

# HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

## Cornelius Bushnell To Be Celebrated at Open House

Storytelling is one of the most effective ways of connecting with peoples' hearts and minds. At the MHS, we tell stories that connect people to the past and make history fun and accessible. On Saturday, November 26, the MHS will host an open house from 10 AM to 3 PM at the Allis-Bushnell House.

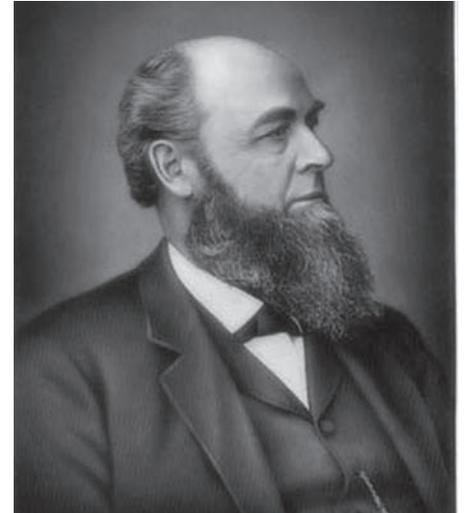


Each room of the first floor has a theme and tells a unique story about a specific period in Madison's past. All visitors are invited to learn about five events from Madison

history, including a special story about a native son whose efforts changed the course of naval warfare.

In the colonial kitchen, visitors will learn about the patriotic women who hosted Liberty Teas during the Revolutionary War. In the Federal-style dining room, the heroics of Captain Frederick Lee and the role he played in the founding of the town are revealed. Civil War-era stories are told in the front parlors, while tales of women's suffrage are recounted in the Victorian tea room.

The highlight of the day will be a pop-up exhibit on the life of Madison native Cornelius Scranton Bushnell. Born during the age of sail, Bushnell left home at the age of fifteen to pursue a career as a merchant mariner. After five years at sea, he returned to New Haven to run a marine hardware store with his brother. An entrepreneur at heart, Bushnell later went on to become a railroad executive. In this role, he traveled to Washington, D.C., where he successfully lobbied politicians for protections for his small railroad. His effective lobbying skills—a form of storytelling—were noticed by members of the Lincoln administration. They enlisted his help to rally congressional support for the construction of ironclad ships—and the rest of Cornelius's efforts made history.



The MHS Annual Open House has dovetailed with the town's Small Business Saturday events for more than a decade. This unique opportunity allows residents and visitors to enjoy a guided tour of the museum and discover some of the collections preserved within the house. New this year, a selection of unique locally made holiday gifts will also be available for purchase.

Docents will tell stories of the many ways in which our shared past connects us. They will also answer questions and serve apple cider and cookies. This free event is open to all ages.



### MHS Welcomes Laura Schneider

The MHS is pleased to announce that Laura Schneider has joined the staff as the collections research associate. Laura, a lifelong Higganum resident, is a recent graduate of Connecticut College where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree in Art History and Museum Studies. Her passion for history began as a young person when she attended summer camp at the Haddam Historical Society. She has volunteered at the organization for more than ten years and received school credit for work on various projects.

Over the summer Laura worked with the Archaeological Conservation Institute in Sabina, Italy and Corinth, Greece. In Italy, Laura attended lectures on the ethics of art conservation and worked on the restoration of a Roman villa dating to the last decades of the 1st century AD. In Greece, she worked at the Archaeological Museum of Ancient Corinth restoring amphoras that had recently been discovered at the site. Laura's long-term goals

include applying to graduate school to pursue a master's program and eventually working in art conservation at a museum. We look forward to collaborating with her on many projects at the Allis-Bushnell House and the MCHC.

## HOLIDAY LANTERN TOUR RETURNS

Did you know that many Main Street businesses at the turn of the last century were owned and operated by immigrants? Or that a Madison woman who staged one-act plays in her garden on Island Avenue, contributed to the birth of traveling summer theater groups? Or that the installation of the trolley system in Madison brought tourists to our town and made leisure travel possible for those who could not afford an automobile? These stories and others



from the 1920s will be told at the Holiday Lantern Tour on Sunday, December 11, from 4:30 to 7 PM.

All participants are invited to step back in time and enjoy this festive storytelling tradition, revived by the MHS in 2018. Local student reenactors and MHS volunteers will bring history to life through a series of lively dramatic presentations that will begin at Lee's Academy and finish at the Allis-Bushnell House.

The Roaring Twenties was a decade of dramatic political, economic, and social change. Women had won the right to vote, and economic growth fueled a consumer culture previously unknown in the United States. While some freedoms expanded during this decade, others were severely curtailed. Immigrants continued to arrive on American shores despite isolationist and anti-immigrant views that took hold across the nation.

These major themes will be the backdrop for the half-mile walking tour that will wind through downtown. Tour guides will lead small groups on a journey where they will meet immigrant merchants, people waiting to ride the new trolley line, and a princess who lived most of her life in Madison. At the end of the tour, guests

will be invited to warm themselves by the hearth and enjoy apple cider, popcorn, and cookies.

