



The
Gazebo Gazette
 Newsletter of the Larchmont Historical Society

Season Kickoff: A Pulitzer Prize Winning Look at “Our Town”

A Joint Presentation of the LHS and the University Club of Larchmont



Phyllis McGinley in her garden at 12 Hazel Lane

On Thursday, October 22, the Larchmont Historical Society (LHS), together with the University Club of Larchmont, will host a fascinating evening featuring a talk entitled “Phyllis McGinley: The “Poet Laureate” of the Suburbs”, presented by Dr. Joanna Gill, Lecturer in Twentieth-Century Literature at the University of Exeter, UK. The event will be held at the Larchmont Yacht Club including dinner with a cash bar. (see reservation form on page 7 for ticket information).

Phyllis McGinley in her garden at 12 Hazel Lane

In this talk Dr. Gill will discuss the life and work of Larchmont poet and essayist Phyllis McGinley, who in her mid-century heyday was one of the most celebrated figures in American letters. McGinley won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 for her book of selected poem *Times Three* (60,000 copies in hardback sold). Her book *Sixpence in her Shoe*, published in 1964 as a response to Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, was devoted to ‘the glory of housewifery’ and it enjoyed six months on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

According to Dr. Gill, the talk will take guests from McGinley’s upbringing in rural Oregon and Utah to her life in Larchmont as wife and mother (McGinley and her family lived at 12 Hazel Lane, a home featured on the 2008 LHS House Tour). Dr. Gill will examine the emergence of McGinley’s poetic voice in the context of changing mid-century attitudes towards the suburbs and in relation to new trends in American poetry. More importantly, according to Jo Gill, “this talk will consider the significance to McGinley’s development of a distinctive poetic style of her everyday experience as a suburban wife and mother.” By examining particular poems in detail Dr. Gill will trace the influence of Larchmont life in her writing. “By drawing on unpublished material from the McGinley archives at Syracuse University, I reveal the importance of the people, places and rituals of Larchmont to McGinley’s success—an importance which, sadly,

became all-to-apparent to her when she briefly left the village for a new home in Connecticut.”

Gossip, success, husbands, fathers, privacy, children, vanity, cocktail clatter, seasons, sexual equality—it all ends up on the backyard barbeque in McGinley’s upbeat, witty, yet sometimes unnerving rendering of the suburban landscape. This is an evening not to be missed!

About Dr. Joanna Gill: Dr. Jo Gill is Lecturer in 20th Century Literature at the University of Exeter, UK. She is the author of *Anne Sexton’s Confessional Poetics* (University Press of Florida 2007), of *Women’s Poetry* (Columbia University Press 2007) and *The Cambridge Introduction to Sylvia Plath* (Cambridge University Press 2008). She is currently writing a book—from which this talk is drawn—entitled *The Poetics of the American Suburbs*.

LHS and the University Club of
 Larchmont present a

Speaker Evening with Dr. Joanna Gill

“Phyllis McGinley: Poet Laureate of
 the Suburbs”

Thursday, October 22, 2009

Larchmont Yacht Club

6:30 cocktails; 7:30 dinner; 8:15 speaker

\$40.00 pp includes salad, dinner, dessert and coffee

Cash bar

For further information call Patti Roberts 833-9080

Send Your Reservation Form (Page 7) Today!

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Lynne Crowley, Archivist

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 Rd., 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.

President's Message:

The Larchmont Historical Society is off and running with many exciting events and ideas underway for this year.

First I would like to welcome new board members Laura Hoffman, Cynthia McManus, Jennifer Lamb, and returning board member, Ellen Martin. Each of them bring energy and enthusiasm to our board, and you'll hear more about their special interests as the year goes on.

For those of you who have followed the story of the beautiful 1922 American La-France Engine One, we have big news to report. After carefully reviewing the fire engine restoration experts and getting bids on what it would cost to restore the fire truck, the fire history committee has selected a restorer in Maine. Engine One has been delivered and work has begun so that once again she can serve the community in her original condition. Thanks to a generous donation by the Orans family, in memory of Jacob Orans – a volunteer firefighter in Larchmont — the fundraising campaign is off to a great start! We'll keep you updated on its progress.

We're in the process of scheduling our first programs. In October we are co-hosting a speaker event with the University Club: Phyllis McGinley, Poet Laureate of the Suburbs. Soon after we are holding a Veterans Day Commemoration, featuring oral histories not to be missed! For fun in December we've got a very special Victorian Christmas talk and tour in the works.

As the years pass, the Century Homes Club numbers keep growing. The annual cocktail party will be scheduled for some time this winter. If you think your home is nearing the century mark, check online for the application procedure.

