

WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FOUNDED IN 1983 ★ SUCCESSOR TO BATTLE OF WHITE PLAINS MONUMENT COMMITTEE ★ WINTER 2007-2008

Jacob Purdy House • 60 Park Avenue • White Plains, NY 10603 • www.whiteplainshistory.org • Winter 2007-2008

Dates to Remember:

- Sunday, February 17, 2008, Washington's Birthday Commemoration at Jacob Purdy House.
- Thursday, May 1, 2008, WPHS Annual Dinner at the White Plains Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Check our website for more details as they develop—
www.whiteplainshistory.org

Have an idea for an article about White Plains History?

Contact Robert Hoch at

[whiteplainshistory@](mailto:whiteplainshistory@gmail.com)

[gmail.com](mailto:whiteplainshistory@gmail.com) if you are interested in having an article published in the White Plains Historical Society newsletter.

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Battle of White Plains Remembered 231 Years After Soldiers' Brave Stand

On October 21, 2007, citizens of White Plains joined together at the Jacob Purdy House to commemorate the 231st Anniversary of General Washington's stand against the British Army at White Plains in 1776. Due to a large gathering of Revolutionary re-enactors in Virginia, the event was held a week early; but the attendees were blessed with beautiful weather and a larger than usual turn-out. Our Revolutionary troops, including soldiers from Pawling's Levies, arrived early and greeted our guests with a Revolutionary encampment; complete with tents, a campfire, and equipment used by soldiers of that era.



Revolutionary re-enactors fire a salute in honor of White Plains' fallen heroes. Photo by Lou DeGenaro

The official celebration kicked off with music by the White Plains High School Tigers Marching Band, and included a colonial honor guard tribute with a 21 gun salute. After recounting the major events of the Battle of White Plains, a scroll of honor was read for those White Plains citizens who fought and died in the Revolutionary War. The gathering also honored those who are serving in our nation's military, and those who have died or been injured fighting for our country around the world. After a moving rendition of "Taps," guests were invited inside the Jacob Purdy House for baked treats, apples and hot cider.

The Trustees of the White Plains Historical Society would like to especially thank White Plains High School Band Director Kathryn Davis, Rev. Carter Via of the White Plains Presbyterian Church, Zelda Ambrose, Doris Cypher, Peg Harrington, Anna May O'Leary, Patty Indelicato, our Revolutionary War re-enactors, and the City of White Plains for helping to make this event possible.

History on the Web

By Lou DeGenaro

On August 11th, 2006 the White Plains Historical Society entered a new era when it launched its very own official Web site, www.whiteplainshistory.org. The site had Spartan beginnings, but throughout its first year we've added more and more content. Here are some of the pages featured on our site:

The [Home](#) (or welcome) page features the Jacob Purdy House, located on Park Avenue in White Plains. The Purdy House served as headquarters for General George Washington during October, 1776, and again from July to September, 1778. It serves in the same capacity for the White Plains Historical Society today.

On the [News](#) page, you'll find our archived newsletters plus links to articles and photographs about WPHS events, such as our 2007 Annual Dinner and the 2007 Battle of White Plains celebration. Just click on the link or icon of the newsletter or event that you'd like to see and read about.

The [Calendar](#) page lists Historical Society events past and future. Click on the Invitation link to view upcoming events. The Calendar page also has an [RSS](#) feed indicated by the orange icon with white radio waves. Click on it to learn more and (at your option) subscribe.

You can view a table of the 8 White Plains sites currently listed on the National Register of Historical Places by clicking on the [Historic Sites & Exhibits](#) link. A new site, the Bar Building, was listed on May 17, 2007. The listings were accomplished through the hard work and diligence of

dedicated White Plains citizens. See more information about each site by clicking on either the historic site's name or its photograph. Click on the historic site's address for a map of its location.

A photographic exhibit has also been added to our site. This contribution from White Plains resident Barry Katzen takes a photographic look at some of the interesting architectural features located throughout our city. Follow the link from the [Historic Sites & Exhibits](#) page to the [Photo Gallery: White Plains Architecture](#). There you'll also find a clickable link to a map of all the locations. Please feel free to e-mail your comments to us.

Follow the [Gift Shop](#) link to view and purchase WPHS items for sale, such as former White Plains Historian Renoda Hoffman's books, or a beautiful coverlet depicting White Plains' most important historic sites.

The [Membership](#) link allows you to request membership in the WPHS. We need your support. Please join or renew your membership today!

Finally, our [Links](#) page contains active links to related Web sites such as the Westchester County Historical Society and the White Plains Public Library.

We're grateful to Barbara and Rod Carlson for establishing the first WPHS Web site.

If you haven't already visited the Web site, give it a try. Bookmark us on your Web browser and visit us regularly to see what's new. We'd like to hear from you. Please e-mail us: info@whiteplainshistory.org.

