

Museum of Rhinebeck History

Celebrating Our 25th Year – Spring 2017 Issue

President's Message from Elizabeth Clarke

We are looking forward to an exciting year of events and preservation of history. We look forward to seeing you at our Jewelry Sale, in partnership with Premier Jewelry, on Sunday, April 30 at the DAR House. We also invite you to donate items for our summer tag sales and Harvest Auction. We hope that you will attend these events as well.

We are very glad to welcome our new trustees, Deborah Eisenberg, Sue Chlystun and Rick Stickle. They bring helpful skills and knowledge to the board. We bid a fond farewell to board member, Beverly Kane, who has been a vital part of the board and the work that we do.

Our board members have been busy collaborating with other local history groups to develop exhibits and events. We have one at the Post Office and two at the Starr Library. Steve Mann, our curator, has been hard at work with others developing an exhibit on Olin Dows. We hope that you take the time to check out these great insights into Rhinebeck's history.

As always, we invite you to contact us about any items you would like to put in the Museum's collections.

New Trustees

In the last issue, we were very excited to report that Diane Closs and Deborah Eisenberg had joined the Board. As of this issue, we are equally happy to welcome Sue Chlystun and Rick Stickle. This made four new trustees, all natives of Rhinebeck,

interested in Rhinebeck history, joining us in 2016.

Deborah (Wanzer) Eisenberg recently joined the Board of the Museum of Rhinebeck History and immediately stepped in to help publicize our summer and fall events, and helped extensively with organizing the garage sales and auction. She is a Rhinebeck native who recently returned to live in Rhinebeck. She graduated from Pace University and Columbia University. Prior to her return to Rhinebeck, she worked as the director of a family mental health clinic in Westchester County. She is now self-employed part time and is enjoying the opportunity to volunteer as a board member. She is interested in early Dutch history and enjoys exploring the Hudson Valley.

Sue (Haskins) Chlystun is a lifetime area resident and recently retired art teacher from Poughkeepsie High School. With a Masters in Art Ed from SUNY New Paltz and a lifelong interest in art and architecture, Sue is looking forward to this new phase of life and working with the Museum of Rhinebeck History. Sue and her husband, Darrell, reside in the town of Rhinebeck.

A profile of **Rick Stickle** will appear in our summer newsletter.

Retiring Trustee Beverly Kane

Beverly Kane has retired from the Board after serving more than two full three-year terms. We are happy that she is remaining as a very active volunteer/archivist. Beverly will be working with trustees and other volunteers on special collections, scanning, and updating our electronic database.

We will work very closely with Beverly to better align our current database and written records. This will assure more accuracy and easier access to the collection not only for volunteers and the public, but for our curator as well. This effort will also result in more images from our collection being placed in the Consortium of Rhinebeck History database so that anybody in the world can access the collection to do research. It is a huge undertaking and we know with Beverly's professional experience and background, it will be a success.

Beverly had been president and vice-president during her tenure. We all thank her for continuing to be part of our museum community and preserve Rhinebeck's history. And we thank her husband, Neil Kane, who has helped us with events and fundraising. Their generosity is much appreciated.

Thanks to Steve Hubbert

Ellen and Steve Hubbert have been constant members of the Museum for many years, and they hold a lifetime membership. Ellen is a former president and served on the Board for many years. As many of us know in Rhinebeck, when you get Ellen, you get Steve.

We wish to thank Steve for continuing to manage our growing database which is on the Consortium of Rhinebeck History website (rhinebeckhistory.org). Through his efforts and that of Beverly Kane, we've added numerous images to the database so that people can actually see what the object is. Much work remains on this project, and we will continue working on it this year. We could not have done it without his knowledge and experience. Thanks a million, Steve!

