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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

Feature
Story

Treasure Trove: Blocks Used To Print Early Pelham Sun Newspapers Reportedly Located in Basement of Wolf's Lane Building

Building

In yet another in a series of recent "rediscoveries" that may have a bearing on the preservation of Pelham's rich history, several sources report that many of the printer's "blocks" used to print early editions of *The Pelham Sun* are stored in the basement of Integrity Fitness located at 91 Wolfs Lane.

Winterthur Museum is Researching the Provenance and History of a Desk-and-Bookcase in its Collection Said To Have Descended in John Hunter Family from Mansion on Hunter's Island, Once Part of Pelham

Winterthur Museum, one of the nation's premier museums located in Delaware, is researching the ownership of a desk and bookcase in its collection. The desk and bookcase (accession number 1957.1024) has a

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Historic Pelham Roundtable Attracts Initial Group of Interested Participants

Eight Pelham residents passionate about the history of Pelham and surrounding areas are working to develop The Historic Pelham Roundtable.

The Roundtable will consist of a group of no more than 12 motivated people interested in the history of Pelham who will meet once a quarter. At each of the four meetings per year, one designated member would be responsible for presenting to members of the Roundtable a paper on some aspect

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HistoricPelham.com Web Site News

According to hosting records provided by the host of the site, during the month of June, the [HistoricPelham.com Web site](http://HistoricPelham.com) received 110,684 hits representing 6,341 page views. Visitors downloaded 942.818 megabytes of data (nearly 1 gigabyte!) from the site during the month of June!



During the last thirty days, 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.

Winterthur Museum Researches Provenance of Hunter Island Desk

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history of ownership in the Hunter family of Hunter's Island. Hunter's Island, once part of Pelham, no longer exists. It is now the parking lot of Orchard Beach in Pelham Bay Park (and the property east of the parking lot.) Hunter Mansion was built on the Island about 1812 and was considered one of the great showplaces in the New York City area. For more than fifty years the mansion was the country estate of John Hunter, a wealthy retired New York City merchant and his wife, a wealthy heiress in her own right.

Hunter's Island, together with City Island and the land that now forms Pelham Bay Park was annexed by New York City in June 1895. In 1937, water between Hunter's Island and land opposite City Island Bridge was filled, converting the Island into a peninsula that became Orchard Beach and the nearby parking areas and picnic grounds. The mansion was torn down the same year.

Ms. Catherine Westbrook of the Public Programs Division of Winterthur, is researching the provenance of the desk and bookcase in question. She has reviewed resources indicating that John Hunter was in business with his father, Robert Hunter, of 5 State Street, New York City prior to the elder Hunter's death in 1799. John Hunter also resided at the State Street address before moving to Hunter's Island. She is seeking more information about Robert Hunter and is focused on determining whether John Hunter moved the desk-and-bookcase now in Winterthur's collection from the State Street address to his mansion on Hunter's Island. According to Ms. Westbrook, the provenance in Winterthur's Registration Office states that the desk-and-bookcase descended in the Hunter family from Hunter's Island.

Historic Pelham Roundtable

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of Pelham history that is of interest to the presenter (and that would also be of general interest to the other members of the Roundtable and to the Pelham community). At the end of each year it is planned that the four papers will be edited and combined into a journal. [Click here for more information about the Roundtable.](#)

Native American Spring Once on the Grounds of Bolton Priory

Most in Pelham know of Bolton Priory, a spectacular home begun in 1838 by the Reverend Robert Bolton who founded what is now the Parish of Christ the Redeemer. The Priory is on the National Register of Historic Places, The New York State Register of Historic Places and the Westchester County Inventory of Places. The Priory still stands on today's Priory Lane near the Parish of Christ the Redeemer.

While most know of Bolton Priory, fewer know of a spring that once flowed on the Priory's grounds that is said to have been frequented by Siwanoy Native Americans. In the 19th Century the Reverend Bolton built a stone spring house with a cross in its apex. Local Native Americans reportedly called the spring "Living Water" although Reverend Bolton renamed it "St. Mary's Spring." There is a wonderful and quaint story associated with the spring.



