




WE GO OUT ON A LIMB


SUMMER 2019

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Working to Preserve
Our Past in Order to
Protect our Future

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Flushing, NY 11354

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Museum Hours
(for guided tours only):
Tues, Sat, Sun: 2:30pm to 4:30pm

Letter from the Executive Director

Branka Duknic

Some of us may or may not be happy with the outcome of the Game of Thrones series. The binge watching is done for many of us, therefore it's high time to binge participate in the amazing events happening all across our multicultural Borough.

But before we do, I would like to introduce you to our latest edition to the QHS team: Jeran Halfpap. Native of Annapolis, Maryland, Jeran has joined our ranks as Kingsland Homestead's caretaker. Jeran Halfpap loves the world of the small museum. He has worked in several historic museums in downtown historic Annapolis, as well as New York, and is currently working as the "Tinker Lab" STEAM (Science, Tech, Math, Engineering and Arts) focused educator at the Lewis Latimer House Museum. Jeran has been a digital creator since high school, working with programming, pixel art, and electronics. He has since acquired a multidisciplinary skill set with knitting, stitching, writing, and gardening.

This season has kicked off with multiple collaborations and partnerships. With Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites Tour of Flushing, lead by Queens Borough historian Jack Eichenbaum, on May 19, our participants had the chance to explore the microcosm of religious sites. We kicked off the tour with no other than the birthplace of religious freedom in US, Quaker (Friends) Meeting House, oldest -active-site of worship in New York City, and then moved along with a selection of remarkable new and old houses of worship. From tiny storefront churches to the elaborate Korean Buddhist Temple on Bayside Avenue, Masjid Abu Bakr Mosque, Mormon Church, Sikh Temple and Jewish Temple Gates of Prayer on Parsons Boulevard.

Moving along the Northeast to South Queens, we co-produced the 100th Anniversary of the First Transatlantic Flight Exhibition with curator Robert Schwach of Councilman Ulrich's office and the Rockaway Artists Alliance. This special exhibition is commemorating a historic and successful Navy Curtiss -4 aircraft flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

Message from QHS President

Patricia B. Sherwood

A look "C" at the Queens Historical Society, 2019.

C for Conscientious — At the board meeting in May, a motion was to have each trustee responsible for an annual donation of \$500. This is an official fiscal response to, "giving or getting." The purpose of the Board is to enhance and enrich the Society. Personal agendas do not keep the Society vibrant and healthy — support and interest is imperative. The motion was passed unanimously beginning with the fiscal year 2020.

C for Construction — Kingsland is finally getting its new roof replaced. Mobilization day occurred in May, after years of planning and inspecting. Completion should be before November. Keeping fingers crossed. Looking at the house design and location presented many challenges. After this project is completed, Branka is working with Landmarks Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreation to restore the porch and driveway.

C for Congratulations — to Jason Antos on his in depth presentation on the history of motion pictures in Queens. That Sunday in March was standing room only.

Between May 8 and May 31, 1919 the Curtiss seaplane NC-4 made a crossing of the Atlantic flying from the U.S. to Newfoundland, then to the Azores, and on to mainland Portugal and finally the UK. The whole journey took 23 days, with six stops along the way.

A special outdoor ceremony, was held at Riis Landing in the Rockaways, on May 8th with participation of the Navy, Coast Guard, NYPD, FDNY, local schools, and family members of the crews of the historic flight. Exhibition is on display only until June 2 at Fort Tilden, in the Rockaways' Breezy Point.

June 9 is another cause to binge on outdoor activities. We're supporting a Worlds' Fair revival by focusing on a temporary public pavillion honoring the site of the monumental Aquacade in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. It's forgotten legacy will be revisited by Cheryl Wing Zi-Wong & Dev Harlan, the artist/architect duo working on a collaborative public artwork in conjunction with NYC Parks. Join us and see a sundial and public space installation revealed at Ederle Terrace, north end of Meadow Lake, Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

Our strength is in numbers, but quality does go in hand with quantity. Our Moore-Jackson Cemetery in Woodside has never looked better. For the last 18 months, group led by Samantha Yeung and Elizabeth O'Connor has organized and mobilized a volunteer-led project to help restore the cemetery and its surrounding land through beautification and revitalization efforts. The project's mission is to bring disconnected community members together in this centrally-located green space to garden, maintain the land, share the history of Western Queens' first settlers, and host family-oriented educational programming.

