

# Mattituck-Laurel Historical Society

## Winter 2018 Newsletter



Dear MLHS Members:

At the end of 2017, Lauren Brigham stepped down from the Presidency after four busy and productive years. Under her leadership this past year, the Historical Society had a number of programs and events that were well attended:

- In April, June Tuthill Bassemir conducted a Rug Braiding Workshop and Tom Wickham made a presentation on the Wickham family's history of farming on the North Fork
- In May, Tom Wickham hosted a tour of the Wickham Orchard Farm
- In June, the Society hosted an Artisan and Antiques Fair in cooperation with the Old Town Arts and Crafts Guild of Cutchogue
- Throughout the summer, Norman Wamback and other volunteers conducted Love Lane walking tours and led tours of the Museums
- In September, Fred Smith made a presentation on the First Schoolhouses of Mattituck
- At the end of October, we had the Annual Harvest Dinner and membership meeting
- And at the end of November, we closed out the year with our Holiday Open House.

The main house needed a new roof last year, and treated cedar shingles were installed before the onset of winter. Fred Smith contracted for the job and oversaw it from start to finish. He has taken on new responsibilities elsewhere, but the good news is that Dennis Rose, who lives right across Cardinal Drive from the Museum, has volunteered to look after the MLHS museums in Fred's absence. We will miss both Lauren and Fred on the Board: they spent countless volunteer hours on behalf of the Society over the past few years, and we deeply appreciate all their efforts. Our sincere thanks also go to Rose Skuro who did a great job as Secretary and provided a strong helping hand at all the MLHS fundraising activities last year.

Your Executive Board for 2018, elected at the October membership meeting, is as follows:

- **President:** Erich Cramer, cell: (613) 661-3210, e-mail [cramere@usa.com](mailto:cramere@usa.com)
- **Vice President:** Emily Tuthill Best, cell: (613) 403-7548, e-mail [etuthillbest@yahoo.com](mailto:etuthillbest@yahoo.com)
- **Secretary:** Nancy Smith, e-mail [nfcorker@aol.com](mailto:nfcorker@aol.com)
- **Treasurer:** Maureen Kelleher, e-mail [mjkconnect@gmail.com](mailto:mjkconnect@gmail.com)
- **Custodian/Historian:** Norman Wamback, e-mail [norman230@optonline.net](mailto:norman230@optonline.net)
- **Trustees:** Domenick Forlenza, Marilyn Gatz, Walter Jackson, Chris Piacente, and Jeff Walden.

We plan to have a very productive 2018, please join us for our many events and programs.

Erich Cramer, President

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### The State of the Society

by Erich Cramer

Increasingly, the Mattituck-Laurel Historical Society (MLHS) has struggled to meet the objectives included in its Bylaws. The reason is simple: we do not have enough local residents volunteering their time. This is not new, this has been going on for many years now. Nor is this a unique situation, throughout the United States many similar organizations and traditional institutions are seeing the same thing happen: the work to keep the organization going can no longer be performed. Ironically, this appears therefore to be a national trend that is becoming history: the inability for communities to operate and maintain volunteer organizations that have been established to keep the local population aware of their history. This would be really funny if it were just ironic, but unfortunately it appears to be that greatly misused term today...the truth.

So as we all agreed at a meeting last year, if we don't turn this trend around for MLHS, sooner or later we will probably need to shut the Society down. Lauren Brigham has held the fort as President for a long time. Norman Wambach has worked for decades to assemble and maintain the collections, but he needs a lot of help now to update the records, conduct an inventory, and arrange the collected materials so that they tell their story to our visitors. Now Emily and I split our time between Delaware (250 miles away) and the Best family home in Ontario (500 miles from Mattituck). We need more of the local membership to step up, because our efforts alone will not be sufficient.

Our own interest and involvement is very strong, but why is that ? Emily's dad (Philip Wickham Tuthill), aunt, and two uncles were all born and raised in the house that is now the Museum. Emily was born in the hospital at Greenport and moved to Delaware at the age of one. Emily's grandmother, Helen (Wilcox) Tuthill, came to live with Emily's family in Delaware when she sold the Tuthill house in the early 1950s. Helen brought lots of family possessions and artifacts with her, and most of these remained in the attic of the Delaware farm house until the farm was sold in 2009. Throughout Emily's life, she would come back to the North Fork for visits along with her dad. Before he died in 2008, he donated a number of family documents to North Fork libraries and historical societies. Emily continued that return of Tuthill and Wilcox family documents from Delaware to the North Fork. She donated sufficient funds to upgrade the Museum Library and to put 5000+ family books and documents into that library. We had been Trustees for a number of years, and the membership that voted last year elected us unanimously to be President and Vice President. Why ? We'd like to believe that we were the best qualified, but actually, nobody else was interested enough to take the responsibility, or if they were, they kept their interest well hidden. Ok, you can see why our interest is strong, but as you can also see, our interest alone, and that of the other officers (our Treasurer also commutes, she lives in Mineola !), now needs real help from the community.

