

THE VILLAGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF EAST HAMPTON

the Village
Preservation
Society of East Hampton

FALL NEWSLETTER
2021

2021 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

By Georgia de Havenon, Historic Preservation Committee Chair

The Historic Preservation Committee of the Village Preservation Society's Annual Awards Ceremony was scheduled many months before its actual date of September 18. The locale of the meeting, the Maidstone Tennis House, was booked and plans for an in-person meeting were afoot. However, the sudden rise of highly contagious COVID-19 Delta Variant interfered with those plans and it was decided to be prudent and have a Zoom meeting instead. In spite of the fact that we could not meet in person, the format worked out very well with the Village Preservation Society first conducting their business meeting, including timely reports on governmental affairs and the status of the airport.

This was followed by a pre-recorded video of the 2021 Historic Preservation Awards Ceremony, a tradition that is in its fourth year. We were anxious to present this year's awards after last year's hiatus. Two very worthy candidates were selected: for the public segment of the award, the recently refurbished Village Hall, the East Hampton Village Board was recognized; the private category award was presented to Alexandra Chantecaille for her conscientious restoration of the Conklin House. Both these properties that date from c.1750 represent important aspects in the development of the Village of East Hampton.

The Village Hall at 84 Main Street is also known as the Lyman Beecher/Hand House. This structure is said to have begun as a south facing lean-to, and over the history of its life has been altered substantially. From 1799 to 1810 it was occupied by Reverend Lyman Beecher, who was a co-founder of the American Temperance Society, as well as the

father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Around 1850, Captain George Hand rebuilt the house, turning it into an end-chimney type of residence and adding a fine Greek Revival door. The recent exterior renovation, managed by Robert Hefner, East Hampton's Historic Preservation Consultant, included re-shingling the exterior to its original appearance with 24-inch Alaskan Yellow Cedar, restoring the front door and window sashes and general repairs to the eaves, windows and chimney. Mayor Jerry Larsen, Trustees Rose Brown and Arthur Graham accepted the award on behalf of the Village of East Hampton.

The Conklin House at 57 Accabonac Road is, according to a report by Robert Hefner, "the best example of an 18th century 'saltbox' in the Town of East Hampton outside the Village". He also has cited it as a typical example of a Colonial era structure, with a two-story front wall and long roof slope reaching to the first-floor eaves of the back wall.

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Photo by Kathleen Cunningham

East Hampton Village Mayor, Jerry Larsen (center) accepts the VPS 2021 Historic Preservation Award in the public category for the careful restoration of the facade of the historic Beecher/Hand house, which serves as Village Hall. Gathered for the presentation ceremony, left to right, Trustees Arthur Graham and Rose Brown, Mayor Larsen, Georgia de Havenon, VPS Historic Preservation Committee Chair and John L McGuirk III, VPS Chairman.



Left Photo: VPS Chairman, John L. McGuirk, III (left) and VPS Historic Preservation Committee Chair, Georgia de Havenon (right) present Village Historic Consultant, Bob Hefner (center), with the VPS Award of Excellence, acknowledging his work for over 40 years preserving historic structures in the Village. The photo was taken outside the Dominy Shops, which is Bob's latest project.



Right Photo: VPS Chair, John L. McGuirk III and VPS Historic Preservation Committee Chair present Alexandra Chantecaille (center) with the 2021 VPS Historic Preservation Award in the private category for her meticulous renovation of The Conklin House, c. 1750.

2021 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

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The west side of the house is the original structure, also built as a lean-to, which was doubled in size in the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the interior is intact in its original state as the house descended through the Conklin family until its recent change of ownership.

Alexandra has meticulously restored the interior surfaces, especially the remaining painted wall features and brick fireplaces, and has tastefully furnished it appropriately including a few modern touches. We applaud her ingenuity and diligence with this renovation. She presented a short Power-Point explanation of some of the changes she made, and her enthusiasm was evident.

Robert J. Hefner, our speaker for the meeting, gave an insightful talk regarding the work he has performed for the Village over the past 43 years. Projects he has spearheaded include restoration of such varied structures as the Montauk lighthouse, the Thomas and Mary Nimmo Moran House and Studio, the Hook Mill (and most of the other windmills in the area), and the George Fowler House, likely the last Montaukett house left in the Hamptons. In 2015, Hefner was responsible for creating the Timber Frame Landmark Legislation that saved the handful of timber frame buildings remaining in the Village. His most recent and ongoing

project has been the reconstruction of the Dominy House on North Main Street and its consolidation with the two Dominy workshops. The project must now raise additional funds required to make the interior suitable as a museum, able to borrow works from other institutions and to realize its status as a unique structure in this country.

