

PIERMONT NEWSLETTER

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ORGANIZATION TO SERVE AS GUIDE TO AGENCIES

Service to Piermonters who require assistance in legal, health, housing or social problems will be provided by a Piermont office of the Rockland Community Action Council, which will open in mid-February. This group, which is financed through the Office of Economic Opportunity as well as by Rockland County funds, will move into an office across from the new bank site.

The director of RCAC, Philip R. Franklin, told the Newsletter that the function of the organization is to help the community find aid, when needed, on a variety of subjects. Whether the problem concerns financial, health, legal or other personal matters, there are a number of local Federal and private agencies that the individual can call on. The purpose of the Council is to help him find the appropriate agencies, and to obtain the required assistance. One or more workers who will be locally-oriented and knowledgeable of problems in the area, will staff the Piermont office.

The chairman of the Rockland Community Action Council in this area is Dr. John Lukens of Tappan. Representatives for the Piermont-Sparkill region are Judy Peaks of Orangeburg and Frederick L. Parker of Nanuet. Mrs. Peaks was a former resident here, and Mr. Parker is a member of our Macedonia Baptist Church. It is at their suggestion that services are being made available in Piermont, with the cooperation of the Mayor and Village Board. Other RCAC offices are in Nyack, Spring Valley and Haverstraw.

THRIFT SHOP DONATES TO PIERMONT AND NEIGHBORS

The PCA Thrift Shop has distributed or earmarked thousands of dollars during 1967, Mildred Burck, chairman of the committee, announced today. The gross receipts of the Thrift Shop during the last year were \$8,408.00. Of these, the following donations have been made:

Piermont T-Shirt League	\$ 24.14
Palisades Library	472.39
Rockland Country Day School Scholarship Fund	98.00
Piermont Fire Department	105.00
Piermont Ambulance Corps.	306.00
So. Nyack Tree & Park Commission	215.00
Sparkill Community Play School ..	1,683.40
Piermont Library	768.39
Tappantown Society	37.00
Piermont Reform Church	30.00
Cornelius Kane Park Fund	102.00

"THE SPOT" IS PLANNED

Mrs. Burck thanked the volunteers who have contributed to the impressive fiscal showing of the Thrift Shop last year. Speaking of present plans for the Thrift Shop, Mrs. Burck said that a new department had opened. This is "The Spot," a section offering select merchandise, such as high-fashion clothes and clothes and accessories of unusual quality. "But I want to stress," Mrs. Burck added, "that bargains are our main business. The Tappan Zee Thrift Shop will always concentrate on offering as much as we can for very, very modest prices."

PLANS FOR UNIVERSITY HOUSING CONCERN ROCKLAND VILLAGES

South Orangetown civic groups from Tappan to Grandview are concerned about Columbia University's tentative plans to build up to 2000 attached houses on top of Clausland Mountain. Columbia has a 3-year option on the 500 acres of land which extend north from the Nike Base to Clausland Mountain Road.

At the January meeting of the PCA, Ted Merrill was appointed the group's observer to attend meetings of the United Civic Groups, an organization representing a number of village associations in the area. Citizens are expressing opinions on both sides of the issue of a tax-free community of 8,000 to 10,000 new residents, while Columbia's answers to letters about the project have not done much to clarify its intentions regarding the site. The University has indicated that it would not like to be a burden on the community, but that its project would produce less revenue than full tax assessment.

The United Civic Groups has offered a counter-proposal to the Columbia project, which is for a 500-acre park on the mountain, maintained by the Orangetown Department of Parks. Mr. Merrill will keep the PCA apprised of developments at future meetings (first Tuesdays of every other month beginning January, at 8:30 P.M. Village Hall.)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Robert Bradbury

One qualification of the president of the PCA which is not written into the by-laws is the possession of a large mail box. Correspondence comes from many unexpected sources and in surprising quantities. As far as volume goes, two sources outstrip all others: a candy company in New Jersey, and the Orangetown Supervisor's office. We are always glad to know everything happening in the Supervisor's office, of course, but surely the candy company in New Jersey has us confused with someone else.

