



# *Stony Brook* **CURRENTS**

Vol. XV, No. 2

*The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society*

April 2020

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*

Arthur Sikes, Jr.

*Vice President*

Jackie Hemond

*Treasurer*

Rick Seaman

*Secretary*

Jan Peake

*Historian & Curator*

Lester Smith

**Trustees**

Anne Borg

Edward Chase

Christopher Childs

Terry Mandirola

Nancy Noble

Norman Noble

James Reeves

Dianne Seaman

Robert Stewart

William Sullivan

Laurie Tavino

Sara Zak

## THE ORANGE AND BLACK

by Lester Smith

*Vyrling Noble Woodruff, a C. L. I. senior pictured in the school's yearbook, was listed as class historian and secretary of the Lesbians, a girls' extra-curricular activity. The note with the photo teases her about an un-named boyfriend, perhaps the reason for her lovely, sly look.*



The title page of a copy of *The C. L. I. Orange and Black 1914*, found among the King House Museum archives identified the 94-page square-back booklet as Volume 1.

The Connecticut Literary Institution was 80 years old at that time, but

Volume 1 turned out to be the school's yearbook. Within a year or two, C. L. I. changed its name to Suffield School, and later, Suffield Academy. The school's yearbook is now *The Pioneer*, but though modern yearbooks are larger and more lavishly illustrated, they generally follow much of the same pattern as the *Orange and Black*.

In the 1914 yearbook, following a frontispiece photo of the school's buildings and the old Kent Memorial Library along High Street, the next photo was a portrait of Charles Chauncey Bissell, who had died that year. The memorial dedication described Bissell as "a friend of the school when all seemed dark and when friends were most needed, a father to young men when their struggles were greatest, a leader in the upbuilding of the school, the community, and the state." Certainly a very nice tribute. I have not discovered what was so "dark" before 1914.

Most of the school staff was pictured next, arrayed stiffly on the front steps of the "North Building," (now Fuller Hall). The faculty comprised nine teachers, all male, and Principal Hobart G. Truesdell. Two women were listed: Mrs. L. Hunt Richardson, Matron, and Margie M. Thompson, Secretary to the Principal. (Miss Thompson was still serving the school in the 1960s, when I used to see her walking to her office in Fuller Hall from her apartment

in the school's apartment house on the corner of Day Avenue.)

Just about all of the standard material found in most of today's school yearbooks followed: the yearbook staff, the list of trustees (33 men, about half Suffield residents), the class officers of all four classes, an entertaining page of senior class history, and short paragraphs, with photos, for each of the 28 seniors (16 boys, 12 girls). All of the senior girls were town residents, but only four of the boys. (When Connecticut required all towns to provide secondary education, many towns, like Suffield, used a local private school as the town's high school.)

The seniors were also included in two crowded group photos: one of "The Boys of C.L. I.," the other similarly named for the girls. Lists of the boys and girls in the junior, sophomore, and freshman classes were included, as well as the twelve boys in the "Preparatory" class, only one of whom was from Suffield. The full enrollment of C. L. I. was 184 students.

Pages for student organizations followed, starting with the Lesbians, whose members were not what the name now signifies. They were a self-selected group of girls who met every other Friday for music, literature, and readings from the "Garland." They also offered occasional public entertainments and an annual reception and dance. With 66 members, it seems that most of the girls at C. L. I. were Lesbians.

Three other extra-curricular activities were featured: Dramatics, Debating, and Y. M. C. A., which was not at all like today's concept of the "Y." C. L. I.'s branch of the Intercollegiate Y. M. C. A. held weekly meetings for good fellowship and "for the sincere study of the life and teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Four sports were reported in the yearbook, with photos of each team. In football, some explanations were offered for the team's winning only 5 of their 12 games that fall. Basketball, however, had the most successful season of the school's history, with 13 wins in 20 games. The 1914 baseball season could not be reported, but in the 1913 season, C. L. I.'s team was "one of the most successful the school ever had." And the 1913-1914 track season, the first year for that sport in Suffield, was "a remarkable success." Surprisingly, C. L. I. included several city high schools and college games in the schedules for all the sports.

The yearbook ended with several pages of tongue-in-cheek humor, including the advertisement: "Learn to cultivate an aristocratic mustache. The magic formula will be sent on receipt of 10 cents," attributed to math teacher G. H. Gove. Another feature was an alphabet with teasing comments for each letter, like: "D is for Dock, consumed by love's flame. Inventing excuses has won him a name." Senior Horton Dockendorf from New Haven may not have appreciated that!

The book ended with 14 pages of ads and a few "Compliments of" supporters. About half the ads were from Suffield businesses.

The Suffield Academy yearbook name may have changed, but the school's colors are still orange and black.

## **KING HOUSE SUMMER EXHIBIT**

Our summer show at the King House will feature past town celebrations, our 200th in 1870, 250th in 1920, 300th in 1970, the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976 and other miscellaneous celebrations. We have many documents in our archives as well as some photos and mementos. If any of you have unique items, we would love to borrow them for the summer.

Do any of you have costumes from the 1920 or 1970 festivities tucked away in the attic? Photos from these events or Fourth of July parades or other significant events? If so, please let Lester know at 860-471-1915.

## **ANNUAL TRIP AND OTHER EVENTS**

Because of the uncertainty of the current times, we are not planning for a spring field trip. Perhaps we may be able to schedule one in the fall.

You will see that our regular meetings are listed as usual. However, we may have to cancel depending on the situation each month. President Art Sikes will notify members by email as to whether or not meetings will be held. Hopefully, our Ice Cream Social will be held as planned in July. We are making it more festive this year by turning it into a Hat Party. Wear an elegant afternoon hat, an old fashioned hat, a fancy sunhat, a just-plain-silly hat or something of your own creation. Let's dress it up in honor of Suffield's 350 years!

