

PIERMONT NEWSLETTER

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Piermont Civic Association*

April, 1968

\$50,000 AT STAKE IN SEWER RIGHT-OF-WAY

The Piermont Village Board wants the Four Villages Sewer Project (Grand View, South Nyack, Nyack and Upper Nyack) to pay \$50,000 for an easement, to permit laying of a Four Villages trunk sewer under the old Erie right-of-way through Piermont to the Sparkill pumping station.

The Four Villages Sewer Project wants to run its sewer through Piermont without paying anything for an easement. With the State Health Department increasing pressure on the Four Villages to cease polluting the Hudson River with their sewage, the controversy is becoming heated. Donald Brenner, Orangetown sanitary engineer who is wearing a second hat as paid consultant to the Four Villages Sewer Project, is directing the attack on the Piermont board and Mayor DiFrancesca. The easement would be given to Orangetown because the Four Villages sewage would be pumped from Sparkill to the Orangetown treatment plant.

The PCA Newsletter asked Mayor DiFrancesca, who has refrained from retorting in the public press to the vociferous attacks, why Piermont had set an easement price of \$50,000. Here is how the Mayor, in an interview, outlined the sequence of events:

When Piermont was planning the rebuilding of its sewer system about three years ago, and Grand View declined to come into a joint project on a cost-sharing basis, the Jewish Home for Convalescents asked Piermont if it could tie in with our sewer system. After exploring the amounts of Federal and State aid available under the Clean Waters acts, it was found this would be feasible with modest annual sewer payments, to which the Home for Convalescents agreed.

It became necessary to amend the plans Piermont had on file with the government to include the spur from the Home for Convalescents, which was done. The Home's outflow, which ran through Grand View into the river, would be diverted into the Piermont sewer, requiring an easement from the

Village of Grand View, whose then Mayor, Carmine Freda, readily agreed to obtain it from his Village Board. But because of obstructionist tactics by the Grand View Village Attorney, Charles Carroll, Mayor Freda backed out of his promise.

As a result, the Home couldn't come into Piermont's sewer system, and the earmarked \$214,000 in State and Federal aid was not available when Piermont had to float its own bonds for the sewer construction in the summer of 1966. The Village thus had to float a bond issue of \$610,000 to be paid off by Piermont taxpayers over 20 years, instead of only \$396,000. This was because the Village could not certify that the amended plan, including the Home, had been completed. Mayor DiFrancesca told the Newsletter that Piermont will be eligible for the full \$214,000 in State and Federal aid when it again amends the plan to eliminate the proposed spur from the Home for Convalescents. But the extra interest Piermont will have paid on its bonds will have cost the local taxpayers about \$37,000.

This out-of-pocket expense to Piermonters, plus incidental costs of contract changes, justifies Piermont's demand for \$50,000 for granting an easement now for the Grand View-South Nyack-Nyack-Upper Nyack trunk sewer through this village. The Village Board has been resolute in its demand also because of the raw deal it had been given. Indications this week are that a compromise may be worked out on the amount to be paid for the easement.

H A B S TO COME TO PIERMONT

Spring, this year, is likely to bring teams of eager surveyors -- notebooks and cameras in hand -- walking the streets of Piermont. They will be cooperating in gathering data for a survey, the Historic American Buildings Survey, which has received the enthusiastic support of the PCA, the Piermont Historical Society, and the village board.

HABS was organized in 1933 by the National Park Service in collaboration with the American Institute of Architects and the Library of Congress. It is a long range program to assemble comprehensive archives of American architecture. These records are stored in the Library of Congress where they are available for use by researchers, i. e., students, set designers, television producers who are eager for authenticity. Buildings as late as the 19th Century and of any nature, public or private, are of potential interest to this survey -- although there is particular interest in recording buildings which risk demolition or drastic alteration. The function of the HABS is educational, archival and advisory; it does not interfere in any way with local policies of zoning or administration, or with private ownership.

On May 6th, Mr. John C. Poppeliers, the editor of HABS, will visit Piermont. Mr. Poppeliers plans to tour the village during the day and that evening will present a program with slides -- Historic Architecture Worth Noticing: A Re-Evaluation -- at 8 p.m. in the Village Hall. The program is open to the public and representatives of local Civic and Historical organizations have been invited to attend. Mr. Poppeliers is particularly interested in encouraging a "re-evaluation" of the 19th century building styles of which Piermont has many good examples. He will conduct a workshop following the lecture for those interested in helping to conduct this survey.

