

NORTH CASTLE HISTORY



Courtesy Dorothy Buick, Jimmy Zygmunt Photographer

**THE ROUND HOUSE, LATE 1980s
Banksville, New York**

THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 45 - 2018

Table of Contents

Letter from President Christine Eggleton	2
The Round House – Banksville, New York	3
World War I Monument	10
In Flanders Fields, a poem by John McCrae.....	14
World War I Messages from <i>The North Castle Sun</i>	15
The Treaty Oak and The Old Washington Oak	20
<i>North Castle History</i> Booklet Cover Images 1974-1979.....	27
Trustees of The North Castle Historical Society.....	Inside Back Cover
The Round House – Banksville, New York	Back Cover

Photographs, Drawings and Maps

The Round House, Banksville, late 1980s	Front Cover
The Round House, Banksville, 1976, a drawing by Hal Schaller.....	3
1868 Map Excerpt showing location of The Round House	4
Birdsell Family Group Picture, 1976	7
Thomas Birdsell and his Treasured Round House, undated	8
The Round House, 2008	9
The Round House, 2018	9
World War I Tablet Monument, Armonk	10
North Castle Men Who Answered Their Country's Call, WWI	11
A Premature, Spontaneous Celebration in New York City, 1918	13
Selling Liberty War Bonds 1917-1918	18
Crossroads around 1885, Today's Virginia Road and North Broadway.....	20
Crossroads, 1954, Virginia Road and North Broadway, North White Plains.....	21
Crossroads, 2018, Virginia Road and North Broadway, North White Plains.....	21
Old Washington Oak, 1903	22
Stump of the Old Oak Tree around 1921	24
Location of Old Oak Tree Monument Stone, North White Plains.....	25
Old Oak Tree Monument Stone Inscription.....	26
Old Oak Tree Metal Marker.....	26
Main Street, Armonk Village, around 1910	27
Corner of North Broadway and Virginia Road, around 1885	28
Banksville, New York 1898	29
Smith's Tavern, March 16, 1898	30
Wampus Brook, Armonk, New York, around 1910	31
Charles Lindbergh Landing at Barrett Field, Armonk, August 12, 1898...	32



Smith's Tavern
Society Headquarters
Listed in The New York State
and National Register of Historic Places

The North Castle Historical Society

440 BEDFORD ROAD ARMONK, NEW YORK 10504

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Members,

This is our 45rd edition of North Castle History. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the names and places in Town that you come across in your daily routine.

The past year was one of great satisfaction for the Board.

Colonial Crafts Days for 4th graders continued to grow. Docents guided many visitors through our educational complex. We repaired the apartment and are happy to welcome a Town employee and his wife as tenants. The Blacksmith Shop has a new roof.

In September we held our annual Partners in Preservation event. The continuing generosity and support from everyone in Town provides for the financial security for our mission of protecting and preserving our complex of historic buildings and providing educational programs.

The haunted house at the annual Halloween Haunt expanded to include both floors of the 1798 Quaker Meeting House. I saw many happy faces!

The past year also brought wonderful news for one of North Castle's most important historic treasures. The County is restoring the 1738 Elijah Miller House (Washington's Headquarters) in North White Plains. There will be a new education building on the property, and the access for buses upgraded. Watch for more news.

Volunteers are always needed. Our Society has many places to use your talents. Please do get involved. Contact me or any other Board member.

On behalf of your Society's Board I offer our sincere thanks for your continued support this past year, both through your contributions and your participation in our activities.

Sincerely,

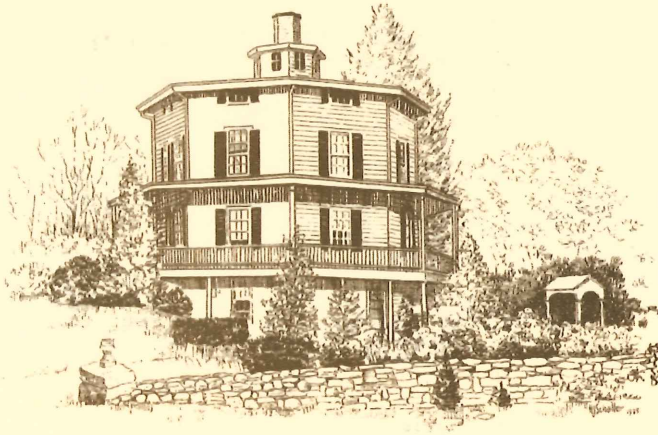
Christine Eggleton, President

THE ROUND HOUSE, BANKSVILLE

by Sharon Tomback

It's a rare eight-sided house that has survived since before the Civil War. Each of the eight sides measures 16 feet. The house is surrounded by a covered porch. Each of the interior sides measures 13 feet.¹ One of two in Westchester County,² it stands on about three quarters of an acre on Round House Road in Banksville³.

It was once the home of Banksville's country doctor, Ralph Griswold. Following Dr. Griswold, Lizzie Crespo used it as her summer home for one year. In 1891, it became the parsonage for the Middle Patent Methodist Church. It was the home of the Slusarz family from 1933 until 1961 and then the home of the Birdsell family from 1961 until 1992.



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

THE ROUND HOUSE, 1976 Pen and Ink Drawing by Hal Schaller

¹ Octagonal shaped houses became popular for a short while due to architect Orson Squire Fowler's book, A Home For All, published in 1848. He claimed the shape was cheaper to build, easier to heat, cooler in the summer, and allowed more natural light.

² There is another Round House in Irvington, New York.

³ Banksville is one of three hamlets in the Town of North Castle. Armonk and North White Plains are the other two hamlets.

The lower level of the house is partially dug into the hillside. The chimney was built in the center of the house and rose through the windowed cupola, reminiscent of the old New England ship captain's residences. A covered porch on the main floor surrounded the house.

Purchased by Dr. Ralph B. Griswold – Banksville's Country Doctor

"Dr. Griswold brought his bride to Banksville, and on the tenth day of November 1859 he took title to 'The Round House' (sometimes called the Octagon House) from Harvey Palmer and Phoebe⁴, his wife, of the town of Mt. Pleasant, New York."⁵ The 1859 purchase price recorded for 'The Round House' was \$800.⁶ Therefore, we know the house was built before 1859.



