

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 • Spring 2016

2016 DUES ARE DUE!

2016 Membership Dues for all except "Lifetime Members" are due. It's our Centennial Year! Please help us continue our mission by sending in your payment with the newsletter form on the back page, or pay on-line at:

www.whiteplainshistory.org

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Mark your calendar now!

**White Plains
Centennial Ball**
featuring

**Vince Giordano
and the Nighthawks**

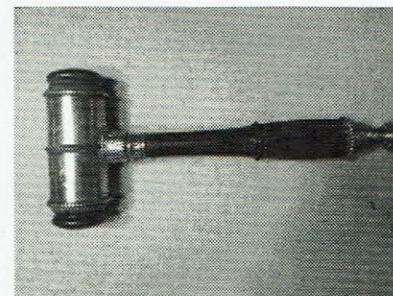
Thursday, May 5, 2016

2016 Marks White Plains' Centennial Year Happy 100th Birthday!

With the arrival of 2016 White Plains will be celebrating its Centennial as a city throughout the year. As the official seal of the City clearly states, the settlement of White Plains dates back to 1683 when early colonists purchased the Quarropas ("white marsh") from the Weckquaeskeck Native American tribe. New York State officially incorporated White Plains as a City in 1916. Prior to that it was a township and village.

As the ball dropped this past New Year's Eve in downtown White Plains thousands of people gathered at the end of Mamaroneck Avenue to welcome 2016 and sang a rousing "Happy 100th Birthday" to the City, led by Mayor Tom Roach.

Nine days earlier, on December 22nd, a ceremony was held at City Hall in which a wooden gavel was presented to Mayor Roach by the White Plains Historical Society. The shiny, sterling silver trimmed gavel is the same one used by the first Mayor of White Plains, Ffarington Thompson, and is inscribed with the date "January 1, 1916." It is believed that it was



Rosewood gavel first used in White Plains in 1916.

used to open the first meeting of the Common Council on that date 100 years ago. The gavel will be on loan for use by the City's current mayor for the entire year 2016.

The City is planning several events to commemorate its 100th anniversary. Stay tuned for more information about the City's annual Independence Day celebration on July 1st and a not-to-be-missed re-enactment of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence in New York State on June 18th at Tibbetts Park (the original event occurred right here in White Plains on July 11, 1776). We will share more details when they are released by the City.

The White Plains Historical Society will host a not-to-be-missed gala CENTENNIAL BALL on May 5th at the White Plains Woman's Club.

Honoring a Local Colonial Era Patriot: Ann Fisher Miller

Ann Fisher Miller was an active participant in the American Revolution. She opened her home to soldiers and leaders of the Continental Army during the Battle of White Plains in 1776. It served as headquarters for General Charles Lee and as a field hospital. Zipporah Davis, daughter of Ann and Elijah Miller, said in an interview that "General Washington had his headquarters at our home for one day and slept there one night when my mother gave him her own bed."

Ann Miller also quartered Continental Army troops on the farm and fed them with the family's livestock and crop harvest. After her husband, Elijah Miller, was killed in the Battle of Long Island, and two of her sons died during the war years, Ann continued to support and promote the birth of a new nation, independent from Great Britain. Ann Miller, was recently recognized as an American patriot, but her grave was unknown and unmarked for nearly 100 years.

The Daughters of Liberty's Legacy (DOLL), a local non-profit organization dedicated to "promoting patriotism and preserving history as education for the future" took up the task of researching Ann Miller's history and locating the gravesite where her remains are laid to rest. Pursuing the effort further, DOLL members in conjunction with the White Plains Historical Society raised funds for a headstone to mark her gravesite.



"The first duty of society is justice."
-- Alexander Hamilton

With the completion of the new headstone, fashioned to resemble other markers from the period, including those of Ann's husband and sons, a dedication ceremony was held on September 27, 2015. The grave is located in the cemetery of White Plains Presbyterian Church (the oldest established church in White Plains, original edifice dating back to 1714).



Robert Hoch, President of White Plains Historical Society, honors Ann Miller.

On a sunny autumn Sunday afternoon a crowd gathered on the lawn of the Presbyterian Church cemetery to honor Ann Miller, and to witness the unveiling of her new headstone. Cub Scout Pack 111 of Valhalla was on hand for a presentation of the colors, accompanied by the Young Continental Marines of White Plains.



