



The Roost

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2007

IRVINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Letter from the President

Dear Members:

Welcome to the Merry Month of May! It is a busy month for us. On May 4 the noted author, Edward J. Renehan, Jr., will be speaking on his book, "*Dark Genius of Wall Street: The Misunderstood Life of Jay Gould, King of the Robber Barons*". A book signing follows.

On May 5, we are hosting a Children's Workshop. Highlighting the homeopathic section of our Pharmaceutical Exhibit, the children will learn about the herbs used for medicine and they will plant a container to take home for Mother's Day.

On May 19, the long-awaited House Tour takes place, featuring old structures adapted for use as residences.

June 19, is the cut-off date for entries into our Irvington Photo Contest. Everyone is welcome to submit a photo. See our website www.irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org for more information

Later in June, we will be dismantling the Pharmaceutical Exhibit to get ready for the Photo Contest. So, if you haven't had a chance to see this display of hundreds of items from the 1870's to the 1970's, mostly found in the basement of the old Irvington Pharmacy, please come by before it is too late.

That's a pretty packed schedule. Exciting and inviting. Thanks to you, our supporters, we can be so ac-

tive and creative.

This issue of *The Roost* continues in the spirit of our mission to bring Irvington's history to you. Sit back, relax, and take a few minutes to read these pages. You'll be glad you did.

Betsy Griggs Wilson

*President of the Board of Trustees
Irvington Historical Society*



Dressing up in Colonial Garb at a Children's Workshop Program at the McVickar House.

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His Stories and Hers

By Walter Schwartz

Each of us has many personal and poignant stories to tell about people or events that have made our lives in Irvington more pleasant and interesting. Yet, most of us are too reserved or modest to step up on the stage before an audience and talk about our personal experiences. That's why your Historical Society conceived the idea of "Irvington Stories," a collection of short stories and vignettes about life in Irvington as told by local residents.



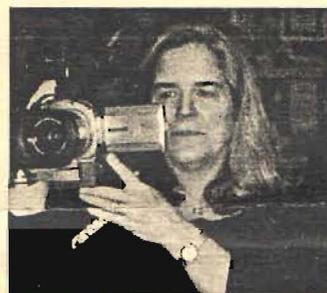
Lifelong resident Jack Gaffney shares his Irvington Story.

On Saturday, January 27, at the History Center in the McVickar House, to help draw out your stories, we assembled a production team, consisting of a producer, director, two videographers, and an interviewer. Eagerly, and, inasmuch as this would be the Society's first such venture in movie making, a bit anxiously, we awaited the arrival of our first storyteller. He was Don Costello, a lifelong village resident, who, responding only to occasional prompting by our local "Charlie Rose," put us all at ease by telling a serene tale of how his grandparents met while living but three houses apart on what was then known as the Behrens Block on Main Street.



Board member Mary Toomy with participant, Elaine Healey.

Following the ten minute filmed interview with Don, our other participants, in turn, shared with us happenings that impacted their lives: her discovery of Halsey Pond and a chance meeting with Miss Halsey (Elaine Healey); the Fire Department's rescue of a deer off the frozen Hudson (Debbie King Turk); how a Memorial Day Parade convinced them to buy a home in Irvington (Laura and Maurice Lohman); the Blizzard of '47 (Chris Shrady); the Irvington High School Band 50 years later (Jack Gaffney); her father's years of teaching history in Irvington (Karen Pickelle); and growing up in the Institute for Economic Education Foundation (Thomas "Soup" Campbell).



Videographer, Cary Gabler, filming Irvington Stories at the McVickar House.

Most of our guests showed off personal photographs or other memorabilia as they recollected and unraveled their stories, all revealed under the eyes of our cameras and recorded for posterity. At the conclusion of the afternoon, both our crew and cast seemed to agree that Irvington Stories was a worthwhile venture, had gotten off to a successful inception and should be continued in the future.

We look forward to final editing and production and to a public showing of the polished video so we may share these fond Irvington Stories with a wider audience. We invite more local residents to participate with us in the future.

