My First 300 Years: A Photographic Journey

A life-long Stonington resident, Rob Palmer (Henry R. Palmer III) will be giving a presentation for the Mystic River Historical Society based on the recently published book *My First Three Hundred Years: A Photographic Journey* by his father Henry R. (Hank) Palmer, Jr. Hank was a boatbuilder and local historian who left stories of his life, his ancestors’ lives and Stonington Borough in a manuscript Rob discovered years after his father’s death. Rob combined the recollections and anecdotes with numerous photographs of Stonington Borough and the Palmer and Babcock families to create the book. His talk will feature some unpublished photographs and a real insider’s look into the long and fascinating history of Stonington Borough and some of its founding families.

Rob Palmer worked closely with the Stonington Historical Society to compile and edit his father’s book and has been very active in the community. He taught in the Stonington school system for 30 years, is an emergency dispatcher and has been a volunteer firefighter for 37 years. He has been involved with many local organizations including board positions for the Pawcatuck Lions Club, the Wadawanuck Club, Stonington Free Library and the Stonington Cemetery Association.

Rob’s talk will be held on Wednesday, February 22, 2012 at 7:30 pm at Mystic Congregational Church’s Community Room. *My First Three Hundred Years: A Photographic Journey* will be available to purchase that evening. MRHS programs are free to all but donations are always appreciated.

The History of the USS Nautilus

Join Captain Mike Riegel and share the history of the USS Nautilus on Wednesday, January 25, 2012 at 7:30 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall of the Mystic Congregational Church. USS Nautilus (SSN-571) is the world’s first operational nuclear-powered submarine. She was the first vessel to complete a submerged transit beneath the North Pole on August 3, 1958. Nautilus was authorized in 1951 and launched in 1954. Because her nuclear propulsion allowed her to remain submerged for far longer than diesel-electric submarines, she broke many records in her first years of operation and was able to travel to locations previously beyond the limits of submarines.

The Nautilus was decommissioned in 1980 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1982. She has been preserved as a museum of submarine history in Groton, Connecticut, where she receives some 150,000 visitors a year.

Captain Mike Riegel, a native of Dodge City, Kansas, enlisted in the Navy in 1961 as a nuclear Machinists Mate. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with the class of 1970 under the NESEP program. Captain Riegel spent his entire career in submarines, commanding the fast attack submarine USS Archerfish (SSN 678) and the Trident fleet ballistic missile submarine USS Kentucky (SSBN 737). Captain Riegel’s last active duty assignment was Commanding Officer, Naval Submarine Base, New London. Following retirement, Captain Riegel has remained active with the submarine community as Vice President and currently as Executive Director of the Submarine Force Library and Museum Association.

MRHS Hits the Road to Rhode Island
This Spring - See Page 3!
As discussed in previous columns, we tend to lose sight of the “little” guy in history. “Social” historians do their best to act the part of historical ophthalmologists, helping us to focus on daily life in the ordinary world, the one inhabited by all those whose names never make it to the history books and are obscured by the fog of time.

Some of you may be familiar with the Annales School—where approximately 100 years ago, French historians Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch initiated the “scientific” historical method of digging deep into the social fabric of a period (for them, it meant pre-Revolution—the French Revolution, of course), rather than emphasizing the political & “great men” themes which had almost singularly interested historians until then. They were followed by Fernand Braudel, also French (the French seemed the only ones interested in social history until the 1950s). By the 1960s ‘& 70s, the method had become a central area of study at most schools, particularly American universities (I can attest personally to its influence—I cut my “thesis” teeth on an economic history of the town of Concord, Mass. from 1750 to 1850). Nobody who studied history at the time could avoid it.

