



From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Spring 2004, Volume 9, Issue 2

From the President's Desk

Despite the calendar, and regardless of longing, we all have our own set of clues that assure us that spring is approaching. For some, it's crocuses, for others, it's the inevitable Ides of April. The other evening, in a rare quiet moment, the traffic noises rested long enough to allow through the unmistakable "tink"... "tink"... "tink" of baseballs shagged off a metal bat for outfield warm-ups. Yes, spring is finally upon us, and blooming into a very active season.

We are looking forward to our first **Quilt Show, "A Celebration of Quilts Past and Present,"** on Friday, May 14th and Saturday, May 15th. Ann Collier, who proposed this project, has been a dynamo, driving her committee with a passion for needlecraft and experience borne from a resume of other successful shows. By every indication, this will be an important exhibition, based on the number and quality of pieces on display. There are still a number of opportunities for volunteer participation. This has been a great opportunity for us to branch out in other areas of historic and cultural interest.

In addition to the quilt show, we are looking forward to the **Annual Dinner Meeting** at the Owenego. Maureen DaRos has a commitment from the Mudflats of Stony Creek to provide the entertainment. By every



indication, it will be a fabulous time. If you've never attended the Dinner Meeting, this is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed - the ambiance of the Owenego on a spring evening, a great meal and the Mudflats too. I look forward to seeing you there.

Shortly after the Annual Meeting, we will be gearing up for the annual **Strawberry Festival**. This is a major fundraiser, but more importantly, it is the non-pariel reunion-get-to-know-you-everybody-can-help-event. Since it has been going on for such a long time, the organization runs like clockwork, so there's none of the frustration or disorientation that volunteers sometimes experience. Your interests and talents can be used and will be appreciated.

In case you're looking for a report on the retreat that I mentioned in the last newsletter, look no further. Due to scheduling complexities, it was necessary to postpone the retreat. We

continue to remain open to your comments and ideas - both for discussion at the retreat and during the regularly scheduled Board Meetings. It is important to us to have everyone involved generating ideas and helping to guide the direction of the Society. We have near-term concerns and long-term goals that need to be tested. As long as you go to the trouble of maintaining your membership, we need to know how this organization can be as worthwhile as possible. We deeply appreciate the dues, but your thoughts and opinions are of great value to us.

By the time you receive this, Jane Bouley will have already presented the Damascus Cemetery program that she researched in cooperation with Martha Bradshaw. Original, scholarly research, and careful documentation are rapidly becoming lost arts with the superficialities of the Internet. Branford and the Society owe them both a tremendous debt of gratitude for their interest and dedication. Like hints of spring, the clues to our collective past are varied, personal and easily overlooked.

Joe Chadwick, President

From the Harrison House

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Branford Historical Society
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2004 Annual Dinner Meeting

Please join us on Thursday, May 20th for our Annual Dinner Meeting, which will include a very special performance by “The Mudflats”

We are very fortunate to have for this year’s Annual Dinner entertainment, The Mudflats, a unique local musical ensemble. The group began singing together in the village of Stony Creek some ten years ago. Although members have come and gone, the mission and intent of their music has remained the same—to share with one another, and the community at large, the love of music, the fulfillment of a group effort and the fun of working with kindred spirits. Currently, the group consists of two women and four men, spanning a couple of decades in age and coming from a diversity of backgrounds. When not singing, members contribute to the greater good as scientist, lay professor, writer, developer, architect and educator. Their music

incorporates a number of styles and eras, from classical to gospel, country to pop, and show tunes to ballads, with a little light jazz and doo-wop thrown in for good measure.

Don’t miss this delightful evening of good company and great entertainment! Many thanks to Maureen DaRos for assuming the responsibility for program arrangements.



Don't miss the Society's Annual Dinner Meeting at the Owenego!

Membership Report

Patricia Broughal Gail Standish have recently become members of our Society. We extend a warm welcome to both.

