

The

Orangetown Crier

News from the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives

SUMMER 2017

A Charles II Chair Comes to Orangetown

by George Way

Some background on a special treasure being lent to the Orangetown Museum for the exhibit
'Loyal to the Crown - British Art from the George Way Collection' opening in October



I love collecting 17th century items, especially chairs from the reign of the English King Charles II (1660-1685). And I've long searched for a chair made by Richard Price – 'RP' – a skilled craftsman who was employed by the Carolean

court and made turned walnut chairs for both the royal palaces and the King's royal yacht.

Unlike others working in London – the leading district for fine furniture making – at the time, this royal chairmaker's pieces exhibited certain distinctive features that hold it apart from similar examples. Still, few dealers, or even furniture historians are able to recognize chairs turned out by Price or his contemporaries in the Restoration period, when Charles II came to the throne, replacing the rigid, icy and unhappy Puritanical rule of the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell.

Some years back, I wrote extensively on stamped chairs from that period for 'Art & Antiques Magazine', illustrating the subject with a variety of stamped chairs I'd come upon during years of research. One day, while searching the cellars of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan, I came upon an armchair bearing the initials 'RP' shrouded under sheets. Not only were the curators unaware of its existence, they did not know it matched another chair in the collection of Temple Newsam House in Leeds, England.



Calligraphy, King Charles II, Ca. 1685, George Way Collection

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In the Footsteps of a SPYMASTER

This coming fall the museum is conducting an Amazing Race style Scavenger Hunt following the footsteps of a spymaster - Maj. John Andre. With stops and challenges at local historic sites, young historians from Dominican College will piece together a tale of deception and intrigue. For this history making event, 'Friends of the Orangetown Museum' board member Paul Clark has composed some clever clues to be revealed on site. Also planned with Dominican College is a time-travelling debate: Patriot vs Loyalist - students will consider the challenge to take a chance or play it safe. Molly Sneden was not the only Orangetown resident caught up in both sides of this historic conflict.



Tappan Cemetery

Where Patriots lie
With Loyalists
In ageless
Tappan ground,
Soldiers, slaves
Rich and poor
Everywhere
Are found,
Angels, names
And wisdom
Live on
In silent stone,
To stand testament
And opposite
The Church
Its name intones

DeWint House

It's the Oldest
House in Rockland
Three times
GW's HQ,
Preserved for all
By Masons
To stay 18th
Century new,
1700
By the door
DeWint would
Feel at home,
History here
Is all around
In bucolic
Brick and stone

'76 House

The meeting place
Of Patriots
In Revolution
It's immersed,
Resolutions
Signed here
Washington
Slaked his thirst,
Where André
Awaited hanging
Is today
A dining room,
In Tappan's most
Famous restaurant
And historic
Old saloon

The Manse Barn

On the Village
Church Green
Where the oldest
Parsonage stands,
A vintage red barn
Beside the Manse
Is constantly
In demand,
Services are held here
Concerts and plays
Conferred,
Step inside
Stand on the stage
And let your
Voice be heard

Dutch Reformed Church

Older than
Three centuries
The soul of
Tappantown,
The place where
Faithful gathered
And to this day
Abound,
Baylor's wounds
Were treated here
André tried
And sentenced,
Its steepled beauty
Always will
Define historic
Presence





Professor Christopher Libertini congratulates Museum Director Mary Cardenas and Curator Elizabeth Skrabonja on being inducted into Alpha Xi Gamma, the local chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the National History Honor Society. The ceremony took place in April at Dominican College in Orangeburg.



Also in April, an elegant Wine & Cheese & Poetry event was co-sponsored with the Orangeburg Library. Pictured: Museum Director, Mary Cardenas, Local Flutist, Jacquelyn Drechsler, Orangeburg's Poet Laureate, Rose Marie Raccioppi, Orangeburg Library Director, Laura Wolven & Orangeburg Library Events Coordinator, Lynn Warshavsky.



The annual South Orangetown Middle School tours May 15 - 17 at the historic Salyer House were a great success with the addition this year of Molly Sneden, as presented by museum Collections Manager, Colleen Moriarty. Bob Schelien and Fred Schofer contributed to this yearly right of passage.



An historic occasion for the museum: on April 22nd museum Registrar Joe Barbieri got married to his college sweetheart, Jessie in a beautiful ceremony surrounded by friends and family. The entire museum community wish them both a lifetime of happiness.

