

NEWSLETTER

WORKING TO PRESERVE OUR PAST IN ORDER TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

SPRING 2019

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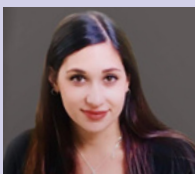
▶ Patricia B. Sherwood
Image Credit: Anthony O'Reilly



▶ Branka Duknic
Image Credit: QHS



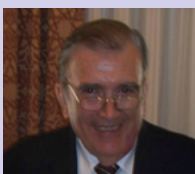
▶ Richard Hourahan
Image Credit: Alina Suriel



▶ Daniela Addamo
Image Credit: QHS



▶ Jack Eichenbaum
Image Credit: Neighborhood Slice



▶ James Driscoll
Image Credit: QHS



▶ Rob MacKay
Image Credit: Rob MacKay

Letter from the Executive Director

Branka Duknic

Dear Readers,

In the depth of winter there's an invincible summer, according to Albert Camus. Our spring newsletter tries to bring a touch of warmth to our visitors. Each season we aim to present a plethora of new and vibrant programs that expand our horizons on diverse issues. From civic activism of the Sri Lankan diaspora, with the Matangi/Maya/M.I.A. biographical documentary film, to lectures on the early history of cinema in Queens, we attempt to show the cosmopolitan nature of our borough.

We continue to emphasize on the Queens-wide nature of our exhibitions and related events by showcasing projects that aim to inform New Yorkers about the amazing scientists, visual and performing artists who made our borough a cultural hub.

These include extraordinary individuals like the jazz pianist McCoy Tyner, recognized as one of the great musicians of his era. From 1960 – 1965, Tyner was a member of the John Coltrane Quartet (a.k.a. The Classic Quartet). The other members were Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Elvin Jones (drums). At times, during this period, Tyner resided in Springfield Gardens.

Or the Randall sisters, Lisa and Dana, two outstanding female scientists who grew up in Fresh Meadows. Professor Lisa Randall is a theoretical particle physicist and cosmologist at Harvard University. Her research connects theoretical insights to puzzles in our current understanding of particle physics, and Dana Randall is the current Co-Executive Director of the Institute for Data Engineering and

Science and the Professor of Computing and Mathematics at the Georgia Institute of Technology. It is our intention to make their stories known to parents and daughters of Fresh Meadows and Oakland Gardens and to encourage more young women to enter the science field.

We have partnered with the Lewis H. Latimer House Museum and will feature Debbie Allen, project manager in charge of moving the home of African-American inventor and electrical pioneer Lewis Howard Latimer (1848 – 1928). Mrs. Allen will recount the incredible journey, thirty years ago, of the Lewis Latimer House move, and the remarkable collaboration between a small group of devoted Flushing advocates, dozens of city agencies and public utilities. The Queens Historical Society is proud to have taken a lead role in this successful endeavor back in the late 1980s. The Latimer House site today is situated in Leavitts Field, Flushing.

We're off to a good start and our organization is proud to announce its engagement through the *Cultural Immigrant Initiative*, grant awarded by NYC Councilman Robert Holden. Students of PS 71 in Ridgewood will take part in a collaborative exhibition by creating self-portraits using objects and symbols that represent their multicultural identity.

Last but not least — Kingsland Homestead Roof Replacement Project spearheaded by the NYC Department of Design and Construction will be underway in early Spring. However, this is just the beginning. We are raising capital funds badly needed to preserve and protect QHS's collection spanning over 250 years of Queens history and material culture. Please spread the word and raise awareness for better storage conditions needed for the preservation of valuable maps, photographs, artifacts in dire need of proper storage space. Let me end with paraphrasing the Roman philosopher Cicero: a place without its history is like a body without a soul!

