

THE HOMESTEAD CHRONICLE

VOL.6 NO. 2 A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring 2020



Established 1967

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President's Message

These are difficult times!!! These are hard times!! These are historic times!! But like other generations, we will get through them and hopefully become stronger.

Governor Cuomo has extended the NY on PAUSE social distancing measures through May 15th. That cancels all in-person programming through that date. Since social distancing would be impossible for tours and programs at Mesier, and the maintenance of safety of our docents, volunteers and visitors is paramount, the Board is planning for no programs through the end of June.

The very difficult decision was made to cancel our major fundraiser- the Spirit of Mesier. While some organizations have postponed their events until the fall – we felt the weather would be too iffy and so we will plan the “biggest and bestest” gala for next spring.

In July we might start with small tours by appointment. Stay tuned.

Please visit our website, www.wappingerhistoricalsociety.org for news of our reopening schedule for tours, programs, and other events.

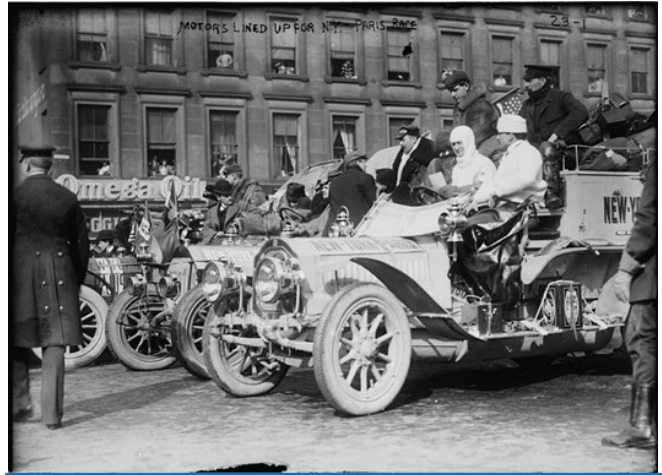
Thank you for your continued interest and support. We miss you and we hope to see at Mesier soon. Until then, stay safe and stay well.

Beth Devine

The Great Race Comes to Poughkeepsie

By Jeff Stickle

For a fleeting moment on the afternoon of February 12, 1908, all eyes were on Poughkeepsie. It was one of the first of what would be hundreds of host cities along the route of what was, and perhaps remains, the greatest race of all-time: The 1908 New York to Paris Race. Six cars - three French, one German, one Italian, and one American - left Times Square that morning on their way around the world in what would be almost 6 months of danger, hardship, intrigue, and quite a bit of hilarity before one of them rolled down the Champs-Élysées in victory. The prize: a 1,400 pound trophy. As of this time, only 9 cars had even been driven across the U.S., and none in winter. (The race was run in winter so that the cars could drive across the Bering Strait, which proved to be a hilariously bad and ultimately impossible plan.) It would be honored in 1965 as the inspiration for the mostly fictional "The Great Race" starring Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis, and Natalie Wood.



Lined up at the starting line, Times Square

From the beginning, the race had problems. Set to begin at 11 a.m., the crowd of over 250,000 waited eagerly for Mayor McClellan of New York to fire the starting pistol, but he was nowhere to be found. Finally, at about 11:15 and tired of waiting, railroad financier and race sponsor Colgate Hoyt grabbed the pistol, fired it, and the race was off. The six cars sped off, headed on what remains the longest race ever completed. The road conditions were poor on account of snow. The German car, the Protos, got lost - twice!- between Peekskill and Poughkeepsie. This was already proving to be a challenge.

The Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle announced the start to the race in its February 13 edition:

*IMMENSE CROWD GREET'S AUTOISTS
QUEER LOOKING BUZZ WAGONS ARRIVE ON WAY FROM NEW YORK TO PARIS*



The Great Race Comes to Poughkeepsie (Cont'd)

In anticipation of the arrival of the racers, a huge crowd formed in Poughkeepsie up Market Street, stretching from the post office to Cannon Street. The Hudson Valley Automobile Association was represented by several cars, including Mr. J.M. Janes in his bright red Lane steam car as the “pilot of the party”. At about 2 pm, Mr. Janes and his parade of cars headed to Wappingers Falls to meet the racers. The pilot car then led the American car, a Thomas Flyer, into Poughkeepsie and up Market Street. When it arrived, the crowd mobbed the Thomas.

It was loaded down with stores and the necessary paraphernalia for fording streams and etc. Suspended from the iron skeleton for the canvass hood was a rifle, while on the sides were planks to be used for fording streams. On the rear was a pick, and shovels were also prominent. The occupants were robed in furs and heavy caps.

