



NEWSLETTER

WORKING TO PRESERVE OUR PAST IN ORDER TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

WINTER 2018

50th

Anniversary of the Queens Historical Society

CONTENT

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1 | 4 | 6 |
| ▶ QHS 50 th Anniversary | ▶ Democracy in Action | ▶ Exhibitions Now at QHS |
| 2 | ▶ More About Recent
Underground Railroad
Discoveries (cont. on pg 5) | ▶ Education Programs |
| ▶ Executive Director Letter | 5 | 7 |
| ▶ Message from QHS
President | ▶ More About Recent Under-
ground Railroad Discoveries | ▶ Supporters |
| 3 | ▶ What's in a Name? | 8 |
| ▶ Public Programming | | ▶ Membership Form |
| ▶ Our Logo's a Winner! | | |

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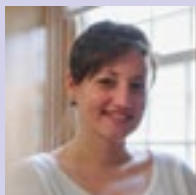
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Cover: Plaut Bros.' Department Store
& Jonas Millinery Co. on
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Writers



▶ Patricia B. Sherwood
Image Credit: Anthony O'Reilly



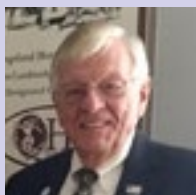
▶ Branka Duknic
Image Credit: Frank DiStefano



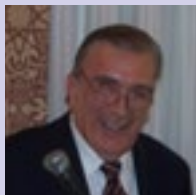
▶ Richard Hourahan
Image Credit: Alina Suriel



▶ Daniela Addamo
Image Credit: QHS website



▶ Joseph R. Brostek
Image Credit: Queens College



▶ Jim Driscoll
Image Credit: QHS

A Letter from the Executive Director

Branka Duknic

Dear Readers,

Freezing weather has been unkind to many this winter, but “the old that is strong does not wither, deep roots are not reached by the frost,” as J.R.R. Tolkien wrote. This year marks a significant moment for us. We are celebrating the 50th year of the Queens Historical Society.

Since its last move, Kingsland Homestead has been the headquarters of the Queens Historical Society. As one of the largest depositories of letters, artifacts, furniture and many other items significant for our County’s history and heritage — we have strived to preserve and protect our past. However, we are in dire need of overhaul and a safe storage environment for our collection. This is an appeal as much as a statement on the poor conditions of the basement areas that harbor high humidity, random fluctuations of temperature and potential rodent problems.

Things need to change and we are trying as much as possible. Thanks to Borough President Melinda Katz’s mindful patronage, we secured \$400,000 for a much needed roof replacement capital project. Nevertheless in historic houses, like Kingsland, our work is never done when it comes to renovations. Therefore, stay tuned for a big fundraiser we plan to organize in the Fall.

A Message from Queens Historical Society President

Patricia B. Sherwood

2018 is The Queens Historical Society’s year of celebration. We were founded in 1968 as the Kingsland Preservation Committee; therefore, this is our Golden 50th Year. This is time for anticipation, correction and reflection. Jack Eichenbaum is the Chairperson for the Anniversary Events. Among the plans being determined there will be a walking tour, a celebratory reception, and exhibit in November.

Reflection will be on our accomplishments, events, history, and personnel; all contributed to the formation of the Society. Under the direction of Connie De Martino, our most senior board member, we are organizing these memories.

On a brighter note, we are happy to announce new exhibition projects for late 2018 and early 2019. Democracy in Action – Art and the New Deal in Queens will be featured at various locations ranging from Astoria to Woodside, reminding us of the deep impact of the New York City based artists in the first half of the 20th century.

Our very own Kingsland Homestead will house an exhibition titled Double Vision-Queens through the Lens of Visual Poetry where talented young poet Rosanna Oh and graphic artist Loide Marawanga will show their full take on collaborations between writers and visual artists. The challenge is to bring context and complexity of the written word to blend with visual representation(s).

We are also proud to collaborate with Flushing Town Hall once more and bring a distinguished set of New York City and Amherst (Massachusetts) artists to chart paths through language and place in the new multimedia installations. The exhibition titled Of Soil and Tongues will aim to publish poetry in three-dimensional space and different languages spoken in Queens and New York City in general. The artists featured are: Lê T.D. Thúy, Vietnamese-American poet; Afghan-American visual artists Sahar Muradi and Laimah Osman.

Stay tuned for more and, as always, follow us on relevant social media conduits.

