

# THE HOMESTEAD CHRONICLE

VOL.4 NO. 3

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July 2018



The Mesier Homestead

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

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Established 1967

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## HOMESTEAD CHRONICLE

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## President's Message

We started off this year with two wonderful speakers. In April, we heard from Carney Rhinevault who spoke to us about some of the hidden mysteries in the Hudson Valley. In May, Keith Jones reved us up talking about the history of motorcycles and Motorcycle Museum in Newburgh. June brought us wonderful weather on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the attendees at our third annual cocktail party, *The Spirit of Mesier*, were regaled with live jazz, delicious food and much camaraderie. Many thanks to our sponsors and attendees for their generous support! We raised over \$7000 and will start restoring the front windows of the Homestead mid July.

On July 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 we will hold our annual potluck picnic. This is always a very enjoyable time for our members to relax and mingle on the front porch of Mesier.

Coming on Sunday, August 5<sup>th</sup> at 2PM, Robert Ulrich will present a program about Chief Daniel Nimham, a local Native American hero. This will be held at the Wappinger Town Hall on Middlebush Road. Plenty of parking – and air conditioned.

On September 23 at 2 PM, we will welcome back Newburgh historian Joe Santecroce who will present his documentary, *The Hudson Fulton Celebration* at the Wappinger Town Hall.

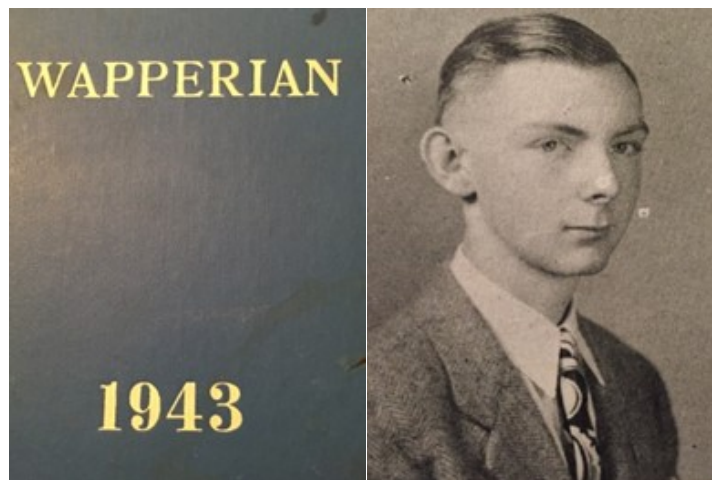
Hope to see you at the picnic!!

~ Beth Devine

## *James Thomas Conley (1924-2018)*

Sunday, June 10, brought together members from the local community. The gathering took place at the Methodist Church in Wappingers Falls to honor and learn more about the life of James Thomas Conley. Upon his death in January, Mr. Conley generously bequeathed portions of his estate to a few local organizations, including the Wappingers Historical Society. Attendees watched a slide presentation of his life, and below is a summary of this presentation. The Historical Society is extremely grateful to be remembered in Mr. Conley's will.

James Thomas Conley was the son of James and Jennie Proctor Conley. He was born in the Village of Wappingers Falls on November 22, 1924. He and his family lived in a house on Dutchess Terrace. He graduated from Wappingers High School in 1943. Jim went on to earn a teaching degree and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts from the State University at Albany. Jim taught history for over thirty years. According to his "adopted family", the Quinns, Jim was a Scot who loved scotch. He was widowed twice, and spent the later years of his life with his companion, Ellen Quinn. He and Ellen met at a meeting of the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, which was organizing a trip to Ireland. He and Ellen travelled all over the world - Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Italy, France and India to name a few places. He also loved travelling in the United States, visiting a few of our westernmost National Parks, as well as taking a cruise to Alaska. Jim was a collector of paintings from the Hudson River School artists and was a volunteer with three different garden clubs. He and Ellen lived in Calverton, New York. Jim died at the age of 93 in January 2018. He is buried in Wappingers Rural Cemetery.



