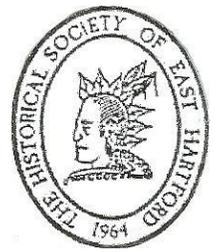


Historical Society of East Hartford

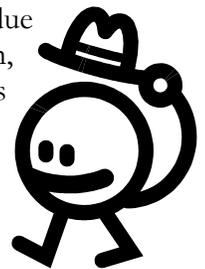
Newsletter, May 2011



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been an extremely long Winter for all of us and suddenly, here it is: Spring with all its glory! The mountains of snow have finally melted away and a more familiar landscape has returned. Spring is always a welcome change after a cold, dreary season. The newness of fresh green grass, buds on the trees, flowers blooming across the lawns, and the downside of course is: allergies.

I'm sorry to announce that our Treasurer, **Ed Carlson** is stepping down from his position due to health issues. His role as guardian of our finances will be taken up temporarily by Craig Johnson, until Nominations can elect a new Treasurer this summer. His wife, **Marie Carlson**, will step down as well to continue to look after Ed's welfare. Her role as our Historian is also open pending Nominations. We will sorely miss Ed's and Marie's stewardships, which the Society has greatly benefited from for many years. We thank them both for their generous service and expertise. Happily, Ed and Marie will both continue their membership with the Historical Society community and we are looking forward to seeing them again after their absence this winter.



Preparations to open the facilities at Martin Park, in co-ordination with the Parks and Recreation Department, have begun. As P&R goes about their maintenance on the park grounds, we tackle the housekeeping at our facilities. Along with the blacksmith's shop and the schoolhouse, our little museum will need a thorough sweeping and dusting to get ready for the inevitable curious summer visitors. Volunteers are needed for a few hours of clearing the cobwebs. We also check the interior and exterior of the buildings for any structural damages. If you wield a mean broom or can swing a hammer, you are welcome to join us.

Guided tours of the Martin Park facilities are offered to the public Sunday afternoons, June through August. We have trained docents who usually work in twos and threes to conduct tours of each facility. A handbook exists for each one of the buildings; reference guides to the families who owned them and the artifacts on display. All three buildings can be toured in about an hour. The Society welcomes members who would be interested in training with more experienced guides in conducting these tours. If you would like to become better acquainted with the Martin Preservation Park and help share that knowledge with the public, please speak to a board member or indicate so on a clipboard for weekend preferences that we will pass at the May meeting.

As you can see, while the formal business of the Society comes to a conclusion for a few months, more activities begin with the opening of Martin Park. Some of us also work the year round at the Selden Brewer House, identifying donations to our collections and cataloguing them in our software. Since we discovered the air-conditioning works throughout the entire Brewer House, (what is this unmarked switch? and what does it do?) we will be spending some time at the upstairs office pouring over documents and escaping from the summer heat. If you have a particular fascination with antiquities....we do try to get to the office one evening a week. There are some lovely old articles of clothing that we need to catalogue and archive, as well as old newspapers, furniture, photos, documents, and the occasional unexpected treasure. Many hands make light work, so if you have an evening or two to spare, please speak to Elizabeth Morin, Craig Johnson or myself.

I'm looking forward to seeing you 7:00pm at the May 18th meeting; we have another great program.

Bette Daraskevich, EHHS President
860 - 568 - 5188, bdaraskevich@comcast.net

MEMBERSHIP

We are very pleased to announce that we have had 4 new members join the Historical Society since our last newsletter. **David and Valerie Carrier of Hartford, Mary Alice Dwyer-Hughes of East Hartford, and Drew Johnson of East Hartford** have added their names to our roster of those who support our local history. If you know anyone with an interest in history, ask them to come to a meeting. We are a friendly and caring group and what more can you ask of any organization. See you at the May meeting. *Eileen Driscoll, Membership Chair*

MAY 2011 MEETING ON CONNECTICUT'S ROLE AT GETTYSBURG

The Historical Society of East Hartford is pleased to have Mrs. Connie Satton of Rockville who will present a program called "The Connecticut Troops at Gettysburg."

