



Robert Hawkins House
P.O. Box 111
Yaphank, NY 11980-0111
www.yaphankhistorical.org

631-924-4803 -Swezey-Avey House
Main Office

Meetings: Third Thursday of the
Month; 7:30pm, Swezey-Avey House.

Newsletter Editor: Peggy Judd

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- Vice President - Jim Vavrina
- Treasurer - Audrey Kessler
- Recording Secretary - Kayann Donaldson
- Corresponding Secretary - Marie Desch
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- Historian - Suzanne Johnson
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YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Historic Yaphank - Where the Past Greet's the Present

APRIL, MAY, JUNE 2021

Virtual General Meetings Please Join Us

All our historic houses are still closed to the public. These precautions remain necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of our members, guests and visitors. However, we are happy to report that in order to keep in touch with our membership, the Society has decided to host Zoom meetings in place of our in-person General Meetings. These Zoom meetings will usually be scheduled on the third Thursday of each month. Although we will no longer serve refreshments following the program, we hope that doesn't keep you from zooming in to hear our interesting and informative guest speakers.

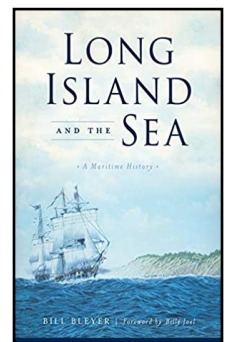
Registration: Each Zoom Meeting Link, ID number, and Passcode will be emailed to our members with active email addresses prior to the meeting. Others who wish to attend, please send an email request to webmaster@yaphankhistorical.org. Please put "**Zoom Meeting**" in the subject line. In your message, please include your name, current active email address, and the name of the program you wish to attend. We will then email the necessary linking information to you prior to the meeting.

April General Meeting---Note that this meeting is on Wednesday
Zoom meeting: Meeting Link, ID number, and passcode will be emailed to our members prior to the meeting. Non-members are also welcome; see registration information above.

Wednesday, **April 14, 7:30pm**

Guest speaker will be **Bill Bleyer**, author and retired prize-winning Newsday reporter.

Program: "Long Island Whaling", covering the whaling industry of Long Island from Native American era to the discovery of oil.



May General Meeting

Zoom meeting: Meeting Link, ID number, and passcode will be emailed to our members prior to the meeting. Non-members are also welcome; see registration information above.

Thursday, **May 20, 7:30pm**

Guest speaker will be **Dr. Allison McGovern**, Senior Archaeologist and author.

Program: "Archaeological Investigations at the Weeks Family sites in Manorville and Yaphank"



Letter From The President

I hope this letter finds you all healthy. We hosted our first Zoom general membership meeting and it was a great success. I want to thank **Suzanne Johnson** and **Jim Vavrina** for organizing it and making it the success that it was. We will be hosting more Zoom meetings with speakers on the third Thursday of each month (See page 1). Please check our website for more information on our speakers and for upcoming events as they are scheduled. Of course, as always, these Zoom meetings are free of charge. All are welcome to attend.

Work continues on the front porch of the Hawkins House. The work was more extensive than we realized when we first started the project. We had to replace some of the posts, steps, stair rails as well as some balustrades, top rails, and porch boards. Progress is being made and we hope to be finished with the project shortly.

We are also doing work at the Swezey House. A few years ago, some 19th century doors were generously donated to us by Connie Dankmyer of Nellies Antiques in Amagansett. We have repurposed these doors, changing out the flat panel doors that the Town of Brookhaven installed when they took over the building. We are short by a few doors, but we will keep looking to replace the rest of the doors. **I want to thank the correction officers and the inmates from the Sheriff's Vocational Work Program for helping us with this project.**

We have other projects on our agenda for this year. We want to put a Paddock Fence around the Hawkins House. We also want to repair the fencing at the Buckingham Cemetery; as well as paint and repair the Paddock Fencing that runs along Yaphank Avenue and East Main Street. We are also replacing the sign at the Hawkins Cemetery and we hope to get this cemetery cleaned up and new fencing installed this year.

Our buildings remain closed to the public. We are going to clean and sanitize all our buildings and hopefully open them to the public, by appointment only, sometime later this year. The safety and the well-being of our guests and volunteers is of upmost concern to us.

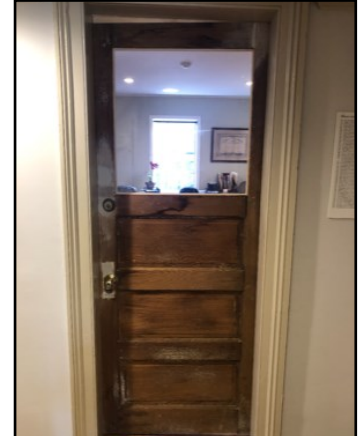
Robert Kessler



Repairs to the Hawkins House front porch. Rot and insect damaged areas are being completely replaced. Jeremiah McGiff, Restoration Carpenter, is heading up this project.