1943 Senior Yearbook Photo  
from the "Wapperian".

Notes in the yearbook regarding Jim; "My only books were woman's looks, and folly's all they've taught me". Display Club 2, Bachelor's Club 3, Bridge Club 4, National Honor Society 3,4, Yearbook Staff 3,4, Associate Editor Yearbook 4, Senior Play 4, Wapperian Staff 4, "Pinafore" 3, Prom Committee 3, Traffic Squad 4.

## *Let there be music! Community Bands, Orchestras and Drum and Fife Corps*

The later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a tremendous surge in marching and community bands. Most communities, no matter their size, had at least one band that represented them on Memorial Day and July 4<sup>th</sup> parades, firemen parades, “welcome home from war parades”- and they performed in gazebos and parks during picnics and other community events. The popularity of conductors and composers such as John Phillip Sousa and his contemporaries increased the ability to obtain high quality music scores.



**Brennan's Band**, alternately **The New Hamburg Band**, was formed in 1886. Its leader was Thomas J. Brennan, a cornetist in the West Point Band for the previous ten years. Brennan's Band was incorporated in March of 1899. According to the Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle “The object of the incorporation is to furnish good music, and the directors are as follows: Marvin V. Griffin, Archibald E. Edgar, William J. Workman.”. Brennan's Band performed for many years under the conductorship of Mr. Brennan, performing at home in the old gazebo of Mesier Park and in local community parades, and as far away as Port Jervis, Hudson, Yonkers, Peekskill, Rhinebeck, Beacon and Poughkeepsie. They played in Newburgh at the Hudson River during the Hudson-Fulton 1909 Tercentennial Celebration. Thomas Brennan resigned as conductor in March of 1917 having devoted over 50 years of his life to his music. The Band continued performing through the 1950's under the leadership of Thomas O'Rourke.



**New Hamburg Band/Brennan's Band**



**New Hamburg Band/Brennan's Band- This Bass Drum is in the Wappingers Historical Society Collection.**



*Let there be music!*

**The Wappers Fife and Drum Corps** performed during the 1910's, most notably playing in the "Welcome Home Parade" for the WW1 soldiers in September 1919. Their leader was George Pettit and the drum major was James Macauley. According the Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle, "Little Gus Pettit marched behind the drum major, was the smallest fifer in the association". The Corps consisted of thirteen fifes, four snare drums, two bass drums and two cymbals. Their uniforms were blue, elaborately trimmed with gold braid, and the visor caps matched the uniform.



**Wappers Drum and Fife Corps**



**Sander's Orchestra** was another performing group in the Wappers area. According to newspaper mentions in the Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle, they performed from the early 1900's through the 1930's. Some of the venues they played in are as follows: The Social Club, The Oak Grove Grange, The Wappers Lodge, the annual Harvest Dances at the Park Hotel, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Dahlia Society Exhibit. They also did private parties, such as the surprise party in 1906 for Lillian Rush, daughter of the proprietor of the Rush's Hotel in the Village of Wappers. In June of 1909, members of the orchestra greeted the famed Lyric String Orchestra of New York City at the New Hamburg Train Depot. The Eagle noted that "the New Yorkers would be given a first class time". They took a coach to the Village

### **New York Sander's Orchestra and the Lyric String Orchestra**

and proceeded to march up West Main Street to Spring Street for a luncheon. Coaches brought them to the Woronock House in New Hackensack, where they enjoyed a game of baseball, followed by a chicken supper and music. The next day they enjoyed a clam bake at Stoutenburg's Cove and created a musical extravaganza with both orchestras performing before the Lyric String members departed from New Hamburg.

*Let there be music!*

**The Loyal Temperance Legion Number 22, aka Band of Hope**, met at the Zion Episcopal Church. These young men took a vow “against the use of alcoholic drinks in any form, tobacco and profanity”. It appears this group met to perform military-like drills, learning to march, salute and hold dummy rifles. As seen in the photos owned by the Historical Society, it appears that the band was mostly a drum and fife corps. It was believed by the Temperance Society that this activity was a good outlet for the militaristic leanings of young men. They performed music from the Temperance Society music book “Marching Drills for Young Crusaders”.



