



Stony Brook **CURRENTS**

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The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

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Kozikowski's barn on Hill Street in its prime.

THE KOZIKOWSKI BARN

by Laurie Tavino

"When Harry Kozikowski's father went to Hartford to fill out citizenship papers, it was the day of the 1938 hurricane. His father made it back safely but trees blocked the road a mile from the house. Walking the rest of the way home, he saw that many of his farm buildings had collapsed, but the house was intact. It was the same scenario forty-one years later when the 1979 tornado struck the farm." (From an article on Harry Kozikowski by Jackie Hemond.)

A violent F4 tornado touched down on October 3, 1979. I was away at college but when I came home for the summer I saw the destruction. The top two photos on the left show the barn's before and after appearances.

Even as a teenager, I loved the open views on Hill Street. Below those two photographs is a painting I did many years later of the majestic barn that was lost.

A horse weathervane stood atop the cupola on the Kozikowski barn. Hear-say has it that during the tornado the weathervane sailed through the air to Southwick. In reality the weathervane plummeted to the earth, landing next to the demolished barn. No matter what happened, the weathervane survived and here it is.

INSTRUMENTS OF THE SKIES: PHELPS-HATHEWAY'S WEATHERVANES

by Lynn Mervosh, Site Administrator, North Central Region, Connecticut Landmarks (CTL)

Weather vanes above churches, homes, and barns serve the dual purpose of decoration and meteorological instruments. The earliest recorded weather vane honored the Greek god Triton and was located atop the Tower of the Winds in Athens, built ca. 48 BC. To the ancients, the winds had divine powers and a vane served to capture humankind's ability to chart and harness this unearthly force.

In later times, wealthy landowners installed weather vanes to predict short-range shifts in conditions and to discern seasonal change. The 9th-century Vikings made use of these instruments as navigational tools for nautical conquests. Years later, from met function in the banners found in medieval Britain, Normandy and Germany. Derived from the Anglo Saxon "fane" meaning flag, vanes of cloth showed archers important wind direction. Now embellished with a family crest or coat of arms of the resident lord, the weather vane's importance as a meteorological tool lessened in favor of its decorative appeal.

Early American weather vanes often took the shape of a "weather cock". George Washington commemorated the end of the Revolutionary War by adorning his estate at Mount Vernon with a "Dove of Peace".

Patriotic designs abounded in the United States from the late 18th through 20th centuries. The Goddess of Liberty, the Federal Eagle, as well as military objects and racehorses trended on homes, churches and civic establishments. It is at this time that prominent manufacturers began to emerge such as L.W. Cushing, and J.W. Fiske.

Suffield is home to many period and reproduction weather vanes atop public and private buildings. The Phelps-Hatheway House and Garden alone has almost 100 weather vanes donated in 1975 by the collector Henry M. Clark, husband of Delphina H. Clark, noted Suffield historian. To showcase this gift, a state-wide tour of the vanes took place between September 1985 and December 1986 in honor of the 350th anniversary of Connecticut's founding and of Connecticut Landmark's (CTL's) 50th anniversary. During this period, ten of the largest museums in the state hosted weather vanes in a much-anticipated nod to collection stewardship. Hailed



PHOTO BY SHAELYN AMAIO,
COURTESY OF
CONNECTICUT LANDMARKS

as one of the most "significant and affordable and exciting project leap since the Bicentennial" (Richard E. Ballard, President Yale Co-op to Patrick McFadden, Jr., December 31, 1984), the traveling exhibition garnered attention via lectures, symposia and public events funded through the Connecticut National Bank, Hartford.

Selecting vanes for the 350th anniversary tour must have been difficult! Thirty-four were initially chosen, some of which were removed due to their fragile condition; a delicate "bee" vane, for example, suffered broken limbs in the

process and was forced to remain in Suffield. Custom-built stands, which still exist today, were crafted in the shop of Michael Modugno of South Windsor.

A few of the most popular vanes from the exhibition include:

- "Grasshopper", anonymous, early 20th century. The grasshopper was frequently found on top of an exchange or financial institution. The earliest example was located on top of Fanueil Hall, Boston, 1742, and was inspired by the 11-foot hopper on the Royal Exchange, London.
- "Columbia" or "Goddess of Liberty", L.W. Cushing and White Manufacturer, 1865-1883. The original model was carved by Henry Leach, Boston.
- "Red Fox Running" or "Leaping Fox", L.W. Cushing and Sons, 1883. A popular subject, the fox was often mounted on a long iron rod with a hound chasing behind. This vane has assumed a permanent place in CTL's history as the inspiration behind our logo. The jaunty fox of sheet copper hammered over a carved wooden form still bears traces of its original goldleaf. "Red Fox Running" is on display in CTL's Hartford office.
- "Crowing Rooster on Ball with Arrow", J.W. Fiske, 1875-1900. The cock, crowing at daybreak, is the emblem of vigilance. When positioned on places of Christian worship, it symbolizes St. Peter's denial of Christ.
- "Ram", J.W. Fiske, 1883. This vane was crafted in Ohio and is often referred to as "Cotswold sheep".
- "Hose Cart with Driver", A.B. and W.T. Westervelt, 1883. Fire apparatus was a popular symbol for firehouses. Due to its size and weight, this vane is perched on a weighted stand in the Phelps-Hatheway Visitor's Center.

