

From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Autumn 1997, Volume 2, Issue 2

From the President...

To our membership and those of you who may not know me...I am a retired educator from the Town of Branford. Over the past 35 years, I have served as teacher, Teaching Principal and Administrative Principal. I have served on the Veterans Parade Committee since 1960, and as the Southern Area Vice Commander for the Department of CT, American Legion serving veterans and their concerns. I have also served as Branford's Fireworks Chairman for seven of the past nine years.

My wife Helen and I have owned and operated an Antique shop for eight years and have acquired a working knowledge and appreciation for antiques and collectibles.

When I accepted the opportunity to serve as your president, I felt we had two major goals to work toward, and, as the song goes, "You can't have one without the other." First, to find ways to increase our annual income. This would permit us to meet our second goal...to find ways to better inform and serve the community, particularly our school population, regarding Branford's history.

Our present programs need people to serve on the various Committees. Please join us and help make these goals a reality. Call and offer to be, not only a member, but an ACTIVE participant, too.

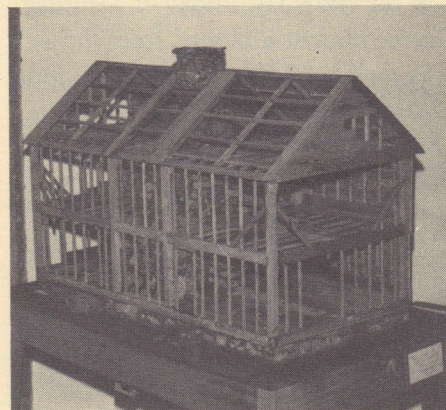
Bob Bescher, 488-0100

Harrison House Museum

by Nancy Hendricks, Chairman

Why should the Branford Historical Society maintain and seek to improve our one-room museum at the Harrison House?

As Branford residents, we live within one day commuting distance of some of the greatest museums in the world—New York, Boston, Hartford, New Haven. While there are numerous special interest small museums in New England, visitors to the Harrison House are primarily interested in local history. They want details on the house, and the people who occupied it. They have questions on the Indians who occupied the territory before the English came, and the circumstances of the settlement at Branford (Totoket). They are interested in how the original settlers, and those who followed, met the challenge of the environment and



Arnold Peterson's model of the Harrison House.



A suit worn by Deacon Ralph Linsley of Northford at his baptism in 1790.

developed a pattern of living within that environment.

Historical facts and photographs are available from many sources—the Blackstone Library, church records, town hall, our archives and our Town Historian, Jane Bouley. But the ability to see actual, genuine objects is fundamental in the consideration of museums.

Alta Powelson has just completed a thorough inventory of all objects in our collections at the Harrison House and has updated all of our records accordingly—a long and tedious job well done.

It is said that a museum is judged by its collections. Its possessions account for its existence, their character determine its worth, and reveal the policies and objectives at

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Branford Historical Society
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Our Fall Program

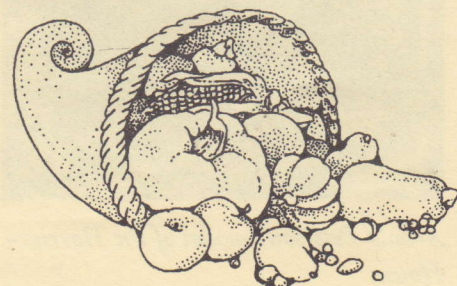
September 21 Fall Walk Series

September marks the return of our Fall Walk Series, opening with a guided tour of the Bradley Street triangle, led by John Ifkovic. The history of the street goes back to 1961. The tour is open to all who are interested. We will meet in Richlin's parking lot, next to the Canoe Brook Senior Center at 2 p.m. Following the walk there will be a tour of Harrison House and refreshments.

October 25 Harvest Festival

Our Harvest Festival will be held on Saturday, October 25 from 10-3. The annual tag and bake sale will be held on the grounds of the Harrison House. Rain date is Sunday, the 26th. In case of a rainy weekend, information will be left on our answering machine, 488-4828.

The success of this fund-raising event depends on the number and quality of items given to us, so look in your attic and ferret out items such as small pieces of furniture, bric-a-brac, working appliances, tools. No clothing, please. For pick-up call Fran Walsh at 488-5429 or the House at 488-4828. Articles may be dropped off on Thursday, Friday or Saturday, at the Harrison House, from 2-5 in September or October. Baked goods may be left Saturday afternoon the 25th or on Sunday morning.



October 18 Surprise Bus Tour

After the popular success of last Spring's bus tour, we are repeating the event to an as yet undisclosed location. Save the date of ~~October 18th~~. A brochure will be sent in the mail.

November 20 Branford River Lecture

We are pleased to present our own Town Historian, Jane Bouley, with a new lecture titled "Along The Branford River, In Time and Place." It will be held in the renovated Blackstone Library auditorium. Come at 7:30 p.m. for cider and donuts and socializing; the lecture begins at 8:00 p.m. We particularly welcome members of the Branford Land Trust who have been working on the cleanup and study of the Branford River.

