

# HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

## 2024 Frederick Lee Lectures present *Madison, Then and Now*

All MHS lifetime learners should be sure to put the 2024 Frederick Lee Lectures on your new calendars! This year's theme is "Madison, Then and Now"— and our slate of expert presenters promise an exploration of the ways our iconic structures, our environment, and our industries have changed with the passage of time. Noted for their sharp focus on local and regional history, the Frederick Lee Lectures are now in their seventeenth year. This engaging series of monthly history presentations in midwinter are offered by local scholars, authors, and resident researchers. Each of them has a passion for regional history and a flair for the stories that bind us to the past as they inform the future. Recent themes have focused on local shipbuilding, immigration, notable Madison women, the growth of our summer community, Madison's historic farms, and the evidence of history in Madison's natural and architectural landscapes.

The 2024 Lectures will be offered in a hybrid format — in person at the First Congregational Church's Hubley Hall and online via Zoom. The Society is grateful for the support the Lectures receive from the community, and we give special thanks to the Madison Foundation and its Roberta Isleib Fund, which have provided generous financial gifts to fund the Lectures. We thank the First Congregational Church for providing us a home at Hubley Hall, and we offer special gratitude to its staff, who prepare for us and welcome us so warmly.

We thank our presenters for the care they take in ensuring that each program is accurate and accessible to an audience of learners from 10 to 110.

All MHS members and the general public are invited to attend. Each lecture begins at 4 pm and is followed by a lively Q & A session. The suggested donation for nonmembers is \$5; MHS members may attend at no charge. All donations are gratefully accepted.



On Sunday, January 14, architectural historian Rachel Carley will discuss the history of the General's Residence. Ms. Carley played an essential

role in the MHS's recent effort to work in partnership with those who built a replica of this iconic home in the heart of Madison's historic downtown village district.



On Sunday, February 11, Dr. Juliana Barrett from the UConn Connecticut Sea Grant program will explore the impact of climate change on our coastline.

Dr. Barrett is an ecologist with a focus on climate adaptation and the conservation, restoration and enhancement of coastal habitats of Connecticut. In 2021 she was on the faculty team that received one of the UConn Provost's Awards for Excellence in Community Engaged Scholarship.



On Sunday, March 10, lifelong Madison resident and Madison Shellfish Commissioner Meig Walz-Newcomb will offer a presentation on the history of local oystering—and

its sixfold growth as an industry in recent years. Engaged in oystering endeavors on the southern side of Tuxis Island and on the Neck River, Meig describes herself and her young adult son as survivors of their three-year adventure in an ever-changing environment.

Please visit [madisonhistory.org](http://madisonhistory.org) for more information about the lectures and to register for the online Zoom format.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

- History Happy Hour .....January 19
- Valentine's Day Party .....February 14
- History Happy Hour .....March 22
- History Happy Hour ..... April 26
- MHS Annual Meeting.....May 21

### 2024 Frederick Lee Lectures *"Madison Then and Now"*

- The General's Residence*.....January 14
- The Impact of Climate Change on Our Coastline*.....February 11
- Madison's Oystering Industry* .....March 10

## HISTORY HAPPY HOUR RETURNS ON JANUARY 19

We are delighted to present our first History Happy Hour of the season on Friday, January 19, from 6 to 7 pm at the Allis-Bushnell House. The featured speaker will be Mannie Berk, founder of the Rare Wine Co., one of the country's premier wine merchants. Mannie's topic will be the history of Madeira wine.

Mannie is well-known for his expertise on the history of Madeira. His career evolved after he discovered a vast quantity of old Madeira in London in 1987. Two years after he purchased that lot of vintage wine, he founded the Rare Wine Co. Since that time, he has made RWC America's finest non-auction source for older wines, including Madeira.



He is now considered the country's leading authority on that wine. In 2002 he was named Food & Wine magazine's Best Wine Importer, and he is a three-time James Beard Award semi-finalist and two-time Wine Advocate Personality of the Year. In 2011 he edited and co-authored the second edition of Noel Cossart's *Madeira, The Island Vineyard*, which the International Cookbook Awards named the best book on European wines published in the United States that year. We are delighted to welcome Mannie as our featured speaker and to continue our partnership with The Wine Thief of Madison, provider of libations for our History Happy Hour series.

These events have become extremely popular, attracting new friends and longtime supporters. If you haven't attended a History Happy Hour yet, we encourage you to join the fun. Each event features a brief presentation followed by a chance to socialize and enjoy the historic ambience of the Allis-Bushnell House.

We recommend that you register in advance for this program at [www.madisonhistory.org](http://www.madisonhistory.org). Admission is \$15 for adults and \$10 for MHS members. Admission at the door is cash only.

