

The Homestead Chronicle

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P.O. Box 174
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President's Message

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A very happy and healthy 2024 to our members & friends!

Last year was another wonderful and busy year for our Society. We were thrilled to unveil the Spook Hill Legends and Lore roadside marker, granted to us by the William G. Pomeroy Foundation. October saw the debut of *Stones & Bones Living History Tour* at Wappingers Rural Cemetery, which was the most successful event! Thanks to the work and dedication of many volunteers from WHS, County Players, Wappingers Rural Cemetery and our sponsors, well-known Wappinger residents “told” their story. Our Speaker Series brought interesting speakers to our community, with Alex Prizgintas, Dani Masterson, and Paul DiMarco speaking on the topic of bottle collecting; John DiDomizio sharing the history of Stoneco; John Cox of Quercus Cooperage discussing barrel making at Obercreek Brewing; Sean McCarthy delving into the artwork of Henry Billings; and Shannon Butler presenting on the hair-raising topic of Historic Murders in Dutchess County.

Thanks to a historic sites & museums infrastructure grant from Dutchess County, we were able to purchase much needed office equipment, display cases, archival supplies, a tour sign, and multiple other items. These will improve our museum displays and expand the storage and cataloguing capability of the archives. Thank you, Dutchess County!

Our membership growth had its most successful year, as did our gift shop. It was wonderful to see many of you at our member pot-luck picnic in July and more recently, at our holiday party in December. We were grateful to have the talented Bryan Lammers entertain us with holiday tunes.

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E. Stickle, Editor

B. Stickle, Layout
B. Devine, Copy Editor

President's Message (continued)

We encourage you to view our new display case in the center hallway of the Wappinger Town Hall. This display case is home to a rotating exhibit from our archives, curated by our WHS volunteers. It currently features a display of Native American stone tools. These tools date from 6000 years ago up to contact with Europeans.

The momentum continues in 2024 with the implementation of a new archival software system, CatalogIt. We are very excited by the capabilities of this museum and archival software and are looking forward to sharing updates with you. We are planning a member meeting in early spring. Look for details in March. “First Saturday” in the Village of Wappingers Falls is a hit, and we are proud to participate with pop-up exhibits. Now that the plastering and fireplace have been completed in the 1742 section of the Homestead, we hope to open the east room to tours. And speaking of tours, we recently applied for a grant from Americana Corner to create a welcome video as part of the tour experience for visitors. We hope to present the Revolutionary War history of the Brower and Mesier families in video format so that all visitors receive a consistent telling of history, delivered visually with narration.

We look forward to seeing you at our events, tour days, or just around town.

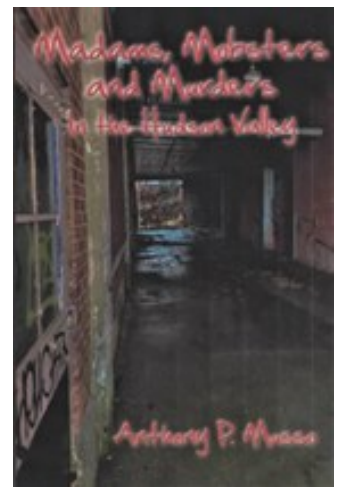
Onward 2024!
Beth Devine

Coming Events!

Speaker Series: Madams, Mobsters and Murders in the Hudson Valley by Tony Musso

Thursday, April 11th at 7pm. Town of Wappinger Town Hall

We are pleased to welcome back local author and honorary WHS member Tony Musso as he discusses his new book, *Madams, Mobsters and Murders in the Hudson Valley*. Amidst the peaceful and quiet Hudson Valley, a dark element existed in its past. Through the years, that darkness took the form of bootleg distilleries, speakeasies, mobsters, and “ladies of the night” operating in plain sight – occupations more often found in large cities rather than rural settings. Yet they chose instead to set up shop in the Hudson Valley, creating large-scale, illegal, and extremely ingenious covert activities under the nose of law enforcement. *Madams, Mobsters and Murders* is a true reflection of the darker side of life in a region otherwise known for its beauty, peacefulness and quiet way of life.





