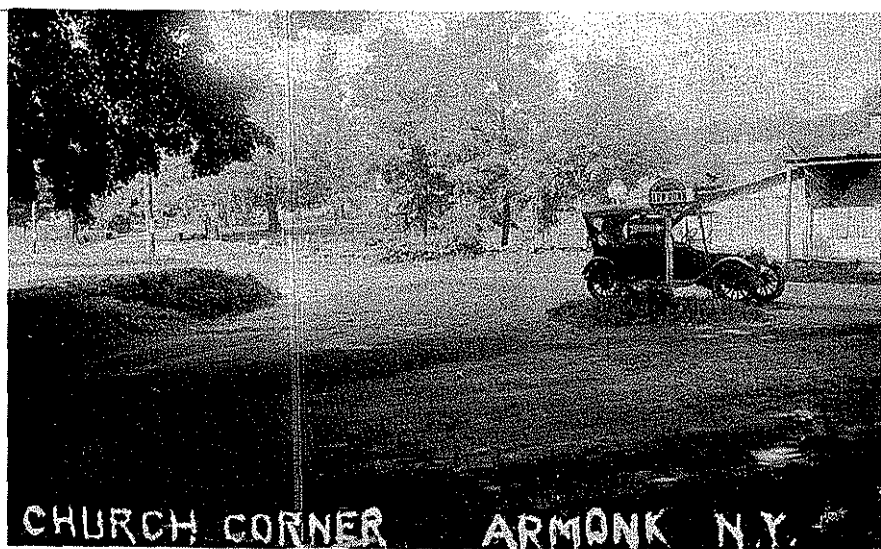


NORTH CASTLE HISTORY



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The North Castle Historical Society

44 BEDFORD ROAD ARMONK, NEW YORK 10504

Dear Members and Friends,

Our Historical Society continues to be an active and successful one because of you -- your support of fund raising and social activities coupled with your annual membership renewals.

We want to welcome our many new members and to invite all members to enjoy the various activities throughout the year. Activities in 1996 included a colonial dinner, spring concert, tag sale, antiques show, visits to other historic sites, on-site exhibits, the president's Christmas party, our annual meeting, contributing to the newsletters and history booklet and various workshops and lectures.

On October 19, 1996, a bronze memorial plaque and stone were dedicated to Richard N. Lander, our first Town Historian. This lovely program was hosted jointly by The Town of North Castle and The North Castle Historical Society and attended by a standing room only crowd.

Our educational complex is open each Sunday afternoon from 1:30 until 3:30 from March through December. Stop in for a visit to our four historic buildings: Smith's Tavern, Brundage Blacksmith Shop, East Middle Patent One-Room Schoolhouse and the 1798 Quaker Meeting House. You will be met by one of our knowledgeable, volunteer docents.

My sincere thanks for your continued support of our Society. We welcome any additional assistance you can offer! I am grateful for your help. We invite all of you to join with us in 1997!

Sincerely,

Constance M. Quarrie

Constance M. Quarrie
President

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JAMES D. HOPKINS: A DAUGHTER'S REMEMBRANCE

by Cynthia H. Smith

Many have noted, since my father's passing in January 1996, his accomplishments as a judge, executive, and legislator. I am not qualified to comment on that part of his life with the exception of corroborating his prolific and satisfying career in all three branches of government at the local, county, and state levels.¹ Others have been and are far more literate and articulate on his contributions as a public servant, dedication as a jurist, and knowledge of the law. However, I do feel qualified to comment on another aspect of his life and character, of which anyone who knew my father for any length of time must certainly also have been aware. That, of course, was his affection for Armonk and North Castle. Recently, I came across a column Dad wrote long ago for *The North Castle Monitor*. It illustrates his attitude toward Armonk and North Castle, as well as another integral component of his character -- his conciliatory temperament:

"It is perhaps true that we think Armonk -- and incidentally North Castle -- is a great place in which to live; it is certainly true that we think it an interesting and instructive place. It is our belief that it is not perfect -- what town is? In all endeavors, however, to improve conditions we are sympathetically inclined; and we believe that more can be accomplished by cooperation and diplomacy than by a series of frontal attacks. Not that wrongs and infirmities should be slighted, but it is our thought that the emphasis should be placed upon affirmative action toward correction rather than upon the state of affairs themselves. To this end praise -- and not for the sake of praise alone".²

Probably no one well acquainted with my father would be surprised to learn that this excerpt from a local newspaper was written by him. It certainly is representative of his feeling for Armonk and North Castle and

¹ James D. Hopkins served fifty-five years, from 1939-1994, in some office of local, county, or state government. He was a member of the North Castle Town Board (1939-1943), Supervisor of the Town of North Castle (1944-1953), member of the Westchester Board of Supervisors (1944-1953), Chairman of the Westchester Board of Supervisors (1952-1953), Westchester County Executive (1954-1957), Westchester County Judge (1958-1960), Justice of the New York State Supreme Court (1960-1962), Associate Justice of the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court - Second Department (1962-1981), and a New York State Judicial Hearing Officer (1983-1994). He was a member of the law firm of Strang & Taylor (1933-1937) and a member and partner in the law firm of Bleakley Platt, Gilchrist and Walker (1938-1953). He also served, without remuneration, as acting Dean of Pace University School of Law (1982-1983).

² James Hopkins, "About Armonk", *The North Castle Monitor* (18 February 1932).

of his agreeable disposition. What may be surprising, however, as it was for me, is to learn that this was written when my dad was only twenty years old. At that time, February 1932, he was in his second year at Columbia Law School and writing a column of chit-chat and commentary for the bi-weekly local tabloid.

As the years passed and I became more appreciative of him, I was astounded by his knowledge of so many subjects, his memory, and his diverse interests. Dad's pastimes, during his lifetime, variously included reading (anything), writing (fiction and non-fiction), painting, music (particularly jazz³), gardening, tennis, baseball, traveling, double-croctic word puzzles, and even computers, an interest he shared with his grandson, Brad. Rarely did I ever see him without a book, magazine, or legal brief in hand. He read at least one book a day for pleasure, as well as assorted magazines, and legal documents. He was a voracious reader with an amazing memory; his curiosity was insatiable. I remember his habit of reading the roadside signs and billboards out loud while driving along in the car. His granddaughter, Alison, found this more than mildly amusing, often teasing him about his irresistible urge to read anything with printed words.

Genealogy

As must be true of everyone, his character, attitudes, and abilities were the products of his heritage, education, and hometown. My father, James Daniel Ryan Hopkins, was born to Niles S. and Kathryn Ryan Hopkins at Fair View, the family farm on the ridge overlooking "the flats"⁴ in Armonk, on March 24, 1911. He was named for his paternal great grandfather, James Hopkins, his maternal grandfather, Daniel Ryan, and his maternal uncle, James Ryan. From what he told me, the farm was typical of those in the area. All of his Hopkins ancestors were farmers, having settled in North Castle from England, via Rhode Island and Long Island, in 1740. Many served the public in various capacities: North Castle Town Supervisor, North Castle Town Clerk, North Castle Justice of the Peace, and Chairman of the Westchester Board of Supervisors. The Ryans were more recent residents in the area, specifically Greenwich, Connecticut, having immigrated from Ireland during the potato famine in

³ Please see his article "The Jazz World in Armonk", *North Castle History*, Volume 12.

