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# The Historian

*A Publication of the Three Village Historical Society*



**Volume 53 Issue 1**

**Winter 2016**



2016 Board of Trustees: Back row (L-R) Jeffrey Schnee, Ed Miller, Ron LaVita, Chuck Glaser, John Yantz, Robert Lauto, Tom Belleau, Michael O'Dwyer, Steve Hintze. Front row (L-R): Frank Turano, Barbara Gottfried, Connie Burawa, Jennifer Crane, Janet McCauley, Holly Griesel, Carol Lane and Patty Cain. Missing from photo: Andrew Pelosi. Photo by Bev Tyler.

## Welcome New Board Members

A new slate of candidates was sworn in by Beverly Tyler (a former president of the Society) at the January 18th members meeting at the Setauket Neighborhood House.

Returning to the Board this term are President John Yantz, Vice President Chuck Glaser, Recording Secretary Cathy White and Corresponding Secretary Patty Cain. Robert Lauto was elected in as First Vice President, taking the spot vacated by Steve Healy, who had completed his term of service with the Board of Trustees. Bob Lauto has served on the Board of Trustees for the past five years.

We also welcome back the following Trustees: Connie Burawa, Jennifer Crane, Barbara Gottfried, Carol Lane, Janet McCauley, Michael O'Dwyer, Andrew Pelosi and Frank Turano.

New to the Board of Trustees is Treasurer Tom Belleau, taking the spot vacated by Karin Lynch. Tom, a resident of the Three Villages for more than 35 years, is a graduate of Notre Dame with an MBA from New York University. Over the course of his career he has been a CPA, VP-Finance, Treasurer, and a Chief Financial Officer for public corporations. He met and married his wife Olga while working for Ethyl Corporation. They have

*(continued on page 3)*

## President's Message



John Yantz  
President, TVHS

Hello and Happy New Year to all our Three Village Historical Society members and friends. As we start the new year of 2016 we can reflect on our successful year of 2015 with great pride.

Top on our list of achievements for the previous year is the first anniversary of the opening of our award winning "Chicken Hill: A Community Lost To Time" exhibit currently running at our headquarters. The exhibit was the brain child of Board Member and Past President Dr. Frank Turano. The exhibit was put together by Dr. Turano with the help of our archivist Karen Martin. When the Nunns Piano factory and later the rubber factory brought industry to the area it also brought an influx of various ethnic groups who formed the work force. Foremost among those groups were the African-Americans of which many could trace their roots to pre-revolutionary times and to the Native American population. Many of their ancestors still live here today. Dr. Turano's exhibit won a coveted AASLH award of excellence and Dr. Turano was selected as Man of the Year in History by the Village Times Herald for 2015. He is also supervising the restoration of our Nunns piano which was featured at a concert at the AME Church Hall to a packed audience in June.

Along with the Chicken Hill exhibit our other exhibit on the Culper Spy Ring continues to draw record crowds due in no small part to the success of the AMC series TURN, now in its third season, about how our local spies helped George Washington win the American Revolution. I encourage all our members who have not yet seen either of our exhibits to come on down to our headquarters Sundays from 1:00 pm– 4:00 pm. Remember, your membership gains you free entrance to both exhibits.

The Society also celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a beautiful gala held at St. George's Golf and Country Club and put together by then relatively new Board Members, Connie Burawa and Jennifer Crane both of whom did a fantastic job on a wonderful evening enjoyed by all.

Our Annual Spirits Tour at the Presbyterian and Caroline Church cemeteries in October drew a large turnout. Chairpersons Brian Cea and Janet McCauley put together an excellent program and a fine cast of characters which included many more women spirits in addition to many of the older prominent ones featured in the past. The theme was the Culper Spy Ring: From Secrecy to Victory which focused on the last years of the Revolutionary War here in Setauket, and featured more spirited interaction amongst our cast of characters.

Our 37th Candlelight House Tour, chaired by Board Member Patty Cain and Past President Patty Yantz, was a huge success over the previous year due in part to the lovely weather compared to the rain of 2014. Combined with the easy walking distance between each of the five Stony Brook homes and the inclusion of All Souls Episcopal Church and the new Reboli Center for Art and History. Compliments from tour goers were plentiful after this year's event.

