

The

Orangetown Crier

News from the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives

WINTER 2017

Finding (More Than) NEW NETHERLAND

by Marissa Klaver

The following is a part of the preface to a comprehensive research project on the local preservation and promotion of Dutch-American history and heritage by Marissa Klaver. Our museum was one of the choice institutions chosen for review by this young scholar, and beams a spotlight on a caveat of New York history often overlooked.

These pages are the result from a research project I conducted during my internship at the Press and Culture Department of the Netherlands Consulate General in New York. It took six months, hours of digging into the unknown, days of visiting peculiar and unexpected places and infuriating nights with feelings of doubt and misdirection. However, every time I wanted to throw my laptop out of the window, I quickly realized that I was fortunate enough to walk the paths that remain hidden and unexpected to most. In many ways, this project was not just a professional but also a personal dive into a forgotten chapter of my nation's colonial past. Even though I worked on Dutch American history before, the rural grounds of New York were unexplored lands for me as well. Therefore, it came as a pleasant surprise that those Dutch pioneers, seafarers, scoundrels, farmers, fortune seekers and everything in between, whom crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the 17th century are not yet forgotten by everyone. Driving through the land I recognized from historical maps, reading local accounts, peeking into colonial households and meeting today's Dutch descendants and their neighbors felt like New Netherland is the kind of 'Narnia' you can actually still reach.

Molly Sneden:

by Colleen Moriarty

The Loyalist who Ferried Martha Washington

The small hamlet of Palisades by the Hudson River has had many names over the years: Dobbs Ferry, Rockland, and Paramus, but perhaps the most popular and long-lasting of these names was Sneden's Landing. The name Sneden's Landing denotes the importance of the ferry the Sneden family operated on the Hudson River from the mid-eighteenth century up until the twentieth century. Molly Sneden was perhaps the most historically influential and controversial of the Sneden family members who operated the ferry.

It was Molly, who introduced the Sneden family to their future trade. Molly was the daughter of John and Abigail Dobbs, who ran a ferry business in Westchester in what became known as Dobbs Ferry. (Before the Revolutionary War, the name Dobbs Ferry was used to refer to the Westchester town, the family's ferry, and Sneden's Landing.) Molly married Robert Sneden and moved to the Rockland side of the Hudson. Molly began supplementing her family's income by operating the ferry herself. Some time before 1756, Molly's husband passed away. In that year, industrious Molly was granted a license to open a tavern. After the Revolutionary War, the area where she lived and worked became known as Sneden's Landing.

There are several myths surrounding Molly Sneden, the most incredible one involves Martha Washington. Molly is said to have ferried Martha Washington across the Hudson River in December 1775. Martha was to meet her husband, General George Washington, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The future first lady was warned to avoid New York City as it was a hub of loyalist activity. In Martha's attempt to avoid loyalists, she was delivered into the hands of one of Orangetown's most notorious Tories, Molly Sneden. However, despite Molly's political leanings Molly safely ferried Martha and her retinue across the Hudson and the two supposedly stopped for tea at Molly's tavern. The reason Molly Sneden agreed to ferry the wife of the Commander of the American troops across the Hudson to safety is lost to history. The widow was known to have some outstanding debts, so money may have been the motivating factor.



Molly and four of her five sons were loyalists. Her son, John, was a patriot. Dennis, James, William, and Samuel Sneden all refused to sign the General Association which all free men were asked to sign. This refusal marked the brothers as loyalists to the crown. Molly, as a woman, was not required to sign. As a result the Committee of Orange County issued them an order on July 29, 1776 that as enemies of America to cease the ferry operation. Despite the order, the Sneden family continued their ferry operation.

During the Revolutionary War, Molly Sneden lived with her son Dennis in a white frame house which is still standing today though it has been largely rebuilt. This house is part of another Molly Sneden legend. A British soldier was being pursued by patriots, so Molly Sneden hid him in her house. She put him in a chest and placed pans of cream to rise on the chest. When the American soldiers came to her house she offered them as much milk as she had as long as they did not disturb the pans of cream. Molly's ingenuity saved the British soldier and that night she ferried him across the river to safety.

After the Revolutionary War, the four Tory sons, like many loyalists, moved to Nova Scotia. The patriot son, John, came in control of all the family's property. Though unlike most loyalists whose land was confiscated and were never reimbursed, John paid his brothers for the land. Molly Sneden, despite her loyalist sympathies, stayed in Orangetown. Molly may have been on the losing end of the War, but she left a lasting legacy with her ferry. One of Molly's grandsons, George Washington Sneden, was named after the husband of the woman she famously ferried across the Hudson. So the loyalist woman's mark in Orangetown was ironically left by her patriot descendants and the memories of her moment with Martha Washington.

Molly would live to the age of 101, dying on January 31, 1810. You can still visit her grave at Palisades Cemetery, though the original headstone has been replaced.

IMAGE: Mrs. Martha Washington by Rembrandt Peale (based on his father's 1795 likeness of Mrs. Washington), Ca. 1850, OASC www.metmuseum.org

AN INTERN'S PERSPECTIVE:

No Day Is the Same

by Emily Clark



Here at the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives, being an intern, you quickly learn that no one day is the same as the last. Every day is different, whether it be the numerous individuals who are here at the museum volunteering their time daily or the different objects and documents that are brought in to be archived, there is never a dull day at the museum. As an intern who began my work here in September I have handled many unique objects that have been brought to the museum. It is fascinating to me that many people may not realize the amount of history that an object can hold.

