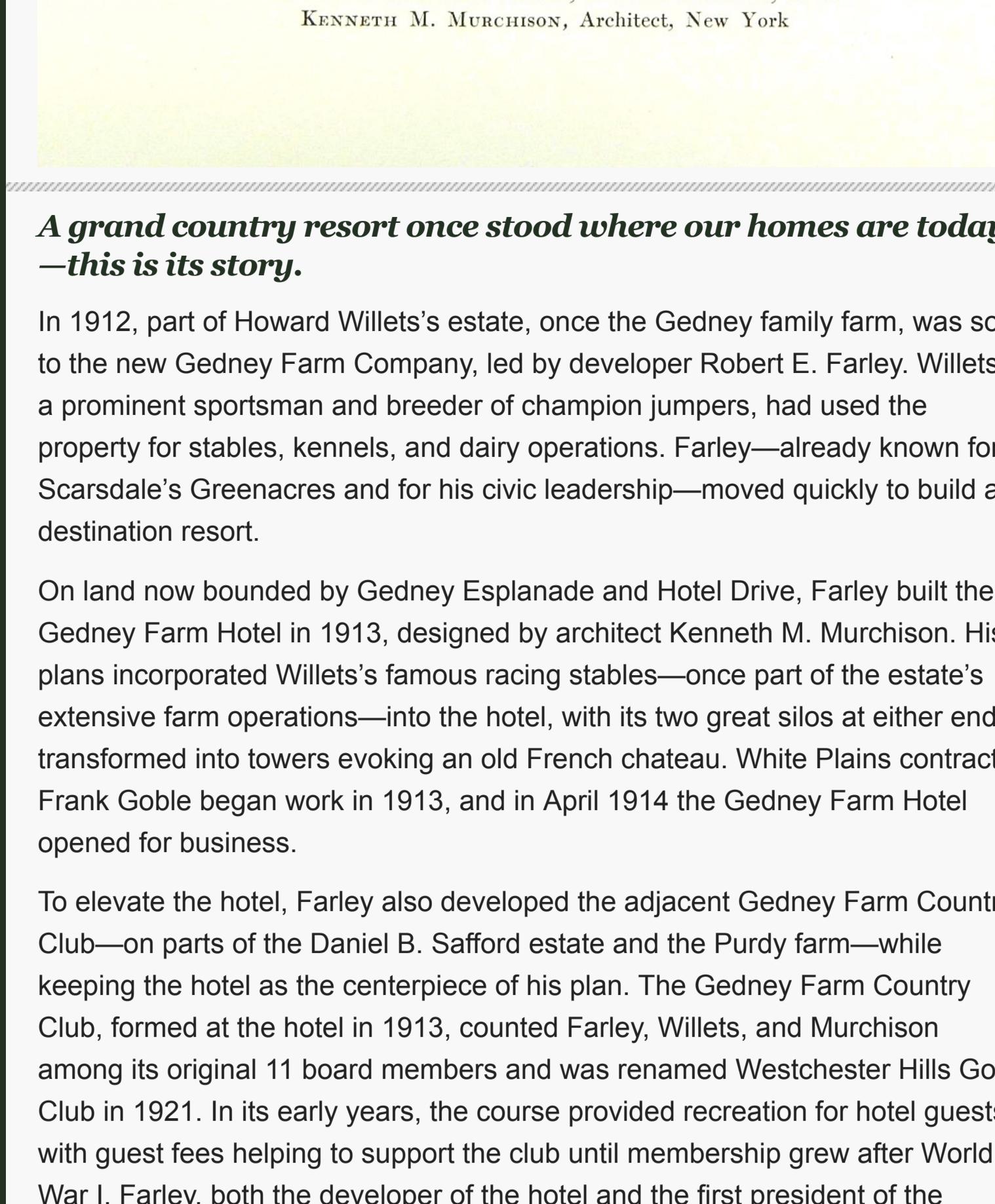




The Gedney Association: Celebrating 100 Years

Volume 4: The Gedney Farm Hotel—A Luxury Resort in White Plains, 1912–1924

September 2025



HOTEL AT GEDNEY FARM, WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.