One of the vintage doors has been repaired to include an upper panel of glass and installed as the entrance to our archive room. After painting, stenciling will be applied to the glass indicating Yaphank Historical Society Archives.



**Funds for this newsletter were provided by the Suffolk County Legislature, 3rd Legislative District.
Thank You !**

Neuss Family Furniture – Back Home in Yaphank

by Helen Kalbach

In the Spring of 2020 Marjorie Niesen (Olive Archer's cousin) donated a 19th century parlor set containing a settee and two matching chairs to the Yaphank Historical Society. These pieces had been purchased by Dr. William Neuss for his office in Brooklyn. When he returned to Yaphank in the 1890s, the furniture was moved to his Main Street residence in Yaphank. The furniture has moved many places and traveled many miles since then and is now back "home". Gustave Neuss, Sr. came into possession of the furniture and handed it down to his son, Gustave Neuss, Jr. Gustave Jr. and Marjorie Neuss moved to Toledo, Ohio, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Springdale, Ohio, New Hartford, New York and Erie, Pennsylvania with the furniture in tow! Marjorie (Neuss) Niesen moved from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Maineville, Ohio, and back to Cincinnati (St. Bernard), Ohio. The settee and chairs have been cared for by the family as job locations changed and have probably traveled more than many people have. But, the furniture traveled always with loving care by members of Dr William Neuss's family.

Along with the furniture donation, Mrs. Niesen included information from documents given from Mrs. William (Ottolie) Neuss to her daughter-in-law Marjorie, wife of Gustave Neuss Jr, in 1998: The following dated excerpts are from those documents:

- March 11, 1889, Graduate Diploma, William Neuss, Bellevue Medical College, New York.
- January 12, 1909, Certified as MD, Education Department, State of New York.
- July 31, 1891, Dr. William Neuss, purchase, One black horse Phaeton harness, \$125.
- June 21, 1893, Deed, Roswell and Josephine Davis to Wm. Neuss MD and Miss Augusta Neuss, \$2,125 purchase building and farm, village of Yaphank.
- July 3, 1893, Receipt, Wm. Neuss MD to Roswell Davis, \$1,125 part payment for house and Land at Yaphank.
- May 1, 1894, Receipt, Wm. Neuss MD to Roswell Davis, \$508.37 in full for farm at Yaphank.
- May 21, 1909, Deed, Clarence Baker for G. Homan deed to Christian Krabbe, \$950 paid at auction for 2 acres.
- August 30, 1907, 8/23/07 Marker, Fred M. Ruland, Granite Monument lettered and set including foundation.
- November 8, 1918, Certificate, Capt. William Neuss, U.S. Army Medical Corps, by Association of Military Surgeons of the United States.



Victorian-style settee and chairs, donated by Marjorie Niesen, will once again have a Yaphank home at the Robert H. Hawkins House.

April is National Poetry Month Remembering Yaphank's Poet Laureate

by Peggy Judd

Established by the Academy of American Poets in April 1996, National Poetry Month is a celebration that reminds the public that poetry plays an integral role in our culture. Over the years, it has become the largest literary celebration in the world, with tens of millions of readers, students, teachers, librarians, booksellers, publishers, families, and of course, poets. Each year the Academy, and their many sponsors, host events and activities that encourage all to discover, enjoy, appreciate and share poetry. New interest in poetry, especially among young adults, was created by the recent performance of Amanda Gorman at the 2021 presidential inauguration. Her poem "The Hill We Climb" generated international acclaim. Ms. Gorman was the first person to be named National Youth Poet Laureate. April 2021 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Poetry Month celebration.

Sixty years before we had a National Poetry Month celebration, Yaphank was celebrating poetry. And Yaphank had its own "Poet Laureate", Henry P. Kovarik. Henry Kovarik (1900--1983) was born in Moravian Slovakia, now the Czech Republic. He joined the army as a young man and later told stories of the hard times that he experienced during those years. He immigrated to the United States in 1930, and first worked as an elevator operator in New York City. He also obtained his real estate license the same year. He moved to Yaphank in 1945, where he bought an older home surrounded by seven acres of woods and grassy areas on East Main Street at the Northeast intersection of Yaphank Avenue. He lived there with his mother until she died in 1965, then stayed on in the house living alone. He never married, but filled his days with writing poetry and gardening.

During a 1976 interview with a Long Island Newsday reporter, Kovarik stated, "I find great peace of mind in making my poems, I don't know why I do it. Poems just jump into my head." When asked if he was lonely, Henry responded, "Living alone is not difficult for me. I have my poems, my flowers, my woods, and they are all linked together inside me. I get the feeling that I am one with nature." He would take long walks through the woods, collecting bird nests, feathers, and any special item of nature that spoke to him. In addition to his love of nature which permeated his poetry, Henry was greatly influenced by Long Island's famous poet, Walt Whitman, and his poems were sometimes patriotic.

