

NORTH CASTLE HISTORY



COLONEL JAMESON'S HEAD-QUARTERS.

Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of The Revolution* Vol. II, 1852, page 188

240 YEARS AGO IN A NORTH CASTLE BARN

In 1780 Thomas Wright owned the North Castle mill where Patriot Colonel John Jameson headquartered.

Due to the insistence of Patriot Major Benjamin Tallmadge, Jr. a man claiming to be John Anderson was held overnight in a barn at the mill. Anderson later confessed he was John Andre, Adjutant General to the British Army.

THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 47 - 2020

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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 Members,

Who knew when we postponed our April 2020 Annual Meeting and finally met in July using a virtual Zoom session, life would never be quite the same?

Even though the pandemic turned everyone's world upside down, the North Castle Historical Society still had buildings to maintain and information to share. We have spent the past year focused on maintaining the ancient buildings at the Smith's Tavern Educational Complex. We have seen an increase in electronic activity. More and more people are keeping up their memberships using the link on our website. We have also seen a big increase in followers on our Facebook page. We are always grateful to our members for their donations and to our *Partners in Preservation* for their additional support. You all enable us to keep the lights on, programs functioning and structures in good condition.

Our amazing volunteers have been the overwhelming bright spot for me this year. While they have always been deserving of many thanks, in this crazy year they stepped up and kept moving forward with our regular behind the scenes obligations. The Investment Committee took steps to improve the return on assets held by the Society; Middle Patent One Room School House basement got some TLC; collections have been re-organized and re-inventoried; and the buildings and the collections they house are in good order.

As I close out my term as President and reflect on everything we've accomplished, the biggest thing was seeing all the work necessary to keep the Society going. Running the North Castle Historical Society is like running a small business and needs the expertise of many talented individuals to keep it successful. We are always on the lookout for people with a passion for local history to learn the ropes and be ready when called to lead the next generation. Please don't be shy – reach out to us and let us know if you or someone you know would like to join the team.

Sincerely,

Christine Eggleton, President

OLD JOHN THE ELEPHANT

by Clara Weil

An elephant is probably not something you would expect to find walking the streets of Westchester.

However, over the years there have been a few who have walked through - and even one who stayed at Smith Tavern in North Castle. Two of these elephants, Old Bet and Old John, are parts of a menagerie and circus history.

In 1922, over a period of four days, Old John the Elephant walked 53 miles from New York City to Somers. It is oral tradition that she¹ stayed in North Castle in a barn at Smith Tavern².

However, a New York Times article,³ published following the walk made no mention of Smith Tavern. I decided to try to figure out if Old John actually stayed in the barn at Smith Tavern.

Old John's walk was from Madison Square Garden in New York City to the Elephant Hotel in Somers⁴, which was built by Hachaliah Bailey to honor all the animals he showed in his menagerie and to provide a resort for circus people.⁵ The walk was to culminate in a memorial to Old Bet the elephant, who is said to be one of the first elephants in the United States.

¹ According to Richard (Dick) Flint, a past president and current board member of the Circus Historical Society, Dorchester, MA, Old John was a female elephant, although most articles refer to the elephant as a male. <https://circushistory.org/officers-and-trustees/>

² At this time the buildings and property were owned by John W. Sterling who rented to tenants.

³ *New York Times*, April 9, 1922, "Namesake of 'John L.' Will Lay Wreath on Grave of Pioneer Sister Performer"

⁴ <http://www.somershistoricalsoc.org/elephanthotel.html>

⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, August 8, 1955

Old Bet stopped by Smith Tavern⁶ when she annually went with Hachaliah Bailey to Somers, meaning the Tavern may have been a stop on Old John's route also, as her walk was to honor Old Bet.⁷

The North Castle Sun reported in the April 16, 1942 issue that twenty years earlier "John, the famous elephant belonging to Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus⁸, passed through Armonk last Tuesday morning on his (sic) way to Old Bet's home at Somers. He (sic) made a real sensation here and the Village turned out to pay him (sic) honor."⁹

Old John set out on her walk on April 9, 1922, wearing a pair of blue leather boots to protect her feet. This walk took her through many towns in the lower New York area. The first night she stayed in a stable at 1910 Walton Avenue in the Bronx. While Old John was there the stable floor collapsed, which spooked her and caused a commotion. During the next two days, she walked almost 30 miles, staying the second night in the Agricultural Hall in White Plains, and the third in Wesley's garage in Mount Kisco. She then attended the ceremony honoring Old Bet, and laid a wreath on her memorial.

Old John was an Asian elephant born sometime before 1860. She performed in the Adam Forepaugh circus, "boxing" her handler using a boxing glove on her trunk, and was named after the legendary boxer John L. Sullivan. The Forepaugh circus joined the Sells Brothers Circus and eventually the Ringling Brothers.¹⁰

⁶ Although the barns where she slept no longer exist, Historic Smith Tavern stands. Recognized by the National Register of Historic Places, the Tavern is one of four historic structures owned and preserved by The North Castle Historical Society at 440 Bedford Road, Armonk, New York.

⁷ *The McDonald Papers*, interviews with 240 Westchester residents (1844-1851) by John MacDonald.

⁸ A complete history presented at the Circus Historical Society Annual Meeting in 2004 indicates that the Bailey who partnered with Barnum was James Bailey, a distant relative of Hachaliah Bailey. The Somers Historical Society website presents the full text. <http://www.somershistoricalsoc.org/menageries2.html>

⁹ Twenty years before would have been 1922. Tuesday would have been April 11, 1922.

¹⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/John L. Sullivan \(elephant\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/John_L._Sullivan_(elephant))

According to a June 30, 1929 article appearing in the *Hartford Courant* newspaper, after she retired from performing Old John watched over children of the performers and led the elephant herd to and from show grounds. Old John died at winter quarters in Sarasota, Florida in 1932.

