



# *The Barn Museum News*

*The Newsletter of the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society*  
Bellport, New York 11713



Volume 12 Number 2

August 2010

## SUNDAY OPERA SERIES

# *Great Voices*

*by Dr. Ira Hayes*

**September 26, October 3, and October 10**

**4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society  
Brown Building  
12 Bell Street, Bellport, New York 11713

*\$40 for series of three; \$15 for single session*

Call 631 776 7640 for reservations



## **GAZEBO DEDICATED**

The BBHS Gazebo was dedicated to the memory of Mr. Philip R. Munson

on Sunday, June 27, 2010. The beautiful finial and cap of the gazebo were restored by Mr. Jeremiah McGiff, local artisan. Remarks were made by Dr. Jan Harting-McChesney and Mrs. Margaret Munson (shown above).

An interesting note about the Gazebo was found in the Museum Newsletter, April 1971. It says, "*Original Gazebo constructed for the Osborne family in the middle of the 19th century and now moved to our property at 31 Bellport Lane. This was a gift of Miss Barbara Capen.*"



### **What is Next?**

What remains now is the restoration of the base and eight sides of the Gazebo. An announcement was made at the dedication to complete the project, and six contributors came forward donating \$1500 for a side.

However, that leaves two sides without a sponsor. Are you willing to help finish the project and be responsible for the one or two remaining sides, or is there a family or group of friends that would like to sponsor a side? If so, please contact Mrs. Jean Pokorny, Bellport Brookhaven Historical Society, 631 776 7640.

As always, thank you for your support and continued interest in the BBHS.



*The Board of Trustees of the  
Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society  
cordially invites you to a  
Ceremony to Dedicate the Society's  
Historic Candelabra Pine Tree  
in the Memory of  
Alyda and Frank Calamita  
Sunday, August 29, 2010  
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.  
Following a short program, champagne  
and refreshments will be served.*

## OPERA SERIES

Dr. Hayes shared a few thoughts about the series. If you are a fan of opera or just learning about opera, join in with what promises to be a very enthusiastic and informative series.

### ***Why this series?***

I have long been interested in what makes a great voice. Why do some voices take us to another place? And I think that, in three sessions, we can begin to explore answers.

### ***What will be covered in the series?***

We will discuss a variety of the great voices of our times. Though mostly from opera – Mozart, Verdi, Puccini, and Wagner – we will also discuss music from Broadway and the classical American songbook, for instance, Irving Berlin and Stephen Sondheim.

We will also talk about why some voices thrill us, and why they are unforgettable, instantly recognizable – from Caruso, Callas, and Pavarotti to Sinatra and Streisand. We will hear historic voices in arias, songs, and extended opera scenes through a combination of CDs and videos.

### ***Have you always been an opera fan?***

I've been hooked on opera for most of my life. As a Columbia College freshman in the late fifties, I went to my first opera performance at the Met, Puccini's *Gianni*

*Schicchi* and Richard Strauss' *Salome*. I can still remember these seats at the old Met, on the side of the Family Circle, way, way up. But no matter, I was thrilled by the larger than life quality – the voices, the orchestra, the size of the audience; I saw five operas that year. The next year, I saw everything I could, getting standing room, joining the line at 5:00 p.m., talking to other standees who had seen the great singers – Flagstad, Melchior, Gigli and every opera you could think of. I learned opera on that line.

### ***What is your musical background?***

I'm not a trained musician, but I'm still excited at opera's potential to thrill me the way no other theater can.

### ***What operas made an impression?***

For many years I went to more than 15 operas a year at the Met then – saw Joan Sutherland's debut, Leontyne Price's first year performances, a performance by Bjoerling that I'll never forget, a *Madama Butterfly* with Renata Tebaldi that is etched forever in my brain.

### ***A Bit About Dr. Hayes***

Dr. Hayes received his doctorate from Columbia University. He was affiliated with the Syosset Central School District from 1984-1998 and is currently Supervisor of Student Teachers at Columbia University. He has also been a Teacher of Opera Appreciation at the College of New Rochelle from 1998 to 2005 and to the South Country Educational Foundation in 2009 and 2010.

