



From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2004, Volume 9, Issue 3

From the President's Desk...

As another summer fades into the rear view mirror, I hope that this edition of the news letter finds you in good health, well, rested, and if not anxious, at least curious about getting more involved with BHS activities.

I'm happy to report that the Programs Chair has been filled by Mary Boyle. It's always great to have new faces at the table, and we all are looking forward to having this important position looked after with regular attention.

All-in-all, this has been a good, albeit quiet summer for the Society. The Strawberry Festival was a tremendous success due entirely to the tireless work of the committee chairs and gracious participation of the volunteers. The Quilt Show, which preceded the Strawberry Festival, opened a door to a new class of activities for us. Since quilt shows do better as biannual events, we're trolling for fresh ideas for the coming year.

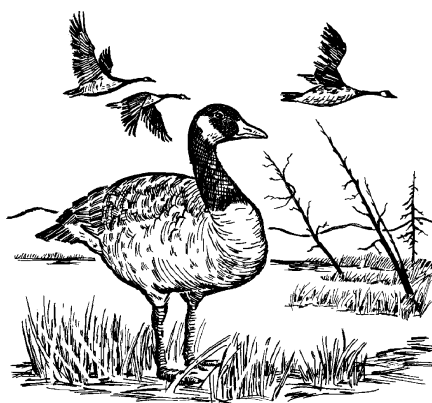
On the business side of things, we've invested in contemporary data base software to better manage our various lists. Soon, we will be soliciting businesses for a special category of Business Membership. In a town that so often promotes itself based on historic ambiance, we are hoping that the business membership will provide a new level of mutual recognition and shared opportunities.

Preservation and the built environment in Branford continue to be a significant area of concern for us. We received a demolition notice for 2 Chestnut Street earlier this summer. Based on the documents available at that time, there were a number of conceptual and technical flaws evident to us in the proposed scheme. We are working in close cooperation with the neighbors and we shall register our strong disapproval of this scheme at any public hearing that we are entitled to attend. I must continue to emphasize, that as residents and taxpayers, we are not adverse to new construction and support projects that will contribute to the tax base and economic future of this town. We will however, do everything in our power to prevent the kind of arbitrary development that obliterates the scale, density and character that makes Branford unique. There are too many examples of previously historic downtowns cannibalized by

fast and loose entrepreneurs with residents waking too late to the cold reality of insubstantial building stock designed for an unsustainable economic circumstance. This is the classic example of the problem of historic preservation overlapping city planning that we expect to devote time to this year.

For me, this begins the season of inevitable melancholy. The shadows in the garden grow distressingly longer; the days are unmistakably shorter. At one time, there was the dread of going back to school. Then, when there was no more school, that feeling of being on the outside without the comfort of a routine, wading through the ambiguities and complexities of real life. Of course it was then and still is, all real life.

Few events will bring reality into focus quite as crisply as the call to military service in a time of conflict. Our Treasurer, Peter Black was called up through his Reserve unit and is presently serving. At a time when most of us are reading about history, Peter is living it, postponing his home life and career. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family.



Joe Chadwick, President

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Harrison House**

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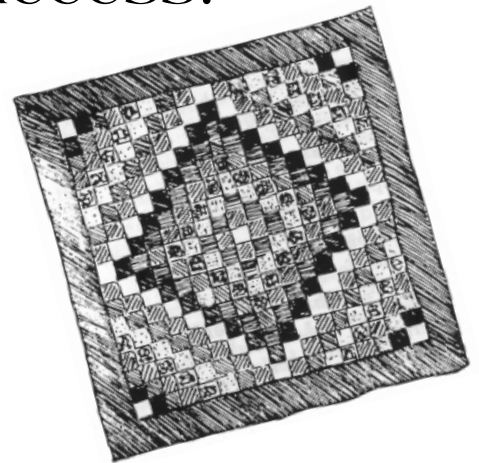
Quilt Show Success!

The Quilt Show was a beautiful successful work of art.

“A Celebration of Quilts Past and Present” was presented by the Branford Historical Society in May at the Trinity Episcopal Church on the Branford Green. The show was sponsored by The Guilford Savings Bank.

More than 180 items were on display including modern and antique quilts, vintage clothing and fabric artwork. In total, there are 150 quilts representing over 200 years of this art form. Special collections include quilts from the Lakota Indians, the Trinity Church Fair, the Griswold family, and a collection of heirloom quilts from New York. Of special interest is a vintage Edwardian Wedding Gown, that has been displayed at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford.

The church was full to capacity without an inch to spare. Members of the Historical Society and many quilting enthusiasts exhibited their quilts as well as helping with the logistics of putting on such a wonder-



ful show. Some of the quilts had not seen the light of day in many years and I think it has given us a new appreciation of the beauty of quilts.

