



HURLEY HERITAGE SOCIETY

# Prologue

"The past is prologue"

April 2020

Glenford

Old Hurley Founded 1662

West Hurley

## *Spring at the Hurley Heritage Museum*

Our new season begins on a strange and challenging note. We are all experiencing the results of the pandemic worldwide threat of a serious virus: COVID-19. There have been school and business closings. We all have been asked to refrain from attending large gatherings and social contacts. In time, we should see a decline in the number of known new cases and the recovery of those who contracted COVID-19. We at HHS are continuing to keep our event plans for 2020 in motion and will continue to reach our members and friends through our website and Constant Contact programs.

As President, I welcome our new Board members: Amy del Aguila, Kathy McMahon, and William Ryan. They are all very qualified and will continue to support our future goals. Many thanks to our retiring members for their diligence and support: Nancy Sweeney and Harvey and Joan Monder.

Unfortunately, our plans to open our new season will have to be postponed. The continuance of the Homer exhibit will feature new paintings, stories and amazing facts to further stimulate your interest. I won't be the spoiler ... visit us!

None-the-less, Spring does arrive, and we will be hosting our annual Plant Sale. It's our way of keeping a positive and healthy break from today's challenges. Although modified, there will be the same excellent selections at a great price. This mailing will contain the Order Form with instructions or you may visit us on our website to clarify any questions.

The Calendar of Events will also be available online and in several local tourist destinations.

As always, Hurley Heritage Society welcomes your ideas and suggestions to make the Museum a memorable and interesting destination in the beautiful Hudson Valley.

*Dale S. Bohan*

President, Hurley Heritage Society

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◀ Postcard c.1920 of mill built in 1849 by Richard TenEyck DeWitt on the foundation of the old mill. *NYS Archives.*

▼ The Greenkill as it appears today at the site of the mill. *Photo: Gail Whistance*



## Stories from DeWitt's Mill

**F**or more than 150 years, the farmers of Hurley drew their grain-laden wagons down a winding road to the gristmill built by the DeWitt family on the Greenkill. The spring-fed Greenkill could power the mill all winter making it a year-round destination for both farmers and villagers. The site is at the foot of the present-day DeWitt Mills Road where it meets State Route 32. Across the road was the Crocodile Inn where Garrett DeWitt hosted locals and travelers in the very early 1800s. The late Michael Pavlov owned the mill site for years and developed a keen interest in local history. He acquired an undated letter hand-written by an old-timer which tells the story of the original DeWitt mill and the newer mill that followed, including many personal recollections. The letter was stamped "L.C. Evory, Bloomington, New York." Here is her letter lightly edited for clarity. It is a charming and rare slice-of-life from an earlier time:

"Many many years ago probably as long ago as 1750, before the Revolution, the old gristmill on the Greenkill brook was built and operated by Col. Charles DeWitt. It is said that George Washington had many sacks of flour ground in this mill for the Revolutionary Army.

"There is a record of an older mill than this which was located in Kingston near the head of North Front Street which was then one of the gates into the Palisade [stockade] which surrounded and protected Kingston. That old mill was abandoned after years of service because typhoid fever was very prevalent in Kingston and was said to be due to the stagnant water of the mill pond.

"The Greenkill mill which began as a smaller local mill was extensively improved and altered in 1806 by Col. DeWitt's son Garrett Dewitt who also enlarged the old stone house which stood hard by the mill site. The mill soon became the scene of a big

business. Farmers from all over the county brought their wheat, rye, corn, and buckwheat to be made into flour and meal.

“My memory goes back to 1865. My grandfather had a farm a mile distant from the mill. He raised grain for all the flour we used. I can remember going to the mill on the farm wagon drawn by our pair of black horses Prince and Nanny, the wagon piled high with sacks of grain. The mill floor was all in one big room, white dust over everything, the noise of the wheel and of the rushing water filling it with a roar of sound. The whole mill trembled and shook as the wheel turned the big grind stones. I was half afraid as I stood waiting while my grandfather carried the sacks of grain and chatted with the miller.

