February: Listening in on Nineteenth Century Social Music with Craig Edwards

Harvey L. Hazen of Norwich, Fiddler, Dancing Master, and schoonerman, was born in 1797 and died at the age of 77 in 1874. A beloved regional figure in Norwich and up and down Long Island Sound on both the Connecticut and New York shores, much of his music is preserved in the manuscript collections of his close friend and musical crony, the artist and musician William Sidney Mount of Setauket, Long Island. Mount’s habits of compulsive note-taking, sketching, and writing out musical notation by ear provide a unique window into Hazen’s musical world. The traditional fiddle music of New England underwent significant transformation in Hazen’s lifetime, and Mount’s habit of notating particular performances of traditional tunes with variations is as close as it’s possible to get to listen in on a nineteenth-century evening of social music. Using historical records of Hazen’s life and the manuscripts and artwork of William Sidney Mount, this presentation will recreate the everyday musical world of coastal Connecticut and Long Island in the nineteenth century.

Craig Edwards is an ethnomusicologist, independent scholar, music teacher, and professional musician. He has worked as a staff musician at Mystic Seaport since 1984, was a member of the Mystic Seaport-based chantey quartet Forebitter, a past Director of the Mystic Seaport Sea Music Festival, currently serves as moderator for the Music of the Sea Symposium, and teaches traditional fiddle styles at Wesleyan University. He has also designed music installations and exhibits for Mystic Seaport, the Ellis Island museum, and several other museums. His musical career encompasses traditional roots music from Appalachian fiddling, Blues, and Cajun to Swing and Zydeco. He plays in half a dozen bands, performs a variety of traditional styles on several instruments, and tours internationally.

To hear more, please join us on Wednesday, February 27th at 7pm at the Mystic Congregational Church Hall, at Broadway & E. Main streets, Mystic. All meetings are free & open to the public with donations welcome. The January & February meetings are cooperatively sponsored in conjunction with the Stonington Historical Society.
The two current book selections are available in hardcover & paperback from your favorite local library or bookstore, as well as being available digitally for e-readers. Online readers can click the cover art for additional information.

The History Book Club is a partner project of the Mystic-Noank Library and MRHS. We thought the reading selections are likely to be of interest to the broader community, and new reader members are always welcome. The group meets on second Tuesdays at the Mystic-Noank Library at 7pm in the Activities Room. For more information, please contact Richard Semeraro at rasemeraro04@gmail.com

In the interest of time, the group has chosen A History of Mystic, CT, from Pequot Village to Tourist Town, by Leigh Fought (139 pages, many pictures) for the March reading selection.

At the February 12th meeting, the club will discuss Homegrown Terror: Benedict Arnold and the Burning of New London, by Eric Lehman (200 pages) - some copies were available at the Library.

After that, the group will be needing to choose a few more history books going forward for the next few months. Below is a list of the books left from the last list they chose from, with some new additions. Members are welcome to add entries. There will be a vote, either in person at the next meeting on Feb. 12, or by email before that date. Each person has four votes, for the April through July selections.

**HISTORY BOOK CLUB SUGGESTIONS - January 2019**
- Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory, David W. Blight, 2001 (397 pp)
- The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic & Madness at the Fair that Changed America, Erik Larson, 2003 (447 pp)
- The Death of Caesar: The Story of History's Most Famous Assassination, Barry Strauss, 2015 (352 pp)
- Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War and Monument in Nineteenth Century America, Kirk Savage, 1997 (214 pp)
- No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, the Home Front in World War II, Doris Kearns Goodwin, 1994 (636 pp)
- The Imperial Cruise: A Secret History of Empire & War, James Bradley, 2009 (400 pp)
- 1776, David McCullough, 2006 (294 pp)
- The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt and the Golden Age of Journalism, Doris Kearns Goodwin, 2014 (742 pp)
- The Last 100 Days: FDR at War and at Peace, David B. Woolner, 2018 (349 pp)
- Fascism: A Warning, Madeleine Albright, 2018 (288 pp)
- Last Hope Island: Britain, Occupied Europe, and the Brotherhood That Helped Turn the Tide of War, Lynne Olson, 2017 (553 pp)
- Black Earth, Timothy Snyder, 2015 (462 pp)
- The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South, Catherine Clinton, 1984 (352 pp)
- Measuring America: How an Untamed Wilderness Shaped the United States and Fulfilled the Promise of Democracy, Andro Linklater, 2002 (320 pp)
- Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America, a Cultural History, David Hackett Fischer, 1989 (972 pp)
- 1421: The Year China Discovered America, Gavin Menzie, 2004 (650 pp)
- The Johnstown Flood, David McCullough, 1968 (305 pp)
- George Washington: the Wonder of the Age, John Rhodehamel, 2017 (353 pp)
- Salt: A World History, Mark Kurlansky, 2002 (450 pp)
- Blood at the Root: A Racial Cleansing in America, Patrick Phillips, 2016 (502 pp)
- Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom, David W. Blight, 2018 (912 pp)
- American Eden: David Hosack, Botany and Medicine in the Garden of the Early Republic, Victoria Johnson
- These Truths: A History of the United States, Jill Lepore

