



From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Winter 2004, Volume 9, Issue 1

From the President's Desk

I hope that this edition of the newsletter finds you warm and comfortable. If this newsletter is forwarded somewhere south to your winter home, please know that you're missing the vigor of a classic New England winter. Living and working in a leaky historic house, I can easily begin to appreciate the appeal of seed catalogs as a way to drift into a mental vacation to a warm place, planning the garden for the spring...

Before I drift off on a garden metaphor, I need to thank every one who worked so hard on the Holiday Open House—both of them. If you recall, the original date was canceled at the last minute due to the heavy snow. Decorations were complete and the front was plowed, but it just didn't seem prudent to expect volunteers and visitors to be out in bad weather. As luck would have it, the following week also snowed, though not as badly. Unfortunately, that was my weekend to have the flu, so I missed what was widely reported to be a fine time at the Harrison House. The decorations held up well, the food was wonderful and the music was well received. My thanks to all who worked so hard and were so flexible on the follow-up.

In between shivering fits and fever that weekend, I spent a good portion of my conscious moments looking at tools and machines in an 1870 census of American Industry. As irony would

have it, my gnat-like attention was drawn to a then-current report on the development and progress of the Ice Industry in the United States, which at the time of that census, was a very big deal. What could be more irritatingly useless and abundant than ice in the winter? Over very few years, ships were outfitted, warehouses were designed, and a need was created such that the height of fashion in London was to have beverages with chips of clear American ice. A whole new concept of dietary selection evolved with the capacity to keep perishables cool in the summer. By creating the expectation of thermal control, it prodded the development of refrigeration, first as a technique to make ice, later as a mechanism to extract heat from boxes, whether the box is in a kitchen, it is the kitchen or it is building sized.



I'm looking to the odds of unintended consequences to favor the Board this month as we close-in on preparations for our first retreat in late February. We're applying for a grant to fund a professional facilitator to make the best use of the session. We hope to accomplish a lot of the basic organizational tasks — clarify the mission statement, set the stage for short and long range planning, as well as churn up issues that aren't addressed at the monthly Board meetings, and ferret out ideas that might take off to the benefit of the Society. To that end, if there is anything that you as a member would like brought up, kindly let me or one of the Board members know what's on your mind. The opinion of the membership is tremendously important, especially as we begin to assess our strengths and look for opportunities to advance the Society. Like ice in the winter, opportunities don't always come labeled as such. Meeting under "facilitated" control will be new territory for the Board, but I think that the time is ripe for the kind of directed daydreaming where gardens are planned and the unlikely opportunities might sprout.

Wishing you well in the New Year,

Joe Chadwick, President

From the Harrison House

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Branford Historical Society
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Spring Program

“Like a Shock of Corn Fully Ripe”

Epitaphs and Other Stories from Damascus Cemetery

On Thursday, April 15, Jane Bouley, Town Historian, will present a slide show entitled “Like a Shock of Corn Fully Ripe,” Epitaphs and Other Stories from Damascus Cemetery. Jane will lecture on the families, gravestones, stone carvers and other discoveries found at Damascus Cemetery after two years of research. There is a fascinating array of gravestone styles and epitaphs found in the cemetery. Some of the families buried there are Rogers, Baldwin, Frisbie, Palmer, Hoadley and Howd. Refreshments will be served at 7:30 p.m., followed by the lecture at 8:00 p.m. at the Blackstone Memorial Library. A \$2.00 donation is suggested.



