

# APRIL

[MamaroneckHistoricalSociety.org](http://MamaroneckHistoricalSociety.org)

| [MamaroneckHistory@gmail.com](mailto:MamaroneckHistory@gmail.com)

## Members Monthly Get-togethers!

Third Tuesday of every month  
(except January, July & August)  
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm at  
Woman's Club of  
Mamaroneck, 504 Cortlandt  
Avenue.

7:00 - 8:00 will be 30 min  
presentation & 30 min Q & A  
on a different aspect of  
Mamaroneck history.

8:00 - 9:00 will be a Social  
and Informal Oral History.  
Here we grab some  
refreshments and talk about  
the old days in Mamaroneck,  
growing up here, going to  
school, who's related to who,  
what businesses have come  
and gone, etc.

Next Get-together on  
Tuesday, May 16 Presentation:  
**Pictures in Postcards: A  
Visual Tour of Old  
Mamaroneck.**

A PowerPoint presentation  
from **Michael N Tripicco's**  
celebrated book. You'll enjoy a  
visual tour through parts of  
old Mamaroneck.

Michael is the Historical  
Society Archivist. He was also



April 18, 2023, Members Get-together

## Fun and Learning - Join in with your neighbors as we uncover Mamaroneck's past, and share memories!

In 2009 on the occasion of Walter's 90th Anniversary (1919) Donald March, then President of the Mamaroneck Historical Society engaged me to research and document the history of Walter's to present the State Historic Preservation Office with a strong argument for including the 1928 Pagoda Stand on the National Register of Historic Places.

At our April Members Get-together I did a presentation on the Story of Walter's based upon that research.



the driving force behind the restoration of The De Lancey Family Burying Ground.

Michael's book will be available for purchase at this Members Get-together.

And don't forget the virtual photo tour of Mamaroneck Avenue created by **Michael Meaney** and found only at the Historical Society's website. He has contemporary and past photos of buildings side by side with historical facts about the buildings!

### Join us! Member Dues

- Individual.....\$25
- Family.....\$40
- Senior/Student.....\$20

Checks payable to *"The Mamaroneck Historical Society"*

Mailing Address: **The Mamaroneck Historical Society, PO Box 776, Mamaroneck, NY 10543**

### Coming Up!

#### Proposed Presentations

June 20 - **Fact or Fancy: Myths & Mistakes About the Founding of Mamaroneck**

July and August Summer Recess

September 19 - **Smugglers, Scoundrels & Land Swindlers - The Founding of Mamaroneck**

**Mass at Most Holy Trinity (c 1889)** - June 04 11:00 am a rare opportunity to celebrate Mass in the Roman Catholic Church Most Holy Trinity on the Post Road opposite the Mamaroneck Diner. There are only two masses a year performed in this Church right now. Join celebrants after the mass across the street at ELKS Lodge 1457 for some light refreshment. Hear about the efforts to save the Church. Contact **James Maver** at [jmaver@lawpace.edu](mailto:jmaver@lawpace.edu)

**Restoration of Burying Grounds** - Florence/Powell Burying Ground (c 1808) up at Mamaroneck High School and Richbell Burying Ground (c 1680) at the Harbor off Rushmore, where our founders John Richbell and family are buried. **James Maver** is leading the effort to restore these historic sites. Interested?

**Mamaroneck High School/Fenimore Cooper Murals** - **Gail Boyle** and **John Pritts** are engaged in finding homes for the murals that were saved from destruction.

**Historical Society display in Mamaroneck Library** - organized by **Michael Tripicco**, coming in May.

How about you? What one aspect of Mamaroneck history excites or mystifies you?

Why not join us and see what you can uncover?

peter

### TUESDAY, MAY 16 PRESENTATION

*Pictures in Postcards*

## A Visual Tour of Old Mamaroneck



Fenimore Road, Altonwood Park, Mamaroneck, N.Y.

# THE LEGEND OF FOOT-AND-A-HALF GIRONDA

*From the March Members Monthly Get-together Presentation (Part 2 of 2)*

*(Photos are not meant to represent any person or persons mentioned in this account.)*



Angelo Nardiello, Louis Pope's enforcer, had it in for Henry Gironda. He and his boys had kidnapped Gironda, robbed him, given him a beat down, and thrown out of the car into the street.

