

During 2023, the Ardsley Historical Society (“AHS”) continued its active engagement with the Ardsley community. Last year we had 152 dues paying members, including nearly 50 former residents, 10 business sponsors, and 25 new members. 2023 marked the 41st anniversary of the Society’s creation and our 2023 calendar reflected many of the Society’s accomplishments over that time.

2023 saw us continue 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, where we uploaded all of our past newsletters and additionally 29 editions (412 pages) of Masterson Press and 35 editions (140 pages) of the Ardsley Sun Leader, as well as posting new photographs, and adding various links, including video links for three programs: The History of the New Croton Aqueduct in Ardsley, The Great Hunger Memorial, and Jackie Robinson & Branch Rickey: The Men who broke baseball’s Color Barrier. We also added a search capability so users can locate specific information in our PDF documents (newsletters, newspapers, etc.).

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 now average 700 page views a month. We also updated our website’s list of business sponsors and encouraged our members to support them.

Our Summer Newsletter, again in color, was very well received. It contained articles relating to Revolutionary War history in the Ardsley area, especially focusing on the six-week joint encampment during the summer of 1781 of the American troops, led by General George Washington, and the French troops, led by the Comte de Rochambeau. The two generals’ decisions and actions during this six-week encampment led directly to the end of the war when the British general, Lord Cornwallis was forced to surrender on October 19, 1781 at the Battle of Yorktown (Virginia).

The significance of this encampment can be better understood in the context of all the related locations: George Washington's troops' encampment along Heatherdell Road (including the areas where Concord Road Elementary School and the High School now stand); Washington's headquarters at Joseph Appleby's farmhouse (no longer in existence but understood to have been located on Secor Road near where the WFAS radio station tower is located); the French troops' encampment (on and near the Sunningdale Country Club property on Underhill Road); and General Rochambeau's headquarters at the Odell House on Ridge Road (now undergoing restoration with plans to eventually become a museum). Generals Washington and Rochambeau met frequently at the Odell House to plan their strategy.

In 2004, the Village of Ardsley approved a resolution to accept a NY State grant for the purchase and installation of six historical markers to commemorate the role our area played during the Revolutionary War. These markers were installed in 2008 (4 in Ardsley and 2 in Greenburgh on the property of the Odell House), and in 2009 President Obama made the encampment and associated roads part of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (w3R-US.org). On the pages of our summer newsletter, we examined each of these 6 markers plus 2 additional markers that were later installed (one for the French Camp, in 2014, and the other for the American Camp in 2022). The centerfold map of the newsletter shows the relative locations of each of the markers.

Throughout the year, Gary Rappaport, one of our directors, continued his Timepiece series, including stories entitled "What's in a Name? The Origins of Ardsley and the 5-Hive," "America's Divided Loyalties" and "Yesterday's papers;" thank you Gary, for your significant contributions.

In addition to website improvements, our upcoming events and other Society news are reported on Ardsley Connect 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. In December we also created an Instagram page to try and attract interest from the student population, present and past.

Last year's High School extern (Luke Farberman) took on several tasks: he updated captions on our photo repository (on Smug Mug) and scanned the senior sections of 15 Ardsley High School yearbooks. This latter task will help us be more responsive for future high school reunions.

As in all other years, we continued to offer programs to both our members and the general public at no charge. On March 19, we offered "The Great Hunger Memorial" by Jim Houlihan. This program was our most popular in recent memory with over 70 people attending. On May 7, we conducted our annual business meeting that included the featured presentation "Jackie Robinson & Branch Rickey: The Men Who Broke Baseball's Color Barrier" by John Vorperian. We received excellent feedback on this program and the recorded program is now on our website for access by our members. On September 10, Mary Calvi presented a program on her latest book, *If a Poem Could Live and Breathe: A Novel of Teddy Roosevelt's First Love*. There was a great deal of audience participation and we recorded this program as well; it will be on our website for our members in the very near future. On September 15, our President, Peter Marcus, delivered a presentation to 22 residents of The Atria about the History of the Ardsley Community.

Another of the programs is a repeat program I've had the privilege of doing for several years, "The Ardsley Community" for all the second grade classes at Concord Road School. On February 6 via Zoom 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 2023 was our Society's excellent collaboration with the Ardsley Middle School's Local History Club for interested students, created by Middle School Teachers Andrew Nappi and Sean Grady. Artifacts they selected for display were moved from the Middle School lobby to the High School where they remained until the end of March. At the end of March, these artifacts were moved back to the Middle School lobby where they remained until the end of May. On September 30 nine students from the History club attended the Odell House's Colonial Day and they enjoyed participating in their activities very much.

Our two historical markers (Ardley Train Station and the Revolutionary War Encampment) both have QR Code signs that remain active. In 2023 we had 98 scans at the Train Station marker and 76 scans at the Encampment marker. The signs are linked to our website pages which provide more information to anyone who scans the QR Code. Both markers are now listed on CLIO (a list of places of interest that is maintained by Westchester County Historical Society).

On Memorial Day, we opened the American Legion building and our Village Historian, Rob Pellegrino, gave tours of the museum to residents after the Village's Memorial Day parade ceremony ended. 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 Ardley high school graduates who made the supreme sacrifice during WWII and who are honored with a star on the Roll of Honor in Pascone Park.

