

the PORTERSVILLE PRESS

www.mystichistory.org • vol. XLII, issue i • sept-oct 2015

In October: Native American Stonework with Markham Starr



A carefully stacked stone cairn in the late autumn woods of North Stonington, CT. Photo by Markham Starr. See markhamstarrphotography.com for more images.

Throughout our southeastern Connecticut woods and fields, there are intriguing assemblies of stone that may offer insight to centuries-old Native American history. Documentary photographer Markham Starr has captured dramatic images of these landmarks from behind the lens and features the results both in his online gallery at markhamstarrphotography.com and in ink in an upcoming book. Please join us to hear more about his discoveries on **Wednesday, October 28th at 7pm** for the first public meeting of our 2015-16 series.

Markham Starr is committed to preserving something of the working cultures of New England. Over the course of the past seven years, he has examined the lives of commercial fishermen and documented other diverse subjects such as life on family owned dairy farms, the end of the sardine industry in America, and traditional agricultural fairs throughout the Northeast. His work has been published in books such as "Down on the Farm: The Last Dairy Farms of North Stonington," "Finest Kind: The Lobstermen of Corea, Maine," "End of the Line: Closing the Last Sardine Cannery in America," "Barns of Connecticut," "Swab Summer: Transformation at the United States Coast Guard Academy," and in his latest book, "In History's Wake: The Last Trap Fishermen of Rhode Island." His photographic work has also been featured in magazines such as *LensWork*, *The Sun*, *Vermont Magazine*, *Rhode Island Monthly*, *Edible Rhody*, and *Yankee* magazine, and the photographs from his major projects have been selected for inclusion in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress. He is currently finishing work on his twelfth book, covering the Native American stonework found in his hometown of North Stonington.



"Pomperaug's Grave" - An etching from the 1872 "History of Ancient Woodbury, Connecticut" portrays a farmer contemplating a stone cairn burial site. Woodbury was developed from the Pomperaug wilderness plantation in the 1670s. From stonestructures.org

Lower Mystic Cemetery: The Case of the Flying Jeep

- Lou Allyn

Late in the evening of August 31, 2014 a couple from Long Island in a 2005 Jeep was speeding down Route 1 out of Mystic headed towards Fort Hill. As they came down the hill past the fire house and approached the Lower Mystic Cemetery, they must have been going pretty fast because they veered off the road to the right, barely missed some trees and a utility pole, and then ran up a wedge-shaped boulder that acted as a launching ramp. The vehicle became airborne! It flew through the air for a distance of 95 feet, slammed off the top of the three foot granite cemetery wall and came to a stop on the driver's side.

Both the driver and the passenger were trapped inside and had to be extricated. I do not know the extent of their injuries but it was just a lucky combination of distance and trajectory that there were no fatalities. When questioned by the police, the driver stated that he did not recall how or why the accident occurred.

Unfortunately, the tow truck that was called to remove the wreck just pulled it off the wall, thereby tearing down about 12 feet of the wall. However, fortunately, the Jeep owner's insurance did pay to repair all damages. Repairs to the wall were so well done by Mystic Landscape Service, LLC that you would never know anything at all had disturbed the slumber of the Lower Mystic Cemetery.



