

THE HOMESTEAD CHRONICLE

VOL.5 NO. 3

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July 2019



The Mesier Homestead

Pease donate to the
Homestead
Preservation Fund.
Make checks payable
to the Wappingers
Historical Society.



Established 1967

P.O. Box 174
Wappingers

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HOMESTEAD CHRONICLE

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President's Message

Dear Friends;

We opened Mesier Homestead for tours in April for the 2019 season and have had over 170 visitors so far. How exciting would it be to double that number by being open twice a month. Our new Administrative Assistant, Christina Ungar, has been working diligently to develop and train new docents to make that possible. If you are interested in joining the team, please contact her at 845-632-1281. I am so grateful for our docents and greeters. They exude enthusiasm about the Brewer/Mesier history which translates to a fun and interesting tour. Spread the word!

Many thanks to our sponsors and attendees for a hugely successful "Spirit of Mesier". The weather could not have been better for this wonderful evening. We raised over \$8200 to be put toward the restoration of the windows in the original 1741 section of the Homestead. We will continue to seek grant money to restore the rest of the original portion of the Homestead.

On July 11 at 5:30 we held our annual member picnic. This is always a very enjoyable time for our members to relax and mingle on the front porch of Mesier.

On September 12th, Joey Cavaccini will give a talk on the history of the area. David Turner, author of the Wappingers Postcard Book, will join us in November. Stay tuned for more details.

Beth Devine

We welcome our new members!

The following people have recently joined the Wappingers Historical Society. We extend our warm welcome to them. Hopefully you will all get a chance to introduce yourself to them!

- Sara Brower
- Susan Davis
- Robert Dyson
- Joseph & Melanie Giordano
- Ann Marie Pantaleo
- Kate Zhang

Visit us at:

www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org

Contact us at:

info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org

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WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS TO REMEMBER

- Homestead Tours—Second Sunday of each Month
- Ice Cream Social; August 8th at the Homestead 6:00—8:00 pm
- Joey Cavaccini, Wappinger Town Historian; *A History of Wappinger* coming on September 12 location TBD
- Taste of History coming October 11th at the Homestead
- David Turner, author of the *Wappingers Postcard Book* November, TBD
- Holiday Party; December, location and exact date TBD

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

Sara Brower is a descendant of Nicholas Brewer. Nicholas Brewer built his home in Wappingers in 1741 after immigrating to this area from Holland. That home today is referred to as the Mesier Homestead. Sara scheduled an appointment recently and spent two days reviewing documents in our “Castro Collection”. This collection has in it many references to the descendants of the Brewer family. We give thanks to Bill Stickle for arranging her computer access and to Beth Devine for giving her a tour of the Homestead. Sara is now a Lifetime Member of the Wappingers Historical Society. Welcome Sara!



Spirit of Mesier

Friday, June 14th, brought a beautiful late spring evening and our 4th annual Spirit of Mesier. A big thank you goes out to those who donated and attended the fundraiser. Many, many thanks to our sponsors! And it never would have happened without our volunteers, who are the backbone of the Wappingers Historical Society.



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The Spirit of Mesier

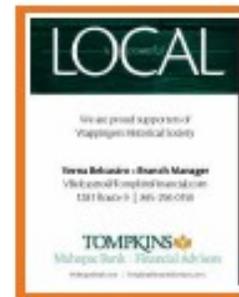
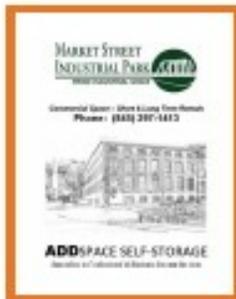
AN EVENING OF DRINKS AND HORS D'OEUVRES
TO SUPPORT THE RESTORATION OF THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY HOME

Thank You To Our Generous Sponsors

Platinum

Filly Baisley

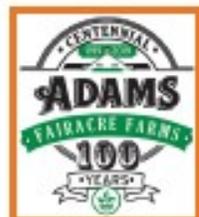
Silver



Bronze



Booster



N. Harold Cottam, Local Award Winning Dahlia Grower

Nassau Harold Cottam was born at Cottingham Grange, Yorkshire, England in 1862, one of seven children. His father, Gledhill Cottam, was a gardener on the grounds of the Grange, which was a working farm that sold produce and flowers to the public. Harold followed in his father's footsteps and became a gardener at the Grange before he immigrated to New York in 1883. After arriving in New York City, according to his obituary, he lived for a brief time in Dobbs Ferry and Yonkers, before settling in Dutchess County in 1889 with his wife Adele and infant son, Herbert. Daughter Emily was born in 1897.

