

Thistle



Vol. XXVIII

December 2000

Millburn's 1900 House

“We’re selling our house and moving, after living here for 50 years. We bought the house from the son of the original owner and he left the family’s things in the attic. Does the historical society want the things?”

This was the message Mrs. Oswald, of 417 Wyoming Avenue in Millburn, left at the historical society this summer. The society subsequently made three trips to the beautiful Wyoming Avenue home, to pick up a remarkable collection of items, some of which date to the 1700s. Fortunately for the residents of our town, both Mrs. Kellogg (photo on right) and Mrs. Oswald valued and saved the ephemera, photos, textiles, etc, that were passed down to them or acquired by them and these items have enabled us to get a glimpse of life in “Wyoming” New Jersey, as it was then known, at the turn of the century.



For the months of December and January, much of that collection will be on display at the museum and visitors are welcome to view it during regular museum hours, on Tuesdays (until January, when it will be Thursdays) from 5:30-7:30, Wednesdays from 3:30-5:30 and the first Sunday of the month, from 2:00-4:00. Because of the volume of material, the entire collection is not on display, but items will be added as

Recent Acquisitions

The society is very grateful to receive artifacts from generous residents and/or members. We are happy to be able to preserve, share and use for reference, these relics of Millburn-Short Hills history.

As we develop our registration sheets (to record donations), we may have forgotten to include a donation here, so please contact us and tell us if we neglected to include your donation. We need the information for our records in addition to making sure we don't forget to thank you! Our sincerest thanks to the following people for enriching the lives of all residents by their donations:

- From Gloria Patrizio, three commemorative mugs from the July 4th 1976 bicentennial, Millburn Township paper weight, Bicentennial events programs, OpSail '76 memorabilia, 1976 awards ceremony memorabilia, 1976 bicentennial-related news clippings from The Item, 1957 centennial book, 1976 Thistle, Suburban Dress Shop hanger, early files from Deerfield-Crossroads Civic Association
- From Robert Reed, vintage printed material for the hat exhibit, vintage bifocals, vintage nutcracker, vintage inkwell
- From Gail Engelschjon, numerous bits of local ephemera, including MHS yearbooks, Community Congregational Church directories, advertising items from local businesses, including an umbrella and Suburban Dress Shop hangers, "The Houses of McKim, Mead and White" (book)
- From Hope, Owen, Greg and Lauren Lampe, numerous items of local interest, including magazines with articles about the town, WWI and WWII memorabilia,
- history book from local elementary school, MHS and junior high yearbooks, community directory, Eric Sloane book
- From Naneen Levine, numerous bits of ephemera, including area postcards and NJ almanac
- From Mr & Mrs Albert Shelby, photos of the Strong family's house that used to be on Knollwood
- From Jean Strickler, vintage school desks from local elementary schools
- From Mrs. Robert J Cunliffe, "A History of St. Stephen's Church, Millburn, NJ 1851-1963" (book), "Dedication of the New Beckerath Organ" for St. Stephen's Church (1970), early photo of the center of Millburn, Layng history of the police department
- From Kay Tourelle, small display boxes and printed/hand painted material for hat exhibit
- From Ann Frohboese, Josephine Layng (local Forest Drive, SH milliner) hat and hat box
- From Bill Clark, rescue squad memorabilia

the items are registered and/or conserved. Among the things that can be seen are Elizabeth ("Bessie") Lyle Young Kellogg's collection of early newspapers, including one from 1783, which features an article on "General Washington's Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States", an 1865 newspaper with a tribute to Abraham Lincoln, an invitation to President Grant's first inaugural reception, a silk ball gown from the 1870s, photos of the early Wyoming area and the first Wyoming elementary school (and the

pupils), and much more. The historical society was fortunate to have the help of Millburn High School intern Miranda Shutte, who assisted with the conservation, labeling, research and display of the exhibit items. Miranda has kindly offered to continue to help at the museum, even though her internship project is complete. For more information please come to the museum during regular hours or call 564-9519 and leave a message.