The Piermont Historical Society and the PCA hope that the community will participate in the project. Other organized groups, or individuals, who wish to help in any capacity should contact the following people:

For the building survey
(house to house)

Mrs. Lisa Ordahl, EL 9-5128
Mrs. Virginia Johnston, EL 8-3648

For building research
(owners of old maps, deeds,
photos, etc. -- and those
willing to dig out more)

Mr. Bill Daly, EL 9-4184

For photographic records
(taking new pictures)

Mrs. Sally Savage, EL 9-5735

We hope that many citizens will be interested in working on this project to record buildings of interest in our village, and even if they do not work as "surveyors" themselves, that they will be interested in helping others who may call at their home. Approached enthusiastically, this survey can provide a fascinating collection of material on our local history which will be of interest to the HABS and invaluable to Piermont.

SPEAKOUT ON RECREATION

Citizens of Rockland County are not getting the green spaces and recreational facilities owed them... Orange County with an equal population (210,000) has over twice as much acreage devoted to parks... The recreational problems of 1968 are being attacked with thought patterns of 1942... Communication is poor between residents, elected officials, builders, planners, school authorities and recreation leaders... What Rockland County really needs is a full-time professional who is paid solely to develop park and recreational areas; These points were hammered out to an audience of 200 by a panel of resource leaders at the recent Speakout on Parks and Recreation sponsored by the Cooperative Extension and Rockland County Committee on Natural Beauty on March 30.

A Piermonter attending the meeting described two obvious possibilities for natural development in this area as the Erie Right-of-Way for a walking and bicycle path, and -- as a large-scale plan -- a marine, beach and picnic area on the river for residents of Piermont.

One of the suggestions made at the Speakout considered apt by the visitor was that Village and Town officials should appoint recreation commissions to set up community-wide programs in cooperation with local school boards. This way, the schools can support their often-stated concept of educating the entire community for leisure. The duplication of services and expenses would also be reduced. A school could be used during off-hours for many activities, and school buses could transport both teen-agers and senior citizens, groups having similar problems of transportation. (In Piermont, of course, there is the added incentive of the existing old school property. Many people have seen the potential of the annex as a recreation center and its surrounding land as a park and athletic area.)

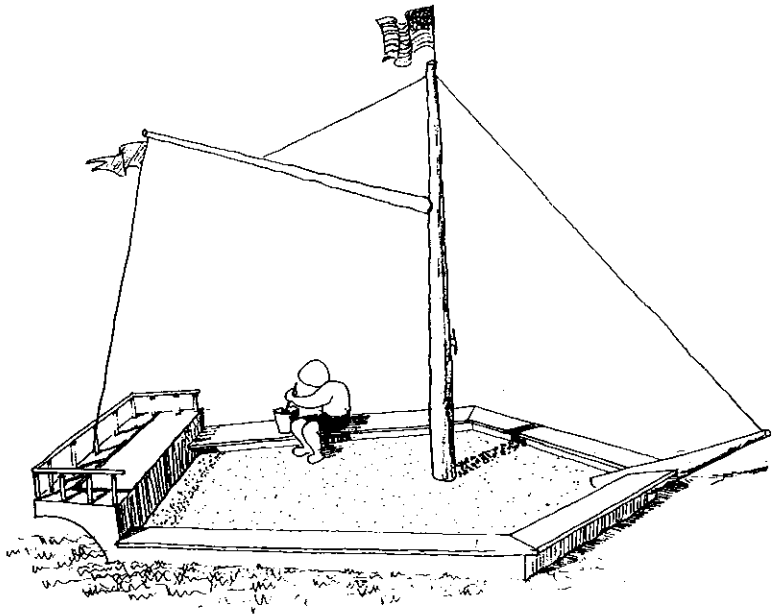
UNDERGROUND 'PHONE CABLE PROJECT TO PROVIDE NEW SIDEWALKS

Piermonterers living along Sparkill Creek are addressed in a letter from the New York Telephone Company, explaining construction activities planned along Piermont Avenue. The letter concerns a telephone cable, running through Piermont from the pier to Route 340. New concrete curbs and sidewalks in the disturbed area will be built by the company following completion of the work on the underground cable. The concept of underground placement was determined by the Mayor and the Telephone Company with beautification in mind. Within six weeks, the project is expected to be finished. The letter requests that any questions or problems be addressed to Mr. G. A. Erikson on 390-6625 for assistance.

