

Siege and Battles of Saybrook Fort

A project of the Old Saybrook Historical Society
funded by the American Battlefield Protection
Program, National Park Service

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From the President

The excitement for the Hart House 250th Celebration caused us to put aside the thought of two important milestones this year.

The first is the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Society. A small group of Old Saybrook residents realized that our community was losing its anchor...its past. So in 1958, with no money or place of its own, they created an organization to save the history of Old Saybrook. Through determination, passion and hard work, 60 years later we look at a campus whose 1767 house, public gardens, exhibit gallery and archives building that day by day, hour by hour, continues to pursue the mission of preserving, protecting and promoting our town's history.

The second is the 20th anniversary of the Frank Stevenson Archives Building. Today it serves not only historical important documents, genealogical research and study, outstanding artifacts, but also is the hub of our organization serving as a welcome center for visitors near and far and the business of our Society. This year, in celebration, it received a total revamping of the computer system and striking change through the new color on the interior of the building. Our Archives Building is one of a kind along the Shoreline and envied by many organizations.

As we think of these two celebrations, we are again awed by the work of an all-volunteer organization that began with so little but accomplished so much. It is an amazing story.

Marie

Coming September 8, on campus
Hosting for History
Taste of the Town

*Fiddlers, wine-tasting and outstanding
food from local restaurants and
specialty food stores*

*Thank you for supporting
the Annual Appeal*

Large Gathering Hears of Saybrook Fort Project

When the earliest European immigrants came to America they faced a dense, untamed environment and an unfamiliar and hostile population. Their first priority was to survive and that meant they had to create a safe living place and obtain a sufficient amount of food.

So in the summer of 1635 English aristocrats signed a four-year contract with Lion Gardiner, an engineer with experience in constructing forts, to build a fort and layout a town for “gentlemen of quality.”

Gardiner and his wife along with twelve men, two women and supplies arrived at Pashbeshauke at the mouth of the Connecticut River in 1636 and quickly began work constructing a fort, planting corn, and eventually building a grist mill.

Fort Saybrook was the first military post to be built in the Connecticut wilderness and the area at and around the fort became the site for the most prolonged and intensive fighting of the Pequot War.

In addition to attacks at the fort, there were skirmishes along what is today College Street and at Cornfield Point. In all, there were more than 20 Pequot attacks and more than 30 English settlers and soldiers were killed.

This original fort, constructed in 1636, was built at the highest point on Saybrook Point and was completely destroyed by fire in 1647. Today’s Saybrook Fort Memorial Park, with its statue of Lion Gardiner, is located in the general vicinity of the



Jim Powers, author and consultant

second fort.

Through a project funded by the American Battlefield Protection Program, National Park Service, the Old Saybrook Historical Society is working to help preserve the sites related to the siege and battles of Saybrook Fort and develop educational materials for schools and the public.

To do this, Dr. Kevin McBride and his team from the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center will be preparing an application for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, develop a walking tour brochure, and design and suggest locations for interpretative signs.

In addition, author and historical consultant James Powers is developing elementary and secondary curriculum materials, a publication for schools and the general public related to the siege and battles of Saybrook Fort and the Pequot War.

In early April the Society hosted a special presentation for the public to share this information, respond to questions, and to invite interested residents to join in forming a group to preserve these and other historic sites in Old Saybrook.

The program attracted more than 100 members of the community and several volunteered to meet to establish a preservation group.

Members are invited to contact the Society to be added to the list to be kept informed of progress or to become involved in preservation activities related to the fort and elsewhere.

For more information about Saybrook Fort and the project, visit our website or send an email to: contact@saybrookhistory.org.



Jim Powers, David Naumec, Tedd Levy, Kevin McBride, Ashley Bissonnette

Tedd Levy

Chalker Papers

Last Fall, member and friend, Robert Lorenz, stopped at the Archives to tell us that he would be delivering the Chalker papers from Mr. & Mrs. Ben Gleason of Bridport, VT September 2017 to become part of our permanent collection. This outstanding collection of 244 documents (from 1670 to 1889) has its own history with us.



