



Stony Brook CURRENTS

Vol. XVII, No. 2

The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

May 2022

SUFFIELD IN HISTORY TRIVIA

1. Prudence Crandall, a Connecticut schoolteacher, defied racial discrimination by opening one of the first schools to educate African American girls in Canterbury, Connecticut in 1833. What was her connection to Suffield?
 - a. She married Calvin Philleo who had been a Baptist minister in Suffield.
 - b. She was born in Suffield.
 - c. She often visited her brother who had a farm in Suffield.
2. Which statement is untrue about Oliver Phelps, who was the second owner of the Phelps Hatheway House?
 - a. He was Superintendent of Purchasing for George Washington during the Revolutionary War.
 - b. He started a silk manufacturing plant when Ezra Stiles, president of Yale College, sent mulberry seeds to every parish in Connecticut. (Mulberries are the preferred food of silkworms.)
 - c. Oliver Phelps ran for Lieutenant Governor of New York State on the same slate with Aaron Burr, who ran for Governor.
3. How many times did George Washington travel through Suffield?
 - a. Once
 - b. Twice
 - c. Three times

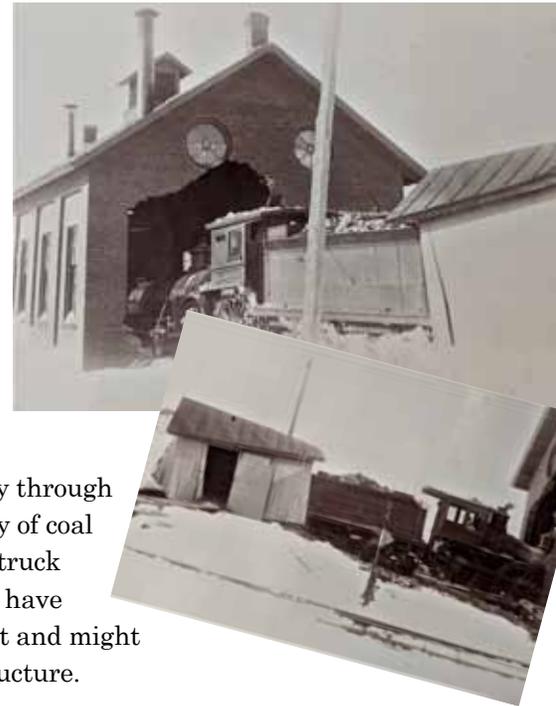
Answers on page 4

ONE KILLED, SEVERAL INJURED IN TRAIN CRASH

by Wendy Taylor

A terrible crash at the Mountain Road depot occurred on February 14, 1899. Thomas Moriarity, a section man who was standing on the tender, was struck by the broken woodwork as the tender crashed through the door. The 35-year-old died the following morning from a broken back and concussion. Others hurt included John P. Smith, the baggage master who owned the Smith Hotel up the street from the depot.

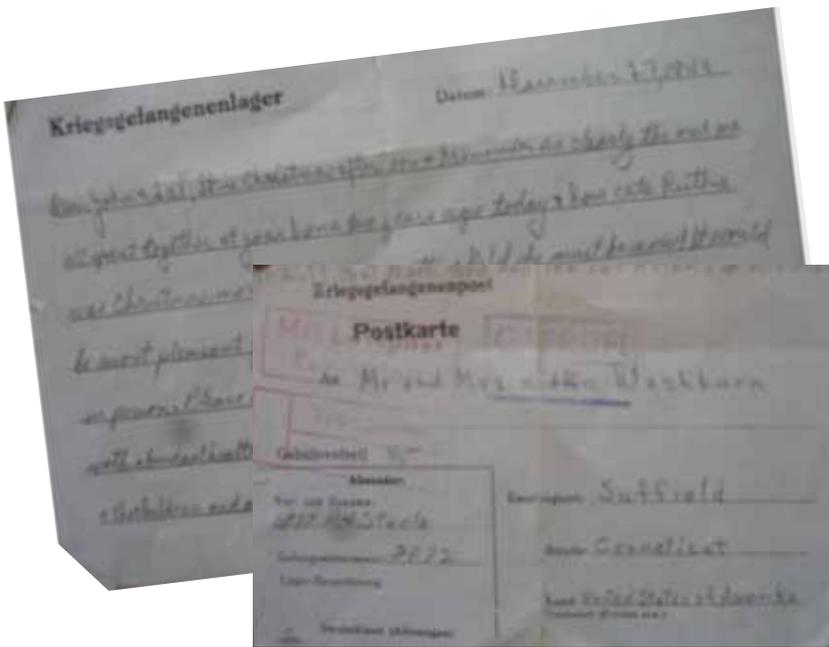
The accident was at least partly caused by a snow storm. There was enough snow that day to make the train tracks impassable. The passenger engine, with the regular train crew and section hands attempted to open the tracks to Windsor Locks. It took so long, the water for the steam engine ran low and they had to return to Suffield. As the engine reached the round house the air brakes refused to work and the locomotive crashed through the closed door, thence the length of the track and partly through the brick wall...If not for the body of coal contained in the shed that was struck it is likely that the engine would have kept on until it reached the depot and might have seriously damaged that structure.



