

# Newsletter

## Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 3 Number 2 Spring 2004

### *A Unique Borden Family Legacy -- Wallkill, N.Y.*

by Alfred Smiley

Researching local history of the Village of Wallkill area is a heartwarming confirmation of this writer's gratitude to live in this valley. Superlatives abound in records from many eras and perspectives. Since my boyhood in the 40's at Minnewaska and Mohonk, European guests and world travelers have extolled the area to me as rivaling any of their experiences.

James Crowell II recalled the famous artist Marc Chagall's visit to Wallkill in 1912 describing it as "...one of the most beautiful parts of the country with its scenic mountains and farms." In this period, nearby Cragmoor had become a colony of renowned artists extending the world's appreciation of our area celebrated by the Hudson River School in the prior century.

In 1881, John G. Borden, the youngest son of Gail Borden (the successful developer of condensed milk and father of modern, sanitary dairy methods), selected this valley after a three-state search to locate his dream "Hope Farm...



to establish an enterprise near a great city" accessible by river and rail which would survive a hundred years, "available as a home, a park, a resting place..."

Borden's first purchase here in 1881 of 563 acres included the 1750 stone Hasbrouck House (500' north of the present mansion built in 1906 by daughter Marion) and the 280-acre farm running west to the river. He renovated the house and built a brick office building (intact today and maintained as office/museum by descendants of Borden veterinarian, Clare Hoyt).

Near the Wallkill/Walden line, the condensory was built in the summer of 1881 on the banks of the river. Interestingly, labor came primarily from New York City by 9 A.M. daily, a rail trip of under

three hours in those days. John Gail, maintained his father's passion for cleanliness in all phases of the company's operation to insure fresh milk products. Called the Dairyman's Ten Commandments, strict procedures regarding types of feed, cleansing and transportation to the condensory plants were required of participating farmers and workers. Inspectors and veterinarians monitored quality at all points. His motto: "What is worth doing is worth doing well" is also evidenced in the aesthetics of all his projects, structures, and landscapes—ornate wood and brickwork, floral beds, treed roadways, and fountains.

Development of the dream farm culminated in purchases of nearly 2,000 acres

*Continued on pg. 3...*



# Letter from the President

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Dear Members and Friends,

2004 is in full swing for the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner. We have enjoyed four monthly gatherings of our members at which we reminisced about the late Elizabeth Hammesfahr, a dedicated public servant and our dear friend, learned about mastodons in the Hudson Valley, took a historical tour of "The Trapps" and other Shawangunk Mountain communities, and met the descendents of Thomas Jefferson and their Orange County, New York, connections. This fascinating list proves that there is always something for everyone at our meetings!

Work is continuing at the Andries DuBois House. With warmer weather here, a new Gardening Subcommittee has been established to enhance the landscape. Once the historic structures report is completed, we can get to work on a variety of projects at the house itself. Some we may be able to do as volunteers, but others will require the services of professional contractors. We will continue to pursue all grant opportunities and

sponsor fund-raising events to help us achieve our goal of restoring the Andries DuBois House for our community.

Speaking of funding, we want to thank the Town of Shawangunk for an allocation of \$2,000 for 2004. This money will be used for public educational activities, including "Borden Day" on August 21<sup>st</sup>. We also thank the Ulster County Legislature for a grant of \$5,000, to be used for the Andries DuBois House restoration project.

Of course, a special "Thank You" goes to all members who have joined or renewed their membership during our recent membership drive. We cannot achieve our goals without you, and your suggestions are always welcome.

So ... until we "meet" again in our September issue, look for a presentation by the Village Historian of Walden, our annual elections and June potluck celebration, Borden Day on August 21<sup>st</sup>, and maybe even a few "surprises". We look forward to seeing you at these events!

Suzanne Isaksen

## *Have you ever wondered where a particular phrase came from?*

The phrase "cut through the red tape" came from solicitors that kept their clients papers tied together with a red ribbon to prevent the papers from falling out. Of course, when they wanted to get the papers, they would have to cut through the red tape (ribbon).

**Correction:** In the Walker Valley Schoolhouse article in the last issue, Greg Greer's sister was Dot Marl, not Schwartz.



## Letters to the Editorial Staff



This is a forum  
for your com-  
ments and sug-  
gestions.

