Why are we, as a culture, so fascinated by misdeeds, violence and mayhem? At the May meeting, presenter Rick Spencer will tackle the human obsession with and documentation of misdeeds using song as the informational medium. From Francis James Child’s centuries’-old ballads collection to the penny broadsides and popular songs from the 1700s to mid 20th century, the notorious tales of Captain Kidd, Jesse James, Stagger Lee, Pretty Boy Floyd and other nefarious types continue to be told....

Join us on May 25th at the Mystic Congregational Church Hall at 7 pm for refreshments & socializing, followed by the program at 7:30. Open to all - donations welcome.

Rick Spencer has been in the historical performance industry for over 25 years. He worked for 20 years as a researcher, historian and presenter of traditional maritime songs and sea chanteys at Mystic Seaport and has performed widely in the US, in Canada and Europe. Rick is best known for his work as a developer and presenter of theme-based historic music programs. He is the former executive director and curator of the Dr. Ashbel Woodward Museum in Franklin, CT and is currently on the board of directors of the New London (CT) County Historical Society.

13-Star American Flag, ca. 1820-1840 ~ A rare, handmade flag with 13 stars, including one apparently added to the middle row as a near after-thought. The flag originally belonged to a 6th descendant of the Mayflower, Chester Reed of Boston MA. When Mr. Reed’s health declined in later life, his neighbors, the Good family cared for him and was gifted the flag for their assistance. The flag remained in the Good family until it was sold at auction in the late ’90s/early 2000s. From rareflags.com

If you have a chance this Memorial Day weekend, drive along Route 1 going west out of Mystic past the firehouse and down the hill to the Lower Mystic Cemetery on the right. There is a little parking area by the east end of the wall. Walking through the cemetery is a wonderful way to spend a few moments thinking about our forebears, especially the veterans. Flags are placed on the veteran’s graves each year by the Boy Scouts of Troop 2 Mystic. (For a listing of all the veterans and a map of where their graves are go to the page www.mystichistory.org/LMC/lower_mystic_cemetery.htm)

There are some relevant articles in the collection of Newsletters published by the Lower Mystic Cemetery Association and recently acquired by The Mystic River Historical Society from the Mystic Noank Library. They are for seven of the years from 2004 to 2015 plus 1994. You may view them at the same website.
An article from 2008 “About Our Veterans” is reprinted here:

ABOUT OUR VETERANS

The Lower Mystic Cemetery contains 140 numbered lots and approximately 420 gravestones. As we have noted before, this burial ground is the last resting place of a number of veterans who fought for our country in past wars. We have veterans from the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I and World War II and the Korean War, a total of nearly 40.

Among the veterans of the War of 1812 are Ezekiel Tufts and Samuel Welch, both members of Capt. Jonathan Wheeler’s Company involved in building and manning of Fort Rachel to defend the village of Mystic against British raids along the Mystic River. Among our 24 Civil War veterans we have Capt. Jedediah Randall 2nd, of Company K, 26th Connecticut Regiment, who died June 9, 1863 at the age of 27 from wounds received on the Banks Expedition during the attack on Port Hudson on the Mississippi River. Lower Mystic is also the burial place of Ames Slack, Charles F. Reynolds and John S. Tufts who served in Capt. Randall’s company. Ames Slack, who lived to the age of 95, died in 1921. The cemetery is also honored to be the burial spot of a Medal of Honor recipient, Capt. John Bucklyn, who lies in a granite mausoleum near the northwest corner. Representing the 20th century, John F. Lucy and Stewart C. Melvin served in the U.S. Navy during World War I while Leslie O. Allen was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War.

There is also a write-up about Horatio N. Fish, Jr. in the Summer 2014 newsletter:

OUR HISTORIC CEMETERY

The people who are buried in Lower Mystic Cemetery depict many chapters in our country’s history. It is the final resting place of many military veterans, including those that served our great nation during the Civil War.

One of the most touching burials is that of Horatio N. Fish, Jr. (1843-1864). He enlisted in Company C, 21st Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers, during the Civil War. This company, under Reverend John E. Wood, had 95 men from Groton, 5 from Ledyard, and 1 from Norwich. Fish was wounded on May 16, 1864, at the battle of Drewry’s Bluff near Petersburg, Virginia, in the heaviest fighting in which the 21st Regiment participated. Fish died of his wounds on August 8, 1864, leaving us 150 years ago.