Membership Report

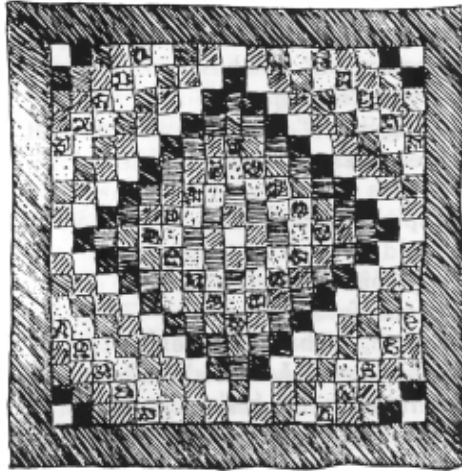
A warm welcome to new members Susan Alicia Anderson, Patricia D. Andriole, Francis and Joyce Black, Richard and Mary Galdenzi, Donna Hetmanski, Gilbert and Eleanor Kelman, Nick Lavorato, Irene Merculaitis, Steven and Diane Mierz, Richard W. Squeri, Marjorie Thompson, Ann Trapasso and Alexine Wallace.

Due to various circumstances, our Society always loses members every year and currently our membership remains at 235. It is our hope that all members will continue to suggest to their acquaintances and relatives that

the Branford Historical Society needs additional members. As a strong voice in our community, our Society can preserve our historic buildings, landmarks and antiquities in our beautiful town of Branford.

Continue to check the mailing label to make sure that your membership status is current. A “C” indicates current, “R” means it is time to renew and “L” is a Life member. If there is any question about the status of your membership, please contact me at 468-5433.

Jeanne McParland, Membership



A Celebration of Quilts Past And Present

—
MAY 14 AND 15, 2004

Please join the Branford Historical Society, in cooperation with Trinity Episcopal Church, for our first quilt show entitled "A Celebration of Quilts Past and Present. The show will feature past and present quilts, wall hangings, period clothing and handmade clothing, as well as a number of items owned and preserved by the Society for the town of Branford. This event will take place May 14 and 15, 2004, at Trinity Episcopal Church on the Green. The Church was built in 1852, and quilts show beautifully on the dark wooden pews.

Guests at the show will receive a program booklet describing the quilts, and white glove attendants will be on hand to hold up and show quilts for visitors. Several local vendors will be on hand to show and sell craft and quilting supplies, including the Quilter's Habitat and Needle Pulling Thread. Refreshments will be available so that guests can enjoy a snack on the lovely Town Green as part of the experience.

Admission to the show will be \$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. Funds will support the ongoing efforts of the Society, as well as the maintenance of the Harrison House Museum.

The Branford Historical Society is very excited about bringing the past and present together to share the various directions quilting has taken us, and we look forward to seeing you at the event.

Ann Collier, Hospitality

Display Your Quilt

A registration form is enclosed for those of you who would like to display your quilts at the show. There is no fee to enter a quilt in this show, but a separate form is required for each item shown. Please carefully read the registration form and return the entire form to us at [address]. Entrance and pickup of the quilts is strictly controlled, and the quilts will be insured.

We welcome quilters of all ages and experience to show their quilts, old and new, from miniature to king size. We'd love to see your handiwork!

Lend a Hand!

Volunteers are needed to help set up, run, and take down the event. If you would like to help, please call Winnifred Judge, 488-8755.

Program Book

Advertising space is available in the Show Program Booklet. For more information, please contact Bill Davis, 481-4615.

Questions?

For more information about the Quilt Show, please contact Ann Collier, 488-5735.

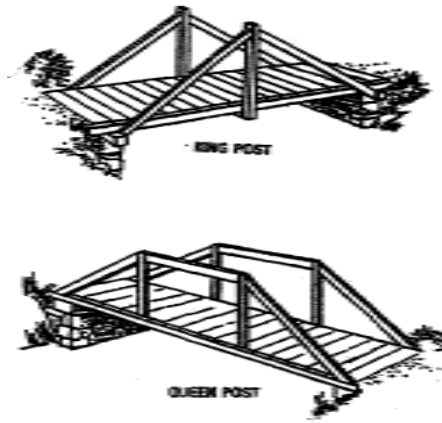
From the Archives

"The Covered Bridges of New England"

The old, picturesque wooden bridges of New England are among the best known landmarks. These simple designs were the king post and queen post, useful when a single timber would span a narrow stream, but not safe where several timbers end to end were needed.

