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Wantagh Preservation Society

2012 February/March

# The Information Window

## Wantagh's History: A Behind the Scenes Look

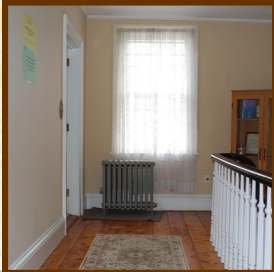
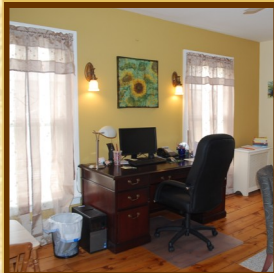
*Jim Colotti, Trustee*

Some Wantagh residents in the 1700s made their soap at home, and the trustees of the Wantagh Preservation Society saw the artifacts first hand during a unique behind-the-scenes tour of the renovations well underway at the historic Dengler House at 1051 Wantagh Avenue. At times, the tour was like stepping back into time as Dr. William James, the current owner, lead the WPS trustees on a gracious journey throughout his abode.

When first entering the residence, one is embraced by a sense of old-fashioned welcome - and for good reason - you are surrounded by the warm craftsmanship of our ancestors. The details in the flooring below your feet were hand wrought two centuries ago - as were the sturdy walls and the inviting stairway.

The tour began in the renovated spaces where it was clear that meticulous care was exercised to preserve the historic value of the structure - from the parquet wood floors that glisten in detail to the feature-rich ceilings. Then Dr. James extended an invitation to the "other areas". At first, leaving the comfort of the renovated spaces is unsettling, but curiosity gets the better of your judgment. A creaky doorway opens, you navigate a steep stairway and then enter a time-capsule of original woodwork that stood the test of time.

The trustees of the Wantagh Preservation Society extend a sincere thank you to Dr. William James for this unique tour and his hospitality. 📖



*Top Photo:  
The Historic Dengler House on  
Wantagh Avenue*

*Middle Two Photos:  
Two renovated rooms that now  
serve as offices*

*Bottom Photo:  
Renovated upstairs hallway  
featuring the original flooring,  
railings and doors.*



*Top Photo:  
Awaiting renovation, the  
Soap Making Room*



*Bottom Photo:  
Dr. James discusses the  
original wood roof planks*

## 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)

## Upcoming General Meetings:

Tuesday, February 28, 8:00 pm "George Washington, First in the Hearts of His Countrymen!" by Chris Wendt

Tuesday, March 27, 8:00 pm "The Ghosts and Legends of Long Island" by the Long Island Society for Paranormal Research

*All are invited to these free events at the Wantagh Library, 3285 Park Ave*



# Wantagh Preservation Society

## Officers

*President:* Chris Wendt  
*1st Vice President:* Bob Meagher  
*2nd Vice President:* Bob Cook  
*Recording Secretary:* Tom Watson  
*Corresponding Secretary:* Dick MacMillan  
*Treasurer:* Wayne Wagner

## Trustees

Jim Colotti  
Ellen Cook  
Theresa Donahue  
Joan Mallon  
Carol Poulos  
Claire Reisert  
Joshua Soren  
Elaine Yarris  
Wayne Wagner  
Mary Wagner

*The Information Window is the official newsletter of the Wantagh Preservation Society. Your comments, ideas and suggestions are welcome!*

Dick MacMillan & Jim Colotti  
*Newsletter Editors*  
[wps@wantagh.li](mailto:wps@wantagh.li)

## Wantagh Preservation Society Outreach to Wantagh Public Schools

*Chris Wendt, President*

The Wantagh Preservation Society and the Wantagh School District will get together to renew our former partnership that integrated the museum and the Society's collection of historical photographs and artifacts with the schools' local history curriculum. In addition, we will begin exploration of several potential ways in which Wantagh High School may partner with the Society to our mutual advancement and benefit.

Carolyn Breivogel, High School Principal will be our initial point of contact along with the Social Studies Director and other key staff members. These are some of the exciting opportunities we will be exploring in 2012! 📖

## When the Museum Opens in April



*stop by and see our  
newly renovated  
exhibits!*

## Did you Know?

- ◆ The Wantagh Preservation Society and the Wantagh Museum were founded in 1966 under a provisional charter granted by the Board of Regents (the Society was granted an Absolute Charter, #15499, by the State Education Department in October, 1977).
- ◆ The WPS is the official custodian of the Nassau County Wantagh Museum which includes the original LIRR Wantagh Station, an historic 99-year old railroad parlor car, Wantagh's first Post Office building, and, an ever-expanding collection of historical artifacts, documents, and photographs.
- ◆ The WPS is governed by a Board of Trustees and officers who are volunteer community members.
- ◆ The WPS sponsors or hosts a variety of community activities during the year including public meetings held on the 4th Tuesday of the month that feature guest speakers who present on a wide range of interesting topics of local, regional, or national historic interest. 📖



## Wantagh's First Post Office

Wantagh's freestanding former post office was built in 1907 on Railroad Avenue, facing the Long Island Railroad station. It had previously been located next door, inside of Fussell's General Store, which then occupied the southeastern corner of Wantagh and Railroad Avenues. The two adjacent structures stood on the current site of Mulcahy's Pub, located at 3232 Railroad Avenue.