Old Bet was an Indian elephant, or African by other accounts. She was brought to America at some point before 1804 as part of a Boston menagerie. Reportedly she was first known as Betty when being exhibited in Boston.¹¹

Hachaliah Bailey¹² bought her, purportedly for farm work, but noticed that people found exotic animals interesting. He toured her widely and attracted many interested people willing to pay for seeing her. Tragically, Old Bet was killed by a Maine farmer in 1816. He was upset at how much money hardworking people spent to see an elephant.¹³

Oral tradition can't always be proven. However, it's still possible for Old John to have stayed in the barn at Smith Tavern.

I would like to think that she spent the night there in 1922 on the way back to the circus from Somers, wouldn't you?

Clara Weil and her family live in Armonk. She is a sophomore at Byram Hills High school and enjoys reading and knitting. Your editors look forward to more articles from Clara.

¹¹ <https://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/3621>

¹² Hachaliah Lyman Bailey (1775-1845) is buried in Ivandell Cemetery in Somers, New York. He and Mary Purdy married in 1798.

¹³ Daniel Davis, a farmer from Shapleigh, Maine shot and killed her.
<https://wgme.com/news/local/old-bet-the-elephant-killed-in-maine-200-years-ago>



Reproduced from This Way to the Big Show, the Life of Dexter Fellows

ELEPHANT OLD JOHN LAYING WREATH

AT MONUMENT STATUE OF OLD BET, 1922, SOMERS, NEW YORK

The ribbon on the wreath reads, "To Old Bet from Old John and Ringling Brothers' Elephant Herd."¹ The blanket over Old John reads, "Pilgrimage of John Oldest Ringling, Barnum & Bailey Elephant, Somers, NY Home of Old Bet First Elephant to Tread American Soil."

¹ *Villager* newspaper, page 4, published in North Castle, New York, Thursday, September 1, 1955

THE LEGENDARY HERMAN GEIST¹

Based on an interview with Deputy Director Mark LaVigne
New York State Association of Counties

by Sharon Tomback



Courtesy of Barbara Geist

PILSEN, GERMANY PARADE

ANNUALLY THE CITIZENS OF PILSEN, GERMANY CELEBRATE LIBERATION AND THE END OF WORLD WAR II WITH A PARADE.

When he left New York for basic training in Georgia on September 6, 1943, Herman was only 18 years old. He had never been that far from home.

After 17 weeks of basic training, he went to the Army Specialized Training Program at the Citadel in South Carolina. He was then sent to the 100th Infantry Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. A Captain Fenstermacher told him that the Army was selecting 12 soldiers

¹ From the 2018 State of the County Address given by Westchester County Executive George Latimer on April 16, 2018.

to go to Fort Benning, Georgia OCS². He thought Herman would not qualify because he was too young, but felt that he should go over and see what the test was all about.

Herman not only qualified, but graduated from OCS as a 2nd lieutenant. He was sent overseas with 15,000 others aboard the Queen Mary. The gyroscope had been removed and the ship repeated a pattern of weaving every six minutes to avoid detection by enemy submarines and U-boats. They landed in Scotland, took a train to Southampton and another ship across the English Channel to Le-Havre, France and then went overland to Liege, Belgium where he was transferred to the 2nd Infantry Division.

During his first days at Liege, Platoon Sergeant Holstein abruptly shoved him down into the snow, which Herman believes probably saved his life. Holstein asked him, "Lieutenant, can you look down the road about 300 yards? You see that black smoke? They're shooting at you."

Herman and his platoon crossed the Rhine courtesy of the American Navy as the Remagen Bridge was unsafe. They encountered little German resistance until arriving in Leipzig, Germany.

One day he was sitting in his tent outside the city of Domazlice when a young girl, about 13 years old, arrived. She said her mission was to escort the Americans into Domazlice so that the Germans would not see them. She spoke English. She said she had been working with the Resistance for five years. Her rifle was bigger than she. Herman was very suspicious, but she knew the password.³

² Officer Candidate School

³ The BBC announced passwords daily.



Courtesy of Barbara Geist

THE HERMAN GEIST FAMILY IN FRONT OF THE DOMAZLICE PLAQUE

**[L-R] Front Row: son Andy and wife Virginia, Herman and wife Barbara
[L-R] Back Row: grandsons Currie and Peter, son Gerry, grandson Harry
and Gerry's wife Leslie**

THE PLAQUE BEHIND THE FAMILY READS, "5. V. 1945" – MAY 5, 1945 – "FOR THE ETERNAL MEMORY OF THE LIBERATION OF THE TOWN OF DOMAZLICE AND OF ALL THE COUNTRY CHODSKO BY THE GLORIOUS AMERICAN ARMY."

He took a squad of men, carefully followed this young girl through the woods and arrived in Domazlice on May 1, 1945. They saw women with their heads shaved in retribution for collaborating with the German soldiers, but they saw no German soldiers. Four days later, Herman led the liberating platoon into Domazlice.

From Domazlice the American Army moved down the road to Pilsen, Germany where they learned the German Army had surrendered and that World War II in Europe was ended.

In 1990 Domazlice bestowed honorary citizenship to Herman Geist, Jim Duncan and Bob Gilbert in celebration of the liberation on May 5, 1945.

Post War and A Family Situation

At the end of World War II Herman turned down an offer to enter West Point Military Academy, and instead joined the Army Reserves.

His Army Reserve group of only thirty men, part of the 77th Infantry Division cadre, was headquartered at 30 Broad Street, New York City and was led by some well-known men. The commanding general was Julius Ochs Adler, general manager of the *New York Times*. The G4 was Winthrop Rockefeller; G3 was John Lehman, son of Senator Lehman; G2 was Keith McKesson from McKesson & Robbins and the G1 was Willis Terry from Baldwin Locomotive.