A Charles II Chair Comes to Orangetown *(cont. from page 1)*

During this time, I also came across a chair housed in Windsor castle, the official residence of Britain's royal family, illustrated in one of my reference books relating to early furniture. The piece, in the collection of Queen Elizabeth II, reminded me of the chairs stamped with Price's initials, so I boldly decided to write to Her Majesty, asking whether she knew if her chair was stamped with any initials.

I sent the Queen a diagram of a chair, noting the area where the initials might appear. It wasn't long before her private secretary wrote back to tell me that the Royal Collection personnel and Her Majesty were unaware of this particular chair's being stamped 'RP' until I brought it to their attention. All the chairs I referenced displayed the same characteristics, which indicated they definitely were made by Richard Price.

This type of chair with barley twist turned frames, carved with crowns and piercing making for a lighter chair, was the most popular style during the late 17th century. Walnut trees planted during the reign of Elizabeth I had grown to maturity by this time, and walnut wood proved efficient for creating fine furniture. Walnut is a softer wood than oak, making it easy to carve and turn. Delicate detail work now could be achieved by master carvers, who would produce some of the finest furniture in England.

Still on the hunt for my own stamped chair, while visiting a friend in Florida this winter I fired up his computer and checked out a well known website. Searching under the furniture heading,

I was nearly bowled over when I spotted an armchair that was simply described as being made of oak. For whatever reason, the dealer hadn't dated the chair, but I immediately recognized it as a Charles II period armchair.

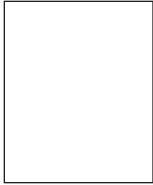
Carefully studying the pictures the owner supplied, I determined it wasn't made of oak, but had been carved out of walnut, which had displaced oak, as the leading timber at the time. The carving was too crisp and detailed to have been done in oak. Looking at it, I realized that had the characteristics of being an 'RP' chair. For starters, the pierced crown on the crest rail was quite large, unlike crowns found on similar period crest rails. Also, the acanthus leaves displayed on the top of such rails are usually flat, while these were somewhat rounded.

I suspected this chair just might be stamped 'RP' but I wasn't going to indicate that to the dealer, who was located in Vancouver, British Columbia. And I knew that British Columbia has strong ties to England, so it might just be possible that an 'RP' chair would be found in this Canadian stronghold of English pride. Since the seller had no idea how old the chair was to begin with, he wasn't asking too much for it, so I snatched it up. A few days later, the chair arrived at Penn Station via a Greyhound Bus, in which it had been stowed with the luggage, courtesy of the bus line's express service.

As expected, the chair was genuine and you will be able to see it on display in the museum's exhibit 'Loyal to the Crown' as a part of my collection.



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 Orangeburg, New York 10962
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 www.orangetownmuseum.com



at The DePew House
 196 Chief Bill Harris Way
 Orangeburg, New York
Office, Archives by Appointment
 (845) 398-1302

Opening October 14th:
LOYAL TO THE CROWN:
British Art from the
George Way Collection

Exhibition hours:
 Tuesdays & Fridays 10 - 2
 Sundays 1 - 4 pm

at The Salyer House
 213 Blue Hill Road
 Pearl River, New York
At Home in
Orangetown

What Was the Tappan
Patent

Permanent Exhibit:
Hours by appointment
 (845) 398-1302

UPCOMING :



Historic Scavenger Hunt - 'In the Footsteps of a Spymaster': On Saturday October 21st look out for Dominican College Students as they scavenge throughout historic Tappan for clues leading to the capture and hanging of Maj. John Andre - the Spy in our midst. Seven teams will seek out seven sites with a grand prize awaiting the swiftest group. Sponsored by The Friends of the Orangetown Museum.



Loyal to the Crown : British Art from the George Way Collection: Opening Saturday, October 14, 2016 at the DePew House, 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg 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 16th and 17th century, this impressive exhibit proclaims: 'God save the King!'



The Orangetown Museum Annual Dinner. Loyalist or Patriot: A rousing repast is guaranteed. Celebrating the museum's accomplishments and our current exhibit. The '76 House is the place, featured speaker, renowned Loyalist scholar, Todd Braisted (guests are encouraged to disagree). Special Catherine Dodge Humanitarian Award presentation to George Way. Sunday, Nov. 12th, 5 pm, '76 House, 110 Main Street, Tappan, NY For ticket information please call the museum at: (845) 398-1302



Debate: PATRIOT vs LOYALIST (what side will you be on?). Open to the public.
 Take a chance or play it safe? This question and more will be considered by members of the Dominican College debate team – transported back to the 18th century. Molly Sneden was not the only Orangetown resident caught up in both sides of this historic conflict. Site, time and date TBA: please contact the museum for 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.



TOWN 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.

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