

SPLIA

The Society for the Preservation of
Long Island Antiquities, 1948–2012



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A Call to Recapture Important Expressions of Long Island's Past, 1948–1949



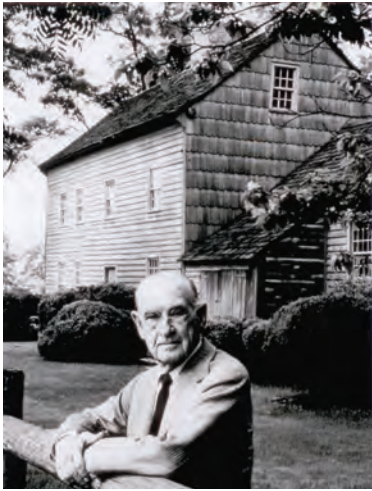
On the evening of November 18, 1948, fifty people gathered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan to discuss forming an organization dedicated to preserving Long Island's "historic sites, historic houses with their furnishings, and historic documents." "Surely," the notice of the meeting had asserted, "the need for continuing our American traditions has never been more urgent than in the turbulent world of today." And aside from the unsettled political climate, Long Island's own character was under threat from an unrelenting building boom as the population of metropolitan New York surged into new suburbs.¹

Invitations to the meeting at the museum had been mailed to 150 people over the signatures of Mrs. Gilbert Darlington, Henry F. du Pont, Robert D. L. Gardiner, Richard M. Gipson, Constance P. Hare, Richard W. Hawkins, Horace H. F. Jayne, James A. Keillor, Thomas S. Lamont, W. Kingsland Macy, Ward Melville, Cornelia DuBois Floyd Nichols, Osborn Shaw, Howard C. Sherwood, Charles Messer Stow, and Robert W. G. Vail. Most were prominent in New York financial, legal, and social circles, and many were discerning collectors with a special interest in Long Island's history and material culture.²

The First Organizational Meeting

Hardinge Scholle, longtime director of the Museum of the City of New York, presided as the temporary chairman. In his opening remarks he spoke of heritage organizations around the world, arguing that they were now needed in America because as a nation the United States was "no longer young and naïve after three hundred years of our own history." Mr. Scholle then turned to Howard Sherwood and Ward Melville to present their ideas for the new organization.³

Mr. Sherwood made it clear that he had a very specific goal in mind—to create an organization to which he could bequeath his early eighteenth-century residence on the Old Post Road in East Setauket. Sherwood, 78 and a bachelor, was very concerned about how best to ensure the long-term preservation of his property. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Sherwood had purchased the house and forty acres in 1908. In August 1947 he had set out with a friend and a chauffeur on a tour of New England, visiting antique shops and old houses in Deerfield, Ipswich, Newburyport, Salem, Lexington, and Concord. Mr. Sherwood had made similar trips in earlier years, but this time, he noted in his diary, he had devoted much of his “time and thought” to having “an organization sufficiently well founded to warrant my leaving to it my house, together with its furnishings and an endowment fund sufficient for its upkeep.” He had enlisted some initial support from a few friends, sending them copies of an article about the house that had recently appeared in *Antiques*, but his plans languished. Now, a year later, Mr. Sherwood was pleased to announce his intended bequest.⁴



*Ward Melville at the
Thompson House.*

Ward Melville, founder of the highly successful chain of Thom McAn shoe stores, then made his remarks. He offered to donate three nearby houses, which he owned and which he considered to have “equal, if not greater historical interest”—the Thompson House, the birthplace of historian Benjamin F. Thompson; the Mount House, the home of painter William S. Mount; and the Brewster House, the subject of Mount’s painting entitled *Long Island Farmhouse*. But first, Mr. Melville felt, it was important for the group to discuss more fundamental issues: would an organization based locally on Long Island be “an adequate vehicle” for accepting and caring for such properties and should there be a separate organization that would focus on local activities? He asked the representatives of other groups at the meeting to respond.⁵

Gardiner Osborne, the secretary of the American Scenic and Historical Society, was enthusiastic: a group to encourage local activity would be a “marvelous thing which would stir people up.” Several local and county historians pledged their support, many addressing the urgent need to preserve endangered residences. Hardinge Scholle remarked that “too many old fashioned societies saved little things which were placed in cases for display, but the larger items, such as houses, were lost”; a group devoted

to saving entire homes, he felt, would be “an answer to a modern need.” Others thought such a group could have an even more noble and patriotic goal. Constance Hare, for example, who saw old houses as being “in reality small museums,” believed that they were “a great influence for good to children as well as to older people.” Osborne foresaw the group’s purpose as offsetting “those communistically inclined who are intent on destroying our heritage.” Col. Leonard Sullivan believed it would be “a very fine American thing to do.” Ward Melville then offered a motion that it was the “sense of this meeting that a society for the preservation of Long Island antiquities be formed.” His motion was carried unanimously. Mr. Scholle appointed a steering committee to draft a constitution and bylaws.⁶



Howard C. Sherwood (center), William Floyd Nichols (right), and James A. Keillor, SPLLA's first president, at a party honoring Mr. Sherwood in 1956.

Marshall Davison, assistant curator of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum, then gave an illustrated lecture, showing slides of historic houses in Suffolk County and stating that “things should not be saved necessarily because they are old, but a society, like an individual, has the urge to recapture important expressions of the past.” He spoke on the dangers of neglecting Long Island’s heritage. He considered Manhattan a “horrible example of lost heritage,” with less evidence from its early history surviving than from that of the Athens of Pericles. A preservation group for Long Island, he argued, would have an opportunity no longer available in New York City. Mr. Davison also saw great value in old Long Island houses, noting that while they were “not as elegant as others on the Eastern Seaboard,” they were “neat and trim and more typical of early American life,” providing a “fair interpretation of our ancestors who exercised a fastidious restraint in the clean lines of their houses.” Howard Sherwood noted in his diary that the meeting had been “very successful.”⁷

The steering committee met two weeks later, on December 3, 1948, at Howard Sherwood’s Park Avenue apartment, with Mr. Sherwood presiding and with Richard M. Gipson, Constance Hare, Horace H. F. Jayne, Euen B. Meader, Ward Melville, John W. Myer, and Robert W. G. Vail in attendance. They made several important decisions. The group endorsed the name that had been proposed at the November meeting, the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, and Ward Melville announced that his attorneys were drawing up the incorporation

A Steering Committee and Incorporation Papers

papers. Levels of membership were agreed upon, from \$5.00 for general members to \$2,000 for founders. The committee agreed to hire Valmai Messiter, as an assistant to the secretary, to handle daily operations.⁸



*Custom House in
Sag Harbor.*

The incorporation papers, signed just a week later, stated that SPLIA's purposes were "to preserve for posterity places, buildings, landmarks, and objects of historical interest on Long Island, and to concern itself with historical, antiquarian, literary, artistic, and scientific matters relating generally to the development of Long Island." The new group was authorized to operate in Kings and Queens counties, as well as in Nassau and Suffolk, and it could "receive gifts, devices, and bequests of money or property of whatsoever kind or description; to acquire, hold, sell, give, or otherwise dispose of such real and personal property." Seven directors were to serve until the first annual meeting: James A. Keillor and most of the steering committee members—Mrs. Hare and Messrs. Gipson, Jayne, Melville, Sherwood, and Vail.⁹

Despite snowy, nearly impassible streets, twenty-five of those who had attended the November meeting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art assembled there again on December 21 and ratified the steering-committee's recommendations. On New Year's Eve the directors held their first meeting, adopting bylaws and electing the first slate of officers—James Keillor as president, Howard Sherwood as vice-president, and Equen Meader as secretary and acting treasurer. Membership invitations were mailed to a "carefully selected list" of 1,500 people.¹⁰

Annual Meetings and Field Trips

The first annual meeting of members was held at Howard Sherwood's house in East Setauket on May 20, 1949. Despite a severe rainstorm seventy of SPLIA's ninety-one members attended. The treasurer's report showed that Mr. Sherwood and his sister, Jennie Sherwood, had made the first major contribution, \$2,500 to be used for operating support. Members' gifts, including seven life memberships, totaled \$1,280. Mr. Sherwood told the group that he was "happy to think that one day the house, with its furniture and furnishings and a sufficient endowment fund will become the property of our Society." Members toured the Sherwood house and then visited other houses and churches in Setauket and the Mount House in Stony Brook; the format of this gathering, a business meeting followed by tours, set the precedent for SPLIA's annual membership meetings for years to come.¹¹

The trustees, in turn, held their own annual meeting at the Sherwood house a month later, on June 17, 1949. The bylaws were amended to increase the number of trustees from seven to twenty-four, and sixteen new trustees were elected, leaving just one vacancy on the board.¹² Three more vice presidents were elected—Constance Hare, Horace Jayne, and Charles Stow. Mrs. Hare was appointed chair of the newly formed Women's Committee. Howard Sherwood was honored with the title of founder, and he and Jennie Sherwood were named patron members of the Society. James Keillor, an executive with B. Altman and Co., was feeling pressed by other commitments but finally consented to stay on as president, an office he would



Trustees of SPLIA and SPNEA taking measure of the great walnut tree at the Sherwood-Jayne House during the visit of the SPNEA Board in 1961.

eventually hold for ten years. The Executive Committee was also established, with the president, secretary, and treasurer appointed in accord with the bylaws. Ward Melville nominated Mr. Sherwood to serve in the one vice presidential slot on the committee and Horace Jayne, Gerald Shea, and Robert Vail to be the trustee members. Later that summer Robert Moses, master builder of parks and expressways, sent word that he could not accept the invitation to serve as a trustee.¹³

During the summer of 1949 the Executive Committee convened each month at the home of one its members, dining first with their host. The minutes of the June meeting revealed that homeowners were already getting involved with SPLIA, some wishing to donate their properties to the Society and others appealing for advice on restoration or preventing demolition. Others offered to open their houses for tours. The Society received its first gift, an 1816 copy of the Psalms of David, which was presented by Anna B. Wood, of Elmhurst. Valmai Messiter's work hours were doubled, reflecting the growth of activity. By the end of the summer SPLIA had more than 250 members.¹⁴

SPLIA's second field trip, held in August 1949, attracted 150 members and their guests; they visited the birthplace of Gen. William Floyd, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, at Mastic on the South Shore, at the invitation of a descendent, Mrs. John T. Nichols. Her daughter, Mrs. David Weld, and trustee Osborn Shaw read papers on the history of the house. Nearly 200 people participated in the September field trip to Bay Shore to visit Sagtikos Manor; the owner, Robert D. L. Gardiner, outlined its long history, dating back to the 1690s.¹⁵

Critical Roles
for the Women's
Committee

Soon after Constance Hare became chair of the Women's Committee, she invited five women who were members of SPLIA—Edith Vail Blydenburgh, Mrs. Arthur Lawrence, fellow trustee Bertha Benkard Rose, Mrs. Charles Webster, and Mrs. David Weld—to form a steering group. In the minutes from their first meeting, they outlined the proposed roles for the committee, recommending that the members act as representatives of SPLIA at “Garden Club meetings, and to reunions of other women's organizations in order to spread information about the purposes of the Society.” They also proposed that committee members serve as hostesses at houses open during SPLIA's field trips. Other members should be assigned to important research projects: they should “make a study of early American gardens, particularly those on Long Island and should keep a record of any information obtained on colonial antiques in different parts of the Island which might be available for furnishing of houses

acquired by the Society in the future; and that they should record any information on early data, letters, papers, etc., which might not otherwise come to the attention of the Trustees.”¹⁶

The steering group also prepared a list of “key women in twenty-two sections of Long Island,” who would be asked to enlist other members. By June 1950 the Women’s Committee had thirty-one members from twenty-three areas—“women of prominence from various parts of Long Island,” who served as zone chairmen for each area. The Executive Committee, recognizing the importance of her work, invited Mrs. Hare to become a voting member of their committee.¹⁷

During its first months of operation SPLIA’s membership numbers had mushroomed. A direct-mail invitation to 5,000 prospects proved very successful: by November 1949 the membership stood at 375. Horace Jayne, chair of the Membership Committee, attributed the steady growth to the “general enthusiasm of members, combined with the work of the Women’s Committee and the Field Trip Committee.” With such a solid start, the Executive Committee decided that SPLIA should join the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, the forerunner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and asked Howard Sherwood to represent SPLIA at the council’s annual meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia.¹⁸

Concluding the First Year

SPLIA’s first full year of operations ended with two auspicious notations in the minutes of the November 1949 meeting of the Board of Trustees. Ward Melville had notified the president, James Keillor, that he was proceeding “immediately to the restoration of the old Thompson House” in Setauket. He had retained architect Daniel Perry “for the necessary research and inquiry” and was committed



*Constance Hare.
Courtesy of the Colony
Club.*

to proceeding with preservation work “as fast as may prove practicable.” At the same meeting Howard Sherwood told the trustees that he had executed a new will that provided for the transfer of his Setauket residence and its furnishings to SPLIA, along with an endowment fund.¹⁹ These two trustees and their properties would have a lasting impact on the organization.