KANE PARK NEEDS YOU!

A rendering of plans for Kane Park is now on display in the window of Sal Conigliaro's shop. Work parties are being called for weekends beginning May 4th. Painters, planters, carpenters and fence menders are needed to carry out plans drawn up over the winter. Also welcome are ideas for additional play equipment. The Village Board has offered its cooperation and the use of some of its heavy equipment.

A summer house is planned as a cool resting-place for parents, as is an attractive entrance of arresting nature for children. A walkway along the perimeter of the park composed of brick, logs, cement blocks and hopscotch stones is one of the long-range projects for work crews to construct. One corner of the park will contain a small fountain with adjoining pool where children may splash or float a paper boat.



New planting will provide screening of adjacent property and shade in the summertime. Landscaping has been planned with help from the South Nyack Tree and Park Committee.

This sailboat sandbox is one of the projects planned for Kane Park. Your help would speed this project. Funds are needed now for free planting. Send your contribution to: Treasurer, PCA, P.O. Box 365, Piermont, N. Y.

Several new play pieces are being added to the existing equipment, and pleas are being made for volunteers to turn out on fair weekends.

Call EL 9-0854 to offer help or materials.

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Robert Bradbury

The article in this issue reporting on the recent Speakout on Parks and Recreation makes the point that Rockland County does not measure up to our neighbors in the acreage devoted to parks. This is a good excuse to mention again one of the favorite projects of the PCA -- to see the Erie right-of-way converted to a walking and bicycle path. We understand Grandview has already so dedicated its portion of the ROW; if Piermont's strip is also devoted to public use it will be possible to walk from Sparkill to Nyack while enjoying one of America's proudest views. It is a rare opportunity to make a really important contribution to the environment of future gener-

ations in Piermont. Can't we begin now? The PCA stands ready to undertake planning, fund raising and organizing work parties, as soon as the Village Board agrees.

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Speaking of the right-of-way, the Mayor's explanation of why the village is charging up-river villages for running their sewer main through Piermont makes sense to us, as it probably does to every Piermont taxpayer. We hear also that plans for the new Westchester telephone service through Piermont provide for (1) buried cables, which in turn will insure (2) about \$70,000 worth of new sidewalks, paid for by the Telephone Company. Our Village Board apparently contains at least one New England horse trader!

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Another park project is getting underway as this issue of the Newsletter goes to press -- the improvement of Kane Park. Mrs. Douglas Spencer originated the project and is organizing the work. She has our gratitude, but she also needs our help, and lots of it. It may take several summers to realize all of the plans, so lets all pitch in.

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A word of thanks to Edward Leber, of Blauvelt, our printer, who is responsible for the recent improvements in the Newsletter.

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Finally, we are delighted to hear that the zoning ordinance is about to be unveiled. It's an important document, plotting and controlling the future growth of the village, and we are sure everyone will want to examine it closely, but perfect or not, its good that we've at least reached this stage.

"SKYSCRAPERS ON THE PIER" JUST A MIRAGE

Piermont's new zoning map has been completed and is currently being reviewed by members of the Village Board, who hope to make it public soon so that a public hearing may be held before the end of May. After hearing citizen reactions and proposals, the Board will vote and the new zoning will then become law. Advance information to the Newsletter indi-

cates that the changes in general tend to upzoning to prevent new developments of clustered homes on small plots. Compared with the present top requirement anywhere in the village of 10,000 square feet, some of the plots on the new map call for 15,000 and 20,000 up to 40,000 square feet residential sites. The former Dorothy Thompson Castle acreage, for instance, has a 40,000 square foot minimum and the open land on 9-W north of the new school calls for 20,000 square feet.

