



the

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“The Stonington Tragedy” Murder at Darling Hill...!

- J. G. duPont

The “*The Stonington Tragedy*,” *Murder at Darling Hill* by Judith duPont tells the true story of a grisly murder that occurred at a farm overlooking Quiambaug Cove.

Through extensive research in town records and newspapers of the period, the author has recreated what happened on a stormy Sunday evening in April when Henry and Maria Langworthy left their farm to attend a temperance meeting in Mystic. The book follows the murder investigation, the subsequent trial, and the later lives of the prosperous Langworthy family. This is a story that touches on many familiar landmarks of the Mystic-Stonington area and brings to life the post-Civil War period in our community when social and economic realities were changing rapidly.

The Langworthy murder sparked a heated controversy within town regarding the proper handling of the investigation. At stake was Stonington’s reputation for justice. Rumors, slander and innuendo were rife in the press, and “The Stonington Tragedy” illustrates the vital role that journalism played during that era.

Our local Mystic Press and Stonington Mirror stood up to the big city papers and valiantly defended their readers.



This book by local author duPont will be available at the Annual Meeting.

Judith Gildersleeve duPont is a lifelong resident of Stonington. She graduated from Sarah Lawrence College and holds a master’s degree in American History from Trinity College in Hartford. Research for this book was conducted at all the local historical societies, including Mystic River, and took her to the Connecticut State Library as well as the Lewiston-Auburn region of Maine. “The Stonington Tragedy,” Murder at Darling Hill is the first in the Stonington Historical Society’s series of monographs on local history called The Ramsbotham Editions.

The MRHS Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper featuring Ms. duPont will be held on Wednesday May 28 at 6:00 p.m. in the Mystic Congregational Church Hall.

MRHS ANNUAL MEETING & POTLUCK SUPPER

Wednesday, May 28th at 6^{pm} Mystic Congregational Church Hall

43 East Main St., Mystic

featuring Judith duPont and “The Stonington Tragedy”

Please bring a dish to share and BYO dishes & utensils.

Be ready to serve up witty conversation and dish out rapt attention to tales of historic intrigue...!

READING *between the* LINES: Students of Portersville Academy - Pt. 2

- C. L. Deichmann

We may think our fascination with world news is a “modern” phenomenon, but it’s not. In last month’s column I looked at essays written by students at the Portersville Academy that showed how familiar these young scholars were with the maritime economy of their community. Many of the other essays from this same collection deal with distant events, demonstrating that our younger citizens were familiar with national and global news as well as local happenings.

Their own writings suggest how the explosion of literacy in the antebellum republic trickled down to even the youngest members of society. Newspapers and other periodicals were widely disseminated, and articles were reprinted from paper to paper, allowing readers in the smallest villages access to world events. As the students’ efforts illustrate, news on all manner of topics was shared within households as well.

In the 1840s, news traveled fast. George H. Murphy’s account of the “Abdication of Ferdinand 1st of Austria” was recorded in Mr. Potter’s class composition book on January 10, 1849, only five weeks after the event itself. Murphy cited “the late accounts arrived from Europe” for his information. Not only were the children of Mystic aware of global news, they were not shy about commenting on it! William S. Fish pronounced favorably on the recent election of Louis Napoleon,” the first real president France ever had,” comparing the process to the “very exciting” 1848 contest here at home. His classmate E. Eldredge chose “[T]he Flight of Pope Pius 9th” from Rome as his topic. “The despotic and tyrannical [sic] sway which the Pope of Rome has so long held over the people of Rome is at length broken” opined young Eldredge, most likely echoing sentiments heard around the family dinner table.

Along with politics, natural disasters, mayhem and murder were favorite topics. Lute Sawyer wrote about a “Great Riot” in New York City, while Albert C. Burrows closely followed the twists and turns of the Boston murder of Dr. George Parkman. While storms in

Key West, fires in Quebec and New Orleans, and famine in Ireland all attracted the attention of our young newshounds, the contemporary events that drew the most attention were war in Mexico and gold in California. Several of the boys followed the progress of American troops from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, describing in vivid detail the battles along the way. “Gold fever”, rather than war fever, was George B. Ashby’s favorite topic. A boy of the sea, he knowledgeably includes the sailing directions for the voyage to California by way of Cape Horn, reminding his readers “if it was not for the Isthmus of Darien you could get there in half the time.” Although the pull of gold was strong here in New

England, young Ashby was aware of other responsibilities that would keep him closer to home. “All the boys that can milk must stay here,” he observed. For the time being George and his classmates must satisfy themselves with observing from their homes in the village, confident that the papers would continue to bring the news of the world to their little corner of it.

