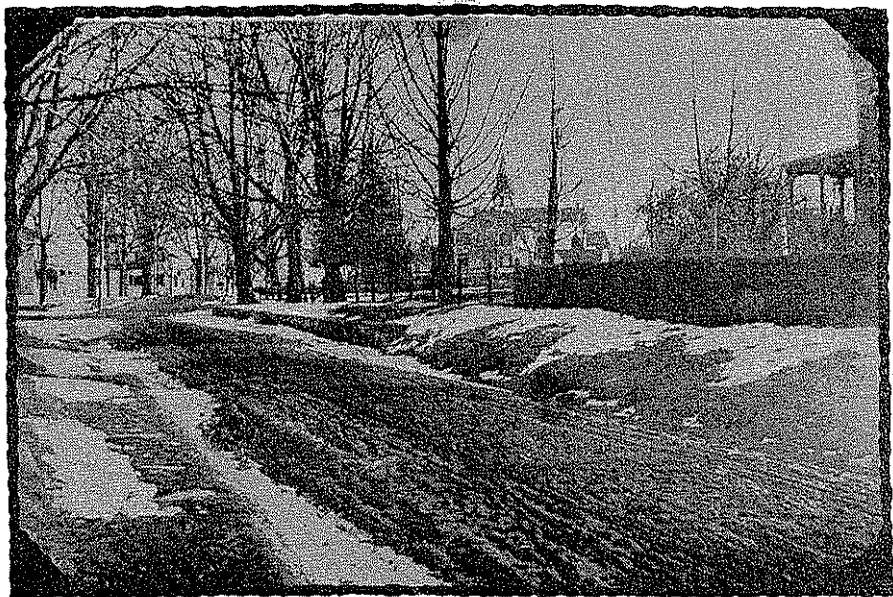


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North Castle History



Banksville, N.Y., 1898

The North Castle Historical Society

15 BEDFORD ROAD, ARMONK, NEW YORK 10504



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends of The North Castle Historical Society,

This is the third bulletin to be published by The North Castle Historical Society and it is produced entirely by volunteer help. My personal gratitude to all concerned, especially Mrs. Barbara Massi and Mrs. Irene Sandford.

As many of you know, Smith's Tavern on Route 22 in Armonk is for sale. The Society would like to purchase this building as it is one of the oldest and most historic structures in the Town of North Castle. It is centrally located and is definitely large enough for the needs and purposes of the Society. The building is in good condition and there is ample parking off the highway.

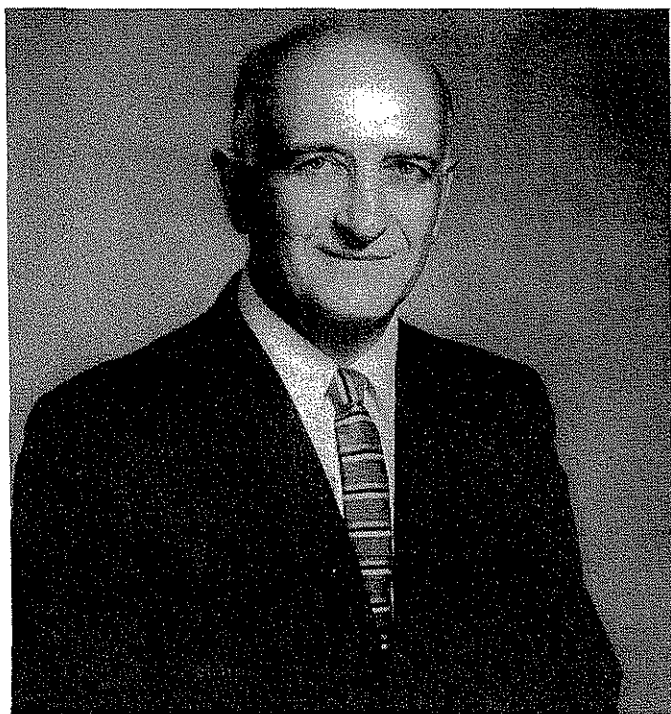
The money required for the purchase of Smith's Tavern is beyond the means of the Society, but we are working on several plans, one of which we hope will produce adequate funds. In any case a fundraising campaign will be necessary and will be the central part of any plan. There is really no doubt in anyone's mind that the Society should purchase this building and there could be no better Bicentennial gift to the Society. It would be a permanent reminder of our Bicentennial celebration here in town. A great deal of enthusiasm must be generated if we are to be successful in this endeavor, so I ask each of you to talk it up as often as possible and when a volunteer calls on you for a donation I hope you will give - better still, volunteer to help in the campaign.

Because of our by-laws I will be passing the gavel to a new President in April but I will continue to serve as a Trustee. The past three years as your President have been most rewarding and educational for me. It has been a real pleasure to work with such a dedicated group and I know you will give our new President, when chosen, the same support.

Kindest regards to each of you,

Lindsay H. Welling Jr.

Lindsay H. Welling, Jr.



JOSEPH T. MILLER

IN MEMORIAM

On December 11, 1975, the entire Town of North Castle was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of one of its most esteemed and popular citizens, Joseph T. Miller. For thirty-five years, a longer time than any previous incumbent, this kindly man had served as the Town Clerk. He brought to the important task of keeping the Town's records a sense of dedication and integrity, and a passion for accuracy that will remain a legacy to future generations in our community. Those researchers or scholars who may later study the *thirty-five years of Town Minutes* dictated by Joe will be amazed at their scope, clarity and the fact that their author was impressed with their future historical importance.

Joe was born on February 8, 1903, and all of his life he was interested in the historic, especially that which pertained to his beloved home town. From the days of his youth when he scrambled up to the top of the hill near his home to watch the construction of the great Kensico Dam, a historical subject in which he was an expert, to the Bicentennial of our Country, Joe was interested in and actively engaged in the preservation of our local heritage. His first public service was as Chairman of the North Castle Washington Bicentennial Committee in 1932. He was also a member of the Committee which celebrated the North Castle Bicentennial in 1936. When The North Castle

Historical Society was formed in 1972 he became a Charter Member and was elected to the Society's first Board of Trustees. Two years ago when the Town Board appointed a group of citizens to serve as an advisory committee to plan observances for the two hundredth anniversary of the United States, Joe was one of the persons they chose, and was serving on the committee at the time of his death.

Joe was a true son of North Castle having lived in the old village of Kensico. His family later moved to the then new community of North White Plains where they built a home. It was this family home at 116 Nethermont Avenue where Joe and his wife, Dorothy, still made their home and where their three daughters were brought up.

Joe's other love was gardening and the grounds about his house were filled with beautiful shrubs and flowering bushes which he grew and cultivated. As a boy he attended Valhalla School, White Plains High School and graduated from Columbia University, Class of 1925, with a degree in Engineering.

During his busy life he was active in the ranks of his chosen political party and prior to his first election as Town Clerk served a term as Councilman. He once acted for a short time to fill a vacancy in the office of Town Building Inspector. He found time to serve as a member of the North White Plains Fire Company and was active in its ranks for fifty-five years. He held every line office and every executive office in the Company. He was also active in the Benevolent Association and served as Secretary of the Board of Fire Commissioners. From boyhood when he served as an altar boy, to the end of his life, he was a faithful parishioner of Holy Name of Jesus Roman Catholic Church in Valhalla, where his funeral service was held on December 13.

