



Old Westbury Gardens News

Spring, 2013, Honoring Mary Phipps



President's Letter

I first met Mary 20 years ago when I was the Executive Director of Planting Fields in Oyster Bay. Representatives of various horticultural and preservation groups were convening there to discuss the problems facing public and private gardens in our area. Mary attended in her role as Chairman of Old Westbury Gardens. I came away from the meeting dazzled by Mary's enthusiasm for all things horticultural and historical, and by her dedication to "getting things done."

Now, two decades later, as President and CEO of Old Westbury Gardens, I'm more dazzled than ever. In my seven years here, I have had the pleasure of being a first-hand witness to Mary's indefatigable leadership and devotion to the Gardens. As Chairman, Mary has ensured that Old Westbury Gardens remains a strong and sustainable organization. Under her guidance, we have completed some remarkable long-term projects. One of many was a complete mapping and inventorying of all trees, including Geographic Information Systems mapping of the entire property. A comprehensive cultural landscape report was recently completed. We have established a stand-alone educational department, as well as begun plans to convert a historic Quaker barn into an activity center. Mary was instrumental in obtaining two very significant New York State Environmental Protection Fund grants for the Gardens, one to preserve our wonderful wrought iron front gates and the other to restore our magnificent Walled Garden pergola.

Of particular note is the role Mary has played in land acquisition. She was very instrumental in the Gardens' acquisition of the Orchard Hill property originally belonging to Peggie Phipps Boegner. Mary spearheaded the fundraising efforts that enabled the purchase of those vital 34 contiguous acres, facilitating the preservation of an assemblage of historic Quaker buildings, and the protection of ground water in that area. That, however, was only Mary's latest effort. She has worked previously with Nassau County and others in purchasing development rights and in establishing easements over additional acreage,

thus preserving Old Westbury Gardens' beautiful grounds for generations to come.

Mary has been involved in the activities of Old Westbury Gardens since we first opened to the public in 1959. She has been a key member of standing committees, the Garden Committee foremost among them. Her knowledge of horticulture is encyclopedic. Every day she reveals a deep appreciation for the historical development of the Gardens and the family's history. To that end, Mary is incredibly generous to everyone with her time: to trustees, the staff and volunteers, our interns, and to our visitors. I am especially touched by the guidance and support she has provided to our young and extremely talented Director of Horticulture, Maura Brush.

Mary has been a sensitive and vigilant steward of Westbury House and its historic rooms filled with priceless antiques, paintings, and decorative arts. Her involvement spans the transition of Westbury House from a private residence to a public venue. In order to preserve the legacy of the house and its collections, Mary undertook every conceivable type of task required, from inventorying clothing left in bedroom bureaus to rallying all manner of public and private support. As a result of her efforts, Westbury House



John Norbeck, Mary Phipps, and Carol Large

stands out as a stellar example of a country manor, elegant yet comfortable, gleaming with silver while still exuding a feeling of hominess through the displaying of original furniture and family possessions. And in continuing a century-old Phipps' family tradition passed down from Margarita to Peggie to Mary, everywhere there are fresh flowers.

We are proud to say that Mary's efforts on our behalf have borne fruit. Old Westbury Gardens is acknowledged regularly, in national and local travel and gardening magazines and other pub-

Chairman's Letter

This year, as Mary Phipps continues her transition from Chairman of the Board to Chairman Emeritus, I think of all that she has meant to the Gardens and to all of us who share her love for the place.

A few years ago, I was asked to introduce Mary when she was receiving an award. It was so easy! I've had the pleasure of knowing Mary for over 20 years. We first met through the North Country Garden Club. Obviously, we had a mutual interest in horticulture. But then I soon learned of our shared commitment to wonderful organizations such as Old Westbury Gardens. To me, Mary has always been a shining example of success in volunteerism, and in life, as she possesses passion and focus, two all-important qualities. She is passionate about Old Westbury Gardens, and as a result has focused closely on the creation and preservation of this amazing public garden.

