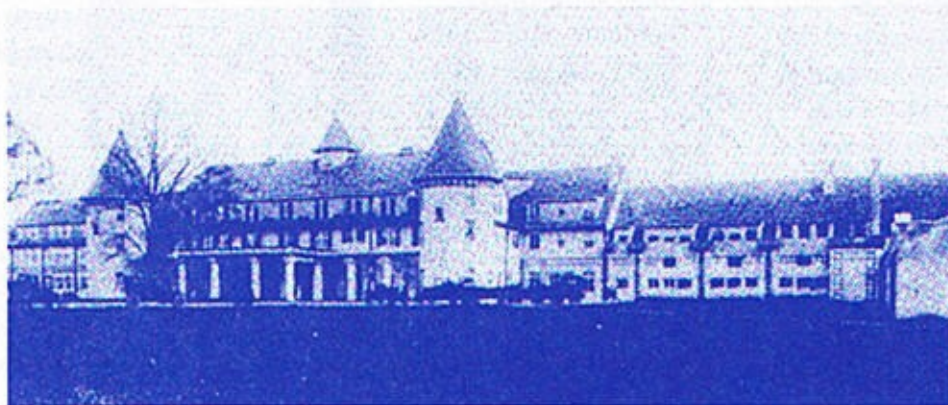


WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

White Plains Neighborhoods

White Plains is a city comprised of many neighborhoods such as Prospect Park, the Highlands, Westminster Ridge, Battle Hill and many others. Each has a unique character and history; many are related to the families who earlier owned the property or historical events which took place there. Gedney Farms is one such neighborhood.



Gedney Farms Hotel

Photo from *Yesterday in White Plains*, Hoffman, 1981

In 1740, John Gedney purchased 160 acres of land in White Plains. He built a home for his wife and seven children on Mamaroneck Avenue opposite Gedney Esplanade. When John died in 1776, his son Bartholomew inherited the property. During the Revolution, most of the Gedneys were Loyalists.

Another Bartholomew Gedney, born in 1802, inherited the the Russian Czar's Commission on Agriculture came to

White Plains to study his methods. Bartholomew's prized shorthorn cattle were famous as well as his number of bushels per acre harvested.

Bartholomew died in 1897; his son John Benjamin Gedney built a house in 1854 on Burling Avenue. John's sons

Roderick and Montgomery served in the Union army during the Civil War. When they returned to White Plains, they managed the farm.

Howard Willets purchased the Gedney farmland in 1897, built a large home and raised prize-winning cattle and horses in the former Gedney barns. Two roads in Gedney Farms

*Information and photo from Renoda Hoffman's *Yesterday in White Plains*.

Continued on page 4

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENT
THURSDAY MAY 4, 2006

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

The 17th Annual Dinner Program of the White Plains Historical Society will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, **Thursday, May 4, 2006**, at 6:00 p.m. Events of the evening will include the presentation of the White Plains Historical Society Citizen Extraordinaire award. The guest speaker will be Richard Brookhiser, historian, journalist and author.

Richard Brookhiser is the author of several books about the Founding Fathers, including *What Would the Founders Do? Our Questions, Their Answers*, which will be published in May 2006 by Basic Books. His previous books include *The Way of the WASP: How It Made America, and How It Can Save It... So to Speak*; *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington*; *Alexander Hamilton, American*; *America's First Dynasty: The Adamses 1735-1918*; and *Gentleman Revolutionary: Gouverneur Morris, The Rake Who Wrote the Constitution*.

A senior editor at *National Review*, Brookhiser is also a political columnist for *The New York Observer*. His freelance writing has appeared in publications such as *American Heritage*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Time*, *Vanity Fair*, and many others.

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

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 Letter

The last few years have been witness to good and bad events for our historical society.

On the negative side, our beloved historian, Renoda Hoffman, died. She will be forever engraved in our minds as one of the founders of this organization and as a person who devoted much of her life in the education of this community dealing with its past history. Her legacy to our society has also been enhanced by the fact that she assigned the copyrights and future profits from the sale of her books to the White Plains Historical Society.

On the positive side, we note that our membership has been growing in numbers as have the number of lifetime members. We have spread our wings into various community endeavors, i.e., the schools, civic projects, landmarking historic places and putting them on various registers, joining with other historical societies in the county in an attempt to sponsor joint events, helping to sponsor a veteran's memorial park in White Plains and generally participating in many other events sponsored by other groups in White Plains.