The Society was also a major participant in the first annual Culper Day along with the Long Island Museum, the Ward Melville Heritage Organization, Times Beacon Record Newspapers and other local groups and organizations. Together we opened the doors of our many attractions for a one day reduced price along with walking tours and activities on the Setauket Village Green. Although it wasn't a big financial success, participation by the public was good and the basis was set for an annual event which we hold great expectations for and which we expect will flourish.

The Society was again a participant in the annual Apple Festival at the Sherwood Jayne House in conjunction with SPLIA and Benner's Farm. Although attendance was low we were able to see some revenue from the day.

### The Historian

Is published bi-annually by the Three Village Historical Society.

Suggestions for articles are welcome. Please send all articles, photos, feedback and ideas to:

**OfficeManager@tvhs.org**

In the subject line please include: **The Historian**.

Editors:

Sandy White,  
Dianne Trautmann

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Historical Society

## President's Message *(continued from page 2)*

Special thanks this year to our staff for a busy and productive year at the office. Without the work of Susie Roberts, Sandy White and Dianne Trautmann we would not be able to pull it all together as well as we did.

Thanks also to our outgoing Board Members Millie Mastrion, Steve Healy and Karin Lynch. Steve will continue to chair the Barn Committee as we finish the rebuilding of the Dominick-Crawford Barn on our property as a place to hold more events, classes for students of history and a myriad of other Society activities. Karin leaves us after ten years on the Board and the last six years as Treasurer. Karin has kept the finances of the Society in order and participated in almost all the other events of the Society. I am sure that her participation will continue even though she is no longer on the Board. Millie Mastrion has also been a tireless helper with all of our projects.

Over all it has been a very successful year with membership on the rise and revenues above previous years. Not all years are as economically rewarding as 2015 and when our expenses exceed our revenue we have to draw from our ever decreasing endowment. In fact, if it were not for our endowment we would have had to close our doors years ago. Our endowment consists of gifts left to the Society by a few people in their wills. It is those testamentary gifts which keep us going and we encourage all our members who can to remember the Society in their final thoughts.

There are many ways that gifts can be established either in wills or as trusts made before one's death which have immediate tax benefits. Any member interested in giving a bequest to the Society can contact us and we will refer you to the professional estate planners and/or attorneys to help you with your decision.

This new year of 2016 we hope to continue with our usual schedule of events and possibly include an "Art from Our Archives" event highlighting some of the art work in our collection. Thank you to all our other Board Members and Society members and friends. We hope to see you all at our future events and hope you will join us and participate as volunteers.



John Yantz

## Welcome New Board *(continued from pg 1)*

two daughters. He retired in 2010, and has previously served as Treasurer of the Three Village Community Trust.

Trustee Holly Griesel has been resident of Setauket for more than 35 years. She is the former Regent of the Anna Smith Strong Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution and currently serves as the Secretary of the local chapter of the Long Island Board of Realtors. Holly is a realtor for Daniel Gale Sotheby's in Stony Brook. She has a daughter attending Gelinis and another in Ward Melville. She is also a "mom" to a rescued Boston Terrier.

Trustee Ed Miller is a 25 year resident and runs the exhibit design firm Miller-Mohr Inc., which he founded 40 years ago with his wife Marilyn Mohr in Setauket. He is a Board Member of the Three Village Chamber of Commerce.

Trustee Jeffrey Schnee attended SUNY at Stony Brook. He worked on the development of the Apple Macintosh computer for KPMG and Apple, later managed the PC Technology Department for the Dime Savings Bank, and was also the CIO of Weber Shandwick, the world's largest PR Company. Jeff moved back to Setauket in 1998 with his wife Jeri-Ann DiPaola DVM, and their son Daniel. Jeff is currently serving on the Board of LISEIA (Long Island Solar Energy Industry Association). Jeff designs Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Systems for commercial and residential applications.

Ron LaVita previously served as a Trustee of the Three Village Historical Society from 2009-2014 and is rejoining the Board after a year off. Ron is a 45 year resident of Three Villages, a graduate of Ward Melville High School and graduate of St. John's Law School. He has been practicing law for over 25 years in Setauket. He has been the Village Justice of Old Field for 18 years, and is currently a Board Member and Legal Counsel to Three Village Chamber of Commerce.



