



Stony Brook CURRENTS

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The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

February 2023

SUFFIELD HISTORY TRIVIA

1. One of the problems caused by high winds and lots of snow near West Suffield on February 1, 1904 was
 - a. 40 passengers were stalled overnight on the Hartford to Springfield train.
 - b. Snowplows pushed over an out-house while it was occupied.
 - c. A man skied out of his second-story window to feed his animals sheltered in a nearby barn.



2. United States officials swooped into Suffield in December 1887? They came because
 - a. \$50,000 of counterfeit money was being printed in Suffield.
 - b. A cache of guns were being stockpiled for a raid against local banks.
 - c. There was 800 gallons of un-stamped cider brandy.



3. On the evening before New Year's Eve in 1983, what catastrophe befell The King House Museum, causing immense damage?
 - a. A pipe burst, flooding the main floor of the house.
 - b. Vandals broke into the house smashing some priceless treasures.
 - c. A fire started in the cellar and did considerable damage.

Answers on page 6

ARA TSOLAG DILDILIAN

by Laurie Tavino

Thousands of people with fascinating stories have lived in Suffield. Ara Dildilian was one such person. He and some of his family were survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-16. As Armenians living in Turkey at that time, their lives were at daily risk that did not end with WWI.



The Dildilian family celebrating their son's graduation from Suffield Academy in 1955.

In 1922, almost one million Greeks and Armenians were deported from Turkey, including the Dildilians. After a horrendous, weeks-long crossing over the Black Sea, the half-starved refugees arrived in Athens where the Dildilian family made a new life. Ara's father built a photography studio, and Ara went to school.

With the help of family contacts at Anatolia College, Ara was accepted at Northeastern University. In 1928, the 20-year-old arrived in Boston

where he obtained a degree in chemical engineering and also met his future wife, Martha Sisson.

Bigelow Carpets brought Ara to Suffield. He began his career as an engineer at Bigelow and ended up as president of a subsidiary. He developed 25 patents including one for invisible seams in wall-to-wall carpets. He was active in the Suffield community, having served as air raid warden during WWII, Chairman of the Building Committee for Spaulding School and Chairman of the Board of Education. His wife Martha was president of the League of Woman Voters with future governor Ella Grasso as her vice-president.

Around 1947, Ara bought several acres off Mountain Road near Kuras Farm where there was a hunter's cabin. The family stayed at "the camp" many summers where Jesse Fowler Smith was a frequent visitor. Once a week, the family would drive home to buy groceries, take showers and do laundry. There was no ...continued on page 3



This picture was taken in February 1934 when Polish General Josef Haller visited Suffield. He was leader of the Polish Army in France during World War I. Aniela Paczosa is behind the screen door.

Three of ten children, in front of store, are (from left) oldest son, John; youngest daughter, Lorraine; and oldest daughter Jean (Eugenia.)

PACZOSA'S MEAT MARKET

by Sara Zak

One hundred years before Suffield Village Market existed, a Polish immigrant opened the first of a sequence of stores owned and operated by three generations of a family for over 60 years. The legacy started with Paczosa's Meat Market in 1922, transitioned to Suffield Public Market in 1946, and ended with John's Foodtown, which operated from 1958 to 1985. The founder of that series of enterprises was Joseph Paczosa, who was not a typical immigrant.

Most Polish immigrants came to Suffield in the early 1900s to work the land or serve as domestics. They usually processed through Ellis Island after an arduous transatlantic passage on the steerage deck of a ship. That is not how Joseph arrived in the United States. According to family history, he stowed away from Europe on a freighter bound for Canada in 1909 when he was 16. Within five years, he worked at Bigelow Sanford carpet mill in Enfield, married another Polish immigrant, Aniela Stawarz (sometimes called Nellie), and had his first child. However, Joseph was not destined to be a farmer.

By the end of 1920, Joseph had become a baker in Enfield and had four children. Shortly after that,

he moved his growing family to Suffield, where he established Paczosa's Meat Market. The building at 175 South Main Street (currently Pentimento Flowers) was both a store and living space. As was common among Polish families, the children had chores appropriate to their ages.

While their Polish American schoolmates might have been feeding chickens, milking the cow, or tending the tobacco field, the Paczosa children might have been stocking shelves or cleaning the store. As they got older, the sons became clerks in the store, delivery truck drivers, or possibly, meat cutters.

