



Stony Brook **CURRENTS**

Vol. XI, No. 2

The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

April 2016

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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AN INVITATION to Friends of History

We are distributing this newsletter in a town-wide mailing to make sure that everyone is fully aware of what the Suffield Historical Society is, what we do, what we offer, and what we dream for the future.

We are a group whose mission is printed at the left. To fulfill that mission, we work to learn and share matters of Suffield history and to collect relevant artifacts. We offer a free series of historical lectures and entertainments at the Kent Memorial Library (temporarily at the Senior Center). We organize interesting bus trips and other special events. And we offer the King House Museum, a significant, free opportunity to view and enjoy an old-time environment in an antique house and barn with many collections of old-time things. What we dream of is to continue and improve and expand as a Suffield History Center.

(What we are not, but are often confused with, is the Suffield Historical Commission, a municipal body that works to preserve the character of the town's two historic districts.)

The Society is a non-profit volunteer association, formed in 1940 and supported by donations and endowment income. Twenty years later Samuel R. Spencer and his wife Helena donated the 1764 house built on South Main Street by Dr. Alexander King, a noted Suffield leader. The Spencers had restored the house well and equipped it with old Suffield furnishings. In 2009 the Society erected our big red barn with its 1840s frame, financed by a bequest from long-time docent Evelyn Phelps.

The King House Museum is open free two days a week through the summer season and for special events.

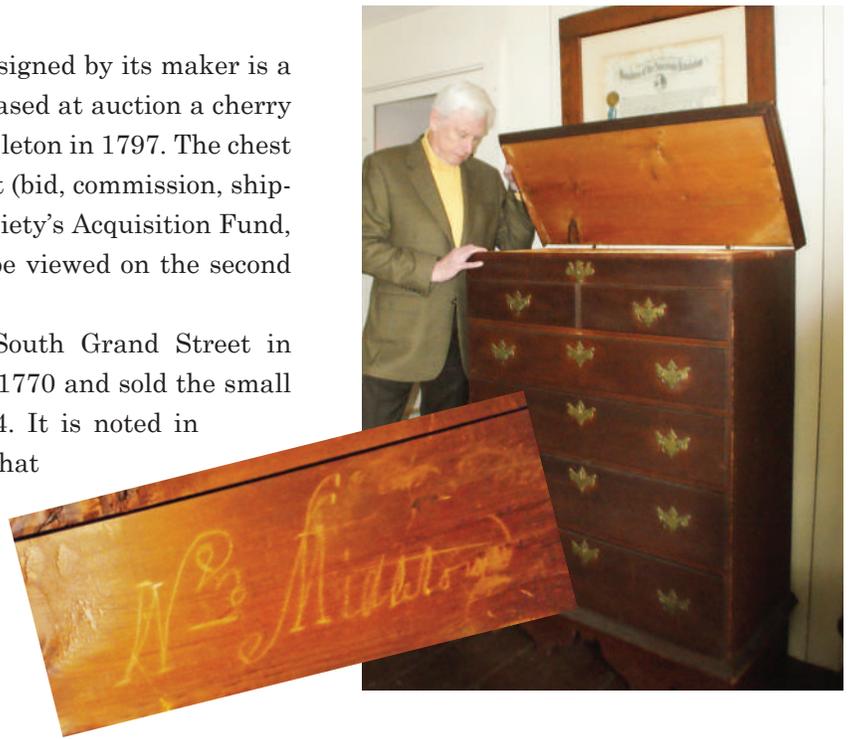
What will help the Society carry on its work is a good complement of supporting members, some of whom can provide occasional hands-on assistance, plus, we hope, some who will grow to take leadership positions in the future. So please come to our meetings (see Page 4), talk with Society officers and members of the Board of Trustees (listed at the left), and consider joining. There's a membership application on Page 3.

A SUFFIELD CHEST

A piece of dated antique furniture which is signed by its maker is a rarity. The Suffield Historical Society has purchased at auction a cherry and pine blanket chest signed by William Mid(d)leton in 1797. The chest has its original finish and brasses. The total cost (bid, commission, shipping) was \$ 3,890; the money came from the Society's Acquisition Fund, which needs to be replenished. The chest can be viewed on the second floor of the King House Museum.

William Mid(d)leton owned property on South Grand Street in West Suffield. He purchased property for £8 in 1770 and sold the small parcel and "buildings thereon" for £24 in 1774. It is noted in Charles Bissell's book on Suffield furniture that Mid(d)leton made a bed for Gideon King in 1790.

Where Mid(d)leton lived during most of his Suffield years is not known at this time. He died in 1820.



SUMMER EXHIBIT

The special summer exhibit at the King House Museum for 2016 will consist of artifacts, books, photographs, documents, and other paper items from the extended Pease family. The material dates from the 18th Century into the 20th Century; it provides a window on Suffield life.

Joseph Pease came to Suffield in 1750 from Enfield, which was established by his grandfather, John, and great uncle, Robert, in 1680. Joseph married Mindwell King in 1756 and, in 1760, he built his second house, a very large one, near the First Congregational Church. During the American Revolution, he was a town leader with Dr. Alexander King and Gideon Granger. His daughter, Mindwell, married Gideon Granger, who became Thomas Jefferson's Postmaster General. Oliver, son of Joseph, was a doctor and Town Clerk for more than 20 years. Other sons played prominent roles.

Another Pease family home (480 North Main Street) was built for Dr. Howard Alden in 1794. It passed into the Pease family when Alden's granddaughter married Don Pease in 1842. The home remained in the Pease family until the present owners purchased it from Sarah Pease Washburn. Sarah L. Pease married Edward A. Fuller in 1862. He became a state official and trustee of Suffield School (now Suffield Academy). His nephew, Howard F. Pease, also became a trustee in the 20th Century.

Material belonging to or about these people, as well as others, comprises the exhibit.

POLISH HERITAGE COMMITTEE

If you are interested in listening to and/or sharing memories of Suffield in the early to mid 1900's, come join this group. They meet on the first Wednesday of the month at the Zak Ambulance Center at 10:00 a.m. except for July and August. In the past they have reminisced about swimming holes around town, tobacco growing as it used to be, dances in the old town hall, and gypsies camping on South Street. Recently the subject has been the founding of St. Joseph Church, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

The group, which is a sub-committee of the Historical Society, maintains a computer at the Senior Center which contains a collection of Polish family photos from the 1900's, including some old class photos. You are invited to view and add to the collection by contacting Della Zera Winans at 860-633-1728. We scan the photos, so you go home with your original photos.

Members of the group have been writing about their families. These stories are available at the Kent Memorial Library.

A BIT OF SERENDIPITY

Lester Smith, Curator

The recent discovery of an uncommon edition of Hezekiah Spencer Sheldon's Documentary History of Suffield led to a delightful visit and two new friends. Clued by member Jan Peake's discovery, I visited a book store in Hartford and bought the book, which carried an image of the Connecticut Baptist Literary Institution on the cover and the title, *Suffield Historical Collections*. It included the usual transcription of the early records of Suffield along with Sheldon's very useful supplemental material, plus 46 more pages comprising several of his additional writings, including, for instance, *The Connecticut River Island and Its Rapids*. On the book's flyleaf was written, "Given to E. Clara Loomis, December 25, 1900, H. S. Sheldon." And on an old slip of paper, was a note: "Hezekiah Sheldon raised Emma Clara Loomis, his niece, my grandmother, [signed] Ruth Havlick."

Havlick is an uncommon name, so it wasn't hard to find Roberta Havlick in Cheshire, who turned out to be Ruth's daughter-in-law. And when I quizzed Roberta on the phone about family connections, she said, "Well, why don't you call my mother-in-law, Ruth; here's her phone number. She's here in Cheshire, 101 years old." I returned from my visit with copies of two very interesting letters from Sheldon and his wife Almira Rose, photos of two ancestral portraits painted in 1833, and pleasant prospects of additional visits to talk about old times.

SHS ANNUAL FIELD TRIP SATURDAY, MAY 21

An excursion that will take us back into time to the days when the New England seacoast was land to be arduously defended, and the sea itself brought great wealth and commerce to local residents.

We're off first to Fort Adams in Newport, the largest defense fort on our East Coast. Established in 1799, it was the our first line of defense. The fort was underpinned by a maze of tunnels for added protection and was very high tech for its time! After a tour and lunch on the grounds of the fort, we complete our adventure with a tour of the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Now in its 90th year, the largest museum of its kind boasts of a 35-ft. humpback whale skeleton, a half-scale model of the whaling bark Lagoda, and a 98-ft. mural of sperm whales by noted marine artist Richard Ellis. We will also be visiting a lighthouse.



COUNT ME IN!

Please sign up: Enclose this form with a check payable to the *Suffield Historical Society* and send to
Ed Chase, 33 Abraham Terrace, Suffield, CT 06078

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Cost of tour for members: \$70.00

Bus will leave the King House at 7:30 a.m. and return to Suffield at 6:30 p.m.

Lunch will be provided by "The French Confection." Soft drinks and snacks on the road are included.

Call or email Bob Stewart for more information: (860) 668-2928 or rstewart371@cox.net.

Special Deal for non-members:

Enclose a check made out for \$80 and enjoy the trip AND the privileges of a one-year individual SHS membership!



NEW MEMBERS ONLY APPLICATION

Miss/MsMr/Mrs _____

Address _____

Telephone (optional) _____ Email (optional) _____

Dues:	Individual Membership	\$10	Family Membership	\$15		
	Youth (under 18)	\$2	Patron	\$25	Donation	_____

The Internal Revenue Service has granted tax-exempt status to the Suffield Historical Society.

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE OTHER UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Tuesday, April 19

Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

Bill Sullivan and his Suffield Academy students
Explore the Underground Railroad that once linked West Suffield and a kidnapped African-American woman and her daughters with Virginia's Supreme Court.

WORK DAY

Saturday, April 23

King House 9:00 a.m. – noon

Springtime clean-up.

Come help spruce up the King House Museum and yard for its opening day. Raindate: Saturday, April 30

OUR WESTERN EXPANSION

Wednesday, May 18

Kent Memorial Library 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Walter Woodward, Connecticut State Historian

After the Revolutionary War, Connecticut's western grant was reduced to a 120-mile strip in northeastern Ohio along

the shores of Lake Erie. Its title was purchased by developers – mostly from Suffield – but Native Americans also claimed the land. Listen to the stories of the diaspora of young Connecticut men and their families who tried to settle this area.

ANNUAL SHS FIELD TRIP

Saturday, May 21

Details for our trip to Rhode Island and Massachusetts are on page 3. Join us on this adventure!

SUFFIELD'S PAST IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Wednesday, June 15

Kent Memorial Library 7:00 p.m.

Anne Borg and Lester Smith

See what Suffield was in days past with a contemporary historical perspective through photographs carefully chosen by Curator Lester Smith and Trustee Anne Borg.

Photos are taken from the late Hawley Rising's collection.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Tuesday, July 12

King House Lawn 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Bring friends and family to enjoy an old-fashioned Ice Cream Social. Pack a picnic, bring lawn chairs. Ice cream will be provided by SHS and entertainment by Paul Kulas.

Raindate: Thursday, July 14

www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org

(860) 668-5256

Suffield, Connecticut 06078

P.O. Box 893

Suffield Historical Society, Inc.

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