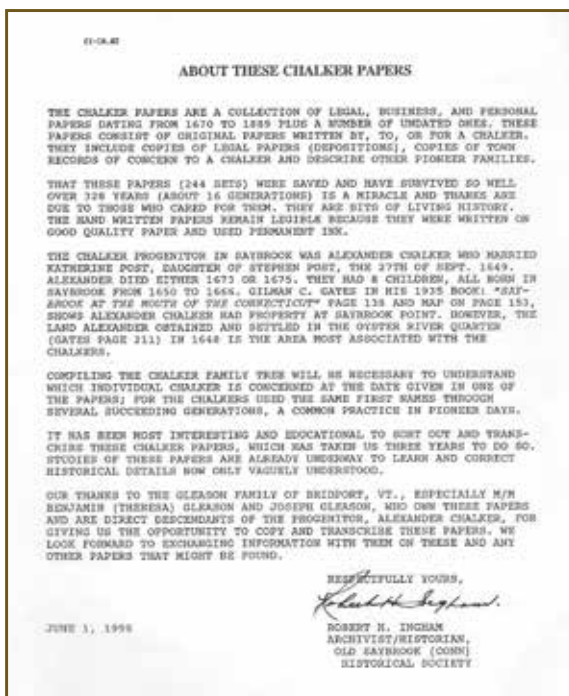
Ben Gleason with Chalker papers

Dorothy Swan, former Registrar and Bob Ingham, former Archivist, were given access to these treasures beginning in 1996 to transcribe and study for three years.

Greg Thompson, current Archivist, is cataloging each piece. They will be protected with special archival material and placed in our vault. We are thrilled to be caretakers of this collection and are very grateful to the Gleasons for their donation. Our only regret is that both Dorothy and Bob, now deceased, were not here to receive them.



1874 Beers Atlas donated by Pat Tripoli. See article on page 5



The US Coast Guard Dixieland Band will return to the OSHS campus Sunday, August 26, from 4 to 5:30 pm. Photo: JH Torrance Downes

A Salute to OSHS Volunteers

The dedication on the 1875 F.W. Beers Atlas Map recently donated to the Society reads, "To honor all the volunteers who make this wonderful facility possible." I always felt that this particular map would be interesting to visitors as it shows the names and locations of many early inhabitants who lived in the town circa 1875. Many of these houses still exist today and it is always interesting to search out information about the people who lived in them.

Many of my Father's ancestors lived in Saybrook during the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. He was directly descended from people who were members of familiar old families of this area including the following: The Ingraham Family, the Dickinson Family, the Tully/Tulley Family, the Pease Family, the Pratt Family, the Lay family, the Kirtland Family, the Clarke Family, the Beaumont Family and the Lee Family. In this article, I want to pay tribute to some of the volunteers who have always made my time spent in the Stevenson Archives positive and productive!

My association with the volunteers of the Historical Society began with a visit to the Hart House in 1983. I have a directory from 1986 where **Elaine Staplins** is listed as being chairperson of the Public Relations Committee. Elaine compiled a letter sent to my Brother Steve in 1983 with information about the John Ingraham (1680-1750 who bought land in Saybrook in 1721) Family and also the Richard Dickinson (1695-1749 who bought land in Saybrook in 1728) Family. Elaine was instrumental on the committee that founded and organized SCFA, **Saybrook Colony Founders Association** in 1985 during Saybrook's 350th anniversary celebration. I became a lifetime member and thoroughly enjoyed its "Hear-Say" publications. I would like to mention another publication from that celebration, "**The Vital Records of Saybrook Colony 1635-1860**" compiled and edited by a committee under the direction of Elizabeth Bull Plimpton.

It was **Margaret Bock (nickname Bucky)** who created the Index for this amazing record preserved from originals copied by hand by Judge Frederick L'Hommedieu. I have spent so many happy hours tracing ancestors from this book, that I can only give my heartfelt thanks to those responsible for creating it!

