E-Mail mail@briarcliffhistory.org Phone (914) 941-4393

Website

Spring Newsletter 2015

2015 Spring Newsletter

Dear Members and Friends Who Are Not-Yet-Members,



Kasey Calnan, Intern

Kasey Calnan, a recent graduate of SUNY New Paltz, is a new intern with us. We're very happy to have her help two full days a week. She has begun a map inventory and researches details of our many maps in preparation for our entering the information into the computer database.

In addition, she and I received training from the Director of the Sound and Story oral history project. We are ready with our new recording equipment for the first interview. Ms. Kay Whitson Bondurant emailed us in April that she would be coming on a "roots tour" in June from Bend, Oregon. Her father was John H. Whitson and his father and uncles owned the Whitson Garage. Now this large building houses Hudson Financial Services, Holbrook Cottage, My Sherry &more Boutique and Briar State Gas (formerly Birrattella's). We can hardly wait to meet her, show her around and record her story!

Karen Smith, President

BMSHS President, Karen Smith, and WCHS Librarian & Speaker, Patrick Raftery, 3-22-2015 Annual Meeting.



To be very brief, the Annual Meeting the BMSHS was held Sunday, March 22, 2015 at Beebe Hall. Parish House of the Briar-

cliff Congregational Church. Our speaker was the Westchester County Historical Society's Librarian, Patrick Raftery, who presented an illustrated talk "Four Hundred Years of Westchester History: From Wigwams to Corporate Headquarters." Over 100 guests attended. Last year's programs, membership numbers (see the list), finances and general progress were all good. We expect 2015 will be even better and it will be with your continued support and encouragement. We are proud to be Caretakers of Our Heritage.



William A. Sharman

MEMORIAM William Anders Sharman

1926-2015

IN

The Briarcliff Manor community lost one of its finest members April 18, 2015.

Bill will be remembered as a life-long resident of the Village, a 72-year volunteer fireman, congregant of the Briarcliff Congregational Church, and first president and leader of the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society. He was an all-round good guy, husband, father, grand father, great grand father, friend and neighbor. We will miss him.

> A very large oak tree has fallen on Oak Road.

2014 Membership List by Category 183 Memberships

Benefactor Memberships

Boe, Carl & Mimi
Caramanica, John & Lisa
Curran, John & Connie
Gioscia, Michael & Clorissa
Nolan, Ed & Elaine
Payne, Edwin & Claire
Quigley, Matthew &
Nina Bogosian
Rittinger, James & Kathleen
Straight, Elizabeth
Vastola, Eugene, Alex &
Anna Bogdanow
Wagner, Chip & Jan
Wilson, Mark &
Denise Rempe

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Hales, Thomas E. & Alice
Kane, David & Siegrun
McGinty, Gregory & Joan
McVeigh, Brian & Heather
Pedowitz, Larry & Kathleen
Ravosa, Carmino & Claire
Rush, Warner & Nancy
Welsh, Kevin & Carol

Sponsor Memberships

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Santiago, Mark &
Adeline Olmer
SaveScarborough.com
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Stoianoff, Carroll
Vescio, Bill & Sara
Wasiczko, Denis & Bernadine
Whitson, Robert & Yvonne
Williams, Morton &
Grazia Girod
Zuydhoek, Paul &
Tamar Halpern
Van Hengel, Drusilla

<u>Family Memberships</u> Aisenbrey, Stuart & Bev

Alenstein, Mary Beebe, Tyler & Brooke Behling, George & Elaine Beicke, Robert & Joan Bogart, Chris & Elizabeth O'Connell Bosak, Barry & Midge Braun, Norman & Janet Cartenuto, David & Christina Caspar, David & Jelane Chapman, Jinx Code, Howard & Susan Cohen, Steven & Lina Corfield, Peter & Gilian Crowley, James & Caroline Dengler, Kenneth & Susan Dumitrescu, Dumitru & Otilia Liana Feher, David & Gwen Feist, Arnold & Carine Fludgate, Simon & Susan Glassman, Jay & Jean Goldstein, Stanley & Alice Grant, Alan & Michelle Hager, Bobby & Terry Halper, Stuart & Stacy Hill, Douglas & Virginia Hoffman, Pete & JayCee James, Thomas & Lynn Kail, Ken & Ivy Hwang Kostman, Stan & Barbara Cochran LaBruzzo, Carmelo & JoAn Leitzes, Martin & Pauline Manganello, Louise

