

White Plains Historical Society

Founded in 1983 • Successor to the Battle of White Plains Monument Committee

Jacob Purdy House • 60 Park Avenue • White Plains NY 10603 • www.whiteplainshistory.org • Autumn 2016

**There's still time
to join the W.P.
Historical Society
in our City's
Centennial Year!**

*Please help us
continue our
mission. Send in
your payment with
the newsletter form
on the back page,
or join on-line at:*

www.whiteplainshistory.org

Inside this Issue:

Douglas Hamilton Visit	p. 1
White Plains Colonial Day.....	p. 2
Dick Nolan of NFL fame.....	p.3
WWI Monument upgrade.....	p. 4
White Plains Firefighters.....	p. 5
Declaration of Independence.....	p.7
Centennial Ball Event	p. 8
Hoffman Scholarship Award.....	p.9
W.P. Woman's Club	p. 10
Local Patriot Honored.....	p. 11
Campaign Slogan Quiz.....	p. 11

SAVE THE DATE!

**Battle of White Plains
240th Commemoration**

Sunday, Oct. 23, 2016

1:00-3:00 p.m.

Hamilton Descendant Visits White Plains to Tour Local Historic Sites

On Sunday, July 17, 2016 Douglas Hamilton, a direct descendant of Alexander Hamilton (great grandson x 5), visited White Plains for the first time. He came to see historic sites where his illustrious ancestor made history in the American Revolutionary War in 1776 and 1778.



Doug Hamilton (second from right) was greeted by Mayor Tom Roach, WP Historical Society President, John Vorperian, Cindy Kauffman (as "Abigail Purdy"), and Nicole Scholet-Villavicencio, President of the Alexander Hamilton Awareness (AHA) Society. Barb Carlson in background.

After touring the Purdy House, guided by Robert Hoch, Trustee of the White Plains Historical Society, Mr. Hamilton, Mayor Roach and party went to the Battle of White Plains Memorial Park; and then to the Public Library to view the mural of "Hamilton at the Cannon" by Edmund F. Ward. The visit was part of a two-week long "Hamilton-on-the-Hudson Festival," sponsored by the AHA Society, that included visits to multiple sites around the New York City and Hudson Valley area. Mr. Hamilton resides in the Columbus OH area and is employed by IBM Corporation, appropriately, in its Banking & Finance sector.

'A Day in the Life of Colonial White Plains' Features Public Reading

As part of the year-long celebration of our city's Centennial (White Plains became a City in 1916), City Hall and the White Plains Historical Society presented a festive day-long event at Tibbits Park on Saturday, June 18th. "White Plains Colonial Day" drew large crowds of local residents and visitors to the site that was the Village Green in 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was read in public at the nearby courthouse (now the site of the Armory).

Colonial Day featured a reenactment of the July 11, 1776 public reading of the Declaration by actor Jonathan Kruk to a large crowd of onlookers amid intermittent cheers of "Huzzah!" and some dissenting shouts of "Long live King George!" Sprinkled throughout the crowd were re-enactors in full dress as colonial militia with muskets, as well as civilian colonists – loyalists as well as rebels. Rob Hoch and Rebecca Simpson Wallach performed a dramatic introduction to the



reading; and Karen Pasquale, Senior Advisor to the Mayor, dressed in colonial finery, welcomed and addressed the audience from the gazebo, as did John Vorperian, President of the White Plains Historical Society (dressed as Jacob Purdy). Immediately following the reading of the Declaration, church bells throughout the city were heard ringing out in celebration.



Colonial soldiers demonstrated how to fire a musket



A model of the Old Courthouse added to the day's authenticity.

Before and after the formal presentations, folksinger Rich Bala played guitar and sang colonial era songs while visitors strolled through Tibbits Park and viewed the exhibits. These included: colonial soldiers' encampment with demonstrations of musket firing; a blacksmith at work; candle & basket making; and cooking colonial era stew. A model of the original Courthouse, where the Declaration was read in 1776, was set up at the south end of the park. Long-time White Plains resident Brian Wallach enjoyed all of the festivities, and said "I wish we could make this a recurring annual event."

