

North

Castle

History

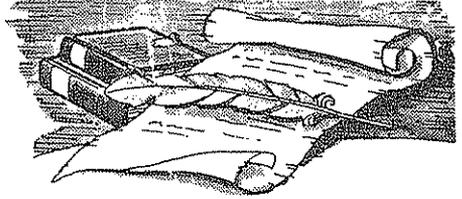


Corner of North Broadway and Virginia Road, North White Plains,  
around 1890.

# *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 number two of "North Castle History," the bulletin publication of The North Castle Historical Society. These publications are designed to provide a collected source of material pertaining to North Castle. The aim of the authors is to be entertaining, but each article is carefully researched and can be used for reference. Each issue represents long hours of work collecting and checking the facts and many additional hours preparing it all for publication. Many thanks to all involved in this vital and worthwhile project.

During 1974 the Society was most fortunate in receiving many fine gifts and I would be pleased to see this trend continue. When you are housecleaning please remember that old letters, diaries, pictures, photographs, books and many other items that may appear useless to you could be desirable items to the Society. All gifts and donations, including dues, are tax deductible. The Society does not make appraisals nor does it have any information about those who do. What may appear worthless to you could have value on your tax return.

As the Bicentennial and the 240th anniversary of the founding of North Castle approaches we here in North Castle are planning a fitting celebration. The planning committee has formulated some very exciting ideas that I'm sure will fascinate everyone, particularly the children. In fact, July 4, 1976 will be their day. Help is urgently needed on many committees to get the job done. Won't you be a volunteer? Call 273-3004 or see Mrs. Devers at the North Castle Library.

My best wishes to all of you,

Sincerely,

Lindsay H. Welling, Jr.

Hannah G. Knapp  
North Castle  
Westchester Co  
N. Y.

A Present from my Uncle A. F. D.

By the advice of friends, and also believing the keeping of a journal to be both useful and interesting, I resolved to commence one and in accordance therewith I now begin it. — — — — —

## HANNAH KNAPP'S DIARY

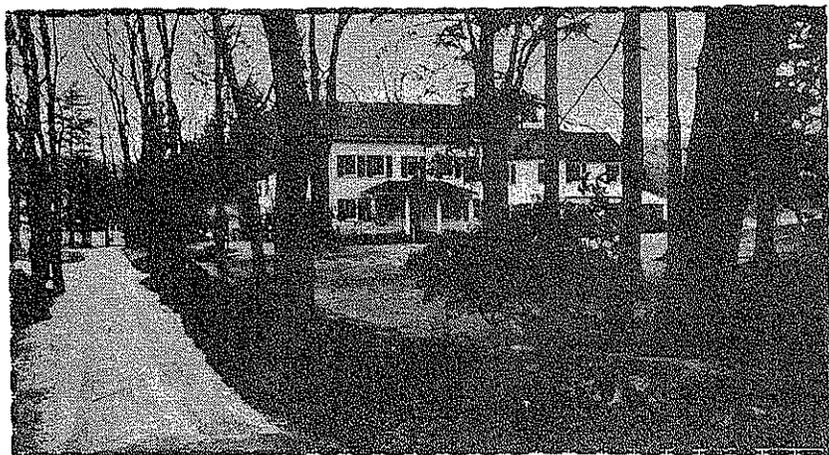
by Barbara Massi

On June 1, 1848, 15 year old Hannah Frost Knapp of North Castle, having received a diary from her Uncle Arnell F. Dickinson, proceeded to enter a daily record covering a period of approximately a year and a half of her life. Although it is neatly written and shows an amazing command of the English language the journal is difficult to read, partly because it is somewhat faded, and partly because of Hannah's delicate script. Nonetheless, it can all be deciphered and it reveals Hannah as a warm, emotionally mature, well educated and respectful teenager whose sensitivity for others is at times very touching.

At the time, Hannah's journal was probably quite insignificant to anyone but herself, but in comparing it to today's intensified life style it tells an invaluable story of the North Castle scene of the mid-1800's, the most obvious difference being the slower pace and simple pleasures that were indicative of the times. Occasionally the serenity was interrupted by a disturbing event e.g. illness, accidents or quite often a death, all of which were sorrowed but accepted as God's will and life went on.

