

# ***NORTH CASTLE HISTORY***



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

**PSALMS ABOVE KENSICO DAM, 2011**

**THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Volume 38 -- 2011**

## Table of Contents

Letter from Joan Krantz, President of The Society 2011 .....	2
Yale Farms 1938, by the late R. Eugene Curry	
Excerpted from <i>House &amp; Garden Magazine</i> .....	3
“The Immoral Influence” of Armonk.....	9
Yale Farms 1935-1957 by the late R. Eugene Curry .....	11
New York, Westchester & Boston Railway by Sharon Tomback .....	14
John William Sterling, 1844-1918 by Sharon Tomback .....	16
Neighbors Against Neighbors by Sharon Tomback.....	19
Psalms Above Kensico Dam by Sharon Tomback.....	28
Trustees of The North Castle Historical Society.....	Inside Back Cover
A View Above Kensico Dam .....	Back Cover

## Photographs, Drawings and Maps

Psalms Above Kensico Dam .....	Front Cover
Historic Smith’s Tavern, 1938 .....	3
Harry Brundage, May 11, 1939 .....	4
Sketch Map of Yale University Property in North Castle, 1938.....	5
A Brundage House, built about 1778.....	6
1790s Cottage, Banksville Road, Armonk, two views.....	7
New York City Skyline – A View from Yale Farms, 1938.....	8
Certificate No. 49, The New York, Housatonic and	
Northern Rail Road Company .....	10
From the Ralph MacDonald 1954 Survey Map .....	12
The Yale Farms 1954 Sales Brochure Cover .....	13
Assorted Fence Post Tops used by the NYW&B Railway .....	15
John William Sterling, Esq. ....	16
John William Sterling and Clinton Conkling at Yale, 1863 .....	17
Banks-Guion House, 1976 .....	20
Rhinelanders’ Sugar House, 1857 engraving.....	24
Above Kensico Dam:	
Looking Towards the Cupolas .....	28
One of the Four Stone Banners.....	29
An Uncarved Tablet .....	30
New York City Mayors during Construction .....	30
Catskill Water Supply Project Engineers.....	31
Catskill Water Supply Board of Commissioners .....	31
A View through one of the Breezeways .....	32



Smith's Tavern  
Society Headquarters  
Listed in The New York State  
and National Register of Historic Places

# *The North Castle Historical Society*

440 BEDFORD ROAD ARMONK, NEW YORK 10504

## **President's Message – Spring 2012**

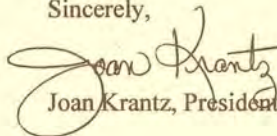
Dear Members and Friends,

As you read this publication, please consider the importance of Historic Smith's Tavern Educational Complex – Brundage Blacksmith Shop, East Middle Patent One-Room Schoolhouse, 1798 Quaker Meeting House, a Privy and, of course, Historic Smith's Tavern. North Castle is enriched educationally, culturally, and economically by the presence of these buildings.

These buildings and their furnishings enrich our North Castle community in many other ways. As home to The Society, they provide space for myriad activities of The Society: writing and editing publications; special exhibits; educational programs; collections of slides, photographs, oral history tapes and video programs; library archives; interpretive tours of the Complex; Colonial Crafts Days; community dinners; and a variety of fund raising activities. As home to The Society, these buildings provide a place to build friendships and to foster community service.

As you read this publication, please consider volunteering with us. Share the spirit of volunteerism that built these ancient buildings ... the same spirit that keeps them painted, protected and preserved today.

Sincerely,

  
Joan Krantz, President

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## YALE FARMS, 1938

### The Story of the Lands that John W. Sterling Owned and Loved

by the late R. Eugene Curry

Excerpted from *House & Garden magazine*, May 1938 Issue

This is not the story of John W. Sterling, son of a Yankee captain of American sailing vessels, or John W. Sterling, Connecticut born boy, Yale graduate of the class of 1864, attorney for half a century in New York, adviser and confidant of the empire builders, quiet but forceful personality in the destinies of the National City Bank, the Consolidated Gas Company and other large organizations, co-founder of the law firm of Shearman & Sterling, famous Yale benefactor.

It is the story of the lands that John W. Sterling owned and loved.



Collections of The Society

#### HISTORIC SMITH'S TAVERN 1938

**Note the front porch and roofline of the building and the then small lake lying across Bedford Road from the Tavern (north of the current dry cleaning store and delicatessen).**

Soon after the turn of the century, Mr. Sterling began to purchase some of the old farms lying back of the historic village of Rye, in the Town of Harrison, in Westchester County... 586 acres in Harrison... 1,400 acres of additional lands in North Castle (the township above Harrison) extending over into North Greenwich, in his native state of Connecticut.

Here Mr. Sterling found the farms owned for many generations by Palmers, Meads, Brundages, Griffins, Hopkins and other fine old Yankee families. Here, as on the Harrison lands, were the Indian campsites near constant flowing springs, meal grinding water mills, the old farmhouses with stone fireplaces, summer kitchens and commodious barns.

On the Post Road from White Plains to Danbury, running through these farms, still stands famous Smith Tavern<sup>1</sup>. Here the horses were changed after the long pull from White Plains, now eighteen minutes by car. This historic building sheltered ... weary stagecoach travelers, town meetings of long ago, as well as many generations of the Smith family.

The teams of oxen kept by Mr. Sterling are well remembered by the neighbors. Harry Brundage, descendant of the Brundages who came to their North Castle lands in 1696, works every weekday in his blacksmith shop, with its piles of horseshoes and its ox-shoeing cramp, adjoining the Sterling holdings.



Photograph by John Gass

**Harry Brundage, May 11, 1939**  
***The Evening Dispatch, White Plains, New York***

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<sup>1</sup> The North Castle Historical Society acquired historic Smith's Tavern in 1977 with the help of generous donations from the IBM Corporation, and members and friends of The NCHS. The Tavern, Brundage Blacksmith Shop, Old Privy, One-Room East Middle Patent School, and 1798 Quaker Meeting House comprise Historic Smith's Tavern Educational Complex, headquarters of The Society.