The dedication and work exhibited by our Board of Trustees has been commendable. These men and women have not shirked from any chores and projects. Many plans are now on the drawing board for other projects, and we invite your help. This organization, like others in White Plains, needs and relies on people who volunteer their time and efforts to help us all in making a successful future. We need you all to work with us.

We wish you all a happy and healthy year.

Robert James Friedman
President

George Washington Update

By Barbara Carlson

What is your visual perception of George Washington? Most of us see him as an older man with white powdered hair; images pictured in the famous Gilbert Stuart and Charles Wilson Peale portraits.

And yet, at the time of the Battle of White Plains, George Washington was forty-five years old. This year, as reported in *The New York Times* (February 17, 2006), three new statues of Washington at ages 19, 45 and 57 will be presented at Mount Vernon as part of an \$85-million renovation of his Virginia estate. These new, very realistic statues are based on several years of forensic research and computer modeling and are supposed to be the most accurate images of what he really looked like. These statues show Washington at three important stages of



his life: as a young surveyor, as general of the Continental Army and as the first president of the United States.

Interestingly, Washington himself posed for only a few of the hundreds of paintings done of him so that the portraits reflect each artist's style. Jeffrey H. Schwartz, professor of physical anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, who led a team of scientists, archivists and historians on

this project. They used renditions of Washington at age 53 by Jean-Antoine Houdon, a French sculptor who studied and took measurements of Washington while staying for several weeks at Mount Vernon. From these measurements, a computer graphics group at Arizona State University used laser scanners to computerize a life-size statue and bust of Washington. Dentures and other artifacts relating to his appearance were also used, and then the group designed software to alter the features and age of the images.

Using these images, artists specializing in historical sculptures created wax figures which will be dressed in historically accurate clothing reproductions. Human hair has also been added, and artists were even able to include subtle changes in eye color that come with age. These life-size statues will go on display this fall. ☐

WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Quest for the Bobwhite Quail – An Historical Perspective

By Raymond Indelicato, Trustee – White Plains Historical Society

Quails are second only to ducks as the most prized quarry of the American Outdoorsmen. It was in hot pursuit of this unique woodland bird that the Vice President of the United States and his ill-fated hunting party felt the sting of misfortune. What followed ignited a torrent of debate and consternation in the public forum. Be that as it may, I thought it might be interesting to provide our members with an historical perspective.

Quails are native across much of the continental U.S. The northern bobwhite, or bobwhite quail, is the most widespread of the six quail species in this country, and the range of its five subspecies covers the southeastern and midwestern U.S. Native Americans utilized bobwhite quail for food, and as they changed from a hunter/gatherer to a more agrarian society, bobwhite numbers increased around cropped fields. In 1557, Hernando DeSoto's expedition reportedly received a gift of wild turkeys and quail at a Native American village in Georgia, the earliest record of white man eating bobwhites. As European settlers carved small farms from vast forests, bobwhite quails became more common.

Initially, bobwhites provided a subsistence food for settlers. Markets developed, and hunting and trapping of quail were practiced from the early 1800s to the early 1900s. Market hunting eventually impacted numbers, and some northern states implemented quail game laws as early as the 1830s. Market hunting began later in the southern states. During the winter of 1905–06, over 500,000 bobwhites were shipped from Alabama to northern and eastern markets. Over time, quail sport hunting became known as a gentleman's pastime, but almost all hunters willing to follow a pointing dog across fields easily succumbed to its princely allure, the camaraderie and the reward of excellent table fare. The bobwhite quail held well for pointing dogs, and their rapid, unpredictable flight provided a strong shooting challenge. Bird hunting provided rich social opportunities among hunters and a common bond of mutual accomplishment and affection between hunters and their dogs. Beginning in the late 1880s, large blocks of land across the Southeast were devoted to the love and sport of bobwhite quail hunting. Okeetee, a 50,000-acre tract of land near Ridgeland, South Carolina, was purchased and organized as a hunting club around 1894 and is bird hunted today. Photographs and stories of numerous hunts chronicle the plentiful supply of birds produced during the early 20th century on many southern plantations such as the Bailey Place in Yalobusha County, Mississippi, Groton Plantation near Estill, South Carolina, and Nilo and Pineland Plantations near Albany, Georgia.

