

Frances Caulkins' History of New London - Nancy Steenburg



Frances Caulkins in a closeup from an oil painting that hangs in the Faith Trumbull D.A.R. Museum in Norwich. Photo by Dr. Patricia Thevenet.

Frances Caulkins's was an extraordinary woman for her times. She had little formal education, she supported herself as a teacher for a number of years, and she was the unofficial "kin keeper" of New London and Norwich with her attempts to interview every aged person in the community who could share stories of the past. She was also a reformer as the first president of the Norwich Anti-Slavery Society and a founding member and treasurer of the New London Ladies' Seamen's Aid Society

In her talk on October 22, Nancy Steenburg will be discussing how Frances Caulkins came to prepare for writing her histories and how she represents a new type of historian, someone who looked at the lives of ordinary people as well as the "movers and shakers" of New London. Background on Caulkins' education and the political influences of important people in her life will also be included.

Most local histories up until the first half of the 19th century were written by men who wanted to leave a record of the prominent citizens of the community. Women were invisible in these histories. Caulkins introduced what we now call "social history," using oral histories as part of her sources. This made her books much more readable than those of her contemporaries, and they included numerous accounts of women, Native Americans, Africans, and other outsiders. Because Caulkins's approach was so modern and so thorough, her histories are still a valuable source for anyone who wants to delve into the history of Norwich and New London.

Nancy Steenburg has been researching Frances Caulkins for over 15 years, with a goal of writing a full-length biography. Ms. Steenburg is an Assistant Professor in Residence at UCONN Avery Point. She will bring the depth & details of her research experience to the presentation at the meeting on Wednesday, October 22 at 7:30 at the Mystic Congregational Church Hall.

Carved in Stone: The Battle for Local Memory of the Civil War

C. Deichmann

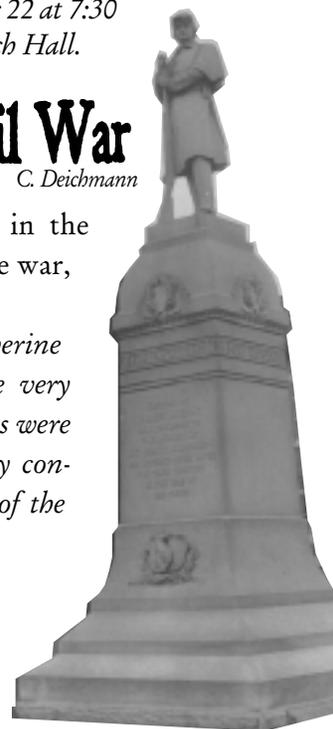
Recently the New London Day reported on the unveiling of a new monument memorializing the Ninth Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, a regiment that suffered heavy losses in the 1863 Vicksburg campaign. The fact that people still care deeply about the history and heroism of the Ninth, the state's Irish Regiment, demonstrates how we continue to fashion and refashion our collective memory of the Civil War, almost one hundred and fifty years after Appomattox.

In 1883, 1916, and 1923, three monuments were constructed in the neighboring towns of Groton and Stonington. The need for multiple monuments demon-

strated the conflicts that arose in the effort to shape the memory of the war, locally and nationally.

On November 19th, Catherine Deichmann will speak about the very different messages these monuments were intended to convey, and how they continue to shape our local memory of the Civil War.

Groton Civil War Monument at Fort Griswold State Park.



PastPerfect Users Group for Local Historical Societies

- Louisa Watrous

MRHS began using the PastPerfect museum software in 2003. PastPerfect offers many features for entering detailed information about our collections under four categories: Archives, Library, Objects and Photos. It is a great all-in-one collections management program, with a multi-media area for attaching photo images, videos and other types of computer files. Also, there are a variety of research features and reports for searching in the database.

