



The Ferryman

Fostering an awareness and appreciation for the history of Dobbs Ferry and all the people, noted and humble, who transmitted the good things of the past to the present and the future.

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Artist's vision provides new perspective into Old Croton Aqueduct.
Page 3

Historical Society to celebrate 150th anniversary of the village throughout the year.
Page 4

Dobbs Ferry Volunteer Ambulance begins in 1962 to provide prehospital care to residents.
Page 6

40-year-old cold case not forgotten.
Page 7

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Winter 2022

Focus on Dobbs Ferry: From bucolic burg to bustling burb

By Henrietta Toth

Over wooded hills that gently slope to the Hudson River, Dobbs Ferry grew from Native American settlements to colonial farmlands, to small estates, to industrial worker housing, and finally to commuter residences to become a diverse New York City suburb.

As late as the 1600s, the village was home to the Weckquaesgeeks of the Algonquin confederation. They had a large settlement by a stream they called Wysquaqua, known today as Wickers Creek, that begins in the Juhring Nature Preserve and flows west into the Hudson River... They fished and foraged for clams and oysters in the river and hunted for game in the woods above the riverbank.

By the seventeenth century, the land was part of Philipsburg Manor and was settled by the Dutch and the English. John and Elizabeth Dobbs built a tenant farmhouse near the current railroad station. Their son, William Dobbs, is credited as the ferryman who began transporting goods and people across the Hudson River in 1730...



At Dobbs Ferry on the Hudson by Granville Perkins circa 1865

William's son, Abraham continued running the ferry until 1759, when Mollie Sneden took it over. The Snedens ran the ferry until 1903, followed by other families until it was wiped out in the hurricane of 1938.

Dobbs Ferry played a pivotal role in the resolution of the American War of Independence. In August 1781, allied American and French troops were encamped locally when General George

Washington devised plans to attack the British at Yorktown, Virginia, a strategy that would win the war.

Following the Revolutionary War, the former tenant farms were divided into smaller parcels and sold, and the community began its transformation from a rural agricultural village into a town punctuated by estates and new industries.

Continued on page 2



Dobbs Ferry today

Focus on Dobbs Ferry..

Continued from page 1

The nineteenth century brought great changes to Dobbs Ferry, as it did to much of the nation, with industrialization that employed a new immigrant population and the rise of the Gilded Age. Estates, such as the Hyatt-Livingston property on Broadway that developed from colonial roots, took hold on former tenant farmlands. The Hyatt-Livingston House... burned in 1974 and today townhouses occupy the site. In 1854, English silk merchant Edwin B. Strange built the Gothic Revival Ingleside (now on the campus of St. Christopher's School). The Alexander Jackson Davis-designed castle is a "cousin" to Davis's earlier architectural endeavor, Lyndhurst, in Tarrytown. Edwin Gould Sr., a railroad executive and second son of Lyndhurst's Jay Gould, bought 88 acres in 1902 and built a 10-room Spanish villa on the current site of Mercy College and the housing development by Wickers Creek. The stone and iron gate of his estate, called Agawam, still stands on Broadway on the grounds of the Alcott School. Gould was a benefactor of the village and donated the land that became Gould Park as well as funded construction of its playing fields and wading pool...

Small industries, such as coal and lumber yards on the riverfront, gave way to larger enterprises in the nineteenth century. A

brewery operated on Palisade Street from 1853 until prohibition and was a major employer in the village. By the 1920s, the Methodist Book Concern occupied the brewery site and employed about 600 workers at the time it closed in 1941. Small manufactories were many and included Ramseyer's Piano Stool Factory and the different businesses that morphed through the Oceana Building, a longtime fixture in downtown Dobbs Ferry. It was a hay and feed store; by 1893, a mill and grain elevator, then a shoe factory, and later a publishing company. Today, it houses condos...

