

MAMARONECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 776 Mamaroneck, NY 10543

Newsletter Fall 2021

www.mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org

President's Message

Board of Trustees

CO-PRESIDENTS

Gail Boyle, John Pritts

VICE PRESIDENT

George Mgrditchian

SECRETARY

Phyllis Kaskel

TREASURER

Don Sutherland

ARCHIVIST

Mike Tripicco

TRUSTEES

Ray Maldonado

Bette Pollak

Dennis Cucinella

Carol Aiken Emeritus

ADVISORY BOARD

Peter Fellows

Nora Lucas

Mike Meaney

John Verni

Dear Friends of Mamaroneck History,

We hope our Fall Newsletter finds you well and thriving despite the challenges. This certainly has been another year for the history books! In addition to year two of the pandemic, our community was hit with serious flooding, impacting the lives, livelihood, and homes of so many. Recovery will take time and support from us all.

We hope you will join us for our annual General Membership meeting on November 16th, which will be held in person – live – and simultaneously virtual – so that all may participate.

We look forward to an amazing presentation with MHS teacher Joe Liberti and a group of MHS students who are in the OCRA Program.

OCRA, Original Civic Research & Action, is a 4-year program at MHS that helps students become civic entrepreneurs by guiding them as they identify needs in their community and, in turn, develop and implement community-based civic action projects.

The program gives our members and friends a wonderful opportunity to hear the voices and hopes of the young in our community! As Albert Einstein said so eloquently;

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

Please join us on November 16th at 7:00pm at the Women's Club, 504 Cortlandt Avenue

or via the ZOOM link at mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org

We appreciate your ongoing interest and support,

Gail Boyle and John Pritts – Co-presidents

Celebrating Local History

The Mamaroneck Historical Society sponsored two Spring 2021 Programs

"The Tumultuous Times and Tribulations of the John Richbell Epoch of Mamaroneck," was hosted by local historian, Peter Fellows. On Sunday afternoon, May 2nd, the Historical Society offered a "Talk and Walk" at the Harbor.

Participants met at the 1816 Schoolhouse under the cherry blossoms. Peter then led the group around the perimeter of the West Basin. As the group paused to enjoy the beautiful spring day and harbor view, Fellows spoke of the purchase from the Weckquaesgeek, in 1661, of three necks of land on the east side of a small river called by the Indians, Mamaroneck.

The Walk and Talk didn't end there though. While pointing out the corresponding historical sites, Peter explained the smugglers, scoundrels, and land swindlers that made for continued drama around the purchase of Mamaroneck.



The Talk and Walk culminated in an exploration of the Richbell Burying Grounds. If you have a chance to visit the monument and cemetery in the West Basin, it is a lovely setting and a significant historic site.



For more info about John Richbell visit our website mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org

Peter's Facebook page contains extensive information about Richbell and more.

Find Peter on Facebook at: [mamaroneckhistory](https://www.facebook.com/mamaroneckhistory)

Richbell as depicted in the display at the Mamaroneck Library.

WPA Mural scene on

Peter Fellows in front of Richbell Memorial, Harbor Island Park, next to the Richbell cemetery.

Jane's Walk Saturday, May 8th at 1:00 pm

Jane's Walk is an annual event, held nationally, which was started in 2006 to honor Jane Jacobs, a writer, urbanist and activist who championed the voices of everyday people in neighborhood planning (janeswalk.org).

The Village of Mamaroneck asked if the Historical Society would lead residents on a walk through the Village, stopping at each of the historical murals. We decided to open up the discussion with participants so that the focus was less on the “art” and more on the story the murals tell about our community.

John Pritts and Phyllis Kaskel of the Mamaroneck Historical Society along with Audrey Decker, a founder of Street Art for Mankind, lead a group of residents along the route. The interaction among the participants brought about a significant amount of discussion regarding the importance of these events and a comparison with the murals installed in Larchmont.



An important fact to keep in mind is the artists who designed and painted the murals had carte blanche in the content and were not always the vision of the Mamaroneck Historical Society. Regardless, we believe the murals have been an asset to the community and promotes discussion among residents. We gratefully appreciate the property owners who granted permission for their “walls” to be a part of the project.

To learn more about the murals, visit our website: mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org.



