A Look Into Area Dutch Heritage
By Lynn Van derzee Christie

Area residents viewed a slide presentation of the Tompkins Collection at the March Historical Society meeting. John Scherer of the New York State Museum explained how a collection of furniture, silver, jewelry, textiles, family bibles, papers, and photographs was handed down through three area families from the 1700’s to the present. The collection first began with Andries Ten Eyck. He was given land in Aquetuck by his father-in-law, Pieter Coeymans. Andries built a Dutch style house on the west side of Biechman Road and Route 143. The contents of the house passed on to his daughter, Garritje. Garritje made provisions for her son-in-law, Andrew Van derzee to take care of her in her old age. However, both Andrew and his wife, Jane Ten Eyck Van derzee (Garritje’s daughter), died before her. The furniture did pass on through to Andrew’s son, Conrad Ten Eyck Van derzee and his daughter, Jane Ten Eyck Van derzee (She was named after her maternal grandmother as was Dutch tradition.).

Their home was less than a mile away on Van Derzee Road. When Jane Ten Eyck Van derzee married Stephen Tompkins, she took the collection with her to the Tompkins family home (present day Sycamore Golf Course).

Tompkins House

This time the items moved a mile and a half. Of the three homes, only the Van derzee family home still stands today.

Jane Ten Eyck and Stephen Tompkins had one son, Stephen. Stephen married Elizabeth Cole and had two sons, William and Van derzee. Van and his wife, Minnie Frayer, had two sons, Stephen and John. It was John Tompkins who went about preserving the family collection. He actively pursued collecting more of the family furniture from some of his maiden and widowed aunts. When John died, his brother, Stephen, inherited the collection and moved it to his home in Michigan. Upon his retirement it was moved again, this time to Arizona. Stephen and his wife, Georgan, felt strongly that the collection should return to its origin and generously donated it to the New York State Museum.

The Museum also recently acquired another Tompkins Collection. This time it was a collection of arrowheads found on the Tompkins farm. John D. King of Bloomington, Indiana, not knowing about the other Tompkins Collection, contacted the New York State Museum. His uncle and aunt, William and Inez King Tompkins, had passed the arrowheads on to him. We are fortunate to have two such unique collections preserved for future generations from our area.
PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I would like to start by thanking all the committees for their dedication and hard work that has been so vital in bringing the Society to such a high standard. This year we will be receiving our permanent charter. This involved a considerable amount of work. The charter committee should be commended for their perseverance in its successful completion.

Our constitution is under revision. These changes will be presented for discussion and ratification at the regular annual meeting.

In the coming months we will be installing a new Museum Curator. You will be seeing many new items and displays at the museum.

Our picnic was held in June at Mosher Park. We had a nice turnout and a good time was had by all.

Again, I would like to thank everyone, especially the trustees and board members, for their participation and help these past six months. I look forward to the second half of the year. The Society is progressing more and more each year, and it is because of you that this is possible.

Ralph Biance
President

The Library at the Museum
By Adrian Brisee

The Historical Society has been making great strides recently in the improvement of our Library. Located at the back of the Museum, the Library was recently reconfigured to improve lighting and access to holdings. While our collection is still humble, we have recently received a number of donations and have more coming in shortly. Access to the Library is through the Museum during the Museum’s regular hours. A desk for research, a comfy reading chair, even a nearby copier, will make your research an enjoyable event.

Our recent acquisitions include:
Descendants of Anneke Jans Bogardus (1605-1663) by William B. Bogardus, donated by the author in thanks for information from our holdings.
American and British Genealogy and Heraldry
1982-85 Supplement to American and British Genealogy and Heraldry
By P. William Filby
The Descendants of James McCabe and Anne Pettigrew by Allen E. Marble
Captain John McCall 1726-1812: His Ancestors and Descendants by Clare M. McCall.

We also have some additional New York History quarterlies as well as some issues of Connecticut Nutmeggers recently donated.

We hope you enjoy these improvements to our Library. Please visit us for your genealogy and family history research.
Dressed in traditional craftsman’s garb, tinsmith Art Thorman spoke at the May 15th Historical Society meeting about the history and processes of tinsmithing. It is a story of the industrial revolution and the development of commercial processes. Tinware has been produced since around 1530 when the process for making tinplate was invented in Bohemia. At that time cast iron was used for many implements, and to keep it from rusting, the iron was first etched with acid and then dipped in molten tin.

