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UPDATE on the New Stanton-Davis Homestead Museum - Frederick E. Burdick

The Stanton-Davis Homestead, earliest house in Stonington built circa 1670, by Thomas Stanton, Indian Interpreter, and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Soon to be made into an educational Historical Museum, by a newly formed non-profit organization: The Stanton-Davis Homestead Museum, Inc.

A talk will be given on the history of the Homestead as well as the plans for its future. This house and land are very special, as they brought together the three cultures that were all connected with this house: The Native Americans, the English and the Africans. Venture Smith, an African slave worked on the farm. There are etchings on the walls and ceiling in the attic believed to have been made by slaves that worked the farm and lived in the house. Uncas, Chief Sachem for the Mohegan's and a friend of Thomas Stanton, came to the farm with his warriors to have Thomas Stanton write his will. There are many Native American artifacts within the house, all found on the property over years of farming the land.

Talk to be given by Stonington Town Historian Frederick E. Burdick, who is also the Vice-President and Treasurer of the Stanton-Davis Homestead Museum, Inc. Fred's roots go back to most all of the original founding fathers of the



Photo of the rear view of the historic Stanton-Davis Homestead

Stonington area. He is on the Board of Directors of the Stonington Historical Society, the Denison Society, as well as a number of other local family associations. Fred's interests which he pursues full time since his retirement from business, include colonial history, genealogy and the documentation of Stonington area Colonial Cemeteries.

Please join us for the full details on Wednesday, January 23rd at 7:30pm at the Mystic Congregational Church Hall.

Do You Remember When...?

- Helen Keith

The Education/Outreach Committee of the Mystic River Historical Society is putting together a three-part, audience-participation program entitled "Remember When". It will feature three 20th century decades: the 1930s; the 1940s and the 1950s. When completed, it will be available for presentation to local retirement communities. Our first venue will be at Mystic River Homes in conjunction with their monthly pot-luck suppers on March 27th; April 17th and May 15th.

We would like to include pictures of local events. If your club, business or organization has pictures of special events from any of those decades we would be most grateful for copies. We would also like to include pictures of how homes were decorated in the 30s, 40s, & 50s. Pictures of local scenes, places and people will add to the enjoyment of this program. We invite your participation; please contact Helen Keith at 536-4779.

New Edition of Ellery Thompson's Draggerman's Haul Published - D. Hanna



Have you been enjoying the excerpts from the writings of Ellery Thompson in recent issues of the Portersville Press? Did you know that Flat Hammock Press recently published a new edition of his book, Draggerman's Haul? This new edition has a Forward by Bernard L. Gordon, owner of the Watch Hill Book & Tackle shop, and an

Afterword by local author Steve Jones. Their additions enrich the story of Captain Thompson's life and career. The book also includes some material from Thompson's second book, Come Aboard the Draggers. This paperback edition is 296 pages and is priced at \$18.95. It's available at Bank Square Books and also online at www.flathammockpress.com.



from the **PRESIDENT'S DESK**

Lou Allyn

For this year-end issue of the Newsletter I thought a review of 2007 would be appropriate. The individual reports of Committee Chairmen and other Board members are being prepared for our January Board meeting and will appear in the February Newsletter.

After a successful completion of the Portersville Rehabilitation in 2006, Building & Grounds turned their attention to the Downes Building. New roofing, exterior paint and shutters brought the outside to top condition. A year's data from the recording hygrothermograph showed that the current HVAC system does a fine job in maintaining temperature & relative humidity within desired limits. An outside consultant was retained to examine the heat pump and the rest of the HVAC system. His advice: it's a good system, keep it running as long as possible.

The Curatorial Committee approved job descriptions for a Curatorial Manager and a Curatorial Assistant whose main purpose is to design and implement improved procedures for our acquisition and cataloging processes. They also updated the MRHS Collections Management Policy. This results in better access to our collections and more efficient use of the limited shelf space in the Downes Building. PastPerfect software was upgraded to Version 4.

The Membership Committee sent out annual renewal letters in the spring and follow-up letters several months later. 340 memberships renewed during the year. (80% of those as of 1/1/2007). There were also 24 new members.

Members were kept informed of our activities in various ways. Eight newsletters (86 pages) were published during the year. Topics included articles about Ellery Thompson, Mystic and the Civil War, Board meeting minutes, calendar notes and information about activities and programs. Financial support was provided by 14 advertisers and 18 Patrons. Our website, www.mystichistory.org was updated quarterly. 15 press releases were sent to local newspapers and the Mystic Chamber of Commerce. Publicity flyers were created and distributed for the Antiques Appraisal Day and the Family Activity Centers. The Constant Contact email messaging system currently has 164 active addresses; 14 general emails were sent out during the year.

