



# Stony Brook CURRENTS

Vol. XVII, No. 1

The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

February 2022

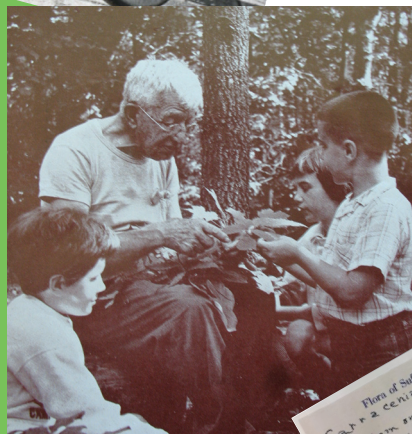
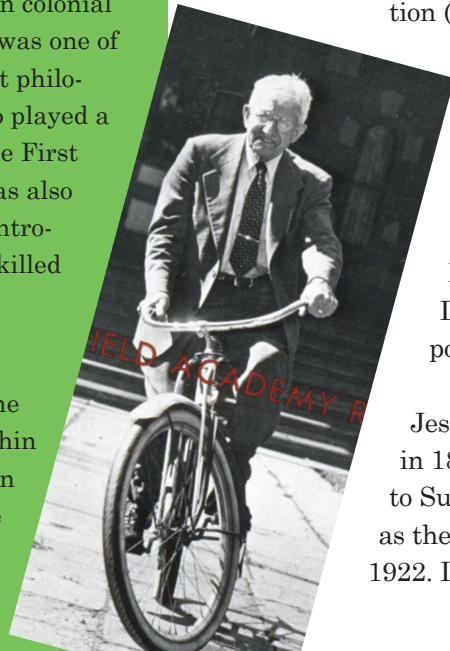
## SUFFIELD IN HISTORY

☞ In a Suffield home, on July 6, 1741, 200 men and women gathered to listen to Jonathan Edwards. On the previous day, Edwards administered the sacrament to more than 500 Suffield communicants, 97 of whom joined the church that day. This may have been the largest one-day church admission ritual in colonial New England. Edwards was one of America's most important philosophical theologians, who played a critical role in shaping the First Great Awakening. He was also the grandfather of the controversial Aaron Burr, who killed Alexander Hamilton.

☞ Major Elihu Kent, Sr., led 111 Suffield men to the Battle of Bunker Hill within 48 hours of the "Lexington Alarm" at the start of the Revolutionary War.

☞ In 1904, Edmund Halladay packed a half ton of Connecticut's best tobacco and shipped it to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a major World's Fair. It was picked at 137 farms and prepared in Suffield.

What are your  
Suffield stories?  
Please share them with us.



## SUFFIELD NOTABLES

by Barry Sisk

Jesse Fowler Smith was a Suffield notable. He was a minister, teacher and naturalist. About 1950, Suffield divided the Town Farm on Halladay Avenue West into three parcels. It kept the expanded woodlot as a town forest and, in 1959, the Town Forest was dedicated as the Jesse Fowler Smith Town Forest.

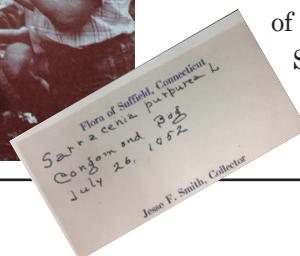
Jesse Fowler Smith was born in Maine in 1870 and spent his boyhood in Suffield. As a teen, he attended the Connecticut Literary Institution (Suffield Academy) when his family lived in East

Hartford. He graduated from the C.L.I. in 1891, Brown University (A.B.) in 1896 and attended the University of Chicago for two years. Rev. Jesse F. Smith graduated from Hartford Theological Seminary in 1899. From 1900-1907 and 1908-1915, he was a Baptist missionary in Rangoon, Burma, teaching English and Pali at Judson College. During the 1907-1908 school year, Rev Smith did post-graduate work at Yale University.

Jesse Smith married Cora Blanchard of East Hartford in 1899 and, with their two daughters, the couple moved to Suffield after his service in Burma. Rev. Smith served as the last regular pastor of the First Baptist Church until 1922. In 1920, he joined the Second Baptist Church of Suffield where he was an active member until his death in 1962. He taught English and the Bible at Suffield Academy for 38 years.

An avid naturalist, he was chaplain and for-ester at a summer camp in Vermont, 1926-1940. He served as a counselor and teacher at Camp Wightman (Connecticut Baptist). He specialized in teaching about the natural environment of the camp (illustration in 1955). In Suffield, he became well known for his frequent travels about town on

.... continued on page 2



**NOTABLES** continued.

his bicycle (now in the SHS King House Museum); he never had a driver's license.

Rev. Smith collected samples of every plant species which he observed in Suffield. He noted the date and name of each plant on a card (illustration). His collection of cards and samples is at the Jesse Fowler Smith Herbarium at Yale University.

*Barry Sisk thanks Lester Smith, Town Historian, for his help in researching this article.*



**DELPHINA CLARK ALBUM INDEXING PROJECT** *by Art Sikes*

We need help!

Delphina Clark collected old and new pictures of old Suffield homes. There are 1,000 images in the collection arranged mostly by street. The oldest pictures in the collection are in a group called the Stoney Brook collection from the 1880's, the newest ones are pictures taken in the 1950-60's.