Bucky was one of the first volunteers I met when my husband Ron and I retired to Essex in 1996 and I visited the archives. She has been a stalwart supporter and helper in all my own efforts to produce notebooks concerning family history for the society and remarkably still volunteers every Thursday at the age of 98! A great and talented lady who has contributed books, time and meticulous research to the OSHS!

Another amazing volunteer for the society that I need to honor is **Donna DiBella** who has offered her many talents to the society for 21 years! She has held many positions with the Society, but the one that I consider most difficult is that of fund raiser for the society, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Donna lived in the house built by my seven times Great Grandfather John Ingraham and hosted many events there to benefit the Society, always sharing her expertise and goodwill.

Perhaps I owe the biggest debt of gratitude to Archivist

Greg Thompson. When I brought in a one-of-a-kind Ca. 1800 hand drawn map attributed to ancestor Richard Dickinson (1731-1820, Surveyor of the Port of Saybrook, appointed by George Washington in 1795) of the Cow Commons containing over 200 Saybrook Family Names, Greg immediately understood the value and importance of such a document. My siblings and I donated this map to the Society, and Greg encouraged my research of this area and then with his help, we created a notebook with copies of most of the maps contained in the map drawer of the Society dating from the 1600's to the 1900's and beyond. We wanted to give access to these maps without having people handle them which of course would eventually harm the maps. I consider Greg a dear friend and I have noticed that he greets all visitors to the archives with respect and enthusiasm. Greg's talent for organization and genealogical research are just two of the amazing talents he has brought to the OSHS for the last eight years.

Barbara Maynard and **Tedd Levy** were most encouraging when I volunteered pictures and postcards for their Postcard Series Book "Old Saybrook". **J.H. Torrance Downes** was very helpful to me in creating my notebook on the history of the Cypress Cemetery where so many of my family ancestors are buried. **Jim Rothgeb** was a help with the internet, and the two Diane's (**Diane Hoyt** and **Diane Lyons**) are always ready with a smile and accurate information! **Teddi Kopcha**, a more recent association for me is such a positive and helpful addition. Recently, **Barbara and Wayne Harms**, who have offered their services to the Society in many capacities, have been wonderful in helping me research the Captain John Ingraham house at 200 North Cove Rd. where the older brother of my Great Great Grandfather Edward Ingraham lived. There are eleven homes remaining in the North Cove area that are associated with my family. Most important to me are #141 where My Great Great Grandfather Edward Ingraham and his wife Amelia Pease raised their seven children, and then #122 where Edward and older brother John were raised by their Father Captain John Ingraham (1709-1775).

I have to mention **Linda Kinsella** whom I met when I was donating old bricks for the garden. She is a wonder with her efforts for the Society, especially in the magnificent gardens she and other volunteers maintain. Finally, last but not least in my voice of praise is President **Marie McFarlin**, having volunteered her talents for the past 13 years. Those who know Marie, will surely endorse my unqualified admiration for her. As President of the OSHS she is just amazing. She encourages all and captains the ship with knowledge and grace!

I have personally been fortunate to volunteer at the Essex Historical Society for the past 14 years, and as we have close ties to our original Saybrook Colony roots and founders, I continue to learn the history of our area. I encourage all to continue their support for all the area Historical Societies, and say without hesitation, that the volunteers make these societies viable. Please consider us with your donations and volunteer time and visit us anytime you want to learn more about the history of your towns. You will always be welcome!

Pat Tripoli

Old Saybrook Historical Society's
6th Annual

ANTIQUES SHOW & AUCTION

Saturday, June 2nd
Show 9 am - 4 pm
Auction 1-3 pm

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AUCTIONEER
Greg Jankowski of G's Treasures

Cypress Cemetery and the National Register of Historic Places

In March of 2017, the “Old Burying Ground” portion of Cypress Cemetery on Saybrook Point was placed on the State Register of Historic Places and will be placed on the National Register of Historic Places by June of 2017. The Town of Old Saybrook, with the support of the Cypress Cemetery Association and the Old Saybrook Historical Society with the consultation of R. Christopher Goodwin Associates of New Orleans, Louisiana, spearheaded the effort. According to the nomination document, the uniqueness of the Old Burying Ground centers on the “funerary art” that can be found. In other words, the assemblage of tombstone carving is exemplary with respect to the artists who carved them and the two “schools” of carving represented.