Plans are underway for the house tour, and this effort is being spearheaded by new board member Laura Hoffman. If you would like to have your home considered for the tour, please get in touch with Laura (833-0009 or laurabhoffman@mac.com)

In addition to doing a good deed for the historical society, the benefit to homeowners is that volunteers will carefully research the history of your house and its previous owners. This provides a wonderful keepsake for you and your family.

If you have not yet renewed your membership in the Larchmont Historical Society, please do. This is the final newsletter we will send to nonmembers. Membership is a great bargain. Senior citizens and students may join for only \$5; individual membership is \$15; family membership is \$25. You can become a life member for \$150. If you're not certain about your status, call the office or send an e-mail.

- Colette Rodbell



Phyllis McGinley's home at 12 Hazel Lane in Larchmont. The home is currently owned by the Oresman family, who have generously opened their home to the community for our 2008 house tour.

From the Archives:

Recently, we received an email from Christopher Murphy, formerly of 26 Linden Avenue. He was writing from Orlando, Florida to send us a photo of the 1982 Manor Beach Swim Team's award-winning swimmers of that summer, taken by Eugene Egan, 6th grade teacher at Chatsworth Avenue School. Christopher says he believes that 1982 was Ralph Santoliquido's first year running Manor Beach. We'll be adding this photo to our website soon, but we'd love to have identification of all the kids! That's where you, dear Reader, come in. Christopher is the handsome 16 -year old on one knee, clutching his trophies, but who are the other aquatic stars in the firmament called Manor Beach (pardon my mixed metaphors)?



Email us (archives@larchmonthistory.org), phone in (381-2239), write a letter, send it by carrier pigeon if you must, but, please, let us know what light you can shed on this mystery!

Meanwhile, with up to the minute news, I'll share with you a possible treasure that has landed in our collective lap here at the archive. The other day I was hanging about the Larchmont Library – just can't get away from research – when June Hesler, Assistant Director of the Library, told me that she was about to receive a donation of a 16mm film that apparently had footage of Larchmont in the 1930s. She had indicated to the donor in Washington, DC that it might be a better fit for the Historical Society, and, so, I picked it up from her; now I'm looking forward to seeing what's on the film. Stay tuned, as it were, to our upcoming newsletters and I'll let you know if we've hit a jackpot!

-Lynne Crowley, Archivist

Mike Tripicco
Custom Covers

(radiator enclosures, screen and storm doors, table pads, lock work)

914-381-5693; cell 914-420-9310



Century Homes Club: “The Dean Cottage” 1251 Palmer Ave

Having grown up in Larchmont, I was thrilled to return in 2006 to our new(for us) old home at 1251 Palmer Ave. I can remember walking by our home as a child on my way to town and I always admired it. Our next door neighbor, who has lived in his house since the mid'70's, told us tales of our house and property. He said it was the homestead for a family orchard, and his house was built for their children in 1898 (he found newspapers stuffed in the walls). Before we moved in, we had insulation installed and based on the construction methods, Lou at Nuway was sure our house dated from the mid-1880's. Now I was really curious, but despite my strong interest and desire to find out more, other pressing matters intervened (like work, family, etc.). I did manage to go to the town offices to check their records, but they did not go back far enough. Then I found out that the Larchmont Historical Society has a Century Homes Club for homeowners in the 10538 zip code whose houses are at least 100 years old. All I had to do was download the application from the website and send it to the LHS with a \$50.00 check for the research and a \$200 check for the plaque. The plaque will even be installed free by Mike Tripicco! Lynne Crowley, our archivist, did the rest.

You may have read of other Century Home Club member's homes in this space. We try to highlight the homes with the most interesting stories. Some houses, however, we just don't know that much about. Lynne discovered that the house was probably built in 1892 by Susan Dean, widow of grocer Henry Dean, on property originally owned by the Howell family. I have a good friend whose mother's name was Dean—he has researched his family roots back to the 17th century. Wouldn't it be great if one of his ancestors had built our house? Alas, it was not to be. Still, the whole exercise was great fun. I hope to find out more about Susan Dean and her story. *- Nancy White*

A Tale of Two Nurseries: Tony's and Larchmont Nurseries

An early glimpse into the history of Larchmont's two neighboring nurseries shows a very different picture than what we see today. In 1909, Frenchman Charles E. Bossi founded the floral and landscape business, Bassi-Freres, Inc. The nursery for his New Rochelle business was situated across from today's Tony's Nursery where the Pine Ridge Condominiums and Town Houses were constructed in the 1970's. The two current nurseries, Tony's and Larchmont Nurseries, were originally private homes constructed as early as the latter quarter of the nineteenth century. There is little trace of the first nursery to the north of Boston Post Road but behind the layers of greenhouses and showrooms to the south hide two century plus houses. In the case of Larchmont Nurseries where more research has been found, much of the original exterior house can still be discovered.