Despite it being the dead of winter, it had no heater, no top, and no windshield. The driver of the Thomas (described as the “chauffeur” in the papers), Monty Roberts, was already a famous auto racer. He wore a leather football helmet. There were three other passengers in the Thomas: George Schuster, a mechanic for the E.R. Thomas Motor Company, who ended up driving most of the trip and saving the Thomas mechanically on more than one occasion; T. Walter Williams, a New York Times reporter and a rather large man; in Erie, as he struggled to get into the car over the piled equipment and the perilously-located gas tank, he was cheered with a robust “Bravo, fatty!” He quit in Chicago, calling the trip “insanity”; and Howard



Monty Roberts and the team of the Thomas Flyer

Brinker, the co-driver, who drove from Cheyenne to San Francisco when the famous Roberts left for “other commitments”. (He rejoined the crew in Paris). Roberts and the other Americans ate lunch at Smith’s and by mid-afternoon, they were headed onward to Albany. Over the course of the race, the dashing Roberts was the source of fascination at every stop, as was where and what he ate at each stop.

The Great Race Comes to Poughkeepsie (Cont'd)

The French DeDion arrived next, with the drivers wearing white hoods “making them look like a band of Laplanders.” They stopped briefly before continuing onward. The DeDion was followed almost immediately by the Italian Zust, which flew into town and “then rushed through the crowd so fast that no one could get a good look at it”, only to make a wrong turn onto Main Street. Once corrected, it continued north without stopping. The cars planned to make it to Albany before heading west, following the railroad lines to Buffalo, Chicago, and beyond. The goal was three weeks.



The DeDion loaded high and caked with snow

Because of its earlier missteps, the Protos (misnamed the “Proton” in the Daily Eagle) was the last to arrive, at about 6:30 p.m., and spent the night housed in the Van Benschoten Garage (22 Catharine Street). The other two cars, the French Moto-Bloc and Sizaire-Naudin, did not make it as far as Poughkeepsie; the Sizaire-Naudin was broken down between Ossining and Peekskill “evidently having troubles of its own”. The leaders did not make it far before being

slowed by snow, however. By 8 p.m., the Thomas had only made it as far as Hudson; the others made it there after 11 p.m. They all spent the night well short of their goal of Albany. The next morning, after being overhauled at Van Benschoten’s Garage, the Protos left Poughkeepsie but only reached Hudson due to the weather, while the Thomas and Zust made it past Albany to Fonda, N.Y. The Moto-Bloc finally made it to Poughkeepsie around noon and left at 2 p.m. where “Malcolm E. Parrott accompanied it for a distance up the North Road”; it only made it as far as Rhinebeck that night. All had difficulty with “snow drifts and soft roads” with a foot or more of snow on the ground. They continued



The Thomas Flyer makes its way down snow-covered roads

to face severe conditions across New York, with the leaders stalling out in snowdrifts at Canastota, near Syracuse, the following day. On the 14th, the Thomas and the DeDion finally reached Buffalo, and the Zust flipped over in Batavia. The trailing Moto-Bloc broke a chain near Utica, while the hapless Sizaire-Naudin finally left Poughkeepsie on Sunday the 16th with a broken differential. It soon dropped out altogether.

The Great Race Comes to Poughkeepsie (Cont'd)



The Thomas Flyer stuck in and digging out of the snow

The Thomas reached San Francisco first after 41 days on the road, with Schuster now at the wheel and 8 days ahead of the Zust, which was still in Utah. It was loaded on a ship headed north to Valdez, Alaska, where it became abundantly clear that crossing the Bering Strait by car was out of the question. It then was shipped to Japan and then to Vladivostok, where it began an arduous crossing of Siberia. In the meantime, the Protos and Zust were shipped directly from San Francisco to Vladivostok, making up time and more on the Thomas. Ultimately, they were penalized 30 days to make up for time lost by the Thomas on the Valdez trip. Thus, when the Thomas finally rolled into Paris at 6 p.m. on July 30, 1908, it was declared the winner, despite the Protos having done so three days earlier. It took the Zust another 46 days to reach Paris. These three cars were the only to complete the race.



