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## AS IT WAS Taverns, Dutch Treats, and Blithe Spirits

By Dr. Susan Jane Staffa

When we think of holiday time, we think of conviviality. Although the New York Dutch regarded the holidays as primarily occasions for religious observance, their "spirits" were considerably warmer than those of the staid New Englanders who, in their most extreme Puritanism, even shrank from remembering Christmas at all. The Dutchman characteristically approached his activities with a convivial attitude. The Dutch have a word for it: *gezellig*, which means easy going, friendly, amusing, and convivial. What is *fun* for modern Americans, *nice* for the British, and *delicieux* for the French is *gezellig* to the Dutch.

It is an astonishing fact that thirteen years after the Dutch came to Manhattan, one quarter of the houses in New Amsterdam were grog shops or shops devoted to the sale of cakes and beer. Usually in such houses, the refreshments would be served in the front room set aside for the purpose, and it is tempting to speculate that the term "Dutch treat" arose from this peculiar mixture of business and friendship. According to a favorite Dutch saying, "A good neighbor is better than a far friend." Thus these taverns played a surprisingly important role in the colonial period as an important institution of neighborliness. Smoking their pipes, bending over their flagons of beer or heartier beverage, the warm-hearted burghers of New Netherland discussed and weighed many a decision crucial to business or politics.

While the proportional number of taverns was less in Schenectady than in New Amsterdam, still there were a great many, and we should note that some of the most important inhabitants engaged in this trade. Arent Van Curler, the founder of Schenectady, was a brewer, as was his good friend, Arent Bradt, who was also one of the first settlers. Another early proprietor, Philip Hendrickse Brouwer (perhaps an uncle of the Hendrick Brouwer who built the house which still stands on Church Street) had run a brewery in Albany before settling here. The name "Brouwer," of course, means "brewer," as does the name "Brewster," in English.

The importance of beer can hardly be exaggerated in the life of the early settlers, for the water supply was often unreliable. In those days existence was inconceivable without it. (The place that became New Amsterdam could well have become New England had the passengers of the Mayflower not run out of beer and therefore decided to put in at Plymouth rather than to sail

farther south). Ladies as well as gentlemen shared in the consumption of the beverage as well as in its making. No housewife was without her own recipe for beer, and when she gave birth, her husband prepared a special batch of the liquid, called "groaning beer." An early almanac urges parents to give their tots a bit of brown bread before drinking their beer, which was to be well warmed.

There were, of course, heartier beverages. The historical record attests to a considerably problem of alcoholism in the colonies, and especially in New York, where the holdings of the Dutch West India Company in the Caribbean ensured a continuous supply of sugar, molasses, and rum. The character of that beverage is expressed in its popular name, "Kill'devil." Those who could afford to do so rather drank imported wines and brandies. In 1745, Ben Franklin compiled a *Drinker's Dictionary*, with nearly two hundred and fifty euphemisms for drunkenness. Many of these, such as "oxycrocium" would be unrecognizable to modern ears, but we would still get the idea if we were told that someone had "lost his rudder," was "drunk as a wheel-barrow," or was "in the suds." Ben was a connoisseur of fine wine, but he valued also the heartier spirits. Many Schenectadians shared his sentiments when he wrote:

"Tis true, drinking does not improve our Faculties, but it enables us to use them; and therefore I conclude, that much Study and Experience, and a little Liquor, are of absolute Necessity for some Tempers, in order to make them accomplish'd Orators...

There were plenty of places in old Schenectady where the *gezellig* atmosphere and refreshments were conducive to oration. In the 1660s and 1670s, the two most important tapsters in town were Cornelis Cornelise Viele and Jacques Cornelise Van Slyck. Viele and his partner, Douw Aukes De Freeze, both of french extraction, operated an inn on the corner of State, Church, and Mill Lane. On the night of February 8, 1690, the night of the massacre, many men had taken part in festivities and roistering which had been going on at this establishment. Van Slyck's place was at the corner of Washington Avenue and Cucumber Alley. The proprietor was half-Indian (his mother being a Mohawk chieftain's daughter), so he had a great number of Indians among his clientele. The sale of liquor to the Indians was forbidden, and so was the fur trade which the Albanians tried to monopolize, (Continued on Page 2)



### WHAT'S HAPPENING

General membership meeting is being held at the Historical Society on Monday, January 30, at 8 P.M. Representatives from the Historic District Commission will speak.

