

# The Homestead Chronicle

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## President's Message

Dear Members,

What an incredible year we have had! This issue highlights a special shout-out to our wonderful volunteers. I have always loved the quote, "Those who can do, do. Those who can do more, volunteer." Not only has our membership grown but we have a dedicated crew of volunteers here at the Wappingers Historical Society- from our Board of Trustees, members of committees, our archive assistants and tour guides, our partner organizations, and many, many more. THANK YOU to all those who help make the Wappingers Historical Society what it is today. (For those who would like to tiptoe into the volunteer world, please stop by Christina's desk at the Homestead and check out a list of opportunities. There is something for everyone!)

The Wappingers Historical Society has been awarded a \$10,000 matching grant from the NSDAR (National Society Daughters of the American Revolution) Historic Preservation Grant. These monies from the grant will assist us with several specific restoration projects in the original section of the Homestead. The main fireplace will be rebuilt to how it would have appeared in the 1740's. The beehive oven will be restored, and a new period appropriate pine mantel installed. The newly discovered 18<sup>th</sup> century exterior window will be restored and reinstalled. And lastly, the downstairs walls will be replastered. We are beyond thrilled with this award that continues to help our effort to restore the original 1740's section of Mesier Homestead. This grant, and funding for these projects, is made possible through the sponsorship of the Melzingah Chapter, NSDAR.

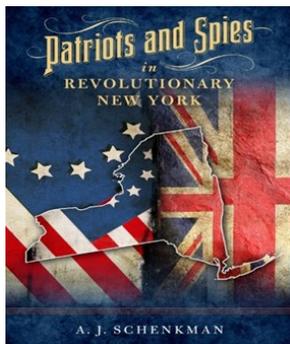
We have a calendar full of activities- please look through the newsletter to see what is coming up in the next few months.

Happy Spring Everyone!!

*Beth*

## Coming Events!

WHS Lifetime member and past speaker John DiDomizio will speak at the **American Legion Hall at 7 Spring Steet in the Village of Wappingers Falls on Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3pm** on *Great Artists of the American Renaissance*. Mr. DiDomizio has been a student of art history since his first visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art sixty years ago. His talk will focus on the works of four artists: Winslow Homer, Frederic Remington, Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Louis Comfort Tiffany. Many of you will remember John's excellent lecture about the stone quarry community of Stoneco some ten years ago. We are looking forward to welcoming him back!



Just in time for Independence Day, Ulster County author and historian A.J. Schenkman will speak on his book, *Patriots and Spies in Revolutionary New York* on **Thursday, June 30<sup>th</sup> at 7pm at Town of Wappinger Town Hall, 20 Middlebush Road, Wappingers Falls**. We know that Patriots were determined to separate from England, while Loyalists were just as determined to defeat what they saw as a rebellion. Many do not know that during several critical periods, the war was almost fatally undermined by English sympathizers or in some cases opportunistic Patriots. Mr. Schenkman will share some stories regarding important moments in New York State's history during the American Revolution .

## Homestead Tours

We are open for scheduled weekend tours of the Homestead. See our website for the latest on dates and details.

<https://www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org/mesier-homestead>



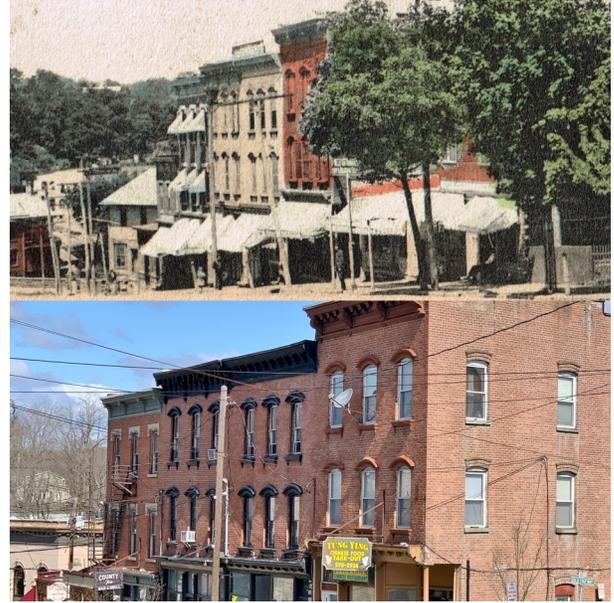
## Save the dates for our summer member events!

- The member picnic in Mesier Park will be on Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm.
- The member ice cream social will be on Tuesday, August 16<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Chilly Willys will be on hand with their delicious ice cream selections.

Details on both of these events will soon be sent to members

## *Hotels, Saloons and Prohibition*

At the turn of the 20th century, the little Village of Wappingers Falls was a bustling center of commerce. Sweet-Orr, Garner Print Works, and Stoneco were the primary employers of its residents. Nineteen hotels with saloons filled the village. The hotels housed many a traveling salesman, and the saloons in the hotels filled up daily with thirsty factory workers on their way home from hard day's work. In addition to providing libations, most hotels served food to their boarders, and some even hosted community events, such as sledding parties, picnics, police dinners and election celebrations.



The most well-known hotel in the village was the Rush Hotel on East Main Street, one of four attached buildings on the north side of the street, up the hill from Mill Street. Also in that block of buildings were the Warren Hotel and the Kaune Hotel. The Park Hotel was located on Spring Street. Mill Street, South Avenue, Franklindale Avenue, and Prospect Street also saw saloons and hotels.