The teams work together through the snow-

The Thomas was returned to Times Square triumphant on Aug. 17, 1908. The seemingly impossible task of driving around the world had been achieved. More importantly, the race helped usher in the era of the modern car. It was proven "to be a reliable and dependable form of transportation", especially the American-built Thomas. It also helped bring to light the terrible state of America's road system, and major improvements began shortly thereafter. It also led in part to the development of the interstate highway system. Not coincidentally, the first cross-country interstate highway, I-80, ran the route of the race, from New York to San

Francisco. And so, for a passing moment on a cold and snowy February day, the people of Poughkeepsie, perhaps unknowingly, watched and cheered as history passed before their eyes.

The Great Race Comes to Poughkeepsie (Cont'd)

The Great Race Comes to Poughkeepsie; Sources:

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3. Arbuckle, Alex Q., "1908: The New York-Paris auto race- A global odyssey in an open cab", <https://mashable.com/2016/11/26/new-york-paris-auto-race/>.
4. Fenster, Julie M.; "Race of the Century: The Heroic True Story of the 1908 New York to Paris Auto Race", New York: Crown Publishers, 2005.
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Mesier Park—Homestead on Right, with Grinnell Library in the distance

James S. Evans and Roy C. Ketcham

In this issue, we take a look at the people behind the names of two of our District schools, James S. Evans and Roy C. Ketcham. Both men were members of the Wappingers Board of Education during the formative years of the newly centralized school district.

James S. Evans

James Stanislaus Evans was born in Pennsylvania in 1881. His family moved to the Village of Wappingers Falls during James' early years, and he received his education (through 8th grade) at St. Mary's School. He married Mary Bain at St. Mary's Church in 1914. They had three children- James, John and Marie. They lived in the Village, first on Clapp Avenue and later on Mesier Avenue. James retired from the Dutchess Bleachery in 1951, having worked there as a clerk and bookkeeper for 38 years.



Photo courtesy of the James Evans Family

James was a civic minded gentleman, and a member of many organizations. He was Treasurer for the Boy Scouts of America, Director for St. Mary's Dramatic Society, past District Deputy and Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, Trustee of Grinnell Library, past President of the Lion's Club and honorary member of the S.W. Johnson Engine Co. During World War II, James was County Chairman of Hospitalization and Evacuation for the American Red Cross.

James S. Evans and Roy C. Ketcham (Cont'd)

It was his work on the Wappingers Board of Education that was posthumously recognized. James served on the Board for twelve years, until his untimely death in March of 1953. At that time, two elementary schools were being built to accommodate the quickly growing School District, one in the Village of Fishkill, and the other on the grounds of the Central School, built in 1938. His son, John Evans, received a letter from the Board of Education in April of 1953 containing this Resolution "Be it further resolved that in recognition of the fact that James S. Evans in addition to being a school board member gave generously of his time and effort to numerous community affairs during his lifetime, the school now under construction adjacent to the Central School, be named "The James S. Evans School" in his honor (signed) Roy C. Ketcham



"BECAUSE OF YOU"

Mr. Alexander Hamilton, Mr. Joseph Ludewig, President Roy Ketcham, Mr. Ross Cobb, Mr. Kenneth Van Voorhis, Dr. Harold Reiley, Treasurer Malcolm Hunter.

Although we students do not have the opportunity of knowing well each member of our Board of Education, we shall never forget the many facilities and advantages their untiring efforts have given us. They are ever seeking to maintain our high standards here at WCS and even to improve our system. The renovation of the Fishkill school and the construction of our new one here will certainly alleviate our overcrowded conditions.

To each and every member of our Board we give our deepest thanks for the many hours you have labored in our behalf. It is our sincere hope that our future lives will reflect the excellent school training we have had here at WCS.



Mr. James Evans

James S. Evans and Roy C. Ketcham (Cont'd)

Roy C. Ketcham

Roy Conklin Ketcham was born in East Fishkill in 1905. He and his older brother Earl were orphaned at a young age, losing their father in 1908 and their mother in 1913. Martin and Sarah Knapp, the boys' uncle and aunt, became their legal guardians. Roy attended school through the 3rd year of high school and married Marion Conley in 1929. They had two daughters, Shirley and Patricia.

