



Peconic Bay SHOPPER

...preserving North Fork History

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On our cover ...

Gerard Matovcik's excellent article in our November issue — The Glenwood Hotel Revisited — produced several responses. Greenport resident Mike Caprice while browsing at a yard sale coincidentally stumbled upon pictures of the livery stable that was behind the Glenwood Hotel. In addition to the cover photo, see an additional view on page 11.

Historically "livery stables" had a somewhat different meaning: a stable where horses, teams and wagons were for hire, but also where privately owned horses could be boarded for a short time. Because of the temporary boarding aspect, livery stables were often attached to hotels and boarding houses. The livery stable was a necessary institution in every American town. In addition to providing vital transportation services, the livery usually also sold hay, grain, coal and wood. In the Glenwood livery, carriage and bicycle repair were also of service.

With the advent of the automobile after 1910, the livery stables quietly disappeared.



Windamere, located at Strong's Water Club at 2255 Wickham Ave., Mattituck, was recently opened on the historic site of the Mattituck Harbor Inn (photo on facing page) by the Strong family, pictured below.



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The Mattituck Harbor Inn, Mattituck, L. I.

Mattituck Harbor Inn, Mattituck, circa 1919

Image in ad below shows the view of the Creek from the Mattituck Harbor Inn, Mattituck, 1919
(both images courtesy of Southold Historical Society & Mattituck – Laurel Library)

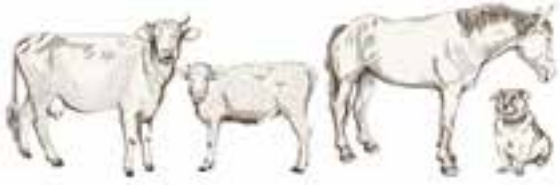
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Doc Fischer

by Dan Horton

Authors note: Four of the people quoted here were interviewed in the late 1990's and have since passed away.

Margaret "Peg" Anne Murphy, 86, remembers winters when the kennels in the backyard were too cold for some of the sick house pets her father, the veterinarian Sebastian Benedict Fischer — best known in town as "Doc" — was tending to and had to be brought inside. "There were cats and dogs on top of the radiator and behind the wood burning stove." (Peg doesn't recall the exact years that this happened but believes it was during the coal rationing of WWII.)

Doc's other daughter, Gail Horton, 77, speaks of one Thanksgiving when a local farmer and fisherman arrived on their doorstep with a young pig that had swallowed a fishhook. "I was in the operating room when they got it out of his throat," she says with all the relish of the young girl she was, proud of her father and excited to see how these things worked.

Dan Fischer, 72, the baby of the Fischer family, recalls that for years after his father died in 1951, baskets of produce, cut flowers cow's milk and goat's milk would be deposited on their stoop. "People didn't always have money to pay so they worked it out in trade," he tells me. Many accounts weren't settled at the time of Doc's passing. While their mother Margaret Fischer loved goats' milk, Dan and Gail didn't like the taste of it and thought it made their mom smell funny, "So we'd intercept it and dump it in the ivy behind the kennels. That ivy never grew so good as when we were fertilizing it with goat's milk."

That's my aunt Peg, my mother Gail and my uncle Dan I'm quoting here and I've been lucky enough to hear stories like these all my life. It's always fed a curiosity about this town and the way things were. Over the years I've chatted with a number of "oldtimers" in casual conversation who held me in thrall with their talk of a place that was so different than it is now. Usually afterwards I'm left with vague impressions of anecdotes and few interesting facts. However I was lucky enough to formally interview some folks who worked with Doc, went to college with him and knew him in town. These interviews were done in the late 1990's and the interviewees have all passed on since then. Luckily my mother, aunt and uncle are still around to fill in the blanks. This story has been a long time in the making (pretty sure I've turned into one of those "oldtimers" I just mentioned since starting it) and I hope it serves these memories well.



Dr. S. Benedict Fischer

(LAST FORMAL PHOTOGRAPH)

Doc was born in Brooklyn in 1908. His father was a German immigrant and his mother was the daughter of German immigrants. The family moved to East Northport when he was 10 and it was there he met his life long friend, the future Dr. Arthur Fredricks. It was through Fredericks that Doc came to be a veterinarian. In their senior year of high school they were visiting Cornell University where Doc had hoped to get into the forestry school, but the Dean of that college was out when they visited, so they went to talk to Fredrick's choice - the veterinary school. "It's a wonderful world of service," the Dean of the veterinarian school told them. He also warned them that they wouldn't make much money doing it. After listening to the Dean, Fredericks suggested they go back to the Agriculture school but Doc replied, "No, I'm going to be a vet."

