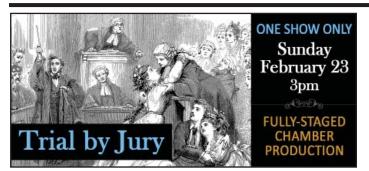
The

GILBERT & SULLIVAN

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2014 NEWSLETTER

Society of Austin



On February 23, we will present *Trial by Jury*, with sparkling music by Arthur Sullivan and hilarious libretto by W. S. Gilbert. Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, will stage this melodic and comedic delight of a show last performed by the Society in 2002. Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** will conduct. *Trial by Jury* will be a fully-staged chamber production of the entire opera, with costumes, props, the suggestion of a set, a reduced chorus and grand-piano accompaniment. The performance will be followed by a social hour, and guests are invited to bring snacks and treats to share.

Trial by Jury is the only Gilbert and Sullivan opera written in one act, running approximately 40 minutes, and is their only opera containing no spoken dialogue. It is considered by some to be the most perfectly constructed of the G&S operas, and is a little gem of wit, cleverness, and charm. It was first produced in 1875 at London's Royalty Theatre, where it was a runaway hit with audiences. The success of *Trial by Jury* launched their famous series of thirteen comic operas produced by Richard D'Oyly Carte.

Hear some of your favorite G&S singers, with Arthur DiBianca as The Learned Judge, Carol Brown as The Plaintiff, Holton Johnson as The Defendant, Janette Jones as Counsel for the Plaintiff, David Fontenot as The Usher, Robert L. Schneider as The Foreman of the Jury. The chorus includes David Treadwell, Wayne Davis, Jay Young, Leann Fryer, Amanda Kay Boundy, Nicole Ryder, Amelia Ciskey, Rachael Shaw, Patricia Combs, Mark Long, and Scott Poppaw. Musical accompaniment will be by Jeanne Sasaki.

The story takes place in a courtroom, with the judge and legal system the objects of lighthearted satire. It is based on Gilbert's own

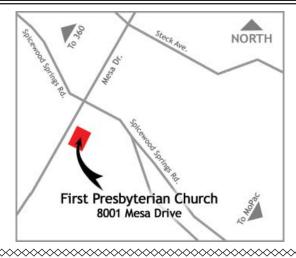
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short experience as a barrister and concerns a breach of promise of marriage suit. The defendant argues that damages should be slight, since "he is such a very bad lot," while the plaintiff argues that she loves the defendant fervently and seeks "substantial damages." After much argument, the judge resolves the case by marrying the lovely plaintiff himself. The judge's song, "When I, good friends, was called to the Bar," is the prototype for a string of similar introductory patter songs that epitomize the Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration. Don't miss this rare and exciting performance!

February Musicale: *Trial by Jury*

Sunday, February 23, 3 pm
First Presbyterian Church
8001 Mesa Drive, Austin
Suggested Donation of \$10 at the door
Please bring munchies to share!



H.M.S. Pinafore auditions — see page 3

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Audition Notes on *H.M.S. Pinafore* by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



H.M.S. Pinafore is one of the three most popular of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas, and its initial success on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1870s put the musical partnership firmly in the consciousness of the English speaking world. It is a shortish opera by later standards, but its unflagging tunefulness, its delightful humor, its characters and their stories, and its Buttercup's-basketful of now

familiar expressions that have entered the English language have all ensured its being kept alive by performing groups: it never fails to delight.

My purpose here is to provide information for auditionees concerning the auditions and also concerning the characters in the show we will present this summer. If you're planning to audition, please read this in its entirety. And even if you're *not*, please read it anyway: I hope you will find it interesting—and that it will give you a foretaste of the delights coming in June!

Auditions will be held on Saturday and Sunday, March 1 and

2. Music Director and Conductor **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** and I request that auditionees memorize a song from Gilbert & Sullivan or something similar that will show their voice and range to best advantage. It is also mandatory to provide a copy of the music for the auditions accompanist. No a cappella auditions will be heard. An accompanist will be provided, but singers will be welcome to bring their own accompanist if they wish.



