

# THE VILLAGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF EAST HAMPTON

the Village  
**Preservation**  
Society of East Hampton

SPRING NEWSLETTER  
2019

## VPS Annual Welcome to Summer Party!

**Save  
the Date!**

Saturday, June 15, 2019 • 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
at the Tennis House on Maidstone Ln.

**Save  
the Date!**

**Reserve Your Tickets Now!**

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

*by Georgia deHavenon, Historic Preservation Committee Chair*

Precipitated by an anxiety that development in the Village was changing the character of East Hampton, one year ago, the VPS initiated its Historic Preservation Award. Besides recognition of exceptional preservation measures, it also is designed to raise the awareness of the local community to the benefits of saving the Village's heritage. In this regard, the National Trust for Historic Preservation assesses the importance of preservation succinctly: "Keeping older and historic places alive, vibrant, and responsive to contemporary needs through continuous use and reuse is recognized as a way to achieve substantial ecological, economic, health, and sociological benefits and create more sustainable, equitable, and healthy communities".

At the same time, we formed a Historic Preservation Committee composed of members of the VPS, architects and architectural historians. During the first meeting of the committee, it was decided that a white paper, discussing the progress of historic preservation in East Hampton, should be generated. The paper is an ongoing project spearheaded

by VPS trustee Gene Cross, who worked as a planning consultant for the Village for many years. This informative and timely document will be presented to the public at our Annual Meeting on September 28. Also, at that time, a speaker of renown will talk to us about a preservation topic, and the Historic Preservation Awards will be presented. We hope you will all attend and look for more information about the event as it gets closer to September. Copies of the white paper will be distributed.

At the meeting, two awards will be given, one for an individual's property and one for a public initiative. Properties in the East Hampton area will all be considered, whether in the Village or not. In order to present the award, potential properties

must be identified and then nominated. This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to participate and we hope you will consider sending in a nomination. Self-nominations are accepted and full information about how to do so can be found on the VPS website, <http://www.village-preservation-society.org/award.html>. The deadline is July 15.



*Inaugural VPS Historic Preservation Award winners, Elizabeth and Patrick Gerschel of 34 Hither Ln moved and restored the Mulford-Baker House built in 1805. This photo shows the VPS plaque recognizing their efforts aside the front door. Private preservation efforts of this nature are essential to preserve not only the historic nature of the Village of East Hampton, but our community character for present and future generations.*

*Photo by Kathleen Cunningham*

# EAST HAMPTON'S GIFTED WOMEN - MARY WOODHOUSE

*By Averill D. Geus, East Hampton Town Historian*

The ladies of East Hampton, God bless 'em, have over and over again confronted issues that had a negative effect on the quality of their lives. When others protested that nothing could be done to ban dust and mud in the streets, the women built roads by way of their Village Improvement Society. They waged a war against unsightly billboards on highways and loudly protested the introduction of neon signs. Sewing circles and literary groups took on problems overlooked by husbands. A group called "The Ramblers" sponsored the creation of a playground for their children, still used extensively today. Others provided hot lunches for school children. Mrs. Gardiner won a small victory in the mid 19th century. She insisted that J. Madison Hunting's store carry toilet paper although she first had to explain what it was used for. Village women may have learned to speak up and be heard through their education at Clinton Academy, New York's first secondary school, which, surprisingly, was co-ed. Two First Ladies received their schooling there: Mrs. William Henry Harrison, née Anna Symmes of Greenport and Mrs. John Tyler, née Julia Gardiner of Gardiner's Island.

Erecting statues to honor outstanding citizens has fallen out of favor, but if East Hampton ever thought it appropriate to honor anyone, it would have to be our great benefactor, Mary (Mrs. Lorenzo G.) Woodhouse. Unless reminded of her generosity, most East Hampton people today have forgotten her and her extraordinary gifts. Newcomers know nothing about her. The big house she and her husband built on Hunting Lane has long since been torn down and there are no plaques on buildings to recall her presence of long ago. To realize the immense changes she made here, one has only to stand on the little green island in front of Guild Hall, turn and look at the East Hampton Library, and turn again to see Clinton Academy. Think of what East Hampton would be without these three institutions.

