



Has Anyone Seen Ervin? *Do You Know Where He Is?*

By Mary Hoar

Have you seen Ervin Saunders? If you have, the Saunders Alumni Association is looking for him!

Ervin Saunders, one of Yonkers leading citizens, considered it his duty and privilege to donate a large portion of his estate to improve life in Yonkers, giving to the causes he hoped would be in the best interest of his home city. He had a happy and successful life here and wanted to help Yonkers youth live more useful lives and become better citizens through education.

He left most of his million-dollar estate to local charities, and perhaps is best known for bequeathing \$240,000 to establish and maintain a trade school to be named after his father David Saunders.

Another generous bequest was \$50,000 to the Yonkers Public Library, matching what Andrew Carnegie donated to build the beautiful library that once stood at the corner of South Broadway and Nepperhan Avenue. His bequest created a trust fund specifically to purchase technical journals and books, making him one of the two

largest donors to the library.

When the Carnegie Library celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1954, trustees of the Hudson River Museum commemorated the event with a special gift, portraits of Saunders and Carnegie painted

by William Collins. Carnegie was an easy subject as there were many pictures and paintings of him. Saunders proved to be much more difficult. A bachelor without family or close relatives, he apparently never took pictures of himself. Friends, former employees, and distant relatives were contacted with no luck. Finally, a small metal cut of Saunders was found in the library files and Collins used it to create the portrait. Both paintings were hung on the walls just inside the library's main entrance, remaining there until the library was demolished.

Today, Carnegie's portrait hangs prominently in the Board Room at the Riverfront Library, but there is no trace of Ervin Saunders' portrait!

The Saunders Alumni Association would love to find the painting and hang it proudly in the school lobby, giving proper honor to the man whose generosity created the amazing Saunders High School legacy, a man who is responsible for the success of thousands of young men and women who have studied at Saunders. ■



Ervin Saunders

If you have any information about the portrait, please contact
Linda De Simone at: saundersalumni@gmail.com

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Editor: Loren Chaidez

While every effort is made to ensure accuracy the Society cannot assume responsibility for statements made by contributors.

VOLUNTEER WITH THE YONKERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

Last year, five new volunteers offered their help at Sherwood House and with the Society!

Share your skills...

We encourage folks - of all ages - to join our team as a volunteer. Being a docent at the museum gives one an opportunity to explore the 283-year-old building and relate stories of its unique history to visitors. The Society seeks new guides and will train them for this opportunity. As well, the grounds of the site are tended by volunteers, and for those with a green thumb (or not!), you are welcomed to join our landscaping team. There is ongoing work at the YHS office for those who are interested in working with our extensive archive materials.

Join us and keep history alive!

Contact us at:

info@yonkershistoricalsociety.org

LETTER *from the* PRESIDENT

2022

was an eventful and robust year for the Yonkers Historical Society!

Being able to check off so many of the self-imposed 'to-do' boxes has been satisfying. From hosting a fundraising dinner in April, to having our first general membership meeting in several years in October, we're back on track and enthused about taking on our biggest challenges. Thanks to membership, sponsors, and financial support from the City of Yonkers, we are poised to tackle the necessary repair of exterior portions of our stalwart Sherwood House Museum. With regular publishing of our newsletter and a rekindled effort to reach out via social media along with enhanced public presence of the society, supporters are more aware of our organization and visitation to the museum is growing.

Please mark your calendars for the springtime re-opening of Sherwood House Museum on Sunday, April 16th and our popular flea market on Saturday and Sunday May 20th and 21st. Students, please note that we encourage you to submit material for the Mangold Scholarship – see details about this on page seven.



Loren Chaidez

Wishing everyone a good year and we hope to see you!

Warm Regards,

Loren Chaidez

History Exhibit Unveiled at Will Library



Photographed on installation day at the Will Library (1500 Central Park Avenue, Yonkers) from left to right are: YHS trustees Richard Mangini and Jason Medina, Will Library Branch Administrator, Aurora Cruz, and YHS President, Loren Chaidez

The Yonkers Historical Society (YHS) partnered with the Yonkers Public Library (YPL) to jointly sponsor seminars and ZOOM webinars of historical significance that are available to everyone.