Walter Schwartz is a Trustee of the Irvington Historical Society.

The Gardens of Paradise: Hudson Valley Landscapes

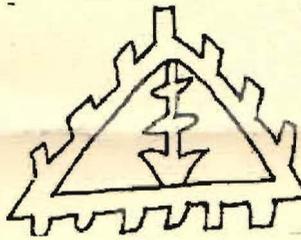
By Mark Gilliland

I can still recall my first drive along Broadway (Rt. 9) - being totally wowed by local estates such as Sunnyside and Lyndhurst. Further north along both sides of the Hudson valley lie even grander estates, once homes to industrial barons and famous painters. The architectural styles of these estates embody a range of European and Asian influences. Their gardens display both naturalistic and formal planting design: alleés of trees, paths and rolling hills accented with jewel-like Parterre knot gardens full of flowering annuals.

How did this fascinating potpourri of the Hudson Valley landscape style come into being? Please join with me in an armchair tour of landscape design history leading up to the grand estates built in the Hudson Valley during the 1800s.

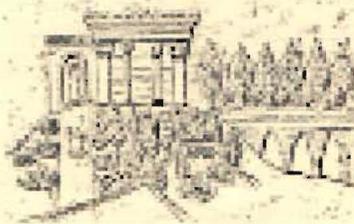
The date? 2200BC.

The place? Sumeria. This (fig. 1) is one of the earliest known artifacts recording human activity of gardening. Interpretations of the depicted scene vary - it might be a walled triangular garden or perhaps a stepped ziggurat (pyramid) with terraced planting levels. In either case, horticultural activity such as this could only be supported by technological advances such as irrigation and scientific advances such as accurate solar calendars.



The most famous early garden in historical records is the Hanging Gardens of Babylon built into the walls of the city as a cascade of terraces.

Only a few depictions of the Gardens have survived. This Assyrian seal (fig. 2) iconographically shows the garden: look closely and you can discern row plantings of trees, shrubs and flowers or vegetables surrounded by paths, with a central fountain to provide a source of irrigation.



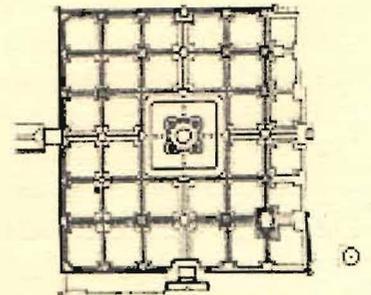
Our story's historical thread continues thru Persia and other Arabic cultural centers - cities often located in harsh, arid environments. Water was a

sign of wealth as it had to be delivered from the distant mountains via underground aqueducts termed "qanat." Gardens were walled for protection from the elements, full of exotic flowering and edible plants. Trees for shade. Fruit and nut trees. Fountains and pools of water. Mist cooled air. A place of fertility, abundance. Floral scents. The garden was a place of spiritual reflection. A place of cool shade. Sounds of flowing water and wildlife. This otherworldly abundance is the essence of the Paradise Garden.

Most of what we know about these early Paradise Gardens comes from rug and tapestry fragments. The typical rug pattern (fig 3) was based upon the layout of the walled Paradise Garden. Analysis of the plants shown in these rug designs has provided detailed information as to what trees were actually cultivated (often imported from distant lands): pine, cypress, poplar, plane (sycamore), oak, maple, fruit and nut trees (almond).



The plan of the Paradise Garden shows a central four quadrant structure with a water feature (fountain) in the middle and paths radiating out in a grid pattern. Water flows in pools and narrow "rills"; there are rows of trees for shade, flower and vegetable beds, with everything enclosed in high walls.



The garden layout could be expanded by simply repeating the basic quadrant grid, (fig. 4) extending water channels to flow north, south, east and west. Smaller paradises give way to larger paradises.