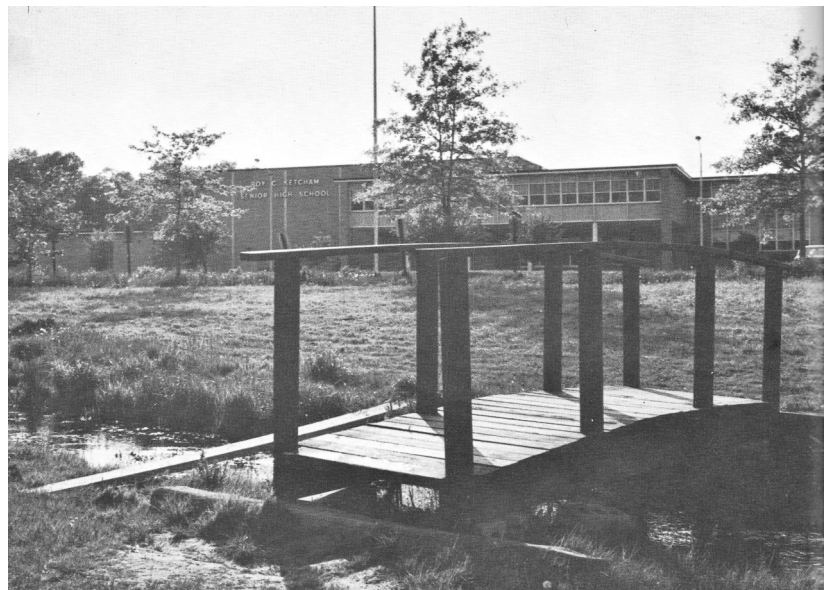


Roy C. Ketcham

given to the Millbrook residents in 1953, he stated "Sixteen years ago the Wappinger area faced a similar situation to Millbrook. The centralization idea was advanced by a committee of one hundred active members and took a little over a year to be approved."

Mr. Ketcham and his family lived in Fishkill, and he owned two businesses in that Village, Ketcham Motors and Fishkill Home Supply. In addition to his businesses, Roy belonged to the Dutchess County Association of Petroleum Retailers, was Campaign Chairman for the United Fund (precursor of United Way), and served on the Dutchess County Republican Committee. He was elected to the School Board for Wappingers Schools (1931-1961), leading the Board as President for many years.

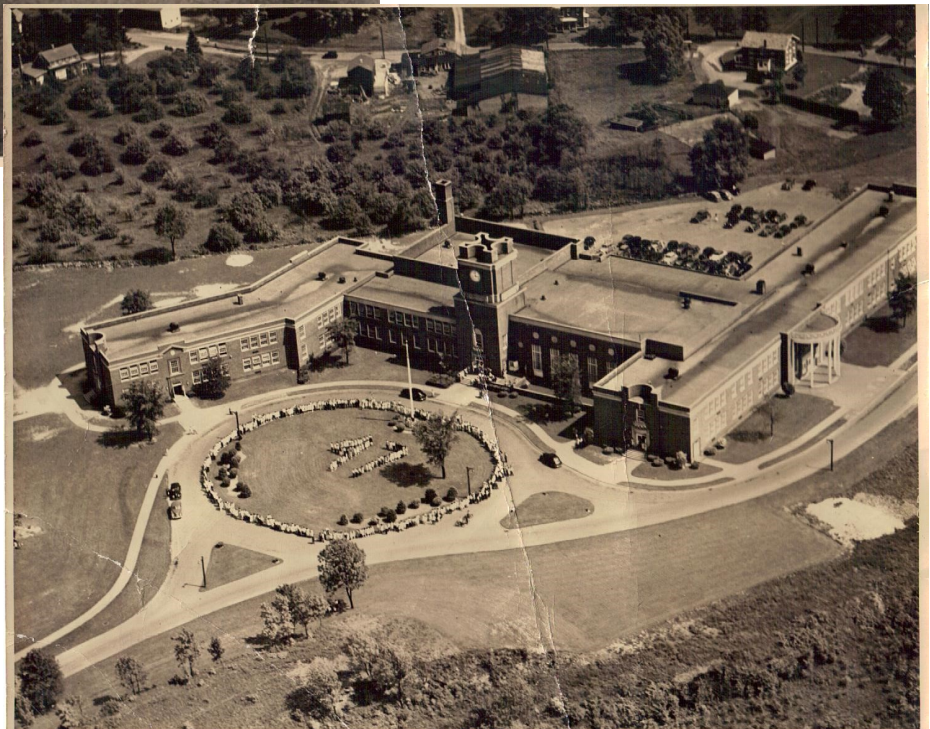
He was the driving force behind centralization of the Wappingers Schools which came to fruition in 1938. He was known for the merger of fifteen district schools and for building the "million dollar school", Wappingers High School, on Remsen Avenue. The fifteen districts consisted of schools ranging from one-teacher schools to a 400 pupil high school. In a speech



RCK Senior High School 1971 Portico Yearbook

James S. Evans and Roy C. Ketcham (Cont'd)

