

YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Historic Yaphank - Where the Past Greet's the Present

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2024

Robert and Isabella Hawkins House

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Newsletter Editor

Robert von Bernewitz

Inside this issue:

50th Anniversary ...1

President's Message ...2

50th Anniversary Event ...3

Homan-Gerard House ...4

Henry P. Kovarik ...5

Karen Mouzakes ...6

Karen M., continued ...7

Upcoming Events ...8

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50TH Celebration

ANNIVERSARY

PLEASE JOIN US ON
Saturday, August 10th, 2024
from 1pm to 5pm
at the
Swezey-Avey House
19 Mill Road | Yaphank



as we Celebrate

THE YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"Where the Past Greet's the Present"

Celebrating 50 Years



MEMORIAL DEDICATION
TIME CAPSULE PLACEMENT
SPECIAL EXHIBITS | GUEST SPEAKERS
LIVE GUITAR MUSIC | REFRESHMENTS
AND MORE!

Letter From The President

The Yaphank Historical Society is getting ready for our 50th Anniversary Celebration on August 10th. Our Committee has been working very hard to get everything done before the event, which is coming up very quickly. I would like to thank all our friends, members and supporters for their generosity during our fundraising appeal. Without your help, we could not have accomplished the things that we have.

We have a lot of events going during this busy time. We will also have our houses open for our regular summer tours, Sunday afternoons during July and August from 1 to 4pm. Private tours are always welcome by appointment. Please visit our website for events, tours and happenings.

We have also started our concert series with Don and Susan playing for us on the third Wednesday of each month from 5 to 8pm. Bring your own chair to the beautiful Swezey Park and enjoy the music Lakeside, with the setting sun as a backdrop.

Our very good friend, Ellen Kushner, has volunteered her time to help the 50th Anniversary Committee with sending out request letters, invitations, thank you cards and other miscellaneous items. She has also secured a caterer and is working on the 50th *Anniversary Celebration Journal*. We can't thank Ellen enough for her help.

We also have a stone monument at the front of the Swezey-Avey House with a bronze plaque mounted on it commemorating the Society's important milestone. This is where we will place the time capsule to be opened by future generations. The beautiful bronze plaque was donated by Eddie Morris, our Brookhaven Town Parks Commissioner. THANK YOU Eddie.

There are so many people I want to thank for the success of the Yaphank Historical Society, I just don't have the room. I do want to thank you all. We are looking forward to the future and growing our Society with your continued support.

Robert Kessler

Editor's Note

I would like to thank the following for their contributions to this Newsletter: Bob Kessler, Helen Kalbach, Kathy Schmidt, Marie Desch, Peggy Judd, Ellen Kushner and Danielle Courtois. **Funds for this newsletter were provided by Suffolk County Legislator James Mazarella, 3rd Legislative District. Thank you!**

Welcome New Members

Monica Gruenheid - Yaphank, New York
Kerry A. Cowen - Yaphank, New York

Volunteers needed

Do you enjoy local history or like driving through a picturesque town and looking at old historic houses? Why not become a volunteer for the Yaphank Historical Society? We showcase wonderfully restored homes that are rich in history! The Society is looking for volunteers to help us with our tours of our properties. If you are interested in helping out, visit our website volunteer page (yaphankhistorical.org/volunteer/) or call (631) 924-4803 and leave a message.

50th Anniversary Activities are in Full Swing at YHS

On May 16th, founding Yaphank Society member Kathy Schmidt gave a presentation on the origins of the Society and how the local community banded together to save the Robert and Isabella Hawkins House. One step away from the wrecking ball, the House is now a centerpiece of the community. Lucky for us, Kathy had an amazing collection of YHS memorabilia on display at the event. The Hawkins House was showcased in several magazines including *Family Circle*, *House Beautiful*, *Victoria* and more.

Shortly after this event, Kathy appeared on the radio program *History Island* with host Dale Spencer on LI News Radio 103.9 FM. Through the efforts of Kathy and other founding members, the Society has preserved many other properties for current and future generations to enjoy.



