

# ***NORTH CASTLE HISTORY***



Photograph – Douglas Elliman Real Estate

**THE LEDGES**  
**Built for Brig. Gen. Samuel McRoberts**

**THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Volume 40 -- 2013**

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*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

Dear Friends of The Society,

During 2013 The North Castle Historical Society suffered the loss of two Trustees, Becky Kittredge and Missy White. Over the years the work that both these individuals did for The Society is immeasurable. They will be greatly missed.

The Smith's Tavern complex continues to offer a unique learning experience, opening its doors to schools in the area. Here they come for Colonial Crafts Days to get a little taste of life from the past. We continue to open the doors on Wednesdays and Sundays from April through November and welcome all for a visit. This is made possible with the help of our docent volunteers, without whom we would be unable to carry on.

We have put a fresh coat of paint on Smith's Tavern, both inside and out, and replaced the South facing roof on the 1798 Quaker Meeting House. We continue to ensure the preservation of our historic buildings.

I wish to especially thank our Board of Trustees who volunteer their time and efforts, thereby playing an integral part in keeping The North Castle Historical Society a vibrant part of our community. I wish to thank you, our members. Your continuing support enables us to expand our programs and publications now and in the future. We welcome any suggestions that you may have and invite you to join us for a step back into our historic past.

Sincerely,

Ree Schultz, President

**THE NORTH CASTLE ESTATE OF  
BRIGADIER-GENERAL SAMUEL McROBERTS**

by Sharon Tomback



**SAMUEL McROBERTS**  
Vice-President, National City Bank of  
New York.

**Samuel McRoberts**  
Vice President, National City Bank of New York, 1909-1917

The February 25, 1916 issue of the *North Castle Sun* newspaper reported that Samuel McRoberts was building a large country home in North Castle and that it was nearing completion.



Douglas Elliman Real Estate

## THE LEDGES

Some neighbors called the house a castle, because of its size, architectural style and the use of stone. The estate was referred to variously as being in Mt. Kisco or Bedford, and on Chestnut Ridge Road, State Road and Bedford Road. Sometimes the location was reported as being in North Castle.

Passenger records for August 10, 1923 for the ocean liner Berengaria list Samuel McRoberts and Harriet McRoberts as arriving at New York from Southampton. Their place of residence is listed as "St. Kisco (sic), New York."

### The Ledges, Later Known as Soundview

Mr. and Mrs. McRoberts called their estate 'The Ledges'. Later on the estate was also called 'Soundview' because from the upper floor one can see Long Island Sound on a clear day. Today the estate is a privately owned residence. It has been lovingly and beautifully restored using the finest craftsmanship, period appropriate antiques and furnishings.

Samuel McRoberts began amassing land in North Castle as early as 1912<sup>1</sup>. Some of his land purchases were from:

Richard P. Nonnatt (sp?)- January 6, 1912 – Liber 1974, page 286  
Eugene S. Cregier – October 7, 1915 – Liber 2097, page 4  
Eugene S. Cregier – March 21, 1917 – Liber 2139, page 496  
Erwin Keeler – April 2, 1917 – Liber 2142, page 27  
William B. Worden – April 2, 1917 – Liber 2142, page 56  
Cornelia E. Ferris – April 12, 1917 – Liber 2143, page 124  
Viola I. Reynolds – June 22, 1917 – Liber 2147, page 396  
John N. Thorne – July 3, 1917 – Liber 2149, page 307

Eventually his land holdings grew to include almost 200 acres.

### Property Improvements

Various issues of the *North Castle Sun* newspaper reported on the activities of Samuel McRoberts. During 1916 a new stone entrance and the stone barn were added. During 1917 an article appeared reporting that it took Mr. McRoberts three years to select North Castle as his home. He bought more land, and he built a lake during 1917. McRoberts went to Washington at the end of 1917, and Mrs. McRoberts went to Bar Harbor during July, 1918. 1919 was a busy year for Gen. McRoberts - the General went to Cuba, was discharged from the Army, made improvements to his home in North Castle and bought more land in North Castle.

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<sup>1</sup> Research provided by North Castle Town Historian Doris Finch Watson.

An article appeared in the April 2, 1920 issue reporting that he was building a dam on his property paralleling Middle Patent Road, “an artificial dam impounding several acres of water.”<sup>2</sup>

According to the New York Social Register published in December 1917, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel McRoberts were living at 32 East 64<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City and spending weekends at “The Ledges” in Mt. Kisco, New York.<sup>3</sup>

Possibly preliminary construction began in 1914, but it was reported in 1916 that construction was *near* completion. Some delay in construction might be explained by a report in the April 22, 1914 issue of *The New York Times* that McRoberts was now at home recovering from blood poisoning after spending some time at Miss Allston’s Sanitarium<sup>4</sup>. At that time he was a Vice President of the National City Bank in New York City.

*The Sun* reported in the June 2, 1916 issue that “an entrance of striking architecture has been completed to the entrance of the estate of Samuel McRoberts, known as ‘The Ledges’, on Bedford Road. The approach is so gentle and sweeping as to give to the whole a most attractive scene punctuated with rich shrubbery and dotted here and there with native boulders that lend ruggedness to the grounds and landscape. The Ledges is destined to be one of the show spots of North Castle. The work was done under the supervision of Samuel Miller, the Superintendent of the Estate.” It is interesting to note that Gen. McRoberts was in Russia during June of 1916 where he negotiated a sizable loan from America.

About 6 weeks later, in the July 14, 1916 issue, *The Sun* reported that the banker Samuel McRoberts was having a stone barn built on his property.

After McRoberts’ death in 1947, his property was conveyed to:

United States of America – March 31, 1948 – Liber 4618,  
page 148

Gotaas & Co. – March 31, 1948 – Liber 4618, page 161

New York State Tax Commission – April 8, 1948 –  
Liber 4620, page 404

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<sup>2</sup> The earthen dam and lake exist today. The project was built under the direction of Charles Miller, farm superintendent for Gen. McRoberts.

<sup>3</sup> The telephone numbers listed were 4849 Plaza for the city home and 67BedVil for the country home.

<sup>4</sup> According to the May 14, 1908 issue of the New York Times newspaper Miss Anna Allston operated a private sanitarium located at 26 West 61st Street in New York, New York.

The October 13, 1950 issue of *The Herald Statesman* newspaper reported that Gotaas had sold the house and a few of the acres previously owned by McRoberts. Of those almost 200 acres, Dr. and Mrs. Luigi Minetta of Brooklyn, New York, purchased the 13 acres that included the 16-room main house “on Route 22 near Windmill Farms, Armonk.”

