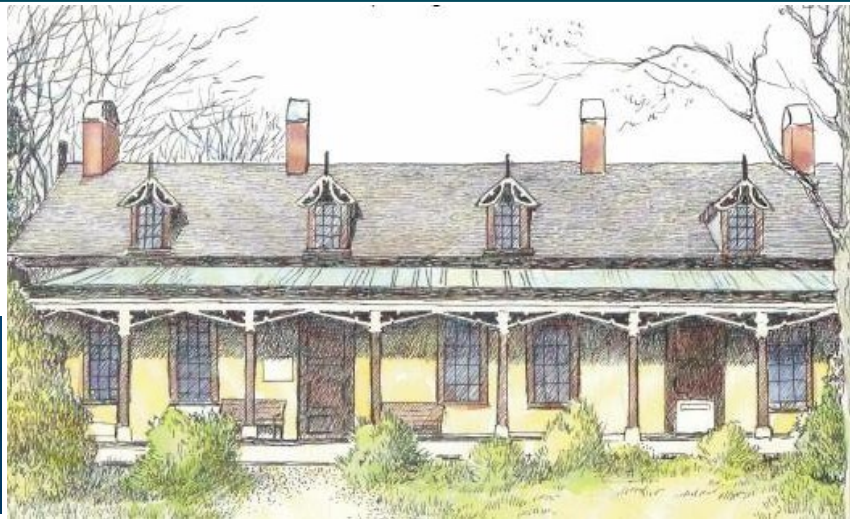


The Homestead Chronicle

VOL. 8 NO. 3 A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2022



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P.O. Box 174
Wappingers Falls
NY 12590
845-632-1281

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President's Message

"Summertime... and the livin' is easy", as George Gershwin penned in his famous opera *Porgy and Bess*. I hope you have had time to relax, perhaps visit with family and friends, and that your livin' has not only been easy, but fun this summer.

Our annual WHS pot-luck picnic was a huge success in July despite having to change the date because of "predicted" storms. We honored long time member and local historian Brenda VonBurg and bestowed upon her a Lifetime Membership to the Historical Society.

On August 23rd we will host our member Ice Cream Social as we welcome back Chilly Willy's ice cream truck and play Trivia in Mesier Park! I am happy to report that we have received many new memberships and renewals. If you haven't already renewed, we hope you will consider doing so. The WHS is very grateful for your support.

Stay tuned for some exciting Speaker Series programs this fall, including *Mothball Fleet on the Hudson* with Tony Musso, and a special talk on the history of the regional native Americans by Evan Pritchard.

We continue to be busy working in the archives and have made much progress in cataloguing and scanning long-stored items. We welcome volunteers who are interested in working with, and sharing, contents of our archives with our community. Please let us know if you would like to help.

The exterior of the 1741 section of Mesier has recently been painted. The whitewash color was one of the few exterior colors of that era. The interior restoration work will start up again this fall. We can't wait to see the restored fireplace and beehive oven, and have the inside walls plastered with the help of the NSDAR grant that we were awarded in May.

Finally, I would like to thank the WHS Board and especially Bill Stickle for the remarkable job they did taking the reins while I was on a medical leave. All is well and I am so happy to be back.

Beth

Coming Events!



Ice Cream Social (Member Only Event)

Tuesday, August 23rd, 5:30pm at Mesier Park

Who doesn't love cold ice cream on a warm summer night? It's time for our annual WHS Member Ice Cream Social, and we have more than one treat in store for you! Not only will you enjoy ice cream from Chilly Willy's Ice Cream Truck, but we hope you'll join in the fun of a game of team Trivia!

