



The King House Museum

Stony Brook CURRENTS

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A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

June 2006

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.

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LAUNCELOT GRANGER: SUFFIELD PROPRIETOR

by Ed Chase

The surname Granger, meaning "tenant farmer", first appeared in England during the time of William the Conqueror. Today it is a common name throughout the United States. Its American family tree boasts of prosperous gold miners, Civil War heroes and the first two U.S. Postmaster Generals (both from Suffield). But most of their roots return to Launcelot Granger.

Launcelot's story begins in 1644 England, where as a 14-year-old, he was kidnapped from his widowed mother. Sold as an indentured servant, young Launcelot is shipped to Plymouth, Massachusetts. After earning his freedom, his story travels to Ipswich and later Newbury. Here he marries 20-year-old Joanna Adams in 1654 and leases a farm on Kent's Island. Their fortune and family grows to include eleven children. However, "Church troubles and Puritan Bigotry" cause Launcelot to look for a less religiously restrictive society.

In 1674, he and four of his sons joined the elite list of original proprietors for the wilderness settlement of Suffield. Not all his children followed; and it is not known if Joanna and the younger children had yet joined him by the time of King Philip's War. But war histories record Launcelot's presence among those who hastily abandoned Suffield prior to its burning in 1675, and a contemporary journal kept by the Reverend Edward Taylor noted that Launcelot took a musket ball in his leg during an Indian attack the following year.

When Suffield was resettled in 1677, Launcelot Granger was elected Land Measurer. He built his house on the west side of High Streete, now North Main Street. His homelot, located across from the current Gay Mansion, was flanked by homelots belonging to his sons George and Thomas. True to the name's origin, the Granger family toiled in the rich soils of the Connecticut River valley and beyond, but as free men.

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The Granger Genealogy, James M. Bodge's "Soldiers in King Philip's War" and the H. S. Sheldon "Documentary History of Suffield" were used by Ed for his research. All are available at the Kent Memorial Library for those interested in a more complete story.

APRIL FIELD TRIP

by Anne Borg

On Saturday, April 29th, thirty-five Society members and guests were off to the Massachusetts North shore with blossoming trees and flowers making the day a visual delight.

The first stop was Hammond Castle in Gloucester. Here they enjoyed a first-rate and very amusing tour, as the guide related some of the pranks enjoyed by the decidedly eccentric Hammond. Hammond was an inventive genius focusing on radio control, synchronization of motion pictures, television, and stereo sound. He is credited with over 800 inventions.

Obsessed with castles, Hammond began drawing plans at the age of 10. Hammond Castle was built 1926-29 as a wedding present for his wife and opened as a museum in 1930.

Following the castle, the group observed progress on the Isabella at the Essex Shipbuilding Museum. Participants tried their hands at bending a large plank like those used on the boat hull. The knowledgeable guides welcomed questions and made the tour a pleasure.

The Ipswich Historical Society opened the Whipple House and the Heard House for the Suffield tour. The first a house dating from 1677 and the latter the home of a family involved in the China trade among other ventures. Both properties contain numerous treasures.

The day's activities ended with dinner at Woodman's, home of the fried clam.

The outing was planned and organized by member Bob Stewart. The Historical Society thanks him for an enjoyable adventure and invites others to join in on its next trip.

SPIFFING UP THE KING HOUSE

by Rosalie Lappen



Above: Bob Stewart rallies the troops at the recent SHS field trip. Below: Helen Kope greets inventor/prankster Hammond.



Last summer, many projects were identified and completed at the King Museum House. There's a new roof on the outhouse, new thresholds on the back doors and rotted trim boards were replaced. Volunteers Steve Estee and Anne Borg touched up the areas where paint was peeling as well as the new wood.

Rotted support beams and rotting columns on the porch are being replaced by top-notch carpenter and Society member, Chris Hodges. The Property Committee decided new reproductions of the old balusters would be better than trying to strip multiple coats of paint from the existing ones. You'll see the completed results soon. The next big project will be a new roof, slated to be installed this summer.

On April 15, Ruth and Barry Sisk, Steve Estee, Gary Mandirola, Anne and Bob Borg, Jim Reeves, and Frank Beneski readied the exterior of the King House for opening day. They cleaned gutters, brushed dirt and cobwebs off the front of the house, pruned trees, lugged brush, raked, planted grass and leveled two sections of fence.

