



# From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

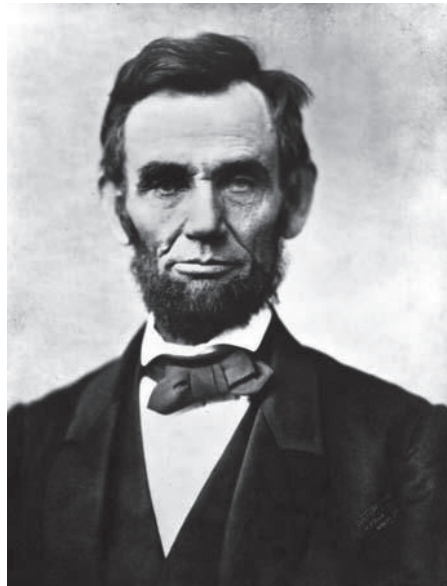
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## Thoughts on Lincoln's Birthday

**T**his February we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln.

Our new President has indicated great affection for him. President Obama's inauguration is seen as the culmination of the struggle against slavery, a slavery justified by racism. Some will note that Lincoln was not fully engaged in the struggle against slavery, noting that the emancipation proclamation freed only slaves in territory Lincoln did not control, and was not issued until well after the War Between the States had begun. Why then did many Southern states leave the Union even before Lincoln took office?

An examination of Lincoln's campaign speech given in New Haven on March 6, 1860, reveals the depth of his abolitionist passion, a passion exceeded only by his desire to hold the Union together. The South did indeed have much to fear from Lincoln's election. When Lincoln visited, the country was still suffering from the financial panic of 1857. The North had always sought high tariffs to protect its industries from foreign competition, whereas the South supported free trade so that it could export its cotton and import cheaper manufactured goods. These long standing tensions were exacerbated by



the Northern abolition movement, which threatened the economic destruction of the slave economy of the South. In response to Northern support for abolition, the South boycotted northern manufactured goods, particularly shoes. Northern factory owners sought to cut workers' wages, but workers went on strike. It was in this environment of economic depression and labor strife that Lincoln was seeking the Republican nomination for President, and stopped in Connecticut's then largest city of New Haven.

Lincoln's New Haven speech reveals the depth of his abolitionist sentiment, and explains why the South felt Lincoln would destroy its society.

In his speech, Lincoln accused Southerners of allowing their monetary interest in slavery to cloud their moral judgment. Here in Connecticut and to the north Slavery does not exist . . . To us it seems natural to think that slaves are human beings, men, not property; that some of the things, at least stated about men in the Declaration of Independence apply to them as well as to us. He stated that the arguments for slavery undercut the basis of the Republic, the Declaration of Independence, and said "We think Slavery a great moral wrong . . ." He then compared slavery to a poisonous snake. He justified allowing slavery to continue in the South because, just as attacking snakes in bed with children might harm the children, attacking slavery where it was part of the social and economic fabric would harm the South. On the other hand, "... if there was a bed newly made up, to which the children were to be taken," he would be crazy to put snakes in the new, clean bed. And so it would be crazy to allow slavery to spread into the territories.

Lincoln then goes on to threaten that the South will not be satisfied with the expansion of slavery in the Federal Territories, but will seek its

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**Thoughts on Lincoln's Birthday**

return to the North. The 1854 Dredd Scott decision and the Fugitive Slave Act had made this threat very real. Lincoln attacks the Supreme Court, claiming the Declaration of Independence applies to all men, and that "Negros are men." He attacks the Democratic Party taking Negroes from the class of men and placing them with "brutes."

Lincoln claims that the economic pie is large enough for all, including Negroes. He urges Northerners not to succumb to the economic pressures of the shoe boycott. Instead, he urges those who find limited opportunity in New England to strike out west, where the land is free. He recounts his work as a hired hand, "mauling rails", and says "I want every man to have the chance -and I believe a black man is entitled to it - in which he can better his condition - when he may . . . be a hired laborer this year and the next, work for himself . . . and finally hire men to work for him!" Lincoln says that if slavery is allowed to expand, the free laborers of Con-

necticut will have to compete with Negro slaves. He says, "I want you to have a clean bed, and no snakes in it! Then you can better your condition." If northern workers succumb to the southern boycott, they are sowing the seeds of their own demise.

The Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster reconciled his support of the Union with his opposition to slavery by supporting a tax to buy slaves from their owners and resettle them in Africa. Lincoln's vision, laid out in New Haven, was very different. Slavery was not wrong in the sense that we, today, oppose cruelty to animals. Slavery was wrong because blacks were the equals of whites, and entitled to the same chance of success that white men had, including having others work for them. Webster's vision was one of free but separate; Lincoln's was one of equality and integration. With his election, the South knew that their way of life was doomed if they stayed in the Union.

