
The Homestead Chronicle

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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President's Message

Welcome to our new Homestead Chronicle newsletter! As always, this edition features articles about local history as well as information on upcoming WHS events. For those of you who like to read the newsletter from a printed copy, you can still do so with this new format. Simply use the print option from your email program to print out the newsletter.

Last week I was going through old Homestead Chronicles when I came across a 2017 issue that featured an article marking the Wappingers Historical Society's 50th anniversary. The banner across the top of the article inscribed with the years 1967-2017 jumped out - 1967 was when Jack

Early on, WHS collections and artifacts were logged in on index cards, and ephemera just stored in boxes. Nothing archival, I might add. Years later, volunteers catalogued the collections on an Excel spreadsheet. Just recently, we were able to transfer the Excel spreadsheet to a more searchable software program (thanks to a Town of Wappinger grant!) Now the collections are all stored in archival boxes in our newly renovated library/research room!

When I rejoined the WHS in 2013 (yes, rejoined; Jack and I belonged to the WHS in the early 70's before life and kids consumed us), there were short 'show-and-tell' exhibits or programs after

and I got married! I am easily sidetracked and began reminiscing memories of 57 years of marriage instead of writing my 'President's Message'. Some time passed and reality set in - I needed to get back to the task at hand - the President's Message for the Spring issue!

Fifty-seven years ago, a group of local residents recognized the value of preserving local history and had a vision. If only they could see how far we have come! They met in parish halls and firehouses, they collected documents, artifacts, maps and photographs, and stored them in the basement of a local bank. In 1971, the Village let them have one room upstairs in the Homestead to call home and to open to the public. Eventually they were able to use the entire second floor. They would have exhibits from time to time- but it wasn't until the early 2000's that the WHS became custodians of the entire house (the Homestead has been owned by the Village since 1891 and used by the Village police, Village Court, Building Department and the Water Department, who had finally vacated the building).

Upstairs was wicked hot in the summer and freezing cold in the winter. Volunteers worked on the collections and did tours when the weather cooperated. The entire building is now climate controlled and can be open year-round. Most importantly, the collections are being preserved properly. We have regular tours each month and pop-up exhibits during 1st Saturday events in the Village. Our holiday decorations and programs are spectacular.

Donated furniture, and local auctions helped furnish the house. The decor reflects the three different time periods of the house: Colonial, early, and late Victorian, so that visitors can get an idea of how homes might have looked back then. The back part of the Homestead is Colonial from the mid 1700's, when Nicholas Brewer first built the house. The upstairs in the main house is early 1800's, and the downstairs later Victorian, when Matthew Mesier wanted to 'modernize' the Homestead.

the monthly meetings. We were all crowded into a small room (what is now the gift shop). We outgrew that space, and around 2015 initiated our very popular Speakers Series. These interesting and educational programs have been held at the Wappinger Town Hall, the American Legion Hall, River Valley Arts Center and even at Obercreek Brewery. Such fun!

We held craft fairs, tea parties, cocktail parties and silent auctions to help with fundraising. We opened the sealed fireplaces in the main house, restored the original front windows, installed a new heating system and finally got access to the 1741 section. We started the exterior restoration on the foundation of the 1741 section of the Homestead. This back section of the Homestead had been used as the Village workshop (picture paint cans, snow fences and every kind of tool needed for any job in the Village – i.e. a disaster) and had not been touched for over 100 years - it certainly showed it. Then the pandemic hit, and everything ground to a halt. Gratefully, in 2021 we received a wonderful donation from the Margaret Rudel Foundation that allowed us to continue with the 1741 restoration. Today, the stone foundation and the siding have been restored. In 2022, we received a grant from the DAR to restore the original fireplace, plaster and lime wash the interior walls. The electrical work still needs to be finished, but enough has been completed to open the building for our tours.

I wish those dedicated community members who had the vision to start the Wappingers Historical Society and to turn Mesier into a museum could see how much has been accomplished in those 57 years. I think they would be very proud.

Beth



Speaker Series: Will Tatum, Dutchess County Historian

Thursday, September 19, 7pm Town of Wappinger Town Hall

We are pleased to present Dutchess County Historian Will Tatum as part of our Speaker Series program. Please check our website over the summer for more information.



Stones and Bones—Living History Tour with Dani Masterson

Saturday, September 28, Wappingers Rural Cemetery Wappingers Falls (rain date Sunday, September 29)

Save the date! Join us for a tour of the Cemetery and meet a selection of local residents who have been laid to rest there. Tickets will be on sale at the end of August. Watch for additional information over the summer.



Annual member potluck picnic

Tuesday, July 16, 5:30pm

NEW LOCATION! Pavilion #2 at Bowdoin Park. More details coming in June!



Gift Cards Galore Raffle is back!

Our Gift Cards Galore! raffle is back for a 2nd year, kicking off on June 1st at the Festival of the Falls, with the drawing to be held at Tony Musso's talk on October 17th. Last year's raffle was a resounding success, raising over \$2,000 in support of the Wappingers Historical

Society's mission of preservation and education! This year, we again offer over \$1,000 in gift cards. If you have any gift cards that you can't use, or are not interested in, please consider donating them to us for the raffle. Gift cards can be local or national chain, any amount, and must be valid through at least January 2025. You will receive a thank you/acknowledgment letter from us for your generous donation.



New Members

Janice Mae Schopfer
Genie Bata-Slagle
Tony & Sandy Asaro
Danielle Salvati and Family
Cathy Von Burg and Family

Welcome!!