The program will focus on the July 1863 Battle of Gettysburg and the five Connecticut Volunteer Regiments that saw action during this three day conflict. Through the use of slides and Civil War era music, Mrs. Satton will show the battlefield sites as they appear today and follow the actual movements of troop positions. You will see where the 17th Regiment fought on the first day of battle, the 5th and 20th Regiment breastworks at the top of Culp's Hill, the 27th Regiment attack through the wheat field and the 14th Regiment stand at Cemetery Hill where they opposed the great Confederate frontal assault. The Union victory on the 3rd day of battle was called by many as the turning point of the war. The aftermath of the bloody battle and its horrible impact on Gettysburg's town citizens followed by President Lincoln's arrival in November 1863 to speak at the dedication of the military cemetery will also be discussed.

Mrs. Satton, who is currently the President of the Vernon Historical Society, has attended the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College for the last 19 years and has walked the battlefield many times. She has personally taken all of the slides to be shown during the presentation.

The program will be held on Wednesday evening, May 18, 2011 in the Raymond Library Community Room, 840 Main Street, East Hartford. The Historical Society will begin the evening at 7:00pm with a short business meeting followed by light refreshments. Connie Satton will then present her program. The public is invited. There is no cost. Free parking is available in the back of the Library. For information call Craig Johnson at 860-568-2884.

Craig Johnson, Vice President

HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO HOST PARANORMAL PROGRAM ON EAST HARTFORD HUGUENOT HOUSE

The Historical Society will host a fundraiser event program called "The Huguenot House Spirits" on Saturday evening, June 4, 2011 at the East Hartford Community Cultural Center, 50 Chapman Place. Tickets for the 7 p.m. program are \$8.00 sold at the door and \$5.00 for historical society members and for advance sales. All proceeds from this event will benefit the Historical Society and the Huguenot House Fund.

Presenting the program will be the East Coast Paranormal Research Team from Rhode Island. During 2010, this team that does paranormal research throughout New England conducted three separate investigations at the Huguenot House and other sites at Martin Park. The lead investigators are Frank Soltys and Joseph Fontain. They will play back sounds and electronic voice phenomenon (EVP) captured with equipment that picks up noises the human ear can't detect. The large auditorium screen will be used to project pictures of inside the house and translate the EVPs into readable words and sentences.

The Historical Society will start the program at 7 p.m. with doors open at 6 p.m. For advance sales prior to June 1, please send a check or money order to the Historical Society of East Hartford at P.O. Box 380166, East Hartford, CT 06138-0166. List your name and number of attending for at the door verification. No tickets will be mailed. For more information, contact Craig Johnson at 860-568-2884 or at craigrj@comcast.net.

Craig Johnson, Huguenot House

THE HISTORIC HUGUENOT HOUSE AT AGE 250

The Makens Bemont house, also known as the Huguenot House, celebrates its 250th anniversary this year. One of the oldest surviving homes in East Hartford, the house was built in 1761 by Edmund Bemont, the father of Makens, after he purchased 2 ½ acres along a Country Road which later became Burnside Avenue. The house was originally built to sell on speculation. In 1765 when Makens and his growing family moved to town, Edmund bought back the House and sold it to his son for 30 pounds. Makens was an industrious young saddle maker and land owner. He lived in the house for



The 3 historic houses at Martin Park are, left to right, the 1820s Goodwin Schoolhouse, the 1761 Bemont (Huguenot) House, and the 1850s Burnham Blacksmith Shop.

over 60 years until his death in 1826. His widow Pamela lived in the house until her death in 1833. During the next 135 years, many families lived in the house and over time it came to be called the Huguenot House, probably due to the longevity of its original owners who were more than likely descended from Huguenots, a French Protestant sect having its origins in France. The “Bemont” name was derived from the French family name “Beaumont.”

