

# Fire Place

Brookhaven Village Association  
Spring 2009

Published for the residents of Brookhaven Hamlet



**Betty Puleston 1917 – 2009**

On Tuesday morning April 28, a life long resident and great benefactor of Brookhaven hamlet passed away. Betty Puleston was 91. Through Betty's and her family's generosity, large areas of land in the hamlet will remain forever undeveloped, to preserve the character of Brookhaven. In the early fifties, Betty organized the Junior BVA, which consisted of 50 youths who performed various volunteer activities. She was later on the board from 1959 to 1962.

Betty was a tremendous supporter of the arts and had an avid interest in films and film making, producing her own film "Race or Reason, The Bellport Dilemma". Betty also sponsored the "Meadow Lane Players" which encouraged children to have an interest in theater by producing and performing their own plays. Betty was always willing to help those less fortunate or those who had temporarily lost their way. She will be sorely missed.

## **Plume Update**

The Beaver Dam Creek Water Quality group has been meeting monthly since September 2008 with Brookhaven Town and Suffolk County officials to address the leachate plume emanating from the town landfill. Serving on this committee are Brookhaven Village Association board members Sean Pilger, John Curiale and Mary Jane Cullen as well as BVA members Tom Williams, Marty Van Lith and Claire Goad.

The objectives of the advisory committee are to make sure that those in the path of the plume are hooked up to public water, to map out the path of the plume and to recommend remediation. Samples have been taken from test wells in the path of the plume and we are waiting for results.

The Brookhaven Village Association has hired a hydrogeologist to conduct an independent analysis and suggest remediation solutions. The consultants have contacted the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) requesting information for the purpose of reviewing the history of operations and the results of groundwater and surface water sampling that has been performed regarding the landfill. The reports will be used to determine the nature and extent of contamination emanating from the landfill, and an evaluation of the correlation between changes in the leachate contaminant concentrations over time and the changes in water quality within Beaver Dam Creek. Recommendations will be made for addressing data gaps and actions that can be taken to improve the creek's water quality.

**Mary Jane Cullen, President**

## Our Historic Community

*...Brookhaven Hamlet includes an area with so unmistakable a character that when one has entered it there is an immediate awareness of being in a place different in feeling from what surrounds it."*

So wrote Arthur Danto, Hamlet resident and noted art critic, in his 1985 letter to the Town supporting our successful bid to become a designated historic district.

