

RHS: Spring 2021

Friday, February 26, 7:00 pm on ZOOM, David Turner – Forgotten Hamlets of Southern Dutchess County

A pictorial tour with vintage postcards of southern Dutchess County's forgotten hamlets. Learn about the hamlet of Chelsea on Hudson, whose tide changed with the rise and fall of industry on the river. Hear about a woman and her baby who were spared by inches from a runaway trolley that crashed into her house in South Dover. See photographs of southern Dutchess County before it changed from a landscape of small farming communities to suburban oasis. Included in the talk will be dozens of turn-of-the-century images of little known hamlets that are no more than cross roads today, such as Billings, New Hackensack, Glenham, Holmes, Webatuck, Mabbettville, Verbank Village, New Hamburg, Beekman and many more.

President's Message

2020 was a difficult year for all of us but there were some things that I am happy about. My wife and I are well, although some friends and family had Covid they are well now, and we were blessed with a granddaughter last summer. I was pleased to see that the Village pulled together to try and keep our businesses open and I am thankful for all of the hard work on the part of the State and County officials that have helped to keep us safe. There is hope for all of us with two vaccines already available and, hopefully, more in the coming months. So wear a mask, socially distance and hopefully this year will be a good one.

Our work in the archives at the Starr Library has been very limited for the past year. We miss working with our volunteers and helping visitors with their research. The RHS board has been meeting monthly via Zoom to work on our continuing mission. We have been able to keep our quarterly newsletters on schedule with great articles from our friends. We have managed to provide you with six Zoom programs so far and more to come this spring. I do miss having the programs at the Starr where you can make comments, ask questions of the speaker and share some cookies with us after the program and talk about how things are going with you.

These Zoom programs have been added to our website which now total nearly 80 videos produced over the past 10 years. (Our website is: Rhinebeckhistoricalsociety.org) then you "click on the Video link") You should also know that even though our attendance averages 20 to 50 people on Zoom or in person over the years, 30,000 people have watched the videos on our website over that same period of time. And, that does not include all of you who watch the programs on PANDA TV 23. So, we are making every effort to keep things going as we wait to get back to work at the Starr.

We are in the middle of our 2021 membership campaign. If you have not yet sent in your membership form. we hope that you will renew your membership for this year. The RHS appreciates the support of our members. Please stay safe and healthy and we will be back together sometime in the near future.

David Miller, President

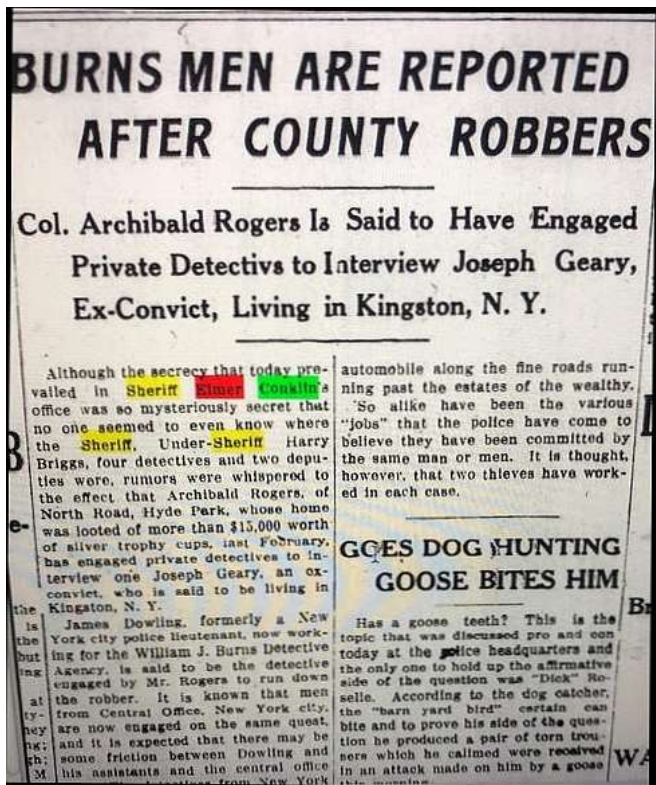
The 1916 Rhinebeck Crime Wave by Jack Conklin

While researching old newspaper articles on an ancestor of mine, I uncovered entries related to a major crime wave in the spring and summer of 1916. The story and the crime wave came to an end at Ferncliff, the Astor estate in Rhinebeck.

In 1915, Elmer J. Conklin, an ancestor of mine, was elected Sheriff of Dutchess County. He served as Sheriff until 1921 when he was appointed Postmaster of the Poughkeepsie Post Office. His term of service spans World War 1 and the beginning of Prohibition.