Mary has been a vital part of the Gardens since its very inception over half a century ago. The assistance that she gave Peggie Boegner in establishing the not for profit structure and successfully protecting its boundary lands, created Old Westbury Gardens as we continue to know it and enjoy it today. Mary's excellent strategic planning skills, her love of the staff, Board members, volunteers, and everyone involved, and her deep generosity of spirit, have helped shape not just Old Westbury Gardens, but the horticultural history of Long Island.

lications, as one of the most beautiful gardens in the world.

Mary's involvement here is far from over. She is proudly serving as Chairman Emeritus of Old Westbury Gardens. And though I may not be sure about all of the details she is planning for this latest role, I can safely say that it is one which will dazzle me.



What people make of their organizations is closely connected to what they make of themselves, as members of society and inhabitants of the earth. Mary is the personification of this ideal. She will always exemplify the best of Old Westbury Gardens, internally to our board and outwardly to the community.

It is true of Mary that, as the finest of leaders, we get our best ideas and accomplish more when she is involved. I know this first hand. I have worked with Mary and Old Westbury Gardens as Garden Committee member, Board Member, and for ten years as President. It was always very reassuring to know that I could always count on Mary's advice and support. But most importantly, Mary had been a very special friend to me for over a third of my life. I look forward to continuing to work with Mary at Old Westbury Gardens, and sharing this beautiful friendship, for many years to come.



Preservation Dinner

On November 30, Chairmen Arlene and Arthur Levine greeted guests to the Preservation Dinner at Westbury House. The theme was a tribute to Mary Phipps. The evening was sold out as Mary's long-time friends gathered to say thank you for her enduring leadership at the Gardens. Guests were treated to carolers in Edwardian dress, tiny gingerbread houses, and great entertainment by Eric Comstock and Barbara Fasano performing selections from the American Songbook. Arlene even thought to arrange having Girl Scout cookies, a Girl Scout banner, and a vintage Girl Scout uniform, in honor of all of Mary's contributions to the Scouts. During the program, Carol Large and John Norbeck gave eloquent speeches about the joys of working with Mary and watching her amazing ability to treat guests from around the world with the same dignity and affection she shows to first time visitors. Her leadership and inspiration have been a great joy for the staff at the Gardens.



From left, Arthur Levine, Carol Large, Arlene Levine, Mary Phipps, Howard Phipps, Jim Large

Friends of Old Westbury Gardens

The Friends of Old Westbury Gardens concluded a very productive 2012 with a luncheon and boutique at Westbury House. The luncheon, chaired by Cathi Cavanaugh and Vickie Stanco, and the boutique, chaired by Margaret Hutzel, were a great success. Margaret had originally planned the boutique for November 5. But given of the effects of Sandy and the snowstorm, she wisely postponed things until December 3. Ten vendors participated in the boutique, donating a percentage of their sales to the Gardens. Several also donated items for future auctions.

If you are interested in learning more about the activities and trips taken by the Friends, please contact Jana Ryan at 516-333-0048 x309 or jryan@oldwestburygardens.org.

Among many other fashionable items at the boutique, hats, and more hats, were on display in the Red Ballroom



Annual Appeal

Despite the many challenges of 2012, or perhaps because of them, Old Westbury Gardens enjoyed excellent results for our Annual Appeal, raising \$350,000. These funds are applied directly toward our operating expenses. We sincerely

appreciate the efforts of Lloyd Zuckerberg, our Annual Appeal Chairman. And we deeply thank all of our dedicated supporters, many of whom increased their level of donations from previous years, even while dealing with the aftermath of a horrendous storm, as well as a sluggish economy.

Old Westbury Gardens at the Metropolitan Museum

In January, Old Westbury Gardens had a unique opportunity to attend a special viewing of the Roy Zuckerberg Silver Gallery that is part of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan. Arrangements were made by Lloyd Zuckerberg, who is Roy's son and member of the Old Westbury Gardens' Board of Trustees. A group of supporters were greeted by Morris Heckscher, head of the American Wing, and were taken for a brief tour before meeting Beth Weiss, the Silver Curator and the elder Mr. Zuckerberg for a lovely talk about the joys and disappointments of collecting antique American silver. Guests then enjoyed cocktails and appetizers at the Georgian Suite. Proceeds from the event will be dedicated to the furniture collection at Old Westbury Gardens.



