



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum

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December, 2015

Vol. 12

No. 4

- **133 Year Old Murder**
- **Movies Before Hollywood**
- **Legends and Lore**

Mandeville Murder

In a packed drawer of the historian's office archives, a sheaf of dingy, legal-sized tablet paper bound by string poked into view. The title, dated 1882, was certainly intriguing – "Allerton on Elting or a History of the Mandeville Murder." Here were some forty hand-written pages authored by Deerpark resident and attorney James Martin Allerton. Upon reading the first short paragraphs, I was hooked and spent the next several hours deciphering his nearly unreadable penmanship, while also enjoying his sometimes antiquated flair for language.

Allerton had conducted the examination of the murder on behalf of the people and felt compelled to write down the case and the history leading up to the crime. The following story which was set in the Town of Deerpark on Neversink Drive, not far from the railroad underpass. Throughout this article, I have used quotes from Mr. Allerton's sketch to emphasize his colorful words. See if you can picture the events as they unfolded 133 years ago.

"On Sunday August 20, 1882, the report of a gun was heard and immediately after a man was heard to groan. The groan could be heard a quarter mile away and it attracted the attention of a number of citizens who came running to investigate. Upon arrival, they found a young man who had been shot."

As he lay there in agony, he declared, "I believe that Phillip B. Elting shot me." The young man, 23 year old Chauncey Mandeville, was lying on his side with "a stream of blood issuing from his body." He claimed he was walking by and stooped down to pick up an apple and then felt a severe pain in his side.

The location of the murder took place near the old Elting homestead, at the time inhabited by Phillip B. Elting, the man who Mandeville suspected of shooting him. Elting was a descendent of a very old Huguenot family from New Paltz, New York. His father was Rev. Cornelius Elting minister of the Deerpark Dutch Reformed Church. A highly-esteemed man, he was known for his "strict piety and unswerving integrity." He was also credited with being a good farmer who resided about a half mile northeast of Carpenter's Point.

His son, Phillip Bevier Elting, was one of a very large family of children. He was well educated and at "manhood was a

man of general information and was qualified to carry on a conversation on any ordinary subject." He had even been a teacher in district schools and was looked upon as a model young man. But for one obvious fault, "his classmates called him a stingy, miserly boy."

"On the death of their father, the children separated. Some of the girls married into the best families of Deerpark. Other brothers became prominent merchants." Phillip took possession of the homestead where he lived with his sister, Blandina, and his mother, Anna Maria Bevier Elting, until her death. Just a note, his mother's probate records indicate she was fairly well off and passed on substantial amounts of money to her children and grandchildren. Neither Phillip nor Blandina ever married.

Phillip B. Elting was prosperous and accumulated other properties quickly, "but gain seemed to whet his miserly disposition to a sharper and keener edge." He began to speculate and buy up second mortgages, but in the end "his avariciousness blinded his reason" and he experienced great loss. He "acquired a mania" for buying odds and ends at auction, items no one else in their right minds would purchase. It was a common sight to see his horse drawn wagon hauling "worthless trumpery" to his out buildings and fields. He became quite indifferent to his appearance.

He went about town clothed "in rags and tatters" with "slip shod shoes at the bottom and a dirty repulsive face on top." His friends, associates, and family avoided him. He was despised by all except his sister Blandina who was "of kindred spirit."

His further downfall was aided by his penchant for litigation "for every real or imaginary wrong," which developed in his youth. His first success in an action occurred over the trespass on his property and the taking of chestnuts and apples. "With him an apple was the 50 part of a cent and a chestnut was 1000 part of a dollar." The farm was located such that one could not easily see trespassers who saw a lot of opportunity in Elting's orchards and fields. "Bad men and the small boy was a continual source of annoyance." The house had loaded guns in each room. He made no secret, "that he would shoot the first man or boy he caught trespassing on him." He had actually shot and injured a young man. The officer bound the wound and ended it there claiming he deserved it. In a certain measure it gave Elting public approval.

Now to the day in question, it was a lovely Sunday afternoon. The Elting farm was located in a lovely spot "that naturally attracted the lovers of nature thither." Directly behind the house, ran the "placid blue waters of the Neversink River" filled with "plucky bass and speckled trout". Its banks braced by mighty oaks and weeping willows.

Allerton describes the location as follows: "On the east rose the Shawangunk Mountains running NE and SW. The observer could see three states. The pinnacle of the first is High Point, 1400 feet above the level of the sea. The second was distinguished by Pilot

Knobb which towers above the first several hundred feet. The third is Mount William and Point Peter which seems to have been placed as an anchor to the lovely village of Port Jervis. Between these points the historical Delaware winds its way. Then again the valley beneath is pierced with the ever busy canal and railroad"

The Elting's one and a half story stone house was built during Revolutionary times. It was situated on the east bank of the Neversink and about 900 feet from the road. The exterior was surrounded by vines and trees that let in little sunlight and "looks like an old ancient structure in a tumble down condition." The interior was equally as bad with rotten floors and decayed walls. It was a filthy dirty place run through by dogs and chickens. How could people raised in such a refined household fall so low as to live this way?

