

January 19, 2017 Bay Shore Historical Society Meeting Notes

Barry called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM and all recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Barry welcomed everyone. Barry said the Snowflake Sale was a great success. There was a steady stream of visitors all day. Sales from the holiday shop and baked goods exceeded expectation. Santa's new beard was a big hit with the children. Thank you to all the volunteers. The Pot Luck Dinner was also a huge success. JoAnn and Mimi worked tirelessly setting up the rooms. MaryAnn arranged for the Girl Scouts to provide entertainment. It was a fun and enjoyable evening. Barry reminded everyone that if you are not receiving emails please let him know. Kelly read the minutes of the November 17, 2016 meeting. JoAnn reported that membership for the year was 321. There were 57 new members and 46 lifetime members. Joe reported expenses were \$695 and income was \$2,776. The bake sale raised \$800 and the pot luck raised \$500.

The guest speaker was Henry Osmer. He presented "Montauk Lighthouse" and discussed his book "American Gibraltar: Montauk and the Wars of America".

The Montauketts were the 1st habitants of Montauk. Lion Gardiner was credited with paying the ransom to return Chief Wyandanch's, the leader of The Montauketts, daughter from the Narragansets back to her father. The Montauk Indian Museum opened this past summer.

Montauk was a grazing area for cattle with 3 houses – 1st house, 2nd house and 3rd house (which because the Montauk Lighthouse). The British were anchored in Gardiners Bay. Commodore Thomas Hardy stole cattle. Uriah Miller, a cattle caretaker, rowed out to the British ship and demanded an audience with Hardy. The demand was payment for the stolen cattle. Hardy paid.

The Civil War did not have an effect on Montauk, but during this time the Lighthouse was renovated. The wooden stairs were removed and an iron spiral staircase put in. 30 feet and a Furrer light were added to the Lighthouse. The 4 Lighthouse Board members were divided in their support of the war – 2 supported the Confederates and 2 supported the Union.

HMS Culloden was a Royal Navy ship that encountered severe weather and followed a zig zag path in the storm. The ship was grounded in the bay. All of the crew, the 74 cannons and all the supplies were saved. The boat was burned to the water line. It is now on the historic registry.

The Long Island Rail Road was used to bring sick soldiers to Camp Wikoff after the Spanish American War. Austin Corbett, the President of the railroad, wanted to make Montauk a port of entry to Manhattan. When Corbett died, the idea died with him.

President William McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt visited Camp Wikoff. McKinley visited the Camp to see if the reports of mistreatment were true. He came away impressed with the camp. Roosevelt and his aide, Gordon Johnston, took turns holding the reigns of each of their horses so they could swim in the surf in Montauk.

Carl Fisher came out to Montauk to build it as a playground for the rich. He lost all of his money in the stock market crash and died of alcoholism. One of the posh hotels Fisher had built was turned into housing for soldiers.

The Navy, Army and Air Force all had a presence in Montauk. There was a Navy base and a Navy Air Station. The Air Station housed a dirigible or blimp. The Navy also used Fort Pond for torpedo testing. The Army opened Camp Welsh as a National Guard training camp. The Army also occupied Camp Hero. Camp Hero was a coastal defense station disguised as a fishing village. The Lighthouse also came under full Army control.

The Coast Guard was also stationed along the shore in Montauk. George Dasch a German agent led 4 saboteurs onto shore in Amagansett. John Cullen, a Coast Guardsman, spotted Dasch and three others posing as fisherman. The men offered Cullen a \$260 bribe to keep quiet. They boarded a train into Manhattan. Dasch called the FBI and revealed the goals of the sabotage program.

The Montauk Lighthouse is not a state park. It is owned, operated and maintained by the Montauk Historical Society. There are over 100,000 visitors annually. It is 1 of 12 Lighthouses on the National Historic Landmarks list.

Barry thanked Henry for his presentation and invited everyone for refreshments.

Respectfully submitted by Kelly Zebro