



# It's Been a Busy Year at The Jug

**W**e had a record year at the Jug in 2019. Just this month we had our last Sparta Walking Tour for 2019, we are wrapping up our 2019 Sparta Speaks Series: Return to the River, and we are celebrating collaborations with two other Ossining organizations. The Jug Tavern of Sparta would like to thank the Briarcliff Brokerage of Houlihan Lawrence for their generous support of our Sparta Speaks program, our wonderful array of guides, speakers, and performers, and our many volunteers that make everything happen.

**T**own Historian Scott Craven kicked off *Sparta Speaks 2019: Return to the River* with his presentation on the *Mouth of the Croton River* at our Annual Meeting in May. This summer, **Suzanne Altman** packed the house with her lecture *The Art of the Hudson River School*. And this month **Tim Rowell** and **Ambrose Verdibello** return for their fourth year for two performances of *Banjo, Fiddle and the Hudson Highlands*.



**I**n conjunction with our Return to the River theme, we were delighted to partner with the **Ossining Arts Council** ([www.ossiningartscouncil.org](http://www.ossiningartscouncil.org)) for River Reflections, an exhibit of Hudson River-inspired artwork by local artists. The exhibit, which opened in August, is on display at The Jug through October. Thank you to **Jill Kiefer** and the Ossining Arts Council for lending your talents and bringing us new visitors and friends.

*Save the Date*  
for our annual *Holiday Gathering*  
on December 8, 2019 (5:00pm to 8:00pm).  
Watch for your invitation in the mail.



**A**lso in October, The Jug Tavern partnered with the **Ossining Historic Cemeteries Conservancy** ([www.ossininghistoriccemeteries.org](http://www.ossininghistoriccemeteries.org)) for a walk through history when we were the home base for the first *OHCC Stories in Stone-Sparta Cemetery Tour*. Participants signed in at the Jug and were bussed to Sparta Cemetery (thanks to the Ossining Recreation Department) for a 90-minute tour of the old burial ground guided by Ossining's Village Historian **Dana White** and Town Historian **Scott Craven**. Afterwards participants reconvened at the Jug for refreshments and good conversation. The afternoon rain did not let up, but that did not stop our intrepid group. Many commented that the weather added to the atmosphere of the graveyard trek. Thank you to Dana, Scott, and all the great folks at OHCC. We hope this is just the first of many tours to come.

**We hope to see you soon.** If you are not already a member, please join our mailing list for invitations to events and reminders of what's happening at The Jug. Or better yet, become a member! Find us on Facebook and at [www.jugtavern.org](http://www.jugtavern.org).

# A Sketch of Old Sparta Revisited

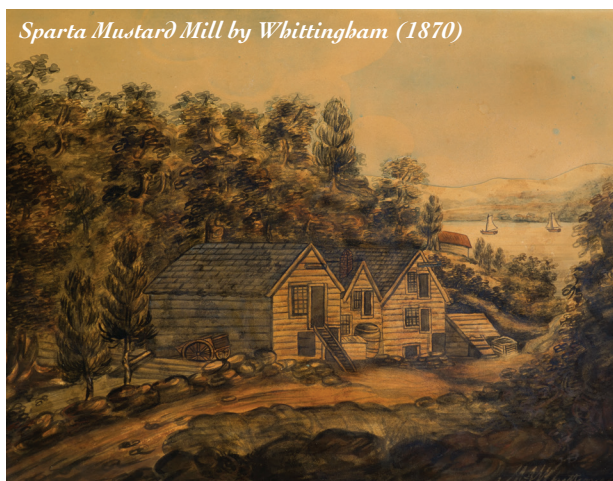
**L**ongtime Sparta resident Helena Mae Foster (1866–1947) penned “Sketch of Old Sparta,” for the 1935 Westchester County Historical Society quarterly bulletin. A teacher and local historian all her life, Foster was born to a family with deep roots in Ossining. Known as Nellie to her family, to the rest of the world she was the beloved “Miss Foster,” a school teacher at Park School from 1889 to 1933, a member of the First Baptist Church and Ossining Historical Society, and at the time of her death a board member of the of the Ossining Public Library. For most of her life, Miss Foster lived in Hillside Cottage, the family home on “Still Hill” (or Still Court), built in the late 1860s by her family as their summer retreat, which later became their year-round home.



Here are excerpts of Miss Foster’s 1935 article. At that time Sparta was looking to the future, while Nellie was reflecting on the past. She does not mention the massive Vanderlip project of the early 1920s that restored the neighborhood after years of neglect and deterioration (although she does note the iron fence that came from the project). Her words are a gentle history lesson that mix fact with oral tradition to ensure we don’t forget the founding families and Sparta’s historical significance to the history of Ossining.

“Among the first settlers were the Agate and Priestly families. Later were the Wards, Orsers, Sherwoods, Hights, Wheelers, Garrisons, Archers and Storms. Thomas Agate was a storekeeper, Edward Agate a bricklayer, Richard Hillier a physician, Rev. John Burgess a clergyman.”

