



# *Stony Brook* **CURRENTS**

Vol. XIII, No. 1

*The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society*

February 2018

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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## **WOMAN'S CLUB SUPPORTS CLOTHING ASSESSMENT**

A while ago, Pamela Baldini, as a UConn class project, took on the task of learning about, photographing and describing many of the items in our clothing collection. She created a very useful document and subsequently gave a Power Point presentation at the library. Members of the Suffield Woman's Club attended and contacted the Society to find out more.

The collection is substantial, consisting of well over 100 items, mostly women's wear. It has been stored in the King House attic for years. Not all of it is cataloged, some of it is not in good repair, and we've never had any members knowledgeable enough to sort through it.

The Suffield Woman's Club has generously offered support to hire a professional textile conservator who will, beginning this spring, evaluate the collection, determine what items should be culled due to condition or duplication and help organize, catalog and better store each item. Pam's original work will be most helpful and will be expanded in the process.

The Society is deeply grateful to the Woman's Club for its interest and financial support which will allow us to take on this project, long a goal of Curator Lester Smith. We are excited about the project and hope it will evolve into a possible exhibit in the future.

## **WANTED: WOODEN HANGERS**

Now a possibility for you to help in this project. Do you have any wooden coat hangers that you would be willing to donate? We could use them for preservation and display of the museum's clothing collection. You can drop them off to Anne Borg (1310 Mountain Road) or leave them in the woodshed at the King House. Thank you!

There is a supplemental project afoot to archivally pad the wooden hangers. Call Anne Borg (668-7841) if you're interested in helping.

## SUFFIELD PROPRIETORS: THE EASTMAN BROTHERS

*Roger Eastman<sup>1</sup>, a carpenter, sailed to the New World in 1638 as an indentured servant. Ultimately, he won his freedom, fathered 18 children, and is believed to be the sole ancestor of all Eastmans in the U.S. Two of his sons were original Suffield proprietors.*

The tannery of Joseph Eastman<sup>2</sup> was located on the east edge of town where Rawlins Brook meets the Connecticut River. He'd received a grant of 50 acres just south of the ferry landing in April, 1677. Suffield, like many colonial communities, often located its tanner's lot far from the town center because of the rancid smell this process produced. But his lot was an ideal location for other reasons as well. He dammed the brook to hold a supply of process water for his industry. The odorous process waste water was dumped directly into the Connecticut River, as there were no EPA regulations in the 1670s!

His proximity to the river also gave him easy access to fish, the oil of which was used in the labor-intensive process of turning animal skins into soft, supple leather. The alternative to fish oil was brain tissue from the slaughtered animals, which often was available along with the skins. Tanning with oil produced exceptionally soft leather that was washable. It was ideal for clothing and footwear.

An alternative to the oil was the use of tannins from tree bark. We can assume Joseph used this method too as he secured rights to peel bark on Feather Street (now East Street). Leather produced by vegetable tanning, as this process was known, was not as supple. Its harder surface made it ideal for carving and stamping. It was often used for armor or saddles, but the stiff leather would shrink and deteriorate if it got too wet.

Either process followed tedious scraping of the hide, and so even the scraps from Joseph's products were precious to early settlers. Scraps were soaked in water for months. The deteriorated, smelly mixture was then boiled to create hide glue.

It may have been an industry that was deliberately isolated from the central community, but tanner Joseph Eastman was central to the early Suffield community. He voted in the first Town Meeting, soon became a Surveyor, and ultimately was elected Selectman in 1688.

Joseph's brother Timothy Eastman<sup>3</sup> also received a 50-acre grant on Feather Street, but he was farther south,

just north of Bridge Street. Like his brother, he was active in civic affairs, serving as a Tythingman and a Surveyor in the 1680s. Both men returned to Hadley, Massachusetts, with their families in 1690. Both of their wives had originally come from Hadley.

Timothy's line terminates in Hadley as he had no male heirs.

Joseph's line prospered in Hadley. His son, Joseph Jr. served nine terms as Selectman in Hadley, was chosen as a Deacon and had eleven children. As a young man of 24, Joseph Jr. was taken captive in the 1704 massacre at Deerfield. After being marched into Canada, he was ransomed back to New England. He lived to the age of 86.

Long before his death, Joseph Jr. returned to Suffield, as did his brother Peter. Peter became a Fence Viewer, Surveyor, a Swine Law Enforcer and a Sealer for Suffield. He received two land grants himself in the early 1700s. Peter also died in Suffield. He was 83.

1. Roger Eastman sailed with his wife Sarah Smith on the *Confidence* in 1638 from Southampton, England. They settled in Salisbury, Massachusetts.
2. Joseph Eastman, b. 1651 in Salisbury, d. 1692 in Hadley. Married Mary Tilton of Hadley. Sired Joseph Jr., Mary, and Peter.
3. Timothy Eastman b. 1648 in Salisbury, d. 1733 in Hadley. Married Lydia Markham of Hadley in 1682. Sired Lydia, Sarah, and Timothy Jr. Timothy Jr. had only daughters who married.

References: *H. S. Sheldon's Documentary History of Suffield*, 1879, H. S. Sheldon; *Pyncheon Papers, Vol II*, Bridenbaugh and Tomlinson, 1982; *Captors and Captives (The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield)*, Haefeli and Sweeney, 2003; *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, George M. Bodge, 1906.



