Madison Historical Society

Historical Happenings

UPCOMING EVENTS

BAUER PARK HARVEST FESTIVAL
Saturday, October 15
11 am to 3 pm

OPEN HOUSE ALLIS-BUSHNELL HOUSE
Saturday, November 26
11 am to 4 pm
"Five Days in Madison"
Docent-guided tours on lower level; light refreshments.

WWI EXHIBIT
Over Here, Over There: Madison in WWI
Saturdays, October/November
11 am to 4 pm

WWI LITERATURE DISCUSSION SERIES
7 to 8:30 pm
Moderator: Dr. Mark Schenker, Yale University
Thursday, November 10
A Farewell to Arms
Thursday, November 17
All Quiet on the Western Front
Thursday, December 1
Poems by WWI British soldiers
Thursday, December 8
Regeneration

WWI FILM SERIES
6:30 to 8:30 pm
Thursday, November 3
Paths of Glory (1957)
Discussion by filmmaker & professor Kevin Hinchey
Thursday, December 15
Joyeux Noel (2005)

WWI PRESENTATION
6:30 to 8:30 pm
Thursday, October 27
The Life of Paul Pavelka
Presenter: Bob Gerard

Keeping Madison's History Alive for 100 Years

For nearly a century, the Madison Historical Society has been keeping history alive. The birth of historical societies is typically a slow-moving process, but the founding of the MHS was done swiftly and with great enthusiasm. The story as recorded by Elizabeth Todd Nash, founder of the Society, tells of a chance meeting of old friends one afternoon in August 1917. George Wilcox and John Henry Meigs -- a Civil War veteran-- stopped at her home and began chatting. They told stories of "earlier times, boyish pranks and school days." According to Nash they all so enjoyed reminiscing that there was little talk of the ongoing war, which typically dominated conversations at the time. From this encounter, the seed was planted to hold regular meetings to tell stories and preserve Madison's history.

At its inaugural meeting just a few weeks later, the Society had a record one hundred-and-four charter members, something unheard of among similar organizations. Within a year, the formidable group of history enthusiasts had acquired the Allis-Bushnell House and set their sights on protecting Lee's Academy.

Since its inception almost one hundred years ago, the Society has relied upon generous members of the community to preserve and protect the town's distinctive cultural history. This generosity started when the founding members donated the heirlooms and artifacts that grace the walls and rooms of the Allis-Bushnell House. It continues today with member contributions of time and energy.

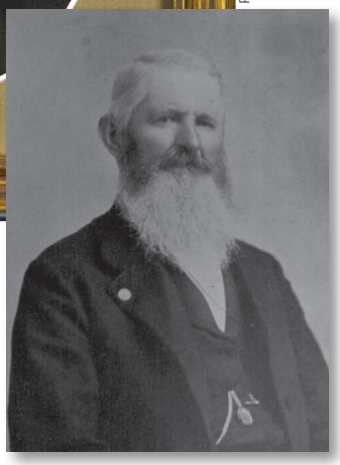

Photo at left courtesy of the MHS; photos below courtesy of CLEMA

MHS Founding members, clockwise from top: Elizabeth Todd Nash, George Wilcox and John Henry Meigs.

As we look toward our centennial celebrations, we hope we can rely on you-- our committed members and patrons-- to support the many events and activities we are planning. Look for announcements in the coming months, and please consider volunteering to help us make this year-long celebration one to remember. Together we can keep Madison's history alive.

Preservation Work at the Allis-Bushnell House and Lee's Academy

The effort to preserve Madison's historic town treasures is a key focus for the Society. Maintenance of the Allis-Bushnell House and Lee's Academy is an ongoing and continual effort. Last fall we embarked upon an ambitious project to make the Allis-Bushnell House more accessible to all visitors. We added a bathroom to the first floor, renovated the kitchen to make it easier to hold functions in the house, and converted the heating system from oil to natural gas.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Bauer Farm Trust, the Society was able to restore the bell tower atop Lee's Academy, making it possible to once again ring the bell from within the building. The grant funding also enabled us to add a drop-down ladder to provide easier access to the attic space and the bell tower.

This year, generous donations and grants will allow us to continue the important task of preservation. The Annex at the Allis-Bushnell House, where our collection of farming equipment and ship-building tools is displayed, is currently getting some much-needed attention. Much of its decaying siding will be repaired or replaced and then repainted. This project requires that all items hung on the walls be carefully removed and then replaced when the job is complete.

Contractors installing attic door at Lee's Academy, right. Below, a view of the decay along the side of the Annex.

