



Stony Brook **CURRENTS**

Vol. VI, No. 4

A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

September 2011

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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STORM DAMAGE

by Lester Smith

The King House Museum suffered a big blow on Thursday, June 9, when a brief, severe wind storm split a giant limb off the big sugar maple out front and it crashed down onto the chimney. Quick response by several members and Brian Doyon – definitely our favorite carpenter – along with the fortunate lack of torrential rain, limited the damage, but the chimney was smashed, the roof was penetrated and structurally damaged, and the porch steps railing was destroyed along with about 30 feet of the front fence. Damage to the museum's collections was trifling: only two broken bottles and a fine layer of masonry dust filling the house.

In the following weeks, Treasurer Gary Mandirola managed our dealings with Chubb Insurance (very favorable), the selection of a mason (good bricklaying), and the quick, excellent effort by Brian (the roof, the railing, and the fence). A professional cleaning service was necessary to clean the rooms.

We opened to the public (attic excluded) on the Saturday following the storm and for two more weeks, but closed again until the cleaning was complete. By mid-July the house was repaired, and a week later the remainder of the offending sugar maple was removed. Left to be done was work in the attic: cleaning in general and restoring the display and storage arrangements there. That will take a while.

We are very grateful to the many volunteers – members and others – who have helped immensely in the recovery.





PHOTOS OF REPAIR

Cover photos show Angelo Famiglietti laying bricks in the chimney top and Brian Doyon nearing completion of the west side shingles. Shown at the left: Remains of the chimney tied for stabilization; Doyon jacking a new purlin next to the chimney; Bennie Famiglietti removing fallen brick and mortar from the south chamber fireplace; and Angelo Famigliette beginning of the chimney repair in the attic.



ANTIQUe APPRAISALS & TAG SALE

On Saturday, October 8, the Society will hold an appraisal day and tag sale. *See details under Upcoming Events.*

We ask that members and friends bring collectibles and antiques for the tag sale to the museum on Wednesday or Saturday afternoons before October 1. For pickup of items, call Gary Mandirola at (860) 668-2341.

Join us for the events and find out the value of what's hiding in your family treasures! Bring your antiques on the 8th for professional appraisal. Please no jewelry.

HORSE-DRAWN VEHICLE SHOW

Also on October 8, our newly restored cigar wagon will be part of a one-day exhibit of all kinds of horse-drawn vehicles being hosted by the East Granby Historical Society. The event will take place from 10-4 at East Granby Farms on Rt 187. Rain date is October 15.

HOLIDAYFEST

The special exhibit for our Holidayfest on December 3 & 4 will be *Decorative Folk Art: Old and New, Collected and Created.*

We depend on generous members and friends to lend items for these brief exhibits, and we hope that many of you will help this time as well. It's a wide-open genre, encompassing painted furniture and accessories, decorated textiles of all sorts, wood carvings and other sculpture, ceramics, scrimshaw, paintings, toleware, weathervanes, garden ornaments, and much more.

As usual, we hope for a wide variety of interesting items, including work created by our members. Please call and let us know what you might let us exhibit.

THANK YOU

We would like to publicly thank Wilma's Scoop du Jour for providing ice cream and toppings at cost for our Ice Cream Social. Their support of this community event is much appreciated each year. Thanks, also, to Nancy Noble, Terry Mandirola, and Anne Borg for the several fruit toppings. And last, but not least, thanks to Paul Kulas who so generously gives of his time and talents to create our musical ambiance.



JOSEPH SEGER, ORIGINAL SUFFIELD PROPRIETOR

by Edward Chase

On May 19, 1679, Joseph Seger was granted forty acres by John Pynchon's Committee for Suffield. Eighteen were for a home lot on the east side of High Street (now North Main) near the north end of the present-day Town Green. The remaining acreage was listed as "somewhere else" – apparently in the vicinity of Hastings Hill on Russell Avenue.

Joseph's father, Richard Seger¹, immigrated to the Boston area with Rev. Thomas Hooker's party of Puritans in 1633. Listed as a freeman, according to his local descendant Ellen Ravens-Seger, Richard followed Hooker to Hartford three years later.

Our Suffield proprietor was born in Hartford in 1652 as the third child of Richard and his wife, Elizabeth Moody from Hadley, Massachusetts.

Joseph married Abigail Taylor of Suffield on September 27, 1680. He was a chair maker by profession and prospered in his trade. His family grew to include eight children. He also grew in stature in the following decade with his election to the public office of fence viewer and later tythingman.