**If you need help at flood time, call Jim Lane at 372-5006. More on flooding in the next issue of the Spy!**

### FROM OUR WASHINGTON BUREAU

At a recent White House reception for film celebrities, President Carter recalled that for him "The high point of 'Gone With the Wind' was the burning of Schenectady, New York, just before Grant surrendered to Robert E. Lee."

### MERGER

By Jack Hickey, Principal  
Riverside School

The Riverside Elementary School — Washington Irving Open School merger is big news on the education front in the Riverside area. The Board of Education, faced with declining enrollments in both schools, has asked that Mr. John Mars, Assistant Superintendent, begin a study of the problems such as merger might cause.

Since last fall, three committees were formed consisting of staff and parents of both schools. They examined problems in the areas of staffing, space utilization, and transportation/enroll- (Continued on Page 3)



## THE STOCKADE SPY

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## The President's Column

January 1978

A new year is upon us and it is appropriate to reflect upon the happenings of the past year and plan for 1978. The past year as I think been a successful one for the Association and the Stockade neighborhood. Several major house restorations are under way or are about to begin. The downtown commercial district is at last showing some signs of rejuvenation, and as we are all aware, this is an important ingredient necessary for the continued health of our neighborhood. The boundaries of the historic district have been expanded to more nearly conform to those specified on The National Register of Historic Places. Also since the new zoning boundaries now more closely matches the natural barrier of the Amtrak right of way, more people will hopefully be inclined to initiate restorations along College Street. The Association sponsored social events have been successful and have helped to interest many new residents in the Association.

All is not as it should be however. The GrandDyck Restaurant proposed expansion points out the need for the neighborhood to work together to find appropriate uses for threatened commercial properties in the district. The City council has not yet approved the text changes to the zoning ordinance which would help to discourage future demolitions. A stroll through the neighborhood indicates that we ourselves do not have sufficient pride in our homes. We may paint our buildings but we do not often bother to pick up trash from our sidewalks, or cut the weeds that grow by the curb. Some of us do not even remove the snow and ice from our front walks. This is not only unsightly but creates a significant health hazard for our neighbors. One of our major complaints every year has been the condition of Riverside Park. The city has not spent the money to even maintain the park let alone improve it. And we the primary users of the park have not been efficiently organized to attempt even a simple clean up campaign. Many of the trees along our streets have died through accident, vandalism or neglect and a major tree planting program is needed to replace them.

Clearly there is much to be accomplished in the coming year and it can not be accomplished by just a few people but rather needs the concerted effort of all of us. In the months ahead any of you will be contacted to help on one project or another. Please watch the Association Bulletin board outside of Arthur's Market and if you are willing to help on any of the posted activities please contact the appropriate chairperson.

T. Gregory Sauer

## AS IT WAS

(Continued from Page 1)

but the Schenectadians continued to pursue. Van Slyck's inn offered much opportunity for profitable, though questionable, activity. In 1671, Viele applied for another license on the ground that he could conduct a better place than Van Slyck. But they were both outdone by a woman. When Arent Van Curler was drowned in 1672, his widow was granted a license to keep an inn, with the exclusive right to sell liquor to the Indians. Her home, at the corner of Church and Union where the Mohawk Club is now, was also a tavern.