LOCATED IN THE  
TOWN OF GREENWICH, FAIRFIELD COUNTY, CONN.  
AND  
TOWN OF NORTH CASTLE, WESTCHESTER COUNTY, N.Y.



5

This neighborhood has many old farmhouses, milestones, ruined mill dams, remnants of the early industries, family burial plots long forgotten, old farm lanes between stone walls, caves in the deep woods where men hid in perilous times, tools and latches of hand-wrought iron, ox yokes, lime kilns, ancient documents of land patents, Wills, resolutions of town meetings, royal grants from Queen Anne, and many other ties to the long past heroic times. He maintained the simplicity of the countryside...

When a railroad extension was proposed through his Connecticut lands, he agreed, but with the provision that it should revert to him if the railroad were not built in five years.<sup>2</sup>



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

### **A BRUNDAGE HOUSE, built about 1778**

**Note section 'P' on the Sketch Map herein. Advertised at \$20,000 with 10 acres, a barn at the rear, electricity, hot water heating and plumbing.**

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to article herein "New York, Westchester & Boston Railway"



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

**BEFORE: 1790s COTTAGE, BANKSVILLE ROAD, ARMONK**



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

**AFTER: 1790s COTTAGE REMODELED BY JOHN A. HILL**

**Note property next to section 'W' on the Sketch Map herein. Benson Eschenbach, Architect – remodeling costs were about \$7,000.**



“... The Greenwich and North Castle farms were part of Mr. Sterling’s large bequests to his Alma Mater, Yale University<sup>3</sup>. ... the unspoiled countryside has been maintained; zoning and deed restrictions prevent business or roadside stands and compel all plans to be submitted for approval. On the Yale Farms no site less than five acres is offered and the average sale has been eleven acres. Some of the old farmhouses have been restored to their Colonial dignity with the addition of modern improvements.... New country homes and estates are being built, designed by Lindeberg, Wyeth & King, Swan, Holland & White, Ives and others, with the natural beauty of landscape abetted by such experts as Ellen Shipman and Beatrix Farrand.

A few short years ago, Mr. Sterling visited his Harrison and Connecticut farms on weekends; the trip to the country was not lightly considered, and lunch was invariably carried along. Today from the high ridges in Sterling Ridge and the Yale Farms one may see the glistening towers of New York, and by the magic of modern trains and new parkways one may go from this countryside to the Battery in an hour.”

*(Ending of Excerpts from Mr. Curry’s article)*



Photograph by John Gass, Collections of The Society

### NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE – A VIEW FROM YALE FARMS 1938

<sup>3</sup> The land was given to Yale University, but remained in the Sterling estate until 1935. Sales were actively pursued until 1942 when Mr. R. Eugene Curry left for service in the United States Navy. Sales were reopened after 1945 and concluded in 1957.

## “THE IMMORAL INFLUENCE” OF ARMONK

Several cautions and instructions were detailed in a contract between Mr. John W. Sterling and Mr. John Stevenson<sup>1</sup>, his Farm Superintendent, dated February 11, 1918.<sup>2</sup> One paragraph is humorous today, although quite seriously intended, and received, in 1918.

*Since the party of the first part has owned the so-called Connecticut Farms, he has been particularly annoyed by the farm foremen and men under their charge visiting Armonk, a small town about a mile from the Brundage Place, and returning to the farm in an intoxicated condition, and the party of the first part is particularly sensitive about having his foremen go to Armonk, unless it is in the performance of their duties, and then only for the purchase of absolute necessities on account of the immoral influence of the place.<sup>3</sup>*

The Farm Superintendent was required to thoroughly understand farming, in all its branches; know how to clear, drain and grade lands, build roads and keep them in repair; and to “handle men economically and get the best results from the smallest number of laborers.”

He worked with his men on outside farm work and in the dairy. Laborers were required to work ten hours daily. The lazy, inefficient and shirkers were weeded out. Those in charge of a horse or team were to always have a whip at hand. Every horse or team was required to go at a trot, except when drawing a load or when the weather was too sultry.

Sterling required that all machinery be stored inside nightly. All barns and outbuilding were locked every night.

Graft was strictly forbidden. The Farm Superintendent could not receive or ask for commissions or money from any laborer. He could not ask for or receive any discount for purchases. He was contractually required to “deal on behalf of the party of the first part” (Sterling) with absolute

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<sup>1</sup> John Stevenson and his family lived on the property. One of his children, George, later married Marge Farrington, a sister of Eleanor (Mrs. John Schnoor) and Debbie (Mrs. James Torlish).

<sup>2</sup> John W. Sterling died a few months later.

<sup>3</sup> From a Contract of Employment between John W. Sterling and John Stevenson, dated February 11, 1918 donated to The Society by North Castle Town Historian Doris Finch Watson.



exactness and honesty as to the cost of labor and material and in all other respects.

As Farm Superintendent, John Stevenson was required to board the men employed on the farm. He received \$20 per month for each man. He was given a garden plot large enough to grow vegetables to assist him in reducing the cost of boarding the farm help, but he had to work the garden on his own time.

Monthly wages of \$70 were paid twice a month. Stevenson was allowed free rent for the portion of the cottage where he was then residing on the Griffin Farm.



### THE NEW YORK, HOUSATONIC AND NORTHERN COMPANY



Collections of Doris Finch Watson

### CERTIFICATE NO. 49 REPRESENTING OWNERSHIP IN THE NEW YORK, HOUSATONIC AND NORTHERN RAIL ROAD COMPANY

**William Wright purchased 30 Shares for \$100 each on March 9, 1867**

About forty years before work began on the New York, Westchester & Boston Railway, another railroad for North Castle was planned. Work progressed to the point that stock certificates were issued. Shares were sold for \$100 each in 1867. The New York, Housatonic and Northern Rail Road was to run through the eastern end of Town connecting White Plains, New York and Brookfield, Connecticut.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See *North Castle History*, 1976, Volume 3, "The New York, Housatonic & Northern Railroad" by Helen Manner.

