



# From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2006, Volume 11, Issue 3

## Cenotaph Restoration & Beautification Completed

The final stage of the beautification of the Cenotaph has been completed.

Plantings, security lighting and a granite stone with a bronze plaque containing a brief history of the Cenotaph have been installed. An accolade cherry tree will be added in the early spring to round out the landscaping. The existing time capsule located to the right of the monument has been incorporated into the landscape.

Credit should be given to the companies involved: Douglas Kycia, landscape architect from Bethany, Landscape Specialties from Centerbrook, Finelli Electric, East Haven, Seton of Branford and

Shelly's of Guilford. All did an incredible job.

This special World War I monument by Andre Smith has once again been dignified by the restoration and landscaping. The Green area behind Town Hall has been transformed. Numerous public comments have been very positive. The remaining funds in the Cenotaph account will be used to cover maintenance.

The Historical Society is grateful to the Cenotaph Committee for their steadfast effort in accomplishing their goal. Committee members are: Winnifred Judge, Jeanne McParland, Bill Davis, George Ahern, Bill O'Brien, Peter Banca and Jeff Valette.

Mark you calendars for the rededication of the Cenotaph on Sunday, November 12th at 1:30 p.m. at the Cenotaph. The event will be part of the Veterans Day Ceremony. Jane Bouley will give a brief history of the Cenotaph and the Totoket Singers will perform a medley of World War I songs. ♪

*Below: Committee members Winnifred Judge and Jeanne McParland show off the Cenotaph special exhibit at the September Branford Garden Club Flower Show. This exhibit can be seen at the Willoughby Wallace Library in October and at the Blackstone Library in November.*



## From the Harrison House

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Branford Historical Society  
124 Main Street, P.O. Box 504  
Branford, Connecticut 06405  
(203) 488-4828

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# Membership News


Membership is at its all time high. Currently there are 252 members. Since our last Newsletter in the spring, twelve individuals and families have joined the Society. Our new members are Joan Ahern, Attorney Todd R. Bainer, Cheri Elliott, Shirley Girouard, Mary Lou Iovene, Rod & Elaine Keith, John B. Lust, Jr., Warren & Judith Spehar, Mark Spinello Sr., Mark Spinello, Jr. Jack & Jean Wood and Suzanne Zdanowicz. You are all a very welcomed addition to the Historical Society membership.

Our drive for 2007 membership will begin later this month with a special letter to all members. In 2006, 100% of our members paid their dues. This wonderful response was very rewarding to me and to the Society.

The hulling of the strawberries and sale of the Strawberry Short Cakes at the Branford Festival was a time for new and old members to work side by side and get acquainted.

The preservation of landmarks was highlighted this year with landscaping of the restored Cenotaph located behind Town Hall. Our Preservation and Landmarks Committee, Chaired by Martha Bradshaw, continues to monitor the sale of historic homes and to try to prevent their destruction.

If you happen to talk to a friend or a family member and know they are interested in preserving Branford's historic homes and keeping its history alive, contact me with their name and address. I will send them an invitation to become a member.

 Jeanne McParland, Chair  
468-5433

## IN MEMORIAM

*Robert Bescher*

*Past President, 1999-2001*



## Another Successful Strawberry Festival

With dozens of organizers, hullers, whippers, and servers the Society had another successful Strawberry Festival on Fathers Day weekend.

The Society realized a profit of \$4504.08 which helps to maintain the Harrison House and to preserve Branford's historic artifacts. We thank all the volunteers and the community for their support.

## Historic House Plaques and Research Service

Did you know that the Branford Historical Society offers house plaques to identify historic structures and landmarks in Branford. Properties are acknowledged by date of construction and by original or historically recognized owner. Buildings built prior to 1945 are eligible for a plaque.

The wooden plaques are 11-1/4 x 17 inches, painted white, with black lettering and a border. Stainless steel screws are included. The cost is \$55.00.

While we maintain extensive inventories of historic data, research to identify the date of construction and ownership of your house may be needed. This can be provided for an additional fee of \$25.00.

If your house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, you may request a Bronze National



*Sample Historic House Plaque*

Register plaque. The cost is \$35.00 and includes shipping fees.

For more information, please contact Martha Bradshaw at 481-9980, or visit [branfordhistory.org](http://branfordhistory.org) to download a brochure and order form.

