



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum

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The Story of the Capote

Recently, the museum's favorite lecturer and expert on Colonial Indian Affairs, Frank Salvati, presented Historian Norma Schadt with the gift of a full length, striking-red capote. Most people would recognize the garment as one of those Canadian blanket coats, but would not be familiar with the term capote. The investigation into the genesis and evolution of the capote revealed an interesting story which dates back to the earliest contact between Europeans and the native people of North America.

The term "capote" comes from the French word for cloak. In the early 1600s, French sailors traded their coats and wool blankets with the MicMac on the Atlantic coast. Wool blankets were sought by the native people in exchange for beaver pelts, buffalo robes, moccasins and pemmican (a food prepared from dried meat). Wool was desirable for its ability to hold heat even when wet and was certainly easier to sew than animal hides.

The widespread harvesting of furs for European markets coincided with the development of this uniquely

Canadian garment. These wool blanket coats replaced furs as the typical winter clothing for both the native and French trappers and traders.

In 1779, it was suggested to the Hudson's Bay Company that the manufacture and trade of these blankets would be a lucrative proposition. Though they never manufactured these blankets themselves, they contracted with woolen mills in England, a practice which continues to this day. The blankets soon became a staple trade good. By 1780, the first "point blankets" were shipped to Fort Albany on James Bay.

The word *point* derives from the French word *empointer* which means "to make threaded stitches on cloth." Hudson's Bay blankets have the distinctive black stripes in the lower

corner. There is a debate between those who claim the number and size of the stripes determined the cost in pelts and those who claim it denoted the size of the blanket. It was no doubt a combination of the two.



Many capotes were handmade from very simplistic patterns having various cuts. The coats might be decorated with contrasting seam binding, small shells, sequins, calico strips, beadwork or hawk bells. However, most had nothing more than a large pointed hood, fringe on the shoulders, for wicking away water and a sash to tie shut. An essential fire bag was placed inside the folds of the sash or hung around the neck by a shoulder strap. A fire bag was used for carrying flints, steel and tinder to start a fire as well as tobacco, pipe, knife and other essentials, as most capotes did not

have pockets. In later years, buttons and toggles were added.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the cut and construction of the coat started to follow changing American and European fashions, the coats became widely used. Through time the capote or Hudson's Bay coat has become looked upon as the Canadian National Dress.



Later this spring, a new display will be unveiled at the Deerpark Schoolhouse Museum featuring our capote with its leggings, muslin shirt and moccasins, plus items from Frank Salvati's vast collection of native artifacts.



The Huguenot Singing School

Our one room schoolhouse was built in 1863 at the peak of the Civil War. Huguenot was a bustling village with the D&H Canal running at full-speed through the center of town passing by the school's front doors. Many of our citizens were employed in occupations that were connected with the canal; locktenders, watchmen, boatmen and as well as boat builders and repairmen in the

boatyard. However, most families lived and worked on farms both large and small. They now had a solid brick structure to be proud of for the education of their children and to indicate their growing affluence. The schoolhouse became the focus for community functions and social gatherings.

Newspaper evidence has shown the school building hosted gospel preaching ministers who presided over communion, and several obituaries listed funeral services being held here as well. Certainly, town fathers gathered to discuss community issues. By 1869, there was already an active singing school on the premises. One gets the impression from the old newspaper articles that the singing school was a real source of community pride.

The *Evening Gazette* of April 19, 1870, printed a front page article describing the 1869-70 singing season's closing exercises. "The little village of Huguenot is wide awake in musical matters; in fact she sets an example which we should be glad to see Port Jervis imitate. For seven months in the year they have maintained a Musical Association, during which time they have neither lacked funds nor singers, which is due to the public spirit of Mr. Peter P. Swartout, and other gentlemen in that neighborhood. The association was conducted by Prof. I. B. Sweezy, of Middletown, whose efforts as an instructor were so successful in our village, some time ago.

"On Friday evening last we had the pleasure of attending the closing exercises of the school for the season, and a more pleasant gathering, or better singing we never enjoyed. The schoolhouse in which the singing was conducted is of brick and is roomy, well ventilated, high ceiling, and well adapted for both school and singing purposes.

"The attendance was large, many visitors being present from

Cuddebackville, Sparrowbush, Port Jervis, and the vicinity. Prof. Sweezy was in good trim and his violin also. Miss Jemima Swartout presided at the organ. Miss Mary Swartout also played successfully several pieces.

"One feature in the Huguenot school was that all were there on time, all sang, there was no lagging behind."



"The *Flag of the Free* was a good piece and was well sung by Estelle Masten, Ada Van Etten and Mandane Bidwell."

The article listed a number of students and praised their performances; Misses Hattie Swartout, Jennie Swartout, and Kate Cuddeback. The juvenile class included Alvah Van Etten, Clement Cuddeback, Ella Swartout, and Delia Bidwell.

The evening concluded with Mr. Gustavus Baume, who gave a history of the Huguenot singing-school done in verse.

The article went on to sum up the evening saying, "It was a capital production and created much fun and merriment, a better school than that of Huguenot is not to be found, nor finer voices heard."

In November of 1881, the papers reported that the trustees met at the school house to plan the next season's singing school agenda. They agreed to call the organization the "Huguenot Musical Association." Tickets for admission to the school were placed in three grades: youths, 50 cents; ladies, \$1 and gentlemen, \$2. People not purchasing regular tickets were admitted by paying an advance fee of 15 cents each evening.

