

# Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Museum 1863 Schoolhouse

Town of Deerpark Historian Office, 25 Grange Road, PO Box 621, Huguenot, NY 12746

Phone—845-856-2702/www.1863schoolhouse.org

March 2013

Vol. 10

No. 1

## Features

- **History of Deerpark Forts**
- **Early Firearms**
- **Deerpark Supervisors History Project**
- **Brant Bus Tour Update for 2013**
- **2013 Deerpark Museum Programs**

## Forts in the Deerpark

In the early days of European settlement the Lenni Lenape Indians and settlers lived compatible lives. In the early 1750s the New York Governor decreed that a state militia be created and that forts were to be built. When the Lenape saw the settlers going through their military drills, they became concerned. In 1755, the Indians moved north and west.

At that time Deerpark and Port Jervis were known as the Upper Neighborhood, (Town Hall, Huguenot north to Westbrookville), and the Lower Neighborhood, (Town Hall, Huguenot south to Port Jervis). The Upper Neighborhood was in Ulster County. The Lower Neigh-

borhood was in Orange County.

Although the Lenape Indians were peaceful, there were disagreements leading to Indian attacks upon the settlers, especially during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). Therefore the settlers built “forts” for protection. These “forts” were little more than settlers’ homes fortified with high picket fences surrounding them.

There were five forts in the Lower Neighborhood.

Cole’s Fort , East Main Street, Port Jervis, was the northernmost of a chain of forts erected along the Delaware River by the New Jersey authorities during the French and Indian War. It was named for William Cole, whose residence was there.

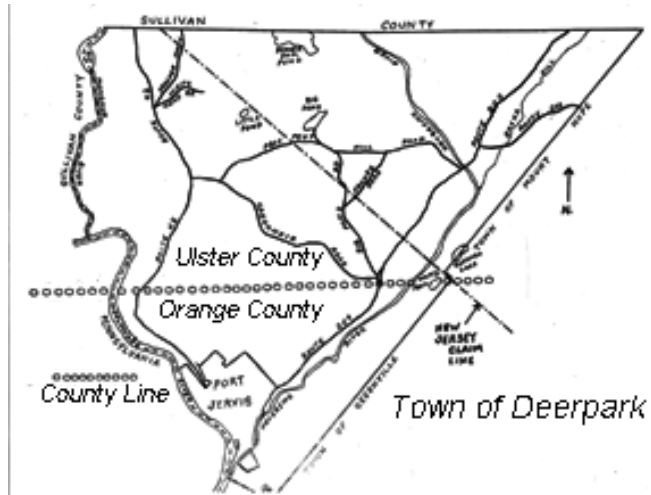
Fort Decker, West Main Street, Port Jervis, was built in 1760 as a trading post by a family named Hayne. Captain Westfall married a daughter of the Hayne family and it was said that they

lived in the old stone fort when Captain Joseph Brant and his Tory raiders attacked the valley in 1779. The original fort was burned and the present building was built in 1793.

Fort Van Auken, Neversink Drive, Deerpark, was located along the Neversink River. It’s the only fort to withstand Joseph Brant and his Tory raiders. Shots were exchanged, but no one in the fort was hurt. After about an hour the Indians gave up and moved on to burn more homes and farms.

Decker Fort, Neversink Drive, Deerpark, (not to be confused with Fort Decker in Port Jervis), was the stockaded home of Major Decker. On July 20, 1779, Brant and his Tories wanted to capture the Major because the British had a bounty on his scalp.

Fort Westfall, Route 209, Huguenot, was one of the earliest forts built in the area. It was the home of Uriah Westfall and

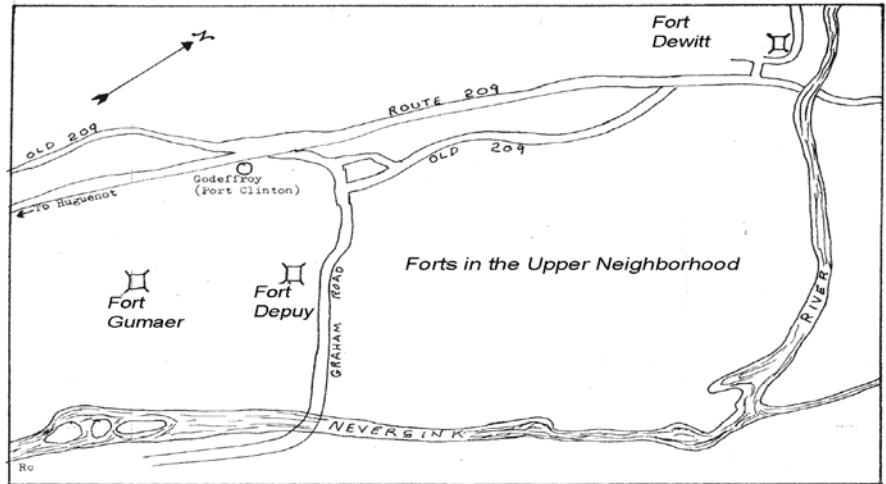


had eleven men of the New Jersey Frontier Guard stationed there. In 1758, during the French and Indian War, Indians surprised this fort, killing seven men. Peter Westfall, age 3 was kidnapped by the Indians.