On the Top Stair

It is with great sympathy that we read in Bessie Kellogg's diaries that in 1894 her only daughter died, two years later her father died, three years after that her mother died, nine years later her husband died and seven years later her middle son died. These sad events make the following March 1932 diary entry of hers even more poignant. (Note: Schermerhorn street was where Bessie lived as a child in Brooklyn):

Awoke this a.m. saying "On the Top Stair!" I seemed sitting on the highest step of the long staircase in old Schermerhorn St. Beside me was the niche in the wall on which once stood the statue of Flora, or some goddess (but she had fallen down the stairs to destruction years ago, and my mother evidently had never regretted it as she often feared she might fall on one of us children -- and besides she objected to even a goddess unclothed!).

I was looking down the flight of steps to the hall below. Then I realized, when quite awake, that I am on the Top Stair of Life. Each stair was like a year or some event in my long life...some joyful, some sorrowful, others useful, and still others anxious, and so on, but I had climbed them all and knew I was on the top - the last one. No more to struggle up. I was glad to sit down and rest and wait! For what? Have I so nearly reached the End? God only knows and I pray to Him that I may be ready for the next Step wherever it may lead. Into space unknown? Into loving arms!

About one-third of the stairs had been run up when I married. Another third when I was widowed had been walked up. And the last third had been sedately ascended, step by step, alone, with the aid of the baluster rail, often painfully and wearily.

Recent Acquisitions, cont'd

- From Mindy Bressman, Glenwood School yearbook
- From Mr & Mrs Vaclav Benes, early architectural pieces from their house
- From Clarence Bair, vintage local postcards, early Millburn Fire Department photo
- From Thomas Mellins, "New York 1880 : Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age" (book of which Mellins was one of the authors)
- From Doris McKee, sheet music of WWII, written by resident Dr. Cornell Grossman

- From Ann Smith, piece of vintage bridal wear (from a local store), cookbook and dress belonging to Mrs. Denman, Papermill re-opening memorabilia
- From John Davis, Cora Hartshorn manuscript and sketch (from the estate of Dr. Thomas Davis)
- From Pat Clark, 1969 Millburn dog tag

*If we forgot to list your donation, please call and leave a message at 564-9519.



...and We're Searching For:

From Nancy J. Miller, of the Wareham Historical Commission, comes the following request:

"The Wareham (Massachusetts) Historical Commission is requesting help in locating the papers of William Root Bliss, Esq., formerly of Short Hills, NJ. In the late 19th century, Mr. Bliss published two books, "Colonial Times on Buzzards Bay" and "The Old Colonial Town and Other Sketches". He also, it appears, published numerous articles as well. In these works Mr. Bliss notes using the following information: "A Booke of Records of the owners and devisions of the lands or some tracts of lands & meadows of Agawame liing and being in the precincts and bounds of new plimouth" (Agawame was the original name of Wareham) and "Israel Fearing his Booke bought January the 10 day 1722" – when George the First was King.

Both books were, it seems, stolen from town hall sometime between 1900 and 1950. Also missing is the original town clerk's book for 1739-1759. The loss of the early history of our town is heartbreaking. Mr. Bliss appears to have been a meticulous researcher and as he only spent a short time here each summer, it is thought that he probably copied these records and then worked on them upon his return to Short Hills. Any help anyone could give us in locating these records would be greatly appreciated. In advance I would like to thank you for any assistance"

If you have any information whatsoever that might be of use to the Wareham Historical Commission, please contact our museum/society at 564-9519 and leave a message and we will put you in touch with Ms. Miller.

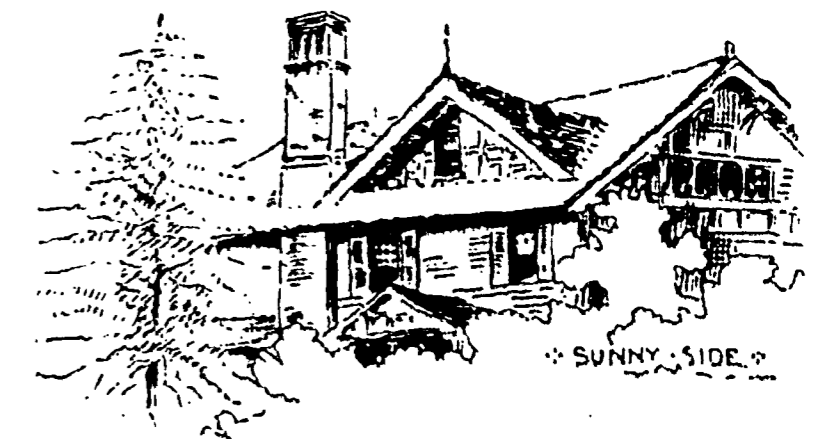
The Romance and Tragedy of a Widely Known Business Man of New York

