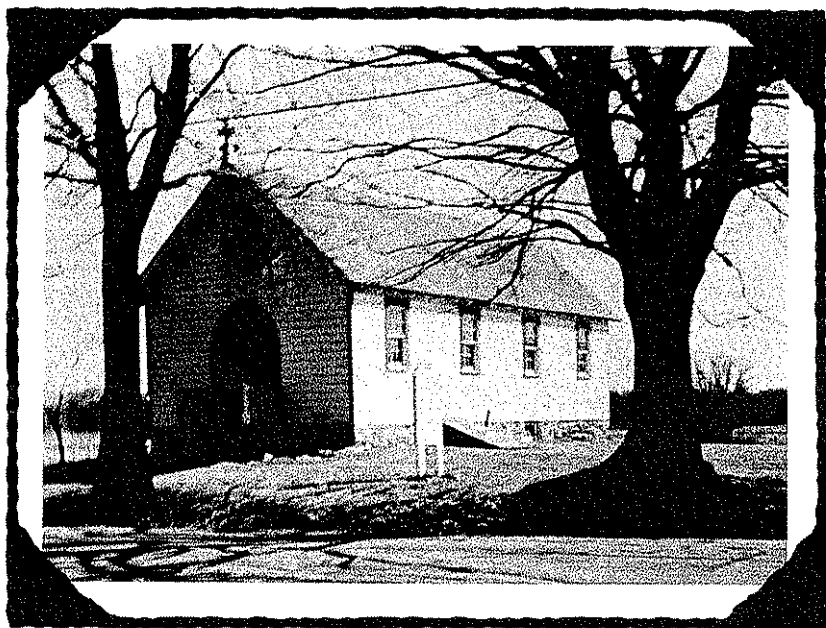


# North Castle History



St. Patrick Church, Armonk, N.Y., 1924

THE NORTH CASTLE HILLS PART II      ST. PATRICK CHURCH 1924-1982  
A NOTE AS TO CUSTOMER-SKIMMERTON  
THE OLD POST ROAD AND ITS MILESTONES IN NORTH CASTLE

# *The North Castle Historical Society*

Bedford Road, Armonk, New York 10504



## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Dear Friends,

The booklet you hold is unique. Edited by Barbara Massi, it is a product of volunteers dedicated to reminding us of our heritage. More than the past, however, it is a reminder of our responsibilities now.

Too often those of us excited by history have a tendency to look backward. I am happy that the North Castle Historical Society looks forward as well. Truly we have one foot in the past, one in the present and an eye toward the future.

An Oral History Committee led by Susan Shimer is busily interviewing and taping; a Quaker Meeting House Committee led by Doris Finch Watson is planning to bring a 200 year old Friends Meeting House to our complex; a part-time consultant, Ellen Pierce, is offering us professional museum management concepts. These are only a few of the possible opportunities for community service to which you might respond. Call me. Let's step into the 1990's hand-in-hand.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Tomback".

Sharon Tomback  
President



## ST. PATRICK CHURCH OF ARMONK

1924-1982

By Sebastian N. Silvestro

Catholic services were not available in the Village of Armonk until 1924. A small group of women, headed by Mrs. Stanley (Eugenia) Sniffen, sought the services of a priest so that Mass could be celebrated in Armonk. At their request Franciscan Fathers from Greenwich, Conn. came two or three times to offer Masses. But there was nothing definite in the arrangement, so Mrs. Sniffen sought the assistance of Father Martin F. Cavanaugh of St. John and St. Mary Church in Chappaqua. Father Cavanaugh was the first pastor of that parish and celebrated the first Mass there Nov. 12, 1922. St. John and St. Mary Church was dedicated by Cardinal Hayes June 3, 1923.

Father Cavanaugh responded to the request of Mrs. Sniffen and agreed to come to Armonk. Since a suitable structure was not available early in 1923, Mass was celebrated and baptisms administered at the Reardon home, at the southeast corner of Banksville and Bedford Roads. Later in 1923 and early in 1924 Mass was celebrated in a barn located at the northeast corner of Bedford and Sterling Roads.

During 1923 fund-raising drives were conducted by the Catholic men and women of Armonk. On Jan. 25, 1924, two acres of land were purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Schmaling. The property fronted on the Armonk-Bedford state road, adjacent to a stream flowing from Wampus Pond.

A church was built on this parcel by volunteers from Armonk and Chappaqua, under the supervision of Harry Schnoor. Though the building was far from complete, the first Mass was celebrated there on Sunday, May 24, 1924. The church, named in honor of St. Patrick, was considered a mission of St. John and St. Mary and remained in that category until it was declared a parish in June, 1966.

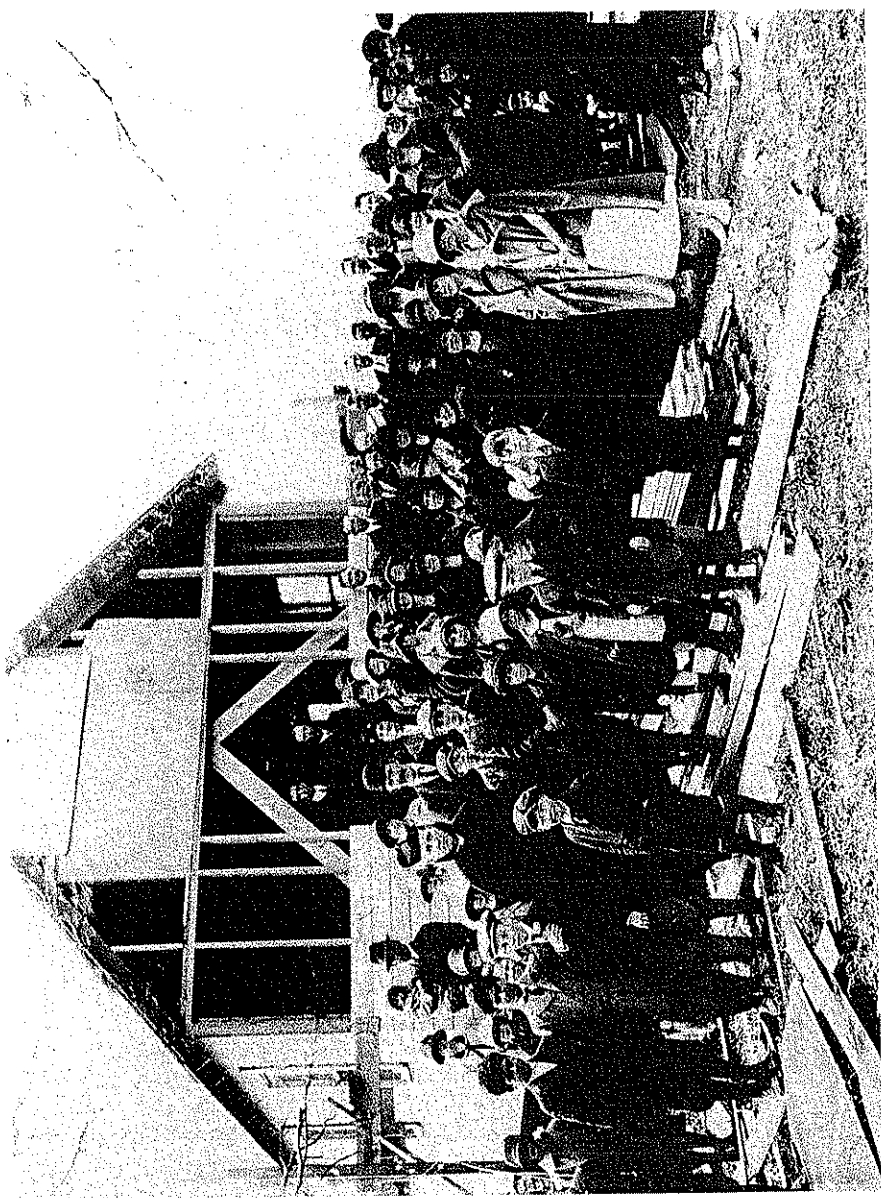
Father Cavanaugh also established missions in Millwood (1924) and Purchase (1927). In 1927 he was assigned by Cardinal Hayes to found the Parish of St. Anne in the Bronx.

Father Cavanaugh thus became the first pastor of St. Patrick Mission Church. He served from 1924 to 1927. Father John F. Stanley, its second pastor, served from 1927 to 1932. Rev. Joseph E. Brady, the third pastor, assumed the duties of the parish of St. John and St. Mary from 1932 to 1955. He requested that the women of St. Patrick form a guild to assist in its care and needs.

Father Brady became ill in mid-1953 and Father William O'Neill was assigned as his assistant. Father O'Neill suggested the men of St. Patrick also organize and become more active in the church's functions. He was instrumental in seeing that St. Patrick's Day be celebrated in a special way. Subsequently a dance was held in March, 1954.

Father Brady died July 16, 1955. Father John J. O'Donahue became administrator of St. John and St. Mary. The Rev. Louis A. Stryker was assigned to St. John and St. Mary becoming its fourth pastor on Sept. 9, 1955, remaining in that post until mid-1963. During his pastorate many extensive repairs were made to the mission church [of St. Patrick].

In the spring of 1957 Father Stryker obtained permission to build a



The original St. Patrick Church under construction, with some parishioners, 1924.  
*Who do you recognize in the picture?*

parochial school in Chappaqua. A fund-raising drive was instituted in Chappaqua and Armonk. Father Stryker realized that adult members of St. Patrick and their children would be directly affected. He suggested that a group of volunteers join with the parishioners of St. John and St. Mary in the appeal for funds. Eight men responded and listened to Father's Stryker's discussion of the need for the drive. Cash and pledges totalling \$160,000 were realized. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on June 28, 1958, and the school officially opened in September, 1959. Francis Cardinal Spellman dedicated and blessed the school of St. John and St. Mary. Father Stryker was elevated to the rank of monsignor after the school's dedication.

