

## **Pocantico Hills, NY**

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## Preface

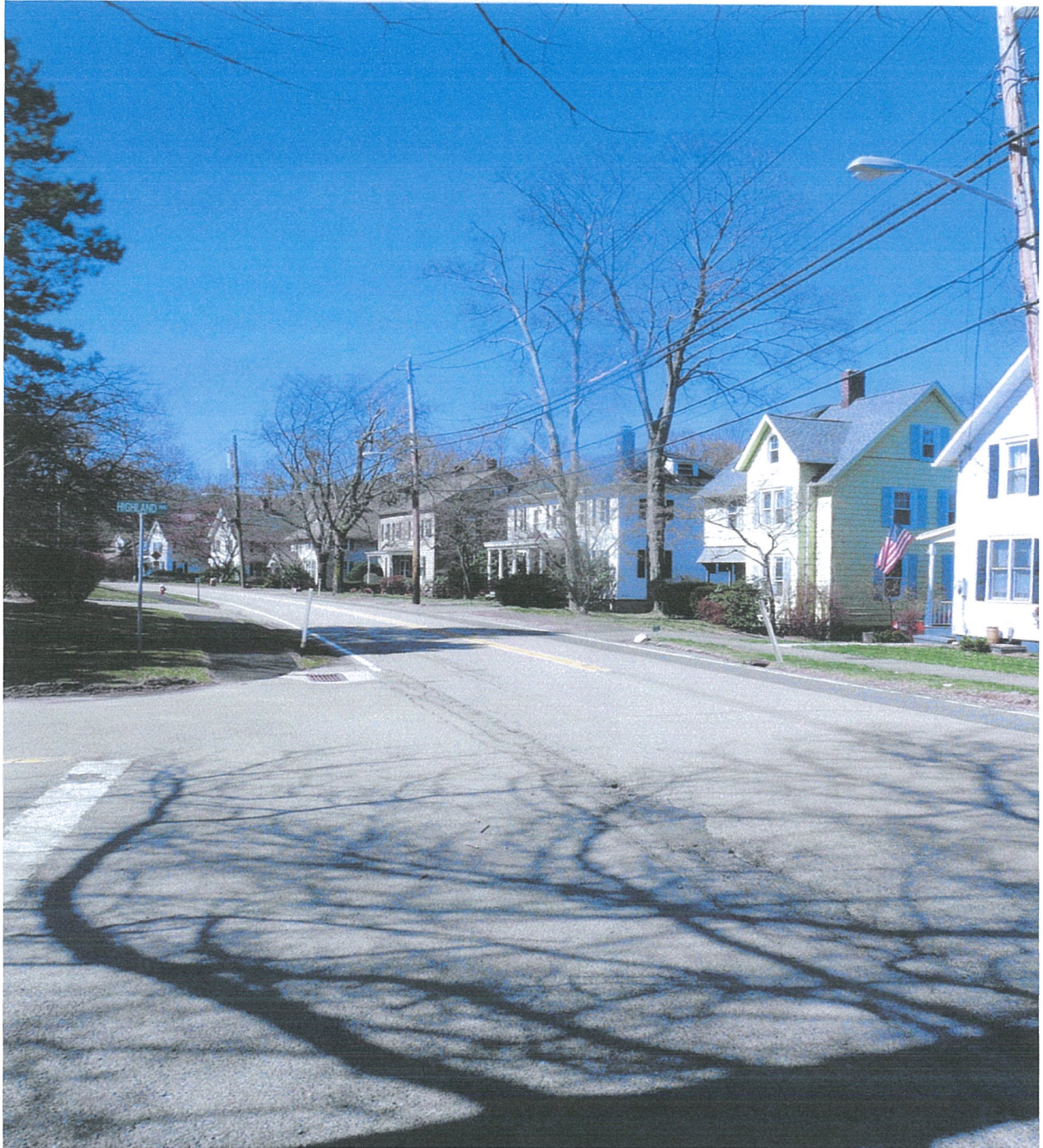
In the 1930s, the Joseph Garrison Knapp family moved to 8 Willard Ave. Pocantico Hills, N.Y., the family home. This was the home of the Shute family and occupied by Lillian Shute and her father Abram Weeks. Abram had sold his farm and worked as a gardener on the Rockefeller Estate. At that time, Rockefeller owned most of the houses in the village and rented them to his employees.

The Knapp family lived there until 1947 when Joe was transferred to Janesville, WI.

Pocantico Hills was often referred to as a “fairy tale” existence. This book will give you a glimpse into their life.



**Bedford Road – coming up the hill from Tarrytown to Pocantico Hills.**



Bedford Road – another look



Dot - Mim - Joe

## **Pocantico Hills, New York**

**Pocantico Hills is a hamlet in the town of Mount Pleasant, New York, northeast of the village of Sleepy Hollow and southwest of the village of Pleasantville. The area was originally settled by native Americans of the Wecquaesgeek ; “Pocantico” means “running between two hills,” and the name is a reference to the meandering Pocantico River Nestled between the Hudson River on the west and the Saw Mill Parkway on the east, one finds pristine woodlands, brooks, 1,000 acres of hiking trails and nature walks an hour’s drive from downtown Manhattan.**

**The Rockefeller family estate, anchored by Kykuit, the family seat built by John D. Rockefeller Sr., is located in Pocantico Hills, as is the adjacent Rockefeller State Park Preserve.**