The so-called “million dollar school” housed 1,200 students when opened in 1940 and quickly expanded to 2,600 by 1953. The newly built James S. Evans Elementary School and the expanded Fishkill Elementary (one of the original decentralized schools) took on the additional student load. The building boom under Mr. Ketcham’s leadership continued with the building of several more elementary schools and a new high school in the late 1950’s-early 1960’s. Roy C. Ketcham retired from the Board of Education in 1961, and received the honor of having the new high school on Myers Corners Road bear his name. The high school opened for classes in September 1962. Mr. Ketcham continued to serve in his community, particularly for the United Fund, throughout his retirement. He passed away in 1989.



Top Photo—The “Million Dollar School” under construction 1939

Bottom Photo—1947

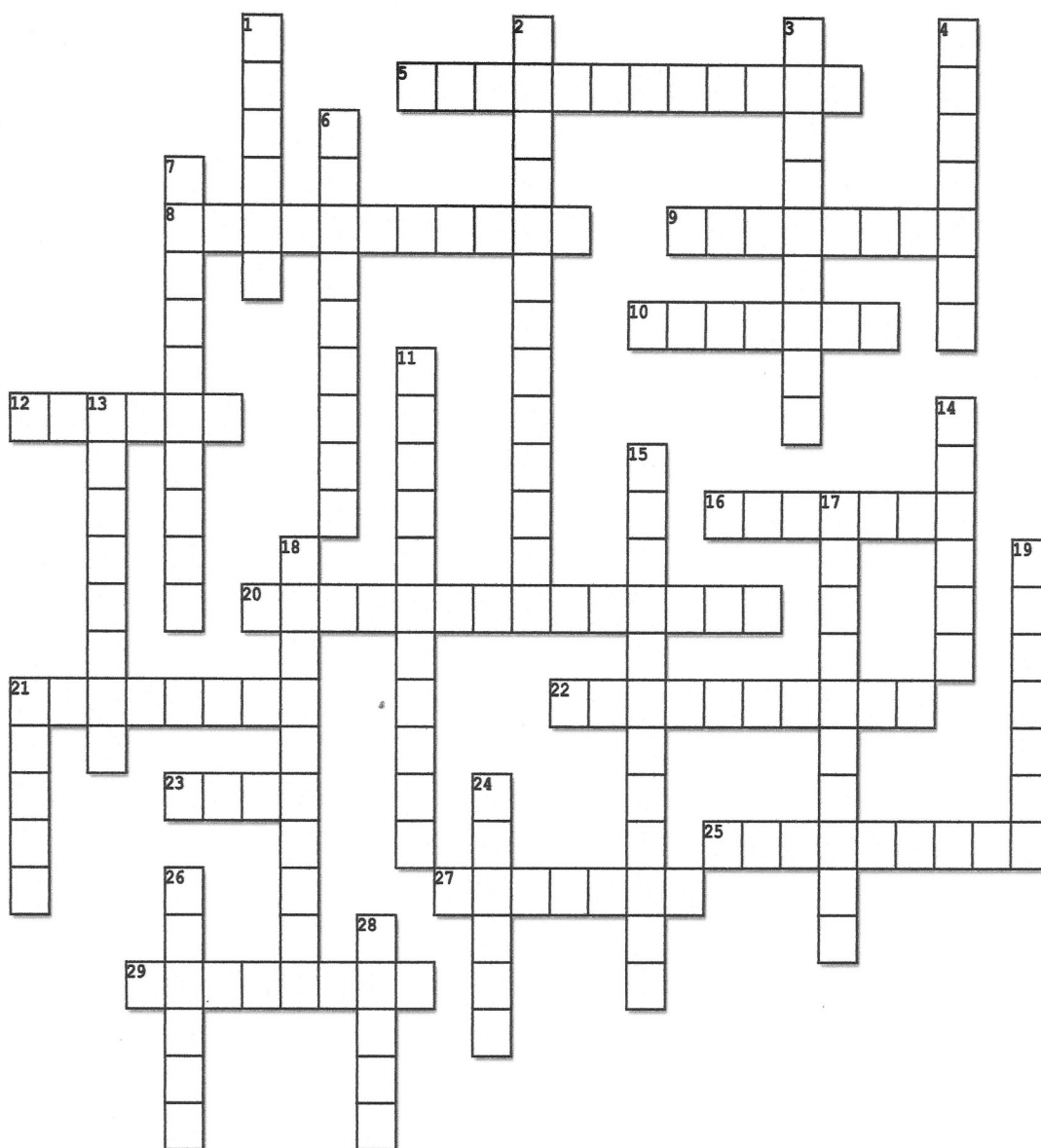
Did You Know?

