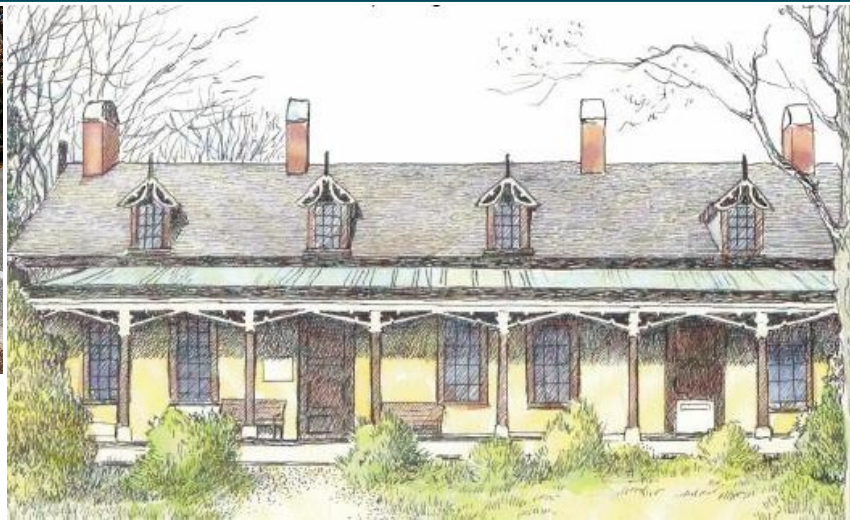


# The Homestead Chronicle

VOL. 9 NO. 4 A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fall 2023



Established 1967

P.O. Box 174  
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## President's Message

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Dear Friends,

The leaves are changing color and fall is upon us. As 2023 winds down, it's a good time to look back at our accomplishments this year. We made great progress with the restoration of the original 1742 home. The fireplaces have been restored in both the east and west rooms, as well as the west room walls and flooring. Much more work lies ahead of us, and funds will need to be raised to pay for this work, but we can all be proud of what has been done so far. We are excited to see what the next phase will bring!

Our Speaker Series events were well attended by members and non-members alike. We learned about the history of bottle making, Stoneco, and the art of barrel making. We held our annual Pathway through History costumed character tour, learned about the artwork of Henry Billings, and were "spooked" by historic murders in Dutchess County. The Stones and Bones Living History Tour, held in collaboration with Dani Masterson and the County Players actors, wowed us all and we hope to make this an annual event!

Check our website for updates on our holiday events. I look forward to seeing you soon as we celebrate the closing of another fabulous year. ONWARD!

*Beth*

**E. Stickle, Editor**

B. Stickle, Layout  
B. Devine, Copy Editor

## *Coming Events!*

### **Special Veteran's Day Tour Day**

*Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup> at 1pm, 2pm and 3pm at Mesier Homestead*

In honor of Veteran's Day, hear about Muriel Engelman's experiences as an Army nurse in WW2 and learn a little about her life here in Wappingers Falls. Mrs. Engelman, wife of beloved village dentist Dr. Melvin Engelman, will be portrayed by our very own Trish Costello. After our Veteran's Day tribute, the tour continues through the Mesier Homestead, and at the conclusion, you will have an opportunity to view Veteran-related artifacts from our archives.



## **GIVING TUESDAY**

Tuesday, November 28

Giving Tuesday is a global movement, occurring annually on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving. It serves as a counterbalance to the consumerism of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, redirecting the focus to acts of kindness and charitable giving. Our giving campaign this year focuses on sustaining the works of the Wappingers Historical Society. We are dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of the Town of Wappinger, the Village of Wappingers Falls and neighboring communities, and to maintain the custodianship of the Mesier Homestead. We work to preserve and expand our archives, collections and library to actively chronicle the life of our hamlets, village and town for future generations. Our public programs and exhibits allow people of all ages to better understand their connection to history, and we safeguard and share our architectural heritage and history of the 1741 Mesier Homestead. Please consider a monetary donation to the Society to allow us to continue and expand our programs.

