

PRESERVATION NOTES

NEWSLETTER
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Historic post card view of Nikola Tesla's Wardenclyffe Laboratory. (The transmission tower in the foreground was demolished after the property was sold in 1917.)

WARDENCLYFFE'S CYBER SAVE

Since 1996 the Tesla Science Center at Wardenclyffe had been trying to save the crumbling century-old Shoreham laboratory that Stanford White designed for visionary inventor Nikola Tesla. Its goal was to buy the 16-acre site (offered at \$1.6 million) and restore the building to create a museum and science learning center to honor Tesla's achievements. What the center couldn't imagine was raising \$850,000 in just six days with the help of an internet cartoon blogger from Seattle who happened to be a big Tesla fan.

The partnership began in August of this year after Matthew Inman, creator of "The Oatmeal," blogged about Nikola Tesla as "the greatest geek who ever lived." With a glib, no-holds barred style of writing and illustration, Inman described how Tesla – the inventor of alternating electrical current – was a far greater inventor than his former employer, Thomas Edison. With readership well into the millions, Inman's post went viral, inspiring new appreciation for the lesser-known inventor and connecting Inman to the Science Center's president, Jane Alcorn, who explained its mission to save Tesla's last remaining laboratory, Wardenclyffe. Inman then

launched a 45-day campaign at the crowdfunding website, indigo.com and encouraged donors to support "Operation Let's Build a Goddamn Tesla Museum" by promoting the Science Center's vision and offering Tesla-themed Oatmeal "perks" like an autographed "Tesla Geek Booklet."

The money rolled in – faster than anyone could imagine – and soon exceeded the \$850,000 needed to match government grants for the site's purchase. By campaign's end, over \$1.2 million came from roughly 29,500 individuals in more than 100 countries. Now the Science Center is in a position, not only to buy the site but to begin the process of restoring the lab.

The added support couldn't have come at a better time. Declared a brownfield after Agfa-Gevaert Group of Belgium (owner since 1969) ceased operations two decades ago, the property recently sparked new interest among potential buyers after the completion of an eight-year remediation of cadmium and silver contamination. Bolstered by far-reaching support, the dream of a Tesla Science Center at Wardenclyffe is closer to reality and it only seems fitting that it should result from a virtual relationship forged in cyberspace.

DID YOU KNOW...

New York City's oldest public high school is in Flushing?

Founded in 1875 before the Greater New York consolidation, Flushing High School was established for the Long Island Township of Flushing, an area of nurseries and farms comprising the villages of College Point, Whitestone, Bayside, Douglaston, Little Neck, and Flushing. The original building at the corner of Sanford and Union Streets doubled as a grammar school. While an 1891 expansion helped it to accommodate a growing population, by 1910 an altogether new and separate high school would be needed.

The current high school building represents the area's transformation from rural township to city suburb. Construction began in 1912 at 35-01 Union Street on land acquired from the well-known nurseryman, Samuel Parsons. Completed in 1915, the building was designed by the Board of Education's Superintendent of Buildings, C.B.J. Snyder and is an outstanding regional example of the Collegiate Gothic Revival style.



Historic view of Flushing High School main facade.

The old building remained a grammar school until its demolition in 1950. At around the same time, Flushing High School underwent a substantial renovation that altered many interior spaces and included construction of a large new wing. Luckily, the historic building's dominant features survived: the grand Assembly Hall and the crenelated entrance tower whose interior features several murals on the history of Flushing sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

SPLIA'S LIST OF ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES: UPDATE



High style Gothic Revival interior staircase at St. Paul's School, 2010.

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Credo: It has become apparent that those of us who are interested in conservation and preservation need to be alerted to the destruction of the irreplaceable values and environments that comprise our heritage and to the actions proposed to avert such threats. These notes are designed to raise awareness.

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SPLIA's List of Endangered Historic Places was initiated in 2009 to help shine a light on the region's threatened historic resources. Derived through nominations, the list invites individuals and organizations to identify what matters in their communities, and begins a conversation about what a "save" might entail. It also is intended to promote solutions while raising awareness both for specific properties and the broader issues affecting preservation in the region.