Although the lines above describe the life of Joe Miller, those lines can never be an adequate measure of the man. His devotion to God, Country, family, community, friends and neighbors would fill volumes. His kindness, helpfulness and friendship were boundless, and extended to all who came in contact with him, whether friend or stranger. The many services he rendered, the many problems, public and private, he helped to solve are uncountable. Those of us who were privileged to be associated with him in The North Castle Historical Society are proud he was one of us; proud that he was a member of our Board of Directors and blessed by the legacy of service he bequeathed to us.

Richard N. Lander

*"For Thy faithful people,
O Lord, life is changed -- not
taken away; and, when the house
of this life on earth has been
destroyed, an eternal home is
prepared for them in heaven."*

1736 - 1936 NORTH CASTLE'S 200th BIRTHDAY

by Irene Sandford

The year is 1936, the month July. The Town Supervisor is the Hon. Richard P. Limburg, and the four councilmen are: Eugene Curry, Paul C. Lehr, Joseph T. Miller, and Walter Wohlfeil. The residents of North Castle number approximately 3,000. The local weekly newspaper, published on Friday, is The North Castle Sun: founder and first editor, Alvah P. French of Armonk; current publisher Warren J. Hall of Cox Avenue, Armonk. The subject of town-wide discussion: How best to celebrate North Castle's 200th birthday?

On Wednesday, July 28, a group of interested citizens met with the Town Board to formulate ideas and programs for this once-in-a-lifetime historic event. More ideas were forthcoming than might prove feasible, but a basic outline developed from this first meeting. The celebration would be a three-day event, to take place Saturday, October 10, Sunday, October 11, and Monday, October 12. There would be a parade, a pageant, and a Grand Ball, all on Saturday. Sunday would be devoted to Homecoming church services, an inspection of Colonial Homes, and, only possibly, an air show at Armonk's own airport.¹ Monday, Columbus Day, activities would include a repetition of the Historic Pageant and fireworks in the evening.

It was agreed to set up headquarters in an empty store on the southwest corner of Main Street and Whippoorwill Road. The front of the store would house an exhibit of historical artifacts and relics related to the original Indian inhabitants and to the early settlers, and a display of the town records. This exhibit to be under the supervision of James Hopkins and open to the public. The rear of the store would be the nerve center of the Committee, where meetings would be held and information made available to the public. Eleanor Waterbury took on the responsibility for this office, which would open on Monday, August 3, as well as the function of secretary and financial record keeper for the Committee. And, to set the wheels in motion, the Town Board appropriated the sum of \$200.00 "as a nest egg."

Committees Set Up

A ten-member Executive Committee was set up: Niles Hopkins, Chairman; Charles Kaiser (Postmaster), Edward J. Kanze, William Getchell, Ralph L. MacDonald (Town Engineer), Bernard H. Christenson, Mrs. Thomas Bruce, Mrs. James B. Stilson, Rudolph Wilson, and Courtney C. Brown. Later Eugene Curry and Mrs. Frank H. Shelly were added to this Executive Committee. A large Honorary Advisory Committee was also developed with C. R. Agnew Jr. as Chairman.

Sub-committees were needed and one of the first was the Hospitality and Homecoming Committee, under the chairmanship of Supervisor Limburg. The Supervisor outlined the two major roles for this committee to play as follows: "1. To arrange details of a grand home-coming party for former

residents who will be invited to return to assist their former fellow townsmen in the gala birthday party and to renew the bond of neighborly affection. 2. To be the official hosts and dispensers of welcome and good will to all visitors, whether old timers or not." Executive Committee Chairman Hopkins immediately set a standard for town participation: every man, woman and child of North Castle was to consider himself as an unofficial member of the Hospitality and Homecoming Committee!

A Dance Committee was formed, under the Chairmanship of E. Harold Lape, with Richard H. Schnoor, William F. MacDonald Jr., Carleton G. Borden, and Mrs. Aaron Goodhart as committee members. It was agreed to plan for both ballroom and street dancing.

Spencer J. Leech was to look into all the aspects of an air circus at the Armonk Airport, perhaps for Sunday afternoon. Miss Mary Elizabeth Gerhard of North White Plains, a member of The Sun staff, undertook to prepare a "History of the Town of North Castle," to be printed in weekly installments in The Sun.

One of the largest and busiest groups, the Pageant Committee, under the energetic chairmanship of Mrs. J. Hobart (Edith) Cox, was already busily at work researching material for the pageant, costumes and scenery, and requesting assistance from descendants of the settlers and town founders.

Plans develop

As committees went to work, new members joined and new thoughts were advanced. It was suggested that Supervisor Limburg extend an invitation to Governor Herbert H. Lehman, his uncle, to attend the celebration. The air circus plan was proving a problem: could the roads be closed and traffic detoured? Would such an air show be safe? (A plane had crashed at the airport only the previous week!) A decision was to be made by the Committee at its meeting on Monday, August 17.

By mid-August the Finance Committee, with C. R. Agnew Jr. as Chairman, requested the committees' plans to prepare for the necessary financing. The Historic Relics Committee requested approval to hire a carpenter to build cabinets in the exhibit room for the protective display of many priceless articles offered for loan. The Dance Committee sought suggestions as to the number and style of dances. The Homecoming Committee asked that people write their out-of-town relatives and give a list of names to Miss Waterbury for formal invitations. Publicity, with The Sun Publisher Warren Hall as Chairman, reported banners were ordered for North White Plains, Armonk and Banksville, and a sign ordered for Headquarters.

Felix Amoriello of North White Plains, Chairman of the Parade Committee (consisting of seventeen other volunteers), indicated plans were for a parade of two-three miles long that would take about three hours to stage. The Committee was considering changing the original route plan, which was to have the entire parade start at Washington's Headquarters in North White Plains and march to Armonk, to form the parade in three

separate areas, all three to merge into one simultaneously in Armonk.

Three main historic episodes for the Historic Pageant had been decided upon by this Committee. The episodes would cover North White Plains, Banksville and Middle Patent, and Armonk, and interspersed in each there would be folk dances and singing as well as pantomime. Many subcommittees were being set up and Mrs. Cox announced that it was "not unlikely that every able bodied person in North Castle not already assigned to celebration duty, would be drafted!"

By the end of August plans were really snowballing. Henry Teclaw of North White Plains announced that real Indians might come and set up an Indian Village as their ancestors may have had in North Castle. Estimated expenditures for the entire celebration would be about \$2,500, according to the Finance Committee. 300 residents would take part in the pageant, and this fine spectacle would be staged twice, on Saturday and on Monday, out of doors for authenticity. The Parade Committee announced that six to nine bands might be needed. The Dance Committee had finally decided on only one large dance, and that to be held in Armonk. The sum of \$200 -- more if necessary -- was appropriated for the Fireworks Committee, consisting of E. Harold Lape and Richard H. Schnoor.

A new committee, Sports, was formed with Mrs. Eugene Meyer as Chairman. Out of this committee grew the idea for field day events at the schools, with prizes and medal awards.

