



Award for Achievement in Historic Preservation in Old Saybrook

2019



KEITH & JANE BOLLES
Saybrook Home
Ambrose Whittlesey House

2017



CAROL & STEPHEN HUBER
John Whittlesey House

Preservation is a powerful and complicated word. Organizations and individuals around the globe deal with it constantly. The what to save; how to save; how to pay for and do the restoration that is often required and plan for the future takes multiple sources, tremendous resources, dedicated individuals and organizations. In 2016 the Society decided to recognize extraordinary individuals or groups who have contributed to the preservation of the rich history of Old Saybrook with an annual award. Their efforts are an inspiration to all of us.

2018



BARBARA MAYNARD
Lifetime Achievement

2016



HERB & SHERRY CLARK
Bushnell Farm



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From the President 2019...SPECIAL GIFTS and MOMENTS

This past year brought an extraordinary list of surprises. When we reflected upon what happened, we were amazed at the list.

Our members and volunteers continued their support with their monetary contributions and sharing of their time and skills. They are the backbone of our organization and never falter in their commitment.

On top of that, we have the gifts that make a huge difference in the quality of our organization. This year was outstanding!!!

Collections: three of them stand out. Their stories are rich and show the vast network beyond Old Saybrook that filters back to us. We own a 1777 powder horn that belonged to Oliver Graham who came from the Saybrook area. Two years ago we heard from Pamela Vittoria, a genealogist and direct descendant. She traced the powder horn to the Society after she learned of its existence when she saw the painting of it by Rufus Grider at the New York Historical Society. Pamela gained permission to have the only print made of the painting and, through her generosity, she gave the beautiful print to us. It now is displayed next to the powder horn and helps to tell its incredible story. The second is the Kruger Collection (story on page 5). The third is the donation made by a direct descendant of Robert Chapman so that we could purchase the Amos and Amelia Sheffield portraits that we have had on loan from the First Church of Christ Congregational, Old Saybrook, since 2011. They have great historical significance and will continue to be displayed in the dining room.

The American Battlefields Protection Program grant from the National Parks Service took off this year under the phenomenal direction of Tedd Levy. The special programs were well attended but what made it extraordinary was

the support that was received from various town organizations. The grant did not cover any publishing of the research and plans. It was up to us to fund the finished products...a daunting task. These organizations made it work: From the Historic District Commission's commitment of \$4,000 for interpretive historic signs which were placed in strategic locations around town and whose installation was done through the help of the Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments; the Planning Commission publishing 5,000 brochures that show a bike trail to the points of interest related to the Siege and Battle of the Pequot War in Saybrook; Saybrook Point Inn providing \$2,000 for a publication; and Ct Humanities providing \$4,500 for an exhibit at the Hart House Gallery related to the archeological and historical findings. This is all related to a project that began ten years ago under the direction of Dr. Kevin McBride and Dr. David Naumec. We began our partnership with them and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum when they started the study of the sites and archeological digs a decade ago.

We are grateful also to the United States Coast Guard Dixieland /Jazz Band who gave an excellent concert on our grounds.

The successful Auction was lots of fun! We are grateful to Saybrook Recycled Furniture for the planning and execution and the Lorensen Auto Group for the financial support.

Taste of the Town, our major fundraiser, brought generous supporters from all over our town... Guilford Savings Bank, Hadass and Matthew Rubin, Donna and Bill DiBella, Paradise Wine and Spirits and Harbor News as major sponsors.

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2019 Achievement in Historic Preservation

The year's recipients are Jane and Keith Bolles, of Saybrook Home, for their preservation and protection of the Ambrose Whittlesey Home, (1765&1799) 14 Main Street. The house is a rare example of architectural and cultural value to Old Saybrook. Even more so, the adaptive reuse of the structure serves to anchor and influence redevelopment of land at the intersection of Main Street. The House is an integral thread to the historic fabric of Main Street. The thoughtful expansion of Saybrook Home over the years has reflected and maintained the architectural integrity of this early home. We will present a plaque for the House representing this award at an early spring ceremony

Keith Bolles, upon receiving this award, stated: "We are thrilled. Anytime we are recognized for our accomplishments and efforts is very rewarding for us. We have enjoyed running our business out of this historic home for 42 years. It fits well with what we are doing here and we are honored to be recognized for helping to preserve the history of Old Saybrook".