Despite his story of prosperity and community service, Joseph had grown up in a tumultuous world. From 1650 to 1670, the Hartford area was "caught in the grip of Witchcraft fever." Joseph's

mother, Elizabeth, was tried as a witch. Apparently she associated with others who were all tried, and several were hung. Although a jury found her guilty, Elizabeth was acquitted by Governor John Winthrop, Jr. However, in 1665 she was again tried and found guilty of witchcraft. This time the court intervened and discharged the prisoner.² (See related article on Witchcraft below.)

In 1721, Joseph sold his home on High Street and moved to his property on Hastings Hill, which at that time was called Kent's Hill. By 1738, he and his wife needed town aid for support. Payments for firewood, milk, a bonesetter, and finally a coffin upon his death in 1740 are in Town records.

Three of his children survived to adulthood and eventually moved to Simsbury, Connecticut. Ensuing generations of Segers became the original settlers of Kent, Connecticut.

Twelve generations after Joseph, his descendant Charles Seger and his wife Sarah moved back to Suffield and here raised their five children. Charlie was a dedicated runner and today the Seger name appears in the annual September Suffield Road Race named in his honor. Charlie and Sarah's youngest daughter, Ellen Ravens-Seger provided much of the information for this article.

SUFFIELD NARROWLY MISSED WITCHCRAFT CONNECTION

In 1679, John Younglove – a protégé of John Pynchon – arrived as Suffield's first minister. He had just left Hadley in the midst of much controversy and discontent. Soon after his arrival, Suffield heard more disquieting news: prior to his service in Hadley, Pynchon had installed him as the minister in Brookfield. Dissatisfied citizenry in Brookfield demanded his ouster.

It was not long before Suffield was initiating complaints against the new pastor. By 1690, the General Court took official notice of the "unsettled conditions and breaking of Suffield, especially as to the differences between the minister and the people." Younglove "solved the situation by conveniently dying that year..!"³

In the next few years, Suffield searched far and wide for a minister who might serve this community with a rebellious reputation. In 1694, following the notorious Salem Witch Trials, Suffield made an offer to the Reverend Samuel Parris. Parris had instigated the witch trials that resulted in twenty deaths. Eighty more people were on the docket when sanity prevailed and the trials were stopped.

With the trials ended, Parris was unemployed. An offer for Suffield's pulpit arrived. Although he was without a position, Samuel Parris refused Suffield's offer!

1 Richard Seger was born circa 1595 in England.

2 Because of the notoriety, Richard, Elizabeth, and their youngest child John moved to Westerly, Rhode Island – then considered a more liberal state.

3 *Biography of a Town*, Robert Alcorn, 1970

References: *The Seger Family* (Genealogy), by Ellen M. Seger. *The Documentary History of Suffield 1670 to 1749*, by H. S. Sheldon, 1879. *The New England Genealogical Register*, Vol 157, January 2003. *Records of Samuel Parris*, Salem Village, Mass. 1688-1696. *Hartford Courant* articles: *Medical Science Casts a New Light on 1661 Tale of Witchcraft*, 1993; *The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut* by John Taylor, 1974; and *Witches on State's Gallows* by Lawrence Goodwin, 2006.

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King House Museum
232 South Main Street

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

Newsletter Editor
Maggie Philippon

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL CAR SHOW

Sunday, September 11 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

King House Grounds

Free admission. No fee to exhibit. Rain cancels.

Organized by Bill Gozzo and Bob Sullivan

NEW ENGLAND CIDER MAKING

A Drink When We Want It

A Cup for a Thirsty Traveler

Thursday, September 8 7:30 p.m.

Senior Center

Dennis Picard presents an illustrated program detailing traditional Yankee cider processing. Find out how the old-timers made fresh and hard cider.

ANTIQUe APPRAISALS & TAG SALE

Saturday, October 8 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

King House Barn

There will be a tag sale of member-donated antiques and collectibles as well as some museum surplus.

Appraiser John Pappas, Swansea, New Hampshire

Bring your antiques for professional appraisal.

Cost \$5 each or three for \$10.

Help us make this a great event!



PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS

Wednesday, October 12

7:30 p.m.

Senior Center

George Baker portrays John Adams in this energetic program that will appeal to all ages. Dressed in period clothing, Baker will present Adams' views of the nation, history and family life in an inspiring and humorous talk.

WORK DAY

Saturday, October 29 9:00 a.m.– noon

King House and Barn

Don your gloves and come help put the house to bed for the winter and do some yard cleanup.

Because of your efforts in the spring, the house and yard have never looked better.

Let's continue the momentum.

Rain date will be Saturday, November 5.

HALLOWEEN CANDY DISTRIBUTION

Monday, October 31 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

King House Porch

Join us in costume for an evening of fun and comraderie.