If *H.M.S. Pinafore* is not in your library, you can download the libretto from The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's website (www.gilbertsullivan.org; click on "Summer Production"). The Gilbert & Sullivan Archive has additional material; call on http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/, where you will be able to read a plot synopsis, see vintage images, or download audio files. Go to GSOpera (www.gsopera.com/opera/51/lexicon) for other good information on the work.

H.M.S. Pinafore is filled with roles that are fun to play, and several of them have serious sides—and challenges—too; the work is familiar to many, and thus deserving (as is all of Gilbert & Sullivan) of careful characterization and effective singing and acting. But it will be new to many others, too. *H.M.S. Pinafore* was my own introduction to G&S, and many others have told me the same. The show has probably brought more fans to Gilbert & Sullivan than any of their other works.

THE CHORUS is composed of the men: The Able Seamen (sailors) serving aboard H.M.S. Pinafore (14 gentlemen, of various ages, idealized seamen in brilliant white uniforms and occasionally dark blue pea jackets); and the women: Sir Joseph Porter's sisters, cousins and aunts (14 females, idealized Victorian maidens of various ages, in Victorian finery: millinery designed for traveling).

Here are brief character sketches, with a nods of gratitude to the writings of William Cox-Ife, Peter Kline—and a certain W. S. Gilbert*:

The Rt. Hon. SIR JOSEPH PORTER, K.C.B (*First Lord of the Admiralty*) (Light Baritone): "The civilian cross that the Royal Navy has to bear." "The Monarch of the Sea"—but one who's never (no, never!) been to sea. He wants to marry Captain Corcoran's daughter Josephine. Sir Joseph is from humble beginnings, but swaggers about in his Court dress, believing that "A British sailor is any man's equal—excepting mine"2—that is, he's a snob and does little to endear Josephine to him. "He is as lacking in a sense of humor as he is in human feeling, and yet he attempts both." But he's very funny, and invariably endears himself to audiences!

CAPTAIN CORCORAN (Commanding H.M.S. Pinafore) (Baritone): "The Captain is a genuinely attractive man who loves his daughter, respects his crew, and admires his superiors." He's the ranking officer aboard-ship and hopes to climb socially if he can get his daughter to marry Sir Joseph. A topsy-turvy version of the usual naval commander, he is polite to his crew, and they return the favor. There is, however, in his past a deep secret that only Little Buttercup knows—until the final minutes of the opera when its revelation leads to the inevitable happy conclusion.

RALPH RACKSTRAW (Able Seaman) (Tenor): Rafe is a "simple sailor with an amazing, but quite respectable vocabulary." He's in love with Josephine though beneath her in social standing; when she refuses her love, he almost commits suicide by blowing his brains all over the deck, but Josephine reveals her love, and they plot an elopement that very night. This, however is revealed to the Captain by the dastardly Dick Deadeye, and Ralph is sent to the brig. Buttercup reveals her secret, however, and the two lovers are reunited with "joy [and] rapture unforeseen." (By the way, you're not going to believe this, but "Ralph" is pronounced "Rafe" in the opera: it has to be—for Gilbert rhymes it with "waif.")

<u>DICK DEADEYE</u> (*Able Seaman*) (Bass): Although Dick is "able," he suffers from physical shortcomings, including a humped back, a withered arm, and a dead eye. He is "the villain of the piece," and not "a popular character," as he himself admits. He's "an old, battered, embittered sailor, with a stern conviction of what's right." He betrays Ralph and Josephine's elopement to the Captain. If one listens to what he says he invariably speaks common sense, however cynical—even if it conflicts with our sympathies toward the other characters.

BILL BOBSTAY (*Boatswain's Mate*) (Bass-Baritone): "The Petty Officer *par* excellence." Friend of Ralph and respected by his fellow sailors, and is full of good cheer and *bonhomie*. Has a great solo in Act II: "He is an Englishman!" The Boatswain hangs out with the Carpenter's Mate.