In February of 2023, as a result of this collaboration, the YHS installed an exhibit of household items on loan from the Sherwood House Museum in a display cabinet on the main floor of the Grinton I. Will Library. This public presentation illustrates the mission of the YHS and gives viewers a taste of what to look forward to when they visit Sherwood House. The YHS will have new exhibits throughout the year with varying themes and artifacts that represent colonial life and times.

Plans for future exhibits are to highlight other facets and features of Yonkers' history. Updates can be found on these YHS and YPL sites:

Facebook: [@yonkershistoricalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/yonkershistoricalsociety),

Web: ypl.org and www.yonkershistoricalsociety.org ■

Mary Hoar Appointed as Yonkers Historian

On October 28th 2022, several members of the Yonkers Historical Society attended the appointment ceremony at City Hall of Mary Hoar, our own President Emerita, as the City of Yonkers' first female Historian. This is a volunteer position aimed at encouraging the community to reflect on the City's nearly 500-year history.

"I am proud to appoint Mary Hoar as our first female Historian," said Mayor Spano, who made the presentation. "Today all 50 states have historians who record, track, and preserve the history of their respective communities. Mary's professionalism, extensive knowledge and experience will prove to be a great asset to the City of Yonkers as we strive to honor our past and plan for our future."

"Yonkers has an amazing, wonderful history and many wonderful stories," said Mary Hoar. "So many of our forefathers and foremothers helped to create our world, to shape the Yonkers of today. Many of the life changing discoveries and inventions were created by Yonkers people, right here in Yonkers. Our strength always truly has been our people; the stories of our wonderfully diverse population need to be told, to recognize and appreciate the contributions of all our Yonkers people!"

Mary Hoar has been on the board of the Yonkers Historical Society since 1988 and in recognition of her invaluable



L to R: Mayor Mike Spano with Mary Hoar, Council Majority Leader Tasha Diaz and Councilwoman Shanae Williams

contribution to the Society was awarded the Key to History in 2004. The Yonkers Historical Society is very proud of this significant appointment and joins the entire city in congratulating Mary for a position she is truly worthy of — an appointment well deserved. ■

— Marge Delaney

Choosing Sides

By Richard Mangini

If you think today's politics are divisive and polarizing be grateful you weren't around on the eve of the American Revolution. Except for Quakers who eschewed violence and warfare, in 1776 you would have had to choose sides. Holding divergent opinions went way beyond unpleasant moments at the Thanksgiving dinner table. Families, friends and neighbors were split up by their differing sentiments. Neutrality was not an option.

Disaffection with the mother country began in earnest after the French and Indian War when Great Britain began taxing the American colonists, primarily on imported necessities, to pay for the hostilities. The colonists, who had no representation in Parliament, felt



Boston Massacre 1775

they were being treated as second-class citizens and used as a cash cow by the crown. The notion of separation was not by any means popular until after The Boston Tea party which resulted in the closing of the port of Boston in 1773, and the Boston Massacre in 1775 in which five colonists were killed by British regulars. These events galvanized all thirteen colonies in protest, causing the population to split into Loyalists (Tories), who supported the Crown, and Rebels (Patriots) who at least favored self-rule if not outright independence. Nevertheless, each group believed they were the true Americans. That has a familiar ring.