The North Castle Historical Society Maps Collection

LOCATION OF DR. GRISWOLD'S RESIDENCE AND OFFICE, 1868, THE ROUND HOUSE (map published by Beers, Ellis & Soule)

B. F. Hobby owned the house and property at the intersection of today's Bedford-Banksville Road and Round House Road, known today as La Cremaillere Restaurant.

⁴ The 1850 Federal Census lists Harvey and Phoebe Palmer along with children John W., Samuel, Watson, Sarah, William, and Deborah living in Mount Pleasant. The 1860 Census lists Harvey, wife Phoebe, Samuel, Sarah, William, and Deborah living in Mount Pleasant.

⁵ Doris Finch Watson, "Ralph Barnard Griswold, M.D.", *North Castle History*, published by The North Castle Historical Society 1991, page 4

⁶ Westchester Land Records, Liber 429 of Deeds, p. 323

In the 1880s Dr. Griswold purchased the old Ezekiel Finch farmhouse and property.⁷ After taking down the saltbox house on the Finch property, Dr. Griswold built a magnificent square Victorian house with three floors and a large office space on the south side to accommodate his medical practice needs.

Purchased by Lizzie Crespo in 1890

Dr. Griswold sold the Round House in 1890 to Lizzie Crespo, a lady from New York City who thought she might like to have a country place to enjoy in the summer. However, she kept it less than one year then sold the building and property to The Middle Patent Church in 1891.⁸

Purchased by the Trustees of The Middle Patent Church

Theodore Brundage, William J. Brundage, Shadrach R. Close, Theodore E. Close, William S. Finch, Ralph B. Griswold, Lorenzo Mead, Hiram Mead, Ezekiel Reynolds and Richard Smith, Trustees of the Church, were instrumental in purchasing the Round House - situated on three-quarters of an acre of ground with outbuildings - for \$1,300.⁹

The first pastor who lived in it was the Reverend William Willcocks. The Church held the Round House until February 1925 when it was sold and passed out of the church's hands.¹⁰

The Slusarz Family

Anthony and Anna Slusarz and their children were living on North Street, Greenwich when the 1930 Federal Census was taken. They were living in the Round House in Banksville when the 1940 Federal Census was taken. He was a gardener on the Dewart Estate on North Street.

The 1940 Federal Census listed the following Slusarz children still living at home, all born in Connecticut: Joseph, Mary, Edward, George, Kasmer, Helen, Lucas, Stanley and Anthony.

⁷ The Ezekiel Finch house stood approximately at the site where the Ivan Lendl Grand Slam Tennis Club stands today in Banksville.

⁸ Watson, op. cit., p.8

⁹ Westchester Land Records, Liber 246 of Deeds, page 469

¹⁰ Richard N. Lander, "A History of the Middle Patent United Methodist Church," *North Castle History*, published by The North Castle Historical Society 1993, pages 19-20

According to a June 26, 1936 article in the *North Castle Sun* newspaper, Joseph Slusarz was a recent graduate of Mount Kisco High School. He was living at home with his parents in the Round House across the way from the Middle Patent Golf Club where they had lived since 1933.

Anthony was born in Poland¹¹ in 1889 and immigrated to the United States in 1906. Anna was born in 1890 and immigrated to the United States in 1907. Six of Anna and Anthony Slusarz's sons served in the armed forces during World War II: Lt. Joseph P.; Sgt. George A.; Cpl. Edward J.; PFC Kasmer; Cpl. Frank A.; and Pvt. Lucas M. Slusarz.

The December 15, 1939 issue of *The North Castle Sun* reported, "Anthony Slusarz, Banksville gardener, who has enough sons to make a full baseball team and enough daughters to form a good-sized cheering section, last Friday became a citizen of the United States. Mr. Slusarz, 51-year-old father of 15 American-born children, was admitted to citizenship by Supreme Court Justice Lee Parsons Davis in company with 21 other men and women. The gardener, an Austrian¹² by birth, came to this country in 1906. All of his children live near him in Northeastern Westchester or just over the Connecticut line."

Purchased by Thomas Edward Birdsell in 1961

On November 29, 1961 Thomas (Tommy) Edward Birdsell signed a deed of purchase for the Round House with Margaret A. Wilson and Anthony Harry Slusarz, executors of the Will of Anna Slusarz.¹³

Thomas worked as a painting contractor. He was a member of The North Castle Historical Society.

His parents, James Ellsworth and Sadie Frances Mandeville Birdsell, lived with him. They celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in 1976 at the Round House surrounded by their children.

¹¹ During the years when Anthony and Anna were born, Poland did not exist as an independent state. The German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires absorbed parts of the territory. The Republic of Poland, created at the end of World War I, is commonly known as the Second Polish Republic.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Recorded in the Office of the Clerk of the County of Westchester, Division of Land Records, on November 30, 1961 Liber 6163 Page 415 of Deeds



Courtesy of Dorothy Buick

**65th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY PARTY, 1976
for James Ellsworth and Sadie Frances Mandeville Birdsell**

[L-R] Back Row - Fred (Jimmy) Birdsell and Thomas (Tommy) Birdsell; Second Row – Mary Louise (Toddy) Birdsell Horton, Sadie and James Birdsell, Rose Birdsell Duncan; Kneeling – Nancy Birdsell Valdez and Dorothy Birdsell Loperena (Two children are not pictured: Charles Birdsell and Eileen Birdsell Kovach.)

Thomas Birdsell's ancestors were some of the earliest settlers in the Banksville/Greenwich area. He filled the house with antiques and welcomed area historical societies, school groups, family, friends and all who knocked on the door. He loved the old Round House and kept an open door for anyone interested in visiting. "Every time I step out the door there seems to be someone who wants my picture taken in front of the house ... I don't mind; in fact, I am very proud of the house."¹⁴

¹⁴ Robert Burg, The Patent Trader newspaper, January 10, 1986



Courtesy of Dorothy Buick

Thomas Edward Birdsell in Front of his Treasured Home

Thomas lived in the Round House until his death on September 23, 1992. He is buried in Middle Patent Rural Cemetery. His Executor, Louise Horton, took possession of the Round House on December 16, 1992.

