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Hook 'em While They're Young: Getting Children Interested in Family & History

On January 26th, Catherine "Casey" Zahn will present "Hook 'em While They're Young" - ideas & techniques for getting children interested in their family heritage. A third grade teacher, Ms. Zahn is a firm believer that children can become interested in any type of history with the right strategies. From hands-on activities to websites, this presentation will show adults how to engage kids with history.



Zahn's own interest in connecting children with history began, appropriately, with her father. His family was from the Southeastern Connecticut area with deep roots in Mystic - half of his family is buried in Elm Grove Cemetery. When her father became ill, Zahn traveled from New Jersey with her daughter, then age five, to visit him: "I realized that if I didn't research my family history, my daughter wouldn't know about her Connecticut roots. Often our trips would include old back roads and visits to cousins and cemeteries. (My dad used to warn me to be careful about some of them since they were on ledges!) So when it came time for my daughter to draw something in school that she liked to do with her mother, she drew a lovely picture of a cemetery!! It was then that I knew I could get children involved & excited about their family history.

Casey Zahn is a Norwich, CT native residing and teaching in Robbinsville, NJ. She is a past trustee of the Genealogical Society of NJ and was the 2008 program chair for the FGS Conference in Philadelphia. Casey has written teacher guides for the National Genealogical Society and has had teaching articles published in Heritage Quest Magazine. She was recently elected to serve on the National Alumni Council for Davis & Elkins College in WV and was a 1997 district recipient of the NJ Governor's Teacher of the Year. She is an America History Fellow for the Nathanael Greene Liberty Foundation. Currently, Casey resides in Pennington, NJ with her husband and daughter and often goes home to New England to seek out her relatives past and present.

In February: Mystic's Firefighters - The Continued History & Memorabilia

Please join us on Wednesday, February 23rd at 7:30pm in the Mystic Congregational Church fellowship hall. Our speaker is Chief Frank Hilbert of the Mystic Fire Department. Chief Hilbert will expand upon his previous presentation by noting some of Mystic's firefighters from the Mystic Hook and Ladder and the B.F. Hoxie Engine Companies, including the past Fire Chiefs. The presentation will include notable fires and training sessions from the 1970's and identify firefighters in historical photographs from the early 1900's. Chief Hilbert will also bring an interesting collection of fire fighting historical memorabilia for display and discussion.

Chief Hilbert has been a member of the Mystic Fire Department for almost 40 years and Fire Chief since 1989. He is the Foreman of the T. W. Lane, Mystic's 1883 button hand engine which is frequently displayed at Fire Department Musters in the area.



Unidentified firefighters battle the Gilbert Building Fire of 1915 on West Main Street in Mystic. A portion of the bridge can be seen in foreground. For more imagery, visit Mystic Seaport Museum and Mystic River Historical Society online archives.



from the PRESIDENT'S DESK

Jim Kimenker

Driving home from work the other night, I found myself listening to Beethoven's 6th, the *Pastoral*, thinking about how remarkable it is that 200 years after it was composed, it remains so accessible. "Modern" music, on the other hand, difficult to understand because of its dissonance and lack of any apparent cohesion, typically causes most to turn a deaf ear. But, we tend to forget that "modern" composers are not intending to drive people from the concert hall. So why do they compose works that obviously require the listener to expend an extra effort to gain understanding? For those of you flipping back to the first page masthead just to make sure you hadn't missed something, I'll ask the obvious question—what the heck does this have to do with our mutual interest in history?

We are programmed, unfortunately, to respond positively to things with which we are already comfortable. Conversely, we tend to be intolerant of those things which we do not understand (modern music, for instance) or which do not coincide with our general world views. To make matters worse, studies overwhelmingly suggest that people tend to receive their news from a single source. With the proliferation of news outlets catering to narrower & narrower political interests, that is hardly good news for those hoping for world understanding!