 Peter Black, President

*IN MEMORY*

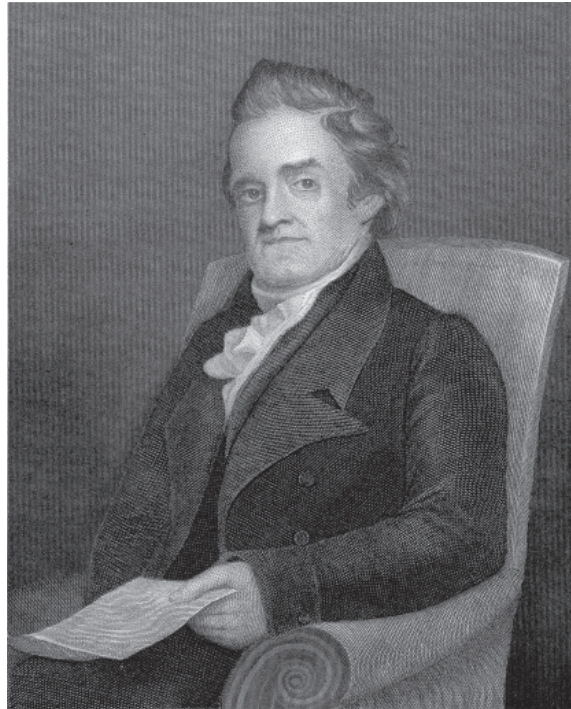
**MARY BOYLE**

*PROGRAM CHAIR*

*2006-2008*

# The Many Faces Of Noah Webster

**THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009**  
**7:00 p.m. at the Blackstone Memorial Library**



Noah Webster was a man of many faces according to Christopher Dobbs, executive director of the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society. Mr. Dobbs will enlighten us regarding the life and personality of Webster in a special program at the Blackstone Memorial Library on Thursday, March 19th at 7 pm. There will be light refreshments following the program.

Today Webster is best remembered as the author of the “first American Dictionary”. Webster’s many other accomplishments have often been overshadowed by this monumental work. Some of these accomplishments include educator, co-founder of Amherst College, political commentator, abolitionist, Federalist, statesman, and father of America’s copyright laws. He also had other pursuits which included universal public education and the creation of a national language.

Christopher Dobbs has an extensive background in history and museum experience. He holds an BA in American history from Indiana University and an MA degree in historical museum studies from Cooperstown’s Graduate Program in Cooperstown N.Y. Join us for a very information lively evening as Mr. Dobbs gives us insight into the many faces of Noah Webster. Learn more about this famous American writer, educator, and statesman on Thursday, March 19th at 7 pm.

## Main Street(s) Name Change

**A**t the Branford Historical Society's January Board meeting a discussion was held regarding the change of West, North and East Main Streets to the Boston Post Road. The Board voted against any change and a letter will be sent advising the Town. Historically, North Main Street was a wooded area until 1935 when a road was built. It was named North Main Street at that time. North Main Street was never part of Boston Post Road. This photograph from our archives shows a structure in the woods called "Thieves Den" built and used by teenagers from uptown as a place to hang out. It was in the woods at what is now known as North Main Street.



## A Delightful Holiday Party



**M**embers and friends gathered at the Harrison House on December 7th for our annual holiday party. The house was beautifully decorated with greens by Nancy Lynch, Lillian Ryan, Andree Pierson, Roberta Rowe, Maureen O'Brien, Ceil Wheeler, Mike Russo, Winnifred Judge and

Jeanne McParland. Wreaths for the front door and outhouse were made by Debbie Vallas and center pieces by Martha Bradshaw. Shelley's Garden Center graciously donated our tree again this year. The tree was beautifully decorated by Martha Bradshaw and Betsy Millane. Volunteers who kept the punch bowl full were Mike Russo and Peter Black. Cookie trays were filled by Eva Peterson, Marjorene Ainley, Jane Bouley, Maryanne Hall, Suzanne Zdanowicz, Guides Bryna Scherr and Roberta Rowe showed the guests the upstairs parlor and hall chambers. Anton Wohlert was on hand to answer questions about the house and museum. Many members responded to our request

for cookies: Marjorene Ainley, Diane Altieri, Marilyn Anderson, Peter Black, Martha Bradshaw, Jane Bouley, Maureen DaRos, Cheri Elliot, Nancy Gaylord, George Goebin, Patti LaBonte, Nancy Lynch, Audrey Nelson, Priscilla Oliver, Eva Peterson, Roberta Rowe, Winnifred Judge, Maryanne Hall, Janet Jackson, Andree Pierson, and Suzanne Zdanowicz. The Society thanks all of you for your baked goods.

