

WALKING TOUR OF MYSTIC BASED ON HELEN CLARKE'S DIARY

Twenty participants enjoyed "A Walk Through Helen Clarke's Mystic" on Saturday, April 27, 2019.

The walk, sponsored by Mystic River Historical Society and the Mystic and Noank Library, was led by historical society member Marilyn Comrie, and was based on the diary of Helen May Clarke, who was born in Mystic on Sept. 17, 1905. Helen kept a diary her whole life and, after her death in 1989, the historical society acquired the portion of the diaries from the years Helen lived locally, ending in 1926, when she married and moved to Providence, R.I. The historical society published that portion of the diary in 1998, to celebrate the society's 25th anniversary.

Walkers got a glimpse of what Mystic was like when Helen was a girl. There was still a livery stable downtown, trolleys ran through town, and Water Street was an active area for fishing boats.

Helen's diary is full of descriptions of people and places and she is not shy to say what she thinks of people. The tour included information about people who lived in the houses along High Street 100 years ago, as Helen described her walk to school. She writes about the Grand Army of the Republic Hall on Pearl Street, where veterans of the Civil War, including Helen's grandfather, gathered for the Decoration Day parade in 1917.

She also writes of the lovely stinks along Water Street, which locals called Rotten Row, where all the fishing boats, including the two her father owned, were moored.

And walkers passed the house on Noank Road where Helen lived, with her grandparents' house right behind it on Ashbey Street.

April's walk was limited to 20 participants, but due to the immense interest, the library and the historical society will offer the walk again on Oct. 5, 2019. There will be additional tour guides that day, so the event will be able to accommodate many more walkers. Please join us. Watch for sign-up information on the library website in September.

“A Walk Through Helen Clarke’s Mystic” started in the parking lot of Union Baptist Church, where Helen attended Sunday School as a girl. Historical Society member Marilyn Comrie led the tour, which was based on Helen’s diary, which she began writing in 1915, when she was 9.



Helen Clarke was a great admirer of Juliet Haley, who lived in this house on High Street, just north of Union Baptist Church.



Helen attended Mystic Academy and walked to school every day from her home at 12 Noank Road.



Downtown Mystic was a favorite haunt of Helen's. Walkers stand at the corner of Pearl and West Main streets, where the Peace Grant house stood in Helen's day. It was taken down in 1924 to make room for the commercial building that is there today.

