

Introduction after Welcome for 10-28 event

By Mary McTamaney, City Historian and Newburgh Quadricentennial Co-Chair

We are gathered here tonight to dream together about a way to capture the heritage of our community during its 300<sup>th</sup> birthday – to inspire our children – to inform our new residents and show them why we love this place – to show the wider world that Newburgh has always been a community of innovative, resilient, diverse and welcoming people and that we still are. Newburgh is a great place to live, a great place to establish a business. It is a crossroads of ideas as well as a traditional crossroads of transportation networks.

Look down the valley from this sheltering bay and think of the many people who took refuge here and decided to stay: Bands of Munsee Indian families, Germans fleeing devastating wars in their Rhine Valley, Colonists fleeing the British occupation of Manhattan in the Revolution, Slaves making it to freedom from below the Mason-Dixon line, Irish coming from starvation in their windowless huts to work in these open hills, all the way to modern New Yorkers coming out from the terror of September 2001 and deciding life was better “up here.”

Each migration and each struggle has dozens of corresponding personal stories. Those are the tales we want to tell in a documentary film about our Newburgh-Beacon Bay next year. Our quadricentennial planning committee decided that a book or calendar or set of brochures was not enough to document this anniversary. We want to show our history in a living way that will reach a wide audience and in a format that will be useful to as many residents and constituents as possible and that will last to be shown in the same dynamic way again and again.

We know that there were scores of pageants and postcards in 1909 and dozens of speeches and broadsides back in 1809. Lithographs were printed and made into collectible prints and captioned calendars. Yet, none of that conveys the energy our ancestors felt at those community anniversaries. Storytelling can do that, we think, in the form of a beautiful and richly crafted film.

Imagine a depiction of Susan B. Anthony thanking her followers at the Palatine Hotel as she turned the gavel of the women’s suffrage movement over to the next generation. Imagine Thomas Edison directing his engineers as they built the early electric generating station he designed on Montgomery Street and on the first electrification of a church up at Calvary Presbyterian on Grand Street. Imagine Asher B. Durand or Thomas Benjamin Pope sitting with an easel along the Quassaick Creek painting the scene looking toward Storm King Mountain. Imagine Henry Ward Beecher advocating the principles of abolition at the old Union Church on First Street while Harriet Jacobs penned *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* down the road in Cornwall.

This is some of what we envision. We hope you share our enthusiastic feeling that this could be a great boost for Newburgh with many potential audiences. Some of our initial production team and its advisors are here tonight to answer your questions and mostly to take your comments, suggestions, ideas...