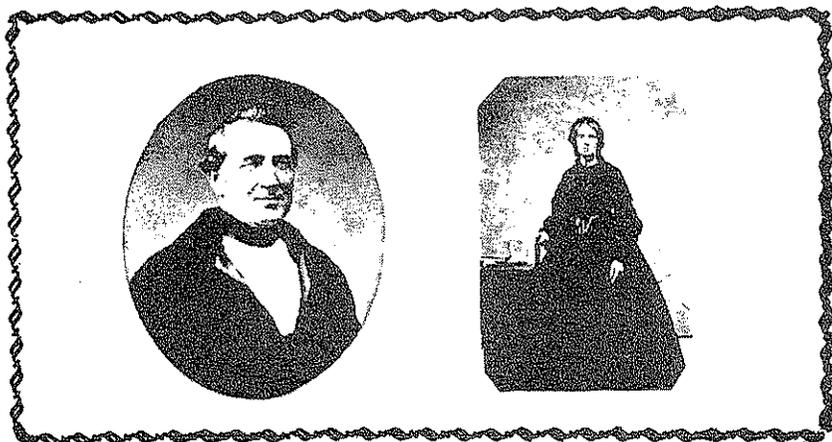
### Hannah's home and family

Hannah lived in Middle Patent along the Bedford-Banksville Road, approximately ¼ mile north of the old Middle Patent Methodist Church, in what is now the home of former supervisor Richard P. Limburg. She refers to her home as "Rocklawn" for part of the front lawn is dominated by a huge boulder which she often climbed to observe with appreciation the beauty around her.



The Knapp Farm, now owned by the Hon. Richard P. Limburg. The wings on the right have been added onto the house since the Knapps lived there.

Hannah's father, Samuel, was a farmer and from all indications, fairly well to do. The family had farm help as well as a girl who helped with the household chores. For the first weeks of the diary her mother, Patience, had a continual struggle with some ailment -- possibly bronchitis or pneumonia -- that caused her considerable discomfort and kept her in and out of a sickbed with a cold, pains and coughing seizures.

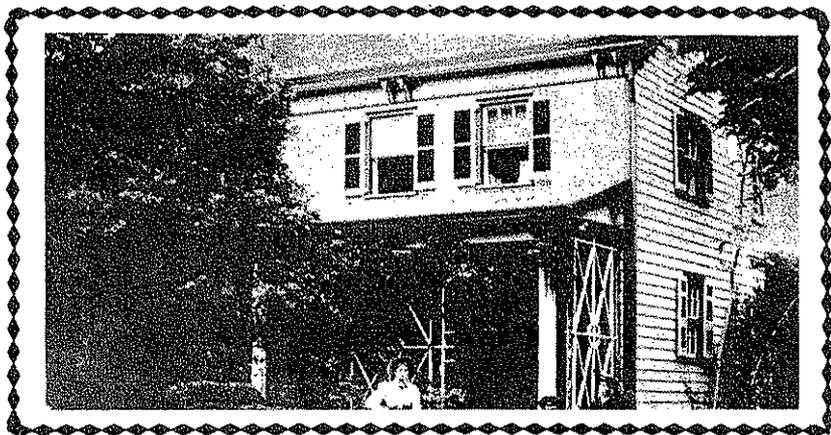


Samuel Knapp

Patience Maria Knapp

There was only one other living offspring in the Samuel Knapp family, Hannah's 7 year old brother, Samuel Eldon Knapp, of whom she speaks quite frequently and fondly.

Uncle Dickinson,<sup>1</sup> to whom she was very close, was her mother's brother. He lived with his mother, Hannah Frost Dickinson, across from the John Jay homestead at Cantitoe Corners in Bedford. The Knapps and the Dickinsons were a very closely knit family and Hannah describes many visits to and from her Grandmother and Uncle Dickinson:



Dickinson home, about 1900, showing some Dickinson decedents. The house was actually much larger than it appears to be in this picture.

*".....About eleven o'clock Uncle Dickinson and Grandma came here, took dinner, and spent the afternoon with us..."*

The Knapp family usually attended the Bedford Presbyterian Church to hear the Rev. Mr. Inglis, but other churches and meetings were also visited on Sundays. Hannah mentions attending an Episcopal service down at the "little schoolhouse" -- apparently the old Middle Patent School -- and occasionally she accompanied Grandmother and Uncle Dickinson to various Friends meeting houses in Westchester where she met many people of the Quaker faith. Visits to friends or relatives in the vicinity were always made on these occasions. Indeed, to go "calling" or to have "callers" on any day of the week seemed to be the social trend of the times for people were continually visiting one another. Dropping by to "take tea" sometimes ran into dinner or supper and, depending on the weather, the distance to be travelled or the lateness of the hour, frequently meant an overnight stay. Hannah speaks of visits to many people and places in the area including Byram Pond, Cross River, Pound Ridge, North and South Salem, Danbury, Purchase, Rye Flats, and the beach at Mead's Point in Greenwich:

*"George Banks and wife, their two children, Abigail Smith (sister of Mrs. Banks) pa, ma, brother and myself went down to Greenwich on a point of land by Mr. Noah Mead's. We spent the day there very pleasantly as we would be*

1. Arnell F. Dickinson was a well-known, prominent citizen of Bedford and Westchester County and served in many important posts, including Bedford supervisor and a term in the New York State Assembly. He had inherited his farm from his father, Arnell, and was a prosperous farmer who invested his money well and became quite wealthy.

