



YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Historic Yaphank - Where the Past Greet's the Present

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2020

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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Board of Directors

President - Robert Kessler
Vice President - Jim Vavrina
Treasurer - Audrey Kessler
Recording Secretary -
Kayann Donaldson
Corresponding Secretary -
Marie Desch
Librarian - Peggy Judd
Historian -Suzanne Johnson
Historian Emeritus -
Karen Mouzakes
Curator - Helen Kalbach
Honorary Lifetime Board Member -
Kathy Schmidt
3-Yr. Trustee - Judi Bird
2-Yr. Trustee - Kitty Daniels &
Tricia Foley
1-Yr. Trustee - Tom Skapinski &
Gary Scherpich

Letter from the President

I hope everyone is well. Please stay safe. Our historic houses remain closed and will remain so until the end of the year when we will decide on a schedule for next year. We will clean and sanitize our houses before we open them up to the public. We want to make sure that our members and guests are safe.

For the last eight months the Yaphank Historical Society, along with our consultants Zach Studenroth and Kurt Kahofer, have been working on getting the Yaphank Historic District on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Due to a number of factors, the decision was made to withdraw the application at this time and the hearing on our application was postponed and will be revisited at a later date. Needless to say, this is very disappointing to us as we have spent so much time, money and effort into making our very historic community a place that we can all be proud to live in.

During these past few months we have been working on getting repair work done on our houses. This work will continue as we wait to reopen. The **Homan House** is getting weather stripping on all the exterior doors. We are also getting all the locks on the doors repaired and working; these are locks that are original to the house.

The **Hawkins House** is getting work done on the front porch and the steps leading up to the porch. There are also some flashing/roofing issues which are going to be resolved. Our volunteer gardeners worked in both gardens over the summer .

The **Booth House** is in good shape except for a few minor repairs which we will be taking care of. The back-yard herb garden has been maintained by our volunteer gardeners. I want to once again thank **John Gobel**, Store Manager, and **Charlie Chacon**, Operations Manager, of the Bellport Home Depot for their generous donations.

The **Swezey House** is scheduled to be power washed by the Town. They will also power wash the fencing and deal with the flooding issue in our parking lot. They will also be putting a fence around the Hawkins Cemetery. I want to thank Brookhaven Town Parks commissioner **Eddie Morris** for taking care of these items. Historic marker signs are being made for the Swezey House and the Hawkins Cemetery.

We are waiting for the Sheriff's Department to give permission for the inmates to come out and help us with these projects; paddock fencing around the Hawkins House, and cleaning and painting all fencing in the Historic District. These are projects that were put on hold due to the pandemic. Hopefully we will be back on track soon.

The Society is especially thankful for a generous grant from the **Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation**, which has helped offset the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Concer n for our members and visitors has necessitated the cancellation of all 2020 fundraising events.

Robert Kessler

In Memoriam and Loving Memory—John Mouzakes



With sadness we acknowledge the passing of John Mouzakes. John and his wife Karen were Founding and Life Members of the Yaphank Historical Society. Karen is the Society's Historian Emeritus. Although John was not always "visible", he was an ardent supporter of Karen's activities within the Society.

For many years a black metal fence was a prominent feature in front of the Hawkins House. When that fence was being discarded by the Long Island Railroad from its location over Long Island Avenue, Karen convinced John that it should be at the Hawkins House. Needless to say, the fence found its way to the Hawkins House! The fence is now in Riverhead at the Railroad Museum—an appropriate place for this artifact of our early history. An annual activity of the Society is "dinner and dusting" in the weeks before Christmas. For many years, after dusting and cleaning to get the house ready for the holidays, dinner was held in the kitchen of the Hawkins House and all the workers that day returned for dinner—spaghetti, meatballs and salad prepared by John. John was a wonderful chef and the meatballs were unforgettable!

John and Karen were married for 54 years and had two children, Amy and Nick. Amy and her husband and two sons live in New Jersey. Nick remains a resident of Yaphank. Donations to honor John's life can be made to any charitable organization of your choice. John will be missed and remembered always for his kindness and thoughtfulness.

