The Mystic River Historical Society
Presents
CURBSTONES
CLAPBOARDS
AND
CUPOLAS

4 Self-guided Walking Tours
A Brief History Of Mystic Connecticut
In Words & Pictures
INTRODUCTION

The Mystic River Historical Society is pleased to present Curbstones, Clapboards and Cupolas, an illustrated book describing four self-guided walks on the Groton (west) side of the Mystic River. The river and the village take their name from the Algonquin "mis-si-tuk" meaning "little river running to the sea". The earliest residents (circa 1650) had trouble crossing the river so the first settlement was at the head of the river, now known as Old Mystic. Development was sparse until after the Revolutionary War. Even as late as 1815 there were only a dozen houses in the area now comprising Mystic.

- Each of these walks begins and ends at Portersville Academy which is located at 74 High Street, one block south of Route One. Limited parking is available near the Academy.
- You may take each walk separately or combine two or more.
- Each walk is less than two miles in length and on relatively flat ground, although there is one short, steep hill on each and some of the pavement is uneven. In inclement weather or if you are not able to get around easily on foot you may follow the walk routes by car.
- The dated plaques on houses and buildings give additional information and will increase your enjoyment of your walk.

Net income earned from this book will go toward supporting the programs of the Mystic River Historical Society, a non-profit organization. Copies of Curbstones, Clapboards & Cupolas may be obtained by retail outlets at special rates. Arrangements for guided tours based on this book should be made in advance through the MRHS. For more information, please contact the Mystic River Historical Society, Box 245, Mystic CT 06355. Phone (203)-536-4779.

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WALK #1 - THROUGH THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN

As you leave Portersville Academy turn left and head south on High Street. Immediately across Old New London Road stands the house built by Daniel F. Packer for his wife Carrie. Here in 1869 he started making "Lightening Soap" (later and still known as Packer's Tar Soap). The pungent soap was reputed to cure everything from pimples to excema and to be good for everything from babies to baldness. Local young ladies found genteel employment making and wrapping the fragrant bars. In 1883 Packer moved his soap business to a site on Water Street. In 1899 he sold his shares back to the Company which then moved to a new brick building next to the Mystic railroad depot on the Stonington (east) side of the river.

Continuing along High Street you will see a large, center-chimney house and an embankment style cottage on your right. At one time another Packer home stood on your left where two homes recently built in the "Victorian" style are now located.

At the bottom of the hill cross Noank Road and continue along Fort Rachel Place.
During the War of 1812 the British blockaded the New England coastline. Mystic's small maritime community was hard-pressed to maintain its economy and the townspeople petitioned the State to provide a garrison. The State did not comply and the men of Mystic took action. In 1813 they established a fort on the flat top of the steep cliff ahead of you and slightly to your right. They built stone walls to form a bulwark and furnished it with a four-pound cannon captured earlier from the British. Thus armed they were able to prevent British barges from coming upstream. Their creation was named Fort Rachel in honor of a village character whose cottage nestled at the base of the cliff. Aunt Rachel is said to have provided cold spring water and, some say, other favors to the men who built and manned the Fort. The Captain Daniel Packer Inne is on your left. It is currently one of Mystic's fine restaurants.

Even before the Revolution the riverside, here known as Randall's Wharf, included busy wharves, ship-building and other maritime activities. As you turn north along the river where Fort Rachel Place joins Water Street, you will see two buildings on your right: the car barn and the powerhouse. In 1903 the State legislature chartered the Groton & Stonington trolley line from the Thames River to Westerly, Rhode Island. Mystic was the base of operations for the trolleys. The 18-car barn housed eight closed cars, eight open cars (for warm weather) and a double truck Taunton snowplow. The powerhouse generated electricity to run the trolley-cars. Both buildings have now been converted into apartments or condominiums.
Continue northward along Water Street and turn right at the parking lot entrance. Directly in front of you is the Mystic Art Association building. In the 1890s Charles Harold Davis moved to Mystic to paint landscapes. He was later joined by several other artists who formed the Society of Mystic Artists in 1913. In 1930 they incorporated as the Mystic Art Association, bought this lot on the river and built the gallery which opened July 23, 1931. Recently the building has been refurbished and enlarged. Exhibits are on display and the public is welcome. The grounds provide a pleasant riverside park for townspeople and visitors alike.

