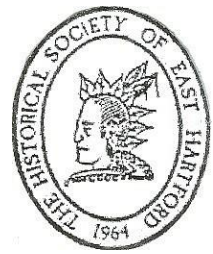


Historical Society of East Hartford

Newsletter, September 2015



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome back to the 2015 – 2016 Historical Society year. While we were initially apprehensive about the continuing success of our Sunday tours at the Martin Park Historical Buildings, the general public was encouraged to show a significant awareness in the Town's history through a series of articles written by members, and the staff at both the East Hartford Gazette and the Journal Inquirer throughout the summer months. The interviews with and pictures of our volunteer docents provided the appeal and interest. And, so they came! Showing up in groups of twos and threes, with an occasional solitary visitor passing through. Our stated 'Open For Business' hours of 1pm to 4pm gradually began extending to become an unplanned 1pm to 5pm+. We shuttled visitors from room to room, building to building, and locking up behind us while still talking. Only to turn around to find a still-enthused group of people standing out on the lawn waiting to continue their conversations with us about the history of our Town and its people. To our Sunday docents, I wish to express our sincere thanks for the extra time spent with all our guests at the Huguenot House complex. While we have always shared our enthusiasm and knowledge with the public, you have made their summer experience informative and enjoyable, and we thank you for all your endeavors. It was a great season for historical East Hartford's tourism!

Our timeline for the Civil War is slowly winding down. The conclusion of the American Civil War includes important battles, skirmishes, raids and other events of 1865. These led to additional Confederate surrenders, key Confederate captures, and disbandments of Confederate military units that occurred after Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender on April 9, 1865 at Appomattox Court House. Our country lost a staggering number of Americans, both Confederate and Union. The figure that is most often quoted is 620,000; more soldiers dying from either a lack of proper medical attention or disease. At any rate, these casualties exceed the nation's sad loss in all its other wars combined, from the Revolution through Vietnam.

I hope to see you all at the Annual Dinner. The menu from Becker's Catering sounds delicious, as always. And we have an unusual PowerPoint presentation on the William's family of East Hartford. All about gypsies in East Hartford!

Bette Daraskevich, President

PROGRAM TO FEATURE BETH LAPIN, AUTHOR OF CARAVAN OF DREAMS

Our after-dinner entertainment will feature Middletown author Beth Lapin (right) who will present a PowerPoint program on her book entitled Caravan of Dreams which is a true story about an English Gypsy family with ties to 19th century East Hartford. Thomas and Victoria Williams were well-known horse traders in town and are buried in Center Cemetery. Based on historical records, Caravan of Dreams traces the lives, loves and aspirations of English Gypsies arriving in America during the middle 1800s and offers insight into a mysterious culture. It also harbors Victoria's grief,





HSEH Annual Dinner Meeting

September 16th 2015

First Congregational Church East Hartford

White and Dark Meat Roasted Turkey

Baked Ham

Roasted Baby New Potatoes

Green Beans with Shallot Butter

New England Apple Sausage Cranberry Stuffing

Tossed Salad with Italian Vinaigrette

Bottled Water, Tea, Coffee

Rolls with Butter

Pumpkin Pie with Fresh Whipped Cream

pain and loss as a wife and mother with a tragic family story. Victoria herself was found dead on the East Hartford railroad tracks in 1896. Beth Lapin has been writing most of her life. Her publications focus on relationships, with an undercurrent of sleuthing in historical contexts. Having advanced degrees in social and biological sciences, she has been a facilitator of creative writing groups since the 1990s. Beth will have books available for sale at the church for anyone wishing to purchase an autographed copy.

Craig Johnson

ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

The September 16, 2015 Historical Society Annual Meeting will be held at the First Congregational Church, 837 Main Street in East Hartford. The usual awesome buffet style dinner catered by Matt Becker of Becker's Catering awaits your dining pleasure. Reservations for the dinner must be received by Monday, September 14, 2015 using the required reservation form enclosed in the newsletter. The cost will be \$20, the same for both members and guests of members. A menu is included. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. and dinner starts promptly at 6:30. For anyone wanting not to attend the dinner but would like to see the program, you can arrive after 7:30 p.m. There is plenty of free parking available in the back of the church. Call Craig Johnson at 860-568-2884 for information or if you have any questions.

Craig Johnson

SEPTEMBER 16, 2015 ANNUAL DINNER/PROGRAM

Reservation Must be Received by Sept, 14, 2015.

Tickets are \$20.00

NAME: _____ \$ _____

NAME: _____ \$ _____

TOTAL: \$ _____

Make a check for the dinner reservation out to: **The Historical Society of East Hartford, Inc.**
Mail check to: **Historical Society of East Hartford, Inc., Po Box 380166, East Hartford, CT, 06138-0166**

MARY LOU DEVIVO of Windham, Jan 17, 1939 – July 1, 2015, member of this Society passed away in July. She was a teacher, business owner, active volunteer especially in the Windham area.

