

# HERITAGE NEWS

*The Historical Society of East Rockaway & Lynbrook*

## ? National Heritage Designation....

Art Mattson, Madeline Pearson, and Bob and Pat Sympson will be meeting on May 12<sup>th</sup> at the Rockville Cemetery with Robert Guerriero, President and Jennifer Betsworth, Historical Preservation Specialist of the NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Why? It is our hope that the **Bristol Mexico** monument and burying ground will be placed on

the National Register of Historic Places. Art initiated this last year. As you are aware his book **Water and Ice** recounts the tragedies of the two ship wrecks almost one hundred and eighty years ago.

Bob has contacted Dr. Nina Bassuk Cornell University an Urban Horticultural expert to see if there might be a student interested in designing a landscape plan for a

stipend. One student answered the RFP so we hope that her ideas will suit the area and we can move ahead along with the ancient Order of Hibernians and indeed have the plot landscaped and ready for historic recognition.

As you know each November we have a commemoration ceremony at the cemetery to remember these poor souls.



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### *New Members*

*Terry Monahan*

*Ruth Jackson*

*Gene Torborg*

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*Advice for a Lady  
with a Market Basket*

*Henri Charpentier*

*We Lacked the  
Vision...*

## RETROSPECTIVE 2015...

The signature historic event of our year is the annual Retrospective.

Every fourth grade student in East Rockaway and Lynbrook will have the opportunity to come to the Lynbrook Library to experience a soupçon of history.

It is important that we have you involved too. Madeline prepares a schedule of when the classes will be at the Library. It is usually for 75 minutes. The youngsters are divided into groups of

seven or eight and are then sent to various stations:

- **The Haviland Davison Grist Mill** with Bob Sympson
- **What is an Artifact?** We try to get some odd thing from one or both of the villages and discuss exactly what an artifact is and then send the children away with the idea that they

should look at home for an artifact.

- **I turned the Quern.** We'll leave that to your imagination. But it is fun.
- **Picture Yourself in History.** Each student has his or her picture taken.
- **Wheat and its significance** in your life. The students get to see and feel real wheat.

CIRCA

1906

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*“The bank was small  
and had bars on its  
windows...”*

*Gene Torborg  
referring to the East  
Rockaway Bank*

## An Old Story / A New Interest

We are about history, right? We have had several members who have old houses not always historic but old who have expressed an interest in letting the world know the age of their home. Now we know most people are reluctant to tell their own age but not the age of their home.

We discussed it with former Mayor Lenahan but time got away from us.

## Save It..

Madeline and I attended the East Rockaway Chamber of Commerce meeting.

It was an opportunity to say good bye to Debbie Hirshberg who had been president for the last five years and to welcome the new president, Michael Hawksby.

The meeting was interesting and several people spoke of their

The new East Rockaway administration Trustee Richard Bilello, touched base with me and indicated that the village is very interested in doing all it can to preserve the historic beauty of the village and is willing to work with us.

Ernest Tarmin has given us much information on this effort.

He is willing to work with

particular interest.

The East Rockaway Car Show which will run from June 1 to August 31<sup>st</sup> on Main Street each Monday evening;

The Commander of the VFW spoke of the many charities they support.

Several store owners mentioned the difficult time they are having with a lack of people who wish to buy.

Another problem is

HSERL. If you are, too, please email [psympson@optonline.net](mailto:psympson@optonline.net) or phone 887-9094.

We will then be able to include you in our effort and you can take pride each time you see a CIRCA sign on a house in Lynbrook and East Rockaway. We will brainstorm and then meet with village officials from both East Rockaway & Lynbrook.

parking and that has been a problem for a long time.

One very important item however is the fact that Bank of America is leaving East Rockaway. **WE DO NOT WANT TO WAKE UP ONE MORNING AND HAVE THE BUILDING GONE.**

It's just like a tree; once it is cut it is gone forever. Its replacement doesn't always make it in our lifetime.