## The Name is Smith - A Homestead is Saved

By Beverly Tyler,  
Historian

In 1978, one man out of every 100 in the United States was named Smith.

*"From Scotland and from Ireland to our golden shore America is mighty proud of her adopted sons galore, There is the clan O'Shaughnessy, also the clan of Moore, Who love the land of sunshine, but love the old sod more; There are the Tooles, the Hannigans, and the Bradys, too, and of the clan O'Hara there is quite a few, And not a single family we are acquainted with Can compare a minute with the good old clan of Smith!"*

**(From the Book of Smith by Elsdon C. Smith)**

One of the most common names connected with the history of the Three Villages is Smith. Records compiled by Leroy & Alvin Smith indicate that there were four Smith families who settled in Setauket in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The first to arrive was Richard "Bull" Smith who came from Southampton in 1656 and who later founded Smithtown, then known as Smithfield, in 1663. The next to settle in Setauket was Arthur Smith, a Quaker, who was admitted as a townsman in December 1659. Arthur had left Southold to avoid further punishment for being a Quaker and evidently found a more receptive and tolerant community in Setauket. He was also probably well known to the men from Southold who had founded Setauket in 1655.

Robert Smith was the next to arrive, coming from Southold in 1667. Robert, who had lived close to Arthur in Southold, was probably a relative but no relationship has been established. Town records indicate that Robert and Arthur lived near each other in Setauket as well. Robert sold his entire estate in October 1682 and he left no known descendants.

The fourth Smith to settle in Setauket was Colonel William "Tangier" Smith who arrived about 1689. Colonel Smith settled on what is now Strong's Neck and built his home which he called St. George's Manor. When his great-granddaughter Anna (Nancy of the Setauket Spies) Smith married Selah Strong, the neck passed to the Strong family (Three Village Guidebook #88). In addition to Strong, the descendants of "Tangier" Smith include many other early Three Village families. Colonel Smith and his wife Martha had a total of thirteen children but only six are known to have produced future generations. The genealogy of the family includes, in addition to the Strong, Woodhulls, Mounts, Brewsters, Hulses, and many others including some of the descendants of "Bull" Smith.

Arthur Smith and his wife Martha, who had settled in Setauket in 1659, had four known sons. The first son Thomas was born about 1646 and died about 1685. He was married to Joanna Longbotham of Setauket and had at least one son, Thomas. A second son, John, was born before 1649. He had a wife named Rebecca and at least

two children, Deborah and John. Third son, Benjamin was born about 1655 and produced one son, Benjamin, Jr. Benjamin Sr. is thought to have been the builder of the Smith homestead. The fourth son, Arthur Jr. was born sometime before 1659 and had at least three sons, Arthur, Daniel and Samuel. The majority of the known descendants of Arthur Smith, the Quaker, have descended from his grandson Daniel. Daniel had eight children, four of whom died single. Many of the descendants of Daniel's other children are still living in the Three Villages.

Daniel married Mary Thompson, daughter of Samuel and Hannah Thompson in 1720. Daniel was Brookhaven Town Treasurer from 1733 to 1737 and then town clerk until 1775. Town meetings were held at the Smith home and thus the house was the seat of town government for many years. Daniel died July 31, 1784 and his son Timothy, born September 3, 1730, inherited the homestead (Three Village Guidebook #76). Timothy, who married Zurviah Smith is believed to have lived with his wife and children in the homestead by 1766. During the Revolution, as detailed by descendant Julia Smith, Timothy outwitted the British who searched his home many times, by hiding his guns in the foundation of the house and his gold in tobacco leaves.



The Smith Homestead, aka: The House on the Hill.c 1948. The black walnut in the rear yard was recently destroyed in the storm of August 4, 2015.

The Smith Homestead has undergone many changes since it was built circa 1685. It was thought to have had a long sloping roof, known as a salt box or cat slide roof, possibly added about 1705. There is no doubt that the house grew and changed, much as the family grew and changed. It remained the Smith

Homestead until the last family member in the house died in 1948, a period of continuous occupation for over 250 years.