Walk along the river’s edge on Steamboat Wharf to the bascule bridge. In the early years of the settlement travelers crossed the river north of here at what is now Old Mystic. Later two ferries (one from Randall’s Wharf to Pistol Point and the other at the narrows just south of present day I-95) were operated by the Packer and Burrows families respectively. In 1818 a group of townsmen petitioned the State to allow a drawbridge at Mystic. With capital of $2,500 the Mystic Bridge Company completed a 230 foot raised drawbridge with a clear opening of 26 feet. It was rebuilt in 1841 by Amos Clift and again in 1854 by Henry Latham, this time with a draw that rolled to one side. The towns bought that bridge for $8,000 and abolished the tolls. In 1865 the bridge pictured on the cover of this book was built a few feet upstream at a cost of $420,000. The first to be built of iron, it had a central stone pier and openings of 55 feet on each side. The present counter-weight bridge was constructed in 1923. During the summer months, after sounding a warning whistle, it opens at quarter past the hour (except noon). Motorists deplore the inevitable traffic delays, but pedestrians enjoy watching the bridge go up and the boats passing through.
Turn left and walk westward along Main Street. Mystic has experienced many fires and retail buildings have been destroyed, demolished, rebuilt and renovated over the years. Even so, our present-day Main Street looks very much as it did more than one hundred years ago. At Bank Square turn left.*

A short distance ahead on your right is Factory Square. From the beginning of the 19th Century until the 1970s this was the site of a number of different manufacturing enterprises. One firm produced cotton gins. It went bankrupt as a result of the Civil War when its southern customers could not pay their bills. Now the structure houses offices, shops, restaurants and apartments. Just beyond, at the corner of Old New London Road, are two early houses. The near one, built in 1810, was the headquarters for the Fort Rachel garrison during the War of 1812. On the far corner is a cape built by Levi Amesbury in 1809. Turn right up the hill to return to Portersville Academy.

*Instead of turning left onto Water Street at Bank Square you could cross to the north side of Main Street and continue a short distance up the hill. At Bank Street (Mystic Pizza on corner) turn right and follow Walk #2 -- Along the Riverside.
Mystic River

Walk # 2 - Along the Riverside

Leaving Portersville Academy turn right and walk north on High Street. Carefully cross Route One, turn right and head down the hill to Bank Street. Turn left. On the far corner is "Mystic Pizza," made famous by the 1989 movie of the same name. As you walk up Bank Street you will note embankment cottages on your left and on your right recently renovated turn of the century homes. Veer right into the schoolyard of Mystic Academy. Mystic Academy was organized in 1850 as a private school founded to meet the demand for better educational advantages. Sessions began in temporary quarters between the Mariner's Free Church and Portersville Academy. In 1852 a new two-story building on this location opened with 150 pupils. The 1855 catalogue listed 195 students from such far away places as Key West, Florida; Cadiz, Spain; Galveston, Texas; and Panama. Within a year the Academy ceased operation as a private school and became the property of the Fifth School District of Groton. A second frame building was constructed in 1879. In 1911 a new brick building opened replacing the two wooden structures and later a multi-purpose auditorium was added. The school closed in 1993.
Skirt the south end of the building and walk down the steps to Pearl Street, then turn left (north). Ahead a short distance across the street on your right is an Italianate house with a front verandah built in 1880 by Postmaster Parmenas Avery. The Reverend Thomas Dickinson, Sr. bought the house in 1889. Rev. Dickinson and two of his sons ran a witch-hazel business in several Connecticut towns, including near-by Ledyard. A mill established there in 1888 produced Ledyard-Brand Witch Hazel. The barn here was used as offices and production space well into the 20th Century. The Dickinson family retained possession of this house until 1962.

Continue north on Pearl Street until you come to Grove Avenue and turn left. A short distance ahead on your left, at #15, is one of Mystic's oldest houses. It was built in 1729 by John Burrows, grandson of Robert Burrows who came to the colonies aboard the Arabella (John Winthrop's flag ship) in 1630. Among Robert's other descendants are his great grandson, Captain Hubbard Burrows Jr., who died 6 September 1781 defending Fort Griswold. The original gambrel-roof, center-chimney house has had at least two additions and once again it is undergoing extensive renovations.