Herman and Barbara married on June 25, 1950 – the same day North Korea attacked South Korea.⁴ He expected to be called into action, but never served in Korea. He remained in the Army Honorary Reserves, and expected to be notified of a promotion by mail. One day he returned home and asked, “Barbara, did I get anything from the Army?” She began to cry and told him, “Well, you got a promotion. I forget, lieutenant colonel or colonel. It said if you accepted, you would have to be 72 hours on alert.”⁵ He learned that

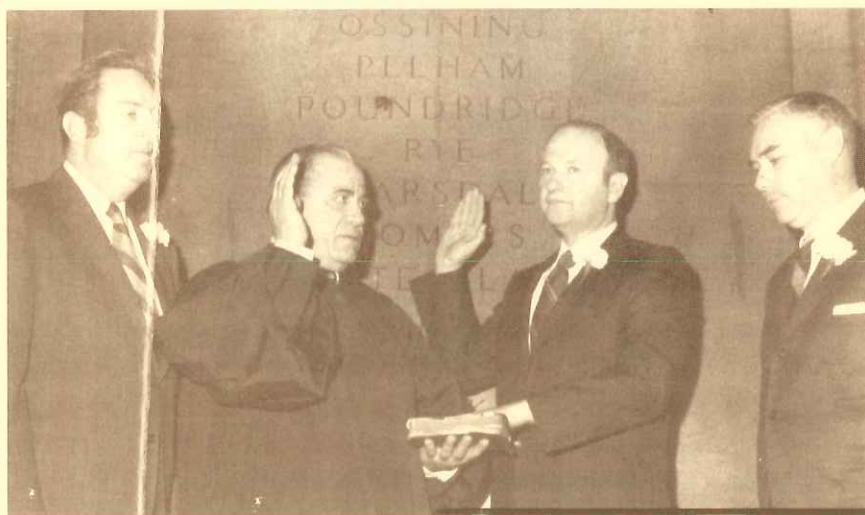
⁴ The United States did not declare war with North Korea. American troop involvement is through the United Nations.

⁵ New York State Association of Counties, podcast interview with Mark LaVigne

she had called his mother asking what to do, and Herman's mother told her to tear up the paper, which she did.

After his military service, Herman returned to college and graduated from the New York University School of Law.

He and Barbara lived in Mount Vernon, New York where children Andy and Gerry and Peggy were raised. He served on the zoning board in 1952 and on the Mount Vernon Hospital board for about 20 years. He served as supervisor for Mount Vernon and as a member of the Board of Supervisors for Westchester County. In 1998 the Westchester County Board of Legislators named its library in honor of Herman S. Geist, the first chairman of the Board.



Courtesy of Westchester County Historical Society

SWEARING IN HERMAN GEIST AS FIRST CHAIRMAN OF THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS, 1970

[L-R] Minority Leader Harold Smith, Supreme Court Justice P. Raymond Sirignano, Chairman Herman Geist, and Majority Leader John Lee

Herman and Barbara now live in the Windmill section of Armonk. Their son Gerry and daughter-in-law Leslie live in the Eastern District of North Castle. Gerry is a highly respected past North Castle Councilman who served the Town for six terms. He is now the

Executive Director of the Association of Towns of the State of New York and is a partner in the White Plains law firm Geist Schwarz & Jellinek, PLLC.

Herman remains an active volunteer for several political and community boards and committees. Westchester County Executive George Latimer has termed him “the Legendary Herman Geist.”



Courtesy Barbara Geist

BARBARA AND HERMAN GEIST

JUNE 2020 – 70TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Much appreciation to North Castle Historical Society Board Vice President Ed Woodyard for suggesting and facilitating this article. Thank you to Barbara Geist for her assistance and for sending the pictures. Appreciation to Mark Lavigne, New York State Association of Counties.

NORTH WHITE PLAINS SCHOOL – PART I

by Nora Kanze Manuele



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

THE NORTH WHITE PLAINS SCHOOL BUILDING - 1920

CENTER ENTRANCE IS NOW A WINDOW

From my kitchen window on Nethermont Avenue in North White Plains, I look down on the old brick school building on Route 22, also known as North Broadway.¹ It's a bittersweet moment. As I think about the grand old building turning 100 this year, I have wonderful memories of being a student there.

In 1973, I was a graduating sixth grader singing our alma mater song. The words, written by Principal George H. Remsen, were sung to the tune of Cornell University's alma mater. My brother Ed remembers that Mr. Remsen "was a much-loved friend of our family and retired after I was in the second grade. I still remember his retirement party on the playground. It was great fun. He wrote the

¹ It is an office building at 845 North Broadway today.

lyrics to the school song, which I still find myself singing sometimes” Mary Pointer, class of 1947, wrote, “Funny, I have trouble telling you which day of the week it is, but still remember the words to that song.”

THE NORTH WHITE PLAINS SCHOOL SONG

Verse 1

*Among the hills old Westchester
Near to Kensico
Stands a school above all others
Anywhere you go*

Chorus

*North White Plains School,
All love thee
And we will always sing
Of the praise and of the glory
hear our voices ring*

Verse 2

*Day by Day we always gather,
When we hear the bell
And we try our best to master
All our lessons well*

Chorus

Verse 3

*When we leave these halls of learning
Onward we will go
Onward, yes, and also upward
Till our journey's through*

Chorus

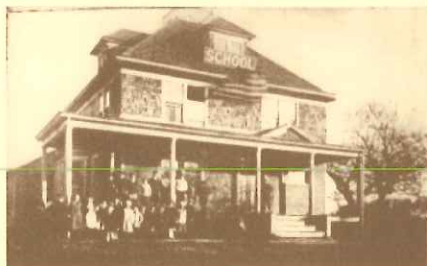
Back in 1973, little did I know that those were the final years of this building being used as it was intended – as an elementary school for local children and center of community activities. Before we dwell on those years, I'd like to take you back to the beginning.

BEFORE THE NORTH WHITE PLAINS SCHOOL THE CAMP SCHOOL, UPPER NETHERMONT AVENUE

Joseph Miller, former North Castle Town Clerk, wrote that prior to the building of Kensico Dam (completed in 1917), the area that became North White Plains had a population of only sixteen families.² As a result of the Dam construction, North White Plains' population exploded. New residents were transplanted from the flooded Village of Kensico, and workers who came to build the dam became new residents. To meet the needs of laborers' families,

² *North Castle History*, 1975, page 18.

the New York City Board of Water Supply opened a school on upper Nethermont Avenue to educate their children. This temporary school was called "The Camp School." My Aunt Edna Kanze (later Gordon) attended this school until the North White Plains School opened.