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That anecdote was told to me by Doctor Larry Waitz, (1910...-2011) who was a classmate, close friend and traveling companion to Doc. (He was also a long time contributor to the Peconic Bay Shopper). "I only took a bus to Cornell once" he said, the rest of his trips up and back on route 17 - this was before the throughway and parkways - were with Doc and Fredericks.

To make his way through college, Doc waited tables in a frat house. He made 35 cents an hour plus one meal a day. "I know it was hard on him, dealing with those snooty frat guys" Waitz told me. He also signed on as a merchant seaman one summer on a ship that took him to Copenhagen and other European ports - none of which he had a chance to see. It turned out that Doc's father had paid the quartermaster to keep an eye on him and not let him off the ship in any place where he might get in trouble! That quartermaster "Sailor John" became a life long friend and occasional employee of Doc's. There are pictures of him visiting the Fischers many years after Doc's European non-adventure.

Near the end of their Senior year Doc, Waitz and Fredericks all went for a physical with a doctor for the Army Veterinary Corps (though none of them ended up serving) and Doc found out something terrible about his health. "I went in for fifteen minutes and Arthur Fredericks went in for fifteen minutes and Ben stayed in for an hour. He came out and laughed. Said he was just talking with the doctor," Waitz said. The truth of that conversation was actually quite grim. As a child Doc had suffered Rheumatic fever and that damaged his heart, something which had gone unnoticed until this physical. The doctor informed him that this problem was serious and would probably cut his life short, (as it did). "The Doctor had told him of his heart valve problem. I didn't learn about it until near the end of Ben's life... the courage of that man."

If you look at the next 20 years of Sebastian Benedict Fischer's life - the years where he was Southold's "Doc" Fischer - it seems to me that he was making sure to cram as much living in as life would allow him. That's simply conjecture on my part of course, but perhaps the rest of the story will bear witness to this view.

It was Waitz who had the connection to Southold. Starting at age 14, he had supplied Camp Dunes (then a girl's summer camp, now co-ed and called Peconic Dunes) with a team of horses for the campers to ride. (He actually rode the horses in from Queens! This was before the expressway or even the parkways.) Waitz had heard that the Farm Bureau was posting the need for a veterinarian for Southold. The old vet Dr. Ogle had just died. (He may have heard this from Stanley "Starry" Krukowski, a Southholder attending Cornell Vet school who was several years behind them.) Waitz was too young to take the licensing test but Doc had already passed it so, in 1931 Doc moved out to Southold, bought a house on the south east end of Horton Lane from IP Terry, built kennels in the back yard and set up his practice.

"I was there when Larry Waitz took him down here." Lester "Let" Albertson (1918-2006) told me. Years later Let would be the Supervisor of Southold town for most of the 1960's as well as the Suffolk County Clerk, but in 1931 he was in high school and found himself working for the new veterinarian in town. "I had just gotten a license and I would go there before school and clean out the kennels and go home and take a shower." The kennels were mostly for dogs - Doc made house calls to operate on farm animals such as horses, cows or goats. Given that the practice was in a residential neighborhood their barking sometimes posed a problem. "We used to tie gauze around the barking dogs mouths to keep them quiet" said Let. "Later I got a little more involved and I'd help with the operations, hold the chloroform mask over the dog or horse's mouth." (The mask was a tin can with both ends cut out with a cotton swab whetted down with chloroform or ether inserted inside.) "Some times the ether wouldn't hold." Let added. Large animal field operations could unwittingly take on the spirit of medical rodeo.

"Farm work was physically tough on a veterinarian." Waitz told me. "There were no tranquilizers. Nowadays a hundred pound woman can take care of a thousand pound bull no problem, back then you had to do it with brawn."

Which isn't to say that Doc was a bruiser According to Waitz Doc was small in stature but fearless and "full of pep, and he had a hair trigger. He jumped over a bar several times to defend a friend," said Waitz.

