

The Piermont Newsletter

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SPRING 2010

Solved: The Mystery Of Those Empty Buildings

There are several handsome buildings in our area which look finished, but are curiously empty and mysteriously unused.

Just over the Piermont border in Sparkill, an impressive three story brick and stone building on Route 340, has been under construction for almost five years. A sign, saying "Coming soon, Coppola's Tuscan Grill" has been hanging from the building for over a year.

Salvatore Coppola, the owner said, "It took us longer than we expected to get a liquor license and some permits from the Town, but we're getting everything in there to open on April 1st." The restaurant will have a wood burning oven and an elevator, a rare feature in Sparkill.

The menu will feature northern Italian cooking. Mr. Coppola, who will be the executive chef, learned his craft in his native Italy. He owns two restaurants in Manhattan, Coppola's East and Coppola's West. Neither is in a building as handsome as the new one.

The Sparkill building, where Tony's Lobster House used to be, shares space with a magnificent white ash. The tree, listed as a "Champion Tree" by the DEC is the largest of its kind in New York State. James Castagna, who lives in Sparkill, said the tree was measured by New York State Forester Lou Sebesta late last year and was found to be only a few inches smaller in girth than the largest white ash in the entire United States.

Just north of Oak Tree Road is a beautifully rebuilt replica of the old Route 9W Gas Station that was operated for over 50 years by Henry Kennel. At one



Fred Burrell

The mystery is over. Dianne Fuhrmann and Bruce Tanner, partners in the new Palisades Market, share some grapes before the opening.

time the old building had a sign on the roof that advertised Indian Motorcycles. It was a charming set for many movies, TV commercials and ads. The new Palisades Market has been built in its form and will open this spring.

Dianne Walsh Fuhrmann of Demarest, NJ, built the new structure on the footprint of the old. Her plan is for "an old fashioned American store reminiscent of those from the 20s and 30s when life was simpler." She said the old building, built in the 1930s, was too decrepit to renovate. Rebuilding allowed her to put in a full basement with ovens and refrigeration, which

will be used for food preparation.

The friendly, enthusiastic mother of three, Dianne is brimming over with ideas for her new business. She has hired a chef and a baker who will be turning out fresh baguettes on the premises. There will be a deli section with soups, sandwiches and salads, a coffee stand and a veggie and fruit juice bar. "I plan to serve simple, top quality, healthy food that is organic and locally grown whenever possible," she said.

There will be a grilling area for hamburgers, pizzas and such and a case with preheated take-home food. And there'll be fresh flowers and penny candy as well as a bulletin board for people to post notices.

At the moment Dianne is allowed to have 14 seats but she hopes additional seating on the outside terrace will be permitted. "I look forward to creating a comfortable atmosphere that encourages great conversation," she says.

Dianne recently bought an old Blauvelt family house on Western Highway. She'll live there after refurbishing it.

A handsome building on the west side of Route 9W, just north of the Palisades line was built to provide "Interactive Healthcare Sciences." It operated for a few months back in 2007. But the 17,000 square foot building, 75 percent fitted out for medical offices, has been empty of doctors or medical care since then. Its current owner is, rather anonymously, 348 Realty Associates LLC in White Plains. Commercial realtor Michael Rao has been listing it as a "vacant trophy property" for more than a year. The asking price, he said, is \$4.3 million. But that is "negotiable—very negotiable."

~Fred Burrell

President's Corner



Fishing licenses were for elites with fly rods angling for trout in mountain streams when I was a kid growing up on the river in Grand View and Nyack. Now, if you're over 16 you need a license to fish in the Hudson. I don't fish anymore so I hadn't realized that last fall they changed the rules.

Apparently, there are fishermen in Piermont who haven't gotten the word either. Educating them is a job for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) but since it has just three agents covering all of Rockland and Orange Counties, the Piermont police take up the slack.

Most of the time people obey the rules after they learn them and the violations are minor but not always: "In years past," recounts Piermont Police Chief Michael O'Shea, "we have had groups here from Queens with large commercial coolers. We had information that they were selling the fish to restaurants back in the city." Holy cow!

In early March this year, before the opening of the striped bass season, DEC agents arrested two people with 22 of the desirable game fish. The limit is one per day per fishermen.

"Someone had been watching them fishing in the Sparkill Creek behind the ball field and reported them," O'Shea says. "They tried throwing them back in the water but it was too late and they got summonses. The same group has had

people with walkie-talkies who would warn them that police are coming so they could throw the fish back."

