



# From The Harrison House

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The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

January 2020

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## Greetings as We Start the New Year Together!

2019 saw the Society hosting many visits to its headquarters and museum, the Harrison House, both from our usual (and favorite) three groups – Branford’s public-school third graders – to several groups from other schools. We even had some visitors taking part in nationwide family reunions and making the Harrison House one of their stops.

Of course, speaking of visitors, the Society continued its Saturday open-house tours from June through September, available to any visitor and offered free of charge, and also hosted its annual Holiday Party at the Harrison House in December.

Come visit the Harrison House this year if you haven’t stopped in for a while – you’ll be amazed at the new items on display, especially the many items acquired over the past few years which reflect everyday life during some fascinating historical periods, including the First World War. There’s further information about this year’s acquisitions below.

Away from the Harrison House...the Society hosted presentations on everything from the art and imagery of Connecticut’s war memorials to the development of the Pine Orchard area in the late 1800s and early 1900s – that program drew over 100 attendees! (Photo on the next page.) The Society hopes that you’ll be attending its presentations in 2020, featured on the next page.

There were several brand-new events, too! Society members and friends marched in the Columbus Day and Holiday (Tree-Lighting) Parades, and the Society displayed part of its art collection at June’s Branford Armory Show.

And, we’d be remiss to not mention the Society’s Annual Strawberry Shortcake Festival on the Branford Green during the Branford Festival in June.

It was a busy year both inside and outside the Harrison House this year, and we hope that you’ll find time to volunteer for one (or more, we hope!) of our activities, whether it’s marching in a parade, decorating the Harrison House for the Holiday party, working on the Harrison House and its grounds, assisting with hosting a tour or with preparations for the Strawberry Shortcake Festival, or in any other way. To volunteer, you can send an email to [Info@BranfordHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:Info@BranfordHistoricalSociety.org) or leave a message at 203-488-4828.

## A One-of-a-Kind Event (in Recent History, at Least)

This June, the Branford Armory was open to the public for the first time in almost twenty years! The Branford Arts & Cultural Alliance (BACA) led the planning for the event, partnering with the Society and the Second Company of the Governor’s Foot Guard to present a day-long series of activities in celebration of Branford’s 375th anniversary. There were music performances by the Foot Guard’s Band and the Stony Creek Fife & Drum Corps, and the Society exhibited art from its collection, featuring scenes of Branford as interpreted by local artists, together with some vintage paintings which celebrated the beauty of our community.

# Programs/Presentations Scheduled (so far!) for 2020

Mike Russo, the Society's Programs Chair, has arranged some great, and varied, programs for the coming year, and we look forward to seeing you! We'll send out notices as new programs are added.

- Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>: Branford Recreation Director Alex Palluzzi will speak at the newly remodeled Community House/Senior Citizens' Center. His talk will cover the history of the department and his mentorship under the guidance of past director Joe Trapasso. While you're there for the program, tour the brand-new facility.
- Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>: Architectural Preservationist Erin Fink, Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, will present "*Funding for the Rehabilitation of Historic Homes*", information on how to earn a rebate for the cost of up to 30% of certain rehabilitation work on qualifying homes (those listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places – Branford has many qualifying homes, including those in the newly listed Short Beach Historic District!), focusing on the application process and rehabilitation requirements. It will be held at the Community House and is being co-sponsored by the Stony Creek Museum and the Society.
- Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>: Branford resident Bob Barnett will speak at Willoughby Wallace Library on the evolution of secondary school education, focusing on Branford. Bob is the author of *Eight Schools: Campus and Culture*.
- May: Annual Meeting and Dinner: The date and venue are still being worked out; the meeting will feature a presentation on the 1824 and 1825 tour of the United States by the Marquis de Lafayette, including his visit to Branford – and the Society has a memento of that Branford visit on display at the Harrison House! Come learn more about the tour (which covered not only the original states, but also extended as far as Illinois and Louisiana), and about Lafayette himself, from a recognized expert.
- Wednesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>: Society Board member and former Historical Society President John Ifkovic will lead a discussion focusing on the changes to our town's Main Street through the years. Please come and share your own memories of the center of town. We will meet at Blackstone Library.
- Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>: Local author and Society member, Ted Braun will speak on a portion of his book, *The Barkers of Branford*, in a talk titled "Branford at the Turn of the Century: Wheels of Progress" and includes information about the Golden Age of bicycles, street cars, and the 'Horseless Carriage'. The event will be held at Blackstone Library.

