



# Stony Brook CURRENTS

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A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

January 2012

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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## DAY BY DAY IN SUFFIELD IN WWII

by Jan Peake

A recent gift to the Suffield Historical Society consists of thirty small diaries for the years 1935 to 1965 faithfully kept by a twice-widowed Suffield native, Elizabeth Clara Pease Goodrich Burke (who appears to have gone by Clara), born in 1874. She was the mother of four, one of whom lived at home on South Grand Street, two others in town and one in California. The entry that immediately excited me was for May 27, 1940: "The King of Prussia told soldiers to lay down guns to Germans."

I thought the diaries might provide a detailed picture of World War II as seen by a Suffield resident. This was not to be, but they do present a wonderful picture of the life and times of a West Suffield widow during the war. Clara notes the temperature and details about her garden, house repairs, and news of her family and friends along with occasional comments about the war. Among war-related items mentioned was the airfield being built in Windsor Locks, starting in

1941, for pilot training. Clara made seven mentions of seeing trucks with rocks going by her house headed toward

the field to construct runways. After the field was up and running, there were no fewer than

forty-three notations about many planes flying overhead day and night.

Four times crashes at the field are recorded. (One of those crashes involved

the first fatality on the airfield, that of Lt. Eugene M. Bradley, for whom the air-

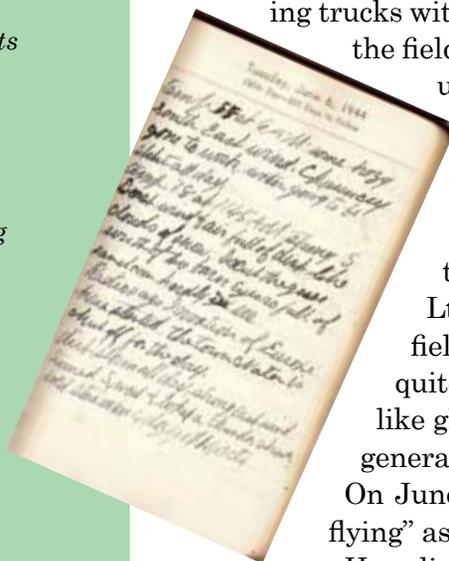
field was named.) One of her sightings was quite poetic, "lots of silver white planes look

like glass balls when the sun hits them," but in general she just mentions "many planes flying."

On June 23, 1945, she noted "hardly any planes flying" as the war was coming to an end.

Her diaries also give us news about relatives and friends who were serving overseas and corre-

spondence she had with these soldiers. She mentions the award of a three-oak-leaf cluster to one local pilot and the news of a local soldier in a prisoner of war camp. We learn



she took part in many salvage collections of paper, rubber and metal for the war effort. She reported signing up for ration books that were needed for oil and food, as well as for the sugar that was so important for her fruit canning and jelly making. And there were four mentions of black-outs for the town of Suffield.

Throughout the war years she noted her many activities in the American Legion. She made routine visits to soldiers at the Veterans' Home in Newington, faithfully attended monthly meetings at home, and marched in the patriotic parades. She bought supplies and sewed uniforms. She also noted that her daughter in Suffield was a night-time plane spotter, and the fact that she recorded receiving a telescope she had ordered makes me think she took part in this important activity too.

I learned she was a diligent radio listener – she carefully recorded each monthly purchase of a new radio battery for about three dollars. She regularly read the paper but rarely reported war news she learned from the radio or the printed page. Two exceptions were her comments that the radio had let her know about the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and on June 6, 1944, she learned that the “Invasion of Europe has started.”

In one of the rare entries that included any personal feeling, on August 14, 1945, she reported that “President Harry Truman declared peace at 7 P.M. tonight from Washington – the people are Wild, act like fools. Better wait til our soldiers are home if that will ever come.” The end of the war also meant the end of steady employment for her son Chauncey, who lived at home. He had started working at Pratt and Whitney in East Hartford on February 12, 1942, six days a week until August 23, 1945, less than two weeks after Truman's announcement. Clara began again to worry about his employment, noting daily in her diary whether he had work that day or not. She would continue to make note of it, along with information about the weather, her crops, her cooking and food preparation, news of family and friends, Suffield happenings, and all the other details that filled her diaries during the war.

