



The Historian

A Publication of the Three Village Historical Society



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The Three Village Historical Society

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Autumn/Winter 2009



Seasons Greetings From Our House to Yours

Change is in the air at the Three Village Historical Society. In this issue you will get a glimpse of the many events that the Society has been involved in from September through December. Many plans are in the works as we greet the new decade with plans to continue our goals of education and historical preservation of documents and objects from the Three Village community.

Through the efforts of Three Village Historical Society member, David Fortuna of Swan Cove Landscaping in collaboration with Joseph Troffa of Jos. H Troffa Landscape & Mason Supply and Christopher Graf of Stone Gate Landscaping Construction, Inc, plans to renovate the front of our headquarters/visitors center in preparation for the planned Culper Spy Ring exhibit were realized with the installation of a brick walkway and landscape renovations.

We are still in the planning phase of a new exhibit relating to the history of Culper Spy Ring based here in Setauket, whose combined efforts helped General George Washington

defeat the British forces in the Revolutionary War. The exhibit will be housed at our location at 93 North Country Road in Setauket. Changes to the building's front entrance and maintenance issue will have to be addressed in the coming year in order to move the Spy Ring Exhibit project forward.



(L-R) Christopher Graf, David Fortuna, TVHS President Peter Paul Ostapow and Joseph Troffa stand by the completed brick walk way installed in November. Photo courtesy of Peter Ostapow

Building and Grounds: Walkway Construction

**Stay connected.
Receive event
reminders and
updates on
volunteering
opportunities.
Send us your
email address!
info@tvhs.org**



The process of installing the brick walk in front of the Bayles-Swezey house, home of the Three Village Historical Society is documented in the photos below. Preparation were put in motion months in advance when plans were discussed for the reclaimed brick walkway in keeping with the history of the building. The bricks were collected for months in preparation for the three day installation of the walkway. See front page for details on the project.



Photos courtesy of David Fortuna

TVHS Calendar of Events

JANUARY 2010

Monday, January 18th, 7:00 p.m. Monthly Lecture Series: Presentation by Eric Ferrara- "*The Illicit Apple: A History of Gangs, Vice & Crime in NYC*". Explore the role that crime and vice has played in the everyday lives of New Yorkers over the last 400 years and trace the origins of contemporary organized crime. Meeting takes place at the Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main St, Setauket, NY. 7:00 p.m. - reception, 7:30 Members Meeting, 7:45-9:00 p.m. Speaker. The Monthly Lecture series is free and open to the public.

FEBRUARY

Monday, February 15th, 7:00 p.m. Monthly Lecture Series: Presentation by Richard Welch- "*Memento Mori*". Meeting takes place at the Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main St, Setauket, NY. 7:00 p.m. - reception, 7:30 Members Meeting, 7:45-9:00 p.m. Speaker. The Monthly Lecture series is free and open to the public.

MARCH

Monday, March 15th, Annual Awards Dinner. Stony Brook Yacht Club

APRIL

Monday, April 19th, 6:00 p.m. 23rd Annual Pot Luck Supper held in conjunction with the Setauket Neighborhood House Association. The dinner will be held at the Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main St, Setauket from 6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m. Speaker T.B.A.

The Historian

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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.

The deadline: for our next issue is February 15, 2010

Acting Editor/
Layout: Dianne Trautmann

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Historical Society



"We will begin the process of preparing for the new year with new ideas, new exhibits and some new surprises."

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 Spring Events help is needed for the Monthly Lecture Series and Annual Dinner. Contact the office at 751-3730

President's Message

As the year quickly draws to a close and the Holidays are now but a distant memory, it's an appropriate time to reflect on my first year as your President. I have learned much and have come to realize how much I do not know about this truly outstanding organization.

Our major asset is our volunteers without which none of our endeavors would have taken place. It's truly mindboggling how many of you come out to support our activities. I'd like to thank all the chairpeople and their committees for a very successful year especially in light of the poor economy. The success of the 31st Candle Light House Tour helped us to meet this years' budget.

Your Board of Trustees was perhaps one of the best this Society has ever had. It was my pleasure to work with them and look forward to even a better year in 2010. We are also fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated office staff. Betty Domino and Dianne Trautmann have done an amazing job this year. The Rhodes Committee along with Karen Martin, our archivist, continues to provide an invaluable service. Our new Education Director Donna Smith has continued the work of Liz Kaplan and we are looking forward to expanding our Education Department this coming year.

