

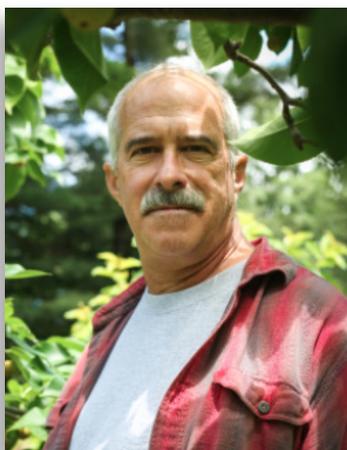
# HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

## Annual Members' Meeting Thursday, May 5 at 6:30 PM

The history of the apple will take center stage at the Madison Historical Society's annual meeting on Thursday, May 5.

Following a brief business meeting in which MHS members will vote on the slate of officers and the annual budget, orchardist Peter Montgomery will offer a program on the origins of the apple, which is not native to North

America. This free event, open to the public, will explain how the apple moved from the Silk Road to our shores some 8,000 years later.



Montgomery, owner and operator of Montgomery Gardens Heirloom Apples & Orchards in Warren, CT, has been on a mission to help homeowners revive old fruit trees and plant small orchards of heirloom cultivars. His presentation will answer the question, "How did the apple arrive in North America?" and will offer tips for growing healthier trees for better fruit.

Montgomery's career had included a two-year stint in Silicon Valley, from which he made weekly visits to the San Jose, Sunnyvale, and Palo Alto farmer's markets. There he discovered his favorite fruit—the Asian pear.

When he retired to Connecticut's Litchfield County in 2005, Montgomery could not find a tasty Asian pear, so he decided to grow his own. His early attempts presented him with many challenges, and five of the six trees he planted died.

More than fifteen years later, his home orchard boasts sixteen fruit trees on half an acre. Among his trees are Asian pear, apple, plum, cherry, peach, nectarine, and apricot. His engaging presentation is the culmination of years of reading and research, many successes and failures, and information garnered from his studies at the Cornell orchards in Geneva, NY.



*Asian Pears*

Those wishing to attend in person are invited to join the Society's board of trustees in the Johnson Community Room at the E. C. Scranton Library at 6:30 PM. The meeting will also be offered virtually for registered users who prefer to connect via Zoom. To register for the annual meeting, please visit <https://www.madisonhistory.org/>, scroll to the bottom of the welcome page, and click on the Upcoming Events link. Copies of Montgomery's in-depth how-to guide are available upon request.

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE MADISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Annual Meeting Hybrid Format

Presentation on the History of the Apple  
Thursday, May 5 @ 6:30 PM  
E.C. Scranton Library

### Great Give

May 4 @ 8 AM to May 5 @ 8 PM  
Online giving event to raise funds for the summer internship program.

### Connecticut Open House Day

Five Days in Madison Tours  
Saturday, June 11  
10AM - 3PM  
Allis-Bushnell House

## REMINISCENCES FROM MIKE JOHNSON & DAVE STONE

At the intersection of Bunnell Bridge Road and Summer Hill Road sits the Summer Hill Nursery, owned and operated since 1957 by farmer and philanthropist Mike Johnson. On a cold February morning, members of the Madison Historical Society's oral history project sat with longtime friends Mike Johnson and Dave Stone to chat about their memories of Madison in earlier eras.



*The restored Johnson family summer home on Summer Hill Road.*

Stone's family has lived continuously in the area since 1639, the year Dave's ancestors arrived with Reverend Henry Whitfield. They negotiated for land and, within a few years, had established the Guilford settlement. Johnson, now 90 years old, was born in Panama and spent his summers in Madison beginning in 1938. His family purchased what he called a gentleman's farm, where they raised sheep and pigs. According to Johnson, "I was the farmer. My dad was the gentleman." Mike spent his formative years in New Jersey and attended a private high school in Manhattan—a time Johnson recalls as "the worst four years of my life." Not a city boy, Johnson longed for the wide open spaces and quiet that Madison offered.

Dave, now 86 years old, grew up on a dairy farm and was working at his dad's side from the time he was able to walk. The Herbert H. Stone Dairy Farm was located on Route 79 in North Madison.

