

The

Orangetown Crier

News from the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives

SPRING 2013

A PLACE TO BUILD THE FUTURE



Recalling a decade of great change – from Shanks Village to the construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge and the Palisades Interstate Parkway – the world had changed and taken Orangetown with it.

Tuesdays 10 – 2 pm Sundays 1 – 4 pm

OPENING APRIL 20TH AT THE DEPEW HOUSE

In the immediate post-war years Orangetown presented to the nation a case study of the dreams, ambitions and optimism that define this important decade. Awakening after the fog of the war years, local residents found themselves in a still semi-rural community. 'Camp Shanks', the secret military base built in Orangeburg, once called 'last stop USA' became the first stop for a social experiment. The army barracks turned into housing for veterans and their families and served as a quick interface back into society. Family life thrived; the babies born in the newly named 'Shanks Village' needed new schools to accommodate them.

The Building Boom that accompanied the Baby Boom in Orangetown encompassed transportation as well. Projects postponed due to the war were embraced in earnest. The Palisades Interstate Parkway with its magnificent vistas provided a suitable backdrop for commuters in shiny new cars and, despite the protestations of some local Grand-Viewers, the Tappan Zee Bridge rose to cross the Hudson. These new thoroughfares called for the breakdown of mass transportation in the region with the abandonment of ferry and rail lines that were relied upon for decades. In this era of expansion – what was new was more highly valued than the old as cultural mores, dress, music and tastes changed dramatically. When in 1955 the United States Government offered 'A Fabulous Investment Opportunity' in the sale of the nearly

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A PLACE TO BUILD THE FUTURE
Orangetown
 1950s

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700 acres of land that comprised Shanks Village, houses went up with names like 'The Tappan' and 'Orangeburg'. Danforth Toan, a local architect who worked on the Prel Park development wrote, "Everyone who has worked on this project has aimed at providing quiet, relaxed clusters of houses interspersed with generous open spaces, which add up to a good neighborhood in the old fashioned sense." Between 1950 and 1960 the number of U.S. homeowners increased by over nine million, reaching an incredible 32.8 million.

For many young families, Orangetown was the place to be. Small town life in Pearl River was idealized in the 1955 TV series 'Norby' shot at Pearl River; local residents were delighted to see their town featured on the small screen. As late as 1946 there were only 7,000 television sets in use throughout the nation but by 1960 they numbered over 50 million. Helen Hayes, the great actress and resident of Nyack hosted 'A Night With The Stars' at the Rockland State Hospital Auditorium to benefit the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, Rockland County March of Dimes. Her 'Polio Ball' featured such renowned performers as Katherine Cornell, Carol Channing, Burgess Meridith and Lillian Gish. Polio's devastation was being fought at the same time in earnest by the researchers at the local Lederle Laboratories; they would eventually come to produce the vaccine that would provide long term protection against all known strains of polio. There was, however, some trouble in paradise as Betty Friedan, living in Grand View worked on 'The Feminine Mystique' – a book that sparked the women's movement and encouraged young women to "Resist limiting your own perspectives". The burgeoning youth culture dictated the popularity of drive-ins, sock-hops and a new world view.

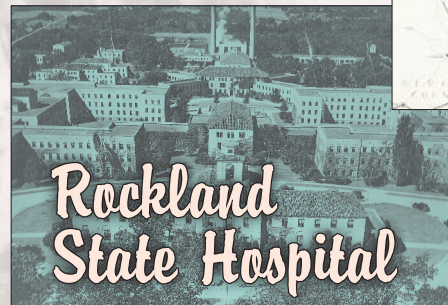
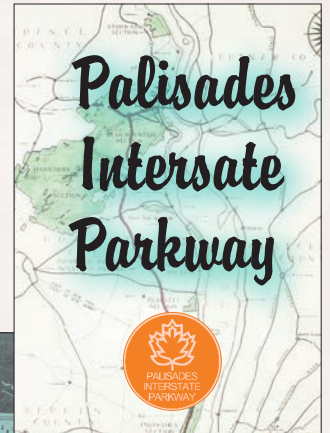
Change was in the air and both Ike and the cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead concurred; Orangetown was the place to build the future. EKS



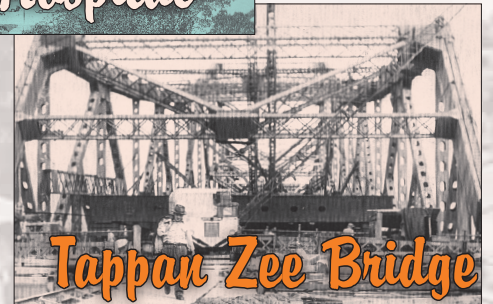
*OHMA, Gutman family, Shanks Village
 photo ca. 1950*

Shanks Village

Lederle



Rockland State Hospital



Tappan Zee Bridge

Education



Opening April 20th
 at the Depew House

The Onderdonk House



The original parcel of land in Piermont, some 320 acres, on which this house is located, was sold by Aurie Smith to Abraham and Garret Onderdonk. The house built c. 1737 was inherited by Isaac, son of Garret Onderdonk in 1768. (Abraham died and left his share of the property to his brother Garret.) Isaac's daughter Catherine inherited the property. She married Charles Haring and their sons Edward and John, would later inherit the house.