The Village Board has been working on the new zoning law for the last two years with the assistance of the County Planning Board. For one thing, no two-family homes may be built within the village limits. The zoning map will also set to rest any fears Piermonters may have as the result of a wild story carried recently in the local press about the possibility of high rise apartments being built on the Continental Can Company site on the pier. It develops that there had been informal talk about such a possibility at one of several workshop sessions on the master plan. Aaron Fried, director of the Rockland County Planning Board, who attended the workshop, later took it upon himself to describe this publicly as a possibility without any authorization from the planning board. Mayor DiFrancesca, asked for comment, said it was "utterly impossible" for any developer to erect high rise or any other apartments there. The pier area is zoned only for business or industrial use.

LIBRARY CHEERS ITS VOLUNTEERS

We wouldn't have an active library without volunteer help, but with it the Piermont Public Library has grown and become a major center in the village. In this issue of the Newsletter we want to describe the activities of the Library Volunteers and give some much deserved credit where it is due.

Of the 25 hours per week that our library is open, one half are manned by volunteers at the desk. Cynthia Crippen, Grace Daly, Molly Hunt, Kay Jessup, Jeanne Koenig and Lisa Merrill work regularly at this job. But library volunteer work involves much more than the absolutely necessary job of the desk. For the junior patrons, volunteers conduct weekly Story Hours and regular visits of the Kindergarten and First Grade during school hours. Carrie Arbiter, Rose Azar, Gaby Bruno, Phyllis Brunson, Mimi Bryan, Phoebe Colwell, Nan Hennion, Lisa Ordahl, Mary Polinsky and Jo Watkins keep these programs functioning.

Not all of the volunteer jobs require regular hours; special projects contribute greatly to the effectiveness of library service and the enjoyment

of the Library. Margaret Holihan handles Library publicity for the local newspapers; Donna Lynch has been compiling a complete bibliography of our special Garden Collection; Bill Daly produced a stunning exhibit on Haiti; Phyllis Brunson arranges films for both children and adults; Mary Keane -- working with the elementary school art department -- has provided us with exhibits for the children's room. We can use even more help in these "enrichment" areas of the Library's service, and need two more desk volunteers for regular stints. Volunteers in the Library find the work challenging and a good way to get to know the village. If you'd like to join up, call Mrs. Chute or Mrs. Gaynor at EL 9-4595.

The Spring Calendar of events at the Library is another tribute to the work of the volunteers:

- . During National Library Week there will be special film showings for children and adults, and on Sunday, April 28th a Spring Open House and dedication of the Dorothea Thompson Garden Collection.
- . Simultaneously, in the Upper Gallery an exhibit of Crewal Work by local residents will honor the 50th anniversary of Grand View.
- . In May, a display of handcrafts by the Piermont Senior Citizens will celebrate Senior Citizens Month.
- . In May and June there will be a series of three forums: Community Planning -- How to Keep a Good Neighborhood; Community and the Law -- Narcotics, Problem and Control; Community Services -- Available Social Services. Guest speakers and residents who are knowledgeable in these areas will participate. The Library will assemble special book collections on the topics under discussion.

Inspired by our new movie projector and screen, Mrs. Brunson has planned an extensive program of films for both adults and children. Detailed résumés of the films are available at the Library.

Adult Program:

- Friday, 26 April, 8:30 p. m. BEHOLD A PALE HORSE Donation \$1.00
- Friday, 17 May, 8:30 p. m. Four films on Painters and Paintings.
Admission free.
- Friday, 14 June, 8:30 p. m. THE BRIDGE (German with sub-titles)
Admission free.

Children's Program:

Wednesday, 17 April, 10 a. m. Films for 4-8 year olds.
Saturday, 27 April, 2 p. m. Nature Films for 9-12 year olds.
Saturday, 11 May, 2 p. m. Ballet Films for all ages, girls only.
Saturday, 25 May, 2 p. m. Space Films for all ages, boys only.
Wednesday, 12 June, 3 p. m. Nature and Story Films for 4-8 year olds.
Wednesday, 26 June, 2 p. m. The Sea and Sailing, for 9-12 year olds.

PIERMONT EDUCATOR TO RETIRE

A Piermonter who has contributed a great deal to education during the 35 years he has lived in our village will be honored on June 1. He is Anthony Barone of Orchard Terrace, whose retirement from the public school system on August 31 will be marked by a dinner at Singer's Hotel in Spring Valley. Mr. Barone's many friends can contact dinner chairman Philip DeLorenzo or co-chairmen Ernest Tebo or Anthony Komornick for details.

