

From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2001, Volume 6, Issue 3

From the President's Desk

As a result of an unexpected turn of events, I was nominated and elected at the Annual Meeting, to continue to serve as President for a second two-year term. In addition, Paul Rowan (Vice-President), Dona Wohlert (Treasurer), Winnifred Judge (Assistant Treasurer) and Nancy Gaylord (Recording Secretary) were duly nominated and elected to serve for the next two years.

Judy Myjak, who graciously accepted the responsibility of Strawberry Festival Chair, and her Co-Chair, Roz Jones, immediately invited all present to actively participate in our 22nd Annual Festival in June. Through the concerted efforts of the sub-committee chairs, who enlisted many of you to volunteer, along with careful planning and fantastic weather, we sold out at 3:30 p.m. As a result of this collective effort, we netted \$3,659.11. Thanks to all for a job well done!

In closing, may each of you and your families and friends experience the joy and fond memories that are associated with Thanksgiving and the ensuing Holiday Season.

— *Bill Davis, President*

National Historic District Designation

Those of you who were unable to attend our April and May meetings may not be aware of a significant activity the Society has undertaken. At the April Board of Directors meeting, a motion was made and unanimously approved to enter into a contractual agreement with a preservation consultant in Guilford to conduct a field survey and research of structures in the "triangle" bounded by Main, Bradley and North Harbor Streets, along with several other buildings on Main Street, among these the Harrison House. Several structures on Cherry Hill Road, including the Canoe Brook Senior Center, are also involved.

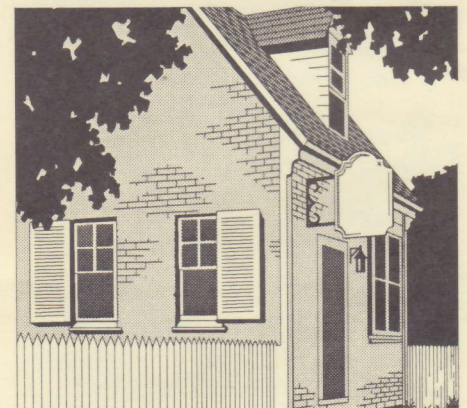
The purpose of this study is the official designation of the entire area as a National Historic District, which will be called "Canoe Brook Historic District, Branford, Connecticut." The time line for this activity is as follows:

1. On or before September 20, 2001: A complete first draft of nomination with all required documentation will be submitted to the Connecticut Historical Society (CHS) for two purposes; a) a formal approval for National Register study of the district, and b) staff review of the nomination.

2. On or before December 15, 2001: Following approval for study and staff review, the revised final draft nomination will be submitted to CHS for review and approval by the State Historic Preservation Board (SHPB), whose first possible scheduled meeting is February 2002.
3. Within 15 days after SHPB meeting: A complete final version of nomination with a set of photographs is sent to the National Park Service (NPS) for approval.

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places usually occurs within 90 days following the above requirements. Although there are no guarantees, we anticipate a favorable outcome.

— *Bill Davis, President*



**From the
Harrison House**

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Branford Historical Society
124 Main Street, P.O. Box 504
Branford, Connecticut 06405
(203) 488-4828

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**It's Time to Renew
Your Membership**

We're pleased to report that our membership is more than 200 people strong, many of whom participate in activities such as our annual Strawberry and Harvest Festivals, Holiday Open House, and our monthly programs and events.

Your membership in the Branford Historical Society supports our efforts to educate and to foster an interest in the history of Branford and to encourage the preservation of antiquities, landmarks and buildings.

**Would you like to be
more involved?**

We are always in need of volunteers for our various activities that work toward the goal of preserving the history of Branford. Be sure to check off your interests on the enclosed Membership Renewal form.

Another way to support our organization is to ask family and friends to attend monthly programs and special events and to encourage them to become members. If they would like more information, we

would be happy to send them a copy of our brochure, just give us a call!

We look forward to receiving the annual renewal of your membership dues and your areas of interest. If you are able, please consider becoming a sustaining member at \$25 or a contributing member at \$50 .

No matter how you choose to support the Society, we are looking forward to seeing each of you this coming year.

—*Jeanne McParland,*
Membership Chair

To check the status of your membership, please refer to the mailing label on this newsletter. A "C" means you are a current member and it is time to renew for our 2001-2002 membership year; "NR" means you have not renewed your membership since 1999-2000; "L" means you are a Life Member; "O" represents a like-minded organization.

Join Us for these Upcoming Events

Branford Historical Society Harvest Festival
Saturday, October 20th

"From World's End to Summer Resort:
The History of Pine Orchard"
Thursday, November 15th

Annual Holiday Open House
Sunday, December 9th



Harvest FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 20th

The Society's annual Harvest Festival will take place on Saturday, October 20th (rain date October 27), from 9:30 a.m. through 2:30 p.m.

Please join us for this enjoyable day. It's a great opportunity to learn more about the Historical Society and to tour the Harrison House. There will also be a Collectibles Sale, with proceeds benefiting our 2001 programs and events.