Our young scholars often described launchings, and the return of local ships. In the autumn of 1846, the launch of the Greenman yard’s schooner Elizabeth was a popular topic. On March 14, 1849, Prudence Bailey composed an essay “On the arrival of the Ocilla and Almeda;” a few days later Leonard W. Morse reported on the “Arrival of the Robin Hood.” Shipwrecks aroused both interest and fear. The wreck of the steamboat Atlantic near Fishers Island elicited several lengthy accounts in prose and verse, many focusing on the bodies and debris that eventually washed ashore on local beaches.

Continued next page.



1849 poster offers golden opportunity in a mere 35 days to California.

The Newsletter of the Mystic River Historical Society is published monthly, September through May, with a combined issue for November and December, by the Mystic River Historical Society • Box 245 Mystic, CT 06355 Back issues of the newsletter are available for online viewing at www.mystichistory.org



Portersville students were remarkably well-traveled. In 1846, young J. W Eager provided a description of Kingston, Jamaica, "by an eyewitness" -- himself. Thomas E. Wolfe recounted his personal observations of St. Helena, the Crozette Islands, and the Isle of France in the Indian Ocean. William Romwell noted the latitude of "New Archangel, Russian America" in his account of his visit to Sitka Island. In another essay Master Romwell gave a detailed description of the "US ship of the line Columbus as she appeared at the Sandwich Islands in 1845," right down to the number of guns and the manner of burying sailors who died at sea. Not surprisingly, the ports that received the most "eyewitness" reports were those on the usual Mystic trading routes, such as St. Mark's and Key West, Florida, Mobile, Alabama, and Havana, Cuba.

In their own words, Mystic's children demonstrated their involvement in the local maritime economy, both on land and at sea. The tempo of the village ran with the tides, and even the younger members of the community sensed this rhythm. In March, 1847, E. Rogers was inspired to write a poem to celebrate the coming of Spring. Along with anticipating the warm sunshine, longer days, and the chance to play ball, Rogers didn't fail to note another important sign of the season:

"The spring has come the agent say
My ships will soon be home
My debts and drafts I then can pay
With lots of oil and bone."

**I have kept the students' own spelling and punctuation (or lack thereof) in excerpts from their work. - C.L.D.*

**Please join
The Mystic Depot
Board of Trustees
to celebrate the
30TH ANNIVERSARY
of the
Mystic Depot
Renovation**

**Saturday May 31 • 2008
at 11:00 am**

2 Roosevelt Ave, Mystic, CT

**Peter Stuart & Cindy Palmer • Co-Chairs
Mystic Depot Rededication Committee**

Portersville Academy and Family Activity Center announce 2008 Season

- K. Havrila

The Academy will be open during the week when the Downes building is open and on Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00. The activity center will be open from Sunday, June 22, through Sunday, September 7.

We will have special events on the following Sundays:

June 22: Opening Day & Strawberry Festival

July 27: Grandparent's Day

September 7: '38 Hurricane Remembrances



You May Still Squeak into the Salem & Gloucester Trip June 11-12

- J. Everett

The MRHS spring trip to Salem and Gloucester on June 11 and 12 has more than enough participants to go and we are all looking forward to a grand adventure.

The trip includes a visit to the Judge Jonathon Corwin House (aka the Witch House), the Peabody Essex Museum for a tour of the newly reconstructed Yin Yu Tang house from China and



The famous tourist attraction, the Gloucester Fisherman's Memorial

a whale-watching excursion.

However, if you have been unable to sign up until now and would like to go, please call Joyce Everett at 536-6339 and ask if we still have room for you. I am holding an extra room for as long as possible and we would be delighted to have you join us if there is still space!

April 2008 Meeting Minutes



- C. Marco

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce on Monday, April 21, 2008. Board members present were Lou Allyn, David Evans, Bill Everett, Joyce Everett, Tim Evers, Sally Halsey, Dorrie Hanna, Paul Ingle, Helen Keith, Cathy Marco, John Porter, Jennifer Pryor, Stephanie Thorp, and Kit Werner. Guests present were Sherri Pellerin and Jane Preston.