A Paragon of Progress, 1950–1961

SPLIA's founders debated, frequently and sometimes heatedly, the organization's true mission during its first years of operation, but the need for the organization was never in question. So many people joined so quickly, for example, that even the trustees were astounded. The *New York Sun* reported that SPLIA had already shown itself to be a "paragon of progress" after only a year of operations. *Antiques* magazine stated in 1955 that SPLIA had already "done most valuable work not only in the preservation of sites but in arousing interest throughout the island in its history and antiquities."¹ Launched by trustees and volunteers, SPLIA's first activities—protecting historic properties, supporting preservation legislation, producing surveys and publications, and collecting decorative arts—laid the groundwork for the organization's programs for the next four decades.

Since its founding in 1948 SPLIA's administrative office had been located in the home of its sole employee, Valmai Messiter, the assistant to the secretary of the Board of Trustees. Two years later, realizing that the organization needed more sizable headquarters, trustee Ward Melville suggested that SPLIA move its operations to an early eighteenth-century frame house on North Country Road in Setauket known as the Thompson House. The property had been owned by the Thompson family for 178 years, and the house itself was the birthplace of Long Island historian Benjamin F. Thompson. Mr. Melville and his wife, Dorothy B. Melville, had already begun restoring the building and had recently deeded it to the Stony Brook Community Fund, a foundation that Mr. Melville had created in 1939 to preserve environmental and historic properties. SPLIA's office would occupy a wing of the Thompson House, and the rest of the building would be a house museum and showcase for the Long Island artifacts that the Society hoped to acquire.²

Thompson House:
SPLIA's First
Headquarters

The Thompson House thus became the first of many historic properties to come under SPLIA's management. SPLIA's goal was to make the Thompson House the most outstanding restoration project anywhere on Long Island and to furnish it with "only articles about which *Antiques Magazine* could write." But funds were scarce, and initially the Furnishings Committee had to be content with filling the house only with objects that members and trustees were able to donate or loan. When the building was opened to the public in July 1951, it was staffed largely by volunteers who were members of the Mayflower Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.³

In 1954 three preservation experts—John Graham 2nd of Colonial Williamsburg, Loring McMillen of the Staten Island Historical Society, and Abbott Lowell Cummings of the Metropolitan Museum of Art—were called in to suggest ways to make the Thompson property more attractive and of greater interest to the public. The house was closed for several weeks for more restoration work. When it reopened in September 1954, the original furnishings had been augmented with pieces loaned by leading New York antique dealers and with lighting fixtures from the Cooper Hewitt Museum. The Thompson House soon became a focus of SPLIA's activities, including picnics, lectures on medicinal and culinary herbs, and displays of textiles and dried plants. Between May and October 1956, when the property was open on afternoons and weekends, the number of visitors reached nearly a thousand. Within four years attendance doubled.⁴

SPLIA won the acclaim it had sought for its work on the Thompson House when *Antiques* featured the house and its furnishings and *National Geographic* carried a photograph of the colonial herb garden. The antiques exhibited in the keeping room, parlor, and kitchen were prominently featured in *Newsday* in 1961.⁵

The records of SPLIA's early years are filled not only with planning for the Thompson House but also with discussions about the true mission of the organization: should SPLIA be acquiring and restoring properties, especially those that were endangered, or should its focus be on education and outreach, particularly by encouraging local communities to undertake the work themselves?⁶ This debate still filters through aspects of the organization's work today.

Properties and Preservation Issues

Even in the straightforward language of the minutes of meetings of the Board of Trustees, it is clear that determining what to save and how to go about it engendered intense discussion. In

1954, for example, Constance P. Hare, for many years SPLIA's most active and outspoken trustee, admonished her fellow board members that the organization's basic purpose was "to save old houses and it has not saved one." She wanted SPLIA to be able to rescue buildings from demolition, and she pushed for an emergency fund for endangered properties. Thousands of new houses had been built on Long Island since SPLIA's founding, and those numbers, she argued, stood in stark contrast to the "very few beautiful or historic houses saved in that same period." With the Island's rural character dissolving into suburbs, the Board of Trustees even toyed with the idea of creating a living farm evocative of life in the 1830s.⁷

Other trustees were more wary about acquiring real estate. Mrs. Bradford G. Weekes, for example, agreed that while "the whole reason for the existence of the Society is to save things," she felt that "in some cases SPLIA would have to be satisfied with generating publicity and raising interest in the community." Some trustees worried about the financial responsibilities that would follow. John Walden Myer, chair of the Policy Committee, proposed that SPLIA take the same position as the National Trust for Historic Preservation: it should accept as gifts or bequests only those properties that were sufficiently endowed to support their restoration and maintenance."⁸

During these early years SPLIA turned to outside experts for valuable advice on preservation philosophy and practicalities. Bertram L. Little, the highly regarded director of the Society for the Protection of New England Antiquities, spoke at SPLIA's 1952 annual meeting about how to evaluate buildings worthy of preservation, highlighting the dictum that it is "better to maintain and repair than to restore" and "better to restore rather to reconstruct." On another occasion the chief historian of the Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia spoke about "What Shall We Preserve—How Can We Do It?" Sometimes SPLIA ventured beyond its boundaries to support other preservationists, spearheading, for instance, a regional letter-writing campaign to save Hamilton Grange in Manhattan.⁹

Despite its good intentions, SPLIA was not at first very well equipped to evaluate endangered properties. A Committee on Buildings to Be Saved, organized in 1955, was charged with visiting threatened buildings and generating public interest, but securing the necessary expert advice and following up proved difficult. The committee chair resigned after a year, complaining that it was "embarrassing to ask architects and committee members to travel distances to look at buildings and make

reports, and then find it necessary to tell them that the SPLIA had no money and so nothing can be done.”¹⁰

Without resources to save entire structures, SPLIA began collecting elements from historic buildings. In 1956 special funding was used acquire the “corner cupboards, Franklin stoves, paneling, etc.” from the Jackson-Jones House in Wantagh. Over the next few years so much flooring, doors, windows, siding, and hardware was rescued, sometimes only a step ahead of the bulldozer, that more storage space was needed. There was some talk of using these salvaged elements as the nucleus of a museum.¹¹

Beginning in 1957 Allen L. Woodworth, the new chair of the Committee on Buildings to Be Saved, began expanding the committee’s activities from saving building fragments to defining the parameters of acquiring real estate. Barring an exceptional situation in Kings or Queens counties, the committee believed, SPLIA should confine its acquisitions to Nassau and Suffolk counties. A scheme to create a museum village akin to those at Sturbridge or Shelburne was considered but quickly abandoned as impractical. Instead, SPLIA should focus squarely on saving structures in their original settings. Fearful of dissipating its resources, the trustees agreed to refuse bequests of real estate without an adequate endowment. Woodworth, though, would soon bring his considerable energies to bear on important properties that fell outside of these guidelines.¹²

Meanwhile, SPLIA was moving forward on another important front—educating the public about the many advantages of local preservation legislation. Barbara Ferris Van Liew had become involved with SPLIA during the early 1950s while scouting out interesting old Long Island properties with her neighbor, Constance Hare. At Mrs. Hare’s request, Mrs. Van Liew prepared a report entitled “Possible Legislative Aid in Saving Old Houses,” which analyzed historic-district legislation already in place in cities across the country and recommended the adoption of similar laws on Long Island. The booklet received national and local attention. Trustee Dorothy Horton McGee returned from the 1959 annual meeting of the National Trust for Historic Preservation convinced that promoting local legislation should be an important priority for SPLIA, especially given the “ruthless destruction of historic houses, especially by the bulldozers of real estate developers.”¹³

In the mid-1950s, as it sorted out its preservation priorities, SPLIA invited historical societies and other civic groups to

become organizational members, with the hope that gradually SPLIA would become the “center of all Island historical information, a miniature National Trust for this area.” Early organizational members included the Long Island, Oyster Ponds, and Wading River historical societies and the Old Saggs-Harbour Committee.¹⁴

A Publications Program

Publications have long been an important part of SPLIA’s work. Its first venture, issued in 1951, was modest in scope—the reprinting of a 1925 pamphlet entitled *The Lloyd Manor of Queens Village*, but SPLIA soon launched a more ambitious publishing program. In 1953 it created a comprehensive map and guide to historic places on Long Island, the first of its kind. Entitled *Landmarks of Long Island*, it was compiled by the Women’s Committee and edited by Dorothy McGee. Ten thousand copies were printed, and within three months three-quarters of them had been distributed, with many copies supplied to librarians and social-studies teachers throughout Long Island. An updated edition, of another 5,000 copies, was issued in 1958, and the guide was reprinted regularly up through the 1970s.¹⁵

In 1956 two booklets were published. *The Thompson House*, by Louise Gay Tyler, dealt with the history of the construction of SPLIA’s headquarters and the former owners of the building. The second, *A Portrait of William Floyd, Long Islander*, by William Q. Maxwell, was based on a cache of Floyd papers uncovered in the attic of the home of Mrs. John T. Nichols, a SPLIA trustee and Floyd descendant. *Long Island, Behind the British Lines during the Revolution*, which was based on newspaper columns by John Reynolds, was published in 1960.¹⁶

The Women’s Committee developed the first SPLIA newsletters, which were intended to disseminate information about the activities of the Society and feature “odd bits of interesting information on the subject of Long Island Antiquities, or activities relating thereto.” The first issue appeared in February 1957, with an illustration of the Thompson House on the cover. Louise Tyler was the editor for the first two years, then Laura Astor Chanler White, for the next three years. Local organizations sent news of their activities, and historians contributed articles on early Long Island.¹⁷

Documenting Historic Places on Long Island

The first major undertaking of the Women’s Committee, SPLIA’s largest and most active group, was a survey of historic houses. During the summer of 1950 committee members compiled reports on pre-Revolutionary houses around Westbury and collected photographs of old houses and reminiscences of

longtime residents of Smithtown. The group assembled a collection of color slides of the exteriors and interiors of historic houses, which were used to educate members at SPLIA's annual meetings, shown to groups in Manhattan, and loaned to schools, universities, churches, and historical organizations.¹⁸

The survey soon grew to take in not only buildings but also paintings and decorative arts. Constance Hare, as chair of the Women's Committee, enlisted John J. Vrooman, head of New York State's historic sites, to help. She and Barbara Van Liew upgraded the survey work by developing a fact sheet for volunteers to use when collecting information. At the request of the Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation in Wilmington, Delaware, the committee also surveyed early water-powered mills on Long Island. After that project was featured in *Historic Preservation* magazine, SPLIA began other thematic surveys, including octagon houses, churches designed by Richard Upjohn, and sites related to George Washington's 1790 tour of Long Island. To support its documentation projects, SPLIA purchased from the Library of Congress a collection of 495 measured drawings and photographs and 100 data sheets of early Long Island houses made by HABS in 1936. Purchased in 1954, this was the only complete set on Long Island.¹⁹

SPLIA's outstanding collection of Long Islandiana has grown from modest beginnings. In 1950 SPLIA's attorney had advised the board of trustees to seek gifts of furniture and objects with historic interest and hold admission-free regional exhibits in order to underscore its role as a "public benefactor" and thus enhance its application for tax-exempt status. Donor Howard Sherwood contributed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century side chairs, a mahogany cradle, a pine liquor case, and kitchen and fireplace equipment.²⁰

Acquiring the First Collections

Meanwhile, SPLIA had finalized negotiations for the loan of a distinguished collection of objects, primarily primitive furniture and folk art, assembled by the late John Seys Huyler Held, an attorney and early collector of Long Islandiana, and much of that collection was placed on display at the Thompson House. Other early acquisitions included the Floyd and Floyd-Jones family papers, the 1697 Moriches patent, and portraits of the Underhill family. SPLIA appealed to members for gifts of early hardware and Long Island furniture and decorative arts.²¹

By the spring of 1951, within eighteen months of its founding, SPLIA had attracted 438 members, and within a year that number had grown to 580. While some trustees celebrated this

Members and Special Events



Left to right, Mrs. Leicester Y. Ryan, Mrs. Leighton H. Coleman, Mrs. Arthur B. Lawrence, Mrs. Charles C. Lawrence, Mrs. David Weld, and Mrs. Hamilton Potter preparing for a 1955 auction to benefit SPLIA.

growth, others hesitated, worrying that “there were so many things in favor of keeping our Society small so that we can do things that give us all so much pleasure.” However, there was no provision in the bylaws for restricting or refusing memberships, and in 1954 the board agreed that all membership applications be accepted.²²

Field trips were a popular social and educational benefit for members. Members would gather for the annual meeting of the board and a field trip; in 1954, for example, the annual meeting was held at the Piping Rock Club in Locust Valley, followed by visits to Killingworth and two other early houses built by the Underhill family, as well as Sagamore Hill and Raynham Hall. The 1955 annual meeting was convened at the Friends Meeting House in Westbury, with a tour of six early Quaker houses and the Jericho Friends Meeting House. The 1958 annual meeting was hosted by Richard W. Howland, president of the National Trust, at his Setauket home.²³

In the fall of 1955 the Women’s Committee organized a country auction of items donated by members and friends of SPLIA; it was held in the carriage house at Box Hill in St. James and netted \$5,800, all earmarked for the Women’s Committee’s preservation fund. In 1960, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its sister organization, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, SPLIA held a gala dinner at the Three Village Inn at Stony Brook. More than 140 people attended, including SPNEA trustees and representatives from twenty-seven Long Island historical societies.²⁴

Membership growth began to pose practical problems. Having large numbers of members limited the choice of venues for annual meetings and proved to be a financial drain: by 1956 expenses were far surpassing the income from membership dues. Ward Melville, realizing the danger of deficit financing, tried to steer SPLIA in a more inclusive, lucrative direction. He argued that SPLIA “should not be coasting along with one nice house and support from one or two people” and challenged the Executive Committee “to change the course of the Society’s operations” by enlisting new board members and setting strategic goals.²⁵

When the Executive Committee met in New York in September 1957, SPLIA’s financial future appeared, for the first time, to be stable and secure. Up to that time its budget had been modest, less than \$10,000 a year, and the organization had been running a considerable deficit, with expenses outstripping income two to one. Over the years Howard and Jennie Sherwood had stepped forward many times with special gifts to cover impending shortfalls.

