



The King House Museum

Stony Brook CURRENTS

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A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

April 2009

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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Committeemen Holyoke & Cooper *by Ed Chase*

October 5, 1675, and the Indian raid that destroyed most of Springfield's buildings and foodstuffs also brought death to two of Suffield's original proprietors. Neither of these two prominent men ever settled in Suffield.

Elizur Holyoke, John Pynchon's "ancient friend," married John's sister and was second only to John in prominence during the early settlement years. Holyoke served as Captain of the Hampshire Regiment, Town Recorder, and a member of the General Court of Boston. During an early exploration up the Connecticut River, the highest peak in the traprock mountain range on the east side of the "Great River" was named Mount Holyoke.

Holyoke died in Springfield on February 5, 1776, during the terrible winter following the October fires that destroyed shelter, sustenance and comfort for Springfield's early settlers.

His son, Captain Samuel Holyoke, continued to serve the struggling settlement with his service in the militia. Following the death of Captain Turner during the battle at Turner's Falls, Samuel organized a retreat from the successful attack on May 19, 1676. He was severely wounded himself and followed his father in death later that same year.

Lt. Thomas Cooper arrived on the ship *Christian* in 1635. He settled first in Windsor, but was working as a carpenter in Springfield by 1642. He built the first meeting house there in 1645 and was made a freeman by 1649. Cooper operated a ferry between the mouth of the Agawam River and Springfield, became a prominent fur trader and held a conspicuous seat in the meeting house. Cooper served as Selectman for 18 years, Clerk of the Writs and a militia officer. His stature grew with ownership of large tracts of land in Springfield, Suffield and what is now Agawam. He married Mary Slye and together they had nine children between 1642 and 1659.

On that fateful October day in 1675, Cooper and Thomas Miller were ambushed while approaching the Indian fort below Long Hill. The two were investigating rumors of an imminent Indian attack. Miller died instantly, but a wounded Cooper managed to ride back to the nearest house to warn Springfield residents before dying.

Neither Holyoke's nor Cooper's position on the Committee for Suffield was ever filled.

H. S. Sheldon's *Documentary History of Suffield*, 1879; *The Pynchon Papers*, Vol. I & II; *The Biography of a Town*, Alcorn, 1970; *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, Bodge, 1906; *The Great Migration Series*, Vol II C-F, Neghs, 2001; *New England Outpost*, Melvain, 1989.

CURATOR'S REPORT

by Lester Smith

It's been a busy winter and spring, and some great new developments are taking place.

The biggest (at 1,400 square feet) is the old post-and-beam barn now under construction at the King House Museum. As many of our members may have read in the March issue of *The Suffield Observer*, the Society has purchased the frame of a mid-19th-century barn from Ontario, Canada. It would have been good to preserve a local barn, but we couldn't find a suitable candidate. When we were offered this one, it seemed just right. The barn will provide an excellent space to display our collection of horse-drawn vehicles, as well as our tobacco items too big for the loft exhibit in the King House.

The barn's concrete foundation was installed in the week of March 30 by Hinckley Construction and Accu Foundation; the frame's assembly (to be done by the seller, who took it apart in Canada) is expected to follow quickly. The roof and wall sheathing and other carpentry will come next, to be done by local contractor Brian Doyan. It seems likely that the barn will be ready when John Wells Loomis's cigar peddler's wagon comes home in a few months, fully restored.

That project began last June when restorer Jim Chevalier carried the old wagon off to his workshop in Belchertown, Mass. I have visited now and again during the restoration process to check the work, which has gone very well. In March the wagon body, essentially complete, came down to the decorative painter's shop in Somers for its striping and gilding. Chevalier will bring the wheels down for their stripes soon, and the undercarriage work is well along. I still feel immensely grateful for the donations and grants that made this restoration possible.

In the course of his work, Chevalier confirmed the age of the wagon – about 145 years – and determined that it was made by the Abbott and Downing carriage works in New Hampshire.