Our reading of history is no different. Obviously, we should seek to avoid histories with a predetermined point of view of the past just because they parallel our own. Why bother to read them if you're not going to be challenged by new or controversial thoughts. But, I'm equally concerned about poor scholarship in popular historical works—whether the historian has truly tried to think "outside the box" (apologies for an overused cliché), or instead takes shortcuts or relies on accepted versions of events.

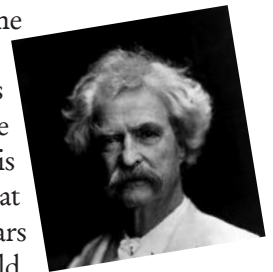
How does one avoid that? Welcome to my "President's New Year's Reading Suggestions". There are historians who think differently than run-of-the-mill historians. Take David Hackett Fischer's recent, *Champlain's Dream*, a biography of Samuel Champlain. With his preface, you'll immediately understand that Fischer can be relied on to review the avail-

able source materials logically and creatively, but still not leave the bounds of reality—too many histories make fallacious assumptions about the historical record or actually skew the record because of the historian's point of view. Delightfully (for the reader), Fischer doesn't hesitate to call historians out for those fallacies or outright fabrications. Other readable works by Fischer include *Paul Revere's Ride* and *Washington's Crossing* - put them all on your list.

Another book which challenges the reader to think creatively is *1492—The Year the World Began* by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto. Almost universally, the year 1492 is viewed only through the lens of Western Europe, which is hardly a surprise, since the explorers from Western Europe were responsible for knitting the world together in ways previously unknown. But that's entirely the point, isn't it? In other words, how many of us can honestly say we understand how the discovery of the New World impacted history across the globe? Credit Fernandez-Armesto for this attempt to get outside the constraints of our comfortable thinking "box".

Finally, a recommendation that could be viewed as almost too obvious—the first volume of Mark Twain's *Autobiography*. But, as celebrated as he was in his own time and as much as we continue to be fascinated with the man and his thoughts, who could be surprised that he suppressed this work until 100 years after his death? That alone should make everyone want to read it. And, given Twain's unmatched understanding of the human condition, one might reasonably expect to be entertained with yet another "box" of surprises.

Oh, and the next time you have an opportunity to listen to some modern music, bring an open mind. You never know, maybe it won't seem so strange! Then again....



Mark Twain (1835-1910) left specific instruction after his death in 1910 that his autobiography was not to be published for a century. The University of California, Berkeley has stored Twain's 5000 page manuscript and worked diligently to edit & prepare it for the late 2010 release.

Mystic River Historical Society Mission Statement

The Society exists to collect, arrange, exhibit and preserve records, papers, photographs, artifacts, relics and related archival materials that document the history of the people who lived in the area around the Mystic River from the first settlement in 1654 to the present.

Officers: President - Jim Kimenker • Vice President - John Porter
Treasurer - Bill Everett • Corresponding Secretary - Lois Glazer • Recording Secretary - Cathy Marco

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Issues of the newsletter are available for online viewing at www.mystichistory.org



Helen Keith 1928 - 2010

- Dorrie Hanna

It's hard to believe she won't be sitting at the desk in the Downes building answering the phone or becoming deeply involved in organizing one of the Society's document collections any longer. When I spoke with her shortly before she died she said to me, "You'll have to find someone to replace me!" My response, understandably, was "Nobody can replace you, Helen". She was referring to replacing her as our office manager, but that was truly only one small facet of what she did for our organization.



Helen (Haynes) Keith

It didn't happen often, but occasionally Helen would comment about something in the past history of the MRHS and say, "That was before my time". Roughly translated that would be more than 20 years ago. She was a vital part of so many events and programs, serving at various times as President, Vice President, Curator and Education Chair. She served on the Finance Committee, a by-laws revision committee, and MANY house tour committees. She assisted Joyce with the planning and organization of our popular trips. She created exhibits at Portersville, and elsewhere, and developed our Hands On History program and the popular "Remember When" outreach. She recruited docents, role players and volunteers. She planned and prepared countless take home crafts for visiting school children and fulfilled orders for toys they purchased. She arranged to have PVA cleaned each spring and fall and the activity stations set up and taken down. The list is virtually endless. And I'm sure many of our members had no idea what a valuable role she played.

