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Historical Society

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March 2021

Dear Valuable Members and Friends –

What a loooong year it has been, huh? Wow! I hope you're well and enjoying spring. But it HAS been a challenge, hasn't it? During that time I uncovered some very interesting things which I'll share as we go forward. And go forward we must! **2024** is the year the Society will be 50 years old and we want to begin to make plans for a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. So today I'm writing to appeal to you to renew your membership for 2021 at the highest contribution level possible. Your generosity has been wonderful over the years. And we thank you for your continuing support.

One especially important project was accomplished even during the Time-of-the-Covid! The Law Park Lantern had been given to us in 2019. It was restored and installed near the Pavilion last summer with the great help and support of Mayor, Steve Vescio and the Board of Trustees; Village Manager, Phil Zegarelli; and the expert stone-man, Robert Carpenter.

From last March to November I had been working on a reorganization of our archival material when I was injured in a car accident; but I'm recovering and am eager to pick up where things left off. The penultimate touch to the Law Park Lantern is the handsome marble surround of the base which was just installed. Thank you Team DPW! Ultimately the lantern will be dedicated and we're hopeful we will have not one, but two of W. W. Law's grandsons join us for the occasion.

"The rest of the story" about this lantern and the others comes from several sources. It is believed that W.W. Law imported them by 1902 from the Far East with the assistance of some Christian missionaries. The lanterns were the "finishing touch" on several of Law's projects. You've seen them here and there around the Village, but our *original historical research* (our Mission after all) has revealed where each was originally placed and where each is now. Only two are in its original location.

We're excited to share this research with you in this letter. I'm certain you'll enjoy reading it. As I've said before, we have a wealth of information here and lots of enthusiasm for our subject. We ask for your support again; please enjoy our handsome, updated website; and look forward to the *Notebook* pages we email. And we will welcome you to stop by for a visit when conditions allow.

With many thanks and great appreciation!



Karen K. Smith, Executive Director



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# The Story of the Stone Lanterns

*I'm going to tell you a story. I think it's almost like a fairy tale –  
how six beautiful stone lanterns came to Briarcliff Manor.*

A long time ago, about 1895, Walter Law retired from his spectacular career with W. & J. Sloan Fine Furnishings in Manhattan & the Alexander Carpet Company in Yonkers. Especially large, fine carpets were created at the Smith facility with Axminster looms. The carpets furnished palaces around the world, the White House and Gilded Age homes here.

Any other person would have needed to rest after all these accomplishments and success; but “retirement” meant something very different to Law. He initially purchased about 500 acres (part of the Towns of Ossining and Mount Pleasant) and set out, with the help of the Olmstead Brothers, to design a bucolic village with a majestic “destination” lodge; curving “roads” (no streets here!); the Briarcliff Congregational Church; a huge exemplary farm; a notable girls’ school, Mrs. Dow’s School; a School for Agriculture and Horticulture; a water, fire and electric company; a new, fine train station – all on land that for hundred of years had simply been farmland. He encouraged his wealthy friends to be part of this vision: “an all-year-home village, strictly residential with all the conveniences of a city with the freedom and natural beauty of the charming country.”

Law’s motto for all-things-Briarcliff was: “Nothing But the Best for Briarcliff.” It was on the top of his business letterhead, as you see below. Note all the businesses.

<b>B R I A R C L I F F</b> WHERE ONLY THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH WESTCHESTER COUNTY--THIRTY MILES FROM MANHATTAN--NEW YORK		
<b>BRIARCLIFF FARMS, WALTER W. LAW, OWNER</b> A park-farm hill country estate of 6000 acres		
<b>BRIARCLIFF DAIRY</b> Handling the Milk product of 1200 Registered Jerseys	<b>BRIARCLIFF TABLE WATER</b> A deep-spring water showing analysis of surpassing purity	
<b>BRIARCLIFF REALTY</b> Sold only for permanent Country Home locations	<b>BRIARCLIFF INDUSTRIES--In Departments</b> Electric Light-Power, Stables, Construction, Painting, Laundry	
<b>BRIARCLIFF HOTELS</b> Perfectly appointed and conducted summer and winter	<b>BRIARCLIFF PRINT SHOP</b> Working only for the finest effects of the Printing Art	
<b>BRIARCLIFF GREENHOUSES</b> 100,000 square feet of glass for American Beauty Roses	<b>BRIARCLIFF OUTLOOK</b> A monthly home-print Magazine for promotion of Country Life	
<b>BRIARCLIFF HOME OFFICE</b> Briarcliff Manor, New York	<b>DAVID B. PLUMER, GEN'L. MANAGER</b>	<b>BRIARCLIFF INFORMATION</b> New York Store, Windsor Arcade

By 1902 Law was able to incorporate the village (by counting as many of his farm workers as “residents” as were needed to get to 300.) And now for the finishing touches! Walter Law had been a generous contributor to the Christian missionary effort in the Far East for years. We have no written account of how he came to request a shipment of imposing Japanese stone lanterns (presumably with his connections with the missionaries), how they were transported to New York; their age; their cost; and exactly when they arrived.

But I’ll go on with the story to tell you where the lanterns were originally placed and where they are today.

## Lantern #1

We have a 1900s postcard of “The Hotel Beautiful” – The Briarcliff Lodge. The original portion was finished in 1902. Placed in the most imposing place at the entrance to the Lodge was the “grand-daddy” of the lanterns. It was moved from the Lodge/King’s College campus to the grounds of the Briarcliff Congregational Church (BCC) Parish Hall in 1990 when King’s College was about to close, as per an agreement between King’s President Friedhelm Radandt and Rev. George Higgins of BCC. Not knowing the fate of the Lodge/King’s property, they agreed that the grounds of the BCC would be the best place for it. It is now on the lawn of the Parish House on South State Road. (Note the height of the man in the bowler v the height of the lantern!)