Loss of Numerous Museum Friends

Since our last publication, we wish to remember our beloved late longtime friend and member, Donald Kallop, father-in-law of Trustee Rick Stickle. Don participated as a leading panel member of the Rhinecliff Oral History Project. We also lost Rhinebeck native Bill "Toad" Wager who lived in the historic former Oak Street Schoolhouse. We remember Bob Curthoys, who was the father of our former trustee Kathleen Boehm, and former trustees Eve Mc Clenahan, widow of Dr. James Mc Clenahan, and Alex McKnight. Alex was moderator of the Rhinecliff Oral History Project, which he co-chaired with the late Alan Coon. We also remember Gordon Briggs, widower of our late trustee Marcella (Clarke) Briggs, and member Joan Oury who always enjoyed attending the progressive dinners.

Exhibit on Rhinebeck: The Parlor City at the Rhinebeck Post Office

Thanks to Museum Trustee Sue Chlystun, Town Historian Nancy Kelly, and other history buffs, an interesting exhibit is on display at the Rhinebeck Post Office. The current installation of **Rhinebeck: The Parlor City** is a look at the boarding houses/guest farms that were in the Rhinebeck area during the turn of the century through the 1940s.

In the showcase is an interesting interpretation in miniature of what the parlor of one of these guest houses may have looked like. It was constructed by Sue in miniature scale, her father was the late Rhinebeck miniaturist Ralph Haskins, whose models of the interior of the Reformed Church and the Tap Room of the Beekman Arms can be found on loan from the Museum at those locations.

Several of these boarding houses/guest farms were in the village of Rhinebeck. Many were on the outskirts off of Route 308, or off Slate Quarry Road. For a few we are still trying to determine their exact location. We believe several which said they were in "Rhinebeck" were indeed in the outer regions of the town, if not in Staatsburg, the town of Red Hook, Milan, Bulls Head, or Clinton Corners. They may have used "Rhinebeck" to designate the New York Central Railroad station location for travelers.

One of the houses in the exhibit is on the corner of West Chestnut and Montgomery Streets. It was owned by Mrs. Sleight, and she ran it as a widow. It was later a rooming house owned by Mr. & Mrs. William R. Carroll, Jr. The house was refurbished a few years ago and is currently used as additional guest accommodations for those staying at the Beekman Arms/Delamater House complex. Another such place in the exhibit was the John Traver house on Wurtemberg Road, a lovely 19th century farm house, which is now used as a stately private residence. There are still three sets of guest accommodations (bed and breakfasts) on Wurtemberg Road today.

The exhibit will remain up through March or early April, then a new exhibit will be put in its place. Feel free to view it during regular lobby hours, Monday through Saturday.

Mini Exhibit on the Rhinebeck Fire Department at the Starr Library

Thanks to the generosity of Robert and Betsey (Ebers) Press of Palm Springs, CA and Rhinebeck, NY, we were able to install in November a mini exhibit on the Rhinebeck Fire Department. We used material that had been loaned to us related to Betsey's dad, the late Gus Ebers of Rhinebeck. While space was limited, we

were able to show some of the related artifacts that his family has in its collection.

Gus was associated for many years with the Department as its Treasurer. As a matter of fact, he received recognition from the Guinness Book of World Records for his continued service with the Department. Seventy years old at the time he was recognized with that achievement. We also had his service medals, fire hat and helmet, a caricature drawing that was presented to him many years ago, and a great T-shirt showing the old Pocahontas, an antique apparatus still in the Rhinebeck Fire Department's possession.

We thank the family for their continued loyal membership with the Museum and their willingness to share a bit of their history with us.

Second Mini Exhibit at the Starr Library

Should you take the elevator or stairs down to the lower level of the Starr Library, you will see an exhibit case with a small winter-themed exhibit assembled. It is a portrayal of Rhinebeck during snowy winters past.

Through the eyes of the late Rhinebeck photographer Frank Asher, one will see an old sleigh being driven down Chestnut Street in the early 1940s, the ferry TRANSPORT docked at Rhinecliff, ice boating on the Hudson River, and the decorations at Holiday Farm (now Astor Home for Children). The photos are of the 1938-1952 era in Rhinebeck.

Also in the case is an antique bear coat belonging to a Rhinebeck man who had driven an open sled many years ago, vintage ice skates, and iron ice tongs.

