



The Newsletter of the Larchmont Historical Society

December-January

2003-2004



An Ideal Candidate in the Town for the Roster of Century Homes

In the last newsletter, we brought you news of the latest century-old houses to be added to the Society's roster of Century Homes. All of these, as well as those earlier placed on the roster, are in Larchmont Village. Far fewer residences in the unincorporated Town than in the Village are 100 or more years old, but pictured above is a prime candidate, standing at 59 Edgewood Avenue.

It was built sometime before 1901 for Dr. and Mrs. Thomas O. Taylor. John

Hoagland, a man of leisure, came into his inheritance in 1911 at the age of 40, purchased the house, and expanded it greatly. He was the son of Joseph Hoagland, a founder of the Royal Baking Powder Company (1873), which he built through skillful advertising into the largest and most lucrative manufacturer of baking powder in the world.

To learn how your home can become a Century Home, contact

Diane Holland at the Historical Society Archives (381-2239 or lhs@savvy.net).

The above photo and information are taken from *Images of America: Larchmont*, just published by Arcadia Press. The book is currently for sale at Anderson's Book Shop, Futterman's, Larchmont Store, Foley's, and Larchmont Art, and the Historical Society will soon have copies for sale as well. Author Judith Doolin Spikes has assigned her royalties to the Society.

President's Message

Three years ago, before 9/11, the Mamaroneck School Board proposed to reconfigure the land around the high school. This reconfiguration, to be paid for out of bond revenues, would have included destroying the Richard Kemper Memorial Park and moving the monument, which is the focal point of that park, to another location on the high school campus. After considerable public outcry, the plan was dropped and the funds to pay for it removed from the bond issue which subsequently passed. We thought the issue was settled then. We were wrong.

Once again, the School Board has cast eyes on Kemper Park, this time with the purpose of adding a playing field. In November, in light of the history of this issue and before hearing from either side, the trustees of the Historical Society adopted a resolution in opposition. It was plain to us that the proposal was wrong in 2000 and that it is still wrong today.

This is not an issue of merely moving a rock to allow for more playing fields. It is a matter of tampering with a special place, donated in 1946 by the family of Richard Kemper for a specific purpose: to memorialize those in our community who gave their lives to defend our freedom. The deed by which the School District gained title is quite clear: "The said parcels of land shall be held and maintained in perpetuity for public and school use as a memorial to the late Lt. Richard Kemper, and the other students and former students of Union Free School District No. 1, Town of Mamaroneck, New York, who gave their lives in the

service of the United States of America in World War II; all of said parcels to be collectively known as Richard Kemper Park."

Land is special and unique in the law. Real estate is not fungible like dollar bills or sacks of grain. If a seller agrees to sell a specific piece of land, no other piece of land can be substituted. This is the issue we face here. The memorial park was established by the donation of land. It is not for this, or any subsequent, School Board to decide that the memorial park can go elsewhere or that it can be reconfigured at will. Were this a 9/11 memorial, we doubt that the proposal would ever have been made as the memory of that event is too fresh. Is it proper to tamper with a World War II memorial because the memories are less fresh?

The memorial is the park. The memorial is the land. The memorial is not merely the stone which has been erected in the park. For the School Board to assume that the land which contains the monument is theirs to do with as they please is to dishonor the original agreement by which the School District gained custody of this land. We dispute the proposition that the monument can be moved or the park reconfigured. The memorial is land and thus must not be compromised, to quote the deed, in perpetuity--*Fred Baron*.

On February 4th, St. Paul's Church National Historic Site, at 897 S. Columbus Avenue, Mount Vernon, will present a talk about the lives of former slaves buried in the churchyard. For more information about this and other events at St. Paul's, call 667-4116.

Published by
The Larchmont Historical Society
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The Larchmont Historical Society was founded in 1980 and chartered in 1981 as a not-for-profit educational corporation by the New York State Board of Regents to discover, preserve, and disseminate information concerning the natural, social, and civic history of Larchmont, and to promote the preservation of local historical sites and structures. The Society maintains an archives in the Mamaroneck Town Center, 740 W. Boston Post Road, Mamaroneck; publishes a newsletter; offers programs; conducts tours for school children and adults; and offers outreach lectures to other community groups.

The newsletter is published to provide news of the Society and occasional articles of related interest. Opinions expressed are those of their authors; publication should not be construed as endorsement by the Society.

The Archives are located in Suite 301 of the Mamaroneck Town Center, 740 W. Boston Post Road, Mamaroneck. 10543.

Regular hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-2. Appointments on other days, including Saturdays, may be arranged. Please call 381-2239 for more information or to make an appointment.

Archivist: Diane Holland

Home page: <members.savvy.net/lhs>

Plea for a Home

By Barbara Newman

This is the story of a wonderful old village by the sea called Larchmont and the Historical Society that wants to share the story with the people who live there.

It's a captivating tale, replete with rich stories
Of the colorful founders and all of their glories.

This once was a grand old seaside town
Where people would come from miles around
To stay and play in the grand hotels,
Build summer cottages and great clubs, as well.

