



# Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

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## *Now You See It... Now You Don't* *Porch Removal Reveals Clues to DuBois House Architectural History*

To Remove, or Not to Remove ... This question plagued the DuBois House Restoration Committee for more than two years. Concerns about the dilapidated front porch urged many Society members to cry, "Tear it down!" However, the committee faced a serious dilemma: how to remove the porch without further damage to the brick façade.

Before any action could be taken, the age of the porch had to be determined. A circa 1940 photo of the house shows a similar but slightly different porch. When the existing porch floor was removed for an archaeological investigation in 2004, committee members found a "1981" date inscribed in the plaster joining the porch floor to the lower wall of the house. Newspapers also dating to 1981 were discovered lining the plastered area. Based on this evidence, the existing porch was deemed not historic.

Next, the porch had to be documented with photographs and a measured drawing, as a permanent record of this 20<sup>th</sup>-century feature. Committee member and professional architect **Joseph P. Trapani** volunteered his services by providing the necessary drawing. Society archives also contain many photographs of the porch. As a further step, the Society received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to fund an archaeological investigation along the front façade. One objective was to locate evidence of an historic porch, to assist in the eventual reconstruction of a porch more appropriate to the house's period of significance.

During this time, the Restoration Committee continued to grapple with the delicate technical aspects of the porch removal. The issue was finally settled this past summer, when prospective bidders for the painting and restoration carpentry projects toured the site. Originally, both projects included stabilizing and painting the porch. However, when more than one contractor expressed serious concern about climbing on the porch to reach the dormer windows, the decision was finally made to dismantle the porch altogether.



With the porch now gone, fascinating aspects of the house's historic architecture have been revealed. It is believed that the current building was constructed circa 1815 on the original foundation of the house built by Andries DuBois (circa 1769). A close examination of the front façade reveals many details of the early nineteenth-century appearance of the house, including crowns above the first-floor windows and remnants of a narrow porch roof above the front doorway. Major modifications to the house occurred circa 1840, when the house took on its current "Greek Revival" appearance. The first-floor windows were reduced in size and the doorway slightly relocated in conjunction with interior renovations. The front of the Andries DuBois House has much to tell us about changes in architectural styles during the early-to-mid nineteenth century.

A portion of the brickwork was left unpainted for two reasons. This section was damaged as the deteriorated porch gradually pulled away from the front of the house. Brick and mortar stabilization will be addressed in 2007. Also, a careful examination of the unpainted brickwork reveals patterns of glazed brick - another important clue about the 1815 "look" of the Andries DuBois House. When the new porch is built, the brickwork will remain unpainted for visitors to see this historic feature.

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**Letter from the President**

Dear Members and Friends,

December is here, and so is the end of another year. This is the time when we often fret about snow and ice this winter, the cost of heating our homes, holiday bills, and how much weight we'll gain from all those holiday goodies. However, at the Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner we have many more productive things to think about!

Let's start with the Andries DuBois House. The Restoration Committee has winterized the house, and plans are in place to identify any structural issues and stabilize the front masonry exposed when the porch was removed this year. Since we really want to get you out to the site to enjoy the lovely grounds, we also will renovate the small former garage building and temporarily move our one-room schoolhouse exhibit there for all to see. No date has been set for the "grand opening," but the more volunteers and funding we can get for the work, the sooner that date will come!

In conjunction with the exhibit, we plan to publish Elaine and Ed Weed's excellent research into the Town of Shawangunk's one-room schoolhouses. The publication date and price have not yet been set, but we are eager to hear who might be interested in a copy. Please drop us a line! We'll also announce more information in a future newsletter.

Plans for our second annual Garden Tour and discussions about our four annual Borden Day are underway. In 2007 we will have even more gardens for you to visit. If you'd like to add your local garden to the tour or want to join the tour committee, please let us know.

There will be no membership meetings in January and February (yes, the dreaded ice and snow does enter our thoughts occasionally). We will resume on Wednesday, March 7<sup>th</sup> (7:30 p.m. at the Wallkill Reformed Church) with an excellent program by local stonemason/restoration carpenter **Richard Phelps**. In my last letter, I was quite remiss in thanking new trustee **Carolyn Crowell** for jumping right in after the election in June and putting together an excellent schedule of speakers for us this year. This promises to be one of the best!

Among the other activities that we hope to offer in 2007 are a spring flower sale at the DuBois House, group visits to other historic sites and museums, a "tent sale" at the DuBois House, and a special event at a local winery. Now that our newsletter is coming out on a regular basis – thanks to editor **Libby Ross** – you will not miss news about any of these activities.

