



DEDICATED TO PRESERVING, PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE HISTORY OF OLD SAYBROOK

December 2023



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Frank Stevenson

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President's Message

Our fiscal year is from October 1 to September 29 but I am looking at the calendar year as we look forward to the beginning of 2024.

2023 brought many exciting and wonderful events and surprises. We received a record number of monetary gifts and the Home and Garden Tour was a success. We completed the Witness Stone program with the 8th grade teachers at Goodwin School and continued to bring in visitors from across the Country to our "Family Matters" exhibit. Our heritage gardens flourished and, as you will read, we received exceptional collections for our Archives.

The "Family Matters" exhibit was dismantled in October. The video is now available on our website and parts of the exhibit were loaned to Roger Williams University in Rhode Island for their winter exhibit. Marek Sarba,

an outstanding artist, loyal member and Old Saybrook resident, will present an exhibit of some of his historical paintings in our exhibit gallery next year.

We realize (more than ever) the importance of history. Everything we know derives from it and should instruct us for the future. We all need a sense of place and a functioning democracy, constitutional republic, depends upon citizens, well informed, committed to the betterment of their neighborhood, town, city, nation. We are storytellers. These stories must be saved to help us make important choices. Our buildings, well preserved and used, give us a sense of place. We will continue to work hard to help with all of these important needs.

Thank you for all your support. We could not exist without it.

Marie

New Trustee Jessica May



Jessica May joined the Old Saybrook Historical Society as a Trustee at the October annual meeting. She is the president and owner of Saybrook

Hardware, a family owned business for almost 40 years. Two years ago Jessica and her husband received the Society's Historic Preservation Award for their restoration work on Main Street's Dudley Building, which houses Saybrook Hardware.

Jessica was formerly the Compliance Director for the Institutional Investment Products Division of the Hartford Life Insurance Co. Born and raised in Montreal and Delray Beach, FL, she earned a BFA in painting and studio-arts from Bishop's University in Quebec. She and her husband Lincoln live in an historic home in Old Saybrook and have three children in college.

Thank you for renewing your membership. If you have not done so yet, we will look forward to your renewal. Our members are the lifeline of our organization.

The Frank Stevenson Archives Building

Twenty five years ago, on the campus of the Old Saybrook Historical Society, a building opened that would change the Society so radically that today we could not imagine functioning without it. It is a building that is not only the safe place for innumerable historical documents, maps, letters, pictures, artifacts, but also a place for research and the center of the business part of the organization. It resembles a carriage house from the outside but the inside includes a large vault, office, library, large windows that overlook the heritage gardens and a large storage area on the second floor. It is the Welcome Center that is open year round.

The building has a history that extends back to the founding of the Saybrook Colony in 1635. Even though there was a fire at the Fort in 1644 and many papers were lost, many were not. From that period on, letters, maps, documents were kept by families, the Churches, governing organizations, etc. Some major organizations, such as, Yale University and the Ct Historical Society (now the Museum of Connecticut Culture and History) received donations pertaining to the Colony as well as Old Saybrook. Yet, as families moved, a great deal of historical memorabilia went with them. The Historical Society was formed in 1960 and bought the present property and General William Hart House in 1974.

This did not solve the problem of a central place to preserve these incredible historical resources. They were moved from basement to basement and building to building, in shoeboxes, liquor cartons and any storage material that could be found. Loyal volunteers continued these efforts until...

Polly Timken, Martha Soper, Anne Sweet, Elaine Staplins, Margaret Buckridge Bock, Warren Almquist (who donated land) Sallie Boody, Dorothy and Donald Swan with the aid of Edie Gengras (in charge of fundraising) began a successful campaign to fund the building to be a proper central location. William Phillips donated \$100,000 matching fund and the building was named in honor of Frank Stevenson, a devoted citizen of Old Saybrook.

This was an extraordinary effort for a small town. The Robert Chapman Foundation formed by descendants of Robert Chapman, a founder of the

Saybrook Colony, presented the Society with a gift of \$250,000 knowing that a new building and its maintenance would be a large expense for the Society. Robert Chapman descendants, scattered throughout the country, continue to be loyal supporters of the Society.