*likely to in a pleasant place with agreeable company. We took dinner and tea under the shade of two venerable trees. Went in the water bathing which I enjoyed very much but not as much as did my brother Samuel Eldon who seemed in perfect ecstacy of delight frolicking all the while. Miss Abigail Smith and I walked around upon the shore picking up all the curious stones we could find, gazed upon the meadows of dark rich green and upon the sparkling waves as they washed upon the beach dashing against rocks that were evidently much worn by the waters. Sometimes we would see a steamboat gliding majestically by us. They passed quite close to the shore. We did not take our departure until the sun was casting his last receding rays upon the place. Reached home about eleven o'clock. The day was a lovely one and all nature seemed joyous."*

### Hannah leaves North Castle

Part of Hannah's diary was written in Brooklyn where she attended the Brooklyn Female Academy for about eight months. Her early education, which appears to be exceptional, was acquired in a school in Bedford. While in Brooklyn she boarded first with a family named Mead, then with the Holmes family after they moved to Brooklyn from Bedford.

To reach Brooklyn in those days was quite an accomplishment by today's standards:

*"Pa carried Uncle Dickinson and myself down to the steamboat. Uncle went for the purpose of taking care of me. Started from home about 5 in the morning. We parted from Pa about 8 o'clock at the steamboat landing [Port Chester] and got in New York about 11 o'clock. Then took the ferryboat directly over to Brooklyn."*

An alternate route also used was: horse and buggy to White Plains, the "Harlem Railway Cars" to New York and then the trip to Brooklyn.

While at the Academy Hannah took the Collegiate course in Latin, French, Algebra and Chemistry. She studied art and continued her piano lessons always practicing about two hours a day. She liked all of her teachers:

*"... Uncle thinks that school teaching is an honorable employment and that it should be so considered. He thinks also that persons who teach the youth of our country should be possessed of a good education and good manners..."*

Hannah talks about visiting Prospect Park, Fulton St., Mott St., Chambers St., Canal St., and Broadway, etc.:

*"...Went down to Fulton St. and had my daguerreotype taken by Mr. Atkins. Paid two dollars. Seems to be a very exact one..."*

On October 20, 1848 she attended a fair at Castle Gardens<sup>2</sup> and on November 7th she remembered her mother's birthday :

*"...Clear and cold. Ma's birthday. She is now forty two years old. Today is election day when our president is to be elected and I suppose it will be General Taylor..."*

On December 9th she refers to the cholera epidemic in New York City and hopes that it will not reach Brooklyn. Her 16th birthday, Friday, December 22, 1848 was spent quite uneventfully. Her entry for that day was :

*"Snowing and hailing alternately. Took a music lesson. It was my birthday. I am now 16 years old. Hope that I may improve my time more this year of my life."*

### Hannah's schooling ends abruptly

Twinges of homesickness are revealed at times, although they are bravely camouflaged with tender words of appreciation for what her parents were doing for her :

*"...I feel almost sure that ere long I shall see my dear mother in Brooklyn and I trust that I may continually think how much my father and mother have done for me and how kind my Uncle and Grandmother Dickinson have been to me and I will try all that I can to study and improve and to remember that time flies fast..."*

Sometime in April, 1849 Hannah was "taken with the measles" which she had quite severely. She was sick for one month and apparently developed bronchitis or pneumonia for she was left with a cough that lasted for months. The illness also left her eyes "very weak," which, under certain conditions, was a common after-affect of measles. Her mother went to Brooklyn and brought her home to North Castle on May 24, 1849. Until her illness Hannah had not missed a single entry in her journal. She made only three entries in May and then the diary skips to Thursday, July 19, 1849 when she continued her faithful accounting.

### Back in North Castle

Hannah's life continued much the same as it had before her stay in Brooklyn with the exception of her health. Her illness had evidently taken a temporary toll on her strength for she occasionally mentions becoming "fatigued" after an outing. On Tuesday, July 31st Hannah went visiting, as she often did, with Uncle Dickinson :

*"...Went along by Long Pond - over the mountain stopping a while on the mountain to take a view of the surrounding country. We had a beautiful view of North Salem village. Uncle Dickinson was very interesting, pointing out every object worthy of notice, one of which was the Granite boulder, a large rock resting on four limestone points. This rock is of a different kind from any found in that part of the country which is all limestone, but this is granite. There*

2. Castle Gardens was located at the Battery. Many years later it became an immigration processing center and then the New York Aquarium.