The newspaper description continued “Known as The Ledges, the stone mansion is on the style of a European castle and is located, appropriately, in the Town of North Castle. It was built in 1914. Off the 20 by 30 foot entrance hall are a sunken living room with fireplace and French doors leading to a covered stone terrace, a 14 by 12 foot library, and a 21 by 18 foot dining room with fireplace. The first floor includes a butler’s pantry, kitchen, servants’ sitting room and bedrooms. The second floor has a master suite of three bedrooms, each with a bath, a sitting room, guest room with bath, and servants’ rooms. An eight-car garage with two five-room apartments was included in the sale. The original estate included 193 acres. General McRoberts, New York financier, died three years ago. Norman Dillon of Bedford Village was the selling broker. Pre-Views, Inc. was the marketing agent.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Town of North Castle real estate records on file in the Assessor’s Office, after Dr. and Mrs. Minetta’s ownership, the house passed through a series of owners including Mr. Harmin in 1967, Lawyers Title Insurance Corporation in 1974, Henry D. Stevens and Christine Valmy in 1975, Sydney Glazer in 1986, Anthony Ingrao in 1991, a real estate company in 2004 and then to the present owners in 2009. Restoration work was completed in 2012.

The August 10, 1950 issue of *The Herald Statesman* newspaper reported that Mrs. James N. Fetherolf of White Plains, New York had purchased the vacant acres of the estate in North Castle adjoining the Windmill Farms development. The tract of land included a 20-acre lake and had road frontage on Middle Patent Road and Route 22.

By 2009 the house was vacant and had been heavily damaged by weather and vandals. It has been brilliantly redesigned by Mitchell Wilk Architecture PC<sup>6</sup>. Some structural changes were made to the interior.

The original front door, marble stairs and brass stair railing were preserved and used in the new design. The exterior of the building was preserved and new additions were patterned after the old stone. Interior changes and furnishings are period appropriate and of the finest craftsmanship. It has been lovingly and magnificently recreated by the present owners. Photographs provided by Architect Doug Wilk show the restored grandeur of Gen. Samuel McRoberts’ castle.

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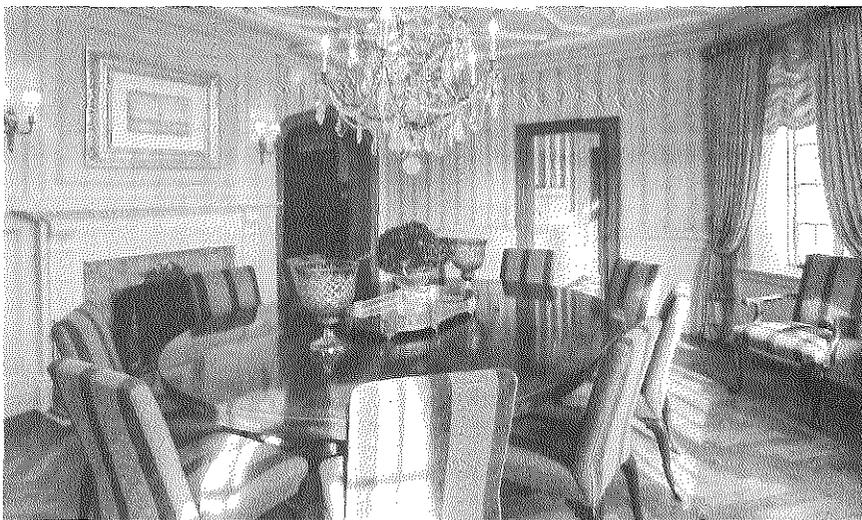
<sup>5</sup> *The Herald Statesman* newspaper, Yonkers, New York, October 13, 1950, page 14.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell Wilk Architecture PC; 2 Purdy Avenue; Rye, New York 10580

## TWO INTERIOR VIEWS OF THE NEW DESIGN



**New Entrance Foyer showing Original Front Door  
and Original Brass Stair Railing**



**New Dining Room**



**New Living Room**

### **Mary Rita Donleavy's Memories**

My family and I visited the McRoberts estate almost weekly from about 1933 until about 1945. My mother's distant cousin, Mary Connaughton, was the cook for the McRoberts.

On our visits, we passed the elegant entrance to the estate on Route 22. We always drove farther on to enter the service entrance. Taking a long drive past the garage with its several cars, the professional creamery, and the houses for the help, we continued past vegetable gardens in season to a circle in front of the servants' entrance for the castle.

Downstairs and upstairs were distinctly separate quarters. The kitchen was downstairs. A servants' sitting room was downstairs. There was always a cool breeze as we entered the building at the basement level. The large room on the right directly below the servants' sitting room had no floor but went room-length deep into the ground, having large doors opening on the parking circle back of the house. In past times, it was used to store ice harvested during the winter from the general's lake about a mile away and used throughout the year. Packed with insulation, often straw or sawdust, the ice would remain frozen for months.

At some point a separate ice house was built about 500 feet from the house. On July 16, 1931 more than forty members of the Armonk Fire Department responded to a fire that destroyed the roof of Gen. McRoberts' ice house. The *North Castle*

*Monitor* reported the fire company used its new \$15,000 fire apparatus and a 150 gallon booster tank. Fire Chief Harry Williams said he thought the fire was started by hoboes sleeping in the vacant ice house.

The general's chauffeur was named John. He was German-born and interested in pre-World War II politics. Mr. G was the butler. He lived in a house on the estate with his wife and two children. As children we were impressed that the boy and girl went to a one-room school on Route 22, across from the estate.<sup>7</sup>

Mary Connaughton had been born in Ireland. Dignified and reserved, her life was that of daily prayer, going to Sunday Mass at Saint Patrick's Church beside the airport, cooking for the General, and having occasional visions of the Virgin Mary while sitting on a large rock at the back of the castle. In the beginning of our visits, she had the company of upstairs and downstairs maids, the butler, and the gardeners and chauffeur. In later years, she was alone, except for the chauffeur.<sup>8</sup>

The 1940 Federal Census for North Castle listed six persons in the household: Samuel McRoberts, age 71 years; Karisy McRoberts, age 66 years; Ida Skinner, age 77 years; Margaret Gunn, age 50 years; Bessie Kerin, age 39 years; and Mary Connaughton, age 46 years.