"If you worked for Doc you did about everything, cut wood, painted, helped take the bungalows out of the pond" Lou Baker told me (and more about the bungalows later in this story). Lou worked for Doc from 1943 to '47 and also got to do some field procedures. "To castrate a bull you needed to tie him to a tree or two trees if there was any size to him. Penicillin and sulfa were just starting out. He had a fluoroscope. It was a machine like an x-ray but it didn't take a picture - you had to wear a mask [to see the image]" Much of the work didn't require such state of the art technology. "We'd cut the tails off of sheep, and the horns off of bulls.



Ben at Cornell, circa 1930

It was about all farm animals. There were still dairys, Merkel's (?) dairy in East Marion (across from [Island's End] golf course) had 30 or 40 cows ... Booth's Dairy in Peconic, Sills in Greenport."

And there were farmers who never hung their shingle as an official "dairy" but sold milk. Peg used to get milk from Terry's farm, just east of where Hart's Hardware is now, and the Jennings on North Road. Gail Horton remembers the Riley sisters east of Soundview and Grattan's. And of course there were assorted goats and pigs... plenty of work for a country veterinarian.

Waitz explained to me that they weren't really taught much about working with small animals in vet school. In the late 1920's the focus of their education was mostly livestock and horses. However people did have house pets and would have to work out ways to help the healing process along. "If a dog had a dislocated hip you could throw him out of a second story window (onto a mattress) and he would put the hip back into the joint flipping around in mid-air." Waitz told me. "Benny Fischer did any work that came to him."

"He had a small boat with an outboard and would drive it to Shelter Island to do house calls," Waitz told me. There's a letter from a Shelter Island summer resident that bears witness to this. The letter has an interesting complaint, "...*Your bill is too low for the work you have done here this year. If you know people are able to pay it why don't you charge more? I'm only saying this to you because I think so highly of your work...*" A wonderful world of service, indeed.

*

If I had written this story when I did my first batch of interviews back in 1997 I would have been able to sort out a few of the facts regarding things where various claims overlap. Alas that did not come to pass. So I'm not sure whether it was Helen Krukowski's brother Starry who introduced Doc to an 18 year old Aquebogue girl named Margaret "Peggy" Dimon (as my mother's god mother "Aunt" Helen told me) or if it was Dr. Waitz. Either way the two were brought together and immediately hit it off. Helen remembered that, after a short courtship her friend confided in her: "Ben said to my father that he wanted to marry me and my father said 'What, marry?! She doesn't know how to boil water!' and Ben said 'That's alright, I do.'"

They were wed in 1932. Doc was a devout Catholic - they were married in the rectory however because Margaret was Presbyterian. Soon they started a family.

Margaret Anne was born in '34, Robert Benedict in '36, Gail Helen in '43 and Daniel Lawrence in '48. Margaret helped teach her children the Catholic catechism while also teaching Sunday school at the Presbyterian church.

