

The Piermont Newsletter

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Will They Move The Village Clerk To The Community Center?

The Piermont Village Board is looking at a number of ways to make more room for the Police Department. It now shares the Village Hall ground floor with the Village Clerk's office. New York State law says the police must have more workspace.

Moving the clerk's office to the Piermont Community Center building on Hudson Terrace is one idea the Board is considering as a permanent solution. While it is studying this and other possibilities, the Board has taken steps to ease the police crowding. If you've been to any Village Hall meetings recently, you've noticed a change in the meeting room. The stage curtain is gone, replaced by a partial wall of sheetrock, creating new locker rooms for the police.

To save taxpayer money, the village's own Department of Public Works did the work. It will next turn its attention to transforming the cops' former downstairs locker room (HGTV has nothing on these guys) into a police intake and juvenile interview room, offering much needed privacy and separation from the comings and goings at the clerk's office.

Besides moving the Community Center, proposals permanently to end the police space jam also include rebuilding the Village Hall or building a separate police station or a completely new municipal/police facility.

But observers are betting that in this time of sharply rising construction costs and diminishing state aid, the Board will want to use the solid brick

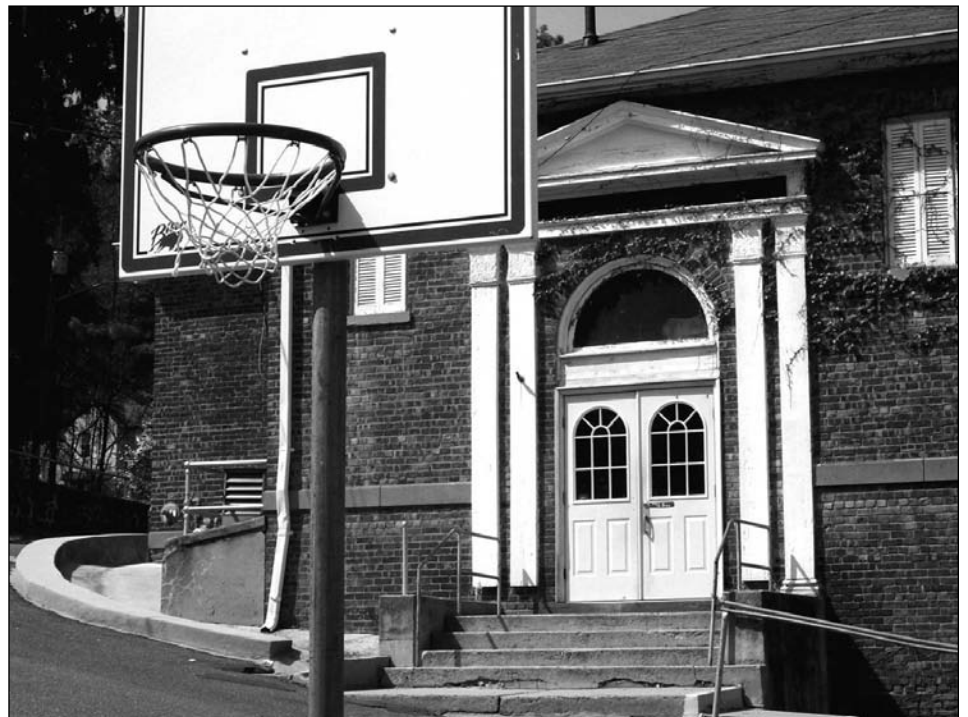
Community Center. It was built as an annex to original Tappan Zee High School that was demolished in 1971. Old-time Piermonters still call the Community Center "The Annex."

Inside, on the Hudson Terrace street level, it has four large 12-foot high, light-filled classrooms, each about 600 square feet. There's also a main hallway, small office, kitchen, a staff bathroom, and handicapped accessible bathrooms. The mezzanine level has a single small office, and the ground floor has a lofty gymnasium with bleachers, and a small separate storage/office space. There is a wheelchair access ramp to the north-

west classroom entrance, a large parking lot, a basketball court and children's playground.

During the day the Community Playgroup uses building and Piermont's Police Athletic League (PAL) takes over in the evening. The Playgroup, a not for profit daycare center, has called the Community Center home since the 1970s. It currently serves about 20 children (7 from Piermont). Those numbers grow during summer, says Susan Loiacono, its director. The Playgroup uses three of the four classrooms, the kitchen and office, and has use of the gymnasium. It rents the space from the

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The Village Clerk's office may move to the Community Center. Fred Burrell photo

President's Corner



Governments move in slow and mysterious ways. Right now, right here in Piermont, we have a prime example. Get this—Rockland County is spending an estimated \$1 million plus restoring an 1880 drawbridge it owns and that no one will ever drive across.

At the same time, mind you, there is no money to fix another historic Piermont bridge, our Silk Mill Bridge (also known as the Rockland Road Bridge). This a crossing we actually use but it is in such sad shape that it is now limited to one-way traffic. The village was so worried about its soundness that for a period it completely shut it down.