⁴ This area served as a small airport on the south side of Route 22 for many years. Today it is the site of a small shopping mall, part of new Route 22, and a corporate park, including the Ramada Inn.

the mid-nineteenth century. Daniel Ryan, Dad's maternal grandfather, was a horse trade, buying and selling horses. Both sets of grandparents were great friends and often traveled together. One such trip took them to the World's Fair of 1904 in St. Louis, Missouri. Dad's father, Niles, a Methodist and Republican, operated the family farm and was North Castle Justice of the Peace for a while. Dad's mother, Kate, a Catholic and Democrat, had been a women's suffragist and member of the Armonk School Board. No doubt their example instilled in their children the importance of service to others.

Childhood and Education

By all accounts, Dad's childhood was rather uneventful. One incident, I recall his recounting on occasion, occurred when he was about four years old. I wonder now if it was not his reaction to the arrival of a new family member, his sister Mary Anna Marguerite⁵, born on September 13, 1915. If so, it is probably the only occurrence I know of that may represent rebellion, which by the way was totally uncharacteristic. According to my Dad's account, his father, or perhaps the farmhand at the time, had hitched up one of the horses to a wagon and left the rig parked outside the house. Dad, unable to resist the temptation, managed to scramble up and into the wagon, grabbed the reins, yelled "giddy-up" and drove the wagon down the driveway onto Bedford Road (Route 22). Apparently his father soon realized that horse, wagon, and James were among the missing and took off after the recalcitrant child. Fortunately the horse, probably sensing the inexperience of its driver, stopped before a serious accident occurred. Dad said he remembered that his father, who too was known for his mild temperament (but not that day), removed him from the buckboard and switched him all the way back home. This apparently was such a traumatic incident for my father that he always identified it as his first childhood memory.

His early education may have been the catalyst for his remarkable reading habits, although both his mother and father were exceptional readers also. I always enjoyed hearing about his early education because it was so different from what I experienced. He and his sister Marguerite attended a schoolhouse on Cox Avenue, less than a mile from their farmhouse.⁶ I

⁵ Mrs. Samuel J. Lewis; Trustee of The North Castle Historical Society.

⁶ Presently this building is used by Dr. Stanley P. Duberman, Veterinarian. The site is on Cox Avenue between the Modern Furniture Barn and St. Patrick's Catholic Church properties.

was fascinated to learn that there was only one room and one teacher for eight grades with no more than thirty children at any one time. Dad attended this school from 1917 until 1923 when he graduated and went on to Valhalla Junior High School for the ninth grade and then Pleasantville High School. He always said the benefit of a one-room school was that younger pupils could gain from listening to the lessons of the older pupils. Evidently, he did take advantage of the situation as he graduated just after his twelfth birthday having attended only six years, not the usual eight. His teacher, Miss Lillian Webster, was a warm caring lady who had to cope with children, not only of varying abilities but also of different ages, without the kinds of support services now available to teachers. He always spoke with admiration for Miss Webster and affection for his fellow schoolmates, with whom he remained good friends over the years. Lacking the usual playground and gym equipment available to children attending larger schools, these children were compelled to create their own recess and lunch time activities, such as "Keeley"⁷, basketball and baseball. The building was not well insulated and heated only by one pot-belly stove, stoked by the children. Often on cold, blustery winter days, pupils and teacher sat huddled in coats, woolen caps and gloves as they recited their lessons.⁸ No doubt these experiences contributed to building strong character and imagination.

This last attribute, imagination, manifested itself in his writing short stories, novels, and poetry and in painting, both acrylics and watercolors, which he dabbled in off and on for thirty years. He wrote poems for his own pleasure or to commemorate a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion. He also penned at least two novels of which I am aware, as well as several articles for The North Castle Historical Society. When he graduated from Columbia University Law School in 1933 at age twenty-two, he received its prestigious award for writing.⁹ Of course, legal writing was his forte. He was known for his logic and ability to cut to the heart of the matter. His curiosity never waned, even when poor health and age took their toll. He was fascinated by personal computers and tinkered with one he got for Christmas when he was eighty-three.

⁷ A game where one team tosses the ball over the roof to the other team which must catch the ball, run around the building and tag out one of the opposing team members.

⁸ James D. Hopkins, "Miss Webster's School: A Fond Remembrance of School District No. 4", *North Castle History*, Vol. 9 (Armonk, NY: The North Castle Historical Society, 1982), p. 6.

⁹ This writing was published fifty years later by Pace University School of Law: "The Development of Realism in Law and Literature During the Period 1883-1933: *The Cultural Resemblance*", *Pace Law Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (White Plains, NY: Pace University), 1983.

My Childhood Recollections

My childhood recollections of Dad are still vivid and include Saturday morning junkets when I would accompany him on his "rounds" in downtown Armonk. These errands included first picking up the mail at our box in the post office, then located in a tiny storefront on Whippoorwill Road East¹⁰; returning and taking out more books at the library; picking up the three newspapers he read every day (*New York Times*, *Herald Tribune*, and *Reporter Dispatch*) at "Art's"¹¹ on Main Street; sometimes stopping in to say hello to Hergie or Gerry¹² at the police booth or getting a haircut at "Barber John's"¹³; and finally dropping off papers (letters, reports and other documents) and picking up more at the Town Hall, located on Maple Avenue until 1949. No trip into town was possible without bumping into numerous people with whom Dad always stopped to chat. This usually meant that we were gone from our house on Orchard Drive for hours, or at least it seemed so to me. Sometimes their conversations would go on and on. As I got older, I became a less frequent Saturday morning companion, but I do remember how much Dad, then the Town Supervisor, really enjoyed talking with everyone.

The old town hall (a section of Mechanic's Hall)¹⁴ with its pot-belly stove, wooden office furniture and files, and low oaken "fence" with swinging gate separating the office of Town Clerk Joseph T. (Joe) Miller from that of Receiver of Taxes George (Buck) Schmaling, was a particularly fascinating place for me. In the winter, the drafty building with its inadequate heating system would force Ruth Foster, our neighbor on Orchard Drive who also was the secretary shared by both Joe and Buck, to work in her coat, boots and hat -- a sight I often reported to my mother upon returning home. Fortunately town employees and visitors did not endure the frigid conditions much longer as a new modern town hall was constructed in 1948 on Bedford Road. This building, still used today as an integral part of the North Castle Town Hall, was built entirely without borrowing *any* funds. No bonds were issued; no mortgage was taken out.

¹⁰ Presently the site is part of the vacant parcel across from Citibank.

¹¹ Armonk Stationery Store, owned and operated by Arthur Nichols.

¹² Chief John Hergenhan and Lieutenant Gerald Hendricks served the North Castle Police Department for many years from the 1930's through the 1960's.

¹³ Armonk Barber Shop, owned and operated by John Trerotola.

¹⁴ This building remains on Maple Avenue. See "And a Good Time Was Had by All" by James D. Hopkins. *North Castle History*, Vol. 14, pages 19-29.

My father, a fiscal conservative, did not want the taxpayers saddled with public debt so soon after the Great Depression and Second World War. Our house on Sterling Road was undergoing construction at the same time as the new town hall, neither of which seemed to ruffle my always patient father.

