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# NEWSLETTER

WORKING TO PRESERVE OUR PAST IN ORDER TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

FALL 2016



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## Annual Meeting Report

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## A letter from the Executive Director

Branka Duknic



Patricia B. Sherwood  
Image Credits: Frank DiStefano

It this age of magnet High Schools the history of the schools that are “magnetized” is Lost. “ Here’s s song to her we love Jamaica tried and true. Source of all our dearest aims the school of Red and Blue”. The school song for Jamaica High School. June 1956 was a busy day at the house. Both my sister’s graduation from JHS109 and mine from Jamaica was scheduled on the same day. Diana graduated from the Queens Theater on Jamaica Ave in the morning and as luck would have it they split our High School graduating class of 914 into 2 sections fortunately I graduated in the afternoon. I played 3rd Trombone in the High School band which played for the ceremony. The selections included the March from the Prophets by Meyerbeer and In a Persian Garden . I went from High School to Queens College and Graduated from there in 1960[BA] 1963 {MsED} and a MLS . I take great pride

that I received all my Education from NYC Public Schools.

The class of June 1956 refused to let tradition die and will be celebrating a 60th Reunion this October at the Great Neck Inn on October 18th. We have celebrated our classmates achievements and I salute the spirit of those who count Jamaica High School as their Alma Mater. Members of our class have visited the Queens Historical Society and they applauded the effort to preserve our Borough’s History. Alumni from our school have distinguished themselves in many walks of life and now live here and across the country .

I would like to remember the classmates that made my time at Jamaica and a time to learn new things, meet new people that I count as friends even today.

## A Message from Queens Historical Society President

Patricia B. Sherwood



Patricia B. Sherwood  
Image Credits: Anthony O’Reilly

Our current exhibit, “Toys and Games From the Attic and Beyond!” has had and continues to have exposure in community newspapers and television. Thank You Joseph Brostek for reaching out to the press as well as Senior organizations and residences. Everyone who comes through the doors seems to enjoy the “jogs of memories.” Smiles appear on faces and eventually turn into wide grins. Comments from yesteryear are shared.

Carol Costello has been coaching the staff in the writing of grants for much needed funds. Up to date we received an award from Con Edison.

Jim Driscoll recently attended an unveiling of a WPA “found mural” at the New York City Health and Hospital site on 164th Street. This work of art by William Palmer had been discovered in the basement and now has a place of honor in the lobby. Extensive research on the artist was conducted by Patrick Symes.

We are in the process of reviewing our site rental agreement. This means of revenue is very important to us. We have to be cognizant of the fact that any activity in the museum is a reflection on the mission of our historical house.

Working meetings regarding the Kingsland Roof Replacement project began in the Spring and are continuing. We hope that the completion will be done before the end of 2018.

Branka and I attended a Welcome Party for John Krawchuk recently. He is the new director of the Historic House Trust. We are looking forward to him visiting our house soon. Kingsland is a member of the Trust since we are located on Parks Property.

We also met recently with Senator Toby Stavisky to ask for State funding. Capital funding is needed to erect an appropriate fence and signage for the Moore-Jackson Cemetery.

The staff and volunteers are working with the Board every day. New forces are so appreciated and I thank them for their support and allegiance.

Thank you for your donations:

Robert Miller  
Mary O’Hara  
Arthur and Millicent O’Meally

Hope to see you at the coming programs.

P.S. Look for the raffle of the handmade afghan made by Fran Varon at the Holiday Historic House event.

“ Autumn is here! Frost is in the air. The Queens Historical Society is ever changing and also remaining the same. ”

Branka Duknic, our Executive Director is back from her maternity leave. She and her husband welcomed a wonderful baby boy into the family this summer in the moth of June.

Andrea Zrake has left to investigate new horizons; Daniela Addamo is here as Educational Director and Outreach Coordinator.

# Public Programing Updates

Daniela Addamo

With the start of a new season we are enthusiastic to begin our newly developed public and educational programs. As mentioned in the President's letter, Con Edison has just approved a grant for an educational project to be facilitated at QHS called "Now It's Electric!". This program will use strategies and methods that will assist in the development of knowledge and appreciation for life and the use of power in Colonial America, to the use of electricity in the 20th century and its innovative applications in the 21st century. Engaging in interactive lessons and activities, the student will develop skills in communication and creativity. The workshop will feature various scientists who advanced the discoveries in the field of electrical engineering and physics.

In the spirit of the holiday season approaching, we are eager to announce our 29th Annual Holiday Historic House Tour taking place on Sunday, December 11th. This is a great opportunity to see seven historic houses in Queens and learn about their

unique histories! Be sure to check the website to find out how to purchase tickets.