"Miss North Castle"

But the most interesting new idea to come forth was for a "Miss North Castle" contest. Voting was to be done by way of coupons given for purchases in local stores: each purchase of ten cents would ensure a coupon worth 100 votes for the buyer's favorite. Eligible candidates could be married or single, between the ages of 16 and 32. Tabulations would be made each Thursday night and published in The Sun the following day. This lucky winner would be supplied with a beautiful costume and, accompanied by maids-in-waiting, would ride in the parade's most splendid float.

The air circus was ruled out by the middle of September, for reasons of financing and highway traffic complications. Also, the Indian Village idea had to be discarded because of the difficulty in setting it up.

It was decided to invite two further dignitaries to the celebration: Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, because one-third of North Castle land was New York City watershed property; and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, because part of his Hudson estate was on land once owned by Moses Quinby, North Castle's first Town Clerk. Unfortunately, Roosevelt, LaGuardia and Lehman were unable to attend.

The Pageant was coming along well, but it was decided to offer it only once, on Saturday, with a rain date of Sunday. The Parade would take place on Monday, to be followed by athletic contests on the school playgrounds in North White Plains, Banksville, and Armonk. Twelve watches, four each at the three schools would be awarded as prizes.

Goldie Hergenhan was reported the early leader in the Miss North Castle contest, but by September 18 Beatrice See had moved to first place. The Sunday Homecoming reunion luncheon would be held on the grounds east of the Armonk Fire House. \$300.00 was voted for the purchase of costume material for the Pageant Committee, and the Grand Ball was set for Monday night in the school auditorium, with tickets at 75 cents.

In the next to last ballot count for Miss North Castle, on September 25, Marion Greene had taken a slight edge over Beatrice See. The count stood at 1,562,900 for the leader and 1,554,900 for second place, and only one week to go to make purchases and acquire voting coupons.

The Historic Relics exhibit included the Indian collection of Howard Quinby, a collection of deeds of Niles Hopkins, mail boxes and letter drops of the pre-Civil War era, and a poster of the Hiram Finch Stage Line.

It was the week before the historic weekend, and the final vote was tabulated for Miss North Castle. The popular winner was Mrs. Antoinette McGeiver of Armonk, a Clerk in the Armonk Post Office, with a total of 34,162,000 votes. The large amount of purchases made during the last week caused some surprise, but the Committee determined that some merchants may have exchanged coupons for the payment of old bills. Coupons of small denomination were weighed on the "supersensitive scale" in Dr. Benjamin Marx's Armonk Pharmacy,³ instead of being counted. Mrs. McGeiver was so much a dark horse that The Sun confessed it did not have a picture of her, but would run one the following week in her regal robes, which it did.

The celebration begins

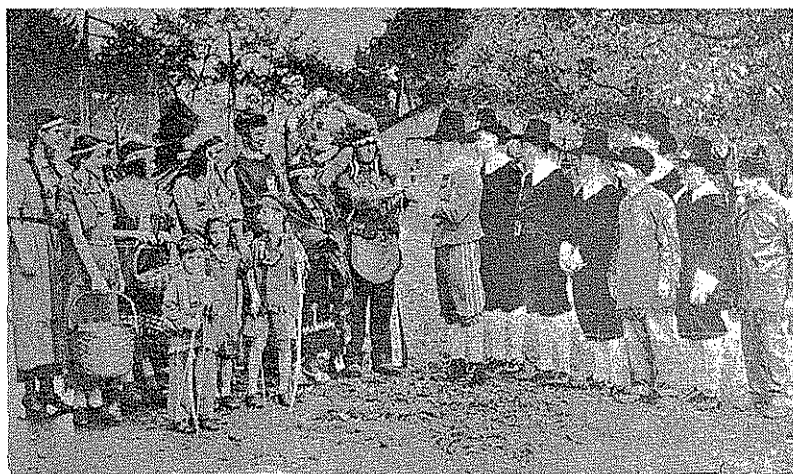
The preparations all complete, the historic three-day program was finally upon the Town, and the one factor none could control did not cooperate -- on Saturday it rained. The Historic Pageant, "North Castle from 1640 to 1936," had to be moved inside into the Armonk Public School auditorium, but the change apparently in no way diminished the quality of the production and performances. The scope of the pageant was complete. It was presented in six episodes: 1640 - Early History; 1736 - The First Town Board Meeting on Record; 1778 - Revolutionary Days; 1865 - Civil War Time; 1914 - The World War Period; 1936 - North Castle of Today. The scenes were directed by Miss Margaret Garland of W.P.A., and the Historical Research had been the responsibility of Mrs. Caroline Greenacres. The authentic costumes and extensive production were described as "spectacular." As it was later expressed in The Sun, "pictures taken of outstanding scenes looked as though they might have been lifted from the pages of history."

On Saturday evening, under the sponsorship of the Parade Committee, the community was invited to a showing of the W.P.A. play "The Unique Farce Comedy 'Help Yourself,'" at the North White Plains school auditorium. Following the play there was a display of fireworks and then dance music was provided at Oscar's Tavern⁴ in North White Plains, and Brad Lape's orchestra provided dance music at the North Castle Lodge⁵ in Banksville.



PAGEANT PERFORMERS IN PURITAN AND DUTCH COSTUMES taken in front of the Armonk (Whippoorwill) School- L-R: Maria Rodgers (holding copy of Souvenir Program), Ada See, Richard Lander, Mrs. Martha Jane Lander, Mrs. Viola Taylor, Miss Clara Taylor, Mrs. Elizabeth Brundage, Dutchman-unknown, Eldon Pietschker, Mrs. Martha Koenig, Mrs. Carl Koenig, Irma Usted, Ida See. Photo courtesy of Richard N. Lander.

PAGEANT PERFORMERS IN INDIAN, PILGRIM AND BUCKSKIN COSTUMES Esther Hall, left; Orrin Husted, 2nd Pilgrim; Eldon Pietschker, 5th Pilgrim; Fred Acker, 3rd from right; John Blank, extreme right. The 3 Hall children are standing in front. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Marguerite Lewis.



On Sunday, appropriate homecoming services were held at St. Stephen's Episcopal, St. Patrick's Catholic, and the Methodist-Episcopal Churches, all in Armonk, and Castle Heights Methodist Church in North White Plains.

The Old Timers held their reunion by the Firehouse at noon on Sunday, and at one-o'clock were served a picnic luncheon. About 100 came to witness the weekend activities and reactivate old bonds of friendship. The oldest Old Timer present was 94-year old Dr. L. V. Plageman. Mr. Isaac Tripp was recognized as having come the farthest distance, from Hartford, Connecticut. And Mr. Louis Gallade received a booby prize for having stayed away the longest, not having returned since 1906, although a-resident of Katonah.

The final day of the historic weekend, Monday, began at 9:30 a.m. with the competitive field day events at the three schools -- North White Plains, Armonk and Banksville. 24 prizes were awarded, 8 at each school, evenly divided between boys and girls, for feats of athletic skill.