Photograph of Spring and Spring House on Grounds of Bolton Priory, June 19, 1920, Courtesy of Office of The Historian of The Town of Pelham

A legend about the spring attributed to Elbert Roosevelt, an early Pelham settler and landowner, has been handed down and was documented by Barbara Reeves (among others) in an article published in the 1950s. The article,

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Do you have more information about the Estate of John Hunter of Hunter's Island and how it was disposed of during the 19th Century? (See story, page 1 and column 1, this page.) According to reports, in 1865 an heir sold the "magnificent collection of paintings" through the Dusseldorf Gallery at 548 Broadway (next to Tiffany's at the time).

Native American Spring

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“John Hunter, Country Squire,” recounts the tale as follows:

“An Indian Tale

Hunter’s neighbor, Elbert Roosevelt, was considered an authority in the lore of Pelham. . . . [H]e often told of an experience he had with an Indian in 1808.

Apparently Mr. Roosevelt was gazing at a distant rock known as the ‘Gray Mare’, on Hunter’s Island, which had served as an Indian guide stone. As he pondered its history an old Indian quietly walked up to the front door of Roosevelt’s water front home and knocked loudly. The startled Mr. Roosevelt opened it and gazed with wonder upon the old-man’s weather-beaten, deeply creased face.

The old warrior, dressed in full regalia, apologized for disturbing Mr. Roosevelt but explained that he had wished for many years to return to the playgrounds of his childhood and visit the happy hunting grounds of his ancestors, before he joined them and the Great Spirit. Mr. Roosevelt invited him to stay at his home for a few days, but with considerable apprehension.

When Mr. Roosevelt arose early the next morning, he discovered that the Indian was not in the house. After a short search, he found the old man on top of the ‘Haunted Cedar Knoll,’ which is at the entrance to the present New York Athletic Club. The old chief had climbed the knoll before sunrise and he now stood facing the east in order to see the first rays of the rising sun. This hill he had known as ‘Sun-rise Rock.’

As the first golden rays pierced the gloom in the east Mr. Roosevelt reached the crest of the knoll, and then descended with the old chief and accompanied him to a spring located on what is now Bolton Priory. The Indian informed him that the Siwanoy had called it ‘Living Water.’ It was later named ‘St. Mary’s Spring’, by the Rev. Robert Bolton, who founded the Priory and Christ Church. The Reverend later constructed a stone house over this spring and he placed a cross in its apex.

The old Indian Chief quenched his thirst with the water and filled his water bags. As he left, he told Mr. Roosevelt that he was headed for the ‘Sunset Rock’. The Hotel Gramatan in Bronxville is supposedly set into this hill.”

Uncle Sam Wants You! Did you know that the man who designed the famous depiction of Uncle Sam pointing from a recruiting poster during World War I was none other than **James Montgomery Flagg of Pelham Manor?**

History Events of Interest to Pelham

July 2 – Tour four centuries of Pelham Bay history. One hour walking tour offers a glimpse into the area’s rich heritage. The tour is from 1 – 2 p.m. Please wear long pants and sturdy shoes. \$2.50 Adults, \$1.25 Seniors and Students, free for those under 12. For reservations please call 718-885-1461 or email BartowPelIED@aol.com.

July 4 – A traditional July 4th celebration, marking the 227th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, with music, speeches, reading of the Declaration, tolling of the church bell, and refreshments. St. Paul’s Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon, at 1 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 8 – Lecture: John Glover and the American Revolution, a talk in the museum on the life and times of Glover who led American Patriots in the Battle of Pelham. St. Paul’s Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 1 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 9 – Outdoor Living History Demonstration: Pell’s Point: The Battle That Saved Washington’s Army. St. Paul’s Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 12:15 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 11 – Walking Tour: Church Tower Walk. Participate in an interpretive talk and a walk up the staircase leading to the 1758 bronze bell in the bell tower. St. Paul’s Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 3 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 13 – String-A-Bead with Nancy! At Historic Sherwood House. Yonkers Historical Society and Historic Sherwood House present Historical Society Trustee Nancy Sarmast who will teach those who wish to learn this skill 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/>.