So why, you may wonder, didn't they use the drawbridge money to repair the Silk Mill Bridge? The same question occurred to our Mayor, Chris Sanders, and our County Legislator, Connie Coker. They thought about trying to get the money shifted but they feared if they raised the question Rockland County might take it away from Piermont and spend it on other projects.

Keep in mind that the drawbridge (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) belongs to the county and the Silk Mill Bridge (designated a National Historic Monument) belongs to us. That's why the County says repairing it is our problem. But many people believe that the County broke it so it should fix it. That's because 20 some years ago all traffic

heading downtown was detoured onto it while County contractors bumbled and procrastinated repairing the Army Bridge. It's the one at the end of Ferdon Avenue near the playground.

The Silk Mill Bridge took a terrible pounding back then. A daily conga line of trucks carrying construction equipment and supplies to Piermont Landing crossed it on the way to the pier. What's more, every bus, every car and every delivery truck coming into or leaving the village from that direction used it. No wonder it is falling apart.

Because just one other New York State bridge shares its turn-of-the-century brick arch design, the Silk Mill Bridge has historic value. Piermont made that point in applying for an historic preservation grant to restore it but the state turned us down. Mayor Sanders promises that we'll try again for a grant. Meanwhile, he's asking the village engineer for a new repair estimate.

Perhaps, he said, we would have more of a chance for a grant if the bridge remained one-way and became a park. Under this scheme, he would widen sidewalks and add benches for people to sit and watch the water come over the dam.

Even during a drought it flows more logically and faster than government.

~Bob Samuels

Cowboy Fields Decision Near

Rockland County is waiting for the South Orangetown School Board's answer to its proposal to buy the Cowboy Fields and turn the property into parkland. The details of the bid have not been made public. The hope is that the Board will make a decision soon.

The Newsletter Is On The Web

The Piermont Newsletter is also available on the World Wide Web. You can find it at:

<http://piermont-ny.com/newsletter/>, free to everyone with an internet connection.

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

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We Cover The Waterfront



Gulls rest on rocks off the Piermont pier. Fred Burrell photo

One of the joys of the Tappan Zee is the marvelous changing vista as one drives across the Bridge. But as part of the refurbishment of the Bridge, a new view-blocking sheet of steel is being installed. The fence stands three-feet seven inches above the roadbed. Driving a small car, you can't see over the fence. But most vans, SUVs and 18-wheelers are tall enough to allow a view. By October 2009 it will block river views from Rockland's shore through the main span. Thruway Director Ramesh Mehta said Federal regulations require the new barrier, intended to keep large trucks from driving off the Bridge into

the river. But he said that in the fifty-year history of the Bridge only seven vehicles—four tractor trailers and three cars—had driven into the River.

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The Coast Guard patrols the Tappan Zee by sea and air. It has five ice breakers available to keep the channel open so heating oil can keep flowing to Albany. The channel didn't freeze over this year and Information Officer James McGranathan said he couldn't think of any particular incidents that roused the Guard to action. "In our business it's a good day when there's nothing to report."

But he reassured us that "If a Coast

Guard crew notices any lights out on the Tappan Zee Bridge, they will report it to Bridge maintenance."

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On its surface, the Hudson has been quiet. But underwater there's been no lack of action.

The Fire Department's SCUBA divers, led by Chief Danny Goswick, pulled the bodies of two suicides that jumped from the Tappan Zee Bridge on the same dismal afternoon in early April. The coincidental suicides occurred within a little more than an hour of each other.

Training of the SCUBA unit will

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Piermont Baseball -- A 50 Year Tradition

Love Baseball? Well, love this: Piermont has a championship team - Piermont Police Athletic League's White Team. Those terrific ballplayers took the 2007 "Elite Championship League, Garden State Division" title.

The PAL program came full circle when the Piermont's Taylor Simpson, great grandson of Piermonter Howard Brawner, one of the founders of the original 1957 Piermont Baseball League, played second base with the 2007 championship team. That's 50 years of Piermont baseball.

Peter Cocker is the engine behind an extraordinary sports program for local kids. Peter, a retired NYC policeman, is the son of former deputy mayor and fire chief Don Cocker and his wife Ronnie. As a kid growing up in Piermont he took part in PAL programs. Peter always loved playing ball, but his interest spiked when his son 11-year-old John took to the game. He pitched for the 2007 championship team.

On the sunny first day of Piermont "Spring Training Camp" at the Rittenberg field, we caught up with Peter. About 60 boys and girls were working out. In the far outfield, the youngest were practicing their throwing, while the more experienced kids were going through a pitching rotation with a professional ball player that Peter recruited to fine tune their skills—yes, a pro ball player. Peter has brought in several semi-pro and pro players, among them Pat Gorman from the NY Mets and Chris Lamones from the Bal-



Peter Cocker and some of his ball players. Fred Burrell photo

timore Orioles, who volunteer to work with the kids.

PAL runs three programs during baseball season. T-ball games get the littlest ones started, followed by the t-shirt league where all kids play all positions. Ten and 11-year-olds can try out for the "traveling teams", the White Team and the Blue Team. They play against the best comparable young teams in the tri-state area as part of the Elite Championship League.

