



The Roost

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IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2008

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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2007-2008

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Letter from the President



Dear Members:

On November 27th 2007, the Irvington Historical Society held its annual meeting. The Society elected seven new members to the Board. I would like to welcome John Abbott, Brenda Livingston, Joe Lombardi, Laurie McGuire, Reina Sinni, and Erik Weiselberg to the Historical Society. I would also like to thank the outgoing members of the Board for their years of unselfish service and many, many contributions to the Society. Thank you, Pat Ryan, Florence Costello, Charlie Bates, Gail Weiler, Rich Weiler, and Jim Parker.

After nine years as President of the Irvington Historical Society, Betsy Wilson decided it was time to take a well deserved break from the day to day duties of running the organization. At the Society's Annual meeting in November 2007 she stepped down as President. Thankfully, she will remain active as a member on our Board of Trustees. Betsy has an amazing list of accomplishments to her credit from her nine years as President. Under her stewardship, the Historical Society has become a vibrant part of life in Irvington. Historical Society programs on Irvington history, educational programs and history-based crafts programs for Irvington's children, prominent authors discussing local and regional history, historic house tours, and walking tours have all become com-

monplace in Irvington. Her most outstanding accomplishment as President was shepherding the creation of the McVickar House. This was no small undertaking. It took years of negotiations for the acquisition of a dilapidated old building, years of planning with architects and designers, years of fund raising, and years of construction and renovation. Her Presidency leaves us with a beacon to Irvington at the head of Main Street, a place for the Society to present incredibly professional exhibits of our history, an educational center for our youth, and a permanent home for The Irvington Historical Society. The members of the Board of Trustees, the members of the Society, as well as the entire Irvington community thank you, Betsy, for your outstanding service.

Andy Lyons

*President of the Board of Trustees
Irvington Historical Society*

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With Heartfelt Thanks

The Board of Trustees and the membership of the Irvington Historical Society would like to take this opportunity to offer our heartfelt thanks to our former president, Betsy Griggs Wilson. Over the past nine years Betsy has truly been an inspiration to us all. A tireless worker, patient, tenacious and dedicated, Betsy made the dream seem possible and then went on to prove that it was. Here are a few of our favorite snapshots of Betsy over the years.



At the closing for the purchase the McVickar House



Getting “down and dirty” at the McVickar House



Always encouraging inquiring young minds



Running a tag sale to raise needed funds



At the 2005 Thursday Club event which benefited the Children’s Workshop



Organizing classroom programs at the Main Street School



The 2005 opening of the McVickar House



Greeting visitors to the History Center



Outgoing President Betsy Wilson and incoming President Andy Lyons.

Choring Around the House

By Joan Lobdell



When we first started assembling the latest exhibit at the McVickar House “Choring Around the House” part of my inspiration was the diary of my grandfather, Arthur Hollenbaugh, a narrative that gives a window into an earlier time. On October 27, 1896, he wrote

“Husked corn, chopped wood and built an ash hopper. Chored at home. A girl baby came today.”

My grandfather, Arthur Hollenbaugh, born on March 21, 1868, was the son of Eli Hollenbaugh and Eva Myers. His ancestors had emigrated from Franconia, Germany prior to the Revolutionary War. Arthur was the oldest of eight children. He was considered a serious man and although he had meager formal schooling he had a great love of reading.



My grandfather, Arthur Hollenbaugh. The name Hollenbaugh meant “hollow bog” describing where his ancestors came from.

Arthur married Bertha Irene Miller in 1890, when he was 22 and she was 19. Bertha was the oldest child of John and Mary Stahl Miller. She had a brother, Rolla who was two years younger. Then after nineteen years, a sister, Margaret was born followed by another brother, Oscar. By the time Mar-

garet was born, Bertha herself was expecting her first child.



My grandmother, Bertha Miller Hollenbaugh at their home in Fostoria, Ohio.

