

The

# Orangetown Crier

News from the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives

WINTER 2011/12

## ORANGETOWN

the new book from the Orangetown Museum

As the ever-present motto of our town reminds us, Orangetown is rich in history. And after just finishing a new, 128-page book on the story of our town, we here at the museum believe it more strongly than ever.

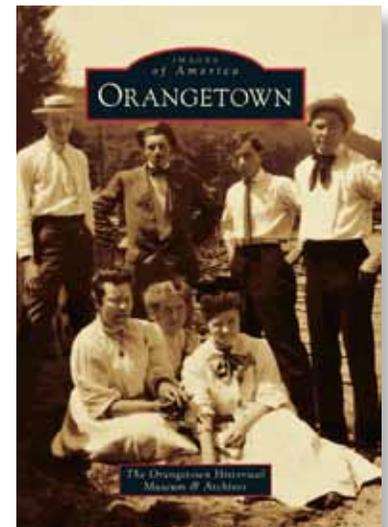
The book is appropriately called *Orangetown*, and it presents our history from the 17th-century farms and settlements through the changes brought about nearly 300 years later with the building of the Tappan Zee Bridge. Researched and written by museum director Mary Cardenas and writer Paul Clark, and generously sponsored by the Friends of the Orangetown Museum, the book is now off press as part of Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series.

Arcadia is a nationally known publisher of local histories as told primarily through vintage photographs and captions. In early 2011, Arcadia published *Suffern*, written by Rockland County Historian Craig Long, as well as *The Nyacks*, compiled by The Historical Society of the Nyacks and the Nyack Library in 2005. But unlike these two fine books, *Orangetown* took on a slightly larger set of challenges. *Suffern*, for instance, dealt with one community. *The Nyacks* covered four. *Orangetown*, on the other hand, entails the stories of ten distinct communities; the six hamlets of Blauvelt, Orangeburg, Palisades/Snedens Landing, Pearl River, Sparkill and Tappan, as well as the four villages of Grand View, Nyack, Piermont and South Nyack.

But of the many challenges we encountered, and there were several, the first was perhaps the trickiest: finding and deciding which photograph would appear on the book's cover. Given the distinct and varied stories of each hamlet and village, which single image could encapsulate the collective story of Orangetown? But after searching through thousands of images, we found and chose the 1903 photo of seven young visitors at Fort Comfort Beach in Piermont you see above. In the process of choosing that photo, we also sought and selected the more than 200 photos, postcards, maps and other images included in *Orangetown*.

They were, in all, daunting, fun, but enlightening challenges. And thanks to the many generous and insightful residents of Orangetown who helped and advised us, and shared with us their personal anecdotes and photos, we accomplished what we set out to and discovered some hidden historical riches along the way.

—Paul Clark



After researching for months through thousands of photos, we selected this image for the cover of *Orangetown*. It portrays seven young visitors enjoying a day at Fort Comfort Beach in Piermont, in 1903. The scene personifies what Orangetown had become at the turn of the 20th century: a bright, modern and energetic place known not only for its imposing natural beauty, but also its industry, inventiveness and the same forward-looking optimism that still embodies the spirit of Orangetown today.



### **BLAUVELT** *Camp Bluefields ca. 1915*

YWCA Camp for young working girls from New York City. Charging \$3.50 for a week's vacation of sleeping in tents and engaging in a variety of activities, the camp adhered to a regimented program. The girls were required to wear uniforms of bloomers and middie blouses, and the start of activities was signaled by bugles. (Courtesy OMHA.)

## Searching photos ---- ---- Counting words

In addition to the challenges posed in finding and narrowing down our photo choices for the book (some hamlets and villages, we discovered, were better documented photographically than others, and some photos had maintained their visual quality more successfully over the years than others), we were also bound by publisher guidelines when it came to the quantity of text. Photo captions, for instance, were limited to 70 words. And each of the individual hamlet and village histories we composed to introduce each of the book's 10 chapters were limited to 350 words. Interesting tasks to say the least. Needless to say, we chose our photos, and our words, carefully.

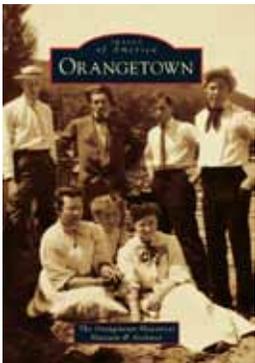
In writing captions and other text, we consulted many books, newspapers and other printed sources, and spoke at length with people whose Orangetown lives and experiences spanned several decades. We searched through the archives here at the Orangetown Museum, as well as the Historical Society of Rockland County, several local libraries, private collections and online archives. In all, we viewed and sorted through photos of Blauvelts and Harings... streets and houses... sloops and steamboats... firemen and police... factories and farms... churches and cemeteries... Camp Shanks and soldiers... families and festivals... horses and cars... trains and train stations... stores and schools... rivers and streams... and bridges, buildings and other depictions of items and events of historic importance, as well as scenes of everyday life.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

by Mary Cardenas

1. Almost 100 trains traversed Orangetown in the 1930s on three passenger lines—the Pascack, the West Shore and the Erie – to and from New Jersey. Many of the passengers went into New York by ferry.
2. The large brick building in Piermont by the Sparkill Creek known as “the Silk Mill,” formerly housed a general store on the first floor and a library on the second floor.
3. In 1914 and 1915 the Vitagraph Moving Picture Company made movies in Tappan on Main Street using residents as extras.
4. In 1900, the earliest commercially produced baby food was produced in Tappan. It was called “Cereo.” Other products for mothers and growing children were also produced here. The house in which these products were made can still be seen.
5. Tappan was home to several benevolent organizations which include the Salvation Army and the German Masonic Lodge, initiating a tradition of service to the local community.
6. In 1910, the New York National Guard bought land on Clausland Mountain that was used for training. It later became a summer camp for young working girls who came from the city.
7. Pearl River had mussels in the “Muddy Brook” that contained pearls. The community came to be known as “Pearl River,” not “Muddy Brook.”
8. Sparkill was a busy intersection for freight and passengers on the Erie Railroad which connected Piermont to Dunkirk in Western New York.
9. A ferry between Snedens Landing and Dobbs Ferry ran almost continuously for 217 years. Service ended in 1946.
10. 123 houses and businesses were sacrificed during the construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge, which destroyed a good part of South Nyack.