Photo courtesy of Keith Bolles

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Flowers, music, food vendors, auction baskets, Osso Electric pro bono work, outstanding silent auction items from Herb and Sherry Clark as well as Becker Jewelers were all contributed to this a successful and happy evening.

The William E. Phillips legacy gift... Bill was a loyal and generous member. His contributions over the years have made a tremendous difference... how lucky we have been to have had him as a supporter!

The final surprise is amazing. We received from the Scoville Family Charitable Fund the sum of \$70,000 for the renovation of the Hart House working kitchen and the repair of the bathroom. (Ed

Our Trustees



JH Torrance Downes, Linda Kinsella, Marie McFarlin, Alan Cantor, Marc Delmonico, missing Edward Mosca and Katie Toolan.

At our annual meeting, we lost three trustees and gained three.

The three, who must leave because the bylaws require that a trustee must take a year off after six years of service are Linda Kinsella, Edward Mosca and JH Torrance Downes. Each of these individuals served with distinction and their contributions to the Society are immeasurable. They will continue their service by accepting or continuing responsibilities that do not include trusteeship. Marie McFarlin, president, spoke of her working and personal relationship with each of them and how proud she is to have served with these extraordinary members.

The Society voted to accept Marc Delmonico, Alan Cantor and Katie Toolan as new trustees. They have already begun to contribute their time and talents to us and we are grateful that they are willing to accept this responsibility.

Armstrong's report page 7). The House is used for all types of social and educational events and the kitchen is seeing more and more use and is much in need of work. This Fund was set up for the enhancement of organizations that add to the quality of life in our great town. We are especially grateful to Pat Scoville, a special advocate of the House and a firm believer in its importance to our community.

We welcome the New Year with excitement and much gratitude for the past.

May it be a healthy and happy one for you.

Marie

Concealed Shoes: A Good Luck Piece

My wife and I purchased a home located at 385 Main Street in early September of 2017 and immediately started on exterior and interior home renovations of the house that was often referred to as the "purple house". Circa 1870.

Exterior improvements were critical, as the home was utterly neglected. The roof, chimneys, and damaged wood trim boards were all replaced. Followed by 34 windows being replaced and finishing with the front porch replacement and new railings,



according to code. Our goal was to modernize the dwelling and not alter the appearance of exterior, while maintaining structural integrity. After reviewing and discussing colors for three months, we choose a light green and dark green combination with white trim and bargeboard accents.

The interior was much more involved and intricate. To our amazement, the electrical wires were still knob and tube which was replaced with a 200-amp service and lighting improvements were addressed as well. On November 7, 2017 we were working on installing wires to illuminate the central hallway which was entirely sealed with curved plaster, so a hole in the adjoining front living room was created to gain access. Upon reaching in to feed the wire, we discovered a **very worn shoe** in the ceiling right where the light box was going to be installed.

Thinking that this was rather strange, we placed the shoe on the fireplace and photographed it... See attached...A couple evenings later, I did some research via the internet, and to my astonishment, this practice was very popular in Europe during the mid-1850's. The concept, concealing shoes, originated as

a way to ward off evil spirits when building a home; good luck piece, much like a modern day horseshoe placed over the front door of a home. We also read numerous articles that explained: a worn shoe is the only article of clothing that retains its shape overtime, and concealing it "transfers the owner's personality in it forever." Eccentric custom indeed.

To insure no "bad house karma", after our interior first floor renovations were complete, we placed the shoe back exactly where we found it.

Very few concealed shoes have been discovered in the U.S.

Alan and Sharon Cantor

[The renovated home of the Cantors will be on the Sept. 12 home tour.]



Elizabeth Hartzler, age 9, from Tobyhanna, PA, visited the Old Saybrook Historical Society for the purpose of researching her Genealogy as a descendant of the Hart Family. Her mother is a direct descendant of Captain Thomas Hart, 1643 and Deacon Thomas Hart. She and her mother were researching Jeanette Hart.

Kerry Auld

From Georgia to Saybrook – Fourteen Hours and 200 Documents

It is surprising how far Saybrook documents and other materials travel over time and heartening how some eventually make their way home again. And, the journey often begins with a phone call or email which is how the most recent example began.

Several months ago Historical Society president Marie McFarlin received an email from a woman in Georgia asking if we would be interested in Saybrook documents. Assuring the writer that we would, Ms. McFarlin asked for more information and, with the exchange of several emails over a period of several weeks, was informed that the writer possessed a large number of early 19th century documents.

