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# HISTORIC PELHAM

*Historic Pelham Herald – A Monthly Newsletter on History Happenings in Pelham, NY  
Vol. 1, Issue 9 (March 2004)*

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*Feature  
Story*

## Grant Sought to Preserve and Exhibit 1929 Silent Film Made in Pelham

On February 26, The Office of The Historian of The Town of Pelham filed an application with the National Film Preservation Foundation seeking funds from the Foundation’s federally-funded film preservation grants.

As part of the Town of Pelham’s 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration this year, the Office of The Historian seeks the funding to permit preservation and exhibition of a culturally and historically significant black and white silent film documentary made in 1929. The film, entitled “Memorial Day Pelham NY 1929”, documents a day of events revolving around the Town’s Memorial Day celebration on May 30, 1929.

The “reversal original” film is unique – there are no copies. It has been meticulously maintained by The Office of The Historian. Indeed, one of the two film preservation laboratories asked to analyze the film has described the film as being in “excellent shape” and even thanked the Town of Pelham for

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**Film Canister Containing the Film  
"Memorial Day, Pelham, NY 1929"  
Photograph by Blake A. Bell.**

## HistoricPelham.com Web Site News

The HistoricPelham.com Web site has received its [third award](#), this time a “Top Local Site” award. Hosting records provided by the host of the site show that during the short month of February, the [HistoricPelham.com Web site](#) received 198,169 hits representing 10,739 page views. Visitors in February downloaded 1.279 **gigabytes** of data from the site.



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## Grant Sought to Preserve and Exhibit 1929 Silent Film Made in Pelham

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“giving us the opportunity to see this piece of history and to see what a well maintained film from 1929 can really look like if well kept.”

Mimi Buckley (Town Historian) and Blake Bell (Deputy Town Historian) have researched the film and the events depicted in it. A cryptic reference in an article that appeared in the May 10, 1929 issue of *The Pelham Sun* suggests that the film was commissioned by Pelham Post No. 50, American Legion. See Past Commanders of Pelham Post To Be Honored by Members, *The Pelham Sun*, Vol. 20, No. 6, May 10, 1929, p. 6, col. 1 (noting that at an upcoming Post gathering the Memorial Day Committee will report that a “motion picture program has been arranged”).

The film documents a day of events revolving around the Town’s Memorial Day celebration that year. The time was special. Pelham’s last living Civil War veteran, 86-year-old Maj. Charles J. Walker (who served in the 5<sup>th</sup> New York regiment during all four years of the War) was in his declining years. The previous year he had shared Memorial Day with Col. Charles Buck, Confederate Civil War veteran, but Col. Buck had died during the previous winter.



**Frames From the Film Showing  
Pelham Police Officer Standing  
on the Esplanade with Spectators  
Strolling in the Background**

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Rudimentary analysis of frames of the film indicate that it documents the day’s events and significant participants in those events. For example, scattered throughout frames of the film are title frames that contain titles of scenes of the documentary. A few of the many titles, by way of example, are: “MEMBERS OF THE POST”; “US ARMY DETACHMENT FOR PELHAM”; “LIEUT VINCENT”, etc. Efforts to match the program of events for the day with frames of the film indicate that each of these titles depicts a portion of the day’s events. For example, Lieutenant J.W. Vincent commanded a detachment of U.S. Regulars from the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry (stationed at Fort Slocum) who marched in the parade sponsored by members of Pelham Post No. 50, American Legion.



**Frames From the Film Showing  
Wreath Laying at Local Cemetery  
Before the Day’s Remaining Ceremonies Began**

The program of events for the day, which seems to match the contents of the film when the frames are reviewed carefully, included:

- Louis C. Covell, Chairman.
- Band selection, 104<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Band.
- Assembly – Trumpeter.
- Invocation, Rev. Vincent De Paul Mulry, St. Catharine’s R.C. Church.
- Preamble to Constitution of the American Legion – Harry F. Mela, Post Commander.
- America – Assemblage.
- Battle Hymn of the Republic – Mrs. J. Graham Sullivan.
- Address – Hon. William D. Cunningham.
- Long, Long Trail – Assemblage.
- To the Colors – Trumpeters.