Now, we are required to turn our attention back to the victim, Chauncey Mandeville. He was the son of Albertson and Mary Mandeville. His father, quite simply, described him as a fine young man who never caused his family any problems, not with the law nor with women.

A Port Jervis reporter for *The Evening Gazette* took down Chauncey's statement just twenty minutes before he died on the morning of Aug. 21st. He stated, "I went on Sunday to my uncle's, John Romer's, who lives at the 'Point,' where I remained for dinner. About half-past three I left Romer's house and stood talking in front of Moore's blacksmith shop for a few minutes. I then went across the Neversink River Bridge to Westbrook's barber shop for a shave, but Westbrook being away, I

started home, which is about three miles from Carpenter's Point.

"As I was passing a cornfield adjoining the orchard of Philip Elting, I saw about twenty feet from the fence lying on the ground, a nice looking apple. I passed through an aperture in the fence, stooped down to pick up the apple, heard a loud report and felt a severe pain in my left side and realized that I was shot.

"I did not see any one in the field before the shot was fired. I am a farm laborer: have been working lately for Mark Van Etten. Four or five years ago, I worked for Elting, at which time he even begrudged me the apples I ate."

The news article continues with what happened. Gilbert Mandeville, uncle of Chauncey, and his friend, Andrew Storms, were sitting on the track near the culvert. At about 4:20, they heard a loud report from the direction of Elting's. They ran down off the track and crossed the highway toward the cries coming from the orchard. They carried his nephew to the fence and laid him on the grass. By this time quite a crowd had assembled. The men then went to John Cases' house for a horse and wagon and took him to Mark Van Etten's house. Dr. Solomon Van Etten arrived about 6PM and found Chauncey still in the wagon. The uncle was unsure Chauncey could survive the bumpy trip back to his home, but home they went. The doctor determined the wound was fatal. The doctor visited again later that evening and the next morning.

At 10:40AM, Chauncey died of his wound. An autopsy was performed in the company of Dr. Van Etten and Dr. W.L. Cuddeback. They found a three quarters of an inch wound in the left side directly underneath the armpit and

over the tenth rib. The rib being fractured. After tracing the path of the bullet through the vitals, it was found just under the skin above the right hip bone. The bladder was found to be full of blood. The extracted ball was given to Coroner Shaw.

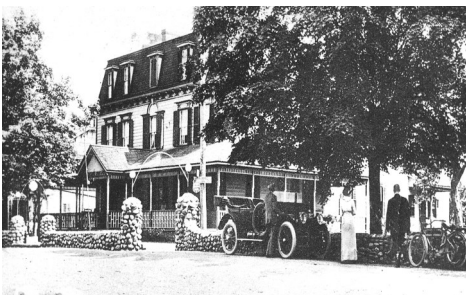
Chauncey Mandeville's funeral at the New Reformed chapel at Carpenter's Point took place at 3PM on the 23rd of Aug. The Neversink Lodge No. 358 of the I.O.O.F (International Order of Odd Fellows) of which Chauncey was a member in good standing, attended the funeral as a body.

On the afternoon of the shooting, Nathan Skinner, a farmer, notified Dayton T. Cox, Justice of the Peace, of the occurrence. Cox took Mandeville's statement and issued an arrest warrant for Phillip B. Elting. He was arrested at his house at 4:30 the morning of the 21st by Chief Wallely and Officer Gorr.

At an interview with Elting in jail, "He stoutly protested his innocence and disclaims any knowledge of the affair whatever."

In the afternoon of the Monday, Aug. 21st, Coroner Cox from Middletown arrived in Port Jervis and proceeded to impanel a jury for the coroner's inquest.

In the March issue of our newsletter, I will continue with the testimony of those numerous witnesses at the scene and other circumstantial statements that helped to shape the fate of Phillip B. Elting.



Caudebec Inn

Movies Before Hollywood

It was an exciting time in Cuddebackville and Godeffroy between the years 1909 and 1911 when movie director, D. W. Griffith made movies in the Town of



D.W. Griffith

Deerpark. He was the principal director of the Biograph Company, a motion picture firm founded in 1895 and active until 1928. It was the first company in the United States devoted entirely to film production and exhibition. For two decades it was one of the most prolific, releasing over three thousand short films and twelve feature films. Griffith revolutionized motion picture drama and founded the modern technique of the art. Some of the innovations which he introduced were the large or close-up figures, distant views, sustained suspense, and the fade-out. In 1908 he was searching for a special place to film beautiful outdoor scenery that included rivers, waterfalls and mountain. J. J. Kennedy, an associate of the Biograph Company, had worked on the Cuddebackville hydropower plant in Cuddebackville. He told Griffith about Cuddebackville, the Neversink River and the D & H Canal and its proximity to New York City. Griffith checked out the area and decided that it was perfect for filming his Indian and historical films, which called for wild

mountainous country. He was especially pleased with the lighting in the area.