COVER: (Left to Right)

"Pentagram Invasion", James Hsieh, Winter 2018 @ Queens Crossing (Photo by Aliana Prior née Ramdass). MATANGI MAYA M.I.A. Documentary Official Image. Stephan Chirinian, 2017 Art & History Contest 5th Grade 1st Place Winner. "Luz de Maxikiosco", Tom Fruin, Winter 2017 @ Queens Crossing (Photo by Aliana Prior née Ramdass). "Beyond the Rocks" starred the screen's first sex symbol, Rudolph Valentino, on the right, alongside Gloria Swanson, Produced by Jesse L. Lasky, 1922.

Message from Queens Historical Society President

Patricia B. Sherwood

Since the Autumn Newsletter, a significant event was held. Surrounded by family and friends, Queens Historical Society celebrated its 50th Anniversary. November 8, 2018 at the Queens Botanical Garden, a warm and congenial setting. Ebony Wiggins, staff member of QBG supervised the set up and provided support that was invaluable. Susan Lacerte, Executive Director displayed the epitome of warmth and was a true model of inter-organizational hospitality, as noted by Jack Eichenbaum, chairperson of the celebration. The celebratory feeling was contagious throughout the evening. Positive comments that were noted included, “never saw the room look so good” — “a special thank you to QBG for the loan of the pumpkin centerpieces.” “If I knew it would be this nice, I would have come earlier.”

The relaxed friendly evening was a true testimonial to all the guests present. Introductions, recognition, reacquaintance and communication expounded. A special thank you to all, who worked to make this a remarkable and profitable occasion.

Public Programming

Daniela Addamo

QHS is kicking off the spring season determined to broaden our programming to include more film screenings and talks that deal with specific immigrant communities in Queens and the captivating history of early cinema in our borough. QHS is also proud to cover topics that speak to a variety of interests including: sports history, art history, poetry, film, folk music, literature, photography, and more!

For those who have an interest in political activism and music you don't want to miss our film screening March 9th, on the British-Sri Lankan singer and songwriter Matangi / Maya / M.I.A. This is a documentary featuring M.I.A.'s life and her journey from being a daughter of the Tamil resistance fighters during the Sri Lankan Civil War, to a refugee, immigrant, and eventually, star. As part of our ongoing *Immigrant Voices* initiative to tell the stories of Queens immigrants living in the most culturally diverse area in the world, this

The honorees were surrounded by their relatives and friends. All were very generous and very complimentary to the hostesses. The souvenir journal was a reflection and compilation of tributes and history.

If you missed it, enjoy the pictures; if you were there, enjoy the evening again by looking at the photos.

December 2 was the opening of the *Erasures* Exhibit featuring the works of Rosanna Oh and designed by Loide Marwanga. It truly felt like a SoHo event. The house seemed to be bursting at its seams.

The next weekend featured the Historic House Holiday Tour. New visitors were greeted and with the usual complaints, most enjoyed the effort put forth by the various houses, refreshments and staff.

Winter has set in. Spring programs are in place. Please note that the Board continues to expand and accept new members. Our goals are being reviewed and restated. However, your active participation and contributions help us to grow. The first 50 years are a strong foundation for the next golden years. Our worries are our driveway, the roof, the floors and our collection. Please note, your support is crucial.

documentary reaches the large Sri Lankan communities in Queens. Topics also covered in this award winning film extend to human rights and political activism. As a continuation of our focus on film this season, join us March 31st to hear historian Jason D. Antos discuss how Queens played an integral part in the early days of cinema.

Since the official launch of our *It's Electric* programming the previous year, QHS is extending the workshops into weekend activities for families. These workshops, dealing with the history of power from the Colonial era to the present, are typically only available for scheduled school groups. During the spring and summer months, families will have the opportunity to bring their children for a fun and hands-on learning experience that deals with specific types of energy. The first workshop this season on April 7th, *Circuits and Currents: It's Electric*, will focus on teaching kids how currents work by putting together their very own circuit to make a light bulb turn on! For more details about future programming please turn to page 6 .

In Memoriam: Carol Gillen Costello

With a heavy heart, we are sad to announce that Carol Gillen Costello, a longtime member of the Board of Directors and the former Treasurer of the Queens Historical Society, passed away this past year. The cause of death was cancer.

