



The Roost

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2004

Letter from the President

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HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
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2004

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Dear Members:

The work on the McVickar House has come quite far. We are so pleased to be able to make a better presentation on Main Street. We have come a long way since negotiations started in 1998, but we have a long way to go.

In November 2003, I announced at the Annual Meeting that we had received a grant for \$200,000. We were given to believe from those in Washington that this was a certainty. Unfortunately, that was not the case. We had started the work on the house well before we had received any word of a grant possibility. The deterioration of the house was dire and fast moving and we needed to do some immediate rehabilitation work. We did not know that some of these improvements would fall outside the restoration parameters of the Save America's Treasures grant. Although we made a lengthy presentation supporting and justifying all the work we had done, we were deemed ineligible for the Federal funds.

Our goals, however, have not changed, nor are we less determined to complete them. We may not be able to work quite as fast, but we will endeavor to complete this wonderful project just as soon as we can. This is where we need your additional help and

support. If you have made a pledge to be spread over two years, we ask that you please make your next payment soon. If you made your contribution to the Building Fund in 2003, perhaps you would consider making another one and receive an additional tax-deductible benefit for 2004. You may remember that a gift of \$1,000 will add your name to the Wall of Donors that will be displayed in the front hall of the McVickar House and higher levels of giving will be acknowledged (see page 10).

As our motto states, "A Village That Cares About Its Past Is Devoted To Its Future". We all eagerly look forward to cutting the green ribbon at the front door of #131 Main Street.

Thank you for continued support.

Betsy Griggs Wilson

*President of the Board of Trustees,
Irvington Historical Society*

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The Odell Tavern

By Peter Oley

On Saturday, June 19th, a ceremony honoring one of the oldest buildings in Westchester, the Odell Tavern, will be held at the Tavern site near the intersection of Broadway and Dows Lane. Built in 1693 by Jan Harmse, tenant farmer for Upper Mills of Philipsburg Manor, the tavern was located on the King's Highway, a major route used by drovers moving cattle from one location to another. Harmse held the property for fifty three years until his death. In 1746, it passed to the family of Mathias Conklin and his wife Sophia. The tavern takes its name from its next owner, Jonathan Odell who acquired it in 1756 and owned it during the Revolutionary War.

An important part of the celebration will be the installation of a Daughters of the American Revolution plaque acknowledging the historical significance of this site. The DAR, founded in 1890 and headquartered in Washington, D.C. is a volunteer women's service organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American History, and securing America's future through better education for children. The recognition of the tavern is the result of the work of a number of individuals including Kristen Liddle, Steven and Caroline Niemczyk, the present owners of the tavern, and the restoration project manager, David C. Overholt.



Excerpts from the letter submitted by me to the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution in support of these efforts gives us some understanding of the history of this site.

"I am writing to you as Historian of the Village of Irvington, NY. The local Chapter of the D.A.R. wishes to put a marker next to a historic house in our town and has asked me to write a letter confirming the facts on the marker.

This building and site are truly historic and was home to real patriots. Jonathan and his wife Margaret Dyckman Odell lived on a farm of 436 acres on the banks of the Hudson River in Irvington. They brought up 11 children in the farmhouse on that property. Three of the boys (John, Isaac and Abraham) were "Westchester Guides" during the Revolution. They could be counted on to guide light horse troops for surprise attacks against British companies and also for quick retreats through short cuts only they knew. Another son, Jacob was a Post Rider who carried daily intelligence to the Committee of Safety of the Representatives of the State of New York.

On August 31, 1776, a session of the Committee of Safety met at the Odell Tavern. They learned grave news that day. George Washington's Army had been defeated at the Battle of Long Island! The 5 members of the Committee were: Colonel Van Courtlandt, Colonel Van Rensselaer, Robert Livingston of Dutchess County, Abraham Yates of Albany and William Duer of Charlotte County.

After the Battle of White Plains, when the British Army withdrew to New York, General Vaughn encamped with his men on the Odell farm, destroying his orchard and cattle. They then took Jonathan prisoner along with several of his neighbors to the Dutch Church in New York City, which was being used by the British as a prison. The four neighbors all died in prison but Odell escaped and returned home.

These facts along with many others, illustrate the patriotic zeal of those that lived on the property and the important events that took place there. Irvington is so fortunate that this historic building dating from our very founding as a nation, remains intact."