Roy Zuckerberg

A Gardens Gift

Back in October, Old Westbury Gardens received a call from Lawrence Lirot, a gentleman who lives with his wife in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. About 40 years ago, they visited Old Westbury Gardens for the first time. They were so enraptured by the experience that they have faithfully been sending annual gifts to the Gardens ever since. Mr. Lirot called in reference to a letter he received from the Gardens about the damages inflicted by Hurricane Sandy. Because

he was heading off to his local Garden Club, he wanted permission to speak to fellow club members about donating funds to Old Westbury Gardens, both individually and as a club, to help us through this difficult time. He recalled that he visited last July and that he would never forget the beauty of the white, pink and blue delphiniums in the Walled Garden. In February, we received an envelope containing five checks from members of the East Longmeadow Garden Club. It's moments like this that make us grateful to be working for such an inspirational organization.



Some of the more famous among the many visitors that Mary Phipps has welcomed to Old Westbury Gardens include Senator Ted Kennedy, left, and Lady Bird Johnson, right

Behind and Over the Wall

by Kim Johnson

As the resident gardener, I try to track the timetable of the Walled Garden, both for those who walk through the gate, and those who fly over the wall. Over the years, more and more of the former seem very interested in the whereabouts of the latter, particularly butterflies and hummingbirds. The plant selections that we choose to fit within the framework of the Walled Garden design have greatly influenced the arrival of our winged friends. If you plant it, they will come. The first of many steps gardeners can take to encourage visits from butterflies and hummingbirds is to plant the flowers that attract them. Flowers provide their nutritious food source: nectar. Simultaneously, the flowers benefit from being pollinated. Tubular flowers depend on the long tongues that butterflies and hummingbirds have to get down deep into the flowers. Butterflies enjoy flowers that have spikes of small clusters of closely placed flowers. They also like round top clusters of many small flowers such as yarrow, and zinnias which have daisy shaped flowers that provide many cluster of small flowers together. The showy outer petals attract their attention, provide a seat at the bar, and more flowers per stalk (small flowers in the center) give them more drinks at one sitting.

On a day last summer hundreds of Painted Lady butterflies were having a party among the Zinnia 'Profusion Cherry' in front of the east-west border. Visitors "oohed and aahed" as the clouds of the butterflies undulated like waves. Late summer and fall brings the visit of migrating Monarchs. They enjoy the taller zinnias, spending longer time on their flowers, seemingly just waiting to be photographed.

Flower shape is also important. Tubular flowers are good for hummingbirds, as are flowers that point upward and outward for easy access. Color is also a consideration in attracting birds. Anything red in the garden, not necessarily a



flower, can get a hummingbird to investigate. Hummingbirds also are attracted to blue flowers, while the butterfly hue appears to be purple. The challenge is to select flowers that appeal to both butterflies and hummingbirds. Two groups of flowers that excel at that job are used in large numbers in the Walled Garden: agastache (hysop), and salvia. The borders are designed so that there is succession of blooming time from spring to the end of fall. These plants only get better as the seasons progress. They are invaluable for long colorful shows during our long, slow autumns. Both agastache and salvias belong to the mint family, and as such usually produce very fragrant stems and leaves. A wide range of colors and scents are available. Agastache are long flowering tender perennials or annuals, mostly not hardy in our area. Experiment by leaving some plants in the ground during a mild winter and see if they come back next spring. In the extensive world of salvias, there are numerous plants that are annual and perennial varieties. Here at Old Westbury Gardens, we dig out stock plants from the garden at the end of the season, and store them in the greenhouses. In the winter, plants for the following season are propagated by rooting cuttings and are grown on until it's warm enough to plant them outside. Both agastache and salvias are easy to grow. They don't need much other than well-drained soil and full sun.