Engineer George L. West, Fireman J. H. Geary and Conductor J. R. Middlebrook stuck to the cab and escaped uninjured...it is the general verdict that Engineer West did all that could be done after the air brakes failed to work, staying at his post until the engine stopped.

NOTES: This story came from the Windsor Locks Journal, February 17, 1899 and the Meriden Republican, February 15, 1899. The train depot on Mountain Road (previously Depot Street) where Suffield Auto Sales is located.

TIME CAPSULE DAY! JUNE 15



Sometimes you discover amazing things when you review old family photo albums. Pamela Washburn Berry recently found a postcard addressed to her parents, John and Sarah Washburn of Suffield, from Lt. Robert Steele who was a prisoner of war in Germany.

While stationed at Bradley Army Air Field, Lt. Steele and his wife became friends with the Washburns. Lt. Steele was based in England in 1943 when he was shot down on his 23rd mission. He became a POW, first in Holland then in Germany. He was liberated in the spring of 1945.

Dated December 27, 1944, he writes from the POW camp: "It is Christmas afternoon and I remember so clearly the one we all spent together in your home two years ago today ... It would be most pleasant for me if I could greet you all with a "Merry Christmas" in person." Steele concludes by naming each Washburn family member and extending "my regards & best wishes for a New Year brimming with abundant health & happiness ... Would certainly enjoy a snapshot of you all including your new son. As Ever, Bob"

Here is a translation of some of the words on the displayed postcard:

Kriegsgefangenenpost = war prisoner mail
Kriegsgefangenenlager = prisoner of war camp
Gefangenenummer = prisoner of war number
Gebührenfrei = free mail.

Thank you to Peter Das for the translation and to Pam Berry for the pictures of the postcard.

Please join us for a picnic supper and time-capsule dedication Wednesday, June 15, 5:30 pm! Bring a memory of 2020-2022 to be placed in the Society's time capsule, which will be opened in 2070, Suffield's 400th anniversary. Capture a day of your life here in Suffield: bring us something you've written or pictures of your day. A typical day, an exceptional day – you decide. Some of the Society's most treasured artifacts are daybooks and journals whose owners described everyday life in Suffield decades ago. Help us record our lives for future residents!

Bring your time capsule contribution, a picnic supper, and lawn chairs. Desserts and entertainment will be provided by the Society.

When George Hendee bought 500 acres to build the farm called Hilltop, he found an old Sikes family cemetery on the property. He preserved the cemetery and, in May of 1916, Mr.



Hendee unveiled a boulder and bronze tablet in memory of David Sikes, who fought in the Revolutionary War, and listed other family members buried there.

THE 1950 CENSUS IS AVAILABLE

In every decade since 1790, the United States has taken a census, listing people's names and residences and more information. Since the individual records are available only after 72 years, the 1950 was not available for public access until April 1, 2022. The handwritten information from the original lists was "translated" into printed form with OCR (Optical Character Recognition) technology, making it possible to search for and more easily read names. However the OCR process doesn't always recognize the handwriting in the census, so volunteers are needed to correct the transcript. You can find the database on the National Archives website. And by following the links you can volunteer to help transcribe and correct the text. Find more information at this link: <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950>.

HOSTELERS CAME TO SUFFIELD IN 1937

Youth Hostels became a phenomena during the 1930's in America. The purpose was to promote a greater understanding of the world and make travel easier by providing low-cost accommodations, bicycle trails and foot paths. In September 1937, a Hosteler group came to Suffield via the train with their bicycles from New York City. The (Laurie) Tavino family waited at the train station for the arrival of the group from New York City. They took some great pictures, two of which are presented here. (Please let us know if you know anything more about this event in 1937.)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT *by Art Sikes*

The Historical Society has taken a big step. This month, our first employee will come on board. Christine Ritok is our new Associate Curator. Over the last several years, even before the pandemic, the number of gifts and purchases that the Society acquired has increased. Lester has tried to keep up, but we have been getting farther behind. Christine will help to get these items into our collection, while doing other projects.

