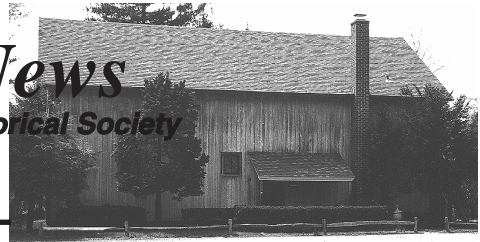


The Barn Museum News

The Newsletter of the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society

Volume 8 Number 2

June 2006



MUSEUM COMPLEX OPENS THURSDAY, MAY 25

The Bellport-Brookhaven Museum Complex, including the Barn Museum and Post-Crowell House opens for the 2006 season on Thursday, May 25.

Hours

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday
11:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m.

Suggested Donation

Society Members.....Free

NonMembers

Adults.....\$5.00

Senior Citizens 65+ and

Children 13-17.....\$4.00

Children 12 and under.....Free

New, Fun Questionnaire

The Museum Committee has created a “treasure hunt” questionnaire to “test your powers of observation.” Visit us and see how well you do.

Tinware Collection

More than 75 pieces of Emilie Underhill and Ruth Morse’s extensive tinware collection is now on display. The unique collection, touted as only second to that of the Smithsonian, includes trays, eyeglass cases, platters, teapots, tea boxes, etc.

Period Wedding Dresses

This exhibit beautifully and tastefully displays our collection of wedding dresses spanning a period of 145 years, the oldest from the 1860’s. The dresses are complemented by beaded purses, fans, headpieces, and shoes. A collection of wedding photos graces the background walls, adding a personal touch to an already personal exhibit



F.O.C. Darley Watercolor

The Museum is proud to have, not one, but two of Felix Darley’s compositions in its collection. The newest acquisition is “Bellport LI 1871.”

Where in the World is Belleville?

Most of us have heard the story that the Bell Brothers had planned to call the village they founded Bellville, but they found there was another village with that name in New York State; so, the name was changed to Bell Port when the post office opened in 1834. (see Bellport and Brookhaven, 1968, 3rd Edition, page 20).

Is there really a Belleville?

Interestingly enough, there are two Bellevilles in upstate New York---Belleville in Jefferson County and Bellville (without the “e”) in Allegany County. As best can be determined, Bellville does not have its own post office, so it stands to reason that Belleville was established well before the Bell Brother’s chose the name.

In comparison, Belleville is a small community with about 400 residents near Lake Ontario. Bellport is a small community with about 3000 residents on Great South Bay. Ms Quick of The Historical Association of South Jefferson says, “Belleville has very little crime and is a great place to raise your family.” Sounds like Belleville and Bellport have a lot in common!

A Brief History of Belleville

Belleville, Town of Ellisburg, Jefferson County, New York was first settled in 1802 as a farming community. It is located in the southern part of the county, about 4 miles from Lake Ontario.

Giles Hall came in 1806 and built a sawmill and gristmill, and the community became known as Hall’s Mills. The name was change to Belleville in 1814, after Belleville, Ontario, Canada. The Belleville Post Office was established on April 26, 1827. The village was incorporated on June 11, 1860 and the corporation dissolved on September 19, 1929.

The village had the usual businesses in the 1800’s and early 1900’s – gristmill, sawmills, blacksmiths, hotels, various merchants, cheese factories, etc. There have been four churches established in the village (Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Methodist). Today, the Methodist Church is the only one still operating.

Belleville never grew to be more than a small village as the railroad bypassed it by several miles, and it is inland from the lake. Therefore it has remained a farming community. Some of the best farm country in New York State is located in the Town of Ellisburg. For 200 years many of the farms have been passed to the next generation and have remained in one family.

The largest business in the past was Union Academy, a private boarding high school, which was started in 1824. It became renown for its high academic standards. The school was enlarged in 1856. The entire school burned to the ground on January 29, 1923 and was rebuilt. In 1931 the school ceased to be a private school and organized with several

(Continued page 7)

The Bellport Bay Yacht Club – The Beginning

Bellport, L.I., July 1906

Saturday evening, July 21st, about thirty men responded to a notice sent to about 100 cottagers and other residents of Bellport and Brookhaven to meet at The Goldthwaite Inn to organize a Yacht Club.