To clear up a little historical background, it must be realized that more than one Woodhouse families called East Hampton their summer home. Lorenzo Guernsey Woodhouse and his wife, Emma, built a large Hunting Lane house in 1894 and called it "Graycroft". Marshall Field Department Store was one of their lucrative companies. Four years later, in 1898, Mr. and Mrs. Lorenzo Easton Woodhouse, of Burlington, VT, visited their Uncle and fell in love with the village. In 1903, they purchased several acres across the street from Graycroft and built their own house, naming it "The Fens". Their two children, Charles and Marjorie grew up in a family compound of over fifty acres. Emma Woodhouse created a Japanese garden wonderland, out of a former swamp where she

entertained with tea parties, plays and cultural events. The garden, much photographed, contained red lacquer bridges, a moon windowed teahouse, a smaller bamboo structure, exotic flowers and shrubs. In an era of elaborate gardens, it was a showstopper. The younger Woodhouses inherited this property with the gardens, which they opened for the public's enjoyment. It is known as the Nature Trail today. The younger Mrs. Woodhouse, (Mary), also loved gardening and landscaped her property with formal rose gardens and fountains. She was an enthusiastic gardener, albeit with the help and planning of professionals. She founded and was the first president of the East Hampton Garden Club, which still meets today.

Just inside the gates of the estate, in the midst of the gardens, Mary Woodhouse built an extraordinary playhouse for her daughter's 16th birthday. With a 70-foot long grand salon, a stage and a balcony complete with pipe organ, it became a family cultural center. Actors, musicians and dancers, including Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan were invited to perform there. Theatre, paintings and music powered Mary Woodhouse's life. Her interests were so intense that it became her ambition to help the public enjoy them as well.

Her first forays into serving public needs had little to do with the arts. While staying with her in-laws in 1897, she busied herself in relief work for veterans of the Spanish American War, who under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy for the McKinley Administration, had seen service in Cuba. They returned to recuperate from typhoid and yellow fever to the open meadows of Montauk where government aid was almost totally lacking. Without food or medical care, equipment or necessities, many would have died without the help of East Hampton residents. The Woodhouse women joined in the great relief with others from the village.

Mary Woodhouse found East Hampton charming and picturesque but regretted the lack of a library for local people. The first library facility in the village was funded by subscription and books could be borrowed from a shelf in the home of Mrs. Henry Hedges. These were moved to Clinton Academy at a later date. Mr. and Mrs. Woodhouse decided to provide children and the reading public with an honest collection of reading materials and a real library. They bought land on Main Street in 1911, hired architect Aymar Embury II to design a structure in keeping with the English background of the village and by 1912, East Hampton's first real library was built. Twenty years later, the library's Cloister and the Red Room with its comfortable leather chairs, meeting table and windows overlooking two charming gardens were added.

Thrilled by the warm reception they received for their library gift, the Woodhouse couple next turned their interest to

Clinton Academy, acknowledged to be the oldest secondary school in the New York. Built shortly after the American Revolution to encourage education in the village, by 1921 the school had been abandoned and by the last 19th century, turned into a basketball court, lecture rooms, a place for clam chowder suppers, debates and meetings. Woodhouse funds rescued the building from ignominy and restored the 18th century structure to its original appearance. The completion of the work brought about the formation of the East Hampton Historical Society, which cares for the building to this day.

The restoration of the historic Clinton Academy was not welcomed by many in East Hampton, who regretted the loss of their public space. Letters of complaint were written to the Star and there was resentment over the lack of a meeting facility. Mrs. Woodhouse responded to the complaints with her most magnificent gift, which was the building of a community cultural center she named Guild Hall. Over 200 East Hampton families gave additional funds for the building, which was also designed by Aymar Embury II. Guild Hall, built across Main Street from the Library and Clinton Academy, facing the flagpole on the Village Green, became the focal point and meeting place for the whole town.