I want to thank every member for their continuing support of the Society’s mission to educate and foster interest in the history of Branford, a well as to encourage the preservation of its landmarks, buildings and antiquities. Please keep our organization in mind when you talk to family and friends and encourage them to join the Society. You may call me at 468-5433 with their names and I will send out membership information accordingly. Also, please remember to check your label on the newsletter to make sure your membership is current (C) or needs to be renewed (R).

Jeanne McParland, Membership

A Celebration of Quilts Past and Present

FRIDAY, MAY 14, 12:00 - 8:00 P.M.
& SATURDAY, MAY 15, 10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

Presented by the Branford Historical Society
at the Trinity Episcopal Church on the Green in Branford

- View antique, vintage and contemporary quilts and wall hangings, as well as period and handmade clothing on display from collections across New England. A number of items preserved by the Society for the Town of Branford will also be on display.
- Learn more in the program booklets, and from white glove attendants on hand to show quilts for visitors.
- Visit several local vendors who will show and sell craft and quilting supplies, including the Quilter's Habitat and Needle Pulling Thread.
- Enjoy refreshments on the lovely Town Green after the Show. And on Saturday, visit the Branford Women's Club 12th Annual Arts & Crafts Fair on the Green!

Admission: \$6.00 per person

All proceeds will directly benefit the Branford Historical Society, which is dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of artifacts documents and records of Branford provenance.

Sponsored by
THE GUILFORD SAVINGS BANK

To volunteer at the event or for general information, please contact the Ann Collier, (203) 488-5735.

From the Archives

“Colonial Pewter 1725 - 1850”

Pewter has played an important role in the development of civilization, both as a medium for artistic expression, and as a material from which domestic utensils were fashioned. Pewter was probably first made in the Bronze Age (between 2000 and 500 BC) but the first known pewter vessels were made and used by the Egyptians. The records of its domestic use commence with caldrons employed for boiling meat at the coronation of Edward I in 1247. The Romans utilized pewter extensively and by the time of their invasion of the British Isles had developed considerable skill. By the Renaissance, most European countries were well advanced in pewter working. It was England, however, that became the pewter center of the medieval world. During this time, roughly around the 1300's, the pewter guilds formed and grew in power. Upon the discovery of the New World, pewter was introduced in the Americas where it was a favored material for the production of Colonial domestic utensils such as chargers, candlesticks, teapots, pitchers, flagons, porringers and tankards.

Like most of the earliest colonial crafts, the story of pewter is one of slowly changing traditions and rich sources of material. Material and methods of production hark back to the craft practices of medieval England. Tin, always the chief metal of the pewter alloy, came from the famous mines of Cromwell where the abundant ore cassiterite was found in solid, broad veins. Large lumps of this ore, bluish white in color, streaked with yellow brown and rocklike in appearance, were hoisted into heaps near the entrances of mine shafts. They were then broken into smaller pieces and sent to mills for crushing. From there, the ore was taken to furnaces for smelting and molding into tin ingots or blocktin, as it was called. The best quality pewter ware contained as much as ninety-nine percent of pure tin. Tin gave pewter its light color and soft luster.

Pewterers emigrated to this country as early as the seventeenth century and set up trade with evident success. There was plenty of old pewter to refurbish into new forms. The rarity of American pewter dating from the first periods of settlement results from wear and the common

practice of casting old pewter into new. One of these magnificent English chargers, which survived from the 17th century, is now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. It is probably the earliest known pewter with an American history. It was owned by William and Jane Collier, who were said to have been the wealthiest inhabitants of the Plymouth Colony. According to tradition, they brought the charger with them from England when they settled in Plymouth in 1633.

Pewter making was a big business in England and colonial America and estimates of pewter importation to America are astounding. By the 1760's, the annual importation amounted to more than 300 tons. American pewterers employed a high percentage of tin in their ware and maintained fairly close control of this alloy in order to successfully compete with ware imported from England. Importation of finished English pewter must have helped to maintain standards in this country and also supplied the colonial pewterer with a continual replen-

Continued on page 5.