EXHIBIT A - THE LAUNCH BOULDER

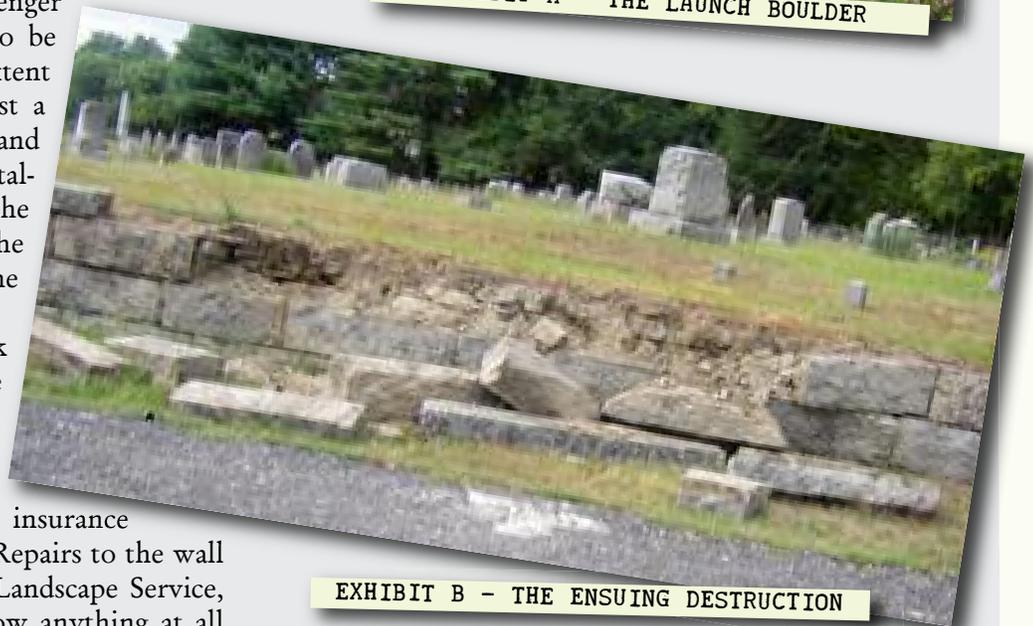


EXHIBIT B - THE ENSUING DESTRUCTION

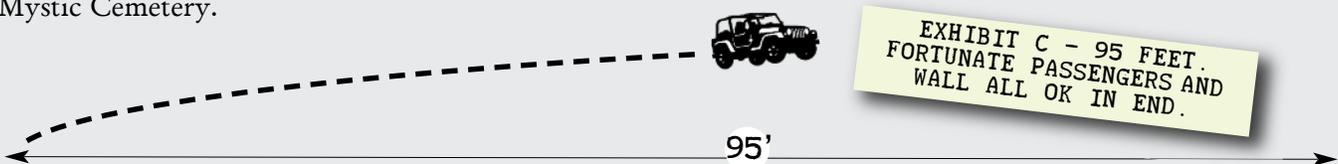


EXHIBIT C - 95 FEET. FORTUNATE PASSENGERS AND WALL ALL OK IN END.

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 1654 to the present.

Officers: President - Lou Allyn • Vice President - Bill Everett
Treasurer - Barry Thorp • Corresponding Secretary - Lois Glazer • Recording Secretary - Cindy Allyn

The Newsletter of the Mystic River Historical Society is published six 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



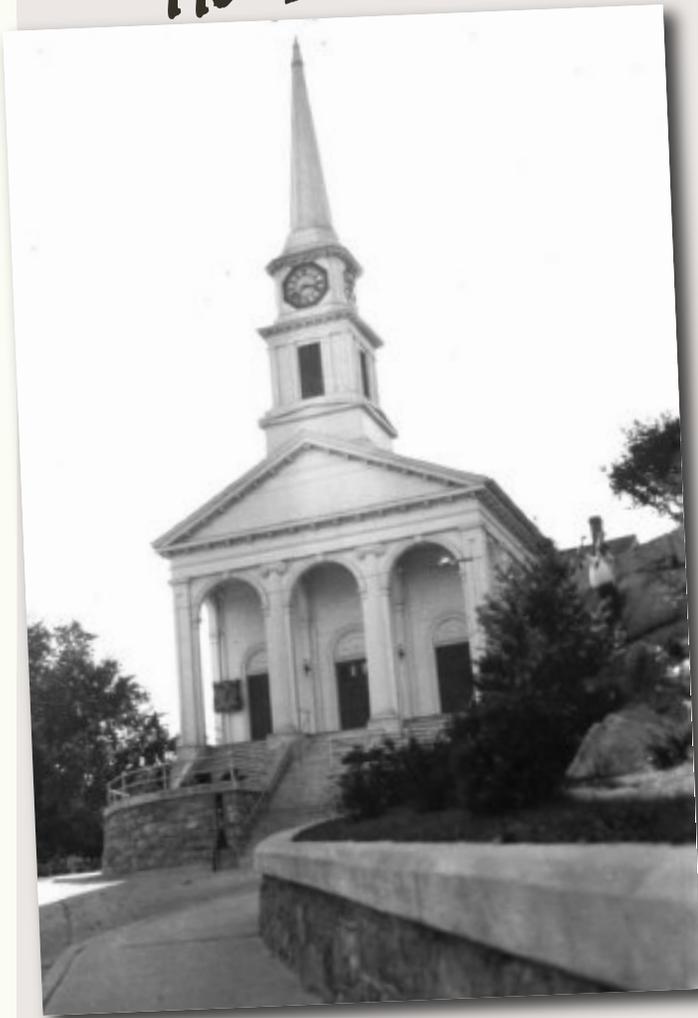
Happy 250th, UBC!

MRHS Books Have New Home

For many years, the majority of our book collection has been shelved in the Local History Corner of the Mystic & Noank Library because we simply do not have adequate shelf space at the Downes Building. About a year ago, the MRHS Board of Trustees approved the concept of passing ownership of these books from MRHS to the MNL.

