



The Timeline Project

This year the Jug Tavern of Sparta is taking a new look at our received history of the Jug, the neighborhood and the surrounding area. We will reexamine the lens through which this history has been written and ask larger questions that speak to what makes a community thrive for over two hundred years. Along the way we will fill in the gaps for a fuller picture of our heritage and indulge our curiosity. History is important. Our job in keeping history alive is to ask the questions, find the answers and tell the truth.

Far from an abstract exercise, the Jug Tavern invites local residents, friends and neighbors to the Jug to take a look at our timeline, which will be exhibited on our walls. We invite your questions and welcome contributions to our shared memory.

Visit our website www.jugtaavern.org, sign up for one of the Historic Walking Tours and watch for an announcement of open-house dates to come in and view the project up close and ask questions. What are you curious about? Members of the Jug Tavern of Sparta will be on hand to help answer your questions or to post your question directly to the timeline so that it can be researched and answered.

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HELP US BUILD A DIGITAL SCRAPBOOK

Share your memories or photos of Sparta. Did you swim off Sparta Dock or race paper boats in Sparta Brook? Did you spend an evening at Dudleys or the Pine Tree Restaurant? Have you walked through Sparta on your way to the riverfront, movies or Arcadian Gardens? Did you join other residents in signing the petition to save the Jug Tavern?

CALLING HISTORIC HOMEOWNERS The Jug Tavern is actively collecting whatever information we can about the homes in the Sparta historic district. We are interested in the full range of a home's history, from original deeds to the families who lived there over the years and reside there now.

Perhaps previous owners have handed down photographs, documents or plans. You may have heard stories about your home from neighbors. Maybe there are items you have yet to discover in your attic or basement – a letter in the floorboard, a box under the eaves, a batch of love letters tied with a faded ribbon. Join in on the fun with the story of your house.

Contact us through our website www.jugtaavern.org/contact-us, we would love to hear your story and add it to our memory bank.

The Sparta Association Saves the Neighborhood – Again

The Jug Tavern of Sparta and Sparta Historical and Architectural Design District residents owe a great deal to the power and influence of members of the Sparta Association who banded together and fought to preserve the character of the area. The actual date the neighborhood association became an active voice is unclear, but we do know that from the 1960s until 2006 the Sparta Association was vigilant in addressing concerns that would have adversely affected the quality of life in the Sparta Historic District.

In the mid-1960s the Sparta Association fought against formidable public pressure that sided with a critical need to replace Highway 9 as a main throughfare. The proposed design for the Hudson River Expressway included an access road that would cut through the middle of Sparta, necessitating removal of several historic homes. A petition was signed by 100 residents in a single afternoon, and, after strong opposition, the highway was not built and Sparta was saved from bulldozers.

In the 1970s historic Sparta was threatened by changes to the Village of Ossining zoning ordinance, which had altered the local zoning to multi-family, previously limited to only single or two-family. Then in 1974, the Association fought against the installation of an above-ground fuel tank “farm” on Hudson Street. The Association took the Planning Board to court arguing that “the resulting truck traffic on Sparta’s narrow and often sidewalk-less street would endanger people and historic homes and create pollution.” With ongoing pressure from the community, an amendment to Ossining’s zoning ordinance was proposed to designate the neighborhood as the Sparta Historical Architectural & Design District. SHADD was established in 1975, the first historic district in Ossining and a big win for the Sparta community.

Also at this time, the Town of Ossining was considering buying and restoring the Jug Tavern as a focal point for the upcoming United States Bicentennial Celebration in 1976. Louis Engel, a Sparta resident living on Revolutionary Road and a member of the Village Board of Trustees, led the formation of the Ossining Restoration Committee as an instrument for the purchase of the Jug Tavern, which occurred in May 1976.

In 1978 the Ossining Restoration Committee won a state grant for the Jug restoration. In April 1978 the Sparta Association voted to establish a constitu-

tion that stated the organization’s purpose “to preserve and improve the quality of life in Sparta.” Association members represented Sparta at Ossining Village Board and Planning Board meetings and researched issues that impacted the area.