At the next intersection turn right and then right again (following Pearl Street east and then south). The house on your left was once owned by Charles Davis, founder of the Mystic Art Association (Walk #1). Across the river is the Marine Historical Association's world famous "Mystic Seaport," which was organized in 1929. In 1931 Mrs. Edward Harkness gave the Marine Historical Association land and buildings that were formerly The Mystic Manufacturing Co. woolen mill and
in September of that year the museum opened. Exhibits were first displayed in 1934 (on Thursday and Saturday afternoons only.) A second building opened that year as well and since then the "Seaport" has grown to its present status as the premiere recreation of U.S. Maritime History.

Ahead on your left at 56 Pearl Street is a classic example of Greek Revival architecture that was built in 1851 by Baptist Minister Erastus Denison. The beach to the left of the house has an unusually firm bottom and, even at low tide, an adequate depth of water. These factors made it an ideal location for baptisms. Rev. Denison and many other ministers used this spot and the shoreline along Gravel Street for this purpose throughout the latter half of the 19th Century.

Continue south on Pearl Street, then left onto Eldredge Street. Looking north up Park Place try to imagine how this area looked in the mid 19th Century when the C. H. Mallory Shipyard flourished here. This was only one of six active yards operating on the banks of the Mystic River from 1780 to 1920. The river, a sheltered arm of Fisher's Island Sound, has gently sloping banks on which ways could easily be erected. Its channel was deep enough (about 16 feet) to accommodate larger and larger ships and the surrounding countryside abounded in raw materials for ship construction (such as oak, pine, and hackmatack.) At first they built small fishing smacks, then whaling vessels, clipper ships and finally steamships.
Where the road turns right on to Gravel Street note the two houses on opposite corners. These were built by brothers (George and Thomas Eldredge) who married sisters (Hannah and Lydia Burrows). The Cape on your left was built in 1791; the hipped-roof colonial in 1842. As you walk south on Gravel Street consider that, with the exception of #27, every house was either built by or lived in by one or more sea captains. On the north corner of Gravel and Clift Streets was the home of Amos Clift II, whose father bought a large tract of Burrows land extending from the river to the top of the hill (Walk #3). When Amos I died in 1818 his widow, Thankful Denison Clift, became Mystic's first woman entrepreneur. She sold many building lots and as soon as Amos II was old enough he joined her in the lucrative real estate business. He built such diverse structures as Portersville Academy and the second bridge across the Mystic River. (Walk #1). #13 Gravel Street was dubbed The Spite House (it effectively blocks the up river view of #11 and #9). Past the Christian Science Church is a building (now housing Grover Insurance) which is known as the Case Bottle House because it is built in the shape of the crates in which whiskey bottles were shipped. When you come to the corner turn right onto West Main Street and continue up the hill to the Baptist Church. Turn left and cross Route One to return to Portersville Academy. If you wish to continue with Walk #3--The High Road, turn right onto High Street.
ILLUSTRATIONS

1. 20 High Street c. 1880
E. A. Schofield, photographer
Courtesy of Mystic Seaport

2. Daniel Packer Tavern c. 1920
Josephine Dickinson, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

3. Power House c. 1905
George Tingley, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

4. Mystic Art Association c. 1935
Josephine Dickinson, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society.

5. West Main Street c. 1880
Mystic River Historical Society

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7. Mystic Academy c. 1880
Mystic River Historical Society

8. 15 Grove Avenue
William Everett, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

9. View of Seaport property c. 1900
E. A. Schofield, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

10. Baptism, September 18, 1842
From the engraving by J.W. Barber
Courtesy of Carol Kimball

11. View of Gravel Street c. 1900
Mystic River Historical Society

12. # 13 Gravel Street c. 1900
Mystic River Historical Society

13. Union Baptist Church
& Portersville Academy c. 1880
E. A. Schofield, photographer
Courtesy of Mystic Seaport

14. Gambrel center chimney house
William Everett, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

15. Greek Revival house
William Everett, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

16. Queen Anne house
William Everett, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

17. John Mason Monument
Josephine Dickinson, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society.

18. Mystic & Noank Library c. 1895
Post card pub. by P. Hammacher
Courtesy of Dorrie Hanna

19. # 6 Prospect Street
William Everett, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