From the Archives, continued

ishment of raw material as plates became damaged and worn.

In this country, almost up to the first decade of the nineteenth century, pewter was made by relatively uncomplicated craft methods. The necessary tools were few: a pewterer could set up a shop with a furnace, pots, molds, lathe, anvil, hammers, files, scrapers and a workbench. Pewter was formed by pouring molten alloy into smoked and heated bronze molds. After knocking the pewter from its mold, edges were trimmed and the surface scraped, skinned, or peeled away on the lathe, and the metal polished. Pewter made by this method was necessarily heavy bodied and durable. The surface of the metal had the appearance of compactness, utility, simplicity and strength. Pewterers working in Connecticut from the mid-1730's to the middle of the nineteenth century produced virtually the complete range of forms found in this country. The impetus on Connecticut craftsmen to produce this wide range began with and was nurtured by Thomas and Josiah Danforth, who were responsible for the training and development of many other artisans who eventually moved on to work in other parts of eastern America.

 *Nancy Hendricks*
Archivist

25th Annual Strawberry Festival



The Society's Silver Anniversary Strawberry Festival will be held on the Branford Green on Saturday, June 19th, from 10:30 AM to 4:00 PM, or as long as the berries hold out. In the event of rain, shortcakes will be served in the undercroft (basement) of Trinity Episcopal Church. As in the past, coffee and lemonade will be offered and included in the ticket price. Ticket prices are \$4.50 per person, pre-sale, and \$5.00 on the day of the Festival.

A special letter, enclosing four (4) pre-sale priced tickets, will be mailed out very soon by Richmond Browne, Tickets Chair (315-1237), to all Society members and others. Please send in your checks as soon as possible following receipt of your letter.

Other Festival Committee Chairs are Winnifred Judge (488-8755), Strawberry Hulling; Sandra Browne (315-1237), Whippers; Judy Hayes (488-3119), Servers; Eva Peterson (488-0450), Kitchen; Ann Collier (488-5735), Beverages; and Pete Peterson (488-0450), Set-Up and Clean-Up.

Your willingness to volunteer will enable our 25th Strawberry Festival to be a resounding success.

 *Bill Davis, General Chair*

Get Online with History

www.branfordhistory.org

FROM THIS ISSUE

Learn more about topics from this issue of our newsletter:

Shoreline Quilters Guild

www.shorelinequilters.netfirms.com

New England Quilt Museum

www.nequiltmuseum.org

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

www.cttrust.org

Branford Folk Music Society

www.folknotes.org/branfordfolk

Branford Festival

www.branfordfestival.com

OTHER SITES OF INTEREST:

The Society for Industrial Archeology

www.ss.mtu.edu/IA/sia.html

Barn Again!

www.agriculture.com/barnagain/

Eyewitness History

www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/

 *Jen Payne*

From the Attic Publications and Prints

2003 Accessions Report

Every year at this time, we like to thank donors who have given items for display in the collections either in the house, the archives at the library, or now in the barn. We received many photographs, post-cards and family heirloom clothing.

Many thanks go out to Jane Bouley, the Town of Branford, Brian Deevey of Virginia, Nancy Gaylord, George Goeben, Andrea Mullen, Dorothy Perkins, Polly Petre of Vermont and Anton Wohlert.

Three items were purchased—an 1840's lamp, an old fashioned cherry pitter and utensils to complete our table settings.

If you have items you would like to donate to the Society, you can talk to a Board member or call me at 432-3770, 488-8265 or email maureen.daros@yale.edu.

Maureen DaRos, Accessions Chair

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



“You never know where the Connecticut Trust’s name will turn up. We recently heard from Mara Kaminowitz, a student at the University of Connecticut, who had written a class paper on our 2003 list of The Most Important threatened Historic Places in Connecticut (CPN, September/October 2003). The paper, written for a geography class, used a numerical goal programming system to evaluate the sites and decide which ones should be given priority. Based on six factors-condition, property value, threat of demolition, public or private ownership, age, and landmark status-the three sites that rates the highest were the **Wyllys Russell House in Branford**, the Seth Wetmore House in Middletown, and the Remington Rand Library in Norwalk.”