The Queens Archaeology Talk, part of our lecture series this past summer, has been rescheduled to take place Sunday, October 23rd with Professor Jim Moore of the Queens College, City University of New York. Along with this lecture, Professor Moore has been involved with QHS and plans to do excavations in Moore-Jackson Cemetery in the future.

In addition to the "Now It's Electric" workshop, we have added a brand new workshop in our educational programs called "Victorian Crafts: Silhouette Portraits". This program was inspired by the Victorian History of the Kingsland Homestead and will teach students about popular items of style and culture during Victorian times. This is a fun, hands on class that allows students to learn as they create their very own silhouette portraits.

## What is New in the Collection?

Richard Hourahan

James Grabow of Morristown, New Jersey has donated many artifacts from his grandparents' cold water flat in the Dutch Kills section of Long Island City. Collectively they recreate the life of hard-working people enduring the Great Depression of the 1930s—kitchen items, sewing materials, clothing, tools, etc.

Life was extremely hard—Mr. Grabow has also provided a sobering and sometimes humorous narrative of the family's life—after-school activities such as shooting rats under the Queens Borough Bridge with an air rifle, after-school work such as plucking rats out of the brine vat at the Heinz Pickle factory at 5 cents per hour and gathering discarded coal from Silvercup Bakery to heat the apartment.

These items may be worth very little in monetary terms; however, as history they are a rare instance of material culture evoking a traumatic period of the United States.



Image Credits: Katherine Avalos

# GROWING UP IN QUEENS

## Fran Varon

I was born and raised in Bayside, on 201st Street, off 42nd Avenue, a dead-end street because the tracks of the Port Washington branch of the railroad ran there. Even though we were half-way up the block, I can still remember how the pictures on our kitchen wall vibrated as the trains ran through. I still recall the sounds of the train, but like all city noises, those sounds just became part of our everyday lives.

Our street looked typical of many city blocks, with its multiple family houses sitting closely together, narrow, shared driveways that led to parking nightmares, and lots of people. Back then, the families on our block were predominantly Italian, with a smattering of Czech and Irish. But Queens is home to so many cultures. Today, 201st Street is enjoyed by the next generation of immigrants; Asian, Western Indian, and Hispanic families now call it home.

In retrospect, it was a great place to grow up. What could be better than having your grammar school right across the street? I would rise 20 minutes before line-up in the schoolyard and make it there before the bell rang. My classmates ate in the school cafeteria, but I got to go home for lunch every day, where I knew I'd find my mother, sitting in front of the TV set watching Jeopardy with Art Fleming (Fleming was the first announcer, before Alex Trebec took the reins).

Right across the street and adjacent to the schoolyard was a city park, my park. It had everything a kid could want: swings, a sandbox, slides, monkey bars (no rubber matting underneath back then; you just tried not to fall), and a working shower right smack in the middle of the playground for summer cooling. We loved to cover the drain with towels, creating a little pool to splash around in. One of my favorite "friends," John the Parkee, was always there to talk with in the early summer mornings and to dispense all sorts of park toys, as long as you promised to bring them back! And throughout those hot, summer days, playing in the background was the music of The Yankees announcer, excitedly relaying the plays that would bring the "Bronx Bombers" another win.

In the summer evenings, 201st Street was filled with families sitting on their stoops, partially to chat with neighbors but mainly, I think, to

escape the sweltering heat inside. We kids loved this. Dinner was over, baths taken, pajamas on, we were allowed to sit outside too, and maybe even get to "visit" a friend who was sitting on a stoop with his or her family two houses away. If we were really lucky, one of the older children would treat us to a game of "Hide and Seek."

I think the best side effect of having a park across the street was the number of ice cream trucks that arrived throughout each summer day. Every day, three times a day, came Mr. Softee, Good Humor, and Melody Bar, one of my favorites. Melody Bar was an independent, run by my other best friend, "Artie the Ice-Cream Man." If I absolutely needed an ice cream sandwich but was short on change, Artie would front me the money, knowing he could find my parents right across the street.

The dead end afforded its own unique safety net for a kid playing outside during the summer. We didn't know it at the time, but that allowed us some freedoms that may not have been possible otherwise. We could ride bikes, roller skate, and push our doll carriages independently; no need for Mom to stoop what she was doing to watch us. We only needed "to stay on the block" and we were okay. When we got "old enough," maybe 9 or 10 years old, we graduated and could walk up the block to the next street, and spend our nickel or dime in Conlin's, the neighborhood candy store, owned by another very dear friend of mine, Mrs. Conlin, who lived in the apartment above the store. Going to Conlin's was always an exciting adventure, filled with thoughts about which gums or candies or maybe even pretzel rods we could buy with our precious change. It never got old.

