



# YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

*Historic Yaphank - Where the Past Greet's the Present*

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2022

**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

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 Treasurer - Audrey Kessler  
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 Corresponding Secretary - Marie Desch  
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 Historian Emeritus - Karen Mouzakes  
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 1-Yr. Trustee - Tom Skapinski & Gary Scherpich

## Historic House Tours—Summer Season

We are happy to be able to once again offer in-person tours of our restored historic homes in the Yaphank Historic District. All four of our historic houses, the circa 1850 **Robert and Isabella Hawkins House**, the circa 1829 **Booth House Museum**, the circa 1790 **Homan-Gerard House**, and the circa 1843 **Swezey-Avey House** will be open Sunday afternoons beginning July 10 through August, from 1:00—4:00pm. The Swezey-Avey House, designated as a Brookhaven Town Landmark, features several exhibit rooms—the *Weeks Legacy: A Yaphank Story*, the *Kovarik Collection* and the *History of Prosser Pines*, a new exhibit this year. Docents will be on hand to guide tours and answer questions.

**Please join us. We look forward to seeing you!**



## Fall Community Yard Sale

**Saturday, September 17,**

**9:00am—3:00pm**

**at the Hawkins House**

**(rain date, Sunday, September 18)**

**Donation: \$10 per vendor.**

**No Reservations Required.**

Bring your own table and chairs and “treasures” and set up shop. Spend some time with your neighbors and get a chance to browse all the vendors. We usually have a large crowd of customers and our location right on the main road ensures a continuous supply of shoppers. Perhaps it’s the cooler fall weather or the approaching holidays, but the shoppers always seem to be in a buying mood for this sale.

## Letter From The President

I hope everyone is well and enjoying this summer season. We have a busy summer schedule.

The Society is in the process of developing plans for the Homan-Gerard House portico. This will be the remaining construction piece to finish the restoration of the Homan-Gerard House. Final plans will be coming this week and then we will be developing a budget and hopefully, finally finish this house; it certainly has been a long and sometimes difficult road toward the restoration of this beautiful house. We had a great tour of the Homan-Gerard House June 26 with a group from the Long Island Studies Council. We spent several hours doing a tour of the house and we had a great time. The Society will be hosting our popular historic house tours this year. Tours are Sundays from 1—4pm and all four of our historic houses will be open.

We will be restoring the historic Hawkins Cemetery thanks to a very generous grant from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation. The cemetery was overgrown with weeds and debris and with the help of the Sherriff's Vocational Work Program we were able to clean it up and restore order. Thank you to Sheriff Toulon and the Correction Officers and the inmates who worked on the project. I also want to thank the Brookhaven Town Parks Department for supplying the dumpsters at the site. Thanks also goes to Brookhaven Town Parks Commissioner Eddie Morris for having a new fence installed around the cemetery. Restoration of the stones is scheduled for this week, weather permitting. When this project is done, we will be having a grand re-opening of the cemetery and we hope you can all join us.

Late in June, a movie group was granted permission to conduct a "movie shoot" at two of our historic houses. The group used the Hawkins and the Homan Houses for different scenes for a movie, temporarily referred to as "The Lady of the Lake" or a couple of variations of the same basic name. They were there for three twelve-hour days. We had to put a lot of our items away and move some furniture to prepare for the group. We then had to put all the items back when they were finished. We also had to staff the houses with one of our members at all times when the group was there. I want to thank the Board members for giving of their time for this project.

As a note of interest: The County is installing a fish ladder under Yaphank Avenue at Lily Lake. While this project is going on the canoe and kayak launch site has been closed and will be closed for the duration of the project.

The Society has accomplished much this year. Thank you to the Board members (all are volunteers) for their hard work to keep the Society moving forward.

*Robert Kessler*

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

### Volunteers Needed for the Busy Summer Season

If you can donate a few hours on one or two of the Sunday afternoons in July and/or August, you can welcome visitors to one of our Historic Houses. We have docent information for each house which you can refer to during the tour. If you are interested in learning more or want to volunteer, please call **Tom Skapinski at 631-732-1825.**

Thank you in advance for your support.