Lately Supervisor Lovett's correspondence has been concerned with the possibility of Columbia University building on a 500 acre tract on Clausland Mountain, and we've been bothered by a nagging thought that there's a certain inconsistency in the clamor over Columbia's plans. The present zoning prohibits the kind of

construction Columbia contemplates. Therefore the town should be able to prevent down zoning, or permit it only after obtaining payments in lieu of taxes to pay for services which the town must provide. Then what's all the fuss about?

Could it be that the town has no confidence in its ability to maintain and enforce the present zoning? If so, why? And if so, all the more reason for making a favorable arrangement with Columbia which will bring in a type of resident which will make an important contribution to the intellectual resources of the community.

Elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter is a letter from Bincey Taylor describing the continuing good work of the Sparkill Community Playschool. It's impossible to measure the benefit to the 32 children now enrolled and to the whole community, but certainly if the Thrift Shop had done nothing else, this one endeavor would justify its efforts. Our thanks to the ladies of the Thrift Shop and our thanks to the ladies at the Playschool. They are making our community a better place to live.

The Mayor's committee for improving the business district met recently for a preliminary discussion of its goals. There were many good suggestions with an air of enthusiasm and confidence that much can be accomplished. It will require hard work, but if this spirit can be maintained there should be visible results in the village very soon.

HISTORIC AMERICAN HOME SURVEY IS CONSIDERED

Behind some of the most unlikely facades can hide an historical gem. With this thought in mind, the PCA membership voted to authorize Lisa Ordahl to find out more about Piermont's participation in the U. S. Historic American Building Survey.

The first step in this project will be to invite a representative from the Department of Interior Parks Department (under whose auspices the survey is conducted) to come to Piermont and explain the procedure to all who are interested. The PCA will also contact the Piermont Historical Society and the Rockland County Historical Society to invite their participation.

The Historic American Building Survey maintains a registry of buildings dating up to 1850 and others of special historic, social or architectural value which date to 1900. Documentation is done by volunteers in the community who visit all buildings and homes which they suspect would be interesting, fill in government forms, write a description and attach a photograph. All buildings are then evaluated by the Department in Washington, and if accepted, go into a Federal Registry as primary information for historians.

There is also a National Registry which provides a certain amount of Federal protection for a building threatened by demolition.

By participating in this survey, the PCA feels that Piermont's many interesting and lovely buildings will be recognized and recorded for future historical research.

PCA HOPES TO REFURBISH KANE PARK

An elephant of cement and a length of pipe to crawl through may soon be making an appearance in Piermont's Kane Park. Mrs. Douglas Spencer is selecting a committee which will include an architect to update and refurbish the play equipment and appearance of the pocket-size park at the corner of Paradise Avenue

"We want ideas, and maybe there is even an energetic father or two who would like to help us," Mrs. Spencer told the Newsletter. "We want to make it colorful and, of course, safe -- a place that can stimulate creative play."

The committee will be aided by Thrift Shop funds, as donations are made in its name. A reserve has already been set aside to give the project a start.

The site of the park is owned by the Village of Piermont and was named in honor of Cornelius Kane on July 16, 1956, a few months before his death at the age of 93. Miss Helen Kane, his daughter and life-long resident of Piermont, spoke of the new PCA project as "just the nicest thing that could happen."

LIBRARY EXPANDS HOURS, PROGRAMS, EXHIBITS

The Library is pleased to announce that due to increased demand, starting February 19th, it will be open in the morning from 10 to 12 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; this in addition to the regular hours of 3 to 5 and 7 to 10 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 1 to 5 p.m. on Saturday. The children's STORY TIME has been such a success that it has also expanded and is now being held in two sessions; Wednesday mornings at 10 for ages 3 - 5, and Wednesday afternoons at 4 for ages 5 - 7. The three, four and five-year-old children from the Community Play School have joined with others in their age group in attending the morning story time and plan to continue to come.

The periodicals section of the library has been enlarged with the addition of six new magazines, and the record collection greatly expanded in the areas of classical, jazz, and folk music and spoken records. Because of its location and historical interest in the waterfront and boating, the Piermont Library plans to build up an extensive collection of books on boating; new books in this collection are coming in almost daily so here's your chance to get a headstart on the season.

