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Peaceable Kingdom
a treasured Bedford - New Castle connection



There is a distinct enclave bordering Bedford and North Castle known as the "Peaceable Kingdom" or "Hickory Kingdom" which begins near the end of Middle Patent Road and runs along East Middle Patent all the way south to Greenwich and east to the Mianus River Gorge. Like many of our borders, it is indistinct - you can live in North Castle but get your mail in Bedford, live in Bedford and have a Pound Ridge phone number - but your neighbors are your neighbors, map lines aside.

This is a treasured part of Westchester with a history that connects Bedford and New Castle. One of its anchors is St. Mary's Church where services bring together those who have lived in and appreciate this community within communities.

Below is the Thanksgiving Address given in 1991 at St. Mary's Thanksgiving service by R. Eugene Curry who had lived in the area since 1930. With thanks to Margaret Curry Gregg for sharing this with the Bedford Historical Society.

And a very special thanks to our donors, friends and neighbors who make everything we do possible. Wishing you all a safe and happy Thanksgiving!

at St. Mary's Church

This is the first opportunity for Margery and myself to express our personal thanksgiving to East Middle Patent for what it has been, is, and will continue to be, a quiet corner in a reeling world.



In 1930, after we were settled in our farm home on Mead Road, Margery began to drive about the countryside. One day, she came home quite excited, saying that she had found another world, and so it was, a Peaceable Kingdom with the appropriate name, Hickory Kingdom, and a white church at the end overlooking meadows and woodland. Soon I was to learn much more about East Middle Patent, as a member of the Town Board.

This had been farm land, rolling fields and woodland. Oxen had been used, especially in building the stone walls; Jim Todd told of seeing 16 pairs of wooden ox yokes hanging in an old Hobby barn. Nearby, George Mead was plowing with oxen into the 1950s. Andrew Muirhead told of raising vegetables to be sold in Stamford, and we know that apples, potatoes, and other crops were shipped by steam to New York out of the Lower Landing in Cos Cob Harbor, at the end of the Mianus River. Shad fish were caught far up the Mianus. There were several mica and feldspar mines, one of them open to the public in the Mianus Gorge Preserve. In 1939, after WWII began, several were reopened to obtain molybdenum, for hardening steel; just over the hill from this church, off Kingdom Ridge Road, there was a pit where trees were cut up and burned to make charcoal.

The roads were dirt until, in the 1930s, Allie See obtained waste from the feldspar mine owned by John Kinkel in Bedford.



Later, oiling made the roads of today. Before that, many springs and thawing made automobile passage almost

impossible: Robert Ingersoll Sr. kept a team harnessed to rescue cars near his home on Hickory Kingdom Road.

The hounds for the Westchester-Fairfield Hunt Club were kept in Lower Stanwich, and the school was a drop-off point for foxes. Bridle trails were miles long through the countryside. Richard Miller told of big wooden rollers drawn by horses, to pack down the snow, this before trucks with snow plows were made. Jim Todd tells of finding a quotation from one of the Hobbys: "I have a thousand apple trees dancing on my hillside."



Among the old families, we have mentioned the Hobbys; another was Abel Miller; he had a brick and mason building business in Brooklyn, and commuted, in the 1880s, to New York, driving horse and buggy to the Greenwich railroad

station. Frank Miller was the father of our beloved Richard Miller, known to many here for his loving care of the St. Matthew's burial grounds.

The 1930s brought many new families into the community. Walter and Hope Weil purchased the Percy Elliott pig farm in 1931. They converted the old barn with its great timbers into a very nice home. Walter found that the poles and wires were telephone lines, no one had electricity. He had declared that he did not want to go to the country, and told Hope that she could look at trees in Central Park, but in the war years he was carrying produce from Hope Farm on the train into the city. We appointed him as chairman of the newly formed North Castle Planning Board; their meetings were held in a jovial mood in the Weil home on Sunday mornings. He was instrumental in getting the IBM to build its headquarters in North Castle; Walter became the chairman of the Westchester County Planning Commission also. He was instrumental in founding the Middle Patent Association, with John Lockwood obtaining the legal papers and Jim Todd and others joining and continuing the important civic body. Daughter Hope married Benjamin F. Levene Jr. and they had their own home on Hope Farm. Father and daughter were active in voluntary agencies and she continues to be.

Among those arriving in the 1940s were the Godino family, Scott and Grace Reiniger, Ted and Lucia Faithfull and daughters, Ralph and Winifred Bugli and sons, Robert and Margaret Parke and many others. Aage Jensen and his friend built the home next to the church. Later, Clifton Daniels and his wife, Margaret Truman Daniels, rented the white house opposite the church.

Suddenly, in 1946, the peaceful community was in an uproar. The United Nations began surveying and inspecting this area, from Round Hill to the East Middle Patent. Ambassador Grabilovitch of Yugoslavia was in charge of the inspecting teams. Hope Weil Levene tells of looking out of the window to see a line of black cars moving slowly past looking over the place.

Margery and the four children and I had just returned after three years away in the naval service, and we said that if the cause of peace would be served, we would give up the farm home. Some neighbors spoke sharply about us, but they had not been in the service. Signs were erected, meetings held. The New York Times pictured Walter Finch in the Finch Store, declaring "We Don't Want It". Fortunately, and with great relief for all of us, John Lockwood, who was the attorney for the Rockefeller brothers, was soon helping John D. Rockefeller Jr. obtain the title to the Second Avenue site, to be given to the U.N.

Since the building of this church, in 1853, it has been an important part of the community. In 1946, the Bookmobile (from the North Castle Public Library in Armonk) came to East Middle Patent. This was a memorial gift from the father of Walter S. Gifford Jr., Lieutenant D.S.N.R., killed in a plane crash in the Pacific. Hope Weil Levene, Dorothy Hubbell, Mrs. Siesel and others drove it to the homes in the countryside, with the arrival announced by a beautiful bugle horn.



and Larry lie in the St. Matthew's Church burial grounds.

When the school district was moved and the school was closed, the schoolhouse was offered for sale. Betsy Sluder, head of the Conservation Council of North Castle, suggested to Doris Finch Watson that it be saved. Dorrie was able to bring about a withdrawal of a bid for \$500 and secure the building for the North Castle Historical Society for \$1. Then John R. Schnoor took charge of moving it to its present site in the educational complex of the Society at Smith's Tavern. It has been restored and hundreds of school children come to see the blackboards with their assignments, the old seats with inkwells, and all the aura of a country school of generations ago.



On December 12th, 1953, an important event took place: the founding of Mianus River Gorge Preservation Committee, now [the Mianus Gorge Preserve](#). This has been a vital pioneer project in a national movement. Thousands come to walk


quietly along the trails, restoring their souls. For the past six years, Anne Hubbell French has reached out beyond her duties as Executive Director to help found the Mianus River watershed Council, in two states and five towns. She has been helpful to the land trusts and other protective organizations. The Mianus Gorge Preserve has enrolled scores of volunteers among school children for projects, testing of the river, arousing interest in their heritage. A vital force indeed.

We have given some of the recent history of the Peaceable Kingdom, and we are joining with you in thanksgiving for what has been, is, and hopefully will be a remarkable community.

Edited from Thanksgiving remarks which can be read in their entirety [here](#). You can also read R. Eugene Curry's biography [here](#).

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