There the family grew silage corn, hay, and vegetables and raised cattle and poultry. They owned horses to help with the heavy labor. Dave didn't enjoy school and preferred to work with his father. In the mornings, it was his responsibility to prepare the cows for milking. "By that time, the coffee was perking," recalls Stone. "My Dad would give me a cup with a little coffee and a lot of milk. I was probably about four or five years old."

Johnson remembers going to the Stone Dairy Farm with his mother to purchase chicken and vegetables. "When I was about nine or ten years old, my father had an old wooden station wagon. A monster would jump up on the car, throw his arms over, and look up to see what was in there. Of course that was David. He hasn't changed much since, actually."

For more than an hour, the pair covered many topics, including the 1938 hurricane, Madison through the decades, and the importance of friendship. Their recording can be found on the MHS website on the Virtual Programming page under our Learn tab. The oral history project is an effort to preserve Madison's cultural heritage. If you have an interesting story of your own to tell, please let us know by emailing [office@madisonhistory.org](mailto:office@madisonhistory.org).

## Donation Supports Gilbert Munger Research

Michael Schroeder, one of the world's leading authorities on the Madison-born painter Gilbert Munger, continues to value the work we do at the MHS. In 2017 he donated one of Munger's landscape paintings to us and established a fund with a \$5000 gift for the acquisition of other works by the nineteenth-century artist. In 2020 Schroeder was instrumental in our purchase of Munger's Cazenovia Wheat Field, a large work that now hangs in the Allis-Bushnell House, opposite the earlier gift, believed to portray the forest of Fontainebleau. This February, Schroeder donated an additional \$5000 to support our efforts to search, catalog, and digitize our collections of artwork, books, diaries, and documents in the hope that we might find new information related to Gilbert Munger. His generous funding has already helped us unearth a scrapbook from Munger niece Myra Dowd Monroe that contains snapshots of several "lost" paintings.



Michael Schroeder's generosity serves as an example to all who make charitable gifts in support of the causes that matter to them. If you own a Munger painting or any other Munger family memorabilia or documents, we encourage you to contact our office at [office@madisonhistory.org](mailto:office@madisonhistory.org). With the help of our summer interns, we plan to create a database of Munger's works and would love to know of the existence of other previously unknown paintings or ephemera related to Gilbert Munger or to other Munger family artists, including George Munger, Clarissa Munger Badger, and Caroline Munger Washburn. For further information on Munger's life and works, visit Michael Schroeder's remarkable site, <https://gilbertmunger.org>.

## MHS RECEIVES WATERCOLOR OF SAMUEL WILLARD

Jeff Howard of Washington, D. C., grew up believing that a small watercolor painting in his family home was a portrait of his ancestor George Boardman Boomer, a former Union Army general. When Howard decided to donate the painting to the American Civil War Museum in Richmond, VA, he learned that the subject of the painting was, instead, Madison's own Captain Samuel Willard. After further exploring the captain's history, he and his family decided to return the painting to Madison as a gift to the Madison Historical Society.



During his service, Willard kept a diary in which he recorded his thoughts and later forwarded them to his wife. When he died, his diary was found on his body. Its last entry, dated Wednesday, September 17, reads, "I pray God we may be successful, and that you may see me again..." It is believed that, as the battle began, he may have dropped his pencil without finishing the note.

The inscription on the back of the watercolor includes several lines from Willard's diary, written on the day before

he perished. The excerpt reads, *"If my body should ever reach home, let there be no ceremony. I ask for no higher honor than to die for my country. Lay me silently in the grave; imitate my virtues and forgive all my errors. I prefer death in the cause of my country to life in sympathy with her enemies. We are now to go into battle. God save my men! God save me! God save the United States of America! God bless you, my own dear wife, and may we meet at last in Heaven, where there will be no war and no sin!"*

The MHS is grateful to have received this generous donation from the Howard family. At this time, the watercolor is being restored by Sarah Dove Fine Art Conservation in Stonington. A small exhibition of Willard artifacts will be mounted when the restoration work is completed.

Born in Madison on November 22, 1822, Willard served as the town postmaster after an earlier stint following mercantile pursuits. Prior to the outbreak of the war between the states, Willard led a small militia in Madison. On August 1, 1862, he enlisted at the second call for troops, joining Connecticut's 14th regiment. At the time of his enlistment, he stated, "I feel that it is God who bids me go." He mustered a company of other Madison men to join the ranks and was chosen as their captain. Sadly, Captain Willard fell in battle while leading his regiment at the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862. Rescued from the battlefield by his brother-in-law, Private John T. Bradley, he eventually succumbed to his wounds.