20. West Mystic Avenue c. 1860
Mystic River Historical Society

21. #12 West Mystic Avenue
E. A. Schofield, photographer
Courtesy of Mystic Seaport

22. #8 West Mystic Avenue
E. A. Schofield, photographer
Courtesy of Mystic Seaport

23. #4 West Mystic Avenue
Clarissa Jones, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society

Front Cover - Main Street c. 1897
George Tingley, photographer.
Mystic River Historical Society

Back Cover - Portersville & Archives
James Burbank, photographer
Mystic River Historical Society
Walk #3 - The High Road

As you leave Portersville Academy turn right and cross Route One. Notice the extremely high stone retaining walls on three corners. In 1924 the town rebuilt this road to make a better approach to the new bridge. At the same time the road was lowered to reduce the grade of the hill. Automobiles were becoming increasingly popular and their needs had to be considered.

Across the street is the Union Baptist Church. The original 1829 structure was known as the Mariners Free Church because almost without exception the initial subscribers had some connection with the sea. At first Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists shared the Church. As the maritime trade expanded and prospered over the next twenty years, the population of Mystic grew and the Methodists and Congregationalists built their own churches across the river. At about the same time the Second Baptist Church was built just down the street, close to where Portersville Academy now stands. In 1857 the original proprietors ceded control and the Mariners became the Third Baptist Church. In 1861 the Second and Third Baptist Churches joined their congregations and
their meeting houses. The Mariners Church was moved back on its site and turned at right angles to the street. The Second Baptist Church was moved up High Street, on sleds pulled by oxen, and placed in front of the Mariners forming a "T." The combination created the Union Baptist Church that flourishes here today.

As you stroll northward along High Street you will see (within a very short stretch) the full range of Mystic's 19th Century architectural styles. During the Colonial Period (from 1650 to 1780) houses were usually built having two rooms, one on either side of a center chimney, and a front "porch," with or without a staircase. To enlarge such a house a lean-to across the back and two upstairs front rooms could be added easily. A second floor above the lean-to and an ell at right angles to the original house usually completed the structure. The center chimney was sometimes replaced by a center hall and two chimneys. The "embankment cottage" follows this basic design, but with a cellar that is above ground on one side.

After the Revolution anything "British" was scorned and anything "Classical" was revered. Nevertheless, in small towns like Mystic, which were just beginning to grow, old ways persisted well into the 19th Century. This is why you will see houses here built in the 1820s, 30s, even the 40s that have the basic "look" of much older structures. Many betray their true age with Greek Revival details such as pilasters, columns and transom and side lights at their doorways. Portersville Academy (1839) boasts all these standard Greek Revival features and you will see them repeated on several houses along High Street.
Connecticut voted an offensive war against the Pequots, choosing John Mason to head the troops. On May 15 Captain Mason and 90 men left Hartford in three small vessels accompanied by Chief Uncas of the Mohegan tribe with 100 of his warriors, traditional Pequot enemies. Proceeding indirectly they sailed to Narragansett country and marched back overland to surprise the Pequot stronghold at Mystic with an attack before dawn. After fierce fighting the English achieved victory by setting fire to the natives’ fort. Most of the Indians died in the flames. The 1889 monument reflects 19th century patriotism, commemorating the battle and the demise of Pequot power.

From the Monument site turn left and proceed south on Pequot to Burrows Street. Turn left and head down the hill, turning right onto Elm Street. The second house on your right (#15) was the summer home of Elihu Spicer, Jr.

Captain Spicer was born in Noank in 1825 and went to sea at an early age. He made his fortune as a partner in the Mallory line of steamers. In 1892 Spicer bought the property across from this house where he proposed to build a library. Unfortunately he died in early 1893 as the result of a carriage mishap in New York. His will provided for the completion of the Mystic & Noank Library which officially opened at 2:30 p.m. January 23, 1894. Captain Spicer planned every detail of this handsome Neo-Romanesque building which was cited as the architectural gem of the Mystic River District in 1979 when it was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. A recent harmonious addition more than doubled the Library’s capacity. Interior restoration included the ornate wood ceiling and the stained glass windows on the second floor. Stop in for a visit -- it will be a welcome respite.

