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# HISTORIC PELHAM

today

*Historic Pelham Herald – A Monthly Newsletter on History Happenings in Pelham, NY  
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Please Visit [HistoricPelham.com](http://HistoricPelham.com)

*Feature  
Story*

## Treasure Trove: Village of Pelham Detective Discovers Rich Cache of Historical Documents

Detective Rick Deere of the Village of Pelham Police Department has rediscovered a large and historically-significant collection of police records in the basement of Town Hall. In February, Detective Geere found more than 70 two-inch thick, leather-bound "Records Books" containing daily handwritten police log entries for the Village of Pelham Police Department from the 1920s through the mid-1970s.

The logs should offer important and fascinating glimpses into the life of the Village and how it has changed in the last 90 years. Detective Deere reports that early entries show police officers dealing with escaped goats and other animals indicative of a more simple country life. Other interesting entries include that for the day of December 7, 1941 – the date of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The logs are sure to show other historically-significant developments as perceived by The Village of Pelham's Finest.

Promptly after his discovery, Detective Deere contacted The Office of The Historian of The Town of Pelham.

## Pelham Preservation and Garden Society Is Renovating the Highbrook Avenue Gates

Among the latest community service projects underway at the Pelham Preservation and Garden Society is the renovation of the Highbrook Avenue Gates located at the entrance to Pelhamwood near the Metro-North railroad overpass. The renovation involves re-tiling the slate roof, masonry work and restoration of the wooden structural elements.

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## HistoricPelham.com Web Site News

According to hosting records provided by the host of the site, in its first month of operation, the [HistoricPelham.com Web site](http://HistoricPelham.com) received 77,140 hits representing 5,717 page views. Visitors downloaded 352.041 megabytes of data from the site in that first month period!



Since the site was unveiled on March 27, a large amount of new material has been added. The [survey of historic and architecturally-significant structures](#) has been expanded with many new photographs. Many new historic [post card views of The Pelhams](#) have been added. A new feature is also available on the site: a [Catalogue of Library of Congress American Memory Photo Views of Pelham](#).

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## PPGS Renovates Highbrook Ave Gates

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Members of the Society have obtained necessary approvals for the restoration plans from the Village of Pelham Board of Trustees and the Architectural Review Board. Pelham Roofing, Inc. is donating labor and expertise to the project.

It is not too late to join our neighbors and make a tax-deductible contribution to the "Save the Gates" campaign. Contact Megan Cifarelli at 738-0713 to make a donation.



**View of Highbrook Avenue Gates Shortly After They Were Constructed**

Thank you to those who have donated so generously so far: Ainso and Associates, Joel Barad, John and Bev Bertsch, Virginia Brooks, Edwin Bullock and Margaret Kielian, David and Angelina Clark, Mrs. Robert L. Clarke, Chris Courtien and Paula Frezzo, Robin Gneiting, Ed Hotchkiss and Khadija Musa, Nicholas Lemann, David Martin and Martha Solinger, Stuart and Jessica McLean, Michael and Susan Mutti, John and Jeanne Orefice, Deepak Perianayagam and Rene Parmar, Mina Gary Ryan and Adam Weinstein.

## Village of Pelham Works To Preserve Historical Documents

The Village of Pelham is working to preserve its history. During the administration of Mayor Art Scinta, the Village applied for, and received, a grant to assist it in the preservation of historically-significant documents. Ms. Lisa Stievater has been charged with overseeing the project.

Approximately 100 cubic feet of Village records dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century have been earmarked for preservation. The records will be moved from the basement, organized, indexed

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## Man's Head Found Behind Carriage House on Manor Circle

A true story – really! Admittedly, the headline above is calculated to capture your attention in classic yellow journalistic style common to 19<sup>th</sup> century tabloids of old New York! As was often the case in such broadsides of old, the headline is only partially true. . . .

Residents of a lovely Victorian home on Manor Circle in Pelham Manor have made an interesting find buried in their back yard behind a carriage house built in the late 1880s or early 1890s and now used as a garage. Buried several feet deep and lying amidst old bottles dated to approximately 1915 was a large portrait medallion made of plaster of paris affixed to a wooden frame and depicting an unidentified bearded man.