There was a sense of urgency that a Yacht Club be organized at once; and the Chair, upon approval, appointed the following “Committee of Fifteen on Organization.” William Kraemer, George Kraemer, Thomas A. Eddy, Charles A. Rich, Henry Edey, Ralph Brandreth, J. W. Overton, William T. Walton, Jr., A. B. Boyd, Darwin J. Meserole, John D. Walton, Clarence Vose, Irving MacElroy, Alexander N. Cook, and P. G. Hubert.

The Committee was instructed to prepare and present a Constitution and By-Laws for the proposed Club at the next meeting to be held Saturday, evening, July 28th. The Committee was also given power to appoint a Regatta Committee. A Membership Committee, which was also formed, would later issue an invitation to all who were “*interested in yachting and the social outdoor life of the town.*”

The Secretary received 28 signatures on the 21st and collected \$80.00 in dues (\$5.00 per member for the season). The organizers were optimistic that there would be no less than 50 members by the next meeting.

The first race was scheduled for August 4, 1906.

And so it began, 100 years ago.

Report of Meeting held to Organize a Yacht Club at Bellport, Bellport Bay Yacht Club, Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Booklet, page 7.

Member of Bellport Bay Yacht Club

Our records show that Dr. Edward Payson Crowell, father of Misses Ethel and Florence Crowell, was a member of the Bellport Bay Yacht Club. He was a summer resident of Bellport for many years before his death in 1934, first renting, then buying 31 Bellport Lane (the Post-Crowell House) in 1919.

Save the Date

**SUMMER GALA
100 Years on the Bay**

**Honoring the
Bellport Bay Yacht Club**

**Saturday, July 15, 2006
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

**on the Grounds of the
Bellport-Brookhaven
Historical Society**

***Cocktails – Dancing - Auctions
New Exhibit at the Museum
Fireworks***

BUD CORWIN

The rains didn't deter the large crowd that gathered to hear Mr. Schuyler "Bud" Corwin speak at the General Meeting of the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society on Sunday, April 23.



What started as an interesting explanation of market hunting (shooting game birds commercially), local Corwin decoys, and a bit of family history [Wilbur R. (grandfather), Wilbur A. (uncle), and Frank (father)], soon ended up as an afternoon of story-telling. The stories were about a time long ago, in a world that many of us are only vaguely familiar with.

Bud was joined in the audience by his cousin Sue, her husband, and son from New Orleans, Louisiana. Sue is the granddaughter of Wilbur A. Corwin and daughter of Jean Corwin Norwood.

Corwin Decoys

In 1881, Wilbur R. purchased a schooner, the Mabel Jewell. During the period 1831-1890, 22 sloops and schooners were made in Bellport; one of which was

the Mabel Jewell. Wilbur leased land from the Smiths and subsequently from the Town of Brookhaven to establish The Quanch Duck Lodge. Wealthy sportsmen from New York (called sports) would come out to hunt ducks. They would use a puntie (traditional type of duck boat) or battery (also known as a sink box). Wilbur used the schooner to lift the sink box onto its deck and take it to the hunting grounds. Once there, he lowered the sink box into the Bay so the men could hunt. There were about 200-300 decoys around the sink box.

Wilbur R., with his brothers Ed and John, carved over 600-700 decoys. Wilbur had three batteries with about 500-600 decoys, and 19 punties with about 20 decoys each.

When Wilbur died in 1914, his son, Wilbur A. (an architect in NYC) took over his father's hunting and ferry business.

Scooter

Wilbur R. is known as the father of the scooter. He was the first person to attach a jib sail and "rocker the runners" on a scooter (1874). Wilbur A. told Bud that the ice scooter is the only known "conveyance" than can be propelled and steered by the wind. The scooter is now the Bellport Village emblem.

To hunt out of this scooter, Wilbur made small, hollow decoys that could be transported under the gunwales; the solid cedar decoys were made for rougher hunting in bigger rigs like the battery.