Christine comes to us from Deerfield Museum where one of her duties was working with their collection of early New England furniture. We will open the King House for tours on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons starting in May. Stop by and introduce yourself to Christine and see our new exhibit put together by Bob Stewart (in the shed room).

Now on to the next challenges: Finding space to store and display all of the items that we have received, and sprucing up our display items to welcome visitors.



This photo of a First National Bank of Suffield 1867 banknote for one dollar, superimposed on a sketch of the bank's long-time headquarters, was one of the 28 framed images donated recently to the Society by Peoples Bank after their interior renovation of FNBS's 1970 building. The gift includes paintings, engravings, photos, and a number of old postcard groups – a very nice present, indeed. PHOTO BY LESTER SMITH



Top: This hosteler is having fun on his high-wheel bicycle. This picture might have been taken

near the train depot (which was near Suffield Auto Sales). Next: Two New York visitors touring Suffield on an unusual side-by-side tandem bicycle stop to chat with a native.



CONCEALMENT SHOE FOUND IN GRANBY

A few years ago the *Suffield Observer* ran a story by Laurie Tavino about the discovery of a "concealment shoe" in a house on East Street North. It was thought that these hidden shoes would protect the house from harmful spirits. When Morgan Hubbard of Granby found a concealment shoe behind the wall of her consignment shop, she con-

tacted SHS to see if we were interested. Laurie Tavino went over to take pictures and get the story.

The leather button boot with a low heel and straight toe cap dates from the 1880's. Also behind the wall was a cover of a German book with writing inside: "Lois Viets Cotton, Grade V, Age 10, Granby, Conn. Child of Mr. and Mrs. H.B. Cotton. I have 2 brothers = Robert Cotton 2 1/2, Henry C. Cotton 6."

When you're remodeling an old house, pay attention to the stuff behind your walls. You too might find a very old shoe. If you do, please contact us.

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www.facebook.com/SuffieldConnecticutHistory/

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
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UPCOMING EVENTS

New King House Exhibit

May through September

Decorative Arts, Fine, Folk and Commercial from the collection of Suffield Historical Society Trustee Bob Stewart.

Colorful fabrics and other artifacts from around the world which highlight the crafts of weaving, embroidery, and print design using subliming inks with a rare example of 19th-century brocade weaving using 32 colors on a double manual loom.

Samples of weaving on a backstrap loom from southern Mexico, a carryall bag hand woven from jungle plants in Ecuador, illustrated legends from indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest, contemporary sublimation ink technology, 20th-century Geisha doll from Japan with detailed fashion and fine craftsmanship are just the beginning. Each exhibit is described by captions and informative signs.

The King House Museum will be open to visitors on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons beginning in May. Admission is free. We'd love to see you.

Suffield in Pictures

Wednesday, May 18 Suffield Senior Center

Come explore unknown sites in Suffield through the legacy of photos from Delphina Clark's albums. Perhaps you'll discover something of your own personal history!

Picnic Supper and Time Capsule Contributions

Wednesday, June 15 King House Museum

Bring an object or artifact to be placed in the SHS time capsule, which will be opened for Suffield's 400th anniversary.

Ice Cream Social

Tuesday, July 12 King House Lawn

Bring friends and family, pack a picnic and lawn chairs to enjoy an old-fashioned ice cream social.

Ice cream and entertainment provided by the Society. Bring your appetite for fun, food and festivities!

TRIVIA ANSWERS: 1a, 2b, and 3b.

Note: Ezra Stiles did send mulberry seeds to every parish in order to develop a sustainable industry in Connecticut independent of Europe. So many people invested in this local silk industry that it is known as the "mulberry mania."

SHS Officers: Arthur Sikes, Jr., *President*; Jackie Hemond, *Vice President*; Rick Seaman, *Treasurer*; Jan Peake, *Secretary*; Lester Smith, *Historian & Curator*. **Trustees:** Anne Borg, Edward Chase, Christopher Childs, Nancy Noble, Norman Noble, James Reeves, Dianne Seaman, Robert Stewart, William Sullivan, Laurie Tavino, Jennifer Yergeau, and Sara Zak

