



# Stony Brook CURRENTS

Vol. XII, No. 3

The Newsletter of the Suffield Historical Society

September 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.

## Suffield Historical Society

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## MEET THE AUTHOR

Sunday, September 17

2:00 p.m. at West Suffield Academy Hall

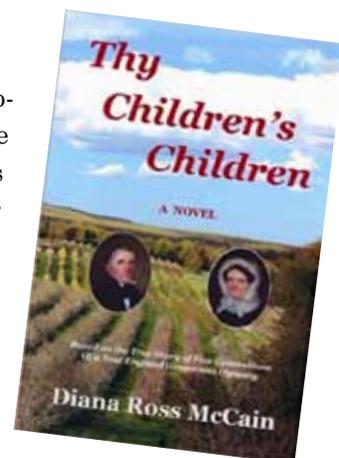
Many of you may remember Diana Ross McCain from her historical columns in the *Hartford Courant* years ago. An independent historian who has been researching, writing and speaking about Connecticut's past for more than thirty years, Diana will join us at West Suffield Academy Hall to discuss Suffield's connections mentioned in her new book, *Thy Children's Children*.

She was on the staff of the Connecticut Historical Society for twenty-five years and is currently a partner in "Come Home to Connecticut," an enterprise which offers historical and genealogical research services, consulting and programming. She has written extensively for publications such as *Early American Life*, the *Hartford Courant*, and Connecticut magazines.

Following the authorship of several successful non-fiction books, including *It Happened in Connecticut*, *Mysteries and Legends of New England*, *Connecticut Coast*, and the award-winning *To All on Equal Terms: the Life and Legacy of Prudence Crandall*, Diana tries her hand at her first novel. This fiction is based on the Lyman family of Connecticut's Lyman Orchards. It follows five generations of the family through the turbulent times of colonial America to the survival of a young nation.

We are fortunate to have her come to the Society for this special meeting. Join us as she details the connections with Suffield's Phineas Lyman and, surprisingly, our own Sylvester Graham of cracker fame!

We are trying something new in a Sunday afternoon time and would like member feedback on afternoon versus evening meetings. The meeting will be held at Academy Hall at 1499 Mountain Road in West Suffield.



## WORLD WAR I

This year is the anniversary of our country's entry into World War I. On Saturday, November 18, the library, in partnership with the Suffield Historical Society, is hosting the Connecticut State Library's *Remembering World War One* digitization project.

Do you have old photos, documents, letters, mementos or anything related to the war at home or abroad that you are willing to have scanned or photographed? The images of your articles will be archived and made available online. Your originals will be unharmed and returned to you after the recording which takes only seconds.

Help us tell the stories of the men and women involved in the war. This event will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Suffield Senior Center. Please bring your items and any pertinent information about them for inclusion in the project.

## OUR CATALOG IS GOING DIGITAL!

Early this summer the Society received an Amiel Zak Grant, which was used to purchase a computer and software to digitize our files.

Members Dianne and Rick Seaman have been inputting records so that eventually the information about each item in the King House Museum collection will be searchable in a digital database. We also plan to create and digitize a catalog of our photographs and other images, for which we have had no catalog. We're moving into the 21st century! Other volunteers are welcome. This is a huge project.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are looking for a couple of members who would like to serve on a permanent Nominations Committee charged with filling officer and trustee vacancies of our Society. Call Nancy Noble at 668-2538 to volunteer.

We are also still looking for someone to replace Gary Mandirola as SHS Treasurer. This officer is key to keeping the Society running. Gary is happy to help that special someone get started. Call President Ed Chase at 668-2962, if you are interested.

## HOLIDAYFEST

Believe it or not, it's time to start planning for Christmas! Our theme for December 2017's Holidayfest is "Vintage Parlor Games." We ask you to search those closets. Haul out old board games and card games, preferably pre-1960. Chess boards, checkers, old dominoes, Parcheesi, Old Maid, Mah Jongg and many others have all been around for years.

We like to gather things a week or two before Holidayfest to provide time for an attractive display.

Mark your calendars for December 2 and 3 to bring your children and grandchildren. Let's give them an idea of what games we played before Gameboy and computers!