The Arabic style of the Paradise Garden entered Europe thru influence of the Moors in Iberian peninsula: 711 A.D. is a very important date in Landscape History. It is the year the Syrian Arabs invaded Spain, bringing Middle

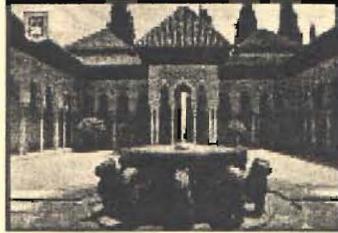
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The Gardens of Paradise, continued

Continued from page 3

Eastern architecture and culture to the European continent. The Moors ruled Spain until Granada fell to the Christians in 1492.

Perhaps the most important garden of the time was Alhambra Palace in Granada. The grand Lion Court contained a central water feature - the Lion Fountain.



Flower beds were depressed below the level of walkways so that the flower heads bloomed at footstep level - a literal "carpet of flowers." Alhambra (fig. 5) embodied the true Paradise Garden in its colorful tile work; water channels (rills), fountains, and pools; varied, often exotic plant materials; garden rooms with connecting paths.

Persian Garden design traveled across Europe from Moorish Spain into the Christian domains of Spain, Italy and France. In the 1500's, Villa D'Este was built by Cardinal Ippolito at Tivoli, outside of Rome. Villa D'Este is a landscape that tells a story not just about the display of wealth and power but also about principles learned from past civilizations.



Great pools and water courses (modified rills) feed magical fountains which spray the ever-present sculptures of Greek and Roman mythical themes (fig. 6). Here, then, garden is once again seen as a microcosm of the civilized world, often filled with exotic, newly discovered plants from far-off lands.

The grand landscapes of Italy found fertile competition in the 17th century estates of the French Aristocracy. Andre LeNotre, the most famous of the French designers, built the gardens at Villandry for a high court noble. The wonder of Villandry was said to have made King Luis XIV so jealous that LeNotre feared for his life. He was determined to make for Luis XIV the grandest of all gardens at Versailles Palace.

The Versailles landscape (fig. 7) can be seen as consisting of two disparate design elements brought into harmony: the "bosque" - naturalistic wooded areas with paths, grottos, seating; and the more formal geometric areas with intersecting paths, grand steps, pools, fountains, sculpture and "parterre" flower beds.



Formal French design is the summit of the Grand Baroque style. It is a show of Man's domination over Nature. Everything was of monumental scale and rich and lavishly decorated, exuberant yet well-ordered. Still hints of the Persian garden can be seen in the great reflecting pools which bisect the grounds, dividing the view into symmetrical parts. An allee of trees line either side. Elsewhere, the parterre beds of the estate's large kitchen gardens were laid out in the familiar nested quadrant grid of the Paradise Garden.

With the Age of Exploration and Conquest came the Physick Garden in England, an encyclopedic horticultural enterprise aimed at growing and cataloging the medicinal and herbal properties of exotic plants gathered from around the world. Consider the rapid pace of change that resulted: 1621 - Oxford Botanical Garden founded, 1670 - glass houses invented, 1673 - Chelsea Physic Gardens founded, 1730s - first seed catalogs printed, 18th century - first college of botany opens its doors. (The Physick Gardens were laid out in the familiar nested quadrant grid of the Paradise Garden, but with sculptural accents rather than fountains and dirt paths replacing rills of flowing water.)



England, too, imported the Grand Baroque landscape style for its grand estates - such as Hampton Court (fig. 8), the palace of King Henry VIII. But for more modest properties,

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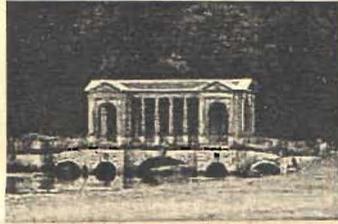
The Gardens of Paradise, continued

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a folksy, informal style (ultimately to become the "cottage garden") persisted. Such subsistence gardens typically consisted of raised beds and fenced walls, planted with a functional mix of herbs, vegetables and flowers.

The dawn of the 18th century brought Neoclassicism to England and with it, the beginnings of English Landscape Painting. With the end of civil strife, plagues and social turmoil, the wealthy had time to think about beauty and philosophy once again.

