

Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 3, Number 4

Winter 2005

Archaeology at the Andries DuBois House



Society member June Simpson sifts through soil excavated from under the porch looking for artifacts.

Throughout 2004, the Andries DuBois House has been undergoing a thorough "top-to-bottom" analysis, as we delve into its history and evolution to develop a plan for its restoration and use. Paint samples have been scraped from the exterior siding and interior windowsills, nail samples have been taken from walls and beams, and countless photographs and drawings have been developed to document each period of construction of this complicated building. There are some questions, though, that cannot be answered by inspecting the house itself. For these answers, we must "dig a little deeper".

In 2002 the Society conducted an archaeological excavation near the northwest corner of the house. This activity was mandated by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation administering our grant for the foundation stabilization project. Since this project involved potential excavation for the masonry work, we had to contract with professional archaeologists to investigate the area of proposed ground disturbance. This dig yielded several interesting artifacts dating to the nineteenth century, as well as a "burn layer" suggesting a fire on the property. Many Society members gained firsthand experience during the dig by screening for artifacts, as

well as in the "laboratory" washing and cleaning the hardware, bone, pottery, and other items unearthed. A report of this excavation is in the Society's archives.

Last October we conducted a voluntary dig to answer some questions about the house. For example, what did the original entryway look like? The current front porch dates to the mid- to late-20th century, and there is photographic evidence of an earlier but similar porch. Above the front doorway, there are signs that an even *earlier* porch might not have extended the length of the front façade but was similar to a "stoop" found on many early houses. With no photographs available, archaeology may provide a clue.

What about that burn layer found at the northwest corner? Would we find more evidence of a fire covering the extent of the house site? This would be an important part of the history of the house, and archaeology could provide some information. Excavations began with several shovel tests to determine the best place to put the 5'x 5' unit. This unit was brought down to "virgin soil", where there was no evidence of human activity. During the excavation of the unit, Society volunteers assisted with screening for artifacts. The artifacts were bagged and labeled by the level where they were retrieved. *(Continued on Page 5)*



Archaeologist Arnold Pickman records progress during the dig under the DuBois House front porch.

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Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends,

2004 is now part of history .. but what a year it was for the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner! Before we welcome 2005, I'd like to recap briefly our major accomplishments this past year:

- Our Local History Celebration in April, held jointly with the Town of Crawford Historical Society
- Our participation at Walker Valley's Old-Fashioned Day in June
- Our tremendously successful Borden Day in August
- Our Halloween Spook-Tacular in October
- Our archaeological dig at the Andries DuBois House in October
- Our ever popular Christmas Shop in November and December
- Our sponsorship of prospective Eagle Scout Brian Sweeney's Graham Cemetery Restoration Project
- Our monthly meetings featuring a wide variety of historical topics (and some of the best homemade goodies ever!)
- Our quarterly newsletter highlighting historic properties and events in our area
- Our continued work on the historic structure report (HSR) and restoration activities at the Andries DuBois House.

When you look at this list, it truly is amazing that a small local historical society can accomplish this much! However, every one of our activities is a community effort, in which we have partnered with local residents, businesses, civic organizations, educators, and government officials; historians and historical groups from neighboring communities and across the Hudson River; and even state and national historic preservation organizations. With each of these partnerships, we have demonstrated our commitment to preserving and promoting our local history.

2005 promises to be a very exciting year for us. With the imminent completion of the HSR for the Andries DuBois House, we can get to work on "bricks and mortar" restoration projects on the house and the out-buildings, as well as plan some landscaping projects. Our work will be based on a firm understanding of the history of the house and its changes over time. It will not be a "romantic notion" of what we *think* it might have been, but a historically-accurate restoration of what it was during its major period(s) of significance. We will be able to tell with confidence the story of who lived there, their roles in the community, and what their lives were like in 1810, 1840, 1890, or 1920 Shawangunk.

Of course, Borden Day, our Local History Celebration Dinner, the one-room schoolhouse exhibit project, our monthly meetings, our quarterly newsletter, and many other activities will continue. We look forward to a challenging and productive New Year!

Suzanne Isaksen

Help Wanted!

Do you like to garden? Have an interest in 18th- or 19th-century ceramics? Are you a "camera buff", or just like to take pictures? Will you help with our monthly "phone chain"? Are you handy with a hammer, have sales skills, or just like to talk to people? Whether it's painting a wall or planting lavender, researching a family or rehearsing a skit, the Historical Society is offering a wide variety of volunteer opportunities to match your talents and interests!