It turns out that the writer and her husband were renovating the Mercer Spencer house in Woodstock, Georgia. In the process of renovating the structure they were throwing out trash. While in the attic above the garage, Carmen Kruger found some old newspapers, a 15' x 7' 45 star U.S. flag and an old small trunk.

Opening the trunk she was surprised to find dozens of old letters, deeds, wills, and photos which, along with the flag, were taken home. They had no idea how they got there but were thankful that they did not just throw them out.

For the next several weeks Carmen and her husband Elliot struggled to read the old script and research the people who originally wrote or received the documents.

They saw that the material came from Saybrook and decided that they should be returned. Responding to the request for more information, they prepared a list of more than 200 documents. They also indicated that they would like to sell the entire



Marie McFarlin, Wayne Harms, Carmen and Elliot Kruger

collection to the Historical Society.

Unable to put a price on the collection and hesitant about sending it through the mail, the Krugers made arrangements to bring the documents to Old Saybrook. They arrived after a 14-hour train ride from Georgia and the following day brought the items to the Archives.

President Marie McFarlin, vice president Wayne Harms and member Tedd Levy reviewed the material and decided it would enrich our knowledge of Saybrook history and be a worthy addition to the Archives. The entire collection of 200+ items was purchased through the generosity of a member who wishes to remain anonymous.

Tedd Levy

Legacy

Did you know the Old Saybrook Historical Society can accept donations from your IRA?

If you are 70 1/2 or older, you may transfer any amount, up to \$100,000, directly to the Old Saybrook Historical Society. This is referred to as a Qualified Charitable Distribution.

This gift could fulfill some or all your Required Minimum Distribution reducing your income and thus your Federal and Connecticut income taxes. This is the perfect charitable gift for individuals who can't claim itemized deductions anymore because of recent tax law changes.

For more information please call us at 860-395-1635 or email us at contact@saybrookhistory.org.

The Garden in Winter

Recently, I was at Mystic Seaport where I spied a very tall winterberry shrub laden with bright red berries. It was a beautiful sight.

It reminded me of an event, many years past, when I stopped along the roadside to clip a few branches of winterberry for a holiday wreath. An older woman saw me doing this and got out of her car to severely chastise me for taking the “wild bird food”.

It was a guilt lesson I never forgot and one that led me to redeem myself by planting winterberry bushes near the brook on my property. Winterberry are dioecious so you need female plants plus at least one male plant to get the berries, a fact I didn't know until the following year! But many years later the bushes are mature and prolific with bright berries.

This got me thinking about planting some winterberry at the Hart House Garden. We have a variety of plants that supply food for birds, butterflies and bees from spring to late fall.

We keep dry perennials seed heads standing in place from September until early December for the birds to eat. But our winter landscape is rather

sparse, so in 2020 we will plant some visual appeal for the winter garden that includes bright red winterberries for the non-migrating birds.

Happy 2020.

Linda Kinsella



Photo by Gabrielle Ranelli

Margaret “Bucky” Bock



Her 100th birthday celebration was a beautiful day on our campus. Many friends and family including the selectmen from Westbrook and Old Saybrook and our State representative came for the ceremony and party. The Stevenson Archives volunteers provided the food and helped our hospitality committee.

Westbrook Historical Society and the Old Saybrook Historical Society were thrilled to have this special event for our incredible volunteer. Bucky was thrilled too!

Photo courtesy of JH Torrance Downes

Fourth Quarter Facilities Overview

A new benefactor presented a surprise to the Historical Society in the form of a donation to remodel the General William Hart House working-kitchen and repair the half-bath. The donation was received in December and we received the building permit for the project on Dec 26, 2019.

This exciting kitchen remodel will improve the Society's capability to support events and will bring our electrical, plumbing and heating requirements to current code standards.

The kitchen remodel will be designed to achieve an historically complementary design together with modern appliances. We are optimistically targeting spring 2020 to complete all work to achieve an occupancy certificate.

Autumn 2019 Work Completed

Facilities work completed this fall included normal maintenance of the heating systems, fire-suppression equipment and alarm system. Additional maintenance was required for the Archives Building office-heating system air handler (some equipment upgrades are being scheduled).

