

During 2022, the Ardsley Historical Society (“AHS”) continued its active engagement with the Ardsley community. Last year we had 160 dues paying members, including nearly 40 former residents, 10 business sponsors, and 27 new members. 2022 marked the 40th anniversary of the Society’s creation and our 2022 calendar reflected many of its accomplishments over that time.

2022 saw us begin a new chapter in our goals of further enriching the experience for our members and deepening our community ties, particularly with Ardsley’s schools.

We continued to enhance our website, uploading all of our past 85 newsletters, posting new photographs, and adding various links, including video links for three events: the Village’s 125th Anniversary walking history tours, our Spring program on The Life & Legacy of Thomas Paine, and the unveiling of the American Encampment Revolutionary War Marker which I’ll be discussing in greater detail in a few minutes. Our website is now integrated with analytics software that allows us to track page and site performance, and also allows for electronic payments for membership and donations. We also updated our website list of business sponsors and encouraged our members to support them.

Our Spring and Fall Newsletters, now in color, were very well received and contained articles across a range of Ardsley’s history. We express our deep gratitude to George Calvi who has served as our Editor for 6 years. The Spring edition sent to our members contained “More Tales from the Fire Chiefs” (Patrick Lindsay, James Macri, and Rick Thompson), “An Historical Marker for the Ardsley Train Station” (Pete Marcus), “Part 4 of The First Amendment at the Ardsley Schoolhouse Gate” (Gary Rappaport), “It Could Only Happen in Ardsley” (George Calvi), “The Legend of Mully” (Matt Arone), and “Remembering Acting Village Justice Robert Horan” (George Calvi). Our Fall newsletter was sent to all Village residents and business owners and contained articles entitled “Life with former Village Clerk Mary Kamens” (George Calvi), “A Brief History of The Ardsley Little League” (Matt Arone), “Middle School Students Help Unveil Revolutionary War Marker” (Pete Marcus), “Historical Society Collaborates with the Middle School Local History Club” (Rob Pellegrino & Pete Marcus), and “Another Tale of the Fire Chiefs” (the Vinny Coulehan Years). Throughout the year, Gary Rappaport, one of our directors,

continued his Timepiece series, including stories about Native Americans in Westchester County; Does History Take Sides; Textbook Wars: Missing Lessons from the Vietnam War; Looking for America: Kings of the Road from Ardsley to Michigan; The Other Sept 11s, and Next Stop Worthington-Part1); thank you Gary, for your significant contributions.

In addition to website improvements, our upcoming events and other news are reported on Ardsley Connect every week as well as on Facebook, where we have also added photographs and other content. We also continue to expand our digital inventory as people generously make donations of articles, photographs, and other memorabilia as well as monetary contributions. One of the recent items received was a Wildflowers Quilt from Rachel Palermo's daughter (Joanne); the quilt was made by the Garden Club in 1976 and raffled off (Rachel was the winner then and this beautiful quilt is now stored in our archives).

In regard to important inventorying of materials, this year's High School extern (Jake Federbusch) took on the special task of completing an inventory of the contents of the American Legion building in Pascone Park. Jake produced a detailed Excel spreadsheet of the contents as well as a photograph of each item; the photos are part of our Cloud Repository (SmugMug), and a link to both items is on our website under "American Legion Museum Virtual Tour." It is our intention to engage professional level help to improve the experience for visitors to the museum. We also continue to digitize important books for our members. We previously had digitized Arthur Siliman's *History of Ardsley*, and we are presently digitizing Fred and Patricia Arone's *The War Years*, a book which describes life in Ardsley during WWII and is dedicated to the 14 young men from the Ardsley School District who made the ultimate sacrifice.

As in all other years, we continued to offer programs to both our members and the general public at no charge. On January 30, we offered "Our Navy Today and Tomorrow – Facts, Strategy and Challenges." This program produced a very lively question and answer session. On May 22, we conducted our annual business meeting that included the featured presentation "Thomas Paine and Revolutionary America" by Dr. Michael Crowder, from the Institute for Thomas Paine Studies at Iona College. We received excellent feedback on this program and the recorded program is now on our website for access by our members. On October 23, Walter Schwartz presented a program on the New

Croton Aqueduct. There was a great deal of audience participation and we recorded this program as well; it will be on our website for our members to enjoy in the very near future.

One of the programs is a repeat program I've had the privilege of doing for several years, most recently just this morning via zoom – Ardsley History for Second Graders. I covered topics like How Ardsley Got Its Name, Pickle Factories, the Impact of the Railroad and Early Schools in Ardsley.

