



# Newsletter

of the **SUFFOLK COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

300 WEST MAIN STREET RIVERHEAD, NEW YORK 11901 (631) 727-2881 FALL/WINTER 2013

## Message from Kathryn M. Curran, Executive Director



I am very pleased to report that the Suffolk County Historical Society is losing its unofficial designation as the “Best Kept Secret on Long Island.” Our membership, public response, and attendance at our exhibits, events, and lecture series have surpassed all expectations. The SCHS has had more media coverage of our exhibitions than ever before. *News 12*, the *New York Times*, *Riverhead News Review*, and other local press have embraced our vision. The new energy and focus at SCHS have secured funding from the New York State Council for the Arts, in the form of a two-year General Operating Support Grant; the NYS Council for the

Humanities for public programs; Riverhead Town, in the form of a Main Street grant for new signage; and the Gerry Foundation’s special gift for the restoration of our East Wing to its former glory as gallery space. We are actively positioning the SCHS to play a critical role in the revitalization of downtown Riverhead. History is alive at the Suffolk County Historical Society!

### **Hidden and Forbidden: Art and Objects of Intolerance, Depictions of Blacks in America February 1 - June 1, 2013**

In commemoration of Black History Month, the Suffolk County Historical Society mounted what has been considered its most controversial exhibition to date; *Hidden and Forbidden: Art and Objects of Intolerance, Depictions of Blacks in America*. This exhibition was applauded for



undertaking the theme of racism and placing it into its historic context. Rarely seen overt and subtle images of racism were shown of American and Suffolk County history from the 1700s to the present day. The images showed the public that history, in some instances ugly and challenging, can be used as a means of social growth. The themes of slavery, Jim Crow, the Ku Klux Klan, commercial exploits and stereotypes of blackness, along with segregation and racism, were addressed. Displayed were examples of material culture, art,

and archives from the SCHS collection and from private collectors on Long Island. This was a strikingly visual experience, curated and installed by David Byer-Tyre and Georgette Grier-Key.

Georgette Grier-Key commented, “...this exhibition will provide a conceptual framework of images and objects that are often hidden because of fear and perceived perception. It is through this historic retrospect that this part of American history is viewed, shared, taught, learned. and spoken to ensure it does not disappear.”

The NYS Council for the Humanities awarded the Suffolk County Historical Society a grant that funded a lecture series on forgiveness, post-racism, and historical research on slavery in Suffolk County.

### OTHER EXCITING HAPPENINGS:

**Dr. Sherman Mills: Healthcare Instruments Past and Present**  
Exhibit features the antique surgical instruments of Roswell Sherman Mills, M.D. (1914-2009), Family Practitioner and Collector of Americana from the SCHS collection. On view at the Health Sciences Library at Stony Brook University until September 2013..

**Association of Suffolk County Historical Societies Quarterly Meeting** Earlier this year SCHS hosted ASCHS with a breakfast, a museum tour, and a bus trip to the downtown Riverhead Historic District with Richard Wines, Chairman of Riverhead Historic Landmarks Commission.

**Knitting Group** Meets every Thursday at 10:30 AM. This is an open knitting group. All are welcome. Bring your own projects and ideas!

**Women Undercover: Aprons**  
In celebration of Women’s History Month SCHS presented this exhibit, which displayed over 130 vintage aprons from the private collection of Diane Schwindt, textile designer and historian.

**Barren and Wasteland: Long Islanders and the Pine Barrens**  
Suffolk County Executive, Steve Bellone, marked the forty-third anniversary of Earth Day by unveiling an exhibit honoring one of Suffolk County’s most environmentally sensitive and significant areas, the Long Island Pine Barrens. The exhibit focuses on one of the great natural resources of Long Island shown in its historic context. On view in the lobby of the H. Lee Dennison Building in Hauppauge until January 2014.

**More Than Warmth** Historic quilts representing all ten towns of Suffolk County from the SCHS collection will be on view from December 2013 to March 2014.

### Save the Date

**Warm Winter Evening Gala  
December 13, 2013 6-9 PM**

Details to follow...

# East Wing Expansion

The SCHS is currently in a state of growth and expansion. We have increased our audience and community outreach fourfold. Becoming a center of history and culture for the residents of Suffolk County has created a need to expand our gallery space. The Society is undertaking the full restoration of our East Wing.

The restoration will afford the Society a reclaimed gallery in its historic structure. This increase in space will allow SCHS to offer additional exhibitions and events to the community. The East Wing of the building is approximately 25' x 30' with a ceiling height of 12'. Unfortunately used as storage for the last two decades, it is the SCHS's intention to return this space to its original grand design as a gallery and meeting area.

