



# From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2005, Volume 10, Issue 3

## From the President's Desk...

At the annual meeting in May, I assumed the presidency, after a tour in the sunny town of Fallujah, Iraq. Since then, I have seen the culmination of much work done by the energetic board members. Notable happenings include the preservation work of Martha Bradshaw, the upcoming Fall Festival led by Mary Boyle, the Ella Wheeler Wilcox exhibit at the Harrison House, set-up under the direction of museum Anton Wohlert, and the restoration of the Cenotaph under the determined leadership of Winnifed Judge.


A cenotaph is a monument erected in honor of dead whose remains are elsewhere. Branford's cenotaph should be restored in time for Armistice Day. Its design, with the words "Pro patria", inscribed below the Christian cross, with an eagle superimposed upon it, speaks of sacrifice for one's country. It evokes the words of two poets, the 20th century British, Christian Wilfred Owen, and the 1st century Roman pagan Horatius Flacus. Horatius wrote, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori," or, in English, "It is

sweet and fitting to die for one's country." This sentiment was widely used to urge youth to sacrifice themselves in World War One.

Wilfred Owen's poem, "Dulce et Decorum Est," describes the horrors of death by gas attack in the war. While the British Owen went to war ignorant of its horrors, those horrors were fully apparent when Branford's boys entered. And yet, they went. Confronted by the war's horrors, Owen felt the soldiers' sacrifices were not noble.

Unlike Owen, I feel that the horrors of the Great War enhance the nobility of their sacrifice. Today, soldiers' remains are carefully retrieved and returned from the battlefield. In Iraq, we called the dead "angels", and their bodies were carefully retrieved from the battlefield and tended to, first at the field hospital in Fallujah, then at mortuary facilities in Iraq, Germany, and Delaware, usually accompanied by a member of the deceased's unit until final internment.

The Cenotaph reminds us that there was a time before DNA identification, when artillery churned soldiers' bodies with the mud of the trenches they had sought refuge in, a time when the scale of the carnage made it utterly impractical to return our dead to our own soil. Its restoration, doggedly pursued by Winnifed Judge over the last several years, ensures that their memorial will endure for many generations to come.

 *Peter Black*  
*President*



## From the Harrison House

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Branford Historical Society  
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## Cenotaph Restoration

At this writing, I can report the work on the Cenotaph is completed. Raising a total of \$31,106.30 has rewarded our fund raising efforts. With the added budgeted amount of \$15,500 from the Town of Branford our total funds were \$46,606.30. Donations are still coming in. The restoration alone cost \$38,500. The remainder of our funds will be used for landscaping and an historic plaque about the monument. Hopefully the town will provide security lighting. There was a wonderful response from our membership, the general public, and from businesses. Such a response made the project more than worthwhile.

A debt of gratitude is owed to our steering committee and those whose names appeared on our letterhead as Honorary Members. The following individuals should be acknowledged: William O'Brien, William Davis, Jeanne McParland, George Ahern, Peter Banca, and Jeff Vailette. All these individuals played a significant role in the success of the fund raising campaign.

Take time to inspect the work just completed by Gothic Stone Restoration Company. The Distinguished Service Cross emblem has been re-carved and re-detailed. The stone on which the inscription "Pro Patria 1917-1918" has been turned around resurfaced and re-lettered. The original lettering has been encapsulated. The entire monument has been cleaned, pointed, and mortar joints repaired. The steps leading to the monument and granite stones in front with the Legion emblem, a five-pointed star, have also been cleaned.

Many caring residents, businesses and organizations of Branford have saved this historic Cenotaph from deterioration. It is my belief that Andre Smith and the original committee would be proud of their monument as it appears today.

*Winnifred Judge*  
*Restoration Committee*  
*Project Chair*

# Hurricane Damage Brings Preservation to Forefront

Like many New Orleanians, my husband's sister, and parents decided to stay in their home when Hurricane Katrina arrived. It was a risky plan that turned into a nightmare when the 17th Street levee in their neighborhood broke. It was one week before they called us from San Antonio, Texas to let us know they'd survived.

Alive, and in fairly good shape despite skin rashes and trench foot caused by the water that now fills New Orleans, they talk about rebuilding. On-line neighborhood forums are filled with reluctant expatriates asking, "How high is the water on my street?" "When will we be able to rebuild?"