In three years, SPLIA has called attention to nine endangered places and some are already seeing positive change. The **John Coltrane Home** in Dix Hills was awarded a \$36,000 state grant for a preservation feasibility study after making SPLIA's 2011 list. It also went on to be included on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Eleven Most Endangered List which brought greater support to its friends group through national publicity. SPLIA's 2010 listing of the **Sayre Barn** (one of several buildings that make up the Southampton Historical Museum) helped to galvanize fundraising efforts for its restoration. This in turn encouraged National Register listing for the entire complex, making individual structures more eligible for public funding. And the **Canoe Place Inn** in Hampton Bays – close to being a lost cause when it made SPLIA's list in 2010 – is now looking at restoration for its future as part of a new condominium development at its site.

As SPLIA prepares for a new list of endangered historic places, the overall status of most properties is either unchanged

or oriented towards improvement. The long-term future of **St. Paul's School** (a 2010 listing) still hangs in the balance although residents revealed they were not ready to give up on the building when they voted down a referendum to demolish it. For the Commack School District-owned **Marion Carll Farm**, following its listing in 2011, a new citizens group has emerged as an intervener in the current lawsuit over covenant compliance with hopes of returning farming and education to the 9-acre covenanted site. Only the 2011-listed **Hotel Huntington** faces a negative future, with its demolition approved by the Town of Huntington to make way for a new bank building.

Following an alternating announcement year cycle, SPLIA is looking to release its next list in 2013. For those interested in nominating a property, forms can be downloaded at our website, www.splia.org, or requested by contacting our office.



Historic view of the Hotel Huntington main entrance c. 1930.



Historic post card view of the Canoe Place Inn.

BULOVA WATCHCASE FACTORY



The Bulova Watchcase Factory rehabilitation under construction, 2012.

Five years after current owners, Cape Advisors, received permits to convert the Bulova Watchcase factory into luxury condominium apartments, the high-profile adaptive reuse of the 2.3 acre site in the heart of downtown Sag Harbor is finally underway. A complex project to organize,

the rehabilitation of the crumbling 1881 factory – originally built for watch maker, Joseph Fahy and vacant since 1979 – not only required brownfield remediation but also compliance with a Suffolk County affordable housing requirement. Resolving the housing issue and the recent recession



Conceptual bird's-eye view of Watchcase Factory. (Courtesy of www.watchcasefactory.com/content/welcome-watchcase.)

delayed the project. According to the developers, affordable housing was not feasible as a result of the scope of the project and the cost of remediation. Ultimately, a compromise was reached where the developers would contribute \$2.5 million to the village's Community Housing Trust for the creation of affordable housing units at another location.

With obstacles finally cleared, the 64-unit development of loft-style residences called the "Watchcase Factory" is scheduled to open in 2013. With the construction of additional townhouses and integrated gardens with various amenities at the site, one can expect new life for the decades-old eyesore and another example of adaptive reuse on Long Island.

JOHN JERMAIN LIBRARY

Like the Watchcase Factory, the John Jermain Memorial Library expansion is another big Sag Harbor project that is finally underway. Following years of delay, the neighborhood-approved scheme includes restoration of the 1910 Augustus N. Allen designed Classical Revival building that Mrs. Russell Sage had built in honor of her grandfather (Major John Jermain), and construction of a glassy modern addition to accommodate new uses. Created by Connecticut-based Newman Architects, the addition will sit below and behind the historic roof line and will maintain the old building's center stage status while doubling the facility's square footage to 15,000. Restoration began in June of 2011 and to date all masonry repointing is complete and several windows, including the leaded glass lay light, have been removed and restored. The building's Guastavino tile dome is the latest focus area and if all goes as planned, the library hopes to open in 2013.



Architect's rendering of the John Jermain Library expansion, (Image courtesy of Newman Architects, LLC.)

