



The Roost

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 3

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FALL 2015

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS: 2015–2016

President: Pat Ryan

Vice President: Barbe Crowley

Corresponding Secretary: Sue Robinson

Recording Secretary: Amy Sherwood

Treasurers: John Ryan & Barbara Carrozzi

Curator: Barbara Sciuilli

TRUSTEES:

Stephen Beech

Frank Campbell

Barbara Carrozzi

Florence Costello

Barbe Crowley

Ellen Devlin

Earl Ferguson

Mindy Gordon

Sarah Kelsey

Brenda Livingston

Andy Lyons, ex-officio

Neil Maher

Dan McGiffin

Susan Robinson

Pat Ryan

William Schwartz

Barbara Sciuilli, ex-officio

Amy Sherwood

Mary Toomy

Kevin Weber

Doug Wilson

Betsy Wilson, ex-officio

Village Historian:

Nina Caporal-Dawson

The Creation of the History Center by Earl Ferguson

The McVickar House, also known as the Irvington History Center, is the second oldest structure still proudly standing on Irvington's historic Main Street, and has for ten years been the home of the Irvington Historical Society.

McVickar House was built in 1853 by Reverend John McVickar—then professor and acting President of Columbia College and a friend and neighbor of Washington Irving—for his son William, the first rector of the Church of St. Barnabas. The house passed out of the McVickar family in 1870 and was owned by a succession of private residents. In 1957, the Consolidated Edison Company acquired the property, installing a power substation in the backyard and renting out the residence to Dr. Mario Dolan, who lived there for a time with his growing family and kept an office on site until 1984. Other tenants followed but, under the ownership of the utility company, the building deteriorated due to deferred maintenance and in 1991 was abandoned.

The Village of Irvington set out to acquire McVickar House, with the following goals in mind:

Δ To create a permanent home for Irvington's Historical Society, which would include a museum, educational facilities, offices, and meeting rooms. The preservation itself would symbolize

an appreciation for our cultural and architectural heritage.

Δ To preserve one of the oldest sites in the historic Main Street district through rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

Δ To demonstrate a commitment to sustainable design principles that include rehabilitation of existing building stock, mitigation of wasteful building practices, and conservation of the historic character of the Village.



The house as it appeared before restoration.

Contents:

- 1 The Creation of the History Center by Earl Ferguson
- 3 A Profile of Betsy Griggs Wilson by Barbara Kerr Carrozzi
- 6 A Profile of Doug Wilson by Barbara Kerr Carrozzi
- 9 McVickar House Tenth Anniversary by Frank D. Campbell
- 12 Photo Contest Winners

The Creation of the History Center, *continued*

In order to meet these goals, the project would require collaboration of public and private resources, including financial contributions, volunteerism on every level, and highly specialized, labor-intensive pro-bono services.

When the Village finally acquired the property from Con Edison in 2002, McVickar House was in an unrecognizable state: shrouded by overgrown trees and vines inside and outside the structure, and plagued by collapsing ceilings, a crumbling chimney, corroded pipes, inadequate roofing, a treacherous staircase, and a dilapidated front porch. Water standing for many years in the lower level had caused extensive mold and mildew damage.

But although McVickar House had severely deteriorated, the basic form and features of historical importance survived the many years of decay and neglect. Determined to reclaim an endangered piece of Irvington's past, the Historical Society, along with the Village and its residents, collaborated to procure and preserve the building as its headquarters. Finding such an appropriate use for the residence gave the community a strong sense of vision and purpose.



Stabilizing and rebuilding the exterior.

Remedial work included reinforcement of rubble stone foundations and structural framing, replacement of the roof, extensive drainage, and waterproofing. Stabilizing the building consumed most of the available funding. Existing single-pane windows were replaced with historically appropriate high efficiency windows. Electrical and plumbing systems were replaced to comply with current building codes. Central HVAC was installed to maintain constant temperatures and humidity for archival collections.

Originally built as a simple two-story post-and-beam folk colonial residence with Greek Revival and Gothic Revival influences, Folk Victorian ornamental details had been added during the early life of the house. During the restoration, these and other original details were carefully documented and maintained or reconstructed. The front porch was rebuilt with duplicated trim, and a small addition in the back was added to increase space to satisfy the adaptive re-use functional program.