Collections of The Historical Society

THE CAMP SCHOOL

It became evident to the people in the area that a more permanent school building was needed to meet the changing needs of the community. In 1916, a School Committee worked to establish a new school district in the lower section of North Castle (now known as North White Plains). The School Committee gathered to discuss their options with School Commissioner Charles C. Cheney. He proposed establishing a new school district.³

CREATING THE NEW SCHOOL DISTRICT

Creating a school district was not an easy task. Territorial issues, taxes, and control were at the root of the matter. According to *The North Castle Sun*, "The Valhalla Trustees expressed themselves as unanimously and unalterably opposed to surrendering any portion of the dam property to create a new school district. They were in favor of the consolidation or the extension of their district to meet the White Plains city line. There are approximately 200 children of school age embraced in the district as originally laid out by the school committee, of which perhaps 90 at the present time are within the Valhalla district line."⁴ It was felt that if the school was built in North White Plains, where the majority of the children lived, the plan would be acceptable to the residents and to the Town of North Castle.

³ *The North Castle Sun*, June 2, 1916, page 1

⁴ *The North Castle Sun*, June 16, 1916, page 2

School Commissioner Charles C. Cheney proposed that this new district would include all that portion of North Castle formerly in the White Plains School system and a portion of Greenburgh across the Bronx River. "The School Committee" according to *The Sun*, "as a whole is not very enthusiastically in favor of the plan as it would mean a tax rate of at least \$10 per thousand valuation, whereas Valhalla, which is in possession of the entire dam and a large portion of North Castle territory, is paying a tax rate of but \$1.62."⁵

Disagreements continued between North White Plains and Valhalla into 1917. Finally, a "Public Notice" dated April 23, 1917 was printed in *The Sun* proclaiming the establishment of a new district – School District #7. The first district meeting was held on May 1, 1917 at the North White Plains Fire House.⁶ Town Justice Arthur Pietschker, who has been called the Father of the new Seventh School District because he gave so much of his time and energy, was instrumental in getting the new school district organized and in developing a plan for the new school.⁷

CONSTRUCTING THE SCHOOL BUILDING

The next decision to be made was where in North White Plains to build the school. Many landowners took active parts in contentious meetings chaired by school board president Judge Arthur Pietschker. Mr. John De Hart, developer of the Castle Heights neighborhood in North White Plains, was one of them. Initially three sites were voted. The Daly property (formerly known as Daly's Farm), received seven votes. The Washington Avenue property (a plot on an elevated portion of the Washington Headquarters section running through from Custis to Washington Avenues) received twenty-six votes. The Castle Heights property, received fifty-three votes.⁸ However, the vote was discarded, and then a new vote was held, presided over by Bernard Christenson, a resident of Castle Heights.

⁵ *The North Castle Sun*, October 6, 1916, page 1

⁶ *The North Castle Sun*, April 27, 1917, page 2

⁷ *The North Castle Sun*, May 4, 1917, page 2

⁸ *The North Castle Sun*, May 25, 1917, page 1

The Sun reported that “A good deal of literature had been distributed throughout the section favoring a certain site. But it lost.”⁹ When the ballots were counted at the early October meeting a result different from the meeting in May was announced: The Daly-Riley site, 42 votes; De Hart site, 9 votes; Mooney site, 6 votes; and the Castle Heights Inn property, 5 votes.¹⁰

A few weeks before the second vote was held, *The Sun* published in its September 21, 1917 issue, “The Board of Education has purchased two acres on the Broadway end of the State Road from the Patrick Daly estate for a school site ...”

NOTICE!
TO
Contractors & Builders

All contractors wishing to
bid on the new six-room
Brick Schoolhouse
to be built at
North White Plains
write for plans and specifica-
tions to
ALFRED YOUNG
Clerk of Board of Education
Town of North Castle.
Address. R.F.D. 2, Mt. Kisco, N.Y.

In February, 1918, Alfred Young, Clerk of the Board of Education for the Town of North Castle, advertised for builders to submit plans and specifications for bidding on the contract to build the new school in North White Plains. When a vote was taken regarding issuing bonds to finance the construction, thirty people voted in favor of the \$37,000 project, and eight against.

⁹ *The North Castle Sun*, October 12, 1917, page 3

¹⁰ Ibid

The new school building was not completed by the projected May 1920 date. Additional monies were needed to put water into the new building. More bonds were sold. “The matter of securing abundant coal”, *The Sun* reported, “has been one of the contributing causes of the enforced delay.”¹¹

OPENING DAY

According to *The North Castle Sun*’s Friday, January 7, 1921 edition, “The new school building in School District No. 7 was opened for regular sessions this week. The attendance was very satisfactory and the Principal George Remsen is enthusiastic over the prospects. The building will be formally dedicated with appropriate exercises within a few weeks.”

George Remsen served as principal of the North White Plains School from the day it opened in 1921 until 1964. The legend of George Remsen was told often in my family. My father, Edward J. Kanze, Jr., was a former student of Mr. Remsen’s, and he later had the privilege of working under him as a teacher. Mr. Remsen started his career in North White Plains at “The Camp School” and took over as teaching principal, teaching grades 6, 7, and 8, in the new school. In 1923, he and Kathleen Rehill, one of the teachers, married.

