

The Marshall House on Route 4 in Schuylerville was built in 1770 by Peter Lansing, who was enticed north of Albany by his friend Phillip Schuyler. But Lansing never really settled there and sold the home after the American Revolution. Skip Dickstein / Times Union

A witness of Revolution survives

Marshall House's owner to host up to 4 dozen people for family reunion this weekend

By Wendy Liberatore

Schuylerville

For years, David Bullard has admitted strangers into his home on the hill. People stop by to stare at the blood stains on the floor or peer into the stone basement to see where Revolutionary War soldiers died on the then-dirt floor.

And this weekend, the owner of the Marshall House will be welcoming more than three to four dozen for a family

reunion that celebrates both the turning point in the war and generations of Marshalls who once lived there. The weekend will coincide with the village's annual Turning Point Days, a weekend-long celebration of colonial times and the War for Independence in which the Marshall House played a pivotal role.

"It's a surviving witness to the Battle of Saratoga," Bullard said of the home he shares with his wife, composer Hilary Tann. "It's where Baroness Frederika Riedesel sheltered with her three young daughters during the battle and where many of the British and mercenary German soldiers died."

Bullard, who has given countless tours

of the historic property, said that on Oct. 10, 1777, British General John Burgoyne was losing to the Americans. He was running out of food, ammunition and the weather was turning cold. Seeing this, Friedrich Adolf Riedesel, who was commanding the German mercenary soldiers, sent his wife and children to shelter just north of the village in the then-abandoned farm house, owned by the Lansings of Albany. Wives of other military leaders followed.

The Americans, across the Hudson River at Clark's Mills, spied the activity there and started to rain cannon balls down on the house — one of which

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snapped a beam, which is still propped up today with mortar and bricks.

"It was just boom, boom, boom, boom," Bullard said. "Everyone was crowded in the cellar. They ran out of water because the well ran dry and every time they went to get water from the river, they were shot at."

Bullard is familiar with the details of the week-long siege on Marshall House because the Baroness kept a diary, which he said "makes your hair stand straight up." He shared some of the passages.

"Eleven cannon balls went through the house, and we could plainly hear the rolling over our heads," she wrote. "One poor soldier, whose leg they were about to amputate, having been laid upon the table for this purpose, had the other leg taken off by a cannon ball in the very middle of the operation."

She also penned passages about people "rolling in anguish, scarcely breathing," "the horrible stench" and soldiers who were

"more dead than alive."

A week later, Burgoyne surrendered to the Americans. Soon thereafter, France threw its support behind the rebellious Americans, helping them to ultimately win the war.

The darkness and anxiety of that week will be retold at the reunion by Debbie Bailey, a Greenwich re-enactor who portrays Baroness Riedesel. Bullard said she will center her performance on tales of "blood and gore."

The history of the house on Route 4 started out on a sunnier note. It was built in 1770 by Peter Lansing, who was enticed north of Albany by his friend Philip Schuyler. However, Lansing never really settled there and sold the home after the Revolution, to the Bushee family. In 1817, the Marshall family purchased the home and it remained in their family until the Bullards, who once owned the orchard in Schuylerville, bought it in 1930. David Bullard grew up in the house.

Over the years, he has found a 17-pound cannon ball and countless musket balls and uniform buttons.

"They pop up when I'm

mowing the lawn," Bullard said. "The frost brings them up too."

His father, digging on the property to build a cold frame, unearthed human bones, presumably of the unknown number of soldiers who died there and were quickly buried in the yard. Archaeologists, including some from the Discovery Channel, have overrun the property numerous times.

"We've had a lot of people come in and want to dig around," Bullard said.

But a visit from the Marshalls, whom Bullard said have a "strong homing instinct," makes for a special occasion. They came in 2013 for the first time. They are returning for the family's 200th anniversary of the home's purchase from the Bushees.

"It's interesting because none of them ever lived here," Bullard said. "The house has been in my family for 87 years. All the Marshalls that were here

are dead and gone, but the ancestors are still interested and enthusiastic."

Elaine Gardella, one of the descendants, has done a full history on the family and the home and is looking forward to the weekend, which also will include a parade and fireworks display in the village, a boat ride on the Hudson, a trip to the Marshall cemetery and many meals at the Marshall House.

"It is our hope that the descendants of the Marshall and Bullard families will continue working together to preserve and protect this historic site for the future," Gardella

Turning Point Weekend

■ **When:** Saturday and Sunday

■ **Where:** Schuylerville

■ **Info:** Weekend includes a festival from 1 to 11 p.m. Saturday in Fort Hardy Park and a parade at 1 p.m. Sunday down Broad Street.

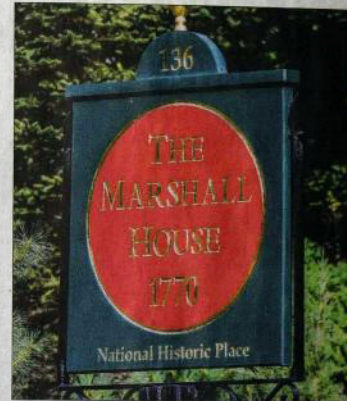
■ **More:** <http://www.turning-pointparade.com>

Party primary with Meyer said.

said. "The vivid portrayal of the Baroness under siege while taking refuge in the cellar of this historic house truly makes history come alive. We must continue to educate the younger generations

on the value of sharing these profound and moving stories during the forming of our nation."

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The marker on the road to the Marshall House.



These cannonballs were found on the property of the Marshall House in Schuylerville.



David Bullard owns the Marshall House in Schuylerville, scene of a violent siege during the Revolutionary War.

Photos by Skip Dickstein / Times Union