*are various conjectures concerning the manner by which it came there, but any way we look upon it, it shows the agency of a mysterious power."*

### A visit to New York City

On December 17th Hannah left North Castle once again for a month's visit with cousins in New York City at which time she frequented many cultural events. The stay also afforded her the opportunity of making many new acquaintances as well as renewing old friendships. Hannah had reached her 17th birthday on December 22, 1849. She returned to her beloved home and family on January 16, 1850 and the journal ends after her account of Wednesday, February 6th. The last two pages of the diary are devoted to several verses taken from a book in the library of the Female Academy on December 21, 1848, no author mentioned. Space being limited only three of the verses are quoted:

#### *Home*

*"There is a magic in the name of home,  
A charm which even the callous bosom knows,  
And oh, when from its precincts far we roam,  
How brightly each loved scene in memory glows!*

*When wandering in a scene of strife and cares,  
Mid those alas! we may not deem our friends,  
How fair a form each scene of childhood bears --  
How warmly each dear distant object blends!*

*Sweet - happy home! Oh can I e'er forget  
Thy charms - thy flowery bowers, thine azure sky --  
And those dear friends who in thy bounds are met  
Ah, no! Ah, no! 'I'll love thee till I die.' "*

#### Epilogue (by date)

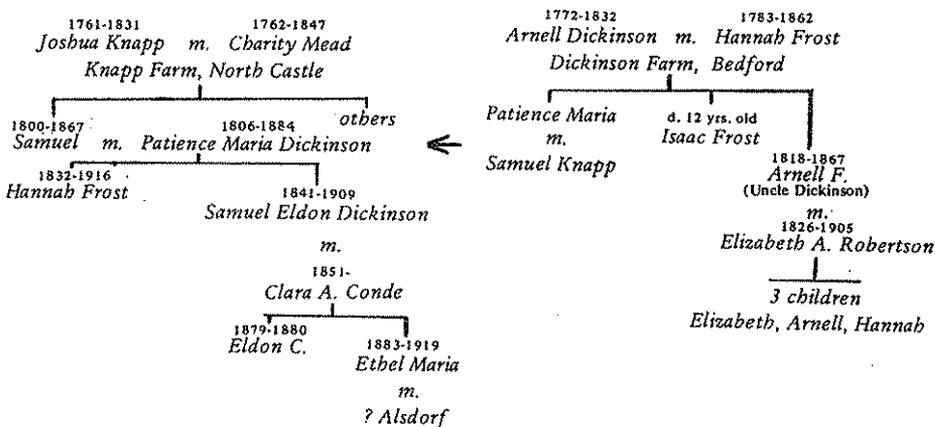
1852: Uncle Dickinson married Elizabeth A. Robertson, teacher and daughter of Henry and Huldah Robertson, who were neighbors of the Dickinsons. They lived at the Dickinson farm. 1862: Grandma Dickinson died. 1867: Samuel Knapp died, and Uncle Dickinson died of a heart attack in the parlor of his home at age 49. 1874: Samuel Eldon, Hannah F. and Patience Maria sold the farm in North Castle to a Thomas Baker. They moved to Bedford where it is believed they lived on the road from Katonah to Cross River (now Route 35) near the village of Cross River. The area is not far from the Dickinson farm at Cantitoe Corners. Uncle Dickinson's wife and three children still lived there. Samuel Eldon Knapp married Clara A. Conde probably around this time. 1879: A son, Eldon Conde was born to Samuel Eldon and Clara C. Knapp. 1880: The Bedford census lists S.E.D. Knapp, farmer; wife, Clara; son, Eldon C.; Patience; Hannah; and Jane Ferris, a servant. Also in 1880 Eldon C. died, age 10 months, 23 days. 1883: A daughter, Ethel Maria, was born to Samuel Eldon and Clara

Knapp. 1884: Patience Maria Knapp died. Her will, read June 25, 1884, left Hannah well provided for, but it also mentions that William M. Skinner, Jr., Clerk of the Surrogate's Court, was appointed Special Guardian of Hannah Frost Knapp ..... "who is a person of unsound mind"..... 1905: Uncle Dickinson's wife, Elizabeth died. 1909: Samuel Eldon Knapp died.

Hannah had left home again on August 12, 1886 and spent the next 29 years 5 months and 23 days in the New York State Hospital (asylum) at Binghamton where she died of lobar pneumonia on February 4, 1916 at the age of 83. She was returned to Bedford on February 6, 1916 (exactly 66 years after the date of her last journal entry) and buried on that date by her cousin, Arnell, son of Uncle Dickinson, in the Dickinson-Knapp plot of the Bedford Union Cemetery. She lies next to her loved ones -- in an unmarked grave.

Hannah had come home to stay.

#### FAMILY TREE



References: Nicholas Knapp genealogy at Westchester Co. Historical Soc.; Land Records Office, Westchester Co. Clerk, White Plains; the book "Katonah" by Frances R. Duncombe, 1961; Bedford census file of Mrs. W.A. Kelly; Knapp photographs in possession of Mrs. W.A. Kelly; Knapp diary in possession of Mr. W. Gregar (uncle to B. Massi). N.Y.S. Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Albany, N.Y.

## THE CAVES OF NORTH CASTLE

by Mary C. Brewer

Caves and rock shelters have captured the imagination and served a practical purpose ever since Man evolved upon this Earth. What early man was not grateful for a safe shelter for himself, his family, his tribe, from which he could make sorties to hunt, could feed and rest out of the weather, or could hide from his enemies? What small boy or girl of more recent date has not enjoyed being scared witless when peeking into the dark beyond some rocky entrance, sure that a ferocious beast lurked within?