Uncle Salem Stories

Bud entertained us with many Uncle Salem stories. Salem was one of Wilbur R's four sons.

He told several stories about the Jewish Working Girls Vacation Society of New York; the girls used to stay at the Bay House (the front porch is our present Bandshell).

The girls loved to sail, and Uncle Salem was glad to oblige them. On one such day, a girl fell overboard. Uncle Salem said, "you are always suppose to hold onto something while you're on the boat." She replied, "I did. I held my girlfriend's pocketbook."

Another--At the time there were many eel pots made from oak and reeds. If they were in the water for too long, they would get soggy and collapse. So the eelmen devised a way to hang them on stakes out of the water to dry so they could be reused.

When Uncle Salem had another group of girls out for a sail, one of the girls asked about the eel pots (now drying on stakes out in the Bay). She wanted to know how the eels got into the pots. Uncle Salem said, "the eels would shimmy up the pole and climb into the pot."

And the last--Salem was coming out of a gin mill/bar (The Bellport Hotel, now the Chowder House), when Ed (his father's brother) came by and saw him. He said, "Salem, it grieves me to see you

coming out of there." And Salem replied, "well, give me ten cents, and I'll go back in!"

Bud was Superintendent of Suffolk County Parks for 35 years. He is now retired and volunteers at the Museum working on the grounds and buildings.

Thanks Bud, it was a delightful afternoon.

Correction:

The March 2006 Newsletter "Museum Receives Bequest" should have read: "...the Society had received a bequest from the estate of Jean Corwin Norwood, daughter of Wilbur Arthur Corwin."

Save the Date

ANNUAL Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society ANTIQUÉ SHOW

**Saturday, July 30
(Raindate: Sunday, July 31)**

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**on the grounds of the
Historical Society
31 Bellport Lane
Bellport, NY 11713**

**Coordinated by
Thos Cornell Galleries Ltd
Patchogue, New York**

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN FIGUREHEAD FOLLOWUP

Dick Baldwin had the answer to our question about the Benjamin Franklin figurehead.

As the story goes, on July 17, 1854, the side-wheeler Benjamin Franklin went aground in a heavy fog on the bar off Moriches. She was 263 feet long and 2195 tons, carrying 150 passengers to New York from Le Harve, France. All were saved, but the vessel was a total loss.

Thomas Conklin was a professional diver and helped salvage the cargo and material from the Franklin. The statue stood at his home for a number of years in his front yard at what is now #42 on the west side of Bellport Lane. However, through a series of unfortunate events, the statue ended up at the Howell home, across from the Episcopal Church (that house was torn down many years ago).

The statue stood 7 feet or more tall. Mr. Howell always kept it well painted: the coat blue, the waistcoat and knee-length breeches yellow, the stockings white, and what was left of the shoes, black.

Mr. Howell and the statue eventually ended up in Philadelphia. At some point, it was put up for auction by Howell's son in Pennsylvania and bought by figurehead collectors, who then donated the statue to the Maine Maritime Museum.

*From the files of the Bellport-Brookhaven
Historical Society*

SUMMER GALA PLANS

The beautiful Save the Date card has been mailed, FAME, the band that played last year, has been engaged, and Chez Fran will be catering the event. There will be a Silent Auction in addition to the Live Auction, which will be on a smaller scale than last year. Our Museum Curator, Dolores O'Connor, is preparing a new exhibit which will celebrate *100 Years on the Bay*.

Fireworks

The Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society Trustees are very excited about joining the Bellport Chamber of Commerce as a sponsor of the Fireworks Show on Saturday evening, July 15.

It is quite fitting that an evening celebrating 100 Years on the Bay will conclude its festivities at the Village Dock on the Great South Bay.

MISSING – Information About FRANCES H. TOMS

Ms Toms was a resident of Bellport. It appears that she was either born in Canada or immigrated to the United States in 1891, depending on which US census you read. She was a well-known, local photographer. One of her photographs was used for the Summer Gala Save the Date card; others have been used in various local calendars.