Times have changed, there was no ipad, ipod or iphone, nor a laptop computer. It was a simpler time, much different from

today. Stop by for 10 minutes and see this display during library hours. It's up through March 31.

Exciting Collaboration – Rhinebeck Cemetery Tour

Through the leadership of the Rhinebeck Historical Society, the first annual costumed cemetery tour will take place on Saturday, June 10, 2017, at 2 PM at the Rhinebeck Cemetery (Mill Road). Representatives from the Boards of both the Friends of the Rhinebeck Cemetery and the Museum of Rhinebeck History will be assisting with the tour script, costumes, logistics, and refreshments.

This tour will complement the one given by the Friends of the Rhinebeck Cemetery on Sunday, October 9, 2016. It will focus on the Suckley and Kelly families (both from the Friends' 2015 tour) and then the Hillside of Section C which will include the Morton, Dows, Delano and Crosby families. The tour will conclude with refreshments at the Kane farm on Mill Road.

Information will be available on all three organizations' websites and updated as it becomes available. The tour guide will be Steven Mann. Portraying the subjects will be members from all three groups. This is the first time that all three organizations have worked together on an effort.

Preliminary Plans for Exciting Olin Dows: Artist and Native Son Exhibit Unveiled

The Museum of Rhinebeck History is serving as the lead of a multi-agency exhibit on the life of Olin Dows. The exhibit, Olin Dows: Artist and Native Son will be exhibited from September 29-October 1, 2017, at the Delamater Conference Center in Rhinebeck. Another exhibit, focusing on the contrast and similarities between the work of

Poughkeepsie artist Thomas Barrett and Olin Dows, will take place prior to that at the Barrett Arts Center in Poughkeepsie.

Besides two days of the exhibit being open to the public, an opening reception and closing reception will be held. Programs will be held during the summer 2017, at local libraries leading up to the exhibit to build interest. The Rhinebeck Historical Society with the Museum and the Friends of the Rhinebeck Cemetery will present a June 10 costumed gravesite walking tour which will include reenactors talking about the lives of several residents, including David and Alice Dows and their children, Deborah and Olin, who are all buried in the family plot at the Rhinebeck Cemetery.

In August and September, a mini exhibit will feature information on the historic estates of Fox Hollow and Glenburne. A small exhibit will be posted at the Quitman Resource Center of photographs from the Dows family belonging to the Museum's permanent collection. An interesting mini exhibit at Rhinebeck Town Hall will present information on the important role that the Dows family played in local business and civic affairs.

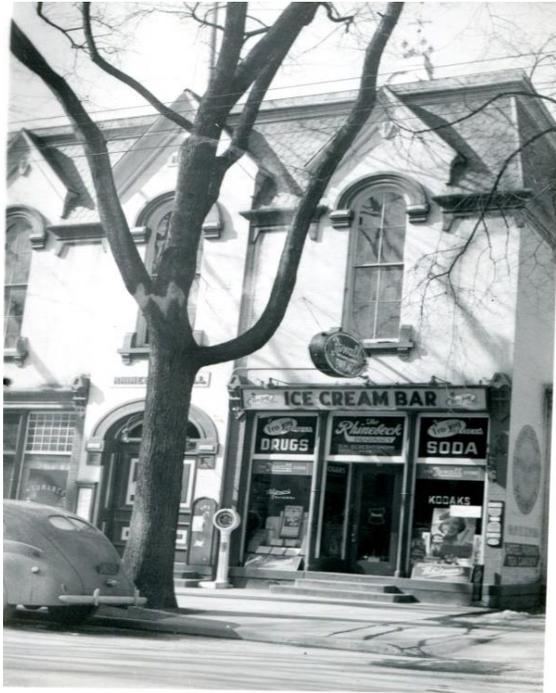
For further information, or to be included on the mailing list for these events, please contact the Museum by email (museumofrhinebeckhistory@gmail.com) or by phone (845-554-6331). Those already on the Museum mailing list will receive information on the exhibit and related events during the summer.