Among the highlights of 2022 was our Society's excellent collaboration with the newly created Ardsley Middle School's Local History Club for interested students, created by Middle School Teachers Andrew Nappi and Sean Grady. On Sept 17, the Village Historian (Rob Pellegrino) conducted a tour of the American Legion Building in Pascone Park for 20 club members. Later that week, Rob and I met with club members and Mssrs. Nappi and Grady at the Society's office to view and explain the significance of a selection of our artifacts. After voting on which of the artifacts they wanted to display and preparing brief descriptions for each of them, Club members arranged and installed them in the display cases in the Ardsley Middle School lobby. Ardsley's School Superintendent praised the efforts of the Club and the reception being given to the display in one of the Sharing Success blasts to the District. In December, the artifacts were moved from the Middle School to the High School where they are scheduled to remain through the month of January before moving to Concord Road.

Before discussing the Historical markers, photos of which I have with me, I'll recap briefly our many other activities and accomplishments –

At the beginning of the year, we acquired from Greenburgh one of Anthony Radomski's leatherworks about Native American Tribes and after completing some repair work, we delivered it to Ardsley's Middle School principal (Stuart Horlacher). It is now on display in the Middle School's library.

We provided valuable research assistance to Noah Bonett, a 2020 Ardsley High School graduate and Syracuse University student majoring in civil engineering. He was assigned a "hometown project" and chose Ardsley's flood control project; he was near a dead end in looking for more detailed materials

and we provided him a book produced by the Army Corps of Engineers, enabling Noah to complete his project.

We provided regular research help to Henrietta Toth who writes on local history for the *Bee Local Buzz* magazine (recently it was renamed *The Neighborhood Buzz: The Rivertowns*), including materials relating to the woolly mammoth bones discovered in 1975 in the yard of a home on Huntley Drive, and more recently materials relating to the history of the Ardsley Public Library. In turn, she has highlighted our society and our Village Historian, Rob Pellegrino. In an article relating favorite local historian stories. Rob related the fact that in 1882, 37 years before the federal government would grant woman the right to vote, residents of the then hamlet of Ashford debated and then voted in favor of women's suffrage at a meeting at its Lyceum; Ardsley would also be the first village or town in Westchester to elect a woman to office – Isabel McCartney, Treasurer, in 1914, still years before women were granted the right to vote.

On March 15, we hosted French historian Dr. Iris de Rode as she viewed the Odell House's 1781 exhibit that was on display in the lobby of the Ardsley Middle School.

On Memorial Day, we opened the American Legion building and our Village Historian gave tours of the museum to residents after the Village's Memorial Day parade ceremony ended, and on Veterans Day we sent out a link to our membership telling them about the Living History program that was being broadcast on the local public access TV channel. We also unlocked the 1995 video program on our website about the 14 Ardsleyans who made the supreme sacrifice during WWII and who are honored with a star on the Roll of Honor in Pascone Park.

In the Fall, we participated in the Village's "Welcome Back Ardsley" event in Pascone Park; our table was visited by many of our residents who enjoyed looking at some of the old high school yearbooks and other memorabilia.

An especially enjoyable part of our work is discovering that items in our archives or received by us have special significance. In late September, we discovered that the band director's jacket in our archives was worn by Joseph

Greco, Ardsley's High School band director, at a 1972 international band competition held in Vienna, Austria, that Ardsley won. After tedious research, including locating past band members, we were able to offer enough information and several photographs to create a calendar page in our 2023 Calendar honoring the band's achievement.

Lastly, on December 19 we received an early 20th century leather fire helmet from a collector's estate. Uncertain at first, it was determined that the helmet was indeed an Ardsley Fire Department helmet from the early 1900s, and it was donated to the Ardsley Fire Chief who has added it to their display case on the second floor of the fire house.

As always, the Village Historian and I have continued to respond to inquiries from current and former village residents. These inquiries include requests for information and pictures about past events, their ancestors, and their homes. Our archives have been a great resource in responding to these inquiries and we welcome the inquiries.

Our Society, in addition to its core mission, has extended itself to support two other important ongoing historical projects that will ultimately highlight the Ardsley School District area's strong connection to the Revolutionary War. One is the ongoing Odell House Restoration, where General Rochambeau was headquartered and regularly met with George Washington and his officer during the six-week long encampment our area. Included in our efforts are our communication of updates on the progress of the restoration and the launch on You Tube of the latest video, *Westchester's Philipsburgh Encampment of 1781*. It was designed for use by Westchester students studying American History in grades four and seven, and also serves as an introduction for anyone interested in Westchester's role in the Revolutionary War.

During 2022, our organization has also actively supported the RW250 initiative (an organization that is working to promote events that focus on the 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War) in Westchester. We've circulated links to their three new videos on Westchester's role in the American Revolution: "Revolutionary People: Patriots and Loyalists" featuring local acting students (including Ardsley's own Piya Kathikeyan, age 11), and on October 22 the Village Historian and I staffed a table at their living history event

at Pierson Park in Tarrytown (Revolution on the Hudson) where we displayed some materials from our own archives, including pictures of our historical marker of the American Encampment.