Community response was extremely enthusiastic and included not only generosity of funding and services, but also abundant donations of historical artifacts to the Historical Society for use in both archival curation and exhibits.



The building as it appeared following restoration.

After three long years, the project was completed and the grand opening was celebrated in 2005. This structure, though small in scale, represents a big example of how a community's love of its past can reflect the truest commitment to the direction of its future. It is a testament to the celebration of our architectural heritage, social consciousness and cultural history. As a result, McVickar House is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

—Earl Ferguson

We invite you to visit the current exhibit, Let's Celebrate!, which features a photographic record of the preservation and reconstruction of McVickar House for its new role as the Irvington History Center.

A Profile of Betsy Griggs Wilson

by Barbara Kerr Carrozzi

The summer day, July 26, 1940, was a glorious one in the lives of Ashley and Elizabeth (Libby) Thorndike as they welcomed their third daughter, Betsy Parker Thorndike, into their hearts and home. With older sisters Anne and Barbara, and in time the birth of a fourth daughter, Carolyn, Ashley and Libby Thorndike's family was happily complete.

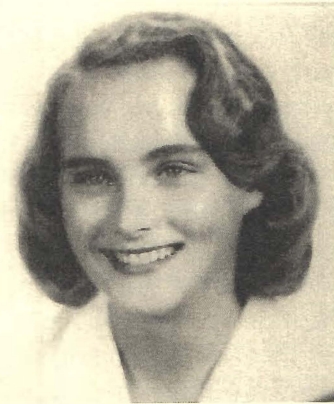


Betsy's baby picture.

A native daughter of the Village of Irvington, Betsy's childhood days were happy ones. She joined the Girl Scouts and spent many hours under the leadership of Irvington's legendary Girl Scout leader, Isabel K. Benjamin. Betsy attended Irvington schools through the sixth grade, after which she became a student at The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, graduating with the Class of 1958. Berkeley Business School in New York City followed, and upon completion of her business studies, she obtained employment with an advertising firm in Manhattan, where she remained for several years.

On June 30, 1962, Betsy and Toby Griggs, also an Irvington resident, married and established their home in Dobbs Ferry. Before long, Toby, who was working on Wall Street, opted for a career change and purchased the nearly defunct Irvington Hardware Store at the corner of Main and North Ferris Streets. Betsy soon joined her husband in this new venture, handling all charge account billings as well as working behind the counter several days a week. Their three children, Lee, Ashley, and Candis, along with many Irvington teenagers, also helped out in the store.

In addition to working at the store, Betsy served 12 years on the board of the Hudson Valley Day Care Center, Dobbs Ferry, as well as devoting her time and talents in support of her alma mater, The Masters School. One major endeavor she spearheaded was the establishment of the very popular Rivertown happening known as "Esterwood's Boutiques" held every November on the Masters School campus. In recognition of her outstanding volunteer leadership and exceptional support and service to the school, Betsy was awarded the prestigious Richmond Bowl, presented annually by the Dobbs Alumni Association.



Betsy's senior class photo.

Caring, compassion, and a spirit of helpfulness were evident in Betsy from an early age according to her sister, Barbara Hopkins. She fondly recalls how Betsy was always eager to offer whatever assistance she could in any situation during their growing-up years in the family home, and stresses how that commitment to "pitch in in any and all ways" continued through her roles as wife, mother, sister, friend, and volunteer extraordinaire throughout her adult life. Barbara further remarks of Betsy, "Doug met his match with someone who had passion for volunteer work!"