An early advance over these was the Warren truss, basically a barn set up over water. The Burr truss, king posts with an arch for added support, permitted even longer spans. The most popular design was the Town lattice truss, strong and easily built with short timbers. The still stronger Long truss was briefly used by railroads. The Howe truss took over because it used iron supporting bars.

The Covered Bridge is a reminder of the colonization of New England by European settlers. Less

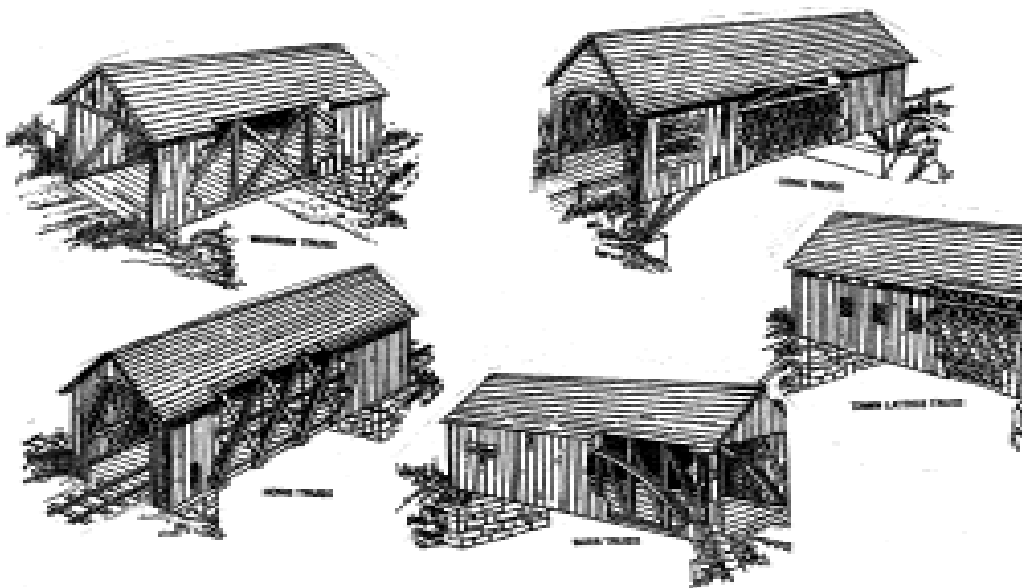


than 900 of these original wooden covered bridges remain in a nation once linked by tens of thousands. The bridges conveyed an important chapter in the evolution of engineering practice in the United States and today they are popular with tourists and residents alike for their aesthetic contributions to rural landscapes. Some continue in service today as

vital vehicular or pedestrian connections but many have deteriorated and been replaced by concrete and steel bridges.

Contrary to popular belief, covered bridges were not built that way to keep the snow and rain off travelers. The easily replaced enclosures provided protection for the structural member and for the roadbed. They kept wind, rain, snow and sleet from the heavy beams and timbers that support the bridge load. Ironically at times it was necessary to shovel snow onto covered bridges in the winter in order to let sleighs and other horse-drawn vehicles pass over them. Each bridge is unique in design, reflecting the time in which it was built and its makers' taste and skill.

*Nancy Hendricks
Archivist*



Historic Structures in Jeopardy

One of the primary concerns of any Historical Society is the preservation of historic structures. The membership of the Branford Historical Society, of course, shares this concern as an important component of the mission of our organization. In an effort to inform our members of structures in current jeopardy, we periodically include related information in our Newsletter as found below.

Chris Wigren, a writer for the *Connecticut Preservation News*, has contributed (through Society member Martha Bradshaw) the following information...

This statement has been published by the Regional Water Authority (RWA):

"The primary mission of the Regional Water Authority is providing clean, safe water and to accomplish this task, it is critical to protect our watershed.

