

1939

A History of
BRIARCLIFF MANOR

By **ROBERT B. PATTISON**



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THE BRIARCLIFF WEEKLY

A History of Briarcliff Manor

By **Rev. Robert B. Pattison**
member of the Ossining Historical Society.

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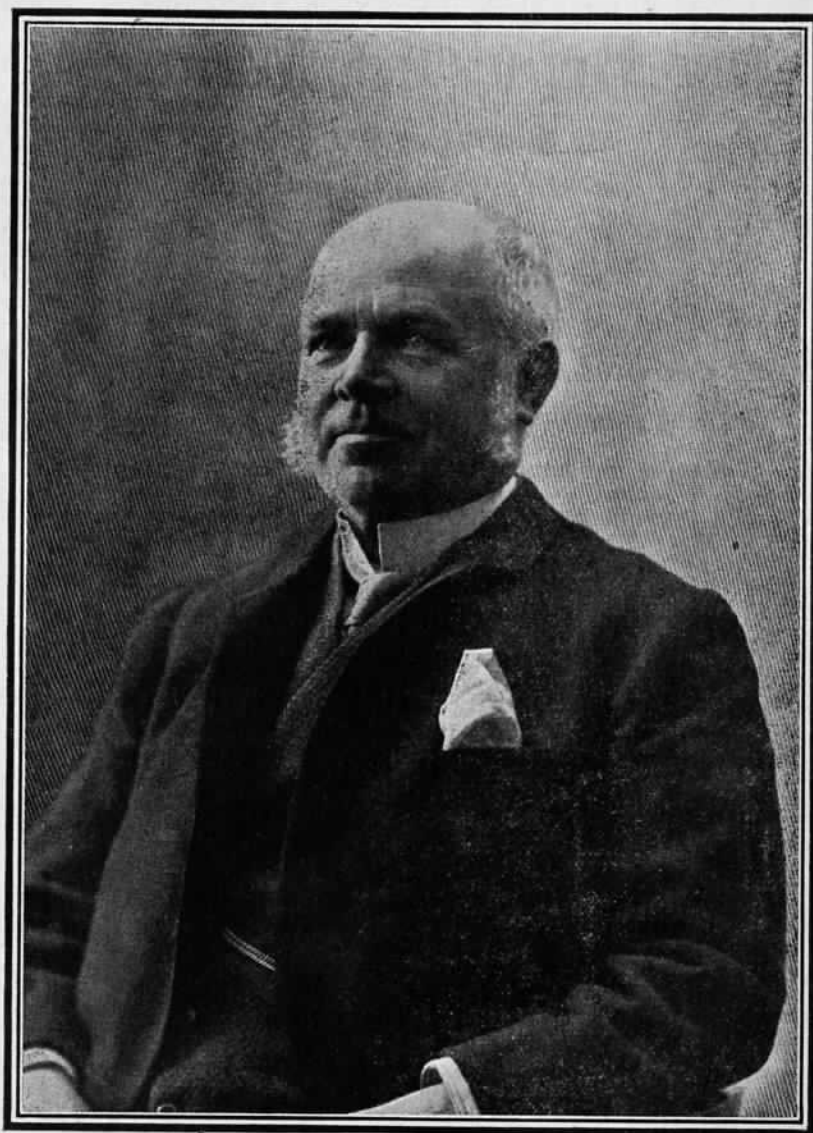
THE BRIARCLIFF WEEKLY

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Founded Briarcliff



Walter W. Law, Esq.

A History of BRIARCLIFF MANOR

From an Indian's campfire to modern heating, from a burning pitchpine stick to electric lights, from farm pumps to water faucets, such bridge the long gap between early days and our own in our Village, materially. From a very simple, small Sunday School to five well-established Churches, such shows up our gain in religion. From dirt roads, often knee-deep in mud, to excellent macadam or cement roads, such says something about the progress in transportation.

It is a far cry from those days when there was no fire apparatus apart from water carried in buckets from the farm spring, when there was no police department and when the country doctor in his horse-drawn buggy came only for strict emergencies and dealt out home-made pills for most maladies. The auto has supplanted the ox cart and the telephone has taken the place of the neighbor's shout across the acres to announce another little citizen's arrival at some farm.

Columbus discovered America some 410 years to a day before Briarcliff Manor was incorporated October 12, 1902. In those four centuries things happened in our land and not the least of them was the beginnings of our locality as a farm group and later as a recognized political division in New York State.

The very first inhabitants were Mohegan Indians, a branch of the powerful tribe of Algonquins. They came many a century ago from the far west, and

centuries before that from across Behring Strait into what is now North America from Asia. So, in long ages, to the Atlantic Ocean lured by hunting, fishing, and safe lodging under rock-shelters, one of which is to be found on the Dell Farm nearby. Indian arrow heads of age unknown have been found in it recently. It would be of great interest to know what name the Indians may have given to this locality.