## Lantern #2

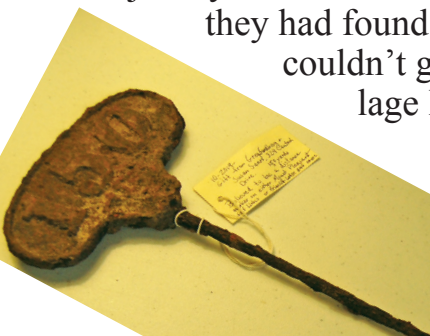
This lantern was on the grounds of the Briarcliff Lodge, but we don’t know just where. It was moved to stand between the BCC and the church’s manse on South State Road.

## Lantern #3

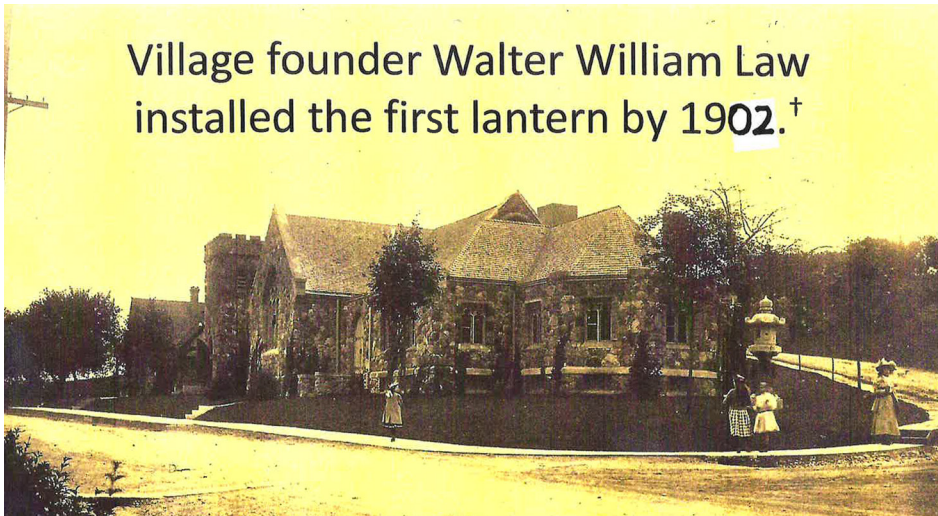
The Briarcliff Lodge initially had a nine-hole golf course which extended from Central Drive West to the top of Central Drive to Dalmeny Road. (Later the course extended to 18 holes across 9A to the undeveloped land, subsequently named the Crossways.) This lantern had been on the first 9-hole portion since the early 1900s. In 2018 the Sears family who lived there gave our in-

tern, Nathan Feist, an opportunity to photograph all aspects of the lantern and he did an in-depth study of its iconography.

In anticipation of the family’s move to Connecticut in 2020, they made a gift of the lantern jointly to BMSHS and the Village. In addition, they gave us a corroded 50 yard-marker they had found buried in an area they determined had previously been a sand trap. “I couldn’t get anything to grow there for the life of me!” Mayor Vescio and Village Manager Zegarelli supported us on every step of the way to the installation of this lantern in Law Park, as you see it today. We will have a celebration as soon as COVID19 conditions allow.



## Lantern #4

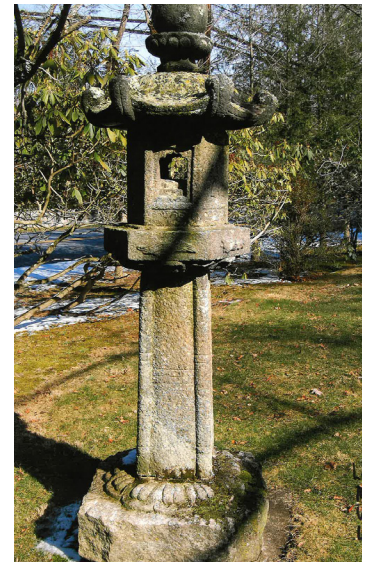


This lantern, seen by all of us as we come and go, was placed at the corner of the Briarcliff Congregational Church property at South State & Elm Road. The photograph shows it at this location where it has been ever since.



## Lantern #5

Walter Law had this lantern placed at his daughter Edith Law Brockelman's property named "Little Mount Vernon," across from the entrance to the Law Manor on Scarborough Road, where it remains. This is the other lantern that hasn't moved from its original location.



## Lantern #6

One of Law's former business partners and close friend was George McNeir who built *Brae View* at the top of Central Drive. Law offered one of the lanterns to be the feature in his garden. It is no longer there, but it remains in the garden of another private home in Briarcliff Manor.

And we all live happily ever after in Briarcliff Manor enjoying our beautiful lanterns. These are the "gifts that keep on giving" from Walter W. Law, our Village's founder.



# 2020 BMSHS Membership List

*A very special thanks goes to Susan Sears and her husband, Greg Sundberg, for their gift of their beloved stone lantern to the BMSHS & to the Village.*

## **\$5,000 Level**

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Henrietta Porter  
Marion Sader  
Agnes Murphy Fitzgerald  
Schrader  
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Hank Stroobants  
Ann Surath  
Lauren Tannenbaum  
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Dennis &  
Bernadine Wasiczko  
Jude Westerfield  
Barbara Williams

**Simply to repeat, we thank all of you for your generous and kind contributions to the work of the Society!**