## Victorian Valentine's Day Party Returns to MHS

Are you looking for something fun to do this Valentine's Day? Why not celebrate with the MHS in Victorian style? Avoid the crowded restaurants and skip the overpriced roses this year. Instead, celebrate the way the Victorians did, in the relaxed and elegant atmosphere of the Allis-Bushnell House. We are bringing back our popular Victorian Valentine's Day party after last year's inaugural event, which was a smashing success.



Jennifer Munro

Our second annual Victorian Valentine's Day party will be held on Wednesday evening, February 14, from 5:30 to 7 pm. This festive celebration of love and romance is open to all adults, including singles and couples. The event will feature a display of vintage wedding dresses and valentines, and refreshments will include a special Victorian punch, wine, other beverages, hors d'oeuvres, and chocolate treats.

A duo of flutists will serenade visitors as they enter the historic house, and shoreline resident and nationally known storyteller

Jennifer Munro will return for another captivating performance. She will present a new and moving tale of familial love.

Last year's Victorian Valentine's Day party was very popular, so we encourage everyone to reserve their tickets early. The registration fee is \$25 per person or \$20 for MHS members. Please visit [madisonhistory.org](http://madisonhistory.org) for tickets or call (203) 245-4567.





## MHS Holiday Lantern Tour Succeeds Despite Torrential Downpour

The weather outside was frightful, but that did not stop the MHS from presenting its Holiday Lantern Tour on Sunday, December 17, despite a heavy downpour and high winds. Five minutes before



the tour began, the wind was howling and the rain was lashing, so we made a quick decision to hold the event indoors.

Instead of strolling from the green through downtown by lantern-light, we staged all of the scenes in the comfort of Lee's Academy and the Allis-Bushnell House.



As planned, visitors began the tour at Lee's Academy, where they watched reenactors portray

a family listening to the radio in their living room on December 8, 1941, when President Roosevelt gave his famous "Day of Infamy" speech. Then they proceeded to the Allis-Bushnell House, where they watched four more scenes from the 1940s as they enjoyed hot cider and cookies and the warmth of a blazing fire.

Reenactors played such historical characters as a Holocaust survivor, a volunteer for the civilian coast guard reserve, and an American journalist who reported from China in the 1930s and later moved to Madison.

We are grateful for the hard work and dedication of the many volunteers who made this event possible and especially for all the attendees who adapted to the new plan at a moment's notice.



## 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 led by Mary Berlin ([mberlin@comcast.net](mailto:mberlin@comcast.net)) and are held every 3rd Tuesday at 6 pm via Zoom and in person at the Madison Center for History and Culture on the lower level of Lee's Academy. You may enter in front (use left door) or via the ramp and door at the rear of the building.

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

#### JANUARY

*Atlantic: Great Sea Battles, Heroic Discoveries, Titanic Storms and a Vast Ocean of a Million Stories*  
Simon Winchester

#### FEBRUARY

*The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World*  
Andrea Wulf

#### MARCH

*A History of the World in 6 Glasses*  
Tom Standage

#### APRIL

*Iron Curtain the crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956*  
Anne Applebaum

#### MAY

*At Home*  
Bill Bryson

#### JUNE

*Leonardo Da Vinci*  
Walter Isaacson

## The MHS Bids Farewell to Executive Director Jennifer Simpson



Early December marked the final days of the longtime tenure of Jennifer Simpson, the society's executive director for nine years. Jenny has moved on to full-time employment at Guilford Savings Bank (GSB), where she will use her formidable skills in their internal communications department.

At the MHS, Jenny applied her energy, intelligence, and creativity to the job every day she was with us. Dedicated to the mission and vision of the society, Jenny built strong relationships with other local organizations and businesses so that they understood our goals and our value to the community. In working with staff, trustees, and interns, she was endlessly collaborative and

immeasurably supportive. Always attentive to the limits of our budget, she often offered to work without compensation on special projects, and she was always available to trustees far beyond her official work hours. Often the voice and face of the Society, she cheerfully welcomed countless opportunities to engage with the public. We will deeply miss her ingenuity and initiative. Although we have used most of them here, there are not enough adverbs to help describe Jenny's gifts to the MHS. With our sincerest affection and gratitude, the MHS wishes Jenny all the best in her new position. We know we will see her often as a volunteer and as a guest at our events, and we hope that all members find opportunities to thank her for her exemplary contribution to all of our efforts.

Join us for a  
*Victorian Valentine's Day*  
 PARTY

Wednesday, February 14 - 5:30pm to 7pm

*Celebrate the romance of the holiday in Victorian style!*

Enjoy 1890s punch, wine and beer, light hors d'oeuvres, and a display of vintage Valentines and costumes in the festive ambience of the Allis-Bushnell House.

Featuring a special presentation by award-winning storyteller Jennifer Munro

853 Boston Post Road, Madison  
 \$25 per person (\$20 for MHS members)



Make your reservation today at [madisonhistory.org](http://madisonhistory.org) or call 203-245-4567



**Madison Historical Society**  
 Founded in 1917  
 P.O. Box 17  
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[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 10 AM to 2 PM.*

*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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