"Piermont's sports programs are really a great coming together of the community, the police, fire and public works departments," says Mayor Chris Sanders "Everyone pitches in to

get these programs going, and helps maintain the field and equipment. Fund raisers and donation have paid for fencing and will mean new bleachers this season." Sanders has a single word for what Peter Cocker has done for these kids: "exceptional."

You can sit in the bleachers and soak up some of the fun of t-ball and t-shirt baseball on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 5:30. They'll post the home team schedule for Piermont's travel teams at the pavilion.

Up on Hudson Terrace at the Community Center, the gym is equipped with a pitching cage for extra practice, although most evenings the action there is with a basketball.

Peter Cocker hopes to add some academic mentoring to the PAL program. He's talking about helping teens with homework and study skills. "We really need a committed group of volunteers," he adds. "Perhaps we could find some retired educators, to help out a few afternoons a week," says Peter.

Looking across Rittenberg Field's bright new grass to where a professional ballplayer is fine-tuning a youngster's position on the mound, and the afternoon sun is casting long shadows across the reeds at the edge of the outfield, it was easy to understand the nickname some of the kids have given this place, "field of dreams".

~Margaret Grace

To volunteer for a teen afternoon homework program, call the PAL office, 359-1258, Ext. 8.

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Caveat Emptor, Anyone?

When the time comes to sell your house, you will probably take for granted the stately dance of official procedures that surrounds the transaction—the necessary evils of mortgages, title clearance, closings, and other lawyer-friendly procedures that have been locked in place seemingly forever. Oddly enough, one of these routines is now a subject of controversy in Piermont. That is, the role of the village in the clear-title search that accompanies the sale of a property. To what extent if, any, should the village play a role in the private transaction between somebody selling and somebody else buying one's house?

The procedure causing the controversy begins when the title company representing the buyer's bank checks with the seller's town (in this case Piermont) on the accuracy of the declared data on the property. Title companies do this routinely to verify that their information is correct as to the number of bedrooms and baths, the presence or absence of air conditioning, the number of fireplaces and outbuildings and such things. It is their job to insure that the property being sold accurately matches the tax records and that the bank is getting what it expects.

On receipt of the query, the seller's town has one of two choices. It can do a cursory paper search to verify that the title company information matches the local records. Or it can do a more thorough job with an on site inspection to check the accuracy. If the second route is chosen, as is the case in Piermont, it is the job of the Building Department to make that inspection, and it is this act that some residents declare is an unwarranted invasion of their privacy, and possibly illegal.

In the view of those questioning onsite inspections, it is the responsibility of the buyer, not the village, to insure that the property they are purchasing is as advertised. Caveat emptor is their attitude: Let the buyer beware. To quote Richard Stark, a longtime resident, the inspections meet the definition of a warrant less inspection as defined by the State Court of Appeals. The court judged unconstitutional, in a slightly different context, a Freeport, Long Island, ordinance requiring owners of a rental property to obtain a permit certifying their residence as safe, clean and in good repair.

Piermont Mayor Chris Sanders sees onsite inspections in a more positive light and as generally beneficial in helping the village maintain good property values. He is preparing to hold open hearing to air all sides of the argument.

In the event the board gets a nod from village attorney Walter Sevastian and votes to make permanent a regulation requiring onsite inspections, the Mayor stresses that it will be important that the Building Department be monitored not to go beyond the limited objectives required by the title search itself and essentially to be blind to non-connected code violations.

~Bob Cone



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Piermont's Stage Struck Couple



Actor/director Elyse Knight and writer/director Joe Giardina. Fred Burrell photo

Actor/director Elyse Knight and her husband, writer/director Joe Giardina, met in a New York City acting class in 1989, four years after Elyse came east from Southern California where she had grown up, and more than a decade after Giardina had come to New York from Boston.

Which of them first picked the other out in class? Their silence eloquently suggests that neither was initially impressed. However, some weeks later, when their coach asked class members to interact as the characters they had been working on, Elyse's proudly confident G.B. Shaw character Lina encountered Joe's Mamet per-

sona Edmond. When Edmond confronted Lina with a gun, she laughed it away. Which was undoubtedly impressive.

They began their married life in Manhattan, acting and directing in and out of town, but by 1996, deeply involved in running a New Jersey arts education organization called Arts Horizons, Joe was tired of reverse commuting to his Jersey job. The couple decided to move west across the Hudson, thought of Nyack, and found Piermont. Now they both commute, Elyse to her present job as an understudy to two soccer moms in Kathleen Clark's "Secrets of A Soccer Mom" which is running in the Jerry Orbach theater at Broadway and 50th Street. Since 2002 Joe has traveled in to a daytime job as Education Director for Theatre for a New Audience in Manhattan. It's an off-Broadway production company that brings in classes of students for performances of Shakespeare plays.

The couple is deeply committed to the theatre; both have done years of regional and off-Broadway theatre. Between them they have written, directed, and/or acted in well over 100 works, many of them bluntly political. To read and hear about their activities is to understand commitment to the medium and an equally strong commitment to speaking out politically.