- “Peacock”, L.W. Cushing and Sons, late 19th century. Echoing the motif of the peacock found in the Réveillon wallpaper in the Phelps addition of the Phelps-Hathaway House, the peacock was a popular decorative element from the late 18th to early 19th century. Its magnificent tail, with vibrant eyed pattern, is a symbol of watchfulness.

Upon their return from the tour, the vanes were housed in the Hatheway barn until a select few were moved to the Visitor’s Center for display. This season, we invite you to visit our site to take in the splendor of Henry Clark’s outstanding collection.

The Phelps-Hatheway House and Garden will open on Saturday, May 4 from 1-4pm. Tour of the museum will be available each second Sunday of the month from May-October. The Visitor’s Center and Hatheway Barn are also open during programs and events, free of charge. Please visit our website at www.ctlandmarks.org for more information. Whatever the weather, we’ll look forward to your visit!

SUFFIELD TORNADO: NOTHING NEW

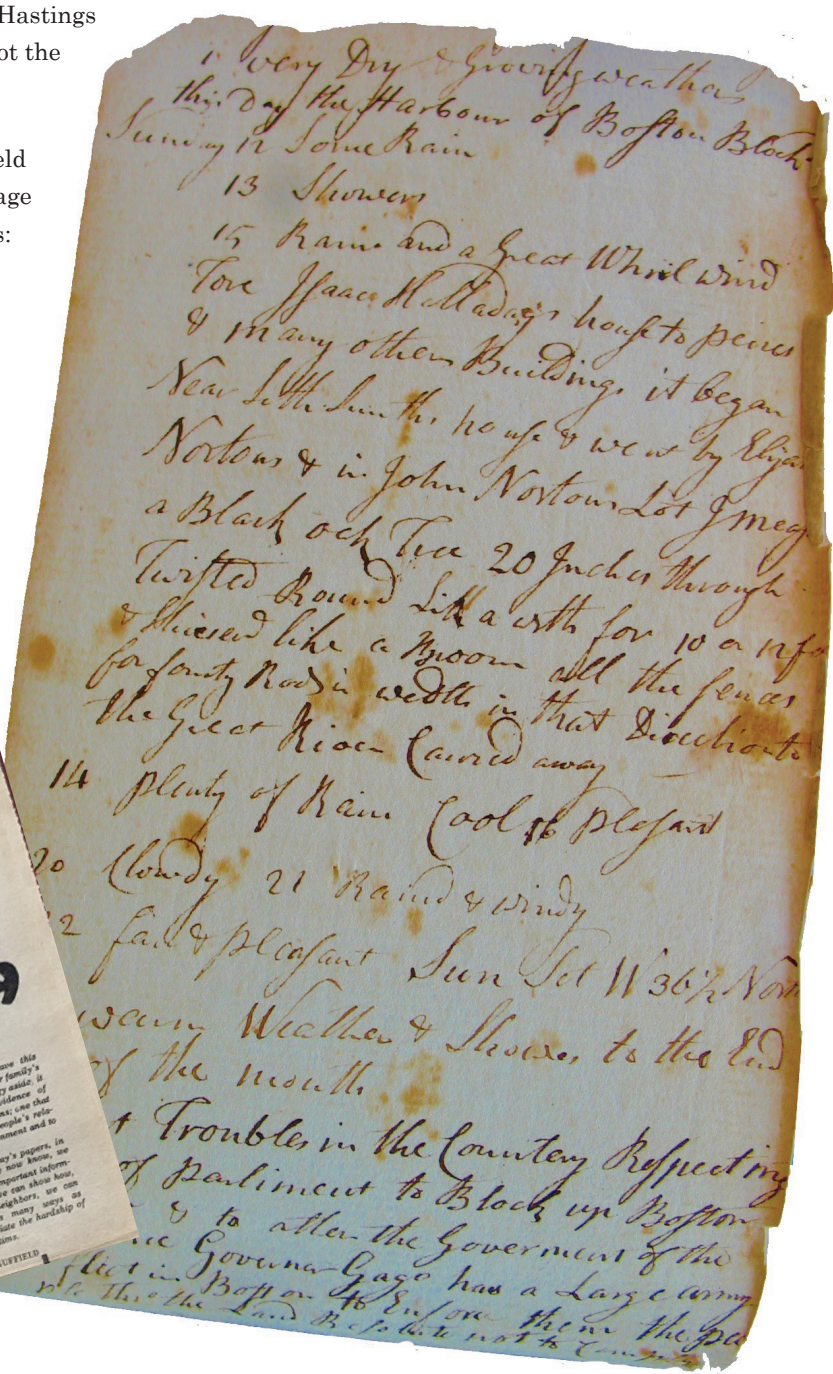
by Barry Sisk

In October, 1979, a tornado touched down in Poquonnock, traveled into Windsor Locks at Bradley International Airport, then into Suffield heading north bouncing along Hill Street. The Hastings Hill area suffered some severe damage. However, this was not the first tornado to do damage in Suffield.