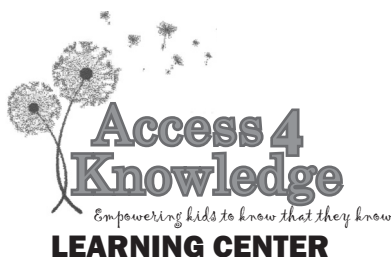
Most violators, according to Piermont Detective Brian Holihan, are unaware of that they're doing anything wrong. The first time they're caught they're given a warning. After that they get a summons. But if the police or the DEC agents see anyone trying to hide their illegal catch, they immediately ticket them.

The pier attracts a wide variety of fishermen year around. There are retirees, many of them former cops and firemen. There also are many Hispanics, African-Americans and Asians, some fishing with their families. Most of the retirees release what they catch but others keep them. Holihan says that he's certain that some people are "fishing to eat." I'm sure he's right.

I don't know about you, but that bothers me much more than someone fishing without a license. Because the river is loaded with PCBs and other nasty stuff, the New York State Health Department says that children under the age of 15 and pregnant women should not eat any of its fish. Everyone else should limit themselves to just one meal a month of most Hudson River fish. The advice on blue crabs is no more than six a week.

Fishing licenses are available at the Orangetown Town Hall (not the Piermont Village Hall) or online from the DEC <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/28941.html>.

~Bob Samuels



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Dark Days For Tallman

These are difficult days for Tallman Mountain Park, its staff and those who use and support it.

First, there was New York State's fiscal crisis, which almost certainly will result in the closing of several of the state's parks and the curtailment of hours and activities in almost all of the others. Fortunately, Tallman is not likely to be closed, nor its hours of operation cut back. But depending on the final budget adopted by the ever-more dysfunctional legislature in Albany, Tallman's pool will be shut down, at least for this season. That means its 19,000 users, many of them youngsters from low-income families, will be out of luck.

To compound the woes, a late February storm, with its heavy, wet snowfall, wreaked thousands of dollars in damage. A large tree fell on one of the historic, WPA buildings near the park's main entrance, and numerous other trees and branches fell across the park's various roads, paths and hiking trails. While the major ways were cleared within a couple of weeks, Clark Alexandre, the park's manager and his two workers, were assessing the damage well into March.

All this cleanup costs money – at a time when less and less is available. Alexandre says he'll probably have to hire a contractor to do some of the heaviest work.

In years past, Alexandre hired 20 to 30 part-time workers during the summer season, but he says he doesn't know how many he can afford to take on this year. Of course, he won't need lifeguards and the other pool part-timers if that facility is closed. But a pool shutdown will impose costs of its own as maintenance is deferred and improvements put off. Consider how your car would operate if it sat abandoned for more than 20 months.

Tallman, which averages almost 300,000 visitors each year, is one of 28 New York and New Jersey parks in the Palisades Interstate Park system, stretching north from the Edgewater-Fort Lee border in New Jersey to Lake Minnewaska near New Paltz and the historic Senate House in Kingston. Almost all of them have been adversely affected by the harsh winter and the even harsher fiscal crises.

But you can help. Alexandre takes on volunteers during



A huge tree damaged the roof of the charming refreshment stand near the track and playing field.

the spring, summer and fall to maintain paths and trails, pick up litter, patrol the grounds and assist park users. He'll need that help more than ever this year. If you're interested, call him at 845-359-0544. Managers in the other interstate parks also use volunteers. Call the park's headquarters at Bear Mountain, 845- 786- 2701.

And then there's the possibility of financial contributions. The Palisades Interstate Park Conservancy supports various aspects of the parks, and membership fees begin at \$35. Contributions can be earmarked for specific parks and activities. See the website, www.palisadesparksconservancy.org/contact/ It's always welcome when people volunteer to pitch in or contribute to the park," Alexandre said. He added that at this time of financial need and heavy damage, "it's helpful for them to fill in the gaps."

~Richard Benfield

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New Optimism About Preserving The Onderdonk House



Sally Savage

It now seems more likely that the Onderdonk house, Piermont's most historic building, will be saved. Two potential buyers have promised to restore the sandstone home and not demolish it, a real estate agent told the *Newsletter*.

