



Wrapping up 2014 with Best Wishes to All in 2105



Marie McFarlin welcomes guests to the Wassail Party. (Photo: Lynn Riemer)



The Hart House tree, donated by Mar. Floral and Botanicals, glows. (Photo: Bill McLaughlin)



Student volunteer Reagan Mason portrays Lady Fenwick during the Cypress Cemetery tour in October. See Page 3. (Photo: Tedd Levy)



Society members and friends marched in Old Saybrook's Torchlight Parade in December, including Torrance Downes' granddaughter, Eva Louise Downes (looking at camera), black-hatted Society Secretary Judith Chase and be-hooded Barbara Maynard. (Photo: Torrance Downes)



Deb Pignataro crafted her creation at Sherry Eldridge's November wreath-making event at the Hart House. (Photo: Linda Kinsella)



Kunsang Dorjee, our student volunteer "musician in residence," entertains at the Wassail Party. (Photo: Bill McLaughlin)



The October Annual Meeting drew a large number of Historical Society members who were updated on the latest news and 2015 plans. ((Photo: Bill Roberts)

Officers

Marie McFarlin, *President*
Ed Mosca, *1st Vice President*
Linda Kinsella, *2nd Vice President*
Ellen Lepak, *Treasurer*
Judy Chace, *Recording Secretary*

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Ways & Means
Donna DiBella

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President's Message

The two-year term for our officers ended Oct. 31. **Bob Pedemonti**, our dedicated treasurer for nine years, retired. The Nominating Committee asked all other officers if they would take another term. After much reflection, they all accepted the nomination.

The slate of officers, with the addition of our new treasurer, **Ellen Lepak**, was approved Oct. 15 at the Annual Meeting. We all realize our tremendous responsibility, and with our dedicated officers, trustees and volunteers, will work tirelessly to continue the Society's mission.

The fall programs (Chapman Lecture, Cypress Cemetery tour, Bushnell Farm Open House and wreath-making weekend) were great. The Wassail Party, with our largest crowd ever, filled the Hart House with joyful

camaraderie. Our coming spring and summer events will provide further exciting times. Our membership renewals, coming from all over the country, are inspiring.

Donna DiBella, former president and outstanding "Ways and Means" Chair, recently received a message to share from **Elizabeth Titus Putnam**, a direct descendant of Gen. William Hart and founder of the prestigious Student Conservation Association.

"Please extend my congratulations to everyone on having been named the non-profit of the year by the Chamber of Commerce," she wrote. "What you have done is truly extraordinary... and to think that this has all happened due to the dedication of volunteers."

May you have a wonderful 2015!

-- Marie

350 Years Ago: Saybrook & Lyme's "Loving Parting"

In 1631, the Earl of Warwick granted lands at the mouth of the Connecticut River to several friends, including Viscount Saye and Sele, Lord Brooke and Colonel George Fenwick. These worthies chose John Winthrop as governor and hired Lion Gardiner to build a fort and lay out a town on the west side of the river, which he did in 1635. Winthrop named the town Saybrook in honor of its founders.

Settlers gradually moved across the river to an area known unofficially as East Saybrook, establishing themselves over a wide-ranging area, including today's Old Lyme, Lyme, East Lyme and part of Salem. In 1665, they petitioned and received permission from the Connecticut General Court to establish their own town covering the area described above.

To conclude the process, representatives from both sides of the river signed an agreement February 13, 1665, in an event known as "The Loving Parting," due to its amicable nature. The name Lyme - attached to this new town in 1667 - is likely taken from Lyme Regis in England, a town from which some of settlers may have had ties. (**J.H. Torrance Downes** is Society liaison to "The Loving Parting" initiative.)



Student Volunteers 'Stand In' for Noted Residents at Cemetery Tour

On a bright October afternoon, Historical Society trustee **Torrance Downes** led a lively, informative tour of Cypress Cemetery, one of North America's oldest, continuously operating burial grounds. It was originally laid out in 1635 as part of the Saybrook Colony.

The event was highlighted by presentations from seven Old Saybrook Public School students, each of whom related the background of a notable individual buried in the cemetery.

Standing beside the gravestone of "their" person, the students gave informed and knowledgeable presentations in a poised and thoroughly enjoyable manner to an audience of more than 100 area residents, including several beaming parents and grandparents.

