



The Roost

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 2

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2010

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS: 2009-2010

President: Andy Lyons
Vice President: Pat Ryan
Corresponding Secretary:
Barbara Carrozzi
Recording Secretary:
Brenda Livingston
Treasurer: John Ryan
Curator: Barbara Sciuilli

TRUSTEES:

Jane Berger
Frank Campbell
Barbara Carrozzi
Florence Costello
Barbe Crowley
Veronica Gedrich
Frank Gilligan
Jack Hurson
Brenda Livingston
Andy Lyons
Sue Maley
Claire Mastroianni
Laurie McGuire
Lenore Munigle
Ginny Read
Pat Ryan
Walter Schwartz
Barbara Sciuilli, Ex-officio
Reina Sinni
Mary Toomy
Erik Weiselberg
Betsy Wilson, Ex-officio

Letter from the President



Dear Members:

I would like to welcome all of our new members to the Historical Society. This year's membership drive was very successful; more than forty new members have joined us. To those who have renewed, thank you for your support and generosity.

The Society has presented three wonderful programs since the last edition of *The Roost*. Irvington students presented an oral synopsis and answered questions about their research papers at "Tomorrow's Historians." They did an outstanding job. The Historical Society honored each participant with the Peter K. Oley Young Historian's Award and a copy of *Irvington Then and Now*.

We celebrated bridal fashions at "I Do, I Do" with more than fifty wedding gowns modeled by volunteers from the high school and the community. What a wonderful event; the perfect balance of local history, fashion history, and just plain fun. The full story appears in this issue. The current exhibit at the McVickar House is all about Irvington wedding memories. The House is open on Thursdays and Saturdays from 1 to 4 P.M.

To celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Earth Day, we held a children's workshop for grades K-5. Irvington artist Michele Firpo-Cappiello showed the kids how to make keepsake collages from things normally recycled or thrown away. The children

had fun and learned a little bit about preserving our planet.

This summer, the exhibit committee will be preparing for our fall offering: A History of Our Public Service Departments. This exhibit will highlight the Police, Fire, Public Works, and Water Departments and the Ambulance Corps. If you have any stories or artifacts that could be included, please email me: president@irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org.

Our program committee is planning a fun history quiz; it will be fashioned after the Discovery Channel's popular "Cash Cab" show. So, bone up on your local, state, and national history trivia and get ready for the History Cab!

Please keep Officer Luigi Osso in your thoughts and prayers; our support is so important to him.

Andy Lyons
President of the Board of Trustees
Irvington Historical Society

Contents:

- 1 Letter from the President
- 2 John J. Irvin: A Remembrance
- 3 Coming of Age in Irvington by Jack Irvin
- 7 Children's Workshop
- 8 Curator's Corner by Barbara Sciuilli
- 9 Bridal Show & Exhibit
- 11 Tomorrow's Historians
- 12 Save the Date

John J. Irwin (1921-2010): A Remembrance

The author of the article that follows, John (Jack) J. Irwin, was born in Irvington on March 2, 1921, the son of Robert T. and Agnes (Kiernan) Irwin. The family residence for most of Jack's life was 82 East Sunnyside Lane. He was a parishioner of Immaculate Conception Church and was confirmed there by Cardinal Hayes in 1932. He attended the Irvington schools, was vice-president of his junior and senior class at Irvington High School, and served on the Student Council. He was also a member of the high school football team and was "All-County" tackle in 1939, his senior year. Upon graduating from high school, he enrolled at the Barnard School for Boys (later, Horace Mann School), a college preparatory school in Riverdale, NY, from which he graduated in June of 1940.

Although he had intended to enter either Lafayette University or Catholic University, the war interrupted and Jack enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard one day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He had five years of active service that included anti-submarine duty along the East Coast, and service in the Caribbean, Panama, and in the Southern, Central, and Northern Pacific, including the invasion of Okinawa. During the 1945 Okinawa invasion he was aboard the USS Sheliak (AKA 62), an attack cargo ship which sent "wave after wave of invasion supplies to the beach."