Please send all  
material to:

Historical Society of  
Shawangunk & Gardiner  
Attn: Editorial Staff  
P.O. Box 570  
Wallkill, NY 12589-0570

(Letters will be printed  
at our discretion)

## Upcoming Events

**Wed. June 2**  
Annual Meeting  
and  
picnic at  
Verkeerderkill Park  
6:00 pm

**Sat. June 12**  
(Rain date June 13th)  
Flea Market  
Dubois House lawn  
9:00 am

Regular meetings  
7:30 pm  
at the  
Wallkill Reformed Church



## *A Unique Borden* cont. from pg. 1

including a major portion of the current Village of Wallkill which he designed on both sides of the former railroad. The large farm which included livestock and agriculture depended on local labor for which Borden provided lots and housing at little or no cost. His roads and lot lines survive largely the same today when comparing our current map with his original.

The Hope Farm, started in '81, became home to a community in eight short years. Houses for farm labor, many barns and silos, and two water-powered grist mills were complemented by orchards and vineyards, rolling grain fields and pastures, creating a model bucolic scene for those gathering here for demonstrations at annual agricultural festivals of the Wallkill Valley Farmers Association.

Fortunately, John Gail's death at age 47 in 1891 did not halt the Borden family's obvious pursuit of excellence. His youngest daughter Marion, carried the standard forward, erecting a 26-room mansion worthy of her father's nearby 350' barn designed to store 500 tons of hay above the livestock. Her efforts to provide electrical power to the farm and village became the origin of the Central Hudson Power Com-

pany. She fostered social gatherings in the house, barns, and the greenhouse gardens. An avid Scouter, she championed Girl Scouting by giving to the Ulster County's GSA Council the east end of the farm off St. Elmo's Road, the site known today as Camp Wendy and added an all-purpose room to the Wallkill Reformed Church which students from her father's high school used for plays and indoor athletics. The Wallkill Library was also her bequest in 1930.

It is difficult to briefly and adequately remind the community of its indebtedness to the vision and charity of the John Gail Borden Family. One, however, cannot miss the remnants of the majestic, tree-lined roadways; stone gateways and metal fencing still outlining open spaces. Downing-style cottages are evident despite modifications, and, fortunately, barn and mansion restorations currently in progress on the Home Farm by the Practical Philosophy Foundation are preserving segments of that more elegant period. Our village parks, library, school, four styles of homes, and gardens: the area's electrical power; and safe milk supplies everywhere remain testimony to the rare ethic and humanitarian legacy of the Borden family.





# *Society to Sponsor First Annual "Borden Day"*

On Saturday, August 21, 2004, the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner will sponsor its first annual "**Borden Day**". This event will celebrate the legacy of John G. Borden and his family in the Hamlet of Wallkill – a legacy that has given this small community parks, a library, a school building, breath-taking agricultural landscape, and charming company housing in the "Arts-and-Crafts" style.

Activities will take place in two main areas: (1) the center of the Hamlet itself - focusing on the area between the Town of Shawangunk Municipal Building/Wallkill Public Library/Borden Park complex and the Wallkill Middle School (originally the John G. Borden High School); and (2) John G. Borden's nationally-known "Home Farm".

There will be two types of tours available that day. Tours of the Home Farm will be conducted every two hours, from 10:00 AM until 6:00 PM. Highlights of this tour will be the Marion Borden mansion, John G. Borden's office, and the beautifully-landscaped grounds and breathtaking views from the property. Self-guided tours of the area including Wallkill Public Library, Borden Park, houses built for Borden officials and employees, and the Wallkill Middle School also may be taken using a brochure developed by the Historical Society.

The starting point for all activities will be the Middle School and/or the Town of Shawangunk Town Hall, where participants may board a mini bus for the tour of the Home Farm; see historical displays

relevant to the Town of Shawangunk as well as the Borden family, and listen to one or two speakers on topics pertaining to the dairy industry or other related topic. Reservations for the Home Farm tours will be required, but all other activities will be open and free of charge.

The rain date for this celebration will be Saturday, August 28<sup>th</sup>. Additional information will be mailed to all Historical Society members and friends during the summer. We will need **many volunteers** to make this day a success, and you may choose to assist with activities in the Hamlet area or up on the Home Farm. If you wish to get involved, please contact Suzanne Isaksen at 845-778-1736, or Al Smiley at 845-895-1710.