We can no longer financially justify owning and maintaining (these 14) houses. The land on which they sit is watershed land and needs to be protected. We will maintain that land as open space. Recognizing the historic value of some of these houses, we are offering the houses to anyone willing to move them and are committed to reasonably assisting these moves..."

GUILFORD

John Norton House, 1115 Great Hill Road: a two-story house built in 1810. Late Colonial form with handsome Federal details, set in an agricultural landscape.

HAMDEN

Elam Ives House, 95 Ives Street: a very well preserved one-story house with an unusual plan, built in 1794. It is an integral part of the 19th-century industrial village of Ivesville, where brass and iron parts were made to supply the New Haven carriage industry.

House, 233 Skiff Street: a modest house, probably from the mid-19th century. It may have been connected with Augurville, another small industrial center. Moved to its present site about 1960.

MADISON

House, 752 Summer Hill Road: a one-story cottage built in the 1920s or '30s, it appears to have been a vacation cottage or hunting lodge. Siding and windows were replaced in 2003.

NORTH BRANFORD

House, 714 Foxon Road (Route 80): a shingled bungalow, probably built in the 1920s. Also on the site is an early gas station, built at the same time. RWA spent \$40,000 for lead abatement in 1999.

House, 785 Foxon Road (Route 80): a modest early 20th century house on a busy road. Adjacent properties are privately owned.

House, 83 Great Hill Road: a well-preserved American Foursquare built in the 1920s. Its unusual plan was probably dictated by the use of an

older sandstone foundation. The tenants have renovated the interior.


Hanan Palmer House, 79 Great Hill Road: this 1-1/2 story house from the early 19th century has undergone numerous sympathetic changes. The Palmers were important local landowners and the relationship of the house to its setting reflects their importance.

Fred Harrison House, 105 North Street: a well-preserved bungalow with accompanying barn. Inside - unpainted woodwork, pocket doors and built-ins. Located inside the fence that surrounds a reservoir.

If you or someone you know would like to submit a letter protesting the demolition and/or removal of the houses from their historic sites, it may be addressed as follows:

David Silverstone, CEO
Regional Water Authority
90 Sargent Drive
New Haven, CT 06511

Letters to the *New Haven Register* and other regional publications would be welcomed as well.

 Martha Bradshaw

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above information is a partial listing of the "14 houses" referred to by the RWA.

17th Century Chair Styles in New England



Jacobean wainscot chair

Most of the styles of chairs seen in New England in the 17th Century were chairs brought from England or chairs made in this country in the same styles as those used in the old country. The first photograph is of a Jacobean wainscot chair, which was one of the earliest styles to be found here. The solid wood back was often carved, and the front legs were sometimes turned on a lathe. These "Great Chairs" were for men of status, having evolved from the throne. Chairs were not actually common, three-legged stools (good on uneven flooring) and benches being more widely used. Oak was much favored in the Jacobean period. This style continued to be made until about the middle 1600's, although these chairs were valued and passed through succeeding generations. The so-called Yale President's Chair at the Yale University Museum of Art was made in Branford, CT circa 1650, which predates the founding of Yale itself.

The Brewster and Carver chairs were named after two of the men who came over on the Mayflower. Both styles were wooden armchairs, but no longer had the solid wooden throne-like back. They instead had a more open back of horizontal and vertical spindles between the main vertical stiles. The Brewster chair had turned spindles inserted both below the arms and below a wooden or rush seat (below.)



Brewster chair



Ladder back, or slat back, chair

Deacon John Carver was the first Governor of Massachusetts, and the chair that bears his name is similar to the Brewster chair but the spindles beneath the arms and seat were not turned.

The ladder back, or slat back, chair followed and continued to be used extensively into the 1700's. It could be either an armchair or a side chair, and the seat was usually rush or splint. These chairs often had decorative wooden finials on top of the stiles, which are the vertical members in the back.

