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BMSHS
Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough
Historical Society

Website
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Summer Newsletter 2015

2015 Summer Newsletter

Map Collection: Report from Intern, Kasey Calnan

Photo BMSHS Collection



Kasey Calnan

As of July 2015, the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society is one step closer to meeting the requirements to be eligible for an Absolute Charter. Due to the efforts of our intern, Kasey Calnan of Fishkill, the BMSHS map collection is now organized, accessible and easily searchable within our PastPerfect museum computer software. We also have finder's guides to help. Having up-to-date entries of our collection entered

into PastPerfect is one requirement necessary to receive an Absolute Charter and our newly organized map collection provides just that. An Absolute Charter is important because it will allow BMSHS to apply for grants, which has not been possible in the past. The BMSHS map collection includes nearly 120 maps of varying ages and subjects. Our maps vary in date from the late 1700s through today. There are street maps, property ownership maps, topographical maps and zoning maps, which cover the village; and some even cover larger areas including Westchester County and the Hudson River Valley. Although thirteen maps were either recently purchased or received as gifts to BMSHS, the large majority of them were "found in collection." FIC is an unfortunate, but common, designation, which means we don't know when it came to us or who gave it to us.

Using the BMSHS map collection one could easily trace the history and expansion of Briarcliff Manor. The 1891 map identifies an area of land called Whitson's Corners, which was the area that became Briarcliff Manor when Walter W. Law purchased the land and incorporated it in 1902. Maps from the early 1900s show property ownership and illustrate the large and numerous portions of land designated as being owned by Walter W. Law aka Briarcliff Realty. Several maps show details of the location of the historic Briarcliff Lodge. More current maps depict Briarcliff Manor as it is today, including street names and information about local businesses. A 1908 map outlines the route of the Briarcliff Road Race, while a 1989 blueprint collection shows the floor plans for Sleepy Hollow Country Club.

What began as a map case packed with maps and miscellany is now an organized collection of maps separated into various

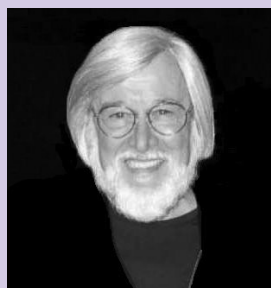
categories. Although only a few maps are displayed on the walls of the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society, all are available for public viewing and research. So, if you have any questions that a map could answer about Briarcliff Manor, or if you are

just curious and want to take a look, stop by the Center on the lower level of the library and let us show you the whole collection. Unfortunately for us, Kasey has just accepted a paying position at Boscobel, but we wish her the very best and thank her heartily for her good work for BMSHS.



1867 Map of
Sing Sing Penitentiary layout

Photo BMSHS Collection



Carmino Ravosa

IN MEMORIAM
Carmino Ravosa
"Our Music Man
Extraordinaire"
1930-2015

The Briarcliff Manor community lost another of its finest members July 18, 2015.

"Only the Best Is Good Enough for Briarcliff," was Carmino's original song for the 2002 Centennial Variety Show. It could be our Village Anthem. It is peppy, tells a good story and is joyful – all qualities of Carmino himself. He said of his accomplishments, and there were many, he was also very proud of getting the suffragette Carrie Chapman Catt's home, *Juniper Ledge*, added to the New York State and National Register of Historical Places in 2004. We thank him! and we will miss him!

We will have no new songs, but how we will treasure the ones he gave us.

Letter from the Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough Historical Society President

Dear Members and Friends,

Hope you are enjoying your summer 2015!

We are happy to present this newsletter to you, which includes a current report on our map collection; a memorial tribute to our dear, long-time member and Trustee, Carmino Ravosa; the backstory, newly researched and updated by BMSHS on how Phelps Hospital came to be named; and a recap of our visit and interview with Kay Whitson (Whitson Road sound familiar, anyone?)

Look for announcements of up-coming events we're finalizing now. Please save the date: **Sunday, October 4 at 2PM** at the Library for Dennis Corcoran's presentation on Major John Andre – the notorious spy during the Revolutionary War. Dennis will be in costume.