The students participating in the event, and the historic figures they portrayed: **Reagan Mason** (Lady Fenwick), **Ruthie LaMay** (Lynde Family), **Olivia Gaidry** (Miss Anna James), **Kyle Jackson** (Louis Von der

Meyden), **Eric Mitchell** (Gen. William Hart), **Adam Nucci** (Giles Ward) and **Jonah Nucci** (Elisha Hart).

Historical Society president Marie McFarlin noted that all of the students participate in the Society's volunteer program. "They are outstanding representatives of the Old Saybrook Public Schools. All of us in the Society appreciate their valuable contributions."

"It was a lot of fun," said **Reagan Mason** in a follow-up email to Marie. "Thank you very much for the opportunity." **Adam Nucci** agreed. "I liked it very much. It was a wonderful experience and I got a lot out of it."

Angela Gaidry, Olivia Gaidry's mother, said, "Thank you for asking Olivia to participate; she truly enjoyed it. Also, my best friend (Olivia's godmother) and her 10-year-old daughter (Alix) were visiting from France. So it was a very special treat for them, too!"

The Society also thanks Starbucks for its generous support of the event.



Ruthie LaMay (Lynde Family)



Eric Mitchell (Gen. William Hart)



Kyle Jackson (Louis Von der Meyden)



Olivia Gaidry (Miss Anna Louise James)



Jonah Nucci (Elisha Hart)

(Photos: Tedd Levy)

What's Happening in the Archives

Visiting researchers from Wisconsin, California, Colorado and Montana came to the source of their American ancestry this fall. I will never tire of their reactions upon seeing the records from so long ago.

A couple from Montana came to our shoreline for a family reunion not knowing that his ancestor was from Old Saybrook. They received a call only that morning from a relative who informed them that Capt. David Newell, who was killed by slaves aboard his ship, was their direct ancestor. They drove here on a whim and, as luck would have it, found it open. The Hart House, which has a portrait of Captain Newell, will be on their agenda when they return next spring.

Visitors from Colorado, who had only started their research three weeks previously, contacted us after finding old records his father had kept. Doctor Leonard was a dentist from 1880s to 1904 in Old Saybrook. He married the daughter of D.C Spencer, a descendant of the Chapman's, a founding family. They explored cemeteries, Fenwick (home of Dr. Leonard), Town Hall records, and old maps. Found photo of Spencers and info in newspapers.

A family researcher from California was here to flesh out her Shipman family tree. We were able to help her sort out the connections and show her who she was actually descended from.

Newest Contributions

Once again, the vault swings open to welcome the newest donations to the Society and there are many. We are overwhelmed by the generosity.

- Papers pertaining to people who gave money (\$15) to obtain use of upper meeting rooms of the Central School Academy for religion, singing schools, etc., for one year, commencing December 1838. Donated by **Elsie Manning**.
- Pen-and-ink portrait of the second Chapman homestead built by Caleb Chapman in 1740 and destroyed by fire in 1871. Given by **Ann Boyer**.
- Girl Scout photo with list of names; Say & Seal school newspaper, 1966 & 1967; High School Program of Studies, 1966-67; original Pep group Rooters button & decal, 1965; and Freshman beanie, 1964. **Janis Esty**, donator.
- Letter found in a home in Darien, Conn., written in 1894. "Slice of life" mentions of high school graduation and parties. Mentions Beebe, Chapman and Pratt. Unfortunately, last name of writer and receiver unknown. From **Maeve Zanesky**.
- Photo, 1925 Girl Scouts with names. From **Julie Perkins**.
- A collection of miscellaneous books pertaining to Old

Saybrook families, map of New Haven Green, letters and genealogical research on Scovill family. From **Mark Sanner**.

- Various Whittlesey letters given by **Scott W. Brinkerhoff**.
- The family of **Henry Austin Clark, Sr.** has given two large Bibles, and a binder with handwritten family-tree records of Clark family.
- Two newspaper articles about 18th century West Indies trade in the CT Valley and slaves, merchants and crafters. **Rae Ann Ferrialo**, contributor.
- Six binders compiled by **David Naumec**, Mashentucket Pequot Museum, from **Anne Sweet's** life-long research on early New England, Old Saybrook, and Native Americans. Each binder has a different subject and has at least 75 pages. We are expecting six more. What a treasure for us.

