



# *Stony Brook* **CURRENTS**

Vol. XIV, No. 2

*The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society*

May 2019

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**

### *President*

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Arthur Sikes, Jr.

### *Treasurer*

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Edward Chase, III, *Programs & Events*

Arthur Sikes, Jr., *Membership*

Barry Sisk, *Long-Range Planning*

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Laurie Tavino

## **JUNE 22<sup>ND</sup> FIELD TRIP**

This year's annual SHS Field Trip will explore highlights of the history and beauty of western Connecticut. Join us in exploring the natural wonders and the industry as well as a mansion and gardens made possible by the prosperity of the Chase brass works.



To accommodate the size of our anticipated group and to control costs, we have decided to forego the large bus. Ed Chase and Bob Stewart have volunteered to drive. (Depending on sign-up numbers, we may be looking for other drivers.)

The trip departs from the King House on Saturday, June 22 at 7:30 a.m. and will return no later than 5:30 p.m.

We will be visiting the Beckley Furnace in New Canaan, the scenic Kent Falls State Park, the Case Antique Machinery Association in Kent, where we will eat lunch at their pavilion. After lunch we will have a tour of Chase (Brass) Summer Mansion and see the gardens, both located in Topsmead State Forest. Last on the trip is a tour of the Tapping Reeve Law School in Litchfield.

Most places are free admission or voluntary contributions, so cost will likely be under \$20. Everyone should pack their own lunch to bring along. Call Ed Chase at 860 668-2962 to sign up.

## A POSSIBLE NEW BUILDING

*by Barry Sisk*

The Suffield Historical Society trustees voted on May 1, 2019, to employ Crosskey Architects to create conceptual designs for a new building at the King House Museum site. William W. Crosskey II has significant experience with historic sites. A new building, to be located on the site of the old stable, will provide the space needed to plan and host new activities, which would attract more visitors, supporters, and volunteers. The Long Range Planning Committee came to this conclusion after a two-year study of the issues facing the SHS.

The proposed new building provides three principal spaces, each serving a specific function and fulfilling a current need. The three spaces are the research center, the gallery, and the office/work space.

The research center offers much needed secure archival space for our current collections plus room for growth, along with a study room complete with computers and additional shelving for reference material. This space would serve both individuals and small groups, especially students in local schools, for whom the research center will be a vital resource and educational hub.

The gallery will display permanent and changing exhibits, allowing us to expose more of our broad collections and pique members' and visitors' interests. The gallery also provides space for meetings and group activities, educational and otherwise. A malleable space, it will include moveable cabinets to suit the needs of its use.

The office will serve our administrative and curatorial needs, with space for the director/curator and volunteers, sorely needed now, and crucial for the organization to operate effectively. In addition to these principal spaces, there will be an accessible lavatory, a small work room, and a stairway to the attic.

Once the architect's conceptual design is approved by the trustees, a decision must be made by the trustees whether or not to proceed with construction of a new building.

## PHS JUNE MEETING

*by Sara Zak*

Many Suffield teens spent their summers working in the shade grown and broadleaf tobacco fields in the area. Some of the first-generation Polish Americans remember tobacco farming as the family business in which everyone played a part. Few, however, know what went on in the tobacco industry once the school year started.

The Polish Heritage Society welcomes Bob Sullivan, grandson of tobacco businessman, John L. Sullivan, whose three-story warehouse still stands today on Burbank Ave. He will share some interesting history of a seldom seen aspect of tobacco farming. Many Polish immigrants, male and female, were employed in Sullivan's warehouse as well as others in the Suffield area.

Join the PHS on June 5 at 10 a.m. at the Suffield Ambulance Center for this presentation. All are welcome to attend.



## SUMMER EXHIBIT

*by Anne Borg*

The King House Museum opened for the season on May 1st, but our summer exhibit of "Clothing from the Attic" is not yet fully organized. Our clothing consultant, Stacey Danielson and a student of fashion history and design at NYU, Myra Edmonds, will be helping to install the exhibit, which should be ready

sometime in June. Meanwhile, you can still see a limited collection informally displayed.

The items we plan to display are mostly women's dresses from roughly the 1840's to the 1950's. We expect to include accessories such as hats, gloves and purses.

We hope you'll stop in to see the fashions of yesteryear, which certainly make one appreciate the informality and freedom of today's clothing. No more corsets, bustles or whalebone stays!

## ABSENTEE ORIGINAL PROPRIETORS

by Ed Chase

Major John Pynchon purchased Suffield from various natives in the years nearly 350 years ago. No deed from any local chief has ever been found nor any document listing Suffield as a township prior to the settlements that Pynchon organized in 1670.