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- The Star Spangled Banner – Assemblage.
- Decoration of Memorial.
- Salute – Detachment United States Army.
- Taps – Trumpeters.
- Silence – Assemblage.
- Benediction, Rev. J. McVickar Haight, Christ Church.
- Band Selection – 104<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery.

The National Film Preservation Foundation, which has been quite encouraging regarding the application, is expected to make its decision on the grant application in April. Significantly, a Pelham resident – anonymous for now – has stepped forward and offered to fund preservation of the film in the event the grant application is unsuccessful, thus ensuring that the film will be available for study and exhibition later this year as part of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

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### **Pelham Library Will Host Slide Presentation and Book Signing by Noted Author**

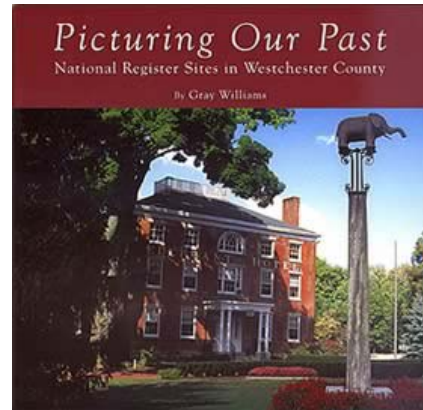
On Sunday, March 21 at 2:00 p.m. The Town of Pelham Public Library will host a slide presentation and book signing by Gray Williams, author of PICTURING OUR PAST – NATIONAL REGISTER SITES IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY. The lecture is the third in a series of twelve monthly lectures being presented as part of Pelham's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration.

At the event, which is free and open to the public, copies of the book will be available for purchase and signing by the author. Mr. Williams, of Chappaqua, will speak on National Register sites in and near Pelham as well as his experiences photographing and researching the book.

PICTURING OUR PAST is published by the Westchester County Historical Society. It is 11 by 11 inches in size and 492 pages long with 615 illustrations (365 of which are in full color). The book represents more than four years of work by Mr. Williams who researched and wrote the text, took 275 new color photographs of the sites and collected historical illustrations, paintings, drawings, prints and photographs from collections throughout the country.

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In connection with Mr. Gray's presentation, the Library will unveil an exhibit in its main hall on National Register sites in and near Pelham. This exhibit is also the third in a series of twelve monthly exhibits being presented as part of Pelham's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration.



"Picturing our Past" by Gray Williams is a new book about historic places in Westchester County

### **Cover of the Book PICTURING OUR PAST**

The Library's monthly lecture series has been quite successful so far with the presentation room filled to capacity during each of the first two lectures on the topics of: "Thomas Pell and the Legend of the Pell Treaty Oak" and "Pelham and the Toonerville Trolley". The April slide presentation and lecture will feature Mark Gaffney, Vice Commodore of the Travers Island Yacht Club, addressing the "History of the Islands of The Manor of Pelham". That presentation will be held at the Library on Sunday, April 18, beginning at 2:00 p.m.

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### **Town Historian's Office Engaged in Initiative to Scan and Document Glass Photographic Negatives in the Town's Collections**

Representatives of The Office of The Historian of The Town of Pelham are engaged in an initiative to scan and document a large collection of glass photographic negatives in the Town's collections. The initiative, undertaken entirely on a volunteer basis and at no expense to the Town, is the first systematic effort to create positive images of all of the glass negatives in the collection.

The collection consists of many boxes of glass negatives. Each negative is individually stored in an acid-free archival envelop that, in turn, is stored with

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## Town Historian's Office Engaged in Initiative to Scan and Document Glass Photographic Negatives in the Town's Collections

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other such archivally-protected negatives. The photographic images are believed to have been taken by a former Town Historian, William Montgomery, during the 1920s. They reportedly were found in Mr. Montgomery's attic after his death and were provided to The Office of The Historian of The Town of Pelham. Although a few of the images were printed on photographic paper years ago, that initiative ended before completion due to the expense of the project.