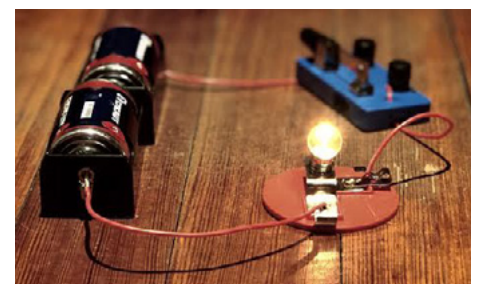
Carol was a beloved member on our Board, and we were very fortunate to have worked with her. She was very active in the community, and was part of several other organizations including the Irish Institute, Knights of St. Patrick, and many more.

Carol was a retiree of the NYC Department of Education, where she worked at various Bronx high schools for 8 years, before becoming a School Principal for 10 years.

It was Carol's wish to designate the Queens Historical Society as the non-profit organization of choice for any donations that will be made in her honor. Our sincerest condolences to Carol's family, son Michael, daughter-in-law Heather, and granddaughters Amanda and Karina.



▼ Image Credit: “Matangi / Maya / M.I.A.”, Documentary official press image.



New Book Shares a Queens Neighborhood's Patriotic Support — and Losses — During World War I

Rob MacKay, Trustee

More than 650 College Point residents enthusiastically enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War I. They were heroes in their Queens neighborhood whose population was about 80 percent German-American at the time. The tight-knit community was proudly patriotic, and many of these native sons got high-energy farewell parades during which bands would play polkas and revelers would sing in German.

Then, the youths — with last names such as Breisacher, Mohrmann, and Schmidt — would go to boot camp to train to fight...the Germans. Meanwhile, others stayed home and worked in the local factories that produced materials — everything from gun barrels to rifle shells to submarine chasers to airplanes — that went to the effort to kill...Germans.

Residents loved the USA, but they also ate bratwurst, spoke the Mother Tongue, danced the waltz, and sang in "mannenkorens" or men's choirs.

Such was life in College Point in the early 1900s. Residents loved the USA, but they also ate bratwurst, spoke the Mother Tongue, danced the waltz, and sang in "mannenkorens" or men's choirs.

James E. Haas reports on this unique moment of history in his new book "To Honor Fallen Heroes: How a Small, German-American Village in New York City Experienced the Great War."

The College Point native, whose sister still lives there, begins with an overview of the area in the

late 19th and early 20th centuries. The middle class neighborhood was known for its industry and the legacy of Conrad Poppenhusen, a 19th century magnate from Hamburg who struck it rich with rubber before becoming a benefactor who donated land, brought in a railroad, and built the Poppenhusen Institute, a community center that still exists today. It was also a summertime destination for day-trippers from Manhattan who flocked to the beer gardens and beaches. (Yes, the adjacent East River was clean back then.)

Haas also puts this hamlet in the context of national issues such as labor strife, anti-German sentiment, espionage scandals, and an influenza epidemic. Then, he gets to the book's main focus: Telling the stories of the 28 local soldiers who died during World War I.

Presented in chronological order, these vignettes read like obituaries, providing basic information about the fallen heroes' lives, families, and experiences. Some died from combat wounds. Others died of diseases. Suicide was also an issue.

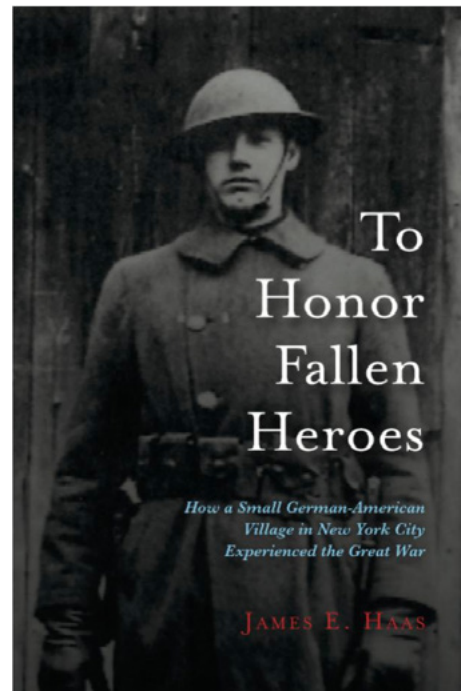
To gather information, Haas, who graduated from St. John's University in 1965, looked at genealogical notes, read books obtained via library loans, explored Ancestry.com, and perused old newspaper clippings. He shares some photos, but their quality isn't very high due to technological issues. (Some images were scanned from Memorial Day programs from the 1920s.)

