

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

YOU ARE INVITED TO A GALA EVENING—TWO CENTURIES IN THE MAKING!

In 2026, the Town of Madison will celebrate a remarkable milestone—the bicentennial anniversary of our town's founding in 1826.

To mark this extraordinary moment, the Madison Historical Society is proud to announce an upcoming gala, "From Before to Beyond," on August 4, 2026, at 6 pm at the Madison Beach Hotel.

This special event will bring together community leaders and citizens for an elegant evening that honors Madison's past and celebrates its future.

All Madison residents are invited to join the Madison Historical Society trustees for a gala evening of dinner, live music, an auction—and a journey through history—in celebration of Madison's Bicentennial. This celebration will include a special one-night-only exhibit about the history of Madison's West Wharf and will also include a silent auction filled with can't-miss items and experiences from your favorite shoreline businesses. In addition, we will present the Madison Historical Society's inaugural Elizabeth Skinner Platt Citizenship Award. In recognition of their outstanding contributions to our community, John and Melissa Mathers are the first recipients of this award.

We ask for your support by joining us at this special event! To reserve your tickets now, please visit madisonhistory.org. Single tickets cost \$150, or you can gather a table of 10 guests for a discounted price of \$1,250.

This celebration is made possible through the generosity of local businesses and community partners who share our commitment to preserving Madison's history and strengthening its future.

Thank you to our sponsors: Gulick & Co., Saltwood Cabinetry, Eversource Energy, Connecticut Water, The Madison Foundation (Sponsored by Foundations through the generosity of Ascend Bank), Exposure, National Trust Insurance Services LLC, Madison Financial Planning, Principle Wealth, and The Walz Family.

For all inquiries, including opportunities for participating in event sponsorships and for donating auction items, please call us at 203-245-4567 or email us at office@madisonhistory.org. We can't wait to see you at this historic event!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

From Before to Beyond
A BICENTENNIAL GALA



TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, at 6 PM
MADISON BEACH HOTEL
DINNER / LIVE MUSIC / AUCTION / EXHIBIT

TICKETS
\$150 PER PERSON
\$1250 PER TABLE OF 10

Honorees
JOHN and MELISSA MATHERS
the inaugural recipients of the
ELIZABETH SKINNER PLATT
CITIZENSHIP AWARD

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

Allis-Bushnell House Museum Open House Tours and Summer Markets, 11 am – 1 pm July 11, July 18, August 1, August 15, September 5, September 19

Costume In Detail August 13

History Happy Hour at the Allis-Bushnell House, 6 pm August 21, September 25, October 23

Lantern Tour November 7

SUMMER MARKET & Open House

Join us this summer at the Madison Historical Society to view a unique slate of artists and creative vendors at our second annual Summer Market! Join us on the beautiful back lawn of the Allis-Bushnell House Museum during our open house hours of 11 am to 2 pm. The markets are held on the first and third Saturdays of the summer, starting on June 20 and ending on September 19. Our vendors will offer unique gift items such as sea-glass jewelry, stationery, home decor, skincare items, and much more!

Want to become a vendor? Spots are still open, but space is limited. Visit our website to reserve your table.



President's Corner June 2026

Happy 200th Birthday, Madison!



It has been a wonderful summer of celebrations as we commemorate Madison's Bicentennial. Thank you to our dedicated staff and volunteers whose hard work, enthusiasm, and commitment helped make our Flag Day & Bicentennial Commemoration such a memorable success. Your efforts brought our community together to honor our shared history

and celebrate this important milestone.

Stop by the Madison Center for History & Culture at Lee's Academy to view historic flags from the Madison Historical Society collection and explore the stories they tell about our nation's past.

As we head into August, join us for From Before to Beyond: A Gala Fundraiser benefiting the Madison Historical Society. The evening will feature the presentation of the first Elizabeth Skinner Platt Citizenship Award, along with entertainment, a silent auction, and an opportunity to support the preservation and sharing of Madison's rich history.

Here's to 200 years of Madison—and to the people who continue to make our town such a special place.