A Rare Collection for Our Archives



Photo by Tedd Levy

Craig Fanning, historian for the First Church of Christ, Old Saybrook, and Sara, his wife, delivered important historical documents and records of the Church to the Society. These documents will now reside in our Archives vault. The Historical Society will be the caretaker to keep them safe and preserved. This is an honor for our organization and we accept this responsibility knowing the trust and faith in us to keep them safe. Included in the collection is the family bible of Reverend William Hart. In it he recorded the date of birth of each his nine children including the time of the birth.

Carol Koopman Levy

April 23, 1939-September 9, 2023



We wish to express our deepest sympathy on the death of Carol, our beloved friend and loyal member. She is survived by her husband Tedd, two daughters, Janel Feldman and Jennifer Gaston and five grandchildren.

Her career as an RN spanned 40 years...her

compassion and caring, a lifetime. She left all

who knew her with memories of a strong, brave, loving, fun loving, hard working woman. Her cooking, gardening and sewing, skills she was so generous in sharing. As a member of the Society, she attended our programs and events helping where needed and always being our best cheerleader.

We were so fortunate to have known Carol. Our hope is that the memories of her will be a comfort to her family as they gather strength in this time of sadness.

A memorial bench will be placed in our gardens in her memory.

May she rest in peace.

Edward Bushnell, Jr.

Edward Bushnell, Jr., of Old Saybrook, served in the United States Army Air Force during World War II and the Korean War. He and his crew members saw action sixty-six times in World War II. During the Korean War, his crew flew thirty-five missions in a B-29 bomber, known as Nipp on ese, wing name Oklahoma City. After receiving his discharge with honors, he returned home to his family.

His two sons, Coleman and Steven, proudly preserved numerous items and documents from his service years. After much profound and philosophical consideration of what to do with the articles, they finally decided that the best place for them would be with the Old Saybrook Historical Society. They brought the articles to the Historical Society in the late summer of 2023 for inclusion in the World War II collection.

The photo displays a small sample of the articles the Bushnell brothers shared: Incoming Personnel Document- Langley Air Force Base " Virginia, Mission hat worn by Edward Jr., bridge table cover with Air Force insignia, a case from a medal and



action bar awarded to Edward, and a photograph of Edward Sr. and Edward Jr., wearing the hat, from September 2, 1951.

Teddi Kopcha

Year-End Garden Report

It's December, and the cold weather has finally arrived. November was quite mild and some plants in the garden began to re-bloom. A few of the old garden roses were among them but what really surprised me was several flowers on the the white lilac bush.

During the first week in December we decorate the exterior of the buildings for the holiday season. Red ribbons and classic evergreen roping is hung along the front fence and balsam/pine wreaths are hung on the doors. The Hart House windows glow with candlelight and all was very festive for the annual Wassail party.

The Heritage Garden Committee held their end of the season, "Lunch in the Garden" on October 10th this year. Rain was predicted, but we were optimistic and set up a long table on the lawn, with 14 places. The cloudy day magically turned beautiful, warm and sunny. A day for laughter, good food and wine. A time to say thank you to the gardeners who volunteer to give up personal hours every week, to work planting and maintaining the garden, for eight

months of the year. To Nancy Dziama, Joanne Goduti, Jim Madden, Jessica May, Susan Murphy, Elizabeth Normen, Bonnie Penders, Jennifer Randak, Carin Roaldset, Mary Walter and Marcia Zup, thank you.

This year's card cover photo announcing the annual members meeting in October, depicted a beautiful swallowtail butterfly sipping nectar from an echinops blossom. The photo was taken by artist/gardener, Carin Roaldset, who tends the bed where the patch of echinops grows. The purple colored blossoms are shaped similar to a wine goblet. Sometimes when we have 2 or 3 swallowtails enjoying a cluster of echinops, I wonder if they are having an "end of the season party" too.