*[See also the article on the **Declaration of Independence** by Debra Palazzo on page 7.]*

Dick Nolan—White Plains Denizen & NFL Star

by John Vorperian, President, White Plains Historical Society

“Crazy legs’ Nolan as his teammates call him gets his big break for offensive duty this fall after starring for two years as a defensive halfback....” – The “50-Yard Line” at University of Maryland (1953)

Dick Nolan played 9 seasons (1954-1962) in the NFL as a defensive back and later coached for 11 years, twice piloting the San Francisco 49ers to conference championship games ('70 & '71) and 3 divisional titles. In 1970, Nolan was NFL Coach of the Year.

Richard Charles Nolan born March 26, 1932, Pittsburgh, PA, and grew up in White Plains. As a teenager, Nolan was the starting quarterback at White Plains High School.

Dick Nolan spent nine years as an NFL player and eleven as head coach of the San Francisco 49ers and New Orleans Saints.
(Associated Press photo)



He accepted a University of Maryland scholarship where Terrapin coach Jim Tatum converted the speedy athlete to a running back and safety. The intramural dash champion set a Maryland football record in 1953 for the longest touchdown punt return (90yds). Nolan was invited to the Senior Bowl and the College All-Star game.

The honorable mention All-American was drafted by the NY Giants in 1954. His teammates included Hall of Famers Frank Gifford and Tom Landry. As a rookie, Nolan nabbed six interceptions and with the Giants won an NFL Championship in 1956 and played in two other championship games in 1959 and 1961.

In 1962 he retired but reunited with Tom Landry, then Dallas Cowboy Head Coach, who made Nolan his defensive coordinator. As 49ers and New Orleans Saints Head Coach, Dick Nolan was known for being a sharp dresser, wearing smart business suits as he called plays from the sidelines. Upon signing a contract with Reebok, the NFL disallowed this fashion practice.

In 1992 he left football and spent more time with his wife Ann and six children. His son Mike became 49ers Head Coach in 2005, making the Nolans the fifth father and son duo to become NFL head coaches. In 2006 Mike Nolan convinced the NFL to allow him to wear dress suits. “My father always projected an image of authority, and I wanted to honor him...”

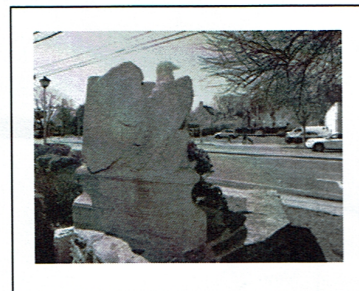
On November 11, 2007, at 75, Dick Nolan died after battling Alzheimer’s and prostate cancer. He is still remembered by long-time White Plains residents as a local celebrity and sports hero.

Author John Vorperian hosts BEYOND THE GAME, seen on White Plains cable television, Optimum 76, Fios 45, and www.wpcommunitymedia.org.

White Plains World War I Monument Gets a Needed Facelift

In a small parklet at the junction of Maple Avenue and Post Road stands White Plains' monument to those who fought in World War I. The eagle sculpture that dates back to 1919 had become time-worn and deteriorated. The eagle's head was broken off by vandals in the 1990's and replaced with a concrete molded version, and that, too, was eroding. But, this past Spring, to the rescue came graphic artist Joseph Giglio, who grew up in White Plains near the monument. Giglio now lives on Long Island, but regularly visits his mother who still lives on Rathbun Avenue, White Plains. He relates having an emotional attachment to the monument dating back to his student days at Post Road Elementary School, a short block away from the monument.

Mr. Giglio purchased a block of limestone and sculpturing tools, and fashioned a new eagle's head. He then donated the new eagle's head to the City, working with the Common Council and Recreation & Parks Department to present it and install it permanently on the World War I monument. The monument also features a bronze plaque inscribed with the names of White Plains men who lost their lives in the "War to End All Wars," as well as a small garden with evergreen and other plantings.



When presenting the gift to the City's Common Council, Mr. Giglio said, "I'm not the type of person who looks for attention, but I've always loved this monument. So to be able to give a little something back to my hometown makes me feel great." (See also article in our Winter-Spring 2015 newsletter).

White Plains Historical Society

invites you to celebrate the 240th Anniversary Commemoration of the

Battle of White Plains

Sunday, October 23, 2016 · 1-3 p.m.

at Jacob Purdy House

60 Park Avenue · White Plains NY 10603

Free Admission · Colonial Militia Re-enactors · Refreshments

Join us and immerse yourself in local history!

