

3309 Bainbridge Avenue  
The Bronx, NY 10467  
718-881-8900

The Bronx County Historical Society, founded in 1955, is a private, non-profit educational and cultural institution chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. The Society is dedicated to the collection, preservation, and interpretation of the history and heritage of The Bronx.

The Society disseminates information by utilizing its collections in exhibitions, historical research, publications and documentaries, educational and cultural programming, the operation of our Research Library, The Bronx County Archives, and two national landmark historic house museums: the c. 1812 Edgar Allan Poe Cottage and the c. 1758 fieldstone farmhouse Valentine-Varian House, home of the Museum of Bronx History.

The Bronx County Historical Society is partially supported through funds and services provided by the NYC Departments of Cultural Affairs and Parks and Recreation, the Historic House Trust of New York City, The Bronx City Council Delegation, the Office of The Bronx Borough President, The Bronx Delegations of the NYS Assembly and the NYS Senate, the H.W. Wilson Foundation, the Astor Fund, The New York Times Foundation, the New York State Library, Susan Tane, the New York Community Trust, the New Yankee Stadium Community Benefits Fund, and the New York Public Library.

# THE BRONX HISTORIAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE BRONX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FEB.—MAY 2023

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## SOCIETY UPDATES

✎ The Museum of Bronx History, located at 3266 Bainbridge Avenue, has resumed regular opening hours, Saturdays 10AM–4PM and Sundays 1–5PM. Admission is free for members. For non-members admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for seniors, children, and students.

✎ A new exhibit on the deaths of Edgar Allan Poe and his wife Virginia is on display at the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage, 2640 Grand Concourse. See "Upcoming Events" for more information.

✎ The date for this year's Bronx County Historical Society Day of Golf and Charitable Giving has been set: Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at Pelham Bay/Split Rock Golf Course. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

## CELEBRATING AJASS

The African Jazz Arts Society and Studios (AJASS) was founded as the Jazz-Art Society in 1956 by a group of Black teenagers and young adults, many of whom lived in the Morrisania section of The Bronx. According to a late founding member of the organization and prolific community historian Bob Gumbs, Morrisania was known to residents at the time as "The Harlem of The Bronx," and for good reason. At the time of its founding, the Jazz-Art Society sought to promote the African cultural roots of jazz and was particularly tuned into the scene centered at Club 845, located at 845 Prospect Avenue in The Bronx. Jazz legends Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Dexter Gordon, Charlie Parker, Dina Washington, and Art Blakey, to name a few, all performed here during this period.

Although Bob Gumbs passed in 2022, he was one of the leaders of The Bronx African American History Project, a community-based oral history project jointly begun by Fordham University and The Bronx County Historical Society in 2002. Bob was personally involved in more than 100 of the 300+ oral histories recorded for the project thus far. Bob's legacy lives on through the tremendous archive of Black life in The Bronx he has left behind as well as the continuation of the project today, which now documents Black life in many areas of the borough.

Two other founding members of AJASS, Elombe Brath and his younger brother Kwame Brathwaite, organized beauty pageants in The Bronx and Harlem that celebrated the African roots and identity of Black Americans. Out of these pageants were born the Grandassa Models, a Black modeling troupe that featured

# Thanks!

## to our donors

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\* This is a partial list.

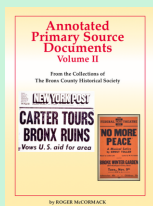
## New Members

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Eta
- Omega Omega Bronx Chapter
- Jenelle Bonner
- Marie Capasso
- Jim and Mary Coleman
- Nicholas Dembowski
- Chris Hoffman
- Elizabeth Rosenberry
- Linda Richman
- Mark Richman
- Daniele Roffi

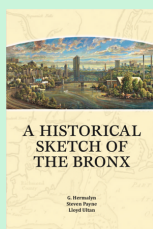
\* This is a partial list.