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Over the last decade, their productions, at the Puffin Cultural Forum in Teaneck, and elsewhere, include Joe's adaptation of George Orwell's 1984, Elyse's adaptation of anti-war poet Robinson Jeffers' Earth, God America and Men, and a play about Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the convicted Russian spies, Red Nightmare, by Stanton Wood whom Joe calls their Playwright in Residence.

Mr. Hoover's Tea Party, another Wood creation about a re-imagined conversation between J. Edgar Hoover and Martin Luther King, was presented in 2005 at St. Charles AME Zion Church in Sparkill. They trucked all the props for that production from Teaneck to Sparkill in a raging blizzard. There appears to be nothing they won't bite off.


Joe's Invasion, based on Invasion of the Body Snatchers was produced at the Puffin in 2006, its interpretation reflecting, as Joe has written, his horror at the 2004 election and his conviction that "people are aliens when they don't agree with me."

Elyse, well practiced in actually being on stage, found herself initially terrified in her first understudy job. But there are understudy rehearsals once a week, so a few months in, she's now feeling confident that if one of her principals goes down, she's ready to go onstage.

The couple started their newest enterprise, Off World Theatre, in 2000. They found the name on the label of a music tape and thought it perfectly expressed their view that the world is a little off.

Joe and Elyse, plus whatever actors they recruit, perform in Off World's various productions. A significant part of what they produce is Chamber Theatre, which Joe describes as "a style of adapting prose for dramatic presentation which includes the narrative voice. An omniscient narrator controls the actions of the characters by using the narration to interact with them."

It was chamber theatre that some 120 Piermonters had a chance to sample at the Off World Theatre's debut in the new Piermont Library this spring when a four-person cast presented a chamber theatre production of Edgar Allan Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart. Off World plans to return at the end of October for a three-day, Halloween-bracketing production of Joe's adaptation of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.
~Joan Gussow




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Walking to School



Yes, some kids still do walk to school.
Sally Savage photo

"I started school at the age of four. The only school near enough for me to walk to alone was Talcere Covent, a mile up Ffordd Ddwr, across fields and lanes and down into a tree-shaded scoop on the way to the estuary. The first couple of days Annie (thirteen-year-old mother's helper) took and fetched me, but I was soon off on my own, lank hair shorn off, swinging sandwiches by the string and a tin of cold tea with "G.W." scratched on the lid."

From George, An Early Autobiography by Emlyn Williams (Welsh actor, playwright, director).

At the time I read this wonderful book, my own boys were almost this young; it startled me, and was a passage I never forgot!

One morning this March, the William O. Schaefer School in Tappan lost all electricity. The children whose homes were not directly on the routes were bussed to the Tappan Zee Elementary School on 9W. When my neighbor Jennifer Bikker got the call to collect seven-year-old Paul, she had no car, a baby and a four-year-old at home. Since I only had one car seat, she adamantly refused my offer of a ride up to the school, even though I tried to assure her that the Piermont Police would understand the reason for the short emergency trip.

Being a stalwart, Jennifer was intent on walking to the school with baby Katie in her stroller. I took four-year-old Michael, but was not sure exactly how to direct her the back way to the school (after all, I have only lived here for 51 years!!). Alas, I misinformed her that possibly the Erie path would lead there.

Once I found out my mistake—our roads department guys told me about the "fire road"—I tried to find Jennifer and Katie. I finally drove with Michael to the school, and learned that in the end she had had to walk ALONG 9W with baby in her stroller. Terrifying! I was mortified!

We then decided to try out the route one nice day with Jennifer's whole family. We found that the "fire road" is an extension of Crescent Road, which is an immediate right turn off Piermont Place. Ten-year-old Jan Bikker

timed the entire walk from Piermont Place at five minutes!

We have suggested to Al Bartley that there might be two signs indicating: "FOOTPATH TO SCHOOL" or "FOOTPATH TO T.Z. SCHOOL" much like they do in England, where, in fact, if one closes the gate against escaping cows or sheep, one is allowed to cross the farmers' fields.

In discussing this misadventure, Margaret Grace mentioned that there is a wonderful website (www.walkingschoolbus.org) with a plan for cooperative groups of parents to take turns escorting their children to school. Described as "like a carpool without the car" it not only would give the children good exercise, which recent concerns emphasize, but also give parents expanded social connections, in a time when neighborhood schools are mostly a thing of the past.

Of course not all locales lend themselves to this idea, and we have hills! But more than once I have seen a school bus stopping twice between 9W/Ash Street and Piermont Place! There are only five homes there. The same occurs in Grand View. Do children really need door-to-door service? Perhaps now that warm weather is here, some T.Z. parents might like at least to experiment.

In soggy Wales, I have no doubt that young Emlyn Williams trudged to school even in the rain, armed with his "wellies" his "mac" and his "brolly"!

