



Guests pick out plants, pumpkins and corn stalks for sale during the Irvington Historical Society's benefit on Sept. 10.

TIM LAMORTE/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

## Owner relocates greenhouse to landmark property

By Jackie Lupo

IRVINGTON — Using a passion for historic restoration and a talent for detective work, the owner of Octagon House, preservation architect Joseph Pell Lombardi, and his son, Michael Lombardi, reinstated a Lord & Burnham greenhouse on the property, creating a replica of the one that originally stood in the same location next to the carriage house.

The greenhouse on the 4-acre West Clinton Avenue property, unveiled Sept. 10 at the Irvington Historical Society's annual fundraiser, now stands like a multifaceted, colorful jewel, its antique, wavy glass panes offset by paintwork in rose, gray, brown and dark red to match the authentic paint colors on the main house, which was

built in 1860. The crest of the roof is outlined by steel curlicues painted in bronze-gold, echoing the metalwork over the windows and chimneys of Octagon House, which the architect bought in 1978 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Inside the greenhouse, a brick floor laid in a herringbone pattern leads to an octagonal fountain with a goldfish pond. Over the entry door, a carving of an Eastern elk presides, echoing the images of the elk seen on the weather-vane on the main house's dome and on light fixtures, urns, and etched-glass panels throughout the residence.

On Sept. 9, Joseph Lombardi, who lives part-time in the house and part-time in Manhattan, said the restoration of the main house was almost complete, save for some decoration in the Egypt-

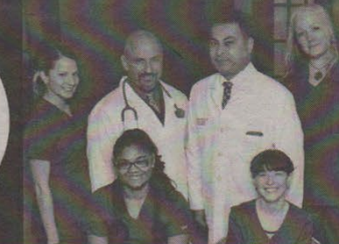
ian-Revival music room and restoration of the basement-level service kitchen. Guests at Saturday's historical society fundraiser had the rare opportunity to take guided tours of the house.

The National Trust had bought the house in 1976. After a series of owners who had failed to maintain it properly, the building had suffered a serious decline both visually and structurally. The dome was in danger of collapsing, the walls leaked, and many of the original details had been lost over the decades. The National Trust decided it could not afford to restore it properly, and offered it for sale for \$75,000, on the condition that the new owner restore the house up to the National Trust's exacting standards. Joseph Lombardi, who grew up in Irvington and was familiar with the house, rose to the challenge, becoming

the first private citizen ever to buy a house from the National Trust. He has spent many times the purchase price making the house structurally and mechanically sound, fixing the beautiful polychrome slate roof (necessitating the reopening of a Vermont quarry to find the right tones of slate to match those on the dome), and researching and recreating the original details of the house. The color scheme, which the architect called a "Romantic polychromatic paint scheme," was determined by microscopically analyzing layers of paint chips. He explained that the Victorians "were wildly excited about color, because [colored paint] was just recently available." Octagon House and its outbuildings are "as colorful as you can get," he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

NEW NAME. SAME GREAT CARE.

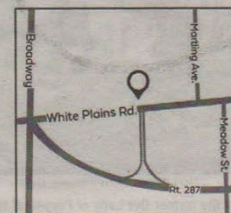


## IMMEDIATE CARE



is now Dwell Family Doctors

7 DAYS A WEEK  
NO APPOINTMENT IS NEEDED  
ALL MAJOR INSURANCES ARE ACCEPTED  
THE SAME GREAT PROVIDERS & STAFF ARE STILL HERE FOR YOU  
7+ YEARS SERVING THE COMMUNITY



155 White Plains Road  
Suite 210  
Tarrytown, NY 10591  
914.372.7171  
(NOT located in Stop & Shop Plaza)  
Mon-Fri: 8AM - 8PM  
Weekends: 9AM - 3PM  
dwellfamilydoctors.com



TIM LAMORTE/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

The structure was resized, and the pitch of its roof was changed, to match the site's former greenhouse.

## Greenhouse

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Until a few years ago, he and his son had been unable to turn their full attention to recreating outbuildings that no longer existed. They had rebuilt the carriage house, which had been devastated by fire (Michael Lombardi and his wife, Jessica, an artist, live there, with their 7-month-old son, Enzo).