When that failed to deter him, Nardiello had machine-gunned Gironda on Mamaroneck Avenue outside Gironda's speakeasy, Hihe, 393 Mamaroneck Avenue.

Now Nardiello had been found slain on Clarendon Road in Greenburgh, with two bullets in his brain, a victim of another gangster "ride."

Greenburgh police were convinced Gironda was involved. They picked Gironda up, and interrogated him for thirteen hours about this murder (and two other contemporary unsolved murders) but were unable to secure evidence against him so he was released.

But the reason the Greenburgh police were *so* convinced that Gironda was involved, was not just because of Nardiello's previous assaults on him, but because of what happened earlier on the evening that Nardiello was executed.

It happened in Mamaroneck. Gironda's niece, Jeannette Lore, 33 years old, (the bridesmaid at his wedding) was out walking, when two men grabbed her, forced her head back, and poured acid into her eyes!

She was taken to United Hospital in Port Chester "horribly burned and in serious condition."

It was believed that Nardiello was responsible for this attack.

Nardiello's murder remains unsolved.



**On January 23, 1933** a newspaper article stated: *“First blood was shed in a beer war in Westchester today when Henry Gironda, former Mamaroneck constable and ex-convict, was shot down at Hollywood Inn, a Bronx River Parkway roadhouse at Valhalla, in a dispute over sources of beer supply.*

*“Since October there have been only minor flare-ups in the Westchester beer domain and differences were reported to have been settled to the satisfaction of the controlling syndicate in the county.”*

The differences Louis Pope had with the *other* competitors might have been settled, but apparently, nothing was settled with Henry Gironda.

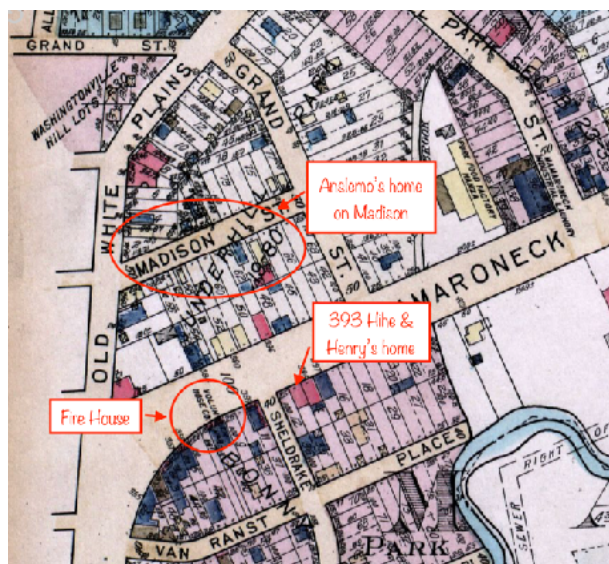
Gironda was the chief supplier of gin and rye to the Hollywood Inn.

Milton Watson, Louis Pope’s main man, and brother-in-law, told the proprietor of the Hollywood Inn, Henry Henschel, “If you don’t keep Gironda out of here I’ll do it myself.”

Henschel warned Gironda that it was not safe for him to come to the speakeasy.

Gironda didn’t listen. On Monday, January 23, 1933, Henry arrived at the Vahalla speakeasy about 3:00 in the morning.

**Meanwhile, in Mamaroneck...** that same morning about the same time, Pope’s men visited Gironda’s father’s house (the first house on Madison Street at Old White Plains Rd.) in Mamaroneck.



It was a two family house. They removed the lock in the door of the apartment that was rented to Benny Amoruso's family, and pushed a lit taper through which set fire to the curtains.

Fortunately, both the families of Anselmo and Benny escaped from the house when they were awakened by smoke.

**Back in Valhalla...**three hours later, just before 6:00 in the morning, the party had wound down.



Gironda was finishing a second glass of ginger ale, sitting alone at a table in the dance room at the Hollywood Inn.

Henschel, the proprietor was in a rear room dozing.

Esposito the bartender, was in a side room, behind the bar.

Buckley, a White Plains taxi cab driver, was sitting with two passengers at one table.

Three hostesses were sitting at another, Vera, Ariette, and Frances.