## A NEW LOOK

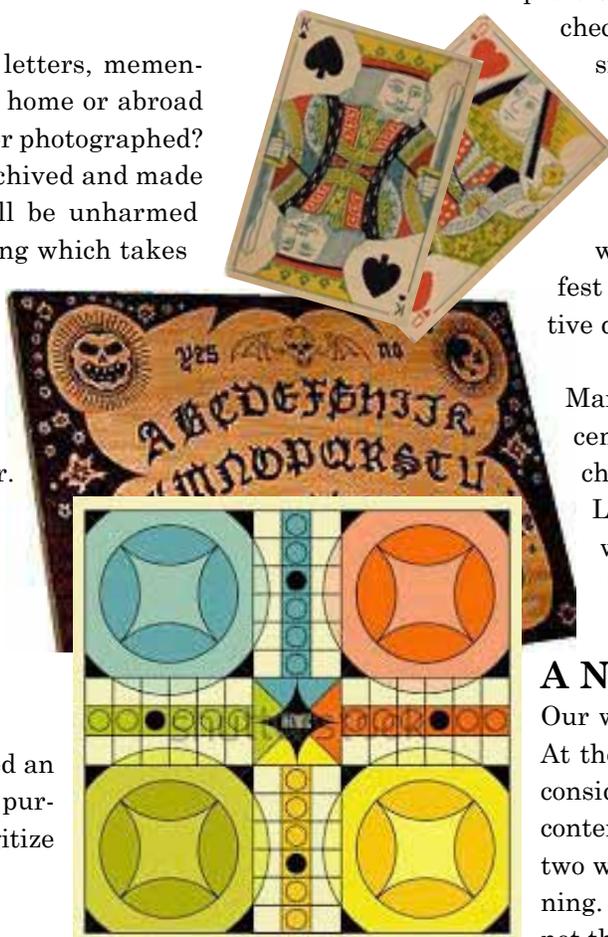
Our website is being transformed. At the moment it is in flux, as we consider a new format and new content. Take a look in a month or two when it should be up and running. Meanwhile, what you see is not the final product.

## 350th ANNIVERSARY

Suffield will be 350 years old in 2020! Suffield Selectmen have set up a Town Committee to begin working on the celebration. Society members Art Sikes, Chris Childs, Norm Noble and Lester Smith are part of that committee.

If you have ideas to share or would like to work on a sub-committee, please let one of them know. Events, displays, publications, activities, marketing – this is the brainstorming phase of the planning. Committee members will be reaching out to residents as plans move along, and helping hands are needed.

One Society-sponsored project already moving forward is Jim Turek's and the Polish Heritage Society's publication of a CD of traditional Polish music. Another is Art Sike's major effort to identify all extant Suffield houses built before 1870.



## TWO ORIGINAL PROPRIETORS FROM WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT

by Ed Chase

Following King Philip's War, Pynchon writes "Thro the favor of God in scattering the Heathen, the Committee had hopes to resettling [Suffield]."<sup>1</sup> Thus we begin the story of two original proprietors from Windsor who settled here after the uprising.

Ever wonder about the unusual spelling and name of the street that passes the east side of the new CVS? Let us solve the mystery of Ffyer Place and tell you the story of Zerubbabel Ffyer<sup>2</sup>.

The first land grants on the Stoney Brook Plantation were granted in January 1670/71. The largest of them all was granted to Zerubbabel Ffyer, who received a total of 60 acres.

His father Lt. Walter Ffyer<sup>3</sup> came from Dorchester, Massachusetts, with the Rev. John Warham to settle Windsor in 1634. Zerubabal was Walter's second son and married Experience Strong before coming to Suffield. They arrived in Suffield with five children. Four more were born to them during the scant five years they lived in Suffield.<sup>4</sup>

By the time he settled his land grant in 1677, new rules about house lots in Suffield had been passed. Following the abandonment of the settlement and its destruction during King Philip's War, an ordinance required all houses be close together for protection against further Indian raids. His six-acre house lot was typical of the new regulations with 198 feet (12 rods) of frontage on the west side of Main Street (located diagonally across the street from the present-day King House Museum).