So, the little guy found his champion, even if he still remains largely anonymous. But I’ve been recently reminded that there are momentous historical events which themselves have passed beyond the mists to become nearly invisible to the modern eye. Consider a new book by Scott Ridley, *Morning of Fire*. His subject is a near-forgotten sailing expedition led by John Kendrick, a Cape Codder and well-known Revolutionary War veteran, which departed Boston in October 1787 and, over the course of nearly 7 years, made an epic voyage around the Pacific. Its goals? First and foremost, to make money for its investors in the fur trade between the American Northwest (now the coast stretching from Oregon to Alaska) and Asia. But those investors were also interested in establishing a new United States presence on the other side of this continent to compete with the Spanish, Russians and English. And, finally, they were interested in finding the mythic Northwest Passage which, even at that late date, was still thought to exist. Does any of this sound familiar regarding other, later iconic American persons and passages? Sure, John Jacob Astor - regarding the fur trade across the West & Northwest - but primarily Lewis & Clark, who made that famous trek to the Pacific. John Kendrick had rubbed elbows with all the great names of the American Revolution and had participated in the war as a successful privateer, annoying the British and others on both sides of the Atlantic. As related by Ridley, news of the expedition’s launch in 1787 caused a sensation in Spain, which still viewed the entire Pacific as its private domain to be protected at all costs. In other words, this particular event had global implications and the people involved were hardly unknown at the time. Yet the event and participants sank into relative obscurity in comparison to, say, Lewis and Clark. It’s useful to remember that until 100 years had passed after their return, even Lewis and Clark were hardly part of the American conscious. The point to be made is that significant historical events await “re”-discovery, and historians like Scott Ridley are making the attempt. Not only that, they frequently do a wonderful job of interweaving their story with more well-known historical events and people of the time. It can be eye opening & illuminating.

What’s the ultimate “take home” here? Merely that rescuing events and people from the oblivion of lost memory is exactly what history is all about (ok, perhaps that famous line about not repeating the past has practical applications, too). So, don’t be afraid to pick up a book about something that seems unfamiliar—you might be surprised to find out how familiar it really is!

**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 1634 to the present.

*Officers:* President - Lou Allyn • 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*
Following in the footsteps of our fearless tour guide Joyce Everett will be hard to do. She wanted us to continue seeking out historic and hidden delights for our members and friends. She shared much of her enthusiasm and knowledge with others in the Society, so we hope we will make her proud by announcing our next bus trip.

On Wednesday, May 2, 2012, we will depart from the Olde Mistick Village parking lot at 7:30 a.m. (StoneRidge at 8 a.m.) and be on the road to Bristol, Rhode Island. We will take a guided tour of the beautiful mansion and gardens of Blithewold, home of the Van Wickle family. Aptly named in Yankee Magazine as one of the 2010 Best 5 Public Gardens in New England, we will visit when the dogwoods, daffodils and columbine are in bloom. The house is designed in the English Country Manor style and was lived in until 1976 when it was opened to the public.

After lunch at a waterside restaurant in Bristol, we will drive a short way to College Hill in Providence and visit the John Brown House Museum, home of the Rhode Island Historical Society. This premier 18th century home has been painstakingly restored in various styles from different periods. John Brown was an influential business man involved in the China trade and a slave trader as well. He was one of the early benefactors of Brown University. We will be back in Mystic by 6 p.m.

The cost of the trip, including transportation, snacks, lunch (including tip), and all admission fees is $125 per person. A non-refundable deposit of $25 is due by February 15, with the remaining $100 due by March 31. We need a minimum of 25 for the trip to run. Please join us, and bring a friend! For more information, call Sally Halsey at (860) 271-3980 or email sally.halsey@gmail.com.

Background: The Monet-esque gardens of Blithewold.

- Sally Halsey

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Thank you to Rod, who did an excellent job in restoring & painting the fan window on the front of Portersville Academy.

An MRHS Risk Assessment Visit

On November 3, the MRHS had a Risk Assessment visit from Donia Conn, the Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Northeast Document Conservation Center. The Curatorial Committee members attending were Lou Allyn, myself, and Kit Werner (who took terrific notes that helped me write this article). The meeting consisted of a risk-assessment walk-through, followed by an evaluation and time for our questions. Donia was delightful and pleasant, and her visit was enjoyable. She gave us valuable suggestions regarding improvements we could make, both inside and outside our two buildings. Bree Shirvell from Patch (Stonington/Mystic) did an interview with Donia and there was a Patch article on November 17.

This visit was in connection with the Disaster Planning workshop series offered by the Connecticut State Library, which I attended over the course of 2011. I’d like to call your attention to three points in regard to the workshops and the assessment visit:

- MRHS is taking advantage of professional external resources to ensure our facilities & collections are well protected.
- We received high marks on our inspection/review and have taken care of any minor maintenance that needed to be done.
- It was a very good opportunity for us to ask questions and we learned quite a bit. A sample of the topics we discussed, besides the interior and exterior conditions, includes: We need to designate a ‘Disaster Team Leader’—someone willing and able to coordinate everything, perhaps the President or Vice President—and a ‘Work-Crew Coordinator’—someone who can see the ‘big picture’ during and after a disaster, and yet not be in there working.