We need volunteers to ensure a successful festival!

Set-up will begin at 7:30 a.m., for which a minimum of 20 volunteers is needed. No bake sale will be held this year. 1000 items have been collected for the Collectibles Sale, in a variety of categories. Two cashiers and two baggers are needed for each shift; 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. A knock-down crew is also needed following the Festival to rebox and again store unsold items in the barn. Please save your plastic and paper bags to be used during the sale.

Please call General Chair, George Goeben at 481-9200 to volunteer your services. Callers are asked to speak slowly, loudly and clearly when leaving a message. Harrison House Guides are also asked to call Guides Chair, Patty LaBonte, at 488-6482 for House tour assignments.

A Seasonal Tale

As the Society's Newsletter Editor, I have opted to offer you an appropriate vignette (given approaching Halloween activities) concerning my family ancestry. I am a direct descendant of Margaret Scott, who was one of the very unfortunate women in Salem, Massachusetts to be hanged as a witch during an 8-month period in the year 1692, a dark time indeed in Colonial history.

Margaret Remington (her maiden name) settled in Salem as a very young child, having survived the arduous ocean voyage from England to the new world. When a young woman, she married Benjamin Scott, a successful farmer and land-owner, and bore at least five children, perhaps seven. Benjamin predeceased his wife, bequeathing her the family property and "his biggest cow."

My late mother, Eunice Hungerford Jones, and I took a very memorable trip to Salem some years ago to research the family's long talked-about "witch," who was eventually exonerated, along with all 18 fellow victims. (My grandmother, Florence Hungerford, kept for many years a tattered, yellowed newspaper clipping, listing Margaret's name among those exonerated following the infamous witch trials.) When pouring over available relevant books and writings, I found, unfortunately, very little documentation concerning Margaret's hanging, as she was one of the last accused to be put to death, and the "paper trail" of the time apparently disappeared during the course of the trials. I was able to determine, however, that Margaret was in her mid-seventies when

hanged, which was quite elderly for a woman of that era. No evidence exists as to her imagined crimes, or the identity of her accusers, but it is thought that she too fell victim to the over-active imagination of a number of bored young girls in the community, under the tutelage of a West Indian servant, who practiced voodoo.

A visit to Salem is a most interesting outing. Should you decide to make the trip, be sure to visit the Peabody & Essex Museum, housing a priceless collection of materials documenting the trials; the historic "Witches House," an original dwelling of the 1600's offering a fascinating and enlightening tour; the House of Seven Gables, which was the inspiration for Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous novel; and the many meticulously restored homes of wealthy sea captains, now open to the public. The Hawthorne Inn provides elegant lodging...

A reflective Halloween to all.

— Roz Jones, Editor

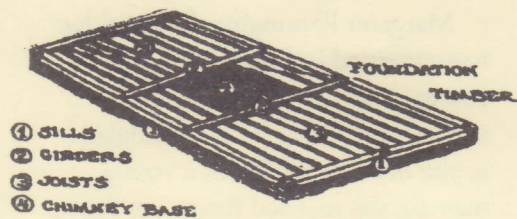


From the Archives

— Nancy Hendricks, Archivist

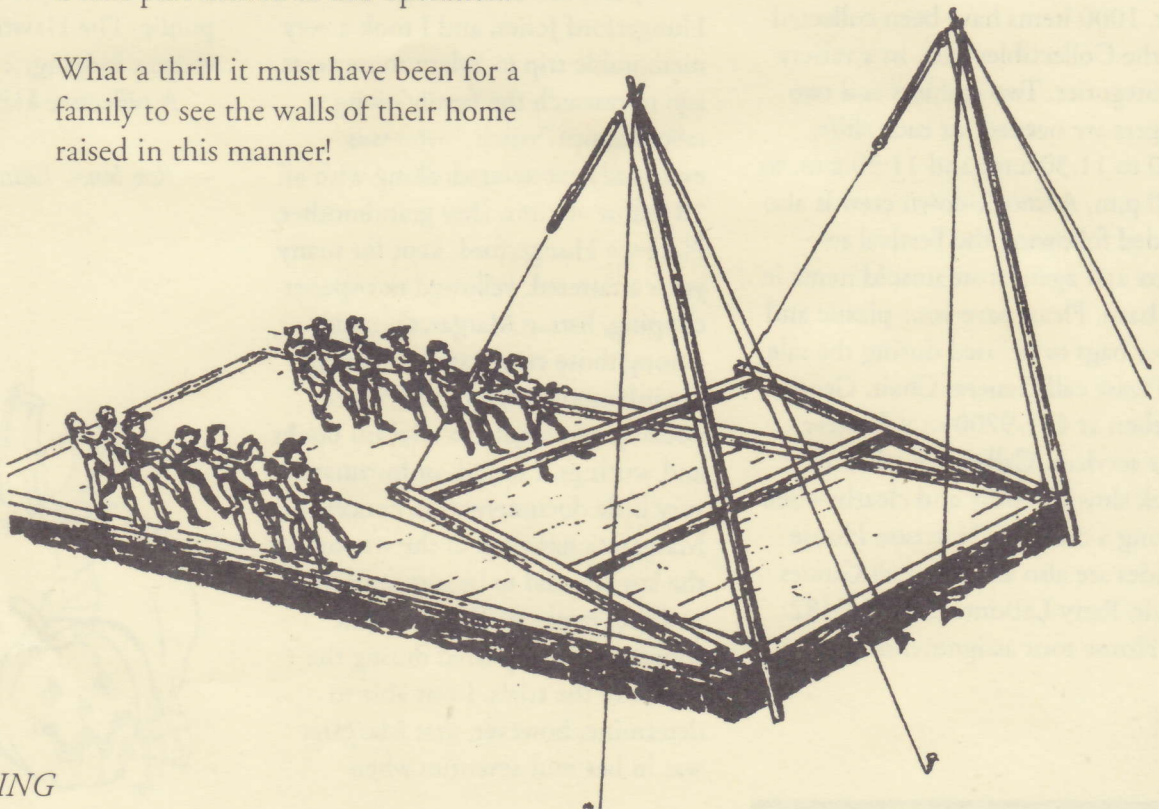
We now come to “Raisin’ Day” for a house such as the Harrison House. It may have taken a year since the men of Branford felled the first trees to begin the building of a new American landmark. Good neighbors were so important at this time. By dawn they gathered at the building site with hearth-cooked victuals, drink, gossip, music-makers and, above all, plenty of muscle.