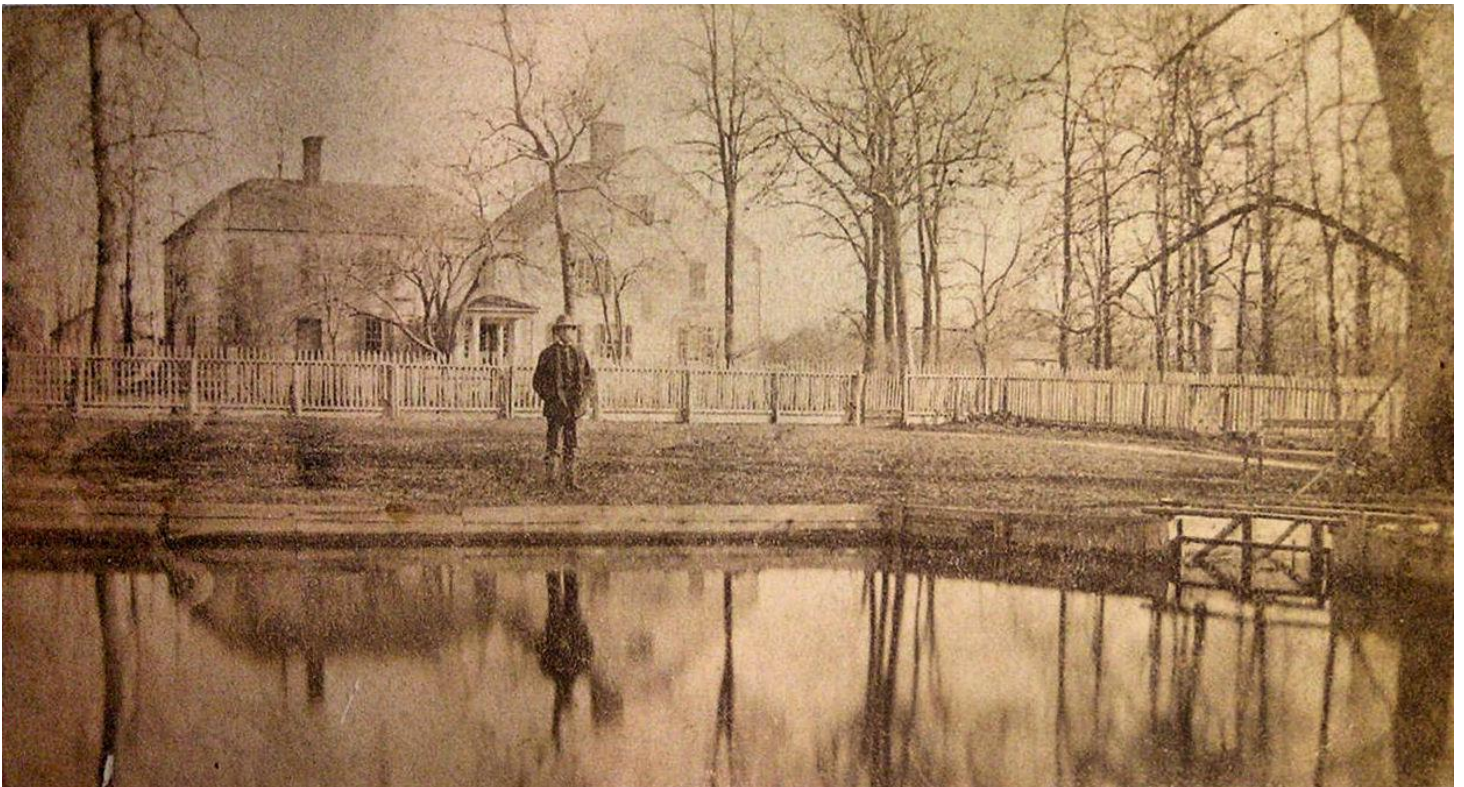
The ambiance he wrote of stems from our community being the oldest on the south shore of Brookhaven Town, with the first settlers having arrived around 1676, a full 100 years before the Declaration of Independence was written. Two of our four historic church buildings are still active – the South Haven Presbyterian Church, established in 1740 and the St. James Episcopal Church, built in 1873. While many of our homes were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there is at least one home in our community dating to 1740.

Other noteworthy historical dates for our hamlet are: 1702 – South Country Road (originally called the Highway at the South) was established between Brookhaven and Bellport; 1735 – twelve Fire Place landowners petitioned the Town and built Beaver Dam Road; 1776 – 21 men from Fire Place fought in the American Revolution; 1803 – 28 years after Independence, we were one of the first communities in Suffolk County to have a post office. The year 1803 also saw our first school established near where the Elementary School is today.

Some 20<sup>th</sup> century historical events include: 1900 – Captain Sam Newey opened a boatyard near the end of Beaver Dam Road; 1914 – our fire department was organized; 1926 – our library was built. The BVA was born in 1906 and is now the oldest continuously functioning civic organization in Brookhaven Town.

Thanks to the Post Morrow Foundation's historical archive, many photographs and documents of our community from the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have been preserved. I hope that you will join us at our annual meeting on June 17, where I will give a brief slide presentation highlighting some of this history.

**Marty Van Lith, BVA Historian**



**Miller House circa 1860 - 1865**

## **Squassux Landing Dredging Update**

We have an upland site for depositing dredging spoils. We have collected funds, but those funds are not enough to complete the dredging and hauling of spoils to the upland site. We are working on securing a loan for the remainder of the funds.

If we get the loan, we will immediately have the DEC test a spoil sample. If the DEC approves the sample, we will go forward, starting October 1. If the above 2 conditions are in place, and we go forward, all boats will have to be out by October 1.

If we can't secure a loan at a favorable rate, or if the test of sample spoils fails, risk to the success of the project greatly increases.