## Publications

**Annotated Primary  
Source Documents,  
Vol. II  
\$22.00**



**A Historical Sketch  
of The Bronx  
\$15.00**



## CELEBRATING AJASS, CONT.



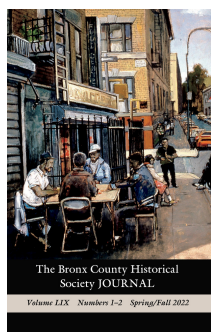
The Henry LeTang Dancers at Club 845, 1947. Gelatin silver print. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

all-natural hairstyles, African fashions, and body positivity during a time period, the 1950s and 1960s, when these were considered utterly taboo in U.S. fashion. Indeed, the groundbreaking efforts of AJASS and the Grandassa Models in this regard helped spawn the Black is Beautiful Movement, which instilled national consciousness and pride in Black Americans throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Bob Gumbs, Elombe Brathe, Kwame Braithwaite, and other members of AJASS were also accomplished graphic and visual artists who helped shape the wider Black Arts Movement that swept New York City during this period. Members of AJASS simultaneously became involved in community activism in New York City as well as international solidarity, with a particular emphasis on African liberation, especially anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa. Kwame Braithwaite was instrumental, for example, in bringing Nelson Mandela to New York City in 1990. In short, AJASS left an indelible mark on many different aspects of music, culture, style, art, and politics in New York City and elsewhere, and it all started here in The Bronx.

See "Upcoming Events" for information about a free screening by The Bronx County Historical Society of a documentary on AJASS in February 2023.

## SUBMISSIONS TO OUR JOURNAL



Since 1964, *The Bronx County Historical Society Journal* has been one of the premier historical journals in the tri-state region. The *Journal's* articles are of interest to all who enjoy scholarly studies and personal accounts of individuals, events, cultures, struggles, and triumphs in The Bronx. Submit article manuscripts in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx) along with 2 images at 300dpi, if relevant, as email attachments to [spayne@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:spayne@bronxhistoricalsociety.org). The manuscript should be in 12-pt. Times New Roman font

and double-spaced. Be sure to include your full name, contact information, and short biography in the body of your email. Publication of submissions is not guaranteed.

# ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

Starting with the next issue of our newsletter (June–Sept. 2023), members will receive only the electronic version of our newsletter by default. Members who wish to continue receiving the physical version as well as the electronic can opt in by contacting Teresa Brown, Chief Administrative Officer, [tbrown@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:tbrown@bronxhistoricalsociety.org) or 718-881-8900 x103.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**SCREENING OF AJASS: PIONEERS OF THE BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT**  
**Saturday, February 18, 2023, 2:30–7:00pm**  
**NYPL Bronx Library Center Auditorium**  
**310 E. Kingsbridge Road**

Join Cultural Caravan Productions, Inc., The Bronx County Historical Society, and other sponsors for a free screening of Louise Dente's award-winning *AJASS: Pioneers of the Black is Beautiful Movement* (2022), hosted at the NYPL Bronx Library Center on Saturday, February 18, 2023, 3:00–7:00pm. Doors open at 2:30pm, and the screening begins at 3:00pm. A panel discussion with founding members of the African Jazz Arts Society and Studios and one of the original Grandassa Models, the first Black modeling troupe, will follow. Bob Gumbs, one of the founding members who passed in 2022, will be honored at this event.

Register for the event at [shorturl.at/orvG3](https://shorturl.at/orvG3).

**The Bronx in the American Revolution Lecture**  
**Sunday, February 26, 2023, 2:00pm**  
**Woodlawn Cemetery (Woolworth Chapel), 3800 Jerome Avenue**  
**Members: \$15; Nonmembers: \$20**

Explore the significance of The Bronx in the American Revolution with The Bronx County Historical Society. This lecture will highlight the Battle of Pell's Point, the impact of the war on ordinary Bronx farmers and inhabitants, and the general history of the war in the Bronx. Contact Roger McCormack at [education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org) for more information.