The Historical Society has Wappingers high school yearbooks in our collection. The dates range from the "The Wapperian" 1938-1943 to "The Portico" 1944-1972. "The Wapperian" later became the name of the high school newspaper, and "The Portico" became the name of the Yearbook at Roy C. Ketcham High School.. "The Portico", of course, was named for the portico at the west side of what is now Wappingers Junior High.

If you should have any Roy C. Ketcham Yearbooks from 1973 to the present and would like to donate them, please email Christina at info@wappingershistorical.org . Thank you!



Historical Wappingers Area



Across

- 5. A crossroads in the Town
- 8. FDR's sport on the Hudson (2 words)
- 9. New Hamburg based band
- 10. Railroad stop in eastern Town of Wappinger
- 12. Revolutionary family name in Village of Wappingers Falls
- 16. This employer 'rocked'
- 20. Continental Army port (2 words)
- 21. Farm now a Town park
- 22. A city in New Jersey, we have a New one
- 23. Church established on Mesier land
- 25. Hall of Famer
- 27. It traveled daily from Poughkeepsie to the Village
- 29. Local library

Down

- 1. Print-works and fire company
- 2. Incorporated into the Village in 1871
- 3. Road name for former NYC summer camp (2 words)
- 4. Another name for Low Point
- 6. General from Fishkill
- 7. Site of first Church build in Wappinger
- 11. Ellesdie Chapel grounds
- 13. Overall manufacturer (2 words)
- 14. Built the 1741 Homestead
- 15. Area with many apple orchards (2 words)
- 17. Shipping port in the 1800's (2 words)
- 18. He visited here during the Revolutionary War
- 19. Cottam won many 1st prizes for these
- 21. Manufactured in the Village in the 1800's
- 24. Number one occupation in Town at turn of 20th century
- 26. Built 'Old One Hundred' in New Hackensack
- 28. His paintings are on display at Grinnell

Answers are on page 18—No Cheating!

Visit us at:
www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org

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2019

The Spirit of Mesier

AN EVENING OF DRINKS AND HORS D'OEUVRES
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TEG
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DCH WAPPINGERS FALLS TOYOTA

Auto Elegance
COLLECTION

Ulster Savings

Central Hudson
A FORTIS COMPANY

Booster

ADAMS
100 YEARS

CENTER FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY



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otherwise noted.

New Members

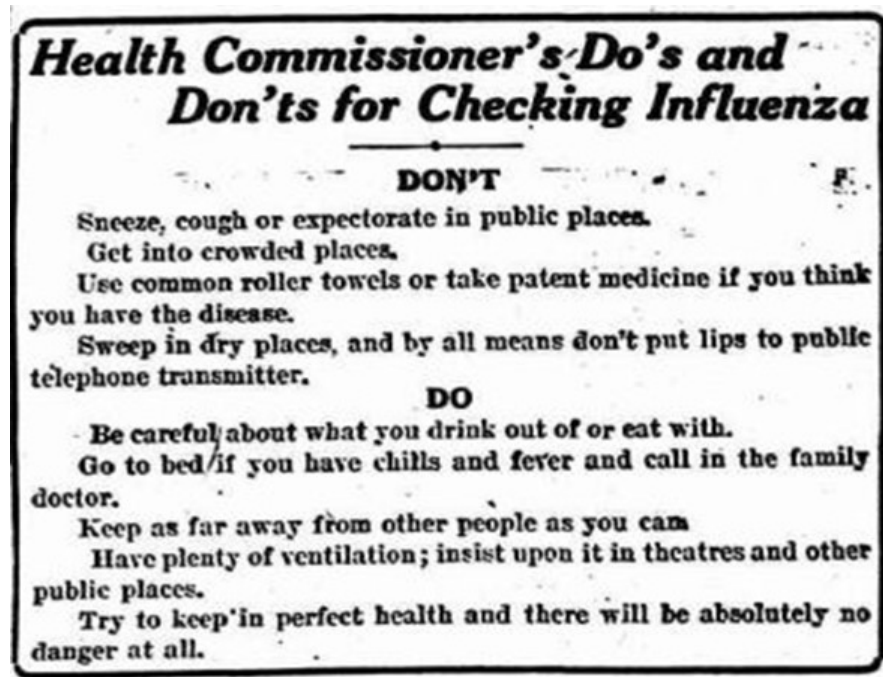
The following people joined the Wappingers Historical Society in the first quarter of 2020. Thanks to all, and again welcome!

