

The

Orangetown Crier

News from the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives

SPRING 2021

Transcribing the Past

For several years the language of the past has permeated the Orangetown Museum. Volunteer Henry Rennie took on the formidable task of transcribing a massive collection of bound, xeroxed (from the original) documents intrinsic to the history of the Town of Orangetown. Comprised of an admixture of copies from 'The Budke Collection of Manuscripts' which are currently housed at the New York Public Library's Manuscript Collection in New York City, these transcriptions offer a rare passport to a lost world. Written with flourishing hand scripted text, mysterious language and creative spelling each page challenged Rennie to 'get into the head' of that 18th and 19th century bureaucrat tasked with recording a document for the ages. Listed are deeds for land transactions, debt obligations from the Court of Common Pleas, estate documents: including wills, probate, inventories, distributions, payment receipts and coveture documents. There is the Tax List for Orangetown, NY for the year 1796 compiled by Abraham G. Blauvelt, Collector, Election Reports for Orangetown from the years 1765-1819 as well as miscellaneous bills of sale, land surveys, school receipts and files from the Council of the Proprietors.

Not all were transcribed due to poor or incomplete images, text written in Dutch or text already transcribed. The original documents were unique testaments to life changing deals, transfers and inheritances; stored and treasured for generations. According to Rennie, "Many of the documents contain little or no punctuation which makes the document difficult to read. The script is often exaggerated in style, extremely small and often barely legible. One document is in 'Old Dutch'. The text is filled with usage of words, phrases and unique spellings which were correct at the time it was written but does not easily lend itself to modern interpretation. Examples are: *behoof* (behoove meaning incumbent on) *enseoffed* (in fee simple) *seisin* (seized meaning possessed) and *disannul* (utterly make void) and many others. The documents

are transcribed as written except with additional punctuation to help the reader and modern spelling for clarity."

Regarding land deeds there is some surprising cartographic language used, such as in the deed of John J. Blauvelt and his wife Catharine, Grantors, to Thomas Blanch, Grantee in 1811. Part of the land granted is described thus: "...*the first of which begins by the Northwest corner of Jacob J. Blauvelt's meadow lot by Tappan Kill from thence running South seven degrees West seventeen chains to a stake standing by Closter Brook then South sixty five degrees and a half West three chains and seven links to a stake standing in a meadow lot of Elizabeth Blauvelt, deceased, then North seven degrees East fifteen chains and thirty five links to said Tappan Kill from thence running up stream along the Kill to a place of beginning, containing five acres and ten rods ...*" Of the wares bequeathed in the will of Claus van Houten to Isaac B & John C van Houten in 1819 are the following practical – yet valuable, items: "*one bell, woolen wheel, half barrel, three barrels, tureen, three barrels, ox chains, post ax, sundries, broad axe, drawing knife, three saws, plains, brush hook, grindstone hammers & wedges..*". When co-signers or witnesses could not read or write, they signed with a mark (generally a large 'X') as in the Bond of Isaac Secor and John Jersey in 1784 where Elisabeth Haring left her mark under 'Sealed and Delivered in the Presence of'. In a letter to the Rockland County Commissioner of Pensions in 1839 Mr. R.I. van Orden in support of John Hutten wrote, "...*I have been informed by a friend that Mr. John Hutten of Clarks Town Rockland County and the State of New York, a soldier of the Revolution is likely to be curtailed in his pension and having a friendly feeling toward the old soldier and knowing the harsh privation and fatigue they had to suffer during the Revolutionary War, I could not refrain writing you on that subject having been acquainted with Mr. Hutton from my youth until the present day ...*"

Being able to read and appreciate these historic documents allows for a unique portal on to the world of our earliest local residents.

EKS

The jewel in the crown of the Orangetown Museum is the Michael Salyer House. Our museum's first home, it fulfilled a long held dream of local historians and history buffs. Situated majestically on a grassy knoll it commands the attention of all who pass by its graceful roof and Dutch sandstone façade. Built in the last quarter of the 18th century the Salyer House was the original home of Michael and Elizabeth Salyer and their four daughters. Since 2003 it has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2008, after extensive renovations it re-opened with a permanent exhibit in three parts. The Salyer House holds memories for many who have visited it as a part of a school group or during our annual Holiday open House; it is currently open by appointment only.

A Spy in Our Midst

Major John André



Vincit Amour Patriae – this motto. 'the love of country conquers' is inscribed on the silver medal awarded to the men who prevented Maj. John Andre from accomplishing an act of espionage that might have altered the outcome of American history. Michael & Elizabeth Salyer, the original inhabitants of our house, would have been keenly aware of the dramatic events surrounding the capture and subsequent execution of Andre in Tappan on October 2nd, 1780. Only a few years before the horrific Baylor Massacre of 1778 had occurred just west of Tappan. American Dragoons were brutally killed by the British as they slept – without heed to mercy for a surrendering foe. In this highly charged and emotional atmosphere where the pursuit of

liberty was dangerous and the war's outcome yet undecided, the Andre affair played a crucial part in our nation's history. History is conflicted as it considers the loss of Andre, a gentleman soldier who faced death as a brave man, leaving many to reflect on the tragedy of war. The exhibit examines this historical dilemma.