Welcome New Members

- Gail & Frank Bailey, Middle Island, NY
- Debbie Hochman, Medford, NY

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

Notes from the Editor:

Technology Update

WiFi was recently installed at the Swezey-Avey House and we look forward to the ability to easily connect to the internet for our members, guests, and guest speakers. General Meeting programs can be more informative and interesting for our attendees and our speakers will definitely welcome WiFi capability. Special thanks goes to **Jim Vavrina** for taking the lead on this project and successfully completing this much-needed technical improvement.

Election for Yaphank Historical Society Board Members:

Our regular election process (nominations and general meeting member voting) has been postponed until next year. The Society is extending the term for each Board position for one year. All current Board Members will remain in their current position through the end of 2021. Elections for 2022 Board positions will be scheduled for November 2021. Voting will take place at our November 2021 General Meeting.

Newsletter:

Starting with this issue, the Society will be distributing the *YHS Newsletter* online and via email. All members who have provided us with an active email address will receive a full-color PDF file of the *Newsletter* via email. As usual, the same full-color PDF version will be posted on the Society website, available to all.

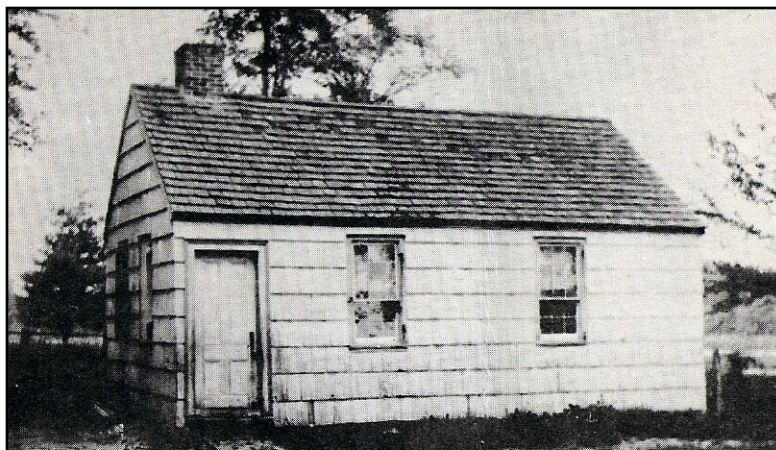
Our English Day School By Karen Mouzakes

Joseph Tuthill was nineteen years old when he traveled from his home in Wading River to be interviewed for a teaching position at Millville. The 20' x 24' one-room school had been built in 1813, when The Town of Brookhaven created its' thirteen school districts. Millville was School District #12. The schoolhouse was located just north of Swezey's Corner. A log-constructed house now stands on that site.

When Tuthill met with the fifteen subscribers, or heads of families, who would be sending their children to school, he carried with him letters of recommendation. The first was written by his former teacher at the Wading River School who wrote that Joseph Tuthill had "Reviewed English grammar and Gibson's Surveying. He had studied Bowditch and navigation along with Latin grammar and half of Esop's (sic) Fables." Tuthill also provided letters of recommendation from the Inspectors of Common Schools in Brookhaven and Islip Towns. Both found him to be of "good moral character and of sufficient learning and ability."

Tuthill must have made a good impression, because a teaching contract was signed on August 3, 1818.* "The contract is between the proprietors of the 12th School District and Joseph Tuthill. The said Joseph is to teach an English Day School in said District. Each subscriber is to pay him \$1 for every scholar." The subscribers would also "do his equal proportion in boarding and washing for said teacher."

Of interest is the contract's signed list of subscribers. These were the heads of families who would provide the scholars. Listed were Mordecai Homan, Christopher Swezey, Samuel Glover, Robert Hawkins, Simmons Laws, Wm Homan, Thomas Homan, Shepherd Robinson, Silas, Davis Overton, Daniel Homan, William Saxton, David Hammond, Amos Sell, and Isaac Mills. These men, a veritable "Who's Who" of Millville, also agreed to supply cord wood to keep the school heated.



All Brookhaven Town school houses were of this design.