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to Roger Hart, Lucy Lonning, Signe Wright and Kerry Tabbett.

## THE MIGHILLS, *by Ed Chase* ORIGINAL SUFFIELD PROPRIETORS

John Mighill, Sr. and his sons, Thomas and John Jr., became Suffield proprietors on June 27, 1681. John Sr. and his son Thomas received grants east of the present day East Street to the Connecticut River bank, while John Jr. was granted acreage on the west side of East Street. Their 140 acres were all south of Stony Brook near the current Boston Neck Road intersection.

John Sr.<sup>1</sup> was the first child of immigrant parents who left Yorkshire, England, and settled in Rowley, Massachusetts. His name shows up in Ipswich 1658 court records as “fined for taking tobacco” and, more positively, in the following year in Rowley taking Sara Batt of Newbury as his wife. They moved from town to town in following decades buying and selling land in Massachusetts and New Hampshire before settling in Suffield.

John Sr. is listed among the Suffield inhabitants having “the Priviledge and Liberty of Voteing in all Towne affaires” on March 6, 1682. On three occasions he was chosen Selectman. In 1687, he was chosen to “treat with Colonell Pynchon in the town's behalf about ye Mills,” some of which developed along Stony Brook near the families' grants. He died in Suffield. John and Sara Mighill, Sr. had seven children, all born in Newbury; their first two were John Jr. and Thomas, who moved with their father to Suffield as proprietors.

John Jr.<sup>2</sup> was elected a surveyor and fence viewer in Suffield. With his wife Elizabeth Ferman, he had eight children. With two of his brothers, John Jr. bought 400 acres of Killingly land in 1706. He died in 1743 in Killingly.

Thomas,<sup>3</sup> a wheelwright, also died in Killingly. In 1697, he was summoned before Judge John Pynchon in Springfield to answer to charges of breach of the peace for “striking of Robert Old of Suffield, and beating and wounding him,” Thomas admitted the crime, saying “he was in a Pashon, and thereby disordered and was very sorry, and will be more careful from time to come.” After being “fined to the King 6 shillings,” a penitent Thomas was dismissed. He also agreed to pay damages to Mr. Old.

In 1700, Thomas married Abigail McLafin in Enfield and, four years later, sold his Suffield homestead lot with her consent. Thomas had two wives and six children before his death in 1745.

*NOTE: Three of Thomas and Abigail's sons changed their surname Mighill (pronounced "My Hill") to Miles. General Nelson A. Miles – a Civil War general, an Indian fighter, Chief of the U.S. Army, and one of the most colorful military men in U.S. history – was a 7th generation descendant of Thomas Mighill, through his youngest son Daniel Miles. Several times Gen. Miles campaigned for the nomination for President of the United States.*

- 1 Thomas Mighill, (the immigrant) b. 1580 Yorkshire, England; d. June 14, 1654 in Rowley, Mass; m. 1st Ellen mother of John, Sr.; m. 2nd Ann Parrat. John Mighill, Sr., b. abt. 1634; d. bef. Dec. 7, 1702 in Suffield; m. July 6, 1659 Sara Batt b. June 2, 1640 Newbury, Mass.; d. May 4, 1714 in Enfield, Conn.
- 2 John Mighill, Jr., b. abt. 1660 in Newbury, Mass.; d. Nov. 13, 1743 in Killingly, Conn.; m. Sept 27, 1693 in Enfield, Conn. Elizabeth Ferman; b. Feb. 11, 1675 in Salem, Mass.
- 3 Thomas Mighill, (the proprietor) b. abt 1662 in Newbury, Mass.; d. April 1745 in Killingly; m. 1st Dec. 12, 1700 in Suffield Abigail McLaffin; b. Mar. 19, 1676 in Wenham, Mass.; m. 2nd Joanna.