**Reader Tips: Rev War Refreshers**
- As I am reading Homegrown Terror I’ve had to refresh my memory as to conditions surrounding the Revolutionary War and I found the following video to have some interesting points that helped me to see how confusing those times must have been, and of course assuming that these facts are correct: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8P4upXnsCM

- I don’t know whether anyone watched the AMC History show “Turn: Washington’s Spies,” but these discs are available at the Groton Library & might be worth of interest. This web page https://history.pmlib.org/sites/default/files/PDF/TURN_Finale.pdf (which is classified alphabetically by subject, place, or person) was originally designed to help sort fact from fiction during the 4-year AMC Television series. It became something more than that. This page provides many links to Long Island, NY’s previously undersung, largely unknown role in the American Revolution, including Long Island’s development of America’s first organized espionage ring – the Culper (or Setauket) Spy Ring – precursor of the OSS and the CIA.

~ Dana & Richard Semeraro

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**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 - Margaret Austin  • Treasurer - Barry Thorp  • Corresponding & Recording Secretary - Elizabeth Holland

The Newsletter of the Mystic River Historical Society is published five times annually: September-October, November-December, January-February, March-April and May-June

Copy deadline is the 3rd Friday of the month prior to issue publication. Please submit to jenniferspryor@gmail.com

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**Online? Handy Tip!**

Past issues of the newsletter are available for viewing at www.mystichistory.org

Click blue text to link directly to more information online.
These days the Mystic Community Center is much in the news, an integral part of Mystic life. Not many remember its predecessor, the Mystic Club, which stood for many years on Holmes Street where its rear rooms and wharf extended well out over the mudflats of the Mystic River.

When we came to Mystic in 1939, the building was still there, known as the old Community House. It was rundown and bedraggled, and there was talk of having it condemned as unsafe, for the 1938 hurricane had not been kind to the shingled structure. However, it hung on for years before it finally disappeared.

The Mystic Club grew out of the Cosmopolitan Club, an informal gathering of village social leaders organized about the turn of the century (sic) when industrial technology had begun to provide more leisure time for the populace.

The Cosmopolitans, whose membership reached 75, met in club rooms in East Main Street. Eventually they decided to arrange for their own building in order to extend their activities. The substantial, roomy two-story structure that resulted from their building campaign cost $17,500*. They raised the money in the good old-fashioned way — by soliciting funds from the community.

Several generous donations came from Mystic manufacturers, augmented by initiation fees of $10 and annual dues of $6. Eli Gledhill, popular manager of the Mystic Manufacturing Company on Greenmanville Avenue, was elected president. His firm produced fine, fancy woolen worsteds.

When the clubhouse was ready in midsummer 1911, applications for membership reached 200. The new quarters contained reception, reading and billiard rooms, a kitchen, a gymnasium and bowling alleys. “An attractive place to spend the evening,” wrote The Day reporter after inspecting the premises.

As an indication of the increasing importance of woman’s role in society, the distaff side was not excluded. The ladies were allowed to participate in many programs, and one day each week was designated as Ladies’ Day.

The Mystic Club,Mystic Conn. ca. 1911 from The Day, March 7, 1991

But life in Mystic was changing. Time and the Great Depression took their toll. With the advent of the automobile, the Mystic Community Club was once more neglected and finally disappeared forever from its perch on the river bank.

