

Town of Greenburgh
**ASSISTANT
TOWN HISTORIANS**



— felicia barber + riley wentzler —



A Small House, an Important Meeting, a Huge Victory: The Story of the Odell House

By: Riley Wentzler & Felicia Barber

At 425 Ridge Road Hartsdale, stands a house which looks unimportant, but which is actually a very important house in the history of the United States. It is on the National Register of Historic Places and has been since 1973. This small unimpressive looking, but yet very important, building is the Odell House and, it was built in 1732.

It was here that General George Washington had several meetings with General Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur Rochambeau of the French expeditionary forces between July 6, 1781 and August 9, 1781

(<https://www.lohud.com/story/news/local/westchester/greenburgh/2018/07/09/historic-odell-house-greenburgh-renovation-efforts/760111002/>). General Washington was able to use the house because it was owned by one of his soldiers, Captain Gilbert Bates, who bought the house in 1760. Unfortunately, by the time of the meeting, Bates had been captured by the British and had died while being held prisoner in New York (Williams, 2003, p.45). Accordingly, when Washington and Rochambeau arrived, it was Bates' widow who offered the house to the revolutionary cause. The plan agreed to at the end of these meetings led to the success of America's war for independence.

The original purpose of these meetings was for Washington and Rochambeau to plan an assault on British General Henry Clinton's forces holding the Island of Manhattan. However, as the weeks went on, and the two generals talked and rode through Westchester and the Bronx, it became clear that the British had overwhelmingly larger forces and commanded the rivers. Due to the strength of enemy forces, the generals began developing a new plan.

On August 14, the French Admiral De Grasse sent word that he and his fleet could hold the British forces in place at Yorktown, Virginia. This development persuaded Washington and Rochambeau to abandon their plans to attack General Clinton in Manhattan and instead to attack British General Lord Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown. The Battle of Yorktown lasted from October 11, 1781 until October 19, 1781. At this battle, the French Navy fought the British Navy and kept them at bay by preventing them from supplying British Army troops. This enabled General George Washington and the American Army to defeat Cornwallis' troops.

In addition to the naval aid, Rochambeau also provided Washington with additional ground troops. In 1775, Washington's army consisted of only 1,000 men (<https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/battle-of-bunker-hill>), and in 1777, Washington had 6,500 men (<https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/battle-of-saratoga>). In 1781, Rochambeau gave Washington an additional 5,300 troops (Donovan, 2015, p. 14). Washington's new total of 17,000 easily overpowered Cornwallis' 9,000 men (<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/battle-of-yorktown-begins>). After the crushing defeat at Yorktown, the British completely surrendered. American independence was officially recognized in 1783. The house is referred to as "the Odell House" because after the war Captain Johnathan Odell bought it from Bates' widow with money General Washington had paid him for his service (Williams, 2003, p.45).



Odell House July 2003

In addition to its critical role in the American Revolution it also reflects much of who we are as Americans today in terms of our country's core values. It shows:

- our resilience as a people
- our commitment to supporting the common man
- our time-honored alliance with France



Odell House July 2018

Unfortunately, as seen in the above photos, this house with its: broken windows, rusted doors, and front steps barely visible under thick vegetation, is in desperate need of restoration and

repairs, or it will soon be lost forever!!! Accordingly, realizing the importance of this house, The Town of Greenburgh has reached out to many local organizations and the state government for the necessary funding.



In one such effort Greenburgh Town Supervisor Paul Feiner said, “If it wasn't for this house, we might have Queen Elizabeth as our leader”- Greenburgh Town Supervisor Paul Feiner, July 9 2018. The Town of Greenburgh is currently seeking grants from other funding sources as well. We are hopeful we will save this priceless historical landmark.



Previous Slices of History include:

The Guardians of History: Greenburgh's Historical Societies (1/6/19)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Mail%20-%20jlucasey@greenburghny.com.pdf>

How a Flat Tire led to a Happy Escape: The Story of Carvel in Greenburgh (12/11/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Carvel%20History.pdf>

A Thousand Words Which You Never Knew: The Forgotten Story of the Seal of Greenburgh. (11/17/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Slice%20of%20History%20-%20A%20Thousand%20Words.pdf>

"The Disappearing Railroad Blues" in Greenburgh: The Fate of the Putnam Railroad Line and the old Putnam Trail ((11/6/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Slice%20of%20History%20-%20%20Railroad%20Blues.pdf>

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**Greenburgh's BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF AND TRUTH: A History of
The Freemasons in Greenburgh (9/12/18) <http://www.greenburghny.com/Cite-Access/news/archnews.cfm?NID=47212&TID=10&jump2=0>**

About the Authors:

We are both Assistant Town Historians at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

Riley Wentzler:

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. Within Communication Studies, I specialized in semiotics. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. **To learn more about The Odell House or to suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com. To help me find employment you can contact me at rjwentzler413@gmail.com.**

Felicia Barber:

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com. To learn more about my artwork or to help me find employment you can contact me at feliciadbarber@gmail.com.**

Interview with the Authors:

<https://wcbs880.radio.com/articles/news/stories-main-street-couple-cerebral-palsy-brings-many-talents-town-greenburgh>

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