STOUGHTON'S LEGACY

by Sarah Konyak



Our homes are museums where we have curated a lifetime of collections of items we deem as meaningful, interesting, useful, and perhaps even valuable to us. When we depart from this world, our collections stay here, and our loved ones are left to decide

what to do with them. On February 12th, 2021, John Stoughton, a local resident, donated a collection of over 62 items dating from the mid-1800s to early the 2000s. At first glance, the Stoughton collection may appear to be a random assortment of unrelated items. We start out with apothecary bottles ~ some from the local area of Orangetown, including a bottle from the Tappan Pharmacy and a Bell-ans bottle with tablets still inside. (Bell-ans was a late-1800s Orangeburg company known for manufacturing pills to remedy indigestion and other maladies.) As we continue examining the collection, we find Domino sugar and cinnamon bottles, Billy beer cans made by Falls City Brewing Company, tomato seeds, a Kodak Brownie camera, a WWII War ration wallet, family photo

albums, daguerreotype images, milk bottles, and draftsman kits along with assorted drafting tools. Researching and cataloging the Stoughton collection has been a fascinating adventure.

Although I am from nearby New Jersey, when I came to Dominican College, I knew little to nothing about the history of Orangetown. Through the school, I learned about Camp Shanks, the history of Dominican College, and the Orangetown area. However, thanks to my experience of working with the various items in the Stoughton collection, I have gained a whole new understanding of this community and the lives of the humans that built it. One item that particularly stood out to me was the World War II ration wallet. War ration wallets were used to hold ration coupons that were distributed by the U.S. government during WWII. Ration coupons were issued in order to prevent the hoarding of goods, such as coffee, sugar, meat, and other items that were in short supply due to the war; and it was considered patriotic to ration these items in order to supply soldiers with the necessities they required. The wallet in the Stoughton collection



at Home in Orangetown 1876

In 1876 our nation was celebrating its centennial – Chinese lanterns, flags and fireworks marked in glorious illumination this anniversary. Orangetown – as described in the ‘Handbook of the Northern Railroad’ was, “A romantic place full of historical memories of the days of the Revolution which,

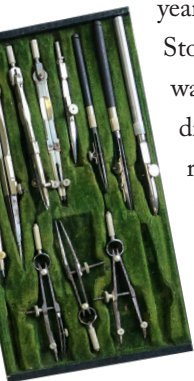


in its quaint and quiet beauty seems as if the last ninety years were rolled away and we were in a time when old Rip Van Winkle flourished”. Into this idyllic setting the Pascack, Northern and Erie railroads made a

dramatic impact. The aftermath of the Civil War brought hopes for universal liberty and justice; early photographs captured the spirit and personality of the nation. Still primarily an agrarian community, Orangetown was known for its fields of tomatoes and dairy farms that supplied New York City with fresh produce. The community was starting to industrialize, local newspapers took off as well as a shipyard in Nyack. Pride in the innovative American spirit can be traced to this period – as reflected in the development of the nation and life at home.

came from Bergen County National Bank of Hackensack and was issued in 1943 to Eliza D. Beard, Ruth D. Beard, Armand D. Beard, and Paul A. Beard who lived in Tappan, N.Y. Paul and Eliza Beard lived there with their two children Ruth and Armand. During the time the wallet was issued, Armand was 4 years old. As I researched these items, the ration wallet specifically stood out to me because of the four year old son, Armond D. Beard. I began to imagine what life must have been like for a four year old little boy during wartime.

Digging further, I learned that this four year old little boy grew up to be John Stoughton’s uncle; and Uncle Armand was the owner of the hand drawing drafting tools! This revelation created a real connection for me as I attended a vocational high school where for four years I studied Architectural and Mechanical Drafting. I was taught both how to use an AutoCAD program and how to draw by hand using some of the very types of drafting tools in this collection. However, despite



OUR Dutch Sandstone HOUSES



Stonemasons and carpenters were the first builders of our Dutch sandstone houses: there were few trained architects or professional

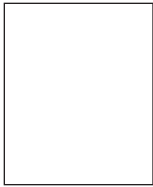
builders among our first residents. They were built with native sandstone, cut and drawn from nearby quarries, many along the Palisades. With a binding of clay the stones that faced front were cut in a smoother, more even manner while the three remaining walls were more rough cut. The Dutch settled primarily near the rivers and creeks with their homes facing south. A notable feature was the combination of various building materials – stone, shingle, clapboard, brick and iron harmoniously in one house. These one and a half story houses created with a steep roof and rough stone walls of substantial size with stepped gables were different from anything seen before. The gambrel roof – two slopes on each side, the lower steeper than the upper - came into use in the middle of the eighteenth century. This combination of slopes and curved, overhanging eaves came to form a distinctive American style.

my previous knowledge of some of the tools used for drafting, there were some items I was not familiar with. This included an Equal Space Divider made by Theo, Altender & Sons. I had never seen a tool like this but, after some research, I learned that it was used by drafters to create equal spaces between two points. This item led me to research further allowing me to gain an even deeper understanding of the art and history of drafting and architecture. These items, the war ration wallet and the drafting kits and tools, provide a window into the life of Armand Beard, a little boy who was taught at a very young age the value of sacrificing for others during World War II, and subsequently grew up to become a self-employed cartographer and mapmaker who had a passion for art.

So, what is the importance of these collections from a person’s lifetime that are donated by family and friends when they are no longer here to use and enjoy them? For me, as I connect with the people and things of the past, I find that not only does my knowledge of places, industries, vocations, and events increase, but I learn more about myself and the world I live in. This, in turn, helps to shape my values, ideals, and the path I take into my future.



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ORANGETOWN Suffragist

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Admission is Free;
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Pearl River, New York

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The ORANGETOWN CRIER is produced thanks to the generous assistance of *The Friends of the Orangetown Museum*. The group was formed in 2000 in order to further the activities of the museum and provide support in the achievement of the museum's goals. *The Friends* are instrumental in organizing fundraisers that provide financial assistance for museum purchases and cultural events. FOUNDER: Catherine Dodge CHAIRMAN: Peter Wade

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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

Teresa Kenny, 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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