Helen requested donations in her memory be given to her church, St. David's in Gales Ferry, or to the MRHS to be used to enrich our collections. Specifically I believe she would have been delighted to see the purchase of more family history resources.

Helen had a strong personality and when I first met her back in the day, I was intimidated to say the least. But over the years she became my mentor and, more importantly, my friend.

The 2011 New Years' Giving Opportunities at MRHS...



Portersville Press Advertising & Patronage Rates: from \$75
Membership Rates: from \$15
Volunteerism: free! (your time)

For more information, see www.mystichistory.org or call (860) 536 - 4779

Spring Trip Under Construction!

- Joyce Everett

Please plan to be with us! We will leave Monday, April 25, and return Thursday, April 28. We plan to visit Washington's Headquarters in Morristown, NJ, and head on to Valley Forge, PA. We will spend the night there and continue our investigations in the Philadelphia area and Delaware. We will spend two nights in Delaware and return home by way of the Barnes Foundation outside of Philadelphia. We will be among the last groups to enjoy the treasures at the Barnes in their original setting before the collection is moved to a new building in downtown Philadelphia. This is a special place - try not to miss it! More details will be coming shortly.



Washington's Headquarters at Morristown from *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*, Vol. I by Benson J. Lossing, 1850:

Morristown was again the head-quarters of Washington during the winter of 1779-80. The campaigns for the season had been fruitless of very favorable results to either party... Toward the close of the year, Sir Henry Clinton sailed from New York for Charleston, and the main body of the American army went into winter quarters near Morristown. They remained in tents until the 14th of February, when log huts were completed for their use. Strong detachments were stationed at West Point and other posts near the Hudson, and the American cavalry were cantoned in the western part of Connecticut. Washington made his head-quarters at the residence of the widow of Colonel Jacob Ford. It is situated nearly three fourths of a mile east of the village green, on the Newark and Morristown turnpike. The general and his suite occupied the whole of the large building, except two rooms on the eastern side of the main passage, which were reserved for Mrs. Ford and her family. The lower front room, on the left of the door, was his dining-room, and the apartment immediately over it was his sleeping-room while Mrs. Washington was at head-quarters. He had two log additions made to the house, one for a kitchen, on the east end, and the other, on the west end, was used as the offices of Washington, Hamilton, and Tilghman. In the meadow, a few rods southeast of the dwelling, about fifty log huts were erected for the accommodation of the life-guard, which consisted of two hundred and fifty men, under General William Colfax. In that meadow Count Pulaski exercised his legion of cavalry, and his dexterous movements were the wonder and emulation of the officers, many of whom were considerably injured in attempts to imitate his feats.

November Meeting Minutes

- Cathy Marco, Recording Secretary

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on Monday, November 15, 2010. Board Members and Committee Chairmen/members present were Aimee Allaire, David Evans, Joyce Everett, Bill Everett, Tim Evers, Lois Glazier, Sally Halsey, Kay Janney, Jim Kimenker, Cathy Marco, Betty O'Donnell, John Porter, Jennifer Pryor, Stephanie Thorp, and Kit Werner.

President's Report (Jim Kimenker): The by-laws need to be reviewed and finalized by January. All board members should send any recommendations to Stephanie Thorp before the end of the year. The by-law revisions will be published in the March/April newsletter for a vote at the Annual meeting. • A number of places have been looked into for our future board meetings (i.e., Hoxie Firehouse, Knights of Columbus Hall), since the Mystic Chamber of Commerce is moving by the end of the year. We have decided to accept Mystic and Noank Library's offer to meet there (as long as we leave by 9pm). Dorrie has arranged this for us and our fee has been waived. • Lou Allyn is getting a quote for D&O Insurance and will be reporting at our next board meeting. Jim requested Cathy ask Lou about whether we need to get a quote for internet liability. • Lou and Cathy attended the October 28 presentation by New Haven law firm, Wiggin and Dana, on "Charities and their directors: Meeting Governance Expectations and Minimizing Liability." Cathy reported on the key points of this presentation. • Audit of our books does not have to be done every year and can be done by an in house audit committee. We plan on doing this in 2011.