Anthony Campos in 2006

According to records of the Assessor, Town of North Castle, Anthony Campos took possession of the house October 4, 2006. By September 2016 the house and property were held by Federal National Mortgage Association.

Manor Properties Redevelopment LLC 2017 A Salute of Appreciation

On November 10, 2017 Manor Properties Redevelopment LLC purchased the old Round House. Thanks to this new owner the historic and unique Round House in Banksville has been saved and beautifully rebuilt.



Prudential Holmes & Kennedy Real Estate

THE ROUND HOUSE, 2006



Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage

THE ROUND HOUSE, 2018

WORLD WAR I MONUMENT

**IN HONOR OF THE MEN OF THE TOWNSHIP OF NORTH CASTLE
WHO ANSWERED THEIR COUNTRY'S CALL IN THE GREAT WORLD WAR
1917-1919**

The North Castle Sun announced in its October 15, 1920 edition that the new tablet would be dedicated on Armistice Day:

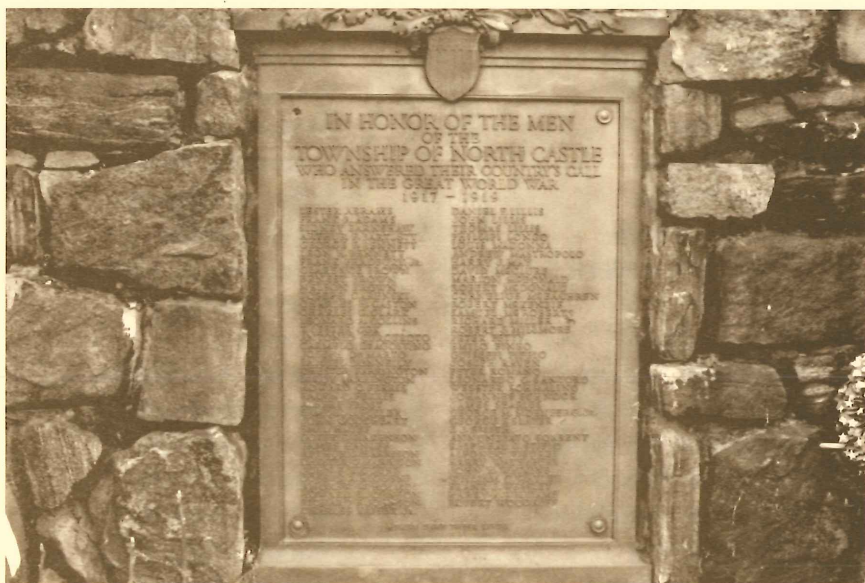
“It is now expected that the dedication of the tablet to the men who were in the World War will take place on November 13th, Armistice Day. The work of preparing the foundation and erecting the shaft of rubble stone is now under way and will be completed in ample time. It will be a most attractive memorial.”



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

THE WORLD WAR I TABLET MONUMENT 3 Bedford Road, Armonk

The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917 – reluctantly joining in World War I three years after fighting began.



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

NORTH CASTLE MEN WHO ANSWERED THEIR COUNTRY'S CALL IN THE GREAT WORLD WAR 1917-1919

Abrams, Lester
 Adams, Frank R.
 Barnshaw, Sidney
 Bartlett, Arthur F.
 Bennett, George P.
 Bennett, Leon H.
 Bradbury, Jr, Frank
 Brown, Clarence
 Brown, Ernest
 Brown, Nelson
 Carenski, Joseph
 Caston, Charles H.
 Clark, Charles G.
 Collins, Leonard A.
 Cox, T. Lester
 Curcuroto, Antonio
 DeAgostino, Carmelo
 DeMarto, Joseph

Donnelly, Samuel
 Farrington, Chester
 Farrington, LeRoy
 Ferris, Howard C.
 Ferris, Howard C.
 Ferris, Ralph C.
 Frost, Albert
 Fuller, Samuel L.
 Goodheart, John
 Hajek, Emil
 Haknson, Gotfrid
 Hanley, James
 Harrison, Arthur J.
 Harrison, Chester J.
 Higgens, John F.
 Higgens, Joseph A.
 Holmes, Andrew W.
 Johnson, Howard S.

Johnson, Richard F.
Kaiser, Jr., Charles
Lilllis, Daniel F.
Lillis, John
Lillis, Thomas
Longo, Phillipi
Madonna, Louis
Mastropolo, Andrew
May, Harry J.
McClure, David
McDonald, Marion
McDonald, Robert
McEachren, Cornelius
McKenzie, Robert
McRoberts, Samuel
Miller, Richard
Millmore, Robert J.
Petty, Peter
Pineo, Emilo

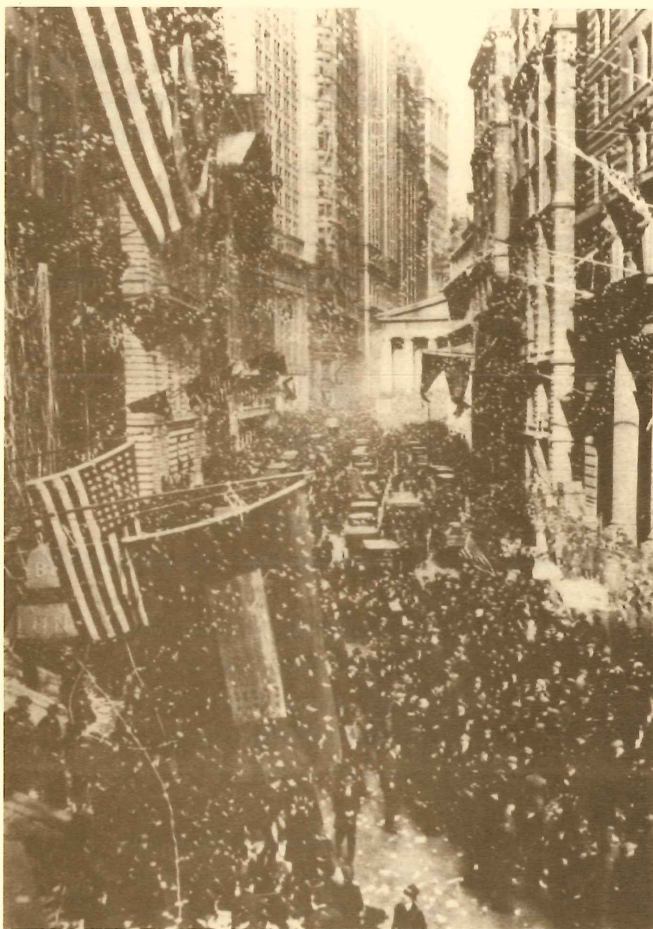
Pipelo, Guiseppi
Raven, Joseph
Romano, Peter
Santoro, Leonardo C.
Schmaling, Webster
Schnoor, Johannes
Searles, James
Sidenberg, Jr., George M.
Slater, George F.
Smith, J. J.
Sorrent, Annunziato
Stipio, Ralpheal J.
Tiburzi, Alfonzo
Waterbury, Harry
Watkins, John H.
Watley, William O.
Wessley, Frank J.
Williams, Harry N.
Woodruff, Robert