There were three forts in the Upper Neighborhood.

Fort Gumaer, on the Flats, Godeffroy, was built in 1753 to protect inhabitants of the surrounding country from Indian invasions. During the Revolutionary War, Fort Gumaer was garrisoned to protect the inhabitants. After Joseph Brant burned the Upper Neighborhood on October 13, 1778, one hundred and five settlers spent the winter of 1778-79 at the fort.

Fort Depuy, Guymard Turnpike, Godeffroy, was abandoned during the Revolutionary War for lack of militia to defend it. On October 13th, it was sacked and burned. In 1783, Benjamin Depuy began to restore his "fort", reputedly using stones taken from the old Fort Gumaer. In 1803, the Depuy "fort" was purchased by Peter E. Gumaer and remained in the Gumaer family until 1878. Locally it is now known as the "Gumaer Stone House".



Fort DeWitt, Prospect Hill Road, Cuddebackville, was built by Captain Jacob Rusten DeWitt around 1770 as his stockaded home. It was garrisoned during the Revolutionary War and withstood Brant's attack. During the winter of 1778-79 sixty-five settlers lived at the fort. The building is still standing and it is generally accepted as being the birthplace of DeWitt Clinton, former Governor of New York.

The ancient Chinese alchemists were trying to find a potion for immortality and they ended up making gunpowder. When they found out that it exploded they used it for fireworks. In time they began to use gunpowder before a battle to try to scare people off before they fought them.

§

**History of Firearms**

Researched by Daniel Ramirez

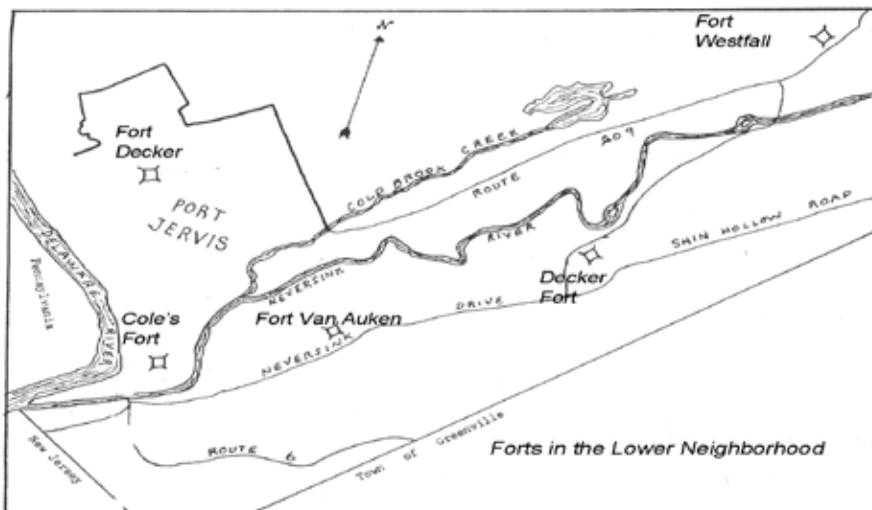
Bringing the reader back to a time when firearms were first introduced is a long journey leading us back to 9th century China.



*Chinese Fire Lance*

The Chinese finally realized that if you explode gunpowder near people they might die so they started using it in war. This led to the development of the fire lance.

The first recorded use of a firearm was the hand cannon used in the Chinese Yuan Dynasty in 1364.



### *Chinese Hand Cannon*

One theory of how gunpowder came to Europe is that it made its way along the Silk Road through the Middle East. However, Genghis Khan stated that the invading Mongols introduced gunpowder to the Islamic world.

The first mention of firearms in Russia was during the 1382 defense of Moscow from Tokhtamysh's Golden horde. The earliest surviving firearm in Europe, dating back to 1396, was found in Estonia. Up to this time the small cannon-like firearm was fired by holding a burning wick to a "touch hole" in the barrel igniting the powder inside. The shooter used one hand for firing and a prop or the help of another person to steady the device. In the late 14th century smaller and portable hand-held cannons were developed. By the late 15th century the Ottoman Empire used firearms as part of its regular infantry.

In the 1400s, the first device, or "lock" for mechanically firing a gun, known as the matchlock, was developed. Powder is held in a "flash pan" and ignited by a wick in a movable clamp. Both hands remain on the gun, vastly improving its aim. The conquistadors brought firearms to the Americas at the end of the 15th century.