Lucy Bostwick
Roger & Leslee Clapp
Danielle Masterson
Julie Mitchell
John Morris

1918-19 Influenza Pandemic

One hundred and two years ago, the world was in the grips of a severe influenza pandemic. It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population was infected. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide, with about 675,000 deaths occurring in the United States (statistics taken from CDC website). Sadly, we are repeating history today.

Below is an article from The New York Evening telegram, dated September 25, 1918.



“New York has a right to be alarmed over the spread of “Spanish” Influenza. If you want to call it that. It might just as well be called Belgian fever or enemy croup, for that matter. But the epidemic which is sweeping all seaport towns, and which has New York and many other big cities worried, is indeed no joke at all. And this is from no less an authority than Dr. Royal S. Copeland, Health Commissioner of the city of New York.

‘We know little more about this influenza now than we did, he said today, and we are more impressed that it is mighty treacherous. A person may feel a little chilly, the bones may ache and he may develop a little fever, which will continue three days, but then it all disappears and the happy physician and family believe that it is all over. But no, there comes another chill, the temperature jumps to 103, pneumonia sets in, there is a terrific burning in the chest, the patient becomes cyanotic, the respiration becomes rapid and in seven days the patient dies.’

Same Old Influenza

That is Spanish Influenza, or really the old time influenza which has come to life again after a lay-off since 1893 or so. The “Spanish” is simply a new name, but it really isn’t Spanish at all, or English or anything else.

1918-19 Influenza Pandemic (Cont'd)

There was an idea about that the spread of the disease would not amount to anything. The city doctors were well aware that it was more prevalent than ordinarily, but they did not believe that there would be any disastrous result. In fact, it was taken as just a scare.

Dr. Copeland is satisfied now, after a most thorough investigation, that it is indeed treacherous. It is almost as mean a disease as there is. And the germ or bugs that carry it are the very meanest there are in the long list of germs that are so common in these parts.

New York Lucky

While New York has been lucky so far in keeping down the number of cases here, that will not for a minute stop the extreme precaution that will be started today by Dr. Copeland, his assistant, Dr. Louis I. Harris, and the entire sanitary force of the New York City Health Department and the thousands of Police Reserves.

For, beginning today, cafes, ice cream parlors, hotels and other public places will be visited and a determined effort will be made to find out how clean glasses and other eating and drinking utensils are after being used before they are used again.

And another thing, sneezing, coughing, and expectorating in public places is prohibited. The police will see to that. Unless a handkerchief is used in each case the policemen have been instructed by Commissioner Enright to make arrests.

Arrest will Go Hard

To be arrested for any one of the three offences will mean a violation of the Sanitary Code, and the penalty is a \$250 fine or six months in jail, or both. Of course, that is the limit, but it will not go easy with anyone who is caught in the dragnet.

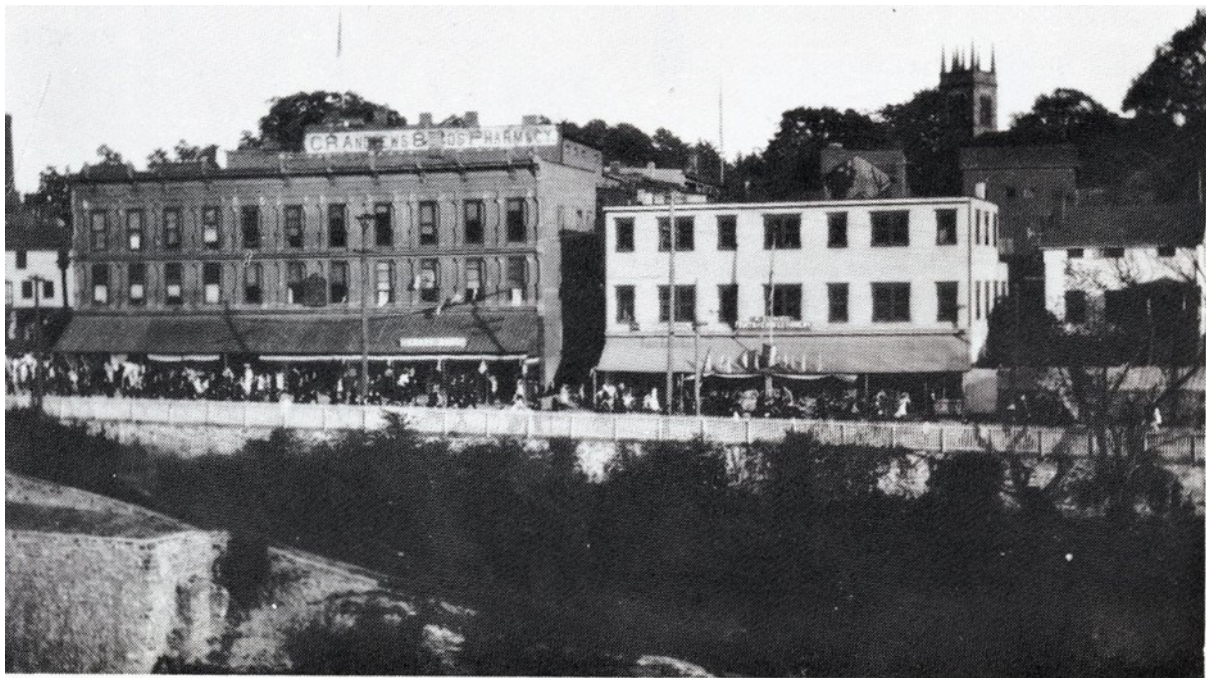
There are many ways to safeguard against the disease. For instance: Keep away from crowded places, by going to bed immediately if you think you have it and calling a physician, and by being careful where you drink and what you drink from.