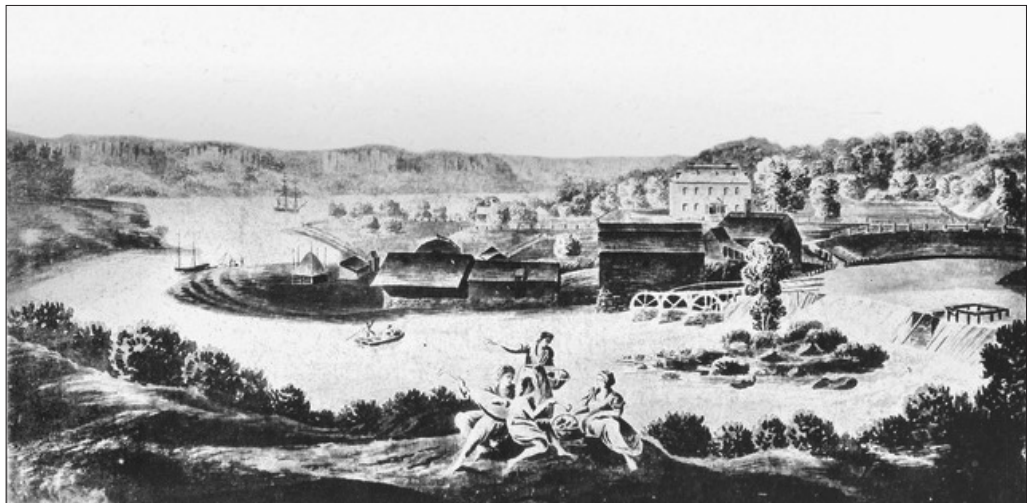
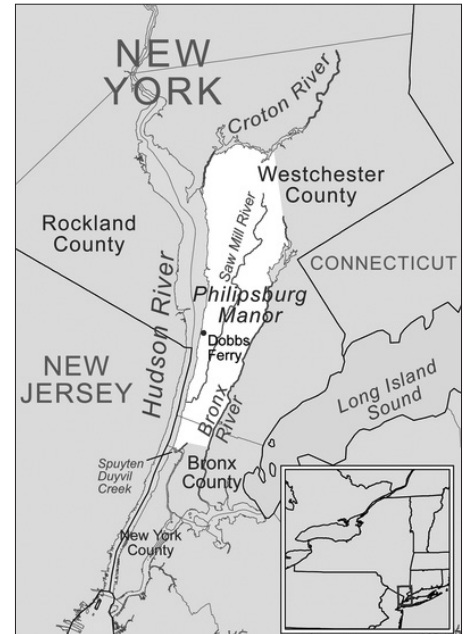
At this time nearly half of the two-hundred thousand inhabitants of the Royal Province of New York considered themselves British subjects loyal to the King. Though New York was only seventh in population, it contained the largest number

and highest percentage of Loyalists in the colonies. After the Battle of Brooklyn in 1776, New York City was captured by the British and remained their center of operations until the end of the war. It's difficult to explain the reason for the strong Loyalist sympathy in New York. Historically it was thought that a thriving merchant class who benefited from commercial stability, and conservative upstate farmers also dependent on the marketplace made economics the reason, but there are enough exceptions in both these groups to dispel that notion. Loyalists and Rebels alike were drawn from diverse ethnic, religious, social, and economic population segments. It was simply a personal preference and decision.

Westchester which encompassed today's county and all of The Bronx was largely carved up into various manors with privileges granted by the Crown. Naturally,

Continued on next page...

Below: Map showing the extent of Philipsburg Manor



Manor Hall grounds and mills along Saw Mill River as they appeared in the late 18th century

Choosing Sides *Continued...*



*Frederick Philipse III,
last lord of
Philipsburg Manor*

the lords of the manors and their dependent tenants were steeped in this tradition and tended to be Tories. Philipse Manor contained all of present day Yonkers and stretched from Spuyten Duyvil to the Croton River. This vast estate was assembled by Vrederic Felypsen, a carpenter, who arrived from the Netherlands in 1653 when the Dutch still owned the place. An enterprising fellow, through trade, including with the likes of slavers and pirates, he amassed a great fortune and began buying up Adriaen van der Donck's large estate after the latter's death in 1655. In 1664 when the Brits snatched up New Netherland, Vrederic wasted no time in swearing allegiance to the English Crown, promptly anglicizing his name to Frederick Philipse.

From a fine house in New York City he could look after his business interests, but in 1682 he began construction of his country house on the banks of the Nepperhan (Saw Mill River) in what is now downtown Yonkers. In 1693 by royal decree the 90,000 acre estate became the "Mannour of Philipsborough" (aka Philipsburg) and its owner henceforth the Lord of the Manor with almost feudal rights, providing he develop and populate his holdings. The Manor prospered through the 18th century, passing in turn to Frederick's grandson, Frederick II, and then to his oldest son Frederick III. At age 30, one of the wealthiest men in the colonies, Frederick III chose to move from the city into the family's summer retreat in Yonkers, where he could devote his time to administering his estate. He enlarged the house, established formal gardens, and worked to make the house and its surroundings a mirror of genteel, English-manorial life.

By virtue of his wealth and status as lord, positions of leadership and responsibility in colonial government were his birthright. Though a fair and generous landlord to his tenants, he really had no particular ability or interest in politics. Though ineffectual in the provincial assembly he consistently voted in support of the royalist administration. He probably did not comprehend the



Philipsburg Manor Hall — East Front

seriousness of the growing conflict between the king and his American subjects. After the bloodshed in Boston, Frederic, like many Loyalists, believed that if King George III knew what was really going on, a peaceful settlement of hostilities could be worked out. The assembly of the largest flotilla of warships in British history in NY harbor in the spring of 1776 demolished that belief.