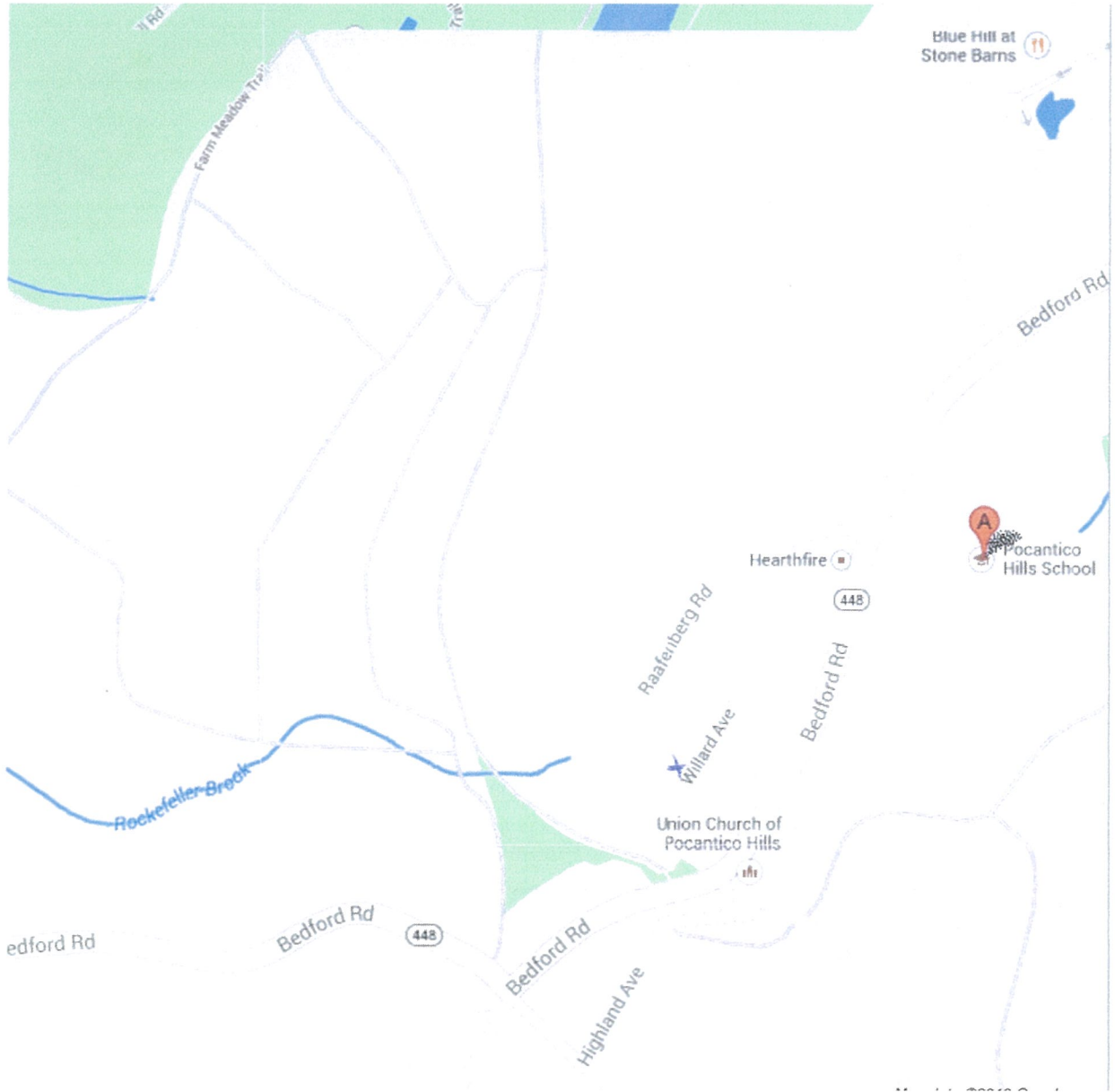
**The Union Church of Pocantico Hills is also in the hamlet. The quaint stone church was built by the Rockefeller family for their and the communities’ use. It features beautiful stained glass originals, including one by Henri Matisse and nine by Marc Chagall. The Matisse window was his final piece prior to his death in 1954 and was commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller in memory of his mother. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. One of the founders of the Museum of Modern Art.**

**The Stone barns agriculture center was established in 2003 to demonstrate multi-cultural, self- sustaining farmer techniques; it is host to the Blue Hill restaurant, a high-end eatery which features foodstuffs grown (or raised) in the Stone Barns property.**

A photographer's paradise, the hamlet and park have invited countless photographers from Audubon Society to Hollywood. Woody Allen's *A Midsummer's Night Sex Comedy* and the *Rebound* (2009) with Catherine Zeta-Jones have been filmed amongst the wooded trails and quaint lanes.

Lea Lane – Huffington Post





**Map – Pocantico Hills**



8 Willard Avenue Pocantico Hills, New York



New Houses built in Pocantico Hills

The Rockefeller family owns the property – the home built are relatives of the Rockefellers

THIS TRAIL FOLLOWS THE PATH OF THE ORIGINAL RAILROAD TO SERVE POCANTICO HILLS, BUILT IN 1880. THIS RAILROAD EVENTUALLY BECAME KNOWN AS THE PUTNAM DIVISION OF THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD THAT CONNECTED HIGH BRIDGE AND BREWSTER.

IN 1881 A PORTION OF THE RAIL LINE WAS REROUTED DUE TO INCREASED TRAFFIC AND THE SPEED AND WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS ON THE 80-FOOT HIGH TRESTLE AT EAST VIEW. THE NEW ROUTE TRAVELED AROUND WHAT ARE NOW THE TARRYTOWN LAKES, THROUGH THE KYKUIT LANDS AND THEN CONTINUED NORTH; IT WAS LONGER AND ADDED NEW STATIONS TO THE LINE.