The Sherwoods’ Legacy

Jennie Sherwood had died in 1953, and her will provided that a third of her estate be used as an endowment for SPLIA. When Howard Sherwood died four years later, in January 1957, SPLIA received as gifts not only his house in East Setauket but also \$250,000 to endow the property and \$800,000 for an unrestricted endowment. The Society calculated that it could expect an annual income of \$10,000 from the house fund and of \$50,000 from the other funds. In the course of one fiscal year, SPLIA’s assets grew from less than \$25,000 to more than \$1.8 million.²⁶

Prior to Mr. Sherwood’s death, his property had been known as the Jayne-Sherwood House, but in April 1958 SPLIA’s trustees unanimously agreed to change the name to the Sherwood-Jayne House. At his death, the SPLIA newsletter noted “the Society lost its Founder and loyal friend. His interest and support will be greatly missed, as from the very beginning, it was his enthusiasm that carried us through moments of discouragement. His spirit will remain an inspiration to us all.”²⁷

Loring McMillen described the Sherwood-Jayne House as a “typical New England and Connecticut 18th century ‘salt-box’ farm house.” The west end, he believed, was the older section, dating from about 1730. An attorney and resident of Manhattan, Sherwood had begun restoring the property in 1908, spending weekends and summers there over the next five decades. Mr. McMillen advised SPLIA that the two rooms in the east end,

which probably dated from the 1770s, “should be preserved at all costs, since in every detail they are original and the painted walls unique.” Trustees Bertha Benkard Rose and Gerald Shea, both experts on Long Island antiques, surveyed the furnishings and agreed that the east rooms were the most significant; they proposed that “they be made into period rooms of approximately 1800, using substantially the same furniture as they now contain.” However, this recommendation was not followed; instead, the Sherwood-Jayne House Committee decided that the house should be represented as an “18th century house in which Mr. Sherwood enjoyed living with his antiques” during the twentieth century.²⁸

Repair work to the roof and cellar, along with plastering and painting, began almost immediately after Mr. Sherwood’s death. When the house was opened to the public in June 1958, nearly a thousand people came to visit. In order to protect the rural setting from development, SPLIA purchased forty acres of wooded, rolling land on the other side of the Old Post Road, known as the Hulse property.²⁹

The opening of the Sherwood-Jayne House coincided with the publication of two articles celebrating the impending tenth anniversary of SPLIA and the restoration work being done at the property. The *New York Times* called the house “the society’s first permanent exhibit.” Another story, entitled “Two Long Island Lovelies,” was published in the *Ladies Home Journal*.³⁰

The bequests from Jennie and Howard Sherwood transformed SPLIA. The August 1957 newsletter told members that SPLIA would “no longer be a small society hampered by insufficient funds, but a very active one, able at last to fulfill our purpose of preserving objects of interest on Long Island.”³¹

Professional Staff and New Offices

With the Sherwood bequests in hand, real estate and collections to manage, and educational programs to implement, SPLIA was ready to hire its first executive director, someone, they hoped, who would have “vision and imagination and a practical organizational and business sense.” Early in 1961 Philip Dunbar was hired for the post; a World War II veteran and a graduate of Dartmouth and Yale, he was then assistant curator of collections at Colonial Williamsburg. By that autumn he had presented detailed recommendations for SPLIA’s programs and policies.³²

SPLIA soon needed more office space. After investigating several properties with Mr. Dunbar, Allen Woodworth—who was by then vice president of SPLIA, as well as chairman of

the Committee on Buildings to Be Saved—convinced the New York Telephone Company to donate the Swezey House, an early nineteenth-century building located on land that the company had recently purchased along Route 25A. In 1961 SPLIA moved the house to the land that it had just acquired near the Thompson House. Under the direction of architect James Van Alst, a new foundation for the Swezey House and a fireproof wing were constructed, and the offices were occupied in 1962.³³

James A. Keillor, SPLIA's first president, served in that post for a decade, participating in the organizational meetings of 1948 up through the time of the Sherwood bequests. Keillor, a department store executive and a collector of old farming implements, was admired by his fellow trustees for his abiding faith, courage, determination, sober judgment, serenity, cheer, and enthusiasm. He was succeeded by W. Kingsland Macy, a powerful South Shore politician and newspaper publisher, who died suddenly in July 1961; in a tribute SPLIA recalled his "warm personality and humor" and his devoted service to the organization. His successor, John Walden Myer, who had followed Hardinge Scholle as the director of the Museum of the City of New York, served as president of SPLIA for two years.³⁴

Leadership and Antiquarianism

SPLIA owes much of its early success to another founding trustee and longtime vice president, Constance Hare. Former president of the Colony Club and chair of the Cooper Union Museum, she prodded the SPLIA board to make saving threatened buildings a priority. As the highly energetic chair of the Women's Committee, Mrs. Hare could take credit for initiating many of SPLIA's programs. She and her committee members ensured that the Thompson House became a successful house museum, and they worked on surveys and publications. In 1954, however, Mrs. Hare insisted that the Women's Committee be disbanded and its members fully integrated in a new system of committees with clearly stated tasks. She resigned as a member of the Executive Committee in 1958 but continued on as a trustee and chair of the Publications and Publicity Committee. At the 1960 annual meeting the trustees presented Mrs. Hare with a silver tray and saluted her for "her unflagging energy in originating new projects" and "for her unselfish gift of her talents and for her dedicated and magnetic inspiration to all the members of the Society."³⁵

Many of James Keillor and Constance Hare's fellow founders of SPLIA were not only prominent leaders in the New York City worlds of business and society but also highly knowledgeable collectors of decorative arts and owners of important historic

properties on Long Island. They were “antiquarians” who lived surrounded by their collections. They were avid readers and contributors to *Antiques* magazine. They loved visiting each other’s houses and sharing their recent collecting triumphs. Trustee Gerard Shea advised Jacqueline Kennedy on redecorating the White House in the early 1960s, Bertha Benkard Rose’s dining room was featured in Helen Comstock’s *The 100 Most Beautiful Rooms in America*. Vice president Preston R. Basset, chairman of the Sperry Corporation, eventually donated his Long Island stoneware and glass collection to SPLIA. Like Basset, others had their own collecting spheres: Keillor focused on trades, crafts, and tools; Mrs. Leighton Coleman’s passion was eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ceramics; and Mrs. J. Cornelius Rathborne, John Walden Myer, Elisha Dyer, and Allen Woodworth all possessed fine private collections.

Springing from these antiquarian roots, the founder-collectors created a organization with an ambitious goal, to protect the heritage of Long Island just as it was entering a period of fundamental change, from a largely rural to a largely suburban economy and culture. Over the next decade they oversaw a critical period in SPLIA’s growth, from a small group with modest programs to a professionally staffed organization with an endowment and a multitude of responsibilities.

Chapter 3

The Woodworth Years, 1962–1973

Allen L. Woodworth was seventy years old, when he took over as SPLIA's president in 1962. At a time when some were criticizing SPLIA for inaction, he brought to the organization vital energy and a clear vision. He had already served on the Committee on Buildings to Be Saved and as vice president under John Walden Myer. For the next eleven years, Woodworth would be SPLIA's hands-on leader while a succession of five short-term directors came and went.

Woodworth's time as president of SPLIA's board coincided with escalating pressure on historic resources on Long Island. His approach to combating the race against developers—rescuing the best surviving eighteenth-century structures—is by today's preservation standards a narrow, antiquarian one. His mission was possible at that time because SPLIA was flush with the recent Sherwood bequests—\$1.5 million for the general fund and \$250,000 endowing the Sherwood-Jayne House.

Allen Woodworth was a former executive at the Socony-Vacuum Oil Co., which was later affiliated with Mobil Oil. Retiring in his prime to be with his wife, who was in ill health, Woodworth never returned to work after her death. He was remembered as a frustrated executive by his stepson and successor as SPLIA's president, Huyler C. Held.¹ Held's own father and Woodworth had been "congenial antiques cronies" who often visited antique shops together. In 1954 Woodworth married Huyler Held's widowed mother.² At SPLIA Woodworth was both a knowledgeable and a demanding employer: he took charge, kept track of workers' hours, and, in short, acted like a director himself rather than the president of the board of trustees.

A Succession of Directors

During Woodworth's eleven years, five directors revolved through SPLIA's doors. The Society's first director was curator Philip H. Dunbar, who served from 1961 to 1963.³ Louis Ismay, a lively preservation activist, succeeded Dunbar in 1964.⁴ In 1965 SPLIA's Executive Committee, realizing that "the qualities of an Administrator and a Museum Director are not apt to be combined in one person," added an administrative assistant position to oversee SPLIA's growing number of properties.⁵ Charles McDermott, a retired publisher of *The Long Island Forum*, a regional-history monthly, started as director in January 1966. Douglas C. Paterson, a former executive with the Sperry Rand Corporation, became McDermott's assistant.

Allen Woodworth, president, addressing the annual meeting in Setauket, 1968. Seated, left to right, Mrs. Leighton Coleman, Mrs. Willis D. Wood, Huyler C. Held, Mrs. William M. Preston, Mrs. B. Tappan Fairchild, Preston Bassett, and Mrs. Allen Woodworth.



After McDermott left in the fall of 1967, SPLIA trustee Charles C. Vanderveer III stepped in as director. In 1969 Vanderveer and Woodworth disagreed over a proposed property acquisition, ending Vanderveer's tenure.⁶ Former Nassau County Parks commissioner, Robert Gamble, of Sea Cliff, was hired in February 1971. During the previous eight years Gamble had supervised Nassau County's Old Bethpage Village, a re-creation of early Long Island village life.⁷ With a vision attuned to Woodworth's and a mild-mannered temperament accustomed to county politics, Gamble remained at SPLIA for three years, longer than any of his predecessors.

Throughout the years of the Woodworth regime, one staff member remained at her post, the loyal executive secretary, Valmai Messiter. When she retired in July 1972, SPLIA recognized her "careful nurturing" of the organization for

over 25 years.⁸ Her successors—Ruth Olingy (1972–1986) and Rosemary DeSensi (1986–2010)—have carried on Valmai Messiter’s record for vital office continuity at SPLIA.

The story of Allen Woodworth’s tenure centers on his drive to “collect” vulnerable colonial and post-colonial Long Island dwellings. When Woodworth took over as president, he was deeply involved in negotiations with the New York Telephone Company to acquire and move an early eighteenth-century farmhouse, known as the Swezey House, from its threatened site on Route 25A in Setauket to a safe place 300 yards south along North Country Road on the grounds of the Thompson House. The Thompson House was SPLIA’s base at the time. It was actually owned by trustee Ward Melville’s Stony Brook Community Fund and was leased to SPLIA for a \$1 a year.

New Headquarters in Setauket

Woodworth’s plan was to convert the relocated two-story residence into the Society’s new headquarters. With only a single room at the Thompson House available for SPLIA’s office, director Philip Dunbar anticipated that the eight rooms in the Swezey House would be “a welcome relief.”⁹



*New SPLIA
headquarters in
Setauket, 1961.*

The house was moved in July 1961. Veteran Long Island architect James Van Alst volunteered his professional services on the project.¹⁰ A cement strike and labor problems delayed the work for several months, but over the course of 1962 work progressed. By August SPLIA had spent \$47,826 on re-shingling the exterior, renovating the interior, and constructing a new fireproof wing for storing documents and materials. These books, manuscripts, maps, photographs, slides, and measured drawings would

become the nucleus for a hoped-for research and information center on the “past life, architecture, and physical appearance of Long Island.”¹¹ At last, in November 1962, SPLIA’s two employees, Philip Dunbar and Valmai Messiter, set up offices in the new headquarters.

