



Restoration work will soon begin on the Nathaniel Rogers House at Ocean Road and Montauk Highway in Bridgehampton.

BETH YOUNG

Renovations for historic house to begin

By Beth Young

The grand lady among Bridgehampton historic houses is scheduled for a face-lift this year.

Some people know the weathered Greek revival building at the southeast corner of Bridgehampton's Main Street and Ocean Road as the Hampton House—an inn that was famous for its lavish parties in the early 20th century. Others know it as the Nathaniel Rogers House, so named for its first owner. In recent years, it was known as the Hunting House, after one of its 19th century owners, and later as the Hopping House, after its longtime owners, the Hopping family.

Soon, the nearly 200-year-old structure will become more than just one of the oldest buildings in Bridgehampton. It will be restored and will house the Bridgehampton Historical Society, which plans to use the space as its headquarters. The home will also include exhibition, archival and public space.

In February, architects and structural engineers commissioned by the historical society and Southampton Town started picking apart the building to determine how much restoration will be

said Town Supervisor Linda Kabot. "The town went the extra mile to preserve this site. It's considered something that could be a national treasure, and here it is rotting on Main Street."

More than 270 Bridgehampton community members contributed approximately \$500,000 to help the historical society purchase the house in a 2003 partnership with the town, which appropriated \$2.5 million to purchase the land through its Community Preservation Fund. The historical society then gave the house to the town, but it will remain the building's steward.

The restoration project is expected to cost \$3 million, \$1.3 million of which has already been raised through a combination of state, town and private contributions. New York State has contributed \$250,000, which has been matched by grants from the town and donations to the historical society. The town plans to contribute \$400,000 per year for exterior improvements over the next two years through the Community Preservation Fund.

Abraham Rose built the original house in 1820 and sold it to Nathaniel Rogers in 1839, who renovated and expanded

four years before his death in 1844. It was purchased in 1885 by the Storms family, which opened it as a hotel and bar called the Hampton House.

In 1894, the Hedges and Hopping families turned the then-rundown hotel into The Hopping House, which many residents remember as the most elegant inn in Bridgehampton.

While in the care of the last innkeeper, Caroline Hopping, who died in 1952, the house again fell into disrepair.

The good news, from a historic preservation standpoint, is that little has changed.

Historical Society Executive Director John Eilertsen has been working with the town to hire structural engineers, wood experts and architects.

"The house is in much better shape than we expected," said Mr. Eilertsen.

Still, "there's been wear and tear, deterioration in the roofs. Some of the structural elements need to be reinforced," he said.

Once the society moves into its new home, its current headquarters, the Corwith House, built in 1840, will be used as a museum, with period displays and tours.