Then came the era of the Hollanders and the English under both of which Vreddryck Flypsen (Frederick Philipse, later name) bought land from the Indians of our vicinity, his purchases being confirmed by English royal patent from overseas, January 2, 1689. The Philipse estate finally covered all from Spuyten Duyvil to the Croton River, and from the Hudson to the source of the Bronx. One of his later purchases was of land from the Pocantico stream to the Croton, and from the Hudson to Nepperhan Creek (now Saw Mill River), so that altogether his holdings included land where Briarcliff now stands.

The Sint Sinct Indians may have occupied land where our village stands, land which Philipse bought from them on August 4, 1685, the transfer being made, according to tradition, on the elevated land just east of the Scarborough railroad station. The price was in wampum axes, guns, blankets, knives, kettles, cloth, shirts, not to forget rum. If our section was included in

Edgewood Park

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Briarcliff Manor

this particular purchase, it is interesting to know that the price was much more than the historic \$24 worth of goods for which Manhattan Island was originally sold! (But who would exchange ours for New York City? Perish the thought!)

The transfer of land here and hereabouts was made more historic when the Commission on Forfeiture (appointed to seize and sell land held by the Tories during the Revolutionary War) sold, in 1784-1785, all of the Sing Sing tract, among others, to loyal Americans who had sided against King George Third of England; thus all the Philipse estate passed into other hands and Briarcliff Manor land was of this piece.

An old map in the possession of Mr. H. B. Valentine shows the many tenants on the Philipse lands hereabouts at the time of the Commission on Forfeiture, 1784-5. It seems to indicate that they bought the very land they occupied (for it had been the policy of all the Hudson River estate owners not to sell land, and these tenants were doubtless glad of the chance at last to buy). Perhaps there is only one name on this map of a century and a half ago still having local association, that of Thomas Bishop whose father John in 1785 bought some 265 acres with the Hudson River as its western boundary. The three Bishop brothers in present-day Briarcliff, Jesse B., T. Everett, and Howard G. Bishop, trace descent from this family. If any others are traceable so far back, it would be interesting to know it.

Those were crude but resourceful days! Forest land was here by the square mile. There were many Indians and very few whites, some trails but no roads, some shelters but no

houses; religion but here no churches, some books but here no school, hunger enough but here no stores.

With time came a few settlers. Farms began to supplant forests, civilization showed its comforting face, conveniences such as the tin peddler came through, a blacksmith arrived, and Indians more and more gave way to "pale faces."

We wonder where the first house stood, and how many of them there were in that long ago. In time, however, there were built the three farmhouses, all still standing, of the three Whitson brothers: John, Richard and Reuben. They occupied adjoining farms, totaling some 400 acres. Their uncle, Joseph, built the Crossways now corner of Pleasantville Road near the Congregational Church in 1820, the date being plainly visible for years on its exterior; the elms there are judged to be at least a century old. This house came into the possession of his nephew, John H. Whitson. Richard lived in the house on Pleasantville Road now occupied by Mr. Emerson Kessler, and Reuben lived in the house now owned by Mr. Preston Herbert, near the Bronx Parkway.

This last-mentioned house is probably the oldest in the locality. An atlas, published in 1867, shows this house with the name "R. Whitson" and the comment "Century Homestead," so that it must have been built prior to 1767.

Other families of course were present, but the Whitsons were enough to give to this whole section their name: "Whitson's Corners," and when the railroad came, the depot took the name of Whitson's Station.

The story of early transportation tells much of those times.



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There was a stage-coach, and in winter a stage - sleigh, between Pleasantville and Ossining (then called Sing Sing). Would that we had a photo of that horse-drawn vehicle! So the traveler went north or south by rail, for the railroad came to Ossining in 1849, some thirty years before it ran to Whitson's; or, by stage still, passengers might travel on the old Albany Post Road north or south. When that train arrived, December 1, 1880, (or December, 1879?), it was on what was called the New York and Northern Railroad, later called the Putnam Division of the N. Y. C. R. R. If anyone would see our first station building, it is now the Millwood station, for it was loaded on a flatcar one day and hauled there. People still living remember Ben Fisher, the first station agent here; and he was followed by Charles H. Whitson, who for 25 years held that position. Mr. Whitson's first salary was all of \$35 a month, and his hours were from 7 A. M. "till the milk train came through" which was occasionally midnight so that some days were seventeen work-hours long.

Transportation improved naturally. The ox and the horse yielded to the motor-driven car, cement roads appeared, parkways came into being. But let none sneer at the patient ox, for ox-teams were called into use, as our oldest citizen, Mrs. Susan D. Ransom, remembers, to haul out cars stuck fast in the heavy mud of the highways.