A prolific writer, Fish’s letters to those at home have been compiled into a moving program by Marilyn Comrie. His letters are housed in the collection of the Mystic River Historical Society.
New Online Collection Exhibits

by Louisa Watrous

We are frequently adding new images for you to view, and for researchers from all walks of life to discover through the web. The online exhibits are generated from our PastPerfect Collections database. A new initiative is to offer them for families in the Mystic area, currently including Allyn, Brown, Burrows, Coogan (see below), Cottrell, Crumb, Denison, Fish, Haley, Holmes, Morgan, Newberry, Newbury, and Williams. We will be adding more as we work through the collection and catalog new material, so keep checking back! If there are any names you’d like us to consider, please let us know: info@mystichistory.org or 860-536-4779. Visit our page at www.mystichistory.org/collectionsexhibit/index.htm.

More About Diaries

by Dorrie Hanna, Collections Manager

Congratulations to all who made the renovation and re-purposing of the Coogan Farm possible! Again this month I’m focusing on diaries given to us by the Coogan/ Marshall family and I realized a couple of points worth mentioning about diaries in general.

One—entries written in pencil smudge badly and become almost illegible. For example one diary in the Coogan group appeared to have some very interesting anecdotes, but even with a magnifying glass I couldn’t easily make sense of them and I set the diary aside for another day.

Two—you should always include the year of the diary, even if only once at the front of the book. The diary mentioned above gives no year. It mentions a fire at the rail yard in New London that destroyed five locomotives, but I have no idea when that happened.

Three—it can be hard to keep up entries as the year goes on. New Year’s day is a time when we make resolutions (such as “I will keep a diary”) but it’s easy to abandon our good intentions. Clara Coogan’s diary for 1922 is neatly dated and written in ink. She begins with good intentions:

“January 17 – Tuesday: The sun is shining and it is a beautiful day. Clarence is still getting in ice. It is very, very cold. Mother has gone downtown (i.e. down town). Got one load of ice and packed rest away. Stanton killed cow, changed tires. Learned spider lace. Aunt Dora spent day. Uncle Frank Called.”

But by July her entries are just dinner menus: “Friday – Dinner – Clam soup, cold lobster garnished with lettuce and lemons.”

So, while I’m having more difficulty transcribing from these diaries than I anticipated, they clearly illustrate some of the pitfalls of keeping a daily record of everyday life.

Portersville 1847

I ought to sing our noble river
On whose banks you colors quiver.
It rises up in Lantern Hill
Driving many a cotton mill,
It sweeps right through River-Head
Nor stops at Long Bar’s sandy bed,
But passing swiftly Helme’s bridge,
Randall’s wharf, the fort’s high ridge
In whirling eddies round the bend
Near Murphy’s point, which is lands end,
By Crove Point’s dreary shore,
Leasing Fitches Goat Point store,
By Sixpence Isle and Penny too,
Of Noank we’ve the finest view;

So there you have the river Mystic,
In all its glory, grand, majestic.
With Mallory’s “swards” and Cottrill’s yard
Nor must we Randall’s disregard
Nor Fishes’ wharf, nor Mr. Avery’s
Nor Iron ways,
Nor Prentice’s slip,
Nor Niles place where Baptists dip.
Here’s Pepot hill, where they battled,
Where bows were bent and bullets rattled.
Here live the names long found in story
The Denisons, in all their glory.
The Burrowses of every race,
The Packards too have spread apace;
Parkes, Wolf, Gallup, Lamb,
Eldredge, Douglass and Brayman;
Fishes, Randalls, Averys, Tilts,
Haley, Starks, Williams, Cliffs.
These had their day and have it yet,
But new comers line each street.
Every year new ones come
(Some had better stay at home.)
But never mind, the world is free,
There’s room enough for you and me.

~ Lydia Burrows, ca. 1847 from MRHS archives
**March 2016 Meeting Minutes**  

The Mystic River Historical Society Board of Trustees met Monday, on March 21, 2016. Attendees included: Cindy Allyn, Lou Allyn, Margaret Austin, Dave Evans, Bill Everett, Lois Glazier, John Parry, Richard Semeraro, Barry Thorp and Stephanie Thorp.

