



The King House Museum

# Stony Brook CURRENTS

Vol. II, No. 3

A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

June 2007

The mission of the Suffield Historical Society is to collect, preserve and stimulate interest in the history of Suffield and the region and to actively share it. The Society hopes to inspire a sense of community, as well as to provide an understanding and appreciation of Suffield's past.

## Suffield Historical Society

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## Early Suffield Proprietor: Quinton Stockwell

by Ed Chase

Richard Melvoin describes Quinton Stockwell as a "poor and struggling fellow." One of five brothers, he moved from Salem to Dorcestor, then to Dedham and on to Hatfield, Massachusetts. The Connecticut River Valley farmland in Hatfield was fertile, but in 1675 - like Suffield - was under Indian attack.

Stockwell moved to Deerfield with his wife Abigail and son John. In September of 1677, he was one of the few brave enough to risk resettlement in Hatfield.

However, just before dark on September 19th, Hatfield was again under siege. Stockwell was one of 21 prisoners taken by Northampton Norotuck Chief Aspelon. The captives were taken to Canada.

Not all of the captives survived, and records describe some deaths from torture. However, through the heroic efforts of two Hatfield men who avoided capture, Quinton Stockwell and several others were ransomed. By late May 1678, he wrote his wife from Albany, New York: "Though we met with great afflictions and trouble since I see you last, yet now here is opportunity of joy and thanksgiving to God."

Five years later, this optimistic and brave man took an oath of allegiance to the settlement in Branford, Connecticut. During the following four years in Branford, Abigail bore them a second son, Eleazur. But in 1683, he saw more opportunity for his family in Suffield and was granted 40 acres on the west side of High Street (now North Main, the second lot south of Russell Ave.).

Despite humble beginnings, Quinton Stockwell became an esteemed and respected townsmen. He held the offices of Highway Surveyor, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Fence Viewer, and served on the committee to build the minister's house. Both his sons married and had families in Suffield, but the name "Stockwell" disappears from Suffield records not long after Abigail's death in 1730.

References from H. S. Sheldon's *History of Suffield* (1879); *New England Outpost* by Richard L. Melvoin (1989); and a letter to the Hon. Samuel R. Spencer from Dr. H. M. Stockwell, a direct descendent of Quinton Stockwell (July 13, 1933).

Quinton died in Suffield on January 22, 1715.

Abigail died in Suffield on May 5, 1730.

## GOOGLE US....

Or use our web address:

<[suffieldhistoricalsociety.org](http://suffieldhistoricalsociety.org)>

Trustee Arthur Sikes tells the *Currents* that a popular page on our website is "Early Suffield Families". The site now contains information on thirty of Suffield's original proprietors and typically follows a family line for three generations.

If you have early ancestors in Suffield, own an early Suffield house or live on a street named for one of these families, visit our website to read about their lives. If you are not comfortable using the web, a printed copy of all the web pages is available at the Kent Memorial Library.

For those interested in more information or other Suffield genealogy, Art reminds all what a treasure house exists at the library. In addition to the family histories located in the reference section, knowledgeable volunteers staff the historical room every Thursday from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Art has built a database in preparation for a book he plans to publish, *Suffield Families, from settlement to the Federal Census, 1670-1790*. The Historical Society's family page has been gleaned from his research.

"I would like to share some of the information that I have collected," says Sikes. By exchanging information with descendents living today, Art hopes to improve the quality of his data as well as to be of service to those involved in genealogical searches.

He can be contacted at 1175 River Boulevard in Suffield or at [ArtSikes@aol.com](mailto:ArtSikes@aol.com).

## WORK DAYS

by Anne Borg

A big thank you goes to Society members who volunteered their time and their backs to get the King House ready for the summer season of visitors. On April 17 Nancy Noble, Peg Shaughnessy, Terry Mandirola, Nancy Smith and Jan Peake vacuumed, dusted and washed inside the house. Two days later Jim Baker, Jim Reeves, Blair Childs, Steve Estee, Peg Shaughnessy and Nancy Noble as well as Lester Smith and I trimmed and cleaned up the yard, swept the outhouse, cleaned the bathroom and began the major project of re-laying the gravel path to the house. This last project demanded true sweat equity, as those wielding the pick ax can attest! Thanks to all of you who so willingly gave up a morning to help out.



*SHS members on the battlefield during recent Society-sponsored trip to Saratoga Springs*

## WHAT IS A PROPRIETOR?

Our first page articles as well as our website refer to "proprietors" of Suffield. Here SHS President Ed Chase describes their role in early Suffield.

In October 1670, the General Court of Massachusetts accepted a petition to settle the Stony Brooke Plantation (now Suffield) and simultaneously appointed a committee "...for the managing of the affaires of this township receiving inhabitants, granting land within the tract..."

Captain John Pynchon headed the committee with Quartermaster George Colton, Ensign Benjamin Cooley, Roland Thomas, Captain Elizur Holyoke, and Lieutenant Thomas Cooper.

The committee met periodically from 1670 to 1682\*, making grants of land for the settlement of Suffield.

A total of 121 land grants (6,258 acres) were issued by the committee, and the recipients of these grants are known as the *Original Proprietors*.