The grocery business started by Joseph passed to the next generation in 1946, when Joseph and Aniela sold it to son Edward, and daughter Janet's husband, John Klaus. Paczosa's Meat Market became Suffield Public Market and eventually occupied a space in the center of Suffield, just a few doors from another store, George Martinez and Son.

In 1958, John and Janet Klaus opened John's Foodtown, a half mile west on Mountain Rd. The third generation of Paczosas got involved when Joseph and Aniela's grandson, Dennis Klaus, became involved at John's Foodtown until it closed in about 1985.

Suffield's baby boomers are the only residents likely to be familiar with the Paczosa family series of businesses. For example, they may still direct others to the plaza "where John's Foodtown used to be." Many second-generation Polish Americans may remember the small variety store Joseph and Aniela ran in the late 1950s, during the post-retirement phase of their lives. It was next to the St. Joseph Church rectory and quite popular with the children on recess from Saturday morning catechism lessons.

Although the livelihood of the Paczosa family differed significantly from many of their fellow compatriots, their values did not. They had a strong work ethic, stuck together, and ardently supported St. Joseph Church. Joseph and Aniela raised their children as dedicated participants in all religious, cultural, and social activities. Subsequent generations have maintained a strong presence in Suffield.

Many thanks to the Paczosa granddaughters, Deborah (Bajek) Winter and Patty (Meleski) Cosma, for their help with this article.

JOHN BRODERICK, SUFFIELD TOBACCO FARMER

by Wendy Taylor

A genealogical query from a relative in Okinawa led me to a photo and story about a Lithuanian immigrant to Suffield. John Broderick was a tobacco farmer as you can tell by this amazing photo. Some of his descendants who visited Suffield were kind enough to share their photos and stories.



John was born Jonas Budvytas in Sveksna, Lithuania. He came to the US around 1899, and married a girl from his home town, Caterina Gedrim. They started their life in New York, where their first child Jean was born. They moved to East Windsor where John was a laborer. When he put together enough money, they bought land in Suffield on Boston Neck. His financial success allowed him to donate money for a stained glass window at Holy Trinity Lithuanian Church in Hartford, with the inscription: "Jonas ir Kotrina Budvyčia". The window is still there. In 1908, a Windsor Locks Journal article said, "the Connecticut Railway company...put on a special car Sunday mornings [in Poquonock] for the convenience of the Polish and Lithuanian Catholics who attend church in Hartford...the first car...which left here at 7:30 a.m., was crowded."

John and Catherine would have two other children, but both died young. John died in 1934, and Catherine followed him two decades later.

OUR GRATITUDE LIST IS LONG Thanks to...

Curator Lester Smith – For his curiosity & careful oversight

Curator Christine Ritok – For her expertise, respect and vision

President Art Sikes – For his diligence

Anne Borg – For her archival work and upkeep of house and grounds

Jan Peake and Barry Sisk – For being stalwart docents

Jimmy Kent – For excellent repairs

Bill O'Brien – For being Lester's right-hand man

Marjorie Begin & Joe Artioli – For her beautiful handcrafted wreaths and to Joe for hanging them

Nancy Noble, Terry Mandirola, Jan Peake and Anne Borg – For their talent in decorating the house

To all bakers and docents – For helping with HolidayFest

To the Officers, Trustees & Members of the Historical Society

To the Anonymous Donor of the HolidayFest exhibit



As of this printing, Lester is recovering well at Suffield House following his accident.

Didilian *continued from page 1*

electricity, no running water and an outhouse but the kids loved it. Daughter Miriam would walk down the mountain and then to the center of West Suffield to use a phone booth and stay in touch with her friends. Her brother would get water from the nearby stream for them to use while at the cabin. Her father dug irrigation channels, cleared the road and dug out a small pond so they had a swimming hole that was fed by the spring. Eventually Ara donated the land to the town to the Suffield Land Conservancy.

In 1955 Bigelow sent Ara and the family to Amsterdam, New York to preside over a subsidiary factory. Sixteen-year-old Miriam was heartbroken to leave Suffield but still has fond memories of her time here on River Blvd. And although Ara Dildilian spent only 20 years in Suffield, he apparently loved it because 31 years later upon his death he came to his final resting place in Woodlawn Cemetery on Bridge Street.

