



# Stony Brook CURRENTS

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A Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

April 2013

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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## SUFFIELD AND THE CIVIL WAR

by Anne Borg

The only Suffield recorder of Civil War events I found was William L. Loomis, son of Luther. He lived in what is now the Masonic Lodge, then at the NE corner of Bridge and High (now Main) Streets and was a storekeeper in the Loomis block just to the north.

In 1860, he was elected to the position of Town Clerk. He served for many years, kept excellent records and compiled a record of births, deaths and marriages into a large handwritten volume we refer to as the William L. Loomis Collection of Vital Records (a copy at the KML), for which historians and genealogists owe him a large debt of gratitude.

Loomis was politically involved and a Connecticut delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1860 that nominated Lincoln with Hannibal Hamlin as V.P. This story is best told in his own words.

Nov. 10, 1860: "...All excitement on Politicks. Lincoln & Hamlin declared elected..."

Nov. 20, 1860: "Ever since Lincoln's election to the Presidency a wormy [?] kind of a time is had South of us - S Carolina as before raises the dis-union flag - proclaims herself virtually seceded from the Union - disclaims any wish to continue with state who express the least hostility of carrying out the law of 1/2 of the union to the effect of sustaining slavery and wishing it might be spread all over our free territory. This Southern excitement has produced quite a panic in money affairs & the Southern Banks advise for a general suspension - the N. York Banks are closely tied up - & stocks fall in market and a general consummation of all things desirable by Southern hot heads. We at the North think, that we shan't back from what we deem is right - are willing to own our Southern brethren as brothers so long as they behave & don't wish to turn them out of doors in the cold - think it will blow over as before and all become quiet again." How wrong he was!

Feb. 20, 1861: "*Vice President Hamlin at Connecticut Literary Institution and spoke.*" For us now, this is a maddeningly brief entry.

After Fort Sumter surrendered he writes on April 15, 1861: "*Fort Sumpter evacuated and Pres. Lincoln issued proclamation calling on the States for 75,000 men. The people wide awake. Citizen's meeting held in chapel of C.L. I.; resolutions passed. Flag raised on Common and a cannon fired. ... Enrollment of volunteers going on in town at the office over our store.*"

April 21, 1861: "... to W. Locks - saw the military parade & train passing to N.Y. with troops & cannon - very exciting times"

April 26, 1861: "*Special Town Meeting this p.m. Voted \$1000 dollars to aid the families of those who enlist from Town to go into the war ...*"

April 30, 1861: "*Volunteer company drilling. Ladies met at Dr. Ives to prepare Red Flannel shirts for the Suffield company.*"

In January 1862 Loomis posted the first draft notice.

February 1, 1862: "*Town Hall crowded to hear the drafted men plead their excuses - out of the 41 drawn 13 paid their ten dollars - some excused - & some 11 stood draft.*"

The following week: "*Orders came to suspend further drafting from the Gov. A terrible excited public - all very vehemently opposed to this law...*"

In December Loomis talks about the rapidly rising prices of merchandise: "...no new feature in War matters - success one day & defeat the next - when will it close?"

War weariness was setting in. In 1863 the draft was renewed. The law allowed draftees to pay for an exemption or to pay a substitute, certainly hardly a democratic practice. Loomis himself arranged for a substitute when his number came up.

There are few entries in 1863 and 1864 other than reporting on men enlisting.

March 15, 1864: *Wendell Phillips of Boston gave a lecture. "His views are thought very radical & totally unfit to warrant any one of the present day to over see them realized. That the Negro has, is & will be the great sufferer, that prejudice is not easily overcome is very true. Slavery must be blotted out as the chief strength of the Southern States..."*

And then on April 14, 1865: "*Friday Eve. Abraham Lincoln Pres<sup>t</sup> of the U.S. was shot while at Fords Theatre in Washington by an assassin - Booth. Serg. Wm Seward badly wounded. This news put every loyal person into mourning. On the Sabbath morning I dressed the Baptist church & Cong<sup>l</sup> church in Black & appropriate exercises held.*"

April 19, 1865: "*Funeral exercises of our late Pres<sup>t</sup> was held in Cong<sup>l</sup> church appropriately dressed in mourning & preached by Rev<sup>d</sup> Dr. Hawes of Hartford - church crowded. Bells tolled at sunrise also from 11 1/2 to 12 noon business suspended.*"

Reading this journal, we realize that Suffield, like every town, was intimately involved in the war effort. Men left home, women carried on, and the town supported them both. After the war ended, there was talk of a monument, but it was not erected until 1888 and dedicated in October of that year. There are nearly 300 names listed. Others served, but deserters and dishonorable discharge men were not included.

*A Quarter Millennial*, by Henry B. Russell  
*Biography of a Town*, Robert Alcorn  
*Journal of Wm L. Loomis* [1860-65]  
Notes on the Civil War by Hezekiah S. Sheldon



*The Halladay buggy, a light, four-wheel runabout made in New Haven and owned in Suffield, has been ensconced in the King House Barn since January.*

*This excellent gift was donated by Ethel Dunn of Southwick in memory of her late husband, Bill, who had received it from his good friend, Horace Halladay, and restored it nicely.*

## THE 150th COMMEMORATION OF AMERICA'S CIVIL WAR

by Ed Chase

More than 30 from my family died as a result of our Civil War: killed in battle, died of wounds or suffered until death while imprisoned. My great-great-grandfather, Alonzo H. Chase, contracted malaria while a cavalry soldier in Louisiana. Alonzo's father, Chauncey M. Chase, survived without use of his right arm from battle wounds. Two West Point-graduate Chase family members were posted in the south and fought for the southern cause. Salmon P. Chase financed the war for the Union as Secretary of the Treasury. Later, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he presided over the passing of the amendment outlawing slavery. The Civil War shaped our family.