There are people who wonder if New Orleans should be rebuilt. Some areas may be too polluted to be habitable after steeping in toxin filled water for so long. Others say not to rebuild because living below sea level cheek-to-jowl with a levee is too risky. This seems an impossible consideration to one Canadian who wrote CNN to say that if anyone thought that the home of Jazz wouldn't be rebuilt, well then, they didn't know Americans!

New Orleans has 17 National Historic Districts, (French Quarter and Garden District are also National Historic Landmarks), and more than 35,000 listed buildings. There are 73 official neighborhoods, many made up of small-scale, vernacular architecture dating from between 1807 and 1935 that define our image of the Old South. Visitors drawn to New Orleans's historic districts spent more

than \$4.4 billion last year. U.S. tourists brought in another \$945 million to New Orleans airport.

But there is a good possibility that whole neighborhoods will have to be bulldozed. This will be an enormous loss to our nation's historic architectural and cultural archive. New Orleans is what it is because of the historic context of these neighborhoods. The people of New Orleans already know they have to take care not to blanket neighborhoods with generic houses when they rebuild, or they will become Anytown, USA.

In Branford, few hurricanes sweep through to change the face of our neighborhoods. Demolition and alterations that render structures unrecognizable as historic do that as well as any natural disaster. The generic box that replaces our historic architecture pushes us one step closer to becoming Anytown.

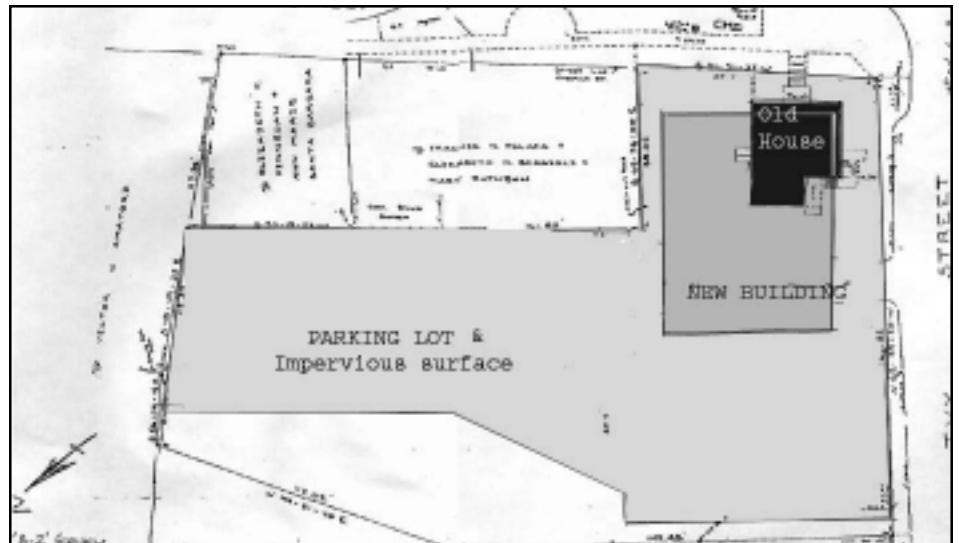
Right now the circa 1810 Dr. Newton B. Hall House on

2 Chestnut Street in the Branford Center National Historic District is slated for demolition. Dr. Carmen Balzano plans a 7,650 sq ft medical building to replace it.

There is community support to save this house shown by petitions signed by 730 residents, and calls from our state representatives to Town Hall. First Selectman John Opie and Building Inspector Anthony Cinicola suggested to the developer that he find out if his project will be approved by Planning and Zoning before demolishing one of Branford's historic structures. Dr. Carmen Balzano has applied for a demolition permit.

It is not unreasonable to request that Dr. Balzano wait until he is sure his project will be approved. Planning and Zoning regulation 23.9 says that business uses are subject to special standards to assure preservation of

*Continued on page 5 >*



*Overlay of proposed retail-medical-residential building.*

## Preservation...Something to Think About



*Dr. Hall House as it was in 1890  
(photo from the file of Jane Bouley)*



*Dr. Hall House after inferior alter-  
ations 2005 (photo by Jane Bouley)*



*Good examples of commercial re-use of historic structures: Total Kitchen and Bath  
(350 Main Street), and Marvin Windows and Door (1145 Main Street). (photos  
by Martha Bradshaw)*



the residential character of existing structures, and to keep in harmony with the neighborhood.