Numerous immigrants came to the village to work at these burgeoning industries. A number of German nationals worked at the brewery and lived in rooming houses on Palisade Street. An Italian community also later adopted Dobbs Ferry as their new home and their influence is still seen in the old-world-inspired construction of the Roman Catholic Church Our Lady of Pompeii on Palisade Street and the palazzo at 10 Main Street. Many new residents to these shores also found work on the local estates as carpenters, coachmen, cooks, craftsmen, grooms, groundskeepers, laundresses, and maids. A large influx of immigrants—mostly German, Irish, and Scotch—came early in the nineteenth century to do the dangerous work of constructing the Old Croton Aqueduct... Later, in the twentieth century, two

industries set up operations on the east side of town by the Saw Mill River Parkway and have since closed: Stauffer Chemical Company and Akzo Nobel Chemical Company.

By the onset of the twentieth century, Dobbs Ferry began growing into a suburban commuter village. The railroad was electrified in 1906, and by 1930, the Saw Mill River Parkway connected Dobbs Ferry with the larger world. The old estates were carved up into several neighborhoods, such as Springhurst Park, named after the estate of civic-minded Colonel and Mrs. Franklin Q. Brown who were influential in Dobbs Ferry during the first half of the twentieth century. Much new housing was built in the early to mid-twentieth century, including on the craggy hills rising above the river. The first apartment buildings cropped up on Broadway in the early twentieth century...

Today's economically and socially diverse Dobbs Ferry harkens back to those early days, when the village's immigrant population worked its industries, settled its streets, and infused the society with their ethnic traditions...

The preceding material was contained in an article originally published in *The Neighborhood Buzz: Rivertowns* (formerly *Bee Local*); Spring 2021 Issue. Reprinted with permission.

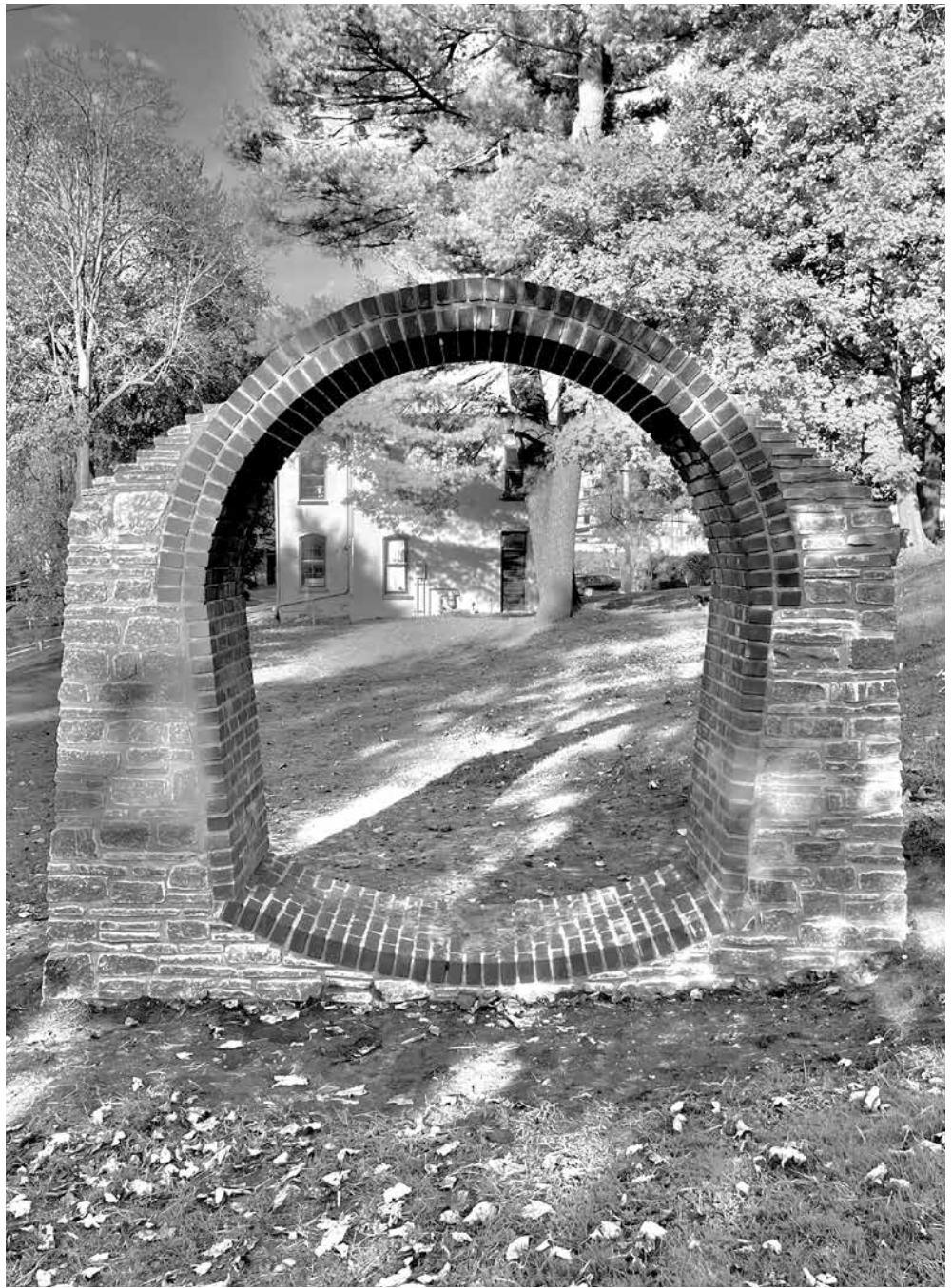
Old Croton Aqueduct: What's Really Beneath Your Feet...

