



# Stony Brook CURRENTS

Vol. IX, No. 1

A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

January 2014

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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## OLD CARRIAGE RETURNS

*Lester Smith, Curator*

Parkes Loomis's old five-passenger carriage, parked in our stable for many years, went off to be restored over a year ago. Jim Chevalier's carpentry and painting work in Belchertown, Mass., went well, but when he took the body to an Amish shop in Pennsylvania for the convertible top, things changed. Before much was done, Jim's man in Pennsylvania died! These are small businesses, and the work could not continue there. Jim chose another shop in Ohio and took the carriage West.

Time passed, and we weren't getting progress reports, so I called Jim. It was his widow who answered! Jim had died, and Mary Ann Chevalier hadn't been able to find our phone number to tell us. After my condolences, Mary Ann said the work in Ohio was approaching completion, and she would arrange to fetch the carriage. She and her son soon did that, and I was able to visit the Chevalier shop for an examination in November. After some final work on the harness attachment parts, the carriage came back to Suffield in January. It looks great!

The Loomis carriage bears the nameplate of Ithiel Silliman, Coachmaker, New Haven. Through Jim Reeves's research, we now learn that Silliman was in business in the 1840's and died in 1850, with no son to carry on the trade. Jim Chevalier had commented that this was very

old; now we know it is the oldest of our wheeled vehicles. (The Hezekiah Spencer sleigh is older yet.)

*Society President Ed Chase holds the whip as he sits in the driver's seat of the newly-restored Parkes Loomis carriage.*



# WILLIAM AND EBENEZER BROOKS, ORIGINAL SUFFIELD PROPRIETORS

by Ed Chase

Like so many of our Suffield proprietors, the story of William Brooks<sup>1</sup> begins in England. On October 18, 1654, this 44-year old man took Mary Burt<sup>2</sup> as his wife in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Mary was exactly half William's age and already had left her mark on Springfield society. Records show she had been given twelve lashes on her bare back for birthing an illegitimate child. (Samuel Wright was the father and also her brother-in-law. Samuel also received twelve lashes!) Following this, Mary paid a fine for "committing wickedness" with Joseph Bonde.

Despite this somewhat checkered past, William and Mary had a long and prosperous union. In the year of their marriage, William was granted 40 acres "at the foot of ye higher falls in ye Great River."<sup>3</sup> He worked as a tailor and, in the following twenty-five years, Mary gave birth to eight sons and eight daughters.

Their two oldest boys were part of Major John Pynchon's scouting party on October 1675. On the 27th, the group was ambushed by Natives between Westfield and Northampton. Both sons were killed in this early battle of King Philip's War. Five years later, John Pynchon's Committee for Suffield granted William Brooks 50 acres of Suffield land and 40 more to his son Ebenezer. It is likely that they served as compensation for the loss of the two older boys. These adjacent lots were located along Mapleton Avenue just north of the Victory Sikes lot.<sup>4</sup>

William Brooks appears on the list of eligible voters for Suffield's First Town Meeting in 1682, but there appears no record of these lots ever being settled upon by the Brooks families.

Around this time, debts to John Pynchon and the burdens of supporting a large family became more than William could handle. The family moved to Deerfield. That community had some of the best land in the river valley, but land was cheap because of the frequent attacks by Natives. These facts made it an affordable choice for the troubled family.

For three-quarters of a century, Deerfield sustained devastating raids. The 1704 Deerfield Massacre records four Brookses and three Burts among the list of captives. Through the lives of their children and their descendants, William and Mary Brooks left a huge legacy in the area, although they never prospered in Suffield.

1 William Brooks, b. 1610 in England; m. 18 Oct 1654 in Springfield, Massachusetts; d. 1689 in Deerfield, Massachusetts.

2 Mary Burt, b. 1632 in Springfield, Massachusetts; d. 1689 in Deerfield, Massachusetts.

3 These falls are now part of Chicopee and Holyoke. Chicopee in 1669 was part of Springfield.

4 The Victory Sikes lot remains in the Sikes family. It is located on Mapleton Avenue opposite the ancient Indian path, now known as River Boulevard Extension.

## REFERENCES

*Documentary History of Suffield (1670-1749)*, by H. S. Sheldon; *New England Outpost, Colonial Deerfield*, by Richard Melvoin, 1989, *Captors and Captives*, Haefeli and Sweeney, 2003. *The Pynchon Papers*, Letter Vol. I and Accounts Vol. II, edited by Carl Bridenbaugh, collected by Juliette Tomlinson, *Brooks Genealogy*, internet, and *Burt Genealogy*, internet.

## AUTO SHOW ENDING

We thank Bob Sullivan and Bill Gozzo who have successfully organized our Auto Show each *Suffield-on-the-Green* weekend for a number of years. The show has always included a nice selection of vehicles and brought many visitors to the King House. We are most appreciative of their work to make this happen. They are stepping down. If anyone would like to take responsibility for continuing the show or have ideas for a new and different event, please contact Ed Chase.

## KING HOUSE TURNS 250!!!

Built in 1764, the King House Museum now enters its 250th year. The property was donated to the Historical Society in 1960 by Samuel and Helena Bailey Spencer, after they had carefully restored much of the house themselves.

We are planning some special events throughout the year and would love to get input from members for programs, exhibits and events. Call any one of our officers with your terrific ideas. Let's really CELEBRATE!

## CURATOR'S REPORT

Our Holidayfest weekend, December 7 & 8, attracted about 110 visitors, who enjoyed the decorations and the goodies so well prepared by generous members. The special exhibit, "It's Raining Cats and Dogs," got a surprising response: I had thought it would be adequate and kind of fun, but it turned out to be one of our most popular Holidayfest collections. Many thanks to all who helped make the event such a success. And special thanks to John Quenneville, whose exhibit ideas and prolific participation are immense assets to the museum's operation.

*Lester Smith, Curator*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*by Lester Smith*

Verne Spear, born near Spear's Pond at the north end of North Grand Street but now retired to South Deerfield, has been an intrepid historical researcher, producing a considerable amount of historical and genealogical material.

Several years ago, Verne reviewed the old deeds for his ancestors' land purchases (preserved in the Kent Memorial Library Spencer Historical Room and the Town Clerk's vault). He discovered that as early as 1757 some of the property was described as lying "on Burleson's Brook where the South branch emptieth into said brook."

In related deeds there were other references to Burleson's Brook. But the names of the two brooks, which came from the west and the south to feed the mill pond Moses Spear later created, had disappeared from use many years ago. Verne believed they should be remembered, so he set out to get both names on the map.

Through communication with Town Engineer Gerry Turbet, Verne got the Suffield Mail-a-Map to respond in 2009, but somehow the details came out wrong. It wasn't until the 2013 edition that the brooks were printed with the correct names. Those names are now included, correctly, in the Town's GIS computer map. Perhaps the USGS Quadrangle will show the correction someday.



*John Quenneville (above) and Eleanor Chase (left) were among those to view the Holidayfest "It's Raining Cats and Dogs" display at the King House Museum in December.*

## GARDEN CLUB GIFT

Thanks to a very generous 2012 gift from the Suffield Garden Club, we now have two new shade trees planted in the yard at the King House. There were numerous suggestions for yard and landscape improvements, but following the sad demise of our *Liberty Elm* and anticipating the decline and eventual removal of at least two other trees, we decided to ask Jim Mather to select and plant another elm, a *Valley Forge*, in the place of the old one by the barn and a sugar maple across the parking lot.

These trees will soon provide shade for events on the lawn and for parking. We are most grateful and publicly thank the Garden Club for their large gift, the results of which will benefit visitors for years to come.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## ANNUAL ICE HARVEST

**Saturday, February 1** Noon – 3:00 p.m.

Noble & Cooley Mill Pond, Granville, Massachusetts

*Learn how to handle an ice saw and other antique tools to cut blocks of ice. Dennis Picard and crew will present the event that is co-sponsored with the Suffield Land Conservancy and the Noble & Cooley Museum.*

*Refreshments and museum tours will be available.*

*Dress warmly. The harvest is dependent on weather conditions. Storm date February 2. Call Bob Stewart for last minute weather updates at 668-2928 or 729-6429.*

## WORKSHOP

**Wednesday, February 12**

King Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

*We will be demonstrating favorite historical websites.*

## SHOW AND TELL NIGHT

**Wednesday, March 12**

King Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

*Sign up for a short presentation on any aspect of local and American history, anecdotes about local characters, folklore, artifacts, photographs or works of local artists.*

*Sign up by March 1 with Bob Stewart at 668-2928.*

## NEW ENGLAND FOLK SONGS

**Wednesday, April 9**

King Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

*State Historian, songwriter, music producer and performer Walter Woodward traces our history through a collection of uniquely New England folk songs. In the tradition of New England folk music gatherings, audience participation is strongly encouraged!*

## A STORM TOO SOON

**Wednesday, May 14**

King Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

*An intense surprise storm caught several vessels at sea off the east coast and in extreme danger of going aground. Michael Tougias retells the exciting story of techniques used by pilots and rescue crews in saving the lives.*

## ANNUAL FIELD TRIP

**Saturday, May 17 (tentative date)**

*Tentative destination: The Florence Griswold Museum, the Sub Base Museum and the Henry Whitfield State Museum, all in southeastern Connecticut.*

*A detailed itinerary will be mailed out to members with the April newsletter.*

Newletter  
Maggie Philippson, Editor  
Anne Borg, Compiler

King House Museum  
232 South Main Street  
Open to the Public  
Wednesdays and Saturdays  
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
May through September

www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org

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