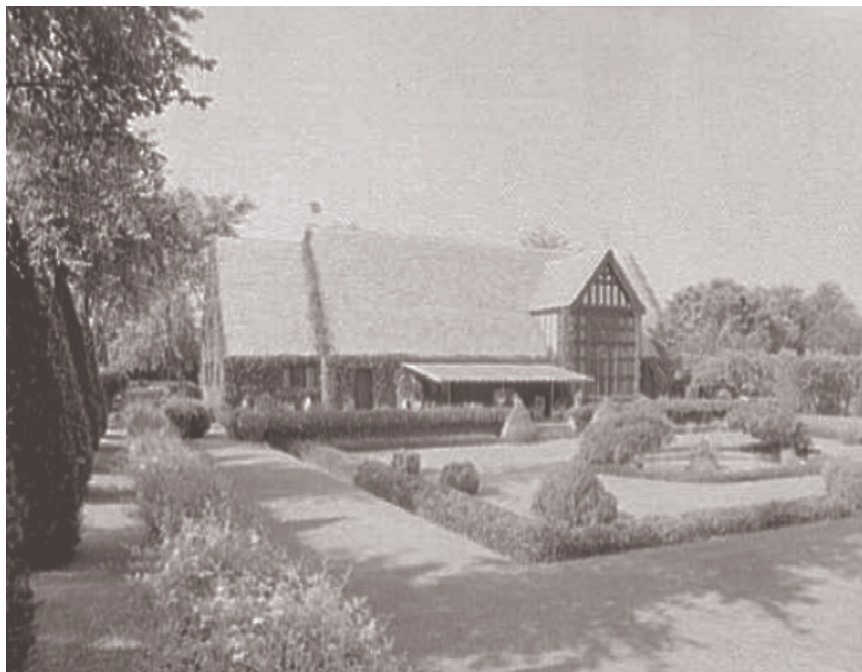
Through the 1930s and 40s, Guild Hall was a hive of activity. Two galleries displayed the work of renowned local artists, such a Childe Hassam, Thomas Moran and others. A small theater with house lights that resembled a cluster of balloons and wall covering give it the illusion of a circus tent. A revolving stage, several small dressing rooms, a green room and a balcony were unanticipated attractions. A Guild Hall membership entitled subscribers to join a Players Club, and entrée to the various groups that met there, including a Music Club, art lessons, teenage dance classes, a photography club, a square dance club and much more. All this activity was organized by Mrs. Enez Whipple, an enormously talented director, who worked closely with Mrs. Woodhouse. The benefits to the village were many and Guild Hall became the social center for hundreds of East Hampton residents.

The Woodhouses also addressed the dearth of medical

facilities in East Hampton. It was difficult for many to get to Southampton Hospital because they lacked any means of transportation and highways were difficult to traverse. Sympathetic to the problems faced by people of limited resources, the couple built a small emergency hospital on the grounds of the Neighborhood House on Three Mile Harbor Road. It was used for minor operations and procedures until easier access to Southampton was found.

Mr. Woodhouse died in 1935, two years after his daughter, Marjorie, was killed in an automobile accident in California. Having inherited Graycroft, Mary Woodhouse gave the estate's house to Leighton Rollins to use for a School of Acting. Each summer provided audiences with a great variety of entertainment. The school was closed when World War II made it impossible to continue.

Change was inevitable but not for the better. The wonderful Japanese Gardens were given to the Village Park Commission, and the name changed to the Nature Trail. Vandals destroyed the teahouses, the bridges and the plantings until most newcomers now refer to it as the duck pond. Still, it remains a treasured site in the village. Marjorie's playhouse is now a private home, the library has been expanded, and Guild



*"Marjorie's Playhouse" hosted many famous creative professionals in its time.  
Photo by Samuel H. Gottscho. 1933. Source: Library of Congress.*

Hall is no longer the community center it once was.

Mary Woodhouse was truly the unsung heroine and arbiter of change in East Hampton. She loved East Hampton and its people for what they were, and she worked to preserve the village heritage of history and beauty. She reshaped the community by adding richness to its cultural life, which remains a chief asset of present day East Hampton.

She died in 1961 in Tarpon Springs, FL, at 96 years old. Wherever her life took place, she surrounded herself with her attachments to theatre, music, painting and dance. Her son did not inherit her spirit of generosity and her interests. Mary Woodhouse was buried in Cedar Lawn Cemetery but with no headstone to commemorate her life and achievements. Her close friends and neighbors, Enez and Warren Whipple, quietly corrected the slight and marked the grave with a tombstone provided by them.

# VILLAGE REQUIRES LOW NITROGEN SEPTIC SYSTEMS

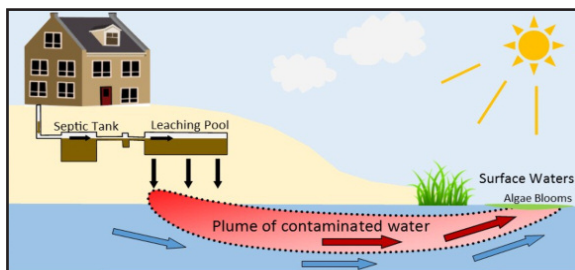
By Polly Bruckmann

In February, the East Hampton Village Board adopted regulations to begin the process of restoring the health of our surface water bodies by requiring new buildings or redevelopment representing 25% of the gross floor area of a residence to install new, low nitrogen septic systems. VPS has long supported this important regulation and applauds the Village Board for adopting it. Sometimes referred to as Alternative/Innovative systems, this technology represents a big shift in how we think about and treat our wastewater. Presently, no legislation on commercial properties has been proposed until decisions regarding a possible wastewater treatment plant have been made.

over the past few decades.