Mr. Hefner was awarded the Village Improvement Society's Award of Excellence, one of few recipients to have received such an honor.

*Below: The Lyman Beecher House
Inset: Reverend Lyman Beecher (Archive)*



Below: The Conklin House (back) Below Right: The Conklin House (front)



EAST HAMPTON AIRPORT UPDATE

By Peter M. Wolf

As of September 26, 2021 the Town of East Hampton is, at long last free of its obligations to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), from a grant to repave a taxiway in 2001 arranged by the Schneiderman Administration. This long-awaited landmark has been preceded by weeks of what the Town Board has called 'Re-Envisioning' exercises conducted over a series of weeks in September via Zoom, due to an uptick in COVID positivity in the community. This is a critical moment in time for the Town Board in that it now has control over the use of the 610 acres of publically owned land, a right surrendered during the FAA grant period of 20 years.

During the town's visioning workshops, many proposals have been entertained, including outright closure; closing and re-opening under stricter guidelines; and keeping the status quo, which would allow the airport to continue to remain open all day, every day, all year long. Additionally, the Town has conducted several studies including the airport's profitability to the region (marginal); impacts of carbon emissions to a municipality in climate crisis (some); environmental impacts including water quality (concerning) and impacts of potential closure on other regional airports, particularly privately-owned, Montauk airport (increase in helo traffic at Montauk debated by knowledgeable people). The studies can be found at: <https://ehamptonny.gov/748/Documents-and-Presentations>.

While the Town Board continues to consider its options, a new group, The Coalition to Transform East Hampton Airport, dedicated to closing the airport joins similarly positioned, Say No To KHTO, to push back against well-funded efforts by national aviation interests and their lobbyists, many of whom dominated the Zoom work sessions.

As this is a local election year, it is unlikely definitive

plans for the airport's future will be made before then. We urge all residents of the communities affected by the airport to make their positions regarding the airport and its impact on your life, and your desires for its future known to the Town Board.

VILLAGE BOARD PROMOTES INCREASED DENSITY IN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

By Joan D. Osborne

The new Village administration, committed to quick action to please its backers, has been on a tear introducing several pieces of legislation, most of which will profoundly increase population density in the residential and commercial districts of the Village. It has also stopped conducting work sessions in a public venue, which many find alarming.

While the 2002 Comprehensive Plan is in need of an overhaul, it established and codified long held planning principles and the community's stated desire to preserve the historic, neighborhood character of the Village. Code changes are being adopted at blinding speed, as a simple majority of the Village Board conducts a public hearing on and adopts in the same meeting regulations unraveling decades of preservation work.

Of major concern is the lack of process by which these regulations have been proposed. The codified goals of the Comprehensive Plan, and Commercial Districts Study, a component of that Plan, itemize in detail the process by which changes to the Village Code should be conducted. No study has been offered that demonstrates a need for any of these changes.

Density may now be increased in a number of ways. The biggest opportunity is for residential lots of 60,000 sq ft or more which are now permitted a 2nd dwelling unit with 2-bedrooms, full kitchen and amenities. Nearly 28% of village

THE EAST HAMPTON CENTENNIAL PARADE



Top: The VPS was delighted to participate in the parade marking the centennial of Village's incorporation on Saturday, September 25, 2021. Leading the parade were banner carriers Georgia de Havenon, left and Mary Busch, right, followed by a 1971 Cadillac convertible chauffeuring Polly Bruckmann, John and Suzanne Cartier and their daughter-in-law, Pam, driving her beautiful vintage car. Pulling up the rear was Katy Graham, Charmaine Caldwell and Kathleen Cunningham in the Graham's 1981 CJ-5 Jeep. It was a perfect late summer day and a grand time was had by all.



Bottom: Centennial Parade line-up: Georgia de Havenon and Mary Busch, banner bearers, left to right: Councilwoman, Kathee Burke-Gonzalez, Katy Graham, Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc and Charmaine Miner Caldwell, standing behind the car. In the car: John G. Cartier and his daughter-in-law, Pam, the owner of the car, in the front seat. Polly Bruckmann and Suzanne Cartier in the back seat.

residential properties will be eligible for this new density increase, a concept the Comprehensive Plan actively rejected. Gross floor area in general has been increased on all lots, a repeal of more restrictive coverage meant to maintain neighborhood character. Basements will soon be permitted to be deeper and contribute to living space, including reaching out beyond the walls of the house under porches or decks to increase living space.

VPS strongly supports workforce housing in the Village, the need is obvious and great. With an existing parking deficit of at least 2000 spaces in the Village commercial core, new regulations permitting 'transit-oriented development' within 500 ft of a transportation hub, will present serious challenges for neighboring residential streets on which residents of any such housing will need to park. There is no meaningful public transportation to provide commutation options for a transit oriented development project, yet the Village Board now

exempts parking requirements to encourage this type of development. This regulation is particularly baffling as it will increase density in an already overcrowded commercial district of the Village at relatively complicated roadway intersections, with essentially, no public transportation.