Continued on page 3

The Odell Tavern, continued

Continued from page 2



Historical Society Board Member, Doug Wilson, at an event held at the Odell Tavern.



View of the east side of the Tavern



The Odell Tavern

According to tradition this building was used as a Tavern and also served as the Odell Home.

The Patriot, Jonathan Odell and his wife, Margaret Dyckman lived here.

Their sons John, Isaac and Abraham were Westchester Guides, and their son Jacob was a post rider for the Committee of Safety during the War for American Independence (1775-1783).

The Odell's home was a site of a meeting of the Committee of Safety, Aug 31, 1776

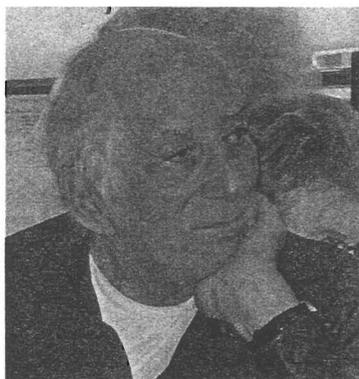
Marker placed June 19, 2004 by the Hudson River Patriots Chapter, DAR
in appreciation of the restoration of this building

DAR plaque to be placed on a boulder outside the Odell Tavern.

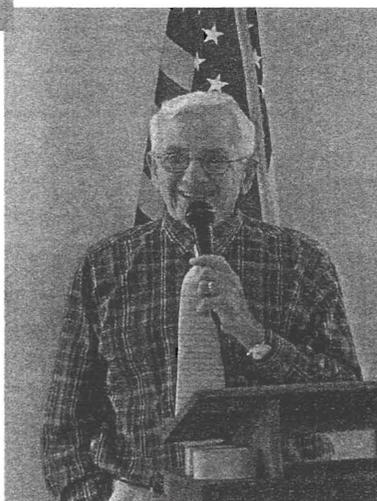
The Irvington Historical Society's Oral History Project—April 27, 2004



Florence Beckley spoke of her love for the East Irvington School located on Mountain Road. "Good teachers, good times, good friends."



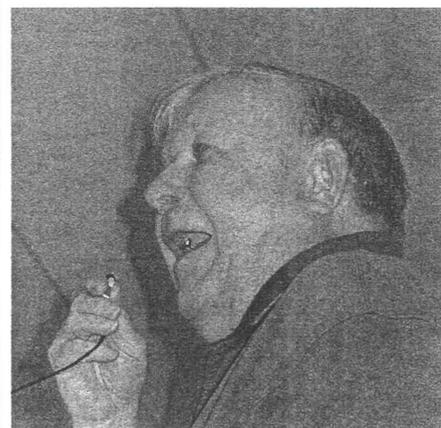
Irvington resident Maurice Lohman enjoying the stories and recollections.



Bob Connick moderated the Society's joint program with the Irvington's Senior Citizen Center. Residents shared their recollections of village life.



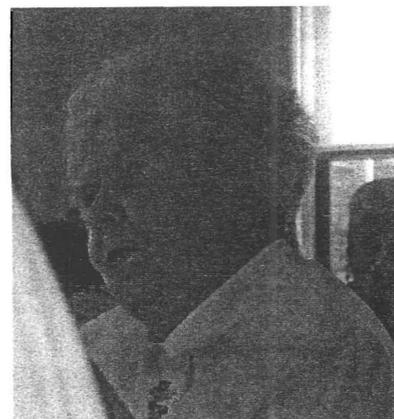
Ed Barbagallo lives in Hudson View Park. He and Dan Berry were charter members of the Brookside Model Airplane Club when they were 14 years old. About 8 other boys with the same hobby joined the group.



Donald Seus's father worked first for Lord & Burnham and later for A&M Hunter & Son local builders who did a great deal of work on the great estates. He has been married to his wife, Netta, (shown below) for over 57 years



Charles Bates, Judy Dolan and Irvington Village Historian, Peter Oley spoke about the village in earlier times.



Continued on page 5

Oral History Project, continued

Continued from page 4



Historical Society Board Member, Pat Bonomi introduced the afternoon's program.