## *Flea Market - Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup>*

Dubois House Lawn

Rain date June 13<sup>th</sup>

Vendors needed, **\$10.00** per space. (Tables not included)

Contact: **Freda Fenn** 895-3986 or **Kathy Antonelli** 564-0019



## *Give Our Past a Future Become a Member*



\_\_\_ **\$5.00 Student**    \_\_\_ **\$10.00 Individual**    \_\_\_ **\$15.00 Family**    \_\_\_ **\$30.00 Business**  
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Mail Check (tax-deductible) payable to:  
**Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner**  
**P.O. Box 570 Wallkill, NY 12589-0570**



# Andries DuBois House Update

Spring is **finally** here, and our dedicated volunteers are back to work at the DuBois House. First on the agenda is a little "spring cleaning," both inside the house and around the property. A "Gardening Subcommittee" has been formed, to provide an opportunity to improve and enjoy our property.

Just as with the restoration of a building, questions of historical accuracy are raised about landscapes at an historic site. Should we plant flowers and shrubs that are popular now, or do we try to incorporate "heirloom plants" from a particular period into our landscape design?

Where do we locate new gardens? Decorative and floral gardens were located in different areas of a property during different historical periods. Some gardens were designed to enhance the front of the house, while others were located just outside the entry to the kitchen.

Some gardening questions will have to wait until the completion of the historic structure report (HSR) for the DuBois House this year. The HSR will advise us about the house's "period(s) of interpretation", based on the extensive historical research that now is underway. Using the HSR, we can restore the house

and its landscape to a period or periods of significance. In doing so, we will learn about plants available in our area at that time, how gardens were used by our house's inhabitants, and what flowers decorated the gardens and homes at different times. Most importantly, we can pass heirloom gardening information on to other owners of period houses as well as visitors to the Andries DuBois House.

But for now, we will focus on enhancing the appearance of the property and enjoying its park-like setting overlooking of the Wallkill River. Everyone is welcome!

## 14th Annual Student Research Awards

The New York Student Research Archives is sponsoring the 14th Annual Student Research Awards. The Contest is open to all New York State students in grades 4-12 who use historical records in their research projects. Eligible projects include traditional research papers,

audiovisual productions, performances, exhibits, etc. In order for the entry to be competitive, a substantial portion of the research should be based on historical records from archives, historical societies, libraries, museums, local governments or other organizations. The dead line is

June 1, 2004. Information about the program is available on the New York State Archives website, [www.archives.nysed.gov](http://www.archives.nysed.gov) and click on Student Research Award; or call 518-474-6926; or e-mail [archgrants@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:archgrants@mail.nysed.gov).

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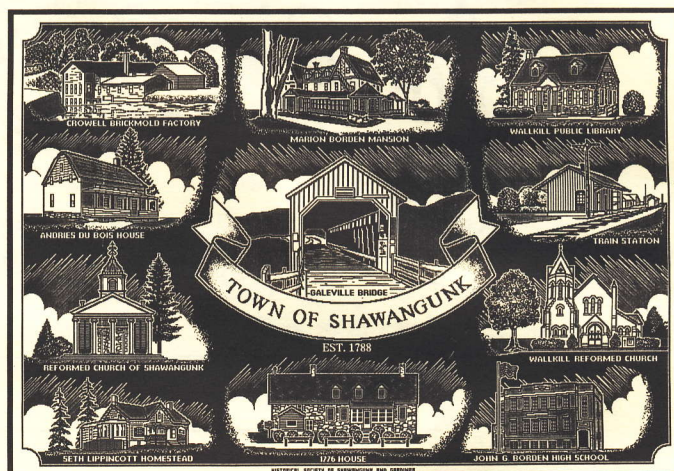
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**Walker Valley School, Class of 1923**  
**1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grades**



- Front Row:** Louis Weed, Jr., James Gregston Greer IV, John Polhamus, Harold Marshall, Freddy Mance, David Mance, Alfred Kirby, Alice Weed, Laura Frampton, Dorothy Greer, Sadie Napolitano, Lloyd Greer.
- Second Row:** Henry Green (Tink), Arthur DeWitt (Buzz), Alfred DeWitt (Checkers), Jim Weed, Lloyd Scott, Mary Napolitano, Claudia Weed, Miss Sonja Krook (Teacher), Edith Hauser, Eleanor Greer.
- Third Row:** Kenneth Marshall, Harry Polhamus.