In 1509, the wheellock mechanism, in which a spinning wheel against a metal plate showered sparks into the "pan" holding "priming" powder, was invented. However, these were very expensive to produce so the matchlock continued to be the firearm of choice. In 1540 rifling appeared in firearms. Sometime in the late 1500s a lid was added to the flash



*16th Century Musketeer*

pan design. To expose or protect the powder, the lid had to be moved manually.

The flintlock, developed in 1630 solved a longstanding problem. A flintlock mechanism was designed to push back the lid and spark a flint at the same time. This system was in place for two centuries.

Samuel Colt developed the first mass-produced, multi-shot, revolving firearms in 1835. Various revolving designs had been around for centuries, but precision parts couldn't be made with available technologies. Colt applied Industrial Age machining tools to the idea.

Prior to this time each firing piece was hand-made, usually by the local blacksmith. The blacksmith also had to make whatever repairs were necessary. William Tietsoort, a blacksmith, was the first European settler in the Neversink Valley. The Lenapes gave him land in exchange for his skills as a blacksmith. The Lenni Lenape Indians in the Neversink Valley owned guns, as well as other metal tools. Tietsoort was asked to move here so that he could repair their tools and weapons as well as make new ones.

The technology developed during the Industrial Revolution provided the means to produce many different types of firearms.

## § Deerpark Supervisor History Project

The Town of Deerpark is planning a timeline of the Supervisors who have served the town. To begin the project, the Historian's Office would like to copy pictures of the Supervisors. Since photography became popular in the 1880s-1890s, perhaps some of our readers have old pictures which include the Town Supervisors. The following is a list of Supervisors who may have had their pictures taken. Their terms of office are in parentheses:

Luke Rosencrance (1880-88)

Francis Marvin (1889)

Charles F. Van Inwegen  
(1890-1891)

William H. Nearpass (1892-1895  
& 1898-1907)

Thomas J. Quick (1896-1897)

Frank Patterson (1908-1909  
& 1912-1915 & 1918-  
1921 & 1934-1935)

Abram H. Hoag (1910-1911)

Herbert Senger (1916-1917)

Benjamin C. Swartwout  
(1922-1923)

Daniel L. Patterson Jr.  
(1924-1933)

Herbert Happ (1936-1943)

Maynard C. Hammond was the longest serving Supervisor (1944-1967). Pictures from his terms in office to the present are available. If anyone has pictures of the above Supervisors, it would be greatly appreciated if you would contact Norma Schadt, Town Historian.

The phone number is 845-754-8070 or mail Historian Office, PO Box 621, Huguenot, NY 12746 . The pictures can be scanned and printed for the Timeline. This process only takes a few minutes

and the pictures will be returned immediately. Thank you.

Included in this Supervisor's Timeline Project will be information of events that took place during the term of office.



1947 Town Officials—Seated Left to right Fred Fibiger, Maynard Hammond (former Supervisor), Charles Burrows, Frank

Cuddeback, Eli Conor Back row—Left to right Darwin Hoffman, Alfred Sailer, Frank Felter

## § 2013 Brant Bus Tour Update

On Saturday, July 21, 2012, the Deerpark Museum Committee successfully kicked off its first annual Brant Raid Tour in the Town of Deerpark. Frank Salvati and six members of the committee, dressed in period attire, led a group of forty-two on a tour along the route Mohawk Indian and British Loyalist, Joseph Brant, and his Tories took when they attacked settlements in our valley on July 20, 1779.

The tour covered areas of attacks along Route 42, Peenpack Trail, and Neversink Drive in the Town of Deerpark. Decker's Stockade Fort, Solomon Davis Grist Mill, Black Rock School, Fort Van Auken and Solomon

Kuykendall Fort were among many of the locations attacked on this part of the route. The tour continued into Port Jervis where Brant had burned the Maghagamach Church, Peter Kuykendall Tavern and Fort Decker. There was an opportunity to visit the old Maghagamach Cemetery where the church resided and where Revolutionary War soldiers Martinus Decker and Simon Westfall are burried.

The tour ended with a colonial-period cooking demonstration at Fort Decker in West End hosted by the Minisink Valley Historical Society. Frank Salvati provided extensive background information about Joseph Brant.

This tour was so successful that two Brant Bus Tours are planned in 2013. The first tour will be on Saturday, July 20, 2013. The second tour will be on Saturday, August 24, 2013. There were so many requests for the 2012 Tour that this year's July Tour is just about sold out. Information and Reservation Forms are available on the Town of Deerpark website [www.1863schoolhouse.org](http://www.1863schoolhouse.org), at Town Hall, and at the Town Museum, 1863 Schoolhouse, 25 Grange Road, Huguenot. Reservations are required.

The tour starts and ends at the Sparrowbush Fire House, Main Street, Sparrowbush, NY. All participants will meet at 7:45 a.m. There will be free coffee and snacks available before the bus leaves promptly at 8:00 a.m. Box lunches will be available for sale. For additional information call 845-754-8070. Tickets will be sent to registrants in the beginning of July. Tickets are necessary because space is limited.