Are you a "born leader"? Then become an Officer or Trustee. Every June the Society elects members of its governing board. Officers (president, vice president, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and treasurer) serve one-year terms, and trustees serve three-year terms. In 2005, we will elect all five officers and three trustees. Officers and trustees attend monthly board meetings on the last Tuesday of the month and also serve as committee chairs. Additional duties of officers are explained in the Society's by-laws.

Do you prefer to work "behind the scenes"? Then become a committee member or volunteer for a project that matches your talents and interests:

- **Programs and Education** - contacting monthly meeting speakers, working with students, speaking to school groups and organizations, videotaping, oral history, photography, music, theater
- **Fund-Raising** - representing the Society at special events, selling advertising for our publications, making handcrafts for the Christmas shop and other sales, planning fund-raising activities
- **Membership** - managing a database
- **Publicity** - drafting press releases, photography
- **Restoration & Building Maintenance** - carpentry, painting, gardening, landscaping, archaeology, historical research, photography, drawing, videotaping, general handiwork at the Andries DuBois House
- **Finance** - accounting or bookkeeping
- **Archives & Collections** - recordkeeping, historical research, database management, photography
- **Publications** - writing, photography, proofreading.

We also need volunteers to help with Borden Day and other special activities. Our only qualifications for any of these "positions" are that you are a Society member and have a sincere interest in local history. Contact an officer or trustee to find out how you can participate, or check the "I want to get involved!" box on your membership renewal form.

Upcoming Workshops

The Hudson Valley Documentary Heritage Program is holding a history-themed workshop:

Identifying Historical Records: What is it? Where does it Belong? Is it a Keeper?

April 2, 2005 (snow date April 8)

9:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Ellenville Library & Museum

Registration: \$10.00

Participants will examine actual records and learn how to identify (appraise), evaluate, and finally select records with potential historical value. It introduces core terminology, concepts, and standards used by the archival profession relating to the appraisal and selection of records that should receive ongoing care.

As a member of the Historical Society you are entitled to attend this and future workshops. To register, contact either of the following:

Dianne Macpherson, DHP Regional Coordinator

phone: (914) 592-6726

email: lowerhudson@msn.com

Erica Blumenfeld, DHP Regional Archivist

phone: (845) 471-1630

email: Ericablumenfeld@hotmail.com



The Christmas Shop was hosted by Estelle Caswell. Toni Gagan and Freda Fenn are shown here while staffing the Shop. (Barbara Palinkas photo)

Christmas Shop a Success

Our Christmas Shop was a great success this year, generating \$995 dollars for the Society. Our thanks to **Estelle Caswell** for hosting the Christmas Shop, and to **Freda Fenn**, **Kathy Antonelli**, and all the other Society members who contributed their time and effort to support the Society.

Meeting Highlights

For those of you who have missed some of our monthly meetings, Trustee Michael L. Dunnigan provides the following highlights of our October and November 2004 meetings.

October 2004:

"The Van Wyck Homestead"

On Wednesday, October 6, 2004, **Mr. Dick Valinski** from the **Fishkill Historical Society** in Dutchess County, New York, gave a slide show on the **Van Wyck Homestead**. While his wife operated the 1917 Magic Lantern slide projector, Mr. Valinski led us on a "virtual tour" of this fabulous historic house.

The Van Wyck Homestead has a long history of occupation – about 233 years, in fact. For most of its history, it was subsistence living in Fishkill, New York – living off the land. Mr. Valinski stressed the need for systematic documentation of the homestead, relying on primary documents and archaeology for answers. For example, the result of the 1798 Federal direct tax on houses, land, and other buildings made the first comprehensive National Census of housing necessary, but these documents were lost except for the states of Maryland, Delaware, and Massachusetts. Mr. Valinski has consulted with studies done by Chief Historian Jack Larkin at the Old Sturbridge Village for answers to many of his questions about documenting this and other historic houses of the period.

The Van Wyck Homestead has several wings built at different times. The east wing was built in the 1730's. Cornelius Van Wyck came to this area to conduct a survey of Madam Brett's property. Her homestead, located in Beacon (south of Fishkill), was constructed of hewn beams in 1709, requiring about 360 days of work. Mr. Valinski spoke about fireplaces in the kitchen areas like the Van Wyck Homestead east wing. Here, the inhabitants did roasting, baking, and frying with a large and smaller oven in the home. They also cooked directly on the stones, putting cakes on them. Adequate heat was often a problem.