“The first miller I remember was Richard ‘Dicky’ DeWitt, son of Gerrett DeWitt. [Richard DeWitt built his mill on the foundation of his grandfather Charles’ older mill.] I always think of him as I saw him standing in the mill door powdered all over with flour dust in his hair, his beard white with age, and his ruddy complexion looking redder still from the white surroundings. No dust could dim his keen black eyes. I remember Mrs. DeWitt better. She was a great church worker and many a church social was held in her roomy hospitable house. The kitchen in the house was a huge room. Plenty of room to ‘swing your partner’ in the quadrilles we danced at the socials.

“The miller who ran the mill after Mr. Dewitt became too old to carry on was Mr. Samuel Collard from New Jersey. He and his family — Mrs. Collard, Hannah, Carrie, Hattie and [?] — lived in the cottage across from the mill. Many fine times I enjoyed in their happy



The DeWitt homestead c.1900 at foot of DeWitt Mills Road built by Johannes DeWitt in 1736. Burned in 1930. Marilyn Wright Collection.

home. My brother Will, older than I, was very much in love with Hattie Collard. I had a lot of sleigh rides from Will taking Hattie and with some young man taking me for company. It was not considered good form for one couple to go sleigh riding alone though each couple had their own cutter and horse with bells. This romance ended somewhat abruptly as Mr. Collard went to New Jersey. He could make more money there. The next miller was Mr. Benjamin Apgar. That family lived in the cottage, too, but the son was much younger than the young people who composed our set at that time. They lived here a long time, and Alfred grew up with the next lot of young people. After Mr. Apgar removed to another town, Mr. Christian with his family came to take their place. Mrs. Christian I remember was very successful with flowers and sometimes presented the neighbors with lovely tea roses she raised.

“Charles Dewitt, son of Richard, had by this time married Nettie Van Wagener and took over the mill. His uncle Simon Peter did most of the mill work. They continued the business until around 1920 when the mill was condemned as unsafe. The business had fallen away. Only local orders were brought in, and it was decided to abandon it.

“The old building was torn down, but the wheel fell to decay bit by bit, seemingly so strong and sturdy it was hard breaking it up. It had been made in times when building was a fine art and men made things to last, but now no trace of the old mill remains. Greenkill brook still rushes along its course to the Rondout Creek, for men may come and men may go but the brook goes on forever.”

*[Transcription from the website [mrjumbo.com](http://mrjumbo.com); introduction and edit by Gail Whistance.]*

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OR CURRENT RESIDENT

*Annual Plant Sale – May 15*

**ANNUAL PLANT SALE 2020**  
CO-VID 19 Protocol Style

**Its time to think spring and that means planning your gardening needs.** The Hurley Heritage Society's annual plant sale will be modified this year. We will be doing the plant sale for pre-orders only. Flats, pots and hanging baskets of beautiful flowers grown by Saunderskill Farms, Accord, can be preordered using the enclosed form. The nursery had an increase in prices this year, therefore we had to raise our prices. Remember, any profits made by this sale go directly to the Heritage Society.

Forward the completed form and mail it together **with payment** to **Flo Brandt**, 132 Woodland Drive, Hurley, NY 12443. The form must be returned to Flo by May 1st. Pick up for the pre-orders will be at the Museum grounds Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, between 4 and 6 p.m. There will NOT be a plant sale on Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup>. The back yard of the museum will be accessible on Saturday for those who can't pick up their orders on Friday. If you need special arrangements for pick up please call Flo at (845) 331-8767.

Proceeds from the sale will be used for the maintenance of the gardens and grounds of the museum. The preorders may be a good way to meet your flower needs per CO-VID 19. The society feels we all need something to look forward to at this time.. Please feel free to call if you have questions or need additional forms.

Thank you,  
Flo Brandt