



OYSTERPONDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE MUSEUM of ORIENT
And EAST MARION HISTORY

Fall / Winter 2008

NEWSLETTER

OHS' Newest Publications by Karen Braziller



William Steeple Davis, *East Marion Lake*,
black and white photograph, April 7, 1900.

This story was shared with the East Marion Community Association History Project by Ron Kennedy, a 90 year old former resident of East Marion, who currently lives at Peconic Landing. It is just one example of the many stories, family legends, and memories about East Marion's history and culture that are known by the community's elderly tradition-bearers, whose lives span most of a century. Their stories range from what it was like to live in East Marion during key times in history, such as Prohibition, the Depression, and the World Wars, and describe the seafaring and farming life, local sports, such as the baseball teams of the 30's and 40's, the emergence East Marion's Greek community, and much more.

Like other places on the North Fork, East Marion's traditional fishing and farming life has been disappearing. Many of our elders have vivid memories of those times, which we are losing day by day. In East Marion, the past year has seen the development of a new appreciation of the hamlet's past and its cultural heritage. The founders of the East Marion Community Association (EMCA) have launched a history project to collect the life accounts of our elderly residents as a resource for understanding and valuing the history and special culture of East Marion.

*As the story goes, James and William Winters were two ship captains from East Marion who became blockade runners for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Following the war, their activities caused them to be less than welcome in East Marion and they fell out with many of their fellow seamen. So, after being run out of East Marion, the Winters brothers fled to Brooklyn and opened a fish store on Fulton Street. After the Brooklyn Bridge was built they moved their business across to Manhattan, but kept the name, Fulton Fish Market, which became a fairly big operation and included catering and running clambakes and vote-buying cruises for political clubs, like Tammany Hall. One of their specialties was clam chowder. Because the price of cream was high and the Winters brothers observed that by the time their customers got to the chowder they often weren't in any condition to pay close attention to what they were eating, they started substituting tomatoes and calling it Manhattan clam chowder. According to his grandson, Austin Phelps Winters, William Winters insisted that before he began cooking up vats of red clam chowder, the dish had always been made with cream and this East Marioner proudly proclaimed himself the inventor of Manhattan clam chowder. **

EMCA held a "Reaching for Our Roots" meeting in November and invited community members to share photographs, artifacts, and stories. That meeting was so popular that another community sharing meeting is scheduled for May 31, 10am-2pm at the East Marion Firehouse. At the same time, the organization is recruiting and preparing videographers and interviewers from the community and begun conducting recorded interviews with the elders East Marion residents who are living links in the historical chain, eye witnesses to history, and shapers of a vital and indigenous way of life. Through collecting the stories and artifacts of East Marion's past, the East Marion Community Association wants to help bring East Marion from what some have seen as a 'bend in the road' to a community that knows about, takes pride in, and is committed to protecting its identity and its heritage. EMCA looks forward to working with the Oysterponds Historical Society in archiving the materials that are collected and making them available to the public.

* The main facts of this story are reported in the following article, "Now It Can Be Told: The Dark Tale of the Red Clam Chowder" by Molly O'Neill, *New York Times*, January 24, 1990.

WE'RE NOW ONLINE!
www.oysterpondshistoricalsociety.org

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**Staff:**Ellen M. Cone Busch,
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by Tazewell Smith, OHS President

My mom used to say: "There is a reason for everything. We just may not understand it."

When our director, Bill McNaught, advised me of his intentions to step down and retire, my first thought was: "This is not in the script." We quickly reorganized a Search Committee and charged them with finding a replacement. We were looking for someone who possessed the skill sets essential to carrying out our mission.

Our good neighbor, Rachel Sorenson, recommended her soon to be sister-in-law who was completing a master's degree in Museum Studies and had many years of business experience. Sherri Duell was hired as Interim Director, and the rest is history! Sherri quickly learned the job, our mission, and the community. We had the best of both worlds and did not miss a beat with Sherri as the Interim Director and Bill continuing to

serve as part-time Curator.

Now, Sherri has informed us that she too is moving on. As a result, we have again recharged the Search Committee. I am pleased to report that the committee has done a very thorough job and has made a recommendation. We have offered our Executive Director position to Ellen M. Cone Busch. Ellen comes to OHS as the former Executive Director of the Planting Fields Foundation at The Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park in Oyster Bay, NY. She will begin her employment on July 1.

On behalf of the Board and our entire membership, we extend a hearty thank you to a job well done to both Bill and Sherri, and welcome Ellen to our community. We hope you will not even notice the change. And, Mom was right. There *is* a reason for everything.

