



Stony Brook **CURRENTS**

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A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

January 2013

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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LEAVITT DAY BOOK GIFTED *by Anne Borg*

The King House Museum archives has recently acquired a fascinating Day Book of "T. Leavit & Son No. 1 1800" through the generous donation by Lester Smith who purchased the book from a dealer some years ago. T. Leavitt was Thaddeus Leavitt who built the old house now on the south corner of North Main Street and the Country Club road. He was a prosperous local merchant who ran a store which supplied area residents with a wide variety of goods. In his diary (a partial typed copy of which is at the Kent Memorial Library) he notes on August 9, 1788 "This day Raised the Frame of a store adjoining the north end of my Hous." Presumably, the store was run from a room in his home before this date.

Thaddeus traveled to New York to purchase goods for his store. On May 14, 1786 he notes in his diary "...also saw his Highness George Washington Esquier President of the United States of America - whom God long preserve." At some point he and Asahel Hatheway were partners, and he had other partners along the way, but in 1791 he sold out. However, by 1793 Thaddeus got back in business on account of his son "who inclines to tend a store rather than go thro his Education."

Thaddeus Jr. attended boarding schools in "Weathersfield" and Williamstown in the years 1792 and 93. By 1795 and 96 Thaddeus was at Yale, despite his professed interest in the store. Two letters to him at Yale from his father indicate that his behavior there caused some trouble. At any rate, we know from the Day Book that in 1800 he was back home and in business with his father.

The Day Book is a Who's Who of Suffield people at the turn of the century. We find familiar names, including Alexander King and his son Carlos, Joseph and Royal Pease, William and Rev. Ebenezer Gay, Oliver Phelps, Oliver Hanchett, and Gideon Granger to name just a few. There are a few entries for women, among them Miss Mindwell

Granger, Widow Lucy King, Miss Ruth Rising, Bildad Granger's wife and some entries under the man's name with the notation "On your wife." However, it seems obvious from the lists of purchases that in many cases the women were doing the shopping and charging to their husbands' accounts. These purchases often listed yards of various fabrics, pins, thread, dishes, etc. unlikely to have been purchased by the men. Besides the notable names, we see "Stephen Negro" also listed.

People appear to have traveled some distance to patronize the Leavitt store. "Rev. Whitefield Cowles" from East Granby was a customer.

The Leavitts also appear to have been acting as bankers, paying others' bills as per the entry "To pay your order to Morgan."

To illustrate the variety of goods offered by the Leavitts, here is a short list: pork, turkey, oysters, rum, brandy, corn rye, nails, indigo, tea pots, dishes, knives, candlesticks, raisins, sugar, paint lead, molasses, calico, muslin, cotton, chintz, scythes and, of course, tobacco and snuff.

The Day Book makes these people of 200 plus years ago real to us. When we see Rev. Ebenezer Gay buying sugar, salt and rum or Alexander King buying brandy (which he bought a lot of) and "1 pr Silk Gloves" we begin to feel as if we are seeing them as real people and not just names in a history book. This is the essence of historical documents and the reason why it is important to preserve them. Suffield has done an excellent job in the past of preserving its history; may we continue to do so.



OLD HOUSE SIGNS

by Art Sikes

L to R: An original 1920 sign; a sign made by Bev Sikes for her own home; and two replacement signs made for historic homes where the 1920 plaque had to be replaced.

For the 250th anniversary or "Quarter Millennial" of the Town of Suffield in 1920, one of the projects undertaken was to put signs on the older houses. There was no historical society until 1940, so this was an effort by a group of citizens interested in history and old homes. Each sign had the name of the builder or owner who built the house as well as the date of the structure was believed to have been built. Suffield was the first town in the state to put signs like this on old homes. You can still see these signs on many of the homes today, especially on Main Street.

As our 350th anniversary approaches in 2020, we would like to continue the efforts from 1920. The years have taken their toll on the original signs. Many of them are in bad shape, have been replaced or are missing altogether. For a start we are going to give a suggested specification for the signs so they will all look pretty much the same. The signs are 11 1/2" by 26", white with black lettering. The width comes from a standard 12" board. The original signs were put on homes built on or before 1800. Since almost a century has passed, should we consider putting signs on newer houses, perhaps built on or before 1900?

The goal is to give more detailed specifications and then put them on our web site for all to use. We are also thinking of offering suggestions of people who might be willing to make signs and offering help in dating houses. Give us your feedback on this project, and let us know if you might be willing to help.

THE ALLENS OF SUFFIELD, ORIGINAL PROPRIETORS

by Ed Chase

Before colonists first settled Suffield, an Indian trail ran along the west bank of the Connecticut River. Between Rawlins Brook and Deep Brook, the Committee for Suffield laid out eight lots along that old path (or what we now call River Boulevard). The fifth lot south of Deep Brook¹ was a 60-acre plot granted to Edward Allen² on October 30, 1678. Simultaneously, his sons John, Edward Jr, and William were each granted 40-acre plots adjacent to Edward's grant.

Edward had married Sarah³ Kimball of Ipswich in 1658. When they moved to Suffield, they already had 11 children, including the three "grown"⁴ sons who also received land grants. Two more children were born to them in Suffield, and all but one child grew to adulthood.

Edward was a voter in our first Town Meeting, March 9, 1682. Records show he held the offices of Selectman and Fence Viewer. He was also required to provide 500 boards for the construction of a home for the Reverend Benjamin Ruggles, Suffield's first ordained minister. Edward and Sarah continued life on their land grant until their deaths in 1696.

