



Stony Brook CURRENTS

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The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

February 2017

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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SIGNIFICANT ARTICLES DONATED

by Lester Smith, Curator

An unexpected phone call from Virginia last August led to the Society's receipt of a very nice donation from a Windsor Locks native with connections to Suffield who now lives in McLean, Va. Ambassador Hugh Montgomery asked if we would like to receive a pair of old whale oil lamps that he used to see on the mantel of the Spencer home at the end of Spencer Street when he came to visit. He had received the lamps by bequest from Samuel R. Spencer, a collateral ancestor, and wanted them to return to Suffield. Of course we would be delighted to receive them.

Also offered were a Civil War officer's sword presented to Lt. William Wallace Montgomery at Nottoway Courthouse, Va., in April 1865, as General Grant was pursuing General Lee to Appomattox, and a Model 1861 musket made in Windsor Locks in 1864 in William Muir's canal bank factory. (Muir produced 20,000 muskets on a Federal contract during the war.)



The objects of the recent Montgomery gift are shown laid out on the kitchen table in the King House: Two 1835-1840 whale oil lamps from the old Spencer home, Lt. W. W. Montgomery's Civil War sword, a musket made in 1864 in Windsor Locks, and two bayonets.

It took some time for the objects to be appraised and properly packed and shipped, so it was December before they arrived, intact. A surprise bonus was two Civil War bayonets. All these relics were a substantial gift, gratefully received and now being cataloged and prepared for exhibit.

Ambassador Montgomery is a retired operative of the OSS and subsequently the CIA, with some time out to serve in other intelligence service and a stint as Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations. His exploits and achievements in WWII, during the Cold War, and into the current century were formidable and notable. He has received many honors, including the 2015 William Donovan Award of the OSS Society. (For that award's presentation speech, Google *cia donovan award*.)

COLLECTION ADDITIONS

by Barry Sisk

The Suffield Historical Society purchased two pieces of furniture at auction on October 19, 2016. A cherry slant front desk on frame (1780-1795) and a cherry highboy (1770-1790) have construction characteristics of Suffield-made furniture.

The slant front desk on frame is almost a duplicate of one illustrated in "Connecticut Valley Furniture," page 338.* It is described as probably made in Suffield.



The highboy (high chest) has a key characteristic of Suffield-made furniture: the bottom rear corners of the drawers are "omitted" (known as the *Suffield Notch*). The notch is illustrated in "Connecticut Valley Furniture," page 514.

The desk and the highboy are the second and third pieces of Suffield-made furniture which the Society purchased in 2016. The first piece, a blanket chest which was signed and dated by its Suffield maker, was purchased at auction in February (reference the April 2016 SHS newsletter).



Curator Lester Smith holds one of the drawers of the Society's recently acquired tall chest, showing the "Suffield Notch" of the rear corner dovetail joint, a feature that has been described as peculiar to Suffield furniture.

These purchases were made possible, in part, by funds from the SHS Annual Appeal.

* *Connecticut Valley Furniture – Eliphalet Chapin and His Contemporaries, 1750-1800*, Thomas P. Kugelman and Alice K. Kugelman with Robert Lionetti.

CURATOR'S REPORT

by Lester Smith, Curator

Holidayfest on the first December weekend at the King House this year went well, and the special loan exhibit, *Boxes, Baskets, and Curious Containers*, got satisfactory reviews. The house was nicely decorated outside by Marjorie Begin's notable wreaths and remarkable panel over the front door and inside with greenery and bows by Terry Mandirola, Anne Borg, and Green Knees members, along with the curator's favorite: a very uncultured, non-fashionable, Christmas tree cut from the top of a 25- or 30-foot fir from Art Sikes's former informal tree nursery. All these things are much-appreciated yearly donations, including the delicious goodies enjoyed in the kitchen by our guests. Perhaps the most-mentioned feature of the weekend is the log fire in the great kitchen fireplace, something less often enjoyed in modern homes with gas fireplaces.

We would welcome suggestions for next year's special exhibit.

The Society's trustees agreed this year to bid at auction for three substantial pieces of old Suffield furniture. The bids succeeded, and the items are described in the immediately previous article by Barry Sisk. We also acquired a good addition to our exhibit of tobacco-growing memorabilia in the King House barn. This was a wooden tobacco leaf basket from the early days of shade tobacco about a hundred years ago, something we have sought for years. It was offered at Jim Kent's big equipment auction on Halladay Avenue in September.

Come and visit this summer and see how the King House Museum collections and exhibits continue to grow.

THANKS TO WORK DAY VOLUNTEERS

Many thanks to volunteers Jim Reeves; Art Sikes; Nancy, Norm and Sean Noble; Jan Peake; Anne Borg and, of course, our curator, Lester Smith for closing up the barn and house for the winter and hauling the brush.

Keeping the yard neatly trimmed and burning brush are always priorities.

It won't be long before it's time for Spring cleaning and the opening of the museum properties. We'd love to have you join us. Watch for dates and times in your next newsletter.

ORIGINAL PROPRIETOR

JOHN SEVERANCE, JR. *by Ed Chase*

John Severance, Jr., was one of twelve settlers who received Suffield land grants at a Town Meeting on June 12, 1678. The homelot portion of his 50-acre grant was the second lot south of the west road crossing Stony Brook (now South St.).

