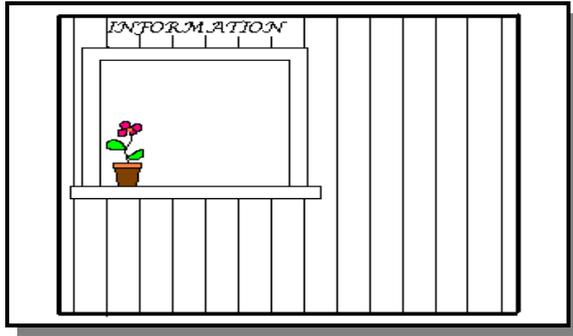


The INFORMATION WINDOW of the WANTAGH PRESERVATION



November 2004

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NOVEMBER 23 MEETING

The topic at our meeting in the Wantagh Library on November 23 will be on the 100th anniversary of the New York Subway System, presented by Wantagh Library Director, Frank McKenna.

After the meeting, our refreshment committee will provide coffee and other seasonal goodies. If you'd like to help with donations of cookies or cake, call Theresa Donohue at (516) 221-2152. 📖

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On pages 3 and 4 of this issue, Society President Jeff Saporito gives a summary of the extensive work done on the old railroad station building which is now our Wantagh Museum and the center of many of our activities. The station was originally built by the Southside Railroad, and was named "Ridgewood," the name which then was applied to our town. Those names were long ago replaced by the modern "Long Island Railroad" and "Wantagh." 📖

SOCIETY OFFICERS FOR 2005

At our November Meeting, David Denenberg has been invited to install the Society's Officers and Trustees for 2005. Our re-elected President will be Jeff Saporito; the first and second Vice Presidents will be Joshua Soren and Larry Elliot. Recording Secretary will be Elaine Yarris; Corresponding Secretary will be Dick MacMillan, and Harry Strole will be the Treasurer.

The new Trustees of the Class of 2009 will also be sworn in. They are Ellen Cook, Dick MacMillan, Jeffrey Saporito and Harry Strole. 📖

CAROL SING & TREE LIGHTING

December 12 will be a busy day at the Wantagh Mucem. We will gather on the station platform at 2:00 P.M. to sing carols from our song sheets, then go inside to warm up, and enjoy cookies and hot chocolate. The Parlor Car "Jamaica" will be open, and folks can walk through and enjoy the decorations.

At roughly 3:30, Wantagh Kiwanis will take over, with a story hour for children in the museum waiting room, and at 4:30 the big event will be the tree lighting, centered on the Showmobile in the Museum parking lot. Of course, there will be more cookies and hot chocolate to round out the afternoon.

Since the parking lot will be filled with the Showmobile and lots of people, parking space will be available on the local streets. When parking, be sure to be considerate of our neighbors, and don't block folks' driveways. 📖



Preservation Society Calendar

Tuesday, November 23:
Membership Meeting at the Wantagh Public Library,
8:00 P.M.

Sunday, December 12: Carol Sing at the
Wantagh Museum, 2:00 P.M.

Tuesday, January 18: Trustees Meeting at the
Wantagh Museum, 8:00 P.M.

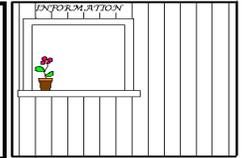
Tuesday, January 25: Membership Meeting at
the Wantagh Public Library, 8:00 P.M. 📖

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TO JOIN OR RENEW MEMBERSHIP

Name _____

Addr. _____

_____ ZIP+4 _____

Phone _____ New Renewal

Circle one: Indiv. \$6 Family \$12

Send to: Wantagh Preservation Society

MUSEUM CLOSED FOR SEASON

The Wantagh Museum will close for the winter season following the Carol Sing and Tree Lighting on December 12. We will need volunteers to act as hosts at the museum until then.

Hosts will be needed through the winter, when special tours of the museum are scheduled. If you'd like to volunteer as a host, call Donald Warner at (516) 826-6631, and he will be glad to pencil you into the schedule.

BUILDING 19 MIND BENDER

"Building 19" is a chain of surplus stores in the Boston area, with an eclectic advertising newsletter. Here's a second Mind Bender from their newsletter!

"I am the ruler of shovels. I have a double. I am thin as a knife. I have a wife. What am I?"

Ask for the answer at the January 25, 2005 membership meeting at the Library, or wait until the next Information Window.