Greek philosopher Aristotle recognized several types of friendships. Among them is the good and true one. QHS strives to make and preserve those friendships for they are based on respect, appreciation for each other's qualities, and a strong will to aid and assist in their cause.

Follow us further for more events, collaborations and friendships along our path.

Congratulations to Emily Brostek on her new position at the American Kennel Club Dog Museum in mid-town Manhattan. Emily was a visiting research intern at QHS .

C for Caring — members who have made contributions and donations to QHS.

Jean Bartelt, Kathryn & Alfred Brand, George La Grange, Betty Anne McDonough, Robert Uher, Anthony & Kim Young Yandoli

Jean Burns, Connie & Lou DeMartino, Rachel Donner, Michael Gannon, Joan Kindler, Patricia McGiver, Robert A Miller, Lourdes & Chi Mo, Marianne & Brian Percival, Jon A Peterson, Lynn, May Salls, Arline Abdalian, Jean E Hellmann, Barbara Hull, Joan Lane, Nancy Lercara, Wanda Peri, Deborah Silverfine, Edith Smith, James Trent

C for Condolences — to Jason Antos on the loss of his father.

C for Ciao — Have a wonderful Summer and hope to see you all at the Annual Meeting in the Fall.

Public Programming

Daniela Addamo

We're hitting our programming out of the ballpark! This October will mark the Golden Anniversary of the beloved Miracle Mets. In honor of the Flushing baseball team's first-ever World Series title in 1969, we're going to kick start our Sports in Queens-themed events on June 13 at 6:30 pm. Guest lecturer Jeffrey Kroessler will offer a historical survey of the borough's sports landscape. The long-time Sunnyside resident is the author of *The Greater New York Sports Chronology* and *New York, Year by Year: A Chronology of the Great Metropolis*. Stay tuned for more sports activities leading up the larger celebration of the Miracle Mets. (And while we're at it, why not root for the current Citi Field squad to win it all?)

As an extension to our Early Cinema in Queens lecture given by QHS board member Jason D. Antos back in March, we will host a screening on July 21. The program will feature one of the films discussed during the lecture, *Sally of the Sawdust*, which was filmed in Queens. Antos will give an introduction.

Moon Mission Memory

Joseph R. Brostek, Trustee

Fifty years ago, I worked in the advertising department of the Continental Can Company, which made many kinds of food packaging. When I learned that one of its products would be on the Apollo 11 moon mission, I recognized a good public relations opportunity.

In the early days of spaceflight, astronauts ate freeze-dried food that had to be reconstituted and was not very appetizing. When the flights became relatively "routine," astronauts had time to think about other things, like the quality of their food. Continental developed a flexible pouch which enabled them to have real tasty food such as turkey and gravy. In anticipation of the mission, I had special pouches printed to commemorate the event. The head of our company wrote a very meaningful letter telling how proud the company was to be part of this historic mission. His letter was enclosed in the pouch using commemorative stamps which had been issued for Apollo 8 which circled the moon. A special mailing list of 675 business, financial and media leaders was compiled. When I learned that there was a town in Pennsylvania named Apollo, I devised a plan to have a special representative go there with the pouches to wait for my signal to mail them so they would be postmarked when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were on the moon.

The space shuttle carrying the moon module for the lunar decent blasted off from Kennedy Space Center on July 16, 1969. The module successfully landed on Tranquility Base at 10:56 p.m. on July 20. Neil Armstrong said: "That's one small step for [a] man and one giant leap for mankind." The world was thrilled.

My family was home, toasting with Tang, the artificially orange-flavored drink mix that astronauts drank. So far so good. Now came the hard part.

