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If You're Thinking Of Living In:

Tarrytown, NY

A Historical Stretch Along The Hudson River

By ELSA BRENNER

IN recent summer evening, Cathy and Richard Chulla and their two daughters spread a blanket along the Hudson River and sat down to enjoy a refreshing breeze coming off the water.

The family was part of a crowd of Tarrytown residents who had gathered by the river that sultry evening not only to cool off but to watch an outdoor movie sponsored by the village. Tarrytown's proximity to the Hudson and the availability of such public events were two reasons the Chullas had limited their recent search for a house to Tarrytown.

"And the sunsets, too," Mrs. Chulla added. "They're among the most beautiful in the world."

Mr. Chulla, an employee of Sleepy Hollow's water department, and his wife, who teaches second grade in Tarrytown, recently bought a three-bedroom house in the village for \$399,000 after looking for two years. They had refused to consider other towns because they wanted to live where they "could walk anywhere, day or night, and feel safe," Mrs. Chulla said.

The mayor of Tarrytown, Paul Janos, said the village's quality of life "isn't that easy to find anymore 25 miles outside of Manhattan." Mr. Janos, a part-time mayor, who also owns the Main Street Cafe, said elected officials had worked to "keep a handle on overdevelopment" and the ills that often accompany it

"For one thing, we've recently upzoned to decrease future density," said Mr. Janos, who was born in Tarrytown 46 years

ago, just as the Tappan Zee Bridge opened.

The bridge, which provided a link over the Hudson between Westchester and Rockland Counties, now carries I-287, Westchester's major east-west highway, and I-87 leading south toward New York City. Its opening was a watershed for Tarrytown, prompting development of office parks and hotels and generating new tax dollars. But it also caused, and continues to cause, traffic problems along Route 9, the main thoroughfare (also known as Broadway), and the side streets.

Mr. Janos was re-elected last year to a second two-year term on a platform of preserving the village and controlling development. When he was initially elected, much of his support came from residents who had been fighting a plan by the state Department of Transportation to straighten Neberan Road in the Tarrytown Lakes neighborhood. The road was already being used by drivers as an alternative to I-287, and residents did not want to encourage more traffic in the mostly residential area by making the road easier to navigate. The road was never straightened.

BUT if the housing market is any indication, Tarrytown's assets outweigh its traffic problems. Karen Stroub, the manager of DeCecchis Realty in Tarrytown, said residents enjoy the village so much that they rarely move away. As a result, Ms. Stroub said, only 29 houses and one co-op have been sold so far this year.



"I have a folder's worth of customers who will sell only if I can find them something else in Tarrytown," Ms. Stroub said. "It's a bit of a logjam."

Of the village's 5,200 housing units, less than 40 percent are single-family houses, with the median price \$340,000. In Westchester County, the median price of a single-family house is \$470,000.

Almost 60 percent of the residences -- rentals, co-ops and condominiums -- in the village are in multiunit buildings. Another agent, Eleanor H. Ross, who owns Tarrytown Real Estate with David Leggio, said she recommends renting in Tarrytown while waiting for the right house to come on the market, giving house buyers a chance to know the area.

Families like the Chullas -- who have two daughters, ages 10 and 13 -- say the schools are another reason to move to Tarrytown, which is part of the town of Greenburgh. Graduating seniors in the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns, which serves most of Tarrytown and all of Sleepy Hollow, a neighboring village in the town of Mount Pleasant, scored an average of 597* on the College Board verbal tests and 621* for math in 2000, the most recent year for which the district had numbers. Those results were well above the state average, which was 494 for the verbal test and 506 for math. Of the 130 students who graduated in 2000, 70 percent went on to four-year colleges and 19 percent to two-year institutions.

*** Correction: Sunday, September 2, 2001.** An article on Aug. 19 about living in Tarrytown misstated the average College Board scores of the graduating seniors in the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns in 2000. They were 495 for the verbal section and 500 for math, **not 597 and 621.**

Last year, almost 900 students in Grades 7 through 12 attended Sleepy Hollow Middle School and High School at the campus overlooking the Hudson. The high school curriculum includes 16 advanced placement courses and 18 honors courses.