A search of old newspaper articles turned up some interesting episodes in Sheriff Conklin's law enforcement career. In the spring and summer of 1916, the newspaper articles report on the break-ins and burglaries of some of the wealthiest landowners in Dutchess County—Tracy Dows of Foxhollow Farm, George Miller of The Grove, Levi P. Morton of Eilerslie, Mrs. Richard Aldrich of Rokeby, William Delano of Steen Valetje, and Colonel Archibald Rogers of Crumwold Hall to name a few.

It appears that Colonel Rogers, skeptical of Sheriff Conklin's ability to stop the break-ins, organized support of his neighbors and hired the famous Burns Detective Agency to uncover the villains.



When asked to comment on Colonel Rogers hiring the Burns Agency, the Sheriff was quoted as saying "I sincerely hope Burns puts all his men on the case."

Colonel Archibald Rogers (1852-1928) was a native of Hyde Park. He graduated from Yale as an engineer and worked in the railroad industry. He was a true "aristocrat", a sportsman of every description—defender of the American Cup in yachting, polo player, ice boating enthusiast, first-class golfer, and foxhunter with hounds and horses. It was his collection of silver trophies that attracted the robbers. It was reported that \$15,000 worth of silver was stolen, hence Rogers's interest in hiring the Burns Agency.

Carney Rhinevault's book, *Colonel Archibald Rogers and the Crumwold Estate*, published in 2003, notes the robberies of Colonel Rogers's silver trophies and his frustration with the district attorneys who would not issue a search warrant that Rogers requested. Rogers was convinced that the robber was a man named Ralph Rose, a fugitive from justice, who some years earlier robbed the West Park Post Office. Colonel Rogers wrote to his neighbor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who in 1916 was Acting Secretary of the Navy, asking for Federal help in catching Rose. He wanted to know what sort of records the Federal authorities had on Rose. FDR responded quickly and

promised to help. FRD's search turned up a description of Rose, a list of his aliases and past crimes. The problem was that Colonel Rogers was wrong in tying Rose to the Rhinebeck break-ins. Rhinevault reported that Roosevelt and neighbor Tracy Dows drove up to the Astor estate to inspect the site of the crime.

Vincent Astor's Ferncliff, George Merritt's Leacote and Richard Aldrich's Rokeby all hired watchmen. On August 5, 1916, three burglars stuck-up the watchman at Rokeby, but nothing was stolen. Mrs. Aldrich complained about the "wholesale house-breaking epidemic" in Rhinebeck.

On August 6, 1916, James Kerley, an employee of Leacote on River Road in Rhinebeck, discovered a hidden stash of loot. The find included a bicycle owned by the butler of the Miller estate along with valuables from the Miller and Montgomery houses in Rhinebeck. Included were pieces of silver wrapped in flannel clothing. Rather than return the recovered items, the Sheriff's Deputies, staked out the location waiting for the robber to return to claim his prize. The location was reported to be along the "S" curve of River Road between Ferncliff and Leacote.

The *Poughkeepsie Eagle News*, in the August 7 edition, reported on the confrontation that ended in a running gun battle. The robber, identified as Fred "Fritz" Cramer, age 36, was shot by Deputy Sheriff M.T. Baumbusch. Cramer died of his wounds at Vassar Hospital. The deputy recovered a black calfskin satchel with a complete set of burglar's tools. The satchel was an important "find" and key to the second part of this story. The headline in the paper read "Robber Shot – Dies." That ended the crime wave!



But to add to the drama, Mrs. Frank Dominick of Rensselaer, asked the local police for help in finding her missing husband. The Rensselaer police investigation tied the missing man to the shooting at Ferncliff. The result was an interview with the Dutchess County Sheriff. She identified a photo of her husband and the satchel that contain the burglar tools.

**FIND BURGLAR
FATALLY SHOT WAS
FRANK DOMINICK**

**Clothing of Rensselaer Man
Shot in Woods of Ferncliff
Last August by Authorities
Identified by Woman Claim-
ing to Be His Widow.**

**ONCE ARRESTED
FOR SAFE BLOWING**

Mrs. Dominick, after questioning and having her Rensselaer house searched by Deputy Baumbusch, admitted that her husband had been convicted of burglary in California. The activity involved blowing up a safe. Dominick turned "States Evidence", which helped to convict his accomplices. One newspaper article reported he escaped a sentence, and another reported he served a short prison term. In California he went by the alias of Antonio Reichert.