BOB BECKET (Bass-Baritone or Bass): (*Carpenter's Mate*): Friend of Ralph and the other sailors; joins Ralph and the Boatswain for the wonderful trio, "A British tar": "Not very bright, especially when it comes to sightsinging!" He has no solo spoken speeches in dialogue.

TOM TUCKER (*Midshipmite*) (Non-speaking, non-singing): The part is traditionally played by a child (male or female, but appearing to be male) about ten years old. He's an officious little mite, superintending the sailors, and appears at various times throughout the opera. His "real" name was always listed in D'Oyly Carte programs as "Master Fitzaltamont," which was done because printing deadlines preceded his recruitment at local venues. *Our* Middy will have his or her real name in the program!

MARINES (Non-speaking, non-singing): Two military men dressed in scarlet and white uniforms, they add pageantry to Sir Joseph's entrance in Act I, take Rafe to his dungeon cell in Act II, and appear again in the Act II Finale. We seek two volunteers to play these parts, which will involve minimal rehearsal time, though full commitment the week before production and through the nine performances.

JOSEPHINE (the Captain's Daughter) (Soprano): A beautiful and dutiful daughter who tries valiantly to ignore—even reject—Ralph despite her love for him until his near attempt at suicide leads her to defy her doting (and socially ambitious) father. She's a clever woman, who turns Sir Joseph's assertion that "love levels all ranks" against him, noting that "He little realizes how eloquently he has pleaded his rival's cause!" 2

HEBE (Sir Joseph's First Cousin) (Mezzo): Hebe appears at Sir Joseph's right hand and is ready to echo his sentiments, and perhaps even dominate him! Her loyalty pays off at the end when the First Lord realizes that he cannot marry a person of lowly rank and she steps forth and offers to marry him and "soothe and comfort [his] declining days." He buys it—and the social order is maintained. (What marrying his first cousin does to the gene pool is something beyond the scope of comic opera—and perhaps propriety!) Hebe has only two short speeches in dialogue (before the Act II finale).

MRS. CRIPPS (LITTLE BUTTERCUP) (a Portsmouth Bumboat Woman) (Contralto): That is, she rows a small boat between the ships in the harbor, selling snacks, trinkets, and personal items to the sailors. A "plump and pleasing person," Little Buttercup has a long history with Ralph and Captain Corcoran, having nursed them "in childhood's happy hour." In fact, she has a hopeless passion for the Captain. When she learns of Ralph's presence aboard the Pinafore, she sings "Remorse! Remorse!" At the end we find out why. She also sings one of the most well-known songs in all Gilbert & Sullivan—right after the opening chorus.

I've said perhaps too often that there's only one G&S activity more fun than seeing one of their operas—and that's actually *working* on one. If you need a little push to encourage you to audition, please consider this it. Jeffrey and I do all we can to make the auditions fun and relaxed.

If you have questions, please contact me: RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com.

Elsewhere in this newsletter are details on how you can sign up for an audition slot, so please do it today, and then please encourage a friend or two to audition so that even *more* can share the delight of Gilbert & Sullivan. Our audiences have been growing, and I suspect we'll have even larger crowds in June than we had for *Princess Ida* last summer!

*Bibliography

¹William Cox-Ife, *How to Sing Both Gilbert and Sullivan*. London: Chappell & Co., Ltd., 1961.

²W. S. Gilbert, *The Savoy Operas: I.* London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

³Peter Kline, *Gilbert & Sullivan Production*. The Theatre Student Series. New York: Richards Rosen Press, Inc., 1972.

H.M.S. Pinafore Auditions

The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin will hold auditions for *H.M.S. Pinafore* on Saturday, March 1, from 10 am to 6 pm, and on Sunday, March 2, from 2 to 6 pm, at Genesis Presbyterian Church at 1507 Wilshire Boulevard. **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** and **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** will be returning as artistic and musical directors, respectively, and **Bill Hatcher** returns as production manager. Please see Stage Director MacPhail's audition notes on pp. 2 and 3 of this newsletter for a description of the opera and its characters.

Auditions are approximately ten minutes long and are by appointment only. Call Pat Turpin at (512) 963-9021 (7 am to 8 pm) or email audition@gilbertsullivan.org to reserve a time slot. All roles are open for casting including principals, chorus, and supernumeraries. A small honorarium will be paid to each performer.