### Camilla Ruth Cole Smidt's Memories<sup>9</sup>

In 1978 Mrs. Smidt was asked to present recollections of her childhood to Mrs. Ming's elementary school class. Mrs. Smidt's granddaughter Kimmy Sylvestri was in the class. "Earlier I mentioned General Samuel McRoberts. His place across from us on Route 22 is called 'Soundview'. When we were younger he was alive, and we often went to his house, which is like a castle. On the upper floors, from the windows facing south, one could and can see Long Island Sound, and on clear days Long Island too. Mrs. McRoberts (Harriet Pearl Skinner) was an invalid for many years, and we used to go upstairs to take her flowers and books to read. She enjoyed having company. General McRoberts often played golf with my father and rode horseback with him in our and his woods. We girls sometimes rode with them too. He had a very large white horse that was extremely lively. My father had a roan named Peggy. She was quite gentle so I rode her sometimes, and I can remember her pulling the lawn mower. However, whenever my father met the General on the bridle paths, Peggy would get so excited at seeing the

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to volume 5 of the *North Castle History* booklet, published in 1978, for more information.

<sup>8</sup> Patrick John Dunleavy, Patriot, Philosopher, Family Man by Mary Rita Donleavy, 2013, [www.Xlibris.com](http://www.Xlibris.com).

<sup>9</sup> Camilla Ruth Cole Smidt was a daughter of Dr. Rufus Cole who purchased the estate of journalist Richard Harding Davis. Davis bought Crossroads Farm in 1903 and added a lake, water tower, and house, which was completed in 1905. Over the years Davis added parcels of land to his holdings amounting to nearly 300 acres.

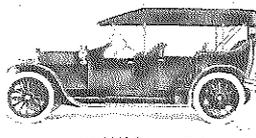
General's horse<sup>10</sup> that it was all my father could do to control her. After a while she would calm down and be her old gentle self again."<sup>11</sup>

### Samuel McRoberts – Professional Career

Samuel McRoberts began his professional career in the legal department of Armour & Company. From 1904 until 1909, he served the Armour family as treasurer and general financial manager. For three years during this time he served as president of the Illinois Tunnel Company, the operating corporation of the Chicago freight subway.

He left Armour & Company in 1909 to become a Vice President of the National City Bank of New York, and subsequently became one of its executive managers.

McRoberts was among a group that included J. Ogden Armour, L. F. Swift, C. H. Swift and A. W. Armour and other directors of the National Packing Company who were indicted by the Hudson County New Jersey Grand Jury for fixing beef prices. The United States Supreme Court issued an injunction against the "beef trust"<sup>12</sup> in January 1905, but *The Chicago Eagle* reported on May 2, 1908 that the "beef trust" continued to defy the Supreme Court.<sup>13</sup>



### The Orson Automobile Venture

Early in his career at National City Bank, McRoberts joined National City Vice President Horace Kilborn and other fellow bankers and investors in a venture to custom build their own motor car – one which would combine the best features of various models of automobiles in use. It was marketed to 'prominent investors'. Ultimately the company failed, even though ten original investors guaranteed \$2,500 each as part of a security bond to the Farmers Loan & Trust Company.<sup>14</sup> The 1914 New York State Official Automobile Directors lists permit number 15588 issued to Samuel McRoberts for his Orson automobile.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. McRoberts was an avid horseman. He and his neighbors Dr. Charles Paterno and A. J. Stone, all members of the exclusive Greenwich Hunt Club, cleared private bridle paths through their Middle Patent properties. Sweet's Architectural Catalog published in 1920 includes Samuel J. McRoberts' stable in Mt. Kisco, New York as a "prominent stable."

<sup>11</sup> Refer to "Memories of Cohomong Wood" written by Camilla Ruth Cole Smidt and published in *North Castle History* booklet, Vol. 35, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> The big six meatpackers who were indicted as the 'beef trust' were Swift, Armour, Morris, Cudahy, Wilson and Schwartzchild.

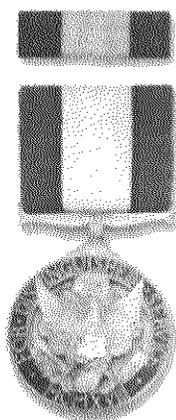
<sup>13</sup> In 1903 when the six leading meatpackers were sued under the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, they agreed to merge and call themselves the National Packing Company.

<sup>14</sup> Automobile Topics, October 9, 1915, Volume 39, page 661

Upon the invitation of the United States War Department, in late 1917 he obtained a leave of absence from the Bank and was commissioned Major in the Reserve Corps for service in the Ordnance Department in Washington. He was promoted to Colonel in the National Army shortly after.

He was appointed Chief of the Procurement Division, Ordnance Department in December, 1917, where he directed the contracting of all ordnance material used by the Army. On August 28, 1918, he was promoted to Brigadier-General. He resigned from active service in 1919.

McRoberts served in the United States Army Ordnance Department, heading the newly created procurement division, during World War I. His job included securing food, clothing, arms and equipment for all the soldiers of the Army.<sup>15</sup> On October 19, 1918 news releases reported that he was being posted overseas to join General John Joseph (Black Jack) Pershing's staff.<sup>16</sup> He earned the title "Brigadier General" for service to his country during the war.



In recognition of his contributions in World War I as a Brigadier General for the Procurement Division in the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, the United States Government conferred upon Mr. McRoberts the Distinguished Service Medal and the French Government made him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.<sup>17</sup>

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918, takes pleasure in presenting the Army Distinguished Service Medal to Brigadier General Samuel McRoberts, United States Army, for exceptionally meritorious and distinguished services to the Government of the United States, in a duty of great responsibility during World War I, as Chief of the Procurement Division of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, in which capacity he was charged with the procurement, by purchase or manufacture, of all articles of ordnance supplied to the United States Army, and the execution of the necessary contracts in connection therewith."<sup>18</sup>

After retiring from National City Bank in January, 1920, McRoberts became President of Metropolitan Trust Company in December, 1921.<sup>19</sup> He became Chairman of the Board of the Chatham Phoenix National Bank and Trust company in 1925, and continued there until 1932.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Roanoke Beacon* newspaper, Plymouth, North Carolina, March 1, 1918, Volume XXVII, page 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Railway Review*, Chicago, Illinois, July-December 1918, Volume 63, page 591.

<sup>17</sup> *United States Investor*, Boston, December 31, 1921, page 3112(20).

<sup>18</sup> <http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/>

<sup>19</sup> *The New York Times* newspaper, New York, January 14, 1920 and December 14, 1921.