On June 15, 1774, a tornado that damaged property in Suffield was noted in the journal of Joseph Pease (1728-1794). The page illustrated here has not been entirely deciphered but it reads:

“15: Rain and a great whirl wind tore Horace Halladay’s house to pieces & many other buildings. It began near Seth Smith’s house & went by Elijah Norton’s & in John Norton’s lot I measured a black oak tree 20 inches through twisted round like a _?_ for 10 or _?_ & slivered like a broom all the fences for forty rods [660 feet] in width in that direction to the great river carried away.”

The use of the words “great whirl wind” and “twisted round” suggest a tornado. Further research may fill in the blanks.



CATASTROPHIC WEATHER AND UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES EXPERIENCED IN SUFFIELD

by Jackie Hemond

1816: The Year Without a Summer

In 1816, there was frost every month and snow in summer. Warm and cold weather fluctuated throughout the year. In July, August and September, there were periods of snow but also drought and extreme heat. Only 10% of the crops were harvested. There was little corn or wheat. Animals starved. Prices increased and the drought caused forest fires which filled the skies with smoke.

The cause of the extreme weather was an increase in sunspot activity, which cooled the earth's temperature, and volcanic dust from the April eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia, which blocked out the sun. The Tambora event, ten times more powerful than the Krakatoa eruption in 1883, was the largest of four separate volcanoes which erupted in 1816. The Krakatoa eruption got big press reaction in 1883 because it erupted after the invention of the telegraph, which quickly spread the news of the eruption. That eruption also impacted weather, and the temperature fell an average of .4 degrees in the Northern Hemisphere.

1816 wasn't the only bad year. 1812 through 1818 were abnormally cold, especially the year 1817. Hoping to find better weather and better farmland, New Englanders abandoned their farms and flocked to Ohio, Connecticut's Western Reserve. Connecticut's population grew slowly in the aftermath of this cold, cold weather.

November 1833: When the Stars Fell from the Sky

Countless shooting stars rained down on the earth in November 1833 for two days. Many people dropped to their knees and prayed fearing Judgment Day was at hand. Instead, it was a phenomenon known as the Leonid Meteor Storm. The Leonids occur every year in November caused by debris from the 55P/Tempel-Tuttle comet. Over 70,000 meteors lit up the sky in an hour, normally the count is just 10 to 15 meteors per hour. The display was visible all over North America, east of the Rockies. The storm gave birth to the study of meteor astronomy. We now know that the Leonid Meteor Storm occurs every 33 years. Expect to see a good one in this area in 2031.



March 1936 Flood

The winter of 1935-1936 was a severe one with lower-than-normal temperatures. The combination of heavy rain from three back-to-back storms, enormous amounts of melted snow, and ice jams caused massive flooding from Maine to the mid-Atlantic states. In Holyoke, an ice jam sheared off a huge section of the Holyoke Dam. The Connecticut River crested at record-breaking heights which have not been exceeded. At Thompsonville, the river reached 16.6 feet but in Hartford the record was 37.6 feet. Communities were cut off, including Springfield, which became an island. Between 150 and 200 lives were lost. Property damage in New England was estimated to exceed \$100,000,000.



The water receded after two weeks, but thick mud remained. Weeks and months afterwards, people still stood in breadlines. Standing pools of water bred mosquitoes and disease. A massive typhoid vaccination ensued. That June, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Flood Control Act, which enabled the Army Corps of Engineers to build levees and flood walls throughout America.

The Long Island Express: The Hurricane of 1938

On September 21, 1938, with no warning from the weather service, a hurricane galloped across Connecticut creating devastation everywhere. It was New England's first hurricane since 1815. Occurring during the full moon when tides were at their highest, waves reached heights of 40 to 50 feet. Winds exceeded 100 mph. The destruction was so great that damaged trees and buildings were still in the affected areas as late as 1951. The coastal regions of Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut were hit the worst, but Suffield had its share of destruction. The

steeple of the 1st Congregational Church was blown off, tobacco sheds were flattened, trees fell on roads and buildings, power lines were down and water was everywhere. All total, 682 people were killed, and 700 were injured in New England alone. The hurricane destroyed 4,500 homes, 2,600 boats, and 26,000 automobiles.

