

The Piermont Newsletter

VOLUME XXXXIV NO. 1

PUBLISHED BY THE PIERMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2014

The Next Big Thing?

Railroad baron Eleazer Lord built his Piermont castle in the 1840s on 19 wooded acres, overlooking what now is Route 9W. In 1890, the owners hired McKim, Meade and White, the famed Beaux-Arts architectural firm, to remodel it.

Because of the trees, Lord's Castle is difficult to see, but it stands grandly across 9W from the Tappan Zee Elementary School. Since 1968, it has been the home of the Ikelheimer and Stern families. It is now on the market for \$5.5 million. Potential purchasers arrive like suitors, smitten with the beauty of the setting and its possibilities but until recently unwilling to take on the challenge of updating the 15,000 square foot, 30 plus-room silver-haired baronial bastion and its outbuildings.

Now someone is interested and what happens next could see Piermont taking its next big evolutionary step, making it a weekend destination for the wealthy. In February, Michael Safko, representing a group of hospitality industry investors with Chinese financing, brought a "rough draft" proposal before the Village Board. It showed a dramatic transformation of the estate and its surrounding property.

Under the plan, the castle would remain the signature building but updated with new heating, air-conditioning and plumbing. It would be the centerpiece of a 140-room boutique hotel and conference center. The plan also includes a spa, "world-class" restaurants and 600 parking spaces.

"It would be a fringe destination, with an upscale clientele that is looking for a luxury getaway just an hour from Manhattan," said Safko, a Piermont resident. Acknowledging the risk inherent doing all this in untried territory, he revealed the balance of the proposal. It calls for 60 luxury townhouses on the periphery of the property. He said it would be unlikely to add children to local schools since most of the owners will only be here



Piermont's castle. Bob Samuels photo

for weekend getaways. The sale of these, he said, would make the plan less risky.

Bear in mind that Safko and his backers have not yet bought the property or even hold an option to buy it. That night he was asking the Board for a sense of it how felt about his proposal, and how long it might take to

TZE and Cowboy Fields, On Watch List See page 16

win all the approvals necessary to start construction. He added that they'd dropped the plan completely if it ran into strong citizen objections.

Overall, the Board was encouraging, agreeing that the development would increase the village's real estate tax base, and possibly allow it to add a hospitality-related tax. It also acknowledged that it could bring wealthy new clients to Piermont's businesses.

He didn't get a timeline, but several Board members later told the Newsletter that it would take a minimum of a year before they could know enough to start to give an approval.

As Trustee Steve Silverberg pointed out, "The devil is in the details." And those details are challenging:

- ✓ Access and egress onto a narrow, traffic heavy 9W may be the greatest problem. It would require turn lanes and traffic signals.

- ✓ Connecting the project to the already overburdened Orangetown sewer plant could prove difficult. The Castle now has its own septic system.

- ✓ Rezoning to allow the many buildings would be necessary. Current rules only allow about 12 housing units on the property.

- ✓ Terracing the land, or configuring it in some other way, would be required. Village laws prohibit construction on steep slopes.

~Margaret Grace & Bob Samuels

President's Corner



Even though we live in the world's richest country, and pay more taxes than most Americans, officials tell us that we can't afford to maintain the Palisades Interstate Parkway (PIP) or open the Tallman Mountain swimming pool. It turns out that we have the money but they're putting it in the wrong pocket.

As you may know, drivers leaving the GW Bridge on the PIP are jolted around like bomber pilots in flak-filled skies. Despite recent slapdash pothole repairs, the road still flattens tires and destroys wheels, windshields, suspensions and alignments.

This isn't a new problem. Chris Szeglin, PIP's assistant superintendent said they've "been seeking funding from the State of NJ for road repairs for 10 years and for a full for resurfacing for the last five."

Finally, acting as if it was doing a favor for us New Yorkers, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) is promising to resurface the road, but don't get too excited. It won't happen until later this year, or, if we're lucky, in the summer.

The way this came about is very strange. It seems word of the PIP's wretched third world condition finally reached the ears of James Simpson. He's the NJDOT chairperson. On a recent weekend, he actually drove on the PIP and "was surprised at how bad a shape the road was in," his spokesperson said. Although the PIP is not his department's problem, Simpson promised to take \$15 million out of his \$1.6 billion capital budget to resurface it. That's about as much of a sacrifice as us sending \$5 to India to feed poor people.

The Palisades Interstate Park Commission runs the parkway, 24 parks, and oversees more than 20 miles of Hudson River shoreline. It has an annual budget of just \$7.7 million. That's about half the cost of repaving the NJ part of the Park-

way. It's a pitifully small sum, like beer money to politicians. It is amazing that they can even mow the grass for that. No wonder they couldn't afford to fix the parkway or open the pool.