## THE YALE FARMS 1935 - 1957

by R. Eugene Curry (1901-1994)

John W. Sterling purchased the 1400 acres in the Towns of Greenwich and North Castle in the 1912-1915 period, in anticipation of the construction of the Westchester and Boston Railroad from its terminus in White Plains (where B. Altman is now)<sup>1</sup> through Danbury and north.

Mr. Sterling built many roads with stone base, barns for dairy herds, kept the farmlands cleared and used for grazing and haying. Many single farm hands were employed. John Stevenson and wife boarded them.

Upon Sterling's death in 1918 the livestock was sold, but John Stevenson and two men kept the fields mowed and the houses in repair; all buildings had been painted yellow. The land was given to Yale University, but remained in the Sterling estate until 1935. Taxes were paid at all times; it was not exempt.

I [Mr. Curry] was employed by the Miriam Osborn Memorial Home in Rye to handle other lands of Mr. Sterling, now the Sterling Ridge residential area opposite the Westchester Country Club. Living near the property, Yale University asked me to report on the disposition, as they were about to take title. My report recommended sales in plots of not less than five acres, although the zoning was two acres.

The sales map made up by Ralph L. MacDonald was the first to use an aerial survey for subdivision. The stonewalls and fields were part of the planning. We carried on active sales until 1942. I left for service in the United States Navy. The mowing was abandoned for lack of gasoline. During that time we had sold many of the old houses with five to ten acres for \$5,000 to \$20,000.

After 1945, the late Sidney H. Francis of the Yale staff reopened the property, built several roads, and offered to sell four acres for \$3,200.

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<sup>1</sup> B. Altman Department Store was located at the corner of Westchester Avenue and Bloomingdale Road in White Plains, New York. The White Plains station was demolished when B. Altman Department Store built on the site. During the early 1990s the B. Altman building was demolished when The Westchester shopping mall was built.



When Mr. Francis retired in 1954, I [Mr. Curry] returned to complete the sales, ending with the final plot, 7 acres on Quaker Ridge Road, inadvertently purchased by myself in 1957 for \$3,000. Later Mrs. Phoebe Milliken and William Sanford added to these 7 acres to make a 22-acre gift to The Audubon Society, across the road. This ended a very happy chapter in my life.<sup>2</sup>



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

#### FROM THE RALPH MACDONALD 1954 SURVEY MAP

*Note that the parcel identification letters differ from those identifying letters on the 1938 Map*

<sup>2</sup> The Audubon Greenwich sanctuary was opened in 1943 and was the first educational nature center for the National Audubon Society. The center is located at the intersection of John Street and Riversville Road (called North Greenwich Road and New York State Route 433 in North Castle, New York).

## SOME YALE FARMS PRICES - October 15, 1954

Included in the archives of The North Castle Historical Society is a yellowed and torn copy of a price list dated October 15, 1954. Mr. R. Eugene Curry is listed as Manager and Mr. John Stevenson as Superintendent.

Residents welcomed neighbors with similar interests, but references were required. Exterior construction materials, including color, plans and location on the site required approvals.

The price list bears an interesting disclaimer and particular information. "Prices may be changed without notice or reissue of price list and the property or any portion of it may be withdrawn by the seller at any time without notice, and without obligation of any kind to the broker or prospective purchaser."



Collections of The NCHS

1954 SALES BROCHURE COVER

### ***SECTION "E" LOTS FOR SALE ON DAY ROAD AND YALE PLACE OCTOBER 15, 1954***

Lot 2	3.2 acres with pond and spring, \$4,300
Lot 12	2.0 wooded acres, \$3,750
Lot 16	2.4 wooded acres (a 25 foot reserved strip along the north boundary), \$4,000
Lot 17	2.0 wooded acres, \$4,000
Lot 19	2.0 wooded acres, \$3,750
Lot 20	2.0 wooded acres, \$3,750
Lot 21	2.3 wooded acres, \$3,750



## NEW YORK, WESTCHESTER & BOSTON RAILWAY

by Sharon Tomback

The New York, Westchester & Boston Railway Company was incorporated in 1872, but went into receivership in 1875 as a result of the Panic of 1873. The company emerged from receivership in 1904 and began acquiring additional real estate rights for its route.

In 1906 bankers Oakleigh Thorne and Marsden J. Perry bought the stock of the company on behalf of the Millbrook Company, a holding entity. After the Panic of 1907, the assets of the Millbrook Company were transferred over to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad for \$11 million, becoming a part of that company's emerging consolidated monopoly on rail and water transportation in southern New England.<sup>1</sup>

### Mr. John W. Sterling Anticipated Construction

"The 1400 acres in the Towns of Greenwich and North Castle were purchased by John W. Sterling in the 1912-1915 period in anticipation of the construction of the Westchester and Boston Railroad from its terminus in White Plains (where B. Altman is now)<sup>2</sup> through Danbury and on up (northward). The Millbrook Company was the vehicle for land purchase by the railroad. The right of way was east of Old Bedford Road, some 500 feet directly in from the end of John Street. It crossed Old Bedford Road, also Quaker Ridge Road (Riversville Road) where a cut was drilled with steam operated drills in the rock-still to be seen. Two hundred feet east, heavy slabs of stone over the stream form a bridge. Two stops were to be built on the Sterling lands; he gave the right of way, but with a reverter in the deed."<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in 1912 and continuing until 1937, the New York, Westchester & Boston Railway operated from the Bronx to White Plains and Port Chester. It was an electric railway for commuters. It was known as the 'Boston-Westchester' and simply as the 'Westchester'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_York,\\_Westchester\\_and\\_Boston\\_Railway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York,_Westchester_and_Boston_Railway).

<sup>2</sup> The B. Altman Department Store was located at the corner of Westchester Avenue and Bloomingdale Road in White Plains, New York.