Grand Parade

The long-anticipated Grand Parade started at 1:00 p.m. in Armonk, and covered the following route: the formation took place on Cox Avenue and Route 22, then proceeded West on Route 22 to Maple Avenue and through to the intersection of Maple Avenue and White Plains-Mt. Kisco Road, turning south onto that road and ending in front of Rhineland Gardens.⁶ From this point the paraders were taken by buses and cars to the Parkway Extension and Route 22 in North White Plains, where they re-formed and marched west to Rotary Circle on the Parkway, south to Lafayette Avenue, past Washington's Headquarters on Virginia Road, and on to North Broadway, where they turned north and marched as far as the Bronx Parkway Extension and Route 22, where the entire parade formation disbanded.

A judging committee awarded four silver cup prizes to the following paraders: Daughters of America, Guard Hill Council No. 55 of Mt. Kisco, for "Best Float"; "Most Historical Float" went to the North White Plains school entry, Capture of Major Andre; the Armonk Independent Fire Company's Fife and Drum Corps was recognized as the best in that category; and a reserve prize was won by the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Armonk Independent Fire Company. The North White Plains PTA float received an Honorable Mention.

The parade, led by the North Castle Police, with Town officials following behind them in open cars, was comprised of the following entries: Dobbs Ferry Fife and Drum Corps; Packard Westchester Co., Inc.; Brown Buick Co., White Plains; Armonk PTA; North White Plains PTA; Armonk school boys; Brownies of Armonk; Armonk Girls Club; Armonk Council, Junior Order of United American Mechanics; the Log Cabin Band; North Castle Chapter-American Red Cross; North Castle District Nursing Asso.; Westchester County Board of Health; Armonk Girl Scouts; Civil War Veteran, Mr. Decker; North Castle American Legion Auxiliary; New Rochelle American Legion Auxiliary; United States mail rider, Charles Remsen;⁷ Westchester Lighting Co., Mt. Vernon office; Genung's Depart-



Photos courtesy of
Mrs. Eleanor W. Husted



ment Store, White Plains; Young & Halstead, Mt. Kisco; Suburban Fuel Oil Service, Inc.; Valhalla Independent Fire Company; Mt. Kisco Fire Company; Bedford Fire Department; Amargerone Fire Company No. 1, Greenwich, Conn.; Armonk Fire Company's Fife and Drum Corps; Ladies' Auxiliary of the Armonk Fire Company; Miss North Castle and attendants, and "George Washington's Closing Campaign in North Castle."

Grand Finale

Townpeople did not have too much time to rest their tired feet from their marching before they dressed in their dancing shoes for the evening's - and weekend's grand finale, the fireworks display and Bicentennial Costume Ball.

The fireworks were shown at the Airport at 8:00 p.m. to an audience chilled by a windy and cool evening. They returned to the Armonk School auditorium for the gala Reception at 8:30 p.m. and dancing to the music of Rudy Gunther's orchestra, plus entertainment listed as "Jack Pettet, formerly with RKO's and Loew's, and Marion Spencer, formerly with Roxy's and Playland Casino." The evening's music, as well as prizes for the costume contest, were a gift of Dr. Charles V. Paterno of Windmill Manor.⁸ Costumed contestants were judged during a special waltz and Dr. Paterno awarded the prizes. Mrs. Warren Hall was recognized as wearing the most appropriate costume, that of an American Indian. Mrs. Eugene Curry, as a Colonial lady, came in 2nd place. Best male characterization went to J. Fred Acker, dressed as a Pioneer, and 2nd prize went to Tory-costumed Eugene Curry. The first prize for Best Waltzers in costume went to Beatrice See and Brad Lape, and second prize to Councilman and Mrs. Joseph T. Miller.



Joe and Dorothy Miller, Beatrice See and Brad Lape. Photo courtesy of Beatrice See Lape.

The last dance signaled the finale of this outstanding three-day Town celebration, but 40 years later much of the excitement and splendor of the event remains vivid in the memories of many who still make their homes here. Town Historian Dick Lander, then only eight years old, remembers "Nothing quite like it had happened in Armonk in my very early years; it was certainly the biggest event I had ever seen!" Mrs. Eleanor Waterbury Husted, Mrs. Goldie Wago Hergenhan, and Mrs. Marguerite Hopkins Lewis (daughter of Niles Hopkins and sister of James Hopkins) carry in their memories the splendor and size of the parade. Mrs. Husted especially recalls that colorful wagons owned by the Agnew farm were used in the parade, and Mrs. Hergenhan remembers the fine efforts of the local police in closing streets and rerouting traffic. Judge James Hopkins looks back with pride on the fine display of Indian artifacts, all of which had been found and collected in North Castle by Howard Quinby. In Eugene Curry's memory is "The women, God bless them!, they did all the work! As they always do! The pageant was a spectacular undertaking and success!" Mrs. Beatrice See Lape and Mrs. Dorothy Miller both have fond recollections of receiving their prizes from Dr. Paterno at the beautiful Costume Ball. Mrs. Lape still remembers the beautiful costumes they wore, which were rented from a costumer in White Plains, and which were actually original clothing of the revolutionary period, including the capes, wigs, and silk stockings! But perhaps former Supervisor Richard Limburg leaves us with the most all-encompassing recollection: "There were elaborate fireworks and a very fancy costumed parade, but the best part of it all was that everybody turned out!"

FOOTNOTES

1. The Armonk Airport property was divided by the new Route 22, but included land on the south side of the highway now called the Westchester Business Park, and on the North side extended to old Bedford Road and MacDonald Avenue. The airport terminated its operations in the 1960's with the construction of new Route 22.
2. The Armonk Public School, now known as the Whippoorwill School, which is closed.
3. Dr. Marx's pharmacy was then located on the northwest corner of Main Street.
4. Oscar's Tavern was located on the site of the present Pastore's Rest. in N.W.P.
5. North Castle Lodge was located approximately where the Bum Steer Restaurant is now, on Banksville Road in Banksville.
6. The Rhineland Gardens was a large, popular restaurant, owned by Bill Reibers, and located at the present site of the Armonk Bowl.

The author wishes to thank the many people who helped supply information for "North Castle's 200th Birthday."



We apologize for not identifying everyone in the photos of North Castle's Bicentennial celebration of 1936, and appeal to readers to help us fill in the names so that they will be part of the permanent record in the picture collection being compiled by Lindsay "Pete" Welling.

The Society is interested in obtaining more pictures of North Castle's Bicentennial celebration of 1936. If anyone has any pictures of this event that we may copy, please call Lindsay "Pete" Welling at 273-3226.

THREE MEN AND A FIRE

The Beginning of the Armonk Fire Department

by Erling J. Taylor

One day in the spring of 1930, three men -- William J. Taylor, Harry R. Williams and Harry Jackson -- decided to take a day off and go digging for clams. Getting all the necessary gear together, they headed for Cos Cob, Connecticut. Arriving there in the forenoon, they dug clams until they had their fair share.