Westchester County, by its very topography, has its share of rocky hiding places. Two general ranges of hills run north and south, one close to the Hudson, the other along the Connecticut boundary line, with hills from two hundred to a thousand feet in height. Hence, water-courses also run in a general north-south direction. The rocks are mainly gneiss and mica-schist and limestone, ancient and entirely devoid of fossils, very much folded and disturbed. The softer limestone and sandstone washed out over the centuries into valleys, the hard gneiss remaining highland. Through extensive glacial action, large granite boulders were undoubtedly transported to this region from Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

The North Castle area is especially rich in rock shelters, which were explored at the direction of the American Museum of Natural History by Mr. M.R. Harrington in 1900-1901. One of the most important is Finch's Rock House, found a little less than 2½ miles N.E. of Armonk, in what is now



North entrance to Finch's Rock House

Windmill Farm. It was formed by the falling of a mass of rock from the ledge, and is actually an enormous overhanging rock with a giant boulder lodged just below the outer edge of the overhang, creating a secluded shelter 32 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 11 feet high in front, with entrances at both ends. Long a resort of picnickers, its Indian character was unknown until Harrington dug there. The black top layer contained Indian relics, including pieces of English trade clay pipes and other fragments of European origin, showing that by this time, the natives had come in contact with the white man. Earlier, a period without occupancy allowed sand to sift and wash in; further excavation however found refuse built up to a depth of 2 feet in places, containing relics and implements found at rock bottom, indicating that the cave had been occupied soon after the great stone had fallen from the ledge.

This cave is so well concealed that any war party passing through the valley of the Mianus, only a short distance away, would not have suspected its existence. Water was available in a small stream nearby and in a "pond-hole" about 50 feet away.

#### Other caves

Another shelter, located in North White Plains on city watershed property, was occupied by a 19th century hermit, James Johnson, known as "Jimmy-Under-the-Rock."\* This refuge is a large flat hill, about 15 feet above the floor of a ravine. Jimmy added rough walls on the three open sides, and constructed a raised bed from a box wagon body bolted to the rock ceiling, to separate himself at night from the many copperhead snakes who shared his hideaway.

Bet Heliker's cave and Little Heliker's are two shelters found about a mile S.W. of Armonk, near the headwaters of Bear Gutter Creek. Apparently Bet did not actually dwell in the cave that bears her name, but lived in a hut in the woods nearby. There is an unconfirmed story that for a short time this cave sheltered Anne Hutchinson while she was enroute from Rhode Island to New York. In any case, white men did live there, as one of the three fireplaces found within is a white man's fireplace.

Bet Heliker's cave is also known to have been occupied, at various times between 1860 and 1889, by a character called the Leatherman who used many rock shelters in his wanderings through this part of New York State and Connecticut. The Leatherman was a mysterious man, dark, stocky, strong and silent. He dressed in patched garments made of boot-top leather weighing about 60 pounds, which rustled in the winds and gave off a creaking harness-like sound. The Leatherman walked almost continuously in a huge circle comprising about 100 miles in New York and 200 miles in Connecticut. He accomplished his trek in exactly 34 days for more than 25 years and was so punctual that farmer's wives could plan ahead when to put out food for him. Even the blizzard of '88 did not disrupt his schedule. But the next year he was found dead of exposure, cancer and

\*See "North Castle History" Vol. 1 No. 1

starvation in a cave near Ossining. There is a large and fascinating folder on this unusual man at the Westchester County Historical Society, containing many contradictions and speculations as to his age, height and mysterious origins.

Mr. Harrington also explored several other caves in and near North Castle for the Museum. One is at Nebo Rocks, about 1½ miles N.W. of Armonk; a very small shelter is at the north end of Byram Lake; another one known to be the Leatherman's is 2½ miles S.E. of Armonk on Quaker Ridge just within Connecticut; Quartz Quarry Rock Shelter is north of Banksville, and a small shelter exists just north of Finch's Rock House. One called Buzzard's Cave lies to the East of Byram Ridge Road in North Castle Estates and another small one is located approximately ¼ mile from there.

These and other rocky hiding-places continue to fascinate, partly because of their strenuous geological origin, but probably all the more because they were actually inhabited by Indians and by odd, unusual characters.

References: "Westchester County and Its People", Ernest Freeland Griffin, Editor, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1946; Frederick Shonnard and W.W. Spooner "History of Westchester County New York," 1900; History of Westchester County New York, Vol. 1, 1925, Alvah P. French, Editor in Chief.

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## — HISTORICAL RESEARCH —

Blowing the dust from old documents and family bibles and looking for headstones in old cemeteries in search of a particular person or family from the past is a fascinating experience. One must be part sleuth, have an adventurous spirit, possess a considerable amount of persistence and perception and most important have the time to spend searching for and deciphering the old documents.