LONG ISLAND'S LOST

Von Stade Estate, Old Westbury

Now a 40-acre subdivision consisting of 16 building lots known as Hidden Lake, this former horseman's estate was built in 1914 for bristle importer and noted sportsman, Francis "Skiddy" Von Stade Sr. Originally designed by the firm of Cross and Cross in the Colonial Revival style, the estate included a main house (enlarged c. 1930 by Peabody Wilson and Brown), a stable, several outbuildings, an enclosed practice track, and a small lake. Von Stade – a champion polo player, founder of the National Museum of Racing in Saratoga Springs, and Mayor of Old Westbury from 1940-50 – maintained the estate until his death in 1967. It then passed to the Entenmanns family of bakery fame. After a long period of vacancy, the property was purchased for redevelopment by Stewart Senter Inc. and was completely leveled earlier this year.



Von Stade stable before site demolition, 2010.

Dark Hollow, Lloyd Harbor

Designed by architects, Mott B. Schmidt & Mogens Tvede in a "Neo-Palladian" style, Dark Hollow was built in 1930-31 for Oliver B. Jennings. The estate overlooked Lloyd Harbor and included a gate house and a waterside tea pavilion. The largely intact main house featured a grand double-high living space and an intimate interior rotunda with a stair case to access second floor bedrooms above the main entrance. The property was occupied until 2010 and was then left to deterioration and vandalism by new owners who demolished it in January 2012.



Dark Hollow west facade facing Lloyd Harbor during demolition, 2011.

LOOKING FOR A HOME: QUOGUE'S "ANTIQUITY"

Any old house lovers out there with some vacant land? The Quogue Historical Society has the house for you: one of Quogue's oldest and most important, built in 1734 and known as "Antiquity." Saved by the Society from the developer's wrecking ball, it has been meticulously deconstructed and stored to await a new owner.

Originally the residence of Deacon Thomas Cooper (1710-1782), one of Quogue's first settlers, "Antiquity" is a full 2-story, 5-bay house with center door and chimney with flanking 12 over 8 divided pane windows. It is one of the largest (and rarest) surviving homes of the Colonial period in Southampton Town and, according to Town Historian, Zachary Studenroth, and Robert Strada of Robert Strada Designs, Inc., it is in excellent condition, retaining a high degree of architectural integrity. The interior room layout remains largely undisturbed, featuring spacious parlors and bed chambers and a wealth of historic interior details that include a small built-in corner cupboard, horizontal paneling with chair rails, and wide-plank floor boards.

The Society would like to keep "Antiquity" in Quogue, or nearby, if at all possible. Interested? Please contact the Society at 631-996-2404 or preservation@quoguehistoricalsociety.org.



"Antiquity" before deconstruction in 2011. In this view, the saved 1734 house is on the right. The wing to the left is a later addition that was removed.

SAVED



Restored Knollwood Gates, 2012.

Knollwood Gates, Muttontown

Owned by Nassau County and located on Route 106 at the Muttontown Preserve, the Knollwood Gates were recently restored through a partnership between the M.O. and M.E Hoffman Foundation and the Village of Muttontown. Working with input from the County, the \$63,000 project was spearheaded by the Village's Beautification Committee and entailed repairing limestone-clad pillars and restoring cast-iron railings and gates that were embellished in bronze. While as much original material as possible was conserved, new metalwork was needed to replicate what was either lost or deteriorated beyond repair. The result is a source of pride for the collaborative team which celebrated the restoration earlier this year and is now looking to find appropriate half lanterns to replace those that were lost. The structure is now essentially the last recognizable feature of the grand estate that the firm of Hiss & Weeks designed for Charles I. Hudson in 1906.

PLACES TO WATCH



The Glen Cove Mansion Hotel and Conference Center (formerly John T. and Ruth Pratt's "Manor House"), 2012.

"Manor House" (Glen Cove Mansion Hotel and Conference Center), Glen Cove

Glen Cove residents who attended a public hearing on the former John T. and Ruth Pratt estate, "Manor House," predominantly objected to a new subdivision plan that would help preserve the historic building. Concerns raised included density, traffic, and school taxes but under existing zoning the same amount of housing is allowed and the 54.5-acre site could be carved into 1-acre lots, and the building demolished.