Yaphank Historical Society Gardens are beautifying the Community



Diane Schwindt Lecture on Life and Dependency of Yaphank's Mills 50th Anniversary Event

On Saturday May 18th, Diane Schwindt gave a wonderful cooking and history demonstration on how early settlers of the area lived and thrived when the mills were churning in "Millville." Local residents depended on these mills for food, shelter and clothing. The Swezey Mill and the Homan-Gerard Mills were major centers of commerce. It was a wonderful step back in time to see how the local residents adapted to these times.



History of the Homan-Gerard House

In June, as part of our 50th Anniversary Celebration, YHS board member and archivist MaryLaura Lamont gave a presentation on the History of the Homan-Gerard House. Through her extensive research, attendees were treated to rare photos and learned the history and progression of the house and its inhabitants. Also as part of the presentation, we learned about the various mills that operated on the property. Thanks to the efforts of Suffolk County, Yaphank Historical Society and others, the completely restored house is here today for the community to visit and enjoy.



In the spring as part of our 50th Anniversary activities, 2-year trustee and naturalist MaryLaura Lamont gave a series of walking tours in the trails behind the Homan-Gerard House. In this picturesque setting, which encompasses the Carmans River in Southaven County Park, attendees learned about the cultural and natural history of the area.

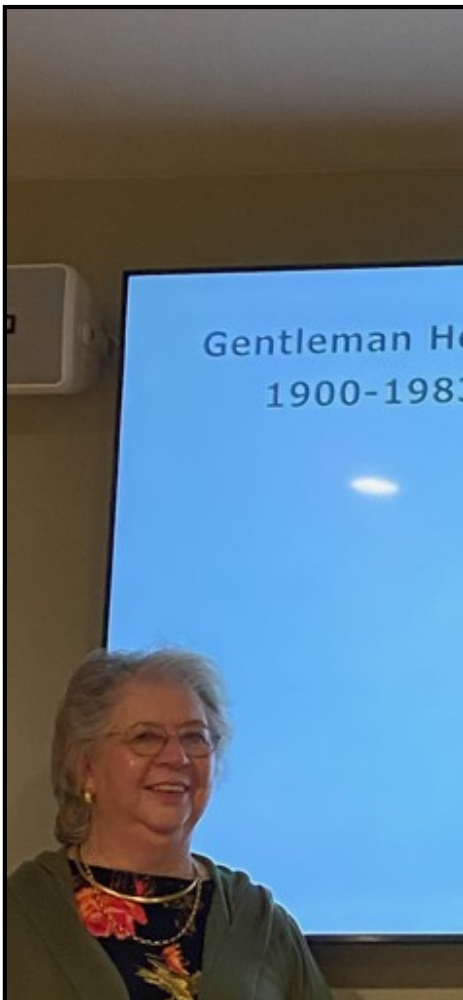


50th Anniversary Presentation on Henry P. Kovarik

On April 18th former President and current Curator Helen Kalbach presented a wonderful talk on Yaphank's Poet Laureate, Henry P. Kovarik.

Henry P. Kovarik was a many faceted man — some people would say he was a gentleman, a character, a well-read man, and most of all Yaphank's Poet Laureate. Henry was born in 1900 in Moravia, a historical region in the east of the former Czech Republic. Henry was in the Moravian Army during World War I. After the war he worked for several years on an uncle's farm. He emigrated to the United States in 1927 with his mother Teresa or Tessie, who passed in 1966. Henry worked as an elevator operator, a night watchman, a chauffeur and a real estate broker. His first encounter with Yaphank was as a chauffeur for Mr. DeLappe, Lucille Stroud's father, who owned a house on Main Street. Henry would bring the family from Yaphank to New York City. Through his real estate connections, he purchased the De Marca House on the east side of town. Henry loved nature; he was often called a Naturalist Poet. He also loved poetry and compiled over 200 poems into the book *"Concept of a Bible. For Our Time in Sententious Poetry."*

Henry was an early member of the Yaphank Historical Society when it was formed 50 years ago. Henry's dream of creating a place for poets and creative writers came to fruition after his passing in 1983. *The Henry P. Kovarik Foundation* provided scholarships for graduating students from Longwood High School. The *Foundation* also provided funding for the creation of a Henry P. Kovarik Reading Room at the Longwood Public Library and covered the purchases of books and tapes, as well as supporting ongoing special programs to the community. Foundation funds were also given to the Society to create a Henry P. Kovarik Reading Room at the Hawkins House; that original room was moved to the Swezey-Avey House. The *Foundation* ceased operation in 2013.



