Mattituck-Laurel Civic Association

Minutes of Meeting Of

November 25, 2019

**HISTORY OF MATTITUCK & LAUREL**

38 PEOPLE ATTENDED

After the Pledge, Charlie introduced Anne Smith who spoke about the civic partnering with CAST to adopt a family for the holidays. Anne explained the way donations will be converted into gift certificates and gifts for a family in Laurel and that we can collect donations tonight as well as at the Holiday Party on December 11th. Our deadline for submitting donations is December 12th. Gifts will include items for a new baby. This is a time of year when we are grateful for family and friends and in the spirit of the MLCA, we are grateful for community.

Then Charlie introduced the panel of Amy Folk, Robert Harper and Erich Cramer. Amy Folk, the town historian, spoke first about the history of the hamlets. The meaning of the name Mattituck is a description of the area. It could be the “place of the great creek” of “a great waterway”. In 1661 the town ordered surveyors to map out lots and held a lottery whereby people could draw a number and choose a lot to purchase for farming.

In 1692 the only way to move products was by railroad or boat and the state required the town to create roads. One of these roads was used as part of a racetrack in 1909 which included a hairpin turn in Mattituck and stretch back through Riverhead to Manorville. A new record of 70 miles an hour was set during this race and there was a fatal accident during the race.

During the revolutionary war, there was a concentration of British forces along lake Maratooka and the Main Road. Maratooka is a derivation of the name Mattituck. In 1792, residents at the western end of the town complained about the distance needed to travel to town hall for the mandatory meetings, which was a 3-day round trip walk, and the town went to the state legislature to be split in half, and the town of Riverhead was created.

In 1831, the area of Franklinville (named after Benjamin Franklin) was formed. In 1832, the Franklinville academy was built next to the existing post office. In 1844 the railroad was extended through Franklinville and Mattituck to Greenport. In 1862, 22 local men joined the civil war. Between 1850 and 1890 expansion and a building boom moved some of the local economy from farming and into manufacturing with buildings along the railroad tracks for easy shipping of products. New businesses brought workers who needed places to live and houses sprang up throughout the hamlet. Many of these historic homes are still with us today.

In 1872, problems arose because there were 2 places in NY state called Franklinville. That’s when several Indian names were considered, but the name was changed to Laurel, because of the lake. The Laurel schoolhouse was built shortly thereafter.

Love Lane had many buildings built in 1856, including a hotel and a bank. Neither exist today. In 1920, several of the buildings were replaced and the street was paved. In 1938, the bank was robbed by 4 men during the day. Making it the first daylight bank robbery in Suffolk County. They stole $6000 (value today is $110,000) and got away in a Buick, later found at Laurel Lake. One of the hostages recognized one of the robbers because they had played in a craps game together. All 4 were later caught and sent to prison. Tourists still flock to the north fork for the open space and fresh air.

Robert Harper acknowledged other historians in the audience and then spoke about the Historic Preservation Commission and how they try to preserve the architecture and history that is all around us. What makes this place special: the people, the waterways, the open spaces and farms, the families who have been here for hundreds of years, the small-town atmosphere.

Robert showed pictures of several historic homes, some of which pre-date the revolutionary war and 1 home in Laurel that was built in 1699. The buildings of the Mattituck Laurel Historical Society and the Tuthill family homes were discussed. Andrew Gildersleeve built 2 churches and several homes in Mattituck. There is a Gildersleeve room at the historical society. Several significant buildings have been repurposed over time. A bank is now a library in Southold and another church is the library in Cutchogue.

Robert explained the National Register of Historic Places (established in 1966) with things like Mount Rushmore, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building and other well-known places. The National Register was created as a result of the demolition of Penn Station and the Brokaw Mansion in New York, which started a movement to preserve historic buildings.

A National Historic District is an area designated to have historic significance. There are no restrictions on properties within these districts unless a local municipality adds them. There are 3 of these districts in Southold Town: Orient Village, Southold Village, and the East Marion Main Road Historic District.

There are 4 individual Landmarks in Mattituck/Laurel: the Cox/Forman House; Ira Tuthill House, Jesse Tuthill House, Andrew Gildersleeve Octagon House. The Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities is an organization dedicated to preserving our cultural heritage. There are 3 Historical Societies in Southold – Mattituck-Laurel, Southold, and the Oysterponds.

In 1968 a plan to alter Grand Central Terminal was proposed by the New York Penn Central railroad and opposed by the NYC Landmark Commission. There was a law suit and in 1978 the U.S. Supreme Court upholds the Landmark Commission’s position. This established the legal authority of local governments to enact laws protecting historic properties. In 2004 Southold Town adopted Local Law 170 as our Landmarks Preservation Law. To see the law, go to: <https://www.southoldtownny.gov/225/Historic-Preservation-Commission> and scroll down to “Resources”. The purpose of the law is to insure that additions and architectural work are done in a manner that conforms to the original design. The law has no jurisdiction over interior renovations, landscaping, or regular maintenance and repair items.

Erich Cramer then spoke about the buildings on the Mattituck-Laurel Historical Society property. The MLHS preserves some of the historic buildings and furnishings. It also informs about the history of some of our local families. Erich discussed the problem of getting young people involved in organizations like historic societies or civic associations and a collaborative effort should be made to get younger people involved so that we can continue to preserve history.

Robert resumed speaking and told us that there are 346 properties in Southold Town, 200 of which are in Orient, that are designated as local landmarks, but there are almost 2000 historic buildings in the town. This means that those that are not landmarked can be lost if a future owner wants to make changes. The pros and cons of owning a landmarked home were discussed. Older materials are much better than materials used today. Refurbishing old items is a very environmentally friendly thing to do. The Town should create incentives to get more people to be willing to landmark their homes.

When a structure is demolished, it is lost forever.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charles Gueli