Manuele, John & Lisa

Mayas, Albert & Francine McCarville, Michael & Alison McGrath, Jr, Thomas & Barbara Mickel, John & Carol Midgley, Edward & Margaret Molinelli, Michael & Gina Morris, Andrew & Susan Morrison, George & Mirla Neuroulias, Andonios & Eva Nichols, Allen & Myrtle Obermeyer, Werner & Izel Pastore, Jr., Joseph & Pattie Patella, Paul & Anne Marie Reilly, Patrick & Sally Scudo Rotondo, Guy & Marisa Schrader, Agnes Murphy Fitzgerald Schultz, Stephen & Marilyn Siebert, Bob & Norvell Towbin, Carl & Twilia Varvaro, Steve & Mattie Ventura, Bill & Marion Vincent, Tom & Barbara Wachtel, Lou & Barbara Warnier, Daniel Wolf, Buddy & Penny Zegarelli, Phil & Barbara Zirman, Bryan & Rori

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Bauer, Wilhelma Bergman, Ruth Bernstein, Barbara Blockley, Kaye Brennemann, Florence Carter, Phoebe Comisky, Thomas Davis, Stephan DiMase, Frances Dubac, Doris Fetonti, Bob Florent, Mary Jane Freeman, Ellen Graham, Audrey Graves, Bruce Haimowitz, Raphaelle Herbek, Richard Hofstedt, Ann Horkans, Wilma Jean Isaac, Helene Kwiat, Barbara

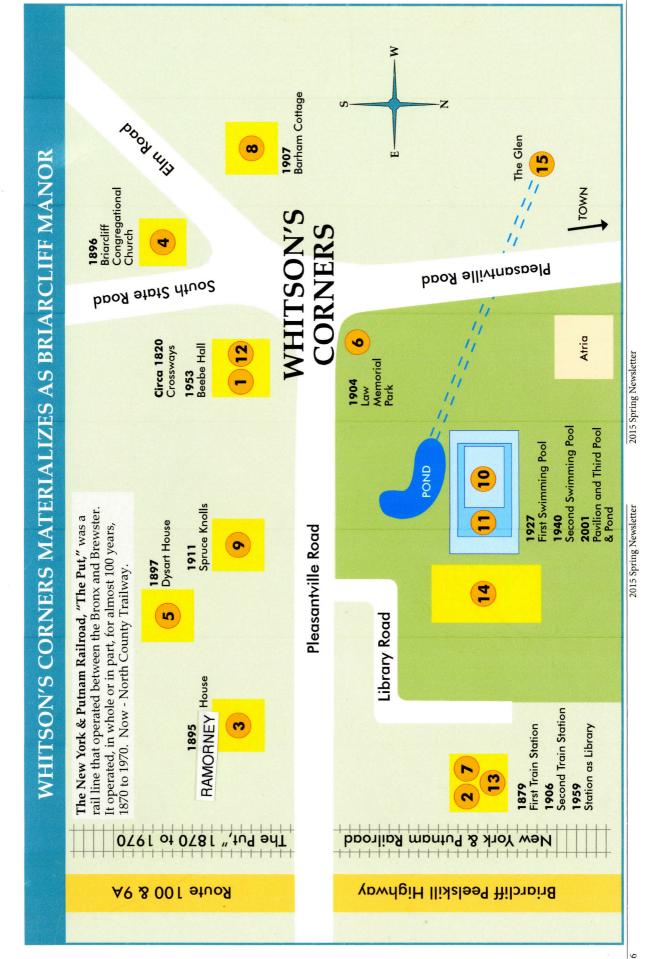
Limongelli, William Maguire, John McGinnis, Eva Marie Mendelsohn, Jim Michael, Peter Mirsky, Sandra Myers, Louisa Neubauer, George Olson, Maxine Paddock, JoAn Parker, Caroline Peterson, Rhoda Porter, Henrietta Reynolds, Cal Ross, Shirley Ruffner, Nancy Satlin, Sheldon Schwartz, Margaret Schwartz, Esther Seideman, Betty Semisa, Aurelia Smalley, Stephen Springer, Todd Strauss, Lore Stroobants, Henry Tobin, Beverly Walsh, John

