

The Roost

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IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Letter from the President

Dear Members,

After seven years as President of the Irvington Historical Society, Andy Lyons has stepped down and relocated to Annapolis, Maryland. Annapolis's gain is our loss. During his time as President, Andy made enormous contributions to the Society and to the Village of Irvington. His unfailing energy, dedication to historic preservation, and vast knowledge of topics ranging from mechanical engineering and architectural detail to local history provided both inspiration and leadership.

From the time in 2002 that the Village of Irvington acquired the small, dilapidated structure at the top of Main Street until the day it opened as the Irvington History Center in 2005, Andy was an integral part of this grand venture. The renovation of McVickar House was a monumental effort that effectively created a new building within the existing structure. Andy's talents and hard work—from advising on plans and design, to meeting with and supervising contractors, to hands-on painting, fitting and sanding—made a huge undertaking somehow manageable and, yes, even enjoyable. In the ensuing years, Andy continued to oversee the development and day-to-day maintenance of McVickar House.

Taking over as President in 2007, Andy's stewardship of the Society built on the leadership of Betsy Wil-

son. Never one to seek the spotlight, Andy encouraged members to contribute their own talents and ideas to further the Society's mission, fostering programming, events and, most recently, technology, by spearheading the new Facebook and webpage efforts, along with Trustee Steve Beech.

Andy's contributions to Irvington extend well beyond the Historical Society. He was a member of the Village FACE Committee, chaired the Architectural Review Board, and was co-chair of the Historic District Committee. In fact, very little happened in the Village that Andy was not part of. Easygoing, supportive, and incredibly resourceful, Andy will be sorely missed by the entire Irvington community. Thank you and best of luck with your next adventure, Andy!

Pat Ryan

*President of the Board of Trustees
Irvington Historical Society*

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Village Wolf Den Cub Scouts Visit *Irvington Unfolds* Exhibit

Irvington Cub Scouts from Pack 120 were welcomed at McVickar House in November with a VIP tour of the popular *Irvington Unfolds: A Village History in Maps* by Historical Society Trustees Ginny Read and Amy Sherwood. The exhibit, curated by Ginny, tells the intriguing history of the village from the 1600s to the present day through an array of old and rare maps, postcards, photographs and artifacts.

The scouts' visit was arranged to help the Wolf Pack with their goal to learn about local history. The second-graders began by exploring why maps are important, how to read a map, what *legends* are and how to use a compass.

They then learned about the history of Irvington and how the village evolved over time. The tour covered early inhabitants, famous people, the Revolutionary War, how the village evolved from farmland to streets laid out alphabetically; the Historic District, East Irvington ("Dublin"), and more.

The scouts were especially excited to see the "Lost Irvington" case where they learned of an exotic private zoo just beyond the Tarrytown border near Sunnyside, on land once considered Irvington.

The morning tour concluded downstairs in the Children's Workshop where scouts drew their own personal maps of Irvington, noting places and things they would want children who visit Irvington 100 years from now to see. They created their own map legends and marked special places, which included their homes, school, favorite restaurants, and even where they walk their dog.

The event was a great success and has led to more requests for scout tours of *Irvington Unfolds*.

—Amy Sherwood



Ginny Read and the Cub Scouts investigate the parts of a map.



Cub Scouts personalize their maps of Irvington.

Don't miss it!

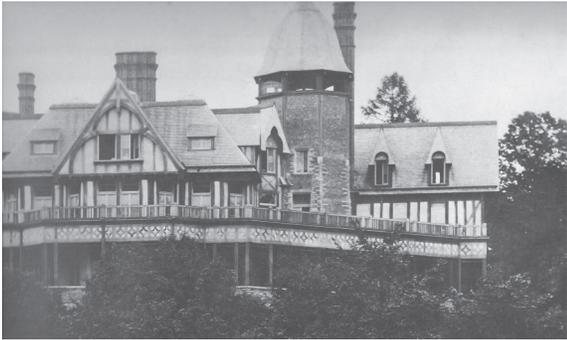
Celebrate Irvington! Sunday, June 21, 2015. Join friends and neighbors for a village-wide celebration of our wonderful village. Main Street will come alive with a historic trolley tour sponsored by Sunnyside Federal, music, walking tours, and much, much more. Visit the Farmer's Market, the McVickar House, the Tiffany Room, the Irvington Public Library and our lovely shops and restaurants. So mark your calendars—rain or shine!