McRoberts served as a director for many corporations, including the American Sugar Refining Company, Manufacturers Trust Company, Great American Insurance Company and New York Air Brake Company. At the time of his death he was serving as chairman of the board of McRoberts & Tegtmeier, Inc., importers.<sup>20</sup>

### **Social and Professional Associations**

He was a member of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity. He served as a Trustee for Baker University and as Trustee and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees for the Young Men's Christian Association in New York City. He was a member of the Metropolitan Club, Union League, The Recess, Racquet and Tennis Club, Links, Army and Navy Clubs and the Chicago Club. He was a founding member of the National Golf Links of America and belonged to several country clubs.

McRoberts served as Chairman of The Economic Club of New York for the term 1930-1932. The prestigious Club was founded in 1907 for the purpose of serious discussions of "economic, social and other public issues in a non-partisan forum."<sup>21</sup> Members are distinguished leaders in their professional lives.

Considered an authority regarding foreign capital needs, in 1910 McRoberts published "The Extension of American Banking in Foreign Countries." In 1916 he published "Russia's Future Needs for Capital."

### **Charitable Acts – Coman Hill School**

Samuel McRoberts and his wife, Harriet S. McRoberts, generously gave land to School District No. 3 of the Towns of North Castle and Bedford on which to build a new school. The price of the transaction was \$1.00. The deed is dated November 25, 1914 and reads, "...Beginning at a point on the westerly side of the new highway known as the State road, leading from Armonk to Bedford, adjoining land of Joseph Klass, ... Richard Harding Davis<sup>22</sup>, ... and to the corner formed by the intersection of the new highway, or state road, and the old highway..."<sup>23</sup>

This donation enabled the building of the third Coman Hill school building in 1915. It was built close to the site of the second school. The building is a stone structure built with surplus materials from the General's mansion and farm

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<sup>20</sup> The Michigan Alumnus, Hastings, Michigan, October 4, 1947, Volume LIV, page 36.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.econclubny.com/history.php>

<sup>22</sup> Richard Harding Davis was a journalist who popularized the Spanish American War, Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders. He reported for the *New York Herald*, *The Times of London* and *Scribner's Weekly*. He was also a successful playwright and novelist. He died in Mt. Kisco in 1916.

<sup>23</sup> Research of Doris Finch Watson, Town Historian of the Town of North Castle, Westchester County Land Records.

buildings, which still stand near the old schoolhouse. The materials were donated to the school district by General McRoberts. The school closed in the 1940s. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Adams purchased the property in 1969 and have made it their home ever since.<sup>24</sup>

### Charitable Acts – Mennonites

In the mid-1920s McRoberts was instrumental in obtaining settlement rights for a group of Canadian Mennonites in Paraguay. His second wife, Harriet Skinner, a daughter of a Presbyterian minister and a devout Christian Fundamentalist, convinced him to provide his backing. He convinced Catholic authorities, including the archbishop, to approve the Mennonites settlement efforts. The first settlement, Menno Colony, was in 1926 and then Fernheim and other Russian Mennonite colonies by 1930.<sup>25</sup>

### Harriet Pearl Skinner McRoberts

Harriet Pearl Skinner McRoberts was also a prolific writer. In 1921 she published a book of poems entitled Every Christian: Poems which was dedicated to her husband. Her title poem begins:

“Let every Christian in the earth  
Come quietly unto God’s throne;  
    You, and you,  
    And mine, and me,  
And every man and child and crone  
And woman, boy, and old and young  
Of every race, and every tongue ...”

Also in 1921 she published A Christian Crieth Unto Israel, a book of twelve songs dedicated to her sister ‘I.E.S’. Perhaps her best known book is Boys Who Became Famous Men<sup>26</sup> which is a collection of stories of the childhoods of poets, artists and musicians including Byron, Chopin, Handel, Bach and Gainsborough. The book was illustrated by Sears Gallagher and dedicated to Frank, Howard and Robert Andrews.

Harriet Pearl Skinner died January 22, 1946 and lies buried in Saint Matthew’s Episcopal Churchyard in Bedford, New York.

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<sup>24</sup> Refer to *North Castle History*, Vol. 5, 1978 for a full discussion regarding this school.

<sup>25</sup> Bender, Harold S., “McRoberts, Samuel (1868-1947)”; *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1957. <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/>.

<sup>26</sup> Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1905.

## Samuel McRoberts – Personal Information

Samuel McRoberts was born December 20, 1869 in Malta Bend, Missouri. He was educated at Baker University and earned an LLB degree in 1893 at the University of Michigan. Biographers report that Samuel McRoberts was a son of Alexander Highlander McRoberts and Ellen Sisk McRoberts. His grandparents were Alexander and Nancy (Donnell) McRoberts, and his great grandfather was Samuel McRoberts who came to Virginia from Scotland during the American Revolutionary War.

He was described as genial in his manner possessing frankness and directness. He was a trusted advisor to American Presidents. Mary Rita Dunleavy described him in his sixties as a handsome, tall, ruddy-faced man often accompanied by a huge Irish wolfhound.<sup>27</sup>

Samuel McRoberts married twice. He and his first wife, Mary Agnes Caldwell, married in 1895<sup>28</sup>. She died in 1904. McRoberts and Harriet Pearl Skinner were married in 1906.<sup>29</sup> No children were born to either marriage. His obituary reported that a brother, P. M. McRoberts of Malta Bend, Missouri, and two sisters, Mrs. C. E. Stephens of Bladwin, Kansas and Mrs. C. G. Wilson of Richmond, Virginia survived him.

Samuel McRoberts died September 8, 1947 at the Harkness Pavilion of the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. Both wives predeceased him. He was 74 years of age when he died.



Mitchell Wilk Architecture PC

## SOUNDVIEW TODAY

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<sup>27</sup> Op. Cit., Mary Rita Donleavy

<sup>28</sup> Reported as October 9, 1895 Sedgwick County, Kansas by the Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society, Wichita, Kansas. The *Wichita Daily Eagle* reported they married in the morning at the bride's home on College Hill and that Samuel McRoberts was from Chicago.

<sup>29</sup> Who's Who in American Methodism, compiled and edited by Carl F. Price, New York, New York, 1916.

# KENSICO: A CASUALTY OF COMMISSIONER DALY'S WAR

by Sharon Tomback



*The New York Times Newspaper* dated May 2, 1893

## NEW YORK CITY COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS MICHAEL T. DALY

Michael T. Daly was Commissioner of Public Works for New York City from 1893 until 1895. Part of his job was to ensure that the supply of drinking water for New York City was safe. During his tenure he began securing the Croton Watershed against contaminants including animal and human waste. Some felt his methods were overreaching and damaging; others felt his actions were warranted.

