

Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

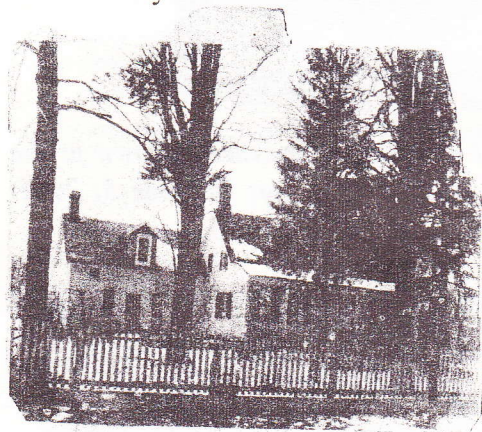
Volume 7, Number 1

Winter 2010

Dr. James G. Graham: a Strong Man in Shawangunk's Early History

All too often, our forbearers leave only a name and date. Dr. James G. Graham, however, left a trail of intellectual curiosity, professional and public service, Revolutionary War patriotism, and connections to prominent leaders of his time, along with some hints of a warm family life.

His father George, a native of Ireland, arrived in Shawangunk in the 1730s. Town records note that he was appointed Overseer of the Wallkill Road in 1746. The Graham home was built in 1772 on land granted to Girard Beekman and his partners by the English Crown in 1709. It stands at the junction of the Bruyn Turnpike and the old road that once led to Walden on the west side of the Wallkill river but which has since been abandoned. The house is currently occupied by Vic and Mary Work.



Ivy Nook: Dr. Graham's house

George's son, James G. Graham, was born in 1747. He received medical training in New York City in 1773-74 at King's College Medical Faculty (now known as Columbia University's College of Physicians & Surgeons). Dr. Graham became one of the earliest doctors in Shawangunk. He also trained at least one other doctor; David Hasbrouck, born in Shawangunk, the son of General Joseph Hasbrouck and his wife Elizabeth Bevier, studied with Dr. Graham and

attended lectures in New York before moving to Utica, New York in 1804 to practice medicine.

Dr. Graham served as a colonel in the NYS Militia during the Revolutionary War. The training ground was located on the Albany Post Road near the Bruyn Turnpike. Some sources believe that General George Washington inspected the troops; he rode by horseback from headquarters (which he occupied from 1782-3) on the banks of the Hudson River in Newburgh. By tradition it is believed that he slept overnight in the Graham house.

Like many educated men of his time, Dr. Graham's interests and achievements were many and varied. One historical source calls him "one of the strong men in the early history of the town." He served in the New York State Assembly in 1790-91 and in 1811. He was elected to the State Senate from 1798-1801, and again from 1806-1809.

Dr. Graham had many interests. While serving in the State Senate, he also represented Ulster County in the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts and Manufacturing. This scientific organization, founded in 1791 to promote the economy, served as an informal advisor to the State Legislature. All Legislative members were given honorary memberships and the Society met when the Legislature was in session.

In October 1800, Dr. Graham played an important role in making known to the larger world the discovery of large bones found about three miles north of his home (see Fall 2009 issue, Volume 6, Number 3 for the story of the Peale Mastodont). It was natural for him to write a letter about the discovery to The Medical Repository, American's first medical journal, because he knew the editor, Dr. Samuel Latham Mitchell; Dr. Mitchell also served in the NYS Legislature and was one of the founders of the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts and Manufacturing. Not surprisingly, Dr. Mitchell was quick to publish the letter.

