

# WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FOUNDED IN 1983 ★ SUCCESSOR TO BATTLE OF WHITE PLAINS MONUMENT COMMITTEE ★ FALL 2006

## George Washington Returns to the Purdy House

By  
Barbara Carlson

Long before it was the headquarters of the White Plains Historical Society, the Jacob Purdy house served the same function for General George Washington during the Battle of White Plains in 1776. About thirty years ago, the house was moved to its present park-like setting atop Purdy hill overlooking the City of White Plains. Here the Historical Society conducts its business and keeps local history in the spotlight with a wide range of activities including special anniversaries like the Declaration of Independence and the Battle of White Plains. While the Historical Society is involved in all aspects of White Plains' past, it is especially dedicated to the American Revolution and the man we now call "The Father of our country."

Jack Harrington, one of the Historical Society Trustees said, "The more you understand Washington, the more you're awed by his character, vision, ability and sense of duty. Saying that he possessed the best qualities of our greatest leaders is by no

means an exaggeration. And he personally took on the responsibility for winning the Revolutionary War. Without him there would be no United States of America."



Harrington has an arsenal of stories about Washington which he tells with such uncannily first-person insight that you might think he was actually with the Continental Army until you remind yourself that the events he describes happened 230 years ago.

The Purdy House headquarters is once again welcoming the General. This time he returns as a blue-uniformed image in a magnificent framed print that will hang over the fireplace where Washington once warmed himself. The painting shows General Washington as he would have appeared at the Battle of

White Plains with a force of militia and short-term regulars in the background. This print was donated by Wayne McGrath, the City of White Plains' liaison for the proposed

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## A CALL TO ARMS

COMMEMORATE THE  
230<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

BATTLE OF WHITE PLAINS

Sunday, October 29, 2006, 1PM – 3PM

Jacob Purdy House

60 Park Avenue, White Plains, NY

## MISSION OF THE WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the history, past and present, of the City of White Plains, particularly the preservation of historical buildings, sites, monuments and cemeteries; and to promote public interest and awareness to generate pride in our historic heritage.

### President's Report

It has been a very good year for The Society. Our membership has increased to a level never seen before. This means that more people are hearing our message and it broadens our base for the dissemination of our goals and progress and also broadens our base for people to volunteer their services in some of our endeavors.

We have joined other community organizations in their efforts to reach different segments of our community. This has been done by making contributions to their publications and also having members of our society attend some of their social affairs. Hopefully these organizations will work with us in trying to educate the public on the historical aspects which have occurred in White Plains.

Our annual dinner, at which Robert Stackpole became our 'Citizen Extraordinaire,' was a success. The attendance was excellent; Our 'Citizen Extraordinaire' gave a rousing address and our guest speaker, Richard Brookhiser, not only gave an interesting and excellent talk but many copies of his new book were personally autographed and sold. The success of this dinner was due to the efforts of members of our Board of Trustees. Try to make our next annual dinner which will be held on May 3, 2007 at the Crowne Plaza.

People are also volunteering to work on specific projects and we invite all of you to participate in programs that you desire. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of Lou DeGenaro we now have our own website, at [www.whiteplainshistory.org](http://www.whiteplainshistory.org). If you have items of interest which you feel might be of interest to be placed please contact me by letter sent to the Purdy House.

Again my thanks to the members of the Board of Trustees and the others who have given of their time. I wish you all a happy and successful year.

Robert James Friedman  
President

### Neighborhood Scenes

## There Really Was A Sound View

By  
Barbara Carlson

On the south side of White Plains near the Scarsdale border, there is a wide avenue called Soundview. For many residents, it serves as a shortcut to downtown White Plains and beyond via such thoroughfares as the Bronx River Parkway and I-287. Running along the western edge of a neighborhood called "The Highlands," Soundview provides more enjoyment than convenience. To anyone fascinated by great architecture Soundview Avenue provides great rubbernecking. By early in the twentieth century, Soundview Avenue was playing host to a growing collection of grand homes that would eventually include every significant style and become a veri-

table architectural museum of classic American homes.

When you drive down Soundview, your mind works like a camera clicking and saving what could be an Kodachrome



A 1920's photo of SoundView Manor. It looks the same today and, when the leaves are gone, still has a view of Long Island Sound.

slideshow while the other side of the brain strains to image what life was like on Soundview way back when the appearance of Soundview was much different than today.