The Irish Immigrants of Wappingers Falls

In search of a new life- improved economic circumstances and escape from religious and political turmoil- millions of Ireland's citizens fled their homeland, especially in the midcentury 1800's. The majority of Irish immigrants came to America, arriving at the ports of Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Most were primary school educated but worked at unskilled laborer jobs when they first settled in their new country.

The Village of Wappingers Falls saw a large influx of Irish immigrants following the Civil War. They lived in two distinct areas in the Village.

The first area was on West Main St./West St./Church St., and surrounding the Catholic Church. The Church of St. Mary was established in 1845. The present church building was erected and dedicated in 1878. These immigrants were Catholic and looked to their church for support.



Some of the family names around West Main St. in the 1880's were Dolan, Moran, Fitzpatrick, Brouthers, McCloskey, Drake, Brophy and Hanlon. A second area in the Village was nicknamed "Christian Hill" -on and around Spring Street - on the east side of the creek. Some of the early families who lived there were: McCafferty, Delehanty, Hoolihan, Sullivan, McMullin, Croak, Young, and Kennedy. While many of the Irish wives "kept house", the older daughters were generally hired for domestic work in the 1800's. That changed when factory jobs became available for the young women. The immigrant men held various jobs, but at least half were employed at the Garner Print Works or the Bleachery. They also found positions at Stoneco and Stuart's Foundry. Stereotypically, quite a few owned bars and liquor stores. They were grocery store owners, hoteliers, and schoolteachers. The stories of a few Irish immigrant families in the Village follow here.



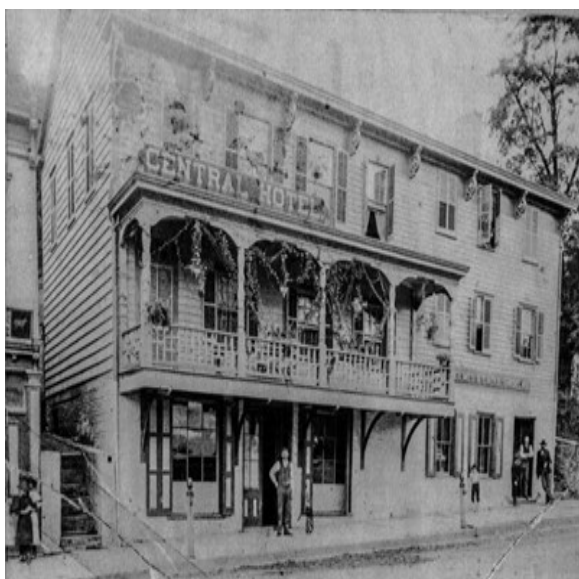
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The Irish Immigrants of Wappingers Falls (continued)

The Delehanty Family

With assistance from Kevin Delehanty, 5th generation descendent

Michael Delehanty, born in Ireland in 1833, came to America in 1865. He and his wife Mary Ann “Annie” had seven children. He worked as a common laborer when he first arrived here, and in 1880, he had work in the boiler house at the print works. The family lived on Christian Hill. His son Michael Jr. (born 1864) married Catherine Dolan and they had eight children. Michael Jr. was known as “a great baseball player” in his younger years, as this was the time Wappingers had several baseball teams and was the home of the great “Big Dan” Brouthers (another Wapperian of Irish descent). Michael worked at the Bleachery as a folder, and later, as a blacksmith.



Michael and Catherine’s eldest son, James Francis, (b. 1889) married Anna Hoolihan. James and Anna had two sons, James F.X. (b. 1915) and John. James worked as a clerk in a grocery store which shared space with the Central Hotel. He eventually purchased that store, which was located on West Main Street at Terminal Square, (the end of the trolley route).

“This is the building.” said Kevin. “William P. Lawrence owned it before my grandfather. The porch was torn off in the 30’s or 40’s. The door on the right was a storage room. The building was sold in 1959 after my grandfather died. Frank Scianna bought it”.

Early in their marriage, James and Anna made a home on School Street and later moved to Mesier Avenue (the corner of Mesier and Elm). According to Kevin, his grandfather’s house on School Street was torn down when the SW Johnson Engine Company relocated its headquarters in the early 1960’s. His father took a discarded board from his childhood home as a memory.