Once a trolley electric line from Ossining to Sherman Park via Briarcliff was considered (1906) and came near to realization, but not quite.

This brings us rightfully to the Law family and their large and valuable contribution to all that concerns Briarcliff Manor.

Walter W. Law was born an Englishman in 1837 and came to America evidently determined to grow up with the land and help make the land grow. By his industry and good Judgment he became, in time, Vice-President of the W. and J. Sloane Carpet Co., and soon was directing his energies in this direction so that, in 1895, the Briarcliff Realty Co. was begun with 2,000 acres of land. It was incorporated in 1908.

The Briarcliff Manor Farms, one of his concerns, grew to 5,000 acres with 300 workers, based everyway on scientific principles. It was considered the best of its kind in all the United States, specializing in pure-bred Jerseys.

New York deliveries of its milk was affected through many stores and so excellent was its output in milk, cream and butter that it won the Gold Medal at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

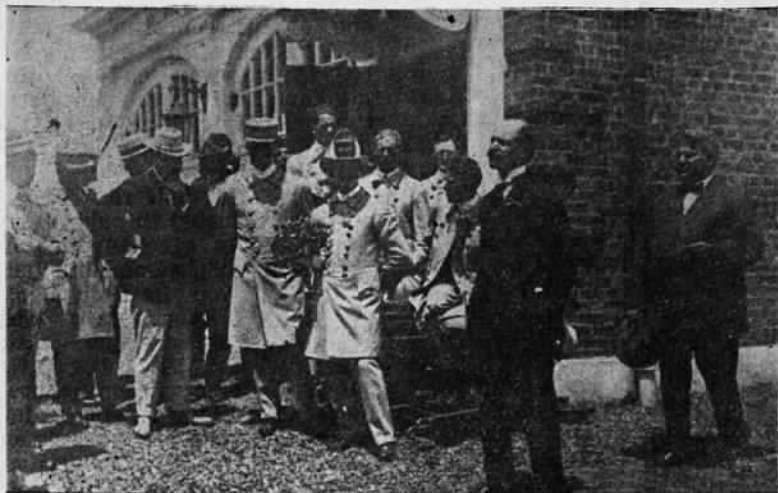
Besides cattle, the farm boasted some 500 pigs, 4,000 chickens, many thoroughbred horses, some pheasants, a few peacocks and a flock of sheep. To carry through to perfection, Mr. Law gave prizes at Christmas time, 1900, for the best-kept barn, the cleanest room in the dormitory (Dalmeny) and for the gentlest handler of his cows. He was insistent that cows do better under humane treatment and allowed no shouting or abuse of any kind. A man whom he saw kick a cow soon was told to seek work elsewhere.

One of his enterprises was the School of Practical Agriculture and Horticulture, in Pocantico Lodge, Pleasantville Road, with Mr. George T. Powell as director and with many young men under special instruction. It was in line with Mr. Law's ideal, "I shall not be satisfied to stop un-

til the Briarcliff Farms has placed itself in the forefront of any institution of its kind to be found in the whole country."

With the emphasis that came to be placed on real estate it was inevitable that the farmland would have to be used for residences. Therefore, in 1907-08, the Briarcliff Farms was moved to Pine Plains, N. Y., and many workers went there at that time.

his origin. It was not to be a hotel, but to be "a building which should have about it the atmosphere of a cultivated gentleman's home." The furnishings were often elaborate, its Sunday evening musicals were of the best, its Tea-room and Grillroom were well patronized; and tennis, golf, swimming pools indoors and out, and other specialties appealed to a society clientele



President of the Village Walter W. Law, Jr., presenting Key of Municipal Building to Fire Company. July 4, 1914.

Another of Mr. Law's projects was rose culture. It grew to 75,000 square feet of greenhouse space and its annual sale of American Beauty Roses went up to over \$100,000 a year. The commercial interests were placed in charge of Mr. Paul M. Pierson of famous name in the rose business. There were also carnations. All-told sometimes as many as 2,000 flowers would be cut in a single day.

The Briarcliff Lodge was of

so that guests often made it a summer-long resting place.

Mr. Law's interests were wider than mere business. He had a large private library, he insisted upon due observance of laws in the community, his devotion to education showed itself in the encouragement of Mrs. Dow's School, he gave land in 1904 for what is now the Park for the use of residents. The Congregational Church is readily traceable back

to his emphasis upon religion; for he began it, gave very liberally to it, and once said of it, "My heart is there!"

There is a characteristic story told of how once the Premier of Canada informed Mr. Law that he much wished to see the model Briarcliff Farms of which he had heard such high praise, and set Sunday at 11 if that time was convenient to his host. To this Mr. Law replied that he hoped the Premier would make the visit, but "I have an engagement every Sunday morning at 11."