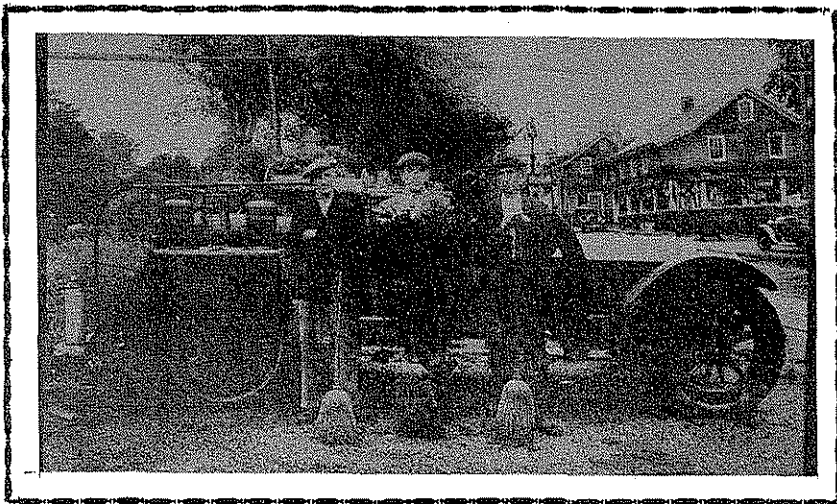
Leaving the beach, tired but happy with their success, they began their return trip to Armonk. Along the way they encountered the Greenwich (Connecticut) Fire Department fighting a very large grass fire. The three tired and weary men decided to stop and help. Each man took a broom from the fire truck and began to fight the fire by beating out the flames. After the blaze was under control, they continued on their way and began discussing the need for and possibility of starting a fire department in Armonk. Upon arriving home, they realized they had brought the fire-fighting brooms with them.

The three men had several meetings before making a final decision to go ahead with their idea. After enlisting the aid and support of several men of the town who they thought might be interested, they decided there was enough enthusiasm, support and need for an Armonk Fire Department. (Prior to this time the only fire protection for the Armonk area had to be summoned from Mt. Kisco; this took valuable time which in many cases could not be afforded.) Meetings for the purpose of obtaining a charter from the State of New York were held in the rear of Harry Williams' garage on Main Street on the site now occupied by the Cheese Box, Flower Basket and Village Coffee Shop. After obtaining counsel and the legally required number of signatures, the petition was forwarded to the State of New York and a charter was granted in 1931.

First Fire Truck

The three men purchased a Locomobile Chemical Fire Truck from the Bedford Hills Fire Department for \$200. Having no funds as yet in their treasury, the truck was paid for by a personal check from Harry Williams and housed in his automobile repair shop. For a fire alarm they retrieved a railroad locomotive iron tire from the Bronx River. This was suspended from a wooden structure and struck with a sledge hammer to alert the members of the Department of any emergencies.¹ By this time the membership had outgrown their meeting place in the Williams Garage and larger quarters were obtained at the Mechanics Hall on Maple Avenue, which now houses Stromak's Gallery.

As a result of community participation and special fund-raising events, the Department was now in a position to purchase a new 1932 Mack 1000-gallon Pumper and to replace the original fire alarm with a large siren mounted



William J. Taylor, Harry R. Williams and Harry Jackson with the Locomobile Chemical Fire Truck, June 7, 1931. The brooms hung in the Armonk Firehouse for several years after it was built.

atop a high steel structure alongside the Williams Garage. During that same year a 99-year lease of watershed property along Maple Avenue was obtained from New York City for \$1.00 for the purpose of erecting the existing firehouse. This building was completed in 1932, at which time a new Chevrolet Fire Truck (still part of the existing equipment -- used for parades) was added. In the same year the Department was assigned to the Town of North Castle, becoming Fire District No. 2 and supported by tax monies, and the following were the first officers of the Department:

Chief	Harry R. Williams
Assistant Chief	Samuel J. Lewis
Captain	Harry H. Schnoor
1st Lieutenant	Harry Jackson
2nd Lieutenant	Fred Calabrese
President	William F. MacDonald, Jr.
Recording Secretary	William J. Taylor
Treasurer	George G. Holmes

The first Fire Commissioners of Fire District No. 2 were: James R. Young, Walter R. Wohlfeil and William P. Grover.

FOOTNOTE

1. The railroad locomotive iron tire stands today by the Armonk Firehouse -- a permanent reminder of the beginning of the Fire Co.

Editors' Note: Mr. Erling J. Taylor is the son of William J. Taylor and a lifelong resident of Armonk. Following in his father's footsteps, the author has been a member of the Armonk Independent Fire Company for twenty-eight years and has served as Chief.

THE NEW YORK, HOUSATONIC & NORTHERN RAILROAD

by Helen Manner

A railroad through the Town of North Castle? This almost became a reality back in 1863 when the New York, Housatonic & Northern Railroad was granted a franchise to lay 38 miles of track from White Plains, New York to Brookfield, Connecticut.

The middle of the nineteenth century saw railroad development progressing rapidly throughout the United States and Westchester County was not immune to this railroad fever. The New Haven had not yet been built in 1844 and the Harlem was the only line out of New York, so a railroad connecting inland Connecticut with New York seemed an idea worth pursuing. Thus, a road called the New York and Hartford was projected, to be built from Hartford to Danbury to New York with much interconnecting with other lines. One upper section of the line was completed before the project was abandoned.

Plans revived in 1863

The idea was put aside until almost the close of the Civil War, when the old plans were revived and modified by a group of men, including Benjamin A. Birdsall, local resident and one of the directors of the Incorporated New York, Housatonic & Northern Railroad Company. The projected line would follow the path of the old stagecoach route beginning about 500 feet south of the Depot of the New York and Harlem Railroad Company in White Plains and ending in Brookfield, Connecticut about a quarter of a mile north of the schoolhouse.

A "First Class" road

According to plan, the railroad would pass through or near every post village on the former route up to Cross River. At this point the road was to pass west of Lake Waccabuc, across the former Peekskill-Danbury post route near Salem Center, then to North Salem and on to Connecticut with stops at Ridgebury Village, Danbury and Brookfield. Wooden passenger stations were to be built at White Plains, Rye Lake, North Castle, Banksville, Bedford, Palmers, Cross River, Waccabuc, North Salem, Ridgebury, Kanosea, Danbury and Brookfield, at a cost of \$1,000 each with the exception of those at White Plains and Danbury which would cost \$2,000. A passenger station in New York City was also in the plans.

There were to be two brick engine houses, one in White Plains and one in Brookfield, each costing \$7,500. The train itself would consist of 8 "first-class" locomotives at \$15,000 each; 15 "commodious and comfortable" passenger cars, constructed upon the latest and most improved plan, at \$3,000 each; 60 freight cars, adapted to the business to be done, at \$1,000 each; 4 baggage cars at \$2,000 each and 4 hand cars at \$250 each. The estimated cost of the completed project was \$1,520,000 or \$40,000 per mile, all funds to be raised by capital stock subscriptions if possible, instead of

bond issues.

Prosperity forecast for all

The prospectus painted glowing pictures of the effect of the railroad on Westchester and Fairfield Counties, indicating that thousands of wealthy New York City businessmen traveling on the train would see vistas of hills, lakes, streams and pastoral beauty and buy land to build summer homes. The surrounding scenery was favorable compared to the barren sand plains of Long Island and the red clay tracts of New Jersey. The prospectus hinted that the "pure moral atmosphere, thrift and sturdy intelligence of the suburban farmers and rural beauty and elegant refinement of the homes" would surely bring the city dwellers flocking to the country.

