



The King House Museum

Stony Brook CURRENTS

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A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

April 2007

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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Original Suffield Proprietors: Victory Sikes

by Ed Chase

The Anglo-Saxon name Sikes, alternately spelled Sykes, means a water course or brook. The name flows through the earliest Suffield records and winds like a river through the history of Suffield.

Richard Sikes was the earliest New England settler from this Flockton, England family. He first settled in Dorchester, Massachusetts in 1639 and subsequently moved to Cambridge. But by 1641 he had joined the John Pynchon Plantation in Springfield. During the next three decades, this multi-talented man became a prominent figure in the Springfield community. His name appears with John Pynchon's on the petition to form the new town of Stony Brook, now Suffield.

Victory Sikes was born to Richard and Phoebe Sikes in 1650 in Springfield. At the age of 23 Victory married Elizabeth Burt. At the age of 30, in 1680, he secured a 50-acre grant in the new Stony Brook settlement. In 1681 his young family settled on the grant on the west side of Springfield Road (now Mapleton Avenue opposite River Boulevard Extension). Two years later, he was a widower. In their 10-year marriage Elizabeth had borne seven sons. Only two, Jonathan and Samuel, survived.

Victory then married Elizabeth Granger, the daughter of original Suffield Proprietor Launcelot Granger. This marriage produced four male children. Only one, Victory Jr., survived.

A third marriage to Mary Pritchard remained childless.

By trade, Victory Sikes was a carpenter. Records show that he and his brother, Increase, built a large barn for John Pynchon in those early days. However, Victory Sikes is best remembered for his prominence in the business of the fledgling community. He held many Town offices including Sealer of Weights and Measures, Constable, and Surveyor. His name often appears as reader in local church services. Like his father, he was a much valued citizen.

Material taken from H. S. Sheldon's "Documentary History of Suffield" and Arthur M. Sikes Jr.'s "Richard Sikes and His Descendants."

Victory, b. March 3, 1650 in Springfield and d. April 29, 1708 in Suffield. He married Elizabeth Burt, dau. Jonathan Burt and Elizabeth Lobdell, January 29, 1673. Elizabeth died in Suffield on September 29, 1683. His property remains in the Sikes family, owned today by Kathy Sikes.

SPENCER LEGACY

by Anne Borg

The King House was given to the Suffield Historical Society by Samuel Reid Spencer in 1960. He originally bought the property in 1910, in a state of neglect, in order to protect his own home across Kent Avenue. He and his wife slowly restored the house.

The interior had not been altered significantly. The Spencers uncovered the original paneling and restored the 12 over 12 windows. The Victorian front door was replaced with colonial period doors from a house in Windsor. When they were installed, they were found to fit exactly into the outline of the original frame, thus restoring the facade to its 1764 appearance! The Spencers furnished the house with family antiques, heirlooms contributed by other Suffield residents, and purchases of period pieces.

Mr. Spencer (whose ancestor was an original town proprietor) held many offices in town, was one of the founders of the Suffield Historical Society, and served as Treasurer and Lieutenant Governor for the State of Connecticut.

His wife, Helena Bailey Spencer, was instrumental in the restoration and refurnishing of the house. She ran a riding academy and bred dogs. The Pohala Stables at the rear of the house were built to accommodate these pursuits.

At the time the house was given to the Society, local news reporter Eleanor Smith described the building as "a breath of Connecticut's past for future generations to admire" [*The Courant Magazine*, April 3, 1960]. The Society maintains and exhibits the house as a museum reflecting mid-18th- to mid-19th-century family life.

The property opens on May 5 for the summer season with hours from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays through September.

SPRING WORK DAY

A Spring Work Day is planned at the King House on Saturday, April 21, from 9:00 a.m. until noon. Anyone willing to help with outdoor projects is welcome. A rain date is set for April 28.

In preparation of the opening of the museum, we will be cleaning up the inside of the house on Thursday, April 19. Again, the time is from 9:00 a.m. until noon, and volunteers are needed.

Call Anne Borg at 668-7841 if you can help.



The Alexander King House before renovation by Samuel and Helena Bailey Spencer, 1926

NEW MEMBER OPEN HOUSE

New Society members will soon receive invitations to an Open House at the Alexander King House Museum on Saturday, April 28, from 1-4 p.m. We hope all new members can come join us and tour the house, tour the grounds, see the collections, and share refreshments. King House Curator Lester Smith and Society members will be on hand to greet new members, give tours, and answer questions.