His sons, Mr. Henry W. Law and Mr. Walter William Law, Jr., have both held the position of President of the Village. They believed in carrying forward the tradition started by their father, he who was called by his friend, Andrew Carnegie, "The Laird of Briarcliff Manor" and who wrote of him an article for the Outlook Magazine with that title. In 1924, aged 86, he died and, with his wife, lies buried in Woodland Cemetery. "He rests from his labor and his works do follow him." A very suitable memorial window to their parents by the children may be seen in the Congregational Church.

It was Mr. Law who chose the name Briarcliff Manor. In large measure he borrowed it from Dr. John Ogilby, who founded All Saints' Church in 1848, designating it as All Saints' Church, Brier Cliff, Sing Sing, N. Y. Dr. Ogilby adopted the title "Brier Cliff" from his property in Ireland. Mr. Law liked the name and so, combining the two words into one, changing the spelling a little, adding the word "Manor" he applied it to the Farms and later to the Village. This was therefore the name given the village even be-

fore its actual incorporation in 1902.

Like Tennyson's brook, "Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever," so the Village once begun, continued. The first election was Dec. 19, 1902, in the old Briarcliff Steamer Co. room, which was west of where the Realty office now stands. By ballot the following were selected: President of the Village, William De Nyse; Trustees, W. W. Law, Jr., and J. Sidney Baylis. The first Treasurer was Stanley H. Kidd, who served for a short term and was succeeded by T. Everett Bishop whose service in that capacity extended through 32 years. The first Clerk was William H. Coleman whose term of office continued through 1921, or for 20 years. He was succeeded by Alfred H. Pearson, who still remains in office.

The total official Assessment Roll, April 21, 1903 was \$610,000; and the first Village tax rate, June 2, 1903, was \$5 per \$1,000. A budget was adopted: \$2,000 for streets, \$200 for lights, \$859, general, a total first budget of \$3,059.

A Board of Health, with three men headed by Jessie Coddington, was selected August 7, 1903. In due time came the departments of Police, Fire, and Water, in addition to Streets and Health.

Street lighting dates from 1904, with 29 electric lights. There was no gas or oil used in this way.

How large was that first Village? It was incorporated with 640 acres, or one square mile, whereas now, 1939, it covers five and one-half square miles or 3,520 acres. This increase was due to two additions. The Scarborough section was added in 1906, and the northern section

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was in 1927 taken over from the Town of Mt. Pleasant.

Sidewalks were necessary, and the first one was laid from the Putnam Bridge to the railroad station in 1903. A Municipal Building goes with a first rate village, and ours was erected in 1913, costing \$20,000, and housing also the fire department. An official paper is essential, so "The Briarcliff Outlook" was declared to be such. (Are there copies of those first issues extant?) "Why not have a Village Band? All right, let's, and Edgar S. Stowell became director with 22 musicians, in 1908. This Band, if the same one, seems to have been longwinded, for, December 1926, there were 42 instruments worth \$1,000 and some 53 uniforms. And why not have a Choral Club? In 1926 such was organized to "foster and develop the singing talent here" with Alois Havrilla as director.

How great a matter a little fire kindleth! Therefore, we find a regular fire department made part of the Village system February 3, 1903. It was supported by voluntary contributions; it had its first quarters in the old blacksmith shop near Barn A. Ironically enough, this barn was burned April 28, 1913. Steamer Co. No. 1 was its title; it was a handdrawn chemical outfit originally, but became a horse-drawn express wagon with hose later on. A steamer followed, then a hook and ladder. The steamer blew up at a fire in Ossining. Services of the firemen were volunteered from the first. On July 4, 1914, in their new building, Hon. Walter W. Law, Jr., formally presented the key to James Fleming, President of the Fire Co., and Mr. Stewart of the Board of Trustees turned

the new fire apparatus over to Chief F. C. Messinger.

Though far from being its only use, water goes with a fire department. Farm pumps gave way to a system with a steam pump taking water from the Potomac Brook Pond at the Dairy. Later, deep wells were driven near the present High School, there was a reservoir on the hill where now is the Briar Hills Country Club. Pumping units, in different places, came later. There seems to have always been plenty of water; one of the oldest inhabitants recalls how rain or spring water would rush down the hillside opposite the present High School and settle like a marsh where the present lake is.

Briarcliff has always been noted for the purity of its water. In fact there was a Table Water Department, with wells 250 feet deep, whose product was sold in five cities. "There is no sulphur or perpetual youth or medical theory about it. Just Purity and Safety." (Advertisement).

Briarcliff has never had a serious crime. The Police Dept. has from the first been organized to give due protection to life and property. It began in an old barn back of the Realty Co. office when one policeman, Edward Cashman, covered his work on foot; later his equipment was augmented by a bicycle. With the growth of the community more police were added, with, today, eight in the department, and a radio car in addition to autos.