A London doctor, John Snow, had proven in 1854 that cholera was spread through drinking water. He substantiated that human sewage contaminated one water well, which then caused 616 deaths from cholera. French scientist Louis Pasteur and German scientist Robert Koch independently proposed that disease is caused by germs, and that disease is spread through untreated water. Governments began working to make sure their drinking water supplies were safe. "Early efforts focused on microbiological contaminants, such as protozoan, bacteriological, or viral contaminants. Efforts were made to prevent raw sewage from entering water bodies used as sources of drinking water and to treat water taken from lakes, rivers, and reservoirs."<sup>1</sup>

In 1892 New York City opened the first municipal laboratory in the world that routinely identified disease. It was called the Bacteriological Laboratory. It has been reported that the Board of Health for New York by this time had grown to be more powerful than any other in the United States. An early 1900s children's rhyme illustrates public sentiment of that time, "Margaret, go wash your feet, the Board of Health's across the street."<sup>2</sup>

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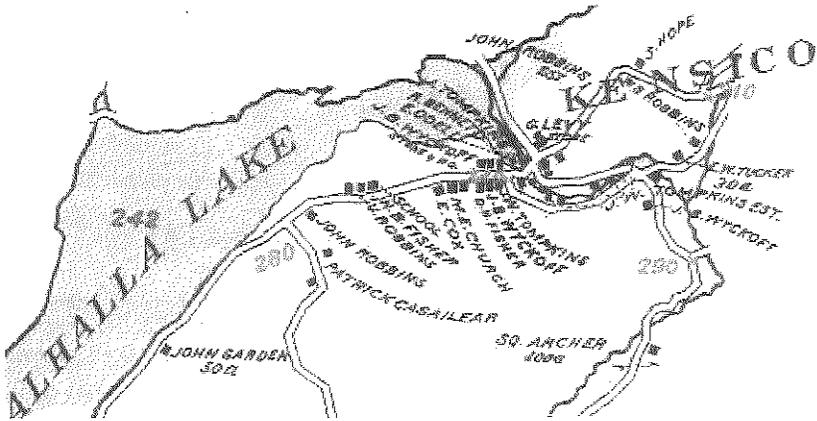
<sup>1</sup> Website [water.epa.gov](http://water.epa.gov)

<sup>2</sup> New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2005 publication; also memorialized by Wallace Tripp in his 1985 book of the same name.



## How about Kensico?

The reporter then asked, "How about Kensico?" Commissioner Daly answered that about a dozen properties had been condemned, but that some were barns. "It is nonsense to say that their removal will wipe out the town," he said.



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

### 1893 MAP OF KENSICO published by Julius Bien & Co.

According to the newspaper article, the following buildings in Kensico had been condemned the week previous:

- house and barn belonging to Jennie R. Gardner;
- untenanted house belonging to Andrew Lester;
- estate farm of Evander Odell;
- frame building public schoolhouse;
- house and coops owned by John B. Wyckoff;
- frame building Kensico Methodist Church;
- saloon of William Ackerly;
- blacksmith's shop belonging to the Carpenter estate;
- house and barn owned by Jotham Tompkins;
- two houses owned by D. N. Tucker.

The next day *The New York Times* carried an interesting account. "Residents of Kensico had a brief hour of excitement yesterday when their fellow townsman, William Ackerly, proprietor of the Brookside Hotel, made the first show of opposition to Commissioner Daly's authority." Mr. Ackerly's saloon/hotel was condemned the previous week when he had been given two days to vacate the property. He did not. When Lawyer Harry F. Dykman, attorney for the Board of Public Works arrived, along with Sheriff John Duffy and Deputy Sheriffs Verplanck and Stanfield, there were workers from the aqueduct on hand ready to tear down Ackerly's Brookside Hotel.

However, there were an equal number of men inside and “Ackerly was dispensing liquids over the bar.” Ackerly told the authorities “he did not intend to remove one single article from the house, not even a glass of whiskey.”<sup>6</sup>

The employees from the aqueduct went to work. Within an hour there was nothing left but a pile of lumber on the roadway. There were dozens of bottles, glasses, cigars, beds, clothing, chairs, stoves and household effects scattered about in the mud near the creek.

According to the same article, the Gale estate, which did not appear in the listing above, lost two houses, a barn and farming tools which were removed from the barn and put on the road. Pig pens and hen coops were also demolished.

### **A Black Flag with a Tammany Tiger Upon It**

“About a mile from the village is a small, broken down shanty owned by Daniel Tucker. . . . On the roof was raised a flag pole, from which floated a black flag with a Tammany<sup>7</sup> tiger upon it. Nailed to the door was a rudely painted sign which read, ‘Notice - To be burned tomorrow by order of the Tammany Sachems and Tammany Hall Ring.’ It was learned that the house, which had been considered worthless for some time, had been purchased by Mr. Tucker when he found out that the city would in all probability order its destruction. Mr. Tucker purchased the property on a speculation, with the expectation of trebling his money. It used to belong to the Tompkins estate, to which Jotham Tompkins, whose house and barn were burned on Wednesday, fell heir.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Legal Claims Were Filed**

Property owners filed claims against New York City. *The New York Times* newspaper published on January 20, 1894 that although some claims were dismissed by County Commissioners J.H.V. Arnold, Hamilton Fish and Francis Larkin, Jr., other claims for land taken by New York City in Commissioner Daly’s “recent raid” on Kensico were paid. There was \$63,250 awarded. About a third of that amount was awarded to William R. Smith. Giles S. Dimmock was awarded \$7,100. The Tompkins estate was awarded \$8,300. Some of the cases took years to be decided in Court.<sup>9</sup>

### **In the End**

Many of the properties in the Village of Kensico became casualties of Mr. Daly’s war against microbes.

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<sup>6</sup> *The New York Times* newspaper, April 2, 1893, page 17.

<sup>7</sup> Tammany was a political society based on graft and corruption that operated in New York City for more than 150 years utilizing a system of wards.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> National Reporter System, Volume 76, The New York Supplement, 1902.

However, in the end, the entire Village of Kensico would become a casualty of the second and present Kensico Dam and Lake. An earth dam had been constructed by the City of New York in 1885, but by 1909 more water was needed. A decision was made by the government of the City of New York to build a new dam, and preliminary construction work was begun. Construction of the dam was begun in 1913 and completed in 1917.

### **The Flooding of Kensico Village Valley**

Many writers have been interested in the flooding of the Kensico Village valley. The Hon. Joseph T. Miller<sup>10</sup> wrote a detailed article for The Society which was published in the 1975 issue of *North Castle History*. He also drew a map of the area and put together a very informative slide and audio presentation.<sup>11</sup>

Del Pietschker, Ruth Dalrymple and Neil S. Martin wrote detailed articles for The Society which were published in the 1983 issue of *North Castle History*. Del Pietschker drew a map of the area and put together an educational slide and audio presentation.

