



# From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Summer 2007, Volume 12, Issue 2

## From the President

### THE RELIGIOUS ORIGINS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

July brings Independence Day, and a revolutionary declaration that all men are created equal. In the Old World, those of royal birth were, at their creation, superior to those of noble birth, who were superior to those of common birth. Nothing one did in one's lifetime could alter one's status. The basic premise that all men were equal at birth was truly revolutionary.

So how did the idea that all men are equal infuse itself into our national psyche?

It did not come from the South, and slave owners and traders like Jefferson. It came with the Pilgrims of Plymouth.

The Pilgrims are often called Puritans, but they were not. Puritans believed the Church of England could be purified; the Pilgrims believed the Church was too far gone to be saved. The Pilgrims were Separatists. They believed they had to separate from the Church of England to worship God properly. For the Church of England was a feudal organization, with the King at its head, and bishops and priests, the lords spiritual, above the common people. The Pilgrims believed that all men were equal before God, and their separate churches were governed in a wholly democratic way: the members voted.

For this reason, their churches became known as Congregational Churches. Each church is a separate entity, and any matter including basic theological doctrine, is decided by a vote of the congregation. In many cases, those that disagreed with the majority left to form their own churches, often subscribing to a different theological doctrine. In the 19th century, the Plymouth Church voted to become Unitarian! The strict social mores of the Pilgrims have succumbed to popular disfavor, with many Congregational Churches affirming behaviors their ancestors found abhorrent. One lasting legacy of the New England Pilgrims, however, is the American belief that all men are created equal, an idea that led us to reject a King not only as a religious leader, but also as leader of civil government.

 *Peter Black, President*

## Scholarship Award

The Branford Historical Society has provided a \$1000 scholarship which was given to Jennifer Eschrich, a June graduate of Branford High School. The award recipient was selected by the school. To receive the award, the student must have an interest in history.

Jennifer will major in art history/museum studies at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Purchase New York. A high honors student and member of the National Honor Society, Jennifer was named C.A.P.T. (Connecticut Academic Performance Test) scholar. She pursued honors and advanced placement courses whenever appropriate. During May and June, she interned at the Blackstone Library, where she catalogued materials in the Branford History Room. She learned of things some of us may remember i.e. Branford's first ambulance and Branford's nuclear disarmament committee.

A creative individual, she enjoys art, photography, and philosophy. As president of Amnesty International she has assumed the role of urgent action coordinator. She also has been president of Green Scene, an environmental club. She is the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Eschrich.

 *Jackie Ulrich,  
Publicity Chair*

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# Two Special Exhibits at Harrison House

The historic Harrison House, located at 124 Main Street in Branford, is open to the public for guided tours on Saturdays from two to five p.m. through September 29th and by appointment. Admission is free.

The salt box house, recorded on the National Register of Historic Places, is maintained by the Branford Historical Society as a museum.

This summer season the Society is featuring two special exhibits. One is a display of Dutch Fort artifacts and the other is the celebration of the life and works of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Short Beach's famous Victorian poet and writer.

### Dutch Fort Artifacts

The Dutch Fort artifacts were excavated in 1998 and 1999 from a site on Linden Avenue. Based on a map drawn by Ezra Stiles (third Yale president) in the mid-seventeen hundreds, archaeological research was undertaken by the Branford Historical Society and Wesleyan University to seek out evidence of a seventeenth century Dutch Fort. It is widely known yet not well documented that the Dutch were in the Branford area prior to an English settlement in 1644.

On view are photos of the dig along with artifacts representing Branford's early colonial history such as pipe bowls, ceramic plate pieces and musket balls. Also on display are Native and American artifacts illustrating a broad time range from Paleo-Indian to the European contact period.

### Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ella Wheeler Wilcox was born in Wisconsin in 1850 and published her first book of poetry in 1872 called "Drops of Water". Her most famous book "Poems of Passion", was published in 1883 making her an internationally known author and celebrity.