July 15 – Walking Tour: Revolutionary War Soldiers. Participate in a walking tour of the grounds and focus on the lives and roles of some of the soldiers (on both sides) who fought and are buried at St. Paul’s. St. Paul’s Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 3 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

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History Events of Interest to Pelham

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July 16 – Outdoor Talk and Demonstration: Anne Hutchinson and Religious Freedom. St. Paul's Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 1 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.its.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 18 – Walking Tour: Church Tower Walk. Participate in an interpretive talk and a walk up the staircase leading to the 1758 bronze bell in the bell tower. St. Paul's Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 3 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.its.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 22 – Lecture: The Adams Family in Our Town. A lecture in the museum on Presidents John and John Quincy Adams and their connections to the St. Paul's Church National Historic Site. St. Paul's Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 1 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.its.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 23 – Outdoor, Living History Demonstration and Lecture: The Hessians. A lecture about the German auxiliary soldiers who fought with the British against the Americans in the Revolutionary War, including several who are buried St. Paul's cemetery. St. Paul's Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 12:15 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.its.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 25 – Walking Tour: Church Tower Walk. Participate in an interpretive talk and a walk up the staircase leading to the 1758 bronze bell in the bell tower. St. Paul's Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 3 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.its.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

July 30 – Outdoor Living History Demonstration: The Wounded During the Revolutionary War. Participate in a demonstration about use of St. Paul's Church as a military hospital during the Revolutionary War (beverages provided, special activities for children). St. Paul's Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon at 3 p.m. For more information contact David Osborn at 914-667-4116 or Sharon Mills at 914-667-4116 or visit <http://data2.its.nps.gov/calendar/index.cfm?alphacode=SA PA>.

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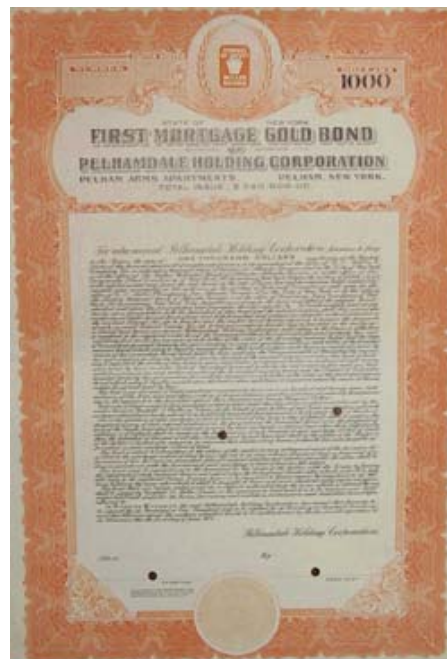
July 30 – 90-Minute Guided Tour of the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum & Carriage House with an emphasis on the life and times of the Bartow family and those who lived and worked on the estate. \$2.50 for adults and \$1.25 for Seniors and Students (free for those under 12). For reservations, call 718-885-1461 or email BartowPelLED@aol.com.

Apparent Specimens of "First Mortgage Gold Bonds of Pelham Arms Apartments" Find Their Way Back To Pelham From the Netherlands

It was June 1, 1924 and the Roaring '20s were rolling. There was no Securities and Exchange Commission and certainly no hint of the looming financial calamity that later came to be known as The Great Depression.

Entrepreneurs were building in Pelham. One plan by a company known as Pelhamdale Holding Corporation was to build the Pelham Arms Apartments and to fund the venture through the issuance of \$390,000 worth of "First Mortgage Gold Bonds of Pelham Arms Apartments".

Two specimens of such gold bonds (in \$500 and \$1000 denominations) recently have been unearthed in the Netherlands and sold to a local collector of Pelham ephemera. The bonds appear to be unnumbered and unsigned specimens with all coupons unclipped and intact. Each provides for repayment of principal and interest "in gold coin of the United States of the present standard of weight and fineness, or its equivalent" with principal due on June 1, 1936 and interest payable twice each year on June 1st and December 1st.



