Joshua Hempstead was born in New London in 1678, and died there in 1758. At times during his long life he was a shipwright; carpenter; farmer, townsman; trader to Boston, New York, and the West Indies; representative to the General Assembly; justice of the peace; surveyor; writer of wills; and business agent for the Winthrop family. He also kept a diary, the surviving part of which covers the years 1711-1758. Its 700 pages are a rich resource for anyone interested in colonial life in New England.

One of the things that stands out in the diary is the number of places mentioned. Some of these were due to Hempstead’s activities, such as surveying in many towns, attending court sessions, keeping tabs on tenant farmers, and visiting family and trading on Long Island. Other places were connected with the coasting and West Indies trade so important to this area’s economic life, still others with England’s various wars.

This talk looks at the geographical world of Joshua Hempstead, and by extension New London, using the place references in the diary. Where did Hempstead travel in the course of his daily work? Where did his family members live? Where did he trade? Where did he find familiar people in his travels? And what can we conclude from the answers about New London’s connections to the wider world? The talk will be illustrated with maps showing Hempstead’s travels.

Patricia M. Schaefer has been working with The Diary of Joshua Hempstead for about fifteen years. Her book, A Useful Friend: A Companion to the Joshua Hempstead Diary 1711-1758 will be for sale at the meeting (290 pages, $25). The purpose of the book is to make the diary more accessible to the general reader and to scholars. It includes articles about various aspects of life in colonial times, maps and explanations of places referred to by Hempstead, a subject index of the diary, and a glossary.

Hope you have already marked your calendars for Mystic’s first ever co-hosted House and Garden Tour being planned by the MRHS and the Mystic Garden Club. Homes and gardens located on Clift, Eldredge, Gravel, Grove, Park Place, Pearl and Starr Streets will be featured. Tickets for the tour will be $22 in advance and $30 day of and will be available in the spring, both on line and locally.

The chairmen are: For the Mystic Garden Club Gail Ettinger and Linda McArthur. For the MRHS Sally Halsey, Joyce Everett and Dorrie Hanna. We still have a number of positions to fill, including Publicity, so don’t be shy. Contact one of the co-chairs to see how you might be able to help!
Membership Survey – Part II
To conclude September’s Newsletter discussion of the results of last spring’s membership survey:
The responses to the question “How important is Portersville Academy to you?” averaged 3.5 (a little above medium importance) which is not unexpected since many of our members have no personal interaction with Portersville even thought they do feel a connection with the 1839 schoolhouse. However, the result for “Do you agree that the Historical Society has an obligation to maintain the Academy and make it available to the community as part of the town’s history? “ was a strong 4 average with many responses at 5 (highest importance). This is consistent with the original impetus in founding the Mystic River Historical Society – to preserve and protect Portersville Academy and to tell the story of its importance to our local history. (In 1975 the newly formed Society raised enough money to purchase the Academy from the Town of Groton and restore it to its original condition.) Continuing to fulfill this purpose is one of the requirements for maintenance of our 501(c)(3) non-profit status. In effect, we have a contract with the government, with our members, and with the townspeople of Mystic regarding Portersville Academy which is important to all of us.

Responses to the questions about why are you a member of MRHS, in order of importance:
- Support a worthy group (mostly 4’s and 5’s)
- Keep in touch with local history (a range of replies averaging 3.7)
- Attend meetings (a range of replies averaging 3.7)
- Genealogical research – Important to a few people

In conclusion, the results of the survey indicate that the Board, officers, employees and volunteers of the Mystic River Historical Society are providing the membership and the community with what is important to them. We will strive to continue to do so.

Memories of Nauyaug 1903 - 1910
By John (Jack) Wheeler - Age 93 When Noted in 1989

My father, Charles E. Wheeler, was a co-owner of the first complete cottage built on Nauyaug. A Mr. Leuther, minister of the Mystic Congregational Church, supplied the labor and Charles E. Wheeler furnished the materials. The cottage was built on the west side of Nauyaug, next to the large rock on the highest ground. This occurred in 1903-1904.

Before that time, all the campers’ places consisted of lean-tos for the kitchens and large tents on platforms for living and sleeping. Our cottage consisted of kitchen, dining room, living room & large bedroom with cots in various directions.

The campers to the north of us, Mr. Doubleday; Miss Gill; Charles A. Van Winkle and family; Professor and Mrs. Haines (later owned Gates Island with cottage); John Allyn; Roughhouse Duncan, who worked in Lamb’s store, and several other Mystic boys; two cousins (names forgotten); then the Holmes (in children, Raymond and Charles); Seneca Eldridge; Walter Lathrop, and others.

