



# DEER PARK DIARY

Town of Deerpark Historian's Office, Little Red 1863 Schoolhouse  
25 Grange Road, Huguenot, NY  
845-856-2702

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## Features

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by Catherine Westfall
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The 2009 Deerpark Diary's topic will be about the houses of Deerpark and their architecture.

Houses in our community are as different and as alike as the people who live in them. They provide us with shelter and keep us warm, cool, dry, and safe through the changing seasons. We all have neighbors. Their houses for the most part, are pretty much like ours. Together our homes make up neighborhoods and communities that are our town. The character of our town is defined by the homes that we live in.

Have you ever noticed that some houses are very decorative, with fancy carved woodwork, while others are quite plain? Some of these differences have to do with personal taste and what people find attractive. Sometimes the way a house looks evolves out of a tradition. Early immigrants to America adapted

their traditional ways of building to suit the weather, the lay of the land, their household needs, and what they could build using local materials. Over time, vernacular housing—architecture that is characteristic of a particular people and place—has become so much a part of our architectural heritage that much of the housing in our country fits that description. People in all parts of the United States have created houses that speak about their culture, what they find beautiful, and the patterns of their family.

Houses built in a certain place and at a certain time period often have similar characteristics. One of the best examples in Deerpark is the style of houses built during the Canal Era—1828-1898. They have eyebrow windows, simple lines, clapboard exteriors and a porch. Many of these houses are still in use today and can be found throughout the town, especially along the route of the old D & H Canal.

The first houses (1690s-mid 1700s) built in Deerpark were simple log cabins. They were usually built on sloping ground. There was a front door, with small high windows on either side. The larger back door was opposite the front door and level with the ground. This was done so that logs for the fireplace could be easily carried or

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*This picture of a log house, on Prosper Davis Road, Rio, is the only one available showing the construction of early homes in this area. The woman in the center is a Delaware Indian, Iantha Jacoby Davis Marshall. (year of photo unknown). Prosper Davis Road was named for Prosper Davis (1804-1888) who was married to Viola Jacoby (1851-1942). The town of Forestburgh requested that the road be closed, however Deerpark turned down the request because the parcels of land located on the road would have been landlocked. Photo recorded by Richard Carey, former Deerpark Historian.*

rolled in. Inside of the house was one large room, with a fireplace for cooking and heat. The ceiling was low. Short, steep stairs, or ladders, led to the sleeping rooms above. There was a small cellar used for keeping food. Thick oiled paper covered the windows because glass was very expensive and had to be brought to the colonies from England. Furniture was simple: a table made of boards; benches; stools; a sideboard; a box-like bed with a feather or corncob mattress. The interior of the homes was

dark with very little lighting available.

The houses of the next generation (1750s-1800) were built of stone. They were much warmer and more comfortable. Their shape was rectangular with larger doors, divided across the center. The top of the door could be opened to allow light and fresh air in while the bottom remained closed to keep the animals out. The inside of the house had a large room with the fireplace covering one end wall. The other end of the house was made into a small room. This was used either as a dining room or as a bedroom for the parents. The children slept in a loft upstairs. There was also storage space above the living room. Under the house was a large deep cellar used for storage. By this time the settlers were able to buy glass for windows that was brought here from England. Candles and simple oil lamps provided additional light.



*Cuddeback Stone House, located on Route 209, Godeffroy was built by Jacob Cuddeback in 1755 when he was about 70 years old.*

The D & H Canal brought many changes to Deerpark. New houses were built by new residents moving into town. The parsonage on Oakland Valley Road is an excellent example of houses built during the 19th cen-

tury. Note the ‘eyebrow’ windows that were so typical of that time. Most of the houses were built with one and a half stories. The upper story was tucked under the roofline.



*The Parsonage for the Cuddebackville Reformed Church located on Oakland Valley Road.*

Around the turn of the 20th century, home ownership became an important issue for many Americans. A simple, affordable, attractive house was what people wanted—one that would be just right for their lifestyle no matter where they lived. The bungalow, introduced in California, offered the perfect solution—one to two stories tall with wide overhanging roofs and a broad front porch. It could be built in a variety of styles and materials to suit every taste and pocketbook.



*The home of Burt Thelander and Anne Prather, Guymard Turnpike, Godeffroy is typical of the bungalow style built in Deerpark. This house was built in 1928 by Emil Myer for one of his workmen.*

The bungalow was the forerunner of the more modern styles of house that became popular during the 1900s such as

the Cape Cod, ranch house, and larger split-level.

