



# THE YEOMAN

Farmingdale-  
Bethpage  
Historical Society  
www.fbhsli.org

Mildred Johnston, President

James McCullagh, Vice-President

September  
2009

## Ceremony Culminates Extensive Eagle Scout Project

A program honoring two Farmingdale brothers who served in the Union Army in the Civil War served as the culminating event in the extensive Eagle Scout project of Patrick Looney on Friday, August 21. The program was held at the German Methodist Cemetery (aka Lyceum Cemetery) on Hempstead Turnpike in Bethpage, and included dedication of footstones honoring Albert and Cornelius Walters. Albert died in service in Tennessee in 1865; his brother Cornelius died in 1868 from a service-related illness after returning to Farmingdale. Their headstones had been repaired earlier in the project.

The total project, which took over a year to complete, included identification of local Civil War veterans and their gravesites; gravesite rehabilitation, which was extensive at two cemeteries; and a program of public education about the contribution of these veterans.

At the August 21 commemoration, Patrick Looney thanked a lengthy list of individuals who assisted him to meet his goals, as well as Troop 261, BSA, and the Farmingdale-Bethpage Historical Society. Serena Brochu, FBHS Trustee, provided invaluable help with research, Patrick noted.

FBHS President Mildred Johnston presided at the cemetery event, at which Donald Wentler of the Bethpage United Methodist Church gave the invocation. Town historian John Hammond spoke on "The Town of Oyster Bay and the American Civil War". Bill Johnston, Farmingdale village historian, acknowledged the posthumous relationship of the late Alonzo Gibbs to this project, reading Mr. Gibbs' "Sermons in Stones" about the thirteen Farmingdale young men who left for service on August 21, 1862, from HARKING BACK, a collection of articles about Bethpage Purchase history. FBHS trustee Harrison Hunt read the obituary of Alfred Walters from the QUEENS COUNTY SENTINEL of February 25, 1865, and Bill Brochu, substituting for his wife Serena, presented the story of Cornelius Walters.

On behalf of the Town of Oyster Bay, Town Clerk Steven L. Labriola presented Patrick with a citation from Supervisor John Venditto and the Town Board for distinguished achievement on completing his extensive Eagle Scout project.

Mary K. Looney, Patrick's grandmother, coordinated the refreshment time, assisted by his mother Suzanne and sister Michelle.

The officers, trustees, and members of this Society congratulate Patrick on reaching the culmination of his large and ambitious project, and wish him continued success as he embarks on his college career within a few days.

## In Memoriam: Lance Corporal James D. Argentine, USMC

The Farmingdale-Bethpage Historical Society joins with the entire community in mourning the loss of Lance Corporal James D. Argentine, USMC who died suddenly on August 6, 2009. James was a member of a regimental combat team serving in Afghanistan. The officers, trustees, and members of this Society extend deepest sympathy to James' parents, Jan and Robert Argentine, on their tragic loss.

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## **Village Walk Set For Sunday Afternoon, October 4**

The Farmingdale-Bethpage Historical Society will sponsor a walk in a central portion of the Village of Farmingdale on Sunday afternoon, October 4. The walking tour will include sections of Rose, Richard, Main, Prospect, Weiden, Bernard, and Doud Streets. The area has been a favorite locale of residence with many business and professional people with offices or shops in the Village over the years, due to its close proximity to the central business district.

Participants are invited to meet at 2pm on the Village Green, next to Village Hall. No pre-registration is necessary, and there is no fee. The walk will be held in case of light showers, but postponed if there are thunderstorms or heavy rainfall.

Those interested are invited to visit the website of the Farmingdale-Bethpage Historical Society at [www.fbhsli.org](http://www.fbhsli.org) for further background information on the Farmingdale area.

## **New Program Year Begins With Fall Calendar of Events**

The 2009-2010 program year for the Farmingdale-Bethpage Historical Society begins with the walking tour on Sunday, October 4, as noted above. The annual Installation Dinner will be held late in October. Registration information on the dinner will be carried in the October issue of THE YEOMAN.

Harrison Hunt, a former FBHS president and current trustee, will open the Fall-Winter Lecture Series on Sunday, November 15, at 2pm at the Farmingdale Public Library. Mr. Hunt will speak on medical care during the Civil War, a topic he has researched for many years.

For those who wish to plan for the early months of 2010, the Winter Lecture Series will be presented at the Farmingdale Public Library on these Sundays at 2 pm: January 17, February 14, and March 21.

## **Summer ASCHS Recap; East Islip Society to Host Fall ASCHS**

The Lindenhurst Historical Society was host to the Association of Suffolk County Historical Societies (ASCHS) on Saturday, August 1. After registration at the Rainbow Senior Center, participants toured the 1901 LIRR Depot and the Old Village Hall Museum, and witnessed the rededication of the graves of Lindenhurst's Civil War veterans in the Breslau Cemetery. The luncheon and business meeting were held at Fanelli's Restaurant.

The host society provided one-third of the 75 attendees. Mildred and Bill Johnston represented the FBHS.

The East Islip Historical Society will host the fall meeting of ASCHS on Saturday, October 24. If you are interested in attending, kindly contact Mildred Johnston at 516-249-3099.

