



ADVOCATES FOR SAG HARBOR'S HISTORIC AFRICAN AMERICAN SUMMER COMMUNITY RECEIVE 2019 NYS AWARD



NYS Historic Preservation Awards ceremony, December 4, 2019, at the NYS Museum in Albany, NY. From left to right: Jennifer Betsworth, NYS Historic Preservation Office; Daniel Mackay, Deputy Commissioner; Kathy Howe, NYS Historic Preservation Office; Renee Simons, Steering Committee President; Kristen Herron, NYS Council on the Arts; Sarah Kautz, Committee advisor; Erik Kulleseid, NYS Parks Commissioner; Dr. Georgette Grier-Key, Committee advisor; NYS Assemblyman Fred Thiele, Eglon Simons, SANS homeowner; Lisa Stenson, Committee member.

The Sag Harbor Hills, Azurest & Ninevah (SANS) Steering Committee received an Organizational Achievement Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for their efforts to document, preserve, and protect an historic African American summer community. Located in the incorporated Village of Sag Harbor, SANS was first established in the late 1940s by and for African American

professionals and their families. Community volunteers worked for nearly four years with support from nonprofit advisors to survey and successfully nominate the SANS Historic District for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2019.

At the awards ceremony held at the NYS Museum in Albany, NY, certificates were presented to SANS Steering Committee President Renee V. H. Simons (SANS homeowner and local advocate),

committee advisor Dr. Georgette Grier-Key (Eastville Community Historical Society's Executive Director and Curator), and committee advisor Sarah Kautz (Preservation Long Island's Preservation Director). They were joined by NYS Assemblyman Fred Thiele, who spoke about the historical importance of SANS and the challenges of preservation on Long Island's East End.

(See page 7 for more about SANS and Long Island's 2019 NRHP listings.)

ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES UPDATES

LOST THE MEADOWBROOK BANK BUILDING, FREEPORT, NY (1929–2019)



Along with Meadowbrook Bank's irreplaceable craftsmanship and materials, Long Islanders have lost an excellent opportunity to revitalize one of our region's most unique historic landmarks. Demolished in December 2019 to make way for a car dealership, this loss reflects an ongoing pattern of insensitive re-development in our local communities. Many revitalization efforts ignore the availability of financial incentives like historic tax credits as well as the broader value of rehabilitating old buildings.

Once the tallest building on Long Island east of Jamaica, when erected in 1929, it was reminiscent of Manhattan's wedge-shaped Flatiron building. The bank's exterior featured distinctive Mesoamerican-style bas-relief sculptures and a lobby with Caen stone marble and bronze. Vacant since the 1980s, lawsuits and unrealized plans mired the property, which was owned by the Village of Freeport since 1991.

We thank the community members who worked to save this place and nominated it for listing as one of our 2013 Endangered Historic Places. The lessons learned from this site will help strengthen advocacy for Long Island's many other endangered historic places.



The Meadowbrook Bank Building, "Freeport's Flatiron," appears in a ca. 1930 photograph soon after its construction in 1929 (detail). Image courtesy of the Freeport Historical Society.

PRESERVATION NOTES NEWSLETTER

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

Preservation Notes is listed in the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals.

THREATENED MERRICK GABLES HISTORIC DISTRICT, MERRICK, NY



Known locally as “the Gables,” Merrick Gables is an architecturally and historically significant 1920s planned community located just thirty miles east of Manhattan. Listed as one of our 2019 Endangered Historic Places, the Gables is threatened by an ongoing loss of community character due to the demolition of historic structures and insensitive redevelopment throughout the neighborhood. Thanks to grant funding from the New York State Council on the Arts for 2019, Preservation Long Island hired an intern to work with our Preservation Director on providing advocacy and technical support for the Gables community.

Established in the 1920s by developers Joseph Frankel, a New York City-based promoter, and William Fox, a Hollywood mogul and founder of Fox Film Corporation, the community’s proximity to Manhattan continues to make it an ideal suburban neighborhood. Construction at the Gables began in 1926, centering on an eight-block area south of Sunrise Highway where as many as 400 structures were built. The U.S. stock market crash of 1929 halted construction, leaving over 400 vacant lots to be auctioned off in 1931 due to bankruptcy.

About 250 original Gables houses survive today, representing excellent examples of Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival-style archi-

ecture. The one- and two-story dwellings exhibit character-defining elements like towers, parapets, stucco finishes, terracotta-tiled roofs, and stained glass accent windows. Original interior features include cathedral ceilings, exposed timber details, Spanish-style fireplaces, arched doorways, and parquet floors.

