

# **NORTH CASTLE HISTORY**



• [2001 Richard Koenig] •

**CORNELL-BIRDSALL HOUSE**

**THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Volume 27**

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**2000**



# *The North Castle Historical Society*

440 BEDFORD ROAD ARMONK, NEW YORK 10504

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

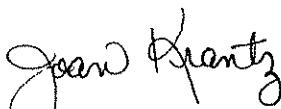
You have made my three years as President exciting and rewarding. I admire and appreciate all of you who continue to be so supportive of and interested in The Society. Your knowledge, energy and friendship make The Society an outstanding organization!

This past year has been filled with exciting projects. Many of you have shared with me a renewed enthusiasm for historic preservation. Together, we have expanded the Docents Program; presented two educational Exhibits; held two Antiques Shows; coordinated several Colonial Crafts days for the area fourth grades; dished up a Colonial Tavern Dinner; participated in the Town-wide Christmas Party; offered the Mary Guion Brown Diary; and joined in the Millennium Committee activities.

The North Castle Historical Society has numerous opportunities for your participation. We invite you to be a part of the future while we learn from the past.

Please enjoy this newest issue of North Castle History. The articles in this issue trace some of our land uses during three centuries. Hopefully these articles will encourage you to record other portions of our Town's history. Please share your personal knowledge so that our collective history is recorded and preserved before it is lost forever.

Sincerely,

  
Joan Krantz  
President

## NORTH CASTLE HISTORY, VOLUME 27, 2000



### THE CORNELL-BIRDSALL HOUSE ON THE ORIGINAL SITE

[1960s photograph from the Archives of The Society]

This house is an excellent example of a post-Revolutionary period farmhouse dating back to the time when George Washington was President of the United States. Experts believe the oldest portion of the house dates back to around 1790.

Willett Cornell conveyed this circa 1790 house to Joseph Birdsall, who passed it to his son, Benjamin Birdsall. James E. Brundage purchased the property at the turn of the century and later sold it to Cornelius R. Agnew, who called the house North Gate. Various superintendents (including Harry Hunter, William C. Whipple and then Arthur E. Hendry) lived in the house. IBM Corporation purchased the Agnew estate. In the mid-1960s this house was moved to its present location behind Town Hall, renovated and decorated by IBM.

The present building, pictured on the front cover, consists of four parts, one added to the original structure around 1870-1880 and two added by the Town of North Castle since the building was moved.

Reprints of *NORTH CASTLE HISTORY*  
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The North Castle Historical Society  
440 Bedford Road  
Armonk, New York 10504

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*Please forward any corrections or additions to the information presented herein and/or your constructive suggestions for improving this publication to your editorial board at The North Castle Historical Society, Smith's Tavern, 440 Bedford Road, Armonk, New York 10504.*

*If you would be willing to research and/or author an article, please let us know. New writers and new perspectives are vital.*

## WENGA FARM A North Castle "Great Estate"

by Doris Finch Watson

High on a hill beside Route 22 in Armonk, New York, stands the well-known World Headquarters of IBM Corporation. It stands on nearly 450 acres, and if that land could talk, what a long and interesting story it could tell.

Tradition says that back in the time when Indians roamed these lands, the Siwanoy Indians<sup>1</sup> built a type of "Fort" on the high part of that land. When early settlers near the Long Island Sound looked to the north, they referred to the "Fort" as a castle; thus, the name North Castle.

But long before settlers came to "North Castle", there were heavily wooded rolling hills, with crystal clear streams winding through the valleys. It was Indian land. Today, some of those Indian leaders' names live on in such names as the Wampus Park and stream, the Mianus River and Gorge, the Kensico Reservoir and Dam – reminders of long ago.<sup>2</sup>

### Settlements in the Woods

When early settlers came in the 1700s, small settlements grew up along the streams. Homes had to be built, so lumber mills and gristmills were founded. By 1736 North Castle elected town officials, held meetings and recorded town minutes.<sup>3</sup> Cart paths became muddy or frozen narrow roads, and stagecoaches went through on what was called the New York-Danbury Post Road. By 1787 a Methodist Church was built north of the Methodist Cemetery<sup>4</sup> on Cox Avenue; by 1798 the Quaker Meeting House was standing.<sup>5</sup> North Castle was growing.

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<sup>1</sup> The Siwanoy were one of the largest of the Wappinger subdivisions and occupied land ranging from present-day Norwalk, Connecticut to Hell Gate, New York. Frederic Shonnard and W.W. Spooner, History of Westchester County, 1900, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Doris Finch Watson, "The Indians of North Castle", North Castle History, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Historical Records North Castle/New Castle, 1736-1791, jointly published by New Castle and North Castle, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Richard N. Lander, "Methodism at North Castle", North Castle History, 1987.

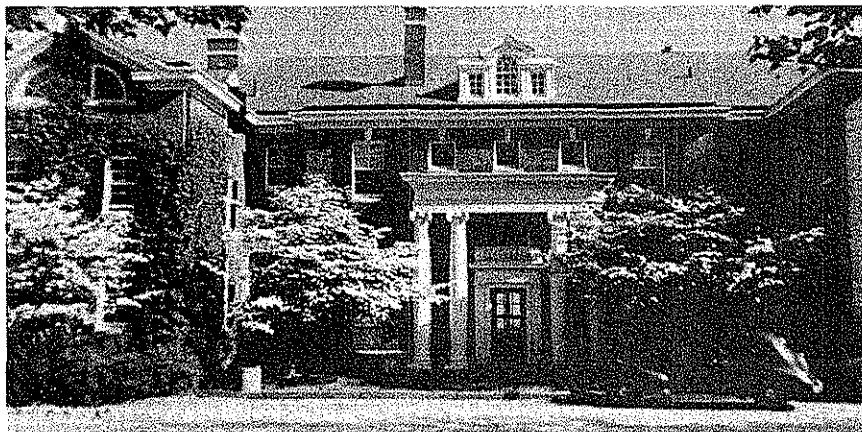
<sup>5</sup> The Quaker Meeting House was moved from Cox Avenue to The North Castle Historical Society property at 440 Bedford Road, Armonk, and a program of

## The Setting

About 1790, it was in this setting that Willett Cornell chose the piece of land (now IBM land) on which to establish his home and farm. About 1825 he conveyed it to Joseph Birdsall, who lived there and farmed the land until his death. Then his son, Benjamin Birdsall, a Quaker and well-known citizen, farmed it until his death. Later, the property was purchased by James E. Brundage who sold it to Cornelius R. Agnew.

## The New Owner

With the sale to Mr. Agnew, a whole new chapter arose in the life of that fertile land. Mr. Agnew, a vice president of a New York bank, and "one of the prominent citizens of Westchester County",<sup>6</sup> began acquiring several neighboring farms on both sides of the highway until he had acquired over 600 acres. He and his wife, Blanche Bean Agnew, began planning their country home and estate. Following the custom of the time, they turned the name Agnew backward and named their estate WENGA FARM ... for it was to be more than just a country mansion, it was to be a working farm.