Debra Palazzo welcomes guests as Cindy Kauffman personifies Ann Miller.

Debra Palazzo welcomed all on behalf of the Daughters of Liberty's Legacy. Following that Cindy Kauffman, playing the part of Ann Fisher Miller in colonial dress, gave an account of the patriot's life and important contributions.

What's Hot in White Plains Local History? The Library!

by Rod Carlson

Okay, you're serious about history and you're suddenly interested in what was going on at the corner of Main and Court Streets in 1929, or maybe you're into the anniversary of World War I and the heroes of White Plains, where do you go for answers to these and other historical questions you might have about our fair city?

"That's easy, the library," says librarian Ben Himmelfarb, at the White Plains Public Library. "With books, photographs, maps and other materials, our White Plains Collection is an amazing resource and it's available to all. Whether you're interested in our city's past or your own, including genealogy, we'll lend a hand," said Mr. Himmelfarb, then added, "You'll be interested to know that we've taken history to a whole new -- make that



Ben Himmelfarb of
White Plains Public Library

'old' level historically speaking -- with our oral history program called People & Stories. As far back as ancient Greece and the first real historian Herodotus who documented Persian wars the organized study of history has relied on 'eye-witness testimony' which unfortunately has a short shelf life. When the eye-witnesses died so did the accuracy of their testimonies, which was subject to change with each retelling. But all that changed with recording technology. Now we can catch and save the history that would have been lost forever. That's what People & Stories is all about: White Plains citizens recording, preserving and sharing their experiences with others now and far into the future."

As of this date "People & Stories" Oral History Project has interviews available with:

Cecilia Bikkal
Connie Brown
Leola Bryant
Harry Bright
Shirley Acevedo Buontempo
Julie Cohan
Kevin Doherty

Milt Hoffman
Dr. Olivia Hooker
John Kirkpatrick
Bob & Lucille Landry
Ted Lee, Jr.
Lee Palmer
Harold Mercer

Andy Morzello
Al Surya Peterson
Peter Stone
Isabel Villar
Brian Wallach

To listen to interviews, go to:
<www.whiteplainslibrary.org/local-history>

WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

invites you to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of White Plains becoming a
City



at the **CENTENNIAL BALL**

Dine! • Dance! • Celebrate Together



Thursday, May 5, 2016 • 6-10 p.m. • Woman's Club of White Plains

Dinner by Caperberry Events • Music by Vince Giordano & the Nighthawks

Ticket information: <www.whiteplainshistory.org> or (914) 282-2920

Battle of White Plains Commemoration Enjoyed by Large Crowd



Abigail Purdy welcomed the crowd and invited General Washington inside.



Continental soldiers formed ranks for the battle and demonstrated musketry.

White Plains Historical Society hosted the 239th Anniversary Commemoration of The Battle of White Plains on Sunday, October 25, 2015 at Jacob Purdy House National Historic Site (Washington's Headquarters in 1776). The ceremony featured flag raising, roll of honor, soldiers' campsite, and live harpsichord music and refreshments. All free to the public.



White Plains High School Marching Band played at the Commemoration Ceremony.



General George Washington surveyed the battle site.

Vietnam War Dead from White Plains Honored at Wreath Laying Ceremony

Remembering all our deceased veterans and war heroes from the Vietnam Era was the purpose of "Wreaths Across America" including laying of wreaths on 14 graves of local military veterans who are buried in nearby cemeteries. On Saturday, December 12, 2015 a ceremony was held on the front lawn of the White Plains American Legion Hall. Seven wreaths, made of fresh evergreen boughs with bright red ribbons, were laid at the memorial marker at the base of the American Legion flag pole.

Each wreath was placed by a pair of presenters, one a military veteran and American Legion member and the other a uniformed youth from the Young Marines of White Plains followed by a

(continued on page 5)

Vietnam War Dead from White Plains Honored (continued from page 4)

solemn salute. A bugler was present to play "Taps" and a lone bagpiper also played "Amazing Grace" as the final wreath was placed on the memorial. Re-enactors of colonial militia from the Battle of White Plains, Denis Jones and Eben Turnure, also attended the ceremony in full costume and fired a resounding salute with their authentic flintlock muskets.