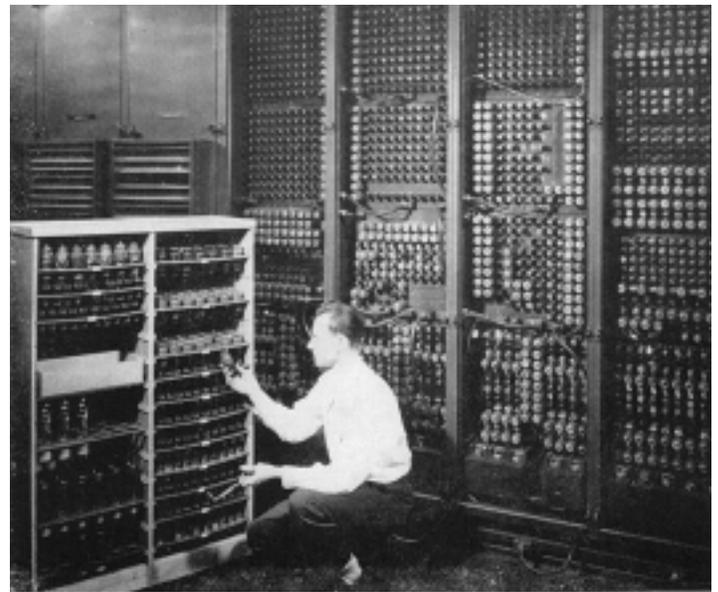
As we become more and more familiar with the software, Dorrie Hanna, Lou Allyn and I spend time talking about which features to use and which ones to ignore. Additionally, we have drawn upon the resources of the creators of PastPerfect both by attending training courses and contacting their user support staff with questions and suggestions for improvements. We have developed processes and procedures which document best use of the software for our purposes. These documents are reviewed and approved by the Curatorial Committee. Also, Barry Thorp has been particularly helpful in administering the systems part of the software behind the user interface. He conducts routine data backups and updates of the software and administers the in-house network that connects PastPerfect to all our computers. He has written detailed procedures for these tasks.

Along the way, we found that it is beneficial to compare notes with other local historical societies who also use PastPerfect, as there is so much to learn. We soon realized that we are all developing our own procedures and “tips and tricks” for using PastPerfect and should be sharing these with each other in order to make the best use of the time available for this work and avoid “reinventing the wheel.” As a result of these cooperative activities and our conversations with other local groups, MRHS has decided to establish a regional PastPerfect Users Group. At this point the group includes various local historical societies: Avery-Copp, East Lyme, Groton Historical, New London County Historical, Noank Historical, and Stonington Historical.

We have also discovered that there is a great deal of overlap between these societies in the material and the family histories with which we are working. There are some opportunities to share information which will be explored. I recently presented a workshop to the Stonington Historical Society offering an overview of the program and examples of collection pieces with work sheets for detailing the information.

If you have an interest in knowing more about PastPerfect or the Users Group, you may visit www.museumsoftware.com on the web, or give Dorrie, Lou or me a call!

Louisa Watrous is Curatorial Assistant at the Mystic River Historical Society.



Replacing a bad tube meant checking among ENIAC's 19,000 possibilities.

Fortunately for us, “museum software” does not mean “antiquated” software! The ENIAC (above) was the first digital electric computer for general use. Called “The Giant Brain”, it contained 17,468 vacuum tubes, 7,200 crystal diodes, 1,500 relays, 70,000 resistors, 10,000 capacitors and around 5 million hand-soldered joints. It weighed 30 short tons, was roughly 8.5 feet by 3 feet by 80 feet, took up 680 square feet, and consumed 150 kW of power (from Wikipedia)

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MRHS & Garden Club Join Forces for Tour

"New" Look at the Downes Building

- Dorrie Hanna

After a four year break, the Society began planning for another House Tour in the summer of 2009. Our first call was to the Mystic Garden Club, to make sure there was no conflict. As luck would have it, the Club was planning a Garden Tour for next summer as well! After very little deliberation, it was easy to agree that we should join forces and host a House and Garden Tour.

Gail Ettinger and Linda McArthur have joined with Sally Halsey and Sheri Pellerin and a vast network of very able men and women from both groups to begin organizing the tour. Houses and gardens have been identified and approached, committees are being formed, and homeowners are planning and planting for next summer!

If you are interested in getting involved, please call Sally at 536-4772, or email her at sally.halsey@gmail.com. We will need lots of helping hands to make a successful House and Garden Tour!

Save the date: **June 20, 2009!**

- Sally Halsey

HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR

We are very lucky to have our Downes Building—many small historical societies don't have climate controlled storage space for their collections. It is, however, a modestly sized facility and we need to make every square foot count. To this end we have undertaken another rearrangement of the files and furniture.

We've set up an area where visitors can work without being "under foot" and we are creating files of clippings and other non-accessioned material that they can consult for quick reference. We also established two workstations for the on-going projects of our volunteers. Now they will be able to safely leave their work in progress between visits.

Looking ahead it's clear than we will soon need another row of metal shelving for our boxes of documents and photographs. But we have to do some additional "housecleaning" before we have space for these much needed shelves.

I think the project so far is a success and hope that our visitors think so as well. Speaking of visiting, have YOU ever come in to the Downes Building? We're open Tuesdays from 9 to Noon, and Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 4.



The William A. Downes Building

OCTOBER

by Robert Frost

O hushed October morning mild,
Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;
Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,
Should waste them all.

The crows above the forest call;
Tomorrow they may form and go.
O hushed October morning mild,
Begin the hours of this day slow.
Make the day seem to us less brief.