Library

Donated by **Gregory Thompson**:

- Booklet, "100 Years in Newspaper Clippings," Avery Family & Avery Family Association.
- "Thanksgiving", a detailed, nonfiction recounting of the first Thanksgiving.
- "Without Reservation," detailed account of the starting of the Foxwoods Casino, its trials and tribulations.

Donated by **Elizabeth Manning**:

- An account book from the Saybrook National Bank, 1879-1881.
- A book, "Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut" (1924).

Donated by **Scott Brinkerhoff**:

- "Memorials of the Whittlesey Family," an old copy of the Whittlesey family genealogy. No publication date.

Donated by **Rae Ann Ferrialo**:

- "Lyme, A Chapter of American Genealogy" (1976).
- "Donnelly, Dynamic Leadership".
- "Military Collector & Historian, Vol.XXXIV #1"
- "Connecticut Industry: Key to Prosperity" (1960)
- "Valley Shipyards." Four large pamphlets on shipbuilding with photos.
- "Shipbuilding Communities in the Connecticut River Valley" by Conn. River Foundation.
- "Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Connecticut." Three booklets concerning Native Americans.

-- Diane Hoyt

Saved from Landfill, G. Fox Mannequins Go Back Home Again

After the legendary Hartford, Conn., department store G. Fox closed its doors more than a dozen years ago, holiday decorations and mannequins used in the store's celebrated window display were headed for landfill until Historical Society member Donna DiBella came to the rescue. She took them in and provided a warm "home" in her garage and the Hart House attic.

This unique collection included Mr. and Mrs. Santa, an ice-skating couple, happy children, a horse and sleigh, elves, mice, evergreens, bags of snow and assorted holiday props. In the winter of 2000, Donna and more than 70 volunteers organized and exhibited their newfound friends at the Hart House.

The successful event was titled "Animated Memories of Holidays Past" and was hosted by dozens of Society volunteers and their mechanical mannequins who welcomed visitors to each room. Not long after, the mannequins were stored away.

They received a new lease on life this fall when Donna



Donna DiBella and the team loaded the holiday items for their trip back to Hartford. (Photo: Tedd Levy)

and "iQuilt," an organization seeking to revitalize downtown Hartford, arranged their return to the G. Fox windows, now home of Capital Community College and several business offices.

With a large rental truck and hearty volunteers, the old G. Fox family was retrieved from Donna's garage, the Hart House attic and the Society's storage shed to make their journey back to their Hartford homestead.

They have been lovingly rejuvenated and now are displayed once again to admiring spectators. It's not always easy when your grown children leave, but we know they'll be just fine in their new life.

-- Tedd Levy

Wisconsin Visitors Find History & Camaraderie



Diana and Ron Bliss traveled from Madison, Wisconsin, to find the records of Thomas Bliss, an early settler, who followed Rev. Fitch, Saybrook Colony's Congregational minister, to found Norwich in the 1600's. The Bliss's so enjoyed their visit that they extended their stay to attend the Chapman Lecture on Connecticut and the Civil War (see Page 7). (Photo: Bill Roberts)

Volunteers Tidy and Put Hart House Gardens to Bed



In November, Hart House Garden volunteers were already prepping for the spring. Joanne Goduti and granddaughter Amelia plant spring bulbs while Jim Platt, founding member and past president, helps with the fall cleanup. Also set up: A new sign recognizing Marianne Pfeiffer, founder of the Wildflower Garden. (Photos: Linda Kinsella)

Society to Support Film Company's Feature on Saybrook Family

The trustees and officers of the Historical Society have voted unanimously to provide support to Searchlight Films, a small, highly accomplished film company that specializes in making documentary films for television, which plans to produce an hour-long documentary about the noted James family, an African-American family that rose from slavery, triumphed over racism, and produced a number of "firsts" for women and African-Americans.



Ann Petry

Among Old Saybrook's most distinguished 20th century residents was best selling African-American author Ann Petry. Many area residents are more familiar with Petry's more locally famous aunt, Miss Anna Louise James who operated her pharmacy for many years. Ann Petry also trained as a pharmacist, but made major contributions to American culture through her compelling novels, short stories

and works for children.

The film will be designed for broadcast television and for distribution through libraries, museums, community organizations, and digital Internet streams.