And now where the BMSHS stands today. We have 205 memberships so far for 2015. Yahoo!! Names are listed on the following page. We LOVE seeing this many. What's more, 40 of those memberships are NEW memberships. If there are any errors, please let me know; or if you have just forgotten to send in your renewal, please do it now (see the last page for the information); because, of course, we'd like more members. And spread the word about all we do and offer. We look forward to entering a really BIG number when we report our membership tally as part of the Absolute Charter package we're preparing.

Some of you know this already, but our space in the Library has been in the middle of the construction process for the community center. We've had to keep virtually everything under protective sheets while engineers, elec-

tricians and contractors build the infrastructure necessary for the HVAC system through our premises.

In exchange, the Village agreed to build a substitute closet for us outside our center. In addition, the Village will be installing an air-conditioning and dehumidification system tailored for our space. It will add comfort and the stable climate control will fulfill an Absolute Charter requirement.

Additionally, it is important to share with you that the BMSHS will have to contribute approximately \$4,000 of the total cost of the project as our share of the cost. We would appreciate any contributions above and beyond your membership that you would like to contribute towards this one-time expense.

As you can easily understand, this is not an ideal time NOT to have a fund-raiser, but it couldn't have been otherwise. Unfortunately we will not be holding our Annual Fall Harvest fund-raising dinner this year. People have asked for the date and have looked forward to it, but... We will endeavor to have a somewhat smaller event, if possible.

However, it is our hope that when the Absolute Charter comes through we will have a huge celebration and give an immense thank you to all you loyal supporters. Thank you again for your continued support, participation and interest. And don't forget to spread the good word about BMSHS!

Karon K. Smith



Photo K. K. Smith

"2001: A Space Odyssey" transfer switch for our Community Center in the parking lot.



Photo K. K. Smith

Can THAT fit into this? Our former coat closet.



Photo K. K. Smith

WHEW! It weighed a ton and took a crane to get it to the lower level.

2015 BMSHS Membership List through July.

If your name is on this list, you're a current member. If your name isn't on this list, we wish you were. The list includes 40 NEW memberships. Please add your name to the list. The membership information form is on the last sheet of the newsletter.

Names in bold are new members.

Benefactor Memberships

Boe, Carl & Mimi
Curran, John P. & Connie
Elkes, Steven & Mitzi
Gioscia, Michael F. & Clorissa
Nolan, Edward P. & Elaine
Payne, Edwin & Claire
Quigley, Matthew &
Nina Bogosian
Vastola, Eugene &
Anna Bogdanow
Wagner, Lynn M. & Jan

Patron Memberships

Banino, Charles & Amelia
Caramanica, John &
Lisa Czachor
Gartner, Gary J. & Deirdre
Kane, David H. T. & Siegrun
McGinty, Gregory Francis &
Joan
Nichols, Norman E. & Mary
Pedowitz, Lawrence &
Kathleen

Sponsor Memberships

Bauer, Wilhelma M. & Rudolf
Buerger, Theodore V. & Helen
Citron, Gerald & Millicent
Code, Howard T. & Susan
Davis, Jr., H. Thomas & Kathy
DeRose, Cesare & Beatrice
Emerson, Dede
Eschweiler, Peter Q. & Mickie
Feher, David & Gwen
Garrison, Bruce D. & Aphrodite
Gilbert, Barbara G.
Hegarty, Michael & Anita
Holzer, Stuart J. & Rhoda
Kahn, MD, David & Diane
Leichtling, Michael & Arlene
Little, Robert B. & Mary
Malech, Kenneth E. & Betty
McCain, Sean & Kiana
McGarrity, Thomas F. & Meg
Naclerio, Richard A. & Elisa
Neider, Calvin & Phyllis
O'Brien, Robert & Cathy
Pitman, Jennifer
Reusch, Germaine
Santiago, J. Mark &
Adeline Olmer
Saunders, Andrew W. & Sharon
Smith, Karen K.
Tung, Andrew & Ellen
VanHengel, Drusilla R.
Van Steen, John & Deborah
Zuydhoek, Paul &
Tamar Halpern

