

## LINCOLN DEPOT MUSEUM

By Bruce Apar

**O**n Feb. 19, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln was en route to his Feb. 23 inauguration in Washington, D.C. from his home of Springfield, Ill. During that trip, he made a single stop in Westchester County. It was in Peekskill, at the Hudson River Railroad train station. After President Lincoln's assassination in 1865, his funeral train retraced the route and stopped in Peekskill on the way back to Springfield.

The location, 10 South Water Street, is now the site of Lincoln Depot Museum, which had its celebratory opening Oct. 18, 2014. The mission of the Museum is to explore, remember, and educate audiences about Peekskill's historic role on the national stage. Located by Peekskill Bay on the east bank of the Hudson River, the Museum occupies a 3,000 square foot space that was a freight and passenger rail depot at the intersection of South Water and Central Avenue.

According to the Museum, "By all accounts, a large crowd gathered to witness Lincoln's visit. A local newspaper reported that 'a large assemblage, about 1500 or thereabouts, was gathered, all quiet, orderly and curiously expectant.' Past city historian Colin Naylor Jr. said, 'Farmers and their families from all parts of Cortlandt town, Putnam County and Yorktown joined the villagers at the station.' First introduced by Nelson, Lincoln spoke briefly, but his impact lasted a lifetime for those who were there to witness the event."

The impact of that whistle stop by our 16th president has lasted many lifetimes, right up until today, thanks to Westchester County Legislator John G. Testa, the prime mover of the ambitious project and president of the Lincoln Depot Museum board.



*On Wednesday February 9, 2011, The Lincoln Depot Foundation held a Groundbreaking Ceremony for the start of the interior construction/restoration of the Lincoln Depot in Peekskill.*



*February 19, 2011, This year, nationally renowned Lincoln impersonator, Fritz Klein, came to Peekskill to perform Lincoln's speech to the citizens of Peekskill in 1861. His appearance was sponsored by the National Parks Service.*

The Lincoln Depot Museum and attendant historic site are in an area that increasingly has become a destination for the diverse businesses within short walking distance.

They include Homestyle Desserts Bakery next door, Peekskill Brewery across the street, Taco Dive around the corner, and others.

"The local businesses along the riverfront are big supporters and look forward to working with us to utilize the site for outdoor events," says John Testa. "We are very encouraged for the future."

In 2015, the Museum welcomed 1000 visitors, and, it's estimated slightly more than that in 2016. Mr. Testa said that, "We had visitors this year from as far away as Australia who have discovered the museum from our inclusion in the I Love NY website. Our proximity to New York City and the convenience of the Metro North Peekskill train station has made the museum a destination."

The theme that the museum was built on is "New York and Abraham Lincoln: The Indispensable Relationship." It shows the influence on Peekskill that Lincoln had, as well as his effect on the Hudson Valley region and all of New York state.

The goal of the Lincoln Depot Museum is to be a center of educational outreach and community involvement. One of the first collaborations was with the Peekskill Elks Lodge, which donated the flagpole on the museum grounds.

The historic building was acquired in 2003, followed in 2007 by formation of the Lincoln Depot Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established to restore the depot as a museum. It was financed with the help of \$3 million from the New York Environmental Protection Fund, and grants from the New York Empire State Development Corporation. Critical support came from then-Governor George E. Pataki, a past Peekskill mayor.

"We are proud of the result of our many years of hard work," says Museum president Testa. "There has been a tremendous amount of research, planning and collaboration to achieve this success." Legislator Testa was mayor of Peekskill from 2002-07 when the building was acquired and the grants awarded. The Museum's inaugural collection features more than 100 artifacts that detail the role New Yorkers played in Lincoln's two elections as President, and explore his ties to Peekskill. The Museum plans to collaborate with other museums, historical sites and individuals.

The Peekskill Museum has several items on loan to the Depot Museum. Among them is a Hawkins Zouaves 9th New York

Infantry Regiment uniform worn by a Peekskill resident during the war. The Field Library has contributed an 1852 map of Peekskill that is the earliest known map showing the size and location of the depot visited by Lincoln.

There also are items on loan from Depot Foundation director and board VP Brian D. Caplan, a prominent collector of Civil War and Lincoln memorabilia. Other officers are well-known Peekskill personalities: The Honorable Catherine E. Pisani, who served on the City Council longer than anyone, is treasurer; and Sibyl Canaan, former director of the Field Library, is secretary.

The Museum will rotate items from its permanent collection and continue to accept and highlight items on loan. The museum is always looking for items to be donated to become part of the permanent collection.

A busy schedule of presentations, movies and special events keep the Museum humming. On Feb. 18, 2017, it will host a series of events for the annual Lincoln Remembrance Day, in partnership with the Lincoln Society.



John G. Testa, president of Lincoln Depot Museum, with Peekskill resident and international entertainer Daisy Jopling at the November 2016 Lincoln Depot Museum fundraiser.

Entering only its third year of existence, the Lincoln Depot Museum has garnered a hatful of awards and recognition, including from an architects' association and Westchester Magazine.

Early this year, a new website will be launched. By the end of 2017, it's hoped a support building facing Water Street will be completed to house the museum's gift shop, administrative offices, meeting/presentation room and public bathrooms. That phase of development will include the final landscaping and pathways leading to the depot building.



On February 18, 2012 the Lincoln Society in Peekskill held their 108th Commemorative events of the 1861 stop of President-elect Lincoln in Peekskill. A large crowd participated in the parade and the reenactment of Lincoln's speech by Lincoln impersonator Michael Griest of Peekskill.

Groups or individuals can rent the Museum space for private events, with capacity for 60 to 100 people. A fully equipped pantry including convection microwave, ice machine,

refrigerator with freezer and ample space for staging and storage is ideal for catered food service.

The Museum welcomes family membership at \$80 and individual for \$35. For active and veteran military personnel and seniors, membership is \$20. Donations of any amount are appreciated. The Museum is open April through November every Saturday and Sunday, excluding holidays, from 1-4 p.m. For further information, visit LincolnDepotMuseum.org or call at 914-402- 4318.

WC-17964-H06  
PC-3283



## ★ CHIMNEY SWEEP ★

*Over 30 years of Experience*

# 914-739-4326

Kurt Pelaccio, Owner/Operator  
PO Box 417 Verplanck, NY 10596

facebook: All American Sweep  
ALLAMERICANSWEEP.COM



## BUCHANAN DENTAL ARTS

107 BANNON AVE  
BUCHANAN NY 10511  
914 737 6300  
914 737 6302 FAX  
BUCHANANDENTALARTS@GMAIL.COM





IMPLANT DENTISTRY  
SLEEP APNEA APPLIANCES

INVISALIGN

## JANUARY SPECIALS

New patients - exam, xrays, cleaning

# \$149.00

---

In Office Bleaching

# \$249.00

---

Invisalign

# \$3900.00

## 914-737-6300

\*gift certificates available\*