We look forward to celebrating with you!

Maryanne Harmuth,
MHS Board President

STUDENTS BRING MHS ALIVE THIS SPRING

The MHS hosted students throughout the spring. We were pleased to continue our long-running tradition of welcoming Grade 2 students to Lee's Academy for our "Colonial Days" program. Students from Neck River Elementary and Brown Elementary experienced education in the 1700s and participated in outdoor games and activities.



In recognition of Memorial Day, Grade 5 students at Brown learned about headstone preservation and cleaning at West Cemetery. Grade 7 students from Polson Middle School taught the fifth graders about local veterans who fought in wars from the American Revolution to World War I.

We also received a visit from students at Our Lady of Mercy Preparatory Academy. Grade 6 and Grade 7 students first toured the Allis-Bushnell House before taking a historic tour of Madison's downtown. The morning concluded with crafts in the Madison Center for History & Culture at Lee's Academy.

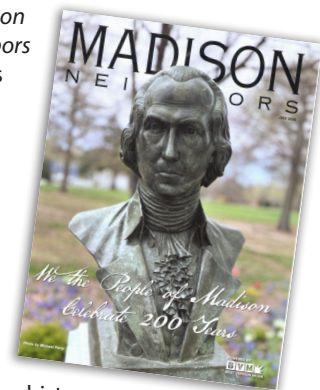
Thank you to all of the wonderful students for making the MHS come alive with your excitement and curious questions. Thanks are also due to our fantastic volunteers who helped make the experience meaningful and memorable for all students.

Community Business Spotlight:

MADISON NEIGHBORS

The Madison Historical Society was honored to be a featured contributor to the July issue of *Madison Neighbors* magazine. *Madison Neighbors* is a community magazine that brings neighbors and businesses together with a positive, relevant, and friendly message. Each month, the Madison Historical Society contributes a feature article to *Neighbors*.

To commemorate Madison's Bicentennial, the Madison Historical Society was invited to offer numerous articles and puzzles that honored the past 200 years of Madison history. One of the articles, written by MHS Trustee Henry Griggs, is reprinted here in this newsletter.



To learn more about *Madison Neighbors*, please visit bestversionmedia.com/ct/madisonneighbors

BICENTENNIAL & FLAG DAY COMMEMORATION A BIG SUCCESS!

On June 13, the Madison Historical Society, in partnership with the Town of Madison and the Madison 200 | America 250 Steering Committee, welcomed guests to the Madison Center for History & Culture



at Lee's Academy for a Bicentennial & Flag Day Commemoration. The event brought together community members, veterans, and civic leaders to honor both Madison's 200th anniversary of incorporation and the enduring significance of the American flag.

The ceremony began with a musical prelude by the Scranton Strummers. Members of the 14th Regiment and Griswold Post 79 of The American Legion then led the procession and presentation of colors, followed by a ceremonial flag raising conducted by The American Legion and VFW Post 2096. Nicholas Valentine performed "Reveille," and Luke Soja delivered a stirring rendition of the National Anthem. The audience then joined Captain Jeremy Yorke and Jack Yorke in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Serving as master of ceremonies, Municipal Historian Henry Griggs welcomed attendees and reflected on the past 200 years of Madison's history. The program highlighted the town's bicentennial milestone through a series of proclamations and remarks from local and state leaders. State Senator Christine Cohen presented gubernatorial and legislative recognitions honoring Madison's 200 years of civic achievement. First Selectwoman Peggy Lyons and Madison 200 | America 250 Steering



Committee Chair Rosalyn Cama also offered remarks acknowledging the remarkable community of Madison and the exciting upcoming town events pertaining to the bicentennial.

A special reading by Madison poet laureate Edward Lent provided a moving reflection on the town's history and the sense of community that strengthens our bonds. His poem, entitled "By Many Hands and Many Hearts," traced the history of the Hammonasset people, the coming of the European colonizers, and the development of a productive and cohesive community

that honors the contributions and relies upon the cooperation of people of many skills and cultures.