Seniors (2) Memberships

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Amicucci, Phyllis
Austin, Sandra
Carpentier, Marie
Chervokas, Roseanna
Cryan, John
Hershberger, Jim
Lebenson, Eric
Lewis, Barbara Anna
Lynch, Carolyn
McGuire, Carol
Mezzatesta, Diane
Taub, Sue Bicksler
Teitelbaum, Michael
Wayne-Paulmeno, Larisa
Zawacki, Kathleen





The Crossways, in the trees at left; BCC in the distance; stone retaining wall where it is today. Photo ca 1900

Whitson's Corners

Materializes as

Briarcliff Manor

By Karen K. Smith, President

with expert assistance from

Alex Vastola, Trustee; Michael Feist, Wikipedian; and Carol Reif, journalist

Briarcliff Manor is a heckuva big place for a "Village." It is part of not only the Town of Ossining, but also the Town of Mount Pleasant, which should not be a big surprise because in the early 1900's, Walter Law had purchased 5,200 acres of land and was the largest individual landowner in Westchester County. The Village of Briarcliff Manor was his handiwork.

The beating heart of the village is the tiny, tree-lined area once known as Whitson's Corners. No matter how much things have changed, the site of its original settlement has managed to remain pretty much the same.

Dotted with the mansions of millionaires from early days, the village has seen some of these private estates developed. Yet, the close-knit community's traditions and values are still reflected in the architecture of many homes and buildings that are still standing. The aura of early Briarcliff Manor remains.

Standing in the middle of Law Memorial Park, at the corner of Pleasantville and South State Roads, and turning 360 degrees, you can get a sense of the vast amount of history that Briarcliff Manor has managed to pack into this space.

A mogul of milk and roses, Walter W. Law; a nuclear physicist, Eugene Booth; opera singer, Katherine "Kitty" Moran Douglas; notable architects, Arthur Ware, Sr. & son; one of the foremost African-American leaders of the

late 19th and early 20th century, Booker T. Washington; then-New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt; and Mark Twain's lawyer, William Woodward Baldwin, have all tread the sod at Whitson's Corners.

These are among the facts, as laid out by Karen Smith, President of the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society, in a presentation to the Briarcliff Congregational Women's Society given in early March. Subsequently, the material has been polished, double fact-checked and re-researched with the excellent help of Carol Reif, Michael Feist and Alex Vastola.

1. THE CROSSWAYS – ca 1820

Although part of the Frederick Philipse estate, or manor, in the late 17th century, the area called Whitson's Corner was named for the prominent Whitson family. Joseph Whitson built the house, which came to be known as The Crossways, near the corner of Pleasantville and South State Roads. The Whitsons moved to this area from New Castle in the early 1800s and dominated the economic landscape until one Walter William Law blew into town with big plans and deeper pockets in the late 1890s.

Law, who became a fine carpet magnate, was born in England in 1837 and immigrated to the United States in 1860. He lived and thrived economically as the W. & J. Sloane Furniture senior veep and liaison to the gigantic Alexander Smith & Sons carpet factory in Yonkers.

Ostensibly, after suffering from a bout of tuberculosis, Law took his doctor's advice, packed up his family, and hightailed it to the fresher air and more open spaces of rural Westchester. In 1890 Law forked over \$35,000 to James J. Stillman, wealthy businessman, banker and landowner, for 236 acres of land with the hope of turning what Law called a "small" and "unprofitable" operation off Pleasantville Road (near where St. Theresa Church now stands) into a going agricultural concern. Law also began a business growing and selling American Beauty roses.