1955 Flood

Two back-to-back hurricanes caused the worst flooding in Connecticut in recorded history. *Connie*, the first hurricane, merely grazed the state on August 11 and 12, but dropped about four to six inches of rain. When *Hurricane Diane* passed by just five days later, the ground was still saturated and set the stage for the massive flooding that occurred.

Connecticut received the most rainfall from the second storm, particularly in areas north and west of Hartford, with Suffield receiving about 12 inches of rain in 24 hours. Total rainfall for the month of August for the Suffield area is estimated to be about 22 inches. August 1955 is the wettest month on record for Connecticut. Seventy-seven people died from the flooding in Connecticut with damages amounting to \$350 million in 1955 currency. The flooding changed the topography of many towns, but fortunately not Suffield. Two months later, another storm hit southwest New England, dumping another 12 to 14 inches.

“A nationwide flood program was not enacted until the passage of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968. After the floods from *Diane*, the American federal government provided funding for the Army Corps of Engineers to construct dams and reservoirs throughout New England to mitigate future flooding. In about 14 years, the Corps built 29 dams in Connecticut alone at the cost of \$70 million, including three along the Connecticut River.” (<https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/hg/disasters/1955Floods>)



The Tornado of 1979

Residents had no idea that the forecast for afternoon rain and wind were the precursor to a tornado on October 3, 1979. It was about 2:50 p.m. and the sky was dark, then came an eerie glow in the sky and the shattering of windows. A Connecticut State trooper saw the tail of a tornado touch down between Exits 39 and 40 on Interstate 91, near the border of Windsor and Windsor Locks. The wind picked up from 8 to 86 mph in seconds. The barometric pressure nosedived and half-inch hailstones drilled down from the sky between Hartford and Springfield.

A United Airlines plane with 114 passengers was attempting to land but the pilot was able to abort the landing just in time. The tornado moved straight north, causing damage to Suffield, Feeding Hills, Springfield and surrounding towns. It lifted about five miles north of the Massachusetts border. In its aftermath almost three inches of rain fell. Toppled aircraft, shorn roofs, rolled-over vehicles, collapsed buildings, uprooted trees, a power outage and dazed residents were left in the wake of the brief but intense storm.

Ella Grasso quickly came to assess the damage. Her house in Windsor Locks was a block from the tornado's path but she hadn't been home. President Carter declared the area a disaster zone. Three deaths and 600 injuries were recorded. At least 38 businesses were damaged or destroyed, 65 homes were completely destroyed, and at least 75 homes and 25 tobacco sheds were damaged. Thirty vintage aircraft were damaged or destroyed, constituted about 90% of the artifacts at the New England Air Museum at Bradley Airport. Most of the state's National Guard helicopters were demolished. It was one of the costliest storms in New England history.

PHOTOS: Above left: *Antique drawing of the meteor shower*; Far left: *1938 First Congregational Church*; Above, top photo: *1955 Business on Depot Street (Mountain Road)*; Above, bottom photo: *Stony Brook Dam*.

6 AN EXTRAORDINARY LEGACY, AN UNPRECEDENTED DONATION

by Christine Ritok, Curator

Over the past year, the Society has been processing an amazing donation: the lifetime Suffield history collection of Lester Smith. Lester served as Curator of the King House for over 40 years, and more than two decades as Town Historian. Since *The Suffield Observer's* inception in 1999 until last year, he was a writer and photojournalist for the paper. Many readers know Lester: his passion for the history of Suffield and his dogged inquiries into the distant past and contemporary events in town made him an indelible presence in the area.

I began working at the King House two years ago, having first visited in 2016. I'll never forget my first visit: Lester's knowledge, intelligence, and curiosity made an impression. And he obviously kept very busy – there were projects ongoing throughout the house, and he had turned the kitchen into an active workspace. As

I now appreciate more fully, he devoted much of his long life to supporting local history. He has been a resource to many, locally and, as his correspondence makes clear, around the world, in inquiries and projects related to Suffield and regional history. He served as a member or on the board of numerous organizations, and remains a mentor and friend to many of us who share his interests.

Lester and his son Peter Smith have generously permitted me to take any items of interest from Lester's house to the King House Museum and add them to the Society's collection. Given Lester's longstanding passion for Suffield, and his prolific collecting, the material is deep and rich. I refer to going through his collections as "sluicing" and see myself as mining for history gold. I am frequently asked what are you taking out of Lester's house? The short answer is: amazing material that likely exists nowhere else. At present, over 1,000 items have been accessioned into the museum's collection, and dozens of linear feet of research materials are being made accessible to anyone interested. Each week, I visit Lester with a bag full of questions, and I always leave with pages of answers and notes. He and I have developed a wonderful relationship, and his collegiality and friendship have enriched my life in ways I cannot fully express.