To the north of the big rock was Arthur Van Winkle (with the tobacco-stained moustache) and family (Theodore, Charles, and Sterling). Van Winkle’s camp was previously owned by Buckley High School boys - noisemakers.

John and Ernest Rossie of Rossie Velvet Co. came next, then the Dodies. That consisted of campers on Nauyaug in 1903 and 1904. I enjoyed every summer of that period, from school closing in June to Labor Day. My Aunt Nettie (Mother’s sister) was my housekeeper.

Father had a 26’ launch built in Stonington (the Emma Louise, after my mother), a cabin cruiser with torpedo bow, full size head and covered cockpit, with Hasbrook engine, 3 cylinder, 2 cycle, built by Holmes Shipyard at West Mystic. Dad motored daily to Standard Machine Co.

Capt. Palmer Bindloss was his first paid captain. Mother, Edna (sister) and Norton (brother) divided their time with Dad in Mystic, as they had more to do there than on the island and Dad always wanted three hot meals a day, dinner at noon.

continued on page 5
On November 8th, a group of costumed role players arranged by Helen Keith, took part in the American Girl® doll tea held at St. Mark’s Church in Mystic. Scotty Breed represented the Revolutionary War era, Louisa Watrous and Lilly Schlauder portrayed Nancy and Emma Denison from the 1830s, and Angie Robinson shared Helen May Clarke diary excerpts from 1915.

In preparing for the event, Louisa found that the first American girl book was actually published in 1831 as "The American Girl's Book" by Miss Leslie, and is available on Google books. Lilly as Emma had a mock up copy for the occasion to show that she had the first one!

With the help of volunteers, Lilly presented household implements borrowed from Portersville Academy to show what life was like back in her time, in having to get water, cook over the fire, churn butter, grind food, make candles, and wash clothes with a washboard. The girls were happy their modern chores aren't as hard as all that! Lilly also shared the list of punishments for not behaving properly in school - one of the infractions was having long fingernails! Helen provided a number of games from PVA for the girls attending to try, including dominoes, checkers, Graces, Jacob’s Ladder, yo-yos, and tops. It was a festive and fun occasion for all of the girls who came with their favorite dolls, and mothers and grandmothers in tow!

2009 MRHS Operating Budget

The following Income and Expense Budget for the Fiscal Year 2009 starting 1/1/2009 was prepared by the Finance Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at its November meeting. The $5,000 House Tour income is our projected share of the profits from the House & Garden Tour planned for this spring in conjunction with the Mystic Garden Club. Dividends and interest on our endowment funds are not included in this budget but will be used to cover any Operating Loss, if this should prove to be necessary.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Archival /Curatorial 300</td>
<td>Administration 14,625</td>
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<td>House Tour 5,000</td>
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Operating Gain / (Loss) -4,315
Springtime in The Big Apple  
Joyce Everett

We are planning a spring 2009 trip which will be closer to home, one overnight, and two days of exploring. We have sent a questionnaire to the people on the foliage trip to Pennsylvania and asked many of our usual travellers whether they would prefer a trip to New York City with different and entertaining events or a trip to Long Island to see Theodore Roosevelt’s Oyster Bay estate as well as other estates, gardens, and a winery or two. As luck would have it the responses are an exact tie! Therefore Helen Keith and I have decided that I should plan the New York City trip for April and we will do the Long Island one in the fall. We expect the trip to take place April 24-April 25 to take advantage of weekend hotel rates in New York. We plan to start with a visit to the Museum of American Finance near Wall Street, a presentation of U.S. financial history from the Dutch settlers to modern Wall Street with all its ups-and-downs, panics and recoveries. We will continue to lunch and the South Street Seaport Museum a few blocks away. Our overnight stop will be as close to Times Square as possible so that those who would like to go to the theater can do so. The next morning we will have a tour of the New York City of Revolutionary War times including the Green-Wood Cemetery looking out over New York Bay where the Continental forces were overwhelmed by the British fleet, Fort Greene Park, and General Washington’s headquarters, the Morris-Jumal Mansion. In the afternoon we will do the shorter Circle Line boat tour of the city before we make our way back to Mystic. It always looks different from the water.

I will be putting the trip together and compiling exact details and costs by the end of January. In the meantime please let me know if you might like to come and haven’t had the chance to let me know. Please tell me if you have suggestions of any sort! Do you have a friend who knows everything there is to know about the Revolution in New York City? Great restaurants? This will be a shorter trip to make it easier for people working on the House Tour. Please contact Joyce Everett  536-6339

Notes from the Downes Building  
Dorrie Hanna

We’re holding down the fort at the Downes building as we wind up 2008. We miss Emily Perkins and are “making do” without Helen Keith for the time being. Volunteers Corinne Breed, Bettye Noyes and Charlotte Smith are a big help to Louisa Watrous and myself as we work our way through various and sundry boxes of material. Jane Preston hopes to be back volunteering in the spring to continue working on the book collection.