In 1942, while home on furlough from Florida where he was then stationed, Irwin was engaged to Mary Thornton, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Martin S. Thornton of East Irvington. A wedding soon followed on January 2, 1943, when the two were married in the old Spanish Cathedral, St. Augustine, Florida. The Irwins then resided at Flagler Beach, Florida, where Jack's Coast Guard base was located. After his discharge in February of 1947, Jack was hired as a fire inspector in the safety engineering department of the Atlantic Mutual Company, leaving soon after to accept an appointment with the New York State Department of Labor, where he continued to work for the rest of his career.

For almost half a century, beginning in the early 1950s, Jack was especially active in local affairs. In the political arena, he was a member of the

village, town, and county Republican committees. He was chairman of the Irvington Village committee and a member of the town executive committee. He served as Village assessor (1962), and was appointed Clerk-Treasurer (1980–1986). He also held the post of Town Clerk, Town of Greenburgh. Jack was vice president of the Irvington Youth Center, a member of the Parents–Teacher Association nominating committee, and very actively involved with the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Other activities included the Rotary Club (president), VFW Post 2911 (past commander), the Irvington Historical Society (president), and the Irvington Fire Department. He was an officer of the Triangle Club of East Irvington, and a member of the Sunnyside Community Club, the Irvington Pastime Club, and the Irvington Holy Name Society.

For some fifteen years Jack and Mary resided in Nokomis, Florida. Before his passing on May 17th, this longtime Irvington resident, who gave us so much of his time and energy, submitted the article on the facing page, which truly reflects his attachment to the Village.

Jack was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Robert; and his sisters, Margaret and Sydney. Survivors include his wife, Mary; his five children—Linda (Richard) Simon, Jack Irwin, Robin Waters, Ann (Richard) Conlan, and Sydney (Jordan) Dunitz—and his eight grandchildren. To his family, we extend our sincere sympathy.



Jack Irwin and his wife, Mary, circa 1995.

Coming of Age in Irvington

by Jack Irwin

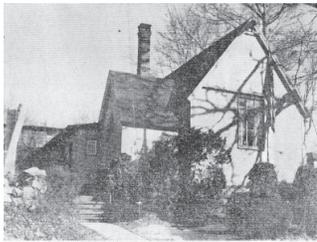
While preparing the following article written by former Historical Society President Jack Irwin for publication in the summer edition of The Roost, we received the sad news of his passing in Florida, where he had resided for fifteen years.

In 1927 my family—mother, father, two sisters, and myself—moved from the Whitehouse estate at 35 South Broadway to our new two-family home on East Sunnyside Lane, built by my maternal grandfather, Michael Kiernan. (Regrettably, my brother, Rob, died at age 17, prior to the move.)

Our property sloped from the road down to the Sunnyside brook, which continued on to the Hudson River. My father, who at that time was engaged in the trucking business, filled in and leveled the backyard with furnace coal ashes he picked up every morning from many of the private estates in the village. My job as a very young boy was to shake the newly distributed ashes in a wood-and-wire rectangular container and pick out and save the unburnt "clinkers" that still could be used.

At the northeast corner of the property facing East Sunnyside Lane, my father installed a Socony gasoline pump. He always believed that at some time in the future, East Sunnyside Lane and Taxter Road would be a very heavily trafficked thoroughway to White Plains.

On the Tarrytown side of East Sunnyside Lane extending from what is now Woodland Lake Estates to the former chapel was the Sidney Borg estate (later destroyed by fire). The Borg estate sat at the top of a long hill climbing from East Sunnyside Lane to the top of Mount Pleasant Lane in the unincorporated Town of Greenburgh area known as East Irvington or "Dublin."



A favorite Halloween trick at the time was to ring the large bell in the tower of this former chapel on East Sunnyside Lane—and then run and hide in the woods nearby.

