

November 19th Meeting - Local Monuments & Memory of the Civil War



The Civil War monument in Mystic at the corner of Broadway and Main streets - today, on left, and a century ago, at right. Note pavement fill has now abridged curb height - smoothing over trolley tracks visible in foreground of vintage photo. Images from MRHS at www.mystichistory.org

Veteran's Day 2008 will receive encore tribute and insight at the November membership meeting with Catherine Deichmann's discussion of area perspectives regarding our Civil War heritage. Ms. Deichmann cites the three monuments constructed locally between 1883 and 1923, and "the very different messages these monuments were intended to convey, and how they continue to shape our local memory of the Civil War."

Ms. Deichmann is our featured speaker on Wednesday, November 19th at 7:30 at the Meeting Hall of the Mystic Congregational Church. Please note the earlier meeting date due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Remember When - 1940's

- Jane Preston

A group of residents at Mystic River Congregate were enthusiastically awaiting the arrival of Jane Preston and Helen Keith on October 14th. Jane and Helen were coming to present the second program of the Remember When series. Booklets were soon passed out containing information on events and happenings of the 1940's. The Program director treated everyone to M&Ms and other candies that were introduced in the 1940's and then the discussion began.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor and the events of World War II both here and overseas were topics close to everyone's life experience. It was a decade when all those present were growing up and most were at some phase of their education or entering the working world.

Remembrances of books, movies and the cost of living were shared. World celebrities from all walks of life were remembered for their contributions to the decade.

As Jane and Helen were leaving, several of the residents were listening or dancing in the foyer to a CD of the great music of the 1940's.

On November 18th the third and final program -Remember When-the 1950's - will be presented at the Congregate and everyone is really looking forward to reliving those years.

This program series consists of information on three decades: the 1930's; the 1940's and the 1950's. There are booklets, music and pictures and snack suggestions available for each decade. Jane and Helen would love to have others present this program to Seniors in other places. It is a simple and fun thing to do and the enthusiasm that comes from the residents is a joy!

Recently, Dorrie Hanna, Helen Keith, Cindy Allyn and I attended sessions of "A Primer for Small Museums & Historical Societies" presented by the New England Museum Association, the Connecticut Humanities Council and the Five Rivers Consortium. It was two very informative days built around the themes of "Save Your Collection, Share Your Story, and Sustain Your Mission." The overhead slides of this course will be presented here and in upcoming issues of this newsletter so that all our staff and members can gain a greater appreciation of what the Mystic River Historical Society is all about and what goes into creating a successful local history society.

All museums exist to serve the public good

- Non-profit, tax-exempt – privilege
- Responsibilities
 - Resources held in public trust, used for public good
 - Operate in transparent, publicly accountable manner

Four kinds of statements to keep your organization on track

- Statement of purpose in articles of incorporation which should rarely change
 - Changes must be reported to the State
- Mission statement
 - Goals
- Vision statement
 - Programs & methods
- Tagline
 - Short catchy way to explain yourself

MRHS Statement of Purpose

Mystic River Historical Society, Inc. is a 501-c-3, tax exempt organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut. Referred to below as the Society.

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.

The Society Archives are maintained in the William A. Downes [Archives] Building. The building provides an environment to support historical research and to promote awareness and understanding of the history of the Mystic River area. These materials and information are shared among members, interested scholars and with the public.

The Society's collections are used in the presentation of public programs and through displays of Mystic memorabilia in the Portersville Academy, an 1839 structure owned by the Society, and by programs and exhibitions elsewhere in the community.

Mission Statements

- Based on statement of purpose
- Short and easy to remember
- Specific to organization
- Unique
- Should be periodically reviewed & revised as needed

The MRHS 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.

Tag Line

- Tag line: "His House, Our History"
- Short and easy to remember
- Specific to organization
- Unique
- Should be periodically reviewed & revised as needed

Why do organizations need mission statements?