PCA OPPOSES DOWNZONING FOR CLAUSLAND MOUNTAIN

PCA members voted to support the United Civic Groups' efforts to prevent downzoning or tax abatement for the prospective 500 acre residential development that Columbia University is considering building on Clausland Mountain.

Columbia still has not clarified its intentions for use of the site. Apparently, the University is not only considering several alternative sites, but has several alternative plans for use of the Clausland area. The latest word is that it will be five or six months before any specific plans will be presented to the local governments for consideration.

Meanwhile, the United Civic Groups, and an organization called Save the Mountain, are proposing to the Rockland County Park Commission that the Clausland Mountain acreage be acquired for county or town park use. Representatives from Save the Mountain will present a short report on this activity at the next PCA meeting.

SAILING SEASON TO START SOON

The Tappan Zee Sailing Association plans to hold its regular early spring lecture series on sailing techniques in the Piermont Library. It will also conduct, in its inimitable disorganized way, a summer and fall sailboat racing series on the river.

Dates for the lectures and the races had not been set before press time, but if you are interested in getting a sailboat, learning to sail, or joining the racing, call Ted Merrill EL 9-1025, George Keane EL 9-0381 or Art Watkins, EL 9-0299.

LANDMARK SAVED FOR PIERMONT

We have good news from the top of the hill. The late Miss Dorothea Thompson's house on Castle Road will remain a private residence. The house, a local landmark, was built originally for Eleanor Lord. Shortly after the turn of the century, the noted New York architect Sanford White added a number of alterations that gave the house its castle-like appearance.

Since Miss Thompson's death in 1965, the house and property attracted a number of prospective buyers, but most of them wanted to have the property downzoned for development. The Village Board wisely refused to consider downzoning, however, and deserve great credit for successfully protecting one of the finest examples of Hudson River architecture in the area.

The new owners of the Castle, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald S. Ikelheimer, hope to have all the closing legalities wrapped up by mid-April so they can move in by month end. They presently live in New York City and have a two year old son.

PIERMONT "FIRSTS"

One of a series on Piermont history

The village's first schoolhouse, built in the early 1800's, stood on the Sparkill Creek, near the site of the present ice-skating rink. The first story was of whitewashed stone, the second of wood painted red. The building functioned not only as a school, it also housed the meetings of the Baptist Society, until its new church was dedicated in 1819. "Extensive revivals

occurred during 1828 and 1835," the histories record, although they do not describe the site of the first Piermont house of worship.

The First Reformed Church of Piermont was organized in 1839. The first building was temporary and "just below the hill station of the Northern RR of New Jersey." In 1850, the permanent building was erected for \$5000. The first recorded marriage was of William H. Whiton to Sarah Lord in 1845.

The first services in the parish of the Episcopal Church were held in 1847. In the next years, the parish received a gift of land and the present stone church was built. The Rev. Solomon G. Hitchcock served as rector for 28 years, from 1849.

Before 1848, Piermont's Catholic population had no regular attendance by a priest. In that year, the Rev. McKeone was assigned to Haverstraw to look after Catholics in Nyack, Piermont, Spring Valley, Suffern and other villages. A large congregation was soon formed in Piermont and Mass was first held in the Odd Fellows Hall. In July, 1852, the Rev. John Quinn was appointed pastor of Piermont, and bought property where the church now stands. He presided until 1875.

The first Fire Department was organized in 1852, with James Westervelt as chief. The engine (Empire No. 1) and house were the property of the Erie RR Co. The first company had 30 members.

The Piermont Rowing Association was formed in 1879. E. N. Whiton was president. "A neat and commodious boat house was built at a cost of \$3,000. This house was on the Tappan Zee a short distance north of the Village and it commands a fine view of the bay and river. The first floor was used for storing boats and the second floor was a reception room and ladies' parlor." The building is now the Grandview Village Hall. The association owned 13 boats valued at \$2,000.

The Piermont Improvement Association was formed in 1892. Its first president was William Mastin. The Piermont Free Library was an outgrowth of the Association.

Steamboat travel came to Piermont in 1827, with the Orange, 75 feet long, the first boat to run from Nyack to New York City with a stop at Piermont. Once, the Orange failed to stop at the Slote (Piermont), which so angered the Tappan residents that they built a steamboat of their own. It was the Rockland, 100 feet in length. Not to be outdone, the Nyack people added a false bow and stern to the Orange, which the Tappantowners nicknamed "Pot-Cheese."