In a phone conversation, Haas stressed that most College Point residents were third-generation Americans by World War I's outbreak in 1914. He never found anything to indicate that members of the population were rooting for the Germans. He also argued that the book is more about history than a certain geographical location.

"I wrote it about College Point, but it's really about what the ordinary soldier, sailor, and marine experienced in the war," he said. "You read the funny parts, the horrible parts."

Haas currently lives in Maryland, but this is his fourth book on his hometown. His other works are "This Gunner at His Piece: College Point, New York & The Civil War, With Biographies of the Men Who Served," "Conrad Poppenhusen: The Life of a German-American Industrial Pioneer," and "St. Fidelis Parish in College Point, NY: The First Seventy-Five Years — 1856 – 1931."

"To Honor Fallen Heroes" costs \$20 per copy via <https://store.bookbaby.com/book/To-Honor-Fallen-Heroes> with an extra \$3 charge for shipping. It's also for sale at Amazon and Barnes & Noble. For signed copies, contact Haas via email at jehaas@comcast.net.



▼ Cover Credit: Sgt. John Harold Embree; Jeb Embree. "To Honor Fallen Heroes" Book.

Recent Donation to the QHS Collection

Richard Hourahan,
Collections Manager

We are extremely proud and grateful to receive a donation of manuscripts and ephemera from Jon A. Peterson, Professor Emeritus of Queens College and former Chair of its History Department.

Jon is an American historian and educator — Member of the Organization of American Historians, the Society of Architectural Historians (from which he won the Spiro Kostof Award in 2005), the Society for American City and Regional Planning History and the Urban History Association.

The donation covers the period from 1980 when, with a Mellon fellowship, he founded a seminar in Queens History until his retirement in 2005. This interval of time was a significant one in Queens and his choice of focus was extremely prescient.

Professor Peterson received a BA in History from Swarthmore College; an MA in American History from Ohio State University and a Doctor of Philosophy in American History from Harvard University. His professional career as an academic was at CUNY, Queens College from 1966 – 2005.

Finding Out About Our Past

James Driscoll, VP for History

In early May 2018, the Queens Historical Society and the Voelker Orth Museum co-sponsored a walking tour of Flushing Cemetery. Fred Gerber, Chuck Wade and I were the guides. A number of well-known people such as Bernard Baruch, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Joseph Hellman (the founder of Hellman's Mayonnaise) are buried here. Here, as are people closely associated with the sponsoring organizations, such as Mary Murray ("Aunt Mary") and Conrad Voelker.

Our first stop was of the plot owned by a Society of French War Veterans. They had a list of French wars at the front of the plot. America was not involved in some of the wars, such as that in Algeria. In others, such as World War II, France and America were very much involved. Most of the people buried here were born in France, became American citizens, fought in French Wars and were members of the Society.

The Queens Historical Society at Fifty

Jack Eichenbaum, Queens Borough Historian and QHS Board Member

In 1965, Kingsland, the eighteenth century structure that is now home to Queens Historical Society, QHS, was moved from its location in the Murray Nurseries to its present site in Weeping Beech Park. The move was a response to the creation of the Murray Hill shopping center on what was formerly nursery land in the Murray Hill section of East Flushing. Kingsland became the first city historical landmark in Queens later that year after the NYC Landmarks law was passed. Three years later, in 1968, the Queens Historical Society nucleated in Kingsland.