Those familiar with tombstone carving are aware that in the 17th and 18th centuries, there was the “Boston school” of carvers from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the “Connecticut River Valley school” of carvers from the river valley area of Connecticut. The Boston carvers commonly used durable slate for their markers due to the prevalence of that type of stone in the greater Boston area while the Connecticut River Valley carvers used the softer red sandstone found throughout the river valley. Goodwin Associates explains that there are cemeteries with great examples of tombstones by the Boston artists, and there are cemeteries with great

examples of tombstones carved by the Connecticut artists. The uniqueness of Cypress is that the Old Burying Ground has great examples of *both* schools of artists. Although the individual artists of the Boston

tombstones are generally unknown (they tended to work in collaboration where it’s more difficult to determine individual carvers), tombstones carved by the most well-known of the Connecticut River Valley artists – the Stanclifts, Johnsons and Drake – are represented throughout the Old Burying Ground.

The National Register designation does not impact the operation of the cemetery, but identifies the site as an important part of our historic and cultural heritage worthy of preservation and recognition. In an effort to highlight this important designation, a team will be designing and placing an exhibit sign near the front of the cemetery to educate the public regarding the

significance of the cemetery and its connection to the original Saybrook Colony founded on Saybrook Point in 1635.

For information, contact the Old Saybrook Historical Society at (860) 395-1635 or go to the Cypress Cemetery website at www.cypresscemeteryosct.org. To read a copy of the nomination document, go to the Cypress Cemetery website.

J.H. Torrance Downes



Facilities Report Update

Three major facilities projects were completed this past winter; restoration of half of the Hart House 32 antique windows, interior painting of the entire Archives Building, and repair & painting of the Hart House entry hall as well as repair and painting of the Tinsley Room and Library.

Antique Window Restoration

This first phase of the window project was funded by benefactors of the Old Saybrook Historical Society. Window restoration included structural and surface repairs to make all lower sashes operable (before the restoration, only two of the Hart House 32 windows had operable sashes). Several windows required sill and frame repair, which was accomplished using cedar and pressure treated lumber.



Window restoration included removal of paint as required in an environmentally-safe enclosure, replacing broken panes with similar antique glass, renovating the window frames / mullions / sills and trim where required, and installation of new hardware. Following repair, the window mullions, frames and trim were painted with water-borne alkyd paint in the colors to match the Hart House rooms.



Restoration of each window was completed with the addition of weather-strip gaskets at the meeting rail and bottom of the lower sash.

To restore the remaining 16 antique windows, we have applied for a matching-grant; with a May 2018 decision anticipated.

The start of the 2017 / 2018 "facilities improvement" year also included several electrical

upgrades; including exterior rear garden and porch lights with cell-phone-enabled Bluetooth timers, new storage room LED lights and a new antique wall sconce for the Winthrop-Annex room.



Winter Painting Completed

This was the third consecutive winter during which interior surfaces of the Hart House was repaired and painted; including ceilings, walls and trim of the Hart House two-story entry hall, Tinsley Room ceiling & trim and the Library ceiling & trim. To repair the three ceilings and the entry-hall walls, the painter performed a labor-intensive skim-coat repair of cracked-stucco surfaces. The stucco



repairs required crack removal, double skim coat, sanding, priming and painting.

All Hart House historic paint colors were followed so as to maintain the period appropriate design of our 250-year-old museum.

The interior of the Archives Building was also painted, much to the delight of our volunteer staff. This was accomplished with a dramatic paint-color-transition of the walls from white to an historic blue. Archives' interior painting included the four front rooms, library area and reference area.