At that time the Borg mansion did not have any modern sanitary facilities and the odors emanating from the mansion's many "privies," which opened into trenches that ran down the slopes to East Sunnyside Lane, were overwhelming and unhealthy for all the residents in the vicinity. Eventually, the authorities in the Albany health department acted and the Borg mansion was brought into modern times.

Of course, in those days we did not have a recreation department and yet we somehow managed to survive. As a rite of passage and fun, boys would climb to the top of the water tower in the woods near Dublin Square and play cards. In the winter we had skating on Borg's Pond and at Mike Mann's pond at the top of Mountain Road. For a few years the village flooded the baseball infield at Memorial Park. This was great—plenty of parking lights at the rink area, music from car radios, lighted and heated restrooms in the field house. Life was good: I had an expensive pair of racing tubulars (skates), a Christmas gift from my big sister.



Skaters on Borg's Pond

When I was younger, a pre-teenager, there was swimming in the Hudson River at Matthiessen Park. Two sandy beaches, two floats, lifeguards, two dressing rooms, picnic tables, and, of course, slides, swings, etc. Swimming in the river was finally prohibited by the Westchester County Board of Health because of all the sewage and other waste material being dumped into the once mighty and pristine Hudson. At this time, the river was being used as a garbage disposal area by most of the bordering communities.

continued on page 4

Coming of Age in Irvington, *continued*

Somehow or other, at least once during the summer I would manage to get a very severe case of sunburn—not nice, especially in those old-fashioned itchy wool swimming trunks. Returning on the long hike up Main Street, then up Broadway and on to Sunnyside Lane, I would think, is it worth it? Of course, we boys swam in the river anyway—off the rocks between the park and West Sunnyside Lane. This beach was known as the B.A.B.

Another public swimming area was an abandoned stone quarry on Mountain Road. Although this was a popular swimming hole for the local children, it was also considered very dangerous. There weren't any bathrooms, lifeguards, or swings, etc., at this facility. A few years ago when the quarry was being drained and converted into a private pool, I had an opportunity to visit it once again. It seemed to me to have been a pretty dangerous swimming hole with many jagged rocks and even a few bedsprings and auto tires along the sides and bottom. Also, it wasn't nearly as deep as we had been led to believe.



A swimmer dives off the rocks at the quarry.

As a young teenager my favorite swimming hole was Browning's Pond in Pennybridge. To reach it, I walked up Borg's driveway to the top of Mount Pleasant Lane, climbed over the wall and through the woods, passing through Father Divine's property for approximately two miles to the pond. We were always finding shortcuts, some taking much longer than oth-

ers. All along through the wooded meadowland there were many trees and secluded places to change into bathing suits. Browning's Pond was shared by swimmers from all over the area, including Yonkers and Dobbs Ferry. But, in all the many years that I walked through this wooded area, I never met another person passing by in any different direction.

The eastern portion of East Sunnyside Lane from Broadway to Dublin Square looks just about the same now as it did when I was young. Exceptions: the Burroughs estate on the corner of North Broadway and Sunnyside Lane, from where each fall we used to liberate very tasty Delicious apples, is now the Woodbrook Gardens apartment complex. Across the street on the Tarrytown side of East Sunnyside Lane was the Peary estate. A portion of the East Sunnyside Lane side of this estate was the site of one of the earliest Irvington public schools. On the hill facing Broadway was a statue of an American eagle, with wings spread, standing on a round marble ball similar to the eagle at the front of the Irvington Main Street School.

Hudson View Park looks almost as it did before World War II, except for the elimination of Tom Jack's small farmhouse at the corner of Sunnyside, which was torn down and six houses built on the property.



An aerial shot of Hudson View Park, circa 1954.

