



# Bulletin of the

# Passaic County Historical Society

Museum Headquarters  
LAMBERT CASTLE  
Garret Mountain Reservation  
Paterson, N. J.

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**UNITED STATES HOTEL**

140 Market Street, corner of Union Street, Paterson

This hotel was built after the great fire of 1848 burned the "Old Hotel", later known as the Oldham Shops. (See Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 1.)

Adjoining this hotel on the west was the National Hotel.

Former Sheriff, Albert A. Van Voorhis, was its proprietor as early as 1892 and was doubtless the proprietor at the time it was demolished by the great fire in 1902.

On the site of this historic hotel building, the Silk City Bank Building was erected in 1903 which subsequently was purchased and remodeled to become the banking home at present of The Citizens Trust Company.

The reader may be interested to learn that the number of museum visitors who signed the register at the time of visit during the calendar year 1951 was as follows:

January, 358; February, 1,221; March, 1,726; April, 2,989; May, 2,686; June, 2,750; July, 3,908; August, 3,317; September, 2,486; October, 1,178; November, 1,407; and December, 746. The grand total for the whole year 1951 was 24,772.



**THE DYKES BUILDING**

132-134 Market Street, Paterson

This building, still standing, although much altered in appearance on the ground floor, stands between Union and old Hotel Streets. The Passaic County Stationery Co.\* occupies the main floor. Adjoining this building on the east is a building where one of the first movie houses in Paterson occupied its ground floor; to the west is the L'Enfant Building.

Fred. W. Brindle was the last proprietor of the U. S. Hotel here pictured in 1923.

President D. Stanton Hammond announces with pleasure herewith that the present issue of the *Passaic County Historical Society Bulletin* was entirely prepared by the Society Historian, Robert P. Brooks. Criticism and constructive advice gladly received.

## Old Cemeteries . . . "There —and Here"

For the lover of history, one of the most interesting sources of information lies in the cemeteries. Many of these are just little private burial plots located in beloved sections of farms and plantations. The editor some years ago "discovered" such a place in Virginia. Being in an adjoining field to the highway, he investigated and saw the last resting places of George Washington's great-grand parents, both of whom died in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Perhaps the little, private plot on the Dey farm in Preakness and the Colfax plot in old Pompton are the best known hereabouts.

As to larger burying grounds, there is a great abundance of historical material to be seen. Many famous cemeteries of yore still exist in very good condition and they may be visited at any time. A few hours spent in them can be rewarding.

A good illustration of historical source of material may be found in the old Mobile burying ground. Hardly a stone exists which doesn't tell where the person came from and what he did in his lifetime. The "Old Granary" on Tremont Street, Boston is the last resting place of many historic figures. Here lie John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, Mary "Mother" Goose and many others equally well known.

The Burial Hill grounds at Plymouth, Mass., the "Old Burying Ground" at Deerfield, Mass. are well worth a visit. In the latter may be seen in "one awful grave" the burial place of the forty-eight men, women and children who were massacred by the Indians in one raid on their village.

To the old West, the "Boot-Hill" graveyard at Tombstone, Ariz. is perhaps the most historical. The grave markers spell out the tragedies and drama of this boom town. Such captions as:

*"Legally hanged, March 8, 1884."*

*"Tom Lowry—Shot 1881—On the Streets of Tombstone."*

*"John Blair—Died of Smallpox, Cowboy threw ropes over Feet and dragged him to his Grave."*

aid us in forming an historical picture of the times and places.

Of particular interest to persons living in and near Passaic County, is the small, private plot, along the road from Paterson to the Pompton Falls on the Colfax property. Here is the last resting place of General William Colfax, Captain of General Washington's famous Life Guards.

A very brief account of General Colfax may be of interest. He was born in New London, Conn. in 1756. At an early age he joined the Revolutionary forces in his native state.

While in Valley Forge, Gen. Washington issued orders directing that "one hundred chosen men are to be annexed to the guard of the commander-in-chief . . . They are to be instructed in the maneuvers necessary to be introduced into the army and serve as a model for the execution of them. (These men) are to be American born, of robust constitution and of good character". The motto of this new unit—"The Life Guard" was, "*Conquer or Die.*" Further qualifications of the members specified that they must be "well limbed, formed for activity, and men of established character for sobriety and fidelity."

At the young age of only a few months past 22, William Colfax of Rhode Island was selected Lieutenant and subsequently succeeded Caleb Gibbs, of his native state, as Captain of the Guards.

Captain Colfax served his commander, his army, and his country well. Three times he was wounded in action but was privileged to witness the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, occupying a very prominent position near his Commander.

Immediately after the close of the war, Captain William Colfax married the very attractive Hester, daughter of Jasper Schuyler of Pompton. The wedding took place at the famous Schuyler homestead, August 27, 1783. The "Captain" made his home ever afterward in Pompton and for more than a half-century, William Colfax was one of Passaic county's leading citizens.

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It is worthy of notice that were it not for the combined assistance and support of the Passaic County Park Commission and the Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders, there would be NO Passaic County Historical Society Museum in the Lambert Castle.



COLFAX HOUSE

Built in 1696-97 by Arent Schuyler

As a resident of Passaic County, Mr. Colfax became Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, he was a member of the General Assembly of the State in 1806-7, in 1809-10, and 1811. He served on the Legislative Council in 1808, 1812, and 1813.

In 1811, he was commissioned Brig.-Gen. of the Army, and placed in charge of the Second Division of Infantry from Bergen County, and stationed at Sandy Hook.

After only a short illness, he passed on in September 9, 1838. His burial took place amidst military honors on his estate at old Pompton.

General Colfax left behind six children and one grandchild. This grandchild, Schuyler Colfax became Vice-President of the United States in 1869.