The core of the film is presented via letters, historical documents, and archival photographs handed down through five generations of the James family and preserved by Ann Petry in old cookie tins and boxes. Interviews with prominent historians and scholars will provide context and evaluation of the themes presented.

Society Ornaments Hot Sellers at Bushnell Farm Open House

Visitors to the Bushnell Farm Open House purchased more than \$600 worth of Historical Society ornaments in November.

Sale of the 2014 custom-made pewter ornament, featuring the Bushnell Farm and House, is part of the Historical Society's fund-raising efforts. The handcrafted, decorative piece is made by Woodbury Pewter, Woodbury, Conn., from the highest quality pewter and continues a series of comparable ornaments that have been offered over the years featuring other historic Saybrook sites.

The 2014 ornament is available for \$12 at Saybrook Hardware or by contacting the Historical Society at (860) 395-1635. A limited number of earlier ornaments, priced at \$10, also are available.

While the film profiles one family, it is a prism through for viewing Connecticut life, community, and race relations from the post-Civil War era through the early 20th century. Much of this family story can be found in "Can Anything Beat White: A Black Family's Letters" by former Old Saybrook resident and author Elizabeth Petry, Ann Petry's daughter.

Searchlight Films was founded by Kathryn Golden and Ashley James and specializes in making documentary films for television. Their films are designed to illuminate America's diverse communities and their clients have included PBS, CBS, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and BBC. Additional information is available on its website: [www. SearchlightFilms.org](http://www.SearchlightFilms.org).



Anna Louise James (Photo: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

Chapman Lecture: Noted Historian Recalls "Forlorn Soldier"

Prof. Matthew Warshauer, Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University, author of "Connecticut and the American Civil War," and co-chair of the Connecticut Civil War Commemoration Commission spoke to a standing-room-only audience about the evolution of post-war statuary in the North.

The professor's presentation, part of the Historical Society's Chapman Lecture series, focused on Connecticut's central role in the manufacture of commemorative statuary.

His research led to the rescuing of an ignored, deteriorating soldier carved from Portland brownstone by a leading Hartford monumental works. Long thought to have been a mistake, investigation found it to have been a prototype on which many similar granite statues were based. It is now in the rotunda in the State Capitol in Hartford.



Audience members were eager to converse with Professor Warshauer following his presentation. (Photo: Bill Roberts)



The Old Saybrook Historical Society

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Mark Your Calendars

Genealogy Roundtable is an ongoing program for all levels of family historians and genealogists. They are held the third Tuesday of each month from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Stevenson Archives. Professional genealogist and Historical Society archivist **Gregory Thompson** moderates.

Chapman Lectures are sponsored by the Old Saybrook Historical Society in conjunction with the Acton Public Library. All presentations are free and open to the public. For further information, contact the Historical Society at 860-395-1635 or contact@saybrookhistory.org.

- Feb. 26: **Anne Farrow** -- *The Logbooks: Connecticut's Slave Ships and Human Memory*. Ms. Farrow is coauthor of the bestseller *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged and Profited from Slavery*.
- March 26: **Donald E. Williams, Jr.** -- *Prudence Crandall's Legacy: The Fight for Equality in the 1830s, Dred Scott, and Brown v. Board of Education*. Senator Williams is president pro tempore of the Connecticut State Senate. He holds a J.D. from Washington and Lee University School of Law and a B.S. in journalism from Syracuse University.
- April 16: **J. Ronald Spencer** -- *Connecticut Yankee in Lincoln's Cabinet: Navy Secretary Gideon Welles Chronicles the Civil War*. Mr. Spencer is associate

academic dean and lecturer emeritus in history at Trinity College, Hartford.

May 30: 3rd Annual Antique Sale & Appraisal Day on our 350 Main Street Grounds

June 27: "Hosting For History" benefit party on Grounds, including wine-tasting, New Haven Pizza Truck and music

July 11: Civil War reenactment on Grounds

Upcoming Exhibit: First World War posters and memorabilia

Please Vote For Us!

If you have an account at Essex Savings Bank, please consider voting for us during the Community Investment Program survey between Feb. 1 and March 15. Any funds received will be given in the form of small scholarships to our outstanding senior student volunteers who have helped us during the course of their entire high school term.