**Mike Murtha, Chairman Dredging Committee**

## **Oaklawn Cemetery**

Oaklawn Cemetery, established in 1890, is a non-profit organization comprised of plot owners located in Brookhaven Hamlet. It consists of six acres of land located on Cemetery Road at the end of Arthur Avenue, and was given to the association by James H. Post and Nathaniel Miller. Most of the graves were first located behind the Methodist Episcopal Church (the current-day Old Southaven Presbyterian Church) and then moved by Edward H. Tooker for a fee of \$1.50 each. (Those were the good old days!) Many of the first graves were those of sailors who lost their lives due to the trepid seas around Long Island. Today, the cemetery is a place where many Brookhaven residents rest their loved ones. The president of the cemetery, John "Jeb" Barry, enjoys taking care of the cemetery. Jeb and other volunteers including George Koch (Treasurer), Susan Barry (Secretary), and Trustees Gloria & Robert Brown, Fred Gillispie, and Greg Miglino make sure the cemetery is a well-kept tranquil place. Volunteers do have their work cut out for them because vandals sometimes overturn gravestones and they have to be repaired. There is also a lock on the gate to keep out "trouble" at night and this seems to be helping.

Overall, this is a nice place to visit during the day and we hope Brookhaven residents continue to take pride in their local cemetery.

Oaklawn Cemetery Association is a registered cemetery of the State of New York Divisions of Cemeteries. For information please contact Jeb Barry (631) 286-0204 or by mail: P. O. Box 415 Brookhaven Hamlet, NY 11719.

**Jeb, Sue and Heather Barry**

## **Squassux Spring 2009**

### **Difficult Times**

Since becoming dock master, I have learned that Squassux is a land time forgot in a wondrous way. Weekenders motor past us on Sunrise to the Hamptons. New houses grow on East end farms like mushrooms. Meanwhile, the Carman River changes little save for the winter lifting of poles and docks, or the appearance of a few new boaters each spring. The yearly erosion creates its craters, while rivulets of rain and tidal runoff carve small inlets under some of the river docks. Then, each year Squassux undergoes its ritual of renewal as spring arrives, bringing fish, animals, greenery, and warmth. Docks are repaired, electricity is turned on, and the water pump gurgles to life. Altogether, this cyclic nature brings the reassurance of inevitable renewal.

However, underlying this bucolic notion is a sinister undercurrent, not of nature, but of our own human devising. Last year the hot topic was the absurd price of gas. Many boats were idle because of that expense. This year it is the steep recession which I know firsthand has affected our neighbors and fellow boaters after speaking with many of them. The Great Depression of 1929 was a deep recession, and I believe depression is the term derived from our frayed states of mind as we consider material values lost, depleted pensions, and fear for our livelihoods. We wish fervently to safeguard our families, homes, and quality of life.

To my surprise, the 2009 dock turnover at Squassux is actually less than the past two years. I had braced for a slew of surrendered slips, wondering how they could be filled, but that just did not happen. Perhaps the resiliency of Squassux' unchanging nature has rubbed off on its boaters. It is a refuge we all can emotionally shelter in and enjoy as the economic storm churns and passes us by.

**Andy Rubin, Dock Master**

## **BVA Tree Planting Program**

The BVA plants a variety of trees each year throughout Brookhaven Hamlet. The tree planting program is funded by monetary donations from community residents, the Bellport Garden Club, the Post Morrow Foundation, and a grant from the Caithness Host Community Benefits Package. In addition, the BVA participates in the Long Island Power Authority's Wire-Friendly Tree Program.

John Beitel of John Beitel Landscaping and Jeffrey Jensen of South Country Arboriculture, along with other members of the BVA donate their time to ensure the success of this tree planting program. This spring Matt Palermo of Lawntasia



Landscaping planted twelve trees for the BVA. To date, the Brookhaven Village Association has planted over 100 trees throughout Brookhaven Hamlet.

