Winter 2023

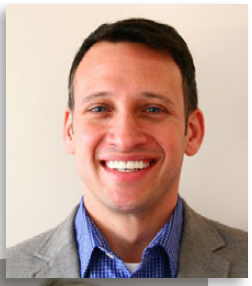
Madison Historical Society

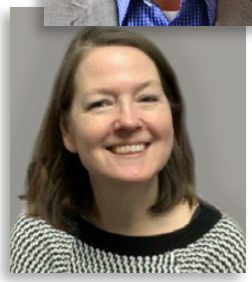
Historical Happenings

Frederick Lee Lectures Explore Madison's Built Environment

The 16th Annual Frederick Lee Lectures will explore the preservation of Madison's built environment. The winter lecture series, named for Captain Frederick Lee, offers lively history-based presentations on topics of local interest. The 2023 presentations will raise awareness of the importance of preservation in retaining the historic character of a place. Further, it will explore choices homeowners can make to restore their period homes and will conclude with an overview of the extensive renovation of Lee's Academy.

The presentations will be held every three weeks beginning in early January. The talks will be offered in a hybrid format–on site at the First Congregational Church's Hubley Hall and online via Zoom. Please check the MHS website for updates in the case of inclement weather or a rise in COVID infections.



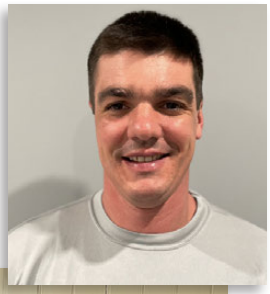


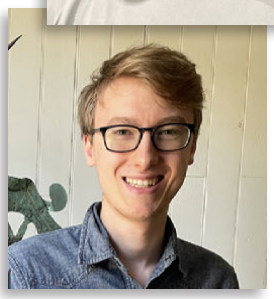
On January 8, the series will open with a presentation by two representatives of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO.) Architectural Historian Mary Dunne and Director of Operations Jonathan Kinney will provide an overview of the programs and services available to municipalities, nonprofits, local advocates, and owners of historic properties. Their engaging talk will set the stage for the later lectures by defining the importance of historic preservation and by sharing information about useful preservation resources.

Local Realtor and Instagram personality Phoebe Schreiner will offer her presentation, "Tales from a Historic Homeowner," on January 29. A lifelong New Englander, Schreiner and her family are restoring their "West Wind Farmhouse" and its adjacent barns on Green Hill Road. The lecture will highlight the home's history, examine its original construction date, discuss the characteristics and qualities unique to the house, and explore the experience of living in a historic property while undertaking restoration and redesign projects. The talk will offer the dual perspectives of a realtor with deep knowledge of the marketplace and a homeowner with deep respect for the history of the property.

On February 19, local renovation and design experts Travis and Felicia Gulick will offer a presentation on the challenges of integrating modern conveniences into historic houses while retaining their original architectural elements.The pair will offer helpful information on determining the style of historic homes and will provide resources for period-appropriate color schemes, architectural details, and the sourcing of historic building materials. Examples of local historic home renovations that combine the craftsmanship of the past with modern design elements will be offered to show how historic homes can be updated to create appeal for generations to come.

In the final lecture on March 12, Geoff Buell of Buell Construction will provide an update on the extensive renovations that have been ongoing at Lee's Academy. This iconic Madison structure located on the green has been part of the town's built environment for more than two hundred years. Alex Gerrish, who researched the history of the building, will open the talk with a brief history of the building and how it came to rest in its current location. Buell will discuss the recent preservation efforts, which have included structural improvements and adaptations that will enable access to all members of the community.





The MHS invites all of its members and friends to participate in these important presentations on preserving the town's history and character through its structures. Registration is required to attend virtually. Visit **www.madisonhistory.org** to receive the Zoom link. A suggested donation of $5 is requested to help us continue to provide engaging community programming and events.

Generous financial support was provided by The Madison Foundation and the John Brady and Roberta Isleib donor-advised component fund of The Madison Foundation.

IN MEMORIAM

Noreen Kokoruda

It is with great sadness that we recently learned of the passing of Noreen Kokoruda. As stated in Peggy Lyons's townwide message, "Right up until her final days, Noreen was a dedicated public servant who loved this town dearly, serving Madison residents for over forty years in so many different ways. Her compassion for others, commitment to service, and devotion to her family and friends, is a lasting legacy we can all share and celebrate together as a community. Our sincerest condolences go out to her family during this very difficult time."

Noreen was a longtime advocate and friend of the MHS. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

MHS Wins Grant to Assess and Preserve Its Costume Collection

The MHS has been awarded a grant from the CT Conservation Connection, a state initiative to preserve Connecticut's cultural collections. This program provides museums with an on-site assessment of their collections and offers a written report of observations and prioritized recommendations.

The MHS preserves nearly 8,200 objects located at the Allis-Bushnell House Museum. More than 1,100 items are classified as clothing, apparel, or other costume-related items, including hats, hat pins, fans, hair combs, umbrellas, shoes, and jewelry.

In October we submitted an application for grant funding to have a museum curator visit the Allis-Bushnell House to examine our costume collection.

The MHS is grateful for the state funding, which will ensure that we employ the best practices and properly care for our impressive collection of apparel and related objects.