During his tenure as pastor, reports were made to diocesan headquarters making it clear that St. Patrick was well on its way to becoming its own parish. In 1964 an abandoned chicken farm, 13.3 acres fronting on Cox Avenue, was purchased to be the future site of St. Patrick Church.

Sunday masses increased from one to four in a rather short time. Msgr. Stryker and Father O'Donahue found they could not do justice to both the Armonk and Chappaqua areas. The Crosier Fathers, living in White Plains and teaching at Archbishop Stepinac High School, responded. Rev. Adrian Piotrowski, Rev. Francis Sheets, Rev. Edward Gust, Rev. Alfred Bishop, Rev. James Poisson, Rev. Cornelius De Vinster and Rev. Ramp were the priests who served.

The Rt. Rev. Thomas A. Kelly became the fifth pastor on Aug. 24, 1963, and remained until the spring of 1966. He approached diocesan headquarters with an architect's rendering of a possible enlargement of the building which could accommodate the increasing number of parishioners. His request to enlarge the facility was rejected. Subsequently, Bishop Edward V. Dargin, D.D., V.G., visited Armonk and made the recommendation that the mission church be declared a parish. Cardinal Spellman did so declare this in the spring of 1966.

Rev. John J. Wallace, an associate pastor at the Church of the Epiphany, New York City, was appointed founding pastor in June, 1966. The first mass in the autonomous parish of St. Patrick Church was celebrated by Father Wallace in June, 1966. Father Wallace appointed Francis E. O'Neill and Sebastian N. Silvestro to the first trustees.

First baptism was that of Laura Cabot, daughter of Thomas and Mary Cabot, July 6, 1966, administered by Father Wallace. First funeral mass was that of Mary Coupe, on that same day, also celebrated by Father Wallace. First wedding was that of Theodore Earl Jones, Jr. and Helen Ann Young. The ceremony was performed by the Most Rev. Quentin Olwen, C.P., Bishop of Marbel, Philippines, on Aug. 20, 1966. The same day also saw the wedding of Francis Stephen Wallace to Patricia D. Link, performed by Rev. Darian Dee, O.F. Cap. The official installation of Father Wallace as pastor was held on Sept. 24, 1966. The ceremony was conducted by Msgr. Francis X. Shea as delegate of Cardinal Spellman. Msgr. Shea was pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church, New Rochelle. The new parish lines were established by the Most Rev. John J. Maguire, Coadjutor and Vicar General of the archdiocese, on July 30, 1966. The first parish-wide census began on Oct. 30, 1966.

Parish organization began during the summer and fall of 1966. Religious formation of the parish youth was a prime concern of Father Wallace. He

organized the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) for this purpose. Elementary classes met in the Legion Hall, the North Castle Library and the small parish church. Other christian churches offered use of their facilities. High school students met in various private homes. As teachers, there were seminarians from Dunwoodie, Sisters of the Helpers of the Holy Souls, followed by the Sisters of the Divine Compassion. Certified lay teachers were organized from the community.

Besides the Women's Guild and the Men's Club, the ushers and mass lectors came into being. A group of women formed the Altar Society. Spiritual activities developed with daily Mass and Holy Hours, especially in May and October in honor of the Blessed Mother. A prayer group also was formed.

The first First Holy Communion was administered to Gary Bolbrook and Christopher Mueller March 26, 1967, by Father Wallace. The Sacrament of Confirmation was held on June 1, 1968 for the first time and administered by Bishop Dargin.

An interest in contemporary hymns developed among members of the parish. Folk guitarists from Hawthorne helped them to learn to play and sing the hymns. On Pentecost 1969, the parish group played for the first time at Mass. They continued to play at one Mass each Sunday every second week.

Father Wallace opened the building fund campaign with solemn benediction and an encouraging talk on Monday, Oct. 28, 1968. The campaign was for the purpose of raising funds for the construction of a parish center and priests' residence. First phase of the drive ended Dec. 5, 1968, at which time \$186,220 in cash and pledges had been realized.

Robert Van Sommern, of VanSommern & Weigold, architects, drew plans and specifications for the projects. Estimated cost was \$380,000.

The cornerstone of the new church was laid in June, 1969.

Early in 1970 Father Wallace paid tribute to the Women's Guild:

*Our Women's Guild has had a glowing history of dedicated service to the church. Their contribution of endeavor, of worthwhile activities and of profitable projects has continued not only to flourish but also to increase. With deep gratitude, I express to our Women's Guild, in the name of the entire parish, sincere appreciation for their successful efforts of the past, and I convey to them every good wish for all future work.*

Principal concelebrant of the Mass was Cardinal Cooke, D.D.

Concelebrants were: Rev. John J. Wallace, pastor, Rev. Msgr. Charles B. Brennan, Rev. Msgr. Bernard A. Quinn, Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Skelly, Rev. Msgr. Joseph F. Tracy.

Masters of Ceremony: Rev. Msgr. Eugene V. Clark, Rev. Msgr. Joseph F. Connolly, Rev. Adrian Piotrowski, O.S.C.

The Homilist was: Rev. Msgr. Joseph P. O'Brien, vicar general of the Archdiocese.

The Lectors were: Thomas E. Boss, Cono J. Ioppolo, John D. Murphy.

Offertory Procession: Sister Therese Connor, R.D.C., Sister Joanne Marie, R.D.C., Francis E. O'Neill, Sebastian N. Silvestro.

Civic greeting was given by: Hon. John A. Lombardi, supervisor, Town of North Castle.

North Castle authorities designated the day as "Cardinal Cooke Day." The

Cardinal, for his part, designated that day as "Msgr. John J. Wallace Day" by announcing that Pope Paul VI had conferred the title of domestic prelate upon Father Wallace, thenceforth to be addressed as monsignor.

Sale price of the original site of St. Patrick was \$115,000. St. John and St. Mary Church donated \$36,000. This money defrayed some of the cost of the new undertaking.

Charles Odorizzi, not a parishioner but a close friend of Msgr. Wallace, donated utilities for both the rectory and parish center kitchens, a public address system for the church and a TV system for the rectory.

Charity and concern of parishioners of St. Patrick Church for others was encouraged by Msgr. Wallace. Gifts were made year after year to Rosary Hill, Holy Name Centre For Homeless Men on the Bowery, The Little Sisters of the Poor, The Maryknollers, The Xavier Society of the Blind, The White Fathers, and others. The parish also responded to the needy of the community and contributed to Mother Theresa projects in the South Bronx and Appalachia.

Msgr. Wallace also underwrote the St. Patrick's football team, "The Panthers," open to every youngster in the community, a truly ecumenical endeavor.

A generous donation was made to Msgr. Wallace by another friend and used largely in the purchase of a new organ.

In recognition of Msgr. Wallace's services to the entire Armonk community, the town fathers of North Castle issued a proclamation declaring June 6, 1976, his 40th anniversary of ordination, as Msgr. John J. Wallace Day, stating: "Monsignor Wallace has earned the esteem and respect of our citizens for his unselfish devotion and service as a spiritual leader . . . whose ecumenical spirit is an inspiration to the entire community."

Rev. Thomas J. Tolentino was assigned to the parish in December, 1974, as associate pastor.

The tenth anniversary of the dedication of St. Patrick was held Sunday, June 15, 1980. This observance was celebrated by Cardinal Cooke, who was principal concelebrant of the Mass. Concelebrants were Most Rev. James P. Mahoney, D.D., Msgr. Wallace, Rev. James S. Finlay, S.J., president of Fordham University, Rev. Msgr. Charles B. Brennan, Rev. Msgr. Bernard A. Quinn and Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Skelly. Masters of ceremony were Rev. Charles G. McDonagh and Father Tolentino. Homilist was Msgr. Wallace.

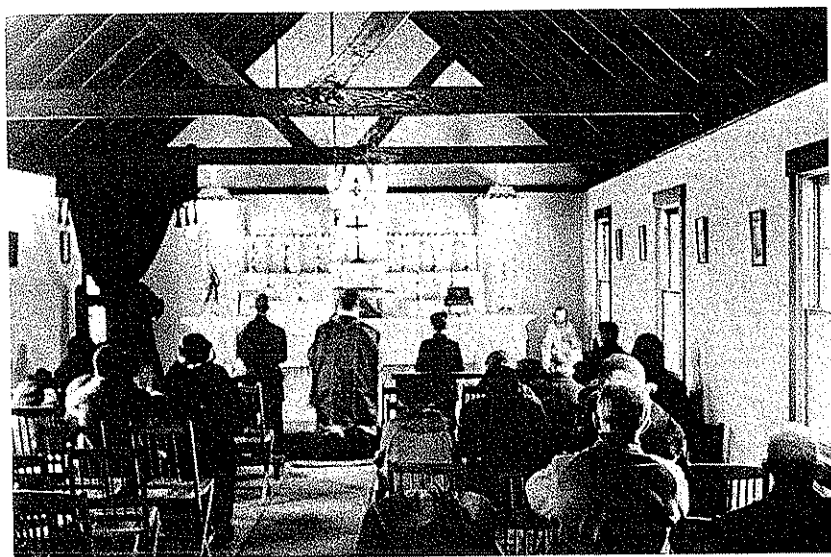
As of June 15, 1980, St. Patrick's debt was \$115,000. Through a legacy of \$100,000 from the late Joseph P. Routh, an outstanding layman and philanthropist and member of the parish, plus \$15,000 of St. Patrick's own resources, a check in the full amount of the debt was sent to the archdiocese.

At Christmas, 1981, a war-time shipmate made a gift to his Navy chaplain of those years, Msgr. Wallace, of a carillon that would summon the people to service, announce the Angelus and play special hymns for liturgical seasons.

