



# *Stony Brook* **CURRENTS**

Vol. VII, No. 4

*A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society*

September 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.

## **Suffield Historical Society**

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## **ORIGINAL SUFFIELD PROPRIETOR WALTER HALLADAY**

*by Ed Chase*

In 1640, Walter Halladay was born to Richard and Elizabeth Baines Halladay in Abbotsford, Selkirk County, Scotland. Records of his adventures for the next 33 years are yet to be found. But on April 22, 1673, Walter married the 21-year-old Springfield native, Katherine Elden Hunter in Springfield, Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup>

The following year, he received a 50-acre grant on the southeast corner of what is now the intersection of East Street and Bridge Street. The couple prospered in Suffield and brought seven children onto their expanding acreage.<sup>2</sup>

Records show Walter and his descendant families acquired land throughout Suffield. As Suffield Surveyors, he and his son William gained great knowledge of the value of terrain. Grants from Pynchon's *Committee for Suffield* accounted for only a small fraction of land within the town boundaries. Some additional Halladay parcels were purchased and others were obtained through Town Meetings, which were often fractious and volatile events in those early years of Suffield.

By 1730, Walter's son William owned a fish dam (weir) with seven other townsmen on the "Great River." The dam's design facilitated catching salmon and shad, which made spawning runs in the spring in great numbers up the Connecticut River. The owners were allowed to sell the fish caught to Suffield families at a fixed price. Any additional fish could be "barrelled up" for sale to the general market. At this time the salmon were already beginning to diminish and brought about 20 times more than shad on the market.

In 1737, William and his nephew John united with 13 other Suffield men into "a Society for Fishery." They petitioned the Town to erect a "small dam, two feet high, projecting about 60 feet into the Great River." Their petition was granted.<sup>3</sup>

Each Spring you will still see fishermen near this dam area on the Connecticut River and perhaps some might know that a Halladay once fished these waters and slowed the water to corral the spawning fish, but many more will recognize the name in Halladay Drive and Halladay Avenue.

Halladay Drive circles past the eastern shore of the middle pond of Congamond Lake off Babb's Road. Halladay Avenue – a more prominent street – was formerly known as the Road to Westfield and proceeds west from Mapleton Avenue and becomes South Westfield Street at the Massachusetts border at Barry Street.

At present, Walter Halladay's direct descendant, Deborah Halladay Pierce, operates a tobacco and vegetable farm on the east side of the Halladay Avenue and North Street intersection.

1 Katherine, b. 1752 in Springfield, Massachusetts, dau. of William and Priscilla Corish Hunter of Springfield. She married Samuel Miller of Springfield in 1710 after the death of Walter Halladay.

2 Ebenezer b. 1675 and William b. 1678, d. 1764. Both born in Springfield. In Suffield, Samuel b. 1680, Sarah b. 1682, Mary b. 1684, Issac b. 1690 and Abigail b. 1692. Ebenezer and Issac both died young.

3 This summer I noticed a pile of rocks on the ledges in the river and queried if they might be a remnant of the old construction.

Any information and insight would be welcomed by the Society.

References:

*Documentary History of Suffield, Conn.*, H. S. Sheldon, 1879.

*Walter Halladay and Katherine Hunter Genealogy*, internet.

Kent Memorial Library Genealogies.

Suffield Historical Society, Family Genealogy website.

## PUPPETS & MARIONETTES

### *An appeal for Holidayfest*

Our two-day exhibits for Holidayfest in early December depend principally on the generosity of members and friends who let us display items in the chosen theme. Many years I worry that this will be the year when we've chosen a difficult theme to gather, but so far we've always managed to assemble good shows. Please give some thought to whether you might have a string or hand puppet of any type, or even a silhouette figure used for shadow-making. Of course, a ventriloquist dummy would be great. Would a Claymation figure used for stop-action video be acceptable? Sure. I cast my net quite wide in these exhibits. Please help!

*Lester Smith, Curator*

## MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

We have inserted a member renewal form in your newsletter.

- If your mailing label says "Dues Aug. 2012" then it is time to pay for your 2012-13 membership.
- If the date is before 2012, then you are behind on your dues.
- If it's 2013, you are already paid up for this next year.

Please spend the time to fill in the member interest portion. We need your help in running the Society and its events. We especially need greeters/tour guides at the King House.

## DO YOU KNOW?

### *350th Anniversary*

We all need to begin thinking about Suffield's 350th anniversary in 2020. What should we do to celebrate? It's not too soon to plan, and the Society should be involved. So give your ideas to officers or trustees now.

### *Archival Collections*

Many of you have probably visited the "new" library since reopening. You should know that the family and local history books are now locked in the closet on the upper level. Please ask the reference librarian for help if you need these resources. The Historical Room is once again open for research on Thursday evenings. We need one or two new volunteers for one Thursday a month.

The King House archives, as well as the library archives, is collecting town memorabilia. If you have old photos, event programs, or other printed material, don't throw – donate!

### *Fundraising Campaign*

Our fundraising campaign is ongoing and doing well. If you have not yet mailed in your contribution, there is still plenty of time before year's end. (Our fiscal year ends in March.)

### *Writers Wanted*

The editors would love to publish your articles about Suffield history or your reminiscences of Suffield's past. Contact Anne Borg if you enjoy writing or would like to contribute. We'd enjoy hearing your stories.

## DAY SIZZLES, ICE CREAM MELTS!

The Ice Cream Social, despite the sweltering temperatures, was well attended. Thanks are once again due to Wilma's *Scoop du Jour* for providing ice cream and some of the toppings at cost. Thanks to our scoopers and our fresh fruits sauce makers as well. Special thanks to Paul Kulas and Bella Hastings for our musical entertainment.

## BOARD MEMBERS TAKE NOTE

SHS Board Meetings are scheduled for October 3, February 6 and May 1 for the coming year. Please save these dates on your calendars.

## SEPTEMBER 1882

Suffield may have changed a lot in the course of the last 130 years, but I was struck by its similarity to local newspaper clippings from 1882.

*"Dry! Dry! Dry! is on every body's lips. They of course have reference to the weather. We had a slight shower on Thursday evening but it does not appear to have helped vegetation at all."*

In the midst of the drought, everyone was still praying for one more bright, sunny weekend for the fall festivities. Back then it was the *Cattle Show and Fair not Suffield-on-the-Green*, but it similarly brought the neighbors, church groups, and local politicians together again after a long, hot summer.

The clippings continue: *"This past week has been one of hurry and bustle with everyone ... The lower end of the middle park looks like a miniature camp with its oyster tents and peanut vendors and dealers of other wares."*

Exhibits of fancy work and works of art were planned inside the Town Hall, along with a melange of prize fruits, flowers and dairy products. Union Hall was readied for a poultry show. The cornet band was scheduled for an open-air concert at the bandstand. The democrat and republican nominees for local offices had just been announced, and they were readying their forces for opportunities to shake hands and discuss town business. The fair included horse and bicycle races.

As summer ended, there was nostalgia in the 1882 Suffield column with a simple description of our community which really hasn't changed pro-

foundly: *"Quite a number of strangers summered in Old Suffield, which is a fine spot for any one who wants pure air, pure water, pure Alderney milk and cream, and good society. The drives are pleasant and the roads are as hard as macadam. The scenery is delightful and an hour's ride will take one to the famous Southwick ponds where a day's boating and fishing may be enjoyed. The nights are cool and agreeable, mosquitoes are the exception rather than the rule. Main Street is a long, broad avenue, with handsome shade trees, fines residences and nicely kept lawns on either side."* The narrative continued with the a description of the fine churches and their good attendance. *"The citizens are quite and justly proud,"* the author writes of CLI (now Suffield Academy). The journalist exemplifies charming innocence as he continues: *"Professor M. H. Smith, a graduate of Williams and college mate of President Garfield, is at the head of this institution, which is a guarantee that it is what it should be."*

But there wasn't really innocence. The year before, a violent act had taken the life of President Garfield. Adjacent stories referenced burglaries, reckless driving of horses, drunkenness and a gang of youths setting fires in West Suffield. There was a brief reference to a rowdy cock fight in Windsor Locks, but, fortunately, it was on the Sabbath and no one from Suffield had violated the Lord's Day to be involved!

Safety issues were sources of worry, but not labeled as crises. *"The six-horse powder team carrying 400 kegs of powder (enough to blow to destruction a whole township) stopped at the West Suffield hotel to put up over night and caused great anxiety to the neighbors and people of the village."*

Building changes were always a source of critical comment: *"Frank H. Reid has got his new cabinet boxes in place and the old post office looks as if it was putting on airs."*

May the timelessness of so many things remain a constant, and may the organizations working *Suffield-on-the-Green* receive the magnitude of appreciation that Calvary women did after the 1882 fair: *"The dinner got up by the Ladies' Aid Society of Calvary Episcopal Church was a success and well they deserved it, for they worked like beavers, early and late, until the end, and that they were well paid the net receipts of \$200 will assure any doubting Thomas."*

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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  
Maggie Philippon, Editor  
Anne Borg, Compiler

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ANTIQUÉ AUTO SHOW

**Sunday, September 9**

King House Grounds 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Free admission. No fee to exhibit a car.

Organized by Bill Gozzo and Bob Sullivan. Visit our booth on the Green and pick up your fall program.

*Rain cancels event.*

### VICTORIAN LADY

**Wednesday, September 19**

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

While dressing in Civil War attire, Kandie Carle gives an overview of fashion, society and culture in the mid-nineteenth century. History and humor combine for a very different view of upper-class life.

### TVAA FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

**Saturday, September 22**

King House Grounds 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Local artists will be exhibiting their works for sale.

Free admission.

*Raindate: Saturday, September 29*

### THE GLASS ARMONICA

**Monday, October 15**

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

Invented by Ben Franklin, the (h)armonica enjoyed great popularity until rumors circulated that it caused insanity and even aroused the dead! Listen to Vera Meyer – 1 of 10 people in the world who plays the glass armonica.

### HALLOWEEN CANDY DISTRIBUTION

**Wednesday, October 31**

King House Dusk until 7:30 p.m.

Come in costume and join the fun!

### NEW ENGLAND'S OTHER WITCH HUNT

**Wednesday, November 14**

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

Prof. Walter Woodward brings the stories of 1860 Hartford Witch Trials and the beliefs that surrounded them.

### HOLIDAYFEST

*Puppets and Marionettes*

**Saturday, December 1 & Sunday, December 2**

King House 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.