Unfortunately, many of our forefathers did not see the importance of complete and accurate recordkeeping, and there was no law requiring the recording of a birth or death. Therefore, the North Castle Historical Society, in its quest to gather as much information as possible regarding North Castle's past, is interested in obtaining ANY information about North Castle's people, places and events, regardless of how insignificant it may seem. Sometimes a seemingly worthless bit of information can open up a whole area of valuable data.

If you have anything relating to North Castle (letters, diaries, pictures, newspaper clippings, family bibles, the history of a particular house, antiques, or even something from memory or family legends) please let us know about it so that we can record it in our research file. If you have any doubts about authenticity, we will mark the information accordingly.

Archivist: Irene Sandford,  
273-3712 evenings

The North Castle Historical Society

# HISTORICAL KENSICO AND THE HILLS OF NORTH CASTLE

by Joseph T. Miller

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

An Indian trail called the Otter Trail extended from the Hudson River thru Kensico and eastward to Long Island Sound. It followed the present route of Stevens Avenue and King Street. The Otter Trail became the Upper Cross Road for early settlers. After being captured in Tarrytown Major Andre was taken over this trail to Wright's Mill in Kensico and then to his hiding place in Armonk. The Otter Trail was intersected at Kensico by another famous Indian trail that followed the North-South course thru the village of Kensico (original Route 22). This intersection, now under more than 100' of water, was almost opposite the Wright Mill monument on the present Route 22 just south of the Rye Bridge.

Adjacent to this intersection was the confluence of the Bronx (Brunks) River, the Bear Gutter Creek and the brook from the Rye Ponds. This beautiful and inviting natural setting became a favorite and a welcomed stopping place for hunters, traders and travellers. Mills soon flourished from the brook water power and the settlement was called at various times: Wright's Mill, Fisher's Mill, Robbin's Mill as well as Kensico. The area developed with homes, schools, a church, stores and small shops as well as many mills. The settlement was named Kensico after a Siwanoy Indian Chief called Cokenseko who opened the surrounding lands to settlers around 1680. He also signed the agreement with Rye settlers for permission to settle in White Plains and North White Plains. (Prior Indian sachems or chiefs sold and resold the same land to many different people at various times causing consternation as well as violence.)

## The Revolution

The first major historical event for Kensico was the Revolutionary War. The Reuben Wright Mill was George Washington's favorite meeting place for councils of war and consultations. Lafayette visited him there on many occasions as well as Alexander Hamilton, Governor Clinton, Count de Rochambeau, Generals Putnam and Greene, Aaron Burr and many others.

The rugged surrounding hills of North Castle were considered by Washington and his advisors to be not only a strategic place for the encampment of his troops but also a secure position against any attack the British might make with their well trained troops entrenched at White Plains under General Howe. The British evidently came to the same conclusion and considered Washington's challenge of "come and get me" a

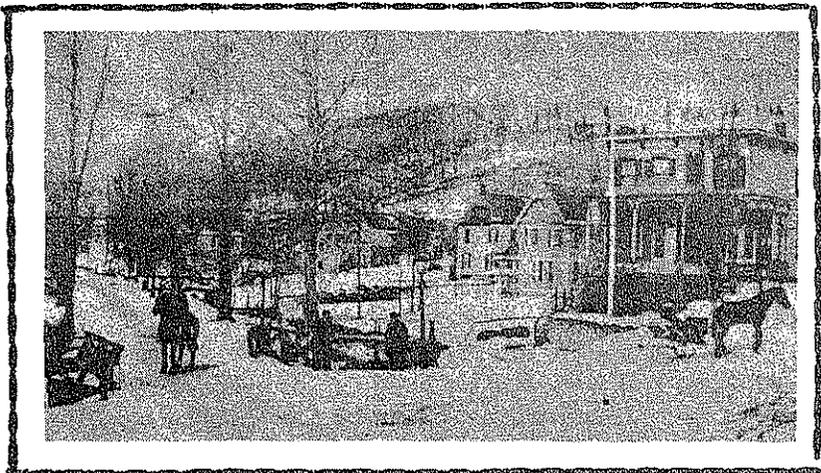
suicidal attempt and finally withdrew back to New York. A French army, helping the cause of freedom, camped on the north shores of Rye Pond (the present south side of the Great Island in Rye Lake). Thus the hills of North Castle made history by frustrating the British from taking the Hudson Valley and West Point and thereby cutting the Colonies into two parts.

During this war period the residents were divided in their sympathies. The entire region was greatly harassed by raids from both sides foraging for food and supplies. Those favoring independence were raided by Loyalists and the British. Those remaining loyal to England were raided by the rebels. Livestock and provisions were confiscated. Houses and barns were burned. This added fuel to the flames of hatred and created a lust for cruel revenge. The suffering and misery were terrible. Historically the area is hallowed ground.