When I was about thirteen years old, I learned once again first-hand of my father's abiding love for his town and its people. My seventh grade teacher¹⁵ assigned each student the task of designing an independent study project that would teach fellow classmates something new about North Castle's history. After relating the parameters of the project to Dad that evening, he and I developed an idea: photograph historic sites, monuments, churches, cemeteries, schools and other buildings; write a brief descriptive history of each, and then locate each on a map of North Castle. Dad enthusiastically embraced this project and offered to drive me around town one weekend so that I could take the pictures. For two days we drove, talked and photographed. Not only did he tell me about each place we stopped, but he did it with such zeal, often relating or identifying a personal experience or family connection. Naturally, I became aware of how much he knew and enjoyed about the town's history. What could have been rather mundane, became fun and a wonderful time together. Recalling this weekend of some forty-two years ago, I am reminded of other occasions that demonstrate his affection for North Castle.

"Doesn't the air seem better here?"

I think Dad really believed that the people who were born in Armonk, or even chose to live there, were quite unusual, if not unique. I remember that often upon our return from a trip that took us away for several days, he would always comment as we drove back into the environs of the town, "Doesn't the air seem better here? Can't you tell the difference?" I always thought of this as a silly joke of his, but I now wonder if he really did believe there was a modicum of veracity to this observation. Perhaps it was the town that created the character of its people, not the other way around, which one might suppose. Personally, I think Dad enjoyed every person he knew and found in each something remarkable, something that he could appreciate. Dad's stories of North Castle and its people were usually droll, but always told with an obvious warmth and regard.

¹⁵ Clarence Urso was the seventh grade teacher when the writer attended Armonk School No. 5, located on Whippoorwill Road, from September 1945 until June 1955.

Bertha Bower Hopkins

I would be remiss if I did not include perhaps the most important part of my father's life -- his marriage to my mother, Bertha Bower Hopkins, born in New York City and a graduate of Pelham High School and New Paltz Teachers' College. The circumstances surrounding their meeting are yet another indication of Dad's involvement with his town and his ability to get others engaged. When they met in the fall of 1936, North Castle was in the midst of celebrating its bicentennial.¹⁶ My mother was the new second grade teacher at Armonk's elementary school. Because of her artistic abilities, another teacher¹⁷ recommended her to my father as someone who could prepare labels for the display of township artifacts. To express his appreciation for her work on behalf of the bicentennial, my father took her out to dinner at Rhineland Gardens on Route 22 (now Old Route 22, the site of the bowling alley). They were married less than a year later on October 8, 1937. They lived in Armonk for the next fifty-eight years, moving three times, always within a radius of two miles of downtown. They were devoted to one another and to their family; my brother David was born in 1938 and I in 1941. As one long-time friend noted, they were like "two peas in a pod."¹⁸ Although my mother gave up teaching shortly after they were married, it did not take long for her also to become deeply involved in volunteer community activities -- Red Cross, North Castle Free Library, Armonk Parent School Group, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, District Nursing Association, Armonk Fire Company Auxiliary, and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Together, they formed a collaboration for the benefit of their family and community. Their commitment to one another was quite evident, especially during my Dad's last illness.

Dad's Philosophy

Although I miss my father profoundly, I am fortunate to have so many marvelous recollections from my childhood. Never too busy to listen, he was an involved parent and grandparent, who offered advice only when

¹⁶ Incidentally, my grandfather, Niles S. Hopkins, conceived the commemoration and headed the committee that organized the events for the celebration. See "North Castle's 200th Birthday" by Irene Sandford, *North Castle History*, Vol. 3.

¹⁷ Lucille Kittredge, fourth grade teacher, sister-in-law of then school principal Harold C. Crittenden and mother of Town Council member Mrs. Rebecca Kittredge Rondo.

¹⁸ Expressed by John Sherlock, Esq., former law secretary/clerk to Supreme Court Justice James D. Hopkins.

requested, which I know was not always easy. Besides being tolerant, unpretentious and kind, his family remembers him as tractable (but resolute if the situation warranted), generous (but not indulgent), and humorous (but never at someone's expense). He unselfishly committed his life and career to his fellow man, but never sought personal acclaim or credit for his achievements. He probably would be delighted to know that I wrote this commentary, but would be embarrassed to learn that it was my tribute to him. Undoubtedly he would take issue with my asserting that he was a remarkable and unique person, but he really was.

Jimmy Caruso, North Castle Town Supervisor, speaking at Dad's induction as Westchester County Judge almost forty years ago, summed up Dad's philosophy of life best: *"I expect to pass through this world but once, any good therefore that I can do or any kindness I can show, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again."*¹⁹

James D. Hopkins with Daughter Cynthia, July, 1962



¹⁹ James R. Caruso, Induction of James D. Hopkins as Westchester County Judge, transcript dated 6 January 1958, Hopkins Family Private Collection, Armonk, New York. This quotation is attributed to Stephen Grellet (Etienne de Grellet du Mabillier, 1773-1850).

Pictured are members of the A. Smith Hopkins family in front of their home “Fair View”. It stood on the hill above Byram Brook Place on the east side of Route 22. (L-R) Gertrude, b. 1896; A. Smith, b. 1852, Anna Maria (nee Flewellin), b. 1855, Niles Smith, b. 1882, and Eulaila, b. 1888. (Photo from the collection of The North Castle Historical Society.)

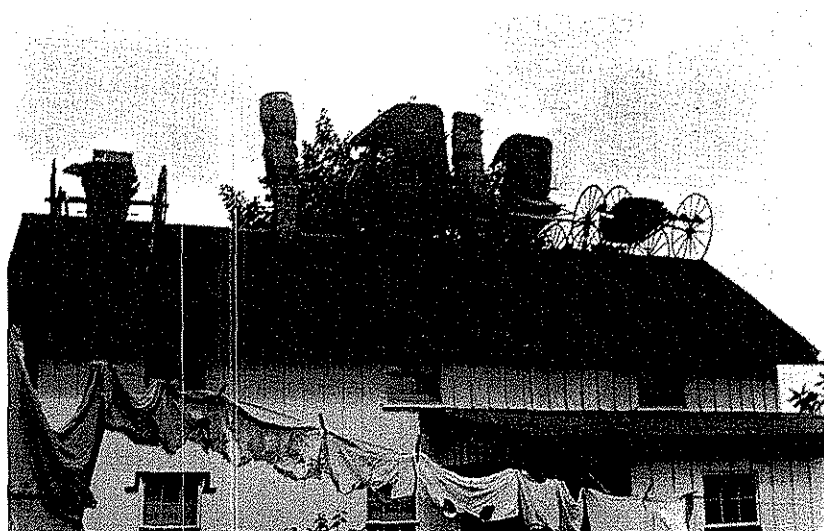


COLLECTORS AND RECEIVERS OF TAXES TOWN OF NORTH CASTLE

The North Castle Historical Society is grateful to Mrs. Mildred Wago, North Castle's current Receiver of Taxes, for her research and for the preparation of the following listing.