The clue to what was different is the name "Soundview" itself. More than representing the naming creativity of a city planner or real estate developer, "Soundview" describes what could be seen from this avenue before the current growth of tall trees when a person could actually look to the south and see Long Island Sound. The name lives on even though the view has vanished behind many miles of tall trees.

Relatively new, today's stately, old trees are the "second growth" that has risen from farmlands once covering much of White Plains and Westchester County. From colonial times onward, the County

#### WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND BATTLE MONUMENT COMMITTEE

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# OUR MAJOR LEAGUER — DEACON JONES

By John Vorperian

Chicago White Sox Deacon Jones had a banner day at the plate September 28, 1963. The first baseman cracked a 6th inning home-run into the Comiskey Park bleachers off Washington Senator hurler Jim Hannan in a ChiSox 7-2 victory.



Photo credit: Courtesy of Ithaca College Athletics

Jones had four at-bats, two hits and with a runner on 'went yard' to earn 2 RBIs in the contest.

Grover William "Deacon" Jones was born Wednesday, April 18, 1934 here in White Plains, New York. The city native's exceptional athletic ability led him to the Ithaca College baseball team. From 1953 to 1956 under manager James A. "Bucky" Freeman, the 5' 10" 185lbs student-athlete played for a Bomber squad that posted a .806 winning pct (50-12). To

date Deacon holds the Ithaca College record with 13 total bases in a game against St. Bonaventure in 1954. Grover's background explains his nickname. Jones grew up in an active church-going family. His grandfather was the Rev. John Jones. Deacon signed in 1957 with the Chicago White Sox organization as an amateur free agent. He was assigned to the parent club's Mid-West minor league outposts. The left-handed batter performed for the Appleton, Wisconsin; Lincoln,

Nebraska; an Indianapolis, Indiana teams. The 1962 major league debut class consisted of such individuals as BALL FOUR's Jim Bouton; '69 World Champion NY Mets Tommie Agee, Ed Charles; Playboy Bo Belinsky; NY Knick Dave DeBusschere and a son of White Plains. Called up from the International League on September 8th, the twenty-eight year old was sent in as a pinch hitter. In the bottom of the seventh batting for Sox second baseman Dick Kenworthy, Jones singled scoring a run as Chicago coasted 6-3 over DC's Senators. Jones' MLB playing career lasted over three seasons and his teammates included Hall of Famers Luis Aparicio and Nellie Fox. Deacon's last game happened on October 1, 1966 against the New York Yankees.

The glove may have been hung up, but Deacon Jones continued with his baseball career. Managing, coaching or scouting from the late Sixties to now for the Chicago White Sox, Houston Astros, San Diego Padres. He currently works as an advance scouts for the Baltimore Orioles. Jones was inducted into the Ithaca College Hall of Fame and the White Plains Hall of Fame.

WPHS Trustee John Vorperian is host and producer of BEYOND THE GAME, a sports history program shown on White Plains Cable Television Channel 76, Tuesdays 10pm and Fridays 9pm.

## HISTORIC PLAQUEING PROGRAM

The Society has established and maintained an Historic Plaqueing Program, actively utilized, to publicly designate those historically significant buildings, sites and cemeteries in the City, and to help educate the public.

### EXAMPLES:

- Peoples National Bank and Trust Company building (1928), now Westchester Arts Council Headquarters
- Meditation Garden and Monument, Good Counsel, Sisters of Divine Compassion
- Jacob Purdy House (1721)

## DATES TO REMEMBER

**October 8, 2006** (Sunday)

Columbus Day Parade – 2:00 PM

**October 29, 2006** (Sunday)

Battle of White Plains Commemoration

Purdy House – 1:00 PM

**November 5, 2006** (Sunday)

White Plains Beautification

Women's Club – 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

**February 18, 2007** (Sunday)

Washington's Birthday

Purdy House – 1:00 PM

**May 3, 2007** (Thursday)

White Plains Historical Society Annual Dinner

Crowne Plaza – 6:00 PM

**TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY SEE APPLICATION ON PAGE 6**

# Veterans Memorial Park in White Plains

by Barbara Carlson

You'll find one in most cities and towns across the United States -- a park dedicated to those in that community who served in the armed forces during our nation's wars. These public parks offer a quiet sanctuary and permanent reminder of service and sacrifice, and also provide an appropriate place for activities relating to such holidays as Memorial Day and Veteran's Day.