Kevin’s father, James F.X., married Madeleine A’brial while serving in the Army during WWII. They had four children. James attended the American Institute of Embalming in the 1930’s and established his business before enlisting in the Army. The Delehanty Funeral Home on East Main St. became home and business for the Delehanty family after the war. Kevin took over the family business with the death of his father in the 1980’s. He has since sold the business, retired, and maintains a home locally.

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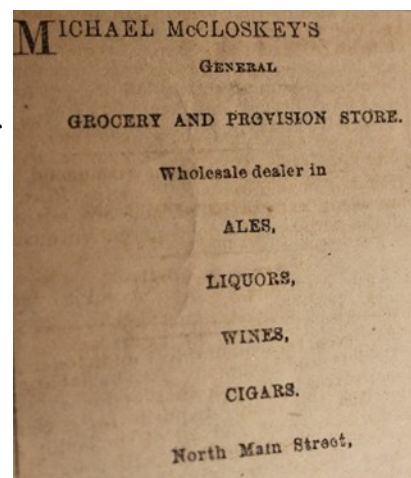
The Irish Immigrants of Wappingers Falls (continued)

The McCloskey Family

With assistance from Pegeen Wall, 4th generation

Michael (b. 1830) and Catherine McCloskey (b. 1840) were grocery and liquor store owners, both born in Ireland. Michael emigrated to the US around 1850, at the height of Ireland's potato famine. He and Catherine had several children, some of whom never made it out of childhood. His grocery store did so well he was able to employ a servant (her name was Bridget Gannon, a young Irish lass) to help run his household.

Michael died in the 1880's, and Catherine ran the grocery store, with help from her son James. The store and home were located on West Main St., just a few houses north of West St. on the lake side. James was a baseball player on the Monitor Baseball Club and was known as a great athlete. He was a member of the Holy Name Society and the SW Johnson Engine Co. He later worked as a bookkeeper at the Bleachery.



1877 *Wappinger Era* newspaper ad

James married Mary Grant and they had five children. Their oldest son, James C. worked as a chauffeur, and was a motorcycle patrolman in the Village in the 1920's. He reached an unfortunate end in 1929. While helping his brother Richard load a truck while working at Stoneco, he either stepped off the truck or fell, and Richard backed over him, not knowing he was on the ground. The family was devastated.



*The senior James McCloskey, far right-
photo taken at the Bleachery*

Joseph, Pegeen's father and brother to James and Richard, was born in 1907. He married Margaret Sullivan and they made their home on West Main St. He worked as a machinist at the Bleachery. Joseph served as Mayor of the Village in the 1950's and was an early President of the Wappingers Historical Society. After his career at the Bleachery, he was employed by IBM until his retirement.

Their daughter Pegeen is a member and outstanding volunteer with the Wappingers Historical Society.

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The Irish Immigrants of Wappingers Falls (continued)

The Gilmore/Riley Family

With assistance from Trish Holohan Costello, 4th generation

Trish's great-grandparent's story begins with their immigration from Ireland in 1886. James Gilmore was born in County Down in 1864; Bridget Connelly Gilmore was born in 1865 in County Meath. They met in New York City, married in 1890 and came up to the Village of Wappingers Falls to begin married life. They lived on West Main Street and had nine children, seven surviving into adulthoods. James had a few jobs throughout the years and was a boiler maker at the Bleachery, but he was known as carpenter and a watch and clock repairman. He had blue eyes, auburn hair, and a mustache.

"He and Bridget had a small store on their property. They sold tobacco, penny candy and other small items. Bridget ran the store", according to Trish. "Bridget had long black hair and blue eyes. Very sweet and kind. A good mother. She was generous to neighbors who did not have much. One story goes that she saw some Irish boys picking on a poor Italian boy. She ran out swinging her broom and chased the bullies away. She gave the young boy food to bring home. They had chickens, geese and a horse in their backyard".