Jonathan Ogden	1736-1739	Andrew Purdy	1803-1804
Joseph Fowles	1739-1740	Benjamin Smith	1804-1810
Stephen Merritt	1740-1745	John Bussing	1810-1825
Thomas Merritt	1745-1746	Benjamin Smith	1825-1826
Thomas Golden	1746-1751	Reuben Merritt	1826-1828
William Ogden	1751-1752	Joseph Briggs	1828-1832
Thomas Golden	1752-1755	Joseph L. Brundage	1832-1837
Nathaniel Merritt	1755-1759	Reuben Merritt	1837-1841
Albert Ogden	1759-1763	William R. Hobby	1841-1842
Joseph Golden	1763-1767	Andrew Brundage	1842-1843
Albert Ogden	1767-1768	Samuel Brown	1843-1844
William Hunt	1768-1769	Andrew Brundage	1844-1851
Nathaniel Conklin	1769-1770	Merritt Sarles	1851-1853
Robert Dickenson	1770-1771	Harvey P. Fisher	1853-1854
Benjamin Hall	1771-1772	David H. Reynolds	1854-1855
Andrew Merritt	1772-1773	Harford White	1855-1856
Anderson Merritt	1773-1774	Robert F. Brundage	1856-1857
Stephen Fowles	1774-1777	Charles E. Johnson	1857-1858
Gilbert Thorn	1777-1778	Othiel Sands	1858-1861
Albert Ogden	1778-1779	Merritt Sarles	1861-1863
William Woodward	1779-1781	James H. Bunn	1863-1864
Reuben Sniffen	1781-1782	Thomas R. Smith	1864-1866
Jacob Choke	1782-1783	William L. Banks	1866-1867
Isaac Webbers	1783-1789	Othiel Sands	1867-1869
Jonathan Hobby	1789-1790	James J. Ackerman	1869-1870
Thomas Van Tassell	1790-1791	Enrich Sniffen	1870-1872
Isaac Webbers	1791-1792	John Sherwood	1872-1874
James Smith	1792-1793	Aaron F. Reid	1874-1876
Robert Murphy	1793-1796	Edgar A. Huestis	1876-1877
Joshua Smith	1796-1797	Richard Bryce	1877-1879
John Smith	1797-1798	William Mathers	1879-1881
James Guion	1798-1800	Nehemiah Acker	1881-1882
Jacob Dean	1800-1803	Charles Story	1882-1884

Charles McDonald	1884-1886	T. Albert Cox	1913-1915
Joseph H. Carpenter	1886-1888	John C. Johnson	1915-1919
T. Albert Cox	1888-1890	Alfred Young	1919-1923
Willis J. Huestis	1890-1892	Mortimer Pietschker	1923-1931
T. Albert Cox	1892-1894	Robert M. Hart	1931-1939
James Lovelett	1894-1896	Julia Bennett	1939-1942
Joseph I. Johnston	1896-1899	Joseph F. O'Neil	1942-1946
Jeremiah Sniffen	1899-1901	George P. Schmaling	1946-1959
T. Albert Cox	1901-1905	Elaine D. Zelt	1960-1969
Norman M. Lander	1905-1907	Mildred H. Wago (Deputy)	1960-69
T. Albert Cox	1907-1911	Mildred H. Wago	1969
Niles S. Hopkins	1911-1913		



SKIMATIN - BANKSVILLE STYLE

Taken during the 1920's, this picture shows the house diagonally across the street from the present Banksville Shopping Center. The custom of providing a newly-married couple a noisy reception including pranks is further described in an article by James D. Hopkins in *North Castle History*, Volume 16, page 12. This particular skimatin (also spelled skimmerton and skimmelton) in Banksville included laundry hanging across the front of the house with carriages on the roof, blocking up the chimney and, probably, the jeers, cat-calls and noisy clatter outside the house on the wedding night. The name in Banksville came from 'skimming' tin pans across the roof of the house. (Picture from the collection of Doris Finch Watson.)

**Robert Pippet, Honorary Trustee
The North Castle Historical Society**

Bob is our *only* Honorary Trustee. He resided in North Castle on Maryland Avenue until 1983 when he moved to be near his sister in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. He contributed to the Society in sundry ways before moving and has remained an interested, involved Trustee since moving. His latest contributions included a set of four "antagonist" jugs and a collection of records of the various activities of The Society spanning the past twenty-five years. His letters, articles, photographs, booklets and memorabilia make a lasting pictorial history for our archives. Thank you Bob!



**Bob Pippet and Dorrie Watson
at his home in Windsor, Ontario
August, 1995**

(Photo courtesy of Doris Finch Watson.)

RICHARD N. LANDER, OUR FIRST TOWN HISTORIAN

by Sharon Tomback

On October 19, 1996, The Town of North Castle and The North Castle Historical Society dedicated a memorial to Richard N. Lander. The memorial is a brass plaque mounted on a stone selected from a site near historic Thomas Wright's Mills, later called Sands' Mills. The plaque reads "Dedicated to Richard N. Lander, North Castle Town Historian 1946-1993, public official, eminent scholar, researcher, author and friend who generously shared his knowledge with all."

Appropriately, the memorial sits in the Bedford Road Historic District, "Mile Square". It faces Dick's beloved Armonk United Methodist Church building and the Bedford Road and Main Street intersection where we imagine the sign still admonishes "Slow Down".

Among his many accomplishments, Dick was one of the seven incorporators of The North Castle Historical Society and served as Town Historian for forty-six years. (Please see *North Castle History*, Vol. 20 which was dedicated to Dick.)

COMMEMORATING OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY!

On April 4, 1971 Mr. and Mrs. Ronald R. Atkins, R. Eugene Curry, Charles Elson, Dave Ferris, Dorothy T. Hubbell, Sally Spencer Hurwitz, Dorothy Johnson, Richard N. Lander, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth R. Mains, Orestes Mihaly, Thomas Parker, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Stone and Doris Finch Watson met to discuss starting a historical society. An "Application for Incorporation of The North Castle Historical Society" was signed by Ronald R. Atkins, R. Eugene Curry, Dorothy T. Hubbell, Sally Spencer Hurwitz, Hon. James D. Hopkins, Richard N. Lander and Doris Finch Watson on May 10, 1971. Ken Mains' idea of a historical society has grown to include an active membership who support an educational complex of four buildings, publications and numerous activities. We thank our founders for their energy, leadership and guidance! And, we toast our 25th Anniversary!

CORRECTION TO NORTH CASTLE HISTORY, VOL. 20

The photograph of the Middle Patent United Methodist Church appearing on the cover of the 1993 issue was taken by William E. Finch, Jr., Greenwich Town Historian, who has served on the Board of Directors of the historic Middle Patent Rural Cemetery for more than forty-three years.

THE CAPTURE OF "PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE"

BY WILLIAM GERALD HENDRICKS

written by W. Gerald Hendricks, Jr.

Prologue

Prior to 1929, the Town of North Castle was policed by constables who were initially elected at large to serve specific areas of the town and later appointed by the Town Board. This arrangement continued until April, 1934, when Civil Service examinations were initiated as a basis for appointment to the police force. Three of the earlier Constables, John C. Hergenhan, William Orman and Joseph Caringi were the first to take the examinations and be appointed Patrolmen. In January of 1935 W. Gerald Hendricks joined the force; he had moved to Armonk from Bloomington, Indiana two years earlier. Special examinations for the post of Sergeant were held resulting in the appointment on July 1, 1936, of Patrolman Hergenhan to be the department's first Sergeant. It was reported at the time that these four "rough riders", as they had come to be known in local circles, constituted the smallest organized police force in New York State. Their "headquarters" was a small, log cabin style structure on Main Street called the Police "booth", the back of which was on the south side of the present "Sheep Shack" building.

