



From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Winter 2007, Volume 12, Issue 1

Springtime Program

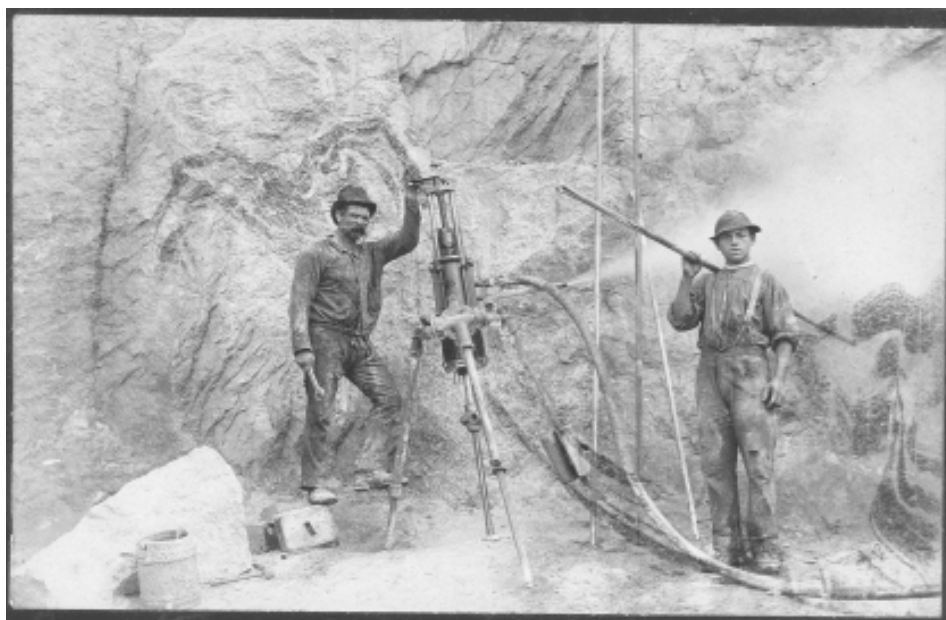
On Thursday, March 15, at 7:00 p.m. at the Blackstone Memorial Library on Main Street in Branford, the Branford Historical Society will welcome Springtime.

The "Silk'n Sounds", a dynamic and large A Cappella group that sings a variety of music in four-part harmony in the barbershop style, will give us a sample of their upcoming concert.

The members come from all walks of life and live in the greater New Haven region. They have performed since their inception in 1998 at the Hamden Goldenbells Festival, local church, civic and private groups, nursing homes, retirement villages, office parties and family celebrations. They participate regularly in regional barbershop contests and conventions.

They are women, helping to make history in March, National Women's History Month, by presenting old songs dear to their hearts and ours, with even an Irish ditty or two. Admission is free and there will be refreshments after the performance.

✿ *Mary Boyle, Programs*



To Be Remembered Is To Live Again

Although a July 1899 article from the Branford Opinion reported that "Norcross is shipping stone to Jersey City and Madison, N. J. for new libraries" the names of the libraries built with granite from the Norcross Brothers Quarry in Branford were not given.

One hundred and eleven years later, in January 2007, a phone call from Madison, New Jersey provided the name of one of the libraries: The 1899 Romanesque James Library, now serving as The Museum of Early Trades and Crafts.

Lynne Ranieri, who is interning at the museum as part of her Masters of

Museum Professions program at Seton Hall University, contacted the Branford Historical Society for information about the quarry for an upcoming exhibit about the construction of their building. Did the Branford Historical Society have any information about the Norcross Brothers Quarry?

This is what I like best about being part of the Society, having the opportunity as a mere mortal from Branford to play detective and bring the dead back to life.

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From the Harrison House

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Branford Historical Society
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To Be Remembered Is To Live Again, Continued

In addition to providing information about the quarry, the Branford Historical Society was able to offer photographs of the quarry and quarrymen. These were taken in 1896 by Branford photographer Harry O. Andrews (1861-1906), generously donated by his granddaughter, the late Betty M. Linsley.