The prominent Walled Garden agastache is 'Tutti Frutti.' Tutti Frutti refers to the bubble gum smell the leaves and stem exude. We use it in back of the flower borders in combination with other salvias. Tutti Frutti, which reaches heights of three feet, continuously produces stalks of numerous small pink lavender flowers. It's beneficial to pinch small plants to encourage the plant to branch and form bushy multibranching plants. Other Walled Garden agastache are 'Champagne,' and 'Golden Jubilee.'

Last summer a new salvia, 'Wendy's Wish' was used in large numbers. Its introduction to the



east wall borders worked like an engraved invitation for the ruby-throated hummingbird, our

A Perfect Partner

by Lisa Reichenberger

There is no greater sense of community than in partnership. It enhances our knowledge, extends our reach, and broadens our scope of public programming. The Environmental Education Department regards this as a means to great success and feels fortunate to partner alongside a selection of Long Island organizations for numerous educational events.

With the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center's Early Bird Walks and Owl Prowls, hundreds of visitors are introduced to resident and migratory species of birds and their local habitats. The Astronomical Society of Long Island offers a spaceman's view of the stars when handmade telescopes line our fields for summer-

one and only species of hummingbird here in the northeast, who came to investigate in larger numbers than ever before. The 'Wendy's Wish' flowers produced many red tubular flowers on stems up to two feet high. Some of our other salvias that are visited by butterflies and hummingbirds include *Salvia farinacea* 'Victoria' and 'Blue Bedder,' *Salvia* 'Black and Blue' and 'Mystic Spires Blue,' and *Salvia coccinea* 'Coral Nymph.'

In any season in the Walled Garden, observe which flowers butterflies and hummingbirds choose to visit. You'll find that it is a long and varied list, and one that can help you create your own exciting home garden that is open for these flying visitors.

time sky watching sessions. The Cornell Cooperative Extension works with us during Bug Safaris, encouraging children's sense of adventure in the handling and identifying of captured insects, while teaching environmental stewardship with their benevolent release back into the wild.

Countless others donate their time and efforts to make our events memorable. Old Westbury Gardens strives to do the same. With outreach programs like Orchard Hill's complimentary NYS DEC teacher training sessions or our Partnership with the Westbury School District, the Gardens is able to share an appreciation of nature and its possibilities for life enrichment. We thank our educational collaborators for extending the hand of partnership through the years and for committing both their knowledge and passions to our Gardens community.



Diversity from the Nursery

by Maura Brush

For decades experts in the plant industry have been crying out for more diversity in our landscapes. Overreliance on one species can be devastating if that species should come under attack from a disease or insect. This devastation became a reality for homeowners in 2012 when both boxwoods and impatiens were under siege from disease. It makes sense that greater distance between similar plants will reduce insect problems because these insects have to travel farther to find their preferred food. Similarly, if a plant is host to a disease, then that disease is likely to spread faster if many host plants are in close proximity to one another.

Impatiens, probably the most widely grown annual on Long Island, are not recommended for planting at this time. So, a question among many growers has been, “what plant will take the place of impatiens?” The

more accurate subject should be “which *plants*,” plural. If we are going to make our landscapes more sustainable, we have to increase our diversity.

Regarding how the downy mildew on impatiens will affect our plantings in the Walled Garden, the simple answer is: not really at all. Kim Johnson, our Walled Garden Supervisor, keeps a similar palette in the borders each year, using dozens of different annuals that are likely to change from year to year. Dahlias, zinnias, ageratum, euphorbia, and melampodium are just a handful of the “front of the border” plants that visitors to the Walled Garden will see.

Nurseries this year will have the unique opportunity to raise customers’ awareness on plant diversity and encourage them to try new things. I have always been surprised that certain plants are not more widely known, or grown. The first example that always comes to mind is ‘Begonia grandis.’

This is a perennial that blooms over a number of months, can take almost full shade, and has interesting foliage. Why is this plant not in every garden? It requires no more care than hostas, which everybody seems to grow.