Following the dawn of the 20th century, Fussell's General Store needed to reclaim its sales space to serve the growing Wantagh community. The Post Office moved next door in 1907 into the newly constructed rental building.

In an undated letter addressed to the editor of the Wantagh Citizen, Gertrude Ballam, a former U.S. Post Office employee, wrote that she began working in the old Wantagh Post Office in 1924. She wrote that she remained employed by the U.S. Post Office, in Wantagh, after it relocated, on an unspecified date, to the ground floor of the Wantagh Lodge. She continued to work in the Wantagh Post Office until 1932.

According to Wantagh Preservation Society Trustee Ellen Cook, following the post office's departure from the structure, her grandfather, Thomas McGee, operated his real estate and insurance agency out of the building through 1947. She explained that he rotated the building 90 degrees, so that the wide side, complete with two windows, then faced Railroad Avenue. A new front door was constructed in between the two windows. After her grandfather moved his agency out of the former Post Office, she said that it functioned as a taxi stand.

In October of 1976, according to the Wantagh Citizen, the "...Wantagh Republican headquarters..." began operating out of the building. The structure subsequently housed Pickle Packin' Momma's, which sold -- pickles.



*Wantagh's Post Office in 1907 (left) and Fussell's General Store (right), now the site of Mulcahy's*

Later, the building housed Bagels and Butts, a food service and tobacco sales facility which catered to Long Island Railroad commuters, according to WPS President Chris Wendt.

Mulcahy's Pub then used the former Post Office as a coat room for its customers, according to Ms. Cook. When Mulcahy's Pub decided to renovate their building in 1995, the 1907 Post Office was donated to the Wantagh Preservation Society. In November of 1995, the structure was moved to the site of the WPS' museum complex, located at 1700 Wantagh Avenue, at the intersection with Emeric Avenue. The building was placed on a new foundation, and its exterior was restored to its 1907 appearance. The renovation of its interior is currently underway.

WPS Trustee Carol Poulos was able to obtain a list of Postmasters of the Wantagh Post Office, from the United States Postal Service. The list, which dates back to 1868, can be found on the following page. Perhaps you'll see a name or two that you recognize!



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## Postmasters of the Wantagh Post Office, from 1868 to Present

| Name  | Title             | Date Appointed |
|---|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>(Originally established as Ridgewood in Queens County)</i> |                   |                |
| Henry T. Seaman   | Postmaster        | 1868-10-16     |
| Horace Seaman   | Postmaster        | 1875-05-20     |
| Thomas B. Seaman  | Postmaster        | 1877-05-03     |
| Willit Whitman  | Postmaster        | 1881-05-31     |
| Frank C. Young  | Postmaster        | 1890-07-30     |
| <i>Name changed to Wantagh on 1891-06-19</i>                  |                   |                |
| Frank C. Young  | Postmaster        | 1891-06-19     |
| Phinetus Gildersleeve   | Postmaster        | 1893-07-19     |
| Charles T. Birch  | Postmaster        | 1897-06-01     |
| <i>Changed to Nassau County in 1898</i>                       |                   |                |
| Jonathan J. Fussell   | Postmaster        | 1899-12-06     |
| Rhoda E. Jackson  | Postmaster        | 1913-07-16     |
| Mrs. Agnes Siems  | Postmaster        | 1923-12-17     |
| Thomas F. Clancy  | Acting Postmaster | 1933-06-20     |
| Thomas F. Clancy  | Postmaster        | 1934-03-29     |
| Mrs. Rose Clancy  | Acting Postmaster | 1937-02-20     |
| Mrs. Catherine M. Mills                                       | Postmaster        | 1939-06-22     |
| Charles A. Pickard  | Acting Postmaster | 1941-10-15     |
| Charles A. Pickard  | Postmaster        | 1942-05-28     |
| Robert K. La Londe  | Acting Postmaster | 1955-10-31     |
| Robert K. La Londe  | Postmaster        | 1957-04-08     |
| Raymond C. Pettit   | Officer-In-Charge | 1971-02-28     |
| Raymond C. Pettit   | Postmaster        | 1971-08-14     |
| Frank Fallica   | Officer-In-Charge | 1977-08-13     |
| Viater Lopes  | Officer-In-Charge | 1977-12-12     |
| George S. Bulin   | Officer-In-Charge | 1978-02-15     |
| Douglas I. Schoen   | Postmaster        | 1978-04-08     |
| Robert J. Brown   | Officer-In-Charge | 1987-09-10     |
| Paul Lipani   | Postmaster        | 1988-01-02     |
| Thomas Clements   | Officer-In-Charge | 1990-05-30     |
| Louis C. Urso   | Postmaster        | 1990-12-29     |
| Robert Massa  | Officer-In-Charge | -----          |
| John N. Bratta  | Postmaster        | 2003-09-20     |
| Michael Silvestri   | Officer-In-Charge | 2005-08-11     |
| Nicholas M. Bratta  | Postmaster        | 2005-11-12     |
| Jean Fuentes  | Officer-In-Charge | 2008-04-16     |
| Annette D'Amato   | Officer-In-Charge | 2008-11-25     |
| Anthony G. Micena   | Officer-In-Charge | 2009-07-13     |
| Anthony G. Micena   | Postmaster        | 2009-08-29     |



Wantagh Post Office and  
Post Master Rhoda Jackson

