

FALL 2013



as Major John Andre

## Harold Jeffrey Keahon

### HIS STORY – AS HE MIGHT HAVE TOLD IT

by Anne Phyllis Pinzow

Board Member, Friends of the Orangetown Museum,  
Staff Reporter, 'Our Town'



as Mary Haring

*Everyone quiets their chatter as the tall familiar figure enters the dining room where the Friends of the Orangetown Museum are holding their annual event.*

*Harold Jeffrey Keahon, who in life played many a historic character for this group, since 2001 injected a taste of the times, and the person's own feelings and thoughts into the retelling of the life and contributions made by the figure.*

*But tonight, Jeffrey's attire is a surprise as he is wearing a contemporary suit, no wig, no make-up and he is not surreptitiously carrying any notes. Tonight Jeffrey is portraying a very special person who in later years will have been marked down in the annals of Orangetown's history as one who has devoted his life to serving the community and helping others. That life has helped to shape the Orangetown into what it is today.*

*Jeffrey, portraying himself, begins his presentation.*

It was in May of 2001 that Catherine Dodge brought me into the fold of the Friends of the Orangetown Museum and it was a good thing they did because they needed help and Catherine knew that I was not shy about telling people what they ought to do. They had to expand their membership so I told them to start a newsletter which worked remarkably well.

I also would donate money from time to time, and in 2009 I presented a check for \$500 to the winner of an art contest I sponsored on the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the Hudson River. At the presentation I portrayed Henry Hudson at Cornetta's restaurant.

He was hardly the first historical figure I portrayed. It was



Jeffrey Keahon at the opening of the museum's exhibit: 'Orangetown - Edward Hopper's Backyard' on May 14th, 2011

PHOTO: Joseph Barbieri

when I played Major Andre some years ago, explaining how I was myself betrayed by that Yankee turn-coat, Benedict Arnold and then captured and tried as a spy because of the advice Arnold gave me, to cover my uniform.

I told another board member that I would get so involved in the papers and documents I was reading about the person, I'd feel as if I were channeling him. Among the

other historical figures I played were Montgomery Maze and Edward Hopper, and not to give short shrift to the ladies, Mary Haring.

I've been asked to describe myself. Well, I liked to come across as an unrepentant curmudgeon who insisted on seeing

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# The Children of Shanks Village Look Back

A collective of forward thinking adults striving to achieve a common goal.

One could say that this is a definition of the essence of **Shanks Village** – but actually, it describes the recent get-together at the museum, ‘*Shanks for the Memories – the Children of Shanks Village*’. General scholarship concerning the war time phenomenon that was Camp Shanks has concentrated on the veterans and their personal stories. What the museum attempted to do – and this was a ‘first’ as far as we know – was to reach out to some of the thousands of children who were born or were raised in the former army barracks when it morphed into Shanks Village. Like the legendary town ‘Brigadoon’, Shanks Village enjoyed a brief and unique moment that lives on not physically, but in the memories of those who were there.

It was during our spring ‘Antique & Collectibles Sale’ that I met Bobbi Chertak, librarian at the Orangeburg Library, idling in front of our Shanks Village scrim. Her interest – and the surprise appearance of two Shanks Village children, Miriam Hsia and Marius Behr – contributed towards planning a reunion. We were not sure what, if anything to expect, and were rewarded with a standing room only crowd. Some of the take-away from the afternoon was an overwhelming feeling of nostalgia. Laughter ensued as memories of baths in the sink, broken down space heaters and crowded classrooms were shared. Everyone acknowledged that times were tough, but the unique communal



PHOTOS: Elizabeth Skrabonja

Marius and Leonard Behr flanking a displayed photo of their mother overseeing a group of children, (the brothers included) in a Shanks Village sandbox.

atmosphere of Shanks left the ‘kids’ with a lesson that neighbors and friendships were important.

As their parents were trying to patch together a new life after the trying war years, everyone was on a new page in Shanks Village. Veterans became students, war brides became mothers and Dr. Spock’s child care book was on everyone’s shelf. The Village boasted a renowned child care center, community church serving various faiths, a newspaper, theatre group, car pool and co-op store. Everyone knew your business, and everyone cared. This feeling of camaraderie was still apparent within the group, a lesson learned from growing up in the barracks that became a village. *EKS*

# Double Dutch



The museum recently helped an interesting pair of researchers from Holland. Tony and Antje de Bruin came to us by way of our friends, Frances and Ralph Blauvelt. Their specialty intrigued us – they transcribe

early Dutch manuscripts for the National Archive in Holland. Of particular interest to us was the knowledge that the very early Dutch experience in ‘New Netherland’ is well documented, but what happened to these ancestors afterwards is markedly less accessible. We arranged for a meeting at the Dutch Reformed Church where Tony and Antje were able to access valuable material. On the Blauvelt trail, George Blauvelt visited us from Colorado. The Association of Blauvelt Descendants (ABD) has made significant headway in establishing a website for genealogists. George will also be assessing archival material with the professional assistance of our Registrar, Joe Barbieri.