Family Memberships

Aisenbrey, Stuart & Bev
Austin, Keith & Joan
Barkley, Byron & Deb Kotter
Beebe, Tyler H. & Brooke
Behling, George J. & Elaine
Beicke, Robert & Joan
Blake, Virginia M.
Bloom, Bruce & Janice Gilroy
Bogart, Christopher P. &
Elizabeth O'Connell
Bombassei, Jim & Casey Anne
Cartenuto, David J. & Christina
Chalsen, Christopher E. &
Georgine
Cohen, Steven & Linda
Cross, Kenneth R. &
Doreen Raymond
Curran, Morgan & Caroline
Feist, Arnold & Carine
Feist, Michael
Forde, MD, Kenneth & Kareitha
Halper, Stuart & Stacy
Hill, Douglas S. & Virginia
Johnson, Jr., William & Debra
Kail, Ken & Ivy Hwang
**Karp, Lawrence &
Elizabeth Susman**
Kostman, Stan &
Barbara Cochran
Kraft, David & Anita
LaBruzzo, Carmelo J. & JoAnn
Little, Robert & Mary
Manuele, John & Lisa
Mayas, Albert E. & Francine
McGrath, Jr., Thomas E. &
Barbara
Merryman IV, Andrew & Mary
Mesiti, Franco A. & Martha
Messer, Eric A. & Hillary
Mickel, John T. & Carol
Miller, DDS, Allan M. &
Hannah Berkowitz
Molinelli, Michael & Regina
Mosenthal, Scott & Pamela
Myers, Thomas D. & Shannan
Nechis, Malvin & Joan
Nichols, Allen E. & Myrtle
Pastore, Jr., Ph.D., Joseph &
Pattie
Patella, Paul & Ann Marie
Reilly, Patrick & Sally Scudo
Rinzler, James & Melissa
Saper, Steve & Shelley Glick
Schrader, Agnes Murphy
Fitzgerald & John Logan
Simons, John & Elizabeth
Towbin, Carl & Twilia
Varvaro, Steve & Mattie
Vincent, Thomas & Barbara

Williams, Robert & Barbara
Wolf, Morton & Penny
Zegarelli, Philip E. & Barbara
Zielinski, Eric & Michele
Zirman, Bryan & Rori

Senior (1) Membership

Alenstein, Mary R.
Beck, Rosalyn
Bergman, Ruth
Bernstein, Barbara
Bernstein, Nadia
Blockley, Kaye
Cerutti, Kathleen
Chervokas, Roseanna
Chu, Frances
Comiskey, Thomas
Corcoran, Dennis
Daly, Trudy A.
DiMase, Frances
Epstein, ASA, FRICS, Ellen
Florent, Mary Jane
Fogel, Natalie
Gentile, Charles
Golden, Meryl
Graham, Audrey
Graves, Bruce C.
Haimowitz, Raphaelle
Horkans, Wilma Jean
Isaac, Helene C.
Kelleher, Gale
Kelly, Elizabeth
Kwiat, Barbara L.
Lichter, Risa
Lieberfreund, Stanley
Limongelli, William
Lyden, John
May, Audrey
McGinnis, Eva Marie
McKay, Lowen
Mezzatesta, Diane
Neubauer, George
Oechsner, Carl H.
Olson, Maxine E.
Paddock, JoAn
Parker, Caroline
Peterson, Rhoda H.
Petroni, Violet
Porter, Henrietta
Reynolds, Calvin
Richter, Sharon
Ruffner, Nancy
Schneider, Sandra
Schwartz, Esther
Schwartz, Margaret
Seideman, Betty
Semisa, Aurelia
Seredynski, Marcia
Springer, W. Todd
Strauss, Lore

Williams, Barbara W.