Timothy and Zurviah's son Amos inherited the farm and homestead when his father died in 1790. His mother continued to live in her home until her death in 1809. As detailed in an old account book Amos undertook repairs to the house in 1796 and in 1801, "when built new end to the house." It is quite possible that this "new end" was built for the comfort of Amos' mother Zurviah.

Amos was a farmer and served as the Brookhaven Town Tax Collector from 1805 to 1810. He also served as a Town Constable from 1803 to 1812. Amos was also a slave holder according to Town of Brookhaven records and a note attached to the family bible. "Amos Smith made return that he had a female Child Born of a Slave of his on the 12<sup>th</sup> Day of March 1803 Childs name is Cloe." (Brookhaven

## The Name is Smith - A Homestead is Saved

Town Records 1798 to 1856 - page 91) The bible note for March 1824 lists the two children of Cloe who is now a freed slave.

In 1810 Amos, age 40 married Ruth Bennett, age 23 and the couple raised four children, Harriet, Isaac, Timothy and Julia Ann. Amos was a successful farmer and added 40 acres in Stony Brook in 1806 and another 10 acres in 1821. He also held deed to another 40 acres. In 1826, Amos was elected as one of 36 Town Fence Viewers and retained the position until it was incorporated into the jobs of the Commissioners of Highways in 1830. Amos Smith died on Christmas Eve 1844, his wife Ruth died July 13, 1852. They are both buried in Caroline Church graveyard just west of the entrance walk.

Isaac J. Smith (1813-1881) son of Amos and Ruth was the only child to outlive his parents. He married Sarah Ann Petty (1824-1895) in February 1844 and inherited the family homestead after his father's death. Isaac was a militia captain and the homestead became known as the Major Isaac Smith house. Isaac was an avid horseman and loved to race. As detailed by Miss Kate Strong, Smith was overtaken by a horse and light rig, made a challenge and won the race. He had not realized that he had challenged Robert Bonner, editor of the New York Ledger and a superb horseman. Bonner said, "I could not spoil his fun by beating him, he was having such a good time."

Isaac and Sarah had, according to family information, as many as fourteen children, a number of whom died young and are buried near their parents in the Caroline Church cemetery. Piecing together family census and church records we can confirm at least 12. The three unmarried children who lived in the homestead well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century were Emily Sarah (1850-1937) who was known as Aunt Em to her sister's children, William Lawrence (1865-1938) and Julia Sophia (1863-1948) known as Miss Julia Smith to many in the community. Julia told many stories about her family and the homestead. A number of her stories were told to Kate Strong who included them in her "True Tales" written for the Long Island Forum.

As detailed by Elinore Bryant, about 1990, there were papers and deeds found in the house along with notes and articles written by Miss Julia S. Smith, an old account book found in the attic, the Brookhaven tax book of 1806, and a paper fastened to the family bible describing the birth of family slaves. These are all, hopefully, still in possession of family members. Bryant wrote that there were "many beautiful pieces of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century furniture... still in use when Miss Julia Smith occupied the house..." She also noted that when the house was sold in 1948, many of Daniel Smith's tools, "(he) was a cordwainer (shoemaker) by trade," were still in the shed.

Today, the Smith homestead, a community treasure, is being lovingly and carefully restored. Sections of the house reflect the different family needs that occurred as each generation of Smiths added to the home and changed it.

Many of these alterations now present a somewhat confusing array of disparate modifications, all of which makes understanding the history of the house more interesting and challenging. However, much of the major changes to the house occurred during the first two

centuries of its existence. As a result the house, as a home, reflects in many ways the lifestyle of the colonial period. As written by Arthur Smith descendant Elinore Bryant, "To cross the threshold over the old mill stone, was to enter another world. The old floor boards glow in the kitchen with the patina of three centuries, while beneath the wide-throated chimney huge black kettles and utensils

hang on the crane, a reminder of the daily chores of the colonial housewife.



Above: main fireplace in the Smith house parlor. Right: View from an upper window. Below, original timber frame joining is the work of a late 17th /early 18th century housewright.