Late in the 1600's a limited number of King Charles II and also William and Mary chairs were found in this country. Charles II chairs were heavily carved and turned, and often had a caned seat and back. Caning came to England from the Orient in the 1660's. Illustration 5 shows a similar design but without the caning. Typical of these styles was the use of scrolls on the back of the chair and also on the front spreader between the legs. These ornate designs were brought to England from Holland by Kings Charles II



Charles II chair

and William of Orange. Walnut was the wood of choice.

The last major style found here in the 1600's was thought to be of American origination. This was the banister back, or baluster back. The backs of the chairs were filled in with turned spindles, cut in half, with the flat side towards the person.

Note: The Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, CT has an extensive collection of early furniture, amassed by Wallace Nutting. Call to be sure the Museum is not under renovation.

✍ Anton Wohler
Museum & Guides



Charles II chairs (Illus. 5)



Banister back, or baluster back

From the Attic

ac-cēs'sion / ac'qui-si'tion: To acquire and record.

My job as Acquisitions Chairman, is to receive historical items for the Society and record them. I have a museum background and the term we use is "accessions." As Chair, I record and maintain records associated with the objects we receive and make sure that they are housed properly. I have been a Senior Museum Assistant at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University for 10 years. I catalogue, keep track of locations, and assist visitors and faculty with objects in the Anthropology Division. We have archeological material, as well as ethnographic objects from living people. The work I do at the Historical Society is much the same. I catalogue incoming material and find a place for them in storage.

Accessioning is the formal cataloguing of objects that we now own. Some of the other registration duties include filing donor records, recording incoming loans, and sending out the thank you notes to donors. Priscilla Oliver and I have been inventorying the collections in the attic, a project we will resume once the weather warms up. We also have the clothing and barn collections yet to inventory. If you are interested in becoming involved with cleaning, inventorying and re-housing the collections or making a donation, I can be reached by e-mail at maureen.daros@yale.edu, or by phone at 432-3770 or 488-8265.

✍ Maureen DaRos
Accessions Chair

Get Online with History

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

Covered Bridges of New England

users.rcn.com/pkulapat/bridge.html

The Wadsworth Atheneum

www.wadsworthatheneum.org/

Branford Land Trust

www.branfordlandtrust.org

✍ Jen Payne

COMING SOON! www.branfordhistory.org

The Montowese Hotel Program

The Montowese Hotel Program held on November 20th drew “standing room only” interest. Many people were turned away at the door because of fire regulations at the Blackstone Library auditorium. Nancy Noble Coykendall, former owner of the Montowese Hotel, introduced the program and addressed questions and comments at the end of the showing. There were many people in the audience who had connections with the Montowese when they were growing up or had either worked or stayed at the hotel. The video, which contained still photos, movies and slides, was put together with dialogue by Mrs. Coykendall. She told the story of the Montowese, intertwined with the

history of the period between 1866 and 1963. She also noted a number of famous guests who spent time at the hotel.

A table of memorabilia was set up and handouts of old newspaper articles, menus and a poem written by Lydia Noble Booth were given out at the door. The descriptive poem (please see below) was entitled “The Montowese.” The poem was about the Hurricane of 1938 and depicted the destruction of the bathhouses, pier, boardwalk and stately trees on the lawn and roadside, yet leaving the hotel in tact. The entire presentation as well received with enthusiastic praise for the format and content. The evening was quite nostalgic. Pleasant vignettes of the existence

and passing of the hotel, and the time in which it was open for summer guests, brought back a flood of happy memories along with a touch of sadness surrounding the demise of the Montowese.

Thanks to those who distributed the posters and flyers throughout the town; Bob Adamson, Bobbie Frink, Joan Jenkins, Audrey Nelson, Carol Petrelli and Lillian Ryan. A big thank you also to Eva Peterson and Michael Sykes for handling the refreshments.

Video tapes @ \$15 and DVDs @ \$20 are available through the Historical Society. Please contact Winnifred Judge at 488-8755 to place an order.