The Hart House Heritage Garden is a part of the "Pollinator Pathway". We grow a sequence of flowering plants that bloom from spring to fall, to attract birds, bees, butterflies and important pollinating insects. The garden provides food and shelter for the pollinators. Unfortunately, each year we are noticing fewer hummingbirds visiting the pergola trumpet vine and fewer swallowtail



Gardeners gather to decorate our campus. Photo: Teddi Kopcha

Garden Report continued

and monarch butterflies flitting from flower to flower in late summer. Fewer pollinators is the damaging effect caused by pesticide and herbicide chemicals being used on lawns and gardens. Please encourage family and friends to avoid the use of pesticides. We all need to do our bit to help save the pollinators.



*Ed Armstrong helping gardeners with decorations.
Photo: Linda Kinsella*

You may have noticed the grass on Hart House lawn looks thicker and taller this season. It's because the lawn is being cut higher to help reduce water loss during the summer heat. A few years ago, the lawn in August was mostly crab-grass. Since we declined to use chemicals to kill the crabgrass, Tom LeMire, of Tom's Lawn Service, suggested we try "overseeding" the lawn in September. He said it would crowd out the growth of broad leaf grasses the following spring. The process took a couple of years to be effective but our grass is now noticeably more dense and we have a pretty nice looking lawn.

In late spring, portions of the dry-stone granite wall, gave way in the "dingle" area. Ed Armstrong quickly obtained the services of an excellent stone mason team who rebuilt them. Hardscape is an important part of every formal garden, so while the masons were there I asked that the teaching garden (Herbs with a Purpose) be extended and a curved brick walkway be installed. It gave our herbalist Bonnie Penders, a lot more space for herbs, to add to her talks for school groups. Bonnie is available for private tours all season.



The Felix DuVerger family of Glastonbury and Old Saybrook taking a picture in front of our garden shed for their family Christmas card. The lights on their outfits actually work. Photo: Cathy Logiudice

On June 24th the Ways and Means Committee held a successful House and Garden Tour, which included the Hart house and garden among the notable touring places. There was a steady stream of visitors who were highly complimentary of the garden. Several expressed interest in knowing how the garden flourished without the use of chemicals. It was a wonderful opportunity to encourage the public to grow pesticide free, native plants.

In July we geared up for two large events. The first was an elaborate, very gorgeous wedding on July 5th. The second was a free concert by the US Coast Guard Jazz Ensemble. on July 24th. The event is always well received by a large, enthusiastic crowd.

We have planted several new native flowering shrubs throughout the garden this season with generous donations from members. I want to thank President Marie McFarlin, the Board and all the members for investing in the growth of this beautiful heritage garden. It is a very special place.

The garden has changed quite a lot since I first came in 1999 to complete the community service section of the UCONN Master Gardener Program. It's been a pleasure to work here for these many years.

Linda Kinsella, Keeper

Gregory Thompson, OSHS Archivist Retires



Gregory Thompson, who served as a volunteer archivist for 12 years, retired from this position to work with cancer patients at the Smilow Cancer Hospital to offer comfort and support to them and their families. Greg is a survivor who knows so well the trauma and ramifications of this disease.

He is a professional genealogist and a Mayflower descendant who has served as Governor for the Ct Society of Mayflower Descendants, is a member of the Ct Professional Genealogist Council, former treasurer for the Ct Society of Genealogists and the former State Registrar for the SAR in the State of Connecticut. He also has provided his research skills for clients, family and friends.

For the Society he provided leadership in the organization and proper documentation of its vast collections as well sharing his knowledgeable research skills. His contributions were extremely valuable. However, we realize that his next position will bring so much help to those in need. We are grateful for the years we had with Greg and are proud of him for his future plans.

When he left, Greg wrote, " I have enjoyed my years as the OSHS archivist. I made new friends and, most of all, enjoyed the many people who have come through the Archives Building doors over the years. Each and everyone of YOU has a special place in my heart and I will miss the camaraderie we had but it is not good bye. I will stop by whenever I can."

Thank you, Greg, for a job well done.
Your friends at OSHS



A visitor from Pennsylvania to attend the Cypress Cemetery Tour was ready for the rain.