*Photos courtesy of Bev Tyler.*



## MEMBERSHIP CORNER

2016 is here and it's time to think about the year ahead and renew your membership with the Three Village Historical Society. Please encourage friends who might share your interest in the history and culture of our beautiful area to become members. Individual dues are only \$35 and a Dual/Family dues are \$50 both of which entitle members to Basic Benefits: 10% discount on many Gift Shop Purchases, the newsletter: *The Historian*, and discount and advance purchases on many of our programs and events. Patron dues are \$100 and along with basic benefits you will receive 2 complimentary walking tour tickets. With membership you are able to attend our new Member's Only event: **Tea with a Spot of History** and gain free entrance to our exhibits. Higher categories of membership bring additional benefits, such as complimentary tickets to the Candlelight House Tour and the Spirits Tour. You can see a full description of member benefits on our website as well as all the events and programs we have planned this year: [www.tvhs.org](http://www.tvhs.org)

Thank you for your support.

Visit our website: [TVHS.org](http://TVHS.org) and use PayPal, or fill out the mail-in application below to become a member.

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### 2016 The Three Village Historical Society-Membership Application

10% Discount on Gift Shop Purchases  
Subscription to The Historian Newsletter, free  
entrance to our exhibits, Nine Monthly  
Member Meetings, Discount and Advance  
purchase on many Society special events

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#### Payment:

Check payable to: **Three Village Historical Society**  
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Credit Card: MasterCard or Visa:

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail application to:  
**The Three Village Historical Society**  
93 North Country Rd.  
Setauket, NY 11733



## Thomas Higgins: Drawn to Birds

**Karen Martin**  
Archivist



Thomas Higgins

Thomas F. Higgins had been a resident of Stony Brook for over 40 years when he passed away on May 18, 2005. Born in New York City, his lifelong hobby as a homing pigeon fancier extended into a love of wild birds and an avocation as an ornithologist. As a young boy he began sketching hawks and Peregrine Falcons that he observed in the skies over Manhattan from his New York City apartment.

Mr. Higgins attended The Arts Students League and The New School, becoming a commercial artist by profession. He was co-founder of *The Linnaean News-Letter* of the



Linnaean Society of New York, and the Museum of Natural History, providing artwork for the masthead in its early years. He also participated in the restoration of Great Gull Island after WWII. He participated

in many bird counts and banding projects including banding birds on Long Island for the Department of the Interior. *Nature Wheel No. 1* was developed by Mr. Higgins and published by the National Audubon Society in 1951. The wheel consists of a circular disc which, when turned, identifies and describes two dozen bird species.

A locally respected bird artist he taught a nature program for children through the Three Village Garden Club.

Thomas Higgins was an accomplished bird artist who was recognized by his peers and whose works had been exhibited around the country. Mr. Higgins produced prints of some of his original works of art. The Three

Village Historical Society is fortunate to have available for purchase in our gift shop a selection of five bird prints by Thomas F. Higgins. The pictures on this page are the prints we have available for sale. Some prints are very limited in quantity. See below for sizes and prices.



**Bufflehead** by Thomas F. Higgins. 38" x 26"



Opposite: **Whooping Crane** (26"x18 1/2"). Above: **Black-capped Chickadee** (17 1/2" x 23"), **Red-winged Blackbird** (17 1/2" x 23") **Morning Dove** (20" x 25 1/2").

Prints are available at the Society's gift shop for \$5.00 each. The Gift shop is open Monday -Friday from 10:00 am- 3:00 pm, and on Sundays from 1:00-4:00 pm.

(Please note: We cannot ship these prints by mail.)

## Crawford Barn Update



**Stephen Healy**  
Co-Chair, Crawford Barn Project

Both the Dominic/Crawford Barn and the Ebenezer Bayles/Swezey House (Three Village Historical Society headquarters) have received designation of Historic Landmark status.

The Three Village Historical Society-Crawford Barn Project is moving along nicely. We have hired Hawkins-Webb Jaeger's Matt Crane to do our site plan, which should be ready by the end of January. John Cunniffe will finalize it and send it off the town for approval. The barn committee met on January 20<sup>th</sup> to discuss the site plan and the granting process with its members. We hope to break ground on the foundation by the summer.

## Young Historians Corner- Research in the Rhodes Collection Archives

Karen Martin  
Archivist

Throughout the year many people come to the Society's archives to conduct research to find that forgotten ancestor, research their home, or delve into the area's past. Nothing gives the Society more pleasure than assisting students and other young people in the community.

