



# The Information Window

## Cookies, Cocoa, Jazz, Strings and Santa

By Jim Colotti, WPS Trustee

The chill in the air didn't slow down the WHS Jazz Ensemble, Wantagh's Symphonic Orchestra Students, nor Santa! At the Wantagh Preservation Society's Open House, where all were welcome, the afternoon was full of holiday cheer and surprises.



*Holiday melodies are brought to life by Wantagh's Symphonic Orchestra students*



*A lively performance of holiday favorites by the WHS Jazz Ensemble*



*Santa and friends on the Jamaica Railroad Car*

Kaitlyn VonRunnen left a check for \$68.50 as a Christmas gift to the WPS. Certainly a kind donation, but the unusual amount had us puzzled until Kaitlyn explained that it was her winnings from the 50/50 raffle at the Fall Yard Sale. By virtue of their charm, Wayne and Mary Wagner managed to vend \$118 worth of 50/50 tickets, and Angelica Balitsos, Miss Wantagh 2013, drew the 50/50 winner.

Colorful Christmas Tree decorations were skillfully tailored by the Paumanacke Garden Club. The Jamaica was festively prepared by Karen Chowske and Bob Meagher to serve as Santa's temporary abode, where he cheerfully heeded Christmas wishes from all.

An outdoor mini-concert of holiday tunes performed by Wantagh High School's Jazz Ensemble delighted the hardy crowd as they endured the chilly weather. Afterwards, inside the museum, piping hot cocoa and an assortment of delightful cookies were offered by Elaine Yarris and Claire Reisert, while the lush holiday sounds of Wantagh's Symphonic Orchestra students filled the air.

Looking forward to 2014 as we continue expanding the museum displays and the restoration efforts on the Jamaica. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year! 📖



Scan or click for more pictures!



Scan or click to be a member in 2014!



*Santa taking Christmas wishes, while figuring who has been naughty or nice*

## Wantagh Preservation Society

1700 Wantagh Avenue (Museum Location)

PO Box 132 (Mailing Address)

Wantagh, Long Island, New York 11793

516.826.8767

[museum.wantagh.li](http://museum.wantagh.li)

Happy Holidays!



# Wantagh Preservation Society

## Elected Officers

*President:* Bob Meagher  
*1st Vice President:* Karen Chowske  
*2nd Vice President:* Bob Cook  
*Recording Secretary:* Tom Watson  
*Corresponding Secretary:* Elaine Yarris  
*Treasurer:* Wayne Wagner

## Appointed Officers

*Curator:* Carol Poulos  
*Newsletter Editor:* Jim Colotti

## Trustees

Ellen Cook  
Joan Mallon  
Claire Reisert  
Joshua Soren  
Mary Wagner

*The Information Window is the official newsletter of the Wantagh Preservation Society, and is published every two months. Please obtain written permission from the individual authors before using material contained in this publication.*

*We hope you enjoy our newsletter. Your comments, ideas and suggestions are welcome!*

[wps@wantagh.li](mailto:wps@wantagh.li)



*WPS President Bob Meagher meets with Wantagh Chamber President Denise Langweber at a recent Chamber meeting. Bob's attendance is part of his effort to involve the WPS in more local activities.*



***Museum is  
now closed until  
Sunday  
April 13***



***More renovations are  
underway!***

## WFD Lends an Extended Hand



Getting a jump on the holiday season, in late November the Wantagh Fire Department lends a much-needed extended hand with the Christmas tree lights. Thanks WFD! 📖



## St. Frances de Chantal Roman Catholic Church

*By Claire D. Reisert, WPS Trustee*

Back in 1947 my well-respected Grandfather, George K. Caffrey, was approached by local Wantagh residents who asked him if he could obtain a Catholic Church in Wantagh since they had to go to Seaford or Bellmore for mass. My Grandfather sent a letter along with a petition signed by more than 250 resident Catholics to the Bishop Molloy of the Brooklyn Diocese requesting a church. He along with especially my Grandmother Charlotte Caffrey and parents Dorothy & J. Henry Reisert worked tirelessly and on Sunday June 6, 1948 the Roman Catholic Mission Catholic of Wantagh was born. My Grandfather had numerous connections in Wantagh and it was his connection with the Wantagh Fire Department that lead to the Mission Church being started in the Wantagh Fire Department's second floor hall (now Wantagh Auto Body on Railroad Avenue) where the first Catholic mass was celebrated.



*St. Frances de Chantal  
as it appeared in the 1950's*

My Grandfather continued his efforts to secure a Catholic Church writing many letters to Bishop Molloy as the population of Wantagh Catholics continued to grow. Much credit must be given to the first parishioners who labored weekly to set up the hall each Saturday evening for Sunday mass and then restore the hall as they had found it right after services.