 Winnifred Judge
Board Member

THE MONTOWESE

September 21, 1938

*To recent friends and those of yore,
Who would like to know of our shore;
A few words will suffice to tell
Of that “high-water and hell”!*

*Out of the East the wind first came
With the strength and force of a
hurricane;
Taking roofs, and felling trees,
With the most amazing ease.*

*When all at once there was a lull,
And it seemed to some that all was
well;
Then suddenly from the South it
blew
With such velocity no one knew.
The water rose ever higher,
Those fearsome waves came even
nigher;*

*Not a thing standing in its wake,
The raging billows did not take.*

*The bath-houses, said those watching
from the lea,
Glided silently, like a serpent, out to
sea;
Leaving not a piece within reach,
Anywhere on that lovely beach.*

*Never had there been a blow to over-
whelm
Those stately maple, spruce and elm;
But down they went one by one,
Gently, reluctantly avoiding as if
purposely,
That house they shaded so lovingly.*

*The next day, old help returned in a
crew*

*With axes, to see what they could do
To render aid to that loved spot,
That had no part in such a plot.*

*The Montowese, like its namesake,
undaunted stood,
Not a blast shook that old house of
wood;
Built by our ancestors to withstand
The wrath of such a mighty hand.*

*The “grape vine” still twines intact
Some of the trees have been brought
back.
God willing when spring comes
With its hope and life of green,
The scars may be dear memories,
The rest but a monstrous dream.*

— Lydia Brian Noble



Holiday Open House

Our Annual Holiday Open House finally took place on December 15 in spite of the snowstorm. Guests were welcomed by beautifully decorated rooms, wonderful punch and cookies. About 30 people braved the elements and had a wonderful time. Lucky Maureen DaRos won two raffled prizes, a beautiful tree and centerpiece. Many, many thanks to the many people who helped make the event so successful.

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 |

Historical Society News & Notes

Lost & Found

A single key on a brass fob was found subsequent to the Holiday Open House. If this is your key, please call Anton Wohler, 481-4665.

Exhibits Needed

The Historical Society is always looking for unique antiques to be exhibited at the Harrison House. Exhibits run from June to September. For more information, call Anton Wohler, 481-4665.

Lectures

The Branford Land Trust Spring 2004 Lecture Series includes several interesting events that may be of

interest to our members. They are held at 7:30 p.m. at the Blackstone Memorial Library. For details, call 483-5263 or see branfordlandtrust.org

FEBRUARY 18: "The Leatherman"

Steve Grant, *Hartford Courant*, will present a slide presentation on the "Leatherman," who walked a regular 360-mile circuit through CT and NY in the 1800s.

APRIL 21: "New England Stone Walls"

Robert M. Thorson, author of "Stone by Stone, The Magnificent History of New England's Stone Walls," will speak about stone walls, the signature of rural New England.

Historical Publications and Prints

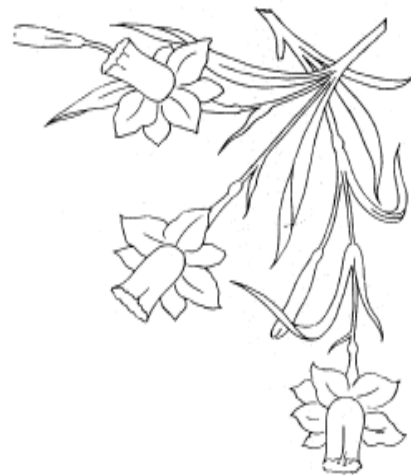
The following are available through the Society. Contact Winnifred Judge, 488-8755, for details.

Early History of Branford \$5.00

Thimble Islands Book
by Archie Hanna \$7.00

Bird's Eye View of Branford with
Historic Buildings (Print) \$5.00

Post Cards of Early Branford
(Stony Creek/Pine Orchard,
Pawson Park/Indian Neck,
Short Beach, Downtown
Branford) each \$3.00



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