

Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

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Spring 2013

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE DUBOIS HOUSE IN WALLKILL: 1759-2000

Although DuBois family history in America begins with Louis DuBois, a Frenchman who arrived in 1660, local DuBois history starts with Andries DuBois (1737-1781) his grandson, who had the good fortune to purchase 590 acres of Van Dam patent land from his cousin Charles Broadhead in 1759. Andries took 300 acres (his partner likely took the other half), married Sarah LaFevre, and built a house. Together they produced 7 children. Andries served in the 4th Ulster Regiment from 1775-1881 during the American Revolution and died in the homestead in 1781, age 44.

During this period, the colonies of British America fought the French and Indian War, ending in a British victory, George III rose to the British throne, the British Parliament enacted the Stamp Act of 1765 which imposed a tax on printed materials used in the colonies, the Boston Tea Party took place, the first Continental Congress met, and the Revolutionary War was fought and near victory.

Sarah DuBois remained in the house with her three young sons, Jonathan, Simon, and Andries. Andries had died without a will, but in accordance with Dutch law, his eldest son Jonathan would inherit the property when he came of age. Jonathan divided the land with his two brothers, retaining the largest section with the homestead for himself. He then married Maria Ostrander and had two children, Sarah and Andries (born 1788). Like his father, Jonathan died early, at age 30, in 1789, leaving Maria with two young children. The house may have burned during this period. When Andries arrived at the legal age to inherit in 1809; he immediately sold the house and half the land to his uncle Simon DuBois who lived immediately on the land to the south.

Between 1781 and 1809, the British government recognized American independence, George

Washington was elected the first President, the Constitutional Convention took place in Philadelphia, the First U.S. Congress met, the U.S. Bill of Rights was ratified, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, John Adams was elected President, then Thomas Jefferson who arranged for the Louisiana Purchase, the slave trade ended, and James Madison elected President.

In 1810, James Mitchell, Shawangunk Town Clerk, bought the 4 acre DuBois homestead for \$1025 and rebuilt it the next year. He owned the property until his death in 1842, but never lived in the house. It is possible that during this period the house was operating as an inn. On Mitchell's death the house went to his son James N. Mitchell, Town Supervisor.

Between 1810 and 1842, the War of 1812 was fought between the U.S. and Britain and Indian allies, the British burned Washington, D.C. before defeat by the Americans, Louisiana became the 18th state, followed by Indiana, Mississippi, and Illinois, the Missouri Compromise was passed, the Monroe Document proclaimed, the Erie Canal completed, construction begun on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, Andrew Jackson was elected President, the Battle of the Alamo took place, and Samuel Colt invented the revolver.

James N. Mitchell did not live in the DuBois house either, but shortly after he inherited the property, in 1843, he initiated major renovations and the house likely continued as an inn. Mitchell sold the property to Charles F.V. Reeve for \$16,000, a sum reflecting a significant increase in value, probably as a result of the substantial renovations and its history as an income-producing investment. Reeve owned the property from 1853-1865 and worked in the local paper mill as a mill operator. He also did not live in the house. (continued on page 3)