Then Pope's men, Watson and Palma, arrived.

Watson, stood in the doorway of the dance hall, blocking the exit.

"What do you mean by insulting my boss?" demanded Watson.

"I didn't insult the boss. He's a friend of mine," answered Gironda.

"Well, if he's a friend, do you think he'll get you out of this jam?" asked Watson.

"I'm in no jam!" retorted Gironda.

"You are. You're gonna die and you might as well die like a man!" replied Watson.

Gironda later explained that he had no idea what he had done for them to want to kill him.

“I didn’t raise my hand to them. Everything was peaceful and quiet at the bar. Watson asked me to have a drink” said Gironda. “Then he accused me of insulting the boss. I thought it was a joke!”

Watson insisted Gironda go outside and “die like a man.” Palma stuck his colt automatic in Gironda’s ribs to enforce Watson’s demand.

Gironda recounted later, “...when I felt the thing in my ribs--it mighta been a gun, or a stick or his finger, we started wrestling.”

As Gironda and Palma wrestled for the gun, Watson kept yelling to Palma, “Give it to him, give it to him!” and yelling at Gironda to “die like a man, cause you gotta die!”

Gironda explained, “I told them that I done nothin’ and if they’d gimme a reason I’d stand up to be plugged.”

Milton Watson, remained blocking any escape through the door of the dance floor, his right hand in his coat pocket.

As Watson pulled out his pistol to shoot Gironda, one of the hostesses who knew him, screamed out, “Don’t, Milton, don’t!”



And then to the proprietor Henry Henschel, she screamed “Stop him, Henry, stop him!”

As Gironda recalled, “I was lying on the floor, on top of Palma, when I looked up and saw two spurts of flame. Then I felt the pain of the bullets. I don’t know who shot me, but whoever he was, he was standing at the door.”

One bullet entered Gironda’s right chest, lodging in the muscles around his right lung, and one entered the right shoulder, fracturing a bone.

Ariette, one of the hostesses, said she saw two spurts of flame from Watson’s outstretched hand.

Frances, another entertainer, said she saw a “small black object” in Watson’s hand.

Watson and Palma ran from the room, leaving Gironda sprawled on the ground, Palma's pearl-handled .45 Colt automatic lying a few feet away from him.

Buckley the taxi driver, his two passengers, and the three hostesses all ran out of the speakeasy and vanished into the early morning.

Gironda, pulled himself up, and staggered into the side room where Esposito was hiding, "Take me to the hospital, I think I've been shot in the lung."

Esposito helped Gironda out a rear door into his automobile and took him to Grasslands Hospital.

At 6:23 am Henschel the proprietor, called the State Troopers at Barracks K in Hawthorne to report the shooting. Two minutes later the Grasslands Hospital having admitted Gironda also called them to report a shooting victim.



Troopers questioned Gironda who refused to identify his assailants.

But they learnt enough from Esposito, and Henschel to know who they were after.

At 6:50, the state troopers phoned Yonkers Police to request the apprehension and arrest of Watson and the White Plains Police to request the apprehension and arrest of Palma.

Detective Daly of Yonkers immediately drove to Watson's speakeasy but finding it closed, he staked out Watson's home in Yonkers.

But before Watson was even *caught*, Louis Pope's guy, Richard Peters, proprietor of the Depot Plaza Garage in White Plains (and a partner of Louis Pope in a used car business) walked into the Hawthorne barracks with an associate.

He said they'd heard that their friend Watson "was in trouble" and that they were ready to bail him out!

Louis Pope's people worked fast!

Palma proved elusive to the White Plains Police but by 9:30 am Monday, they had Watson in custody at the Wells Avenue Station in Yonkers.

State trooper Patrick Gale was waiting there to transfer him to Hawthorne Barracks where he was to be arraigned before a Justice of the Peace.

On the way up to the Hawthorne Barracks, Watson told the Trooper: "They got nothing on me. I'm Louis Pope's brother-in-law and he's got a lot of drag around this county, I'll get out of this."

Palma was still at large at this point, but would later turn himself in with his attorney.

**Meanwhile, at Grasslands Hospital...**the doctors were afraid that because of the severed nerve, Gironda might have to have his right arm amputated.



