



# The Historian

A Publication of the Three Village Historical Society



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## The Three Village Historical Society

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Volume 46 Issue 3

Summer 2009

## TVHS Acquires a Major Collection

By Frank Turano

With the assistance of Assemblyman Steven Englebright, the Three Village Historical Society has been able to acquire a major collection of Three Village materials. The collection had been amassed over a period of forty years by a local collector.

Among the highlights of the collection is a 1905-1912 guest journal kept on board Henry C. Tinker's yacht "Palestine" containing entries and illustrations by New York City architect Charles Alonzo Rich. Tinker was a successful businessman and banker.

An 1884 ledger kept by Jonas Smith, is rich with information about the running of a business in that time period. Smith was a Stony Brook businessman, shipping magnate and owner of the "Old Homestead," now the Three Village Inn.

Extremely rare copies of "Long Island Star," printed in Setauket, 1866, and the "Independent Press," printed in Stony Brook, 1866 are among the many treasures in the acquisition. The Society also acquired several original watercolors and sketches by Francis Melville, grandfather of J. Ward Melville.



Over 300 real picture postcards and several hundred photographs and negatives from our area, including the work of local photographer A.S. Greene are part of the collection acquired by the Society.

The published memorial address for General Francis Spinola (1893), and the published eulogy for Reverend Zachariah Green (1859) are also part of the collection. General Spinola, an Old Field resident, came to fame during the Civil War but his most notable achievement was pioneering the establishment of the Brooklyn Monument to the American Revolutionary War victims aboard the notorious British prison ship "Jersey." Reverend Green was the "Fighting Parson" who fought in the Battle of Setauket and then became the long time Rector of the Setauket Presbyterian Church.

There will be more information on other items in the collection in upcoming newsletters.

While this is a major addition to our existing archives the primary way that our collection grows is through the accumulation of small individual donations. *If you have family or local historical materials that would be of interest to the wider membership these gifts are always welcome.* Please contact our archivist, Karen Martin at the Captain Edward R. Rhodes Memorial Collection of Local History at (631) 751-4775.



Sketch by Francis Melville, grandfather of J. Ward Melville.

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### The Historian

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by the Three Village  
Historical Society.

Suggestions for articles  
are welcome. Please  
send all articles, photos,  
feedback and ideas to:

**newsletter@tvhs.org**  
In the subject line  
please include:  
**The Historian.**

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next issue is  
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Historical Society

## Calendar of Events

### SEPTEMBER 2009

**Saturday, September 12th - Sunday September 13th, Gallery North Outdoor Art Show.** The Three Village Historical Society exhibit: The Sailing Circle, and our gift shop will be open to the public.

**Sunday, September 13th** at 2:00 p.m. **Historic Walking Tour:** This tour of the Setauket Village Green area takes 1½ hours. \* See bottom of page for additional details.

**Monday, September 21st** at 7:00 p.m.: **Monthly Lecture Series: Selene Castrovilla** will talk about her newest book: *Upon Secrecy*. Meeting takes place at the Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main Street in Setauket, NY. 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. Free.

**Sunday, September 20th:** **The 20th Annual Long Island Apple Festival.** Sherwood-Jayne House, East Setauket. Co-sponsored by TVHS, SPLIA and Homestead Arts. Festival is open 11:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. \$6 for Adults, \$4 for seniors and children 2-12 yrs.

### OCTOBER 2009

**Saturday, October 10th** at 10:30 a.m.: **Down the Way, The Wooden Ship Era** with historian Beverly Tyler. Tour lasts one and one half hours. Meet at the Setauket Dock, Shore Road, East Setauket. Fee: \$3 for members, \$5 for non-members.

**Saturday, October 17th: 15th Annual Spirits Tour:** "Legends and Legendary People." Raindate 10/24.2009. Ticket order form is on the back page of this newsletter.