On the 26th, Rosalie Lappen, Brenda Skorski, Peg Shaughnessy, Ruth Sisk, Kerry White, and Anne Borg attacked the interior. The team vacuumed, dusted, removed dust covers, washed floors, and cleaned off mildew.

Just like any old home, the King House Museum requires constant maintenance. The Society's Property Committee identifies and supervises needed repairs. Committee members include Terry and Gary Mandirola, Nancy Noble, Peg Shaughnessy, Ruth Sisk, Anne Borg and Rosalie Lappen, Chair.

A big thank you to the volunteers and committee members, who take pride in our house and its appearance in our community!

CURATOR'S REPORT

by Lester Smith

Our winter activity at the King House Museum accomplished several good tasks: Ruth Sisk's patient work at the copy machine has given us a full copy of the museum catalog, which will be stored off site and updated occasionally. At some point, of course, we'll probably computerize our records, but I don't think we're ready for that yet.

And Anne Borg's enthusiastic effort to improve the storage of our paper material, with Ruth's help, has moved a large quantity from poor storage in the ell and elsewhere into better organized boxes. Some unwanted material has been marked for sale or donation; some has been discarded. Finding healthy storage locations for what we're keeping has been difficult, painfully highlighting our need for additional space.

The King House Museum opened on May 3 with one significant new exhibit and one revised exhibit. For the new exhibit, the big display case in the shed room now shows the carpenter tools of John King (1777 - 1834), a Suffield joiner whose mother was Dr. Alexander King's first cousin. John himself, through his father, was Alexander's second cousin.

The revised exhibit is the popular display of local postcards. This was removed from the big display case, selectively reduced by about a third, and set out in the smaller case that had held an exhibit of silver spoons. The spoons were returned to storage. Color enlargements of a number of postcards are mounted on the display boards above the case.

Please come and visit! Wednesdays and Saturdays, 1 to 4.



Pampunckshat, our new (old) cigar store Indian now stands in the King Museum House yard.

NEW MEMBER NEWS

Since September, we have added 79 new members to the Suffield Historical Society! It is a wonderful response to our first newsletter, but too long a list to welcome here individually. We do, however, welcome each one of you, look forward to seeing you at upcoming programs and events, and to calling upon the talents and skills you have generously offered to further our mission.

— — — — — Membership renewal notices will be mailed in September. — — — — —

Application for Membership

I/we subscribe to the mission of the Suffield Historical Society as published in its inaugural newsletter and wish to be included in its membership.

Miss/Ms/Mr./Mrs. _____

Address _____

Telephone (optional) _____

E-mail (optional) _____

Dues: Individuals \$10 Family \$15
 Youth (under 18) \$2 Patron \$25

Donation _____

Please check any committee or committees that are of interest to you.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collections | <input type="checkbox"/> Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Docents | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibitions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity and Marketing | |

The Internal Revenue Service has granted tax exempt status to the Suffield Historical Society.

Please complete this form and mail it with your check to
Suffield Historical Society, c/o Gary Mandirola, 1600 North Street, Suffield, CT 06078.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Day

Saturday, June 3 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Phelps-Hatheway Barn
55 South Main Street

The Society will take part in Family Day, sponsored by the Antiquarian & Landmarks Society at the Phelps-Hatheway barn. There will be numerous activities for children and parents to enjoy together from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Come join the fun!

Photos of Old Suffield

Wednesday, June 14 7:30 p.m.
Kent Memorial Library

Lester Smith and Anne Borg will present a slide show of pictures taken from the collection amassed by former Town Historian and long-time (founding) Society member, Hawley Rising. The theme will be "Suffield Businesses and Public Buildings."

Ice Cream Social

Thursday, July 20 5:30 p.m.
King House Museum

Suffield residents are invited to bring a picnic supper to enjoy on the grounds of the King House Museum. Ice cream will be provided for dessert. Pack up your blankets and lawn chairs, your straw hats and your parasols. Spend a convivial evening with friends and neighbors as we relive an old custom.

Rain date Thursday, July 27.

King House Museum

Wednesdays and Saturdays
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

A special exhibit of John King's carpentry tools is currently on display at the museum. 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

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(860) 668-5256

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