Trish writes- *"Grandma's father, James Gilmore, died in a tragic accident at Stoneco, on March 13, 1929. He was working at Stoneco for O'Rourke Contractors as a carpenter. He was on a ladder when a machine belt snapped and hit him on the head. He fell off the ladder to the ground. He died within minutes of the accident. Company management claimed that the fall killed him, and no one seemed to know why he fell off the ladder. Dennis Brouthers rushed to James, but it was too late. Bridget never received any form of compensation from the company. It took no responsibility for this terrible accident".*



Winifred Gilmore, 2nd from the left

Courtesy of Trish Holohan-Costello

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The Irish Immigrants of Wappingers Falls (continued)

“When WWII began, six of James and Bridget’s grandsons enlisted. Their son, my Uncle Joe Gilmore, was a diocesan priest. He made a promise to God that he would enlist in the army as a chaplain if his six nephews came home safely. They all came home unharmed. Sadly, Uncle Joe was killed in Anzio, Italy on June 2, 1944. He was administering last rites to a soldier when a German bomb exploded. Captain Father Joseph A. Gilmore is buried in St. Mary’s Cemetery. Gilmore Blvd. in the Village is named for him. He was the first NY diocesan priest to die during WWII”.

Winifred Gilmore, James and Bridget’s daughter, married Frank M. Riley in 1920. They made their home on Downey Ave. Frank was a WWI veteran and a Village Trustee. He made his living at various jobs- shoe clerk, truck driver and yard foreman for NYS Dept. of Public Works. Their daughter Sally married Thomas G. Holohan, who are the parents of Trish Holohan-Costello.

Trish is a Wappingers Historical Society Trustee, tour guide and all-around extraordinary volunteer. Thanks, Trish, for sharing your family stories with us.



The Annual Dutchess County St. Patrick’s Day Parade as told by Trish Holohan-Costello

My husband, Dave, and Tim Doyle came up with the idea of a parade. They attended a village board meeting and presented their ideas. They also approached the local Irish organization - Kevin Barry Irish Club. Both groups gave us their support. Our first meeting was in September 1995 at the VFW. The room was full of people. Each person had a job: securing bands and marchers, organizing and decorating the reviewing stand, line-up, managing our website, and securing ads for our parade journal. The parade journal was and is our only means of raising money.

Dave was the parade chairman for 20 years. He did everything- setting up wooden horses for lineup, posting direction signs, hanging Irish flags on the stone bridge, organizing marchers, setting up and taking down the reviewing stand, delivering the parade journal the night before the parade, transporting people, parade supplies, etc. He was our parade Grand Marshal in 2006. Dave resigned from the parade committee in 2018. He is now an emeritus member.

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The Annual Dutchess County St. Patrick's Day Parade (continued) as told by Trish Holohan-Costello

Over the years I have worked in many positions: chairing the buffet fundraiser, chairing The Emerald Ball each year, designing, decorating, and taking down the reviewing stand each year, securing kids to carry the Irish province banners, working on the line up, ordering award plaques, and the flowers for the morning Mass on parade day.

The parade is a family affair. My daughters, Bridget and Clare and my son, David, have always helped me with the parade since they were little kids. They helped me and Dave in so many ways. They have been part of the parade- riding on our family floats, marching in the parade. My son, David, portrays St. Patrick each year. He has been doing this since 2009.

A Holohan- Costello Family Affair:

One nephew is the master of ceremonies

Another nephew is the photographer

A 3rd drives the scholarship winners in his convertible in the parade

Other nieces and nephews have been on family floats and marched with our family banner.

My brothers set-up the line-up before the parade

My brother-in-law, John, is a committee member. He oversees the Escort Division.

My younger sister converted Irish Province flags into banners to carry.

My sister, Kathy, was on the committee. She and I always worked together on whatever needed to be done before, during and after the parade.