The renovation will include relocating the bulk of objects currently being stored in the East Wing, followed by a floor-to-ceiling renovation, lighting overhaul, and the relocation of the Weathervane Gift Shop from the basement to the corner of the new wing. This newly worked, climate-controlled space will also allow the SCHS to apply for future grants for conservation and restoration of the historic artifacts currently under its stewardship. The upgrade to this gallery space will also permit loans of art and artifacts from other institutions, ensuring a safe environment for those items.

We are looking into various grants to assist us in making this happen. Any financial assistance from our membership would be greatly appreciated.



## Annual Wooden Wonderland December 7, 2013 9 AM - 4 PM

Once again, SCHS will host the Annual Wooden Wonderland, a carvers' holiday show and sale featuring handmade objects by Long Island Craftspeople and live carving/woodworking demonstrations. Items available for purchase include santas, gnomes, ornaments, holiday gifts, and antique duck decoys, among other whimsical and useful pieces. This event provides fun for the whole family. Admission is free. Hope to see you there!

## Mobile Museum: Structures & Cultures

The Society's Mobile Museum, a 37-foot cultural museum on wheels, paid its first visit to the Nokomis Elementary School in Holbrook, NY, in the spring. The "Structures and Cultures" program, presented by two experienced educators, Lisa Cordani-Stevenson and Jennifer Lacey, explores the unique and diverse nomadic cultures that include the Gabra, Mongols, Blackfeet, and Algonkian people.

The Mobile Museum, a gift of the American Museum of Natural History, exemplifies the Society's ongoing community outreach efforts. The travelling exhibit goes directly to schools, community groups, and festivals, eliminating the need for costly field trips by these organizations.

This unique exhibition presents societies in a way that helps students think about and understand cultural differences and similarities among people. It is an anthropological and archeological investigation of the resources and artifacts used in the daily lives, customs, and material culture of the four-featured peoples. This program demonstrates how the traditions and objects of different communities directly reflect on who we are as a people. Students discuss what makes cultural groups unique as well as what unites humanity. The program can be tailored to the needs of each organization. Educators combine a hands-on introductory lesson in the classroom prior to and after boarding. The curriculum meets NYS Standards in Geography, World History, Economics, Arts, and ELA. Content area curricular materials are provided.

The Mobile Museum paid several visits over the summer to libraries, historical societies, camps, and festivals. The feedback has been very positive. We are looking forward to resuming school trips in the fall. Visits can be scheduled by contacting the SCHS at 631-727-2881 ext. 107.

### SUFFOLK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

300 West Main Street  
Riverhead, NY 11901  
(631) 727-2881

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



### HOURS MUSEUM

Wednesday - Saturday  
10:30 AM to 4:30 PM

### RESEARCH LIBRARY

Wednesday - Saturday  
12:30 PM to 4:30 PM

### STAFF

Kathryn M. Curran, *Executive Director*  
Martina Camarda, *Curator*  
Mary Beth Finegan, *Bookkeeper*  
Amy Folk, *Collections Manager*  
Nadine King, *Office Administrator*  
Mark Lapidez, *Custodian*  
Ryan Miller, *Administrative Assistant*  
Wendy Polhemus-Annibell, *Librarian*  
Doris Punzi, *Receptionist*  
Edward H. L. Smith III, *Head Librarian*  
Lee G. Thumser, *Gift Shop/Volunteer Coord.*  
Ruth Vosburgh, *Administrative Assistant*

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Frances Ryan  
Richard Welch  
Georgette Grier-Key, *Ex-Officio Trustee*

The SCHS is a private, nonprofit organization and an Authorized Agency of Suffolk County that receives partial funding from Suffolk County, Steve Bellone, County Executive.

## New Building Signage Coming Soon





## ***Scooters, Cranberry Pickers, and 'Whirling Dervishes': Hal B. Fullerton's Long Island***

***April 27 - August 4, 2013***



The Fullerton Collection of glass plate negatives is one of the treasures housed at the SCHS. Neil Scholl, photographer, scholar, and volunteer has worked with 2,500 of these negatives for reproduction for use in past and future exhibitions. It is Mr. Scholl's contention that, beyond Hal B. Fullerton acting as an agent for the Long Island Rail Road to lure more visitors and settlers to Long Island, Fullerton was a master photographic artist.