Each year the focus of the plant sale is a little different. For 2013, the emphasis is on easy-to-grow plants that, for whatever reason, are not being grown by home gardeners. Our horticulture staff members will be available, as well as Master Gardeners from Cornell Cooperative Extension. Do you need a vine that can cover an arbor quickly and take some shade? How about ‘Schizophragma hydrangeoides?’ Do you travel frequently and have trouble keeping your planters alive and watered? Take a look at our incredible selection of sempervivums and sedums. Our goal is to make you comfortable in finding the right plants for your place, while perhaps taking you just a little outside your normal comfort zone.

Reflections on Sandy

by Maura Brush

In the weeks following Hurricane Sandy, I dreaded the inevitable question, “How did the Gardens fare?” I was too disheartened by the damage to feign optimism, and the amount of clean-up ahead of us seemed insurmountable. But as days passed and areas were cleared, the grounds slowly began to look recognizable, if not quite familiar. A visitor who attended a seminar here in early February commented that it “didn’t seem as if we had much damage.” Because he had only driven from our Main Gate to Westbury House, he hadn’t seen the stump that had once

been a 60 foot Norway Spruce or noticed that hundreds of other trees were now gone. Even the perspective he was enjoying from the Front Hall was to me, drastically and disturbingly altered.

Though I was, at first, troubled that no one could see the totality of the heart wrenching damages that we had suffered, I then realized that I needed to forget the views that I held in my memory so that I could begin to enjoy the view in front of me again. If I look on the bright side, our Walled Garden, Rose Garden, and Cottage Garden were all almost completely unaffected by the storm. Visitors strolling along the Primrose Path or down the Lilac Walk this spring will see very

little change since last year. Our West Porch Beech, the lindens in our Entrance Allée, and our 100 year-old weeping cherry tree all weathered the storm like venerable veterans, having seen their share of hurricanes, blizzards, heat waves, and droughts. That they have withstood the worst that Mother Nature has ever dished out in our area makes me admire and appreciate them just a little bit more.

Hundreds of felled trees have been removed. Damaged trees have been tended and pruned. But most importantly, new trees will be planted. It may be decades before these young trees reach the stature of their predecessors. But as Gertrude Jekyll said, "A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness." As gardeners we have learned to be

patient. A decade or two is no time at all in the life cycle of an oak or a spruce and the amount of growth that most young trees put on in their first ten years is almost miraculous. I hope that visitors will acquaint themselves with these new additions and take the time to check in on their progress over the years. It won't be long before *they* are the veterans in our garden.



The South Terrace White Pine, one of hundreds of trees lost to Sandy

The More Things Remain the Same

We are fortunate to have preserved for us in the Village of Old Westbury a great country house with its gardens, which are illustrated in "Great Gardens of the Western World."

Entering the estate from Old Westbury Road, the visitor drives through a massive wrought iron gate more than 30 feet tall, up the quarter-mile driveway lined with European linden trees to the parking area. From there, the pale gold roof of Westbury House is seen rising among ancient trees in an island of woods and green fields. The cherry-wood brick and limestone trimming of the Georgian house contrasts with the roof made of thin stone slabs brought especially from Rutlandshire, England.

Among the outdoor highlights are the Rhododendron Bank west of the house that comes into full bloom in late May; the Lilac Walk; and the expansive, two-level walled Italian Garden with plantings changed throughout the season to provide a summer-long blaze of color. This garden also has a central pool and fountain, and at its far end, a Pergola covered with wisteria and

grape vines backing a lily pond bordered with iris and day lilies.

Going out of the Italian Garden's east gate, the visitor can meander through the Ghost Walk, a tunnel of trained hemlock paved with very old and handsome flagstone. At the end of this walk is a niche, surrounded by 12 foot high evergreen hedges enclosing two large bronze peacocks. Fresh flowers form the backs of the birds while their tails are fashioned of espaliered yews.

