

BOOK GIVES LIFE TO BANNERMAN CASTLE

ART TEACHER THOM JOHNSON TAKES HIS PASSION TO PRINT

There's a medieval-style castle not far from Irvington, and IHS art teacher Thom Johnson is working to see it gets the attention it deserves. It's Bannerman Castle on Pollepel Island in the Hudson River near Cold Spring, and Mr. Johnson has co-authored a book on the subject.



Thom Johnson leads tour of Bannerman's Island.

With Barbara H. Gottlock, a retired high school librarian, he has published "Bannerman Castle" in the Arcadia Images of America book series as part of his effort to save this gem of Americana. On page 115, you'll find a photograph of Mr. Johnson, who has been with the District for 30 years, with a group of his art students posing in front of the castle ruins.

Now in disrepair, the castle was built as an arsenal in the early 1900s by Francis Bannerman. A Scottish immigrant, he purchased surplus military supplies for re-sale and used the island as both a residence and a storage place. His business was the model for the Army-Navy store.

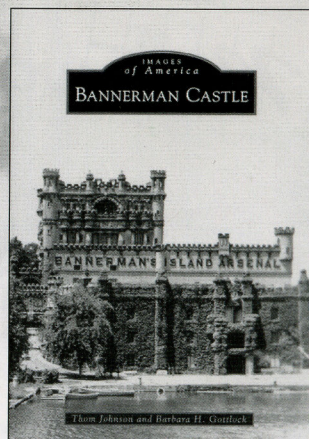
But Bannerman's interest wasn't simply mercantile, explained Mr. Johnson, who is also a founder of the Bannerman Castle Trust. "He was an educator in a very real sense," said the art teacher who occasionally uses the island as an extension of the classroom. Bannerman often brought youngsters from his neighborhood in Brooklyn to the island.

In early October, more than 40 students from advanced photography, AP portfolio

and architecture visited the island for a range of photographic, art and architecture projects.

The castle is an architectural treasure that offers rich lessons in history and art, and provides innumerable opportunities for photographing, sketching and painting. "It is an example of how much our architectural heritage can be used to enrich the education of today's students," said Mr. Johnson.

Bannerman died in 1918; the island eventually fell into disrepair and, in 1969, burned. It is now managed by the Bannerman Castle Trust under the auspices of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Tours are available in spring, summer and fall. For more information, go to www.bannermancastle.org. Copies of Mr. Johnson's book are available in area bookstores.



HUDSON VALLEY RUINS: Former student puts a lens on the area's architectural treasures

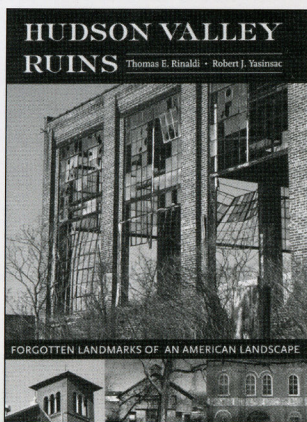
You don't have to travel to Europe to see the ruins of civilization. Ruins of our own abound right here in Westchester. Fortunately, Robert Yasinsac, an Irvington High School graduate (1995), has saved many of them, if only in photographs. Mr. Yasinsac, with Tom Rinaldi, has co-authored "Hudson Valley Ruins: Forgotten Landmarks of an American Landscape," published in September. The book focuses on abandoned historic sites in our region that have been all but forgotten, or sit awaiting demolition.

The Tarrytown resident has always had an interest in history and photography, one that was stoked by teachers Peter Oley and

Thom Johnson. Mr. Oley was his fourth-grade teacher, whose field trips awakened Yasinsac's historic sensibilities. Thom Johnson, who taught Yasinsac photography, lent him books on architecture and the Hudson Valley that touched a deep chord. "These structures are our link to

the past. It is a shame to let them disappear," he said. "I have photographs of many sites that were still standing when I was younger that have crumbled or been demolished."

He hopes that his work will save other architectural gems from demolition by drawing attention to their historic and potential value. For information, go to www.hudsonvalleyruins.org.



FITNESS CENTER UPDATE

In a cooperative venture between the Village and the school District, the Village of Irvington's Recreation Department held four open houses for residents to tour the District Fitness Center in the Campus A&A. The open houses, held in October, were designed to provide input on a pilot gym membership program for all residents of the Village and the District.

Residents were encouraged to share their comments on this potential pilot program through questionnaires. The results are being reviewed by the Recreation Department, and a determination will be made on the initiative by January.