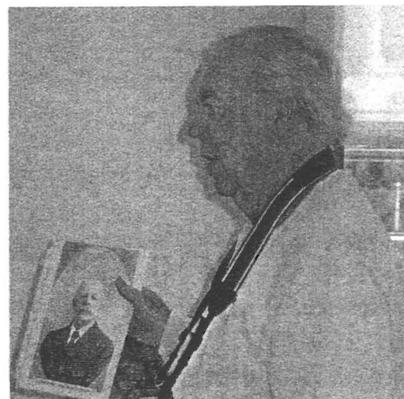
Helen Uszak remembers seeing cows at the head of Main Street when she first moved to Irvington. On hot days schoolchildren could be seen heading for school in their bare feet.



Charles Bates talks with Elanor Consula whose father was the superintendent of the Washington Irving estate. Although it was a wonderful place to live, she said, it was sometimes lonely. She shared a photo of Miss Benjamin's Girl Scout Troup from 1933.



Dot McHugh has lived in Irvington for 65 years. Her husband, Bill, was the butcher at Kraus's Market on Main Street.



Frank Gilligan shared stories and pictures of his ancestors. His grandfather, Daniel Gilligan came to Irvington in 1861 and opened a paint shop at 113 Main Street. He married Katherine Cooney from East Irvington. Her uncle owned the Hotel Sullivan located there.



Harriet Gamper spoke about Ted Mack coming to Irvington for two years to help raise money for the purchase of the Methodist Church on Main Street. The church became the Isabel K. Benjamin Community Center.



After 35 years of living with her husband John on South Dearman Street, Olga Morabito, says that "Irvington has and always will be home to me."

The Curator's Corner

By Barbara Sciulli

Archaeological Survey of the McVickar House

The McVickar House is located at 131 Main Street, Irvington, New York. Built in 1853, the house is a 2 1/2 story wood frame, single family structure with a basement and fieldstone foundation. It is one of the oldest houses on Main Street. The site was visited periodically during the winter of 2003-2004 to examine any open trenches and evaluate the exposed soil strata as the renovation and construction proceeded.



Photograph showing the trench on the west side of the McVickar house.

* The examination found that the yard surrounding the house was completely disturbed. Trenches opened along the water and sewer lines on the south and west sides of the site had no clear stratigraphy: 2-8 inches of dark brown fill covered lighter brown, dense soil layers.

* The area around the foundation was excavated and the disturbed fill had numerous small rocks or stones.

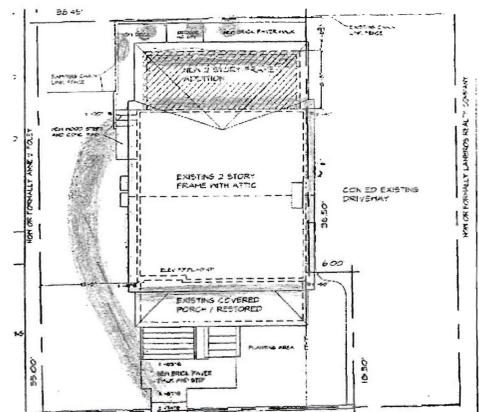
* The examination of the foundation extension at the north side of the house found disturbed fill layers. An unrecorded 3" white metal pipe ran the length of the area. The backyard was likely disturbed by the installation of this pipe.

* Several test pits were hand dug along the fence north of the foundation hole and the disturbed fill was found to extend completely across the yard. A dark brown surface layer contained gravel, probably from the driveway installation and repair. The lighter brown compact fill below the surface had some stones and rocks.

The limited number of recovered artifacts date to the 20th century and include a pint, clear glass Borden's milk bottle, a small clear glass medicine bottle, several modern beverage cans, and a handful of cut and wire nails. The cut nails were found on the surface and were from recent re-siding of the house.

Conclusion: The quantity of artifacts was disappointing. The construction of the multistory building on the west side, the electrical sub-station on the north side, the grading of the lot following the installation of modern utilities obliterated all evidence of potential 19th century features. The result of this examination indicated that the site was completely disturbed during the 20th century.

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Site plan of the McVickar House. The shaded areas indicate the excavation.