Lester was born in St. Louis, Missouri, and moved to New Haven as a baby with his parents and two siblings. After graduating from MIT, he took a job designing aircraft propellers with Hamilton Standard and moved to Suffield in 1954. I often

joke with Lester that he has the zeal of a convert in his love of all things Suffield. But he is part of a long and distinguished tradition of town historians, born in or transplanted to Suffield. They include Hezekiah Spencer Sheldon (1820-1903), Delphina Hammer Clark (1892-1984), Hawley Rising (1925-2012), Roger Loomis (1916-1999), and many



others. Lester stands out because

he understands that history is continuously happening and committed to preserving recent history alongside interpreting the past. One of his collecting passions is Suffieldiana, a term he invented which refers to all things Suffield: advertising and promotional materials; ephemera including postcards, matchbooks, menus, and countless other items; work by local artists; cups, mugs, and other serveware featuring area businesses and organizations; maps, maps and more maps; and items from town schools. In his honor, the special exhibit this summer will be "Suffieldiana: Lester Smith Collects," and will feature items that illustrate the town's recent history and Lester's unyielding commitment to preserving it. Special thanks to Peter Smith, Anne Borg, and Jackie Hemond for their support of and assistance in facilitating the donation of Lester's truly once-in-a-lifetime collection.

PHOTOS: Left: Lester Smith served as an official emissary to "daughter-town" Suffield, Ohio's bicentennial celebration in 2002. Right: Lester in 2007 with one of his many read cars.

DUMPSTER DIVE PAYS OFF!

by Anne Borg, Archivist ⁷

Last summer we received a message from a man in Pennsylvania. While walking his dog, he found an antique book in a dumpster in front of a house being cleared out. It was an account book kept by John Leavitt (1724-1798) of Suffield.

The book was subsequently shipped to me. It contains mostly financial records and covers the years primarily 1760's to 1780's during an important period of American history which included the French and Indian Wars locally, the American Revolution and is a detailed look at everyday life in early Suffield. It includes some familiar names, e.g., Alexander King, Joseph Pease, Oliver Phelps, Seth Austin, Ebenezer Gay and others. John Leavitt appears to have been a farmer and a carpenter. Entries bear this out as he was dealing in corn, rye, potatoes, apples, salt pork, wood and timber as well as making and mending furniture, lending his oxen, boarding horses and doing odd jobs. The book also contains a few pages of poetry and prayers, the receiving and paying out of town school money for the School Committee, and some legal judgements as Justice of the Peace.

There is also mention of a second book, which was not in the dumpster, and may well be lost to history. The account book will be added to the extensive collection in the Samuel R. Spencer Historical Room at the Kent Memorial Library. We are so fortunate that this book has returned to its original home.

John Leavitt was the son of Joshua Leavitt (1687-1732) and Hannah Devotion (1694-1726) and was born in 1724, one of eight children. He married Abia Kent (1727-1782) in 1745 and had twelve children, son Thaddeus Sr. being the most well-known among

Suffield historians as an entrepreneurial merchant who ran a thriving store on the west side of North Main Street. John lived first on Crooked Lane (Mapleton Avenue) and later bought Asaph Leavitt's home on the west side of North Main. John served in the French and Indian Wars and appears from some entries to be Captain John. His son John, born 1755, is also referred to as Captain John and may have served in the Revolution or in the

militia. (Robert Alcorn in his book *Biography of a Town* does not distinguish between Sr. and Jr. in his list of veterans.)

I want to focus here on an extraordinary entry at the beginning of John's book. He has included "An account of the Inhabitants of the Town of Suffield Taken ye 1 Sepr 1776." This is an extremely early and very detailed census. It includes males and females under 10, 10 to 20, 20 to 70, above 70 plus militia members and Negro males and females below 20 and above 20. Nowhere else in Suffield records have I come across such early information. There was a total population of 2,018 at this time. 223 were officers or soldiers in militia rolls and 15 were able-bodied males age 15 to 45 who were in the militia. Sixty-nine were in the Continental Army and 18 were "men raised for Defense of the colony." There were 23 Negroes living in Suffield, most probably enslaved.

An account of the Inhabitants of the Town of Suffield Taken ye 1 Sep^r 1776

males under 10 years	332
female under 10 years	351
males between 10 & 20 married or single	245 Single married 0
female between 10 & 20 married or single	277 Single married 0
males between 20 & 70 married or single	293 M 107 Single
female between 20 & 70 married or single	293 M 145 S
males above 70 married or single	12 M 50
female above 70 married or single	12 M 511
Officers & Soldiers in Militia Rolls	223
able Body men between 15 & 45 not in militia rolls	15
Men in the continental army	69
men raised for Defense of the colony near & distant	18
Negro males under 20	7
Negro female under 20	3
Negro male above 20	10
Negro female above 20	3