Barbara Massi and Mount Pleasant Town Historian George Waterbury and his wife Claudine privately produced a video program on CD. They used slides and information from both The North Castle Historical Society and the Mount Pleasant Historical Society. Barbara and her husband Lew have also drawn detailed maps of Kensico.

### **Kensico – Gone but Not Forgotten**

The 2,200 acres of land which included the village of Kensico – now covered by the 30 billion gallons of water in Kensico Lake – and the surrounding beautiful high hills were favorite hunting places of the Indians for bear and otter. A brook in this area is still called Bear Gutter Creek.

When you next drive over the Rye Lake Bridge, take time to dwell for a moment on the history and glamour of the area, the courage and valor of the early settlers and to contemplate with gratitude the rich heritage of traditions and accomplishments which blazed the way for us.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Town Clerk, Town of North Castle, 1940 to 1975.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to *North Castle History*, volume 2, 1975 pages 13-18.

<sup>12</sup> Hon. Joseph T. Miller, *North Castle History*, 1975, "Historical Kensico and the Hills of North Castle".

**REMEMBERING MISSY**  
**MELISSA TAYLOR WHITE**  
**(1953 – 2013)**

Melissa “Missy” Taylor White, 59, died on September 1, 2013 after fighting lung cancer for some months.

Missy was the only child of Alberta “Sue” Bohner and Erling “Bumpy” Taylor. She was a descendant of the Carpenter family, one of the founding families of North Castle. Oral tradition says that Timothy Carpenter was the first white child born in the area (1698) and that the Native Americans (Indians) were so intrigued they gave the baby 100 acres of land.

After growing up in Armonk, Missy moved to the South where she worked as a teacher. When her mother became ill she moved back to Armonk to care for her. After her mother died, Missy stayed on to take care of her father. She was devoted to her family and delighted in visiting with them. She was dedicated to her cousins Jinx Remson and Ernest Remson and Ernest’s partner Deanna Lockwood, and her friends, especially Fred and Judy Coughlin.

Missy was very proud of the achievements of her father. “Bumpy” was a valued Trustee of the North Castle Historical Society, the North Castle Library, and member of the Armonk Lions Club. Bumpy received the Pat Bresha Community Service Award from the Armonk Lions Club. He was named Legionnaire of the Year for Westchester County by the American Legion. In 2010 he was recognized by the State of New York for his 65 years of service as a volunteer fireman.

Missy’s grandfather William J. Taylor, along with Harry R. Williams and Harry Jackson, conceived and organized Armonk’s first volunteer fire department. Their story can be read in [North Castle History](#), volume 3, 1976 in an article entitled “Three Men and a Fire” written by “Bumpy” Taylor.

Missy was a longtime member of The North Castle Historical Society, serving as a Trustee for many years. She was a devoted volunteer and docent for The Society and was instrumental in helping out on Colonial

Crafts Days. She was known as the “Candle Making Woman” to many elementary school children who attended those events. Missy thoroughly enjoyed working with the children.

An active member of the Board of the Middle Patent Methodist Episcopal Church for several years, Missy set up the four annual programs and mailed out the correspondence for that historic building which is unheated and lit by kerosene lanterns. Music there is still provided by an organist playing an old foot-pump organ. Missy loved recreating the ‘old-timey’ church services and was devoted to making those services memorable. It is a great tribute to her love and devotion that her daughter Kate arranged for Missy’s funeral services to be held in that ‘old timey’ church on Bedford-Banksville Road in the Middle Patent area of North Castle.

Both her parents predeceased her. She is survived by her daughter, her only child, Kate Lindsey, son-in-law Patrick Lindsey and two grandchildren, Lauren and Theodore, all of whom live in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Missy was a true and constant friend. We miss her.



Collections of Michelle Boyle, All About Armonk

**Missy with her Dad, Erling “Bumpy” Taylor, May 28, 2012**

## A SALUTE TO BECKY

### REBECCA ANN KITTREDGE

November 15, 1943 – August 25, 2013



Collection of Bonnie M. Candless



The Examiner Newspaper

Rebecca Ann Kittredge was one of two daughters born to Ellis and Lucille Answorth Kittredge. She attended elementary school in Armonk and graduated from Pleasantville High School in 1962 and thereafter graduated from Berkeley Secretarial School in White Plains.

Becky headed the youth group of the Armonk Methodist Church for several years. During the Vietnam War years she led a peace march through downtown Armonk and during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, she marched in Harlem.

Leaving New York for Bermuda Becky took a job at the United States Air Force Base at Bermuda Aviation. Her brief stint there ended when her father became ill, and she returned to Armonk. She resumed her career with the White Plains School District where she took on roles as administrator, contract negotiator, and supervising the classified staff. She retired in 2011 after 37 years with the District.

A dedicated North Castle Town Councilman, Becky served her Town for 32 years. She was appointed as deputy supervisor to long-time Town of North Castle Supervisor John A. Lombardi. Her responsibilities involved acting as Town Board liaison to the Police Department, Highway Department and the Beautification Committee. She took her post seriously, manning phones and spending many sleepless nights at the Highway Department during snowstorms, and most notably Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy. Becky was a guiding force in the thoughtful and responsible development of the Town.

She served with distinction on the Board of Directors of The North Castle Historical Society for more than 20 years. She will be remembered by the local school children as “The Butter Lady,” as she demonstrated the 18<sup>th</sup> century art of churning butter during Colonial Crafts Days.

She personally welcomed and assisted neighbors who arrived to drop off items for recycling on Zero Waste Days. An active volunteer for the Armonk Lions Club’s Annual Fol-de-Rol and the Friends of the North Castle Library’s Armonk Outdoor Art Show, Becky was also involved in the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration and orchestrated the town’s first and subsequent memorial services for those who perished in the 9/11 terrorist attacks and those who aided at ground zero. In 2012, she received the Pat Bresha Award for Distinguished Community Service, awarded by the Armonk Lions Club; several years earlier she had been the guest of honor at a dinner held by the Armonk Rotary Club, when her contributions to the Town of North Castle were also recognized.

Becky served on the Board of Directors of the Friends of Frosty, the group that sponsors the annual Armonk Frosty Day to honor Armonk as the hometown of Frosty the Snowman. She was an integral force in gaining the support of the town to claim that distinction. She cherished escorting Frosty as he paraded down Armonk’s Main Street to the cheers and smiles of hundreds of children.