**Monday, October 19th** at 7:00 p.m.: **Monthly Lecture Series: Long Island Society for Paranormal Research: The Ghosts and Legends of Long Island.** Meeting takes place at the Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main Street in Setauket, NY. 7:00 -9:00 p.m. Free

**Saturday, October 24th** at 10:30 a.m.: **Historic Walking Tour:** Setauket Village Green. \*

### NOVEMBER 2009

**Sunday, November 1st** at 2:00 p.m.: **Historic Walking Tour:** Discover Setauket's rich history as you explore its architecture and beautiful natural environment. \*

**Sunday, November 8th,** 1:00 p.m.: **WALK THROUGH HISTORY WITH FARMER & SPY ABRAHAM WOODHULL.** Tour starts at the Caroline Church parking lot at the Carriage Shed along Dyke Road at the Setauket Village Green. Fee: \$5.00 per person/\$3 per person for TVHS Members. Tour lasts approximately 2½ hours. Please arrive 5 minutes prior to tour start time to ensure a prompt start.

**Monday, November 16,** at 7:00 p.m.: **Member Meeting: Candlelight House Tour tickets on sale to Members Only.** Meeting takes place at the Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main Street in Setauket, NY.

**Saturday, November 28th,** at 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.: **Candlelight House Tour Ticket Sales** at the TVHS Center, 93 North Country Road, Setauket, NY. Ticket sale is open to the public.

### DECEMBER 2009

**Friday December 4th and Saturday December 5th.:31st Annual Candlelight House Tour**

**\*TVHS Setauket Village Green Walking Tours .start at the Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main St., Setauket, NY. Fee: \$3 for members, \$5 for non-members**



**"If we each asked a friend, neighbor, relative or co-worker to join TVHS we could double our membership".**

Peter Paul Ostapow,  
President of the Three  
Village Historical Society.  
*Photo courtesy of Susan  
Byrnes*

***If you are interested in volunteering for any of our Fall Events help is needed for the Apple Festival, Monthly Lecture Series, Spirits Tour and Candlelight House Tour. Contact Donna Higgins at 751-5177***

## President's Message

Time flies when you're having fun and fun is what we had these past few months. Our goals for 2009 were to increase membership, increase sponsorships and to have interesting and exciting events for our membership and the public. Due to the tremendous job of our talented trustees we were able to accomplish much and have fun doing it as you can see from their reports on page four of this newsletter.

On Saturday, August 8th, we participated in the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Setauket Fire Department. The day was picture perfect and we were able to raise funds through the sale of antique maps, which were generously donated by Trustee Michael O'Dwyer. We also premiered our new Culper Spy-Ring T-Shirts designed by our very own trustee Patty Cain. You can find them on sale in our gift shop. A special thank you goes to our Volunteer Chairperson Donna Higgins who was able to rally the troops to man our tables.

We have many events in the planning stage and would like to have you volunteer your time to make these events a success. We are working on the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Long Island Apple Festival, the Gallery North Outdoor Art Show, 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Spirits Tour and our biggest fundraiser the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Candlelight House Tour.

In closing, I just wanted to extend my sincerest appreciation to all our Trustees for the great job they have been doing. They are truly wonderful and deserve our heartfelt gratitude for all of their hard work. Our office staff takes such pride and ownership of our day to day affairs, I think they are wonderful. I would be remiss if I did not personally thank and recognize Michael Raggi and Nancy Cox, our summer interns, for the outstanding jobs they have done helping out in the office and aiding our Education Chair, Liz Kaplan with research for our in-school programs.

We still have not reached our membership goals. If you have not yet renewed your membership please consider sending it in as soon as possible. Better yet why not ask your friends, family and neighbors to join. If we all just ask one person to join we'd double our membership overnight.

**Peter Paul Ostapow**

## Good & Welfare

Congratulations to Dick and Carol Russell and Harry and Barbara Lynch who celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries in June.

Proud grandparents Peter & Irene Ostapow; daughter Susan and son-in-law Andrew of Miller Place for the birth of identical twin girls: Natalie Rose and Katherine Elizabeth.

Condolences to the family and friends of Marcie DiAnguano, one of our incredible Candlelight House Tour decorators who passed away in the spring.