Neoclassicism was England's reaction against the ornate trappings of the Baroque. Instead of Man walled off from Wild Nature, Neoclassic poetry and painting spoke of Nature as Beauty for its own sake, as a great and wondrous parkland. Landscapes were romantically stylized and filled with ancient temples and Roman ruins (termed "follies" - fig. 9).



Views of the distant, rolling landscape (fig. 10) were incorporated into design vistas, resulting in a naturalistic approach which integrated the entire landscape into an expansive Picturesque Vision.

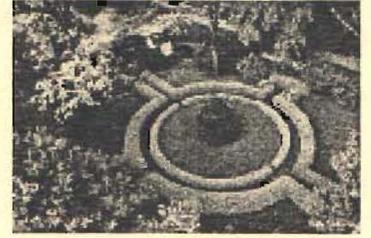


Key to this romantic view of landscape was the notion of "genius loci" - or spirit of place. The new breed of English landscape designers who tried to capture this unique spirit included William Kent, Capability Brown, Humphrey Keptan, William Robinson and Christopher Lloyd.

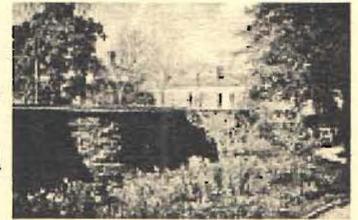
Now it is time for us to take sail across the Atlantic to the New World and the lands of the English Colonies. Early gardens in the colonies were typically unstructured, informal, functional - much like the ones found in villages of the home country. These were potage gardens geared towards subsistence and survival.

However, in the developing urban centers such as Colonial Williamsburg we begin to find a

very English mix of informal potage gardens and formal Parterre plantings such as that at the Governor's Palace with its traditional "bedding out" of annuals (fig. 11).



In the 18th century, the grounds of University of Virginia and Monticello were designed by Thomas Jefferson, heavily influenced by his study of classical architecture themes. Yet these reveal a less aristocratic, more egalitarian style and scale appropriate to the new democracy. The result was often quite functional and inventive as in the single brick thick Serpentine Walls behind the Great Lawn (fig. 12). The walls, now planted with trees, shrubs and perennials, were actually intended to divide land into potage garden plots for each resident scholar.



The 19th century, especially in New England, ushered in the rise of the Rural Cemetery Movement: in 1831, work on Mt. Auburn Cemetery (in the Boston countryside) was begun (fig. 13). It was envisioned not only as a cemetery but as a park (influenced by Pierre La Chasse Cemetery in Paris), to serve as an escape from the urban noise, pollution and density of the city and to be open to anyone (rich or poor) who could afford transportation to its gates. When first developed, sections of the overall plan were given to leading artists, architects and landscape designers to design. The resulting park-like environment is considered to be the beginnings of the public parks movement in the U.S.



The first major American landscape designers included Andrew Jackson

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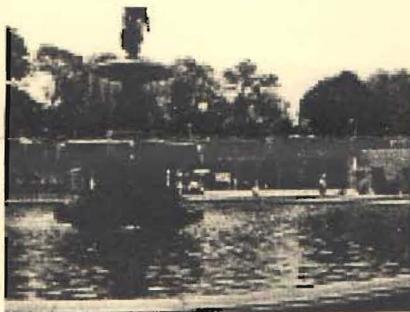
The Gardens of Paradise, continued

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Downing and Fredrick Law Olmstead who studied the English Romantic esthetic closely. Olmstead, walking across England, toured many private estate gardens and landscapes with their sequence of picturesque views: encounters with temples, statuary, springs and grottos, all involving layers of visual, literary, and personal allusion, often centered around a calm body of reflecting water. Olmstead came to believe that we must always remain conscious of nature and learn from the beauty all around us – what he termed “Naturalism.”

Probably the most famous of the urban parks created in 1800s is Central Park in New York City. Fredrick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux worked on this project as a team. (Vaux was a French landscape architect brought in because he had more public project experience than Olmstead).