Thursday, February 25, 1937, started out as just a typical day in the sleepy hamlet of Armonk. Little did anyone suspect that by day's end events would propel the town, its tiny police force and Officer "Gerry" Hendricks to national prominence. In fact, probably the biggest dilemma facing the young policeman that morning was how to get his wife, Lillian, and her mother, Rose Trerotola, to the dentist and still be on time for his 4:00 pm shift. He decided that he would give them the car and report to work two hours early - a decision that would change his life forever.

Meanwhile, about ten miles up the road in Katonah, a village of about 1,200, local residents were paying little attention to three rough looking men who drove through the business district several times before parking their 1936 Ford coupe, bearing New Jersey plates, near the railroad station. The men sat quietly in their car until 2:00 pm when two of them (dressed in greasy blue-striped mechanic's overalls, with grease and dirt smeared on their faces) walked across Katonah Avenue and into the one story, red brick building housing the Northern Westchester Bank. Two customers, Waldo Woodcock and George Dickinson, were at a teller's window and three employees were behind the counter when the gunmen

drew their revolvers and ordered cashier Stanley Schaefer to open the door leading to the "cage". As the customers and employees were being led towards the vault, James Waite, another customer, entered the bank and was ordered to join them. The six victims were then forced to the floor while one robber covered them and the other placed his revolver on the counter and scooped the cash out of the drawers and into a brown paper bag. When all of the money in sight (\$17,626) was taken, the customers and employees were led into an inner compartment of the vault, locked behind a steel grill and warned to remain there in silence. One of the robbers, speaking for the first time, told them: *"You're lucky. We'll give you a break. We won't close the big door on you."* (That action would likely have resulted in the suffocation before help could have reached them through the time-lock mechanism on the huge, burglar-proof vault door. After breaking the key off in the lock to foil the quick release of their captives, the gunmen made their getaway.)

A few minutes later another customer, Francis Dupont, entered the bank and was stunned by the unusual silence and the absence of any employees. Noticing the door to the cage ajar, he discovered the victims huddled quietly in the rear of the vault. Realizing what he had stumbled upon, Dupont ran to the adjoining firehouse and turned in the fire alarm. The president of the bank, Edward Fielder, was just finishing a leisurely lunch at a restaurant across the street when he heard the shriek of the siren. He rushed out into the street to discover that his bank had been robbed. (Police later said that the holdup had been accomplished with such speed that the employees had no chance to activate the tear gas with which the bank had been equipped for just such an occasion.)

Upon exiting the bank, the holdup men drove north turning onto Cross River Road, a back-country lane leading onto Route 22. It was along this deserted stretch of road near Cross River Dam that they had stashed another vehicle, a seven year old black Ford coupe, which they intended to use for the remainder of their getaway back to the Bronx.

Meanwhile, Town of Bedford Police, whose jurisdiction included the Village of Katonah, sent out a countywide teletype alarm and contacted the smaller local departments, including Armonk, by telephone. Upon receiving the notice of the robbery, Sergeant Hergenhan, assisted by Patrolmen Hendricks and Orman, immediately set up a roadblock at the

intersection of Route 22 (Bedford Road) and Mount Kisco Road (Main Street), stopping every car and questioning the occupants.

Patrolman Gerald Hendricks had parked his patrol car across Route 22, just before the intersection, in order to intercept all southbound vehicles. He had stopped about eighteen motorists, causing a slight traffic jam and sent them off after a few brief questions. There was a lull in traffic and then at about 2:20 pm, only twenty minutes after the daring daylight holdup, Hendricks saw an old, battered Ford coupe bearing New York license plates occupied by only one man, coming down the road at a disarmingly moderate rate of speed. The driver, a short, swarthy man with a mustache, told Hendricks that he had "*just been riding around the county*" and that he was an auto parts salesman, pointing to several catalogues on the seat beside him. He was nervous; his answers were vague. Officer Hendricks later described the capture:

"It didn't seem right to me the way that guy was answering, so I ordered him to step out of the car and gave him a quick frisk. There was nothing on him. Then I went around to the back of the car and lifted up the rumble seat. When I raised the lid, after encountering some initial resistance, two guys lying inside pointed two guns in my ribs. I slammed down the cover so hard that the front hinges of the cover broke loose. I held it down with all of my weight and called for assistance from my fellow officers, who had stopped another car on the opposite side of the road."

With guns drawn, Sergeant Hergenhan and Patrolman Orman rushed across to join Hendricks, who by then had drawn his own weapon to cover the driver, while still holding down the now-sprung rear compartment lid. The officers called out to the two men inside to drop their weapons and, as the revolvers thudded onto the bottom of the compartment, Hendricks released the lid and the occupants crawled out with their hands over their heads. A search of the car revealed a brown bag containing \$17,626, a Colt .38 caliber revolver with an eight-inch barrel and a .32 caliber revolver, along with ammunition for both weapons. The men were then herded over to the Police booth. They gave their names as James Richards, an auto salesman, and Joseph Stuzzo, a laborer, both of Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, and George Rera, an auto mechanic, of East Tremont Avenue, the Bronx.

Bedford Police and New York State Police rushed the culprits to the Bedford Town House where they were questioned by District Attorney Walter A. Ferris, Sheriff George A. Casey and federal and state law enforcement officials. It was during this interrogation that the man who had given his name as "Richards" readily admitted his true identity as Merle Vandebush, a 30-year-old native of Green Bay, Wisconsin who had been described by J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as the nation's "Public Enemy #1". (Vandebush was also referred to by the press as "Public Rat #1".)

Vandebush, with a long record of arrests and convictions, had been sought by federal agents for three Wisconsin bank robberies, in Monroe, Seymour and Ripon, and was under federal indictment for the kidnapping and attempted murder of New Jersey State Trooper William A. Turnbull. (Vandebush was carrying Trooper Turnbull's weapon when he was captured in Armonk.) His cohorts were identified as Anthony Rera, 29 years old, and Rera's cousin, George Rera, the getaway driver, 19 years old. All three men were held on charges of first degree robbery and remanded to the Westchester County Jail at Eastview, less than four hours after the stick-up occurred. (Vandebush later referred to the new, modern jail as "*the best jug I've ever been in.*")

Within hours the news of this capture was being carried in banner headlines as front page stories by local newspapers and through the AP and UPI was spread across the nation. The young police officer Gerald Hendricks was being hailed as "Public Hero #1 of the U.S." Through newsreels, his face became familiar to theatergoers coast to coast and his voice was heard by millions of radio listeners when he appeared as a guest on NBC's nationally broadcast "Rudy Vallee Show". (Ironically, among the most shocked were the officer's own family who read of his exploits in the Bloomington, Indiana newspaper. He had never told them of becoming a police officer because he did not want to worry his mother.)

