

HISTORICAL



NOTES

Newsletter of the Garden City Historical Society

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November 18 Free Lecture: Architecture, Garden City, and Recording Our Past

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: Garden City Casino
Cathedral Avenue and
Sixth Street

Art historian, Professor Donald Dwyer, will present a slide presentation on building architecture, most specifically, architecture found in the Village of Garden City. Professor Dwyer is affiliated with Parsons School of Design, New York Institute of Technology and the School of Visual Arts. He has lectured for museums, institutions and art groups within the New York area. His specialties include architecture, sculpture, painting, interiors, furniture and decorative arts. All are welcome to attend.



Historic Structure Survey

The November 18 lecture coincides with the kick off of the Garden City Historical Society's Historic Structure Survey, a cataloguing of pre-1935 residential and non-residential structures in the Village of Garden City. If you are an owner or occupant of such a property, we are seeking your help in compiling information and photographs for our catalogue of the Village's oldest structures.

To view our Historic Structure Survey form, please visit our Web site at www.gardencityhistoricalsociety.org. Or if you are interested in receiving a form by mail, contact President Brian Pinnola at 516-456-0433.

Members of the Society's Board of Directors will be happy to answer any questions at the November 18 lecture.



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Message from President Brian Pinnola

By the end of November, we will have substantially completed the renovation of our 1872 Stewart-era Apostle House into the Garden City Historical Society Museum. Construction crews have been working almost daily since April 7 to complete the work, and hopefully, with a little luck we will obtain our Certificate of Occupancy promptly from the Village!

This is an exciting time for our organization, as we can now concentrate our efforts on the "business of history" instead of worrying about where and when we will obtain the funds to complete our museum. Envision attending an exhibit loaned by the Smithsonian Institution to the Society, or viewing a collection of photographs of turn of the century life at St. Paul's School, or listening to a theatrical reading about Cornelia Stewart, or hosting a class of grade school students for a lesson in Garden City lore by our historian Vincent Seyfried. These types of programs are what our Village residents can expect from our organization. And hosting programs, exhibits and lectures will present opportunities for individuals and companies to sponsor the events and help offset the cost to the Society.

Naturally, with an ambitious agenda, we are seeking volunteers to help make this a reality. A few of our committees include membership, education, building/house, cataloging, marketing and newsletter. Regardless of your interest, we probably have something for you. There is no minimum volunteer time to serve, and some work may be done at home with flexible scheduling. We are happy and grateful to work with all interested persons. Volunteers have an opportunity to meet friendly neighbors with similar interests, and we thank those of you who have recently come on board as volunteers.

Lastly, we thank our good friend and supporter New York State Senator Kemp Hannon for his efforts to secure the funds that were necessary to complete our museum. We thank our patient membership for their unwavering support, and I personally look forward to meeting each one of you early next year when we open our museum!

SPECIAL THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Enclosed with this issue of *Historical Notes*, please find a "We Support" sticker that you can display in your home or car window.

Interview with Vincent F. Seyfried: Esteemed Village Historian

By NancyAnn Akeson

Vincent Seyfried has so many fascinating stories to tell – from his childhood in Hollis, Queens, his service as an officer in World War II, and his marriage to a wonderful woman, to 33 years as a High School English teacher and 44 years as a Garden City resident. This man not only lived a successful personal life, but he also preserved the history of Garden City, Queens and Long Island.

Seyfried is one of Garden City's two official Village Historians, but did you know that he's also a learned historian of many other villages? ...that he owns the largest and most complete collection of Garden City newspapers dating back to 1932? ...that he has written and published a well respected compendium on the Long Island Rail Road? ...that he's an expert on the history of trolleys in America? ...or that he authored over a dozen books, including *Founding of Garden City*, written in 1969 to celebrate the Village's 100th Anniversary?



What Seyfried has accomplished is a task usually tackled by entire graduate study departments at renowned universities. His tireless efforts to unearth stories and compile information make up the spirit of this man. He has received accolades and awards for his work. In fact, the Greater Astoria Historical Society of Queens named their research center in his honor, and it's dedicated to maintaining Seyfried's high standards of selfless research and the spirit of his vigorous inquiry into history.

Asked why he became an historian, documenting and creating great anthologies, Seyfried stated that "old things" always interested him. He's passionate about research, which he does the "old fashioned" way – not by using the Internet, but by delving into stories in historic newspapers, books and pictures. In the early 1950's, he volunteered to prepare historic newspapers owned by NYC's library archives to be "microfilmed". The actual newspapers, dating back to the early 1800's, now belong to Seyfried. Furthering the value of his collection, he's summarizing and compiling the articles in complete and comprehensive indices, and memorialized them on his "old fashioned" manual typewriter.

At his home, Seyfried serves as curator of his personal museum and library of research and historic collections, which include memorabilia of transportation – maps; pictures of Long Island Rail Road train stations; brass plates from trolleys and train conductors; a collection of thousands of postcards, depicting trolley cars or trolley lines throughout the United States – all meticulously organized and archived.

His fascination with the transportation system emanates from his early childhood experiences, and his first book focused on the Trolley system in Queens. His other works focus on the history of Garden City and areas of Queens – Corona, the Rockaways, Flushing during the Civil War, Long Island City-Astoria, Woodhaven, Elmhurst and Queens Village. Two of these books can be easily purchased: *Old Queens, NY in Early Photographs* and *Old Rockaway, NY in Early Photographs*; others are unfortunately out of print. Yet, Seyfried has them all — from soft covered books to beautifully bound volumes.

Despite Seyfried's retirement, he continues to be an ambassador of knowledge to all of us in Garden City and throughout Long Island. For me, my afternoon with Vincent Seyfried was very special. This teacher, veteran, famed author and devoted Garden City resident and gentleman captivated my attention for hours.

Archive Room...

During the renovation of the future home of the Garden City Historical Society Museum on Eleventh Street, a second floor room was set aside to preserve the Society's artifacts. The secure room is temperature and humidity controlled and equipped with a dedicated phone line and Internet connection for a computer. In August, members of the Society's Collection Cataloguing Committee set up shelving and transferred many artifacts to their new home. Special thanks to all Village



residents, past and present, who have donated items dating back to earlier times.

Do You Recognize this Wall?

Old fashioned graffiti? Be the first person to email the Webmaster at info@gardencityhistoricalsociety.org with the correct location of this prior day graffiti and win a complimentary book by former Village historian Mildred Smith, entitled, "Garden City, Long Island, in Early Photographs, 1869-1919".



Historical Notes Email Express

Bringing our organization into the 21st century, the Society would like to send our newsletter, *Historical Notes*, via email to all our supporters who would prefer to receive the publication in that fashion. It's easy — no paper. If you'd like to receive *Historical Notes* via email, please email the Webmaster at info@gardencityhistoricalsociety.org and tell us to put you on our electronic mailing list. It's that simple!