The Cemetery Ladies: Recording the History Buried in Our Cemeteries

Needing help solving a genealogical graveyard mystery? Wondering about a family “plot” twist? Bring your questions to the “Cemetery Ladies” at the MRHS open meeting on Wednesday, December 6th. The ‘Ladies -- Joanna Case and Judy Hicks -- will share their enthusiasm & experience from surveying seven years’ and over 20,000 burial sites worth of local cemeteries with familiar names such as Crary, Fish, Niles, Packer, Wells and assorted Burrows, as well as the Elm Grove, Lower Mystic and Stonington grounds. They now have compiled & recorded family history details from 13 cemeteries on both sides of the river which are available for public access at libraries, historical societies, town halls and online sources like Find-A-Grave.

JoAnna Case was the Director of the Mystic & Noank Library for thirty-five years. In her retirement, Joanna has invested some of her time and energies to her family genealogy and well as reorganizing the Mystic & Noank Library’s Local History Section.

Judy Hicks has been interested in Mystic history for many years. This interest grew with her emphasis on offering area history books at her former bookstore Village Books in Old Mystic Village. Judy has edited and published “A Mystic River Anthology” and coedited “Images of America: Mystic” published by the MRHS. Judy is past president of MRHS and has been an active member for many years. She is a former Library Assistant at the Mystic & Noank Library working in the local history section. She has lived in Mystic for over 50 years.

For more, see “So Many Graves, They Wore Out a Camera” by Steven Sloberger at WesterlySun.com

A Sample Peek into a Family History, Starting at the Cemetery...

Allyn Family Plot - No. 82 in the Lower Mystic Cemetery memorializes Gordon S. Allyn (1816-1876), his wife, Hannah L. (1830-1838) and their children, Francis, Hannah, Juliaett and Mary who tragically all died young.

Gordon & Hannah’s son, Louis P. Allyn (1852-1938) has a stone marker in Elm Grove cemetery with his wife and son.

Headstone photos by Joanna Case from Findagrave.com. Original plot map of the Fishtown/Lower Mystic Cemetery and a modern diagram are available at mystichistory.org/LMC

MRHS: The Gift of Honoring the Past for the Present & Future

Share your love of heritage & local history holiday season! Please consider gifting a MRHS membership or donation to honor the special people in your life. Support opportunities begin at just $25 annually. Donations are welcome in any amount. • MRHS-produced publications & films are available at the Downes Building, with many books also sold at nearby Bank Square Books or the Seaport Museum Store. Shop local for twice the support - thank you & happy holidays!

info@mystichistory.org • 860-536-4779 • Visit 74 High Street, Mystic, Tues 9a-12n, or Wed & Thurs 1-4p
Although a good deal of construction has already gone into the establishment of the new Local History Room at Groton Public Library, its opening has been delayed to January 2018 as the Library awaits delivery of shelving and other furniture.

Once the shelving is installed, hopefully next month, the Library looks forward to receiving and cataloging Jim Streeter’s extensive collection of Groton historical materials. After additional furnishings have been delivered, the Library expects to open the room to visitors. In the meantime, anyone seeking to research the Library’s holdings can contact the Library with a request, and librarians will search the current holdings, which are in storage, for the materials requested.

The transition from the previous Local History Room to the new one also drove an update to definition of mission & scope. The update focuses on Groton history and genealogy and historical Groton families. Previously, a substantial amount of material in the Room related to towns besides Groton. Many of those items have been moved to the Circulating Collection. Some materials have been redirected to other facilities that are more closely related to those subjects.

For those wondering about Carol Kimball’s bequest of her historical collection, it turns out that she donated her collection to the Groton Historical Society, (not to Jim Streeter, as may be mistakenly thought,) so it is up to the GHS to determine how to handle the Kimball materials.

One of many great results of the progress toward the new Local History Room is increased interest from the public as to directing their own materials to the Library. **GPL will send a press release when the new room is open to the public - make plans to stop by & see the results!**

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**Disaster Planning Begins at Home**  
By Dorrie Hanna

When you hear first person accounts from victims of hurricanes and fires (and there have been so many lately) folks often say they didn’t have time to save their family photos and heirlooms. And likely not any family history documents or files either. This has reminded me again that it’s a good idea to have a back-up that is kept off-site, out of your home. A high capacity flash drive isn’t very expensive and will fit easily into your safe deposit box. I need to do this myself and Family History Month in October combined with all those natural disasters increased my resolve.