Their first child, Fern, was born within the year. She was followed by Bessie, in 1892, Ray, in 1894 and my mother, Lois in 1896. Lois was the girl baby referred to in the earlier quote. When they first married they lived in a series of rented homes but eventually he and Bertha, and their eight children settled on a small farm (about three and a half acres) in Fostoria, Ohio. This amount of land was large enough to have a house, a barn, a large garden, an orchard, a chicken yard, a pen for pigs, a cow and a horse.



My grandfather shown out back of the house tending his hens.

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Choring Around the House, *continued*

Continued from page 3

The barn was built first but, by the time this was done, there was no money to build the house. So, my grandfather decided to turn the barn into a house. Partitions were added downstairs to make a bedroom, a living room and a dining room. Steps to the loft were installed and this was turned into bedrooms. There was a lean-to kitchen out back that had a cooking stove.

There was still much to be done before that first winter came on. A hard coal stove was put in the living room and a smaller stove suitable for wood or coal was put in the dining room. The chimney had to be rebuilt and plaster board put on all the walls. But there was little time to work on the upstairs of the house and that first winter snow sifted through small cracks in the roof and a fine white layer covered the beds. Extra comforters were brought out and hot bricks covered with towels were placed between the blankets. By the next winter, all of the holes and leaks were patched.

One difficulty with the new house was that there was no water. Water had to be carried from the neighbors' wells until spouting could be put on the house so the rain water would run into barrels at each corner. Well water was kept in crocks, kettles and a covered tub. Eventually, a well was dug and the family was very happy that they no longer had to depend upon rainwater.

All of the land surrounding the house was carefully utilized. Shade and cherry trees were planted in the front. On the north side of the house was a grape arbor, a raspberry patch and an apple orchard. To the west was the chicken yard, a large strawberry patch and a vegetable garden. My grandfather

hoped to grow everything his large family would consume.



My grandmother picking the corn. The small farm provided most of the family's food.

My grandfather both worked the farm and had an outside job as a salesman to help support the large family. This meant that the work at home was shared by all, even the youngest. And no matter what the job, it was done by whoever was available. As my grandfather wrote:

November 8, 1896 *"Hauled in my kraut cabbage and put it down cellar. Chored around the house. Helped Bertha with the wash. Weather cold and clear."*

My Aunt Mildred told us the story of when her mother milked the cow in the evening. Mildred's job was to hold the cow's tail. When my grandmother was busy sewing new clothes, Fern, the oldest, worked with her and Bessie took care of the two youngest, Mary and Gertrude. There was an old treadle sewing machine that was always open and each of the girls learned to sew as they got older.

My mother's first sewing venture was to make all her summer

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Choring Around the House, *continued*

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underclothes. She wanted to make them pretty and so she put on ruffles. Unfortunately, she put the ruffles on the belt not on the leg where they could be seen.

When my mother was young, her job was to tend to the chickens—feed them, gather the eggs and give them water. Once a week she had to clean the chicken coup, a job she greatly disliked. As she got older, Byron took over caring for the chickens.



My mother's younger brother, Byron, feeding the chickens.

Byron and Mildred had to help with Bess, the cow. There was a shelter out back for Bess and every morning, they would take Bess out to pasture and bring her home to be milked every evening. They also brought in the coal and corn cobs for kindling. Later, they would carry out the ashes.

Byron, Lois and Mildred also had to take care of the rabbits that were raised for food. Not surprisingly, they made pets of them and although it made their father very angry, they could not eat them. Eventually, he gave up and the rabbit pens were taken down. Once a year the family butchered a pig. No one seemed very happy with butchering days but the meat was appreciated.

During the summer and fall, there was

enough to eat but life in winter could be hard. Water for the cows and chickens had to be thawed and straw laid out to keep the animals warm. During the cold months, the cow didn't give much milk and the hens did not lay many eggs and once the chicken supply was depleted, there were no eggs. Often, a meal would consist of only boiled potatoes with their jackets on.