The ladies, indeed, deserve special attention for a surprising number of women operated inns and taverns. Usually they went into business as partners of their husbands, but during widowhood, continued to be tapsters. After all, if they were producers of beer and ale, it was only natural that they continue to dispense it. Such "Dutch treating" was a natural means of support. By now we have all heard of the Widow Kendall who, in her tippy house on Ferry Street, operated a shop for cakes and beer in the late 1790s and, upon occasion, would be carried home by her son when she tipped too much, but less well known is the widow of Caleb Beck who, after the death of her husband, ran the watering-hole he had established where the Knights of Columbus building now is from 1733 onward. Similarly, the widow of Arent Bradt, in the early nineteenth century, continued to operate the tavern her husband had founded on State Street where the Cushing building stands. The reputation of all these ladies, however, was tame in comparison with that of Maria Truax (De Trieux), who lived here several decades earlier. Maria came to Schenectady late in life, but spent her younger years in Manhattan where, with her husband, Jan Peek, founder of the famous and populous Peek family, she operated an inn. Prosecuted for selling liquor without a license, dispensing firewater to the Indians, and, it is said, for running a bawdy house, she and Jan left New Amsterdam and traveled up the Hudson where they gave their name to Peekskill.

But we have not yet mentioned some of the most important dispensers of liquid refreshment of the eighteenth century. A man of Maria's family, Isaac Truax, kept a half-way house five miles east of Schenectady on the Albany road. Isaac was said to have been "a jolly-good tavern keeper and congenial friend." Even closer to home, on Front Street, where the DeGraff house (Nos. 25-27) now stands, Jacobus Cromwell had an inn, the lot of which took in No. 29, and extended to the river bank. That was during the early decades of that century. Some of these places became rendezvous for persons with particular political leanings. In the troubled years before the war, discontented colonists patronized especially two taverns on the west side of North Church Street. One of these, run by Reuben Simons, where the Colonial Apartments are, was used for consistory and trustee meetings of the Schenectady Academy when it was organized in 1785. British troops and loyalists frequented a tavern run by Charles Doyle opposite the Presbyterian Church on Union Street (No. 218), and also a public house erected by a Major Snell on Liberty Street. The latter establishment became such a rendezvous for supporters of the crown, that it was there that the Liberty Boys chose to raise their flag. After the war, old soldiers of the revolution were accustomed to gather at a tavern called "The Topham Coffee House" on Ferry Street on the site of the Barney Company warehouse.

During and after the revolutionary period, Robert Clinch managed a hotel of excellent repute on the south side of State Street near Washington Avenue. George Washington was entertained there on his second visit to Schenectady in 1782. And then there was the famed Eleven O'Clock House on the site of the present 35-37 Front Street apartments, which opened just after the war. It was operated by Willam N. Lighthall and so-called after the hour at which Dutchmen would drop in to get their spirits. During the 1840s dances were held there in a large room on the second floor. From 1772 to 1814, Sebastian Olsaver operated a large tavern at the foot of Ferry Street where the pumping station is now. Doubtless boatbuilders and ice house workers formed an important clientele for this establishment, which actually continued in operation until 1872, when it was torn down to make way for the machinery of the new public water system. Nor should we fail to mention Case Steers' tavern, opened during the first decade of the nineteenth century with the opening of College Street. Though not a large public house or in continuous operation over the years, it is the only ancient tavern from which the convivial spirit now flows.

From the foregoing, it would seem that the Dutch were occupied with, if not preoccupied by, hearty "spirits." Later generations, of less sanguine temperament, and alarmed at the social problems of drunkenness and alcoholism turned to the temperance movement. In March of 1842, the first temperance house was established on Liberty Street not far from the railroad. "Cold-water" songs were sung and a procession marched through Union, College, Green, Front, Washington Avenue, and State Streets to the front of the house where the "tyrant alcohol" was burnt in effigy. Yet we should note that the oath of members of the Society did not include renunciation of beer, but only of "ardent spirits." Thus the social heritage of taverns and public houses was liberality of attitude rather than liberality of morals, and conviviality rather than conventionality, traditions which American society inherits today.