Then, as now, industrial spies ferreted out the secret, enabling England to use the stolen information to produce its own tinplate. By 1790 a process for making sulfuric acid had been invented and a new method of flattening metal sheets, the rolling mill, had made it cheaper to produce “poor man’s silver.” In our area, Greenville became a center for tinsmithing.

Although today’s “tin” is actually made with sheet steel, modern tinsmiths such as Mr. Thorman carry on this traditional craft using tools and techniques developed centuries ago by master craftsmen. His tools include candle mold stakes of various sizes and shapes; swedges to crease the metal; rawhide mallets; and, raising blocks to make a curved surface, among many others. With them, Art Thorman makes wall sconces, chandeliers, pitchers, boxes, and many other items, decorating them with crimping and pierced or punched designs in the manner of his 18th and 19th century predecessors, keeping history alive for future generations.

So, what’s the Collection Committee all about?

By Barbara Goetschius

Put away your wallet (unless it’s an antique), the Collections Committee isn’t after your money – just your valuables. Committee Chair Harry Sturges and members Bonnie Russo and Ralph Bianco are looking for items, papers, and photos pertaining to the Village of Ravenna and the Town of Coeymans. The Committee accepts donations, examines them, and presents them to the Board of Trustees.

Their job doesn’t end there, though. They work with the Preservation and Display Committees to get materials organized, stored in archival containers, and labeled. As part of their efforts to organize documents and photos, the Committee is putting them in binders according to subject, such as churches, fire companies, etc., and separating duplicates. In addition to materials of local historical interest, the Collections Committee also needs 3-ring binders, acid-free tissue paper, archival sheet protectors, and small, acid-free boxes (to store items such as coins and pins) to protect all the materials from damage. As always, your donations, both historical and archival, will be greatly appreciated.
THE MYSTERY OF THE
APPLE BARN DOOR
By Mary Farinelli

The old door had eight panels – four large and four small – and a large iron box lock. The signs of wear on the scratched inside surface, the patches of bare wood on the outside, and the darkened areas around the door knobs speak of the years that hands and wind and rain have touched the door. Yet it is still strong and enduring – it was built well. And there is a sense that the door has struggled and persevered and survived, a testimony to its builder and to the generations that have opened and closed it and saved it.

Robert Blaisdell wrote that, years ago, he had learned of “a stone building [in Coeymans Hollow] that was two stories in height, used as an apple storage barn. It was put up the same year as what is known as the Coeymans Castle was torn down…It must be in the records somewhere – when built, when torn down. It stood at the south corner of First St. and Westerlo [in Coeymans].”

Historians have written that Barent Pieterse Coeymans built the Castle some time after 1673, when he bought a large tract of land south of Albany. The Castle is described as a 50 ft. by 30 ft. stone structure, one and one-half stories in height, with a 30 ft. by 20 ft. rear wing. It faced the river. In the center of the first floor was a Dutch door with two windows on either side.

After Barent’s death in 1710, the property was passed down to his son, Pieter Barentse Coeymans. Pieter lived in the Castle with his five daughters until his death in 1744. An 1832 deed shows that Jacob A. Ten Eyck, a Coeymans family descendant, sold three acres of land for $1,250 to James Lawton and Richard Lawton of Coeymans. The property included “the Old Stone House, formerly owned by the late Pieter Coeymans, deceased.” There are no known records that tell of the dismantling of the Castle or the whereabouts of the stone and wood from the structure, but it seems likely that it was indeed torn down in 1833.

Robert Blaisdell had more that a passing interest in the Castle. His great-grandfather, Levi Blaisdell, and his grandfather, Fletcher, had, through marriages, brought Coeymans land and Coeymans blood into the family. An 1802 “lease of the Stone House and land around it to Levi Blaisdell for $80 by Peter Ten Eyck” provoked Robert to respond “How in hell could Levi ever have consented to let the old Coeymans house get out of his mitts? Wish he hadn’t.”

Robert had yet another reason for his interest in the Castle. He reported in his writings, “The story is that, when in 1833 Coeymans Castle was torn down, Daniel [Van Antwerp] bought the interior woodwork and installed it in his new house. We continue to applaud his idea. This was, or course, a Coeymans descendant.” And a distant relative of the Blaisdell family.

Daniel Van Antwerp’s grandfather, Daniel Van Antwerp (1741-1822) had married Gerritje Whitbeck, granddaughter of Pieter Coeymans. Daniel’s father, Andrew, had married Mariche Houghtaling, a sister of Fletcher Blaisdell’s wife and a descendant of Pieter Coeymans. In past years families would come to embrace all blood relations in the neighborhood. A community of kinfolk – or a clan – provided for its own. Even in the twentieth century Robert Blaisdell had a remarkable sense of heritage.

