



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

Inside this issue:

Little Susy's Church	... 1
President's Message	... 2
Cranberries	...3
Eagle Scout Gazebo4
In Memorium5
Upcoming Events	...6

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

YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Historic Yaphank - Where the Past Greet's the Present

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2021

“Little Susy’s Church” --- Good News, Restoration Begins



James H. Weeks built St. Andrew's Church in 1853 to memorialize his two-year old granddaughter, Susan Maria, named after his wife. Susan was buried on the feast of St. Andrew, and the church became locally known as "Little Susy's Church". .

On September 1st, 2021, The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island signed a contract with Maestro Construction Corporation to restore St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, c. 1853. Work started on September 20th with repairing and putting on a new roof. The outside work; sill plates, restoration of the siding and a fresh coat of paint is expected to be completed before Christmas, restoring much of the inside will be completed after Christmas. This restoration work will ensure that St. Andrew's is around for another 175 and more years.

St. Andrew's has been active in the community through its Community Ministry, Neighbors Being Human. The Neighbors Being Human Ministry currently feeds over 100 neighbors a week who have food insecurity. Working with neighborhood partners, this is all done through donations.

St. Andrew's services are at 10:00am on Sunday and all are welcome. If you would like to see the church, please stop by for a service, or come after while the food pantry is open. The Food Pantry is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:30pm to 8:30pm and Sundays from 11:00am to 1:00pm. Please check the website standrewsyaphank.org for more information. If anyone has any questions, or would like to make a donation, the church's email address is info@standrewsyaphank.org or you can call Rich Ohlsen, the church's Senior Warden at 631-764-6321.

Letter From The President

The Yaphank Historical Society hosted a table at the Longwood Fair; our display featured Society brochures and information about our preserved historic houses located within the Yaphank Historic District. We also had Society publications available for purchase. I attended both Saturday and Sunday and several of our board members were on hand to talk to visitors and manage the table. We all took advantage of visiting the other Societies and groups that were in attendance. This was my first time attending and we had a great time. It was a perfect opportunity to meet new people, make new friends, and share stories and ideas with old friends. We even signed up a new member and several visitors to our table took member applications with them. Hopefully we see them as new members soon.

Our new Eagle Scout project is complete. We now have a gazebo in the Swezey Park. A picture of the finished gazebo is on page 4. We are hoping to have some concerts on the lawn this fall with our favorite musicians Don and Susan Cerce. We have a new Eagle Scout project in the works. Our new project is to build wheelchair-accessible benches along the existing boardwalk. They will be easily accessible from our handicap parking spots.

We are also working on getting a grant to restore the Hawkins Cemetery, a project headed up by Zach Studenroth. This is a very old burial ground located on Yaphank-Middle Island Road, and it is in dire need of restoration. Along with restoring the stones, we will be installing a new fence around the property. We will also have the sign restored.

During September, we had two children's programs at the Park. We had about 135 4th graders from Charles E. Walters school participating in the Pine Barrens Society "A Day in the Life of the Carmans River". This is a great program to show the kids what a healthy river system looks like. Read more about our participation on page 4. The following week, we had 120 students from Longwood School visit the Park. This is a camp program. The school has purchased kayaks and paddle boards for the kids, and they had a great time. Some of these kids have never done this before and it is such a pleasure to watch them learn so quickly. The Swezey-Avey House was open for both of these programs.

Our historic houses are in good shape. We check on each house monthly, noting any repairs required, etc. We still need to finish some of the work on the Hawkins House porch. The houses remain closed for the year, but we do offer tours by appointment and a few people have taken advantage of scheduling a visit. We want to remind everyone who comes to our houses that the County and the Town are requiring proof of vaccination or masks to be worn when inside any of the houses. We thank you for your continued support.

Please stay safe and have a happy holiday season.

Robert Kessler

Welcome New Members

- Robert Von Bernewitz, Coram, NY

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

Cranberries - A Thanksgiving Tradition

by Peggy Judd

Cranberries are one of only three fruits native to North America (the other two are blueberries and Concord grapes). Cranberries have long played a role in our holiday culture as well as health and fitness. And the refreshing tart taste associated with the berry has resulted in a wide variety of modern cranberry products beyond juice.

Native Americans, long before the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, mixed deer meat and mashed cranberries to make *pemmican* (a food that lasted for long periods of time and ensured survival through long harsh winters). These same people believed that cranberries had medicinal value and they used the berries to make poultices to draw poison from arrow wounds. Cranberry juice was also used to dye rugs, blankets and clothing.