**President (L. Allyn):** Lou read a summary report on the evolution of the Society as a lead into a workshop led by Harry White to brain storm the internal Strengths and Weaknesses and external Opportunities and Threats (a S.W.O.T. analysis) regarding our organization and its programs. Harry gave two overarching purposes to the SWOT analysis and program planning:

1. Define future programs that are relevant and interesting to new audiences, members, volunteers and trustee candidates.
2. Strengthen the ID / recruitment of new volunteers by knowing/sharing the programs and MRHS functions they can support.

The SWOT analysis will be a framework for planning programs that build on strengths, seize opportunities, help address weaknesses and acknowledge threats. Results of the SWOT analysis and further program plans will be reviewed at our next board meeting April 18. • The regular meeting was then resumed. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the February meeting as published.

**Corr. Secretary (E. Holland):** Twelve thank you notes sent.

**Treasurer (B. Thorp):** For 2/22/16 - 3/20/16, all deposits have been made, all bills paid current and account books reconciled. Expenses for the month are mostly non-discretionary. No unusual expenses for the period. Deposits included payments of many member 2016 dues and a PayPal deposit that represented a balance payment of a Life membership. The present balance in the Chelsea Groton checking account is positive.

**Curatorial (L. Allyn/D. Hanna):** The committee met 3/21/16. Collections Manager Dorrie Hanna updated the group on activities at the Downes Building since the last meeting. Sixteen requests for information have been filled since the beginning of the year. There was discussion of how MRHS might utilize our collections material to promote awareness of our organization.

**Finance (D. Evans):** A review of allocations between the Vanguard accounts is underway.

**Information Technology (S. Thorp):** Administrator performed updates & backups 2/27/16. All equipment and software appear to be in good condition and functioning as designed. The backups for the Past Perfect database files and working files were done and removed offsite for security.

**Newsletter:** The Board voted to print the March/April issue in color.

**Program & Membership (M. Austin):** Howard Veisz, a Mystic Seaport employee who oversees the care and upkeep of “The Gerda III” at the Seaport, will speak to the role and historical significance of the boat on April 27th. On May 25, a short Annual Meeting will be followed by Rick Spencer’s historical music program “Historic Songs of Outlaws, Villains and Rogues”.

**P&M Subcommittee of Hospitality & Membership (C. Allyn):** 186 membership renewals for 2016 have been received to date.

**Publicity/PR (S. Thorp):** Notices are being posted on the MRHS Facebook page about upcoming speakers.

**Cooperation with Mystic-Noank Library (R. Semeraro):** The History Book Club had its first meeting with 12 people in attendance. Nathaniel Philbrick’s “Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War” will be discussed at the next meeting.

Next meeting April 18, 2016, 7:00 pm Mystic Noank Library

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Allyn for Liz Holland

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**February 2016 Meeting Minutes**  

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on February 22, 2016. Attendees included: Cindy Allyn, Lou Allyn, Margaret Austin, Lois Glazier, John Parry, Richard Semeraro, Barry Thorp, Stephanie Thorp, Liz Holland, Bill Everett, and David Evans.

**President (L. Allyn):** A motion was made, second & passed to accept the minutes of the January meeting as published. • Insurance on the schoolhouse will be modified to exclude rebuilding coverage from $286k to $150k in an attempt to lower the annual premium, saving $263 per year. A motion was made, seconded and approved to modify the insurance policy. • The snow removal company will be notified to return the gravel displaced by the snowplow back into the driveway at the schoolhouse.

**Corr. Secretary (E. Holland):** Thirty-one thank you letters were sent since the last meeting.

**Treasurer (B. Thorp):** For 1/1/16 - 2/21/2016, all deposits have been made and all bills paid current. Account books are reconciled with the Chelsea Groton Bank statements. Expenses are mostly non-discretionary, including utilities, postage, dues and curatorial staff. No unusual expenses for the period. Deposits included many member 2016 dues and a generous donation from individual member families and a portion of a Life Membership. Present checking account balance is positive. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the Treasurer’s Report.