For info: visit www.whiteplainshistory.org or call (914) 328-1776



White Plains Firefighters: A Tradition of Alertness, Efficiency and Bravery

by Barbara Carlson, Trustee, White Plains Historical Society

A red, gleaming White Plains fire truck speeds by, sirens blaring, responding to a call. This scene is always an exciting one, as the spotless truck and the outfitted firemen inside convey rapid response, efficiency and professionalism. An emergency is being handled with confidence, care & expertise.



W.P. Fire Dept. HQ at Maple & Mamaroneck (built 1927)



Fire Patrol & Independent Engine Co. No. 2 (circa 1890)

The first White Plains volunteer fire department, Hope Engine Company No. 1, was organized on December 2, 1851, after a disastrous fire at Crawford's Hotel which stood on South Broadway in the vicinity of the Courthouse (the present day Armory). Then in 1854, after a fire destroyed the Orawaupum House, donations were collected to purchase the first fire engine for the Village. Known as "Old Hope" it was custom made, horse drawn and cost \$1,200.00. Information from 1886 describes this Company of 38 men occupying a building at the corner of Hamilton and Lexington Avenues. Also, shortly after 1886, the water supply system and fire hydrants were installed.

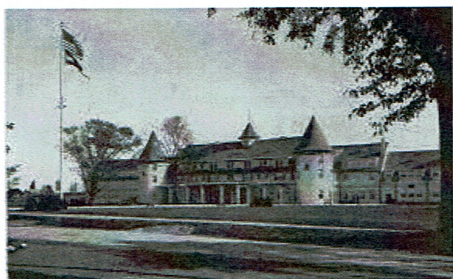
The Union Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was organized in May, 1861. It disbanded in May, 1876 but was reorganized in 1883; it had about fifty members. Independent Engine No.2 was organized in 1884, and this company numbered about forty members. Fire Patrol No. 1 was formed in December, 1895 with 10 members, to control and protect property at fire scenes.

Three additional companies were formed and are still in existence: East Side Hose (Engine) Company No. 3 organized in December, 1897; South Side Engine Company No. 4 in October, 1906; and Chatterton Hose (Engine) Company No. 5 in October, 1907.

Between 1907 and 1917, a number of disastrous fires took place in the city in which buildings were destroyed and firemen were injured or killed. These fires, together with the fact that many of the volunteer firemen were leaving to serve in World War I, and White Plains officially becoming a city, resulted in the hiring of the first paid firemen. From the first hiring in April, 1917 to April, 1927, forty-four paid firemen were appointed under civil service. Several paid firemen were assigned to each

volunteer company. H. Abbott Griffen, head of the volunteers since 1914, was appointed chief of the paid department; he would serve until his retirement in July, 1950. In 1929, the Uniformed Firemen's Benevolent Association was organized for the purpose of taking care of members and their families.

On September 20, 1924, the famous Gedney Farm Hotel caught on fire and was destroyed; White Plains "suffered its first million-dollar fire". This disaster was largely due to an inadequate water supply, and afterwards the city installed a new and extremely well-regarded water supply system.



The famous Gedney Farm Hotel, circa 1924



Hotel fire on 9/21/24 resulted in a total loss

In 1927, White Plains built a new fire station headquarters at Mamaroneck Avenue and Maple Avenue, where it still stands today. The continued growth of the city necessitated a second paid company, which was placed in service as Engine Company No. 6 in January, 1932; the department had now grown to 75 paid men and officers. During World War II firemen left to serve in the military, and the volunteers filled in. They augmented the paid firemen by "sleeping in" at various fire houses.

After the war, growth in the city's southeastern areas required more protection, and in 1950, a new station was built at the corner of North Street and Ridgeway, housing Engine Company No. 7. It is still in use today. As White Plains' population has continued to expand, the need for volunteer firefighters has also continued. Currently there are six volunteer companies in the Volunteer Fire Division: Hope, Union Hook & Ladder, Fire Patrol, East Side, South Side and Chatterton, with a combined total of approximately 100 members.