Following closing remarks by Henry Griggs and a benediction offered by Reverend Todd Vetter, the Scranton Strummers concluded the formal program with a final musical selection.

Guests were then invited inside the Madison Center for History & Culture to enjoy refreshments and explore the exhibits featuring Revolutionary War artifacts and historic flags from the Madison Historical Society's collection.



The Flag Day Celebration served as a meaningful tribute to Madison's bicentennial year, bringing together history, patriotism, and community spirit in a memorable observance. By honoring the town's past and recognizing the contributions of generations of residents, the event reaffirmed Madison's commitment to preserving its heritage as it enters its third century.



JOIN US FOR COSTUME IN DETAIL: DISCOVER HOW CLOTHES TELL THE STORIES OF MADISON'S WOMEN

Join the Madison Historical Society on Wednesday, August 13, 2026, at 6 pm at the Allis-Bushnell House Museum for a special presentation, presented by Clare Barnett.

Drawing from the Madison Historical Society's remarkable costume collection, this program will explore

the stories of several Madison women whose lives are preserved through the garments and accessories they once owned. Through careful examination of fabrics, construction techniques, alterations, wear patterns, and historical documentation, attendees will discover how clothing can reveal insights into family life, social

status, education, work, travel, and community involvement.

Featured objects include dresses worn by prominent Madison residents. Visitors will see a pair of wedding shoes belonging to former Madison High School principal Mary Frances Hull and a mourning bonnet owned by Mary Scranton Evarts, the first librarian of Madison's E.C. Scranton Memorial Library. The presentation will also highlight the life of physician and surgeon Isadora Murray, whose elegant dress survives as a rare artifact of her extraordinary career and personal story.

\$15 Adults / \$10 MHS Members. Registration is requested at madisonhistory.org.

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Thank you to our dedicated volunteers — your generous time and talents make our programs successful.

A Short Course on Madison's History *by Henry Griggs*

Because I am Madison's municipal historian, the question is often put to me, "Where can I find the best history of Madison?"

A great place to start is the Scranton Library website, but a little navigating is required. Step 1: Search for "Scranton Library Our History." Step 2: Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on Madison Center Historical Resources Narrative – June 2021. Step 3: Jump to page 20, Historical and Architectural Overview. Here are a few highlights, liberally lifted more-or-less verbatim from the narrative report.

Early Settlement

Englishman George Fenwick, who was then living in Saybrook, Connecticut, bought most of the area that is now the Town of Madison from the Mohegan Sachem Uncas in 1636. George Fenwick returned to England around 1638, and, while there, he met Reverend Henry Whitfield. Together, they arranged for Rev. Whitfield and twenty-five families to settle on Fenwick's lands, which bordered the New Haven colony of Quinnipiac. The colonists left England in June 1639 and spent seven weeks at sea before reaching their new home. The passage was free from sickness or death; one woman gave birth to a healthy baby.

The Fenwick lands, named Guilford, were parceled out in at least three separate divisions. The first of these occurred shortly after the settlement was established. The second happened in 1645 and was meant to encourage settlement in the Neck, known at the time as "easterly farms," which would later become part of the town of Madison. Nicholas Munger, an apprentice flax weaver, is often credited with building the first house in the area in 1651.

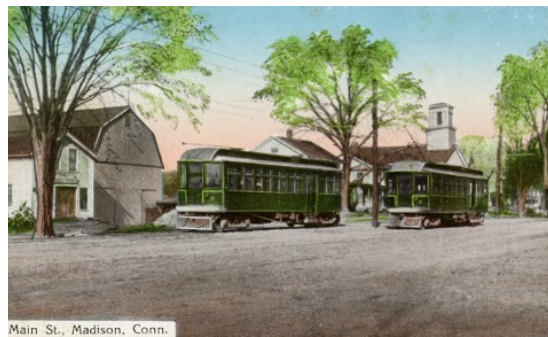
The Nineteenth Century

Madison truly became a community with its own unique identity in the nineteenth century. Between 1800 and 1830 the population of the area increased from 1,428 to 1,809. Madison had asked for independence from Guilford in 1783 but was unable to separate itself at that time. A second attempt was successful, and the town was incorporated by the Connecticut General Assembly in May of 1826.