" 'Public Enemy (or Rat) Number One' in the catalogue of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been captured by a village policeman in Westchester. While rejoicing, we can also afford a laugh at the irony of circumstances which delivered this national desperado, sought by Mr. J. Edgar Hoover's famous agents for the better part of a year, into the hands of an alert local police officer. 'Country Boy makes Good in a Big Way' might be the title for the extraordinary story which reflects no

*discredit on Mr. Hoover's elaborate machinery, but rather celebrates the occasional triumph of chance and native wit over the best laid plans of mice and men. ...Not only is the most widely hunted fugitive on the Federal list at last in custody, not only is the manner of his downfall in the charming tradition of 'Jack the Giant Killer', but who can think of a more ignominious fate for the Jesse James of the moment than to be trapped under a lid in the rear end of an old runabout? Sounds like a body blow to the romance of banditry."*¹

Hundreds of congratulatory letters and telegrams poured into the tiny police booth on Main Street, including a personal note of praise from J. Edgar Hoover. The Westchester County Grand Jury passed a resolution commending Officers Hendricks and Hergenhan for their work. The North Castle Town Board voted unanimously to give both men an extra week of paid vacation and also to purchase four new \$50 overcoats for the Police Department. Merle Vandebush, the notorious bank robber and kidnapper, was humiliated; he had been captured by a small town policeman. *"These hicks sure work fast. What a sap I am to let a country cop catch me... the G-men couldn't."*

Epilogue

On March 16, 1937, less than three weeks after their capture in Armonk, Merle Vandebush and Tony Rera were given prison sentences of 45-70 years and George Rera was given 15-20 years by Westchester County Court Judge Gerald Nolan. The trio initially served their time at Sing Sing². Vandebush was later transferred to the maximum security Clinton State Prison at Dannemora, known as New York's Alcatraz. Clearly these were times when justice was meted out swiftly and harshly!

Sergeant John C. Hergenhan and Patrolman W. Gerald Hendricks continued their careers with the North Castle Police Department for more than thirty years after the capture of Vandebush. Both men provided distinguished and dedicated service to the community in the capacity of Chief of Police.

¹ Editor, "Under a Lid," *The New York Herald Tribune*, February 27, 1937.

² Presently known as Ossining Correctional Facility, Ossining, New York.

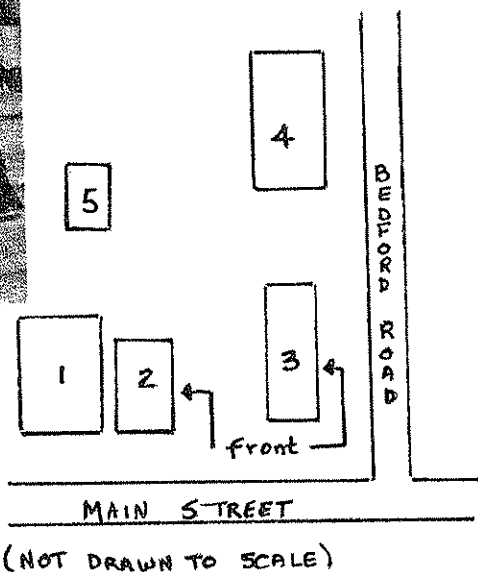


(L to R) Sgt. John Hergenhan
and his wife, Goldie Wago,
Officer Gerry Hendricks
and his wife, Lillian Trerotola.

March 1937, leaving White
Plains Courthouse.

(Photographer unknown.
Picture courtesy of W. Gerald
Hendricks, Jr.)

1. Presently the "Sheep Shack"
2. Police "booth"
3. Judge Raven's vegetable stand
4. Raven home (presently stores)
5. Judge Raven's cider mill





Sgt. J. C. Hergenhan

Ptl. J. Caringi

Ptl. W. Orman

Ptl. W. G. Hendricks

The North Castle Police Department, probably 1937. Some say the police "booth" was built around a telephone booth. It faced towards the Methodist Church and the back of Judge Raven's vegetable stand. The booth backed up to the side of the present 'Sheep Shack' building. (Photographer unknown. Picture courtesy of W. Gerald Hendricks, Jr. See *North Castle History*, Vol. 1 for another view of the police "booth".)

Intersection of Mount Kisco Road (Main Street) and old Route 22 (Bedford Road), 1937, showing a re-enactment of the roadblock and capture of the bankrobbers. Picture was taken from the Methodist Church corner; the Police "booth" was behind the vegetable stand (a parking lot today). Judge Julius Raven's house was to the right (where the shopping area is today). (See *North Castle History*, Vols. 1 and 19 for other views.) Whippoorwill School, presently residential condominiums, appears in the left background. (Photographer unknown. Picture courtesy of W. Gerald Hendricks, Jr.)



THE ARMONK EAGLE

by Orestes J. Mihaly

The celebration of our nation's Bicentennial by the citizens of North Castle on July 4, 1976 will long be remembered by those who were there and may not be surpassed until the celebration of the tricentennial in 2076. The Armonk Eagle played a significant part in that celebration and has endured to this day. It is located now, just as it was then, on a small knoll across from the entrance to the headquarters of IBM at the northwest corner of the intersection of Route 128 and Route 22.

Original Concept

Charles Elson, an award winning international stage designer, was the Chairman of the July 4th Committee and the impresario of that day's celebration. Elson included an eagle in developing the concept for a triumphant arch to be built over the Route 128 highway near the Armonk Methodist Church - a Roman victory arch or Arch of Triumph - with an eagle as the symbol of victory and under which those in the line of march would enter into the Village of Armonk with colorful banners and enthusiastic bands. Arthur Soka, an architectural visualizer by profession, submitted three designs to Elson and Tom Yaroscak, Chairman of the Design Committee. It was at a meeting of this committee in late January of 1976 that Elson turned to Soka and pointed to one of the eagle designs and asked: "Art, can we make this eagle fly?" and Art replied "I know we can!"

That was the beginning of the "Armonk Eagle" as it has come to be known. The Armonk Eagle as first conceived is perhaps best described in a Bicentennial Parade draft copy of a letter by Elson to New York's CBS-TV:

"From the hill topped by IBM International Headquarters where the parade starts, the sweep of the rolling hills and the village below is ordinarily inspiring, but it will additionally have as its focus our forty foot eagle, probably the world's largest, as a triumphant entrance arch with the village beyond bedecked with 3,000 yards of specially designed bunting made for us in India and decorated Liberty Trees in the manner of the French. The Parade itself, with bagpipes and fife & drum, will hold aloft its forty coordinated banners looking like quilts and representing all segments of our township.

State Rejected Original Plan

But the arch and an eagle over the road were not to be. An application and a drawing made by a New Jersey engineering firm were filed with the State Highway Department, but were swiftly rejected. In addition to the rejection by the State Highway Department, the estimated cost of \$17,000 would have made the use of this proposed structure impossible. The original plan for an arch over the road was then changed to a more modest eagle silhouette that could be seen equally as well from both sides, and that could temporarily be hung by wires for the day of the parade. Soka's design of the eagle was primarily a silhouette so that it could be seen from both sides, but he had also included, as part of the design, the cut outs which serendipitously allowed for less wind resistance to prevent the structure from being blown down. The design and a budget item of \$500 were submitted to the Bicentennial Committee headed by R. Eugene Curry and were quickly approved.

Construction

This time Elson, Soka and John Schnoor, a local businessman and builder who was in charge of construction, and the others involved in the planning believed permission to suspend the eagle over the highway would be granted by the authorities and construction began. Elson, Soka and Schnoor relied on a group of other enthusiastic and talented North Castle residents with engineering, construction and artistic backgrounds. Together they planned and constructed the original Armonk Eagle along with the help of many other volunteers including Guy Papale, Norman Egdell, Seymore Gage, David Stech, Spence Wallin, Tom Yaroscak and Jack Desmond. It was agreed that the Eagle would be 12' x 40' in size and that it would consist of overlapping 4' x 8' marine plywood panels. The panels and the epoxy glue, commonly used for kitchen counter tops and paint were bought and the panels were delivered to the Byram Hills High School where they were laid out in the hallways and overlapped. The outline of the eagle and the vent holes in the body were marked in chalk by Soka, according to a grid that he had prepared.