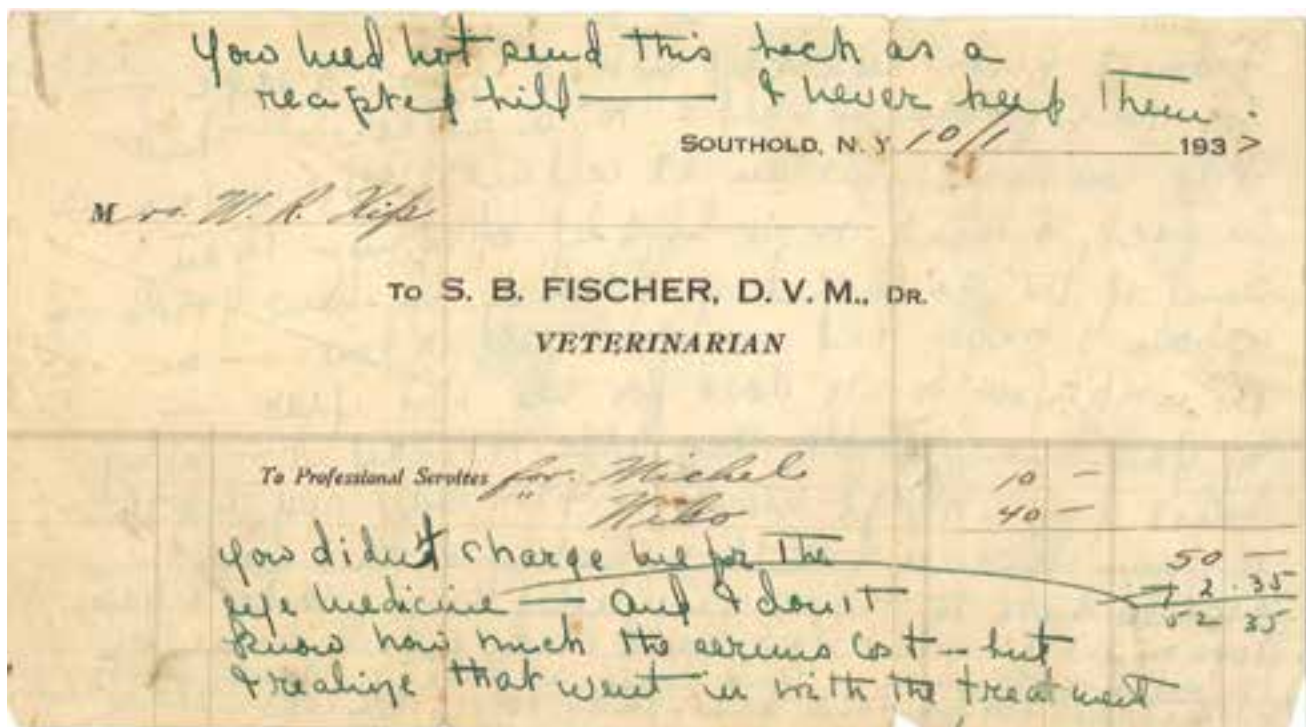
With a busy veterinarian practice and a growing family Doc still found the time to be quite involved in the community in many levels. He was a charter member of the Rotary club and a Chairman of Southold Park Commission. Both he and Peggy were performing members in the "Old Town Players" theater group which used to hold it's productions in Belmont Hall, which used to stand across from the Southold Library. Likewise he was chairman of the pageant committee for Southold's tricentennial celebration in 1940, as well as president of the Long Island Veterinary Society, and was one time commodore of the Southold Yacht Club. In fact, he and another member named Frank Robinson together constructed the old club house at Paradise Point on land Robinson owned.

Doc also became a part time landlord when, in 1939, he and his brother Eugene of East Northport went in as partners to buy property from Bob Hyatt at the sound end of Horton Lane and North Sea Drive to build six cold water bungalows between the road and the beach for summer rentals. They also built one for Doc's family. They enlisted the help of their father Lawrence and brother Larry for some of the wood work and roofing. Charlie Columbo was hired to do the stone fire places, stone pillars for the Fischer's cottage – now brick- and the community barbecue. These were all built from beach rocks which Doc found on the shoreline and lugged to the site. (Columbo also built a mantle for a fireplace with the same sound stones that still stands in the home on the south end of Horton Lane.)

"In the summer we'd move down to the cottage," says Dan Fischer. "It was nice, we had a good vacation. There was no hot water but the sun would heat the water in the pipes so if you were the first one in the shower you'd get warm water. The place had Adirondack chairs which dad had made" remembers Dan. At some point that cottage went to Eugene's family.

The families (Hickeys, Sipps, Dorrs, Gruerrins were some of the names remembered) came back year after year to rent a cottage for one month. One family said they wouldn't be back the next year because they were having a 3rd child so Doc built another room so they could return. "During a hurricane one year people had to evacuate and they stayed at our house," tells Peg.