The west wing of the homestead was built later. Some of residents Mr. Valinski discussed were Cornelius and Hannah Van Wyck (the first occupants of the homestead); Isaac Van Wyck, a New York State Legislator in 1811; and Abraham Van Wyck.

Today the Van Wyck Homestead serves as a museum and the home of the Fishkill Historical Society. This active group sponsors school programs, public

programs, holiday tours, and a research committee studying the role of the Van Wyck Homestead and the Fishkill Supply Depot during the Revolutionary War.

We forward to scheduling a group tour to this historic site very soon.

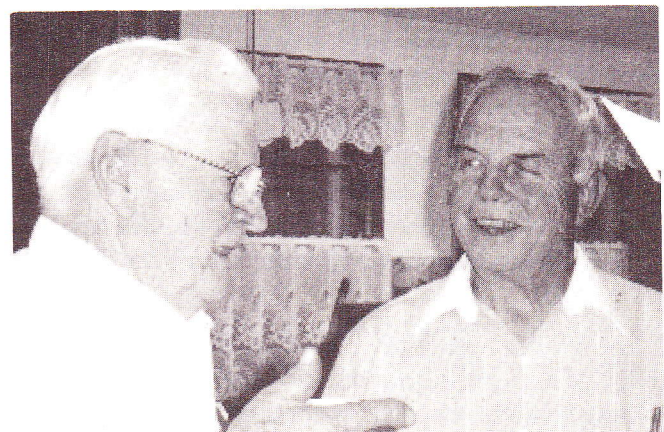
November 2004:

"The Walker Valley Methodist Church"

On Wednesday, November 3, 2004, the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner held its monthly meeting at the **Walker Valley Methodist Church** on Route 52 in Walker Valley. **Mr. Cliff Upright** gave an informative presentation about the history of the church, which was celebrating its 150th anniversary. Also serving as hosts were **Pastor Robert B. Hewitt** and **Associate Pastor K. Paul Vander Kruik**. A brief synopsis of Mr. Upright's presentation follows.

In the 1800's a religious society met in the schoolhouse. In 1853 James Walker Sr., a prominent community member, willed \$300.00 for the construction of a church, with the provision that an additional \$700.00 be raised. The Walker family donated the land. Construction began in 1854, and the church was dedicated on January 8, 1855. In 1854 Reverend Smith was appointed, with Francis Andrews as assistant preacher.

In 1907 the original church building was struck by lightning, and all was lost. In 1908 the present church was constructed. Several Walker Valley families were instrumental in establishing and maintaining the church throughout its history. These include the Evans, Fulton, Wright, and Walker families.



*Society Trustee **Gilbert McCord** (left) and speaker **Cliff Upright** (right) enjoy Walker Valley reminiscences during the November meeting at Walker Valley Methodist Church.*

The Walkers came to this country from Ireland. Mr. John Walker Sr. lived from 1771-1852 in Evansville at the top of the mountain at Cragmoor. It was his son James who willed the initial funds for the church, and his grandson Jacob who donated the land. Moreover, Jacob Walker was a church worker and was in the General Merchandise business.

Mr. Upright provided additional fascinating details about the church's setting and development. There was a horse and buggy area near a picnic ground, surrounded by dirt roads and trees. In 1964 plans were developed to add an education building; completed in 1966, it also included a dining area and kitchen.

In 1917 Mr. James Walker gave the Firemen's Club land to build a firehouse next to the church. In 1971 the fire company needed a larger facility, and the church purchased the old firehouse for \$6,000. The firehouse was demolished and the plot turned into a lawn.

After a question-and-answer period, Society members were given a tour of the church and treated to refreshments provided by their hosts.

Archaeology at the DuBois House

(Continued from Page One)

However, before a trowel or shovel could be put in the ground, the Restoration Committee had work to do. The first step was to fully document the existing porch with photographs and drawings. Many photographs have been taken by Society volunteers since the house was acquired. A complete set of drawings was made by Society member and professional architect **Joseph P. Trapani**. We now have a complete record of this part of the house to be dismantled.

The next step was removing the porch floor. The remainder of the porch was kept intact, to shelter the archaeologists and volunteers from inclement October weather. With the floor removed, **Wendy Harris** and **Arnold Pickman** from **Cragmoor Consultants** could get to work.