~Sally Savage

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THE FRONT LINE

Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works (also known as the Highway Department) is preparing for a busy summer, according to Superintendent Al Bartley. Projects they will be involved with include the following. For more information, go to the website www.villagedpw.com:

Phase III of sidewalk and curb replacement has been advertised for public bid. This will affect parts of Main Street, Paradise Ave., Piermont Ave., Ash Street, Ohio Street, Tate Ave., Hester Street, Franklin Street and 9W. Specific areas are listed on the Department's website above.

Phase III of road resurfacing is in the engineering phase and will soon go to public bid. Most of the resurfacing in the village has already been done.

A new drainage line and check valve will prevent flooding on Bridge Street; the DPW is seeking bids from contractors.

Silt remediation and retaining wall repairs on the Skating Pond (Eleanor Stroud Park) to be completed this summer.

Bi-weekly rubbish and debris pickup started on April 15 and will run through October 15.

Rockland Road Bridge (Silk Mill Bridge): The village is trying to secure funding (See President's Corner).

Police Department

From Chief Mike O'Shea:

We will be checking commercial vehicles monthly in response to complaints from residents about increased truck traffic. On April 24 the Piermont PD and NY State Police checked commercial Vehicles on Rt 9w. Forty-one violations were issued, three arrests were made and four commercial vehicles were taken out of service. The 10-ton truck ban limits vehicles over 10 tons to local deliveries, which includes all of Orangetown.

Please make a closed home report with the Police Department before going on vacation. We regularly check all closed homes. Remember to lock all doors and windows when you go out: 60 percent of burglaries are the result of open doors and windows.

Fire Department

Before you set out, did you know that you can check the status of traffic on the Tappan Zee Bridge simply by going to the Empire Hose Company #1 comprehensive website at www.pfd13.com? Click: Bridge Webcams. Also on the PFD website, note the specific services provided to the village by the Piermont Fire Department, including:

- * EMS
- * Water/Dive/Ice Rescue
- * Fire Fighting
- * Jaws of life victim extraction
- * High Angle Rescue
- * Regional Area Disaster Shelter
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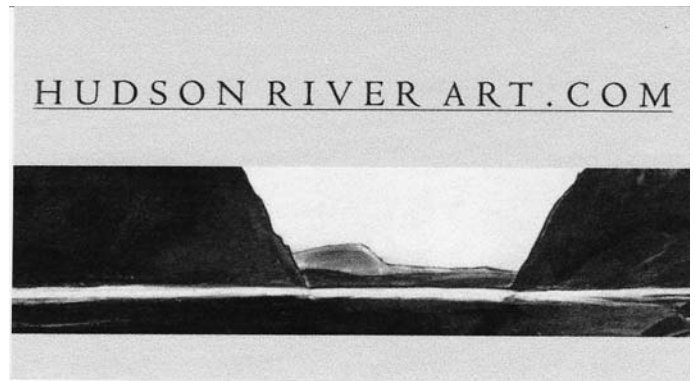
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FROM THE LIBRARY

Many new movies, books on CD and music CDs will soon be available at your new library thanks to a \$10,000 grant secured for us by State Senator Thomas P. Morahan. Many thanks to him for his continuing support of our efforts.

Our new Library Director Jessica Maisano, who will begin work on June 16, will be helping us choose the new material. Ms. Maisano has been the Director of the Catskill Public Library in the Mid-Hudson Library System since June 2006. She had been Assistant Director/Library Manager of that library since September of 2005. She earned her Master of Library Science degree from Pratt Institute in 2005. Now in the process of relocating to our area, Ms. Maisano says she is "customer-service oriented and works well with the community as well as staff and trustees." We look forward to her arrival.

Another welcome addition, Alexis Starke, joined our staff in January. She'll be able to walk to work when she and her husband Martyn move into the old library on Hudson Terrace! Alexis spent many childhood hours there and will now bring her skills to a new generation of young patrons as she begins a series of special Story and Art classes for children, (described below) at the end of April.

Alexis studied art and design at Dartmouth College and English and Art History at University College, Cork, Ireland. She has taught children's art classes for the past eight years at various schools including the Saddle River Day School and the Martha's Vineyard Public Charter School.

The library quietly celebrated our first anniversary in the new building in March. In the past few months, many patrons have noted how nicely the place is coming together, with new

furniture, new environmentally friendly lighting, many new books, and the gradual development of a familiar and lived in feeling.

A computer center, donated by Piermonter Lynn Boone, provides a space for the use of multiple laptop computers. A number of community groups are now holding regularly scheduled meetings in the conference room.

Wonderful paintings by local artists grace our walls each month, and a couple of red leather club chairs, given in memory of Davis Crippen, attract those looking for rest and relaxation with a river view. Special events, including concerts, play readings and other programs, have been enjoyed by hundreds of people.