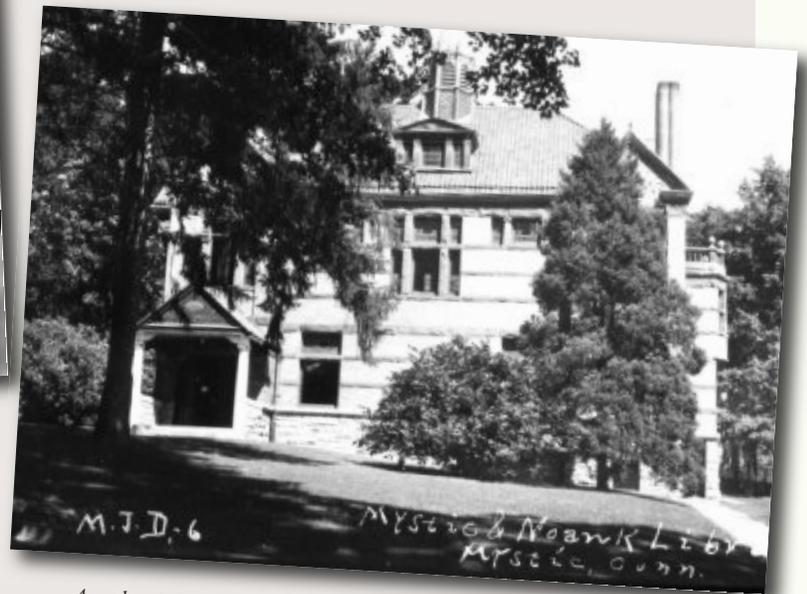
After careful review of the inventory, and the return of a few volumes to the Downes Building, a letter of agreement was sent to the Library for signature. Each party now holds a signed letter of agreement and documentation of the transfer process.

This cooperation between our two organizations is a win-win for both and we look forward to more shared projects in the future. For a community like Mystic, so focused on history, it seems like a logical idea for us to work together.



"Our neighbor," the Union Baptist Church was built 1861, originally neighboring Portersville Academy on adjacent grounds to the north, until 1887 when the academy was moved to its current location. This c. 1930s photo shows the eastern & front view of the church, which is largely unchanged.

From the MRHS Dickinson Collection.



Another MRHS neighbor, the Mystic-Noank Library, is shown here in the 1920s. The library was a gift to the community from Captain Elihu Spicer, whose successful ventures and partnership with Charles H. Mallory afforded them both opportunity for philanthropy. Although he died before the library's completion in 1893, and dedication in 1894, Elihu Spicer's name is memorialized in a fireplace on the second floor, which reads: "Elihu Spicer gave this library to the people. Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere."

*For more detailed library history, please visit mysticnoanklibrary.org
Photo from the MRHS Dickinson Collection.*

Happy Anniversary, Union Baptist Church! The "big white Church on the hill" is celebrating 250 years of service to Mystic. Among the events & projects they have undertaken, I'd like to mention two.

One is the republication of their Church history, originally written by Marilyn Comrie and Carol Kimball. It was my pleasure to support Pat Pia in her work on this book by locating many pictures in the MRHS collections.

I'd also like to call your attention to their upcoming gala on November 5 from 6 to 8 p.m. This will be held at the Mystic Aquarium and proceeds will benefit their Historic Preservation Fund.

Ed. Note: The community has an opportunity to give back & continue Cpt. Elihu Spicer's generosity and support at the library's annual gala on October 8th this year, or during Honor Book Days each April.



May 2015 Annual Meeting Minutes

The Annual Meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. The President declared that a quorum of 25 members was present.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to dispense with the reading of the minutes from the 2014 Annual Meeting as posted on the Society's website www.mystichistory.org.

Treasurer Barry Thorp presented his annual report (below). A motion was made, seconded & passed to accept the report.

Nominations were made for re-election to the Board of Trustees for terms of three years: Cindy Allyn, Lois Glazier and Barry Thorp. Also for election to her first term on the Board: Jennifer Pryor. There were no nominations from the floor. A motion was made, seconded and passed to elect the slate as presented. • The President announced that Cathy Marco is retiring from the Board after eight years and that John Parry of Mystic has been appointed to finish the third year of her term. He noted that Cathy will long be remembered for her leadership on the GeoHistorian project and thanked her for her years of contributions and active participation. He also recognized all the officers, board members, employees and volunteers who continue to make MRHS a successful and respected local historical society.

There was no new business to be brought before the membership.