While we must await the final excavation report to see if any of our questions were answered, we do have the following initial statement written by Wendy Harris:

One of the more interesting discoveries were two stone footings that most likely supported an earlier porch. (We) also found several pieces of pottery dating to the 1700s. This is noteworthy because it indicates that the house (or an earlier house at the same location) was

occupied during the 18th century. In addition to pottery from the 18th and 19th centuries, the dig also uncovered artifacts that had belonged to former occupants of the house such as coins, children's toys, buttons, and a bone comb. Prehistoric Native American artifacts were also found. More will be known once the artifacts are processed and analyzed.

The dig also found a "burn layer" just above the virgin soil, continuing the question of whether the whole site had been cleared by burning before the farmstead was established and the house was built. Or, was an earlier house destroyed by fire and replaced by the existing Andries DuBois House? The questions continue for this fascinating house.

The Society wishes to thank the following Society members for making this project possible: **Joseph P. Trapani** for drawing the porch; **Stewart Crowell**,

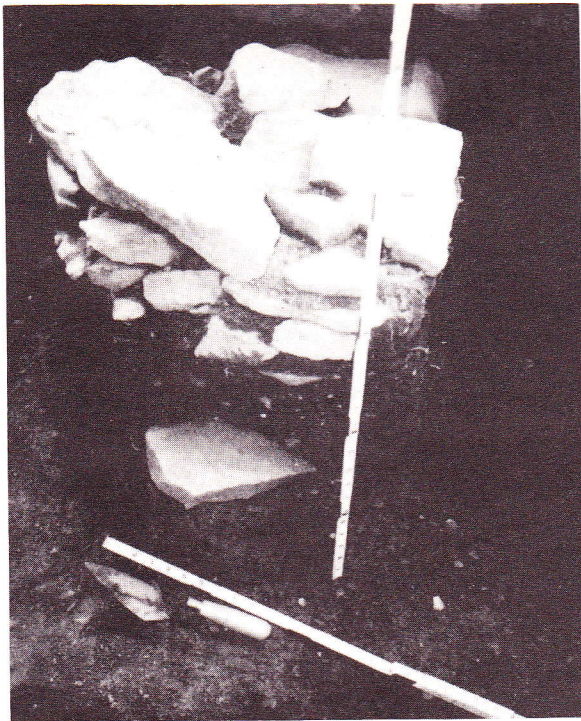


Society Trustee Karen Dale takes her turn searching for artifacts during the excavation of the area under the Dubois House front porch.

Paul Dale, and **John Isaksen** for removing the porch floor; **Barbara Bouffard**, **Karen Dale**, **Michael Dunnigan**, **Freda Fenn**, **Kristina Rose**, **June Simpson**, and **Ed Weed** for screening artifacts; **Doris Callan**, **Karen Dale**, **Freda Fenn**, **Jennifer Parker**, and **Cassie Myers** and **Wallkill High School** students **Kaylee Flinton** and **Greg Mowjean** for washing and cleaning artifacts; and archaeologists **Wendy Harris** and **Arnold Pickman** of **Cragmoor Consultants** for making this project an educational experience for everyone. Funding was made possible by grants from the **Ulster County Legislature** and the **National Trust for Historic Preservation's John E. Streb Preservation Services Fund for New York**.

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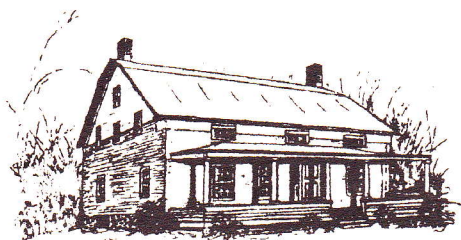
Original front porch footing unearthed during the archaeological dig at the Andries DuBois House.

Historical Society of
Shawangunk & Gardiner
Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, April 6, 2005
At Wallkill Reformed Church
Bob Ewald: *Fly Fishing with Bob Ewald*

Wednesday, May 4, 2005
At Wallkill Reformed Church
Dave Johnson: *Eight Thousand Year Old Archaeological finds in the Hudson Valley*

Wednesday, June 1, 2005
Annual Meeting and Picnic
Verkeerderkill Park, Route 52, Walker Valley
J. Gregston Greer V and Richard Greer:
J. Gregston Greer IV and Dorothy Greer



The Andries DuBois House

The
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY of
SHAWANGUNK & GARDINER**

P.O. BOX 570 • WALLKILL, NEW YORK 12589-0570

Dear Members and Friends,

It's time to renew your membership in the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner. If you're not already a member, then please join us!

In 2004 we worked very hard to accomplish our mission of preserving and promoting our local history. If you've attended one or all of our monthly membership meetings, participated in Borden Day 2004, and/or read every issue of our newsletter from cover to cover, we hope that you feel your membership support was "money well spent". We also hope that you will want to join us for another year of exploring our local history.

