

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

UPCOMING EVENTS



HISTORY BOOK GROUP

March 16
 April 20
 May 18
 April 15
 7 pm

FREDERICK LEE LECTURES

Slavery in Connecticut:
 Connecting the Past to Our Present
 March 14
 4 pm

THE DAFFODILS ARE COMING!!

The Garden Club of Madison planted 2,000 daffodils that will be popping up around town in late March. The fragrant “Thalia” daffodils will adorn the front beds of the Allis-Bushnell House. Known for their large, pure white flowers, these daffodils are among the oldest variety of narcissus.

Stewardship of Our Historic Properties

If 2020 was the year of virtual programming and remarkable innovation at the MHS, then 2021 will be the year of responsible stewardship and conservation of our historic properties. Last year we formed an ad hoc committee to identify and prioritize solutions to safeguard the Allis-Bushnell House, for instance. Now the Board of Trustees is undertaking several projects to protect this historic structure and preserve the artifacts contained therein.

Our highest priority is to protect the Allis-Bushnell House from fire. The loss of the house would also mean the loss of our extensive and irreplaceable collection of objects. On the most basic level, without the house museum and its contents, the MHS would lose the heart and soul of its existence as a protector of Madison’s cultural heritage.

After meeting with several fire protection engineers and other specialists, properties chair Dennis Flynn and board president Mark Edmiston proposed a three-tiered approach to this essential project. We intend a complete upgrade to the electrical system, the installation of a state-of-the-art fire alarm system, and the creation of a safe room for treasured objects. These initiatives, which rely on quick detection of fire as well as a quick response from the fire department, will reduce the overall risk of complete loss.

Madison electrician Peter Lemley has reviewed the electrical system and is developing a statement of

work based on our needs. The wiring upgrades are expected to begin this spring, while plans for installing highly sensitive smoke alarms and building a safe room are in development.

In addition to the fire prevention efforts, the board authorized the installation of UV protection storm windows to protect the house and its contents from the harmful effects of the sun. Rather than applying a film to each windowpane, the committee opted for custom-fitted storm windows, called Indows, that not only filter the sun’s rays but also better insulate the home. Noise reduction from activity on the Boston Post Road is an added bonus. In total, seventeen windows were installed on all east- and north-facing windows at the front and side of the house.

Work on the creation of the Madison Center for History and Culture on the lower level of

Lee’s Academy is at long last moving forward. This Center will include an accessible exhibition hall with integrated technology and displays and will provide community meeting space. Dennis Flynn, Bob Gundersen, Rick Camp, and Jim Matteson are serving as “clerks of the works,” overseeing the construction project. Working with the State Historic Preservation Office, the team has identified a contractor. We are in the final stages of negotiating the contract and hope to begin the work in March.

Custom-fitted storm windows provide UV protection, sound reduction, and better insulation reducing energy costs.



PHOTO BY DENNIS FLYNN



PHOTO BY BOB GUNDERSEN



PHOTO BY BOB GUNDERSEN

Stone walls surrounding the smallpox burying ground on the banks of the East River in Guilford. Left: Captain Ichabod Scranton memorial plaque at Pock Lot

Smallpox Burying Ground Preservation Grant Award

The Smallpox Burying Ground, owned and maintained by the Madison Historical Society, will get some much-needed attention in 2021, thanks to a \$3300 state grant. Located on a deeply wooded parcel of land along the East River in Guilford, the property has been maintained by the MHS since 1949. Guilford town historian Joel Helander and Guilford Preservation Alliance member Tracy Tomaselli applied for the grant funding on behalf of the MHS.

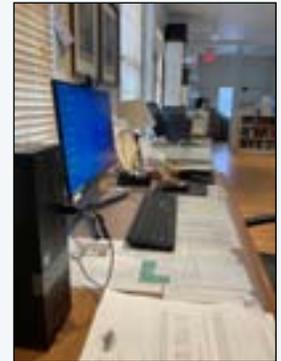
The grant award will enable the Society, in partnership with the Town of Guilford, to rebuild the

stone walls, cut back overgrown brush, and restore a memorial plaque. The state grant program was established in 2015 to protect and preserve burial grounds or cemeteries that are not “under the control or management of any...cemetery association.”

This hallowed ground, also known as the Pock Lot, is believed to contain the remains of Ichabod Scranton and other local patriots who fought in the French and Indian War. Captain Scranton led fifty-seven men from Guilford and Madison to upstate New York to fight for the Crown in March 1760. Later that year, the group

was ravaged by smallpox on their return trip from Albany. Sadly, several members of the regiment died, including Captain Scranton, who is interred in the pock lot.

The MHS is grateful for the leadership and guidance of Helander and Tomaselli who, in 2019, were successful in obtaining a grant for the restoration of the Goldsmith Cemetery at 1454 Moose Hill Road in Guilford. Guilford’s First Selectman Matt Hoey announced this second award in early January. Work is scheduled to begin this spring. Visit our website at www.madisonhistory.org to learn more about the Burying Ground.



Technology Upgrade

The MHS wishes to thank Jack and Laurie Heflin for their extraordinary generosity in 2020. With their financial support, we were able to replace two outdated computers, add battery backups in case of power outages, install a VPN to allow for remote access, purchase a large flat-bed scanner, and pay for a year of IT support. With the switch to virtual programming as a result of the pandemic, this upgrade could not have come at a better time. The Heflins have long been champions of the Madison Historical Society, and we are deeply grateful for their continued support of our mission.