Over the next few years, as threatened farm buildings came to their attention, Woodworth and his building committee created a barnyard complex north of the new headquarters. These structures, later moved to the Sherwood-Jayne property, included an old barn from Northport, an octagonal ice house from Oyster Bay, and a corn crib from Westbury.¹²

The Sherwood-Jayne House in East Setauket

The nearby Sherwood-Jayne House in East Setauket was SPLIA’s only other property when Woodworth began his term as president. SPLIA had undertaken only minor repairs to plasterwork and floral wall frescoes before the grand opening on May 28, 1963, at the organization’s annual meeting.¹³ With its trove of antiques and its bucolic setting, the Sherwood-Jayne House attracted 689 visitors in its first year as a house museum, including groups from the Bowne House Historical Society, the Woman’s Club of Huntington, and the Long Island Historical Society, as well as a contingent from the United Nations. However, after the first season it was clear that termite-ridden sills needed to be replaced and the drainage improved at the foundations.

Across the Old Post Road from the Sherwood-Jayne House, a relatively large tract of land known as the Hulse property came on the market. Woodworth and his building committee saw this as an opportunity to protect the view across the road from the Sherwood-Jayne House. Almost incidentally they found they had purchased, deep in the property, a tar-papered shack. On closer inspection it turned out to be a tiny, center chimney dwelling from the 1750s, a convenient future home for SPLIA’s director.¹⁴ Known as the Hulse House, it was ready for Louis Ismay to move into during the spring of 1964, and administrative assistant Douglas Paterson and his family later lived there. In 1966 the pond on the Hulse property was enlarged, and the old East Setauket firehouse (now at Sherwood-Jayne) was moved there to provide storage space for the restoration materials that the building committee was salvaging from doomed houses.¹⁵ In 1967 SPLIA built a large storage shed on the Hulse property to warehouse architectural fragments, furniture, and early farming and industrial equipment.¹⁶

Over the next few years Allen Woodworth and SPLIA's building committee looked beyond the home base in Setauket to other "strategic points" on the Island. Between 1962 and 1966 SPLIA acquired or partnered in the maintenance of four additional eighteenth-century landmarks in more distant locations on Long Island—Rock Hall in Lawrence, Joseph Lloyd Manor in Lloyd Harbor, Sayrelands in Bridgehampton, and the Custom House in Sag Harbor.¹⁷

SPLIA's House
Museums Beyond
Setauket

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LANDMARKS OF LONG
ISLAND, a Guide to 127
places open to visitors in-
cluding museums, historic
houses, churches, historical
reference collections, public
gardens, and more.

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Advertisement for
SPLIA's historic
properties in Long Island
Forum, 1973.

The first of these was the stately Rock Hall on the South Shore. This two-story Georgian landmark on Broadway in Lawrence was already an established house museum operated by the Town of Hempstead. Its careful restoration in 1952-1953 had been supervised by Bertha Benkard Rose, a historic-preservation dynamo now active on the SPLIA board.¹⁸ In the spring of 1962 SPLIA entered into a partnership with the town to administer the property. SPLIA set up a volunteer committee to serve as "a day-to-day supervisory body" and took charge of the collections, exhibitions, and any restoration work. In exchange SPLIA would be allowed to borrow objects from the Rock Hall collection.¹⁹

In separate interviews reminiscing about the Woodworth years, two longtime SPLIA figures—Huyler Held and Richard Nicodemus—coincidentally described Lloyd Manor House as a "gem." Trustee Peter Fisher referred to it as SPLIA's "flagship." A

rare survivor of an eighteenth-century country seat, Lloyd Manor would provide SPLIA with more than a new and fascinating house museum: it would in time become the organization's workshop, collections-storage facility, primary education center, and staff housing.

Set on Lloyd's Neck, a spit of relatively remote land jutting north into Long Island Sound, the dignified, shingled Joseph Lloyd Manor House was, like Rock Hall, one of the grandest of its day. It was constructed in 1767 for a descendant of the First Lord of the Manor. Over the next 200 years the two-story house had been benignly cared for, serving for many of those years as the guest house of the adjacent Fort Hill estate, owned by the Matheson family. In 1940 and 1941 Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh had rented the old manor house.

Allen Woodworth, president, Anna Matheson Wood (seated) at Joseph Lloyd Manor, 1971. Front, left to right, Dorothy Horton McGee, Mrs. B. Tappen Fairchild, Allen Woodworth, Mrs. Richard E. Byrd, Mrs. William M. Preston, Robert Gamble, director. Second row, unidentified man, Mrs. Alfred L. Loomis, Mrs. Roger Delaney, Mrs. Gordon L. Holcomb. Back row, Mrs. William J. Pike, Mrs. William C. Overend.



In 1962 SPLIA board member and past president John Myer reported that Anna Matheson Wood, the elderly owner of Fort Hill and grande dame of Lloyd Harbor, was willing to bequeath the Lloyd Manor property to SPLIA, but without an endowment.²⁰ The New York State Office of Parks and Recreation was also eyeing the site, and Woodworth and his committee felt pressured to act quickly. They decided to make an exception to the organizational policy of accepting only endowed properties.

It was a decade before the Lloyd Manor House actually came to SPLIA, after Mrs. Wood's death, and another decade before the house was finally restored. In May 1982, five months before Allen Woodworth's death at the age of ninety, the house was at last opened to the public after years of careful research and restoration.

Hope Alswang, who had worked on the re-installation of the American period rooms at the Brooklyn Museum, oversaw the project with a team of specialists, including wallpaper expert Jane Nylander and furniture authority John T. Kirk. Zachary Studenroth, a graduate of the Columbia University Historic Preservation program, took up residence with his young family on the third floor and coordinated the physical restoration of the manor. Other outside consultants on this state-of-the-art effort were Abbott Lowell Cummings, Morgan Phillips, Daniel Hopping, and David M. Hart.

In 1966 Woodworth and his committee branched out to acquiring properties at the east end of the Island. The Old Sagg-Harbour Committee deeded a two-and-a-half story, five-bay-wide house, along with two acres of adjacent wetlands, to SPLIA for a house museum. Known as the Custom House, this c. 1770 building originally stood at the corner of Union and Church streets, across from the Whaler's Church, and dated back to the era when Sag Harbor was a busy port. The first custom master, Henry Packer Dering, collected duties on imports ranging from whale oil to Jamaican rum in a front room of what was then his own dwelling. Henry Dering succeeded his father as custom agent, and the family continued to live in the house until 1849.

One hundred years later, when the Custom House was nearly derelict, the Old Sagg-Harbor Committee had rallied to save it. Charles Edison—former New Jersey governor, Sag Harbor summer resident, and son of the famous inventor—donated property two blocks away, on the corner of Main and Garden streets, and the house was moved there in 1953. When SPLIA took over administration of the museum, curator Henry F. Ludder led a major project to restore the interior and reinterpret the Dering story. Ludder exhaustively cataloged all the Dominy furniture and other Dering family pieces exhibited in the rooms. SPLIA reopened the museum to the public in 1972 and welcomed 6,500 visitors during its first season.²¹

In 1966, when SPLIA was negotiating to take over the Custom House, Helen Niles of Bridgehampton offered the organization another classic Long Island house of similar proportions and vintage. Known as Sayrelands, this mid-eighteenth-century residence had been in Mrs. Niles's family for several generations, ever since her ancestor, a prosperous whaling captain named Uriah Sayre, bought the place in 1832. The family called the house—a two-story, five-bay-wide structure with double interior chimneys—Sayrelands. Having lived for years amidst its beautiful raised paneling and rare stenciled walls and ceilings,

Mrs. Niles was seeking an organization that would preserve the property and operate it as a house museum. She offered it to SPLIA, complete with furnishings.

However, Sayrelands could not be opened to the public immediately. Mrs. Niles held a life interest, and the house needed restoration work “from the foundation up.” This was the sort of ambitious and complex project that Allen Woodworth relished, but SPLIA was already involved in the restoration of the Custom House and in negotiations related to the Lloyd Manor House. Finally, in the spring of 1973, exterior work was begun at Sayrelands. The house was jacked up carefully, in order to preserve the stenciled plasterwork. The house needed new sills and a new roof, and research indicated that the shingle-clad house originally had clapboards. Noted architectural historian, Daniel Hopping, guided the later stages of Sayrelands restoration.

Huyler Held chaired Woodworth’s Acquisitions Committee during most of this era. Other key figures on the committee with wide experience were Loring McMillen, George Latham and Gerald Shea, who also served for a time as chairman of the Collections Committee.²² Looking back, it is interesting to record some of the places SPLIA considered and for various reasons failed to acquire—William Cullen Bryant’s Cedarmere in Roslyn, the Manor of St. George’s in Mastic, and even a lighthouse in Long Island Sound.

Surveying
Long Island’s
Historic
Buildings

While Allen Woodworth and the Acquisitions Committee were collecting eighteenth-century houses, another force at SPLIA, led mostly by women, was tackling Long Island’s preservation crises from a very different angle: they were looking at the bigger picture—advocating for surveys, legislation, and other protection without outright acquisition. Spurred by their concerns, SPLIA began taking a role in such public issues as opposition to the widening of Route 25A; encouraging the preservation of historic districts in Brooklyn Heights, Roslyn, and Huntington; and providing technical assistance to local historical societies to help them fight their own battles.

These were the kinds of issues that had been dear to the indomitable Constance Hare. Still the chair of the Publications and Publicity Committee, the 89-year-old Mrs. Hare died at her home in St. James in June 1962.²³ Her influence, style, and vision were passed on to several other intrepid preservation advocates, including to her neighbor, Barbara Van Liew of St. James, as well

as to Dorothy Horton McGee of Locust Valley and Roger and Peggy Gerry of Roslyn.

These preservationists saw the need to identify and document the Island's historic resources community by community. Back in the 1950s Constance Hare had begun the process. Her disciple Barbara Van Liew later reminisced that Mrs. Hare had "picked out the gentry ladies who would know about the old houses and out comes a list of important old houses in the community."²⁴ By 1963 SPLIA had projects underway, ranging from a slide collection to a photo survey of Long Island landmarks.²⁵

The National Historic Preservation Act, enacted in 1966, called for systematic statewide inventories of historic resources, and over the next few years SPLIA became responsible for Long Island's inventory. The State's "blue forms" (officially the Building/Structure Form of the New York State Survey of Historic Resources) provided a standard recording tool that SPLIA and other local groups could use in many ways and state planners could consult in reviewing massive public-works projects.

While the Gerrys surveyed Roslyn and Dorothy McGee worked on Oyster Bay, Barbara Van Liew mobilized other historical societies. When she found the quality of the recording by volunteers inadequate, Mrs. Van Liew drove to obscure corners of Nassau and Suffolk counties herself. Working with student research assistants from Columbia University and Parsons School of Design, she dictated her findings from the driver's seat in a car filled with maps and research materials.²⁶ Over the next two decades, during the 1970s and 1980s, Mrs. Van Liew and her team recorded some 6,500 historic structures. Stories of the intrepid Mrs. Van Liew include her cheery greeting to the armed guards as she proceeded up the gravel drive leading to a Mafia leader's domain: "Yoo-hoo...we're just here for the architecture!"²⁷

On occasional weekends Barbara Van Liew produced *Preservation Notes*, a newsletter that alerted SPLIA members to local issues.²⁸ According to Mrs. Van Liew, director Louis Ismay had proposed this publication in 1965, "to get me out of his hair."²⁹ She had been badgering him to draft letters stating SPLIA's official position on various Long Island preservation crises. Ismay saw that her identification of threatened places and her research into new solutions would fill a real need in educating Long Island residents concerned about their rapidly disappearing historic landscape.³⁰

Preservation
Advocacy
through
Publications

The resulting publication, *Preservation Notes*, became an effective preservation tool. Embellishing the covers with witty cartoons and interspersing the text with images often provided by volunteer Harvey Weber, a *Newsday* photographer, Barbara van Liew wrote pithy updates on threatened structures and preservation challenges throughout Long Island. The contents were deliberately not copyrighted, for she hoped the information would be copied and used by others, and by 1971 its success surprised even SPLIA. The mailing list grew as public officials, libraries, and conservation leaders from as far away as Illinois sought subscriptions.³¹ Also during this period Mrs. Van Liew produced forward-looking pamphlets on such subjects as “Possible Legislative Aid in Saving Old Houses.”

Under Louis Ismay SPLIA also published a scholarly journal in 1965 and 1966 entitled *The Long Island Courant*. Reviving the name of a pre-Revolutionary publication, the journal was edited by Myron H. Luke.³²



Barbara Van Liew
receiving the Howard
C. Sherwood Award in
1981 from Huxley C.
Held, president, (center)
and Robert B. MacKay,
director.

Landmarks of Long Island, a large-format pamphlet with a map keyed to a wealth of historic sites accessible to the public, was published and reprinted several times in the early 1960s. SPLIA trustee Dorothy McGee³³ and the Special Projects Committee researched the places—from churches and museums to arboretums—worthy of inclusion. The listings ranged from Brooklyn to Montauk. The first edition

included 95 sites, and in 1965 the revised edition was expanded to 127 entries; a New York State Council on the Arts grant funded another reprinting in 1971.³⁴

Throughout the Woodworth years, SPLIA also issued its quarterly *Newsletter*, which was begun in 1957 under the direction of the Women’s Committee. In addition to highlighting the activities of the Society, the *Newsletter* covered subjects of general interest to members and potential members. For example, in director Philip Dunbar’s era, the April 1962 issue discussed preservation theory and legislation.³⁵

Education
and Events

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s SPLIA began to look at ways to attract new visitors to its house museums, as well as to enhance preservation awareness through educational programs. In 1965 Louis Ismay created a slide program called

“It’s Your Choice,” which combined striking photographs of “the beautiful and the ugly” and was designed for presentations to business groups, historical societies, and civic groups.³⁶ Curator Hank Ludder instituted a craft program in the summer of 1969 offering free demonstrations of spinning, dyeing, and weaving three afternoons a week in the barn at the Thompson House.³⁷ These hands-on demonstrations continued for two more years, through 1971.