The next step of the construction occurred at the Morgan-Manhattan Warehouse, on Old Route 22, where the now chalk-marked panels were glued together and the eagle's outline and its holes were cut out by several citizens with saber saws. The building process was enhanced by the

fortuitous availability of large heavy containers in the warehouse which were placed over the drying panels while the glue set.

The eagle was now ready for painting. Again it was moved to another location. This time a tractor trailer flat bed truck was obtained from Morgan-Manhattan to carry the 12' x 40' structure to the old barn at Ruth and Bill Frank's Dilly Dally Farm on Route 22 where the eagle was painted a deep blue after a suggestion that it be painted a severe black was rejected. The exposed edges of the plywood were carefully given three coats of paint, hopefully to slow down the delamination of the plywood. David Stech painted the lettering on the Eagle - "Bicentennial 1776-1976".

It rested in the barn for several weeks and was then ready for delivery to the site on Route 128. For a second time and only two days before July 4th the State Highway Department refused to grant permission to hang the structure by wires across the road. All the toil and effort to build the Eagle seemed to be vain. John Schnoor then suggested that the Eagle be placed somewhere along the route of the parade so that the parade marchers would be able to see the victory Eagle as they marched down the hill into the town. It was then decided that the knoll on Route 22 would be the site of the Armonk Eagle.

A call was made to another town resident, Bob Manner, who was an executive with the New York Telephone Company that donated and erected two telephone poles to which the Eagle was attached after 4' x 6' wood beams were lag bolted as bracing to the back of the structure by John Schnoor. Four cherry pickers, also provided by the telephone company, hoisted the eagle. Holes were drilled into the 4' x 6's and into the telephone poles to accommodate the 17" long bolts that affixed the Eagle structure to the poles.

The egg and offspring

Charles Elson and Art Soka glanced at each other and nodded knowingly - the Armonk Eagle had indeed been made to fly just one day before the great parade. The next morning revealed that someone had placed a white basketball in the midst of a pile of straw. The town buzzed with the story that the Armonk Eagle had laid an egg. It is still not clear who was responsible for this aspect of the Armonk Eagle's first days on its perch.

Aside from the egg the Armonk Eagle had many offspring. Michael Gressel, another talented resident of Armonk and an internationally known sculptor, was asked by Soka to carve a small replica of the Eagle. Gressel produced a three dimensional, twelve inch carving out of Linden wood from which Soka arranged to have the Bronx Brass Foundry cast 150 copies. These smaller eagles were fastened to the poles that held the banners carried in the parade. They were later removed from the poles and sold to the public. In addition, five feet wide eagles were cut from plywood by Freda Margiloff, painted, and affixed to the Town Hall and the three firehouses in North Castle - Armonk, Banksville and North White Plains. The Brass Foundry was so enthusiastic with the eagle that they cast an additional 350 and presumably disposed of them elsewhere.

The Armonk Eagle remained at this site after the parade, and about eight years later was taken down and repainted by the Town through the efforts of John Schnoor, Leo Guidali and David Stech. But the Armonk Eagle had enemies in addition to the elements of Mother Nature. While it was on the ground for repainting the Armonk Eagle was torched by vandals. Luckily the accelerant used was alcohol, which quickly burned off, causing only a minimal amount of damage.

Maintenance and Repair

The structure began to deteriorate badly. In May of 1991 a letter was sent to the Town Board by the author requesting that the Town Board consider erecting a more permanent structure. Town Supervisor Jack Lombardi and the Board were very supportive of the request and immediately created a special committee to make recommendations for the future of the Armonk Eagle. Councilwoman Becky Kittredge was the Town Board liaison and represented the town government along with Highway General Foreman Norman Anderson and Building Inspector Tony Palamarczuk. Others on the committee chaired by the author included many of those originally involved in the Armonk Eagle's design and construction as follows: Art Soka, John Schnoor, Seymour Gage and John Stamatov.

Periodic meetings were held by the committee during which time the Armonk Eagle began to break apart, until finally it no longer flew. The committee first considered the construction of a permanent metal eagle.

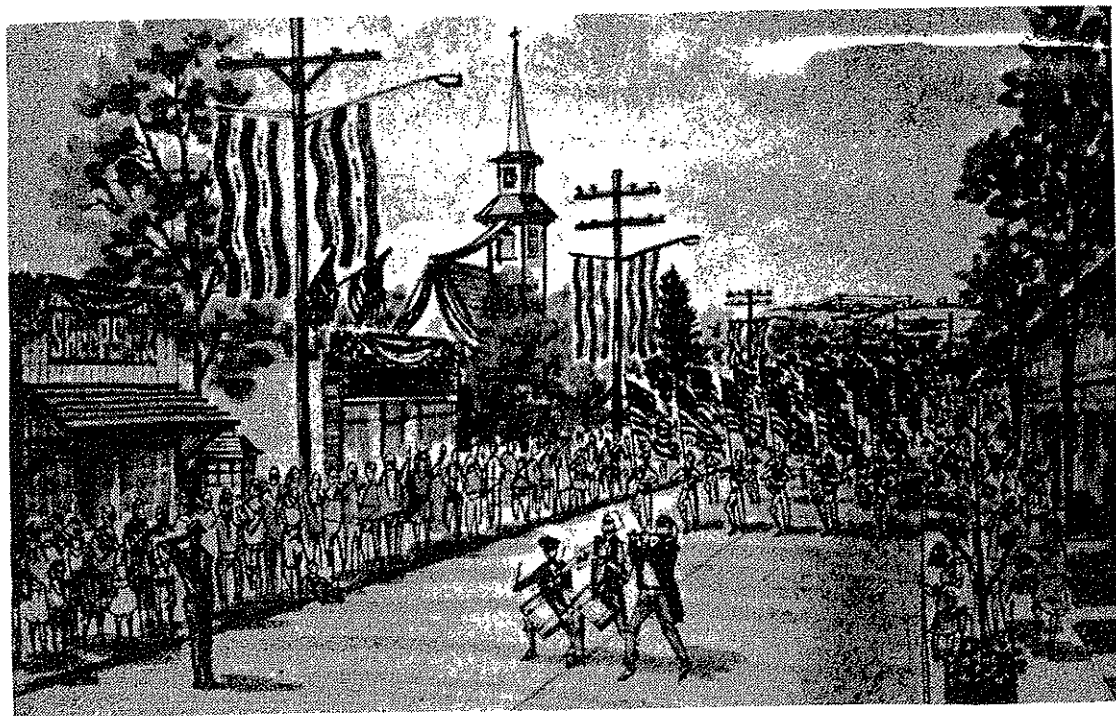
but eventually decided to recommend replacing the original Armonk Eagle with another wooden structure. The Town Board was urged to finance a permanent structure made of metal or other more durable and permanent material in the future. On August 13, 1992 the Town Board authorized the construction of an enhanced wooden eagle by ECTS - Scenic Technologies Inc. of Cornwall on the Hudson, New York. Through the auspices of Orestes J. Mihaly, Jr. the work was performed at cost by the company. By the end of August 1992 the cherry pickers again hoisted the Eagle to the telephone poles after it had been transported to the site on a flat bed truck and the Armonk Eagle flew from its perch on Route 22 to be viewed once more by tens of thousands of motorists. Soon thereafter the American Legion Armonk Post 1097 provided a U.S. flag and flag pole and the Town Board authorized the electrification for the lights illuminating the Eagle and the Flag.