Dr. Susan Jane Staffa  
December, 1977

## THANK YOU

Gene and Fran Gordon, who chaired the recent tree listing ceremony, would like to thank all those who were so generous with their time, talents, and donations. In particular, they thank Bob Strain for his advice and for coordinating arrangements with the City Parks Dept. Jim Lane for his help in decorating the tree and with the party arrangements. Hank Binzer for coordinating this year's criers and Eleanor Jaeger for her advise and generous donation. Feibes and Schmitt were generous enough to help us with printed material once again. Stillman, Herschkowitz, and Rodriguez donated the use of their cellar and electricity and letting everyone plod across their carpet several hundred times! Contributions were received from Rev. Dean Dykstra, Wayne Chapman, and Carl Steubing and the First Reformed Church Choir. Other invaluable helpers included Art Polachek, Tony Marrotta, Don Zizzi, Robbie Stimson, Fred Sistarenik, Art Levy, Jack Zegger, Jim Sherwood, Claire Duggan, and Betty Lane. Thanks to Mary vanderBogert for planning a delightful party and Virginia Kambour for the beautiful decorations and special thanks to Heather McCart, Kathy Lewis, Bonnie Wallace, Jimmy Cimino, Suzy Smith, Sherri Foster, and Stephanie Sosnowski. A

(Continued on Page 3)

## O To Once Again Be Eighty!

Four score years are mine this natal day  
I never dimly dreamed I'd make it all the way  
As through the past I've battled endless ills  
Crawling over mountains of medicines and pills

From my mother's knee went forth the theme  
That I was hardly worth the while to wean  
And through the passage of my tender years  
I was the cause of much parental tears

I poured out tons of hard-earned wealth  
In constant search of elusive health  
Unnumbered doctors on my bankroll batted  
Internists, psychiatrists on my bounty fattened

And so I struggled on in desperate tenacity  
To manhood and hypochondriasis  
My life a pilgrimage to find the secret nostrum  
A Florida of health alike Senor de Leon

To spas, the baths and exercises varied  
Too frail, I felt, to think of ever being married  
And thus the years of search rolled by  
As I worried daily of my symptoms and their why

I never ever, ever felt really up-to-snuff  
I'm telling you, believe me, the going was really rough  
How I managed to ever reach this, my natal date  
Is something I can only dimly speculate

Mayhap parental genes or my daily shot of rye  
Or maybe I've just been too mean to lie me down  
and die

I'm starting now a new decade of varied medicating  
For those newly-found spots of miscellaneous aching

But, I'll count my blessings wonderful and weighty  
If the years to come are still as good as these, the last eighty!

Ernie Cohen

December 1977

## CITY COUNCIL ACTS TO ENLARGE STOCKADE ZONING BOUNDARIES

By Louis Navias

In the SPY of December 1977 an article appeared discussing the proposed changes to the Historic Zoning ordinance as recommended by the City Planning Commission. The changes dealing with boundary modifications were translated into four separate Ordinances for consideration by the City Council.

The City Council held a public hearing on November 21, 1977 where citizens were given to opportunity to present their views on the proposed changes. Amendments were also made by the Council after presentations by the Stockade Association. The final wording of each Ordinance was agreed upon and presented to the City Council for consideration at their regular meeting on December 5, 1977. Each Ordinance was introduced, voted on and passed unanimously by the five members of the council present.

Briefly, the substance of each Ordinance is given here, emphasizing the changes of Zoning classification from the original Ordinance No. 14221 of May 14th 1962.

**Ordinance No. 77-88** — changes "G" Light Industrial District to "B" Two Family Dwelling District of property on the East side of North College Street, better known as 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14 North College Street. (The residents of this block of houses did not wish to become part of the Historic District, but took advantage of this opportunity to protect their residential status.)