TRAINS CONTINUED TO TRAVEL THIS ROUTE IN POCANTICO HILLS UNTIL 1931, WHEN THIS SECTION OF LINE BETWEEN EAST VIEW AND BRIARCLIFF MANOR WAS RELOCATED ALONG THE SAW MILL RIVER VALLEY.

POCANTICO HILLS  
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION, INC.

OFFICE OF PARKS  
RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

**A trail entry in Pocantico Hills**



Pocantico Hills Central School



Mim on diving Board

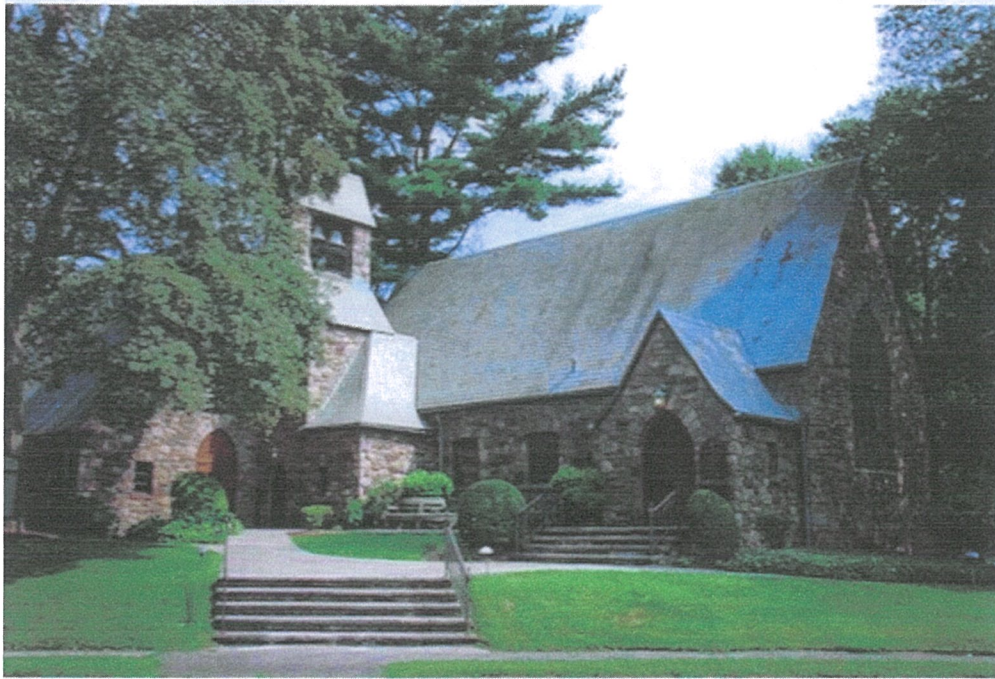


Skating at the Pocantico Pond



**The Knapp children learned to swim in this pond.**





Union Church



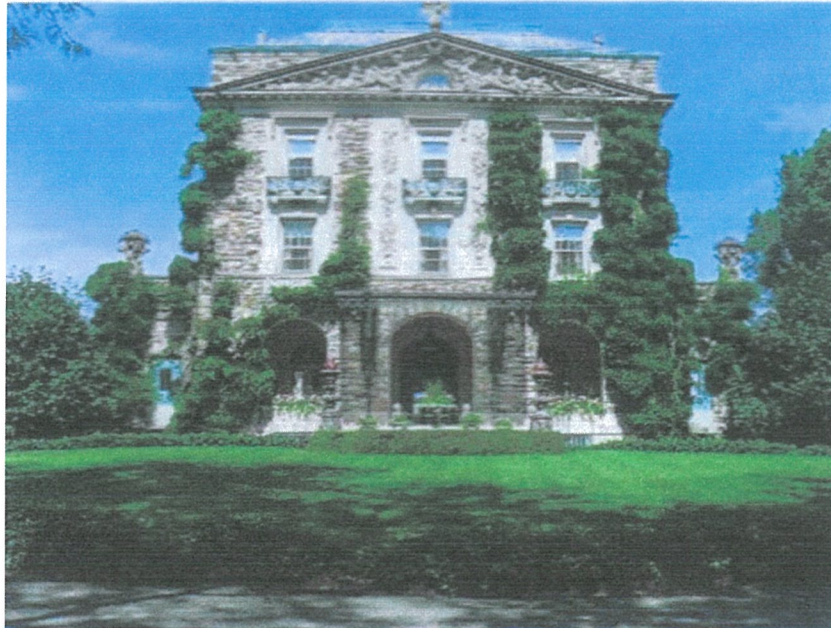
**Union Church - Chagall**



Pocantico Hills – Rock Cut



Pocantico Hills – Rock Cut – Joe, Mim, Dot and cousin Joan



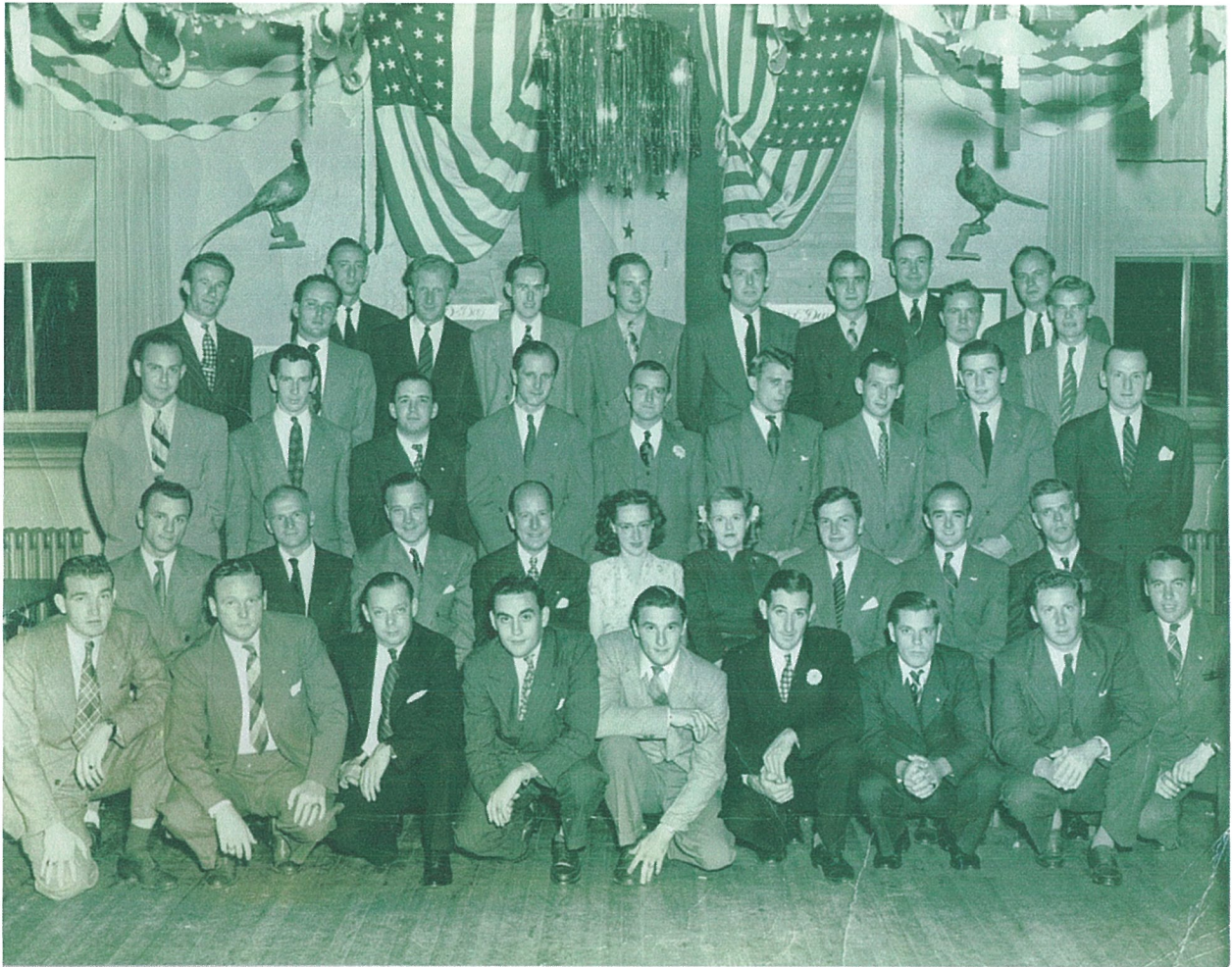
Kykuit – Rockefeller Family Estate