The town began to prosper in the second half of the nineteenth century when industry started to flourish. Early industry centered around the central green where the prolific



inventor Reuben Shaler devised many items still used today, including roller skates, a type of weathervane, wire-bound brushes,



and the weigh bridge. Munger and Son later built a truly national business, selling school supplies that included a product first called



"dustless chalk"—and now known as crayons.

Shipbuilding

The maritime trades of shipbuilding and shipping grew alongside farming and cottage industries in the nineteenth century. At least five shipyards operated in Madison at The Neck as well as East and West Wharves. Shipbuilding was so important to the town

that the launching of a new vessel was a working holiday and all schools were closed. Many of the ships built in Madison yards were employed locally, in coastal or long-distance trade. Others were sold to distant owners.

Ships for the coastal trade were usually sloops or schooners. They moved varied cargoes, including vegetables, livestock, coal, paper, and even gunpowder among shoreline towns. Larger Madison-built craft sailed to New Orleans, the West Indies, and farther. By 1890, when a fire destroyed the Miner shipyard, the last of the Madison yards still in business, more than 200 sloops, schooners, brigs, barks, and ships had been built in the town.

On July 1, 1852, the first passenger train began regular service on the Shoreline, changing the development of the East River community, as well as the rest of the town.

The decline of shipbuilding and shipping in the late nineteenth century coincided with the rise of the summer visitor as a major economic force.

Transportation via horses and oxen gave way to trolleys and automobiles as Madison Center began to develop. The three-story Monroe Building, Madison's first "skyscraper," was constructed in 1911 by druggist J. Harrison Monroe.

The Summer People

The potential for profit from the summer people was not lost on local developer J. Myron Hull, who remembered the influx of their carriages and wagons at the beginning of the season. He decided to start an informal real estate business in 1887, the same year that he was appointed Madison's postmaster. By 1889, he had also opened Madison's first real estate agency and first insurance agency.

Development for the summer residents began to increase in Madison after 1915. Myron had anticipated this trend by buying lots on the former Seaview Farm in 1912. He began to sell them as the demand increased, and he quickly became one of the most successful business owners in Madison.

The installation of electricity brought the trolley car to town. Madison was served by the Shore Line Electric Railway from 1910 to 1919 and by the New Haven & Shore

A Short Course on Madison's History—continued from page 6

Line from 1920 to 1929. Buses, which by 1925 could take advantage of newly paved roads, soon replaced the trolleys.

Hammonasset State Park opened on July 18, 1920, and with the park came the camper, a new type of visitor who also spent money and time in town. The park had 75,000 visitors in its first year.

By 1930 all of Madison's trolleys were gone, and the Boston Post Road was clogged with the traffic that made its way from New York to Boston. Even as a handsome new post office was built in 1938, some citizens were worried that Madison

was forever ruined by the crowds of visitors and newcomers. When the Great Hurricane struck late in September of that year, that fear became a different kind of reality. By the end of the day, the Boston Post Road was a literal logjam, strewn with fallen trees and broken branches; cottages and golf links alike were inundated or destroyed altogether.

After the devastation of the storm and the drama of widespread changes, the 1940s dawned in relative peacefulness. The nation was on the brink of World War II, but the growing town enjoyed a period of stability. Chockablock with older business, newer enterprises also lined U.S. Route 1: rental cabins, gas stations, and diners served the needs of the still-thriving tourism trade. Families moved into homes in new developments, and, in this decade, the number of preschool students in Madison was twice the number of residents older than age 65.