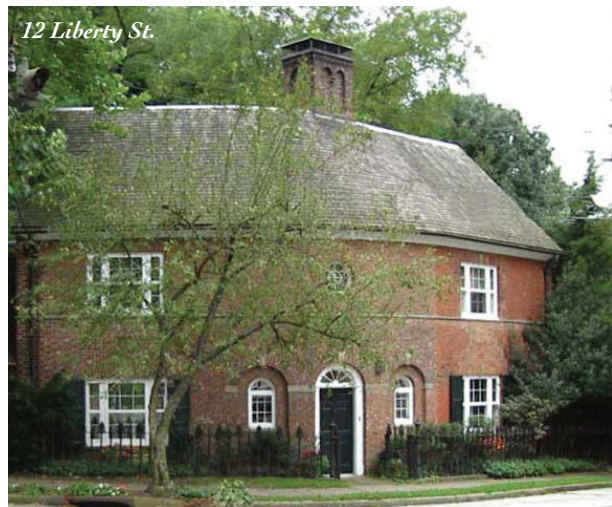
“The community grew steadily for a time [1795-1830]. Brickyards were established. A stone quarry opened on the brook running south of Mount Murray a grist mill was erected. The contour of the shore line was suited to the shipping and during the period of navigation sloops were in frequent communication with the metropolis. Perhaps this commerce was made up of bricks and stone, of farm products, wheat and flax. At one time an attempt was made to raise silkworms, and many mulberry trees were planted. However, owing to the rigor of the climate the project was abandoned.”



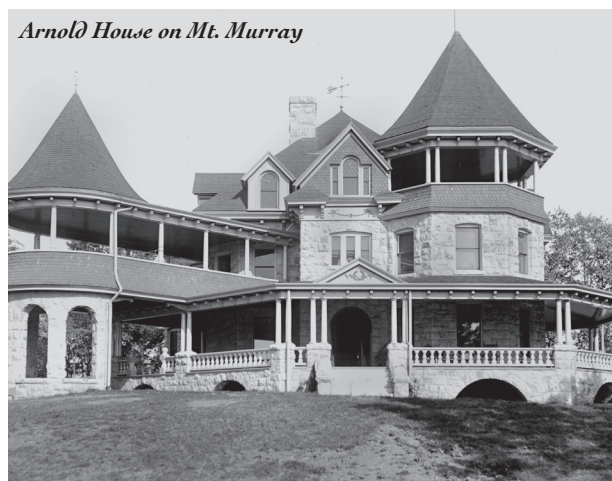
“In the early period the houses on the streets were neatly kept and the gardens gay with old fashioned posies and walks bordered with boxwood hedges. At the foot of Liberty Street stands the Agate and Carmichael House. . . . The present iron fence surrounding the property was added (1921) from the old Custom House . . . in New York. In early times there was in front of the house a small green or park, where under the overhanging willows the gentle folk gathered. The older ones from the benches watched the younger dance.”



“The Tavern, ‘Washington Inn’ now known as the Circular House [a Vanderlip remodel], still stands [at 12 Liberty St.]. . . . Near the tavern in the square was the well—the common source of water for use of the village. Sanitary precautions were unheard of. Rugged individualism was the common lot.”



“Mount Murray rises abruptly about one hundred feet above the river [location of Scarborough Manor today]. . . .The mount was named for Maria Murray, who, deserted by her fiancé, in despondency and grief cast herself into the river. . . . During the revolution it served as a lookout and the “Scouts” had a hut there from which they could watch the British forces. Opposite here in the Hudson in 1780 the ‘Vulture’ anchored after its unsuccessful attempt to get Major Andre and a cannon ball was fired at the old Presbyterian Church in the burying ground. . . .Sparta brook to the south of Mount Murray was a sizeable kill. Here stood the grist mill. Some two hundred feet up the brook one could still see as late as 1927 the foundation of the dam.”



“The Sparta school was started in 1840. . . . The alphabet and multiplication tables were taught by songs. When the school was merged with the Ossining schools the old bell was appropriated by a junk man.”



“The Baptist Church in Sing Sing started a church mission and Sunday School in the brick house opposite Washington Inn [1 Rockledge Ave.]. Subsequently, this work was taken over by the Ossining Presbyterians who later held services in the Sparta schoolhouse. When funds were raised it built in 1888 the stone edifice known as Calvary Chapel on Fairview Place. In May 1895 . . . Calvary Chapel was closed. It has been remodeled into a private residence.”



“Leaving Sparta we come to a long frame house on Revolutionary Road. Here General Washington stopped en route from Stony Point to New York. [A footnote here reads: “Traditional and doubted by some writers.”] From its well, still intact [in 1935, gone now], he satisfied his thirst.

“This old house was known as the Capt Garrison House and liquor was sold by the jug and not retailed by the glass. Aunty Garrison was notorious for her home remedies and specifics for all dire ailments. She was said to have drawn a fund of medical lore from the wisdom the Indians on Mount Murray. She also kept a thread and needle store and on her shelves were arranged glass jars of peppermint, sassafras and licorice candy—the joy to childhood of yesteryear. The old tavern is not much changed from the days when the stagecoaches passed its door en route from New York to Albany.”

*Note: Although not part of this article, Foster is credited with the first recorded account that the Davids-Garrison House was locally known as “the Old Post Road Jug Tavern” in a 1947 interview.*