John Pritts explains the story behind the “Diversity” mural. When we asked residents what they valued about living in Mamaroneck, many shared they value our diversity throughout our history.

From the Archives Saint Vito's R.C. Church

By Mike Tripicco, Archivist

At around the turn of the century, Italian immigrants in Mamaroneck needed a place to worship. In 1907, a Chapel was used for worship in a building on Sheldrake and Van Ranst Place (139 Sheldrake). It was dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua. In 1908 the first resident priest arrived, Father Papale. He stayed for 1 year only.

The Italian immigrants worked together to build a permanent church. Land was donated on Madison Street and a wooden church was built there. In 1910, a new priest was assigned to the new church. The Italian residents, being mostly from the area and town of St Vito, Italy, named the church Saint Vito's Roman Catholic Church. Father Francis Coccozza was assigned as pastor. The parish was legally incorporated Aug. 23rd 1911 as the Church of St. Vito. Father Coccozza's brother was the sexton and played the organ, and his sister sang.

The parishioners all worked together through the years to decorate the church and keep it in good repair. In the 1920's, the church had feast day celebrations like the old Italian neighborhoods in New York City and Italy. Statues of our lady of Mt. Carmel and St Vito, were carried up and down the streets of Washingtonville, and people would pin money to the ribbons on the statue to raise money for the church.



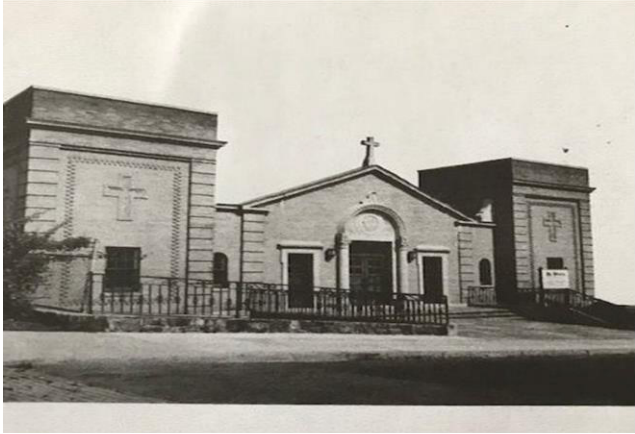
**Original Chapel on
Madison Avenue**

**Chapel as it appears
today - now part of the
Swim Tank Building**



In June of 1927, Father Coccozza was forced to retire because of his health. Father Biagio Del Negro was assigned Pastor on July 2nd, 1927. The old church needed upgrading and Father Del and all parishioners pitched in to help. For example, for every can of paint Father Del bought at Baxter's Hardware Store in Mamaroneck, Mr. Baxter gave him a gallon free and threw in the paint brushes. The church was heated by a little stove that used wood and coal to keep the church warm so he could have a service in a warm church. The heating system was finally improved with no cost to the church, and installed by the Santoro brothers.

By 1929, enough money was raised to buy property on New Street and Underhill Ave, for a new church. A Mamaroneck Construction company and parishioner, Carmelo Santoro & Son, won the bid. The church was built below ground level because of money problems. It was built with the hope that another floor would be added later. All the statues in the church were donated, and made out of white marble from Carrara, Italy. The first mass was celebrated Christmas Eve, 1930. On May 10th, 1931, the church was dedicated and blessed by Bishop Hayes.



In the late 1950's a church school was constructed. At that point, Father Del retired to his home in Italy. In August 1959, Reverend Monsignor John A. Goodwine replaced Father Del as pastor. On March 19th, 1960, it was announced that a school, convent, and parish hall were planned. Ground was broken Nov 5th, 1961, and school opened Sept, 1962. The parochial school is no longer in operation there, nor is Monsignor Goodwine, but the church and congregation lives on.

UPDATE, OCTOBER 20, 2021: Our archivist, Mike Tripicco, submitted this article for our fall newsletter in August. None of us predicted or imagined the destruction that would hit Mamaroneck in September. St. Vito's was hit hard. According to an article published in Catholic New York, "Our church is now gutted, said Father Tierney of St. Vito-Most Holy Trinity Church. The pews had to be removed. There was over 7 feet of water in the church so it covered up and over the altar. Books that were in cabinets, books that we use for Mass—lectionary, sacramentary, the Spanish, the English—all soaked, all just have to be discarded. Additionally, there was over 9 feet of water in the school building, in the gymnasium," Father Tierney said.