Growth and Transformation

During the 1950s, the rapid growth of town infrastructure ensured the education and care of all those new residents. Schools were built and expanded as the enrollment more than doubled between 1951 and 1960. By far, the most monumental change came with the construction of the Connecticut Turnpike. While the project restored peace and quiet to the town center, the Turnpike forever changed the landscape and the pace of life. Although the State of Connecticut had claimed Madison homes and farms under the principle of eminent domain, the highway

made Madison even more desirable to commuters working at city jobs.

From 1960 to 1970, the population jumped from 4,567 to 9,768. Madison had been transformed, at least in part, into a bedroom community. While summer visitors still arrived in great numbers, the volume of permanent residents had grown larger than the seasonal

influx. Sixty-four new roads were added by 1969, and newcomers spread north of the turnpike into the wooded hills. School construction continued, and a waterfront park was added to town property with the purchases of the once-private Surf Club and Garvan Point parcels.



Madison Beach Hotel, Madison, Conn.

By the mid-1970s the town had a new police department, and a new firehouse was built in North Madison. By 1980 the town population had soared to 14,000. While growth was not deliberately restricted, a growing awareness of the importance of preserving the character of the town resulted, during the next decades, in thoughtful planning and zoning regulations and the acquisition of several important open-space parcels.

Among the late-twentieth-century improvements to the town were the formation of an Inland Wetlands Commission and the innovation of a private grass-roots initiative called the Madison Land Conservation Trust.

In 2003 a new Daniel Hand High School opened. By 2006, Madison had approved the creation of both a downtown historic village district and a Historic District Commission. In 2008 a 2.3-mile section of the Boston Post Road was designated a CT Scenic Road, a tribute to the stewardship of town planners and residents. Today, three local historic districts further preserve and protect some of Madison's historic structures and its visible historic and cultural landscapes.

Today, Madison's population continues to grow, now approaching 18,000. Our town remains a primarily residential suburb with close ties to the nautical and maritime history of the Sound.

This article originally appeared in the July 2026 issue of *Madison Neighbors*.

MHS HISTORY BOOK GROUP

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!

Monthly meetings are led by John Yrchik (jyrchik@comcast.net) and are held the 4th Tuesday of each month 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 visit the Learn menu at www.madisonhistory.org.

JULY

The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt
Edmund Morris

AUGUST

The Wright Brothers
David McCullough

SEPTEMBER

Eisenhower in War and Peace
Jean Edward Smith

OCTOBER

A Perfect Frenzy: A Royal Governor, His Black Allies, and the Crisis that Spurred the American Revolution
by Andrew Lawler

NOVEMBER

The Blazing World: A New History of Revolutionary England, 1603-1689
by Jonathan Healey

DECEMBER

The Wide Wide Sea: Imperial Ambition, First Contact and the Fateful Final Voyage of Captain James Cook
by Hampton Sides

It's Award Season at MHS

Tom Boyle Wins Jane R. Kuhl Award

Congratulations to Thomas E. Boyle (right), Chair of the Historic District Commission, on receiving the Jane R. Kuhl Award for Historic Preservation, which was presented by Henry Griggs at the 2026 Annual Meeting.

Tom was recognized for his outstanding leadership and service to the Town's Historic District Commission, as well as for the vision and perseverance that led to the establishment of the Old Elm Street Local Historic District, a landmark preservation achievement in Madison.



MHS Federico Barrera Scholarship Winner

The MHS is also pleased to announce that Adam Stotz is the recipient of the Madison Historical Society's 2026 Federico Barrera Scholarship. Over the years, Adam has generously contributed his time and talents to the MHS, helping support our mission and engage the community. An Eagle Scout, Adam has demonstrated leadership, service, and dedication both within and beyond our organization. He is currently pursuing his private pilot license and will attend Auburn University this fall, where he plans to major in Professional Flight. The MHS wishes Adam continued success in his next chapter.



Madison Historical Society
Founded in 1917
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www.madisonhistory.org

*MHS offices are open
in the c. 1821 Lee's Academy
at 14 Meetinghouse Lane
on Wednesday, Thursday & Friday
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*For a tour of the Allis-Bushnell House,
the MHS c. 1785 National Historic
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*The MHS newsletter is
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