<sup>3</sup> R. Eugene Curry (1901-1994), "Yale Farms 1935 - 1957", see article herein.

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_York,\\_Westchester\\_and\\_Boston\\_Railway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York,_Westchester_and_Boston_Railway)

An article appearing in the November 8, 1912 issue of *The New York Times* newspaper reported that the New York, Westchester & Boston Railroad had sold an additional \$2,000,000 of 4 ½ percent bonds to be used for the construction of the new Westchester Northern Railroad Company, an extension of the Westchester Boston system. The new route was to extend from the White Plains terminal northward through Westchester County to Danbury, Connecticut. The article ended, "The construction of this new road has caused a boom in real estate in the eastern section of Westchester County through which it will pass."

Two years later, news was not so positive for the New York, Westchester & Boston Railway. An Interstate Commerce Commission report dated 1914 proclaimed, "The Westchester is a story of profligate waste of corporate funds. The road was not necessary as a part of the New Haven system."<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary writer Robert A. Bang has called the Railway "Westchester County's Million-Dollar-a-Mile Railroad." The New York, Westchester & Boston Railway has been termed "J.P. Morgan's Magnificent Mistake" by author Herbert H. Harwood, Jr. who wrote that unrecorded millions of dollars were paid for unknown reasons, boosting the cost in 2005 dollars to almost \$40 million per mile.



Collections of theloopny.com

#### **ASSORTED FENCE POST TOPS USED BY THE RAILWAY<sup>6</sup>**

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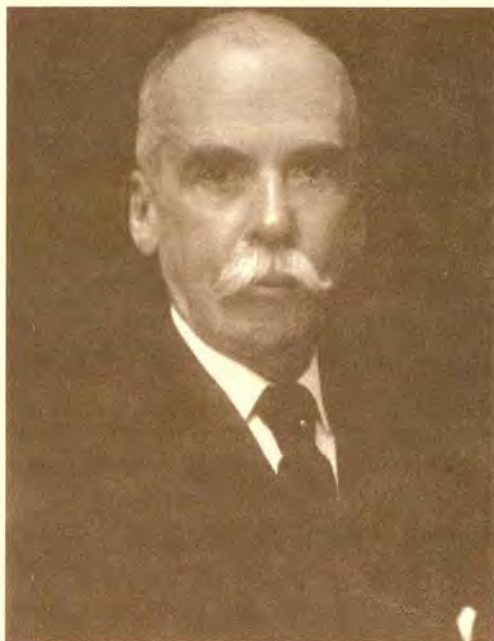
<sup>5</sup> U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission, No. 6569, *Report of Investigation of the Financial Transactions of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company*, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> <http://theloopny.com/blog/tracing-westchesters-vanished-railroad/>



## JOHN WILLIAM STERLING, 1844-1918

By Sharon Tomback



<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

### JOHN WILLIAM STERLING, ESQ.

John William Sterling was born May 12, 1844 in Stratford, Connecticut. His parents were John William and Catherine Tomlinson (Plant) Sterling. He died July 5, 1918 while at a friend's hunting lodge in Canada. Two sisters, Mrs. Catherine (Rufus W.) Bunnell and Miss Cordelia Sterling, survived him. At the time of his death, Sterling was living at 912 Fifth Avenue, New York City.<sup>1</sup>

John Sterling was an 1864 graduate of Yale University. He bequeathed Yale University property worth more than \$15 million dollars<sup>2</sup> upon his death. At the time it was the largest gift ever donated to an institution of higher learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Obituary published in *The New York Times*, July 17, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated by the *Stamford Advocate* to be valued at more than \$200 million in 2011.



Courtesy Yale University Archives

**JOHN W. STERLING, LEFT  
AND ROOMMATE, CLINTON CONKLING  
AT YALE, JULY 11, 1863**

Mr. Sterling was one of the founders of the esteemed international law firm known today as Sherman & Sterling LLP.

Sterling's legal clients included Great American Insurance Company, Citizens National Bank, Anaconda Copper, Standard Oil, Canadian Pacific Railroad, Jay Gould, William Rockefeller, Henry Ford, Henry Ward Beecher, and James Stillman, chairman of the board of National City Bank.

Another of his clients, Miriam Adelaide Trowbridge Osborn, founded The Osborn Home in Rye. When she died in 1892, Sterling was executor of her Will which stipulated establishing a home for 'aged gentlewomen in needy circumstances.' It is interesting to note that as a bequest of his Will Mr. Sterling donated back legal fees associated with Mrs. Osborn's Will, with interest, and added an additional \$1,000,000 for the Home.

Although he did not live in North Castle, his purchase and preservation of significant properties in Town are noteworthy. Sterling Road in Armonk bears his name.

According to the July 17, 1918 edition of The New York Times, "The two sisters, his lifelong friend James O. Bloss, a retired cotton broker,



who made his home with the testator for more than forty years; George H. Church, who had been closely associated with the testator in the management of the many important estates of which he was Trustee, and the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company are named as executors." All of these, except the sisters, were named as Trustees.

An advisory board to confer with the Trustees was created by the terms of the Will. This board originally consisted of James Stillman, Samuel Thorne, and Stephen S. Palmer, all of whom predeceased Sterling, but by the codicil executed in 1913 Sterling appointed James. A. Stillman, Percy A. Rockefeller, Samuel McRoberts<sup>3</sup>, and George B. Cortelyou to be members of this board.

For a number of years Mr. Sterling was personally concerned in the formation, foreclosure and reorganization of railroad companies.<sup>4</sup>

He served as counsel for many trust estates. He served as a director for National City Bank of New York, New York Trust Company, Consolidated Gas Company of New York, Central Union Gas Company, Northern Union Gas Company, Standard Gas Light Company of New York, Bond and Mortgage Guarantee Company and New Amsterdam Gas Company.

