



Westhampton Beach Historical Society  
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# Westhampton Beach Historical Society

Serving the  
Communities of  
Westhampton Beach,  
Westhampton Dunes,  
Westhampton, Quogue,  
Remsenburg, Speonk  
and Eastport



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## Newsletter

Early Spring 2022

### *The Gov. John Adams Dix Windmill: Historic Preservation Pending!*

The Historical Society is presently assisting the Village of Westhampton Beach with the process of preserving an historic windmill. The windmill in question was formerly part of a two-story home at the southwest corner of Seafeld and Sunswyck Lanes. The property was recently acquired by new owners who planned to redevelop. A few sharp-eyed folks discovered that the windmill was headed for a dumpster and made the Village and Society aware of the potential loss of this iconic historic structure. Through the efforts of many concerned folks a plan was developed to save the windmill by moving it to a Village location and landmarking it, which would facilitate obtaining Community Preservation Fund monies for restoration. While there are still some moving parts to this process, it appears that the necessary actions by the Town and Village are underway and should result in a

positive outcome. By this time next year, there may be a restored landmarked historic windmill on the Great Lawn!

The windmill was originally constructed by John Adams Dix in about 1870, together with other buildings on the property. John Dix had a long illustrious military and political career that included serving in the War of 1812 and Civil War, US Senator (1845-1849), President of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad (1853) and Union Pacific Railroad (1863-1868), Postmaster of New York City (1860-1861), Secretary of the Treasury (1861), US Minister to France (1866-1869), and 24th Governor of New York State (1873-1874). He would have been in his early 70s when the windmill was built, and upon

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### *Membership Reminder – Please Renew in 2022!*



As our Society recovers from the COVID-19 crisis, we need the support of our members more than ever! Although we continued some activities throughout, we were unable to hold some fund-raising events and still needed to maintain our buildings, pay our very small staff, and keep the lights on. Your membership support has been critical, which we very much appreciate. Our 2022 membership renewal notices will shortly be mailed and we ask for your support once again – we plan to expand our programming in 2022 and your help is needed. Our dues remain low – just \$35 for individual, \$50 for a family, and \$100 for a business, with higher levels of membership also available. Our Society relies on membership income to support our activities – please help us to continue to be there for you now that there is some light at the end of the COVID tunnel!



*Early 1900s view of the windmill.*



*The windmill in the mid-1900s.*



*The windmill today - getting ready for the move!*

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## The Gov. John Adams Dix Windmill: Historic Preservation Pending!

his death in 1879, his son the Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix inherited the property. Reverend Dix sold the property to Desmond Dunne, a Brooklyn Commissioner of Public Works, in early 1902. A 1915 photograph of the Dunne estate (courtesy of the Digital Archives of the Queens Library) provides the earliest picture of the windmill. More recent photos and a postcard show the windmill in great detail, both as a working structure and when converted to living space.

Westhampton Beach was previously referred to as “Windmill Town” (*Historical Sketches of Westhampton Beach*) due to the number of the windmills in the Village. The Dix windmill is a “smock style” windmill, referring to the roof that resembles smocks traditionally worn by farmers and millers. This windmill was designed to pump water for agricultural and household purposes, rather than for milling grain or sawing timber. Water windmills could be more slender than grist or saw mills since they contained considerably less mechanical equipment. The

structural framing is heavy duty, visually impressive, and in very good condition. The windmill had four wooden blades attached to shafts connected to an exposed windshaft. The windmill blades and windshaft were previously removed, although original wrought iron straps and long bolts used to prevent splitting of the windshaft were found onsite. Typically windmills of this type had rotating roof structures, windshafts and blades that allowed the blades to be turned into the wind. However, windmills used for water pumping apparently did not require this feature and the roof was fixed with the fan blades facing the prevailing winds (this windmill likely originally faced westerly). The blades could turn at a speed of upwards of 30 miles per hour and were slowed and stopped via a brake wheel on the windshaft.

It is hoped that once the windmill is relocated and restored it can be made operational again and serve as a working reminder of our Village’s history!

## Engrave a Brick Fundraiser – Great for Recognition

Last Fall the Westhampton Beach Historical Society began a wonderful fund-raiser. We built a brick walkway to access the Foster-Meeker Heritage Center and new bricks were also needed to replace badly-worn bricks of the Tuthill House front walkway. While the Foster-Meeker walkway was funded through a grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation and the Museum Association of New York,



replacement of the Tuthill House walkway was not grant-funded. Instead, we are asking our community of friends to purchase an engraved brick to support this project. You can include a personal message, name a loved one, promote a business, or say whatever you want (within reason...!) The engraving will last for a lifetime...and the donor will know that the proceeds go directly to the Historical Society to support this project. The cost is \$200 per brick, which includes 3 lines of up to 21 characters each for an inscribed message. The campaign will be ongoing, although you should not hesitate to place your order. Go to our website at [www.whbhistorical.org](http://www.whbhistorical.org) and click on the Download Donation Form on the home page. The Society appreciates your support of this project!

Our new walkway – ready for your brick!



Scene from the Antique Fire Apparatus Muster.



The start of a Westhampton Beach walking tour.

## 2021 in Review

Last year, with the pandemic in full force, circumstances were unusual for all of us. For the Westhampton Beach Historical Society, this meant re-looking at our usual programs to keep our offerings as exciting as possible while respecting limitations imposed by COVID-19. We decided to hold over our exhibit at the Tuthill House Museum “A History of Local Firefighting and the 25th Anniversary of the Sunrise Wildfire” with protective measures in place. Open every Saturday throughout the summer, we had many folks attending, with much engagement. In conjunction with the exhibit, in July we held an **Antique Fire Apparatus Muster** outdoors on the Great Lawn. Strong attendance and much spectator interest were clearly in evidence. Our traditional **Summer Crafts Demonstrations** also took place at the Foster-Meeker Heritage Center. Always a popular learning experience for adults and children alike, last year we held five Saturday craft demonstrations in July and August that included basket weaving, fleece felting, jam making and more.

During 2021 we also held four popular **walking tours**, three in the Village of Westhampton Beach and one in Remsenburg. Reaching out to children is an important part of our charter and last year we held a program at the Westhampton Beach elementary school discussing World War I with a local veteran. A **Westhampton Cemetery tour** directed to young students focused on markers of many prominent historic local citizens.

Our 2021 **Historic Preservation Award** went to Larry Jones for his dedication and knowledge in historical reconstruction. Larry spearheads the **restoration of the Foster-Meeker House** on our Mill Road campus for which we received a very generous grant from the O’Brien Foundation – a legacy of a long-standing Westhampton Beach family – to complete the restoration. Much upkeep was also accomplished on our premises, including painting, roofing, drainage, and more.

We have plans for great activities in 2022, our 33rd year of existence, including a new exhibit and a summer event on the Great Lawn. Be a part of our ever-growing membership and expanding program agenda – visit our website at [www.whbhistorical.org](http://www.whbhistorical.org) and become a member today!



Volunteers John Phillips and Nancy Winters rejuvenated our herb garden next to the new accessible brick walkway.