Ardsley Country Club

by Francis D. Campbell

The Ardsley Country Club has been a key component of Irvington's social, developmental, and recreational history. A recent fire, which occurred on December 13th, 2014, at the current clubhouse site on North Mountain Drive, has prompted this brief overview. Fortunately, the fire caused no injuries and Peter Hofmann, Ardsley Country Club president, has indicated to the press that most of the fire damage was limited to the newer, northern wing. The older, more historic wing to the south, containing the main dining room, bar, "Rally Room," and a partly enclosed terrace, suffered mostly smoke and water damage.

The original club was part of a real estate development plan of Amzi Barber, following his move into the former Cyrus Field estate in 1895. Barber, who came to be known as the Asphalt King, had amassed a fortune because he foresaw the importance of asphalt in the development of the nation's roadways with the advent of the automobile. He formed a syndicate of investors that bought or leased 107 acres of the estate's land, much of it along the Hudson riverfront.



The original Ardsley Casino occupied the grounds of the present-day Hudson House.

The Club's history involved three different clubhouse locations. Originally called the Ardsley Casino, it opened in May of 1896 and was located on grounds presently occupied by the Hudson House Apartments. It had a membership and facilities that led some to refer to it as "a Millionaires' Utopia." In addition to the Casino clubhouse, the property included 100-horse stables, 12 grass tennis courts, and an 18-hole golf course. It also had its

own train station, whose architecture matched that of the club, on the main line of the New York Central railroad. The station was connected to the club by a covered bridge. Surrounding the clubhouse were spectacular gardens laid out by George Parsons, the landscape gardener of Central Park. Until 1911, Station No. 9 of the New York Yacht Club on the Hudson River, provided easy access to the club and accommodated those members who possessed yachts. The first Yacht Club "member-in-charge" of the new station was Amzi Barber. The scale of the golf course project surpassed anything ever attempted in this country. Scotsman Willie Dunn, golf course designer and golf professional, was hired to create the course. Upon completion there were 9 holes west of Broadway and 9 holes east of Broadway.

The Club became a gathering place for those who had achieved social and financial prominence. General Philip Schuyler, who occupied Nevis, was president of the club; Amzi L. Barber was vice president; Cyrus Field Judson, grandson of Cyrus West Field, was secretary; and General Samuel Thomas was treasurer. The Board of Governors included John D. Rockefeller, William Rockefeller, William S. Webb, Henry Villard, John Pierpont Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and Chauncy DePew. Several of these men, and others such as the Astors, Morgans, and Goulds, owned estates in the area. By 1898, the women's golf champion of America had won her title on the Ardsley links and several intercollegiate golf championships were held there. However, despite its celebrated status, the Ardsley Casino changed its name to the more sedate "Ardsley Club" in 1897.

The Lorena Company, named for Barber's eldest daughter, was organized as the owner of the club lands. This excluded the clubhouse and stable land and properties that were owned and managed by the syndicate as the separately incorporated Ardsley Casino Company. Barber's Lorena Company was also the owner/developer of "Ardsley Park," one of the early suburban developments in the country. Over the years, the Park would surround the Club,

Ardsley Country Club, *continued*

each enhancing the other. During the pre-World War I period, the club's stables were converted into a garage for the new "horseless carriage." The golf course was improved by William Henry Tucker, there now being five holes on the west side of Broadway and the remainder on the east side. The club had also taken on a more private character.

In the years following Barber's death in 1909, the status of the leased golf course land had been uncertain. At the time of its 20th anniversary, the club was undergoing major change in its ownership and land development. A syndicate headed by John F. Havemeyer, president of Concrete Steel Company, purchased 250 acres of land from the Lorena Company in 1916, which included the golf course and the clubhouse property of the Ardsley Casino Company. Both were combined into a new holding company, Ardsley Estates, and a 20-year lease was signed with the Ardsley Club. Some 70 parcels of land were sold by Ardsley Estates, mostly to Ardsley Park residents and club members. In 1917, the great golf architect, Donald Ross, reconfigured the golf course, which now wound in and around the residential sites. In 1928, Alistair Mackenzie, another great golf architect, carried out further reconfiguration that resulted in more of the golf holes being moved to the east side of Broadway. Ardsley Park and its renowned golf club by now had become a great attraction to those in the business community who wished to commute into New York City but live in the country with their families.

However, 1929 brought the Great Depression, which had a heavy impact upon the Ardsley Club, causing many members to resign and bringing about a very large financial deficit. Although merging with the recently formed Racquet and Swimming Club of Ardsley-on-Hudson was considered, the idea did not appeal to many members and on December 28, 1934, at a special meeting, the club dissolved itself. Still, as former Ardsley Club members were absorbed by the Racquet and Swimming Club, this union became a virtual merger in March, 1935, when the club's name was changed to the Ardsley Country Club. The newly composed club was now housed in its second location, the half-timbered-and-brick stables – still standing today – at the intersec-

tion of Ardsley Avenue West and Clifton Place, where it moved forward with its combined membership programs.