A number of neighboring villages had their own singing schools. In February, 1871, *The Evening Gazette* noted, "A party of about thirty singers passed up Pike St. last evening in the Sparrowbush stage, on their way to visit the Huguenot singing school." Again, in the February, 1883, *Tri-State Union*, there appeared an article that stated, "Two large sleigh loads of members of the Carpenter's Point singing school, visited the Huguenot school Tuesday evening. The parties were cordially received and the visit was very enjoyable. The Huguenot school resolved to return the visit Wednesday at the Point. Fine singing is anticipated."

In the spirit of the friendly rivalry that existed then as well as now between Huguenot and Port Jervis, this editorial from the *Tri-State Union* of January 19, 1883, is included. The editor responded to an earlier reporter's lament about the lack of good singers in Port Jervis and also in its churches. The editor wrote, "I see in your column that a correspondent inquires what has become of the Social and Literary Union of the Reformed Church which favored us with so many good musical and literary entertainments. I would also enquire what has become of the singing school we had last winter which the small pox broke up? I don't hear of its revival this winter. If such places as Carpenter's Point, Huguenot and Cuddebackville can keep up singing schools I should think Port Jervis at least might. Port Jervis ought not only to keep up a good singing school but a large association where the singers from all churches can improve in singing."

The last mention of Huguenot's singing school was in the December 11, 1890 issue of the *Evening Gazette*,

where a Mr. Marvin had taken over as the singing instructor. That was over 128 years ago. The little red school of

Flag of the Free sung to the tune of the *Wedding March*

FLAG OF THE FREE.
Steady Time. March from "LOHENGRIN."

1. Flag of the free, fair-est to see! Borne thro' the strife and the thun-der of war;
2. Flag of the brave, long may it wave, Chos-en of God while His might we a-dore, In

Ban-ner so bright with star-ry light, Float ev-er proud-ly from mountain to shore,
Lib-er-ty's van for manhood of man, Sym-bol of Right thro' the years passing o'er.

For: While thro' the sky loud rings the cry, U-nion and Lib-er-ty! one ev-er-more! D.S.

Em-blem of Free-dom, hope to the slave, Spread thy fair folds but to shield and to save,
Pride of our coun-try, hon-ored a-far, Scatter each cloud that would darken a star, [While

Hu-

Hints from an Old Household Guide

Children's Section

Children in the Home

Never let your father or mother bring you a chair or get one for themselves. Wait on them instead of being waited on.

Always rise to a standing position when visitors enter, and greet them after your elders.

Talk in a low, even voice. It denotes refinement.

Never retire without bidding the members of your family good night.

A child's sleigh can be made out of an ordinary sled by cutting off the legs of an old high chair just below the seat and fastening the seat to the sled.

Baby Can't Tip His High Chair Over: Put a large screen door hook on the back of the chair, and screw eye in the woodwork

of each room where the baby visits - - including the porch for summer. Keeps baby "sitting tight."

Baby may be saved from a fall if smooth soles on new shoes are sandpapered before wearing.

Line the pockets of children's sweaters with cotton cloth of the same color. Pockets will not wear through or stretch.

Keep youngsters from losing money on the way to school by fastening coins with transparent tape to inside of the lunch pail lid or book case.

With rainy days ahead, the children will be tracking mud into the home. You can make an efficient mud scraper by nailing old bottle caps, crimp side up, to a scrap of lumber. Use roofing nails.

Old nylon stockings make a good stuffing for children's toys. When washed the toys will dry quickly.



Orange County Facts

Of the eight counties named Orange in the U.S., Orange County, New York is the oldest. (1683)

It is 206 years older than Orange County, California (1889)

It is 169 years older than Orange County, Texas (1852)

It is 162 years older than Orange County, Florida (1824)

It is 133 years older than Orange County, Indiana (1816)

It is 98 years older than Orange County, Vermont (1781)

It is 69 years older than Orange County, North Carolina (1752)

It is 51 years older than Orange County, Virginia (1734)

Vinegar Valentines

In researching the customs of Valentine's Day, an odd and unknown tradition came to light. Around the 1840s and for the next one hundred years, not only was it a day to send out expressions of love but an opportunity to hurl hate, insults and abuses at those we did not love. These were known as vinegar valentines. Penny cards displayed caricatures and satirical rhymes intending to mock and hurt the recipient. They were available in stores in America and Europe, right alongside the cards adorned with hearts and lace. These insult cards made up half of the valentine greetings sent. By Victorian standards these cards were considered distasteful, vulgar and morally depraving.

The *Evening Gazette*, of February 6, 1877, pondered this peculiar trend and printed, "Of late years, however, comic valentines are more popular with the purchasing class than the sentimental kind, and the receipt of a caricature of this sort by some sensitive body from an unknown source has engendered feelings of anger in many hearts unused to such passionate exhibitions.

"Still there are many specimens suspended in the windows and decorating the show cases of our stores which are designed for the mischief-loving or sarcastically-inclined youth as well as the sentimental biped or moon-struck maiden."

A headline in the February 15, 1887 *Evening Gazette*, read "Postmaster Ryall Handles 1,500 of the tender missives." Ryall reported, "Some were beautiful and breathed tender words of love, while others

(and unfortunately the majority) were caricatures, too horrid to look at."

The practice of sending such cards faded out by the 1940s.



MISS VANITY

You think yourself a picture,
You are—a sketch in paint,
You work for hours before the glass,
To look like what you ain't.



HELD IN BONDAGE

Your wifey holds you, in her hands.
You dare not disobey commands.
And every single cent you earn
She takes---and so has money to burn.

150th Anniversary Sparrowbush Methodist Church

In 2018, the Sparrowbush Methodist Church will commemorate its 150th Anniversary. The historian's office is helping to compile information covering the church's contribution as an important focal point in its community's history. If you have photos, memorabilia or info that will help us tell the church's story, please contact the museum at 856-2702.

Thank You