Right after the war Kensico rebounded with activity. Many prosperous mills, small industries for leather goods and shoes, shops making wooden pegs for homes and boat builders, a file factory, as well as flocks and herds flourished. The wares were exported by wagon to the Hudson River or to Long Island Sound over the Upper Cross Road and placed aboard boats for New York and points south. A small prosperous suburban center developed in this beautiful valley. Soon a stage coach line was established, at first running to White Plains and then to the new railroad station at Davis Brook (now Valhalla).

### The railroad was averted

The coming of the railroad was the second major historical event for Kensico. The building of a one track railroad from New York to Davis Brook (Valhalla) two miles south of Kensico in 1845 brought more prosperity to the area. Business and goods consigned to Kensico were so great that the



View of road to Kensico Station (now Valhalla Station) not far from the present circle at Kensico Dam Plaza. Bridge goes over Davis Brook. Picture taken around 1885.

Davis Brook Station's name was changed to Kensico. Though originally planned to follow the Bronx Valley to Kensico, Mile Square (now Armonk) and then to Mt. Kisco, vigorous protests forced the railroad to run its tracks up Davis Brook through the present Hawthorne, Thornwood, Pleasantville areas to Mt. Kisco.

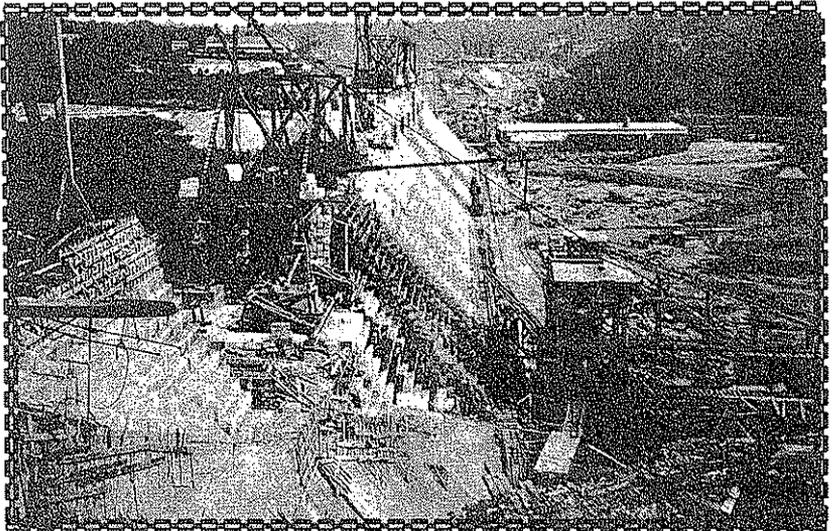
### Earth dam disrupts Kensico

The third major historical event for this little country village was the disruption caused by the City of New York in 1885 with the construction of an earth dam and a lake that destroyed a church, a school, several farms, and some homes. However, the village continued to prosper around this new lake. In 1900 the State decided to build a hard surface road to White Plains. By 1902 a water bound crushed stone roadway (original Rt. 22) was completed from Oak Tree Inn (now Save Way Cleaners) in North White Plains to Cooney Hill Road in Kensico. Prior to this all roads were dirt constructed and usually one lane wagon trails.

In 1908 the first international auto race, called the Briarcliff Race, came thru Kensico. It caused much excitement and was witnessed by over 300,000 persons along its entire route.

### Kensico Dam eliminated Kensico

The fourth major historical event took place in 1909 when the city of New York decided to build the present Kensico Dam and Lake. The construction of the dam, 128' high above ground and 180' below ground, began



View of Kensico Dam under construction, looking east. Photo shows old earth dam to the right, which was taken down.

in 1913 after 3 years of preliminary construction work was completed for: a 17 mile rail system, an electric plant, a sand pit, a granite quarry, stone

crushers, concrete mixers, cableways, the construction of homes (called camps) to house the influx of more than 1,000 workers and their families. The work, an outstanding feat in engineering and efficiency, was completed 3 years ahead of time in 1917. This project not only disrupted but completely wiped out the beautiful little village of Kensico. Former Judge Julius Raven, whose parents owned a farm and a hotel at the intersection of Old Orchard Street and the original Rt. 22 in this village recalls, as a paperboy covering the route for 7 years, that the following houses and businesses were demolished for the project:

Coming North on the original Rt. 22 starting at the Dam were the following homes and buildings: Esser, Ravens Farm and Hotel (on both sides of Old Orchard Street), Methodist Parsonage, Ellis, Cox, an old Methodist Church used by the Harts to store farm machinery, Harts (on Harts Lane), the new Methodist Church, Gale, Wyckoff's General Store, Dominique, Steve Gale, then the Bear Gutter Bridge. A sharp left turn at the bridge went west to Steven's Avenue toward upper Valhalla. The original Rt. 22 went north straight ahead to a "V" intersection. At this intersection was the Pfister Store and post office (the prior owner being Bang who in