I would like to extend my thanks to all who assisted in putting the show together including: Lois Lehr for her administrative assistance; Winnifred Judge for coordinating our volunteers for the event; Jen Payne and Jackie Ulrich for working on publicity; and Bill Davis, George Goeben, Blake Lehr, and Paul Rowan for selling the ads in our Program Book.

I would also like to thank our sponsor, The Guilford Savings Bank, and our vendors—Quilters Habitat and Needle Pulling Thread. Thank you also to all the businesses and individuals who supported the event by purchasing ads in our Program Book.

Special thanks to the Willoughby Wallace Library Quilters and the Shoreline Quilters, and to everyone else who shared their quilts with us for this event!

Ann Collier, Hospitality



Awards Presented at Annual Dinner Meeting

Bill Davis and Winnifred Judge were honored at the Annual Dinner on May 20, 2004 at the Owenego. They received the Branford Historical Society Award which was established in 1999 to honor members of the Society for their outstanding contribution and dedication to the historical preservation of the town of Branford.

A member since 1997, **Bill Davis** served as Vice President for one term and President for two terms. As a staunch advocate for the preservation of historic buildings in Branford, Bill has written numerous letters and articles to local Newspapers on this issue. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Canoe Brook Historic District. Over the past two years, Bill has attended local Planning and Zoning meetings as well as The Connecticut Historical Commission meetings in Hartford, to fight for the preservation of the Wyllys Russell House, circa 1820, which is in danger of being demolished to build the Sterling Ridge Condominiums. After stepping down as President, Bill worked with others to create the Ad Hoc Preservation of Historic Structures and Landmarks Committee. In addition to his other responsibilities, Bill has coordinated and chaired the Strawberry Festival for the past three years.



Winnifred Judge has been a member of the Branford Historical society for the past 24 years. In 1985, as Civic Development Chairman for the Garden Club, Winnie helped arrange the planning and the planting of the herb and colonial gardens behind Harrison House. She chaired the Grounds committee from 1994 to 1997. As Assistant Treasurer since 1997, she has the responsibility of presenting a yearly budget to the Board. She Co-Chaired the Strawberry Festival from 1994 to 1997 and has been in charge of hullers for the Strawberry Festival since 1994. Recently she contacted and scheduled all the workers for this year's Quilt show. All the arrangements for the annual dinner have been made by

Winnifred for the past seven years. Additionally, she is responsible for all the publications which are sold at many of our events.

With her continuing interest in history, she was instrumental arranging for the Montowese Program which had an overflow crowd last November. Currently Winnie is involved with the Cenotaph Restoration Project. As steward of the Branford Town Green, she is Chair of the Branford Green Committee.

Both Bill and Winnifred are true examples of outstanding members of the Branford Historical Society, who are dedicated to the historic preservation of Branford.

Jeanne McParland

Scholarship Awarded

The Branford Historical Society has awarded a \$300 scholarship to Christopher Hayes, one of the top 10 graduates of Branford High School this year. He graduated as salutatorian of his class.

Christopher, senior class treasurer, was named a Presidential Scholar and a Chemistry Olympics Finalist. A four-year high honors student, he also received the Rensselaer Medal Award, a French Embassy Scholarship and the Alliance Francaise Book Award. He was a member of the National Honor Society.

He played varsity soccer and varsity tennis for four years and was captain of the tennis team his senior year. He also was a member of the Model Congress Club and the Jazz Band for which he played guitar and was section leader.

His volunteer activities included being a tutor for Camp Totokett and a waiter for Theater for the Deaf.

He will attend McGill University where he will major in Chemistry.

Christopher is the son of Olivia Robinson and Jonathan Hayes.

Jackie Ulrich, Publicity

A Word of Thanks...

Although many of you were not in attendance at the Annual Dinner Meeting on May 20, 2004, I want to extend my thanks to all the members of the Society in honoring me with the Society Award in recognition of my "outstanding contribution and dedication to the historical preservation of the Town of Branford."

Such an award of recognition is not attained without the support of those with whom I have had the pleasure and the privilege of serving, both on the Board of Directors and the Membership during my tenure on the Board.

Even though I will be stepping down from the Board next year as your Past President, I shall remain active in preserving the historical character of our community with my membership on the Board's recently established Ad Hoc Committee for

Preservation of Historic Structures and Landmarks. If anyone is interested in promoting the action of this committee, I strongly encourage you to contact Chairperson, Martha Bradshaw (481-9980).

"THANKS AGAIN" - I have previously expressed my personal thanks to the sub-committee chairs of the Strawberry Festival, and I would be remiss in not taking this opportunity to offer a "heap of thanks" to those of you who answered the call to work on the various committees and/or perform specific tasks. The Society's Silver Anniversary Strawberry Festival was an overwhelming financial success. With dedicated teamwork, we netted almost \$4,100 (the most ever). A "well done" to all of you.