At the same time, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph W. Manny donated a porcelain sculpture of The Last Supper. This sculpture was produced by Italian craftsmen and had been exhibited at the Brussels Fair where it was awarded first prize. It is on permanent exhibition in the narthex of the church. The narthex as well is the home of the names of those parishioners who made sacrificial donations.



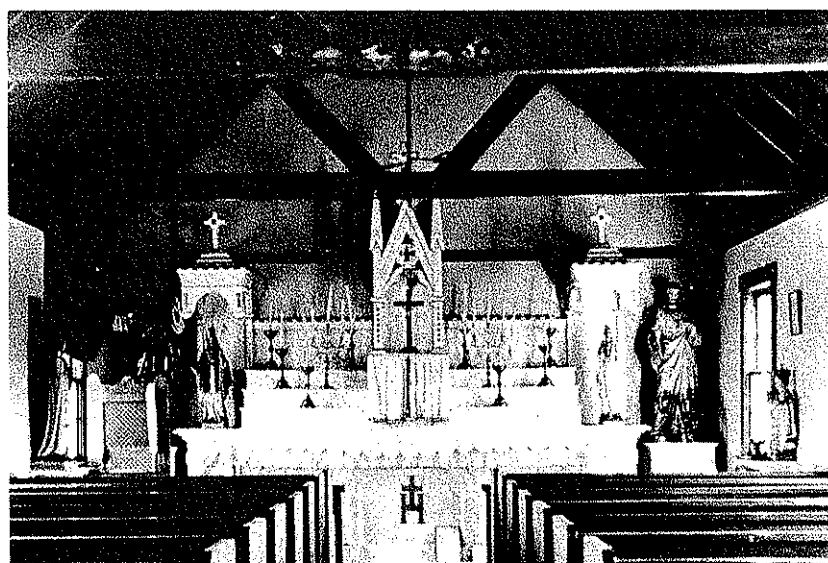
ST. PATRICK CHURCH, 1924

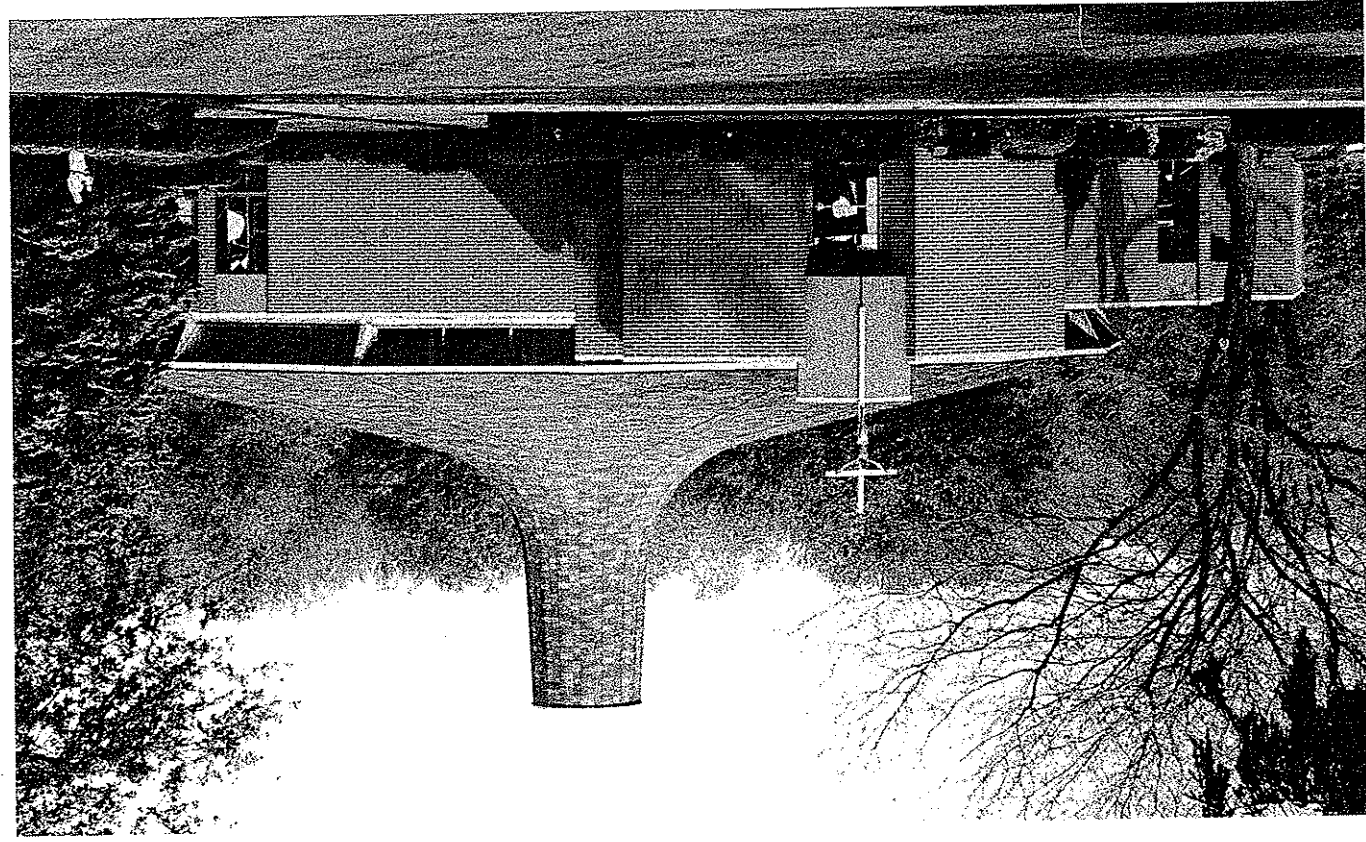






ST. PATRICK CHURCH, 1933





St. Patrick Church, 1989

A parishioner, Michael Gressel, sculptor and carver, was commissioned to carve statues for the church. The Crucified Christ on the Cross above and behind the altar, the Blessed Mother and Child, St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Anne and St. Patrick were products of his artistry. He contributed a carving of Christ on the Cross, situated on the upper facade of the church, and of the Pelican feeding its own blood to her offspring, which symbolizes Jesus giving His blood for us.

Sunday, June 6, 1982, was a sad day for the parishioners. It was announced that Msgr. Wallace had reached the mandatory retirement age of 75.

Msgr. Walter L. Schroeder was assigned as pastor on July 1, 1982. He and Msgr. Wallace had been friends since seminary days. Msgr. Schroeder, who came from St. Joseph Parish, Middletown, was installed as pastor Oct. 24, 1982.

Msgr. Wallace went to his eternal reward Nov. 23, 1986. His spirit continues to shine in the hearts and minds of all those who were privileged to know him.

St. Patrick Church of Armonk 1924-1982 was taken from the original publication published by St. Patrick Church.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sebastian (Sunny) Silvestro, and his wife Rosary (Ro), have lived in Armonk since 1953. He has been an active member of the St. Patrick parish and served as an usher for over 30 years. He was one of two original trustees and served as a trustee for 17 years under Monsignors Wallace and Schroeder. He was on the building committee and headed the fundraising drive for the construction of the new church. For 25 years he headed the Cardinal's Campaign Fund in Armonk for the Archdiocese of New York. Mr. Silvestro also held the posts of secretary and vice-president of the Holy Name Society of St. Patrick. He was a representative of the transportation division of the school board in Armonk for the children of St. Francis of Assisi in Mt. Kisco where he was also involved in the fundraising drive for their new school, School of St. John and St. Mary in Chappaqua, and St. Patrick School in Bedford. He also held several other posts as well.



#### • • • FROM THE MT. KISCO RECORDER, APRIL 5, 1903 • • •

"Armonk is located on the Armonk River. Just south of the village, a tunnel is dug under hill and then goes into Kensico Reservoir. The village on the north is bounded by Wampus Lake, and Byram Lake; on the east by Morris Brundage's blacksmith shop, on the south by Byram Swamp; on the West by Whippoorwill. It is situated six miles from Kensico Station, and it cost 50 cents by stage to get there. (It costs 50 cents by trolley to go from New York city to Boston). It has three stores kept by Flewellin & McDonald, Wm. K. Haviland, and Mervin R. Baker; all do a thriving business. All goods are drawn from Kensico Station. Three [four] hotels: Augustus Angevine (Waldorf-Astoria); Charles Walton (Brookside); William Ackerly (Road House); Daniel C. Merritt (Pig Street Hotel). He is a large dealer in game chickens, and fast horses. It has two churches, Methodist and Episcopal. These are a few of the cemeteries: Episcopal, Methodist, Quaker, on Sands' Hill; Wampus Pond cemetery, Briggs' cemetery, Townsend cemetery, Smith cemetery, on George Yerks' farm; Tucker cemetery, on Albert Waterbury farm, and the Indian cemetery, on the John Platt Tripp farm. Dear readers, you should visit some of these cemeteries and see what interest these good people take on the lots where their forefathers and foremothers are now resting. One blacksmith shop, kept by William Brundage [Maple Ave.]; does a thriving business; harder work to sell him a bill of goods than it is to collect the money. Sam Taylor does the shoe business of the village; Frank McDonald sells what meat is used in the surrounding township; gives good satisfaction; don't have to take your hat off to eat it. Bob Quinby makes the best cider in that country. I know, for I have tried it."

(There was more to this article but it was not legible.)

## A NOTE AS TO CUSTOM - SKIMMERTON

By Hon. James D. Hopkins

Skimmerton? A strange word that does not seem to bear any relation to any other word. In truth, it is hard to trace a connection.

The connection in my case is a memory of a conversation between my father and mother when I was a child. I cannot say why this memory persists; our minds make their own laws of recall. They were talking of a couple in Armonk who the night before had been treated to a "skimmerton," an event that took place on their nuptial night. I have since come to understand that skimmerton was a custom brought over by the colonists in these parts.