Treasurers Report (Bill Everett): Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss statement as of November 1, 2010 had been distributed to all via email. COLORS OF MYSTIC have been selling well - over 350 books so far. It was recommended to divide the sales into three categories: Retail Sales (taxable); Sales at Special Events (Tax Exempt); and Sales for Resale.

Finance (David Evans): The committee has not been advised of any change in the status of the Education Committee and thus no changes to the budget as presented in October. A motion was made and seconded to accept the 2010-2011 budget as presented. The board voted unanimously for the 2010-2011 budget.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Committees not listed had no reports for this meeting.

Curatorial (submitted by Dorrie Hanna): Dorrie, Louisa and Helen are all very pleased with the performance of the new

computers. Thank you Barry and Lou! • Betsy Boucher has completed her part of the Charles B. Allyn Foundation grant project and the laser printer is installed (all within budget). • Louisa, Dorrie and Lou are exploring ways to measure the quality of the data in the PastPerfect acquisition database. • Re-creation of the Virtual Exhibit exhibit in PastPerfect V5 is in progress. The website will stay unchanged for now. • Constant Contact has been renewed for another year. • The committee is looking toward requesting monies from the ARC Fund to restore a painting in the Downes Building. This is a Non-operating fund and will be looked into by David Evans. • Dorrie may cover hours until end of year.

Education/Outreach (No chairperson): Joyce reported that the Past Presidents met and discussed possible volunteers for Helen's former position. 14 names came up during their discussion. Cathy Mauritz, a retired science teacher, said that she would help. For the school programs, we can divide up the work. There was a discussion about changing the name of education/outreach and call it Portersville Academy Programs Committee with one person on Board and a separate Programs person. Similar to what Tim Evers has been doing. Then get other people to do oral histories project. Wendy Schnur might consider the coordinators position. The Past Presidents want to make sure that our school programs continue and are interested in making sure this happens. Therefore, work on this will continue.

IT Committee (Stephanie Thorp): The System Manager has ordered, received, and installed the new computer system in the Downes Building. Before performing the installation, he backed up all files as necessary. Operating System and other application software has been updated to most current version, including Past Perfect. The system and all equipment and software are operational.

The Webmaster has updated the website with the latest Portersville Press issue as well as necessary changes to the home page and the events calendar. In addition, she has added "Colors of Mystic" to the home page and the Publications page, and has deleted the Toys page from the website. A letter from Barry to the board was shared along with a donation.

Membership (Cynthia Allyn): We have had two renewals since the last meeting—they are Mrs Spencer Leech and M/M William Foster both at Family level. We have two new memberships which is great. They are Patricia DuMond and Nancy Avery, both at the Individual level.

~ THE BOOK CORNER ~

Colors of Mystic Selling Hot

The MRHS is pleased to announce that copies of the Ashley Halsey-MRHS joint project are selling well with over 300 copies purchased! The publication, which features local scenes rendered in charming watercolor, is still available at Bank Square Books and the Mystic Noank Library.



Exclusive signed & numbered limited edition giclée prints of Ms. Halsey's images from the book are also available at Finer Line Gallery at 48 West Main Street, Mystic, opposite Bank Square Books.

Proceeds from both book and print sales benefit the Mystic River Historical Society. Call 860-536-4779 or email info@mystichistory.org for more information.

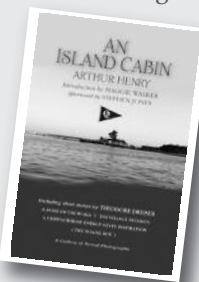
Local Story Enhanced in Reprint of 1902's *An Island Cabin*

Edited from flathammockpress.com

At the turn of the last century, Arthur Henry fled the Big City with the intent to write of an idyllic life on a small island off the coast of Eastern Connecticut. For company, he imports two women (neither the wife or daughter he has left behind in the Midwest), future great author Theodore Dreiser, Dreiser's wife and maid and three Noank cats. A story ensues....

