



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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YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Historic Yaphank - Where the Past Greet's the Present

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2022

Society Receives Robert David Lion Gardiner Grant

Three Long Island historical societies have received the first non-matching \$10,000 grants awarded by the **Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation** for the restoration of historic cemeteries: Roslyn Landmark Society (Townsend Cemetery, East Hills), The Davis Town Meeting House Society (Davis Cemetery, Coram), and Yaphank Historical Society (Hawkins Family Cemetery, Yaphank). The Yaphank Historical Society is pleased to receive this Grant and we extend sincere thanks to the Robert D.L. Gardiner Foundation for their continued support to preserve the history of Long Island. The Yaphank Historical Society is looking forward to the important restoration work to save one of our historic cemeteries.



The three historical societies receiving their grant awards at the Robert D.L. Gardiner Foundation headquarters in Hampton Bays, New York. From left to right: Suzanne Johnson (vice president of the Davis Town Meeting House Society) Jennifer Lister (executive director of the Roslyn Landmark Society), Zach Studenroth (co-founder of the Burying Ground Preservation Group), Kathy Curran (executive director of the Robert D.L. Gardiner Foundation), Howard Kroplick (co-president of the Roslyn Landmark Society) and Robert Kessler (president of the Yaphank Historical Society).

Letter From The President

Best wishes to everyone for a Happy and Safe New Year. I hope it will be a much better year than 2021. It certainly was a difficult year for all with the virus coming back strong again. Let's hope that we avoid any other new variants and can move ahead with "getting back" to normal.

The Yaphank Historical Society has kept our buildings closed except for tours by appointment only. It has been a challenging year for us and we have had to hold our board meetings and several general membership meetings on Zoom. This is just not the same as in-person meetings. The medical situation also seriously restricted our ability to host our normal fund-raising events. Toward the end of the year, we held a couple of in-person meetings, but attendance was necessarily limited by COVID concerns.

On another note, we have completed two Eagle Scout projects this year. Both projects were done in the Swezey Park. The first was a Gazebo built by Jerry Ewald and his crew. This is a great project and we have already held our first concert there this fall. The other Scout project was the building of a Handicap Bench and some additional benches for our Gazebo. This project was done by Jordan Spencer and his crew. The handicap bench is next to our boardwalk and easily wheelchair-accessible from the handicap parking area.

Our reliance on grants continues to increase and we received several grants this year. We received two Suffolk County grants: one was a reimbursement grant that covers some of our ongoing operating expenses; and the other was an Omnibus grant. With the Omnibus grant we were able to produce a movie about the Hawkins House and family and the video will be available on our website. We also received two grants from the Gardiner Foundation. One made it possible to hire an intern who worked with our Curator to catalogue our furniture and our many holdings in our houses. The second Gardiner Foundation grant was to restore the historic Hawkins Family Cemetery. We will be working with Zach Studenroth and Kurt Kahofer to clean up the cemetery, repair and clean all the stones and put a new fence around the burial ground. This work is long overdue.

I want to thank all our friends who have helped us make this a very successful year despite the COVID situation. Special thanks goes to: Suffolk County Legislator Jim Mazzarella and Chief of Staff Tim Rothang; Legislator Rob Calarco and Chief of Staff Eva Rodriguez-Greguski; Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine; Parks commissioner Eddie Morris; and Town Councilman Mike Loguercio.

Thank you to Sheriff Toulon and the Inmate Vocational Work Program. Thanks to all the correctional officers and inmates who have worked on our many projects. We could not have accomplished all that we did without their help.

Last but not least, thanks to all our Board Members for their continued support during these difficult times.