(continued on page 4)

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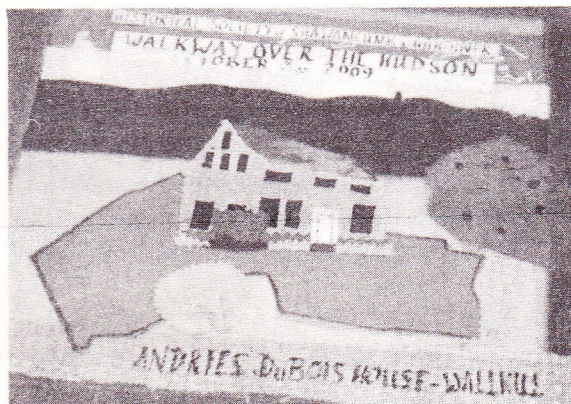
Letter from the Co-Presidents

Dear Members and Friends,

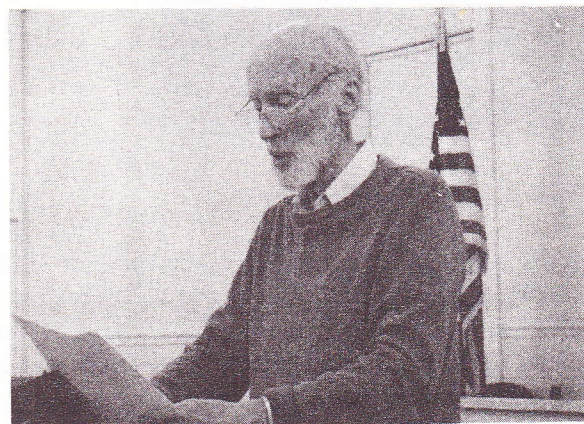
We're very pleased with the progress that has been made at the DuBois House. Central Hudson has come to the site and installed a gas line to the house. A dumpster has been placed in the front yard in anticipation of scheduled structural work that will begin before Thanksgiving. We are eagerly looking forward to the increased restoration activity at the DuBois House.

Also, special thanks to Harold VanAken for developing a website about historic Wallkill. It contains a written history of the hamlet and wonderful old pictures. For those who haven't seen it, go to Wallkillhistory.com. Many thanks, Harold!

Stewart and Carolyn Crowell



Flag by Society Member Freda Fenn, one of hundreds flown at the historic Walkway over the Hudson Opening on October 3, 2009. (see story below)



Gardiner historian Carlton Mabey (see story below)

Event Highlights

On October 7th, **Joseph Devine**, Montgomery, presented the historical background of the world's first complete prehistoric animal discovery in Orange County in 1801, by Charles Willson Peale, and the critical role that Wallkill's **Dr. James G. Graham** made in this regard, which included documenting the 1800 mastodon discovery in Shawangunk. Devine and **Katherine Woltz**, University of Virginia, are writing an historical essay about these events. **Evan Galbraith**, Tuxedo Park, spoke about his plans to develop the Montgomery based Peale Museum of Discovery, which will be educational and fun, geared for families with children. For more information, go to the pealemuseumofdiscovery.com.

* * * *

Members of The Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner joined the **Rhinebeck Historical Society** on October 17 to view **Six Centuries of Watercolors and Drawings**, an exceptional exhibition on view at the Vassar College Loeb Art Center. The art work was on loan from the New York Historical Society in coordination with the Quadricentennial celebrations throughout the Hudson Valley.

* * * *

Freda Fenn and Libby and John Ross represented the Historical Society by participating in an historical opening ceremony of the **Walkway over the Hudson** on Saturday, October 3 (*see photo, page 2*). Hundreds of volunteers designed and created flags to represent towns and cities on either side of the Hudson River, then marched in colorful delegations, hoisting banners of flowing streams, medallions, fish headdresses, and railroad and ship representations, to name just some of the celebratory creations carried across the former railroad bridge, now a destination and walkway for walkers, bike riders, and runners. The view from the bridge is breathtaking.

* * * *

On November 2, the Historical Society met at the Gardiner Town Hall, bringing together members of both Shawangunk and Gardiner, to hear a presentation by Gardiner historian **Carlton Mabee** on the history of the railroad bridge, culminating in the opening of the Walkway over the Hudson (*see photo, page 2*). The bridge opened in 1889, the first railroad bridge ever built over the Hudson. For a short time it was the longest bridge in the world; today, it is the longest walkway built over a river in the world.

The bridge designers benefited from the experience of the builders of the Brooklyn Bridge, choosing a different and safer structure to prevent worker deaths. The structure alternates truss arches with cantilever sections. Building the railroad tracks took concentrated manpower, mostly by Italian immigrants.