A year ago, there was a grandiose scheme to lease our Tallman pool to a private New Jersey swim club operator. It planned to sell memberships, which meant they'd price most of out of using the pool we already own. That plan never materialized but there is no money now to make the repairs needed to open it. "Our operating budget has never been sufficient to do a major capital upgrade," said Jim Hall, PIP's executive director.

It is easy to see why. Some of the PIP's money comes from park fees and concessions, but the bulk comes from the New Jersey and New York state legislatures. They need to give more to maintain the PIP's parkway and parks. It is time for us and our Village and Town Boards to tell our state representatives to start putting our money in the right pocket -- the PIP pocket. We are not poor.

~Bob Samuels

No Swimming at Tallman – Again!

As of early March, the Palisades interstate Park Commission has no plans to open the swimming pool at Tallman Park, according to a spokesperson at the Commission.

"The pool has been closed for a number of years now," she said. "We had one concessioner interested in opening the pool but he suffered a setback." At present, there are no plans to open the pool this season, but that could change later in the spring. Check back with us," said the spokesperson.

The Newsletter is published three times a year by the Piermont Civic Association, Box 454, Piermont, NY 10968

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Making Wise Home Energy Choices

Most residential heat and electricity in Piermont comes from burning fossil fuels, now recognized as the major contributor to present-day climate change. As super storm Sandy warned, and Klaus Jacob highlighted in last spring's Newsletter, rising regional sea level will worsen the impacts of storm surges on our village. In the spirit of thinking globally and acting locally, here are three ways that altered energy use at home can help to lessen our impact on the warming atmosphere.

One way to reduce a home's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is to install photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, as Joan Gussow described earlier in these pages. Her leased system also saves \$\$ and allows guilt-free air conditioning. A Piermont Place homeowner's PV setup, purchased with discounts available several years ago, is now nearing its payback point.

Making your own juice does require O&R back up when the sun don't shine, but 'net metering' credits your account when you are generating more electricity than you are using. Benefits can also include lower O&R delivery charges, cooler space under panel-shaded roofs, and a higher home value. Solar is now hot in NYS, with credits and incentives that can substantially lower its cost. Many companies sell, lease, install and/or offer free estimates in this area. Important considerations include roof/yard sun exposure, leasing vs owning, and finding the reliable contractors with the best products, warranties and financing.

The second 'green' option is 'power-switching' to an alternate Energy Supply Company. ESCOs buy electricity from power plant operators and sell it

through utilities. The switch is simple. It has lured 40 percent of O&R's NY customers with attractive introductory or fixed-price rates, and a 7 percent supply price reduction for two months. The downside is that one must pay close attention to bills and contracts. ESCOs are unregulated and can hike your rate after the initial contract expires. With that caveat in mind, and knowing that 57 percent of O&R's electricity comes from coal and other fossil fuels (2011 data), it is environmentally preferable to focus on the small number of ESCOs that sell electricity derived from wind and hydropower.



The NYS Public Service Commission's power to choose website in mid-February listed seven companies marketing green power at rates from \$0.077 to \$0.130/KWH for 6 to 24 months. Three offers were comparable or lower than O&R's recent rates, which are always variable. ESCOs also buy and sell gas, and two even offer green gas - arguably unreal, but designed to also acquire renewable energy certificates "RECs" that account for your reduced carbon footprint. Green ESCO sign-up perks can also include cash bonuses, a smart thermostat and recruiting rewards.

Energy conservation is a third option. It is often the largest sustainable reduction you can make in both costs and GHG emissions. Remark-

ably useful guidelines on minimizing energy consumption are available from the utilities, no less, along with assistance from government agencies and other sources. Check the O&R rebates site for sizeable cash returns on old, low-efficiency refrigerators, and for the installation of high-efficiency heating systems. Advance planning is vital for the latter, since time and expertise may not be available when heaters fail during winter, or go under during the next major flooding event. Planning could well begin with a professional home energy audit, fully or partially subsidized by the NYS Energy Research & Development Authority. Their approved auditors, or others, can then be engaged to weatherize, add insulation, identify 'vampire power' issues, etc. You can repay some relatively low-cost home energy-saving loans over time on monthly utility bills.

Energy supply now accounts for 47 percent of the average utility bill, delivery 39 percent, and fees and taxes 14 percent. Switching to renewable energy sources, taking basic conservation measures, updating to 'energy star' appliances and employing 'time-of-use' metering can cut costs, and reduce GHG emissions. We don't recommend leaving the grid for candles and firewood, but choosing the best greenway can be complicated. You need to be a careful consumer.

~Stan Jacobs

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Has The Onderdonk House Disappeared?