Under a rose-covered arbor, paved with old bricks, one walks along a path bordered by primroses. Then, just a few steps from the Cottage Garden, the visitor is brought to the the South Allée of European linden. This leads back toward the house and across the manicured Great South Lawn under the 20 foot high brick terrace. Giant wisteria vines cover this wall, and their flowers look like a lavender waterfall during blooming period.

Excerpts from an article in The Long Island Horticultural Society Bulletin, Spring, 1974, written by Mary Phipps

Preservation News

by Lorraine Gilligan

In addition to giving a preview of the proportions and stylistic features to be discovered in other areas of Westbury House, the entry hall has uniqueness, and even a touch of the jungle, all to its own. Looking above, you can almost hear the cry of macaws and the chatter of a monkey depicted in the mural. With this exotic soundtrack in mind, if you let your imagination really soar, you may even hear a roar as you appreciate the lunging tiger trophy displayed in a corner by the stairwell. As ferocious as it appears, it is startling to see amazed children so fearlessly drawn to it. There are various stories about the provenance of the tiger. In 1903, Jay and Dita Phipps embarked on an elaborate honeymoon journey by motor car through India, one of the thrills being to hunt big game. There are photos of Jay on a hunt with a felled tiger being brought back to camp. Yet there is also a NY Times article which includes an illustration depicting Dita taking aim at a tiger while standing in an open air motor car. Another version has it that a maharajah wanted a grander specimen to be on display, and shipped a totally different tiger to the young couple.

Whatever actually happened, the tiger charging through reeds is thought to be the work of world renowned Victorian London taxidermist, Rowland Ward. He was famous for realistic tableaux and developed techniques for presenting spec-

imens that are still used today. Our tiger has suffered from past insect infestation. Its teeth are delaminating, the nose is cracking, and there are patches of thinning fur. The grasses which are carefully positioned to indicate a threatening charge exhibit some mold discoloration. Art Conservator Eugenie Milroy, whose clients include the American Museum of Natural History and the Brooklyn Children's Museum, is working to stabilize the tiger and its natural setting with as little disruption as possible. The imitation bamboo frame display case and old glass are also typical of Ward's presentation, and we are addressing all components as a unified composition. Preserving the tiger display was only possible through the generosity of an Old Westbury Gardens' trustee who hopes that children in the future will be as fascinated by the tiger as her own kids were.

The Gardens is also embarking on a conditions assessment of oil on canvas paintings and frames in the Westbury House collection. Made possible by a grant from the Bay and Paul Foundations, the survey will be conducted by Lucie Kinsolving, Chief Conservator of the National Academy of Art. The English artists represented read like a Who's Who of the Royal Academy. But many of the works haven't been examined since the 1960s. By noting the condition of the canvas, and the state of the varnish and the canvas support, we will create a record of what needs to be done and then prioritize which paintings need immediate attention.



Mary Phipps, Role Model Extraordinaire

While Mary Phipps is known on Long Island as the legendary force behind Old Westbury Gardens, she is famous in New York City for a completely different reason. During the past half-century, while she has been the visionary of one of the finest gardens in America, she has lived a parallel life as a patron and leader of one of America's most beloved organizations, the Girl Scouts.

The Girl Scouts was founded in 1912 by Juliette Gordon Low -- and the New York Council was established in 1913 -- exactly 100 years ago. And for the past 50 years, Mary Phipps has been a guiding light for hundreds of thousands of New York City girls.

Mary joined the board of the Girl Scouts of Greater New York in 1960, the year John Kennedy won the presidency. It was a different world. She was instrumental in attracting many high profile individuals to the group's mission -- people like Kitty Carlisle Hart, and Ellin Berlin, the wife of composer Irving Berlin who notably wrote "God Bless America." During the late 60s, Mary chaired an event honoring Mr. and Mrs. Berlin in Central Park with more than 20,000 Girl Scouts in attendance. In his will, Irving Berlin bequeathed a royalty in perpetuity from this glorious song to the Girl Scouts of Greater New York.

