

# THE BRONX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

3309 BAINBRIDGE AVENUE  
THE BRONX, NEW YORK 10467  
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[www.bronxhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bronxhistoricalsociety.org)  
Visit us on Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter.

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, documentation and interpretation of the history and heritage of The Bronx and its people from its earliest historical references in the 17th century to the present. The Society disseminates information by utilizing its collections in exhibitions, historical research, production of publications and documentaries, educational and cultural programming, the operation of our research library, The Bronx County Archives and two historic landmark house museums - the c.1812 Edgar Allan Poe Cottage and the c.1758 fieldstone farmhouse Valentine -Varian House/Museum of Bronx History.

This newsletter is published three times a year as a service to members and friends.

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 President of the Borough of The Bronx, The Bronx Delegations of the NYS Assembly and the NYS Senate, the H.W. Wilson Foundation, the Astor Fund, the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, The New York Times Foundation, the Verizon Foundation, the New York State Library, the New Yankee Stadium Community Benefits Fund, the Susan Tane Foundation, the New York Public Library, and the New York Community Trust.

# THE BRONX HISTORIAN

Newsletter of The Bronx County Historical Society

FEBRUARY 2017- MAY 2017

VOLUME 40 NUMBER 2

## The Great War Centennial: The Bronx and World War I

World War I was a four-year conflict that altered the world, and yet at the centenary of one of the largest wars in modern history, many Americans today are unfamiliar with its details. Through no fault of their own, this war was mainly fought overseas with American forces only in the war from April 1917 to November 1918. However, in our backyard we had one of the largest National Guard mobilization camps in New York City in Van Cortlandt Park. In the original park plans, there were specifications for a parade ground solely for use by the National Guard of New York. Throughout the next three decades, the parade ground would go from National Guard polo ground to training and mobilization camp for one of the largest wars ever fought.

The National Guard had, throughout this time, conducted mock battles in the park as a way to keep up with their training. On September 25, 1915, ten thousand guardsmen conducted a large public display with events such as foot, flag, and machine gun drill and explosion of land mines. From 1916 to 1917, the Guard used Van Cortlandt Park's parade ground to assemble troops going down to the Mexican border in search of Pancho Villa. When America declared war on Germany in April 1917, the parade ground was used to assemble the 22<sup>nd</sup> Engineers, 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, 71<sup>st</sup> Regiment and others from southern New York State.

From August 1917 to November 1918, the park was a revolving door for guard troops making their way down to rendezvous at the camp at Spartanburg, South Carolina before leaving for Europe. As the war effort wound down, New York gave the final push to collect money for the war effort. April 1919 was Van Cortlandt Park's last sham battle of the war, which included digging trenches, chemical warfare demonstrations and fireworks.



National Guardsmen takes a lunch break while preparing for duty at the Mexican border. Van Cortlandt Park, 1916.

Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.



1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry being mustered before going to the border, 1916.

Photograph courtesy of the New-York Tribune.



Religious service on the Van Cortlandt House grounds, 1917.

Photograph courtesy of the New York Herald.

There are facets of Bronx history, which still need research and study. The role of Bronx parks during World War I was paramount and there is still much to learn. For example, Pelham Bay Park was also utilized as a training ground during the war. As the centennial of the war continues throughout 2019, The Bronx County Historical Society will continue to remember by having exhibitions, walking tours, and lectures dedicated to one of the most important wars in modern world history. Our spring exhibition, *Over There: America & The Great War* will exhibit the items and memories of those who witnessed this conflict.



The 1<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery preparing to leave for the Mexican border, 1916.

Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## PURE GOLD

Schools, businesses,  
institutions, and  
associations in  
The Bronx are noted.