We hope you like the way the new walkway and signage adds a fresh new look to our Headquarters. We are thankful for the generosity of David Fortuna, Christopher Graf and Joseph Troffa for the excellent workmanship.

This year was filled with sadness with the passing of a few dedicated volunteers and long time members. Our sincerest condolences are extended to their families and loved ones. We are especially grateful to the late Julia Darling for her most generous bequest that will be used for capital improvements, new programs and exhibits. Please see our *In Memoriam* feature on page 5, recognizing those who have contributed to the Society in memory of family and friends who have passed away.

We will begin the process of preparing for the new year with new ideas, new exhibits and some new surprises. Your Board of Trustees will take on a more managerial role this coming year and will be charged with the responsibility of making sure our programs are on track and produce positive economic results.

Best wishes for the New Year and we look forward to your continued support.

Good and Welfare

Congratulations to Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld and his wife Kristina on the birth of their first child, Theodore Rudiger Fiore-Rosenfeld on October 5th.

Congratulations to Dorothy Miller on the publication of her new book: "New York City in the Great Depression, Sheltering the Homeless."

Congratulations to Carl Bongiorno who proposed to Elizabeth Reuter by placing an engagement ring on the Christmas tree in the Schmohl's house on Friday night of the Candlelight House Tour (she accepted!).

Sympathies are extended to the following members and their families for the passing of loved ones:

To Marie Mills for the passing of her husband Dr. R. Sherman Mills. (see pg. 5)

To the family of Charles Post, aged 88 and a lifetime resident of Setauket who died on November 11th. Charlie was a member of the Rhodes Committee. A veteran of World War II, he was buried with full Military Honors at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Port Jefferson.

To Graham & Anne DeVault for the passing of Graham's brother Robert DeVault on November 26th.

To the family of Nancy Knapp, 85, a resident of Stony Brook for 35 years before moving to Vero Beach, Florida. She died on November 24th. The family is planning a memorial service in Stony Brook in May.

The Three Village Historical Society 1989-1994 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 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.

Arthur Billadello (1989-1991) was the eighth president of the Society. The Society produced its first professional exhibit, "Down the Ways: The Wooden Ship Era in the Three Villages," in 1989. The traveling 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*. In the fall *Down the Ways* was installed in the Marine Midland Bank in East Setauket (now HSBC) and a new exhibit, in cooperation with the Museums at Stony Brook (now the Long Island Museum) *Community Life in the Three Villages in the 1930s* was installed in Key Bank (now Chase Bank, next to the East Setauket Post Office). Two other exhibits were set up in the Emma S. Clark Library during the year. In July, the Society began a major restoration of the Brewster Cemetery in Setauket. The Society had taken over responsibility for the cemetery in 1983, formed a cemetery committee and cleaned up the cemetery but this

restoration of the stones and survey of the cemetery began a program that resulted in the restoration and survey of a number of Three Village area private cemeteries over the next two decades.



George and Betsy Delforge, (circa 1990) donors of the Benjamin Jones painting, stand with Michelle Morrisson. Morrison was the first Director of the Society.

In 1990, the oil painting of Captain Benjamin Jones returned to Setauket, generously donated by Betsy & George Delforge. It had been hanging in their bed & breakfast in Fredericksburg, Texas since Betsy inherited the painting and many other items belonging to Captain Jones a few years prior. In April, the Society took part, along with other community organizations, in the reenactment of President George Washington's Tour of Long Island substituting the Three Village Inn for the relocated Roe Tavern. The first Apple Festival, on the grounds of SPLIA's Sherwood-Jayne House was held on Saturday November 3rd.

In May of 1991, the diary of Elizabeth Evans Jones, second wife of Captain Benjamin Jones was donated to the Society by Betsy Delforge. Elizabeth voyaged around Cape Horn with her husband and three children. In August, the oil painting of Mary Swift Jones, first wife of Captain Benjamin Jones was donated to the Society by Judy & Bruce Southworth. The painting, a companion piece to the painting of Captain Jones, had been hanging in their bed & breakfast in Sugar Hill, New Hampshire. Mary went on a three year voyage to China and Japan with her husband and wrote many letters

home about her experiences. On September 1, Michelle Morrisson became the first director of the Society.