Henry was a familiar figure in town and was well loved and respected in the community. As a founding member of the Yaphank Historical Society, he served on the Board of Directors as a trustee. In the early years of the Society, Board meetings were often held at his house, where he would sometimes offer a poem. His love of poetry and his eagerness to share that love with others earned him the name "Yaphank's Poet Laureate".



Kovarik House, on East Main St.



Henry P. Kovarik, "Yaphank's Poet Laureate"

Remembering Yaphank's Poet Laureate (continued)

Henry passed away in 1983, but before he died he established the Henry P. Kovarik Foundation for Poetry, Inc. Funding for the Foundation came from the sale of some of his property. The Foundation was formed to preserve his memory and to promote poetry. From 1986 to 2013, the Kovarik Foundation awarded two scholarships annually to graduates of the Longwood Public School District, who planned to study poetry or creative writing in college. Over 60 of these scholarships were awarded to Longwood High School graduates. In 1989, the Kovarik Foundation donated funds to create the Kovarik Reading Room at the new Longwood Public Library. The Foundation also provided \$4,000 annually to the Library to fund programs on poetry and to purchase poetry books for their collection. In 1995, the not-for-profit organization, Taproot Workshop & Journal, hosted "The Henry P. Kovarik Memorial Reading" at the Longwood Public Library. At that meeting, Karen Mouzakes (Yaphank Historical Society Historian and Secretary of the Kovarik Foundation) presented a talk entitled "The Legacy of Henry P. Kovarik".

Early on, funds from the Kovarik Foundation were given to the Yaphank Historical Society to create the Henry P. Kovarik Room, located at the Robert H. Hawkins House, where his poetry was stored in the Society archives. When the Society moved its headquarters to the Swezey-Avey House in 2012, Henry's poetry, pictures, office furniture and other documents in our archives were moved to the new site and are now stored in the newly created Henry P. Kovarik Reading Room. In 2013, the Kovarik Foundation was dissolved and the remaining money was given to the Longwood Public Library (\$75,000) and the Yaphank Historical Society (\$25,000).



Karen Mouzakes (Secretary of the Henry P. Kovarik Foundation) presents Kovarik check to Audrey Kessler (YHS Treasurer)



The Henry P. Kovarik Reading Room now located at the Swezey-Avey House, features a Presentation Wall of pictures and information about our Poet Laureate, as well as some of his office furniture. A spacious oak table with matching chairs provide adequate space for reading or looking through archives.

References: Yaphank Historical Society Archives
 National Academy of Poets, www.poet.org
 LI Newsday Magazine, "Long Island's Solitary People", August 8, 1976.

YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
APRIL, MAY, JUNE 2021 UPCOMING EVENTS

Special Notice: In order to protect the health and well-being of our members, guest, and visitors, and to help mitigate the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) the Society will continue to evaluate each event as we move into the 2021 calendar. At this time, all of our historic houses remain closed to the public. Please check our website www.yaphankhistorical.org for ongoing current information. We are hosting several Zoom meetings in place of our in-person General Meetings. Please see instructions on how to participate on page 1 of this Newsletter. We look forward to seeing you.

April General Meeting

Zoom meeting: Meeting Link, ID number, and passcode will be emailed to our members prior to the meeting.

Non-members are also welcome; see registration information on page 1 of this Newsletter.

Wednesday, April 14, 7:30pm

Guest speaker will be **Bill Bleyer**, author and retired prize-winning Newsday reporter.

Program: "Long Island Whaling" covering the whaling industry of Long Island from Native American era to the discovery of oil.

June General Meeting

Zoom meeting

To be announced.

May General Meeting

Zoom meeting: Meeting Link, ID number, and passcode will be emailed to our members prior to the meeting.

Non-members are also welcome; see registration information on page 1 of this Newsletter.

Thursday, May 20, 7:30pm

Guest speaker will be **Dr. Allison McGovern**, Senior Archaeologist and author.

Program: "Archaeological Investigations at the Weeks Family sites in Manorville and Yaphank"

Bank of the River Gift Shop at the Hawkins House
CLOSED.

Membership Dues: Your membership is important to us. Dues are currently payable for the Yaphank Historical Society 2021 membership year. Your support is essential at this extraordinary time and we sincerely appreciate your support. **If you have already submitted your 2021 membership dues, thank you.**

Yaphank Historical Society
P.O. Box 111
Yaphank, New York 11980-0111

Please enroll me as:

() Active Member	\$20.00/person - \$17.50/Senior Citizen (62+)
	\$25.00/couple - \$22.50/Senior Couple (62+)
() Contributing Member	\$50.00
() Life Member	\$100.00/person - \$75.00/Senior (62+)
() Patron Member	\$300.00
() Benefactor Member	\$500.00

Name _____ Telephone # _____

Address _____ E-Mail: _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____