The Volunteer Fire Division is headquartered at Fire Station 5, at the corner of Robertson and Harding Avenues, just off Central Avenue. Members of the Division undergo training as members of CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams), a component of FEMA. The goal is to increase local neighborhood self-sufficiency. The Volunteer Division played a significant role during Hurricanes Irene and Sandy, staffing and running an emergency shelter for 12 days; plus canvassing neighborhoods to ascertain conditions and communicate information to residents who were without power. In September, 2013, volunteer firefighters assisted in staffing a shelter for 45 individuals who were displaced as the result of the YMCA fire. White Plains is grateful for our dedicated firemen – paid and volunteers alike. Look for them marching in our city's parades and shout out a 'thank you' for their diligence, readiness and courage, and for protecting and assisting us all in urgent times and situations when help is most needed.

INDEPENDENCE FROM GREAT BRITAIN!!

White Plains Commemorates 240th Year of the Declaration of Independence

by Debra Palazzo, Trustee & Vice President, White Plains Historical Society

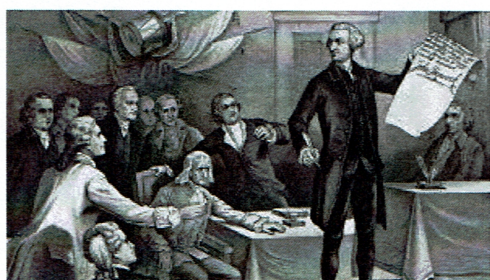
Although the Declaration of Independence, which declared the United States' independence from Great Britain, was adopted 240 years ago in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, it was here in White Plains seven days later, on July 11th that it was read in public for the first time.

In 1776, the Provincial Congress, which was the Colonial equivalent of the State Legislature, fled from British attacks in Manhattan and used a 1758 white frame courthouse on the Boston Post Road (now South Broadway), in what was then known as the village of White Plains, as their meeting place.

On July 9th they received a copy of the Declaration of Independence with a letter from John Hancock asking them to approve it, have it printed and distributed on broadsides (like handbills) and to read it publicly. An original copy of the broadside is part of Westchester County's Archives and can be viewed on their website (<http://www.westchesterarchives.com/ht/muni/wca/declaration.html>). Approval by the Provincial Congress was given the same afternoon and the Declaration was read on July 11, 1776 by Judge John Thomas. Accompanied by a drummer, Judge Thomas read from the Courthouse steps to a crowd of 500 Colonials on the Village Green. In the resolution endorsing the Declaration, the Congress changed its name to the "Convention of Representatives of the People of the State of New York," which makes the spot of the first courthouse the birthplace of the State.

Judge John Thomas was seized from his bed by the British on March 22, 1777 and imprisoned in the so-called infamous "Old Martyr's Prison" in New York. According to some historians, he was tortured for 40 days and died on May 2, 1777. His remains are in the historic cemetery at Trinity Church in Manhattan.

The White Plains courthouse was destroyed by fire by Continental Army Major John Austin and his detachment along with the historic White Plains Presbyterian church and seven homes on November 4, 1777. This was done in defiance of General George Washington's orders. A second courthouse was built on the same site in 1786.



Original signing in Philadelphia, July 4, 1776



150th Commemoration & pageant in White Plains in 1926

The White Plains courthouse was demolished in 1881 and replaced by a Victorian house which in turn was demolished in 1908 and replaced by the current Armory building. The Armory was constructed from stones that were part of the original courthouse's foundation. The building nearby at 57 Mitchell Place, which now serves as headquarters of the White Plains American Legion Post 135, was modeled on the old courthouse.

That building was built in 1810 by a prominent and influential city lawyer, Minot Mitchell, as his home; and moved to its present location. Mitchell's grandfather, Rev. Josiah Sherman, was a Patriot of the Revolution and his great uncle, Roger Sherman, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. In 1926 a re-enactment of the 1776 reading was held at the Armory site including a pageant with more than 100 White Plains citizens participating.