### ***New Members***

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

Katie Faller

Lucy De Santis

Angelo & Barbara Giaimo

Robin & John Licari

Eileen Hills

Tom McAlister

Franca Petrillo

Matthew & Terry Meltzer

Mary Volpe

Michael Martinez and family

Mike & Connie Boden and family

## Holidays at the Mesier Homestead

### Sinterklaas and Dutch Holiday Traditions, Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>

A fun family event filled with stories, decorations, and traditional Dutch holiday treats. 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, and taste some of the traditional Dutch sweets which were part of the festivities. There will even be a surprise visit by a special guest – St. Nicholas himself! Space is limited, tickets are online through our website.

#### **Holiday Open House Schedule:**

Stop in to see the beautifully decorated downstairs rooms of the 1741 Mesier Homestead, complete with candlelight, fresh greenery, ribbons and bows. The Homestead will be open on Wednesdays, December 6, 13 and 20 from 11am – 2pm and Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> from 11am – 2pm. Bring your friends and family to see this jewel of the village of Wappingers Falls!



#### **Our gift shop is open to start (or finish) your holiday shopping!**

Come shop the *new* Mesier Homestead Gift Shop! We revamped our shop and added new merchandise from local artists. You'll find 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. Come see what we have - you're sure to find the perfect, unique gift!

The Gift Shop is open during the Open House (see dates, above) as well as on Thursdays & Fridays December 7 & 8; 14 & 15. We will also be open each day during the week before Christmas, December 18 – 22 from 11am – 2pm.

Don't live in the area, or do you like to shop 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 Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>.

### Member Holiday Wine and Cheese Party

Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>

5-7 pm

Mesier Homestead



## Legends and Lore- Spook Hill Road Marker Unveiled

The grand unveiling of the Spook Hill Road marker was held Saturday, October 28. Representatives from the Historical Society, the Town Board, and County Historian Will Tatum, as well as other supportive citizens were present. The Historical Society obtained this marker through a grant from the William G. Pomoroy Foundation.

As Deryn Pomoroy, a trustee from the Foundation stated in a letter read by President Beth Devine, “This marker program helps communities promote cultural tourism by highlighting their local folklore and legends. Today, with this Legends & Lore marker, you recognize the place-name lore and eerie tales surrounding Spook Hill Road.” The marker has been placed along the roadside at the newly renovated Spook Hill Park.



## A “Road Trip” in the Town of Wappinger (Part 2) (or, How Some Wappinger Roads Got Their Names)

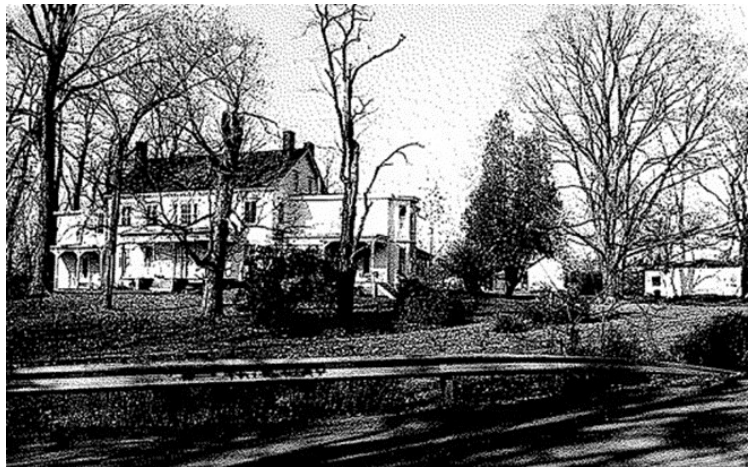
### Roads in New Hackensack

**New Hackensack** and its namesake road were named after Hackensack, NJ; the hamlet was formed when residents of that place came to live in Dutchess County in 1714.

**Widmer Road**- named for Oscar Rembrandt Widmer; established a farm here in the early 1900’s.

**St. Nicholas Road**- a fresh air summer camp for NYC children established in the 1930’s on this road; St. Nicholas Farm, named for the Collegiate Reformed Church of St. Nicholas, Manhattan which funded the camp.