**New Virtual Programming** Under the direction of our Youth Education Chair, Maryanne Harmuth, the MHS is producing several new videos to supplement children's understanding of local history. The first three videos, roughly three minutes in length, tell the stories of town founder Captain Frederick Lee, railroad executive and shipbuilder Cornelius Scranton Bushnell, and philanthropist Daniel Hand. DHHS students Norah Stoltz, Will Cassidy, and Federico Barrara narrate these mini-documentaries to provide students with an overview of the men's lives and their significant accomplishments. The stories of three important Madison women will be featured in the next series of videos. All will be posted on the MHS website in Virtual Programming under our Learn tab.



Norah Stoltz (top) and Will Cassidy (left)

## 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 [office@madisonhistory.org](mailto:office@madisonhistory.org). Walk-ins are always welcome!

Meetings are every third Tuesday at 7 PM via Zoom and are led by Lucy Van Liew. ([ljestewartvanliew@gmail.com](mailto:ljestewartvanliew@gmail.com))

For more information about the books, please go to the Adult Education page at [www.madisonhistory.org](http://www.madisonhistory.org).

#### MAY

*The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire*  
William Dalrymple

#### JUNE

*Thaddeus Stevens: Civil War Revolutionary, Fighter for Racial Justice*  
Bruce Levine

#### AUGUST

*The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women and Women to Medicine*  
Janice P. Nimura

#### SEPTEMBER

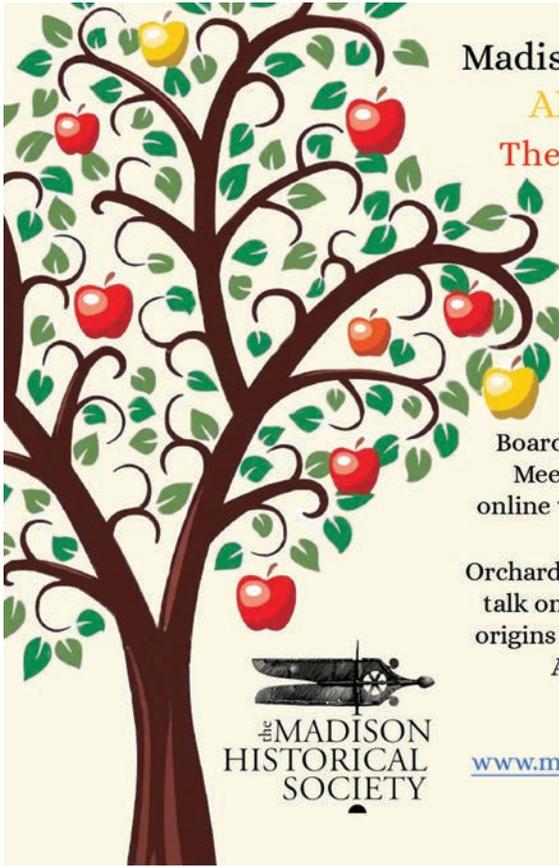
*I Invented the Modern Age: The Rise of Henry Ford*  
Richard Snow

#### OCTOBER

*The Price of Peace: Money, Democracy, and the Life of John Maynard Keynes*  
Zachary D. Carter

#### NOVEMBER

*The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and the Birth of Right and Left*  
Yuval Levin



Madison Historical Society's  
**ANNUAL MEETING**  
 The History of the Apple

**MAY 5, 2022**  
 6:30 - 8 PM

You're invited to join the MHS Board of Trustees for the 2022 Annual Meeting at the Scranton Library and online via Zoom. Registration required.

Orchardist Peter Montgomery will give a talk on the history of the apple from its origins on the Silk Road to its landing in America thousands of years later.

Join virtually or in person. Visit [www.madisonhistory.org](http://www.madisonhistory.org) for more info.



**Madison Historical Society**  
 Founded in 1917  
 P.O. Box 17  
 Madison, CT 06443  
 203-245-4567  
[www.madisonhistory.org](http://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 Allis-Bushnell House, the MHS c. 1785 National Historic Register property, call 203-245-4567.*

*The MHS newsletter is published quarterly.*

and join us on Facebook

[office@madisonhistory.org](mailto:office@madisonhistory.org)

Send us your email address:

[www.madisonhistory.org](http://www.madisonhistory.org)



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