At the last Curatorial Committee meeting Judy Hicks remarked that we hadn’t been promoting our publications very heavily, so let me take this opportunity to remind members, old and new, that we have a number of items for sale. In addition to our DVD, Mystic: An American Journey, we have our two books: Images of America Mystic and An Account of My Life. Any or all of these would be informative and entertaining reading or viewing on a cold January evening. We also have maps and notepaper available. All the proceeds from sales of these items benefit the MRHS. But the key here is “sales”—they earn us no return sitting on our shelves. Please consider stopping in and making a purchase or two.

Finally, here is a “show and tell” from our collection. Item number 1973.066.0095 from the Brown Collection. Postmarked at Mystic at 6:30 a.m. on January 1, 1909. I found this quite by accident while looking for something else. I think it’s perfect for this issue of the Portersville Press. Happy 2009 to you all!
Johnnie Allyn (my age) became my pal and what fun we had “lassoing” the Mason’s sheep, at the rear of our cottage where there was a sheep shed. If we roped them by the legs, they were caught quickly, but if we roped their necks they would pull us 200 feet or more. Andrew Mason stopped the sport—afraid of injuries to the sheep—not us.

Another sport was shooting bullfrogs with my 22 rifle on the center pond. Aunt Nettie skinned the legs and made a pie which was better than any chicken pie ever made.

Before July 4th, all the campers gathered driftwood and filled a pit behind our cottage and on the evening of the 4th, the blaze could be seen over Noank.

Most of the campers collected rainwater for washing, but milk, butter etc., were kept in a pail at the bottom of Mason well, near our cottage. We had no refrigeration. We rowed to Noank most every day for groceries, purchased at the store near the public landing.

Once when Aunt Jenny (Dad’s sister) was visiting us, we rowed to Noank and on the way back we tried to better the time across. Aunt Jenny sat on the stern and I rowed in the forward bow for she was broad and tall. As we got nearer Nauyaug, Aunt Jenny kept crying, “ Faster, Jack, faster, we’ve got to beat the record.” I kept pulling with my eyes shut, nearly exhausted until we hit the dock. Aunt Jenny went in the air on top of me with petticoats flying and jelly beans, which she had in her lap, all over the boat. What a laugh we had!

In August, the crab season started and I took Aunt Jenny into the cove on the west side with incoming tide. It took us about two hours to fill the bottom of the boat with blue shells. I stood up in the bow, poling along with the tide. A crab caught me in the middle of my instep (barefooted) and I jumped overboard, spilling Aunt Jenny. She thought I had gone nuts. I never went crabbing again barefoot. We cooked the crabs in the big iron kettle in the backyard. Aunt Nettie picked out the meat and made a crab soufflé. As Byron Hatfield should say, “We lived high on the hog.”

There were fishnets on the east side of Nauyaug extending out some 100 feet from the shore to the west. Each week Mr. Wilcox came over to empty the nets early in the morning. I would row out and bring back a 2-3 lb. flounder for 10 cents, or if I had no money, I always brought back a fish.

We went swimming at high tide daily, rain or shine. Once Seneca Eldridge, 6’3”, 200 lbs. swam over to Cabin Island (north of Mystic Island) with me holding onto his shoulder with one hand and kicking with my feet. Seneca used a crawl stroke, head submerged except to breathe. The Holmes had a speedboat, Blue Peter, with a new Holmes engine. Had a speed of over 18 knots which was very fast for those days.

There was not much social life among the campers but Johnny Allyn and I were with the Van Winkle girls most every day. Wilhelmina was my girl (my age). Elizabeth and Charlotte were older, John and Carl younger. One Sunday when we were all gathered in front of the Van Winkle tent, Carl fell off their dock. He was three or four years of age. We all rushed into the water to get him, much to the delight of the parents who served us sarsaparilla and cookies for all.

Another time, I remember an adventure with Wilhelmina. We strayed to Nauyaug Point, exploring the shore and went inside a cave formed of an overhanging cliff. What a time we had kissing and making love unforeseen to anyone except Mrs. Dodge. She had called Mrs. Van Winkle to tell her her daughter was in a cave with a boy for a long time. Wilhelmina was scolded and I was afraid of Mrs. Van Winkle for a long time, though I was invited to Rutherford during Christmas holiday and entertained at a big party and a trip to New York to a Broadway musical with C.A., family & friends.