I’m going to start by copying all the genealogy material that’s already on my hard drive onto a new flash drive. Next I will look over documents and scan any that might be hard to replace. Or maybe I will scan loose photographs. Or take digital photos of heirlooms. Or…? I won’t lie to you, it will be a BIG project. I probably won’t even finish it. But everything I get onto that flash drive and off to the safe deposit box will be in good hands. The MRHS has a disaster plan for its collections. You should too!

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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  
Box 245 Mystic, CT 06355

Issues of the newsletter are available for online viewing at **www.mystichistory.org**
We had a good discussion in October on "And Then All Hell Broke Loose." Sorry if you missed it, and hope you can make one or more of the following months' discussions. Our upcoming books were selected a few months ago:

**November 14:** The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl, by Tim Egan (310 pp)

**December 12:** Rogue Heroes: The History of the SAS, Britain’s Secret Special Forces Unit That Sabotaged the Nazis and Changed the Nature of War, by Ben Macintyre (Part I)

**January 9, 2018:** Rogue Heroes (Part II)

We will discuss books to be considered for future months at the November meeting, so please email me or bring your suggestions to the Nov. 14 meeting. We can discuss them, and then vote before or at the December 12 meeting.

Thank you. Happy Fall, and hope to see you in November!

Dana & Richard Semeraro are MRHS members and cofounders of the History Book Club. The Club is a partner project of the Mystic-Noank Library and MRHS. New reader members are welcome at any time! Please join us on second Tuesdays at the Mystic-Noank Library at 7pm in the Activities Room.

For more, please contact Richard Semeraro at rasemeraro04@gmail.com

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**MRHS Announces 2017-18 Program Lineup**

**Bring a friend!** All meetings are open to the public at the Mystic Congregational Church Hall, Broadway & E. Main, Mystic. Join us at 7pm for refreshments & socializing -- the programs begin at 7:30p. Donations at any level are welcome.

- **October 25, 2017**     Jason Mancini – New London’s Indian Mariners
- **December 6, 2017**    Johanna Case & Judy Hicks – Recording the History Buried in Our Cemeteries
- **February 28, 2018**   Roger Reed - Free Masons: A part of Mystic History
- **March 28, 2018**      Richard Froh – History of Mystic Fires + Vintage Firetruck
- **April 25, 2018**      Kate Dimanescu - Denizens: A Narrative of Captain George Denison & His New England Contemporaries
- **May 22, 2018**        Lou Allyn – History of Enders Island & Mason’s Island

*Additional Speakers:*    Joan Warren – (WWI) – Pauline Sands Lee
                          Catherine Deichmann – WWI-2018/19
                          Richard Donahue – WWI Monuments in CT (member/Cromwell Hist/Soc)
We are pleased to list all our members for the year 2017. If your name is here, we sincerely thank you for your continuing support of the Mystic River Historical Society. Your dues provide the funding to offer a unique local history resource to the Mystic community as well as the staff, services & physical facilities to grow, catalogue, maintain & communicate our collection.

If you don’t find your name on the list and would like to maintain your membership and Newsletter subscription, and/or gift a subscription to friends or family, please, send $25 Individual or $50 Family or $75 Contributing to PO Box 245, Mystic. Thank you!

Cindy Allyn, Membership and Lou Allyn, President

~ Individual $25 ~
MRHS Membership 2017
(Change text from 2016 to 2017 and insert here.)

~ Individual $25 ~
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Jeanne Baker
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September 2017 Meeting Minutes --

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on Monday, September 18, 2017. Attendees were: Cindy Allyn, Lou Allyn, Margaret Austin, John Parry, Richard Semeraro, Lois Glazier, Jennifer Pryor, Stephanie Thorp, Barry Thorp, Lyndsey Pyrke-Fairchild, and Steve Menno. The meeting was called to order at 7pm by President L. Allyn. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the June meeting minutes.