Seniors (2) Memberships

Barnes, William & Ani
Bosak, Barry & Midge
Braun, Norman & Janet
Corfield, Peter & Gilian
Cryan, John & Maria
Franco, Anthony A. & Edith
Grant, Alan & Michelle
Grund, Victor & Joan
Herbek, Richard & Linda
Holmquist, Eric & Ragnhild
Jusko, Edward & Delores
Kotter, Bruce L. & Marie
Mendelsohn, Jim & Michele
Morrison, George & Mirla
Moylan, Patrick & Margaret
Ravosa, Carmino & Claire
Sader, Raymond & Marion
Satlin, Sheldon & Doris
Shanahan, John & Monica
Williams, Gray & Marian
Williams, Paul & Phyllis

Individual Memberships

Amicucci, Phyllis
Andrews, Patricia
Austin, Sandra
Corcoran, Dennis
Dick, Janet
Fetonti, Robert
Filardi, Anna
Fitzgerald, Anne
Gaffney, Thomas
Giam, JoAnn
Greenblatt, Melinda
Lewis, Barbara Anna
Lynch, Carolyn C.
McCarville, Michael
McGuire, Carol A.
Mirsky, Sandra P.
Myers, M. Louisa
Netburn, Malcolm
Remy, Marilyn T.
Sharman, William
Stroobants, Henry G.
Vastola, Alex
Wayne-Paulmeno, Larisa
Wetzel, William
Zawacki, Kathleen Reilly

Bus./Org. Memberships

**Briarcliff Manor Chamber of
Commerce**
**Association for Mentally Ill
Children**
St. Lawrence Contracting, Inc.
Look of Success Hair Salon

Kay Whitson Bondurant's Summer Roots Tour

Mrs. Kay Whitson Bondurant, and her son, Ryan, a recent high school graduate from Bend, Oregon came to Briarcliff Manor on a roots tour June 17, 2015. The Statue of Liberty was special, their trudge up the spiral steps into Lady Liberty's outstretched arm had a dynamite view; the view from the Empire State Building was fogged in; Ellis Island and the 1776 foot-tall Freedom Tower view were not to be missed, but what Kay really wanted to see was the cemetery where her family had been buried and the building that had been Whitson's Garage.

So first, Gray Williams, New Castle Historian and Westchester County Historical Society Trustee, gave Kay and her son, Ryan, Karen Smith and Michael Feist a tour of the Quaker and Fair Ridge cemeteries in Chappaqua to point out where numerous Whitson grave-stones were.



Photo BMSHS Collection

From a newspaper article dated June 1, 1941 we have the obituary of Kay Whitson's great-grandfather, Charles H. Whitson, former postmaster and station agent at Briarcliff Manor, buried in Fair Ridge Cemetery, Chappaqua.

Great-great-grandfather Charles H. Whitson gravestone with Kay Bonderant pointing.

From the obituary, "Mr. Charles H. Whitson retired as postmaster in 1928 after more than 40 years of service in this capacity. For a number of years he also was agent at the old New York and Northern Railroad station, which subsequently became the Putnam Division of the New York Central.

"The Briarcliff station was known as Whitson's Corner at the time he assumed joint duties as station agent

and postmaster. His father, the late John H. Whitson, Kay's great-great-grandfather, operated a large farm, which covered much of the area comprising the Village of Briarcliff Manor today. The elder Mr. John Whitson donated land for the construction of the railroad and later sold many of his holdings to the late Walter W. Law who established his Briarcliff Farms there."

Kay said that family lore has it that when her great-great-grandfather, John H. Whitson, donated the land to build the railroad through this area, it was with the stipulation that if ever it were no longer being used for a



Photo BMSHS Collection

"It's MINE - ALL MINE NOW!" she facetiously said.

railroad, that ownership would revert back to the Whitson family. The statute claiming ownership might have run out.



Photo BMSHS Collection

Back of early Briarcliff Manor businesses, still standing, with Whitson's Garage in background with dot ca 1920

Continuing from the obituary, “Mr. Charles H. Whitson was associated with his sons, J. Harold Whitson and R. Everett Whitson, in the operation of a garage business in Briarcliff from 1916 until January of 1941. He resid-

Route 9A, as it always has from 1916 to 1941, continues to pump gas and repair cars doing business as Briar State Gas Corp. and Auto Repair Shop.

Lunch was served by the Briarcliff Congregational Church Women’s Guild in the Eastman Room of the church, organized by BMSHS member Bev Aisenbrey. Great-great-grandfather, John H. Whitson was a charter member of the Briarcliff Congregational Church. Kay was shown the church’s beautiful Tiffany stained-glass windows. John H. would have seen the same windows Law installed in the church before 1906. The foyer also holds two plaques listing Briarcliff participants in World War I and II. Kay noted Whitson names on both.