JANICE ARBUCKLE, Dec 9, 1928 – July 29, 2015, longtime member of this Society and of Friends of Center Cemetery and devoted, active parishioner of the First Congregational Church also passed away in July.

The Historical Society extends its heartfelt sympathy to Mary Lou's and Janice's families and friends.

ELECTIONS

Historical Society of East Hartford Executive Board 2015 – 2016

President:	Bette Daraskevich
Vice President:	Craig Johnson
Recording/Corresponding Secretary:	Eileen Driscoll
Treasurer:	Joyce Yoo
Historian/Antiquarian:	Jeff Cummings
Director:	Virginia Lynch
4 year:	Betty Russell
3 year:	Ruth Shapleigh-Brown
2 year:	Dan Russell
1 year:	

We are grateful to all of the current officers who have agreed to fulfill the second years of their terms. Each and every one of them had done an admirable job, above and beyond their required duties. We thank them all, as well as the Committee Chairs, for keeping our gem of a Society afloat.

There is one position to be filled – Director for a four year term. Virginia Lynch has agreed to be a candidate.

For those of you who may not know Ginny, she is a long-time member of the Historical Society. She is a descendent of the Richard Risley family who settled in East Hartford in the 1600s, so she has intimate knowledge of our Town history.

We thank Judy Hillman for serving as director for the past four years and for her loyal assistance at the Huguenot House, as well as her research with respect to a recorded tour of our Historical Complex.

Betty Russell

MEMBERSHIP DUES, SEPT 1, 2015 – AUG 31, 2016

Once again it is time to renew our memberships. The Historical Society depends on your membership to keep doing our community projects, sharing our rich history, and keeping our historical buildings open. If it's easier, mail this renewal in with your confirmation for the annual dinner. See you there. *Fern Strong, redbarnrugs2@yahoo.com*

NAME: _____ **PHONE:** _____

ADDRESS: _____ **CITY, STATE, ZIP:** _____

EMAIL: _____ **EMAIL NEWSLETTER? Y ___ N ___**

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____ **\$15.00 / Individual, \$20.00/All at one address,**
\$10.00 / Student, \$50.00/Patron

Make a check for membership out to: **The Historical Society of East Hartford, Inc.**

Mail check to: **Historical Society of East Hartford, Inc., Po Box 380166, East Hartford, CT, 06138-0166**

HUGUENOT HOUSE ENDS ANOTHER SEASON OF OPENINGS

The Huguenot House Museum had a very busy season come to an end. Thanks to our loyal volunteers, we were able to open Saturday, June 13 on Connecticut Open House Day and stay open eight consecutive Sunday afternoons from July 12th through August.

The number of visitors was much higher this season due to added newspaper coverage. We also used our local public access cable station as a reminder of our openings. Much appreciation goes to Kathy McWilliams of the Journal Inquirer who ran a story on our Sunday opening and allowed for continuous coverage in the paper's Local Calendar and Time Out sections. Also want to acknowledge East Hartford Reminder News reporter Lauri Voter, who visited on July 26 and did a full page story complete with photographs that appeared in the August 6 Reminder News. The increased attendance more than doubled the amount of donations we normally receive at the Museum.

Craig Johnson

TAVERN, TAVERN, WHO'S GOT THE TAVERN?

The American Colonies were once a land of small, primitive towns and settlements where homes served as the hubs of most community activity. The concept of hospitality--the warmth, charm and style with which guests were taken into the home--was a central element of a town's daily life.

Most people today probably assume that abstinence must have been a part of the many social restrictions of our Puritan ancestors. They would be genuinely surprised to learn that the Mayflower actually carried more beer than water for its journey to the New World; chiefly due to the impurities in water in Europe. The King of England is actually responsible for the creation of the taverns and inns that dotted the New England countryside. In the early 1600's, the King decreed that each town provide a 'House of Hospitality' for travelers.

Samuel Cole opened the first tavern in Boston on March 4, 1634. Before long the demand and necessity for taverns in New England, and throughout all the colonies, was overwhelming. And, in June of 1644 the General Court of the Colony of Connecticut ordered that all its towns would provide for the 'wants of travelers'. Almost all colonial taverns were located on main highways or turnpikes. The ordinary inhabitants of those towns could not (under law) 'continue at any common victualing house in his owne town beyond a half an hour at a time'. Then you had to leave! They could not frequent the establishments after 9:00 o'clock at night drinking wine, beer or hard cider. No inhabitant could sell or provide hard liquor, wine or beer to the Indians; they could only sell as much cider to the native Podunks as the Indians could drink in the provider's presence.