Within a few days of the initial request, haunting images from Branford's past were scanned and e-mailed to Mrs. Ranieri in New Jersey. Because of a phone call from New Jersey, a photographer who recorded Branford's history and the people who were part of it, and the 21st century technology that makes a scanner and computer work (most of the time), 19th century ghosts were spirited to an audience who might otherwise have never heard of the Norcross Brothers Quarry and Harry O. Andrews. To be remembered, is to live again.

The Museum of Early Trades and Crafts will feature an exhibit titled: "Building the Building: Elements of Style" that according to curator, Peter Rothenberg, "will explore some of whos and hows of the Museum's home, a 1899 Richardsonian Romanesque stone library." The exhibit will include information about the people who were part of creating this ornate building.

The exhibit opens on March 4th, 2007 and runs until August 24th 2007.

Museum of Early Trades & Crafts
9 Main Street
Madison, NJ 07940
Phone (973) 377-2982
www.rosenet.org/metc

Photos and history of the
Richardson Library:

www.rosenet.org/metc/james.htm


From the Museum of Early Trades & Craft's website:

The Museum of Early Trades & Crafts is wrapped up in a fancy package - the building which is our home. Built in 1899 as Madison's first library, the ornate Richardsonian Romanesque Revival building was a gift to the town by D. Willis James, a rich copper magnate.

Building the Building: Elements of Style will explore some of the "whos and hows" of crafting and decorating the edifice. Elements of the exhibit will include original blueprints by the architects Brigham and Adden, an examination of how artist A. B. Cutter designed and crafted the building's stencils and stained glass windows, and the wood carving and constructing process.

This exhibit will appeal to artists, architects, historians and anyone who appreciates beauty and art.

In conjunction with the exhibit, the Museum will be offering a stone gargoyle carving course by sculptor Franco Minervini. Participants will assist in carving a clone of the gargoyle Minervini carved for the national Cathedral in Washington, DC.

 Martha Bradshaw,
Preservation of Historic
Structures and Landmarks

(Front page photo by H.O.Andrews)

Hidden Treasures at the Harrison House

Many visitors to Stony Creek are beguiled by the thought of hidden treasure left behind in the Thimble Islands by Captain Kidd. Perhaps even Branford natives would be surprised to learn that the Historical Society owns a chest with a treasure perhaps even more enchanting than a hoard of booty.

One of the more ancient objects on display in the Harrison House is a hide-covered chest at the foot of the four-poster bed in the parlor chamber. It is slightly smaller than the bulky traveling trunks of the Victorian era and has a simple, elegant shape with a gently curved lid. The untanned hide (which is actually still furry) is attached to the wooden construction with brass studs on thin bands of leather which provide a decorative pattern on the top and front and record the date of 1710 and the initials AF. Like most trunks, it led a peripatetic life, having come into the hands of one of Branford's most prominent citizens, Dr. William Gould (1693-1757), and passing from heir to heir from Killingly, Putnam to Boston, until it came to rest at the Historical Society in 1987.

The interior of the chest is lined with paper, and today we can see pieces of a large floral print along with a layer of what appears to be old newspaper. Recycling old paper for various uses such as packing and insulation has a much longer tradition than one might expect. Taking a look at the text of this particular print takes us back to a time when the colonists relied on astrology to make predictions about favorable conditions for important events like



planting crops or embarking on a journey. The pages now pasted into the chest belong to an almanac compiled by Edward Holyoke (1689-1769) and entitled, *An Ephemeris of the Coelestial Motions, Aspects and Eclipses, Etc. For the Year of the Christian Aera 1709*. The date and publishing place betray the colony's allegiance to the mother country with a reference to Queen Anne, who was in the eighth year of her reign, and locating Boston in terms of its distance from London, 71 degrees westward. The booklet itself, consisting of only sixteen pages, is little more than a calendar with complicated tables of symbols devoted to each month, a title page and three pages of instructions including a woodcut illustration of the astrological signs mapped on the human body. Mr. Holyoke had just graduated with an M.A. degree and went on to become president of Harvard College later in life.