included in the foregoing numbers

Wendy Taylor, a librarian at the Kent Memorial Library, led me to The Colonial Records of Connecticut 1775-1776 which gave me the following information from May 1776. It was resolved that selectmen take and transmit to the Governor "a particular and exact account of all persons in their respective towns in this Colony, as well as negroes or slaves for life as white persons..." and include ages, sex and militia. It was needed by September 1 so that the General Assembly could answer a request from John Hancock, Esq, President of the Continental Congress. According to research done by Wendy on the State Library's web site, only three other towns in Connecticut have noted that they have a record of the original census. John Leavitt has done us an amazing service by recording this census. It leads one to wonder if he was one of the selectmen in town at the time, tasked with counting the inhabitants. Only further research may tell. We do know he was a Representative to the General Assembly in 1775, so he was obviously interested and involved in current affairs.

John died in Suffield in 1798, and his obituary appeared in *The Impartial Herald*, the earliest newspaper printed in Suffield which only lasted for a couple of years.

Sources: Robert Alcorn's *Biography of a Town* and the Delphina Clark Notebooks at the Kent Memorial Library

8 THE ELIHU KENT JR. HOUSE

by Jackie Hemond

Elihu Kent, the father of Elihu Kent, Jr., led a militia of 59 Suffield men to Lexington in April 1775, the day after British soldiers and colonists clashed at the start of the Revolutionary War. Elihu, Jr. aged 16, marched with his father that day. Elihu, Jr. continued to fight in the war until he was captured in 1776 during the Battle of Long Island and confined in the Rhinelander Sugar House, a notorious prison where many died. Upon his return to Suffield, he married Elizabeth Fitch in 1780, and became a farmer and tavernkeeper. In 1787, he built a Georgian-style house with a symmetric façade and end chimneys at what is now 161 South Main Street on land transferred to him from his father. Elihu lived there with his wife and four children. This house is known as the Elihu Kent Jr. House, which in this article will be referred to as the House.

Around 1793, Elihu, Jr. moved to a smaller house located at 221 South Main Street. His half-brother Gamaliel then lived in the House until 1804 when he moved to the Connecticut Reserve [now Ohio]. Elihu, Jr. died in his second house in 1813, a year before his father. The House had a succession of owners including Charles S. Kurvin, who in 1912 moved to a Victorian house he built next door to it. After that, the House remained vacant for 50 years.

The current residents are Jean Matejek and Dan Perakes. The outside of the house probably looks the same as when Elihu lived there although the rear ell and dormers were added in the 20th century. The carriage house once associated with the house became the property of the Victorian house.

Inside, significant changes were made. It is difficult to ascertain what the inside once looked like, although vestiges remain. There are many fireplaces, some of them original. The front entrance design is reminiscent of some colonial houses with a short entrance hall leading to a staircase with a “tight run around.” There is antique lath and lime plaster insulation on the stairs ascending to the attic. Original door hardware is still in use. Surprising features are the original closets since early American houses had few closets. The floorboards are wide, probably original, including one floorboard upstairs which is extra wide. Jean called the wide board a King’s Board. In colonial times, extra big trees were reserved for ship masts and booms built for the king’s navy. Some say that it was illegal for early Americans to use the lumber from large trees for personal use. Whether true or not, it is strange that there is only one extra wide floorboard which was placed in an upstairs room.

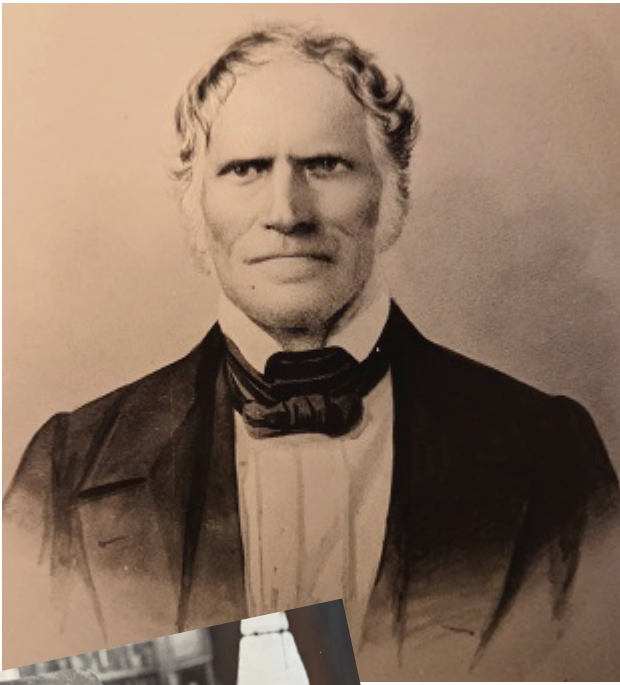


Throughout the house, Jean’s eclectic blend of antiques and contemporary accents is stunning, elegant and pleasingly comfortable. Unlike today’s minimalist style, Jean’s house is a feast of mirrors, decorative boxes, floral arrangements and paintings, all artfully arranged. One wonders what Elihu would think of his house today. I think he would have stayed.