**Lynn DiClemente Brown, BVA Tree Chairperson**

## **BVA Website**

Please visit our website at [www.brookhavenvillageassociation.org](http://www.brookhavenvillageassociation.org). You will find many items of interest relating to the hamlet. One new addition is the Tree Map. If you are current with BVA activities, you are familiar with the BVA Tree Fund. Monies donated to the fund are used to purchase trees to maintain the rural look of the hamlet. Some tree plantings are to replace diseased or dead trees and others are purely aesthetic. Trees native to Long Island are given priority over other species, yet a variety of trees are planted to improve diversity. Since its inception in 2001, over one hundred trees have been planted in the Hamlet. The Tree Map shows locations of tree plantings marked by standard Google balloons. The usual zoom tools are present and you can switch from map to satellite. Click on the balloons for info on type of tree and date planted. All tree locations are approximate. Lynn Brown is the Tree Committee Chair and welcomes suggestions for locations to plant new trees. You can find the link to the Tree Map on the home page, in the Important Announcements area. Please email us if you have suggestions for new website content.

**Janet Quirk, BVA Treasurer & Web Designer**

## **Quality of Life**

Spring! Finally! What a long winter. I'm sure glad it's over. Time to go outside and get ready for summer. Where to start? I have so much to do and not enough time to do it. Can I squeeze a couple hours in for my community? I love this place so I will take a couple hours out of my year to help in the litter clean up.

We just finished our spring litter clean up and it was a big success. Thank you to all who showed up to help. Each person did the work of two people. We put a big dent in our litter problem.

As for me, I look at the garden, the boat, all the things I want to be doing instead of picking up other people's garbage. I don't want to go but I do. Half way through I realize that it's not all about me and I put in more time than I planed on doing in the first place. When I'm done and feeling good the thought comes to me:

Brookhaven, I love this place.

**John Curiale, Chairman Quality of Life**

## **Graffiti**

We have all noticed the additional graffiti on the railroad bridge crossing South Country Road. It has been a frustrating process trying to get the LIRR to repaint the bridge. Since November 2007 I have placed phone calls to Public Affairs for the LIRR but to no avail. I offered to send pictures several times, but was advised not to because it would take longer to get the painting done. I've spoken to four different people, five times since then, and was always assured that we would be put on the list and that they would take care of it ASAP. I was a bit skeptical since each time they would ask if the language was foul, because they do try to get to those sites first. Since it wasn't, they never got here!

Feeling like I wasn't getting anywhere, I started contacting the Town of Brookhaven this past January. I was told that if I filed a complaint, the Town would send a letter to the railroad and they would have to paint over the graffiti within 60 days. They sent the form; I filled it out and waited.

Then I spoke to someone who works for the railroad, and what they told me was verified by someone in the law department of the town.

Apparently the Town does not have jurisdiction over the railroad. The railroad does not have to comply with the town laws in these matters, though individual citizens with property do.

So, we're back to square one...and the graffiti is still there, and much worse than in 2007.

I think that if enough people contacted our town, or county legislative officials, or perhaps the newspaper, this additional pressure would help. Also, if the LIRR got enough calls, they might decide to clean up the graffiti.

The phone number for the LIRR Public Affairs is: 718-558-8228. Their address is: LIRR Public Affairs, Jamaica Station, Jamaica, NY 11435.

The Town of Brookhaven complaint desk has several numbers to try: 451-6500, 451-8696 (call center), and the law department number, which sends the complaint form is: 451-6653.

We shouldn't give up!

**Diane Zanazzi, Concerned Resident**

## Brief Interview with Lifelong Brookhaven Resident Ben Savage



On a warm Saturday afternoon I went to Ben Savage's work shop and asked him a few questions with an aim to getting him to reflect on his life in the hamlet. Ben is a local artist and we have all seen his distinctive and beautiful signs around the hamlet and elsewhere. Ben was president of the BVA in the late 70's and early 80's. Here are the questions and his answers; I hope you find them as interesting as I did.

**Q:** Where were you born?

**A:** Ben was born in a house on his family's duck farm on Old Stump Road, right across from where Diane Martens lives now. A Mary Tenke who lived on Yaphank Avenue, was a local midwife who helped bring him into this world.



**Q:** What was Brookhaven like when you were a kid?

**A:** Ben said that basically it was pretty quiet, and that there weren't many kids his age to play with. His playmates were George Nesbitt and Bruce Barteau who were both younger than he was. During World War II, the already quiet hamlet got even quieter because folks left to find defense contracting work elsewhere.