He visited the “Van Antwerp” stone house several times and recorded his visits: “The house stands on a small flat place against the hill, so that a basement kitchen was possible. Basement under front door. House faces east…Front door, paneled, sidelights, etc…Two windows along side it, with 3 above. Lintel have a pattern cut on them”…The description is vividly detailed. He writes again and again, “There was a nice wainscot in the hall, which was likely from the Castle…” He could not locate the farm on the 1854 Gould map as belonging to the Van Antwerp. He explored the roads and the side roads, unable to remember or discover anything that would validate the story.

Eleanor (Payne) Turner had lived as a child on the old Cary Farm where the stone house once stood. She remembers very little about the place, except that Aunt Mary Lawson had told her that the door had come from the Coeymans Castle and the wood had come from the ballast of a ship. The building was used as a barn at the time, but fell down during the hurricane of 1960.

Don Boice worked at the barn as a young man, bringing ripe apples from the orchards to the cool cellar to be stored before they were shipped. He remembers walking into the cellar through the basement door and recalls what a difficult time the men had bringing the barrels of apples down the hill with the horse and wagon. After the hurricane all that was saved was a stone with a date – 1833. It was
placed in the attic of the farmhouse but is no longer there.

But Eleanor had a list of Cary property deeds and writings saved by a former neighbor. The list of sales and subdivisions of the property began with the 1839 deed in which John McCarty sold 150 acres to Daniel Van Antwerp. John McCarty (1782-1851) was the son of Brigadier General David McCarty (1737-1812). Daniel Van Antwerp was the grandson of Lt. Col. Daniel Van Antwerp (1741-1822).

Research in the State Archives revealed that the two elder men were closely connected during the Revolutionary War, had a business partnership before the war, and had participated in marriage and baptism ceremonies with each other. Gen. David McCarty had married Charlotte Whitbeck, sister of Lt. Col. Daniel Van Antwerp’s wife. Their wives were granddaughters of Pieter Coeymans.

The 1833 Assessment Rolls of the Town of Coeymans show that David’s son, John McCarty, owned over 500 acres of property, while Daniel’s grandson, young Daniel Van Antwerp owned none. Like his father, John was a judge and also a State Senator. Unlike his father, he seemed to be financially secure. (David somehow lost most of his property in 1809 and John had managed to buy it back from the Sheriff.) And, John was a farmer who loved the land. The Road Assessment Rolls of the Town show that he worked on District #41 roads from at least 1814 through 1842. This section of road was in the District where he lived with his son, David. District #42 was north of #41 and was worked on by Abraham Weaver (among others) until John McCarty bought the property from Weaver in 1826. This was the same property that McCarty sold to Daniel Van Antwerp in 1839, which Van Antwerp sold to Joseph Cary in 1867.

The Cary papers say that “Judge McCarty erected a stone house on the Weaver farm abt. 3 yrs. ago, abt. 20 x 28 ft. – appears to be a 2 story house besides the cellar.” Written in 1837, the notes implied that the property was still referred to as the “Weaver” farm, not the McCarty farm. Perhaps John McCarty, good son, good friend, and good neighbor, had tried to rekindle the Coeymans heritage and restore the McCarty good name. Perhaps the Whitbeck sisters, and the Ver Plank cousins who had married into the McCarty and Van Antwerp families, had helped the “clan” provide for their own.

The apple barn door does not look like the Dutch door in the Coeymans Castle sketch. It is not cut horizontally across the center, as the typical Dutch door before 1776 would have been. But the eight-panel door does appear to date from the mid-18th century, according to architectural historian John Bonafide. The door’s panel design is “Georgian in form” and the “door’s width indicates a mid-18th century construction period.” John believes that it may have originally been “used as an interior door and reused as an exterior unit.” The hinges on the door “indicate a reuse of the door in the mid-19th century.” Could the door have come from the Castle? John believes it could because the door dates to a period when the Castle was still standing. “But,” he says, “this is not conclusive evidence.”

An antique dealer recently looked at the door. He believes the door dates from about 1830, judging from the nails – probably too late to have been used in the Castle, he said.

Yet the door still stands – worn but proud, a witness to kinships and friendships, and unwritten agreements, now examined and treasured, inviting personal interpretations of its history.

Appreciation is extended to Eleanor Turner for her interest and encouragement and for sharing her photographs and historical records, to Don Boice for sharing his memories, and to John Bonafide for sharing his expertise.

