



Branford Historical Society
Post Office Box 504
Branford, Connecticut 06405

Volume 1 Issue III

April 1997

Editor, Harriet White

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK:

On April 3rd a special Board meeting convened at the Harrison House to consider the proposed plans for Town Hall renovation. Jane Bouley reviewed the plans and described her attempts to see them prior to the selectmen's meeting on March 26 and her offer to contribute advice as town historian. She only had the plans 48 hours before that meeting and the selectmen expect to vote approval on April 23rd. There is not much time in which to inform yourselves, form an opinion, and express it to RTM members and/or the Selectmen.

The plan includes a 1200 square foot concrete extension, eliminating the sidewalk in front and an exceptionally long and awkward ramp for disabled access. The Board felt that a permanent stage has not been justified and that it would impose an esthetically unpleasant appearance to this Greek revival building, disrupting traffic and pedestrian access along the road.

The Board unanimously voted to express opposition to the present plan of the Board of Selectmen for Town Hall renovations and to urge that the decision on acceptance be postponed for further public input and full architectural drawings. They will be sending a letter to the selectmen, and we urge our members to make themselves heard as quickly as possible.

THE HARTFORD HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR on March 15th was a great success with all seats filled on the bus and a glowing report from attendees.....such an enthusiastic response calls for future trips.

APRIL PROGRAM MEETING : On April 17th, Archibald Hanna will speak on the Thimble Islands and sign copies of his book on that subject. Mr. Hanna graduated from Clark University and holds a PhD from Yale. In 1981 he retired from Yale, where he had served as curator of the Western Americana Collection at the Beinicke Library. Born and raised in Massachusetts, he has lived in Branford for fifty five years and is an ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church. The talk is preceded, as usual, by a social half hour with coffee and cookies, and copies of "A Short History of the Thimble Islands" will be available for sale.

ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER will be at the Community House on May 15th and a tear-off form is at the end of this letter , due back by May 8th. Dinner will be served promptly at 6:30 and reservations are essential. Al Russell has planned an entertaining program for the evening, titled Victorian Lady, presented by Kandy Carle, describing and showing women's clothes of the 1890's.

Following dinner when the Annual Meeting convenes, a new slate of officers will be presented for the next two-year term by the nominating committee, for the vote of the membership, and annual reports will be turned in by the chairmen for the Society's records.

In addition, the membership will be asked to vote on a proposed revision to the Society's by-laws. Copies of both the old and the proposed By-laws are available at the Blackstone and the Willoughby Wallace Library. The main changes are the elimination of members-at-large on the Board and the addition of separate offices of Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer in place of the previously combined Assistant Secretary/Treasurer office. Winnifred Judge and her committee have tried to clarify and simplify the wording where possible

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CURRENT MEMBERSHIP ROSTER stands at 217 (counting just once for individual and family) and we welcome the following people who have newly joined us this year: Joyce Tierney, Helen Brastauskas, Muriel Diaz, Alcy Stiepock, Pearl Mueller, Janet Mahoney, Sylvia Moore, Francis Walsh, Regina Moher, Mary Lou Welch, Phyllis DaCorte, Kathy Pellegrino, Michael Zaffino, John Trustman, and Susan Meshako, Elizabeth G. Barnes, Skip Short.

Sadly, this year, several of our long-time valued members have died: Bob Howell, Russ Meickle, Jean Blair, Murray Burdick, and Eunice Jones. Eunice was for many years a colonial costumed guide at the Harrison House.

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THE HARRISON HOUSE will be open for the season on June 1st and guided tours will be offered from 2 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, as in the past. While there is a basic core of trained guides, new staff is needed and a training session is planned for May. It is a great way to get to know the House and the treasures we have and perhaps help plan some innovations. Give Elinor King, the out-going chairman a call at 488-1258 to sign up for the new training class.

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ACCESSIONS; The Historical Society has received many donations during the last year. There are old photographs, postcards, newspaper clippings of historical events, maps, and an inventory of the estate of Jonathan Foote. We have diaries of Ellen Linsley, Betsy Whelan, and letters written by famous people, including Ella Wheeler Wilcox. These items are placed in the archives, now supervised by Jane Bouley. Other larger articles are stored for the museum. There are glass milk bottles from Sagal Lou, Knudsen and others, a milk can from Medlyn's Dairy and a chair formerly owned by Henry Bradley Linsley. War mementos include a framed decorative picture honoring Victor Vickstrom in World War I, and blackout shades from World War II. Clothing dating from the 1890's has been added to our extensive clothing collection.

In the barn we have added old farm tools, and, from MIF, a telephone pole holder made by them, and a crate used to pack furnaces made at the factory.

Arnold Peterson's hand-built replica of the Harrison House as it looked in 1724, with a book detailing the construction, is on display in the museum room, as well as a Bible, printed in 1673, the oldest known Bible in Branford, loaned by the Partridge and Averill families. We urge you too visit the exhibits. Donations of historic interest are always welcomecontact Accessions Chairman, Alta Powelson at 488-4302.

WHAT IS SO RARE AS A DAY IN JUNE?

The eighteenth annual strawberry festival on Saturday, June, 14th, at the Academy on the Green. The festival means a generous portion of strawberry shortcake topped with real whipped cream with coffee or lemonade. Tickets will be sent in the mail sometime next month and our hope is that you will support the event by purchasing these in advance. The festival is our primary source of income: the monies going to the maintenance of the Harrison House, Branford archives, the museum, programs, and publications.

Many hands are needed on this day and on Friday for hulling of the berries. Please think about volunteering on Saturday for set-up and take-down, serving, or kitchen help. We thank those of you who have worked in the past and are looking forward to including new volunteers.

Please contact either Winnifred Judge, 488-8755, or Jane Bouley, 488-6531.

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Annual Dinner Reservation Form

Mail to Branford Historical Society
Post Office Box 504
Branford, Connecticut 06405

MENU

Roast beef with gravy
Baked chicken Italienne
Fish filet in lemon and wine sauce
Baked ziti marinara
Potato, salad, rolls
Italian Pastries, Coffee/Tea

Name _____ Phone # _____

Address _____

Number attending _____ @ \$10.00 Amount enclosed \$ _____

May 15, 1997, Branford Community House, 6:30 p.m. promptly.
Please return prior to May 8th.