## Robert D.L. Gardiner Foundation College Scholarship Awarded



Scholarship winner Abigail Horn, & Bob Kessler, President, Yaphank Historical Society

The Yaphank Historical Society is proud to learn that **Abigail Horn, a senior at Longwood High School, has been awarded the 2022 Honorable Peter Fox Cohalan Scholarship in American History.** The scholarship is given annually by the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation at \$10,000 per year for attending a four-year college. Abigail's research at the Society resulted in her winning essay entitled "Camp Upton's Economic and Environmental Impacts". She utilized the "Longwood's Journey" website as well as the extensive clipping files in the Yaphank archives at the Swezey-Avey House which were compiled by Karen Mouzakes. Her paper covered the history of Camp Upton since its creation in World War I through its years as a Civilian Conservation Corps and on to World War II and finally, its present use as Brookhaven National Laboratory.

Abigail will attend State University of New York at Albany in the fall, studying political science. As a scholarship requirement, she will also need to spend some time as a volunteer at the Historical Society.

**Congratulations Abigail!**

The Society welcomes the opportunity to work with Abigail who will be volunteering at the Society starting this summer. She will be working closely with our curator, Helen Kalbach, updating the inventory of items located at several of our historic houses and entering that data into the Collections Database.

## Restoration of the Hawkins Family Cemetery—An Update



As reported in the last *Newsletter*, thanks to a recent grant from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, the Yaphank Historical Society has retained Burying Ground Preservation Group (BGPG) to clean, repair, and restore the 15 markers in the Hawkins Family Cemetery, located on Middle Island-Yaphank Road in the Yaphank Historic District. Work has started on the restoration project—the grounds have been cleaned, stones lifted, and a new split-rail fence installed. The Society also recently installed a new cemetery sign, pictured here. Restoration work and cleaning of the actual stones and markers is scheduled for completion this summer.

The stones are a significant historic resource and date from 1770 (Joseph Homan) to 1861 (Robert Hawkins). The cemetery is the burying place of many of Yaphank's earliest families: Homan, Hawkins, and Gerard. Valuable data will be added to our archives as the project progresses. It is anticipated that we may obtain new data once stones, now illegible, are cleaned and restored. We are especially interested in any markers indicating veterans of the Revolutionary War. Updates on this project will be published as the work progresses. Stay tuned.

## Concerts at Swezey Park

Our special “Concerts in the Park” series, featuring Susan and Don Cerce, kicked off on May 18 with beautiful weather. And we were blessed with good weather for the second concert in June. At each event, a small crowd of music lovers brought chairs and settled down for a couple of hours of great tunes---both old classics and newer popular songs. Most of us in the audience knew many of the words and hummed along with Susan. Both musicians are comfortable with a wide variety of music and they also understand their audience and play to please. The happy audience offered generous applause following each number, including those audience members that did impromptu dancing off to the side. The Society provided a few chairs for those people that happened to stop by upon hearing the music. And we also had some snacks and bottled water for sale. Everyone enjoyed both evenings and we are looking forward to the next concert.

**Please join us! “Concerts in the Park” will be performed the third Wednesday of the month, from 5:00—8:00pm, through September, 2022. All are welcome.**



## Who’s Using Our Website

☰ Menu

**YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Where the Past Greets the Present

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Yaphank Historical Society Newsletter  
Click here to read this month's edition

A Video Tour of the Hawkins House  
with Isabella Hawkins

Our new Yaphank Historical Website ([yaphankhistorical.org](http://yaphankhistorical.org)) was launched in January of this year. So far, we have received positive feedback from users. The site uses current technology to provide an easy-to-use experience for the user and offers a comprehensive overview of the Society and its activities. The site contains details about the history of Yaphank, the historic district and our historic houses, our upcoming events, and provides volunteer opportunities and a way for online donations. The site also provides social media connections.

We have been evaluating user statistics to determine what is of special interest to our site visitors. We are pleased to note that each month we get a good number of visitors (between 175 and 250). The number of new users remains high, approximately 90% of the total number. The consistent top five areas of interest for our new users are: Upcoming Events, Historic Buildings, Yaphank History, Research, and *Newsletters*. Current regular users are most interested in Upcoming Events and all users will check out any new postings, e.g., Media Announcements, the Hawkins House Video, and a new issue of the *Newsletter*.

## From our archives ... Who Knew ???

By Karen Mouzakes

### **Who knew that before Ocean Spray, there was Yaphank Swamp???**

"Mr. William James Weeks is picking his cranberries. Years ago he conceived of the idea of turning low swampy land to account, and while wisecracks declared it nonsense and whispered together, Mr. Weeks pushed his enterprise and today produces the best cranberries in the county."

*The Patchogue Advance, September 21, 1878*

### **Who knew that Yaphankers were such party animals???**

"Yaphank is having her share of surprise parties, sociable, etc., this winter. There is nothing like it—do it while you are young."