**Diddell Road**- John Diddell, born 1773; farm owner. His son J. Jackson Diddell inherited the farm in the 1850’s. The house is located across from the DC Rail Trail Parking lot on Diddell Road.



The Diddell House

### Roads in Myers Corners

**Myers Corners Road** was named for John Myers - farmer and hotelier- his residence was located at the intersection of Myers Corners Rd. and what is now All Angels Hill Road.



The Thurston/DeGarmo House

**Degarmo Hills Road**- Elias Degarmo- born in 1887- owned a dairy farm of 195 acres- the house was originally built by Joseph Thurston in 1751- he is an ancestor of our Town Superintendent Richard Thurston. The house still stands directly behind the gas station at the corner of Myers Corners Road and Degarmo Hills Road.

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**Gold Road, Brothers Road-** Brothers Chauncy and Monroe Gold; real estate developers.

**Dose Road-** Frederick John Dose-; bought a 153-acre farm in 1941, which was sold to the Gold Brothers and consolidated into the 1950-60's subdivision of Brothers, Gold and Dose Roads.

**Montfort Road-** Named for The Honorable Peter P. Montfort NYS Assembly, who was born in 1796.

**All Angels Hill Road-** All Angels Episcopal Church in Manhattan ran a fresh air summer camp for NYC children here in the 1920-40's and named it All Angels Farm.

**Schnabel Court-** John Schnabel, who emigrated from Germany, owned a farm near Kent Road (known as Kent Avenue before 1950)

**Lake Oniad-** Italian immigrant Ignacious Daino and his family lived on Kent Road in the 1940-50's and were the inspiration for the lake's name-Onaid, which is Daino spelled backwards.

**Ervin Drive-** Named for Canadian immigrant Charles Ervin. He owned a farm along Myers Corners Road.

**Spook Hill Road-** A legend says there was a spot along the road that glowed in the dark and "spooked" the horses when they reached that place.

**Pye Lane-** Named for Amelia Sleight Pye (1821—1916). Widow Amelia inherited the farm from her brother Edgar Sleight. Edgar actually owned two farms here, one being an apple orchard. He developed a cultivar which was named Sleight's Lady Apple.

**Brown Road-** Named for George W. Brown, a farmer (1841—1928).

**Whites Corner Lane-** named for White's Corners, the name given to the intersection of Old Hopewell Road and All Angels Road. The White family lived in a house at this crossroads in the 1800's, which is still standing today. The house was originally built by Peter duBois (Madam Brett's surveyor) in the early 1700's.



The DuBois/White House

**Ardmore Drive-** named for Ardmore Farm; the Shook family gave this name to house and farm in the early 1900's; it was later purchased by Dr. Hyman, who bred racehorses on the property.

their

**Eck Road-** named for Louis Eck, farmer and third owner of Ardmore Farm.

## Stones and Bones

Many thanks to **all** of our volunteers who have dedicated their time and talents to make the premier of *Stones & Bones Living History Tour* such an outstanding success!

- The Board of Governors of County Players, and the actors and stage hands, for the portrayal of our apparitions and guides, the costumes, and for taking care of the details to ensure an entertaining and educational event.

- The Board of Trustees and Members of the Wappingers Historical Society for their research, script writing, promotion, photography, day-of-event activities and ongoing support.

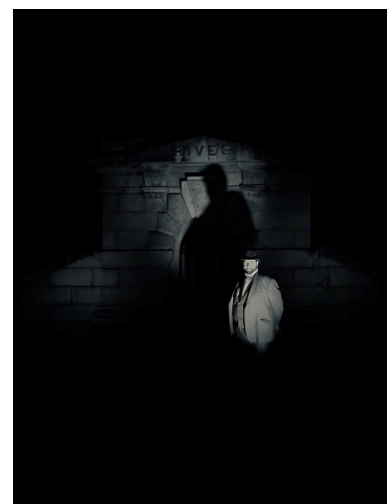


- The Board of Directors of the Wappingers Rural Cemetery for their cooperation and support in planning this event to ensure a smooth and safe flow of visitors.