They removed the bullet in the arm, but Gironda wasn't in a condition that they felt would allow them to remove the bullet in his chest.

The State Troopers brought Watson to the hospital for Gironda to identify him. But Gironda insisted he could not link Watson with the shooting.

Gironda was reported to be an unruly patient, demanding a private room, which they did not have. They were relieved when New Rochelle Hospital said they had a private room for him and he was transferred there.

Gironda used an assumed name in registering at New Rochelle hospital, and asked to have his room kept secret.

They assigned him a small room on the top floor. A hospital official said, "He gave no reason for requesting the seclusion but it was seen it would be more difficult for enemies to penetrate the roof of the hospital."

But Gironda, fearing that his life was not safe at the Hospital, had street clothes smuggled in to him, and with a bullet still in his chest, and a fractured arm, fled the hospital and went into hiding.

It was only a few days later that the pain in Gironda's arm and chest becoming too much for him, he returned to the hospital where the doctors set his fractured arm.

They didn't know whether he would regain the use of his arm, and they had to wait for his fever to go down before attempting to remove the bullet lodged in his chest.



The three hostesses were arrested as material witnesses and held in the County Jail at East End, pending bail. Louis Pope offered to pay the \$90,000 bail for the three girls. They refused the offer and told county authorities that they did not wish attorneys to represent or to see them, and preferred the cold jail cells to release. They were afraid, they said, to be released, and they were afraid to say what they were afraid of.

When the Assistant District Attorney, began to present the case to the Westchester County Grand Jury in order to get an indictment against Watson and Palma, Girona, true to his code, refused to identify his assailants, only saying that the shooter stood in the doorway.

The ADA was able to get an indictment from the testimony of State Troopers, Buckley the cab driver, Henschel, the proprietor, Esposito, the bartender, Kaida Barber, (described in the newspaper as the “Negro piano player”) and the three hostesses.

Watson and Palma pled “Not guilty!”

Usually, the accused are held in jail while the police prepare a report on their backgrounds. This report is then given to the judge so that he can decide what bail amount, if any, is appropriate. The newspapers were astonished that Judge Coyle didn’t wait for the report but instead immediately set bail. They also claimed that that the amount of bail was far less than in other cases involving lesser offenses.

In his defense, Judge Coyle claimed that without Girona’s testimony it was unlikely Watson and Palma would be convicted.



The defendants appealed for the trial to be moved to a different venue and it was moved from the County Court to the Supreme Court under Judge Taylor.

Watson and Palma were both found *guilty*.

They were visibly stunned when the jury reported. Watson’s face turned deathly pale, but quickly recovered its composure, and Palma slumped into his chair, nervously playing with a button on his coat.

The Judge described Watson’s crime as “atrocious,” pointed out that he could inflict a penalty of 20 years. Instead he sentenced him to six years for possession of a gun in the shooting, and six years more for the assault, as well as a \$1,000 fine, which if not paid off, would be worked off at the rate of \$1 a day.

The Judge announced that, even though he was convinced Palma owned the .45 calibre revolver, the gun was so far removed from Palma at the time of the shooting that no sentence would be imposed for its possession. He gave Palma from two to four years. They both were sent to Sing Sing.

The three entertainers remained in the County Jail, where they were lodged and where they had been under heavy guard since Jan. 26. They refused offers of bail saying they preferred jail. The plan was to release them as soon as the District Attorney's office could find some way to get them out of Westchester safely.



“Foot-and-a-Half” Girona (actual photo), the little boy on the horse in the 1913 Mamaroneck “Pick and Shovel” Italian laborers strike, went on making his living the only way he knew how, in and out of prison. His last trial was in 1967 when he was sentenced to around 15 years.

Local lore says that sometime after he was released, at about 70 years of age, he was killed by a hit and run on Mamaroneck Avenue just over a block from his old speakeasy.

Random accident or mob hit?

Who knows?

Next Members Get-together:

## ***Pictures in Postcards: A Visual Tour of Old Mamaroneck***

**Tuesday, May 16, 7:00 pm**

**Woman's Club**

**504 Cortlandt Ave**

*Not a Member?*

*RSVP for a guest pass from [petermfellows@gmail.com](mailto:petermfellows@gmail.com)*