Significant Facilities Plans for 2020

Costly Facilities plans that may extend into the next fiscal year include:

1. Replacement of three (3) Archives awning windows on the North side of the upper floor level. The existing awning windows and trim have deteriorated. We are in the process of obtaining estimates for these repairs and for inspection of all Archives windows. The deterioration of the Archives Building exterior features continues to be a major concern.
2. We plan to obtain quotes for sealing the Hart House and Garden Shed cedar roofs and inspection of the Archives roof and Hart House North Gambrel roof. It is possible that both the Archives roof and North Gambrel roof will require replacement in 2020.
3. Inspection and potential repair of the three Hart House chimneys.
4. Concurrent with the upcoming kitchen remodel, we hope to obtain quotes for re-grading the Hart House Gallery south garden and addition of



Hart House kitchen before demolition

Photo by Ed Armstrong

French drains. We will also repair the Gallery south entrance exterior walls and siding. The needed re-grading of the garden area would follow recommendations made by Wick York in 1990 (a Consultant in Historic Preservation and Building Restoration). Mr. York recommended that the current ground level be lowered to help lessen deterioration of the Gallery exterior.

Ed Armstrong



Deteriorated awning window

Photo by Ed Armstrong

2019 Wassail Party

Teresa Tafuri, Harpist
*Photo by
Ed Armstrong*



Photo by Catherine Logiudice



Marie McFarlin, Ed Armstrong, Kerry Auld at the launch of Kerry's scarecrow creation "The Hart Harvest Cookout." It received many compliments and lots of attention.



The CT League of History Organizations and Ct. Humanities held a Meet and Greet Meeting in December hosted by the Society at the Hart House. There were over 20 representatives from organizations devoted to improving the quality of life in our State through the humanities. Carl Fortuna, our first selectman, welcomed them to our Town and spoke to the value of these organizations and especially what value the Society brings to our Town. Dr. David Naumec, our consultant throughout our work on the Siege and Battles of the Pequot War, provided the input on our exhibit which was funded by Ct. Humanities. The Hospitality Committee, under Donna DiBella and Cathy Logiudice, provided a warm and welcoming morning in our beautifully decorated Hart House.



Float replica of the Hart House for the Fife and Drum Parade in December built by Katie and Brian Toolan. It looked great!

Photo courtesy of JHTorrance Downes

New Exhibit Showcases Findings Related to Saybrook Fort and Pequot War, 1636-1637

In the summer of 1635 Lion Gardiner, an engineer with experience in constructing forts, agreed to build a fort and layout a town in the new world for "gentlemen of quality."

By the time his fort was completed, he and a small group of settlers were involved with the Pequot Natives in one a prolonged battle that included more than 20 Pequot attacks and more than 30 English settlers and soldiers and an unknown number of Natives killed.

This first fort, built on the highest point on Saybrook Point, was destroyed by fire during the winter of 1647-1648. However, after extensive archaeological work researchers have a fairly good idea of the fort's location.

To share these findings and display artifacts, the Historical Society worked with designer Brenda Milkofsky and historian David Naumec to develop a public exhibit in the gallery of the Gen. William Hart House.

Included in the exhibit are several artifacts selected from the 600 items uncovered during the archaeological work at Saybrook Point and others from the Society's collection.



Dr. David Naumec, consultant, at exhibit
Photo by Tedd Levy

There are two 2-dimensional figures, popular with photo-taking students, representing the Pequot and English of the period.

In addition to historic models, illustrations, photos and art work the exhibit features a large map locating 12 significant sites related to the siege and battles of Saybrook Fort. This map is reproduced and available for visitors as a take-away brochure to visit these sites.

Visitors to the exhibit are encouraged to begin a journey to better understand historic events and see, and save, these incomparable historic resources in Old Saybrook and elsewhere.

The Old Saybrook Historical Society is grateful for funding from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program, and CT Humanities. Reservations are now being taken from school groups for spring visits.

Tedd Levy

Jon T. Lorensen...we wish to pay tribute to Jon who passed away this past year. He founded Lorensen Auto Group and grew the business into the 10 franchise it is today. Jon was a supporter and benefactor of the Society and a sponsor of many of our successful events. His generosity was a tremendous help to our organization and made a huge difference. We are so grateful. May he rest in peace.



US Coast Guard Dixieland/Jazz Band concert on campus. Photo courtesy of Edward Armstrong



The Old Saybrook Historical Society

350 Main Street
Post Office Box 4
Old Saybrook, CT 06475
860.395.1635
www.saybrookhistory.org
contact@saybrookhistory.org

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Mark your calendars!

Saturday
September 12, 2020



O.S.H.S.
HOUSE TOUR

Look for details this spring!