It has been reported that John Sterling was a serious man with strict work habits and attention to detail. Both of those characteristics are apparent in the contract made with his Farm Superintendent. He wanted "the best results from the smallest number of laborers" and he did not want his workers going to Armonk "on account of the immoral influence of the place."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel McRoberts built a country home in North Castle, which stands today on Route 22 north of Armonk. The home was known then as "The Ledges" and later as "Sound View" reportedly because one could see Long Island Sound from the upstairs windows.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to "New York, Westchester & Boston Railway" herein, pages 14-16.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to "The Immoral Influence of Armonk" herein, pages 9 and 10.

## NEIGHBORS AGAINST NEIGHBORS

by Sharon Tomback

During the years leading up to and following the Declaration of Independence,<sup>1</sup> North Castle residents were divided in their loyalties. Some favored independence from Great Britain (Patriots) and some favored allegiance to the King of England and the motherland (Loyalists).

However, there were other divisions. Some neighbors exhibited other loyalties. These neighbors had no allegiance to either the Patriots or the Loyalists (Cowboys, Skinners). These North Castle residents stole from their neighbors and sold the stolen goods to anyone for personal gain.<sup>2</sup>

Officially North Castle fell into the area historians generally describe as the Neutral Ground<sup>3</sup>, or no man's land, during the War years. Neither the British or American armies were in control. Both armies foraged the area for food and supplies for the troops and horses.

Sometimes neighbors openly and violently opposed neighbors because of their beliefs. Houses were burned. Crops and fields were ruined. Livestock was stolen. Furniture and household furnishings were plundered. Clothing was stolen. Even when the opposition was more secretive, it was not less cruel.

Beliefs set neighbors against neighbors.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Revolution, also called the War of Rebellion depending on one's beliefs, spanned many years. The Battle of Concord and Lexington, Massachusetts occurred in April 1775 prior to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The decisive Battle at Yorktown, Virginia actually was fought for more than two weeks from the end of September to the middle of October 1781. Hostilities in North Castle continued for more than two years afterwards.

<sup>2</sup> Reportedly "Skinners" were named after General Courtland Skinner and the "Cowboys" were so named because they stole and resold cattle, frequently the same cattle more than once. Dictionary of American History, 2003, and [www.encyclopedia.com](http://www.encyclopedia.com).

<sup>3</sup> Refer to American Revolutionary History in North Castle, published by The North Castle Bicentennial Committee in collaboration with The North Castle Historical Society, 1976, "The Middle Patent Of North Castle", by Doris Finch Watson, present Town Historian for the Town of North Castle.



## **Banks Family Experiences of the Revolutionary War**

The John Banks family farmed on the Bedford-Banksville Road in Middle Patent. John and his wife, Deborah Newman Banks, produced a large family of twelve children.<sup>4</sup>



**BANKS-GUION HOUSE, 1976**

Research by George Pouder indicates that James and Martha Guion purchased the house in 1804 from Samuel and Charity Lyon Banks. Samuel was a son of John and Deborah Newman Banks.<sup>5</sup> The Smith family purchased the house in 1862. In the 1920s the house was a nursing and convalescent home called "The French Hospital". It has been the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Pouder since 1967.

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<sup>4</sup> John married Elizabeth Reynolds; Deborah married Deacon Silas Sutherland; Hannah married Daniel Ferris; Samuel married Charity Lyon; Joseph died in the Sugar House Prison in 1779; Sarah married Joshua Briggs; Diadamia married Moses Lyon; Martha married James Lyon; Rachel married Jonathan Miller; Benjamin married Keziah Miller; Alanson married Mary Owens according to a Banks genealogy researched by Richard N. Lander.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to North Castle History, 1998, Volume 25, pages 5-9, "James Guion of North Castle, 1777-1861" by George Pouder.

## Martha's Story

Martha Banks, a daughter of John and Deborah Newman Banks and a sister of Samuel Banks, discussed with John MacDonald<sup>6</sup> one of her remembrances when neighbors attacked her father's home during the Revolution. Her husband, James Lyon, served as a private in the Second Regiment, Westchester County Militia, under Col. Thaddeus Crane.<sup>7</sup>

"I am 88, one year only older than my husband. Once toward the close of the war, early about daylight of a Sunday morning in the Fall, I think, Colonel Homes at the head of a party of Refugees came to my father's house in the Middle Patent. Father had been guarding the cattle all night. They were for safety kept in the yard, where they could be seen. The first we knew they broke and cut the windows with their swords. My father was abed with the curtain drawn. They surrounded the house and forced the doors, and demanded all our money. My father gave them his pocket book, which contained only one dollar. They demanded more. Father said that was all he had, etc. A gentleman now spoke, 'How d'e do, Mr. Banks?' 'I don't know who you are', said father, much frightened and trembling like a leaf. 'What! Don't you know an old neighbor?' 'No', said my father, 'I don't recollect you.' 'I am Colonel Holmes',<sup>8</sup> replied the stranger. My father then reasoned with and shamed Colonel Holmes for allowing an old acquaintance to be robbed. He replied, 'That is the usage of war.'

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<sup>6</sup> The McDonald Papers, by John M. MacDonald in the collections of the Huguenot/Thomas Paine Historical Association, New Rochelle, New York.

<sup>7</sup> Martha Banks and James Lyon were married in 1785. Their children were Banks, Phebe, Deborah, Israel, Newman, James, Mary and Knapp according to Robert B. Miller, Lyon Memorial, Volume II. <http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/robert-b-miller/lyon-memorial-volume-2-lli/page-13-lyon-memorial-volume-2-lli.shtml>

<sup>8</sup> Col. James Holmes was an American officer, but retired to his Bedford, New York farm in 1777. Thereafter, he served with the Westchester County Refugees in service to the British. His estate was confiscated during the war. He lived with his niece and her husband, Col. Jesse Holly, in Bedford until about 1810, when he moved to New Haven, Connecticut where he died in 1824 at the age of 87 years. History of New York During the Revolutionary War and of the Leading Events in the Other Colonies at that Period by Thomas Jones, Justice of the Supreme Court of the Province, Volume II, New York printed for The New York Historical Society 1879, pages 618-621.