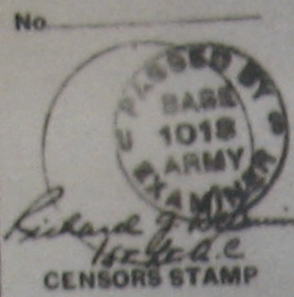
RICHARD J. DE BRUIN
1ST LIEUT. O-562848
SENDER'S NAME

328TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
SENDER'S ADDRESS
APO 637, c/o PM NY, NY

25 AUGUST 1942
DATE

JOHN A. WASHBURN & FAMILY
MAIN STREET
SUFFIELD, CONNECTICUT U.S.A.

25 AUG 1942



England.

Dear John, Sal, Ruthie, and Howard,

Certainly was glad to receive your letter and to hear about the new arrival. Certainly was glad to receive your letter and to hear about the new arrival. Certainly was glad to receive your letter and to hear about the new arrival.

WORLD WAR II LETTERS, PART IV *by Barry Sisk*

This series of articles about WWII Army Air Force pilots began in 2020 on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of V-E Day.

While stationed in England, First Lt. Richard J. DeBruin was one of four pilots who wrote to the Washburn family of Suffield, Connecticut: John and Sal (Sarah) Washburn, their 2-year-old daughter Ruthie and the newborn son Howard. He became a friend of the Washburns while based at Bradley Army Air Field in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, as part of the 328th Fighter Squadron (October 7 - November 1, 1942). The following are excerpts from his 25 August 1942 letter from England.

DeBruin wrote: "Congratulations, Pop and Mom, and I'll drop in for my cigar on the way back to good old Wisconsin. Bet Ruthie is all eyes and plenty excited about her baby brother. What is Howard going to be, John, a future football hero, or our next President?"

Richard mentions that he is kept pretty busy and had yet to visit any of their mutual friends from the Bradley Army Air Field, who were now stationed nearby. He was keeping up with missions and achievements through the local Army paper, "Stars and Stripes." He also mentions having received much mail from his wife Evy and pictures of little Dale, who now had four front teeth. "Surely wish I could be around to watch her progress. But I'll have my day!"

"Considering everything, things are fine over here. I manage to get around a bit and see some of the sights. Plan on visiting London after pay-day. The boys that have been there, say one visit is enough, but I have to pay my respects to the King and Queen just once. Have been in to Cambridge a few times looking over all the colleges, and taking in a few dances and some very old movies."

After his discharge, he returned to his family in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he died on February 18, 2003. His wife, Evelyn, died on October 11, 2012.

dances and some very old movies. All for now, and give my regards to Grandma and the rest.

V-MAIL

Dick

SHS'S FIRST EMPLOYEE

by Jackie Hemond



This April, Christine Ritok, the King House Museum's first employee is approaching her first-year anniversary as a curator. She holds a BA in history and art history from Kalamazoo College and an MA from the Parsons School of Design/Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Institution in the

History of Decorative Arts & Design. She gained experience as a curator at Historic Deerfield, Cooper-Hewitt, the National Design Museum, the Museum of the City of New York and the Detroit Institute of Arts. Christine's special expertise is 18th and 19th-century American furniture craftsmanship, ornament and upholstery. She is also interested in European and American sculpture and decorative arts, and the history of collecting.

Approximately 5,400 items, the majority of the collection, has been entered into an electronic database from Curator Lester Smith's meticulous notes, transcribed and enhanced by Christine, an accomplishment helped in part by previous volunteer work. The exhibition room is better lit, more storage space was found, better preservation techniques and pest control are being implemented. After organizing the curator's office, Masonic symbols discovered by Lester, are now visible. She and Lester surmise that the room was possibly used for secret Masonic meetings during the period of anti-Masonic sentiments beginning in the 1820s.

A particular delight for Christine is to listen to Lester recount the stories of Suffield, its history, people and myths. They have traveled together throughout the town. He pointed out the highlights, while she recorded him.

In a November program, attended by locals and antique experts, Christine and Kevin G. Ferrigno presented a program on their discovery of an account ledger of Lemuel Adams (1769-1850), a partner in the prominent Hartford cabinetmaking firm Kneeland & Adams. Christine mounted a stellar exhibit for the museum's annual HolidayFest in December. Choosing disparate treasures from an anonymous lender, Christine presented a new way of thinking about local history: How and what do individuals collect? What does a museum exhibit?