By Seamus Breathnach

Known simply as the Aqueduct, the approximately 1.5-mile path that passes through Dobbs Ferry from Mercy College to the Hastings line has been a locale for passive recreation for residents and visitors since the mid 1800s. The Aqueduct is an integral part of village life here in Dobbs Ferry, used by people out for a stroll, bike riders, and joggers. At various times you can children playing, or students using it as a shortcut to school. While nearly everyone who lived in the village has used or passed the trail at one time or another, one wonders how many of those who enjoyed the fresh air and magnificent views actually knew what was buried beneath their feet. Now, thanks to the vision and inspiration of artist and architect Dionisio Cortes Ortega, and the efforts of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, you can see for yourself. Dedicated on November 13, his creation "Croton Arch of Triumph" is a full-scale cross section of the water tunnel that runs beneath the trail. The piece is located on the aqueduct just south of the Keeper's House on Walnut Street.

Work Begins, the Irish

The Old Croton Aqueduct was conceived in the 1830s to address the lack of fresh water to service the growing population of New York City. The threat of fire, polluted water supplies, and unsanitary conditions that became breeding grounds for disease, forced local leaders to seek a new way to deliver clean water. The idea was to construct a conduit to bring water from the Croton River, which they would dam up creating a reservoir, along a 41-mile path to lower Manhattan, where two reservoirs would receive and distribute the fresh water, one at the sight of the present-day Great Lawn of Central Park, the other where the Public Library is on 42nd Street near Bryant Park. This epic project was based on the theory used for the ancient Roman aqueducts, which were gravity fed. When navigating the 26-mile trail atop the aqueduct through Westchester, one gets the feeling of traveling up and down



"Croton Arch of Triumph"

gently rolling hills, when in fact, the precise engineering of the water tunnel has a pitch that drops its elevation approximately 13 inches per mile. When completed, it took nearly a day for water to travel from the river to lower Manhattan.

Construction of the Aqueduct took five years. Originally spearheaded by Major David Douglas, the engineer John B. Jervis oversaw the completion of the project. The scope of the project was enormous. Workers created dams, built bridges and overpasses, and dug trenches and tunnels all along the

route while making sure that the elevation maintained the pitch necessary to keep the water flowing. Considering the time, technology, and equipment available, it is an engineering feat.

The project was done in four separate divisions. The Second Division was to stretch from Sleepy Hollow to an area known as Livingston Landing, present day Dobbs Ferry. The work force assembled for this undertaking consisted of several thousand laborers, mostly Irish immigrants.

Continued on page 5



From the Desk of the President

By Madeline Byrne

2023, a year of celebrations

In 2023 Dobbs Ferry celebrates its Sesquicentennial or the 150th anniversary of its 1873 incorporation as a village. The Historical Society and the Village have some special events planned to commemorate this landmark event.