"The current owners," added Lynn W. Saaby, the broker, "would never sell it to anyone who would tear it down. They would continue to suffer the taxes instead." Saaby owns the Jan Conner real estate agency in New City.

What's more, the Village Board, at its March 16 meeting, voted to stop issuing demolition permits for six-months. It's asking the Piermont Historical Society to recommend which parts of the village it thinks should be declared historic districts. The Onderdonk house is

sure to be on its list. An earlier effort to make the entire village an historic district failed.

Preservationists have long feared that a buyer would rip down Onderdonk house (despite its listing on the National Register of Historic Places) and its rental cottage and replace them with one or two new houses. The .67-acre lot is on Piermont Avenue at Ritie Street and has a river view.

One potential buyer is the children of a longtime Piermont couple. Their mother asked that we not reveal the family's name. "Yes," she said, "our kids are interested and they are talking about it. They haven't made a decision yet." Both her children have architectural backgrounds but now make their living in real estate.

"They've had contractors in there," said Saaby, "and are investigating the situation to see if it works for them as an investment and also as a restoration project. I would be pleased, but also very surprised if it actually made sense for them. It just seems like a whole lot of extremely difficult and expensive work."

He guesses that it would cost between \$500,000 and \$700,000 to make the place livable. "That's not necessarily a museum quality restoration," he points out, "but it would take that to fix all the problems and get it finished off for comfortable living. The cottage, which is occupied, is also old, yet quite livable, but it has some peculiarities that could also stand some work down the road. It is certainly adequate now as a rental house."

The other possible buyer is a Brooklyn man who restores old houses. "He is interested but is currently in hiding somewhere," Saaby said sarcastically. "There have been some serious discussions with him but I haven't heard from him in weeks. There have been offers and counteroffers with him."

The owner of the Onderdonk house is Hester Haring, who spent part of her childhood there, according to the broker. She is in a nursing home. Her husband, James Cason, is managing the property. He is sympathetic to the fact that the property has been in her family for a long, long time and has significant historic value but he's made it clear that he is not willing to give the place away.

"He would never sell it to anyone

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who wants to it tear down," said the broker, "but they have been under the burden of what amounts to almost punitive real estate taxes from the village."

The first Piermont reassessment valued the property, which is listed for sale at \$1.2 million, at \$2 million. "The total real estate taxes are some \$26,000. The owners are steaming under the burden of paying those taxes," Saaby remarked, but he admitted that they haven't challenge the assessment at a grievance night.

He wishes he could wrap up the sale soon. "The real estate business is a lot about waiting," he sighed.

The Onderdonk House History

The Onderdonk House is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, buildings in the village. Its history can be traced back to Theunis Roelofse Van Houten who settled on a large tract of land along the Hudson between Nyack and the Slote (Sparkill Creek) in about 1686. His daughter Jannetje married Arie Smith,

a son of one of the Tappan patentees, in 1711.

An article in the Journal News of April 15, 1975, says "Little did Arie Smith know when he built the house for his bride Jannetje back in the summer of 1712 that had he laid his cornerstone a little closer to the water, history might tell a different story today."

This refers to a Revolutionary War attack on the property by a British ship which didn't damage the building. The point here is that a house was apparently built on this property in 1712. On March 26, 1736, Arie and Jannetje sold the property to Garret and Abraham Onderdonk. Cole's history of Rockland County and the property described it as a farm on the North River, consisting of 320 acres with houses, barns and other amenities.

Garret Onderdonk married and had nine children, and the farm eventually "passed to his sons," according to William Krattinger of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in nominating the house to the National Register. "The Onder-

donk House, he wrote, "as presently constituted, incorporates at least three distinct periods of construction within its physical fabric, c. 1737, c. 1810, and c. 1867." If anything remains of a 1712 house, he didn't find it, so the house is generally dated from 1737, the year after the sale to the Onderdonks.

Krattinger believes it is "an outstanding example of lower Hudson Valley vernacular domestic architecture" which is "illustrative of larger cultural and architectural trends on both the regional and national level." The house was passed along in the family for generations. One owner, Catherine Onderdonk, married a Haring in 1820, and in the twentieth century the property was often referred to as the "Haring House." The current owner is a Haring.

