Fall 2019

Madison Historical Society

Historical Happenings

UPCOMING EVENTS

HOLIDAY LANTERN TOURS
Sunday, December 15
4:30-7PM
Lee's Academy
14 Meetinghouse Lane
History-based lantern tours of Madison's historic green.

FREDERICK LEE LECTURES
Immigration and Becoming American
Sunday, January 12
Sunday, February 9
Sunday, March 8
First Congregational Church on the Green — Hubley Hall
4-5

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Frederick Lee Lectures Explore Immigration and Becoming American

The thirteenth annual Frederick Lee Lectures, launching in January 2020, explore immigration and the notion of becoming American. The three-part series will focus on immigrant stories— from the Puritans who first settled the area to the Germans who contributed their skills to agriculture and industry and onward to the diverse immigrant shopkeepers who ran Main Street at the turn of the last century. These timely talks will reveal how each wave of immigrants shaped community life and were in turn shaped by it.

On January 12, local architect and author Duo Dickinson opens the series with a presentation on religion and the founding of the American Republic. With characteristic wit and scholarship, Dickinson asserts that New England was settled by "radical rejectionists and hard zealots." His talk will focus on the Puritans who fled Europe seeking religious freedom and founded communities centered around the meetinghouse and the village green. He will conclude with the establishment of Madison's First Congregational Church, its place of prominence on the town green, and its major architectural elements. This talk will reveal the intensity of the brutal confrontation between the Old World and the world on these shores.

Madison native, adjunct professor, and history enthusiast Fred Raudat will chronicle the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migration of Germans to Madison when the Lectures continue on February 9. As a German-American with deep roots in Madison, Raudat will explore how these immigrants assimilated into their adopted community while preserving their cultural heritage through the establishment of the Lutheran church, social clubs, and strong ethnic neighborhoods. Comprising the largest immigrant group to reach America's shores, the Germans in America became known as the "silent majority." Raudat's presentation will feature photos and artifacts documenting the lives and contributions of Madison's first non-English-speaking immigrant group.

Roxanne Coady, owner of RJ Julia's Booksellers, will deliver the final lecture on March 8. Her presentation will focus on the immigrant merchants who owned and operated thriving Main Street businesses—from the Monroe Building, anchored now by Walker Loden, to the sycamore tree beneath which the Schmeddlings ran a successful bakery for several years. Coady will bring to life the personal stories of the British, Czech, German, Irish, Italian, and Russian men and women who embraced Yankee principles of thrift and ingenuity and built successful lives in Madison.

The Frederick Lee Lectures receive the financial support of the Maureen and Peter Dalton Fund, which provides grant money to civic organizations promoting cultural enrichment. Additional support is provided by the First Congregational Church, which offers Hubley Hall as a home for the Lectures.

The Frederick Lee Lectures are offered to the public with a suggested donation of $5. Each presentation begins at 4 pm and is followed by a brief Q & A session. The snow date for each lecture is one week after the posted date. Inquiries can be directed to the MHS office at 203.245.4567 or via email at contact@madisonhistory.org.

CIVIL WAR TAKES CENTER STAGE IN THE HISTORICAL LANTERN TOUR

Did you know that Madison was once home to the most generous person of his day? And that he gave the equivalent of $40 million to a charitable organization in the late 1890s? Discover the identity of this philanthropic man at the Society's Historical Lantern Light Tour. Together with local students and members of the Deacon John Grave Foundation, we will offer lantern-lit tours of the Madison Green National Historic District on Sunday, December 15.

An MHS holiday tradition, the Holiday Lantern Light Tour is a 90-minute journey through time to glimpse a period in Madison's history. This year visitors will be transported to the year 1862, when the nation was locked in a civil war. Emilie Ely, whose three older brothers served in the Union Army, will greet guests at Lee's Academy. The tour will then continue to the First Congregational Church to see congregants celebrating the brief return of Reverend Samuel Wheelock Fiske from the battlefield. As a role model to other Madison men, he left his post as pastor to serve in Connecticut's 14th Volunteer Infantry.

The tour will also introduce guests to women from the Soldiers Aid Society and to Talcott Bradley, whose sons and son-in-law fought for the Union Army. The evening walk will touch on American holiday traditions during the Civil War, and reenactors will appear along the route to tell stories of courage, hope, and healing.

Guides will lead groups of eight to ten people every thirty minutes, beginning at 4:30 PM. The last tour will depart at 7 PM. Visitors will cover roughly a half-mile, traveling on foot over various terrains for the duration of the tour. For this event, visitors are strongly encouraged to dress warmly and wear appropriate footwear, whether we have rain or clear skies. There is no rain date.

Beginning at Lee's Academy, the tour makes six to eight brief stops and concludes with a warm fire and refreshments at the Deacon John Grave House. On the tour, visitors can peek into historic homes while learning about important people and events in Madison's past. While we explore our lovely New England green, we hope visitors will deepen their commitment to supporting and protecting our town's cultural heritage.

Tickets are $15 for adults ($10 for MHS or DJG members) and $5 for children ages 5-17. They can be purchased online at www.madisonhistory.org or by calling 203.245.4567. The tour is recommended for children aged 5 and older.