2005 already promises to be an exciting year, as we "roll up our sleeves" and get to work on turning the Andries DuBois House into a local history center and museum for our community. The historic structure report (HSR) will assist our project planning, but the financing of the restoration is up to us. We will explore every grant opportunity; solicit donations of money, labor, and materials; and develop fun but profitable ways to raise the funds for our future museum. Creating a legacy for our community isn't easy or inexpensive. However, the dedication our Society has demonstrated through its many activities will convince anyone that we can do it.

First on our agenda will be restoration of the house's windows and door framing, replacement of damaged clapboard siding, and a new coat of paint for the clapboard and trim. Gone will be the "black-and-blue" scheme ... to be replaced with colors that represent the house's 1840's appearance. (These colors have been specified by our architects and are based on careful paint analysis from the exterior of the house.)

Next, we hope to address the condition of the brickwork on the house's east and south facades (including removal and replacement of the front porch!), restoration of the two chimneys, and stabilization or replacement of the roof. At the same time that the chimneys are restored, we will need to replace our furnace with a more efficient system that also will preserve our collections as we begin to build them.

How can you help? We now are offering three ways that members and friends of the Society can join in this effort.

- (1) **Renew your membership (or become a member).** Membership in the Society is still a bargain, whether you join as a student, individual, family, or business/institution. Members receive our quarterly newsletter and advance notification of all special Society events.*
- (2) **Become a Benefactor of the Society.** Benefactors will receive all member benefits as well as quarterly detailed progress reports about the Andries DuBois House Restoration. Special tours of the house will be organized for all interested benefactors. Also, the names of all benefactors will appear on a special **2005 Benefactors** plaque in the Andries DuBois House in recognition of their contribution towards its restoration.*

Benefactor categories are named for the following 18th- and 19th-century owners of the Andries DuBois House (whose periods of occupation, in parentheses, are based on careful deed research).

\$2,000.00	Andries DuBois (ca. 1759-1781)	\$200.00	Charles F. V. Reeve (1853-1856)
\$1,000.00	Jonathan DuBois (1781-1789)	\$150.00	Simon L. DuBois (1856-1865)
\$750.00	Sarah DuBois Vernoooy (1789- ca. 1809)	\$125.00	Jonathan Deyo DuBois (1865-1871)
\$500.00	Simon DuBois (ca. 1809-1810)	\$100.00	Jacob Tears (1871)
\$350.00	James Mitchell (1810-1842)	\$75.00	Elizabeth DuBois (1871-1891)
\$250.00	James Nicholl Mitchell (1842-1853)	\$50.00	John Alsdorf Tears (1891-1892)

(3) **Get involved as an Officer, Trustee, or Volunteer.** Contribute your special talents towards achieving our mission of preservation and education. Check the box next to "I want to get involved!" on the form below, and let us know what your interests and talents are. We'll have the right job for you!

Please note ... if your mailing label has the designation "2005", then you already have renewed your membership. However, if you'd like to become a Benefactor or participate as an Officer, Trustee, or Volunteer, we'd welcome that, too! Please fill out the form below and send it with your check in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you again for your dedication to local history!

Sincerely,

Suzanne M. Isaksen

Suzanne M. Isaksen
President

✂ ----- ✂ ----- ✂ ----- ✂
I want to renew my membership in / become a member of the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner as follows:

_____ \$5.00 Student _____ \$10.00 Individual _____ \$15.00 Family
_____ \$30.00 Business/Institution

I want to support the **Andries DuBois House Restoration** by becoming a special benefactor (dues are included) in the following category:

_____ \$50.00 John Alsdorf Tears	_____ \$250.00 James Nicholl Mitchell
_____ \$75.00 Elizabeth DuBois	_____ \$350.00 James Mitchell
_____ \$100.00 Jacob Tears	_____ \$500.00 Simon DuBois
_____ \$125.00 Jonathan Deyo DuBois	_____ \$750.00 Sarah DuBois Vernoooy
_____ \$150.00 Simon L. DuBois	_____ \$1,000.00 Jonathan DuBois
_____ \$200.00 Charles F. V. Reeve	_____ \$2,000.00 Andries DuBois

_____ I want to get involved! Please contact me about becoming an officer, trustee, or volunteer for the Society.

My interests are: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

The Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner is a 501(c)3 corporation. Your donation is fully tax deductible.