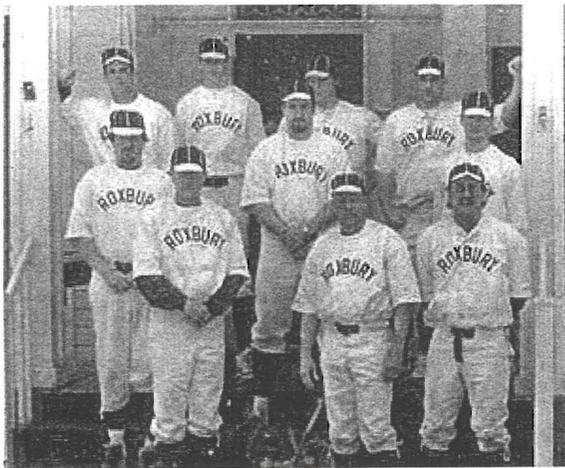
Barbara Sciulli is the Curator of the Irvington Historical Society and a member of MALFA, Material Archive and Laboratory For Archaeology, the Louis A. Brennan Lower Hudson Chapter of the New York State Archaeological Association.

Vintage Base Ball Comes Again To Lyndhurst

By Paul Luftig, Joseph Epstein and Peg Ellsworth

One of the best-kept secrets in this part of Westchester County may be that Vintage Base Ball, written as two words until 1913, is played in our own backyard. Lyndhurst, located in Tarrytown, has been hosting one of the truly fun-filled activities of summer for the past two years. The Great Lawn becomes the "ball field" for two teams from the Vintage Base Ball Association this, July 10th. (Rain date July 11th.)

Lyndhurst has a long and strong connection to base ball. When former Lyndhurst owner, Helen Gould Shepard acquired Kirkside, her summer home in Roxbury, New York, she immediately started improvements on the grounds which included a beautiful base ball diamond for the local team, the Roxbury Nine. The playing field soon became the finest field in the Catskills. Lyndhurst considers the Roxbury Nine its "home" team as one of its members is the grandson of Helen and Finley Shepard.



Lyndhurst's "Home Team" the Roxbury Nine.

The Providence Grays, from Rhode Island will provide the opposition. In the spring of 1998, several local fans banded together to form a tribute to the 1884 Grays, they were inspired by a league of similar historical base ball teams in New York. That league is the Vintage Baseball Association, which has member teams throughout many states. They are dedicated to keeping our

national pastime as alive as non-professional base ball was in its early days. The teams are composed mainly of guys in their twenties to forties who love to play the game on weekends just for fun. The teams wear the baggy wool flannel uniforms of the period and use bats and balls that are replicas of the equipment used in the Nineteenth Century.

This year's double header will feature one game using the customs and rules of 1884 and the second game those of 1898. Pitching will be a key element in the outcome of each game. In 1884, the pitching distance was 50' with an overhand hurling style sure to sting the hands of the catcher. By 1898, pitching was overhand from 60'6" with no mound and a rule that requires the pitcher to square up to the plate with a one step delivery. The Nine's possess a strong four man rotation in both styles of pitching. It is likely that Mike McAfee will start the 84 game. McAfee is credited with a rare vintage base ball no hitter at the 2002 Old Bethpage Vintage Base Ball Festival. The Gray's, whose signature style of play is 1884, is accustomed to a fast, overhand pitch from 50', and will have to re-think their hurling strategies for the 1898 game, although the Grays are sure to place their crafty southpaw, Brian Travers on the rubber to quiet the powerful bats of the Nine. However, both clubs boast a powerful offensive lineup and with Lyndhurst's noted "short porch" in right, spectators are sure to see many fielders entering the woods to retrieve a ball.

The 1898 game presents the need for different pitching strategies. John McDaniel or Greg Snyder is likely to start on the mound for the Nine and spectators are sure to see closer John Fairbairn. Fairbairn is noted for his speed and accuracy and has shut down the likes of the NY Mutuals, Providence (Rhode Island) Grays, and Elizabeth (New Jersey) Resolutes. Grays'southpaw, Travers has been known to go 12-13 innings and may in fact remain on the

Continued on page 8

Baseball Comes Again To Lyndhurst, *continued*

Continued from page 7

mound for the Grays, but chances are the Nine will face the fireball hurling of Charlie Dryer. Dryer is a gritty and competitive player and is noted for being one of the hardest throwers on the Vintage Base Ball circuit.