She married Robert Wilcox of Meriden in 1884. They made their home in the Short Beach section of Branford at "The Bungalow". Their home was the meeting place for many artists, authors, poets and actors of the period.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox items on exhibit include calling cards, vintage post cards, artifacts, first edition books and photographs. Also on display are antique Victorian and Art Nouveau silver plate pieces manufactured 1867-1898 by Wilcox Silver Plate Company of Meriden (later known as the International Silver Company)

Harrison House was built in 1724 by Nathaniel Harrison and renovated in the 1930's by renowned architectural historian J. Frederick Kelly. The house also features furniture from the 18th and 19th Centuries as well as an herb and colonial garden tended by the Branford Garden Club and a barn housing antique tools on the two-acre site.

For information or to arrange a special tour call Anton Wohlert 481-4665.

 Jackie Ulrich,  
Publicity Chair

## Display of Dutch Fort Artifacts at the Harrison House


As a graduate student at Wesleyan University I took an archaeology class with Dr. John Pfeiffer, an archaeologist that I worked with in the 1980's from Old Lyme CT. He approached me about a map he had been studying which identified a "Dutch Fort" in Indian Neck. With sponsorship from the Branford Historical Society and the generous cooperation of property owners we set out to find archaeological evidence of an early colonial presence in Branford. The map was made in the mid 1700's by Ezra Stiles a Yale president traveling the coastline making notations of things that he probably observed himself. The Branford records do not have a record of a Dutch Fort—there is mention of Dutch Wharf but as Dr Pfeiffer points out our history is an English history. The Dutch were here before the English not for colonization per se but for resources and trade with the Native Americans. There is plenty of evidence for this elsewhere in New England and New York.

In the Summer of 1998 Angelica and Chet Bentley allowed us to do a test excavation in their side yard—a place that was on the highest rise in the vicinity marked on the Stiles map. Shortly, just 4 or 5" below the turf we came across an unusual feature of sandy daub outline (Feature A). In it we found what is believed to be an early Colonial ceramic piece. Other early artifacts were found such as wrought iron nails, a bottle neck, European chert and trade beads. All evidence for early, possibly pre-Colonial occupation.

That fall the Rosenthals were kind enough to allow us to dig a test trench adjacent to the area we were digging at the Bentley's. Our objective was to trace the extent of the site features. We found evidence of mounded earthen structures which could be interpreted as being associated with the internal structure we found made of daub and with the nails may indicate that Feature A was a wooden structure. We also found an 1800's cistern. Although we did not find conclusive artifacts, the mounded ditch features add to our knowledge of the layout of the site.

The summer of 1999 we went back to the Bentleys for more extensive excavation, made possible by the generous donations of Society members, Branford citizens and businesses to the Dutch Fort Project administered through the Branford Historical Society. We opened an excavation of more than 35' feet by 15' across. We found musket balls (lead shot), more European chert and more of the early ceramic plate found the year before. As interesting as the Colonial and historic items are, we also found Native American artifacts from different time periods. Many were woodland lithics and ceramics dating from 3,000 years ago to the time of contact but we also found a feature that may be from the Paleo-Indian period possibly dating back 10,000 years.

On display are many of the diagnostic artifacts that were found at the Bentley locus. We have just finished cataloguing the collection that will remain at the Harrison House as part of its permanent collection.

 *Maureen DaRos*

## Congratulations Members

Once again our membership gave us great support at the Strawberry Festival held on June 19th. New members joined us for their first time hulling the strawberries, serving, taking tickets and all the other areas needed to have a successful event.

Bernadette DiGuilian and Maureen McGuinness have recently joined the Society. Your membership is valued, welcome!

The majority of the Branford Historical Society's 248 members live in Branford; however, our loyal membership extends to Florida, Vermont, Maryland, Virginia and other towns in Connecticut. There are 232 members who are current in their dues.

You are encouraged to visit Harrison House at 124 Main Street in Branford. On June 2nd the house opened for tours. It is open every Saturday from 2-5 pm thru September 29th. If you have a visitor and want to show them the house at a different time, contact Anton Wohlert at 481-4665 to arrange a private tour.

The house was built by Nathaniel Harrison in 1724 as a "two over two" house and occupied by his family and descendants until 1800. The Linsleys and their descendants lived there until 1938. J. Frederick Kelly, a prominent architectural historian, bought it and restored it to its original condition. It is recorded on The National Register of Historic Places.