At about this time Frederick gathered a group of his tenants imploring them "to support the legal government." This act marked him, not only as an opponent of the Patriot cause, but a loyalist recruiter. He was now firmly on the radar of the Rebel Congress. He was arrested in early August of 1776 and held under guard first in New Rochelle and then New Haven, Connecticut where other New York loyalists were detained. After several months he was permitted to return to Yonkers



*One of the
east-facing doors
with original
wrought iron
hardware*

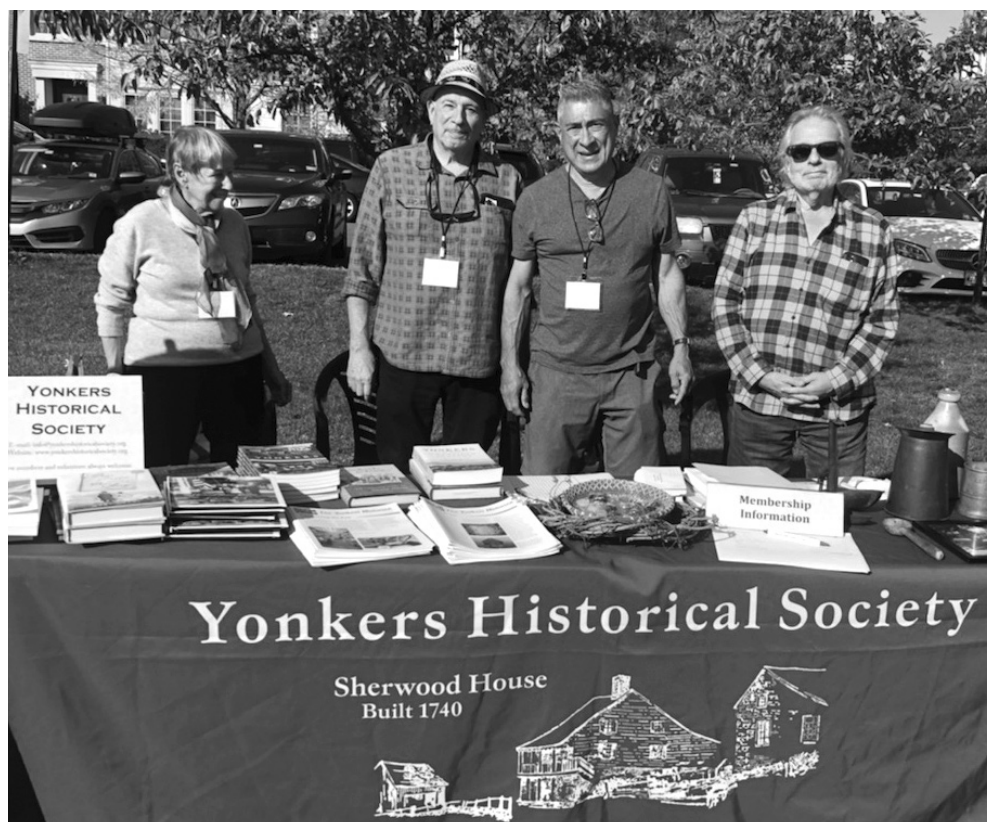
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On April 7th, 2022, the Yonkers Historical Society hosted a fundraising gala at The Fairways at Dunwoodie. Trustees of the YHS gathered for a photo op and pictured here from L to R are: Susan Blanchard, Richard Mangini, Michael Walsh, Gwen Dean, Jackie Lorieo, Marge Delaney, Loren Chaidez, Kathy Ennis, Chris Kenney O'Rourke, Ed Sabol, Nortrud Spero, Mark Silberblatt, Jerry Ostroff, Judith Waite and Beth Fitzgerald.

As Westchester County prepares for the upcoming 250th anniversary of the reading of the Declaration of Independence in the year 2026, events are already being sponsored by Revolutionary Westchester 250 (RW250) coordinator Constance Kehoe to raise awareness.