The next Annual Meeting will be held Wednesday May 25, 2016. The Annual Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m. Cindy Allyn, Recording Secretary

Treasurer's Report to Annual Meeting (B. Thorp): During the fiscal year 2014, Mystic River Historical Society operated within a sensible budget, established by the Finance Committee, with income generally matching expenses. During the year our income was \$24379.78 (with major sources being donations from generous members and community organizations, income from annual memberships and interest from our accounts.

Expenses for the year were \$26221.65 (with major expenses being payments to our staff to operate our Past Perfect database, provide research for our patrons for historical information, providing of a public presence for our records, information and activities, publication of our bi-monthly newsletter, insurance for our property, and the expenses of maintaining our buildings and grounds).

The Treasurer's records are being prepared for the annual review by the MRHS Finance Committee of receipts, invoices and bank statements.

The Society's filing of the federal 990-N form was completed on 8 February 2015 and our filing of the Connecticut Charitable Organization Renewal was made on 22 October 2014. Copies of the filings are available for public review at the Wm. Downes Archive building on 74 High Street, Mystic.

The Mystic River Historical Society remains fiscally sound. All bills are paid current and our records are reconciled with the bank statements. The current balance in our checking account is \$14,993.59 as of today's date.

*Respectfully submitted,
Barry L. Thorp
Treasurer*

May 2015 Board Meeting Minutes

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on Monday, May 11, 2015. Attendees included: Aimeé Allaire, Cindy Allyn, Lou Allyn, Dave Evans, Bill Everett, Lois Glazier, John Parry, Jennifer Pryor, and Richard Semeraro.

President (L. Allyn): New board member John Parry was introduced. A motion was made, seconded & approved to accept the minutes of the April meeting as published. • A \$3,000 grant was given from the Charles B. Allyn Foundation for painting Portersville. The 1772 Foundation declined our application for a grant. Painting will begin shortly.

Corresponding Secretary (L. Glazier): A letter to the Mystic Garden Club for their contribution of \$250.

Treasurer (B. Thorp): 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 the month of April were mostly non-discretionary commitments including utility payments, building security services, and payments to our curatorial staff. Deposits for the month were thanks to continued responses to the dues mailing notices and gifts. The present balance in the Chelsea Groton checking account is positive.

Curatorial: The committee met May 11. Approval was given to final versions of all documents needed to complete the transfer of ownership of MRHS books to the Mystic & Noank Library and the transfer process will proceed. Betsy is writing a new and improved Procedures Manual. The schedule is open for volunteers to cover for Dorrie while she is on vacation.

Finance (D. Evans): Year to date our balanced portfolio of Vanguard Funds is up 3%.

Information Technology (S. Thorp): The System Administrator performed updates & backups to the computer system on 1 May 2015. All equipment appears to be in good condition and functioning. The backups for the Past Perfect database files and working files were done and removed offsite for security. All equipment and software operated properly.

Newsletter (J. Pryor): The current issue is ready to print. Jim Kimenker is ending his very popular column from the Contributor's Desk. It was proposed that Carol Kimball's newspaper columns be re-printed in its place.

Program & Membership (A. Allaire): Our talk by Joseph Simcox on April 22nd was enlightening, entertaining and a bit of a departure from our usual type of talk. We had about 45 people attend. \$39.25 were donated. • This month, on May 27th, we have Joe Waxman from CT Historical Society talking on From Hula Hoops to High Fashion: Remembering G. Fox & Co. in the 1950s. • Our next committee meeting will be this Thursday, May 14th where we will continue to plan for 2016's programs. A new committee member will be joining us, Lyndsey Pyrke-Fairchild.

New Business There was a discussion regarding holding some dinner meetings with speakers and menus apropos to the topics.

Education/Outreach and Publicity (S. Thorpe) committees had no reports. Next meeting is June 15, 2015, 7:00 pm at the Mystic-Noank Library. Meeting adjourned 7:40pm.

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Allyn

June 2015 Meeting Minutes

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on Monday, June 15, 2015. Attendees included: Aimeé Allaire, Cindy Allyn, Lou Allyn, Lois Glazier, John Parry, Jennifer Pryor, Richard Semeraro, Barry Thorp and Stephanie Thorp.

President (L. Allyn): A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the May Trustees meeting and the May Annual Meeting as published. • It rained the day scheduled for painting Portersville so it is being rescheduled. • Our insurance with Philadelphia Insurance is in the process of being renewed.