However, the Onderdonk house's greatest claim to fame is its property's association with George Washington and the Revolutionary War. Toward the end of the war, Washington and the British commander Sir Guy Carleton held a meeting at Washington's Head-

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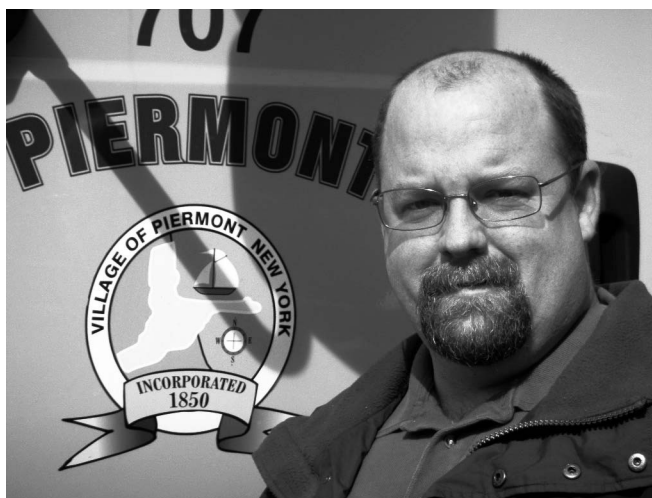
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Tom Temple: Piermont's New DPW Boss

Our new Department of Public Works Supervisor, Tom Temple, is a native Piermonter. He heads the team that keeps the village infrastructure intact—maintaining buildings, roads and sidewalks—and clears the village of trash and snow. Indeed, Piermont's DPW is regionally famous for plowing its streets with astonishing speed. So, nature threw Tom a special snowy challenge in his first year. He passed easily, setting what might be a record in getting rid of the white stuff through a snowy February.

Born in an apartment over the Community Market, Tom is a Tappan Zee High School graduate. He now lives on Tate Avenue, not too far from where he started. He is a twin, (he arrived first, he says, beating his identical brother Tim by three minutes). Contradicting the popular belief that twins become less trouble as they grow up entertaining each other, Tom is convinced that he and Tim, made trouble from birth. They were adventurous enough to encourage his mother to stop at two. (Girls are apparently easier. Tom and his wife followed their twin girls, now five, with a younger daughter.)

When Tom talks about growing up in Piermont as one of the "River Rats," it's clear that he thinks it was a great life for boys. Was "River Rats" a negative title? Not really. They called themselves that. There were lots of kids and they managed to find their way everywhere. They were always outside, Tom says. The pier was there for fishing and crabbing, and the Community Center and Kane Park were there for all kinds of



Fred Burrell

activities. On Gate night and Halloween the whole village was there for playing pranks. "Lots of toilet paper," Tom said. "Now I don't want them to do that!" Tom also recalls the Fire Department's late lamented Fourth of July weekend carnivals. He helped out on them after he joined the Department in 1991. Those evenings ended with fireworks displays over the river. The Carnival, which lasted until 1997, were a summertime ritual for many Rocklanders.

Frances Tallman was the first highway supervisor Tom remembers. Even back then the village had the reputation of clearing its streets after a snow storm faster than anyplace else. Tom began his work life as a building maintenance man for Piermont Landing. When he joined the DPW as a seasonal worker in 1996, Ray Holmes was in charge, but the boss he served longest under was "Big Al" Bartley. "He did such a great job," says Tom. "It has been a challenge to fill his footsteps."

As for leading the DPW, Tom admits

to having wanted his job for a long time although the idea of following Al was intimidating. But the job opened up earlier than he expected when Lou Hurban, who had long been Al Bartley's second in command, decided he did not want it. To prepare, Tom took classes with Al and added classes about local roads at Cornell University's Extension in Stony Point and. Since he took over he has had to deal with many absences in his crew from illnesses or injuries, but he has managed to do it without too much overtime. Day-to-day maintenance

isn't the problem, he says. "It's the big projects that get put off when you're trying to keep overtime down," he explains. This winter's snowstorms have surely tested his budget—especially weekend snow storms when overtime is most costly.

I had three final questions:

What has found hardest about the job? "Really nothing," says Tom. "I kind of anticipated everything because I had worked with Al. I have to take myself out of the friendship line with the men during the day, but we're still friends outside work. That's been fine."

And what's the hardest thing about the job—which stuff do the guys least like to do? That answer's easy: "Picking up garbage in the rain."

And finally, what could Piermonters do to make his job easier? He couldn't think of a thing. "They're good about recycling," he adds, "and I just want them to know that I appreciate the opportunity to do the job."