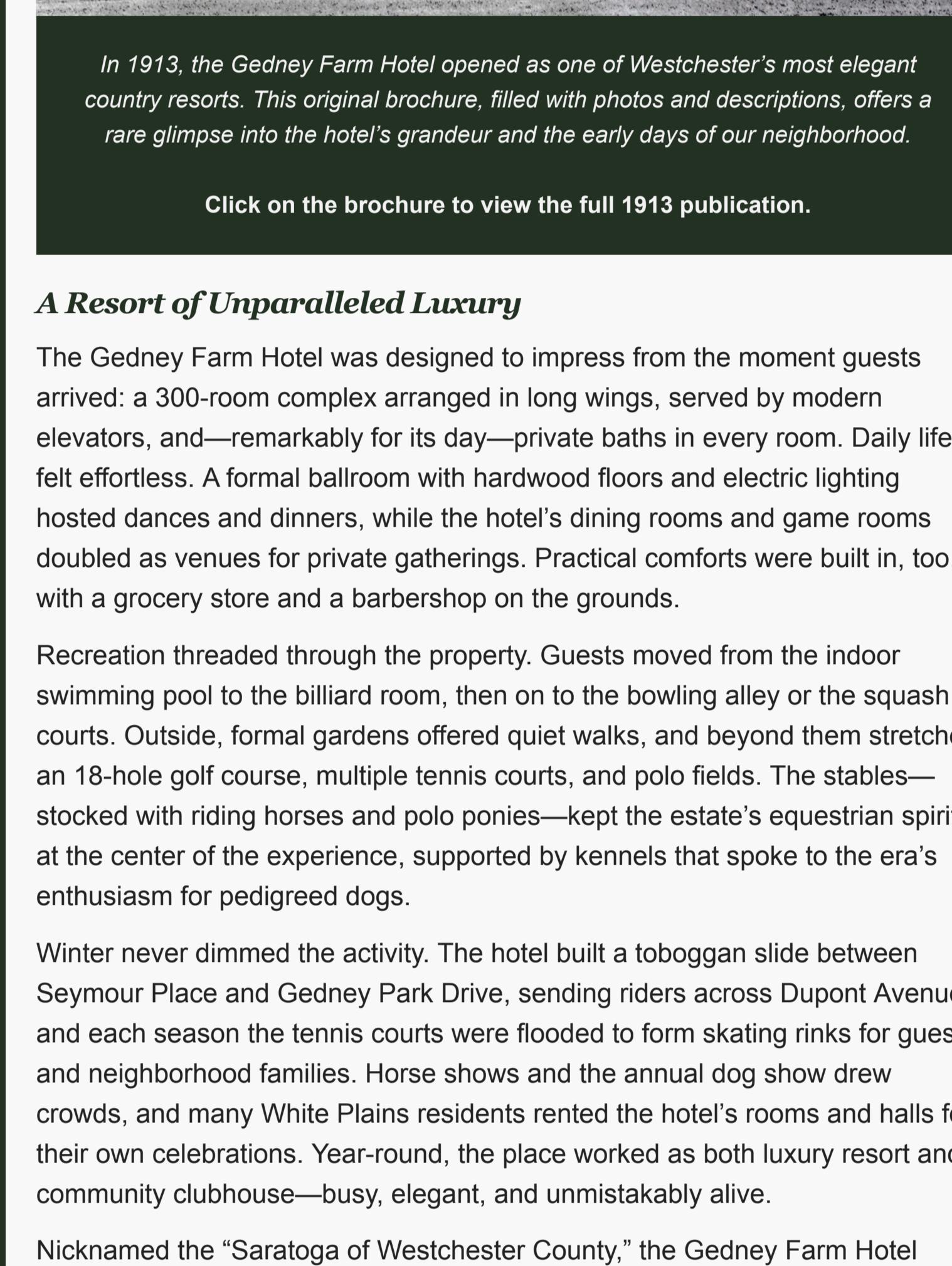
KENNETH M. MURCHISON, Architect, New York

A grand country resort once stood where our homes are today – this is its story.

In 1912, part of Howard Willets's estate, once the Gedney family farm, was sold to the new Gedney Farm Company, led by developer Robert E. Farley. Willets, a prominent sportsman and breeder of champion jumpers, had used the property for stables, kennels, and dairy operations. Farley—already known for Scarsdale's Greenacres and for his civic leadership—moved quickly to build a destination resort.

On land now bounded by Gedney Esplanade and Hotel Drive, Farley built the Gedney Farm Hotel in 1913, designed by architect Kenneth M. Murchison. His plans incorporated Willets's famous racing stables—once part of the estate's extensive farm operations—into the hotel, with its two great silos at either end transformed into towers evoking an old French chateau. White Plains contractor Frank Goble began work in 1913, and in April 1914 the Gedney Farm Hotel opened for business.

