



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Museum, 1863 School House

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History of Deerpark Historic Markers

Biograph Silent Movies 1909-1911

Museum Programs 2025

History of Deerpark Historic Markers

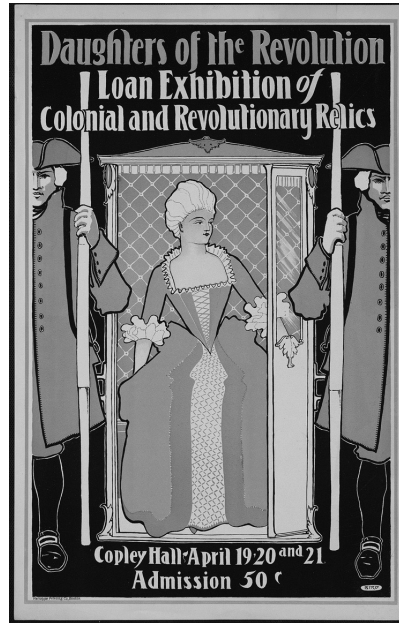
Then

Prior to 1936, there were no historic markers in this area.

On October 16, 1934, Mrs. Fred Terwilliger wrote to W. J. Coulter, (Genealogy for Enjoyment), Middletown, N. Y. announcing that her National Society Daughters of the Revolution of 1776 had appointed a committee to look for historical subjects in the Deerpark/Port Jervis area.

The Daughters of the Revolution of 1776 (DOR—1890-1983) was a patriotic genealogical lineage society to perpetuate the patriotic spirit of men and women who achieved American Independence, requiring direct decent from a patriot ancestor.

This is a distinct and separate organization from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR—1890-Present).



*Daughters of the Revolution
of 1776—Program Poster*

Mr. Coulter begins his letter to Mrs. Fred Terwilliger; “Your letter of the 16th advising that your chapter had appointed a committee to look after historical marking, gives me a good deal of pleasure because it is a subject that I have long discussed privately, but never before publicly. You are to be congratulated on your initiative in this respect.”

The letter continues with an outline of twenty-three specific sites in the Town of Deerpark and Port Jervis, many dealing with Brant’s 1778 and 1779 raids on the Neversink valley. He also lists sites about the Battle of Minisink

at Minisink Ford.

The members of the DOR sent information to the New York State Historian whose office reviewed and gave approval to the State Education Department for funding and installation. The New York State Marker Program was active from 1926 to 1939.

The October 2, 1937 Port Jervis Union Gazette published the following article entitled “Pilgrimage to Historical Points Near the City”.

“The Historical Pilgrimage held Saturday afternoon as a part of the Bi-centenary of the Deerpark Reformed Church, was one of the most remarkable caravans of motorcades ever held in the valley as many spots, little known to the general public, were visited and the markers dedicated by descendants of the original settlers. Much time was spent by the DOR Chapter under direction of Mrs. Fred Terwilliger in getting the locations definitely located and the markers from the association having charge of it.

“Among the places visited Saturday were the following with the name of the persons making the short addresses and the wording on the markers.

“The motorcade began at the Maghaghkamik Church built 1743—dedicated by Rev. Taylor.

“A short history for each marker was presented by the de-

scendants mentioned on the marker in the following order:

“Cole’s Fort built in 1755—dedicated by Justice Blasé Cole.

“Decker Fort burned by Brant’s raiders July 20 1779—dedicated by Lyda Heller Best

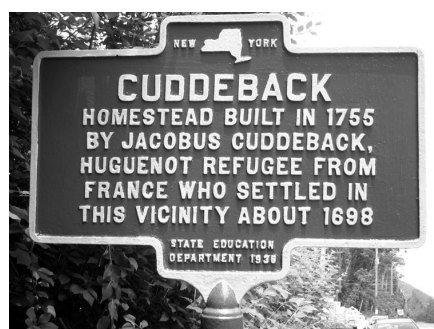
“Tavern of Peter Kuykendall Esq. burned by Brant’s raiders July 20, 1779—dedicated by Anna Kuykendal Cuddeback

“Residence of Capt. Abraham Westfall—dedicated by Bertha Bell Brown

“Huguenot named for Huguenot families who settled here “Home of Philip Swartwout—dedicated by Willard Swartwout

