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Grooms Tavern

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GROOMS TAVERN GAZETTE

Fall 2013

Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern

P.O. Box 1166 Clifton Park, NY 12065

www.groomstavern.com

Holland Society of New York

Patroon Branch Annual Meeting

Groom Road Tavern October 26, 2013

With The Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern

The Patroon Branch of the Holland Society of New York, a history and genealogy organization focused on the New Netherland period of New York State history (1609-1675), will hold its annual meeting at the historical Grooms Tavern located in the Town of Clifton Park, Saratoga County, New York will take place following the annual meeting of the Friends of Grooms Tavern, also a historical organization focused on Grooms Tavern and the tavern's contribution to Clifton Park history. The meeting will begin at 2:00 pm. There will be light refreshments offered. All are welcome and there is no cost for this event.

The first permanent settlers on the land area now included within present day Clifton Park were New Netherlanders who built farmsteads located along the north shore of the Mohawk River in the 1670s. Many of these settlers were of Dutch or northern European heritage, including Forts, Clute's, Cragiers, Winnes, Witbecks, Vischers and Van Vrankens. Some descendants from those families still reside in or near the town.

The Patroon Branch meeting will feature noted author Firth Haring Fabend, who has written extensively regarding the history of the Dutch in New York, New Jersey, Delaware Connecticut and parts of Pennsylvania, otherwise known as New Netherland. Her most recent book is entitled New Netherland in a Nutshell: A Concise History of the Dutch Colony in North America, recently published under the auspices of the New Netherland Institute in Albany, New York. The title of her program is "**The People of New Netherland: Roughnecks, Grandees, Multi-taskers or All of The Above.**" Author Fabend will include a power point presentation as part of her program, and also will welcome questions regarding this historical period of our state and country.

Well known author Russell Shorto, whose book "**The Island at the Center of the World**", published in 2005, began the national and international interest in the New Netherland period, writes "For anyone seeking to answer the question, 'What was New Netherland?' this little volume is a handy, richly packed resource. It gives you the background, the actors, the action and the legacy. In clear prose, it covers a lot of history in a few pages." It is a beautifully written and artfully illustrated book. Copies will be available for purchase and signing.

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Farm Fest Sept 21-22, 2013 at The Tavern

Saturday - 10:00AM - 4:00PM - Tavern Tours by James Groom and Susan Van Vranken

Noon - to 4:00PM - Artisan Demonstrations in the Store

2:00PM - Celtic Music

Sunday - Noon to 4:00PM - Antique Car Show and Tavern Tours Continue



A BIT OF HISTORY

by John L. Scherer

The Grand Erie Canal

The Erie Canal ran through the Southern portion of the Town of Clifton Park for about 10 miles, passing through Forts Ferry, Vischer Ferry and Rexford. Remains of the canal are evident in the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve and at the Rexford Yacht Club. While the canal was in operation from 1825 to 1917, the southern portion of the Town teemed with activity. Immigrants moving west and freight from both directions came through Clifton Park on the canal.

Canal oriented businesses sprang up. There were three dry docks in our Town where canal boats were built and repaired. Two of these were in Vischer Ferry and the third was at a community that grew up along the canal near the Half Moon town line, adjacent to a canal store run by Nicholas Clute. There were also canal stores at Willow Spring (now Willow Spring Perennials), Vischer Ferry, Fundy's Basin (now Riverview Landing) and Rexford. Mule barns, where fresh Mules could be hired, were located at Willow Spring, Vischer Ferry and Fundy's Basin. There were three locks: Lock 19 at Vischer Ferry, Lock 20 at Fundy's Basin, and Locks 21 and 22 at Rexford. An aqueduct at Rexford brought the canal across the Mohawk River so it could continue to Schenectady.