Johnnie Allyn and I had great fun exploring the island and were at the Mason house many times. Once we got as far as the kitchen and saw, in the dining room, the table all set with china and silver, left there since the Mason’s sister died. At that time, Andrew and John did not speak and lived at opposite ends of the house.

Andrew Mason called on my father several times, on Sundays, and talked politics (both were Republicans). Father tried to buy the land but could not get Andrew to set a price or consummate a sale. However, I remember Mason sitting on the porch floor with chest open and crushing fleas with his long fingernails, caught on his chest. Father showed him his new telescope built by Mr. Edgecomb in Mystic and told Mason he saw a lady on Fishers Island fixing her garter. It brought a chuckle from Mason.

My sister entertained several teachers from W.M.I. School in New London; Madeline Freeman, Miss Austin and Mr. Bud. On one occasion, Madeline Freeman was very sick at night after eating too many gingersnaps, made by Aunt Nettie. My sister-in-law, Katherine, went to W.M.I. and many years later and early in the morning before classes began, asked Miss Freeman if she still liked gingersnaps (“Jack Wheeler, her brother, wants to know”). “Go take your seat, Katherine Maxson, and don’t try to get familiar with me.”

My mother entertained the Ladies Aid Society of the Mystic Congregational Church on the boat. They went to New London and on the way home it was very rough and were all sick, but as usual enjoyed the cruise up the river.

After I entered high school, my interests were no longer on the island and Father sold the cottage to Charles Van Winkle, son of Arthur, who lived on the other side of the big rock. He had a brother, Theodore, my brother Norton’s age, on the Rutgers football team.
November 2008 Meeting Minutes

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce on Monday, November 17, 2008. Board members present were Lou Allyn, David Evans, Tim Evers, Bill Everett, Joyce Everett, Sally Halsey, Dorrie Hanna, Jim Kimenker, Cathy Marco, Betty O’Donnell, Jane Preston, John Porter, Stephanie Thorp and Kit Werner.

President (Lou Allyn): There are no meetings scheduled for December; however, articles for the Portersville Press are due on December 19. Our next Board meeting is January 12. Our next Membership meeting is January 28th. Lou thanked the board members who wrote articles for the last edition of the Portersville Press for their interesting articles.

Treasurers Report (Bill Everett): Bill reported that credit card applications are now “in the mail” and should be here in three weeks. He apologized for not providing the board with the financial report before the board meeting due to unforeseen computer problems. He reassured the board that the latest financial report would be in their email upon return from the board meeting. Bill reported that the fall trip produced a modest income for the Historical Society which will help with planning future trips.

Corresponding Secretary (Kit Werner): There were eleven letters of thanks sent this past month: 3 for donations related to membership renewals and to newsletter patrons; 4 to local businesses, for renewing advertisements in The Portersville Press; one to our speaker for the November meeting; one to Joyce Everett, for yet another fantastic MRHS trip; one for a donation in honor of Helen Keith’s birthday; and one to Rufus Allyn for the donation of a Dell computer to the MRHS. Kit also sent a get well card with candy to Helen Keith.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Buildings & Grounds (John Porter): Duncklee performed semi-annual preventive maintenance on the heating and cooling system. No problems were noted.

Curatorial (Dorrie Hanna, Collection Manager): No major developments since last month. Lisa Sheley, our URI student, is finishing up her class project and it has been a pleasure to work with her. Dorrie has been able to cover the hours that we are open in Helen Keith’s absence (due to illness). Dorrie and Jane Preston continue work on the book collection with the goal of making the books easier to find on the shelf and more fully described in PastPerfect, as well as removing book that are not relevant to our Mission Statement. The house histories and the photo collection are being researched in support of the upcoming House and Garden tour.

Education (Tim Evers): No schools are scheduled for Portersville Academy programs at this time. One good possibility for working with schools is to suggest having them read an appropriate historical book and then we would go to the school with an accompanying presentation. This will be researched and discussed further.

Outreach (Helen Keith): Jane Preston reported that she and Dorrie (who has volunteered to assist in Helen’s absence) will be doing the last “Remember When” program for Mystic River Congregate on the 1950s on Nov. 17.

Finance (David Evans): Nothing to report.

Hospitality (Cindy Allyn): Joyce will provide cookies for our November membership meeting.

Information Technology (Stephanie Thorp): On November 1, Barry performed the normal monthly system update and file backup tasks. All systems appeared to be in good operating condition and were functioning normally. He also installed the new McAfee Internet Security software from ATT successfully for all system units (Computers MRHS1, MRHS2, MRHS3).