## **Executive Board Meetings**

The next meeting of the officers and trustees of the Society will be on Thursday, September 3, 2009 at 7pm at the Farmingdale Public Library in the conference room near the Reference Desk. The meetings will follow the traditional first, non-holiday Thursday of the month schedule. Subsequent meeting dates will be: October 1 and November 5, 2009. Members are reminded that they are always welcome to sit in on meetings of the executive board and, with prior arrangement with the president, to address the Board on matters of concern.

## **"Art in the Park" on the Green, Saturday, September 12**

The second annual "Art in the Park" Outdoor Art Show and Sale will be held on the Village Green Saturday, September 12 between the hours of 10am and 5pm. The rain date is Sunday, September 13. Full details are available at [www.farmingdalevillage.com](http://www.farmingdalevillage.com).



## **The Cross-Island Trolley Line, 1909-1919**

Late summer 2009 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the trolley era in the Farmingdale area. A grand parade and an all-day celebration heralded the start of trolley service on the Cross-Island Line on August 25, 1909, with a sandlot baseball game, a vaudeville show and a community ball.

The first two decades of the twentieth century were the heyday for electric powered trolleys, or street cars, in this country. Ownership of private cars was not widespread until the 1920s, so trolleys filled a vital need. It has been said that one could travel from the East Coast as far west as Milwaukee by interurban trolleys in the World War I era, provided one had the time and patience to change lines repeatedly.

Although it operated for just over ten years, 1909-1919, the story of the Cross-Island Trolley Line forms a colorful chapter in Farmingdale's history. The line ran north to Halesite and south to Amityville, with a major transfer point at the Farmingdale LIRR station. A two-story tower was added to the west end of the 1896 structure in 1909 to house electrical equipment needed to power the trolleys. Ceramic insulators are still visible on the north side of the tower.

The Cross-Island Trolley connected three stations and lines of the Long Island Rail Road: Huntington on the Port Jefferson line, Farmingdale on the Main Line, and Amityville on the Babylon-Montauk Line. The trolley line in Farmingdale came south from Halesite on Broad Hollow Road (now Route 110), and swung west on Conklin Street into the Village of Farmingdale. On Conklin Street, just east of where the telephone building now stands, the track turned north into a dead-end spur which served the railroad station at Depot Avenue. Trolleys then continued back to Conklin, turning south on Main Street, and leaving the village at a crossing of the LIRR Central Branch on their way to Amityville.

One of the dozen or so passing sidings on the single track line was located at Staples and Main Streets in South Farmingdale. The eighteen and one-half mile line was divided into six zones, each with a nickel fare, so one could ride the whole route for thirty cents. The scheduled running time between the end points was 76 minutes.

The aging of the line's equipment, the difficulty in maintaining the right-of-way, the loss of a U.S. Mail contract, and the increasingly successful encroachment of unlicensed jitney operators all took their toll on the Cross-Island Line. On September 23, 1919 after the schedule for the day was completed, the line was shut down.

So ended Farmingdale's trolley era. In their time, the trolleys helped area residents to shop, go to work, attend religious services, and even to attend the new Farmingdale High School, which opened with a ninth grade in September 1913. Although some complained about its service for a variety of reasons, the Cross-Island Line filled a needed role in its time.

## **Farmingdale, Bethpage Stations Lose LIRR Ticket Agents**

An article in *NEWSDAY* on August 18, 2009 related that Farmingdale and Bethpage were among twenty LIRR stations slated to lose ticket agents effective the next day. The article stated that in 1996, 100 of the 124 stations were staffed by agents. As of August 19, 2009, that number is down to 30 stations.

The article also included two photos of the Farmingdale LIRR station, one taken in 1909 and one a century later. The earlier picture portrays the tower added to house electrical equipment and the overhead conduits spanning the tracks, all to power the new Cross-Island Trolley line which opened in 1909.

The lack of staffing in Farmingdale is possibly the first occurrence in its long railroad history. Farmingdale's first LIRR station opened at the Main Street crossing in October 1841. The present station, 1000 feet east, replaced it in May 1896.



**Farmingdale-Bethpage  
Historical Society**

Box 500  
Farmingdale, New York 11735  
www.fbhsli.org

“We hold fast to the elements that  
are dear to us.”  
- Jesse Merritt

The Farmingdale-Bethpage Historical Society was founded at a meeting in historic Powell House, Merritt Road, Farmingdale, on April 12, 1964. It is chartered as an incorporated non-profit educational and cultural organization by the University of the State of New York.

**Executive Board**

- Mildred Johnston - President; Membership
- James McCullagh - Vice President
- Gail Goldschrafe - Recording Secretary
- Jeanne M. Buck - Corresponding Secretary
- Frank Bondietti - Treasurer; Collections Committee
- JoAnne Bihary - Trustee; Hospitality; Collections Committee
- Serena Brochu - Trustee; Newsletter Editor; Collections Committee
- Joseph Carosella, Sr. - Trustee-elect
- Nancy Cinque - Trustee
- Eric Goldschrafe - Trustee
- Harrison Hunt - Trustee
- William J. Johnston - Trustee
- JoAnn Krapp - Trustee; Exhibits Coordinator
- Pierre Lehmuller - Trustee
- Seymour Weinstein - Trustee; Website
- Nancy White - Trustee
- Lawrence R. Jorgensen - Ex-Officio Immediate Past President

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