Winter 2018

Madison Historical Society

Historical Happenings

UPCOMING EVENTS

HISTORY BOOK GROUP
Allis-Bushnell House
February 21
7 pm

THE FREDERICK LEE LECTURES
Hubley Hall
First Congregational Church
4 pm

Exploring the Lives of Mary Scranton Evarts and Charlotte Evarts
February 11
(snow date February 18)

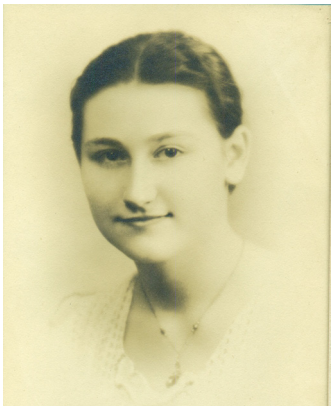
History of Girl Scouting in Madison
March 11
(snow date March 18)

Frederick Lee Lectures Celebrate the Stories and Lives of Madison Women

The Madison Historical Society launched the eleventh annual Frederick Lee Lectures in January. Celebrating important Madison women in the twentieth century, this year's talks feature local presenters telling the fascinating stories of a renowned poet, the town's first woman doctor, the first town historian, a beloved librarian, and the young women who participated in Madison's vibrant scouting movement. Lectures are held on the second Sunday of the month at Hubley Hall in the First Congregational Church on the Madison green.

At the first presentation on January 14, MHS trustees Doe Boyle and Bob Gundersen, with recitations by Jennifer Simpson, told listeners about two fascinating women featured in the society's recent publication, *Madison's Treasures*. Grace Miner Lippincott (1879-1975) was a prolific and prize-winning poet with six published books and more than 1100 published poems. Mila Elisabeth Rindge (1915-2005) was the town's first female doctor, the state epidemiologist, and a witty diarist who recorded observations of her work and travels.

The stories of Charlotte Evarts (1916-1994), the first town historian, and Mary Scranton Evarts (1872-1968), the first librarian of the E. C. Scranton Memorial Library, will be featured in the second lecture on February 11. The story of this mother-and-daughter team, told by presenters Warner Lord, Pam Evarts Landon, and Henry Griggs, is also that of the founding of the Memorial Archives. Both women were passionate about preserving the history of the town and worked to document the changes throughout Madison by collecting pictures, letters, and other ephemera that tell the story of who we are. The Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives, founded in 1995, carries on the important work of organizing and preserving collections.



The final presentation on March 11 will feature Madison resident and CEO of the Girl Scouts of Connecticut Mary Barneby as she explores the history of girl scouting in Madison and its impact on the lives of girls and women. For more than 100 years, the GSA has maintained its mission to build girls of courage, confidence, and character for the purpose of improving the world. Thousands of scouts and scout volunteers—many of them our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and daughters—have contributed to the fabric of life in Madison. Barneby, with current Madison Girl Scouts, take us down a memory lane that intersects the lifetime journeys of local Girl Scouts with the historical changes that have evolved over the past century.

The Frederick Lee Lectures have a suggested donation of $5. Each presentation begins at 4 pm and is followed by a brief Q & A session.

Left: *Madison Girl Scouts pictured with founder Inez Godman*
Above: *Charlotte Evarts*

RENEWED FOCUS ON THE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR COLLECTION

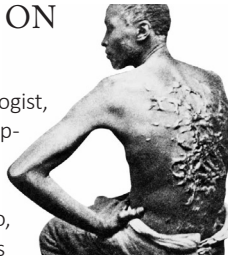
After years of working on structural elements at Lee's Academy and the Allis-Bushnell House, the MHS is turning its attention to the stewardship of its growing collection. A newly formed collections committee has been meeting since December 2 to develop strategies for improving the organization and the storage of artifacts central to telling the story of Madison's history.

This ambitious project, headed by collections chair Bob Gundersen, began with a thorough review of accessioned objects and the creation of a workspace where objects can be evaluated and processed. The goal is to develop a storage system that allows for greater accessibility of artifacts.

Bob became aware of the acute need to address these issues in August 2015, when he began photographing objects for the WWI exhibit. He discovered that access to files was limited and garments and storage boxes were often blocked by other items that were not part of the permanent collection. It was clear that the lack of storage space and the lack of a dedicated archivist had made for challenging conditions.

Bob and his dedicated volunteers meet weekly and have created an effective strategy for a more functional work environment. The group hopes to finish the cleaning and sorting phase by May so that Bob can get back to his first love—photographing our treasured objects. If you can help with the AB House collections work, please contact the office.

DON RANKIN TO GIVE TALK ON SLAVERY AND RACISM



A slave scarred from whippings, 1863. Credit National Archives, photo no. 165-JT-230

Madison resident Don Rankin—surgeon, archaeologist, and history enthusiast—will chronicle the development of slavery in the United States, the origins of the underground railroad, and the role of his ancestor, the Reverend John Rankin of Ripley, Ohio, in aiding more than 2000 slaves on their journeys to freedom. The talk will be held on **February 21 at 7pm** in the Scranton Library Community Room.

In 2013, Don spoke at the induction ceremony of his ancestor into the National Abolitionist Hall of Fame. The heroic efforts of Reverend Rankin, John P. Parker, and William Lloyd Garrison featured prominently in Harriet Beecher Stowe's book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The talk, offered from the perspective of someone with biracial ties, will conclude with an open forum where participants can discuss racism and how we can work collectively to mitigate it.