Betsy has also maintained a longtime membership with the Thursday Club, a philanthropic organization founded in 1921 and dedicated to fundraising for charitable organizations within the Rivertowns, and spent a decade (1979-1989) as manag-

A Portrait of Betsy Griggs Wilson, *continued*

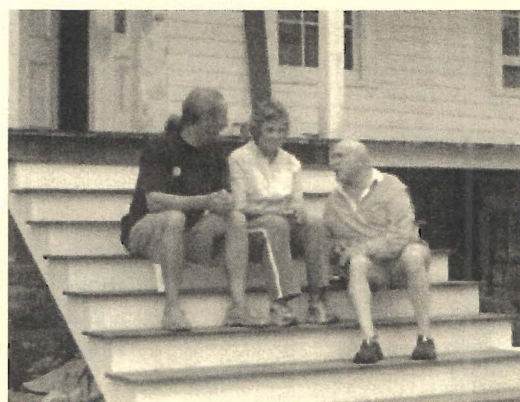
er of the Hudson Valley Tennis Club in Hastings. Along with her involvement in many community organizations and events, she remained an interested and involved parent in her children's lives and activities, spending many years volunteering at her children's school, Springhurst Elementary in Dobbs Ferry, and serving as a Cub Scout den mother and Girl Scout leader.

In 1984, after 20 years' ownership of the hardware store, Toby and Betsy made the decision to sell the business, affording them and their family some well-deserved leisure time. Many wonderful days followed spent boating on the Hudson River. However, sadly, Toby became ill, succumbing to his illness in January 1992.

During the years that followed Toby's passing, Betsy slowly became more involved in the life of Irvington, a village that in her heart she had never left. Always eager to participate and help in any way she could, she quickly became a "go to" person in the village. Early stirrings of Betsy's great love and passion for the Irvington Historical Society began at a "coffee" held in 1994 at the home of Adele Warnock, which Betsy attended at the urging of Doug Wilson. The "coffee" actually resulted in the rebirth of the long-dormant Irvington Historical Society. With nine committed, enthusiastic members (Betsy and Doug included), and the late Peter Oley agreeing to serve as president, the Society was revitalized—alive, eager for growth, bursting with vision. Today, the Society boasts more than 500 members.

Invited in 1995 by Mayor Dennis Flood to view the dilapidated, grossly neglected house at 131 Main Street as a possible home for the Society, Betsy and Doug thankfully accepted, caught the vision, realized the significant importance of its location at the top of Main Street serving as a gateway into our village, and visualized the potential of the house. Their "Yes, let's do it!" response proved contagious, spilling over to other village residents, and the future of the Historical Society's home and Irvington's History Center was more viable than ever. Negotiations between the village and the property's owner, Con Edison dragged on for years. Eventually the transac-

tion was finalized and major restoration fundraising began. Funds were raised and volunteers came forward to offer their input and services free of charge; all in all a successful coming together of dedicated, committed, like-minded people, with Betsy and Doug in the forefront.



Betsy, Andy Lyons (l) and Doug Wilson (r) on the steps of the McVickar House during the renovations.

A few years later when Peter decided to step down as president, Betsy graciously assumed the position, serving in that capacity for 10 years (1997–2007). Following her tenure as president, under her successor, Andy Lyons, she served for many years as Chairperson of the Society's program committee. The superior quality and high caliber of the speakers and programs she arranged are a testimony to her love of history and her desire to share historical knowledge and information with our village and surrounding communities.

Betsy's creative style and talent can be seen in the commemorative afghan she designed, which features many special village sites and remains a popular item for purchase at McVickar House. A former member of the Irvington Garden Club, her love of nature, beautiful flowers, and landscape design still hold a major place in her heart. Betsy is to be commended for her tireless efforts not only in support of the Irvington Historical Society, but other endeavors that have benefitted our village. A founding member of Irvington Landmark Preservation, Inc., Betsy was involved with the Halsey Pond Project, the conservation of the Washington Irving Memorial Monument, and plaques for the Library and Town Hall. Support-

A Portrait of Betsy Griggs Wilson, *continued*

ing Irvington's Chamber of Commerce, she was instrumental in raising funds for the Rip Van Winkle sculpture on Main Street. (A secret desire of Betsy's is to one day redefine the village's boundaries and put Washington Irving's home, Sunnyside, back in Irvington as it once was. If anyone can accomplish this, it's Betsy!)



Betsy cleaning damaged artifacts following Superstorm Sandy.

In recognition of her participation in the life of the village, the Irvington Board of Trustees presented Betsy with the Adele M. Warnock Good Citizenship Award in 2002. Her legacy in her hometown is legendary; she is a priceless jewel in Irvington's crown!

