



Stony Brook **CURRENTS**

Vol. IX, No. 2

A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

May 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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SAMUEL SR. AND SAMUEL KENT JR., ORIGINAL SUFFIELD PROPRIETORS

by Ed Chase

Prior to King Philip's War, the total number of Suffield land grants stood at 36. In the early 1670s, John Pynchon had constructed both a sawmill and "corn" mill along Stony Brook. At the last meeting of the Committee for Suffield prior to the war in January 1674/5, it was agreed to "fill up the place to 100 families."

The Committee's optimism was quelled in June when the war quickly spread west from Swansey, Massachusetts. By September 1675, the entire upper Connecticut River Valley was engaged. Suffield was not defensible. Suffield was abandoned. All the English dwellings, barns, and mills were turned into ashes by King Philip's warriors.

Destruction was total, but within 18 months, the Committee wrote "Whereas thro the favor of God in scattering the Heathen, and giving us some quiet, there is hope of re-settling." On February 21, 1676/7, the committee issued new grants. The first was to Samuel Kent Sr.

Kent¹ and his wife, Frances Woodall, both emigrated from Upper Wallop, Southampton, England. They settled first in Gloucester, Massachusetts where he became engaged in the fisheries trade to England. Later they removed to John Pynchon's Brookfield settlement. When they arrived in Suffield, their family included two daughters (Sarah and Mary) and two sons (Samuel Jr. and John).

Samuel Sr.'s grant of 60 acres was divided between a 5-acre home lot on the west side of High St. now occupied by the Suffield Academy Library and the remaining acreage on the west side of Feather St. (now East St.), the second lot south of what is now Bridge St.

In 1679, Samuel Jr. turned 18 and was granted 40 acres of his own. His home lot was just south and adjacent to his father's. By this time the total number of Suffield grants had reached 66, including those made prior to King Philip's War.

The Kent males were very prolific: Samuel Jr. had 12 children with three wives; brother John also had 12 children with two wives; and Samuel III fathered 11 children with one wife. Kent men also proved to be industrious and useful citizens of Suffield. Samuel Kent Sr. was a voter in Suffield's first Town Meeting². However, Sheldon's *Documentary History of Suffield* shows that that was only the beginning of the Kents' civil involvement, for between 1682 and 1749 generations of Kents held every Town office. Many of them served in multiple offices and multiple terms.

Later histories show continuous Kent military service from the French and Indian Wars through the Revolutionary War. The Kent name is mentioned by Sheldon more than any other surname in Suffield!³

In his *Biography of a Town*, Robert H. Alcorn describes a later notable Kent: Sidney Albert Kent. Sidney was born in 1834 in his grandfather Benajah's impressive home at the southwest corner of Mountain Rd. and Sheldon St. The son of Albert and Lucinda Kent, he was educated at C.L. I. (now Suffield Academy). He chose not to go to college, but joined his Yale-educated brother, Albert, in a Chicago packing business. The brothers prospered throughout the Civil War. After Albert left because of poor health, Sidney continued alone. Expanding into railroads and grain futures, he then joined with Philip Armour, a meat packer. Of like minds, they prospered mightily.

Wishing to leave a Kent legacy to his hometown of Suffield, he offered to build a library for the town. His offer was accepted, and Sidney bought the original home lot of his ancestor Samuel from the C.L. I. He spent \$35,000 dollars on construction, purchased 7,000 books, and left an endowment of \$25,000 dollars. The Kent Memorial Library was dedicated in memory of his parents on November 1, 1899.

The library had no room for expansion as the town grew. Thus the building was ultimately sold to Suffield Academy, where it exists today as the S. Kent Legare Library of Suffield Academy. A replacement public library was dedicated in 1972 as the Kent Memorial Library in the redeveloped area at the junction of Main Street and Mountain Road. Thus the Kent Legacy lives on.

- 1 Samuel was the son of Thomas Kent of Upper Wallop, Southampton, England. He died in Springfield in 1691.
- 2 March 9, 1681/82
- 3 The only one close in Sheldon's notations was the King family.

REFERENCES:

SHS website genealogies, also Internet genealogies
Biography of a Town, Robert H. Alcorn, 1970
Documentary History of Suffield, 1879, H. S. Sheldon
 Kent Memorial Library Website

CALL TO ARTISTS "KING HOUSE IN ART" COMPETITION!

Help the Society celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Dr. Alexander King House by entering an art contest. Students, amateurs, and professional artists are invited to submit art – paintings, photographs, prints, drawings, sculpture – focused on the King House Museum or grounds.

\$100.00 prizes will be awarded for first place in four categories: 1) kindergarten – 5th grade; 2) 6th – 8th grade; 3) high school; 4) adults.

All entries will be displayed at the Pinney Gallery at the Kent Memorial Library during the month of June 2015.

Contest Guidelines:

- Up to three works of art may be submitted per artist.
- All artworks must be submitted digitally to n44noble@gmail.com with artist's name, email, address, and phone.
- Deadline to submit works is January 31, 2015.
- Submissions will be judged by a committee of Suffield Historical Society trustees.
- Artists will be contacted in May 2015 regarding displaying their art at the Pinney Gallery
- Prizes will be awarded at the Suffield Historical Society's annual meeting, Kent Memorial Library, June 2015.

Questions?

For more information, contact Nancy Noble at n44noble@gmail.com or 860-993-3010.



THANK YOU TO OUR REFRESHMENT VOLUNTEERS

To all of you who have provided refreshments after our monthly meetings this season, in years past and in years to come, a hearty thank you! Many of you have become permanent fixtures on our calendar, and we are indeed grateful for your time and your culinary gifts. Your efforts make each meeting a social event where members, guest and speakers can convene for conversation after each presentation.

250 YEARS OLD!!

This year the King House turns 250. We have several celebratory events planned, including a birthday cake at the July 15th Ice Cream Social, a creative arts contest, another appraisal day in October, and possibly others.

Come visit and help us celebrate the original construction and lasting appeal of this lovely old home, as well as the efforts of the many who have preserved and maintained it for two and half centuries.

SUFFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S ANNUAL FIELD TRIP

This year the Society will visit at least three military or historical sites. The coach leaves from the King House promptly at 7:30 AM on Saturday, May 31. Our first stop will be at the Submarine Museum in Groton. Most of the museum is handicap accessible. Access to the submarine *Nautilus* requires going up or down a steep companionway. However, there are many other exhibits on submarines, their construction, history and capability to interest the amateur historian.

Then the bus will proceed to Ft. Trumbull. Fort Trumbull has served various defense, research, and education functions for the United States Army, Coast Guard and Navy since 1839, most recently as the Naval Undersea Warfare Center. The fort is a fine example of stonework and masonry. The fort contains informative markers, displays, and gun emplacements. The fort interior features 19th-century restored living quarters, a mock laboratory, and a 1950's era office furnished to resemble a research and development lab at the facility.

The tour will then stop for lunch at Lenny & Joe's Fish Tale in Madison. ***Lunch is on your own.*** Lenny & Joe's prices range from \$3.59 for a bowl of chowder to lobster dishes at \$25-\$30. You may bring a lunch from home and eat at an outdoor picnic table. (But their fish is outstanding !)

The tour will go on to the Henry Whitfield House in Guilford. Built for the Reverend Henry Whitfield, one of the founders of Guilford. The house was considered an "ancient relic" even over a hundred years ago, when it opened as a museum in 1904. Rooms display antique furnishings and local artifacts. There are changing exhibits in the visitor center. We expect to be back in Suffield at 7:00 PM



Count me (us) in!

Enclosed is a check for \$55.00 per person made out to the Suffield Historical Society

Send it to: Ed Chase - 33 Abraham Terrace - Suffield, CT 06078.

(Cost includes all museum admissions and driver's tip. Lunch at Lenny and Joe's is not included).

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Town, State & Zip _____ (Phone) _____

KING HOUSE OPENS

The King House Museum will open for the summer season on Saturday, May 3, and will be open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1:00-4:00. Curator Lester Smith plans to exhibit memorabilia from the Suffield Pharmacy, formerly on Main Street, on loan from Chet Madey who worked for "Doc" Caldwell for many years at the pharmacy and later owned it.

On Saturday, June 14, we will be participating in Connecticut Open House Day when many museums throughout the state will be open for free or at a discounted rate. We will be open for extended hours, 11:00-4:00. In the barn, we will be showing off our newest restored wagon, which once belonged to the Parkes Loomis family. We will also offer cookies to our visitors.

We are always looking for volunteer house guides. If you are interested, please call Nancy Noble at 668-2538.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A STORM TOO SOON

Wednesday, May 14

Kent 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 lives.

ANNUAL FIELD TRIP

Saturday, May 31

Head for the Connecticut coastline with us as we visit the Submarine Museum, Fort Trumbull and the Henry Whitfield State Museum. See details inside.

SUFFIELD'S PAST IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Wednesday, June 11

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

Photos from the late Hawley Rising Collection selected by Curator Lester Smith and Trustee Anne Borg.

Newsletter
Maggie Philippou, 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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