Kykuit, also known as John D. Rockefeller Estate is a 40 room Natural Trust house in Westchester County, New York built by oil tycoon, philanthropist and Rockefeller patriarch John D. Rockefeller. Largely conceived by his son, John D. Rockefeller Jr, and enriched by the art collection of third- generation scion, Governor of New York and Vice President of the United States Nelson A. Rockefeller. It has been home for four generations of the family.

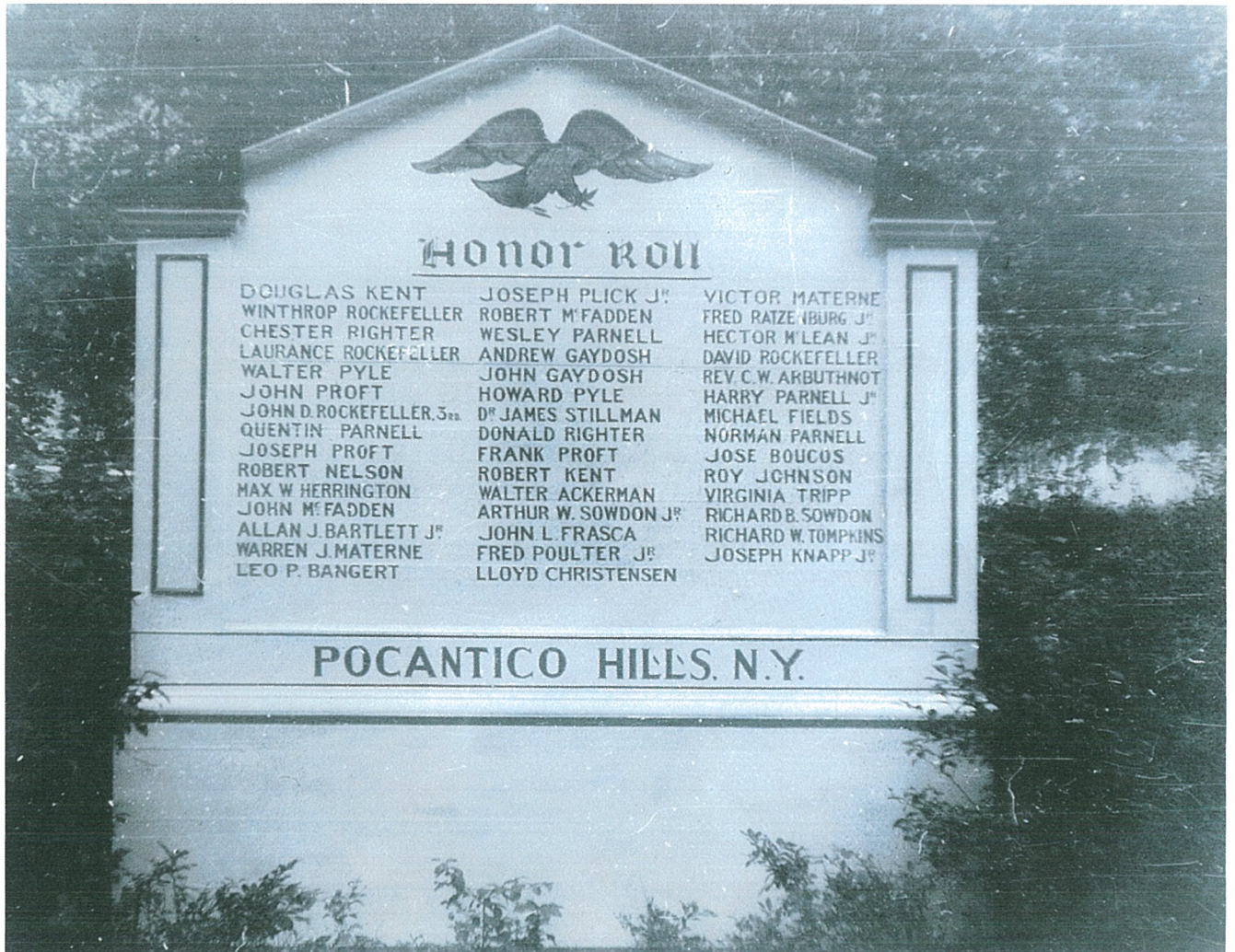
“Kyhuit”, Dutch for “lookout” is situated on th highest point of the hamlet of Pocantico Hills, overlooking the Hudson River at the Tappan Zee Bridge. Located neat Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow, it enjoys a view of the New York city skyline twenty-five miles to the south.