Fullerton's many photographs chronicling the landscapes, workers, and seashores of Long Island have become his enduring legacy. Mr. Scholl mounted thirty-one of those images to showcase at Heckscher Museum of Art in an exhibition called "*Scooters, Cranberry Pickers, and 'Whirling Dervishes': Hal B. Fullerton's Long Island.*" Lisa Chalif, the curator of the exhibition at the Heckscher, said she was impressed by the "aesthetic and tonal qualities" of the photographs as well as by their nostalgic appeal. "The show's jaunty title," Ms. Chalif said, reflected its "range of content — seaside, agriculture, and biography." Scooters, shown in two photographs taken in Bellport, were small sailboats that could travel on water or ice. Children and adults were shown harvesting cranberries in a pastoral setting in Calverton in 1899. Two years before taking his railroad job, Mr. Fullerton joined the Whirling Dervishes, a group of bicycle and photography enthusiasts based in Brooklyn.

## ***Dennis Puleston: Explorer, Naturalist, and Artist***

***June 28 - September 28, 2013***

Dennis Puleston studied biology and naval architecture at London University. He settled in the United States marrying Betty Wellington in 1939. Puleston became an American citizen in 1942 and served in World War II. After the war, Puleston was appointed Director of Technical Information at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island. He kept detailed records of the osprey's reproductive history that resided in Gardiners Island Wildlife Refuge. After several years he noticed a large decline in the osprey population and discovered that the harmful effects of pesticides, especially D.D.T. interfered with the female osprey's ability to produce the thick eggshells their species requires to survive incubation.

Puleston, along with a group of others, filed a class action in New York State Supreme Court to force the Suffolk County Mosquito Control Commission to stop using D.D.T. After Puleston presented seven watercolors that he painted to illustrate how D.D.T. was destroying local wildlife, the Suffolk County Legislature became the first legislative body in the nation to ban the use of D.D.T.

A year after the victory over banning the spraying of D.D.T. in Suffolk County, Puleston was overwhelmed with stories of similar struggles across the country. Consequently, he and his colleagues formed the EDF, Environment Defense Fund. As a result of Puleston and his group's efforts, the amount of D.D.T. residues in the environment dropped and the osprey, along with other Long Island wildlife, were saved.

During the later years of his life Puleston was able to focus on his passions of painting and writing about Long Island wildlife, stepping back and fully admiring all that he was able to save. Thanks to the generosity of his daughter, Jennifer, 250 of the environmentalist/artist's bird paintings, journals, awards, and photographs are on display in our main gallery until September 28, 2013.



## ***David N. Ebner: Material, Process & Form***

***June 28 - September 28, 2013***



David N. Ebner is an artist/craftsman who works in four modes: classical impressions of furniture, turned objects, sculptural furniture, and furniture. In his artist statement Mr. Ebner says, "I approach my art intuitively as well as intellectually, drawing inspiration wherever I find it. I've explored a variety of directions and themes over the years, but each piece is treated as an art object with concern for my material and honesty to its inherent qualities. For me, one's creative ability is demonstrated in the diversity of the pieces and what one learns from change."

Ebner was educated at the prestigious School for American Craftsmen at Rochester Institute of Technology, New York. It was there, under the tutelage of artist Wendell Castle, that he realized that there could be "an artistic approach" to woodworking.

Upon graduation from RIT, Mr. Ebner sought advanced studies at the London School of Furniture Design. After a two-year stint in the armed forces, Mr. Ebner knew he wanted to pursue life as a full-time studio craftsman. He established a studio on the south shore of Long Island in 1973.

David Ebner is considered by curators and collectors alike as an integral part of the "studio craft" furniture movement. He feels that he is creating "the antiques of tomorrow." Twenty pieces of furniture crafted by Mr. Ebner, along with his drawings and designs, are on display until September 28, 2013.



300 West Main Street  
Riverhead, NY 11901  
*Past, Present, and Future: We Unite Them*

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***Back to the Future - Contemporary Artists Consider the SCHS Permanent Collection***  
***October 17 - November 23, 2013***



This exhibit will examine the way contemporary artists mine the past to create new work. Ten contemporary artists will create new works for this exhibit that are inspired by objects in the SCHS's permanent collection. Funding for the exhibit is provided by Heart for Art and a special grant from the Suffolk County Office of Cultural Affairs to encourage collaborations among nonprofit agencies on Long Island. The review panel was particularly intrigued by the unusual partnership between an agency specializing in history and another focusing on contemporary and experimental artwork.



The featured work in the exhibit will not focus on copying the past, but rather consider history as fluid, something that is constantly in dialogue with the present and future. Some artists are considering the way history's very transmission is changing, such as how books and printed materials are becoming obsolete in our digital age. Others are drawing more formally from the collection, creating dinnerware of malomare plastic based on historic china patterns. This collaboration should prove to be an exciting and diverse exhibit.