It has been reported that the United States mobilized forces totaled more than 4.3 million people and that the number of prisoners, missing, wounded and killed totaled 323,018.¹ World War I spanned four years – 1914 to 1918 – and has been called the “war to end all wars.” The United States did not join the fighting until 1917. The North Castle Monument spans 1917-1919.

Although the causes of wars are complicated and often debated, most historians agree that the causes of World War I grew from a complicated system of mutual defense treaties, expanding imperialism, an ethnic revolt, and a growing worldwide emphasis on building the military. However, it was the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria-Hungary, at the end of June 1914 by a Serbian nationalist that sparked this war.

Four days before the actual signing of the armistice ending World War I, a premature peace report set off wild celebrations across the United States. The cease fire became official on November 11, 1918.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I/Killed-wounded-and-missing>



A PREMATURE, SPONTANEOUS CELEBRATION IN NEW YORK CITY

Armistice was officially declared at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918.

However, the Armistice was extended on three occasions before peace was finally ratified by all involved on January 10, 1920.²

ARMISTICE DAY CENTENARY – NOVEMBER 11, 2018

²Edmonds, Sir James, *The Occupation of the Rhineland 1918-1929 (History of the Great War)*, 1944, London.

Rector Nils Chittenden and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church collected, edited, and published accounts from friends and relations as a memorial tribute to the service and sacrifice of those who took part in the First World War, some of whom were North Castle soldiers.

Please access the beautiful memorial publication at <http://www.ststephensarmonk.org/news/2018/11/29/armistice-day-centenary-commemoration> and at www.northcastlehistory.org.



IN FLANDERS FIELDS
a poem by Lt.-Col. John McCrae (1872-1918)

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Canadian physician John McCrae wrote this poem in 1915. While serving in France in 1918, he died of pneumonia.

WORLD WAR I MESSAGES

Excerpts from *The Sun* newspaper, 1918

Friday, January 18, 1918

ONE WAY TO HAVE INTEREST PAID YOU

Now is the time to help the government. Buy a War Saving Stamp or Thrift Card. You are paid 4 per cent interest, compounded quarterly.

Friday, February 15th, 1918

OUR WAR

One pound of wheat less; one pound of other cereals a week more – and our exportable surplus is increased by 132,000,000 bushels. ... If you buy flour by the barrel or sugar by the box; if you have no meatless days or wheatless days or porkless Saturdays at your house, you are helping America lose the war and starving our allies who have suffered for three years as we need never suffer, thanks to them.

Friday, March 8th, 1918

HELP YOUR COUNTRY

The following article was signed, “Members of the Red Cross, Branch of Armonk” - If you want to help your Country, if you want to help Humanity, if you are not able to go “over there,” you can show your colors by giving your aid to the Red Cross branch of Armonk. We are seeking more help with our knitting and bandage work and your earnest co-operation is solicited. It is your help that we want, the help of those at home. Send in your name to the Chairman, Mrs. George M. Sidenberg. ... No matter how little you might do, it will help to dress some wounds and keep our soldier boys warm and most of all you will be helping Our Dear Country, these glorious United States of America and her Allies in their struggle for Humanity and Freedom.

Friday, April 26th, 1918

ONE WAY TO PUT KAISER OUT OF BUSINESS

The brutal Hun must be checked in the midst of his ferocity. No! not checked, but pounded, and hammered and beaten to his knees, and given so much of his own militaristic medicine until he is compelled to yell for

mercy. Not till then will the world be made safe for Democracy and peace and tranquility prevail again as of yore. To this end everybody in North Castle, man, woman and child, should be prepared to do their bit. We can't all go to the firing line. We're not all so financially situated that we can buy liberally of Liberty Bonds, but we all can and should raise, or help to raise, every possible pound of pork and poultry to help overcome the meat stringent and to grow all the fruit and vegetable food in our power to help feed our country and the starving population of our noble Allies fighting the world battle of fair play and justice to humanity.

Friday, May 24th, 1918

RED CROSS ORGANIZATION AT NORTH WHITE PLAINS

The Red Cross Drive at North White Plains is in full swing. Judge Pietschker is the team captain and Miss Pearl Pietschker the secretary. The team consists of Mrs. Clarence Bird, Miss Dorothy Harrison, Castle Heights; Miss DeWitt and Miss McCarter, the Holland Park section; Miss Higgins and Miss Wood, Kensico Manor; Mrs. Archibald, Mrs. Glaiser and Mrs. Fulton, Washington's Headquarters; and Mrs. Banks, Miss Adelaide Kraus and Miss Pearl Pietschker, Broadway and Orchard Street section. Thursday will be school day and every child will give a penny for each birthday passed. Saturday night there will be a Red Cross dance at the North White Plains Fire House under the auspices of the "Two Old Friends." The firemen have very kindly donated their hall for the occasion.