Correction is part of growing. In examining the procedures of the Society, our primary concern is our Collection Criteria, how we adhere to our mission, and follow the Museum Collection Standards.

We take pride in being a community oriented resource. Our educational programs have been developed to fulfill the mandates of the Department of Education. Memorable events are the annual family reception for the student winners of the Art Society Contest and the Holiday Historic House Tour.

A heartfelt thanks in recognition of the contributions and donations from the Euler Foundation, One Point of Light, Historic House Trust, The Women’s Club of Forrest Hills, Virginia A. Crosby, Joan Hellmant, Allan Roberts, and Patricia Sherwood.

Public Programming

Daniela Addamo

This cold winter season has been heating up at Queens Historical Society with our most popular kids workshops! These workshops range from our Colonial Toys and Games programs to the Road to Freedom: Paper Quilting. The Road to Freedom program is a great way to celebrate Black History Month in February for fifth graders covering U.S. History leading up to the American Civil War. We are also launching the official It's Electric! workshops which is a continuation of the pilot program we taught last year to the eighth grade students at P.S./M.S. 164Q. Please refer to page 5 for more details.

The 30th Annual Holiday Historic House Tour was a great event this year especially with new added features. Not only did we celebrate a special anniversary for the tour, we also included the Centennial of the Women's Suffrage Movement. Each house celebrated an important woman who was influential to the families of the seven historic houses featured in the tour. For the first time in many years, a culminating concert was also included in the Holiday Historic House Tour! In addition to the seven houses which participated, we would like to thank John Cho and Maureen Hoon from the

Flushing Chamber of Commerce who have been instrumental in their involvement with this event. Speaking of anniversaries, the 50th anniversary of Queens Historical Society is coming up, so stay tuned for details about a special celebration this fall!

A large part of the mission of the Queens Historical Society is to offer low-cost educational programs to the community. For seniors, we offer specially discounted events ranging from lectures and discussions to group tours of Kingsland Homestead Historic House (our headquarters) and any of our year-round exhibits.

We are currently appealing to local council members for the SU CASA grant funded by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Aging. As part of this program, Professor Elizabeth DiGiorgio, an accomplished artist who has been teaching Art and Design at Queensborough Community College, will be leading sessions at the designated senior center. Her collaboration with QHS dates back to the Practicing Equality: Quakers in Queens, 2013 exhibition, where she displayed her artwork featuring blossoming images and nature-related forms. The aerial perspectives of Professor Digwiorgnio's images evoke a feeling of transcendence, by merging still life and landscape sensibilities.

The project Quilting Nature: Echoes of a Changing World will develop and enhance the seniors' observational skills through a series of sessions aimed to engage their memories of changing natural surroundings ranging from early childhood to the present. The comparative memories of their local experiences with nature will materialize in a collaborative painting project and culminate with an exhibition of their art projects. We hope that our efforts will be granted to provide this interactive program to seniors living in the borough of Queens.



▼ Collections Manager, Richard Hourahan speaking to Historic House Tour group, 2017. Image credit Queens Historical Society.

Our Logo's a Winner!

Christina Bozsik

The Queens Historical Society underwent a rebranding in July 2017.

Former QHS Graphic Designer Richard Prior of Richard Prior Designs renovated, revamped, and reimagined QHS's identity. In January of 2018, Richard's hard work and The Queens Historical Society's new image, was recognized on an international level. Our logo was awarded first prize in the 2017 Charity & Non-Profit category by the International Visual Identity Council. The IVIC is made up of an international roster of top-tier Designers and creative thinkers. We are so proud of Richard Prior and are thrilled to have an award winning brand.



▼ Pattern of the Queens Historical Society's official logo in full color.



▼ Knockout of the Queens Historical logo with the "Discover Queens" tagline Rich Prior coined for QHS.

Democracy in Action- Art and the New Deal in Queens

Richard Hourahan,
Collections Manager

“I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people.”

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 2, 1932

When Roosevelt uttered these words the United States was in a deep economic depression — 25% of Americans were unemployed; the New York Stock Exchange had fallen 90% over the previous three years. In March, 1933, Roosevelt was inaugurated as President. Over the next three years he introduced programs to alleviate the economic suffering of Americans. Collectively they are referred to as the “New Deal” — Banking Reform, Emergency Relief, Work Programs, Agricultural Programs, Union Protection, Social Security, Aid to Tenant Farmers and Migrant Workers.