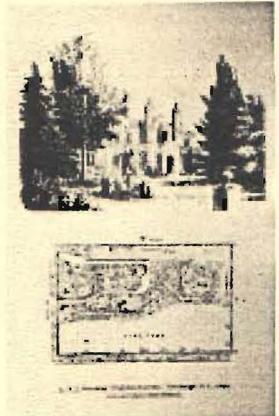
The park combines both formal elements (fountains, plazas, alleés – fig. 14) and naturalistic elements (curving walks thru woods and meadows - fig. 15). Olmstead enhanced the naturalistic design magic of the park setting by keeping traffic out of view through extensive use of sunken roadways and berms.



Andrew Jackson Downing was perhaps the most influential landscape architect of 19th century. He helped shape the fabric of the Hudson Valley during the rise of its great country estates through the creation and publication of a series of Pattern Books which presented plans for various historical styles of mansions/houses. Included with these were estate plans and plant lists for associated landscape and gardens (fig. 16). His “Picturesque Landscapes” were a

hybrid of the free-flowing English naturalistic style combined with more formal display beds close to the house, typically at the front or rear entrances.

Downing soon became known as the “Apostle of Taste,” almost single handedly defining and creating the suburb movement - moving out of the congestion of the city to one’s own estate (no matter how large or small). The new railroad along the river helped this opening of the Hudson Valley; commuting was now within the grasp of the urban dweller. Soon anyone might dream of owning his own Paradise Garden in the Hudson Valley.



Inspired to work on your own garden paradise? Here are a few places to go for high-quality, new and unusual stuff:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| Rudolph’s Gardens -
Carmel, NY | 845.277.4874 |
| Pound Ridge Nursery -
Pound Ridge, NY | 914.764.5781 |
| Kolvek’s Perennials -
Chesnut Ridge, NY | 845.735.2904 |
| Rosedale Nursery -
Hawthorne, NY | 914.769.1300 |
| Matterhorn Nursery -
Spring Valley, NY | 845.354.5986 |
| Mountain Maples -
(mail order—CA.) | 888.707.6522 |

Mark Gilliland is Landscape Designer certified by the New York Botanical Garden and is also a Cornell Master Gardner. His landscape design business is Garden Artistry. For more information: www.garden-artistry.com - Phone: 914.714.3056

Curator's Corner

By Barbara Sciulli

Irvington Historical Society will join the celebration of the "Hudson- Fulton- Champlain Quadricentennial in 2009." A New York commission has been formed to plan, promote, and organize the 400th anniversary celebrations of the historic voyages made by Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain, as well as the 200th anniversary of the sailing of the Robert Fulton's steamship Clermont from New York City to Albany. Many activities will be celebrated in the Hudson River Valley. Check the website www.exploreNY400.com to see the exciting plans.

The Historical Society will participate in the celebration by forming a committee to plan an exhibit that will highlight the life, people, and events of our village in 1909. That era, a century ago, reflects a change from "Victorian" to "Modern" times. To join the committee and planning, please call the McVickar house-591-1020.

We invite you to participate in other future exhibits and events:

Fall 2008-2009- A survey of the Society's clothing and accessory collections.

Spring 2008-Salute to Irvington's veterans, curator Peter Oley.

Fall 2007 -2008-"Choring Around the House", curator Joan Lobdell. This exhibit will feature hand tools and gadgets used for household chores. Joan is collecting and organizing materials for the exhibit now. Do you have a push lawn mower, coal scuttle, or other interesting item in your kitchen, workshop, or attic that you would like to lend or donate? Do you have photos of people using vintage tools? Call Joan at the McVickar house 591-1020 and leave a message.

The Warnock Gallery will feature some of the collections of our members. These exhibits will change frequently and promise to peak both interest and curiosity. Do you have anything you would like to share? Snow globes? Thimbles? Postcards? Coins?

You will see collections of woodenware, door stops, and butter pats in the near future.

The more people we have participate in our committees, or loan us objects the richer the exhibits will be. We also have a lot of fun! Please join us!! Call 591-1020.