As you know the Society is always seeking new members. Please contact me if you have someone interested in keeping Branford's history alive.

 *Jeanne McParland*  
*Membership Chair*



## Fife & Drum Corps Entertained at Annual Dinner



The Stony Creek Fife and Drum Corps performed at our annual meeting and dinner held at the Owenego Inn in May. The members of the Corps were resplendent in their uniforms and put on a wonderful concert of fife and drum music. One felt you were back in “colonial times” as you listened to the music. As part of the indoor program members explained the historical background of the music and instruments. As each member spoke you sensed the musical fellowship and camaraderie of the group.

The home of the Corps is Seaside Hall in Stony Creek where five generations have been taught and in turn teach the art of ancient style fifing and drumming. Seaside Hall is where the Corps meets and practices, and has been home to the Corps for

the past 60 years. Corps uniforms, trophies and awards are housed at Seaside Hall. The Hall was built 1875. Today it has become victim of weather and time and is in need of restoration.

*Winnifred Judge,  
Chair Annual Dinner*

## Successful 28th Annual Strawberry Festival

On a beautiful sunny June 19th day, the lines formed for the Society’s biggest event of the year. The people enjoyed the traditional shortcake topped with freshly hulled strawberries and real whipped cream.

Committee members Jane Bouley, Pete Peterson, Winnifred Judge, Jeanne McParland and Jackie Ulrich organized the work to be done. Arrangements were made to purchase the strawberries from Pells Farm by Bill Davis. Winnifred Judge scheduled 31 people to hull, wash and slice the 380 quarts of strawberries. Jeanne McParland ordered the 84 quarts of cream and 1200 biscuits.

Richmond Browne was in charge of mailing out approximately 1800 the presale tickets. Sandra Browne organized her team to whip the cream as Eva Peterson sugared the strawberries to make them taste extra delicious. Al Paulson was in charge of making coffee and lemonade and scheduling volunteers. Jane Bouley contacted servers, and Pat Black supervised them during the day. Pete Peterson organized all the additional supplies and set up the tent as well as cleaned up after the event. Over 70 people were involved in making our Strawberry Festival one of the most talked about food booths of the Bradford Festival. Comments about the strawberry shortcake were “the best I ever had” and “excellent.”

Thank you to all members who were a part of this wonderful day. *Winnifred Judge*

## “We Are Having a Delightful Lazy Time at Indian Neck”

Indian Neck was a popular vacation spot during the twentieth century with its summer hotels, fine swimming and majestic views. There were over five hundred picture postcards of Indian Neck produced during this period. Favorite scenes were Limewood and Linden Avenue, The Owenege, Montowese House, The Ark, and Sunset Beach.

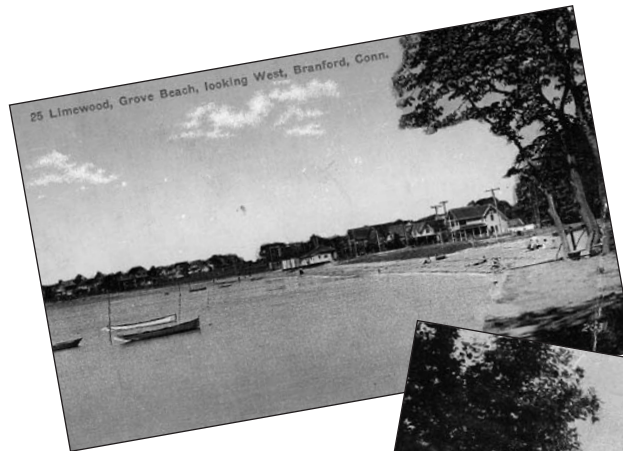
The largest producer of Indian Neck postcards was Charles J. Lounsbury, later C. J. Lounsbury & Sons. Charles (1867-1955) was the grandson of David Lounsbury who established the Owenege Inn in 1847. Charles opened a newsstand in 1912 at 70 Limewood Avenue and delivered the New Haven Register for thirty-seven years. He expanded the store to include ice cream, candy, grocery items, western union, and cottage and boat rentals. He delivered groceries and newspapers to many residents along the shore, using a cart and later a large, open touring car. His son Louis continued the business until he retired in 1962. The Lounsburys produced and sold dozens of postcards at their store.