So as a start, this newsletter repeats the message you've all heard ad nauseum over the years: we need well-informed people to conduct tours through the Museums (docents), we need people to maintain and improve our media capabilities so that the community better understands what

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we're trying to do and why it's important for them, we need people to plan programs and events that focus on local history, the list goes on and on. We have a 4.5 page "2018 To Do List" on our web site which shows the broad range of tasks before us this year. Most importantly, we just need people to show up: that's a start. In the big picture, we need volunteers to lead the following functional areas: 1. Plan and manage activities when the Museum is open for visiting; 2) Plan and manage programs and events; 3) Maintain the collections, including receipt, disposal, record-keeping, and inventory; 4) Write grant applications for major improvements to the Museums; 5) Make the community more aware of its historical heritage; and 6) Promote historical research and education.

At the micro level, here's the local help Emily and I need because we're out of town except for one Friday and Saturday each month: 1) Someone local to perform Executive Secretary functions including picking up the US mail from the MLHS mailbox at least once a week, reading it, identifying actions that need to be taken, sending bills to our Treasurer, getting the phone messages off the phone at the Museum, and to work with us via e-mail and text and phone to answer the mail and phone queries; 2) Someone local to help with our IT functions, the electronic tools we use to communicate with the community starting with our web site and expanding into Instagram, to make them super user friendly for our membership as well as people from outside our membership so that they can become aware of all we have to offer the community. This month Emily's son, Nathanael Tuthill Best has given us a hand from afar (he's in Canada now and will be in the UK by May), but his assistance has made our work easier. We plan to have him activate an MLHS Instagram account and blog to improve the MLHS broadcast capabilities. 3) Someone local to lead our efforts to interface actively with our existing membership and to expand our membership to include a real cross-section of the community...by preparing and sending out newsletters, for instance, perhaps monthly rather than every four months, for example; 4) Someone local to plan our programs and events and oversee their execution from start to finish. **One immediate opportunity here is to run the Art and Artisan Fair scheduled for June 2.** If you have done this somewhere before, or you would like to improve on how it was done last year, here's your opportunity. And if you still don't quite know how you can help out, please just call or text me at 613.661.3210 or e-mail me at [cramere@usa.com](mailto:cramere@usa.com) and I'm sure we can put your skills and expert knowledge to very good use somewhere. Emily always says we need to have fun in the Society, and there's lots of opportunity for fun here. If you've read this far, I think you can readily agree that our primary objective for 2018 needs to be to increase the number of volunteers engaged in MLHS activities.

The 2018 budget, based on last year's costs, is about \$24,000. In addition, there are two major maintenance projects that we need to cost out: bringing the wiring in the Museum up to spec and installing a ventilation system in the Museum that maintains air quality at a level that safeguards the collection. Once we have cost estimates in hand, we will seek targeted donations and perhaps write grant proposals for this work. **If you have grant proposal writing experience, here's your chance to hone your hard-earned skills for a worthy cause.**

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Overall Membership statistics show that we have significant presence in the local area:

1. We have more than 40 Life Members, and about half of them live in the local area.
2. We have more than 200 members and ex-members who live in the immediate vicinity.
3. In 2017, we had 135 people either become members or make donations to the Society.

Our monthly meetings provide an opportunity for the membership to meet and communicate directly with the Board. Please join us when you can, we look forward to your participation.

### CURATOR AND HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Norman Wamback

#### The Southold Town Jail at Mattituck

The Chase Bank at 10300 Main Road just west of the turn into Love Lane has been a welcome addition to the Mattituck community. In former days, this site held another interesting building, the Mattituck Jail, built in the late 1880's. An article from the Traveler/Watchman from that time recounts the following:

"It will be in order next spring for this end of the Town to apply to the voters in town meeting to appropriate a sum sufficient to erect a lockup somewhere in the election district. The centre was supplied a year ago and this year the appeal from the eastern extremity has been heard and heeded. It is well to begin thus early in agitating this matter, for there are times when a lockup would be a great convenience, and freight cars may not always be available".

By 1920 the jail house was no longer needed. An article in the Traveler/Watchman section "25-50-100 Years Ago" on June 28, 1973 sheds light on what happened to the building:

"Mention of Mattituck's once famous and long-lost village 'lockup' brought a response from Mrs. Raymon Tuthill of Marratooka Park. It was in 1922, she tells us, that James Rambo (now of Nassau Park) was the Justice of the Peace for this area, and it was his assignment to sell the little one-night rooming house for Southold Town, we presume. The purchasers were Mr. and Mrs. Tuthill who had it moved by the late Raynor Wickham to their lot in back of their residence in Marratooka Park. It was a sturdy affair, 12 by 14 and eventually was transformed into a 'summer cottage', which grew and grew and became the kitchen and stairway of a fine summer house with a living room, 3 bed ooms, dinette, bath and the lockup".