Friday, July 12, 1918

SEND SOLDIER BOYS HOME PAPER WITHOUT COST TO YOU

Mr. William Boyce Thompson of Westchester County had decided as a contribution to war work to send some one Westchester newspaper to each enlisted man of this County in the Army or Navy while on duty away from home engaged in military service and to each member of such unit as the Hospital Unit, Medical Corps, Red Cross or the Y.M.C.A. ... He will send the paper on application of men in the service, but in order to get it started early, will send it first on the application of the next of kin, if the next of kin will fill out the following blank coupon and send it to Mr. Thompson, the paper will be sent without delay.

Friday, August 16, 1918

**AUGUST 24TH REGISTRATION DAY FOR MEN REACHING 21 SINCE
JUNE 5TH LAST**

August 24th is the day set for the registration of the men who have become of age since June 5th last. To prepare for any delay in the passage of 18 to 45 man power bill, Provost General Crowder has issued orders to State headquarters calling for the registration on August 24th. It is planned to hold the first registration of men between 18 and 21 years and between 31 and 45 years early in September, the date depending upon the passage of the man power bill.

Friday, September 6, 1918

DRAFT EXAMINERS

On Thursday, September 12th, a board of examiners to take the list of those who are eligible for the new army will hold a session in the Town Rooms. The Board will comprise Edgar Huestis and Alvah P. French, the publisher of The Sun. The Board will be in session from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. There are to be no exceptions between the ages of 18 and 45 years of age.

Friday, August 27, 1918

THOSE LISTS: THE FOURTH LIBERTY LOAN

Every city, town and village in the United States may be represented on those lists from the front – the lists that tell of heroism by those new to fighting that has aroused the wonder and the admiration of those who make of war a science. Our town must share in the suspense as it shall surely share in the glory. ... the Fourth Liberty Loan will soon be made. Every dollar we lend means added security for our boys who are there and those others from this community who soon will be there. And that means added security for us who wait at home. Begin today to plan your part in the campaign for the Fourth Liberty Loan.

Friday, October 25, 1918

NORTH CASTLE GOES "OVER THE TOP"

Quota \$43,000. Amount Secured \$58,500.

The Armonk District of the Town of North Castle was asked to raise for the Fourth Liberty Loan the sum of \$43,000. This was its quota. When

the returns were tabulated this week, the amount subscribed aggregated the sum of \$58,850 representing 125 subscribers. This excess shows that we went far over the top and that an honor flag will float to the breeze from the staff on the Village Green.



Collections of The Society

SELLING LIBERTY WAR BONDS 1917-1918

A soldier, speaking in front of the large American flag mounted on the Armonk Methodist Church building (today's Westchester Chinese Christian Church, 3 Bedford Road, Armonk), is selling bonds to finance the war. There were multiple issues of bonds. The government defaulted on the Fourth Liberty Bond, but substantially repaid all the others by the end of the 1920s.

Friday, August 30, 1918

PUBLIC NOTICE: WARNING

For some weeks various forms of unnatural, and in some respects suspicious, lights have been observed in this vicinity. Any form of light signaling by unauthorized persons, either by means of search lights,

rocket flares, flashing of automobile lights, in any manner, which acts as a communication should be immediately discontinued. The Civic and Military authorities are fully cognizant of these activities and the locations in which they occur, and all persons are hereby warned that orders have been issued to those in authority to arrest anyone detected in the act of signaling, and in case of need to fire upon them with warning.

Friday, June 7, 1918
HONOR ROLL WANTED

An Honor for North Castle, that is what we aim to see. A list of the names of the young men in the service who represent this township in the great task of throttling the murderous Hun. Publish the names in a conspicuous place, so that all may see and read and know who are the daring young spirits that are fighting for the further glory of the historic old town of North Castle.

Friday, November 15, 1918
PEACE DECLARED: BOYS WILL COME HOME

The North Castle heroes who went into the Army and Navy with the colors will now have a chance to return home as rapidly as the civic conditions abroad will warrant. This will in all probability require at least twelve months.

If however, trouble should come out of the Russian situation the delay may prolong into years. Self-government for those not used to it is an untried scheme and it will take years for them to adjust themselves. But let all hope for an earlier and easier solution of the problems growing out of the great upheaval. What a welcome the young warriors will get!

Friday, December 13, 1918
THE GREAT WAR IS OVER

Soon the boys that represented North Castle in the greatest conflict in history will be on their way home. What will this historic township do to show its appreciation and gratitude for the wearers of blue and khaki?

THE TREATY OAK AND THE OLD WASHINGTON OAK IN TODAY'S NORTH WHITE PLAINS

by Sharon Tomback



Collections of the North Castle Historical Society

CROSSROADS AROUND 1885 TODAY'S VIRGINIA ROAD AND NORTH BROADWAY

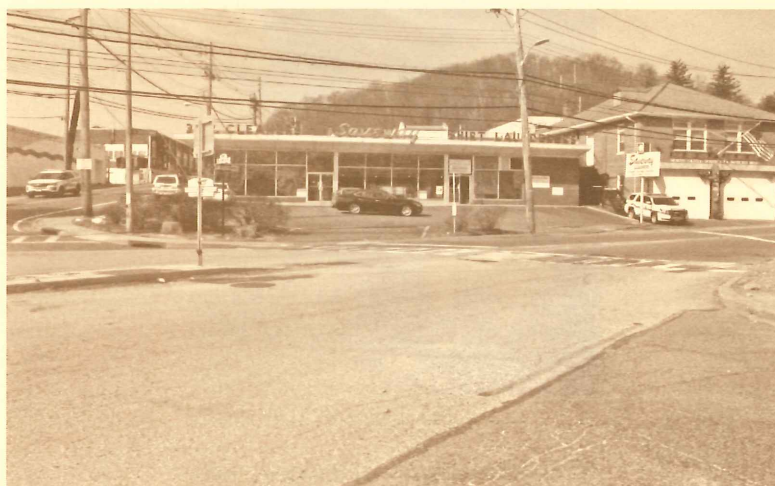
According to legend the historic old oak tree pictured above was used by Continental soldiers to hang deserters and spies during the Revolution, and it was called The Old Washington Oak. In earlier years the oak tree was used as a North Castle boundary defining marker and as a site where treaties were negotiated with the Indians. It was called The Treaty Oak.