Walk south on Elm Street to Route One and cross at the crosswalk. To return to Portersville Academy, turn left down Old New London Road. If you wish to continue with Walk # 4 -- Captains' Walk, turn right and walk up the hill.
WALK #4 - CAPTAINS' WALK

On leaving Portersville Academy turn left and then right up Old New London Road. At the southwest corner of Route One and West Mystic Avenue stands Nathan Gallup Fish's 1835 homestead. Early in the 1650s Robert Burrows and John Packer received substantial land grants in what is now Mystic and in 1655 John Fish bought land north of the Burrows and Packer grants. His son, Samuel, served in the King Philip War (1675), was a representative to the General Court of Connecticut and is buried in the Packer Burial Ground. (This cemetery is located beyond the firehouse a short distance west on Route One.) N. J. Fish (John's 3rd great grandson) was a Captain of merchant ships and a pillar of the community. In 1853 he retired from the sea and formed Maxson, Fish & Company, a shipyard in West Mystic. Between 1853 and 1869 they built 35 ships, including the iron-clad steamer Galena and the gunboat Vicksburg. In the 1920s the house became a boarding house and tea room. The barn in back was used as a car repair shop. Nathan Fish's children all built their houses in the immediate area -- John 0. at 1 Prospect Street (1873), Simeon across the street (house no longer standing) and Captain John Palmer Wilbur (N.J.F.'s son-in-law) at 3 Prospect Street (1875).
When you reach Prospect Street turn left. Just beyond Scott Lane on your right stands one of Mystic's earliest houses. Built in 1776 by Samuel Burrows IV on approximately 60 acres, it is a typical Connecticut Cape that has been added to substantially through the years.

As you walk south on Prospect Street enjoy the panoramic view of Fisher's Island Sound. At the end of Prospect Street turn left onto Thomas Street. The house on your right, #5, was built in 1864 by newspaper publisher, Thomas Amos Watrous who started the Mystic Pioneer in 1859. In 1866 he formed a partnership, "Watrous & Bidwell," which sold books, stationery, pianos and guitars at Mystic Bridge. (Do take note of the plaque on #3.) When you reach West Mystic Avenue turn left and head northward on this handsome boulevard.

About 1835 this wide, new street was laid out from the Fish homestead to the Maxson & Fish Shipyard at Old Field in West Mystic. This was Mystic's first residential development. Many of the houses were built by contractor Gurdon S. Allyn. The original deed called it "Skipper Street", an appropriate name as most of the men who bought lots and built these substantial Georgian, Italianate and Victorian houses were sea captains.
Mystic was singularly dependent on its river. From before the Revolution to after World War I, shipbuilding was a major industry. Whale "fishing" reached its peak between 1830 and 1850. At that time Randall’s Wharf (Walk #1) was busy outfitting ships for three and four year expeditions. Eighteen whalers were home ported in Mystic in 1845, but surprisingly only four were built here. In 1849 gold was found in California. The hazardous 17,000 mile trip around Cape Horn, at the tip of South America, took an average of more than 130 days. The demand for bigger, faster clipper ships was met by Mystic's six shipyards which produced record-breaking vessels such as the Andrew Jackson (89 days, 4 hours.) and the David Crockett (93 days). During the Civil War all of Mystic's yards were busy building wooden steamers for government service. After 1870 much of the shipbuilding moved to the Palmer Yard in Noank. Throughout the period support industries such as sail making, rope walks, outfitters and many other trades flourished here also.