When Becky was not on the golf course, she was a generous hostess and her door was always open. She was a lifelong Democrat and had an extensive collection of Americana memorabilia.

Becky and Marino Rotondo, Jr. were married on April 26, 1992, at Kings Wood Estate, located at the time on Route 120 in North Castle. She was predeceased by her husband, her parents, her sister, Judy Kittredge, and her uncle, Harold C. Crittenden. Becky was survived by two step-children, Peter Marino Rotondo of Alexandria, Virginia, and Frances Michelle Rotondo of Virginia Beach, Virginia, as well as by three grandchildren: Isabella Sorano, Zachary Rotondo and Alaina Rotondo. She was also survived by her devoted and well-loved Old English Sheepdog Jenny, and by hundreds of friends.

## **THE JUDGE WILLIAM K. HAVILAND HOUSE**

**KNOWN ALSO AS  
PART OF STROMAK'S ACUTION GALLERY,  
THE ARMONK GUN SHOP,  
AND BEASCAKES**

by Sharon Tomback



Undated Photograph by Gene Matusow  
Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

### **THE HOUSE THAT WAS AT 29 MAPLE AVENUE**

Before the house was built, the property was part of land subdivided into building lots and sold by St. Stephens Episcopal Church beginning in the mid-1800s to support the finances of the church. The house survived until January of 2012 when it was razed to make way for the new Armonk Square construction.

## History of the Property

The 1867 map by Frederick W. Beers lists “J. Baker” as the owner of the property. Both the 1872 J. B. Beers and the 1881 Bromley maps list the property owner as “La Salle”, but no structure is indicated on either map.

The 1893 Julius Bien & Co. map shows a structure at present-day 29 Maple Avenue, Armonk, but does not identify the property owner. The house was home to Judge William Kipp Haviland and his wife Ella for many years. Sometime after she died in 1937 it was conveyed to Ralph L. MacDonald who conveyed it to John C. and Patricia Stromak in 1949.

The building served Stromak’s Heritage Square Auction Gallery as a sales display area. According to North Castle Building Department records, on July 1, 1957 Charles A. Bruggemann was granted a building permit to erect an addition to the building at an estimated cost of \$800. He signed the paperwork as owner<sup>1</sup> and as builder stating that he lived on Hidden Oak Road in Armonk. On November 12, 1959 Clarence Abrams, builder, was granted a permit to erect a 750 square foot addition for sales display at an estimated cost of \$3,000. The owner at that time was John Stromak.

John Stromak ran an auction house and owned much of the property that is Armonk Square today. Stromak’s Heritage Square Auction Gallery headquarters were at 37 Maple Avenue as late as January 1976 when an advertisement appeared in a Connecticut newspaper, the Westport News, offering a pair of 17<sup>th</sup> century church pews.

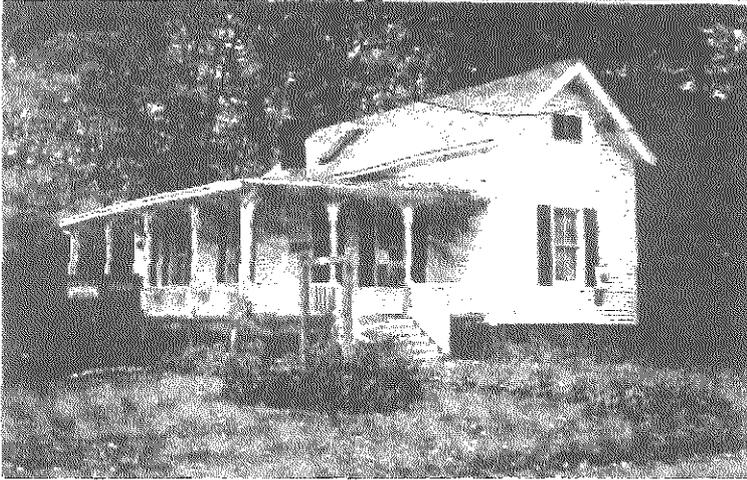
Maple Avenue was moved (between 1881 and 1893) from the west side of St. Stephens to its present site between the Church building and Wampus Brook. The Church’s horse sheds stood in the way and were moved behind the Church building. Later these horse sheds were remodeled and served as Town Hall offices for the Town of North Castle. Mechanics Hall<sup>2</sup> and the horse sheds were combined, and that building today at 37 Maple Avenue, Armonk, houses Cocobolo Interiors, Inc.

John DiGiacinto, Briggs Lane, Armonk owned the property on October 8, 1980 when Steven Torborg applied for a sign permit for the proposed “Armonk Gun Shop”. Steve and Pam Torborg and their daughter Katie ran the Armonk Gun Shop for more than twenty years and added much to enrich our community. We miss them.

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<sup>1</sup> John C. and Patricia Stromak bought the property in 1949 and were the owners of record in 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to *North Castle History*, 1987, Volume 14, “And a Good Time Was Had by All – The Story of Mechanics Hall in North Castle” by James D. Hopkins.



Courtesy of the North Castle Building Department

### **THE HOUSE THAT WAS AT 29 MAPLE AVENUE, 2003**

In March, 2003 Joseph W. DiGiacinto advised that he was the Managing Member of DFR No., LLC which owned the building at 29 Maple Avenue, Armonk that was previously owned by his father, the late John DiGiacinto. Later in 2003 a sign permit was granted for a free-standing sign, “Beascakes, Bakery & Breads”. The premises were leased to Shkedy Enterprises, Inc. Beascakes was the last tenant. They moved to their present location on Main Street in Armonk shortly before demolition of Haviland House.

It has been reported that the old wood used on the inside of the new Fortina’s Restaurant in Armonk Square was taken from the former Armonk Gun Shop.<sup>3</sup>

Reminiscent of the horse and buggy era in Armonk, until about 1988 a hitching post stood on Maple Avenue in front of the residence.