Hearts not averse to being beguiled,
Beguile us in the way you know.
Release one leaf at break of day;
At noon release another leaf;
One from our trees, one far away.
Retard the sun with gentle mist;
Enchant the land with amethyst.
Slow, slow!

For the grapes' sake, if the were all,
Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,
Whose clustered fruit must else be lost--
For the grapes' sake along the all.

REMEMBER WHEN?

- Jane Preston

Helen Keith and Jane Preston have recently had an enjoyable time presenting a program at Mystic River Homes entitled Remember When? The program consists of three separate presentations: one for the 1930's; one for the 1940's and one for the 1950's. Each program has music, snacks and a booklet containing all sorts of information and pictures about that decade. Just recently, Helen and Jane have presented the 1930's segment at the Mystic River Homes Congregate to a group of the residents who enthusiastically shared their memories of what the 1930's meant to them. Jane and Helen would like to have others carry on this series of programs to other organizations for their enjoyment. Judging from the enthusiastic response they have received for their presentations, they know others will enjoy them as well. There are booklets, music CDs of the era and suggestions for snacks that were popular during each era available by contacting either *Helen Keith at 536-8284 or Jane Preston at 535-1486.*

September 2008 Meeting Minutes



- Cathy Marco

The Board of Trustees met at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce on Monday, September 15, 2008. Board members present were Lou Allyn, David Evans, Tim Evers, Joyce Everett, Bill Everett, Sally Halsey, Dorrie Hanna, Cathy Marco, Betty O'Donnell, Jane Preston and John Porter.

President (Lou Allyn): Dorrie Hanna, Helen Keith, and Lou will be attending seminars September 22 and October 20 entitled "Save Your Collection, Share Your Story, Sustain Your Mission: A Primer for Small Museums and Historical Societies" These seminars are for organizations run by volunteers or with a small number of paid staff and will help us build a stronger organization for the future.

Our membership survey indicated an annual fund drive (or need-specific drive) may be worth discussion during our budget planning process during the next two months.

Some board members suggested saving money on fewer publications of the Portersville Press. Ideas included: publishing every other month with supplemental postcard meeting announcements as necessary and/or email distribution of the newsletter (although only 40% of membership subscribes via email). Many members look forward to the monthly hard copy of the newsletter.

The November membership meeting will be held on Nov. 19th due to Thanksgiving week conflict.

Treasurers Report (Bill Everett): We've submitted applications for individual "subsidiary" credit cards for Lou, Dorrie, Joyce, and John in MRHS name. This will help correct the sales tax-exempt purchase problems. Bill will receive one monthly bill for MRHS and he requested that all credit card purchase receipts be submitted to him for audit purposes. If any other board member needs to make a purchase for MRHS, they should contact a card holder.

Corresponding Secretary (Kit Werner): 27 letters of thanks were written during July, August and September! These included: donations related to membership; renewals & newsletter patrons; Joyce Everett for the June trip; Mystic Women's Club's Walking Tour brochure print cost donation; Stephanie Thorp for her donation of vintage hat forms contributed & sold on eBay; Paul Ingle and 17 friends for donations in honor of his birthday. Board members praised Paul for his unique idea of donations in his honor on his birthday. What a wonderful gift!

STANDING COMMITTEES

Buildings & Grounds (John Porter): The board reviewed the list of individuals to call in case of emergency at one of the buildings. The first call would go to Alan Greener, second to Tim Evers, and third to John Porter.

Curatorial (Dorrie Hanna, Collection Manager): Dorrie reported that re-arranging the Downes Building space to better divide "public area" from collections area is almost complete. Thanks to Helen and to Barry for their efforts.

The last files of "mystery material" are being reviewed & inventoried by Helen. Jane Preston has agreed to work on the book collection.

Education (Tim Evers): So far, no schools have signed up for any fall trips. It was decided to invite only 1st and 3rd grades for fall & spring trips and will follow up.

Outreach (Helen Keith): This summer saw fewer visitors. Jane and Helen will be presenting a 1930s "Remember When" program at Mystic River Congregate. The Board discussed other places to advertise to entice attendees to our buildings (i.e. doctors offices, specifically pediatricians).

Finance (David Evans): No activity during the summer. 2009 budget preparation scheduled was discussed. Committee chairs will submit their needs with explanation to David by September 30th. Bill Everett will provide chairpersons with September 15th, 2008 Profit & Loss Report for reference. The October board meeting will review information from committee chairs and at the November meeting, the board will vote.

Information & Technology (Stephanie Thorp): On August 30, 2008, the MRHS System Administrator (Barry Thorp) performed system update and file backup tasks. All systems appear to be in good operating condition and functioning normally. The following tasks were performed.