NEW TRUSTEES WELCOMED

The Madison Historical Society is pleased to welcome two new members to the board of trustees. Born and raised in Greenwich, Connecticut, Bob Kach has lived in Madison for more than forty years. A graduate of the University of Bridgeport with a BS in Engineering and a major in Industrial Design, Bob worked as a yacht designer and naval architect for nearly twenty years. He later founded a trade exhibit company serving major US and international corporations. Since joining the MHS board, Bob has helped the properties committee and recently took a leadership role in developing the thirteenth annual Frederick Lee Lectures.

Maryanne Harmuth grew up in New York and in the Chicago area. She graduated with a degree in education from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse and went on to teach high school biology and health and fitness. Maryanne and her husband moved to Madison in 1989 to raise their two children, John and Elizabeth. She worked as an instructional paraprofessional educator at Island Avenue School for twenty-two years and also served as Director of the St. Margaret Church Pre-School Sunday School for eight years. Though she retired in 2019, Maryanne has not slowed down. She has assumed the education chair position at the MHS and "feels very fortunate to have found a new niche at the Madison Historical Society."

The MHS executive officers also wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our executive director Jennifer Simpson, our office manager Barbara Lessard, our bookkeeper Astrid Bernard, and volunteer Connie Piccione for their assistance in the MHS office. Their efforts are essential to the smooth administration of our events, our education programs, and our public relations initiatives--indeed, our organization as a whole. We are honored and grateful to be the beneficiary of the talent and skill of these and all members who serve as trustees.

Steve and Marilyn Shaw to Receive Historic Preservation Award

Steve and Marilyn Shaw will be awarded the Society's Jane R. Kuhl Award for Historic Preservation at the annual members' holiday party. The award is named for an MHS president emeritus. Jane Kuhl was a champion of the preservation of architectural treasures. The award recognizes significant contributions in the field of historic preservation made by both individuals and organizations.

Designed by noted architect Alfred Hopkins, known for his unique farming estates, the Shaw property reportedly once encompassed all the land from the Boston Post Road to Hummer's Pond. The Shaws began renovating the current property's three-story 1920 Colonial Revival-style home on Lover's Lane in the summer of 2015. At that time, the property was in need of significant care. A team of contractors, electricians, painters, masons, designers, and plasterers started work almost immediately.

The long list of repairs included the removal of twenty-eight radiators and the installation of a new HVAC system, a complete plumbing overhaul, replacement of rotted windows and doors, refinishing of all of the original hardwood floors, and extensive exterior structural and cosmetic renovations.

Many original elements of the home were preserved from its original oak and Douglas fir floors to its mahogany staircase and butler pantry, and onward to its custom-built kitchen cabinets, which were refaced rather than replaced. The Shaws also restored several sets of pewter sconces that flank four of the home's five working fireplaces and also light the walls of the formal front hallway and the upstairs hallways. This project was a labor of love for the Shaws. "We really see ourselves as custodians of the house and property. We want to preserve the house for the next generation," says Marilyn.

First awarded in 2007, the award has also recognized the preservation efforts and accomplishments of Peter Gulick, John and Diana Herzog, Beth Vogel and John Lind, William Plunkett, the Deacon John Grave Foundation, Lucy Van Liew, Joan O'Neill, the Summer Hill Foundation, and the East River Reading Room Association.

Your Annual Appeal Donation Matters!

Your gift to the MHS Annual Appeal fund can make a profound difference in our ability to protect Madison's treasured objects. Thanks to your generosity and that of donors like you, we made great strides in preserving our collection in 2019. We hope to continue this important work in 2020 and beyond.

In the spring, our properties committee chair Dennis Flynn oversaw the installation of two mini-split ductless units. These heating and cooling units help maintain a constant temperature and reduce humidity in the Allis-Bushnell House. High humidity encourages mold growth and pest activity and contributes significantly to the deterioration of such materials as textiles, artwork, and ephemera. This improvement to the HVAC system puts the MHS another step closer to ensuring that artifacts from Madison's past are preserved for future generations.

Annual appeal contributions also helped fund a paid internship last summer. Rebekah Wallace worked twenty hours per week for eight weeks. She inspected, described, recorded, and organized hundreds of artifacts for the permanent collection. She also proofread and corrected the archival records of hundreds of other objects. Bob Gundersen characterized her efforts as "greatly improving" the society's archival inventory.

The deadline for making charitable contributions that qualify for the 2019 fiscal year is December 31. You can also make a direct distribution from your IRA account, which qualifies for exclusion from your taxable income. We hope you will remember the MHS in your charitable giving this holiday season. THANK YOU!

MHS MONTHLY HISTORY BOOK GROUP

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Books are often available at the Scranton Library: call 203-245-7365 to inquire.

To register, please call 203-245-4567 or e-mail contact@madisonhistory.org. Walk-ins are always welcome!

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

For more information about the books, please go to the Adult Education page at www.madisonhistorical.org

JANUARY 21
The Crowded Hour
by Clay Risen

FEBRUARY 18
The Saltwater Frontier
by Andrew Lipman

MARCH 17
Mar-Kor-I-Noor:
The History of the World's Most Infamous Diamond
by William Dalrymple and Anita Amand

APRIL 21
The Summer of 1787:
The Men who Invented the Constitution
by David O. Stewart

MAY19
The Saltwater Frontier
by Andrew Lipman

Holiday
LANTERN TOUR

December 15 ❄ 4:30 - 7 PM

Tours leave every half hour. Limited space available.

www.madisonhistory.org

THE MADISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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