Do we have our Past Perfect database backed up? We replied that we have it backed up monthly; with the backup drive stored off-campus. We’re doing it the right way! Donia noted that the best scenario would be multiple copies on multiple media, stored in multiple locations. Online backup to the ‘Cloud’ would be a good, duplicate addition. What does our insurance policy cover? Lou explained the details, including that it covers all the contents of the Archives. It has coverage for the Thompson painting, valued at $10,000. The most difficult part of making an insurance claim on any item in our collections is establishing a value based on sales of similar items.

Do we have priorities set up for salvaging the collection in the event of a disaster? Setting a step-by-step list of priorities is probably the most difficult task, as everyone has his or her personal favorites in a collection. The Curatorial Committee will help make that decision. Lou suggested that we flag the prioritized items in Past Perfect, and we could then run a report off-site.

To do soon: draw up a formal Emergency Call List. Decide on Recovery Services—i.e., which conservators we would call. Identify sources of emergency funds. Make a written note of credit cards and their limits. Create a tub of disaster supplies. Essentials might include a bucket, sponge, a hand-crank flashlight (requires no battery), etc. If a real disaster occurs, we’d need a lot more! I just want all of our MRHS members that we take our responsibility to care for our collection seriously and are trying to do things right!
Memories of Nauyaug, Part III: Social Entertainment from John R. Wheeler

There was not much social life among the campers but Johnny Allyn and I were with the Vanwinkle 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 Vanwinkle 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 unforesen to anyone except Mrs. Dodge. She had called Mrs. Vanwinkle to tell her her daughter was in a cage with a boy for a long time. Wilhelmina was scolded and was afraid of Mrs. Vanwinkle 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. and family and 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 fix -

Iron Family of Mystic from Robert Irons

Since my family is the last of this Irons line I thought it was appropriate to find a few words and stories to document some of what I know about this branch of the Irons family that settled in the Mystic area. The first segment described the Col. Laben Irons Family line originating with Matthew (1615-61) of Boston to Lydia of Stonington, CT.


Dexter was the first to move to the Mystic area - recorded in a newspaper as one of the first stewards of the Old Mystic Med. Church. Later, he worked at Leeds Shipyard in Old Mystic and married Eunice B. Crumb of Groton in 1829. Dexter was likely living in Old Mystic in 1830 per the 1790-1870 CT Census. Eunice died in 1837 and Dexter married her sister, Mary Ann Crumb, in 1838.

Dexter was at the Leeds yard for the launches of seven vessels prior to 1840, when he became a partner with Amos Grinnell as Irons & Grinnell. In 1841, Irons & Grinnell moved to Mystic Bridge (now the Stonington side of Mystic). Dexter lived in a home on shipyard property at Pistol Point, just Northeast of the railroad bridge in Mystic. The house was later sold to the McGrath family and reported in the “Mystic Press” as burned on 3 Mar. 1901.

Dexter was one of the original Capital Stock subscribers of both Mystic River Bank, charted 1851, and Elm Grove Cemetery, 1853. He also was one of the signers of the "May 1854 Session" resolution incorporating Groton Savings Bank.

The Irons & Grinnell shipyard built 38 vessels before Merchant Ship Builder Dexter Irons died in 1858 of chronic liver inflammation. The shipyard buildings & other property belonging to the Irons estate sold at auction for $6475. to Amos Grinnell, while Mary Ann sold their house and purchased the former Congregational parsonage on Church St. for herself, living to 28 Apr, 1911 - age 100 and 7 days. Mary is buried next to Dexter in Mystic’s Elm Grove Cemetery next to many of their seven children: Infant - 1839, Mary Ellen - 1840 & mar. Philip H. Case, Emma Jane - 1843-68, Frances E. - 1845-48, William Henry - 1847-48, Anna Eliza - 1851-1936, mar. 1873 Benjamin W. Dixon, Fannie Ella - 1853 & mar. 1872 Jonathan Brenton Shaw Wilcox.
In honor of the Civil War sesquicentennial, I will be looking at the war month-by-month from the historic local point of view: Like the citizens of Mystic at the time, we have no idea how long the war will go, what the incredible cost will be, or even who will prevail in the end. It should be interesting to watch it ‘unfold’ in the months to come.