Bobwhite quail numbers peaked during the mid-1800s in northern states and from around 1890 to the mid-1940s

in the Southeast and then began a slow decline. The high population numbers occurring during the bobwhite's heyday were an accidental by-product of diverse land use practices. As forests were cleared, small patch row crop farms, fallow areas, grass fields, and woodlots emerged. Annual burning of fields and forests, rotational cropping and open grazing of livestock improved ground level habitat conditions and set back a succession within this habitat mosaic, and bobwhites flourished. However, changes in land use practices beginning in the mid-20th century contributed to declining habitat quality. Over the last several decades and across their ranges, bobwhite quail and other game species associated with early-forest succession and grasslands have declined to historically low population levels. In fact, over the past 20 years, northern bobwhite population numbers have declined by over 65%. The population decline has been attributed to many factors, including predators, pathogens and pesticides, but the primary cause is the cumulative effect of the deteriorating bobwhite habitat due to land use changes. Advanced natural succession, intensive monoculture farming, intensive timber management and declining use of prescribed burning have negatively impacted quail habitats. In layman's terms, flora that provide nesting, brood rearing and protection from predators is declining.

Changing land use practices have simplified the landscape by promoting the abundance of one habitat component (grassland, agricultural crops or woodland) to the exclusion of others. Consequently, modern agricultural and forestry practices that emphasize optimal crop and fiber production have supplied world markets but eliminated the landscape complexity bobwhites require. Since World War II, individual farms have become much larger. Thousands of miles of weedy ditch banks and fencerows and millions of acres of intermingled field and woody habitat components have been lost. The grass-bound field is the greatest enemy of the bobwhite quail. Selective harvest of older, natural forests has changed to a management regimen favoring short-term, dense pine plantations. Additionally, mechanical clearing and prescribed fire clearing practices once used to prepare sites for reforestation have largely been replaced by more soil-conserving practices, reducing bare soil and germination of several seed-producing plants.

Prescribed fire clearing burning dramatically enhances bobwhite habitats. Native Americans patch-burned forests and fields to manage game, increase hunting success and improve access. Historically, controlled burning was employed annually or biannually to our agricultural and pine lands. Its use has all but disappeared due to alternative techniques. While the decline in quail population is

Continued on page 5

White Plains in the Big Time:

Robert Hyland

By John Vorperian

Super Sunday. Those two words mean two National Football League titans clash for the Circuit's Championship Crown. And in Super Bowl II, January 14, 1968, Miami, Florida, before 75,546 enthusiastic fans and a national television audience, the ultimate matchup was between legendary NFL Head Coach Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers and Al "Just Win Baby" Davis' Oakland Raiders.

White Plains native Robert Hyland was an anchor for the Green Bay offensive line that day as the Packers repeated as NFL Champs in a 33-14 rout over the upstart Raiders. Hyland, born here, graduated from St. Bernard's School, Archbishop Stepinac and Boston College. A four-sport — baseball, basketball, football and track — interscholastic star at Stepinac, upon his arrival at Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, Hyland honed his athletic talents strictly for football. Eagles skipper Jim Miller noted that Hyland was "an All-American lineman, if I ever saw one." Hyland did not disappoint his BC football head coach. The White Plains denizen garnered All-American awards as a junior and senior. He participated in both the East-West Shrine Game and Senior Bowl.

On March 14, 1967, Hyland was the first-round draft pick (9th Overall) for the NFL's Western Conference Green Bay Packers and the first offensive lineman selected. In his inaugural NFL season he was named to the All-Rookie Team. His toughest opponent, Hall of Fame Member and later a teammate, was Midway Monster, Da' Bears, middle linebacker Dick Butkus. With Chicago, Hyland played with another key Canton enshrinee, famed running back Gale Sayers. Hyland's 11-year NFL career brought him to five franchises: Green Bay, four seasons; New York Giants, five seasons; Chicago Bears, one year; New England Patriots, one year; and in 1978 he retired as an Oakland Raider.

Robert Hyland continues to be active in White Plains as a successful financial executive, as a local businessman (Bob Hyland's restaurant, SPORTS PAGE) and with various community and civic groups.

He also holds the distinction of being a member of the Westchester County Hall of Fame, Boston College Varsity Club Hall of Fame and the CHSAA 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 on Tuesdays and Fridays.

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.

White Plains Neighborhoods *from page 1*

today bear the names of Willets' horses, Heatherbloom and Hathaway.

In 1912 the huge Bartholomew Gedney barn was transformed into a luxury year-round resort accommodating 300 guests, the Gedney Farms Hotel. In addition to the stable of riding horses and polo ponies, there was an 18-hole golf course, tennis courts, swimming pool, bowling alleys and squash courts. Winter activities included skating, tobogganing, sleighing and winter tennis. Crystal chandeliers graced the huge ballroom and French chateau architecture was created out of the barn silos. The hotel stood on today's Hotel Drive facing Gedney Esplanade.