The Crossways ca 1930

When Law finally retired from the rug business in 1899 and went full-steam ahead with Briarcliff as his second career, he established the School of Practical Agriculture and Horticulture in 1900. His farm's dairy products were of such superior quality they became highly sought after by top New York City hotels and restaurants. According to the *New York Times* of 1901, he soon owned all of a mile-square area of land, with the exception of two, small pieces By 1902, Law had plowed several million dollars into his new hobby. According to the *New York Times* of 1901, Law quickly owned virtually all of the mile-square area of land he had had his eyes on.

The farm operation pulled up stakes and moved to Pine Plains in Dutchess County in 1907; however Law was not done with building his real estate fiefdom. He erected guest lodging at Dysart House on Pleasantville Road opposite the train station (now library), and then he built the Briarcliff Lodge, which became the top resort in the Hudson Valley and beyond, attracting all sorts of big wigs.

The name "Briarcliff" originated from *Brier Cliffe*. In 1854 Rev. John David Ogilby established All Saints' Episcopal Church and named his estate, on which the church was built, *Brier Cliffe* as a nod to his Irish ancestral home. *Manor* was suggested by Law's friend, Andrew Carnegie, when he kidded Law saying he was the *Laird of the Manor*. Law liked the sound of it and the name stuck. *Briarcliff Manor* it was to be and Mr. Law was its *Laird*.

The Whitsons themselves had not been slouches in the real estate arena. Joseph Whitson's three nephews – John, Richard and Reuben – collectively owned more

than 400 acres of land. John inherited The Crossways. Richard Whitson built a home, which still exists, near the north corner of Todd Lane and Pleasantville Road. Reuben Whitson's house is located at the corner of Chappaqua and Washburn Roads near what is now the Taconic Parkway.

The Crossways had many incarnations – first as a home, then as a post office, then as a teahouse and then as the site of very popular village fairs in 1943 and 1944. Its great elm trees provided the backdrop for local folks to display the bounty of their

WWII Victory Gardens, their home-canned jams and jellies, homemade pies and cakes, and flower arrangements, as well as farm animals and family pets. It was torn down to make way for the Briarcliff Congregational Church's new parish house, Beebe Hall, which was completed and dedicated in 1957.

2. THE FIRST TRAIN STATION - 1879



Photo by Rob Yasinsak

Whitson's Corners Station - 1879

The first train pulled into Whitson's Station in 1879. The building served Briarcliff Manor for 27 years. But in 1906, the little building, having been considered not sufficiently grand, was loaded onto a flat car and moved to Millwood. Sadly, after suffering years of deterioration and neglect, it was torn down in 2013.

3. RAMORNEY HOUSE - 1895



RAMORNEY House - ca 1900

The large and beautiful home on Pleasantville Road was built around 1895. No information could be found on who constructed the house; however we know it was the home to Eugene T. Booth, an American nuclear physicist who was a member of the historic Columbia University team, which worked on the Manhattan Project; and later, Andrew J. Vosler, a prominent local resident and member of the Board of Education.



RAMORNEY Jouse - 2015

4. BRIARCLIFF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH – 1896

The BCC was an outgrowth of a Sunday School that was held at the early White School. George A. Todd, Jr. was the schoolteacher, and later the superintendent, from about 1867 to 1906. Todd, sensing that locals needed a more permanent place to gather and worship than the

small one-room schoolhouse, approached Law with the idea for a brand new church. Law, perhaps eager to bolster his real estate empire, jumped at the chance to help. Law gave the land and Todd donated the stones to build it. Others contributed lumber and labor to the project. The church was officially dedicated and incorporated in 1897. Law had been an elder in the First Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, but he gathered together the group of people connected to the project for a vote on the denomination of the new church, which was chosen for its "democratic policy." It opened as a Congregational Church. There were 33 charter members of the Briarcliff Congregational Church.

Henry Sloane Coffin, president of the Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, and one of the most famous ministers of his time, preached from the pulpit. Booker T. Washington and Dr. Emerson Fosdick did as well.

In 1898 the first Tiffany stained glass window, which depicts St. George defeating the dragon, also known as "The Joseph Window," was given to the BCC by W. W. Law. The southern window was dedicated to soldiers and sailors who had died in the Spanish-American War of 1898, despite the fact that there were no known enlistments from the area. The window was dedicated to Law's longtime friends, Mr. and Mrs. William Sloane of New York City. Law had been Sloane's protégée in the carpet business.