Backing up files to removable hard drive, Windows and Office applications updates, Security software updates and anti-spyware and anti-virus scans on MRHS computers One, Two and Three. A modified backup procedure was initiated to include exercising PP4 "Backup to External Drive" as part of monthly backup.

On September 13th, Barry assisted MRHS staff in rearranging office equipment by disconnecting, moving, reconnecting and verifying operation of the computer systems.

The website has been updated to reflect the current status of events and education activities.

Marketing (Sally Halsey): Press releases have been sent to all newspapers about our September 24th program.

Membership (Cynthia Allyn): 405 renewal letters were sent out; 345 have responded; 60 reminders were sent out in September. Dues & Newsletter Patrons monies received to date are running only slightly less than budgeted. New member: Mr. Christian Oakes of Mystic. The board was impressed with the good renewal rate and monies received to date. Congratulations Cindy on your good work.

Nominating (Tim Evers): Anyone interested in joining this committee is welcome, just contact Tim.

Program (Paul Ingle): Lou Allyn, Nancy Steenburg and Catherine Deichmann will be the speakers at September October & November membership meetings. There will not be a membership meeting in December. The first meeting in 2009 is on January 28th with Patricia Schaefer.

Special Events (*Joyce Everett*): The Key West trip was cancelled, and our October trip is sold out with a waiting list.
House Tours (*Sally Halsey*) - We have 7 "House and Gardens" locations and 5 "Gardens Only" to date. We're writing and calling 31 home owners and would like to have 10 total "House and Gardens" locations. We've had difficulty finding historic homes, and three committed locations were built in the mid-20th c. A tentative title is "A River Walk." Committees are started, and plan to meet monthly on first Fridays at 11:00 in the Chamber office. Barbara Washburn will be event treasurer.

Walking Tour (*David Evans*): Since May, a total of 929 brochures have been distributed to the Welcome Center, Whalers Inn, Chicco's, Bank Square Books, and Library. The Chamber paid for over 800 copies (thank you!!) and we ordered & paid a total of \$70 for additional 500 copies.

The brochure is not on the Chamber's website for individuals to print off themselves. David has made inquiries to Conn College's History Department seeking student assistance with historical research. He will be following up on this and additional suggestions made by Board members.

NEW BUSINESS

Sally mentioned Mystic Seaport was offering a tour of Ireland and England, with a voyage on the Queen Mary 2 on April 24 - May 8, 2009. We've been asked to advertise the trip at our meetings and in our newsletter. If any of our members signs up, we will receive the travel company rate. The Board agreed that the brochures could be passed out at the membership meeting as a gesture of cooperation with our fellow organizations in the Mystic area.

Next Board meeting is October 20th. The next General Membership Meeting is September 24th.

Include your ad HERE!
Ad Rates: \$75/Small, \$150/Large
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CALENDAR Notables

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Sept. 24, 7:30p
Fellowship Hall of the Mystic Congregational Church
MRHS' own Lou Allyn presents an illustrated lecture "The 1938 Hurricane: Scenes Before, After, and Today"

Transcription Club Monday, October 6, 12:30p
at the Avery-Copp House, 154 Thames St., Groton
*Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Leslie Evans (860) 445-1637 for more information.*

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Oct. 22, 7:30p
Fellowship Hall of the Mystic Congregational Church
Nancy Steenburg will talk about Francis Caulkins and discuss the new reprint of the Francis book "The History of New London"

Transcription Club Monday, November 3, 12:30p
at the Denison Homestead, 120 Pequotsepos Rd.
*Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Jane Preston (860) 536-9248 for more information.*

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Nov. 19, 7:30p
Fellowship Hall of the Mystic Congregational Church
Catherine Deichmann with "Carved in Stone - the Need for Monuments to Memorialize the Conflicts that Arose as a Result of our Civil War."

No Membership Meeting in December

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2009 7:30p
Patricia Schaefer - "The Geographic World of J. Hempstead"

Newsletter Patrons

Our Newsletter Patrons for the 2008-2009 issues are listed below. We appreciate their support in covering the printing and postage costs of the Newsletter. Also please look over our advertisements and patronize these businesses when possible.

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<i>Sally Halsey</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Brian Thorp</i>

Membership Updates - Cindy Allyn, Membership Chair

Additions to the Membership list published in the September Newsletter: Life – Mr. & Mrs. Beau Beaumont Family – Liz Allyn & Julie Whitney Individual – Joanna Case. New member: Christian Oates, Mystic, Individual We will miss the following member who has died recently; the Mystic River Historical Society extends sympathy to his family: Harold R. Stevens member since 1998.

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