The proposed new subdivision was planned under a new "estate preservation" zoning classification established to encourage the protection of large historic properties in the area. Named "North Manor Estates," the subdivision would be limited to 17.5 acres on the northwest corner of the property and would consist of 46 residences in 23 duplex buildings. The Charles A. Platt designed main house, built 1909-15, would continue to operate as the Glen Cove Mansion Hotel and Conference Center and the remaining 37 acres (including the great lawn) would become open space with no further development allowed. The property's current owner, Montclair Hotels, is not threatening demolition but financial concerns are driving the need to explore alternatives to keep the property viable.



Inisfada main facade view of porte cochere, 2011.

Inisfada, North Hills

The Jesuits' New York Province recently announced the closing of its St. Ignatius Retreat House at Inisfada and the property is now for sale at \$49 million. Consisting of 33 acres with an intact country house built between 1916 and 1920, the site was formerly the estate of Nicholas and Genevieve Brady. Designed by the Philadelphia-based architect, John Torrey Windrim, it was donated to the Province by Mrs. Brady in 1937.

As an outstanding example of the high Tudor Revival style, Inisfada maintains most of its original interior and exterior features but is not protected by any formal landmark designation. This is cause for concern because the site's substantial acreage makes it highly attractive for redevelopment which, without protection, could lead to demolition. SPLIA received confirmation that the property is eligible for National Register listing – an incentive for adaptive re-use – but without a preservation-friendly buyer, an important piece of history could be lost.

PARK PLACE, CROWN HEIGHTS

Recently designated an historic district by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Park Place in Crown Heights, Brooklyn is comprised of thirteen attached row houses built c.1894 by brothers, Frederick W. and Walter S. Hammett of Philadelphia. Richly ornamented, the group was designed by Joseph Mason Kirby as a single piece in a composite Romanesque and Queen Anne style. Brick, sandstone, and terracotta create varied color and texture while shared roof line, alternating between flat, round, and peaked elements belies the relatively modest scale of the individual houses which were intended for upper middle-class homeowners.

Among the group's first residents was the future architect, Mott B. Schmidt, who moved to 671 Park Place with his parents as a boy and continued to live there during his early career after completing his studies at Pratt Institute. Schmidt became a well known designer of country houses. Among these were about twenty commissions on Long Island including

the recently demolished "Dark Hollow" in Lloyd Harbor (See "Long Island's Lost," page 5), the Charles A. Bateson house in Huntington, and "Elyston" for Albert H. Ely in Cold Spring Harbor.

The Park Place designation represents

a small part of a larger, proposed Crow Hill Historic District. Delighted with the current designation, local advocates remain hopeful that the Landmarks Commission will soon revisit the broader district designation.



Typical Park Place street scape, 2011. (Photo courtesy of Historic Districts Council.)

YAPHANK HISTORIC DISTRICT



The Homan-Gerard House, stable but severely deteriorated, 2010.

The Yaphank Historic District is an unusual neighborhood at the north end of Southaven County Park that includes both private and publicly-owned properties located on Main Street adjacent to the Carmans River. Locally designated by the Town of Brookhaven, the district is supported largely by the Yaphank Historical Society, the neighborhood's primary preservation advocate since 1974. With a mission to interpret the district as a representation of Yaphank's development

from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, the Society partners with its public agency friends – particularly, the Suffolk County Historic Trust – to maintain, improve and interpret historic buildings in the district.

The Society's first foray into partnership was in the restoration of the County-owned Robert Hawkins House. Beginning in 1985, the restoration has provided the district with its interpretive heart: a house museum and headquarters for the Society. Another project was the restoration of the

c.1829 Mary Louise Booth House. Moved to the site in 1998, the Society helped with fundraising and interior finish-work while Suffolk County addressed exterior and infrastructure needs. The building opened to the public in August 2011 and is interpreted to reflect the life and career of Mary Louise Booth, the first editor of *Harper's Bazaar*.

The Booth House established a model working relationship for the County and the Society. By committing to fundraising and hands-on assistance, the Society, working as a future site operator, helps to bolster County initiatives.