Barbara Sciulli is the Curator for the Irvington Historical Society

The Irvington Historical Society proudly hosts
An evening with author

Edward J. Renehan, Jr.

As he discusses his latest book

Dark Genius of Wall Street

The Misunderstood Life of Jay Gould

King of the Robber Barons

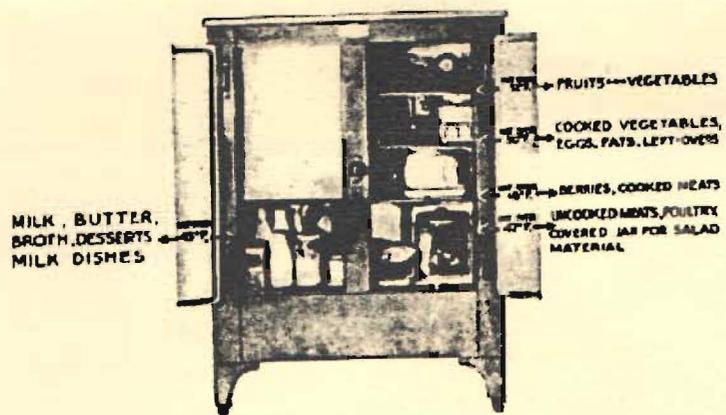
Book Signing following lecture

Friday May 4th, 7:30 pm

The Calvin Auditorium of the Irvington Presbyterian Church

Upcoming Exhibit— “Choring Around The House”

The Irvington Historical Society is planning its next exhibit, “Choring Around the House -Tools and Implements Of Yesteryear.” Ever wonder how your grandmother (or great-grandmother!) washed and ironed clothes, kept food cold or cleaned the house or how your grandfather mowed the lawn, provided food or repaired the house?



This exhibit, planned for September, and organized by Joan Lobdell, a member of the Historical Society Board and an active archival volunteer, will provide an in depth look at the daily chores, indoors and outdoors, that were necessary to maintain everyday life and how these were accomplished. If you have items that you would be willing to share for this exhibit please call the Society at 591-1020.

An Irvington Tale of A Leatherneck and A Doughboy

Peter Oley, Village Historian

This is the story of two men, both representing their community and their country, one who died young and far away, and one who came home but most assuredly was forever impacted by the terrible experience of war.

It was the evening of June 10, 1918, and Mary McGovern was doing the laundry down in the coal basement of her Barney Road (Station Road) home. Suddenly, she felt strong arms around her and the presence of a familiar being! It had already been a strange evening to say the least. Bosco, her son Philip's dog, kept climbing up the Aqueduct and howling for his master and his sisters had to keep fetching him home. The dog, a collie, was heard all the way over at Abbotsford (East Clinton Avenue) by Philip's grandmother, Margaret Kiernan.

The next day, the tragic news came that Philip, of the 5th United States Marines, only 18 years of age, had been killed in the Battle of Belleau Woods. This was the first engagement in which American troops had met the Boche. Philip had lied about his age and joined the Marines at the age of 17.



Philip McGovern, shown on left, posing for photo with another soldier during World War I.

All Irvington was saddened by this dreadful news. The front page of The Irvington Gazette displayed a picture of the slender young hero with the caption, "He Gave His Life For His Country and Friends. He Died That Others Might Live. He Gave His All."

Philip's family received his citations from

General John J. Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the Armies, Marshal Petain of France and General Barrett, Commandant of the Marine Corps. On his Marine corps medal Nathan Hale was quoted "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

The 4th Marine Brigade took 50% casualties, but reduced two German Divisions and won Belleau Wood thus stopping the German drive on Paris only 35 miles away. It was the Iwo Jima of World War I.

The French government awarded to the Brigade in 1918, the Fourrage, a senior unit award, dating from Napoleon's time. The green and scarlet cord can be seen on the left shoulder of the 5th and 6th Marines today, 89 years later. On June 30, 1918, the 6th French Army issued an order officially redesignating the Bois the Belleau as the "Wood of the Marine Brigade."