Despite the devastation, parishioners were out providing food and assistance to the community, especially the homes and apartments that were under water. And like the rest of the community, rebuilding begins.



St. Vito's before Hurricane Ida



St. Vito's after the waters were cleared

Feature Article – Mamaroneck Memories

Recording our memories is the best way to preserve history. Ben (Schapanick) Shaw, has done just that. Ben grew up in Larchmont and attended Chatsworth Avenue School K-6, Mamaroneck Junior High School 7-9, MHS 10-12. This excerpt from his memoir will bring back memories for many in the community.

Memories of Brewer's Hardware, East Boston Post Rd.

By Ben Shaw

I remember Mamaroneck as having two iconic businesses, Walter's Hot Dog Stand, and Brewer's Hardware. People would come from all over to go to both places. People liked Brewer's as it was a walk back in time. Everyone was so knowledgeable and friendly, and you could find hardware and boating supplies there that could not be found any place else. There was also a lumber yard and two marinas behind the hardware store.

Brewer's was a family-owned business that had survived for 140 years before it closed in the summer of 2019. I only knew two members of the family well, "Old Man Brewer," the last owner/manager, and his son, Jack, who I graduated with from Mamaroneck High School in 1958.

When living in Mamaroneck, Brewer's was the "go to place" for everything. If you needed the smallest, unique bolt, latch, or type of nail, you would go to Mr. Brewer, and he would take you on this maize like trip to the cellar. You would quickly go from alley way to alley way of amazingly organized materials and then stop in front of a bin where Mr. Brewer knew exactly where to find what you needed. It might be up three or four shelves high, but it was always there. I always marveled at Mr. Brewer's ability to remember not only the item but its exact placement in the store. There should have been a contest to see if there was something hardware wise that could not be found in Brewer's.



Brewer's in the Early days of business on Boston Post Road

Author Ben Shaw on the right with classmate Mike Tripicco, Archivist for the Historical Society



I also remember in high school that our group of friends needed a place to hang out. Mr. Brewer suggested his cellar. We thought that was a great idea until we saw the cellar. Then Mr. Brewer said that he would furnish the lumber, tools, and hardware but we would have to build our own "clubhouse."

We did just that and we all spent many happy hours at the Brewer's. We also learned something about carpentry with the project. Mr. Brewer was so very wise.

Jack made his father proud as after college he went on to purchase numerous boat yards and marinas along the East Coast that were not prospering. He put them back on the map. Brewer and Johnson Marinas were all along the Eastern Coast after a few years. Today two of Jack's sons, each own their own marina. The boating business is still in the Brewer genes.

Going to Brewer's was like going to that general store that had been there forever, in the smallest of towns. It was so welcoming, so unique, and so non-commercial. You met your friends there, you shared stories there and you knew the workers as friends. When Brewers closed, a page in history closed. There are so few family businesses today and those, like Brewers, are becoming a national treasure. Brewers was and should continue to be an institution that goes down in history.

Interview with Jack Brewer

**Special Program featuring Ben and Darla Shaw interviewing Jack Brewer.
Listen as they explore Jack's memories of his family's long history in Mamaroneck**

Date: Thursday December 2nd, 7:00 – 8:00 pm

Register for this ZOOM event at the Mamaroneck Library Events Link

Or at mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org Events Link

Program is Co-sponsored by the Mamaroneck Historical Society and Mamaroneck Library

Welcome to the Neighborhood!

By Gail Boyle

While relaxing with a book down at Harbor Island this summer, out of the corner of my eye I saw a bird swoop down across the soccer and softball fields and land on something – possibly some lunch? The bird immediately lifted off and swooped majestically back up to the top of Heathcote Hill.

I realized that many eyes were riveted on this scene and was thrilled when a man standing nearby shared that we had just seen a bald eagle gathering food to bring back to her nest. I wondered where was the nest?

Well, I hiked up and down and around Heathcote Hill and could see no evidence of a nest. When I asked folks down at Harbor Island beach if they had seen an eagle in the park, many said yes, but no one had any knowledge of a nest nearby.

So, I turned to the expert, Kyle Troy, Mamaroneck's Marine Education Center Naturalist. Kyle leads a Bird Watch hike periodically and I was hoping she had seen the eagle in the park.