In 1986 the Sparta Association opened its membership beyond property owners and grew to include 125 families. As they worked to develop plans for the renovation of the Jug Tavern, the Association formed a separate entity, Jug Tavern of Sparta, Inc., which was chartered as a not-for-profit corporation with the sole purpose “to renovate and preserve the Jug as a public treasure.”

On August 19, 1986, the Town of Ossining transferred title of the Jug Tavern to the Ossining Restoration Committee, which, in turn, sold the property to the Jug Tavern of Sparta, Inc. With the loss of state and federal funds, the Town of Ossining needed to remove itself from historic preservation and

found it gratifying that a private group came forward with the intention of completing the renovation and obtaining private funds to handle the ongoing maintenance.

Over the decades, Sparta Association involvement included development, zoning classifications, density, and land use issues; traffic impact appeals for improved signage, sidewalks, vehicular weight

and speed limits; protection of local quarries and mines; and neighborhood nuisance issues, such as noise from a local cabaret.

At its heart, the Sparta Association was a neighborhood association. The records show its commitment to bringing the community together over the years by organizing picnics, garden parties and an annual holiday or “Early American” Christmas party, as well as creating local festivals, such as the 200th anniversary of the founding of Historic Sparta in 1995.

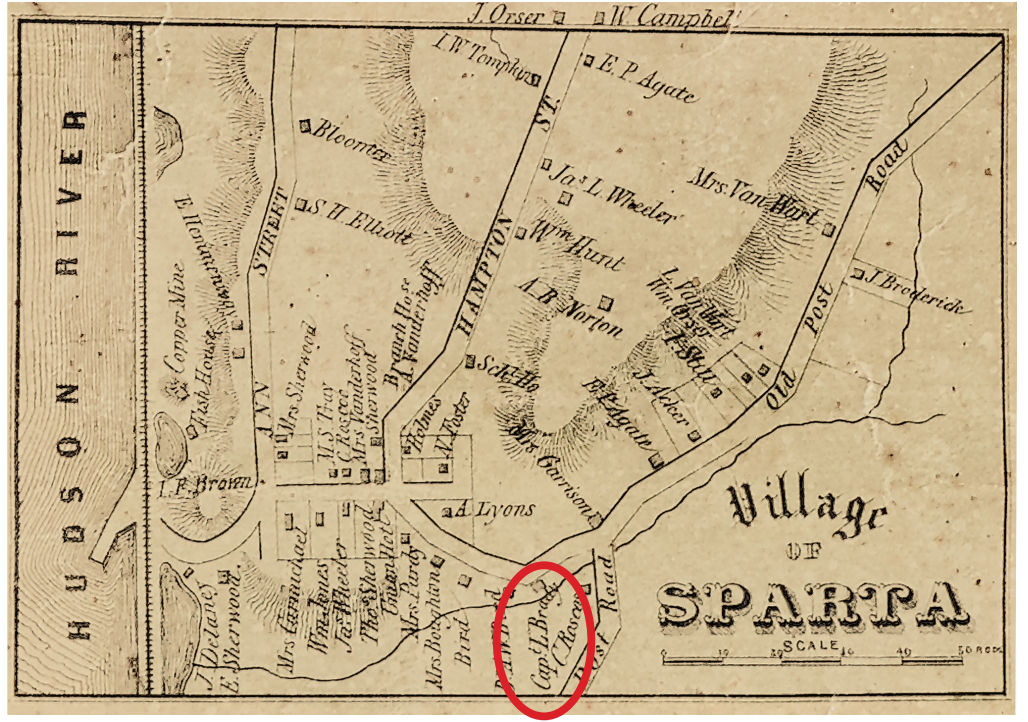
In 2006, the Sparta Association dissolved, although the Sparta Holiday Party and End-of-Summer neighborhood picnic traditions continue, now hosted by the Jug Tavern of Sparta.

—Gina Piazza

Thanks to Florence Brennemann, John Lee, and William Hanauer, former members and officers of the Sparta Association for their input and to past community historians whose records were invaluable.

See You at the Fair!