New houses built today incorporate different architectural styles dating from the early log cabin to modern geodesic domes.

## **Our New Home in Deerpark by Catherine Westfall**

“Where was Deerpark?” I thought.

Deerpark, Huguenot, or any other place around Port Jervis was new to me. I was about ten years old, and my Dad was building us a new house on the “Huguenot Road.” Route 209 was referred to as the Huguenot Road in the early years of the 1940’s.

Deerpark, for me, was miles and miles away from 153 Hammond Street, Port Jervis, New York. No, I wasn’t going to move into that new house with the shiny hardwood floors, two baths, and a real train running through my back yard. However, I soon had to get used to the fact that since my mother, father and sister were about to journey to a “foreign” land to live, I had no choice but to go along.

My father was proud of the fact that he built the house himself, with the help of some friends. It took three summers, from 1945 to 1948, to complete and I remember crying and saying to myself, “Please let it take a little bit longer.” I wanted to stay in Port Jervis.

One of the fondest memories I have of Deerpark was the beautiful huge trees that lined the “Huguenot Road” forming a breathtaking archway for the “long” car ride from Port Jervis. Sadly, those trees would be cut down to make the road wider. I would miss those trees with their long extending

branches that bloomed in the spring, waved to me in summer, dropped their glorious colored leaves in the fall, and cradled the crisp, glistening snow in winter.

Adjusting to living in Deerpark wasn't easy. What a hardship for me, I thought. How was I going to survive without being able to walk to school, to town, to the movies, to church, to my friends, to dance lessons, or around the corner to Dunn's store. No, this wasn't going to work, how could my parents do this to me, and how was I going to cope. Well, they did and I eventually did, and after many years I'm still in the same house.

I remember that the O. and W. Railroad ran through what is now my extended back yard. That to me was interesting and fun. However, at times a bit annoying when one was sleeping. The quiet "country," which was now my new home, didn't seem too quiet anymore with the sometimes rumbling of the train, and the noise from the "big wheels" on the road. Soon though, the train would be no more, and the "big wheels" would retire to the newly built Route 84.

My mother and father worked tirelessly to build and furnish the new house. There was never much money, but somehow they managed. My father was always wanting to take a "chance" and in-



*Catherine Westfall's home, Route 209, Huguenot—Catherine Pirotta Westfall on the left with her sister Mary Ann Pirotta Hendrick. The house was built by Manny (Emanuel) Pirotta. His business truck "Manny's Dry Cleaners" is in the driveway.*

vest in property, however, my mother always was hesitant and usually did not want to purchase something that she wasn't sure they could pay for.

For example, my father wanted to buy the property, which included several lots, adjacent to our house for \$800. At that time, \$800 was an enormous amount of money, therefore my mother said no. Eventually, the building on one of the lots became a school in the Port Jervis School District. Later it became the property of the Town of Deerpark, which now houses the Deerpark Police, the NY State Troopers and a Senior Citizen Room.

My father and mother were very proud of the new house on the "Huguenot Road," in the Town of Deerpark.

Over the years, I came to realize that living in Deerpark did not keep me from enjoying life in the "city," as well as the "country".

Like others, I have much hope for the future of this beautiful valley with its winding rivers, and surrounding, sky reaching mountains which hold within their boundaries, an enormous amount of history.

## **National Register of Historic Places**

Is your home important to the history of the Town of Deerpark? Is it special because it is old? Because of its architecture? Or because something significant happened there? A building that meets these standards can be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Town of Deerpark Museum is on the National Register of Historic Places. The D & H Canal in Cuddebackville is listed as a National Landmark. These are impor-

tant designations.

The following are frequently asked questions about the State and National Registers of Historic Places in New York State:

*What are State and National Registers of Historic Places?*

Administered by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the registers are the official lists of properties that are significant in history, architecture, engineering, landscape design, archaeology and culture within local, state and/or national contexts. Over 80,000 properties in N.Y. have received this prestigious recognition.

*What qualifies a property for listing on the registers?*

The registers criteria recognize the value of all aspects of New York's diverse culture. Properties must represent a significant historic theme (e.g., architecture, agriculture, industry, transportation) and retain sufficient integrity to illustrate their association with that theme—specifically, properties must possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

*What kinds of properties can be included in the registers?*

Buildings and structures such as residences, churches, commercial buildings and bridges; sites such as cemeteries, landscapes and archaeological sites; districts or groups of building, structures or sites that are significant as a whole, such as farmsteads, residential neighborhoods, industrial complexes and cultural landscapes; and objects such as fountains and monuments.