Lawn Clean-up

Saturday, September 10th, 9:00am to Noon at Mesier Homestead

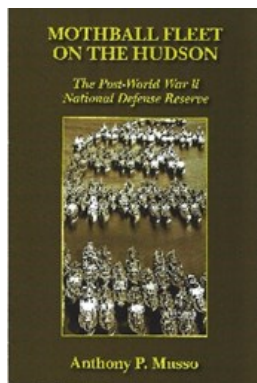
Calling all members and volunteers! Take part in the overall restoration related activities on this late summer morning. We plan to clean up the lawn area around the c1742 part of the house now that the exterior has been restored and painted. There are many tasks to be done, such as sorting the "extra" brick nogging and foundation stones and screening the dirt which was removed around the foundation. We will also begin planning our heritage kitchen garden for the spring with "Garden Enthusiast", Trustee and Town Supervisor Dick Thurston. Coffee and donuts will be served!



Pathway Through History costumed character event

Sunday, October 16th at Mesier Homestead

As you visit the rooms of the Mesier Homestead, you'll meet some of the people who helped form Wappinger history: Nicholas Brower; Johanna Mesier; Irving Grinnell; George Rush; Mary Lenox Sheafe and others.



Speaker Series: Mothball Fleet on the Hudson with Tony Musso

Thursday, October 27th at 7pm, Town of Wappinger Town Hall

Author and historian Anthony Musso will explain why this massive fleet of de-commissioned U.S. Navy ships from World War II was moored in the Hudson River across from Peekskill at Jones Point from 1946 to 1971, a fleet which many local people called "the ghost ships."

Coming Events! (continued)

Speaker Series: Evan Pritchard—”The Wappingers”

Thursday, November 10th at 7pm, Town of Wappinger Town Hall

Evan Pritchard, a descendent of the Micmac people (part of the Algonquin nations) is the founder of the Center for Algonquin Culture, and is a former Professor of Native American history at Marist College. Evan will speak on the native American people of this area, both past and present.



Sinterklaas and Dutch Holiday Traditions

Sunday, December 4th at Mesier Homestead

At this fun family event you’ll discover the history of Sinterklaas and learn about the holiday traditions that the early Dutch settlers brought with them to New Netherland.

Celebrating the Holidays

Throughout the month of December at Mesier Homestead

Set your sights on the Mesier Homestead during the holiday season. Our annual Member Holiday Party is still in the planning stages; we’ll send out the date in November. We look forward to sharing the beauty of the decorated Homestead with you at the party and on open house dates for the public to visit and view the decorations. Plus, remember our gift shop for unique, quality gifts for all ages.



Homestead Tours

We are open for scheduled weekend tours of the Homestead. See our website for the latest on dates and details.

<https://www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org/mesier-homestead>

Let us know what you would like to see in 2023!

As we start to plan speaker events and other programming for 2023, we are very keen on hearing from YOU about the types of events and topics you are interested in. Please let us know what topics you would like to learn more about; if you have ideas for programs that we can offer; or if you know of someone who might be interested in speaking to our membership. Please email info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org with any comments or suggestions.

Wappingers Garden Club

In 1948, twenty women interested in gardening met at Grinnell Library to form the Wappingers Garden Club.

Organized with help from the County Garden Club of Poughkeepsie and Cornell Cooperative Extension, the club elected Edith Valente, president; Carolyn Wixson, secretary, and Barbara Berry, treasurer. Also joining were Josephine Amodeo, Kay Bailey, Maria Clausen, Edith Dethlefs, Florence Diehl, Esther Fernekees, Esther Hall, Emma Linge, Beatrice Marble, Eileen McDonald, Eleanor Morton, Rosanna Napoleon, Mary Temple, Marion Terwilliger, Lois Vough, Marion Deitchmann, and Margery Phelps.

The club met monthly, first at the Wappingers Central School on Remsen Avenue for a few years, and then in its permanent home at the Presbyterian Church in the village. An annual flower show was held, usually in September. Members displayed their individual specimens (rose, delphinium, iris, peony etc.), house plants and African violets, dish gardens, and miniatures. The shows were held in the basement of the church.



Members of the area garden clubs were invited to attend (Beacon's Tioronda Garden Club, and the Highland, Hopewell and Poughkeepsie clubs). The winners won blue ribbons and bragging rights. Grinnell Library benefited from Garden Club's expertise, as its flower boxes were planted and maintained by the club each year. According to the membership lists, held in our archives, peak membership was in the mid to



Note the use of milk bottles as vases in this 1958 photo

late 1950's, with approximately 40 members yearly, all residing in the Town or Village of Wappingers.