Skimmerton is only one of the variants for the spelling of the custom. William Safire in his book, Take My Word for It, asked what was called a noisy neighborhood reception given to a couple just married who were then expected to leave the marital chamber and welcome (?) the uninvited guests. He was informed by his correspondents that it was a shivaree (from the French chari-vari, itself derived from a Czech word meaning "headache"—a truly apt description for the morning after), used in the West, or a belling, used in West Virginia, or a skimmerton, used in lower New York State and New Jersey.

Skimmerton, says the Oxford Dictionary, is another way of spelling skimmerton, and the authors find its usage in books printed as early as 1634 — about the time the colonists were emigrating to America. They also trace it to the kindred custom of the skimmity ride, something known in Dorset and Somerset in the west of England, deriding an ill-used husband or a shrewish wife. Thomas Hardy refers to this custom in his The Mayor of Casterbridge.

As I understand the custom of skimmerton in North Castle, the neighbors surrounded the newly-wedded couple's home just after nightfall and serenaded them with the clatter of dishpans drubbed by spoons intermixed with jeers and hoots in an endeavor to rout them from their home and force them to entertain the crowd with beer and cake (cakes and ale?), until at last the tormentors withdrew.

The custom long ago disappeared, fortunately. The new customs of a wedding reception and a honeymoon out of town have rendered the crude mockery of a skimmerton obsolete. But it seems to have survived its passage from England until this century.



FROM THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S QUARTERLY BULLETIN,  
VOL. 20, NO. 1, JANUARY 1944:

Taken from a day book kept by Joel Lawrence of South Salem, 1815-1829. This book is now in the archives of the Westchester County

Historical Society:

To Make a Cheap Paint

To ten quarts of slacked lime

Add one and one-half lb. brown sugar

Ten lbs. whiting and

One lb. salt

Mix well together and apply it to the wood with a whitewash brush or paint brush.

The above is as was given me this 29th day of June 1849 by Mr. Jonathan Hobby of Middle Patent.

# THE NORTH CASTLE HILLS

## An Afro-American Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century



Second in a series (See N. Castle History, Vol. 15, 1988)

By Edythe Quinn Caro

No single event in the history of "The Hills" community was as dramatic as the Civil War, in which at least 32 black men from "The Hills" served in four black regiments. One "Hills" man enlisted in the 54th Regiment, Massachusetts Colored Infantry; ten "hills" men enlisted in the 14th Regiment, Rhode Island Colored Heavy Artillery; and seventeen others enlisted in the 29th Regiment, Connecticut Colored Infantry, all in 1863. In 1864, four "Hills" men enlisted in the 20th Regiment, New York Colored Infantry.

In the Winter 1987 issue of The Westchester Historian,<sup>1</sup> I described the military career of Sergeant Simeon Anderson Tierce of the 14th Regiment, Rhode Island Colored Heavy Artillery, focusing on information in five letters which he sent to his wife Sarah Jane in the Harrison section of "The Hills."<sup>2</sup> Here, I will concentrate on the "Hills" soldiers from North Castle.

On occasion, families in "The Hills" moved from one dwelling site to another, sometimes crossing town borders, e.g., from Harrison to North Castle. Therefore, records were not always consistent as to place of residence. Here, I have listed the "Hills" black men whom I feel confident were North Castle residents in the 1860's. However, there may be other "Hills" soldiers who at some time lived in the North Castle section of "The Hills" community.

### **"North Castle Hills" Soldiers in the Twenty-ninth Infantry Regiment, Connecticut Colored Volunteers<sup>3</sup>**

The Companies of the 29th Infantry to which "Hills" men were attached fought in the campaign before Petersburg and Richmond, Va., from August 1864 through the fall of Richmond on April 3, 1865, suffering heavy casualties in the skirmishes of October 27, 1864. The Companies then served as an army of occupation near Brownsville, Tx.

BUTLER, THOMAS of North Castle, Co. D (or E), Private. Buried in black cemetery on Buckhout Road, military gravestone.

JOHNSON, GEORGE WASHINGTON of North Castle, Co. F., Private. Died on August 9, 1865 in Brownsville, TX., of "Diarrhoea" and/or "Scurvy."

ODELL, DANIEL of North Castle, Co. B., Private. Hospitalized in New Haven, Conn., for Measles. "Wounded, shoulder, severe," Oct. 27, 1864, on the "skirmish line, Kell House."

ODELL, WILLIAM M. (MINER), of North Castle, Co. B., Private. Died on June 30, 1864 at Military Hospital, Beaufort, S.C., of "Lympho Malarial fever." Buried July 1, 1864 "Lot No. 20, Grave 640, Beaufort Cemetery," Beaufort, S.C.

Daniel and William Miner Odell were brothers. On June 30, 1864, Daniel signed a statement, acknowledging that he had received the effects of his deceased brother, William Miner.

SEYMOUR, HORACE of Harrison [or North Castle], Co. B., Private.

WILLIAMS, JAMES A. of North Castle. Co. H., Private.

**"North Castle Hills" Soldiers in the 14th Regiment,  
Rhode Island Colored Heavy Artillery, Company E  
(11th Regiment, U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery)**

Dudley Taylor Cornish, author of The Sable Arm, succinctly described the 14th Rhode Island's military record:

*It was the fate of the 14th to have various garrison, picket, and outpost duty in the river parishes of Louisiana, at Plaquemine and Donaldsonville. . . . Their greatest enemies were not Confederates but "yellow jack," "breakbone fever," and boredom.<sup>4</sup>*

BARKER, DAVID of "The Hills" (possibly North Castle).

BARKER, ELISHA of North Castle, Corporal.

SEYMORE (also SEYMOUR), ALFRED of North Castle, Private. Sick with diarrhea in Battalion Hospital; suffered from chronic diarrhea after return home. Alfred is the father of James Shipman and John Wesley Seymore and the uncle of William Henry Seymore.

SEYMORE, JAMES SHIPMAN of North Castle, Private.

SEYMORE, JOHN WESLEY of North Castle. Private. Discharged at Muster-in because of Hernia, as "unfit for duty."

SEYMORE, WILLIAM HENRY of North Castle, Private. Sick with diarrhea, hospitalized. Mustered out Oct. 2, 1865. Died in "The Hills" on March 25, 1866, from chronic diarrhea. Buried in black cemetery, Buckhout Road, Harrison, military and private gravestones.

STEPHENS, MORGAN of North Castle, Private.

SPENCER, PHILIP of "The Hills" (possibly North Castle).

**"North Castle Hills" Soldiers in the 20th Regiment,  
U.S. Colored Infantry**

**New York State's Regiment was formed in 1864.**

The men were mustered in on Riker's Island, New York Harbor, and mustered out in New Orleans, LA, in October 1865. As with the 14th Rhode Island Regiment, they served as an army of occupation.<sup>5</sup>

GILCHRIST, SOLOMON of North Castle, Corporal.

"Appointed Sergeant, Jan. 1, 1864," and on June 3, 1864, "reduced to the ranks for quarrelling;" completed service as a corporal to which he was appointed on March 1, 1865. On February 27, 1864, Solomon Gilchrist gave sworn testimony that he was the victim of an enlistment bounty fraud, being promised \$350, but only receiving \$150 of it.

PURDY, WILLIAM HENRY of North Castle, Corporal, Co. E. Appointed Corporal, February 3, 1864.

VALENTINE, WILLIAM of North Castle, Private, Co. A, March 4, 1864, Discharged "without pay or allowances" . . . found "incapable of performing the duties of a soldier because of secondary syphilis."

Many of the "Hills" soldiers returned home suffering from injuries and illnesses which negatively affected both their ability to earn a living and their community's economic welfare. Others, having acquired more experiences than their ordinary civilian lives would have encompassed, returned home changed and subtly changed the community in which they lived. Changes are seen, for example, in the reorganization of the church and the founding of a "hills" chapter of the benevolent society, The Brothers and Sisters of Love and Charity, in 1869. And others moved away, seeking better opportunities elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

Movement out of the community was as close as to a black neighborhood on Westchester Avenue on the Harrison/White Plains border, or to Tarrytown or Mount Vernon. Some went farther, to the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, to New York City, or to Connecticut, especially to New Haven. Throughout its history, "The Hills" people interacted with the urban black populations in New York City and New Haven, particularly through religious ties to other congregations.<sup>7</sup>

One of the first recorded instances of a "Hills" family moving to New Haven was in 1866, when William H. Purdy and his wife Lucinda A. and their only surviving child, a son William junior, moved there. Lucinda was the daughter of Christina and Alfred Seymore of the North Castle section of "The Hills".\* Upon William's return home from the Civil War, in which he had served as a corporal in Company D of the 20th (NY) Regiment USCT, the family lived for a short time in "The Hills" near their kin and their childhood homes.<sup>8</sup>

In the Spring of 1866, the William H. Purdy family moved to New Haven where William and his wife resided until his death from "consumption" in 1885.<sup>9</sup> At that time, Lucinda went to live with her son William junior in Providence, R.I. Lucinda's brother, James S. Seymore, a veteran of Co. E. of the 14th R.I.H.A., also lived in Providence. She returned to New Haven about 1891 to reside near her kith and kin who had migrated there from "The Hills" and other towns in Westchester.<sup>10</sup>

Such kin included Lucinda's cousins, Emily J. Myers and Mary Jane Hatfield, who both declared that they grew up next door to each other in "The [North Castle] Hills." Emily J. Myers recalled: "We were born and brought up like two sisters, always living right with each other."<sup>11</sup>

Lucinda was awarded a widow's pension of \$8 per month. She died circa April 15, 1900.<sup>12</sup>

James S. Seymore, Lucinda's brother, returned to Providence, where he had been mustered into the 14th Regiment, Rhode Island Colored Heavy Artillery. But he also had ties to New Haven, having married his first wife, Jamima A. Mitchell, there on Feb. 26, 1867. Seymore lived in New Haven for "about 1 year" and for two years in Middletown, Conn., before moving to Providence around 1892/3. In 1926, James S. Seymore was "totally incapacitated" and "confined" to the Rhode Island Soldiers' Home in Bristol, supported by a government pension.<sup>13</sup>

Other veterans and/or their families likewise moved away from "The

\*Lucinda's sister Sarah Jane married Edward Lloyd and continued to live in "The Hills" through the 1870 Census enumeration.