Future plans include a detailed collection policy, repurposing the King House rooms to display different eras in the home's history, an updated docent's narrative, the addition and training of more docents, articles to publish, more programs and events-particularly for the upcoming celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, an archaeological study of the grounds and fundraising for the building of a storage facility. Lots to do!

DR. AZARIAH P. SHERWIN

by Wendy Taylor

Azariah Proctor Sherwin was born in Hermon, New York. He came to Suffield in 1885 after studying medicine at the Chicago Hahnemann Institute and the New York Homeopathic Medical College. As a doctor in Suffield, he delivered my Great Grandmother, Lillian Sherwin Reid in 1897. Family lore says Lillian was given the middle name of Sherwin, in honor of Dr. Sherwin.

While cleaning the attic, we came across a pamphlet from Second Baptist Church detailing the events of his funeral at Second Baptist Church on November 25, 1910. Dr. Sherwin died at home, of complications due to pneumonia. "This community, to which he devoted practically his entire professional career, deeply feels the loss of a successful physician, a genuine friend, a wise counselor, a helpful citizen and a good man."



The pamphlet continued "His nature was simple, frank to a fault, and generous. His feelings had a tenderness and delicacy that showed the gentleman, strong in his convictions, yet tolerant of the opinions of others ... It was an unusual tribute to the man, and to his life, that on the afternoon of his funeral the places of business were closed."

Dr. Sherwin married Lillian Bell Fenn of Waterbury, they had two children and lived on Day Avenue.

Naturally, I would now like to know – was Great Grandma Lillian also named for Dr. Sherwin's wife?! Does your family have any Dr. Sherwin stories? If you don't mind sharing with the Kent Memorial Library's historical room, send them to me at wendy@suffield-library.org.

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Like Us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/SuffieldConnecticutHistory/

King House Museum
232 South Main Street

Open to the Public, Free
Wednesdays and Saturdays
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
May through September

Newsletter
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Polish Heritage Society

Mondays, February 6, March 6, April 3, and May 1
Suffield Ambulance Center 10:00 a.m.

Genealogy 101: Starting your Family Research

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Suffield Senior Center & via Zoom 7:00 p.m.

With more genealogy resources online than ever before, how do you determine which are reliable or worth paying for? Join Society President Art Sikes, Jr., for an introduction: what questions to ask, where to find resources, and how to organize your findings.

Story of Two Blacks Owned by Oliver Phelps and His Impact on the Haudenosaunee

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

Suffield Senior Center & via Zoom 7:00 p.m.

Suffield Academy students will share history about individuals that Oliver Phelps enslaved when he lived in Suffield's Phelps-Hatheway House, as well as original history about Phelps's impact on the Haudenosaunee, commonly referred to as Iroquois or Six Nations.

Suffield Polish History

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

Suffield Senior Center & via Zoom 7:00 p.m.

Sara Zak, author of "Suffield Stories from Another Half-Century," researched many subjects pertinent to the history of the Polish presence in our town in the late 1890s. Her program will explore the history and culture of Polish immigrants.

Windows of Suffield

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Suffield Senior Center & via Zoom 7:00 p.m.

Using the historic photographs of Delphina Clark, Art Sikes, Jr., will explore Suffield history and architecture through its historic windows. Join us to explore innovative and interesting designs as we consider Suffield's windows to the past.

TRIVIA ANSWERS: 1a., 2c, and 3c.

NOTE: 2.c. The revenueurs discovered that Halsey J. Wright was in the habit of covertly shipping his Suffield bootleg brandy to other towns. No record of his fine was found. Around 1888, Halsey was caught selling unlicensed gin and fined \$6,500. In 1890, he was caught selling milk which consisted of mostly water for which he was fined \$50 and costs. Perhaps all of his chicanery was due to the loss of his new and extensive tobacco shed which was blown down in a May 1880 hurricane. He must have needed to recoup some money!

3.c. A fire started in the cellar and damaged most of the first floor.

SHS Officers: Arthur Sikes, Jr., *President*; Jackie Hemond, *Vice President*; Joe Artioli, *Treasurer*; Jan Peake, *Secretary*; Lester Smith, *Historian & Curator*; Christine Ritok, *Associate Curator*. **Trustees:** Anne Borg, Christopher Childs, Justin Drenzek, Nancy Noble, Norman Noble, James Reeves, Dianne Seaman, Robert Stewart, William Sullivan, Wendy Taylor, Jennifer Yergeau, and Sara Zak Ed Chase, *Trustee Emeritus*