This crossroads was the site of the original Fisher Farm (shown above). Later the Oak Tree Inn operated for many years in the farmhouse. Today the Save-Way Cleaners building stands where the farmhouse once proudly reigned. The North White Plains Fire House stands today immediately to the right of the farmhouse shown above.



Courtesy Westchester County Historical Society

**VIRGINIA ROAD AND NORTH BROADWAY CROSSROADS, 1954
NORTH WHITE PLAINS**



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

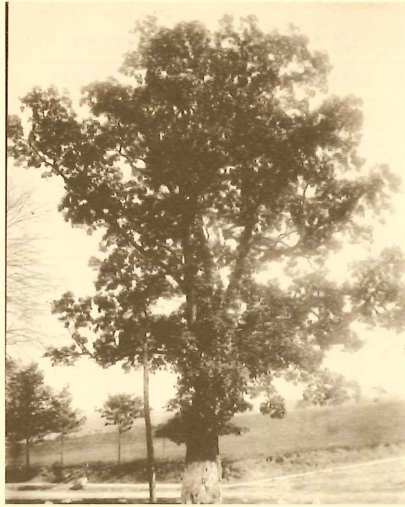
**VIRGINIA ROAD AND NORTH BROADWAY CROSSROADS, 2018
NORTH WHITE PLAINS**

North Broadway curves around in front of the Oak Tree Inn site (today's Saveway Cleaners) and the North White Plains Fire House. The roadway exiting to the left is Virginia Road.

THE OAK TREE INN

Otto May was the owner of the Oak Tree Inn in 1916.¹ A very sad accident happened in front of the Inn at the end of September 1917 when Helen May was run over and killed instantly. She was only six years old and the only child of Mr. May.²

By August 1941 Jacob Knauber owned the Inn. He renovated the interior and painted the exterior, and introduced a new outdoor dining garden (termed by some a beer garden) with a celebration dinner advertised at seventy-five cents per plate. "In celebration of the event Mr. Knauber is holding a steak dinner next Wednesday evening, August 20th and is inviting all his old and new friends to partake of a delicious feast especially prepared for the occasion."³



Photograph by John Rosch

THE OLD WASHINGTON OAK, 1903

John Rosch⁴ wrote in his book, Historic White Plains, that the tree was destroyed by lightning in 1903, three weeks after the photograph appearing above was taken.

¹ State Commissioner of Excise of the State of New York for the Year Ending September 30, 1916, Volume I

² *The Sun*, published in North Castle, New York on Friday, September 28, 1917.

³ *North Castle Sun*, published in Armonk, New York on Thursday, August 14, 1941.

⁴ Rosch, John, Historic White Plains, Harbor Hill Books, 1939

REMAINS OF THE OLD OAK TREE⁵

by Charles Kaiser, 1915

“What remains of the Old Oak Tree straddles the White Plains village and North Castle town lines in Westchester County, New York. One feels impelled to take off his hat and bow in veneration before it as, grim and silent and decrepit, it stands like a sentinel beside the State highway, challenging the attention and the wonder of the speeding autoists who whirl by it at the rate of a thousand or more per day.

What marvelous tales the broken old giant could tell had it but a voice and a memory! Stories of the red man in his pristine glory, of the coming of white men from across the seas, of the struggle for supremacy of Indian and paleface, of the wars amongst the white strangers themselves – Dutch vs. English and French vs. English – and, finally, of the supreme struggle for liberty of the young colonies.

All these things happened in the life time of this famous old guardian of the roadside, for, even when Columbus first crossed the Atlantic in his adventurous quest for a new route to the East Indies, this noble oak was already a sturdy sapling.

Alas! That a tree with such a history, that, according to tradition, sheltered the immortal Washington more than once, upon whose spreading limbs more than one spy was reputed to have been hung, and in whose shadow important documents were passed upon and signed – alas, that for want of a little timely care and attention, its trunk should have been permitted to fall into decay and so weakened that after centuries of brave battling with the elements, it was, finally, unable to withstand a moderate blow from the northwest and toppled heavily across the roadway.

A twelve-foot stump of the venerable trunk still remains, and the past summer a few feeble sprouts made an heroic effort to grow and keep alive, but, to all intents and purposes, the Old Oak Tree is no more.”

⁵ Kaiser, Charles, *North Castle Sun*, published in Armonk, New York on Friday, January 29th, 1915



Photograph appearing in In the Footsteps of Washington, printed 1921⁶

THE STUMP OF THE OLD OAK TREE ABOUT 1921

“The modern tourist approaching from White Plains is guided by a sign nailed to the famous old oak tree before an ancient crossroads inn. The inn is ‘dry’ and the tree is dead: time having gnawed a great hollow in its sturdy heart after a century and a half of beauty and service. Without question it existed in Washington’s day, and even in its present state of decay it serves as a fitting adjunct to the little cottage in the wildwood ‘handy by’.”⁷