One of the agencies designated to carry out Roosevelt’s employment goals was the Works Progress Administration. In Queens people were employed by it to build LaGuardia Airport, the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge, the Triborough Bridge, the World’s Fair and Flushing-Meadows Corona Park, Alley Pond Park, numerous streets and sewers, Astoria Park, IND subway stations — Elmhurst Avenue, Grand Street, Woodhaven... and the rest of the stations through Rego Park, Forest Hills, Kew Gardens, Briarwood and Jamaica. Numerous

More About Recent Underground Railroad Discoveries

Jim Driscoll,
Vice President for History

In the Spring 2017 Newsletter edition, I tried to bring you up to date on our Underground Railroad research¹ and I said that I recently met the newly hired Bowne House archivist, Charlotte Jackson.

In going through the Bowne House collection, Ms. Jackson came across a letter from the Reverend Simeon Jocelyn of Williamsburg,

schools and playgrounds were built or repaired — among them Bayside High School. On the cultural front the Federal Art Project of the WPA was equally impactful. Some of the 20th century’s most renowned artists were its beneficiaries.

A series of exhibitions distributed across eight communities in Queens will be mounted in 2018/2019 about the art that was created by the New Deal in their schools, libraries, post offices and public housing. These communities are: Astoria, Cambria Heights, Corona, East Elmhurst, Long Island City, Richmond Hill, Woodhaven and Woodside. Collectively these exhibitions are titled: Democracy in Action: Art and the New Deal in Queens.

Philip Guston, created two murals in Queens, and in a 1965 interview spoke of his personal experience and view of the significance of the New Deal on Art and Artists:

The Federal Art Project was my training ground. I feel very strongly about this. We were all poor, or most of us, and to have the time and opportunity to continue working — I was in my twenties, which is the important period, the crucial period for the young painter — this was most important and figures significantly in my own development. The project kept me alive and working — it was my education.

When asked if the New Deal was good for American art Guston replied: I have two thoughts. That practically all the best painters of my generation developed on the New Deal projects such as Pollock, deKooning, Brooks, Greene and Baziotés. I could go on and on. My second thought is the reason it was good was because it had a broad base due to the economic situation we were in — the Depression — and

Brooklyn, a documented member of the Underground Railroad. He sent the letter to William Bowne Parsons and asked an African American, a fugitive from slavery, to deliver it. Jocelyn said in the letter that staying in Williamsburg was too dangerous. It was too close to Manhattan and it would be better if the fugitive stayed in Flushing a couple of days.

The African American was escaping to Canada from a Southern plantation with the help of the Underground Railroad. The UGGR was basically a series of hiding places, or “stations”, that took an individual from slave territory through the free states all the way to Canada. A “station” was a place to sleep and to get some food. The letter was dated September 28, 1850, a few weeks after the Fugitive Slave Bill was signed into law by President Fillmore.

all kinds of art and styles, plus all degrees of talent were employed. Everybody was given an opportunity to prove himself. The artists I mentioned, who have come such a long way, are proof of this.

In other words, democracy in action is democracy at its best.



▼ Guston, Philip, Working on Mural, 1940, Queensbridge. Image credit LaGuardia and Wagner Archives.



▼ Ruth Reeves Mural at William Cullent Bryant High School. Image credit Archives of American Art.

The slave states had long demanded a Federally enforced Fugitive Slave Law. Before 1850 there was a Federal Law but the enforcement of this law was left up to the states. Now a Federal Commission had the power to fine you or put you in jail if you were caught helping a fugitive. Some backed away from helping fugitives. Others, such as William Bowne Parsons, continued to run “Underground Railroad Stations”, the most dangerous thing you could do.

We didn’t know much about William Bowne Parsons but have since found out that he was the youngest son of Samuel Parsons and Mary Bowne. They married in 1806. Mary Bowne was raised in the Bowne House and was a direct descendant of John Bowne. Ms. Jackson researched the Federal Census of 1850 and discovered that William Bowne Parsons also

1 Bowne House Newsletter,
Autumn 2016, Pg 2.

Continued on pg 5 ➡

Continued from pg 4

lived at the Bowne House in 1850, the same year the Fugitive Slave Act was signed and that Jocelyn wrote the letter. Unfortunately, William Bowne Parsons died in his early thirties while on a visit to Vermont in 1856. Unlike his two older brothers, Samuel Bowne Parsons and Robert Bowne Parsons, he doesn't seem to have been involved in running the nursery. These two facts could explain why we know so little about him.