YHS Takes a Field Trip to East Hampton

In April, members of the YHS enjoyed a guided tour of the East Hampton Historical Society's recently opened Dominy House reconstruction, which includes the family woodworking and clock shops on North Main Street and original pieces of Dominy furniture. In the 1800's three generations of the Dominy family of East Hampton built and repaired clocks and made furniture of superb craftsmanship which is highly respected to this day; so much so, that examples are displayed at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware.

After the tour, members enjoyed lunch at the Townline BBQ Restaurant in Sagaponack, followed by a traditional stop at the Bridgehampton Candy Kitchen for ice cream!



50th Anniversary Spotlight on Founding Member Karen Mouzakes - Historian Emeritus

My family moved to Coram in 1953. For a year, I attended Coram's one room schoolhouse with Evelyn Holshue as my third-grade teacher. Halfway through that year, the eight third-graders were bused to Port Jefferson with the older kids. The following year, a new Coram school was built and I had happy years there with Mrs. Raynaud and Mr. Rocklein as my teachers. I feel that these two teachers had a very positive influence on my decision to become a teacher.

Before seventh grade my family moved to a new house on Church Lane in Middle Island. I had a horse and enjoyed riding with my friend Linda Lyons. In summer, we were allowed to let our horses graze in a pasture of a farm on Mt. Sinai Road across from the Archambault house. Carol Archambault also had a horse grazing in that pasture. Her parents allowed us to run a hose across Mt. Sinai Road to fill a bathtub with water for the horses. We all spent many happy days horseback riding on the farm field roads off Canal Road. Farmers let us ride there, as long as we were careful to stay on the road. I doubt that any of this would be allowed today.

I consider Middle Island, to be my childhood home. I had many good friends there with the last names of Wellings, Columbine, Rindos, Mouzakes, Dellabovi and Oeding. We all belonged to the Drum Corp Band sponsored by the Middle Island Fire Department. In those days, all of the local fire departments held a parade and carnival. In summer there were at least two a week. We loved marching in parades and going to the carnivals afterward. During the day, we played pinochle on Rindos's front porch and rode bikes. That was our entertainment back then.

We all attended Port Jefferson High School. I was a cheerleader and belonged to the Future Teachers of America Club. While I attended there the school's name was changed to the Earl L. Vandermeulen High School, after the beloved principal.

My first job was selling vegetables at Mr. Johnson's "?" Farm Stand. Yes, that was its name "?". I worked there every summer all through college. Once I sold a flat of marigolds to a customer thinking they were tomato plants. Mr. Johnson was a kind and patient boss.

During my senior year, I applied to Oswego State Teachers College and was accepted. I loved attending Oswego where it seemed to snow every day November-through March. In 1966, the school had to close when we got 6 feet of snow and plows from Long Island came up to help with removal.

While attending Oswego, I lived at the Pi Delta Chi House. It was the former home of the Kingsford Family. They owned Kingsford Starch Co. which later became Niagara Starch Co. Fifty-two girls lived there. It was a beautiful house. It was here that I began to love old houses! I explored every inch of that house, from the wine cellar to the ballroom balcony where everyone stored their luggage. During two years when I was president of the sorority, I got to have the master bedroom which had an elevator down to the dining room which we were forbidden to use! "Darn!"

I married John Mouzakes, a friend since childhood, in 1966. We lived in Hawaii where I taught in a local school and he was in the U.S. Navy. After two years, John went on to serve in Viet Nam and I returned to Middle Island and taught at the Blue Point School for the next thirty-four years. I loved teaching. Blue Point is a lovely place with wonderful kids.