Condolences to the families of: Cynthia and Hap Barnes for the passing of Cynthia's dad and Donna and Jerry Higgins for the passing of Donna's mom.

Condolences to the family and friends of Wilma Gerard (see page 7).

Condolences to the family and friends of Helga "Ginger" Viertel who died on July 30, 2009 and to the Skidmore family for the passing of George A. Skidmore on August 13, 2009.

## Spring Events Help Raise \$10,000 for the Society

Our **Annual Yard Sale**, held this year on June 6th was a great success! We all enjoyed the beautiful weather which brought out lots of shoppers. Our thanks go out to all of our members who donated items for us to sell. I would like to thank fellow trustee, Michael O'Dwyer for once again handling all of the pricing of items for the sale, as well as his help the day of the sale. Our special thanks to David Fortuna for his generous donation of three Sunfish sailboats and a number of different plants and small trees that we offered for sale. Our vendors sold everything from gifts, to baked goods, to plants. Many of your fellow members gave generously of their time for set-up, sale and very importantly, clean up. Thanks to our office staff, Betty Domino and Dianne Trautmann, for guiding me through my first big endeavor as a new trustee. We hope to see you all next year!

**Midge Brown, Chair**  
Yard Sale 2009



This landlocked fleet of sailboats were sold at this year's Annual Yard Sale. Photo courtesy of Lee Lutz, Editor: Times Beacon Record.



Attendees of the May 1st Benefit Reception enjoy the photos on display from our Rhodes Collection at the Port Jefferson Village Center. Photo courtesy of Bev Tyler.

The Three Village Historical Society held a benefit reception on May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Port Jefferson Village Center to celebrate the opening of the exhibit: **Setauket: People, Places and Pastimes 1890-1950**. The exhibit, featuring over 90 enlarged photos from the Society's Rhodes Collection and private collectors was the work of the Greater Port Jefferson-Northern Brookhaven Arts Council and the TVHS Rhodes Committee. The exhibit was funded by Bryant Funeral Home. Our thanks to Bliss, Mario's of Setauket, the Old Field Club, South Setauket International Deli Starbucks and Ally O's for providing food for the event as well as the many area businesses that donated items to our auction. The reception and auction were a great success and enjoyed by all who attended, raising money to fund TVHS programs.

**Patricia Yantz & Stephen Healy**  
Co-Chairs, Benefit Reception Committee

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Jeanette and Edmond Handley of Budget Print in Stony Brook were honored by the Three Village Historical Society with the first annual **Business of the Year Award**. This award was created to recognize local business owners who have contributed and participated in the character building of the Three Village Community. Throughout their thirty one years of business the Handley's have donated much of their time and resources to the Three Village community.

The festivities, held at the Setauket Neighborhood House, began with appetizers created with an Australian/Irish theme by the chef of The Dish of Stony Brook. Guests enjoyed listening to Sinatra, Dino, and Sammy as DJ Deviant enticed people to dance. In addition to the Business of the Year Award the Handley's received special proclamations from Senator John Flanagan, Assemblymen Stephen Englebright, Legislator Vivian Fisher and from Councilman Steven Fiore-Rosenfeld.

Our thanks go out to the servers for the evening; all were students who donated their time to the event in the spirit of community service. A special thank you goes out to Fred Bryant, for donating the party package he won for the Setauket Neighborhood House, DJ Deviant, and the food from Via Pizza and Luigi's restaurants.

**Steve Hintze, Event Chair**



Event Chair Steve Hintze, left, and President Peter Paul Ostapow (right) present Janette and Edmund Handley, with the first TVHS Business Recognition Award on May 28, 2009. Photo courtesy of Bev Tyler.