Many people always thought the Bowne House was somehow connected to the Underground Railroad. Years ago there were all sorts of stories about tunnels that began at the Bowne House and ended at Northern Boulevard or the Flushing Creek. Some time ago Professor James Moore and his Archaeology Students from Queens College did some digging around the Bowne House. They found some nice artifacts which were exhibited at the Flushing Library but they found no tunnels. I don't even know if they were looking for them because current research says there were few if any tunnels connected Underground Railroad Stations.

About a block west of the Bowne House is Union Street which is the street's name today and in 1850. On the western side of the street

was the Macedonian African Episcopal church which was also there in 1850. On the sidewalk next to the church is an elaborate N.Y.C. City Planning Commission Sign. On one side is a map showing the location of historic sites of the Flushing Freedom Mile. On the other side is a series of pictures and words giving the history of the Macedonia Church. It says that many of the church's members were involved in the UGGR. According to a pamphlet found at the Queens Archives in Jamaica, the pastor of the Macedonia Church in the early 1850s was the Reverend Edward Africanus and the pamphlet states that he hated slavery.

Slavery had been declared illegal New York State in 1827 and some of the African American members of the congregation were born into slavery or were the children or grandchildren of slaves. Many African Americans would be glad to help fugitives escape to Canada.

Having the assistance of free African Americans was beneficial because they knew where they were going if a fugitive had to be brought to the next Underground Railroad station. Free African Americans were generally well known locally so they would rouse little

suspicion if they were accompanying fugitives. Most importantly they knew who to avoid. A person could be arrested if caught violating the Fugitive Slave Law, so they knew who the local law officials were. And they always kept their eyes open for bounty hunters, people who would be paid if they returned African Americans to a plantation.

Thanks to Ms. Jackson's research² we now know that at least one member of the Parsons family was involved in the UGGR and that the Bowne House was most likely a "station" on the Underground Railroad. The people involved in writing and researching the Underground Railroad of Queens are very happy with the recent discoveries, as is N.Y. State Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubrey who gave us grants to undertake the project.

² Jackson, Charlotte: Bowne House Newsletter, Autumn 2017, Pgs 1-2.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Joseph R. Brostek, Trustee

I was honored when Dennis Walcott, President of the Queens Public Library, introduced me as a Trustee of the Queens Historical Society and historian of nearby Saint Andrew Avellino parish. I was very pleased that QHS Trustees were present (and seated!) at the standing room only event this past November. There were state and city elected officials who spoke, as did St. Andrew's Pastor Joseph T. Holcomb who provided a benediction.

The occasion was the unveiling of a bronze plaque commemorating Father Edward F. McGoldrick, the pastor who founded Saint Andrew Avellino parish in 1914 and the one who was responsible for the establishment of a public library in the community. As historian for the century-old parish, I knew that McGoldrick had been a strong proponent of reading and education. He knew that one day he would open a school. (He did so in 1925 and it is a thriving Academy today.)

His campaign for a library was successful and when it opened in 1929 it was called the Broadway Flushing Community Library. This revelation gave me a wonderful opportunity to

share some history with the audience especially the children from the SAA Academy chorus who sang "God Bless America" at the event. Many people did not know that Northern Boulevard had been called Broadway before it was renamed in 1916. This is why the neighborhood is called Broadway-Flushing and the nearby Long Island Railroad Station is called the Broadway Station.

Father McGoldrick had been a trustee of the Queens Public Library and soon after he died in 1930, the trustees voted to rename the library as the McGoldrick Branch Community Library. Over the years the library moved to a few different locations before coming to its present site at 154th St. and Roosevelt Avenue adjacent to Northern Boulevard. As a result of the relocations and renovations, the McGoldrick connection to the library was unfortunately lost. Being a local resident and frequent visitor to the library, I would ask the people on duty who McGoldrick was. Sad to say, many could not answer. As an historian, I was motivated to correct the situation.

There are 62 public library branches in Queens and almost all are geographically named Flushing Library, Jamaica Library, etc. Only four of them are named after human beings. The Poppenhusen Library in College Point has a bust of the famous businessman on display.

Langston Hughes Library in Corona displays his poetry. Steinway Library in Astoria features Mr. Steinway's portrait. The McGoldrick branch had just his name with no explanation of his connection. When I brought this to the attention of President Walcott, he fully agreed that something should be done to rectify the situation. His staff uncovered a beautiful picture of Father McGoldrick in the archives of the Queens Central Library. It was mounted on a bronze plaque along with text I prepared giving the background and history of the naming. The plaque we unveiled at the November ceremony now hangs in the library entrance. Happily, a very old question has been answered.