## Pompton's "Little Yellow House"

at the Cross Roads

One traveling through Pompton from Paterson on the Hamburg Road toward Wanaque can hardly fail to notice a monument at the cross roads. This memorial, built of native field stones and surmounted with a battered ventilator from the battleship "Maine", bears a tablet and marks the site of a "Little Yellow House at the Cross Roads". This small dwelling was built long before the Revolution. During the war, it was the home of Casparus Schuyler, grandson of the pioneer of Pompton, Arent Schuyler.

The elder Schuyler settled in Pompton about 1700 and during the war, lived to the northward, on the Cannon Ball Road near the Ramapo Valley.

Casparus Schuyler's house was very unpretentious having a southerly frontage on the Paterson road of only thirty feet and extending to a depth of twenty-four feet. On the easterly end stood the kitchen, a one-story and attic affair. The main part of the building was two stories in height in front and had a long, sloping roof which almost reached the ground at the rear. A covered veranda extended across the entire front of the building.

Through its double Dutch doors, General Washington entered on July 11 or 12, 1777. The General was en route to the Highlands of the Hudson but very inclement weather necessitated a delay of from two to three days. According to the biographer of Robert Erskine, the late A. H. Heusser, General Washington met Robert Erskine here at the "cross roads" while waiting for the weather and the roads to be more conducive to traveling.

There seems to be practically no doubt that it was here in the little cottage home of Casparus Schuyler that the General and Mr. Erskine, a resident of Ringwood, talked over the matter of map-making for the army. Mr. Erskine, being a skilled topographer and "happy to render every service in my power," says Mr. Erskine in a letter to Washington, "to your Excellency, and to the cause in which the rights of humanity are so deeply interested" was tentatively offered the position of map-maker for the Army of America, subject to Congressional action.

Because of the great urgency of this type of work, General Washington, on the 19 July, 1777 recommended to the Congress that an office of Geographer and Surveyor-General for the army be established and also recommended that Robert Erskine be commissioned for that command. The Congress acted promptly and on 28 July the Commander-in-Chief, writing from Flemington, N. J. apprised Robert Erskine of his commission.

In the summer of 1780, the house was operated as a tavern by a Mr. Curtis and his two beautiful sisters. During the winter of that year the Marquis de Chastellux stopped there for the night, being en route from Philadelphia to New England. It is this gentleman, who writing of his travels in America, tells us more about the

place than any local historian of the day. The Marquis, besides describing the house, tells of a large barn on the property and a garden where corn could be raised on some three acres of space.

The noted Frenchman records the beauty of the sisters and their literary tastes as well as the fine furnishings. However, says he, "the cellar was not as well stored as the library . . . neither wine, cyder, nor rum was to be had", for there was none.

The New York Brigade under the command of Col. Philip Van Cortlandt was in winter quarters at Pompton in 1781-82. The Colonel had his headquarters in this house during his stay in the Pompton area and he was host to the General and Mrs. Washinton who arrived at the tavern headquarters on Thursday, March 28, 1782 and remained there until Sunday morning following, when they set out for Newburgh.

Upon the arrival of the General, he had an escort of an officer, a sergeant and twelve dragoons. Col. Van Cortlandt furnished the General and his lady an additional escort through to Ringwood.

This little house at the cross roads in Pompton was removed in 1890 to permit a change in the roads. Having been very advantageously located during the early days when there was great activity in Old Pompton, its great usefulness as a meeting place merits memory.

The Treasurer of the Passaic County Historical Society is Mr. William Carter Shute who is performing the duties of Acting Curator during the withdrawal of Curator, Miss Mary Schweizer due to illness. Treasurer Shute "came up" with some timely advice as follows:—"When out riding, say Sunday afternoon along the "Valley Road" to Montclair, why not pause on the way to visit the Passaic County Historical Society Museum in Lambert Castle. We will be pleased to show you the very interesting things exhibited without admission charge."

March 13, 1822, the ship Hannibal sailed from New York under the wide-spread canvass made at the Phoenix Mills, Paterson.

The first locomotive steam whistle was made by the Rogers Locomotive and Machine Works and used on the "SANDUSKY" on Oct. 6, 1837.

## Traditional Headquarters

### General George Washington at the Falls Area

Henry W. Gledhill, the local historian, states that General Washington flew his headquarters' flag over two ancient taverns near the Great Falls of the Passaic. Whether this can be substantiated from the records, the editor is at present unable to state.

There appears to have been a room in the old Passaic Hotel known for many years as the "Washington Room." This room was in later years remodeled for use as a ladies' retiring room.

Another tavern, purporting to have housed the Commander-in-Chief for perhaps a very short time, was a small, one-storied Dutch-type farm house which occupied a site on high ground near the falls. The site of this house is known as "Monument Heights".

During its history as a tavern, it was under the management of Abraham Van Houten, Helmagh Van Gieson and one, Christopher Breeze, who purchased it with six acres of land from Daniel Holsman.

An advertisement appearing in a newspaper on April 10, 1822, inserted by Mr. Breeze states:

*"FOR SALE at the house known by the Sign of the Bergen Hotel on the Hill at the Great Falls House, farm implements, 2 barns stable. Valuable shad fisheries attached to the farm."*

### THE CRICKET GROUND

The broad plateau bounded (today) by Totowa, Redwood, Union and Sheridan Avenues was open and bare ground in 1780. Washington's army used it as a drill ground during his encampment in this region. It was frequently mentioned in the orders as The Grand Parade.

During the period of 1860-70, this same ground was used as a cricket ground.

Are YOU a member of The Passaic County Historical Society? It costs \$2.00 per year and your membership would be appreciated.