THE BIRKENMEYER BASEBALL TEAM

Courtesy of Maureen Briccio



The first family baseball team? It is quite possible they were the first because the team was formed in 1906. They were the ten Birkenmeyer brothers.

Jack used the submarine delivery long before “Carl Mays”, former Yankee great, was ever heard of. On occasion he used the over-hand curve drop, the in-curve drop, and the out-curve drop. In modern day baseball lingo, his pitches were probably the slider that either broke down and in or down and away. The over-hand curve drop was probably the split-finger fast ball that broke down sharply.

“Big Dan” Brouters, when he played and managed the Newburgh team (1906) in the old Hudson River league had Jack pitch and was the captain of the team. According to “Big Dan”, Jack was one of the best all-around players ever produced in Dutchess County. Jack and Charlie played together as a battery for 14 years and neither one ever complained of a sore arm. The players hardly ever complained of a sore arm in those days, they just loved to play ball.

The Birkenmeyer brothers never made the big leagues, but they did make the news. Ten sons and two daughters were born to Adolph Birkenmeyer, a German wagon maker, and his wife Mary in Wappingers Falls, New York. When they were old enough, they decided to organize their own baseball team. The Birkenmeyer boys ranged in age from Ray (10 years old and team mascot) to Charlie (30 years old).

Jimmy Gleason became the team manager in 1906 and for several years played the best teams up and down the Hudson Valley from Brooklyn and Queens up to Hudson, New York.

It was an excellent team capable of winning most of its games against some very strong teams throughout the area. The batteries were Jack, the pitcher, and Charlie, the catcher. They were both excellent players and on certain occasions, Jack was such an outstanding pitcher that he was paid five dollars to pitch for other teams. One Sunday Jack pitched and won a game in Cold Spring. After the game, the pitcher for the other team was so impressed with Jack's performance that he asked him to come to Flushing, Long Island the following Sunday and pitch for his team. Jack accepted the offer, went to Long Island and won the game. He received \$25.00 for pitching and that was considered big money for a pitcher in those days.

The rest of the Birkenmeyer team consisted of Oscar, who played 1st base. Hughie was the 2nd baseman and seldom used a baseball glove. Joe played short-stop and Adolph, who had a "cannon" for an arm, played 3rd base. On occasion when Jack needed a rest, he also pitched. In the outfield, Jim played center field and Albert was the left fielder. When needed, Albert could also catch. The other outfielders were Ray and Vincent.

The team was once offered a chance to play in the Polo Grounds, home of the old New York Giants, but the game was never played because of scheduling problems. The brothers were very disappointed but nevertheless were very proud just to have been asked to play in a famous ballpark like the Polo Grounds.

The Birkenmeyer team was not only quite unique but because of their baseball skills and popularity, surely placed Wappingers Falls prominently on the baseball map of that period.

Editor's note: The Birkenmeyer family resided on High Street in the Village

Play Ball!



From left: 1951 Little League players Jimmy Komornik and Dick Lahey, and from the 1963 New York State champion Senior Little League All-Star Team Ron Paino, Ernie Martin, Bill Snyed, Joe Canale, Beth, Dani ... plus the Town officials.



Play Ball!. our latest Town Hall exhibit, was unveiled at an April Town Board meeting. Dani Masterson and Ken Cerino did a fabulous job curating the exhibit. Displayed are baseball artifacts on loan from the community, as well as some of the Society's own. The exhibit can be seen in the lobby throughout the summer during Town Hall hours 8:30-4:30.

From the Archives



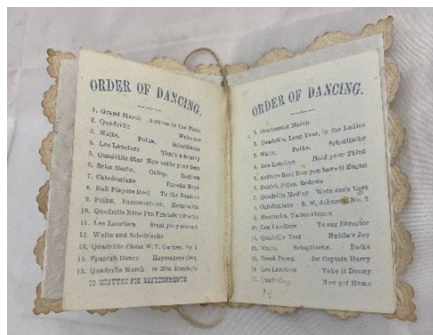
This foot warmer and its companion was recently donated to us from the Mahwenawasigh DAR Chapter. The sides are punched in a decorative



style using hearts and concentric circles. The user would put fire embers inside the box. The handle allowed for transport, whether to warm the toes in a carriage, attending church services or for use in another part of the home.



Autograph books were very popular in the late 1800's through the mid-century 1900's, most particularly with girls. Here is an inscription from a Poughkeepsie High School classmate to Edna Goring, of Wappingers, in April 1909.



This is a dance card from a New Year's Party in 1875. The Active Base Ball Club of Wappingers played at fields such as Eastman Park, the Warring Grounds, Germania Hall (all in Poughkeepsie) and the Poughkeepsie Military Institute and competed with teams across New York State and Connecticut.



Wappingers was not immune to the dahlia frenzy that swept the nation in the late 1800's-early 1900's. These trophy cups were awarded to A. Seaman Hunt in 1907.

Help our Archives Grow!

While we have artifacts and ephemera relating to the village of Wappingers Falls and Hughsonville, we do not have much in our collection from the broader Town of Wappinger and surrounding hamlets of Chelsea, New Hamburg, New Hackensack

and Swartwoutville. If you have artifacts, documents, photos or other memorabilia regardless of the time period, please consider donating them to our archives. This will help us create pop-up exhibits for 1st Saturdays, and ensure that our local history is preserved. We always accept donations to the archives, and can even scan photos or documents and return the originals to you if you prefer. If you would like to make a donation, call 845-632-1281 or email us at: info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org.



Devine's Devils - the Trivia Queens!!

At our March member meeting, we held a trivia contest. The winners were Devine's Devils. Congratulations to Eileen, Beatrice, Delia and Nancy!



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