Harold found employment, shortly after coming to Dutchess County, as a gardener for Reginald Rives, owner of Carnwath Farms on Wheeler Hill Road. It was while living at Carnwath that he became interested in cultivating dahlias. By the time of the 1910 US Census it appears that Mr. Cottam was financially able to purchase a plot of land for himself on South Road, just outside the northern border of the Village of Wappingers Falls. The property extended west to Clinton Point on Sheafe Road, and east to South Road, now the Mall at South Hills and the Galleria Mall. Long-time residents can recall that Cottam Hill Road came out onto Route 9 between the two malls. Here it is that he built his home and his dahlia farm. Son Herbert became a business partner of his father.

In 1923 Mr. Cottam published a catalogue (Lansing Bros. Print, Poughkeepsie, NY) containing upwards to 300 varieties of dahlias. It was titled "Catalogue of Dahlias : 1923 N. Harold Cottam & Son, Dahlia Specialists". The tuber's prices mostly varied from 10 cents to about \$1.00, depending on the variety. A few of the fancier flowers could cost \$2.00- \$4.00 apiece. Carriage (shipping) was free if you spent \$2.00 or more. Only cash was accepted, and the tubers came with full guarantees. All plants were field grown on his farm, which must have been a spectacular sight to see. The types of dahlias were: Cactus, Peony-Flowered, Decorative, Show, Collarette, Single and Pom-Pom.

Several varieties were developed and named by Mr. Cottam. The Rotary (Harold was a Rotarian) was a Chinese red dahlia tipped with white. The Gertrude Mae "is a deep pink with just the faintest overcast of primrose yellow, giving an iridescent effect. Blooms are large and petals are somewhat pointed. Tubers \$15.00". Mrs. Florence Coolidge "is a wonderful red with just a bronzy sheen which adds to its fiery appearance. The blooms are large and flat and seem to stand right out. Tubers \$10.00". This flower was presented by Mr. Cottam to the wife of the Governor of Connecticut, Mrs. John H. Trumbull, at the Danbury Fair. It was named in honor of her daughter, the daughter-in-law of the President of the United States. Some other dahlias he hybridized were the Winona, the Dal So La Lee and Cottam's Primrose.

Harold Cottam entered the Dutchess County Fair and won many prizes over several years. Examples of his First Prize awards in 1932 are: Best Peony Flowered, Best Decorative, Best Pom-Poms, Best Quality, Best Display, Best Basket, Best Vase, and Best Hybrid/Cactus.



Continued on page 6

N. Harold Cottam, Local Award Winning Dahlia Grower (continued)

Mr. Cottam was elected President of the American Dahlia Society in 1927. It was headquartered in New York City. A few of the other organizations in which he was active in were The Dutchess County Agricultural Society, where he once held the Vice President position, The Dutchess Horticultural Society, the Masonic Fraternity, and the Oak Grove Grange, which was located just north of his farm.

Harold lived to the age of 72. He and his wife are buried at Wappingers Rural Cemetery. His farm land was sold by his son Herbert and daughter Emily in the early 1940's and turned into a large housing development. Cottam Hill Road was dead ended with the building of the Galleria Mall.