## Wappingers Historical Society Presents ***"Unknown, but Unforgettable"***

### **CHIEF DANIEL NIMHAM, AN AMERICAN PATRIOT**

The story of a local Native American hero whose life spans all three eras of early American History: the Dutch era, the French and Indian War, and the Revolutionary War.

Our presenter, Bob Ulrich, is a local historian in the Mid-Hudson Valley, and has been a repeat lecturer at all of the area's lifetime learning (LLI) programs, including Bard College, Mt St Mary College, Marist College, NY State University at New Paltz and Vassar College .

Wappingers Historical Society is proud to have Bob present a fascinating story of a local hero in our region's history—Be sure not to miss it!

***Sunday, August 5, 2018—2:00 PM***

Town of Wappinger Town Hall,



# *A Star is Born*

By Rena Corey

In 1887, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle penned the first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*. Over 130 years later, the resident of 221B Baker Street remains the world's quintessential sleuth. Listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the most portrayed character in films, the part of Holmes has been played by over 70 actors. On October 7th 1887, a man born in the small village of Wappingers Falls, was not one of them. But John Joseph Mulhall did become actor Jack Mulhall, appearing in over 400 movies from the silent era through the 1950's.



His parents, Richard and Henrietta (Hattie) emigrated from Ireland and Scotland, respectively and in addition to Jack, had five other children. Still living in Wappingers Falls in 1892, Richard is shown as a “laborer” in the census that year.

By 1900 the Mulhalls had moved to another small town, Wallington, in Bergen County, New Jersey. The one square mile borough had been growing quickly since about 1890 and was home to many Irish families. Father Richard was a “mill hand” there and at age 12, Jack shared the same occupation. Five years later, the Mulhalls were in Passaic with Jack still engaged at a mill. There are some references to his doing carnival work from age 14 but the census clearly shows his steady factory employment. It was in Passaic that he began his career by playing in stock theatre.

A 1929 headline in the *Niagara Falls Gazette* ,” Talkies Not New to Jack Mulhall Who Made Them with Edison in 1918,” tops an article by Dan Thomas recounting Mulhall’s career to that point. He had already been in vaudeville, on the legitimate stage, and worked in silent pictures beginning in 1910 and at Biograph Studios in 1914. Biograph at that time boasted D.W. Griffith as its top director and stars like Mary Pickford and Lionel Barrymore. Jack Mulhall’s filmography runs through generations, from those very early cinematic efforts to his last appearance in *The Atomic Submarine* in 1959.



# *A Star is Born*

He appears to have been a genuinely likeable man. In his book, *Silent Players: A Biographical and Autobiographical Study of 100 Silent Film Actors and Actresses*, Anthony Slide describes him as "... a reliable and affable leading man who ultimately outlasted many of his female stars. With his broad smile, blue eyes, and genial demeanor, Jack Mulhall was a natural actor, not a poseur in the manner of say, Valentino. He was breezy without being arrogant. He was not an irritant but a delight to the spirit. On screen and off, Jack Mulhall was a decent human being."

*The Beacon News* followed the actor's career from the 1920's through the 1950's. They also reported on his, and his family's, return visits to Wappingers Falls. As late as March of 1950, they documented Jack and his brother Edward, coming to the village to see Mr. and Mrs. George Weisner of Brick Row and Margaret Riley on Fulton Street. The Weisners were old family friends as they were in the 1892 census along with the Mulhalls.

Jack died in 1974 of congestive heart failure at age 91. He has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 1724 Vine Street.



We are looking forward to a celebration of Jack Mulhall by the Historical Society. Stay tuned.