Those auditioning should memorize a song from Gilbert & Sullivan or something similar that will show their voice and range to best advantage. It is mandatory to provide a copy of the music for the accompanist. Please note that no unaccompanied (a cappella) or self-accompanied auditions will be heard. Although an accompanist will be provided, singers are welcome to bring their own if they wish. The libretto and score of *H.M.S. Pinafore* are available from the Society's website at www.gilbertsullivan.org/SummerProduction.htm. A completed audition form (available from that website) is required, and a résumé and headshot are requested if available.

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels are ready to entertain for your next event, presenting lively, lovely, and amusing musical numbers in your home, party, school, or activity. See our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org) for further details.

The Wand'ring Minstrels performed eleven concerts in 2013, and are preparing for an even busier 2014. They hope you can all see and book one of their shows!

NEWS of our MEMBERS

Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** will give a lecture in Bryan, Texas, on Thursday, February 20: "*Thespis*: 'Must Have a Beginning, You Know.'" The event is an opening-night gala for St. Michael's Episcopal School's production of the first Gilbert & Sullivan Opera. (Information and reservations: www.stmes.net/operetta; 979-822-2715; mary.brown@stmes.net.) On March 6, on the way home from Austin, *H.M.S. Pinafore* will be Rafe's subject for another lecture at the University of Chicago in advance of the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company's production. "The Secrets of *H.M.S. Pinafore*" will be free and open to the public. (Information: www.gilbertandsullivanoperacompany.org/secrets.html.)

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late April; the deadline for submissions is April 7. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

Annual Business Meeting and Sing-Along by Reba Gillman



On Sunday, January 5, at 3 pm, about 40 people (mostly members) gathered in Westminster's Harris Bell Hall for the G&S Society of Austin's annual Business Meeting. As President **Libby Weed** politely mentioned in her introductions, this is usually the least attended meeting of our year, but the level of people attending is high class. She was happy to see the

increasing number of members assembled to assist in running our Society by listening to reports and voting to elect the members of our Board of Directors. As a result of our increasingly professional yearly shows and rising reputation in the community, more members make a point to show up, listen, and vote, and that's important.

Libby then introduced **Leonard Johnson**, retired UT Associate Professor of Voice, who would lead the sing-along choruses, and **Jeanne Sasaki**, pianist, who never fails to bring the music to life with orchestral hints. Jeanne introduced **Evie Ladyman**, the page turner (obviously very important when the music is complicated), and Libby introduced **Claire Grasso**, who would sing the part of Mabel in "Poor wand'ring one." Last year she also sang Mabel for us, but her name was Claire Ludwig then.

The meeting got under way with a few short reports. Libby said we were very happy with the way our June production of Princess *Ida* worked out. Not only was the production excellent, it was also very well attended. This seldom-performed, three-act opera which requires many costumes, brought in many happy viewers and made us realize the importance of giving our community a chance to see all the G&S operas, at least once in a while. That is part of the Society's mission. Our Society reached a new, more professional performance level, and received two nominations for B. Iden Payne Awards: Jeffrey Jones-Ragona for outstanding Director of a musical production, and Michelle Haché for outstanding Lead Actress in a musical production. Michelle was selected for the Award. Production Manager Bill Hatcher reported that preparations for this year's June production of H.M.S. Pinafore were proceeding efficiently, and noted that he was also working on the fully-staged one-act chamber opera Trial by Jury, which will be performed only once, at 3 pm on Sunday, February 23, at the First Presbyterian Church at 8001 Mesa Drive. This delightful, very funny short opera is not long enough to qualify as a full-blown yearly show, but is something we want to produce for our faithful audience. The successful production of Princess Ida gives us the courage to find new ways and new G&S operas to mount for Central Texas Savoyards.

Dave Wieckowski, Treasurer and CFO, reported on our successful financial situation for the year. We do not make public many details, but any member of our Society may ask for a report. E-mail the office at info@gilbertsullivan.org or leave a message at 512-472-4772. Michael Meigs, Secretary and Bursar, said he was a Jack of All Trades who did anything no one else would do. He reported that membership remained variable at 285 to 295.