In the 1880s one of the wealthiest families in Short Hills was that of Mr and Mrs William Ingraham Russell, the owners of "Sunnyside" first (39 Knollwood Road), then builders of "Redstone," formerly at Wells Lane and Knollwood (and destroyed by fire in 1934). Mr. Russell seems to have made his fortune in broking the sale of an undisclosed material, about which he wrote "The largest consumers in our line were the oil refiners, all of whom have been absorbed by the Standard Oil Company". His lavish parties were described in the local paper (see "The Dance in the Barn" article in the November 1997 Thistle, taken from the October 1888 edition of The News Item) and the Russells were apparently known for their spirit of hospitality and generosity.

In 1895, however, Mr. Russell's ship foundered and his fortunes began a downward spiral. Concurrent with the dramatic downturn in his wealth, Mr. Russell contended that his "friends" turned away from him, too, because of that. His bitterness about the wrong turn in his financial and social circumstances led him to write a book about the events that led to his new status, in 1905, with thinly-disguised references to what he perceived to be his ungrateful friends, but with great love and admiration for the steadfastness of the devotion of his wife. The book, "The Romance and Tragedy of a Widely Known Business Man of New York by Himself" was issued in a limited edition of 1000 copies and was barely anonymous...although everyone apparently knew of it.

The historical society owns a copy of Mr. Russell's book and is fortunate to find in it

a picturesque peek into the earliest days of Short Hills. From the book we learn that William Ingraham Russell was born in Brooklyn in about 1850, but he contends that he never liked living there. As he got older he began to be plagued by "neuralgic headaches" and was advised by his physicians to leave Brooklyn for a dryer atmosphere. In April 1876, Mr and Mrs Russell moved to "a place of about six acres, five minutes' walk from a station on the Morris & Essex Railroad, between Summit and Morristown." He notes "The last night in the Brooklyn house I had one of my worst attacks of rheumatism. *I have never had the slightest twinge of it since.* Blessed be New Jersey!"



In 1878, as the Russell family grew, they found that they needed a larger home and they desired a "house with modern conveniences, neighbors, pleasant, cultured people whose society (they) could enjoy." He notes further: "On my trips to and from the city I had observed from the car window a section of country not far from where we were then residing, and as the few houses I could see were modern, the elevation high and beautifully wooded, we thought it worthwhile to investigate. With my wife I drove there one afternoon and we were both surprised

and delighted at what we saw. A gentleman of wealth had purchased many hundreds of acres of land, and after building for himself a handsome home had commenced development of the property for residences of the better class. There was nothing of the cheap real estate scheme about the place. The owner would sell or rent only to such people as he deemed desirable. Although the water supply and sewerage system had been established, miles of roads built, a handsome railroad station erected and a large Casino in course of erection, there were at that time but six houses completed. Knollwood was to be a park, and as a unique feature no two houses were to be alike. How successful it has been is shown by the fact that to-day there is no more beautiful or flourishing residence park in the vicinity of New York.

As a result of our visit to the property, an arrangement was made for a house to be built for us on a lease of three years, and we were permitted to select the plans of the house, its site, and the interior decorations. Work was to commence at once and possession given us in April 1879."

Russell adds that "When, at the end of the year, the books were closed at the office, I was pleased to find that I had made a little over twelve thousand dollars" and that he was "but twenty-eight years of age."

In chapter twelve, titled "An Ideal Life", Russell describes this new chapter of his life, now in Short Hills: "As the new house was approaching completion we found much pleasure in occasionally going to Knollwood for an hour or two, to look it over.

Our having selected the plans and site made it seem as if it belonged to us and our interest in its development was great. The kitchen was in the basement. On the first floor was a square entrance hall opening into parlor, dining-room and library. There were four bedrooms and bath-room on second floor and above that a maid's room and attic.