The Onderdonk house, How it was, 1969, and how it is today, March 3, 2014. Sally Savage photos

The state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is reportedly considering delisting the Onderdonk House from both the State and Federal registers. It doesn't want to leave anything in the record to suggest that the current reconstruction is an historic Dutch house. If they do take it off the rolls, the Onderdonk House, even on paper, will be gone forever.

The rebuilding, something that seemed like very good news only a few short months ago, has turned into a sad story of the loss of yet another historic building. For years we watched as the old sandstone house deteriorated, some bemoaning the fact, others trying to organize to buy and preserve it. Nothing seemed to materialize. But suddenly there was a sale, and a lot of hope that what was probably our oldest building would be preserved for posterity.

That's obviously not quite what occurred. And now we hear cries of "How did this happen?" and "Who is responsible?"

The simplest answer is that in a way we all are responsible.

Let's be clear. The new owners complied with all Piermont building regulations. While the house is clearly more

massive, it seems that they didn't enlarge the footprint but rather rearranged it, using footage from two additions that had been added many years ago. They obtained permission to raise the ceiling height on both floors, so the building is higher but still within the Village height requirements. No variance was needed.

Several years ago, Piermonsters stopped attempts to enact historic preservation legislation. Residents feared losing their rights to control their own property. They argued that there was already enough control, and in some cases more than enough. They also rejected the idea of creating yet another layer of regulation. So, when the buyers of a very old, very dilapidated yet important historical building come in to discuss their plans, the village's ability to regulate is limited.

When we asked Bill Kratttinger, an Historic Preservation Specialist for the state, what more could the village have done to save the original house, he replied: "A local reservation law with teeth, for one. And, perhaps more importantly, a covenant on the sale that would've protected the house from what is, in essence, a demolition project." A covenant on the deed would have to have been made by the sellers, who apparently had no desire to do so." Such a covenant



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might have reduced an already fairly small pool of buyers.

The new house will no doubt be lovely in its own right. And is it not ever so much better than another McMansion or a pile of rubble and caution tape? However, the whole thing is a bit sad, and makes one wonder how many more of Piermont's historic properties will disappear in the next few years. Part of the charm that attracts people to our village is our fairly intact 19th century main street area and many lovely older houses. We should ask ourselves, do we want to protect that character, and if so, how can we do it?

~Grace Mitchell

Reminiscences From The Old Onderdonk House,

By Adriennne (Scholz) Yaron

I could tell you much about that house. We lived there from 1973 (when I was six) until 1980. The owner had split the building into two rental units. Our side, to the left as you faced it from Piermont Avenue, included most of the original farmhouse.

It had numerous original features, including the stone and slate fireplace. It still had swinging iron hooks for cooking. We locked the double Dutch front door with an 18th century lock. There was a steep and narrow Dutch style staircase.

Although I never experienced this myself, both my mother (Paula Hanna) and my brother (Erich Scholz) insisted that a Colonial era figure haunted this staircase. They both claimed to have more than once seen the shadow of a man in a tri-cornered hat carrying a lantern walking up or down those stairs.

We also came to believe that escaped slaves had used the house as a stop on the Underground Railway, the network of secret routes and safe houses. The stone walls of the ground floor were three feet thick, but the upper floor walls were wood and plaster, with an almost three-foot-wide crawl space running around the outside of most of the house.

By the time we lived there, much of this crawl space was impassable, but we found some interesting 19th Century items in it. There were a few dishes, some clothing, and, most notably, a number of newspapers and magazines from the 1840's and 1850's—as if people had spent considerable time in these spaces. I believe my mother kept some of these items for a time, but I have no idea where they might be now.

The destruction of the grounds saddens me. They have taken down the two beech trees that had been in front, and the maple that shaded the back yard. The trees were hundreds of years old and probably predated the original house. The pine in front was a little younger perhaps, but also no spring chicken.

And the gardens were so lovely when we lived there. My late mother spent many thousands of hours caring for them—they were her favorite part of living there. Hydrangea and honeysuckle lined the front of the house. On the North side (the left as you face it from Piermont Ave.) was a formal garden, planted with all kinds of flowering bulbs and birdbath in the middle. Behind that was a little arboretum, just one narrow path lined by younger trees and large shrubs, but in summer it felt like the woods. At the rear end of it was a dogwood tree that was nearly dead when we moved in, but my mom nursed it back to health and it began flowering again.

Below the embankment to the back yard was a small kitchen garden, about half of which supplied us with salad in the summer (tomatoes, radishes, herbs, and a few greens). The other half was my strawberry patch, which eventually grew to cover much of the embankment itself and kept us in berries all summer. Along the side of the garage was a strip that some years had vegetables and other years had flowers. One year we put rhubarb there, and we made pie with my strawberries (delicious!). My mom trained roses up the side of the garage that eventually covered the whole wall. In the back, along the driveway, was another larger vegetable garden. I forget what we originally had there, but by the last few years it was entirely string beans and we grew enough to eat fresh or frozen for the whole year.