In the early 1970s SPLIA began to receive significant funding for more ambitious educational programming through the New York State Council on the Arts. With these grants SPLIA began to plan events that would bring together members of the Island’s many historical societies. Starting in 1970 SPLIA held symposia on preservation issues at the Neighborhood House in Setauket, as well as workshops at various locations on the Island.³⁸

SPLIA tried several alternative strategies to preserving properties short of outright acquisition. In 1966 it offered a \$6,000 grant to the Kingsland Preservation Committee to help it save the 1785 Kingsland Mansion in Flushing.³⁹ This gambrel-roofed landmark, which had been moved once for subway construction in 1923, was again threatened, this time by plans for a shopping center. SPLIA made a second grant in 1968 to help move the house to Weeping Beech Park, near the Bowne House. The Kingsland Mansion became the headquarters of the Queens Historical Society.⁴⁰

Seed Grants and Revolving Funds

Throughout the mid-1960s and early 1970s SPLIA directors and trustees devoted many meetings to grappling with the process of setting up a revolving fund whereby buildings might be acquired and then resold with preservation restrictions. Huyler Held became a revolving-fund advocate after a visit to Charleston, South Carolina, and in 1966 he encouraged the then new director, Charles McDermott, to plan visits to Charleston and other cities where revolving funds had succeeded.⁴¹ In 1972 more study was underway, but in January 1973 plans for a revolving fund were shelved due to pressing issues involving the restoration of Sayrelands and Lloyd Manor.⁴²

The revolving-fund debate was only one example of SPLIA’s priorities during the Woodworth years. Under Woodworth the organization’s directors, who tried to bring in new ideas, did not stay long. As Huyler Held observed, the elderly and completely involved Woodworth saw himself as both president and administrator.⁴³

Allen Woodworth’s Retirement

Annual meeting luncheon in Setauket, 1968. Left to right at head table, Mrs. William L. Bassett Jr., Charles Vanderveer III, Mrs. George Latham, Mrs. Oliver Edwards, Bradford G. Weekes; Mrs. G. Philip Lynch; Dr. Myron H. Luke, Dorothy McGee, Ward Melville, Mrs. Karl D. Hartzell; Oliver Edwards, Mrs. John S. Toll, Mrs. J. C. Rathborne; Mrs. Alfred L. Loomis Jr. and Dr. John S. Toll.



At the annual meeting in June 1969 Allen Woodworth accepted another term as president “with great reluctance.” He was “sure a younger man is needed—as well as younger trustees” and acknowledged then that the president should have “a vital interest in preservation in its broadest sense.”⁴⁴ However, it would be four more years before he actually passed the gavel on to his trusted stepson, Huyler Held. Woodworth once told board member Richard Nicodemus that running SPLIA had proved to be much harder than his experience running a big corporation.⁴⁵ At SPLIA the competing missions of antiquarianism and preservation advocacy had escalated to a point that in 1972 Woodworth himself recognized that the organization was at a “crossroads.”⁴⁶

Allen Woodworth fit into the early years of SPLIA when it was an old-fashioned “society” that was essentially a “collectors club” of connoisseurs. It operated with a windfall endowment, which was treated like a trust fund. Limiting his quest to eighteenth-century Long Island landmarks, Woodworth was carrying on the legacy of the great founder of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, William Sumner Appleton Jr.⁴⁷ But he was following this model long after Appleton’s time. SPNEA had long ago begun taking on Victorian properties, and in 1974, the year after Woodworth’s retirement, it was acquiring the Gropius House, a Bauhaus-influenced landmark near Boston.

Woodworth left SPLIA with a set of rare eighteenth-century house museums that today remain an important part of the organization’s identity. Despite his narrow focus, however, SPLIA’s activists had also become an important force in the larger preservation initiatives on the Island. It was time for a new regime led by president Huyler Held and director Robert B. MacKay.

Chapter 4

New Leadership and a “New” SPLIA, 1973–present

Meeting in McKim, Mead and White’s grand rooms at the University Club on Fifth Avenue in Midtown Manhattan, SPLIA’s Executive Committee made two daring decisions in January 1977. First, it resolved to divest itself of Sayrelands, the still-unrestored eighteenth-century house that had been prized and pursued over the previous decade by retired president Allen Woodworth. The second decision was to accept the Society’s first revolving-fund property, the Titus-Gardiner House in Old Westbury and to dedicate \$20,000 to its restoration.¹ The combined decisions climaxed a four-year reorientation of SPLIA’s energies and resources under the leadership of Robert B. MacKay as director and Huyler C. Held as president of the Board of Trustees.

Bringing new energy and solutions to Long Island’s preservation problems, Bob MacKay had joined SPLIA as program director under Robert Gamble in 1973. He had proved himself locally in the summer of 1972 by organizing a survey leading to an historic-preservation ordinance for the Town of Oyster Bay that featured tax rebates for designated historic structures.² MacKay had just completed his PhD oral exams at Boston University’s American and New England Studies Program, where he had studied under Abbott Lowell Cummings.

A native Long Islander who grew up in Oyster Bay, MacKay had valuable contacts and preservation experience. Starting in college and then again after a tour of duty in Vietnam, he had worked for Architectural Heritage, Inc., the Boston firm that had masterminded the adaptive use of Boston’s Old City Hall, undertaken the feasibility study for saving the Faneuil Hall

markets, and was involved in the early stages of creating Old Bethpage Village on Long Island. MacKay came to SPLIA at a critical time, when the organization was ripe for change, and he had the academic, social, and practical skills to make the changes happen. But it would not be easy.

In MacKay's nearly four decades as director, SPLIA moved its headquarters and acquired a gallery, created a highly regarded collection of Long Island decorative arts; conducted a massive inventory of historic resources; greatly expanded SPLIA's education, publication, and preservation-services programs; and scaled back on its house-museum properties. He improved the Society's financial footing through a series of capital campaigns. The provocative leader who was willing to suggest that SPLIA dispense with all its house museums in the 1970s has become an elder statesman in the New York State preservation arena.³ He is the first Long Islander to serve on the New York State Board for Historic Preservation, which he has chaired through four administrations.

Robert MacKay, director; (center) and Huyler Held, president, (right) presenting the Howard C. Sherwood Award to Dr. Roger Gerry.



Working with a succession of presidents in the 1970s, '80s and '90s—Huyler Held (for the first decade), Patricia P. Sands, George Hossfeld Jr., Rodney B. Berens, Alexander J. Smith, Richard Gachot, and Paula Youngs Weir—MacKay gradually steered SPLIA off the back roads of East Setauket onto Main Street in Cold Spring Harbor and closer to the Society's membership base. He took the Society's headquarters out of a quaint eighteenth-century farmhouse

and moved its growing operations into a nineteenth-century church and an early twentieth-century library, both landmark civic structures designed for group activities.

**A New Approach
to SPLIA's
Real Estate and
Endowment**

Real-estate decisions dominated the first twenty-five years of Bob MacKay's tenure. They ranged from plans for SPLIA's existing house museums and headquarters to newly acquired properties sold with restrictive covenants through the revolving fund. Momentous resolutions to divest the organization of a property like Sayrelands could turn into a complicated, lengthy legal process. One real-estate decision affected another as funding one goal, such as desperately needed exhibit space, could lead to capitalizing on a less-used Society property. Four capital campaigns targeted fund-raising toward long-term security.

Some Society-owned properties of the Allen Woodworth era were sold with preservation restrictions to sympathetic owners, and development rights to others were sold to public entities. Much of this property was in Setauket—the former headquarters once known as the Swezey House, a portion of the Hulse property opposite the Sherwood-Jayne House, and the valuable Route 25A frontage at the north end of the Sherwood-Jayne property. Then there was Sayrelands, at the end of the Island in Bridgehampton. Divesting property given by past supporters was a public-relations tightrope that SPLIA would walk for years. Each sale involved delicate issues, and the sales had to be accomplished in a responsible and enlightened way.

The best hope was to transfer a redundant property to another historical organization. This happened in East Setauket when in 1998 the Three Village Historical Society purchased the Swezey House. This group had long been associated with the property, renting space in the adjacent Thompson House, as SPLIA had also done in its infancy. The old Swezey farmhouse, with its fireproof archival wing added by SPLIA in 1962, now serves as the History Center of the Three Village Historical Society.⁴

The Hulse property on Old Post Road in East Setauket had been purchased in 1957. Portions of this property, including the little Hulse House, which housed SPLIA staff members in the 1970s, were sold with restrictive covenants. SPLIA retained the property across from the Sherwood-Jayne House to protect the view shed.

The most contested transactions involved Sayrelands and the Route 25A frontage at the Sherwood-Jayne property. In the case of Sayrelands, the donor's son objected to the sale, claiming that the property should legally revert to him.⁵ Years of legal proceedings and delicate negotiations were a financial drain on SPLIA and sapped the energy of staff and board members. Finally, in 1984, the house was sold with preservation covenants to a private owner. The proceeds went into a restricted endowment at SPLIA, the Helen L. and Charles A. Niles Fund, for the "maintenance, repair, and upkeep" of SPLIA's house museums.

For more than a decade the board had discussed moving SPLIA's headquarters. Among the places they considered was Nan Wood's Fort Hill House on Lloyd Neck. This splendid Tudor-revival brick country house has McKim, Mead and Bigelow underpinnings and later embellishments by architects Boring and Tilton. Sited at a strategic spot in the Revolutionary War, Fort Hill's wide

verandahs overlook both Cold Spring Harbor and Oyster Bay. After Mrs. Wood's death the Fort Hill Foundation sought a nonprofit occupant. When the Aspen Music Festival turned it down in 1989, the foundation approached SPLIA. The stunning site, close to Lloyd Manor, SPLIA's new historic-house museum, made the place inviting, but the board and staff decided that its remote location, handicap-accessibility problems, and concerns of the neighbors complicated its adaptation as a headquarters. However, SPLIA took title to the property at the request of the foundation and sold it back into private ownership with preservation covenants. Subsequently, the Fort Hill Foundation created two endowments—one to police the covenants on Fort Hill and another to support Lloyd Manor.⁶



*Opening ceremony for
Joseph Lloyd Manor
on the completion of its
restoration, 1982.*

In 1986, during Patricia Sands's presidency, SPLIA took a further bold step, purchasing the former Cold Spring Harbor Library, close to the center of the Society's membership base, for long-needed space for changing exhibitions. Located on Main Street at the corner of Shore Road, the stylish 1913 colonial-revival structure with its Flemish-bond brick facades was designed by the talented country-house firm of Peabody, Wilson and Brown. It was a local landmark with an uncertain future.

Under the leadership of trustee Floyd Lyon, who chaired the campaign, SPLIA raised \$1 million for its purchase and renovation. Centerbrook, the Connecticut architectural firm that had designed many structures on the campus of the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, was put to work. New SPLIA president George Hossfeld Jr., an MIT-trained engineer, followed the rehabilitation phase by phase. Finally in November

1990 the gallery opened with an exhibit of paintings by nineteenth-century Long Island artist Edward Lange.

For the next six years SPLIA's staff was divided by the hour-long drive between the gallery and its cramped headquarters in the farmhouse in East Setauket. The rooms that back in 1963 had seemed so spacious to Philip Dunbar and his assistant by the 1990s found seven full-time and five part-time staff members jockeying for desk space and for shelves for books and files.⁷ In June 1996 the longstanding quest for more central and accommodating offices was resolved when SPLIA purchased the Methodist Episcopal Church on Main Street in Cold Spring Harbor, within walking distance of the gallery.

The clapboarded Gothic-revival church was a conspicuous component of the village's Main Street. Virtually unused in recent years, the once-loved building had been through a succession of alterations since its construction in 1842. After three years of fundraising and then restoration work supervised by Page Ayres Cowley, the SPLIA offices were resettled from Setauket into the basement of the church. The sanctuary provided a flexible space for lectures, meetings, and additional exhibition space.⁸ President Richard Gachot served through the period of the church renovation, and Paula Youngs Weir was president during its first years as SPLIA's headquarters.