The Mystic soldiers of Co. K, 12th Regiment, in winter quarters at Camp Lyon in Hartford, welcome 1862 with a “Grand Festival” of food and patriotic speeches. Meanwhile, their comrades in the 8th and 10th regiments wait in Annapolis to embark on General Burnside’s expedition to North Carolina’s Outer Banks.

“C.D.L.” of Co. H, 10th CT, writes to assure the folks at home that he and his unit “will give a good account of ourselves” in the battles to come. Major Appleman and his men from the 8th regiment, on board the bark L.D. Bookman, enjoy the festive atmosphere as the troop transports and supply vessels assemble at Fort Monroe, Virginia. The harbor “reminded one of New York bay on some holiday,” writes the Major.

While war of bullets is on hold, the war of the needles is heating up. Throughout the fall, the Mystic Nightingale Society held open meetings every Wednesday at Morgan Hall to sew and knit, collect reading material, and pack items for the troops. In early January, Mrs. C.H. Mallory, Mrs. George W. Noyes. Mrs. Hiram Holmes, and Miss F. E. Cottrell form their own group, the Mystic Volunteer Aid Society, which also meets on Wednesdays, but in some of the town’s most exclusive homes rather than the public hall. When Mrs. Mallory and her friends are criticized for including tobacco in one of their first shipments, they hastily assure the public that the tobacco had been “presented by a friend” rather than purchased with donated funds.

A statewide militia draft is announced. On the 24th, 56 names are drawn in Groton. The draftees are allowed to buy their way out with $10; 43 did so and were excused, so the following week 43 more names were drawn. Stonington had a similar outcome. 73 names were drawn in the first round; 49 of these paid or were excused, so another 49 names had to be drawn. Some of those selected in the second round had just paid their way out of the first draft, and now had to pay another $10 to be released again! This cumbersome and costly process quickly draws the public’s ire. The Pioneer prints a guide to navigating what it sarcastically calls “our beautiful militia law.”

Many Mystic men who enlisted in the fall and early winter have yet to leave Connecticut. The 12th, 13th and 14th regiments remain in their camps in Hartford and in New Haven. From the 2nd Cavalry at Camp Tyler in Meridan, one soldier writes home about the splendiferous sleighing he and his comrades are enjoying, while admitting “wooden buildings would be preferable to tents for winter quarters.”

Local soldiers serving in the 8th, 10th, and 11th regiments are not enjoying the winter weather at all. Assigned to Burnside’s expedition, some of them have been on board troop ships for more than a month, due to unfavorable weather, difficult currents and a lack of pilots. As the vessels wait to be towed over the bar to discharge the troops, the festive atmosphere of January’s embarkation has been replaced by “great disappointment and much murmuring” among the soldiers riding out the rough seas onboard ships.

The anticipated successes of Burnside’s campaign and General McClellan’s spring offensive in Virginia lead to cutbacks in some aspects of war work. The Greenmanville and Mystic mills temporally suspend their production of army cloth. Faced with a poor yield and widespread public opposition, Governor Buckingham ends the problematic militia draft. Meetings of the Nightingale Society are cancelled due to inclement weather and lack of an urgent need for additional supplies.

The Mystic Valley continues to be fully engaged in the maritime side of the war. In support of Burnside, Captain Eldridge and his schooner are ferrying supplies from New York to Roanoke Island, while Captain Treble and his vessel await orders at Hatteras. The Mallory-built bark Tycoon is carrying troops to the Tortugas under government charter. With no other war news to fill the space, The Pioneer prints a series of letters from Moses Sawyer describing daily life the Navy’s blockading squadron in the western Gulf of Mexico.

Late in February the first reports of local boys felled by disease in camp arrive. Yet war spirit remains high. A festival to raise money for a new organ for the Union Baptist Church features a “Grand Tableau” where local men posed as leaders of the Confederacy “in full military costume, with a slight addition… a rope around their necks, which was attached to a beam above.” The Pioneer wryly notes that this scene “attracted much attention;” the event raised $140.
October Meeting Minutes
- Cathy Marco, Recording Secretary

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on Monday, November 21, 2011. Board Members and Committee Chairmen/members present were Cynthia Allyn, Lou Allyn, David Evans, Bill Everett, Alan Greener, Lois Glazier, Sally Halsey, Judy Hicks, Jim Kimenker, Cathy Marco, Betty O’Donnell, John Porter and Stephanie Thorp. The Board members who were not present had been excused.