**Home at 667 Esplanade After a Snowstorm.  
Glass Photographic Negative Created by  
W. Montgomery on February 18, 1928.**

The process for creating positive images of each glass negative is slow, cumbersome and labor intensive. A flatbed scanner attached to a portable notebook computer with scanning software is set up. Strong light sources are suspended above the bed of the scanner. Each negative is carefully removed from its archival sleeve and laid on the bed of the scanner. The light sources are then used to direct light through the negative while it is scanned at a very high resolution.

Once the negative image is captured, a software program known as Adobe Photoshop Elements is used to manipulate a duplicate copy of the negative image. The original electronic negative image is retained for archival purposes. Using Photoshop, the negative image is "inverted" thereby creating a positive image of the negative.

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The glass negatives are significant. Because they were created by a Town Historian, many of the photographs are of historically-significant structures and structures that no longer exist. One of many such example is the Marshall House at Pell's Point (near today's bridge to City Island). The Marshall House was one of many mansions located in what we know today as Pelham Bay Park that were torn down by the City of New York.



**The Marshall House at Pell's Point.  
Glass Photographic Negative Created by  
W. Montgomery on April 21, 1923.**

The glass negative project is expected to take a year or longer to complete.

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## Town Supervisor Announces That Local Legislators Have Arranged Grants Totaling \$10,000 To Fund Fireworks for 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

During a public meeting of Pelham's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Steering Committee held at the Pelham Art Center the evening of February 26, Pelham Town Supervisor Joe Solimine announced that he has successfully arranged two \$5,000 grants from State Senator Guy Velella and State Representative Amy Paulin to fund a Memorial Day weekend fireworks celebration as part of the ongoing 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

Tentative plans are to hold the fireworks celebration at Shore Park on the Friday evening of this year's Memorial Day weekend (May 28). The fireworks will be a wonderful prelude to the two Town wide Memorial Day picnics being planned for Memorial Day on Monday, May 31. One such picnic

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## Town Supervisor Announces Grants To Fund Fireworks Display

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is tentatively planned to be held at Shore Park while a second is planned near the Village of Pelham Firehouse.



While there are many, many events (including lectures, exhibits, presentations and more) being held – and being planned – throughout this year, current plans are for three large celebrations: (1) the Memorial Day weekend celebration; (2) the June 12 Street Fair and Block Party sponsored by the Pelham Chamber of Commerce; and (3) the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum celebration on the Bartow-Pell Estate on June 27, 1654 – the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Pell's Treaty with Local Siwanoy Native Americans.

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## Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum Will Hold Two "Clearing the Past" Events on March 20 and March 27

On Saturday, March 20 and Saturday, March 27 the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum will host "Clearing the Way to Our Past" from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. The purpose of the event is to bring community volunteers together to thin a section of arbor that now obscures the area where the circular fence that once protected Thomas Pell's Treaty Oak still stands.

As the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Pell's land acquisition from local Native Americans approaches, the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum and the International Garden Club, Inc. are working hard to

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improve the grounds. The Town of Pelham has arranged for local arborist businesses to donate equipment and labor to assist with the initiative.

Volunteers are needed to help with the effort and to create a new trail for visitor access to the historic site of the Treaty Oak where, according to tradition, Thomas Pell purchased from Siwanoy Chieftains much of the northeast Bronx and lower Westchester County. Under the direction of the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum and NYC Parks Department staff, this all-day two-day activity is set to clear the site for the Sunday, June 27, 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the Thomas Pell accord. For more information or to register as a volunteer, please call 718-885-1461 or e-mail your name and phone number to [BartowPellED@aol.com](mailto:BartowPellED@aol.com).

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## 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Logo Unveiled

The logo for the Town's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration has been unveiled. Designed by Pelham resident Bruce Withers, the logo (see below) shows a stylized view of the Pell Treaty Oak in the last years of its life when it stood within a protective circular fence on the grounds of the Bartow-Pell Estate.



