

The Westhampton Beach Historical Society Newsletter

Early Summer 2023



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

OUR “SPLASH INTO SUMMER” COCKTAIL PARTY!!

Although June 17 started out with rain and wind in the forecast, by early afternoon the skies were clearing and by 4 PM the stage was set for our “**Splash Into Summer**” cocktail party! Our guests included 85 members and other well-wishers who enjoyed an open bar and plentiful delicious food donated by some very generous local purveyors, including **Sydney’s Taylor Made Cuisine, Hamptons Aristocrat, the Mill Road Cheese Shop, Justin’s Chop Shop, and Tonino’s Pizza**. Bart Birk of **The Happy Oyster** provided and opened a beautiful selection of local oysters – yum!! Please remember these folks when you do your shopping – you can’t go wrong!



Jim Hulme and Chuck Finch entertained the crowd with some mellow guitar music and vocals – our thanks to both of them! **Vern Hackworth**, an excellent bartender, brought the glasses and kept them filled! **Abby Ketner** provided a charcuterie board, **Gillin Fisheries** provided ice, the **Westhampton Presbyterian Church** loaned their tables and chairs, and **Jim Barlow** brought a great tent – including setup beforehand and packup after! **Aram Terchunian** from **First Coastal** sent a crew with enough fence to enclose our campus to comply with NYS Liquor Board rules.

The **Westhampton Garden Club** (see article in our previous newsletter) outdid themselves by quickly planting the first of what will be several gardens to grace our campus. The planting was completed before the party and we all admired the result – a **beautiful pollinator garden!**

The new exhibit “**Our Local Waters Throughout History**” (see Exhibit article below) was open for viewing and received many compliments. Dot Berdinka, our exhibit curator, and her team have put together a great show. The **Foster-Meeker Heritage Center** was also open for tours led by Larry Jones, our resident restoration specialist and leader of the reconstruction effort.

We appreciate all who attended this important fund-raising event for our Society – the monies raised help to support our mission of preserving local history. If you missed out, please plan to attend next year!



New 2023 Summer Exhibit: OUR LOCAL WATERS THROUGH HISTORY

Starting June 17, in conjunction with our opening gala event, the Westhampton Beach Historical Society presented a new exhibit “**Our Local Waters Throughout History**” at the Tuthill House Museum on our Mill Road, Westhampton Beach campus. The exhibit encompasses five rooms with displays of local water-related historic activities, the largest of which concerns the historic **Life-Saving Service**. This Service included life-saving stations on Long Island beaches, including our local station, the **Potunk Station**. Never-before-seen photos of this Station showing scenes of daily life are on display!



OUR LOCAL WATERS THROUGH HISTORY (CONTINUED)

A second room highlights the very popular **SS (Small Sloop) one-design wooden sailboat**, the first of which was constructed by Benjamin Hallock in 1908 and many of which continue to be raced. This room includes design information, trophies, and many pictures of SS boats in action. Two additional rooms focus on Bay-related activities, including tools of the fishing trade and stories of the people who made it happen. These rooms include artifacts of a wide range of gear for fishing, clamming, eeling, trawling, and lobstering.

Our last room focuses on **duck farming**, which was a major industry in our area from the late 1800s until recently. Duck farming is explained from the time that the best ducks are selected to become brood ducks to the process of turning the fully-grown ducks into one of Long Island's best known products – the Long Island Duck.



This “can’t miss” exhibit is open on **Saturdays from 10 AM to 1 PM between June 17 to September 16**. Admission is free! Come down and enjoy our air-conditioned Museum this summer!



Membership Reminder – Please Renew in 2023!

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 the pandemic, 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 2023 membership renewal notices were recently mailed**, and we ask for your support once again – we plan to expand our programming in 2023 and your help is needed. Our dues remain low – just \$35 for an 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 by renewing your membership!**

AND NOW FOR OUR NEXT EVENT....

Revolutionary War Living History Event



Saturday, July 8th , 10 AM to 4 PM

(Rain or Shine)

On the Great Lawn, 35 Main Street
in Westhampton Beach



WESTHAMPTON BEACH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Experience the Revolutionary War as
**REENACTORS BRING AMERICAN HISTORY
TO LIFE** with Colonial and British soldiers in
period uniforms demonstrating infantry, cavalry,
and artillery skills and a skirmish.