Just before this I heard them say, 'Give up your money or you are a dead man.' I ran into the room in my nightdress, and knocked up the muzzle of a gun pointed at my father's breast. They took off all our bedclothes and most of our other clothes, which we never got again. They inquired for my brothers and took one of them a prisoner. Then they inquired for the other brothers. I told them the others had gone to Bedford for a force to take them. They then left my father's in a hurry and retreated. A few plunderers remained behind to take off what remained of our clothes."<sup>9</sup>

### Jonathan's Story

Jonathan Banks, one of twelve children of John and Deborah Newman Banks and a brother of Martha Banks Lyon and of Samuel Banks, was born in Middle Patent in 1759. He was an avowed Patriot. He enlisted in the Second Regiment of the Westchester County Militia and served under Colonel Thomas Thomas, Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert Budd, Major David Hobby and Major Jesse Truesdell.<sup>10</sup>

Jonathan suffered cruelly at the hands of his neighbors. One early morning, his home was broken into. He was brutally beaten and imprisoned by attacking Loyalists who did not share his Patriot beliefs. Note that in the following story Jonathan's son, unnamed by Mr. Scharf<sup>11</sup>, related that his parents had been married only six months.<sup>12</sup>

"The writer has been permitted to present the following sketch of the capture of Mr. Jonathan Banks, of Banksville, written by his son many years ago. It shows what life in the Neutral Ground was like during the Revolution.

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Banks, another of Martha's brothers, was held prisoner and died in the Sugar House in New York City. Op. Cit. American Revolutionary History in North Castle, pages 65-66.

<sup>10</sup> New York In The Revolution As Colony And State, Vol. I., a compilation of documents and records from the Office of the State Comptroller, Albany, New York 1904.

<sup>11</sup> History of Westchester County, New York, by J. Thomas Scharf, Vol. II, L.E. Preston & Co., 1886, Philadelphia.

<sup>12</sup> According to family genealogy, Jonathan Banks and Anna Murphy, a daughter of Robert and Anna Knapp Murphy, were married in August 1772.

'My father and mother were sleeping, when, at the break of day, the rushing tramp of British horsemen awoke them. Said father, 'Anna, the Hessians<sup>13</sup> are upon us!' Mother sprang out of bed, and raising the window-curtain, saw the troop passing the house, remarking at the same time, 'No, Jonathan, I believe they are our own Colonel Sheldon's<sup>14</sup> army.' In another moment, however, the presence of an enemy was verified by the dashing in of the front window, which was followed by a scene the description of which, as given by mother, I have often listened to with breathless interest.

At the time of the capture my father had been married just six months. Father was taken to New York and confined in the old Sugar House<sup>15</sup>, which was the most popular receptacle for Whig prisoners. ... The party of cavalry who made a prisoner of my father also compelled my grandfather, who was an aged and infirm gentleman, to give up his money. They also drove away his cattle and literally pillaged his dwelling of every portable article of any value. My father's and mother's wardrobe, containing not only the marriage suits of each, but all of the linen and woolen cloth, spun and woven by my mother, shared the same fate.

I have heard my father tell of his putting on his beaver hat, as he was leaving his young wife, and that an officer took it off his

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<sup>13</sup> German mercenaries fighting for the British during the American Revolution.

<sup>14</sup> Colonel Elisha Sheldon was a Patriot. In a letter dated September 4, 1782, written to General George Washington from "Middle Patent, near Bedford, New York", he stressed his difficulties in obtaining forage and water for his men. Library of Congress, Calendar of the Correspondence of George Washington, Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, Vol. III, December 9, 1780-January 4, 1782.

<sup>15</sup> Sanitary conditions at the sugarhouses used as prisons were almost non-existent. Diseases, malnutrition and starvation were constant threats. The death toll was extremely high. Being sent to a sugarhouse was akin to a death sentence. One of these British prisons in New York City was a five-story brick warehouse built in 1763 that belonged to the Rhinelander family. Ghost stories about skeleton hands reaching through the bars and emaciated bodies peering through the windows were repeated for years. The building was taken down in 1892 and replaced by the Rhinelander Building where, as an artifact, a barred window from the old prison was built into the side of the building using some of the ancient bricks. In 1968 the Rhinelander Building was demolished. The site is now occupied by Police Headquarters. The old prison window is preserved at the site. [www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/patriotprisons/sugarjail.html](http://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/patriotprisons/sugarjail.html)



head and gave him one in return that he took from the head of his colored servant. They took father a mile below his house where they stopped for breakfast. Then they stripped him of his clothing and scourged him with whips of rawhide, on his naked flesh, till his sufferings had become so intense that his tormentors thought death would ensue.

He survived the outrage, but he carried with him to the grave the scars of the British scourge and the British sword.”



New York Public Library Picture Collection

## RHINELANDER'S SUGAR HOUSE & RESIDENCE

Jonathan Banks lived another 28 years. He and his wife established a large family of eleven children. Their children married into the Smith, Bussing, Newman, Clark, Romer, Finch, Dayton, Hoyt, and See families.<sup>16</sup>

The Jonathan Banks family appears on the Federal Census for 1790 listed between the David Hobby and Hannah Smith families on one side and the William Finch and Lansing Banks families on the other side. There are

<sup>16</sup> Genealogy research in the collections of The Society contributed by the late Richard N. Lander, past Historian for the Town of North Castle. Anne died in 1796 unmarried; Levi married Olive Smith; Benjamin M. married Sarah Bussing; Clarissa married James Newman; Esther married Nathaniel E. Clark; Sarah married Joseph Romer; John married Lydia Finch; Lavinia married Henry Romer; Walter married Mary Dayton; Elizabeth married James Hoyt and James married Elizabeth H. See.

eight persons listed in the Jonathan Banks household: one “free white male” more than 16 years old and two less than 16 years old, and five “free white females.”

