



Greenburgh AND The ARTS

By: Riley Wentzler and Felicia Barber

Greenburgh has a rich artistic culture and history. Below are the stories of a few notable artists who either currently live here in Greenburgh, lived here in the past, or were born here.

Cab Calloway (1907-1994): Cab Calloway was a famous jazz singer and musician. Cab Calloway was born on December 25th, 1907 in Rochester, New York. He spent his childhood in Baltimore Maryland, before moving to Chicago Illinois to study law at Crane College. His heart was never really in it however, his true passion was singing. He frequently performed at Chicago's famous Sunset Club as part of The Alabamians. After meeting Louis Armstrong and learning the style of scat singing, he dropped out of law school, left Chicago, and moved to New York to pursue a full-time career as a singer. In 1930, Cab Calloway and his Orchestra were regular performers at one of the most popular clubs in New York, Harlem's Cotton Club. His most famous song, which sold more than one million copies, is "Minnie the Moocher" (1931) (<https://www.biography.com/people/cab-calloway-9235609>). In 1955, he moved to Greenburgh and settled into a 12 room

House on Knollwood Avenue. While there, he performed in the famous opera, “Porgy and Bess”

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/14cabwe.html>).

He received the National Medal of the Arts in 1993 and died a year later in Hockessin, Delaware (<https://www.biography.com/people/cab-calloway-9235609>). Cab Calloway is not the only famous artist of Greenburgh who spent much of their career in Harlem’s Cotton Club, the same is true for the comedian Moms Mabley.

Moms Mabley(1894–1975): Moms Mabley was a famous African American comedian. Her real name is Loretta Mary Aiken. She was born in Brevard, North Carolina. Her father was a firefighter; he died in the line of duty when she was eleven. She began her career as a comedian with the African-American Vaudeville Circuit at the age of fourteen. In the 1920s, she became a regular performer at Harlem’s Cotton Club. She used her standup comedy routines as a way to reveal and undermine the systemic racism that existed all over the United States at that time. Her subtle yet hilarious routines resonated with African Americans throughout the country. Her most successful comedy albums include: *The Funniest Woman Alive*, *Moms Mabley at the Playboy Club*, and *Moms Mabley at the UN*. In addition to her primary career as a comedian, she also was an actress. She performed in the Broadway show *Fast and Furious: A Colored Revue in 37 Scenes* (1931). Her acting career was so successful that she performed at The Apollo Theater more than any other performer in the 1930’s. She also acted in all of the following movies: *The Big Timers* (1945), *Boarding House Blues* (1948), and the musical revue *Killer Diller* (1948) (<https://www.biography.com/people/moms-mabley-38691>). Sometime in the 1950s, Mabley moved to the Town of Greenburgh where she stayed until her death in 1975 (<https://americacomesalive.com/2014/02/26/jackie-moms-mabley-1894-1975-trailblazing-comedian/>). Singers and comedians aren’t the only type of artists Greenburgh can be proud of, the town also has a few famous sculptors. One such sculptor is Vinne Bagwell.

Vinne Bagwell: Vinne Bagwell is a famous African American sculptor. She was born in Yonkers. She was raised in the Town of Greenburgh and attended Elmsford High School where she first became interested in art in general and more specifically in painting. She then studied painting at Morgan State in Baltimore,

Maryland. However after graduating college she taught herself the art of sculpting. She has been completely self-taught ever sense. She began her craft in 1933. Thematically, her art emphasizes the struggles and successes of the African-American Experience. Her first commission entitled “The First Lady of Jazz Ella Fitzgerald” was for the City of Yonkers in 1996 (<https://www.vinniebagwell.com/about>). In 2008, Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, commissioned her to create “Fredrick Douglass Circle” a two-foot sculpture honoring the man. Her more recent commissions are: a sculpture commemorating the contributions of Chickasaw Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans, commissioned by the City of Memphis, Tennessee entitled “Legacies” (2010) (<https://www.vinniebagwell.com/about>), and “a three-quarter, life-size bust” of Teddy Roosevelt entitled "The Man in the Arena" (2015) commissioned by the DC Government Department of General Services (Bagwell, 1993). Inspired by her sculpture honoring Fredrick Douglass, the city of Yonkers has commissioned her to create a vast project commemorating the city’s long African American history entitled “The Enslaved Africans’ Rain Garden” which she is currently working on. Not all of Greenburgh’s famous artists came here from outside the towns borders, some were born right here. One such group of artists is the lead singers from the world famous R&B group Atlantic Starr.



Atlantic Starr: Atlantic Starr is a world famous R&B group based in White Plains. It was founded in 1977 by three brothers from Tarrytown: David Lewis,

Wayne Lewis and Johnathan Lewis. All three brothers graduated from Woodlands High School (<https://www.lohud.com/story/news/2017/06/09/greenburgh-band-atlantic-starr-honored-street-naming/383680001/>). The three founding brothers also function as lead singers. In addition to being a lead singer Johnathon Lewis also plays the trombone. At the time it was founded, the band also included: Sharon Bryant, William Sudderth,(trumpet) Koran Daniels,(saxophone) Clifford Archer, Porter Carroll Jr., and Joseph Phillips.

The band, Earth Wind & Fire was the inspiration for much of Atlantic Starr's early music. Their first two albums were *Atlantic Starr* (1978) and *Straight to the Point* (1979). These albums did ok, the most successful song on these first two albums "Stand Up" made it to number 16 on Billboard's R&B charts. However, it was their third album, *Radiant* (1981) that made them into titans of R&B music. The following year when they released their fourth album *Brilliance* the single "Circles" climbed to number 2 on Billboard's R&B charts.