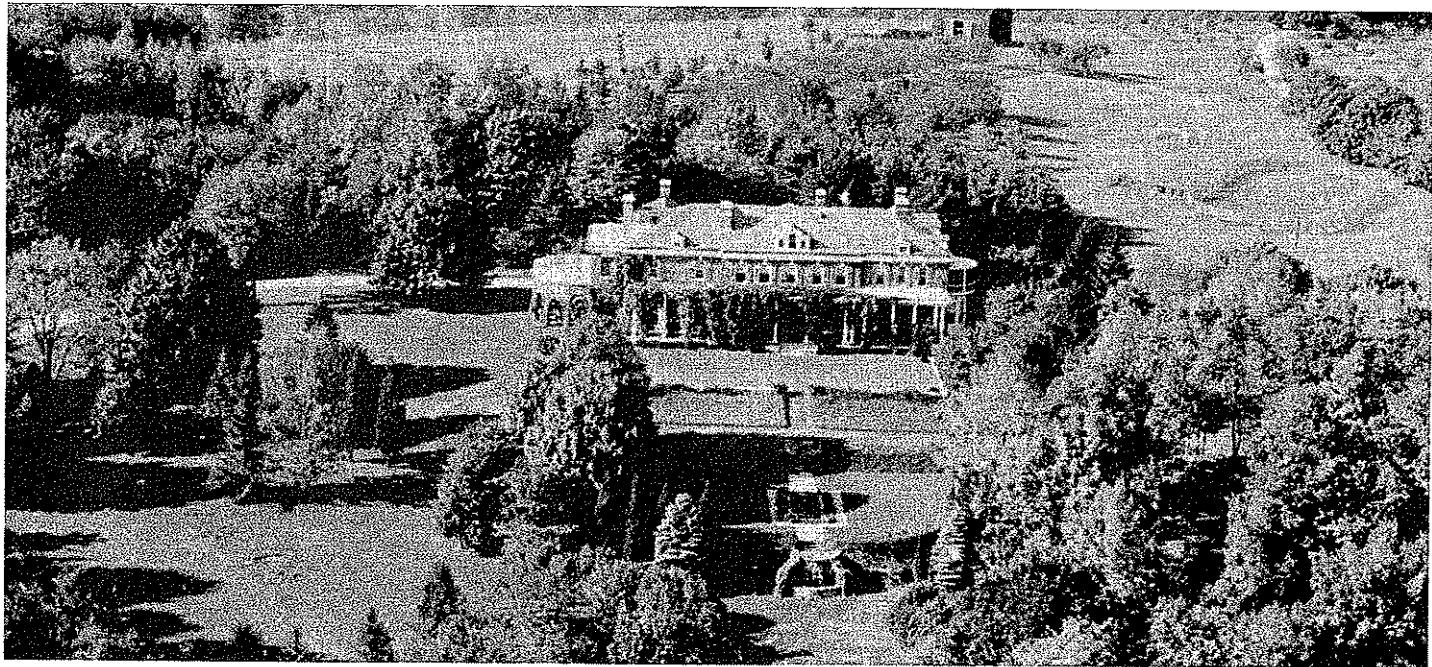


THE AGNEW MANSION FACED IN A NORTHERLY DIRECTION. IBM CORPORATION WORLD HEADQUARTERS BUILT ON THIS SITE AND MOVED HERE IN 1964. [Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr.]

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dedication was held on October 1, 1995. It has been completely restored and is available for community use. Refer to North Castle History, 1978, Volume 5.

<sup>6</sup> Westchester County and Its People, Lewis Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1946, p. 319.



#### AN AERIAL VIEW OF CORNELIUS REA AGNEW'S WENGA FARM MANSION

The terraces and reflecting pool on the rear grounds of the mansion are visible in the lower center of the photograph. A circular addition to the mansion housed the library and Mrs. Agnew's organ. [Photograph courtesy of Mrs. C. R. Agnew, Jr.]

## The Mansion

The new, large main house was reached by a long, winding driveway and stood majestically atop a rolling hill. The house was elegant, with huge white columns supporting a roof over the entrance. Mr. and Mrs. Agnew had four children: Alice, Cornelius Rea, Jr., Donald and Sanford, so the house contained many bedrooms, baths, sitting and guest rooms on the first and second floors, with the servants rooms on the third floor. It was a spacious, gracious home with all the comforts of the day.

The Agnews built a special room with a circular outside wall where Mrs. Agnew's organ was placed. The room was paneled in chestnut, just before the blight hit all the chestnut trees. Even the organ has a fascinating history. After years of use in the home, the Agnew family donated it to the Bedford Presbyterian Church where it was used for years. Later, the Church gave it to the Banksville Baptist Church. When the Church became a residence, the organ went into storage at Clifford Henry James'<sup>7</sup> barn for a brief period, followed by storage in Mount Vernon, New York, and then in Silver Spring, Pennsylvania. Following Mr. James' death his sister, Ethel Lewis, presented the organ to the Vanderbilt House, "Biltmore", in Asheville, North Carolina. The organ has been restored and enjoyed by many.

Magnificent landscaping, including beautiful dogwoods, surrounded the mansion, and a glittering reflection pool nestled down below several tiers of rolling lawn. The views from the house included the Kensico Reservoir, the rolling hills and the Long Island Sound. This country home provided everything the Agnews loved: walking and riding trails, room for sports and hobbies and space for grandchildren.

## Other Homes on Wenga Farm

A handsome colonial farmhouse, occupied about 1790 by Willett Cornell, was used as a superintendent's house, sometimes called North Gate. Long-time Armonk residents will remember that Harry Hunter was superintendent and lived there, followed by William Whipple.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Clifford Henry James was an architect who lived at 605 Bedford Road, Armonk in the James Gedney-Lyon house built c.1750. Mr. James was buried in The Middle Patent Rural Cemetery on April 3, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> William Whipple's wife, Lulu, was a well-known schoolteacher. Following his death, she later married a Mr. West.

Then for many years Arthur Hendry was the farm's superintendent, and the house became known as the Hendry House.<sup>9</sup> Many local people worked on the farm under the superintendent's leadership.<sup>10</sup>

THE CORNELL-BIRDSSL HOUSE (NORTH GATE OR HENDRY HOUSE) PICTURED ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE BEFORE IT WAS MOVED AND REFURBISHED BY IBM CORPORATION AS A GIFT TO THE TOWN OF NORTH CASTLE. The flat-roofed addition on the right has six-over-six windows that are smaller than the earlier section windows. Two large sections have been added since the building was moved. [Photograph from The Archives of The North Castle Historical Society]



When the Agnew children became adults they had homes on the farm. The daughter, Alice<sup>11</sup>, lived in a home called Crow's Nest not far from the mansion. Two Agnew sons had homes on the King Street end of the farm: one was Peach Blow, where Sanford lived; the other was called South Gate, where Cornelius, Jr., called Rea, lived.<sup>12</sup> Paths were created

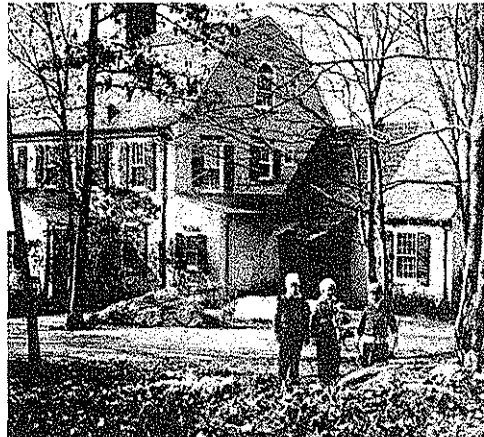
<sup>9</sup> Although sometimes called the Hendry House (because Arthur Hendry was so well known), the proper name is the Cornell-Birdsall House. It was moved to the lot behind Town Hall and is sometimes referred to as the "Annex".

<sup>10</sup> Many local people worked on Wenga Farm through the years, including William Carpenter, Frank Holmes, Mr. Light, Charlie Caston and George Coupe. In an interview in her home, Mrs. C. R. Agnew, Jr. told a story and talked kindly of George Coupe. It seems that on a Sunday afternoon her children were taking a walk with their nurse. Little Billy put his hand into a hole between rocks, only to be bitten by a snake. George Coupe hunted down the snake and killed it ... much to the relief of the family. Some acreage on Wenga Farm was rented to Franz and Irvin Henker. The well-known Henker Farm was on Bedford-Banksville Road, but the Henkers rented additional land from the Agnews for crops.

