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# GROOMS TAVERN GAZETTE

Fall 2012

**Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern**

P.O. Box 1166 Clifton Park, NY 12065

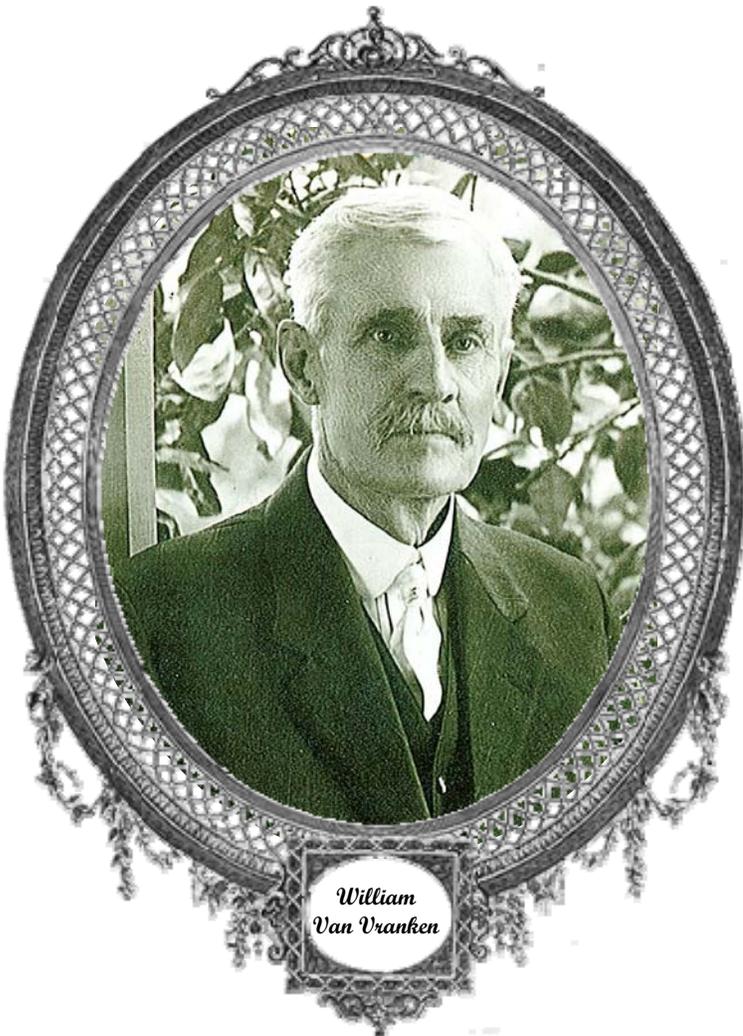
[www.grooms-tavern.org](http://www.grooms-tavern.org)

Join us for our 2012 Annual Meeting  
**Friday November 16, 2012 7:00 PM**

At The Grooms Road Tavern

Meet William and Susan Van Vranken as presented by  
Bob and Lori Liebert Van Vranken

Come see the progress on the staircase to the Ballroom and enjoy  
homemade treats and beverages. Open to all.





# A Bit of History

by John Scherer, CP Town Historian  
Edited by Bob and Lori Liebert Van Vranken

The roots of the Town of Clifton Park in Saratoga County go back 340 years, to the year 1672, when two Dutch settlers from Albany, Ryckert Claase Van Vranken and Claes Janse Van Boeckhoven contracted to buy land "over the river at Canastagione" by agreement dated May 17, 1672. The price was "550 skipples (wicker baskets) of wheat", and the deed was issued on October 31, 1677, when it was paid in full. Canastagione, an Indian word meaning corn flats, referred to the lands along the north shore of the Mohawk River, lands now encompassed, in part, by the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve.

Ryckert Claase (Van Vranken) came to New Netherland in 1651, age 16, and from the town of Nijkerk in the province of Gelderland in what is now the country of the Netherlands. As a child of peasant farmers, it was unique that he could read and write Dutch, signing his name to a contract with the van Rensselaer family for four years service to the patroonship of Rensselaerwyck in what is now the area of much of the Capital District. Ryckert lived in the patroonship for at least eight years, then in the town of Beverwyck, now the city of Albany. He married a woman named Hillegonda (last name unknown), started a family and then purchased the land on the north side of the Maquas (Mohawk) River. He maintained a town house in Albany while he developed his farmstead, selling his house and lot on North Pearl Street in Albany and moving permanently to his farm at Canastagione in 1684. This farmstead, located westerly of the farmstead of van Boeckhoven, included a small house and a substantial Dutch barn, which barn was built in a new North American style made possible by the ample first growth timber located everywhere. Ryckert died in 1688, leaving his wife, Hillegonda and six children. His land was eventually divided among three sons, Gerrit, Maas and Evert. These three brothers established farms east of present day Vischer Ferry and which bordered on the north shore of the Mohawk River.