Although the actual date of the incorporation is July 5, the celebrations will occur throughout the year.

Usher in 2023 when the New Year's Eve ball drops at midnight outside Village Hall on Main Street. The Historical Society will provide hot cocoa to all those who attend.

Next, and just in time for the anniversary celebration, the annual Clara Mead Eggnog party returns on January 8 after

a two-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The event, held at the Mead House, will include a variety of sweet and savory finger foods served along with Clara's "special recipe" eggnog.

The Society also has plans to host special evening events at its headquarters honoring Irish, Italian and German immigrants, and their contributions to the Village. An Irish "Gathering of the Clan" in March, a German Oktoberfest in the fall and on New Year's Eve 2023 an "Italian-style get together" are all scheduled.

The Society will hold a 50-50 raffle, and celebratory banners for display throughout the village will be for sale. For more information, please visit www.dobbsferryhistory.org.





Prudy Ferraro

Society Mourns

We are sad to announce the passing of one of the Historical Society's longtime volunteers, Prudy Ferraro. Prudy spent every Tuesday morning working in our archives (except for the summer months when she was on her beloved Fire Island). She cut out and filed articles pertaining to our village from the Rivertowns Enterprise and The Journal News, and personally paid the subscriptions to both.

Prudy moved to Dobbs Ferry in 2006 to be close to her family. At 80 years old she quickly got involved in village life and in addition to volunteering at the Historical Society, she became a substitute teacher at Springhurst Elementary School as well as a volunteer there. She joined the Brown Bag book group at the Library and was a regular at the Senior Citizen's group where she enjoyed playing Mahjongg and Bridge.

She will be sorely missed.

Dobbs Ferry is turning 150!!

Support the celebration by purchasing a banner that looks similar to the image here.

Banners will be hung throughout the village starting March 2023.

To sponsor a banner, please complete this application and return it to the Dobbs Ferry Historical Society with \$150 fee.

Payments can be made via **Paypal at DFhistory@icloud.com**

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Old Croton Aqueduct...

Continued from page 3

According to Gerard Koepfel, in his book *Water for Gotham*, “The real number of Irish was much higher. The men often brought their wives and children and set up residences along the line in ‘shantees’ provided by the contractors. The Croton’s ‘Shanty Irish’ proved unwelcome in many of the old Dutch and English enclaves of Westchester.” The laborers were paid about \$0.75 a day. When the Aqueduct was completed, many of the Irish workers found other jobs and settled in the area.

Along with their culture, the new Irish immigrants also brought their religion with them. Before the construction of the Aqueduct, very few Roman Catholics had settled in Westchester. The first Catholic Mass celebrated in Dobbs Ferry was circa 1838 and was read at the Lime Shed on Gould’s pier, which was just north of the mouth of Wicker’s Creek on the Hudson River. Most of those in attendance were workers on the aqueduct.

Ventilation shafts, weirs

The completion of the project saw the path through Westchester dotted with structures along the way. Ventilation shafts, stone towers that provided fresh air to the conduit, were constructed about every mile, with approximately every third one having an access door for workers. Ventilator number 16 just south of Main Street in Irvington has one of these doors sealed up, while number 17, just north of Mercy College does not.

Weirs, stone structures housing massive gates, were used to shut down sections of the aqueduct and divert the water so maintenance could be done. The weir in Ossining offers tours and an opportunity to descend into the tunnel.

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The other notable structures on the aqueduct were houses built for the “keepers” or overseers who patrolled and maintained the aqueduct. Four were constructed in Westchester. Of the two that remain, the only one still on the Aqueduct and open to the public is on Walnut Street here in Dobbs Ferry. Built in 1857, it was the home of James Bremner, principal supervisor of the Aqueduct north of New York City and is now the headquarters of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct.

The architects and engineers believed that their creation would supply water to New York City for many centuries to come, but the rapid growth of the city and the influx of immigrants from all over the world resulted in greater demand, and the construction of the New Croton Aqueduct a few miles to the east began in 1885. Thanks to advances in technology, the new line which opened in 1890 is bigger and deeper in the ground. It still delivers water today. The Old Aqueduct was shut down in 1955, but the upper part was reopened in 1987 and supplies water to the town of Ossining. In 1968, New York State purchased the land and the structures in Westchester from New York City and created the Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park, which countless people enjoy today.

