

The Homestead Chronicle

VOL. 6 NO. 4 A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY Fall 2020



Established 1967

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

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President:

Beth Devine

Vice President:

Bill Stickle

Treasurer:

Sandra Vacchio

Recording Secretary:

Trish Holohan-Costello

Corresponding Sect'y

Amy Hauck-Barr

Trustees:

Brian Alexander

Michelle Baez

Joey Cavaccini

Renee Ellis

George Hemroth

Eileen Stickle

Dick Thurston

Trustee Emeritus

Mary Schmalz

Brenda VonBurg

E. Stickle, Editor

B. Stickle, Layout

B. Devine, Copy Editor

B. Goodman, Copy Editor

P. Jensen, Distribution

President's Message

The clocks turn back on November 1st – and we lose an hour of afternoon daylight. It feels like we have lost 9 months. Yes, these are difficult times!! Yes, we will get through them and hopefully become stronger.

So...as the saying goes: "When life gives you lemons – make lemonade." The WHS has been working hard to make lemonade.

We had to cancel our regular tour days due to Covid19, BUT we are now offering small group Signature Experience Tours by reservation. These mid-week tours have been very successful.

We had to rethink how we present our annual Pathway Through History Historical Character Tour... stay tuned for a special video production by the "Mesier Troupe"! We will share the details on their "premier" in the upcoming weeks.

As a result of our fundraising efforts over the past few years, we are extremely excited to finally start on the restoration of the original 1741 section of the Homestead. (See separate article in this newsletter.)

We are honored to have been voted *Best Historical Society* for a third year in a row by the readers of Hudson Valley Magazine. We are so grateful for our Members, Volunteers and Friends who support us!

Please visit our website, www.wappingerhistoricalsociety.org for news of our programs and holiday events.

We miss you. Stay safe and stay well.

Beth Devine

The Wappingers Wheel Club

The Wappingers Wheel Club was formed in 1887 by a group of bicycle enthusiasts living in the Village of Wappingers Falls. The bicycle, as we know it today, was a fairly new amusement at that time. The precursor to the modern bicycle was the Draisine, created by a German, Baron von Drais, in 1817. The high-wheeled penny-farthing was in vogue in the 1870's and was considered the first bicycle. By the 1880's, the bicycle style we know today became a standard. Inflatable tube tires, back pedal brakes and coaster brakes were added by the turn of the century.

The League of American Wheelmen was founded in 1880, as well as the Good Roads Society (a society which advocated for improved roads), no doubt giving the gentlemen of the Village the idea to start a club. Bicycle clubs were popping up throughout communities in America, as well as in England and France. The French war office, in 1892, authorized the employment of 6,000 to 7,000 wheelmen, to be used as messengers. The US military also considered this idea, the details which will be told later in this article.

Locally, the Wappingers wheelmen competed with other clubs, most notably the Poughkeepsie Bicycle Club. They also got together with various men's groups, such as the Hyde Park Bowling Alley Club and the New Hackensack Baseball Club, for other athletic endeavors. The Wheelmen rented rooms for their meetings and leisure (the location of the rooms is uncertain). Their annual dinner meetings were usually held in the Warren Hotel, located on the north side of East Main Street, between Rush's Hotel and Kaune's Hotel. Notices in the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* indicated that the group put a new pool table in their room and the Club played against Hyde Park in the "Bowling Alley" on Spring Street. On Valentine's Day, the club would host an annual masquerade ball. In July of 1890, the Poughkeepsie Club invited Wappingers to attend a moonlight excursion on the steamship "Mary Powell." The clubs were accompanied by their own bands - Wappingers brought Brennan's Band, and Poughkeepsie, Scofield's Orchestra-, as they cruised up the Hudson River to Kingston and back. In August of that same year, the Wappingers Wheel Club competed in a race organized by the Dutchess County Fair.

Some of the founding members of the Wappingers Wheel Club are as follows: W.K. Roy, Irving Halliwell, Edward Cashin, Albert Leister, Chris B. Winne, Edward M. Marlor, John Hunter, Jr. and John Kenney. The *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* noted that in July 1890, Cashin, Winne and A.M. Roy rode to Lake Mohonk. On June 7, 1890, headlines proclaimed "A Lovely Time Expected" at the first bicycle race in the Village. The start time was 8:30 AM on South Avenue at Charles Worsley's residence. Racers would proceed to the Poughkeepsie Cemetery, returning to School Street, crossing on West Main Street. A 1:00 PM parade, starting at Remsen's gate, would close the festivities.

