



The Acorn

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEDYARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume VIII Number I

www.ledyardhistory.org

August 2011

Society Revamps Calendar

More History, More Meetings, More Often

At their meeting held June 13, the Society's Executive Board voted to change the regular meeting day of the Society and to add more membership and executive meetings during the year.

The second Tuesday of each month has been set as a regular "history day." Executive meetings and membership meetings will alternate, month by month. The first Executive meeting was held on July 12, and the first membership meeting is scheduled for August 9 (program described opposite). The regular meeting place will be the Bill Library in Ledyard, with alternate venues arranged from time to time. There will continue to be additional events on other days, including a number of daytime weekend programs.

These more frequent meetings are intended to help with planning of Society events, and to bring more history to the members at meetings. It is also hoped that with more frequent general meetings on interesting topics, more people will become active in the Society.

Realignment of the meetings will entail some revision of the by-laws, to be presented at the August 9 meeting.

Researching History from Home

August Meeting to Highlight Online Resources

At the Society's August membership meeting, Scott Buka, chair of the Information Technology Committee, will conduct a hands-on seminar on online historical research. This will cover a wealth of websites devoted to local history, historic archives and photographs, and genealogy. Among these is the Libraries Online (LiOn) network, of which Ledyard Libraries are members and which now indexes much of the Society's own material.

Those attending are encouraged to bring their own laptop computers, which can connect to the web in real time via the library's wireless network. A few laptops will also be available for those unable to bring their own. Large screen projection will enable all to view the demonstrations.

The meeting will be held on **Tuesday, August 9, 2011**, at the **Bill Library meeting room**, beginning with a business meeting at **7:30 PM**. The Ledyard Bill Library is located at **718 Colonel Ledyard Highway** in Ledyard Center. Bring your laptop and bring a friend.

Stargazing at the Nathan Lester House

Jeremy Doyle to Interpret the Night Sky, August 30

Have you ever longed for a dark and quiet place where you could observe the heavens, undistracted by the lights of civilization? Our Nathan Lester House is just such a place. Please join us there on **August 30th**, as we welcome Jeremy Doyle, from North Cove Outfitters. Jeremy will guide us in our exploration of the summer night sky and the mythology of the constellations. Look through a telescope as he tells us the history behind the science.

Come at **8:00 PM, Tuesday the 30th**. Bring a blanket, family and friends, and your own telescope, if you like. A snack will be provided. Sponsored by the Ledyard Historical Society, the event is free and open to the public. The **Nathan Lester House** is located at **153 Vinegar Hill Road**, the intersection of Vinegar Hill and Long Cove Roads, in **Gales Ferry**. Questions? Please contact Andrea or Scott at 860-464-8540, or email events@ledyardhistory.org.

REMEMBER, the Nathan Lester House is available for use by small groups of up to 35 people. Contact caretakers Scott and Andrea Buka at 464-8540, or email nathanlesterhouse@yahoo.com for more information or for tours out of season.

The Acorn

MIGHTY OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

Published bimonthly by Ledyard Historical Society, Inc.,
P.O. Box 411, Ledyard, CT 06339
Kit Foster, editor, telephone 860-464-6466,
email acorn@kitfoster.com.

Items for inclusion should be submitted by the first of
July, September, November, January, March or May.
© 2011 Ledyard Historical Society, Inc.

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, August 9, 2011: Membership meeting, Online historic research, Bill Library, 7:30 PM.

Tuesday, September 13, 2011: Executive Board, Nathan Lester House, 7:00 PM.

Tuesday, October 11, 2011: Membership meeting, The Old Leather Man, Bill Library, 7:30 PM.

Sunday, October 23, 2011: A Celebration of Ledyard Women: wedding dresses and other fashions, Ledyard Congregational Church Fellowship Hall, time to be announced.

Tuesday, November 8, 2011: Executive Board, Bill Library, 7:00 PM.

Sunday, December 4, 2011: Annual Yule Celebration at the Nathan Lester House.

