



The King House Museum

Stony Brook CURRENTS

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A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

September 2010

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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ROBERT OLD, ORIGINAL PROPRIETOR

by Edward Chase

Among the earliest Suffield proprietors was Robert Old of Windsor, Connecticut. He received one of the first five land grants from the Committee for Suffield in 1670.

Old's 50-acre grant included a strip of land 12 rods in depth (198 feet) along the north side of Mountain Road from High Street west to the east bank of Muddy Brook. Another section included 23 acres northwest of the intersection of Mountain Road and the present Hill Street, including the current Sacred Heart property and Sullivan Field. Robert Old built his home a quarter mile off Mountain Road on Hill Street, then called Old Street¹.

In 1673, he moved to Suffield with his wife Susannah Hosford and their two children. Their family grew to include eight children and among them was Mindwell Old, the first white child born in Suffield and the only white child born in our town before King Philip's War.

After Susannah's death in 1689, Robert Old married Dorothy Granger, daughter of Lancelot Granger and Joanna Adams. Six more children were produced from this union. Both Robert and Dorothy died in 1728 and are buried in the old churchyard cemetery, behind the First Congregational Church. The southern part of that cemetery, as it exists today, was within Old's grant.

Robert was never a freeman, and his origins remain a mystery, but his valuable service to the fledgling Suffield is well documented. In 1694, he was appointed Town Agent to manage Suffield's case before the Massachusetts General Assembly concerning the burdensome tax rates imposed on the town. Two years later, he is credited with having made the brick and built the chimney for the minister's house. He also served as a surveyor of highways and as a constable.

Many of Robert Old's progeny² remained in Suffield and served our community in the following years, although none with this surname are residents today.

¹ Originally Northampton Road, part of it was renamed Old St., and finally Hill St.

² An "s" was added to the surname in subsequent years, i.e. "Olds." Other sources use the spelling "Ould."

References: H. S. Sheldon's *Documentary History of Suffield, Connecticut*, the *Old Genealogy*, and *The Papers of John Pyncheon*.

HI-TECH TEAMS UP WITH HISTORY *by Mary Anne Zak*

Historical Society

The wealth of old photographs which attracts large audiences to the Suffield Historical Society's June meetings is growing richer!

Two thousand slides in the Hawley Rising Collection have been showing their age, but they are coming back to life in the hi-tech hands of David Rancourt. Rancourt has volunteered to scan the slides, digitize them to TIFF formatted files and use Adobe Photoshop Elements to restore them.

The software can eliminate scratches, darken or lighten, enhance contrast, and crop. After enhancing each image, Rancourt saves each image in its final format, indexes it, and archives it on DVD.

Accessible by any photo software, the TIFF format is called lossless because it can be saved repeatedly without any deterioration and consequently preserved forever. Besides preserving and enhancing photos, digitizing keeps images available for generating photo prints, slide shows, posters and various visual materials.

Former town historian Hawley Rising took the 2000 slides in order to preserve the images in old photographs dating from the late 19th century. Many of the photographs belonged to the late Delphina Clark, local antiquarian and historian, and to the late Roger Loomis, local photographer. Other photographs were gifts of local residents and members of the historical society.

Itinerant photographers took many of the photos in the 1880's. Anne Borg said families dressed up in their Sunday best to pose in front of their homes with servants, animals, vehicles, and sometimes with portraits of deceased loved ones.



*A view of Rising's Corner taken from the south circa 1880.
The image at the top is of a slide taken around 1970; below is a restoration.*

Families and animals held stiff poses in order to preserve their collective image for posterity!

Polish Heritage Society

In a separate project, the Polish Heritage Society is collecting old photos of Suffield's Polish community for its archives. With a software system called PastPerfect, the society is scanning the photos and indexing them so that stored information can be easily retrieved.

A committee headed by Helen Zera has been collecting the photos and identifying them by the names of the people depicted. Another committee chaired by Della Zera Winans is learning to use the computer and the PastPerfect software to store and index the photos. The computer, with Microsoft Office, scanner, printer and cables was a gift in December 2009 from Della and Roger Winans in memory of Della's grandparents, Harry and Adella Kleszczewska Zera.

PastPerfect, the main software, was designed for historical societies, museums and archives. It can be used to do research, to inventory, to cross reference, and to track organizations' collections and members. Art Sikes assisted the Winanses with technical expertise in choosing the program, which was financed by a Zak grant. Gary

Mandirola served as business advisor and liaison between the Suffield Historical Society and Polish Heritage Society.