Now that I live in the city, I miss the gardens most of all.

Adriennne (Scholz) Yaron is an attorney. She lives in Brooklyn and occasionally visits Piermont.

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Preserving Our Railroad Station



The sign is an accurate reproduction of the original. Fred Burrell photo

Alarmed by the possibility that Piermont's beautifully restored railroad station might become a single-family residence, The Piermont Historical Society (PHS) has found new energy "to develop a program that would... ensure that our station remains a living monument to the history of railroading in Piermont."

It took Society volunteers hundreds of hours of work and fund-raising to restore the Victorian building. They gave it a new roof, cupola and fresh paint in the colors it wore when the railroad built it in 1873. The Society largely completed the work in 2008, but little use has been made of it. Last year it was only open to the public for six days-- on the first Sundays of May through October and for a Greenway event.

The station is owned by the Village, but managed by the Society on a caretaker basis. Although the PHS raised around \$100,000 to restore the station, it has had trouble

raising the estimated \$1,700 to \$4,000 a year for utilities and on-going maintenance, for the 141-year old structure. Last year the Village Board agreed to take over these costs. To cover them, it is considering renting out space in the station for a residence or office.

"The Village has an obligation to look at all its assets and see how they can best be utilized," noted Trustee John Gallucci, Jr. He visited the station with Building Inspector Charles Schaub. They determined that with relatively minimal modification the two rooms and bath on the second floor could be made into a living space with the addition of a kitchenette. The exterior would not be modified at all. The first floor will also remain unchanged.

The railroad always used the second floor of the building as an apartment for the stationmaster and his or her family. Long after it ceased operations, it remained an apartment for Belle Kelly, the last stationmaster, and her son, Tom. They have both passed away.

As another option, Piermont architect Robert Hoene told the Village Board he would be interested in renting space in the station for his business. "It would be a 9 to 5 operation and have very little impact," Hoene said. He and his associate would work on the second floor and put a conference table downstairs to meet with clients. "Historical displays would certainly stay as they are," he said.

But alarmed by the prospect of losing full use of the station, the Historical Society has sprung into action.

Led by Chairman Richard Esnard, who is vehemently opposed to renting the building, the Society has been circulating a petition asking the Village Board not rent the building; to "Save Our Station." The Village has no plans to sell, move or tear down the station.

"As a rental, you're going to take the building, this jewel



of Piermont, an historic site, and... you're going to hide it." Esnard said, "It's going to be hidden. Eventually the memory will fade." He feels that renting the building to a family or business would limit programs that the PHS would like to start there.

The PHS has suffered a shortage of volunteers. It has six to ten now on board now and is seeking new ones to convey the history of railroading in Piermont. "We need help to promote the history of Piermont," said Esnard, "by creating an archive of historical documents, giving lectures or educational events for school "

Sixteen people showed up at the Society's February meeting. "If we come up with funding and programs we will keep going. Now is the time for action." Esnard told them.

The PHS will hold a fund raising

dinner dance with the theme "Save Our Station" at Cornetta's seafood restaurant on May 1.

Village Trustee Stephen Silverberg expressed a positive view. "I think they're going to do fine," he said. "They've made tremendous progress and they're a great organization."

"The Historical Society has now reinvented itself," He declared

Persons interested in volunteering should e-mail PHS secretary Lola Esnard at www.piermonthistorysociety.org.

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From The Library

Our fall appeal for funds raised \$16,000! That's a welcome addition to a budget depleted by rising costs and the added expenses of a very difficult winter. Thanks to all who contributed. If you did not receive the mailing, it is still accessible on our website.

Piermonsters sometimes ask how our library compares to other local libraries, particularly when it comes to the size of our book collection. To compare libraries can be a bit like comparing apples and oranges. But it's also instructive. For example, in 2012 (the last year for which all figures are available), our disbursements totaled \$345,536. That may sound like a lot, until you look at Nyack. Its disbursements were \$3,157,664, about nine times more than ours were. Nyack had 110,246 books; we had 14,066. That's eight times more books. Over in Spring Valley, at the Finkelstein Library, disbursements totaled \$6,685,622, supporting a collection of 251,891 books. In Tappan, the figure was \$641,186, with 29,214 books. Notice a pattern?

Remember, through the Ramapo Catskill Library System, you have electronic access to millions of items. With a library card, you can search its huge collection online and reserve books, CDs, DVDs and other material. It sends what you order to us for you to pick up. We also are an access point for new information technology that not everyone has at home, even in Piermont. Last year, 4,049 patrons used our public internet access and computers.