The Huguenot House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is owned and maintained by the Historical Society of East Hartford on town-owned property in Martin Park. It was moved to Martin Park in 1971 from its original location ½ mile down Burnside Avenue near where Tolland Street joined Burnside. The house was given to the Society in 1968 by its previous owners, Adolph Rosenthal and Selma R. Gross, on the condition it be moved from its original location. In the fall of 1970, faced with the imminent sale of the land, a fund-raising drive was begun. Aided by contributions from many individuals, school children, local businesses, civic organizations and a grant from Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Huguenot House was moved up the road to Martin Park. Exterior and interior restoration was overseen by Society historian Doris Suessman and restoration consultant Herman Marshall. The ten year restoration project was made financially possible by continued public generosity and a Connecticut State Historic Commission grant. Because of this community wide effort to preserve East Hartford’s past, we do not charge any admission for tours.

While the gambrel-roofed style was quite popular 250 years ago, very few homes had survived without major structural changes made over time. Although none of the household furnishings are original to the Bemont family, most everything is period and dates to the 18th century, before 1800. It is interesting to know that when acquired by the Historical Society, the house when at its original location included a 19th century ell that was conveniently demolished when a tree toppled on it. Thus the house could be restored to its Colonial beginnings. During the 40 years that the Huguenot House has been located at Martin Park, many hundreds if not thousands of school children and adults, both Connecticut and out-of-state residents, have had the pleasure of touring the house and viewing its period furnishings. A Connecticut Gambrel style dwelling, its furnishings reflect the lifestyle of a prosperous craftsman in the late 18th century. In 1989, the Historical Society received a donation for the house of a tomahawk and arrow that was captured as a war prize by Lieutenant Edmund Bemont during the French and Indian War. The trophy donated by descendants of the East Hartford Merriman family, hangs on the wall of the kitchen and is perhaps the only remaining link to the original builder of the home.

The Huguenot House has also generated curiosity on incidents that can be described as unexplainable. During the restoration project, there were occasions when strange pounding noises were noticed on the security monitoring device and on some days Mr. Marshall and his workmen also heard loud rapping or crashing sounds. Doris and Mary Dowden affectionately named the possible ghost creating all of the noise “Benjamin” which means “son of the right hand.” Maybe this was the spirit of Makens Bemont helping us to restore his house? After restoration was complete, things quieted down. But in 1982 a young girl playing in the area saw an apparition of a lady in a long blue dress that seemed to float by inside the house. When she tried to see who the lady was, there was no one in the dress and the apparition vanished which scared the child so much the police had to be called. Benny

and the Blue Lady were mentioned in the October 2009 Connecticut Magazine along with some other supposedly haunted places in the state, so now you know how these names originated. Over the years, many paranormal organizations have done investigative research at the site and so far, nobody has been disappointed.

The Huguenot House is open for tours between Memorial Day and Labor Day on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00. Also at Martin Park is the 1821 Goodwin Schoolhouse constructed by George Goodwin and moved here in 1976 as a gift for the Revolutionary War Bicentennial and the Burnham Blacksmith Shop moved here in 1982 and dedicated in 1992. Because this building was converted for use as a tobacco sorting and storage shed in the 1920's, the inside exhibits cover two historical trades. To open all three buildings for Sunday afternoon tours, the Historical Society is in need of members who are willing to serve as docents. During the May 18 meeting at the Raymond Library, a sign-up sheet will be passed around for volunteering. Even if you can't attend the meeting, please give me a call if you are interested in helping. The Huguenot House and other buildings are a part of East Hartford history that all members should take pride in.