## STONEY TALK



Legendary film-maker George C. Stoney (left) and Mr. Tom Williams, vice-president of the Post-Morrow Foundation, Brookhaven, NY (right) spoke at a special meeting of the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society on April 18, 2010. Mr. Stoney presented two films, "Planning for Floods" and "The River." Mr. Williams discussed the results of the Carmans River Watershed Preservation Plan Study

## KIDS CAMP TO MUSEUM

The BBHS was delighted to again host the second and third graders from Bellport's Kids' Camp July 26 and 27, 2010.

This year the pillory, tiring, and old plow were added to the "outside" tour. The children were very interested in sending their counselors to the pillory, trying to decide how the plow was pulled and what it

did, and learning how metal rings were put around wooden wheels by use of the tiring.

Several new questions were added to the "treasure" hunt inside the Barn Museum, thanks to Matt Zanerello, one of our "summer interns." For instance, do you know (1) who wrote the diary shown in the display case; (2) what is the name of the puppet theater located in the doll section, and and (3) what beach club the life saver ring is from?

You can find the answers to the above by visiting the Barn Museum, 31 Bellport Lane, Bellport. The Museum will re-open Memorial Day 2011, Friday and Saturday, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

## *SAVE THE DATE*

### **Annual Meeting of the Bellport-Brookhaven Historical Society**

Sunday, November 14, 2010  
3:00 p.m.

Brown Building,  
12 Bell Street, Bellport, New York

### **Guest Speaker: Dr. Carol Bleser**

Lecture:  
*The Long Forgotten History  
of Plantations and Slavery in  
Colonial Long Island*

Members: Free; Non-Members \$15.00  
Students with ID \$5.00

## MERRITT RESPONDS TO BELL'S COMPETITOR

*The Barn Museum Newsletter*, June 2010, page 5 article created a lot of interest, but none more than from Mr. John Israel Merritt, great-great grandson of Captain Israel J. Merritt.

Mr. Merritt writes: *"Thanks for your latest on IJM and Bell. I know nothing about the schooner Competitor, although it's possible I own a painting of it."*

### 19th-century painting of a schooner flying flag of Merritt Wrecking Co.

This painting of a Gloucester schooner in New York Harbor has presumably been in the Merritt family since it was (presumably) commissioned sometime in the latter part of the 19th century.



My dad, John I. Merritt, Jr. (1920-2003), gave it to me in 1998 when he and my mother sold their home; Dad acquired it in the 1960s from the estate of his mother; my grandfather John Israel Merritt (1883-1954) presumably inherited the painting from his father, my great-grandfather Israel John Merritt, Jr. (1853-1936).

The flag flying from the top of the foremast

sports the black horse logo of the Merritt Wrecking Company. Flying from the main (rear) mast is a pennant with the misspelled name of my great-grandfather — the painter has rendered the surname as “Merrett.” I have always assumed that the painting was commissioned by either my great-grandfather or his father, my great-great-grandfather Captain Israel John Merritt (1829-1911), so the misspelling is curious — perhaps it was something of a family joke. I have also assumed that “Israel J. Merritt, Jr.” was the name of the vessel and that it was a private yacht owned by either Captain Merritt or IJM, Jr., but since the name would be on the

stern and the stern isn't visible, this remains a supposition. It is also possible that this was a working salvage boat owned by Merritt Wrecking and that the pennant with my great-grandfather's name flew whenever he was on board.

The schooner is definitely in New York Harbor. The northeastern end of Staten Island

## NO MYSTERY ABOUT IT - MYSTERY HISTORY BICYCLE TREASURE HUNT FANTASTIC SUCCESS

The day began about 10:00 a.m. as teams registered. They were given complimentary bottles of water and were invited to browse through the Barn Museum until starting time. When the 10:30 bell rang, more than 85 participants (adults and children) were off.

The object of the game? Answer all 10 questions correctly (sites located on Academy Lane, Bellport Lane, and Browns Lane) and get back to the Museum first.

Everyone was a winner. All participants received a cap (color of their choice) and juicy, ice cold watermelon.