Villages along the line would flourish and new ones would spring up, complete with shops, hotels and boardinghouses. Land values would increase by \$1,605,120 for the five mile stretch on either side of the line, according to elaborate tables calculated in the prospectus. Eager farmers rushed forward to offer land, either as an outright donation or in exchange for sub-



Photo taken from the Greenwich Mail, 1968, shows roadbed that was cut through ledge in the vicinity of Sterling Road, on the Connecticut side.

scriptions of stock in the railroad.

The major money maker for the line, however, was not to be passengers but freight: hats, shoes, paper, flour, carriages and, most importantly, milk for New York City. Milk was one of the best paying commodities of freight at that time and the railroad plans allowed for milk to be picked up at several points for delivery to the city. Milk revenues alone were expected to

account for \$109,500 annually.

Plans approved — work begins

The Articles of Association were duly filed in the office of the Secretary of the State of New York on October 6, 1863, capital stock subscriptions in the amount of \$1,000,000 were issued, men were hired and, by the late 1860's, construction was underway. Most of the workmen were Irish laborers since Italian laborers did not arrive in any number until the early part of this century. The men were quartered either at farmhouses along the road or in barracks type encampments on the farmland.

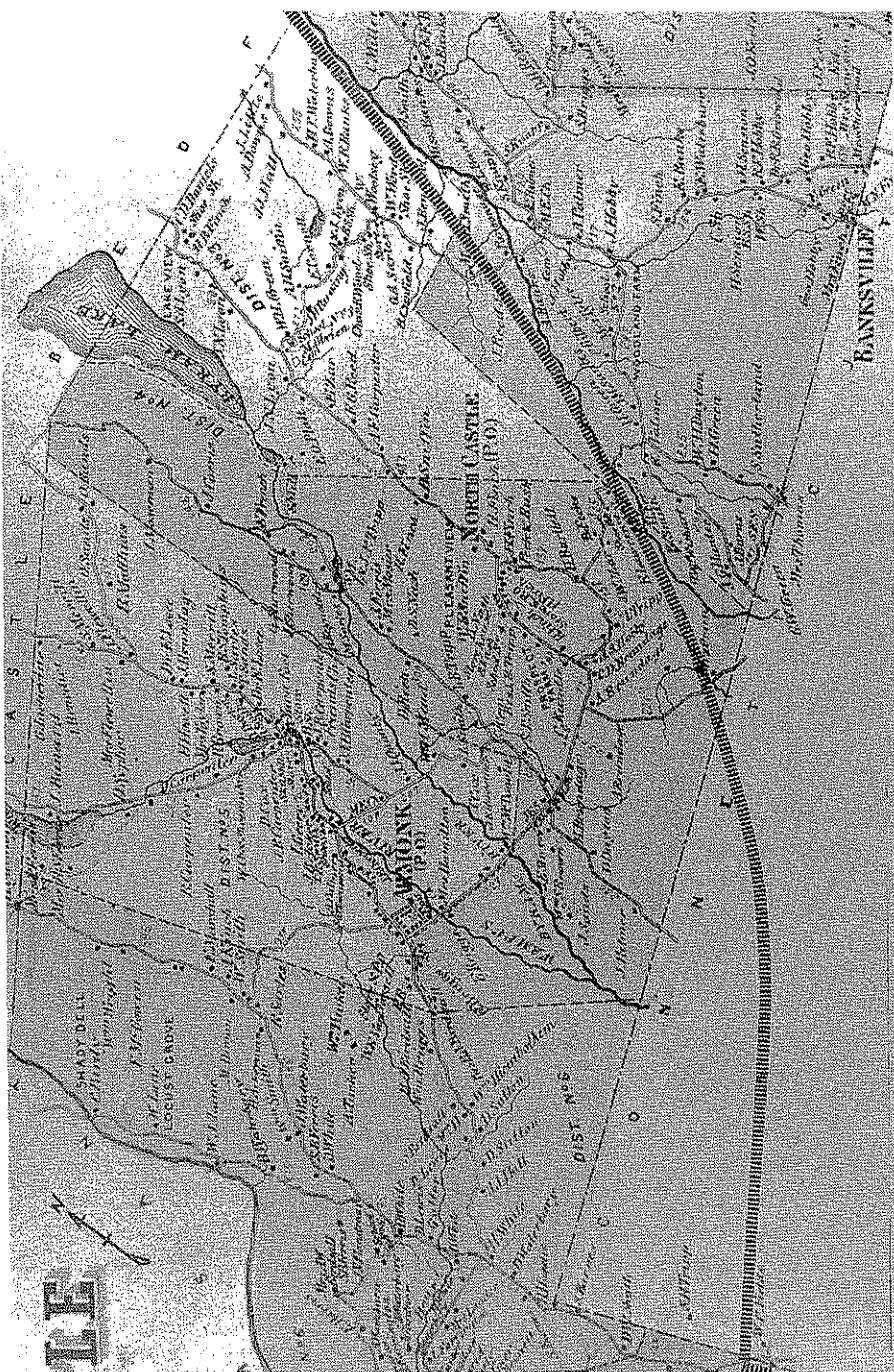
The route through North Castle

The proposed single-track road would enter the Town of North Castle near Rye Lake (Pond), cross into Connecticut and pass through the northwest corner of Greenwich, re-entering North Castle along Brundage's Ridge (now Yale Farms). The projected course would continue north across the widow Reuben Green's land (Green Valley Farm) at the Quaker Ridge road (now Creemer Road), and cross the Banksville road not far from the hamlet of North Castle.¹ The route was to proceed on this northerly course (close to the area of the present Windmill Farms), passing west of the Middle Patent Rural Cemetery, and cross the Middle Patent road at the sand and gravel pit (now owned by the Daniel Gray Fishing Club). The route would continue in a relatively straight line passing through several farms, including the Worden and Woolsey properties, on the way to Bedford Village where there was to be a station house on the village green.



Photo taken from the Greenwich Mail, 1968, shows roadbed in the vicinity of Sterling Road, on the Connecticut side.

1867 Beers Map showing most of North Castle and the route of the N.Y., Housatonic & Northern Railroad. Photo courtesy of Lindsay Welling.



Funds run out — work stops

Apparently work was started at each end of the line simultaneously. Most of the work was done by hand with picks and shovels except for some rock blasting done by placing explosive powder in holes drilled by two hammer hand drill teams. Either horse drawn dump carts or dirt cars pulled by hand or horses along temporary tracks removed the rubble from work sites. When crews were working in North Castle they took their rock drills which needed sharpening to the Brundage blacksmith shop at the junction of Route 22 and the North Greenwich road.

Work seems to have stopped somewhere short of Bedford as there was no indication of any excavation beyond the North Castle area. Evidently the only work done on the line was the preparation of the roadbed by excavation and grading and the only track laid was temporary with the exception of a five mile stretch between Brookfield and Danbury. This section, in operation in 1868, was known in that area as "the dummy" because a dummy engine was used to pull the car. It eventually became a part of the New Haven system.

All work came to an abrupt halt when funds ran out and laborers refused to continue working unless paid. Thus, the New York, Housatonic & Northern Railroad, with such a rosy future on paper, folded in panic in 1873.