One of Four Engraved "Pages" of the \$1000 First Mortgage Gold Bond

Short Take: A Toonerville Trolley Bibliography!

Early last century Pelham and its citizens inspired the creative genius of a man named Fontaine Talbot Fox (1884-1964) who created one of the most popular comic strips in the United States that became known as "Toonerville Folks". The strip centered around the quirky inhabitants of a town called "Toonerville" as well as a rickety and unpredictable trolley car that came to be known as "The Toonerville Trolley." The operator of the trolley was known as "The Skipper." The comic strip was based in part on the artist's experience during a trolley ride on a visit to Pelham. The strip ran in hundreds of newspapers from 1910 to 1955 and brought national attention to The Pelhams.

Fox, Fontaine, *A Queer Way to Make a Living*, Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 200, No. 33, Feb. 11, 1928, p.6 (detailing how trolley ride in Pelham, NY inspired the Toonerville Trolley).

Sparks, Asa *THE COMPLEAT TOONERVILLE* (privately printed Montgomery, AL: 1999).

"Toonerville Trolley" Had Its Birth in "Pelham!" Nationally Known Movie and Cartoon Feature By Fontaine Fox Originated Through Artist's Visit Here – Admitted During an Interview, The Pelham Sun, Aug. 13, 1921.

Trolley's Passing Saddens 'Skipper' Retired Veteran, 86, and Rickety Pelham Street Car Inspired Fox's 'Toonerville' Series LAST JOURNEY TOMORROW Cartoonist to Be 'Chief Mourner' – Model for His Character Hopes to Be at Controls, N.Y. Times, Jul. 30, 1937.

Village of Pelham Manor, *The Pelham Manor Story 1891 – 1991* at p. 99 (James B. Saunders, ed. 1991) (Chapter 17 "The Toonerville Trolley").



A Passenger Hangs On for Dear Life While "The Skipper" Pilots The Toonerville Trolley

Pelham Preservation and Garden Society's Summer Solstice Soirée a Tremendous Success

On June 7, a large crowd gathered at the beautiful home of Brenda and David Harris at 215 Loring Avenue to celebrate Pelham, its history, and efforts to preserve and beautify our town. The Summer Solstice theme of the celebration seemed particularly ironic given the rainy weather that had waterlogged the town for weeks, but the spirits of those who attended the party were never dampened!

Attendees participated in a silent auction that included historical items such as: a First Edition of Lockwood Barr's seminal history of "The Ancient Town of Pelham" published in 1946; a copy of the revised edition of Alfred Franko's book entitled "Pelham Manor: The Forgotten Battle of the Revolution: Near Mount Vernon, N.Y." reprinted by The Bicentennial Committee of the Town of Pelham in 1975; and a written history of a local home to be prepared by the Deputy Town Historian (the home turned out to be The John Fairchild Home located at 334 Pelhamdale Avenue – preparation of the history is well underway).

The soirée was a fund-raising success as attendees participated spiritedly in the silent auction and purchased spectacular floral arrangements that decorated the event. The funds will support the Society's ongoing preservation efforts and its numerous public service projects for the benefit of Pelham.

The Board of the Society has extended its heartfelt thanks to the many supportive businesses that donated items for the event. It also has extended its thanks to those who donated items for the silent auction and to Richard Heller who provided orchids that were a big hit at the event.

It is never too late to support the community efforts of The Pelham Preservation and Garden Society. If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the organization, mail your checks payable to The Pelham Preservation and Garden Society, c/o Randy Kran, 164 Ancon Avenue, Pelham, NY, 10803.

Did you know?

Among the many, many illustrious individuals said to have visited Pelham in its early days:

George Washington (yes, he is said to have slept here . . . in Col. Philip Pell III's farmhouse that was located near today's Cliff and Colonial Avenues).

President Martin Van Buren, who visited Hunter's Island when it was part of Pelham.

The Marquis de Lafayette who fought with American patriots in the Revolutionary War.