In October 2022, a very well attended outdoor event that featured historical interpreters, story tellers, and crafts people was held on the grounds of Pierson Park in Tarrytown. Historical societies from around the county were invited to participate in the day's events. The YHS set up an information table to let visitors learn more about the YHS and the history of the City of Yonkers.



Manning the table on that day were society members Judith Waite, Richard Mangini, Loren Chaidez, Mary Hoar and Ed Sabol.

Be on the lookout for more information about future RW250 happenings in local newspapers, on the YHS and RW250 websites, and from the Westchester County Historical Society.

2023 Patricia Mangold Scholarships

Submission Deadline: *May 1, 2023*

This award is to be presented to a high school senior residing in Yonkers who has demonstrated both an educational and a significant personal interest in Yonkers history. The applicant must be planning to pursue further education.

First prize: \$1,000

Second prize: \$500

Applicants will present a project showing understanding and appreciation of Yonkers history. The project may be in a medium chosen by the student: written essay, photographic montage, video, mixed media, etc. A bibliography or reference list must be included when applicable. Students may choose any topic, but the project should contain more than repetition of facts from the internet or text books. Possible themes for applicants to consider are: presentation of an argument based on Yonkers historical facts; relating Yonkers history to their own family; comparing the past and present in Yonkers; and showing Yonkers part in events of U.S. or World history. Projects are not limited to those suggestions. Several events, institutions, businesses, organizations and cultures have shaped Yonkers history. People, starting with Native Americans through our most recent immigrants, are all part of this history.

The application is available on request at yhsawards@gmail.com or by calling the YHS Office. E-mail your application, project and transcript to yhsawards@gmail.com or drop it off at the YHS Office in the Grinton I. Will Library, 1500 Central Park Ave., Yonkers, NY 10710, when the office is open. Call ahead of time (914) 961-8940 to confirm someone will be there, and please leave a message, if necessary. If mailed, the deadline is by postmark May 1, 2023.

Submit the application form, project and student transcript to:

Yonkers Historical Society
Attn: Kathleen Ennis
Patricia Mangold Scholarship Awards
P.O. Box 190
Yonkers, New York 10710

Choosing Sides *Continued...*

troops headed south toward the British encampment at Kings Bridge and quickly sent a note warning them of the impending Rebel attack. The courier was intercepted, and Frederick's treachery revealed (Really Fred, a written note?). Not waiting for repercussions, he fled with his family down the Hudson to his townhouse in British occupied New York City. He remained there until the end of the war, fraternizing with the enemy. Although he never returned to the Manor Hall, his tenants continued to pay him rent as late as the end of 1778.

With the British entrenched in Manhattan and the Rebels in the Hudson Highlands, Westchester became a no-man's land with bloody guerrilla warfare, committed by both sides throughout the war. In an effort to end Tory power in NY, the revolutionary legislature passed the Act of Attainder or Confiscation Act of 1779. This not only seized Loyalist property outright (household goods as well as land), but condemned them to death if caught within the state's borders. The Philipse property was to be used as collateral for war debt. After the war in 1784 Commissioners of Forfeiture were appointed to auction off Loyalist land. Former tenants who supported the revolution were given first choice at an appraised price. Philipsburg Manor was sold in 311 separate parcels with nearly 200 former tenants accounting for 80% of the new owners.



Interior of East Parlor (before recent renovation of Manor Hall)

Frederick III was forced to leave for England when the British evacuated New York City. His position and what had been his family's estate for over a century was taken from him. Broken in spirit and in poor health he was forced to leave the country of his birth for an essentially foreign land. Though he was well compensated for the loss of his fortune by the crown, he died in exile in 1785 before the last acre of his manor had been sold off.

It is interesting to note that the concept of a Bill of Attainder, a legislative act declaring a person or group guilty of a crime and punishable often by death without a trial, was expressly forbidden in the US Constitution of 1789. ■