I've referred to the historical markers several times and I've saved them for last since they represent an accomplishment that will inform and educate thousands for decades to come.

On behalf of the Society, I applied to the William G. Pomroy Foundation for approval for historical markers for the Ardsley Train Station on the Putnam Division railroad and the American Encampment during the Revolutionary War. The Foundation, which in 1939 took over from New York State the responsibility for vetting applications, requires primary sources to document whatever is noted on the sign, and the process takes many months. Both markers were approved at the end of 2021.

On April 30, a dedication of the railroad marker, placed at the Elm Street accessway to the South County Trailway where the Ardsley Station was located, was held with the Ardsley mayor, several trustees, and representatives from Westchester County government (including Mary Jane Shimsky) in attendance. At the end of September a QR Code sign was added to the marker which is linked to a web page that contains historical information and photos concerning the station which began service at the end of 1880, as well as photos from the dedication ceremony. Our thanks to David DiGregorio and the DPW staff for handling all of the installations.

On October 22, an unveiling ceremony of the American Encampment marker was held on Farm Road at the entrance to the high school property. Prior to the unveiling, Dr. Schoenfeld commended the Society for its efforts and collaboration with the school district. Following those remarks four members of the Middle School History Club and their teachers, Andrew Nappi and Sean Grady, read from an historical narrative that I had prepared. The ceremony concluded with reverence in comments offered by Mary Jane Shimsky and Susan Seal, leader of the non-profit assisting the Town in the restoration of the Odell House, and Supervisor Paul Feiner. A video of the ceremony was produced by one of our directors, Pierre Fontaine; thank you Pierre, for your

excellent production. A link to that video is included on our website as well as on the web page linked to the QR Code sign. Both markers are also now listed on CLIO (an app that shows places of interest in Westchester County and is maintained by the Westchester County Historical Society).

2023 has begun with our latest calendar which was mailed to all AHS members at the end of December. Among other topics, it contains calendar pages with information about noteworthy Ardsleyans, one example being Donald Moss, who designed U.S. Postage Stamps for the 1976 Olympics.

On March 19 we plan to conduct a live program about the Great Hunger Memorial which is located in Macy Park, and we are also attempting to schedule Mary Calvi to talk about her second book on Teddy Roosevelt's first love. We are also considering a program about Mark Twain.

We plan to add a search capability to our website so users can find specific information in our PDF documents (newsletters, etc.). We are also investigating a long-term project of digitizing the back issues of the Rivertowns Enterprise.

We plan to continue to support and participate in the RW250 initiative and the Odell House restoration. Two major events have already been scheduled: (1) on May 20 a mobile audio tour ("Follow the French Troops") to three locations: Yorktown, Smith's Tavern (in North Castle) and the Odell House; and (2) on September 29-30 Colonial Day, which will include a replica of George Washington's tent utilized during the encampment. Planning is underway for inviting younger Ardsley students to the tent raising on the 29th.

One of our primary goals is to build on our collaboration with the Ardsley School District beyond the Middle School Local History Club which will necessarily remain a focus, to explore ways to encourage students and teachers to learn about our area's history.

We would also like to obtain recognition for Adolph Lewisohn (e.g. a sign or a plaque) in connection with the new Village Garage, which is currently under construction.

Last year, our Society's efforts were successful in locating a memorial plaque listing the 14 young men who died in WWII. The plaque was the central

piece of a WWII memorial park dedicated in 1954, located in what is now the rear of the Ashford Court Condominium, We are planning to restore the plaque and to discuss with the School District the possibility of installing it in an appropriately respectful place on the High School grounds.

Lastly, our youngest Board Member, Matt Arone, is developing a social media plan to reach Ardsley Class Reunion sites and other Ardsley related sites to communicate to them the benefits of membership including, for example, the photographs and information we have in our complete collection of yearbooks.

Of course, these are just a few of the many activities and endeavors planned for 2023.

The AHS currently has two openings on our Board of Directors as well as an opening for an editor for our newsletters, as well as someone who is interested in working on our archives. We also welcome ideas and articles for consideration for publication. If you have an interest in Ardsley history, please contact me for more information (Pete Marcus at 914-393-3222).

Of course, we are always happy to have new members. To become a member or to renew your membership go to our website (ardsleyhistoricalsociety.org) and under “membership” you can either pay by credit card or go to the bottom of the page and download our membership application, enclose your check and mail it to our PO Box (523). Our next monthly Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 21 at 7:30 via Zoom. All Ardsley residents are welcome to attend.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Marcus, President