In all, there were 2,284 students in the district in January. Per pupil costs for 2000-2001 were \$14,460 a student, said Andrew LaBella, the business manager for the district.

Tappan Hill Elementary School houses prekindergarten and kindergarten classes. First-grade students attend John Paulding Elementary School. Second and third graders are at Winfield L. Morse Elementary School. Washington Irving Intermediate School, has Grades 4, 5 and 6.

The assistant school superintendent, Dr. Susan K. Heiferman, described the school district as "diverse economically and ethnically," with more than 40 percent of the students coming from Hispanic and other minority families.

About 375 students in Tarrytown who live south of Route 119, an east-west road, attend the Irvington Union Free School District, which serves Irvington and part of the unincorporated areas of Greenburgh.

In all, 1,735 students attend Irvington schools: Dows Lane Elementary School (K-5), Irvington Middle School (6-8) and Irvington High School (9-12). Per pupil cost in the Irvington district for the last year was \$14,481. In 2000, 96 percent of the graduating class went on to college. College Board scores in 2000 averaged 552 for verbal and 572 for math.

Despite its relatively small size, Tarrytown has been home to a number of historical figures. After the Revolutionary War until 1849, when the Hudson River Railroad opened, the area flourished as a port. In the middle of the 19th century, river traffic slowed and factories sprang up, with the village incorporating in 1870.

By the turn of the century, mansions had begun to appear on the hills overlooking the Hudson. Among the remaining mansions is Lyndhurst, a Gothic Revival structure now owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It was designed by Alexander Jackson Davis for Gen. William Paulding, a former mayor of New York City, and completed in 1838. It was later owned by Jay Gould, the railroad financier.

Tarrytown has also been home to other tycoons, including William E. Dodge, a merchant and philanthropist; J. D. Maxwell, an automobile pioneer; and several members of the Lehman banking family.

Washington Irving, known for "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," who has been described as the first American to make his living solely from writing lived in Tarrytown, at Sunnyside, a pre-Civil War estate now open to the public.

Samuel L. Clemens also owned a house, which is now used by catering service. "It's a great place," Clemens said in 1902 about the village. "It has a lower death rate and a higher tax rate than any place on the civilized globe."

Another village landmark, the 800-seat Music Hall, is on Main Street, along with many antique stores and family-owned restaurants. The Music Hall was built in 1885 in the Queen Anne style by William Wallace, a chocolate manufacturer. Originally a venue for opera and vaudeville, it is one of the oldest theaters in Westchester County. It has been used for concerts, town meetings

and cotillions. President Theodore Roosevelt once spoke on its stage.

Joan Baez, Tony Bennett, Dave Brubeck, Liz Callaway, Tom Chapin, Judy Collins, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Tito Puente, Gwen Verdon and Wynton Marsalis are among those who have entertained at the Music Hall. Mr. Marsalis is returning for two shows there on Oct. 27.

Today, visitors can take in the Tap Kids Show at the Music Hall, where more than 40 young tap dancers from the United States and Canada will be performing.

For those staying for dinner, be warned. "They roll up the sidewalks early on Sunday evening in Tarrytown," Mayor Janos said. "Don't forget, it's just a small town at heart."

THE SUNNYSIDE OF LIFE: Washington Irving, who was born in 1783 and never married or had children, shared his home, Sunnyside (now a national historic landmark), with his brother Ebenezer and five nieces. Irving also used the pen names Dietrich Knickerbocker, Jonathan Oldstyle and Geoffrey Crayon. He often traveled in Europe, and in 1842 was named minister (what today would be ambassador) to Spain by President John Tyler. On Nov. 28, 1859, Irving died at Sunnyside surrounded by his relatives. He was buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery at the Old Dutch Church in Sleepy Hollow.