An oral history was recorded the day of Kay’s visit. Purchase of the recording equipment was made possible through the generosity of the Tompkins Bank of Mahopac and the Rotary Club of Briarcliff Manor. The BMSHS received a generous gift of \$550, which was used to purchase the equipment to “archive and record written and oral histories of Briarcliff Manor, its residents and activities, past, present and future. Specifically, to maintain the history of residents for the community” -- stories just as Mrs. Kay Whitson had to tell. Purchase of the equipment was made with the expert advice of the director of Sound & Story, Ms. Eileen McAdam. Ms. Kay Whitson was the Society’s first interview and it was an A#1 interview. “We learned stories ‘that didn’t make the papers,’ said Karen Smith, BMSHS President, “and we look forward to adding many other histories to our archives.”



Photo K. K. Smith

Contemporary view of same scene 2-2014

ed on Pleasantville Road. Surviving Mr. Whitson is his wife the former Elizabeth ‘Hessie’ Reynolds of Briarcliff; his sons R. Everett of Saw Mill River Road, and J. Harold of Pleasantville; a brother J. Wilbert Whitson of Ossining and four grandchildren.” (Record from Vol. 1, p. 38 of Briarcliff Manor Library Clippings archived by the BMSHS.)

Whitson Garage was a centerpiece of early Briarcliff Manor and the imposing building remains so. The building has been entirely renovated as of this year, by Gary Ramuno, President of Hudson Financial Services, and it looks terrific. Hudson Financial Services has the center portion; Holbrook Cottage and My Sherry & more (sic) are on either side. The garage, facing



Briarcliff Congregational Church World War I and II plaques



Photo K. K. Smith

Photo BMSHS Collection

l to r. Karen Smith, BMSHS President; Eric Lebenson, Rotary President; Rachel Leibbacher, Rotary Trustee; and, seated, Kay Whitson Bondurant

Backstory of How Phelps Hospital Came by Its Name

The sixty-acre parcel of land, which the hospital now occupies, was originally inhabited by the Wappinger Confederation of Native Americans. Eventually, in 1609, English sea captain, **Henry Hudson (ca 1567–1611)**, sailing for the Dutch East India Company, undertook the first recorded voyage up the river in his ship *The Half Moon*.

Henry Hudson



Illustration credit, Wikipedia

Dutch settlers followed Hudson and acquired the land from the local Native Americans. One of these settlers was **Frederick Philipse (1626-1702)**, who in 1639 built his Upper Mills on what became known as Philipsburg Manor, just south of where Phelps Memorial Hospital stands today. He went on to become one of the wealthiest men in America as he took over most of the land in the area and leased it out to tenant farmers while building his industrial empire through the production of lumber and grains.



Picture credit, Wikipedia

Frederick Philipse

His descendants continued to own it until they made the ill-fated decision to back England during the American Revolution by becoming Loyalists and lost everything. New York State took over the land after the war and General Girard Beekman bought the par-

cel of land that would become North Tarrytown, which is named Sleepy Hollow today.

Meanwhile, close by, **William Phelps (1593-1672)**, an English farmer, had emigrated from England and settled in Connecticut in 1630.

His great-great-great grandson, **Thomas Phelps III (dates unknown and more information is unavailable)**, served in the Revolutionary War as a Lieutenant under **Major General Nathanael (sic) Greene (1742-1786)**, who emerged from the war with a reputation as George Washington's most gifted and dependable officer. When the fourth son of Thomas Phelps III was born in Simsbury Connecticut, Thomas was so attached to General Greene that he named him **Anson Greene Phelps (1781-1853)** after General Greene. Just by the way, the year before, this same General Greene was in charge of the Court of Inquiry that found British **Major John Andre (1750-1780)** guilty in Tappan of spying and gave him a sentence of death.