The original text, published in 1902 as part of a lifestyle trilogy, is entertaining enough in its own right, but this Flat Hammock Press edition adds local author and professor Stephen Jones' backstory surrounding the summer of 1900. Arthur Henry's granddaughter and biographer, Maggie Walker also provides an introduction. To flesh out the real story, this new volume includes three short non-fiction pieces by Dreiser based on his awkward forays away from the island. A gallery of dozens of period photographs from 1900 Noank enhances a book which transcends local history to become a permanent part of Americana.

"An Island Cabin" by Arthur Henry with an Introduction by Maggie Walker & Afterword by Stephen Jones is available for \$19.95 at Bank Square Books or from flathammockpress.com



Program (Aimee Allaire): No meeting of the Program Committee was held this past month. • October's Book Signing event went very well with about 100 people attending and donations totaling \$30. Many MRHS members helped to make this event a success including, of course, the book committee and Ashley Halsey herself. The Program Committee would like to express its gratitude to everyone involved. • November's program, on this Wednesday the 17th, should be very interesting. Matthew Stackpole of the Seaport will be discussing the long history and the bright future of the Charles W. Morgan whaling ship.

Special Events (Joyce Everett):

At the recent meeting of the Past President, the next House Tour was also discussed. The Mystic Art Center is excited about doing this with us. Willa Schuster will host a meeting at her house which Lou and Dorrie will attend along with Mystic Art Center reps. The Art Center's Anniversary Committee Chairperson is yet to be decided. Both of our organizations will choose 2-3 people to work together. We will be celebrating our 40th anniversary with this tour. Our three volunteers will be Lou, Dorrie, and Judy Hicks. A motion was made and seconded to accept all three as our representatives and was passed unanimously by the board. • The spring 2011 Trip will be the last week in April (starting the Monday after Easter). The trip will be to Washington, DC, Morristown, Valley Forge, Philadelphia, Wilmington, New Castle, etc. Hopefully we will include the Barnes Foundation in Marion, PA, a wonderful museum with impressionist paintings.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Colors of Mystic – Event was very successful and book sales continue during the next months at the Bank Square book store and Finer Line art store. Many thanks to Sally and Aimée for their work: Sally's marketing really paid off - the event had great newspaper coverage and good attendance. Aimee did an excellent job organizing the event.

The next scheduled Board meeting is January 10, 2011 at 7:15pm (second Monday) at the Mystic and Noank Library.

Membership

- Cindy Allyn

We had a few renewals -they are Victoria Cooke, M/M William Foster, Mrs Spencer Leech, and John and Catherine Mauritz all at the Family level. We also have Michael Hennessy & Pauline Wen at the Benefactor level.

We also have quite a few new members—they are Nancy Avery, Patricia DuMond, Mary Oberhelman, Steve and Maggie White and Pat Zalesny all at the Individual level. We also have Harry and Susie Ferguson and Nancy and Gary Johnson at the Family level.

We will miss two long time members who passed away—Sandra Dolan and Helen Keith.

CALENDAR Notables

Membership Meeting

Wed., January 26, 2011, 7:30p
 Mystic Congregational Parish Hall
Casey Zahn: "Hook 'Em While They're Young - Getting Children Interested in History"

Membership Meeting

Wed., February 23, 2011, 7:30p
 Mystic Congregational Parish Hall
Fritz Hilbert "More on the History of Mystic and its Fires"

Membership Meeting

Wed., March 23, 2011, 7:30p
 Mystic Congregational Parish Hall
Bill Peterson "Mystic's Photographer: Everett Scholfield"

Membership Meeting

April 27, 2011, 7:30p
James Baughman "Mallorys of Mystic"

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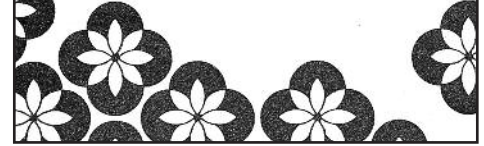
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