## 20th Annual Long Island Apple Festival September 20th

Bakers preheat your ovens and dig out your best apple pie recipes for the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Long Island Apple Festival, held on September 20<sup>th</sup> at the Sherwood-Jayne Farm in Setauket from 11 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Last year's winners, Dan Buzzanca of Setauket and Kyle Craig of Port Jefferson, won using Dan's grandmother's apple pie recipe. For more information about the contest and the Apple Festival visit our website: <http://www.tvhs.org/specialevents.htm>

Family activities abound at the Apple Festival: pony rides, wagon rides, sack races and apple relay races, face painting, open hearth colonial cooking and craft demonstrations. Traditional music, storytelling, as well as homemade food and refreshments offer a great day for the whole family. Tickets available the day of the festival for \$6/Adults, \$4/Seniors & children 2-12 years of age.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Long Island Apple Festival is presented by the Three Village Historical Society, the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities and Homestead Arts.



Dan Buzzanca of Setauket, his grandmother Kay, and Kyle Craig of Port Jefferson. Dan and Kyle won last year's Apple Pie Baking Contest with Kay's recipe. Photo courtesy of SPLIA

## The Mystery of 729

*By Gregory Perricone, TVHS Trustee*

Have you ever noticed during the Memorial Day or Fourth of July Parades that the cabs of every fire engine in the Setauket Fire Department are lettered with the words "seven-twenty-nine"?

Where did this number come from and what does it mean?

During the period of 1775-1780 General George Washington relied on a small group of trusted Setauket citizens and soldiers to spy and report on the movements of the British in New York City and Long Island. They used a number code written in disappearing ink. Their identity and code remained a secret for 164-years, until deciphered in the 1939 book *General Washington's Spies on Long Island* by Morton Pennypacker.

We know that group was the Culper Spy Ring, and the secret code they used was authored by Major Benjamin Tallmadge, General Washington's Spy Chief. The code used numbers to represent people, places and words. A simple code, it was hand-written on only four copies.

The code used seven-twenty-seven for New York City, seven-twenty-eight for Long Island and *seven-twenty-nine for Setauket!*

The first fire truck to wear seven-twenty-nine was a 1950's era Chevrolet pumper. Today, each pumper in the Setauket Fire Department wears these numbers as a connection to the Revolution and the Culper Spies of 729.



Photo of Setauket Fire Department pumper truck cab "Seven Twenty Nine" courtesy of Greg Perricone

## TVHS Salutes 100 Years of Fire Fighting

Congratulations to the Setauket Fire Department and the Stony Brook Fire Department, both of which are celebrating 100 Year Anniversaries this summer.

The Stony Brook Fire Department was founded on January 29, 1909 and incorporated on March 13, 1909.

The Setauket Fire Department was founded on August 11, 1909 as the

East Setauket Hook and Ladder Company. They officially became known as the Setauket Fire Department in July of 1949.

We salute the men and woman of the past and present who have served the Three Village communities through their valiant work with both fire departments, saving lives and protecting the community through their fire fighting efforts.

## The Three Village Historical Society 1984 to 1993 - The Third Decade

*By William B. Minuse and Beverly Tyler*

The Three Village Historical Society was founded by a group of men and women who believed that the history of the Setauket/Stony Brook area needed to be brought to the attention of every resident and visitor. The Three Village area was, they understood, not only the original settlement in the Town of Brookhaven, but the home of many ordinary people who did extraordinary things. These ordinary people were hard working settlers, patriots and Revolutionary War spies, farmers and sea captains, shipbuilders and leaders of industry, poets and painters, native Americans and immigrants.

**Ruth Regan (1984-1985) was the sixth President of the Society.** An important step was taken when the Society agreed to coordinate the interpretation of the Stony Brook Grist Mill, starting in June 1984. The society continued to train millers and interpret the mill until it was closed for extensive renovations in 1988. The Ward Melville Heritage Organization now maintains and interprets the mill. A series of oral history workshops were conducted, beginning in October 1984. As a result, an oral history committee was formed and over the next decade added much valuable material to the society collection. At the annual dinner in 1984 special awards were presented to Harvey Allen for his countless services to the Society and to the widow and children of the late Bruce Giles for his splendid accomplishments in preserving and restoring, for adaptive reuse as offices, the Old East Setauket School House at Route 25A and Old Coach Road.