Park Hill Ruins — *The Hotel That Never Was*

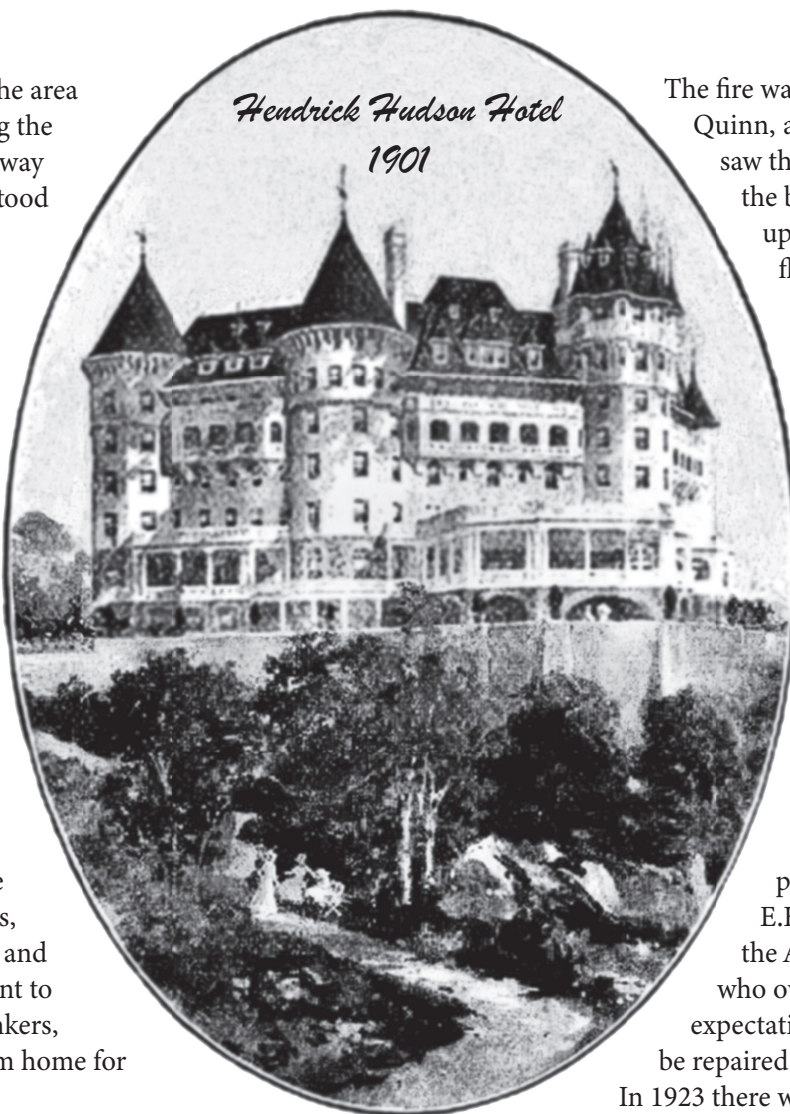
By Jason Medina

The High atop a cliff in the area of Park Hill overlooking the intersection of South Broadway and McLean Avenue once stood a majestic hotel that more resembled a castle from a fairy tale. It was loosely modelled after the famous Chateau Frontenac in Quebec. Built in 1901 by the American Real Estate Co., at a cost of \$125,000, the luxurious Hendrick Hudson Hotel stood at seven stories tall. It had 2 wings, surmounted by lavish towers, and 230 rooms to accommodate its first class guests. It boasted a fantastic view of both the Hudson River and Palisades. The facade of the structure was 183 feet across, covered with fancy porches and piazzas. The hotel was meant to be the crowned jewel of Yonkers, serving as a home away from home for wealthy visitors.

Although the hotel was erected on solid rock, it did not prevent a 40-foot tunnel going straight down to the ground level from being drilled to create an elevator shaft. This elevator would take guests down to a horizontal tunnel extending 150 feet across. The tunnel exited at the Park Hill Station of the NY and Putnam Railroad Line, which at the time, was located at the foot of the cliff.

Original plans called for the purchase of the old Dunwoodie Golf and Country Club to add to the hotel's assets. However, these plans and others quickly died when the hotel caught fire on its opening day. Fortunately, the building was mostly unoccupied.

It was an early Sunday morning at around 5 AM on March 31, 1901, when flames erupted in the building.



The fire was discovered by Patrick Quinn, a watchman at the hotel. He saw the fire pouring down into the basement. When he ran upstairs, he saw the upper floors were engulfed by flames. The fire could be seen from miles around burning brightly atop the 350 foot plateau top. Within 90 minutes, the entire building had burned to the ground leaving behind only a few stone arches and the hotel's foundation as a sad reminder of what might have been. After the fire, the elevator shaft was covered for safety reasons.