All went well at Millville's English Day School. Joseph Tuthill had his contract renewed in 1819 and again in 1820. Many teachers were to follow him, including the father of Mary Louise Booth. The villagers of Millville seemed satisfied with their little school until the early 1850s. Millville by then had become Yaphank. Many believed that their thriving village deserved a schoolhouse where the roof didn't leak! Others felt that the little school was too far out of the village. They wanted the new school to be more centrally located, on land somewhere between the two mill sites. It was School Superintendent William Weeks, who persuaded Betsy Downs to sell a piece of property. The land was almost equidistant from both mill sites and on the south side of Main Street. Weeks proposed that an octagon shaped schoolhouse should be built. In 1854, the new octagon schoolhouse came to be. The old English Day School was now obsolete!

*Thank you to David Randall for giving me the old contract.

From Our Curator

Thinking of Donating Items?

Archives

The mission of our historical society is to preserve items of significance to our unique location on Long Island. We look for records (not vinyl), photographs or memorabilia that help us reconstruct the past and foster an accurate description of what life was like for our predecessors.

Sometimes it is best or more logical for a donation to belong to a different repository—one whose mission more closely relates to that of the donation. If this is the case, we encourage donors to reach out to those organizations. Whether your items are best served in our collection or with another organization, you can be satisfied knowing that professionals will catalog and preserve those items for future exhibition and research.

When someone donates their personal or family items to a historical society, your family history becomes a part of your community's collective memory—if your personal or family papers are deemed appropriate for a historical society's collections, and you agree to donate those papers, you stand to gain many benefits. A historical society can provide the papers with environmentally controlled, secure storage and can oversee their proper handling and use.

For Our Gift Shop

Donations to our Bank of the River Shoppe are always welcome. You can call 631-924-3401 and leave a message for the shop manager. Arrangements for you to drop off your donations will be handled as soon as possible. There are some exclusions regarding certain items. Those details will be explained by the shop manager. We thank all those who donate. It helps us with society expenses.

DO'S AND DON'Ts

WHEN THINKING ABOUT DONATING ITEMS

Do make an appointment so we can adequately look at the items you wish to donate and to discuss the significance of them and their relationship to your family and Yaphank.

Don't leave items, either for archives or gift shop, at the front or side doors of any of our historical houses. This is not only to safeguard the items from theft or environmental threats, but because, if the donation is for our archives, we want to hear from you the story behind the donation. Arrangements for drop off or pick up, including location, will be specified.

Don't expect appraisals here. We are unable to give you an appraisal as we are not licensed. If you wish to get the most from your tax deduction, have the item appraised and keep that with the deed of gift paperwork you will receive from the repository or archive.

Do understand that though you may be able to keep documents and letters safe in your home, an environmentally controlled location is optimal for keeping materials preserved.

Don't be upset if the answer is "no". Sometimes an item requires too much in terms of cost for preservation and room for storage.

Don't forget that having these materials (associated with your family's name forever) kept in a repository means that they can be shared by all members of your family for generations.

Do understand that we cannot promise that any donated materials will be used as part of an exhibition, but we promise that if exhibited, your items will be treated with care.

Don't forget us! If you are interested in discussing future donations, please feel free to call us with your questions and concerns.

Our headquarters phone number is 631-924-4803.

HOLIDAY MEMORIES – SEASONS PAST

Since we can't celebrate the holiday season together this year, perhaps these holiday pictures from years past will bring you happy memories. We send best wishes to you and your family for a wonderful holiday season and our very best New Year wishes for a happy, healthy and safer 2021.



YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OCTOBER through DECEMBER 2020
UPCOMING EVENTS CANCELLED

Special Notice: In order to protect the health and well-being of our members, guests and visitors, and to help mitigate the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Society has cancelled all events through the end of 2020. All of our historic houses are closed to the public. Please check our website, www.yaphankhistorical.org, for ongoing current information. We hope to see everyone again next year. In the meantime, please stay safe and be well. Thank you for your support.

The following scheduled events have been cancelled.

Dinner and Dusting Event (October)

November General Meeting

Election of Board Members postponed to November 2021

Yaphank Historic District Christmas House Tours

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

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 _____