Summer 2021

Madison Historical Society

# Historical Happenings

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 49TH ANNUAL ANTIQUES FAIR

**Saturday, August 21**
**9 am to 4 pm**
**on the Madison Green**

### MHS MONTHLY HISTORY BOOK GROUP

**AUGUST 17**
*The House by the Lake: One House, Five Families, and 100 Years of German History*
by Thomas Harding

**SEPTEMBER 21**
*Notre-Dame: A Short History of the Meaning of Cathedrals*
by Ken Follett

**OCTOBER 19**
*The End is Always Near*
by Dan Carlin

**NOVEMBER 16**
*Iron Empires: Robber Barons, Railroads, and the Making of Modern America*
by Michael Hiltzik

**DECEMBER 21**
*100 Mistakes that Changed History: Backfires and Blunders That Collapsed Empires, Crashed Economies, and Altered the Course of Our World*
by Bill Fawcett

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**
*For more information about the books and the History Book Group, please go to the Adult Education page at* ***www.madisonhistory.org.***

## The Preservation Conversation Continues at MHS

Madison, like many other New England towns, has long faced challenges in preserving its historic structures and sites. But our historic resources provide an atmosphere of stability and offer a tangible link to the past that both residents and visitors can experience and enjoy. Among the many benefits of historic preservation are the economic value of these properties, the protection of the natural environment, and the wide-ranging educational opportunities for learners of all ages.

What can the MHS do to protect and preserve the historic character of the town, in addition to the efforts we make to preserve our collection of more than 8,000 historical objects? Our trustees recently held a preservation retreat to try to answer this question. All trustees in attendance at the retreat agreed that, while the primary mission of the MHS is to safeguard its three historic properties and its extensive holdings of artifacts, the MHS should continue to raise awareness about the fragile nature of Madison's historic buildings.

To that end, we have begun to recreate an inventory of Madison's historic resources to identify its most endangered structures and to focus and guide future preservation conversations. Through increased public awareness, the MHS hopes to rally town-wide support for the prevention of home demolitions and the destruction of other historic treasures. As a community, we should be mindful that once historic structures are destroyed, they can never be recovered.

Iconic town structures such as "The General's Residence" or "The Ledges" attract special attention because they are easily recognized. Though the efforts of the MHS and others did not save the General's Residence from demolition, the MHS played an important role in coordinating an effort to preserve as much of the history of the property as possible. Thanks to the diligent attention of Dennis Flynn (MHS Properties Chair) and Denny Van Liew (MHS Preservation Chair), the MHS commissioned a comprehensive report from architectural historian Rachel Carley on the history of the house and its occupants. This document is available on the MHS website as a research resource.

During the preservation retreat, board trustees agreed that many features of Madison's past are worth preserving. In addition to historic structures both public and private, these resources include signage, roads, ruins, and remnants. Additionally, the trustees agreed that natural resources such as historic farms, landscapes, waterways, and even heritage trees should be protected.

The preservation retreat concluded with an agreement to form an exploratory committee to study the possibility of forming a preservation alliance in Madison. This separate nonprofit organization would solicit financial support from the community to create, for example, a revolving trust to acquire, restore, and sell properties of historic value. The committee will meet to consider ways the MHS might help all interested parties create this initiative.

# Sincerest Thanks to Our 2020 Annual Appeal Donors

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## MHS Wins Grant for AB House Improvements

In March 2021 the MHS applied for a grant from the Erwin C. Bauer Foundation to fund upgrades to the critical fire prevention systems at the Allis-Bushnell House. We are pleased to announce that the grant committee looked favorably on our grant application and awarded the Society $13,000 toward this much-needed capital improvement project. Soon, all upgrades to our security, fire detection, and electrical systems will be complete.

The Erwin C. Bauer Foundation was established in 1990 to support Madison organizations working in the fields of education, conservation, agricultural programming, public health, housing, and social services. Since its founding, the Bauer Foundation has provided approximately $80,000 to $100,000 annually in vital grant funding to local nonprofits.

Born in New York City on January 28, 1904, to German immigrant parents, Erwin Bauer and his brother Anthony moved to Madison in 1909 when the family purchased the Amasa Dowd House and farm on Copse Road. The Bauer family was among more than 30,000 Germans who settled in Connecticut in the early 1900s, most of them around the New Haven area.