Everyone is asked by Dr. Copeland to refrain from sneezing, coughing or expectorating in public places. They are advised also to refrain from sweeping dry dust, and men are particularly warned about pipes, and children their old toys. Even they might act as germ or bug carriers.”

Market Street Fire

Village of Wappingers Falls

This postcard, circa 1910, depicts the Smith Building, on the left, which was demolished in a fire in the 1950's. The center building, 10 Market Street, succumbed to fire on February 25, 2020. The residents of the Village, the Town of Wappinger and beyond came together in a mammoth effort to assist the displaced tenants from the apartments and the stores below.



MARKET STREET WAPPINGERS FALLS. N.Y.



This cardboard fan was a very popular promotional item, given to the customers of Rosemary's Flower Shop.

The U.O. Colson Company, which was founded in 1892 in Paris, Illinois, grew into a manufacturer of calendars and paper fans, advertising for all manner of businesses from roofers to funeral homes until it sold the business in 1967.

WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

UPCOMING EVENTS

All tours, meetings and Speaker Series events are tentative, due to the current public health crisis. Go to our website www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org for up-to-the- moment information. We are hoping to reschedule any cancelled events for later in the year.

Currently Scheduled:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| July 12 | Tours of Mesier Homestead 1-4 PM |
| July 17 | Members' Potluck Picnic 5:30 PM Mesier Homestead |
| August 9 | Tours of Mesier Homestead 1-4 PM |
| August 18 | Ice Cream Social and Show and Tell 6-8 PM Mesier Homestead |
| September 13 | Tours of Mesier Homestead 1-4 PM |
| October 11 | "Taste of History" Tours 1-4 PM Mesier Homestead |
| November 8 | Tours of Mesier Homestead 1-4 PM |
| November 28 | Small Business Saturday Mesier Homestead Gift Shop |
| December 6 | Sinterklaas Celebration 1-4 PM Mesier Homestead |
| December 11 | Members' Holiday Party |
| December 13 | Holiday Open House 1-4 PM Mesier Homestead |
| December 8, 10, 15, 17- | Morning/afternoon Holiday Open House |

To Be Rescheduled:

- Speaker Series: Tony Musso "Setting the Record Straight"
- Speaker Series: Quercus Cooperage "Barrel Making"

Crossword Puzzle Answers:

Across:

5. Hughsonville
8. IceYachting
9. Brennans
10. Diddell
12. Brower
16. Stoneco
20. WappingerCreek
21. Carnwath
22. Hackensack
23. Zion
25. Brouthers
27. Trolley
29. Grinnell

Down:

1. Garner
2. Channingville
3. AllAngels
4. Chelsea
6. Swartwout
7. Middlebush
11. Bowdoin
13. SweetOrr
14. Mesier
15. MyersCorners
17. NewHamburg
18. Washington
19. Dahlias
21. Combs
24. Farmer
26. Horton
28. Clapp

Wappingers Historical Society
PO Box 174
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

Visit our website
wappingershistoricalsociety.org
To find out our schedule for
Mesier Homestead Tours!