In the 1970s, Mary helped launch the Girl Scout School Break program which benefited girls in under-served communities in the city and targeted neighborhoods where volunteer services were otherwise limited. Always a champion of social justice, Mary was a voice for every girl, everywhere, regardless of race, color, religion, or country of origin. This was a time of extraordinary growth in the organization's history.

In 1984, Mary successfully advocated to the national office that the Girl Scout program should reach younger girls, those in kindergarten. This was driven by her conviction that even five year olds could benefit from the organization's beliefs, teachings and wholesomeness. Thus began the "Daisies," the youngest Girl Scout cohort, taking the nickname of the founder.

During her 48 years on the board, she chaired virtually every committee and served as board president and chair. And it is fair to surmise that during her tenure, she and her wonderful husband, Howdy, have been New York's most generous patrons and fundraisers. As such, they have enriched the lives of so many girls and young women, and as a consequence, their families, friends, and communities.

While we are appreciative of all of Mary's gifts to the council - her oversight, governance, financial support, and stewardship - she also captures the essence of Girl Scouting. Mary is and always has been a person of great humility and personal dignity. She is comfortable in every setting, poised at every challenge, kind to everyone she meets, a woman who makes every audience feel appreciated and cared for. Her intelligence, vision, inspiration, and encouragement have shaped the organization in ways she cannot even imagine.

She is unique, she is peerless, she is priceless.

Thank you, Mary.

Carmen Dubroc

President and Chair
Emerita, Girl Scouts
of Greater New York





Picnic Pops

by Vince Kish

Few events are more closely associated with Old Westbury Gardens than our Wednesday evening Picnic Pops concerts. Ellie Simpson, the Chairman of Picnic Pops, wrote a piece about the beginnings of this perennial favorite series for our second ever (Summer, 1970) issue of Old Westbury Gardens News, which included the following excerpts.

“When in 1970, Mrs. Etienne Boegner, President of Old Westbury Gardens, suggested that it would be nice if we could have some outdoor music at the Gardens, I was asked to explore the possibilities. There had been outdoor performances by the Metropolitan Opera Studio previously, but due to the air traffic overhead, sound was distorted and enjoyment suffered. It was decided that, instead of attempting to present the type of music which demanded an acoustically suitable environment, we would try a more informal approach.

All profits from the Picnic Pops are funneled into the Education Fund, which pays for such items as bringing elderly, ambulatory hospital patients by bus to visit the Gardens. To Mrs. Boegner, however, profits were not to be measured monetarily. If we could stay afloat financially, while providing pleasure for the many hundreds of families who brought picnic hampers filled with everything from ‘Chicken Delight’ to salmon aspic, then the concerts were to be considered a success.”

That first Pops season in 1970 was comprised of a total of two performances, both by the Young Artists Chamber Symphony. General admission was \$1.25. The Symphony would return for the lead-off concert in 1971, followed by the Westbury High School Concert and Stage Bands, with special guest Burt Bacharach, and then Bill La Forge’s All Star Band.

By 1977, the series had expanded to five evenings, including a performance by Peter Duchin, who would return regularly to play at the Gardens, a venue he particularly enjoyed. In his



Mary Phipps, center, with Ellie Simpson and Martin Travers, President of Security National Bank, the first Pops sponsor

1996 memoir, *Ghost of a Chance*, Duchin wrote, “The lawn would be packed with picnickers of all ages, from infants who had never heard of Peter Duchin to octogenarians who would totter up to the bandstand and tell me about the time they danced to my father’s music...and four generations would be on their feet, dancing every which way as the lights came on in the huge ivy-covered mansion at the top of the lawn.” The second group that summer was the Long Island Mummies String Band which consisted of 75 high spirited musicians featuring everything from banjos to glockenspiels to a bone-rattler. (Thankfully, that last item describes a percussion instrument along the lines of playing the spoons rather than an effect on the audience). The rest of the schedule included the Speakeasy Jazz Babes, the Lionel Hampton Orchestra, and the Hal Hoffman Band.

