

The Homestead Chronicle

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Established 1967

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President's Message

A belated Happy New Year to our members and friends!

2022 was a record year filled with growth and challenges for the society. We offered interesting programs documenting historic events in the Hudson Valley. In November, Evan Pritchard led us in a celebration of the life of Wappinger Indian, David Fescier, as well as showcasing items in our Native American collection. During that evening's program, a decorated Native American buckskin tunic handmade by Fescier was donated to the Society. This a wonderful and unique addition to our collection!

We presented several costumed tours during the year highlighting well known residents of yore and offered a special costumed Veteran's Day program honoring Wappinger resident Muriel Engleman, who served heroically as an Army nurse during the Battle of the Bulge.

The restoration of the c1742 section is progressing. Heat has been installed, the floors repaired, the walls prepped for plastering in the spring, and phase 1 of the electric wiring update is complete. We can hardly wait for the next phase – restoration of the fireplace and the beehive oven.

Our membership growth had its most successful year- as did our gift shop. We were the grateful beneficiaries of 4 grants that will continue helping us in the restoration efforts, adding software and equipment for our archival collections, and developing a program for 4th and 7th grade students in local history. With grant money we received from the Town of Wappinger, we purchased a museum quality display case which be installed in the lobby of the Town Hall. Our volunteers will work to provide ongoing historic displays.

(continued on page 2)

President's Message, *continued*

Members enjoyed our Annual Picnic, Ice Cream Social and our latest endeavor- a Trivia contest. We wrapped up the year with a Holiday Party at the homestead with lots of food and lots of fun- complete with snow and Bryan Lammers serenading us with magical holiday tunes.

I hope after reading this you share my sense that the WHS continues to be a growing and vibrant part of our community. The extent to which we are successful is dependent on our dedicated volunteers, our wonderful members, and those special friends who respond to our fundraising efforts. We can't thank you enough for your support. Onward to an even greater 2023!!

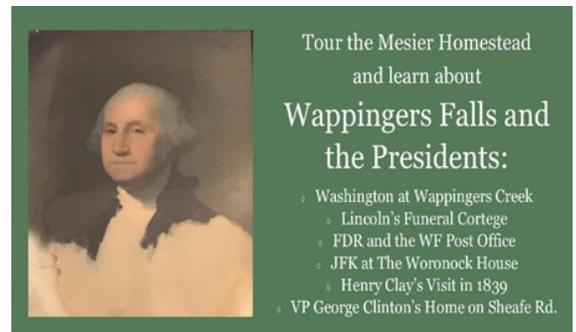
Beth

Coming Events!

Special Presidents Day Tour Day

Sunday, February 19th at 1pm, 2pm and 3pm (snow date February 26th) - Mesier Homestead

In honor of Presidents Day, Mesier Homestead tours this day will feature information on the special relationship the Homestead's first occupants had with General Washington's Army during the Revolutionary War, as well as tidbits about connections our village, town and hamlets have to past Presidents.



Speaker Series: Figuratively Speaking – Idioms and Adages with Frank Dispensa

Sunday, March 12, 2023 3pm , American Legion Hall, 7 Spring Street Wappingers Falls



We're not *beating around the bush!* No stone was left unturned to find our speaker, Frank Dispensa, so that you can learn *straight from the horse's mouth* about the origins and use of common English idioms and adages. This talk will be the *best thing since sliced bread!* So, please join us – after all, *nothing ventured, nothing gained.*

Coming Events, continued

Speaker Series: Local Bottle History with Dani Masterson and Paul DiMarco

*Sunday, April 23th, 3pm American Legion Hall, 7 Spring Street
Wappingers Falls*

We welcome back WHS Trustee Dani Masterson and Member Paul DiMarco to speak with us about bottle collecting. Whether they are apothecary, milk or drink bottles, they all have historical significance and tell tales of years gone by. Learn about the types of bottles found and used locally, how they were obtained, and how they are evaluated and dated.