*Ed. Note: The $17,500 campaign is the equivalent of about $450,000 today. While it would be considered a bargain price for what is now a premium waterfront tourist district, the Holmes Street address in 1911 would have been considered a more “industrial” area. The neighbors would have included core components of Mystic’s maritime heritage, including the Byron Church boat shop, Mallory sail loft, Lathrop Engine Co. and the Holmes Coal Company wharf.
When I was a boy in Mystic I was a member of the Boy Scouts of America Troop 34. I still vividly remember weeks spent at Camp Wakenah: one when I was 11 and then again two years later. The years passed until about twelve years ago Cindy and I drove over to Salem, CT and walked around the camp. What amazed me was how everything had gotten smaller: the flagpole on the ball field was shorter and a lot closer to home plate, the dining hall was now half its size, the large swimming area, beach and docks were a lot smaller, and the top bunk beds were not that far off the floor. We had a fine picnic lunch while I reminisced about the magic incantation of O Wa Ta Goo Siam around the campfire, braiding lanyards by the yard, the wonderful smell of breakfast as we walked to the mess hall in the morning, inflating tied off trouser legs to make a float during life saving classes, and on and on.

So, imagine my delight when I read the following last summer by Robert Welt in the Mystic Times. It certainly took me back. If you were a member of Troop 34 and/or spent time at Waeknah, please send me a note to lallyn@snet.net or give me a call 860-536-9363 so we can share some memories.

"It is amazing how many summer activities kids enjoy today. The Day has run ads for all sorts of camps, from 4-H to soccer to art. I don’t recall all these choices being available 60 years ago. Of course, there were swimming lessons at various beaches, but camps were either private, run by churches or by the scouts.

The highlight of summers was my time at Camp Wakenah on Gardner Lake in Salem. Wakenah was then one of the oldest Boy Scout camps in America, having been established around the time of World War I, not many years after Boy Scouting began in this country.

The dirt road off Old Colchester Road, leading into the camp, was not designed for speed or a comfortable ride. The road ended at a large field that had been graded compliments of Electric Boat. Surrounding the field were the nature lodge, the health lodge, and the trading post, which sold gimp, Coke, candy bars, and Scout materials.

Between the field and the lake was the dining hall, which had two levels. On top was the actual dining room and kitchen. The room was furnished with finished picnic tables and benches and contained a large stone fireplace.

Metal pitchers were used for bug juice, which was consumed by the gallon. Wakenah had four campsites named after local Native Americans: Cassasinamon, Uncas, Samson Occum, and Tamaquashad. Campers didn’t use tents, but lived in Adirondack lean-tos, each of which had two sets of bunk beds.

There were a variety of opportunities available to campers each week. Younger boys, who had not yet achieved first class rank, were urged to concentrate on the camp craft and other skills necessary to reach that level. One staff member who taught the use of knife and axe was Dave Geer, who later became a world champion lumberjack. Legend had it that Dave’s axe is sharp enough to shave with!

Another activity was swimming. The waterfront was set up with finger docks in the shape of the letter F. Every boy took a swimming test on Sunday afternoon and was judged either a beginner, intermediate, or swimmer.

The better swimmers were allowed to swim out to the raft. One grueling activity, open to volunteers who trained for a week, was the mile swim. During general swim, staff members were on the docks with reach poles and the area between the far dock and the raft was patrolled by rowboat. The lifesaving mantra was: “reach, throw, row, go.”

Beyond swimming lessons, the waterfront offered merit badges in swimming and lifesaving, as well as for rowing and canoeing. The camp also had sailboards. I was on one of them one afternoon with a friend when the tiller broke.

We tried to steer by dragging a leg in the water. Needless to say, we were berated, though good naturedly, for sailing into the swimming area.

On Friday evenings each campsite participated in a waterfront carnival to which parents were invited. The highlight of the evening was the parade of floats using rowboats. Near the Fourth of July, one troop’s patriotic float portrayed Washington crossing the Delaware. As the float was front and center under the spotlight, the voice of the waterfront director could be heard bellowing loudly from the porch, “I don’t care what your name is. Sit down in that rowboat!”

A more serious incident involved an evening trip to the Casino, a pinball parlor and soda fountain at the end of the lake. The adventure began on our return when the weather changed from calm to nasty.

We were paddling back to camp against the wind and the lake was getting pretty choppy. In fact, at least half the time when my 11-year-old partner dipped his paddle, it didn’t touch the water. I told him to move to the middle of the canoe and lay down. I moved a little bit forward and kept the craft into the wind.