North Castle Hills" and the pension documents included information about several of them. Daniel Odell moved to Brooklyn, where he resided with his second wife Caroline until his death in 1917. He had married his first wife, Mary Evelyn Barnett, in Brooklyn in 1877.<sup>14</sup>

After the death of her husband in the Civil War, Mrs. George W. Johnson (Adeline M.) and her young son moved to the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. One of the witnesses to her deposition was James H. Hatfield of Williamsburg. As mentioned previously, Hatfield was a surname associated with blacks in "The North Castle Hills."<sup>15</sup>

In an 1886 Deposition for Jane Seymore's pension claim, Elisha Barker of the North Castle "Hills" explained:

*I left the neighborhood about May 1866, and stayed at Hartford, Conn. for eleven years, working for L. Cundy & Co., Rubber Dealer, and then returned here.*<sup>16</sup>

Although Elisha returned to "The Hills," his wife Emily didn't. In 1886, Jane Seymore explained that she was unable to read or write and that during the war, Mrs. Elisha Barker used to read her son's letters to her. And she also explained that Mrs. Elisha Barker had left her husband and moved to New York City, describing her as "a bad character." In one of Lucinda (Seymore) Purdy's depositions, dated 1893, she mentioned that Mrs. Emily Barker was residing in West Haven, Conn.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the history of "The Hills," several large families dominated its kinship system, including the Seymore family of the North Castle section. After the Civil War, in which several Seymore men served in the 14th Regiment, the family's strength and independence were broken by poor health incurred during the war, and the resulting poverty from reduced ability to earn a living.

Alfred Seymore was the patriarch of the family in 1860, when the Census listed his age as 50 and his occupation as a gardener. He volunteered along with his sons James Shipman and John Wesley, and his nephew William Henry Seymore, enlisting in the 14th Regiment. On enlistment and pension records, he gave his age variously as 40 and 44. Considering the poor state of his health in service, he may have been the older age, i.e. 50, too old to resist the Louisiana weather and poor health conditions of camp. As his comrade Elisha Barker testified:

*His sickness was caused by exposure and the climate. A great number of the men were sick with Fever and Diarrhoea there; some more than others; many died of it.*<sup>18</sup>

Alfred was listed as sick with "Intermittent fever," possibly malaria or typhoid, at Plaquemine and Donaldsonville, spending time in the regimental hospital. Upon his return to "The Hills," he suffered continually "with Chronic Diarrhoea and liver troubles," and was unable to regularly work. He was attended by H. Ernest Schmid, M.D. of White Plains, who confirmed treating Seymore and his neighbors, explaining: "he with others had just arrived home and I was attending several for similar troubles." Alfred Seymore died on October 2, 1877.<sup>19</sup>

In the early 1880s, his widow Christina Seymore filed a pension claim,\* which was supported by her friends and neighbors, both black and white.

\*Christina Seymore died before her claim was fully processed, sometime before 1887.



Christina lived with her daughter, Sarah Lloyd, "who was now obliged to support her." Her needs were great as described by her attorney, V.M. Hodgson of White Plains:

*The widow is in much need, old and feeble, and a very respectable Christian colored person, has always been respected for her faithfulness and integrity, more than usual in her class, and her feebleness places her on the charity of others and if any thing is due her it's early settlement would be a great relief not only to her but to others who are charitably disposed toward her.*<sup>20</sup>

Hodgson was the attorney, representing many of "The Hills" veterans and/or their widows in their claims, and although he routinely presented their cases as needy, he added a personal plea in this case. However, as is evident in his comment, he normally questioned the honor of "her class," allowing that she was an exception. White witnesses frequently expressed their prejudice in this form. As was the racial rule for the time, black people as a group were not regarded as "respectable," their honor (and/or honesty) frequently being questioned. However, when testifying for a black person (or couple) whom one knew very well over a long period of time, a white person would claim he/she was "respectable," an exception to their race. While society's condemnation was routinely voiced against the group, personal knowledge of the individual intervened, and the person involved was praised or defended. But this recognition of an individual black's honor was not strong enough to overcome the general prejudice against the group.

While Alfred Seymore suffered for years from the debilitating illness, his young nephew, William H. Seymore, died of diarrhea shortly after his return. William left his elderly parents poverty stricken, as they had depended on him for support, especially after his father was unable to work steadily due to a hernia. His mother, Jane Halstead Seymore, and later his father, Harvey Seymore, filed for pensions.<sup>21</sup>

Documents in Harvey and Jane Seymore's pension file record the "valuation of all property assessed to [them] — personal or real estate" between 1865 and 1885. That figure remained constant at \$150. Harvey Seymore explained: "I own this property, which has about one acre of ground . . . [M]y son [Alonzo] pays about \$2.40 a year for taxes on it." At the time of Jane Seymore's death on January 28, 1892, the attorneys testified on Harvey Seymore's behalf, stating:

*There remained as property belonging to them a house and lot in what is known as the Hills in the town of North Castle and its value was no more than \$250 and it is doubtful if it would bring that.*<sup>22</sup>

Today, the area known as "the Hills in the town of North Castle" no longer has an Afro-American population. The black families completed their exodus from "The Hills" by the mid-1940's. For the most part, the North Castle "Hills" area is New York Watershed Property, preserved in its rugged state. Much of the property on Stony Hill Road in the Harrison section of "The Hills" is part of Silver Lake County Park.

1. The Westchester Historian is a quarterly publication of the Westchester County Historical Society.
2. Edythe Quinn Caro, "Black Civil War Soldiers from The Hills," The Westchester Historian (Winter (1987), Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 9-16.
3. The lists of soldiers with brief details concerning their service record were compiled and condensed from several sources: The National Archives and Service Administration, Compiled Service Record of Volunteer Union Soldiers who Served with United States Colored Troops and Pension Files, 1861-1934, Town of North Castle Military Record: War of Rebellion (Civil War), Oct. 24, 1865 (in possession of North Castle Town Clerk's office); Catalogue of Connecticut Volunteer Organization (Hartford, Conn.: Press of Case, Lockwood and Company, 1864); Scharf, Vol. II, pp. 635-636 and 718-719; and The Weekly Anglo-African, Vol. IV, No. 14 (Whole No. 170). Individual references within the lists will not be cited, unless distinct from the above.
4. Dudley Taylor Cornish, The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865 (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1956), pp. 286-287.
5. Cornish, p. 253.
6. New York, Westchester County, Record of Deeds, "William Tierce to The Brothers and Sisters of Love and Charity," 6 February 1869, Liber of Deeds, No. 714, p. 110.
7. Caro, "The Hills," especially the chapter on "The Church in The Hills."
8. The National Archives and Service Administration, Pension Files, 1861-1934 (hereafter cited as Pension Claim or Widow's Pension Claim), "Case of Lucinda A. Purdy, No. 348,629," Deposition A, dated 13 March 1883, pp. 5-7.
9. Ibid., "Affidavit of Physician who Treated the Soldier in his Last Sickness, Showing the Date and Cause of Death," dated 27 March 1891.
10. Ibid., Deposition A, and Deposition G, dated 17 March 1893, p. 19. The National Archives and Service Administration, Compiled Service Record of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with United States Colored Troops Service Record, (hereafter cited as Service Record) "Case of James Seymore" and Pension Claim, "Case of James Seymore, No. 914,610."
11. Widow's Pension Claim "Lucinda A. Purdy," Depositions B, pp. 2-10; C, pp. 11-12.
12. Ibid., File Jacket.
13. Pension Claim, "Case of James Seymore, No. 917,610." Declaration for Additional and for Straight-Increase Pension, dated 16 October 1897. Circular dated June 1898. Declaration for Pension dated 22 May 1912. Questionnaire dated 18 March and 11 July 1915. Letter dated 26 April 1926. File Jacket.
14. Pension Claim, "Case of Daniel Odell, No. 1175273." Questionnaire dated 12 April 1915.
15. Widow's Pension Claim, "Case of Adeline M. Johnson, No. 115993," Declaration dated 12 January 1866.
16. Pension Claim, "Case of Jane Seymore, mother, No. 258,672." Deposition EE, dated 27 August 1886, pp. 81-82.
17. Ibid., Deposition A, p. 6. Widow's Pension Claim, "Lucinda A. Purdy," Deposition A, dated 13 March 1883, p. 6.
18. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, New York, Westchester County, North Castle, (hereafter cited as U.S. Census, 1860), p. 59, No. 427/457. Service Record, "Case of Alfred Seymore," Widow's Pension Claim, "Case of Christina Seymore, No. 271628," Testimony dated 6 August 1881.
19. Widow's Pension Claim, "Christina Seymore," Report from Hospital Records, dated 28 June 1882. Testimony dated 31 December 1882 (H. Ernest Schmid, M.D.).
20. Ibid., Testimony dated 4 June 1881. Letter dated 4 January 1881. Undated response noted on letter dated 23 March 1887.
21. Pension Claim, "Case of Jane Seymore, mother No. 258,672. Testimony dated 8 April 1892 (Robert B. Ryan, undertaker). Pension Claim, "Case of Harvey Seymore, No. 542,885."
22. Pension Claim, "Jane Seymore," Exhibit HH, p. 86, dated 28 August, 1886; Pension Claim, "Harvey Seymore," Deposition B, dated 25 August 1886, p. 18; and Testimony of V.M. Hodgson and L.C. Platt, dated 26 May 1892.