Franklin Neal (1992-1994) was the ninth president of the Society. In March the Society held its first Volunteers/New Members Party, a tradition that had started with a holiday party for volunteers at the Sherwood Jayne House a few years before. In June, Sally Packard, Society Archivist, and our first paid employee, retired after six years working with the Rhodes Collection. As noted by Franklin Neal, "Sally can be credited with pulling our collection together and making it possible for it to be readily accessible and useable by the public." The first Candlelight House Tour's Friday Night Tour was instituted and helped the Society net its largest income to date. During 1992, the Society, which took a leap of faith in hiring our first director, struggled with the financial realities as the new director and the trustees worked to increase our professionalism, our contact with the community, our exploration of our area's cultural history, and our collaboration with other local organizations. We received two modest grants during 1992, the first for \$1,975 from the Institute for Museum Services through the American Association of Museums to help in our long range planning and \$700 from Suffolk County for the summer youth programs, "Artistic Explorations."

In 1992 the Society began a long range planning effort with a membership survey that asked why members joined the Society, what events they attended, what services they used and what they would like the Society to accomplish. There were only 59 responses out of 400 members but the majority, as its first priority, wanted the Society to acquire its own facility.

The Society also hired a professional consulting archivist, to review our Rhodes Collection. The following year, 1993, would see the Society take a giant leap forward in many of the areas outlined by our new director Michele Morrisson. (To be continued)

Dr. R. Sherman Mills : 1914-2009



Dr. Roswell Sherman Mills was a devoted member of the Three Village Historical Society for over forty years. He was a Trustee from 1989-1992 and served on the Rhodes Committee

and the Cemetery Committee. Born in Brooklyn in 1914, his family summered in Setauket and he made Setauket his permanent home in 1930. Dr. Mills served in World War II as a battalion surgeon in Patton's Third Army. He landed on Omaha Beach in Normandy during the D-Day invasion and was part of the liberation of France in 1945. After WWII, Dr. Mills practiced medicine in Port Jefferson for 40 years. He was the fourth generation of the Mills family to make Setauket his home and lived to see his seven great grandchildren.

Karen Martin remembers working with Dr. Mills when she first came to the Society in 1995 as archivist for the Society:

"What I remember about Dr. Mills was his love for this area. When you toured his personal collection you learned he had a history for each item -not only what it was used for, but where it came from and, most importantly, whom it belonged to. He treasured each piece. I recall his emotion as he held a blacksmith's hammer and spoke with the utmost respect for its owner. In each item he saw more than just an object. This respect was also shown through his dedication to the Society's collections and to the local cemeteries. As chairman of the Cemetery Committee he led others in annual clean-ups and on-going repair work in the local

graveyards, especially in the often neglected and abandoned family burying grounds."

Dr. Mills contributed to the publication, "Setauket: The First Three Hundred Years, 1655-1955." He wrote about local physicians in "300 Years of Local Medicine" and about local business leader Edward L. Tinker.

Donations in memory of Dr. Mills have been received by the Society and total more than \$12,000.00. Dr. Mills' daughter, Barbara Russell, historian for the Town of Brookhaven and an active member of the Society, is working with the Board of Trustees to determine how the funds will be used to honor her father.

In Memoriam

The Three Village Historical Society recognizes the contributions of members wishing to remember loved ones that have passed away:

Wilhelmine (Wilma) Gerard

Franklin & Cassandra Neal; Michael & Barbara Russell

Charles (Charlie) Post:

Jean Baker, Peter & Joan Fraccalvieri, Marie Mills, Daisy Moraitis, Michael and Barbara Russell, John and Pat Strong,

Dr. R. Sherman Mills

Eric & Analise Bosch; Fred Bryant, Debbie Legault and the staff of Bryant Funeral Home; Karen Buxton; Ann Lowery; Maryann MacCrate; Collin and Leslie Masson, Catherine Minuse; Cynthia Murphy; Franklin and Cassandra Neal; Guy Tyler, William and Barbara Wissemann;

Jean & William B. Minuse

Catherine Minuse

Bequests:

The Estate of Ingrid Wallach
The Estate of Julia Darling

American Heritage Camp: Rock and Roll Remembered



Activities centered around farm life and the music of the 50's and 60's were the theme of five days of fun in August at the annual American Heritage Camp, co-sponsored by the Three Village Historical Society and SPLIA (the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities). The camp was sold out this year, and the weather was beautiful for a week at the Sherwood-Jayne farm in Setauket. Campers enjoyed feeding the animals, making their own tie-dye shirts and singing along to songs by Elvis and other popular songsters of the era. Thanks to Margo Arceri, Pat Hildebrandt and Bob "Mac" Macaluso who ran this year's camp along with their helpers Isabella Sobolvarro and Carole Garveson

Photo courtesy of B. Macaluso

Record Turnout at the 20th Annual Apple Festival

It was a beautiful day with a record turnout at the Sherwood-Jayne Farm for the 20th Long Island Apple Festival. There were kids everywhere and we were running out of everything. We had wonderful volunteers from the high school as well as our Society members. The kids were going from pony rides, to the apples press, to Bob Benner's games. There was not a kid to be seen without one of Janette Handley's candy apples. We could not keep up with the demand. We had entire families staying the whole day, it was such a festive atmosphere for the community. Thanks to event organizers for TVHS: Christy Radke and Patty Cain, and the army of our wonderful volunteers organized by Donna Higgins.