As you stroll northward on West Mystic Avenue you will note that the houses on the right (east side) are somewhat less pretentious than those on the west side. Even so, almost without exception, their builders or first owners were related to the sea in some capacity (joiner, caulker, etc.) The larger houses to your left were owned by sea captains. Captain William Brand (#14) succeeded Captain Henry S. Stark (#6) as skipper of the bark Ocilla. Brand’s son-in-law followed him, both as Captain of the bark George Moon and as owner of this house. Contractor Allyn built #12 for his brother-in-law (who could not meet the payments). Captain Charles Sisson bought the house in 1858 after an unsuccessful search for gold in California. He commanded the clipper ships Elizabeth F. Willetts and Mary Sutton. His next door neighbor (#10) Captain Pierre (Peter) Rowland was skipper of the David Crockett when it made its famous run from San Francisco to New York in 1860.
Albert Stark built #8 in 1850, two years after Dr. Orson Fuller's book, A Home for All or a New, Cheap, Convenient & Superior Mode of Building, was published. The octagon house was presented as a scientific answer to the housing needs of America's common man. It purported to be more efficient and healthful; a form endorsed by nature. By 1857 the octagon form was being used not only for houses, but for barns, schools and churches as well. Unfortunately, very few examples of our one truly American architectural style still exist. This house lost its cupola in the 1938 hurricane; its present owners have restored it. Albert Stark died in 1853 (age 29). His widow married Captain Isaac Washington (schooner Mustang) in 1860. In 1849 Captain Henry Stanford Stark bought two lots and his wife supervised the building of the handsome Italianate structure at #6 while he was at sea as skipper of cotton trade vessels and later clipper ships. He died at the age of 37 in 1857. An exception to our east side, west side generalization is #5 built in 1850 by Gurdon Allyn for Captain Gustavus Appelman. In 1853 it was sold to Captain Benjamin Burrows who commanded the sloops Alert and Neptune and the schooners Anthem and Stampede. Captain Henry R. Manwaring, (clipper Harriet Hoxie and steamer Nightingale), built #4 circa 1850.

Return to Portersville by crossing West Mystic Avenue at the Route One corner and proceeding down New London Road. Or, after crossing West Mystic Avenue, reverse your footsteps south. Turn left onto Rowland Street, bear left on Orchard Lane, then right on New London Road.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
In preparing this book the committee drew upon the written and photographic resources of the MRHS as well as the knowledge of its members. The committee would especially like to thank Groton Town Historian Carol Kimball, as well as Janet Godwin and the volunteers at the William A. Downs Archives; the Mystic & Noank Library; and the Mystic Seaport Museum for their assistance. Some material was taken from the file of house histories originally compiled as a project of the Mystic Junior Woman’s Club and continued by the MRHS.

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READ MORE ABOUT MYSTIC

The following sources were consulted in preparing our narrative of Mystic history

*Groton Connecticut 1705-1905* by Charles R. Stark (1922)

*The Groton Story* by Carol Kimball (1991)

"Historic Glimpses" column by Carol Kimball in the *New London Day* (Var. dates)

*Maritime Mystic* by Virginia Anderson (1969)

*Mystic: The Story of a Small New England Seaport* by Carl Cutler (1945)

*Mystic Built: Ships & Shipyards of the Mystic River* by William N. Peterson (1989)

*Mystic River Anthology* Judith A. Hicks, editor (1988)

*The Stonington Chronology 1649-1949* by William Haynes (1949)

Additional works about Mystic and the surrounding area are available, both at the Mystic & Noank Library and for sale in local shops.
Portersville Academy was built by Amos Clift in 1839 as the Fifth District School. This handsome example of Greek Revival architecture originally stood further up High Street just north of the Union Baptist Church where it served the school children of Mystic for nearly fifty years. In 1887 the town of Groton bought the building and moved it to its present site. It functioned as the Town Hall (meeting hall & polling place) for the First Voting District until 1958. No longer in use for these purposes the building deteriorated over the years, despite the attempts of several local groups to preserve it. Finally in April 1975 it was acquired by the Mystic River Historical Society and restored. The twin doorways were reinstalled as was the oval light in the pediment. The original courtroom railings were intact which inspired the renovation of the downstairs room as a courtroom or District Hall. Upstairs a schoolroom of the 1840s has been recreated. Members recently made reproduction wooden desks for this classroom which is visited by more than 400 school children each year as part of the MRHS Outreach Program.

The Mystic River Historical Society was founded in 1973 to preserve and promote the historical traditions of the greater Mystic area and currently has over 400 members. Monthly meetings with speakers of interest are held from September to May in the Parish House of the Mystic Congregational Church, usually on the 4th Friday of the month, at 8 pm. Meetings are open to the public at no charge. Members receive a monthly newsletter. New members are welcome. For more information contact the Society at the address below or call (203)-536-4779. The Society owns two buildings: Portersville Academy and the William A. Downes Archives Building. The Archives Building is open year-round on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 3 pm. Portersville Academy is open late May to mid-October: Tuesdays 10 to noon; Thursdays 1 to 3 pm and the third Saturday of each month from 9 am to 1 pm.

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