There were composers and actors,
authors and playwrights,
Starlets and crooners--oh my, what a sight!
A playground for the rich and famous;
I'm told
That Larchmont was the place to be in the fold.

And the story continues with the wonderful people
Who put down their roots and put up some steeples.
And the chronicle builds as the neighborhood grew.
Roads were paved, schools opened, and businesses, too!
A railroad came through and suddenly pleased
The first crop of commuters, who traveled with ease.

Through wars and depressions, the village remained
A tight-knit community where hope never waned.
Soon a new Thruway was opened, and then
The town was never the same again.

And so it continues, with each new Larchmont face.
History is made in this wonderful place..
But no one who lived there ever really forgot

How much things had changed, and how much they had not.

And then, in the Eighties, a group was unveiled
That realized the value of such a fabulous tale.
Each document and photo, map and deed
Was vital to this town named after a tree.

Every single last story of historical lore
Should be gathered, documented, and let's not forget--stored!
The Historical Society was formed for the caring
About keeping the history intact for its sharing.

They set out on their mission to preserve and protect,
And enlighten the public so they'd never forget
The history and people and all that came to be
Whilst forming this village called Larchmont by the sea.

So the people of Larchmont shared what they knew
By donating costumes, music, and photos, too.
They gave paintings and drawings and trunks full of wares
In hopes of creating a community that cares.
The Society collected the treasures and stored them away,
Hoping to have a place to show them one day.

But alas, this short tale ends sadly right now,
For the recording and gathering led only to how
They have endless stories and objects to share
But no place to hang and exhibit their wares.

No wonderful space for public visitation
Or bringing school children to a neat location

For slideshows and lectures and tours of a museum.
Such glorious mementos and no place to see them!

A Museum! Oh my!

Wouldn't that be grand, to have one of those?
To just make sure that everyone knows
About an amazing collection of historical things
And watch the excitement that such a thing brings?

And interest would peak as exhibits did change.
Of course, the most prized possessions would always remain
On display in this home for all to see
Just how this small village so came to be.

But for now we'll just write you when we newly acquire
A few fabulous pieces that your heart would desire
To check out for yourself, up close and in person.
Instead, you'll be settling for a written description.

If, after having read this tale through, you are aware of the dilemma,
You might wonder how in the world it could ever get better.
Well, perhaps there's a home that you might like to donate?
Or if a gift of cash is your thing, we think that would be great!

We're starting a fund, a collection, you see,
For our fairytale house, chock-full of history.
Any and all assistance will be welcomed with bliss,
For we truly believe that you should see all of this.

We promise to update you in the very near future
When our campaign finally kicks off, that's for sure.

continued on page 4

BUT IS IT HISTORY?

The following is the third in a series of local myths written by the late Phil Reisman, Jr., and first published here in 1989. We will republish one of the myths in each issue.

The Underground Railroad.

Larchmont legend has long held that the handsome old house at 60 Beach Avenue was, before and during the Civil War, a secret way-station on the historic Underground Railroad. Slavery had been abolished for several decades in the northern states, but under a Federal law, the Fugitive Slave Act, any runaway from a slave state was still considered "property" and subject to apprehension by professional slave catchers who would return them to their owners for a fee.

The "railroad" was actually a chain of secret safe-houses where runaway slaves from the South could be temporarily hidden while being relayed north to freedom in

continued from page 3

And at the end of the rainbow, when our doors finally open,
Rest assured you'll be invited to celebrate this occasion.

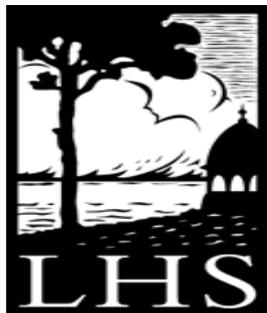
If you have any ideas or information about a house in Larchmont that would

Canada. The word "underground" was a synonym for "clandestine," but it gave an extra melodramatic color to the hiding places, which were as often attics, closets, and outbuildings as they were subterranean.

In 60 Beach Avenue, Larchmont has an ideal example of the type of house that attracts the underground railroad legend. It boasts narrow back stairs, a trap-door entry, windowless store rooms, cobwebby root cellar, and a handy escape route to the Sound--familiar set decorations for melodrama. Alas, no shred of historical evidence has ever been found to support this romantic story. [In fact, since Phil penned these words, evidence has been found that 60 Beach was not even built until 1894--Ed.]

be in a good, central location for the Historical Society's headquarters, one that might become available for purchase or could be donated at a future time, please contact our president, Fred Baron at 834-0876. Any and all ideas and suggestions are welcome!

Larchmont Historical Society
P.O. Box 742
Larchmont NY 10538

**Membership Form**

Please enroll me as a member of the Larchmont Historical Society. My tax-deductible dues for one year are enclosed. Membership year ends December 4, 2004.

New Renewal

- | | |
|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$15. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$25. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (65 or older) or student | \$5. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional or Business | \$25. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$50. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life (individual only) | \$150. |

Make checks payable and mail to:

Larchmont Historical Society
Box 742
Larchmont NY 10538

I would like to serve on the following committee:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Publications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> House Tour | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Costumes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> Archives |

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