Aunt Rebecca Pink's house in Pocantico Hills



**World War 11 Veterans – Pocantico Hills, NY**



**Pocantico Hills Honor Roll - World War II**



## A Day Trip to the Rockefeller Preserve

If you're seeking fresh air and rural beauty, hop a Hudson-Line, Metro-North commuter train out of Grand Central. The Rockefeller State Park Preserve in Pocantico Hills is just 40 minutes north of Manhattan, in Westchester County. It offers varied, unspoiled terrain on hundreds of acres, a great close-by NYC getaway.

The preserve rolls and undulates in several sections, with giant, dappled woods, gurgling rapids, and meadows with blue tinged mountain ridges across the wide Hudson. Lakes and orchards, grassy pastures and glacial rocky outcrops,, animals and birds – all can be enjoyed, even in a short walk. The scattered homes and barns, stone bridges and reservoirs are reminders of humanity, but defer, as they should, to the land.

Across state road #448 (Bedford Road), the tiny stone Union Church of Pocantico Hills displays a dozen stained glass windows by Marc Chagall, and a rose window by Henri Matisse. And for those who seek a perfect meal, Blue Hill at Stone Barns presents food grown and raised on site, You can spend a bundle at the restaurant with huge windows overlooking the preserve, or just grab a sandwich at the kiosk.

But I love walking the land itself, without needing any other distraction . History and myth resonate here besides the Rockefellers; the Headless Horseman, Hessian troops, Indian guides, the Putnam Railroad. This preserve is natural fantasy, developed with minimum artifice and manipulation.

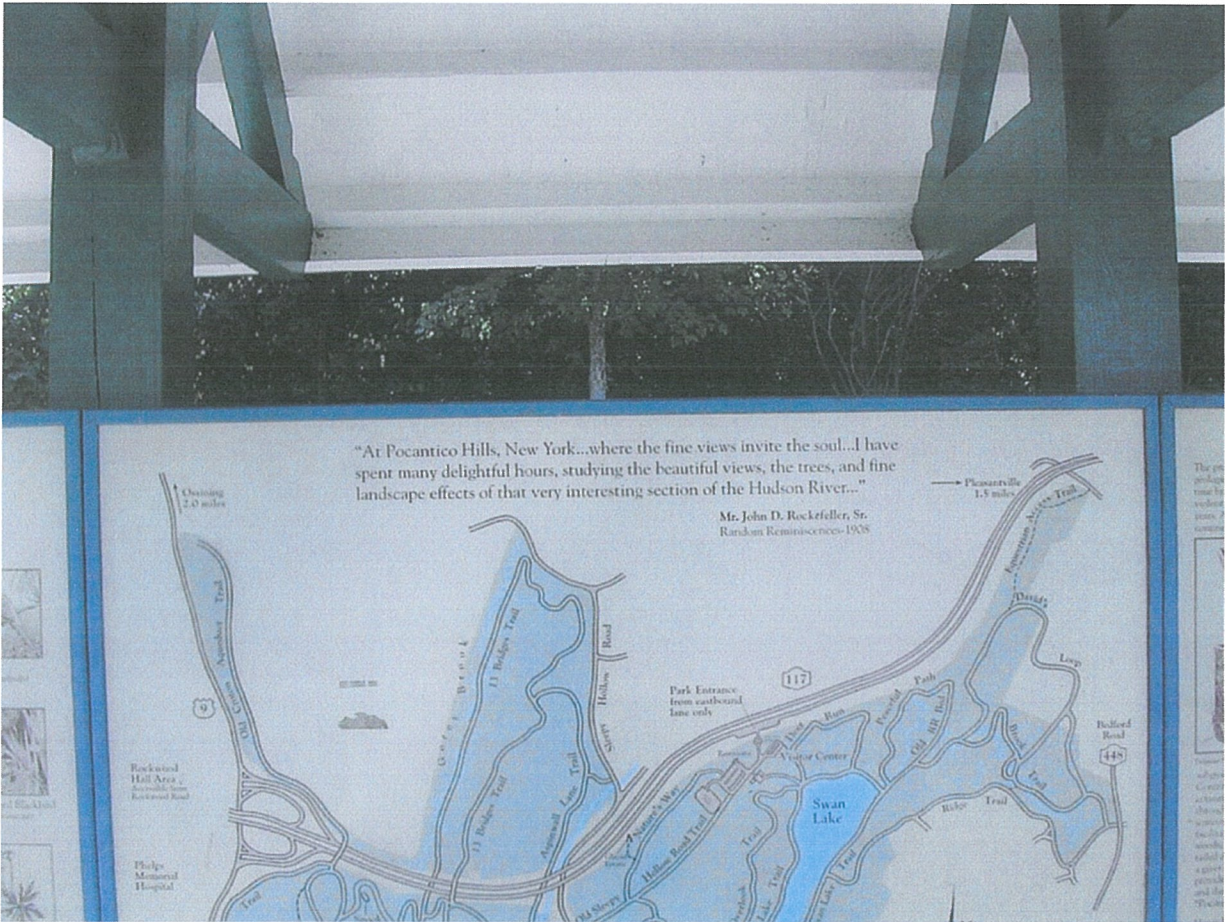
All seasons shine here, as winter's sculptural forms green out and slowly blaze away, adding leafy crunch under foot, and in summer, the forests of old trees often offer respite from city heat.