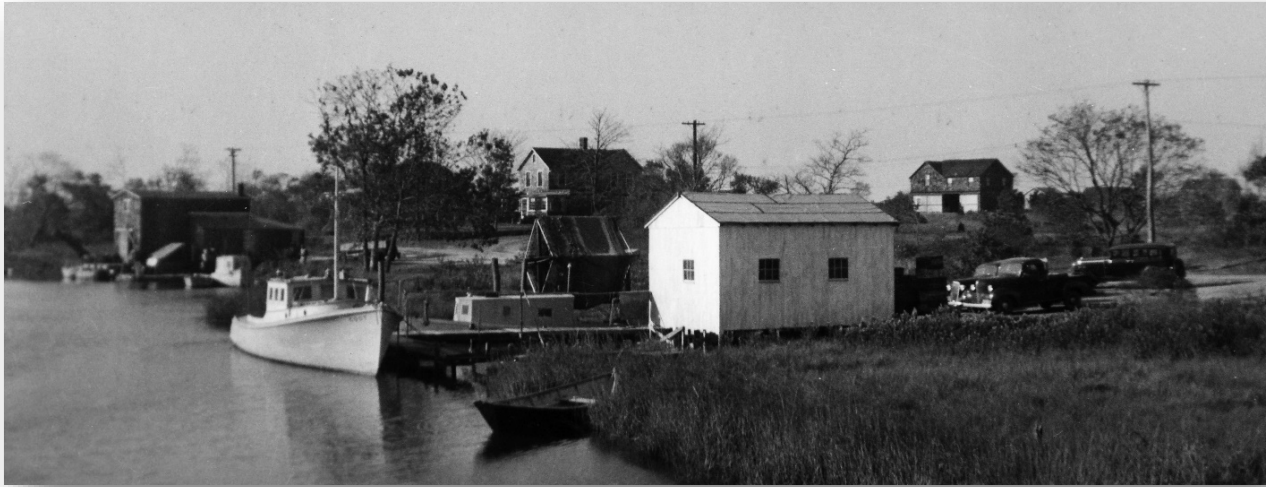
FREE
Admission

INCLUDING:
Beer Garden
Food Trucks
Ice Cream Truck

Partly Funded by The County of Suffolk.

The Raynor Fish House:

Legacy of a Fishing Family's History on Beaver Dam Creek



The barn-like structure in the photo above is a fish house built in 1939 on Beaver Dam Creek by William Fletcher Raynor. Constructed partially over the water, and braced for support in heavy weather, the fish house was used to store fishing gear, provide shelter for fisherman and their equipment, and serve as a place to repair boats and nets between fishing expeditions. This fish house was used by “Fletch” Raynor and then by his son, Charles Marvin Raynor, until about 2014. The fish house and property were recently acquired by the Town of Southampton Community Preservation Department to be preserved as a reminder of a former way of life.

Raynor families lived on Beaver Dam Creek since the mid-1700s. Jonathan Raynor (1681-1741), who settled in what is now Westhampton Beach, acquired lands along Apaucuck Creek (Beaver Dam today) in 1712, when Southampton Town divided the 1666 Topping Purchase meadow lots, including Speonk Neck, Tanners Neck, and Apaucuck Neck (Apaucuck is Algonquin for “flaggy land,” for the abundance of cattail flags or reeds used to weave mats and cover wigwams.) Jonathan’s son, Nathan (1716-1772) was reportedly the first Englishman to settle Apaucuck Neck near the head of the Creek in 1741. In 1746 the Town consented to damming of the Creek and construction of the first grist mill in the western part of the Town. The mill was completed in 1748 and located at the western end of Mill Road adjoining Nathan’s property in what became known as the Beaver Dam settlement area. A church, a school, a stagecoach stop, a blacksmith, and a cemetery (now the Westhampton Cemetery) were also established in the settlement area. Although Nathan is said to be buried in an unmarked grave on Apaucuck Neck to the west of the Creek, many of his descendants are buried in the cemetery at Beaver Dam.

Raynor families continued to live along the Creek and were primarily farmers and fishermen who supplied food to their families and the community. However, in 1868 the Long Island Rail Road extended track through the Westhampton area, bringing new economic opportunities. Three Raynor families ran boarding houses for summer visitors on the Creek. Arthur Halsey Raynor used his boat *Helen* to take visitors to the beach. And more Raynors came to the Creek to make a living by commercial fishing now that their catch could be taken to market in New York City via rail.