Many other boats made the passage to the City, as well as to Tarrytown. In an interview in 1884, Captain Mausell, one of the first of the captains, described the clientele on the river. "They were gentlemen," he said. "They had a very nice way of dressing. They had great talks and chats with each other. They were greatly interested in the welfare of things which transpired around them. It was not uncommon for old Dominie Lansing to stand in the doorway between the gentlemen's and ladies' cabins and preach by invitation of the passengers."

The Village of Piermont was incorporated in 1850. The first Trustees were Peter H. Tallman, J. G. Blauvelt, Mames A. Hopson, S. S. Post and J. I. Walsh. In 1860, the population of the village was at a peak -- 2,426. Jobs were plentiful. When the Erie moved 2 years later, many families also left Piermont, and it was said that in the early part of 1862, the town lost half its residents. By 1900, the population was down to 1,153. At this time, "the village had one large general store, one dry goods' store, four groceries, two drug stores, two millinery stores, one clothing store, one shoe store, one hardware store, two bakeries, four meat markets, a number of confectioneries and several saloons." It had, as well, five churches, two public schools, one parochial school and one private school.

In 1901, the Piermont Paper Company purchased a large tract of land where the car shops and round houses formerly stood and erected a brick building for the manufacture of paper of all kinds. Work started in February of 1902, the company having been incorporated in January with a capital of \$500,000.

A second major industry had sprung up in the building of Haddock's store on the road to Sparkill. This was the Hasbrouck Motor Works established in 1900. Its business was the manufacture of motors for yachts. Piermont's friends and chroniclers held high hopes at the turn of the century that through these new industries she might gain back some of the prosperity she had lost when the railroad pulled out.

A REMEMBRANCE

(We are very grateful to Helen Bryant for reminiscing with us about her dear friend.)

Florence Riply Mastin, who died on February 28, lived in Piermont most of her life. When she was two years old, her parents bought "Crows Nest" from the Crow family and changed the name to "Four Gabels". The house still stands today, occupied by the Radin family, nestled hillside on Franklin Street.

Her childhood was a rural one and her favorite sounds were the tinkle of a cowbell and the whirr of a windmill raising well water. She and her younger brother, Robert would cycle down Ash Street and very often tumble head over handlebars. When Spring would come, she sought the wild flowers on Tallman Mountain or would row a boat on the river. From their sweeping porch, she and her brother would watch thunder storms come down the Hudson Valley.

Miss Mastin was the first valedictorian of the old Tappan Zee High School which still stands today on Hudson Terrace. She graduated from Barnard and went on to teach at Erasmus High School in Brooklyn. While there, she still managed to spend weekends and summers at "Four Gabels" which she sold in 1960. A collection of her poems about Piermont -- "Across Time's Fence" -- will be published soon.

One day last winter while driving on River Road, she commented that there were still so many old landmarks, like an old stone wall, a house, a tree. Piermont had changed so very little...

ESCAPE

Florence Ripley Mastin

The city towers recede to Lilliput,
Miniature that a baby's hand could hold,
And distance opens like a parachute
Unfolding in a cloud of blue and gold.
The mountains rise, remote, enduring spires
And brooks descend in swift, tumultous silver
Where willows light their amber, wayside fires
Along the vast processional of the river.

Then suddenly the valley drifts to green
And an ancient house on whom the evil days
Have fallen not... for here a lamp, unseen,
Perpetually burns, and the gentle ways
Of peace are marked within the mossy gate
Where a vanished world remains inviolate.

New York Herald Tribune, September 1958

(This poem was written for Miss Anna Quackenbos and her home on Piermont Place which is now the Blauhut house.)

Purebred Piermont kittens, all black. 3 long hair, 2 short hair. Free.
EL 9-1025.

Driver wanted. Woman with car who can drive me to and from church
functions, card parties, etc. EL 9-3413, eves.

Visit the Piermont Emporium. Gifts, delicacies, etc., etc., etc.

(Rate 10¢ per word.)

NEXT MEETING, Tuesday, May 7, Village Hall, Piermont, N.Y., 8:30 P.M.
Dues, \$1.00 (\$2.00 for families) per annum. P.O. Box 365, Piermont, N.Y.