The Three Village Historical Society would like to congratulate such a student: Sahil Sangwan aged 14, a ninth-grade student at Gelinis Junior High School, was selected by the New York State Archives and Archives Partnership Trust as the recipient of the 2015 Laura and Robert Chodos Award for Excellence in Student Research Using Historical Records Grades 6-8.

His entry "*Impact of the Melville Family's Contributions to the Three Village Area*" investigated the impact of one family on the character of the Three Village area. Sahil conducted research at the Three Village Historical Society archives (consulting original materials found in the Society's Melville Family Papers) and at the Emma S. Clark Memorial Library in support of his statement that "the Melville family was singularly the most influential family in Three Villages."

The judges commended Sahil on his use of historical records found in his local community and his ability to incorporate the information from those records into his essay.



Sahil Sangwan receives the 2015 Laura and Robert Chodos Award for Excellence in Student Research from Thomas Ruller, NYS Archivist & Executive Officer of the Archives Partnership Trust. Photo by Ved Vati.

Sahil had this to say about his experience: "I had a great time working on this project and learned so many fascinating things about the founders of the Three Village community, how they shaped it, and why our community is the way it is today. There are several people I would especially like to thank for helping me in my research and making it a fun experience. I want to recognize my school's librarian, Mrs. Connelly. She introduced me to the project, was forever patient and helpful, and began the journey on which I learned an incredible amount of information about my community's past. I also owe a lot to the archivist I worked with in the Historical Society's archives at Emma S. Clark Library, Mrs. Martin, who went above and beyond to help me in my research."



Society President John Yantz gave a lecture on Nov. 16th on the Slocum shipwreck disaster. Colin Hoelzl attended the lecture and brought in the certificate / medal his grandfather received for helping survivors at the time of the disaster. Photo by Bev Tyler.

*Please Join us for our  
39th Annual Awards Dinner  
Wednesday, March 23, 2016 6-10 pm  
Old Field Club, Setauket  
Music, \*Dinner, \*Cash Bar\* Raffles  
Awards Ceremony*

**Tickets: \$55/Members \$65/Non-members**  
**Scroll of Honor listing in the Awards Program**  
**Gold Level \$100 Silver \$50 Bronze \$30**



*Visit [TVHS.org](http://TVHS.org) to order tickets  
and donate to our scroll of honor*



## 50th Anniversary Spy Gala



L-R: Connie Burawa and Jennifer Crane, Co-Chairs of the Spy Gala. Middle Photo: Michael O'Dwyer (white jacket) proposes a toast to our past presidents: Frank Turano, Steve Hintze, Art Billadillo, Patty Yantz, Bev Tyler, Barbara Russell and Margaret Olness. Right: Gala attendees gather around the cake to celebrate the Society's 50th Anniversary. *Photos courtesy of Conrad Trautmann.*

20th Annual Spirits Tour: *In the Spirit of the Spies: A Journey with the Culper Spy Ring*

L-R: Abraham Woodhull/Dennis O'Connor, Mary Woodhull/Bonnie O'Connor, Emma Clark/Karin Lynch, Bette Harmon/Bonnie Duval, Selah Strong/Steve Hintze, Nancy Strong/Holly Greisel, Major Andre/Pat DiVisconti, James Rivington/Tim Adams, Rev. Greene/Morton Rosen, Major Tallmadge/Tim McNamara, Robert Townsend/Art Billadello, Pvt. VanWort/Sage Hardy, Benedict Arnold/Brian Cea- (Event Co-Chair), Peggy Shippen/Stephanie Carsten, Col. Benjamin Floyd/Bev Tyler and Caleb Brewster/Steve Healy. *All Spirits Tour photos courtesy of Rhiannon Gupta*



Pvt Van Wort/Sage Hardy and Pvt Williams/George Monez capture Major Andre/Pat DiVisconti



General George Washington, played by John Galla. The blue flag with white stars is a replica of the flag Washington used to designate his headquarters.



Nellie Edwards greets children at the Setalcott Indian Encampment during the tour.



## 37th Annual Candlelight House Tour- Dec. 4th &amp; 5th, 2015



Left: Veronique Velazquez was on duty Friday Night at All Souls Episcopal Church to show tour goers how the bell at the church is rung. (Her parents were also on duty as docents Friday night).

