



Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 17, Number 3

Fall 2017

GABE'S SHOE REPAIR SHOP IN WALLKILL By Georgina Liucci

This is the story of the Russano family and their shoe repair shop in the hamlet of Wallkill. It began when the Russano family, Gabriel, Lucinda, and their children, Robert and Rose Marie, moved to Wallkill in the late 1930s. They moved into a second-floor apartment in a building on Main Street between The Valley National Bank and the Western Auto hardware store. Within ten years, Gabriel had prospered enough to buy the building. He moved the family down to a first-floor apartment.

Ever since the earliest businesses were established in Wallkill, it was common practice for families to live in buildings where they also operated a small business. In the Russano building, there were two commercial stores in the street level front. Gabriel Russano opened Gabe's Shoe Repair Shop in the store on the side closest to the Bank; he leased the other store to Harry Headlam who opened a barber shop on the side closest to the hardware store next door.



Gabriel and Robert Russano outside the shoe shop

In the 1950s, Headlam moved his business across the street to a building occupied by the Terwilliger general store and that left the shop space open; the Russano family turned the second store into an apartment for Gabriel Russano's mother.

Gabriel moved his business to Walden in 1960 (although his family continued to live in Wallkill) and there he worked until "retirement." He reopened the shoe repair shop in his Wallkill building and continued to run the business until he finally closed the store in 1993, a remarkable 55 years of operation! Lucinda Russano died in 1991 and Gabriel in 1996.



Young Robert Russano and the family dog outside the shoe shop

Robert Russano fondly remembers growing up in Wallkill. Perhaps his most dramatic memory is of his mother foiling a bank robbery. Lucinda, looking out the window, saw bank robbers trying to enter the National Valley Bank basement next door; she opened the window, shouted, and the men ran away, only to be caught near the library. Try to imagine anyone brave enough to try to stop such a break-in in modern times!

The Russano family enjoyed a good life living and working in our little hamlet.



Website: <http://WallkillHistory.com>

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Events

Benefit Plant Sale. A Benefit Plant Sale was held at the Dubois House on Saturday June 3. Freda Fenn once again encouraged the generosity of local nurseries and gardeners who donated beautiful, healthy plants for the event, raising \$327 for restoration purposes.

Elmendorph Visit. Board members Bob Mooney and Libby Ross, accompanied by **John Ross** travelled to The **Elmendorph Inn** in Red Hook to view this elegantly restored building and to learn from town volunteers who began restoration work on this historic property in 1975. Taking note of methodology for preserving the structure and interior details, the Historical Society team returned with specific ideas that are applicable to the DuBois House restoration, as well as reassurance that this work takes time.

Restoration Update. The big news centers on considerable progress in the restoration of both the Knights of Pythias House and the Andries Dubois House throughout the summer, usually a slow time. At the Pythias House, the work has focused on two rooms in the back that will serve as a real kitchen and welcome center, as well as display area for the Historical Society during our regular meetings. Work continued with cleaning, repairing and painting walls, and floor refinishing. We had major contributions from **Lisa and Skeet Dunn** and **Joe Vogel**, as well as our regular Society workers; together we could make dramatic changes.

At the Dubois House, the interior work has emphasized repair and historical restoration of the kitchen area on the first floor. This approach was inspired by the visit to the Elmendorph Inn (see above). The removal of contemporary wallpaper over the course of the summer has been the first step to restore the room to a clean simple look of the typical kitchen of the late 1800s. Bids for the exterior structural problems of the front wall of the house have been received and are being evaluated by the restoration committee in advance of Board action. This is a huge expense for the Historical Society, and we have begun efforts to research grants and develop fundraising activities

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DUES. Have you paid your 2017 dues?

Check your mailing label to find out last-paid dues.

Mail dues to:

The Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner
P.O. Box 570,
Wallkill, NY 12589-0570.

Dues and donation can be paid at the website
[HTTP://WallkillHistory.com](http://WallkillHistory.com)

(credit card or PayPal)

Individual: \$20, Family: \$30, Supporting: \$50.

Business: \$50, Patron: \$100, Benefactor: \$250

Historical Collections

The historical Society Collection of Historical Items is in the process of reorganization and indexing. The Collection Policy has been revised with the goal of indexing all items and making available on the Historical Society website.

A new Collection Room has been selected for storage of the racks and boxes for the different collections with an area where researchers may access the collections.

With the help of a Summer Intern, Georgina Liucci, 11 boxes of documents & items have been reorganized, indexed, photographed and stored in boxes on racks. The index with descriptions and photographs have been put on the Historical Society Website and can be accessed at <http://WallkillHistory.com/collection>

Collection Samples

[Collection 2](#) - Documents and pictures from John G Borden to Addison Crowell

[Collection 3](#) - Documents and pictures from John G Borden to Addison Crowell



Borden Family

[Collection 4](#) - Collection of various pictures and documents about the Borden Home Farm

[Collection 5](#) - Collection of photos of Wallkill residents 1880-1910

Collection 6 - Not Done yet

[Collection 7](#) - Antique Coffee Grinder, Pitcher & LAMP



Cora DuBois Rogers

[Collection 8](#) - Framed pictures of Wallkill and postcards



ParkView Hotel



Marion Borden Mansion 1905



Valley Store



Marion Borden - Florida



Marion Borden Driving Car

Officers

President Debra Wolff
Vice President Libby Ross
Recording Secretary
Doris Callan
Corresponding Secretary
Donna Myer
Treasurer Bob Mooney