According to the club's last yearbook in our archives (1968-69) the officers were President Trudy Power, Vice President Eleanor Goetchus and Secretary and Treasurer Carolyn Wixson. Monthly meeting activities for that year included: workshop in flower arrangements in May, visiting Mrs. Archie Thornton's gardens in June, the annual picnic at Elizabeth Morey's home in July.

The flower show was in August that year. In September, members learned about dried flower arrangements; covered putting the garden to bed in October; did Christmas arrangements and candle making in November. The December meeting was the Christmas party, January was for plant propagation, February for preparing for spring planting, March was devoted to artificial arrangements, and April 1969 rock gardens.

No records have been discovered dated later than 1971, so it is assumed the garden club disbanded around that time. Vegetable gardening, canning and preserving were all part of the counterculture's back to nature movement. It's nice to think that maybe the ladies of the Wappingers Garden Club were part of it.

Obadiah Cooper House and Ardmore Farm

The Obadiah Cooper House, built c. 1730 (according to the DCHS 1986 Survey), stands today as a private residence on Old Hopewell Road at the corner of Spook Hill Road. At the time of the 1986 survey, the notable features included wide board floors, many original doors and hardware, a double Dutch door and many fireplaces, including a cooking fireplace. Helen Wilkinson Reynolds included this house in her 1929 book *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley before 1776*. She writes “The east end was an early stone house, with very thick walls, to which the west end was added”... “Who built the stone house is unknown”...” Entrance to the house is through an admirable Dutch door...”

Obadiah Cooper (1720-1776) born in Albany, settled in the Town of Fishkill (now Wappinger) in 1748, in the house that bears his name. The land consisted of 500 acres and was farmed. His son, Obadiah W., (1749-1807) served in Brinckerhoff’s 2nd Regiment during the American Revolution. In 1777, Obadiah W. was promoted from private to sergeant and was tasked with guarding Fishkill Landing. He married Maria Van Benschoten in 1775 and they had six children. According to the 1790 US Census, he kept two enslaved persons. Upon his death, his three sons, William (1781-1848), Elias and Tunis inherited the house and farm. William married Amy Myers and the house passed to his son Napoleon upon William’s death. Napoleon and wife Clementine, childless, were the last of the Cooper family to reside in the home.

In 1892, the William Shook family, from Red Hook, purchased the Cooper farm from Napoleon’s estate, named it Ardmore Farm, and resided there until 1936. In 1919, a boarder at the Shook’s farm, F. B. Merwin, painted a picture of the farmhouse, and it was re-printed by a well-known NYC photographer of the day, Dudley Hoyt. Mr. Hoyt was known for his lighting techniques and in 1908, the Albany Times-Union called him “an interpreter of female loveliness.” This re-print of the Ardmore Farm painting was donated to the Historical Society and was recently re-discovered by our archive collection volunteers.

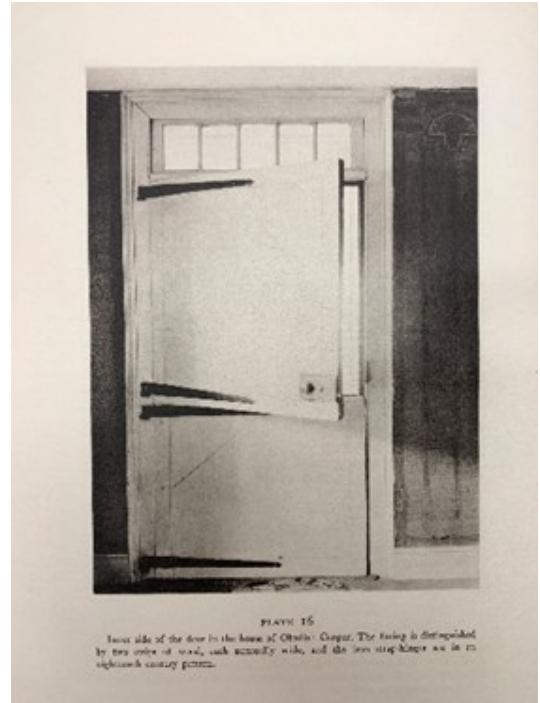


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Obadiah Cooper House and Ardmore Farm , continued

