



Julia Willis Philip

February 20, 2017

CLAVERRACK – Julia Willis Philip, a doyen of Hudson Valley society and orchard owner who worked with apple growers, community activists and the locally grown movement, died on Monday. She was 92.

Mrs. Philip, was one of the first women fruit growers in Columbia County, and for over 30 years, managed “Philip Orchards,” in Claverack, first with her husband, John Van Ness Philip, then as sole proprietor for 24 years following his death. The farm, which has been in the family for more than 280 years, is one of the oldest continually operating family farms in New York State, and is part of the Dutch legacy of the Hudson Valley. A pioneer working woman and civil rights stalwart, she raised five children while holding jobs in New York City, for many years at Fund For the City of New York and at the English Speaking Union. During the 1960’s she was part of the Harlem Initiative, a group of Manhattan PTA mothers who helped bus children down from Harlem after bus drivers refused to comply with new laws that mandated integration of the public schools. In 1967 she helped her husband found Modern Distribution Management, a newsletter, which became a leading publication on business innovations. In 1975, she and her husband moved their publication from Manhattan to Claverack and devoted themselves to the management of his family’s historic ancestral home and farm. Over the years, Mrs. Philip opened the family’s 1802 colonnaded house “Talavera” for Columbia County Historical Society house tours and events.

In 1992 she was part of the founding group that worked to save the Hudson Opera House from demolition. She went on to serve on the newly formed Opera House Board for many years, working to initiate the restoration efforts, which have led to its eventual flourishing as the Arts Center it is today. She also sat on the boards of two important New State Historic Sites: Wilderstein in Rhinebeck and Clermont in Germantown. She was a longstanding trustee of the Columbia County Historical Society and in 2014 was honored for her contributions by being designated A First Columbian.

Mrs. Philip was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1924, shortly before her father became a professor of Electrical Engineering at Princeton University and the family moved there. She attended Vassar College then Westhampton College at the University of Richmond. After graduation, she worked as a reporter for the Princeton Herald, under the editorship

of a Princeton graduate and decorated WWII Marine Corps veteran, John Van Ness Philip, whom she would marry in 1952.

She is survived by five children: John Van Ness Philip III (Andrew Loren Resto), William Churchill Houston Philip (Mana Kobuchi Philip), Thomas Willis Philip (Emily Cohen), Katherine Philip Chansky (James Chansky), Leila Stott Philip Evans (Garth Evans) and six grandchildren. A Memorial service will be held Saturday April 29, 11:30AM at Christ Church Episcopal in Hudson.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations in her name be sent to the Columbia County Historical Society, (5 Albany Ave Kinderhook, NY 12106) or to the Greenport Fire Department Rescue Squad (3 Newman Road Hudson, NY 12534).