**Obverse of Portrait Medallion of Unidentified Man Found Buried On Manor Circle**



**Reverse of Portrait Medallion**

The medallion originally was oval in shape and approximately 15 inches wide and 18 inches high. The bearded man with a mustache has hair halfway down his right ear and a part on the right side of his head suggesting, but not establishing, he was left-handed. It is unknown whether the image was a work of art depicting a famous person, a personal portrait or an ornamental piece to decorate, for example, an outbuilding.

[HistoricPelham.com](http://HistoricPelham.com) welcomes any and all comments and thoughts regarding the portrait medallion. If you have ideas or thoughts regarding its subject or possible origin, please contact Blake Bell via e-mail at [bbell@stblaw.com](mailto:bbell@stblaw.com).

## Village of Pelham Preserves History

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and stored in acid-free containers in a storage area being made available in the Firehouse on Fifth Avenue.

The records are as varied as blackout orders issued during World War II to old bonds issued by the Village of North Pelham before it merged with the Village of Pelham -- sure to intrigue those engaged in the hobby of scrippophily.

The project to organize and preserve the records is expected to take several months.

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## Introduction to The Office of The Historian of The Town of Pelham

At the back of the Daronco Townhouse is a rather inconspicuous door with a carved plaque that reads, quite simply, "Town Historian". That door leads to an office filled with glass-enclosed bookcases, metal file drawers, large metal flat files, metal cabinets and shelves filled with glass negatives, photographs, maps, books, clippings, paintings, artifacts and ephemera relating to the history of Pelham and surrounding areas from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present.

The Town of Pelham has had a Historian since at least early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Historians who have served the Town during the last 80 years have assembled, organized and indexed a collection of materials that provide a wealth of information regarding the rich history of the town.

In the Historian's office, visitors can see a bell believed to be from the Trolley Car that inspired the nationally-syndicated comic strip "Toonerville Folks" about the "Toonerville Trolley that Met All the Trains". The comic strip ran in hundreds of daily newspapers during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. There are Indian artifacts discovered in what we know today as the Village of Pelham. There are photographs of Wolfs Lane when it was little more than an eight-foot wide dirt path overgrown with trees and bushes.

Today's Town Historian, Mimi Buckley, has worked on the Town's collections for more than two decades. She has created hundreds and hundreds of files and has maintained a massive index card file that gives prompt and easy access to the Town's large collection.

The Town Historian's Office responds to a wide-range of inquiries almost weekly. It accepts donations of historically-significant material. It maintains and preserves a large collection of material for our posterity. It reports to the Board of Supervisors. In short, it serves as the historic repository and museum for our community.

## History Events of Interest to Pelham

**June 1** – Blake Bell, Deputy Historian of the Town of Pelham and Village Historian of the Village of Pelham will make a presentation entitled "The Little Red Church Grows Up: A Brief History of The Huguenot Memorial Church" beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel at Huguenot Memorial Church, 901 Pelhamdale Avenue at Boston Post Road. For more information, call 914-738-3488.

**June 1** – Yonkers Historical Society and Historic Sherwood House, and the Untermyer Performing Arts Council cosponsor a Strawberry Festival from 1-4 p.m. At 2 p.m. Untermyer Performing Arts Council President and Historical Society Trustee Steve Sansone will speak on the secrets of Yonkers' famed lawyer, Samuel Untermyer, and his beautiful historic Untermyer Park. Program is free and open to the public. For more information telephone the Yonkers Historical Society at 914-961-8940 or visit its Web site at <http://www.yonkershistory.org/>.

**June 4** – Pelham Bay history one-hour walking tour. Participate in a walking tour of the nine-acre Bartow-Pell landmark site and learn of the early history of Pelham and its surrounding areas. \$2.50 for adults and \$1.25 for Seniors and Students (free for those under 12). For reservations, call 718-885-1461 or email [BartowPelLED@aol.com](mailto:BartowPelLED@aol.com).

**June 7** – The Pelham Preservation and Garden Society invites you to a Summer Solstice celebration at the home of Brenda and David Harms, 215 Loring Avenue, beginning at 6:30 p.m. Make a bid on the silent auction or purchase fabulous floral arrangements decorating the event. \$40 per person at the door or, mail your checks payable to The Pelham Preservation & Garden Society, c/o Randy Kran, 164 Ancon Avenue, Pelham, NY, 10803.