NASA knew there was a chance that the lunar module might not be able to lift back off from the moon and rejoin the shuttle. It was possible that men could be trapped to die on the moon! In fact, the lunar module lift off was considered the most dangerous part of the entire mission. Long after the mission, it was learned that NASA and Washington had a plan in place in case they could not get off the moon. It was called: "In event of moon disaster." The plan was to have then President Richard M. Nixon call Mrs. Armstrong and Mrs. Aldrin, the "widows-to-be," to express the

For more details on QHS events, please see page 6. Plus, all updates on summer and fall events will be posted on our website and social media accounts!



▶ New York Mets catcher Jerry Grote embraces pitcher Jerry Koosman as the Mets defeated the Baltimore Orioles in the 1969 World Series. Photo Credit: New York Post.

▶ Poster for the American comedy film *Sally of the Sawdust* (1925). Paramount Pictures / United Artists.



nation's grief and then go on TV with the sad news. Nixon's speechwriter, William Safire, prepared the speech that Nixon would have given. Part of it read: "Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace." If you Google "In event of moon disaster," you will see the fascinating interview that Tim Russert conducted with Safire on NBC's Meet the Press on July 23, 1999, marking the 30th anniversary of the moon landing. You can read the entire speech.

So, while Walter Cronkite was sweating in Houston and President Nixon was sweating in Washington, I was very nervous in Queens. There was a tight window to have the pouches postmarked while the men were still on the moon. If they were mailed and something happened so that they could not get back off the moon, the celebratory pouches would be delivered at a time of national mourning! I had a very tough decision to make. Senior company management told me to follow the situation closely and do what I thought was best.

After many anxious moments, NASA said things looked OK for the module lift off – the astronauts pushed the buttons – the lift off was achieved – the module was successfully reunited with the shuttle – and it was still July 21. I phoned my man in Apollo and said: "Mail them!" Most of them were delivered on "splashdown day" July 24.

The rest is history. The internet is filled with stories of just how hairy the lift off actually was. A critical circuit breaker had broken and threatened to doom the mission. Buzz Aldrin later said his backpack had accidentally hit it, but thankfully, he was able to fix it with a ballpoint pen!

The mailing became an instant collector's item. Of course, I had one sent to my home.



▶ "APOLLO 11: 1st landing on the moon" mail, Joe Brostek.

A Tree Grows In Queens

Rob MacKay, Trustee

There's nothing like a Weeping Beech! With large, sweeping branches, this tree provides shade on a hot summer day. Then in fall, its green leaves become copper-toned and beautiful. Most of the year, its nuts provide healthy nourishment to squirrels, mice, and some birds.

But this hulking hardwood is also a shining example of a centuries-long Queens tradition: An immigrant arrives in Flushing with nothing, but achieves the American Dream via perseverance and service to its new country.

The first Weeping Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) to grow in the United States began life on Baron DeMann's estate in Beersal, Belgium in 1847. We'll call it "The Matriarch." It crossed the Atlantic Ocean as a young, four-inch cutting in a flower pot before spreading roots in the Flushing nursery that Samuel Bowne Parsons operated with family members.

The Matriarch quickly grew to 60 feet tall with a 14-foot girth and an 85-foot umbrella (or "leaf curtain") with spindly branches that produced a large shaded area. The branches eventually touched the ground and re-rooted, begetting eight offspring around its large canopy via a process known as "root suckering."

Parsons, a prominent horticulturalist who supplied trees to Central Park, then did a cutting and sent saplings around the United States. Over time, the eight original "daughters" acquired more than 1 million siblings whose habitat currently stretches from southern Canada throughout the continental United States.

The Parsons family's nursery stayed in business until 1906, but the Matriarch lived on. It became a tourist attraction and the namesake for Weeping Beech Park, where it lived in the vicinity of 145th Street and 37th Avenue.

New Board Member at QHS: Maria Becce

Joseph R. Brostek, Trustee

Maria Becce (née Restivo) is a lifelong resident of Queens. She was born and raised in Astoria and has lived in the Broadway-Flushing neighborhood with her husband, William, and son, Matthew, for almost 40 years. The Becces are members of St. Andrew Avellino Parish. A graduate of Mater Christi High School (currently St. John's Preparatory School), Maria attended Queensborough Community College and completed professional advancement programs at Citibank, N.A. Her last assignment at the bank was Executive Assistant to the President and Chief Administrative Officer of Citicorp and Citibank. After 17 years there, Maria started a consulting firm for customized personal accounting services before becoming Vice President of Corporate Accounting at Arden Asset Management, Inc.