## ADDENDUM:

### ALLEN BANKS OF NORTH CASTLE

By Edythe Quinn Caro

Allen Banks, a black man from North Castle, never lived in "The Hills" and, therefore, cannot be officially counted in its population. But his story has such classic dimensions that it deserves inclusion in this history of an Afro-American community in Westchester. Also, Allen undoubtedly knew many of the "Hills" families as he was growing up in North Castle; and he served in the same Civil War unit as several "Hills" men, G Company of the Twenty-ninth Infantry Regiment, Connecticut Colored Volunteers.

His history forms a direct and personal bridge from his father's slavery in North Castle and freedom through manumission to his own service in the Civil War to secure freedom for Southern slaves. Allen's surname, Banks, is significant, linking his family to the large white family of Banks, living in that section of North Castle which to this day is called Banksville.

In the 1800 Federal Census for North Castle, five heads of households with the surname Banks were listed: Samuel, followed by the surnames of 23 other family heads, then the four other Banks household heads listed one right after another, James, Benjamin, Jonathan, and another Samuel. The five households totaled 38 white persons. James Banks' household also included a free black person and a slave.\*<sup>1</sup>

In 1819, the North Castle Overseers of the Poor agreed to the manumission of a slave named Pomp, belonging to James Banks. The record read as follows:

*We the undersigned overseers of the poor in and for the Town of North Castle in the County of Westchester and State of New York do hereby certify agreeable to Law concerning Slaves and Servants that a certain Molator [sic] man slave named Pomp belonging to James Banks of said Town aged about Twenty eight years of age and appears to be of sufficient [sic] ability to provide for himself as a freeman in Witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands this fifteenth day of February 1819. Joshua Smith/John Smith<sup>2</sup>*

According to New York State's Gradual Emancipation Act of 1799, every child born of a slave after July 4, 1799 would be free, if a male at 28 years, if a female at 25 years. Pomp seemed to be conveniently old enough to be freed. According to law, the overseers of the poor had to certify that a slave would not become a public charge after manumission but could provide for him/himself.<sup>3</sup>

Pompey Banks and his family are reported in the Federal Census manuscripts<sup>4</sup> for North Castle as follows:

1850 Federal Census, Family #174 (living along side the white Banks families)	
POMPEY BANKS	(b) age 56, m, Laborer
Catharine	(b) 28, f,
Caroline	(b) 17, f,
Elisha	(b) 10, m,
Harriet	(b) 8, f,
Jane	(b) 4, f,

1860 Federal Census, p. 28, #29	
William Oliver	(w) age 60, m
POMPEY BANKS	(b) age 60, m
Catharine	(b) 40, f
James	(b) 6, m
Josephine	(b) 4, f
Frances M	(b) 1, f

\*Samuel Banks, the founder of the family, was listed as a slave holder in North Castle as early as 1755, owning "one wench Named Marget." In the 1790 Federal Census, Ann Banks was listed as owning one slave and having two free blacks residing in her household.

Listed in nearby, white households are several of Pompey's other children:  
Allen Hobby (w) age 62, m, Farmer (p. 39, #40)  
Elisha Banks\* (b) 19, m

John Banks (w) age 51, m, Farmer (p. 72, #72)  
Harriet Banks (b) 17, f

Although Allen Banks was not listed in Pompey's household, other records clearly identify him as Pompey's son\*\*. Allen gave his age as 34 in 1864, when he enlisted in the Civil War. He would have been approximately 30 years old in 1860 and 20 in 1850, ample age to be living outside of his father's household.

On the fifth day of January 1864, Allen Banks, the son of a former slave, enlisted as a "Soldier in the Army of the United States of America, for the period of three years," to fight in the Civil War, which since the Emancipation Proclamation, effective January 1, 1863, was being waged to free the slaves in the rebelling states. This statement, while overly dramatic in its retelling, is historic fact. Allen Banks had enrolled in G Company of the 29 Regiment, Connecticut Infantry (Colored). He was promoted to Corporal per a Regimental Order, dated September 1, 1864.<sup>7</sup>

In this regiment, Allen was enrolled with at least 16 men from "The Hills," and served in G Company with four of those men: John Lea Brown, Thomas L. Brown, William Glasco, and Edward Hall. The regiment saw heavy fighting before Richmond, Va, on October 27, 1864. Allen was wounded slightly in the leg, on the "skirmish line, [in the] Engagement near Kell House." He "went to the Flying Hospital for treatment of [the] gun shot wound of [the] right ankle." After recovering, he was "corporal of the guard at Fort Harrison," Va. Allen was mustered out with his Company on October 24, 1865, at Brownsville, Tex.<sup>8</sup>

From information in his pension application and in the supporting depositions from friends and relatives, the circumstances of his postwar years as well as his connection to Greenwich, Conn. are described. The records confirm that his ties and those of his friends were with Connecticut rather than "The Hills," demonstrating that "The Hills," while a prominent community for Blacks, was not the only alternative available. Blacks born and raised in other nearby towns often remained residents of those communities. While most of Allen's early ties were to Greenwich, he moved to New York City and lived in other Westchester cities as well. In his deposition of Jan. 12, 1894, Allen Banks explained:

*For the five years before enlistment I lived at Banksville, Westchester Co., N. Y. I was farming during these five years. I was working for Geo. Hobby. I also worked for Jonathan Hobby and Franklin Hobby and Charles Brundidge. [All North Castle residents] . . . Immediately after discharge I came home to Banksville...*

\*Allen referred to Elisha as his "half-brother". Given Catharine's age of 28, she is not Allen's mother, but rather Pomp's second wife. Allen's brother William H. of Greenwich was not listed with Pomp's family in either 1850 or 1860. William gave his age as 65 in his deposition dated 1894, at a time Allen claimed to be age 64. Allen and William were Pomp's children by his first wife, possibly a woman with the maiden name Carpenter, the surname of Allen's uncle Joseph and his cousin Amos.<sup>5</sup>

\*\*In the Town of North Castle Military Record, Allen Banks is listed as a laborer, a resident of Banksville in North Castle, the son of Pomp Banks.

I only lived at Banksville, N. Y. for about a month after the war; from there I went to Greenwich, Conn. I lived in that town about two or three years, from there I went to New York City. I loaded cotton, drove trucks and work of that kind. I did not load much cotton as the work was too heavy. I drove a truck hauling vegetables and fruits . . . I was only in New York City about a year, from there I moved to New Rochelle, N. Y., and worked for Chas. G. Banks, where I did all kinds of work.

I have been a laborer wherever I have been. I have no regular trade. I learned stone-masonry when I was about 12 or 14 yrs old and worked at that trade some before the war but not much since the war. I lived at New Rochelle until about six months ago when I moved here to Mt. Vernon, N. Y. I am unemployed at present.<sup>9</sup>

In an example of physical deterioration after return from military service, Allen Banks declared that ever since the war he had been suffering from his leg injury, as well as from varicose vein-like swellings on both legs incurred during the long, military marches, making him unable to perform heavy labor. However worn out and poverty stricken he was at the end of his life, Allen had once been a robust man, able to perform heavy labor. Charles G. Banks of New Rochelle, a white lawyer and former resident of North Castle, recalled that before the war Allen "was a great boxer and a regular athlete." Charles confirmed that Allen "was a laborer in our family both before and after the war."<sup>10</sup>

In 1894, the Special [Pensions] Examiner sympathetically testified to Allen's poor economic and physical condition, stating:

*There is no question as to his poverty, he is very poor and in dependent circumstances at the present time. He is also weak and worn down. He does not look as though he was able to do much work . . . The claimant seems to be an honest, upright old man and is well thought of by those who know him.*<sup>11</sup>

The testimony of friends and relatives offers evidence of Allen's circumstances as well as their own residence patterns in the post war years. Zenus (or Zenos) Webb, formerly of North Castle, and Joseph Carpenter, a stone mason and Allen's uncle, were both living in Mount Vernon in 1894, where Allen was also residing. Allen's cousin, Amos F. Carpenter and his friend Charles E. Green<sup>\*12</sup> continued to reside in Greenwich. Both of them had served in G Company along with Allen.

In 1898, Allen reported his marital status to the Bureau of Pensions, as part of his application for a pension. He had married his second wife, Catharine Evesers, around 1890, at Little Bethel Church in Greenwich. His first wife, Ellen Harden (or Handen) had died. Banks had no children from either marriage.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Pension Bureau discredited his claim that the swelling on his leg "had its origin in service," because of his general deterioration and lameness from his ankle wound, he received an invalid pension\*\* of \$12, probably per month, starting in the early 1900s.<sup>14</sup>

Allen Banks, the son of a freed, Northern slave and a veteran of the Civil War, died on January 21, 1905.<sup>15</sup>

\*Webb, Carpenter and Green are surnames associated with white, North Castle families. In the 1800 Federal Census, Jeremiah Green owned one slave. Zenos Webb and his family are listed in North Castle, in the 1850 Federal Census.

\*\*Around 1880, Allen Banks was granted a pension of \$2 per month, but his pension papers were destroyed; and after he let his pension claim lapse, he was dropped from the pension roll. Around 1897, the record indicates that he was receiving an invalid pension of \$6 (probably per month).