A Sons of Italy donation allowed us to buy state of the art audiovisual equipment and we are starting to plan film showings. Donations from our wonderful group of "Friends" have

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facilitated a number of projects, and a dedicated corps of volunteers has really helped keep us going. We are pleased and proud of what we've accomplished in our first year here, and are looking forward to adding more programs and services in the coming months.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Children's Story and Art classes with Alexis Starke: Classes will meet on Wednesday afternoons from April 30 to June 4, 4:30-5:30. In these free classes, children will create imaginative art projects inspired by books from the Library's collection using different techniques and media appropriate to the age group including drawing, painting, collage and mixed media. All materials will be provided. Class size is limited, so please call 359-4595 to register.

Paintings by Delah McKay, May-June: Piermont artist Delah McKay spent her early years on a farm in the English countryside where she absorbed the colors, sounds, smells and sights of the natural world. She later explored the far corners of the earth, working successfully in international fashion and photography, and then found her real passion in painting. McKay has studied with some of the major figures in contemporary realist painting including Steven Assael, Frank Acuri and Dennis Sheehan. She now maintains a studio in Piermont. For more information on Delah and her work, see www.delahmckay.com.

Book Discussion with Author Firth Haring Fabend: Firth Haring Fabend,

a Rockland County native who is a descendant of some of the earliest settlers in our area, will talk with us about her new book *Land So Fair* at 7:30 pm, Tuesday, June 10.

Land So Fair is a historical novel/family saga set in Rockland during the eighteenth century, with flashbacks to the Dutch colony of New Netherland. Her discussion topic is "The Land of Milk and Honey and What Happened to It." How did Piermont look in 1609 when Henry Hudson sailed past? How did it look in 1783 when George Washington and Sir Guy Carleton met at Tappan Slote and traveled to Tappan for their historic meeting at the DeWint House? How was the area changed by years of Revolution? Come hear Firth and find out! Books will be available, and refreshments will be served.

Gamelan Son of Lion Concert for the Summer Solstice: The group will present contemporary music for the Javanese Gamelan at 2 pm, Sunday, June 22." This group is a new music "composer's collective and repertory ensemble" co-founded by the composer, performer and ethnomusicologist Barbara Benary. She also built many of their instruments herself. Since its inception in 1976, it has premiered more than one hundred pieces. It also performed as guests of the Government of Indonesia at Expo 86 in Vancouver and toured Java in 1996. The group has an impressive array of scholar/teacher/musicians. For more information, see www.gamelan.org/sonoflion.

This is the last of a series of three

"Celebrate the Seasons with Concerts" from the Library. The series was 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 and a generous grant secured by Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee. The Friends of the Piermont Library concerts also supported the series.

Frances Pellegrini's PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE 1950S, July-August. Frances Pellegrini had a successful commercial career in New York from the late 1940s through the 1980s. She was a contemporary of the movement that saw photographers like Margaret Bourke White and Walker Evans lend artistic ability to commercial purpose. Her images reflect an elegantly understated style and modern sensibility. She also worked with photographers Dan Weiner and Sid Grossman whose use of photography as a tool for social change and personal expression found their way into her work.

Frances recently sold Buttercup and Friends, her much loved Piermont shop for children, and is now returning to her photography. In this show she will include examples of both reportage and fashion photography from her extensive body of work.

For more information on upcoming programs for summer, please check our website frequently: www.piermontlibrary.org. There you can also access your library record, order books, see what new titles are in and

continued on next page

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From The Library

continued from previous page

even write your own book reviews!

SPECIAL BOOK DONATION

Book donations have added significantly to our collection in the past year. Especially in the categories of mystery and popular fiction, donated books have become welcome additions to our growing collection.


One particular book stands out however. *Little Town*, a picture book for children, was published by the Macmillan Company in 1941. Authors Berta and Elma Hader lived for many years in Grand View. The sandstone storybook house they built overlooking River Road has long been a landmark. They illustrated *Little Town* with scenes of both Piermont and Nyack to create illustrations of an iconic American small town. It is complete with Main Street, churches, factories and small businesses with friendly proprietors.

In this town the people sleep peacefully while Officer O'Malley patrols Main Street on foot, whistling and swinging his nightstick for fun. After school the children go down to the river to fish, swim and sail small boats. At four-thirty the mill whistle blows and a diverse group of workers walks home along the "winding creek," with a view of the smokestacks and water towers of the mills in the background. A particularly amusing illustration is that of a meeting of the village board, in which of nine members present (all men, of course), a total of seven are shown smoking—either cigarettes, cigars or pipes - with clouds of smoke swirling around their heads!



The Piermont Civic Association bought the Library two copies of this charming little book. We thank its members for the donation! The books will become a part of our local history collection and charm future readers with scenes of a bygone era in Piermont.

~Grace Mitchell

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What To Do With The Mill Pond Silt

Now that they finally know the extent of the pollution in the silt clogging the Sparkill Creek's Mill Pond, Mayor Chris Sanders plans to have a meeting this summer with residents and county officials to hash over ways to get rid of the stuff.

The good news is that the State Department Conservation (DEC) says that the it isn't hazardous but merely "municipal" waste."

"As we all suspected they are contaminants in there," says Piermont Legislator Connie Coker. "There is nothing that is life threatening or a highly toxic. However, it will cost more money and be more of a hassle to find a place to put it than if it was clean," she points out. "It can't be used as your garden variety landfill. It could be used as a cover in a landfill like the Clarkstown dump."

