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Wantagh Preservation Society

2014 February/March

The Information Window

Long Island's Historic Houses of the South Shore

By Mary Wagner, Trustee

Christopher M. Collora, Author of "Long Island Historic Houses of the South Shore", will be our guest speaker on Tuesday, February 25, at 7:30 PM at the Wantagh Public Library. He will have a slide presentation on communities along the Great South Bay. In contrast to and predating the North Shore Gold Coast, these houses were home to hundreds of less publicized, yet equally impressive mansions and historic houses. Well known owners of these homes included the Bourne, Cutting, Gardiner Guggenheim and Vanderbilt families. Charlie Chaplin and Rudolph Valentino were guests at one of the homes. Several houses connected to the Revolutionary War are also mentioned. The lifestyle of the South Shore is also portrayed, including activities like hunting and fishing as well as the famous beaches that served as tourist attractions.

Christopher Collora is an award-winning broadcast and print journalist. He was born and raised on the South Shore of Long Island and is a contributor to Historic Long Island, which promotes historical preservation across Long Island. He will have copies of his book available. Please join us and invite your friends for this exceptional evening! 📖



Eclectic mansion built by Edwin Augustus Johnson circa 1850. Later owned by James Neal Plumb who made several alterations resulting in this unique architecture. (Courtesy of East Islip Historical Society.)

A majestic mansion purchased by St. Johns University in 2001 from Clason Point Military Academy. The Academy purchased the structure in 1926. (Courtesy of the Suffolk County Historical Society.)



Unqua, also known as Rosedale, was built by Major General Onderdonk Floyd-Jones (1792-1862). It sat across from land that later become John Burns Park. It was demolished in the 1950's. A small shopping center currently occupies the land. (Courtesy of the Historical Society of the Massapequa.)



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

Upcoming Events:

- ◆ Trustee Meeting, February 4 at 7:30 PM at Wantagh Museum
- ◆ General Meeting, February 25 at 7:30 PM at Wantagh Library, featuring "Historic Homes Along the South Shore" by Chris Collora
- ◆ Trustee Meeting, March 4 at 7:30 PM at Wantagh Museum.
- ◆ General Meeting, March 25 at 7:30 PM at Wantagh Library, featuring a presentation on the LI Rail Road by Dave Morrison

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



Wantagh children dressed for school in 1962. This photo and many others are part of a heartwarming & heartbreaking journey into our past (please see the page 4).

When the Museum Opens in April



*stop by and see our
newly renovated
exhibits!*

The 2014 Membership Drive is in Full Swing

By Mary Wagner WPS Membership Chairperson

Our membership year for 2014 begins on January 1 and ends on December 31. Thank you to all who have already joined or renewed your membership this year. The money raised through membership is our main source of funds. You are not just joining the society; you become a supporter of history. You enable the society to continue in its work to enlighten residents on Wantagh's past and to help restore the Jamaica train so it can be open to visitors. We will also present informative programs.

An application to join or renew is included on the last page of this Information Window. As an alternative we have also implemented a secure online payment option accepting all major credit cards. Visit museum.wantagh.li, or, click or scan the QR Code to pay online if you wish. 📖



January: A Welcome Break

By Bob Meagher, WPS President

Wantagh's January is usually a quiet month for the society in any year, but to tell the truth we needed a break to catch our collective breath! For us, 2013 was a year filled with challenges and obligations that needed immediate attention. It is Wantagh's good fortune that the society has a dedicated group of volunteers and benefactors to see our many endeavors to completion.

We started off 2013 with a flurry of paperwork. We had to update our status on the state and federal level (this was required of many exempt groups recently) and take care of some local and business items as well. With some patience we persevered on all accounts.

We made great headway on our various projects last year. Many have noticed a large handsome, turn-of-the-century, lamppost now illuminating the museum grounds. A big thank you goes out to Sentry Electric for all their help in achieving this goal.

In addition, our Post Office building's interior is in the last stages of completion. We hope to open it to public viewing this summer.

Great strides were made in restoring the Jamaica Parlor Car to its former glory. A good effort was made by our contractors and volunteers to sandblast, prime and paint the car. In addition 42 new windows were set in place, enabling people to actually see in as well as out of the train. We are hoping to complete much of the interior work so that it too will be open to the public this summer.

Inside the station museum, new display panels and reframed pictures offer a renewed window to our town's past. Our newest-old addition to the museum collection is T. Wiebel Barber chair. The barber shop was housed in an existing building (behind Dunkin Donuts on Sunrise Highway) where he made his living barbering in the 1930's.

Our Spring and Autumn fairs were a great success as was our mid-summer music concert, which was co-sponsored by our library friends. The holiday end-of-the-year open house was serenaded by our talented students from the high school, with a decorating assist from our fire department. We had quite a crowd!

Finally, what for us was a delightful surprise, we started a Facebook page that has proven to be a huge hit with Wantagh and keeps growing in members.

Hopefully we can keep the momentum going in 2014 (at a more leisurely pace we hope!) and maintain this treasure of a museum that some visionary Wantaghites started so many years ago.



*The Jamaica Parlor Car is currently being restored.
(Photo by Ken Thalheimer.)*

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God Bless Arthur (*But Who's Arthur?*)

Forward By Jim Colotti, Editor

A heartwarming and heartbreaking glimpse into Wantagh's past is told by Burt Zastera who spent part of his childhood in our town circa 1960. Arthur was Burt's childhood friend who sadly met an untimely death before his 6th birthday. In his "God Bless Arthur" webpage, Burt takes us on a journey into his childhood growing up in Wantagh, complete with recollections of a simpler time and photographs that are sure to bring back memories.

The preamble below is a sampling of Burt's detailed narrative. For the complete journey and its full-circle closure, visit the "God Bless Arthur" page by clicking or scanning the QR code. 

Who's Arthur? You might ask. Arthur was a friend I had when I was very young. In the late 1950's, early 60's we lived in a section of Levittown in Wantagh, Long Island, New York. My parents and I had moved there from Nebraska a couple of years earlier, when my father took a job transfer. Being the only kid in our family, I enjoyed the friends I made in the neighborhood. Arthur was one of them. He lived on Duckpond Drive, around the corner from my street, Deep Lane. (Levitt named all the streets starting with the letter "D" in our development). I could go around the block to his house without crossing the street, so I was allowed to go there on my own at a very young age, probably around 6 or 7. When I went to his place, we spent time playing with toy cars and trucks, and knocking a kickball around in the backyard. I remember Arthur was easy-going, like me. I don't think he and I ever had a fight or even a disagreement.



For the rest of this bittersweet story, scan or click the QR code.



Cherrywood School classroom in 1962 depicting Burt's classmates. Many more vintage Wantagh photos are available on the "God Bless Arthur" page.

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