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The Photographs of Erma DeWitt

NEW PALTZ, NY (January 13, 2010) – Images of Ulster County, taken by local photographer, Erma DeWitt can now be found on-line at www.hrvh.org/exhibit/ermadewitt. The exhibit, The Photography of Erma DeWitt, presents a snapshot of the people, places and events that took place in our county during the 1940's and 50's. The images are part of the Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection at Elting Memorial Library. This virtual exhibit and digital collection has recently been added to the Hudson River Valley Heritage site (hrvh.org). A presentation of some of the images will be held in the Steinberg Room at Elting Library, 93 Main Street, New Paltz on Sunday, February 7th at 4:00 P.M., with a snow date of February 21st

Erma DeWitt was married to Dr. Virgil DeWitt, an Ulster County native. She was a trained nurse and worked for many years beside her husband, in the DeWitt Medical Practice in New Paltz.

“I began photographing stone houses in Ulster County because I thought a record of them should be preserved. Some are left to fall apart. Some are modernized. When some owners modernize such a house they keep as much of the old house as possible. Others modernize for convenience, to make the house livable for which you can't blame them.”

-Erma DeWitt, November 7, 1954

Although Mrs. DeWitt loved to photograph houses, children were her favorite subjects. During WWII, when her husband was serving in the military, she became a professional photographer. The majority of the pictures she took were of children. During that same time period, she helped out at the New Paltz High School and Normal School taking the photos needed for their yearbooks.

Erma M. DeWitt died in her home, in New Paltz, NY on March 17, 1999 at the age of 91. Erma

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expressed that her dream was that one day her photographs would be published. Due to a generous donation made by her son, Dirk, that dream has come true.

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Hudson River Valley Heritage (HRVH) is an award-winning collaborative initiative between the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) and libraries, historical societies, museums and other cultural organizations in the Hudson River Valley Region – Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Ulster, Sullivan Rockland, Orange and Putnam Counties of New York State. At www.hrvh.org, researchers, students, instructors and website searchers have free, 24/7 access to the online collections of digitized historical materials – photos, postcards, letters, newspapers, diaries, scrapbooks, manuscripts, memorabilia, maps, ephemera, and audio and video clips – about the Hudson River Valley Region. The digital repository is administered and hosted by SENYLRC. HRVH funding comes from federal funds, New York State funding for library systems, special grants and annual membership dues.

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The Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection is the non-circulating research section of the Elting Memorial Library. Considered the best genealogical and local history collection in the Mid-Hudson Valley, it is a repository for primary source material and published works relating to the Hudson Valley. Its strongest focus is on the town and village of New Paltz. For more information, please call the library at (845) 255-5030. The program is free and open to the public.