- Keeps personnel (paid and volunteer) working together for clearly understood goals
- Prevents internal strife, wasted resources, and public confusion
- "Mission drift" at its worst can lead to loss of tax-exempt status if organization no longer serves the public in the way it was incorporated to do

Serving the public by sharing stories

- Define your stories
 - Programs & exhibits are easier to plan and run
 - Visitors understand & learn more if everyone tells the same story
 - New staff have an organized way to learn and support the mission
- Keep your definition broad
 - Find common threads throughout local history
 - Include all aspects of community life
- Be sure your story is unique
 - Every organization has a unique story
 - No two communities have exactly the same history
- Share your story
 - No limit on "public interests"
 - Accessible to all
 - But, audiences change – need to keep up

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





This 1844 historic district home has seen relatively few exterior changes to its classic Cape form since it was built. An exception is the unusual formal portico entry - a Greek Revival touch which was added in the 1920's.

Historic Homes Research Tips

- Dorrie Hanna

Lately I've noted an increase in requests from homeowners seeking both old pictures of their historic homes, and information about the dates and builders. We've even had two queries about the design and manufacture of the actual house plaques themselves, one from New Jersey and one from New York City. It's gratifying that folks want to learn more about their older houses, whether out of curiosity or to help them plan a remodeling design, so herewith some information about the Historic Homes research project.

The Mystic Junior Woman's Club undertook this project back in the 1970's. Their initial focus was on homes on the Groton side of the river that were built before 1900.

Copies of their research are available at the Mystic & Noank Library as well as at MRHS. Not every research attempt was successful. Sometimes the chain of title was so complex that a final determination of who built a given house in what year could not be made with certainty. And of course 1900 was an arbitrary cut off date. Many lovely homes in Mystic were built in the early part of the 20th century and have yet to be researched. The MJWC no longer does this research, but I have been encouraging interested homeowners to try and trace their house history on their own. One would start by going to the appropriate Town Hall (Groton or Stonington) and working back through the deeds beginning with the deed most recently recorded. Perhaps the MRHS could advise those undertaking a search, but we don't have the volunteer manpower to do the actual job.

Finding pictures of how a particular house once looked can be problematic. MRHS has two series of photographs that show most every home on the Groton side of Mystic. One set was taken in the 1980's and one in 2004. Bill Everett was the contributor of many of these pictures, some of which are in printed format, and some on CDs. When it comes to older views our options are more random. Of course we have thousands of vintage pictures, but the odds that one of them shows the house YOU want to see are fairly low. And it's not always easy to know which collection to consult since so many images are not yet entered into the database. We are always willing to try, but not always successful in finding a specific picture

Fall Tour Successful - Spring Ideas, Anyone?

- Joyce Everett

The MRHS Foliage Tour to Pennsylvania was a grand success. We returned with wonderful memories of good company and good food. We had successful visits to Milford, PA, and the beautiful Gifford Pinchot house, the grounds of the Nathan Denison house in Forty Fort and the Wyoming Massacre Monument, the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, the Daniel Boone Homestead with a picnic in front of the wood fire, tours in Amish country, and a visit to the extraordinary Nemour Mansion and gardens outside of Wilmington. Thank you to everyone who came and made it such a good trip and so much fun for the tour director!

We are now beginning plans for a spring trip well before the House Tour. If you have ideas for places to visit, please share them with us.

From a vintage postcard: "Scene from Industrial Place, Mystic, Ct."



October 2008 Meeting Minutes

- Cathy Marco

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce on Monday, October 20, 2008. Board members present were Lou Allyn, David Evans, Tim Evers, Bill Everett, Sally Halsey, Dorrie Hanna, Jim Kimenker, Cathy Marco, Betty O'Donnell, Jane Preston, John Porter and Stephanie Thorp.