The Erie Canal was a milestone in American history. Although digging did not begin in Clifton Park until 1822, when local residents were paid 7 cents per cubic yard of earth excavated, construction of the Erie Canal was actually begun in Rome, New York on the Fourth of July, 1817. When completed in 1825, the canal was a narrow ditch 28 feet in width at the bottom, 40 feet wide on the surface, and extending 363 miles between Albany and Buffalo. The depth of the water averaged four feet. To compensate for the various levels, there were eighty-three locks along the length of the canal. Twenty-seven of these locks were

in the first fifteen miles or so between Albany and Schenectady around the Cohoes Falls. The Mohawk River was crossed by two mighty aqueducts, one at Crescent and another at Rexford. At Lockport, the famous combines - five pairs of double-locks - were the marvel of the engineering world. Indeed, the Grand Western Canal, as the Erie was often called, was the Eighth Wonder of the World. Within ten years of its opening work began on enlarging the canal. It would now be wider and deeper. The canal was enlarged through the Town of Clifton Park in 1842.

Besides freight, the canal also transported passengers via packet boats. Although accommodations on a packet boat often left something to be desired, they offered the tourist or other traveler and inexpen-

sive, leisurely mode of conveyance. Maximum speed limit on the canal was four miles an hour. Many tourists and famous travelers popularized the canal as a mode of travel, through their written accounts. A few well known people who journeyed the canal were Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Tyrone Power, and a Frenchman named Michael Chevalier. Chevalier writes of his trip on the canal in 1839:

"You can get no idea of this great channel, with its fleet of light, elegant, covered barks gliding along at a rapid rate, and drawn by a powerful team. Every minute boats are passing each other, and the boatman's horn warns the lock-master to be in readiness. Each moment the landscape varies; now you traverse large new towns, fine as capitols, with all their houses having pillared porticos and looking externally like little palaces; it is an admirable spectacle of life and variety."

It almost sounds as though he must have passed through Vischer Ferry.

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The people who lived along the route of the canal, and especially those whose livelihood depended on the canal were a separate breed of character. The Erie canaller felt a strong kinship with his maritime colleagues, giving the canal a nautical flavor. The canal packet boats were named after the sleek sailing craft of the Atlantic service. The captain of an Erie packet could proudly array himself in full seaman's regalia. Towns along the route of the canal were "ports." Many of these towns throughout central and western New York survive today - Gasport, Port Byron, Brockport and Lockport.

A boater meeting another on the canal, might say "Full freightings, Captain!," a customary greeting from the mariner's world. He would refer to his tour of duty as a "trick" and at night he slept in his "cuddy" on the canal boat, a nautical term referring to the sleeping room on a ship. The canal even affected the women's domain. Gossip traveled "along the towline" and one canal wife might tell another that she "heard it by the towpath news." If she told something she shouldn't, the phrase was "spill the nosebag."

During its first forty years, the Erie Canal




made transportation and commercial history. In the early 1870s, freight traffic gave the canal a period of its greatest use. In 1875 an average of 95 boats a day passed through Lock 19. However, the Railroad soon won out and the Iron Horse supplanted the canal boat. It was the sixteen locks around the Cohoes Falls that gave birth to the nation's first railroad in 1831. Because it took a full day of traveling to clear the "terrible sixteens," a railroad was established between Albany and Schenectady, making the trip in little more than an hour. This saved travelers a whole day in traveling time.

These nice summer days are a great time to acquaint yourself with the remains of the Erie Canal, Clute's Drydock, and Lock 19 in the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve. These remains, and perhaps the ghosts of a few ship's carpenters and canallers, remind us of a time when southern Clifton Park was not quite so quiet - a time when brawls, drinking contests, cock fights, and a race to enter the lock first were all too frequent.

2013 Calendar of Events



<p>September 21-22nd Saturday 10AM - 4PM Sunday Noon—4PM</p>	<p>Farm Fest: Open House Includes "Erie Canal Exhibition"</p>
<p>October 26th Saturday 2 PM - 5 PM</p> 	<p>Annual Meeting and Program 1-5PM Refreshments will be served Meeting open to the Public</p>
<p>December 8th Sunday 1 PM - 5 PM</p>	<p>Old Fashioned Christmas Open House Music by Sweat Briar Players and the Decorations provided by the "Country Garden Club"</p>
<p align="center">FOHGT Monthly Board Meetings Fourth Monday of each month held at the Grooms Tavern from 7 PM - 9 PM. Meetings are open to the public.</p>	



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 Old-Fashioned Christmas.
7. Volunteers to weed the garden.
8. Donate or hold a fundraiser for our renovations.



www.groomstavern.com

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