President Lou Allyn called the meeting to order at 7:00pm at the Mystic and Nonaik Library. Minutes of the October Board meeting were approved.

President’s Report (Lou Allyn): Each committee chair should present a summary report of what the committee did in 2011. One or two paragraphs would be fine. This is due on January 20, 2012 and may be included in a future newsletter.

Our Constant Contact service will end on November 28 and has been replaced with an account on Gmail – Mystic.Historical@gmail.com for communications. This will save $126 per year and make it simpler to include images. It was suggested that MRHS members make sure that these new mailings do not end up in their SPAM or JUNK folders.

We are investigating potential uses for www.sparked.com which allows you to post “challenges” to be answered by people who have volunteered to do so. One example is “Our website would appreciate your insight... Please take a look at our website and suggest five simple changes we could make.” Lou has received eight responses so far.

We had a very positive visit by Donia Conn of the Northeast Document Conservation Center to review our disaster plans. See Stonington-Mystic Patch article on November 17, 2011 “Historical Societies Protect Local Culture From Natural Disasters” http://stonington.patch.com/articles/historical-societies-protect-local-culture-from-natural-disasters

Treasurers Report (Bill Everett): Financials were sent to the Board prior to this meeting.

Finance (David Evans): The Finance Committee met Nov. 16th to review the 2012 budget proposal to be presented to the Board on Nov. 21. Lou Allyn reported that the Membership Committee rejected the idea of raising dues for 2012 but recommended an Annual Appeal. The Committee is projecting $400 of expenses and $3500 in for this initiative.

Further discussion of the budget dealt with the concerns about “deficit spending” raised at the last board meeting. The Finance Committee reviewed the presentation of our financials and the disconnect between spending on operations and so called “investment spending.” The latter category includes long term building maintenance expenditures and projects such as the Colors of Mystic. The Downes Fund is intended to generate income to support projects such as 2010’s painting and window restoration at PVA, while the Colors of Mystic was funded by the 25th Anniversary Fund (which is being replenished through sales of the book). In 2012, we’ll explore ways to present this aspect of our operations with greater clarity.

Other Budget issues included changes made in the 4th quarter 2011 to directing our interest, dividend & capital gain disbursements to our money market account rather than to the purchase of additional shares in the funds. This increases our flexibility to transfer funds for current operations as needed without selling shares. The proposed budget includes $3000 (approximately 75% of annual earnings) as revenue.

Historically the House Tours every third year has been our major fund raiser and has served to absorb the shortfall in revenues from operations. Again, this is not neatly captured by our Project & Loss. To make up for the decrease in revenues from dues and the increasing amount of work being done by paid independent contractors rather than volunteers, we find it necessary to use a method of many other organizations called the annual appeal and this is reflected in the 2012 Budget. It was recommended that doing it as a MRHS “Birthday Appeal” in September would be novel.

After discussion by the board, a motion was made to accept the 2012 Budget as presented, seconded, and passed unanimously by the Board.

Corresponding Secretary (Lois Glazier): Correspondence for October consisted of five than you letters.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Buildings & Grounds (Alan Greener): Rod Greene is painting the oval window from the PVA attic. Roy Bohlander cleaned the south gutter on the Downes Building. The overhanging branches need to be cut back; Daniel Lucente is talking to a tree man about doing the work. All reachable trees and branches along the ledge have been cut. Two posts on the fence around the heat pump have broken off; Alan Greener is arranging repairs along with replacing a riser on the PVA back stairs. Cindy Allyn has joined the committee.

Curatorial (Judy Hicks): A meeting was held with Donia Conn, Outreach Coordinator for Northeast Document Conservation Center on Nov.3 to survey the archives and Portersville with respect to disaster preparedness. Dorrie Hanna, Kit Werner and Lou Allen were in attendance. Suggestions were made by Donia on how to handle our collections & property in case of major storms. The committee discussed the necessity of having a Disaster Team Leader and a Work Crew Coordinator.

The Curatorial Committee discussed the plaques for downtown buildings as well as a written history of MRHS in conjunction with our 40th anniversary in 2013. The com-
committe would like to take on these two projects, with the Board’s approval. Specific facts will be presented to the Board at a later date. Cathy Marco is researching types of plaques for the downtown project – materials, designs, prices, etc. and possible uses of QR codes or Microsoft TAG.

We discussed our Virtual Exhibit policy and the need for procedures to decide what subjects, duration & publicity. Imaging policy and appropriate fees were also discussed.