Our early settlers learned of these uses and cranberries found a regular place on their tables and on their pantry shelves. Historians are fairly sure that cranberries were served at our first Thanksgiving Dinner in 1621 in Plymouth, Massachusetts. There are documents indicating that by 1638, settlers were making cranberry juice to be regularly stored on pantry shelves. Written recipes using cranberries date back to the 1700s.

Cranberries are rich in vitamin C and our ancestors quickly found health benefits from eating the berries and drinking the juice. American sailing ships were stocked with cranberries before setting sail. Just as

the English sailors used limes, New England sailors used cranberries with their generous amount of vitamin C to prevent scurvy. Modern scientific studies have now proven that there is truth to the “old wives’ tale” that cranberry juice was a remedy for urinary infections. Cranberries contain an ingredient that acts as a urinary antiseptic, keeping harmful bacteria under control.

There is documentation showing the first commercial cranberry crop was grown and harvested in Dennis, Massachusetts in 1816. Today cranberries are primarily commercially grown in five states: Wisconsin, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington. There are 100 varieties of cranberries but only four are grown commercially. However, there are still small stands of wild cranberries throughout the North East and across the northern part of the U.S. And we should remember that there were small commercial cranberry operations on Long Island not too long ago. Our own Weeks Pond, a stopping spot along the Carmans River Nature Trail, served as a successful commercial cranberry bog.

Today, cranberry sauce is an essential part of American and Canadian Thanksgiving celebrations. A traditional Thanksgiving dinner table usually features a roasted turkey with all the “trimmings” and one of those trimmings that you will find on most tables is some version of cranberry sauce. We have a wide variety of recipes to choose from—both homemade and store bought.



Happy Holidays

As another holiday season fast approaches, it is hoped that we all may spend time with family and friends to give thanks at Thanksgiving and to share the joy of the Christmas season. It has been an extraordinary couple of years and we send wishes to all that the New Year brings us a safer time and place where we can meet once again.



We wish you a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season

Eagle Scout Gazebo Project Completed

The Eagle Has Landed! Jerry Ewald, of Middle Island Scout Troop 433, has completed the Swezey Park Gazebo Project, to earn his Eagle Scout badge. Eagle Scout is the highest achievement or rank attainable in the Scouts BSA program of the Boy Scouts of America. Since its inception in 1911, only four percent of Scouts have earned this rank after a lengthy review process. The Eagle Scout rank has been earned by over 2.5 million youth.

The new gazebo features a handicap ramp and is situated toward the center of the park for easy access. The white railing with intricate balusters was designed to match the white railing on the front porch of the Swezey-Avey House, Society Headquarters.



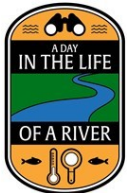
Jerry hard at work.



The new Gazebo in its lovely Swezey Park setting.



Jerry Ewald, Glenn Ewald, & Bob Kessler



A Day In The Life Of The Carmans River

This event is a fun science research program sponsored by the Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning & Policy Commission, under the direction of Melissa Griffiths Parrott. This year, several teams of 4th-grade students, (approximately 135 students) gathered on the shore of Willow Lake at the Swezey Park. The team used seine nets and lab equipment to investigate aquatic life, biodiversity, water chemistry and quality, while also noting tides and weather conditions that may impact collection results and conditions.

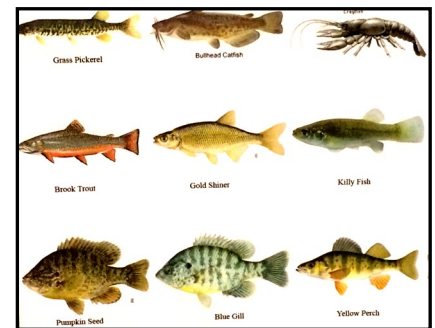
Each year, the Society opens the Swezey-Avey House to the students, offering refreshments and restroom facilities. Plus, the students can enjoy the “Yaphank Lakes Today” exhibit on display in the main meeting room. The exhibit features a list and pictures of insects and fish that are part of the ecology of the Lakes and River. A Society member is on hand to answer any questions.



Legislator Jim Mazarella with students at Willow Lake



Lakes display featured highlights from recent invasive plants eradication efforts.



Some of the fish species found in Yaphank lakes.

Historic District Committee Update

by Suzanne Johnson



The members of the Yaphank Historic District committee have been busy with a new project: the Robert and Isabella Hawkins House. By focusing on the inventory that was prepared upon the death of Robert Hawkins in 1856, the group will identify which furnishings currently found in the house are appropriate and what changes might be made to more fully reflect the years that Isabella Hawkins lived in the house until 1884.