## MERGER (Continued from Page 1)

ment. A report was made to the Board on December 13th, and a summary of the findings is listed below:

- 1) Both schools will operate separately under one administrator with each school pursuing its own program.
- 2) There is adequate space for both schools to be housed comfortably, but with some alterations including flooring the balcony for an all purpose room, the addition of toilet facilities on the second floor, and expansion of some rooms into the corridor using both temporary and permanent partitions.
- 3) Transporting Hamilton Hill students to Open School at Riverside is an unresolved problem. There is concern that enrollment may drop, thus affecting Open School staffing.
- 4) Additional parking for staff is also an unresolved problem.

The single most important aspect, from the Riverside School point of view, is that we will not lose what is presently a more than adequate building. If Riverside were to be closed, the issue and cost of busing our children to other points in the city would have to be faced and this would be most undesirable.

It is assumed that the Board of Education will be making a decision soon so that both schools will be able to plan for whatever the future holds.


## THANK YOU (Continued from Page 2)

generous donation of lights came from Mr. and Mrs. John Sistarenik. It was a pleasure working with people so willing to give a little of themselves so that so many of us could enjoy a lovely evening.

**Ordinance No. 77-89** — changes "F" Business District to "B-2" Historic District of properties forming the South Boundary of the District emphasizing especially where the Boundary crosses Ferry Street, Church Street and Washington Avenue. Specifically included in the Historic District are: 1) on the west side of South Ferry Street numbers 112, 114 and 116, 2) on the east side of South Church Street numbers 9 and 11, 3) on the west side of South Church Street numbers 12 and 14, and 4) on the east side of Washington Avenue numbers 49, 51, 53 and 55. Please note that the following two buildings are included in the present 1962 Historic District; namely number 115 South Ferry Street and number 60 Washington Avenue. Properties 5 and 7 South Church Street remain in the "F" Business District.

**Ordinance No. 77-90** — changes "C" Multi-Family Dwelling District to "B-2" Historic District of properties on the south side of Green Street, better known as 306-310 Greent Street. Please note that the structures on Cottage Row are not included in the Historic District and for the time being will remain as "C".

**Ordinance No. 77-91** — changes "G" Light Industrial District to "B-2" Historic District all properties on the east side of North College Street from number 16 to Front Street with the exception of 1) 301-305 Green Street (Abelove's Laundry) and 2) 22-28 North College Street (Continued on Page 4)




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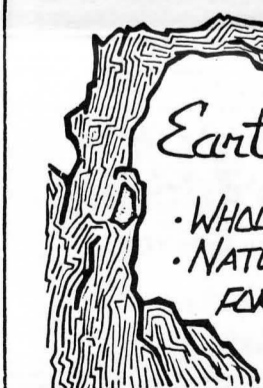
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STOCKADE REMINDER: KEEP SIDEWALKS SHOVELED (Several neighbors have mentioned to the editors that they are hesitant to navigate the icy sidewalks. The editors welcome these comments and hope that all Stockade residents will feel free to contribute to the Spy).


M.S.

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# HISTORIC PRESERVATION & THE TAX REFORM ACT OF 1976

The Tax Reform Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-455, Statute 1519) contains important tax provisions affecting historic preservation. Section 2124, "Tax Incentives for the Preservation of Historic Structures" provides new tax incentives for historic preservation and changes provisions in the existing tax code which have worked against preservation.

## 1. What property is affected by Section 2124

The tax provisions of Section 2124 apply to a depreciable (i.e., income-producing; residential if rented) property of historic character which is:

- Listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Located in a Registered historic district and is certified by the Secretary of the Interior as being of historic significance to the district, or
- Located in a historic district designated under a statute of the appropriate state or local government if the statute is certified by the Secretary of the Interior as containing criteria that will substantially achieve the purpose of preserving and rehabilitating buildings of historic significance to the district.

**Please Note:** At this time only owners of historic properties listed on the National Register are eligible to take advantage of Section 2124.

## 2. Provisions of Section 2124

**2124 (a):** Permits amortization over a 60-month period of certain rehabilitation expenses made in connection with qualified depreciable properties.