Former state representative Pat Wilson Pheanious

Lee Lectures Update

The Frederick Lee Lectures have featured two speakers exploring the topic of slavery in Connecticut. Dr. Matthew Warshauer of Central Connecticut State University detailed Connecticut’s connection to the West Indies slave trade in January. Dennis Culliton of the Witness Stones Project explained how the group restores the history and honors the lives of local enslaved persons through research, education, and civic engagement during his talk on Valentine’s Day. Student

historian Elke Zigmont of Middlebury presented findings from her original research.

Former state representative Pat Wilson Pheanious will conclude our series on March 14 with her talk entitled, “Connecting the Past to our Present.” She will reveal the ways her family thrived in the face of insurmountable challenges and became dedicated public servants with a deep commitment to serving our nation.

Ironically, modern technology has

enabled the MHS to engage the community with its history during the pandemic. Hosting these lectures on Zoom has allowed us to continue to tell these stories while keeping people safe at home. We look forward to coming together in 2022, but remain committed to offering these talks virtually for those who prefer to connect from the comfort of home. Registration for the March talk and archived videos of all 2021 Frederick Lee Lectures can be found on our website.

Examining 100 Years of Historical Records



PHOTOS BY BOB GUNDERSEN



Daniel Hand - Half-plate colored daguerreotype of Daniel Hand (1801-1891) in embossed case circa 1850s. Lock of hair belonging to Elizabeth Hand wrapped in notepaper with her printed obituary notice, possibly written by Daniel Hand.

Much has been written about the important work being done by the collections committee led by MHS trustee Bob Gundersen. Long before the Marie Kondo method was heralded far and near, Bob

and a team of volunteers were diligently sorting our collection and accessioning objects. Bob has been instrumental in building our digital archive of photographs.

An equally important effort has been quietly unfolding behind the scenes to review, catalogue, and properly preserve the historical records in our collection. Exhibits chair and collections committee member Tricia Royston has

taken up this challenge. For more than a year, Tricia has been reviewing the documents stored at Lee's Academy. She has rediscovered a treasure trove of invaluable photographs, letters, postcards, and newspaper clippings, among other items.

One of the most interesting items is a collection of photos taken by H. Rossiter Snyder. In 1921, armed with a car, a camera, and a need to support himself, Snyder traveled across the nation, photographing the homes and businesses of middle-class Americans. He then sold the prints to the homeowners for a profit.

An album of Snyder's photographs of Madison homes was given to the MHS from the Branford Historical Society some years ago. The images are a snapshot in time of the houses as they were one hundred years ago.

Another fascinating find in our Daniel Hand collection was a lock of hair from Daniel's daughter, Elisabeth Augusta. Born in 1830, the young girl contracted scarlet fever and died in December 1841. Grief-stricken, Hand carried these strands for the rest of his life, along with a letter she had written to him.

The MHS is grateful for the energy and effort put forth by the trustees and committed volunteers who are preserving these relics. These wonderful stories, images, and artifacts connect us to the past and help build a sense of community. They would be lost to future generations without the work of many like Tricia and Bob.

COVID Relief Funding

The MHS has diligently pursued COVID relief assistance, including grant funding and payroll protection loans. We are pleased to report that the PPP loan offered last year enabled the MHS to keep all three of its part-time employees without reducing their hours. This loan was forgiven in September after we provided the documentation showing how the funds supported our operations.

A new round of funding was offered in early January. Once again, we were lucky enough to get federal support with an additional loan. The MHS is grateful for this additional financial help. As was true in many small nonprofits, COVID forced the cancellation of all MHS fundraising events. We hope we will be able to resume some of our planned events in 2021. Among those may be our summer antiques fair on the green and the holiday lantern tour in December.



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 www.madisonhistory.org. Walk-ins are always welcome!

Meetings occur online 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/mhs-history-book-group/

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

JUNE 15

Iron Dawn: The Monitor, the Merrimack, and the Civil War Sea Battle that Changed History
by Richard Snow

The Madison Historical Society presents

The Frederick Lee Lectures

The Lectures will be presented via ZOOM. Registration is required.

Sign up now at www.madisonhistory.org

Sugar, Slavery, and Social Justice

Pat Wilson Pheanious, JD, MSW

Co-Chair Witness Stones Project & Former State Legislator

March 14 @ 4 PM

American Social Justice: Connecting the Past to Our Present and Building a Sustainable Future

Discovering an American family's path from enslavement to achievement and the elusive quest for social justice.



The Madison Foundation provided generous financial support.

We appreciate YOUR support with a suggested donation of \$5. • www.madisonhistory.org



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 Lee's Academy, built in 1821, 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.

and join us on Facebook

contact@madisonhistory.org

Send us your email address:

www.madisonhistory.org



FOUNDED 1917

MARK EDMISTON
President
DOE BOYLE
Vice President
MAHLON HALE
Treasurer
BILL DOWLING
Secretary
TRUSTEES
RICK CAMP
VICTORIA CLEMENT
LYLE CUBBERLY
DENNIS FLYNN
BOB GUNDBERSEN
DIANA HARTMANN
ROBERT KACH
JAMES MATTESON
FREDERICK P. MURPHY
JANE RAPPORT
TRICIA ROYSTON
STEVE SHAW
GINNY TRIOLA
DENNY VAN LIUW
JENNIFER SIMPSON
Executive Director
BARB LESSARD
Office Support
ASTRID BERNARD
Bookkeeper



Post Office Box 17 Madison, Connecticut 06443 203.245.4567

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GUILFORD CT
PERMIT NO P1 275