All events start at 7 PM and are free (except for the Annual Dinner) and open to the public. Please join us! Here's a photo from the Pine Orchard presentation this year:



# New Items to See at the Harrison House

The Society has been blessed this year with the receipt of many notable donated items ('accessions', as they're called by our hard-working Accessions Chair, Mary Hitchcock, and the equally hard-working Jane Bouley, Town Historian and overall wonderful Society volunteer). It's impossible to list all of the accessions, so here's a quick list of superlatives:

- Tallest (and likely the oldest): A tall case clock, which we'd commonly call a grandfather clock, made by E. Sanford in the town of Plymouth, Connecticut c. 1810, and a beauty to behold with its gesso face.
- Heaviest: The lintel from the former Town jail, which was located behind Town Hall for many years and then demolished after a stint as groundskeeping storage for the Town Green. Here's a photo of it:



- Smallest (it's a tie!): Any of the half-dozen whole nutmegs received in a small tin case; and, a thick, curved needle in a net-mending kit.
- Most unusual, and perhaps the most technologically advanced for its time: A Southern New England Telephone switchboard console from New Haven which served Branford SNET accounts of the time, including Town Hall, the Board of Education offices, several churches, and a few commercial establishments.
- Most reflective of Branford's involvement with the affairs of the wider world: Uniforms, photos, and memorabilia from the families of several World War I soldiers from Branford, including a 'Doughboy' helmet. You can also learn about Branford soldiers' involvement in the Pancho Villa Expedition.
- Most personal: An individual's deposit book from the old Branford Federal Savings Bank.
- Most artistic: A pencil drawing of the old Farm River bridge, c. 1879.



These items, and many more received this year, will be on display at the Harrison House, with explanatory notecards carefully composed by Mary and Jane.

If you have an item that you think would aid the Society in its mission "to discover and preserve the history of Branford, Connecticut by the acquisition and preservation of artifacts, documents, and records...and actively promote Branford's history to the community", then please contact the Society at [Accessions@BranfordHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:Accessions@BranfordHistoricalSociety.org) or call leave a message at 203-488-4828.

## Jane Fortune: In Memoriam, from Matt Radulski, President

It's with deep sadness that I report that Jane Fortune, longtime Society volunteer and the Society's Publicity Chair at the time of her death, passed away this Fall. No words of mine could do justice to Jane's many contributions to the Branford Historical Society. Because many of you worked with her longer than I've been active with the Society, I won't attempt to define her work or personality except to say that I was ALWAYS glad to see her and that her cheerfulness ALWAYS made me smile. Rest in peace, Jane.

# Tours and Guides: Busy, As Always, with Both Regular Saturday Tours and Special Events

As noted on the first page, the guides (led by Guides and Tour Management Chair Susan Rood) were busy this year! As has been the case for many years, the Society hosted the third graders from all three of Branford's public elementary schools; this year, students from Branford's Connecticut Experiential Learning Center also toured, as did a group from Branford High School. Additionally, several family groups visited, including members of the Harrison family, descendants of the original Branford settlers whose family built the Harrison House. The Society extends its thanks to all of those members who volunteer their time for the regular Saturday open-house days June through September and also those other members who have helped out for the school and family visits. Here's a photo of guide (and House and Grounds Chair) Joe Naylor speaking with members of the Harrison family:



The Branford Historical Society  
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**RETURN SERVICE  
REQUESTED**

**Check out our expanded and improved website – [www.BranfordHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.BranfordHistoricalSociety.org) – brought to you by Branford's own Webbersaur.us web-development agency (led by Chris Hauman) and the Society's Treasurer and all-around "get it done" volunteer, Josh Russo!**