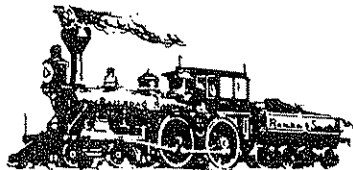
According to information supplied by the New Haven Railroad, which displayed interest in the Danbury route early in this century, a line which proved to be the old New York, Housatonic & Northern was offered to them by a Mr. C. E. Arnold, then vice-president of the New York, Boston, Albany & Schenectady Railroad. Even though Mr. Arnold stated that \$750,000 had been spent on grading the roadbed and getting it ready for rails, the New Haven decided the primitive workmanship plus the necessity of repurchasing most of the property, which had reverted or been sold for taxes, would make the deal unprofitable.

Unquestionably a railroad would have changed the character of the Town of North Castle, and one can only speculate on what affect it might have had on the quiet country villages of Armonk and Banksville.

FOOTNOTE

1. The hamlet of North Castle referred to in this context consisted of a post office and store located approximately 2 miles from Armonk in the area of the present Sniffen Road.

The author wishes to thank Mr. Ken Mains of Armonk for the research material he contributed.



REFERENCES

Prospectus of the New York, Housatonic & Northern Railroad, 1864; Westchester Historian, Vol. 22 No. 2 & 3, April-July, 1946, N.Y., Housatonic & Northern Railroad and N.Y. Westchester & Boston Railway, by Allison Albee, a publication of The Westchester County Historical Soc.; 1866 route map of N.Y., Housatonic & Northern Railroad, Land Records Office, County Clerk, White Plains, N.Y., drawn by Geo.S. Avery.



by Richard N. Lander

Dr. Hugh MacKay was the third generation of his family to reside in America, his grandfather, John MacKay, having come to these shores in 1760 from Inverness in Scotland. The reasons for his removal from the beautiful lake country of his native land are not known. He settled at Stanwich in the Town of Greenwich, Connecticut. John MacKay became a prominent citizen in the Town, serving as Town Selectman prior to and during the Revolutionary War, and was a member of the Committee of Safety and Inspection. His life of eighty-one years came to an end in 1813.

His eldest son, John MacKay Jr., was born at Stanwich, Connecticut, in 1772. He married Elizabeth Hungerford Knapp, the daughter of Israel and Margaret (Hungerford) Knapp of Putnam Hill, Greenwich, in 1795, her family being descendants of the earliest settlers of Greenwich. They lived at Stanwich where he died in 1832. Hugh, the subject of this sketch, was the first-born of their twelve children, the event occurring on June 12, 1797.

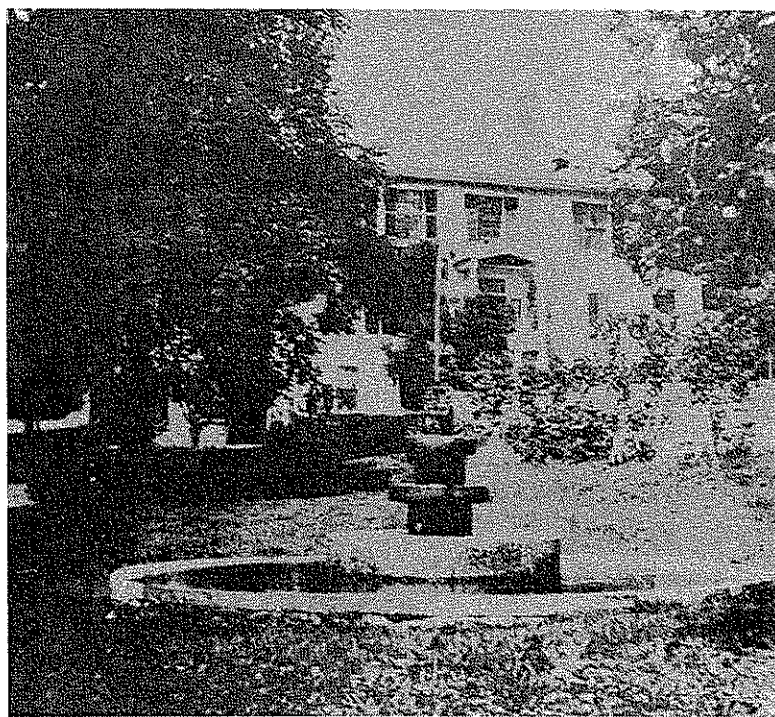
Of his boyhood we have no record. He no doubt performed the numerous farm chores of boys of this period, and attended the district school. His earliest ambition was to be a lawyer and he embarked upon that study, but soon determined it was not for him. He then began supporting himself by teaching school and he decided to be a physician. Continuing his teaching duties, he went to work as an apprentice-student with Dr. David Palmer, only 6 years his senior, who was then in the practice of medicine at White Plains. Dr. Palmer was known to young MacKay because he, too, was a native of Greenwich. Dr. Palmer had studied under the well-known Dr. Elisha Belcher of Round Hill, Connecticut, the dean of the doctors of the countryside, and had numerous connections back in Greenwich. After serving his apprenticeship he enrolled in the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, from which he graduated in 1824.

After graduation he returned to the scene of his youth. One of his descendants, Miss Ethel G. Dawbarn of New York City related to the author that according to family tradition, when he returned to practice "he was exceedingly tall and very handsome" and this was said to have caused "a great flutter among the local young ladies." We are told that he was said to have lined his high hat with notes received from the belles of the neighborhood. However, he favored Miss Susan Smith Lounsbury, daughter of Silas and Mary Feks Lounsbury of East Middle Patent. She was born April 29, 1801, and from all accounts was an exceedingly beautiful, accomplished and sweet-spirited young lady. The young doctor addressed a goodly number of stanzas to record his opinions as to her virtues and finally wrote a formal letter to Mr. Lounsbury asking for his daughter's hand, which was granted. They were married and he then went to live on her ancestral acres in North

Castle.

The Lounsburies were pioneer settlers in the Middle Patent and acquired their lands in 1757 when Joshua Lounsbury first settled there. His son, Joshua, remained on the farm his entire lifetime. His son, Joshua Lounsbury Third, married Susannah Smith, served in the Westchester County Militia during the War for Independence. When Joshua Second died he willed his extensive holdings not to his son Joshua Third, who received money, but to his grandson Silas, the father of Susan Smith Lounsbury (named for her grandmother), who became Mrs. Dr. MacKay. Thus Mrs. MacKay was the fifth generation to reside at the Lounsbury homestead.

The Lounsburies were sturdy yeoman farmers, well respected by their neighbors. They evidently shunned politics except for the repeated elections of Joshua Third and Silas as Overseer of the Roads. The Lounsbury-MacKay farm was, at its greatest extent, over 300 acres.



The Lounsbury farm is now a portion of the G. Sterling Rockefeller Estate. Located on East Middle Patent Road, near Banksville and close to the Connecticut border, the house known as "Bella Vista" was taken down some 50 years ago.

The ancient Lounsbury house was built originally in 1757 and was rebuilt on the old foundations in 1818, using the Georgian windows and the large square rooms of that period. It was a 3-story hillside house. Apparently

in the early days of the Lounsbury-MacKay occupancy, the lower story was occupied by the oldest couple, Mr. and Mrs. Silas Lounsbury. The other two stories of five rooms each were equipped with housekeeping fireplaces and descendants presume that young Dr. and Mrs. MacKay occupied these quarters. Some years after the Doctor joined the family household, he installed the then very modern innovation, a furnace, and a kitchen was added on the first floor. Their descendant, Miss Dawbarn, relates the entire family then lived together as one family unit. Evidently this was a very happy relationship with their daughters, their husbands, and offspring all spending some time at the family homestead, which in later years was called "Bella Vista."