Turning towards the shore was not an option as it was all swamp. We finally got back and as I think about it, whoever made that kid wear a life jacket was very wise.
Canoes played a part in another unsanctioned activity that gave everyone a good laugh. Next door to Wakenah was a private camp, whose loudspeaker could be heard at various times. Every day about mid-morning campers were directed to line up at the milk tree for snack time. But the term "milk tree" was too much to resist. Wakenah purchased its milk in waxed containers. Rather than throw them out when empty, some devious staff members collected them and washed them out. Someone cut down a small dead tree, and the milk cartons were hung from the branches, with a sign that said, "Milk Tree." Late one night the tree was loaded across two canoes and paddled down the lake to the neighboring camp where it was fastened to their raft. I hope our neighbors took it with good spirit.

An activity that many of us enjoyed was shooting. The instructor was Steve Rocketto, who went on to coach rifle teams at Grasso and Montville High. Wakenah had a rifle team and we shot a match against another private camp. Those kids all had expensive target rifles. Ours were neither expensive nor fancy. I remember lying in the prone position, in a light rain, and my glasses getting all wet. I pulled the hood of my poncho down lower on my face, and kept shooting. We won the meet! Later I used to tell my middle school students that I did more shooting at Boy Scout camp than I did during Navy boot camp.

I remember the names of some of the staff. Jack Kirkness, a professional scout, was the director, and a very talented horseshoe player. Other staff members were Richard Force, from Groton and Ron Sudol and Kent Sistaire, from New London. One staff member, who was older, had earned his Eagle award while living in the Philippines, and when we wore our full uniforms for evening retreat, his Eagle budge fascinated me, because unlike the American award, it showed the bird in flight.

I had a great time at Wakenah, both as a camper and, for one season, on staff, and I'm sure many men in this area today share my feelings and are disappointed that it is no longer a Scout camp, having been sold in 2004.”

Special to The Times by Robert F. Welt of Mystic; he is a retired Groton Public Schools teacher. This article first appeared in the Mystic Times Aug. 27, 2018.

It’s always a pleasure to hear from one of our members, especially when it is someone’s memories like this one from Rosemary Dayton, who now lives in Williamsport, PA:

“Just a note to go with my yearly dues. I take great pride in being the one who brought a group together to save the District Hall from destruction. Along with a very few people we feel we saved a very fine building. I’m ninety now and have good memories of my time in Mystic. Our home at 10 New London Road overlooked the District Hall and I’m glad to see it in good hands!

Sincerely, Rosemary Dayton”
Tech Support, Where are My Photos? ~ Lou Allyn

The transition to digital photography and social media is having a major impact on the documentation of local history. Up to now most of the images in our collections are 50 years or more old; they come to us as prints and negatives and are scanned into digital format and saved along with the originals.

Now think about what happens today when mostly digital cameras and smartphones are used. Every day hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands, of digital photographs (images and videos) are taken in the Mystic area alone. Most of them are not of historical interest, but what of the ones that are? Where are they stored, are they labeled, will they just disappear? And what about the ones that are uploaded to monster data farms in “the cloud”? Much is being written and said about these questions but I can only refer you to an article in the November 29, 2018 issue of The New York Times, Tech Support, Where Are My Photos? at www.nytimes.com/2018/11/29/style/digital-photo-storage-purge.html. The conclusion of the article says “There does exist a version of events, however, rendered in a coherent way, in the manner of photographs recorded for posterity — a pair of photo books printed for our parents, who requested a way to show photos that didn’t involve their phones. If history is any guide, our best chance at having something to look back at when we’re old won’t come from the next Google, or whatever comes after that. It’s that these books will survive all of it, and find their way back to us.”

PS – Based on my experience looking for information about a person, I would encourage everyone, when the time comes that you shuffle off this mortal coil, to be sure to have a full obituary in a newspaper (or its nearest equivalent). That way a small history of your life will be easily found by any internet search engine.

November 2018 Meeting Minutes ---

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on Monday, November 19, 2018. Attendees were: Cindy Allyn, Lou Allyn, Margaret Austin, Marilyn Conrie, Steve Menno, John Parry, Richard Semeraro, Stephanie Thorp, and Barry Thorp. The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by President L. Allyn.