The 1898 rules are more like the modern game and feature overhand pitching, although foul balls are not strikes. Also, some of the teams playing under customs and rules of 1898 still don't use gloves because they were not introduced to many teams until the early 1900s. Open fingered weight lifting style gloves were introduced in the major leagues in the late 1880s and became popular by the early 1890s. By the turn of the twentieth century, a closed finger workman's style glove was introduced. The Roxbury Nine, although an 1898 team, did not have the resources to afford and purchase modern equipment and therefore does not wear gloves. Articles published in the Roxbury Times note that the Nine did not start wearing gloves until 1903.



The Providence Grays arch rivals of the Roxbury Nine.

The Nine and the Grays have an unsurpassed rivalry that surfaced when they first crossed bats in 2001. Some of the Northeast's best

positional players will be going head to head. Catchers Rich Ellsworth for the Nine and Gilly Faria for the Grays will exhibit some of the most painstaking catching styles of the game. Matt Walker of Roxbury and Kevin Faria, Gray's Captain, take their place at short with no gloves and plenty of guts. Mark Cammer for the Nine and Peter Fallon for the Grays bring their sure handedness to first base. Now with eight matches against each other, the Nine are looking to dominate the record with two commanding wins at Lyndhurst. However, when all is said and done, and the lines of the playing field are crossed, both teams possess the utmost respect for their opposition, and have grown to be comrades in arms in their quest for historic accuracy and steadfast dedication to America's favorite pastime in its formative years.

"Both the Nine and the Grays have good pitching, hitting and fielding" says Nine catcher Rich Ellsworth "The teams are so evenly matched that anything can turn the tide of the game". With this in mind, the Nine plan to bring their best game to the forefront, while being sure to capitalize on any margin of error brought forward by the Grays. The Grays have a different outlook; they're clearly out for the win and plan to bring forth a strong offense and faultless defense.

On Saturday, July 10th, the double header at Lyndhurst will start at 11 am. In addition to the games, 19th Century activities for children, stilt walking, croquet, and hoops, will be on-going from 12pm to 4pm. Advance tickets, purchased by phone at (914) 631-4481 are priced at \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6 – 12, and children under 5 are free. Tickets at the gate are \$12 for adults and \$5 for children ages 6 – 12, and children under 5 are free. Some grandstand seating is provided, attendees – or "cranks" as fans were called before 1898 – are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets for a more intimate view of the game from the foul lines. Typical ball park food will be available, including chicken, ice cream, soft drinks and of course hot dogs.

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Baseball Comes Again To Lyndhurst, *continued*

Continued from page 8

If you want to see baseball played in all its glory by our “home” team, come on out, and come find out what it means when the umpire yells, “striker to the line.”



“Play Ball” at Lyndhurst on Saturday, July 11th.

For more detailed information about Lyndhurst, a Gothic Revival mansion built in 1838 and owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, visit www.lyndhurst.org.



Fifth Grade Walking Tour

On Thursday and Friday, May 20, and 21st four board members of the Historical Society took a total of 8 Fifth Grade classes on short walking tours of parts of our wonderful village. Two routes were taken: north on the aqueduct to Fargo Lane, back along Broadway and down Main Street; south on the aqueduct to Memorial Field, up Broadway and down Main Street.

Histories were given on Main Street school, the Old Croton Aqueduct, the estates, the memorials at the park, the tunnel, the mile marker, Madam C. J. Walker, the lych gate, the churches, the McVickar House, the Dearman Farmhouse and the war memorials. Each student was presented with a copy of the Historic Walking Tour done by Sid Goudie for his Eagle Scout award..

Tour guides, Barbara Sciulli, Marion Connick and Doug and Betsy Wilson thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The kids asked fascinating questions and gave us some good ideas for next year’s tours. The Society would welcome some volunteers to assist with this project as well as other classroom sessions planned for the next school year with both the fourth and fifth grades.



Mr. Levine’s class posed before the World War II monument on Main Street.

Our gratitude goes out to all contributors to the McVickar House Building Fund Project. We would like to express our special thanks to those who made gifts of \$1,000 or more. Their names will be listed on a "Wall of Major Donors" plaque in the front hall of the house. We welcome any additional special gifts and would be pleased to add several more names to the plaque.

Wall Of Major Donors as of May 24, 2004

Very special thanks (Gifts of \$11,000 to \$50,000): Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Camp, Mr. & Mrs. Peter Derby, Mrs. Charles Gamper, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Hoch, Mr. & Mrs. John Sanders, Lewis B. Shradly, Mr. & Mrs. Tom Low, Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Wilson.