Hi-Ho, Come to the Fair

Ledyard Fair, September 9, 10, 11.

The Historical Society display in the Fellowship Hall will feature The Ledyard Up-Down Saw Mill, courtesy of the Ledyard Historic District Commission's Saw Mill Committee. An additional poster will focus on Ledyard barns included in the Historic Barns survey conducted by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. And be sure to visit the historic Ledyard Center one-room schoolhouse, fully furnished with desks and located just behind the stage. It will be open Saturday and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 PM.

Would You Like to Receive the Acorn via Email?

Printing and mailing *The Acorn* is one of the Society's largest annual expenses. Delivery of the newsletter via email would cut down on these substantially. To change from postal to email delivery just email a request to the editor at acorn@kitfoster.com. Be sure to include the email address to which you want the issues sent.

Fort Griswold Day

**Come Experience the Revolutionary War
September 3, 2011**

On Saturday September 3, 2011, the Friends of Fort Griswold will present "Fort Griswold Day," honoring the 230th anniversary of the Battle of Groton Heights. On September 6, 1781, patriots answered the call to defend Fort Griswold in Groton, Connecticut, against the brutal attack by British forces led by Benedict Arnold. This year also marks the centennial year of the Memorial Gates leading to this hallowed battlefield.

What is unique about this event is that a playwright/actress/re-enactor from the Mystic Seaport Museum is writing a play to be performed in various settings of the battleground, including the front grounds of the Avery house where "patriots" will be cared for as they lie "dying."

This will be intensively interactive with the public, as we present skirmishes between the forces, and the surrender of Colonel William Ledyard, commander of the fort. Auditions will be held for many of the parts to be played, as we encourage participation from the community.

There will also be encampments, where the public will learn how life was in those times, craft vendors, and booths to promote the various history organizations representing colonial families and towns in Southeastern Connecticut.

Activities will begin at 10:00 AM and conclude at dusk with a moving, candlelight memorial remembrance, as we read the names of those patriots who gave their lives in the fight for our independence. Come share in this unique event, and have fun learning at the same time. Volunteers are needed in many capacities, so if you'd like to participate, contact Shirleyann Dunbar-Rose at 860-449-8026, or Paul Duarte at 860-446-0770.

October Meeting to Tell of the Old Leather Man

Residents of Connecticut and eastern New York have long heard stories of the Old Leather Man. He was a mysterious figure who appeared in 1856, wandering the country roads and sleeping in caves, huts, and lean-to shelters, dressed in an outfit he fashioned from scraps of leather. Around 1883 he began traveling in his famous clockwise circuit, a regular route of 365 miles every 34 days. He continued this pattern until his death in 1889.

Stan DeLuca, author of *The Old Leather Man: Historical Accounts of a Connecticut and New York Legend*, will speak about the Leather Man at our October meeting, to be held **Tuesday, October 11, 2011**, at the **Bill Library**. The meeting will begin at **7:30 PM**.

Making Connecticut

Connecticut Historical Society Highlights 400 Years of History

Don't miss this exhibit 400+ years in the making. Colorful, interactive, and filled with more than 500 historic objects, images, and documents, *Making Connecticut* is the story of all the people of Connecticut, from the 1500s through today. Themes of daily life, clothing, transportation, sports and leisure, work, and social change run throughout the exhibit. Hands-on activities for kids (and adults) include working a World War II assembly line, hand stenciling designs for a 19th-century chair, sewing a Native American moccasin, replacing bobbins in a textile mill, and cooking a meal and setting the table in both a colonial and a 1980s kitchen. The Connecticut Historical Society is located at One Elizabeth Street in Hartford. Consult www.chs.org or call 860-236-5621 for hours.

Items of Interest from the Executive Board Meeting of June 13, 2011

Present: President Kit Foster, Vice President Ellen Fossum, Secretary Lee Moore, Treasurer Nancy Avery, Committee Chairpersons Scott Buka, Barbara Duncan, Jan Bell, and Rusty Godino, and Member at Large Vin Godino.