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## Special Postal Cancellation Arranged To Take Place During the June 12 Street Fair and Block Party

Local philatelists will be pleased to learn that a special postal cancellation has been arranged to commemorate Pelham's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. The special cancellation will be available for one day only, during the June 12 Street

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## Special Postal Cancellation Arranged To Take Place During the June 12 Street Fair and Block Party

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Fair and Block Party sponsored by the Pelham Chamber of Commerce.

During that event the United States Postal Service will offer a special cancellation that will be forever retired immediately following the event.

Those who visit the temporary Postal Station will be able to purchase stamps, envelopes and other materials and may have the stamps cancelled with a special commemorative cancellation that will look something like the mockup below.



## History Events of Interest to Pelham

**Mar. 5** – The Bronxville Historic Conservancy hosts its annual lecture with a presentation by noted author Walter Isaacson on “The Civic Virtues of Benjamin Franklin.” Concordia College, Sommer Center, Bronxville, NY. Lecture begins at 8:00 p.m. Admission is free and the public is welcome. Please call 914-337-9300, extension 2111 to reserve a seat.

**Mar. 13** – The Westchester County Genealogical Society will present a talk by Jim Logan about Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. Mr. Logan is overseeing Sleepy Hollow’s written overview of the cemetery’s history, art and architecture, which is expected to be published in 2005. Aldersgate Methodist Church, 600 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry, NY. Social time begins at 9:30 a.m. and the meeting starts at 10:00 a.m. Guests are welcome. \$3.00 donation. For more information, please contact Ann Wadsworth at 914-478-3491.

**Mar. 18** – Guy Cheli, author of IMAGES OF AMERICA: SING SING PRISON, will present a historical overview of the famous prison and provide fascinating details

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about this famous landmark site in Ossining which dates back to 1825. Yonkers Riverfront Library, One Larkin Center, Yonkers, NY. The presentation will begin in the Community Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, at 6:30 p.m. Copies of the book will be available for sale after the program and light refreshments will be served. Please call 914-375-7957 for more information.

**Mar. 20** – “Clearing the Way to Our Past”: the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum and the NYC Parks Department seek volunteers to thin a section of arbor to create a new trail for visitor access to the historic site of the Treaty Oak where, tradition says, Thomas Pell purchased lands from Siwanoy Chieftains. The all-day event (9 a.m. until 4 p.m.) is free. For more information or to register as a volunteer, please call 718-885-1461 or email your name and phone number to [bartowpellED@aol.com](mailto:bartowpellED@aol.com).

**Mar. 21** – The Town of Pelham Public Library presents Gray Williams, author of PICTURING OUR PAST: NATIONAL REGISTER SITES IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY. Mr. Williams will give a lecture and slide presentation on National Register sites in Westchester County with an emphasis on sites in and near Pelham, NY. This is the third in a series of twelve monthly lectures presented as part of Pelham’s 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration. At the event, which is free and begins at 2:00 p.m., copies of Mr. Williams’ book will be available for sale and signing by the author.

**Mar. 27** – Saint Paul’s Church National Historic Site presents a special event: Women’s History Month Celebration. This is a special event examining women in 18<sup>th</sup> century America. It features demonstrations about midwifery, spinning and the lives of African American women in colonial New York; a performance of 18<sup>th</sup> century music by Linda Russell, and talks on Anne Hutchinson and the legal history of women in colonial New York. There will also be special lectures by distinguished Professor Carol Berkin of the City University Graduate Center and Mary-Jo Kline, of Columbia University on women in 18<sup>th</sup> century New York. For more information, please call 914-667-4116.

**Mar. 27** – “Clearing the Way to Our Past”: the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum and the NYC Parks Department seek volunteers to thin a section of arbor to create a new trail for visitor access to the historic site of the Treaty Oak where, tradition says, Thomas Pell purchased lands from Siwanoy Chieftains. The all-day event (9 a.m. until 4 p.m.) is free. For more information or to register as a volunteer, please call 718-885-1461 or email your name and phone number to [bartowpellED@aol.com](mailto:bartowpellED@aol.com).