### **Judge William Kipp Haviland**

Haviland began serving as Justice for the Town of North Castle about 1887. An interesting article entitled “*Armonk, a Gretna Green*”<sup>4</sup> appeared in The North Castle Sun in the July 1916 issue. Judge Haviland was characterized as ‘the marrying Justice of the Lake Region.’ Judge Haviland performed the marriages in his home. “It is quite frequent, too, in these runaway or rural weddings that

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.weewestchester.com/2013/06/14/fortina-fires-up-armonks-growing-culinary-village/>

<sup>4</sup> In 1754 England adopted a Marriage Act requiring parental consent for minors under the age of 21 to marry. The Act applied to England and later to Wales, but not to Scotland. Gretna Green became a famous elopement spot in Scotland.

the bride-to-be is often the more aggressive of the participants, paying the fee and looking minutely after the details so as to insure no error as to the outcome in the making of the contract a 'fast' one."<sup>5</sup>

James Nickerson Angevine, a veteran of the Civil War, applied for a pension for his military service. His application, dated March 6, 1908, was attested by Ella Haviland and Edwin Brundage and signed by William K. Haviland, Justice of the Peace, Armonk, New York. The application proved successful, because at the time of his death in 1911 Mr. Angevine was receiving a pension payment of \$20 per month.<sup>6</sup>

Judge Haviland's work also included the darker side of human behavior. In 1896 there was an investigation into the management of the Westchester Temporary Home for Indigent Children. The Judge testified that he had committed two boys to the Home and that when he went there three days afterward he found them handcuffed and wearing chains. He learned that this was punishment for their running away.

### **Biography of Judge Haviland - 1899<sup>7</sup>**

*One of Armonk's most esteemed citizens is Mr. Haviland, who for many years has been prominently identified with the leading business interests of this locality — first as a contractor and builder, and at present as a merchant. He has made his home in Westchester County since 1871, and has taken quite an active and prominent part in its political affairs, being a recognized leader in the ranks of the Democracy in the community.*

*Mr. Haviland was born February 26, 1846, in the eighth ward of New York City, a son of John B. Haviland<sup>8</sup>, who worked at his trade there throughout the greater part of his life. The father was a native of Baden Baden, Germany and was a worthy representative of an old and honored family of that country. He received a good practical education in the schools of his native land, but when a young man he crossed the Atlantic to the New World. Here he married Jane Tomkins, who belonged to a good old Quaker family of Chappaqua, this county, and of the children born to them; two are still living, the others having died when young. The two are W. K. and B. K. In politics the father was a Democrat, and in religious faith was a Methodist.*

*The boyhood and youth of our subject were passed in New York City and White Plains, this county, his education being received in their public schools. On the 19th of November, 1870, at Williamsburg, New York, was celebrated his marriage with Miss Ella Lewis, a daughter of William B. and Lavina (Strong) Lewis. As previously stated Mr. Haviland is one of the influential men in the Democratic Party in this section, has*

<sup>5</sup> The North Castle Sun, July 1916, page 539, an interview with Judge Haviland.

<sup>6</sup> North Castle History, 2002, Volume 29, page 26.

<sup>7</sup> Biographical History of Westchester County, New York, The Lewis Publishing Company, 1899.

<sup>8</sup> John B. Haviland was buried in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn, New York according to The Recorder, a Mount Kisco newspaper, December 31, 1886 edition. Volume XIII, No. 38.

*been a delegate to every state and county convention for the past twenty years, and has done all in his power to insure the success of the party. He is a public-spirited and enterprising citizen, and for four years has most capably and satisfactorily served as postmaster of Armonk. Socially, he affiliates with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and the Junior Order of American Mechanics, and religiously, both he and his wife are connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church.*<sup>9</sup>

In the November 19, 1915 issue of The North Castle Sun the Judge advertised for business as Justice of the Peace, General Auctioneer, and Notary Public. His address was simply 'Maple Place' in Armonk, and his telephone was 84-M Pleasantville.

Mrs. W. K. Haviland of Armonk, New York wrote a testimonial for 'Dr. King's New Discovery'. Published in several newspapers across the country, her testimonial read, "Our little daughter had an almost fatal attack of whooping cough and bronchitis, but, when all other remedies failed, we saved her life with Dr. King's New Discovery. Our niece, who had consumption in an advanced stage used this wonderful medicine and today she is perfectly well."<sup>10</sup>

During the Civil War William Kipp Haviland served at Harper's Ferry. He was "long a picturesque figure in the Democratic politics in Westchester County."<sup>11</sup> He was Postmaster at Armonk from November 6, 1893 until November 12, 1897<sup>12</sup>. He was a Justice of the Peace of North Castle for thirty-four years. When he died at his home on Maple Avenue on February 23, 1921, he was the oldest member of the Westchester County Association of Justices of the Peace.<sup>13</sup>



***Special Appreciation to the following people:***

***Karen Cappuzzella, Building Department, Town of North Castle for her patience, sharing the files with me, and assisting with details of ownership of the property;***

***Victoria Sirota, Assessor, Town of North Castle for checking the real estate records, sharing her time and research regarding ownership of the property, and going the extra step to contact Dennis Lowes;***

***Dennis Lowes, Manager, Ralph L. MacDonald Company in Greenwich, Connecticut who graciously researched files, copied maps, delivered them to Victoria and explained the transition of ownership of the property.***

<sup>9</sup> Op. Cit., Biographical History of Westchester County, New York

<sup>10</sup> The Sedalia Democrat, a newspaper published in Sedalia, Missouri, June 12, 1902 issue, page 2.

<sup>11</sup> New York Tribune, Thursday, February 24, 1921, page 9.

<sup>12</sup> Records of the United States Postal Service.

<sup>13</sup> Op. Cit., New York Tribune.

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The North Castle Historical Society is not responsible for the accuracy of statements and signed articles.

## **THE LEDGES**

### **Built for Brig. Gen. Samuel McRoberts**

The photograph appearing on the front cover shows a winter view of The Ledges, the home of Brig. Gen. Samuel McRoberts for more than thirty years. The home has been expanded and meticulously renovated and stands today on Bedford Road in Armonk.

*The Herald Statesman* newspaper reported in its October 13, 1950 issue that at one time the mansion house graced an estate of almost 200 acres. As the house was built of stone in the style of a European castle, local residents referred to it as 'The Castle'. The house was also referred to as 'Soundview' because the Long Island Sound is visible from the upper story.

After Samuel McRoberts died in 1947 his estate was conveyed to the United States of America, the New York State Tax Commission and Gotaas & Co. In 1950 Dr. and Mrs. Luigi Minetta of Brooklyn, New York purchased the 16-room main house and 13 acres of the property.

The North Castle Historical Society salutes the present owners and Architect Doug Wilk, Mitchell Wilk Architecture PC, for preserving the exterior of the house, for the careful additions to the building and for the detailed interior renovations and furnishings. The Ledges graces the estate property once again.

Please forward any corrections or additions to the information presented herein and/or your constructive suggestions for improving this publication to the editorial board at The North Castle Historical Society, Historic Smith's Tavern, 440 Bedford Road, Armonk, New York 10504. If you would be willing to research and/or author an article, please let us know. Different writers and diverse perspectives are vital. We would appreciate hearing from you.

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