Recreating the greenhouse, with an actual Lord & Burnham greenhouse of comparable size, was more of a challenge. Lord & Burnham, established on the Irvington waterfront in 1870 in buildings that now house the public library and the Bridge Street complex, flourished during the age of the great estates of the Hudson Valley. The company grew to be the premier glasshouse manufacturer in the U.S., and it was one of the major employers in the Village of Irvington. The firm

closed in 1988, but some of the greenhouse product lines continue to be produced under the Lord & Burnham name by the Under Glass Manufacturing Corp. and Rough Brothers, Inc.

Unfortunately, no photographs or drawings of the original greenhouse or artist's studio existed. The Lord & Burnham archives at the New York Botanical Garden, which might have provided clues to the greenhouse, do not include 19th-century structures; those plans had been destroyed in a fire at Lord & Burnham. So they had to use a variety of sources to reconstruct what the greenhouse probably looked like.

Joseph Lombardi said that old surveys of the property revealed the footprint of the original greenhouse, potting shed, and artist's studio. He was determined to find an actual, antique Lord & Burnham greenhouse rather than recreating one from scratch.

"For 30 years we searched for a Lord & Burnham greenhouse," he said. "We found one in Philadelphia on an estate that was being torn down." The greenhouse they acquired was larger than the footprint of the original one on the site, so it had to be resized and the pitch of the roof had to be determined. They found clues to what it should look like by studying old photographs of the greenhouse that existed at the neighboring Hamilton estate, and by looking at the recent reconstruction of the Lord & Burnham greenhouse at Olana, the home of Hudson River School artist Frederic Edwin Church in upstate Hudson. This latest project also included recreation of the artist's studio, a Lilliputian-size building painted to match the main house, and potting shed attached to the greenhouse, made to hold gardening supplies and the boiler that delivers heated water through pipes running under the greenhouse. "We have all of the original Lord & Burnham cast iron heating pipes," said Michael Lombardi. "The pieces have 'Lord & Burnham, Irvington, NY' marked on them."

They were able to recreate the decorative metalwork on the greenhouse and artist's studio roofs because several years before, they found a piece of that metal trim buried on the grounds. They first assumed it had fallen off the house, but there was no place that it fit, so they concluded that it had come off some long-demolished outbuilding. They had additional metalwork manufactured to match the one original piece.

Joseph Lombardi said that the original owners, who had many servants, would have been unlikely to have spent time repotting plants in their greenhouse, but they would probably have enjoyed walking across the lawn on a chilly day to sit in the warmth of the greenhouse, surrounded by fragrant lemon trees and other plants brought inside for the winter. Joseph Lombardi said the family plans to use the greenhouse much as the original owners did. "Mike will sit there with his wife and son, sipping tea," he said.

## What Life Is Like at Brightview Tarrytown...



Brightview Tarrytown is filled with people who are comfortable, who feel at home, who are rejuvenated and gain the energy to pursue their passions, learn and grow.

An appreciation for potential and possibilities – rather than limitations – is the focus.

Residents are engaged in a full calendar of intellectual and cultural pursuits, sports and exercise, music, art and travel.

Mom and Dad enjoy themselves and are no longer isolated in a house that has gotten to be too much.

OPEN HOUSE • Saturday, August 27 • 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

BRIGHTVIEW  
TARRYTOWN  
ASSISTED LIVING



Please call  
Marianne or Kaitlin to learn more.  
914-297-8594

581 Old White Plains Road • Tarrytown, NY 10591

American Legion - Dobbs Ferry Post 1048

## Flea Market & Bake Sale

(Many Vendors!!!)

Dobbs Ferry Waterfront  
Sunday, Sept 18

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Raindate: Sun. Sept 25  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

For more information,  
call 693-9482



## MAISON MARCELL

OFFERING:

- Custom Upholstery
- Furniture Restoration
- Custom Window Treatments & Drapery
- Fabrics available for sale

Free Pickup & Delivery • Free Estimates

91 Main Street • Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. 10522  
Call for an appointment (914) 693 9044