During its heyday, the Gables was a “mini Hollywood,” where bicoastal stars like Errol Flynn and Ed Begley lived during their performances on Broadway and Manhattan’s many historic theaters. The neighborhood continues to attract Hollywood stars as a popular location for film and television productions. Among others, Merrick Gables provided the backdrop for the 2011 HBO mini-series *Mildred Pierce*, starring Kate Winslet and Guy Pearce, as well as the 2019 FX series *Fosse/Verdon*, starring Sam Rockwell and Michelle Williams as Bob Fosse and Gwen Verdon.

In response to the ongoing demolition of Gables dwellings, residents and the Merrick Gables Association, Inc. (a not-for-profit local civic organization) are working to raise awareness about the neighborhood’s distinctive character and sense of place. The community’s historic homeowners are also leading the way to protect the Gables by seeking individual town landmark designation for their properties. Local advocates have also asked

Hempstead’s Town Supervisor and Town Council to consider enhancing the town’s preservation ordinance with a new provision for designating and protecting local historic districts like Merrick Gables.



William Fox (January 1, 1879–May 8, 1952) is pictured above in a 1921 promotional photo from *Wid’s Year Book*. Founder of Fox Film Corporation, he was an early Hollywood mogul who co-developed Merrick Gables.

DIGITIZING ARTHUR S. GREENE'S GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES



Arthur Greene (1867–1955). Photograph looking down Main Street towards Port Jefferson Harbor where a large ship is under construction. Early 20th century; Glass plate negative. Collection of Preservation Long Island. Greene's work preserves period views and streetscapes from Long Island's past, like the one above.

In 2011, Preservation Long Island (PLI) acquired 450 glass plate negatives made by the prolific Port Jefferson photographer, Arthur Smedley Greene (1867–1955). Greene's photos are a treasure-trove of historical information, depicting local townscapes, businesses, landmarks, and scenic vistas at the turn of the 20th century when the arrival of new technologies like telephones, electricity, and automobiles began to transform everyday life on Long Island.

Greene was an English-born photographer who moved to Port Jefferson from Pennsylvania sometime before 1894. In the March 16, 1895 issue of the *Port Jefferson Echo*, Greene advertised the opening of his photography studio above B.D. and A.T. Norton's general store. For nearly half a century, the highly regarded photographer made images of people and places throughout the Town of Brookhaven and beyond. Greene's work appeared on souvenir postcards, in several promotional publications, and was regular-

ly featured in the *Port Jefferson Echo*.

The negatives Arthur Greene used are gelatin dry plate, a type first developed in 1871. These negatives were mass-produced and consisted of a silver-based, light-sensitive emulsion—which imprinted the image—fixed to one side of a glass plate with a gelatin binder. Because the negatives were exposed dry, the process is called dry plate negative. Previous methods required cumbersome equipment and chemicals. The ease and speed of the dry plate process revolutionized photography. It allowed Greene to quickly take pictures in the field and capture snapshots of everyday life, leaving behind a unique record of Long Island people, places, and moments over one hundred years ago.

PLI received a service grant to digitize the Greene collection as part of Long Island University's Palmer School of Library and Information Science's "Digitizing Local History Sources" project, a multi-year initiative funded by the Robert

David Lion Gardiner Foundation. Over two semesters, Palmer School graduate students scanned and created metadata for hundreds of glass plate negatives in our collection, which were then uploaded onto Preservica, a cloud-based archiving and digital preservation platform.

Thanks to the Palmer School's digitization project, these wonderful images are now more accessible than ever, and the delicate glass plate negatives are better protected from potential mechanical and chemical damage from over handling and light exposure.

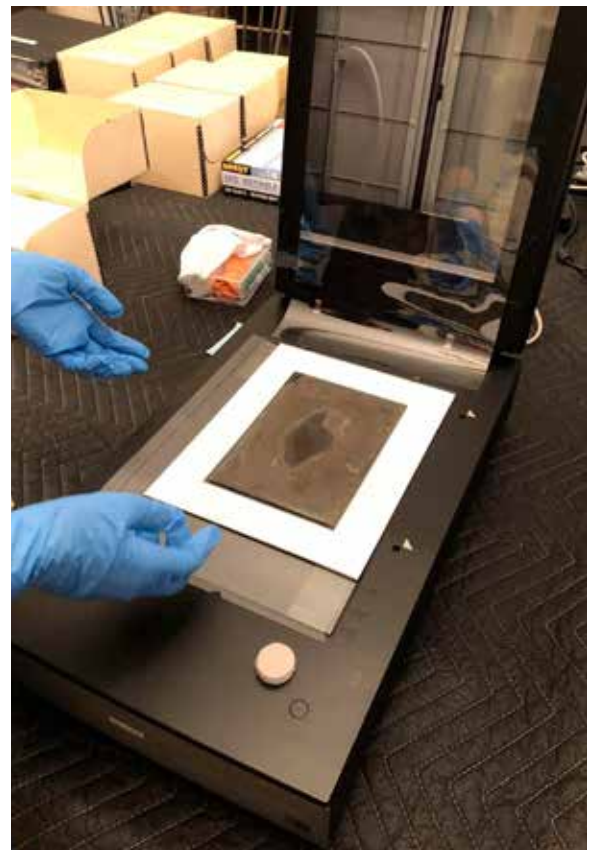
Please visit our digital collections online to explore hundreds of photographs by Arthur Greene and others:

preservationlongisland.historyit.com

- by *Lauren Brincat, Curator
Preservation Long Island*



Arthur Greene (1867–1955). Portrait of children outside a house, ca. early 20th century. (Left) Scanned image. (Above) Original glass plate negative. In their original format, glass plate negatives are extremely fragile and difficult to see, share, and display. Digitization minimizes the risk of damage from handling and light exposure while providing a much clearer image for viewers.



(Above & right): Aliko Caloyeras and Olena Zozulevich, graduate students from Long Island University's Palmer School of Library and Information Sciences, scanned our collection of Arthur Greene glass plate negatives at PLI's headquarters in Cold Spring Harbor. This work was supported by a service grant from the Palmer School's "Digitizing Local History Sources" project, funded by the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation.

LONG ISLAND'S LATEST NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS

As of October, two historic districts and three historic properties in Suffolk County were listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2019. Congratulations to this year's NRHP nomination sponsors, supporters, and property owners!

Listing on the NRHP plays a key role in preservation planning and cultural resource management. In addition to honorific recognition, listed sites are eligible for certain federal tax credit programs and grants for historic preservation. Owners of NRHP-listed properties may also be el-

igible for a 20% investment tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings. For more information about the NRHP, please visit Preservation Long Island's website.



EAST MARION

East Marion Main Road Historic District, Town of Southold (shown left in an early 20th-century postcard, image courtesy of the East Marion Community Association).

A distinctive North Fork community encompassing a variety of architectural resources that reflect popular styles and craftsmanship from the mid-18th to mid-20th centuries. Historically, most of the area's households supported themselves by fishing and farming; these heritage industries remain important elements of Long Island's regional economy today.

Located within a qualifying census tract, contributing properties within this district may qualify for New York State Historic Homeowner Tax Credits, which covers 20% of qualified rehabilitation costs of owner-occupied historic houses.

NORTHPORT

The Stanley H. Lowndes House, Village of Northport (shown right, image courtesy of New York State Board for Historic Preservation).

This large Queen Anne-style house was built in 1895 overlooking Northport Harbor for Stanley H. Lowndes (1857–1914). Lowndes, a prominent Long Island oyster baron of national renown, is pictured below in a photo accompanying his *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* obituary from March 13, 1914.



SAG HARBOR

Sag Harbor Hills, Azures, and Ninevah Beach Subdivisions (SANS) Historic District, Village of Sag Harbor (Photo of a gathering in Ninevah at the home of James and Barbara Brannen. From the collection of John Pickens).

Stretching along the waterfront of Sag Harbor Bay, SANS is one of the first summer communities developed by and for African Americans. Established prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 during the late 1940s, SANS property owners worked together to overcome the challenges of racism, housing segregation, and mortgage financing discrimination that prohibited many people of color from developing and enjoying resort communities.

As part of Preservation Long Island's mission-based technical assistance and advocacy support program, our Preservation Director, Sarah Kautz, served on the SANS Steering Committee during the years-long effort to



document, preserve, and protect this distinctive community, culminating in the recent NRHP listing. In recognition of their advocacy work, Sarah and fellow SANS Steering Committee members, Renee V. H. Simons, and Dr. Georgette Grier-Key

received a 2019 New York State Historic Preservation Award.

To learn more about the community's history, and for updates about ongoing preservation needs in SANS, please visit our website.



SMITHTOWN

Frederick and Annie Wagner Residence and St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Town of Smithtown (Image of the church courtesy of the New York State Historic Preservation Office).

The Wagner House was constructed in 1912 for Frederick J. "Wag" Wagner, an early promoter of car culture and auto racing, as the main residence of his country estate in Smithtown. Later used as a rectory, the house is architecturally significant for its design by Gustav Stickley, an influential leader of the American Arts and Crafts Movement. The 1929 Tudor Revival-style church was designed by architects McGill & Hamlin for St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church and built on land that was once part of the Wagner estate.

These properties were featured in an article by local scholar Corey Victoria Geske published on our blog and *Preservation Notes* (2017) entitled "Rediscovering Smithtown's Golden Age of Progressive Architecture (1911–1948)."

Both buildings are currently stewarded by the Byzantine Catholic Church of the Resurrection congregation, which sponsored the NRHP nomination.



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