Residents concerned about these major changes adopted by the new Village Administration, would do well to follow the Village Board's actions as there is likely more to come. The active pro-development position this Board has taken is surprising, given the candidates representations during the election process. And, it is wreaking havoc on decades of careful management of development and redevelopment anchored in preservation policies that have helped to maintain the historic patterns of development in the Village. This is a very real threat to residential quality of life and neighborhood character. Concerned citizens should take note and make their feelings known.

WORLD WAR II IN EAST HAMPTON, 1941 – 1945 (PART II)

By Averill D. Geus, Historian

I was seven years old when I returned to school after Christmas vacation in January 1942. The holidays had come and gone, Santa Claus was a memory, and life was normal with visits to my grandmother, and playing outdoors with my brother. As I walked into my second grade classroom, Bobby Card ran up to me, brimming with excitement. "We're in a war," he announced - "a war". What's a war, I asked? Pearl Harbor, bombing, Nazis, were words I'd never heard before. But, they formed the backdrop of the next five years of my childhood. And, life as I knew it slowly changed.

I read LIFE magazine as soon as they arrived each week and knew how bad it was in Europe and Asia. And, during those was years, each summer we had a house-guest who was special. His name was Eugene Sheffer and he was a professor at Columbia University, in charge of the Maison Française. Until he was 21, Gene had led a normal life, but fell victim to the 1918 epidemic, which he barely survived. His legs became twisted, he walked with difficulty and he got around on a bicycle. He was about 35 when he first stayed with us and easily became part of the family. He spent part of each day at the School for Children run by Dr. Carlsen in a house near the Main Beach on Terbell Lane. He had friends such as A.J. Leibling, Jean Stafford and other writers. He also had a brother who was in the Pacific during the war, whose ship was sunk and who drifted about in a life raft until he was rescued. It was a hair-raising story. He went to the Catholic Fair when visiting and won a prize, a set of ceramic chickens, clearly marked "Made in Japan". When he left, the chickens stayed behind and I set them up in a dollhouse pen. Gene knew some of the refugees from Europe who managed to escape the Nazi death camps and arrived in America with almost nothing. Many stayed at the Sea Spray Inn, a haven

offered to them by Arnold Bayley, Innkeeper. Among them was a charming couple, Mr. and Mrs. Franz Pick. Mr. Pick had been the financial editor for Le Figaro before the war and escaped with his wife through the Pyrenées, and Spain to safety in this country. To know people like them made the horror of war more relevant to me than almost anything else. Another couple who visited East Hampton during war was the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. While their notoriety was at its height at the time, they were not welcomed by many. People lined up on Ocean Avenue to see them, but Juan Trippe, then President of the Maidstone Club, where they spent their days, had orders to keep his eye on them every minute. Their close relationship to Nazi Germans was not a secret and although the Club sent many sons into the war, there were a few German sympathizers.

A great many war stories never appeared in the newspapers and we did not hear of them until long after the war. When we went to the ocean beach in the summer, we had to wear thin little rubber shoes because the beaches were often covered with a black tarry substance. Impossible to get off if you walked in it. I was an adult before I realized this black oozy stuff was oil from torpedoed ships carrying war goods to Europe. Ed Osborne was a commander of one of those ships and told me of seeing a torpedo explode one of the ships in his convoy. He knew it was the ship on which "Pint" Marasca was assigned. All lost. Eight years ago, oily tar balls washed up on local beaches, which were believed to have come from a British tanker sunk 20 miles south of Shinnecock by a torpedo. The ship contained up to 28,000 barrels of oil. It is said there are many rusting hulls along the coast here still containing gallons of oil. The Coast Guard calls them ticking time bombs. *(To be continued)*

THE ANCHOR SOCIETY

By Kathleen Cunningham

On August 26, 2021, the VPS held an informational session on our collaboration with The Anchor Society, a not-for-profit corporation founded by Bess Rattray to bring 'Commerce that Serves Community' back to East Hampton. Over 40 people participated in a Zoom session and enthusiasm for the project was rewarding.

The Society has long discussed the inability of residents to find simple goods and services to conduct the daily business of life and the topic, lead by VPS Trustee, Curt Schade, gained traction during a June Board meeting. The Society was about to form another not-for-profit organization to work to preserve the commerce of the community, which is just as valuable as other historic assets for which preservation projects have been carefully and successfully executed. As it happened, Ms. Rattray had already begun the work to

establish a not-for-profit organization, called "The Anchor Society", the mission of which was to establish a general store in the Village of East Hampton. By lucky coincidence, our two organizations were connected and this collaboration was born. Mr. Schade and Executive Director, Kathleen Cunningham have volunteered to serve with Ms. Rattray on the Board of Directors of her new not-for-profit.