Top: The Society's "new" old barn, shown here before it was fully disassembled in Canada, is being erected at the King House Museum. Lower: As concrete is poured for the new barn foundation, Doug Colson spreads the mix along the form as Brandon Stafford encourages the flow from the trough.

Another project that has advanced during the winter is the conversion of the small store room in the King House ell to become a climate-controlled archives room. We own many old documents, including John Wells Loomis's account books, that deserve better preservation conditions than we have been able to provide. We trust that the new facility will even encourage new donors to consider the Society as a good home for their own historical documents and memorabilia.

Along with the archives room, we are insulating the adjacent rest room, so we will no longer have to drain the pipes for the winter. Those of us who have been at the King House during our weekly work sessions throughout the winter will be quite appreciative.

When the museum opens on May 2, a new temporary exhibit will be in place, occupying the large, flat display case in the shed room and perhaps some additional space there. This will show the considerable progress that the Polish Heritage Society has made in documenting the history of Suffield's Polish community. The Historical Society is pleased to have been able to provide support to the Heritage Society, and the new exhibit should be a popular attraction.



Striper" Brian Fitzpatrick adds dark shading on the rear door decoration of the Society's old cigar peddler's wagon.

THE WAY WE WERE...

Verne Spear will entertain the Society at our June meeting with photos and stories of old West Suffield. Born on North Grand Street, Verne has recently completed his autobiography, which he previewed at our *Show and Tell* last month. At 92, he recalls with great fondness his adventurous youth of nearly a century ago.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes new members: Martha Clark and Michael and Suzanne Petro.

BARN PHOTOS

In conjunction with our barn raising, we would like to print a 2010 calendar of Suffield barn photos to sell at this year's Suffield-on-the-Green. Is there anyone with a digital camera and the computer know-how who would like to make this happen? Or several someones? Call Anne Borg, 668-7841.

SPRING CLEAN-UP

Our springtime work day is scheduled for Saturday, April 25 from 9 a.m. to noon. Come help spruce up the King House museum and yard for its opening day ... *and come see all the exciting changes taking place!*

Membership Application for New Members Only

I/we subscribe to the mission of the Suffield Historical Society as published in its newsletter and wish to be included in its membership.

Miss/Ms/Mr./Mrs. _____

Address _____

Telephone (optional) _____

E-mail (optional) _____

Dues: Individuals \$10 Family \$15

 Youth (under 18) \$2 Patron \$25

 Donation _____

Please check any committee or committees that are of interest to you.

_____ Collections _____ Development

_____ Docents _____ Exhibitions

_____ Property _____ Membership

_____ Program _____ Special Events

_____ Publicity and Marketing

The Internal Revenue Service has granted tax exempt status to the Suffield Historical Society.

Please complete this form and mail it with your check to
Suffield Historical Society, c/o Gary Mandriola, 1600 North Street, Suffield, CT 06078.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING CLEAN-UP

Saturday, April 25 9 a.m. to Noon
King House Museum house and yard.

KING HOUSE MUSEUM

Opens for the Season
Saturday, May 2

Special temporary exhibit on the history of Suffield's Polish community. The museum is open May through September from 1 to 4 PM on Wednesday and Saturdays. Also by appointment, 860-668-5256.

SHS FIELD TRIP

Saturday, May 16
See enclosed flier for details and additional information.

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

www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org

King House Museum
232 South Main Street

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

FREEMEN FOR FREMONTS

Wednesday, May 20 7:30 p.m.
Kent Memorial Library

The presidential campaign of 1856 evolved from a nation deeply divided by slavery and political issues that were beginning to boil into what would become the Civil War. John Fremont was the candidate of the newly-formed Republican Party, Millard Fillmore led the American Party, and James Buchanan was the Democrat in the 1856 election process. Historian, composer and singer Rick Spencer will bring the music and history of this name-calling, mud-slinging campaign to life.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES OF OLD SUFFIELD

Wednesday, June 10 7:30 p.m.
Kent Memorial Library

Long-time town resident Verne Spear will entertain our Society with a combination of old stories and photos of Suffield.