

East Fishkill Historical Society Newsletter

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REMINDER: STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL on SUNDAY JUNE 7TH. 2-5PM

Ramblings from the Director – Malcolm Mills

A sure sign that spring has come is for me to see the display of daffodils at the Brinckerhoff house site. However when the sudden hot weather follows, the flowers quickly fade. What a pity they can only be enjoyed for such a short time. Some town residents have commented that they remember spring lasting several weeks with flowerings following in the usual sequence. At home we have had the delicate snowdrops in bloom at the same time as an old variety of daffodils. These little plants have had to push through many inches of snow and were not released from their covering until mid-April.

As soon as the grass was exposed around the Brinckerhoff house our site manager, Rick Soedler, began tidying the grounds and in particular clearing the brush and small trees from the stream that flows alongside the schoolhouse. This stream originates in the wetlands to the east of our property and flows through a culvert under the lawn between the carriage barn and the blacksmith's shop. Now that it is gradually being opened up the "kil" (stream) will become an added feature of the grounds. In anticipation of the Strawberry Festival some of the dips in the lawn are being filled with dirt to make the ground more level.

Tim Paraskeva brought his "Bob-Cat" machine and moved the pile of rocks that have been stood near the entrance to the handicap ramp since restoration of the house began 40 years ago. This revealed three vertical stone pillars that once formed the front supports of a lean-to shed that probably protected one of the farm carts or machines. Tim spread the rocks between the carriage barn and blacksmith's shop where they will be covered with dirt when the shop foundations are backfilled.

Office Assistance

The society has a new computer and it was anticipated that all the membership programs and catalog data could be easily downloaded from the old computer. We even

paid for a "geek" to make the transfer. Unfortunately technology has advanced so rapidly that he had difficulty and when he announced that he was in second grade when our 1995 computer was purchased, it sort of put it in perspective. It appeared that we would have to re-enter all the data, which would take many hours and days into the new computer. Also this meant I would have to handwrite all the address labels for future mailings!

Mean time Jill Posephney, an attorney, had contacted me with an interest in volunteering as a docent or to assist cataloging our documents. Jill visited the Brinckerhoff house one snowy Saturday morning and was given a tour. As we sat down to talk I happened to explain our problem with the computer and she said she might be able to assist. She returned the following Saturday morning and performed miracles, with computer screens flashing faster than I could read them, within an hour she had recovered all the information downloaded from our old computer. She was amazing and I am very grateful for her help. Jill is obviously smarter than the two "experts" we had consulted.

Strawberry Festival

It doesn't seem a year ago that we were enjoying the camaraderie of friends and neighbors at the Strawberry Festival. Please make a note of Sunday June 7th. for this annual tradition at the Brinckerhoff house historic site. The festivities begin at 2PM with musical entertainment by Rick Soedler playing his guitar and singing familiar ballads. Members of the 4-H club will be bringing their pet rabbits, guinea pigs and other furry creatures. There will also be a petting zoo with goats and possibly other small animals.

Chairs and tables will be under a tent to keep visitors cool from the bright June sun as they sit and chat. Drinks and cookies will be available throughout the afternoon and we will begin serving strawberry shortcakes at 3PM. There will be tours of the farmhouse throughout the afternoon and the impressive new icehouse museum will be open. Children will also be able to visit the schoolhouse and there will be games. Please encourage your families and friends to come and experience an appealing afternoon in the pleasant surroundings of their own historical society.

Eagle Scout Projects

We are fortunate to have two ongoing Eagle Scout projects, which will be completed in time for the Strawberry Festival. You may have noticed that the house on the western boundary has recently been sold. Whereas the previous neighbor had kept the grounds with lawn and trees, which blended nicely with our grounds, the new neighbor has cut

down several trees and stores his landscaping equipment on the property. He has also accumulated a very large wood pile behind the icehouse. This detracts from the neat appearance of the historic site. The trustees initially wanted to erect a 6 foot palisade fence to screen his yard. However this was modified after the neighbor promised to clean his yard and we now have a 4 foot post and rail fence installed. Preparing and erecting the fence was undertaken by Kevin Lam for his Eagle Scout project. The fence matches the section along Kensington Drive and looks historically appropriate. We can always plant an additional barrier of forsythia or similar shrubs if we need added privacy. One of our members, William Happ II has generously offered to underwrite the cost of this scout's project.