Completing and complementing Betsy's amazing life is her husband of almost 18 years, Doug Wilson. Their beautiful relationship had its beginning on November 16, 1992, when Doug, then a widower, asked Betsy to a performance at the White Plains Courthouse featuring actor Larry Luckinbill as Clarence Darrow. Five years later (almost to the day) on November 15, 1997, they married. Bringing their years of marital experience, children (three each), and grandchildren (eight between them ranging in age from 7 to 23), Betsy and Doug have successfully blended two families. They continue to share many mutual interests, not the least being all things Irvington, as evidenced by their involvement with the Historic District Committee as well as the Open Space and Land Use Committees. They have

also forged a partnership in their recently formed television production company. They are blessed with a mutual love, respect, and admiration for each other—a dynamic, loving relationship.



Betsy and Doug on their wedding day, November 16, 1995.

Betsy and Doug's life's journey together continues to evolve and keeps them happily busy while adjusting to change. After reading an article in a Hudson Valley magazine featuring the Saugerties Lighthouse—the 1869 landmark beacon on the Hudson River that is now a living museum and bed and breakfast—they decided to visit it. Surprisingly, a room was available for the evening (almost unheard of since reservations are made well in advance). Little did they know their lives were about to change dramatically. After a delightful evening in the lighthouse, they set out the next day, almost on a whim, to explore the area. Encountering a real estate agent and viewing some available properties, they left Saugerties that day the owners of three acres of amazing land on the banks of the mighty Hudson! As Doug and Betsy happily say, "We are building our dream house." When their home is completed, they may physically be leaving Irvington, but their commitment to the Irvington Historical Society and village happenings will surely remain and we look forward to seeing them when they travel back from time to time.

—Barbara Kerr Carrozzi

A Profile of Doug Wilson

by Barbara Kerr Carrozzi

Robert Douglas Wilson, known to us as "Doug," was born in Brooklyn, on August 16, 1935, but raised in Garden City, Long Island, the youngest of three sons of William Wallace Wilson and Alice Elizabeth Corl Wilson. A product of Garden City public schools kindergarten through twelfth grade, Doug excelled academically, graduating near the top of his class in 1953. Childhood days were busy and full with part-time jobs, competitive sports (undefeated wrestler senior year of high school), senior class presidency, National Honor Society membership, scouting (obtaining rank of Eagle Scout), and serving as soprano soloist at the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City. Following high school graduation Doug attended Colgate University, Class of 1957. While an undergraduate, Doug sang with the Colgate 13, an a cappella group founded in 1942 that remains a Colgate tradition to this day.



Doug, age 16 and an Eagle Scout, being congratulated by a Supreme Court Judge after giving a speech at the Garden City Hotel.

On September 27, 1958, Doug married Deborah Grigg and together they raised three sons, Ted, Jamie, and Peter. That same year Doug joined ABC television as a production assistant, remaining with the network for 50 years! In early 1964, Doug and Debbie, house-hunting in Irvington, fell in love with and purchased their beautiful home on Lewis Road. On a

snowy February day, their moving van, un-equipped with chains, got stuck, necessitating Doug and their realtor to seek a solution. Driving down Main Street, they encountered a policeman and related their predicament. The kind officer directed them to the salt-and-sand depot at the foot of Main, telling them not to take too much and to do it in a hurry. Doug's response was, "This is MY village!"



Publicity picture of the "Wanna Be a Star," circa 1958.

With the young family settling into their new home and village, Debbie, a stay-at-home mom, quickly involved herself in church, school, Phelps Memorial Hospital and village activities; a major contribution was serving as the first Town Hall Theater Commissioner, acting as liaison between the theater and village. Sadly, after more than 25 years as a vital and integral part of Irvington, Debbie succumbed to illness in March 1991.