Five lucky people won the raffle for the center pieces and tree. Special thanks to Louise Kenney for obtaining greens. Music by "Now and Then" with three piece harmony was enjoyed by all.

## Congratulations Members

**T**hank you for the wonderful response for my request for the 2009 membership dues and caring about the preservation of Branford's historic buildings and landmarks. As this Newsletter goes to press, there are over two hundred members who have renewed their dues. Total membership is two hundred and fifty-five.

Since our last publication, David & Sheryl Levine, Barbara Blake, Allan Wilcox, Roberta Trotta, Mary Kay & Vincent DeVita, Janet & Donald Jackson, Lee & Andree Pierson, Frank Twohill, Tracey Twohill, Bernice Paprocki, Peter Banks & Nancy Wallace and Raymond Green became new members. The Society's new business member is The Owenego Inn. Business members are also listed on our website [www.branfordhistory.org](http://www.branfordhistory.org). Welcome to the Society and thank you for your membership.

Our open house on December 7th was a big success thanks to the volunteers who provided and served food and decorated and to those of you who stopped in to say hello to new and old friends.

I would like to ask each of you to assist me as membership chair. If you happen to talk to a friend, neighbor or family member explain that the Historical Society is interested in preserving the historic buildings and landmarks that make Branford a beautiful historic town. Ask them if they would like to join the Society. If they indicate that they would like to join the Society, contact me at 468-5433 and I will send them a letter inviting them to become a member. My goal is to have 300 members and you can help me achieve that vision.

*✍ Jeanne McParland  
Membership Chair, 468-5433*



*If anyone would like to donate a pewter porringer,  
please contact Anton Wohlert at 481-4665.*

## Janet Gaines Remembered

**L**ong time former Branford Historical Society president, Janet Murphy Shattuck Gaines, died October 22, 2008 at the age of 95. Her great grandfather Henry Killam, a New Haven carriage manufacturer, came to Branford in 1880 and developed a family compound known as Killams Point, where she was born and where she maintained a summer residence.

After the Society acquired the Harrison House under a lease agreement in the 1970s, she took special interest during her tenure as president in obtaining furniture and antiques for the house with a Branford provenance. With a background in museum and library work, she focused on the proper interpretation of the furniture and other objects. She also developed a system of cataloging accessions, still in use today by the Society.

She was known throughout the state for her work as a docent at the Webb House in Wethersfield and as president of the Connecticut League of Historical Societies.

*Be alert to an  
announcement of a meeting  
concerning possible  
changes on the Green.*

## Colonial Food



**T**hose who landed on New England shores were raised on the food of Olde England, and of course brought these tastes with them. The English diet featured roast meat and birds, pies and pottage, gravies and sauce, boiled suet puddings, fish, cabbage, carrots, onions, parsnips, peas, cheese and other dairy products, apples, cherries, currants, gooseberries, greengage and damson plums, quinces, breads and beer or ale. Although the emigrants' ships carried seeds and cuttings of their fruit and vegetables and agricultural grains such as wheat, oats rye and barley, the early harvests were a disaster.

The colonists then turned to the Indians for help and tutelage in using plants and animals native to America. From the Indians they learned how to cultivate crops not known in England - corn, native beans and squash—and how to seek out edible wild plants. New shipments in time reinforced supplies of seeds, farm draft animals and tools. But meanwhile the settlers eagerly adopted the fruits, nuts, fish, vegetables so plentiful in their new wild home. From the onset, colonial cooking impressed a stamp on the New World and its English inheritance.

Note: There are seven chapters of research in the files of *The Old Farmers Almanac* first published in 1703 which show the simple recipes of Colonial Cooking.

✍ Nancy Hendricks

## Publications & Prints

Contact Winnifred Judge, 488-8755 for details.

Indian Neck, Short Beach, Thimble Islands & Double Beach:

CD-Rom Vintage Postcards..... \$15.00 each

*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

Post Card Prints of Early Branford (Downtown, Stony Creek/Pine Orchard,  
Short Beach, Indian Neck/Pawson Park).....\$3.00 Each

Montowese Program DVD ..... \$15.00

## 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

*Thank you for your support.*

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

# Important Dates To Remember

**THURSDAY MARCH 19TH 7 PM**

The Many Faces of Noah Webster at the Blackstone Library

*(see page 3 for details)*

**THURSDAY MAY 21ST 5:30 PM**

Annual Dinner

**SATURDAY JUNE 20TH**

Strawberry Festival

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