The spring bus trip, "In Pursuit of General George Washington", went to Yorktown, Jamestown, Williamsburg, Mount Vernon and Philadelphia. The fall trip was to the Hudson River Valley.

The 2007 publication, "A Kayaker's Guide to the Mystic River and Its History" sold 285 copies to date.

Membership meetings continued to be well received with the change to Wednesday evenings allowing more people to attend, although at the cost of losing some of Friday night regulars. And not having thumps and bumps from the children events overhead has made it easier on the speakers. Speakers during the year included: Sally Ryan - *The Hempstead Family of New London*; Jim Streeter - *The Restoration of Avery Point Lighthouse*; Melissa Ryan - *In Search of the Bonhomme Richard*; Carol Kimball - *How I Came to be Named "Municipal Historian for the Town of Groton"*; Robert Welt - *The Use of 19th Century Primary Source Written Correspondence*; Pat Schaefer - *Patterns In Life - Indexing the Joshua Hempstead Diary*; Catherine Deichmann - *The Battle of Mystic: A Seldom-told Civil War Tale About How the National Draft Affected Mystic*

Education and Outreach developed a new program of Family Activity Centers in Portersville Academy. This was somewhat done to compensate for declining participation in the grammar school sessions. There was a very nice article and pictures in the Mystic Times.

Our financial condition remains sound. Operating Revenue for the year was \$26,800 versus Operating Expense of \$20,400. The Finance Committee ensured that cash was available from our Vanguard Mutual Fund short term accounts for the work on the Downes Building (\$20,500). Our mutual fund investment started the year at \$194,300 and ended at \$183,500. Dividends & distributed capital gains added \$11,400. Unrealized capital losses were \$900 as the stock market ended the year about where it started. We also gave a grant of \$750 to the Mystic & Noank Library for a project to convert microfiche newspapers to DVD.

Last but by no means least, there was the normal turnover of Board and Committee. (Some elected Board members are not Committee Chairman but all Committee Chairs are on the Board.)

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September through May, with a combined issue for November and December, by the
Mystic River Historical Society • Box 245 Mystic, CT 06355
Back issues of the newsletter are available for online viewing at www.mystichistory.org*



President's Desk, cont.

Board & Committee:

Cindy Allyn – appointed Membership Committee Chair

Lou Allyn – reelected President

David Evans – elected to the Board

Tim Evers – elected to the Board in 2006

Bill Everett – reelected Treasurer

Joyce Everett – reapptd. Special Projects Committee Chair

Sally Halsey – reappointed Marketing Committee Chair

Paul Ingle – reappointed Program Committee Chair

Helen Keith – reelected Vice President and Chairman of the Finance Committee. (Helen retires in 2008.)

Jim Kimenker – elected to the Board.

Cathy Marco – elected Recording Secretary replacing Betty Anne Reiter.

Betty O'Donnell – elected to the Board in 2006

John Porter – reapptd. Building & Grounds Chair

Jennifer Pryor – Newsletter Editor and Publisher

Stephanie Thorp – reappointed IT Committee Chair

Kit Werner- reelected Corresponding Secretary

Employees:

Dorrie Hanna – Curatorial Manager

Emily Perkins - Office Staff

Louisa Watrous - Curatorial Assistant.

I would also like to thank all the other volunteers and committee members who contributed their time & energy to make 2007 a successful year for the MRHS.



Appraisal Day will be held on Saturday, March 29, 10am to 3pm. We are changing the day of the week and adding extra hours to accommodate people who could not come on our traditional Friday date. In addition to some wonderful local appraisers, we are very excited to have Darius Nemati, of the Nemati Collection in New York City, joining us for the day. Mr. Nemati deals in high-end antique oriental rugs and tapestries and unusual modern hand-made rugs. This will be an excellent opportunity for anyone with an antique oriental to obtain expert advice about its provenance. The MRHS monthly program on Wednesday, March 26, at 730p, will be moderated by Tim Bell, our wonderful appraiser who has been with us on all previous occasions. The subject will be collecting and an interesting local collection of old pewter built over two generations.

TRANSCRIPTION CLUB Meets First Mondays Monthly

-Helen Keith

Do centuries-old, hand-written documents pique your curiosity? Do you have a box of old family letters or your grandmother's recipes? Would you like to learn how to decipher, transcribe and preserve these treasures? If your answer is "yes" then please join our Transcription Club on the first Monday of each month.