*✍ Martha Bradshaw,  
Chairperson, Preservation  
of Historic Structures &  
Landmarks*



*You are invited to the  
**REDEDICATION**  
OF THE CENOTAPH*

*Veterans Day*

*Sunday November 12th*

*Time: 1:30 p.m. at the Cenotaph*

*(In case of rain: High School Gym)*

# History of the Farm River

with Jane Peterson Bouley

Thursday, November 16  
at 7:00 p.m.

**J**oin the Friends of the Farm River Estuary and the Branford Historical Society for another delightful and informative journey through local history with Jane Bouley, Branford's Town Historian.

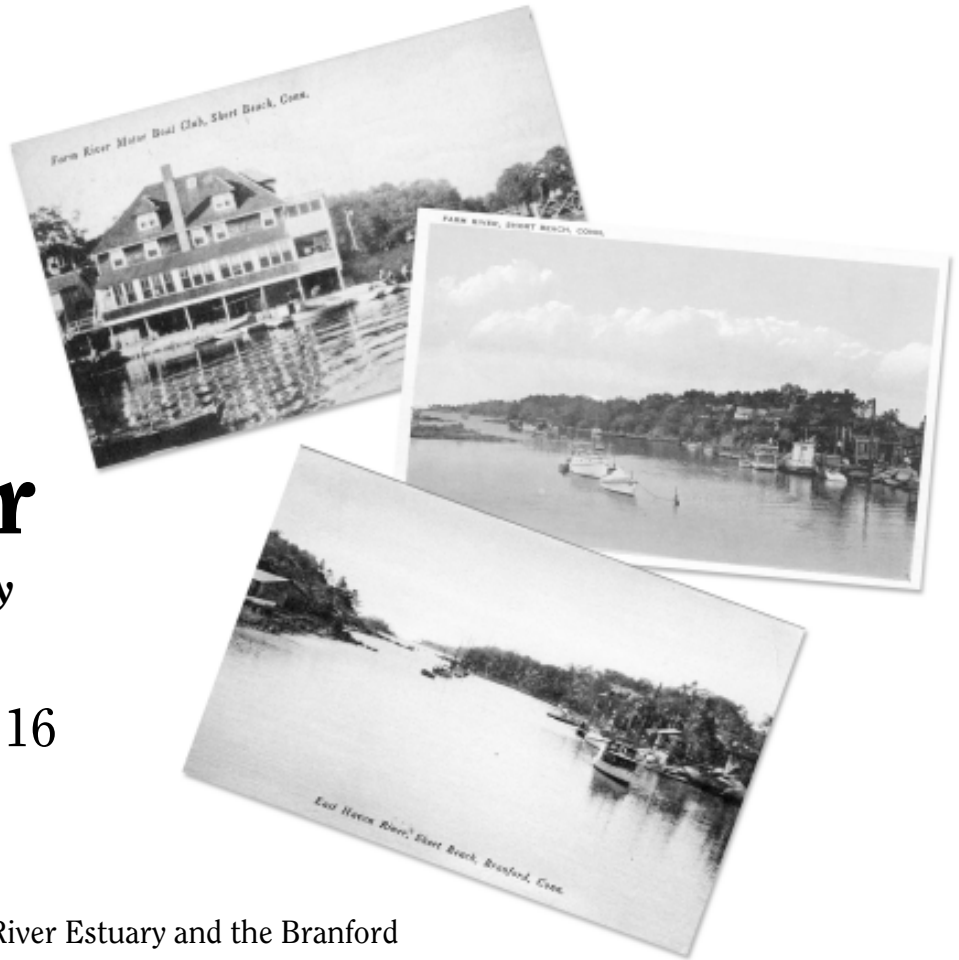
In this entertaining slide-show lecture, we'll take a historic trip starting at the source of the Farm River in North Branford down to its outlet at Long Island Sound. Along the way we'll be stopping at a Connecticut Governor's mansion, and riding on the trolley past the old Quarry and Beacon Hill. We'll get to meet our own Nellie Green at her infamous establishment. And, we'll learn about the many commercial and leisure activities the river has hosted over the years, all illustrated with historic photos.

