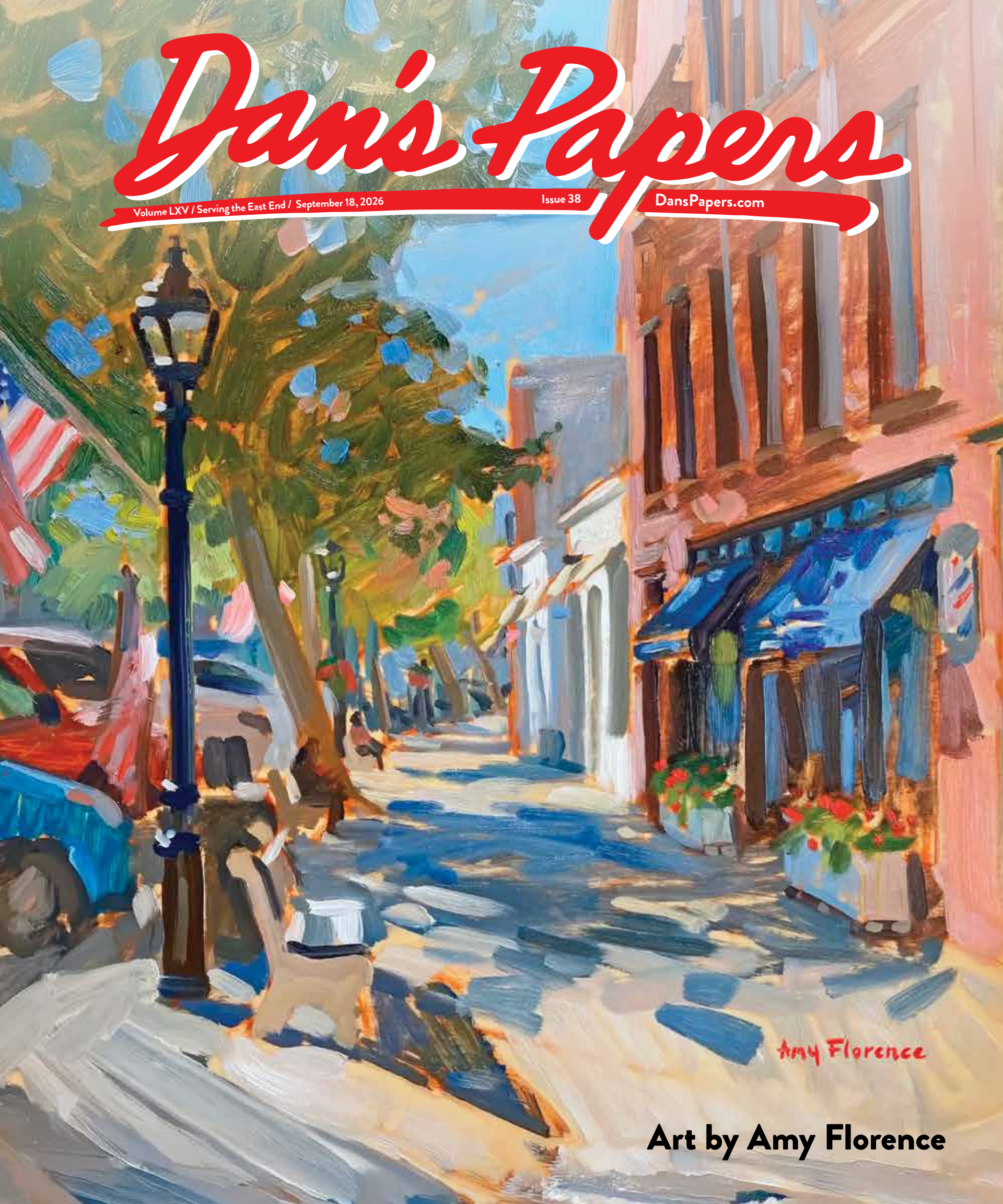


Dans' Papers

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Amy Florence

Art by Amy Florence

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Amy Florence Paints a Quintessential Sag Harbor Scene

BY OLIVER PETERSON

This week's *Dan's Papers* cover artist, Amy Florence, discusses her impressionistic scene of Sag Harbor's Main Street just in time for HarborFest, the differences between painting in Italy and the East Coast, and how she developed and evolved her painting technique.

Tell me about this painting and what inspired you to paint Main Street like this?

I was staying just off of Main Street and painting local scenes for the Grenning Gallery. I especially liked the mornings when the air was fresh and people were starting their day. The coffee shop was full of people coming and going, and I liked the framing of the hardware store in the foreground, and the American flag catching the sunlight. I grew up in London and to me, Sag Harbor has a small town feel that is charming and wholesome. The shop fronts on Main Street have a lot of character. It feels like a place that has evolved over time, still holding parts of its past in the architecture.