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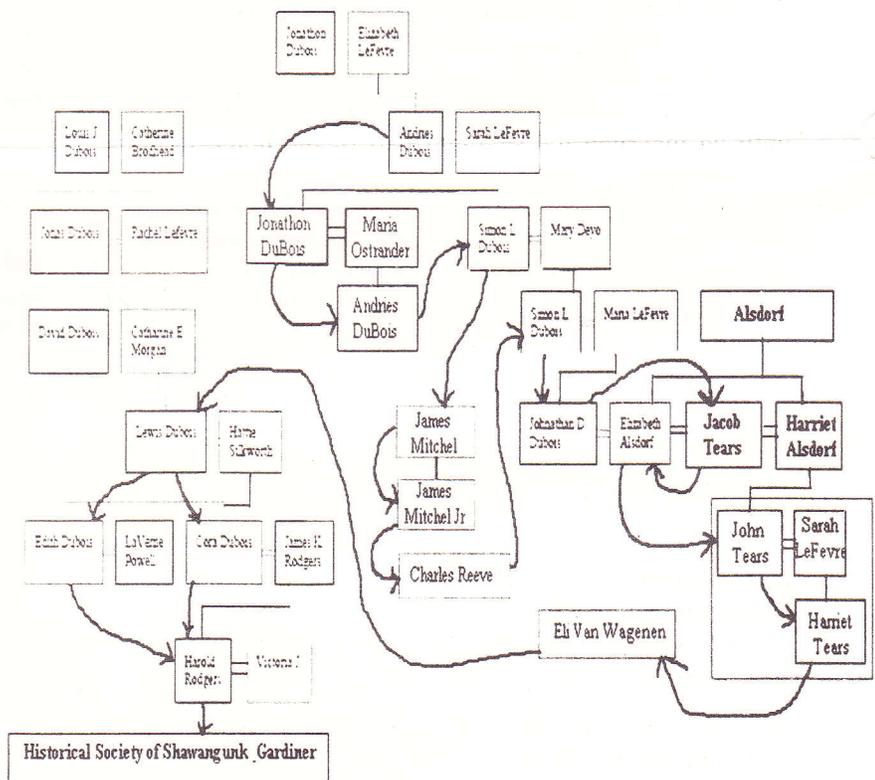
Dear Members and Friends,

The Historical Society has had a busy Spring getting ready for fund-raising events, included the benefit auction at the Andries DuBois House. The date for Borden Day has been set for September 28, 2013, to coincide with the Wallkill Central School District's 75th Anniversary celebration. The school will celebrate homecoming that weekend and is planning a big event in the middle of town. Sounds like a great weekend to hold Borden Day!

We were also very please to receive a \$1000 donation from the Wallkill Valley Federal Savings & Loan which will certainly help to restore the DuBois House.

Carolyn Crowell and Toni Gagan, Co-Presidents

Descendants of Jonathon Dubois



A diagram of ownership of the Andries DuBois House from its first owner in the 18th century to the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner in 2000

Shortly after James N. Mitchell inherited, he initiated major renovations and the house likely continued as an inn. He sold the property to Charles F.V. Reeve for \$16,000, a sum reflecting a significant value increase, probably the result of substantial renovations and its history as an income-producing investment. Reeve owned it from 1853-1865 and worked at the local paper mill as a mill operator. He did not live in the house.

1843 to 1865 included the American-Mexican war, the California Gold Rush, the Dred Scott decision, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, the Pony Express, the Civil War, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, General Lee surrendered to General Grant, and President Lincoln was assassinated.

Charles F.V. Reeve sold to Simon DuBois, a grandson of Andries DuBois, passing the house back to the DuBois family. Simon owned the homestead from 1856-1865 but continued to live on the 87 acre farm to the north that he had inherited from his father. When Simon died in 1865, he divided his property which contained two houses between sons Jonathan D. and Andries.

In 1860 Jonathan D. DuBois (1865-1871) married Eliz. Alsdorf and lived in his father's house to the north until he inherited the southern part of the home farm that included the homestead. After his father's death, Jonathan moved to the DuBois house. He appeared to have been in debt, selling off small parcels of land. Finally, in 1871 he sold ten acres, including the homestead to Jacob Tears, a brother-in-law married to Harriet Alsdorf, Elizabeth's sister. Jacob transferred the property to Jonathan's wife Elizabeth Alsdorf on the same day he acquired it and continued to live in Montgomery. The transfer secured the property with Elizabeth and avoided the loss of the homestead to debtors. It is more complicated, because at Jonathan's death in 1872 at the age of 38, his estate auctioned off the remainder of the property but excluded the west homestead lot. And five years later, when Jacob's wife Harriet died, he married his sister-in-law Elizabeth. Elizabeth owned the property from 1871-1891.