To that end, the committee has been revisiting the history of the house and in August, the committee viewed a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Karen Mouzakes, Society Historian Emeritus, about the Hawkins family. We are learning that the Yaphank location was a summer house where the family came to escape the heat of their neighborhood in Brooklyn Heights.

In September, the group traveled to Meadow Croft, the John Ellis Roosevelt estate in Sayville, and enjoyed an informative tour about recent changes at that site, particularly the addition of appropriate lighting fixtures. The committee will continue to examine the furnishings in each room at the Hawkins House and determine whether changes should be made. We look forward to being able to share the new interpretation with the public in 2022.

Gardiner Grant—Young Scholars Internship Program

The Yaphank Historical Society was pleased to receive a grant for \$1500 from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation to participate in its new Young Scholars Internship Program. The program requires that we hire a young person between the age of 15-23 to help with a project for 100 hours and be paid \$15 per hour. The Society has retained Sarah McGiff, who is working with trustees Helen Kalbach and Kitty Daniels bringing the inventory of items in the Robert and Isabella Hawkins House up to date. At the end of her internship Sara will create a short video about her experience which will be shared on the Gardiner Foundation website. Sarah is currently a student at Suffolk Community College; she plans to continue her education at Stony Brook University and will be pursuing a career in journalism. The Society wishes her continued success.

Sad News—In Memorium



We are sad to announce the passing of Edythe Davis. Edythe was a Life Member of the Society and will be remembered by many for her support and her many contributions over the years. Edie was an active member, participating on fundraising events and lending a helping hand as the Society grew from a small group of local residents early on, to a larger organization with expanded membership. She was particularly happy working on holiday fundraising events, helping decorate the Hawkins House and being part of a group of ladies that created holiday wreaths, using locally resourced greens from various yards and close-by woods. The Society used to host holiday fairs, and the wreaths and hand-made decorations were always best sellers. Edie was also a local source of historic documents and historic information about Yaphank, and "Courtesy of Edythe Davis" can be found at the bottom of many pictures in our book, *Images of America, Yaphank*. Her collection of old Yaphank postcards was loaned to us for a display at the Hawkins House during one of our summer house tour seasons.

Edie was also very involved in the Yaphank Senior Citizens Group, finding the frequent meetings to be great fun and she made many good friends there. Edie served on their Beautification Committee, and helped plant the various flower-filled barrels located around the town, as well as doing gardening chores at the clock-tower garden across from the central gazebo.

The Society received a large donation of furniture from the Edythe Davis Family in memory of Edie. Among the furniture donated, there were pieces that found a place in several of our historic houses. A few pieces will remain at the Swezey-Avey House.

YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, 2021 UPCOMING EVENTS

Special Notice: In order to protect the health and well-being of our members, guests, and visitors, we will be following New York State Pandemic Safety Guidelines for any events hosted by the Society. Mask requirements and/or social distancing requirements will be posted at the houses. We are hosting in-person General Meetings in October and November. At this time all of our historic houses may be visited by appointment only.

Please check our website www.yaphankhistorical.org for ongoing current information about upcoming events. We may continue to host several Zoom meetings in the future and notice of those meetings will appear on the website or in the Newsletter.

How to attend Zoom Meetings:

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.

October General Meeting

In-person meeting. Masks Required.

Thursday, October 21st, 7:30pm, Swezey-Avey House

Guest speaker will be **MaryLaura Lamont**,
National Park Ranger, William Floyd Estate

Program: "Richard Floyd and the Whalers, and More"

Refreshments will follow the program.

Bank of the River Gift Shop at the Hawkins House

OPEN!!! OPEN!!! OPEN!!!

Hours: Thursday Afternoons, 12:00-4:00pm

(weather permitting)

Phone: 631-924-3401

November General Meeting

In-person meeting. Masks Required.

Thursday, November 18, 7:30pm, Swezey-Avey House

Guest speaker will be **Helen Kalbach**, Society Curator

Program: "Robert Hawkins, Houses and Family".

This program was researched and created by Karen
Mouzakes, Society Historian Emeritus.

- **No December 2021 General Meeting**
- **No January 2022 General Meeting**
- **No February 2022 General Meeting**

Holiday Celebrations on hold

Due to the uncertainty surrounding COVID conditions this winter season, the Society will not be hosting special Holiday House Tours or other in-person events. We will decorate the Yaphank Historic District to bring some holiday spirit to our area. The Society always looks forward to welcoming members, guests, and visitors to help us celebrate the holiday season and we are truly sad to have to once again put holiday celebrations aside.

As always, any of our historic houses may be visited by appointment. Please send an email request to schedule an appointment to our website www.yaphankhistorical.org or call 631-924-4803 and leave a message.

We do send best holiday wishes and a happy, healthy 2022 to all.