Mayor Sanders says there is a facility in the Catskill Mountains that can bake the pollutants out of the silt, turning it into clean fill. That's another possibility.

In the meantime, the village is pressing the Army Corps of Engineers for approval of a plan to dig the silt out of the skating rink and dumping it on nearby land under the 9W viaduct. You can't do the same thing with the silt from Mill Pond, according to the mayor.

Instead, he suggests we might use the silt to build up the pond's existing islands and plant native marsh plants on them. Some residents east of the Mill Pond have suggested taking out the dam near the Silk Mill Bridge. That would remove both the problem and the Mill Pond.



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Will The Village Clerk Move continued from page 1

village under a yearly contact, which is up in June.

PAL uses the other upstairs classroom as a "social space," outfitted with foosball, a pool table, computers, television, and sofas. Downstairs are its offices. The gymnasium is hopping every weeknight with supervised basketball. Dozens of Piermont kids, 10-17 years old, use the programs and facilities.

"It's a home away from home, a place to meet friends and relax and play some ball," says Police Chief Mike O'Shea. "This facility and program have served generations of Piermont kids, some of whom, like Peter Cocker, Alex Rivera and Jose Vega, have returned to help keep the programs going for the younger ones."

If the Village Board decides to move the clerk's offices and possibly the Building Department, to the Community Center, it will necessitate some space reorganization for the existing tenants. The move would free the entire downstairs of the Village Hall

for the police department. Upstairs would continue as Piermont's main meeting room and village court.

The Center building is in good shape, says DPW head Al Bartley. The village replaced the roof in 2000 and the windows a few years earlier. He speculates that the building made need a partial electrical upgrade. They'll also have to see if the building requires an elevator to meet handicapped access rules.

Piermonters will surely miss that easy Main Street "walk-in" quality to the clerk's office, if the Board decides to make the move. On the positive side, the building has plenty of daytime parking and, best of all, it's already built and we own it. Any one of its classrooms is almost twice the size of the current clerk's office.

The Mayor says that the Board will soon re-focus on resolving police space needs. The Community Center will be in the mix. Perhaps its time has come.

~Margaret Grace



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A dog walker was surprised to find the pier's North Shore Walkway closed for repairs. It has since been reopened. Bob Samuels photo

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Piermont's Helping Hands

Rockland has homeless people? Yes, I suppose we always knew that. We had a chance to learn it first hand when Helping Hands Safe Haven of Rockland County contacted Pastor John Vanden Oever three years ago. The request was simple: could the Piermont Reformed Church provide food and shelter for from 12 to 25 people for three nights a month during the five coldest months of the year?

Homeless people! My thoughts went back to seeing and smelling them on subways or New York City Streets. Sometimes we heard them rant and rave as well. What were we getting ourselves into - I wondered as my husband Charles and I prepared pot roasts and mashed potatoes and vegetables for "anywhere from 12 to 25 people."

"They're hungry," Pastor John told us. "Some of them come back for seconds and thirds. So be prepared." John also told us that they used up many paper towels, trying to wash up in the church rest rooms. I went through my linen closet and found a dozen bath towels I could part with. John said he'd launder them and keep them on hand at the church. I also donated the soap and lotions I'd collected from various hotel stays.

My Piermont dentist, Dr. Vincent Ferrara, donated a dozen toothbrushes, each with sample toothpaste and dental floss.

We had everything ready to serve a hungry crowd by the time the Helping Hands van pulled up. The first shock was how "normal" they appeared. They didn't rant, rave, or smell bad. Most were well dressed in clean clothes and new sneakers. Helping Hands gets donated clothing, along with the use of the vans that pick people up at designated places around the county.

"Although the people who come to sleep in our various houses of faith have become homeless for any number of reasons," notes Pastor John, "many of them have jobs and are working to pull their lives together. Each year, Helping Hands helps ensure the survival of these people through the winter. There are always some among those who come to

our Safe Havens who find sufficient employment, save money and find housing, and return as volunteers the next season," he adds.

I was touched by how orderly and polite our guests were, saying "please" and "thank you," as we ladled out the food. Pastor John set out board games on the tables and selected a DVD to play on the Sunday school television, as they got ready to bed down with new sleeping bags, pillows and blankets,

The Piermont Reformed Church is a small congregation. This past winter, Pastor John felt we needed more help. He knew the Piermont Civic Association, through its e-mail list, could get the word out. "We were heartened by the response," says Reverend John.

Among those who came as a result was Marjorie Der-ven. "My daughter Rebecca and I prepared and served a meal," she says. "We enjoyed this very concrete way of helping people." Shari Meyer, Chris Sanders, Marlene Dietrich, and Dick Benfield also volunteered.

Girl Scout troop leader Mary Ryker found her two Girl Scout troops enjoyed helping others. Her fifth grade Junior Troop made bag lunches for the people to take with them the next day. The older girls cooked a huge pot of matzo ball soup. "They were so proud of that soup," says Mary. "It took them all afternoon. They made it from scratch, including the stock."