Dr. H. M. Hyman purchased the farm in 1936. Dr. Hyman was a New York City physician employed by the NYS Industrial Commission. He was a horse enthusiast and travelled between NYC and Saratoga during the racing season. “Wizard Play”, a stallion, was owned by Dr. Hyman and he raced him locally. He advertised new stables and box stalls as well as boarding, grooming, exercising, transporting and breeding. The farm also sold saddle bred horses. William Keith was his farm superintendent and, in 1941, could be reached by calling 107-31 (quite different from today!)

The farm and its acreage were divided and sold in the later part of the 1950’s. A large tract of land was sold to a developer who built homes along a new road, which was named Ardmore Drive. The house remains today in private ownership.

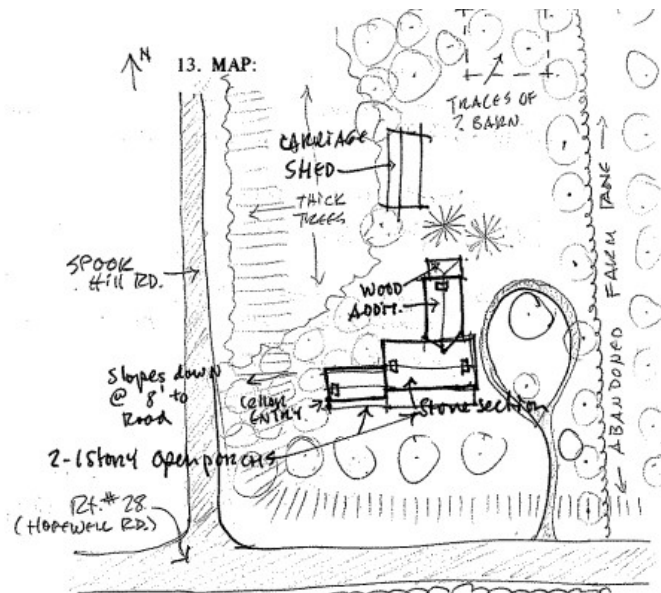


Above: The double Dutch door entrance to the Obadiah Cooper House.

From *Dutchess County Doorways and Other Examples of Period-Work in Wood*
1931 Helen Wilkinson Reynolds



Above: The House, as it appeared in the DCHS 1986 Survey records



Right; a sketch of the grounds as it appeared in the DCHS 1986 Survey records

Member Potluck Picnic

On Wednesday, July 13, our annual member picnic was held under a tent at Mesier Homestead Park. Over 60 members attended on that very hot July evening. Good food and good friendship were shared by all who attended. Brenda VonBurg was recognized for her volunteerism and received an Honorary Lifetime membership to the Society. A very special thank you to Delia Engstrom and her volunteer crew- Trish Costello, George Hemroth, Christina Ungar and Bill Stickle. Thank you to Jack Fedigan and AddSpace for donating the tent. And a big thank you to all the members who shared their delicious side dishes and desserts!



Cousins !

Restoration Update—c1742 portion of Mesier Homestead

Exterior painting on the c. 1742 section of the Mesier Homestead was completed in July. The front door will be newly constructed by Andrew Dupont when he returns in the fall. Andrew will also continue with the interior restoration. Also scheduled for the fall will be the rebuilding of the fireplaces and plastering of the downstairs walls, which is being partially funded by the NSDAR grant received in May.



New Members

We welcome our newest members who joined the Wappingers Historical Society since our last edition of the Homestead Chronicle!

Susan Dexter

Bob Rush

Ellen Stuart Roberts

Honorary Lifetime Member

Brenda VonBurg