Treasurer's Report

Nancy reported our assets as Dime Bank savings and checking accounts totaling \$18,898.66.

Committee Reports:

Programs: Ellen updated the Board on events planned, and suggestions for others:

- ❖ A program on the fashions of wedding gowns through the years, has been scheduled for October 23, 2011 at the Congregational Church. This may change to a “*Celebration of Ledyard Women*” and expand to more than just wedding fashions.
- ❖ The annual Yule Celebration at the Nathan Lester House will be Sunday, Dec. 4.
- ❖ Vin gave an update on the possible program about “*The Leather Man.*” He will request more information and scheduling possibilities from the speaker, Stan DeLuca.
- ❖ Lee reported on programs scheduled for The Friends of Fort Trumbull, and a very interesting author-talk he attended in Old Saybrook, on *Connecticut in the Civil War.*
- ❖ Kit brought up the idea of a program on Ledyard's one-room schoolhouses, since there are many local people who attended these schools.

Librarian/Historian: Jan reported that our historical room passed with flying colors in the Preservation Assessor's analysis. She also informed the Board, she has received most of the original probate records from the town, now that they are digitized for town records.

Information Technology: Scott reported the new website www.LedyardHistory.org is up and running. Scanning of the slides from the 1966-

74 restoration of the Sawmill is progressing though not accessioned yet; and he already has pictures from the *Images of America: Ledyard and Gales Ferry* book uploaded.

Scholarship: With so many excellent applicants, the scholarship award was given to Tara Pealer for “demonstrating superior academic achievement, participating in extra-curricular or volunteer activities, and who plans to pursue a college degree.”

Old Business

• Meetings

After considerable discussion, Scott Buka moved that we have meetings every month, generally on the second Tuesday, and alternating board meetings with general membership meetings as follows: Board meetings will be every other month beginning in July (Sept., Nov., Jan. Mar., May), and Membership meetings on the second Tuesday of the alternating months (Aug., Oct., Dec., Feb., Apr., June). June will then become the Annual Meeting, after a by-laws change is proposed and approved. This motion was seconded by Vin, and approved unanimously. The Board decided the venue for each meeting will be researched and a plan decided at the July Executive Board meeting.

• Battle of Groton Heights Anniversary:

Lee shared the progress being made: a three-part play has been written (short segments), and a casting call will be announced soon for volunteer re-enactors to audition for various parts. There are commitments from 75 colonial re-enactors to participate. Lee asked for suggestions of crafters who may wish to participate. Also, 2011 is the centennial year of the *Memorial Gates*, so there will be a service there with the city Mayor, and hopefully other dignitaries.

New Business

- **Ledyard Fair:** The Friday night of the fair will be “Military Night,” Saturday will “Celebrate Children,” with interesting displays from the Denison Pequotsepos

Introducing “Revolutionary CT”

(coming soon: www.revolutionaryct.com)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lee Moore, Secretary

Annual Financial Report

The Society’s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. The following summary shows our income and expenses for 2010-2011. We consciously adopted a deficit budget in order to complete some important projects. Longer term, we need to develop other sources of income for long-term financial stability.

This spring, a group of volunteers and staff members from several eastern Connecticut heritage organizations met to discuss better marketing of our sites, communities and Revolutionary War stories to potential visitors and supporters. With support and facilitation from The Last Green Valley and their Executive Director Charlene Cutler, we began developing plans for a new initiative that we hope eventually to extend state-wide.