Libby then announced that it was time to elect our board. All 12 nominees were present except **Diane Radin**, who is visiting her grandchildren in Israel. One board member from last year, **Chris**

Buggé, has retired from the board but will happily continue to provide the volunteer services we find so useful. Libby introduced the nominating committee, Reba Gillman, Chair, and Allan Longacre and Diane Radin. Libby asked that nominees stand when their names were called and remain standing. She said a few words of introduction for each. You may read this material in the President's Message on page six of this newsletter. Libby asked if there were any additional nominations from the floor. When there were none, Sue Ricket Caldwell moved that we elect this slate by acclamation. Spencer Reichman seconded the motion, and all applauded the job well done.

Maestro Leonard Johnson came forward with a music stand and baton; Jeanne took her place at the piano, and our Sing-Along began. First, Leonard introduced the important and difficult chorus "Dance a cachucha" from *The Gondoliers*. He explained the meaning and pronunciation of several unusual words, and had us all sounding them out. I don't remember such attention to the words when we prepared our past productions of *The Gondoliers*. After singing through this challenging selection several times, Leonard suddenly gave it a whirl as he danced Libby off the stage and moved on to the easier, more familiar "Poor wand'ring one" with Claire singing the coloratura solo. This is a lot of fun for the chorus, and some members were disappointed that we did not sing it through one more time after we had mastered it. When David Fontenot came forward to sing the familiar lead-in to our traditional "Hail, Poetry" from The Pirates of Penzance, Leonard gave those words some of the same attention, which seemed like a good idea. As the music started for "Now to the banquet we press" from *The Sorcerer*, Leonard shouted out the words, which gave the audience their first much-needed rehearsal of that tricky music. It seems that we should do a little rehearsal of the music that we traditionally ask the audience to sing. They would sing it better and certainly enjoy it more. All this singing left us happily tuned up and energetic, as we proceeded to the conversation and delectables awaiting us at the back of the room. Happy Business Meeting everybody, and Thanks to Westminster and their Harris Bell Hall!



pianist Jeanne Sasaki is assisted by page turner Evie Ladyman

The G&S Society's Annual Business Meeting and Sing-Along

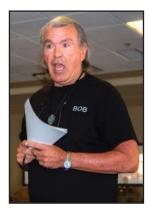
photos throughout this issue courtesy Steve Schwartzman

see more at gilbertsullivanaustin.smugmug.com

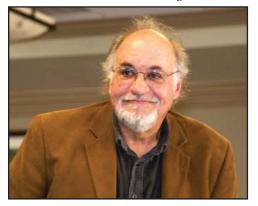








President Libby Weed gets reports from (above, l-r) Bill Hatcher, Dave Wieckowski, Robert L. Schneider, (below, l-c) David Little, and Michael Meigs, then turns the entertainment portion of the program over to Leonard Johnson (below r)















Leonard Johnson instructs and conducts the chorus-audience, while soloists Claire Grasso and David Fontenot perform. Leonard and Libby dance a cachucha!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Our January Annual Meeting was great fun. The business portion of the event was punctuated by interesting reports from **Dave Wieckowski**, **Bill Hatcher**, **Michael Meigs**, **Robert L. Schneider**, and **David Little.** It was clear that our Society is busy, growing, and vigorously achieving its mission to our community. **Reba Gillman** has recounted in this newsletter the robust singing of the crowd and the way **Leonard Johnson** led us with enthusiasm and **Jeanne Sasaki** accompanied with grace.