**Curatorial (L. Allyn/D. Hanna):** The committee met 1/25/16. Facebook pictures posted by MRHS are becoming increasingly popular. • Lisa Saunders is still active and working on a book. • John Parry and Lou Allyn have been speaking with Harry White for his expertise on strategic planning and fundraising – Harry will come to the March meeting. The Board may consider sending out a survey to MRHS members.

**Finance (D. Evans):** David will consider moving money from the managed funds to an index fund.

**Information Technology (S. Thorp):** Updates & backups performed 1/30/16, including Past Perfect database with offsite removal for security. All equipment including networked operation, printer connection & Microsoft virus protection appears to be in good condition and functioning as designed.

**Newsletter (L. Allyn for P. Pryor):** Copy deadline is Friday following meeting. Members are encouraged to send articles and historical photos to Jennifer.

**Program & Membership (M. Austin):** The committee met on January 7. We are hopeful that if speakers submit a picture, it will get more press in the local newspapers. Upcoming speakers are: Michelle Moon “New England Food History” March 23, Howard Veisz “The Gerda III” April 27, Richard Spencer “Historical Songs of Outlaws, Villains and Rogues” May 25, also the MRHS annual meeting. On October 26, Kate Dimancescu will come back to speak about her book. • R. Semeraro is forming a History Book Club at the Mystic Noank Library. Its first informational meeting will take place March 1 at 7 pm.

**P&M Subcommittee of Hospitality & Membership (C. Allyn):** We mailed 308 annual dues renewal letters in January.

**Publicity/PR (S. Thorp):** Press releases of the membership meeting will be sent out. Dorrie is posting photographs on the MRHS Facebook page every Thursday.

**New Business:** The New London Historical Society has several interns from local colleges; perhaps this is something MRHS should consider as well.

Next meeting March 21, 2016, 7:00 pm
Respectfully submitted, Elizabeth Holland, Recording Secretary
A stalwart crew had a good time discussing Nathaniel Philbrick’s “Mayflower” at the last History Book Club meeting. People enjoyed his writing enough to recommend reading another book by him for the June meeting.

As mentioned before, we will be discussing “The Warmth of Other Suns,” by Isabel Wilkerson for the May 10th meeting. From 1915 to 1970, the exodus of almost six million people changed the face of America. Wilkerson compares this epic migration to the migrations of other peoples in history. She follows several families intimately as they migrate to diverse areas of the country, and the consequences on future generations.

Join us for the next gathering at the Mystic-Noank Library on Tuesday, May 10th at 7pm in the Activities Room. The History Book Club is a partner project of the Mystic-Noank Library and MRHS. For questions or ideas, please contact Richard Semeraro at rasemeraro04@gmail.com

MRHS Gifts in 2016

We would like to express our appreciation the following for their gifts to MRHS this year.

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Jim & Pam Allyn
Liz Allyn & Julie Whitney
Atty & Mrs Robert Anderson
In Memory of Robert Palmer Anderson, III
Norma Aronson
In Memory of Dr, Roger & Mildred Fowler
Linda & Barry Boorman
In Memory of Capt. John Porter, U.S.N. Ret.
David & Jean Evans
Muriel Hinkle
In Memory of David R. Hinkle
Nancy and Gary Johnson
In Memory of James Dean Fish
William Lewis
Nancy Mckay
Tom & Nancy McLoughlin
Brendan & Betty O’Donnell
Barbara Pearson
In Memory of Helen Bentley Pearson
Susan Phillips
Laszlo Pozsunyi
Jean Rowley
Sharon Schnare
Evan Seehaus Family

Elizabeth & Peter Sorensen
In Memory of Loring Bailey
Barry & Stephanie Thorp
Robert Walker
Harry & Liz White
Catherine Casey Zahn

Thank you!
Membership Updates

Please welcome our new Members who have joined MRHS since the November/December Newsletter

Abigail Van Slyck & Mitchell Favreau, Mystic - Family
Bob & Cindy Martin, Mystic - Family
David & Keli Levine, Mystic - Family
Julia Constantine, Mystic - Individual

Renew, become a member or find out more about MRHS ~ contact us at: info@mystichistory.org or 860-536-4779.