The Rockefellers donated the land to the state rather than open it to development.

Lea Lane – Huffington Post New York 6/27/2011



Rockefeller Preserve – entrance – with directions and maps



Rockefeller Preserve – map

At the top of the map is a statement by John D. Rockefeller

“at Pocantico Hills, New York ... the fine views invite the soul ... I have spent many delightful hours, studying the beautiful views, the trees, and fine landscape effects of the very interesting section of the Hudson River.”

Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Sr . 1908.



Rockefeller Preserve – Swan Lake



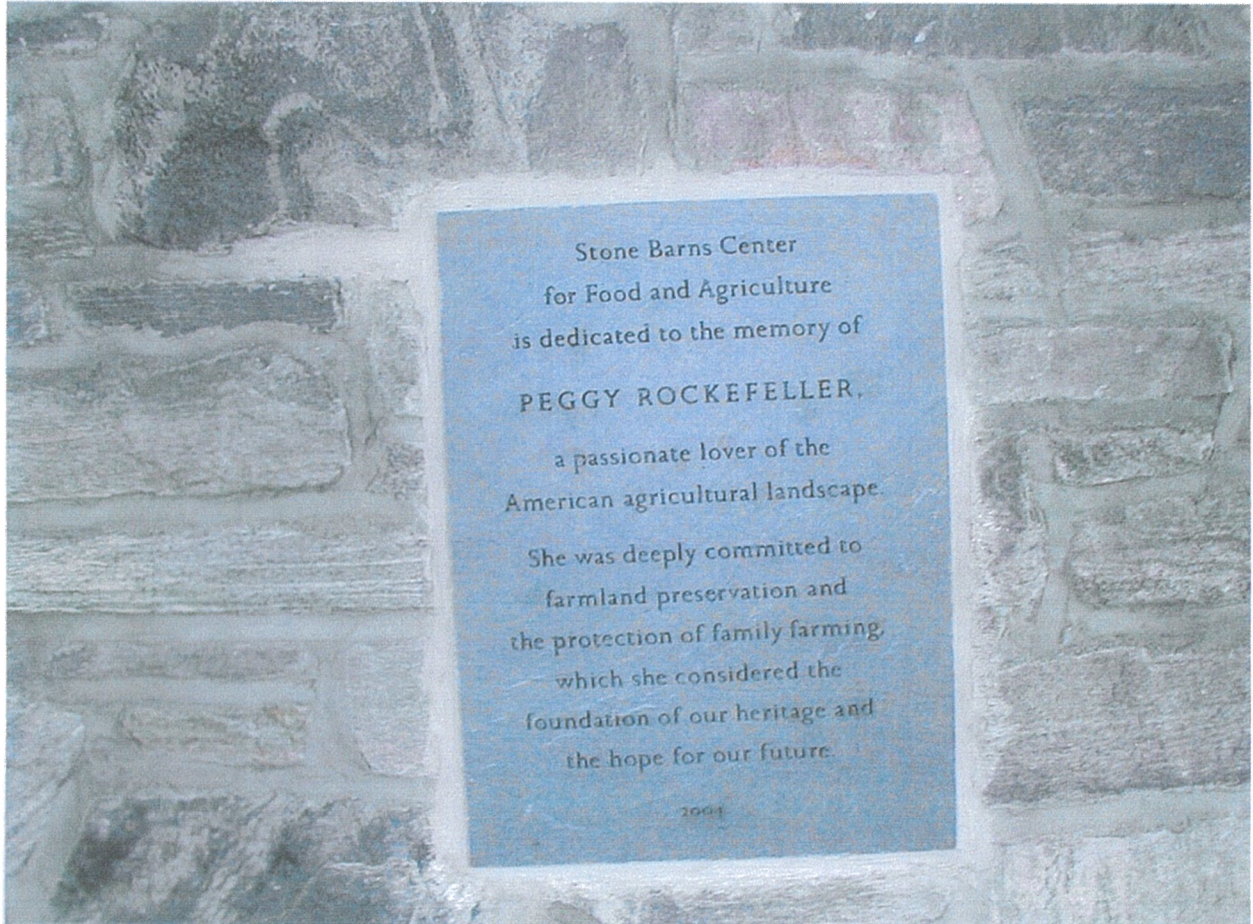
Rockefeller Preserve – open fields



Rockefeller Preserve - open field 2



Rockefeller Preserve – Equipment storage – yes, they do farm some of the land.