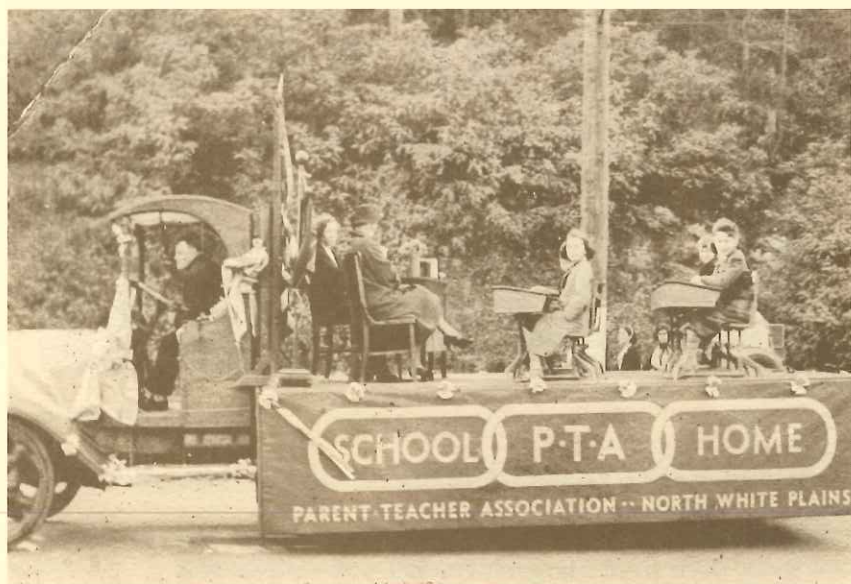
My aunt, Edna Kanze Gordon, and my uncle, Robert P. Kanze, graduated from the North White Plains School in the late 1920s, and my grandfather, Edward J. Kanze, Sr. served as a member of the Board of Education during the 1920s. According to *The North Castle Monitor*, “As a member of the Board of Education he [my grandfather] has accomplished a lot considering the fact that the North Castle end of the joint school district is in the minority.”¹²

Judging from the newspaper indices used to write this article, things ran smoothly and quietly at the North White Plains School. Frustrating to this historian, there were not many articles to discover what was taking place there.

¹¹ *The North Castle Sun*, December 10, 1920, page 3

¹² *The North Castle Monitor*, January 2, 1930, page 2

Thanks to the very active Parent-Teacher Association of North White Plains in the 1930s, the school was a hub of social activities: card parties, dances, plays, student operettas, father-daughter dances, fairs, and festivals. The Town Council (later called the Town Board) of North Castle met regularly at the school. The school building served as the center of the community.

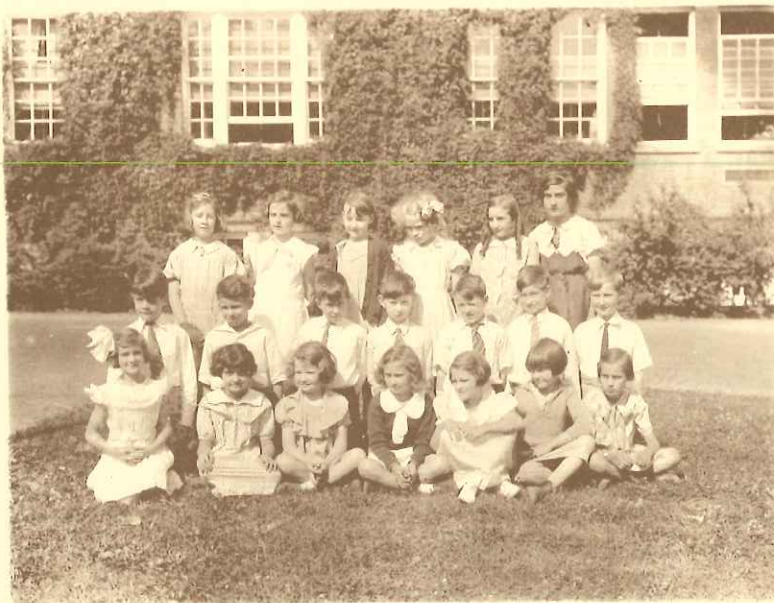


Courtesy Ed Kanze III

FLOAT IN THE 1936 TOWN CELEBRATION

Teacher Helen Cross is facing away from the camera. Dad, Ed Kanze, is the student in far right of the photograph.

North White Plains vied for political power in the school district. 1930s articles often refer to the joint board of education of Valhalla and North White Plains schools. It's interesting to note the name change of the school district. I found no commentary regarding the name change, but the district went from School District #7 to Union School District No. 5. According to The Kensico School website, "The Valhalla Union Free School District was formed in 1923 when the Columbus Avenue School and the North White Plains School consolidated."



Courtesy Ed Kanze III

NORTH WHITE PLAINS SCHOOL CLASS PICTURE, circa 1936

[L-R] Front row: Edith Shampanois, Catherine Molino, Nancy Conklin, Rose Bova, Doris Hart, Margaret Driscoll, unknown student

[L-R] Center row: Joe Lombardo, Tony "Bill" Caruso, John Balosini, Ed Kanze Jr., Leonard Kirsch, Eddie Carr, Henry Gerke

[L-R] Back row: Mary Valenti, Mitzi Lanyi, Floy Gates, Margaret Martin, Agnes Conte, Catherine Preola

~

Part II of the history of the North White Plains Elementary School 100th anniversary article will appear in the next edition of *North Castle History*.

THE BANKSVILLE CO-OPERATIVE CREAMERY COMPANY

by Sharon Tomback

Banksville is a hamlet in the Eastern District of the Town of North Castle. The New York-Connecticut State line continues to divide the hamlet geographically, but not communally. During the late 1800s and the early 1900s an important business thrived just over the State line and served New York and Connecticut farmers.

This building once housed the thriving Banksville Co-Operative Creamery. Originally, the building shown below was constructed to serve the local dairy farmers, but today this building serves another group from the community. Today this building serves the St. Timothy Chapel congregation.



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

ST. TIMOTHY CHAPEL, BANKSVILLE - DECEMBER 2020

A local newspaper¹ reported in 1889 that the two-story building was “tasty in design” and that it resembled a small factory. A Certificate organizing a joint stock company named Banksville Co-Operative Creamery Company was filed in Connecticut on April 6, 1888. In

¹ *The Recorder*, Mount Kisco, N.Y., Frank Dromgoole, Editor and Publisher. Friday, June 14, 1889.