Ten years later, Jonathan Banks and his family appear on the Federal Census for 1800. He is one of 1,178 persons then living in North Castle. The family is listed between the James Banks and Benjamin Banks families on one side and the Samuel Banks and Joshua Knap (sic) families on the other side. There are ten persons listed in the Jonathan Banks household: a male and a female, both between 26 and 45 years of age; four males and four females, all less than 26 years old.

### Mary Ann's Story

Mary Ann Banks, a daughter of James and Ann Brush Banks, was a cousin of Martha Banks Lyon, Samuel Banks and Jonathan Banks. Her father, James Banks, was a brother of the John Banks who married Deborah Newman.

“I am a native of Middle Patent, where I lived during the Revolutionary War, and married, near its close, Mr. Thomas Ferris<sup>17</sup>. I think it was part of Delancey's party that fired Bedford from their conduct as they attacked Mr. Miller of that place, refusing him quarter and hacking him to pieces with their swords. Upon that occasion they burned the houses of the warm Whigs on the road as they went up, vizt, Peter Lyons, etc. They drove off a good many cattle and on their return intended to burn Middle Patent, but the bridge of Mahann's River<sup>18</sup> was taken up and they would not ford it. A part of Delancey's afterward came to Middle Patent and drove off the cattle, commanded I think by Major Huggeford.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> According to research of Richard N. Lander in the collections of The Society, Thomas Ferris held several offices in the Town of North Castle: Assessor, Commissioner of Highways, and Town Clerk. He served as County Clerk of Westchester 1802-1808, 1810-1811 and 1813-1815. Mary Ann Banks and Thomas Ferris had eight children: Harriet, who married Thomas Owen; Margaret who married John Hains; Ann who married Henry Clift; Catherine who married Peter Guion; Deborah who married Harvey Palmer, Maria who did not marry; Samuel Banks who married Hetty Guion and Thomas Jr. who died as an infant.

<sup>18</sup> Mianus River

<sup>19</sup> Refer to American Revolutionary History in North Castle, published by The North Castle Bicentennial Committee in collaboration with The North Castle Historical Society, 1976, “The Middle Patent Of North Castle”, by Doris Finch Watson, present Town Historian for the Town of North Castle.



### Claim of Archelaus Carpenter, Loyalist<sup>20</sup>

In a claim for loss of property made to the British authorities in Canada, Archelaus Carpenter testified that he came to Nova Scotia in 1783 on board the ship *Cyrus* and that he settled in New Brunswick. He said that he owned an estate in North Castle, but left home in 1777 and went to New York. As proof, he produced a 1769 deed from Caleb Fowler evidencing purchase of 80 acres, another from Jacob Carpenter for 17 acres dated 1772, another from William Fowler for 6 acres of woodland, and another deed dated 1774 from Walter Franklin for 125 acres. He said that he was always openly in favor of the British, and that he “harboured” and “victuald” as many as 200 at a time taking food to them in the woods.

He did not know what had become of his property. He thought perhaps Franklin might have put somebody in possession. He testified that he had left his movables on the farm and that a Committee<sup>21</sup> took them. He said they took three horses, one yoke of oxen, four cows, four young sheep, household furniture and utensils. Robert Thorne testified that Carpenter had always been “reckoned a Loyalist”. Gilbert Purdie(y) testified that he knew Archelaus Carpenter to loyal from the first. He said the land contained a piece of good meadows, which he valued at eight pounds an acre. Francis Flewelling stated that he knew Archelaus Carpenter to be very loyal, that he used to help feed Loyalists in great numbers. He testified that he saw the Rebels take Carpenter’s cattle.

According to family genealogy Archelaus Carpenter was born in 1734 in North Castle and died in 1810 in Nova Scotia. His parents were Timothy and Phebe Coles Carpenter. He married Rebecca Golding in North Castle in 1755.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives, Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario by Alexander Fraser, Provincial Archivist 1904, published Toronto by L. K. Cameron Printers 1905, page 880.

<sup>21</sup> On March 6, 1777, the Provincial Congress appointed Commissioners of Sequestration to take into custody and possession all personal property of loyalists and to sell the seized items at public auction after ten days’ notice. Loyalist families were allowed to keep personal clothing, some furniture and three months provisions. New York in the Revolution as Colony and State, two volumes, Albany, J. B. Lyon Co., 1904. In 1780 New York empowered Commissioners of Specie to sell forfeited lands. Later the Commissioners of Forfeitures replaced the Commissioners of Sequestration, and the Surveyor General replaced the Commissioners of Forfeitures in 1788. [www.westchesterarchives.com](http://www.westchesterarchives.com).

<sup>22</sup> Family genealogy reports nine children born to Rebecca and Archelaus Carpenter. Jan Robison reported on [Rootsweb.ancestry.com](http://Rootsweb.ancestry.com).

The Treaty of Paris, signed in September 1783, called for confiscated property belonging to British subjects to be returned, or repayment made if the property had been sold. However, in 1784 the Provincial Congress authorized “the speedy sale of the confiscated estates”<sup>23</sup>.

**A 1786 Notice Posted by the Treasury Office, State of New York<sup>24</sup>**

“ALL Persons having demands against the forfeited estates of Edmund Ward and James Delancey, of Westchester, John Bates, David Heustice, Israel Seaman, John Pell, Frederick Devoe, Solomon Fowler, of Eastchester, Archelaus Carpenter, Isaac Titus, John Gidney, George Cornwell, Griffin Corey, Nathan Whitney, William Reed, Isaac Williams, Shubal Brush, Gilbert Miller, Miles Oakley, Phillip Jones, Jeremiah Travis, Shubal Sniffin, Joseph Givney, Thomas Merrit, Ezekiel Hawley, Joseph Merrit, Nathan Osburn, Anthony Miller, Caleb Frost, William Travis, Benjamin Kip, Jonathan Wright, Joshua Pell, Benjamin Lewis, Zoar Cock, John Crawford, James Crawford, Lewis Homes, James Holmes, Gabriel Davenport, Jacob Frost, Jonathan Moorhouse, Thomas Flewelling, Stephen Fowler, of North Castle, Peter Drake and Francis Peemart, all of the county of Westchester; who are relievable by an act entitled, ‘An act for the speedy sale of the confiscated and forfeited estates within this State, and for other purposes therein mentioned,’ passed the 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1784, and who have not yet delivered in their accounts or demands, audited and certified according to the directions of the said act, are hereby notified and required to exhibit to me their claims, within four months from the date hereof, that I may proceed to discharge the same as the law directs, otherwise they will be debarred and forever precluded from relief. (signed) Gerard Bancker, Treasurer.”