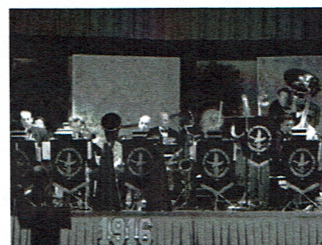
Centennial Ball: A Tribute to White Plains' 100 Years as a City

It was like being swept back into 1916 for an evening (the year White Plains officially became a City).^{*} A Model-T Ford Touring Car parked outside the entrance offered a photo-op for guests. A barbershop quartet greeted them with four part harmony as they entered the ballroom. Men were given "skimmer" hats and ladies received glass beads of silver and gold. Charlie Chaplin silent comedies were playing on a Nickelodeon in the cocktail and hors d'oeuvres reception area. All this in the initial moments of the White Plains Historical Society's Annual Dinner and CENTENNIAL BALL.



In place of its customary Annual Dinner, on May 5th the White Plains Historical Society put on a gala celebration of the City's Centennial at the White Plains Woman's Club. Many attending wore period costumes including ball gowns, tiaras, head scarves, tuxedos and spats. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ware wore their 1916 era Salvation Army uniforms. All 130 attendees, Society members and guests, dined on a delicious full course dinner, and hit the dance floor as a top-rated 12-piece band, *Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks*, played early 20th Century music – pop, standards, jazz and ragtime.

Following the cocktail reception, the fun-packed evening began with singing of our national anthem, led by Hon. Milagros Lecuona; recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance led by ex-Marine pilot Rod Carlson; a video welcome by Historical Society President, John Vorperian; invocation by Rev. Tim Dalton; and greetings and remarks by White Plains Mayor Tom Roach. Past president of the Historical Society, Rob Hoch, conducted the business meeting where new officers for 2016-17 were voted in.



Other highlights included remarks by World War II veteran Barney Mayrsohn, who fought at the Battle of the Bulge and related why he chose to settle in White Plains. Miss Isabel Hoch sang a beautiful, old-fashioned version of "I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls." And, Milagros Lecuona and Peter Stone performed a tribute to W. C. Handy with an original "White Plains Historical Blues." Everyone sang a rousing 'Happy Birthday' to White Plains as a tasty birthday cake dessert was served.

Historical handbills and exhibits gave an historical perspective on issues in White Plains in 1916, including: Women's Suffrage; whether to enter World War I, already raging in Europe; Prohibition; stopping terrorist raids on U. S. soil by Pancho Villa; and repeal of the Internal Revenue Act of 1913.

White Plains Historical Society is grateful to our sponsors & boosters who made our Centennial Ball on May 5th such a rousing success! Thank you, one and all.

SPONSORS: Amodio's Garden Center • Ballard Durand Funeral Home • Bao's Chinese Restaurant
Caperberry Events Catering • Christian Science Church • Francesco's Restaurant • I. Wunder Photographics
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Toddlers' Songtime • Vince Giordano & the Nighthawks • White Plains Bake Shoppe

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Pawling's Levies Wants You!



Men, Women, Children & Families Wanted

Do you have an interest in history? Do you like the crackling of a campfire or the boom of a flintlock musket firing? Would you like to experience what it was like living at the time of the American Revolution?

Consider joining a living history organization such as *Col. Albert Pawling's Independent Corps of Levies*. We are members of the Brigade of the American Revolution and the Continental Brigade. We portray what people did and how they lived in military encampments. We also demonstrate various civilian activities. We take part in re-enactments and school lectures. Maybe you've seen us at the annual Battle of White Plains commemorations.

We're having a meeting at the Jacob Purdy House, 60 Park Avenue in White Plains, on Sunday, October 9, 2016 at 1 PM. Light snacks will be served. Please join us and meet our re-enactors. No pressure or obligations. You just may find meaningful historical knowledge, wholesome fun and enjoy some good company.

R.S.V.P. or Questions? Email to Denis Jones at elmsford78@yahoo.com.

Hoffman Scholarship Award Winner Announced

A scholarship award, named for Renoda Hoffman, is given annually by the White Plains Historical Society to a local graduating high school senior. This year's winner is White Plains High School student, **Michael Ainsworth**. He was in the top half of his class, is an accomplished nationally ranked chess player, completed a most rigorous curriculum, and was captain of the varsity baseball team. Michael will be attending Johns Hopkins University this fall to study bio-medical engineering. Congratulations to Michael, and best wishes as he encounters new horizons.

A Salute to 100 Years of the White Plains Woman's Club

The Woman's Club of White Plains is a model of community service, establishing & supporting literally hundreds of programs for the betterment of others in the greater community. Like the City of White Plains, the Woman's Club is celebrating its 100th year in 2016 -- a century of service.