The Old Town Hall – The Short Version

The former town hall was built in 1873, for what was then the princely sum of \$20,000. Its construction was overseen by former Town Supervisor Virgil C. Traver, who died in 1906. The town board construction

superintendent appointed him to the job. Traver had a heck of a time as Town Supervisor getting the bonding approved for the project, but that is a much longer story.

Front Façade of the old Town Hall



The site was purchased from Griffin Hoffman, and it was located on Mill Street (Route 9) on the site of the current post office.

North Façade of the Town Hall showing front door



The carpentry was done by Henry Latson. Masonry work was provided by James D. Hogan and Rensselaer C. Worden. All three were home construction “mechanics” per Dr. Morse. The building was erected so that it was a stately monument to the proud village of Rhinebeck. In other words, it stood out.

On the south side of the building was the post office. Dr. Frank Latson, who died in 1920, had his drug store on the north end.



Interior of Dr. Latson's Pharmacy

Latson apothecary bottles and labeled jars can still be found in the cellars and attics of Rhinebeck homes. The town's court room was located on the west end of the first floor. Conrad Marquardt and Theophilus Gillender were the first justices to use it. A large public hall was on the second floor. The local jail (hoosegow) was in the basement. Later, Joseph Griffing's Music Shop moved into space on the first floor. Due to the foot traffic, this retail space was prime realty.

To pay for the operating costs, local civic groups and families could rent the hall for social events, theatre productions, and other purposes. The town board at the time (1873)

was Supervisor John G. Ostrom, Town Clerk Jacob Rynders, Tunis Wortman, and Isaac F. Russell. The local justices of the peace at the time were Marquardt and Gillender, mentioned above. Interestingly,



all of these gentlemen were against the original bonding issue to pay for the town hall's construction.

South Façade showing Applegate Insurance sign.

Ferncliff Forest

One of the great open spaces in the town of Rhinebeck still existing is the tranquil wildlife refuge referred to today as Ferncliff Forest, on Mt. Rutsen Road, just off of River Road. It is currently 192 acres of undeveloped land that is open to the public.

Establishment of the Acreage

One part of the current Ferncliff Forest, 125 acres, was owned by Thomas Suckley. He had inherited it from his mother, Catherine Rutsen. Thomas was the proprietor of Wilderstein on Morton Road in Rhinebeck, the noted historic site for whom his daughter, Margaret "Daisy" Suckley, is credited with preserving through her final

wishes. In 1878, Mr. Suckley donated land to the New York State Methodist Conference. It was to be used as a seasonal retreat for retired clergy of that denomination. The clergy built cottages, and a chapel was constructed in 1883. They tried to farm the land quite unsuccessfully. By 1900, the colony had been closed and the land stood unused. We know this because in 1900, John Jacob Astor IV purchased 106 acres of the Methodist colony for \$5,500, which he incorporated into a property to be known as Ferncliff Farm. From 1902 until approximately 1905, the chapel was used as a Methodist Sunday School. The cottages were torn down around that time. The chapel stopped being used and was demolished.

A Gift to the People of Rhinebeck

When John Jacob Astor IV aka Jack Astor died in 1912, on the Titanic. Ferncliff Farm was left to his son Vincent. Vincent in turn continued acquiring land in the area and by 1940 his estate had approximately 2,800 acres total. When Vincent Astor died in 1959, the farm was left to his wife, Brooke Marshall Astor. The land initially went on the open market in varied parcels. In 1963, Homer K. Staley, a local realtor who spent some of his childhood years at Ferncliff, asked Mrs. Astor to donate the acreage. She agreed and deeded the land to Rhinebeck Rotary for a forest preserve and game refuge. The land was given with the provision that it remain wild in perpetuity, as a gift to the people of the town.

The position of Ferncliff's first forest ranger was an unpaid position. It was first held by Rhinebeck resident Homer K. Staley. He held that trusted position for an incredible 30 years. In 1988, the Rhinebeck Rotary transferred the land. As a result, took on its own nonprofit corporation funded completely by donations. In 1994, the Homer K. Staley, Sr. Nature Walk was

established at the preserve as a gift from the Rhinebeck Rotary. The nonprofit agency remains a vibrant organization to this day.