**IT Committee (Stephanie Thorp):** The System Administrator performed routine backups of all data & PastPerfect files on 5 November 2011. MRHS1, 2 & 3 have had software updates Norton Security 2012 installation and connectivity checks. MRHS4 has been retired. • Both printers & all IT equipment were verified to be operating and in good condition. • All copies of Past Perfect were updated to the current 5.0B4, with the Past Perfect version on the laptop (MRHS3) modified to allow it to function as a terminal to the master version installed on MRHS1, as requested by the curatorial committee. • An up-to-date copy of the MRHS membership list was installed on MRHS1 and MRHS2.

**Marketing (Sally Halsey):** Releases were sent for our November program, Facebook continues to be updated, and we’ve been getting good press in local boating publications.

**Membership (Cynthia Allyn):** We have had 2 new members at the Individual level and 7 renewals—2 Individual, 3 Family, 1 Contributing and 1 Benefactor. We have had 25 new members join MRHS in 2011.

**Nominating (John Porter):** As of next year, there will be three openings for elected Trustees on our board. John has found two interested individuals who have agreed to serve.

**Program (Aimée Allaire):** The lovely Judy Hicks’ “Four Women of Mystic” was a grand success for the October Member Meeting. With close to 80 members attending, the night was lively, fun and entertaining. Lots of new faces of all ages were seen. $52 was collected in donations and $120 in MRHS book and DVD sales. The night was a perfect example of how MRHS is a relevant, important and valued part of our community. A huge Thank You to all the members who helped make the evening great.

We’re looking forward to November’s program, member Laura Beach’s “Sailors’ Valentines to Susan’s Teeth: Collecting Maritime Antiques Then and Now.” Thanks to Cathy Marco who volunteered to help out with hospitality.

On November 10, 2011 the Program Committee met and made the following recommendations:

1. We recommend that the Membership Committee be combined with the Program Committee. We see the combination as an opportunity to collaborate for the benefit of the Society and its members. Membership has been a committee of one, limiting its ability to expand our membership. Being one larger committee gives us a chance to work together to not only increase our member numbers but also to serve our members in new and exciting ways.

2. One of the new ideas we recommend is to begin an Annual Campaign. Since our member dues are very reasonable, this may remind members of some of our ongoing needs such as exterior painting of Portersville Academy.

3. In an effort to reduce costs and consolidate our resources, the Committee recommended the elimination of September’s member meeting since attendance has been quite poor the past two years.

The Committee also discussed ways to increase revenues by such things as charging non-members to attend membership meetings, adjusting MRHS dues, and continuing to ask for donations at membership meetings. They agreed that voluntary donations will be requested, with a “Suggested Donation of $5” placed on or near the donation container.

The Board discussed the Program Committees recommendations, including combining the Membership committee with the Program committee. The Board’s consensus was to go along with the plan.

**Special Events (Sally Halsey):** In retrospect, planning a three day trip with a new tour leader at the helm did not seem feasible - a more logical & successful trip would be a one day bus trip to Newport & Bristol for a house & garden tour and lunch. Put May 2nd on your calendar and join us for an interesting day of activities and friendship.

**Education/Outreach, Walking Tour, Unfinished Business:** None/no report

**New Business:** A survey of members on what they want, don’t want, or care the most about would be important. We are transitioning as our organization needs to change and grow. Years ago the Board made a survey of the membership with a questionnaire. Each committee chairperson is being asked to write down questions you would like to ask and give to Lou. Examples: Do we need to postal mail the Newsletter to people with internet access? How would people feel about the choice between higher dues or low dues and annual fund drives? What is the level of interest in going to house tours and working on them? What would people like to see on Virtual Exhibits, Facebook, email, etc.? How do people care about Portersville Academy, our collections, our research assistance? How do we compare with other local organizations (MNL, Seaport, MAC, Noank Historical, Stonington Historical) re programs, speakers, volunteers, services, etc.? What do people think about our membership meetings?

The next meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on January 23, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Marco, Secretary
Membership Updates

We had two membership renewals during this period. They are Mr and Mrs Frank Davis at Contributing level and Mrs Anthony Halsey at Benefactor level. We have three new members. They are Paula Thompson and Susanne Furay at Individual level and Arline and Buzz Whitaker at Family level.

We sadly regret the passing of Richard Perkins, Jr., a faithful member of MRHS for many years.

- Cynthia Allyn, Membership Chair