In that year, he set up a “Committee for Suffield.” This group granted allotments of land to Suffield’s settlers between 1670 and 1682. The first allocations were to each of the members of this committee, with the following distribution: John Pynchon, 80 acres; Benjamin Cooley, 50 acres; George Colton, 50 acres; Rowland Thomas, 50 acres; Lt. Thomas Cooper, 35 acres; and Elizur Holyoke, 35 acres. None of the committeemen ever settled on their land grants, although they, like all other original proprietors, were expected to pay for their land grants with cash or labor or special service. In the following years, the heirs of the committeemen either settled or sold these grants.

Eight other early grantees or proprietors never settled in Suffield. Among them were John Ingersol (1681) and his son, John, Jr. (1681), who instead settled in Westfield. Like the Ingersols, Joshua Wells<sup>1</sup> (1674) and John Petty (1682) both of Windsor received 50 acres in Suffield which neither ever settled.

Nathan Cheeney, AKA Nathaniel Cheny, received a 60-acre grant in 1680. Part of this grant became the property of Handford Old in 1697, when he agreed to pay the town all “arrears due at rates, now due.”

Six-year-old brothers, Joseph and Benjamin Barber, each received 40 acres in 1682. The allotments were granted to the children as they were the first twins born in Suffield. The land was given provided their father – Suffield Proprietor Thomas Barber – paid the rates until his sons came of age. However, Thomas soon died, and the boys were adopted by Quakers in New Jersey. Neither ever returned to Suffield.

Joseph Pynchon, like his father John Pynchon, received an 80-acre grant. Joseph graduated as a physician from Harvard in 1664 and remained in Boston as a member of the General Assembly. He died in December 1682, the same year that the Committee awarded him this Suffield allotment. The property passed to John Pynchon, Jr.

1 The *Biography of a Town*, written by Robert Hayden Alcorn for the 300th Anniversary Celebration of Suffield, notes that the author’s grandmother was Cora Wells Terry, a direct descendant of Joshua Wells who received the 1674 50-acre grant.

References: *Documentary History of Suffield*, H. S. Sheldon, 1879

## PROGRAMS

Ed Chase has stepped down from being our program chair, and we are looking for people to find and schedule four monthly topics of interest. If you would be interested, please contact Art Sikes at 860-668-0414 or ArtSikes@aol.com.

We welcome ideas for programs from all of you. As we approach the celebration of Suffield’s 350th anniversary, we are especially interested in trying to come up with Suffield topics. Let us hear from you!

## HOW ARE WE CONNECTED?

by Sara Zak

“Six degrees of separation” is the idea that all people are six, or fewer, social connections away from each other. The theory is most fascinating when it connects two random people who don’t know one another and live in different parts of the world. On the other hand, six (or fewer) social connections can be found easily between two people in a closed environment such as Suffield. It is even easier if the two people had Polish ancestors, as Polish immigrants married other Poles during the first two decades of the 20th century. Once they began to intermarry the local Yankee and Irish men and women, the social connections extended much further.

*Polonia* is a term for a colony of Poles who settled outside the borders of their homeland. I am growing a Family Tree of Suffield Polonia that includes many of the early immigrants and their descendants. It is created using a software called Family Tree Maker, and it currently includes almost 2,000 names over four generations. This software allows the user to chart the relationship, if it exists, between any two people on it.

Staying within the Family Tree of Suffield Polonia, I discovered my family connections to SHS Trustee Norm Noble and SHS Secretary Nancy Noble. With a little more research in newspaper archives, I discovered I am also connected to former SHS Treasurer Gary Mandirola! Investigate your connections!



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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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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Annual Spring Field Trip**

**Saturday, June 22, 2019**

Departs from the King House parking lot  
7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

*Join us as we travel from New Canaan to Kent Falls State Park. Picnic with us at the Case Antique Machinery Association before we explore the home and gardens of the magnificent Chase Summer Mansion.*

*See page 1 for details!*

*Call Ed Chase at 860-668-2962 for reservations.*

### **Connecticut's Evolving Transportation System**

**Wednesday, May 22, 2019**

Richard DeLuca

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

*Indian trails, dirt roads, canals and railroads!  
These links fostered America's development.*

*Richard DeLuca, author of Post Roads and Iron Horses, focuses emphasis on the Farmington Canal and the New Haven Railroad.*

### **Suffield's Past in Photographs**

**Wednesday, June 19, 2019**

Anne Borg and Lester Smith

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

*This year Art Sikes will be showing photos digitized from the library's collection of six photo albums done by Delphina Hammer Clark who took pictures and collected older ones in about the 1940s. She was primarily interested in documenting old homes.*

*Lester and Anne will provide additional comments.*

### **Ice Cream Social**

**Tuesday, July 9, 2019**

King House Lawn 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 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. Rain date: Thursday, July 11*

### **Suffield on the Green**

**Saturday, September 7 and Sunday, September 8**

*Stop by our booth to check out SHS upcoming events for the new program year!*