Mailing List – Send a Newsletter to a Friend

If you know of a current or former local resident who you feel should be getting a newsletter, feel free to email us. We will check their status on the list, and if they are not receiving, or have not received newsletters in the past, we will gladly add them to our list. The Museum depends on paid memberships as part of meeting annual operating costs. Please email us or call us at the information provided: Email: museumofrhinebeckhistory@gmail.com ; Phone: (845) 554-6331. Membership chair Mara Marrero will get back to you.

Officers for 2017 Announced

Once again, Nominations Co-Chair Steven Mann presented the following slate of officers on behalf of the nominations committee. The slate was approved as submitted and is as follows:

President Elizabeth Clarke; *Vice-President* Lida Traver-Landy; *Recording Secretary* Dianne Closs; *Treasurer* Mara Marrero; and *Corresponding Secretary* Steven Mann. We welcome Diane as an officer.

That same meeting Rick Stickle was voted in as a trustee as nominated. Continuing as trustees will be Deborah W. Eisenberg and Sue Chlystun. The board has two vacancies. Thanks to each of them for bringing their talents and skills to the Board.

Mark Your Calendars

Jewelry Sale: April 30, 1-3pm at the DAR House at 77 Livingston St. All items arrive by Mother's Day.

Museum opening and tag sale will be Saturday, June 17. The tag sale will be from 9-3, and the Museum will be open from 10 AM – 4 PM that day. Exhibit is second year of Farming in Rhinebeck with changes made to several parts of last year's exhibit. Light refreshments will be served. **Vendors are welcomed at \$20 for the day; please contact us through email or our phone to reserve space.**

Collaborative ***Costumed Cemetery Walking Tour*** on Saturday, June 10, 2 PM at the Rhinebeck Cemetery, Mill Road in Rhinebeck, with reception following at the adjoining Kane Farm.

Second Tag Sale: Saturday, July 22. The tag sale will be from 9-3. **Vendors are welcomed at \$20 for the day; please contact us through email or our phone to reserve space.**

Open a Box of History: Sunday, August 6. This event will be 1-3pm at the Local History Room at the Starr Library.

Special Exhibit -- ***Olin Dows: Artist and Native Son***, Friday evening, September 29 – Sunday evening, October 1, 2017, at the Delamater Inn Conference Room, Montgomery Street, Rhinebeck.

Annual Autumn Auction on Sunday, October 22 at Rhinebeck Town Hall, E. Market St., Rhinebeck. Silent Auction followed by Live Auction. Benefits Museum and Chancellor Livingston Chapter, N.S.D.A.R. **Donated items are welcomed, contact us by email or telephone. Donations are tax-deductible. If you own a business, consider donating an item, a service, or a gift certificate.** New participants are always welcomed and encouraged! It's a great way to support local historic preservation.

SUGGESTED LOCAL HISTORY READING LIST

Hissing Cousins: The Lifelong Rivalry of Eleanor Roosevelt and Alice Roosevelt Longworth by Marc Peyser

Images of America: Rhinebeck by Michael Frazier

Our Time at Foxhollow Farm: A Hudson Valley Family Remembered by David Byars

Our Town, Our Voices 1918-2013: Interviews with Residents in and around Pine Plains, New York; recorded/edited by Rosemary Lyons

Red Hook: Portrait of a Town by the late Clare O'Neill Carr

Reprint of History of Rhinebeck by Edward M. Smith (1881)

Rhinebeck: Portrait of a Town by Nancy V. Kelly

Rhinebeck's Historic Architecture by Nancy V. Kelly

Rhinebeck's Historic Beekman Arms by Brian and Matthew Plumb

Staatsburg: A Village Lost in Time by Reporter Anthony P. Musso

The World Around Me: A Selection of Essays from "About Town" 1998-2011" by the late Cynthia Owen Philip

Women of Privilege: 100 Years of Love & Loss in a Family of the Hudson River Valley by Susan Gillotti

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