SPLIA's most recent presidents (Frederic L. Atwood, Babcock MacLean, and Paul Vermeylen Jr.) have been involved in a series of creative property transactions that have established new endowments. The disposition of forty-six acres of the Sherwood-Jayne property fronting on Route 25A came in December 2003 after twenty years of proposals, and it netted SPLIA \$4 million, far more money than any other transaction.⁹ Suffolk County bought thirty-six acres of woodland for a "forever wild" park, and the Town of Brookhaven purchased the development rights for another ten acres of meadow around the Sherwood-Jayne House, augmenting the endowment of the Sherwood-Jayne House.¹⁰ In 2008 a similar deal with the Town of Southampton, selling an easement on the front lawn and the wetlands behind the Custom House in Sag Harbor, significantly increased the endowment of that property.¹¹ Finally, in 2011, realizing that the sanctuary of the former Cold Spring church that was SPLIA's headquarters, if equipped with museum lighting, would serve well as the Society's exhibition space and recognizing the importance of its location across from municipal parking, SPLIA sold the old Cold Spring Harbor Library building with covenants. The gallery was then moved to the headquarters building.

Highlighting
Long Island's
Material Culture:
Collections and
Exhibitions

In its earliest years SPLIA had collected appropriate furniture and other decorative arts to furnish its house museums. SPLIA curator Hank Ludder's comprehensive inventory of furniture at the Sag Harbor Custom House contributed to Charles Hummel's classic study entitled *With Hammer in Hand: The Dominy Craftsmen of East Hampton, New York* (1968). Here was a rich topic worth exploring on an Island-wide scale. Now, as the Society entered the 1970s under Bob MacKay, it made significant new strides in the analysis of the decorative-arts tradition on Long Island.

In July 1974 MacKay hired a new curator—a bright, young Winterthur graduate and Long Island native, Dean Failey. Failey began working on an exhibition and book on Long Island's decorative arts, a monumental undertaking. His research excited SPLIA's board. In 1976 the "acquisition of decorative arts of Long Island origin" was added to SPLIA's mission, second only to the preservation of worthy historic structures.¹² This new goal was encouraged by Huyler Held, whose father was the first serious student of Long Island decorative arts and author of the first articles in *Antiques* on the region's distinctive decorative-arts traditions. Other advocates for the collections were Bertha Rose, the chair of SPLIA's Curatorial Committee and a nationally known collector, and subsequent longtime chairs Seton Shanley of East Hampton, Peggy N. Gerry of Roslyn, and Joanna Badami of Lloyd Harbor.¹³



Bertha Benkard Rose.
Courtesy of the Colony Club.

With over one thousand photographs and scholarly entries on Long Island-made chairs, desks, clocks, maps, paintings, silver, bed hangings, cradles, and ladles, as well as appendices with biographical sketches of hundreds of Long Island's woodworking and metalworking craftsman, Failey's book, entitled *Long Island is My Nation: Decorative Arts and Craftsmen, 1640-1830*, is encyclopedic and authoritative. First published by SPLIA in conjunction

with an exhibit as a bicentennial project in 1976, it was also a defining event for the "new" SPLIA. The Society was suddenly recognized in the national press. *Antiques* magazine called the show "the first significant attempt to explore Long Island's rich heritage."¹⁴ In two successive, picture-laden articles, Rita Reif of the *New York Times* made this "extraordinary exhibition" big news, describing it as "perhaps the most comprehensive collection

of crafts to date from this region as well as a fascinating history lesson that traces a cultural map of the area in the Colonial period.”¹⁵

SPLIA had discovered a fresh and fertile field of Long Island’s material culture that would inspire a whole series of exhibits and publications in the next two decades: *Edward Lange’s Long Island* (1979) by Dean F. Failey and Zachary N. Studenroth, *Useful Art: Long Island Pottery* (1985) by Cynthia A. Corbett; *Edward Lange Revisited* (1990) by Alison Cornish, and *Woven History: The Technology and Innovation of Long Island Coverlets, 1800-1830* (1993) by Susan Rabbit Goody. Failey went on to a career at Christie’s, but he never stopped collecting information on Long Island decorative arts. In 1998 he expanded the second edition of *Long Island is My Nation* with some 75 new discoveries that had come to his attention in the intervening years.

Long Island is My Nation: Decorative Arts and Craftsmen, second edition.

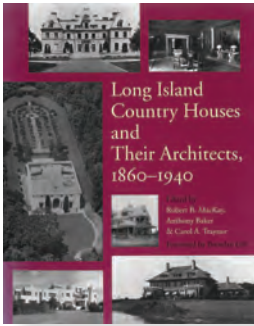
“*Long Island Is My Nation*,” SPLIA’s Bicentennial exhibition held at the Museums at Stony Brook, 1976.

In 1976 SPLIA had no exhibition space worthy of the monumental decorative arts show, so “Long Island is My Nation” was mounted at the Museums at Stony Brook. The need for gallery space became more pressing as the Curatorial Committee continued to acquire rare items either through gifts, bequests, or purchases but had no place to show them until SPLIA purchased the old Cold Spring Library. Today SPLIA’s collection has been called the strongest regional collection of decorative arts in New York State.¹⁶



Publications

Long Island is My Nation broke new ground for SPLIA.¹⁷ SPLIA's next mega-book, *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860-1940*, evolved from a statewide study of the destruction of large estates initiated by Joan K. Davidson at the New York State Council on the Arts in 1975. In 1978 SPLIA published *Saving Large Estates* by William C. Shopsin, which presented case studies on the successful adaptive use of country houses and their grounds. One hundred copies sold immediately, and the book went through three printings. SPLIA learned that no one—not even owners of country houses themselves—knew much about the histories or architectural significance of their houses. A book on Long Island's country houses would not only record the places that had been lost but give vital context to the surviving ones and encourage the preservation of these landmarks and their landscapes.



*Long Island Country
Houses and Their
Architects, 1860-1940*

Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects began modestly. In 1983 Anthony Baker, chairman of the Publications Committee, reported that nineteen of the anticipated thirty-nine chapters had been commissioned.¹⁸ Ultimately weighing in at eight pounds, the book would ultimately grow to include 237 entries on nationally and locally significant architectural firms; it would become an invaluable reference for scholars and a “must-have” volume for Long Island’s coffee tables.

Longtime board member Brendan Gill of *The New Yorker* set the tone of the book. In his foreword Gill wittily confessed that “the truth of the matter is that I have a soft spot in my heart for any house that has over 100 rooms,” while Bob MacKay’s introduction examined the reasons behind the rise of the Long Island estates phenomenon, which reached its zenith in the decades before World War I. In his acknowledgements MacKay credited his co-editors Anthony Baker and Carol Traynor. “Country house sleuth” Baker “pursued elusive estates by land, water and air, often resorting to ‘fly overs’ of places we were attempting to document.” A trained archeologist with an eye for detail, Traynor served as archivist for the huge project. One copy editor died in the course of production. The final drama came when book designer Katy Homan’s offices went up in smoke, and New York City firemen rescued three boxes of irreplaceable illustrations and a vital computer disk.¹⁹

In 1992 SPLIA collaborated with the Long Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects on a Dover publication, the *AIA Architectural Guide to Nassau and Suffolk Counties*. This more manageable paperback, edited by Bob MacKay, Stanley Lindvall, and Carol Traynor with photos by Joseph Adams

and Mary Ann Spencer, profiled 250 existing structures.²⁰ SPLIA researchers Barbara Van Liew and Zachary Studenroth contributed to this project.

SPLIA produced or collaborated on a number of other works. Some were the result of special studies, such as *Long Island: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites* (with the Historic American Engineering Record, 1974). Some stemmed from research on individual sites, such as *A History of the Joseph Lloyd Manor House* by Kenneth Scott and Susan Klaffy (1976), or educational programs, such as *Today's Children in Yesterday's Houses*, by Wendy Aibel-Weiss (1986). Bob MacKay co-edited *Between Ocean and Empire: An Illustrated History of Long Island*, with Geoffrey Rossano and Carol Traynor and issued by Windsor Publications in 1985 (revised and reissued as *Long Island: An Illustrated History*, with Richard F. Welch, by American Historical Press in 2000). Co-publications with W. W. Norton began in 1983 with *Windmills of Long Island* by Robert J. Hefner and has continued in recent years with the works of two eminent scholars—Richard Guy Wilson's *Harbor Hill: Portrait of A House* (2008) and Cynthia Zaitzevsky's *Long Island Landscapes and the Women Who Designed Them* (2009). Ten years in the making, Zaitzevsky's book highlights the Long Island projects of a host of landscape architects including Beatrix Farrand, Ellen Shipman, Ruth Dean, Martha Hutcheson, Marian Coffin, and Annette Hoyt Flanders. Zaitzevsky's research took her to archives all over the country, and the book attracted national attention from reviewers and an unprecedented number of advance orders to the publisher. *Long Island Modernism, 1930–1980*, researched and written by Caroline Rob Zaleski, will be co-published with W. W. Norton in 2012.



Long Island Modernism, 1930–1980

Most of these books were funded in part with grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, and beginning in 1987 NYSCA encouraged applications for works oriented toward needs of minorities and special constituencies.²¹ These publications included Grania Bolton Marcus's pioneering *Discovering the African-American Experience in Suffolk County, 1620–1860*, published in 1988 and reprinted in 1995. SPLIA drew attention to the work of a woman who worked for Currier and Ives in a 1997 exhibit and catalog entitled *Fanny Palmer: A Long Island Woman Who Portrayed America*, with essays by art historian Charlotte Streiffer Rubenstein and SPLIA curator Carolyn Oldenbusch. Oldenbusch also edited *Anchor to Windward, The Paintings and Diaries of Annie Cooper Boyd*, published by SPLIA and the Sag Harbor Historical Society in 2010.

*"Fannie Palmer:
A Long Island Woman
Who Portrayed
America" exhibition,
1997.*



Early in his tenure Bob MacKay saw that publications would be an “indicator of professionalism,” and the books of his era have given SPLIA lasting recognition, while providing valuable information to scholars beyond Long Island’s shores.

Meanwhile, SPLIA continued to inform its members through the *Newsletter* and *Preservation Notes*, which merged in 1994. When Barbara Van Liew turned ninety in 2001, Charla Bolton began to take on editing the publication. Now produced in color under editor Alexandra Parsons Wolfe, the *Preservation Notes Newsletter* continues to report on recent National Register listings, new preservation initiatives by Long Island groups, and threatened historic places. It still bears Barbara Van Liew’s stirring “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 alert you.

Preservation Services

In 1997 SPLIA undertook a survey to rank the priorities that motivate the membership. At the top of the list were “supporting a worthy cause” and “preservation advocacy.”²² Day-to-day over the years these activities, often in collaboration with other organizations, have much absorbed SPLIA’s staff. Unlike publications, these efforts do not always yield a tangible result for which SPLIA can claim credit. But the work is vital to SPLIA’s mission, and the Preservation Committee has been one of the Society’s most active under the chairmanships of Richard Gachot, Mary Ann Spencer, and Paul Bentel.

Publicizing preservation laws, inventorying—community by community—unrecognized historic places, undertaking thematic studies of buildings in public ownership and neglected Modernist structures, and supervising architectural alterations to covenanted structures (including the three landmark houses sold through the revolving fund in the late 1970s and early

1980s)—these have all been projects which take SPLIA’s staff beyond the office and into the field.²³

Over the years the advocacy work has evolved, and the problems are ever changing.²⁴ When the revolving-fund activity slowed in the mid-1980s, SPLIA started a program of contract services using the artisans and at times SPLIA’s longtime restorationist Randy Staudinger, who prepared the revolving-fund houses for resale, offering not only practical skills but the preparation of reports and National Register nominations, undertaken by Zachary Studenroth. In time, as many architectural firms and contract specialists offered these same services, SPLIA phased out these activities rather than compete with the for-profit sector.



In the 1980s, as part of its advocacy efforts, SPLIA secured a federal grant to help stabilize the Van Wyck Lefferts tide mill at Lloyd Harbor.

Under Charla Bolton and more recently Alexandra Parsons Wolfe, SPLIA has returned to the Barbara Van Liew model of advocacy work, responding to the concerns of preservation-minded Long Islanders by writing letters to the editors of newspapers, testifying at hearings, and holding workshops on new issues. SPLIA has encouraged achievement by bestowing preservation awards to leaders in the field and drawing attention to threatened places through its Endangered Long Island Properties List. SPLIA has also examined the fate of landmarks in public ownership in a series of reports on historic properties

SPLIA successfully collaborated with the World Monuments Fund and the Barnett Newman Foundation to save the Edward Durell Stone-designed A. Conger Goodyear House in Old Westbury in 2001. Ezra Stoller © Esto.



owned by Nassau and Suffolk counties and New York State.²⁵ Alexandra Wolfe’s initial 2001 report offered a partial solution: she found that buildings cared for by a county in partnership with a local group were the ones that were better maintained.²⁶

SPLIA often compares itself to Historic New England. With thirty-six historic sites, mostly house museums, Historic New England cares for more properties across a larger territory from Boston across to western Massachusetts and into three adjacent states—Maine, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Historic New England oversees covenants on more than seventy-five other private properties as compared to SPLIA’s eight. Here, however, the comparison stops. Historic New England does not attempt the grass-roots advocacy SPLIA has made part of its mission. With, for example, staff bundling up and traveling out to Southampton on a sub-zero January morning in order to back up local groups protesting the fate of a doomed Tudor landmark known as Bayberryland, SPLIA is still carrying on the work of its early preservation warriors.²⁷

Education Since the 1970s the ongoing restoration and archeology at Lloyd Manor and the interpretation of the Sherwood-Jayne property as a working farm have provided interactive educational sites for visitors. The trend is on lifestyles, putting today’s visitor in the shoes of early Long Island residents. As former board president Patricia Sands put it, the transition has been from “This is a Windsor chair, this is a Hitchcock chair” of the old days to “How did people live in this period?”²⁸

As SPLIA was preparing to open Lloyd Manor, well-known educator Wendy Aibel-Weiss, author of *Today’s Children in Yesterday’s Houses*, came on board to develop new hands-on, role-



Craft class ceremony, Setauket, 1971. At far right, Hank Ludder, curator, and to his left, Robert Gamble, director.

playing school programs, which were implemented by Kathy Kane and more recently by Pat Hildebrandt and Joan McGee. Through the late 1980s and 1990s Lloyd Manor bustled with elementary and junior-high school groups. Since September 11, 2001, safety concerns, as well as school budgetary constraints, have diminished the number of student visitors. SPLIA has addressed this challenge with more in-school programs. In 2007 the Society installed video-conferencing equipment to create a new connection with schools.²⁹

At Lloyd Manor, where the Lloyd family once held slaves, SPLIA tells the history of Long Island's African-Americans. The bucolic setting of the Sherwood-Jayne House, with its meadows, orchard, hayfields, and woodlots, has allowed SPLIA to present that property in a way antiquarian Howard Sherwood might not have expected.³⁰ The Long Island Apple Festival, held there every year in conjunction with the Three Village Historical Society and Benner's Farm, draws thousands to the site.