The tavern was a place to gather, have a pint of stout, share a newspaper, peruse the latest pamphlets, and engage in friendly—or maybe not so friendly—banter concerning the latest news and gossip. Newspapers were delivered by post to taverns, and the literate patrons eagerly read them aloud to their illiterate neighbors. Signs were essential and since many people in colonial times could not read, a sign with a picture was an absolute necessity.

In the century or so leading up to the Revolution, colonial taverns and inns were an essential part of the community. Horses need frequent rests, and travel by coach and horseback was far from comfortable for a passenger. In Massachusetts, on the roads leading to Boston, taverns and inns were spaced about every eight miles, which worked out to a reasonable journey in the winter cold before a person needed to warm up, inside and out. In the cities and some rural areas, taverns were much more plentiful, sometimes scandalously so. The only difference between a colonial era tavern and an inn is that: the inn offered sleeping accommodations, and the tavern only provided food and drink.

In the beginning, the Puritans of New England tried their best to regulate taverns and people's behavior inside them, a practice common throughout the colonies. County officials supervised their operation, and recognizing the vital role they played in society, they sought out 'suitable innkeepers'. The tavern was the means by which the town assemblies controlled the distribution of alcohol. Early legislature dictated that assistance for the poor be the responsibility of every community. So, a common practice was to offer licenses to widows, in part to keep them off the county dole, as a woman in those days without money nor a husband often relied on social welfare to survive. Hence, the British term 'alewife' was derived. But the alewife was a solitary soul in her own environment. Women could come into taverns to look for their husbands, or they could come in with male relatives; other than that, women were not allowed.

Because of their great importance to the community, every innkeeper in Connecticut had to be recommended by the selectmen and civil authorities, constables and grand jurors of the town in which he resided, and then licensed at the discretion of the Court of Common Pleas. Drunkenness was discouraged, and both the inebriated and the tavern keeper could be prosecuted. What liquors and what food could be served were decreed by county or city regulation.

But, the community's insistence on having a colonial era tavern close by churches made monitoring these laws doubly difficult. It was a common practice to spend all day Sundays in church, with a break around noon for lunch and to warm up, because in winter, churches were seldom adequately heated.

Mince meat pies were, in fact the fast food of a colonial day and age. Wrapped in dough, they were cooked, stored, and could be reheated when needed. Truthfully, among the upper 'crust' of society, the crust wasn't eaten. But the poor couldn't afford to be choosy and sopped up the gravy with the outer layer.

The taverns also gave us our current cup and spoon measuring system. Europeans favored scales, but Americans, always eager to get back to work and therefore in a hurry, demanded faster service. So the innkeepers resorted to measuring with cups and spoons, which was much quicker.

And of course there were puddings, always a favorite among the British all around the empire. In the New England colonies, it was difficult to grow wheat and oats, so the grain of choice was corn, which it turns out: makes a tasty pudding. Pudding was filling and quick to cook, hence the reference to 'hasty pudding' in the song, Yankee Doodle. Corn meal also made up the essential ingredient to Johnny cake, a bread similar to a pancake, which could be eaten hot or taken with you on your journey.

With each meal you got alcohol. A colonial era tavern's reputation could rise and fall on the quality of its ale. Ales and beer were usually locally brewed, often by the innkeeper himself. Hard cider was also extremely popular. The dirty little secret we're not told in school about Johnny Appleseed was that: he wasn't planting apple trees to have apples to eat, but for cider to drink. Which had as much to do with practicality as inebriation. You couldn't keep an apple crop through the winter, but you could keep a barrel of cider. Also, cider could be transported undamaged for long distances so it was a commercial enterprise as well.



[Great Room, Bullard Tavern. Old Sturbridge Village, Worcester County, Massachusetts OSV site](#)

Hard liquor was common among the English colonists, although immigrants preferred beer and suffered somewhat less drunkenness. Rum was cheap and a perennial favorite. The typical colonist in 1770 swilled down almost four gallons of hard liquor each year. Water was often foul, infected and generally suspect, so they chased all the rum and brandy with gallons of beer, cider and wine each day.

One might wonder why the typical colonist wasn't an obese drunkard, but you have to consider the hard lives they led, and the amount of calories burned off in a day. A typical colonist might take in 6,000 calories in alcoholic beverages alone daily, but obesity was rare, which gives you an idea of the number of calories they must have been burning off. Today, the generally accepted caloric intake is put around 2,000.