Maria recently retired as an Officer of the Broadway-Flushing Homeowners' Association after more than 35 years of volunteer service. During that time, she chaired numerous committees involving zoning, press relations, membership, spring garden judging, and historic plaque installation, while organizing numerous social events.

Maria has also volunteered at St. Andrew Avellino Roman Catholic Church and School. She was a Chairperson of the Annual Dinner Dance and one of the original members of the Pastoral Council while she was

In 1966, the Matriarch was designated a New York City Landmark via a document that proclaimed it "has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City." The Landmarks Commission also determined that the tree "is a natural phenomenon which by rare good fortune has prospered and grown to great size in the heart of the City, that it is situated in an attractive setting for all to see, and that it is a joy to all nature lovers."

In 1968, the Kingsland Homestead, which is the Queens Historical Society's present day headquarters, was relocated to the park so visitors, employees, and board members could experience the tree-generated joy as well.

The Matriarch entered into decline in the 1960s, and though it received countless fertilizer injections for three decades, city arborists declared it dead in 1998. It had lead a transformational, 151-year life.

Henry J. Stern, who was the Parks Commissioner at the time, held a public funeral for the Matriarch before it was chopped down to a stump. A 10-foot section remains in the park as a memorial. The rest was given to artists to create sculptures and benches for the Flushing Heritage Trail.



► Weeping Beech Tree at Kingsland Homestead.

President of the school's Mothers' Club. While President, the school was energized by the formation of the Music, Art, and Computer programs. During this time, Maria was also a Board Member of the Catholic Adoptive Parents Association and Chair of the high-profile Media Awards Annual Luncheon.

Her community interests continue as she's a Representative to Congresswoman Grace Meng on the New York Community Aviation Roundtable and Community Liaison to City Council Member Paul Vallone.



► Maria Becce (née Restivo).

The Parsons Family Giveth And The Parsons Family Taketh Away

Rob MacKay, Trustee

The apple never falls far from tree...for better or worse.

As mentioned in the previous article, Samuel Bowne Parsons Sr. brought the first Weeping Beech to the United States in about 1847. Three years prior, he had become the father of Samuel Bowne Parsons Jr., the man blamed for introducing a fungus that almost destroyed a different heritage tree.

The American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) dominated the American forest during the Colonial Era. For decades, one of every four hardwood trees on Eastern Seaboard was a member of this species.

The fast-growing tree's strong and rot-resistant wood was perfect for building barns and log cabins, especially foundation logs. Its lumber was great for posts, telephone poles, furniture, musical instrument, and railroad ties. Plus, hogs and cattle grew fat from its edible nuts.

Then in 1876, Parsons the Younger imported trees from Japan that came in boxes filled with a pathogen (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) that wedges into tree trunks and blocks their root system, basically making them die from lack of water and nutrients.

They loved the Chestnut family, and it's estimated that the pathogen killed almost 4 billion trees in the early 1900s. The American Chestnut hasn't recovered yet, and it's deemed "functionally extinct" by USDA.

Queens Celebrates Golden Jubilee

Much gratitude goes out to all who joined and supported our 50th Anniversary Gala. Special thanks to Susan Lacerte and her team at the Queens Botanical Garden - green gem of our Borough.



► Executive Director of Queens Botanical Garden, Susan Lacerte with Bayside Historical Society Board Member Henry Euler, QHS Board Member Connie DeMartino and Joan Polla, Mrs DeMartino's daughter.



► QHS Honoree and historic preservationist Joan Kindler (seated second on the left) with her family, and Board President Patricia Sherwood, Board Member Connie DeMartino, Professor Elizabeth DiGiorgio, Executive Director Branka Duknic, and Patrick Symes of The Flushing Friends Meeting House.

Horrible, but a comeback has been sowed — and the borough is the center of it.

Eight saplings were planted at the Queens Country Farm Museum on Earth Day 2019 (April 22).