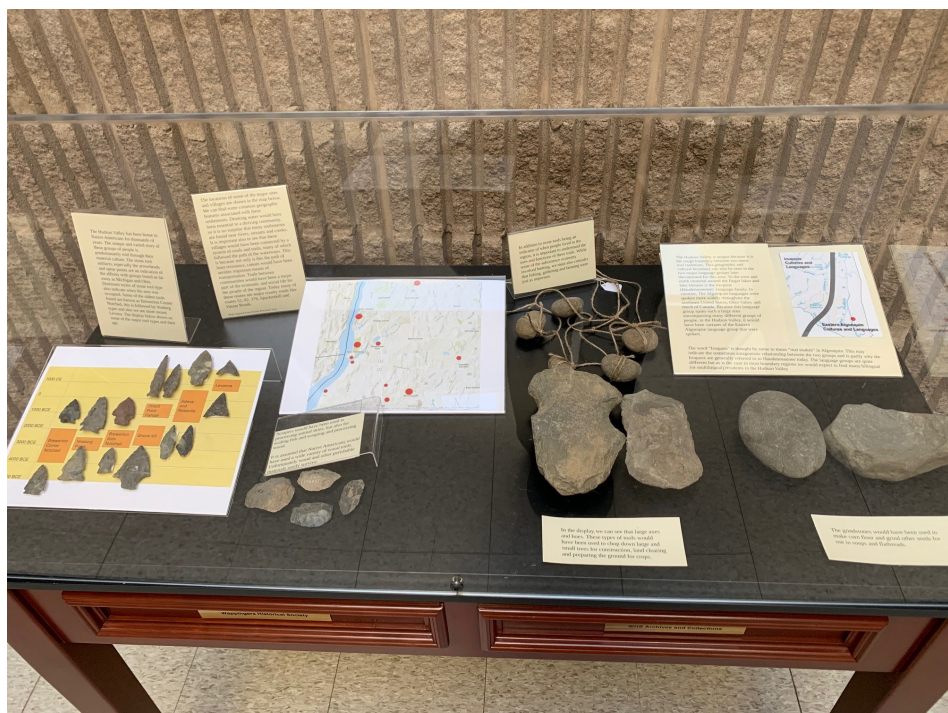
Clare Costello, holding the banner
Photo courtesy of Trish Holohan-Costello

On Saturday, March 2, 2024, @ 1 pm, the 29th Annual Dutchess County St. Patrick's Parade will step off and march through the Village of Wappingers Falls. 🍀

Wappinger Town Hall Exhibit

Our current exhibit in the lobby at Wappinger Town Hall features local Native American stone tools. It showcases how and where the Native American communities lived in our area. The tools on display date from 6000 years ago up to European contact. This exhibit was created under the direction of WHS Trustee Dr. James Williams.

The Town Hall is open M-F 8:30am-4pm.



New Members

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

Elizabeth Ramirez

Karen Watkiss and Family

Beatrice & Steve Moffett and Family

Richard & Irene Barth

John Beale

Daniel Shortt

Robert Yarnall & Joseph Rivera-Ramos

Janice Schopfer

Alexandra Winsby & Myles Bisi and Family

Victoria Velders and Family

Brian Zickafoose

Volunteer Spotlight – Speaker Series



L-R: Trish Costello and Laura Landau greet attendees at the sign-in table for our October 2023 Speaker Series talk.

We hope you've been enjoying our Speaker Series lectures over the past few years. Our current Speaker Series coordinator, Laura Landau, is lining up a roster of speakers and topics for this year. You'll hear from some familiar names in the history community on new, unique topics, plus hear from some speakers who are new to WHS. We're looking forward to another busy year of events!

Many hands make light work and we would love to have more members get involved with our Speaker Series – no experience or special knowledge is necessary! We always need greeters at the sign in table, a refreshment table coordinator, and

occasionally help with set up and break down (depending on the location of the event). Or, if you have a recommendation for a 2025 speaker or topic, we would love to hear from you! If you are interested helping at speaker events, 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.

News from the Archives

Recently, we received a fun donation to our archives – numerous *Festival of the Arts at Mesier Park* posters from the 1990s! It's a nice chronicling of the festival over the years, and we are planning to display some them on the porch of the Mesier Homestead during this year's Festival of the Arts.



Help our Archives Grow!

As we were preparing a pop-up exhibit for this past Veterans Day, we realized we do not have much, if anything, in our archives from the Korean War, Vietnam, the Gulf War or other recent conflicts. If you have uniforms, insignia, documents, photos or other memorabilia from these wars, especially from a local viewpoint, please consider donating them to our archives. This will help us create exhibits for Memorial Day or Veterans Day .with content more recent than WW1 and WW2.

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, please contact us via email at info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org or call 845-632-1281.