Doubtless crime was a small item in the worries of those early days; but there is this in the Clerk's book: "Sept. 3, 1907. Chief of Police Cashman made a report to the Trustees as to the advisability of purchasing a

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Bloodhound to be used in connection with police work in the Village — and citing results that might have been accomplished in the Village when two young women were recently followed by some men on the streets." But there is no record that the Bloodhound was acquired.

In 1913 the Police Dept. moved into the Municipal Building. There have been three Chiefs: Edward Cashman, Allan O. Keator, and A. W. Johnson, the present Chief of Police. Some long terms of service deserve notice, Mr. Keator having served for 31 years, and Floyd Bernard for 29.

How did the Post Office start and continue? The first was in the railroad station situated where the station now is but with the railroad called New York and Northern. This was in 1881. John H. Whitson was the first Postmaster; then, in order, Walter E. Howard, Charles Whitson (who served for 35 years), then Vincent Phelps (1929) and finally Mrs. Lillian O'Connor. Just before the station building was moved to Millwood the post-office was housed temporarily in a small edifice a bit southeast of the present station. This building was moved, in time, to Elm Road and is now owned by Mrs. Douglas.

At this time a concrete post-office was erected and stood until the Briarcliff-Peekskill cut-off came through and took this Pleasantville Road land, after which the postoffice was in the "Brookside Inn" (since demolished to make way for the cut-off) on the Old State Road. Then to the Crossways; then to its present location. The official name Briarcliff Manor Post Office was given it, October 1897; about the same time as the railroad station took that name.

Few factors have had so beneficent an influence on the whole locality as the Community Club. It became quickly the center of village social activities, with a gymnasium, a library, a place for public addresses and lectures, a floor used occasionally for dances and for some time for meetings of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. This Club numbered as high as 100 members (in 1910). It published "Community Notes," "in the interest of the Briarcliff Community Club, every other Friday," and in 1922 through 1925 the "Community Club Bulletin;" "To help make Briarcliff a better place to live in."

The Community Club was housed in the building formerly used as a school house, being situated on Pleasantville Road where now is the byroad leading down to Route 404. The cut-off wished this land and purchased it, so the club ceased to be, October 1, 1927. Its various activities were absorbed by other local institutions. The old Club building burned down in 1929, being then the property of the Roadway Commission. But its life continues especially in the Free Library. There was a library in the Community Club; on September 1, 1922, all its library funds were passed over to the Library Committee by the Club Board of Directors; so that our library of today carries on one of the finest elements of the very useful Club.

The swimming pool has provided the majority of outdoor life in recent years. It was completed in July of 1927 at a cost of \$8,641.

Golf has figured prominently in village sports. Two courses may be found in the village limits. The Briar Hills Country

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Club Course and that of the Briarcliff Lodge.

Camping has long been participated in within the village although the most of it has been done by outsiders. There are two national camps of the Girl Scouts located out beyond the Preston Herbert house. Camp Andree, the principal camp of the national organization, and Camp Edith Macy for Girl Scout leaders.

Since it has always been one of America's ideals that free public schools should be instituted for the education of all concerned, it was natural that this locality should have its own school. So the proverbial "Little Red Schoolhouse" was erected (in 1865?) It was on land given by Mr. John H. Whitson, on Pleasantville Road, being that where now is the head of the byroad leading to route No. 404, just west of the present T. Everett Bishop home. It had one room and one teacher, Paris Bowers. Hard wooden benches tried to hold up the swelling brains of ambitious youth while the old-time wood stove baked the pupils on one side while they froze on the other. And this in spite of all the diligence of the one School Trustee, Joseph I. Pierce. The official title was "Union Free School, District No. 6, Towns of Ossining and Mt. Pleasant."

In 1867 and on the same site, with the same District 6 number, was built the "White School," probably named from the paint adorning its exterior. Its interior consisted of one room for all grades, being taught by one teacher, George A. Todd, Jr. There was an enrollment of 35 pupils, but attendance differed with the season, for farm-needs kept children home, so that planting crops always

meant a small attendance. Material seeds outclassed mental ones!

This school building was moved to Hawthorne, to act there as the Fire-house and it may be seen to-day. "Thoughts that burn" thus continue. Local education made an advance in the schoolhouse next erected, in 1896, on the site of the "White School." More modern, boasting two teachers now, but still stove-heated, if "heated" is the correct word. The stove tried to do its duty in front of the platform, not always with success, as note this newspaper item (Sing Sing Register, Feb. 2, 1898) "The school-mistress of the free school at Whitson's, in this town, on Wednesday morning was obliged to close the school, as 40 degrees above zero was the highest temperature that could be reached with the heating apparatus on hand. The attention of the School Commissioner is to be called to the affair."