December 6 Open House

December 6, Sunday 1-5 p.m. Once more the 17th century House will be aglow with festive decorations and candlelight for the annual open house, welcoming members and guests with punch, refreshments, music, and hospitality. It is a lovely time to visit with each other and to see the old House at its best.

We are pleased to introduce our new Program Chairman, Judy Myjak, who will be coordinating the Spring program. Judy is an RTM member and active volunteer, who is interested in the Historical Society, and willing to take a position of responsibility. We are planning to have monthly meetings from February through May, and members are welcome to attend!

Bill
Sat 11/19

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Harrison House Museum, continued

the museum. Frankly, our position at this point reminds me of an old joke that a museum is a large group of labels illustrated by a small group of specimens. Our donations in recent years have consisted largely of documents and photographs which are most welcome but better suited to library and archive development.



Antique cobalt-blue Staffordshire tableware.

This year I have tried to create a more professional look to our museum displays. There are some permanent displays on the Harrison House and the Academy on the Green which have been expanded. Our new displays include our mannequin dressed in a suit worn by Deacon Ralph Linsley of Northford at his baptism in 1790, and a small collection of antique cobalt-blue Staffordshire tableware. I have also presented an unusual stoneware trophy awarded as first prize to Clara F. Corey in the Killams Point tennis tournament of 1898. A 300-year-old watchman's rattle is also there for viewing for the first time. In addition, Arnold Peterson has added "fire" (little lights) to the fire places in the House model which he built and donated to the Historical Society.

Other members of the Historical Society have donated their talents to the museum. Betty Mount, using her

book-binding expertise, repaired a writing portfolio belonging to the first principal at the Academy on the Green. Arnold Peterson has agreed to become our Museum consultant on displays. He constructed a support table for the House model, as well as seven hanging mounting panels for display. These panels will eliminate the need to damage the fragile plaster walls with nails. Bill Hendricks has constructed cradles for our telescopes, a holding device for our mannequin and various support devices for displays.

I have tried to give you a picture of our Museum to date. We need membership assistance with donations or loans of any objects with ties to Branford history. A little story or history on the subject would be welcome. I am planning for next year's displays and welcome calls at 488-7411.

The Harrison House Museum is open from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m., Thursday through Sunday until October 1. Knowledgeable guides are on hand to answer any questions. For more information, please call 488-4828.



Historical items on display at the Harrison House Museum.

Membership Notes

Dues are Due!

It's time to renew your Historical Society membership! We hope you will continue to support our aims and that you'll consider volunteering for a committee, as well.

Memberships are important to us, not only as an income, but because they tell us how effective we are in enlisting support from the community, both for maintaining our historic house/museum and for educational programs.

An envelope is enclosed for your use, with a space to check off your special interests. Questions? Call Elinor King, chairman, 488-1258.

Welcome!

We would like to welcome the following new members of the Branford Historical Society:

Rosemary Booth
Peter and Patricia Black
Keith Harvey and Laura Malis
John and Rebecca McColl
Charles and Helen Sibley
Andrew Schaeffer
Patricia Vivadou

On Sale at Harrison House

We like to remind you from time to time about some of the popular items that are available as gifts or for personal enjoyment. A popular item is the Birds-eye view of Branford, an early map, 30" by 24", suitable for framing, \$5.00. The *Early History of Branford*, also \$5.00, the *History of the Thimble Islands*, by Archie Hanna, in beautiful blue and gold hard cover, \$10.00. Note paper and note cards of the House also available.

Historical Society Review

Strawberry Festival

Chairman Winifred Judge tells us that the Strawberry Festival did extremely well this year, both financially and socially, making a profit of \$3,454. The presale of tickets to our membership is a tremendous help in meeting up-front costs and this year more members contributed to the presale than in past years.

While we ate wonderful short-cake under the trees, there was renewal of old acquaintances as well as new members enrolled. Our publications were on



sale, bringing in an additional \$114. The Board is grateful for your loyalty and support, and we all look forward to more of the same next year!

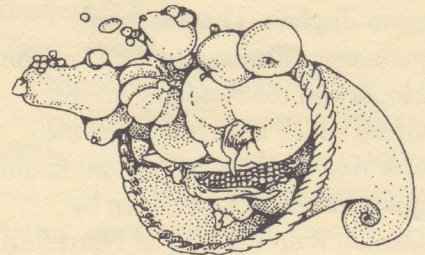
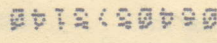
Appraisal Day

Our Appraisal Day at Clocktower Antiques, arranged by Fran Walsh, was a pleasure to those who participated, and earned a profit to the Society of \$450, representing a donation of \$5.00 per item appraised. Clocktower Antiques had set up a marquee by their shop on Route 1 and there were four expert appraisers: Joe Kabe for furnishings, Roland Dupre in textiles and Oriental rugs,

Carl Theriault for glass and china, and Alex Mihura for paintings. We are grateful to the time and expertise these volunteers gave, and to Clocktower Antiques, who absorbed the expenses involved.

About the Newsletter

We have been working on updating our newsletter in an effort to better inform our members and community about Branford's history. Your input is welcome, as our new editor is looking for photos, facts and stories to include in upcoming issues. If you would like to help out, please call Jennifer Payne, 483-5353.



HELEN & BOB BESCHER
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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