This typical Lower Hudson Valley sandstone house was built in several parts beginning in 1737, c. 1810 and c. 1867. The sandstone portion of the house has the typical gable ended roof.

It has been family legend that a skirmish which involved two Onderdonk boys and British soldiers/sailors who came ashore looking for supplies. When the British soldiers/sailors returned to their ship the Vulture, several volleys of cannon were fired at the house; one cannonball struck the house and one struck the well and years later another cannonball was found in the sandy beach in front of the house. This cannonball was donated to the Orangetown Historical Museum.

It was near the site of this house on May 6, 1783, that General Sir Guy Carleton disembarked from the British sloop, Perseverance, and was met by General George Washington. Both generals then headed to the DeWint House where a meal was served and key issues ending the Revolutionary War were discussed.

After almost 276 years, the Onderdonk-Haring House was sold out of the family to new owners who will restore and use this house as their residence. Thankfully, another piece of Orangetown history will be saved.

A Grand Challenge

The gable-roofed neo-Tudor Village Hall in Grand View was designed by architect Anthony de Haven Zink. Built on stone piers and concrete pillars, the large three story clubhouse had a dancing hall, billiards room and guest rooms with an oak beamed main room and impressive fireplace. Over 500 guests attended a dinner party and danced to a live orchestra when it opened on June 5th, 1914. Fifty two yachts were anchored offshore, representing yacht clubs up and down the Hudson. During the depression that followed World War I the club fell upon hard times and was eventually purchased by the Village on September 22, 1928. During World War II it was used as headquarters for Coast Guard Flotilla #109. Rose Kean donated the bell from the Wayside Chapel to be used to signal blackouts. Later the Sea Scouts used the big dock left over from the Yacht Club as a mooring for their boat, the S.S. Tappan Zee. Sadly, this whole dock was destroyed on March 10, 1948 during a severe ice storm. *(Taken from 'Gems on the Hudson – the Grand Views' by Terry Tally)*

Over the years the building has suffered, but never as significantly as from the onslaught of Hurricane Sandy on October 25th, 2012. The storm destroyed both upper and lower porches, the stone pillars were severely compromised and several



feet of water invaded the lower level. According to Jack Geist, former Mayor of Grand View, the downstairs toilet actually fell into the river when the floor collapsed. Village offices have been relocated to the Piermont Community Center on Hudson Terrace for the duration. Discussions with FEMA are ongoing concerning reconstruction.

In 2014 the Grand View Village Hall building will be 100 years old. It is our hope that Orangetown will be able to celebrate this centennial with a re-opening of one of our most magnificent public buildings.



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

Opening April 20th

Orangetown/1950s: A Place To Build The Future

A building, baby and business boom exploded in Orangetown. See how life changed – the optimism, idealism and hula-hoops; Ike and Margaret Mead concurred; it was the place to build the future.

Admission: your donation

☛ 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
Hosting in May: The South Orangetown Middle School 7th Grade Class
(845) 398-1302

THIS WINTER AND SPRING:



Antiques & Collectibles Sale: Saturday, May 18th, 10 am – 4 pm.

The museum will be open free of charge! Enjoy a beautiful spring day with some fabulous Antiques, Fine Collectibles, Jewelry, Toys, Decorative Arts, Furniture, Fine Arts & Ephemera. Table rental for dealers and collectors is \$25.

At the **DePew House**, 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg, NY. Please call (845) 398-1302 for further info.



Orangetown /1950s: A Place to Build the Future. Opening Saturday, April 20th, this exhibit will recall a decade of great change in Orangetown. From Shanks Village, to the construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge and the Palisades Interstate Parkway – life was never quite the same again. From pop culture to politics, come and remember these milestones with us, be it in Mom's kitchen or in the labs that helped to wipe out polio, it was all happening in Orangetown. Exhibit open through November 17th, 2013.



Friends of the Orangetown Museum Annual Dinner. Join us on Sunday, June 2nd at the 1776 House! This year's dinner will conjure up images of the 1950's as Dwight D. Eisenhower makes an appearance by way of Jeffrey Keahon. This year we are honoring a gentleman who makes history happen every day: Rob Norton – for preserving our '76 House with a nod to colonial cuisine in a contemporary context. Tickets are \$55.



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.

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