Pfister's store and post office at crossroads in the village of Kensico -- taken around the turn of the century.

turn bought the store from Odell). The road on the west side of Pfister's Store went north to King Street up what is now called the peninsula. To the right of the store going up the original Rt. 22 from the post office were the following homes and buildings: Carpenter, Krepps, Lane's Saloon, and opposite the present Wright's Mill Monument on New Rt. 22 were a Millpond, a textile mill and a file factory. Then came a little red bridge across Bear Gutter Creek. A road from the bridge to the right went southeast to the Rye Lakes, Woodman's Farm, and to the Bates house on the present



Great Island. From the red bridge going straight ahead on the original Rt. 22 would take you to Daniel Tucker's, two homes owned by Effingham (Ham) Ferris, Mary Sweeney at the corner of Cooney Hill Road, then to Whimpenny's old-fashioned rag carpet mill, Martin's house, Bob Blake's Saloon, Tubbs house, a blacksmith, a one room schoolhouse No. 6, facing King Street, then across King Street was Koch's Crystal Spring Hotel -- King Street was considered the division line between Kensico and Armonk.

Returning to the west side of Pfister's Store and post office and going north on the road up the present peninsula were: Ryder's Farm, Carpenter's blacksmith, schoolhouse No. 7, Myrtle's Summer Hotel run by Greenops Brothers (5 musicians), Butts (a violin bowmaker), the two Greenop's houses, Pryor, Browning, Ed Riley (Poor Master), Dynan, Fesser (an artist), Weinheimer (later Rackenbush), Harper (later Versen), George Ackerly's Farm (highest point on peninsula), Pietschkers, Flandreau's two houses, Willis Husted (a horse specialist and owner of the first steam press cider mill), and retired Rev. Stephen White on King Street. This peninsula was labeled as Dominie White's Point on many maps.

Returning to the Pfister's Store and the post office and going west on Stevens Lane were: Bill Miller's Grist Mill, Dan Sands (later Headquarters for Water Works Police), and the large Reynolds and Griffen Dairy Farm.

#### North White Plains affected by dam

Kensico Dam was completed in 1917. This last major historical event for Kensico not only wiped out the village but took a toll of worker's lives: 8 in one day during April 1915. It also had a tremendous growth effect on North White Plains. Prior to the construction of the dam North White Plains had 16 families. The influx of many workers on the dam and the families moving from Kensico resulted in such a fast growth for North White Plains that sewer, water, gas and electric lines were installed as well as hard surface roads, all within 13 years. An example is the Pietschker family who on moving from Kensico immediately built 3 homes on Nethermont Avenue and with the help of neighbors proceeded to build the Castie Heights Church, the first firehouse, the present firehouse, the pumping station and about 20 houses in the surrounding area.

#### Not to be forgotten

Although wiped out, Kensico remains not only dramatically historical but also romantically personified with such names as Kensico Manor, Kensico Dam and Kensico Plaza, Kensico Lake, Kensico Cemetery, Kensico Station, Kensico Knolls Place and numerous streets and roads named Kensico in the surrounding area.

The record and glory of the past soon fades into forgetfulness. It would seem only proper therefore, whenever you pass the "Wright Mill" Monument on Rt. 22 just south of the Rye Bridge to dwell for a moment on the history and glamour of the area, the courage and valor of the early settlers and to contemplate with gratitude the rich heritage of traditions and accomplishments which blazed the way for us.

## THE AUTHORS

Barbara Massi has been an Armonk resident since moving from southern Westchester 14 years ago. She grew up in an historically-minded family and acquired the diary through a cousin who discovered it in an antique shop in Perth, N.Y. After reading the diary she decided that it was worth writing about and her story is the result of 2 months of research. Mrs. Massi would like to see a headstone erected for Hannah Knapp.

Mary C. Brewer lives in Windmill Farm, Armonk. Because Finch's Rock House is on their property, she and her husband have been interested in caves since moving to North Castle from southern Westchester 5 years ago. Mrs. Brewer, who is very interested in North Castle's history, extends an invitation to anyone interested in seeing Finch's Rock House to call her at 273-3730.

Joseph T. Miller has been Town Clerk for North Castle for 33 years. He remembers the village of Kensico well and used to bicycle there from his home in North White Plains. While attending the Valhalla School Mr. Miller would occasionally scamper over to watch the construction of the Kensico Dam.

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### COVER PICTURE

North Broadway and Virginia Road intersection showing the original Fisher Farm in North White Plains. Save-Way Cleaners is now at the site and the N.W.P. Firehouse is next door. Legend says that the historic old oak tree in the front of the picture was used by Continental soldiers to hang deserters and spies during the Revolution. The tree was called The Old Washington Oak and, of course, it no longer stands. The Oak Tree Inn, for many years, was located on this corner. Picture taken around 1885.

Typography, art work, layout, paste-up by Barbara Massi

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