1905 the Creamery appears on a list of companies to be dissolved unless the annual reports were filed and a fee of \$25 paid before February 15, 1906.² The report must have been filed and the fee paid, for according to the State of Connecticut List of Corporations with Capital Stock, the company was still in business as of April 1, 1907 and was authorized for 3,000 shares of capital stock.

We do not know when the Creamery ceased operations, but St. Timothy's Mission, North Street, Banksville was established in the building in 1920 as a mission of St. Paul's, Glenville, Connecticut.³

The Recorder article discussed operations at the Creamery as of June 1889. Three men in all were employed there. Dr. Ralph B. Griswold was the president of the Co-operative and Mr. H. B. Alley was the manager.

Production averaged about fifty pounds of butter a day. During the spring and summer production increased to as much as about 160 pounds a day. In 1889 the price paid for cream averaged 10 cents a quart in summer and 14 cents a quart in winter. The wholesale price for butter in summer averaged 26 cents a pound and during the winter sometimes sold as high as 40 cents a pound. Butter was sold under the "Willows" brand and was marketed as perfectly pure butter, never touched by human hands. Wooden spats and a wooden, grooved cylinder handled the butter.

The Creamery Co-Operative took the cream from the farmers, measured it and gave credit at the current market rate. After expenses were deducted, the dairy farmers were paid their proportional share of the profit. Expenses did not increase – meaning that the more cream taken, processed and sold as butter, the more profit for the Co-Operative.

² Public Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut in the Year 1905, Hartford Press: The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1905

³ Guide to Vital Statistics in the Church Records of Connecticut prepared by the Connecticut Historical Records Survey, Division of Service Projects, Work Projects Administration, December 1942



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

BANKSVILLE MAIN STREET, 1898 – TODAY'S NORTH STREET

The Creamery was across the road from the Banksville Baptist Church, a private home today (top center). The Creamery is home to today's St. Timothy Chapel. Below is a contemporary image showing the Grand Slam Ivan Lendl Tennis parking lot and the North Street Shopping Center on the right. The buildings on the left were there in 1898.



Courtesy Google Maps

BANKSVILLE MAIN STREET, 2020 – TODAY'S NORTH STREET

PATRIOT BENJAMIN TALLMADGE, JR. - HIS TIES TO NORTH CASTLE AND AREA

by Sharon Tomback

FAMILY TIES TO NORTH CASTLE AND WHITE PLAINS

Benjamin Tallmadge, Jr., born in Setauket, New York in 1754, was the second of five sons of Susanna and the Rev. Benjamin Tallmadge, Sr., minister for the Setauket Presbyterian Church. Benjamin's mother was Susanna Smith. Born in White Plains, New York in 1729, she was a daughter of the Rev. Dr. John Smith and Mehitable Smith. Rev. Dr. John Smith served as a physician and the minister of the First Presbyterian Church in White Plains, NY before the American Revolutionary War years. Both Benjamin's grandparents are buried in the Church Cemetery in White Plains.¹

Two of Benjamin's aunts, sisters of his mother, married North Castle men. Aunt Sarah Smith married Reuben Wright, who owned the mill that was a Washington's headquarters and was where the captors of John Anderson (British Major John Andre) first brought him. Aunt Abigail Smith, married Jacob Purdy, who served as a road overseer for North Castle, Town supervisor and Town Trustee during the years 1771 through 1782. Both Aunts are buried in the First Presbyterian Church Cemetery in White Plains.²

FOUGHT AT WHITE PLAINS – OCTOBER 28, 1776

"The American army were all at their several posts on the last (of) September and beginning of October ... On the 27th October, 1776, it was announced at Head Quarters that the enemy was in motion from Westchester, through Eastchester, directly toward the White Plains.³ Tallmadge was part of a detachment commanded by General Joseph Spencer ordered to the front to meet the British on the

¹ <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/benjamin-tallmadge/>

² Refer to *North Castle History* booklet, 2017, pages 3-16

³ *Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge*, published by Thomas Holman, Book and Job Printer, Corner of Centre and White Street, New York, 1858, pages 13

road before encountering the main body of Patriot soldiers entrenched north and east of White Plains village. However, retreat became necessary “before such an overwhelming force. To gain Chadderton’s (Chatterton’s) Hill, it became necessary to cross the Bronx, which was fordable at that place. ... When I reached the bank of the river, and was about to enter it, our Chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Trumbull⁴, sprang up behind me on my horse, and came with such force to carry me with my accoutrements, together with himself, headlong into the river.... Our troops poured ... such a destructive fire, that they (the Hessians) retreated down the hill in disorder, leaving a considerable number of the corps on the field. This relieved me from my perilous situation, and I immediately remounted my horse, and ... rode to Head Quarters, near the Court-house, and informed Gen. Washington of the situation”⁵



Benjamin Tallmadge, Jr.
Pencil Drawing by
John Trumbull, about 1783⁶

During December 1776, the Second Continental Light Dragoons was commissioned by Congress under the command of Colonel Elisha Sheldon. Tallmadge was offered command of the first troop. “My own troop was composed entirely of dapple gray horses, which, with black straps and black bear-skin holster-covers, looked superb.”⁷ Service in the Dragoons was highly esteemed.

2nd CONTINENTAL LIGHT DRAGOONS

⁴ Rev. Benjamin Trumbull fought on foot with the soldiers at White Plains and lived until 1820. The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution by J. T. Headley, page 239, published by Charles Scribner, New York, 1864

⁵ Op. Cit, Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, pages 13-14

⁶ Ibid. Frontispiece.

⁷ Ibid. Page 19

He participated in several military actions, including at battles at New York City, Brooklyn, Long Island, White Plains, Germantown, Monmouth, Short Hills, and Yorktown, and commanded an observation corps at Valley Forge. Sadly, Benjamin's brother, William, was taken prisoner at the Battle of Long Island and died on a British prison ship from starvation, according to Benjamin.