Photo courtesy of SPLIA



3rd Time's the Charm for the Annual Spirits Cemetery Tour

Weather forecasts for fierce storms led to the postponement of the 15th Annual Spirits Cemetery Tour for its originally scheduled date of October 17th and then again on the following Saturday, October 24th. On Sunday the show finally went on, thanks to our intrepid cast of spirits and the volunteers that stepped in to take the places of those who could not make the third rain date, both in costume and behind the scenes. Our thanks to all of our volunteers and ticket holders who didn't let the rain dampen their spirits. Thanks to event organizers Frank Turano, Patty Yantz and Patty Cain.



Henrietta 'Etta' Sherry
portrayed by Helene Bredes.



Dr. Ferdinand Bates
portrayed by Tim McNamara
and Roberta Odiera as Anna
Strong.



Eleazer Hawkins: portrayed
by John Molfetta.



Nehemiah Hand portrayed by
Frank Turano.

Photos courtesy of Bev Tyler.

31st Annual Candlelight House Tour

This year's Candlelight House Tour focused on homes in the Stony Brook area. A magical evening of *Moonlight on the Mill Pond* was experienced by tour goers on Friday evening and the rain on Saturday didn't deter the hundreds of people who walked the tour route to see the homes on Saturday. Five private homes opened their doors to ticket holders this year, along with Avalon House in Avalon Park and the Stony Brook Community Methodist Church which celebrated its 100th Anniversary this year. Friday night's tour culminated in a festive 'after party' at the Long Island Museum sponsored by Fratelli's Marketplace.

Our thanks to Event Co-Chairs Christine Petrone and Pat Vitale along with all of the volunteers that give of their time each year to make the tour possible. Our home owners, decorators, house chairs, docents, traffic volunteers, office staff, area restaurants and businesses help make the event a success.



TVHS Docent Peggy Confoy shared some of the history of the Skerrit House with tour goers.



Barbara Wallace, one of the many TVHS Docents for the Schmohl house on Saturday, stationed in the dining room of the home



Kim Bailey was among many of our volunteers that worked the traffic detail in the rain on Saturday.

Candlelight House Tour photos courtesy of Bev Tyler

Guest Curator Anna Sato: The Three Villages-A Changing Landscape



Anna Sato is our most recent Guest Curator. *The Three Villages: A Changing Landscape* features both Anna's paintings and sketches of area landmarks, paired with postcards of the area from the Society's McNamara collection. The exhibit will be up through January.

Photo courtesy of D. Trautmann

The Three Villages: A Changing Landscape is the newest installation in our Guest Curator program. The exhibit features paintings and charcoal sketches of local points of interest by Anna Sato coupled with reproductions of postcards of the same local spots featured in Anna's artwork from the Society's McNamara Collection.

Archivist Karen Martin matched the locations in Anna's paintings with the locations featured in the postcards, showing the area as it looked in the early 20th century (1910-1940). The exhibit will be open for viewing through the end of January: Monday through Thursday from 10:30 a.m.– 2:30

The Guest Curator program is open to members of the Three Village Historical Society, allowing members to curate an exhibit based on some aspect of Three Village history.

If you are interested in being a Guest Curator, please contact the Society office at 631-751-3730.

If you haven't renewed your membership please do so as soon as possible. We look forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming events. Thank you for your continued support!

Three Village Historical Society
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Suggested Membership Levels:

- Individual: \$30.00
- Dual/Family: \$50.00
- Patron: \$100.00
- Benefactor: \$250.00
- Helmsman: \$500.00
- Midshipman: \$1000.00

**Rates Reflect Annual Dues,
Renewable January of Each Year**

For a complete list of benefits for each level of
membership please visit our website:

<http://www.tvhs.org>

The Three Village Historical Society Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Payment:

Check payable to: **Three Village Historical Society**

or

Credit Card: MasterCard or Visa:

Name on Card: _____ Exp. _____

Account Number: _____

Mail application to:
The Three Village Historical Society
P.O. Box 76
Setauket, NY 11733