A new tradition was established in April 1985 when the Society and the Setauket Neighborhood Association held a joint meeting with a covered dish supper at the Neighborhood House. This has become an annual affair. In September 1985 a long

range planning study was begun. The Three Village Historical Society Planning Report, prepared under the direction of Gregory M. Allard was completed in December 1987. The report evaluated the programs and policies of the Society and set guidelines for both short and long range objectives. It was designed to be a valuable tool for our officers and members in developing future policy including the hiring of a society director. In November 1985 the Trustees created the Capt. Edward R. Rhodes Memorial Fund for Local History to support that very important program. In December, a very valuable addition to the Rhodes Collections was the gift of many significant documents by Dr. R. Sherman Mills.

**Beverly C. Tyler (1986-1988) was the seventh President of the Society.** The major event that year was the republication and updating of the Three Village Guidebook. This continues to be one of the most important printed source of Three Village historic information available to the public. In March 1987 the Society agreed to sponsor the committee organizing the community effort to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. The Society produced a fashion fantasy entitled "A Frivolous Distinction" at the Carson Auditorium of the Stony Brook School in September 1987. This featured the private collection of Lesley Balazs and was for the benefit of the Greening of 25A and other beautification projects of the Society. In May 1987 the Trustees instituted a new award, the Robert Cushman Murphy Award, for outstanding contribution to the beauty and preservation of the natural environment of the Three Villages. The first honoree was Albert W. Hostek in October 1987. For many years he has been a superb horticulturist devoted to making this a better place to live. The twelve year agreement with the Society for the Preservation of Long

Island Antiquities for showing the Thompson House was terminated by mutual consent on December 31, 1987. SPLIA trained personnel to develop its own interpretation programs, although members of the Society continued to volunteer as docents until the Thompson House was closed for needed repairs two years ago. On May 22, 1988 the Society's sponsored the local Constitution Bicentennial Celebration, chaired by Gayle Becher. The "We the People Festival" marked the 200th anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution by New York State. On May 22, 1988 dozens of organizations and individuals sponsored and took part.



Left: Lucy Keyes (1900-1995) being interviewed for the oral history project undertaken by Glenda Dickerson and TVHS. TVHS Photo.

One of the most satisfying collaborations undertaken by Three Village Historical Society occurred in 1988. Glenda Dickerson, associate professor of theater arts at the State University at Stony Brook, met members of the African-American community on Christian Avenue in Setauket, one of the oldest African-American communities on Long Island. Dickerson soon discovered that much of this community's history had thrived in folklore and stories passed down from generation to generation. From that point on, she was determined to document and preserve that history by collecting this community's stories in their own words.

Her creative research project

## The Three Village Historical Society 1984 to 1993 - The Third Decade



Performances of "Eel Catching in Setauket" brought voices of African Americans on Long Island to life for visitors, and provided the Society with an alternative method for disseminating new research. Rachel Hart, eel spearer, portrayed by Lynda Gravatt. Right: May 1988 Historian. TVHS Photos

employed the talents of volunteers from a variety of communities. Student interns and teachers at the university gathered the oral histories with help from volunteers and historians from the Three Village Historical Society and residents from the African-American Christian Avenue community. The project culminated in performance exhibits in the Theater Arts Department at the university. The resulting creative performance project, "Eel Catching in Setauket," was both an introduction to the Christian Avenue community and a lasting memorial to the rich history of its residents. Artifacts from the community were combined with oral histories, folklore, and William

Sidney Mount paintings to create dramatic vignettes which reflected the life of the community. Eight professional actors portrayed members of the Christian Avenue community and brought their history to life. The Society's May 1988 "Historian" became the program for "Eel Catching in Setauket, a Living Library—The African-American, Christian Avenue Community."

*"When Pete Tucker felt like dancing, he walked all the way from his home in Setauket to the county seat in Riverhead. He walked slow and easy, not in a hurry. Carriages filled with lustrous ebony, sepia, butterscotch*

*and tea-rose party-goers passed him on the way, but when they arrived, he was always there ahead of them, lounging insolently against a gnarled post in the barn which served as their dance floor" — "Eel Catching in Setauket" by Glenda Dickerson*

"Eel Catching" represented a unique collaboration between scholars, creative artists, academicians, historians, and religious and secular community residents. It demonstrated how very special things happen when local people work together.