The August information session provided examples of other communities, primarily in Massachusetts and Vermont, which have successfully taken on this very challenge, providing useful models for the effort.

There is much work to be done, but the goal is clear and many talented and helpful people have stepped forward to help. For more information or to volunteer to help, please e-mail: anchorsocietyeh@gmail.com.



**Please fill out, cut along the line and mail to THE VILLAGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 2015, East Hampton, NY 11937 • 631-324-3524 • www.villagepreservationsociety.org**

Please enroll me as a member of The Village Preservation Society of East Hampton
for the Membership Year from January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email address _____

Number of Members in this Membership _____

For year round Newsletters and information, please print winter address

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Contributors of:

\$ 25,000.00 will be listed as **Chairman's Circle**

\$ 10,000.00 will be listed as **Visionary**

\$ 2,500.00 will be listed as **Advocate**

\$ 500.00 will be listed as **Patron**

\$ 100.00 will be listed as **Friend**

\$ 15,000.00 will be listed as **President's Circle**

\$ 5,000.00 will be listed as **Champion**

\$ 1,000.00 will be listed as **Benefactor**

\$ 250.00 will be listed as **Supporting Member**

Regular Membership (\$50) _____

The Membership Year runs from January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

I would like to be active. My special interests are: _____

I (We) support VPS principles but do not wish to be listed as a member.

Enclosed is a contribution of \$ _____

THE VILLAGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

P.O. Box 2015

East Hampton, NY 11937

www.villagepreservationsociety.org

DOWN THE DRAIN

By Sara Davison, Executive Director

FRIENDS OF GEORGICA POND FOUNDATION

We have had a lot of rain lately and you have probably noticed that some roads drain well, and some roads are chronically flooded. There are a lot of variables that contribute to flooded roads, and clogged leaching basins are just one of them. After Hurricane Ida, New York City's roads and subways were inundated. More severe rain events are in our future and our aging infrastructure is not up to the task.

Road runoff is a term easily misunderstood. Runoff of all types-- whether off roads, parking lots, lawns, or roofs-- can cause real problems to nearby wetlands and nearshore waterbodies. Runoff carries contaminants and according to the Peconic Estuary Program, the most common contaminants in runoff are motor oil, sediment, pet waste, garbage, fertilizer, and pesticides. At Georgica Pond, minimizing runoff into the pond is one of our key water quality improvement objectives.

Working with a group of stakeholders, the Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation has been helping develop a plan for the area around the rest stop on Rt. 27 at Georgica Pond and at the end of Cove Hollow Road at Georgica Cove. Stormwater runoff at these sites is responsible for erosion and high bacteria counts after heavy rainfall.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYS-DOT) manages Rt. 27, and a series of leaching basins have been installed along Rt. 27 to capture road runoff and keep the highway as dry as possible. Leaching basins are designed to catch runoff and are either connected to a series of underground pipes which drain somewhere (hopefully not directly into a water body like at Georgica Cove) or simply catch the water and let sediment and other detritus settle and allow the water to slowly recharge back into the soil.

But leaching basins must be maintained and if not, stormwater can flow right over them and into nearby wetlands. A recent New York Times article about New York City's drainage issues stated "...one of the most immediate fixes for the sewage system is the simplest: better maintenance of existing drains and catch basins, the underground holding pens for water that can become clogged with leaves, mud or garbage." In the Village, particularly important are all the leaching basins around Georgica, Hook and Town Ponds and the Nature Preserve.

An inspection of leaching basins around the Rt. 27 rest stop revealed that they were full of detritus. Thankfully, the NYS-DOT responded quickly and pumped them out. An agreement between the NYSDOT, the Village and the Town of East Hampton to maintain our drainage basins better is a high priority.

Here is what you can do to help to reduce contaminants and overall stormwater runoff into Georgica Pond and other Village ponds and wetlands:

- Greatly reduce fertilizer & pesticide use. Use time-release organic fertilizer or compost tea instead of synthetic fertilizer.
- Pick up pet waste and dispose in the toilet or in the trash
- Divert water from your gutters to the lawn, a rain barrel or rain garden (a simple depression that catches runoff)
- Plant a native plant buffer at the edge of wetlands or ponds
- Replace pavement with permeable paving or permeable pavers such as techno bloc
- Report construction or post construction runoff to the Village. (Construction sites should have erosion and sediment controls such as hay bales or silt fences in place to intercept all runoff before it reaches the road).