My grandmother loved her garden. The land close to the house was hers for flowers. As soon as the birds came back in spring she would get out her seeds. They all worked along with her and it was always a great pleasure to walk with her in the garden. My Aunt Mildred wrote, "She compared the beauty of the blue larkspur to the dainty blue of the forget-me-nots. Then there was the yellow of the nasturtiums, cosmos, zinnias, etc. They were all her pleasure."

She also loved their fruit trees. The cherry trees would be filled with fruit and my grandmother would can them in blue glass Mason jars. One of the children's greatest winter treats was a dish of these cherries after dinner. My grandmother also made wonderful apple butter and I can still remember how that scent filled the house when I would visit.



Billows of steam engulf my grandmother as she makes apple butter.

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Choring Around the House, continued

Continued from page 5

In spite of the difficulties and hard work, the Hollenbaugh household was a lively one. There were few toys but as my mother said, “I didn’t have much to play with but I had brothers and sisters.” There might be building blocks and a rag doll or a doll made from a corn husk or a cucumber, but whatever toys there were, they were shared.

Much of the children’s play time was spent outside. When there was a large group, they would play Ducky on the Rock, Run Sheep Run and Blind Man’s Bluff. A favorite game was Hide and Seek, especially when it was played in the dark. On those rare occasions when there were only two, they might play mumbly pegs, marbles or quoits.

At Christmas, there was always a bag of candy from church; sometimes an orange or an apple, and my grandmother’s sugar cookies. They didn’t often have a Christmas tree but one year, Byron made one. Byron carried railroad messages from one depot to another. That year, he watched as freight cars full of Christmas trees were being unloaded. One of the men saw him and asked if he would like the broken pieces. Byron made several trips home carrying the broken fir branches on his bicycle. Out of these, they all helped to make a tree against the wall. They decorated it with strings of popcorn, colored paper chains and hair ribbons. By the time they were finished, they thought it was the prettiest tree there could ever be.

“Choring” around my own house, I glance at a large framed photo of the Hollenbaughs taken when my mother was a baby and remember a story that she told me. One evening Grandma left a bowl of bread dough to rise overnight. After she retired, the boys

stuck dabs of the dough on the faces in the picture. By morning, the dough had risen and those faces were large and puffy with only holes for the eyes. Everyone, including Grandma had a good laugh.



A bowl of bread dough and this portrait proved too tempting for the Hollenbaugh boys.

In the exhibit are my grandmother’s griddle and pancake turner. When grandfather brought the turner home he was anxious to try it out for when you squeeze the handle the pancake automatically flips over. Unfortunately, grandfather’s pancake flipped right into the pan of dishwater that was heating on the stove!



My grandfather’s pancake turner took some getting used to.

Some of the exhibit visitors have shared their own stories—a shirt or dress that could stand on its own from too much starch in the rinse water; jelly that boiled over leaving a sticky mess that the cat tracked around; putting too much corn in the fireplace

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Curator's Corner

By Barbara Sciulli



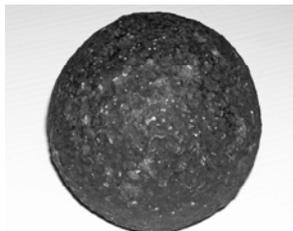
The Curator's office in the McVickar house is always busy and interesting on Tuesdays 9AM – 1PM when volunteers provide essential assistance. Join us to help catalog, sort and file the collections. We are also challenged to answer the many inquiries, usually concerning genealogy & obituaries, property histories, map sources, photo requests, questions for dissertations on local history, and identification of archaeological finds.

If we don't have the information on hand in our existing collection to answer an inquiry, we try to suggest other resources. Can you give us information concerning any of the following example requests?

1. Dr. William G. Richard's family, including Alice (Orton) and daughter Dorothy. They lived in the area 1910-1913.
2. Neighborhood baseball teams from the past.
3. Identification of students in a class photo published in the 2007 Irvington Historical Society calendar (June).
4. Photographer John Martin.
5. Age of the large tree on Dows Lane.