“Design Criteria and Guidelines, Branford Town Center” states, “A few buildings still exist which have historic period character; it is crucial that these be preserved and restored. They are the cornerstones of the identity of Main Street.”

“PRESERVE AND RESTORE buildings that are 50 years old or more; these are the historic foundation for Main Street.”

The Branford Town Plan states as policy: “Preserve and protect valuable historic structures and landscapes.”

The Branford Historical Society is not against commerce, we encourage

preservation and re-use of historic structures. Marvin Windows and Doors, and Total Kitchen and Bath are one of many businesses that maintain the original features of their old buildings. Doing so shows respect for the community in which they do business, and benefits the town by increased property values.

Buildings do more than merely provide shops or a roof over our heads. They define the character of a community; they reveal where we came from, and who we are now.

*✍ Martha Bradshaw, Chair  
Preservation of Historic  
Structures and Landmarks  
Committee*

## Get Online with History

[www.branfordhistory.org](http://www.branfordhistory.org)

For more information on every thing you see in this issue, be sure to visit the Branford Historical Society web site: [branfordhistory.org](http://branfordhistory.org). Here are some other sites of interest:

### Historic Preservation Donation Funds

National Trust for Historic Preservation, (202) 588-6135  
[www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)

### Heritage Emergency National Task Force

[www.heritagepreservation.org/  
PROGRAMS/Katrina.htm](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/PROGRAMS/Katrina.htm)

### Preservation Resource Center, New Orleans

Preservation Disaster Relief Fund,  
(337) 784-9893  
[www.preserveneworleans.org](http://www.preserveneworleans.org)

### How to Save Your Possessions After a Flood

[www.heritagepreservation.org/  
NEWS/SaveTreasRight.htm](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/NEWS/SaveTreasRight.htm)

### Resources for Protecting Your Heirlooms from Moisture, Mold, and Monsoons

[www.heritagepreservation.org/  
programs/TFmold.htm](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/programs/TFmold.htm)

*✍ Jen Payne,  
Newsletter Co-Chair*

# 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*

# Accessions

The Historical Society would like to thank all those who donated items last year. We had some really special items come into our collections. Nancy Hendricks donated a pewter tankard in memory of her son and in honor of her friend Winnifred Judge. Martha Clark answered our call for a Hitchcock chair. Special acknowledgment goes out to Eric Yester for including the Historical Society in his Eagle Scout project on the Supply Pond. Many items were donated by Peg Hampton, a long time member of the Society. Other items and archives were received from Natica Jones, Winnifred Judge, Chad Lyons, Arnold Peterson, the family of Ernest Peterson, Ann Schneider, Anton Wolhert, and Alison Wallner.

*Maureen DaRos,  
Accessions Committee*

## Branford Historical Society Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

- Contributing      \$50.00
- Sustaining        \$25.00
- Family              \$15.00
- Individual         \$10.00
- Student             \$5.00

Additional donations, or contributions to our Memorial Fund are also appreciated. Please make checks payable to Branford Historical Society and return this form to us at:

Branford Historical Society  
P.O. Box 504  
Branford, CT 06405

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your support.*

### Please indicate the areas in which you would like to volunteer:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harvest Festival   | <input type="checkbox"/> House & Grounds     | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum Guides       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday Open House | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership          | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs/Publicity  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality        | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum/Acquisitions | <input type="checkbox"/> Strawberry Festival |

# Strawberry Festival Success

Our Annual Strawberry Festival was held on June 18th during the Branford Festival, and it was a great success! One of our largest fundraisers, we were able to raise more than \$3,700 to help in our ongoing efforts. Thank you to everyone who supported this event and who bought tickets! Special thanks to all of our Historical Society volunteers who worked hard in preparation for this event and during the Festival itself. We could not have done it without you!

 *George Goeben, Chairperson*

# Publications and Prints

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

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
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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 DVD .....	\$20.00

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