

Newsletter, vol. VI, no. 1, November 28, 2006

## President's Report

Notes, Narration, and Natter

*from Gerri Gibney*

Everyone on the Society's Executive Committee brings their own special talent and insight as to the activities of the Society, whether that be a short-term or long-term circumstance. And, when it comes to Caryl Block, who is our Hospitality Chair, she has brought her own calm thoughtfulness to every situation we discuss.

We all know that working on a committee is a give and take, and it certainly is always good to have people on a board, who are willing to listen to all points of view, and then make a choice. That *is* Caryl – her interest is always putting the Society first. With her straightforward, deliberate thinking she has been an important part of all the decisions made by the Executive Committee.

You would think that her level headedness would be in itself enough, but that's not all she brings to the table. Her ties to Harrington Park, and indeed, the Northern Valley area run strong and deep. And because of this, her love of town and place are always evident by the wonderful stories and passion she shows for those places and their people. Long before the Society was reactivated, Caryl was busy taking pictures of the Old Burying Ground, identifying the tombstones at the cemetery, and working on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of H.P.'s incorporation.

She knew the importance of conserving the history of our area.

Something else I would like to share with you; Caryl's ability to know dates in history is uncanny. We might be talking about the inception of the Girl Scouts, and Caryl knows the name of the founder and the date she founded it! It doesn't matter what the subject – Caryl always knows!

But now, you must know that with great regret,



Figure 2: Caryl Block in "period hat" at the 2004 Memorial Day Parade

I must tell you that Caryl is leaving her beloved Harrington Park, and will be moving to Colorado. It is very sad for us, but also very happy for us to know that Caryl has made another thoughtful decision, and that is to relocate to a beautiful part of our country. Knowing Caryl, she will most likely look around, and after careful deliberation, decide to volunteer her gifts to another fortunate organization in great sky country. God speed to you, and your sister Lynne, in your new adventure.

Several months ago, the Demarest Town Historian, Maryann Clark, called together the Northern Valley historical societies and town historians to discuss a problem that most of us encounter, and that is the proper storage and archiving of all the materials collected by our various groups. Many of the towns responded to the call, and we have been threading our way through many of our common problems. After much discussion, the group has decided the best way to address the problem is to form a Northern Valley Historical Society. At our last meeting, the group agreed the following would be our Mission Statement:

*The mission of the Northern Valley Historical Society is to gather, conserve, and make more widely known the historical record of the Northern Valley."*

At this juncture, we are at the very earliest stages of formation, but I believe it is a worthy endeavor, and positive results will ensue. In addition to me, also attending these sessions from our Society are Dave Ross and Caryl Block. We will keep you posted as to the group's progress.

Holiday time is upon us, and so is our

**December meeting.** Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup> we are off to a tour of the Garretson Forge and Farm (1719) in Fair Lawn. This living Dutch farm museum is one of the oldest sites in Bergen County. The pre-revolutionary sandstone house is officially listed on the New Jersey State and United States National Register of Historic Places. After the tour, we will have a reception to include hors d'oeuvres and desserts (cash bar) at the Dutch House Tavern (1740) also in Fair Lawn. We depart from the Library parking lot at 7:00 P.M. sharp. Cost is \$20.00 members, and \$25.00 non-members. Please call me immediately at 201 768-2615 to let me know you are coming.

Start putting aside any treasure you might have that you no longer want, for the Society's garage sale in spring 2007. We will give you more details shortly, however, we wanted to give you advance notice in order for you to start saving all those "goodies" you might not want. The Pascack Historical Society conducted a sale this fall and made over \$2500! Not too shabby at all! The funds raised at this event will be dedicated to work at the Old Burying Ground.

**Old Burying Ground** [Davis Ross 768-3621 - [davisross@verizon.net](mailto:davisross@verizon.net)]

Over the past year much has been accomplished:

1. Member **John Mager** continues to help maintain the Old Burying Ground and to research various records concerning people interred there and in the Perry cemetery. He assisted **Davis Ross** in preparing the annual report which was presented at the May 2006 public meeting of the Society.
2. Work has been started on mapping the Old

Burying Ground. Anyone interested in helping with this or on the research projects, please call.

- Maintenance is an ongoing challenge. The site has a number of very tall locust and cherry trees. Recent wind storms in the autumn resulted in branches from these older trees being broken – fortunately there have been only “near misses.” Although we like to use “green” tactics, clearing those branches sometimes requires the use of power saws.