On the Irvington side of East Sunnyside Lane was the former Sayles estate, now belonging to the Reverend Moon. The chauffeur, Richard Ebbets, and his family lived in a small picturesque cottage at the top of the hill. The estate was the recreational playground for the children of the Hudson View Park area. In winter we played basketball in the loft of the

continued on page 5

Coming of Age in Irvington, *continued*

stable/garage and, without permission, we also borrowed skis, toboggans, sleds and other sporting equipment from the garage.



A young man at bat on the grounds of the Sayles estate.

The open fields on the north side of the driveway leading to the Sayles mansion became a large level plateau approximately halfway up the hill. This plateau lay behind the backyards of some of the houses in Hudson View Park and was approximately 250 feet from the moveable heavy rock home plate of our baseball field. All the other bases were also large heavy rocks. We did not have a backstop so usually one of the younger kids was drafted to be the first backer upper to the first backer upper. One of my greatest ambitions in those days was to hit the side of the Halstead house. I never did accomplish this feat. However, my dear boyhood friend Irv Halstead did so many, many times, usually against my pitching.

Irv's father was a blacksmith with a shop at the top of Hudson Avenue. It was always great fun to watch him shoe horses and I was entranced by the forge and anvil and how he would trim the white stuff from the horses' hooves. Later in life, Irv became a baseball coach at the A.B. Davis High School in Mt. Vernon and during the 1940s was a standout minor league player.

Baseball was truly the national pastime in those days and every community had several teams and Sunday games. The fire department usually played on the field behind the Main Street School. The Irvington Cardinals, formerly known as "Cudney's A.C." after their hardware store sponsor,

played at Memorial Park. Twilight league softball games were also played there.

During the Great Depression, Memorial Park was called by some, "Murtha's Folly" but its construction provided some much needed jobs for the unemployed. In the beginning, some of the residents of the area tried to ban baseball and such public activities and to limit the use of the area only as a bird sanctuary.

Brookside Oval was the home of the Sunnyside Athletic Club and was located on the open fields behind the Sunnyside brook and adjacent to Hudson View Park.



Sunnyside Athletic Club teammates Joe and Marty Thornton and their cousin Marty Thornton.

There were also baseball fields at the East Irvington and Pennybridge schools. Another field, used by Irvington High School as their home field, lay behind the Kyle School for Boys, a military academy located on North Broadway between Fargo Lane and Meadowbrook Road.

High school football games were played at Memorial Park and also in Edison's empty lot on North Broadway, adjacent to Circle Drive, Riverview Road and Strawberry Hill. (Dobbs Ferry was our biggest rival but we never beat the blue and white until many years after I graduated.) At that time, as I suppose it is now, the wall at the front of the Main Street School was an evening gathering place for high-schoolers. For some reason, the police officers walking the beat made it a point to chase us away after dusk. Naturally we complained bitterly. Particularly, I recall one young man who had complained loudly later became a local policeman who seemed to take

continued on page 6

Coming of Age in Irvington, *continued*

great delight in chasing another group of young kids from this convenient meeting place.

One of my most heartfelt personal regrets is that Irvington does not have a public swimming pool. From a period directly following the end of World War II until I left the village fifteen years ago, I served on many, many committees looking to provide such a public pool. One summer evening when I was commander of former VFW Post 2911, I marched a group of former G.I.'s up Main Street to the quiet village board meeting being conducted in Town Hall. We wanted to let the members know emphatically that we did not want any type of stone memorial, nothing except a swimming pool. We failed and we still do not have a public pool. Maybe some day!!!

The Youth Center committee was another I served on in the village. Also serving on this committee were future congressman, Mayor Peter A. Peyser; Richard Wells, president of the school board; Adele Warnock, former school board president and village trustee; Burnham Bowden of the Lord and Burnham Company; and Robert Whitman. It came to our attention that the St. Paul's Methodist Church was going to merge with the Dobbs Ferry Methodist Church and sell the building on Main Street. At this time the sole recreation facility for our youth was the former Pastime Club on North Eckar Street and the Children's Museum located in a storefront on Main Street.