Over the next fifty years, Kingsland was transformed into offices, meeting space, a library, archival storage and exhibit space. QHS was steered by a board of directors and a series of presidents. Recent presidents were Stanley Cogan, also Queens Borough Historian, and our current president, Patricia B. Sherwood.

On November 8, 2018, QHS formally celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a party held at the Queens Botanical Garden. This site was

In this plot we were looking for the grave of Eugene Bullard, an African American born in Georgia in 1895. According to an article written by Dominick Pisano on The Smithsonian Air and Space Museum website, Bullard as a young man stowed away on a German ship that would take him to Europe. He traveled around Europe and worked at many odd jobs. Bullard ended up in France when the Germans invaded in 1914, starting World War I. He joined the French Foreign Legion and fought in many of the early battles, such as Verdun. Bullard fought well and was allowed to join the Lafayette Squadron. Many of the members of the squadron were American volunteer flyers who fought for France a couple of years before America joined the war. Bullard joined the squadron as a machine gunner but was soon taught how to fly so he took to the air.

In 1917 America joined the war and took over the Lafayette Squadron. Bullard asked to join the squadron, but was told no. According to the Smithsonian he was turned down because was an African American. He joined the regular French army and remained a member till the end of the war. As a soldier he won many medals including the Croix de Guerre, France's highest military honor. Bullard must have been an extraordinary soldier.

not only large enough for the more than 100 persons in attendance but also has a special role in the historical geography of Queens which I spoke about at the celebration.

The Queens Botanical Garden is situated in a valley where much of the drainage from eastern Queens flows on its path to the wetlands later transformed into Flushing Meadow Corona Park, thence to Flushing Creek and Flushing Bay. During the late nineteenth century this valley became the locus of a railroad which has disappeared but has left a lasting influence on the landscape of eastern Queens.

In 1869 Alexander Stewart, who had made a fortune in NYC's first true department store, bought a large tract of land in the town of Hempstead, then still part of Queens County. His goal was to build a "Garden City" similar to the suburban developments pioneered in England along railroad lines. But there were no railroads serving that part of Queens County!

Partnering with Conrad Popenhusen, who had already invested in railroads to Flushing and College Point, the Central Rail Road of Long Island (CRRLI) was built in the early 1870's to serve the new suburb of Garden City. This route proved treacherous and was eventually abandoned a few years later for a route served by the LIRR's mainline. But the route of the CRRLI lives on in a series of

In the 1920's he fell in love with American jazz and started a popular nightclub in Paris where Louis Armstrong once played. In 1940 the Germans once again invaded France this time taking over the country. The Germans used to go to Bullard's club so the French Underground asked him to spy on the Germans. The Germans found out what Bullard was doing so the underground smuggled him out of the country. Eventually Bullard reached New York where he lived till he died 1961.

Wright-Patterson Airforce Base in Ohio has a U.S. Air Force Museum where you can see all of Bullard's honors given by French Government. The Smithsonian says that he might have been the first African American military pilot. Bullard was asked to return to France by the French government to participate in ceremonies honoring the Unknown Soldier and the lighting of the eternal flame. He was one of three decorated French soldiers asked to participate.

In 1994 he was posthumously given the rank of second lieutenant by the Air Force. Finding Bullard's grave hasn't been easy, but with one of his admirers decorating the tomb with a model of a WWI biplane, it has become somewhat easier.

parks in the Kissena Park corridor and Fresh Meadows, Stewart Avenue in Hollis Hills and the Creedmoor properties.

The Queens Botanical Garden was first built on the fairgrounds within Flushing Meadow Park for the 1939 - 40 World's Fair. For the second fair, 1964 - 65, the garden was moved to its present site to the east of the park. Several years ago with a "green" renovation, drainage was incorporated into building design and garden layout.

Patricia B. Sherwood emceed the evening and board member Connie De Martino oversaw the creation of the accompanying journal. Honored guests were Peter Koo, city councilman for the central Flushing area home to both QHS and the Garden and Joan Kindler, a veteran QHS member and stalwart supporter of the Flushing Quaker Meeting House.

