

Westhampton Beach Historical Society

Serving the
Communities of
Westhampton Beach,
Westhampton Dunes,
Westhampton, Quiogue,
Remsenburg, Speonk
and Eastport



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Newsletter

Summer 2018

The History of our Spanish Cannon

Some of you may have noted the cannon near the Foster-Meeker Heritage Center on the Westhampton Beach Historical Society campus. The cannon was relocated several years ago from its prior home near the now-demolished old Village office building. We knew nothing about the cannon, but our President, Jon Stanat, who is interested in artillery, wanted to learn its history. Here is what he found . . .



A Schneider Mountain Gun with its shield intact.

To identify the cannon, he called the U.S. Army Field Artillery Museum at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was put in touch with the museum's curator, Gordon Blaker. He sent Mr. Blaker pictures of the cannon and its registration plate, which indicated that the cannon was made in Seville, Spain in 1924. Mr. Blaker assigned the identification job to a volunteer, who unearthed the cannon's identity.

The cannon is a Spanish 7cm Schneider Mountain Gun, Model 1908, a light artillery piece designed for easy disassembly and transport over rough terrain. Of French Schneider Armaments design, the cannon was constructed at the Ordnance Factory of Seville, Spain. Other than missing its front shield, the cannon is intact.



A Schneider Mountain Gun in service.

led by Francisco Franco. Americans fought in the International Brigades on the side of the Republicans in this civil war, believing them to be one of the last bastions against world fascism. This war occurred at the end of the active lives of Schneider Mountain Guns; we were informed that there were about 177 of these cannons in the war, 56 of which were used by the Republican government forces. This means that our cannon has some historic significance and is, at this point, also somewhat rare and deserving of care.

An enduring question, to which there is no apparent easy answer, is
(continued on page 2)

Westhampton Beach, NY 11978
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Westhampton Beach Historical Society



Westhampton Beach Historical Society 2018 Calendar of Events

Now that "the Season" has started, we hope you can join us at some or all of the following scheduled events. We will be sending out notices of many of these events, so watch your snail mail and email for further announcements!

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| June 30 - Sept. 29... Halcyon Days and 1938 Hurricane Exhibit at the Tuthill House Museum on Mill Road (Saturdays 10 AM to 1 PM) | August 25 Yard Sale at the Foster Meeker Heritage Center on Mill Road |
| June 30 - Sept. 8..... Craft Demonstrations at the Foster Meeker Heritage Center (Saturdays 10 AM to 1 PM) | September 16 Remsenburg Walking Tour and Exhibit at The Academy |
| August 4 Civil War Living History Event on the Great Lawn
And
Blue and Grey Lawn Party Fundraiser on the Great Lawn | October 14 Pot Luck Supper |
| | December 9..... Holiday Party |



* Westhampton Beach Historical Society Museum • 101 Mill Road • Westhampton Beach

The History of our Spanish Cannon

(continued from page 1)

how did this cannon get to Westhampton? It is not too hard to imagine that one of the American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War International Brigade brought it home, but we do not know for sure. We do know that a Westhampton Beach resident, Mary Alice Bissell, bought it in a Riverhead antique shop and gave it to her husband, John Klein, as a wedding gift. It sat on their lawn on the corner of Oneck Lane and Bayfield Lane for many years and was given to the Village in 1985 after John Klein's death. Thereafter, the cannon stood in front of the old Village office until that building was nearing demolition in 2014, at which point the Village moved it to the Society's campus.



Our Schneider Mountain Gun after restoration by John Berdinka.

We noted that the cannon was deteriorating and in need of preservation. The U. S. Field Artillery Museum curator provided some guidance for rust removal, protective coating, and epoxy and paint work on the wooden wheel spokes. John Berdinka, a retired Town of Southampton Highway Department maintenance supervisor

with previous experience restoring a World War II U. S. Army howitzer, undertook the work for the Society and the Village of Westhampton Beach chipped in with some funding. The result is a well-preserved Spanish cannon that will continue to defend our campus for many years! The next time you are in town, please stop by to see the cannon and ponder the history it must have experienced!

A Summer of Historic Crafts!

In the summer of 2017 the Historical Society launched a series of traditional historic crafts demonstrations in the Foster-Meeker Heritage Center and on our campus grounds. These demonstrations proved to be very popular with both adults and children and helped to raise the visibility of our Society within the community. Based on this success, we are continuing this program in 2018 and enlarging it by adding more crafts. Please see the schedule below for the remainder of this summer's program. All demonstrations take place on the Society's campus at 101 Mill Road and are scheduled from 10 AM to 1 PM on Saturdays. We wish to acknowledge the Town of Southampton Cultural Arts/Recreation grant program support for this enlarged program, which enabled us to offer these crafts demonstrations free of charge to the public! We hope you can join us and learn about these traditional crafts!

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|--------------------|--|
| July 21 | Horn Working |
| July 28 | Historic Spinning |
| August 4 | Special!! American Civil War Living History Event on the Great Lawn |
| August 11 | Historic Weaving |
| August 18 | Farm Animals and Candle Dipping |
| August 25 | Leather Working |
| September 1 | Green Woodworking and String Dolls |
| September 8 | Coppersmithing |



Please remember to visit our Halcyon Days and '38 Hurricane exhibit at the Museum this summer. We are open Saturdays from 10 AM until 1 PM until the end of September.

Reminder for August 4:

American Civil War on the Great Lawn!

An **American Civil War Living History Reenactment** will be held on the Village's Great Lawn on August 4! This event will run from 10 AM to 4 PM and include several Civil War re-enactment organizations:

- 67th New York Infantry, Company K
- 10th New York Cavalry
- 9th Virginia Infantry, Company C
- 30th Virginia Infantry
- Union Artillery demonstrators

Union and Confederate camps will be set up to demonstrate camp life and a period medical field hospital will also be available for viewing. Reenactors in authentic dress will go about their daily lives as they would have in the campaign period of 1861 to 1865, including cooking food over open fires, mending clothing, cleaning their equipment, marching, practicing marksmanship, and other typical camp activities. We also hope to have a **skirmish between the Union soldiers and the Southern rebels!** This will be a wonderful opportunity to learn about the Civil War and participate in the action!



And the Blue and Gray Lawn Party!

In association with the Living History event, the Society will hold a fundraising cocktail party from 5 PM to 7 PM on the Great Lawn. Come enjoy hors d'oeuvres and drinks with soldiers from the Civil War and their ladies!

This party will be under tents in an enclosed private area on the Great Lawn immediately adjacent to the Living History demonstration area and will include a quality hors d'oeuvres presentation, wine and beer, and a featured Civil War-era cocktail! Re-enactor Union and Confederate soldiers and their ladies in period dress will circulate through the party and be available to interact with the attendees. Society members and paying public are welcome to attend in period dress if they wish. A banjo and fiddle musician will play American Civil War period ballads and songs to transport the party spirit back to the mid-1800s.



- When:** Saturday, August 4th, 5pm to 7pm
- Where:** On the Great Lawn, Main Street, Westhampton Beach
- Admission:** Tickets in advance \$60/person for members, \$70/person for non-members

For Tickets: Please visit our website (whbhistorical.org) by July 28 to register for this event.

We hope that you can join us for this hands-on opportunity to **immerse yourself in New York State history and support our Society!**