Today, my niece raises her children in Dutchess County, only 90 minutes away from NYC, but it may as well be another country. Her children get plenty of fresh air and they often spot horses on the farm across the road, or see deer and rabbits enjoying their grass. It is idyllic for some, but there are no sidewalks to ride bikes on, and the children must be driven to the homes of friends if they want to play. I enjoy going there for a visit, but Queens is still the place for me.

## Remembrance of Jamaica High School

### Jean C Bartelt

It is this age of magnet High Schools the history of the schools that are "magnetized" is Lost. "Here's a song to her we love Jamaica tried and true. Source of all our dearest aims the school of Red and Blue". The school song for Jamaica High School. June 1956 was a busy day at the house. Both my sister's graduation from JHS109 and mine from Jamaica was scheduled on the same day. Diana graduated from the Queens Theater on Jamaica Ave in the morning and as luck would have it they split our High School graduating class of 914 into 2 sections fortunately I graduated in the afternoon. I played 3rd Trombone in the High School band which played for the ceremony. The selections included the March from the Prophets by Meyerbeer and In a Persian Garden. I went from High School to Queens College and Graduated from there in 1960[BA] 1963 {MsED} and a MLS. I take great pride that I received all my Education from NYC Public Schools.

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I would like to remember the classmates that made my time at Jamaica and a time to learn new things, meet new people that I count as friends even today.

Jean C Bartelt  
Class of June 1956  
Secretary to the Board of  
Queens Historical Society

# QUEENS

## AND THE NEW DEAL

**Jim Driscoll**

Recently, the Queens Hospital Center, the enormous city hospital on 164th Street in Jamaica, just north of the Grand Central Parkway, unveiled a New Deal mural in what seems to be a hallway just off the lobby of the administration building. The artist who did the mural, probably in 1934, was William Palmer and I think he did a wonderful job as did the hospital crew who restored it.

It was actually an unveiling because when everyone finished speaking they pulled away this large curtain, and some saw the mural for the first time. I had already seen the mural on the internet and thought it was dark and dreary but when I saw the actual painting I was more than pleasantly surprised.

It is called "Function of a Hospital" and it tells the story of many who came to the city hospital seeking help. First they are admitted then they are examined. If they are very ill they may be operated on. The operating room in all its brightness is shown. This leads to more examinations and if they are well they are released. The mural tells a great deal and

is very large, nearly 25 feet long and more than five feet wide. The mural doesn't pull any punches. Some of the people in it are hurting, probably from the Great Depression that was still going strong when the hospital opened in 1935. It was a godsend to have city hospital a short trolley ride from downtown Jamaica.

We used to call the old hospital Queens General and it was taken down around 1998. This allowed for the building of the new hospital now called the Queens Hospital Center around 2002. Some of the people at the unveiling remember seeing the mural at the old building and are glad to have it back.

A couple of times in the ceremony they said that Palmer worked for the WPA-FAP. This may not be true because he painted the "Function of a Hospital" in 1934 and WPA was started in 1935. He may have actually worked for a forerunner of the WPA called the PWAP (the Public Works of Art Project). This was started in December of 1933 and was shut down in the middle of 1934. A visit to the Queens Archives of the Queens Library

may have solved that problem. It has a booklet published in connection with an exhibition on New Deal art on Long Island that appeared at Hofstra University in 1978. The booklet lists all the known New Deal art in Queens. It says that Palmer did the painting in 1934 and that it was done for the PWAP. If you really want to know where the New Deal art is located this is a great place to start.

Thanks to research done by Patrick Symes, we know that eventually Palmer worked for the WPA-FAP. He was commissioned to paint three post office murals. The WPA (Works Project Administration) was probably the most famous of the New Deal agencies and eventually employed a couple of million workers. It had within it a small subdivision called the FAP (Federal Art Project) which commissioned artists like Palmer. No matter who he worked for, the artist proves to anyone that has seen the mural he is an exceptional artist in which case I am glad that the government put him to work beautifying Queens General.



**Long Island City Courthouse**

Image Credits: Woodruff Brown Photography

## Does it Look familiar?

If you guessed the Long Island City Courthouse, you are correct !

Originally built in the 1870's, restored and expanded in 1904 after a severe fire, the Courthouse continues to serve as one of the homes for the county' civil term. Known for both exterior and interior ascetics, the Courthouse was rebuilt in a neoclassic style featuring a grand staircase covered in marble.