1st Prize - Citizen's medal and bicycle shirt - Edward Cashin

2nd Prize - Handsome valise and bicycle tights - Edward Marlor

3rd Prize - Silk shirt and bicycle shoes - Albert Leister

The Wappingers Wheel Club (Cont'd)

A second race on October 4th of the same year was open to all riders of the Village. It was called The Village Handicap. Prizes were donated by local businesses. The list of prizes was:

Meerschaum pipe - F.J. Dakin

Comb & brush - Andrews & Thornhill

Bicycle shoes - J.H. Dakin

Gold sleeve buttons - S.A. Simmons

Box of cigars - Robert N. Cummings

Gent's pocketbook - A.S. Peacock

Gent's dressing case - H. Clay Abel

100 engraved cards/engraved copperplate with winner's name - Gales & Fitzpatrick

1 year subscription *Chronicle* - Farrell & Winne

1 year subscription *Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier* - Farrell & Winne

Women were not to be left out of the fun of bicycling. It was mentioned in several newspapers throughout the country that women were forming clubs of their own, though it is not known if there were any clubs in the Wappingers area. On August 19, 1892, the *Daily Eagle* wrote "While coasting down West Main Street hill, Miss Knight, one of the Falls lady bicycle riders, [*sic*] dress got fastened in the chain, which threw her off, causing her to sprain her ankle."



The Great Bicycle Relay Race of 1892

As mentioned at the start of this article, the US Army was testing the notion of hiring bicycle riders to use as messengers, rather than use foot soldiers for this duty. To test this notion, and to promote the upcoming Columbian Expedition of 1893 in Chicago, The Great Bicycle Relay Race of 1892 was conceived by promoter Moses B. Handy. The race would start in Chicago, traverse over 975 miles and end in New York City, with the goal of doing so in 100 hours or less. A message to General O.O. Howard, Manhattan, put in a little red leather bag in Chicago, would be passed from one group of bicyclists to the next. The divisions of bicyclists would pedal for 10-20 miles to the next city or village or town, pass the bag and return home, as the next group travelled closer to New York City and General Howard. The race began on May 18, and was breathlessly reported on throughout the country, as special telegrams went out at each stop along the way. Locally, on May 22, the little leather bag was handed over from the Poughkeepsie division to Edward Cashin at 4:57 PM on Academy Street.

Special Telegram received by the Eagle:

Wapp Fls May 22

Edward Marlbor and Bert Roy, substituting

Left here with relay message at 4:57

Roads very heavy

Peekskill Depot May 22

The bicyclists arrived @7:34. No delay in changing

Haviland took message. One rider started.

The message arrived 109 hours and 5 minutes after leaving Chicago, taken to General Howard on a tugboat to Governor's Island in Manhattan. Sadly, there is no indication what the message said. Perhaps it was a military secret?

Bicycles were used to some degree in the Army afterwards, but soon were eclipsed by a newer and faster bicycle - the motorcycle.



On Display at Mesier Homestead

Below is a photo of the Pierce Arrow bicycle belonging to Edward R. Scofield. Mr. Scofield was a member of the Wappingers Wheel Club and owned a Pierce Arrow bicycle dealership. He served as the Town of Wappinger Supervisor from 1928-1960.

The bicycle was donated to the Historical Society by Edward C. Scofield, Evelyn Carlson and Elmer Carlson.



Edward Scofield & Frederick Scofield (standing)



Town Supervisor

John Wixson owned and operated a dry goods emporium in the Village, Below is a photo of John and his Star high-wheeler. The bicycle was quite innovative for its time.

Both bicycles can be seen when taking a tour of the Homestead.



John Wixson in 1886
with his Star high-wheeler bicycle

New Members

The following people joined the Wappingers Historical Society in the third quarter of 2020. Thanks to all, and again welcome!

Polly Myhrum & Myron Adams (Family Membership)

Joan & Greg Freeman (Family Membership)

Emily Kiernan (Family Membership)

Robert McHugh

Julie Mitchell (Family Membership)

The Murphy Family (Bryan/Heidi/Griffin) (Family Membership)

Joseph Simoni

Wappingers Falls Business & Professional Association (Business Membership)

Many thanks as well for the continued support of *all* our members who have renewed and/or upgraded their membership for the upcoming year in our current membership renewal campaign.

Your continued support is greatly appreciated!

Honorary Lifetime Members

In June, the Trustees recognized **David Turner** with a Honorary Lifetime Memberships as a result of his significant and longtime support of the Wappinger Historical Society.

Visit us at:

Contact us at:

info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org

Like & Follow us !!

..on Facebook

@WappingersHistoricalSociety

.. on Twitter

#WappingersHist

.. On Instagram

wappingershistoricalsociety

Pathway Through History and Sinterklaas Virtual Programs



We've been thinking "outside the box" and will be presenting two virtual programs which will be viewable online. Details for both will be on our website and Facebook page. Both of these programs are perfect for families!

In *Pathway Through History*, you'll meet some of the men and women who contributed to the history of the Mesier Homestead, as well as the Hudson Valley! Costumed historic characters you'll meet include Nicholas Brower Sr., Pieter and Catherine Mesier, famed Revolutionary War spy Enoch Crosby, phrenologist Orson Fowler, baseball great Dan Brouthers, and friends of Sojourner Truth and Daniel Nimham.