The "Wreaths Across America" local event was coordinated by Debra Palazzo and Cindy Kauffman, Trustees of the White Plains Historical Society, who are dedicated to promoting recognition and remembrance of White Plains' history and the men and women who served our nation.



Mayor Tom Roach, Eben Turnure and Denis Jones joined Young Marines of White Plains in ceremony.



Wreaths Across America ceremony at White Plains American Legion Hall marks 50 years for Vietnam vets.

Honor Roll of White Plains Men Killed in the Vietnam War

PFC Michael James DeMarisco	SGT Lawrence Desmore	SP4 Richard Albert Doria
SP4 Bruce Einar Engstrom	PFC Joseph Ficara	CAPT Herbert Jay Glazer
LCPL Frederick Homeyer	CAPT Edward John Hughes, Jr.	PFC Cornelius Paul Keneally
PFC Charles Joseph Rachon*	SSGT Louis Joseph Reed*	PFC John Patrick Riley
LCPL Glenn Andre Sheppard	PFC Albert Calvin Walls, Jr.	* Awarded Silver Star

White Plains Mayor Tom Roach attended the ceremony and spoke briefly, noting that "although less than 1% of our citizens serve in our military ranks, they protect and defend all 100% of us and our rights to freedom." Also on hand were New York State Senator George Latimer and State Assemblyman David Buchwald. A crowd of spectators gathered on the lawn, sidewalk and street to witness the laying of the wreaths and to honor the fallen military heroes from the Vietnam Era.

In August of 1964 President Lyndon Johnson signed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing the U.S. to enter into war against communist infiltration into South Vietnam. The resolution was approved in the Senate by all but two votes, and in the House unanimously. By the beginning of 1965 major U.S. military forces were sent to South Vietnam; and thus 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the start of that conflict. Many young men and women from the White Plains area sacrificed and served in our military and support organizations directed at the Vietnam War effort. Of those who lost their lives, fifteen are known to be buried in our local area.

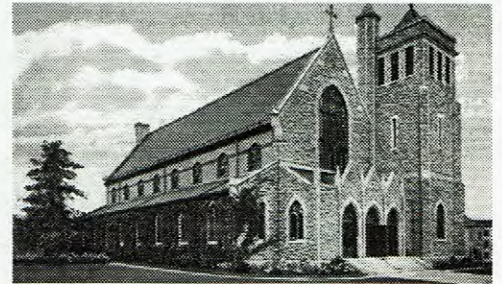
The Daughters of Liberty's Legacy group arranged for a total of 41 wreaths to be placed at actual gravesites in the local area on December 12th in addition to the ceremony at the White Plains American Legion Hall. The White Plains war dead numbered 14 with 7 buried locally. Receiving wreaths were four Medal of Honor recipients from the Civil War, World War I and Vietnam.

The Reynal Family and Its Living Legacy

by Barbara Carlson

White Plains is a city of neighborhoods, beautiful historic neighborhoods, 32 in all. One of these neighborhoods is Reynal Park and another is its adjacent sister, Rocky Dell. Current streets named Reynal Road (in Reynal Park) and Reynal Crossing (in Rocky Dell) indicate the prominence of the Reynals. The Reynals were a wealthy New York City family who lived on Madison Avenue and Park Avenue but owned considerable acreage at the border areas of White Plains and Scarsdale from the 1850s until approximately 1925. The present Fenway Golf Club's clubhouse is part of an original Reynal family home named "Rocky Dell." But who were the Reynals and how did these two neighborhoods come into being?

Early information about the Reynal family includes the construction of the present St. John the Evangelist Church on Hamilton Avenue which was the gift of Mrs. Jules Reynal in 1892, donated in memory of her father, Nathaniel F. Higgins, who had been a wealthy carpet manufacturer, and of her son Jules Reynal, Jr. The Thebaud mansion, "a showplace on Hillair Circle", was a three-story structure built in 1902, containing more than 30 rooms and was owned by Paul Thebaud and his wife, Mathilde, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jules Reynal. Also built in 1902 was a "stone residence" named Rocky Dell, a home for Nathaniel Reynal, which contained "more than fifty rooms, twenty baths, a swimming pool and gymnasium." This home adjoined Dell Farm, the country property belonging to his mother. The Scarsdale newspaper, *The Scarsdale Inquirer*, contains information from the years 1902 to 1925 about the doings of the families, from "brilliant social gatherings" and expertise with polo ponies to participation in Scarsdale village politics. One member of the family, Eugene, was on a committee for San Francisco earthquake relief in 1906. Parts of the Reynal properties were also adjacent and had been sold to the New York, Westchester and Boston railroad.