Glacken's Bar & Grill  
135 East 149<sup>th</sup> Street  
Est. 1940

La Moderna Barber Shop  
1529 Westchester Avenue  
Est. 1962

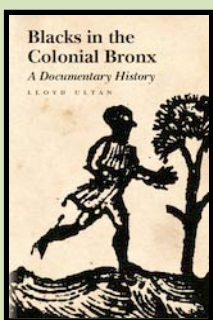
Varsity Army & Navy  
1279 Westchester Avenue  
Est. 1938

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

George &  
Annabelle Leigh Andersen  
Jordan Copeland  
Sarita Eisenstark  
Michael Froning  
Wendy Bailey Jacobellis  
Bernard Kaplan  
Fred Mazelis  
Kim Neall  
Maureen Ann Ocasio  
Joel Pomerantz  
Jeffrey Reuben  
Jennifer Seda  
Susanna Taylor

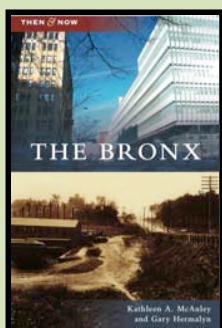
## SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS:

Autographed copy, add \$10



*Blacks in the  
Colonial Bronx:  
A Documentary  
History*  
\$18.00

*The Bronx:  
Then & Now*  
\$21.99



## COLLECTIONS DONATIONS

The Society's research library, object, and archival collections are a great resource. We thank those who recently made the following donations (partial list):

Parker Gambino: 6 ironstone plates commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of North Side Savings Bank and highlighting Kingsbridge, Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil history (1951).

Hebrew Home at Riverdale: Bronx Tourism Council video, "What's Up? The Bronx!" (1993) and booklet, *They Were Here – Some Bronxites Who Have Achieved*. (1980).

Frank Higbie: Book, *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad in New York City: Sydney Howard Gay, Louis Napoleon and the Record of Fugitives* (2014).

Gloria Jones: Three cigarette lighters (1940s) and a World War II Japanese bayonet with sheath (1943-1944).

Robert A. Simpson: Five-point metal star that may have once been part of a medal or decorative military or patriotic element to be worn as a pin or medallion (19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century).

## FINANCIAL DONATIONS

Cash donations help The Society fund programming, publications, equipment purchases, and build endowments. To double your donation, check with your employer for any available matching gift programs. We are grateful for the following contributions:

### \$10 - \$99

Sandra Cardinali  
Clean Jeans Dry Cleaners  
Burton Cohen  
Michael B. Collins  
EarthShare NYC Gives  
Evelyn Isaac  
Arthur Kahn  
Paul G. Kelly  
Harvey Mate  
Patricia Mattson  
Edward McLoughlin  
Donald J. Petersen  
Jerrold Wolfset

### \$100 - \$999

Vollmer-Adair Agency  
Hutchinson Metro Center  
Monroe College  
Alice Golbert  
Sidney Horenstein  
James J. Houlihan  
Automotive Industries  
Joanne Mastropolo  
Norbert Sander

### \$1,000 - \$4,999

The New Yankee Stadium  
Community Benefits Fund

Lloyd Ultan

## SUBMISSIONS FOR THE BRONX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL JOURNAL

Since 1964, the BCHS *Journal* has been one of the premier history journals in the tri-state region. The *Journal's* articles are of interest to all who enjoy accounts of people, business events, mercantile gain, defending the nation's interest, or the love of The Bronx. As an ongoing tradition for Bronxites to share their personal experiences, The Society is accepting articles for its *Journal*. Do you have a Bronx story to share? Kindly send in your article in Microsoft Word format along with 2-4 images at 300dpi as email attachments to [administration@bronxhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:administration@bronxhistoricalsociety.org). Make sure you include your contact information and a short bio.

## 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."

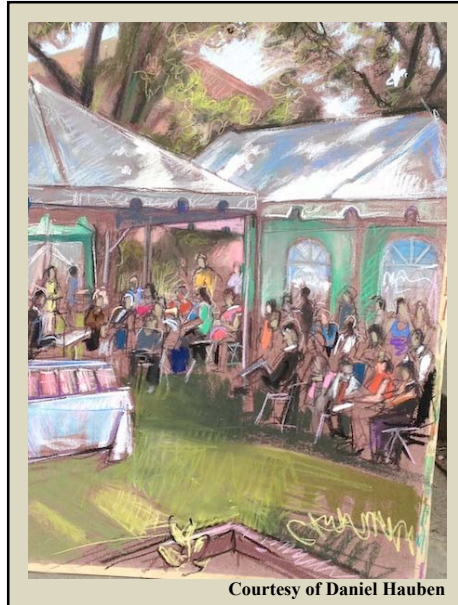
## Celebrating Our Future Bronx Leaders!