Rockefeller Preserve – Dedication to the memory of Peggy Rockefeller





Rockefeller Preserve – Stone Barns Center 1 There is a restaurant located in the barns as well as a snack bar.



Rockefeller Preserve – Stone Barns 2

This is the story of me-Muriel Helen Knapp Splitgerber also known as Mim to family and childhood friends, Murt to college friends(my first roommate knew another Muriel who was Murt so she thought I should be, too) , Auntie M to niece Chris, M to tennis friends in Waukesha and Ma, Mom or Nana to immediate family and friends. Since I met Chick in college, he calls me Murt as did our employees at Trier's. My personal choice was Mimi Scanlon which I envisioned in bright lights on Broadway or in the movies when I was young and prone to day dreams. All of this describes the continuous process to become who I am .

Life began on Nov. 7,1928 in Elmsford, N. Y. I was born at home as was customary in that era. My parents , Joseph Garrison Knapp and Helen Shute Knapp and brother Joe were there to greet me. Joe ,(or Jo-Jo as he was called ), was three years old at the that time. We lived in a little white house until I was 2 years old when we moved into my grandmother's house in Pocantico Hills, only a few miles from Elmsford. I did not know if this an economic necessity or choice of a more desirable place to lie as this hamlet was approximately 200 people and completely owned by John D. Rockefeller.

Our house was located at 8 Willard Ave. The house was white clapboard with a front porch on three sides . There was a front door, side door and a back door. The garage was formerly a barn and was located at the rear

of the yard. The yard was very large- a front yard and a side yard with a large garden and the back yard which backed up to a woodsy area with a little stream where we caught polliwogs.

The house consisted of a living room, a "front room"(another living room), dining room with walk-in pantry and a kitchen which extended along the back of the house and another pantry. There were 4 bedrooms on the second floor and 2 bedrooms in the attic. They were needed because at different periods of time, Aunt Lil and husband, Harry LaBounty and Aunt Marion lived there.

All the rooms at one time had fireplaces for heat since the house must have been over 100 years old at that time. My mother had all boarded up except for the main living room(with artificial logs) and the dining room which was a working fireplace.

There was a front foyer and open staircase and a side entrance hall. The so-called "front room " became the library complete with piano. The living room was the larger and adjoined the dining room which was large enough to contain a table that could seat 12. The butler's pantry contained all the "good dishes" and glasses. etc. The kitchen ran along the back of the house-the pantry and steps to the cellar were at one end. The back porch extended off the back and was

strictly utilitarian. The cellar was big and gloomy with an enormous coal furnace. There was a small room that held the results of the canning season-tomatoes, peaches, rhubarb, etc. as well as the home-made root beer. It also became a dark room when my parents decided to dabble in developing film.

We were not the only residents in this big house. At various times, sisters Lil and Marian and their respective spouses lived there as well. They did not live there simultaneously but , apparently, this was a safe port in the storm of their marriages. I have memories of the loud arguing going on from time to time. Eventually, they both got divorced; Aunt Lil stayed with us for a number of years until she had yet another unfortunate marriage. Aunt Marian left the house, town and country after her divorce and escaped to Anchorage, Alaska. She worked for the railroad there for many years. She also remarried and retired in Squim, Washington. Her later years were happy ones. Aunt Lil did not have such a happy life. I remember both first husbands and liked both of them very much.

We had a series of dogs while I was growing up: Peggy, a sheltie that was really my brother's dog, Aunt Lil's Boston Bull dog, a mean little critter; a little black cocker spaniel called "Blackie"(really creative) that got run over when he ran into the path of an oncoming car.

Then, Mother offered to take Patches, a wire-haired terrier that belonged to another family(who must have been delighted to get rid of him). If someone came to the door, we would take the dog by the collar and push him the length of the kitchen, gaining time while he got a grip on the floor to run back. Need I say-he didn't stay long!

My parents were loving, caring people who wanted us to have all the advantages that they did not have growing up. Mom was somewhat sickly growing up and did not finish high school. I do not know where my grandmother received money to live on and raise the children as grandfather died when they were quite young. I don't ever remember my mother talking about her dad. Her general attitude about men was not favorable as was my grandmother's or my aunt.

Fortunately for all, my dad happened along. He first dated Aunt Lil then Mother. He was born in New York, the last child of Michael and Ellen Scanlon. His mother died in childbirth and father shortly thereafter leaving Dad and his siblings to be parceled out among friends and relatives. Dad went with an aunt named Lou Knapp. He grew up in White Plains. (More about this in his notes and writings.) He quit school at 13 and survived by resourcefulness, doing assorted jobs and finally , getting a factory job in Fisher Body division of General Motors at Tarrytown. He eventually became Personnel Manager,

then Director of Public Relations retiring as Assistant to the Vice President of Personnel Relations of General Motors. Dad's birth name was Scanlon. His parents emigrated to this country about 1860. Due to a family disagreement, my dad had no communications with his brothers in adult life. I can remember only one visit that we made to Uncle Dan's apartment in New York City. They had a son, Danny, who was bed-ridden with a heart condition. He was about 13 years old. Apparently, there was at least one more cousin by Michael but this is the only visit that I remember. The cause of the split was a dispute over some land that Dad felt he had entitled to.