Having a neighborhood partner has encouraged the County to begin the rehabilitation of the Homan-Gerard House. Vacant and deteriorated since it was sold to the County in 1963 by Anson W. Hard, the building dates to 1790 and has ties to the area's founding Homan, Gerard, and Hawkins families. The project's start was formally announced in July and its first phase, currently underway, includes stabilization of the foundation, chimney and building structure in preparation for the exterior and interior restorations. As with the Booth House, the Yaphank Historical Society plans to work closely with the County's Historic Services Office to provide the best support possible and looks forward to adding a new building to its interpretive programming at the site.

NATIONAL REGISTER HIGHLIGHTS



As an official list, the National Register of Historic Places recognizes districts, sites, landscapes, buildings, structures, and objects that contribute to our understanding of the Nation's historical and cultural foundation. The program will not restrict individuals from acting on or even demolishing listed properties but encourages their preservation through applicable grants and tax incentives.

Below are some stand-out listings on Long Island:

Riverhead Main Street District

Proposed by the Riverhead Landmark Commission after local designation in 2006, this district incorporates 46 contributing and eighteen non-contributing buildings located on Main Street, between Griffing Street and Maple Avenue. The area represents Riverhead's development as a center for commerce and government from circa 1840 to 1963 and is significant for expressing the architectural styles of the period. Composed mainly of two and three-story commercial buildings, the district includes banks, theaters, a hotel, churches, and a few residences. Because of the area's listing, all income-producing properties and certain qualifying residential properties are now eligible for rehabilitation tax credits.

Loews Kings Theater, Brooklyn

Located at 1025 Flatbush Avenue, this exuberant French Renaissance-inspired theater was built in 1929 for Loews Inc. at the height of the movie palace boom. Constructed by Thompson-Starrett Company, it was designed by the firm of Cornelius W. and George Leslie Rapp who created more than 400 theaters across the nation. With its lavishly decorated interior, the Loews Kings Theater is significant for being one of five "Wonder Theaters" that brought the grand movie house experience

of Times Square to major residential centers in other parts of New York City and northern New Jersey.

Vacant since its closing in 1978, the brick and terracotta-clad building is being redeveloped by Art Center Enterprises (ACE) Inc. as a new cultural performance space. Because restoration is a major component, the project will employ state and federal rehabilitation tax credits to offset an estimated \$73 million cost. The project is supported by the New York City Economic Development Corporation and is scheduled for completion in 2015.



St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex, Ridgewood, Queens

Designed by Francis J. Berlenback Jr. and featuring stained glass windows by Franz Mayer Co. of Munich, this large complex occupies most of the block at 58-15 Catalpa Avenue and includes a church, rectory, school, and convent built between 1909 and 1926. The complex is harmoniously designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and is significant for being the work of a prominent local architect with a highly decorated church interior and a remarkable collection of painted stained glass windows by a renowned German studio. The site is also significant for its association with the area's German-American Roman Catholic community that emerged after the consolidation of Greater New York City in 1898.



The "Casino," Cold Spring Harbor Beach Club

Located on Shore Road facing the harbor, the 8.7-acre Cold Spring Harbor Beach Club has been recommended by the State Board for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for its association to Long Island's history of entertainment and recreation; particularly in relation to the area's transition from a summer resort to a neighborhood of full-time residents.

The Club's earliest building – the clubhouse – was constructed by Huntington builder J.B. Lefferts in 1888. It was originally a casino for the Glenada and Forest Lawn Hotels which were owned and operated by hotelier William Gerard. The hotels were demolished in 1905 by second owners, Walter Jennings and his sister, Mrs. Helen J. James, but the casino managed to survive as a space for various social events, both private and community oriented. Eventually, it was suggested that the building might better serve as a beach club for the growing number of families living in the area and by 1921 it was officially established. From there, the facility grew to include a boathouse, caretaker's cottage, tennis courts and finger piers that served the club as it evolved into a center for yachting and tennis that contributed significantly to the history of sport on Long Island.



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A CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Do you know of an endangered historic place on Long Island? Want to raise awareness and support for its protection?

SPLIA's 2013 *List of Endangered Historic Places* may be a way to start. If you know of an historic resource that's threatened, nominate it today. Forms can be downloaded from our website: www.splia.org.