Looking Northwest on East Main Street — Then and now. From Left to right, the 3 story buildings were the Rush Hotel, Warren Hotel, and the Kaune Hotel .



The Colonial Hotel—Then and now—Situated on the corner of Fulton and Market streets.

The Colonial Hotel stood at Market and Fulton Street (and still stands today as a private residence). Across the bridge to the west was the Central Hotel (Terminal Hotel), the North American Hotel and eight others along West Main Street, including two operated by James and Dennis (Big Dan) Brouthers. Exiting the village to the north, there were two more saloons on Delavergne Avenue.

The temperance movement had been building strength since the 1870's, but it didn't ease the flow of alcohol to the saloons until the 18th Amendment was passed in 1918. The Women's Temperance League of Wappingers even installed a water pump in Mesier Park as a means of providing drink to thirsty residents – as if that was an alternative! (You can still see the pump in the park today.)

*Continued on page 4*

## *Hotels, Saloons and Prohibition (continued)*

In 1919, a Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle article named a few village residents who were applying for liquor licenses due to new Prohibition regulations, which permitted the sale of alcohol for religious and medicinal purposes only. Saloon keepers had to provide proof that no beer sold on their premises was stronger than 2.75%. And, of course, no other alcohol was permitted to be sold. The applications from the village came from Myatt Goring (pharmacist), Frank Burns (hotel), Carmine Di Domizio (saloon) and Rosie Germano (hotel). What a small number of applicants there were, compared to the number of hotels and saloons still in business! No doubt there were a few intrepid saloon keepers who operated speakeasies or used their own stills, and without a license, but that is a story for another day.

By 1930, the village would see only one hotel still in business, run by James Burns, on Mill Street. One restaurant operated by George Temple (who stressed that he sold soft drinks) remained. It appears that the hospitality industry was greatly affected by Prohibition, but there was also a societal shift afoot. Thanks to Henry Ford's Model T, more people owned cars, which allowed them the convenience of traveling outside the village whenever they desired, for dining, shopping or for jobs further away. There were still plenty of jobs at the "big three" employers mentioned at the beginning of this article, but a whole new world was opening for men and women, who were now employed as teachers, stenographers, plumbers, carpenters, salesladies, and bookkeepers beyond the village's boundary. Motels and restaurants built along Route 9 replaced the small hotels and saloons in villages and towns, which only continued with the growth of the suburbs after World War II. The heyday of the village hotel and saloon was over.



## *Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon*

A luncheon was held on April 27 at the Zion Church Hall, honoring our wonderful volunteers. The Historical Society has been very fortunate over the years to have so many dedicated and knowledgeable members and sponsors who assist us in carrying out our mission of preserving the history of the Wappinger area. It was a meeting of old and new friends, and a delicious lunch was served by Delia Engstrom, Trish Costello and Christina Ungar. A big thank you to them, as well as to Wendy McNeil, who reserved the room for us. And a HUGE thank you to all our volunteers, without whom we could not have a historical society.



# Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon



## *New Members*

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

Susan Blodgett

Timothy Harnett

Michael Kahns

Nancy LoCicero

Micheal & Grace Martin

John Medeiros

*Honorary Lifetime Member*

Bea Buchanan



## *Administrative Professionals Day*

Wednesday April 27 was Administrative Professionals Day. Christina Ungar, our very cherished Administrative Assistant, was presented with a basket of flowers with our thanks and gratitude. She truly is very dedicated to her job and regularly goes above and beyond her duties. We are so thankful for Christina!

## *Celebrating the history of the Mesier Family in May*

Who was Peter Mesier? What's so important about the Mesier family, and why is there a house and park named after them? During the month of May, we'll be answering these questions in a special online feature about the Mesier Family – you can access it from the home page of our website, or directly at

[www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org/mesier-family](http://www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org/mesier-family). Throughout May, we'll be releasing information on the impact that the Mesier family had on the early growth of the Village of Wappingers Falls, So, make sure to join us on FaceBook and Instagram so you don't miss any of this story.



*"Mesier Mill circa 1695"* as envisioned by Len Tantillo depicts a grist mill built by Peter Mesier's great-grandfather, Pieter Jansen Mesier. Known as "the lighthouse", it stood near the tip of Manhattan, operating for almost 100 years.

## *The Mystery of our “Found window” continues to evolve....*

In the winter edition of the *Homestead Chronicle*, a portion of the restoration updates included a story on a window that was “found” hidden in the wall between the c1742 section of the Mesier Homestead and the building that connects the original part of the house to the newer main section. Since the time of that report, Emily Majer completed the restoration of the sashes from the window and was able to make some interesting observations which further sheds light on the history of this window.



- Some of the window panes are original 18<sup>th</sup> century glass (very “wavy”)
- Very thick mullions indicates the window’s age — Mid 1700’s
- Hand crafted mortise and tenon construction
- The glass pane with the fluer-de-lils design is one of several panes that had this covering on it. It is a “poor man’s stained glass” covering . It is a plant base paper that was machine printed, that went on in narrow strips and is affixed with shellac. It is probably from the 1860-70 timeframe, as this was the fashion of the day.
- The original part of the sash frame predates 1800. The window appears to have had another “life” and it is unknown where it was first installed. Its current life was as a “replacement” window on the back of the house. It is easily seen that the sashes had wood added to them to fit into a larger window frame.
- A frame for a second hidden window was found on the other side of the back door. This will be restored also, with a portion of the funds granted to us by the newly announced NSDAR grant. This grant, and funding for these projects, is made possible through the sponsorship of the Melzingah Chapter, NSDAR.