Part of the reason for the happy house is, no doubt, the personality of Susan Lounsbury MacKay, who was described as an "adorable person." Her great granddaughters could recount old persons in the neighborhood who spoke of her remarkable good looks and sweet disposition long after she was gone. She assisted her husband as a nurse and it was said she devotedly nursed back to health many of his difficult or seriously ill patients. Her repayment was the love of the entire Middle Patent-North Greenwich countryside. When she died on June 20, 1868, it was said that her funeral was the biggest and most largely attended ever in the area, persons coming from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Several old timers reported the line of carriages from Stanwich to Middle Patent Cemetery "was three miles long!"



Dr. Hugh MacKay

Dr. MacKay's practice was evidently large and flourishing. As he was the only physician in the back country around Middle Patent and Stanwich -- with the two exceptions of Dr. Bartow White who came to Round Hill in 1821 and replaced Dr. Elisha Belcher when he died in 1825, and later Dr. Ralph B. Griswold who began his practice in Banksville in 1858 -- he must have been in great demand. He was a member of the Westchester County Medical Society, though not active in its affairs. He died on June 7, 1876, one hundred years ago this summer. His remains, together with those of his wife and children (two daughters: Mary Elizabeth, first the wife of Stephen Mead, second the wife of Charles Dawbarn, and Cornelia the wife of George Metcalfe), and numerous descendants, lie by an imposing monument in the cemetery at Middle Patent.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to Miss Ethel G. Dawbarn of 80 LaSalle St., N.Y.C., a descendant of Dr. MacKay, who supplied much of the information, as well as the photos for this article.

(First of a series on doctors of North Castle)



WE'RE FLATTERED

The following letter was received from the Westchester County Historical Soc.

May 1st, 1975

The North Castle Historical Society

15 Bedford Road

Armonk, N.Y.

Attention: Mr. Lindsay H. Welling, President

Gentlemen:

We acknowledge with warm thanks receipt of Volumes 1 and 2 of NORTH CASTLE HISTORY, the official Bulletin of the North Castle Historical Society.

In format, style and content both issues are impressive and the North Castle Historical Society has good reason to be proud of them. They constitute an important addition to the local history section of our library.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. F. Dornbusch
Secretary



The Bicentennial

IN PERSPECTIVE

As the nation joins in celebrating its Bicentennial, we in North Castle are especially fortunate to live in a town with such a colorful and exciting history.

In this year of historic awareness let us particularly remember the significant role that North Castle played during the Revolutionary War. The course of the War and the destiny of the nation were partially determined right here: at Sands' (Thomas Wright's) Mills where Major Andre was held as a suspected spy; at Reuben Wright's Mills (now under Kensico Reservoir) where Washington and his generals met for councils of war; at the Miller house (in North White Plains) where Washington stayed several times during the Revolution and around which much of the battle of White Plains took place. Because of its geographic location, North Castle was a crossroads for the British, French and American armies, as well as for raiding and foraging parties from both sides. Its residents suffered much harassment and deprivation during all of this activity, but managed to survive it all and leave us with a priceless heritage.

Let us also remember that North Castle is celebrating the 240th anniversary of its first known recorded Town Board Meeting, held April 6, 1736.

The Town's extensive Bicentennial activities and celebration commemorate the significance of those times and bring to light the strength and determination of our forefathers.

If the legacy we leave to our children is as meaningful as that which was left to us, they will be able to look back upon these years with pride.

Hopefully, this focus on our nation's early years will not end with the Bicentennial celebration but will be the beginning of a deeper understanding of how the past has influenced the present, so that we may determine the importance of our role as the forefathers of our nation's future.



CONGRATULATIONS, DICK!

1976 commemorates Richard N. Lander's 30th year as North Castle's Town Historian, an unpaid post to which Dick was appointed in September, 1946, when he was only 18 years old. It proved to be a most worthy appointment for he has contributed greatly to the knowledge and preservation of the history of North Castle.

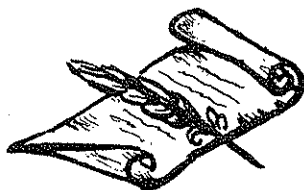
Dick became a member of the Westchester County Historical Society at age 13, and was later a Trustee and a Vice President of that organization. At age 15 he submitted a series of articles which appeared in the local newspaper, The North Castle Sun. The newspaper entered these in a contest on local history, sponsored by the New York State Historical Association. Dick's series took 2nd place in this statewide contest. Since then, Dick has written numerous articles and publications on local history.

As a charter member of The North Castle Historical Society, Dick is presently a Trustee and one of its Vice Presidents. He is also a member of the Bedford Historical Society, as well as a charter member of the N.Y. Annual Conference of the Methodist Church Historical Society. He has been a Director of the Middle Patent Rural Cemetery Association since 1949 and served as Secretary-Treasurer for 17 years and Vice President for 5 years.

Dick is Commissioner of Jurors for Westchester County and Secretary of the New York Juror's Association. For 12 years, 1962-1973, he was a Councilman for the Town of North Castle. He is a former member and president of the North Castle (now Armonk) Lion's Club.

Activities in the Armonk United Methodist Church have occupied a large part of Dick's time: as a parishioner since 1942, Trustee since 1952, presently President of the Board of Trustees, and since 1948 a lay delegate to the N.Y. Annual Conference. He has served as a Trustee of the Middle Patent Methodist Church since 1960.

Since his contributions have meant so much to the Town of North Castle, and his help, guidance and encouragement have perpetuated the study of its history, all of us in The North Castle Historical Society, having benefited from his patience and insights, are especially pleased to say, "Congratulations, Dick!", and we might add, "For gosh sakes -- write it all down!"



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There is to be no reprint of material appearing in "North Castle History" without specific credit given to the Society and the author.

COVER PICTURE

The front cover picture shows the main street of Banksville in 1898 looking south toward the Connecticut half of the community. Note the wagon wheel tracks in the dirt road during spring thaw.

The house on the extreme right, with only the front portion visible, was the Victorian home and office of Dr. Ralph B. Griswold, local physician. The house was torn down in 1969 and the Banksville Racquet Club is now located on the property.

In the distance to the right (in Connecticut) is the Banksville Baptist Church, built in 1853 and converted into a residence last year. The Parsonage (also a private residence) is just before the church. The property between Dr. Griswold's and the Parsonage is presently occupied by the Putnam Trust Company and the North Street Shopping Center.

To the extreme left, not visible, is Finch's Store, still in business since 1860. Mr. Finch was also the postmaster. Next to Finch's Store (also out of the picture) was Miss Purdy's Seminary for Young Ladies (presently the Banksville Liquor Store). The first house that can be seen on the left was the Mills-Osterbanks home, which is still standing. Then the Banks-Close home, also still standing. The last house on that side was moved from the location many years ago. Behind it (not seen) was the Creamery where farmers took their milk. The Creamery building is now St. Timothy's (Catholic) Chapel. Photo loaned by Doris Finch Watson.