DECEMBER, 1931

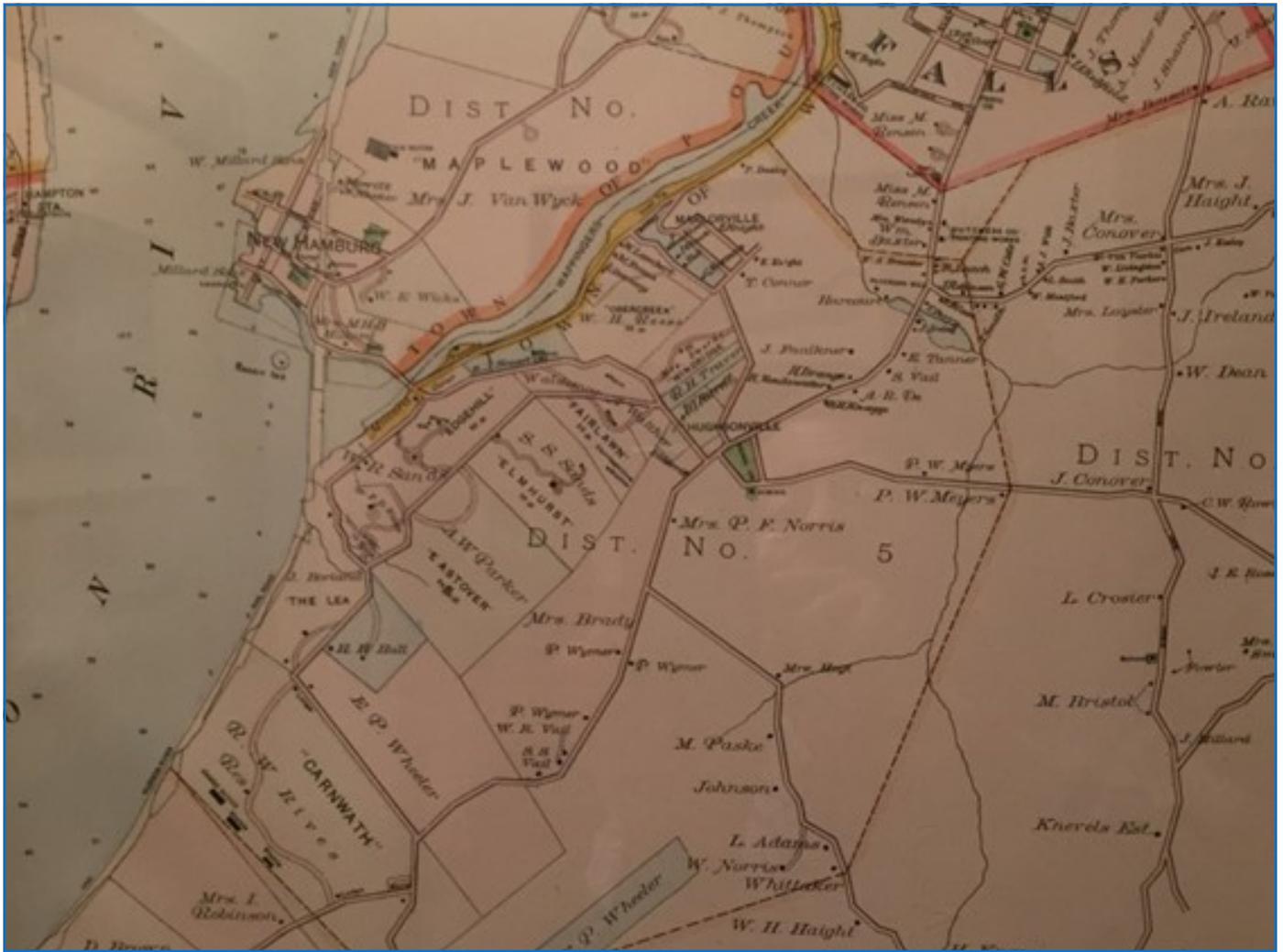


A new dahlia with a Chinese red heart and white petals has been named "The Rotary Dahlia" by its originator, N. Harold Cottam, of Wappingers Falls, NY. Admiring this bouquet are: Leon C. Faulkner, President, New York Rotary Club; Walter Scott Shinn, Chairman, New York Rotary Conservation committee; Warren W. Maytrott, Vineland, NJ Rotarian, President of the American Dahlia Society, and grower Cottam.

Harlem Valley Times, 1931

Many thanks to Jackie Hammond, a Lifetime Member of the Wappingers Historical Society and former editor of this newsletter, for assisting with the research for this article.

Wheeler Hill Historic District



1891 Map of the Historic Register Area

The Wheeler Hill Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The District runs from Obercreek, on New Hamburg Road, south to Carnwath Farms on Wheeler Hill Road. Also included in the Register is the **Old Stone House at Farmer's Landing** (1740), and the **Lent/Waldron Store** (c.1750), both on Old Troy Road. All of the estates and buildings listed in the Register are privately owned, with the exception of Carnwath, which is owned by the Town of Wappinger.

The **Old Stone House** was built by the Verplanck family, the original land owners in this area. The House was home for the agent who ran the shipping yard at the mouth of the Wappinger's Creek. **The Lent/Waldron Store** (located at the right turn heading down towards the river), also built by the Verplanck family, was a dry goods store.

Carnwath was constructed in 1850 for William Henry Willis, son of Margaret Mesier Willis. It is located on the southern edge of the Historic District on Wheeler Hill Road. Mr. Willis sold Carnwath in 1856, and established a new home on the northern edge of the Historic District. He named his estate **Obercreek**. Daughter Mary married William Henry Reese, and the estate has remained in the Reese family up to present day.