St. John the Evangelist Church on Hamilton Ave.
A gift of the Reynal family, 1892.

Changes began to take place around the time of World War I. In 1915, the home Rocky Dell was leased to the Misses Tewksbury School for Girls of New Milford, Connecticut and included an option to buy. Then the home was purchased by the Fenimore Golf and Country Club, which then sold it to the Trio Development Corporation, a group of White Plains businessmen in 1925 and later became Fenway Country Club.

Jeanne Reynal (1903-1983) daughter of Eugene Reynal, was born in White Plains, studied art in Paris and pursued a career in the field of mosaics. She lived in Greenwich Village and married the painter Thomas Sills. Her works were shown recently at the MOMA, which owns some of her mosaic compositions.

Eugene Reynal founded the publishing company Reynal & Hitchcock. The firm had associations with Pearl Buck, Roald Dahl, Dorothea Lange, Arthur Miller and Antoine de Saint-Exupery. Mr. Reynal infamously turned down the opportunity to publish J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, saying it wouldn't sell!

Thus the development of Reynal Park and Rocky Dell as residential areas began. A map from the White Plains City Commission dated September 21, 1925 shows the platting of streets named in "Reynal Park – Subdivision of Property"; these streets included Reynal Road, Hewitt Avenue, Amy Place, Meda Place and Gene Place. Other Reynal Park Streets named Susan Court and Kenneth Road were developed in the 1950s. A subdivision map from the Village of Scarsdale dated August 4, 1925 shows streets in Rocky Dell such as Reynal Crossing, Coralyn Road, Wilmont Avenue and Hazelton Drive.

And what of the Reynal family legacy? What have they given to succeeding generations? They've left White Plains great neighborhoods for families to grow and prosper and some would say that is riches beyond compare. Surely the Reynals would agree, that's a great way to be remembered.

Washington's Birthday Celebration at Purdy House Features Alexander Hamilton: His Indispensable Partner

On Sunday, February 21st an overflow crowd gathered at Jacob Purdy House to pay homage to the Father of Our Country, George Washington, on the eve of his birthday. A contingent of Continental Army soldiers marched in formation with drumbeat to open the ceremony. White Plains Historical Society president, John Vorperian, welcomed guests on the front lawn on a Spring-like day; and led the Pledge of Allegiance as the American flag was raised. "General Washington" and hostess, "Abigail Purdy", then welcomed everyone inside for refreshments and a talk by Rand Scholet, President of the AHA (Alexander Hamilton Awareness) Society. Due to the large size of the crowd Mr. Scholet agreed to give the presentation twice so everyone could hear



General Washington shared his birthday cake with guests.



Alexander Hamilton
Visionary Founding Father.



Rand Scholet delivered an energetic and informative presentation.

the talk, entitled "Washington's Indispensable Partner", compared the significant contributions of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Henry Knox, John Jay and Alexander Hamilton. Mr. Hamilton's wide ranging credits include: establishing the nation's banking and financial system; authoring the Federalist Papers; convening the Constitutional Convention; getting a reluctant New York State to ratify the Constitution; founding the U.S. Coast Guard; and military leadership at the Battles of White Plains and Yorktown.

WHITE PLAINS HISTORICAL WORD SCRAMBLE

~~ Items associated with White Plains history ~~
Unscramble the word or words below.

1. YORRAM _____
2. XORN B VERRI _____
3. YUCTON TASE _____
4. UPSAROQAR _____
5. DYPRU OSHUE _____
6. RAB IG DUBLIN _____
7. TEMPLANO _____
8. GAHDSL IHN OSLOCH _____
9. TREMO RHONT _____
10. UNYCOT TRENCE _____

Answers posted on our website: www.whiteplainshistory.org

Published by

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60 Park Avenue, White Plains, NY 10603, or sign up on line at www.whiteplainshistory.org

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