



## THE OLD SAYBROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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DEDICATED TO PRESERVING, PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE HISTORY OF OLD SAYBROOK

April 8, 2020

Annual Appeal: A Gift of History: your mark on historic preservation

January 18, 2001 Trish Bennett wrote for Main Street News on the Miss Anna Louise James collection donated by her niece, Elizabeth Petry:

*"Maybe it's something in the drinking water...some tangible something that draws quietly remarkable people to a town where they make an indelible impression on the community... perhaps that accounts for the dedication and love that inspires town folk to collect , cherish and care for the tangible links to Old Saybrook's vital past-the fascinating artifacts that so often find their way across the threshold to the Stevenson Archives Building. The James collections is the reminder of when a drug store cat inhabited a pharmacy; when the turn of the century ice cream parlor delighted children and adults alike and when the beloved Miss James watched over the physical and mental health of a town she loved".*

Dear supporters and friends of OSHS,

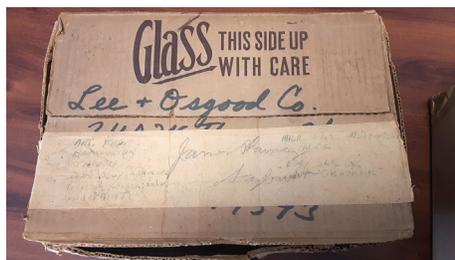
The cardboard box from Tennessee elicited much curiosity. In it was another carefully wrapped cardboard box with bright green letters MISS JAMES on the cover. Inside that box was a letter explaining why it was sent to the Society. The message touched us deeply. We often speak of Anna Louise James (1886-1977), the first African American woman pharmacist in Connecticut and her cherished pharmacy in the historic Humphrey Pratt building. Her incredible story is told in the General William Hart House as we have her desk, rocker, and diploma on display. This box evoked beautiful memories and will be placed with these items. It is a reminder of not only this beloved woman but also the innumerable stories and memories that are found at 350 Main Street.

These fabrics of our history are saved because of your continued commitment and support of our mission. This year your contributions will help fund these major maintenance projects: the replacement of the roof and three deteriorated windows and trim in the Archives Building. As always, we are grateful for your generosity and commitment. With them we will keep our campus a remarkable center for historic preservation and learning.

With gratitude and best wishes,

Marie

Marie



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1767 GENERAL WILLIAM HART HOUSE AND EXHIBIT GALLERY • PUBLIC COLONIAL GARDENS  
FRANK STEVENSON ARCHIVES & MARTHA SOPER RESEARCH LIBRARY BUILDING

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*The Old Saybrook Historical Society is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization*

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Old Saybrook Historical Society  
350 Main Street  
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To Whom it may concern,

Enclosed in this shipping container please find a cardboard box that has been in the possession of my family for many years. It came from Miss James's drug store and was used by my mother to store small items (notice my mother's notes on the top but luckily they do not obscure Miss James's address.) I found it when I was moving and noticed the pencil address on it indicating that it has been sent to Miss James, with items for her pharmacy I am sure. I thought that the Old Saybrook Historical Society might like to have it as it is an artifact from a long-standing Old Saybrook shop.

I grew up on Maple Court (across from Miss James's shop) and on Shepard Street (around the corner from the shop. Miss James was our family pharmacist as well as the pharmacist for my extended family who lived in Old Saybrook and in Westbrook. I have many memories of visiting her shop, the brown linoleum floors, the large scale that one could put a coin in and so obtain one's weight, the penny candy counter where I would spend time trying to decide which confection was my choice, the gift department where I recall my mother purchased a bottle of Jean Nate as a personal gift for my aunt who had just given birth. Another time my mother bought cupcake topping decorations for her sister who was being given a baby shower (different Aunt). I remember that Miss James sold Sealtest Ice Cream in her soda shop.

I also recall riding my bike up the sidewalk and going into Miss James's shop on a hot summer day to choose a Popsicle out of the cooler and looking over the rows of comic books while I tried to decide which one to purchase with my saved allowance. Another time, I recall my mother carrying me up Maple Court (as a preschooler) to purchase Band-aids after I skinned my leg climbing a tree in our backyard and the day when I received a stern reprimand and punishment for walking up Maple Court as a preschooler with my cousin, who was a year older and very persuasive (not that I required much encouragement to be enticed to go for candy) to cross Main Street (something we were obviously forbidden to do) and visit Miss James's shop to buy some candy. I recall that when we were in the store, Miss James asked us, "Do your mothers know that you are here alone?" She might have called my mother because Mom met me as we returned down Maple Court and Mom was not happy! How else would she have known we had ventured where we were forbidden to go? Miss James was watching out for us.

Many years later, in 1975, I was married at the First Congregational Church (next to the Old Saybrook Historical Society's Hart House, and Miss James attended the wedding, much to my delight. Miss James was truly an Old Saybrook treasure and many, many of my childhood memories include her and her shop. I am so glad to be able to donate this humble box that is a small memory of that sweet, long ago time.

Best wishes,  
Deborah Rochette Cole



Schlesinger Library Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

Miss James on her graduation at Brooklyn College of Pharmacy 1908  
Courtesy of Schlesinger Library Radcliffe Institute  
Harvard University



Miss James standing at entrance to her pharmacy