Our goals are to:

- Share our Revolutionary War era stories with the widest possible audience
- Encourage public interest in Connecticut’s importance in Revolutionary War history
- Attract visitors to our sites and programs
- Promote the interests and concerns of Connecticut’s Revolutionary War heritage organizations and sites

Ledyard Historical Society
Fiscal Year
July 2010 - June 2011

| Receipts | Budgeted 2010-2011 | Actual 2010-2011 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Book sales | \$1,000.00 | \$751.50 |
| Membership dues | \$800.00 | \$628.00 |
| Fund raising | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Donations | \$150.00 | \$160.99 |
| Misc sales | \$150.00 | \$261.00 |
| Royalties | \$40.00 | \$0.00 |
| Interest received | \$20.00 | \$21.19 |
| Total operating receipts | \$2,160.00 | \$1,822.68 |
| Expenditures | | |
| Publication projects | | |
| Fund Raising | | |
| Programs | \$500.00 | \$376.04 |
| Sales tax | \$70.00 | \$74.19 |
| Insurance | \$425.00 | \$425.00 |
| Dues & fees | \$300.00 | \$257.00 |
| Research room | \$200.00 | \$33.00 |
| Cataloging | \$3,470.00 | \$2,360.00 |
| Computer equip/IT | \$100.00 | \$1,532.98 |
| Newsletter | \$1,100.00 | |
| Schoolhouse | \$300.00 | |
| Awards (Ledyard HS) | \$50.00 | \$56.55 |
| Scholarship | \$500.00 | \$1,000.00 |
| Contributions | | |
| Curatorial Supplies | \$200.00 | \$29.38 |
| Map restoration | \$1,000.00 | \$1,135.00 |
| Shelving | | |
| Miscellaneous | \$200.00 | \$225.00 |
| Total operating exp. | \$8,415.00 | \$7,504.14 |
| Net Gain/(Loss) | (\$6,255.00) | (\$5,681.46) |
| End of Period Assets | | |
| Checking Acct | | \$472.36 |
| Savings | | \$17,691.81 |
| CDs | | |
| Total Assets | | \$18,164.17 |

Ideas and visions include a region-wide festival commemorating the Battle of Bunker Hill, in which so many men from eastern Connecticut participated, and use of modern digital technologies to present “guided” tours. We are also quite serious about expanding from our limited regional base to include sites around the state.

To take advantage of current enthusiasm we will start rather small and build on a first successful program that can expand. Throughout our discussions we kept recalling two points that Charlene raised at our first meeting.

- We should include organizations and sites that are rarely or never open to the public. Not only will this increase the base of participating organizations, but it will bring out some of the most

Nancy P. Avery, treasurer

interesting stories and will prevent the frustration many visitors feel when arriving somewhere only to find a site closed or un-interpreted.

- If we can engage youngsters aged 10-13 we will have a naturally expansive audience because children this age bring with them parents (or other adults) and siblings (or other children).

After considering all kinds of projects that we might pursue in the future, we have decided that “letterboxing” suits our goal of doing something within the year.

Letterboxing is an internationally-popular family-oriented activity that resembles a familiar old-fashioned scavenger hunt on steroids. Sponsors develop a set of clues that are accessed on-line, usually through www.letterboxing.org. Clues may involve maps, stories, riddles or even poems. At the destination site, the sponsor hides a weather-tight box with more information, a log book, a site stamp and a stamp pad. Letter boxers bring their own journal, a personal stamp (which they often carve themselves) and usually their own stamp pad. Having located the hidden box and read whatever is inside; the letter boxer stamps the log book with their personal stamp and adds the date and any comments. Then the letter boxer stamps their journal with the site stamp.

Revolutionary CT will be launching a letterboxing initiative this fall that will expand over the next year and become a long term marketing feature for our organizations.

To learn more about Revolutionary CT or to become involved as a volunteer, please contact one of us:

Donna Baron, Director
Lebanon Historical Society
PO Box 151
Lebanon, CT 06249
860-642-6579
dbaron@historyofLebanon.org

Jennifer Eifrig, Lead Consultant
Musevue360
555 Millbrook Road
Middletown, CT 06457
860-463-7722

Jennifer.Eifrig@musevue360.com

Organizations currently involved in Revolutionary CT include the Sons of the American Revolution; the Huntington Homestead – Governor Samuel Huntington Trust; the Jonathan Trumbull Jr. House – Town of Lebanon; Hale Homestead – Connecticut Landmarks; Lebanon Historical Society; Hampton Antiquarian & Historical Society; Norwich Historical Society and the Friends of Fort Griswold.