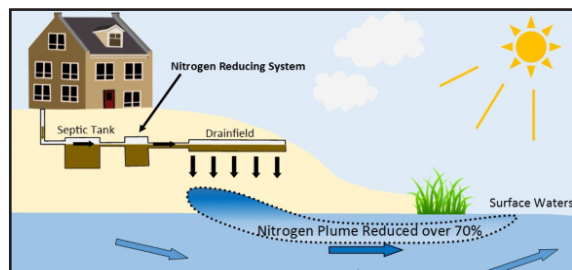
Rebates for priority properties are available through the Town of East Hampton at the Department of Natural Resources. There is also a pool of State and County funding available. Coastal areas and lands closest to surface water bodies are considered priority properties, as they contribute nitrogen quickly because separations from septic systems to ground water are not deep. Percolation rates of polluted water are based in large part to their proximity to ground water. The closer a system is to surface or ground water, the faster the nitrogen will make its way to the water. When water tables are high because of storm activity, some systems

*Alternative and innovative systems add a component between the septic tank and drainfield.*



*How current septic systems work*

The main function of these systems is to remove nitrogen from our wastewater stream by running the polluted water through bacteria rich filters that feed on the nitrogen, dramatically reducing the amount that stays in the water before it reenters the ground. Our old septic systems do not do accomplish this, which is the primary reason our water bodies, like Georgica, Hook and Town Ponds, have been plagued with harmful, sometimes toxic, algal blooms



*How new nitrogen removal systems work*

for shoreline homes are likely in surface water bodies or ground water. Other pollutants like fertilizers, personal care and cleaning products, as well as pet waste, also contribute to the degradation of our water.

Engineered landscaping features such as permeable reactive barriers, rain gardens and filtered drains can help to capture other pollutants before they enter the water cycle as a consequence of storm water runoff.

## VPS AWARDS \$5,000 TO EAST HAMPTON FOOD PANTRY

By Mary E. Busch, Grants Committee Chairwoman

The Grants Committee of the Village Preservation seeks out worthy ventures to support that will benefit the East Hampton Community. We have provided assistance for the Neighborhood House to install a new furnace, contributed to a water program study at Georgica Pond, and helped to fund the restoration of the Amagansett Lifesaving Station among many projects.

During the government shutdown, the East Hampton Food Pantry supplied food to 78 service people and their families, in addition to local families in need. As a result of meeting that need as well as the seasonal slowing of donations, the Food Pantry was very happy to receive a check for \$5,000 from the Village Preservation Society.



*VPS Grants Chair, Mary Busch, VPS Executive Director, Kathleen Cunningham, and VPS Chairman, John L. McGuirk III, deliver the check to Food Pantry Executive Director, Vicki Littman and Pantry Volunteers in February.*

Photo credit: Vikki Littman

# TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

By Kathleen Cunningham

Representatives from the LIRR and MTA reported on the progress of elevating the North Main Street and Accabonac Road trestles as well as upgrade of the East Hampton Railway Station at a recent Village Board meeting. They plan to meet again with Village Board members in early May to discuss and establish a plan for how residents will access their homes during the more disruptive construction elements requiring closure of North Main St and Accabonac Rd. An MTA Spokeswoman led this discussion which revealed the need to close these roads alternately sometime during October 15, 2019 – November 10, 2019 when the actual bridges will be set in place. Delivery of these large (119 ft long by 16 ft wide) bridges is a complex itinerary as they will be shipped from New Jersey via water transit through Mattituck.

Additional work to drive eight, 6-ft diameter caissons into the ground to support the retaining wall will also need to take place. They will endeavor to keep all work along Hook Mill Rd for as long as possible and recognized the great strain this will place on local roads, especially during the summer season. The group consented to Trustee Rose Brown's

request that a landscape plan be submitted for review and approval by the Village Board. The entire project is expected to be completed by year end.