Thanks to Kate Carmel and Jeremiah McGiff who developed the idea; Teresa Platt for her creative poster, handout, and question sheet design, Margaret Munson for registration, Annalou Fletcher as Master of Ceremonies, Tom Lerner for being the watermelon meister, Helen Geraghty and Jane Roe Tierney for stone rubbings, and Scott and Ken Budny for setup, and to Splish Splash, Riverhead; Gateway Playhouse, Bellport; Island 16 Cinema, Holtsville; and Crazy Kidz, Medford for donating the winning prizes.

If you want to give the course a try (bicycles not necessary), here is a sampling of the questions. Good luck and have fun. See you all next year!



Sue Sangiamo and son Michael (age 11). Won 2 tickets to Splish Splash



Emily (age 8), Christine Gentzel, and triplets Natalie, Troy and Wyatt (age 6). Won 2 tickets to Island 16 Cinema



**Red Barn:** Before there were cars or truck or trains, people got around on horseback or in horse-drawn carriages. Many of the houses in Bellport had barns nearby to protect their horses and carriages. One house on Bellport Lane was originally a carriage barn belonging to a big house just up the hill. Can you find it?



William Lang and grandson Tyler Quintana (age 9). Won 2 tickets to Krazy Kidz

**Follow the Flag:** How many freestanding flagpoles are on Bellport Lane including the one at the marina?

**Rays of Sunshine:** There is a house on one corner on Browns Lane that has a big fancy design under the roof that looks like rays of sunshine, although the design is really made of painted white wood. Write the name of the street that crosses Browns Lane to form this corner.

**Old Time Firehouse:** There are two firehouses in Bellport. One is the big brick building on Main street. But there is another firehouse that was built more than 100 years ago. Can you find the firehouse? What is the date that is painted on the sign over the door?

**Buried Treasure:** Before the cemetery on Station Road was opened in 1876, the town used another older Burying Ground on Academy Lane. Can you find it?

**Dockmaster:** There is a Guard House at the entrance to the town dock. What is the name of the Dockmaster on duty today?

**Stick Figure:** Most horses graze on grass in meadows or eat hay or oats in a barn. Can you find a horse that doesn't have to eat at all?

## VOLUNTEER

*It will make you feel good!*

631-286-0888 or 631-776-7640

## The Peek-in Inn

The 1920 circa photo shows the old Bellport Railroad Station, in its current location, on the west side of Station Road, but it was the background of the photo that “piqued” my interest. It shows a three-story house with four fireplace chimneys, built on the east side of Station Road, south of the RR tracks. The building is long gone; actually a convenience store stands in its place, but the building intrigued me.



I asked a few Bellport residents if they remembered any stories about the place. Was it a tavern, boarding house, or place of business of a less than a reputable nature? The gossip was out there.

Recently *The Patchogue Advance* was digitized (see page 12), so I keyed in “Bellport Train Station” and, lo and behold, got an answer.

### **Hotel at Bellport Station is Burned with Heavy Loss**

Crew of Passing Train Discovers Early Morning Fire and Saves Occupants – Two Fire Companies Out

The Peek-in Inn, a two and one-half story frame hotel of rambling design, along with two outbuildings, a garage and a barn, were destroyed by fire early Wednesday morning with a loss, which has been set by the

and two waitresses, one of them being Miss Alice Barber, 725 7th Avenue, New York City, probably owe their lives to the fireman and engineer of the early morning freight train from New York with Conductor John Welch in charge.

The locomotive’s crew saw the flames shooting out of the roof of the hotel when the train pulled into the station to upload freight. The building is just opposite. They tooted their whistle several times, but when there was no indication that anyone had heard, the two men left the train and crossed over to the hotel door.

After the engineer, Roy Coons, and his fireman had pounded on the door for some time, the sleepy occupants were finally aroused. The fire broke out about 5 [a.m.] o’clock and in an hour or so the hotel was but a blackened ruin.

The occupants escaped with only their sleeping garments, and their entire personal belongings were destroyed. The Bellport and Brookhaven fire departments were summoned but the building was beyond



saving by the time they arrived. The proprietor is at present staying with John Lengyel in East Patchogue. The employees returned to their homes in New York.