Right: Docent Caroline Austin at the Suazo House greeting Friday night tour goers.

*Candlelight House Tour photos courtesy of Chris Ryon, Bev Tyler and Conrad Trautmann.*



From Top Clockwise: Allison Van Cott McEntee provides music Friday night at the O'Donnell House. Docent Ann Strong welcomes Saturday tour goers to the Healy House. Docents Leah Sugrue and Jennifer Easton Welcome Friday night tour attendees to the main room of the Van Zeijts house. All Souls Episcopal Church. The Healy family enjoying the Friday night reception at the Old Field Club.

## George Clay

Barbara M Russell  
Town of Brookhaven Historian

On Monday October 19, 2015, the Three Village Historical Society's monthly meeting featured Vincent Marmorale's program, **Italy and the Holocaust**. I found the story of Italy's citizens' bravery during World War II to be inspiring. Locally, we have a story to tell also.



I am sure that many of the Society's members will recall the Clay Family from Stony Brook. George William Clay was born in New Jersey, but grew up in Port Jefferson and Stony Brook. He graduated from Port Jefferson High School, and left his family's home on Christian Ave to be

inducted into the U.S. Army on April 15, 1943. By September he was on his way to Europe, serving as a Medic with the 34<sup>th</sup> Division, known as the Red Bull Division, in Tunisia and Sicily. Private Clay advanced with the 34th Division toward Cassino.

While home on leave from the Army, Pvt. Clay was interviewed by The Port Jefferson Times newspaper. The interview, printed in the October 12, 1945 edition reported, "After some fierce fighting, his particular unit was surrounded on January 13, 1944, near San Pedro, Italy, and its entire force either killed or captured by the Germans. The captives spent two weeks in two different transient prison camps, and then were put on a train to be transported to Germany." While traveling by train, a fortunate event took place, at least for about 100 prisoners. American bombers flew over, and the car that George was riding in, was hit, leaving them an exit. For the next five months, George hid during the day in the woods, and under the cover of darkness would roam from house to house looking for food and shelter. He lived and worked with various friendly Italian families until he had to move on. In George's words, he described his experience, "Most of the Italian families were

very friendly and sympathetic toward my cause. Of course, a few families, especially those who were under close watch by the Germans and were afraid of what might happen if the Nazis found them hiding me, turned me away. Many were at first suspicious of me, while others took me right in. I gradually picked up the Italian language and one family with whom I stayed for a week taught me enough to get by on."

George's original plan was to escape to Spain or Switzerland, but the Italians talked him out of that, saying American forces were advancing quickly. Most of his war news came from bands of Italian rebels, German deserters, and Russian laborers. George related to the Port Jefferson Times that he wore his Army uniform for about a month after his capture. Then he stayed with a family who dyed his clothes, so he could blend in with the Italians. He related that at one farmhouse, a German patrolman came to search the house. George was able to exit through a rear window and flee toward a grain field. The Germans sprayed the field with machine gun fire, but George was able to crawl into the woods, where he remained for several days. That was his only brush with possibly being recaptured.

Back in Stony Brook, his parents, John and Lillie Clay were only notified that he was "missing in action". However, Private Clay did leave his name with some of the Italian families that he stayed with; in the hope that advancing Allied forces would get the word that he was there. The end of George's captivity happened on June 15, 1944, near Alleron, a small town between Rome and Florence. The British 8<sup>th</sup> Army found an American soldier rushing from the woods to meet them. Only a few days before his rescue, his mother received a letter from a British soldier, who told her that her son was safe somewhere in Italy. Apparently, his name was given to the British soldier by one of the families he stayed with. Private George W. Clay returned to the United States in August 1944. He stayed stateside, serving as a Medical Technician in New Jersey, where he met and married his wife, Jean Winfield. Corporal Clay was discharged from the Army on December 24, 1945. George and Jean Clay came to Stony Brook where they lived and raised their family. George William Clay died in 1976.