Rooms with a View 200 Years of American Design at Waterbury’s Mattatuck Museum

“Rooms with a View” draws on the long and rich traditions of domestic and decorative arts used in transforming our houses into safe, comfortable, and appealing homes. This story of home design begins in the colonial period and moves into the mid-twentieth-century. It brings together articles of daily use and adornment, fine arts and handcrafts, furnishings and costumes to examine how needs and tastes are constantly evolving. This is not a comprehensive index of design; rather, it features stylistic highlights and showcases seldom-seen objects drawn from the museum’s collections along with pieces on loan. Highlights include a Hartford chest, Woodbury case furniture, and pieces made by Eliphalet Chapin, pre-eminent cabinet maker in the Connecticut Valley in the second half of the 1700s.

The Mattatuck Museum is located at 144 West Main Street in Waterbury. Consult www.mattatuckmuseum.org or call 203-753-2381 for hours and directions.

History in Small Helpings

Dead Ledyard Oak's Fate May Be Decided Tonight

The deader-than-a-doornail Ledyard Oak is scheduled to get a final sentence tonight. In what may be the last annual meeting of the Ledyard Oak Committee it will be decided what to do with the one-majestic tree which now is magnificent only in its size. Bared of its leaves, it is a mammoth wooden skeleton.

The committee's chairman, Robert H. Bixler, reported today that a report has been received from Dr. Nestor E. Caroselli, a plant pathologist from the University of Rhode Island, who has made recommendations on what can be done with the remains.

Dr. Caroselli, Bixler and others pronounced the 400-year-old oak dead last week. It has been suggested that the tree be preserved at its present site by cutting back

overhanging branches and sealing the remains with paint.

The tree's death leaves the town without its traditional symbol and reports are circulating that a different symbol may be sought. Bixler also remarked that the future of the committee will be discussed tonight. There is a possibility that it will be disbanded, he said. However, the committee also has jurisdiction of several acres surrounding the ancient oak.

The Day, June 25, 1969

Within a few years, the "several acres" surrounding the oak grew to more than a hundred, a town-owned preserve including the Nathan Lester House. The Historic District Commission was formed to administer the property. The Ledyard Oak lives on, of course, as the town's symbol.

-Editor

Pay your dues, recruit a member?

Our membership year runs nominally from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting. **Dues for 2011-2012 are now due and payable.** If your dues are paid through 2012 (check your mailing label), please use this form to recruit a new member.

Ledyard Historical Society Membership Year 2011-2012

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Name _____ | _____ Senior \$5.00 |
| Address _____ | _____ Senior Couple \$8.00 |
| _____ | _____ Individual \$10.00 |
| Telephone _____ | _____ Family \$15.00 |
| E-mail address _____ | _____ Patron \$25.00 |
| Special interests or comments _____ | _____ Life \$150.00 |
| _____ | _____ Life Couple \$200.00 |

Mail to: Ledyard Historical Society
P.O. Box 411
Ledyard, CT 06339-0411



THE LEDYARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Box 411
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Who's Who at Ledyard Historical Society 2011-2012

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|
| President: Kit Foster | 464-6466 | Second District Schoolhouse: | |
| Vice President: | | Bill Fossum | 464-2575 |
| Ellen Bothamly Fossum | 464-2575 | Hospitality: | |
| Secretary: Lee Moore | 572-7084 | Information Technology: | |
| Treasurer: Nancy P. Avery | 464-9574 | Scott Buka | 464-8540 |
| Membership: Kit Foster | 464-6466 | Publications: Rusty Godino | 464-6314 |
| Historian: Jan Bell | 464-2061 | Board Members at Large | |
| Newsletter: Kit Foster | 464-6466 | Vin Godino | |
| Publicity: Barbara Duncan | 464-2200 | Andrea Buka | |
| Curator: Bill Fossum | 464-2575 | Jeanne Allyn | |