Historic sites of White Plains

Below is a list of those White Plains properties listed on the National and New York State Registers of Historic Places :

- Bar Building— 199 Main Street. Built 1928.
- Bronx River Parkway Reservation. Completed c. 1924.
- Good Counsel Complex— 52 No. Broadway. (Headquarters of the Sisters of the Divine Compassion). Completed 1891.
- Jacob Purdy House — 60 Park Avenue. Built c. 1721 (Washington's Headquarters during the Battle of White Plains, and the former home of Samuel Horton).
- Mapleton—52 North Broadway. Built 1864.
- New York Hospital Westchester Division— 21 Bloomingdale Rd. Built c. 1891.
- Peoples National Bank and Trust— 31 Mamaroneck Avenue. Built— 1929.
- Percy Grainger Home and Studio— 7 Cromwell Place. Built c. 1893 (former home of David Cromwell).
- Westchester County Courthouse Complex— Main and Court Streets. C. 1850-1909 (demolished).
- White Plains Armory— 35 So. Broadway (site of the first WP Court House, the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, and the birthplace of New York State). Built 1909.
- White Plains Rural Cemetery— 167 No. Broadway. Est. c. 1750.

WPHS WORKING HARD TO PRESERVE HISTORIC WHITE PLAINS FAMILY CEMETERY

By Robert Hoch

Almost forty years ago, the founders of the White Plains Historical Society (then known as the Battle of White Plains Monument Committee) were embroiled in a battle to gain access to a family cemetery located on private property on the south end of Mamaroneck Avenue. Having been thwarted by the property owner, the late Renoda Hoffman and Stephen Holden Jr. lobbied the City of White Plains unsuccessfully to intercede and allow the Committee members to enter the 247 year-old Jonathan Purdy Family cemetery to clean it up and protect the headstones. Hoffman and Holden were told by the City at that time that nothing could be done to force the hand of the property owner.

All of that changed in 2007. The Property's current owner, William Wolfram decided recently to sell the property and subdivide it for residential development. Part of his plan is to disinter the remains of approximately 70 members of the Purdy Family buried on the site

between 1760 and 1864. Included among those buried there are two Revolutionary War veterans - Isaac Purdy and Hercules Wessels - as well as five generations of Purdy's, their spouses, friends and children. When Wolfram began clearing trees this past Spring, the Society discussed strategies for preventing what seemed the inevitable destruction of another of our City's historical treasures. Fortunately, no local funeral home would entertain the dirty work of disinterring these remains.

Judge Bob Friedman, then President of the Society, fired the first shot by reaching out to the New York State Department of State, which put Mr. Wolfram on notice that he could not disinter the remains without a court order. The next major development occurred when a covenant was discovered dating to 1828, setting the 132 by 82.5 foot cemetery apart for use only as a burial ground for the Jonathan Purdy Family, with a right-of-way of free passage for cemetery visitors, and transporting building materials for upkeep, to the burial ground from the public



road (now Mamaroneck Avenue). There is no record of this covenant ever having been released. In the words of one respected local land use attorney, a *covenant that is imposed in a deed on land survives*, and only a court can remove such a covenant (See "Group Looks to Restore White Plains Cemetery," by Keith Eddings, The Journal News, July 19, 2007).

In May, 2007, representatives of the Society and the Purdy Family **continued on next page**

White Plains Citizens Encouraged to Celebrate 400th Anniversary of Hudson Voyage

September, 2009 will mark the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration of what we now know as the Hudson River. Hudson's voyage on behalf of the Dutch East India Company fired the imaginations of Europeans about commerce and settlement in the New World. Although the Pilgrims missed their mark and landed in New England instead of their in-

tended target of New York, it wasn't long before the Dutch established a multicultural commercial outpost on the tip of Manhattan, and with the English, began to push north into Westchester and the Hudson Valley.

The 300th Anniversary of Hudson's voyage was celebrated by New York in 1909, in conjunction with the

Centennial of Robert Fulton's successful steamship voyage, with a world's fair type atmosphere to rival Chicago's Columbian exposition of 1893. Though it lacked the creation of a "White City," the celebration's organizers used the backdrop of the majestic Hudson River to host one of the

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HENRY HUDSON 400TH

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greatest celebrations in the history of our region. Great banquets, electrical illumination of public buildings, parades, public readings, replica ships, and the largest international naval armada ever seen on the Hudson River were some of the highlights. Wilbur Wright's flight from Governor's Island around the Statue of Liberty was the first time half a million New Yorkers had ever seen an airplane in their lives.

White Plains even played an unintentional role in the Celebration when, on September 29th, the airship of George Tomlinson, racing from Grant's Tomb to Albany, made an emergency landing on Howard Willets' Gedney Farm.