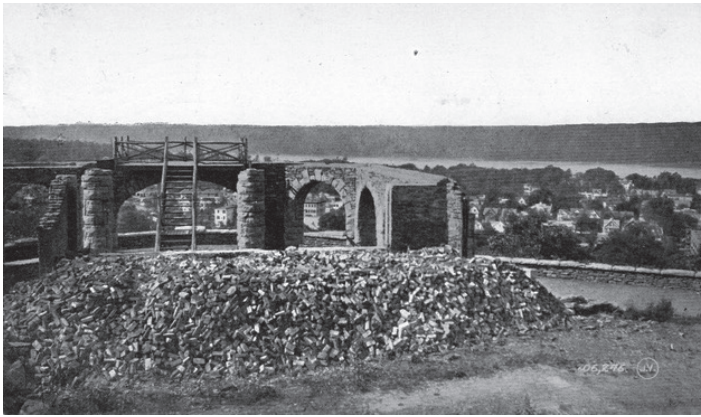
Originally, there were plans to rebuild the hotel. E.K. Martin, the president of the American Real Estate Co., who owned the building, had high expectations that the damage could be repaired. That never came to pass.

In 1923 there was a proposal to build a new hotel at the same location, however, those plans failed to see fruition. Then, in 1929, the City of Yonkers purchased the 8 acres for \$233,000 as a possible site for a South Yonkers High School. This project caused some controversy and in the end also failed. Many years later, there was another proposal for the land. This time, it was to make garden apartments at the cost of \$1 million. Once again, this plan was a failure. It seemed like the site was cursed.

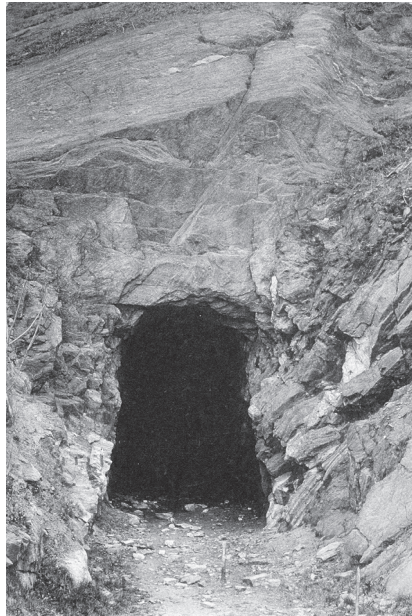
For decades the charred ruins remained in place almost like a monument to the hotel that never was. All the while the wooden covering of the elevator shaft was rotting away creating a safety hazard. The "Park Hill Ruins," or simply "The Ruins," as the area became known, attracted the

Continued on next page...

Park Hill Ruins *Continued...*



*Above: Park Hill
“Ruins”*



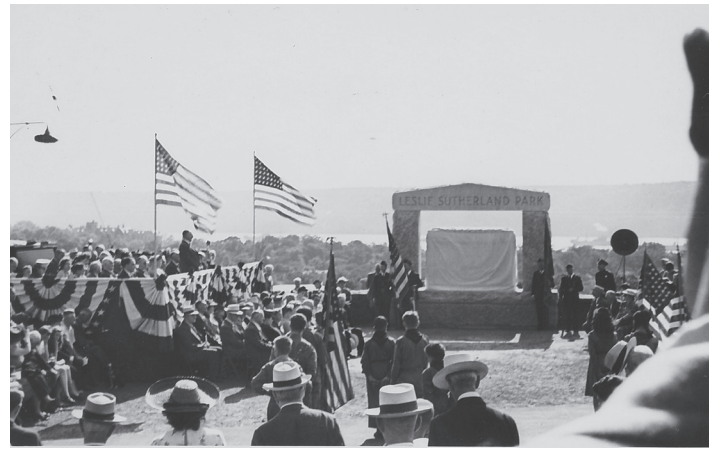
*Right: Cave opening
near ruins*

attention of many historians and photographers. The area soon became a favorite hangout for teenagers and vagrants. The ruins were eventually cleared away, but the cave remained a little longer.

Over the years the old tunnel, or “cave” as it was often referred to, became a playground for the local children. Hidden away about 20 yards into the woods, it was large enough to hide an 18-wheeler truck. The mouth of the cave was 15 feet wide, but only a few feet tall. The ground inside was always covered by inches of water due to seepage.