East Hartford was home to several taverns that appeared along the highways to and from Boston, New York and closer destinations from New London and Rhode Island. Two of the three main routes connecting Massachusetts to New York passed through Hartford. After all, we did have a few ferries; the commonest method of transportation over the Connecticut River. The number of well-traveled roads increased and then enlarged. In a relatively short period of time, East Hartford was home to more than a dozen taverns, several of them offering overnight accommodations, and thus, qualifying as inns.

The earliest roads traveled in East Hartford were laid out close to the river. Prospect Street and Naubuc Avenue were once two of the town's 'main drags' and were populated by the earliest settlers from the 1630's. Our current Main Street developed some years later as the 'Kings Highway' as a result of constant spring floodings in the lower Meadows. Some earlier taverns, like the John Kentfield tavern were located in the south-end near Porter and Broad Streets, close to the New London Turnpike. There were others located on Connecticut Boulevard and on Pitkin Street adjacent to the Connecticut River and the ferries. Others were situated on what eventually became known as Silver Lane.

The junction of Silver Lane and Main Street was situated on the north-to-south route of Springfield to New London or New Haven. It was also the site of the key east-to-west route to Manchester, Bolton and Andover. Further on eastward, this route connected to the Tolland Turnpike and onward to Boston. One of the primary stops for travelers in East Hartford would have been at the juncture of these well-traveled routes. While there have been several taverns located at or near this intersection, only the William Smith Tavern remains on-site at 158 Silver Lane. The others have all disappeared; the casualties of 'progress'. However, the Town of East Hartford was able to salvage one of these buildings – the David Little Tavern.

We know that David Little owned and operated a tavern on Silver Lane due to the items listed in his Last Will and Testament. Who else would keep a 'large table in the bar room', cases of gin and cider, and 28 assorted chairs? His inventory of the furniture and table service runs on for pages in the will. State records dated in 1786 show him as being assessed a tax for running a tavern (Since tax records for Hartford County were non-existent before 1783, we assume 1782 might be the earliest David Little established his businesses). And a sign, uncovered after the property was acquired by the State DOT for a re-alignment of the intersection in the 1980's reads, "David Little's Tavern".

Interestingly, and to add to the confusion, historical town records uncovered an anomaly: the house that was to be so carefully dismantled and stored for posterity was only half-built at the time of his death in 1792 ! David Little had actually lived next door, due east of this property and ran a smaller tavern (and a store) out of his house at the corner of Silver Lane and Main. He had sold a section of adjacent land to his wife's brother, Moses Hills, and the two of them were co-owners of the building that was already under construction. When David died at the age of 46, his immediate heirs as beneficiaries and minors, sold the building to their Uncle Moses who finished the house. From the description of interior of the larger facility, the center of the first floor-plan did not contain a center staircase and was maintained as a large bar room similar to the Great Room in the Bullard Tavern at Sturbridge Village. It is thought that Moses Hills ran the new larger tavern and the name of Little's Tavern was retained in honor of David.

Further confusion exists because David Little's smaller tavern was used as a tavern into the 1800's by Epaphras Bidwell. It exchanged hands again, going to Benjamin Sisson, who acquired the entire corner from Bidwell's unmarried daughter. These buildings were named for the persons who owned them. The tavern became a private home afterwards.

This house was dismantled during the summer of 1989 to permit work on the nearby highway. While the site was not planned to be part of the highway itself, the house lot was needed for storage of trucks associated with that construction. Dismantled, photographed and carefully numbered the entire house sits in a bay on Ecology Drive. Several ideas have been floated as to the use that the building could be put to.....such as an information center or a restaurant. The building is now listed as part of the State Register of Historic Places. Perhaps this treasure will see the light of day yet!

Credits: "An Architectural History of East Hartford" edited by Doris Darling Sherrow; *Historic Resources Inventories to Connecticut Historical Commission* – Doris Sherrow and Scott McDonough – 1989; *News Articles: Hartford Courant and East Hartford Gazette Apr. – Dec. 1989; "Estate of David Little" 1792; East Windsor Probate District; "East Hartford: Its History and Traditions". Jos. O Goodwin; Picture: Bullard Tavern Interiors from the Old Sturbridge Village website*

Historical Society of East Hartford

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indiv \$15, 1 address \$20, student \$10,
patron \$50

Deadline Nov Newsletter – Oct 31, 2015

Clip art:

www.canstockphoto.com/illustration/caravan.html



Sept Dinner/Program

Date: Wed, Sept 16, 2015

Doors Open: 6:00pm

Dinner: 6:30pm

Meal: Becker's Catering

Program: *Beth Lapin Caravan of Dreams*

Where: 1st Cong Church,

Address: 837 Main St

Fee: Dinner & Program \$20

Fee: Program only, 7:30pm, no fee

Info: Craig, 860-568-2884