Ms Toms purchased 18 Bellport Lane in 1920, and, according to the Village Office, it was sold in 1945. Can anyone add any details to her biography?

Belleville (Continued from page 2)

one-room country schools to centralize into one school district. The Union Academy building became part of the public school system.

Today the largest businesses in the community are the farms and the school. The farms range in size, with the number of cows milking at one time ranging from 100 to over 1000 at each farm. Plus they raise many kinds of crops, some for the farm and others for the market. The present population in the village of Belleville is about 400.

Belleville is about 15 miles from Watertown, a small city of less than 100,000. Those not working in the community go to the city or neighboring villages for work.

There is very little crime and is a great place to raise your family. Slower pace. Quiet.

Ms Debbie Quick, Historical Association of South Jefferson, Adams, NY. You can learn more about Belleville on their website hasjny.tripod.com.

VOLUNTEERS - Where are you?

It's that time of year again, and the Barn Museum and the Post-Crowell House need you.

A letter and volunteer schedule have been sent to all Society members. Please complete the form and return it as soon as possible. The Complex opens on May 25. And, if you know of anyone that would like to spend a few hours helping us out, please give them the information, or call Ginny Waterman, 631-286-3344, and I'll

be glad to send them information. You don't have to be a member to volunteer!

THANK YOU --

The Museum wishes to thank Margaret Doran and Bud Corwin.

Bud has done an excellent job pruning the trees on the Museum property and reworking the walkway around the barn and the Bellport Lane driveway.

Margaret has spent countless hours inputting the Museum's collection into the computer database. According to Joe Doran, as of April 23, a total of 2,443 objects and 765 photographs of objects has been entered into the database.

Our thanks to Bud and Margaret, and to all of our volunteers.

Museum Exchange Shop Open

May 25 to mid-December 2006

**Thursday through Saturday
11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Consignments taken every
Wednesday
10:00 a.m. – Noon**

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**New Consignment Policy
70% for Consignor
30% for Exchange Shop**

WE REMEMBER DR. VINCENT E. LYNCH

On March 29, 2006, the Society lost a dear friend, Trustee, and Past President. Dr. Vincent Lynch will be fondly remembered by all who knew him and who have personal memories of their association with him. He will be missed.

Vinny was active in many local organizations including the Friends of Fire Island National Seashore, the Round Table of Stony Brook, and the Bellport Baycrafters.

Al Rand remembers Vinny's work on the Baycrafters' Brown Bag Ball, which collects food for the homeless. And speaking of food, at the Baycrafter's monthly luncheon, Vinny is remembered for his fondness for starting with soup (especially french onion) and ending with a big dessert.

Bob Duckworth remembers that Vinny always had a twinkle in his eye and had a great sense of humor. Bob remembers the time he and Vinny were videotaping the Post-Crowell House contents. "We considered ourselves expert in the field of photography and proceeded. I didn't realize that the camera had a sound attachment and that we were being recorded. Needless to say, the conversation was hilarious. We did several vertical shots and then decided to do a horizontal. Naturally, being accustomed to still photography, we turned the video camera on its side. When we played the tape, one had to lean his head in a 90 degree angle to observe the furniture photographed on its side!" Where is that video now?

Jean Allardt remembers that Vinny always had a broad smile and a good and happy comment to make. And, personally, she will never chew another piece of gum without thinking of him. He was truly a great asset to the Historical Society.

During Vinny's term as President of the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society (1999 and 2000) we enjoyed the second season of the Children's Heritage Program, hosted the Association of Suffolk County Historical Societies, awarded the first Pelletreau award, began Phase I of the Barn Renovation Project (Climate Control), created the Jean Schenck Memorial Garden, in addition to interesting speakers, workshops, and concerts.

Dr. Lynch was a graduate of Holy Cross College and Columbia University's Orthodontic Postdoctoral Program. He had a private practice in Patchogue for over 20 years.

Good by and thank you, Dr. Lynch.

BELLPORT-BROOKHAVEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

31 Bellport Lane, Bellport, NY 11713

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www.bellportbrookhavenhistoricalsociety.org

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