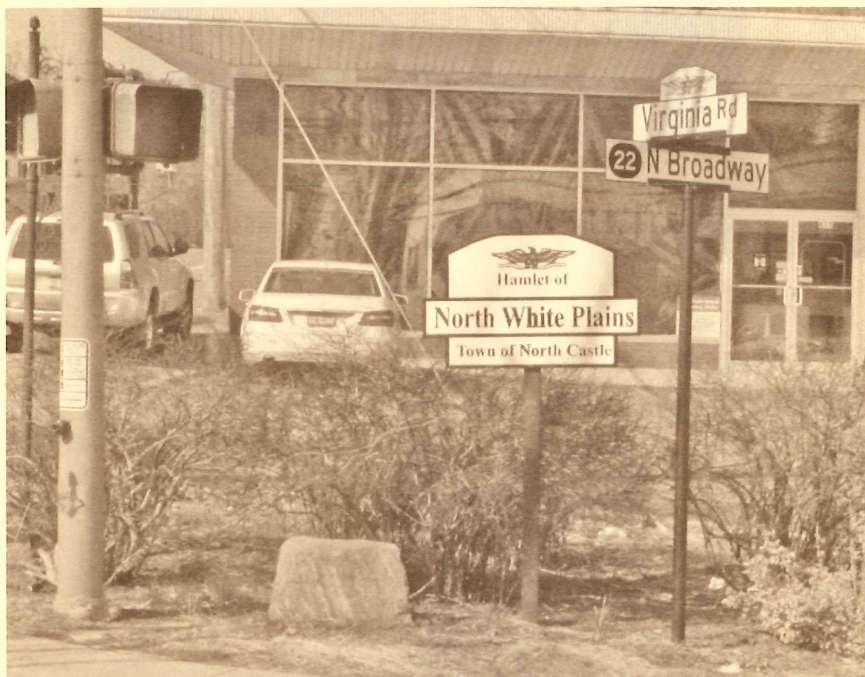
In 1918 the Daughters of the American Revolution appealed to the North Castle Town Board for help to preserve the remains of the Old Oak Tree.⁸ Justices Sinn and Pietschker of the Town Board were tasked with working with the DAR and to provide financial assistance.

⁶ Heusser, Albert H., In the Footsteps of Washington – Pope’s Creek to Princeton, page 239, privately printed Patterson, New Jersey, 1921

⁷ Ibid – referring to Washington’s Headquarters/Miller House

⁸ *The Sun* published in North Castle, New York on Friday, September 13th, 1918

The DAR Magazine reported in 1923, “The site of the Old Oak Tree which marked the boundary between White Plains and North Castle under which General Washington and his army passed many times on their way to the Headquarters a quarter of a mile north has been marked by taking pieces of the old tree and embedding them in concrete and placing against it a stone taken from the ground at the Headquarters with an inscription cut upon it. Experts in forestry claim the tree to be nearly 500 years old.”⁹



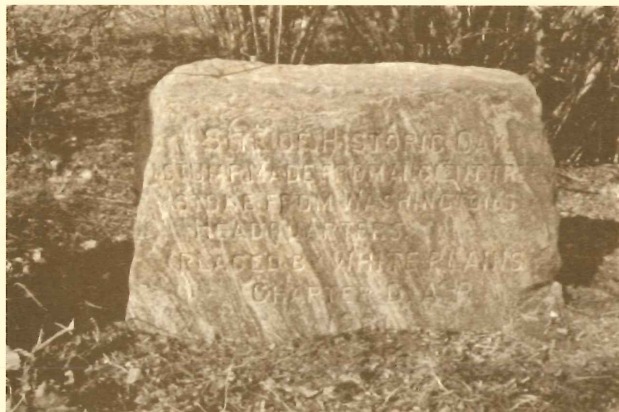
Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

**NORTH WHITE PLAINS CROSSROADS, 2018
VIRGINIA ROAD AND NORTH BROADWAY**

THE OLD OAK TREE MONUMENT STONE

The photograph above shows the location of the monument stone.

⁹ *DAR Magazine*, Volume 57, August 1923, No. 8, page 474



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OLD OAK TREE MONUMENT STONE INSCRIPTION

***“SITE OF HISTORIC OAK
STUMP MADE FROM ANCIENT TREE
STONE FROM WASHINGTON’S HEADQUARTERS
PLACED BY WHITE PLAINS CHAPTER D.A.R. – 1921”***



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

**OAK TREE METAL MARKER ERECTED BY THE WHITE PLAINS
CHAPTER, DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

NORTH CASTLE HISTORY
COVER PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE FIRST SIX BOOKLETS
1974 – 1979



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

FIRST BOOKLET – 1974

MAIN STREET, ARMONK VILLAGE, AROUND 1910

Looking south, the first house on the left was the residence of Charles E. Brundage and is now the home of Hickory & Tweed. The next house on the left belonged to Woolsey Ackerman. It no longer stands and today the property is part of the Armonk Square development.

Beyond the trees on the left is the corner of Bedford Road (part of today's Old Route 22) and Main Street where the Armonk Methodists built a church building in 1890. Today the building is home to the Westchester Chinese Christian Church. The house on the right was the residence of David Brundage. It no longer stands and today the property is home to Cherry Blossom Farm.

Note the wagon wheel tracks in the unpaved street.

In 1910 the population in all of North Castle was reported to be 1,522 people.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH SECOND BOOKLET – 1975



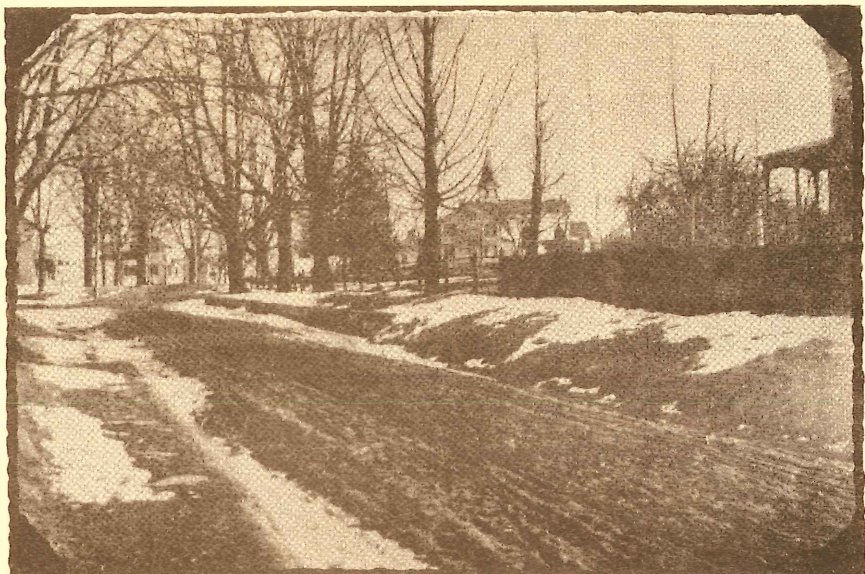
Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

CORNER OF TODAY'S NORTH BROADWAY AND VIRGINIA ROAD IN NORTH WHITE PLAINS AS IT APPEARED AROUND 1885

This original Fisher Farmhouse stood at the intersection of today's North Broadway and Virginia Road in North White Plains. The farmhouse no longer stands. For many years the Oak Tree Inn was located on this corner. Today the property is home to Saveway Cleaners and the North Castle South Fire District No. 1 firehouse stands next door.