*What is the process for listing a property on the registers?*

To begin, an application must be submitted to (SHPO) for evaluation. If the property is determined eligible for listing, the nomination sponsor provides documen-

tation that describes the property's setting and physical characteristics, documents its history, and demonstrates how it meets the registers criteria. Once completed, the nomination is reviewed by the New York State Board for Historic Preservation. If the board recommends the nomination, the New York State Historic Preservation Officer lists the property on the State Register and forwards it to the National Park Service.

*How long does it take to get a property listed?*

In New York State, the length of time required varies from six to twelve months.

*What are the benefits of being listed on the registers?*

The State and National Registers are a recognized component of public and private planning. The registers promote heritage tourism, economic development and appreciation of historic resources. Benefits include:

- Official recognition that a property is significant to the nation, the state or the local community.
- Owners of historic commercial and rental properties listed on the National Register may qualify for a preservation tax credit.
- Not-for-profit organizations and municipalities that own listed properties are eligible to apply for New York State historic preservation grants.
- Properties that meet the criteria for listing receive a measure of protection from state and federal undertakings regardless of their listing status.

*Will State and National Registers listing restrict the use of a property?*

Listing on the registers does not interfere with a property owner's right to remodel, alter, paint, manage, sell, or even demolish a historic property, local zoning

or ordinances notwithstanding.

*Must owners of listed buildings open their buildings to the public?*

No. There is no requirement to open listed properties to the public.

*Will a property owner be able to leave his property to his children or anyone else he/she wishes?*

Yes. Listing on the registers in no way affects the transfer of property.

For more information contact the Historic Preservation Field Services at 518-137-8643 or The Deerpark Historian's Office, 845-856-2702

## History of Early Deed Measurements

Have you ever looked at an old deed and wondered about measurements used long ago? What is a chain or a rod? Where did the odd measurements for an acre originate?

When the Town of Deerpark was established, one of the important officials was the "Fence-viewer". His job was to decide the necessity of all the fences in their neighborhood. They settled disputes between landowners and they were liable for neglect of fences within their jurisdiction. The Fence-viewer

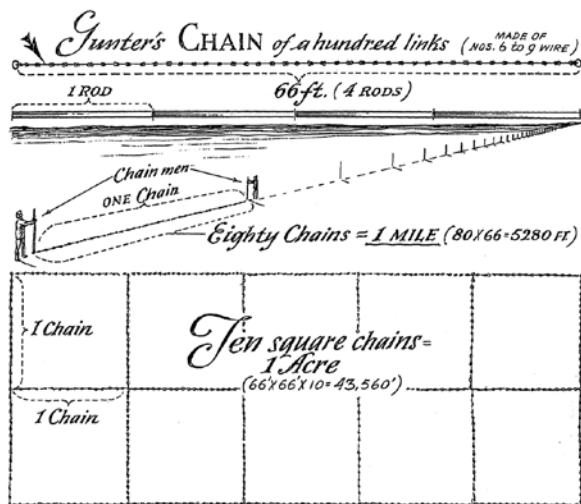
also had deputies and assistants, two of whom carried a Gunter's Chain for measuring acreage and fence mileage. A Gunter's Chain is a linked measuring device sixty-six feet long, including handles on both ends. Edmund Gunter, an English mathematician, invented it in 1620.

To this day, the number sixty-six or denotations of that number occur frequently in historical research or in real estate records. It may be the measurement of the distance between telephone poles (one and two chains apart), the width of a canal-way (one chain) or the width of a highway grant (one chain, with the roadbed in the middle).

The standard length of a rail or a section of rail fence was eleven feet, so that a Fence-viewer could walk along a fence and by apportioning six rails to the chain, he could tell at a glance the size of any field. If he wanted to measure out exact chain-lengths, he could use any eleven-foot rail as his measuring stick.

Shorter distances were measured in rods. Why a rod should be sixteen and a half feet has mystified many. Sixteen and a half feet happens to be just one fourth of a chain and the rod was once known as a "quarter-chain". Few know why a mile should be 5,280 feet long;

but if you multiply a chain by eighty, you will find that  $80 \times 66 = 5,280$ . Even the odd number 43,560 square feet in an acre is found to be the sum of ten square chains ( $66 \times 66 \times 10 = 43,560$ ).



Drawing from "Our Vanishing Landscape" by Eric Sloane