Function, vision

Ortega is an artist and registered architect in New York and co-founder of Reform Architecture. He tries to balance the two disciplines, so they influence each other. He answered an open call for the 2020 project “Monuments Now” at the Socrates Sculpture Park in Astoria Queens. Inspired by a book called *Water Works* written by Kevin Bone, a professor at Cooper Union, he set out to create a “monument to the hidden infrastructure of the city, particularly the water system.” It is also a monument to the immigrants who built it, and to the engineers and government officials who envisioned it. Ortega says most importantly it “is a monument to foresight, a human quality that we are in desperate need of right now.”

The efforts of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, led by Sara Kelsey, coupled with a grant from New York State, allowed Ortega to recreate his monument in an extremely appropriate location, directly



Artist/Architect Dionisio Ortega Cortes at the dedication of the “Arch”

above the inspiration for the piece. It rests just steps away from the Keepers House which serves as a visitor and education center for the aqueduct. His arch is built to the exact dimensions of the tunnel, and with the same materials.

It is now possible not only to see what the old aqueduct looked like, but to stand inside the cross section and try to imagine the skill and effort that went in to creating one of the most remarkable public works projects ever undertaken. While there, you might also be able to share the artist’s vision of foresight and think, as he stated at the dedication, “what seemingly impossibly large project do we need to envision now so that we can protect and ensure our future.” One can only hope that we have such a vision.



DFVAC members Peg Moynihan, and Howard Jordan chat with DFFD members George Keiling, and Cliff Foote (also a Corps member) outside ambulance headquarters on Ashford Ave. in 1963. Corps member Barbara Pearce looks on from the ambulance. — Photo Courtesy DFVAC

Volunteer Ambulance Corps Still Going Strong

By Teresa Walsh

For 60 years the Dobbs Ferry Volunteer Ambulance Corps has been providing emergency medical service to the village.

Since its inception in November of 1962, the Dobbs Ferry Volunteer Ambulance Corps (DFVAC) has set itself apart from the other Village emergency services as its founding members included women. It would be another 28 years, in 1990, before the Dobbs Ferry Volunteer Fire Department admitted its first female member.

As Dobbs Ferry Hospital was ending its ambulance transport service to the village there arose the need to replace it. A group of about 25 residents came together to fill this need and determined to now add prehospital care to the service.

The residents began meeting in the firemen's headquarters in the basement of the village hall for first aid training.

The group used an ambulance it received from the hospital. It was housed in the garage and bicycle shop owned by Joe Lynch at 81 Ashford Ave. Members would often have to move bicycles from in front of the ambulance in order to be able to respond to an emergency call.

A Board of Trustees consisting of a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and an at-large board member was elected as the Corps governing body with a captain, and a first and second lieutenant running the daily operations. Members attended weekly drills and monthly meetings.

The fire whistle activation of four blasts of two was the designated signal to respond to headquarters for a call. Assigned crews of three or four members were set up for each night of the week beginning at 9 p.m. to ensure that coverage was provided.

Continued on page 8

Before the DFVAC...

Prior to 1962, if one needed an ambulance, it was requested through your doctor or Dobbs Ferry Hospital. Edwards Funeral Home on Ashford Avenue provided the service. In 1953, George Keiling Jr. was approached by Mr. Bertsil Edwards about becoming the driver of the Cadillac LaSalle ambulance. Keiling, already a volunteer firefighter with Ogden Engine Company, agreed. The ambulance was originally kept in a garage on the Edwards property, but when that was demolished to make room for a parking lot, it was moved to Joe Lynch's Garage and Gas Station across the street, the site of the present-day Corps. The Edwards family decided to get out of the ambulance business

and sold the LaSalle to the Hospital for \$1. The hospital administration asked Keiling to stay on, and he did, covering all the Rivertowns and the newly -opened New York State Thruway. A crew of one, Keiling credited all of the local police departments for lending a hand on his many calls. Once, when help was needed, he pressed his father, and volunteer firefighter, George Sr. into service. George Sr. soon became a regular driver. Having no radios or pagers, Keiling's wife Marianne answered the phone and dispatched him during regular work hours. When the DFVAC was formed, he was invited to stay on, but with a young family and a growing business he started in 1957, he declined.