To elevate the hotel, Farley also developed the adjacent Gedney Farm Country Club—on parts of the Daniel B. Safford estate and the Purdy farm—while keeping the hotel as the centerpiece of his plan. The Gedney Farm Country Club, formed at the hotel in 1913, counted Farley, Willets, and Murchison among its original 11 board members and was renamed Westchester Hills Golf Club in 1921. In its early years, the course provided recreation for hotel guests, with guest fees helping to support the club until membership grew after World War I. Farley, both the developer of the hotel and the first president of the country club, remained a member until his death in 1933.



The Gedney Farm Country Club, established in 1913 and renamed Westchester Hills Golf Club in 1921. Source: Westchester County Historical Society.

A Prime Location

The Gedney Farm Hotel stood on land now occupied by homes along Hotel Drive and Gedney Esplanade, just east of Mamaroneck Avenue. Its sweeping main drive, now Hotel Drive, once served as the formal entrance to the hotel from Mamaroneck Avenue.

Guests typically arrived by chauffeur-driven automobile or on the New York, Westchester & Boston Railway (NYW&B), which had a station at Gedney Way providing direct service from New York City. The opening of this station in 1913 was considered a major step for the resort, making it a convenient gateway for city residents to enjoy the hotel and its surrounding community.

In a 1914 New York Times feature on the "Trend of Suburban Architecture," architect Murchison described the Gedney Farm Hotel as part of a new era of country resorts designed to blend grandeur with comfort. The French chateau style, he explained, was "in harmony with the countryside" while offering modern conveniences that placed the hotel at the forefront of suburban luxury.

White Plains - 1925

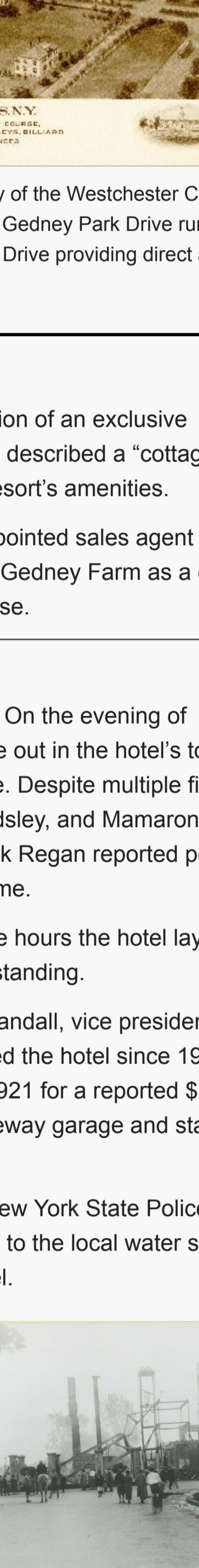
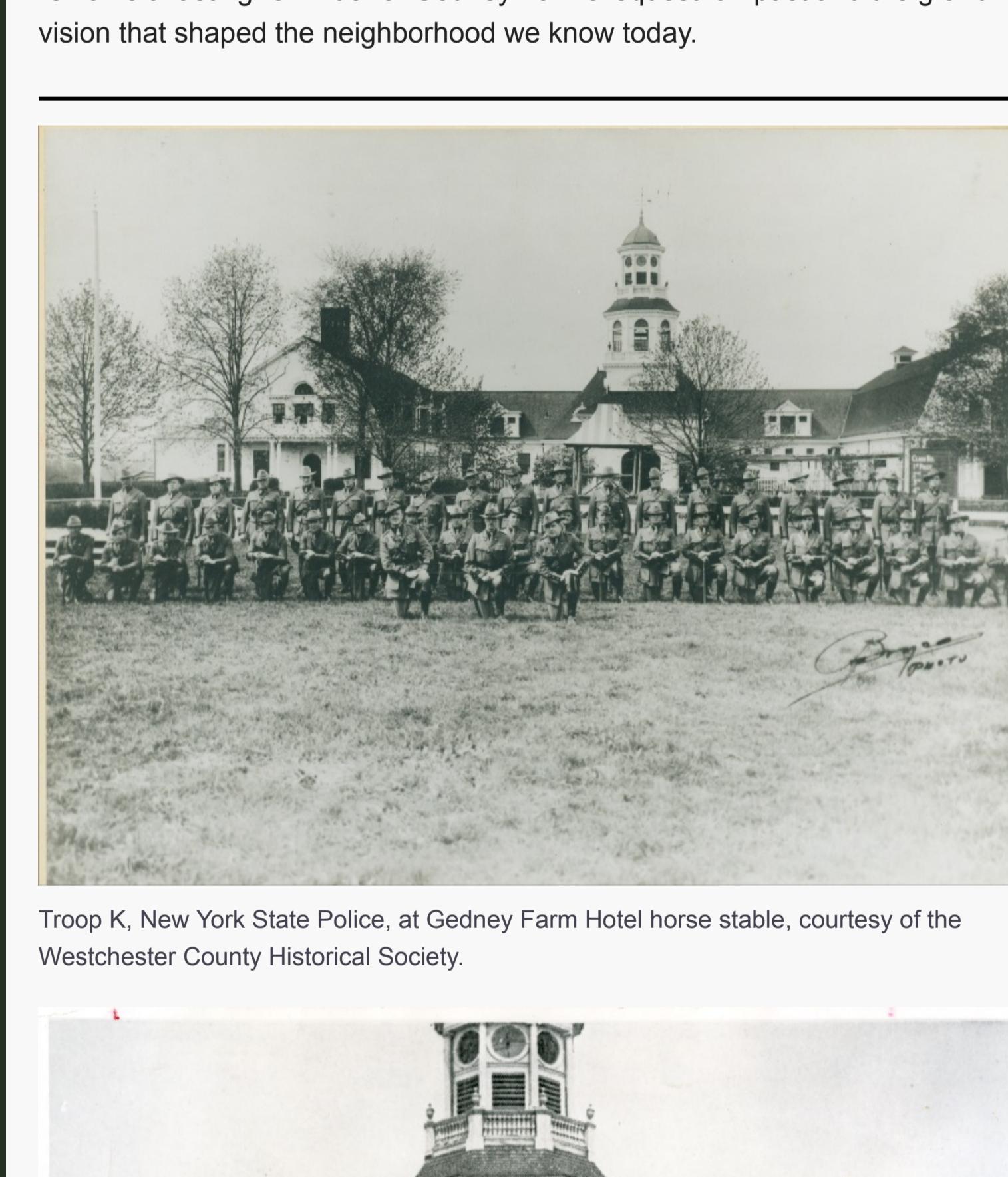