Two years ago, sponsored by the Denison Society, Donna Keith Baron gave a dynamic workshop on transcribing and preserving old letters, journals, wills and other documents. Thereafter, a small group from the Avery-Copp House, the Denison Homestead and the Mystic River Historical Society decided to meet once a month in order to make some headway transcribing the thousands of documents in our respective archives. We would be delighted to have paid staff or volunteers from other history organizations join us on a regular basis. It really is helpful to have extra eyes looking at a problem word or phrase.

Our group includes 2 or 3 individuals who are working on their own family papers. So, if you have family letters or diaries that need to be transcribed and preserved, please join us.

During the colder months we alternate meetings between the Avery-Copp House and the Denison Homestead; during the summer we meet at Portersville Academy. We begin with lunch at 12:30 (everyone brings their own lunch and the host organization provides beverages and dessert). We usually work for about an hour and a half to two hours (our eyes give out about then) and are on our way home by 3 at the latest. It is a happy combination of socializing and accomplishment.

Our 2008 schedule follows with contact information:
Avery-Copp House, 154 Thames Street, Groton
Leslie Evans; (860)445-1637
February 4th, April 7th, October 6th and December 1st

Denison Homestead, 120 Pequotsepos Road, Mystic
Jane Preston; (860) 536-9248
January 7th, March 3rd, May 5th, and November 3rd

MRHS - Portersville Academy, 76 High Street, Mystic;

Emily Perkins (860) 536-4779
June 2nd, July 7th, August 4th
and September 8th



So, What Are "Archives" Anyway?

- Dorrie Hanna

In very simple terms, "archives" refers to the records of a business or organization that are being preserved for their historical value. So when we talk about "going down to the archives building", we are not quite correct. The Downes Building is a repository building that contains both the archives of the MRHS (old minutes, treasurer's records, etc) AND the collections of the MRHS (all the boxes full of wonderful old stuff we are responsible for caring for). A repository building is one that meets certain standards for resistance to fire and other potential damage and is also designed to maintain optimal temperature and humidity for the preservation of the collections.

PastPerfect, the database software we use to catalog our collections, divides items into four categories:

1. Paper documents, which are often referred to as "manuscripts" even though they are not actually the text of a book. (To further confuse matters, PastPerfect calls this

"archives", but we don't use the term in that sense.) This category includes legal documents, correspondence, maps, advertising etc.

2. Photographs including prints, negatives, slides, movies, digital images, etc

3. Objects, i.e. "things" - clay marbles, civil war medals, Victorian ball gowns...

4. Library - books

As you can imagine, volumes have been written about all of these definitions and unless you are a professional you really don't need to concern yourself, but maybe this little explanation will be helpful. So, come on down to our repository (The Downes Building) and you can consult our archives (Board Meeting Minutes from 1992, say) or you can research our collections (Fish Family letters and deeds).



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October 2007 Meeting Minutes



- Cathy Marco

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce on Monday, November 19, 2007. Those present were Lou Allyn, David Evans, Tim Evers, Dorrie Hanna, Helen Keith, Cathy Marco, Betty O'Donnell, John Porter, Stephanie Thorp.

President (Lou Allyn): Lou asked the committee chairpersons to submit their annual reports to him by January 14, 2008. The board discussed the planning and possibilities for the Patrons and Benefactors Party. Lou will work on the where & when and inform the Board of possible locations and dates for their input.

Treasurers Report (Bill Everett): Bill was not in attendance; however, the Profit and Loss Budget versus Actual was distributed to Board members before the meeting.

Corresponding Secretary (Kit Werner): Many notes of thanks were sent this month: some to those who helped with the Family Activity Centers at PVA; one for a membership renewal with an additional gift; one to the Mystic Times for their recent article on Robert Welt's program for the MRHS, and one to our October program speaker. A get well card with azalea plant was sent to Joyce Everett. The Board wishes her a speedy recovery.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Buildings & Grounds (John Porter): At September's board meeting it was noted that the closure for the crawl space under PVA was missing. Following an evaluation at the Board's request, a re-enforced expanded metal grate was installed over the space as corrective action. A UV protective panel on PVA fell out, broke & will not be replaced.

Curatorial (Dorrie Hanna Collection Manager): Work continues along much as in past months. Louisa is almost done entering Fish Collection items. The Committee will most likely meet in January.