In June, 1909 a special group of travelers assembled in Manhattan. They included D. W. Griffith, Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, Mack Sennet and other important silent film actors. Mr. Bitzer, the camera man, the film making crew, carpenters, electricians, plus all of their equipment were also gathered together for the trip to Cuddebackville.

They took a ferry across the Hudson River to Weehawken, New Jersey in order to pick up an O & W train to Summitville, New York. From there the passengers changed to another O & W train that took them to Cuddebackville. The entire trip took five hours. The Cuddebackville train station was located about a half mile from the Caudebec Inn where the director, actors, and film crew were going to stay. George Predmore was the proprietor and his son, Lester, played bit parts in some of the films.

The inn, no longer standing, was located on Oakland Valley Road, next to the D & H Canal freight basin. It was a summer hotel that could hold approximately eighty guests at capacity, which included some guests sleeping on cots in the halls. Linda Arvidson, D. W. Griffith's first wife, wrote, "The Caudebec Inn was no towering edifice--just a comfy place three stories high, with one bathroom, a tiny parlor, ragged, and a generously sized dining-room whose cheerful windows looked upon apple orchards. It was neat and spotlessly clean. On two sides were broad piazzas. The inn faced

the basin at the head of the canal. And the canal took its pretty way alongside for a mile or more until it spilled itself over a busted dam, making lovely rapids which later we used in many a thriller".



Mr. Bitzer, the camera man wrote, "We always stopped at the Caudebec Inn, run by my friend Mr. Predmore, where we would gather at night for rest and recreation. Evening found the men actors downstairs for a game of craps which lasted well into the night. I was too tired after a hard day lugging the camera to give much thought to anything but rest.

"In the late afternoon as the light failed, the time would be used to find the next day's filming locations. At the end of the day the actors would return to the Caudebec Inn, the men washing off the brown makeup from their legs and arms before swimming in the cool waters of the D & H Canal basin across from the inn. The women had the privacy of the only bathroom at the Inn. After changing the actors would lounge in the hammocks and porch rockers or walk down to the general store to buy postcards.

"The bar located in the Caudebec Inn was always well patronized, with Henry Walthall, Arthur Johnson and Mack Sennett entertaining the film company by singing old southern ballads. Poker was played in the small building across the road from the inn next to the ice house, and if the weather was bad

and they could not film, the poker game would be an all day affair.

"Actress Jeannie MacPherson, Tony O'Sullivan and Guy Hedlund would tell hair raising ghost stories, hold séances and even conduct tours through Rural Valley Cemetery which lay just beyond the apple orchard along the canal bank to the back of the inn.

"Nora (Bitzer's first wife) often came along to the village of Cuddebackville, New York, which she loved. This was the first location I went on after Griffith became my director, it stands out prominently in my mind. The story we were doing had to have a mountainous locale. This was the ideal spot for it has the sloping hills that looked like mountains when photographed against the sunset."

Linda Arvidson also mentioned, "The biggest thrill would be an automobile ride to Middletown, nine miles away. If Mr. Predmore wasn't busy after dinner, he'd take us. It was a joyful ride over the mountains to Middletown, quite the most priceless fun of an evening. Everyone was eager for it except the little groups of two, who sentimentally inclined, were paddling a canoe out on the basin or down the canal... Romance got well under way at Cuddebackville."

A total of twenty films were produced in this area: ten in 1909; eight in 1910; and two in 1911.

In January 1910 D. W. Griffith and Lee Dougherty, with the rest of the Biograph acting company, traveled to Los Angeles to film *In Old California*, a Latino melodrama about the early days of Mexico-owned California. The Biograph troupe then

filmed other short movies at various locations. They then travelled back to New York. At this point it was determined that the West Coast was more suitable for a permanent studio. Their first studio was in Los Angeles. After this Griffith and his players decided to go a little further north to a small village they had heard about. They fell in love with this little place called Hollywood. Shortly thereafter, other film companies followed suit and the rest is history.

Legends and Lore Marker Grant Program

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation has new marker program to commemorate legends and Folklore in New York State. They are partnering with the New York Folklore Society to promote cultural tourism and commemorate legends and folklore as part of New York State history. The markers are red and white.

Legends are sometimes referred to as "folk history". They are reports and stories that explain an unusual event, a unique person, or warn others as in a cautionary tale. Passed from person to person over time, there is often historical truth at the heart of every legend. The details, however, are often altered through oral communication.

The Town of Deerpark historian's office has received a William G. Pomeroy Foundation grant to purchase a Legends & Lore marker for the "Painted Aprons--Black Rock School" story. This marker will be placed near the Black Rock School historic marker on Neversink Drive.