

The

Orangetown Crier

News from the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives

A Challenging Transcription

By Mary Cardenas

Mr. Henry Rennie has a special skill. It is not everyone that can read the handwriting of clerks who wrote the Supervisors Reports from as far back as 1728. The Orangetown Museum is fortunate to have Henry as a volunteer with a trained eye able to read and decipher the script from the recorded goings on of the *Proceedings in the Board of Supervisors of Orange County 1728 – 1798, Book A*. Every Wednesday he is transported back to the 18th century. The Supervisors met twice a year – spring and fall. They represented the precincts of Haverstraw, Goshen, Minisink and Orangetown, with the precinct of Cornwall added later on. At these meetings accounts were settled with those people who were lodging the Supervisors and boarding their horses, the Commissioners of Highways and the Keeper of the Poor. Treasurers, Constables and Supervisors were paid for their services. Frequently listed are payments to those men that ‘dispatched wolves’ and presented the animal’s head!

The clerk recording the minutes spelled the names of the individuals as he heard them – in other words – the spelling of a person’s name could change from clerk to clerk. No minutes were recorded from 1775 through 1778, the time of our Revolutionary War. The minutes were taken up again on November 29, 1779 at a Supervisor’s meeting in Goshen and the last entry in the book is on October 3rd, 1797 at the New City Court House where Supervisors from Goshen, Warwick, Cornwall, Minisink, Hempstead, Clarkstown, Orangetown and Haverstraw were present. Henry Rennie’s keen sense of history has given new life to what might appear to be mundane in our time. It will be quite a while yet before Henry completes this task – but from all reports, he has been enjoying the journey.

The British a



George Way greeting local loyalists at the DePew House

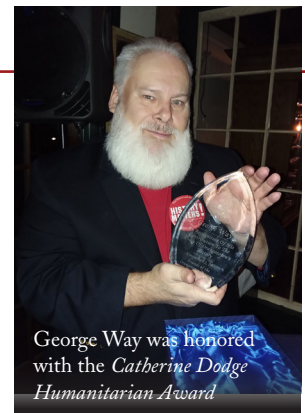
Our season of investigation into all things British has been a fascinating look back to the grandeur of empire. Our exhibit 'Loyal to the Crown' has opened up an historical discourse replete with old/new conflicts. Stay the course or break with tradition? Defy authority or maintain the status quo? Our Orangetown ancestors had these and more dilemmas to face during the heady years of the American Revolution. Considering such questions within the context of our current exhibit has presented a special opportunity for the viewer to become immersed in the story of the British monarchy during the tumultuous years of the 17th century. The reign of Charles I and the ensuing 'troubles' were not forgotten by folks who signed the 'Orangetown Resolutions'. Being able to enter the museum and view the sumptuous collection of art & artifacts from George Way's collection has presented an opportunity to be reminded of what kept citizens – loyal to the crown.

On October 14th *Loyal to the Crown* opened at the DePew House. Scones were served and a British Regiment kept guard outside the DePew House as friends and distinguished guests admired the impressive installation. The combination of carved oak chests and chairs, portraits of Royals from the Elizabethan period on and what are known as 'smalls' – silver coins, bowls and ephemera set quite a scene. Many of the pieces exhibited have never been on display before and present a world class opportunity for scholars and visitors. Of particular interest is the collection of portrait miniatures. Most measuring less than 2" in diameter, these precious images of loved ones or historic figures represent cherished mementoes that have survived generations. As an enhancement to the exhibit we are also presenting our popular display 'A Spy in

Our Midst', retelling the tragic tale of the spymaster, Maj. John Andre. This, along with the storyboard written by historian Todd Braisted detailing 'Colonial Loyalists', rounds our most regal presentation.

Annual Dinner

With 'Keeping History Alive' as our motto, the museum's 14th annual dinner was held on November 12th at the Old '76 House. It was a convivial atmosphere of autumn colors and candles that greeted rabble rousers that were encouraged to – raise a glass to freedom and celebrate the accomplishments of the museum and honor Mr. George Way with the Catherine Dodge Humanitarian Award. Words were also delivered by Colonial Loyalist scholar, Todd Braisted who addressed the question of just who those local loyalists were and what was their motivation.