I often describe my home town and early childhood as a fairy-tale life because the town was controlled, maintained and owned by the Rockefeller family. According to history, John D. Sr. chose this location for his estate around 1890 and began buying land from the farmers in the area. The town was in existence by then so he bought all of the houses and used them for the employees of the estate-butlers, gardeners, chauffeurs, etc.

My great-grandfather, Abram Weeks, owned farm land which is now property of the Rockefeller's. We believe that succeeding family members were allowed to live in that house as a provision of the sale. I remember my grandmother's father, Abe Weeks, when I was quite young and he was quite old. He lived with us (or we with

him) until his death.

Grandma and her brother and sister all lived in the same town. I remember my uncle Al, who was a butler for the Rockefeller's. and Aunt Becky being part of the family gatherings when I was very young.

The village consisted of one main street ( the highway which ran through the town) and a few residential streets branching off this main thoroughfare. Our house was on one of these cobblestone streets. There was a firehouse, grammar school, a catholic church , Protestant church and small general store, selling mostly penny candy. The Rockefellers built the school , firehouse and the church that we attended, the Union Church(Protestant.)

The school was a red brick with spacious grounds and a swimming lake behind the school. The lake as a source of many hours of pleasure for us. We learned to swim at an early age (which has resulted in a life-long activity for me). We were fortunate to have an Olympic-trained swimmer as our coach. In the winter, our beloved lake became our skating pond.

Our grammar school went through grade 8 unlike most elementary schools today. There were thirteen children in my graduation class-almost individual instruction. I did well in school with no pressure from Mom and Dad. Their



education was so sketchy that they were proud of my grades and that I was salutatorian of my class(remember 13 in the class!)

We lived close enough to school to walk to and from school. We also went home for lunch. I loved rainy days because we could stay at school for lunch and I could have cream cheese and olive sandwiches. When it rained, that meant that the parents had to pick up their children. So, we all waited at the side door while each car drove up to the door and the principal called out the name of the child to be picked up. Talk about service!

When I was a little girl, Christmas was such a magical time. We did not decorate the tree until Christmas Eve, so when we came downstairs on Christmas, it was so anticipated! No gifts were under the tree until Christmas morning. At first stirring on Christmas morning, we all had to wait til Dad went down to plug in the tree. I can still re-live the thrill of coming downstairs and into the living room(wherever the tree was that particular year) and seeing all the gifts where there had been none the night before. We followed the tradition of cookies and milk for Santa, of course. Mom and Dad were very extravagant with their gift giving, probably because their own childhood was so devoid of those pleasures.

When I was quite young, Mother made Christmas

decorations and sold them to neighbors to make extra cash.

She would cut Huckleberry branches (from the same bushes whose berries we picked for pies in the summer) mix a paste of flour and water, then dip the branches in Lux flakes producing sparkling, snowy branches. They were so pretty. Now, the same results can be produced with a spray can.

We always had relatives for Christmas dinner which was turkey-ham was for New Year's Day. My aunts and uncle would come and cousins to play with. We had four cousins on my mother's side-Marian Donegan, 10 years older, daughter of Frances & Malcom; Larry Enright, 6-7 years older, son of Bea and Bob; Malcom (Pally) Enright, a few years older than me, son of Bea and Bob; Joannie Shute, between Dot & I, daughter of Bert and Jim.

We especially liked to dive under all the coats piled on one of the beds and bump down the stairs. The entertainment for the afternoon was a card game called "Michigan", a rummy game played with pennies and "white meat". It was a simple game played with four honors cards in the center of the table; the money was placed on those cards. The deck was dealt to all the players-any number could play-and the cards were called out as they were placed in front of the player. One had to follow suit and if the ace, king, queen or jack was played, the player got the money on the card. There was much laughing and

teasing during the game. I don't remember any other games being played.

Besides the family gathering, my parents had a big Christmas party for neighbors and work people and family. We were shuffled off to bed, of course.

We would often take a walk after the midday dinner-sometimes the winters would be quite mild in the East.

Other times it would snow and we would ski on wooden strap-on skies. We also had several good sledding hills.

There was always a Christmas pageant and party at Sunday School where Santa Claus ho-hoed in and we all got stockings with candy, little treats such as crayons and the inevitable orange in the toe. We sang Christmas carols, had cookies and punch. I have no memory of batches of Christmas cookies being baked in our kitchen but maybe there were. We(kids) certainly weren't invited to participate-there were enough cooks in that kitchen!

At grammar school, we made the ever popular paper chains and forgettable gifts for parents. During my ballet career-short-lived but spectacular-we performed the Nutcracker Suite. I performed the Sugar Plum Fairy solo with a classy costume of crepe paper tu-tu with balls of yarn as the sugar plums. I think I spent more time

getting the lamb's wool just right in the rabbit fur toe caps than actually dancing. Maybe that how my toes got so sensitive to being "broken" later in life.

Besides our sledding and skiing, we spent a lot of time ice-skating. When we were young, we skated on the swimming lake. Later, in high school, there just weren't enough boys there, so we went to the Tarrytown Reservoir where the high school kids went.

My childhood was very sheltered. We really did have a village raising us. Everyone knew each other and looked after each other.

There could not have been a better place for my parents to achieve their goals for us. We had a very tranquil existence. A great school to attend, play activities like swimming, skating, roller-skating (on 4 wheel strap-ons), church socials, Halloween on Halloween NIGHT, bountiful Christmases, friends to play with, and older friends to watch over us, places to roam and explore, sleigh-riding, bike riding-all of this with only to normal growing-up problems such as: I hate my hair, my sister is a pest, Rosie is mad at me, or I am mad at her, etc., etc.

So- on to high school in the big town of Tarrytown-about 5 miles away. We actually had a choice of two high schools- Washington Irving High School in Tarrytown or