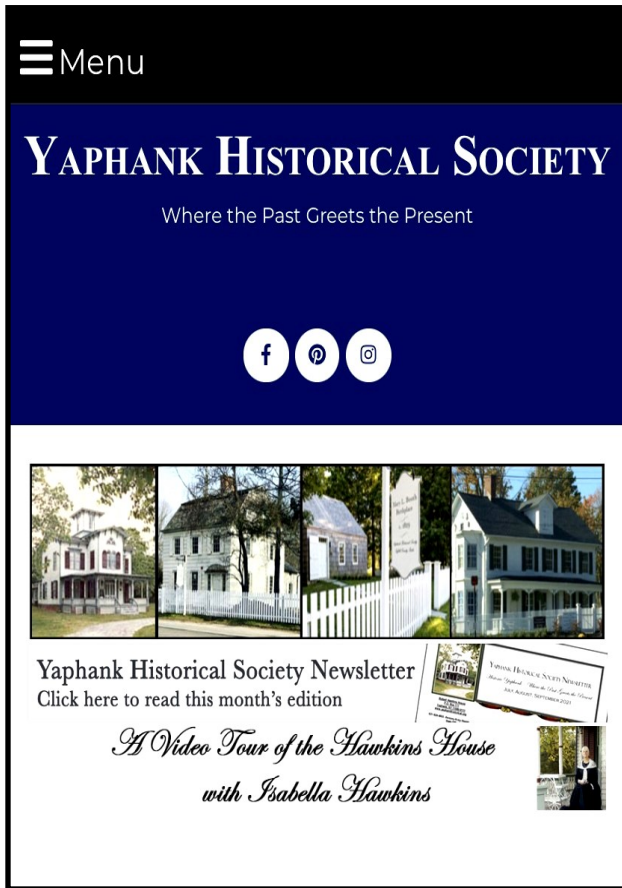
Robert Kessler

Welcome New Members

- Clifford Horne, Coram, NY
- Nora Colon, Coram, NY
- Arrianna Rosendahl, Coram, NY

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

New YHS Website Online Now



Please check out our new website! It is based on the WordPress platform. According to WordPress, “43% of the web uses WordPress, from hobby blogs to the biggest news sites online.” Online stores, galleries, forums, analytics are all possible with this new platform. Many historical societies now use WordPress for their websites.

Enjoy a new modern, up-to-date presentation of important data. There is easy access to our Upcoming Events, Newsletters, and links to popular social media platforms: facebook, instagram and pinterest. The Homepage features a newly commissioned video, *A Video Tour of the Hawkins House with Isabella Hawkins*. Users can view the website either on a PC or on their mobile device. Members and users will enjoy a more interactive experience.

While our old website served the Society well over many years, the new technology now employed gives the Society the ability to collect usage statistics, take donations via credit card or PayPal, and positions us to eventually accept member dues payments. The new website also protects our intellectual property, while promoting our research capabilities and encouraging visits to our archives and library. Our new website features new content and functionality making it an efficient and cost-effective tool to promote and provide for future Historical Society goals. We thank Bob Judd and Andy McLaughlin for all their hard work on this project.

Library Update



Work also continues on improving our research capabilities by developing a searchable library database. Our extensive Library Collection of general interest books, reference books, Yaphank and Suffolk County specific publications, and historically pertinent books is searchable by author, title, subject, publication date, etc. This database, when additional archive data has been entered, will be loaded onto an in-house PC workstation that will feature secure internet access and print connectivity.

Over the years, the Society has accumulated many interesting publications, either through acquisition or donation. For example, one set of publications, a complete set of *Records of the Town of Brookhaven, 1657–1947*, was donated by our first President, Eugene T. Dooley. Other Brookhaven Town early records were also part of this donation. Mr. Dooley served as Brookhaven Town Clerk for many years and donated these books upon his retirement.

The Hawkins House Video

Our new Yaphank Historical Society Video features our beloved Isabella & Robert Hawkins House. Enjoy a tour through the house led by Isabella Hawkins, owner and resident, as she shares the beauty of her home and reminisces about all the good times, and some sad times, she and her family have shared living in Yaphank. Thanks to Suzanne Johnson who obtained funding for this project through a Suffolk County Omnibus Grant.

A long list of credits appearing at the end of the video list Deborah Mayo as Mrs. Hawkins and Douglas Brown, Producer and Director. The credits list includes many others, including members of the Historic District Committee and several Society Board Members who helped out during filming. **Thanks go to all who helped with this project.**



Deborah Mayo as Isabella Hawkins



Producer, Director Douglas Brown



**Filming on location
at the Hawkins House**



Meeting Room Technology

Our newly-installed WiFi connection has proven to be very useful. Members who are involved in work at the Headquarters location can now connect to the Internet and do so often. Several of us who have been working on the Library Database project and the new YHS Website project have taken full advantage of this connectivity. Guest speakers, whose programs rely on internet connectivity, will definitely appreciate the connection.

Our new Audio/Video equipment was used by two of our guest speakers this past fall and viewing their programs on the large screen TV was enjoyed by the attendees and appreciated by the guest speakers. At several of our upcoming General Meetings, we expect attendees will watch our new Hawkins House video on the new TV. Of course, the video will also be available on our website for all to enjoy.

A Stepping Stone From the Past

by Karen Mouzakes



Suffolk County Children's Home

In January of 1896, the Brooklyn Eagle Newspaper announced plans for a new Children's Home to replace the one and one half story structure known as the Yaphank Hotel, which was purchased by Suffolk County in 1879 to be used as an orphanage. The orphanage was over seventy-five years old, stood very close to the railroad tracks, and was part of an eighty-acre parcel. The new "Children's Home" would be built further north on the property for no more than five thousand dollars. The new site would place the Children's Home across the street from the Suffolk County Almshouse. The little schoolhouse that served the original orphanage would be moved adjacent to the new Children's Home and Miss Sarah Higgins would continue on as teacher there.