Trustees

Doris Callan
Freda Fenn
Jim Malloy
Bob Mooney
Donna Myer
Robert Borden Reifmueller
Libby Ross
Harold Van Aken
Alan White
Karen Wohlforth Dale
Debra Wolff

Publications

Libby Ross, Doris Callan, Freda Fenn, Bob Mooney, Hal Van Aken

Standing Committees

Programs and Education:
Freda Fenn, Donna Myer

Fund Raising: Trustees

Membership: Bob Mooney

Publicity: Hal Van Aken

Restoration/Bldg Maintenance:
Bob Mooney

Finance: Bob Mooney

Archives and Collections:
Hal Van Aken

Publications: Libby Ross

Webmaster: Hal Van Aken

Letter from the President

Dear members and friends,

Many good things happened this summer at HSSG thanks to the efforts of our board members and volunteers. We welcomed college intern **Georgina Liucci** who helped us on several projects, including the lead article of this newsletter.

In May **Bob Mooney** and **Libby** and **John Ross** visited the Elmendorph Inn in Red Hook to learn how they preserved wallpaper, ceiling beams, and other architectural features; they reported their findings at our September meeting. On July 28th, **Christine Adams** organized a DuBois house tour for over a dozen summer library readers. Thank you, Bob Mooney, for conducting the tour. During the month of August, **Hannafords in Modena** donated \$1 for each reusable bag that sold; thanks **Hal Van Aken** for arranging this fund-raising effort.

There have been big changes at the Knights of Pythias house over the last few months. (See the report on p. 2) The kitchen was gutted and the floor stripped, thanks to the hard work of **Freda Fenn, Lisa** and **Skeet Dunn**. **Bob Mooney** painted the ceiling tiles in the kitchen and living room while **Lisa** painted the kitchen. **Dave Jansen** from **Sohn's Appliance** donated a stove and refrigerator for the renovated kitchen!! Our board budgeted money for additional materials for the kitchen and bathroom. As a finishing touch, Bob Mooney hired **John Clavin** to sand the wood floors in the kitchen and dining room. As chair of the Restoration and Maintenance Committee, **Bob Mooney** has also been lining up estimates for the front window repair at the DuBois house and working on obtaining fill to expand the parking area.

If you haven't already noticed, check out the new historical marker outside the DuBois House; **Karen Dale** led the charge in procuring a new one. The old one is on display in the main room of the Knights of Pythias house.

On a very sad note, HSSG mourns the loss of long-time member, supporter, and friend, **Mary DuBois Wright**, who passed away on April 26, 2017. Mary was active in HSSG for many years and contributed each year to our fund-raising requests. Mary bequeathed money and several items to HSSG. The money will be used for restoration efforts on the DuBois house, as this was Mary's pride and joy.

We welcome our members to participate in whatever capacity – through volunteer work, attendance at events, advising in areas of expertise, donations of artifacts or photos, recruiting new members, or making a financial donation. Remember, HSSG is your organization and is committed to preserving the rich local history of Shawangunk and Gardiner.

Debra Wolff – President



Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner Mission Statement

In one of the oldest settled townships in the U.S., The Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner preserves historic buildings, stories, records, and artifacts. We share them with the community through absorbing and inspiring programs, strengthening a shared understanding of local history.

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner
 PO Box 570
 Wallkill, NY 12589-0570

Stamp



Where is this?

Last Dues

Monday, October 2, 7 p.m.

The Majestic Family of Gardiner

Location: Town Hall, Gardiner

The history of the Majestic Family in Gardiner and how they have supported and helped to grow Gardiner.

The "historic" building our store calls home has been around since the 1800's serving as a general store, post office, and fire house in its past lives. Today the olde time building serves as a memorable back drop for our customers.

Open to all – Free – Refreshments

Saturday November 4, 2017 2-4 PM

5th Annual Holiday Tea \$20

Shawangunk Town Hall Community Room
 14 Central Ave in the hamlet of Wallkill

For Reservations, Please Call
 Carolyn Crowell, 845-895-3933
 Freda Fenn, 845-895-3986

Door Prizes, Raffle & 50-50

Musical Entertainment

Saturday, October 21, 3-5 p.m.

Sip n Paint with Artist Lana!

Location: Wallkill River Art School. 232 Ward St, Montgomery.

Paint this fun watercolor and learn watercolor basics like masking, splatter painting and color mixing!

Lana makes it easy to paint and teaches you watercolor basics!

All materials are supplied including paints, boards, aprons, cookies etc \$40 per person

Contact: Donna Myer 845-851-8105
 Donna_Myer@Yahoo.com

Wednesday, November 1, 2017 7 PM

Program and Location TBD

Wednesday, December 6, 6 p.m.

Winter Pot Luck Party at the DuBois House

Location: Andries DuBois House 75 Wallkill Ave, Wallkill

Bring a dish to share – Finger food, snacks, dessert, wine etc.

Drinks, music, plates and cutlery provided