New Members

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

Individual membership

Richard Fiorile
Annika Bjornson
Maya Hennebery
Mary Ann Weitz
George-Ann Sauer

Family membership

James Williams and family
Prudence & Robert Barton
Laura Landau and family

Lifetime membership

Pamela Hoiles

Visit us at:

www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org

Contact us at:

info@wappingershistoricalsociety.org

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James R. Lawson (1832-1903) is the 2nd great-grandfather of Historical Society member Ellen Roberts Stuart. Ellen has deep roots in New Hamburg, beginning with Pieter Lassen, who came down from Albany and settled along the Hudson River in 1702. His homestead was located on the land now owned by the Tri-Municipal treatment plant along Sheafe Road in Poughkeepsie. A thank you goes out to Ellen for sharing this story and also for the donations of her family heirlooms to the Society. This story was *lightly* edited for ease of reading.

An 'Accounting' from a 19th Century New Hamburg Man

*"Hotel Windsor
Poughkeepsie, NY
April 12, 1933*

*'...an accounting, as written by Abram Lawson, about his
father, James R. Lawson.'*

*A citizen of New Hamburg, Dutchess Co., New York,
born in 1830 at Barnegat, a nick name, correct name
Clinton Point, named after Gov. Clinton, our first
Governor. His home being at that Point, later Van
Rensselaer Pt---now called Stoneco---about a mile south
old Barnegat. At that time around 1860, several boatmen
lived at Barnegat and several sailing vessels, as sloops, were
owned there---a few carried lime from the three or four lime
kilns at that place and other vessels carried other freight from Albany and New York.
Barnegat at that time was quite a village---among the prominent people living there I
remember few- Abraham Hunt, Peter B. Lawson, Robt. Matthews, Samuel Matthews, John
Matthews, Hanford Ferdon, Abram Ferdon, John Hunt, Frederick Bishop, Seaman Hunt
and John Oneal who was flagman on the railroad and had a railroad shanty to go in at
times. The men at home during the winter would go to the railroad shanty and play Penny
Antie for pass time.*



Abram Lawson—1893

*My father, James Robt. Lawson, I have heard him tell one fall about Dec. 1---He commenced
to prepair his sloop for the winter by taking the sails off. It was a warm day sun shining,
working with their coats off. Two or three different people would tell him he was foolish to
lay up so early, and advised him to make another trip, and so he started off to make another
trip and during that trip he came near looseing his sloop, on account of so much ice. After
that he always said, when the calendar said December, and weather warm it was poor time
to make up for lost time. He had five different sailing vessels on Hudson River. The sloop
Glide, I believe, was his first to captain being only 19 years old, and I heard him tell one day
at the dinner table about his being so near played out he had to give up and come home at
the farm in Barnegat, once the Gill Hughson farm and after, Prop Bull place. He went up in
the wagon house and laid there all day out of sight. He told this in such a sincere way I
commenced to laugh because I knew how he felt at that time. I have been that way myself all
but gone, might say. Handling brick from before daylight until dark and some days very hot-
barily time to eat---*



James R. Lawson

Other sloops he had was Geo. Clinton Beekman, Ellen Eliza, Pennsylvania, James Coats, Gen. Ward.

The James Coats in 1866 bound down the river with fair wind when rounding West Point they had to give the boom from one side to the other; there were five parts of rope and as the boom came across deck and so much slack to the rope — it caught Ben Hunt who then had charge of the sloop, as my father was home at Barnegat. The main sheet caught Ben Hunt around the head and neck and when sheet fetch up it cut his head off and it went over-board. He had caught the rail of stern deck with his arms and was there when the crew saw what happened. He was a good boatman but my fathers younger brother, Warren was one of the crew. Warren was on forward deck. Ben Hunt called to Warren to look out for himself, and perhaps Ben was thinking about Warrens safety, and neglected his own. Ben Hunt was a Civil War Veteran

and his body lies at New Hamburg Cemetery.

The year 1871-Feb. 6-about 9:30 pm was the year of railroad accident at the draw bridge---twenty -two persons killed---Engineer Doc Simmons killed — the fireman jumped and was saved. Chas Cossom was conductor. The cause of accident was a south bound freight train. An oil car in the train jumped the track at the draw bridge and laid on North bound track. An express came up and struck the oil car causing fire all around. My father James R. Lawson owned the Gen. Ward and William Drake owned the James Coats---these sloops laid up for the winter inside of draw bridge caught fire and did some little damage. The railroad paid for damage to sloops .