LAST MONTH'S MIND BENDER, UNBENT

The letter "D" is found in darkness, not in light, present in daytime, but absent at night, and in the deepest of shadows!

THE INFORMATION WINDOW

The *Information Window* is a publication of the Wantagh Preservation Society, and is published preceding its monthly Membership Meetings. The Editor is Dick MacMillan, (516) 785-3951.

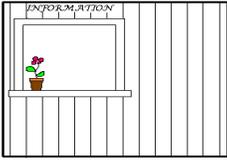
Julian Denton Smith (1898 - 1974) wrote a history of Wantagh that contains this story:

On April 21, 1790, George Washington rode through our town on a tour of Long Island. [The DAR has] placed a marker to that effect on the Hempstead-Babylon Turnpike. They seem to think his route from Hempstead brought him to the Merrick Road by way of the Hempstead-Babylon Turnpike. It is possible from an interpretation of the same source, Washington's own diary, that he came from Hempstead on the Jerusalem Road to Jerusalem and thence to the Merrick Road. Either route brought him into Jerusalem South, now called Wantagh.

Washington made several trips into the States to find out at first hand what the people were thinking, how they lived, and what were their conditions and needs. The government was new, small and without direct relations with the people and its sources of information were meager and poor. The first President was obliged to do his own fact finding. The tour of Long Island, although extending over not more than five days, constituted one of Washington's self-educating trips.

Some of the old buildings and homesteads of the first settlers are still landmarks. Many are labeled by roadside markers erected by the State Department of Education. Most of the old places, however, have been destroyed by fire or the pressure of real estate booms. One old-timer stands on the Scott estate, the west side of Wantagh Avenue at the head of Island Road. It was a Jackson homestead.

An early romance goes back to this house – Jane Jackson eloped with John Althouse, a Hessian soldier. The story has it that a Negro slave carried Jane on his back through the swampland west of the house to where Althouse waited with horses near the location of the present high school. The couple rode for East Rockaway creek, hotly pursued by Jane's father. He caught up with them just after they had been married by the East Rockaway minister but before they could hire a boat for a honeymoon on the bay. The father gave the couple farmland in northern Seaford; many land titles go back to that deed of Jackson to Althouse.



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WANTAGH MUSEUM RESTORATION NOW COMPLETE:

by Jeffrey Saporito

President, Wantagh Preservation Society

In the October 14 edition of the Wantagh-Seaford Citizen, you saw several photos of the work-in-progress at the Wantagh Museum. The project covered the restoration and replacement of a portion (not all) of the decorative woodwork and trim, stripping and replacement of the surrounding canopy roof (not the main roof), exterior preparation and painting of the entire building and the replacement of the rain gutters and leaders. With the exception of repairs to the deck platform, the exterior restoration is now complete.

The project began two years ago when the WPS Trustees were concerned by the severely peeling paint on the exterior of the Museum building. They began an effort to raise funds for painting and repairing the Museum, which led to the restoration project.

Similar to many other historic sites throughout Long Island, our Museum suffers for many reasons, such as weather-related deterioration, a reduction in volunteerism coupled with increased costs of insurances and services. The WPS also shares a unique relationship with Nassau County, where the County owns the property that the museum is located on and is responsible for the grounds, the building exterior and the basic utility costs. We, as a Historical Society chartered by the New York State Board of Regents, are responsible for the housekeeping of the Museum and have full responsibility for the Jamaica Parlor Car and the newly restored Old Wantagh Post Office. This unique relationship has benefited us in years past, in that the County had provided the greatest share of the "heavy" work, such as roofing and tree pruning, allowing us to spend the limited funds we raise from craft fairs, raffles, membership dues and fruit sales on our insurance policy and basic operating costs. Indeed, the talented carpenters and tradesmen of Nassau County executed the original expert restoration of the railroad station building back in 1979 to 1982.

In recent years, the County has been unable to provide the services that the Society had depended on, due to their lack of resources and personnel. As a result, the workload has fallen on the limited resources of our all-volunteer staff. As with any house or building left to the elements without preventive maintenance, small repairs quickly become major catastrophes, and the Railroad Station Museum building is no exception.