Donna DiBella and Cathy Logiudice braving the inclement weather to set up the table for the Cemetery Tour. Photo: Linda Kinsella

Facilities Report

Preservation Connecticut and The 1772 Foundation provided a \$10,000 matching grant to the Old Saybrook Historical Society for the replacement of the cedar-shingled roof over the Hart House kitchen and adjacent porch. The new shingles have been installed and the required gutters are on order. The roof project will be completed early spring 2024 along with roof trim work and sealing of the shingles. The attached photos show the removal and replacement of the cedar shingles on the Gallery South roof. We were fortunate with the replacement of the shingles because the original roof-structure decking had not deteriorated, therefore avoiding potential additional project costs.

A second significant facilities project was started early November for the restoration of the Hart House Gallery South-wall vertical siding and replacement of the two Gallery doors. The existing siding and doors have deteriorated due to improper drainage and soil level. This Gallery project will include removal & replacement of the existing South siding, restoration of the Gallery wall frame and foundation, and restoration of the Gallery South-garden to improve drainage and return the soil-

level back to its early-colonial-period condition. Concurrent with this work, the South Garden has been redesigned to create a garden feature by raising the millstone from its current location as a door-step to create a millstone garden-feature including a description of the origin of the millstone. The attached photo shows the “raising” of the millstone from its location as a door step.

The top priority on our facilities watch-list is the Archives building cedar roof. The Archives building is twenty five years old and the roof shingles have started to deteriorate. In the near term, repair of portions of the roof could extend the remaining life for a limited time. Replacement of the roof will be required within five years.

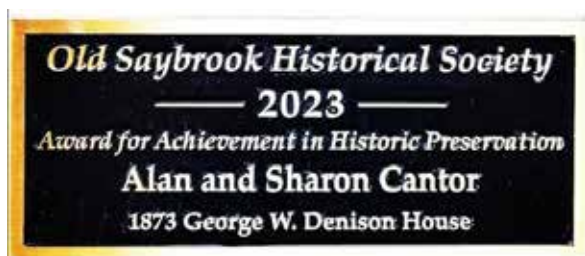
Ed Armstrong



Hart House Gallery South Garden Millstone before start of the project and raising the Millstone

Hart House kitchen and porch roof replacement

OSHS's Annual Preservation Award



The 8th annual Old Saybrook Historical Society's Achievement in Historical Preservation Award was presented at the Society's Annual Meeting to Alan and Sharon Cantor. The annual award recognizes extraordinary individuals or groups who have contributed to the preservation of the rich history of Old Saybrook. This award was for their restoration work on the George Denison 1873 Victorian home at 385 Main Street in Old Saybrook.

Semi-dilapidated when they purchased the home in late 2017, they began both exterior and interior renovations. The many outside restorations included the large eight-foot front windows, the front porch and steps, and the unique architectural bargeboard and gable brackets that support the three steep roof peaks. Inside efforts included exposing all the original Victorian fireplaces and restoring the main 14-step staircase with its stunning walnut banister that turns 90 degrees, leading to the second floor.



Alan and Sharon Cantor at the Old Saybrook Historical Society Annual Meeting

During the electrical renovations a concealed shoe was discovered inside the ceiling above the front door. It was a woman's leather shoe, most likely belonging to a member of the 1870s Denison family. A shoe in the wall was an old English tradition to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck to the home owners. It seems to have worked for the Cantors.

Lamar LeMonte



The award winning 1873 George W. Denison house in Old Saybrook

Outstanding music and decorations for the Wassail Party



Teresa Tafuri, harpist and the old kitchen mantel decorations, a part of the extensive decorations provided by hospitality chair, Cathy Logiudice



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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*May 2024 bring good health,
good friends, acts of kindness and
peace on earth and peace within.*

*May we all remember that life is fragile, that we
nothing for granted, and that we must never lose hope
for a better world.*

*With gratitude and best wishes,
Old Saybrook Historical Society*



www.saybrookhistory.org