FOUGHT AT POUND RIDGE – JULY 1, 1779

“At the commencement of this campaign, our regiment was ordered to its old station on the lines, below Bedford, Northcastle, etc. Not long after we took the field, about July 1, 1779, Lord Rawdon, with nearly all the British light horse, accompanied by a body of light infantry, made an attack upon our corps in the night. The onset was violent, and the conflict carried on principally with the broad sword, until the light infantry appeared upon our flanks, when Col. Sheldon found it necessary to retreat. This was done with so much celerity, that the enemy gained but little advantage. I lost in the affray a fine horse, most of my field baggage, and twenty guineas in cash, which were taken in my valise with my horse.”⁸ The New York Journal, published at Poughkeepsie, New York, on July 5, 1779, reported, “The enemy burned the meeting-house at Poundridge, and also the house of Major (Ebenezer) Lockwood at the same place. They would not suffer his family to take anything away.”

BRITISH SPY CONTAINED IN NORTH CASTLE PLANS OF AMERICAN TRAITOR BENEDICT ARNOLD THWARTED

One of the more interesting events during Tallmadge's military life in North Castle was his encounter with British spy Major John Andre (John Anderson) in the fall of 1780⁹. “I returned from below to the regiment, then near Northcastle¹⁰.... I found that three men ...

⁸ Ibid, page 46

⁹ Refer to *North Castle History* booklet 2005, pages 12-25

¹⁰ It is the writer's opinion that Tallmadge is referring to the Old North Castle Church in today's Mount Kisco at the corner of St. Marks Place and Main Street-New York State Route 117. At that time all of the Town of New Castle, created in 1791, was part of the

had passed below our ordinary military patrols, on the road from Tarrytown to Kingsbridge, (and) had fallen in with this John Anderson ... discovering sundry papers upon him, which he had concealed in his boots ... (they) determined to bring him up to the head-quarters of our regiment, then on to the advanced post of our army¹¹, near Northcastle. This they effected on the forenoon of the 23rd day of September, 1780, by delivering said Anderson to Lieut.-Col. John Jameson, of the 2nd Regiment Continental Light Dragoons, then the commanding officer of said post, Col. Sheldon being at old Salem¹² The head-quarters of the regiment were different from the advanced post. The headquarters were at Reuben Wright's Mill¹³, now under the waters of Kensico Reservoir. The advanced post was at Thomas Wright's Mill¹⁴ (later known as Sands Mills) located in today's Armonk.¹⁵

Jameson sent John Anderson to Benedict Arnold with a letter explaining the details of the capture. When Tallmadge arrived at Jameson's quarters the evening of September 23 and learned the papers included plans of West Point, he pointed out "the glaring inconsistency of this conduct to Lieut.-Col. Jameson in a private and most friendly manner."¹⁶ Prisoner John Anderson was brought back, but the letter to Arnold was delivered. Arnold absconded to the British.

Benjamin Tallmadge was the personal custodian of British Major John Andre from September 23 until his execution by hanging in Tappan, New York on October 2, 1780. "...I was with him most of the time from his capture, and walked with him as he went to the place of execution ... I then shook hands with him under the gallows Town of North Castle.

¹¹ Tallmadge is referring to Thomas Wright's Mill (later Sands Mills) in today's Armonk at the corner of High Street-Cox Avenue and Greenway Road.

¹² Op. Cit., Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, pages 35-36

¹³ Refer to *North Castle History* booklet, 2015, page 3-9

¹⁴ Refer to *North Castle History* booklet, 1994, pages 15-19

¹⁵ Dykman, J. O. (June, July, August, 1889). *The Last Twelve Days of Major John André*, Magazine of American History, number 21 (June 1889), pp. 494-498; number 22 (July, August 1889), pp.49-57, 148-157

¹⁶ Op. Cit., Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, page 35

and retired.... I became so deeply attached to Major Andre that I can remember no instance where my affections were so fully absorbed in any man. When I saw him swinging under the gibbet, it seemed for a time as if I could not support it.”¹⁷ Both men were spies; they were about the same age; both men were educated.

The day after the hanging, October 3, 1780, Tallmadge returned to duty in Westchester County. “There my duties became very arduous; the late events having excited much rage on the part of the enemy. What with cow-boys, skinners, and refugees, we had as much as we could turn our hands to, to keep from being waylaid and fired upon from thickets and stony eminences, about Salem, Northcastle, and White Plains.”¹⁸

SPYMASTER - CULPER SPY NETWORK

For much of 1777 Benjamin worked with spies Major John Clark, Jr. and Nathaniel Sackett. During 1778 “I opened a private correspondence with some persons in New York which lasted through the war. How beneficial it was to the Commander-in-Chief is evidenced by his continuing the same to the close of the war. I kept one or more boats continually employed in crossing the Sound on this business. My station during the campaign of 1778, was in the county of Westchester, and occasionally along the shores of the Sound.”¹⁹ His network, primarily in New York City and Long Island, included a large group of “members, sub-agents, associates and informants”.²⁰

Tallmadge’s code name was John Bolton. Culper, Sr. (Abraham Woodhull) and Culper, Jr. (Robert Townsend) wrote in numerical code or used invisible ink to report British troop sizes, movements, stores of food and weapons, and other information thought useful. Tallmadge developed a code book of 763 numbers representing names, places and words.

¹⁷ Ibid, page 38

¹⁸ Ibid, page 39

¹⁹ Op. Cit., Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, pages 42-43

²⁰ <https://guides.library.stonybrook.edu/c.php?g=35445&p=5548363>

dangerous. Enclosed is a Letter from the Person who has for [a] long time bro't dispatches from the C's—Your Excellency will perceive he has been attacked by some of the Reffugee Boats. He requests more men, as may be seen by the enclosed. Your Excellency will please to direct me in the matter. There are several Continental Crews at Stamford & Horseneck, whose Duty I am unacquainted with. Perhaps one of these can be spared. I am sorry Lt B—r was drove from L. I. so suddenly as dispatches from C. Junr were there waiting for him. I have the Honor to be Your Excellency's most Obedt Servt Benjn Tallmadge

In the preceding letter from Tallmadge to Washington, "C. Junr" means Culper Junior (Robert Townsend) and "C.'s Services" means Culper (Abraham Woodhull) and in paragraph 2, "C.s" means both men. 'Lt B--r" means Lt. Caleb Brewster.