Small Town Mystery Remains Unsolved

By Teresa Walsh

These days the recounting of true crime narratives seem to be very much on trend. While these stories may seem far removed from our lives and only appear to happen to other people it should be noted that Dobbs Ferry has a cold case that has remained unsolved for more than four decades. A case that diligent police work has been unable to bring to closure, from that May evening more that 40 years ago when 17-year-old Martin ‘JR’ Crumblish disappeared from the village.

Police interviews and national database checks over the years have all come up short. Several excavations performed by police, sometimes in conjunction with cadaver dogs, have also produced no information on JR’s whereabouts.

The original missing persons case would eventually be reclassified and turned into a homicide investigation.

Over time numerous newspaper articles have been written about the case and much has been revealed about JR. We learn that as an only child, JR was described as happy-go-lucky. He liked drawing, writing poetry

and sports, playing for the high school JV football team in his sophomore year. He lived with his mom after his parents’ divorce. He was in the middle school musical production of Shenandoah.

A youth who climbed out the bedroom window of his apartment to attend beer parties. And who dabbled in drugs, activities that culminated in his relocating to California and living with father for a while. A youth who planned to take his SAT that fateful weekend.

Accounts of the night vary, but all have JR attending a beer party at a secluded spot, well-frequented by local youth, and sometime after that, leaving a friend’s house where he was to have spent the night. And then simply vanishing.

In 2010, Dobbs Ferry Police Chief Manuel ‘Rick’ Guevara was a sergeant on the village force studying for his criminal justice degree at Thomas Aquinas College.

As part of his studies, Guevara wrote an article on JR’s disappearance that was published that year.



Chief Rick Guevara

Guevara confirmed that since the article was published there have been additional excavations, and to date there have been no hits on the database where JR’s dental records have been uploaded. He granted permission for his article to be reprinted perhaps in anticipation of shining new light on the case.

Guevara said that he would like the teen’s remains to be found so that he could have a “proper burial.” And “to finally put Martin to rest.”

The case remains open. Anyone with any information is asked to please call the Dobbs Ferry Police Department at (914) 693-5500.

A Mother’s Missing Son

By Rick Guevara

Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter and birthdays, all significant days normally celebrated throughout the year that are associated with loved ones spending time together. But for one former Dobbs Ferry mother, these days bring little joy, as she still wonders what happened to her son, Martin “JR” Crumblish, when he disappeared 28 years ago.

Dobbs Ferry is a two- and -half square mile bedroom community populated by 10,600 residents in Westchester County, NY. Located in the northeast section of this NYC suburb is a 76-acre woodland preserve called the Juhring Estate. A frequently travelled area during the daytime by dog-walkers and hikers, it is more popular for the local teens as night-time party spot during the summer months.

Late on May 2, 1981, 17- year-old “JR” Crumblish left a beer party which had been held with a few friends at a Juhring Estate clearing known as The View. Sometime shortly after his friends returned home, “JR” Crumblish disappeared and has never been seen since.

Concerns over “JR” Crumblish’s disappearance began early that morning when he failed to show up for the SAT exam he had signed up to take. When the day wore on and there had still been no sign of him, his mother, Karen Kelly, became worried and contacted the Dobbs Ferry Police Department.

The disappearance was initially classified as missing person case. Initial investigating

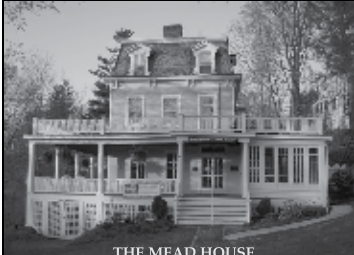


Martin “JR” Crumblish

officers handled the case as such because “JR” had told many people he had wanted to run away, possibly back to California where his father resided.