What is remarkable about this particular almanac is that it is extremely rare. There are only three known copies in American libraries. To put this into perspective, we must recall that in 1709 there had been only fourteen or fifteen printers in the history of British North America. The first press had been established in Cambridge in 1639 and by 1722 only four American cities had printing presses. Boston was the undisputed center of printing and bookselling, and the Holyoke almanac was printed there by Bartholomew Green, the son of one of the earliest masters. The Green family produced a number of printers, including Timothy, who ran the only Connecticut press in New London from 1712-1754.

A close look at the pasted pages within the Branford chest provides some clues about its provenance. The individual pages were not cut out of a

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Hidden Treasures at the Harrison House, continued

private copy of the almanac, but rather we find the original imprint consisting of four pages to a sheet as it would have looked fresh off the press. Normally, the sheets would have been folded and trimmed to size before binding, but these copies were apparently discarded in great number. The Branford trunk contains not just one, but at least two full copies of the almanac and at least ten additional sheets with title pages. Paper was hard to come by in colonial times and if Bartholomew Green did not sell his waste paper, the obsolete sheets may have been used by someone with access to his shop to cover the slightly rough surface of the hand-hewn boards of the new trunk. The most conspicuous family to fit its monogram, AF, is Franklin, although we do not know if James, the older brother of the famous almanac-publisher, Benjamin, was already a familiar face in Boston's printing community. His half-sister, Anne, would have been twenty-three in 1710. While the identity of its original owner will probably remain a mystery much like the existence of Captain Kidd's stash on Money Island, the Branford chest with its valuable contents is not a phantom, but a real treasure.

I would like to thank David Whitesell, Curator of Books at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, MA, and the staff at William Reese Company in New Haven for their kind assistance in researching Edward Holyoke's almanac.

 Amy Prescher, Accessions




Branford History Archives

The Blackstone Library and Branford Historical Society have collaborated to provide finding aids and indexes to Branford History databases. The Branford Historical Society has a large collection of Branford family, municipal and business archives and about 8000 photographic images (which must be viewed with Jane Bouley). These collections plus Branford postcards are at the library. The library has a scrapbook collection of Branford newspapers on microfilm.

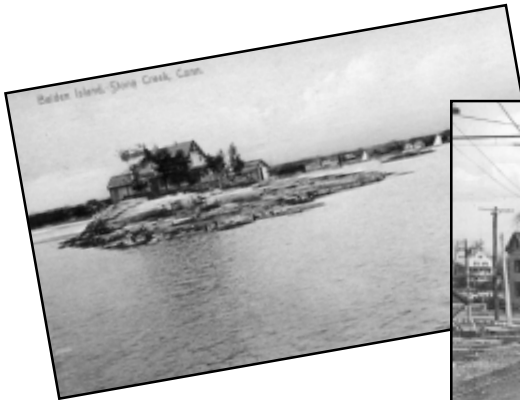
Jane Bouley, the Branford Town Historian, has provided the library with an incredible collection of material. Some of the indexes and databases that are available include a list of Branford federal censuses and vital records. Stop by to view the collection and use the resources that are available. History is a lot of fun!

Reprinted from Marble Columns by permission of the Blackstone Memorial Library

Historical Society News & Notes

-  The Board of Directors extends its condolences to Peter Black, whose father passed away on January 27th.
-  A photograph of the restored Cenotaph has been chosen as the cover for the Town of Branford's Annual Report. The photograph was taken by Bill O'Brien, member of the Cenotaph Committee and the Historical Society.
-  Please be sure to join us for our Springtime Program on Thursday, March 15, at 7:00 p.m. at the Blackstone Memorial Library on Main Street in Branford, with the "Silk'n Sounds", a dynamic and large A Cappella group that sings a variety of music in four-part harmony in the barbershop style.