Remarkably, a freight train, the Central States Dispatch, ran daily over the bridge from the 1890s to the 1970s, from western Maryland to Boston. The railroad was built to benefit the coal industry, which was able to expand its market by shipping coal to New England. Fire was always a potential danger to the bridge. Engineers had to brake heavily on the bridge, causing sparks and dripping oil onto the wooden planks. Water barrels were placed at intervals to put out potentially devastating fires, but the railroads were already in decline – trucks had already ended rail competitive advantage – when a fire in 1974 closed the bridge. It remained a rusting hulk until volunteers came to its rescue in the 1990s.

* * * *

(*continued from page 1*) That same letter was read at a meeting of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia where Vice President Thomas Jefferson presided. This organization was the country's first learned society and played an important role in American cultural and intellectual life. The Society's members included Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. Other members were doctors, merchants, lawyers, ministers, and booksellers, an indication of the widespread interdisciplinary interests of early Americans before the age of specialization. The Society subsequently made a grant of \$500 to support excavation of the bones and later provided space for Charles Willson Peale's Museum which housed the first mastodon skeleton.

Dr. Graham married Jememia Forbisch on 30 October 1776 at the Kingston Dutch Reformed Church and they lived in Shawangunk throughout their married lives. The Grahams knew sorrow – they lost an infant daughter and a 5-year old son, but 5 daughters and a son survived. When he died in 1815, Dr. Graham left his estate to his “beloved wife Jemima” an unusual practice for the time, along with responsibility for son George's education. Dr. Graham and his wife are buried in a family cemetery in a grove of conifer trees on a hill on the southwest side of the Seth Lippencott farm (now Lippencott Manor). [Ed. Thanks to Joseph Devine, Katherine Woltz, Mary and Vic Work, and Alan White for research contributions.]

TAKE NOTICE!!!

Newly available to the community is an excellent website about historic Wallkill and surrounding towns, with schedules, notices, history, photos, maps, and historic houses. If you have a photograph or information to contribute, email Editor Harold Van Aken at WallkillHistory.com.

Printed courtesy of Shawangunk Correctional Facility

J.T. Smith, Superintendent

J. Nicotera, Instructor

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner Spring 2010 Programs

Wednesday, March 3— 7:30 p.m. Ruth Dylewski presents 1970s quilt made by New Hurley Quilters to Historical Society. Bring your own quilt, old or new, and tell its story. **Wallkill Reformed Church**

Wednesday, April 6 - 7:30 p.m. Diaries of Simon & Annie (McElhone) DuBois (1887-1888). Authentic items from DuBois family displayed. Descendant & Society member Mary DuBois Wright will be present. **Wallkill Reformed Church**

Wednesday, May 5 – 7:30 Frank Mentz's "Shawangunk Hearths" revisited. Presentation by Al White. **Wallkill Reformed Church**

Wednesday, June 2. (Time TBA) Annual Picnic at home of Marcia and Al White. Tour of their 1772 Justus Bank House will follow.

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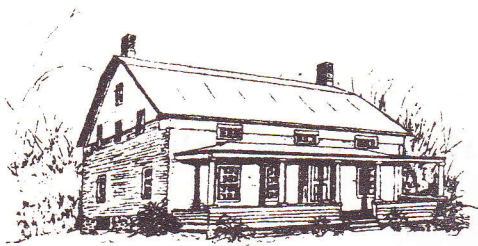
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Historical Society of Shawangunk and Gardiner



The Andries DuBois House

The
HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of*
SHAWANGUNK & GARDINER

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

Winter 2010 appeal

Dear Members and Friends,

Time to renew your membership in the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner! If you are not already a member, then please join us. If you attended one or all our monthly membership meetings, participated in Borden Day, or read every newsletter from cover to cover, we hope you feel your membership support was "money well spent" and that you will want to join us for another year of exploring our local history.

It isn't easy, but we are making progress turning the Andries DuBois House into a local history center and museum for our community. In this newsletter read the status report and see photographs of the work completed by dedicated members of our Society. We welcome your "hands-on" assistance. Just give us a call at 845 895-3049 to sign on.

