

A Short History Of The Hillsdale Memorial Ball Field

BY MARGARET G. HUNT, President of the Young People's Village Improvement Association.

It was back in 1946 that a group of Hillsdale citizens met to decide how to honor the men who had served their country in the two world wars. In the first recorded minutes Dr. George Webster was president; Harry Cornell, vice president, but prior to the first scheduled meeting, all organizations in the town were asked to send representatives to discuss the matter and present proposals. On June 5, 1946 Cadby-Shutts, V.F.W. appointed the following members to represent them: David Vincent, Kellar Sharretts, Henry Heddeshimer, Jr., Ernest Dawson, Walter Bernitt.

On June 10, 1946 the Hillsdale Fire Company appointed Charles V. Soule, George Petith and Edward Baker to serve on the Memorial committee.

The Copake-Hillsdale Garden Club appointed Mrs. Robert Green; the American Legion - Robert A. Cadby; the Eastern Star - Mrs. Elizabeth Dean; Hillsdale Grange - Ralph Pfeiffer; the Masonic Lodge - Edward Baker; and Charles Soule - (member-at-large).

All in all, it was a very representative group from the community, and on July 2, 1946 the project was under way and Mrs. Green was appointed corresponding secretary and Mrs. Irving Deane recording secretary, although the minutes of this meeting were taken down by Elizabeth Deane. At this meeting the following motion was adopted unanimously:

"It is the recommendation of the committee that the War Memorial of the Town of Hillsdale be a playground of suitable size for baseball and other games, with a building to be used as a recreation center, with provision for bowling alleys and an auditorium suitable for basketball, social functions, etc., with a suitable plaque located in a prominent position with the names

of all the Hillsdale residents who have served in World War I and World War II."

Another suggestion was a projection room so movies could be shown; this would help pay (so it was said) for the structure. David Vincent, however, made the observation that the land would have to be acquired first! So Dr. Webster appointed David, Charles Soule, and George Petith to approach Eusten Betten with the view to purchasing a piece of property he owned.

\$400 TO START

As to finances, Mrs. Cadby said there was \$400 in the Community Center treasury (this was an organization which was formed to provide the young people with recreation during World War II), and also \$400 that had been realized from a salvage drive. It was hoped money would be available from the state Youth Commission.

At the next meeting, July 16, the announcement was made by Charles Soule that an option had been taken on Mr. Betten's property, consisting of 3 acres, situated South of the Fire House - now the Town Hall.

Mrs. Green gave the financial report: \$352.31 Community Center Fund; \$500 Auction held at Cadby's; \$100 from Mrs. Don Bell; and \$25 from Dr. Webster: \$1027.31 Total.

Plans for the recreation building were again discussed and Henry Heddeshimer showed plans he had drawn up. It was estimated that \$25,000 would be needed to erect this structure.

The next meeting was to be open to the public and a regular committee established. Robert Cadby was appointed financial chairman and William Daley was asked to be legal advisor.

On July 18, this public meeting was held and wheels set in motion to revive the defunct "Young People's Village Improvement Association." This was on the advice of Don Bell who said it would facilitate incorporation.

It may be inserted here for the uninitiated that almost every New England village with any community spirit organized, during the last part of the last century, a village improvement society to beautify the village, start a library, or pay for improvements that the town council, selectmen or whatever the governing body was called, didn't wish to tax the citizens to pay for. Stockbridge, Massachusetts claims to have the first such society. We still have the bill for oiling the roads in the village, (receipted, of course!) done by the original Young People's Village Improvement Association, and we also have the old subscription list.

Various plans for raising money were discussed and Robert Cadby had "Campaign Manager" added to his duties as financial chairman. Dues of 50 cents would be imposed until the end of the year.