Please send any information to:
 Barbara Sciulli
 Irvington Historical Society
 Box 23
 Irvington, New York 10522
 Or: e-mail-
curator@irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org

Our collection pertains specifically to Irvington and is quite eclectic. It consists entirely of donated materials, and is always increasing. Some recent additions were:



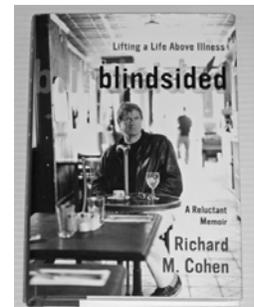
Cannon ball from St. Barnabas' garden (could this have been fired during the American Revolution from a ship in the Hudson?).

Bowling pins from St. Barnabas' bowling alley.



Jantzen bathing suit, wool, c.1920.

Books by local authors.



Other items included:

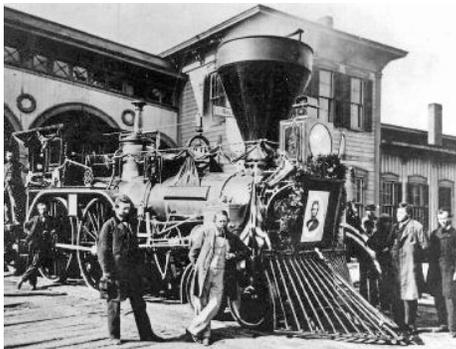
- Victorian bonnets (3), Victorian gowns;
- John Murray's collection of World War II photos;
- Irvington postcards, purchased on eBay;
- Cake plate in the "Irvington" pattern;
- Video's of movies that have scenes of Irvington;
- The papers of Rev. Floyd Van Keuren, pastor of St. Barnabas Church;
- Photos from the society's photo contest;
- Shards of ceramic, pottery, and glass collected during a cleanup from the edge of Barney Brook.

As this list implies, the collection is really many collections – our history is physically preserved in diverse acid-free materials. Cataloguing, cross-referencing, and indexing them for future access is an ongoing challenge that is simultaneously essential and fun.

“We Mourn the Nation’s Loss”

By John P. Ryan

The next time you’re at the Irvington station waiting for a train, spend some time imagining what it would have been like to have been there on the afternoon of April 25, 1865. On that spring day you would have been part of a vast crowd of people lining the tracks to watch for a train that had left New York City at 4:15 pm. Looking at the station, you would see it draped with banners inscribed “The Honored Dead” and “We Mourn the Nation’s Loss.” Shortly before 5:00 pm, a pilot train passes through making sure the tracks are clear. Finally, at 5:07 pm a steam locomotive bedecked in crepe and pulling eight cars rolls through Irvington without stopping.



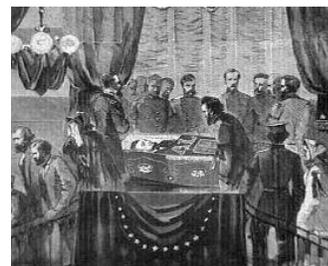
The occasion was the passing of the Lincoln Special, President Abraham Lincoln’s funeral train. According to the Lincoln biographer Carl Sandburg, you would have been one of the 7,000 mourners who were in Irvington that day to pay their last respects to the Great Emancipator, who died from an assassin’s bullet on April 15, 1865. These mourners must have come from all over Westchester and Rockland Counties. The 1860 census put Irvington’s population at

only 599. For that matter as of the last census, Irvington’s population still had not reached 7,000.

All the towns in Westchester along the route came out to see the train and display their sorrow. According to Sandburg, “At Tarrytown American flags arched over the railroad track, and under a flowered dome of flags and black velvet stood twenty-four young women gowned in white. At Sing Sing the burial car with its coffin again passed through a tall arch of flags crossed with black velvet...At Peekskill, encircled with roses and tasseled red-white-and-blue, was a tall portrait of Lincoln.”