Celebrating a Century of Commitment to our Community

In 1904 a group of 15 women who worked in a button factory on Orawaupum Street in downtown White Plains, gathered together and called themselves the Fortnightly Literary Club. In 1916 they incorporated and became known as the Woman's Club of White Plains. From this modest beginning grew one of the largest woman's clubs in the United States.

The club's mission is to promote educational and civic programs in the community. Virtually everyone in White Plains has benefited from the

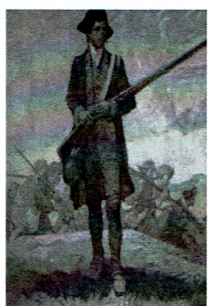


Woman's Club's philanthropic efforts, including the library, the scholarship committee at the high school, the YWCA, battered women, homeless families, the courthouse waiting room, and many others whose needs have been met by the Club's outreach.

In 1931 the club purchased the C.V. Rich mansion (photo, right) built in 1910; and in 1932 added an auditorium/ballroom. It is the site of numerous memorable local events. Congratulations to the 2016 Woman's Club Honoree, Mary Jane Goldman.



Revolutionary War Soldier Honored at Graveside Ceremony in Elmsford



On Monday, September 19, 2016 a special ceremony was held at the Dutch Reformed Church & Cemetery in Elmsford for an American patriot, **Solomon Utter** (1760-1848), who joined the Continental Army in 1778 at the age of 18 and fought in the Revolutionary War. He served in the Hudson Valley in the Artillery Corps; and was at the siege of Yorktown and the British surrender in 1783. Solomon married Sarah Purdy of White Plains, niece of Abigail Purdy. The graveside service to honor him, organized by American Legion Post #1038 in Valhalla, included dedication of a new gravestone, playing of "Taps," and the presentation of a ceremonial flag to members of the Utter family who were present.



PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN SLOGAN QUIZ

*Match the Campaign Slogans with
the Candidates for President:*

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

- 1 ___ William Henry Harrison, 1840
- 2 ___ James K. Polk, 1844
- 3 ___ Abraham Lincoln, 1864
- 4 ___ Grover Cleveland, 1884
- 5 ___ Woodrow Wilson, 1916
- 6 ___ Herbert Hoover, 1928
- 7 ___ Dwight Eisenhower, 1956
- 8 ___ Barry Goldwater, 1964
- 9 ___ George H. W. Bush, 1988
- 10 ___ Ralph Nader, 2000

CAMPAIGN SLOGANS

- A. A Chicken In Every Pot, and a Car in Every Garage.
- B. Peace and Prosperity.
- C. Don't Swap Horses in the Middle of the Stream.
- D. Tippecanoe and Tyler, too.
- E. Blaine, Blaine, James G. Blaine; the Continental Liar from the State of Maine.
- F. A Kinder, Gentler Nation.
- G. 54-40 or Fight!
- H. Government Of, By and For the People ... Not the Monied Interests.
- I. He Kept Us Out of War.
- J. In Your Heart You Know He's Right.

Answers posted on the
White Plains Historical Society website:
www.whiteplainshistory.org

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TURNS 100

In the early 1900's President Theodore Roosevelt established and nurtured strong support for numerous national parks. In August, 1916 President Woodrow Wilson signed a bill that created the National Park Service "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife therein." Today the federal agency oversees 398 national park and monument units covering 84,000,000 acres and accommodates 280,000,000 visits annually.

Published by

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Please check the appropriate line and remit dues payable to the *White Plains Historical Society*, 60 Park Avenue, White Plains, NY 10603; or sign up at www.whiteplainshistory.org; or call (914) 328-1776.

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual.....\$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family (household).....\$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior (persons under age 18) <i>Free</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (over age 62).....\$20 |

Additional Contribution \$ _____

(If your employer has a matching gift program, please make your contribution known to them.)

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MEMBER BENEFITS

Your tax deductible membership to the White Plains Historical Society entitles you to receive all newsletters and mailings, free inquiries and access to research material and archives, advance invitation to public and member-only events, tours and programs, and discounts on books and gift items. Commercial/business sponsors are eligible for recognition in our newsletter and other printed material, and at public events.