**Election of Officers:** A motion was made, seconded and approved to elect Barry Thorp as Treasurer pro tem; he had completed his regular 5 year term. • A motion was made, seconded and approved to elect Lou Allyn as President pro tem; he had completed his regular 5 year term and one year as pro tem.

**President (L. Allyn):** The Board was welcomed back from the summer break. • MRHS received Town of Groton Tax Assessment forms for non-profit organizations. Lou will work with Barry to complete them. • Steve Menno was complimented for contributing and installing shields on the Downes Building’s rain gutter to keep out the leaves. He also agreed to obtain one or two more estimates on painting the building’s exterior. Lyndsey is going to see about using a drone to inspect the gutters on Portersville Academy. • Lou reported that repairs to 15 markers in the Lower Mystic Cemetery paid for by a grant from the Charles B. Allyn Foundation have been completed.

**Secretary (L. Allyn for E. Holland):** Lou will do the minutes while Liz and Lynn are dealing with their new twins and two other children under 5 years old.

**Treasurer (B. Thorp):** For the period 20 June through 17 September 2017. At this time all deposits have been made in the bank and all bills are paid current. The Treasurer’s account books are reconciled with the Chelsea Groton Bank statements. Expenses for this period are mostly non-discretionary commitments that include payments for utilities, other organization membership dues, donations for our meeting spaces, building security and insurance expenses and to our curatorial staff. No unusual expenses for the period. Deposits for this period totaled $1692.13 and expenses $7225.29. The present balance in the Chelsea Groton checking account is $3,038.60. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the Treasurer’s Report.

**Chamber of Commerce (S. Menno):** The Mystic Chamber of Commerce has offered to print more of the walking tour flyers.

**Curatorial (D. Hanna):** The Committee postponed and then cancelled its September meeting. Thanks to everyone who helped cover the desk while Dorrie was on vacation. It’s been pretty busy this summer. We’ve received over 50 research questions year to date. The Groton Public Library History Fair will be held Sept 30 from one to four. Dorrie will represent MRHS but it would be great to have a second person at our table. If interested in helping out please let her know. The annual payment from the Akeley Trust has been received. Our next committee meeting is scheduled for October 16.

**Hospitality & Membership (C. Allyn):** We welcome Francis Moon who joined MRHS as a Contributing member. And we will miss four members who died over the summer. They are Audrey Golub, Mrs Craig Haines, Eleanor Jamison and Marjorie Moore. Each year we send out our annual membership renewal letters in January. Since some members prefer to renew later in the year, we will soon be sending out reminders to 52 members who have yet to renew their membership for 2017.

**Finance:** No report. **New Business:** None.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm. Next meeting is October 16.

Respectfully submitted, Lou Allyn for Elizabeth Holland
Events Calendar
7pm Tuesday, November 14th, 2017
History Book Club - MRHS & MNL Partnership
The Activities Room, Mystic-Noank Library
“The Worst Hard Time” by Tim Eagan

7pm Wednesday, December 6th, 2017
The Cemetery Ladies - Joanna Case & Judy Hicks
7pm refreshments & socializing, 7:30p program
Mystic Congregational Church Hall, Broadway & E. Main, Mystic
Recording the history buried in our cemeteries.

7pm Tuesday, December 12th, 2017
History Book Club - MRHS & MNL Partnership
The Activities Room, Mystic-Noank Library
Part I of “Rogue Heroes” by Ben Macintyre

7pm Tuesday, January 9th, 2018
Part II of “Rogue Heroes” by Ben Macintyre

7pm Wednesday, February 28th, 2018
Free Masons: Part of Mystic History - Roger Reed

Membership Updates
Please see inside this issue for our full list of the 2017-18 Mystic River Historical Society membership.
We are saddened to report the loss of members Billie Palmer and Alan Greener this fall.

Holiday Closings
As has been our tradition in recent years, the Downes Building will be closed the week of Thanksgiving (Nov 21, 22 & 23) and the last two weeks in December (19, 20, 21 & 26, 27, 28). Remember you can always contact us via e-mail: info@mystichistory.org.