

## Lose your head at Sleepy Hollow, NY

by Robert Oakes

Sleepy Hollow, "the whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions...the dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region...is the apparition of a figure on horseback, without a head...who is ever and anon seen by the country folk hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind...and the spectre is known at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow," or so goes that famous tale by Washington Irving, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

You've no doubt heard the story, of how Ichabod Crane, the hapless schoolmaster, upon a dark night in the woods of Sleepy Hollow, just outside Tarrytown, NY, lost his head to the mysterious and ghostly Headless Horseman.

That tale, written in the early 1800's, lives on today as part of the local folklore in this quiet Hudson Valley hamlet.

And during one especially spooky weekend each October, the Horseman rides again, accompanied by a host of ghostly characters drawn from local history and lore.

Known as **Legend Weekend**, this family-oriented event celebrates Halloween not by gorging on blood and gore but rather by conjuring up the more subtle scares of yesterday, when superstitious beliefs made folks wary of the howling wind and watchful of the woods at night.

For two nights that weekend, October 25 & 26, from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m., the grounds of Sleepy Hollow's historic Philipsburg Manor will be turned into haunts for characters like Rip Van Winkle, the Headless Horseman, the Catskills Witch, Captain Kidd,



photo by Chris Marksbury

*Old tombstones, including that of Washington Irving himself, stand outside the Old Dutch Church*

gypsies and ghosts in the rye fields.

Stories, told by local storyteller Jonathan Kruk, will come to life on the grounds as characters act out the dramas. And the old barn will be transformed into an eerie ballroom, where ghostly colonial-clad gentry will dance to period music, shrouded by fog.

For this night-time event, advance tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children ages 5-17. Advance reservations are highly recommended.

And also that weekend, on Saturday and Sunday, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., both Philipsburg Manor and nearby Sunnyside--the former home of Washington Irving--will host Halloween and harvest-time activities that include storytelling, pumpkin carving, cooking and herb demonstrations and spooky woodland walks. For these events, separate admission fees apply. Advance reservations for the walks at Sunnyside are recommended.

And while in the area, you may also want to visit the Old Dutch Church and Burial Ground, which have stood in this spot for centuries. There, you may feel the presence of the area's living history...and maybe some restless spirits, too!

For directions and information about the Philipsburg Manor events, call (914) 631-8200 ex. 618 and for those at Sunnyside, call (914) 631-8200 ext. 628.