Kevin Lam (center) with his brothers and helpers erecting the fence

New Carriage Barn Doors

You may have noticed that the lower part of the carriage barn doors have deteriorated. This was caused by the rain running down the doors and they remained damp so that the wood eventually began to rot. We constructed a pent (overhanging) roof a couple of years ago and this works well in deflecting the rain away from the doors, but cannot undo the rot!

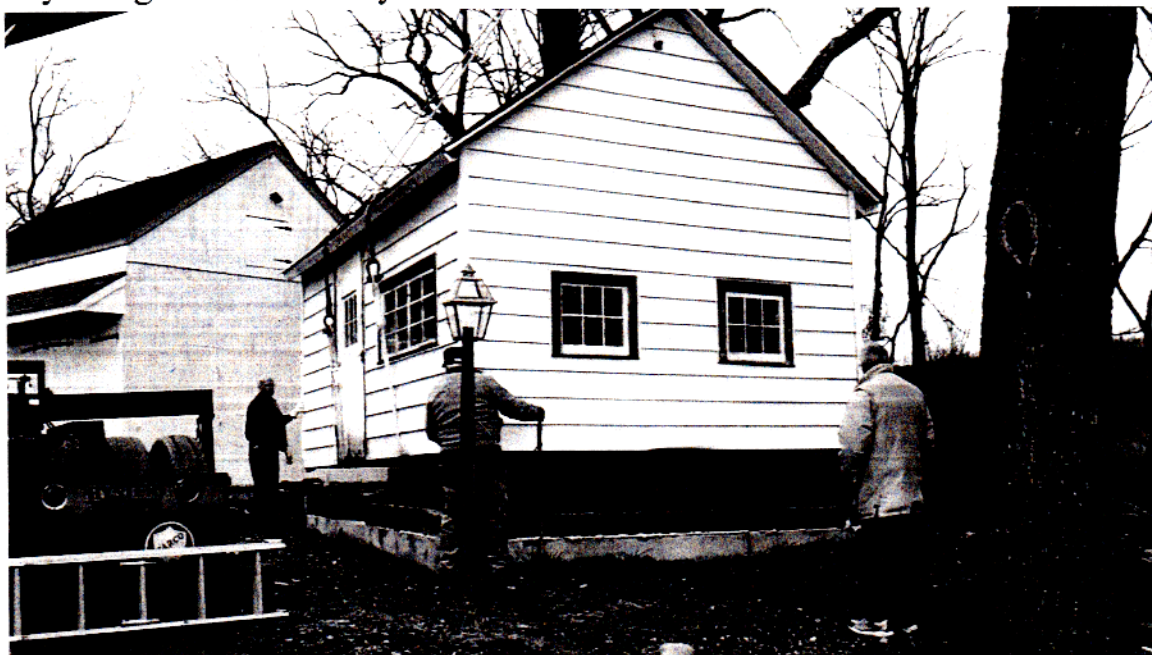
When James Andre contacted us for an Eagle Scout project a set of new barn doors was on our list. It is quite an undertaking as he will be constructing three pairs of large doors. He arranged to purchase the wide pine boards from a saw mill in Newburgh and had the edges rabbeted (milled). Debbie Scannell, one of the trustees gave a generous donation towards the cost of the wood in memory of her father Tom, who had a special

affection for the carriage barn. He was never happier than telling the students about early life on a farm and demonstrating antique agricultural tools during school visits.

James Andre is presently assembling the doors at our historic site and you should be able to see the new doors installed and painted when you come to the Strawberry Festival.

Blacksmith's Shop

In the last newsletter we reported on the preparation for moving the Hyatt's 1880 Blacksmith Shop. John Paraskeva and Dave Koehler, our town historian, installed strong wood bracing inside the empty building to prevent it from being crushed when lifted off its foundations. John donated the wood and persuaded his business friend, Doug Weck to donate the use of his crane and low level trailer to move the building. Everyone made a special effort to have the shop ready to be moved before the director was scheduled to have a hip replacement operation. With one day to spare, on December 29th. The crane lifted the shop onto the trailer and with an escort of two police cars and a bucket truck from Frontier Communications the convoy sped along Route 52 and turned into Palen Road without a hitch. The reverse occurred at the historic site and the shop was hoisted by the crane and placed on the concrete foundations. The first task will be to lay the floor using old bricks salvaged from Tim Leeds's house when it was demolished. The house stood opposite the Wiccopee store. The vinyl siding, which has protected the structure for fifty years, will be removed to reveal the original wood exterior and the interior will be restored to look as it had in Elwin Hyatt's grandfather's day.



Setting the Blacksmith Shop on its new foundation. Elwin Hyatt guiding the corner.