<sup>11</sup> Alice married Dave Hennen Morris. Their daughter, Susan, married Frederic Carter and lives in Millbrook, New York.

<sup>12</sup> This house on King Street was called South Gate as it was at the south entrance to the farm. The other entrance on old Route 22 was called North Gate and, later, Hendry House.

leading from the mansion to the three children's houses. The sons' houses were both pre-Revolutionary and in 1777 belonged to Daniel Lewis.<sup>13</sup> By 1800 the Thomas Waterburys owned them, with their son, Drake, living in the northern one. By the 1870s D. W. Smith was the owner; by the turn of the century it belonged to O. R. Hartmann. Early in the 1900s Mr. Agnew added both homes to his Wenga Farm.



**Crow's Nest, home of Alice Agnew Morris and her family. The children pictured are not identified. IBM Corporation later used this house.**

*[Undated photograph courtesy of Mrs. Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr.]*



**South Gate, home of the Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr. family.  
Later the Byram Hills School District had offices in this old house.  
[1976 Photograph from the Archives of The North Castle Historical Society.]**

<sup>13</sup> American Revolutionary Map of 1777 by Erskin-DeWitt shows both houses of Daniel Lewis on what is now called King Street.



**Peach Blow, the home of the Sanford Agnew family.**  
[1976 Photograph from the Archives of The Society, Welling Collection.]

### **The Outbuildings**

The beautiful riding horses and ponies were stabled in stalls next to the tack room. Other farm animals, cows, sheep, work horses, etc. were housed in the long barns near the silo. The garages housed wagons, carriages and various automobiles, always at the ready. Buildings for farm machinery and implements, as well as woodworking and paint shop stood nearby

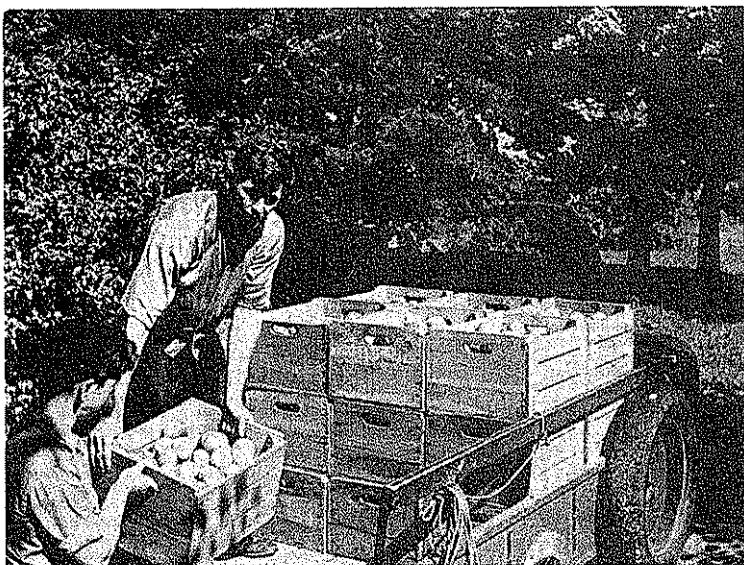


**The Barns and Silo**  
[Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr.]

### **A Working Farm**

Wenga Farm had hundreds of apple trees as well as peach and pear trees. The orchards were beautiful and produced an abundance of fruit, all carefully crated for sale. The farm was a beehive of activity, changing with the seasons: landscaping, planting, haying, harvesting, building, repairing and tending animals. But there was time for family fun as evidenced by a collection of photographs saved over the years.

**Wenga Farm: a Working Farm**  
[Photographs this page courtesy of Mrs. Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr.]



**Apple Picking and Crating**

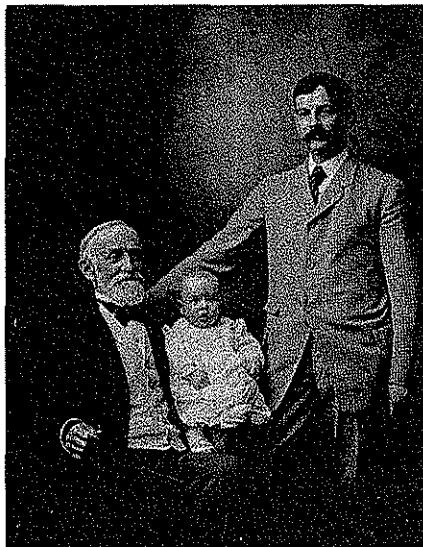


**Gathering the Corn**



A CHILDREN'S COSTUME PARTY AT WENGA FARM c. 1915

[L to R] Rea, Jr. and Kalnie? in the pony cart; Joan behind the goat cart with Edgar and Branet? inside; Will Yard dressed in the mortar board and gown; Sue standing behind the donkey; Donald standing in front of the horse cart; Elrot Tuck\_\_ driving the cart with Alice barely visible to his left and above the horse; and Sandy hidden between Ellie and Mary in the horse cart. The adult male in the extreme right side of the photograph is not identified. [Photograph courtesy of Mrs. Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr.]



[L-R] George Bliss Agnew, Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr. and Cornelius Rea Agnew, Sr. -- three generations of Agnew men. [1906 photograph from Mrs. Agnew, Jr.]



The Agnew Family Crest  
[1999 photograph by Richard Koenig]

### A Passing

As with many great estates of yesteryear, changes came, changes caused by a variety of factors including family structure, children growing into adults, illness and even death. Wenga Farm was no exception.

On Tuesday, November 23, 1954, Cornelius Rea Agnew, Sr. died.<sup>14</sup> He was 84 years old. Obituaries in a variety of papers told of his involvement and work in many organizations: the Westchester Country Historical Society, Sons of the American Revolution, trustee of the New York Zoological Society and many others. Those who knew him best remembered him as "a sweet, gentle man with twinkling blue eyes."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cornelius Rea Agnew, Sr.'s death announcement appeared in several papers, and clips have been saved from The New York Times, The New York Herald Tribune, and The Reporter Dispatch, White Plains, all from November 24, 1954.

<sup>15</sup> These words are quoted from Mrs. Dorothea Agnew and show her high regard for Mr. Agnew, Sr. Her husband, Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr., died at the Greenwich Hospital in 1989. Because of his love for South Gate, he wished to

## Memories and Speculation

Some older residents of Armonk look back on this great estate with vivid memories of the large apple orchards, the gardens, the hayfields (where family members worked), the parties with people coming and going along the long driveway leading to the mansion and the bustle of activities. But change was taking place. The staff grew smaller, the activities lessened. In early 1955 there was only speculation, then rumor turned to fact. IBM Corporation was purchasing Wenga Farm.

## A New Chapter

It was not the end of the story of the rolling hills and fertile fields; it was a new beginning for this land ... with an entirely different use. It would become a WORLD HEADQUARTERS. The new chapter was about to begin.