Painted a cheerful yellow body with green trim, this Victorian house with chalet style details has been dated to as early as 1891 (possibly as early as 1884) through the local tax records. On the 1892 map and the tax records, it shows Mrs. Terence John McCahill owned and resided at this house that included a barn. A semicircular road wraps to the south of the house and was known as Ferguson Place. This south facing façade was the front of the house and must have had a wonderful view of Mott's Mill Pond and ultimately Long Island Sound. In an early turn of the century photograph the McCahill family poses at the base of the porch steps (see image). Today, the porch doesn't wrap around the house but is contained to the area above the stone steps. The house had several owners during the early 1900's including in order: Catherine A. Sagel, Abbie M. Donovan, Daniel J. Donovan, Robert Foley and Frank Alexe in 1918. Ten years later Alexe foreclosed on the mortgage and the Lawyers Westchester Mortgage and Title Company owned the house.

Frank and his wife, Margaret E., continued to live at 315 Boston Post Road (original street address) until 1934 even though the Larchmont Nurseries business began in 1929. The business is advertised in the 'Suburban Shops' section of the New York Times on November 26, 1933. In 1938, Frank and Jose (Joe) Rodrigues purchased the nursery for \$8,500. Their brother, Antonio, would own Tony's Nurseries several decades later.



As mentioned before, little is yet known about the early homeowners at the 2-story house to the east of the McCahill's (research pending). In 1948, Paul H. Terry owned the house and attached a new salesroom and greenhouse; a garage and two greenhouses were already present on the site. The contractor and tenant who completed this work was Antonio Rodrigues. (Note: the Rodrigues brothers were living on the two sites prior to their ownerships). A building permit dated November 10, 1948 notes: "Work Performed by Tenant himself". Eleven years later, Antonio and his wife would officially purchase Tony's Nursery for \$25,000. In 1971, Antonio's son, John A., continued the family business and in 1996, Antonio's grandson, John M. and his wife Virginia, took over the business.

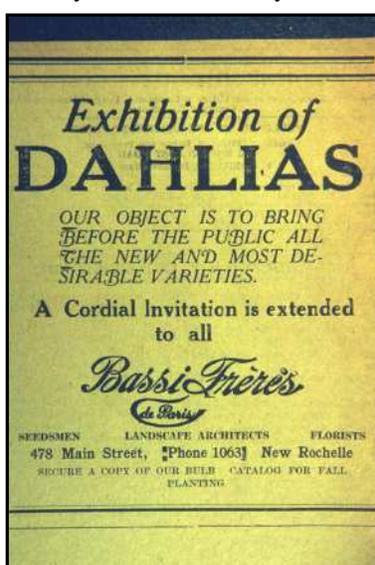
Next door, Frank and Joe were also making improvements on their nursery. At the same time, Frank had a real estate business as early as 1932. In 1942, the brothers built a showroom and greenhouse to the west of the house. Prior to the work, the footprint of the house was like a cross with multiple first and second story porches (see image). In 1965, noted architect G.P. Jennewein and son of the Neo-Classical sculptor, Carl Paul Jennewein, reconstructed a freestanding warehouse for \$20,000 was eventually damaged by fire. Joe's son, Ronny Rodrigues, became the next owner of Larchmont Nurseries. His ex-wife



Joanne continues to run the business today.

By the 1930's, all three nurseries to the north and south of Boston Post Road were running active businesses. The three Rodrigues brothers ran Tony's and Larchmont Nurseries while Charles and Austin Bassi were running Bassi Freres, Inc. Unlike the nurseries across the street, the Bassi business didn't get passed to the next generation of Bassis. Charles passed away at his home, 52 Ellenton Avenue, in New Rochelle on July 17, 1952. Before 1954, the Bassi property had been reduced by half and was to the south of Sherwood Drive. In a NYT article dated December 10, 1963, the property 'owned by a corporation headed by a corporation headed by Frank Rodrigues would be sold to investors'. Ten acres would have been used for a store of 'Grand Way' and 3.3 acres would be converted to a park. This plan was rejected and another plan wasn't realized until the 1970's. In the interim the greenhouses and two-story stone structure (see image) were razed and a developer planned to build a tennis center. The residents of Larchmont wanted housing so Diane Millstein of DGM Partners ultimately built 40 two-bedroom town houses on a 6.5 acres. This development is known as Pine Ridge. The only trace of this nursery may be the stone entry columns standing at the western corner of Boston Post Road and Mayhew. The Tony's Nurseries house still

serves as an showroom
mont Nurs-
to be used
residence.



office and
while Larch-
eries continues
primarily as a
-Ellen Martin

Remembering George Berridge Treasurer, 2004—2007



George Berridge, left, enjoys some cake at our annual Century Homes Club cocktail party in 2007. Ned Benton is on the right.