On Sunday, December 6th, celebrate the Homestead's Dutch roots with our Sinterklaas program. Discover the history of Sinterklaas and learn about the holiday traditions that the early Dutch settlers brought with them to New Netherland. Learn how Sinterklaasavond (St. Nicholas Eve) was celebrated in the home with stories, games, and the traditional Dutch sweets which were an important part of the festivities. There may even be a surprise visit by a special guest for the children!



All in-person meetings and Speaker Series events are cancelled, due to the current public health crisis. We will reschedule any cancelled events as soon as safely possible.

Discover the history of the Mesier Homestead and the Village of Wappingers Falls during our new *Signature Experience* private tours! Go to our website www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org for up-to-the-moment information.

START, OR FINISH, YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING WITH US!

The gift shop at the Mesier Homestead is the perfect place to start (or finish!) your holiday shopping.

We offer items of interest to history buffs as well as people who just love our area. Many of the products we stock are unique to the Historical Society. We carry art by local artists, books by local authors and gifts that have images of iconic locations in our area. You will also see that many of the products we carry both in-store and online show the well-known and recognized symbol of the Wappinger area - The Mesier Homestead.



Specials are planned for each Wednesday from now through Christmas, as well as over Thanksgiving weekend and the first two weekends in December. Check our homepage for the latest special offer. We hope to see you at the gift shop – please call our main number to find out the hours we are open. Don't live in the area, or like to shop late at night? No problem! Many of our items can be purchased online through our website. We are happy to ship directly to you or your recipient. Last day for online orders for the holidays is Thursday, December 17th. Come see what

we have - you're sure to find the perfect, unique gift!

You may have noticed on the front page of this edition of the *Homestead Chronicle* that we are displaying the logo for the “Best of the Hudson Valley 2020.” That's right! We are the winner of the “Best Historical Society of the Hudson Valley” for the third year running, in *Hudson Valley Magazine's* “Best of the Hudson Valley.”

We view this as a great honor, which in great part is due to the fantastic support of our members and friends. The Hudson Valley has many first-rate Historical Societies, which is reflective of the very rich history that our area holds. It is a humbling and proud moment to be recognized for this prestigious recognition among this group of impressive peers.

We continue to strive to improve on our Society, with expanded community involvement, continuing historical education in a variety of forms, our stewardship of the Mesier Homestead in the Village of Wappingers Falls, and so much more

Thanks again for your vote! Be sure to sign up for our mailing list—or better yet, become a member of our growing Society!



Wappingers Historical Society Picnic

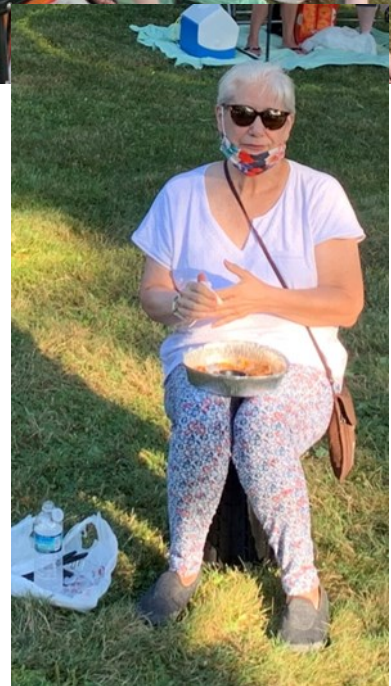
On July 29, members got together for a bring-your-own dinner, socially distanced picnic in Mesier Park. Society member Brian Lammers performed a fantastic concert in the gazebo, and an ice cream dessert was provided for all.



Wappingers Historical Society Picnic



Wappingers Historical Society Picnic



Mesier Homestead Restoration

The Wappingers Historical Society has turned its attention to the restoration of the original house, constructed in 1741 by Adolphus Brower and his son Nicholas. This portion of the Homestead is accessed from the kitchen and is currently used as a storage area. You may not be aware, but this part of the house has never been on the tour. In fact, it was a workshop for the Village Water Department up until a few years ago.



Although we always like to do the “fun” things that are prominent and in-view every day, the first step of this project is to start with the mundane restoration work on the foundation, walls and insulation. Next, we will turn our attention to windows and doors. Eventually, we will have a sound and weather-tight structure allowing for the restoration of the interior of the house. We hope to add this portion of the Homestead to our tour and historic exhibition areas.



This effort was kicked off this fall by relocating the electric feed cables, outdoor meter and main breakers. We also will be re-grading the ground around the structure, creating a safe distance to the bottom of the wooden wall components. Ground was broken on October 21st by digging trenches to reroute the electric feed and move it below ground. By having this work done now, we will be in good shape to begin the foundation work as soon as the weather allows in the spring of 2021. We will begin this work by focusing on the south wall.

We have selected Andrew DuPont of Silver Hammer Restoration

Construction to do the restoration work and he has us on his schedule to begin this work as early as possible.

Although the primary reason to do the electrical work is related to the structural restoration, we will have the very pleasant experience of being able to clear the area and the exterior walls of all the unsightly clutter. As the project progresses, we will provide updates so you can see the progress that we make. We can't wait to add the “After” picture to this picture of “Before”!