After 1922, when Judge Ralph Tuthill became the Justice of the Peace and took up residence in the old Captain Raynor House at Wolf Pit Lake, renovated by Nathaniel Tuthill in 1900, he held court there. Since the Mattituck jail had closed, Judge Tuthill had one of the rooms in this very large house converted into a jail cell. Unfortunately, it is highly unlikely that such a pragmatic and cost-effective solution would be permitted today. Sic transit gloria mundi.

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### Vice President's Corner

by Emily Tuthill Best Cramer

As the newly elected Vice-President of the MLHS, I have three main goals for 2018 for the MLHS and for myself. My first goal is to try and work with Erich Cramer as a Vice-President and not as a wife. The second goal is to have fun as we honor the Society and its history and its place in Mattituck. The third goal is to find positive ways to draw in our members and show them how much we need and appreciate them.

So now here's a little fun for you. Answers may be found in this newsletter, the MLHS web site, or the Internet.

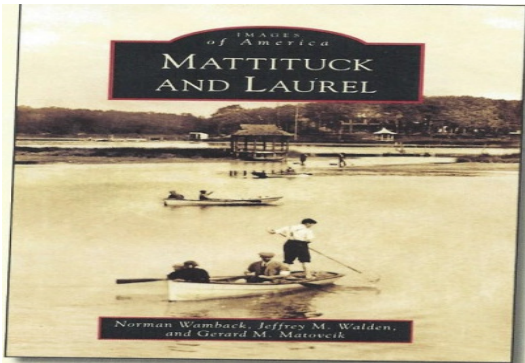
The first all correct response will win an MLHS t-shirt so make sure you include your t-shirt size and your address so it can be mailed to you. Please E-mail your answers to me @ [etuthillbest@yahoo.com](mailto:etuthillbest@yahoo.com) or mail to "Quiz", MLHS, Box 766 Mattituck, NY 11952. To be fair, I will run two timelines, one for e-mails and one for US mail.

#### The February 2018 Quiz

1. The Tuthill House on the MLHS grounds was built in two stages during which two years ?  
a) 1799 and 1821    b) 1799 and 1841    c) 1799 and 1899    d) 1899 and 1905
2. The MLHS Curator and Historian is \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The company responsible for painting the interior and exterior of the Tuthill house is:  
a) The Aquebogue Paint Co.    b) Mattituck Paint Store    c) Roses Painting Company
4. The New Egypt building on the Museum grounds was:  
a) An antique store    b) A dry goods store    c) A schoolhouse    d) A jailhouse
5. The Mattituck Laurel Historical Society was founded in 1978 \_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_ False
6. The barn on the MLHS grounds where the collection of farm implements is kept was originally a place to:  
a) Keep horses    b) Sprout mung beans    c) Prepare Brussels sprouts for market
7. The outside colors of the Tuthill House are white and green \_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_ False
8. The Museum grounds are on the corner of Main Road and \_\_\_\_\_ Drive

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**Mattituck and Laurel**, the book co-authored by Norman Wambach and Trustee Jeff Walden, is available for \$21.99 by calling Norman 631-298-8461 or at any of our events. We also have white T-shirts for sale with the Jesse-Ira Tuthill house on the front, and cream T-shirts with a picture of the MLHS library on the front. Contact Emily: [etuthillbest@yahoo.com](mailto:etuthillbest@yahoo.com) (613-403-7548) for sizes and prices (reasonable).

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## Membership Sign-Up

The Historical Society depends on membership contributions and donations to help operate and maintain the Historical site. We receive no funds from any Government entities, we are solely sustained by contributions from private citizens and companies. Please fill out the following form and send in your contribution to MLHS, Box 766, Mattituck, NY 119952.

### MATTITUCK-LAUREL HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUMS

#### **MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM 2018**

Enclosed is my check payable to Mattituck-Laurel Historical Society & Museums for the membership category checked:     Active Membership, Individual \$20     Family \$30

Patron Membership - \$100     Life Membership - \$500    Donation \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone#: \_\_\_\_\_                      E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Here are some items off our 2018 To Do list for which we need your help, please check at least one!**

- Keep track of membership and correspondence
- Oversee refreshments for events
- Edit newsletters
- Canvass local businesses for donations
- Plan and schedule programs
- Conduct guided tours
- Assist with Public Relations
- Assist the Pres/VP
- Help with Grounds/Gardening



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### MLHS 2018 Monthly Meeting Dates

To the extent possible, in 2018 we want to have our monthly meetings at 10AM at the Museum. Foul weather backup is at the Mattituck Library.

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Meetings are tentatively scheduled for February 17, March 31, April 28, May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25, September 29, October 27, and November 24.

Special events:

\*\*\* The Arts & Crafts Fair – 8-4 PM Saturday, June 2 in cooperation with the Old Town Arts and Crafts Guild.

\*\*\*October 27 - Annual Dinner- Our Redeemer Church

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**Mattituck-Laurel Historical**  
Society & Museums  
PO Box 766 Mattituck, NY 11952  
[www.mlhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.mlhistoricalsociety.org)

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