The following resources were also used in the research of this project: The Robert Blaisdell Papers at the Ravena Coeymans Historical Society/Museum; Little Red Schoolhouse Records; Town of Coeymans Clerk’s Office; Albany County Hall of Records; New York State Archives; Dutch Houses by Helen Reynolds; Everyday Life in Early America by David Hawke; and, Coeymans and the Past by Edward Giddings.
Rec't for the teeth —

Take 4 oz. fresh tonic water + 1 dram Pemurian Bakt + wash the teeth with this Water in the morning + evening before breakfast + after supper — it will effectually destroy the tartar on the teeth + turn out the offensive smell from those that are decayed.

—From the Van Antwerp Papers

2005 Calendar of Churches

You may not recognize this church. It is the first Congregational Christian Church that stood on the corner of Main Street and Mountain Road. The church was completed and dedicated in 1890. It burned down in 1951 while Reverend Imhoff was Pastor. The present Congregational Christian Church was built on the same site.

The Historical Society is planning a calendar of churches for the year 2005, in which past and present churches of the Town of Coeymans will be pictured. Information about the churches will also be included. Look for the Church Calendar sometime in the fall of this year.

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Apple Dumpling

3 sour apples ¼ tsp. salt
1 cup sugar 1 beaten egg
¾ cup flour ½ cup milk
1 tsp. baking powder 1 tbsp. melted butter

Core, pare and chop apples and mix with sugar. Have ready a batter made by sifting flour, baking powder and salt together; add beaten egg and milk to make a drop batter. Stir in melted butter. Mix apples with batter until every piece is coated, then fill greased baking cups and bake in a moderate oven at 375 F. about 30 minutes, or until firm and brown on top. Serve hot with cream or hard or lemon sauce.

This recipe is from Irma Mattice’s 1929 cookbook, Anyone Can Bake. Thank you to Joan Hoose for offering this recipe from her mother’s cookbook.

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Opening Doors to the Past

There’s something about a door that wants to be saved. Large doors, small doors, doors with knobs, and doors with push plates - We may not use the door, but we can’t throw it away. We prop it up in the cellar or lay it flat in the attic. We stack them and pile them and heap boxes on them.

The Historical Society is planning a special exhibit of old doors and door hardware – that is, doorknobs, hinges, escutcheons, keys, and doorbells from an earlier time. On Sunday, September 26th, we will present the doors at an Open House at the Museum in the Village Hall in Ravena.

If you have an interesting old door and/or door hardware, and would like to loan them to the Society for a limited period of time, please call Mary Farinelli (756-6536) or Bob Wade (756-6598). Anyone who would like to work on this project should also call Mary or Bob.
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Thursday, August 12  
Nancy Heinzen: The Onesquethaw-Coeymans Creeks Watershed - 7 p.m.

Thursday, September 9  
Annual Business Meeting - 7 p.m.

Sunday, September 26  
Open House - "Opening Doors to the Past: a Collection of Doors from the Town of Coeymans" - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, October 14  
Judy Felsten: Cooperating on Collection Development - 7 p.m.

Thursday, November 11  
Marvin Wolfe: Old Coeymans Hollow - 7 p.m.

Sunday, December 12  
Christmas Open House - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

These meetings and events are held in the Village Hall in Ravenna.

"...but those memories I have will be gone all too soon, leaving this world at the same time I do...just as the memories of my grandfathers and great grandmothers left with them, unless they are given and passed on, it is as if those things had never been...”

(author unknown)

The Society is pleased to announce that their History Scholarship of $150 went to RCS Senior, John Dibble.

Thank You!
The Newsletter Committee is grateful to John Scherer and Tom Tucker for sharing photos, and to Chuck Friday for scanning photos.

Please Support our Business Sponsors!

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If you haven’t paid your dues, you may mail them to:

Ravena Coeymans Historical Society
15 Mountain Road
Ravena, NY 12143

c/o Bill Meyer

Alcove Preservation Association

Road Pick up – July 31st & Oct. 31st
Chicken BBQ – Takeout Only – September 9th

MUSEUM HOURS

The Museum is open year round (except holidays)

Sundays
from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
or by appointment

Handicap Accessible

Little Red Schoolhouse
Fall Open Houses from 2 to 4 p.m.

September 12  History of Coeymans Hollow with Marvin Wolfe
September 19  Quilt display by local quilters
September 26  Scrapbooking with Cindy Phillips
October 3  Paintings by Ruth Tompkins & Albert Nunziato

The Hitching Post
Ravena Coeymans Historical Society
15 Mountain Road
Ravena, NY 12143