The second clubhouse stood at the intersection of Ardsley Avenue West and Clifton Place.

In the spring of 1936, the original old Casino was razed. On the site, Hudson House, a spacious and luxurious apartment complex was designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, architects of the Empire State Building. Harmon was also a member of the club. Hudson House was dedicated to the memory of Jay Gould. By 1938, The Club had a membership of 210 and a busy schedule of dances, teas, fashion shows, bridge tournaments, bowling matches, swim meets, games and tournaments. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 and during World War II, club operations were somewhat curtailed. However, by 1953, the club was up to a thriving 422 members. In addition to golf, tennis, swimming and bowling were very popular.

By 1960, the 65-year-old stables clubhouse was in need of major repair. After much debate, the club opted to buy the former home and 13-acre property of deceased member Frank Jay Gould atop North Mountain, which Gould had deeded to New York University in 1954. Built originally for Mrs. Justine Bayard Cutting Ward, the cloister-like home was named *Mora Vocis*, and was a tribute in miniature to the great Benedictine Abbey of St. Pierre in the village of Solesmes, in France. Mrs. Ward had studied Gregorian Chant at the Abbey in the 1920s and developed a technique for teaching the music to school children known as the Ward Method. *Mora Vocis* was designed in 1927 by the New York architecture

Ardsley Country Club, *continued*

firm of Delano & Aldrich, more as a religious cloister than as a domestic house. The architects were also responsible for, among others, the Knickerbocker Club and the principal design for Kykuit in Tarrytown. In 1964, when the Ardsley Country Club bought the property from NYU, the existing structures had been minimally altered.



The “new” Ardsley Country Club opened in April 1965.

The new Ardsley Country Club was open for business in its third location by April, 1965. The tennis courts would remain by the river but were converted to clay courts in the 1970s. All 18 holes of the

golf course were consolidated on the eastern side of Broadway. The course was completely renovated in 2005 by golf course architect, Ken Dye.

Ardsley Country Club’s current membership is a diverse mix of predominately young families reflective of the surrounding river villages in which many of the members live. They take full advantage of the Club’s Youth Activities Program and, while golf continues to be the primary attraction, there is also tennis, platform tennis, swimming pools, camp, and even curling – with “the only rink in the entire metropolitan area,” as the Club website announces.

As mentioned, this article is intended solely as an overview of the Ardsley Country Club’s history. For a more detailed history and excellent pictorial record of the Club’s activities, the reader is referred to Kate Buford’s centennial history of the Club, entitled *From Hudson to Hilltop: Time, Change and The Ardsley Country Club*, published by the club in 1997. Much of the above information was gleaned from this volume.

—Francis D. Campbell

Upcoming Programs

No Flinching from Fire: Following the 65th New York Volunteers in the Civil War, a lecture by Chris Barry, Irvington High School Social Studies teacher and department chairperson. Barry’s lifelong interest in the subject was fuelled by a childhood visit to Gettysburg where his great-great grandfather served with the 65th New York Volunteers. Every year Barry’s AP American History class ends with a trip to Gettysburg. Friday, April 17 at 7:30 p.m. at the Irvington Public Library, 12 South Astor Street, Irvington. Free.

Peter K. Oley Tomorrow's Historians Student Research Symposium Join us at a symposium showcasing exceptional research by Irvington students. Wednesday, May 27, 2015, at 7 p.m. at the High School / Middle School Campus Presentation Room. (enter school by the lit marquee, go to campus library; CPR is inside the library).

Irvington Unfolds...Further!

Does the winter weather have you down? Come by McVickar House and see what's new in *Irvington Unfolds: A Village History in Maps*. The Cedar Ridge cabinet is now devoted to Abbotsford, with maps that show West and East Clinton Avenues as they were in the past — and as they were originally plotted out by a group of entrepreneurs who meant for this area to become its own village.

Walk through to the Warnock Gallery and enter Cyrus Field's Ardsley estate, seen from its beginnings through to the 1920s subdivision of some of the land to form Ardsley Park and neighboring Ardsley Country Club.

Prominently featured here is a huge map of the Ardsley estate, circa 1870, that unlocks the secret of just where all those mysterious remaining carriage path segments actually led and which Field houses (including the fabulous Ardsley Towers) stood where. Archival photos of the Field structures accompany the map, which has been graciously loaned to us by Steve Willard, president of the august Ward Carpenter surveying firm. We're beyond thrilled to have it. Coming in May to the Warnock Gallery: a look at the history of Hudson House, complete with maps, floor plans, and other wonderful artifacts, courtesy of the Hudson House Tenants' Association.