## Other Info

Other articles involving Mr. Lengyel refer to the Pekin Inn (probably the correct name of the Peek-in Inn) at Bellport Station, Emil's Tavern at Southaven, and Emil's Inn that had formerly been the Music Box Grill. We have to remember that the period between 1920 and 1933 was during Prohibition, and there was a lot of activity involving federal officials. An interesting time!

An important point to remember is that there was a lot of life going on around the Village of Bellport, and, like the photograph, the background was, most times, far more interesting. *Patchogue Advance, November 8, 1929*

If anyone has any information regarding any of the persons or places mentioned above, please contact Ginny at [ginny@howellspoint.com](mailto:ginny@howellspoint.com). Thanks.

## NEW EXHIBIT AT BARN MUSEUM - Titus Family

Miss Susan Amelia Titus was born on July 24, 1834 and died on June 8, 1875 at the age of 41. Her parents were Henry Weeks Titus and Susan Amelia Misillier.

They lived in the Titus/Otis/Edey house at 76 South Country Road, Bellport. The exhibit documents the history of the famous home, and shows pictures of the Titus family, but

excerpts from Miss Titus' diary prove to be most interesting. Go back to August 10 and 12, 1852 and live vicariously through Susan's words - simple everyday happenings, but spell-binding 158 years later.

Take a few minutes to enjoy this exhibit located on the first floor of the Barn Museum, 31 Bellport Lane, Bellport.

## I Spy Solution



If you guessed that all of the items in "Let's Play - I Spy" ([The Barn Museum News, June 2010, page 11](#)) were found in the wall hanging made for the 1976 Bicentennial, you were right.

The wall hanging is located by the front door of the Barn Museum. It was created by Mrs. Rolf Michelsen, Mrs. Harvey McChesney, Mrs. David Lanman, Mrs. Robert Pelletreau, Mrs. John Pokorny, Mrs. Edward Ljungqvist, Mrs. Peter Paige, Mrs. Barbara Fein, and Mrs. Barbara Michelsen. Several of the ladies who worked so diligently on the wall hanging have passed away, but it is nice to know that their work is on display for everyone to enjoy.

## **Drive Cautiously - You Never Know Cows Then – Deer Now**

A man was driving along Main Street in the first part of the evening recently and a cow that was lying on the edge of the road sprang up just as his horse came near where she was which caused his horse to shy and start so suddenly as to nearly throw him out of the wagon, which in all probability, would have resulted seriously. The best place for cattle is out of the public highways and the owners of the same better take warning before some one is made an example of.

### **Problem Addressed (same issue)**

We are requested by our road master to announce that all persons are strictly forbidden to pasture cows in the highway under penalty of the law.

*Patchogue Advance, November 8, 1889*

**BBHS EXCHANGE SHOP  
12 Bell Street, Bellport, NY  
631 286 0888**

**Open: Thursday, Friday & Saturday**

**11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

*Consignments taken  
every Wednesday*

**10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**

*Merritt Responds (continued from page 5)*

can be seen in the background, to the left of the bow; the height of land is Todt Hill, at 410 feet the highest point on the Atlantic seaboard south of Maine.

The artist was a maritime painter named Elisha Taylor Baker. His signature is barely discernible in the lower left corner

— J.I. Merritt III, 1.27.10

You can read more about the Merritt/Bell connection in previous Newsletters found on our web site at [bbhsmuseum.org](http://bbhsmuseum.org).

### **BBHS EMAIL LIST**

The BBHS email list is now a reality. We hope that this form of communication will save time and postage, and act as a quick reminder to the membership about our many scheduled events.

As a base, we have used the email addresses submitted with your membership renewal form. So, if you have changed your address recently or have just acquired an address, please send that information to [bbhsmuseum.org](http://bbhsmuseum.org) – click on Membership Chair (located under About Us).

And don't worry. If you don't have an email address, you will still receive all information about Society events through regular US mail.

And while you are in the BBHS site, take a few minutes to look around. There is a lot of interesting reading.

– David Cleaves, Membership Chair

## CAVAFY COMES TO BELLPORT -

Saturday, June 5, 2010

In a bold, new approach to fund raising, the Bellport Brookhaven Historical Society invited the Emmy Award winning actor, Yannis Simonides, to perform his one-man, theatrical event “Cavafy: Passions and Ancient Days.”