As of today about 60% of these images have been indexed. The most important part of the index is getting house numbers attached to each image, the albums were put together before there was a town-wide house numbering. An example of a street needing indexing is East Street N, where there are 9 pages of pictures with a total of 19 images. If you would like to help then I would suggest a street that you have some knowledge of. I'm looking for help on these streets: Boston Neck Road, Bridge Street, Day Avenue, North Grand Street, and Sheldon Street. This would give you a chance to know a little more about the homes on those streets.

**Do you know this house?** At the end of the indexing a street, there are typically a couple of pictures that can't be identified. This house was with the Ratley Road pictures, do you know anything about it?

Clark's caption: "On the west side, built by Sabin Ingram about 1819."



PHOTO ABOVE

This front door belongs to a traditional center chimney house, built circa 1740. It is the oldest house in the Hastings Hill Street Historic District and was conserved by Delphina Clark, the first woman admitted to the Yale School of Architecture. The tobacco barn on its property housed the 200-seat Band Box Theater which operated from 1936-1940. The NY Times voted it one of the top five venues in the East. Tallulah Bankhead starred in one production but left after three days.

PHOTO RIGHT  
SHS President Art Sikes is shown driving the society's Loomis cigar wagon in Suffield's 350th anniversary



anniversary parade. The fellow with the long beard owns the horse, which he brought from Massachusetts. This was the only horse-drawn vehicle in the parade, and it was also the first time we've shown the wagon in use.

CREDITS: Hastings Hill house and barn photos taken by Laurie Tavino. Parade photo provided by the Town, from photos taken by State Sen. John Kissel's photographer. *Holidayfest* photos taken by Bob White.



## WHERE WAS THE SMITH HOTEL?

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by Wendy Taylor



In 1893, the Windsor Locks Journal announced John P. Smith was going to build a three-story hotel: “He will put up a building which will be an ornament to the town and a convenient and popular hostelry as well. The site is particularly advantageous to business men who, remaining overnight, have only to cross the roadway to take a train.” Smith had been the Baggage Master for 21 years at the Suffield train depot. He would build his hotel on the site of what is now the Food Bag on Mountain Road (formerly Depot Street). It had a billiard room, a barroom, par-

lor, dining room, kitchen, “capacious chambers” and “two piazzas in front affording room for guests to enjoy the gentle zephyrs of the summer evenings.”

Smith would enjoy his new hotel only six years when a train, encountering slippery conditions, crashed through the station. He jumped from the train but died after undergoing surgery to relieve the pain from bone fragments caused by the crash. He was born in Suffield in 1847 and died in 1899.

The hotel was sold to Sarah and George T. Irwin. When the prohibition years hit, it was sold to the Academy in 1925. The school moved it back from the road and up the hill so it could be used as a dormitory. It was eventually torn down.

The King House Museum has a Smith Hotel bottle with the Irwin name on it.



## POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY

by Sara Zak

The Polish Heritage Society hopes to resume monthly meetings in Spring 2022. In the meantime, anyone with an interest in learning about and perpetuating the history, culture and genealogy of our Polish ancestors is encouraged to contact us. We welcome new members, volunteers to help organize meetings and suggestions for presentations. We are particularly interested in additions to our collection of family stories. These stories may include details such as the names of ancestral villages in Poland and relatives by marriage. Such accounts may lead to surprising, previously unknown connections between Suffield families.

Family stories might also help sprout new limbs on the ever-growing Family Tree of Suffield Poles. Also, if you have taken a DNA test, please consider sharing your matches to add leaves to the tree. We may be able to help trace the connections between you and relatives you didn't even know you had. Contact the Polish Heritage Society by email at [suffieldpolams@gmail.com](mailto:suffieldpolams@gmail.com) or through the Suffield Historical Society.



**PHOTOS LEFT: The 2021 Holidayfest's smaller-than-usual exhibit of "Vintage Sports Paraphernalia" was well attended considering the times we are in. Probably the most intriguing item on display was a roller-sled from Babb's Beach. It ran on a tall slide into the lake and, not surprisingly, was in use for only two years before being shut down by the insurance company as being too dangerous. Another popular part of the exhibit was Laurie Tavino's father's football uniform and accompanying photos and news clippings. He played on a regional team during WWII which seems to have gotten much press. Visitors also saw Lester's summer exhibit, mounted for the 350th celebration, of previous town anniversary celebrations. Many thanks to all members who either lent items for the display or baked cookies. Your contributions made the weekend a festive event.**

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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  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Because of COVID-19 protocols, programs and formats of upcoming events may be revised. State mask guidelines will be followed. If events need to be virtual experiences rather than in-person meetings, SHS members with email addresses on file will get a notice of any change (or check our website).

### Workshop

#### What to do with Grandma's Stuff

Wednesday, March 16 Suffield Senior Center

*What is worth keeping, what should be donated,  
what needs to be thrown away ...  
and how to get help in deciding.*

### Oliver Phelps and New York's Indigenous Tribes

Tuesday, April 19 Suffield Senior Center

*Bill Sullivan's American History students from Suffield Academy will share original research into the original owner of Suffield's Phelps-Hatheway House and once the largest land owner in the country!*

### 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 in 2070, 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!*

**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