## AND...

I alluded to the closing of the Bank of America on the corner of Cammerer and Main Street. It dates to the late 20s. We have seen aerial pictures with the bank having already been built. In fact, one uses it as a focal point to

locate other places in East Rockaway. I needed more information. So who better to call but Gene Torborg? He said he had a whole set of photos taken by his grandfather and father detailing the building of the bank.

It was built to replace the small East Rockaway Bank located diagonally across the street. It's almost 100 years old so we must save it. You may yet see a photo essay of this bank in the near future. This is **HISTORY**.

## Heard over the wires... TIDBITS...



...Over the grape vine not the clothesline because not too many people have one any more, we want to pass on some news.

>Someone we know is on his way to Peru to visit his son.

>Gloria Christiano fell and broke her ankle. Now with the sunshine maybe she will be able to get out.

>Sixty was a magic time for someone. As an aside it is really wonderful that today it is very difficult to gauge someone's age. We remain in good health longer.

> Do you know a junior or senior who would consider a scholar project? We'd like to know.



### ADVICE FOR A LADY WITH A MARKET BASKET... Henri Charpentier

**APPLES** -Split the stem. If it soft and sappy it is a good apple, probably tree ripened.

**ORANGES**-Test for fragrance by scratching skin with fingernail. As a general rule

unblemished, brilliant skins are indications of ripeness and consequently flavor.

**PEACHES**- Take those which are fragrant. Peaches with beautiful skin & no odor are usually tasteless.

**BROCCOLI**- Take that which has short crispy stems

**LETTUCE**-Should be firm and crisp. If it has been plunged in water to revive it the inside will be soft.

**PEAS** -Press finger nail into pod. If sap does not appear in the wound the peas are not fresh.

**STRING BEANS**- Fresh strong beans have solid stems. Avoid those of anemic pallor.

**TOMATOES**-If vine ripened the tempting odor can be detected at arm's length.

**BEEF**- should be streaked with fat.

**OYSTER AND CLAMS** Rap the shells together. If they sound like stones the inhabitants are alive and edible.

**CRABS** A live crab is a good crab.

**The Henri Charpentier Cook Book, Recipes and Memoirs of the World. 1945 p 34.35.35**

## WE LACKED THE VISION...

Remember the East Point Inn? Remember Jack and Jill? They are gone never to be replicated. It is our hope that the bank building on the corner of Cammerer and Main street will not disappear in a similar manner.

Do you recognize this building? Yes, it is a Denton house preserved. It is a McDonald's on Jericho Turnpike, New Hyde Park. Could that have been done with Davison House now Wendy's?

These historic buildings could have and should have been preserved. Lynbrook preserved its old Library and added on. It is beautiful and still useful. We surely know that every winter.

Wesley Hill managed to save the Havilland Davison Grist Mill with a little ingenuity and appeal to the Village Fathers. That will be a future story.



Not many fast-food restaurants have patrons who claim to have once lived on the premises, and it is a rare prospective bride who wants to have her bridal portrait taken on the stairs to a McDonald's dining mezzanine. But then the McDonald's in New Hyde Park, New York is in some ways exceptional. Yes, the ubiquitous Big Macs and immutable McNuggets are here defrosted, fried, assembled, and delivered with the familiar dispatch. And yes, the 140-seat interior exhibits the predictable McDonald's themes. But patrons of this restaurant, located along Long Island's Jericho Turnpike, dine within the shell of a circa 1860 house.

The original owners reportedly were descendants of Richard Denton, a Presbyterian minister who arrived in the New World in 1630 and helped to found the village of Hempstead in 1643. Another Denton, Augustus, was a Nassau County politician at the turn of the century. After World War I the house was no longer inhabited by Dentons and became first one and then another restaurant. It was the son of one of these restaurateurs who claimed to have occupied the upstairs.