Other important ways you can help:

(1) **Renew your membership (or become a member).** Join as a student, individual, family, or business/institution, patron, or benefactor. Members receive our quarterly newsletter and advance notification of all special Society events.

(2) **Contribute to the restoration of the Andries DuBois house.** 100% of all donations are applied to restoration or to special displays within the house. Donors receive guided tours (so that you can see where your money is going!) and satisfaction that comes with knowing that you are contributing to your community's preservation of local history.

(3) **Serve as Trustee, or Volunteer.** Contribute talents towards achieving our mission of preservation and education. Let us know your interests and talents. We have the right job for you!

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2010 OR BECOME A NEW MEMBER!

Individual:	\$20	Business:	\$ 50
Family:	\$30	Patron:	\$100
Supporting:	\$50	Benefactor:	\$250

Contribution to DuBois house restoration: \$25___ \$50___ \$100___ Other \$___

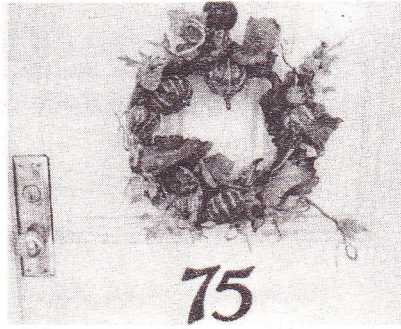
Our programs depend on your support. Checks payable to Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner, P.O. Box 570, Wallkill, NY 12589

Name_____Address_____

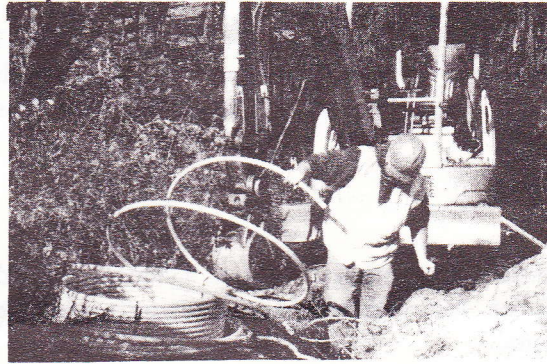
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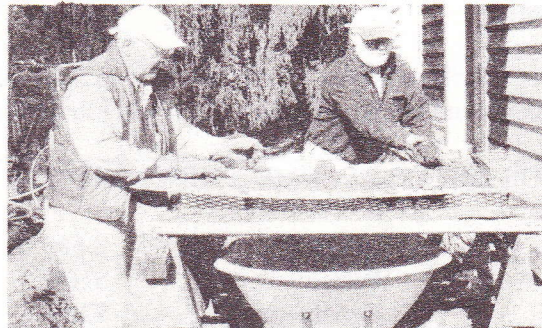
Warm Greetings from the Andries DuBoisHouse!



Good news! Central Hudson has installed a street-to-house gas line to the maximum length permitted without charge. Contractor Dave Barnhart will complete the job by running the entry pipe to the new rear location near the building's center, and will pressure test the pipes for leaks. When work is completed, Central Hudson will make the connection and we will have heat!



After repointing work was completed on the foundation, Bob Mooney and Al Smiley sifted disturbed dirt from the trench at the front and back of the house, storing finds in containers awaiting washing and identification by "experts." The items include intriguing crockery shards, a button, iron nails and hinges. The Society will purchase archaeological display boxes.



While sifting, Bob and Al located two 9" x 12" large slate stones in front of the front door panels about 1' deep that appear to be support stones for an older, smaller porch. They prepared a location diagram: the stones will be left in place against future decisions about the building front, although they will be covered once the front foundation sifting is completed. Bob and Al also recorded the below the surface water valve position, identified by pipe markers, for future work.

The size of the dumpster placed by Ken Betz at the house has sparked speculation as to how much will be removed as the house is structurally stabilized. The plan includes supporting the first and second floors, repairing second-floor joists, and engineered jacking to ease adjustment of the existing structure and minimize damage to wall and ceiling surfaces. Stay tuned!