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, Newsletter 2004

A SUMMER DAY 1869 Shells by Ella Wheeler Wilcox Milwaukee: Hauser & Storey, 1873.

There's a gaping rent in the curtain
That longs for a needle and thread,
There's a garment that ought to be
finished,
And a book that wants to be read.
There's a letter that needs to be
answered,
There are clothes to fold away,
And I know these tasks are waiting,
And ought to be done to-day.

But how can I mend the curtain,
While watching this silvery cloud,
And how can I finish th' garment,
When the robin calls so loud.
And the whispering trees are telling
Such stories above my head,
That I can but lie and listen,
And the book is all unread.

If I try to write the letter,
I am sure one half the words
Will be in the curious language
Of my chattering friends,
the birds.
The lilacs bloom in the sunshine,
The roses nod and smile,
And the clothes that ought to be
folded
And ironed, must wait awhile.

I lie in the locust shadows,
And gaze at the summer sky,
Bidding the cares and troubles
And trials of life pass by.
The beautiful locust blossoms
Are falling about my feet,
And the dreamy air is laden
With their odors rare and sweet.

The honey-bees hum in the clover,
The grasses rise and fall,
The robin stops and listens,
As he hears the brown thrush call.
The humming-bird sings to me
softly,
The butterfly flits away—
Oh what could be sweeter than
living,
This beautiful summer day!



2004 Annual Dinner Reservation Form

MAY 20, 2004

**6:30 p.m. at the Owenego
Inn, Indian Neck**

**Cost: \$28.00 per person
Guests & Public Welcome**

Cash Bar will be open
at 5:30 p.m. with selected hors
d'oeuvres. Buffet will feature:
carved turkey, ham, seafood
newburgh with rice, pasta
selection with meatballs,
seasonal vegetable, salad bar,
dessert and coffee.

**RESERVATIONS MUST
BE IN BY MAY 13TH**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone #: _____

Number Attending: _____ @ \$28.00 per person

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____

RETURN RESERVATION FORM WITH CHECK TO:

**Winnifred Judge,
31 Pawson Park Rd.
Branford, CT 06405**

Make checks payable to
Branford Historical Society
Phone: (203) 488-8755

Historical Society News & Notes

A Celebration of Quilts Past & Present

The Branford Historical Society, in cooperation with Trinity Episcopal Church, will hold a quilt show entitled "Presenting a Celebration of Quilts Past and Present" on Friday, May 14th from 12:00 Noon to 8:00 PM and Saturday, May 15th from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The show is sponsored by the Guilford Savings Bank. An impressive array of antique and contemporary quilts and wall hangings will be displayed across the pews in the sanctuary of Trinity Church, 1109 Main Street, along with interesting clothing, both vintage and current. Admission is \$6.00. Representatives from Quilters

Habitat and Needle Pulling Thread will offer information on basic quilting procedures in the Parish Hall. Quilt making materials will also be available for purchase by interested visitors.

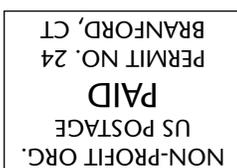
Do plan to attend this most interesting and eye-pleasing display of one of our nation's most important domestic legacies - the American household quilt.

Thank You

I wish to thank all the volunteer guides for donating their time to enable visitors to see Branford's wonderful asset, the Harrison House. The following guides have done that for 10 or more years: Jane Cheek, Peg Hampton, Betty Mount, and Jean Sunny. Thank you. — *Anton Wohlert, Guide Chairman*

Barn Displays...

Arnold "Pete" Peterson is looking for volunteers to help with displays of historical acquisitions donated to the Society to be placed in the barn. If you can give the Society a couple of hours of your time, please call Pete at 488-0450. Thanks.



Branford Historical Society
Post Office Box 504
Branford, Connecticut 06405