Elmhurst was built by Samuel Sands, who was a partner of William Henry Reese. On the Elmhurst grounds today is The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors. It is on the east side of Wheeler Hill Road.

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Luke Hemenway completed **Edge Hill** around 1835. It is located opposite Elmhurst on the west side of the road. According to the map, it appears that the **Old Stone House** was on this property.

On an adjoining piece of land to the south, **Henry Suydam**, son of Jane Mesier Suydam, designed and built **Millside** (known as the Henry Suydam house on the Register). Mr. Suydam's daughter Laura married Dr. Francis LeRoy Satterlee, a physician, in 1868. They purchased Edge Hill after their marriage. William Sands, brother of Samuel Sands, purchased Edge Hill from the Satterlees. The Sand brothers, as well as William Henry Reese, were stockbrokers in Manhattan in the late 1800's.

Another member of the Satterlee family, G.C Satterlee, owned the **William Crosby House** (c. 1830) at one time. It burned down in the early 1900's, a victim of arson. There are a few private homes on the property that was once the Crosby House, adjacent to Carnwath.

An example of life on these estates is displayed in the 1900 US Census. Reginald Rives, 3rd generation owner of Carnwath, had a wife and two children. To support the family and estate, he employed a butler, governess, maid, parlor maid, laundress, kitchen maid, cook, two coachmen, carriage groom, stable groom, two gardeners (Harold Cottam and his brother-in-law) and a farm laborer.



Carnwath Gardens and Gardener's Cottage circa 1875



Carnwath Greenhouse and Gardens, circa 1875

Information for this article gathered from The Historic Research Survey, Dutchess County, the Historic Register Nomination Document, and the Town of Wappinger Historian's office.

Carnwath Photos property of Joey Cavaccini, Town of Wappinger Historian and Wappingers Historical Society Trustee

Town of Wappinger Community Day



The Historical Society was present at the Town of Wappinger Community Day festivities July 5-7 . We thank all of you that stopped by and had a look at our exhibit of historic photos and advertisements as well as informational brochures and selected items from our gift shop. Many thanks to Christina Ungar who braved the ever changing elements of the weather that day. The Town of Wappinger Community Day was a huge success this year with many new vendors for the enjoyment of the attendees. We take pride in being an exhibitor at this great community event.

Receiving Hardcopy of The Homestead Chronicle

For this edition of the Homestead Chronicle, we decided to mail a printed copy to all our members. We continue to send the email version to our “Friends” as well. We’d like to hear from you on your preference on the way we provide the Chronicle to you. Many of our readers prefer receiving our newsletter in electronic form, but others prefer to have the Chronicle in print form. Please let us know what you think!

More Dahlias!

An organization called the Wappingers Dahlia and Improvement Society held an exhibition each September, from 1901 to 1930. In the beginning, the shows were held each year at Farrell’s Opera House, and later moved to Park Hall. Zion Church was the venue in the late 1910’s. The final exhibit was sponsored by the Wappingers National Bank in 1930.

Prizes were awarded for best kept lawns, as well as for the dahlias. As an example of the prize in 1908, a Silver Cup, valued at \$25.00, was awarded to the winner by the Dutchess County Horticultural Society. Harold Cottam was frequently a judge at these shows, and Mr. Irving Grinnell appeared to take home many of the first prize awards.



Member's Picnic

The Wappingers Historical Society's Annual Picnic was held on Thursday, July 11. The weather was lovely, the company and the food were great! Thanks to everyone that attended and brought along their favorite pot-luck foods. A shout out to George Hemroth and his sidekick Jack Devine on their perfectly grilled hamburgers and hotdogs! And a big thank you to Trish Costello for organizing the picnic.





Wappingers Historical Society

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

We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax deductible.

Website: www.WappingersHistoricalSociety.org

Contact us at: Info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org

Wappingers Historical Society
PO Box 174
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590



ICE CREAM SOCIAL
& “SHOW and TELL”
Thursday, August 8
6~8pm
Members are Free
Guests \$3.00

Please join us for a fun evening on the porch of the Mesier Homestead. Ice cream will be served along with all the fixings to make your own sundae. Members are encouraged to bring with them a small item of historic significance that they would like to talk about.

Please contact Bill or Eileen Stickle
to reserve a sundae!
eileenstickle@wappingershistorical.org
845-297-6628