**EDGAR ALLAN POE TO HIGHBRIDGE WALKING TOUR**  
**Wednesday, April 12, 2023, 12:00pm**  
**Meet at Edgar Allan Poe Cottage, 2640 Grand Concourse**

Join The Bronx County Historical Society and the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct for a walk from the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage to the High Bridge, the oldest bridge in New York City. The event is free and open to the public. Contact Roger McCormack, at [education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org) to register for the event or to find out more information.



### EDGAR ALLAN POE COTTAGE AT POE PARK

*Grand Concourse & E. Kingsbridge Rd.*  
Owned by the New York City Department of Parks, Poe Cottage is operated by The Society. The national landmark house is a member of the Historic House Trust. Its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.



### MUSEUM OF BRONX HISTORY

*3266 Bainbridge Ave. & E. 208th St.*  
Owned by The Bronx County Historical Society, the Museum of Bronx History at the national landmark Valentine-Varian House is a member of the Historic House Trust.





## BEQUESTS

You can support The Society's work by means of a bequest. The following paragraph is suggested for your convenience, for insertion in your will: "I give and devise and bequeath to The Bronx County Historical Society, located at 3309 Bainbridge Avenue, The Bronx, New York 10467, incorporated with the New York State Board of Regents, [insert the amount of money or describe the personal property or real estate] to be used for the general purposes of The Society."

## THE BRONX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### FACILITIES:

#### Research Library & The Bronx County Archives

3309 Bainbridge Avenue  
The Bronx, NY 10467  
By Appointment:  
M-F: 9AM-5PM

[librarian@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:librarian@bronxhistoricalsociety.org)

#### Museum of Bronx History at the Valentine-Varian House

3266 Bainbridge Avenue  
The Bronx, NY 10467  
S: 10AM-4PM  
Su: 1-5PM

#### Edgar Allan Poe Cottage

2640 Grand Concourse  
The Bronx, NY 10458  
Group and individual tours by appointment:

[education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org)

FOLLOW US ON:



## UPCOMING EVENTS, CONT.

### NEW EXHIBIT: THE DEATHS OF EDGAR AND VIRGINIA POE

Open By Appointment During the Week  
and Select Saturdays, 1:00-5:00pm:

February 11, February 25, March 11, and March 25  
Edgar Allan Poe Cottage, 2640 Grand Concourse

The Deaths of Edgar and Virginia Poe exhibit is on loan from the Poe Museum in Baltimore and will be displayed in the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage until September 2023. Explore the infamous and mysterious death of Edgar Allan Poe and the tragic death of his bride, Virginia. Admission to the exhibit is included with regular admission to the Cottage. Contact Roger McCormack at [education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:education@bronxhistoricalsociety.org) for more information.

## TRIBUTE TO JOE KELLEHER



Joseph Kelleher, President and Chief Operating Officer of Hutch Metro Center, passed away on November 25, 2022. Joe was a strong advocate for the people of The Bronx and long-time supporter and friend of The Bronx County Historical Society. His legacy and memory will live on through all the individuals and organizations he impacted for the better.

## COLLECTION DONATIONS

The Society's various collections provide invaluable insight into the history of The Bronx. Below is a partial list of those who have recently made donations of material and thus helped preserve our borough's history:

Signe Brightmann (October 2022): 2.66 linear feet of historical documents, correspondence, letters, journals, and manuscripts dating back to the nineteenth century, comprising the Eichmann Family papers in The Bronx County Archives.

John D'Emilio (October 2022): 1 copy of his memoir, *Memories of a Gay Catholic Boyhood: Coming of Age in the Sixties* (Duke University Press, 2022).

Glenn Hart (October 2022): 1 Edgewater Camp advertisement card from the early twentieth century.

Mary Chapman Cole (December 2022): 2 large 1920s maps, a collection of early twentieth-century postcards, 2 cancelled checks, and 1 leather-bound diary from the 1920s, all belonging to the donor's grandparents and family.

Claire P. Murray (January 2023): The original Ewen Park land conveyance document from Eliza M. Ewen to the City of New York, dated July 27, 1916 and the campaign poster for John Ewen.