Photos: Jenny Simpson

At Lee's Academy we plan to address a critical problem with the wooden architectural doors, which are rotting from within. To counteract future erosion, the doors will be replaced and a drip edge or historically appropriate overhang will be added. All work to the building will be approved by the Historic District Commission to be certain that the changes preserve the historical integrity and charm of the facade. We also plan to complete the painting of the double-hung windows that were replaced several years ago. The window exteriors were primed but never painted, and the interior sashes remain bare wood. We hope to replace the doors as soon as possible and complete the painting of the windows in the spring.

World War I Exhibition Open Saturdays through November

A marvelously collaborative exhibition on World War I, co-curated by the MHS and the Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives, opened in late July with a small ceremony for donors. A grand opening party is planned for all MHS members and friends in the fall. At that time, we hope to unveil the Eagle Scout project of DHHS student Ryan Tomicic. His aim is to have this special enhancement to the exhibition installed before Veterans Day. We hope the whole community will enjoy and applaud his ingenuity and creativity.

The exhibition, titled *Over Here, Over There: Madison in WWI*, explores Madison's role in the war with a focus on the personal stories of individual citizens. The exhibit, which is open every Saturday through November 26, has two main venues: the exhibition hall at Lee's Academy and a companion exhibit on the upper level of Memorial Town Hall. This exhibition represents the tireless work and dedication of many board members and volunteers. We urge you to visit, and we hope you will also look for upcoming news of our related film series and book talks.

HELP WANTED

The MHS needs your talents and time. We need help with the following projects:

Archivists: We have items to accession and items to add to our collections database. Do you have a few hours weekly to evaluate, describe, and enter information into our museum software? Call us!

Library/Media Organizers: We need help organizing our research library and our photographs and postcards. Are you detail-oriented? Do you enjoy creating systems? The MHS needs you!

Researcher: We need to find photographs for our newly designed website, launching in 2017. Do you have a good eye for design? Do you like to dig into a project with both hands? This is the job for you!

Grant Writers: Funding the many MHS educational programs is increasingly challenging. State money has been slashed from the budget of CT history and humanities org. Without their generous support, we need to find new sources of revenue. Do you have experience in communications and/or grants? The MHS can put your talents to use!

Event Planner: Our centennial celebrations and programs will require the help of many volunteers. Do you have event planning experience? Are you good at managing projects? Please join the centennial committee!

Volunteer hours are flexible. Work as little as two hours a week, depending upon your availability. To explore any of these opportunities, please call 203-245-4567 or send an email to director@madisonhistory.org.

RECAP OF SUMMER EVENTS

The fourth annual Tour of Remarkable Homes on June 26 was a huge success! More than three hundred guests toured five unique Madison homes. Visitors also had the chance to tour the Allis-Bushnell House. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the homeowners, the realtors, and committee members who made the event possible. We are already beginning to plan for next year. Please let us know if you would like to feature your own remarkable home!

The forty-fifth annual antiques fair on August 27 brought us fewer exhibitors than in years past, but the quality of their offerings remained high. Thousands of visitors flocked to the green for the fair, which is one of the largest on the Shoreline. Thanks to the generous donation of furnishings from an anonymous benefactor, the MHS set up its own booth at the event. All proceeds from those sales directly benefitted the Society.

Photos: Jenny Simpson

Laura Becker, MHS Development Chair, selling wares at the MHS antiques fair. Above, offerings at the 45th annual antiques fair.

MHS MONTHLY HISTORY BOOK GROUP

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Books are available at the Scranton Library.

To register, please call 203-245-4567 or e-mail contact@madisonhistory.org

Meetings are held every third Tuesday at 7:00 PM at the Allis Bushnell House and are led by Lyle Cubberly, Ph.D. (1lachawk@att.net)

OCTOBER 18
A Short History of Reconstruction, An Updated Edition
by Eric Foner

NOVEMBER 15
The War that Made America: A Short HIstory of the French and Indian War
by Fred Anderson

DECEMBER 20
The Printer and the Preacher: Ben Franklin, George Whitefield and the Surprising Friendship that Invented America
by Randy Peterson

JANUARY 17
Agincourt - 1415
by Anne Curry

FEBRUARY 21
The Concise History of Ireland
by Sean Duffy

Over Here, Over There

Madison in World War I

A collaborative exhibition of the
Madison Historical Society & the Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives

On view at Lee's Academy and Memorial Town Hall
Saturdays 11-4 through November 26, 2016

This exhibit is made possible with the generous support of CThumanities

the MADISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Madison Historical Society
Founded in 1917
P.O. Box 17
Madison, CT 06443
203-245-4567
www.madisoncthistorical.org

MHS offices are open in the c. 1821 Lee's Academy at 14 Meetinghouse Lane on Wednesday, Thursday & Friday from 9 AM to 1 PM.

For a tour of the MHS c. 1785 National Historic Register property, the Allis-Bushnell House, call 203-245-4567.

The MHS newsletter is published quarterly.

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