After retirement I took a position at the Middle Island Nursery School, a locally run cooperative that was housed at the beautiful St. Andrew's Church on East Main Street in Yaphank. I taught three- and four-year old classes there for six years. I loved having, "my own little school!" I met and worked with many lovely parents and kids.

Meanwhile, John and I had found an old house to purchase on the south side of Main Street. I loved the hundred-year-old house and John loved the Carmans River that ran behind the house—perfect! We moved to Yaphank in 1972. We spent many, many hours doing restoration work at 132 Main Street. We loved it!

My first two years in Yaphank I enjoyed having a Junior Girl Scout Troop. My friend Donna Weber and I enjoyed the company of twenty-five local girls. We met each week in the basement of Yaphank's Presbyterian Church. We went on bike-rides to Southaven Park and painted Main Street's store windows at Halloween. I loved it!

In 1974, the Yaphank Historical Society came to be—I was a Charter Member and the first Recording Secretary. I loved the history of Yaphank which I was first exposed to while doing a title search of my home. I found the names of all the people who had lived there before me and found where they were buried in the Yaphank Cemetery. I loved all of the old houses and was happy when the YHS came to an agreement with Suffolk County to save the Robert and Isabella Hawkins House. I became Historian of the Society and enjoyed researching and writing articles for the *Yaphank Historical Society* Newsletter each month. I also did research for short "Historic Moments" on the radio. Yaphank has such a rich history!

Tricia Foley and I enjoyed co-authoring the book **Images of America, Yaphank**. This year, I was encouraged by Paul Infranco to put all of the articles and research I have written into the book, **People, Places and Legacies**. Both books preserve Yaphank's History and also bring in some much-needed funds for more restoration.

I love Yaphank, but in 2014 I decided to move to Phillipsburg, NJ, to spend more time with my grandchildren and to watch them grow. I have stayed in touch with all of my YHS friends. My son has the house on Main Street where he grew up and my daughter lives in a two-hundred-year-old house here in NJ. Both of my children are old house lovers!

When I moved, I was made Historian Emeritus of the Yaphank Historical Society. It has been a great honor for me. I try to be of service to the Society by answering all of our website questions. I send answers to questions and accompany the answers with photos if appropriate.

I have had many happy years in the Society.

Editors Note:

This essay was written by Karen in Response to questions asked by Robert von Bernewitz in February of 2024



Karen States

"This is the Reason I moved to New Jersey."



Karen and her Son with her new Book

YAPHANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
July 2024 through October 2024 UPCOMING EVENTS

July 50th Anniversary Event

Saturday, **July 6th, 1:00pm to 4:00pm**
Scavenger Hunt - Yaphank Historic District

July General Meeting

Thursday, **July 18th, 7:30pm**, Swezey Avey House
Guest Speakers **Bob Kessler, Society President**
Program: Swezey-Avey House Restoration
Refreshments will follow the program

August 50th Anniversary Event

Saturday, **August 10th, 1:00 to 5:00pm**,
50th Anniversary Party
Swezey-Avey House
Refreshments, Special Events, Music and more
All are welcome!

September General Meeting

Thursday, **September 19th, 7:30pm**, Swezey Avey House
Guest Speaker **Paul Kaplan, Author**
Program: Penn Station and the Long Island Railroad
Refreshments will follow the program

October General Meeting

Thursday, **October 17th 7:30pm**, Swezey Avey House
Guest Speaker: **Karen Mouzakes, Historian Emeritus and Founding Member YHS**
Program: Hawkins Family of Yaphank and Brooklyn Heights Connections
Refreshments will follow the program

November General Meeting

Thursday, **November 21st, 7:30pm** Swezey-Avey House
No guest speaker
Program: Yaphank Historical Society Elections
Refreshments will follow the program

Bank of the River Gift Shop at the Hawkins House

Open all year long, weather permitting
Hours: Thursday Afternoons, noon - 4:00pm
Phone: 631 924-3401

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please enroll me as:

_____ \$25 Individual _____ \$150 Business \$_____ Additional Support
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Thank you for your Support !

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