Some time after Debbie's passing, Doug experienced an epiphany while jogging around the Halsey Castle ruins. Because of his demanding position at ABC Broadcasting, he had been unable to effectively participate in village life for the first two decades of his Irvington residency but that was about to change! He decided to approach village officials to see if there were any plans to "fix

A Profile of Doug Wilson, *continued*

up the area.” When they cited the expense of clean-up efforts as too costly, Doug proposed a plan to organize a group of neighbors who would agree to a dollar-for-dollar match with the village in a fundraising effort. The village agreed, the funds were raised, and the project was underway! Today, the last intact structure on the site of the Halsey estate—its tea-house—has been magnificently restored, hiking trails prevail, and the pond and surrounding wooded area form a tranquil and inviting nature preserve.

In 1993, Irvington Landmark Preservation, Inc., was founded with Doug serving as its first president. Consisting of a committed and energetic group of volunteers, the organization, at the urging of Mayor Flood, began a massive project to restore and preserve the Washington Irving monument at the corner of Broadway and West Sunnyside Lane. A bronze sculpture by artist/sculptor Daniel Chester French (who seven years earlier had sculpted the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.), Irving’s monument had been suffering from decades of gross neglect and disrepair. Restoration would be costly. Once again a dollar-for-dollar match with the village was set in motion, and before long funds were amassed, allowing the project to move forward. In 2000, the monument was added to the National Register of Historic Places, and it stands as a magnificent point of entry to our village, close to Irving’s own *Sunnyside* home. One of the many commemorative plaques designed by Irvington Landmark Preservation, Inc., has been set in the concrete sidewalk in front of the monument. Other commemorative plaques populating the village courtesy of ILPI can be found at the entrance to Town Hall, the site of the Rip Van Winkle bronze sculpture on Main Street, the Peter Peyser Memorial Rock at Scenic Hudson Park, Beltzhoover Castle on the Halsey property, the Tiffany Room in Town Hall, and the Library, to highlight a few. Doug is proud of this work, noting that “Irvington is a monumental village . . . everywhere you look there is an historical monument, street sign, or plaque.”

With his leadership and participation in such a wide array of village activities, his personal respon-

sibilities, along with his challenging, demanding position with ABC (a physical feat in itself with Doug covering 51 different sports for ABC’s *Wide World of Sports*, involving travel across five continents for events in venues as diverse as Olympic arenas and backroom pool halls), one would surmise his time and energy would be close to exhausted . . . but not so with Doug!

Beginning with the 1964 Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria, Doug has participated in ten Olympic Games. After his coverage of the figure skating competition, as well as the closing ceremony, of the Calgary Games in 1988, Doug was recognized as the worldwide premier director of the sport.

The winner of 17 Emmys, Doug also has received accolades from the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation with its Distinguished Service Award for his production of the International Special Olympics, been honored by the Directors Guild of America with its Lifetime Achievement Award in Sports, inducted into the National Figure Skating Hall of Fame in 2003, and was the first recipient of the Frank Bare Award for Service to Gymnastics by the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame in 2011.

An engaging and popular lecturer on the campus of many colleges and universities, as well as for leading corporations across the country, Doug also continues to perform his one-man show featuring his adventures and experiences with such notable athletes as Muhammad Ali, Peggy Fleming, Howard Cosell, and many others. In 2013, Doug wrote a book! *The World Was Our Stage: Spanning the Globe with ABC Sports* has been another feather in that proverbial cap. Enthusiastically received, the book reached #36 on an Amazon bestseller list. Truly an accomplished man in so many diverse areas!

As much as Doug’s professional life and village involvement has given him personal satisfaction, it was his marriage to Betsy Thorndike Griggs in 1997 that brought him happiness beyond measure. Together, they are a force; devoted and committed to their love and marriage. Their per-

A Profile of Doug Wilson, *continued*

sonality traits and talents complement each other, making them an ideal couple. An expression often heard around the village is, "If you want something done, get the Wilsons," and Mayor Flood knew this only too well, even before they *were* "the Wilsons." On a Saturday morning in 1995, he made a fateful telephone call to Doug inviting him "to take a look" at the dilapidated house at 131 Main as a potential home for Irvington's History Center. Joined by Betsy, Doug viewed the property. Outside vines reached inside the structure and the walls of the house were caked with black mold but, for visionary Doug, its location at the gateway to Main Street was, as he recalls, "a no-brainer." Knowing they faced a long, uphill road ahead, Doug and Betsy were up for the challenge! Years of their life were devoted to the massive project of restoring the property. What an incredibly joyous day it was for them and the entire village when on November 11, 2005, McVickar House celebrated its official opening! Irvington now had a home to showcase its past, present, and future history. The Irvington Historical Society continues to be a grateful benefactor of Doug's commitment, dedication, vision, fundraising efforts, and integration of the myriad of talents and attributes he possesses. We are forever indebted to him.