**Join us on Facebook!; - Search for Wappingers Historical Society from your id and then "Like" and "Follow" us.**

**For Village information**

Visit the village website

[www.wappingersfallny.gov](http://www.wappingersfallny.gov) or

<https://www.facebook.com/WappingersFallsEvents/>

**For Town of Wappinger information**

Visit the Town's website

[www.townofwappinger.us/recreation.html](http://www.townofwappinger.us/recreation.html)

**For events and programs at Grinnell Library**

<http://www.localendar.com/public/Grinnell>

**WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS TO REMEMBER**

**Sunday, August 5:** 2 PM Robert Ulrich "Daniel Nimham"  
held at Wappingers Town Hall

**Sunday, August 12:** 1-4 PM Tours of Mesier Homestead

**Sunday, September 9:** 1-4 PM Tours of Mesier  
Homestead

**Sunday, September 23:** 2 PM Joe Santecroce—*The  
Hudson Fulton Celebration*

**Thursday, September 13:** 7 PM Member Meeting at  
American Legion Hall

**Sunday, October 7:** A Taste of History at Mesier  
Homestead

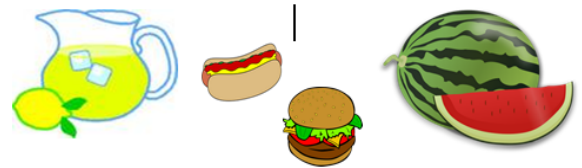
**Sunday, October 14:** 1-4 PM Tours of Mesier Homestead

**Sunday, November 4:** 2 PM Tony Musso Hidden  
Treasures of the Hudson Valley III at Town of Wappingers  
Town Hal

**Sunday, November 11:** 1-4 PM Tours of Mesier  
Homestead

**Sunday, December 9:** 1-4 PM Tours of Mesier Homestead

**Sunday, December 9:** 5 PM Member Holiday Party at  
Mesier Homestead



Wappingers Historical Society's  
Annual

## **BBQ & PICNIC**

Thursday, July 12 5:30 pm

Mesier Homestead

This is a pot-luck picnic.  
Please bring your favorite dish to share.  
**WHS will provide the hamburgers/hotdogs**  
RSVP: Trish 845-297-0800 or  
Tirish55@gmail.com

**Remember to renew your membership to**  
**WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY!**

Since July is upon us, this is Membership month. You as a member are the backbone of our Society. Whether you are actively involved or just a supporter of our mission – we are grateful to have you be part of the Wappingers Historical Society family.

If you have not already renewed your membership, please take a few minutes to complete the form on the last page of this newsletter and send it in, you can either mail it to our post office box or bring it with you to our picnic



All photos are from the Wappingers Historical  
Society Collection unless otherwise noted.



# Spirit of Mesier

The Spirit of Mesier was held Friday night June 15, with over 135 of our members and supporters in attendance. The evening's weather couldn't have been better for the gathering. Simply Gourmet provided us with their wonderful hors d'oeuvres and the Ben Basile Jazz Duo kept us tapping our feet as we indulged on an excellent selection of wine, prosecco and beer. A big thank you to our sponsors. Their generous donations will go far when we begin our renovations of the Homestead. We also received many donations for the silent auction, which was a huge success. Thanks to all who donated items and to our winning bidders. The proceeds of the auction will go to restore the front windows of the Homestead. The goal this year is to build and replace missing sections that are currently filled in with painted plywood or plexiglass and restore the rest of the front windows.

A BIG THANK YOU to EVERYONE!







# *The Spirit of Mesier*

AN EVENING OF DRINKS AND HORS D'OEUVRES  
TO SUPPORT THE RESTORATION OF THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY HOME

Thank You To Our Generous Sponsors

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*Wappingers Historical Society*  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Please complete this form and mail it and your check to:

Wappingers Historical Society

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Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

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(Docent, historical research, genealogy, archiving, fund raising, etc.)

ANNUAL DUES: \_\_\_\_\_ INDIVIDUAL MEMBER~ \$20.00

\_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY ~ \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_ BUSINESS/CORPORATION~ \$75.00

OR: \_\_\_\_\_ LIFETIME MEMBER ~ \$500.00 \_\_\_\_\_ BENEFACTOR ~ \$1,000.00

You will receive a confirmation membership card upon processing of your application.

We are a non-profit (501c) organization. Donations are tax deductible.

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