- Harry and Sarah Terbush of Wappingers Falls Hydroelectric for sourcing and providing all of the lighting for this production.



*Most especially, many thanks to **Dani Masterson**, whose love of history, love of theater, broad vision, boundless energy and countless volunteer hours has brought this program to life.*



## Stones and Bones



## Research Corner

*(Editor's Note- The Wappingers Historical Society recently received an email from Neville C., a resident of Victoria, Australia. Neville's grandmother Angiola was born at Stoneco in 1904, and he was inquiring about the Italian community in Wappingers Falls and life at Stoneco. John DiDomizio, our expert on all things Stoneco, was happy to correspond with him)*

It turns out that Neville did not have definitive proof about his grandmother's birth and did not know the family's whereabouts thereafter. I referred Neville to St. Mary's Church for her baptismal record, who in turn referred him to the Archdiocese of New York who now processes requests of this type. We haven't heard back yet. I then went to my favorite old newspaper website [fultonhistory.com](http://fultonhistory.com) and found that Angiola's father had been in Peekskill in 1913.

The good news is that Neville asked for some sort of description of life in Stoneco. Whereupon I, with hundreds of pages of information at hand, finally decided to complete my book. The book ***On Italian Life In Stoneco 1900-1914***, with over one hundred pages and twenty-five figures, will be available in about one year by my current estimate. Neville was sent a preliminary set of chapters and was most pleased. He is also helping me by doing some research on the Italian Ancestor Portal.

**John**



## Speaker Series recap

In case you missed it, in September we welcomed Sean McCarthy to speak with us about artist Henry Billings, whose murals of the falls grace the lobby of the former Wappingers Falls Post Office. Sean made an outstanding presentation to us about Billings, his artistic style and works. Most surprising was that Billings painted large-scale murals in both the Ford and Chrysler buildings in the New York World's Fair of 1939-1940! Many thanks to Michelle Martinetti of River Valley Arts Center for hosting our event, and to Village Police Commissioner Paul Italiano for allowing attendees to visit the lobby of the Police Station prior to the talk to view the murals in person.



Shannon Butler made murders most interesting during her recent talk on Historic Murders in Dutchess County. Her “true crimes” stories, extensive research and humor made attendees realize that life was not always so bucolic in our beautiful area.

## Gift Cards Galore Raffle

Congratulations to our \$1000 gift card winner Doreen Shephard (pictured here) and Wilhelmina Girolamo, winner of \$250 worth of gift cards!

Thank you to all who supported the historical society through this raffle.



**Visit us at:**

[www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org](http://www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org)

**Contact us at:**

[info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org)

**Like & Follow us on:**

Facebook—@WappingersHistoricalSociety

## Volunteer Spotlight – Greeters and Docents

We're part of 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in the village! This special day is a wonderful opportunity to open our archives, and display some of the unique items we have in our collections. For a couple of hours in September, we showcased artifacts and information related to the Wappinger Trolley. Pegeen & Tom Wall shared trolley postcard photos, tickets and tokens, and even a piece of rail and a trolley man's uniform with our visitors.



L-R: Pegeen & Tom Wall, along with Janet & Charlie Powers are ready to greet visitors to our 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday exhibit



L-R: Nancy Piscitello and Wendy McNeil get into the spirit of the season in our gift shop.

Rain dampened the October 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday, but we still had a good, spooky time with the theme “Victorian Macabre”. Indeed, we have spooky stuff in our collections! Janet & Charlie Powers, along with Pegeen and Tom & Wall braved the damp weather on the porch. Wendy McNeil and Nancy Piscitello did double duty for the day: gathering the items from our archives, then staffing the Gift Shop. These ladies can be found working with our archives during the week and staffing our Gift Shop on tour days.

We would love to have more members get involved with 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday – no experience or special knowledge is necessary! If you are interested in doing this type of work for the Society, please let us know! We have an online volunteer registration form on our website at <https://www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org/volunteer-application> -or- call us at 845-632-1281.



L-R: Tom Wall, alongside the Victorian Macabre artifact exhibit.