For three years the Wantagh Catholics led by my Grandfather worked to secure our own Catholic Church by writing letters, running fund raisers and never giving up. In 1950-1951 there was a large influx of Catholics to the Wantagh area especially after World War II. In February 1952 the number of Wantagh Catholics had outgrown the Fire Department's hall and mass was then moved to the Beech Street School. The efforts of the Wantagh Catholics were rewarded in January of 1952 when Father Stanislaus Smulski was appointed pastor of St. Frances de Chantal R.C. Church. In less than 6 months and \$165,000 a simple wooden country church was built on the property that was purchased from the Smith family. The first mass was celebrated at the new church on June 15, 1952. The original Smith family home was used as a rectory for the priests.

The rest is history as the number of Catholics grew and more buildings were added especially a school in 1956. Unfortunately on October 27, 1983 an arsonist set fire to the original wooden church and it was pretty much destroyed. But, as in the beginnings of the Catholic Church in Wantagh, the Wantagh Fire Department came to the rescue again of the Wantagh Catholics. With reverence the firemen tirelessly fought the fire and preserved most of the stain glass windows, cross, tabernacle, many of the statues and more religious artifacts. Two of those stain glass windows were donated to the Wantagh Preservation Society for their display. One is a plain window that was on the side of the church the other window displays an image of "The Lamb of God". After the fire it took another 5 years and over two million dollars for a new church to be built and it was dedicated by Bishop John R. McGann from the Diocese of Rockville Centre on May 30, 1987.

St. Frances de Chantal is now the vibrant home to over 5,000 Wantagh Catholic Families and serves countless Catholics and non-Catholics from all over Long Island in its mission to serve all of God's people. 📖

Seasons Greetings




*"Preservation with a Purpose."*

## Fun Facts about the Jamaica Parlor Car

*Compiled by Claire D. Reisert, WPS Trustee*

As we anxiously await for the restoration of the Jamaica to be completed, here are a few interesting fun facts about the car.

- ◆ 1912 - Built as a Parlor Car to carry 26 passengers by American Car & Foundry Corporation for use by the Long Island Railroad. The car was operated by Long Island Parlor Car Company which was a subsidiary of LIRR.
- ◆ 1925 - It was reclassified as a business car for use by LIRR executives and renamed "The Montauk".
- ◆ 1930 - It was rebuilt as an Observation Car with State rooms, a Solarium, Dining Room, Galley (kitchen) and Butler's Quarters as well as an Observation Deck that allowed passengers to sit and enjoy the breezes & scenery.
- ◆ 1941 - Returned to Pennsylvania Railroad and air conditioning (that used ice blocks) was installed.
- ◆ 1949 - LIRR bought it back for \$26,434, renamed "The Jamaica", a name that endured from 1949 to 1957.
- ◆ 1962 - Reclassified as a passenger car and served all of LIRR on express trains.
- ◆ The Jamaica was supposed to be moved to Freeport for storage but could not clear the Meadowbrook Parkway overpass, so it was instead moved to Grumman in Bethpage for storage.
- ◆ 1968 - It was retired and donated to the Wantagh Preservation Society.
- ◆ 1972 - Three firms donated labor and supplies to move the car to its present location on October 25. The move involved a crane, a flatbed truck and a police escort. Overhead wires had to be held up to provide room for the car. The trip took 2 hours.
- ◆ 1996 - It was dedicated and opened to the public.
- ◆ It is a behemoth at 80 feet long, 14 feet high and 80 tons.
- ◆ It has an original mail crane on the north east end of the tracks.
- ◆ It was heated by hot water circulated through pipes behind the baseboards.
- ◆ It has the original ornate hand-applied pin striping in the interior.
- ◆ It has its own power generator, ice hatches for the air cooling system, coal stoves and a fully-equipped galley.
- ◆ A fan blew air over two 300 pound blocks of ice to keep the car cooled for a weekend ride to Montauk Point.
- ◆ The Jamaica was used by Governor Rockefeller. 



*Governor Rockefeller on the Jamaica*

### ***We Need You! Join or Renew Your Membership for 2014!***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ New ☐ Renew ☐  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to help with:

- |   |   |   |                                      |
|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening & Planting       | <input type="checkbox"/> General Meeting Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction             | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hosting museum on a Sunday | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Event Planning   | <input type="checkbox"/> Publication & Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                |   |   |                                      |

Check Membership Level: ☐ Individual \$15 ☐ Family \$25 ☐ Friend \$35 ☐ Patron \$50 ☐ Fellow \$100

**Please Make Checks Payable To: Wantagh Preservation Society PO Box 132 Wantagh, NY 11793**