Look for us on Saturday, June 10th at the Ossining Village Fair



ABOVE, LEFT: Captains Cottage at 14 Rockledge Avenue. ABOVE, RIGHT: Sparta 1862, Clark & Wagner. BELOW: Capt. Brady imagined and illustrated by Benjamin Feinstein.

PROPERTY PROFILE: 14 Rockledge Avenue

The Captain's Cottage

If you strolled down Rockledge Avenue, perhaps you did a double take at the quaint, brown, antique farmhouse labeled “Captain’s Cottage.” Built in 1805, this charming historic residence was home to Lewis Brady and his family for over 50 years. Brady settled in Sparta at the age of 63 and died there at the age of 108. His story is one of courage, resilience and pride.

His time in Sparta begins with a property deed registered in May 1836, between “James Knowlton, of the Town of Mount Pleasant . . . and Lewis Brady (colored man) of the same Town.” What is unusual about this transaction is that Knowlton was a prominent member of the Ossining community, who was instrumental in the formation of the Town of Ossining in 1845, and Lewis Brady was a “colored man” with enough money to purchase property in an all-white neighborhood, something unheard of in the early 19th century. Slavery had been abolished in New York State only nine years prior to Brady’s purchase, and fugitive slave laws were still in effect. The Civil War was still 25 years in the future. Who was Lewis Brady and how did he come to settle in Sparta?

I found the answers in a November 4, 1880, edition of the *New York Herald*. Brady had been interviewed at the impressive age of 107 about his early life and journey to New York. At that time, Brady was described as a “tall, intelligent-looking negro” with snow-white hair and rounded shoulders. He was “a little lame” due to rheumatism in one ankle. There are no known pictures of Brady. The portrait offered here is speculative. It was commissioned by the author and combines the above descriptive elements and the features of his grandson’s image. What follows is his story.

Lewis Brady, named Noah at birth, was born into slavery in Maryland in 1773 to an unknown father, enslaved by President George Washington, and unknown mother, enslaved by Colonel David J. Zabriskie. Brady’s parents lived separately on adjacent plantations. Brady recounted spending time at Washington’s Mount Vernon and was able to recite the names of formerly enslaved men and women owned by the former president.



Noah was 26 years old when Washington died in 1799. He remembered the grand procession that led to the president’s tomb. A few years later, his father was manumitted by Martha Washington, and while his mother purchased her own freedom from Zabriskie, Noah remained enslaved by him.

During the War of 1812 Brady served as Col. Zabriskie’s body servant and remained with Zabriskie until his death, at which point Zabriskie’s niece inherited him. Because of a “mixup” with his former owner, Brady adopted the name Lewis Brady at this time. Within a few years, he was in jeopardy of being sold, but Brady had no intentions of facing that ordeal. On the night before the sale, he ran away, heading north to New York. He recounted, “That night . . . I lit out and I never went back again, either.”

After a long arduous journey on foot via an Underground Railroad route through Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, Brady landed in Tarrytown, New York, in 1820 at the age of 47. This is where he met his bride, Sarah Thompson, and together they had three children: Mary, John and Ann Elizabeth.

Industrious and frugal, he saved his money to purchase a small sloop (boat) and entered the clam and oyster business on Sparta Dock. The *Herald* article mentioned that Captain Brady was “strictly and scrupulously fair and honest.” He was well respected in the local community, earning the nickname “Captain Brady” for his work

as a local fisherman.

Lewis Brady died at 108 years old—the oldest person buried in Sparta Cemetery. He rests there with his wife Sarah, their son John W., and John’s wife Charlotte. In his life he served in the War of 1812 (although his service was not acknowledged), escaped slavery and settled in Sparta, where he established a business and became one of the earliest black homeowners in Ossining. He also left a legacy for future generations. In the *Eastern State Journal*, his death notice concluded, “It is to be hoped he has gone where the good darkeys go.” While the notice overlooked his many accomplishments, research has revealed his true and inspiring story.

—Joyce Sharrock Cole

MAKE TIME FOR THE SPARTA TOUR

Reservations at www.jugtavern.org

April 16, May 7, June 11,
July 23, August 13,
September 17, October 15



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.