PHOTOS: Top to bottom: Exterior today; modern kitchen with original flooring; original door lock; the lath and lime plaster insulation; and the sitting room.

FURNITURE SPOTLIGHT: ASAPH BISSELL'S DESK

by Jackie Hemond



Caroline D'Otreppe recently donated her great-great-great-grandfather's desk to the King House Museum. His name was Asaph Bissell (1791-1850). Asaph was the ninth of thirteen children born to Isaac Bissell (1749-1822) and his wife Amelia Leavitt (1757-1809). They married on July 4, 1776. Isaac was one of a number of post riders, like Paul Revere, who spread the news of the Battle of Lexington. Isaac and Amelia were originally from Suffield but had moved north to Hanover, New Hampshire prior to Asaph's birth. They are both buried in the Old Center Cemetery in Suffield as are Asaph and his wife Lucy Norton Bissell (1793-1865). When Asaph was six years old, four of his siblings died from an epidemic. Although Asaph's family expected him to serve as an apprentice with his Uncle Thaddeus Leavitt who was a wealthy merchant in Suffield, his siblings' deaths may be why Asaph chose to become a doctor instead.

Asaph was a medical doctor in Suffield from 1815, the same year he graduated from Yale Medical School, until his death in 1850. He was in its second class to graduate from Yale and the first doctor in Suffield educated in a medical school. Asaph began his studies at Dartmouth College in 1811, but when Dr. Nathan Smith, his teacher at Dartmouth, became the first Dean of the Yale Medical School, Bissell followed.

Asaph's handsome desk is a cherry Hepplewhite bookcase secretaire. Hepplewhite furniture was popular during the Federal period, between 1780 to 1810. Hepplewhite desks are tall, slender and graceful. This desk has a hinged front panel that opens downward to become a writing surface and also reveals pigeon holes in which herbs and other materials could be stored. The upper section of the desk has shelves for books. Donor Caroline included some very old books with the desk.

There is considerable speculation about the desk's origins. The desk was likely made by John Fitch Parsons, a Suffield cabinetmaker

although Parsons did not place a verifying mark on his furniture. Some suggest the desk was not built for Asaph but rather was handed down from a family member, received as payment for a medical bill, or acquired from another doctor in town. A record in John Fitch Parsons' account book references a "Meddison and Book case" that he made for Doctor Currier in 1812. Possibly this is the same desk???

Asaph lived in the lovely Greek Revival-style house at 52 South Main Street which was built for him circa 1835. In addition to seeing patients in his home, he made house calls using saddlebags to carry his medicines. Charles S. Spencer, Caroline's father, donated the saddlebags and its assorted nostrums and powders to the Yale Medical School.

PHOTOS: Top to bottom: Portrait of Asaph Bissell from the Yale University Library collection; Dr. Bissell's saddlebags and medical equipment and potions courtesy of Yale Medicine Magazine, Winter/Spring 1998 "When House Calls were Horse Calls" by John Warner, PhD, and the cherry Hepplewhite bookcase secretaire as it stands in the King House Museum.



10 LOCAL HISTORIANS: SUFFIELD FFA CHAPTER HISTORIAN

*by Mary Turner,
Student of the Agriscience Center, Suffield High School*

Tradition and history are a source of pride for the Suffield Regional FFA. Keeping an accurate record of events and making sure all photos are uploaded and easily accessible is important for the entire chapter. When “stationed by the scrapbook” I can maintain a neat and organized scrapbook for future generations in the years to come, so they can look back on the 2023-2024 year. The scrapbook highlights various events and awards that the chapter received.

PHOTOS: *Mary Turner is shown wearing the official dress for FFA in front of hydrangeas outside of Suffield High School; The inset of 2023-2024 scrapbook is open to the two-page spread of the June state convention showcasing Suffield Regional FFA at the annual Connecticut State Convention.*



THE DELPHINA CLARK NOTEBOOKS

by Wendy Taylor

The Delphina Clark Notebooks have been digitized! Delphina Lundsteen (Hammer) Miller Clark (1892-1984) used to live in Suffield, and she loved to research history, including Suffield's. One of her most-used research collections is her Suffield property and family notebooks. She started with the original 1670 Suffield land records and followed the purchase and sale of the lands out to about 1880/1900. The collection includes, in addition to land record information, genealogical and probate information, and anything else she found interesting during her research – there are 11 volumes in this collection!

The original books are at the Kent Memorial Library but they are now digitized and available online at suffield.historyarchives.online/home. She also recreated the old, original Suffield land records which are stored in Springfield, and kept albums of Suffield house photos which include some interiors. These collections are also at the Kent Memorial Library. Questions? You can find me at the library! This digitization project was thanks to an American Rescue Plan Act grant received from the Town of Suffield and given to the Kent Memorial Library Foundation.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Art Sikes

Thirty-nine volunteers worked 1938 hours. Thanks for everyone who helped last year. I hope to see all of you this year along with some new volunteers.