Craig Johnson, Huguenot House

CIVIL WAR SNAPSHOT¹, MAR 1861 – APR 1861

- Mar 4, 1861 Lincoln becomes President of the United States amid rumors of war, insurrection; thousands flock to see him inaugurated; armed military are stationed openly in Washington to protect him and to keep the peace; in his inaugural he says he will not interfere with slavery as it exists; no state has the right to secede; he will use his power to hold government property using force only as necessary.
- Mar 6, 1861 A small regular Army of the Confederate States of America is authorized; it will fight with the temporary Provisional Army and states' militias; 100,000 volunteers and militia are called for
- Mar 11, 1861 Constitution of the Confederate States of America is adopted unanimously by the seven seceded states in Montgomery, AL, the Confederate capital
- Mar 29, 1861 Lincoln is determined to hold onto Fort Sumter in Charleston; he sends help by sea
- Apr 12, 1861 Confederate Gen Beauregard fires on Fort Sumter about 4:30am, Friday morning; Civil War begins
- Apr 13, 1861 Major Anderson surrenders Fort Sumter; help is unable to reach him; he has no food
- Apr 14, 1861 When leaving Fort Sumter, during the final flag salute, 1 Union soldier is killed, 1 mortally wounded due to an accidental explosion; these are the only fatalities, the first in the war
- Apr 15, 1861 Lincoln asks the states for 75,000 volunteers to serve for 90 days; states are given quotas to fill
- Apr 15-22, 1861 Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia, Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas refuse to send troops
- Apr 16, 1861 Northern governors fill their quotas easily; after Sumter patriotism seizes the north²; CT Gov Buckingham calls for volunteers to fill 1 regiment, the state's quota; heavy enlistments begin immediately; within 3 weeks CT has 54 companies, 5 times CT's quota, filling 3 regiments³
- Apr 17, 1861 Virginia convention votes for secession; seizes the Harper's Ferry arsenal and the Norfolk naval yard, largest southern ship building facility; the next day Robert E Lee resigns his US commission
- Apr 18, 1861 Massachusetts' 6th regiment answers Lincoln's call; travels by train to Washington; reaches Hartford at 2am and is met by 2500 widely cheering people⁴; is cheered similarly in Meriden and New Haven
- Apr 19, 1861 Massachusetts' 6th regiment reaches Baltimore; returns fire of hostile, pro southern crowd; 4 soldiers and 12 citizens are killed⁵; Lincoln will place a strong hand on Maryland to keep access open to the north; it is the 86th anniversary of Lexington & Concord

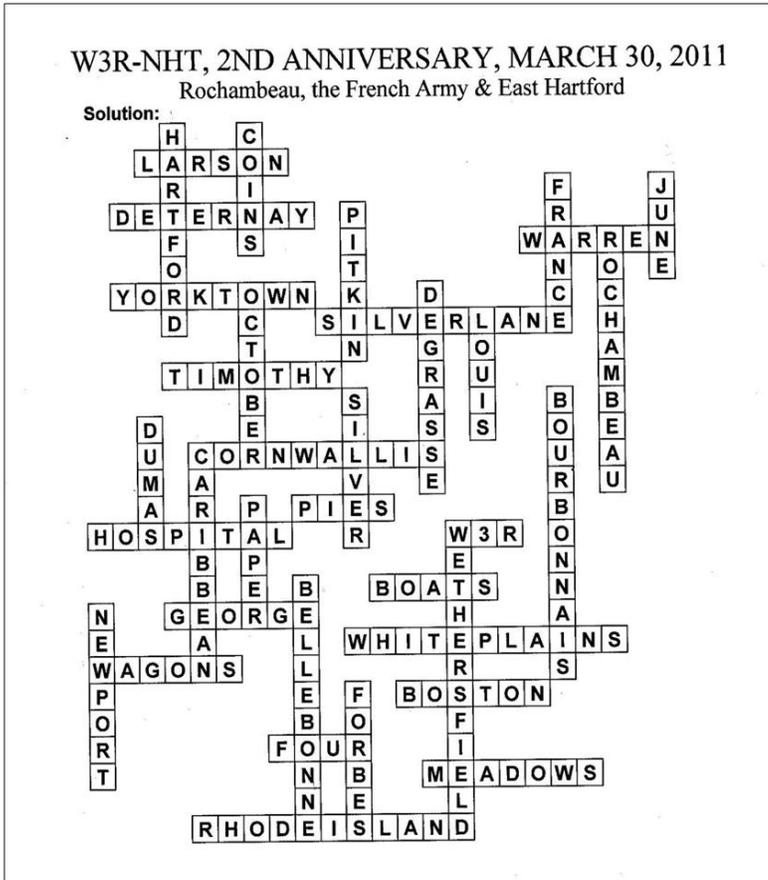
¹ Information is from <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/10/29/opinion/20101029-civil-war.html>; site has links to source readings. *Connecticut in the War*, Croffut, W.A., and Morris, John M., Published by Ledyard Bill, New York, 1868. *Abraham Lincoln A History*, Nicolay, John G., and Hay, John, The Century Company, New York, 1890, Vol Four.

