Fall 2020

Madison Historical Society

Historical Happenings

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE FREDERICK LEE LECTURES

January 10 @ 4 PM

Matthew Warshauer, Ph.D
Professor of History, Central Connecticut State University
Connecticut's Sweet Tooth: Sugar, Slavery, and the West Indies Trade

February 14 @ 4 PM

Dennis Culliton, MAT
Co-Chair & Executive Director, Witness Stones Project
Witness Stones Project and Finding Slavery in Madison and Guilford

March 14 @ 4 PM

Pat Wilson Pheanious, JD, MSW
Co-Chair Witness Stones Project & Former State Legislator
American Social Justice: Connecting the Past to Our Present and Building a Sustainable Future

Registration is required to receive the Zoom link for the presentations.

The Frederick Lee Lectures — Sugar, Slavery, and Social Justice

The fourteenth annual Frederick Lee Lectures will explore local stories unearthed through a closer look at New England's history of involvement in the system of enslavement. Together the three programs offer inspiring accounts of people at the heart of an institution that created the foundations still underpinning American racial discrimination.

Dr. Matthew Warshauer, Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University, returns to the Lee Lectures in January to open the series. His talk, "Connecticut's Sweet Tooth: Sugar, Slavery, and the West Indies Trade," explores the connection between Connecticut farms, the shipping trade, and the West Indies, the collection of islands between Florida and South America.

Sugar was gold during the colonial era, and Connecticut had a sweet tooth. Its entire economy revolved around the syrupy goodness that created molasses, rum, and more rum. Sugar fueled a bustling trade between the islands and New England, all of it wed to slave labor and brutality. Warshauer's talk will explain how Connecticut came to rely on the West Indian markets while turning a blind eye to its role in supporting the Atlantic slave trade.

Retired middle school teacher and passionate historian Dennis Culliton continues the conversation in February with his talk, "Witness Stones Project and Finding Slavery in Madison and Guilford." As co-founder and executive director of the Witness Stones Project, Culliton works independently and with local groups to unearth the untold histories of the towns' enslaved peoples.

Culliton will share his foundational research on slavery in Guilford and East Guilford (now Madison). His presentation will show how he developed the Five Themes of Slavery as a means of analyzing primary documents. Culliton will celebrate the lives and contributions of three enslaved people held in captivity in East Guilford by the Hodgkin, Todd, and Chittenden families. The stories of Theophilus, Lettuce, and Pompey will be told in this riveting talk.

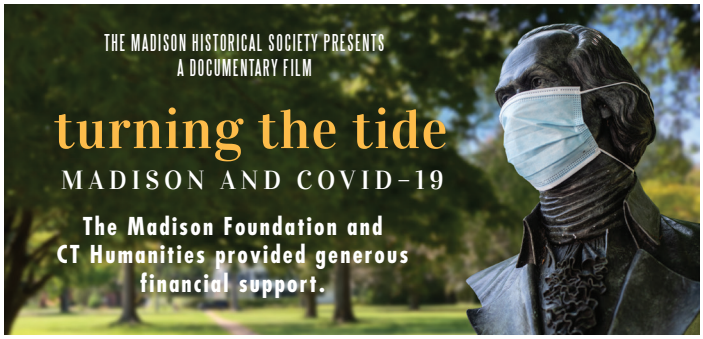
After forty years in public service, Pat Wilson Pheanious came out of retirement in 2018 to represent the people of Ashford, Tolland, and Willington in the state legislature. She served in that capacity until January 2021. Now co-chair of the Witness Stones Project, Pheanious traces her ancestry to indigenous Caribbean people who were enslaved and brought to Guilford in the early 1700s.

In March, Pheanious will conclude the lecture series with her presentation: "American Social Justice: Connecting the Past to Our Present and Building a Sustainable Future". Her talk will explore one American family's path from enslavement to achievement and why "social justice" for Black people in this country has been an elusive quest. Drawing on her family experience, she will explore structural obstacles, prerequisites for progress, and how we can achieve inclusion and equitable outcomes inherent in a just society. Pheanious will conclude with thoughts on developing a new American consciousness to achieve the hallowed goal of "liberty and justice for all."

As in years past, the winter lectures will be held at 4 PM on the second Sunday of the month starting in January. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and for the safety of all, the lectures will be held virtually this year. Registration is required to receive the Zoom link for the presentation. These events are offered at a suggested donation of $5. We encourage you to support our mission by visiting www.madisonhistory.org to make your reservation and your donation.