1946 - A BEGINNING

On August 14, 1946 the title "The Young People's Village Improvement Association" was formally adopted and the War Memorial Committee absorbed by it. This organization was represented by some of its original members: Mrs. Grace Snyder, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Cornell and John Smith. The new War Memorial Committee was now represented by Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Cadby, Mrs. Robert Green, and Mrs. Irving Deane. Plans were now made to extend the organization by adding new members.

On August 27th at which meeting Harry Cornell presided, Mrs. Green read the articles of incorporation of the old Y.P.V.I.A. which had been drawn up by Don Bell in 1893. The newly formed organization was to have nine directors, each to serve for 3 years; membership was to be open to any citizen of the United States and the dues were to be \$1 - which they still are. At this meeting the officers of the new association were elected: president, Harry Cornell; vice president, George Webster; secretary, Mrs. Irving Deane; treasurer, Robert A. Cadby. A committee was appointed to go to Mr. Bell's office to close title to the property of Eusten Betten: Mrs. Green, Mr. Duffy (who agreed to survey the field), Mr. Cadby, Mr. Soule, and Mr. Petith. This was accomplished and a check for \$900 was tendered to Mr. Betten who donated the balance of \$100 as his contribution.

This transaction was reported at the September 10 meeting when discussions and plans for a building to house facilities for basketball and bowling continued. A goal of 100 members was aimed for, there being only 40 at that time. At the meeting on April 1, 1947 directors were elected: 3 years - William Daley, Burt Herrington, Mary Dodds; 2 years - David Vincent, Dr. Parker, Robert Cadby; 1 year - Kellar Sharretts, William Fremd, Ed Baker.

New officers were also chosen - Burt Herrington, president; John Dodds, vice president; David Vincent, secretary; Robert Cadby, treasurer. Other matters taken up at this meeting were presentation of by-laws prepared by Mrs. Green and Ed Baker and the information that the board of Assessors would grant tax exemption for the property.

MONUMENT ERECTED

It is hardly necessary to relate the details of each meeting but the first act was the planning of a suitable monument to be placed at the northern border of the field, right on Route 23. This would be a large boulder on which a bronze plaque would be affixed. Although the boulder was donated by the Mountain Sand and Gravel company it cost \$500 to get it moved and \$307 for a base on which to rest it. Mr. Hinricks of the Hillsdale Foundry donated the plaque and he and Robert Cadby and Kellar Sharretts were appointed to pick out a design. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Cadby paid Staples of Hudson to have the marker riveted to the stone; William Fremd donated the flagpole and George Porteous gave the flag. And on Memorial Day 1949 the exercises were held at the new monument, George Sakellarios giving the Gettysburg address. I have heard that this was the first observance of Decoration Day since its discontinuance during World War II.

The ornamental shrubs planted around the monument were given by the Hillsdale-Copake Garden Club.

Ed Baker succeeded James Duffy as president, the task of leveling the field was begun, and all the efforts of the association for the next four years were to be expended raising money for this purpose.

MONEY RAISED

There were food sales, Strawberry Festivals, two concerts by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Bloch, a Gymkhana by the Circle Saddle Club, a spaghetti supper given by Mrs. Avenia. A quilt donated by Mrs. Guy Hunt was raffled off, and a cook book was published (of which there are a few copies left - see David Vincent!). It seemed as if we would never get our heads above water even though Leroy Michael had been very generously supplying fill. But on January 26, 1953 a most momentous meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Cadby.

Dorothy Bashford was secretary at the time and the minutes read:

"The Young People's Village Improvement Association held their ... meeting at the home of Mrs. R. Cadby. Present were Mrs. Green, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. Irving Deane, Mrs. Angelo Avenia, Mrs. Cornelius Hunt, Mrs. Many, Mr. and Mrs. David Vincent, Leroy Michael, Ed Baker and Mrs. Byaly Bashford... Acting president, Mrs. Green, called the meeting to order. Treasurer Mrs. Deane read the treasurer's report. Mr. Michael's bill... came to \$897.55. The sum of \$187.20 was deducted as a gift from Mr. Michael; corrected bill \$707.55. (Mr. Michael expects 100 yards will finish fill for the field.) Road graders will be needed to smooth it off in the spring, followed by harrowing and seeding...