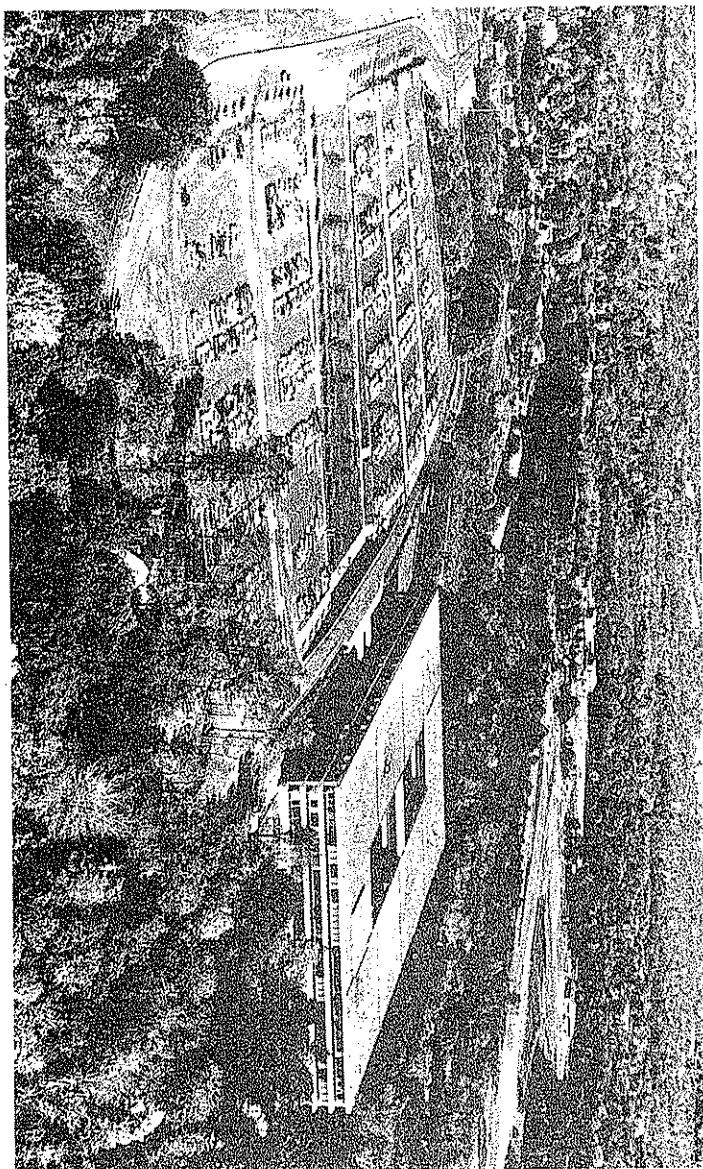
*[See the following article describing IBM Corporation's contemporary use of the old Wenga Farm lands.]*

**Acknowledgments:** The author would like to thank Mrs. Cornelius Rea Agnew, Jr. (Dorothea) for her kindness in sharing family photographs, lending the silver family crest to be photographed, for sharing her memories of Wenga Farm and for her gracious hospitality. Appreciation to Dick Koenig for photographing and copying items used in this article. Gratitude to John Schnoor and Erling Taylor for supplying names of some of the farm workmen.

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have some of his cremains scattered there. Dorothea recounts that IBM Corporation graciously cleared the old, overgrown path behind the house so the family could walk into the woodlands. Children and grandchildren accompanied Mrs. Agnew to a family farewell, which she said was "very touching". Mr. Agnew, Jr. served in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II; Dorothea taught school in Washington, D.C. Their children are Emily (Mrs. John E. Nelson), Margaret (Mrs. Jonathan Whipple), and William.

In this 1964 aerial photograph of the IBM Corporation World Headquarters site, the rectangular shape of the building, the two inner courtyard gardens and the parking lot are easily visible. Not so clearly visible are the old Armonk Airport and H.C. Crittenden School appearing in the upper right of the picture and the Crow's Nest house appearing nestled in the trees in the lower center of the picture. [1964 Photograph courtesy of IBM Corporation]

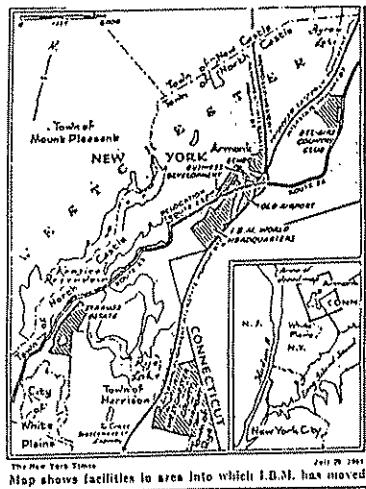


# INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION

## A Different Neighbor

by Sharon Tombak

During the summer of 1955 IBM Corporation purchased 443 acres in North Castle from the Agnew family. For the next six years several plans and designs were prepared before architects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill finalized a four-level, rectangular corporate headquarters building. It would be constructed around two courtyard gardens and a grass mall lined with trees would bisect the parking area in front of the building. Walter Kidde Constructors Inc. was awarded the contract. The building was dedicated in 1964.



### A New Chapter

"The electronics era is producing tremors in the economics and esthetics of North Castle, a town of 27 square miles of woodland and winding lanes on the northern fringe of Westchester County's expanding commerce."<sup>1</sup> Some worried that the colonial land use pattern would be disrupted. Some worried that the water supply to their wells would lessen. Some worried that the traffic from the 1,000 plus employees would overburden the Town roads. Town Supervisor John A. Lombardi cautioned that "everything will be all right ...".<sup>2</sup>

### Time to Get Out of the Apple Business

Rows of apple trees were retained from the former Wenga Farm. The trees were sprayed by IBM Corporation as many as fifteen times per season in order to get worm-free fruit. Apples on the ground were sold to anyone wishing to pick them up. Handpicked apples were sold in

<sup>1</sup> Merrill Folsom, "Big-City Worries Plaguing Armonk", The New York Times, July 29, 1964, pp. 35 and 67.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. In addition, Mr. Lombardi pleaded that people not "go berserk".

lots to jobbers. During 1964 chairman of the board Thomas J. Watson, Jr. asked that IBM management take a look at the operation of the orchard. Mr. Arthur Hendry, who was the farm superintendent for many years, used a barn near the farmhouse<sup>3</sup> to grade, store and sell apples at retail.

Evidently Mr. Watson, Jr. had learned that some people thought IBM was in the apple business because of signs which were sometimes appended to the main corporate sign. IBM manager Jim Mosley reported that there was no "For Sale" sign attached to the large blue "IBM Armonk" permanent sign, nor did any sign read "IBM Apples For Sale." Reportedly, underneath the permanent corporate identification sign, another read "Armonk Orchard". And, during apple season two additional signs were mounted: "Apples" and "Drive In".<sup>4</sup>

Paul M. Freeman, an IBM Corporation manager, reported that in 1962 IBM Corporation lost money producing apples. He recommended that IBM enjoy the apple blossoms in the spring and spray to eliminate the fruit, thereby avoiding the work and cost of trying to grow apples and preventing any rotten fruit on the ground. "We decided that it was time to get out of the apple business."<sup>5</sup>

### **1964 World Headquarters Building and Gardens**

Architects Skidmore, Owings and Merrill designed a contemporary 417,000-square-foot building with long sweeping lines. On the site of the Agnew mansion, there are three main floors and a partial floor beneath, called the terrace. The site occupies 18 acres of the 443-acre tract. IBM chairman of the board Thomas J. Watson, Jr., dedicated the new headquarters on October 21, 1964 to "IBM employees everywhere."<sup>6</sup> A new glass entrance pavilion, containing the building's main lobby, was designed by I. M. Pei and was opened March 6, 1985.