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<sup>23</sup> The Disposition of Loyalist Estates in the Southern District of the State of New York, by Harry B. Yoshpe, New York, Columbia University Press, 1939.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.historicpelham.com>



## PSALMS ABOVE KENSICO DAM

by Sharon Tomback



### LOOKING TOWARDS THE CUPOLAS

The two-lane road across the top of Kensico Dam is punctuated with four cupolas at each end. One end of the road terminates in the Town of North Castle; the other end terminates in the Town of Mount Pleasant.

Each pair of cupolas is connected with a stone breezeway, built in an arc and supported by six stone pillars. Each of the four stone banners across the tops of the arcs bears an inscription from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Each cupola houses a marble tablet. Some of the tablets are inscribed; others are not. One tablet lists the names of the New York City Mayors during whose administrations the construction of the cupolas were undertaken. Another lists the names of the City of New York, Catskill Water Supply, Board of Water Supply Commissioners during the same span of years.

**Psalms Above Kensico Dam  
Inscriptions of Enduring Faith**

*Psalm 147:16 - He giveth the snow like wool; He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.*

*Psalm 147:8 - He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*

*Psalm 147:18 - He causeth his wind to blow and the waters to flow.*

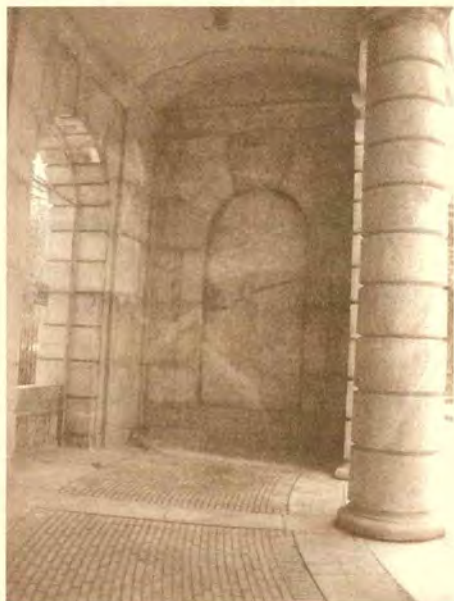
*Psalm 147:8 - He covereth the heaven with clouds. He prepareth rain for the earth.*



**ONE OF THE FOUR STONE BANNERS**

The lovely monuments in stone atop Kensico Dam give testimony to the pride of craftsmanship of the stonemasons who shaped the stones, constructed the pillars, arched the windows, curved the connecting banners and cupolas and carved the inscriptions from the Book of Psalms.





**AN UNCARVED TABLET**



***CATSKILL WATER SUPPLY***

***Begun During the Administration of  
New York City Mayors***

***George B. McClellan, Mayor 1904-1909***

***Continued under***

***William J. Gaynor, Mayor 1910-1913***

***John P. Mitchel, Mayor 1914-1917***

***John P. Hylan, Mayor 1918-1926***

***James J. Walker, Mayor 1926-1932***



**CATSKILL WATER SUPPLY  
CITY OF NEW YORK  
BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY  
PROJECT ENGINEERS**

***J. Waldo Smith, Chief Engineer***

***John R. Freeman, William H.  
Buss,  
Frederic P. Stearns, Alfred Noble,  
Consulting Engineers***

***Thaddeus Merriman, Chief  
Engineer***



**CATSKILL WATER SUPPLY  
CITY OF NEW YORK**

**BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY  
COMMISSIONERS**

***J. Edward Simmons 1905 – 1961***

***Charles N. Chadwick 1905 – 1920***

***Charles A. Shaw 1905 – 1911***

***John A. Bense1 1908 – 1910***

***John P. Galvin 1911 – 1920***

***Charles Strauss 1911 – 1918***

***L. J. O'Reilly 1918 – 1922***

***George J. Gillespie 1920***

***James P. Sinnott 1920 – 1928***

***Philip J. Donohue 1922***



## **NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY**

The New York City Board of Water Supply was established by the New York State Legislature in 1905 and abolished on July 26, 1978 when Gov. Hugh Carey signed the bill into law.

Over the years there was much criticism of the Board of Water Supply Commissioners. The Board was comprised of three members. They were appointed for life and were paid between \$10,000 and \$12,000 annually. Contemporary news articles refer to the Board as a place where little work was done for lots of pay. The jobs were termed political patronage positions. Despite the criticism, the contributing aesthetic architecture and Psalms above Kensico Dam are a lasting tribute.



### **A VIEW THROUGH ONE OF THE BREEZEWAYS**

**When we remember that many people died during the construction of Kensico Dam, it is humbling to stand in the beautiful cupolas, and to read the lessons of enduring faith passed from generation to generation.**

### ***SPECIAL APPRECIATION***

*After the attacks of 9-11-2001 access to the top of Kensico Dam was closed. Special appreciation is extended to Ms. Cathy Durso and Mr. Daniel Massie, Sr. of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection and to Lt. Peter Simonsen of the North Castle Police Department for their assistance in gaining access. All photographs have been donated to The North Castle Historical Society courtesy of the author.*

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## **PSALMS ABOVE KENSICO DAM**

The photograph appearing on the front cover shows a view through the columns of an arched window and the curve of the arc of the breezeway connecting two of the cupolas standing above Kensico Dam. Psalms are inscribed on the four connecting arcs.

When we remember that many died during the construction of Kensico Dam, it is humbling to stand in the beautiful cupolas and read the lessons of enduring faith passed from generation to generation.

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