~Joan Gussow



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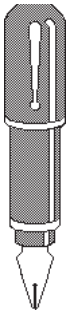
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Reader's Write

The Newsletter *welcomes your letters. Please send them to us at Box 454, Piermont, NY 10968, or e-mail them to BobSam@optonline.net.*

To the editor:

Would you drink Hudson River water?

Many Piermont residents are not aware that Suez Environnement/United Water wants to build a desalination/water treatment plant in Haverstraw to provide its Rockland customers (including all Piermont customers) with drinking water from the Hudson River.

Yet this proposal raises numerous health, environmental, and economic concerns for Piermont residents. The plant would be located on a former landfill in Haverstraw, across the river from Entergy's Indian Point with its history of malfunctions and radioactive leaks. The plant would not be able to remove all radioactive substances from the water. Ironically, Entergy has

based its campaign for Indian Point's relicensing on the fact that the Hudson River is not a source of drinking water in this area.

Environmental concerns are many and varied. Adverse impacts to the fragile Haverstraw Bay ecosystem, a breeding ground for numerous aquatic species, would include fish and other wildlife mortality from water intake apparatus and pollution from concentrated brine solutions to be discharged into the river. The plant would create toxic waste requiring disposal on land and would consume large amounts of energy thus increasing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

With construction costs currently estimated at \$116 million and high operational costs due to salinity and multiple contaminants in the river, the desalination plant would place a financial burden on residents (costs could continue to increase significantly due to rising energy, waste disposal, and carbon emission costs). Desalination is

two to four times more expensive than conventional water treatment and ten times more expensive than implementing conservation methods.

Yet perhaps the largest concern with the proposed plant is that it is not necessary. United Water based its proposal on questionable calculations of Rockland's need for additional water. United Water's figures for our reservoirs were distorted by the company's releasing unpermitted amounts of water (millions of gallons a day) from Rockland reservoirs to its customers in New Jersey. Since United Water has been caught and fined for these violations, our reservoirs have remained above 90 percent. Additionally, United Water used projected population increases that are not consistent with current County and Town comprehensive plans and zoning laws.

Even if Rockland County is facing future water shortages, there are many more sustainable alternatives to

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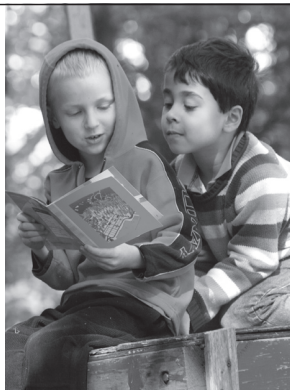


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Birds In The Piermont Marsh

Piermont's marsh is one of several ornithological and ecological wonders we are fortunate to have. It is not only beautiful but also a uniquely productive environment, at the interface between fresh and salt water, and between river and land.

Marshes ("areas of low-lying wetland") come in several kinds, freshwater, tidal, and salt marshes being just a few. Piermont Marsh is a hybrid between freshwater and tidal. Bounded to the north by the Piermont Pier and a grove of cottonwoods, to the east by the estuarine waters of the Hudson River, and, to the west, by the basalt cliffs of the Palisades, the Piermont Marsh is actually a small delta, formed by deposits from the Sparkill Creek, that occupies about a thousand acres of mud out of which grow tall reeds (*Phragmites*, a grass). Large river deltas like the Volga (flowing into the Caspian Sea) or the Danube (into the Black Sea) have extensive reed marshes. These indeed, are spectacular, but the Piermont Marsh, our own mini-delta, "an alluvial deposit at the mouth of a tidal inlet," deserves our attention because of its wildlife, and our respect because it is an important source of organic material that nourishes an entire food chain.

Viewed from the Pier the Marsh looks like a thin line of low vegetation growing between river and wooded cliffs. This, however, is an illusion. To appreciate the real dimensions of the Marsh, drive up to Tallman Mountain Park, settle on a comfortable rock ledge, and look down over the roughly triangular expanse of reeds. Thus seen from above, you notice that the vegetation, far from uniform, is interrupted by small pools, shrubbery, and open channels. In win-

ter, the reeds are yellowish, but, with spring, green growth starts to emerge from the mud. And in early summer, the Piermont Marsh is a beautiful expanse of tall green stalks. To observe its birds at close range, two vantage points are the rise near the swimming pool and an opening in the woods at the end of the path that skirts the edge of the marsh and the bottom of the cliffs, southward from the pool. Once ready to watch birds, the best strategy, in my opinion,



is to sit still and scan the marsh, binoculars at the ready.