A fire broke out at the hotel on September 20, 1924. Although the fire was initially thought to be minor and the White Plains Fire Department had responded promptly, the water pressure system for the area was insufficient and the hotel burned to the ground.

Today the Gedney Farms neighborhood is comprised of lovely tree-lined streets graced by many lovely homes, many dating from the period between the two wars.

Look for other neighborhood histories in upcoming newsletters. ☐

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.

Getting Involved By Denis Jones

Do you have a desire to become active in local history? We're looking for members who would like to become actively involved with the White Plains Historical Society and not just be standing on the sidelines. Would you like to take part in parades, special celebrations at the Jacob Purdy House? What about becoming a Revolutionary War reenactor or maybe you are, but would like to do more. Maybe you have an interest that we haven't looked at yet and would be interested in pursuing. Please let us know.

I have been a member of the original Battle of White Plains Monument Committee and the White Plains Historical Society since 1968 and have enjoyed those years of involvement.

I am also a member of Col. Albert Pawling's Levies, a Revolutionary War reenacting unit. We have an active schedule of events that are fairly local, and we travel to more distant events, too. We are a living history organization, and men, women and children are welcome. Living, learning and teaching the public about 18th century life as a soldier or civilian is what we do. We also have fun and camaraderie with fellow reenactors.

We have over 400 members in the White Plains Historical Society, and there must be members who would like to be involved. Maybe you don't know who to contact or maybe you're shy. Don't be shy, be involved. You can contact me for further information. ☒

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

Quest for the Bobwhite Quail *from page 3*

discouraging, the bright side of the picture is that the bobwhite quail is a prolific species that responds rapidly to appropriate habitat management practices. This has been demonstrated on numerous privately owned hunting and nature preserves in many states that these hardy birds inhabit. Acreage on the South Texas ranch where the Vice President was conducting his hunt was engineered for this purpose. The quest for the American bobwhite quail is a rewarding experience, but please remember to positively identify your target and the threat it poses before firing. ☒

Footnotes and references provided upon request.

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)

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

In 2001, the Society established two annual scholarships to help White Plains High School graduating seniors — The Renoda Hoffman Honorary Scholarship and the Stephen Holden, Jr. Memorial Scholarship. Both scholarships were established to honor their prodigious and ongoing efforts to preserve White Plains history. Holden, Jr. and Hoffman were founders of the White Plains Battle Monument Committee and the White Plains Historical Society. Renoda Hoffman was also the author of three books on the history of White Plains and Holden was a historical reenactor. He also served as legal counsel in the Monument Committee's effort to save the "old Courthouse." ☒

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 4, 2006 (Thursday)

Annual Dinner at Crown Plaza, White Plains
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

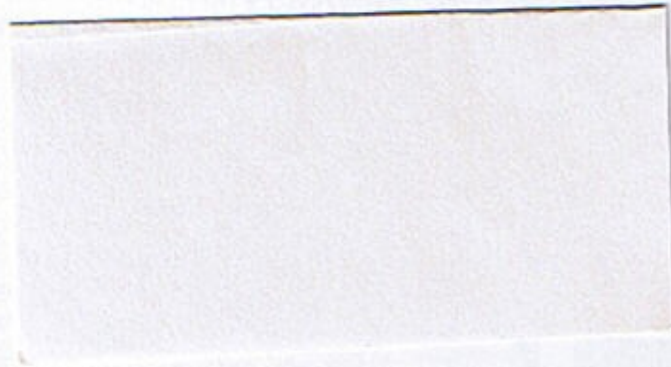
May 29, 2006 (Monday)

Memorial Day Parade, Downtown White Plains
10:00 a.m.

June 3 & 4, 2006 (Saturday & Sunday)

White Plains Outdoor Arts Festival
Tibbits Park at North Broadway, White Plains
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

In our future mailings we will list other events.



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- Individual \$20.00
- Family \$25.00
- Senior (over 60) \$15.00

- Patriot \$35.00
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- Lafayette's Legioneer \$75.00
- Washington's Guard ... \$100.00

- Lifetime Member \$175.00
- Joint Lifetime Member \$300.00

CORPORATE OPPORTUNITIES

- Contributor \$100.00
- Friend \$200.00
- Sponsor \$300.00
- 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.

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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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