The Raynor Fish House (continued)



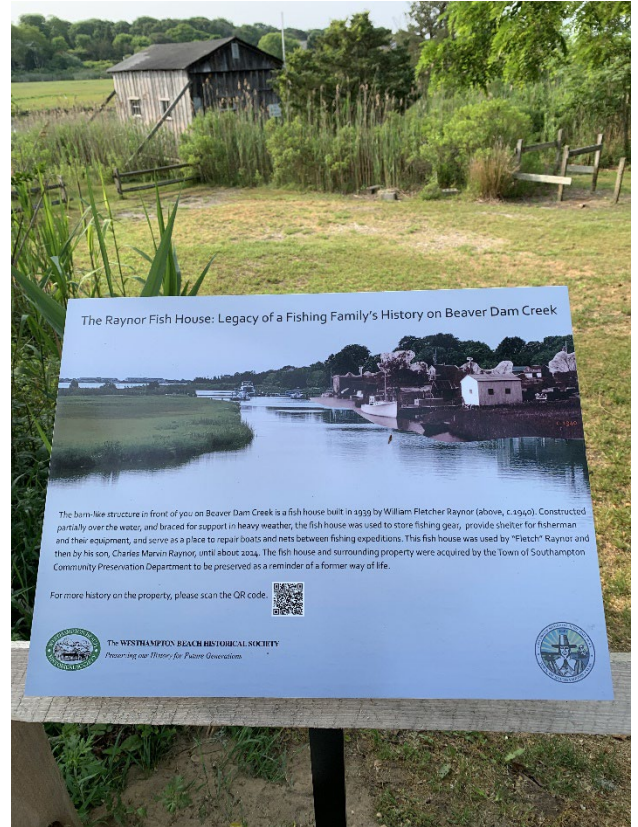
The first Raynor fish house was built in the 1860s and was used to support several commercial fisheries. Sturgeon fishing became popular in the late 1800s and was practiced from the beach using gill nets during May and June; the nets were stored in the fish house during the rest of the year. When sturgeon fishing declined in the early 1900s fishing for cod using scroll lines, trawls and gill nets became popular, both from the beach and on Moriches Bay. The early 1900s photo above shows William Clark Raynor sailing up the Creek with supplies from the beach; the fish house is the building to the left. Freshwater carp were also raised in three fish ponds dug in the marshes near the fish house and then shipped to Manhattan when the price was right. Carp fishing declined after the '38 Hurricane opened permanent inlets to the Atlantic Ocean, increasing the bay salinity. Clamming and fishing for alewives, bluefish, eels, flounder, and striped bass continued in the 1940s and early 1950s, with the fish house used for fishing equipment storage and maintenance, as seen in the photo below.



By the late 1950s commercial fishing had declined and the family used the fish house for crabbing, boat storage and boatbuilding until it was acquired by the Town of Southampton in 2020 for historic preservation. The fish house remains today as a reminder of our community's past.

The Raynor Fish House (continued)

The Westhampton Beach Historical Society, in partnership with the Town of Southampton, prepared an information sign that is now posted near the property on South Road so that the public can be made aware of this important historic resource in our community. A QR code on the sign can be used to access more information about the Fish House on the Town's website. We hope that you make an opportunity to visit the Fish House sign and view this lovely property that has been preserved for future generations!



Our Engrave-a-Brick Fundraiser: Your Chance for Recognition!

In 2022 we built a brick walkway for access to the Foster-Meeker Heritage Center. This project provided inspiration for our Engrave-a-Brick fundraiser as we also needed new bricks to replace badly-worn bricks in the Tuthill House front walkway. We launched this fund-raising project in 2022 with good success and hope that our community of friends will continue supporting this project in 2023.



When you purchase a brick it includes engraving of a personal message, the name of a loved one, a business promotional message, or nearly anything else you prefer that fits on up to three lines of up to 21 characters per line. The engraving will last for a lifetime and the proceeds go directly to support the work of the Historical Society. The cost is \$200 per brick. Please go to our website at <https://whbhistorical.org/> and click on the Donation Form button on the home page. The Society appreciates your support!

Westhampton Beach Historical Society's 2023 Events Calendar

The Westhampton Beach Historical Society has scheduled a number of very worthy events for 2023. While our **June 17th Opening Cocktail Party** at the Tuthill House is now in the rearview mirror, the remaining events include the **Summer Exhibit**, which runs through September 16, the **July 8th Revolutionary War Reenactment on the Great Lawn** (see Page 4), and **craft demonstrations on our campus in July and August**. More events may be added as the year progresses - stay tuned.

June 17th to September 16th	Summer Exhibit , Tuthill House Museum Saturdays 10am to 1pm
July 8th	Revolutionary War Reenactment . Great Lawn
July 22rd to Aug 12th	Craft Demonstrations Saturdays 10am to 1pm
October 15th	Potluck Supper
December 3rd	Holiday Party



We received many positive comments on the first digital edition of the Historical Society's Newsletter and hope that you continue to enjoy this new format. If you have any comments or suggestions, please email our office at contact@whbhistorical.org

Coming in the next edition: Update on the **Dix Windmill**, progress on the **new gardens**, and more **upcoming events!**



Admiring the new garden plans at the Splash into Summer party!