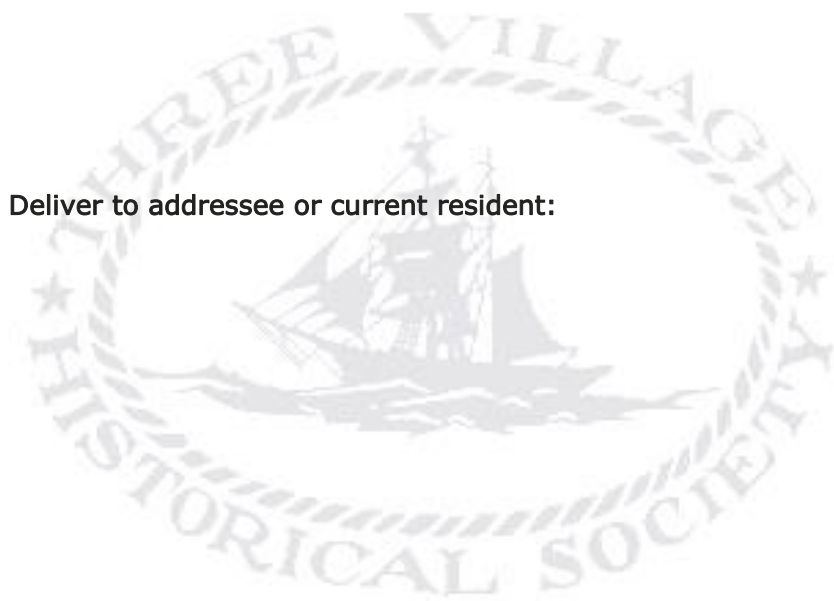
George Clay's experience in Italy is another example of both the fortitude of a young soldier and the kindness of strangers. Corporal George Clay, a Veteran and former Three Village resident, we remember you with gratitude.



Three Village Historical Society  
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## TVHS Calendar of Events

**March 23, 2016: Annual Awards Dinner**  
*Old Field Club, 86 West Meadow Rd, Setauket*  
6-10 pm

**Tea with a Spot Of History:**  
*Members Only\* Held at our headquarters on*  
*93 North Country Rd, Setauket at 2:00 pm*

Feb 22nd: **Octave Chanute** w/*Frank Turano*  
March 16th: **Down the Ways-** w/*Bev Tyler*  
April 13th: **Three Village People & Places** w/*Bev Tyler*  
May 11th: **Stony Brook Before & After Melville** w/*Bev Tyler*  
June 27th: **William Cooper-**w/ *Frank Turano*

### Lecture Series

Setauket Neighborhood House, 95 Main Street, Setauket.  
Free and open to the public. 7pm start unless otherwise noted

**February 15th:** Henry Osmer: **The Montauk Lighthouse**  
**April 18th: Annual Pot Luck Supper** early start time: 6 pm  
**Linking Students In- It Takes a Village**  
**May 16th:** Diane Hill: **Ghosts of LI Pirates & Shipwrecks**  
**June 20th:** Chris Matthews: **Archeological Excavations of**  
**19th Cent. Native/African American households in Setauket**

**Annual Yard Sale:** June 4th 9 am-3 pm

**Culper Spy Day:** July 23rd 9 am- 4 pm



**Exhibit Hours:** Open Sundays from 1-4 pm.

**Chicken Hill:**  
"A Community Lost to Time"



**Spies!** *How a Group of Long Island Patriots*  
*Helped George Washington Win the Revolution.*

**Admission:** \$5 Children/Students,  
\$8 Adults. **Members Free.**

### Walking Tours \*

**Down the Ways: The Wooden Ship Era:** April 17th, May 15th.  
June 18th 3pm, July 30th, August 13th, Sept. 25th

**Walk Through History with Abraham Woodhull:** April 9th, May 1st,  
June 4th, July 2nd, August 7th, Sept. 3rd, Oct. 9th, Nov. 11th

**Setauket Village Green Tour:** April 23rd, May 28th, June 11th,  
July 16th, Aug. 20th, Sept. 10th, Oct. 1st and Nov. 5th

Admission: \$8 \*Please check the Society's website for complete descriptions, location and starting times for all of the Walking Tours or contact the office at (631)-751-3730. All walks start at 2:00 pm unless otherwise noted



**Tri Spy Tours-**  
**April- Nov**  
See website for dates/pricing.  
**WWW.TVHS.ORG**