Bents were pre-assembled sections that made up the width of the frame. Usually there were four; the two ends, and two like sections between them. The bent members were joined flat on the foundation timber and in position to be raised in place.



Erecting a weighty two-story bent of heavy timber for a structure such as the Harrison House would require a gin pole. The gin pole contributed a power lift with its block and tackle rigging. Of course, the block, a casing containing a pulley, played a vital part indeed in this operation.

What a thrill it must have been for a family to see the walls of their home raised in this manner!



Society Archives

A group of members have been placing Blackstone Library and Branford Historical Society papers into archival folders and boxes. The papers are sorted into various categories, i.e., churches, businesses and family papers. Each folder is subdivided chronologically or by other subject headings. The Society's archives are now stored in the Branford Room at the Library to make them more accessible.

Committee members for this project are: Hubba DaRos, Sandra Brown, Jane Bouley, Nancy Hendricks, Mabel Kerrigan, Leocadia Sullivan and Fred Palmer. There are some wonderful historical, business and family papers in this collection, which is available for research during library hours.

— Jane Bouley, *Historian*

2001 Harrison House Displays

Last year we were fortunate to receive a significant group of Native American artifacts which are now on display at the Harrison House. They include tools and arrowheads found at various locations here in Branford, including Short Beach, Branford Hills, Indian Neck, Totoket Road, Blackstone Acres, Pine Orchard, and Stony Creek. Our consultant has dated them between 1000 BC and 1000 AD.

Currently we are also displaying commercial products that were manufactured in Branford. These include three different styles of nutcrackers made in the 19th century by M.I.F., and several groups of very ornate door hinges and locks made by Branford Lock Works.

We have an assortment of old milk bottles from Branford dairies, most dating from the early 20th century. They are all labeled with either an

embossed or painted name of the dairy on the bottle.

In the lean-to room, there is a collection of 19th century food processing kitchen equipment, including a meat press, lemon squeezer, coffee grinder, nutcracker, meat grinder, and patented apple parer, dated 1853.

You can see how people dressed during the middle of the 19th century by examining our daguerreotypes, the earliest type of photographs ever available. Ten of these images are from one family, the Jewetts of Branford.

A variety of other individual items, including Colonial money, are also on display through the end of our regular season, which is the last weekend in September.

— Anton Wohlert,
Museum Chairman



Remember when...

Snow blanketed Branford during the winter of 1961? This photo by Arthur L. Seaburg, was taken by the Candy Shop on Main Street.

The Historical Society invites you to submit your own interpretations on Branford's past. We're now taking submissions of articles, artwork and old photos for inclusion in upcoming issues. Please send to: Roz Jones, 230 Opening Hill Rd., Branford, CT 06405.

Fall & Winter Programs

Branford Historical Society members and the public at large are invited to join us for our fall and winter programs. If you would like more information, please call us at (203) 488-4828.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH

Town Historian Jane Bouley will speak on the topic "From World's End to Summer Resort: The History of Pine Orchard" in the meeting room of Blackstone Library, 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9TH

Our annual Holiday Open House will once again welcome visitors to the Harrison House, beautifully decorated for the Christmas season, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The Branford High Ensembles will perform traditional Holiday selections, and refreshments will be served.



Harrison House Guides

Patty LaBonte, Chair of Harrison House Guides, reports that we are in need of guides for the House for next season.

If you would like to conduct tours through the House, while offering historical information and anecdotes to visitors, please call the Harrison House at 488-4828.



Branford Historical Society
Post Office Box 504
Branford, Connecticut 06405

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