FROM CALEB BREWSTER TO BENJAMIN TALLMADGE

Fairfield Augt 18th 1780

Sir

I Came from Long Iseland this After Noon but have got Now Dispaches Culper has bin Down to Newyork I Wated till this Morning and he Was to Sent them by two oclock but before he Sent them I Was Attackd by Glover and Hoyght I Left one Man Taken and one Wounded. We killed one on the spot. The Man that Was takin Went After Water I shall Want Two Men before I Can Cross Agin I have got Now boates in fine order I Wish you Send Me Seven Men and I Engage to Take Sum of their boates Mister [Murison] Will give you A perticuler Account of our C[rews] Austin Told Me that Sir Henry Clinton Went Down to the East Eand of the Island on the Sixteenth. Dont fail to Let Me have Two C[rewes] if you Can of Continental Soldiers. With Respect your friend and Humble Servant Caleb Brewster

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON'S ANSWERING LETTER

Head Quarters Orange Town 21st Augt 1780.

Dear Sir

I recd yours of yesterday morning last evening. It is unfortunate that Lt B—— could not bring off C—— juns. dispatches, as I imagine they were of consequence. You will therefore endeavour to procure them

as soon as possible. I have information from another quarter, that Sir Henry Clinton had gone towards the East end of Long Island, and that the troops at Whitestone were again embarking. Should the last piece of intelligence reach you, well authenticated, you will be pleased to transmit it immediately to Genl Heath at Newport, as well as to me, as you will always do any thing which seems to interest the French Army and Navy.

*If there are any other Continental Crews upon the sound besides those under Lt B---'s directions, they are there without my knowledge. You will therefore desire him in my name to take what hands he wants from them, and to report who the others are and what business they are upon. I am Dear Sir Yr most obt Servt Go: Washington*²³

“Lt B---” and “C---juns” in the letter above refer to Lt. Caleb Brewster and Culper Junior (Robert Townsend).

TALLMADGE PROTECTED HIS ASSOCIATES

“As it became increasingly clear that peace terms and an American victory were on the way, Tallmadge took care to protect his agents in New York. He received permission from Washington to enter the city ‘under the cover of a flag’ to ‘ensure the safety’ of his correspondents, who were assumed by their neighbors to be staunch Tories and therefore might otherwise have suffered from persecution when the British left the city.”²⁴

PERSONAL INFORMATION

At the age of 15 Benjamin enrolled at Yale where he became close friends with Nathan Hale²⁶. In August 1776 Hale joined a select military group organized under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Knowlton. Great sadness and regret came to Benjamin for Hale’s life dramatically ended a month later when Nathan was hanged by the British as a spy on September 22, 1776.²⁵

²³ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-03005>

²⁴ <http://www.ouramericanrevolution.org/index.cfm/people/view/pp0057>

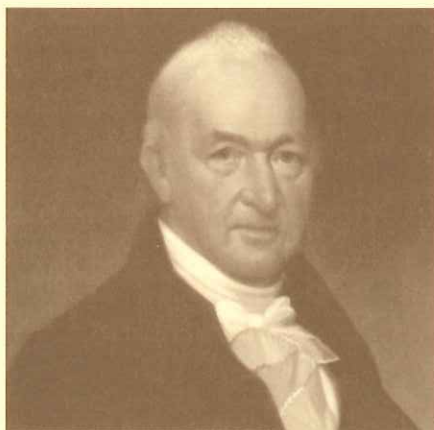
²⁵ http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/revolut/jb_revolut_hale_1.html

²⁶ Hale’s image appeared on the half cent USPS stamp. Bela Lyon Pratt’s bronze statue of Hale stands beside Connecticut Hall, Yale University, where he lived as a student.

By 1773 Benjamin was a school master in Wethersfield, Connecticut. Three years later he joined Col. John Chester's regiment of militia, in June of 1776. A few months thereafter he became brigade major for Gen. James Wadsworth's brigade, Connecticut Militia. He was appointed Captain in December 1776 and Major in April 1777 for the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons.²⁶ He was promoted to Colonel for his service organizing and managing the Culper Spy Ring.

Benjamin Tallmadge and Mary Floyd married in 1784, and they made their home in Litchfield, Connecticut where he became a post-master, businessman, Western Reserve (Ohio) landowner and member of U.S. Congress for sixteen years.

Benjamin and Mary Tallmadge were the parents of seven children – William Smith, Henry Floyd, Maria, Benjamin, Frederick, Harriet and George. Mary died in 1805 and three years later Benjamin married Maria Hackett. Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge died in March 1835 at the age of 81 and lies buried in East Cemetery, Litchfield, Connecticut.



COLONEL BENJAMIN TALLMADGE²⁷
Painting by Ezra Ames, ca. 1825

²⁶ http://www.dragoons.info/our_past/our-officers/

²⁷ <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b06920/>

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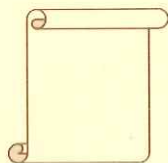
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240 YEARS AGO IN A NORTH CASTLE BARN

If not for three Patriot militiamen who stopped an unarmed man on horseback in today's Sleepy Hollow-Tarrytown area who claimed to be John Anderson, then British spy John Andre would have returned safely behind British lines and Benedict Arnold would have surrendered West Point to the British.

If not for the suspicions and actions of Patriot Benjamin Tallmadge, Jr. at Thomas Wright's barn in North Castle who challenged the decision of Colonel John Jameson to escort British spy John Andre back to Traitor Benedict Arnold, the Patriot Commander at West Point, the American Revolution could have taken a very different path.



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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