One of the many joys of working in a museum is being able to share interesting information, little-known facts and wonderful artifacts with visitors. This spring and summer we have done just that.

The Peconic River inspired this spring’s exhibition “Cross Pollination,” and the canoe trip that we sponsored as part of the collaboration gave us the opportunity to showcase this quiet river that runs right through downtown Riverhead. The Peconic continues to be important to Riverhead, as well as to Long Island. New York State recognized this when the Peconic was included in the state’s Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Today we appreciate the river for many reasons, and now more than ever it is recognized for its natural beauty and for the habitat that it supports for both flora and fauna.

This summer our exhibit galleries are filled with either newly interpreted or rarely seen collections. In the main gallery visitors will be treated to the work of the Peconic Bay Impressionists, Helen Kroeger and Otto Kurth, along with other work produced by some of their colleagues. In the Staas Gallery we are currently showing some of the finest furniture that the society owns along with important paintings from the collection. The newly re-interpreted Staas Gallery looks wonderful, and I hope that you will be able to visit this summer.

– Wallace W. Broege, SCHS Director
The Suffolk County Historical Society was founded in 1886 by a group of forward-looking county residents. Since its founding, the purpose of the Suffolk County Historical Society has remained essentially the same: to collect, preserve and interpret the ongoing history of Suffolk County and its people. To fulfill these purposes the Society operates a history museum, a library and archives, and offers educational programs and events for our students and residents. The Society houses a unique, ever-growing collection of artifacts, reflecting more than three centuries of history.

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2010 Event Highlights

At our May 12th Peconic River "Tea & Talk," Karen Ferb and SCHS program coordinator Kathy Curran flank raffle prize winner Paula Murphy.

Our May 15th Peconic River Paddle -- an 8-mile guided tour with author Mark Gehrke, and naturalist and local historian George Bartunek -- was a wonderful accompaniment to our "Interpretive Flora" exhibit.

Workshop participants show off their beautiful work at the May 8th Pressed Flower Candle class taught by Gayle Wagner at the SCHS.

SCHS President Bob Barauskas, Kathy Curran, Terry Wallace and SCHS Director Wally Bruse at the Kroeger/Kurth opening reception, June 25th.

Call for Entries • 3rd Annual Juried Photography Exhibition “Main Street, Suffolk County”

The Suffolk County Historical Society is pleased to announce a call for entries for our 3rd Annual Photography contest! This year’s theme is “Main Street, Suffolk County.” Contest entries will be displayed at the Society in November, in a new exhibit that will also feature historical photographs from the SCHS collection that depict scenes of Main Street, Suffolk County. This competition is open to all artists. For complete contest details and requirements, please contact the SCHS at (631) 727-2881, or email: curranchs@splotonline.net

About the Artists: Helen M. Kroeger & Otto J. Kurth

Helen M. Kroeger (1892-1986) was born in Mt. Vernon, NY. By profession, she was a New York City schoolteacher. Kroeger also attended the Grand Central School of Art and studied at the Art Students League of New York with Frank Vincent DuMond. Sometimes in the 1930s, she made the acquaintance of Caroline M. Bell (1874-1970). Bell was a first-rate plein-air painter and the leader of a group of women artists living on the North Fork of Long Island. These artists are now known as The Peconic Bay Impressionists.

In the early 1940s Helen M. Kroeger met Otto J. Kurth (1883-1965), a well-known commercial illustrator of newspapers, periodicals, maps and books. While he was a skilled painter of marine subjects, he had little experience painting out-of-doors. Kurth and Kroeger shared a love of nature. They embarked on a career of rendering barnyards, meadows, shorelines, harbors and fish shacks. Under the tutelage of Kroeger, Kurth became an accomplished plein-air painter.

Kurth traveled with Kroeger from Queens to Mattituck. Here he established a warm friendship with Caroline M. Bell and the other women. With Kroeger, he eventually opened the Anchorage Studio on Mulford Lane in Mattituck. The Anchorage Studios became a focal point in the artists community of the North Fork. Both Kroeger and Kurth made a living by selling their paintings from the Studio to local residents and summer visitors. It was also an important destination for the numerous students Kroeger taught. Using painting techniques she had learned from Caroline M. Bell, Emile Gruppe and Anthony Thieme, Kroeger often instructed her students in the field at New Suffolk and at the Indian Museum in Southold.

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Kroeger, top to bottom: Farm on the Sound, Summertime by Otto J. Kurth; Mattituck Creek by Helen M. Kroeger.

New Brown Bag Lunch “History Break” Series • First Wednesday of Every Month

The SCHS will host a new Brown Bag Lunch “History Break” series in the Staas Gallery, on the first Wednesday of every month at 1pm, beginning Wednesday, August 4th. Each month, the History Break will feature a short talk by Museum staff, focusing on specific items on display in the Staas Gallery. Those attending may bring a bag lunch, and the Society will supply beverages. A donation is requested.

Some of the topics for the series will include: Who Sat Here? Thomas Ustick Wadsworth and the Congressional Desk; Legends of Horse Racing; Lady Suffolk and Dinah; Names and Places: William (Point Billy) and Hannah Carmen Smith; Paintings as Primary Sources: William Floyd by Ralph Earl, David Gelston: Politician and Statesman, The Conklin Family of Greenport; The Amistad and Captain Henry Green; The Tragic Wreck of the Louis V Place; Painted Fancy Furniture; School Girl Art; Rarely Seen Collections: Night Lamps, Milk Glass and The Silverbrook Studios.

The Suffolk County Historical Society's Staas Gallery now houses a re-interpreted decorative arts exhibition. The objects on display are from the collection of the Society, and each tells a specific story of Suffolk County’s past. Moments of local and national significance are brought to life while viewing the actual objects and images that reflect the stories of their day. New display items include oil lamps, milk glass and Silverbrook Art Glass (see photos below).

Large image upper left, features mahogany secretary desk of Augustus Floyd, c.1779-1820. Image at right: Book case used by General Richard Delafield (1798-1873) while he was the superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.