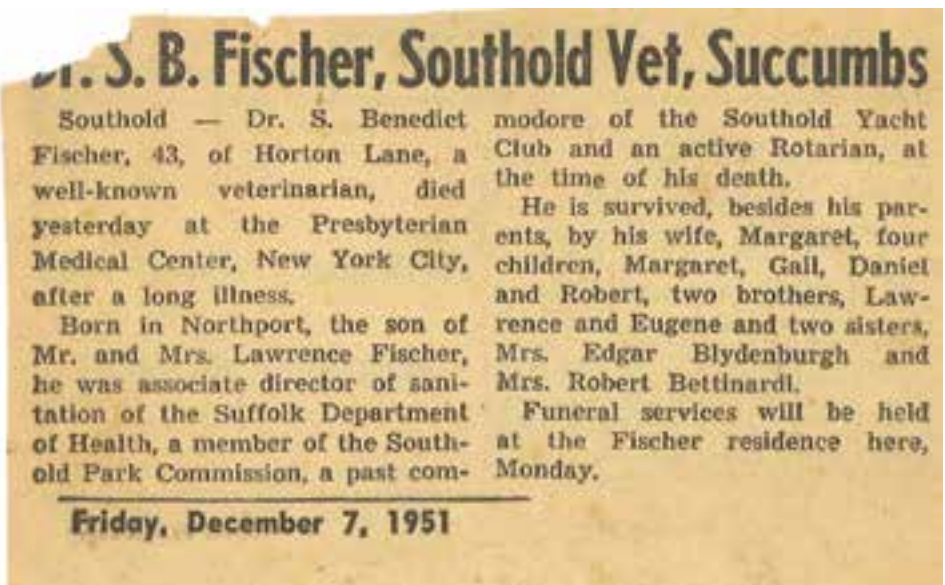
The arrangement usually was that mothers and their kids would be at the bungalows for the week while their fathers worked in New York City or Nassau County. "On Friday nights the women would go meet the men at the railroad station" my Aunt Peg tells me. "I remember parties going on all summer long at the



bungalows For entertainment they formed "The Bungling Bungalow Bowlers" league and "The 8 Ball Yacht Club".

1943 Doc had his first of three heart attacks. The large animal work that he loved to do was taking a toll on him. He tried to ease the burden by hiring on a younger vet but the one he employed wasn't a good match and Doc gave up on the idea. He hoped to sell the practice and work a more regular, less taxing job so eventually he took a job with Suffolk County where he was in charge of inspecting the dairies and restaurant kitchens of Suffolk. Unfortunately the practice did not sell and Doc "found himself with two jobs instead of one," tells Dan Fischer. While that job enabled Doc to help bring pasteurization to the dairies of Suffolk County, the restaurant inspections soured his opinion of dining out so that "whenever our family traveled we had to pack a meal because Dad knew what kitchens were like." Dan remembers that one eatery that did always meet Doc's approval was Porky's Restaurant in Greenport. "Their kitchen always got high marks from Dad."

After his last heart attack in 1951 it was obvious that something had to be done. The procedure to treat a condition such as his – open heart surgery to remove a piece of valve scared from rheumatic fever – had only first been successfully done in 1948 and was extremely risky but, according to Dan Fischer, "He believed that either way it would further the science and help others after him." He almost made it, "Supposedly the surgery corrected the defect but he had a blood clot and that's what killed him." Doc was 43 years old.



Reader Feedback....

To: Peconic Bay Shopper Editor
Date: November 12, 2020

May I share of couple of reflections on Gerard Matovcik's comprehensive article "Glenwood House Revisited." (PBS, November 2020)

In noting that the LIRR ran to Greenport in 1844, the impression is given that there were a number of lines built in the area ("opened its first line").

In fact there was only one and it was built for the purpose of taking passengers from the city to Greenport to connect with a steam ship to Stonington, CT, for a train to Boston. So in reality, the LIRR was not built for Long Islanders!

In discussing the life of Samuel Warren Sneden, the article commented that he was "engaged ... in the economic and political life of the borough of Brooklyn." During Sneden's lifetime, Brooklyn was a separate and distinct city (the article further states that Samuel Booth was Brooklyn's mayor in the 1860's). It only became a borough on January 1, 1898 when the city took on its present composition of five boroughs. Thank you for again publishing another fascinating and informative historical article.