In-school Colonial Day education program at West Side School in Laurel Hollow erecting a house frame, 2007.

In recent years a lecture on the first Sunday in January at Grace Auditorium at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory has become a popular new aspect of SPLIA's adult education. Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen of the Metropolitan Museum of Art has spoken to a packed audience on Tiffany's Laurelton Hall; Samuel G. White has discoursed on Box Hill; Romy Wyllie has recounted the career of Bertram Goodhue; and Derek Ostergard has addressed the work of Delano and Aldrich.³¹ In the dead of winter these lectures have been welcome and enlightening events, as well as modest fundraisers.

The Society's major fundraising event since 1984, the annual country-house benefit, has also drawn attention to architecture

worth saving. The benefit has been held at such significant sites as Delano and Aldrich's Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney Studio and Edward Durell Stone's A. Conger Goodyear House, both in Old Westbury, and Wawapek, the Robert W. de Forest House in Cold Spring Harbor designed by Grosvenor Atterbury. Stalwarts in the organization of these activities have been trustees Linda Holmes and Regina Kraft and staff members Patty Jones and Margie Burkett.

Financial Stability

Huyler Held's life spanned all stages of SPLIA's history. He could remember the days in the 1950s, before Howard Sherwood died, when SPLIA had no money at all. "It was a shoestring organization with a fancy board," he recalled in an interview. "Then it received the endowment from Mr. Sherwood. The question was then what to do with it." With Sherwood's nest egg there was no need to raise more money or even encourage membership growth; the board, he recounted, "acted more like trustees of a trust fund than the usual acquisitive charitable board."³² Some interested but hesitant preservationists wondered whether membership was by invitation only.³³ By the time Bob MacKay took charge in 1973, the Society's finances were in a shambles. In theory the organization would accept only funded properties, but in fact only one, the Sherwood-Jayne House, had an endowment.

Since then the goal has been to put the organization on a solid financial footing. SPLIA has been fortunate to have had a series of highly accomplished treasurers. William Niven of Cove Neck served in the 1970s, and more recently Jack Evans, Greg Riley and Paul Vermeylen of Lloyd Harbor, David Townsend of Oyster Bay Cove, and Morgan Browne of Locust Valley have kept a watchful eye on SPLIA's finances.

It has been SPLIA's goal to endow every property. The sale of Sayrelands created The Niles Endowment that benefits all of SPLIA's historic-house museums. The sale to the town of Southampton of an open-space easement on the Custom House lawn has created a fund for that site. Lloyd Manor benefits from three endowments, two created through the sale of Fort Hill House. The Sherwood-Jayne House became securely endowed through the sale of development rights to the county and town. In addition, three funds have been established in memory of longtime SPLIA trustee Peggy N. Gerry—one for collections, one for publications, and the third, created in 2010 with the Sixtieth Anniversary Campaign, endows a curatorial staff position.

Since the days of the founders when private donations and bequests were the sole source of funding, SPLIA has become adept at getting grants from public sources and private foundations and has increased its endowment nearly sevenfold.

The Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities is now over sixty years old, led for more than half that time by a single director, Robert MacKay. The Society was born in 1948



*Roger and Peggy Gerry
in front of their Roslyn
residence. Ken Spencer ©
1981, Newsday, Inc.*

at a meeting held at the Metropolitan Museum with a December blizzard swirling outside. Its founders wanted to mitigate the depressing trends of suburban blight—the loss of Long Island’s identity, the destruction of its distinctive character. Today the pressures continue, there have been plenty of storms, and the battles sometimes are overwhelming, but a past president, Babcock MacLean, describes a frequent grateful response to SPLIA staff members crisscrossing Long Island as advocates of preservation: “Thank you for coming, it didn’t seem like anyone cared.”³⁴ SPLIA’s sixty-year history has given a hopeful voice for historic preservation on the Island.

1. Mrs. Gilbert Darlington et al, letter, Oct. 30, 1948, copy in SPLIA minute book. Howard C. Sherwood, Remarks before the Long Island Historical Society, Feb. 7, 1950, Barbara Van Liew Collection, SPLIA Collections (hereafter cited as H. C. Sherwood, Feb. 7, 1950).
2. Howard C. Sherwood, diary, vol. 2, 215, SPLIA Collections (hereafter cited as HCS, diary).
3. Notes of Informal Meeting, Nov. 18, 1948, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, p. 2 (hereafter cited as Notes, Nov. 18, 1948).
4. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 208-209, 215.
5. Notes, Nov. 18, 1948.
6. Notes, Nov. 18, 1948. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 215-216. Mrs. Gilbert Darlington et al, Oct. 30, 1948.
7. Notes, Nov. 18, 1948. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 215.
8. Proposed Agenda for Meeting, Nov. 18, 1948, SPLIA Minute Book, 1948–1951. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 216. H. C. Sherwood, Feb. 7, 1950. James A. Keillor was vice president of B. Altman and Co., Thomas S. Lamont was an executive with J. P. Morgan and Co., and Equen B. Meader was with the National Laboratory at Yaphank. Steering Committee, Meeting Notes, Dec. 3, 1948, and June 17, 1949.
9. SPLIA, Certificate of Incorporation, SPLIA Minute Book, 1971–1975.
10. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 216-218. “New Snow in Sight as City Digs Away; Traffic Lines Open,” *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1948. SPLIA, By-Laws, SPLIA Minute Book 1971–1975. Article I, Section 1 of the bylaws specified that the society “may erect, acquire, lease, and maintain buildings, tablets, memorials, and monuments to commemorate events, places, and persons in its estimation worthy of commemoration. It may acquire and maintain in suitable places collections of paintings, drawings, and prints; of books, manuscripts, autographs, and photographs; of furniture and examples of decorative arts; of coins and metals, and of any other objects of historic, literary, scientific, esthetic, and educational interest related to the history of Long Island.” HCS, diary, vol. 2, 217.
11. “Long Island Antiquities Society Meets,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1949. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 217-218. Minutes and treasurer’s report, annual meeting, May 20, 1949.
12. BT, Minutes, Dec. 31, 1949. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 218–219. At the June 17, 1950, meeting of the Board of Trustees the following were elected trustees: Preston R. Bassett, Leighton Coleman, Richard W. Hawkins, Thomas S. Lamont, W. Kingsland Macy, Equen B. Meader, Robert Moses, John Walden Myer, Mrs. John T. Nichols, Mrs. Reginald Rose, Osborn Shaw, Gerald Shea, Charles Messer Stow, Kate Strong, Col. Leonard Sullivan, and Mrs. Bradford Weekes. Herbert Bayard Swope was later elected on the recommendation of Robert Moses, who declined to serve, as a representative of the Parks Commission. His appointment left one place to be filled.
13. BT, Minutes, June 17, 1949. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 219-220. EC, Minutes, Aug. 19, 1949.
14. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 220–221. EC, Minutes, June 24, 1949; July 15, 1949; Aug. 19, 1949.
15. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 220–221. BT, Minutes, Nov. 16, 1949. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 16, 1950.
16. Women’s Committee, Minutes, July 1, 1949, Barbara Van Liew Collection.
17. Women’s Committee, Minutes, July 1, 1949. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 16, 1950., Members of the Women’s Committee, Mar. 22, 1951, Barbara Van Liew Papers. Barbara Van Liew, “The S.P.L.I.A. and Preservation Notes,” Nov. 4, 1976, Barbara Van Liew Papers. BT, Minutes, Nov. 16, 1949. EC, Minutes, Aug. 19, 1949.
18. BT, Minutes, Nov. 16, 1949. EC, Minutes, Aug. 19, 1949. HCS, diary, vol. 2, 222-223.
19. BT, Minutes, Nov. 16, 1949.

1. The *New York Sun* article was quoted in Howard C. Sherwood, Remarks before the Long Island Historical Society, Feb. 7, 1950, Barbara Van Liew Collection, SPLIA Collections (hereafter cited as H. C. Sherwood, Feb. 7, 1950). BT, Minutes, Nov. 16, 1949. "Tercentenary on Long Island," *Antiques* (July 1955), 52.
2. EC, Minutes, Sept. 24, 1950. SPLIA, *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957. Third Annual Meeting, BT, Minutes, June 24, 1951. H. C. Sherwood, Feb. 7, 1950. Second Annual Meeting, BT, July 14, 1950. *Newsday*, Feb. 27, 1961.
3. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957, Aug. 1957. BT, Minutes, June 24, 1951; June 19, 1953. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 6, 1952. EC, Minutes, May 14, 1950.
4. EC, Minutes, May 20, 1954; Oct. 7, 1954; Nov. 15, 1956. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957, Aug. 1957; Oct. 1960. *Newsday*, Feb. 27, 1961.
5. "Tercentenary on Long Island," 50-51. *National Geographic* (Sept. 1957), 308-309. *Newsday*, Feb. 27, 1961.
6. BT, Minutes, June 19, 1953.
7. EC, Minutes, May 20, 1954. Annual Meeting, Minutes, May 18, 1956. BT, Minutes, June 30, 1954; June 29, 1956.
8. BT, Minutes, June 30, 1954. EC, Minutes, May 20, 1954; Nov. 18, 1954.
9. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 6, 1952; June 3, 1955. *Newsletter*, July 1961. SPLIA, postcard, March 3, 1961.
10. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1957. EC, Minutes, Nov. 18, 1954; Nov. 3, 1955; Nov. 15, 1956. BT, Minutes, July 1, 1955.
11. EC, Minutes, March 22, 1956. BT, Minutes, Mar. 20, 1958; Oct. 15, 1959. *Newsletter*, Oct. 1960, 3-4.
12. BT, Minutes, June 29, 1956; Mar. 20, 1958; April 17, 1958.
13. EC, Minutes, Sept. 20, 1956; Jan. 17, 1957. Diana S. Waite, interview of Barbara F. Van Liew, Oct. 21, 2004. *Newsday*, Dec. 3, 1956. *New York Times*, Nov. 11, 1956. BT, Minutes, June 12, 1958. *Long Island Messenger*, Oct. 29, 1959. BT, Minutes, Oct. 15, 1959.
14. EC, Minutes, Jan. 17, 1957. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1958.
15. EC, Minutes, May 6, 1951; Apr. 27, 1953. EC, Minutes, Sept. 17, 1953. EC, Minutes, Jan. 18, 1954. BT, Minutes, June 30, 1954. EC, Minutes, Nov. 15, 1956. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957, Feb. 1959.
16. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957. EC, Minutes, Nov. 3, 1955; Nov. 15, 1956.
17. EC, Minutes, Sept. 24, 1950; Nov. 3, 1955. *Newsletter*, Oct. 1960. BT, Minutes, Dec. 14, 1961.
18. Annual meeting, Minutes, June 16, 1950. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957; Aug. 1957; Oct. 1960; July 1961.
19. *Preservation Notes*, Fall 1998, p. 1. EC, Minutes, Sept. 20, 1956; Jan. 17, 1957. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957, Aug. 1957, Oct. 1960. BT, Minutes, June 30, 1954; Mar. 19, 1959. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 3, 1955.
20. EC, Minutes, June 11, 1950.
21. EC, Minutes, June 11, 1950; Sept. 10, 1952; Sept. 17, 1953; Jan. 18, 1954. BT, Minutes, June 30, 1954; Jan. 19, 1961; March 16, 1961; Oct. 19, 1961. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1957, Aug. 1958, July 1961.
22. EC, Minutes, May, 6, 1951; June 1, 1952; May 20, 1954. H. C. Sherwood diary, Feb. 7, 1950. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 16, 1950.
23. BT, Minutes, July 14, 1950; Mar. 20, 1958. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1957, Aug. 1958.
24. HCS, diary, vol. 3, n.p. *New York Times*, Sept. 16, 1955. Other who served on the auction committee were Mrs. Leicester Y. Ryan, Mrs. Thomas Barker, Mrs. F. Henry Berlin Jr., Mrs. Leighton H. Coleman, Mrs. Arthur B. Lawrence, Mrs. Joel S. Lawson, Mrs. S. Hamilton F. Potter, Mrs. Clarence H. Semple, Mrs. Malcolm E. Smith, Mrs. David Weld, and Mrs. Allen L. Woodworth. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1957, Oct. 1960, July 1961. BT, Minutes, Nov. 3, 1955; Jan. 21, 1960, Jan. 15, 1959-Dec. 14, 1961. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 29, 1960.
25. EC, Minutes, Nov. 3, 1955. EC, Minutes, Nov. 15, 1956. Although Melville would remain on the SPLIA board until 1974, he became less active in the 1960s, perhaps because the Society adopted a strategic vision under Allen Woodworth (see chapter 3) that was in concert with Sherwood's wish that SPLIA be Island wide but conflicted with Melville's focus, which was limited to the Three Villages.
26. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1958, Aug. 1958.
27. BT, Minutes, April 17, 1958. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1957.