John's father, John, Sr., had been born in Ipswich, England, in 1609, but immigrated to Boston as a young man with his wife, Abigail Kimball soon after their 1635 marriage. His membership in the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston attests to his prominence in the community.

However, almost a decade before John, Jr., was born, the young Severance family became early settlers of Salisbury, the first white settlement north of the Merimack River. They had twelve children. John, Jr., was their sixth child, born on November 24, 1647.

John, Jr., had settled in Boston by 1672. He married Mary, whose maiden name remains unknown. During their time in Boston, four of their six children were born – Ebenezer (1673), Abigail (1675), John (1676), and Daniel (1678). Two years after receiving his Suffield land grant, the family settled on their South Main Street lot. (Timothy Hale was their adjacent northern neighbor and John Barber to the south.) In this home, their offspring Mary (1681) and Joseph (1682) were born.

After these births, Suffield records of this family cease!

By 1689, the family had settled on the new frontier in Deerfield, Mass. While there are records that show John, Jr., became a large landowner in Deerfield, by 1703 he moved on again and settled in Bedford, Westchester County, N.Y.

By this relocation, John, Jr., missed the Great French and Indian Massacre in Deerfield in 1704. However, his son Daniel had already been killed during a Deerfield Indian raid in 1694. His son Ebenezer became a soldier in Capt. Wright's Company. While he survived the battles, he was killed by Indians in 1723 while tending his Northfield cornfield. John, Jr., returned to Deerfield shortly before his death.

Thus were the ever present dangers of the New England frontier.

REFERENCES: *Documentary History of Suffield*, H.S.Sheldon, 1879. *New England Outpost*, Richard I. Melvoin, 1989;. *Captors and Captives, 1704 Deerfield Raid*, Haefeli and Sweeney, 2003. *The Pynchon Papers, Vol. II*, Bridenbaugh and Tomlinson, 1985. *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, George M. Bodge, 1906.

COMPUTER-SAVVY VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

The Society is optimistic that we will receive a grant to support digitizing the collections catalog file of the King House Museum. When this project starts, we will need volunteers to carefully transcribe data from the present file cards, often including information from the Excel file of the detailed inventory completed by a contractor in 2013. Work is also needed to help catalog many objects, photographs, and archival material in the collection that have not yet been properly accessioned. Interested volunteers should email Dianne Seaman at dianneseaman@gmail.com.

Dianne and her husband, new members of the Society, are experienced IT professionals now retired and willing to plan and coordinate this project.

GARY MANDIROLA RETIRES

After many years of service, Gary Mandirola is retiring as our Treasurer. In addition to being treasurer for more than a decade, Gary spearheaded our barn construction. He and his wife Terry (one of our Trustees) have been invaluable assets in the choice and evaluation of antiques for the SHS collection. We thank him for his long, dependable work.

If this is a void that you would like to help fill, please call Ed Chase or any other Board member.

JUNE 3 FIELD TRIP TO HARVARD ART MUSEUMS

This year's field trip will center around the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University on Saturday, June 3. Society members will have the opportunity to visit the nearby Natural History Museum and its improved exhibit featuring Harvard's famous collection of Blaschka glass flowers.

Our coach will depart King House at 8:00 a.m. and return there around 6:00 p.m. Lunch will be "on your own" at the Fogg Cafe or at any of several restaurants in the Harvard Square area. Cost will include transportation, snacks and soft drinks, tips and one museum admission. Cost is \$60 which includes one museum of your choice.

Admission to a second museum will be "on your own" at \$12. This is an opportunity to visit a major teaching museum where descriptions of the paintings and artifacts are more detailed than is typical.

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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
Maggie Philippon, Editor
Anne Borg, Compiler

UPCOMING EVENTS

SHOW AND TELL NIGHT

Wednesday, March 22

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

Anyone can sign up for a five- to ten-minute presentation on any aspect of local history. Anecdotes about local characters, folklore, artifacts or photographs are most welcome. Contact Ed Chase by March 21st to sign up.

FREEDOM, SLAVERY, AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF 1774

Tuesday, April 18

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.

Following the 1773 Boston Tea Party, the British Parliament drafted the Coercive Acts of 1774. Bill Sullivan's Suffield Academy American Studies students describe this pivotal point in American history and the intolerable circumstances for the American people.

ANNUAL SHS FIELD TRIP

Saturday, June 3

See tentative details on page 3.

POISONOUS HERBS TO BLOOD

Wednesday, May 17

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.
Horticulturist, historian and raconteur Gordon Kenneson will tell the story of Windsor's colonial Dr. Hezekiah Chafee and his "weeds women."

SUFFIELD'S PAST IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Wednesday, June 14

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.
Anne Borg and Lester Smith join forces to select photographs from the Hawley Rising Collection to illustrate Suffield's bygone days with a contemporary historical perspective.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Tuesday, July 11

King House Lawn 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Bring friends and family to an old-fashioned Ice Cream Social. Pack a picnic, bring lawn chairs and enjoy an evening of neighborly visiting. Ice cream and entertainment provided by SHS.
Rain date: Thursday, July 13.