Betsy and Doug celebrating Betsy's 75th birthday in 2010.

Doug's generous sharing of his gifts as director and producer, along with Betsy's ability to assist and offer valuable insight, has benefitted our village enormously. One outstanding program was the October 30, 2009, tribute to Irvington Mayor and U.S. Congressman Peter Peyser at the Irvington Town Hall Thea-

ter. Complete with a captivating video narrated by Congressman Peyser's actress daughter, Penny Peyser; Clint Clifford's solo, "To Dream the Impossible Dream" (an especially meaningful song to Peter); and the very special, surprise rendering of song by the Colgate 13, with alumni Peter, Doug, and Clint joining in, the event was inspiring and unforgettable. Surrounded by his wife, Marguerite, and his children, Congressman Peyser addressed the packed auditorium at the conclusion of one of Irvington's most memorable programs.

Another gem, produced and moderated by Doug and presented by the Historical Society, was the gathering together of seven living Irvington mayors (Flood, Hurson, Marra, Molloy, Peyser, Reisman, and Stevenson) on the stage of the Irvington Town Hall Theater, participating in an entertaining, spirited Q-and-A session regarding their experiences in office.

Noted for his talents in production and direction, usually associated with activity behind the scenes, Doug is equally comfortable in front of an audience. Gifted with a rich baritone voice, he blessed our village for many years at the annual Memorial Day observances with his rendition of Irvington resident Helen Pastucha's inspirational song, "We Are the People of America," and he remains an enthusiastic performer—always "up for" a gig, singing or acting (dancing too???)! Doug Wilson is a giant in our river village; his fingerprints, touch, artistry and huge piece of his heart are everywhere!

By the time this article appears in the *Roost*, Doug and Betsy will be residing in their dream house in Saugerties, New York. Irvington will indeed miss them, but as Doug says, "It's only a few exits up the Thruway!" We'll still see them in our village from time to time. The Irvington Historical Society and Irvington Landmarks Preservation, Inc., are their "babies," and they could never, ever, not be involved with them, thankfully!

As Betsy and Doug embark on this new path along their life's journey, a grateful village wishes them good health, every happiness, and God speed.

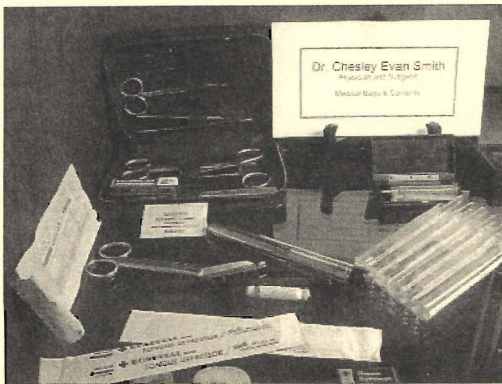
—Barbara Kerr Carrozzini

McVickar House Tenth Anniversary: Celebrating a Decade of Fine Exhibits

by Frank D. Campbell

On November 13, 2005, the Irvington community, together with members of the Irvington Historical Society, celebrated the opening of the Irvington History Center at its new location, the McVickar House, the home it has occupied for the past ten years. The Society's current exhibit celebrates this tenth anniversary with a review of the seventeen exhibits mounted at McVickar House since 2005. This exhibit also includes a contribution from architect and IHS Trustee Earl Ferguson, which provides some historical background and a pictorial display of the preservation planning that contributed to establishing McVickar House as the home of the Society; planning that would eventually lead to its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Society's opening exhibition was entitled *Plain & Fancy: The Art of Needlecraft, Handwork, and Weaving*, and was mounted by Barbara Sciulli, Curator, and IHS Trustee Joan Lobdell. There followed, in late 2006, an exhibit entitled *Irvington Pharmacies: A Century of Pharmaceuticals and Paraphernalia*. It included bottles, pills, and equipment that were stored for decades in the earthen floor basement of the Irvington Pharmacy (46 Main Street), and were brought together by Betsy Wilson, then IHS President, and Barbara Sciulli, Curator.