Our committee began a very successful fund drive and was able to purchase the former church and convert it to a recreation center named in honor and memory of Miss Isabel K. Benjamin, the long-time dedicated leader of the Irvington Girl Scouts.

Well, things were different in those days and I am proud and happy to be a member of the Greatest Generation. In conclusion, I would like to share with you one of my life's guiding thoughts [penned by the Swiss philosopher and poet, Henri Frederic Amiel]:

*Life is short and we do not have much time
to gladden the hearts of those who travel
the way with us. So be swift to love,
make haste to be kind.*



Jack Irwin and family members at the Whitehouse estate. Front row: the author's mother, grandfather, and Jack. Back row: his cousin Catherine Wood Beck, his sisters, Sydney and Margaret.



On June 7, 2010, Irvington Historical Society Board President Andy Lyons, left, was presented with the Adele Warnock Good Citizenship Award by Mayor Jonathan Siegel and the Village Board of Trustees. The award is given to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the village. In presenting the award, Mayor Siegel cited Andy's contributions to historic preservation, the Irvington Historical Society, the Architectural Review Board, and the Irvington business community. We congratulate Andy on this well deserved achievement!

Children's Workshop Programs



Showing off a finished product.



Bella Smith busy at work on her sailor's valentine.



Arushi Parekh glues on shells.



A sailor's valentine covered with shells.

In the Children's Workshop we're busy hosting educational and fun programs for the children in our community.

In February, children joined us to create sailor's valentines. First, they toured the Things, Etc. exhibit, and learned about sailor's valentines from years ago. They planned their designs and then crafted their own sailor's valentines by gluing beautiful shells, beach glass, ribbon, and other items onto boxes that will store treasures for years to come. Like the sailors of years past, the children brought their sentimental gifts home to share with a loved one.

In April, we participated in the village's Earth Day celebration by providing a Recycled Art workshop. Michele Firpo-Cappiello, a local artist, taught the children how to turn everyday items we typically throw away or recycle into beautiful works of art. The children not only had fun creating their masterpieces, they took home a valuable lesson about reusing to help our environment.

In June, we decouped cigar boxes, turning these everyday items into keepsake boxes for someone special. The children learned about the history of decoupage and had fun with friends while crafting.

We are always interested in new and interesting ideas for children's educational activities. If you have any suggestions, please email us at: ihsworkshop@gmail.com.

—Laurie McGuire



Michele Firpo-Cappiello lays out recycled objects for the project.



Kelsey McGuire is all smiles as she displays her project.



Nikki May turns everyday objects into a work of art.

Curator's Corner

By Barbara Sciulli



Thank you for your contribution to "I Do, I Do" and the accompanying exhibit at the McVickar House.

The show and exhibit are the result of the planning, talent and imagination of a terrific group of people: The Fund Raising Committee, Donors to the reception, Donors to the bridal show and exhibit, Volunteers, our lovely models, and my family. Thank you for giving us a lasting memory.

Barbara Wright, your thoughtfulness and hard work meant a lot to me. Your talents and energy are limitless.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Barbara Sciulli
Curator



Curator Barbara Sciulli assisting model Marcie Cuff.



Fitting model Kristy Schmitt.



Lynn Gambardella assists backstage.



Two gowns, one with a very long train, on exhibit at the McVickar House.



What a difference an hour makes! Model Jane Abbott at the pre-show run through and a short time later.



Diana Selenow applying make-up and assisting with hairstyles before the show.



A 1928 gown on exhibit at the McVickar House

Bridal Show and Exhibit



Alisa Brown and her husband, MC Gordon W. Brown, enter Knox Hall.



Model Isabel Garcia



Model Keira Munigle Smith, wearing her own wedding gown, poses with her mother, Lenore Munigle.



Model Ginny Read, Historical Society Board Member, wearing her own gown.



Model Xandria James



Model Jade Carmosino



Zoe Brown models her grandmother, Barbara Sciulli's wedding gown.