Education & Outreach (Vacant): Four first grades from Pleasant Valley School visited Portersville Academy during October. Since then, we have put away all of the "paper" items which will not survive the cold and damp of a winter in PVA. Ann Hallum purchased plastic bags, moth and moisture repellants and has stored all of the "dress-ups" in the Hope Chest and Trunk in Grandma's attic to be aired on a sunny day for use next summer.

At the suggestion of Jane Preston, plans are underway to produce a three-session (1930s, 1940s, 1950s) audience-participation "Remember When" program. When completed, this program will be available to our local retirement communities, high schools and other interested groups. Our first venue will be the Mystic River Homes in conjunction with their monthly pot-luck suppers in March, April and May of 2008. The program will feature pictures, posters, music & artifacts to spark remembrances from each of those decades (one each month). Because this should prove informative as well as fun, we plan to have each session video-taped as a major boost for our archives.

Finance (Helen Keith): The Financial Committee met on November 12th to finalize the 2008 Proposed Budget which was submitted to the Board of Trustees for their approval. A few minor changes were made. In order to keep the budget as simple as possible, three basic principles were agreed upon:

1. Special Events will show as a "Net" profit, line-item under income only. However, if seed money is needed for any "special event" it will be available.
2. Long range requests from several committees have been duly noted and monies will be available from our Basket of Funds as the need arises.
3. All of the Society's Printing and Postage expenditures will be shown under those respective line-items. The treasurer will, however, make note in Quick Books what each expense was for so that the Finance Committee can easily know the income and expenses for such committees as Membership or Newsletter.

Some of the line items in the budget were discussed, including reduced newsletter income and solutions.

Helen made the board aware that the sum of \$25,000.00 is available in our 25th Anniversary Fund for an educational project that will generate income to replace monies used in order to maintain this as a self-perpetuating Fund. The Society should be looking for an appropriate project to utilize these funds.

Lou made a motion to accept the budget as presented, Dave Evans seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Hospitality (vacant): Helen, Dorrie and Cindy will take care of hospitality for the November members meeting. Thank you!

Information/Technology (Stephanie Thorp): Barry did a backup of the system. Stephanie will include programs on the web site once she gets a list of them.

Membership (Cynthia Allyn): We had one new member and four renewals.

Special Events (Helen Keith for Joyce Everett): The Key West trip will be postponed until November. In June there will be a one night, two day trip to Salem and Gloucester including a whale watch.

Appraisal Day will be Saturday, March 29th from 10:00 to 3:00 at the Mystic Congregational Church.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Walking Tour (David Evans): David distributed a copy of the walking tour for review by the board. He and Jennifer are hoping to have the piece printed & web-ready by the "tourist season".

The next Board meeting will be Monday, January 14, 7:30pm.

CALENDAR Notables

Member Meeting Wednesday, January 23, 7:30p
at the Mystic Congregational Church
Frederick Burdick will present an update on the Davis-Stanton Homestead.

Transcription Club Monday, February 4, 12:30p
at the Avery-Copp House
*Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Leslie Evans at (860) 445-1637 for more information*

Member Meeting Wednesday, February 27, 7:30p
at the Mystic Congregational Church
Speaker to be announced.

Transcription Club Monday, March 3, 12:30p
at the Denison Homestead
*Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Jane Preston at (860) 536-9248 for more information.*

Member Meeting Wednesday, March 26, 7:30p
at the Mystic Congregational Church
Appraiser Tim Bell will discuss pewter collecting.

Appraisal Day Saturday, March 29, 1 - 3p
at the Mystic Congregational Church
Bring your heirlooms for professional review & appraisal.

Transcription Club Monday, April 7, 12:30p
at the Avery-Copp House
*Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Leslie Evans at (860) 445-1637 for more information*

Newsletter Patrons

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<i>Mr. & Mrs. Richard Butler</i>	<i>Ms. Judith Hicks</i>
<i>Webb & Patty Copp</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. David Hinkle</i>
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<i>Mary Fuller</i>	<i>Captain & Mrs. John Porter</i>
<i>Sally Halsey</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Peter Stuart</i>

Membership Updates

MRHS will miss two members who have recently passed away: Priscilla Kehm of Masons Island, member in 2002 and Eric Heyniger of Springfield, VT, life member in 1988.

Travel Bulletin



Salem & Gloucester: Coming up in June, the industrious MRHS Travel Team will make a one night, two day excursion to Salem and Gloucester including a whale watch. Stay tuned for more information.

Key West trip has been postponed until November 2008.



Tuesdays 9 A.M. - 12 NOON
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