**2012** marks the 20th Anniversary of the Orangetown Historical Museum & Archives. Our book, *Orangetown*, kicks off this celebratory year. **WE ARE ORANGETOWN**, our exhibit opening on April 21st at the DePew House, is a closer look at the six hamlets, four river villages and a small portion of Nanuet that comprise Orangetown. Through photography, poetry, historical documents and beloved mementoes, we will further explore our town's rich history.



Get your own signed copy of *Orangetown* here! at the Isaac DePew House, 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg, NY 10962.

**\$23.83** (price includes tax)

Or let us mail it to you: please send a check payable to Friends of the Orangetown Museum.

**\$25.00** (price includes tax & shipping)

## JOIN US!

Mary Cardenas, *Town Historian* and author of *Orangetown* for Book Events at:



The Tappan Library, March 8<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.  
93 Main Street, Tappan NY



The Nyack Library, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:30 pm.  
59 South Broadway, Nyack NY



The Pearl River Library, April, date to follow  
80 Franklin Ave., Pearl River, NY

Or tune your radio to WRCR, 1300 AM at 10:10 on the morning of February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to hear Mary Cardenas talk about *Orangetown* and local history on *Crossroads of Rockland History*.



### TAPPAN *Main Street*

Tappan's 18th-century town center remains as distinctive today as it did in 1910. The Dutch Reformed Church is still prominent, and the Casparus Mabie House, built in 1753 and rebuilt after 1897, is today's '76 House. It was in the church built here in 1716 that Maj. John André was tried and convicted of treason. And, it was in the Mabie House that he awaited execution by hanging on a nearby hill in 1780. (Courtesy HSRC.)

### PEARL RIVER

*Erie Station Plaza and Dexter Folder Company*

Talbot C. Dexter moved his Dexter Folder Company into the former Braunsdorf factory in 1894. A prolific inventor in his own right, Dexter's patented automatic folding machines not only changed the way newspapers were folded and assembled but books and magazines as well. Dexter also produced printing equipment and precision material for the military during World War II. After years of having operated under various names and owners, it closed in 1972. (Courtesy HSRC.)

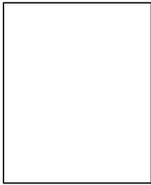




196 Chief Bill Harris Way  
Orangeburg, New York 10962



Tel. (845) 398-1302  
www.orangetownmuseum.com



☛ at The DePew House  
196 Chief Bill Harris Way  
Orangeburg, New York  
*Office, Archives by Appointment*  
(845) 398-1302  
Museum Closed.  
We are installing  
**WE ARE ORANGETOWN**  
*Opening April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012*

☛ at The Salyer House  
213 Blue Hill Road  
Pearl River, New York  
*A Spy in Our Midst,*  
*Our Dutch Sandstone Houses &*  
*At Home in Orangetown*  
Permanent Exhibit: Hours by appointment  
(845) 398-1302

THIS WINTER AND SPRING:



**WE ARE ORANGETOWN:** Opening at the DePew House, 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg, NY, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2012. There are six hamlets and four river villages that together, create Orangetown. Independently they speak to our nation's growth and development along "America's river" – the Hudson. Together they verify the claim – **Rich in History**. This multimedia exhibit will present a historical snapshot of our town. Open through November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012.



**Antiques & Collectibles Sale:** Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 10 am – 4 pm, Rain Date, Sunday, May 20<sup>th</sup>. Presented by **The Friends of the Orangetown Museum**, A NY Heritage Weekend Event – the Museum will be open free of charge. Antiques • Fine Collectibles • Jewelry • Toys • Decorative Arts • Fine Arts • Furniture. At the **DePew House**, 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg, NY



**Friends of the Orangetown Museum Annual Dinner**  
June, 2012.  
Join us to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the publication of **Orangetown** and honor County Historian, Craig Long. A festive dinner and historical presentation of interest is planned.

THE ORANGETOWN HISTORICAL MUSEUM & ARCHIVES  
Mary Cardenas, MUSEUM DIRECTOR • Elizabeth Skrabonja, MUSEUM CURATOR  
The Orangetown Historical Museum & Archives was founded in 1992 to acquire, preserve and exhibit objects which reflect primarily the history of the Town of Orangetown. The Museum's additional, but not lesser mission is to document, research, promote and publicize the town's rich, historical heritage of the town for the people of Orangetown.



Andrew Stewart, SUPERVISOR  
Thomas Diviny, Tom Morr, Dennis Troy and Paul Valentine, COUNCILMEN

FRIENDS OF THE ORANGETOWN MUSEUM  
Your membership in the Friends of the Orangetown Museum helps to collect and preserve the history of Orangetown. Members will receive notices of programs and events as well as free admission to the Museum's special exhibits and events. The Museum is a 501 (C) (3) organization and all donations are tax deductible.

STUDENT/SENIOR \$10 SINGLE \$15 FAMILY \$20  
LIFE MEMBER \$100 CORPORATE \$250