*Bill Davis, Past President
and Festival Consultant*

Membership Renewal Change Successful

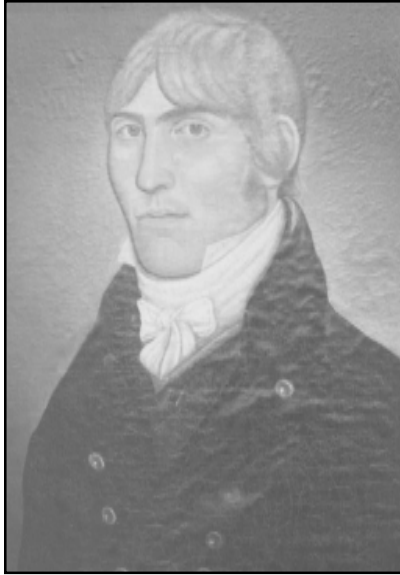
The change in membership renewal procedure last year resulted in the best response since I became membership chair. A separate mailing will be sent after you receive this Newsletter in September.

Members of our Society continue to actively attend meetings to promote the conservation of historical homes in our community. Our Strawberry Festival and other fund raising events were very successful this past year. These events as well as your dues, pay our expenses.

A warm welcome to the following new members of our Society: Irene Ayres, Mary Boyle, Bill Horne, Charlotte Menchion, Amy Prescher, Bryna Scherr and Ann Stoddard. Thank you to those who submitted names of prospective candidates. If you think a neighbor, family member, or friend, might be interested in becoming a member of the Branford Historical let me know and I will write to them and invite them to join. Very little time is asked of members. If they volunteer, they might be asked to work a few hours at the Strawberry Festival or other fund raising event.

Your continued support of the Branford Historical Society is greatly appreciated.

*Jeanne McParland,
Membership Chair*



Orrin Squire

Orrin Squire (1783-1859) was born in Durham and as a young man settled in Branford. He established a blacksmith shop behind the Totoket Hotel (now the site of the Branford Book & Card Shoppe) and with Lorin Hosley and Daniel Nichols founded a business making stoves and other iron goods. This business was later purchased by Thomas Kennedy in 1862 and became the Branford Lock Works.

Squire was the Branford postmaster, town clerk and treasurer, selectman, justice of the peace and judge of probate from 1853-1863. By his first wife Annice Frisbie he had fourteen children, thirteen of whom lived to adulthood. The Branford Historical Society has a portrait of Orrin Squire hanging in the hall and a framed silhouette of him and his wife with a listing of their children hanging in the lean-to. Orrin, his wife Annice, second wife Sarah Foote and several of their children are buried at Center Cemetery.

 Jane Peterson Bouley

Publications and Prints

The following publications and prints are available through the Society. Contact Winnifred Judge, 488-8755 for details.

Two New Limited Publications:

The History of Damascus Cemetery,
by Jane Bouley and Martha Bradshaw \$25.00

Reprint of Malachi Linsley's Diary,
by Betty Linsley and Elizabeth Radulski \$25.00

Early History of Branford \$5.00

Thimble Islands Book, by Archie Hanna \$7.00

Bird's Eye View of Branford
w/Historic Buildings (Print) \$5.00

Post Card Prints of Early Branford (Downtown,
Stony Creek/Pine Orchard, Short Beach, Indian
Neck/Pawson Park) \$3.00 Each

Montowese Program
Tape \$15.00
DVD \$20.00

From the attic...



Ceramic tennis trophy. First prize awarded to Clara Corey in the 1898 Killam's Point Tennis Tournament. BHS1991.019

Historical Society News & Notes

Thank You...

In addition to the Harrison House Guides mentioned in our last issue, I would like to thank Patti LaBonte and all of the other people who have assisted our efforts over the past year.

- Anton Wohlert

Looking for...

Do you have an antique Hitchcock Chair you would like to donate to the Harrison House Museum? It would be a fine addition to our collection. If so, please call Maureen DaRos, 488-8265.

Email a Friend...

Send your best wishes to our friend Peter Black. He can be reached by email at: Blackp@hq.cnrf.navy.mil.

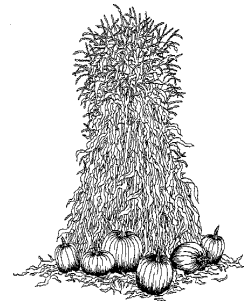
Going online?

Have you had a chance to visit our web site—www.branfordhistory.org? The site provides information about the Historical Society, upcoming events and much more!

Jen Payne and Jacey Wyatt are currently working on adding a number of Branford history photos to the site as well, so be sure to visit this new feature soon!

Holiday Open House

Watch for an announcement of our annual Holiday Open House in December. This is a wonderful time to see the Harrison House in yuletide decorations, enjoy delicious punch and sweets, listen to oldtime music in the parlor and visit with friends and neighbors as we welcome in the holiday season!



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