The legacy of the 1909 celebration included the Palisade Interstate Park, the plan for the Henry Hudson Bridge, replicas of the Halfmoon and the Claremont, and several statues in New York City and along the Hudson; but for the most part, the great celebration has been forgotten. New York State has created a Hudson-Fulton Quadricentennial Commission for 2009, but it is up to our local communities and civic groups to come up with an appropriate way to celebrate these two important occasions in our region's history. WPHS encourages all lovers of history to come together and honor the heritage of the Hudson Valley in a way that will leave an impression on our residents, visitors and children for years to come.

Learn more about the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909 and the 2009 Quadricentennial at www.exploreny400.com www.henryhudson400.com and www.hrmm.org/quad.html#hfcel

History Buffs: Don't miss the Hudson River Valley Institute's *Hudson River Valley Review*. HRVI still has copies of their American Revolution Issue, and the Autumn 2007 issue is about Robert Fulton's Steam Boat. Learn more at: <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/hrvr.php>

Jonathan Purdy Family Cemetery

Continued from previous page

met with Mayor Delfino's office, and presented its case for preventing the cemetery's destruction. In a letter dated July 6, 2007, Corporation Counsel Edward Dunphy informed Wolfram that no action could take place on the cemetery without the permission of the Purdy Family. This was a stunning rever-

sal of fortune almost 40 years in the making.

The Jonathan Purdy Family cemetery remains in jeopardy as long as the property owner is averse to its preservation. It is safe to say that significant real estate value is at stake. But, as of now, the Society has the written support of over two dozen descendants of Jonathan Purdy, to act on their behalf in restoring and maintaining the ceme-

tery pursuant to the almost 180 year old covenant. Through our efforts, a headstone expert has already visited the site, and reviewed the condition of the remaining headstones. Some brush clearing has taken place, and more is soon to follow before the snow sets in. It is the intention of the Society to use all available resources to restore the site to as best a condition as possible, and preserve it for the benefit of future generations.

WPHS SPORTS PAGE

ART MONK-Our Canton Candidate

By John Vorperian

Art Monk, a White Plains native and NFL All-Pro wide receiver was among the seventeen finalists for the ProFootball Hall of Fame's 2007 class. The once Washington Redskin, New York Jet, and Philadelphia Eagle missed selection to being enshrined in the hallowed venue located in Canton, Ohio but has another opportunity this February 2008.

Named to THE SPORTING NEWS' 100 Greatest Football Players list, Monk was the first Washington gridders to produce three consecutive 1,000 yard seasons. He helped Washington to three Super Bowl victories in four appearances and garnered a MVP award in 1984.

Washington Times sports scribe Thomas Loverro wrote of Monk, "He embodied the old school, and for that alone he should be enshrined so that when a father takes his son thorough the Hall of Fame, he can say, Son, here is a man who caught 106 passes in a season when no one was catching 100 passes. Here was a man who caught a pass in 183 straight games. And not once did he ever pull a cell phone out to make a call after any of those catches."

Monk grew up in White Plains and started playing football at age 11 in a Pop Warner league. In an interview with USA Football, the 16 seasoned NFLer said, "I also played flag football and recreational football all the time, I played in the streets, in the snow, in backyards...everywhere. When I was young I had the same mindset that a lot of kids have today. I was very talented and thought all I needed was to be good in sports in order to make it. But I thought about what my mother told me earlier, that without a proper education I would not make it very far."

Monk went to Syracuse University where he was a standout running back. He holds an Orange record for most receptions in a game, fourteen set against Navy in 1977. In 1999, Monk was named to Syracuse's All-Century Team. Monk graduated from SU's College of Visual and Performing Arts.

Selected by Washington as a first round choice in the 1980 NFL Draft the Redskins converted him to a flanker.

Along with Gary Clark and Ricky Sanders, he was part of a receiver trio known as "The Posse". Monk's most noteworthy NFL feat was breaking Hall of Famer Jerry Rice's record for career receptions. Such achievements earned Monk a spot on the NFL's 1980s All-Decade Team.

Today, Art Monk is a member of the Syracuse University Board of Trustees, co-founder of Alliant Merchant Services, an electronic payment services firm located in Northern Virginia and involved with the Good Samaritan Foundation. Monk belongs to the White Plains Hall of Fame and clearly belongs in Football's Hall.

John Vorperian, Vice-President of WPHS and is Host & Producer of BEYOND THE GAME, a sports history program shown on White Plains Cable TV Channel 76 Tuesdays 10pm & Fridays 9PM



Who is your favorite White Plains Athlete of All Time?

Art Monk?

Glenn D. Loucks?

Craig Masback?

Heatherbloom?

_____?

Let us know what you think at

whiteplainshistory@gmail.com





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