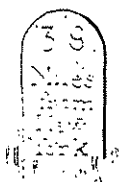
## FOOTNOTES

1. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Second Census of the United States, 1800, New York, Westchester County, North Castle (hereafter cited as U.S. Census, 1800). Reprinted in The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record (April 1926) LVII, pp. 113-116. John Thomas Scharf, History of Westchester County, New York (Philadelphia: Preston, 1886), Vol. III, p. 634.
2. Richard N. Lander and Barbara S. Massi, eds., North Castle Historical Records, Vol. 2: 1791-1848 (North Castle, N.Y.: 1986) p. 262.
3. Carl Nordstrom, "The New York Slave Code," Afro-Americans in New York Life and History (January 1980), pp. 18-19.
4. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, and Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, New York, Westchester County, North Castle (hereafter cited as U.S. Census, 1850 and U.S. Census, 1860).
5. The National Archives and Service Administration, Pension Files, 1861-1934 (hereafter cited as Pension Claim), "Case of Allen Banks, No. 222,727," Deposition A, p. 9 (12 January 1894); Deposition A, p. 5 (27 February 1894), Deposition D, p. 18 (13 January 1894); Deposition D, p. 15 (27 February 1894). U.S. Census, 1850.
6. Town of North Castle Military Record: War of Rebellion (Civil War), Oct. 24, 1865, in possession of the North Castle Town Clerk's office.
7. The National Archives and Service Administration, Compiled Service Record of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with United States Colored Troops (hereafter cited as Service Record), "Case of Allen Banks," Volunteer Enlistment, Company Muster Roll for Sept. & Oct., 1864.
8. Service Record, "Allen Banks," Casualty Sheet (Ind. 50L No. 58), Pension Claim, "Allen Banks," Deposition A, pp. 7-8 (12 January 1894), Service Record, "Allen Banks," Co. Muster-out Roll, dated Oct. 24, 1865.
9. Pension Claim, "Allen Banks," Deposition A, pp. 6-7, 10 (12 January 1894).
10. Pension Claim, "Allen Banks," Deposition A, pp. 6-7, (12 January 1894), Deposition F, p. 23 (13 January 1894).
11. Pension Claim, "Allen Banks," Letter from Ulrey J. Biller, Special Examiner (15 January 1894) pp. 2-3.
12. Pension Claim, "Allen Banks," Deposition B, p. 12, and Deposition D, p. 18 (both 13 January 1894), Deposition D, p. 15 and Deposition E, p. 17 (both 27 February 1894). U.S. Federal Census, 1800. U.S. Federal Census, 1850, No. 132.
13. Pension Claim, "Allen Banks," Declaration for Invalid Pension.
14. Pension Claim, "Allen Banks," Letter from Henry Vail, Special Examiner (18 October 1895), p. 2, Pensioner Dropped (28 July 1905), Pensioner Dropped, 33-405 (1 April 1887), file folders for Cert. No. 227,727.
15. Pensioner Dropped (28 July 1905)



### CAPTION CORRECTION FOR 1988 NORTH CASTLE HISTORY:

The picture caption on page 27 inadvertently omitted the name of Henry Moger, 4th from the left, and James "Robinson" should have been James Robison.



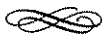
## THE OLD POST ROAD AND ITS MILESTONES IN NORTH CASTLE

by Richard N. Lander  
and  
Richard M. Lederer, Jr.

The word "post" (as in post road) originally came from the fact that mail was carried by the Romans from military post to military post.

Our first post roads, the roads on which the post was carried, evolved from Indian paths. They were gradually widened to accommodate coaches and wagons, but to give impetus to better roads the state authorized turnpike road companies to build roads to specifications. Many of the post roads had milestones to, 1. tell a person where he was, and, 2. to set the rate for the number of miles the post was carried. The turnpike road laws required milestones. In Westchester County the principal roads were The Boston Post Road-Westchester Turnpike Road, The Albany Post Road-Highland Turnpike Road, The Post Road to Danbury and Vermont, several well-known east-west roads and turnpike roads, and some little-known turnpike roads about which we know very little.

This piece is an excerpt and rewrite of the third in a series of articles on Post Roads, Turnpike Roads and Milestones by Richard M. Lederer, Jr.



There is a post road which we shall call "The Old Post Road." It left the Old Boston Post Road at White Plains Road and 228th Street in what is now the Bronx, and passed through Mt. Vernon, White Plains, a tip of Connecticut, Armonk, Bedford and Cross River. There it divided and one post road continued through North Salem into Putnam County and on to Vermont by way of Millerton and Amenia. This road was referred to as the "Stage Road from Bennington to New York" on a 1776 map of White Plains<sup>1</sup> and as "Post or stage road from New York to Vermont" on the 1798 map of North Salem.<sup>2</sup>

Another post road went east to Ridgefield and Danbury and thence to Vermont and also to Hartford, Worcester and Boston. This "Boston Post Road" was referred to as such on the 1797 map of Lewisboro.<sup>3</sup> Today, the Old Post Road basically is the White Plains Post Road in Eastchester and Scarsdale, Route 22 to Bedford Village and Route 121 to Cross River.

The records of the United States Postal Service are good. The first "Act to establish the Post Offices and Post Roads within the United States" was passed in 1792 and one of the first roads established was "from New York to Hartford, through Whiteplains, North Castle, Salem, Pound Ridge, Ridgefield, Danbury . . ."<sup>4</sup> We had, however, post offices and post roads in the early colonial period, but we have not been able to find any record of them as such. And, before that, a post rider would drop a letter at a tavern to be picked up the next time the addressee dropped in. There just doesn't seem to be any record of the first time these roads were used.

A 1714 Hartford newspaper reported that "the Western Post between Boston and New York would go once a fortnight alternatively by way of Saybrook and by way of Hartford."<sup>5</sup> This mail must have been carried by riders on horse trails as the road from Eastchester to White Plains was not laid out until 1717<sup>6</sup> and from North Castle to Bedford until 1729,<sup>7</sup> and from Bedford to Ridgefield until 1737.<sup>8</sup>

Now for the milestones which got us started on all this, we'll look at just those in and bordering North Castle. The thirty-sixth stone was formerly on the westerly side of Bedford Road opposite the driveway leading into the former Adam Ireland farm house. This farm was later owned by Daniel Ryan and F. T. Dodge. This was the first house on the east, south of the New York State line.<sup>9</sup> It was quite an accomplishment to find this stone as it is completely off the ancient post route, having been moved by person or persons unknown prior to 1935. One cannot say that it was stolen as no one seems to know who owns an old milestone, but at least it is now protected and, fortunately, the authors knew of its removal and were eventually able to locate it. It lies next to the present Warburg house, about one-tenth of a mile up the driveway which is one-tenth of a mile east of Bedford Road on John Street.

The thirty-seventh was moved last year by The North Castle Historical Society to the grounds of Smith's Tavern, about 250 feet west of its original site, where it is protected by a masonry structure known colloquially as a "dog house." We cannot ever remember the stone in good condition. There is a picture of it probably taken around 1935/37 by R. Eugene Curry as agent for Yale University (Farms) which then owned the tavern property. (It has always been of interest how crudely the numerals on this marker were cut.) About 1950, at Richard Lander's urging, the state encased the stone in a "dog house" to protect it. However, within five years a tremendous spring rain washed out the stone, protective covering and all. The state or town road crew reset the stone without the covering. About three years ago a motorist struck the fence in front of the stone, breaking the marker in two. The late Norman M. Stone, acting for the historical society, asked and received permission from the state to move the stone to its new location. Because it was nearly illegible and broken in two the society had it dressed down and recut.<sup>10</sup> It is now sharp and clear, but to me it is a reproduction, not the original.

The thirty-eighth is preserved in a stone wall at 518 Bedford State Road, 150 feet north of Red Brooke Place. In revolutionary times this stone stood in front of the home of Andrew Sniffin, a leading patriot and public official of the town. He left the property to his grandson Andrew Sniffin Nash. About 1900 this property became Red Brooke Farm, the estate of Staates DeGroot Tompkins. We believe that Mr. Tompkins took the milestone off the side of the highway and built it into his stone wall to protect it.

The thirty-ninth, with the bottom broken off, is in a "dog house" 100 yards north of the entrance to the Canyon Club. It is by a privet hedge in front of the tennis courts. For those using old maps its location would be between the houses of Hiram Finch and Isaac Tripp on the west side of the post road. The protection was built by the state at the same time they constructed the one around the 37th milestone presently at Smith's Tavern. It is also obvious from the shortness of the stone that it has been broken at some time in the past. However, the important part with the message has survived.

It is almost impossible to tell the exact original site of milestone 40 as the route of the ancient post road has been changed, both east and west of the stone's present site which was chosen in 1976. The old route, west of the site, ran **behind** the old Coman Hill School, now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Rossiello, not in front of it. This route cannot now be traveled to accurately measure the distance from stone to stone, although we have tried. As part of the celebration of the Bicentennial of the United States it was





Before being hit by a car and broken in two the 37th milestone stood near Smith's Tavern on the north side of Bedford Road. (Notice pock marks made by pebbles and rocks thrown up by cars over the years.) The picture was taken by photographer John Gass for R. Eugene Curry (who was the manager of the Yale property real estate) about fifty years ago, and presented by Mr. Curry to Richard Lander, town historian, nearly thirty years ago.

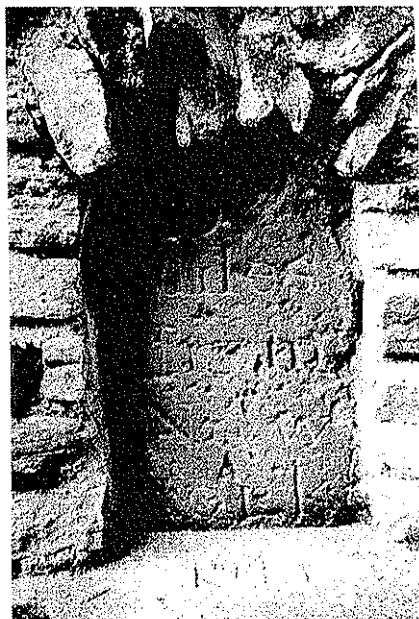


The 36th milestone



The 38th milestone

The 39th milestone



The 41st milestone



proposed to replace the missing stone. This was done as a generous gift of Harold Schaller, a monument builder and a member of The North Castle Historical Society. The spot chosen was at the end of a stone wall about one hundred feet east of the entrance to the estate of Dr. Rufus Cole, now Cole Drive. The marker had a "dog house" covering and was unveiled with ceremony on May 31, 1976 with Arthur I. Bernhard of Bedford, a well-known authority on milestones, making the address. Within two years a car knocked down the "dog house" protector and the beautiful reproduction was stolen.