Kyle confirmed that she has seen two bald eagles this summer and believes they were trying to use an old osprey nest off of Lake Road, just over the Rye border. Kyle believes the pair did not end up using that nest but says we now have bald eagles all over Westchester. She can't say whether any are residents of Mamaroneck or just visitors, but either way it is exciting to see one in flight.

Since ancient times, the eagle has been considered a sign of strength. It was proposed as one of the elements of our official seal by members of the Continental Congress. The American Bald Eagle officially landed on the Great Seal of the United States in 1782 and is now considered an American Icon.



It is amazing to have an eagle in town because in 1978 the eagle was placed on the endangered species list. It's hard to believe that in the late 1800's there were over 100,000 nesting bald eagles in the country! Unfortunately, by 1940, as a result of hunting, habitat destruction and the pesticide DDT, there were only 400 breeding pairs left! As a result of restrictions on the use of DDT and other regulations, the bald eagle has recovered enough to be changed from the endangered to the threatened list, and in 2007 it was removed completely from any list.

And now we have an eagle stopping by for a visit at harbor Island, here in Mamaroneck. We are an historic community and we are honored to welcome our national symbol.

If you haven't been to the [Marine Education Center at Harbor Island](http://marineeducationcenter.org) you are missing an amazing experience and resource for adults and children. Check it out at marineeducationcenter.org Thanks Kyle!

What's the Story?

The Story Behind Bub Walker Park

A long time Mamaroneck resident recently asked, "What and Who is Bub Walker Park?" The sign for the park is in one of those places you drive by and never really know what it is. Possibly you have seen it?

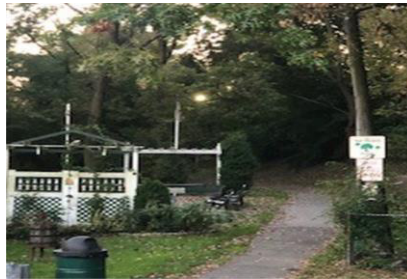
The sign is at the intersection of Plaza Avenue and Grand Street. On the Mamaroneck Village website, the Bub Walker Park is described as having a seating area but that does not answer the question. So John Pritts, Mamaroneck Historical Society Co-president and Mamaroneck Village Historian, dug into the archives and uncovered an amazing history.

Originally, the land where the park sits was a peaceful, wooded path extending along the side of the New England Thruway. Before it was a park there was a public garden there where anyone could plant and tend their own vegetables.

The actual park was started in 1946. It originally had a basketball court and playground, along with the planting gardens.



In 2008, a group of local residents came together and asked if they could build a bocce court at the park, and the Village gave them the go ahead.



The court was built completely by residents who gathered neighborhood donations to finance costs. The village supplied the court with adequate lighting so residents could continue playing as the sun goes down. In the beautiful summer weather, locals have made the area a place to socialize in the evening and play a few friendly games of bocce.

But who is Bub Walker?

It turns out that the park was named in honor of an influential, local African American man beloved by the community. Bub Walker was a postman until 1955. He played football for the Mamaroneck Dodger's in the 1930's. The Dodgers were a big-time semi-pro team that played their games at Harbor Island.

Bub started the fife and drum corps for the Washingtonville David McDaniel Lodge #982 Elks Club. This is different from Elks Club on the Post Rd, as the Elks clubs were segregated at that time. Bub was a real doer in the neighborhood and respected by all in the community.

If anyone knows more about Bub Walker please email us at mamaroneckhistory@gmail.com and we will post on our website.

What is this? An Archives Mystery

We were asked to determine what this mystery object is. Here is what we know so far:



It is a lead ball weighing 28 pounds and has a diameter of 6 ½ inches.

The raised writing on the ball says FE 197.

The ball was found in the woods at the bottom of Mount Misery which was part of the second American line during the Battle of White Plains.



Our Archivist, Mike Tripicco, has consulted with artillery experts. We have consulted with the Westchester Historical Society. Some folks say it might be British artillery. Others say definitely not.

What do you think? Any ideas on how to solve this mystery?

Share your ideas and resources at: mamaroneckhistory@gmail.com

MAMARONECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The Mamaroneck Historical Society Board has been meeting monthly and planning programs despite the challenges. Based on our by-laws, the Board is made up of nine trustees. We acknowledge that often times we do not have the expertise we need to tackle the many issues and questions that come up during the year.