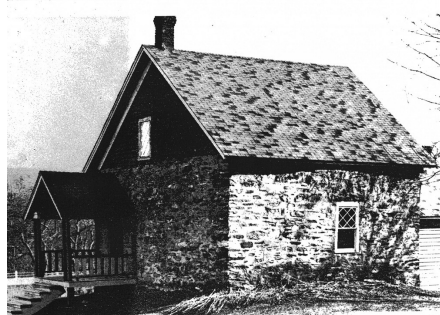
“Residence site Harmanus Van Inwegen—dedicated by Barntsen Van Inwegen

“Fort Gumaer—dedicated by Anna Gumaer Berg



Old 1936 Historic Marker—Route 209

“Cuddeback Home-
stead—dedicated by Samuel M. Cuddeback



“At this point the procession will turn and go back down Huguenot Road to Neversink Drive. Crossing the bridge the first stop will be made at:

“Decker Fort burned by Brant’s raiders July 20, 1779—dedicated by Benjamin Van Inwegen

“Black Rock School—dedicated by Nellie Westfall Woolsey, a descendant of Margaret Decker who was in school at the time of the raid.

“Jacobus Van Fleet homestead burned by Brant’s raiders July 20, 1779—dedicated by Clara Van Fleet

“Home of Solomon Kuykendall burned by Brant’s raiders July 20, 1779

“Simon Westfall homestead—dedicated by Mayor Wendell E. Phillips

“The procession ended at Romannock Farm on the River Road (Site of the first Reformed congregation).”

Now

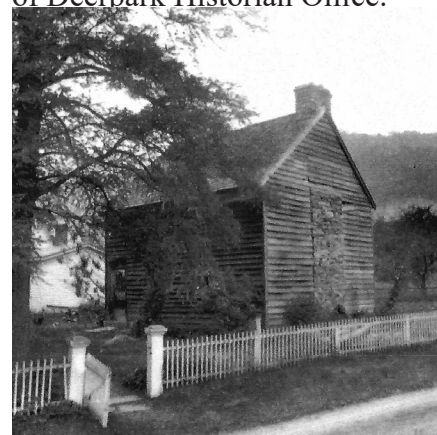
A number of these old markers are still standing. Some have been destroyed and have since been replaced with new signs. Some are still missing and the information needs to be researched by contacting The New York State Archives.



New 2023 Historical Marker

Route 209 & Prospect Hill Rd.

Over the years additional markers, in commemoration of more recent historical events, have been purchased by the Town of Deerpark Historian Office.



*De Witt Homestead
Cuddebackville*

Additional historic markers have been funded by the Pomeroy Foundation Historic Marker Program which was established in 2006.

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Biograph Silent Movies 1909-1911

Members of the Town of Deerpark Museum have been researching material for a new exhibit about the twenty silent movies filmed in Cuddebackville. Books and newspapers about the Silent Movie Era make considerable references to the time spent here. A number of these references have been included in this article, beginning with Griffith’s



**Focus on D. W. Griffith
edited by Harry M. Deduld**

"D. W. Griffith, considered one of the most influential figures in the history of motion pictures, discovered Cuddebackville in 1908. J. J. Kennedy, a Griffith associate in the Biograph Film Company, had worked on the hydropower plant in Cuddebackville. He told Griffith about his discovery of a beautiful area relatively close to New York City. After Griffith checked out the area, he commented, "It was on one of my expeditions that I discovered Cuddybackville, the most beautiful, altogether the loveliest spot in America... with lovely majesty of romance; and where in our small way we found a perfect "location" for scenes for Indian and historical films. It is somewhere about a hundred miles from New York; I don't think you can find it in a gazetteer for I don't even know how to spell the name; I don't want it found, and spoiled...trou



D.W. Griffith

bled by trippers and flying tissue-paper picnic napkins...."



***The Autobiography of
D. W. Griffith's Master Camera-
man by G. W. Bitzer***

"Under Griffith's direction there seemed to be much work on location. We had to develop a large crew who built outdoor stage sets on wooden platforms. The stories we were to film had to have a mountainous locale. This (Cuddebackville) was the ideal spot for, as the sloping hills looked like mountains when photographed against the sunset. Nora, my wife, often came along to the village of Cuddebackville, NY which she loved. As this was the first location we went on after Griffith became my director, it stands out prominently in my mind."