Queens Farm is working with the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF) and SUNY-ESF's New York State American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project to re-introduce the species to a place where it used to thrive. Spread out over 47 acres in Glen Oaks, Queens Farm is a working site with planting fields, livestock, and a vineyard. (For history buffs, it's New York City's largest remaining homestead and host of the Cornell Farmhouse, which dates back to a Dutch family that lived there from 1697 to 1808.)

The eight saplings found their way to Queens Farm in a very neighborly way. Queens Village resident Tim Savage received chestnuts from an ACF-sponsored nut exchange program. (He's a member of ACF's New York Chapter.) He then nursed them in containers on his apartment balcony until they became saplings, which he donated to Queens Farm in December 2018. They stayed in the nonprofit's historic greenhouse until the April 22 planting.

Let's hope these youngsters grow to be strong, healthy trees that abound like the Weeping Beech. May they go forth and multiply like the Matriarch as well.

Editor's note: In Parsons the Younger's defense, he was a prominent horticulturist, despite this one mishap. He designed Balboa Park in San Diego, Albemarle Park in North Carolina's Asheville, and a Dutch garden in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx.



► City Council Member Peter Koo, a long-time QHS supporter, was the gala honoree. Seen second from left, he holds a special proclamation he gave QHS with (from extreme left) official borough historian Jack Eichenbaum, Patricia B. Sherwood, and Branka Duknic.



► Robert Kindler of the Kindler Family with QHS Board President Patricia B. Sherwood.

Searching For The Early Journalistic History Of Jacob Riis

Jason D. Antos, VP of Operations

The history of Queens County touches many lives around the world. The Queens Historical Society recently received an email from Sydvestjyske Museer (Museum of Southwest Jutland) in Denmark. The curator, named Mikkel, informed QHS that the museum is establishing a Jacob A. Riis museum in the social reformer's childhood hometown, Ribe. The curator inquired about Riis' early history as a journalist, asking about a newspaper he worked on which covered south Brooklyn. In addition to writing the book "How The Other Half Lives," Riis was editor at the New York Tribune in 1877 and later at The Evening Sun. His journalism career goes back earlier than that. In an entry dated June 14, 1874 in his pocket diary (which is in New York Public Library's collection of his papers), the proud Richmond Hill resident wrote that he left the New York News Association for a job at the newly started "South Brooklyn News," where

he began on June 5. In a later diary entry dated Aug. 22 the same year, Riis happily writes about this being the first time he was named editor of a newspaper. In December 1874, he purchased the South Brooklyn News for \$600. The paper was paid off in full by June 1875. The Sydvestjyske Museer wrote to QHS inquiring about issues of the South Brooklyn News. Issues of the paper are rare and very hard to find. If any of our members know the whereabouts of issues of the South Brooklyn News, please drop us a line! For more on the Riis museum, visit <http://www.jacobariismuseum.dk/>



► Jacob A. Riis.

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SUMMER 2019 EVENTS

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

Sunday, June 9

2:30pm

POOLTIME - public artwork installation opening honoring World's Fair Aquacade pavillion.

Location: Ederle Terrace, north end of Meadow Lake, Flushing Meadows Corona Park

Thursday, June 13

6:30pm – 8:00pm

Sports History in Queens with Jeffrey Kroessler

Location: Queens Historical Society

Saturday & Sunday, June 15 & 16

Path Through History

Presented by QHS

Location: Queens Historical Society

Saturday & Sunday, June 15 & 16

"Fortified" by Fort Totten Park Temporary Art Installations and Public Access Tours

Location: Fort Totten Park Water Battery Queens, NY 11359

Price: FREE

Sunday, July 21

2:30pm – 4:30pm

"Sally of the Saw Dust" Silent Movie Screening with Jason Antos

Sunday, September 8

2:30pm

Jewish Heritage of Queens Lecture with Jack Eichenbaum, PhD

Location: Queens Historical Society

News You Could Use

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

Days & Times for All Exhibitions:
Tue., Sat. & Sun. from 2:30 – 4:30 pm

Museum Admission:
\$5 General, **\$3** for Students, Seniors, Veterans and Visitors With Disabilities (Care Partner **FREE** of Charge), **FREE** for Members and 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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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.

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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