In 1909, and where it still stands so usefully, the Grade School was built. Enlarged enrollment means enlarged building. The pupils, in 1905, numbered 108, going, in 1912, to 176; to 273 in 1926. The total today (1939) is 350.

It was inevitable that, in time, a High School must be erected and it was so done in 1928. Up to this time the Ossining High School was used by the few Briarcliff High School pupils, except in the intermittent years when there seemed enough local advanced scholars to receive High School teaching locally. But after 1928 all High School pupils attended the new High School.

The roll call of our School Principals will be of interest. The first in this capacity was

George A. Todd, Jr., continuing till 1906; then, in order, Edgar L. Andrews, Charles W. Hunt, J. C. Lewis, Horato T. Baum, Robert A. Plum, Arthur W. Silliman, Otto Huddle. Mr. Huddle began his very efficient labors in 1922.

Certain other names call for special attention. There have been many excellent school officials, and every president of the local Board of Education deserves mention. There has been

country; but in time was given up. The Misses Tewksbury conducted a school for young boys and girls in the house now the residence of Mrs. Arthur Ware on Pleasantville Road; it was taken over by Mrs. Marshall's Day and Boarding School for Little Girls in the same house; to be discontinued later on.

Miss Knox had a private school in the building known as Pocantico Lodge, where previ-

Schoolhouse 1867



Students had to make frequent trips to the nearby railroad station to get warm.

only one woman President of this Board and here we gladly specify Mrs. Susan D. Ransom. Mrs. J. M. Reed also deserves honorable mention for her 20 years' service as Clerk of the Board, beginning this in 1919. Willet J. Nodine gave many years of active interest in school matters, as clerk among other duties; and before him, his father, Ira Nodine, as a Trustee.

Besides the public school, there have been six private schools in the Briarcliff section. The Holbrook School for Boys became one of the best in the

ously the Agricultural School had been housed, on Pleasantville Road. It had also been used as a hotel before Miss Knox's school occupied it. It burned down February 11, 1912, and the school then moved to Cooperstown, N. Y., where it still continues.

A school of remarkable worth was started by Mrs. Mary E. Dow and took her name for many years: The Dow School for Girls, being backed by Mr. Law, who built the present scholastic-appearing buildings on their 38 acres on Elm Road in 1905, pro-

viding for 150 girls. It is now the Briarcliff Junior College, Miss Doris L. Flick, president. One of the popular traditions is the May Day "Souving" (from Souvenir) when classes pass honors to each other.

Edgewood Park School for Young Women under the direction of a Board of Trustees and operating under a Charter from the University of the State of New York, started its first year in October of 1936. Since its beginning, operating in the Briarcliff Lodge Property, it has shown a steady growth both educationally, and in numbers of students, taking its place among leading schools of the country. Its student body is composed of young women from most of the states and several foreign countries.

Thus, from its earliest years, for some 75 years now, this locality has benefited by excellent public and private schools.

The Briarcliff Free Library was started in the old Community Club by Edward S. Arnold 25 years ago this fall.

In the paper "Community Notes" June 19, 1914, we read, "The library is open for the loaning of books. So far six cards have been taken out." This was 25 years ago, that being therefore the age of our library today. The war delayed the library's progress and, in 1921, it was revived, Mrs. A. G. Bookwalter being largely instrumental. At that time the Library Board consisted of ladies only and was composed of Mrs. William J. Watson, chairman, Mrs. Sherman Dean, Mrs. Bookwalter, Mrs. Charles Robinson, Mrs. Charles H. Schuman, Mrs. Arthur Crandall, Mrs. V. Bonnell Tappen, and Mrs. E. F. Zuydhoeck. The opening of the Briarcliff Free Library was held

that year, March 8-13, 1921, in a large renovated room of the Community Club. This Club handed over all funds to the library, September 1, 1922; and in 1924 the Village voted \$500 for library uses. Thus, by this time, it was well on its worth-while way with 1,900 volumes catalogued. This grew to about 3,000 in 1926; today there are nearly 6,000 books.

The library moved, July, 1928, to the Tower Room of the Realty Co. and, March 18, 1930, to its present location in the High School.

Book sources have been many. The old Sunday School gave its books to the new library. The Community Club gave many and did much. A book-party was held March 19, 1926, for donations of books from villagers with the result that 2,100 were contributed of which some 600 were retained after duplicates had been sold. Rev. John E. Steen did much to advance this party. On this occasion valuable autographs and rare books were displayed from the collection of Barrett Clark.

Special mention is due Mrs. Emerson Kessler (formerly Miss Helen Stowell) whose term of service on the Library Board extends from 1923. And certainly the librarians come in for high praise: Miss Louise Miller, 1921-26; Miss Elizabeth Kelly, 1926-27; Mrs. R. M. Hersey, 1928 to date.