George Way was honored with the Catherine Dodge Humanitarian Award



Jess Wirth & Joe Barbieri celebrating their first annual dinner as a married couple

With the 50/50 and 'toast to freedom' raffle baskets (thank you Alice Reis!) awarded, guests headed out to reflect on more than just the glories of merry old England.

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In the Footsteps of a Spymaster

On October 21st the museum hosted its very first historic Amazing Race Style Scavenger Hunt – ‘In the Footsteps of a Spymaster’ with students from Dominican College. After an old fashioned pancake breakfast at the Manse, teams visited 7 historic sites in Tappan – The Dutch Reformed Church, DeWint House, Manse Barn, Old Section Cemetery, Tappan Green, Old ’76 House and the Tappan Library. Once on site, the students read a site poem composed by ‘Friends’ Board member Paul Clark and completed a photo challenge to compete to win a cash prize supplied by ‘The Friends of the Orangetown Museum’. Each student received a copy of Dorothy Mellet’s ‘Gravestones of Rockland County’ to commemorate the day. Select photos from the event can be seen on our website. An historic time was had by all!



The Patriots vs The Loyalists

Take a chance or play it safe? Molly Sneden was not the only Orangetown resident caught up in both sides of this conflict. In a dramatic departure for the Dominican College Debate Team – they were entrusted on November 16th with debating the question of staying loyal to the crown – or forming a new republic. The students met at the Old ’76 House – and suited up with period accoutrements to get them truly in the mood provided by the museum. Our panel of judges consisted of Carole LaValle, Mary Cardenas and Marilyn Schauder; the debate team coordinator was Prof. Chris Libertini. And the winner? The Loyalists! Some say that smiles were detected on the faces of the portraits of Charles I and Henrietta Maria that night.

Holiday Open House

All the grandeur of a Downton Abbey Christmas met guests with a cup of hot cider and Father Christmas during three special Sundays in December at the DePew House. These programs were presented in collaboration with the Orangetown Library.



DECEMBER 3RD. Selene Castrovilla, author of *Revolutionary Rogues* brought the Arnold/Andre affair to life with a reading of her book, beautifully illustrated by John O'Brien.

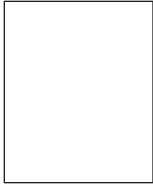
DECEMBER 10TH. Monarchs from England's past grace the walls of the museum's current exhibit. Guests were able to *Learn About the Royals* and enjoy some holiday cheer.

DECEMBER 17TH. *Sunday in the Museum* with George Way's Collection was presented with special flair and historical anecdotes.





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

Opening in October
LOYAL TO THE CROWN:
*British Art from the
 George Way Collection*

Open
 Tuesdays and Fridays
 10 – 2,
 Sundays
 1 – 4
 or by appointment
 Admission free:
 donations accepted

at The Salyer House
 213 Blue Hill Road
 Pearl River, New York

*At Home in
 Orangetown,
 The Tappan Patent*
 Permanent Exhibit:
Hours by appointment

UPCOMING :



Loyal to the Crown : British Art from the George Way Collection. Opening Tuesdays and Fridays 10-2, Sundays 1-4, at the DePew House. 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 century, this impressive exhibit proclaims ‘God save the King!’.



VIDEO. Museum Director Mary Cardenas interviews historian Todd Braisted. Get the lowdown about loyalists in Orangetown and vicinity in the American Revolutionary world. Click on the ‘video’ tab in the upper header of the Orangetown Museum website: www.orangetownmuseum.com



Antiques & Collectibles Sale. The museum will be open free of charge! Enjoy a day on the beautiful grounds of the museum with some fabulous, fine collectibles, jewelry, toys, decorative arts, furniture and ephemera. Table rental antiques for dealers is only \$25! At the DePew House, 196 Chief Bill Harris Way, Orangeburg, NY. Please call (845) 398-1302 for further information. Saturday, May 19th, 10 am – 4 pm

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

Christopher Day, 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