Winter visitors include an occasional Rough-legged Hawk from the Canadian Arctic, distinguishable from the resident Red-tailed Hawk by the black band of its tail, hovering about 30 feet above the reeds, then plunging down to catch a mouse. A regular spring and fall visitor is the Northern Harrier, usually in female plumage with a conspicuous white rump, flying back and forth over the marsh, ready to pounce on rodents.

Beginning in April, migrants appear and sing to advertise a territory. Yellow Warblers, detectable by their lisping, four- or five-syllable song, keep near the edge of the Marsh, between cottonwoods and reeds. Common Yellowthroats (the males sport a handsome, black face mask), another warbler, emit

their witchy phrase three times from vegetation tangles. The trills of Swamp Sparrows will reveal the location of the singers in the reeds. They look like Song Sparrows, but are more richly colored, with a reddish crown. In May and June, listen for the rattle of Marsh Wrens. Hearing them is easy, but seeing them less so, as their territories are scattered deep inside the Marsh.

The most abundant breeding bird in the Piermont Marsh is unquestionably the Red-winged Blackbird. Males perch near the top of reeds, open their wings slightly, thus showing their red epaulets, and simultaneously throw back their head, open their beak wide and tremble while emitting their nasal trill. You may also hear soft and repeated koo 's from a Least Bittern, but to glimpse it you need luck. For this discreet marsh bird, evenings are a good time, as it often manifests itself near dusk. And even if you don't see it, you are bound to watch something of interest, for example a Great Blue Heron, neck outstretched, stalking a fish or a frog, or a flock of swallows that zig and zag over the marsh, lower and lower, before finally settling down in the reeds for the night.

Piermont's Marsh is just one of the many unique natural features that makes living here so special.

~François Vuilleumier

Dr. Vuilleumier, the Piermonter who wrote and illustrated this article knows his birds. The American Museum of Natural History recently published his encyclopedia, 744-page, 6-pound, Birds of North America. A Curator Emeritus, he is former Chairman of the museum's Department of Ornithology.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Friends and Neighbors

On Sunday, April 11, at 2 p.m., we'll present a new program in our popular Friends and Neighbors series. Nick Platt of Paradise Avenue, a former "Asia hand, China specialist, and intelligence analyst in the U.S. Foreign Service," will share some of his experiences and insights into our relationship with China that he gained from a long and distinguished career in the diplomatic service.

The program, entitled *China Then and Now*, will begin with a video of Platt's own films of Nixon's historic China visit. Following the video, he will "conduct an interactive discussion with the audience on current conditions in China and the state of our relationship now." He will also introduce his new book.

In the Gallery

In May we will host a Studio in Art Exhibition by students enrolled in Studio in Art at South Orangetown Middle School. Forty-one of them will be exhibiting work completed in an advanced high school level course which is offered to eighth graders. One of their teachers is Piermont resident Beth Dougherty. An opening reception will be held Sunday, May 2, from 2 to 4 p.m.

In June James Kimak will present an exhibition of his fine art and graphic works with a focus on his artistic process spanning the past 18 years of his career. It ranges from his first one-person show at the Hopper House in Nyack, through his numerous shows at the Allen Sheppard Gallery in New York City.

Mr. Kimak, a former Piermonter, now lives in Orangeburg. Samples of his work can be viewed at his website, www.kimakdesign.com. An opening reception will be held on Sunday, June 11, from 2 to 4 p.m.



An undated photo of Nicholas Platt and Zhou Enlai from the cover of Platt's new book.

Two Concerts

This year we were fortunate enough to receive funding once again for two special concerts. Both feature contemporary musicians whose work reflects the cultural traditions of their ancestors.

We'll welcome spring on Sunday April 18, at 2 p.m., when Fode Sissoko and members of his group Fakoli - African Dance and Drum will perform their unique brand of World Beat music. Sissoko was born in Senegal, West Africa, to a family of traditional musicians. "Fakoli" means "the ancestor" in Mandinko, Fode's native language.

