

Acclaimed for Preservation

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Seeking to honor the work being done to restore local historical buildings, the Village Preservation Society of East Hampton handed out its inaugural preservation awards during its annual meeting on Saturday. The trustees of the Moran Trust, who oversaw the rebirth of the Thomas and Mary Nimmo Moran Studio, and Elizabeth and Patrick Gerschel, who relocated and restored the Mulford-Baker residence, were the recipients.

The Moran studio, a Queen Anne-style structure dating from 1884, was the first artist's studio to be built on the East End. Thomas Moran, a painter of the Hudson River School, was known for his depictions of the Western landscape; his wife, Mary Nimmo Moran, was also a landscape painter, and became recognized as a master of the etching medium.

Their home, a National Historic Landmark, had been battered by Superstorm Sandy in 2013 and was on the brink of collapse when the board members determined to begin a restoration. The studio, now managed by the East Hampton Historical Society, was opened to the public in July.

"When it was being renovated, it was like an archaeological dig," said Michael Clifford, the vice chairman and vice president of the Moran Trust, who accepted the award on behalf of the board. "They would find these time capsules, like Mason jars with notes in them and cigar box covers." Mr. Clifford attributed the success of the restoration to those who supported it financially and to the craftsmen who did the work.

The Mulford-Baker House, which dates from the early 1800s, was originally built on Pantigo Road by Edward Mulford, the son of Capt. Ezekiel Mulford, a Revolutionary War hero. In the 1980s, the Gerschels moved the house to Hither Lane and began restoring it. "We've been living there ever since," said Ms. Gerschel. Although living in a historical home has its challenges, including, she said, a severe lack of closet space, "the important thing is not to tear something down, but to work with it. We love living there."

Kathleen Cunningham, executive director of the preservation society, said both recipients of the awards embodied the society's credo that restoration work is a civic responsibility. "It places a high value on our unique character and history, and that's what makes East Hampton so special."



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