Above: Terry Mandirola puts the finished mantle piece decorations she designed at the King House Museum.

## CURATOR'S REPORT

by Lester Smith

This year's annual Holidayfest was snowless, but that first weekend in December was a nice lead into the Holiday season. This year Kerry White decorated the fresh tree Art Sikes always provides, Terry Mandirola and Anne Borg set up the interior decorations, and Marjorie Begin provided the lovely wreaths outside. (This annual, much appreciated, donation by Marjorie carries on a tradition started over 40 years ago by her mother, the late Carol Rollet.) Many others brought snacks and helped during the two days.

Holidayfest is an enjoyable social event, but the major attraction is always the special exhibit, which depends on the generosity of many friends. This year's topic, *Vintage Parlor Games*, turned out to be surprisingly successful, with about 180 interesting games lent for display – and occasional demonstration. A good fraction were truly antiques; others were familiar reminders of our own years past.

I found most interesting the late Bud Bissell's not-quite complete invention of a game somewhat like Monopoly he created as a youth over 70 years ago. He didn't name it, but I would propose "SUCCESS!" as the winner was the first player to accumulate "One Cadillac, One Mansion, One Resort Cottage, One \$5,000 Life Insurance Policy, and \$5,000 value in Stocks, Cash, and Board Businesses."

Next year's Holidayfest topic will be a challenge, but for someone other than me. Realizing that I should concentrate this nonagenarian's declining efforts on eliminating the museum's cataloging backlog, I plan to leave the work on new exhibits to others,

### FIELD TRIP

Bob Stewart has some local sites in store for us to visit this year. In early June, we will be touring "behind the scenes" at the State House in Hartford with our Representative Tami Zawistowski. Plans are developing to continue our Capitol adventure with guided tours at the Good Shepherd Church and Parish House, the State Library, Coltsville and the Polish National Home. Plans are still evolving, so stay tuned.



*Visitors Anne Waterman and Bill Fournier examine some of the antique board games in this year's Holidayfest exhibit. That's an early pinball machine in the cabinet at the left; Bill's looking at Peter Rabbit's Race Game, circa 1945.*

## POLISH HERITAGE

by Sara Zak

The Polish Heritage Society (PHS) has been meeting regularly for over ten years. From its inception, the primary goal of the group has been to collect and preserve the history of Suffield's early Polish settlers. Thanks to the efforts of Della (Zera) Winans and the late Lorraine (Kulas) Rapacki, many old photographs and family stories have been gathered and stored for posterity. They can be accessed on a computer at the Senior Center or read from the binders that are currently held in the SHS Archives at the King House.

PHS, a subcommittee of the SHS, enjoys meetings that discuss Polish family genealogy, histories and businesses. It also studies Polish customs and art as well as strives to perpetuate them. In this effort, PHS sponsored Jim Turek, who presented a musical history of the evolution of the Polish-American polka. This polka is unfamiliar in Poland! The Turek program will soon be released on a CD. PHS also sponsored an accordion concert with Gary Szredzienski. With the help of two Felician Sisters from Enfield, singing Polish Christmas carols (kolendy) has become an annual event.

PHS meets at 10 a.m. on the first Wednesday of each month, at the Suffield Ambulance Center. Its programs are always open to new members. To encourage working men and women, the organization plans to hold a couple of evening meetings in the coming year. Anyone with an interest in the history and culture of the Polish immigrants is welcome to attend, and a special invitation is issued to second- and third-generation Polish Americans.



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for Holidayfest at*

Suffield Historical Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 893  
Suffield, Connecticut 06078  
(860) 668-5256

www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org

King House Museum  
232 South Main Street

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

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Maggie Philippon, Editor  
Anne Borg, Compiler

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## UPCOMING EVENTS WORKSHOP: RESEARCHING OLD SUFFIELD HOMES

Wednesday, February 21

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

*Interested in finding out more about an old Suffield home? Join us. We will explain the resources available, review work that has been done dating old homes, and look into the methodology for finding additional information about the structure and the people who lived in it.*

## ST. JOSEPH CHURCH HISTORY

Wednesday, March 7

Suffield Ambulance Center 10:00 a.m.

*Recently discovered history of Suffield's St. Joseph Church revealed by Jim Turek.*

## SHOW AND TELL NIGHT

Wednesday, March 21

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

*Anyone can sign up for a 5-to-10 minute presentation on any aspect of local history. Artifacts and photographs are welcome. Please contact Ed Chase (668-2920) to sign up.*

## WYNCINANKI, POLISH PAPER CUTTING

Wednesday, April 4

Suffield Ambulance Center 10:00 a.m.

*Susan Urban of West Springfield will present a hands-on demo of the Polish folk art of paper cutting. Please bring pencil, eraser, ruler, a glue stick and scissors to participate.*

## SUFFIELD'S WWI HOMEFRONT

Tuesday, April 24

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

*Bill Sullivan's American Studies class shares its findings about daily life in Suffield during WWI. This multi-media presentation exhibits the events that propelled our community into the modern era.*

## 1818 CONNECTICUT STATE CONVENTION

Tuesday, May 16

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

*Angry, war weary and talking about seceding from the Union! No, not today's headlines! It is the early 1800s in Connecticut. State Historian Walt Woodward describes the treasonous times, the political spin, and the constitutional convention that changed Connecticut's Standing Order.*