On Sunday, May 16, at 2 p.m., the second concert, featuring the Rudresh Mahanthappa Duo, brings a rising new star in the world of jazz to the library. Rudresh Mahanthappa was born in the U.S. of Indian parents. He is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music with a master's in jazz composition from DePaul University. He used his Guggenheim fellowship to study its musical traditions in India. He is accompanied by Carlo de Rosa, a Latin-American bassist who has worked with many great artists in the Latin and Jazz world.

continued on next page

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## At The Library continued from previous page

This project is made possible, in part, with funds from the Community Arts Grants program of the Arts Council of Rockland, the Decentralization Program of the New York State Council on the Arts. The Friends of the Piermont Library have also contributed significantly to the project.

### First Friday Film Series

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 7:30 PM - NOTES ON A SCANDAL (2006), directed by Richard Eyre. Dame Judi Dench and Cate Blanchett face off with searing performances in this riveting story of obsession and desire, set in a London public school.

FRIDAY, MAY 7, 7:30 PM - HAPPY-GO-LUCKY (2008), directed by Mike Leith. Dubbed by one critic the British version of Amélie - come watch and you'll know why.

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 7:30 PM - SPECIAL! LIVE APPEARANCE! - THE AGRONOMIST (2003), directed by Jonathan Demme. LIVE APPEARANCE

by author and co-producer (and Nyack resident) Daniel Wolff. A magnificent documentary about the life of Jean Dominique, a generous, charismatic Haitian radio broadcaster (and, as the title suggests, agronomist) who was a brave and tireless voice for democracy and human rights - until he was gunned down in 2000 outside his station. Demme's coproducer (and fellow Nyack resident), author Daniel Wolff will appear in person to talk about the film, its subject, and, of course, Haiti.

*Special Program* -- Monitoring the Hudson Estuary

HR-ECOS, the Hudson River Environmental Conditions Observing System, was established in 2008 by a consortium of government and academic/research groups, including Lamont-Doherty, the New York State DEC and the Hudson River Foundation.

On Sunday, June 6, at 2 p.m., a demonstration and discussion of the sys-

tem will be presented by Jean McAvoy, Education Coordinator, NYS DEC, Hudson River Research Reserve, and Alene Onion, HROECOS coordinator, in the library's Hudson River Room.

### Some Notes

Please note that parking in the lot behind the building and the strip along the north side is reserved for library use and that no overnight parking is permitted. Parking tickets may be issued to those who violate this restriction.

Older back issues of *The Piermont Newsletter* from the Library's collection are now available online thanks to the efforts of Richie Stark. Check his website [www.piermont-ny.com](http://www.piermont-ny.com). Issues date back to the mid-1960s and cover the local changes and developments, people and events, that helped define Piermont in the second half of the twentieth century.

~Grace Mitchell

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## Letters To The Editor continued from page 7

a desalination plant such as improved water management, water conservation, stormwater management, water infrastructure repairs, land use planning, and green infrastructure. It is important to know that the desalination plant is proposed to meet "peak demand"- that hot summer day when everyone goes out to water their lawns. Rockland County has not addressed its water resources in a comprehensive manner and it is time we did.

It is unwise to leave decisions on Rockland's water resources to United Water. As a private corporation, United Water, a subsidiary of the French-based multinational Suez Environnement, has a large financial motivation to construct the desalination plant. New York State guarantees the corporation an 8-10 percent annual return on capital investment. While a \$116 million investment would be a boon for Suez Environnement shareholders, it would not be for Piermont residents.

Alexis L. Starke

To the editor:

Tish DeBow, the Mayor of South Nyack, does not want a new bridge, and has admitted that she is worn out by the fight against it. This is, of course, all part of the New York State Department of Transportation strategy. Who in their right mind could possibly maintain the necessary obsessive focus for 10 years' worth of endless public meetings about a bridge? That would be me.

For the past 10 years I have been the Tappan Zee Preservation Coalition's Honorary Secretary and have attended scores of bridge meetings, public and otherwise. After all that, I've come to the conclusion that a new bridge is unnecessary and that rehabilitating the current bridge is a much sounder choice.

Here are some facts that you may not know.

•A wider TZ Bridge right-of-way would force the widening of the Thruway from South Nyack to Suffern so it would "agree" with the replacement

bridge. It would be three times the width of the present span.

•Although the bridge will have room for rail, officials could use this space for more vehicle lanes because there is no money for new trains.