G. C. Whyte, Ph.D.,
Ex officio consultant to the Mattituck-Laurel Historical Society



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.....
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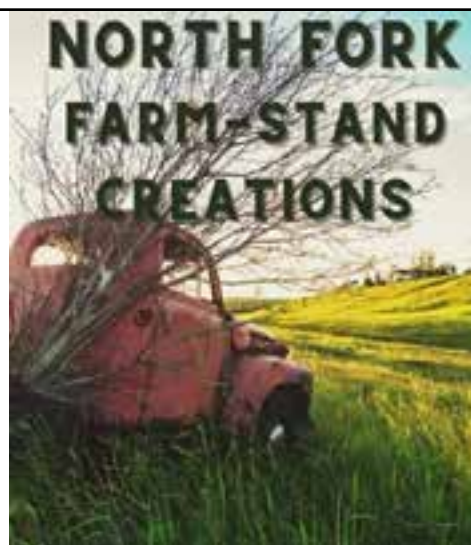
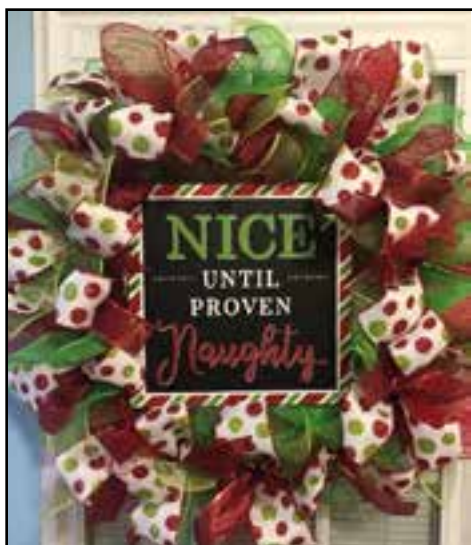
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The Glenwood Livery, circa 1880

Most liverys offered full livery, full board, partial board, self board and pasture board.

The Glenwood livery most likely offered only partial board, where the horse is provided shelter, water stabling and twice daily feedings of hay. All other care, including feeding of grain, stall-cleaning, grooming and all exercise is the responsibility of the owner.



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Reader Feedback....



Thanks to Joe Krukowski of Southold, the above 1935 picture that was in our November issue has been confirmed to be the Corazzini Dairy. The men are, left to right: Manuel Corazzini, Jack Picard and Thomas Corazzini.

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Mike Caprice of Greenport gave us this class photo, found at a yard sale along with the photos of the Glenwood Hotel of Mattituck on this issue's cover and page 11.

All three photos are mounted on boards with the name "Annie Young" written on the backs. Knowing that, and looking at the many local names written under the photo, we are assuming this is a Mattituck group of students.

We hope one of our readers can provide more information. Any photos of the building would be greatly appreciated.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Effie Tanner (teacher) | 8 Walter Gracie | 15 Myra Cox. | 25 Jennie Luthill. |
| 2 Annie Dohme | 9 Raymond Luthill | 16 Nellie Noel | 26 Loma Dohme |
| 3 Elsie Brown | 10 Louis Fildersleere | 17 Mildred Bonhlin | 27 Herbert Reed. |
| 4 Mabel Brown | 11 Rymur Wickham | 18 Emily Luthill | 28 Joe Walters. |
| 5 Claire Wickham | 12 John Jennings. | 19 Joseph Luthill | 29 Cedric Wickham. |
| 6 Joseph Bonhlin | 13 John Albion | 20 Joseph Wines | 30 |
| 7 Lida Rouse | 14 Clifford Denny | 21 Louisa Klein | 31 Nellie Hulse. |
| | | 22 Mary Walters | 32 Flora Luthill. |
| | | 23 Virginia Brown | |
| | | 24 Annie Gracie | |





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ART SALE THROUGH DECEMBER 15: Ten Squared: North Fork in Winter, a 10" x 10" Online Art Exhibition and Sale is offered on the Society's website, www.southoldhistoricalsociety.org, **now to December 15**. Artists submitted pieces that are exactly 10"x 10". Each work will be sold for \$100, half of which will benefit Southold Historical Society. The modest price and varied selection ensures there is something for everyone. The virtual format lends itself well to featuring artwork. For a nominal fee, those that are making purchases will be able to have the artwork gift wrapped & shipped. For more information, please email info@southoldhistorical.org or call 631.765.5500

While there will not be an Art Show & Sale this year, there will be an "Artist Tree," festooned with beautiful ornaments created and donated by local artists, selling for \$10 each (we encourage and welcome Oysterponds artists to continue to donate their festive holiday tree-hangings).

To ensure that your holiday shopping is safe and worry-free, OHS has put in place social distancing and sanitization protocols as well as a mask requirement for all visitors. Only six shoppers at a time will be allowed in the Schoolhouse.

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