Election of Officers: Nominations were made for the following slate of officers: President – Louis Allyn, Vice President – William Everett, Treasurer – Barry Thorp, Corresponding Secretary – Cindy Allyn, Recording Secretary – Cindy Allyn. A motion was made, seconded & passed electing the officers as presented. • Lois Glazier was recognized by the President for the conclusion of her 5 year term as Corresponding Secretary. Aimeé was recognized for the conclusion of her 5 year term as Chair of the Program and Membership Committee. • The President then appointed the follow Committee Chairmen: Finance (Interim) – David Evans, House & Grounds – To be determined, Program & Membership – To be determined, Education & Outreach – Margaret Austin, Information Technology & Press Releases – Stephanie Thorp, Curatorial – Lou Allyn (Acting). The Board concurred with the appointments. Jennifer Pryor will continue as the Newsletter Editor and Publisher.

Corresponding Secretary (L. Glazier): A thank you letter was sent to the Mystic Woman's Club for their contribution to painting Portersville Academy.

Treasurer (B. Thorp): 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 the month of May 2015 are mostly non-discretionary commitments including utility payments, building security services, and payments to our curatorial staff expenses. Deposits for the month were thanks to continued responses to the dues mailing notices and to a generous grant of \$3,000 from the Charles B. Allyn Foundation toward the expenses of repainting Portersville Academy this year. The present balance in the Chelsea Groton checking account is positive.

Curatorial (L. Allyn, acting): The Curatorial Committee met June 15. We are awaiting the return of the book transfer paperwork from the Library. Richard Semeraro suggested MRHS should look to strengthen our cooperative relationship with the MNL. There was a good discussion of ways to improve our Image Use Policy and fees. Dorrie will be drafting a new form for consideration.

Information Technology (S. Thorp): The System Administrator performed updates and backups to the computer system on Friday 29 May 2015. All equipment appears 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. All equipment and software operated properly.

Newsletter (J. Pryor): Copy for the next issue is due August 21st.

Program & Membership (A. Allaire): May's member meeting was a success! Connecticut Historical Society's Joe Waxman's talk on G. Fox was enjoyed by about 75 people and \$152 in donations was collected. • The committee met on May 14th. We voted to cancel the January member meetings since the month has repeatedly had both low attendance and numerous weather concerns. • Mark Starr will speak in October on Native American Stonework.

Publicity/PR (S. Thorp): Notices of the October meeting will be sent to the press at the appropriate time.

New Business The old issue of MRHS being confused with the Mystic Historic District was raised and discussed. One suggestion was to change our name.

Education/Outreach (M. Austin) and Finance (D. Evans) committees had no reports. Next meeting September 21, 2015, 7:00 pm Mystic Noank Library. Meeting adjourned 7:40pm

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Allyn

"Thank you!" to Margaret Austin, who has graciously agreed to chair the Program & Membership Committee! We look forward to her participation and ideas.
~ Lou Allyn & MRHS Board

Recently, on MRHS Facebook....

...There was this little chat and exchange of photos regarding Gravel Street, Mystic after the 1938 Hurricane and today. Thank you, Lyndsey P., for contributing a great snapshot!

Mystic River Historical Society
September 17 at 12:04pm · 🌐
TBT. Monday will be the 77th anniversary of the 1938 hurricane. This picture shows a yacht aground opposite 31 Gravel Street.

Lyndsey P.
September 21 at 7:10pm
Mystic River Historical Society Thanks, Lindsey. Let's hope Gravel Street "now" stays just as lovely and serene!

Stop by our facebook, you'll it!

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Calendar of Events



Wednesday, October 28th, 2015

7:00p refreshments & socializing, 7:30p program

Mystic Congregational Church Hall
 at Broadway and E. Main St., Mystic
*Author & photographer Mark Starr will speak
 on local Native American Stonework.*

Wednesday, December 2nd, 2015

7:00p refreshments & socializing, 7:30p program

*Katherine Dimancescu's "Welcome to the Seventeenth Century"
 will transport audience members back in time to manors, moors, and
 mansion houses of seventeenth century England and New England.*

*Renew or become a Member of MRHS
 and receive updates about all our meetings & events.
 Contact us at: info@mystichistory.org or 860-536-4779.*

Membership Updates



Capt. John Porter died August 18 2015. He was a long time member of MRHS and served the maximum of three terms (9 years) on our Board of Trustees. During that time he was Chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee and project leader for a major restoration to Portersville Academy and then Vice President. After that, he joined the Program and Membership Committee. John's pleasant manner and steady organization will be greatly missed.

~ Cindy Allyn, Membership

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PORTERSVILLE PRESS
 the
 VOL. XLII, ISSUE 1 • SEPT-OCT 2015



PUBLISHED SIX TIMES
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