### “Francis Otloh – A Stranger in their Midst

In the northeast corner of the Old Burying Ground a lone footstone bearing the initials “F O” stands a few feet away from a small heap of broken stones, upon which apparently there had once been legible this inscription: “In Memory of Francis H. Otloh who departed this life October 1<sup>st</sup> A.D. 1850 in the 75<sup>th</sup> year of his age.” That inscription and a brief reference in the preface to *Inscriptions from Harrington Park Cemetery Copied from Original Records Made in 1914* (Contributed by David Demarest Chapter, D.A.R., River Edge, New Jersey, April, 1957) provided what little we knew



**Figure 3** Francis H. Otloh [DAR006] headstone fragments (foreground) and footstone (center background)

of Otloh. The preface noted, probably in the words of the compiler, the Reverend Edward Keller of Englewood Cliffs: “In many instances these obituaries show the inherited tendencies of the

sturdy stock from which they came, and in one instance [referring to Otloh] . . . also their kindness to the stranger who died in their midst and was given not only Christian burial but also a stone to commemorate his life.

Some searching in the Federal Census adds detail. Otloh appears in the 1850 census for Harrington Township, listed as a resident of the household headed by Samuel A. Haring. There – on September 5, 1850 – he is shown (at line 37) to be 83 years old and to have been born in

1850	100	Samuel A. Haring	46	M	18
		Francis H. Otloh	83	M	18
		Frank E. Haring	13	M	18
		Frank A. Haring	11	M	18
		Frank L. Haring	7	M	18
		Holland			17

**Figure 4** 1850 Census page showing the entry for Otloh in the Township of Harrington.

Holland. (The 8-year discrepancy in his age between that shown on the headstone and the census is larger than usual, but does not suggest that we are looking at the record of two different men with identical surnames.) The census does not indicate the actual location of Samuel A. Haring’s dwelling within the rather large expanse of Harrington Township – the latter contained the modern boroughs of Alpine, Closter, Demarest, Harrington Park, Haworth, Norwood, Northvale, Old Tappan, and Rockleigh. But Haring’s neighbors included Justin Demarest who then owned the Wortendyke House (11 Harriot Avenue) and Peter J. White (at the end of the western end of Closter’s Cedar Lane). This probably would place Haring’s dwelling somewhere along Schraalenburgh Road, most likely near Old Hook Road (and now probably sited beneath the reservoir that straddles the road).

The Bergen County Surrogate’s records in Hackensack provide more clues. The will, dated February 9, 1850 is brief, as those documents go. After a standard paragraph enjoining his executors first to pay all his debts and another one setting aside \$50 for his

nephew, Otloh continued:

*. . . . I give to my beloved and trusty friend  
Wilthouse known as Wilthouse and sons No 44  
Lispinard St NY in trust the residue of my personal  
estate to be by him applied at his discretion to poor  
German immigrants who have arrived in the City of  
New York. Should it be inconvenient for the said  
Wilthouse to receive and apply the residue as  
abovesaid then that my executors apply said residue  
to the society for relief of German Dutch  
immigrants in the City of New York. ... I also give . .  
. Wilthouse all my Dutch History books as a present.  
. . . I hereby empower and order my executors... to  
sell all my wearing apparel and [pedlar?] wares  
and goods as soon as convenient. . . and to apply the  
proceeds as directed to Wilthouse or to the society  
[etc.]*

A little more than a week after his death, his will's executors had completed the inventory of Otloh's belongings, the largest portion of the estate's \$246.52 value comprised of his peddler's wares, some of which were:

78 pairs cotton tape	2.00
12 doz corset laces @. 75	2.75
27 coarse combs	2.50
16 pocket combs	1.00
51 boxes hooks and eyes	1.00
8 pieces soap	.50
123 thimbles	5.75
100 papers pins	3.00
577 papers pins	17.00
26 doz knitting pins	1.50
stock of lace and edgings	20.75

Otloh's "Dutch library" was valued at \$5.00; a pair of pistols at \$.50; and his 3 trunks, hone, dominoes, and shaving cup, etc. at \$5.25.

How much of a "stranger in their midst" was this peddler? We cannot determine this with certainty from the sources cited here. We can reasonably conclude that Francis Otloh was in the

locale for at least the last month of his life. His will indicates that he was from Hackensack. He could have been a peddler, based in that city – but with ties to New York City -- who traveled through Bergen County generally selling his wares to Dutch and English-speaking household women. Since he still had what to modern eyes appears to be a relatively well-stocked inventory of items when he died, perhaps he fell ill early on one of his trips through the County. We don't know why 35-year old Samuel Haring and family apparently took the old peddler in; but it appears that Otloh probably was there when he died, given the fact that he is buried relatively close by.