PANDEMIC DOCUMENTARY UNVEILED

After two months of filming, sixteen interviews, and hundreds of hours of editing, the MHS hosted an online premiere of its documentary short, Turning the Tide: Madison and COVID-19, on Friday, November 13, 2020. Now more than 1100 viewers have seen this moving film. It captures the unique realities of the pandemic in Madison while being representative of experiences in small towns across the country and around the globe.



Featuring frontline workers, a medical doctor, a school administrator, students, church leaders, town officials, a restaurateur, and a COVID-19 survivor, the film is a snapshot in time of the earliest days of the pandemic. Documenting our shared experiences of the pandemic is a responsibility we've taken seriously as our town's historical society.

With generous financial support from The Madison Foundation and CT Humanities, the film was a collaboration between the Society and local filmmakers Garrett Samodel and Connor Wilke of Ciné Verité Productions. Visit the MHS website at www.madisonhistory.org to view the documentary.

Looking Ahead to 2021!

The MHS Board of Trustees and staff are already working on 2021 events. We are hopeful that we can again offer our Tour of Remarkable Homes in June, the 50th annual Antiques Fair in August, and our popular Lantern Tour in December.

As we bid farewell to 2020, we extend our best wishes to all of our members, donors, and friends for a healthy, happy, and prosperous new year.

To help you welcome in 2021, we offer you this festive cocktail recipe from a 1979 cookbook donated to the Society by Joan P. Adams. Published in Madison, *Vittles Unlimited* features recipes from such VIPs as Betty Ford and Princess Grace of Monaco. This recipe, contributed to the cookbook by Mrs. Robert Polk of Madison, is said to be the invention of a Copenhagen bartender. Enjoy!

DANISH DELIGHT

2 oz. Vodka
1 oz. Cherry Heering
Lime juice to taste (or lemon juice, if preferred)
Shake with ice and serve in a festive glass.
Makes two drinks.

YEAR-END GIVING CAMPAIGN

In 2020, fulfilling our mission of preserving and protecting Madison's past for future generations became a lot harder. Like most small nonprofits, our business felt a profound impact from the coronavirus. All of our fundraising events were cancelled for public safety, but with the help of the Payroll Protection Program and state CARES Act grants, we continued to pay three part-time employees, maintain our historic properties, and develop new programming.

With determination and spirit, we focused our efforts on producing engaging virtual content. In the early days of the pandemic, for instance, we created a digital archive into which citizens can upload stories, images, and videos. We started an online guessing game featuring unique artifacts from our collection. We launched a YouTube channel for informational videos. And we produced a documentary short film that captured a slice of Madison's experience during the state's spring shutdown. We thank you for your support of those initiatives.

Now the MHS hopes you will help us recoup some of our lost revenue. In that endeavor, we have developed a new approach to the 2020 Annual Appeal. In years past, our membership drive quickly followed on the heels of the annual appeal campaign. This caused confusion among our supporters. Many felt they had just contributed and didn't understand why they were being asked to donate again.

Now, Appeal donors who offer $50 or more will automatically receive an annual membership that will run from January 1 to December 31, 2021. We will not conduct a membership drive in March--although new members will always be welcome at any time of year. Instead, we will launch a giving campaign in May, in association with the Great Give--a 36-hour fundraising event. This spring campaign will focus on a particular preservation need at the MHS.

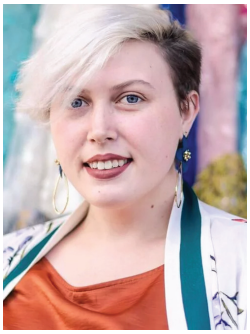
Our hope is that this new arrangement will alleviate confusion, help donors feel appreciated, and engage all of our members in more active participation in our mission. Partners like you make it possible for us to continue the important work of keeping history alive in our town. Thank you for supporting us with your contribution.

MHS in the Community

Our thanks are due to Trustees Tricia Royston and Maryanne Harmuth for creating imaginative and thought provoking displays for the community. Tricia designed the display cabinet at the entrance to the Scranton Library in time for their grand reopening. It features unique objects from the History Mystery contest we sponsored last spring. Maryanne designed a curriculum-based display for Polson students. It features artifacts that focus on life in Madison from the 1600s through the 1800's. Relics from the Hammonassetts, farming tools, stories of immigrants who settled in this area, and photos that convey the importance of water as a resource are highlighted in this display. Thank you both for your commitment to keeping history alive in our community!