You will not find such a park in White Plains, although the City's residents served in the armed forces in all major American wars including the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Civil War, the two World Wars, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, up to the current military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. To be sure, there are various monuments or memorials throughout the city. In Tibbits Park on Broadway, there's a statue of a Civil War soldier and a memorial to those lost during World War I. Displayed on the second floor of the rotunda at City Hall there are bronze etchings of White Plains residents who served in World War I, and in the White Plains Municipal Building there is an Honor Roll of World War II veterans. As important as these monuments and memorials are, a park commemorating service in all our nation's wars is certainly appropriate and could be a real centerpiece for the history of our city.

Hopefully, a Veteran's Memorial Park will ultimately be a reality. In 1996 the City of White Plains Common Council enacted an ordinance dedicating City-owned land across Tarrytown Road from Westchester's County Center. Located at the foot of Battle Hill and on the Tarrytown Road -- both played important roles during the Battle of White Plains -- the Veterans Memorial Park will occupy historically prominent ground. This and its accessible location and prominent view of the City's skyline, make it an ideal home for the park. In 2004, Wayne McGrath, the Mayor's liaison to veterans' service groups, held a series of meetings to gather input from

various local veterans groups, the White Plains Historical Society, and Concerned Citizens for Open Space. At this meeting, commitments were made by representatives of these groups to support



the creation of a Veterans Memorial Park. A rendering of the proposed park had been completed by a landscape architect. It included pathways and 12 garden areas representing the wars the United States has fought during its history. For each there will be a bronze plaque with historical information and the names of the White Plains citizens who served. The Veterans Memorial Park will truly be a meaningful memorial with a strong educational impact. Moreover, Mr. McGrath believes the Veterans Memorial Park could be developed without city funding. He said that the New York State government was considering a grant to help with the landscaping and a local Vietnam Veterans group has volunteered to lead a "buy a brick" campaign to assist with the funding. The development of the initial plans for the park has been spearheaded by the White Plains Historical Society which has offered to provide the bronze work as part of its longstanding historical plaque program.

Local civic leaders have shown great interest in the proposed veterans

park and explored the critical factors in its development. Overtures for essential City involvement have been made but thus far there has been no response.

Everyone seems to agree that the City needs the Veterans Memorial Park now. Our troops have been serving in Afghanistan and Iraq for over three years; many outstanding young men and women have already made the ultimate sacrifice. All the citizen groups that are working to make the park a reality agree that the debt we owe these veterans -- and the legions of our warriors who have preceded them -- can never be repaid. But as a symbol and constant reminder, the Veterans Memorial Park is essential.

Be value our freedom above all else, it's time for action. Nothing should be higher on the City's agenda than the creation of the Veterans Memorial Park. It deserves a place atop the City's Capital Projects list and hopefully the Mayor and Common Council will initiate whatever programs it will to make the Veterans Memorial Park a reality.

In White Plains' Tibbits Park, a memorial to Civil War dead. Also in Tibbits Park, a memorial to Soldiers, Sailors and Marines who Died in WWI.

## Neighborhood Scenes

from page 5

pleasant neighborhood enjoyed by Highland residents today. Many of the grand Soundview homes have survived, but you won't see any Maxwells, Overland Whippets or Pierce Arrow touring cars in the driveways. Soundview Avenue continues to be as scenic as ever, and with a little imagination, you can picture what life was like here in an era when you could look to the south and see the sailboats on Long Island Sound.

For more information, go to [www.soundviewmanor.com](http://www.soundviewmanor.com)

\*This is the second of a continuing series on White Plains' neighborhoods.



*White  
Plains  
Historical  
Society*

September 13, 2006

Mamaroneck Board of Education  
1000 W. Boston Post Road  
Mamaroneck, NY 10543

Dear Sirs/Madam:

The White Plains Historical Society is opposed to your actions concerning the Kemper War Memorial.

The courts have upheld your legal rights to move the same but we deem your actions immoral. Kemper Memorial Park was dedicated to keeping alive the memory and sacrifices made by people in your community who lost their lives during the Second World War. The site was made as a sacred trust to all of the people of Mamaroneck and elsewhere who view the same which fronts on the Boston Post Road and for future generations to stop and think of the past.

Destroying this site or moving it to another locale is tantamount to relocating other sacred monuments to patriots from the past just to build athletic fields. The present location of this mini-park is so that people could obtain ready access to a visible site. Will people stop to view an expanded athletic field? Would you move other historical places such as Valley Forge, Gettysburg, etc. to erect athletic fields?

This monument and park is every bit as important as the one s now being erected to remember 9/11. This monument, where presently placed, is a constant reminder of the sacrifices made by American servicemen and women in World War II, to preserve our freedoms. Any other location would not serve that purpose.