You are based in Italy. What

is your connection to Sag Harbor?

I show at the Grenning Gallery on Main Street. I met the owner, Laura Grenning, when she visited my studio in Florence in 2018 and agreed to represent me. Since then I've been to Sag Harbor a number of times for show openings and painting trips.

Can you share some differences you've noticed about painting on the East Coast of the United States vs. Italy?

People are very friendly on the East Coast. They are excited to see a painter and are always very complimentary. The Italians can be more opinionated, they like to give you a critique when you're painting.

You have a wonderful range with your work — some of it is quite loose and expressive, while other pieces feel a bit tighter and more representational. Can you talk about that?

I trained in Florence at a classical atelier that specializes in portrait painting from life. It was a very rigorous training, focusing on training the eye to see, and the hand to follow

the eye. I left there 15 years ago, and my work has become increasingly impressionist. With time comes confidence, and the freedom to paint with a more individual handwriting. When I started my training, I was more focused on accuracy and drawing, whereas now I am more interested in the application of the paint and the mark making. The drawing is still there, it's the foundation, but it becomes more automatic, leaving room for expression and interpretation. I am influenced by the paintings I like to look at — Russian impressionist painting, French impressionism, and American painters, such as Frank Duveneck and George Bellows, and of course the Italian influence. My studio in Florence is the former studio of an Italian impressionist painter — known as one of the "Macchiaioli," the "mark makers." Titian has always been a favorite of mine, too.

Can you expand further on how you developed your technique?

I think that the goal after a very academic training, is to remove the restraints from that training. There

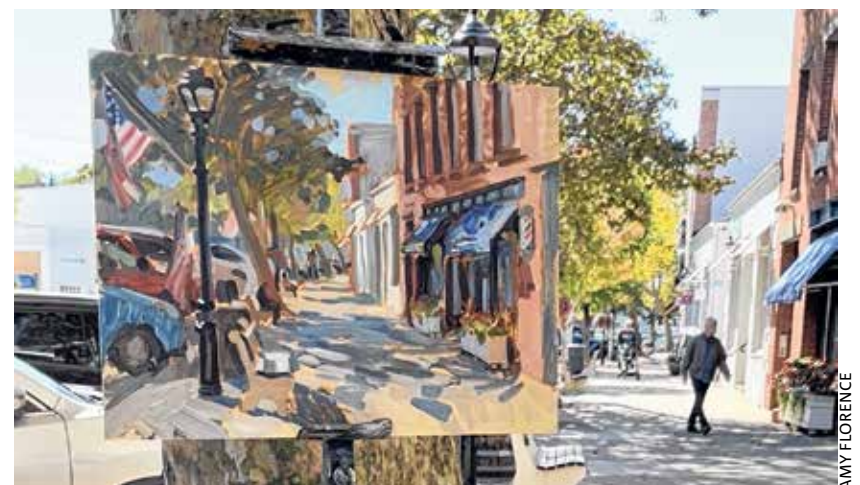
are many rules and particular ways to do things which I think are necessary to train the eye, but it can ultimately prohibit the artistic intent. I try to be more instinctive now, and to paint with more feeling. To allow a looseness in the brushstrokes, and for the excitement I feel from my subject to come into those marks. Much of my work focuses on large floral still life painting, something I started during the pandemic, which was spent in the Tuscan countryside. Flowers are a fleeting subject and require a different approach when painted from life. The looser technique developed through my attempt to capture a moving subject. Painting from life is unique in that it becomes a culmination of time — days spent in front of a large canvas watching as flowers open and then wilt, choosing the opportune moment to paint them, or a few hours on Main Street one morning in September, watching as the light changes, people pass by and shadows move. There's always a dialogue with the subject, you've got to engage with it.

Where can people find your work online and in person?

You can find my work at The Grenning Gallery in Sag Harbor (26 Main Street). Visit @amyflorenceart, my Instagram, for a good place to see what I'm working on currently, and to see more of my process.