Ed Armstrong

Garden Report

After a snowy beginning to 2018, with five dramatic Nor' easter storms, winter is finally lessening its grip on the Connecticut shoreline.

The 200 year old Farmers Almanac accurately predicted heavier than normal snow and "icy doom & gloom" weather for Nutmeggers this past winter.

Power outages were frequent, making many of those without auxiliary generators wonder how the early European settlers managed to survive the cold.

We do know Native Americans sometimes helped the colonists by sharing their winter stockpile of roots, dried berries, fish and game.

But it's April now and the Hart House Garden is slowly coming alive. A few daffodils are blooming, some chives are growing in the herb section and some ephemerals are showing up in the wildflower garden.

Unfortunately, the lesser celandine that has invaded our lawns the last few years is also starting to unfold its pretty yellow flowers. Many people are charmed by this low spreading plant and ask where they get them. Lesser celandine are in the Ranunculus Family (related to the buttercup). Let me say it quickly becomes very invasive and chokes out grass and plants alike. You will be sorry (so may your neighbors) if you plant it.

Cleaning up the gardens is a major task after a bad winter. Nature's method for trimming trees of dead wood drops a lot of debris, sticks and big limbs to be picked up. We only have five women to take care of the gardens, but they do an amazing job designing and maintaining this colonial focused garden.

Sadly, in one of the snow storms, we lost the gnarly old purple lilac bush on the south-east corner of the house. The sweet, intoxicating scent of lilacs

was curiously known in folk-lore to drive away evil spirits and was planted around a house to protect it from evil.

There are three clumps of lilac bushes around the 250 year old Hart house. So maybe, beside providing the beautiful flowers that we cut for Memorial Day, they have other benefits.

Usually in late-March we uncover and prune the

dead or damaged canes from our OGRs (old garden roses) but snow delayed the process this year. Master gardener Bonnie Penders and our artist gardener, Carin Roaldset, spent a recent April morning inspecting the canes and pruning dead or diseased wood. OGRs usually bloom only once a season. They are pretty much low maintenance roses. Many have survived in forgotten cemeteries and back gardens for years by benign neglect.

We are fortunate to have some of the oldest varieties in the Hart House Garden, Alba, the white rose, a light pink Damask,

that sometimes blooms twice and the apothecary rose, R.Gallica. These roses are all very fragrant, and are pretty disease resistant.

I hope you will visit the gardens in June to see these roses and maybe even to volunteer a few hours of your time with us.

Many events are planned in the garden this summer including the wedding of Audrey and Bill Goodhue's granddaughter. Audrey was head gardener here for several years and Bill, along with his son, built the Childress Garden shed.

It's a beautiful place to exchange vows.

Good wishes for a happy spring & summer,

*Linda Kinsella
Keeper*



Photo courtesy of Linda Kinsella



The Old Saybrook Historical Society

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Mark Your Calendars

May 17 – Lecture, “Gillette Castle”,
Acton Library, 7:00 p.m.

May 20 – “Talks from the Hart”, members only
afternoon, 4:00- 5:30 p.m.
Speaker Jane Gullong

May 24 – Lecture, “Upper Cemetery”, speaker
Scott Carson.
Acton Library, 7:00 p.m.

May 27 – Tour of Upper Cemetery,
4:00 p.m. \$5.00

May 28 – Memorial Day Parade

June 2 – Antiques and Auction Day,
9:00 to 4:00 p.m.

June 3 – High School Creative Writing Workshop-
Poetry Reading at the Hart House. 2:00 p.m.

June 23 – Hart House opens for tours,
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday.

June 24 – “Talks from the Hart” members only
afternoon. “History of the CT Valley Railroad”.
Speaker Max Miller.
3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

August 26 – US Coast Guard Dixieland Band
Concert. Hart House Campus 4-5:30 p.m.

September 1 – Hart House tours end

September 8 – “Hosting for History”,
“Taste of the Town”, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Hart House Campus

October 17 – Annual Meeting, 5:00 p.m.

October 28 – Cypress Cemetery Tour, 4:00 p.m.