**2124 (b):** Eliminates business expense deduction for demolition of qualified depreciable properties.

**2124 (c):** Eliminates accelerated depreciation for structures built on the site of qualified depreciable properties.

**2124 (d):** Provides special depreciation rules for certain rehabilitation expenses made in connection with qualified depreciable properties.

**2124 (e):** Amends charitable contribution deductions on income, estate, and gift taxes to liberalize deductions for conservation purposes (including historic preservation).

**Please Note:** Questions concerning the Tax Act of 1976 should be directed to the Internal Revenue Service.

## BOUNDERIES (Continued from Page 3)

(Westad Cash Register Co.). These properties are situated on the strip of land between North College Street and the Amtrak Railroad right-of-way.

The Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church at No. 20 North College and the Rectory next to the Church at No. 16 are also now included in the "B-2" Historic District.

The December issue of the SPY also stated that the Planning Commission had unanimously recommended modifying the text of the Historic Ordinance to preclude demolition of structures older than 75 years. In addition they recommended that buildings between 50 and 75 years old be protected from demolition for no more than one year if the Historic District Commission determines them to be of particular architectural or historical significance. To date the City Council has not considered these text changes. It is hoped that they will do so early in the new year.

## 3. How to utilize the provisions of Section 2124

Owners of property listed on the Register as part of a district will need to obtain certification of the property's significance to the district.

All property owners who wish to take advantage of Section 2124 must have their rehabilitation certified by the Secretary of the Interior.

For further information contact: Doris Malley - Division of Historic Preservation (NYS) — 474-0479; Robbe Stimson - Schenectady County Planning Dept. — 382-3286.

## TIDINGS

In November, Dr. Susan Jane Staffa's book, "Conquest and Fusion — The Social Evolution of Cairo A. D. 642-1850", was published by E. J. Brill of Leiden. In a study that covers thirteen centuries, Dr. Staffa, who writes the column "As It Was" for The Spy, shows how the principal developments of urban life came into existence in response to international events, which altered the relationship of the city to the world outside. The book offers a description of life and events in the traditional period and will be of interest both to the layperson seeking detailed information on Cairo and to the scholar.

Lee and Marjorie Smith spent the Thanksgiving holiday with their families in Clinton, New Jersey, site of the Clinton Historical Museum Village. The museum which is housed in a four story mill (circa 1763), displays life in America during the 18th and 19th centuries and was placed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places in 1974.

Ms. Carmen Royer, who spent the past summer with the Smiths on College Street, has returned to Schenectady after spending three months working for Vermont Congressman Jim Jeffords in Washington, D.C., as part of the cooperative work experience program at the Schenectady County Community College, where she is a student in the paralegal program.

Nuala Reuter of Union Street is the new President of the Friends of the Schenectady Museum.

The Visiting Nurses Association has moved from 205 Union Street to one of the buildings at Glenvue Hospital.

The Lanes of Front Street spent Thanksgiving with Sean's and Erin's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Denton, at Cranberry, New Jersey.

Terry McCart of Washington Avenue and a 5th grader at Riverside School, was one of several students to have their paintings on display in the I Love New York Fall Festival in October at the Empire State Plaza in Albany.

New Neighbors: Mary Ivey of Union Street, who teaches archeology at RPI; Susan Brickman of Greene Street, a reporter for the Gazette; Brenda Wineapple of Ferry Street, who teaches English at Union College; Richard Scanlan of Ferry Street, a lobbyist for the Tobacco Institute; Gail Shaffer of Union Street, historian of the Schoharie DAR Chapter; Heather Calahuss of Washington Avenue, Sportstrainer at Union College; Rene and Nina Cote, who are restoring #9 Washington Avenue.

Playing their violins, Stockaders Sarah Taggart of North Ferry Street and Lisa Zegger of Cucumber Alley were star performers at Riverside School's Annual Christmas Concert.

The Bowdens of Front Street spent the holidays in St. Thomas and Puerto Rico.