***When Movies were Young*
by Linda Arvidson**

"A number of scripts were collected that called for wild mountainous country, among them 'The Mended Lute' filmed

in June. Joy! But didn't everyone become delirious for a return trip, slated for a Cuddebackville week. A week in the mountains in August, with no hotel bill, and pay checks every day! You, unsuspecting sleepy little village, with your one small inn, your general store, and your few stray farms! How famous on the map of movie locations you were to become! How famous in many lands, your soft, green mountains, your gently purling streams, your fields of corn"

***Making Moving Pic-
tures—Actors posing at
Cuddebackville for Dra-
matic Scenes—Middletown
Times-Press June 29, 1909:***

"Thirty people, actors and actresses, are posing at Cuddebackville for films for the Biograph Company of New York. There are four full blooded Indians, graduates of the Carlisle Indian School, in the company

"The natural scenery of the Cuddebackville region is particularly suited to the needs of the moving picture concern, and the actors and actresses are playing in the open air the dramas which will be pictured by the Biograph before thousands of people."

***Cuddebackville—Eve-
ning Gazette, Port Jervis, New
York July 29, 1909***

"Miss Mary Pickford who played Betty with the "Warrens of Virginia " ...was rescued from drowning in the canal basin near here Sunday afternoon by James Kirkwood, an actor. Miss Pickford and a man were in a canoe which overturned. Neither could swim. Mr. Kirkwood was horseback riding along the canal path. Hearing Miss Pickford scream he



Mary Pickford

leaped from his horse, swam out to where she disappeared, dived twice and brought her to the surface and shore. He then rescued her companion who was clinging to an oar. Miss Pickford was revived after some effort.”

Cuddebackville: Scene of Early Movie-Making—Chris Farlekas—Sunday Record-January 3, 1973

“There are no historic markers telling you that Cuddebackville was an important center once upon a time when the movies were young. (Editor’s note: A historic marker was placed on Oakland Valley Road donated by the Pomeroy Founda-



tion 2017)

“For many years, Hollywood and the movies have become a synonymous phrase. But Cuddebackville was there before Hollywood and the grammar of film-making was learned in this tiny Orange County community before the westward trek began.

“And if Cuddebackville had had California’s favorable year-round weather, there is not much question that its name would be synonymous with the movies.”

Deerpark—A rural town rich in history—subtitle Cuddebackville (excerpt describing the hamlet) **Tourist Publication Millenium 2000**

“Cuddebackville was also chosen by early silent filmmaker D. W. Griffith as a site for many of his early movies. The area is still used today as a backdrop for filming. In 1994, one of the general stores was used for a scene for a film starring Shelly Winters with many local people acting as extras...

“Cuddebackville has the only traffic light in Deerpark and it is a blinking one. There is a feeling here of stepping back in time to a simpler way of life and residents would not have it any other way. There is one church, an elementary school, a few general stores, a post office, and an auto repair shop. Living here means quiet and seclusion; there are no subdivisions, but a mix of old stone farmhouses, cabins ...

“Opportunities for relaxation are endless as the town lies along the Neversink River, one of the premier trout streams. ..There are miles of trails for hikers, bikers, or horseback riding enthusiasts.”

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Deerpark Museum Programs 2025

All of the Town of Deerpark Museum Programs are presented on Sunday afternoons 3:00pm at the 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse. Refreshments reflecting the subject of the presentation are served.

May 4, 2025 3:00pm Alex Prizgintas presents “The Borschst Belt”, a region noted for its summer resorts where many famous entertainers started their careers while performing in the major hotels. (1950s-1960s)

June 6, 2025 3:00pm Joe Senece presents “The Port Jervis & Monticello RR”, a twenty-two mile long feeder railroad, built to facilitate travel for resort vacationers in the Neversink Valley up to Monticello from the Port Jervis Erie RR line.

July 27, 2025 3:00pm Frank Salvati presents “The Pahaquarry Copper Mine and the Old Mine Road”, a very interesting chapter of our local history about the Dutch Miners and the building of a 104 mile road to Kingston.

August 10, 2025 3:00pm Bill Marchant presents “John Roebling and the D & H Canal”, Roebling, the future engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge, designed and built four suspension aqueducts to carry canal boats over tributaries.

September (date to be determined) “Silent Movies filmed in Cuddebackville”, exhibit—museum tour—silent movies show with popcorn.