



OYSTERPONDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE MUSEUM of ORIENT
And EAST MARION HISTORY

Fall 2007

Village House Under Renovation



In July of 1798, Augustus Griffin wrote in his journal, "this month, I purchased me a building lot near the harbor at Oysterponds." Now, more than 200 years later, the Oysterponds Historical Society (OHS) has undertaken the challenging task of restoring the house he began to build on this lot in 1799: Village House. The scope of the renovation necessitates the closing of the building until the summer of 2009.

This effort is the latest in the organization's ongoing commitment to preserving its collection of historic houses. OHS has already successfully completed the restoration of Webb House, renovated Hallock Building as the Donald Boerum Library and Archive, and refurbished the Old Point School House as the Janet T. Swanson Gallery. These highly ambitious undertakings were all accomplished within the past 20 years.

The first historic building acquired by OHS, and the only one on its original site, Village House is distinguished by its well-documented and colorful history.

In its tavern, Griffin served British troops during the War of 1812. Early local elections were held there, and it was the final stop of the U.S. Mail. In his diary,

Griffin wrestles with the issue of serving hard liquor, which he continued to do until the Temperance Movement swept the village. The building, which Griffin also ran as an inn, was later converted into a boarding house/hotel by the subsequent owner's son, Jeremiah Vail; this is the house as we see it today, and it is notable as the only preserved example of a 19th century boarding house on Long Island.

The magnitude of the Village House restoration surpasses that of previous OHS building projects; the building needs new wiring, climate control, a new roof, and repairs to the widow's walk. The first phase of the work, securing the building's structure, has already been completed; a crawl space has been excavated and rotting joists have been replaced. Artifacts have been moved to Hallock Building for safe-keeping. In the autumn, the land surrounding the house will be re-graded to divert runoff.

The reopening of the restored Village House in 2009 will present the building in its incarnation as a late 19th century boarding house. It will also include exciting new exhibitions on the history of the building, of Village Lane, and the history of Oysterponds and its relationship to the larger world.

-Fredrica Wachsberger

OHS Initiates a Capital Campaign

This fall marks the launch of a capital campaign, a major fundraising effort initiated to safeguard the buildings and collections of OHS. Among the top priorities of this effort are the restoration of Village House and the timely reinstatement of its collections. Generous benefactors have already pledged \$188,000 over three years, with 100% participation by the Board of Trustees. In addition, OHS will be pursuing grant funding, including a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which will match one dollar to every three. The Society will begin to solicit donors this fall to support this matching grant opportunity.

When OHS was founded in 1944, every member of the community joined the Society, an extraordinary testament to the commitment and dedication of local residents to preserving and interpreting the history of the people who created Orient and East Marion. Today's remarkable collection of buildings, documents, and artifacts is the result of their vision. The members of the Board of Trustees of OHS believe that it is the shared responsibility of the present community to carry this legacy forward for future generations.



Look Inside for
Upcoming
Fall Events!

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A Letter from our President, Edward W. Webb

When I became president of OHS in 2004, I learned a great deal about the fascinating history of our organization, the breadth of our collections, the unfailing dedication of our volunteers, the expertise of our director Bill McNaught and the competence of his staff. I continue to be amazed and proud of our mission and accomplishments.

Today, OHS is seizing opportunities as it faces new challenges. We are undertaking major renovations to Village House, modernizing our computer operations, streamlining our budgeting process and increasing our fundraising goals. As always, we are encouraging members to participate in our valuable volunteer corps.

As many of you know, we recently experienced a significant change in our staff leadership. Early this summer, Bill McNaught resigned his tenure as

director and has assumed a part-time position as Chief Curator. We are delighted that Bill will remain with us until his retirement next year. We are equally pleased that Sherri Duell has joined us as Interim Director. Sherri is in the process of completing her thesis towards her masters degree in Museum Studies from City College of New York and brings to us significant business management and marketing experience.

In just 60 years, OHS has evolved from a mere vision to become a thriving center of cultural and intellectual life of the community and a respected source for scholars, students and others interested in American and regional history. As stewards of this extraordinary institution, we have a responsibility to preserve our history for future generations. I am honored to lead this charge.

A Note from our Interim Director, Sherri Duell

The voices from our past and present communities tell our history. As a newcomer to the community, I have learned to listen to both. The OHS collections, Webb House, and the current *It is Writ* exhibition have provided me with an introduction to Orient's and East Marion's rich history. The stories and memories of our long time residents, OHS members, and visitors to the museum are invaluable. I've only begun to discover our community's heritage. I'd like to extend a personal thanks to those volunteers who have provided guidance throughout the busy summer season.

Although that season is coming to an end, our work here at the Museum continues. We have some exciting events this fall that you won't want to miss. In addition to our annual Art Exhibition & Sale, Holiday House Tour, Webb House Party and Beach Plum Shop opening on November 23rd, there will be new events to look forward to including some Holiday Tree Lighting festivities (see page 3). Please pick up the phone and give us a call to let us know how you can help.

You may reach us at (631) 323-2480.

Save the Dates!

Art Exhibition & Sale

Saturday, October 20 & Sunday, October 21

Cemetery Tours & Family Halloween Activities

Saturday, October 27

Beach Plum Shop Opens

Friday, November 23

Holiday Tree Lighting & Festivities

Saturday, December 1

Webb House Christmas Party

Saturday, December 8

Holiday House Tour

Saturday, December 15

More details coming soon in our Fall Calendar of Events!



Do You Know...

why the old white building that sits partially in the water at the edge of the causeway is called the Old Crab Shack? Contrary to some opinion, it was *not* used as a place for crabbers to rest, but was the meeting place for a men's social group known as the Old Crabs. The photo above depicts the Old Crabs meeting at the Orient Point Inn in 1950. In the OHS archives, we have film footage of one of their get-togethers at the shack. Don't ask me how everyone fit in that building!

-Amy Folk, OHS Archivist

Annual Summer Benefit

The much anticipated OHS Summer Gala was held on Saturday, August 4 at Variview, the lovely sound front home of Gertrude Rich. Thanks to the generosity of Gertrude, the hard work of Event Chairperson Rachel Duell Sorenson and all of our volunteers, benefit sponsors, guests, artists, businesses and community members, this event was once again a resounding success.



OHS President Ted Webb with Event Host Gertrude Rich, Dr. Pamela Weber and John Duell



Contributing artists Dominick Di Lorenzo and Laura Westlake stroll the grounds.



Event Chairperson Rachel Duell Sorenson and Committee Member Tiffany Bell

Our 2007 Membership Drive is Underway...

If you have already sent in your membership renewal for 2007-2008 – thank you! If you are not yet a member, or have forgotten to renew, please consider doing so. Your membership dues are an integral part of our operations here at OHS. The benefits of membership include unlimited free admission to the museums, discounts to special events and programs and a discount on all purchases at the Beach Plum Gift Shop. Most importantly, you will experience the pleasure of helping to preserve the heritage of Orient and East Marion for future generations!

_____ Individual \$30 _____ Family \$50 _____ Associate \$100
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Mail form and check payable to OHS to: OHS, PO Box 70, Orient, NY 11957

We will gladly accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express by phone. Please call (631) 323-2480.

Oysterponds Historical Society – Preserving the Past for the Future



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