AMY FLORENCE IN HER STUDIO

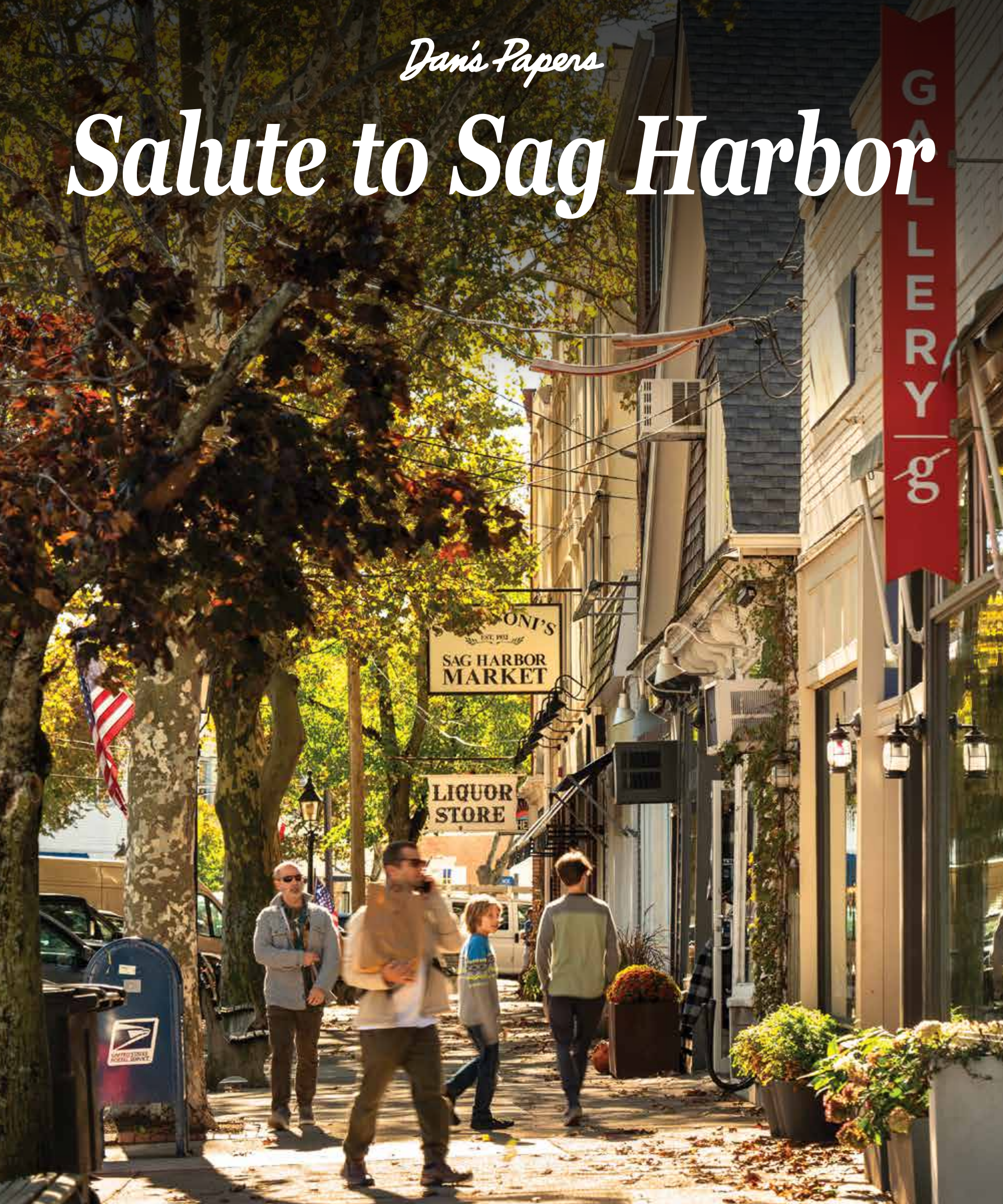


AMY FLORENCE ART IN PROCESS ON MAIN STREET SAG HARBOR

TO SUBMIT YOUR ART FOR A COVER, SEND A HIGH-RES SCAN TO OPETERSON@DANSPAPERS.COM FOR CONSIDERATION.

Dan's Papers

Salute to Sag Harbor



SALUTE TO SAG HARBOR

Sag Harbor: A Village Dredged in History

BY MICHAEL MALASZCZYK

Long before Sag Harbor became known for its historic homes, waterfront restaurants, galleries and summer visitors, it was a working port whose fortunes were tied to the water. From Indigenous settlement and colonial trade to whaling, manufacturing, wartime industry, the rise of tourism and the arts, Sag Harbor has repeatedly reinvented itself while retaining the reminders of what came before.

The area was originally inhabited by Algonquin peoples, who called the place Weg-wag-onuch, a name derived from a word meaning “the land or place at the end of the hill.” The landscape consisted of hills, streams, meadows and swamps, and neighboring communities referred to the area as the Great Meadows. Sagaponack farmers eventually used the harbor as an outlet for shipping agricultural goods.

Although permanent settlement did not develop until the late 1730s, Southampton Town records mentioned Sag Harbor by name as early as 1709. Land subdivisions followed in 1738 and 1745, and the settlement grew around its natural harbor.

The waterfront soon became the foundation of Sag Harbor’s prosperity. A wharf was established in the 18th century, and Long Wharf was completed in 1771, and extended in 1821.