While the house was not large the rooms were all of comfortable size. For heating, in addition to the furnace, there were several open fire-places, a great desideratum in any house. In its exterior the style was something of the Swiss cottage. The grounds consisted of about an acre in lawn with a few flower-beds and a number of fine trees.

In April we moved into the new house. Some additions had been made to our furnishings, and when all was in order we agreed that in our eyes there was no other house in the world quite so pretty. It was a case of "contentment is wealth," and we were perfectly contented.

Of course we must have a name for the place. Every one does that, in the country, and we were not to be the exception. One of our boundary lines was a brook and we decided on "Brookside Cottage." The stationery and visiting cards were so engraved, when, alas, a few weeks later our brook dried up and we had to select another name.

At this time, where the brook had been, a new line of sewer was laid, and my wife suggested "Sewerside," but after punishing her with a kiss for her bad pun, I suggested "Sunnyside." The name was adopted and to this day the place has retained it.

"Sunnyside" was not the only house in Knollwood completed that spring. There were several others, and when the summer commenced there resided there a little community of delightful, congenial people. Most of them were of about my age, and with the exception of the owner of the Park, of moderate means. Probably at that time I enjoyed a larger income than any of them.

Wealth cut no figure in that community. We all respected each other and met on the same social plane, regardless of individual means.

While we liked them all, we became particularly intimate with two of our immediate neighbors, the Woods and the Lawtons, who had come to the Park at the same time as ourselves.

This intimacy became a strong and close friendship, so much so that it was very like one family. The children of the three families fraternized and almost every disengaged evening found the parents gathered together in some one of the three houses, which were connected by private telephone.

In its social elements Knollwood was peculiarly fortunate. The people were bright and entertaining. In a number of instances musical talent, both vocal and instrumental, was of high order, and there was also a good deal of amateur dramatic talent.

Taking this combination and an inspiration on the part of each individual to do what he or she could for the entertainment of all, one can readily see that much pleasure might be derived in Knollwood society.

The facilities for making use of the talent we possessed were excellent. We had a beautiful casino, with a stage well equipped with scenery, and during the first four years of our residence there more than fifty performances were given, each followed by a dance. A Country Club was organized for outdoor sports and there was something going on continually.

The life at Knollwood in those days was to my mind ideal. The beauty of the place, its facilities and conveniences are still there, improved and increased. Its social life, now on a totally different scale, has expanded to meet the tastes of the people. With the large increase in population came the break in the circle. Cliques defining the difference, not in culture or refinement, but in wealth, have developed. The old charm of every resident my friend, is lacking."

In chapter thirteen Russell comments on his increasing prosperity, which enabled him to purchase "Sunnyside":

"My business in 1879 returned me nearly sixteen thousand dollars, a satisfactory increase over the previous year.

My wife and I had become much

attached to "Sunnyside," and as the owner was willing to sell it to us for just what it had cost to build, plus one thousand dollars for the land, we bought it. We then spent eleven hundred dollars in improvements, and when finished our home cost us sixty-five hundred dollars.

It was certainly a very attractive place for that amount of money. To be sure it was only an unpretentious cottage, but a pretty one, and the interior had been so successfully though inexpensively treated in decoration and appointments that the general effect attracted from our friends universal admiration."

In subsequent editions of the Thistle, we will continue the saga of the Russells, their move from Sunnyside to Redstone, site of their lavish parties, and the end of their life in Short Hills.



In 1879 Stewart Hartshorn asked the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White to design a community center for his new community. The Music Hall, or Casino, (above) was built at the site of the present Racquets Club and was formally opened on March 27, 1880. At various times the hall served as a social, civic or religious center.

In 1978 the building was destroyed by fire.

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2000-2001

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Have You Heard of Doerr's Grove?

Area resident Robert Reed has asked if Thistle readers have any information about Doerr's Grove, which is believed to be what the area behind the former Don's restaurant used to be called. A 1960 newspaper noted "A coeducational picnic was to be the final event of the season for the Big L Club. The picnic, to be held at Doerr's Grove, was to honor the baseball, golf, track and tennis teams..."

Other than horseshoes found on the property (like those used in the game of horseshoes), this is the only reference to Doerr's Grove that we have seen. If you have any information about it, please call the society.

Save the Date

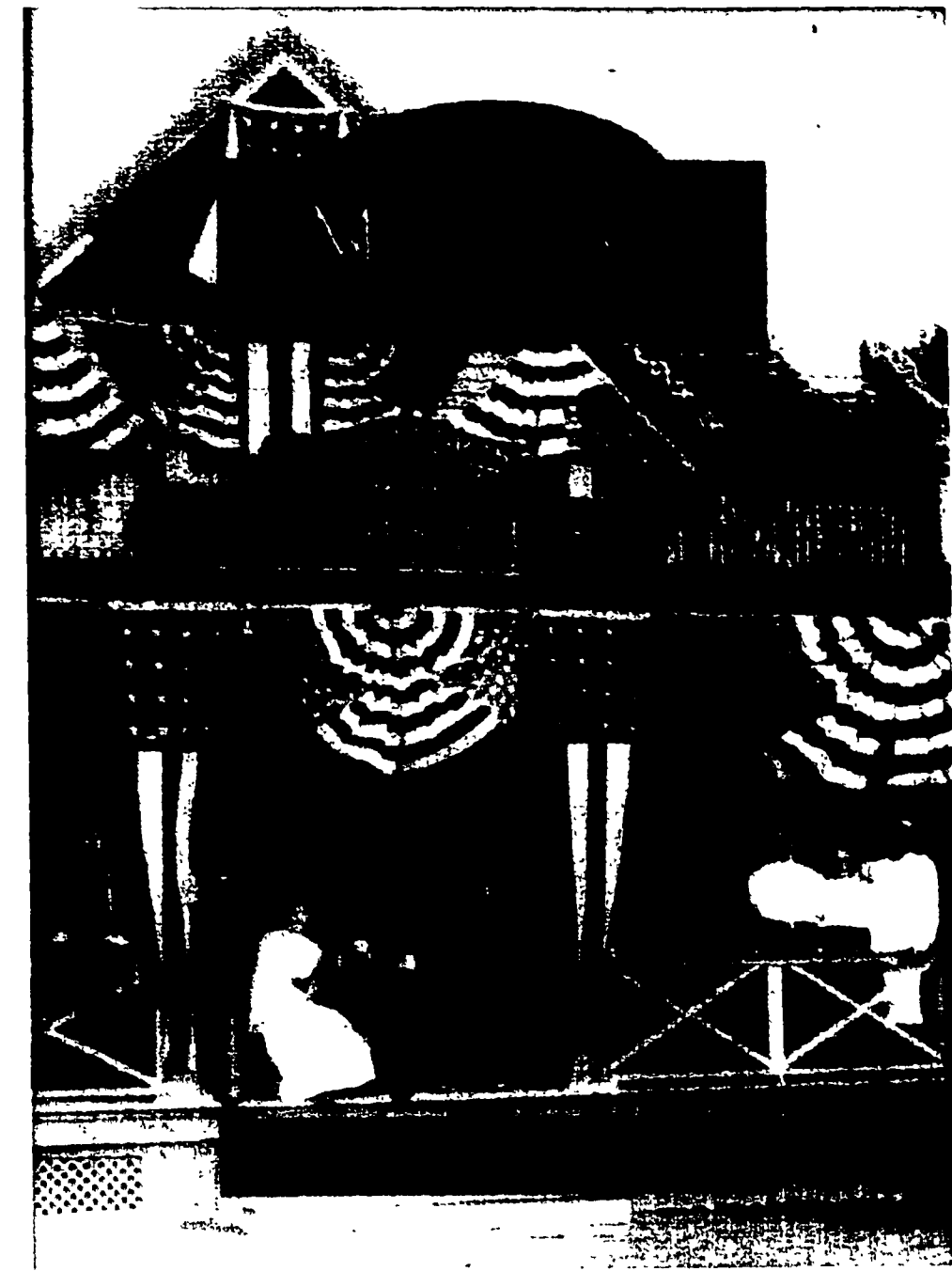
On Sun., March 14th, at the Millburn library, Barbara Mitnick, PhD, will speak about New Jersey philanthropist Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge, the subject of her recent biography. She will also answer questions about Ellis Island.