“Having a Fine Time in Stony Creek”



The Branford Historical Society maintains a large collection of picture postcards. The scenic postcard of the early 1900s provides a slice of the history and culture of a community. Postcards are collected for their location, condition, rarity, manufacturer and type. There are a number of collectors in Branford who focus on neighborhood postcards. It can be estimated that there were about 2,000 different postcards of Branford published in the first half of the twentieth century.

Most prized are cards that are real photographs and are often a one of a kind image. Also highly desirable are cards showing trolleys, train stations, and fire departments. One should not forget to look at the back of a postcard- when and where was it postmarked, where did it go, who made it, what kind of stamp does it have? Perhaps most fun is what is the message relayed on the back of the postcard.

Stony Creek was one of several summer resort areas along the coast in Branford. A look at the messages on the back of the old postcards reveals some changes in how we say things, but for the most part, how little we have changed in a century,

about our desire to go on vacation, have fun, and write home about it. Between 1900 and 1920 vacationers came to Stony Creek to cool off, swim, relax, fish, and have fun.

“Having a fine time bathing, fishing and boating in Stony Creek. Wish you were here.”

“I am enjoying every minute here.”

“The salt air smells good. Come down and we’ll let you have some.”

“We are having a slick time and look like a bunch of lobsters.”

“Hattie took pity on the fish and gave them enough to eat for a month.”

“Wish you could all see this pretty place.”

“The air is delightful down here.”

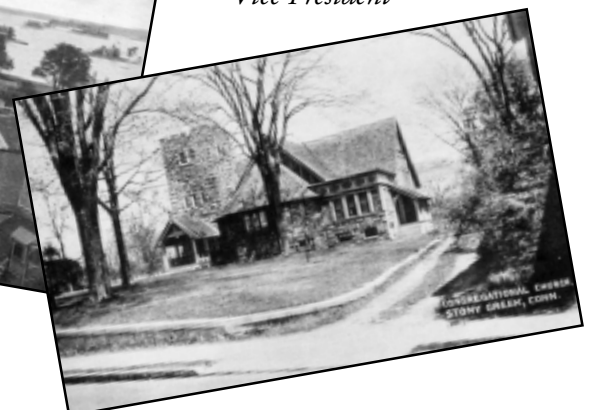
“Stony Creek is so very pleasant.”

“Had dinner at the Indian Point Hotel last night.”

“We went fishing this morning and caught a 2 pound black fish.”

“Can you recommend a good man for pastor of the Congregational Church here? Married man preferred.”

*Jane Peterson Bouley,
Vice President*



From the Archives

The Furnished Colonial Home: 1665-1775

by Nancy Hendricks

The characteristics of New England's country furniture tell the story of a simple life with its thrift, isolation and dependence on local weather conditions, resources and skills. With their backs to the sea, the new arrivals faced a virtually unrelieved expanse of dense primeval forest out of which they had to hew their livelihoods, their homes and much of their furnishings. No traces remain of these 17th century settlers of Totoket (Branford) as their first shelters were hastily constructed with one thought in

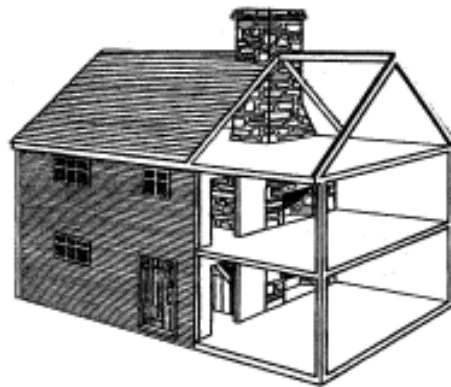
mind—protection. As permanent dwellings were built, they were wooden buildings similar to those they had known in England or Holland. Before 1680, houses were built strictly from memory but shortly after that date, manuals of architecture found their way to this country from England. See below how the homes of our region developed:

The method of construction was usually the same regardless of the size. First a cellar was dug, the foundation laid, and a massive field-

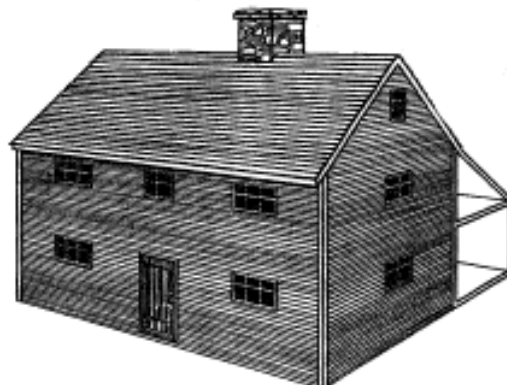
stone chimney erected, sometimes 10 feet by 12 in size. After all of the hand-hewn oak timbers had been notched for the frame and wooden pins whittled to hold it together, the entire community would gather for a "raising bee." While the women prepared food for everyone, the men assembled the wall frames on the ground, then raised and joined them in one collective effort. This left the owner the lighter task of adding the clapboard walls and roof shingles and finishing the interior.



The simplest houses had one downstairs room, called the hall, used for living, cooking and dining. A staircase crowded next to the chimney led from the vestibule to another vestibule and an upstairs bedroom.



The "two-room plan" called for joining two of the basic houses minus a second chimney. This provided the family with an extra bedroom upstairs, and a parlor in addition to the hall on the first floor.



The largest house, the "salt box," had a separate kitchen, a pantry and another bedroom at the back in an addition called a lean-to.

Holiday Open House

About 100 people came together on Sunday, December 3rd at the Holiday Gathering at Harrison House. Our guest book was signed by guests from Seymour, Hamden and Woodbridge as well as Branford. Members provided the home baked sweets and mulled punch. Hospitality Chair, Cheri Elliot with the help of Al Paulsen and Eva Peterson served the refreshments. Guests were entertained by The Flute Choir and the Jet Trio and Sero Quartet. This program was arranged by Mary Boyle. Winnifred Judge, Jeanne McParland and Martha Bradshaw decorated the Christmas tree which was raffled off with three floral arrangements. Thanks to Shelly's Garden Center for donating a beautiful tree and all Society members who provided food, decorations and helped decorate the house.

Membership Update

There has been a wonderful response to the letter sent to all of you in November. At present there are 258 members. Welcome to the following new members: Richard Goodrich, Walter & Phyllis Lowell, Sandra J. Kissel, Susanne Adanowicz, George Uihelein, Marcus & Maryanne Hall, Mary S. Belknap and David & Mavis Britelli.

The Society sponsors programs at the Blackstone Library three or four times a year. Guides are trained and they conduct tours of Harrison House Saturdays from June 1st to October 1st. Groups from schools come to Harrison House by appointment for background information about the house and town. There is a Museum located at Harrison House with changing exhibits. Jane Bouley, Vice President of the Branford Historical Society and Town Historian, has a large collection of photographs. Many people contact the Society when they are trying to trace their family's roots. Genealogical work is encouraged and a file is

maintained at the Blackstone Library of Branford families.

Thank you to all members who have encouraged their neighbors, family and friends to become members. If you know of someone who is interested in the preservation of the history and antiquities of Branford, let me know and I will follow up with a letter inviting them to join.

Please check the label on this newsletter, "C" means you are current, "R" means it is time to renew.

Jeanne McParland, Chair



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

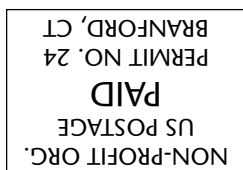
TOTAL ENCLOSED: _____

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



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