Sisters Betsy Wilson, left, and Carolyn Davis, right, pose with Sasha Zweibel, who models their mother, Elizabeth Sniffen Thorndike's wedding gown.



Model Cat Gambardella



Model Joanne Sciulli



Model Meegan Scally



Model Leigh Thomas

Bridal Show and Exhibit



Model Clara Foug



Model Brittany Connick with her grandmother, Marion Connick.



Model Gretchen Bauermeister



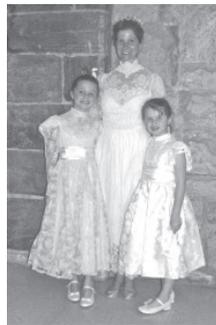
Model Fiona Brennan



Model Jarette Seligman



Bernice Feldman baked this beautiful wedding cake.



Marcie Cuff with her daughters, train bearers, Mary, left, and Sydney.



Model Isa Alimonti



Society Curator Barbara Sciulli, center, with granddaughter, Zoe Brown and event MC, her son-in-law, Gordon W. Brown.



Event ushers, from left, Jack Hurson, Dick Toomy, and Richard Sinni.



Event guests Harriet Gamper, left, and Jean MacIntosh.



Tomorrow's Historians



Society Board President Andy Lyons and Dr. Erik Weiselberg, Society Board Member.



Presenters, from left, Dan Siever, Emily Greenspan, Dylan Hurwitz.



High School Principal Dr. Scott Mosenthal with presenter Isa Alimonti, right, and her mother.

On Thursday, April 15, 2010, the Irvington Historical Society and the Social Studies Department of Irvington Schools hosted the second annual Peter K. Oley student research program entitled, "Tomorrow's Historians: A Symposium Showcasing Exceptional Research by Irvington Students." The students presented excerpts from their research papers, discussed their findings, and addressed audience questions about their historical research and the practice of history. Students presented their papers in a series of panel discussions moderated by Dr. Erik Weiselberg, High School Social Studies teacher.

The event was divided into four sessions focusing on different historical questions. Five papers were presented in each session. Session 1: In-Groups and Out-Groups asked the presenters to write on how various groups throughout history defined themselves. Session 2: Women's History asked the question "What does a study of women in history teach us about the process of history, and of specific historical eras?" Session 3: Geography – The Intersection of Places, People and Ideas asked the question "What role do physical landscapes play in historical change?" Session 4: The Arts asked the question, "How does artistic production reflect and influence its time period?"

A slide show of historical images and photographs accompanied the student presentations. Copies of the papers will be maintained on file by the Irvington Historical Society.



Presenters, from left, Nicky Freeman, Reid Mitchell, Isa Alimonti.



Andy Lyons and presenter Emily Greenspan.



Students Leigh Thomas, left, and Juliet Kleber.



Members of panel respond to questions during the program.

Additional Presenters included: Amanda Jacobson, Allegra Frank, Jennifer Robertson, Rebecca Pozanski, Denise Elliot, Samuel Donow, Scott Kanchuger, Melissa Kuriloff, Eddie Mikus, Hugo Alvarez, Mark Costa, and Julia Canning.

And Honorable Mention to: Sofie Cornish-Keefe, Jane Richter, Lauren Filler, Jade Carmosino, Allyson Gambardella, Daniel Sherman, and Marc Cohen.

The Roost

Irvington Historical Society
P.O. Box 23
Irvington-on-Hudson, NY 10533
Phone: (914) 591-1020
www.irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org

Nonprofit
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 3304
White Plains, NY

Current Resident or:

SAVE THE DATE

ARE YOU A HISTORY BUFF?
THE IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY INVITES YOU
TO FORM A TEAM FOR —

A HISTORY CAB RIDE!

OCTOBER 22, 2010

A take-off on the TV show “Cash Cab”

Irvington Town Hall Theater

Watch for further details this summer.