Our library received recently an efficiency rating of 92.84 per cent from the Library Division of the N. Y. State Education Dept. We are justly proud of those who have made this high rank possible.

Closely allied with a library would naturally be newspapers. "Briarcliff Farms" was the first,

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PHONE: BRIARCLIFF 2891

being a pamphlet dealing with the dairy products from 1900 for several years. "Briarcliff Bulletin" came in 1901; and "The Briarcliff Outlook," in 1903, being printed as "the official organ of the Village." A combination of business and sentiment was effected by "The Briarcliff Once a Week," with Arthur W. Emerson as editor, the date being approximately 1908. The paper "Community Notes," "published in the interests of the Briarcliff Community Club every other Friday," covered considerable time and matter (1914 and adjacent years). "The Briarcliff Forum" followed in 1926, being the most pretentious paper to date. The recently-begun "Briarcliff Weekly," William Rayburn, editor, is well started on its useful way. The Briarcliff Farms and allied concerns had their own printing press and office, and especially dealt with information of dairy interest, being well illustrated and edited.

The first church in what is now Briarcliff Manor was St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Scarborough. The first service was held, 1839, in a schoolhouse on the corner of Sleepy Hollow Road and the Albany Post Road, Dr. William Creighton being Rector. In this schoolhouse congregations met for twelve years till, in 1851, the present church building was erected, being inspired by that of St. Mary's, Scarborough, England, and first used for worship September 1, 1851. The stained glass windows are among the very first of their kind to be made in America. The present rectory, adjoining the church, was built in 1931 as a memorial to the first two rectors, Drs. Creighton and Mead.

There have been, during the century of its existence, only six

rectors: Rev. William Creighton, Rev. Edward Mead, Rev. A. H. Gesner, Rev. Thomas R. Harris, Rev. Berry O. Baldwin and Rev. Charles W. Baldwin, he following his brother from 1914 to date.

The ivy which lends such a graceful dignity to the stone Gothic edifice was brought from Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott, by Washington Irving, who frequently worshipped here.

Second in order of time came another Episcopal Church, All Saints' Church, the erection of which commenced in 1848 by Rev. John D. Ogilby, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the General Theological Seminary of New York City. He donated the building and grounds, and its incorporate title (1863), "All Saints' Church, Brier Cliff, Sing Sing, N. Y.," received its local title from Dr. Ogilby's home in Ireland. Sing Sing has since become Ossining, N. Y. The design of the Church was copied from one at Bremerton, near Salisbury, England. The first service was held December 13, 1854. Due to the opening of Briarcliff Lodge and the two young ladies' schools a movement was started, in 1910, to enlarge the church, so that it became as it now stands, a beautiful stone edifice, Gothic in design.

The rectors of All Saints' Church are as follows: Rev. J. Breckenridge Gibson, 1869-1878; Rev. A. H. Gesner, 1878-1882; Rev. A. F. Tenney, 1882-1884; Rev. A. M. Sherman, 1884-1887; Rev. H. L. Myrick, 1887-1900; Rev. James Sheerin, 1900-1901; Rev. Thomas Hazzard, 1902-1907; Rev. Alleyne C. Howell, 1908; Rev. John A. Howell, 1908-1914. Rev. Henry A. Dexter, 1914-1931; Rev. George Whit-

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Briarcliff Manor, New York

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NIGHT---Ossining 1075

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PHONE 2189

CLEANERS

DYERS

FURRIERS

VALET SERVICE

FUR STORAGE

Garments Altered and Made to Order.

Work Called for and Delivered.

meyer, 1931-1935; Rev. George Bratt, 1935 to date.

The third church in Briarcliff Manor was "The Scarborough Presbyterian Church. Erected to the glory of God and in loving memory of Elliot Fitch Shepherd by his wife Margaret Louisa Vanderbilt Shepherd." The year was 1893. It later became also a Memorial to Mrs. Shepherd herself, donor of not only the church but also the Manse and the Church House.

The first services were held in various houses never far from the corner of Revolutionary Road and the Old Post Road. The present building was completed in 1895, being of Spanish Renaissance architecture, stately and worshipful.

There have been four ministers: Rev. Frank F. Blessing, 1895-1900; Rev. Benjamin T. Marshall, 1902-1906; Rev. Anthony N. Petersen, 1907-1938; Rev. E. M. Wylie, 1938 to date.

Next was built the Briarcliff Congregational Church, being organized in 1896 and dedicated January 10, 1897. It was the outgrowth of a Sunday School which was held in the schoolhouse on Pleasantville Road when the locality was known as Whitson's Corner. This Sunday School was started in 1889 by some members of the Sing Sing Heights Chapel (now the Ossining Heights Methodist Church) the first superintendent being John C. Johnson. When George A. Todd, Jr., became superintendent he interested Mr. Walter William Law in the possibility of a church and Mr. Law responded by erecting the present building as his gift to the community. It was completed by Christmas of 1896, dedicated on January 10, 1897, and officially received into the Congregational denomination September, 1897,

the affiliation being based on a vote of those so concerned in the community and "if possible a religion selected that had no representation on the farm."