When McDonald's acquired the Denton property in 1985, says Lawrence J. Anderer, Jr., the current owner/operator, the company intended to demolish the then dilapidated house and build one of its

standard eateries. But residents of the village of New Hyde Park and the Town of North Hempstead obtained local historic designation and struck an agreement whereby McDonald's would restore the structure's exterior to its appearance in a 1926 photograph -- with an allowance for a low-profile, single story addition to the rear.

McDonald's doesn't keep track of how many of its restaurants are in buildings designated historic, but it does claim this to be its 12,000<sup>th</sup> to open. And that, of course, is history. \*McHeritage Historic Preservation Magazine [www.dentonegenealogy.org/mcheritage.htm](http://www.dentonegenealogy.org/mcheritage.htm)"

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## **Once in A While..**

We are fortunate when we receive material from our members or from the internet. Arthur Tillman contacted us about his family and asked if he could write a story. Of course, he could. We always welcome history. After all we want to make history to available to everyone.

### **A SHARP CURVE IN NO MAN'S LAND Arthur Tillman / Mattituck, New York**

The large touring car was going too fast, speed estimated at 50 miles per hour. That was very fast for 1915 roads probably little more than dirt paths more traveled with horse and wagon. It was around 4 AM when the car failed to make the sharp curve going west on Merrick Road. At the Ocean Avenue intersection it sped across into what was the Sand Hole, now Rockville, Cemetery, hit a willow tree flipped and dug into the dirt. The chauffer had taken his Woodhaven banker's automobile without permission and been out for a ride with friends. It may have been their first automobile ride. The screams of the passengers alerted the car following. The Lynbrook police called. Two female passengers in the back seat were seriously injured. One was near death. The driver and male passengers in the front seat had minor injuries. The most seriously injured women were taken across the road and placed on the porch of Finlayson's Hotel, later taken to a room upstairs and the next day to the hospital.

Immigrants from Bohemia, then a part of the Austrian Empire, Grandpa and Grandma Svarc, living in Brooklyn responded to a newspaper ad for the filling station. In 1922, he bought the place, then a Standard Oil Station for \$7000 and remained there until the road expansion of 1957. My Mom Emily Svarc and Aunt Marion attended the old wooden Malverne School located on Ocean Ave. Living in Malverne I too would go to the new Junior-Senior High at the same location across from the reservoir. I graduated in 1958.

Findlayson's Hotel, also known as the Trail Inn, was built by H.B. Hubbard around 1875 and was located on the Northeast corner of Ocean and Merrick. Prior to that, H.B Hubbard operated a store listed as a mercantile which was once the site of the East Rockaway Post Office. John A. Finlayson, a Scottish immigrant, later bought the hotel and ran it until 1922. He passed away in 1924, but the name remained the same. The new proprietors were Peter Draney who had formerly operated Cherry

Valley Country Club in Garden City and John Koll egger, an Austrian immigrant, who was a chef trained in the European tradition.

One cold evening of March 5, 1926 my Grandfather told me he saw a Lynbrook policeman he knew running from the Hotel and shortly after the place was in flames. Grandpa suspected arson. The Rockville Centre Fire department responded, but was unable to save this once beautiful hotel. They said the cause was a faulty chimney and the improper burning of soft coal. This gathering spot of note for decades was no more. After the fire Grandpa went poking around the ruins looking for buried alcohol, he surely thought it must be there somewhere. He said he poked the ground with a stick, but found nothing. I think Grandpa was in a position to know since he was a run runner. He would take his large touring car with a false back seat, place his German Shepard on the back seat and meet the boats bringing in the booze, I think to the Freeport waterfront. He did pick up a large copper coffee urn from the ruins and made it into a small still which I still have. He also found a wall clock that hung on the wall of the gas station until the end and he gave to me and I gave to a neighbor.