Legend says that the historic old oak tree in the front of the picture was used as a North Castle boundary defining marker and as a site where treaties were negotiated with the Indians. It was known as The Treaty Oak. Reportedly, it was also used by Continental soldiers to hang deserters and spies during the Revolution, and the tree became known as The Old Washington Oak.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH THIRD BOOKLET – 1976



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

BANKSVILLE, NEW YORK 1898

The photograph 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 the 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 was built on the property.

In the distance to the right, in Connecticut, is the Banksville Baptist Church, built in 1853 and converted into a residence in 1975. The property between Dr. Griswold's and the parsonage is presently occupied by the North Street Shopping Center.

The Creamery building stands across the street from the old Banksville Baptist Church building and is now St. Timothy's (Catholic) Chapel.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH FOURTH BOOKLET – 1977



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

SMITH'S TAVERN, MARCH 16, 1898

This photograph was taken by James B. Sutherland, Jr. in 1898. At one time it was owned by Granger Tripp, the great, great, great grandson of Capt. John Smith.

Capt. John Smith purchased the tavern from Harrison Palmer in 1797. John married Sarah Purdy, daughter of Roger Purdy and his wife Elizabeth Fowler. John and Sarah Smith had five children, William Henry, John Haviland, Samuel Purdy, George Washington and Elizabeth Maria.

During the American Revolution Capt. John Smith served in the Continental Army. James Hopkins testified that "...Smith was confined at first in the Sugar House, and afterwards went at large. He was a tailor and worked at his trade making clothes for the officers for which he was paid. ... This information I got from John Smith himself."

Today Historic Smith's Tavern, a National Register Historic Place, is owned and protected by The North Castle Historical Society.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH FIFTH BOOKLET – 1978



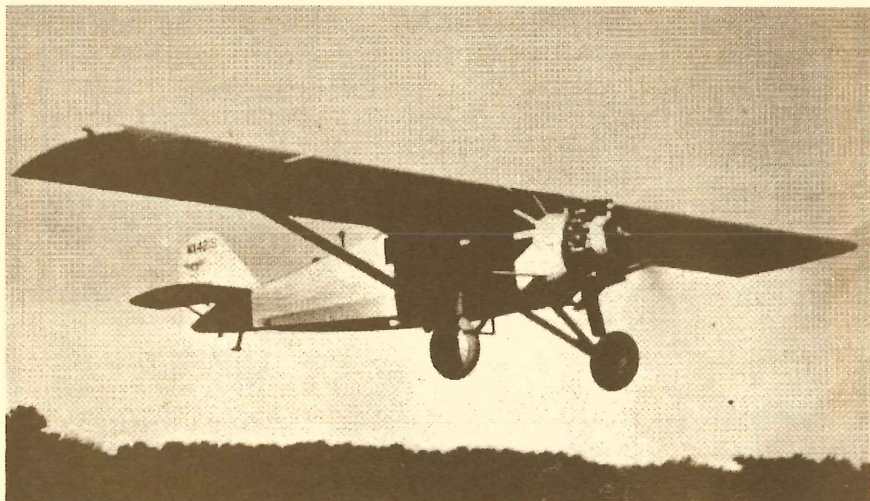
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WAMPUS BROOK, ARMONK, NEW YORK, AROUND 1910

This postcard photograph was taken about 1910 from Bedford Road. The view is north along Wampus Brook into what is today Wampus Brook Park. Maple Avenue is to the far left of the photograph, outside the fence. At the top right of the photograph, Maple Avenue turns toward Main Street where the John and Goldie Hergenhan Recreation Center is located today (the old Armonk firehouse).

Note the bogs where the pond is today. To the right is an old orchard about where the gazebo stands today. The pine grove standing today was planted by New York City when they acquired the property a short time after this photograph was taken.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH SIXTH BOOKLET – 1979



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

CHARLES LINDBERGH LANDING AT BARRETT FIELD, ARMONK - AUGUST 12, 1928

The plane was a gift from the B.F. Mahoney Aircraft Corporation, a subsidiary of Ryan Aircraft who built the “Spirit of St. Louis” and from various other suppliers of equipment for the “Spirit of St. Louis.” It was the only B-IX aircraft with a 46’ wing span and was built especially for Charles Lindbergh in April 1928.

Lindbergh’s coming to Armonk was supposed to have been a secret, but officials at Barrett Field received a call from St. Louis, Missouri on Friday, August 10, that Col. Lindbergh would make a stop overnight on Sunday afternoon and a few people were told. Word passed from mouth to mouth. More than 1,000 spectators lined the field to watch him land.

He stayed overnight with his friends, Mr. and Mrs. R. M. Lewis of Bedford Center and departed Monday morning about 8:30 a.m. Apparently his departure time was less known for only about 100 people came to wave him off.

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THE ROUND HOUSE

Round House Road - Banksville, New York

Sometimes called an octagon house, Banksville's Round House is a rare eight-sided structure that has survived since before the Civil War. We only know of one other in Westchester County.

Each of the eight exterior sides measures 16 feet. The house is surrounded by a covered porch. Each of the interior sides measures 13 feet. The lower level of the house is partially dug into the hillside. Built in the center of the house, the chimney rises through the windowed cupola.

Dr. Ralph B. Griswold brought his bride to Banksville, and on the tenth day of November 1859 he took title to the Round House from Harvey Palmer and Phoebe, his wife, of the town of Mt. Pleasant, New York. The 1859 purchase price was \$800. Thereafter, the Round House was the parsonage for the Middle Patent Church, then the home of the Slusarz family and then the Birdsell family.

The North Castle Historical Society extends a Salute of Appreciation to Manor Properties Redevelopment LLC who purchased the old Round House in 2017. Thanks to this new owner the historic and unique Round House in Banksville has been saved and beautifully rebuilt.

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

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