Within a few years, by popular demand, the number of concerts per summer was increased from five to six, peaking for a few seasons in the late 1980s and early 90s to as many as eight. Interestingly, during that Pops period, along with the traditional participation of big band orchestras, there was a strong presence of country-western music. The billing for 1987 for example, included Pat Cannon’s Foot and Fiddle Dance Company and Country Western Band, with the series ending with a performance by The Country Jubilee. By 2005, following a decline in attendance and some questionable demands by

some of the performers, Old Westbury Gardens needed to experiment with the series. The “Summer Sounds” concerts mixed in some Saturday performances with the usual Wednesday evenings, tried a location switch to the soccer field, and included some smaller, cabaret-style groups. Those changes went over about as well as Euro Disney or New Coke, and by 2006, Picnic Pops returned to Wednesdays on the North Lawn with five concerts, including perennial favorite Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks.

“I love to play Old Westbury Gardens with my band because it is a favorite concert setting,” writes Vince. “The music we play from the halcyon days of the Big Band Era fits so well with the grand, vintage setting of the beautiful lawn and mansion. We are honored to be there! My special thanks to Mary Phipps who has guided this wonderful concert series for so many years. She has made so many people happy.”

The Nighthawks will kick-off this year’s series on July 10. They will be followed by The Hot Sardines, Issa Cabrera and Tropicales del Ritmo, Vanessa Trouble and the Red Hot Swing, and the Eddie Torres Mambo Kings Orchestra. Though the bands have changed during over more than four decades, the basic formula for Picnic Pops remains the same. Bring a picnic, a blanket, and your dancing shoes, or just sit back and relax, and enjoy the sights and sounds of a beautiful evening under the stars.





Then and Now
by Vince Kish

The topiary yew plantings at the base of the South Terrace Wall are overgrown, and will be replaced with smaller plants, as recommended in the Old Westbury Gardens' 2012 Cultural Landscape Report. In the process, with the new yew, we'll all have a better view.

Interestingly, this perspective from the south has changed dramatically over the years, particularly when one compares a photo from 1906 (above, courtesy of *Halcyon Days*) taken during the final months of construction, to the shot below it from 2013. ***Spoiler Alert*** - for anyone who wants to play Photo Match, finish this later. For everyone else, these are some of the major differences.

South Wall: The statues and busts are in the niches. Wisteria climbs the wall. There are two stone benches, presently obscured by the afore-

mentioned yews.

South Terrace: Planters were added on the top of the wall. A fully grown (now over 150 years old) beech tree was planted near the West Porch.

Westbury House: Originally there were three, open-air porches. In 1924, the West Porch was extended from 13 feet by 38 feet to 30 feet by 38 feet, and enclosed. In 1925, the Master Bath was extended onto its roof. Circa mid- 1920s, the Red Ballroom was extended to the column line in the space that had been the South Porch. In 1907, the East Porch was enclosed and converted into a Serving Room for the original Dining Room (now Jay's Study). The present Dining Room was added in 1927. Further east, a Servant's Wing, including a kitchen, was built 1910-1911 (presently Old Westbury Gardens offices). For anyone familiar with the employee entrance, the 1906 date carved above it was likely taken from another part of the house and reused.



The readers of the Long Island Press have once again acknowledged Old Westbury Gardens. In addition to placing Number 1 in the Best Public Garden Category, Old Westbury Gardens was voted Number 2 in the Best Outdoor Wedding Venue Category.

The Diane Wittlinger Memorial Tree Fund and The Volunteer Tree Fund

Donations to both funds have been received from April, 2012 through March, 2013, in memory of the individuals as follow:

Tom N. Armstrong
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Clockwise from left, Mary Phipps with Old Westbury Gardens President Jerry Eaton and Director Susan Tripp at Rockefeller Center, 1996, Mary (second from left, at Opening Day Ceremonies, June 30, 1959, with husband Howard Phipps in 1989, and in 1996

Mrs. Etienne Boegner
(1906-2006)
Founder

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