The Southwest corner of the intersection was an open field, identified as the Athletic Field on old late 1800 maps. At the southern end of the field the Long Island and New York Traction Co. trolley line ran. And at the far southern end were the twelve giant attached silos of the Sunrise Coal Company. A LIRR siding made it possible for the Lehigh Valley Coal Co to deliver there. We had them as a coal supplier for our house in Malverne, too. The siding continued into the LILCO property on the east side of Ocean Ave. A short way down at 50 Merrick Rd. was the home and other buildings belonging to the Dominick Malone Construction Co. who were noted as builders of churches.

All of this is gone now and has been for a long time, but all is quite vivid in my memory and pictures. Today the area has been described by a Lynbrook historian as a "no man's land" and does not command much interest for most people. I am quite sure he is correct, yet the area was so much more for me. It was a place of history in more bucolic times. In my memory it was a time of grand hotels along Merrick Road, Prohibition, trolleys, coal and a too sharp curve at Merrick Road and Ocean Avenue.



Ocean and Merrick Road way back when

The curve was too sharp and the new high speed automobiles made it ever more dangerous. Road widening in 1938 and a reconstructed intersection in 1957 changed that and the entire area. It dramatically changed the life of my grandparents John and Marie Svarc who ran a Tydol filling station and garage on the Southeast corner of Merrick and Ocean. All were later torn down, other properties taken, altered and now gone. It was here I had spent many happy days and nights hanging around

men dropping by to get gas or just talk to Grandpa. The interior had a kerosene stove, a candy and tobacco counter and refrigerator where cold Mission soda was sold. Upstairs was a spacious living area where my grandparents raised my mother and aunt. My sister and I often spent the night there when my parents required care for us. It was a fun place for a young boy. Surrounded by the smells of the garage being with adult men and having a candy counter, all the things a kid loves, readily available, but only one soda or candy bar per visit. Grandpa's large garage to the rear for in the 1940's was leased to Van's Bakery of East Rockaway. Van's bakery home delivery trucks were kept there and the smells from the garage were wonderful. What wonderful memories!

## **YOU SHOULD KNOW...**

- 1. Have you seen any horses, cows or chickens in Lynbrook or East Rockaway? Probably not, but if you have sighted any barns, carriage houses or other out buildings, please contact Frank Torre. [F.torre.LSS@gmail.com](mailto:F.torre.LSS@gmail.com)**
- 2. The Historical Society of East Rockaway and Lynbrook is forming a history book club. If you are interested in participating, please email [marycolway@gmail.com](mailto:marycolway@gmail.com) or call HSERL at 887-9094. All are welcome!**
- 3. At this moment the tentative date for the Annual Meeting is May 27<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendar.**
- 4. Due to difficult circumstances, there was no dunning letter regarding payment of 2014-2015 dues. Please consider making a payment if you have forgotten to do so.**
- 5. Linda Davison Mathues, with whose art you are familiar (Her painting is always a winner at our Annual Tea) will have exhibit of her art work. The Show is *Four Impressions* at the Shelter Rock Art Gallery April 25-May 26, 2015. The Art Gallery is at 48 Shelter Rock Road (516-627-6560). It is important to call to confirm the best hours for viewing.**
- 6. Henri Charpentier the first *Celebrity Chef* will be memorialized in East Rockaway & Lynbrook. The committee is being formed. If you are interested please notify Bob Sympson [rsympson@optonline.net](mailto:rsympson@optonline.net)**
- 7. We have agreed to purchase a National Register sign for the Denton Homestead in East Rockaway. You will be informed as to the time and day of presentation.**
- 8. The enclosed letter indicated that 75 minutes would suffice for you to volunteer for the Retro. Madeline wanted me to tell you that at least 90 minutes were needed.**
- 9. What's new with you? Let us know.**
- 10. See AN OLD STORY / A NEW INTEREST.**

**Ed. Patricia C. Sympson PhD.**  
[psympson@optonline.net](mailto:psympson@optonline.net)

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