At the time of the report, “JR” was described as a white male, 155 lbs., 6 feet 1, with blonde hair and blue eyes. The only

Continued on page 8



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A Mother's Missing Son

Continued from page 7

discerning feature was that he had a gap between his two front teeth.

Martin George Crumblish was born on January 7, 1964, in Dobbs Ferry, NY. Because his father was also Martin Crumblish, his parents found it easier to call him "JR." After his parent's divorced, "JR's" dad moved back to California, but "JR" stayed with his mother at 7 Keller Lane in Dobbs Ferry.

"JR" was described as being a good student early on, but in his teens began to experiment as many youths do with alcohol and drugs. After that his grades began to suffer and he began to have more run-ins with the local police. His mother described him as a sweet person but was not recognizable during those occasions when he was intoxicated. After he became uncontrollable, "JR" moved in with his uncle... "JR" would frequently stay at friends' homes as well.

As the days passed, rumors abounded as to the fate of "JR" Crumblish. His mother, Karen Kelly, told police that her son had been having some difficulty with several local youths. This disagreement stemmed from their belief that "JR" had told the police that they may have been in possession of stolen property. She added

that on several occasions these youngsters had chased him home.

Karen Kelly hoped that her son would return; however, years slowly passed by and "JR" Crumblish never resurfaced. His identity and social security numbers were never used again in any capacity.

In 2002, Dobbs Ferry Police reclassified "JR" Crumblish's missing person case as a homicide. Police officials are not discussing what, if any new leads have been developed. However, all information in their possession suggests that the Dobbs Ferry teen was killed sometime after leaving the party.

Over the years, the Dobbs Ferry Police have been systematically chasing down all leads, hoping that one may lead to locating the missing youth.

In 2001, armed with information, the Dobbs Ferry Police Department were assisted by "Storm", one of three New York City cadaver dogs. These specially trained animals are used to either detect the presence of methane gases, which are common in decaying bodies, or skeletal remains. During the search, "Storm" alerted his handler to a location not far from "The View." Detectives from the Dobbs Ferry Police Department began digging, however their search turned up nothing.

That same year, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children was also tapped by Dobbs Ferry Police Detectives for assistance. Michael Harris, a retired New York City detective who is a volunteer with the center, was assigned to the case. After thoroughly looking over all available paperwork, it is his belief that Crumblish met with an untimely death.

"Martin never left Dobbs Ferry that night or any other night. He is still there, probably in a shallow grave... the key is to find him, because making a homicide case is hard without a body," said Harris.

Harris added, "There are witnesses out there who know what happened, people lose their loyalties as time passes... it's a matter of getting to them."

A suicide attempt was ruled out a long time ago as a body would have turned up. Harris also said, "We don't know exactly what happened to him, but it wasn't a stranger who did it."

Karen Kelly, who no longer resides in the Dobbs Ferry, said that his last words to her when he walked out that night almost 30 years ago was, "I love you mommy."

Kelly said, "I want his body placed to rest. I want a prayer said over his grave. He deserves that much. Anyone does."

Volunteer Ambulance...

Continued from page 6

Phone calls made from police headquarters notified the night crew of a call. These nighttime phone calls would later be replaced by a pager system that alerted crews.

By 1964 the DFVAC was headquartered in a new building constructed just for them on the same site where the bicycle shop had stood and had purchased a new state of the art Cadillac ambulance.

In the 1970s training was expanded and members learned CPR (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation) designed to save more lives.

By the 1980s the membership roster along with the population of the village grew. Members began expanding their medical expertise. Basic Emergency Medical Technician (EMTs) and CPR training became mandatory to ride the ambulance. EMTs were now serving as crew chiefs on all calls. A new modular ambulance was purchased as the frontline rig. The Cadillac now became the second response, or backup vehicle.

The Corps could now respond to multiple calls at the same time or provide two ambulances to the same scene if necessary.

Over the years the Corps has provided standby coverage at football games and other community events. In addition to responding to calls in the village, crews have responded to calls on the Saw Mill River Parkway and the New York State Thruway and to mutual aid calls in other villages. As the Corps' website states it is "not just a ride to the hospital" - something that goes back to the very beginning in 1962.