What's new at OHS? by Ellen M. Cone Busch, OHS Director

Who says things gets quiet on the North Fork during the winter and spring months? While many are away for the winter, OHS remains open and active. Here are a few things that we've accomplished:

◆ OHS is going high tech! On April 1st, the Society launched its first website, www.oysterpondshistoricalsociety.org. The website was built by North Fork Internet's Schuyler Horton, whose grandmother Martha Mattice Horton was a founding member of OHS. Visitors to the website may explore a number of features including the latest calendar of events, a written history on each of OHS's historic buildings, and the opportunity to join or renew their membership online.

◆ It has been a busy spring season for our Village House Preservation Committee. If you noticed the recent activity around the back of the Village House, John Kowalski and David Franke are working hard to prepare a crawlspace under the summer kitchen to allow for a climate control system to be added to the house. The committee has also initiated a Historic Structures Report and Furnishing Plan to help us assess our needs and priorities for both the construction and the curatorial planning of the future Village House.

◆ A special thanks to Todd Huckleberry for his great technical expertise, time, and heroic effort in transferring the videos and outtakes from *Beyond the Expressway* to DVD. Produced by David Wald in 1989 and originally shown on public television, *Beyond the Expressway* narrates the story of Orient's singular history and features interviews with several current and past residents. The footage of former village notables, such as Edna Rackett, Doug Rogers, and Curt Tabor, is irreplaceable. In its new format, this tremendous resource is easily accessible to the community. Disks are available for \$10 at OHS.

◆ For those of you who attended our Annual Webb House Party, you may remember that the evening was a bit chilly. We are pleased to report that OHS has purchased a new furnace for the Webb House and it is now up and running.

Winter Lecture Series & Special Programs

Lecture One

Saturday, June 7, 1pm-5pm Peconic Landing Auditorium, Free

Lecture Two

Saturday, June 7, 1pm-5pm Peconic Landing Auditorium, Free

Lecture Three

Saturday, June 7, 1pm-5pm Peconic Landing Auditorium, Free

Poetry & Music Nights

Saturday, June 7, 1pm-5pm School House or Poq Hall, Charge?

Lecture Four

Saturday, June 7, 1pm-5pm Peconic Landing Auditorium, Free

For more information, please call (631) 323-2480 or visit our website:
www.oysterpondshistoricalsociety.org

Did You Know...?

That the Webb House was moved over a mile before the engine was invented? Originally, the building was built as an inn up by the mouth of Sterling Basin in Greenport. A story about the house claims that in the late 1700s or early 1800s, forty teams of oxen moved the house from its original location to the corner of Main Street and Route 25 in Greenport, where it was used as a farmhouse. The move started on Friday and would have been completed by Saturday evening but was delayed by Jeremiah King – whose property the house was crossing. He was very religious and believed the Sabbath started Saturday at sunset and finished Sunday at sunset. Therefore, the job was not completed until Sunday evening after sunset.

-Amy Folk, OHS Archivist

OHS Awarded Grants

We are pleased to announce that we have applied for and received several grants over the past 2007-2008 fiscal year. For our Village House preservation initiatives, the New York Council on the Humanities (NYCH) has awarded OHS a planning grant of \$2,000, and New York Member of Assembly, Marc Alessi, has funded us \$1,000. Our 2008 summer exhibition is being funded with a \$5,000 grant from the Suffolk County Office of Cultural Affairs. County Executive, Steve Levy, who has obtained for us a \$5,000 grant from the Suffolk County Citizen’s Arts Advisory Board. The Boston Foundation has announced that they will support OHS with a \$500 contribution. And most significantly, the New York Council on the Arts (NYSCA) awarded OHS a \$10,600 grant for the museum’s general operating support. These grants make a tremendous impact on our activities, and we thank them for their support.

Volunteer Spotlight

Joyce Holzapfel, How Does Your Garden Grow?

If you would like to volunteer your time, please contact the Director at (631) 323-2480 or visit www.oysterpondshistoricalsociety.org for more detailed descriptions.

Please Help: Looking for Old Photos!

In 1807 Abraham G.D. Tuthill painted portraits of Augustus Griffin and his wife, Lucrecia. OHS is interested in locating these portraits, if they still exist, in order to include photographs of them in an upcoming publication of Griffin’s Diaries. Anyone who has information about their current whereabouts is kindly requested to notify OHS at (631) 323-2480.



Do you have an item you would like to bequest? If so, please contact the Director at (631) 323-2480.

Our Membership Drive is Underway...

If you have already sent in your membership renewal for 2008-2009 – thank you! If you are not yet a member, or have forgotten to renew, please consider doing so. Your membership dues is 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 satisfaction of helping to preserve the heritage of Orient and East Marion for the benefit of every generation!

_____ Individual \$30 _____ Family \$50 _____ Associate \$100
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Renew by check: Please fill out info below and mail form & payment and to: OHS, PO Box 70, Orient, NY 11957.

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JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE! www.oysterpondshistoricalsociety.org

Oysterponds Historical Society - Preserving the Past for Every Generation



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