The Lincoln Special left Washington, DC on April 21st. It arrived in New York City on the morning of April 24th where Lincoln’s body was borne in a glass hearse drawn by six gray horses draped in black to City Hall to lie in state under the rotunda, as pictured below. The public was admitted after 1:00 pm. It was reported that more than 500,000 people waited in line to view the body.



We Mourn the Nation's Loss, continued

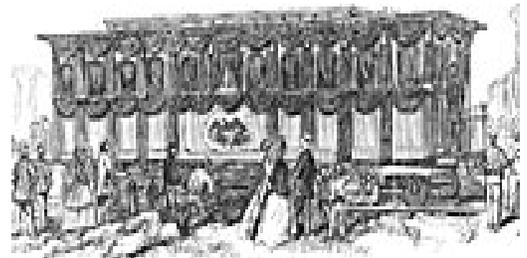
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Walt Whitman, who had served as a volunteer worker for three years in Washington military hospitals, caught the mood of the city that day as he walked in the rain on Broadway. "Black clouds driving overhead. Lincoln's death - - black, black, black - - as you look toward the sky - - long broad black like great serpents."

The Lincoln Special retraced the route of Lincoln's pre-inaugural trip from Springfield to Washington in 1861. That train passed through Irvington on February 19th at about 2pm. The same locomotive named Union was used for both trips. This map shows the route of the funeral train.



This picture, taken in January 1865, shows the private rail car built for President Lincoln draped for the funeral.



Lincoln was never to ride in it while he was alive. The car was used in the funeral train to carry his body and that of his son Willie, who had died of typhoid fever in 1862, to Springfield for burial.

John P. Ryan is the Treasurer of the Irvington Historical Society

Choring Around the House, continued

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popcorn popper. One man said when he was a boy, a neighbor agreed to pay him a penny for every five potato bugs he picked from her potato vines. He picked a quart jar full and when she wouldn't pay for so many bugs, he went to the garden and dumped all the bugs back into the vines!

This exhibit was fun to plan and set up, but it would not have been possible without the generosity of many who loaned us their collections and heirlooms. Among some of the items on display are a vacuum cleaner that has to be hand pumped, round and square ice cream scoops, a barn beam borer, a ceramic hand butter churn, coffee

grinders and a cider press. One of our own treasures is an old carpenter's mallet found on a beam in the attic of the McVickar House.

We hope that many of you will visit our exhibit and share your memories of "choring around the house."



Society Board member Joan Lobdell with members of her family at the exhibit opening

A Message from Irvington's Village Historian, Peter Oley



I am writing to you as your Village Historian concerning our Spring 2008 Exhibit at the History Center. The theme will be "Those Who Served."

Residents who served with the Armed Forces of the United States of America will help to tell the story of their time through lending or donating items such as: pictures, letters, documents, medals, uniforms, souvenirs, maps, etc. which will help your society mount the exhibit.

Our goal is to open this exhibit in early May and have many visitations during Memorial Day weekend when many residents and former residents will be in town. The center will continue the exhibit through July so that all who want to visit may do so.

We have in our collection some items from the Civil War, World War I, World War

II, the Korean Conflict, and the Viet Nam Conflict, but need to supplement those memorabilia to show the extent of our community's participation in serving our country both abroad and at home.

The Society would like to thank in advance those who will help us in this important historical endeavor.

We encourage all residents to join us in this effort. Any memorabilia from either foreign service or service at home, such as Air Raid Warden, Red Cross, or troop support programs would be welcome.

A preview of some of the items to be displayed appears below. If you have any questions, please call Peter Oley at the Irvington History Center, 591-1020, or at 591-8137.

As always we thank you for your assistance.



Civil War Company F, 7th New York No. 27 Dress Hat.



Medals awarded to Lt. Duncan Fraser, World War I for service in France.