When the new Suffolk County Children's Home opened in 1896, it housed forty children and it was the goal of the Matron Mrs. Wheeler that "...children be educated and trained in the habits of industry until homes can be found for them in private families." The ages of the orphans ranged from two to sixteen years old. It cost Suffolk County eighty-four cents a week for each child.

Some Yaphank families took in children from the home, including Clara Weeks who raised four children at her house, "The Lilacs." In 1900, the New York Charities Association had placed seventeen children in private homes, but fifty-nine still remained. By 1919, the Children's Home was considered a "firetrap" and the remaining children were removed and put into foster care. The building was to be used "temporarily" as an Infirmary for the Almshouse across the street. The Infirmary was used for the next eighteen years. It closed in 1935 when the new brick Suffolk County Home was built. The old Infirmary (formally Children's Home) eventually burned.



Children's Home Carriage Stepping Stone

A few years ago, a partially buried, carriage stepping stone inscribed "Children's Home" was found in an open field on Yaphank Avenue by Sheriff Tony Tucci. He dug out the stone and arranged for it to be placed at the Robert H. Hawkins House. It will remain there as a remembrance of the many orphans who arrived at the Suffolk County Children's Home and stepped down from a carriage onto that stone to begin a new life.



Gary Ralph – A Friend of the Society

Gary Ralph, a lifelong resident of Yaphank, passed away suddenly in October. Having known him since he was a boy of 12, I can honestly say that he was always proud to be a "Yaphanker", and part of a family that had a long history here. As a young man, he went to work for Brookhaven Town and held a civil service job for many years. He and his wife, Kelly, raised their two daughters, Heather and Megan, here in Yaphank. Gary and Kelly also raised llamas (yes, I said llamas).

In recent years, besides spending time with his family, Gary worked with our Historian, Karen Mouzakes, to pass along some of his family history. He also spent some time with Tricia Foley, one of our other Historians, who curated an exhibition highlighting the work of Gary's grandfather, Leslie Marchant. The exhibition was presented at the Swezey-Avey House, and then was moved to the Museums at Stonybrook Reboli Center in Stony Brook, NY. Gary, in his spare time, compiled and published a book about the Marchant family. A copy of that book is now part of the Society Library at the Swezey-Avey House.

Gary used to come by to see me at our Gift Shop, located at the back of the Hawkins House, to talk, ask questions, and share his thoughts about Yaphank—his favorite place. I'll miss his visits.

Kathy Schmidt
2021

YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY - MARCH, APRIL, MAY 2022
UPCOMING EVENTS

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 will evaluate each event as we move into the 2022 calendar. We are hoping to host in-person meetings, however if we need to host a meeting via Zoom, we will post registration instructions and meeting data on our website and also send out email messages to our members.

March General Meeting

In-person meeting (COVID conditions permitting)
Thursday, **March 17th**, 7:30pm, Swezey-Avey House
Guest speaker will be **Paul Kaplan**, author & historian.
Program: "Lillian Wald, America's Great Social and Healthcare Reformer"
Refreshments will follow the program.

April General Meeting

In-person meeting (COVID conditions permitting)
Thursday, **April 21st**, 7:30pm, Swezey-Avey House
Guest speaker will be **Richard Welch**, author & historian
Program: "L.I. Gold Coast Elite and The Great War"
Refreshments will follow the program

May General Meeting

In-person meeting (COVID conditions permitting)
Thursday, May 19th, 7:30pm, Swezey-Avey House
Guest speaker will be **Bill Bleyer**, author and retired prize-winning Newsday reporter.
Program: "George Washington's Long Island Spy Ring"
Refreshments will follow the program.

Spring Community Yard Sale

Saturday, **May 21st**, 9:00—4:00
(Rain date: Sunday, May 22nd)
Donation: \$10 per vendor.
Set up on the Hawkins House lawns.
No reservations required.
Call 631-924-4803 with questions.

Bank of the River Gift Shop at the Hawkins House

Open during the winter, weather permitting.
Hours: Thursday Afternoons, noon—4:00pm
Phone: 631-924-3401

Membership Dues: Your membership is important to us. Dues are currently payable for the Yaphank Historical Society 2022 membership year. Please see member types and current dues rates below. Please include your current email address when you send in your dues. Your support is essential and we sincerely appreciate your support at this extraordinary time.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please enroll me as:

_____ \$25 Individual _____ \$150 Business \$_____ Additional Support
_____ \$40 Family _____ \$300 Life Member TOTAL ENCLOSED \$_____

Thank you for your Support !

Make check payable to Yaphank Historical Society.

Please complete and mail form & check to : Yaphank Historical Society, P.O. Box 111, Yaphank, NY 11980

Name _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zipcode: _____

Yaphank Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible as allowable by law.