Therefore, after much study of NYS regulations related to non-profits, the Board decided to create what is termed an "Advisory Board". Our goal is to invite experts to serve on this board to support the work of the society. We sought experts in the fields we often need to consult, such as history, technology, architecture and preservation. We will continue to invite other experts to join the advisory board in the year ahead.

Please welcome our current Advisory Board members:

Peter Fellows: Local Historian involved in extensive research

Nora Lucas: Historical Architecture

Mike Meaney: Use of technology for communication and research

John Verni: Historical Preservation

MAMARONECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND ELECTIONS

Tuesday, November 16, 2021 7:00 PM

Women's Club 504 Cortlandt Avenue (all attendees will be required to wear a mask)

In order to Attend Virtually – Connect on ZOOM via link on our website

www.mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org - [Events Page Link](#)

SPECIAL PRESENTATION - STARTS AT 7:15

Introduction to Original Civic Research & Action (OCRA)

Presented by MHS Teacher Joe Liberti and MHS Seniors

Daniel Marsh, Jackson Owen, Justin Solis, Olivia Sundin

OCRA is a 4-year program at MHS that helps students become civic entrepreneurs by guiding them as they identify needs in their community and, in turn, develop and implement community-based civic action projects with the assistance of local mentors/experts.

Students will share their project "Increasing Local Voter Turnout: Aligning Local and Federal Elections"

Learn how students are exploring our history and impacting the future of our community.

Based on research, both academic and community-based, along with guidance from local mentors, OCRA students are building support for a 2022 ballot referendum that aligns Village of Mamaroneck elections with federal elections to increase local voter turnout.

MAMARONECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2021 ELECTION DETAILS

Board vote will be held at 7:00 PM for members attending the meeting live.

Mamaroneck Historical Society Members who will NOT be attending the meeting live, may vote online on our website www.mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org. Go to the Events page link.

All voting online must be submitted by Monday, 11/15/21.

The following candidates are nominated for Board of Trustee positions. All are unopposed.

Proposed Candidate	Position	Term
Dennis Cucinella	Trustee at Large	2 years
Ray Maldonado	Trustee at Large	2 years
George Mgrditchian	Vice President	2 years
Don Sutherland	Treasurer	2 years

Please Support the Mamaroneck Historical Society

The board of the Mamaroneck Historical Society has been holding virtual meetings to plan for our ongoing programs. As a non-profit educational organization our goal has been to sustain our mission dedicated to recording, preserving, and interpreting the history of the Town of Mamaroneck, the Village of Mamaroneck, and the Village of Larchmont.

Please help us to continue this work by renewing your membership at this time. As a non-profit organization all donations are tax deductible so please consider a donation during this holiday season. Our annual Historic Mamaroneck Calendar is available as well. Thank you in advance for your support!

Hurry up and get your copy of the 2022 Mamaroneck Historical Society calendar while supplies last!

Includes photos of memorable locations and dates in our history. Perfect for Holiday Gifts!

Cost: \$16.00

Available for sale at:

1816 Schoolhouse on 11/28 1-4pm

ASAP – E. Prospect Mamaroneck

Mamaroneck Public Library

Village Paint – Larchmont

Foleys – Larchmont

Toy Box - Mamaroneck

or

Contact Mike at mat521@optonline.net

Or Bette at luckygem3@aol.com for a copy.





**MAMARONECK
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

P.O. BOX 776 MAMARONECK, NEW YORK 10543

NON PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
WHITE PLAINS, NY
PERMIT #4304

IT'S TIME TO RENEW – TO JOIN – AND TO SUPPORT PRESERVATION OF OUR HISTORY

Please use the enclosed envelope to support this effort or

Join via our website at the SUPPORT link. <https://www.mamaroneckhistoricalsociety.org/support>

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Annual Dues: (Please check one)

\$20 – Senior/Student

\$125 - Sustaining

\$25 – Individual

\$250 - Benefactor

\$40 – Family

\$500 – Corporate

Additional Tax Deductible Donation: _____

Please make checks payable to the Mamaroneck Historical Society

Membership is on an annual basis, from January 1st to December 31st of each year.