Thank you for your continued support of our Society. We look forward to seeing you many times in 2007!

**Suzanne Isaksen**

## Meeting Highlights

**Historical Society Lecture.** “The Coldens of Coldenham,” was the subject of an absorbing lecture given by **Suzanne Isaksen, Town of Montgomery Historian**, on November 1.

**Cadwallader Colden** (1688-1766) was born in Ireland, received his medical degree in London, and moved to Philadelphia in 1710 where he established himself as a doctor and merchant. He was fortunate to impress the colonial governor of New York who appointed him Surveyor General of New York, a post he held from 1720-62. During this time he acquired 3000 acres of land in what is now the Town of Montgomery and established a country estate called “Coldenham.”



As Surveyor General, Colden explored the geography and native population of the New York wilderness, and in 1727 published “The History of the Five Indian Nations Depending on the Province of New York.” He entered intellectual circles and corresponded regularly with Benjamin Franklin on the natural and physical sciences. He published a critique of the work of Sir Isaac Newton.

Colden and his wife moved to Coldenham in 1728. They had 5 sons and 5 daughters, chiefly educated by Mrs. Colden, since there were no schools. Several children distinguished themselves – Jane who shared her father’s passion for botanical studies, Alexander, who is credited with establishing the first Newburgh-Beacon Ferry, and Cadwallader Colden Jr. who built his own estate on 500 acres of the family property. Three historic markers located on or adjacent to Route 17K, Orange County note the achievements of Jane, the ruins of the Colden Jr. estate, and a family and slave cemetery. The Town of Montgomery has

organized a Colden Mansion Preservation Team to prepare a heritage park development plan that will include stabilizing and interpreting the ruins on the property.

### Cragsmoor Picnic and Lecture/October 8.

On a magnificent golden Sunday afternoon, Society members drove to Cragsmoor to picnic on the grounds of the 1890’s Stone Church. (Chapel of the Holy Name). The church is situated on the Shawangunk Ridge with an unforgettable panoramic view of the Shawangunk Mountains. Entering into the beautiful church, Society members listened to **Sally Matz, President of the Cragsmoor Historical Society**, lecture on the history of the historic building. It is easy to understand why the church is a favorite site for weddings. Five minutes away at the Cragsmoor Historical Society building, the visitors were privileged to view the new archival room, a model temperature-controlled setting for photographs and other historical artifacts dating back to the 1890s artist community.

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As part of the recent restoration work at the house, a temporary entryway was constructed. A lively discussion has ensued about what type of permanent entry to construct. The historic structure report for the Andries DuBois House, developed by our architects, recommends a “shed-roofed Greek Revival style [full-length] porch”, in keeping with the dominant 1840s period of significance.

However, some Society members believe that more archaeological work must be conducted for a final determination. The 2004 archaeological investigation located the footings of a narrow porch the width of the doorway, in line with the cut joists noticeable above the door (mentioned above). The archaeologists concluded that this narrow covered entryway might have been built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it would have been contemporary with the Greek Revival modifications to the house.

To Remove, or Not to Remove ... the answer to this question has revealed many clues and raised more questions about the fascinating Andries DuBois House.

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**Historical Society of  
Shawangunk & Gardiner  
Spring Programs**

**Wednesday, March 7, 2007 – 7:30**  
**Richard Phelps: *Stone Work of the  
Hudson Valley* – at the Wallkill Reformed  
Church**

**Wednesday, April 4, 2007 - 7:30**  
**Richard and Gregston Greer: *History of  
the Walker Valley Schoolhouse* – at the  
Walker Valley Schoolhouse**

**Wednesday, May 2, 2007 – 7:30**  
**Wendy Crowell-Sutherland: *The Crowell  
Brick Mould Factory* – at the Factory**

**A GIFT FOR THE COMMUNITY!**

The restored Andries DuBois House will serve as museum, meeting place, concert and lecture site, historical research center, repository of photographs, documents, and artifacts, exhibition hall, and focus for the historical memory of our community. Already the butternut yellow building brightens the main road into Wallkill. Fully functional, it will become a center for community activities benefiting the hamlet and township. Be part of the effort by volunteering your time and making a donation to restore this fascinating house.

**CALL FOR OLD PHOTOGRAPHS**

Do you have old photographs or aerial views of farms in Shawangunk? Remember what it was like when farming dominated the landscape, and cows and sheep were commonplace? The Historical Society wants to talk to you in preparation for a project to highlight the heritage of our farming communities. Call Doris at 744-2552 if you have pictures or information to contribute.

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