President (Lou Allyn): Carol Kimball's new book "Groton, Tales from East of the Thames" is on sale at the bookstore (\$19.99). It is a collection of her essays with great photos. The latest edition of the newsletter is a great representation of what we are all about. Jennifer does an excellent job with the newsletter. Thanks Jennifer! Our next monthly membership meeting is on October 22nd with Nancy Steenburg talking about Francis Caulkins.

Dorrie, Helen Keith, and Lou attended two all day seminars (September 22 and October 20) entitled "Save Your Collection, Share Your Story, Sustain Your Mission: A Primer for Small Museums and Historical Societies" sponsored by the New England Museum Association and the Connecticut Humanities Council in partnership with the Five Rivers Consortium at Mitchell College in New London. Lou shares the Powerpoint presentation on p.2.

Treasurers Report (Bill Everett): One of the four individual credit cards has been received. Joyce received hers just in time for the Fall Foliage trip, which will be very helpful in handling the expenses during the trip. The other three soon-to-be recipients of the credit cards should email Bill once they receive theirs in the mail. In the future, any receipts from purchases made by any of the four individuals should be given to Bill Everett. We are very hopeful that this new process will correct the sales tax-exempt purchase problems we have experienced in the past.

Corresponding Secretary (Kit Werner): Four letters of thanks were sent during October. These included: 3 for donations related to membership renewals and to newsletter patrons and 1 thank you to Lou Allyn, our speaker for the October meeting who had an overflowing crowd to hear the timely talk about the Hurricane of '38.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds (John Porter): The front of the building and parking lot was weeded, Portersville Academy downstairs windows were washed, the north side of the building was scrubbed to remove mold, and some pruning was done. Community service labor was used for this effort.

Curatorial (Dorrie Hanna, Collection Manager): We have a URI library school student working on the four groups of "mystery material" as a project for her Archives course. She is arranging and describing the items. This will be a big help to us for adding these things Past Perfect and I'm pleased that we are finally dealing with this material. Thanks to Joan Cohn of the Indian and Colonial Research Center for arranging the student for us.

Also, Helen Keith has been reviewing and re-labeling the photo boxes. We are achieving two major goals: more efficient storage, i.e. less boxes, and more legible labels.

We have another new volunteer, Charlotte Smith, who has been helping us review the photo boxes and remove duplicates, as well as assisting on other tasks. Bettye Noyes has not been able to come in to volunteer for a while. Dorrie has been doing some research for queries in her absence. Emily stopped for a quick visit; however, she has been working on transcribing documents at home.

Education (Tim Evers): No schools are interested in attending our programs at this time. Ideas for alternatives were discussed (i.e. using web site to provide tools for schools, possible program for homeschoolers, etc.) and will be discussed more in the future.

Betty O'Donnell has checked into vintage slate pencils to be used at PVA. This will be researched further.

Outreach (Helen Keith): Jane Preston reported that she and Helen had a very well received "Remember When" presentation at Mystic River Congregate this month. They will be doing another "Remember When" for Mystic River Congregate on the 1950's on November 17.

Finance (David Evans): The Finance Committee met on October 6 to draft the Preliminary Budget for 2009. It will be distributed in advance of the October 20 Board Meeting to permit review. The budget was discussed at the board meeting. A motion was made to approve the budget as presented, seconded, and passed unanimously. Our January newsletter will show the budget to the membership once we have our final numbers for this fiscal year.

Hospitality (Cindy Allyn): Cookies will be served at our October membership meeting.

Information/Technology (Stephanie Thorp): Barry performed monthly backups of the system, early in the month. The system was operating properly, with no known issues. Stephanie updated the website to reflect current information on events and newsletter. Also, Stephanie continues to do battle with Expression Web in hopes of upgrading the website in the future.

Marketing (Sally Halsey): Press releases have been sent to all newspapers about our October members program.

Membership (Cynthia Allyn): We have received 15 more renewals and have one new member - James Holley. Of the 381 renewal letters previously mailed, we now have only 45 who have not renewed. We will investigate these to see if we might approach some who have not renewed and find if they have just overlooked their renewal.