Docents Needed

Docent training will begin soon. Last year's docents did a great job. Most docents are returning, but we need more to share the schedule and spread the workload. The King House will be open to the public starting on Wednesday, May 1st and then every Saturday and Wednesday until the end of September. The hours are 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.

Not all volunteers are docents. If you would like to help but don't want to be a docent, we have openings for a Secretary and on various committees such as the Property or the Collections Committee.

If you think you might be interested in volunteer opportunities at the King House Museum/Suffield Historical Society or if you have other questions, please write to SuffieldHistoricalSociety@gmail.com or call 860-668-0414.

HARTFORD FURNITURE

Hidden Hands: Craftsmen in the Workshops of Aaron Chapin and Aaron Colton

Presented by Curator Christine Ritok and Kevin G. Ferrigno

Do you know what a hockey stick stand is, or a quadrant base? Both are closely associated with furniture production in Hartford County around the turn of the 19th century. Curator Christine Ritok and Kevin G. Ferrigno, ahead of their upcoming article in *American Furniture*, will share recent discoveries about 19th-century Hartford County furniture production, focusing on the successful business practices of first cousins Aaron Chapin and Aaron Colton in their respective shops. Recent research uncovered the identities of their laborers, products, and practices. The presenters will explore how their shops flourished for decades while skilled competitors failed. Join us for “Hidden Hands” on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, 7pm-9pm at the Second Baptist Church or via Zoom.

PHOTO: *Hockey Stick Stand, Inscribed “RColton 1806,” Rhodolphus Colton, Aaron Chapin Shop, Hartford, Connecticut, 1806, Cherry with butternut (Image by Gavin Ashworth).*



WE’VE BEEN BUSY



Bill Sullivan’s American Studies Class surrounds Lester Smith, Curator Emeritus, after presenting a program at Suffield by the River in February. Photo by Bill Sullivan

On a warm day in February, Bob and Anne Borg got to work scraping the paint off at the King House Museum.

Photo by Joe Artioli

You are invited to join us on Saturday, April 13, for a work day at the King House and its yard for our May 1st opening! See details under upcoming events.



WEATHER FOLKLORE FOR APRIL THAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW

compiled by Jackie Hemond

1. If it thunders on All Fool’s Day, it brings good crops of corn and hay.
2. A cold May and a windy April: a full barn.
3. The louder the frog, the more the rain.
4. If the oak is out before the ash then we are in for a splash, But if the ash is out before the oak we are in for a soak.
5. Rain before seven, fine before eleven.
6. Sounds traveling far and wide: a rainy day will betide.
7. A cow with its tail to the west, makes weather the best; a cow with its tail to the east, makes weather the least.
8. A cold and moist April fills the cellar and fattens the cow.
9. Moist April: clear June.
10. Cloudy April: dewy May.
11. Snow in April is manure.

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Like Us on Facebook:
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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
Maggie Philippon, Editor
Jackie Hemond, Compiler

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Upcoming Events

All programs at the Second Baptist Church unless noted otherwise.

Work Day at the King House and Barn

Saturday, April 13, 2024: 9 a.m. to Noon
Rain date: Saturday, April 20
Bring work gloves.

History of the Old Center Cemetery

Tuesday, April 16, 2024: 7 p.m. In-person and zoom
at <https://tinyurl.com/556h7879>

*Bill Sullivan's American Studies class presentation.
If you have information about this historical cemetery to share,
please email Bill Sullivan at bsullivan@suffieldacademy.org*

Opening day at the King House

Wednesday, May 1, 2024: 1 - 4 p.m.
*Free tour of the house and barn. All are welcome! Open every
Wednesday and Saturdays until September 28.*

Farms and Crafts Celebration

Saturday, May 4, 2024: 1 - 4 p.m.
King House Museum grounds
The Museum will be open.

*If inclement weather, the outside program will be canceled but
the King House Museum will be open for tours.*

Hidden Hands

Wednesday, May 15, 2024: 7 p.m.
(please note the date change, no longer May 8)
In-person and zoom

*"The Craftsmen Behind the Hartford Cabinetmaking Shops
of Aaron Chapin & Aaron Colton" presented by Curator
Christine Ritok and Kevin G. Ferrigno.*

Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, May 22, 2024: 7 p.m.
Open to the public.

Doors of Suffield

Wednesday, June 12, 2024: 7 p.m. In-person and zoom
Exploring history through architecture with Art Sikes

Ice Cream Social

Tuesday, July 9, 2024: 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Rain date: Thursday, July 11
King House lawn.

Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, August 21, 2024: 7 p.m.
Open to the public.

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