

Eileen M. Hayden, Woman of the Year 2008



Compiled by Margaret Nijhuis from resume by Eileen Hayden and Living History by Vanni Cappelli

Many generations of the family of Eileen Mylod Hayden, AAUW Poughkeepsie Woman of the Year, have resided in Dutchess County. Both her father and grandfather were officials of the Dutchess County Historical Society. Ms Hayden has served the society since 1980 and was its Executive Director from 1991 until her retirement in October, 2007.

She is a graduate of SUNY, New Paltz and the College of New Rochelle. She was a teacher on the elementary level and at Our Lady of Lourdes High School. Ms Hayden is a certified Community Mediator.

Eileen Hayden serves on the County Historian's Advisory Committee. She is a founding member of Friends of Mills Mansion and a member of the Friends of Eleanor Roosevelt-Val Kill. She served on committees for the Dutchess County Tercentenary, Poughkeepsie Tricentennial, Bicentennial of the Ratification of the US Constitution, and County Court House Centennial.

Her publications include *DCHS Year Book*, *Astor Home: Looking Back*, and *The First Seventy-five*.

Eileen Hayden was honored in 1992 with the President's Award from Marist College and in 1996 with the Ursula Lauris Award from the College of New Rochelle.

From the article *Living History* by Vanni Cappelli:

Dr. Werner Steger, president of the Board of Trustees of the Dutchess County Historical Society, said on the occasion of Eileen Hayden's retirement, "Those who have worked with her will miss her guidance and firm hand at the helm of an organization serving the county's historical needs for almost a century. An educator and historian to the core, she taught in local schools for a number of years before changing her audience to history lovers. Her knowledge of local, state and national history was nourished within a family with a long documented interest in discovering, preserving and using history and historical resources for community good."

Cappelli continues:

... she discusses the archaeology project in Hyde Park aimed at uncovering traces of an 18th century enclave of free blacks and runaway slaves, an American Revolution program at the Mid-Hudson Children's Museum, the summer program for middle school children, an after-school program with the Catharine Street Community Center and the Black History Committee. Yet it is

the Silver Ribbon Tours, which take groups to towns around the county to highlight their historic treasures, that obviously have a special place in her heart.

"There is no town in Dutchess County that does not have its own unique gem to show off," Hayden said. "Whether it's a Georgian house, a historic church or an old railroad bridge, there is always something with a story to discover."

Yet despite the richness of the historical legacy she has presided over for many years, Hayden stresses that it is sharing it with people that has given her the most satisfaction.

"People themselves have given me my strongest memories," she says. "Their enthusiasm for programs, whether they be demonstrations of needlework or displays of old newspapers, has been extraordinary. So many people have been involved and supportive."

And what comes next in the ongoing historical odyssey of Eileen Hayden?

"There will be more leeway for travel and family time, but I am still a member of the society," she said. "I am just going from official to volunteer. I will be able to enjoy the activities for their own sake, now that I am not responsible for so many aspects of their success. And I encourage everyone to come and enjoy them too."