This is a drop-in event, and people can stay as little or as long as they like. Come, make new friends, and share your history with us. As a member of the Society, you're now a part of Suffield history, too!

We welcome several new members who have joined the Society since our January newsletter:

Roger and Della Winans

Bob and Elaine Frasco

David and Margaret Sykes

If you haven't already joined, use the application form to the right or check out our website at www.suffieldhistoricalsociety.org to become a member.

DOCTOR KING'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

The Society is planning a special, new event at the King House Museum in October to celebrate Dr. Alexander King's birthday.

Upcoming editions of our newsletter and the *2007-2008 Program of Events* published in August will fill you in on the details.

We hope all of our members can come to celebrate the day and enjoy the museum!

THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2007 SHOWCASE

by Nancy Noble

On Sunday, February 11, Society members staffed a booth at the Suffield Chamber of Commerce's annual Business and Community Showcase, which was held this year at Suffield High School. We promoted upcoming Society lectures, our field trip to Saratoga planned for May 5, and answered as many questions as we could about Suffield history.

Visitors were particularly attracted to the booth by our display of photographs of old Suffield buildings.

Brisk February weather made it a perfect day to display antique warming devices – many passers-by recognized a bed warmer, but many more were intrigued and puzzled by a foot-warming box and a stoneware hot water bottle. It was a wonderful day to see old friends and meet new ones. The Society gained several new members and new volunteers.

I would like to thank Jim Baker, Eleanor and Ed Chase, Rosalie Lappen, Terry and Gary Mandirola, Ruth and Barry Sisk, and Peg Shaughnessy for staffing our booth. Special thanks to Terry and Gary Mandirola, who exhibited antiques from their personal collection, and King House Curator Lester Smith and Anne Borg who created our photograph display.



Volunteers Gary and Terry Mandirola work with Eleanor Chase to set up the Society's booth, organized by Nancy Noble, at the Chamber of Commerce Business Showcase.

AN EXCERPT FROM DR. ALEXANDER KING'S JOURNAL

December 16, 1773 *The people of Boston and the towns adjacent assembled at the wharf at Boston and destroyed 342 Chests of Tea which was consigned to people or consigner to sell out. A duty of 4 on the Pound was to be paid upon landing which being supposed unconstitutional they would not suffer to be landed. ---- The tea went to New York was taken by the Government and stored in the Barracks. The consigner having resigned on account of the uneasiness of the People.*

January 1, 1774 *Wet moist atmosphere. Two considerable snows fell in December but mostly gone, there being but little frost in the ground. ----*

6th *Killed about 36 Score of Pork and 480 wt. of Beef.*

9th *Sabbath Mr. Gay Preached a Funeral discourse from Psalms 146-4 his Breath passeth away he returns to his Earth in that very Day his thoughts perish, after Sermon attended the Funeral of Lt. Wm. King whose memory with that of the righteous shall be had in Everlasting remembrance.*

Application for Membership

I/we subscribe to the mission of the Suffield Historical Society as published in its inaugural 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 Mandirola, 1600 North Street, Suffield, CT 06078.

⁴Upcoming Events

GROWING UP AT HILLTOP FARM

Wednesday, April 18 7:30 PM

Kent Memorial Library

George Hendee built a mansion as well as the historic barn that now stands on Hilltop Farm.

His niece, June Cook, will show photos of his mansion and talk about summers spent on the farm.

FIELD TRIP: SARATOGA SPRINGS

Saturday, May 5

Make plans to be on the bus!

Call Ed Chase at 668-2962 to reserve your seat.

WINDSOR LOCKS CANAL

Wednesday, May 16 7:30 PM

Kent Memorial Library

Maria Giannuzzi will present a visual history of the

Windsor Locks Canal, including images of the canal, its industries, the Connecticut River and the surrounding communities.

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

PHOTOGRAPHS OF OLD SUFFIELD

Wednesday, June 13 7:30 PM

Kent Memorial Library

Anne Borg and Lester Smith collaborate on a presentation of images of old Suffield from the slide collection assembled by Hawley Rising, former Town Historian.

Back by popular demand!

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Thursday, July 19 5:30 PM

Raindate: Thursday, July 26

Alexander King House Museum

Put on your bonnets and your straw hats!

Bring the family to an old-fashioned ice cream social on the King House lawn.

Pack a picnic supper, bring lawn chairs, and enjoy an evening of neighborly visiting. Ice cream will be provided by the Society.