We urge you to reconsider your decision.

Very truly yours,

Robert James Friedman  
President

cc: The Journal News  
Phil Reisman  
White Plains Times  
The New York Times

## Washington's own book explains his greatness.

Most historians agree that George Washington was our nation's greatest leader, but the nature of his greatness has been the subject of countless books, articles and discussions. Ironically, the book that best explains Citizen Washington is undoubtedly the smallest one and was written by the man himself -- at age 14. Entitled "Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation," this 30-page book



includes 110 rules which Washington collected and used with one purpose in mind: to achieved the highest possible level of personal excellence, not for material gain, not for the praise of others -- or even for self-congratulation -- but for the elevation of his own worth and natural nobility. Take rule #47 for example: "Mock not nor jest at any thing of importance; break no jests that are sharp biting; and if you deliver any thing witty and pleasant, abstain from laughing thereat yourself." Or rule #58, "Let your conversation be without malice or envy, for it is a sign of tractable and commendable nature; and in all cases of passion, admit reason to govern." It's just a little book, but its focus on the sense of duty he applied to every aspect of life makes clear the source of Washington's greatness..

## Join us for the White Plains Historical Society's Annual Dinner Program

The 18th Annual Dinner Program of the White Plains Historical Society will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, **Thursday, May 3, 2007**, at 6:00 p.m. Events of the evening will include the presentation of the White Plains Historical Society Citizen Extraordinaire award, the name to be announced.

We will also have a guest speaker whose name will be announced in the future.

**For Reservations to the  
White Plains Historical Society  
Annual Dinner Call  
914-682-8426**

## Renoda Hoffman's YESTERDAY IN WHITE PLAINS (1981) NOW AVAILABLE!



The late White Plains City Historian Renoda Hoffman's most popular book, *Yesterday in White Plains*, had been out of print for quite a few years. After hundreds of requests for copies, the Historical Society reprinted the 3rd edition.

This 350-page book has over 550 photographs, maps and illustrations of White Plains' evolution and is a cherished archive of White Plains history.

If you would like to order a copy or make a donation to the book fund, please call 682-8426.

## George Washington Returns *from page 1*

Veterans Memorial Park which is being created to honor all the City's veterans including those from the Revolutionary War.

The artist has also become legendary. He is Don Troiani who has had a long career and achieved great success depicting American history. While there are many artists who have focused on history, nobody has done it with more vitality, insight and drama than Don Troiani. In the past decades, he has created hundreds of exciting images that put the viewer in the center of the action from the Revolutionary War to World War II. Born in New York in 1949, he is the son of an accomplished commercial artist who encouraged him from an early age. Troiani's work is represented in the collections of many of the nation's military institutions, including: the U.S. Army War College, U.S. Marine Corps Museum, Command and Staff College, U.S. Army National Guard, West Point Museum, the Pentagon and the U.S. Cavalry Museum at Fort Riley, Kansas. General Washington deserves our praise, but he would have shrugged it off. He wasn't seeking personal power, prestige or celebrity. He could have been a king of the thirteen colonies, but he wasn't even tempted and declined the offer. It can be fairly conjectured that what he really wanted was to do his duty, fulfill his destiny, and to help launch a new kind of country with out class structure or elitism, a country where nobility wouldn't be a rank of privilege, but rather a characteristic of all Americans.

## HERITAGE TRAIL

Since the early days of the White Plains Battle Monument Committee and its successor, the White Plains Historical Society, members have laid out and installed trail markers and maintained those portions of the trail located in White Plains, with support from the Harrison and North Castle Historical Societies.

# Debate over Washington's Headquarters in North Castle

By  
Barbara Carlson

It's not in White Plains, but it's right next door. The simple white house in North White Plains originally owned by Elijah and Ann Miller has stood along the banks of the Bronx River at the bottom of Miller Hill for more than 250 years. George Washington is believed to have stayed in the house during the Revolutionary War when battles were fought on the adjacent farmland. Although the house is on the National Register of Historic Places, the area directly around it has drastically changed as industries developed, railroad tracks were laid and streets were built. Most dramatic is the Byram Concrete plant right next door to the house.

An article in the May 10, 2006 Journal News has called attention to the deteriorating condition of the house and the debate over what next steps should be taken. Westchester County, which owns the house, is studying the condition of the structure this year. A fire at Byram Concrete in 2005 created explosions which shook the area and exacerbated the house's already poor shape. The house had been available for school groups to tour but has been closed in recent years. Signage on the property and a phone number to call for tour information are long out of date.