"Mrs. Green proposed to give a personal check for \$700 to the association. This generous gift to be used during her lifetime at 4% per annum as long as she lives.

"Mrs. Avenia then presented a check for \$50... the result of her own personal effort to raise money for the field by making and selling pizza on Saturday mornings.

"The secret of a \$500 loan by "an unknown person" was revealed to be Mrs. Sabrah Jenkins who then made a present of the whole amount"

"David and Evi Vincent then presented their bill of \$75 for the printing of the cookbooks - marked "Paid!"

(A discreet pandemonium prevailed - it was like the stone that rolled off Pilgrim's back in Pilgrim's Progress!) "A rising vote of thanks to our generous donors seemed so very inadequate; after paying the last bill we now actually have a favorable balance of \$109.84. Mr. and Mrs. Michael were voted honorary members of the association.

"One of the happiest meetings of the Young People's Village Improvement Association was brought to a close.

"Refreshments were served by Mrs. Cadby."

Dorothy Bashford, Secretary

In short order grading was done, grass seed planted, a back stop erected and we were able to

notify Jack Mansfield and Stub Shadic that the field was ready for use.

PLAYGROUND

Although the baseball diamond took priority, work on other projects has continued ever since, for the next twenty-five years: installation of some playground equipment, and (briefly) a skating rink; construction of a basketball court; erection of lights for night games and improvement of conditions for the summer playground program supervised by Grover Shoemaker who recruits local young people to direct the activities.

At present a men's softball league schedules all its games on the field under the lights, and our Leaguers (we do not maintain a "Little League," as such) plays its games earlier in the evening. This past year, for the first time, there was a schedule of basketball games on the basketball court, which will be continued this summer.

Although materials and work requiring professional skills must be paid for, much has been done by volunteer help. The Youth Commission, however, assumes the maintenance of the field with money coming jointly from the Town and the State.

The original plans of the Young People's Village Improvement Association back in 1946 have not been fully realized. Their dream of a "Recreation Center" with bowling alleys and an auditorium for showing movies is still just - a dream, but there is no doubt that the Memorial Field is used and appreciated by the young people of our community and their parents, and does provide a constant reminder to the people of this area of the boys who fought and died in the two World Wars.



Youngsters at the Hillsdale Playground held at Memorial Field enjoy a game of red light.



The memorial to war dead was erected in a small park on Route 23 just above the memorial field after World War II. The plaque on the stone below the flag reminds passersby that men of Hillsdale "gave their full measure of devotion to preserve America's heritage of freedom."



This old Ford truck delivering scrap metal to the parking lot of the Masonic Hall was one of those participating in the town-wide war effort on an autumn Sunday which collected 85 tons of scrap. The workers had lunch at the Masonic Hall and church services were postponed until evening for their convenience. L.-r., Ernest Ostrander, Felix Walkes, and James Duffy. Standing beside the truck is Michael Goldberg.

Copake Memorial Clock Repaired Once Again

Have you noticed that the Copake War Memorial Clock is working again? After being damaged seven times, the last time in March 1976, the clock started again Saturday, July 2. Two original green and white faces have been replaced and the others will also be replaced.

The electrical works for the clock are located in the Needle Nook which was originally the post office. The clock repairman was unable to fix the chimes due to electrical wiring problems.

The clock was originally dedicated on October 29, 1944. The \$3,000 cost was met by donations after an appeal from a committee headed by Edward H. McIntyre and Albert C. Bristol. Other committee members who signed the let-

ter were Clayton Carl, George S. Carroll, Frances Minerly, and Kay Glynn Zurwoski of Crayville; Fred Holsapple, Katherine Melius and Jean Wyckoff of Copake Falls; W. B. Dinehart, Jacob L. Hofstadter, and Zenron Raabe of West Copake; and Edna J. Carl, Charlotte H. Dean, Myra Knox, Blanche C. McGee, Charles W. Peck, Brad W. Peck, Ida L.V. Sologub, and Susan M. Wilsey of Copake.