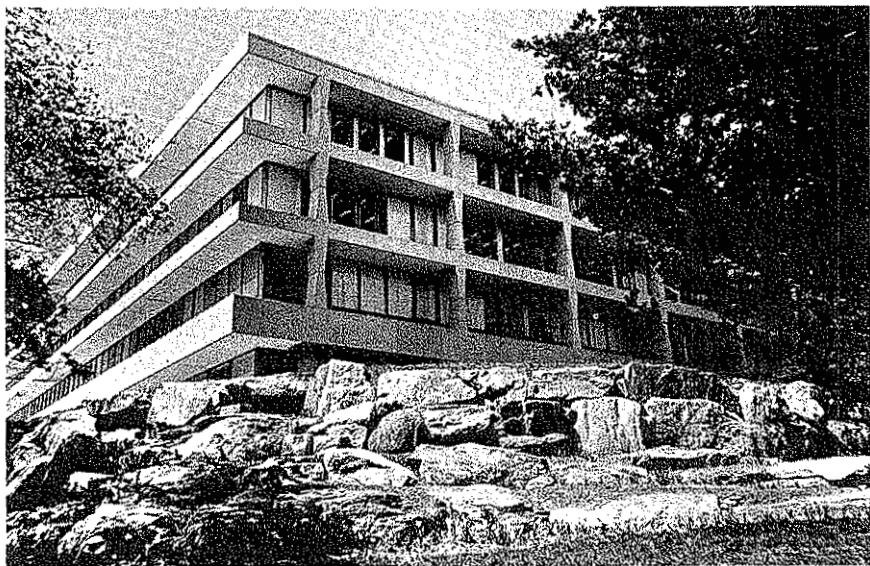
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<sup>3</sup> IBM later moved this farmhouse (the Cornell-Birdsall House) to its present site behind Town Hall.

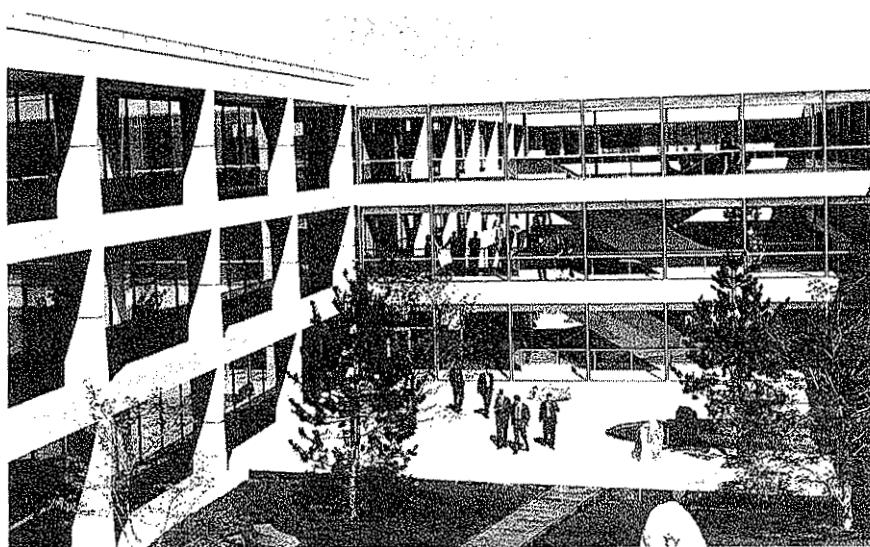
<sup>4</sup> IBM Corporation correspondence dated September 1, 1964 from Paul M. Freeman to A. K. Watson.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Lerner, IBM Press Release dated October 22, 1964.



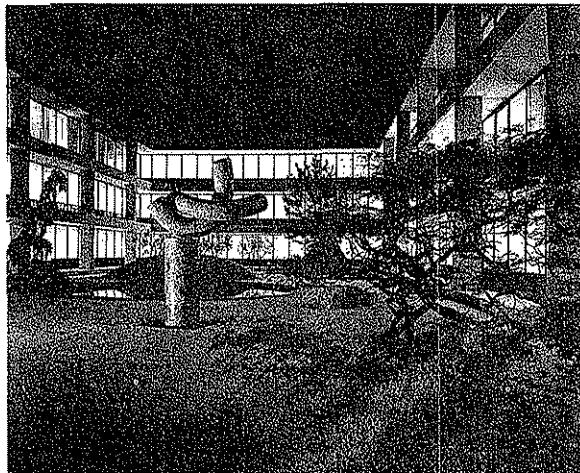
**1964 IBM Corporation World Headquarters Building**  
[Photograph courtesy of IBM Corporation]



**A View of the South Garden**  
[1964 Photograph courtesy of IBM Corporation]

Designer and sculptor Isamu Noguchi created two interior gardens for the 1960s World Headquarters building. A glass-walled, three-level bridge separates the gardens. IBM Corporation press releases and archival data describe further details about the gardens.

The interior gardens represent mankind's past and future. The south garden, featuring a naturalistic setting of rocks and trees is symbolic of mankind's early period of development.



**The future of science and mankind is the theme of the North Garden.**  
**[1964 Photograph courtesy of IBM Corporation]**

A large black dome near the center of the north garden represents man's emergence from the earth to explore the universe. Diagrams carved into it symbolize man's knowledge. A circular pool, painted red and illuminated with underwater lights, reflects the universe yet to be explored. In one corner of the north garden, a granite-covered pyramid represents an atomic fuel pile and is symbolic of power to be used in the future. The Noguchi bronze, spiral-shaped sculpture expresses the genes and chromosomes that determine heredity.

### **A New Education Center**

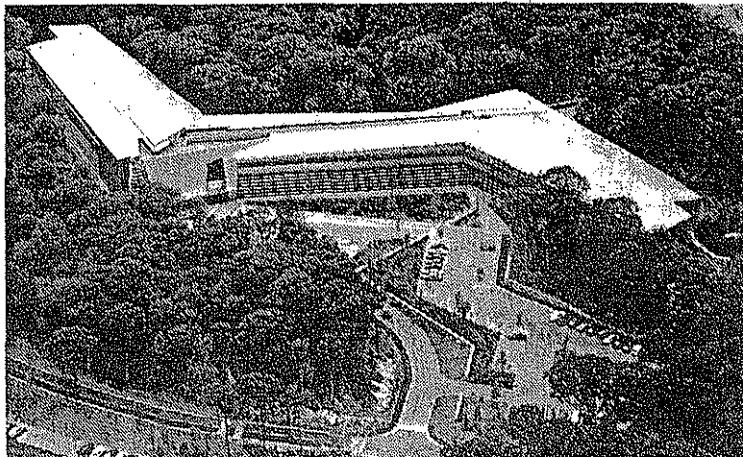
During the 1970s a new education center was planned and built. In 1980 Frank Cary, then chairman of IBM Corporation, formally opened the Management Development Center, which is set on a 26-acre parcel of the world headquarters property. A five-building campus complex was designed by Eliot Noyes to blend with the surrounding landscape.



**IBM Corporation Management Development Center**  
[1980s photograph courtesy of IBM]

### **The Newest Chapter**

During the latter part of the 1990s the North Castle community again heard rumors of change. Would IBM World Headquarters move? Would the 1960's building be remodeled? Would there possibly be a new headquarters building? Rumor became reality. The new lightning bolt-shaped World Headquarters building was dedicated in 1997. It lies to the south of the older site. A new main entrance follows through the woods along a portion of the old, stonewalled, colonial era path leading to Bedford and farther north.



**1997 IBM Corporation World Headquarters Building**  
[Photograph Bob Vergara, All Photographic Services]

## 1997 World Headquarters Building

Kohn Pedersen Fox and Swanke Hayden Connell collaborated on the design of the building. Exterior stainless steel walls, sloping metal roofs, polished granite and reflected glass show a strong concern for the environment and desire to retain as much of the natural environment as possible. The lightning bolt-shaped building, smaller than the 1964 one, respects a 45' height limit and follows the natural contours of the land.

### IBM Corporation: A Good Neighbor

During the spring of 1977, Robert W. Hubner, IBM senior vice president, presented an \$85,000 contribution to The North Castle Historical Society. The gift had been pledged contingent upon The Society's ability to raise the balance of the funds needed to purchase Smith's Tavern, a pre-Revolutionary building located on Route 22 in Armonk. Smith's Tavern is now the headquarters of The North Castle Historical Society as a result of this gift and many others from all our North Castle neighbors.