The family of Philip McGovern at his burial on July 19, 1921 at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

The Philip McGovern American Legion Post was established in Irvington and on July 19, 1921, the young hero's body, having been brought home from France where it had lain for three years, was finally put to rest. After a very moving ceremony at the Catholic Church, the cortège composed of the Legion, Police Force, Village Board, Boy Scouts and a Marine firing squad moved to the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. Prayers were offered by Father Donlon and Mary McGovern, Irvington's only World War I Gold Star Mother turned a spade of earth and the young Marine was finally home. Philip's grave is to the left of the McGovern family stone in Section 54 Lot 2753 and is marked with a

An Irvington Tale of A Leatherneck and A Doughboy, *continued*

government-issue stone and an American Legion marker. Local families such as the Broderick, Foley, O'Neill, Ferris and Kelly families are related to him.

Now on to the story of our doughboy. An inquiry to the mayor's office a few years ago for any information that could be found concerning a certain Duncan Fraser was forwarded to your village historian.

It seems a woman from New Jersey had been given medals awarded to the father of her deceased sister-in-law. One medal showed a picture of our Town Hall and said, "Presented by the citizens of Irvington, New York to Duncan Fraser who served the nation with honor in the World War 1917-1918.

We have the same kind of medal in our archives and so a quick trip to the Main Street War Monument confirmed that Duncan Fraser did indeed represent our Village in World War I.



That same week, I ran into an old friend, Peggy Baird, the long-time secretary of the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery Association and she told me of Fraser Mausoleum at the cemetery. It seems they

were an old Ardsley Park family and had lived in Irvington for many years.

Duncan Fraser was wounded at Soisson, cleaning out a machine gun nest. On November 22, 1918, he sent a poignant letter home to his three month old daughter, Anne. The young lieutenant wrote, "It will be a long time before you will be able to read this letter, but perhaps many years from now it may prove interesting." The 24 year-old hero modestly goes on, "on July 19th about eight in the morning, I got in the way of a machine gun bullet, hence the S.O.S." Fraser closes by saying, "Be a good baby till I get home, which is not so far off now. Your loving, Dad."

He was awarded a citation by General Pershing for his heroism. He also received the Purple Heart, two Croix de Guerre and the Distinguished Service Cross for Valor. He was mustered out on June 28, 1919 and died at the age of 44.

The sister-in-law of Duncan Fraser's daughter gifted his medals, citations and letters written home to Irvington to the Historical Society so that we might better tell the story of one who served!

The lives of Philip McGovern and Duncan Fraser serve to remind us of the personal sacrifices that many of our young men and women have made. Twenty-four Irvington residents are listed on the Main Street monuments as having died for their country from World War I through the Vietnam conflict. This Memorial Day let us remember them.

Peter Oley is the Irvington Village Historian.

Let's hear those cameras clicking!
 Don't forget the Irvington Historical Society's
 Photo Contest
 Submit your favorite Irvington photo by
 June 19, 2007

Fifth Grade Visit To the McVickar House

All eight fifth grade classes at the Main Street School visited the McVickar House last month. Students had an opportunity to view the Pharmacy Exhibit with the help Of Historian Peter Oley, Curator Barbara Sciulli, and Student Teacher Julia Kim. Here are some pictures from that exciting event.



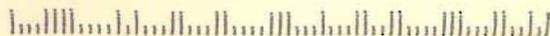
The Roost

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www.irvingtonhistoricalsociety.org

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White Plains, NY

Patricia & John Ryan
17 South Ferris St.
Irvington NY 10533

10533\$1713 0001



The Irvington Historical Society presents its Second Annual House Tour “Great Adaptations.”

Join us for this tour of some of our village’s
Most unique homes.

Saturday, May 19, 2007
1 PM to 4 PM

Would you like to help us with this exciting event – volunteers are needed!
Please contact:

Pat Ryan – jppjryan@aol.com
Barbe Crowley – 914 721-4025
Gail Weiler – 914 693-2023