# HEZIKIAH SPENCER SHELDON WAS WELL PUBLISHED

by Lester Smith



*The Windsor Locks Journal for July 3, 1883, carried lots of ads, many of them for Suffield businesses. This one promoted a local cigar manufacturer, Joseph Guy & Sons. We haven't yet discovered where Guy's shop was located in Suffield, but we know he also opened a cigar store in Enfield*

While gathering material for our forthcoming summer exhibit at the King House Museum, I ran across two issues of the Windsor Locks

Journal from its fourth year of publication. Both

were in the form of a four-page broadsheet. Neither carried what one could call news on Page 1, which was devoted to commentary, poetry, humor, and personal stories. Both issues had local news on Page 2, along with various miscellany. There were many ads.

One of the issues, dated February 9, 1883, included a column and a half of news under the sub-head **SUFFIELD** from "our Regular Correspondent, **VERITAS**," which included news from several neighborhoods in Suffield. There was also half a column under the sub-head **WEST SUFFIELD**, but with no attribution. Evidently there were no correspondents from Zion's Hill, Mapleton, Boston Neck, or other neighborhoods that often showed up in the later issues that have been reported in the "100 Years Ago" feature of *The Suffield Observer*.

In the other issue, dated July 3, 1883, the Suffield news was almost entirely devoted to a reprint from Hezekiah Spencer Sheldon's *Documentary History of Suffield*, taken from the initial pages of that book, published in 1879, which included Sheldon's careful rendering of Suffield history along with the verbatim reprints of early Suffield documents that fill most of its pages.

The newspaper column, evidently continuing an earlier portion in the previous issue, opened abruptly with quoted material from Page 18 of the book, starting "The only allusions to the First Meeting-House found in the Record are the following:" The text continues with a quote from 1685, voting "to begin the meeting on ye Sabbath, at nine of the clock in the morning: and at half an houre after one of ye clock in the Afternoone; And that the Townsmen shall upon the Towne's cost procure a ladder, and alsoe a red flagg to hang out for a signe, That persons may know the time for assembling together." Another line, in 1695, reported, "It was agreed & voted to put up a canopy, or Sounding Board, over the Pulpit."

The column continued, under the subheading **MINISTRY LANDS**, with Sheldon's description of the 80 acres set apart in January 1679/1\* for the financial benefit of the ministry, forever. Then came **MINISTRY MEADOW**, with 13 acres more. A third subhead, **DIVISION OF AVAILS OF MINISTRY LANDS**, described how the financial benefits were to be divided in 1740, when the new Second Congregational Society separated from the First. Here Sheldon was critical of one aspect of the division, judging that it was "against the letter and spirit of the Grant." (Sheldon was a member of the Second Society, in West Suffield.)

The Sheldon material in this issue of the Journal ends with a parenthetical editorial comment: "(Next week we shall give extracts from Major Pyncheon's account books. It is too long for this week and cannot easily be divided, hence the shortness of this week's matter.)" Various Suffield news items continued, but with no attribution to **VERITAS**.

Historian Sheldon wrote a number of short historical reports on Suffield and other subjects, whose manuscripts are in the historical archives of the Kent Memorial Library. At least several of them – perhaps all – appeared in the *Windsor Locks Journal*. A few were printed as monographs, most notably *Suffield and the Lexington Alarm*. Sheldon was, indeed, a productive historian.

\* This odd usage, a standard among many historians, signifies both the Julian calendar date and the Gregorian calendar date in the short period before the New World shifted New Year's Day from mid-March in the Julian calendar to January 1 in the Gregorian.



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

Our Website:  
[www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org)

Contact Us:  
SHSQuestion@gmail.com

Like Us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/SuffieldConnecticutHistory/](http://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  
Maggie Philippon, Editor  
Anne Borg, Compiler

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 118  
WATERBURY, CT

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 350<sup>TH</sup> PARADE

On the weekend of October 10-12, a big parade for Suffield's 350th anniversary is planned in which the Society hopes to take part by entering our horse-drawn cigar peddler's wagon. If you would like to help out in coordinating this event, please give Art Sikes a call at 860-668-0414.

### Polish Heritage Society

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

SVAA Building 10 a.m.

*"Polish Stories and Fables" with Staz Radosz, Director of the Polish Center of Discovery and Learning in Chicopee.*

### Native Ecosystems of Suffield

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

Kent Memorial Library 7 p.m.

Todd Mervosh, Ph.D, Plant Scientist and Land Conservationist  
*Much of Suffield's diverse topography and ecosystems remain undeveloped as agricultural lands, woodlands, meadows, wetlands, and other open space. A history of farm families, conservation-minded citizens and town leaders have maintained these lands for our benefit as well as future residents, native plants and animals that live among us. Todd will discuss the ecosystems of Suffield, a brief history of Suffield's land conservation and ecological threats caused by non-native invasive species.*

### Polish Heritage Society

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

SVAA Building 10 a.m.

*Sara Zak will provide a unique historical perspective of Polish life with information gleaned from the John Sullivan and Son tobacco warehouse and farm weekly time records, 1917-1955.*

### Suffield's Past in Photographs

Wednesday, June 7, 2020

Kent Memorial Library 7p.m..

*Lester Smith and Anne Borg highlight past Suffield celebrations through the photos from the Historical Society's collections.*

### Ice Cream Social

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

King House Lawn 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

*Don your best bonnet and join us for our ice cream social celebrating Suffield's 350th anniversary.*