[L-R] Mrs. Doris Finch Watson, Society vice president and co-chairman of The North Castle Historical Society's Smith Tavern Fund, Richard N. Lander, president of The Society and Robert W. Hubner, IBM senior vice president reviewing some of the original minutes of Town meetings written during Mr. Smith's tenure as Town clerk.

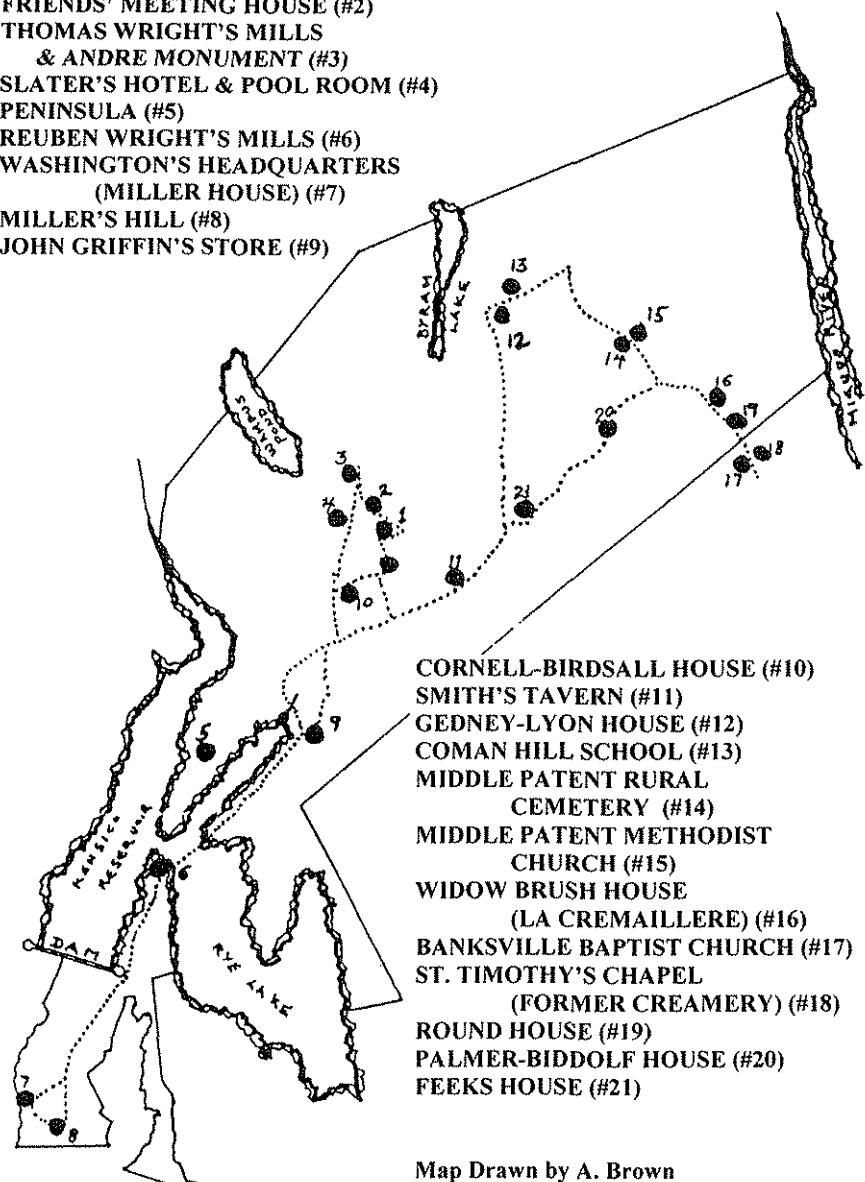
[1977 IBM Corporation newsletter from the Archives of The North Castle Historical Society]

**Acknowledgment:** The North Castle Historical Society is indebted to IBM Corporation and especially to Robert Godfrey, Archives and Records Department, for sharing photographs, press releases and internal documents relating to the purchase of the land, the construction of the buildings and gardens and the move to North Castle. Thank you to Dick Koenig for copying all the photographs loaned by IBM.

START – H. C. CRITTENDEN SCHOOL

TOUR MAP

METHODIST CEMETERY (#1)  
FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE (#2)  
THOMAS WRIGHT'S MILLS  
& ANDRE MONUMENT (#3)  
SLATER'S HOTEL & POOL ROOM (#4)  
PENINSULA (#5)  
REUBEN WRIGHT'S MILLS (#6)  
WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS  
(MILLER HOUSE) (#7)  
MILLER'S HILL (#8)  
JOHN GRIFFIN'S STORE (#9)



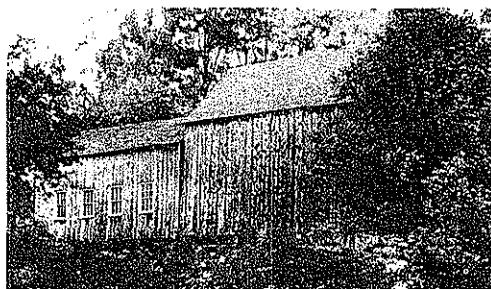
Map Drawn by A. Brown

## AN HISTORIC SITES TOUR

Adapted from the Tour Presented by Doris Finch Watson  
on Saturday, May 31, 1986 as part of the Celebration of the  
250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Town of North Castle

We will leave Harold C. Crittenden School and head to School Street, where we'll pass the former schoolhouse, which is now a residence.<sup>1</sup> When we reach Cox Avenue we will see the early Methodist Cemetery of 1787 (#1)<sup>2</sup> and the site of the early Methodist Church.<sup>3</sup> Then we'll turn in "old" Cox Avenue (east of present Cox Avenue) to the Friends' Meeting House (Quaker Meeting House) of 1798 (#2).<sup>4</sup>

...Our next stop (is) the site of Thomas Wright's Mills and barns (#3) where British Major Andre was held prisoner in 1780.<sup>5</sup> This location is often called Sands' Mills for the family who operated it after 1790.<sup>6</sup>



[Photograph from the Archives of The Society]

<sup>1</sup> Opposite and east of the present Wampus Avenue and School Street intersection.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers in parenthesis correspond to the numbers on the tour map.

<sup>3</sup> The famous Francis Asbury preached here in June 1787. The present church building, at the corner of Main Street and Bedford Road, was dedicated in June of 1872. The old building was dismantled, sold for \$67.50 and rebuilt into a shoe shop, which once stood on Maple Avenue. The Cemetery includes the remains of Gilbert Thorn, North Castle Town Clerk during the Revolution, and Caleb Kirby, New Castle Supervisor for 20 years, the man for whom a place called Kirbyville (near Mt. Kisco) was named. Refer to North Castle History, 1987, Volume 14, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> The Meeting House was saved, moved and restored on Society property at 440 Bedford Road. Dismantling and restoration efforts were directed by John Schnoor and Guy Papale. The completed restoration was dedicated in a ceremony on October 1, 1995. Refer to North Castle History, 1978, Volume 5.

<sup>5</sup> On September 23, 1930, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the containment, the Armonk Business Men's Club erected a monument on a stone selected by Harry Hunter from the old McCracken's Mill dam near Byram Lake. Vito Merlo designed the monument. On September 20, 1980 a rededication program was held on the site.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to North Castle History, 1994, Volume 21.

...(On) Old Mount Kisco Road we will pass a building once called Slater's Hotel & Pool Room (#4). Then we'll pass the old Townsend House,<sup>7</sup> through the center of Armonk and on to Old Route 22, where we will point out the area of the Leatherman's Cave.<sup>8</sup>



SLATER'S HOTEL, ARMONK, N.Y.