But it was not just my family – it was not only soldiers – deaths among enslaved, suffering among the families at home compounded the tragedy. More Americans died in this war than in ALL of our other wars in total! It is fitting that the SHS provide reflection on this tragic chapter in history that, I believe, could have and should have been avoided.

### HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S ANNUAL FIELD TRIP

This year the Historical Society will visit Salem, Massachusetts. There is considerably more to see than the sites associated with witchcraft. We will focus on the Peabody-Essex Museum, The House of Seven Gables and the Phillips house.

**Peabody Essex Museum** The roots of the museum date to the 1799 founding of the East India Marine Society, an organization of Salem captains who had sailed beyond either the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn. The society's charter included a provision for the establishment of a "cabinet of natural and artificial curiosities." Members brought home a diverse collection of objects from America, Asia, Africa, Oceania and India. Today's collection includes 1.8 million works and Yin Yu Tang, the only complete Qing Dynasty house outside China. Entry to the house on our trip is limited to the first 25 who sign up.

**The House of the Seven Gables** Built in 1668 by John Turner, a Salem sea captain and merchant, this house was occupied by three Turner generations before being sold to Captain Samuel Ingersoll in 1782. Ingersoll died at sea leaving the property to his daughter Susanna, a cousin of famed author

Nathaniel Hawthorne. The house inspired Hawthorne's 1851 novel and has survived with many of its original 17th- and 18th-century features. Its architectural "fabric" is considered significant to American architectural, maritime, and cultural history.

**The Phillips House** In 1821, four intact rooms from an earlier house were transported by ox sled to Salem's fashionable Chestnut Street to form the core of a new Federal-style mansion being constructed by Captain Nathaniel West. Nearly a century later, Anna Phillips bought the house and launched a 14-month renovation in the Colonial Revival style. When she, her husband Stephen Willard Phillips, and their five-year-old son moved in, they brought with them a family collection that spans five generations and blossomed during Salem's Great Age of Sail. The house provides a glimpse into the private world of the Phillips family and their domestic staff during the early decades of the twentieth century. The kitchen, pantry, and a domestic staff bedroom present a rarely seen picture of how the great houses functioned as new technologies were being introduced.

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**Please sign up, enclose check payable to the Suffield Historical Society and send to  
Ed Chase, 33 Abraham Terrace, Suffield, CT 06078**

Names(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cost: Complete Tour: \$65.00

Tour without Chinese House Tour: \$60.00.

*NOTE: Only the first 25 individuals can be admitted to the Chinese House.*

Bus will leave King House at 7:15 AM and return at 8:PM. Lunch is not provided. There is a cafeteria at the Peabody-Essex as well as several nearby restaurants. Or you may bring your own and eat at the Maritime Park. Call or email Bob Stewart for more information at: (860) 668-2928 or robert.stewart13@att.net

Suffield Historical Society, Inc.  
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www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org

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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  
Maggie Philippon, Editor  
Anne Borg, Compiler

## SUFFIELD'S ROLE IN THE CIVIL WAR UPCOMING EVENTS

On April 12, 1861, Suffield was laying the cornerstone of a new town hall, replacing the 1797 combination school house/town building that had burned a half-year before. The happy crowd didn't know as they celebrated, that at the same time, in Charleston Harbor, a U.S. fort was under fire. Fort Sumter was being bombarded by secessionist forces of South Carolina, and America's terrible conflict had begun. A few days later, Suffield responded loyally to President Lincoln's call for volunteers. Events in town during the months and years following, along with the record of service of the stalwart soldiers who marched off to preserve the Union, will be examined in a temporary exhibit in the King House Museum this summer.

A number of Society friends have responded to our plea for items they would lend for the exhibit (more would be welcome), and some good material could be found at the Kent Memorial Library. We expect to have an interesting and informative display, so come and visit some Wednesday or Saturday afternoon, or call for a special showing. *Lester Smith, Curator*

### SONGS OF THE WAR OF 1812

Wednesday, May 15

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

*Historian, researcher, singer, songwriter and performer, Rick Spencer will accompany himself on a variety of instruments and bring SHS songs and tales popular during the War of 1812.*

### SHS ANNUAL FIELD TRIP

Saturday, May 11

Destination: Salem, Massachusetts

*Public Welcome. See details inside.*

### SUFFIELD'S PAST IN PHOTOS

Wednesday, June 12

Kent Memorial Library 7:30 p.m.

*Lester Smith and Anne Borg have culled the files of the recently digitalized Hawley Rising Collection of photographs for glimpses into Suffield's past with a unique 2013 perspective.*

### ICE CREAM SOCIAL PICNIC

Tuesday, July 16

King House Lawn 5:30 p.m.

*Pack a picnic. Bring friends and lawn chairs. Ice cream and entertainment provided by the Society.*