Special thanks (Gifts of \$2,000 to \$10,000): Dr. & Mrs. Lari Attai, Charles T. Bates, Mr. & Mrs. Bard Bunaes, Richard Cohen & Meredith Viera, Mr. & Mrs. Donald Costello, Mr. & Mrs. Martin Dolan, Eileen Fisher, Mr. & Mrs. Pat Gilmartin, Mr. & Mrs. Bard Langstaff (the John McVickar Estate), Mr. & Mrs. Robert Mackie, Evan Mason & Garrard Beeney, Mary Melvin, Mr. & Mrs. Chris Mitchell, Mr. & Mrs. Peter Oley, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Pouch, the Estate of Barbara Ray, Mr. & Mrs. John Ryan, Savino Bros. Flooring, Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Siegel, Sunnyside Federal Savings & Loan Association.

Additional thanks (Gifts of \$1,000): Susan Anthony, Mary Bailey, Lance Balk & Peg Determan, Mr. & Mrs. Rudolf Bauer, Janet Carrus, Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Clark, Mr. & Mrs. James Diao, Frank Crowley, Ronald Fatato, Mr. & Mrs. David Field, Mayor and Mrs. Dennis Flood, Mr. & Mrs. George Foster, Mr. & Mrs. Fred Herlitz, Mr. & Mrs. George Gravelee, Irvington Chamber of Commerce, Steven Ivkovic, Erna Kauffman and Joe Lombardi, Constance Kehoe and Kevin Weber, Mr. & Mrs. Brian Kenny, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Kibel, Mrs. Herbert MacIntosh, Mr. & Mrs. Graeme MacLetchie, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Martucci, Terence Masterson, Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Morrisett, Mr. & Mrs. John Murphy, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Murray, Mr. & Mrs. Steven Niemczyk, Mr. & Mrs. Sean Orr, Mr. & Mrs. Charles M. Pateman, The Petri-Hogan Family, Mr. & Mrs. Peter Peyser, The Rosenfield Family, Louise B. Risk, Mary Jane Roth's Fifth Grade Class of 2003, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Sciulli, Mr. & Mrs. Donald Seus, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Sinni, Mr. & Mrs. John Stevenson, Mr. & Mrs. William Stifel, Mrs. John Stimpson, Tarrytowns Rotary Foundation, Inc., Mr. & Mrs. Edward Tishelman, Mr. & Mrs. Russell Watson.

The Society extends a special mention of thanks to Project Manager, Andy Lyons, Project Architect, Earl E. Ferguson and Project Fund Chair, Doug Wilson.



A picture of the McVickar House, recently discovered by Mrs. Joy Merrill Murphy, depicts some of the charming features which adorned the house in the early 20th century. The Society will attempt to reproduce the fence and the vergeboard, which are clearly featured here.



Irvington Historical Society Building Fund
Donation/Pledge Card*

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ (zip) _____

Amount of Donation: \$ _____

Amount of Pledge: \$ _____ #of payments: _____ Enclosed: \$ _____

Gifts of stock may be made. Please contact Betsy Wilson at (914) 591-2564

Donations of \$1,000 and higher will be acknowledged on a plaque in the McVickar House. Donations are 100% tax deductible. Your support benefits all generations now and for years to come. Thank you for being part of this project. Make checks payable to: Irvington Historical Society Building Fund.

Irvington Historical Society Building Fund, 24 Lewis Road, Irvington, NY 10533

The Roost

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Submissions

The Irvington Historical Society is always looking for suitable material, whether historical essay or personal reminiscence, for *The Roost*. We believe that many of our members have information or stories that would be of interest to our readers. If you have a suggestion or idea for an article, please contact Pat Ryan, 591-7809, e-mail jppjryan@aol.com.

In addition, while every effort is made to insure accuracy, the Society cannot assume responsibility for statements made by contributors. ☞

Wish List

The Irvington Historical Society will be working with both the 4th and 5th grades next year. Projects will include classroom lessons on local history, life in earlier times, understanding original documents, and the Hudson river. Walking tours, the visit to the Hermit's grave and other activities are also planned. This is a very exciting (and extensive) project and we are looking for volunteers. If you have any time that you might be able to give, please call Pat Ryan 591-7809. ☞