They designed our building to satisfy a need for a public community space.

They were successful. The numbers show that the use of the library extends far beyond the limits of the book collection to a larger place in the cultural and social life of the community.

Most people responding to our fall survey listed attending programs/events among the main reasons for visiting us. Almost one quarter reported attending children's programs/events; 38.46 percent attended adult programs/events; and 28.85 percent attended meetings of groups or organizations such as book clubs or the Historical Society while 24,403 visited the library overall.

Here is some of what's on offer in the months to come.

In April, we will exhibit Frances Breer's vintage black and white photographs. From 1955 to 1960, she lived in Paris with her husband, the late artist Robert Breer. The photographs in this exhibition were taken mainly in France, Germany and Italy in the 1950s. Frances, a Palisades resident, is now focusing her creative efforts on oil painting, but enjoys looking at the old photographs "for the memories they hold and as a reminder of what my 'eye' saw then and how I see now." For the rest of us, they provide a compelling glimpse into the world of postwar Europe as seen by a young American woman photographer.

Frances will host an opening reception on Sunday, April 6, from 2-4 p.m. Don't miss it!

On Thursday, May 1, at 7 p.m., the library will join with other Orangetown public libraries to bring NY Times best-selling author Christina Baker Kline to

the Manse Barn in Tappan for a book talk and signing. Her recent novel, *Orphan Train*, has received critical praise as well as endorsements from sister authors who call it "a lovely book about the search for family that also happens to illuminate a fascinating and forgotten chapter of American history." The program is free but registration is required. For more information, please call the library at 845-359-4595.

In May and June, students from Alexis Starke's library art classes will exhibit work created during their winter and spring sessions. In these free after school classes, children from grades 1 through 8 have explored a variety of art media and styles, and will, through this show, also learn something about mounting an exhibit of their work. There will be an opening reception Sunday, May 4, from 2-3 p.m. All are welcome. Come see what our talented young artists have been up to. It should be a lot of fun!

On Sunday, May 18, at 2 p.m., we will present a concert by John Whoever and Who Are They, a group led by Piermonter John Vandenoever. Last year, the group released a new CD called *What Is This*. Instead of a big show with five or six musicians, or a solo performance, they are aiming for the middle ground. The library audience will have a chance to hear some new music that the group is in the process of recording.

Please check our website at www.piermontlibrary.org for more information about upcoming events.

~Grace Mitchell



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Union Arts Center, Past And Future



The Union Arts Center before (Caitlin Burck photo) it was renovated, and after (Trevor Traenor photo).



For years as he drove through Sparkill, taking the Union Street shortcut from Main Street to Valentine Avenue, Simon Basner had noticed an old unoccupied building just in from the corner of Main: a run-down stucco building topped with the sign Firehouse Craftsmen, Inc. By the time it came on the market in 2009, Basner had remodeled his own Piermont home, discovering in the process how much he enjoyed renovation.

When he learned that the building was for sale, he went immediately to look it over, discovering inside a series of neglected but potentially beautiful spaces. Although he had no clear idea of what they might be used for, he says, he bought it anyway.

The building had a rich history. Built in 1876 as a carriage house, it became a firehouse after a devastating fire provoked the residents of Sparkill to organize their own fire company, and ultimately to buy the carriage house to store their horse-drawn fire truck.

After the Engine Company moved in 1970, a variety of short-term businesses occupied the building. The last owner, as if to foreshadow the building's future, was a group calling itself the Firehouse Craftsmen, which established an arts and crafts cooperative combining crafts activities with the practice of movement exercises designed to provoke reflection and self-knowledge.

Basner immediately turned to Caitlin Burke whose Piermont Design Group specializes in all phases of project design. She brought in the Allen Ross Architecture firm, builder David Sirois of Sirois Construction, landscape architect Dan Sherman, and landscaper Carlos Ortiz and together they began reconceiving the structure. For the exterior design, Burke and Ross came up with five possibilities at least one of which was a very modern green building. But in consultation with the Orangeburg Building Department they

continued on next page

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## Union Arts Center, Past And Future continued from previous page

settled on a less provocative exterior intended to “dialogue” with the surrounding Sparkill buildings.

There was plenty of work to do. Basner had no specific vision or purpose for the interior other than wanting “flexible, open space.” And the structure needed much more upgrading than he had realized. Water damage from a leaky roof had rotted the entire structural perimeter framing—“I don’t know what was holding it up,” Burke says now—so that on the ground floor the walls had to be taken down to the studs which were secured and set on a new higher foundation.

The back wall of a small lobby on the first floor was removed, the interior stairway to the second floor was moved from the right to the left side of the building, and the former stairway with a small bathroom over it was replaced with a luxe modern full bath and a spacious half bath. “I knew that Simon wasn’t going to cut a corner,” Burke remarks, smiling.