President (Lou Allyn): Anna Sullivan, Coordinator of the Court Order Service Program for the United Community and Family Services in New London contacted MRHS to ask if we had a need for any her program's "volunteers". These individuals help with yard work, clerical, carpentry, cleaning, etc. under supervision. They have been sentenced to community service for their minor offense. We will keep this in mind for the future.

We have received 16 completed surveys to date. If anyone still wants to respond to the survey, you can go to http://www.mystichistory.org/MRHSPPApr08_72dpi.pdf to print off the survey and send to MRHS, P.O. Box 245, Mystic, CT 06355. Don't miss your chance to offer your opinion!

Treasurers Report (Bill Everett): No significant changes to report in financial report. Bill proposed two resolutions concerning a MRHS credit card.

The first resolution was presented as a means to save money and make it easier to avoid paying sales taxes when we purchase things, since we are a tax exempt organization. Often times, a board member needs to purchase something for MRHS and uses their own cash or check to pay for the item(s) with sales tax being included. Although some places may accept a certificate of our tax exemption as evidence, according to regulations, you must either use a check or credit card in the name of MRHS to qualify for tax exemption. Therefore, it was proposed that we apply for a credit card in the name of MRHS and limit its use to a few individuals. A discussion regarding what maximum amount should be requested for the credit card resulted in having the Finance Committee determine this. Lou made a motion to accept the proposal as presented, Dave Evans seconded, and it unanimously carried.

The second resolution was presented to have a committee of Lou Allyn, Helen Keith, and Bill Everett to decide which individuals would be permitted to use the credit card and authorize Bill Everett to contact Chelsea Bank with this information. Motion was made to form the committee for this purpose and give Bill authoriza-

tion to give this information to our bank, Cathy Marco seconded, and it was passed by all except David Evans. Corresponding Secretary (Kit Werner): A very busy month of letter writing with 35 thank you letters for the March program, Appraisal Day, and Patrons' Party. Kit was able to combine our thanks for several events in 11 letters, so it cut down the writing, a bit!

STANDING COMMITTEES

Buildings & Grounds (John Porter): The Grounds Cleanup was held April 26th from 9:00 until noon. Also, Portersville Academy's interior paint is peeling. John took a sample to Mystic Paint and they have attributed the peeling to improper priming. Most initial painting was done by MRHS volunteers. John is contacting CERTAPRO, who did the last work on the Academy to obtain their opinion.

Curatorial (Dorrie Hanna Collection Manager): Helen has agreed to cover for Emily while she's out. Dorrie will be away from April 24 - May 1 and is leaving the Downes in "good shape" and has tasks lined up for volunteers.

An application to the CT Humanities Council has been made for Year 4 of our Heritage Assistance Grant. We had not planned to apply for Year 4, but since the process appeared to be relatively simple Lou and Dorrie decided to "go for it". We haven't received any response so far.

Louisa continues entering material. Dorrie is sorting out pre-existing problems and also on queries, of which we have had at least fifteen since the beginning of the year. Four Deeds of Gift have been sent out and returned with the donor's signature since the last Board meeting.

The Curatorial Committee needs to meet and discuss a number of issues, including the need for more shelving, but it seems best to wait until Mid-May.

MRHS will donate two framed b/w copy prints of photos from our collection to the Mystic & Noank Library Silent Auction in our continuing show of support for other community organizations.

Pedicab (Tim Evers): Inquiries Tim made to the Seaport and the Chamber of Commerce have shown they have no interest in a pedicab. Tim received a call from a man from Southington interested purchasing the pedicab for a \$300 "donation". However, Tim contacted the group responsible for the grant monies we received to obtain the pedicab to see if we could "sell" it. He is awaiting the response from Barbara McLeod, President of the Charles B. Allyn Foundation, since they will be discussing this at their next board meeting on April 29. A motion was

approved to allow Tim to sell the pedicab to the man from Southington for \$300 "donation" subject to the approval of the Charles B. Allyn Foundation. A letter of gratitude for the opportunity to have the pedicab will be sent to the Charles B. Allyn Foundation in the near future.

Education & Outreach (Helen Keith, Tim Evers): In June, there will be one first grade and one third grade visiting Portersville Academy. Tim reported there were 24 invitations sent to schools and so far there are only 5 actively interested. In the past we usually had 10 first grades and 10 third grades participate. We need to follow up with the schools - we've possibly lost momentum since we didn't do this program last spring.