**Q:** What was the biggest event that took place in Brookhaven hamlet in your life?

**A:** Ben said there were 3 big things that happened in the hamlet: **1)** the Tiernan murder. Ben's sister May discovered the grisly scene in 1937. She was going to pick flowers in the cemetery in the field south of Montauk highway and discovered the bodies. (see Brookhaven/South Haven Hamlets website <http://brookhavensouthhaven.org/> ; at the home page in search bar enter "tiernan"). Ben recalls the hound dogs baying outside and police swarming everywhere in search of a killer. **2)** The raid by federal officials on the bootleg operation at his cousin's duck farm. Ben's cousin rented a barn to what turned out to be big time bootleggers. Ben and his cousin were walking down Old Stump Road one afternoon when they saw smoke coming from his cousin's duck barn. The firemen were chopping up yeast cans and destroying the bootleg

operation. Ben said it was rumored that Al Capone had a room rented in what used to be a hotel that later was the Mastic Hour and is now Ground Round. Ben also told me that on the south shore of Long Island during prohibition, there were numerous rum runners. There were several that lived right in the hamlet! Sam Newey worked on rum runner boats that had the powerful Liberty aircraft engines powering them. The Better Ole (now Painters) used to be a speak easy during prohibition **3)** The hurricane of 1938

**Q:** Where did you keep your boat ?

**A:** Ben said that he kept a Herreshoff catboat down at Squassux; it was tethered to a stake driven into the bank

**Q:** Did you have a job as a kid?

**A:** Ben had a paper route and delivered paper to such notables as Gardener Rae and Al Turner (an artist who lived in the house on the corner of Old Barteau Road and Montauk Highway). Ben was very interested in cartoons and was always drawing them. Gardener Rae encouraged Ben in this pursuit.

**Q:** How do you feel about changes that have taken place in the hamlet?

**A:** Ben feels that rapid development of the hamlet has had a negative impact on the quality of life. Ben was involved in defeating a plan by local investors to develop land on Old Stump Road. He went door to door getting signatures opposing the development plan and even though some folks said he "would never stop" them, he did.

**Rick Mohlmann, Fire Place Editor**

**Announcements:**

**Annual Meeting:** Wednesday, June 17th, 7:30 PM, St James Episcopal Church, Beaver Dam Rd. Guest Speaker: BVA Historian Marty Van Lith

**Slate proposed by the board:** President: Mary Jane Cullen; Vice President: Mike Murtha; Secretary: Rick Mohlmann  
New Director to replace Ed Palace, whose term has expired: Ellen Clyne. Second Terms for Frank Miller and Sean Pilger.

**"Squassux Sunset Salute" to Ed Palace,** Friday, June 26th, 6:00 - 9:00 PM at Squassux Landing. Covered Dish Supper. BYOB, chairs and a covered dish to share. BVA will provide soda, water and dessert.

**BVA BOARD MEMBERS**

**PRESIDENT:**

Mary Jane Cullen

**VICE PRESIDENT:**

Mike Murtha

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:**

Janet Taylor

**SECRETARY:**

Rick Mohlmann

**TREASURER:**

Janet Quirk

**DIRECTORS:**

Ed Palace

Lisa Peabody

Jeffrey Jensen

Lenny DaConto

Michael Rizzo

Kathleen Scheibel

John Curiale

Frank Miller

Sean Pilger

**DOCK MASTER:**

Andy Rubin

**HISTORIAN:**

Marty Van Lith

The BVA Board meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Post Morrow Annex, 16 Bay Rd. Meetings are open to the public.

**New Membership Application** - Resident membership in the Brookhaven Village Association is open to individual and family residents of Brookhaven Hamlet, as defined in the BVA Bylaws. To become a member, complete this form and send it, along with your annual membership fee to:

**Brookhaven Village Association, P.O. Box 167, Brookhaven, New York 11719**

Membership Category:  Family, \$15 annual fee  Individual, \$10 annual fee

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Family members at this address: \_\_\_\_\_  
List areas of special concern on back Dennis Puleston Environmental Fund Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
BVA Tree Fund contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Virginia Brown Scholarship contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery  
Fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_