For several years, the Trustees of the WPS appealed repeatedly to the Nassau County Office of Parks and Recreation for assistance with painting, roofing, rain gutters, and dozens of other repairs, because the unique "parent/child" relationship outlined by the organizational charter back in 1966 "entitled" the Society to such services. But over the past decade, Nassau County has reduced the staffing of the Parks department by hundreds. Unfortunately for our Society and all our parks, these layoffs have left the County unable to help with work requests much beyond occasional grass cutting and other rudimentary services. The Board of Trustees is grateful for these services that, although minimal, are still very necessary and helpful but really fall far short of the actual requirements for maintaining this valuable historic site.

Considering the urgent nature of the repair projects and the great value of the Museum to the community, the Board has turned to other sources for assistance, such as our local political leaders, volunteers, and members of the community. All have very thankfully and wonderfully come forward to help the Society.

The repair project was begun in earnest two years ago with an appeal to Senator Charles Fuschillo, who was able to arrange for a *Fiscal Legislative Grant* of \$10,000 for the painting project. A committee of the WPS trustees then filled out the application to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) in order to actually receive the funds of the grant.

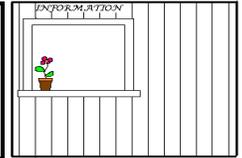
This past spring, we received the good news that the grant was approved and that the funds for painting the museum were coming. With that confidence, we began preparation for the work. On closer scrutiny of the building, it became apparent that the elements had been taking a much greater toll on the building than previously

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suspected. The canopy roof was now leaking in many areas, the rain gutters were corroded through, and the paint had continued to peel away even further. Based on this discovery, we appealed again to Senator Fuschillo to allocate an additional \$10,000 to complete the expanded project. Fortunately, our request was approved, thus allowing for a logical sequence of work in which the canopy roof and rain gutters would be replaced prior to painting. We again filled out an application to the NYSOPRHP. This time however, the process was closely monitored and we received the funds within three months.

With the proper funds now in place, the roofer, the painter and the other trades were scheduled to start work. As we prepared to start of the roofing work, we made the sad discovery that several sections of the decorative "gingerbread" trim and hand-carved fascia boards and roof sheathing boards were also severely rotted due to the lack of timely maintenance of the roof. We requested the site manager from Nassau County for County assistance. Although the County was again unable to provide service, citing a lack of skilled manpower, the site manager was kind enough to take our plight to several private members of the community, one of whom graciously donated half of the \$2,500 in emergency funds that we needed to complete the restoration, with the stipulation that we obtain matching funds from other private members of the community.

In response to a small article placed in the Citizen describing our fund drive, community members sent donations to the Society, ranging from \$10 to \$150, as well as another anonymous donor, who completed the match by contributing \$1,250! Within the span of two weeks, we received enough money to restore the rotted woodwork just in time to start the previously scheduled roof replacement. Over the last eight weeks, the balance of the project has been completed. We sincerely thank those wonderful and generous people who have donated thus far, and we further encourage our community members to continue donating in this spirit, as additional donations will allow us to begin the planned restoration of the Jamaica Parlor Car, the eventual replacement of the

cedar shingle roof on the main building of the museum, and the completion of the interior of the Old Wantagh Post Office.

Donations may be sent to: The Wantagh Historical Society, PO Box 132, Wantagh, NY 11793. This worthy cause is one of the few in our community where you can actually see the results of your donation take shape right before your eyes. The WPS welcomes the entire community to visit the museum and grounds soon. We are open on Sundays from 2:00 to 4:00 PM between April and November, and at other times by appointment for groups of six or more.

Additional sincere thanks and praise are due to the folks in the following list for their role in helping bring the restoration project to fruition:

The all-volunteer members of the **Board of Trustees of The Wantagh Preservation Society.**

All members of the community who sent in and continue to send in donations.

Senator Charles Fuschillo and his staff, for helping to secure funding for the state grants.

Mr. Fred Parola, for lending his personal support and community liaison.

The Wantagh-Seaford Citizen, for publicity of our activities.

Mr. Harrison Hunt, for consultation on authenticity, historical accuracy and fund raising.

Ed Williams, of Apollo Pressure Washing, for power-washing the deck at no charge.

John and Al Pulcini, of Pulcini Roofing Co., for providing a top quality job replacing the canopy roof under contract and stripping the entire roof deck at no extra cost.

Bill Sullivan, of Sullivan Painting Co., for meticulously painting the museum under contract and in addition, painting many other areas and articles at no extra cost.

Gary and Matt, of The Gutter Guy Co., for installing the rain gutters perfectly under contract, and in addition, replacing all the drain pipes under the deck at no extra charge. 📖