*“This is Lounsbury’s where we swim.  
The location is beautiful.”*

*“This is the only place to  
get a shore dinner.”*

*“We are feasting on clams,  
crabs, fish and lobster.”*

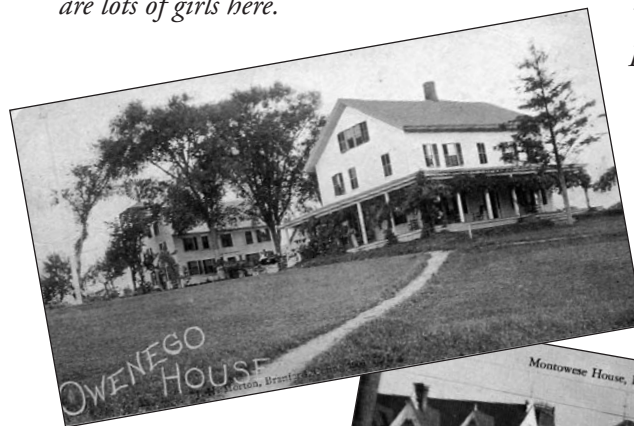
*“I have been bathing  
every day and went  
clamming this morning.”*



*“The views are grand all  
around us.”*

*“We found a peach  
of a place down here at  
Indian Neck. Swell eats,  
good bed.”*

*The Montowese- “This is the  
largest hotel for miles. There  
are lots of girls here.”*



*We are staying at this hotel.  
It is a wonderful experience-  
the sky, air, and water are  
perfect.”*

*“The Ark—I am worn  
out, will be glad when the  
season is over.” Signed,  
Grace Averill*



*Jane Bouley,  
Vice President*

## Scotland's Gift

In the summertime Branford is a playground for young and old. Recently, the Historical Society received a photograph documenting the early twentieth-century love affair with golf. It is a portrait of a boy of thirteen or fourteen seated just inside the threshold of a verandah which opens onto a beautiful yard and seascape in Pine Orchard. He is smartly dressed in 1920s golfing attire: knickers, knee-highs, Norfolk jacket and tie; and balances a set of clubs between his knees. The identity of the sitter, Milton Warner Goss, places him in the circle of founding members of the Pine Orchard Club, which opened its course in 1901. He was the grandson of Alden Young, who owned the estate featured in the photograph and provided land for the Club. Mr. Young, a pioneer in the electric light industry, came from Waterbury to summer in Pine Orchard in the 1890s. Shortly after the completion of his manorial home, called "The Anchorage," (destroyed in 1948), he became a permanent resident and along with his sons-in-law, was responsible for the development of the prime shoreline property. Yowago Avenue, which appears to have a Native American origin, is in fact an amalgamation of Young, Warner and Goss, reflecting this relationship.

The architect of the Pine Orchard golf course, Robert Pryde, was found by happy coincidence. The Scottish immigrant, working for a New Haven cabinetmaker, was sent to build a cherry wardrobe for Justus Hotchkiss, a businessman who was researching the possibility of bringing golf to town with a Yale professor named Theodore Woolsey. As chance would have it, Pryde was an avid

player and had worked as an apprentice repairing clubs at the Scotsraig Golf Club just north of St. Andrew's! He provided the design for a course for the New Haven Golf Club, which opened in 1895 on the site of what is now Albertus Magnus College, and became coach of the Yale golf team. Any number of New Haven members of the Pine Orchard Country Club, possibly the Walter Camps, could have referred him to Young, who sought his services in 1901. By the time this photograph was taken in the 1920s, the demand for tee times had become so great that poor performers among the women and children (scoring over 60 in nine holes) were not permitted to play. Enthusiasm cooled only after the Depression had time to dampen the spirits of all levels of society.

