

After World War II, several black families, often headed by veterans, bought homes here. While these new families were welcomed by and friendly with the Purdy extended family, they were more often engaged in white collar, professional occupations, and became more involved in the civic life of Scarsdale than their predecessors. Around 1960, housing discrimination started to wane in Scarsdale, allowing black families to buy homes in other parts of the Village. Towards the end of the 20th century most of the remaining Purdy homes were sold-often to non-black families-as the long-standing occupants got older or died. However, one home on the original Purdy land is still occupied to this day by an elderly family member, continuing the important 166 year legacy of the Purdy family in Scarsdale.



Alfred Peterson and wife Josephine Baker of Saxon Woods Road, circa 1930. He was a chauffer and she was a domestic worker. In this picture he was approximately 21 and she about 19.

**Scan the QR Code to see the Scarsdale Historical Society's videos about the history of black people in Scarsdale and Edgemont, or check out the exhibit in the Local History Center at the Scarsdale Library.**



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**Not Forgotten**  
 Scarsdale's Black History

This exhibit, a collaboration between the Scarsdale Library and the Scarsdale Historical Society, recognizes and honors the struggles and triumphs of Black people throughout Scarsdale's history. It explores local slavery, the important role of the Black community on Saxon Woods Road, and the local influence of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Learn more about this subject on the Scarsdale Historical Society's website.

# The Black Community of Saxon Woods Road

While Black people have lived in various areas of Scarsdale since its founding in 1701, significant Black settlement in Scarsdale began in Quaker Ridge just before the Civil War. In 1856 a formerly-enslaved Black farmworker named Robert Purdy bought five acres of farmland on Saxon Woods Road for \$227. There he raised livestock and grew a variety of crops, and with his wife Eleanor Landrine Purdy had four daughters and one son, who attended the one-room Quaker school on Weaver Street. Eleanor died in 1880, and Robert died ten years later.



Tombstone of Robert Purdy at the African American Cemetery in Rye, N. Y. Scan the QR code to learn more about the Cemetery.



Through the remainder of the 19th century, the five acres were inhabited by some of these descendants. At the beginning of the 20th century, much of Purdy's original five acres was sold off, later to become part of Saxon Woods Park, leaving the family with only a small strip of land along the road. On the remaining land, the growing extended family built seven houses, soon occupied by familial relations with the last names Peterson, Johnson, and Pitt. In those homes resided a hardworking, self-sufficient, and tightly-knit community for decades. The adults held blue collar jobs and tended to the land in their off hours, making wine and preserves from fruit trees, growing potatoes and onions, raising chickens



The Purdy children attended this one-room Quaker school on the corner of Weaver Street and Quaker Ridge Road. Circa mid-late 19th century.

and pigs, and hunting deer and other local fauna. The children attended the Griffen Avenue school, but shopped and socialized in White Plains rather than the mostly white, wealthier community of Scarsdale. As Scarsdale transformed from a rural community into a suburb in the 20th century, widespread housing discrimination largely prevented black families from buying homes in Scarsdale - except for on isolated Saxon Woods Road, which was already racially integrated.



William "Cack" Peterson (1918-2014), a decendent of Robert Purdy and Saxon Woods Road resident, served in World War II, as did several of his relatives.