The Society produced its first professional exhibit, "Down the Ways: The Wooden Ship Era in the Three Villages," in 1989. The exhibit opened in the Emma S. Clark Memorial library, and the library joined with the Society in sponsoring a series of related lectures. This exhibit, along with a later collaborative endeavor, examined not only local people at home, but their relationship to the sea and the significance of their lives at sea. The exhibit's presence in the library also led, six years later, to the creation of the society's major exhibit *The Sailing Circle: 19th Century Seafaring Women from New York*. (To be continued in our next newsletter.)



## Wilma Gerard, 1924 - 2009

**Wilhelmine Gerard**, Trustee of the Three Village Historical Society from 1992-93 and recipient of the Maggie Gillie Award in 2004, passed away on June 5, 2009 at the age of 85. An active member of the Society, in recent years she volunteered for the Candlelight House Tour, the Apple Festival, the Spirits Tour, the Rhodes Committee, Artifacts Committee and the Walk Through History.

"I have known Wilma since I was very young - and so was she! My lasting impression of Wilma as a volunteer: She always said yes, and she always gave her all."  
*Barbara Russell*

"Wilma was a dedicated member of the Society who took great pride in beautifying the community and Society at the Candlelight House Tour. You would always see her walking around the Setauket pond with her tree clippers looking for a quick snip of a stray branch or flower head ready to go to seed. Her love of nature and the outdoors will always be remembered. I personally will miss her at our events as she was always on my right side selling tickets and keeping the lines moving. Rest in peace Wilma."

*Barbara Lynch*

### TVHS Culper Spy Ring T-shirts

Now available in our gift shop!  
White t-shirt with navy blue design  
on the back and TVHS logo on the  
front. \$10 adult sizes/ \$8 Youth large.

*Culper Spy Ring*

1778 - 1781



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## 15th Annual Spirit Tour: *Legends and Legendary People of the Three Villages* Saturday, Oct. 17, 2009



Meet **Anna Smith Strong**. Legend has it that she was a part of the Culper Spy Ring. She hung laundry to signal other members about secret locations and meeting places.

Visit the historic cemeteries of the Presbyterian and Caroline Churches where you will meet the men and women from the Three Villages who have sparked our imaginations with their legendary stories. *Are their tales Fact or Fiction?*

Tours leave every 15 minutes from the Setauket Presbyterian Church Hall. We offer a Young Historians Tour for young children at 4:45, 5:00, and 5:15 pm. The evening tour departs every 15 minutes starting at 5:30 p.m. and the last departs at 8:00 p.m. Please plan to arrive 10 minutes before your tour is scheduled to depart. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight.

**Pre-registration price: \$15/members and \$18/nonmembers.** Tickets the night of the event are \$18/members and \$20/nonmembers. No Refunds. Rain date for event: October 24, 2009. For more information, or to order tickets with a credit card please call our office: (631) 751-3730 M- F: 10-3 p.m.

## 15th Annual Spirits Tour Member Pre-Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**TVHS Member Preregistration Ticket Price: \$15.00**

Number of Tickets: \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Tour Times: 4:45 5:00 5:15 (Young Historians)

5:30 5:45 6:00 6:15 6:30 6:45

7:00 7:15 7:30 7:45 8:00

First Choice: \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd: \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd: \_\_\_\_\_

Ticket order form must be mailed before October 9th. After the 9th all preregistrations will be done by phone. All ticket orders will be confirmed by email or phone. Tickets will only be available for pick up the night of the Tour at the Will Call table at the Setauket Presbyterian Church. Make checks payable to: Three Village Historical Society. No refunds. Rain date: Oct. 24, 2009

**Pay by check or credit card (MasterCard/Visa)**

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your registration and payment to:

**Three Village Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 76  
Setauket, NY 11733