Starting in 1984 band members began to leave. The first to leave was a singer Sharon Bryant. Her departure was shortly followed by those of: the trumpeter William Sudderth, the bassist Clifford Archer, the saxophonist Koran Daniels and the drummer Porter Carroll Jr. in 1986. However despite these setbacks the band continued to dominate the R&B charts In fact, in 1987 they released their first two number 1 hits "Always" and "Secret Lovers" (<https://www.allmusic.com/artist/atlantic-starr-mn0000509356/biography>). On September 26th 2015, Greenburgh Town Supervisor Paul Feiner, declared September 26 to be Atlantic Starr Day (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/atlantic-starr-day-celebration-concert-tickets-47395836222>), and on Monday June 5th 2017, part of Old Tarrytown Road was renamed Atlantic Starr Way in their honor (<https://www.lohud.com/story/news/2017/06/09/greenburgh-band-atlantic-starr-honored-street-naming/383680001/>). An Atlantic Starr Day Concert is scheduled for Thursday September 27th, 2018 at 7:00pm at The DoubleTree Hotel in Tarrytown (<https://www.lohud.com/story/news/2017/06/09/greenburgh-band-atlantic-starr-honored-street-naming/383680001/>). While most of Greenburgh's contributions to the music scene have been in R&B or jazz, pop music has also left an imprint on Greenburg, thanks to Jesse McCartney.

Jesse Abraham Arthur McCartney: was born on April 9th 1987 in Greenburgh's Village of Ardsley; he attended Ardsley High School, and graduated in 2005 (Internet Movie Data Base 1990-2018). He is a Pop Singer/Pop-Rock/R&B singer with eight number one songs (Billboard Corp. 2018). In addition to his singing career, he appeared as a guest star on the television show "The Suite Life of Zack & Cody" (Sandefur, 2005). He currently lives in Los Angeles California. He is 31 years old. In addition to making big contributions to the music scene some Greenburgh's residents of have also greatly impacted television. The two most prominent examples are Dana Reeve and Biff Henderson:

Dana Reeve (1961-2006): Dana Reeve, wife of Christopher Reeve, was an actress and philanthropist. She was born on March 17, 1961 in Teaneck, New Jersey, but she was raised in Greenburgh's Village of Scarsdale. She attended Middlebury College in Vermont where she studied English Literature. She graduated cum laude in 1984. She acted both on Broadway and in the television show Law & Order. After her husband suffered the spinal cord injury which left him paralyzed, she became a philanthropist when she started the Christopher Reeve Foundation. The Foundation is dedicated to researching treatment and a possible cure for paralysis. She died of lung cancer on March 6, 2006 (<https://www.biography.com/people/dana-reeve-158474>). Another famous Greenburgh resident, to appear prominently on television, is Biff Henderson.

Biff Henderson: Biff Henderson is a comedian and television personality best known for his work on The David Letterman Show from 1980-2015. He was born on October 3, 1946 in Durham, North Carolina. His real name is James Jackson Henderson Jr. Before serving in The United States Army during the Vietnam War, he studied business administration at the Hampton Institute in Virginia (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0376345/bio?ref=nm_ov_bio_sm). In the 1970's, he began working in New York City at NBC in the Technical Operations Department. He soon became a stage manager. Initially his role as stage manager was to oversee coverage of The World Series and NASA'S space shuttle launches. Then in 1980, he began his career as stage manager for The David Letterman Show. In addition to being stage manager he also appeared on camera alongside Letterman. The show was canceled a few years later and then moved from NBC to CBS in 1995. Henderson moved with Letterman and

remained in his dual role as stage manager and comedian/TV personality until 2015 (<https://www.dga.org/Craft/VisualHistory/Interviews/Biff-Henderson.aspx?Filter=Full%20Interview>). One journey which closely parallels Biff Henderson's journey is that of the author Sarah Bracey White.

Sarah Bracey White: Sarah Bracey White is an African American author who writes about the hardships and triumphs of the African American Experience. She was born in Sumter, South Carolina in 1946. When she was nine months old, she moved from Sumter to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and stayed with her aunt. When she was five she returned to her home town at her mother's request. She received a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature from a local college in South Carolina and then earned a Master's Degree in Library Sciences from Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. She officially became a Greenburgh resident in the year 1983, at 35 years of age. She is an author. She has written two books: her memoir *Primary Lessons* (2013) and *The Wanderlust A South Carolina Folk Tale* (2015). She has also written pieces for all the following anthologies: *Children of the Dream* (1999), *Dreaming in Color: Living In Black and White* (2000), *Aunties: 35 Writers Celebrate Their Other Mothers* (2004), *Gardening at a Deeper Level* (2012), and *What We Wore* (2017). She is 72 years old. She currently serves as the Director of Arts and Culture for The Town of Greenburgh. Her hobbies include gardening and photography. You can learn more about her on her website www.onmymind.org.



About The Authors:

We are both interns at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

Riley Wentzler:

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. For more information about the about Greenburgh's Artistic History or to help me find employment, you can contact me at: rjwentzler413@gmail.com

Felicia Barber:

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government. If you want learn more about my artwork, or help me find employment, you can contact me at: feliciadbarber@gmail.com.

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