The Bauer brothers attended Lee's Academy, where they made many friends from other farming families. At home, they tended the family's chickens, cows, and pigs; they grew vegetables, tree fruits, and berries. On market days, they helped their father sell their produce at markets in Durham and New Haven.

Mr. Erwin's generosity to the Town of Madison began in 1990 when he donated a large portion of the farm, the farmhouse, and its outbuildings to the Town of Madison. The remainder of the farm's acreage was donated upon his death in 1996 and Bauer Park was created.

For three decades, the MHS and other local civic organizations have received Bauer Foundation grants to fund special projects. We are grateful for the continued support the foundation provides to nonprofits striving to make a difference in our community

# ONGOING RESTORATION AT OUR HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### *Smallpox Burying Ground*

Restoration work at the Smallpox Burying Ground, owned and maintained by the MHS since 1949, is nearly complete. Funded by a $3,300 state grant awarded to the Town of Guilford in January, this work has included rebuilding four sections of stone walls

that had significantly deteriorated over time. "Stone walls shift with the changing seasons and need constant maintenance," MHS properties chair Dennis Flynn said. Additionally, the work crew cleared brush, removed fallen limbs, raked leaves, and cleaned the memorial plaque dedicated to the local men who contracted smallpox after fighting in the French and Indian War. The committee overseeing the work at the cemetery hopes to have additional funds to cut down dead trees that need to be removed for safety reasons.

### *Lee's Academy*

Interior work has finally begun to transform

the lower level of Lee's Academy into the Madison Center for History and Culture. The MHS received a sizable restoration grant in December 2019 from the State Department of Economic and Community Development, and an additional grant from the Summerhill Foundation. And then the global coronavirus pandemic hit. Nonetheless, the project development team moved forward, selecting an architect and identifying a general contractor. In June 2021 the Town of Madison issued the necessary permits, and restoration work began—at long last.

On June 23, Buell Construction Company exposed the building's original main support beam and started to dismantle the decidedly unoriginal first-floor restroom. A structural engineer will design a new main beam that will allow for the creation of an open exhibit area. The contractors will also install radiant heat before new hardwood floors are installed, and they will build an ADA-compliant restroom that will make the lower level accessible to all visitors.

### *Allis-Bushnell House*

An updated security panel with fire monitoring has been installed in the Allis-Bushnell House to connect the fire detection

systems of the House and its Annex. This integrated system includes smart sensors that provide rapid response technology and monitoring of heat and smoke. When fire is detected, the system will pinpoint the source of the outbreak and will alert central security. Not only do these safety devices offer a higher degree of fire protection, they also offer enhanced safety for the volunteers and visitors in the building. High-definition cameras have also been installed in strategic locations around the property to monitor movement in and around the buildings as part of the security upgrade.

Perhaps the biggest fire prevention improvement at the House is a comprehensive upgrade of its electrical wiring. Lemley Electric has been contracted to install the new wiring along with an emergency lighting system that will provide staff, volunteers, interns, and visitors with clear access to our safe exits. This aspect of the project will be completed by Fall 2021.

## RETIRING TRUSTEES

The MHS wishes to recognize the years of dedication given by former board trustees, Lyle Cubberly and Jane Rapport, who recently offered their resignations. Together, this remarkable pair have contributed more than two decades of service to further the mission of the society.

Whether Lyle was leading the MHS History Book Group discussions, acting as a costumed character in our Lantern Tours, helping manage our Antiques Fair, or leading tours of our Smallpox Burying Ground, he has always gone above and beyond to help people recognize Madison's ongoing connections to its past.

Jane has assisted in the return of treasured artifacts to the MHS collection; has recommended new trustees through her work on our nominating committee; and was essential to the creation and organization of our annual Tour of Remarkable Homes, which she helped to establish as our largest fundraising event.

The MHS is truly grateful for their efforts over these many years. Thank you, Lyle and Jane!

MADISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

49 Th ANNUAL

# ANTIQUES FAIR

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2021

**9 AM to 4 PM**

**On the Historic Madison Green**

**QUALITY EXHIBITORS**

**Great Food • Live Entertainment • Family Fun**

**$5 ADMISSION/$4 MHS MEMBERS/CHILDREN FREE**

**$1 off admission with coupon**

**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. Due to COVID-19, visitors are welcome but are required to wear a mask until further notice.*

*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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