In 1690, it is alleged that, when only 18 years old, Maas Van Vranken was captured by Indians. In February of that year, a war party of French and Indians from Canada attacked and burned Schenectady. On their way back north the raiders seized Van Vranken and a neighbor and brought them to Canada with 27 hostages from Schenectady. Family history states that one night a guard fell asleep and the two men escaped. After months of hardship and narrow escapes from recapture, they arrived home in May so emaciated and forlorn as to be hardly recognized by their families. Recent analysis of family documents have concluded that Maas was only 12 years old at that time, therefore probably not the family member captured. His brother Claas was 18 at the time, and possibly the unlucky victim of this raid.

Today there are many Van Vranken descendants in the Clifton Park and Capital District area. Since the Van

Vrankens have lived in this area far longer than any other family, they have married into many other Clifton Park and Niskayuna (south side of the Mohawk River) families. Those residing in Clifton Park who still bear the Van Vranken surname, are descended from John Witbeck Van Vranken (1820-1869) or his brother, Abraham (Abram) Van Vranken (1838-1903), two of the five sons of Adam A. Van Vranken (1798-1880). Adam A. was the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of the family to live and farm on the original Ryckert land, and he continued to read and speak Dutch, as well as English. These families all lived on their ancestral farms east of Vischer Ferry.

Many people remember Willard Van Vranken, Sr. (1894-1992) of Vischer Ferry. He was a grandson of Abraham Van Vranken, who lived in the old Van Vranken homestead on the banks of the Erie Canal. Many of Willard's grand children and great grand children still live in the Vischer Ferry area.

The civic-minded Van Vrankens have always played key roles in the community. Many have served in Town government, including Town Supervisor, postmaster, assessor, highway overseer and especially Justice of the Peace/Town Councilman. John Witbeck Van Vranken, his grandfather Adam (1760-1837) and his son William H. Van Vranken (1847-1914) served as Justices of the Peace for a total of over fifty years. The records John kept in the 1840s and 1850s during the heyday of the Erie Canal still survive and provide an interesting history of those contentious days on the canal. He served as Town Supervisor in 1850. William H. was postmaster, church deacon and elder, town justice and councilman from 1893 until his death in 1914. He served as Town Supervisor in 1905. William lived east of Vischer Ferry in the house built by his father John W. in 1847, who had carved out a 115 acre farm from his father Adam A.'s 400 plus acre farm. These farms extended from the Mohawk River to an area located north-erly beyond the current Crescent-Vischer Ferry Road and within the current Stony Creek Reservoir parcel.

John W. Van Vranken married Dorcas Cragier, another well know family in the Vischer Ferry area and she was also part of the Vischer family. They had three children; a daughter, Gertrude Ann, who married Isaac Lansing; William H, who married Susan Fort; and Adam Van Vranken, who married Elisabeth Shoemaker. The Lansing and Fort families were also long time Saratoga County and area families. The Lansings lived in Round Lake, Saratoga County, while Adam became a physician and spent his career in Watervliet, Albany County. These families did travel to Vischer Ferry and the homestead farm on a regular basis, continuing to particularly enjoy the riverside with picnics, sailing and the cabin built along the north shore of the Mohawk.

(Van Vranken Family Continued)

The extended Van Vranken family also married into other well known local area families such as Clute, Winne, Schuyler, Onderdonk, Pearse, Bradt, Fellows, Leversee and many, many others. The "joke" often stated at the Amity Reformed Church was that no one could say anything "bad" about other church members, because they were probably relatives from long ago. The stories of this community and town will be shared on November 16, 2012 by listening in on a conversation between William H. and Susan Fort Van Vranken, at their home during the evening of November 16, 1912. Presenters will be Bob Van Vranken, great grandson of Susan and William, and Bob's wife, Lori Liebert.



**Don't Forget to Volunteer!  
We need your help with:**

1. Setup/breakdown for our programs.
2. Become a member of our Board.
3. Write a story about local life in the old days to be published in our newsletter.
4. Be a host or hostess at one of our events.
5. Help provide refreshments for a program.
6. Decorate for the Old-Fashioned Christmas.
7. Volunteer to weed the garden.
8. Donate or hold a fundraiser for renovation.

Join us on  
December 9th 1-5 PM  
FOHGT Annual Open House

Decorations by  
The Country Garden Club

Music by Sweet Briar



## 2012 Calendar of Events



**November  
16th**

**FOHGT  
Annual Meeting  
7PM @ The Tavern  
Special LIVE Presentation On the  
Van Vranken/Fort Family**

**December  
9th**

**FOHGT  
Annual Christmas Open House  
1PM-5PM  
Decorations by  
The Country Garden Club  
Music by Sweet Briar**

Monthly  
Board Meet-  
ings—All  
are  
Welcome

December 14th, January 28th,  
February 25th, March 25th  
April 22nd, May 20th

*Fourth Monday of Each Month  
All Meetings Held At  
The Grooms Road Tavern*



## Farm Fest 2012

Grooms Road Tavern the center of the farm community now and in the past with great food, entertainment and conversation.





[www.grooms-tavern.org](http://www.grooms-tavern.org)

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