All of the windows were replaced and some of them made taller, including the three small windows that had fronted the second floor of the original building. They were replaced with a

bank of five larger windows that now bathe the front of the elegant second floor in daylight. All of the floors and original ceilings were retained and refinished.

On the ground level, the concrete floor was painted to emphasize the drain-centered grooves and stamped gridding on which the wheels of the firetrucks had sat, and the walls and patterned tin ceiling were painted in muted grays. The kitchen behind that room was seriously modernized, its patterned floor with three red squares down its middle recapping the firehouse floor out front. In the “meeting room” behind the kitchen, a curvy built-in wooden bench ran all along one wall, turning the corner at either end. Built by the Firehouse Craftspeople, it has been beautifully restored to border a mandatorily shoeless “room for reflection,” now lit by craftsman ceiling lamps and sconces.

But it is Quincy Hall, the vast second floor room with its pale walls and chestnut colored floor that has become perhaps the most remarkable space in this now remarkable building. A new triptych of transomed French doors now flood the space with western sunlight, and a design for an iron balcony

is being finalized.

After two years of renovation, the newly named Union Arts Center had its celebratory opening on October 20, 2012, with an exhibit titled “Sparkill’s Union Street Firehouse – Past, Present and Future.” At that moment, there was no certain plan for what came next, though, quite appropriately, Caitlin Burke celebrated her wedding there the following February.

And now, the new cornice adorning the

one-time firehouse bears the words, Union Arts Center, intended home to—as its website attests—“performance, dance, yoga, music, film, culinary, meditation, healing, theater, gallery” And, less than two years after its modest opening party, this stunningly beautiful set of spaces has become the setting for all those things—and more. Check out its website ([www.uacny.com](http://www.uacny.com)), and see.

~Joan Gussow



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~2014 Upcoming Events~

Saturday, April 19

Easter Egg Hunt -- PCA

Piermont Library grounds
10 am sharp

Thursday, April 24

**Piermont Chamber of Commerce
Fundraiser**

Pier 701
6 pm to 8 pm

Saturday, May 17th, rain date May 18th

Village Wide Yard Sale -- PCA

Flywheel Park
10 am to 4 pm

Thursday, May 29

Watchfire

Piermont Pier
Midnight

Sunday, June 22

ArtWalk -- CofC

Flywheel Park
3 pm to 7 pm

Saturday, July 12

Bastille Day -- CofC

Piermont Avenue
12 pm to 8 pm

Thursday, July 17th

Free Concert (Tentative) -- PCA

Flywheel Park
7 pm

Thursday, August 14th or 21st (Tentative)

Free Movie -- PCA

Flywheel Park

Saturday, September 13th

Crab/Lobster Fest -- PCA

Goswick Pavilion
2-7 pm

Sunday, September 28

AppleFest Blauvelt Lions

Flywheel Park
10 am-5 pm

Sunday, September 28

Pie Contest -- CofC

M&T Bank Parking Area
11 am to 1 pm

Sunday, October 19th

Scarecrow Contest -- PCA

Piermont Library grounds
11 am

Thursday, November 6

Girls Night Out -- CofC

Participating Piermont Businesses
6 pm to 10 pm

Sunday, December 7

Piermont Holiday Festival -- CofC

Piermont Avenue, Village Hall, M&T Bank
1 pm to 8 pm

Furnishing And Refurnishing The Pier



Visitors enjoy our pier's furniture. Fred Burrell photo

When Dan Sherman, a professional landscape architect, became head of the Piermont Parks Commission in 2004, he found himself charged with the responsibility of planning what might be thought of as the furnishing of the pier. From time to time, at the request of the Board of Trustees, he has created marvelously drawn sketches of what might be added to or reshaped to make the pier more welcoming.

These included a cottonwood grove, a picnic area, native shrubs and wildflowers. More often than not these failed to turn into substance, sometimes because of well-based citizen objections, sometimes because of poorly based citizen objections, sometimes because no money could be found to carry them out, sometimes because they were simply left in the wake of more urgent matters as the Board of Trustees worked to manage the Village.

One of the ideas that was most successfully launched was first put forward ten years ago: placing benches for river-watching along either side of Pier Road, memorial benches whose \$1000 installation would be paid for by anyone who wished to honor an aficionado of the pier.

Recognizing that the demand for such memorial benches might ultimately come to exceed the natural character of the pier —after all some people preferred to have nothing man-made added to the Pier Road—a plan was devised for making available just 16 iron-frame, cedar slat benches to be placed at selected spots along the mile-long road. They

would be offered on a first come, first served basis. And when they had all been sponsored, no more would be available.