Betsy inventoried the collection and organized the exhibit committee. She was involved in every aspect of the exhibition and also typed all of the labels and written materials. Many others offered volunteer assistance with research, photography, and donations, and Peter Oley, former IHS President and Village

Historian, prepared the material on six of Irvington's dedicated physicians.

Joan Lobdell, mentioned earlier for her work on *Plain & Fancy*, curated another exhibit in the fall of 2007. Entitled *Choring Around the House: Tools and Implements of Yesteryear*, this exhibit featured hand tools and gadgets used for household chores and revealed how these chores were a necessary part of everyday life. Joan also authored an article entitled *Choring Around the House*, which appeared in the Winter 2008 *Roost*, wherein she used her grandfather's diary to describe her own family's choring activities.

In the spring of 2008, Peter Oley curated and organized *Those Who Served*, which focused on Irvington residents who served with the Armed Forces of the United States of America and told the story of their service with donated pictures, letters, documents, medals, uniforms, souvenirs, and maps. Items displayed spanned a period extending from the American Revolutionary War to the Viet Nam Conflict.



Oley, who was instrumental in the reorganization of the Society in 1995 and who had been Irvington's Village Historian since 1996, was a Trustee of the Society and had held the post of IHS President for three years. His death on April 11, 2009, was a great loss to the Society and the community at large, since he also had taught in the school system and coached the track team for many years. Soon after his passing, the initial meeting of *Tomorrow's Historians* took place, a symposium that has become an annual event hosted by the Society and the Social Studies Department of Irvington High School show-

McVickar House Tenth Anniversary, *continued*

casing exceptional research by students of U.S., European, and global history. The first program was dedicated to the memory of Peter Oley, and students were presented with the Peter K. Oley Young Historian's Award. The event moderator has been Dr. Erik Weiselberg, a Social Studies teacher at the High School and former member of the Historical Society's Board. The event itself is now known as the *Peter K. Oley Tomorrow's Historians Student Research Symposium*.

February, 2009, saw the opening of *Frocks, Frills, & Furbelows: Four Hundred Years of Fashion*, an exhibit that featured clothing, hats, shoes, and accessories from the extensive collection of the Irvington Historical Society, much of which had been donated by Barbara Denyer.



The fashions date from 1760 to 2009 and the décor of the background setting was Victorian. The Society's Curator, Barbara Sciulli, was honored for her work on this exhibit. In her regular *Roost* column, "Curator's Corner," Barbara had given notice, as early as 2007, that the Society would be joining the celebration of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial in 2009. The celebration was to include the 400th anniversary of the historic voyages made by Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain, as well as the 200th anniversary of the sailing of Robert Fulton's steamship *Clermont* from New York City to Albany. The Society participated in the celebration with an exhibit that highlighted the life, people, and events of the village in 1909. Entitled *Irvington 1909*, the exhibit included maps, photos, stories, fashions, and objects

of everyday life. Pat Ryan, current IHS President, offers an account of the events leading to the celebration and exhibit in her summary article in the *Roost*, Fall, 2008.

In January, 2010, *Things, Etc.* was curated by Society Trustee Claire Mastroianni. The exhibit presented a host of items collected by village residents that included thimbles, bird houses, rolling pins, pottery, model ships and much more. The popularity of this exhibit led to another *Things, Etc.* exhibit, also curated by Claire, which opened the following year, with descriptions of some of the things people collect being discussed and illustrated in the Spring, 2011, issue of the *Roost*. In early 2010, bridal fashions were celebrated with a fashion show entitled "I Do, I Do," where more than fifty wedding gowns were modeled by volunteers from the high school and the community. The accompanying exhibit at McVickar House, *200 Years of Wedding Dresses and Wedding Photographs*, was a showcase of Irvington wedding memorabilia. A third 2010 exhibit, curated by former IHS President Andy Lyons, was entitled *Irvington's Public Service Departments* and highlighted the Police, Fire, Public Works, and Water Departments as well as the Ambulance Corps.