Our "unsung hero award" goes to Louisa Watrous who's been an enormous help at the monthly meetings handing out the name tags & bringing cookies. Thank you Louisa!

Nominating (Tim Evers): Jim Kimenker has agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee. Anyone else who would like to join the committee should contact Tim.

Program (Paul Ingle): Nancy Steenburg will talk about Francis Caulkins and discuss the new reprint of the Francis book "The History of New London" at our October 22nd membership meeting. Nancy is an Assistant Professor in Residence and works with Kevin McBride at the UCONN Extension at Avery Point.

On November 19th, Catherine Deichmann will return 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'll have our first membership meeting in 2009 on January 28th with Patricia Schaefer as our speaker on "The Geographic World of Joshua Hempstead".

Special Events (Joyce Everett): The MRHS Fall Foliage trip departs October 21 for Pennsylvania with all places filled.

House Tours (Sally Halsey) - Dorrie represented MRHS at last week's planning meeting for the House Tour. Dorrie and Joyce Everett have agreed to serve as backups for Sally. Dorrie reported there are a comfortable number of homes lined up for the tour - scheduled for June 20, 2009. Tickets will cost \$22 in advance and \$30 at the door. The plan is to still approach a few more homeowners to add their properties to the tour. The title of the tour may be changed to *River View: A House and Garden Walk*. There is still need to fill positions for a Sponsors & Advertisers Chairperson and a Traffic and Parking Chairperson. It was noted that since some homes on the tour are newer, discussing the his-

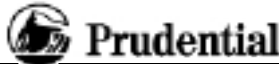
tory of the land they are on would be interesting. The next House Tour meeting is Friday, November 21 at 11:00.

Walking Tour (David Evans): Two "all-weather" leaflet holders have been procured. We are awaiting action by the Town Council on our request to place one of these on the Pumping Station on Gravel Street. Our original request was passed from Public Works to the Town Manager who decided it need to be approved by the Town Council. Their meeting was postponed due to lack of a quorum, so we hope to have a decision by our next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS


Lou discussed the plans for rebuilding the drawbridge in winter 2011. It will be a major undertaking and, obviously, impact downtown Mystic. Lou proposed sharing historical photos of the bridge in an outdoor exhibit someplace near the bridge. He seeks a volunteer to help him look into the feasibility of such an undertaking.

Next Board meeting is November 17th.



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CALENDAR Notables

Transcription Club Monday, November 3, 12:30p
at the Denison Homestead, 120 Pequotsepos Rd.
Bring your lunch & treasured documents for a fun afternoon!
Call Jane Preston (860) 536-9248 for more information.

Membership Meeting Wednesday, Nov. 19, 7:30p
Fellowship Hall of the Mystic Congregational Church
*Catherine Deichmann with "Carved in Stone - the Need for
Monuments to Memorialize the Conflicts that Arose as a
Result of our Civil War."*

No Membership Meeting in December

Transcription Club Monday, January 7, 2009, 12:30p
at the Denison Homestead, 120 Pequotsepos Rd.
Call Jane Preston (860) 536-9248 for more information.

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

River View: A House and Garden Walk!

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Membership Updates - Cindy Allyn, Membership Chair

Membership renewals include: *Individual* - Mrs. Deborah Bates, Ms. Harriet Brown, Dr. Dennis Cambria, Mrs. Atwood Ely, Mr. James Holley, Ms. Mary Hyde, and Mr. Thayer Kingsley • *Family* - Mr. & Mrs Walter Chappel, Hon. & Mrs. Robert Leuba, Mr. & Mrs. Henry Peyton, Drs. John & Marcia McGowan, and Mr. & Mrs. Mark Russell • *Contributing* - Franklin's General Store, Ms. Katrina Korpi and Dr. & Mrs. David Percival • *Benefactor* - Capt. & Mrs. William Yates

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