The west transept window is a triumph of landscape design done by the Tiffany Studios, installed 1906. This theme is distinctive because, at the time, windows with "landscape" subjects were uncommon. The inscription reads: "In Affectionate Memory of his Mother and Father by Walter W. Law." Five smaller Tiffany windows portray biblical figures. All the Tiffany windows at Briarcliff Congregational were commission and installed by 1906.

The east transept window was given in 1929 by the Law children in memory of their parents Walter W. Law (1837-1924) and Georgianna Ransom Law (1829-1910). It was designed by Arthur Ware, Sr., local architect and church member and produced by the John Hardman Studios in London. It recreates the view from the Law Manor looking westward toward the Hudson River with the spire of All Saint's Church in the distance.



Briarcliff Congregational Church 1913

Many people comment on the three large, oriental stone lanterns at BCC. Walter Law received them as gifts from his missionary friends around the turn of the 20th century. Initially one was placed at the church and the other two were placed at the Lodge when it was first built. In 1994, when King's College closed, the college allowed the two remaining lanterns at the Lodge to be transferred to the church grounds.



Briarcliff Congregational Church 2015

5. DYSART HOUSE – 1897



Dysart House ca 1900

This beautiful house-on-the-hill sports a fieldstone foundation, an upper story of half-timber and stucco and pointed wooden finials. Built by Walter Law, it was designed to be a large guest house across from the railroad station (before the Lodge was finished). It was probably named after Dysart House in Kirkcaldy, Scotland. When the Lodge was completed and guests could be accommodated there, the house became a school for boys and girls run by the Misses Tewksbury between 1902 and 1913. There are still school bells in the house.



Dysart House 2015

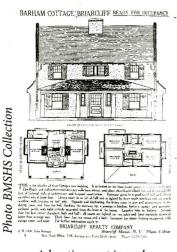
6. SECOND TRAIN STATION - 1906



Train Station Built by W. W. Law 1906

Law wanted a train station where wealthy residents and visiting fashionable friends would be comfortable, so a station was built to cater to the genteel crowd. It sported fresh flowers, oriental rugs and fancy Mission-style furniture. By 1963 the Putnam Division of the New York Central Railroad was abandoned north of Elmsford and the train tracks were removed. Three years later, the empty railroad right-of-way was used to create Route 100 and in the early 1990's, the North County Trailway was created for hikers and bicyclists parallel to the route and is in frequent use today.

Photo BMSHS Collection



Advertisement in early Briarcliff-Once-A-Week

7. BARHAM COT-**TAGE - 1907**

Again, the fine hand of the "Laird" can be detected. Law's real estate holding company put it and other buildings up at about this time. The cottage, located on the west corner of Elm and Pleasantville Roads, was made of stone and boasted "fireproof tile and ce-On December ment." 29, 1907, in the publica-

tion Briarcliff Once-a-Week, it and other "cottages" were described as "showing to the outside world that country home construction in Briarcliff Manor is finding expression in the very last words of the building vocabulary."



Barnham Cottage ca 2000

8. SPRUCE KNOLLS – 1911

This imposing, little-changed house was the home of William Woodward Baldwin, Esq., one of Law's attorneys. Baldwin lawyered the benighted "Plasmon Company of America" deal with Law, Mark Twain and other investors. Plasmon, at the turn of the century, was being commercialized in England. It was a milk product, a sort of casein, and many marvelous qualities were credited to it. Law saw an opportunity in relation to his large dairy and he built a Plasmon factory in Briarcliff Manor, located on Woodside Avenue in a stone building currently used by Briarcliff Classic and Imported Car Services. Twain, who was acting president of the company, which eventually went bankrupt, wrote in a testimonial to the effect that if you ingested Plasmon and "trusted in God, you were all right." When the casein hit the fan and the company



Spruce Knolls 1911 and as in 2015

faltered, Twain would admit only to being its nominal vice president. Baldwin, meanwhile, lived well in Briarcliff Manor for 27 years, served on the local Board of Education, and was a congregant of the Briarcliff Congregational Church.