Frank-Fritz-Fred-Antonio came to the United States from Poland around 1900. Mrs. Dominick, mother of three children, said the family had lived in Hoboken, NJ, Buffalo, NY as well as Los Angeles, CA. Her husband was a bricklayer by trade and often was away from home looking for work. She said he left Rensselaer on August 4, with his black satchel to look for work. After a week, she reported him missing. I could find no information on the widow's situation after the shooting death of her husband.

In an unrelated Astor event, Sheriff Conklin appointed Vincent Astor as Deputy Sheriff. It was said that Astor wanted the "gold badge" to accompany his newly awarded pilots' wings earned by flight training with the Naval Reserve. Astor's donation of an airplane to the Naval Reserve may have assisted in earning his wings!

To Be Sworn in as Deputy.

Vincent Astor, whose summer home is at Rhinebeck, has applied to Sheriff Elmer Conklin for the position of deputy sheriff. Mr. Astor will be sworn in shortly and given one of the gold badges that will be the insignia of his new office. The millionaire recently returned to his summer palace, "Ferncliffe," for the season. It is said he will remain in Dutchess County until fall.

New York, May 2.—Following in the footsteps of Vernon Castle, Vincent Astor, multi-millionaire, has become an aviator. Astor has joined the aerial corps of the second naval battalion, naval reserve, and will begin training within a week. Astor is scheduled to be made lieutenant of the corps soon. He gave \$5,000 toward the purchase of an aeroplane when the corps was founded.


In December of 1916, Vincent Astor formed the "Upper Hudson Protective Society" with the objective of stopping further break-ins. The list of members was impressive: Thomas Hunt, Herman Livingston, Tracy Dows, Archibald Rogers, Warren Delano, John Roosevelt, William Dinsmore, Frederick Vanderbilt, and Robert Huntington. The "A-List" of the wealthy "River People."

Other newspaper articles document typical law enforcement activities with headlines such as: "\$3,000 Taken in Hopewell Robbery", "Washington Thieves Confess", "Tramp Broke into Home of Dr. John Cotting", "Sheriff's Office Nabs 5 Men in Flagpole Theft", "Robbers Carry Railroad Safe One Mile for \$1", "Postmaster is Robbers' Victim".

Looks as if the Sheriff's life was active, but nothing as dramatic as the Rhinebeck caper!

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The RHS is looking for volunteers to help in the local history room at the

Starr Library. The room is open to the public on Thursdays from 10 am to 4 pm. Scholars and researchers come in looking for help with their work, and others send in research requests via email. Volunteers could either assist them directly or do so indirectly by working with the collections in our archives. No prior research skills are necessary. However, attention to detail, interest in history, delight in working with other people, and joy at solving puzzles are all most desirable. It is a great opportunity to learn about our town while helping others. For information call Mike Frazier at 845.876.7462 or e-mail michaelfrazier@earthlink.net.

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Doing Local History Research? The local history room is now open, but only by appointment. Masks and social distancing required, upon arrival you will be given gloves for your visit, maximum 30 minutes. Email michaelfrazier@earthlink.net to make an appointment or to ask questions about Rhinebeck history.

[Check out our website:](http://Rhinebeckhistoricalsociety.org)

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THE RHINEBECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY - UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Friday, February 26, 7:00 pm on ZOOM, David Turner – Forgotten Hamlets of Southern Dutchess County

A pictorial tour with vintage postcards of southern Dutchess County's forgotten hamlets. Learn about the hamlet of Chelsea on Hudson, whose tide changed with the rise and fall of industry on the river. Hear about a woman and her baby who were spared by inches from a runaway trolley that crashed into her house in South Dover. See photographs of southern Dutchess County before it changed from a landscape of small farming communities to suburban oasis. Included in the talk will be dozens of turn-of-the-century images of little known hamlets that are no more than cross roads today, such as Billings, New Hackensack, Glenham, Holmes, Webatuck, Mabbettsville, Verbank Village, New Hamburg, Beekman and many more.

Friday, March 26, 7:00 pm on ZOOM – TO BE ANNOUNCED. We are working on finding a speaker for this day. As soon as we develop a program we will send out an email to everyone.

Friday, April 30, 7:00 pm on ZOOM, Beverly Kane - Sacred Grounds - History of Rhinebeck Cemeteries

There are over 10 burial grounds in the Town of Rhinebeck. Join us to learn more about the history and development of these sacred grounds from the early Dutch and Palatine settlers to the present day. Special attention will be paid to Rhinebeck Cemetery, the largest cemetery in the town.