The South Fork Commuter Connection, a local rail and bus transit option for commuters via the Southampton and East Hampton train stations, began in early March this year. At the insistence of Assemblyman Fred Thiele, Jr., the MTA/LIRR finally yielded to requests for local transportation choices to address the congestion caused by the daily trade parade. For decades Mr. Thiele and many other local groups have petitioned the railroad for local trains to aid the work force traveling from the west to points east. Ridership is building. Numbers on the Hampton Hopper – the Town's bus providing the ride for what is known as 'the last mile' of transit - have been steadily increasing as the season unfolds. Changes to the present schedule are due in early May. More information about the South Fork Commuter Connection can be found at:

<http://web.mta.info/lirr/SouthForkCommuterConnection/index.htm>



**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](http://www.villagepreservationsociety.org)**

Please enroll me as a member of The Village Preservation Society of East Hampton for the Membership Year from January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019.

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 <b>Chairman's Circle</b> | \$ 15,000.00 will be listed as <b>President's Circle</b> |
| \$ 10,000.00 will be listed as <b>Visionary</b>         | \$ 5,000.00 will be listed as <b>Champion</b>            |
| \$ 2,500.00 will be listed as <b>Advocate</b>           | \$ 1,000.00 will be listed as <b>Benefactor</b>          |
| \$ 500.00 will be listed as <b>Patron</b>               | \$ 250.00 will be listed as <b>Supporting Member</b>     |
| \$ 100.00 will be listed as <b>Friend</b>               | Regular Membership (\$50) _____                          |

**The Membership Year runs from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019.**

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](http://www.villagepreservationsociety.org)

## AIRCRAFT NOISE UPDATE

*By Peter M. Wolf*

The Town Board work session of February 5, 2019 featured an update from its consultants regarding airport operations for the 2018 season (6/28/18 thru 9/30/18) and progress on the Part 161 study in which the is Town is engaged with the FAA to reduce aircraft noise impacts at East Hampton Airport (HTO).

The Town's noise engineers from Harris, Miller, Miller & Hansen (HMMH) reported that airport operations were basically flat for the 2018 season, although helicopter and seaplane activity were each up by 3% from 2017. However, helicopter operations were up 50% from 2016, so the upward trend continues.

More interesting was the report from Bill O'Connor of Cooley, LLP, the attorney advising the Town on the Part 161 process and providing guidance on the legal possibilities that exist to reduce aircraft noise impacts. He felt that while curfews were likely achievable through the Part 161 process, they would provide limited relief for the noise affected

community. Finding restrictions in concert with the FAA to limit numbers and concentrations of flights, the main complaint stimulants, could be much more challenging. Even more eye opening, was Mr. O'Connor's advice that the Town Board conduct a parallel study to consider alternate solutions to provide relief for the noise affected. Included in this is a public process to envision other uses for the airport land to restore the East End's quiet community character.

This suggests a path to closing the airport, which is the Town's right once the final set of FAA obligations expire in 2021. Many in the community have long advocated for maintaining a small, rural airport, for the recreational use of local pilots, as it was originally designed. But, it appears, from a legal standpoint that may no longer be possible and that airport closure is now a serious consideration.

As frustrating as the complaint process is, the season is upon us and it remains important that the noise affected record complaints at [airnoisereport.com](http://airnoisereport.com) or [PlaneNoise.com](http://PlaneNoise.com).

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## LEAF BLOWER REGULATION PROPOSED BY VILLAGE BOARD

*By Joan D. Osborne*

In response to the public outcry of the quality of life and health impacts of various pollutants generated by gas-powered handheld tools, primarily leaf blowers, the Village Board further revised a proposal to ban use of this equipment on Village properties by landscapers at their April 18, 2019 Board meeting. The health impacts of using these machines, from noise and particulate matter on both operators and bystanders are well documented. VPS has supported the Village Board's efforts to mitigate these impacts on the general community. As a result of our involvement, the Village Board plans to

adopt policy similar to that of neighboring Southampton Township, to begin a purposeful and regulated transition from gas-powered equipment to electric and battery-powered equipment. Golf courses are exempt from the proposed draft legislation. The present draft proposes a June 1st – Labor Day ban, during proscribed times, on gas powered leaf blowers for anyone defined as a landscaper. Language detailing the criteria for that definition is within the regulation. A public hearing will be set to hear views from residents and business owners regarding the proposed law.