Don will engage listeners with thought-provoking questions that transcend race and gender. We hope you will join us for this timely discussion.

FIRST HEARTH DINNER AT AB HOUSE

The newly restored fireplaces cast a warm glow at the first hearth dinner held at the Allis-Bushnell House on Saturday, December 2. Twenty-five guests gathered to enjoy a traditional meal of smoked fish chowder, roast chicken, rosemary roasted potatoes, and root vegetables. Cheese biscuits and pies were warmed in the beehive oven in the colonial kitchen at the heart of the home. Special thanks are due to Chip and Laura Adams, Vicky Clement, Barbara and Lyle Cubberly, Jane Rapport, and to Jennifer, Neil, Jack, and Abby Simpson for their help in making the evening so authentic and fun!

The extensive restoration of the house's four fireplaces was made possible by a generous grant from the Summer Hill Foundation. The work included relining the flues, repointing the bricks, and pest-proofing the flue discharge openings. A custom-designed oak door for the beehive oven, fashioned and installed by Charlie Walz, completed the work. The next hearth dinner will be held in May.

STUDENTS INVESTIGATE TELEGRAM

The education committee, led by chair Jean Fitzgerald, held a successful history-based lesson at Brown Middle School on Thursday, January 11. MHS volunteers and DHHS students, with district social studies coordinator Chris Pagliuco, developed a lesson plan that combined fifth-grade learning objectives with investigative inquiry, using a primary source object. Using critical thinking and collaborative communication, students were asked to determine the authenticity of the MHS's "Lincoln telegram." This document, received by Cornelius Bushnell in 1863 at the height of the Civil War, has been part of the MHS collection for some time. The fascinating story behind the telegram, purportedly sent by Abraham Lincoln, is detailed in Bob Gundersen's recent *Shoreline Times* article, "Was Madison's Cornelius pranked by Lincoln telegram?"

The students, divided into groups, had an expense account of $1000. Each investigative move they made—asking research questions of docents or requesting a scientific study of the letter—cost them a fee. Working together, the students had to agree on what questions to ask and whether they could afford expensive forensic testing. In the end, the MHS was not able to pull the wool over the eyes of the fifth-grade detectives. They overwhelmingly sussed the telegram as a fake. The Civil War lesson was an enormous success.

In memoriam: Leo J. Brennan (1934 - 2018)

Longtime MHS member and supporter Leo J. Brennan of Madison passed away peacefully in January. A lifelong employee of the Stanley Bostich Company of Clinton, he was a historian of the American Revolutionary War period and an accomplished member of several regional fife and drum corps. For more than half a century, he was a traveling sutler, or seller of colonial goods, who encamped with his wares at muster fields and battle reenactment events. He was also a welcome and familiar face at the MHS, and we offer our condolences and respects to his loving family.

CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN DONOR LIST

In 2017, in celebration of its 100 years of service to Madison, the MHS set the ambitious goal of raising $100,000 through a centennial fundraising campaign. We are pleased to announce that we have exceeded our goal! This extraordinary generosity from our friends, members, and community leaders has put the MHS in a stronger financial position and will enable us to continue to provide high-quality educational programming and events that will engage the community, foster a love of history, and enhance the understanding of our town's past and its connection to the present.

We look forward to sharing with you how we will exercise these gifts throughout this year and beyond. A percentage of the total will be invested for the future financial growth of our organization. Another portion will address the immediate urgency of stabilizing and organizing our collection of Madison historical artifacts and enhancing the accessibility of and the presentation of programming at the Allis-Bushnell House.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who supported us this past year. The tremendous encouragement and outreach from the town has renewed our spirits and has given us energy that we will draw upon through 2018 and for the next 100 years. Thank you!!

VISIONARY $1,000 & UP
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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

February 19
The Passing of the Armies
Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

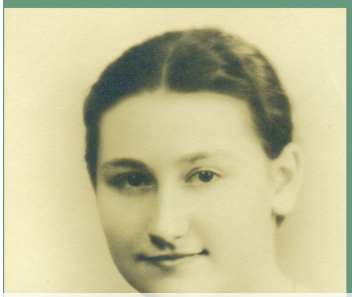
March 19
Lords of the Atlas
Garvin Maxwell

April 16
1066: The Year of the Conquest
David Howarth

May 21
A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir
Donald Worster

June 18
Wellington: The Iron Duke
Richard Holmes

The Frederick Lee Lectures



First Congregational Church, Hubley Hall
Lecture followed by Q & A - 4 PM

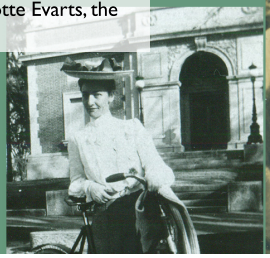
For more information, visit
www.madisonhistory.org

$5 Adults
$4 MHS Members
$2 Children 10 & Older

Stories and Lives of Madison Women and Girls

February 11

Hear the tale of the mother-daughter team, Mary Scranton Evarts, the town's first librarian, and Charlotte Evarts, the town's first historian.



March 11

Discover the history of girl scouting in Madison and its impact on the lives of girls and women from Mary Barneby, CEO of the Girl Scouts of Connecticut.

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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