Slater's Hotel & Pool Room  
[Postcard from The Society's Archives]



Townsend House & Additions  
[2001 Photograph by Dick Koenig]

As we head toward North White Plains, we'll talk about the Peninsula,<sup>9</sup> the old road leading into the former Village of Kensico (#5),<sup>10</sup> and Reuben Wright's Mills and view the old millstones from the early village (#6).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This building at 495 Main Street (the Israel and Phoebe Weeks Townsend house) was significantly modified over the years. Developer Michael Fareri has remodeled the building and built an additional structure on the property. The Townsend Family Cemetery is up the hill behind the house.

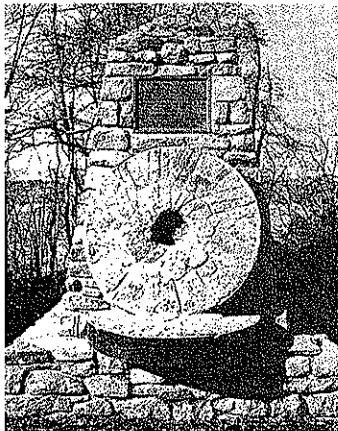
<sup>8</sup> The Leatherman used several caves. This cave in Armonk is also known as Bet Heiliker's cave and is on the hillside behind the old bowling alley. Refer to North Castle History, 1972, Volume 2.

<sup>9</sup> Part of the Peninsula can be seen from Route 120 just north of the Route 22 intersection.

<sup>10</sup> The area was named Kensico in 1848. The first dam and lakes were built in the 1880s, but with the 1908-1917 construction of the reservoir and the 2<sup>nd</sup> dam, the village was demolished. Refer to North Castle History, 1983, Volume 14.

<sup>11</sup> The millstones came from the old grist mill that belonged to John Horton in 1776, later called Deutermann Mill, located on Lake Street in White Plains. Erected in 1932 by the White Plains Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the monument on Route 22 is opposite the Reuben Wright Mills where General Washington and his staff held a meeting July 21-25, 1778.

Washington's Headquarters (Miller House), circa 1738, on Virginia Road is our next stop (#7),<sup>12</sup> where a docent will take us through the house. Next, we'll travel to the top of Miller's Hill, where the earth works played an important part during the Revolutionary War (#8).



Reuben Wright's Mills Monument  
[1976 Photograph by Pete Welling]



Miller House  
[1976 Pete Welling]

As we return toward Armonk, we'll slow down where King Street intersects with Old Route 22; we'll talk about the early store of John Griffin (#9) and the farm of Daniel Lewis.<sup>13</sup> Then, as we travel over Old Route 22, we'll recall the Briarcliff International Automobile Race of 1908 when drivers sped through Armonk and along Old Route 22 on the way toward Kensico and then on back to the beginning point in Briarcliff.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John Miller probably built the house. One of his sons, Elijah, who married Anne Fisher, was active in the Westchester County Militia. Elijah and two of his sons died in camp of a fever in 1776. General Washington headquartered in this house during the American Revolution.

<sup>13</sup> The North Castle Historical Society has the stepping stone from the Griffin Store. The stone is inscribed "J.G. - 1791". The Daniel Lewis farm included two pre-Revolutionary houses located on what is now IBM Corporation property. One house was used for years as the Byram Hills School District Offices. Refer to the Wenga Farm article herein for further details.

<sup>14</sup> Refer to North Castle History, 1981, Volume 8 for a full discussion of the Automobile Race.

We'll take a quick look from the bus at the Cornell-Birdsall House (sometimes called Town Hall Annex or Hendry House), circa 1790 (#10). We'll recall how the house was moved to its present location, restored and given to North Castle by IBM Corporation.<sup>15</sup> We'll then head to Smith's Tavern.

Capt. John Smith purchased his Tavern in 1797, and for generations it served as an early stagecoach stop, Tavern, Post Office and Town Hall, and was a center of community life (#11). As you know, Smith's Tavern is now the headquarters of The North Castle Historical Society, where the educational complex includes the Tavern, the Brundage Blacksmith Shop and the one-room East Middle Patent School, complete with outhouse. (Complex #11).<sup>16</sup>

At Smith's Tavern ... there will be an opportunity to see the year-long display called "Capsule Views of North Castle History – circa 1600-1900", which honors North Castle's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.<sup>17</sup>



**"38 Miles from New York"**

**Watkins Mansion House built c. 1900**

[Both photographs are from the Archives of The North Castle Historical Society.]

<sup>15</sup> Willett Cornell conveyed the house to Joseph Birdsall, who passed it to his son, Benjamin. Refer to the back cover of this publication.

<sup>16</sup> Since this tour was given in 1986, the 1798 Quaker Meeting House has been added to The Society's complex at 440 Bedford Road, Armonk.

<sup>17</sup> Across Bedford Road (Route 22) stands the Thomas Hopkins-David Brundage House, probably built around 1760-1770. Brundage purchased the house from Hopkins heirs in 1812. Oral tradition says the British fired on this house in the summer of 1779 during their retreat from the burning of Bedford. Reportedly, the owners buried their valuables (still buried) to hide them from the British.

As we head east, we'll see the old Mileage Markers along what was called the New York-Danbury Post Road. They show the number of miles from New York City and were guides to stagecoach drivers and their passengers two centuries ago.<sup>18</sup>

We'll point out interesting sites along Bedford Road (Route 22) including Windmill Farm, the location of the Embassy Club, now in ruins<sup>19</sup>, and the site of the little hamlet called "North Castle".

It may be difficult to see the old Gedney-Lyon House, circa 1720 (#12) due to a high fence recently installed, but we will point it out.<sup>20</sup>



[from the Archives of The North Castle Historical Society, Welling Collection, 1976]

Continuing on Bedford Road, we'll point out the location of the old Lyon Cemetery, and across the way the second Coman Hill School (#13) which is now a private dwelling.<sup>21</sup> Next, we'll turn onto Middle Patent Road, where we will pass the old Worden House with its Cobbler's Shop of over 100 years ago; the pre-Revolutionary house where the Smith Family lived; the site of the Samuel Banks home (now Daniel Gray Fishing Club), and then our next stop will be the Cemetery.

<sup>18</sup> See North Castle History 1987, page 18 and 1989 pages 23-27.

<sup>19</sup> The Embassy Club was built as a country residence by John H. Watkins (who purchased the land from Norman W. Lander). Watkins sold the house to Hugh Kirkman Prichitt, whose family lived there in the 1910s and 1920s. See North Castle History 1995, Volume 22, and 1978, Volume 5.

<sup>20</sup> James Gedney sold this house in 1762 to John Lyon. Around 1833 Abraham Lyon deeded the property to John and Mary Bussing; they sold it to Charles Anderson in 1887. Samuel McRoberts owned the house from 1922 until 1948. Later, Architect Clifford Henry James (deceased) lived here. He found charred timbers and beams, suggesting that the British fired this house in 1779 during the retreat from the burning of Bedford.

<sup>21</sup> Refer to North Castle History, 1978, Volume 5.

The eastern part of North Castle is the oldest section, and The Middle Patent Rural Cemetery is North Castle's oldest burial ground (#14).<sup>22</sup> The first recorded burial in our township was that of Samuel Banks, January 29, 1743. We will visit his gravesite. His descendants are numerous, and it is for this family, particularly John Banks, that the hamlet of Banksville is named.

Once again we will leave the bus at The Middle Patent Methodist Church (#15) which was built in 1847. This is a lovely building without any electricity or heating of any type. Particular note should be taken of the beautiful kerosene lamps of brass, the old organ and the lovely stained glass windows.<sup>23</sup>



The Middle Patent Church building around 1901. Notice the horse sheds to the left.