George Lanati, a Suffield High School alumnus who was a classmate of Della Zera in the Class of '59, volunteered to prepare a short, printed illustrated brochure to guide users of the PastPerfect system. The brochure will define the steps operators must follow in order to put data and photos into the system and to retrieve them.

The goal of the brochure is that members of the public who know nothing about computers will be able to use the software system with the assistance of a trained member of the heritage society. A minimum of mouse clicks will retrieve basic information!

The computer will be located at the new Senior Center in a space especially designated, and a schedule will be set up for its use.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new members: Vicki Wees, Greg Panjian, Sue Sgroi and Norah Sargent.

CURATOR'S REPORT

Lester Smith

by

A nice feature article in the Springfield Republican early this summer boosted our visitation noticeably, and there have even been a few visitors who came specifically to view the Willis Seaver Adams exhibit in the Shed Room. This assemblage of 17 of the paintings by Suffield's once-famous artist, plus some supplementary material, will come down at the end of September.

Progress continues out in our great new barn. A big aerial photo-mosaic of Suffield, discovered in storage in Bridge Street School, is now hung inside the north gable wall. We're still trying to find out when and why the map was assembled, but we think the photo survey was flown in about 1948. Visitors are finding it very interesting.

And the old sign from Paul Jones's meat market, stored in the stable office for 22 years since his late daughter Dorothy donated it, now hangs high in the south bay. It probably came from the store's Main Street location, but it's possible that it was used earlier, at the "Beehive" on Depot Street.

We continue to receive much-appreciated donations to the Society's collections. Notable recent acquisitions include old apparel, textiles, papers, and other good miscellany from Sumner and Sally Bissell, who have removed to Duncaster, in Bloomfield. Also added was a collection of Indian artifacts from Terry and Jill Chapin, of Santa Monica. These items were collected by Terry's father Douglass Norton Chapin, mostly from the Douglass farm near the old Thompsonville bridge. Many thanks to the generous donors who make our museum a success!

WEDNESDAY MORNING CLUB

There are now four of us spending our Wednesday mornings at the King House Museum working in the the King House, the archives, the barn and on the grounds. If anyone else is so inclined, you are welcome to join us (sporadically or on a continuing basis).

During the winter months, we would like to begin an inventory of holdings. In October the summer exhibit will need to come down and the house be put to bed, with planning for Holidayfest to follow. There are other small projects pending. So come join us!

SAVE THE DATE!

An accordion concert* by Gary Sredzienski will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 3, at Suffield Middle School. Tickets are \$5 and available at Highland Park Market, from members of the Polish Heritage Society, at our booth at Suffield on the Green, at the door, or by calling 860-668-7194.

*Funded in part by the New England States Touring Program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts Regional Touring Program and the six New England states arts agencies.



Two young visitors study the big aerial photo-mosaic picture of Suffield hung in the King House barn. The ten-by-seven-foot image shows Suffield in 1948, at the outset of its explosive post-war suburban expansion.

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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

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUFFIELD ON THE GREEN

Sat., September 11 and Sun., September 12
Visit our booth on the Green and join us at the

ANNUAL CAR SHOW

Sunday, September 12 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
King House Museum Grounds

AMERICAN POPULAR SONGS

Wednesday, September 22 7:30 p.m.
Kent Memorial Library

Rick Spencer, historian, researcher, singer, songwriter and performer of music, will join us for an evening of song written by the foremost composers of 19th-century music. Rick is the Executive Director of the Ashbel Woodward Museum in Franklin, Connecticut.

FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

Saturday, September 25 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
King House Museum Grounds
*Sponsored by the Tobacco Valley Artists Association
Raindate: Saturday, October 2*

ACCORDION CONCERT

Sunday, October 3 2:00 p.m.
Suffield Middle School
See details inside.

VOICES OF CONNECTICUT IN THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

Wednesday, October 20 7:30 p.m.

Kent Memorial Library

A unique presentation of highlights of the years 1754 to 1763 in the voices of those who lived and fought in the war. Sarah Melcher reenacts as a female and in the persona of Chauncy Goodrich from Wethersfield.

FALL CLEAN-UP

Saturday, October 23 9:00 a.m. - noon
Join us in preparing the King House, barn and yard for winter.

Raindate: Saturday, October 30

GREAT CANDY HANDOUT

Sunday, October 31 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
King House Porch

Join us in costume for this Halloween tradition!

NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES & CULTURE IN NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT

Wednesday, November 17 7:30 p.m.

Kent Memorial Library

Dr. Lucianne Lavin will discuss local Indian history and traditions from over 10,000 years ago to the 20th century.