The Bellport Middle School auditorium was filled with a mix of those familiar with the poet and those who were being introduced for the first time. The audience was drawn into the life of the great Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, through his work, as Simonides skillfully became Cavafy. The stage was sparsely set, but Simonides “changed” moods as he moved from table to chair, added a scarf around his neck, or picked up a book. He transformed from narrator to poet, by changing the tone of his voice. It was an intriguing performance.

The evening concluded with a festive cocktail party at 12 Bell Street where, through decoration, the room could have been anywhere in Alexandria, Egypt. Here, everyone had the opportunity to meet Mr. Simonides.

Thanks to Victor Principe for arranging a one-of-a-kind evening



## ANTIQUÉ SHOW AND SALE

During a time when Ebay and internet shopping seems to be taking over, the Antique Show and Sale, held on Sunday, May 30, 2010, proved that people still like to use the “old fashioned, hands on method” when buying.

More than 400 people visited the 24 dealers on the Historical Society grounds. The weather was perfect for the event, and the Barn Museum was open for the occasion. Refreshments were served from the Post-Crowell House porch and were made available by The Coffee Shop, Bellport, NY.

The very successful show was organized by Tom Cornell, Trustee and owner of Thos. Cornell Ltd, Patchogue, NY with assistance by BBHS Trustees and volunteers.

The BBS was so encouraged by the interest and enthusiasm of the participants and attendees that it may again become an annual event. Let’s hope so.

### **Two Hands (Ah, Romance?)**

Last night I held her hand in mine,  
Her hand so slender and divine,  
Endowed with all the graces;  
But now another hand I hold,  
A hand well worth its weight in gold –  
Just think of it – four aces!

*Patchogue Advance, October 4, 1889*

## Notes about the Long Island Rail Road

“The Railroad was not extended until 1868 to Patchogue, which was the terminus until 1881 [the Bellport Station was opened in 1882], when it was continued eastward to connect at Eastport with a line from Manorville which had been built in 1869, and which gave through service to Sag Harbor. It was not until 1895 that the line was extended to Amagansett and Montauk.

Before the railroad came to Patchogue, mail and passengers were carried from the main line stations to Patchogue and southside villages by stagecoach. Lakeland was the station for what is now Ronkonkoma, Waverly was the station now known as Holtsville, and Bartlett Station was a stop between Medford and Yaphank.

In 1883 a stage coach operated by A. D. Terry ran across the Island from Patchogue to Port Jefferson, leaving Patchogue at 8:48 a.m. and arriving at Port Jefferson at 11:30 a.m. Returning, it left Port at 2:00 p.m., connecting at Medford with the train to Greenport, and at Patchogue with the 5:37 train to Sag Harbor.”

*From Footnotes to L. I. History: Early Days on LIRR by Thomas R. Bayles, Patchogue Advance, December 24, 1953*

## SOUTH SIDE RAILROAD OF LONG ISLAND

Change of time, On and after May 12, 1869 the trains will leave by roosevelt and Grand St. Ferries, New York, as follows:

8 a.m. Mail for Patchogue and all stations

8:45 p.m. Express to Patchogue. Passengers will be ticketed through by the train to Bellport and Fireplace via stage from Patchogue.

*Brooklyn Eagle, May 18, 1869*

## Did Bellport Need One?

L. B. Dennis, of Brooklyn, has purchased fifty acres of land at Bellport. An inebriate asylum will be built there.

*Brooklyn Daily Eagle, April 20, 1889*

## The Patchogue Advance Online

The Long Island Advance recently reported (August 5, 2010) that Suffolk Historic Newspapers has digitized The Patchogue Advance from 1926 to 1946. As has been said many times, the older issues told all -- births, deaths, real estate transactions, travel, wills, etc. And now you can know it all by simply going to [www.suffolkhistoricnewspapers.org](http://www.suffolkhistoricnewspapers.org). Have fun!

### BELLPORT-BROOKHAVEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

31 Bellport Lane, Bellport, NY 11713

631-776-7640

[www.bbhsmuseum.org](http://www.bbhsmuseum.org)

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