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Life

All invited to church dinner

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By Bonnie Langston
Freeman staff

The Old Dutch church welcomes the community Friday evening to its 86th annual George Washington Dinner — all the community, including women.

Last year was the first official invitation, but not more than a dozen or so females showed up. This year there has been more effort to get the word out, said Seth Allen, president of the church's Men's Club, sponsor of the event.

"Although we are the Old Dutch Church, we are looking to the future. We are current, and we don't want to put forward an image of stuffiness or old-fashioned mentalities of any kind," Allen said.

"We're expecting a lot more people in general this year, and we're definitely expecting a lot more women."

For one thing, the dinner — roast beef with all the fixings — will be catered for the first time. In the past, Allen said, the men cooked and a women's group from the church set the tables, served, decorated and greeted visitors. Church member Ed Ford, who has attended up to 20 Washington dinners in his 90 years, said the tradition has been role-reversal at the church's "Spring Fling," when the Men's Club waited on the women.

Despite the expectation that the Washington Dinner in the past was a "celebration of male fellowship," sometimes a woman here and there did attend.

"That was a little bit of a concern to the older men," Ford said. "They didn't like it. Not that they didn't like the ladies. They thought it was strictly for men."

In the past, dignitaries, including President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, renowned news commentator Heywood Hale Broun, Norman Vincent Peale, and most recently U.S. Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey, have been guest speakers.

This year George Washington himself is the honored guest, or at least his persona through the talent of actor and historian Dean Malissa, who has performed at the White House, Mount Vernon and in Europe for presidents, prime ministers and other dignitaries.

Why wasn't Martha Washington invited?

"There's no Martha..." Allen said, "because, I guess, he's a solo act."

In addition to the 7 p.m. dinner, there will be a 5 to 6:45 p.m. reception featuring “Washington” at the Wiltwyck Daughters of the American Revolution ballroom on Green Street in Kingston.

Money raised from the dinner will benefit projects of the Men’s Club, and money raised from the reception will be donated to the Old Dutch Church Restoration Fund.

Tickets for the dinner are \$25, and \$30 for patrons. Cost for combined reception and dinner is \$40. There will be no ticket sales at the door. For tickets, contact the church office at (845) 338-6759, or online at Info@olddutchchurch.org.

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