It was a dark mysterious place of intrigue that gradually became the subject of quite a few urban legends. After so many years had gone by, some locals had no idea of its origin. The tragic tale of the hotel that never was faded over time. Several new origins began to spring up from wild imaginations.

Some Yonkers residents mistook the tunnel for an old mineshaft. Others thought it might have been built for a movie set and left behind. Local children preferred



Leslie Sutherland Park opening ceremony — 1946

to believe it was the secret entrance to an underground laboratory, where sinister experiments were conducted. They would dare each other to venture deeper into the cave, as a game.

At some point, the old cave even became known as “Washington’s Cave.” There were people who believed General George Washington used the cave to hide from “redcoats” during the Revolutionary War.

Another tale was about reputed gangster and Bronx Beer Baron, Arthur “Dutch Shultz” Flegenheimer. During the Prohibition Era he had been operating the old Yonkers Brewery illegally on Chicken Island. Apparently, he used the sewers to transport alcohol using a mile long network of hoses to various locations. This became known as the “Great Beer Hose Case.” Supposedly, Dutch Shultz also used the cave to store kegs of beer, where they would later be delivered to speakeasies in Yonkers. Others thought he hid a two-foot by three-foot treasure chest within the cave as a getaway stash in case he ever had to leave town in a hurry. The chest was said to be filled with cash, bonds, gold, and diamonds, and was valued between \$50 million-\$150 million. Schultz was gunned down in 1935, so he never got to claim his secret stash. This led many on the hunt to find his lost loot, if it ever really existed.

Eventually the covering of the cave became so rotted, it barely remained in place. As a result, the former elevator shaft was filled in and the tunnel was sealed.

In 1946, the site of the old hotel was turned into a city park called the Leslie Sutherland Memorial Park, named after the 11th mayor of Yonkers. For 20 years Sutherland had been the dominant political leader of Yonkers and its foremost citizen holding numerous political titles throughout his career. A stone memorial terrace was built at the park to mark the location.

The site remains a park today, and if you walk through it, you can still find old stone pathways and stone terraces from the former hotel ruins. ■

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**WE RELY ON YOUR
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**PLEASE RENEW YOUR
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**THE YHS
OPENING HOURS**

The office of the Yonkers Historical Society located on the ground floor of the Grinton Will Library (1500 Central Park Avenue) is open Thursday afternoons from 1pm to 5pm and by appointment.

This year, Historic Sherwood House Museum will be open Sunday afternoons from 1pm to 4pm, April 16th through June 25th and from September 10th through December 3rd.

Call the office at (914) 961-8940 or email: info@yonkershistoricalsociety.org for further information or to schedule an appointment or group tour of the house.

**SAVE THE DATES
2023!**

*All of these events take place on the grounds of
Sherwood House – 340 Tuckahoe Road
Free parking available on site*

The spring season for the opening of Sherwood House Museum to begin on **Sundays, from April 16th through June 25th and for the fall season, Sundays, September 10th through December 3rd.** Learn about the history of Sherwood House as well as how colonial lives were lived with our informative docent-led tours.

Many of our happenings are now two-day events ...

The **Spring Flea Market** will be on **Saturday, May 20th and Sunday May 21st.** The **Fall Flea Market** will be on **Saturday, October 7th and Sunday, October 8th.** Several vendors will join the volunteers of the YHS to have rows of tables with items for sale.

The **2023 YHS Fundraising Dinner** will be held at the **Fairways at Dunwoodie on Thursday, October 19th.** More details to follow.

Our **Candlelight Tours & Holiday Boutique** weekend will be celebrated on **Saturday, December 2nd and Sunday, December 3rd**

We look forward to having you visit!
Please view updates and additional dates on our website at:
www.yonkershistoricalsociety.org



YHS MEMBERSHIP

PO BOX 190

YONKERS, NEW YORK 10710

914-961-8940

WWW.YONKERSHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



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I am interested in the following Volunteer opportunities:

- ☐ Sherwood House Gardening (seasonal)
- ☐ Sherwood House Docent and/or Visitor Assistant
- ☐ Sherwood House Chaperone for school & group visits
- ☐ YHS Archives Project (at Will Library)
- ☐ Tuesdays: Morning _____ Afternoon _____
- ☐ Sundays: 1pm-4pm (April-June AND September-Early December)
- ☐ Weekdays: TBD (April-June AND September-Early December)
- ☐ Thursdays: 1-5pm or other times TBD

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