One of these many objects is an antique cash register. Produced in 1910, this National Cash Register is made entirely of brass. Compared to the dull registers we see in stores nationwide today, this particular register has an intricate design that is repeated throughout the entire piece. The brand, National, is embossed across the cash drawer in an elegant font. This register was from Mel's Army-Navy Center, right over in Pearl River, making it special to those who may have known Mel personally.

Another interesting object that I was able to handle was an antique telephone from the early 1900s. This American Electric Co. hand-crank phone is made of an oak case, brass plates, and steel holders. It is very sturdy, and has aged well for a phone over a century old. Inside the case was where all the electric wires and such rested. In researching all the names of companies throughout the case I discovered one, Western Electric Co, based in Chicago was quite unique. An interesting fact about this company that caught my attention is that in 1984 the company was divided into various components of AT&T, a company that is used by millions today.

Objects are not the only materials brought to us here at the museum. A countless amount of documents are brought in regularly. Most of these documents are in regards to lifelong residents of Orangetown. The documents brought in consist of anything from incredibly accurate sketches of train engines by an individual who worked with the railroad for over 40 years, to an article about a journalist of the Journal News who unintentionally found escaped convicts from Singh Singh right here in Rockland County. These documents hold so much history that they allow us to see the lives of these individuals from their birth certificates, their education, and everything in between till the end of their story. These papers tell us as researchers a story about the ups and downs of real residents of Orangetown that allows for us to be able to grasp their personalities and relate to history on a personal level.

The Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives is filled with a vast amount of history that one can learn an incredible amount from. Everyday there are new items being brought in that can illustrate the history this town has seen as early as 1686, when Orangetown was founded, to the present day. Every day is a day of history and we all get to be a part of it. While we are living our own history, we are lucky enough to get to see into the history of others on a daily basis.

IMAGE: Emily Clark with the 1910 National Cash Register from Mel's Army-Navy Store in Pearl River

All Laced Up

by Regina Haring

In the spring of 2014 the museum opened an exhibit titled "Orangetown Scrapbook" which featured photographs, collectibles and ephemera from several centuries of life in Orangetown.

Knowing of my interest in all things fiber-related and especially lace, museum director Mary Cardenas invited me to look at the Lillian Rose Perry collection of lace which had been given to the museum in 2005, and to choose samples to be part of the Orangetown Scrapbook exhibit.

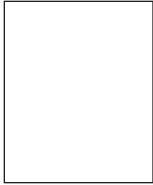
Thus began a most enjoyable relationship with the museum which is into its third year. Lace is defined as an openwork fabric which begins with a strand or strands of thread. The collection consists of about 450 pieces of lace which may have been made with a crochet hook, knitting needles, a tatting shuttle, bobbins, a needle and thread - or by a machine. All but bobbin lace are made with a single strand of thread. Bobbin lace is made with a varying number of pairs of bobbins and has more in common with weaving.

Bobbin lace is my personal interest, and it has been a great delight to realize that over twenty pieces of the bobbin lace in the collection were made by hand. I have belonged to the Metro Chapter of the International Organization of Lace for many years, and we commonly estimate that it takes about an hour to make a square inch of lace - so we have a great deal of appreciation for the work involved in making these beautiful pieces.

IMAGE: Duchesse or Bobbin Lace, Lillian Rose Perry Lace Collection, Ca. 1900



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considering preservation
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at The Salyer House
 213 Blue Hill Road
 Pearl River, New York
 opening in October:
LOYAL TO THE CROWN:
*British Art from the
 George Way Collection*
 Permanent Exhibit:
 Hours by appointment
 (845) 398-1302

UPCOMING :



Antiques & Collectibles Sale: Saturday, May 20th & Saturday October 7th, 10 am - 4 pm
 The Museum will be open free of charge! Enjoy a day on the beautiful grounds of the museum with some fabulous antiques, fine collectibles, jewelry, toys, decorative arts, furniture & 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.



Secret Garden: September, date TBA. A beautiful, formal garden once thrived behind the Historic Salyer House. Designed in the early 1990's by historian Paul Melone, its former glory is coming back due to efforts led by museum intern, Emily Clark. Check back with us as we plan a children's event to celebrate the return of this outdoor jewel to our museum complex.



Loyal to the Crown : British Art from the George Way Collection: Opening Saturday, October 14, 2016 at the Historic Salyer House, 213 Blue Hill Rd., Pearl River, NY . Loyalist or Patriot? This pressing question vexed our earliest residents. The might and glory of England presented a formidable draw - as will be presented through the magnificent collection of art and artifacts from the collector George Way. With paintings, objects and furniture from the 17th and 18th century, this impressive exhibit proclaims: 'God save the King!'



VIDEO: In case you missed the museum's groundbreaking exhibition 'From Holland to Here' we are able to provide you with another chance to see it. By visiting the museum's website www.orangetownmuseum.com and clicking on the VIDEO tab in the upper header, you can access our YouTube video. Collector George Way with Curator Elizabeth Skrabonja and Museum Director Mary Cardenas recollect this important show.

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
 Jerry Bottari, Thomas Diviny, Denis 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.

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