The photograph of Milton Warner Goss is a priceless document on many levels; it tells us about the history of Pine Orchard, golf, childhood, architecture and landscape, leisure and social class, and last, but not least, the history of photography. Although it is a portrait of an individual, it was taken with a panoramic camera, so that the view emerges from

the interior of the verandah in the extreme foreground with the figure just right of center and pans out to an extraordinary depth of the sea in the background. This is not an ordinary snapshot. The panoramic image was generated by means of either a rotating camera or swing lens camera which provided a very wide angle of view. Most often panoramas were used for subjects like group portraits, which allowed the photographer to place the camera much closer to the group, or landscapes. Obviously, the unique composition in the Goss portrait was intended to underscore the family legacy embodied in the person and the place.

 Amy Prescher, *Accessions*

*This article is dedicated to my neighbor, Walter Lowell, who was inducted into the PGA Hall of Fame in 2005, received the "Family of the Year" award from the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association in 2000, and will be celebrating his 75th birthday this summer.*

SOURCES: Earl Carlin, Pine Orchard Yacht and Country Club: The First One Hundred Years, 2000. William Kelley and John Godley, "History of Yale Golf," June 2007. John B. Kirby, The Pine Orchard Shore: A Brief History and a Glimpse at the Summer of 1916, 1981. Stanley Stern, "Panorama Cameras," June 2007. Howard Whiting, History of the Pine Orchard Club, Inc., 1947.




# Candle Making in Colonial America

Before the invention of gas and electric lights, candles played a vital role in illuminating homes. As recently as the middle 1800s, candle making was considered one of the most important duties of house-keepers. Tallow (the fat of sheep or oxen) was the most frequently used substance for candles, although the wax from bayberries and spermaceti from sperm whales were also used. The tallow or bayberries were put into a kettle of boiling water, and the melted fat or wax floated up to the top. A number of wicks made from cotton, hemp or tow were hung from a rod, enabling the candle maker to dip them into the melted fat or wax. It took multiple thin coatings, hung up to cool and harden between each dip, to build up the proper thickness for a candle. Sometimes the liquid was poured into groups of tubelike metal molds in which the wick had been inserted but more often the candles were dipped.

More candles were made in the autumn than any other season for

several reasons. One was the coming need for more candles in the short days of winter, but another was that bayberries could not be harvested until the fall. All these laboriously made candles were kept in metal storage boxes so they would not be eaten by bugs or rodents.

 Anton Wohlert,  
Guides & Museum Chair

## Publications & Prints

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

*Early History of Branford* .... \$5.00

*Thimble Islands Book*, by Archie Hanna..... \$7.00

Bird's Eye View of Branford (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 Membership Application

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

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

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

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

- Business \$50.00
- 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.*

# Lamps for Sale

Oil lamps from the 1800s are being offered for sale to members of the Branford Historical Society. A portion of the sale will benefit the Society. Lamps range in age from whale oil lamps from the 1830s to kerosene lamps made in the 1890s. Most of the kerosene lamps are available in their original state OR electrified in a way that does not decrease their value.

There are about three dozen lamps to choose from. Prices range from \$19 to \$199.

You can see some of the lamps on the Calendar page of [www.branfordhistory.org](http://www.branfordhistory.org). If you would like more information, please call Anton Wohlert at 481-4665.

## News & Notes

### VANDALISM AT THE CENOTAPH

If you have read the newspapers or watched television recently, you may be aware of the vandalism at the Cenotaph. There has been both graffiti on the Monument and the uprooting of some plantings. As a result the Police Department has ordered surveillance cameras which will be installed on the roof of Town Hall. Please keep a weathered eye on the Cenotaph as you pass by and report any suspicious activity to the police number 911. Hopefully the vandals will be apprehended if future attempts are made to mar the Cenotaph and its landscape. — *Winnifred Judge, Chair Cenotaph Committee*

### PROGRAMS

If any member knows of a good program that would be appropriate for the Historical Society contact Mary Boyle @ 481-2996.

### FEDERAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX INCENTIVES

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program offers a 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing historic structures. This is one of the nation's most successful community revitalization programs with more than \$30 billion in private investment to rehabilitate historic buildings into rental housing, offices, and retail stores. For details visit: [www.nps.gov/history/tax.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/tax.htm).

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