Volunteer Spotlight — Youth Education

Wappingers Historical Society archives volunteer, Dr. James Williams, assisted a tour group of students from the Montessori school recently. James has a passion for archeology and is knowledgeable of Native American Artifacts. The focus of our student visitors was to learn more of the Native American history of our area. On the table are a selection of tools and hunting points from our “Taylor Collection.”

James explained how the unique tools were used for food preparation, hunting, fishing and construction. The tunic on display was very recently donated to us.

The tunic belonged to Native American David Fescier, who passed away a little more than a year ago. David was a local, active, leader of keeping Native American history alive while being a notable supporter of Native American rights in our area.



If you are interested in doing this type of work for the Society, please let us know! We have an online volunteer registration form on our website at:

<https://www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org/volunteer-application>

Totem / Story Stick

The interpretation of this totem stick comes from Evan Pritchard, who spoke at our most recent Speaker Series event during American Indian Heritage Month in November. The totem is on display at the Mesier Homestead and Museum.

This story stick or totem stick is Algonquin for “clan”. It is between 150 and 300 years old, but its carver knew a lot about Wappingers tradition. It shows an owl at the foundation, a possum in the middle and a frog at the top.

The messenger or assistant to a chief in Mohican culture is called an “owl” or Duda, a Mohican word. This owl symbolizes the ancient Mohican phase of Wappingers culture. Note the spotted wings and legs. Proto-Mohican was a root language for many Algonquin languages today, including the Wappingers tongue.

The possum (long pointed nose, long toed feet) symbolizes the Wappingers society (Wappinger or “Wappano” means “Men of the East”.) The Wappano came from the Connecticut River Valley, in what is now Hartford County, in the 1600s. Some are still in Greenfield, Massachusetts. The word Wappano is related to “Mu-hwa-pinkus,” or possum. (“One who has no fur on its tail; also, “little white face”.)

The frog at the top symbolizes the Taino, who were adopted into the Wappinger in 1300’s, according to State Archaeologist William Richie. The famous national symbol of the Taino is the Coqui or frog. Proto-Taino traders had been coming up the Atlantic Trade Current from what is now Puerto Rico since at least 1000 BCE.

This totem is on display at the Mesier Homestead in the Village of Wappingers Falls and is the property of the Wappingers Historical Society.



Member Holiday Party

Our traditional Holiday Party at the Homestead happened on what turned out to be a magically snowy evening. Bryan Lammers set a party atmosphere with holiday tunes. The newly restored 1800 map was officially unveiled at this event. This map was restored with funds from a Town of Wappinger Grant to the Historical Society. It is an important addition to our archives and is prominently displayed in the center hall of the Homestead.



Nancy Piscitello & Wendy McNeil



Melanie & Joe Giordano



Mayor Rick Cerino & Dani Masterson

Member Holiday Party, continued



Our new 1800 map display



The unveiling of the 1800 map



As always, Bryan Lammer's music set a festive tone for the evening.



The unveiling of the 1800 map



Jack Devine & Tony McDonough



Pegeen Wall & Helen Cristie

Dutchess Tourism Award of Distinction Finalist

The Wappingers Historical Society was one of three organizations, chosen among many in the County, to be a finalist for this prestigious award. In our category, “History”, the other two finalists were the Hopewell Junction Railroad Depot and Beekman Arms in Rhinebeck. At a recent recognition event held by Dutchess Tourism, it was announced that Beekman Arms won this year’s award. Congratulations to our Society-its members and volunteers-who have made us what we are!



Homestead Restoration Update

Our work continues on the c1742 house restoration. Great progress was made in January. The floor boards were replaced where needed, but just as importantly, the underlying joists and support structures were repaired/replaced. Phase 1 of the electrical wiring is complete and passed inspection. Mesh screen is in place awaiting plaster later this spring. The replacement main fireplace footings have been completed and are ready for the next stage of the fireplace restoration in May.



One of the “discovered” windows is repaired and in place. The beehive oven is ready for its spring rebuild.



The flooring finish will be applied in late spring. The floor is currently under a protective covering.