

The Woodbury/Rushmore Connection

Just what is the connection between Charles Rushmore of Highland Mills and Mount Rushmore of South Dakota? It is a rather curious story which goes back to the 1880's when Rushmore, a young attorney with a New York City law firm, was sent to South Dakota to inspect some mines which a large investing company was planning to buy. Rushmore visited the site and became suspicious about the valuable minerals that immediately turned up. Upon investigating, Rushmore found the mine was being "salted" with minerals by the promoters of the investment and placed in working areas for easy discovery. Rushmore blew the whistle and, in doing so, saved his firm's client a great deal of money. Later, Rushmore asked some local officials and businesspeople what was the name of the great stone mountain they faced. One of the businessmen, William Challis, reportedly replied, "Never had any – but it has now. We'll call the thing Rushmore." That was in 1885 and in 1930, the United States Board of Geographic Names formally recognized the name, "Mount Rushmore.," During its early development, Charles Rushmore donated \$5,000 toward the now-famous memorial which was dedicated by President Calvin Coolidge in 1927. It contains 60-foot high sculptures of the heads on Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt.

The Rushmores Come to Woodbury

Charles Rushmore was born in New York City in 1856 and remained a resident of New York State his whole life. He founded his own law firm, Rushmore, Bisbee & Stern, and had the largest New York banks as his clients. Around 1900, because of Mrs. Rushmore's ill health, the family decided that good country air would improve her condition. They settled in Highland Mills for their new home and first lived in a house on Quaker Road. Soon the Rushmores began acquiring property in the Woodbury area, eventually owning 1,500 acres, including Schunnemunk Mountain. In 1908, they built a mansion of Spanish colonial design which they named Carmore (the "Car" from Carpenter, Mrs. Rushmore's maiden name, and the "more" from Rushmore). It still stands today, known as the Rushmore Estate, with much of the original land now part of the Brigadoon housing community off Route 32.

The Rushmore Memorial Library

Mrs. Rushmore's health improved considerably after moving to Woodbury and, in fact, she lived to be 96, surviving her husband by many years. Caring about their community a great deal, the Rushmores and their daughter, Jean, became concerned that there was no library in Highland Mills and they took that on as a project to fill that void. They bought land at Route 32 and Weygant Hill and had a building constructed which opened as a library in 1923. The Rushmores provided the original furnishings and books, and even formed a volunteer group to staff it. After Charles Rushmore died in 1931, Mrs. Rushmore deeded the library to the local school district with the agreement that it would be known as the Rushmore Memorial Library in honor of her late husband. The building has been granted state and federal status as an historic site, and in 1984 became the home of the Woodbury Historical Society, housing the Society's extensive collection of historical books, maps, artifacts and memorabilia related to Woodbury. The Rushmores, no doubt, would have been very pleased.



Charles Rushmore and his curious connection with Mt. Rushmore will be the program topic at the Woodbury Historical Society's Annual Meeting on November 3rd at 2:00 P.M. Rushmore and his family were long-time residents of Highland Mills. Guest speaker Lou Del Bianco will discuss his grandfather, Luigi's, role as chief stone carver on the Mt. Rushmore project and how the mountain in South Dakota came to bear the Rushmore name.



Charles Rushmore and his family moved to Highland Mills around 1900 for the "fresh country air" because of Mrs. Rushmore's fragile health. They first lived in a home of Quaker Road where Mr. Rushmore is seen on his horse. The house still stands and is now Peppy & Eddy's restaurant. The Rushmore's daughter, Jean, was married there in 1906.



The Rushmore family built an estate in Highland Mills in the Spanish colonial style, acquiring 1,500 acres in Woodbury in the process. First called "Carmore," it is now known as the Rushmore Estate. The Woodbury Historical Society's Annual Meeting was held here on November 3rd, 2012 thanks to the gracious hospitality of the current owners, Dr. and Mrs. Seth Pulver.



**In the early days, this is how the Rushmore Estate appeared.
In the background can be seen the estate's ballroom under construction.**