Please Note:

As of January 1st, 2001, the museum will be open on Thursday evenings from 5:30-7:30 p.m., rather than on Tuesday evenings as it is now. The museum will continue to be open as usual on Wednesdays from 3:30-5:30 and the first Sunday of the month, from 2:00-4:00 pm.

If you would like to confirm the hours, please call the museum at 564-9519. If there is no staff there, the hours will be on the answering machine message (which can only be 20 seconds long, so it must be fast).

Images of America: Millburn-Short Hills



Paperback editions of the historical society's newest and much-acclaimed book, Images of America: Millburn-Short Hills, published by Arcadia Publishers, are available at the museum and select area stores.

The popular book of vintage photographs of the town was written by town historian Owen Lampe and is available at the museum, during regular hours, for \$20 (which includes tax). The author arranged the book as though the reader is driving through the town, so that each chapter features a section of town, in many never-before-seen vintage photos from the society's photo collection.

For more information about the book, please call 564-9519 during museum hours, or you may leave a message and we will return the call.

William Rowell Derrick, ANA, "Poet of the Palette"

His father was Stewart Hartshorn's chauffeur and as a young man former Short Hills resident Thomas Collins would roam the grounds of the Hartshorn estate, where his family lived, and would often see William Rowell Derrick painting pictures of the swan pond and other scenes on the property. Collins remembers Derrick arriving with his wife each summer, to become part of the Hartshorn household.

Stewart Hartshorn was Derrick's patron and friend and for 35 years Derrick enjoyed staying at Hartshorn's Short Hills estate as well as vacationing with the family at Squam Lake in New Hampshire.

Collins lost track of Derrick after Hartshorn's death, but his interest in the artist was renewed in 1973 when he saw one of the artist's paintings in a magazine. For the next twenty-seven years Collins reconstructed the artist's life and searched for his paintings. The culmination of that twenty-seven year pursuit is a charming, illustrated biography of the artist of Short Hills.

The painstakingly-thorough book features twenty-four color illustrations of Derrick's work, including many of scenes of Short Hills, as seen opposite. Local readers will be especially charmed by the vintage photographs of Hartshorn's mansion and estate and the author's memories of growing up on the estate, in an era of icemen, Dort touring sedans and swans floating silently on the estate lake.

A limited number of Collins' 57-page books can be purchased from the museum, for \$45 each. To order, please call the author at 302-945-1642, or the museum at 564-9519.

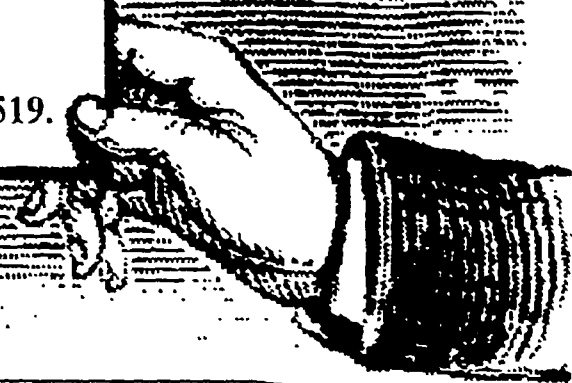


Winter Woodland Stream

Historic Homes of Millburn and Short Hills

Millburn Township's Historic Preservation Commission designed a commemorative poster to celebrate the legacy of our beautiful historic homes. The unframed, color posters can be purchased at the museum, for \$15, during regular museum hours. The poster can be seen in the message board on the track side of the museum.

For more information, please call 564-9519.



Dues Renewals

If you have not yet renewed your membership in the historical society, please use the form below and send your check to, and made payable to, the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society, PO Box 243, Short Hills, NJ 07078.

----- ✂ -----
 Name _____
 Address _____ (City/State/Zip)
 Phone _____ E-mail _____

<u>Annual Dues</u>	<u>Additional Contribution</u>
___ \$15 (Individual)	___ \$50 (Donor)
___ \$25 (Family)	___ \$100 (Sponsor)
___ \$50 (Patron)	___ \$250 (Patron)
___ \$50 (Business)	___ \$500 (Benefactor)
___ \$200 (Life)	___ \$ (Other)



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