Over the years the Armonk Eagle has become a signature landmark for Armonk. "Turn left at the Eagle" or "turn right at the Eagle" have been frequent directions for motorists traveling on Route 22. I still get a thrill, particularly after dark, driving along Route 22 northbound toward Armonk as the Eagle seems to rise from the horizon and its silhouette becomes more and more visible, while the illuminated flag of this great country flaps in the wind. North Castle may not have had its own temporary Arch of Triumph on July 4, 1976, but instead it has a more permanent reminder of the joy that was felt on that day by its citizens -- a joy created by the triumph of our nation over its adversaries both within and without and a triumph symbolized by the Armonk Eagle which still flies today.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

This brief history of the Armonk Eagle is based in part on the remembrances of Charles Elson, Arthur Soka and John Schnoor. They were asked to predict what they thought North Castle would be like in 2076 and would the Armonk Eagle still be there. All thought the town would be more densely populated, perhaps like Scarsdale, and agreed that somehow an Armonk Eagle would still be flying at the Tricentennial. All omissions and inaccuracies, however, are those of the author and unintended.

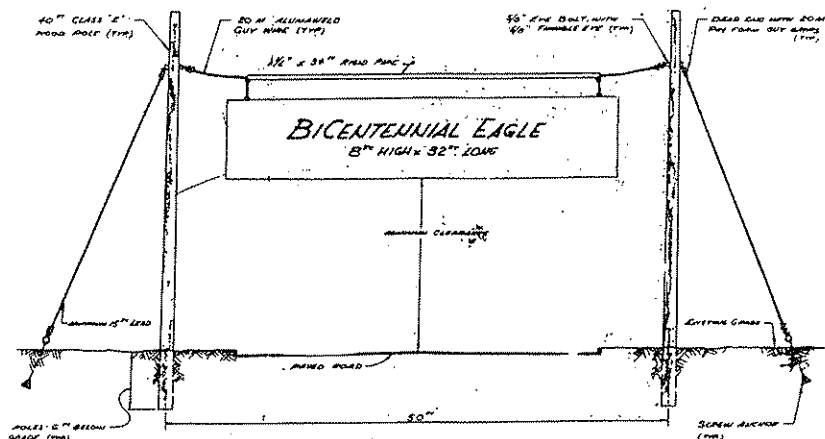
North Castle Bicentennial Parade: 11:00 am, July 4, 1976. Main Street was to be decorated with special bunting and "Liberty Trees." Rendering by Art Soka. Notice the eagle in the rendering is mounted across the road. (*North Castle News*, June 30, 1976, page 6)



Some North Castle residents responsible for constructing and painting the 40' Bicentennial Eagle to be mounted as a triumphal arch for the Fourth of July celebration. (L-R) David Stech, Rolf Lunde, Orestes Mihaly, Alf Frank, Guy Papale, Amy Frank, Arthur Soka, Norman Egdell, Ted Frank, Diana Frank, Tony Ellrodt, John Schnoor, Jack Desmond and Seymour Gage. (Photograph, taken by Erik Thomsen, is from the collection of Art Soka.)



Layout drawing showing the original plan for the arch and eagle over the road. The plan was rejected by New York State. (Drawing from the collection of Art Soka.)



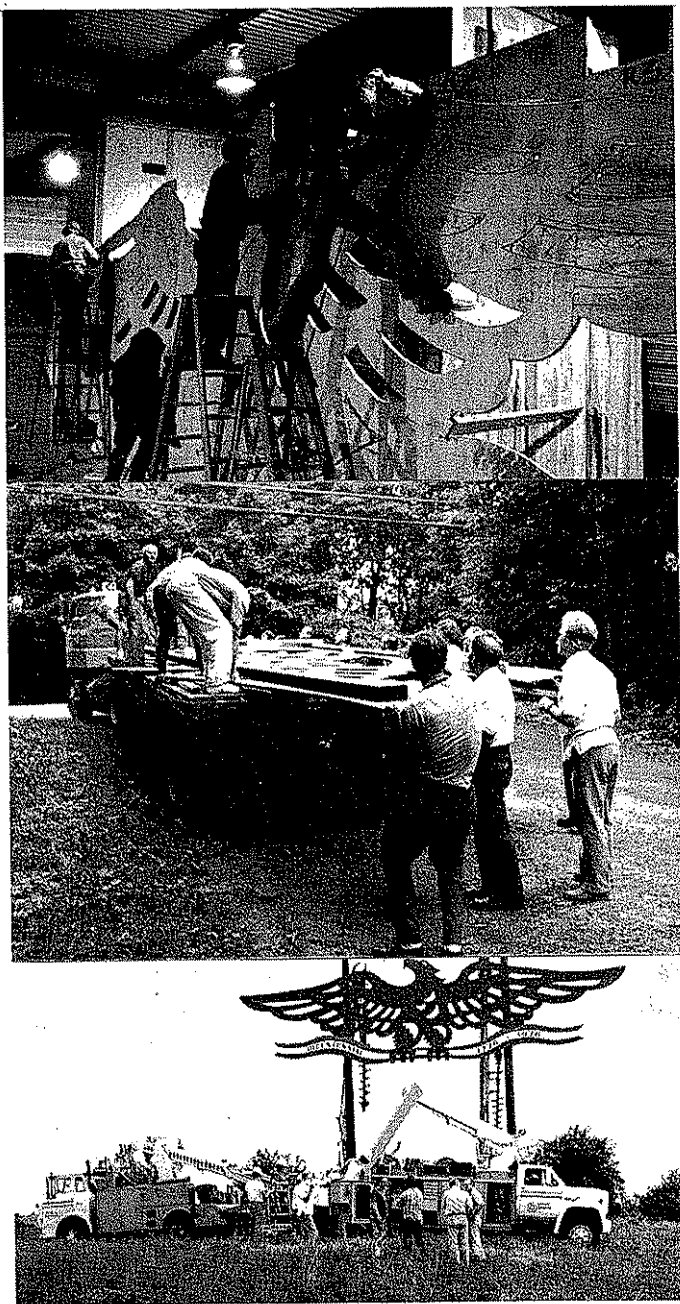
DRAWING NOT TO SCALE

COMPLIMENTS OF
STOUT AND O'SULLIVAN, INC.
 ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS & ENGINEERS
 FARMINGDALE, N.Y.

(L-R) Art Soka and Michael Gressel holding two of the offspring.



Construction, Transport and Display of the Eagle. (Photographs courtesy of Art Soka.)



COVER PICTURE

The front cover picture is reproduced from a post card in the collections of The Society. The photograph was taken at the corner of Main Street and Bedford Road looking southwest about 1920. Notice the "Slow Down" sign mounted on an advertising sign for Goodrich Tires and the bed of flowers at the base of the sign. The roads were not yet paved. To the right of the "Slow Down" sign are directional signs for Mount Kisco and Bedford.

The building to the right in the picture was torn down in April of 1922 and Kent Place was put in at the site around 1960. The old building stood as early as 1850 and served as a stagecoach stop, store, post office and butcher shop. Possibly built by Elisha Sutton, the property was purchased by Griffen Gale in April, 1850. (See *North Castle History*, Volume 19, page 29, for further information.)

We are fondly reminded of Dick Lander; of his story about this spot; of the traffic island, the bed of petunias and the sign which simply said "Slow Down".

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