[from the Archives of The Society, Lander Collection; photographer was the late William E. Finch, Jr., Greenwich]

The final lap of our journey begins as we head toward the hamlet of Banksville. We will pass La Cremaillere(#16), the famous French Restaurant, which is housed in the ancient Widow Brush House, circa 1760, at the corner of Round House Road.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Veterans of the American Revolution, Civil and Spanish American Wars, both World Wars, the Korean War and the Viet Nam War are buried here. The Cemetery was on the farmland of Samuel Banks, whose home was on Middle Patent Road across from the Cemetery.

<sup>23</sup> The building suffered a fire on April 4, 1992 and was completely restored. Refer to North Castle History 1993, Volume 20 for a discussion of the fire, the rebuilding project and the history of the Church.

<sup>24</sup> The house passed into the Hobby and Brundage families. Mr. William Jackson acquired it in 1925 and formed the Westchester Women's Golf and Tennis Club, which was followed by the Middle Patent Golf Club (open to women and men).

Southward we pass through the hamlet, cross the Connecticut line and see the Banksville Baptist Church (#17) built in 1853 and the parsonage built circa 1860. Across North Street is the old Creamery, which was used by all the farmers of the area who raised cows and sold milk. This building is now St. Timothy Chapel and is used for Catholic services (#18).

Turning north again, we pass the landmark Finch's Country Store on the right (how could I leave THAT out?). The business has been in the Finch family since 1860 and is presently operated by the fifth generation (my sons)<sup>25</sup>.

Next, we will stop at the Round House (#19) on Round House Road to observe its interesting architecture. Built circa 1860 by Dr. Ralph Griswold, the local physician, this unusual house is another landmark.<sup>26</sup> Heading back to Armonk on Round Hill Road, we will point out the site where Middle Patent School<sup>27</sup> stood for over 150 years, before it was destroyed by fire.



Middle Patent School, December 23, 1964 ... the day the school closed.

[L to R] Mr. Lanza, custodian; Mrs. Mary Livingstone, superintendent; Mrs. Doris Finch Watson with children Phoebe, Walter and baby Bill; Mrs. Carmie Genkerell. Mrs. Watson, Phoebe and Mrs. Genkerell attended the school.

<sup>25</sup> The property remains in the Finch-Watson family, but the business was sold in 1989.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to North Castle History, 1993, Volume 20, and 1990, Volume 17.

<sup>27</sup> The school stood at the corner of present-day Gina Lane and Round Hill Road. There is a residence on the site now. Refer to North Castle History, 1974, Volume 1.

A little farther along Round Hill Road we will pass the pre-Revolutionary house which was the home of Winus Palmer (#20) and which was later owned by Will Biddolf (Biddulph).<sup>28</sup>

After turning on to Banksville Road, we will pass Daisy Pond (sometimes called Gifford's Pond) where the western founding branch of the Mianus flows under the road. Many years ago the old Hall Mill stood at this location.

Climbing the hill, we will pass the early Feeks house (#21) on the right side of the road. This house has a most unusual feature; it has a large boulder protruding from the outside to the inside of the house and extending several feet in length. (How firm a foundation!)<sup>29</sup>



Feeks House [1976 Lindsay Welling]

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<sup>28</sup> The second half of the house was added exactly matching the first. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gay added a large wing on the left of the house.

<sup>29</sup> A deserter from the Hessian Army, Christopher Elias, built a two-room house, farmed and prospered. His daughter Ann married Daniel Feeks; their daughter Mary Feeks married Adam Shutts; their daughter Annie Shutts married John Bennett and their daughter Mrs. Marjorie Bennett Dennison lived here for many years. Mr. and Mrs. William Mitzian presently own the house and have added to it.

As we return to Route 22 (Bedford Road) we'll point out some of the early houses and point out the route that the early stagecoaches used.

As we head into Harold C. Crittenden School, we want to thank you for sharing this journey with us, and we hope that you have enjoyed this glimpse of history within your town. We invite you to become a member of The North Castle Historical Society and to join with us in the work of preserving our precious heritage for the generations who follow.

\* \* \*

Committee for the Tour of Historic Sites: Bruce Barnard, Chairman; Arthur Brown; Ruth Frank; and Doris Finch Watson. A Special Thank You to the North Castle Recreation and Parks Department for transportation and arrangements; The North Castle Historical Society for refreshments; The Docents of Washington's Headquarters and Smith's Tavern for their time and knowledge; and, of course, a special thank you to all who helped with this day. Sponsored by the Town of North Castle.

\* \* \*

PLEASE REFER TO HISTORICAL SITE TOUR OF NORTH CASTLE PUBLISHED IN 1976 AND WRITTEN BY RICHARD N. LANDER, DORIS FINCH WATSON, IRENE SANDFORD AND THOMAS R. PARKER. ALSO SEE NORTH CASTLE TOWN RECORDS, VOLUMES I AND II.

A "Thank You" note from Mrs. George Schmaling (Alice) to Dorrie Watson for the article last year on the Wagon Wheel Restaurant.

*"I received a copy of North Castle History from Lou and Wanda Tartaglia. I want to thank you for your story about the Wagon Wheel and stories about George. They brought back happy memories! I remember when George went to Banksville to collect taxes, you let him use your store as his office. He appreciated your kindness, letting him 'meet the people'.*

*Harry Hunter called the Wagon Wheel the "Incubator". The fellows who met there were always hatching up something! The town was growing and they were interested in its future. You'd be surprised at some of the deals they made!*

*The picture of Nelson Rockefeller and George was taken at the Log Cabin. It was a huge party to help Rockefeller become governor of New York. It was George's last official appearance. He was slated for an operation from which he never recovered.*

*I am ordering a membership to The Society and booklets for George's grandchildren. They will cherish them. The Historical Society is doing a great job. It is to be commended. Again, a group interested in the welfare of the town and giving of their time and effort. It is a beautiful little town with very special people in it!"*



[L-R] Seated in front: John French, Frank Johnson. Seated 2<sup>nd</sup> row: Ernest Sniffen, Timothy Mahoney?, Arthur Downes, Albert MacDonald, William Turnier?. Standing: -?- Edward Robbins, Herbert Flint. [Photograph courtesy of States D. Tompkins, Greenwich, Connecticut]

#### TOMPKINS' BASEBALL CLUB OF ARMONK, NEW YORK, c. 1915

"The Redbrooke Team" was owned by States D. Tompkins, Esq., whose large estate was named "Redbrooke".

## SATCHEL PAIGE – RULES TO LIVE BY

On October 14, 1964 the North Castle News published the following article. “*Some time ago Colliers, a magazine no longer published, ran a series of award-winning articles titled “The Fabulous Satchel Paige.” Mr. Paige is a baseball player of great antiquity who has been managing to extend his career beyond all actuarial expectations by following (he said in the article) a number of personally evolved rules.*

*Here they are. They have the unqualified endorsement of this newspaper and are especially recommended during this contentious campaign season.*

1. *Avoid fried meats which angry up the blood.*
2. *If your stomach disputes you, lie down and pacify it with cool thoughts.*
3. *Keep the juices flowing by jangling around gently as you move.*
4. *Go very lightly on the vices, such as carrying on in society. The social ramble ain't restful.*
5. *Avoid running at all times.*
6. *Don't look back. Something might be gaining on you.”*

### A Request from Your Editors:

**Do you know of any baseball teams in North Castle during the early 1900s? Please share your knowledge with your editors.**

## A BASEBALL REPORT FROM 1930

**The North Castle Monitor, August 7, 1930**

“The North Castle A. C. nine will hook up with the Rye Lake A. A. team at the King Street field Sunday afternoon. The game, arranged on short notice, brings together two great rivals and well matched clubs. Last Sunday, North Castle defeated the Elmsford Colored Giants in an interesting game. Until the sixth inning, it was a pitcher's game between George Kraus and Ray Westphal. North Castle broke the tie and scored four runs.”

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