In 1682, this committee was replaced by the proprietors themselves. Land grants, after the committee dissolved, were decisions made by the majority of proprietors. All subsequent grantees are known as *Early Proprietors*.

More than 15,000 acres were owned, controlled, and divided as the majority directed.

\* *The committee did not meet in 1675 when Suffield was burned and abandoned because of King Philip's War. Before the war 36 grants had been awarded. Resttlement began in the Spring of 1677. During the war years, Capt. Holyoke and Lt. Cooper both died. No replacements were ever appointed to the committee.*

## FROM DR. KING'S JOURNAL

The following material was written during the years that Dr. King served as a representative from Suffield in the 1772 Connecticut General Assembly.

**May 14** *Election first business of the Lower House to Chuse a Clerk and then a Moderator Receiving the Returns of the Several Members, a Message to his Honour the Governour informing him that the House was formed, [Governor Jonathan Trumbull became colony governor in 1762 and state governor in 1776. He served until 1784.] then followed the Procession to the Meeting House Guarded by a Company of Cadets Capt Willis being the Capt of an Independent Company Instituted last Oct known by the Name of the Governours Guard ---*

*they made a very brilliant appearance ---- Each Soldier Dressed in Red Laced White Breeches & Stockins with half Boots. Ruffled Shirts 2 Drums and 3 Fifes Mr Leavenworth Preached the Election Sermon proceeded back to the Court House, a Committee appointed to Sort and Count the Votes the Governour & Deputy Gov retired. The Counters Seated, the Sheriff made proclamation and called for the Votes for a Governour & after the Election was over the Sheriff made Proclamation of the Persens chosen into Council which made the Same as were in Council last Year the Governour Deputy Governour Treasurer and Secretary Introduced and Sworn and the Council sworn ---- the Assembly adjourned to morrow by the Sheriff* - Lester Smith

## TO RUTH SISK

*by Anne Borg*

Ruth's death was a blow to all of us who knew her. On the verge of full retirement, with plans for traveling, spending more time with her grandchildren, and volunteering in the library's Historical Room, as well as stepping up her already considerable efforts for the Suffield Historical Society, she was looking forward to days full of activities she enjoyed. Her life was always one of commitment: to her family, her church, her hometown. Retirement for her would continue in the same vein but allow more time for gardening and other favorite pursuits.

That she is gone so soon seems terribly unfair. I, for one, was looking forward to a deepening friendship outside of work and a comfortable and rewarding partnership with her, working with the King House Museum's ephemera, where we had already made big strides. Her knowledge of the town and its old-timers cannot easily be replaced.

Always the lady and always impeccably dressed, she was a very private person. But underneath, there could occasionally be glimpsed a finely honed sense of humor. Those who knew her well were very much aware of this, but she kept it often tucked away.

I speak for all of us at the Historical Society when I say "Ruth, we miss you!"

## DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORT

*by Barry Sisk, Chairman*

At the recommendation of the 2006 Suffield Historical Society Strategic Plan, a development committee was created to expand financial resources in support of the mission of the SHS and to coordinate efforts with other committees and the Trustees.

Thus far, the one concrete result has been the initiation of an annual fund appeal to which the members of the SHS have contributed \$9,670 as of June 21, 2007. The goal is \$15,000. Other possible activities will be explored, and members are invited to submit ideas to me.

*Photo to left:*

*Program & Events Chair Bob Stewart chats with tour guide in 18th-century battle dress during the recent SHS Saratoga Spring trip.*



## <sup>4</sup>UPCOMING EVENTS

### COME TO THE ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Thursday, July 19 5:30 PM

Alexander King House Museum

Raindate: Thursday, July 26

*Society will again host an old-fashioned ice cream social on the lawn of the King House.*

*We hope that Suffield residents*

*- members and non-members -*

*will pack up a picnic supper, bring lawn chairs and guests to enjoy a warm summer evening of conviviality with friends and acquaintances.*

***Ice cream sundaes***

***will be provided free of charge.***

*So spread the word, and come celebrate summer and community with us!*

### KING HOUSE MUSEUM

Wednesdays and Saturdays

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

*Join us for a guided tour or bring your summer visitors to see a bit of Suffield history.*

### Suffield Historical Society

P.O. Box 893

Suffield, Connecticut 06078

(860) 668-5256

[www.suffieldhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.suffieldhistoricalsociety.org)

King House Museum  
232 South Main Street

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

Newsletter Editor  
Maggie Philippon

## POLISH HERITAGE GROUP

You may have read about the Polish heritage group which has organized with the goal of preserving the history of local Polish inhabitants. Mary Ann Zak was instrumental in getting this off the ground, and Della Zera Winans has taken up the challenge, along with several others.

The group hopes to collect genealogies, family stories, photos and memorabilia of Suffield's large Polish population and will be working as a sub-committee of the Suffield Historical Society.

Curator, Lester Smith, has long wanted to document this very important part of the town's history and is delighted to see this being done. The Society will be happy to house and to exhibit the results of the group's work.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have joined the Society and are heartily welcomed.

Mariz Giannuzzi

Gloria McVicker

Judith Quinn

George Whitty

Helen Zera

Bill and Kristen Sullivan