*The Patchogue Advance, January 10, 1880*

### **Who knew that the Ladies Social & Benevolent Union once met at my house???**

"The Ladies and Benevolent Union meets at the spacious residence and hospitable home of E. W. Mills, Esq. This excellent organization is doing a grand work, for both the church and for the village in the way of social advantages and of public improvement and of the high art of doing good."

*The Patchogue Advance, November 25, 1882*

(Note: E. Wickham Mills was active in the Yaphank Presbyterian Church and lived in what is now The Mouzakes House, located next to the bank on Main Street.)

### **Who knew that Yaphank's lakes had names???**

"Where can you find a better place for skating than on the twin lakes—Willow Lake and Lily Lake? Children large and small have fun enough in the healthy and exhilarating exercise and sport."

*The Patchogue Advance, December 9, 1882*

### **Who knew that the Yaphank community was not the place to drink your troubles away???**

"No intoxicating liquors are sold here unless it is on the sly. One man paid for a license but the whole village was aroused by Postmaster Davis and Charles W. Train, and all the best citizens signed a remonstrance which was presented to the Excise Commission, so that it refused the license. Now if liquors are sold here, both buyer and seller will know that they are outlaws."

*The Patchogue Advance, July 27, 1883*

### **Who knew the general store also offered food for thought???**

"The Yaphank Library is now open at Roswell Davis' Store and contains 375 well-selected popular books."

*The Patchogue Advance, July 3, 1890*

### **Who knew that patriotism was alive and well in 1890???**

"The Fourth Celebrated. Someone very generously visited each house after midnight and left an American Flag. At sunrise the day was ushered in by the ringing of bells and the firing of guns. It was repeated at sunset."

*The Patchogue Advance,, July 10, 1890*

### **Who knew that trips to Washington, D.C. , used to be so up-close and personal???**

"Mrs. Sylvester Homan and her daughter Ansinetta went to Washington. They visited the Capitol and the White House and shook hands with President Harrison."

*The Patchogue Advance, February 15, 1891*

**YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY - JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2022**  
**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Concerts in the Park**

**Music by Don and Susan**

Swezey Park at the Gazebo

May through September (weather permitting)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, 5:00—8:00pm**

Bring a chair, spend some time with friends, and enjoy the music. **All are welcome.**

**Yaphank Historic House Tours**

**July and August, Sunday afternoons, 1:00—4:00pm**

Robert & Isabella Hawkins House, Homan-Gerard House, Booth House Museum, and Swezey-Avey House.

Docents will be on hand for tours and to answer questions.

**July General Meeting**

In-person meeting.

Thursday, **July 21, 7:30pm**, Swezey-Avey House

Guest speaker will be **Don Fisher**, President of the Railroad Museum of Long Island

**Program:** "History of the LIRR: Focus on the Mainline"

and an update on the restoration of the Sills Road Overpass Fence, donated to the Museum by the Yaphank Historical Society.

Refreshments will follow the program.

**August General Meeting**

In-person meeting.

**Thursday, August 18, 7:30pm**, Swezey-Avey House

Guest speaker will be **Barbara Russell**, Brookhaven Town Historian

**Program:** "Born in Brookhaven"

Refreshments will follow the program.

**September General Meeting**

In-person meeting.

Thursday, **September 15, 7:30pm**, Swezey-Avey House

Guest speaker will be **Amy Kasuga Folk**, author

**Program:** "Rumrunning in Suffolk County: Tales from Liquor Island"

Refreshments will follow the program.

**Fall Community Yard Sale**

**Saturday, September 17, 9:00—3:00**, Hawkins House

**(Rain date, Sunday, September 18)**

**Donation: \$10 per vendor**

Set up on the Hawkins Houses lawns

No reservations required.

Call 631-924-4803 with questions.

**October General Meeting**

In-person meeting.

Thursday, **October 20, 7:30pm**, Swezey-Avey House

Guest speaker will be **John Turner**, environmentalist and member of the Open-Space Council

**Program:** "Cranberry Industry on Long Island"

Refreshments will follow the program.

**Bank of the River Gift Shop at the Hawkins House**

**Hours: Thursday Afternoons, noon—4:00pm**

**Phone: 631-924-3401**

**\*If COVID-19 conditions require that we host a meeting via Zoom, we will post instructions & meeting data on our website [yaphankhistorical.org](http://yaphankhistorical.org) and send email messages to our members.**

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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