Somewhat later, in response to high demand, the plan was expanded with Board approval. It includes a bit more furnishing, six more slat benches plus three seating groups made of boulders, much like the ones constructed decades ago by the WPA along the bike path running north from Nyack Beach State Park, and three made of driftwood—plus three picnic tables.

The original slat style benches all found sponsors, the stone benches attracted no sponsorship so they were replaced by three more driftwood benches. The picnic tables have not yet been sponsored. The six sponsored benches, made of logs rather than driftwood, were all in place by the summer of 2012.

And then came Sandy.

In the immediate aftermath, the pier—closed to all traffic—was virtually bench-free. Only four benches were undamaged. Twelve of the sixteen metal and slat benches were gone, as were all the log benches. Five of the six turned up intact and were reinstalled by the DPW, except one whose sponsor decided to move it up to higher ground at Lamont. All but one of the metal and slat benches were found, eight of them wrecked and then creatively restored by the DPW.

And meanwhile, a new opportunity for bench sponsorship has turned up. Phil Griffin announced that he would be happy to allow some sponsored memorial benches—as many as six—around the gazebo in Flywheel Park. Dan is even now trying to decide what sort of bench would be most appropriate. And at such time as the cottonwood grove is planted and/or decorative improvements are made to the block building at the end of the pier, at least six new benches might be available for sponsorship. Meanwhile, feel free to walk out on the pier and sit.

~Joan Gussow

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*Hudson River ice
makes a fascinating
abstract pattern.
It has been a long,
hard winter.
Lori Lowell photo*



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Worst Weeds—Part II

As promised in the last article, here are a few examples of local weeds divided into different categories. I hope this helps you think about weeds in a way that allows you to determine your own worst weed list.

Root Pests: All three categories of root pests are found in our area. Mugwort, mints and various other plants spread by root runners. The runners can grow deep and spread laterally, with new plants springing up from the runners. Dandelion (one of my favorite edible and medicinal plants) is a different type of root pest: dandelion and others like it can grow a whole new plant from any small piece of root left in the soil. Nut sedge is in the third root pest category because in addition to seeds, it also produces numerous little edible underground tubers, or “nuts”. These nuts stay behind in the soil when with the rest of the roots are pulled out, and then they sprout and grow into new plants. Digging them all out can be very, very time consuming, although according to the Mother Earth News and other sources, the nuts are delicious and are eaten around the world.

One of the worst root offenders of all is Japanese knotweed - a plant that is both edible (in the early stages of its yearly growth) and highly medicinal - antimicrobial (antibacterial and antiviral), antimutagenic, antioxidant. It can live in many soil types and in many climates. The strong root runners/rhizomes can wreck concrete foundations and clog up water drainage pipes. You can find lots of it along the Erie Path. Japanese knotweed can grow new plants via the root rhizomes, which can grow up to 23 feet horizontally and 10 feet down, and it can grow new plants from individual root pieces. It’s incredibly hard to get rid of and can be a major pest, capable of doing a lot of damage. According to Wildman Steve Brill it is also delicious. In fact, Steve’s website states that some communities with knotweed problems have resorted to having Japanese knotweed Festivals in the spring where, as an eradication strategy, they cook and eat the edible young shoots.

Seed Pests: Burdock, a partially edible and medicinal plant, is on the most hated weeds list for some people because, like many other plants, burdock has seeds with barbs. They stick to clothes, garden gloves, hair, pet fur, etc. Morning glory is considered a seed pest for a different reason -- the seeds can stay viable in the soil for a long, long time. Let Morning Glory go to seed and you’ll be digging out new plants for years and years to come. Japanese knotweed is a seed pest because of the large number of seeds it produces as well as their long viability.

Growth habit pests: Many plants fit into this category, including all the quick growing vines, like mile a minute vine, porcelain berry, bind weed, kudzu, etc. Non-vines also fit in this category. My personal addition is the quick grow-

ing and hardy ornamental sedum that Dan Sherman and I had in our garden bed as a living mulch. Few of our young sprouts were thriving until we finally got rid of as much of the sedum as we could. After that our seedlings did great. However, in the right place, this sedum is fantastic. In fact, we’re using its growth habits to try and out-compete other weeds in the Piermont park plantings. Japanese knotweed is also a growth habit pest. It forms thick stands that crowd out and shade out native plants until all that remains is a thick stand of Knotweed.