This program, co-sponsored by the Friends of the Farm River Estuary and the Branford Historical Society, will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the James Blackstone Memorial Library in Branford. Everyone is invited to join us free of charge with refreshments following the presentation.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Friends of the Farm River Estuary  
**488-7691**

Branford Historical Society  
**481-2996**



# From the Archives

## Furnishing the Old New England House 1650 to 1750

*by Nancy Hendricks*

In the early 1600s homes of the poor farmers and sailors of Branford, comfort was unthought of and at least outwardly despised by the Puritans and Pilgrims. The rooms were quite small and inadequate and houses had very little furniture at all and what they did have, was confined to bare essentials. It is true that they had some basic simple, but very lovely chests, long boxes standing 20 to 30 inches high. Some of these chests immigrants had brought with them and others were made after they arrived. Those that were made here were made from pine boards with some simple design or the owners initials carved on the front. Some had feet formed by extending the end boards downward a few inches, but many did not. The chests that were brought from the homeland, Holland and England, were practically all made of oak and readily obtainable woods such as ash, pine and maple. Before long the New England joiners and carpenters were making chests with a drawer below. Then came desks with several drawers, and from there they went to chests mounted on legs, sometimes beautifully carved or painted or both. For a long time these chests served many purposes—seats, tables and even beds.

The second most important item of furniture in the Puritan homes was the bed. Those less well

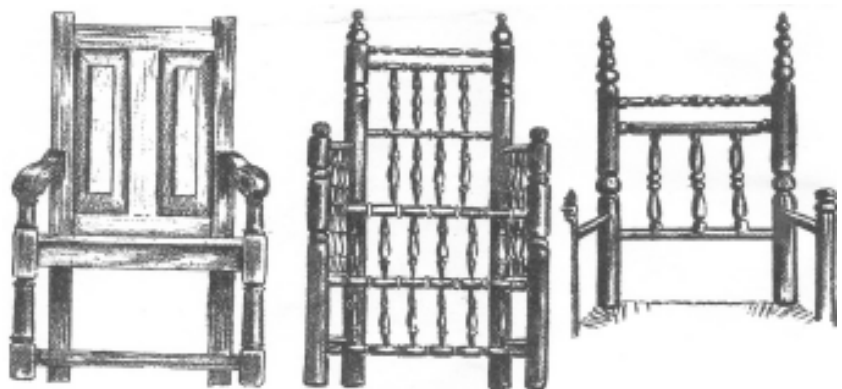
off slept on pallets on the floor. Others who could afford the time and had the skill made themselves a one-point bed. This had only one leg and two sides fastened to the walls. Going to the other extreme, some beds, called press beds, had six legs and a hinge so that they could be folded up when not in use. Space was at a premium.

By the middle of the 17th century, however, the majority of New England's population had comparatively well furnished homes. At least, they had a choice of tables—the hutch type, which also served as a small table or even a seat. The trestle tables could be taken apart after every meal for the same space saving reason. If space was not important, they could be permanently assembled as a stretcher, sawbuck or refectory table. Around 1682 someone in Connecticut came up with a small

butterfly table, so beloved by antique dealers today.

Chairs were scarce items in the beginnings. Often only the head of the house was accorded the dignity of a seat at table. The rest of the family sat on long forms (benches) or pulled up backless joint stool. The first chairs were massive affairs called Wainscot chairs. They had flat, straight backs of solid or paneled wood and flat wood seats. An early Governor of Massachusetts, named Carver, brought a chair to New England with him and thereby achieved immortality. The Carver chair is well known and much admired. The three oldest American chair styles were the Wainscot, Brewster and Carver. The Carver was the least Spartan of the two having a rush seat and quite a few less spindles on the front.

*To be continued in the next issue.*



*The three earliest American chair styles: Wainscot, Brewster, Carver*

# Branford Historical Society Sampler Collection

The Connecticut Historical Society Museum in Hartford is conducting a survey of Connecticut needlework before 1840 for an upcoming exhibition and book. Until recently needlework was one of the chief occupations for women, whose work represented domestic virtues like patience, obedience, and piety, and gave them an outlet for artistic expression. Their designs embellished many different household items from bed coverlets, petticoats and other garments, purses, and wall hangings commemorating important events and family history. Embroidery lessons were part of a young girl's education, and her progress was often demonstrated in the production of a sampler. Normally letters of the alphabet and numerals were displayed in different stitches and styles of lettering in a variety of colors to form a pretty composition. The Branford Historical Society's collection includes a number of these samplers from the hands of Branford girls. Our oldest piece does not have an alphabet, but its maker has arranged some biographical facts in the same format reading:

Nancy Andrews aged 11 born in Branford State of Connecticut County of New Haven In the Year of our Lord 1815

From the following year we have a more typical sampler with three alphabets, one in capital and two in small letters, and the numerals one through nine arranged on lines of varying patterns and colors. It was made by Mary Plant, who recorded her age, fourteen, and the place and

date: Branford, June 8, 1816. According to Jane Bouley's genealogical records both Nancy and Mary died young. Nancy died just one month after her marriage at age 27 and Mary was unmarried when she died at age 33.

Another sampler of slightly later date was donated by the McQueen family, formerly of S. Main Street, Branford. It records that its maker, Mary Jane Dewey of New Haven, attended the Lancasterian School. Although only eleven years old when she completed it in 1836, Mary's talent and ambition stand out in the fancy floral border and an edifying dictum, "Hear Counsel and Receive Instructions." Our most unusual sampler has four lines of what are thought to be Turkish letters in addition to the English alphabet and the common Arabic numerals. According to the report of its donor, Jane Sanders, it was probably inspired by the missionary travels of a woman residing in Branford in 1856. Its color scheme is more vibrant with many shades of red, brown and green.

The Connecticut Historical Society Museum is also interested in finding early examples of needlework in private homes and collections. If you would like to share your heirlooms for the survey, please contact me at 483-9075.

*Amy Prescher,  
Chairperson, Accessions*



Please join us  
for a  
**Holiday Gathering**  
Sunday, December 3  
1:00-3:30 p.m.

It is always an enjoyable afternoon with refreshments, entertainment, and decorations in the historic Harrison House to get everyone in the holiday spirit. Featured is a raffle of a Christmas tree fully decorated and flower arrangements. Guides are on hand to show guests the Harrison House.

Please volunteer to decorate or bake. Leave a message our new Hospitality Chair Cheri Elliot at 488-3512 for baking or Mary Boyle for decorating.

Watch for details on our website, [branfordhistory.org](http://branfordhistory.org).

# The Short Beach Union Church

The Short Beach Union Church was founded in 1883 by summer and year round residents to provide a place of gathering for the people of Short Beach and surrounding neighborhoods. In less than two weeks, the community collected funds and built the chapel with mostly volunteer labor and materials. The master carpenter was Charles E. Bedell of New Haven and an architect, if any, has not been identified. The building is one of the oldest non-denominational churches in Connecticut in continuous operation.

The exterior of the church was originally bead board siding with a cedar shingled steeple and roof. There was architectural ornamentation on the steeple and around the doors and windows. The base color of the church was cream with green trim. Over the years some changes took place including two rear additions and the removal of some decorative trim. The exterior of the building was covered with cedar shingles about 1920 and painted brown.



In 2005 the members and friends of the Short Beach Union Church identified that the exterior of the building needed rehabilitation and a committee was established to oversee the project. Phase I is near completion which has restored the building to its original design and colors. Phase 2 will include final repairs on the steeple and a new cedar shingled roof with the goal of finishing the

project for the 125th anniversary in 2008.

The Short Beach Union Church Historic Restoration Committee (P. O. Box 2083, Short Beach, CT 06405) continues to raise funds for this worthwhile project. Come by and take a look!

*Jane Peterson Bouley,  
Vice President*

## Branford Historical Society Membership Application

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

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

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

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

- |                                       |         |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business     | \$50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing | \$50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining   | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family       | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual   | \$10.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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

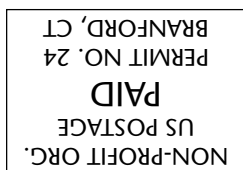
TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your support.*

# Historical Society Publications & Prints

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

<i>The History of Damascus Cemetery</i> , by Jane Bouley and Martha Bradshaw .....	\$25.00
Reprint of <i>Malachi Linsley's Diary</i> , by Betty Linsley and Elizabeth Radulski .....	\$25.00
<i>Early History of Branford</i> .....	\$5.00
<i>Thimble Islands Book</i> , 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



Branford Historical Society  
Post Office Box 504  
Branford, Connecticut 06405