Holiday Lantern Tour–A Snowy Success

Months of research, writing, and planning culminated on a snowy night that created a charming atmosphere for the Holiday Lantern Tour on December 11. Six costumed reenactors embodying key historical figures brought history to life with their retelling of stories from the tumultuous decade known as the Roaring Twenties. Visitors met Princess Pignatelli and learned about her passion for theater. From Charles Shepard, a mail carrier and a caretaker of several town buildings, they also learned about jazz as an expression of freedom and a break with the old-fashioned, repressive ideas of the past. Guides dressed in period costumes led visitors from stop-to-stop, imparting nuggets of wisdom along the way. At the end of the tour, a five-piece jazz band played holiday music and 1920s standards at the Allis-Bushnell House, where a fire blazed in one of our restored fireplaces.

Community events like the MHS Lantern Tour are impossible without the hard work and dedication of many people. The MHS is grateful for the support of its dedicated staff and trustees, who scoured consignment shops for costumes, decorated the house, served as guides, wrote scripts, and coordinated with the student actors. Thanks are due to student volunteer Clare Barnett, who oversaw all aspects of the costuming effort. She altered clothing, sewed hats, and installed a pop-up exhibit of period clothing at The Country Store.

Pam Hunter Returns to the MHS as Public Engagement Manager

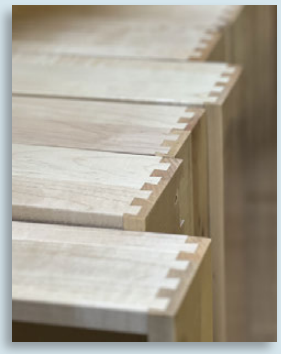
Many MHS members will likely remember that Pam Hunter served as the MHS executive director some ten years ago. In addition to working on the very successful Tour of Remarkable Homes, she oversaw efforts to restore the AB House. Now we are pleased to welcome her back to the MHS as our public engagement manager. In that new staff position, she will develop new programs and events to foster greater community involvement. Following her time at the MHS, Pam moved to Providence, Rhode Island, where she served as ED at Making Music Matters, a program that offers free instrumental music education classes to students in five underserved Boston neighborhoods. After four years of commuting to Boston, Pam accepted an ED position at the Kingston Chamber Music Festival at the University of Rhode Island, where she worked until her retirement in 2021. Upon her return to Essex, Connecticut, Pam was delighted to learn of a new job opportunity at the MHS. "I am very excited to be a part of the MHS family again," stated Pam. "The public engagement position is the perfect way for me to combine my interest in cultural arts with my desire to create engaging programs and events that resonate with the community."

In addition to her nonprofit work, Pam is a flutist who performs in two orchestras. While practicing the flute is part of her daily routine, she also enjoys walking, hiking, and reading. We are so pleased to welcome her back to the MHS!

Ongoing Progress at the Madison Center for History and Culture

The Madison Center for History and Culture is nearing completion. The walls have been painted, and the tile floor has been installed in the ADA-compliant restroom. Floor and ceiling moldings have been added to hide water pipes, ethernet cables, and electrical wires. Hundreds–perhaps thousands–of tiny nail holes are being filled, and woodwork is being sanded in preparation for painting. Once this finishing work is completed, the chestnut floors will be sanded and stained–edging us closer to a grand opening.

Work is continuing on six display cabinets being custom-built by Keith Reed of Stonegate Design Studio. These museum-quality cabinets will serve to display artifacts from our collection and to store research materials, maps, and other objects. Museum consultant Ann Peabody is developing display panels that will tell Madison's story through images and illustrations. These graphic panels will cover six themes including the sea, the land, arts and culture, commerce and industry, and the built environment, including public spaces and public and residential structures.



We look forward to welcoming everyone to the center sometime in the spring or early summer. We remain hopeful that the space may even be ready in February or March to receive guests at our Frederick Lee Lectures.

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. Walk-ins are always welcome!

Meetings are at 6 PM at the Allis-Bushnell House or via Zoom. They are led by Lucy Van Liew (ljstewartvanliew@gmail.com)

For more information about the books, please go to the Adult Education page at www.madisonhistory.org.

JANUARY 17
Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind
by Yuri Haval

FEBRUARY 21
King Leopold's Ghost
by Adam Hochschild

MARCH 21
The Perfectionists: How Precision Engineers Created the Modern World
by Simon Winchester

APRIL 18
Animal Vegetable Junk
by Mark Bittman

MAY 16
Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded, August 27, 1883
by Simon Winchester

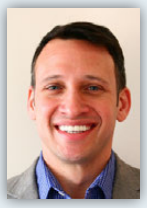
JUNE 20
The Graves are Walking: The Irish Famine
by John Kelly

JULY 18
The House of Kennedy
by James Patterson with Cynthia Fagen

The Frederick Lee Lectures

Preserving Madison's Built Environment

The 2023 presentations will raise awareness of the importance of preservation.



Mary Dunne Architectural Historian
Jonathan Kinney Director of Operations State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

January 8 @ 4 PM

Overview of the programs and services available to municipalities, nonprofits, and owners of historic properties.

Phoebe Schreiner Local Realtor and Instagram Personality

January 29 @ 4 PM

Schreiner will share tales of an historic homeowner as she and her family restore their "West Wind Farmhouse" and its adjacent barns on Green Hill Road.

Travis and Felicia Gulick
Local renovation and design experts

February 19 @ 4 PM

This restoration and design duo will explore solutions for integrating modern conveniences with original architectural elements in historic structures.

Geoff Buell Buell Construction
Alex Gerrish MHS Intern

March 12 @ 4 PM

Alex Gerrish will give a brief history of Lee's Academy and explain how it came to rest in its current location. Buell will discuss recent preservation efforts at this historic schoolhouse, including structural improvements and adaptations to enable access to all members of the community.

Lectures will be presented at the First Congregational Church's Hubley Hall and online via Zoom.
Sign up now at 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 encouraged to wear a mask.

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.

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