Not only the first building to be erected but also the Manse (1898) and the addition of the transepts and the Sunday School room (1902) were gifts from Mr. Law. Not content with these extraordinary gifts, Mr. Law also gave the organ and two memorial windows. Mr. George A. Todd, Jr., proved his devotion by giving the stones for the church, while others contributed lumber and labor.

This church has had four ministers: Rev. Alexander McColl, 1897-1907; Rev. Carl H. Elmore, 1908-1920; Rev. John E. Steen, 1920-1927; Rev. Stanley U. North, 1927 to date.

On July 1, 1926, the local Roman Catholic parish was officially designated "St. Theresa of the Child Jesus." It had been noticed for some time that those of this faith were of considerable number, especially as guests and employees of the Lodge, so that "for several years Mass was said in various old houses of the Lodge which were recognized as Chapels," the Dominican Fathers of Pleasantville being for some time in charge. The first Sunday of July, 1926, Rev. James F. Kelly commended his duties as Pastor of Briarcliff, and not long afterwards he selected the Stillman house and adjoining property on Pleasantville Road as the site for the future Church and Rectory. The first Mass was celebrated in the new Church Midnight of Christmas Eve, 1927, and it has been in use since that time, being dedicated Sept. 23, 1928. The Assistant Pastor, Rev. Arthur F. Nugent, was assigned to the parish in 1934. The sta-

tue of St. Theresa on the Church grounds is the gift to the parish of the Pastor and founder, Rev. James F. Kelly.

For a village so new it is natural that there would be but few events of unusual historic value. It takes age and plenty of it to provide traditions to any place. Here, or hereabouts, no haunted houses lure the adven-

sity pounds. His journeys, in an irregular line, were from Hartford, Conn., to Nyack, N. Y. he lived in caves or huts along his way and was fed by farmers who came to know him as a harmless and perhaps a bit deranged human being. He was never heard to speak a word. He lived on the simplest of food and yet seemed to possess



Postoffice in 1920's

turous youth at moonlight; no "splendor falls on castled walls," no tales such as that of the Headless Horseman of older Tarrytown are ours, nor did John Andre come nearer than Hardscrabble Road.

But we have some curious local contacts. People still living remember well the Old Leather Man, dressed always in that strange garb which was of his own making and weighed some

funds, supposedly from France. His connection with Briarcliff is that one of his abodes was the Old Indian Rock Shelter on the Dell Farm, in which he died March 21, 1889. He was buried in the old Sparta Cemetery in a grave as yet unmarked.

A strange fatality came to Jacob Coope, a farmer of some seventy years ago. To ward off trespassers he kept a vicious bull in his pasture, he himself being

gored to death by his own protector.

A very unique method of churning butter was employed on the Lewis Hunt farm which was at the south foot of what was then called Old Hickory Nut Hill (the hill on which the Lodge was built). At this farm was a coach dog named "Major" having at least two values: as a coach dog to trot along with that vehicle, and as a butter-churner. A wheel was so rigged up that this dog's weight and walk was connected with an old-fashioned churn, not only thus producing butter from cream but also providing one of the sights of that day, about 1875.

There are places as well as persons possessing personality. We count Briarcliff Manor as such a place. Not only that its name, as spelled, is the only one of its kind in all the United States, or for that matter in all the world, but also, and far more important, there is an air of high respectability about the lo-

cality. A law-abiding village, a place of good neighbors, a community that emphasizes things worth while!

Its physical elevation is hardly noticeable, at its highest only some 515 feet above sea level. But its ethical and social elevation is much above the average.

Facts and figures, the mere compilation of historic dates and events, do not make a town or a home or a person. But those facts and those figures become of note when translated into some future realization of past and present ideals. Ours is a village to be proud of, and one in which we may so live nowadays that future generations will rise up and call us blessed!

Therefore, as Mr. Law ended one of his talks, so end we this outline of Briarcliff Manor's History, for the quotation is equally appropriate then and now: "Nay, falter not; 'Tis an assured good to seek the noblest, for that higher vision poisons all meaner choices forevermore!"

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Last Minute Correction
most important date in the
History of Briarcliff

1939							September		1939	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S				
						1	2			
3	4	5	6	7	8	9				
10	11	12	13	14	15	16				
17	18	19	20	21	22	23				
24	25	26	27	28	29	30				



Friday, Sept. 8, 1939

Because

*on that day will appear
the first issue of the*

BIGGER and BETTER

Briarcliff Weekly