The Courthouse was used as the site for many noteworthy trials including those of Willy Sutton, Ruth Snyder, and Henry Judd Gray. The Courthouse was also used as the setting in Alfred Hitchcock's "the Wrong Man" and Cecil B. deMille's "Manslaughter" and continues as a setting for film and television production today.

## All programs & exhibits are held at the Kingsland Homestead unless otherwise noted

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

**Museum Admission:**  
\$5 General,  
\$3 Seniors/Students,  
QHS Members are FREE  
Exhibitions Now on View at QHS

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

## Exhibitions Now on View at Queens Historical Society



### 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.



### 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 mementoes 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.



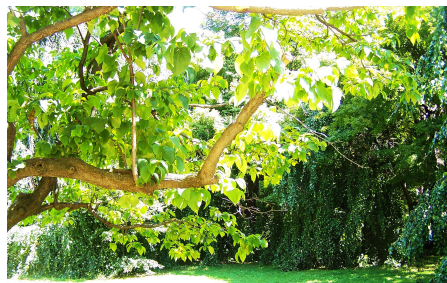
### Toys & Games From the Attic and Beyond!

Step back into your childhood and experience the magic of the toys of yesteryear. Indulge yourself in nostalgia, learn about toys and games from across the world, and discover toys you've never even heard of! The Queens Historical Society presents our newest exhibition, Toys & Games From the Attic and Beyond! This exhibit features dozens of playthings and collectibles -- everything from an antique Chinese pinball game to a Star Wars collection to the Queens-born Fantastic Mr. Machine! Learn about the importance and history of generations of toys and games. On view from July 2016 to June 2017.



### 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.



### 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.

## Upcoming Events – Fall 2016

### Queens Archaeology Talk Sunday, October 23 @ 2:30 – 4:30PM

Professor Jim Moore of the Queens College, City University of New York will be joining us at the Queens Historical Society for an archaeology of Queens County Talk. Dr. Moore is an Associate Professor with research interest in European Prehistory, Historical Archaeology, Hunter-Gatherer Studies; focusing on Eastern North America and Ireland in particular. He has a strong connection with QHS as he has done archaeological surveys at the historic Moore-Jackson Cemetery in Woodside, and plans to do excavations there in the months ahead.

### Holiday Historic House Tour Sunday, December 11 @1:00 – 5:00PM

Celebrate the holiday season with seven Queens historic sites and learn about their unique histories!

Set your own pace and visit as many sites as you choose. One ticket is good for all seven sites (The Kingsland Homestead, Voelker Orth House, Lewis H. Latimer House Museum, Friends Meeting House, Flushing Town Hall, the Bowne House, and the Louis Armstrong House Museum). Each historic house offers tours, sponsors activities, and provides refreshments and snacks. Many of the house will have musical performances throughout the day, holiday crafts to make and take, and historically-themed seasonal displays and decorations.

The six sites are within walking distance. Shuttle bus transportation will be available between sites. There will be a dedicated shuttle that runs between Flushing Town Hall and the Louis Armstrong House Museum.

Ticketing information is available online at:  
<http://hhht2016.eventbrite.com/>

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**Further events will be announced through our social media.**

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*multiply the good*

## QUEENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY SITE RENTAL

Did you know, you can rent space at the  
Kingsland Homestead?

Both the Kingsland homestead and surrounding Weeping Beech Park are available for weddings, business meetings, bridal shower, children's parties and other private events. If you are interested in finding out more information on site rentals at the Kingsland Homestead, please contact us at:

Tel: 718.939.0647

Email: [info@queenshistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@queenshistoricalsociety.org)

SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON  
HOW TO BECOME A BUSINESS MEMBER OF THE QUEENS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**QUEENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**\*If you would like to share info with readers about Queens history or your life in Queens, please send to us at:\***

**143-35 37th Ave Flushing NY 11354 Attn: Newsletter or Email: info@queenshistoricalsociety.org**

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Yes, I would like to become a member of the *Queens Historical Society* or give a gift of membership. My contribution will help preserve the Kingsland Homestead and the history of the Borough of Queens.

Individual (annually) \$30 \_\_\_ Senior (annually) \$20 \_\_\_ Student (annually) \$15 \_\_\_ Family (annually) \$50 \_\_\_  
Business (annually) \$250 \_\_\_ Life \$500 \_\_\_ Benefactor \$1000 \_\_\_

Gift Membership \_\_\_ Donation (tax deductible) \_\_\_ Company Matching Gift Program \_\_\_ TOTAL \_\_\_

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FIRST TIME MEMBER \_\_\_ RENEWAL \_\_\_ GIFT MEMBERSHIP \_\_\_

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 #.