References:

H.S.Sheldon's *Documentary History of Suffield (1670-1749); NE-HGS Register*, Vol 158, July 2004, "John Mighill of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut" by Gale Ion Harris; Internet biographies of General Nelson A. Miles.

## TOUR GUIDES WANTED!

We desperately need some new tour guides who would be willing to devote one or more Wednesday or Saturday afternoons a month to showing the house to visitors. There are written guides in each room to help you remember specific items, and we would ask that you accompany Lester or Nancy on tours to learn the house's stories. Please call Nancy Noble at 668-2538 if you are interested. Your help will be much appreciated.



*One Holidayfest display case included two old ceremonial war clubs: from the Penobscot Indians in Maine (collected in 1924) and the Fiji Islands (1906). Can you guess which is which?*

## APPRAISAL DAY

Our October appraisal day and tag sale was an unqualified success. The weather cooperated nicely, members donated a variety of items, large items long stored in the stable were snapped up quickly, and the appraisals were popular. A good number of people came with possessions to be appraised, and while the line and the wait lengthened, John Pappas, the appraiser, took his time with each customer and gave them information about each piece as well as value. The event earned us \$1543 and was so popular that we hope to repeat it either this year or next.

## A HAPPY HOLIDAYFEST

*by Lester Smith*

Our two-day Holidayfest weekend December 3 and 4 was notable because we added Saturday evening to the affair, and for four hours the King House Museum was part of the Suffield Garden Club's Christmas house tour: Magic on Main. Visitors to the Hatheway House and six private homes on South Main Street came to our museum, many for the first time. Our total visitation for the weekend, including the afternoons, was registered at 528! The old house survived unscathed, and from the favorable comments we heard, I expect many of our brief Magic-on-Main visitors will return during our regular season for a better look – and to visit the barn, which was not open during Holidayfest.

Visitors seemed to like our special two-day loan exhibit: Decorative Folk Art. With over a hundred objects from 18 lenders, including examples from many cultures, the exhibit opened this curator's eyes. We very much appreciate the great cooperation that members and friends offer every year in support of Holidayfest.

## GOOD LUCK JAN!

*Lester Smith*

Over the years, the King House Museum has enjoyed the services of many docents, all of them helpful with the friendly spirit that we believe has characterized the place and pleased our visitors. Unfortunately, we've just lost one of those volunteers, one who has added an especially knowledgeable flavor to her tours. Jan Peake has moved to New York City – a town she loves. With her professional museum experience, Jan has provided great historical assistance along with her docent work, and we will miss both aspects as well as our friendly personal relationship.

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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

### ANNUAL ICE HARVEST

Saturday, February 4      Noon – 3:00 p.m.  
Noble & Cooley Mill Pond  
Granville, Massachusetts

*The Society will again co-sponsor an ice harvest with the Suffield Land Conservancy and Noble & Cooley Mill. Learn how to handle an ice saw and other antique tools to cut ice. Dress warmly. Wear grips on your boots if you want to cut ice.*

*The Noble & Cooley Museum will be open for refreshments and tours.*

*Storm date for the harvest is February 5.*

### GRAVESTONES, SYMBOLISM, MATERIALS AND PRESERVATION WORKSHOP

Wednesday, February 15      7:30 p.m.  
Senior Center

*Ruth Shapleigh-Brown of the Connecticut Gravestone Network will present this workshop.*

### SHOW AND TELL NIGHT

Wednesday, March 14      7:30 p.m.  
To be announced

*Sign up for a presentation on a subject related to Suffield or American history. Anecdotes about local characters, folklore, artifacts, photos or local artwork, quilts, collections, archaeology, and works in progress are all welcome. Time allowed for presentations will depend on how many individuals sign up to present their work. Contact Bob Stewart by March 2 to sign up and arrange to prepare any photos for projection. Projection is preferred to passing valuable artifacts through the audience.*

### A FRENCH SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE IN THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

Wednesday, April 11      7:30 p.m.  
Kent Memorial Library

*This unique presentation will take you through the highlights of the years 1754 to 1763 from the perspective of a Frenchman who fought in the French and Indian War. Frank Molander reenacts the experiences of the Royal Roussillon Regiment.*