Their first son John (b. 1659 in Ipswich) married Elizabeth Prichard of Suffield. Their first three children were born in Suffield, but their last five were born in Deerfield where they resided after 1686. Why they moved to Deerfield is uncertain. The town undoubtedly had the best farmland in the Connecticut River Valley, but it was a dangerous place because of the ongoing French and Indian conflicts.

John and Elizabeth both survived the great attack on Deerfield of February 29, 1704. However, barely two months later, natives murdered them on May 11, just two miles south of Deerfield at a place known as The Bars.

Proprietor Edward Jr. (b. 1662 in Ipswich) was the third child of Edward and Sarah. In 1683, he married Mercy Painter in Suffield. They moved to Deerfield probably about the same time as John moved his family there. All of their nine children were born in Deerfield. Edward Jr. served as Deerfield Town Clerk and Selectman. He also survived the 1704 attack but not without tumultuous consequences.

Edward Jr.'s 12-year-old daughter was captured and carried off to Canada along with 111 other Deerfield settlers⁵. He went on an expedition with other townsmen in an effort to negotiate freedom for the captives – all for naught. Sarah converted to Catholicism and grew up as Marie-Madeleine Helene. In 1710, at the age of 16, she married Guillaume Lalonde and began her new family. She died in Montreal at the age of 72.

Our fourth Allen proprietor and the sixth child of Edward and Sarah was William (b. 1668 in Ipswich). He like his older brothers married a Suffield woman, Susannah Dibble. All eight of their children were born in Suffield. William held the local offices of Fence Viewer and Surveyor.

The Allens, in addition to being prolific, were productive and respected citizens for Suffield's beginnings. Many local residents today carry Allen DNA within themselves. If you're one of them, please contact the Society. Let's see if we can get an idea of how their influence continues within our community!

1. The Arthur Sikes Jr. structure built in 1978 (noted in the plaque on page 2) stands on the first lot south of Deep Brook. The fourth lot was the site for the first ferry across the Connecticut River, circa 1691, following John Allen's departure.
2. Sheldon says Edward Allen Sr. was from Scotland and a soldier under Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War that began in 1642. Edward Allen Sr. was in Ipswich, Massachusetts in 1636, the approximate time of his birth. Perhaps he was of Scottish origin. The Scots, however, were on the side of the Royalty, not Cromwell's Puritans. Also the last battles of the civil war were in Scotland and won by Cromwell, 1650 and 1651. Following that many Scottish prisoners were then sent to the colonies as indentured servants. The only possible Allen who could fit this timeline would have been Edward Sr.'s father. This seems highly unlikely.
3. Sheldon gives "Mary" as the first name of Edward Allen Sr's wife.
4. John was 19; Edward Jr. was 16; William was 10. Each old enough in colonial days to have their own land grants!
5. The Reverend John Williams was among the Deerfield residents taken captive. He later returned to Deerfield and authored *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, an 18th-century best seller.

REFERENCES (available at the Kent Memorial Library):
Documentary History of Suffield 1660-1749, H. S. Sheldon, 1879
The Pyncheon Papers, Bridenbaugh and Tomlinson, 1985
New England Outpost, Richard I. Melvoin, 1988
Captors and Captives, Haefeli and Sweeney, 2003

MEMBER NEWS

The Society would like to welcome new board member Laurie Tavino.

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King House Museum
232 South Main Street

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

Newsletter
Maggie Philippon, Editor
Anne Borg, Compiler

ANNUAL ICE HARVEST
Saturday, February 2
Noble & Cooley Mill Pond, Granville
Noon - 3 p.m.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DIGITAL PHOTO CREATION AND EDITING WORKSHOP

Wednesday, February 13

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

Guest David Rancourt will cover techniques for scanning and editing old photographs. He recently completed digitizing the Hawley Rising slide collection of 2,185 slides for the Society.

SHOW AND TELL NIGHT

Wednesday, March 20

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

Enjoy an evening of anecdotes about local characters, folklore, and artifacts.

Sign up for presentation on a subject related to Suffield or American history. Contact Bob Stewart by March 2.

HENRY SYKES

A CONNECTICUT ARCHITECT

Wednesday, April 17

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

David Horsford, a professor emeritus in history at Rutgers, brings his knowledge to work as president of the New Marlborough Village Association that maintains Sykes' meeting house on the green. Sykes was the architect for Suffield's Second Baptist Church.

GOT ANY CIVIL WAR STUFF?

One hundred and fifty-two years ago our country went to war with itself, and what happened in the next four years had a profound and still-lasting effect on American life. It's a tragic story, so the present sesqui-centennial observance cannot be considered a celebration, but history must be remembered. If we don't, we may repeat ourselves.

To help remember Suffield's role in the War of the Rebellion, and perhaps just to recall life in town in that period, the Society plans a temporary exhibit at the King House Museum. We hope to be able to borrow appropriate material from the Kent Memorial Library, and we have a few items in the Museum's collections. But we need your help. If you have letters, artifacts, pictures, souvenirs, or any other material that might help tell the story, or perhaps even family traditional tales from that period, please get in touch with me or another Society officer.

The museum has secure glass display cases for items that need protection, as well as security protection for the house itself, so be assured that your valued items will be safe.

Lester Smith, Curator