### The Bronx High School Valedictorian Awards Program at the Museum of Bronx History

Sunday, June 4, 2017 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Join us for another opportunity to accentuate the positive in The Bronx and to meet and honor our future leaders. The Society's annual program honors valedictorians of different Bronx high schools at the national landmark Valentine-Varian House, home of the Museum of Bronx History.

The program begins at 1:00 PM with entertainment and tours of the Museum of Bronx History, along with refreshments. At 2:00 PM the awards ceremony will commence. Each honoree will receive an embossed certificate and a package of books about our historic borough, published by The Society. Please call (718) 881-8900 for more information or sponsorship opportunities.



Courtesy of Daniel Hauben



Edgar Allan Poe  
Cottage  
Poe Park  
Grand Concourse &  
East Kingsbridge  
Road

Owned by the New York City Department of Parks, it is operated by The Bronx County Historical Society. The house is a member of the Historic House Trust.



## EXHIBITIONS AT THE MUSEUM OF BRONX HISTORY

3266 BAINBRIDGE AVENUE & EAST 208<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
THE BRONX, NEW YORK 10467

(718) 881 - 8900  
MUSEUM HOURS: SAT. 10AM - 4PM / SUN. 1PM - 5PM  
(GROUP TOURS MON.-FRI. BY APPOINTMENT)

NOW THROUGH APRIL 2<sup>ND</sup>

REMEMBRANCE  
OF PEARL HARBOR

THE BRONX GOES  
TO WAR

THE AMERICAN  
PRESIDENCY



POLITICS  
&  
THE BRONX

SPRING EXHIBITION  
OPENING RECEPTION

APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup> - 4:30PM – 7:00PM

OVER THERE  
AMERICA & THE GREAT WAR

APRIL 5 - OCTOBER 1, 2017



Museum of Bronx  
History/Valentine-  
Varian House  
3266 Bainbridge  
Avenue  
& East 208<sup>th</sup> Street

Owned by The Bronx County Historical Society, the 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, AND TO RSVP FOR THE APRIL 5<sup>TH</sup> RECEPTION,  
PLEASE CONTACT THE SOCIETY  
(718) 881-8900

ADMINISTRATION@BRONXHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



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### **FACILITIES:**

**Research Library**  
3309 Bainbridge Avenue  
By Appointment

**The Bronx County Archives**  
3313 Bainbridge Avenue  
By Appointment

**Museum of Bronx History/  
Valentine-Varian House**  
3266 Bainbridge Avenue  
and East 208<sup>th</sup> Street

Museum hours:  
Saturdays 10AM-4PM and  
Sundays 1PM-5PM.

**Edgar Allan Poe Cottage**  
Poe Park  
2640 Grand Concourse and  
East Kingsbridge Road

Museum hours:  
Thursdays and Fridays  
10AM-3PM  
Saturdays 10AM-4PM and  
Sundays 1PM-5PM.

Call The Society to arrange  
group tours during the week.

### **ENDOWED FUNDS**

The Bronx County Historical Society encourages the establishment of named endowment funds. Funds may be created to support many Society programs, or may be established for restricted use. The funds appear permanently on the financial records of The Society in recognition of their ongoing support of its work.

For further details, contact:  
Mr. Joel Podgor, CPA  
(718) 881-8900

## **Take A Walk Through History BRONX WALKING TOURS**

Each tour costs \$10 for BCHS members, \$20 for non-members. Contact The Society at (718) 881-8900 to reserve your spot. The tours generally run about 2 hours.