Notes

28. *New York Times*, June 19, 1958. *Newsletter*, Feb. 1958. Sherwood-Jayne House Committee, Min., Jan. 19, 1956–Nov. 20, 1958. “Long Island Group to Open Colonial Home,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1958.
29. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1957, Feb. 1959, Oct. 1959. EC, Minutes, Jan. 23, 1958.
30. Sherwood-Jayne House Committee, Minutes, Jan. 19, 1956–Nov. 20, 1958. *New York Times*, June 19, 1958.
31. *Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 2, Aug. 1957.
32. BT, Minutes, Nov. 17, 1960; Jan. 19, 1961; Nov. 16, 1961. A copy of this report was not located.
33. BT, Minutes, Jan. 19, 1961; Mar. 16, 1961; April 20, 1961; Dec. 6, 1972. *Preservation Notes*, Fall 1998, p. 1. Diana S. Waite, interview of Huyler C. Held, Feb. 15, 2006.
34. BT, Minutes, June 12, 1958; Oct. 19, 1961. *Newsletter*, Oct. 1961.
35. EC, Minutes, Dec. 9, 1954. BT, Minutes, Mar. 20, 1958. Annual Meeting, Minutes, June 29, 1960. *Newsletter*, Oct. 1960.

Chapter 3

1. Diana S. Waite, interview of Huyler Held, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 12.
2. Diana S. Waite, interview of Huyler Held, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 2.
3. A native of Worcester, Mass., Philip Dunbar came to SPLIA in his mid-thirties, bringing curatorial experience from the Worcester Art Museum, Colonial Williamsburg, Old Sturbridge Village, and Winterthur. His brief tenure at SPLIA was followed by twenty years at the Connecticut Historical Society Museum in Hartford. *New York Times*, July 17, 1963; Sept. 14, 1994.
4. Louis Ismay of Altamont, N.Y., who succeeded Dunbar in 1964, came with the recommendation of Frederick L. Rath, of the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown. Ismay brought new ideas for publications, education programs, and conferences, which today, some forty-five years later, he good-naturedly realizes were a “shock” to the Society. Still fuming over Dunbar’s sartorial failings, Woodworth equipped Ismay with a fedora to meet the board at the Colony Club. Cornelia Brooke Gilder, interview of Louis Ismay, Feb. 23, 2010.
5. EC, Minutes, Sept. 23, 1965.
6. Charles Vanderveer had been on the staff at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. In 1969 he and Woodworth disagreed over the acquisition of an eighteenth-century saltbox, the Joseph Brewster House in Setauket. SPLIA was not able to support another expensive, un-ended restoration project, Vanderveer argued, and he pointed out that much money would be needed to undo a misguided recent restoration. After leaving SPLIA Vanderveer became well-known as an antiques auctioneer in Bridgehampton. Charles Vanderveer III to Allen Woodworth, July 18, 1969, Barbara Van Liew Papers 1956-1976.
7. *New York Times*, Feb. 28, 1971. BT, Minutes, March 18, 1971.
9. *Newsletter*, July 1962.
10. Educated at Harvard and University of Pennsylvania, James Van Alst was a man of many accomplishments. His practice in Centerport, N.Y., specialized in modern school buildings. He restored the Old Budd House in Cutchogue, N.Y., in 1939. Over the years he wrote on various architectural subjects in periodicals, such as *Country Life* and *Architectural Forum*; he also illustrated architectural books.
11. BT, Minutes, Sept. 20, 1962. *Newsletter*, July 1962.
12. Annual Meeting, Minutes, May 25, 1966.
13. Artist Emile A. Gruppé (1896-1978) had previously restored and touched up these walls for Howard Sherwood earlier according to BT Minutes, Oct. 18, 1962. BT, Minutes, Nov. 21, 1963.
14. Interview of Huyler C. Held, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 6.
15. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1966.
16. *Newsletter*, Jan. 1968; Winter 1969.
17. In 1964 Louis Ismay remembers discussions about acquiring the Bowne House in Flushing. This seventeenth-century house was still lived in and had 300 years of interesting alterations. Ismay differed with Woodworth’s restoration philosophy of stripping away the later changes. In the end SPLIA

- did not acquire the Bowne House, and it is owned today by the Bowne House Historical Society. Interview of Louis Ismay, Feb. 23, 2010.
18. The daughter of an eminent early collector of American decorative arts, Bertha Benkard Rose (1906-1982) was a knowledgeable and potent figure in restoration circles and a connoisseur of American antiques. Back in the 1930s she had worked on the initial plan for Stratford, the Lee family home in Virginia, and in the 1940s on the restoration of Raynham Hall in Oyster Bay. She had ties to many organizations—Winterthur, the Museum of the City of New York, the Metropolitan Museum, and the New-York Historical Society. A close friend of Theodore Roosevelt's daughter Ethel Derby, she chaired the committee of decoration and furnishing for Sagamore Hill in the 1950s while leading the Rock Hall restoration. Shirley Hibbard, *Rock Hall: A Narrative History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1997), 60-62.
 19. BT, Minutes, May 17, 1962.
 20. BT, Minutes, Sept. 20, 1962.
 21. *Newsletter*, Winter 1972-3.
 22. Staten Island native Loring McMillen (1906-1991) was the creator of the living history museum Historic Richmond Town on Staten Island. George Latham, a lumber merchant from Mineola, had privately rescued two eighteenth-century Long Island houses for his own use—the old Willis homestead in Old Westbury and the Webb house in Orient. Gerald Shea (1909-1974), the owner of a chain of movie theaters in New England and Ohio, was a consultant to Colonial Williamsburg. A serious collector of decorative arts, he was sought by many, including Jacqueline Kennedy during the redecoration of the Red Room at the White House in 1961.
 23. *New York Times*, June 19, 1962.
 24. Interview of Barbara Van Liew, Oct. 21, 2004, p. 3.
 25. *Newsletter*, July/Oct 1963.
 26. Interview of Barbara Van Liew, Oct. 21, 2004, p. 29.
 27. *Newsday*, July 31, 2005.
 28. In its first years the publication was called *Preservation News* but was changed to *Preservation Notes* to avoid confusion with the National Trust's publication.
 29. Interview of Barbara Van Liew, Oct. 21, 2004, p. 15.
 30. Interview of Louis Ismay, Feb. 23, 2010.
 31. Barbara Van Liew, Report on *Preservation Notes*, 1971.
 32. Myron Luke was a popular history professor at Hofstra University and later at C. W. Post College, who also served as town historian of Hempstead. BT, Minutes, Nov. 21, 1963.
 33. Known for her wide-brimmed hats and her indefatigable researching abilities, Oyster Bay Town Historian Dorothy McGee was described by Lynn Beebe as the "quintessential spinster." A longtime Oyster Bay resident, she had been in her earlier years an intrepid and competitive sailor recounted in the novel *Skipper Sandra* (1950). She also wrote biographies of Alexander Hamilton and Herbert Hoover. *Hicksville Illustrated News*, Oct. 17, 2003. Interview of Lynn Beebe, Feb. 12, 2010.
 34. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1965, Aug. 1966.
 35. *Newsletter*, April 1962.
 36. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1965.
 37. For 25 years Henry Ludder was the architectural historian for Queens County, retiring in 1985. Obituaries from Gazette.net, Dec. 2004, Carroll Co., Md.
 38. *Newsletter*, Winter 1971/2.
 39. *Newsletter*, Aug. 1966.
 40. *Newsletter*, Jan. 1968.
 41. BT, Minutes, April 21, 1966.
 42. BT, Minutes, Jan. 17, 1973.
 43. Interview of Huyler Held, June 6, 2006, p. 4.
 44. BT, Minutes, June 19, 1969.
 45. Interview of Richard Nicodemus, Feb. 3, 2005.
 46. BT, Min., Nov. 29, 1972.
 47. William Sumner Appleton Jr. (1874-1947) founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in 1910. The organization is now called Historic New England.

1. EC, Minutes, Jan. 14, 1977.
2. Robert B. MacKay, vitae, c. 1980, SPLIA files.
3. Diana S. Waite, interview of Huyler C. Held, May 30, 2006, pp. 5, 10.
4. The Three Village Historical Society calls it the Bayles-Swezey House, recognizing the first owner Ebenezer Bayles, as well as the later Swezeys.
5. BT, Minutes, Nov. 1, 1979.
6. Diana S. Waite, interview of Robert B. MacKay, March 3, 2010, p. 4.
7. BT, Minutes, April 11, 1987.
8. "In Huntington: New Life and Glory for an Old Church," *Newsday*, clipping, c. 1999.
9. Diana S. Waite and Jessica Fisher Neidl, interview of Richard Nicodemus, Feb. 3, 2005, p. 6.
10. BT, Minutes, Feb. 4, 2004.
11. *Sag Harbor Express*, Aug. 14, 2008.
12. Report of the Steering Committee Members (Huyler Held, Richard Nicodemus, Bertha Rose) to the SPLIA Board of Trustees. Dec. 9, 1976.
13. Interview of Patricia Sands, Oct. 4, 2006, p. 2.
14. *Antiques*, Oct. 1976.
15. *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1976; Nov. 7, 1976.
16. Interview Patricia Sands, Oct. 4, 2006, p. 3. Hope Alswang, director of the Museum Aid Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, first made this assertion addressing SPLIA's Board at a retreat in 1991.
17. Interview of Huyler C. Held, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 7.
18. EC, Minutes, Sept. 29, 1983.
19. Trustee Newsletter, May 31, 1996.
20. Barbara Van Liew described vividly her working relationship with "semi-retired" photographer Joe Adams in her interview with Diana Waite: "He would go anywhere, anywhere, anywhere. Brooklyn? No problem. And he was getting pretty old. Would he go to Brooklyn? 'Course he'd go to Brooklyn. He had a terrible time finding his way up one street and down another because all the streets are one-way streets. But he managed. He'd get back alive and bring wonderful pictures." Joe Adams's many photographs were given to SPLIA when he died. Interview of Barbara Van Liew, Oct. 21, 2004, p. 32.
21. Trustees Newsletter, April 11, 1987.
22. Trustees Newsletter, November 21, 1997.
23. SPLIA's revolving fund acquired, restored, and sold the Titus-Gardiner House in Old Westbury between 1976 and 1978 and the Hicks House in Old Westbury and the Adam-Derby House in Oyster Bay between 1979 and 1981. Long Island's surge in property values in the early 1980s made the revolving fund no longer possible as it depended on virtually donated property in exchange for tax benefits.
24. Diana S. Waite, interview of Robert B. MacKay, March 4-5, 2010, p. 3.
25. Interview of Huyler C. Held, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 14.
26. BT, Minutes, Oct. 10, 2001, p. 3.
27. *Dan's Papers*, Jan. 20, 2004.
28. Interview of Patricia Sands, Oct. 4, 2006, p. 6.
29. SPLIA, *Biennial Report, 2007-2008*.
30. BT, Minutes, Aug. 19, 2008.
31. Interview of Huyler C. Held, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 14.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
34. Babcock MacLean, fundraising letter, March 2008.



Annual meeting at Old Westbury Gardens, 1979. At left side of table from front, Alice Smith, Anthony K. Baker, Patricia P. Sands and, leaning forward, Brendan Gill. At right side of table, Carol Baker, Alex Smith, and Peggy N. Gerry.

James A. Keillor	1948-1958
W. Kingsland Macy	1958-1961
John Walden Myer	1961-1963
Allen L. Woodworth	1963-1973
Huyler C. Held	1973-1983
Patricia P. Sands	1983-1987
George J. Hossfeld, Jr.	1987-1990
Patricia P. Sands	1990-1992
Rodney B. Berens	1992-1994
Alexander J. Smith	1994-1996
Richard Gachot	1996-1999
Paula Youngs Weir	1999-2003
Frederic L. Atwood	2003-2005
Babcock MacLean	2005-2009
Paul Vermeylen, Jr.	2009-

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