Girl Scout Victoria Dellacava said she would definitely want to help out again. "I felt sad when I saw the men," she noted, "but good that we were doing something nice for them."

"People don't realize that there is poverty right in our back yard," observed Girl Scout Emily Ryker. "When I saw these people I kept wondering how this happened to them. Just making one meal, on one day can really make a difference."

Allison Kroenert felt "It was fun to come together as a troop and help people who needed it. It feels good to make a difference."

Helping Hands Safe Haven was founded by Raoul Cansino four years ago. Today, over thirty communities of faith pitch in to supply volunteers and other resources needed to provide a safe haven.

"Hospitality is a tremendous gift to those in need," points out John Vanden Oever. "It may not be obvious on the night you serve dinner, but it is very possible you have helped save a life."

~P.J. Mouquin

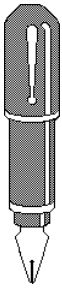
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Readers Write

Thank you Piermont for accepting two Hungarian villages, Nagygéc and Komlódtótfalu, as sister villages.

Thanks also to the 220 Piermonters who signed my petition and helped this to happen. Thanks to the Village Board of Piermont for warm-heartedly welcomed the idea of twinning with those villages on the Hungarian-Romanian border.

Thanks to former Mayor Ed Traynor, who from the beginning of my proposal, embraced the concept of our symbolic union with the villages which are the carriers of an ancient beautiful legend.

You are welcome to a virtual visit to Piermont, TheLegendOfYou.com and to Komlodtotfalu, Hungary; falvak.hu/komlodtotfalu.
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~~~~~

## We Cover The Waterfront continued from page 3

continue on the water this summer. Working invisibly, below the surface, the team will practice ways to get people out of vehicles that have plunged off the bridge. Trustee/diver Mark Blomquist said they'll sink a car with a dummy in it; then take a car door off underwater, break windows, and remove the dummy. As a separate exercise, the divers will learn to exchange spent air tanks for fresh air tanks under water. "Technically, you could stay on the bottom all day," Mark said. It could be nice in hot weather.

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Chris Schneider, who runs the Tappan Zee Marina with his family, said he's never seen the river as richly abundant with life as it is now. "When I was a ten year old boy, it was in bad shape. Now it's amazingly alive. Last summer the whole marina was full of schooling fish. We've got clams the size of half dollars on a mushroom anchor. And we've got oysters the size of quarters hanging on poles, pilings and tires. The river's as clean as it's been since we weren't even here," he said.

The history of oysters in the river goes back 6000 years, according to side-scanning sonar research by Lamont-Doherty scientist Suzanne Carbotte. The Tappan Indians left shell middens in Nyack. Bill Herguth's grandfather made his living harvesting oysters in the shallow waters between

Piermont and Nyack. Encouraged by the River's new health and vitality, the DEC plans to grow oysters on an artificial reef they'll create with the help of scientists from SUNY Stony Brook. Betsy Blair of the DEC said the reef that will become encrusted with oysters, their shells open, filtering water. It will create a complex shellfish habitat supporting a coalition of crabs, fish, minnows and others of God's wee, wet creatures.

"Since it is so clean, oysters can live in the Tappan Zee," Betsy said, "but the water's still not clean enough for us to eat them."

~~~~~

The Hudson is brackish-- an estuary of the Atlantic-- and its salt content is determined by how much rain falls. Joan Gussow, who has an organic garden along the river, has observed some effects of salt on her plants and those in the Community Garden next door. On the Ides of April 2007, the Hudson covered her garden with 18 inches of water, mud, salt, PCBs and driftwood. It seems it was all nutritious. "Last year I had one of the best years I ever had with the garden," Joan said. Another year there was a severe drought and the lack of fresh water raised the River's salt content. Joan noticed that gulls and other seabirds could tolerate the salt, but river rats couldn't. She saw them invade the Community Garden, climb the trellises of tomato plants and eat a lot of

tomatoes, apparently for their water content.

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Drew Ciganek reports that Piermont's resident pair of America Bald Eagles have been having a feast on small striped bass released by anglers on the Pier. "A lot of the released bass don't make it," Drew said. "The eagles see them floating on the surface; they sweep down from Tallman, scoop them out and sit on pilings in the River while they eat them." Drew noted that Downy Woodpeckers have been banging their beaks on the Pier's metal "Don't" signs, trying to make enough noise to get a woodpecker date.

And a harbor seal returned this winter.

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There's always a commercial angle. Hendrick Hudson sailed his Half Moon up the Tappan Zee 399 years ago. Next year it will be 400. A river-long, summer-long celebration is being planned. There is State funding for communities participating in the quadricentennial: \$40,000 to each of 16 counties and \$40,000 apiece for 16 cities along the river. Rockland County doesn't have any cities, so Heather Duke, director of Rockland tourism, suggested that Nyack and Piermont might link up and become a 'city,' thereby getting \$40,000 to spend celebrating Hendrick's trip.

~Fred Burrell



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