Special thanks to Carlos Varon for his photographs, and to numerous members of the QHS staff, board and volunteers. Thanks also to the Queensboro Symphony Orchestra that provided the string trio for live background music, to Susan Lacerte who facilitated our use of the space at the Garden, our caterers, journal sponsors, attendees and raffle donors. The work and efforts of many helped to produce a wonderful gala!

Exhibitions Now on View at Queens Historical Society

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

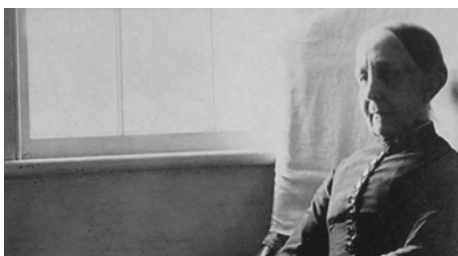
Days & Times for All Exhibitions:

Tuesday, Saturday & Sunday from 2:30 – 4:30 pm

Museum Admission:

\$5 General, **\$3** for Students, Seniors, and Visitors With Disabilities (Care Partner **FREE** of Charge), **FREE** for Members, **FREE** for Children Under 12

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.



ERASURES Exhibition

On view until September 9, 2019

Queens is one of the most ethnically diverse urban areas in the world and is comprised of multi-generational immigrant families.

Erasures exhibition is a collaboration between Pushcart Prize nominee poet Rosanna Oh and graphic artist and filmmaker Loide Marwanga. Both artists spent their childhoods in immigrant communities. The exhibition visually and verbally encompasses the expressive, notional, communicative, and formal aspects of language through poetry informed by the works of Walt Whitman, US Poet Laureates Robert Hayden and Louise Glück.



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.

Spring 2019 EVENTS

*Unless otherwise noted regular admission prices apply. More Information for each event can be found on the QHS website.

Saturday, March 9
2:30pm – 4:30pm

Matangi / Maya / M.I.A
Documentary Screening

Location: Queens Historical Society

Price: \$10 General Admission

\$7 for Students / Seniors

Link: <https://bit.ly/2F9VcEA>

Sunday, March 31
2:30pm – 4:30pm

The History of the Motion
Pictures in Queens

Presented by QHS

More Info: QHS Website

Location: Queens Historical Society

Sunday, April 7
11:00am – 12:30pm

Circuits and Currents: Its Electric!

Grades: 6 – 8

Location: Queens Historical Society

Price: \$10 per child

Link: <https://goo.gl/9j2ygf>

Friday, April 12

22nd Annual Art & History Contest

Presented by QHS

Entry Deadline: April 12th, 2019

Reception: Saturday, May 11th, 2019

Location: Queens Historical Society

Sunday, May 5
2:30pm – 4:30pm

Lewis H. Latimer House and Its
Historic Ride through Flushing
Co-Hosted with Lewis Latimer
House Museum

Location: Queens Historical Society

Price: \$5 General Admission

\$3 for Students / Seniors

Sunday, May 19

The New York Landmarks
Conservancy — Sacred Sites
Walking Tour

Check QHS website for updates!

Price: FREE

Location & Time: TBA

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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 showers, 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:

718.939.0647

www.queenshistoricalsociety.org

Become a Member!

Enjoy the benefits!

- ▶ Free museum admission
- ▶ Discounted admission to our programs
- ▶ Invitations to our special events and Exhibition Openings
- ▶ Copy of our newsletter
- ▶ 10% discount on all publications in our gift shop

See the last page for instructions on how to become a member of the Queens Historical Society.

Donate

Tax-deductible!

Donations are tax deductible & can be made to support any of our programs or for general operating purposes.

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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 _____

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First Time Member _____ Renewal _____ Gift Membership _____

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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.

If you would like to share information with readers about Queens history or your life in Queens, please send it to us at: 143-35 37th Ave Flushing NY 11354 Attn: Newsletter or Email: info@queenshistoricalsociety.org