² *Connecticut in the War*, Croffut, W.A., and Morris, John M., Published by Ledyard Bill, New York, 1868. The writers give numerous examples of the patriotic outpouring throughout CT in the spring of 1861. Money was gladly offered to support volunteers. Bounties were offered to enlistees. East Hartford offered a \$10 bounty and \$10 per month to each man while in service. (pg 53) Men and women, sewing day and night, made uniforms. Others made medical supplies. On page 63 they write "The ladies of East Hartford had, by April 25, made and rolled up, at the house of Dr. C.M. Brownell, six thousand yards of bandages, and one thousand five hundred compresses. Ladies of other towns swelled the quantity of such articles to tons."

³ *Connecticut in the War*, Croffut, W.A., and Morris, John M., Published by Ledyard Bill, New York, 1868, pg 43.

⁴ <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html>; Hartford's 1860 population was about 26,000.

- Apr 19, 1861 Lincoln orders a blockade of ports from South Carolina to Texas
- Apr 21, 1861 USS Saratoga captures the clipper ship Nightingale with 961 slaves aboard; she was off Africa likely headed to Cuba
- Apr 29, 1861 Women's Relief Association forms to coordinate small war-relief groups; northern black men form drill companies but their efforts are not welcome⁶; no black men are allowed in the service



NO WINNER

The solution to the puzzle contest offered in the March 2011 newsletter of the HSEH is printed on the left.

Unfortunately, no winning solution to the puzzle was received by the Society by the deadline given - April 30, 2011. So we have to announce that there was no winner of this contest and no awarding of the year's free membership in this Society.

However, we do hope that those of you who looked for clues in the recommended readings and tried the puzzle did have an enjoyable and interesting time learning some local revolutionary war history.

NEW CIVIL WAR RESOURCES AVAILABLE ONLINE

For all of you interested in researching the Civil War Ruthie S. Brown of the Connecticut Gravestone Network reports that the State library has updated its digital collection to include more civil war era information.

Additional newspapers have been brought online. This is a work in progress, however, and as it continues even more newspapers will be added, including the *Connecticut War Record*. Visit the site <http://cslib.cdmhost.com/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=%2Fp15019coll9> [1].

Gail Hurley has created a page for iCONN on "American Civil War Resources" at the site <http://www.cslib.org/iconnsitemap/staff/CivilWar.aspx> [2].

⁵ http://www.mdoe.org/riots_balt_1861.html

⁶ *Connecticut in the War*, Croffut, W.A., and Morris, John M., Published by Ledyard Bill, New York, 1868, pg 79. In discussing the spring of 1861 they write "Mr. Sedgwick of Cornwall gave early notice of a bill to raise five regiments of negroes; but the project, repeatedly broached by him, met with little favor."

HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION

This folding doll carriage is likely of 1920s – 1930s vintage according to Winters Associates of Southington.

The carriage sides are covered in black material perhaps imitation leather. There are fairly deep gouges in this material. The tan, satin like material covering the flat bed, if it is original, is fraying and has been poorly glued on. The hood covering is missing.

The handle is wood, painted a deeper green. It has been well scraped and the paint is chipping. The handle support arms are metal.

The metal frame of the carriage seems to be complete. All metal pieces are most likely steel. The wheels and their spokes are metal. The tires are most likely hard rubber.

The 2 sides to the carriage and the front and back pieces fold down onto the bed. All the metal pieces above the bed also fold down over the bed.

As pictured the height from the top of the handle to the ground is 26"; the axle to axle distance is 12.5"; the carriage is 9" wide; its overall length is 24".

Overall the carriage is in 'rough' condition and has a value under \$100.00. A modern, small sticker on the bottom of the carriage links it to the local Hollister family. This makes it of special interest to the Historical Society.



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May Program

Date, Time Wed, May 18, 2011; 7:00pm
Place Raymond Library
Program *CT at Gettysburg* with Connie Satton

June Fundraiser

Date, Time Sat, June 6, 2011; 7:00pm
Place Cultural Community Center
Program *Huguenot House Spirits*

Sept Newsletter Deadline, Aug 31, 2011