Helen thanked Dorrie Hanna, Jane Preston, Bettye Noyes and Nancy McKay for the completion of our "Remember When" programs. We have shared the 30s and 40s with Mystic River Homes and they have been very well received. Residents who attended have joined in by bringing memorabilia from both decades and sharing their memories and stories. We have all had a lot of fun. Joan Butler (MRH Director) has been very enthusiastic and reports that the feed-back has been outstanding.

We will present the 50s program to Mystic River Homes on May 15th. Mystic Congregate Homes has asked that MRHS do the three programs there on a weekday afternoon in the fall. The booklets, music, etc. are all available at the Downes Bldg. whenever anyone would like to share this audience participation program at any of the local retirement facilities.

Karen Havrilla is in charge of our Family Activity Centers' summer schedule. She reports the Centers will be open when the Downes Building is open with staff covering as needed. They'll also be open on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 4 beginning Sunday, June 22nd with a Strawberry Festival. Either Sunday July 20th or 27th there will be a Grandparents Day. The Centers will close on Sunday, September 7th with "Remembering the '38 Hurricane". Please let Karen know if you would be willing to be a PVA docent one Sunday this summer.

Finance (Helen Keith): The Finance Committee met in mid-March. In spite of the volatility of the stock market at the present time our Basket of Funds is holding fairly steady. We will consider our options re our ready cash reserves later this spring depending on anticipated repairs and maintenance needed.

The Committee discussed at length the advisability of a Society credit card. Members who need to purchase things for the Society at this time do so with cash or their own personal credit cards. This means that MRHS, although a tax exempt organization, pays taxes on virtually all purchases - which can add up over the year. Also,

on trips, Joyce must use cash or her own credit card. Since accommodations and meals for 30 or more individuals are involved this is definitely a costly nuisance.

It was agreed that Bill Everett would investigate what options are available to us through Chelsea Groton Savings Bank and report back so that we can make a recommendation to the Board.

Hospitality (Cindy Allyn): Cindy will provide drinks and doughnut holes for the April meeting.

Information/Technology (Stephanie Thorp): In late March Barry Thorp performed monthly updates, backup and checkout of the computers at the Downes Building. He corrected a problem with one of the computers not linking to the data & image files of the master computer. All equipment is working properly at the present time.

Initiation of the "MRHS Computer System Incident Report" has commenced with our first incident on April 19 requesting installation of the latest Past Perfect upgrade. Upgrade and tests were successful.

Stephanie outlined the Incident reporting instructions to the board for their information. All completed incident reports will be kept in a binder kept by Dorrie. Remember that the System Administrator is the only person who should correct computer problems and this will be accomplished by completing an incident report.

Marketing (Sally Halsey): A slight problem with this month's newspaper article about our monthly meeting; however, the news coverage for other MRHS events has been spectacular! Some of these included: Helen Keith and the Transcription Club at Fitch Middle School were on Channel 19 and we were highlighted in a wonderful article about Appraisal Day in another newspaper article.

Membership (Cynthia Allyn): New members are Sharon Stryker, Mary Carey, and Charlotte Barnum. 359 renewal letters were mailed out, so probably more renewals rolling in.....


Program (Paul Ingle): Jim Streeter is April's speaker and Judith DuPont will be the speaker at our Annual Meeting in May (where she will also sell her book).

Special Events (Joyce Everett): We grossed about \$1000 from Appraisal Day (netting over \$400). Moving the Appraisal day to a Saturday proved an excellent idea. Joyce praised Amy Swan as "just wonderful" and offered special thanks.

There are 29 deposits for the Trip to Salem and Gloucester on June 11 - 12 and we have room for four more people. Pass the word - call Joyce if you know anyone interested in joining this fun & interesting trip.

Continued on page 7

Due to popular request for the secret to the overwhelmingly successful dish she brought to the Patron's Party, Stephanie Thorpe shares her recipe for meatballs (right) with the membership of MRHS. Bon appetit - now you may eat!



From The Kitchen of Stephanie Thorpe ~ PARTY MEATBALLS


- 1 bag of 1/2 oz prepared meatballs, frozen, quantity about 64
- 1 can jellied cranberry sauce
- 1 bottle (12 oz) chili sauce

Mix the chili sauce and the cranberry sauce. Heat them until the cranberry sauce melts and dissolves. Add the meatballs and bring to a boil. Then simmer for at least an hour. If you use the larger bag of prepared meatballs, containing about 96, add another 1/2 can of jellied cranberry sauce, a cup of catsup, a teaspoon of cumin, and a 1/2 teaspoon of hot paprika. Serve hot, as in a crockpot, with toothpicks and/or a fork or spoon.