We at the Larchmont Historical Society were very saddened at the passing of our dear friend, and exceptional board member, George B. Berridge. George, a long-time resident of Larchmont, joined our board in 2004 as Treasurer, and immediately set to work managing our finances to be even more productive and efficient. He approached his position with integrity and vigor, extending himself beyond the 'call of duty'. And while using his great intelligence to help us navigate our budget and understand our by-laws, he also shared with us his quick wit and wonderful warmth in all of his dealings. We were so fortunate to have worked with George, and will deeply miss his dedication, wisdom, and humor.

2009-10 Calendar of Programs

For information on programs call Patti Roberts, 914-833-9080, patriciaroberts@optonline.net

Thursday, October 22

LHS-University Club speaker event: Phyllis McGinley, Poet Laureate of the Suburbs. Talk given by Dr. Jo Gill from Exeter University, UK. Cocktails 6:30pm/dinner 7:30pm/speaker 8:15pm; \$40 /pp Cash Bar Larchmont Yacht Club. Send reservation form on opposite page with your check.

Wednesday, November 11

“Once Upon a Time in a War” A rare opportunity to hear firsthand accounts of our neighbors’ personal acts of patriotism. Oral histories given by local veterans from many wars and battlefronts. Middle and high school students welcome. A perfect way to honor Veteran’s Day, this will surely be a memorable event. Refreshments. 3pm. St. John’s Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 4 Fountain Square, Larchmont. Donations welcome.

Sunday, December 6—St. Nicholas’ Day

“A Victorian Christmas” In the holiday spirit we are pleased to announce that Larchmont resident Bill Steely, foremost collector of “antique Christmas,” will give a talk on the history of Victorian Christmas and decorations. The talk will be followed by a private tour of the Steely home, bedecked in rare, antique Christmas finery from the U.S. and Europe. Private home location, 2pm. This is a ticketed event and seats are limited. No children under 14. Details to follow.

Saturday, January 23

2010 Winter Antiques Show. This year we are offering our members the opportunity to see the famous Winter Antiques show at the Park Avenue Armory in style! Our group will attend a preview of the show on Saturday, January 23rd followed by luncheon in the landmark-designated Tiffany Room. This year’s loan exhibition features: *Colonial to Modern: A Century of Collecting at Historic New England*. Limited space. Reserve before November 10. Tickets: \$95/pp.. Send reservation form on opposite page with your check.

March TBD

Women’s History Month Speaker to be determined

Sunday, April 25

LHS Annual House Tour: save the date for one of Westchester’s most anticipated events. Get involved! Volunteer by contacting Laura Hoffman at 833- 0009 or laurabhoffman@mac.com.

June TBD

Annual Meeting: Year-end membership meeting/celebration at Horseshoe Harbor Yacht Club

The Larchmont Historical Society



the 2010 Winter Antiques Show Committee

Cordially invite you to a

V.I.P. Day

At the 2010 Winter Antiques Show

The Park Avenue Armory, Park Avenue at 76th Street, New York

Saturday, January 23, 2010

11am open

Early admission with Dealer's Tour * Catalogue * Docent Tour of Special Loan Exhibit

* Luncheon in the Tiffany Room *

56th Anniversary Loan Exhibition:

Historic New England celebrating their 100th Anniversary!

Colonial to Modern: A Century of Collecting at Historic New England

Tickets to members/guests: \$95 (\$70 is tax deductible)

Please see reservation form in below. Space limited.—Reserve before November 10! Make checks payable to LHS.

"Once Upon a Time in a War"

Oral histories told by local veterans of many wars and battlefronts. The LHS invites you to honor Veterans Day and spend the afternoon listening to personal accounts of patriotism. Kids welcome. Refreshments.



3 pm on Wednesday, November 11 at St. John's Episcopal Church, Larchmont
For more information: Patti Roberts 914-833-9080; patriciaroberts@optonline.net

TICKET PURCHASE FORM

Yes, I would like to purchase tickets to:

Dr. Jo Gill, speaker and Dinner LYC, Thurs, Oct 22 # ____ @ \$40: \$ ____

Winter Antiques Show Preview Lunch, Sat, Jan 23 # ____ @ \$95 \$ ____

Not a member of the Larchmont Historical Society?

Join Now!

See membership form on the back page of this newsletter

Total enclosed:\$ _____

Name: _____

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Tel: _____ Email: _____

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please enroll me as a member of the Larchmont Historical Society. My tax-deductible dues for one year are enclosed. Annual membership year is: September - June..

New Member Renewing Member

Please indicate membership category:

Individual \$ 15
 Family \$ 25
 Senior (65+) & Student \$ 5
 Institutional or Business \$ 40
 Sustaining \$ 50
 Life (individual only) \$150

Make checks payable & mail to:

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

I would like to volunteer to help on the following committee(s):

Spring House Tour Museum Planning Grant Research/
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 Exhibits Fire History Century Homes Club
 Publicity Monthly Programs Fundraising
 Archives Special Events

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