Thank you again to Joan Lobdel for the Cedar Ridge items and to Bob Connick for his impressive East Irvington exhibit, both of which had been on display since the September opening. And a nod to Jon Rogers, who recently dropped off a beautiful copy of the 1865 three-village map and a poster-sized "blueprint" of a Hudson River Railroad locomotive, which has been installed downstairs in the Children's Workshop along with a wonderful railroad map. Any other map donations (or loans) will be most gratefully accepted as the Irvington map exhibit continues to unfold!

—Ginny Read

Found in the Village safe: Framed Resolutions of Condolence that were never delivered to the families of young Irvington men who were killed in World War II. The Society has been able to deliver several of these but we need your help to locate the families of those listed below:

- Frank H. Morrell, Sr.
- P.F.C. John Joseph Gilchrist
- Cuthbert Powell Sinking
- Lieutenant Robert R. Chalot, First Pilot, Ninth Air Force, Army of the United States
- Leigh Anderton, Seaman Second Class, USNR
- William Joseph Downey, Member of the Armed Forces
- Robert Frederick Morrison, Member of the Armed Forces

If you have any information, please call the Society at 591-1020, or email: curator@irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org.

Thank you for any leads you can provide.

Curator's Corner

by Barbara Sciulli



The restored portrait of Mrs. Mary Bryant Stone Field is now on display at the McVickar House.

Mary Bryant Stone was born August 28, 1817, in Guilford, Conn. She married Cyrus West Field on December 2, 1840. Cyrus Field is famous for his work on the first transatlantic cable and his estate, *Ardsey*, comprised a large portion of Irvington. Mary and Cyrus were the parents of seven children.

Mary died November 23, 1891, in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Her pastel portrait was donated to the Irvington Historical Society in 2003 by the family of Cyrus Field. Diane Gravlee, genealogist and representative of the Field family, delivered the large framed portrait and other Field memorabilia to the Society. Her car trip from Texas to New York was memorable: she and the portrait weathered a fierce hurricane and both arrived shaken, but undamaged. Super Storm Sandy, hitting the New York area on October 29, 2012, was not so forgiving. Muddy floodwater surged into the IHS Archive, slammed the shelving, and tipped the portrait and its protective crate.



Portrait as it appeared before restoration.

We removed the portrait from its crate and took it to the McVickar House for evaluation. Water was trapped inside the frame. The pastel was removed from the frame and laid flat to dry. A diagonal, muddy stain marred the portrait and the frame. After consulting experts, we knew professional, qualified conservators would be needed to restore both portrait and frame. The Greater Hudson Heritage

Network, in association with the New York Council of the Arts, awarded the Society a 2013 Conservation Treatment Grant of \$7500.00, which paid most of the restoration fees. Ann Baldwin was the conservator for the pastel; Eugenie Milroy was the conservator for the frame. Their detailed reports are available on our website:

www.irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org



We invite you to come and view the beautifully restored portrait.

Other news from our curator:

Collection: A McVickar family bible was recently accessioned to our collection. A woman in Massachusetts called to say she had found the bible while going through boxes in her basement. She offered it to the society and we happily accepted. She carefully wrapped and sent the bible to us by Express Mail. The inscription reads: "William August McVickar to his grandson on his first birthday 1886." The well-read bible has damage to its spine cover. It will be preserved in a custom made, acid-free box.

Exhibit, Fall 2015: The McVickar bible and other treasures will be part of the next exhibit, opening in the fall of 2015. We'll celebrate our 10th anniversary in the McVickar House with an exhibit highlighting our past, our present, and our future.

Volunteers: Help us plan the next exhibit. Join a committee. Help catalog. Join us at McVickar House on Tuesday mornings, from 9 a.m. to noon (weather permitting). Activities vary. We're friendly and have fun as we work.

The Roost

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Current Resident or:

Interested in iPhone photography?



Join us on Sunday, June 7th for this two-hour workshop exploring the world of iPhone photography: learn how to download and use various apps; practice shooting with the new apps and adjusting your images; see how to appreciate this device for much more than you thought possible. Participants should have an iPhone model 4s or newer and should be running the IOS7 or IOS8 operating system. Fee \$25 per person.

If interested contact Veronica Gedrich at:
volunteer@irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org. Registration Limited.

Remember – the Irvington Historical Society’s Photo contest will be coming this summer!