Although the Ffyer family left little impact on Suffield, this unusual name lives on in two places in our town: Ffyer Place, perpendicular to Mountain Road by CVS, and Ffyer Brook, tributary of Muddy Brook. Town records only show Zerubabal voted in the 1682 Town Meeting and was listed as a corporal in the militia. Other records show a variety of spellings for his last name. The NEGHS uses "Filer."

Like Zerubbabel Ffyer, John Filley was the son of a prominent Windsor founder. His father, William,<sup>5</sup> was credited with the establishment of a trading post on the Connecticut River, near the present-day Hartford. William's diplomatic dealings with the Native Americans and prosperity in Windsor are well documented. However, William's history before the 1634 Windsor settlement seems to have been thoroughly erased!

In 1674, John Filley followed in Ffyer's footsteps receiving a Suffield land grant prior to King Philip's War. Likewise he settled the land in 1677. His 40-acre grant was similarly divided into farmland and a six-acre house lot with 198 feet of frontage on the west side of High Street (north of the Phelps-Hatheway House on property now owned by Hess).

John married Abigail Dibble of Suffield in 1681. He died nine years later, leaving Abigail with three daughters.<sup>6</sup> Thus the Filley surname also disappears from Suffield records, and – unlike his friend Zerubbabel Ffyer – no landmarks bear his name.

1. Taken from *John Pynchon's Account Books*.
2. Alternate spellings: First name: Zerubbabel, Zerubabal and Zerubbabell. Family name: Ffyer and Filer.
3. Walter Ffyer (Filer), b. 1613 in England; d. 1683 in Windsor leaving an estate valued at £629. His death coincides with Zerubabal's departure from Suffield.
4. Four more children were born into the family following their return to Windsor in 1683.
5. William Filley b. 1617 in England, m. Margaret in Windsor in 1642, d. in Windsor.
6. One of these daughters, Abigail, became the wife and widow of John Loomis, Issac Pinney and Capt. Nathaniel Phelps. Thus the bloodline continues within very common Suffield surnames.

### References:

*The Great Migration Begins*, Volume I, NEHGS;  
*John Pynchon's Account Books*, Bridenbaugh and Tomlinson, 1985;  
*H. S. Sheldon's Documentary History of Suffield, Connecticut*, 1879;  
 Various Internet genealogies

## CURIOUS?

### Ever Wonder about Other Suffield Place Names?

Now that you know how Ffyer Place got its name (Ed Chase's article above), how many of you can identify the names of the streets in Hatheway Farms? The entrance leading to the post office, Gideon Way, is named for Gideon Granger, Jr., Postmaster General of the United States under President Thomas Jefferson. However, the names within the Hatheway Farms development are all, in some way, related to the Phelps-Hatheway House. Check out the other street names: Oliver, Abraham, Emma, Daniel, Charles, and Elizabeth. How well you know your town history!

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www.SuffieldHistoricalSociety.org

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

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MEET THE AUTHOR

Sunday, September 17

**West Suffield Academy Hall 2:00 p.m.**  
**1499 Mountain Road, West Suffield**  
*Historian and author Diana Ross McCain describes the many Suffield connections to her newest book, Thy Children's Children. See details on page 1.*

### NEW HAVEN-NORTHAMPTON CANAL GREENWAY

Wednesday, October 18

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.  
*Historian Bob Madison tells the story of the pathway that evolved from waterway to rail bed to recreation trail and connected our valley to commerce and development.*

### HALLOWEEN AT THE KING HOUSE

Tuesday, October 31

King Museum House porch dusk to 7:00 p.m.  
*Costumed society members will be on hand to distribute candy to Trick-or-Treaters from the porch.*

### JOHN PYNCHON AND POPULATING STONEY BROOK PLANTATION

Wednesday, November 17

Suffield Senior Center 7:00 p.m.  
*Ed Chase describes the adventure, the daily life, the struggles, the destruction and finally the success of Pynchon's settlement that became Suffield.*

### REMEMBERING WWI

Saturday, November 18

Suffield Senior Center 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
*In partnership with the Connecticut State Library's efforts to digitally chronicle events and life during the WWI years for U.S. citizens, this is a day of electronic scanning. See details on page 2.*

### HOLIDAYFEST

#### Vintage Parlor Games

December 2 & 3

King House Museum 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
*Bring your children to give them a peek into social activities before the electronic wonders! Christmas decor and goodies by the fireside.*