Sag Harbor’s importance extended well beyond the East End. In 1789, President George Washington designated it a federal Port of Entry.

Whaling ultimately became the industry most closely associated with Sag Harbor. From the late 18th century through the middle of the 19th century, ships sailed from the village in search of whales, returning with whale oil and other products that helped finance the community’s growth. By the 1840s, the village was at the height of its prosperity, with 63 whaling ships calling Sag Harbor home and more than 1,800 men em-

ployed in the industry.

The wealth generated by whaling can still be seen in the village’s architecture. The First Presbyterian Church of Sag Harbor, now known as the Old Whalers’ Church, was completed in 1844. Designed by architect Minard Lafever, the building combines Greek Revival and Egyptian Revival elements and was topped by a 185-foot steeple that served as a beacon for returning sailors. The church was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994.

The steeple would not survive the 20th century. The 1938 hurricane tore it from the church and sent it crashing into the nearby Old Burying Ground. It was never rebuilt.

The Old Burying Ground itself dates to 1767 and contains the graves of many prominent early Sag Harbor residents, providing another physical record of the village’s colonial and maritime past.

The Sag Harbor Whaling & Historical Museum offers perhaps the most comprehensive introduction to that era. Housed in the Benjamin Hunting II House, built in 1845 for a wealthy whaling ship owner, the museum preserves objects, photographs and stories connected to the village’s maritime heritage. Its collection includes an actual 1860s whaleboat associated with the Sag Harbor whaling ship Concordia.

The Sag Harbor Historical Museum, housed in the Annie Cooper Boyd House at 174 Main St., provides another window into the village’s past.

Whaling, however, did not last forever. Beginning around 1850, the industry declined as whale populations became scarcer and petroleum was discovered in Pennsylvania.

Sag Harbor responded by becoming an industrial community.

Brass foundries, hat factories, watchmaking, sugar, cotton and flour mills, pottery, bottling and water works became part of the village economy. The most important surviving reminder of this period is the

massive Fahys Watchcase Factory, later associated with Bulova. The four-story, 73,000-square-foot brick factory became a major employer and helped give Sag Harbor a new economic identity after whaling. Bulova ultimately remained one of the village’s last major industries before departing in 1981.

Other industries followed. The E.W. Bliss Torpedo Company brought military manufacturing to the waterfront, while Agawam Aircraft Products and Grumman Aerospace connected Sag Harbor to the aviation industry.

This working-community history is particularly evident in Eastville.

Located on the eastern side of the village, Eastville developed during the 19th century as a multiethnic neighborhood populated by free Black residents, Native Americans and European immigrants.

In the historic Eastville neighborhood is St. David A.M.E. Zion Church, built in 1839 by African American and Native American residents. The church remains in its original location and is widely believed to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad. Its founding pastor, the Rev. P. Thompson, was an abolitionist and friend of Frederick Douglass.

In the 20th century, when Sag Harbor became home to another important chapter in Black American history. The Sag Harbor Hills, Azurest and Ninevah communities, collectively known as SANS, developed beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s as African American families sought places to own property and vacation at a time when discriminatory housing practices restricted where Black families could live and spend their summers.

Sag Harbor’s historic character extends throughout the village. The Sag Harbor Village Historic District contains hundreds of buildings representing the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Federal homes, whaling-era residences, commercial buildings and later industrial structures com-



THE GREAT HURRICANE OF 1938.

bine to create a streetscape that reflects the village’s changing fortunes. Long Wharf remains the natural center of that history.

Bay Street Theater on Long Wharf has become a major performing arts venue, presenting theater, concerts, comedy and other programming.

Sag Harbor Cinema is another example of community preservation. After a devastating fire in December 2016 severely damaged the historic theater, residents rallied to save it.

The Church provides another connection between Sag Harbor’s past and present. Originally built as a Methodist church in 1835 and moved to its current location in 1864, the building was transformed into an arts center in the 21st century.

Even the village’s history of disaster has become part of its identity. Fires devastated sections of downtown in 1817, 1845 and 1877, while the 1938 hurricane dramatically altered the waterfront and destroyed the Old Whalers Church steeple.

Tourism eventually became another important part of that evolution. Sag Harbor had begun attracting summer visitors as early as the late 19th century, and the opening of Sag Harbor Marina in 1979 helped reinforce its position as a destination for boaters and seasonal residents. Today, the village combines year-round residents with a seasonal population drawn by its waterfront, historic architecture, restaurants, shops, galleries, cultural institutions and beaches.

Nearby Foster Memorial Beach, commonly known as Long Beach, provides access to Noyac Bay, while the harbor itself remains popular for boating, sailing, fishing and kayaking.

PHOTO BY COURTESY SAG HARBOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY