



Stony Brook CURRENTS

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The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

May 2017

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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POSTCARD SHOW

On June 14th, our annual picture show will be based on Curator Lester Smith's extensive collection of Suffield postcards.

The earliest known picture postcard, hand designed, was sent in 1840 in London. In the U.S. a card with printed advertising was sent in 1848. American postcards developed from around 1873, first mostly printed by the Post Office, until 1898. The "Golden Age of American postcards" peaked in 1910 and ended by 1915 (Wikipedia), although they are still a popular means of vacation communication.

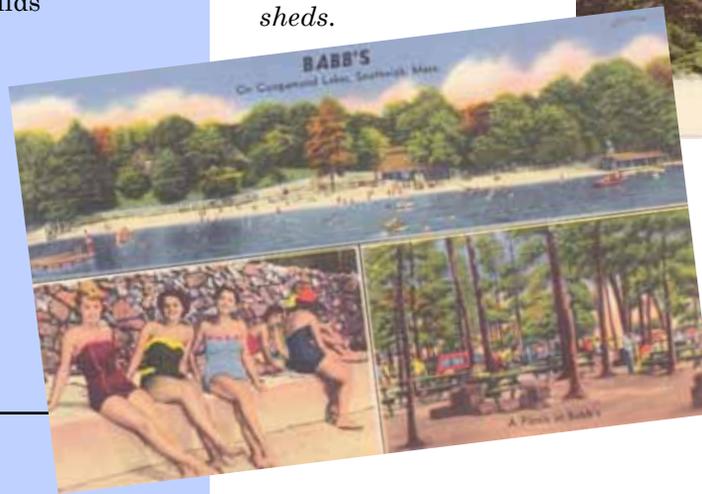
Lester has been collecting for many years and has recently donated his collection to the Society. He will talk about postcard history, formats and Suffield history as portrayed on postcards.

Early picture postcards, like this turn-of-the-century, hand-colored, tobacco harvesting scene, allowed nothing but the address on the other side, so there was a small space under the picture for a short message.

As shown, it was customary for the tobacco to be hung on stands in the field, sheltered from sunlight and breeze, to await transportation to the curing sheds.



This mid-century chromolithograph card from Babb's Beach shows that the beach was much longer then. And the trees in the field above provided a well-shaded picnic spot.



THE WINCHELL BROTHERS, ORIGINAL PROPRIETORS

by Edward Chase

Robert Winchell, an immigrant from England, was made a freeman by the General Court of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in May 1635. He had received a land grant at Dorchester four months before in January, but he never settled on this Dorchester property.

In 1635, Robert moved from Dorchester to Windsor, Connecticut, as did William Phelps. Robert was married to Mary Phelps, William's daughter. And thus begins our story.

From Windsor Town Records it appears that certain lands were assigned to Robert on the very first division of public lands for Windsor's original immigrants. He built a wooden frame house on the corner of Main Street and the Bissell's Ferry Road. Through this division and additional purchases, his property measured close to 50 acres. This was the place where Robert and Mary raised a family of nine children – only four would survive their father. Two of their sons, David and Jonathan, came to Suffield as original proprietors.

On his deathbed, Robert bequeathed his Windsor land to David and Jonathan. He left nothing to his only surviving daughter, as he claimed "I have done for her already." To his other surviving son, Nathaniel, he also left nothing, but indicated that his "eldest son is in my Debt; I acquit him that ..."

Three years later, on 16 May 1671, David and Jonathan each received 60-acre grants in Suffield. These lots were adjacent to each other and ran along North Main Street (then called High Street) between Mapleton Avenue (then the road to Springfield) and Mountain Road. Neither settled his property until after King Philip's War.

Jonathan had married Abigail Brownson of Farmington in 1666, and they had two sons¹ before they relocated in Suffield. A daughter, Abigail was born after their move. Jonathan's wife died in 1710, and he married the widow Mary Towsley in 1713. It was a brief marriage, as he died in 1714.

David², however, lived to the age of 80. He was single when he first carved out his Suffield homestead, but married Elizabeth Filley of Windsor in 1779. She outlived him by five years, dying here at the age of 78.

The last Windsor records of David note that he sold all his inherited land in Windsor to his brother Nathaniel, who had been left out of his father's will in 1673 and, in 1676, made a substantial and voluntary contribution for relief of families distressed by King Philip's War.

The couple had nine children, and David rapidly took his place in the governance of Suffield. Serving the community as both a Selectman and Land Measurer. His career in Town government spanned more than 25 years. During his tenure he surveyed and layout more than 9,000 acres in Suffield. David's son Joseph succeeded him as the Town's surveyor. Joseph also would be the Town Clerk for more than 25 years.

Joseph occasionally graced the pages of the *Proprietors' Books* as Town Clerk with his wisdom and poetry in addition to the facts. One such entry appears in 1742, which is a apropos today as it was then:

MEMORANDUM

"Great Debts requier the greater Care to pay.
Wise Men provide against the Accounting day,
Go. Run. Ride. Swim, use every Honnist Way.
Rather than Poverties Commands Obey.

Truths always Truth, in Age and Youth –
Tis neither Old nor Young –
This is as true, now said of Truth,
As ever was spoke by Tongue."

Although Winchell is one of the most referenced names in Sheldon's *Documentary History of Suffield*, the name appears nowhere in our community. We do know, however, they married into the Remington family. Direct descendants of David include the artist/sculptor Frederic Sackrider Remington and inventor/arms manufacturer Eliphalet Remington, Jr.

1 Jonathan, b. 1670; Benjamin, b.1674 and Abigail born in Suffield 1679.

2 David, b. 1643 in Windsor, d. 1723 in Suffield. Elizabeth Filley, b. 1650 in Windsor, d. 1728 In Suffield.

References:

H.S. Sheldon, *Documentary History of Suffield (1660 – 1749)*, 1870; *Winchell Genealogy*, Suffield Historical Society Web Site; Selections from *The Pynchon Papers* Account Books, by Bridenbaugh and Tomlinson, 1985; G.M. Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, 1906; *Our Bankert Family*, A Family History website; *findagrave.com website*.

SUFFIELD PLAYERS KING HOUSE SUMMER EXHIBIT

This season the Suffield Players and the Suffield Historical Society have joined forces to mount an exhibit showcasing the history of this local theater group. It will be open through the coming spring and summer.

In 1936 local thespians formed a summer theater called the Band Box Theater which was located on the Lewis property on Hill Street. Mrs. Cushing (nee Gwendolyn Lewis) who resided on the property, transformed the barn into a 200 seat theater and furnished living quarters for the performers.

According to Robert Alcorn's *Biography of a Town*, the Band Box Theater performed five nights a week, with a new play opening each week. After its third season, the *New York Times* theater critic rated it one of the top five summer theaters in the East. World War II caused it to close.

The Suffield Players were founded in 1952 and made Mapleton Hall their home in 1978. They have produced 150 plays to date, won many awards, and are active throughout the year in related endeavors. Memorabilia from these years as well as the story of their growth will be on display at the King House from May until September. Come and see how the Players have evolved from their modest beginnings 65 years ago.

EMAIL UPDATES

Has your email address changed? Please send any updates to Artsikes@aol.com. We use your email **ONLY** to send you notices of meetings and events and for no other purpose. If you haven't received notices lately, be sure Art has your current address.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S FOGG MUSEUM SHS ANNUAL FIELD TRIP SATURDAY, JUNE 3

This year's field trip will center around the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University on Saturday, June 3. Society members will have the opportunity to visit the nearby Natural History Museum and its improved exhibit featuring Harvard's famous collection of Blaschka glass flowers.

Our coach will depart King House at 8:00 a.m. and return there around 6:00 p.m. Lunch will be "on your own" at the Fogg Cafe or at any of several restaurants in the Harvard Square area. Cost will include transportation, snacks and soft drinks, tips and the Fogg Museum admission. Cost is \$60 for adults and \$10 for youths.

The Natural History Museum is an **optional** choice and is paid directly to the museum at their entrance which is just a few hundred feet from the Fogg Art Museum. (Admission to the Natural History Museum is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors, and \$8 for youth.)

This is an opportunity to visit a major teaching museum where descriptions of the paintings and artifacts are more detailed than is typical.



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: \$60.00 for _____ adults including bus, snacks and the Fogg Museum admission.
\$10 for youth including bus, snacks and Fogg Museum admission.

Total enclosed: _____

Bus will leave the King House at 8:00 a.m. and return to Suffield at 6:00 p.m.
Call or email Bob Stewart for more information: (860) 668-2928 or rstewart371@cox.net.

Suffield Historical Society, Inc.
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King House Museum
232 South Main Street

Open to the Public, Free
Wednesdays and Saturdays
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
May through September

Newsletter
Maggie Philippon, Editor
Anne Borg, Compiler

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SHS FIELD TRIP Harvard Museums Saturday, June 3

See details and form for reservations on page 3.

KING HOUSE MUSEUM OPENS Wednesday, May 3 232 South Main Street 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

See details inside for the special summer exhibit celebrating the history of the Suffield Players.

POISONOUS HERBS TO BLOOD Wednesday, May 17

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

Horticulturist, historian and raconteur Gordon Kenneson will tell the story of Windsor's colonial Dr. Hezekiah Chafee and his "weeds women."

SUFFIELD'S PAST IN POSTCARDS

Wednesday, June 14

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

Culled from Lester Smith's extensive collection of Suffield postcards, the annual picture show will come from an entirely different source. The postcards date from the mid-19th-century to early 20th-century vacation notes.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL Tuesday, July 11

King House Lawn 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Bring friends and family to an old-fashioned Ice Cream Social. Pack a picnic, bring lawn chairs and enjoy an evening of neighborly visiting. Ice cream and entertainment provided by SHS.

Raindate: Thursday, July 13.

SUFFIELD ON THE GREEN Saturday & Sunday, September 9 & 10

Come see the line up of programs for the upcoming year.