Illustration by Otto M. Vondrak

A few views in and about Gedney Farm Hotel



In 1913, the Gedney Farm Hotel opened as one of Westchester's most elegant country resorts. This original brochure, filled with photos and descriptions, offers a rare glimpse into the hotel's grandeur and the early days of our neighborhood.

Click on the brochure to view the full 1913 publication.

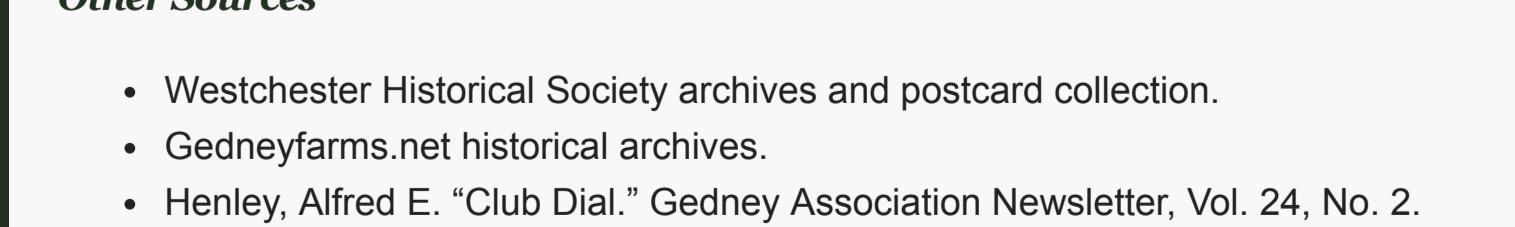
A Resort of Unparalleled Luxury

The Gedney Farm Hotel was designed to impress from the moment guests arrived: a 300-room complex arranged in long wings, served by modern elevators, and—remarkably for its day—private baths in every room. Daily life felt effortless: A formal ballroom with hardwood floors and electric lighting hosted dances and dinners, while the hotel's dining rooms and game rooms doubled as venues for private gatherings. Practical comforts were built in, too, with a grocery store and a barbershop on the grounds.

Recreation threaded through the property. Guests moved from the indoor swimming pool to the billiard room, then on to the bowling alley or the squash courts. Outside, formal gardens offered quiet walks, and beyond them stretched an 18-hole golf course, multiple tennis courts, and polo fields. The stables—stocked with riding horses and polo ponies—kept the estate's equestrian spirit at the center of the experience, supported by kennels that spoke to the era's enthusiasm for pedigreed dogs.