That he, at least, considered himself a "stranger" can be surmised from his last will. What little he had was to go to his closest friend – who lived in New York City – and who in turn was to see that "German Dutch" immigrants received part of the bounty. Those "Dutch history books" must have been precious to him (but not to those who appraised their value) for he seems to have carried them with him on his peddling route.

In one respect the most remarkable element in this abbreviated story is the fact that sixty-four years after he had died, his status as a "stranger" was still remembered, while all else about the man had been forgotten. Yet now – when Otloh's marble tombstone is a jumble of featureless rock fragments – we can nonetheless catch a glimpse of the man from other sources.

### **Members' Corner [Michelle Ryan 201-784-8114 [CHELLE1423@aol.com](mailto:CHELLE1423@aol.com)]**

We sadly report that one of our "founding members," **John X. Vigna**, died this past summer. John attended most of our monthly public meetings and could be counted on for special events, such as fund raisers, winter

outings, and end-of-year social gatherings. In addition, he donated material for the Society's archives, and helped maintain the Old Burying Ground. We will miss him.

**New members** A warm welcome to our newest members: **John Arbolino, Francesca & David Moskowitz**

**Returning members:** Also thanks to the **Angelos family, Louis & Marianne Apa, Jennifer Arbolino, Caryl C. Block, Lynne Block, Barbara & John Budinich, Craig Budinich, Julia & Louis Cambria, Carol & Dominic Carini, Joyce & David Cornell, Marie & Nick D'Amico, Dot Durbec, Bob & Christy Frank, Beth Gangeri, the Geylin family, John Gibbons, Gerri & George Gibney, Anne & Tom Hackett, Paul Hoelscher, Ethel Johnson, Ellen King & Alberto Caballero, John & Virginia Mager, Jen & Joel Miller, Ingeborg & Hans Nebel, Silvia & Toros Papagian, John Post, Regina Potter, Davis & Esther Ross, Michael & Maryann Ryan, Michelle Ryan, The Schaff Family, the Scott family, David & Marion Sunden, Lawrence & Mary Sunden, Christine Looes Welch & Family, Dr. & Mrs. Edward Zajkowski**

**Equipment and Supplies Needed:** [Gerri Gibney 768-2615; Davis Ross 768-3621] We will periodically list some of the Society's needs. Given the Society's restricted revenue sources – pretty much entirely from membership dues – we welcome donations of equipment [new or used] and supplies. Here's a partial list:

- A digital image projector for use at the public meetings of the Society.
- Postage stamps, envelopes, blank postcards
- A digital recorder for oral history interviews
- A laser measuring device, suitable for outside use in the Old Burying Ground and Perry cemeteries.

**Officers of the Society:**

**Gerri Gibney, President (768-2615)**  
**Regina Potter, Vice President /Treasurer (784-9628)**  
**Michelle Ryan, Membership Secretary (767-8544)**  
**Davis Ross, Recording Secretary (768-3621)**

**A friendly reminder:** If you have not renewed your 2006-2007 membership, please take a moment to do so now. (*\$10 single, and \$15 for family*), please send them to *HPHS, P.O. Box 105, HP 07640*)

Thanks to all of you for your support and participation!

**Upcoming Events**

**Monday, December 4, 2006, Holiday Outing:** Garretson Farm Tour, and Reception at the Dutch House, Fair Lawn, NJ. Reservation only [Call Gerri at 201-768-2615] Meet at Borough Hall parking lot at 7:00PM

**Monday, January 8, 2007.** General Meeting. Speaker: Beth Potter, Haworth Town Historian "House Mysteries and Histories"

**Monday, February 5, 2007.** General Meeting. Topic: Eleanor Roosevelt, A New Woman" (First Person Living History Presentation)

**Monday, March 5, 2007.** General Meeting. Topic: "Martha Washington: A Most Agreeable Consort" (First Person Living History Presentation)

**Other Members of Executive Committee:**

**Caryl Block, Hospitality (768-2468)**  
**George Gibney, Public Relations (768-2615)**  
**Ethel H. Johnson, Archives (768-6357)**  
**Ingeborg Nebel, Archives (767-1521)**