Painting credit, Wikipedia



Illustration credit, Wikipedia

1783 Charles Willson Peale portrait of Greene & self-portrait by Major John Andre

The first **Anson Greene Phelps** was descended from the early American Colonial Governors Thomas Dudley, John Jaynes and George Wyllis. His mother died when he was twelve. He chose his brother, **Thomas Woodbridge Phelps (1772-1838)** as his guardian and eventually became a very successful merchant. Senior married Olivia Egleston in 1806 and they had seven children who lived to maturity. He moved to New York City where he established a shipping line and made very prudent investments.

His three eldest children were all daughters and they married men from prominent families: Elizabeth married Daniel James; Melissa married William Dodge; and Caroline married James Stokes. His only son, **Anson Greene Phelps, Junior (ca 1818-1850)**, was born in New York City.

Anson Greene Phelps, Senior



Photo credit, Wikipedia

Phelps Memorial Hospital is named after Anson Greene Phelps, Senior (1781-1853). Details follow.

The sons-in-law went into partnership with their father-in-law and together they formed the Phelps-Dodge partnership. This became one of the largest firms in the country. They had major interests in banking, railroads, property, timber, ironworks and, eventually, the automobile business.

Anson Green Phelps, Junior joined the family firm, married Jane Gibson and in 1848 purchased sixty-six acres from the Beekman Estate to build a summer home. This is the property where the hospital is located today and where the Phelps family decided to build a twenty-two room Victorian Gothic stone home in 1851 and to call it *The Manor House*. The architect was John Butler Snook, who also designed the first Grand Central Depot at the request of Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Two years later Anson Greene Phelps, Jr. died. He died a multimillionaire who had given over \$500,000 to charities. As a memorial to his father before he died, Anson Greene Phelps, Junior changed the summer estate's name to *Phelps Place*; he also renamed the hospital in Ansonia, Connecticut, to Phelps Memorial Hospital, and changed the name of the huge Ansonia Hotel in New York City as well.

Anson Junior died of smallpox only a few years after his father. His widow, Jane, continued living in the home with her sister, Helen, who was a spinster. Jane died 50 years after her husband in 1909. Since Jane and Anson Junior had no children, the land and estate were bequeathed to her sister, Helen, who died in 1918.

Helen left *Phelps Place* to the Presbyterian Mission Board, to the surprise of the Phelps family in-laws. This could have been the final chapter of *Phelps Place*, and in turn, there would have been no local Phelps Memorial Hospital today.

However, thanks to Anson Greene Phelps Senior's great-grandson, **Arthur Curtiss James (1867-1941)** the story doesn't end.

If you recall, **Daniel James (1801-1876)** married Anson Senior's oldest daughter, **Elizabeth Woodbridge Phelps (1807-1847)** and had become partners with his father-in-law and his two brothers-in-law to form the Phelps-Dodge partnership. They became very successful with many diversified business interests, including railroads. Daniel James' son, **Daniel Willis James (1832-1907)** had focused the family's interest in railroads and Daniel Willis James' son, **Arthur Curtiss James (1867-1941)**, had expanded that interest in railroads.

The Phelps-Dodge partnership incorporated in 1908 created a railroad empire, which included ownership of one-seventh of the nation's railroads.



Photo credit, Wikipedia

Arthur Curtiss James

Thus, with the railroads, plus copper, silver and gold mine holdings, and \$26 million dollars that he had inherited from his father, Arthur Curtiss James became one of the wealthiest men in America. Yet he was not known to the public because he shunned publicity and his name and picture were rarely in the newspaper. During his lifetime he gave millions to charity, but all gifts carried the caveat that publicity of the gifts meant immediate cancellation of the gift.

He was concerned when the 66-acre *Phelps Place* passed out of family hands, so he set about reacquiring it and did so when he bought it back from the Presbyterian Mission Board in 1921.

Arthur Curtiss James and his wife, Harriet, maintained their primary residence in New York City. They not only kept a summer residence in Newport but also a winter home in Florida. Nevertheless, they loved their country retreat at *Phelps Place* and spent a good deal of time entertaining guests from all over the world there. The property also included a 12-room superintendent's house, a six-room bungalow, a large garage with two four-room apartments above it and a tennis court. They renamed it *James House*, restored the building and furnished it with valuable antiques and period pieces.