The AHS enjoys supporting other Ardley organizations. On March 12, we supported the Garden Club's event at the Community Center by hanging up 3 of their quilts. On April 15, we attended the Ardley Little League parade and we staffed a table at McDowell Park with some of our memorabilia. We also took photos of the coaches and members of the team we sponsored. On June 24, we supported MVR's (McCartney, Verino & Rosenberry) 100th anniversary celebration at Pascone Park by hosting a table with some of the organization's artifacts and having the Village Historian open the American Legion Museum for tours. Before its use as a meeting place for WWI veterans, the museum was McCartney's original offices. On August 31, we assisted Sharon Colabello with the presentation of the new Military Tribute Banners at Pascone Park. We also gave Tim Lamorte (Editor of the Rivertowns Enterprise) a tour of the American Legion Museum. On September 19, two Ardley Girl Scout leaders attended our Board meeting to discuss their plans for Ardley's 100th Anniversary celebration planned for 2024. We promised to provide them with access to our photographs and newsletter articles as well as to an old girl scout uniform. We also provided them with some ideas for their "gold star" projects. In November, we tried to assist the Village with

organizing a trip for the seniors to visit the Jackie Robinson Museum in NY City. Due to a lack of interest, the trip had to be canceled. Hopefully, the trip can be rescheduled by expanding the audience.

On several occasions during 2023 we met with the Ardsley School Superintendent to discuss installing the WWII memorial on the high school property. This was the memorial that commemorated the 14 Ardsley high school students who enlisted in WWII after graduation and were killed in the line of duty. In 1954, the Honor Society at the former Ashford Avenue School (now Ashford Court Condominiums) raised money for the marker and had the memorial erected in the school courtyard. Unfortunately, when the new high school opened in 1958 this memorial was never relocated there.

In October, the Society's President updated the Ardsley History Timeline by adding an introduction as well as entries for the Girl Scouts, this year's Juneteenth celebration, and MVR's 100th anniversary celebration. In November, we created our own YouTube channel and we have since moved all of our program recordings there for easier access. In December, a high school junior (Sari Barnattan) volunteered to be an intern for the next two years. She wants to try to expand interest in our organization, especially among young people. Throughout the year she will be adding posts to our new Instagram page.

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 them.

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 officers during the six-week long encampment in our area. We supported the *Follow the French* audio tour on May 20, where one of our

members (Pierre Fontaine) created extraordinary 3D model kits of the Odell House for students to assemble. We also supported Colonial Day on September 30. At the event, reenactors demonstrated cooking, blacksmithing, medicinal, and wool-spinning skills. In addition, militia reenactors demonstrated marching and drills. Most significant was the Museum of the American Revolution's agreement to allow the replica of General Washington tent, used throughout the War, to travel to the site, together with the associated docents, and be assembled for visitors to enter.

During 2023, 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 communicated information about the many events and activities (both in person and online) that took place in Westchester. On September 27, President Marcus attended the RW250 County-wide Summit that took place at the Westchester County Center. This event was well-attended by multiple organizations and historical societies. Planning for activities to celebrate our country's 250th anniversary in 2026 is already underway.

2024 has begun with our latest calendar which was mailed to all AHS members at the end of December. The calendar showcases some of our recent programs on local and national history.

Our Winter Newsletter, again in color, is currently at the printer. It will be mailed to all Village residents. Included are articles about two treasures in Ardsley history: one a place, the other a person. For the place, Matt Arone performed an extensive investigation of both present and previous owners of the Riviera Bakehouse which will be closing its doors at the end of January after 70 years of doing business in Ardsley. Follow along as Matt begins at their original location in the Ardsley Village Green and concludes at the current location on Saw Mill River Road next to Carvel. I am sure that as people read this article, they will have their own fond memories of sweets they purchased from Riviera and how much they enjoyed them.

For the person, Sharon Colabello writes about her father, Marty Engleman, and Marty's Mug and Munch, his restaurant. However, Marty was much more

than the restaurant, and you can read it to share in Sharon's walk down memory lane.

Our newest endeavor, in its earliest stages, is to create a short YouTube video that highlights certain key people, places, and/or events central to Ardsley's history. Our working title is "Ardsley: more than a great school district." We also plan to continue to support and participate in the RW250 initiative and the Odell House restoration.

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. As before, our goal remains to explore ways to encourage students and teachers to learn about our area's history. On January 30, President Marcus once again delivered a program on Zoom about The Ardsley Community for all of the second grade classes at Concord Road School. He covered topics including How Ardsley Got Its Name, Pickle factories, the Impact of the Railroad, and Early Schools in Ardsley.

As noted above, the memorial plaque listing the 14 young men who died in WWII was located, in part through the efforts of the Society, and we will be continuing our efforts to see the plaque, and a replica of the monument on which it appeared, located in an appropriate place of reverence on the Ardsley High School grounds. Part of those efforts will necessarily involve seeking significant funding to realize that goal.

We would also like to obtain recognition for Adolph Lewisohn (ideally a readily visible sign or plaque) in connection with the new Village DPW Garage, currently under construction. Another notable, to say the least, is Alexander Hamilton. The original address of Concord Elementary when it opened in 1953 was Alexander Hamilton Avenue, the name of the street that is now a stub next to the entrance to the school. In fact, the official address of the home on that stub is 25 Alexander Hamilton Avenue, and the Society believes that it would be appropriate to restore a street sign at that stub. Accordingly, we ask that we be given an opportunity to meet with one or more Trustees to discuss these efforts further.

Of course, these are just a few of the many activities and endeavors we have planned for 2024.

The AHS has two openings on our Board of Directors as well as an opening for an editor for our newsletters, and someone 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 20, at 7:30 at the Ardsley Public Library. All Ardsley residents are welcome to attend.

I can't close out 2023 without expressing our gratitude to Trish Lacy who has made the community center available to us for our programs with their increased attendance; David DiGregorio for his department's help with displaying our banner on the Village bulletin board, and Trustee DiJusto who has regularly attended our meetings with a sincere interest and desire to be of assistance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Marcus, President