Costumes and Textile Collection

Victoria Timmins, a recent graduate of Rutgers University studying Costume Design and Technology, contacted the MHS in August to inquire about a possible internship. Seniors in her program, she explained, typically seek a research placement one day a week during their final semester to gain professional experience.

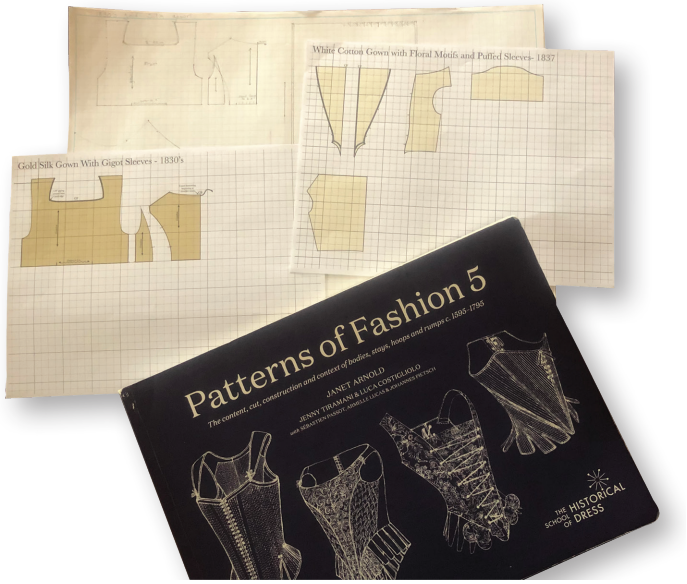


Due to COVID restrictions, Timmins's final semester was fully remote, allowing her to remain at home in Guilford to do her coursework online. This stroke of fate, though disappointing to the affected students, has proved serendipitous for both the MHS and Timmins.

Since September Timmins has visited the Allis-Bushnell House weekly to examine our extensive textile collection. She had intended to divide her time between several local historical organizations but found our textiles to be so compelling and well organized that she focused her efforts solely on the MHS collection.

Timmins studied with author and professor Jenny Tiramani at the School of Historical Dress in London, England, in the fall of 2019. There she developed her skills in the preservation of garments through the documentation of their construction and the creation of gridded patterns.

According to MHS collections chair Bob Gundersen, "Tori very carefully examines each item, takes note of stitching patterns, and choice of cloth. She then draws a sewing pattern for the garment, which she later transfers to design software." Timmins plans to write a book about the MHS textile collection and has graciously agreed to share her research with us.



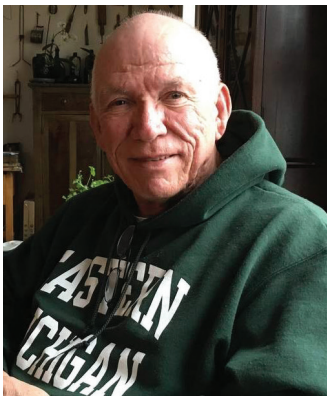
MHS MONTHLY HISTORY BOOK GROUP

Interested in history and nonfiction books? Then the MHS History Book Group is the right group for you. Moderated by MHS Trustee Lyle Cubberly, the group now meets on Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month.

A retired Air Force Major who served for twenty-seven years supporting the Strategic Air Command, Lyle earned his Ph.D. in history with a concentration in the French and Indian War. Passionate about history, reading, and learning, Lyle is dedicated to serving the community.

An active member of his church, a committed counselor helping people with drug and alcohol addictions, and an avid historical reenactor, Lyle is perhaps busier in retirement than he was in his professional life. In his thoughtful stewardship of the book group, he selects books that engage the readers and expand their understanding of current events.

The complete list of History Book Group selections is available on our website. To join



the group, please email Lyle at 1lachawk@att.net or contact the MHS office for additional information.

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 are every third Tuesday at 7:00 PM via Zoom, 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.madisonhistory.org.

JANUARY 19
The Warmth of Other Suns
by Isabel Wilkerson

FEBRUARY 16
The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest in History
by John M. Barry

MARCH 16
Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World
by Margaret MacMillan

APRIL 20
Cult of Glory: The Bold and Brutal History of the Texas Rangers
by Doug J. Swanson

MAY 18
Countdown 1945: The Extraordinary Story of the Atomic Bomb and the 116 Days That Changed the World
by Chris Wallace

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Sugar, Slavery, and Social Justice

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The Madison Foundation provided generous financial support.

the MADISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Madison Historical Society
Founded in 1917
P.O. Box 17
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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.

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