The couple had no children and died within three weeks of each other in May of 1941. Trustees of the estate sold most of the family's possessions but kept the property and established the James Foundation for charitable purposes. Much of the wealth went to worthy educational and cultural causes, but it is believed James had indicated to the trustees that he was interested in donating the property for the establishment of a new hospital.

The Ossining Hospital and the Tarrytown Hospitals were now deemed inadequate and officials from both facilities were interested in building one hospital at a central location to replace them. The James Foundation offered its 66 acres in 1949 with

an additional \$500,000 cash grant with the proviso that two conditions were met: the cash grant had to be matched by the community and the new hospital would be named Phelps Memorial, in memory of the Phelps patriarch, Anson Greene Phelps, Sr.

The medical staffs of both community hospitals



Photo credit, K. K. Smith

The James House

voted unanimously for the merger and the money was raised through the community along with the invaluable assistance of the Rockefeller family. The Rockefellers insisted that *James House* not be torn down – perhaps remembering that William Rockefeller's 205-room mansion, *Rockwood Hall*, which was right next door to the north, had been razed during the Depression. The Rockefeller family also contributed \$1.25 million to the project with the remaining money coming from the community.

The new hospital's cornerstone was laid in 1954 and a nurse's residence cornerstone in 1955. The hospital opened to patients on January 7, 1956. Over 10,000 area residents toured the facility on opening day.

When Arthur Curtiss James and his wife, Harriet, died in 1941, the Victorian mansion was occupied by a caretaker for many years until women from the executive committee of both the Ossining and Tarrytown hospitals formed the Phelps Memorial Hospital Women's Auxiliary in 1952. They agreed

to take care of the building and refurbish it to its original décor in return for use of the building as their headquarters. One of the first things the Women's Auxiliary did was to train volunteers for the opening of the hospital in 1956. After the Auxiliary accepted men, it became the Phelps Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

And while we're at it, let's take a quick tour inside this impressive structure that has been with us for

over 150 years. As you enter *James House* you notice a wrap-around veranda that completely surrounds the outside of the building. You enter the building and see the Grand Hall, which runs the depth of the house, flanked by Corinthian columns. The rooms on your left are the adjoining East and West Parlor rooms. The East Parlor room includes the painting "Lady Washington's Reception" and a grandfather's clock that was

built in 1851, which was a gift from the former PMH Association president, Walter Johnson. Both rooms also contain paintings of the first Anson Greene Phelps and his wife, Olivia. These paintings were donated by his descendants, including his great-great-grandson, Arthur James Hoe.

The Dining Room off to the right contains a 12-branch crystal and bronze chandelier that was

originally from Germany and was donated by the Paschen family. There is a red carpeted stairwell to the right as you enter the Grand Hall, which leads to a landing with a stained glass window above it, and a divided staircase takes you upstairs. Here you will find a portrait of Arthur Curtiss James, the last descendant of the Phelps family to reside in this historic house. Today the *James House* is used by the Auxiliary for meetings and storage and where



Photo credit, Wikipedia

Aerial view of Phelps Memorial Hospital

they have their annual business meeting and holiday party. Additionally, the *James House* is rented out throughout the year for weddings, business meetings, birthday and dinner parties and movie shoots as well. The proceeds from the rental of the James House benefit the hospital.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how we came to have Phelps Hospital and the James House.

The "*James House*" Sally Ackerman, Phelps Auxiliary Historian, 1981

"*Phelps Place: A Historical Overview*," Richard Gerber and James Hoe, Champagne Ball Program, 1995

Invaluable assistance of the *James House* Chairman, Eva Marie Dahling 2008

Dennis Corcoran, local historian, compiled most of the information from sources noted, 2008

"Phelps Memorial Hospital Auxiliary News & Notes" – March-April, 2008; May-June, 2008; September-October, 2008; and November-December, 2008. Material first published in this publication.

Additional research and editing, Karen Smith, Briarcliff Manor Village historian; Michael Feist, Wikipedian, 2015



Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough
Historical Society

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

Officers

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

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Bob Fetonti (2018)
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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's mission 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.

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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