•A Thruway official recently testified that the existing bridge is safe and sound. Previously, to drum up support for a new bridge, the Thruway had falsely claimed it had been weakened by marine borers and had been built to last just 50 years.

•The present structure is being restored to last at least another 10 to 15 years. The cost of more complete rehabilitation is \$3 billion. This includes bringing it up to seismic standard and adding express bus lanes and a bicycle/pedestrian lane. Estimates for a new bridge start at \$6 billion, but many observers believe that the real price is closer to \$20 billion.

•Officials are promoting Transit Oriented Development (TOD) to encourage

*continued on page 15*

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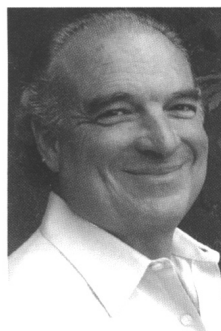
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## Piermont's Dog Run Opening Soon

After a long, snowy winter, Piermont dogs are aching to stretch their legs and break into a gallop. They'll soon have their chance. Because of the efforts of some Piermont residents and the Village Board, the Piermont Community Dog Run (PCDR) is scheduled to open at the end of May.

Volunteers have cleared a plot of village land on the south side of Ferry Road, just beyond the village's ball field and recycling area. Thanks to a generous start-up donation by Lynn Boone, and a very successful fundraising event at the Happy Dog Gallery in February, they've raised enough money for separate fenced-in runs for large and small

dogs. Landscape architect Dan Sherman has donated his expertise and services to help create this canine space.

The run will be available to Piermont residents and employees and their dogs. It will have a locked gate and posted rules. The PCDR is overseen by a working group, headed by Linda Hacker. To become a member and be given a key to the run, residents must register at the Village Hall, sign an indemnification form, provide proof of updated vaccination for each of their dogs, and pay a \$25 yearly fee. For more information, e-mail: [piermontdogrun@gmail.com](mailto:piermontdogrun@gmail.com)

~Margaret Grace

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## Onderdonck House continued from page 5

quarters at the DeWint House in Tappan to sort out the terms of the evacuation of the British troops from New York and the restoration of property to the local inhabitants. Washington traveled downriver on a barge from his headquarters at Newburgh and landed at Tappan Slote, and Carleton came up from New York aboard his ship the *Perseverance*.

The ship "dropped anchor in the Hudson between Dobbs Ferry and Snedens Landing", according to Isabelle Savell's book *Wine and Bitters*. She reports that Washington invited Carleton "to land at Tappan Slote the next day, May 6, and dine with him at Tappan.... In response, Carleton and his party went ashore in two barges on Tuesday, May 6, landing on the Onderdonk property on Tappan Bay near the Slote. Washington and his party welcomed them and, after the ceremonies were over, the two generals rode to Tappan in a four-horse carriage. Since the Onderdonk property was bordered by the creek (Slote), it seems clear that Washington and Carleton met for the first time on this property.

"Protocol called for Carleton to return Washington's hospitality, and on May 7, Captain Lutwyche of the *Perseverance* gave a shipboard dinner for Washington," Savell continues. As they left the ship after the meal, the British gave Washington's party a 17-gun salute. It represented the first official recognition of our new nation. This event could have been witnessed from the Onderdonk property as well.

Members of the Onderdonk family were Patriots, signers of the Orangetown Resolutions and part of the Shore Guard which kept a watch on the river for years. The house was the only one clearly visible along the river for several miles and was fired on by the British. This caused no damage but cannonballs reportedly have been dug out of the yard within five yards of the foundation.

Piermont resident George Turrell, owner of Achter-Col, a business that brings historic buildings back to life, is certain that the sadly neglected Onderdonk house can be restored.

~Grace Mitchell

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## Letters To The Editor

continued from page 11

high-density development near rail or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations. They also are coaching local officials on how to get around local zoning and parking requirements to increase density and create more urbanized public spaces.

•One financing proposal is a public/private partnership. We already have a French-owned water company. How would you like a corporate-owned bridge?

•The project must go through an Environmental Impact Review process but since Rockland County lacks air quality measuring stations, how will we know what impact the larger span will have on our levels of air pollution? Construction will bring 24-hour noise to every home within earshot and the new span promises to be even noisier than the current one.

•There's been no analysis on how a bigger bridge with rail/BRT/TOD would impact local roads. Traffic clogs the streets around Westchester railroad stations during rush hours and parking near them is often a nightmare.

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