On November 5, Barry received a message indicating that the network connection for Past Perfect on MRHS2 was out of order. Barry investigated the problem; powering down and powering up again and reestablished the connection correctly so the system was again operating normally. No further work was required; no definitive reason for the disconnect was found, except to say that Windows occasionally does not do the network connection correctly. So this is most likely a Windows problem.

Marketing (Sally Halsey): Press releases have been sent and electronic calendars have been updated for Wednesday, Nov. 19 program. They were submitted late, so may not appear in the weeklies.

Membership (Cynthia Allyn): We have received one new family membership from Hugh and Sally Smith and seven more renewals including one as a Newsletter Patron. A gift was received from Donna Baron in honor of Helen Keith’s 80th Birthday. What a wonderful present!

There are now 180 names in the database for Constant Contact (for our email communications). Thirty-six follow-up letters were sent to those members who have still not renewed with a questionnaire asking them to share their reasons for not renewing.

[Editor’s Note: Current Membership Updates are listed on back page of newsletter.]

Nominating (Tim Evers): Nothing to report.

Program (Paul Ingle): Catherine Deichmann will return to speak at our membership meeting on November 19th with a discussion on “Carved in Stone” the need for Monuments to Memorialize the Conflicts that Arose as a Result of our Civil War.” After the holidays, we will have our first membership meeting in 2009 on January 28th with Patricia Schaefer as our speaker on “The Geographic World of Joshua Hempstead”.

Lou will be presenting his 1938 Hurricane talk tomorrow to Stoneridge and then later this month to the Rotary Club’s meeting. If anyone is interested in a copy of a DVD of the presentation, please contact Lou.
Special Events (Joyce Everett): The Mystic River Historical Society completed a very successful trip to Pennsylvania in late October. The weather was cold but clear, we brought home the same number of people we left with, always a good thing, and everyone seemed to be having a good time. We were delighted that some of our oldest members could come and enjoy the trip by pacing their activities. The Nemours Mansion outside of Wilmington was quite the highlight of the trip. We also enjoyed visits to the Nathan Denison homestead and the Wyoming Valley, the Hawk Sanctuary, the Daniel Boone homestead, and a tour and visits in Amish country. Special thanks go to Jane Preston for helping Joyce on the trip!

Trip members provided Joyce with two pages of suggestions for our next adventures and she will be starting work on a short spring trip very soon.

House Tours (Sally Halsey): A name has been proposed for the event: River View: A House and Garden Walk. We have 8 houses and gardens, and 5 other gardens only to date. We are meeting with the homeowners, and finding docents for inside and outside. We continue to approach homeowners. We need volunteers to chair the following committees: Publicity, Sponsorship/Advertising, Ticketing, and Operations. Many of these committees already have people who have agreed to work on them, but are not comfortable with being a chairperson. We would also like to have a Bazaar component with plants and other interesting items for sale. If anyone is interested in helping, please contact Sally, Joyce or Dorrie.

St. Mark’s Church has agreed to host a box lunch. Sally met with Mike O’Farrell, Director of Communications from Mystic Seaport, who was most helpful. We will try to get publicity throughout New England. Barbara Washburn, the Treasurer, is working on a budget.

Walking Tour (David Evans): An “all-weather” leaflet holder for our Walking Tour brochure has been placed on the Pumping Station on Gravel Street. We appreciate the Town of Groton approving our request.

NEW BUSINESS
No new business.

- The next Board meeting is January 12, 2009.
- The next General Membership Meeting is January 28, 2009.
- Copy deadline for the February issue of the Portersville Press is January 16th. Please send submissions to: jenniferpryor@sbcglobal.net

- The law offices of O’Brien Stuart Eppinger & Collier, LLC

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CALENDAR Notables

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2009 7:30p
Patricia Schaefer - “The Geographic World of J. Hempstead”

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Feb. 25, 7:30p

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Mar. 25, 7:30p

Membership Meeting Wednesday, April 22, 7:30p

Membership Meeting Wednesday, May 27, 7:30p

No Membership Meeting in June

Save the date - June 20, 2009
Rooms & Blooms: A House and Garden Walk!

MRHS Mini-Marketplace (860) 536 - 4779
www.mystichistory.org

"An Account of My Life: The Childhood Journals of Helen May Clarke of Mystic, Connecticut, 1915-1926" by Helen Clarke Grimes
$15.95 non-members
$14.35 members

"Images of America: Mystic" by Mystic River Historical Society
Published by Arcadia Publishing Company, 2004
$19.99

"Mystic - An American Journey" - DVD
Written and produced by Bailey Pryor, 2004
$15, plus $5 shipping and handling if mailed

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Membership Updates - Cindy Allyn, Membership Chair

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