



Old Meets New at Historical Society

Expanded gallery space makes Oyster Bay Historical Society an artistic center.

By [Anna Scheblein](#) | [Email the author](#) | [April 11, 2013](#)

Until recently, the [Oyster Bay Historical Society](#), established in 1960, was housed solely in the historical Earle-Wightman House on Summit Street in Oyster Bay.

The original one-room house, likely owned by farmers or merchants who lived in Oyster Bay, dates back to the 1720s with additions throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

Upon ringing the bell, visitors are greeted by a staff member of the Society. Once inside, it becomes apparent that there is a plethora of history to be explored, replete with period pieces, as well as artwork on loan from nearby [Raynham Hall](#).

Nicole Menchise, archivist and librarian for the Society, explained that over time, it became clear the Society needed to create a separate space for artifact storage, an archive room, a library, as well as a permanent exhibit space.

The Angela Koenig Research Center Library and Archive building is such a space.

Both the Earle-Wightman House and the Koenig Research Center are part of The Oyster Bay Historical Society. The new building provides storage space for artifacts, books and a library. With this new space, the Society has been able to expand its workshops, offer lectures, and providing a gallery space for exhibits.

"The Earle-Wightman house can now be what it is - a lovely historical home in [Oyster Bay]," said Menchise. The historic house will continue to host annual events, such as the July 4th Ice Cream and its Holiday Open House with the Zion Church, while allowing exhibits to comfortably sit in the Koenig Center.

Utilizing the extensive space in The Koenig Research Center is an exhibit of photographic artist Xiomaro's perspective of Teddy Roosevelt's beloved summer home, Sagamore Hill, in Oyster Bay. The exhibit spans the first floor gallery space.



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Xiomaro was commissioned by the [Sagamore Hill National Historic Site](#) to create an artistic photographic collection of Theodore Roosevelt's Oyster Bay summer home - unfurnished. The result is that the viewer is drawn into expansive space of the rooms, sans buffalo head, deer head, tiger carpet and all the other trophies usually displayed in the library and the "North Room" of the 26th President's summer home.

Instead, it is the gleaming wood floors and the magnitude of the burnished wood mantle at the back of the room that draws the viewer. It is the glittering light that seems to emanate from the glistening wood detail of the architecture of the room that takes center stage. The beauty of the "bones" of the rooms themselves are what make the stark images beautiful, commented Menchise.

Much like the man who made Sagamore Hill his summer White House, known for being a reflective thinker, an avid reader and a powerful writer, as well as being a man of action, the photographs lend themselves to an aura of powerful light, and at the same time, a sense of calm and serenity. Xiomaro's interpretations of the empty rooms express both the powerful man that once occupied the spaces with his wife and six children, and the man that sought the serenity within those walls.

Menchise commented that with the addition of the Koenig Center, the Society can now incorporate both the historic and the new. The Koenig Center allows for new public programs and more extensive exhibits, broadening the Society's mission of preserving the intricate past of the hamlet.

"We're custodians of the records of the Historical Society and the archives pertaining to Oyster Bay's history," Menchise said.

Both the historic house and exhibit are open to the public Tuesday through Friday 10am-2pm, on Saturday 11am-3pm, and Sunday 1pm-4pm. Xiomaro will appear for a gallery talk open to the public on April 14 from 2-3pm.