Mr. Komornick has built new shelves for the reference books and the Library has purchased new and comfortable chairs, including two Boston rockers, so that those who wish to research or browse may do so in comfort.

The Library has a new movie projector, purchased with Thrift Shop funds, and as a direct consequence a plea for another library aide: someone with experience to run it. A program of films will begin with a showing of "The

"Maltese Falcon" on Friday, February 16th, at 8:30. "Citizen Kane" is scheduled for Friday, March 15th, also at 8:30 at the Library. Both films will be free-of-charge, and refreshments will be served. Other organizations in town may use the projector for their own programs and may order films through the Library.

Speaking of aides: we still need more volunteers both to man the desk and to help with other special programs, such as story hours and arranging special events. Anyone who is willing to help or has any special projects he would like to pursue should call Mrs. Chute or Mrs. Gaynor at the Library -- EL 9-4595.

Visitors to the Upper Gallery between Thanksgiving and Christmas were delighted and inspired by a display of handcrafted ornaments, decorations and gifts by Libby Godfrey. During the holidays a lollipop and candycane tree graced the hall and pleased the children, who were encouraged to eat the decorations. Currently on display: Needle Crafts, made and collected by Gloria and Don Blauhut and Cary Arbiter -- a fascinating exhibit of needlework ranging from the late 1800's to contemporary.

The schedule of exhibits for the next few months:

FEBRUARY 3 - 24	<u>Oils, Watercolors and Drawings</u> by Pearl Adams
FEBRUARY 24 - MARCH 16	<u>Haiti and other "Islands in the sun,"</u> arranged by Grace and Bill Daly.
MARCH 16 - APRIL 6	<u>Rockland County Birds</u> , courtesy of the Lakeside Nature Center.
APRIL 6 - 27	<u>New York, City and State</u> -- Places to go and what to see in our locality at minimal expenses -- trips for children to take during Spring vacation.

Also scheduled: a show of handcrafts by members of the Piermont Senior Citizens, and a particularly exciting and unusual project -- a special exhibit of Crewel Work done by local residents to honor the 50th anniversary of Grand View. Those interested in contributing a creative piece of crewel embroidery to this exhibit should contact Mimi Bryan at EL 9-1150. This display will be shown at both the Piermont Library and the Grand View Village Hall.

A Special Plea: During the month of February and in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington whose birthdays will be celebrated then, will the holders of seriously overdue books (they have been frequently notified) please return them to the Library? If not returned, legal action in an equally honest but less forgiving spirit will have to be taken.

THE DAY THE ERIE CAME TO PIERMONT - *(Second of a series on Piermont history.)*

Soot and sound are no strangers to Piermont, the little trading town that was destined to become, in the mid-1800's, a milestone of early U.S. transportation history. The town known as The Slote (for the Sparkill Creek) became "Piermont" with the completion of the long pier in 1838 which was to be the

southern terminus for the country's first long-distance railroad. The town's great moment came some thirteen years later when a grand clutch of notables boarded a New York and Erie RR train in Piermont and traveled the entire distance to Dunkirk, New York, on the shores of Lake Erie.

The town name was the brainchild of Eleazor Lord, a New York City financier whose extensive land-holdings were crowned by a splendid country seat built in the River Gothic style of the day. That sumptuous dwelling, inspired by Lord's friends Sir Walter Scott and Washington Irving, was -- and is -- known as The Castle, and it stands imposing today. Lord envisaged Piermont as the railroad's jumping-off place to New York City after the New York legislature arbitrarily decided the Erie could not run out of New York State. (As further insurance against "outsiders" tampering with the Erie, it adopted a unique track gauge -- 6 feet. Consequently, Erie RR rights-of-way remain to this day wider than those of other lines.)

On Piermont's day of history, May 14, 1851, the guests on the 90-acre pier included President Millard Fillmore, Daniel Webster, and other notables. They arrived by ferry and spoke to the happy crowds on the pier near the large roundhouse which had space for 30 engines.