Winter never dimmed the activity. The hotel built a toboggan slide between Seymour Place and Gedney Park Drive, sending riders across Dupont Avenue, and each season the tennis courts were flooded to form skating rinks for guests and neighborhood families. Horse shows and the annual dog show drew crowds, and many White Plains residents rented the hotel's rooms and halls for their own celebrations. Year-round, the place worked as both luxury resort and community clubhouse—busy, elegant, and unmistakably alive.

Nicknamed the "Saratoga of Westchester County," the Gedney Farm Hotel attracted celebrities such as Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, the Guggenheim family, and entertainer Eddie Cantor. The grounds hosted high-profile events, including the Boston Terrier Club's specialty dog show in June 1915 and polo matches organized by the Westchester County Polo Club. From 1917 to 1924, the estate also served as the first home of New York State Police Troop K.



This 1917 image of the Gedney Farm Hotel, courtesy of the Westchester County Historical Society, depicts Mamaroneck Avenue and Gedney Park Drive running parallel, intersected by Gedney Esplanade, with Hotel Drive providing direct access to the hotel.

A Hub for Development

From the start, the hotel was central to Farley's vision of an exclusive residential community. In 1913, development plans described a "cottage colony" of homes that would share access to the resort's amenities.

In 1920, L. Ward Prince of Prince & Ripley was appointed sales agent for more than 300 acres of surrounding property, promoting Gedney Farm as a desirable home site anchored by a luxury hotel and golf course.

The Fire of 1924

The resort thrived for 12 years until tragedy struck. On the evening of September 20, 1924, around 8:45 p.m., a fire broke out in the hotel's tower and, driven by strong winds, swept through the structure. Despite multiple fire companies responding from Yonkers, Harrison, Ardsley, and Mamaroneck, low water pressure hampered the effort. Manager Frank Regan reported police believed a carelessly dropped cigarette was to blame.

All 150 guests escaped without injury, but after nine hours, the hotel lay in ruins, with only the two silo towers and some chimneys standing.

At the time, the property was owned by Edward Crandall, vice president of the New York State Hotel Association. He had managed the hotel for a reported \$15 million, including the hotel, surrounding acreage, the Ridgeway garage and stables, including the hotel, surrounding acreage, the Ridgeway garage and stables, and the Ridgeway house.

Earlier that year, in March 1924, a fire destroyed New York State Police Troop K's barracks at Gedney Farm, prompting upgrades to the local water system—improvements that arrived too late to save the hotel.

Troop K, New York State Police, at Gedney Farm Hotel horse stable, courtesy of the Westchester County Historical Society.

Gedney Farm Post Card, courtesy of the Westchester County Historical Society.

References

Books

- Hoffman, Renoda. *Yesterday in White Plains: A Picture History of a Vanished Era*. Westchester Historical Society.
- Charlestown, SC. *Architectural History of White Plains in the 20th Century*.
- Vondrak, Otto. *There's No Last Train on The Hudson*. 2013.
- Westchester Hills Club. *Centennial History of Westchester Hills Golf Club*, 1913–2013. Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 2013.

Newspaper & Magazine Articles

- "Important Development Along the Line of New York, Westchester & Boston Railway." *The New York Times*, July 20, 1913.
- "Trend of Suburban Architecture about Greater New York." *The New York Times*, June 28, 1914.
- "Gedney Farm Country Club Elects Officers." *The New York Times*, November 3, 1913.
- "Gedney Farm Hotel Destroyed by Fire." *The New York Times*, September 21, 1924.
- "Gedney Farm Hotel Lost Utterly." *The New York Times*, June 21, 1924.
- "New Murchison Dies in Subway." *The New York Times*, December 16, 1938.
- Magazine, April 11, 1913. *Westchester Hills Golf Club, White Plains, N.Y.* No. 15, April 1913.
- Magazine, April 11, 1913. *Westchester Hills Golf Club, White Plains, N.Y.* No. 15, April 1913.
- Magazine, April 11, 1913. *Westchester Hills Golf Club, White Plains, N.Y.* No. 15, April 1913.
- Magazine, April 11, 1913. *Westchester Hills Golf Club, White Plains, N.Y.* No. 15, April 1913.

Other Sources

- Westchester Historical Society archives and postcard collection.
- Gedney Farm Historical Society.
- Gedney Farm Club (Historical Archives).
- Farley, Robert E. "Letter from Our Founder." *Westchester Hills Golf Club Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 2, January 1922.

Board Members

Board Members

John Sheehan, President

Melanie Kollar, Information Officer

Carol Corbin, Secretary

Ellen Del Vecchio-Lee

Linda Eisen

Christian Garey

Jordan Lee Lender

Connie DeRidder

Connie DeRidder