Although I've never tried it, these would probably make great "little bitty" meatball grinders.



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April 2008 Meeting Minutes, continued

Walking Tour (David Evans): Jennifer Pryor has developed the architectural features section and completed nearly final layout of the tour. This was circulated at the Board meeting for review. Please provide comments as soon as possible. The plan is to publish this in early May.

House Tours (Sally Halsey): Sally introduced her House Tour co-chairperson, Sherri Pellerin (representing MRHS) and mentioned the Mystic Garden Club (who we are co-sponsoring the event with) has co-chairs, Gail Ettinger and Linda McArthur. The House and Garden Tour will be on Saturday, June 20, 2009. Planning meetings will be held the 2nd Wednesday at 7pm of each month starting in May on plans.

Patrons Party (Lou Allyn): We had good attendance for this event. All had a wonderful time with fine food and company in Judy Hick's beautiful home.

1938 Hurricane (Lou Allyn): Photos for a collage are being worked on by Lou to be displayed.

NEW BUSINESS

Nominating Committee Duties (Tim Evers): A report of nominees for the slate of trustees to be presented at the annual meeting will be presented to the Board at the next board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Marco, Recording Secretary

The May Board meeting is on May 19th. The June Board meeting is on June 16th.



Plan now for the 2008-09 Season of the Portersville Press Volume XXXV - 8 Issues!

- Advertise or become a Patron to support your local heritage!
- Connect with membership in the Mystic community and beyond in print & online.

Patronage Rates: \$100/Line Listing
Directly offset newsletter costs to allow more funds directed toward MRHS programs.

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For design details & reservation, contact:
jenniferpryor@sbcglobal.net



The Mighty Little Strawberry

With the season on the horizon, and in honor of our own upcoming **Strawberry Festival at Portersville Academy on June 22**, we might upon strawberries wax rhapsodic....

*Curly Locks, Curly Locks,
Wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash dishes,
Nor yet feed the swine;
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam
And feed upon strawberries, sugar and cream.*
- Nursery Rhyme

*The strawberry grows underneath the Nettle,
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighbour'd by fruit of lesser quality.*
- William Shakespeare, from Henry V

*Doubtless God could have made a better berry,
but doubtless God never did.*
- William Butler on the strawberry

The strawberry "is the wonder of all the Fruits growing naturally in those parts... In some parts where the Natives have planted, I have many times seen as many as would fill a good ship, within a few miles compass."
- Roger Williams, founder of Providence in 1636 who must have been delighted with the discovery of such abundance.

CALENDAR Notables

Transcription Club Monday, May 5, 12:30p
at the Denison Homestead
Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Jane Preston at (860) 536-9248 for more information.

Annual Meeting & Potluck Wednesday, May 28, 6p
at the Mystic Congregational Church
With author Judith duPont and the "Stonington Tragedy".
Please bring a dish to share and your own utensils, plate.

Transcription Club Monday, June 2, 12:30p
at Portersville Academy
Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Emily Perkins at (860) 536-4779 for more information.

Family Activity Center Opening & Strawberry Festival Sunday, June 22, 1p at Portersville Academy
Bring the whole family for bridge & fort-building, costumes, historic activities and more! Center will be open Sundays throughout the summer from June 22 to September 7.

Portersville Academy Open beginning June 22
Tuesdays 9 - 12, Wednesdays 1 - 4, Thursdays 1-4
following the Downes Building schedule and on Sunday afternoons from 1 - 4

Transcription Club Monday, July 7, August 4, and September 8, 12:30p
at Portersville Academy *See above.*

Family Activity Center Grandparents' Day Sunday, July 27, 1p at Portersville Academy

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<i>Sally Halsey</i>	

Membership Updates

- C. Allyn

We welcome three new members: Sharon Stryker - Mystic, Mary Carey - Mystic and Shaker Heights, OH and Charlotte Barnum - Groton. Membership renewals for 2008 - 2009 are pouring in; we greatly appreciate everyone's generous and continued support.



Tuesdays 9 A.M. - 12 NOON
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