▼ (L. to R.) Rev. Joseph T. Holcomb, pastor of St. Andrew Avellino Parish, Dennis Walcott, President and CEO of Queens Library and Joseph Brostek, QHS Trustee & Parish Historian.

Exhibitions Now on View at Queens Historical Society

Off-street parking available in municipal lot at 37th Ave & Union St.

Days & Times for All Exhibitions:
Tuesday, Saturday & Sunday from
2:30 – 4:30 pm

Museum Admission:
\$5 General, \$3 Seniors/Students,
QHS Members are FREE

All programs and exhibits are held at the Kingsland Homestead unless otherwise noted.



Aunt Mary's Landing

Mary King Murray was affectionately referred to as "Aunt Mary" by her family. Aunt Mary resided at Kingsland from 1847 until the 1920s. She is the linchpin in the history of Kingsland and its owners from its construction in 1785 until its sale during the Depression of the 1930s. Aunt Mary saved numerous mementos from her great grandparents, grandparents, and her parents.

Displayed on Aunt Mary's Landing are these handed down memories along with other personal items that were part of her everyday life from childhood to adulthood.



Victorian Parlor

The Kingsland Victorian Room has been modeled to appear as it would have in the year 1870. This year was chosen because it represents a traditional period for the Murray family.

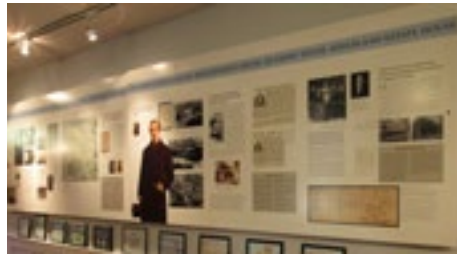


The Sport of Kings in Queens Celebrating 350 Years of Thoroughbred Horse Racing

On view October 8, 2017 – June 30, 2018

Queens has been a major center of thoroughbred horse racing since 1667 when King Charles II of England established here the first race course in his North American Possessions.

This exhibition details the history of this amazing sport in Queens from those early days 350 years ago to the present and its concomitant cultural, social and economic dimensions and relates stories of the sport's legends – horses, jockeys, trainers, and iconic races.



Kingsland: Past to Present

In our main hallway is a refurbished exhibit on the history of the Kingsland Homestead and the family that made it their home for over 100 years.



Weeping Beech Park

Come enjoy nature at work and watch as the buds on the Landmark Weeping Beech tree in America continue to grow and have their own daughters. While here, don't forget to look for the progress of our recently planted New-Town-Pippen apple tree.

Education Programs



The Road to Freedom: Paper Quilting Workshop

The Queens Historical Society offers a myriad of exciting hands on classroom activities for students to explore historical topics. One of our most popular workshops is *The Road to Freedom* which QHS has offered for over 10 years.

This art-based workshop focuses on the Underground Railroad, including secret messages that were encoded through patchwork quilts to help guide slaves to freedom. Students will create paper quilts using authentic symbols and messages.

Appropriate for grades: K – 6

Duration: 90 minutes

Price: \$150 per school group



IT'S ELECTRIC!

Thanks to our sponsor Con Edison, The Queens Historical Society presents a new iteration of *It's Electric* an educational program for middle schoolers. This program traces the development of power, beginning in the Colonial period to modern day! The advent of electricity in the late 19th century paved the way for the age of technology and QHS provides six different options for classes to explore this monumental cultural shift: Industrial Revolutions, Hydro Power, Solar Power, Wind Power, Electric Energy, and Satellite/GPS Systems. Please choose from one workshop for your class to explore together!

Appropriate for grades: 7 – 8

Duration: 60 minutes

Price: \$150 per school group

▼ Quilt image courtesy of Queens Historical Society. It's Electric! classroom image courtesy of Daniela Addamo.

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Individual (annually) \$30 _____

Senior (annually) \$20 _____

Student (annually) \$15 _____

Family (annually) \$50 _____

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Your donation could easily double (or triple) at no extra cost to you. Many firms have generous **"MATCHING GIFT"** programs which they encourage their employees to use. Ask if your company has such a program.

Membership in the Queens Historical Society begins in May and ends in April of the following year. Please make checks payable to the **Queens Historical Society** at **143-35 37th Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354**.

____ I am interested in becoming a Volunteer or Docent at the Queens Historical Society. Please contact me at the above phone number.

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