**June 8 (12 noon – 4 p.m.)** – June Fair at The Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum. Enjoy historic tours of the area including the location of Thomas Pell's Treaty Oak, tours of the mansion-museum, 19<sup>th</sup> century games, "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" stories, maritime songs and much more. \$5 for adults and \$3 for children (free for those under 12). For more information call 718-885-1461 or email [BartowPelLED@aol.com](mailto:BartowPelLED@aol.com).

**June 22** – Yonkers Historical Society and Historic Sherwood House present Professor Jane Weiss who will speak on "A Front Yard Paradise: Gardens and Nineteenth Century Domesticity" at 2 p.m. For more information telephone the Yonkers Historical Society at 914-961-8940 or visit its Web site at <http://www.yonkershistory.org/>.

**June 25** - 90-Minute Guided Tour of the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum & Carriage House with an emphasis on the life and times of the Bartow family and those who lived and worked on the estate. \$2.50 for adults and \$1.25 for Seniors and Students (free for those under 12). For reservations, call 718-885-1461 or email [BartowPelLED@aol.com](mailto:BartowPelLED@aol.com).

## Pelham and the Zeppelin The Hindenburg

It is May 6, 1937. The hydrogen-filled Zeppelin named "The Hindenburg" – known as the pride of the Third Reich – is late. A crowd of hundreds of onlookers has gathered at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station in Lakehurst, New Jersey for the arrival of the airship which has traveled from Europe. At about 7:20 p.m. The ship slowly drifts into view. Within minutes there is a flash and the ship bursts into flames and crashes to the ground as it is consumed by fire. Thirty-six passengers and crew die in a tragedy that some say ended the era of luxury Zeppelin travel.

All of us know the story of "The Hindenburg." Images of its demise are burned into our collective brain. But few know that The Hindenburg had visited the U.S. before its tragic voyage and, indeed, scheduled a flight over Pelham and vicinity on October 9, 1936 – less than seven months before the tragic accident.

The October 9, 1936 issue of *The Pelham Sun* contained a brief story entitled "Principals on Special Zep Flight" with photographs of "Four of the principals who are on board the airship Hindenburg in its flight over Pelham and vicinity today." Immediately below are the photographs that appeared with the feature.

Principals on Special Zep Flight



In the lower left of the images below is Captain Ernst A. Lehman of The Hindenburg. Beside him is R.T. Haslam of the Colonial Beacon Oil Co., a guest on the special flight. In the upper left is Commander Charles E. Rosendahl of the Lakehurst Naval Air Station (another guest) and, in the upper right, is Dr. Hugo Eckener, the developer of The Hindenburg and "Commodore of Deutsche Zeppelin Reederei", which operated The Hindenburg. Captain Ernst Lehman died in the Hindenburg tragedy with some reports saying his last words were "I can't understand".

### Short Take: A Very "Big-Picture" History of Pelham Bibliography!

Barr, Lockwood, *The Ancient Town of Pelham* (The Dietz Press, Inc. 1946) ([READ THE ENTIRE BOOK HERE!](#)).

Bolton, Jr., Robert, *The History of the Several Towns, Manors and Patents of the County of Westchester, From Its First Settlement to the Present Time Carefully Revised by Its Author* Vol. II, ch. "The Town of Pelham", p. 35 (C.W. Bolton, ed., Chas. F. Roper pub. 1881) (this is the easiest of the three editions to find).

Fenlon, Thomas B., *Pelham New York Memories of a Century After Incorporation* (Klein Information Resources, Inc. 1996).

French, Alvah P., ed., *History of Westchester County New York*, Vol. II, Ch. XLII "Town of Pelham", pp. 787-91 (Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc. 1925).

The Junior League of Pelham, Inc., *A Glance at the Past: Pelham's Growth From 1775-1975* (The Junior League of Pelham, Inc. Sept. 1976) (booklet associated with accompanying map; 32 pp. including map bibliography, manuscript bibliography and illustrations by Hedy Klein).

The Pelham Manor Story, 1891-1991 (James B. Saunders, ed., 1991) (bound in blue cloth with gilt cover lettering, issued without dustjacket).

Scharf, Thomas, editor, *History of Westchester County, New York, Including Morrisania, Kings Bridge, and West Farms, Which Have Been Annexed to New York City*, Vol. I, Chapter XVII "Pelham", p. 701 (Philadelphia: L.E. Preston & Co. 1886) (Chapter XVII by Rev. Charles E. Lindsley).

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