### **Historic St. Mary's Park & Its 17<sup>th</sup> Century Roots**

**Saturday, March 4, 2017 - 11:00 AM**

The community surrounding St. Mary's Park has roots deep in Bronx history – it was once part of the Jonas Bronck farm, settled in 1639. The park is important: it is one of six original Bronx parks, described by environmentalist John Mulally in 1887 as “miniature loveliness.” BCHS Program Director Angel Hernandez will show trekkers the park, the site of such lost landmarks as the Janes & Kirtland Iron Works, Bensonia Cemetery, and the original Lebanon Hospital, and will end at the national historic landmark St. Ann's Church. Tour will start at the northbound side of the Jackson Avenue #2 train station on Westchester Avenue. Take #2 or #5 trains or Bronx Bus #4 to Jackson Avenue.

### **Historic Woodlawn Heights**

**Saturday, April 22, 2017 - 11:00 AM**

Woodlawn Heights was a village that was laid out in 1873 by George Opdyke on a part of the former Gilbert Valentine farm. It was later extended northward to the Yonkers line. The neighborhood took its name from the historic Woodlawn Cemetery and now holds a rich collection of various architecture, historic neighborhood memorials, and an Irish tradition that goes back many generations. BCHS Educator Vivian Davis will start the tour at the northwest corner of E. 233<sup>rd</sup> Street and Webster Avenue (BP gas station). Take #2 or #5 train to 233<sup>rd</sup> Street, Metro-North from Grand Central to Woodlawn, or Bronx buses #16 or #31 to E. 233<sup>rd</sup> Street and Webster Avenue.

### **In the Footsteps of Edgar Allan Poe: A Walk from Poe Cottage to High Bridge**

**Saturday, May 20, 2017 - 11:00 AM**

Although the American poet Edgar Allan Poe has been gone for many years now, his home and High Bridge continue to serve as reminders of his beloved walks in The Bronx. Join BCHS Program Director Angel Hernandez on a 3-mile walk from Poe Cottage to High Bridge via Aqueduct Avenue. The tour will meet at the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage in Poe Park on the Grand Concourse and E. Kingsbridge Road. Take the D or #4 train to Kingsbridge Road or take Bronx buses #1, #2, #9, #22, #28, #34 or MTA express bus BxM4 from Manhattan.

### **FREE PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES**

The following lectures (except for April 29<sup>th</sup>) will be held at The Bronx County Archives located at 3313 Bainbridge Avenue, The Bronx, New York 10467. For directions, call (718) 881-8900.

#### ***Before the Fires***

**Saturday, February 4, 2017 - 1:00 PM**

Join Bronx authors Robert Gumbs and Fordham University's Professor Mark Naison as they presents their book *Before the Fires: An Oral History of African American Life in the Bronx from the 1930s to the 1960s*, along with the research that was done during the process. The authors will have copies of their book for sale and signing.

#### **Noted Bronx Women**

**Saturday, March 18, 2017 - 1:00 PM**

BCHS Educator Vivian Davis will offer a presentation on various women who have contributed to Bronx history throughout the years. The presentation will be illustrated and guests are encouraged to share their own accounts about women in Bronx History.

#### ***Gouverneur Morris Visiting Scholars Program Presents***

#### **Celebrating the Historic Legacy of St. Ann's Church**

**Saturday, April 29, 2017 - 1:00 PM**

St. Ann's Episcopal Church, built and donated by Gouverneur Morris Jr. in 1840, has stood the test of time. Once a modest community church, St. Ann's is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is designated as a New York City historic landmark. Continuing the celebration of its 175 years in operation, BCHS Educator Vivian Davis will chronicle the Morris family's history and activism in The Bronx that contributed to the church's surviving legacy. This lecture will be held at St. Ann's Episcopal Church, located at 295 St. Ann's Avenue Bronx, NY 10458, For directons, please call (718) 585-5632

#### **Historic Houses of The Bronx**

**Saturday, May 13, 2017 - 11:00 AM**

There are many historic buildings still standing in The Bronx. While some have been highlighted in the borough, others have yet to be honored. In celebration of Bronx Week, BCHS Program Director Angel Hernandez will highlight our borough's historic house legacy with an illustrated presentation.