Tickets are \$15 for adults (\$10 for MHS members) and \$5 for children ages 5-17. They can be purchased online at [www.madisonhistory.org](http://www.madisonhistory.org) or by calling 203.245.4567. The tour is recommended for children aged 5 and older.



### MHS SUMMER INTERNS MOVE ON

In 2021, the MHS welcomed three summer interns who were rising seniors at their respective schools.

Brian Girardi graduated from Daniel Hand High School and is now a freshman at Rice University in Houston, TX, where he is studying computer science.



Maxwell Brunner graduated from Collegiate School in New York and is now attending Colgate University. He has ambitious plans to double major in economics and political science.

Mathew Breier graduated from the Hopkins School in New Haven and is pursuing a degree in history and classical studies at the University of Pennsylvania. We wish them all well in their future studies, and we look forward to great accomplishments from these talented young adults!



## In Memoriam

### Beverly Montgomery

Beverly (Jiskra) Montgomery, former curator/collections chair at the MHS, passed away peacefully in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on August 12, 2022, just days before her 90th birthday. Beverly was born in Bloomington, Illinois, in 1932 and was the beloved wife of Robert Hayes Montgomery and loving mother of their three daughters, Susan, Sharen, and Sarah. Bev graduated from Vassar College in 1954 with a degree in Political Science and then received a commission in the U.S. Navy. After a move to Madison in 1963, Bev became an untiring and well-respected volunteer with the Madison Historical Society, the Women's League of the First Congregational Church, Friends of the Library, school volunteer, the Connecticut Opera Company, and numerous other organizations. With Warner Lord, she co-authored the book, *Madison in the Twentieth Century*, and contributed much other work to the preservation of the MHS collection. She was laid to rest with her beloved husband in the Memorial Garden at the First Congregational Church. In her memory, gifts may be made to the music ministry at the FCC or to the MHS.

### Gerry Degenhart

The MHS trustees wish to acknowledge the life and contributions of our member Gerald D. Degenhardt, who died at home in Madison in August. Born in 1937, Gerald served in the Army before graduating from Fordham University and later earning a master's degree from Southern Connecticut State College. He taught for more than thirty years at Daniel Hand High School, specializing in creative writing and Shakespeare. A delightful conversationalist and the finest of dinner companions, he loved language, sports, and music and was known for his fondness of humor and his compassion for animals. He enjoyed two happy marriages and had two beloved daughters and five stepchildren. He served on the board of the Friends of the E.C. Scranton Memorial Library. With his second wife, Wendy Gifford, he was an active member and generous supporter of the MHS-- and he will be missed.

# SUMMER FESTIVAL OF ARTS & ANTIQUES



The first annual Summer Festival was held on a sunny day in late August. This event, which grew out of the long-established Antiques Fair, combined many different elements. Vendors of antiques and collectibles shared the green with members of the Madison Art Society, classic-car enthusiasts, and colonial crafters.



The day also offered child-centered activities that included face painting, watercolor crafts, Silly Putty making, a dunk tank, and a birds of prey meet-and-greet.



The fair was the first significant fundraising event staged by the MHS in more than two years, following the cancellation of all major events due to COVID restrictions



or concerns. We hope better conditions in 2023 will allow us to bring back our Tour of Remarkable Homes--our most successful fundraising effort in recent years.

## Update on the Madison Center for History and Culture



The renovations at Lee's Academy are moving along at a strong pace. After months of supply-chain delays, our recycled chestnut floors have been installed, as has a new tile floor in the ADA-compliant bathroom. The exterior of Lee's Academy has been fully scraped and painted, and its bell tower has been restored to ensure that the two-hundred-year-old structure will remain an iconic element of Madison's landscape for centuries to come.



The MHS Board of Trustees has selected Keith Reed of Stonegate Designs to build six display cabinets that will house artifacts that will tell Madison's story. Having secured a state grant for this project in late 2018, the MHS trustees and staff are eager to celebrate the creation of a history center that has been in our imaginations for many years.

## 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.

[ljlstewartvanliew@gmail.com](mailto:ljlstewartvanliew@gmail.com)

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

### 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

### DECEMBER

*The Zealot and the Emancipator: John Brown, Abe Lincoln and the Struggle for American Freedom*  
H. W. Brands

## COMING SOON!

**SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY OPEN HOUSE**  
Saturday, November 26  
11am to 3:pm

**HOLIDAY LANTERN TOUR**  
Sunday, December 11  
4:30 to 7pm

Open House  
at the  
Allis-Bushnell House  
Saturday, Nov 26  
11 AM - 3 PM

Enjoy cookies and cider  
while learning  
about Madison's past.

853 Boston Post Road



SMALL BUSINESS | NOV  
SATURDAY | 26



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 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.*

and join us on Facebook

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