Early days of railroading via Piermont on the Erie are suggested from typical accounts of excursions: "The steamboat Utica left New York City at 8 a.m....The boat arrived at Piermont at 10:30, where the party was joined by Washington Irving, who had come over from his Sunnyside home....Two trains of cars were waiting at Piermont to receive the guests and the number filled them more than comfortably. Only two of these were passenger cars, all the company had as yet, the rest being platform cars.... (They) sat so low down on their frames, burdened as they were with human beings, as to press the woodwork down upon the wheels....They arrived at Goshen three hours after leaving Piermont....The townspeople were there to welcome them with music, flags and guns and tremendous cheers. The gathering at the station and about it numbered thousands of enthusiastic and wonder-stricken people."

These early bright days for the New York and Erie Railroad, and for Piermont, who employed over two hundred people in that enterprise, dimmed in the years ahead. Erie's financial management worsened with the resignation of Lord from the presidency and the ascendance of lesser men. The end -- for Piermont -- came quickly. A year later passengers on the railroad had begun to balk at the lengthy, 'though scenic, route through Piermont. Instead, southbound passengers began leaving the trains at Suffern station and walking or driving to another branch just south of the state line, which ran to Jersey City.

With the eventual link-up of these lines, Piermont's fate was sealed, and in 1852 the Erie made the Jersey City-Paterson-Suffern route the principal one and discontinued steamboat service between Piermont and New York City. Eleazor Lord was irate, and in a book set down his complaints at the by-passing of Piermont, in terms that still reflect the expense of progress.

Lord wrote "...inconvenient, uncomfortable, and in every way exceedingly distasteful, compared with a sail of an hour and fifteen or twenty minutes to Piermont on a fine, roomy steamboat, where their baggage could be properly assorted and packed in transferable cars and a leisurely and comfortable

breakfast served, toilets arranged, cheerfulness maintained and agreeable forebodings of the journey rendered prevalent; a satisfactory, pleasant, buoyant start on a jaunt of four or five hundred miles being universally felt to be more important to the health, comfort and good spirits of the travelers, than to any possible appliances, after a vexed, dispiriting and odious beginning...." (Material for this article is from "Men of Erie" by Edward Hungerford (Random House, 1946) and "Erie RR--Its Beginnings" by Robert E. Woodruff. These and other volumes on Piermont History are available through the Piermont Library.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Piermonters et al:

Thank you all for helping the Community Play School. With the financial support of the community we are now running a much better program for those children who desperately need this head start to do well in school. Many of you have sent money, others have given things to the Thrift Shop to be sold for our benefit, some have given equipment and still others have given their time. We have several volunteer drivers and teacher assistants, as well as fund raisers, on whom much of the success of the school depends. To all of you: thanks again!

This year our program consists of three mornings a week for the four-year-olds taught by Jayne Makowski; and two mornings a week for the three-year-olds with Dottie Shechtman. Both are certified teachers. We have seventeen four-year-olds and fifteen three-year-olds. The rate of sickness has been very high this year, so our groups are often smaller. Mrs. Makowski also acts as our director and coordinator. The school meets in the Parish House of Christ Church in Sparkill for which we owe boundless thanks to the church. The chairman of our board this year is Roseann McGovern, one of our mothers.

That we are at this higher level of operation is due to all of you people who have helped so much. We still need drivers for carpooling, and both regular and substitute assistants. We especially need someone with musical training. Anyone free to help as an assistant should call Mrs. Kakowski at the school, EL 9-2858, on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays between eight-thirty and nine or eleven and eleven-thirty. Phyllis Bunsen at EL 9-3159 is handling the carpooling.

Our contribution from the Thrift Shop is dependent on the donations you make in our name and the hours worked in our name. Don't stop now!!

With many thanks.

BINCY TAYLOR

WHAT HAS THE PCA DONE FOR PIERMONT?

The Piermont Civic Association has planted trees on Main Street. It has contributed, through the PCA Thrift Shop, thousands of dollars to local causes. Its Newsletter is for all of Piermont. In addition to these, and many more, projects, the PCA has a lighter side in its annual dinners, which have become somewhat of an institution. All told, the PCA does something for Piermont. And you can do something for the PCA, and yourself, by joining. Dues? Only \$1.00 (\$2.00 per family). Mail them to PCA, P.O. Box 365, Piermont, New York.