World War I Red Cross Canteen Armband worn by a volunteer in France.



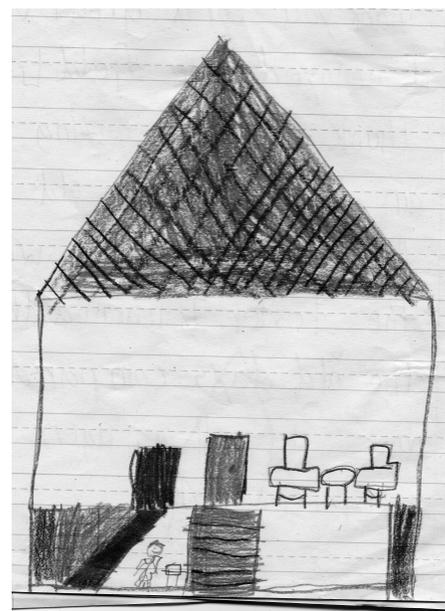
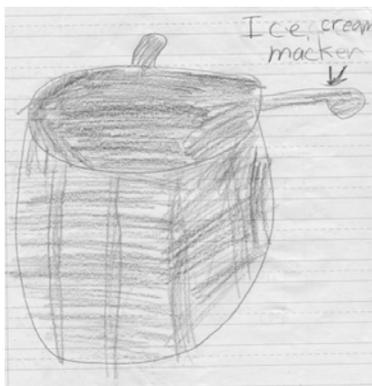
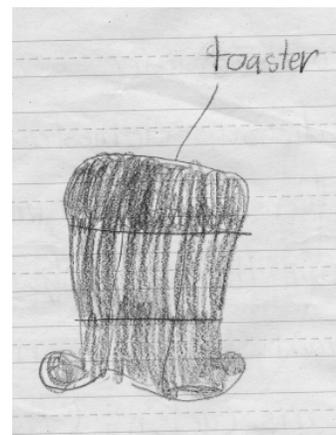
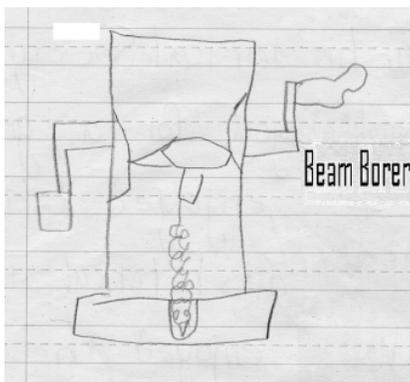
Civil War musket carried by Thomas Owens, an ancestor of Irvington resident Don Costello.

Second Grade Visit To the McVickar House

In November, all seven second grade classes from Dows Lane School walked down the Aqueduct to visit the Irvington History Center at the McVickar house. They were accompanied by teachers Deborah Rogan, Ronnie Alpert, Kari Carlson, Susan Buck, Krystal Mitchell, Kathy Devel, and Fabiola Vera, as well as many parents. At the Center, each class divided into small groups which rotated from the Children's Workshop, to the Warnock Gallery, and to the exhibit "Choring Around the House." Everyone enjoyed the whirlwind visits.

The Center staff subsequently received many "Thank You" letters from the children. Some of the favorite things mentioned were trying on the clothes in the trunk, sitting at the old fashioned school desks, playing with the antique style toys, seeing pictures of old Irvington and old houses, and the "Choring" exhibit objects: toasters, butter churn, carpenter level, butter dishes, cooking tools, vacuums, ice cream maker, and silverware. Children drew pictures of favorite items; some are shown here.

Many children expressed intentions to return with their families and friends for more leisurely exploration and sharing of Irvington history at the Center.

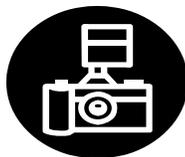


The Roost

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Get those cameras clicking!



The Irvington Historical Society announces its
Second Annual Photo Contest
Deadline August 19, 2008

Details to Follow