The Board of Directors for 2014 was elected at that event and will have, by the time you read this, met twice to conduct its business. I'd like to give you a snapshot of the remarkable people on our board. Every one is a lifelong learner and a Savoyard—a G&S enthusiast. But there are so many more interesting things about all of them! This will give you an idea:

BOARD MEMBER	You may have known	But did you know
Reba Gillman	Reba and her late husband, UT math professor Leonard, became active leaders (and actors/singers) in G&S Austin in the 1970s.	She learned French as a teenager in Paris and learned G&S attending the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company performances in NYC and London.
Leonard Johnson	Leonard was a voice instructor at the University of Texas for many years and leads us in a sing-along annually at the January meeting.	Last year he was honored on the 35 th anniversary of conducting the winning Men's Glee Club in choral competition at Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod in Wales.
David Little	David has worked professionally at KVUE-TV and the Texas General Land Office and is the father of soprano Christiana Little.	He is currently working on a project in San Antonio at The Alamo, exploring the nooks and crannies of the birthplace of Texas liberty.
Roberta Long	Roberta is an experienced and successful grant writer and the wife of frequent G&S Austin chorister Mark Long.	She is actively involved in adult education at Congregation Agudas Achim teaching Hebrew, Torah, and liturgy.
Allan Longacre	Allan has been an active leader in theater and arts management and in community cultural activities in six states in addition to Texas.	He and his wife Barbara starred in an Omaha civic production of <i>Oklahoma!</i> , playing the roles of Will Parker and Ado Annie.
Michael Meigs	Retired from a diplomatic career with the U.S. Department of State, Michael now publishes theater reviews at AustinLiveTheatre.com.	He has logged more than 300 scuba dives and qualified as a scuba instructor in 2006; he reads in six languages.
Diane Radin	Diane is on the mathematics faculty of the University of Texas at Austin and travels frequently to Israel to visit grandchildren.	She and her husband like to hike in places like Inks Lake State Park and Big Bend National Park, as well as European locales.
Robert L. Schneider	Bob performs in many venues with our "Wand'ring Minstrels" and has sung opera in various locations in the U.S. and Germany.	He is the father of Bob Schneider, a fixture on the Austin live music scene and front man for The Scabs, and has run three marathons.
Charles Smaistrla	Charles is a lawyer and economist with an economics degree from Texas A&M and a law degree from UT Austin.	He is involved in many civic organizations and is past president of the University Area Rotary Club and Capitol City A&M Club.
David Treadwell	David, a Ph.D. chemist and chemical consultant, is our newest board member and was in the cast of last summer's <i>Princess Ida</i> .	He is a member of the Robot Group, artistic tinkerers with electronics and mechanics, and he roasts his own coffee.
Libby Weed	I have served in various roles on the G&S Austin board for the past two decades and was a chorister in two <i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i> productions.	I will retire from Brentwood Christian School in June after 30 years as principal; I formerly was an editor at a publishing company.
Dave Wieckowski	Dave is our Treasurer and CFO and recently retired as Global Financial Analysis Coordinator at Whole Foods Corporation.	Dave and his wife Terry and their children enjoy music and theater, and Dave is also on the board of a band parents' organization.

Each of these interesting people is active in advancing the work of our Society ... and thus our group is thriving and our board meetings are actually enjoyable occasions.

See you February 23, I hope!

Libery March

MEMBERSHIP FORM

We encourage you to join our Society. If you are a member, please check your membership renewal on the top of the mailing label. If expired or near expiration, your membership needs to be updated! To correct your address, renew your membership, or become a member, complete this form, and mail it to us with your check, payable to "GSSA," or call to join (512) 472-4772 (GSSA).

lunteer. I'm interested in:



The newly-elected GSSA Board of Directors for 2014: (front row, l-r) Libby Weed, Reba Gillman, Michael Meigs, Roberta Long (back row, l-r) Charles Smaistrla, Allan Longacre, Leonard Johnson, David Treadwell, David Little, Dave Wieckowski, Robert L. Schneider (not pictured: Diane Radin)



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ONE SHOW ONLY
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Coming Events

Feb. 23 *Trial by Jury* Musicale (see p. 1)

March 1-2 *H.M.S. Pinafore* Auditions (see p. 3)

May 18 *H.M.S. Pinafore* Preview Musicale

June 12-22 H.M.S. Pinafore summer production



members and guests sing along at the Annual Business Meeting (see pages 4 and 5)

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

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The Society holds nonprofit status under 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

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