The last marker in North Castle is midway down the long hill known as Woolsey's Hill on the west side of the road opposite the driveway of Judge Harold Tyler - on old maps, John Ferris' house. Despite its antique appearance it is not the original. When Route 22 was rebuilt and repaved in 1933/34, the contractor destroyed the original stone. As the story goes, he threw it into a stone crusher. Col. Thatcher T. P. Luquer, then Bedford Town Historian, was so infuriated by this act that he made the state force the contractor to replace the stone. The new marker was rebuilt into the stone wall to protect it. For some years the stone was painted white, but that, fortunately, has washed away leaving the same brown stone appearance as the originals.

Since we started this article in Connecticut, south of North Castle, we should, in all fairness, continue north into Bedford for the 42nd milestone. It stood just south of the intersection of the Post Road with Fox Lane. In 1935 D. Irving Mead reported it missing and I (Lander) have looked for it several times over the years, but to no avail. In the spring of 1988 we both made another attempt, but it is truly gone.

Those in North Castle can be content with the fact that, along the roughly six miles of The Old Post Road in the town, four out of five of the treasured landmarks placed around 1771 may still be found.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. J. Thomas Scharf, History of Westchester County, New York. 2 vols. (Philadelphia, L.E. Preston & Co., 1886), I: 727.
2. Scharf, II: 502.
3. Scharf, II: 537.
4. Congress of the United States.
5. Frank I. Morse, "The Old Boston Post Road." SPA Journal, Society of Philatelic Americans, June 1955.
6. Land Records, County Clerk's Office, Liber E, Page 152.
7. Road Commissioners' Book, County Archives.
8. Road Commissioners' Book.
9. Orrin Husted, conversation with Richard N. Lander.
10. North Castle Historical Society, North Castle History, Vol. 14, 1987.
11. D. Irving Mead, Milestones on the Danbury Post Road, manuscript in library of Westchester County Historical Society, 1935.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

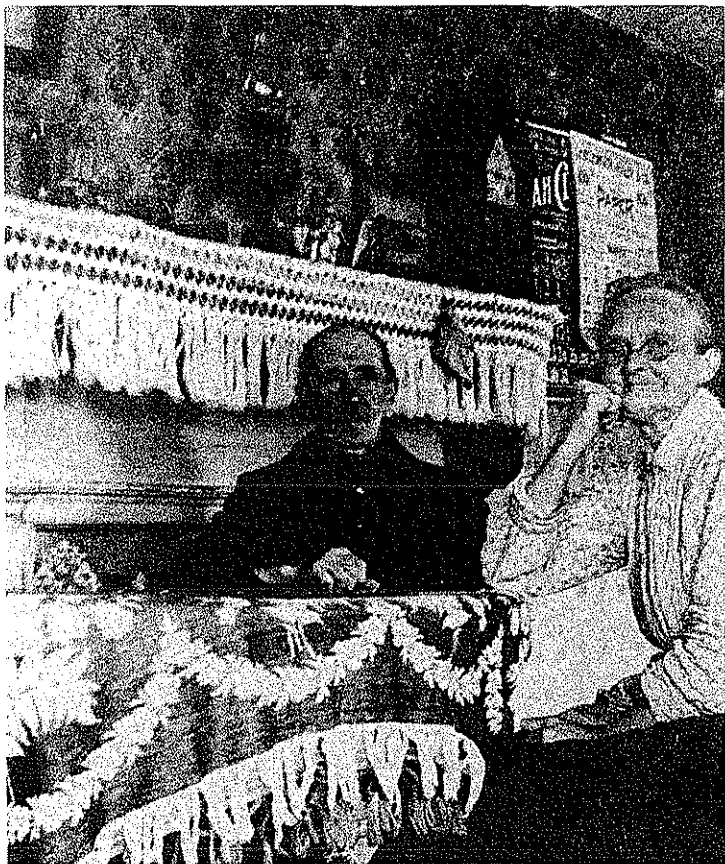
Richard M. Lederer, Jr. is Scarsdale Village Historian and the author of The Place-Names of Westchester County, N.Y., and Colonial American English. Recently the Westchester County Historical Society published his series of four articles on "Post Roads, Turnpike Roads and Milestones" in its quarterly publication The Westchester Historian.

Our own Dick Lander has been Town Historian for North Castle for over 40 years. The authors wish to thank Marguerite Lewis for her assistance with typing.

## FACES FROM THE PAST

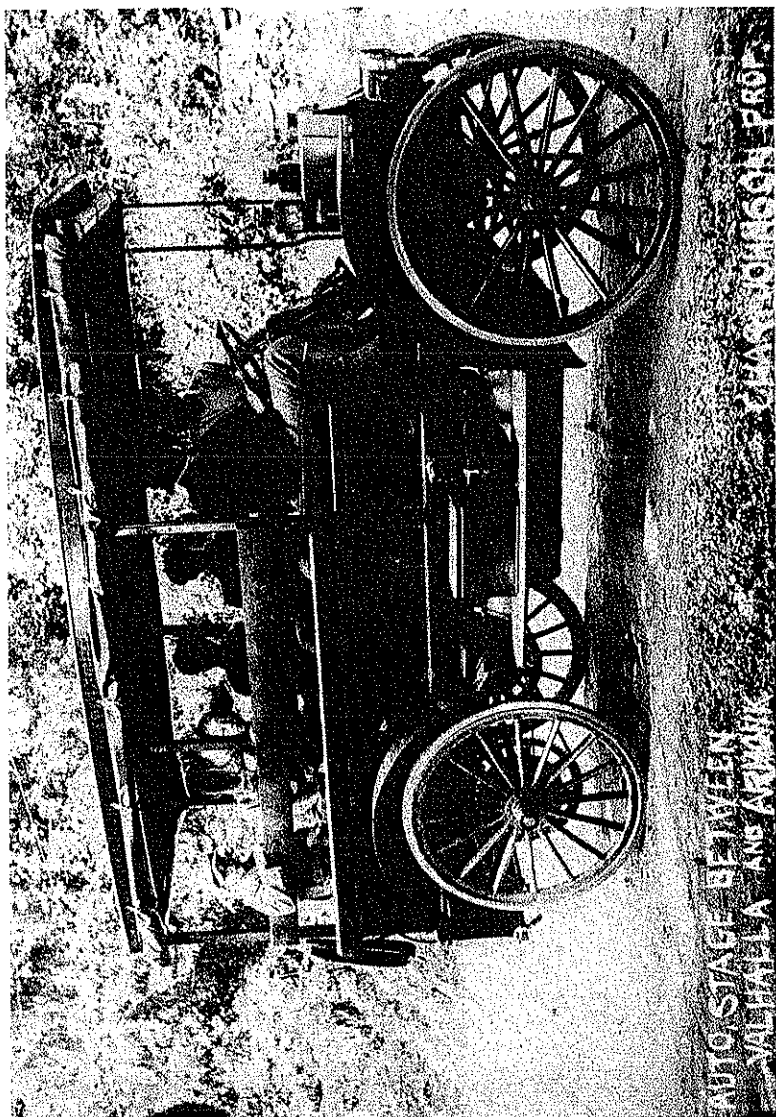


Armonk Village around 1885. L-R: Martha Taylor (maiden name-later married Henry Taylor, no relation); 2 girls not known; boy with black hat thought to be Albert Cox; 4th girl is Jane E. Acker (never married); next to her is Annie Smith (later Mrs. Edwin F. Acker); next girl is believed to be Martha Ackerman (later Mrs. Coleman Clark); the last girl is unknown. The baby in the front row is also unknown. The picture, facing east, was taken in a beautiful meadow where the Armonk Post Office is today. The stone wall in the background hides Main Street, and the picket fence on the other side of Main Street was in front of the Woolsey Ackerman house which stands today as a business. From the collection of Richard N. Lander.



#### FACES FROM THE PAST

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, photographers traveled around the country snapping pictures of residents in their homes or yards. This picture of two well-known Armonk citizens was snapped about 1900 in their Armonk kitchen by a traveling photographer. George H. Lovelett was born in Rye in 1837 and died at this house in 1922. His wife, Deborah Ann See Lovelett, was born in Armonk in 1843 and died in the same house in 1925. Mr. Lovelett and his sons were among the numerous Armonk men who between 1850-1910 were shoemakers. He made shoes until the end of the local shoemaking era. He was also a member of that large local group who had served in the Union Armonk during the Civil War (private, Co. C, 49th N.Y. Volunteers, Army of the Potomac). He received a pension from the United States government for his service in the war. This thrifty couple always kept a garden, cow, chickens and geese to maintain themselves quite comfortably. They lived in a house on the east side of Main Street south of the Methodist Church, just across the Whippoorwill Brook, about fifty feet south of the present Texaco gas station. Although long gone, this old house can be seen in two pictures taken in 1908, which appear in North Castle History, Vol. 8, 1981. The kitchen is typical of the day, with the fringed kitchen tablecloth and fringed mantle cover, the little steeple clock, the oil lamp on the mantle, and, of course, the large monthly calendar. Time stands still in this picture, depicting as it does an era that will never be seen again. Picture from the collection of Richard N. Lander, great-grandson of George and Deborah Lovelett.



As the horsedrawn era was coming to a close this first auto-stage ran the mail and people from Armonk to Valhalla twice a day. Charles Johnson was the proprietor, and his son, Frank, is behind the wheel which at this point in time was on the right. The picture was taken by Sellick around 1910-1915. Picture from the collection of R. Lander, given to him by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Johnson, Jr.

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