Such a valuable historic treasure presents a very sad picture of neglect and decline. Surrounded by a chain link fence, it is liter-

ally being squeezed out of the small patch of land it now occupies. Dust and vibrations from the adjacent concrete plant and heavy traffic on Virginia Road are further damaging the house. Mary Jo Garrity, president of the North White Plains Neighborhood Association, said about the house, "If it stays in its present location, it will eventually collapse." What can be done to preserve the Miller house?

Officials in the Westchester County Parks Department have told the town that unless it can improve the area around the house, the 1738 structure will have to be moved. However, Parks Department spokesman Peter Tartaglia said moving the house is a last resort because the house's historic integrity would be affected. Many, however, see no other alternative since Virginia Road is largely zoned for industrial and commercial use. A possibility may lie in moving the house from the bottom of Miller Hill to the top which is a residential area and may thus offer more safety and protection. A suggestion that the house be moved to a cluster of historic buildings in Armonk run by the North Castle Historical Society was roundly rejected.

Supervisor Reese Berman said, "If it has to be moved, it has to stay in North White Plains."

Stay tuned to see what happens in this Catch-22 situation.

## Free Celebration to Honor the 230th Anniversary of the Battle of White Plains.

By Dennis Jones

Come to the commemoration of the Battle of White Plains on Oct. 29th. From 1-3 PM. Visit the Jacob Purdy House and meet with Revolutionary War re-enactors.

The Battle of White Plains was fought October 28, 1776. It is an often overlooked battle in history because of the small number of troops involved. However, it is really a very important battle in the New York campaign of 1776. The American army lost a series of major battles from Long Island through Manhattan. When General Washington fortified the hills of White Plains and made a stand, it stopped the northward advance of the British

army.

Activities at Sunday's celebration will include: stirring music by the White Plains High School Band, flag-raising ceremony, reading of the roll of honor (names of local militiamen who actually fought in the Battle of White Plains), recreation of a Revolutionary War campsite and a video presentation of the battle. There will be activities for children and free refreshments including mulled cider, cookies, cake and apples. Admission is free. For additional information call: 914-328-1776 or 914-682-8426.

### Neighborhood Scenes *from page 2*

served as a primary source of grain, produce and livestock to feed the ever-growing appetite of New York City, which, even hundreds of years ago, was a short haul away by boat or wagon. Today, the farmhouses, barns, storehouses and wells are gone, but if you fly into a leafless Westchester County Airport during the winter, there's clear evidence of an agricultural past. From several hundred feet in the air, black lines are prominently visible against the white snow. These lines are stone walls that form a patchwork of squares, rectangles and all manner of irregular shaped fields. When farming died out -- in addition to reforestation -- there was another "secondary growth," namely residen-

tial housing. As the population swelled and commuter transportation improved, farmland was subdivided. Soon Westchester was well on its way to becoming the high-rent bedroom-community for New York City.

A prime example is a magnificent Palladio-style home called SoundView Manor built in 1920. When its current resident, Doris L. Sassower arrived more than 25 years ago, she could still enjoy a summer's Sunday brunch high on the third-floor penthouse terrace and watch the sail boats on Long Island Sound. But today, with the trees taller yet, the Sound view appears only when the leaves fall and it's too chilly for alfresco dining.

Over the years, smaller homes filled the acreage and created the

*Continued on page 7*



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## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### INDIVIDUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Individual ..... \$20.00
- Family ..... \$25.00
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- Patriot ..... \$35.00
- Continental ..... \$50.00
- Lafayette's Legioneer .... \$75.00
- Washington's Guard... \$100.00
  
- Lifetime Member ..... \$175.00
- Joint Lifetime Member .... \$300.00

### CORPORATE OPPORTUNITIES

- Contributor ..... \$100.00
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- Benefactor ..... \$500.00
- Patron ..... \$1000.00

### MEMBERSHIP

Join us in preserving and promoting the rich history of White Plains. Become a member today. Invest in the future by helping preserve the past.

### BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

You will receive: Society Newsletters • Free inquiries and access to our archives • Advanced notice of all lectures, tours, programs and special events • 15% discount on books and gift items.

### TO BECOME A MEMBER

Make check payable to White Plains Historical Society. Send check and completed form to: WPHS, 60 Park Ave., White Plains, NY 10603. Or fax form to 328-4391 and we'll bill you.

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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