## Harold Jeffrey Keahon *continued from page 1*

the bottom line. I never managed to do that successfully because I could never take myself too seriously. However curmudgeon that I wanted to be, I didn't take anyone around me that seriously either.



Mary Cardenas, Museum Director awarding ‘Friends’ Board Member Jeffrey Keahon with a Certificate of Appreciation during our annual dinner at the 1776 House in 2012.

As you can tell, I always liked to hear myself talk and those who liked me knew I had the most interesting things to say. Those who didn't like me knew that what I had to say was probably something they didn't want to hear.

Another thing about me, I never wanted to outstay my welcome and so I bid you all good day.

As Jeffrey leaves the room, the diners all rise to give him a standing ovation. We will miss you Jeffrey, for all the characters you played, but mostly for yourself.

Jeffrey Keahon; philosopher-historian, visionary board member, supporter, friend. His inspirational presence will be missed but not forgotten by the Orangetown Museum. His legacy; keeping history alive – we can only hope to continue in his honor. EKS

You are cordially invited to join us at our  
Annual Holiday Open House

## It's A Small World

At the historic Salyer House,  
213 Blue Hill Road  
Pearl River, NY



Four Fabulous Sundays in December  
the 1st, 8th, 15th, & 22nd • 1–4 pm  
Admission: Your Donation

PHOTO: Joseph Barbieri

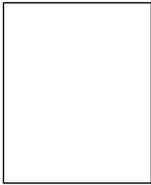
This beloved annual event will be enhanced even more with the addition of Alice Reis's International Doll Collection. Her beautiful dolls of many lands will be displayed throughout the Salyer House set against period decorations and holiday greens. With the Christmas tree, handmade garlands, poinsettias and snowflakes enhancing our historic homestead – a cup of mulled cider and spice cookies will complete the perfect holiday celebration. What better way to mark the season with your family than with a visit to our local past? The museum's permanent exhibits – *A Spy in Our Midst: Major John Andre* and *Our Dutch Sandstone Houses* will be on view, presented with holiday flair. Friends, neighbors, scout and tour groups encouraged!



- DECEMBER 1:** Musical Performance by ‘Harmony on the Hudson,’ a four part a capella harmony ensemble, at 2 pm
- DECEMBER 8:** Musical Performance by the 12-member singing ensemble ‘The Music Makers’ from 2–3 pm, (guitar, keyboard, sax and drum accompaniment)
- DECEMBER 15:** Holiday Favorites sung by Alice Ryan from 2–3 pm
- DECEMBER 22:** Santa will be in attendance from 1–4 pm! Come and enjoy an old fashioned Christmas!



196 Chief Bill Harris Way  
 Orangeburg, New York 10962  
 Tel. (845) 398-1302  
 www.orangetownmuseum.com



☛ The DePew House  
 196 Chief Bill Harris Way  
 Orangeburg, New York  
*Office, Archives by Appointment (845) 398-1302*  
 Museum Closed.  
 We are installing  
**AN ORANGETOWN SCRAPBOOK**  
*Opening April, 2014*

☛ 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

*Holiday Open House – Four Fabulous Sundays!*

THIS WINTER AND SPRING:



**Holiday Open House – It's A Small World!** Four Fabulous Sundays in December – the 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd from 1 – 4 pm at the Historic Salyer House, 213 Blue Hill Road, Pearl River, NY . An amazing international collection, holiday décor and mulled cider await you at our beloved homestead. Musical accompaniment and Santa included! Take a break from the holiday rush with a trip to our collective past: Admission: your donation.



**Get the book – ORANGETOWN.** Discover 300 years of local history! Pick it up at the DePew House, price: \$23.83 or let us mail it to you, price: \$25.00 (price includes shipping & handling) Make your check payable to *Friends of the Orangetown Museum* and mail to the museum at 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg NY 10962.



**An Orangetown Scrapbook** opening mid April at the DePew House.  
*(skrap'book')* n. a book of blank pages for pasted clippings, pictures and souvenirs; memory book.  
 This exhibit will showcase scrapbooks and collections, be they memorabilia or photographs that together, interpret our collective past. Open through November, 2014.



**Antiques & Collectibles Sale:** Saturday, May 17, 2014, 10 am – 4 pm  
 The museum will be open free of charge! Enjoy a beautiful Fall day with some fabulous Antiques, Fine Collectibles, Jewelry, Toys, Decorative Arts, Furniture, Fine Arts & Ephemera. Table Rental for Dealers is \$25.  
 At the **DePew House** 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg NY. Please call (845) 398-1302 for further information.

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