We begin 2011 with *Once Upon a Time: The Stories of the Brothers Grimm and Washington Irving*, curated and researched by then IHS Board member, Dr. Erik Weiselberg. The exhibit underscored the connections between Irving's Hudson Valley legends and the Grimms' German folk tales and was organized into "chapters," that highlighted different facets of the Irving/Grimms connection. Drawing upon Erik's extensive research on the subject, he, Barbara Sciulli, and her volunteer staff were able to "bring text to life using books, paintings, costumed characters, photographs, movies" and other items. An illustrated article by IHS Trustee Ginny Read concerning the exhibit can be found in the *Roost*, Fall, 2011.

In the spring of 2012, *Hobbies* was mounted, highlighting a variety of crafts and interests that village residents pursue. Curated by Anna Marie Sabatino and Mary Elizabeth Hartnett, the exhibit showcased examples of needlework, calligraphy, painting, and quilting, to name just a few. Joan Lobdell, Gail

McVickar House Tenth Anniversary, *continued*

Matthew, Lenore Munigle, and Michele Firpo-Cappiello were among the exhibitors and also shared their hobby experiences in the Spring, 2012 issue of the *Roost*. *Winter Wraps*, opened in late 2012, had its genesis in the popular *Frocks, Frills & Furbelows* (2009), which included gowns and dresses from the Society's archive. Set against a charming Victorian backdrop, *Winter Wraps* showcased the society's collection of fabulous capes, coats, and shawls. Barbara Sciulli and a team of dedicated volunteers worked on the exhibit plan. As Barbara has noted, "we are fortunate to have wraps dating from 1840 through the 1950s."

A View from Backstage, an overview of forty-six years of Irvington High School theater, filled the exhibit areas in late 2013. Thom Johnson, formerly the art/photography instructor and tech theater director at the school (1978-2009) brought *A View from Backstage* to McVickar House.



Starting with the arrival of legendary director and drama teacher Michael Penta in 1967, through to the most recent productions by his talented successor, Diana Selenow, the exhibit employed props, costumes, scripts, scenery, and photos to provide visitors with an inside view of the time, hard work, and talent that went into the many high school productions offered. The involvement of former musical director, Larry Corio, and costume designer, Barbara Sciulli, are also highlighted. Recollections from former students who were part of the HS theater program can be found in the Winter, 2014, and Summer, 2014 issues of the *Roost*.

Irvington Unfolds: A Village History in Maps, curated by Ginny Read and mounted in September of 2014, is the last of the tenth anniversary exhibits. It consisted of maps, postcards, photographs, and artifacts from the Society's collection, along with those provided by village residents. Historically significant maps such as the auction map of 1850 that set the grid for Irvington's Main Street "downtown" area were displayed and the entire exhibit offered visitors an interesting perspective on Irvington's history from the 1600s to the present. Atlases and topographic and survey maps were also included and viewers could "walk" Main Street, circa 1912, through Sanborn fire insurance maps of that year on tabletop display. The Society's Adele Warnock Gallery was devoted to a revolving exhibit of maps of specific Irvington neighborhoods, the first of these being East Irvington, mounted by former trustee Bob Connick.

The Irvington History Center was designed to house the Society's library, a Trustee meeting room, and office space for the Village Historian and the Curator. The lower level was to be utilized as a resource area and a children's workshop, the latter made possible by a donation of \$75,000 from the Thursday Club, a group of 36 women interested in service to the community. While ongoing activities such as educational programs, lectures, house tours, photo contests and the composition of the Society's newsletter, the *Roost*, were occurring or being planned at the Center, its exhibition areas were introducing Irvington's past to the general public. The seventeen exhibits mentioned above are fine examples of this. To quote former IHS president Andy Lyons, "While it is sad to see an exhibit at the McVickar House come down, it is always exciting to see the new one that takes its place." So, come visit. Trustee Veronica Gedrich and her excellent team of docents will be your guides. Should an actual visit not be possible, try a virtual tour via our website, managed by Trustee Stephen Beech.

—Francis D. Campbell