The letter appealed, "Let's get behind a War Memorial that we will all be proud to have in the Town of Copake. A useful living memorial, chiming out our appreciation to the services of the armed forces in both wars, with a durable Bronze Honor Roll on its base where it will be looked at and not forgotten."



A town truck was among the many used to collect metal scrap for the war effort in 1942, the proceeds of which were later donated by the town to the Memorial Field. L.-r., Hillsdale Supervisor Fay Van Deusen, John Pollock, Ernest Ostrander, Superintendent of Highways. Roy Van Bramer was the driver.

Falconer Will Speak

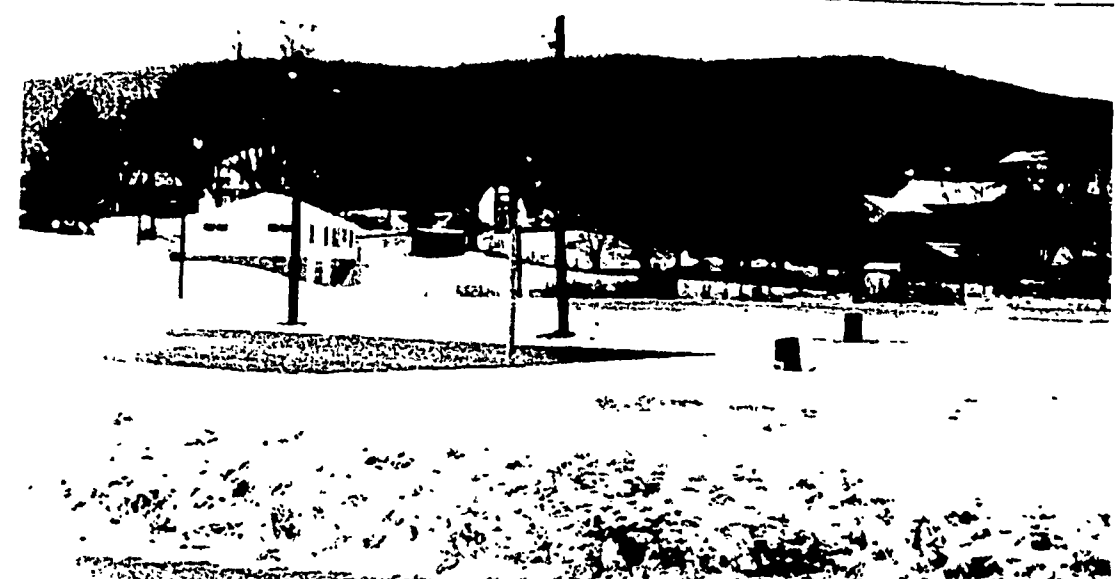
Dr. Heinz Meng, a biology professor at the State University of New York at New Paltz, who has made a lifelong study of predatory birds, will be a guest speaker at Taconic State Park in Copake Falls Friday at 8 p.m. One of the world's foremost experts on peregrines and one of the leading falconers, Dr. Meng will bring a peregrine falcon and a great horned owl with him.

Dr. Meng was born in Germany and received his Ph.D. in Ornithology at Cornell University. He is currently introducing captive-bred peregrines back into the wild, to restore them to the regions where they once lived. Dr. Meng will speak at the nature center in the park.

On Saturday night, Charlie Chaplin's "Circus" will be shown at the center at dusk.



Klaus Beinkampen, playground supervisor, pitches a game of kickball.



The basketball court and baseball diamond on the Hillsdale Memorial Field are the result of years of effort by members of the Young People's Village Improvement Association and get a lot of use from area youth, even in winter when they clear the court to shoot baskets on a good day.