9. ENTRANCE TO LAW MEMORIAL **PARK - 1904**



Law Memorial Park 1904 and similar to 2015

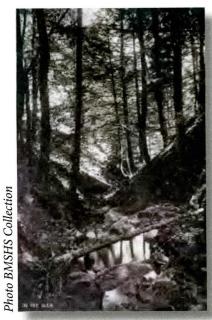
Law donated seven acres of land to the village. Originally known as Liberty Park, and now known as Law Memorial Park, it is thought to have been designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and John C. Olmsted, who were the sons of Frederick Law Olmsted, noted American landscape architect. The stone walls apparently are farm walls that have survived since the village was known as Whitson's Corners.

FIRST POOL – 1927



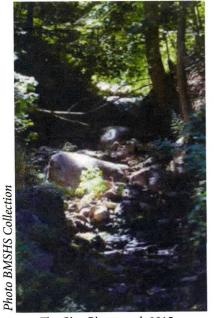
One of Westchester County's first municipal swimming pools 1927

15. THE GLEN AND THE POND



The Glen Postcard ca 1910





The Glen Photograph 2015

And just where does the water for the pond come from? Look west from The Atria driveway entrance and you'll see a deep ravine coming down from the Trump National Golf Course. This is among the many things that have hardly changed since this place was Whitson's Corners.

Briarcliff Manor is rich in history, and although some things have changed, people of the village retain their sense of belonging, the memo-



The Pond in need of beautification ca 1920



The Pond as beautified 2015

ry and pride in their history, and they possess a deep commitment to community spirit, which it has enjoyed from the beginning.

Sources:

Briarcliff Manor 1902-1952

A Village between Two Rivers: Briarcliff Manor 75th Anniversary

The Changing Landscape: A History of Briarcliff Manor, Mary Cheever

Glory in Glass, Karen Sharman

Images of America: Briarcliff Lodge, Rob Yasinsac

Files and Images from the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society

William Woodward Baldwin: 1862-1954: His Era Immensely Simplified, Patricia Woodward Baldwin Andrews, his granddaughter, and Robert P. Ohrig, his greatgreat grandson.

Correction: In the 2014 Fall Newsletter regarding "Capt. Kevin T. Smalley, USMC Received High Honor" we erroneously said he graduated from Annapolis Class of 2001. He graduated Class of 2005. "He is now a Major selectee, waiting for promotion", according to his father, Stephen Smalley.



P.O. Box 11, Briarcliff Manor, New York 10510

Officers

Karen Smith - President Vice President - Open Carine Feist - Secretary Arnie Feist - Treasurer

Trustees

Mimi Boe (2016) Bob Fetonti (2018) Clorissa Gioscia (2016) Patty Henderson (2018) Tom McGarrity (2017) Larisa Wayne-Paulmeno (2017) Alexander Vastola (2016) Kathleen Zawacki (2017)

Dear Members and Friends Who Are Not-Yet-Members -- Please show your support for the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society by becoming a member or renewing your membership. Your support is vital to us as we share our history through the newsletter, offer special programs and reach out to you through our website. Your support is especially needed this year inasmuch as we plan to concentrate wholly on our application to New York State for an Absolute Charter, which, among other things will make us eligible for New York State grant money. So please renew, join us with your new membership or send along an extra donation. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact us anytime at mail@briarcliffhistory.org or 941-4393.

MEMBERSHIP TYI	PE New Rene	wal			
Name					
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Benefactor \$300	Patron \$200	Sponsor \$100	Family \$50	Seniors (2) \$40	
Senior (1) \$20	Individual \$30				
	tions always welcome. ck payable to BMSHS and	mail to PO Box 11, Briard	liff Manor, NY 10510		

Look for BMSHS information in your emails, on the Village Community Events Banner, our newsletters, *The Gazette*, the bulletin board outside the EOCW Historical Center, Facebook, our website www.briarcliffhistory.org and the Briarcliff Library announcements bulletin board. And we welcome your phone calls to us at 941-4393 and email at mail@briarcliffhistory.org