President (L. Allyn): Met with Burrows family members to discuss donation of a family collection.

Recording Secretary (L. Allyn): A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the minutes of the October 2018 meeting.

Corresponding Secretary (L. Holland): Wrote one letter.

Treasurer (B. Thorp): For the period 15 October to 19 November 2018. At this time all deposits have been made in the Chelsea account and all bills are paid current. The treasurer’s account books are reconciled with the Chelsea Groton Bank statements. Expenses for this period are non-discretionary commitments that include payments for utilities, USPS Bulk Mail Permit, and curatorial staff. There were no unusual expenses during this period. Deposits included receipt of 2018 member annual dues, a Patron donation and donations from the monthly meeting. The present balance in the Chelsea Groton checking account is positive. As always, comments or questions are welcome. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the Treasurer’s Report.

Chamber of Commerce (S. Menno): No report.

Curatorial (D. Hanna): The Curatorial Committee cancelled their October meeting and will next meet on November 26. Betsy has been reviewing the “Objects” collection, adding photographs to the database. Cara continues work on documenting and better storage for the china pieces. Dorrie has been focused on responding to queries and also on editing the Procedures Manual for the Committee to review.

Finance (L. Allyn): No report.

Information Technology (S. Thorp): No change from October’s report.

Lower Mystic Cemetery (L. Allyn): Flags were put on veterans’ graves for Veterans Day and removed a week later.

Membership (C. Allyn): Sharon Barrett and Gary LaChance joined as new members. The membership list will be published in the November/December Portsmouth Press. 2019 membership renewal letters will be mailed in January.

Mystic Noank Library (R. Semeraro): November 13 meeting discussed A History of Venice, (by John Julius Norwich (from chapter 24 on). Future readings are: December 11 SPQR, by Mary Beard (through page 628); January 8 SPQR, (finish). SPQR is an initialism of Senatus Populusque Romanus. The Senate and People of Rome.

Newsletter (L. Allyn for J. Pryor): Copy for the January/February Newsletter is due December 14.

Programs (M. Austin): Upcoming meetings are: December 5 – Joan Warren on WWI – Pauline Sands Lee. Speakers for 2019 meetings are being contacted.

Social Media (L. Pyke-Fairchild): Entries continue on Facebook and Instagram.

Walking Tour (Marilyn Comrie): Planned for last Saturday in April.

New Business: Marilyn Comrie suggested that the shrubbery around the WWI monument at the intersection of New London Road and Library Street be trimmed back. The Town of Groton will be contacted to find out who can do this maintenance.

Meeting adjourned at 745 pm. Next is January 14, 2019 7pm at Mystic Noank Library.

Respectfully submitted, Lou Allyn

There is no Board meeting in December.
The Social Pages

Stop by & follow our social feeds
for great imagery & commentary at: facebook.com/mystichistory or instagram.com/mystic_history.
Online readers, click images below or any blue link with a pointing hand to see more!

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mystic_history The Standard Machinery Co, 1924. Now Factory Square. The stairs on the left mark where the entrance to Barley Head Brewery is today, though the stairs today go down instead of up (@barleyheadbrewery).

In 1848, the Randall brothers founded the Reliance Machine Co., which up to the time of the Civil War successfully manufactured cotton gins and related machines. The

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mystic_history Color postcard, "West Main Street, Mystic, Conn" addressed to Miss Ella Harris Wheeler, Boston, Mass, Jan. 6, 1909: "Thank you for the lovely Christmas card. We miss you. All wish you a happy New Years."

#mystichistory #mysticct #downtownmystic #chistory #mysticcountry #vintagepostcard #antique #history #historicnewengland

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mystic_history An early 1900's postcard "Skating on Mystic River, Mystic, Conn." from Mystic Seaport on Connecticut History Illustrated. The image appears to be the view from Gravel Street, and, interestingly, includes green-leaved trees existing simultaneously with a snowy, ice-covered river and skaters bundled against the cold ☃️. #mystichistory #mysticct #downtownmystic #mysticcountry #vintagepostcard #grotonct #stotingonct

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Our MRHS community is saddened to report the loss of Paul Ingle — he was a Charter Member of the Society since its founding in 1976. Paul Simoncini and Charles C. Maxson also passed away in early 2019.

— Cindy Allyn, Membership