Chemistry: Plants manufacture and distribute numerous chemicals that are toxic to other plants and/or animals/insects/microbes/fungi. This is called allelopathy. Garlic mustard is one of the many invasive weeds in our area that uses allelopathy as part of its success strategies. Poison ivy, which is very abundant here, is an obvious plant for the toxicity category. If you think you have it in your garden, take proper precautions when weeding it out. Never put it in the compost, never burn it, and remember that the “poison” is oil-based, so water alone will not remove it from your skin, clothes or work gloves. The oil is not affected by cold either, so waiting until after a frost does not reduce its toxicity. Japanese knotweed also uses allelopathy in its amazing survival strategy, placing it in all four of the categories in this

continued on page 17

Deborah H. Friedman, M.Ed

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Cops Focus On Bike Enforcement

As the weekends get warmer, Piermont is again a prime destination for bicyclists and bike clubs from around the region. Once more, the Piermont Police Department will use a combination of strict enforcement as well as education and outreach to make the streets of the village safe and pleasant for everyone to use.

"We receive a lot of complaints about bicyclists in the spring," said Piermont Police Chief Michael O'Shea, "because we get literally thousands of them through the village on weekends when the weather is warm. Although we do strictly enforce bike laws here, we believe that enforcement alone will not be effective. That's why we have reached out to the bike clubs in the region about safe biking practices such as riding single file and keeping to the right so that cars can safely pass; not passing cars on Main Street, an extremely dangerous practice; and obeying traffic lights and stop signs."

Chief O'Shea said that the President of the New York Cycle Club visited him and asked what the club could do to help its members avoid tickets. "I told him that all bikers are subject to the same traffic laws as motor vehicles and that they had to obey those laws," said the chief.

The police use a number of tactics to

keep bikers on the straight and narrow. They will station a marked police car at traffic lights, however, when a marked police car present, there is usually good compliance with the law. But the police need compliance all of the time, that's why they will use unmarked police cars as well at critical intersections. There will also be patrols in unmarked police cars looking for moving violations.

One ongoing problem that disturbs Chief O'Shea is that sometimes a "pack mentality" develops among bikers. "You do not see this with three or four bikers riding together, but often we get groups of 30 or even 50 bikers together. There have been instances where residents used their horn to try to navigate through the bikers only to be greeted with curses and hand gestures. In some cases, threatening bikers surrounded cars. If a resident feels threatened, or sees bikers misbehaving sees they should immediately call 911."

Rubbish/Debris Collection

Tom Temple, Supervisor of the Piermont Department of Public Works (DPW), said that the DPW will start its rubbish/debris collection on April 7. Collections will run bi weekly through October 7t All items should be placed curbside in a neat and orderly fashion.

"We ask that residents be sensitive in the timing of placing their debris curb-

side and ask that it be put out no earlier than the weekend prior to the scheduled pick-up date because it affects the appearance of the village," he said. "We would also like to remind residents that any debris generated from work performed by contractors must be removed by that contractor."

The DPW cannot accept any type of household hazardous waste(chemicals, paints, batteries, etc.).That type of waste must be brought to the Rockland County Household Hazardous Waste facility in Pomona (Phone .364-2444)

Fire Department Looks For Volunteers

Chief Bill Cavanaugh reminds everyone to change smoke alarm batteries. He also wanted to thank the Mayor and the Village Board for Piermont's new ambulance. He said that the department will also be getting its new pumper truck soon.

The department is looking for new members to join its ranks. Anyone who is interested in joining the Department should come to the firehouse on any Monday evening from 7-9 pm..

~Ron Derven



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TZE And Cowboy Fields, On Watch List

The Tappan Zee Elementary School (across 9W from the castle) and the adjacent Cowboy Fields are poised to re-enter the discussion about future development in Piermont.

With the school-age population in decline, the South Orangetown School District will be closing TZE, consolidating its students in the more central buildings in Orangeburg and Blauvelt. Beginning in fall 2014 there will be just one grade using TZE. The next year there will be none.

The district is looking for education-related tenants for the facility, according to Annemarie Uhl, a long-time school board member. There is no discussion now about selling either the school building or its property, she

added. The school sits atop 10 acres of relatively flat land that steeply drops at its eastern borders to what Piermonters call "The Cowboy Fields" – 29 acres of woodlands, fields, a pond and wetlands.

In 2007 a group of Piermonters pushed to have the County acquire the Cowboy Fields as part of its Open Space Initiative, remembered Nata Traub, one of the leaders in the movement. It didn't happen, but the village recognized the property's importance as a scenic vista and a wildlife corridor between Tallman and Clausland Mountains. Successive Village Boards have supported the preservation of the Cowboy Fields as open space.

~Margaret Grace



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Worst Weeds continued from page 15
column. Other weeds are in more than
one category too, but Japanese knot-
weed is in all four.

It's impossible to have a perfectly
weeded garden, but the above infor-
mation can help you evaluate your
weeds and work out your own worst
weeds list.

Lastly and importantly, always
remember: never ingest anything wild,
including weeds, unless you are abso-
lutely certain it falls well within the
many important established wild foods
safety rules.

~Susan Freiman



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