Between 1865 and 1891, the 13th Amendment passed outlawing slavery, Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, the Wright brothers flew, the first Transcontinental Railroad opened, basketball was invented, Yellowstone National Park was created, the telephone was invented, U.S. population passed 50 million, and Wounded Knee Massacre took place.

In 1891, Jacob and Elizabeth Tears sold 96 acres land to John Alsdorf Tears, the son of Jacob and Harriet

Tears; this was the same land that Jonathan D. DuBois had inherited from his father. John Tears married Sarah LeFevre; their daughter Harriet was the first organist at Wallkill Reformed Church. Jacob and Elizabeth Tears were living elsewhere, so John and Sarah may have occupied the homestead. John died of consumption in 1892 at age 42 and three years later Sarah married John Manning, a dry goods merchant in Shawangunk. Harriet Tears Millsbaugh sold the 10 acre homestead lot to Eli H. Van Wagener in 1918.

Between 1891 and 1919 the world changed again. Income tax was initiated, basketball invented, gold discovered in the Yukon, the Boston subway completed, the Spanish-American War fought, Open Door policy announced, Theodore Roosevelt elected President, the First World Series, the San Francisco earthquake, the Ford Model T appeared, the Titanic sank, and a World War fought.

In 1919 Lewis and Hattie Silkworth DuBois bought the 10 acre homestead lot, thus returning the house to the DuBois family. Eventually Lewis sold 9 of the 10 acre lots, excluding the homestead; he died in 1927. At Hattie's death, homestead ownership passed to daughters Edith and Cora, 1946-1980. Edith married and moved to Gardiner in 1932. Cora married James Knox Rogers in 1933 and remained in the homestead. Son Harold Rogers married Victoria Rogers, and in 1980 Edith conveyed her share of the property to them.

In 2000 the Rogers sold the property to the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner for \$87,000.

In 2002, the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner commissioned a dendrochronology study, a scientific method of dating wood based on analysis of tree ring patterns. The analysis determined that the original huge beams dated from 1769, some still with bark on them. Additional analyses shows the house rebuilt after a fire in 1814 using some of the original beams, and that in 1845 many sections of the building were replaced. In sum, the house was constructed in 1769, burned in the 1790s, rebuilt in 1814 and underwent a major remodeling in 1845.

This article is based on a talk delivered by Harold Van Aken on April 3, 2013 at the Shawangunk Town Hall.

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The early spring restoration of the DuBois house included a Stage 1 reattachment of the roof cover, and gutters attached at both the front & rear of the house. This will help control water coming off the roof so as not to do further damage to the front wall. Cleanup of house & ground began to ready the building for the May benefit auction.

**Historical Society of
Shawangunk & Gardiner
Spring/Summer 2013 Programs**

**Sunday, May 5, 5-7 at the Andries DuBois House
– Benefit Auction. Wine & Cheese Reception.
Tickets: \$25**

**Monday, May 6, 7 p.m. Adam Schenkman
presents Wicked Ulster County: a book review
at the Gardiner Town Hall.**

**Wednesday, June 5, 6 p.m. Potluck picnic on the
lawn of the Andries DuBois House.**

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J.T. Smith, Superintendent
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RECENT PROGRAMS: On March 6, Matthew Thorenze presented a program on **The Barberie Patent 1709**. He described political factionalism in late 17th century NY and the effect of war in England on NY, with its demand for colonial military stores to aid the Queen Anne's War. **Harold Van Aken** presented a talk on the **History of the DuBois House** (see lead article) on April 3 at the Wallkill Town Hall.

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SAVE THE DATES

BORDEN DAY, September 28

TERWILLIGER FAMILY EVENTS, July 12-14: reception, dinner, church services, meeting

REMEMBER YOUR 2013 DUES!

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