

Historical Society of East Hartford

Newsletter, May 2016



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The modern holiday of an American Mother's Day was first celebrated in 1908, when [Anna Jarvis](#) held a memorial for her mother at St Andrew's Methodist Church in [Grafton, West Virginia](#). Her campaign to make "Mother's Day" a recognized holiday in the United States began in 1905, the year her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis, died. Ann Reeves Jarvis had been a peace activist who cared for wounded soldiers on both sides of the [American Civil War](#), and created Mother's Work Clubs to address public health issues. Anna Jarvis wanted to honor her mother by continuing the work she started and to set aside a day to honor all mothers. In 1908, the [US Congress](#) rejected a proposal to make Mother's Day an official holiday, but eventually it became an official U.S. holiday in 1914. According to the telephone companies, more long-distance phone calls are placed on this day than any other in a calendar year. Like many mothers, I have a collection of handmade 'Mom' gifts and cards I can't quite part with. They bring back so many memories of those little people who somehow grew into adults while I wasn't looking. So, here's to all the Moms out there – hope you enjoy your day.

After the success obtained by Anna Jarvis with the promotion of Mother's Day in Grafton, West Virginia, the first observance of a "Father's Day" was held on July 5, 1908, in [Fairmont, West Virginia](#), in the Williams Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, Grace Golden Clayton was mourning the loss of her father when, on December 1907, the [Monongah, WV Mining Disaster](#) in a nearby town killed 361 men, 250 of them fathers, leaving around a thousand fatherless children. Clayton suggested her pastor Robert Thomas Webb honor all those fathers in a service. It became a local observation exclusively. A bill to accord national recognition of the holiday was introduced in Congress in 1913 and failed. In 1916, President [Woodrow Wilson](#) went to Spokane to speak in a Father's Day celebration and wanted to make it official, but Congress resisted, fearing that it would become commercialized. US President [Calvin Coolidge](#) recommended in 1924 that the day be observed by the nation, but stopped short of issuing a national proclamation. In 1957, Maine Senator [Margaret Chase Smith](#) wrote a proposal accusing Congress of ignoring fathers for 40 years while honoring mothers, thus "[singling] out just one of our two parents". In 1966, President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) issued the first presidential proclamation honoring fathers, designating the third Sunday in June as Father's Day. Six years later, the day was made a permanent national holiday when President [Richard Nixon](#) signed it into law in 1972, 58 years after Wilson made Mother's Day official. So, I wish a Happy Father's Day on June 19th to all our Dads as well!

We will once again open the Martin Preservation Park facilities to the public for June 11th from 1-4pm. The opening will be part of Connecticut Open House Day which is celebrated by 150 municipalities in the state. Our preparation necessitates some light housecleaning on our part and we can meet during the week to get the three buildings spic and span if the weekends are inconvenient for your participation. We vacuum, dust and wash windows. All the necessary cleaning materials are supplied, but I'd advise bringing your own broom. I'll pass a sign up sheet at the next meeting this month. Three or four people should be able to complete this task in a few hours.

Bette Daraskevich, President

MAY 18th PROGRAM ON THE 1964/1965 NEW YORK'S WORLD'S FAIR

The Historical Society is honored to have as its guest speaker Manchester Community College Director of New Students and First Year Programs Jason Scappaticci who will present a PowerPoint slide show on history that



The Travelers Insurance Companies, 1964 New York World's Fair. Photo courtesy of Jason Scappaticci.

happened during most of our lifetimes, the New York World's Fair of 1964 and 1965. For those of us who grew up in the tristate area, a visit to the World's Fair was a very memorable experience. As a young teenager it's where I experienced a glimpse of what was envisioned for our future. Remember the Monorail, the Ford and General Motors exhibitions, the United States Pavilion, General Electric, Travelers? It was also our first exposure to the Belgian Waffle. There is very little that remains today of the original Fairgrounds except for the Unisphere, a huge stainless steel globe that still stands in Flushing Meadows Park in the Queens. Jason's program will bring back some happy memories of 50 years ago for those who attended. For anyone who did not get to see it in person, you will have a visual look at what the New York World's Fair was all about.

Manchester Board of Education. He earned a BA in history from Utica College and an MA in American Studies from Trinity College in Hartford. He has a number of lectures on historical topics and has traveled through many towns of the state to give the lectures for senior centers, libraries and historical societies. He has also been invited to speak at the Old State House in Hartford.

Jason is from Manchester, CT where he works as Director of New Students and First Year Programs at Manchester Community College. He is also active in local politics and is currently serving in his second term on the

Following a short 7:00pm business meeting, the Wednesday May 18th program will be held at the Raymond Library, 840 Main Street, East Hartford. Light refreshments will be served. Plenty of free parking is available in the back of the Library.

For any questions, please call Craig Johnson at 860-568-2884.

Craig Johnson, Vice President / Program Chair

HUGUENOT HOUSE 2016 SEASON SCHEDULE

This summer season, the Martin Park museum buildings will be open Sunday afternoons from 1 to 4 starting on July 10 going through August 28th. A sign-up sheet will be passed around at the May meeting, so please check your calendars ahead of time so that you can add your name and telephone number. To keep our buildings open eight Sunday afternoons for tours, we really do need your help. Also later in May, we will need to devote a few hours doing some Spring cleaning. We hope to announce a date and time for this at the meeting. Thank you.

Craig Johnson

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association Trails Day Event will be held on Sunday, June 5th where the Historical Society has signed up to host a walk along the Hockanum River Linear Park Trail and also include a tour of Center Cemetery. Ruth Shapleigh-Brown and I will be co-leaders of this walk. To participate, meet at the parking lot on Elm Street across from the back entrance to Center Cemetery from 2:00 to 4:00 pm.

The 12th Annual Connecticut Open House Day is on Saturday, June 11th. On this state-wide event for tourism, we open up the Huguenot House from 1:00 to 4:00 pm for tours. This is usually our busiest day of the season and we need volunteers for self-guided tours of the Blacksmith Shop and School House. Please consider helping us out on that day.

Craig Johnson

JOHN JAMES MCCOOK

Bette Daraskevich

The Historical Society is fortunate to hear from many people on its website who either lived in the area at one time or were related to persons who were once residents of the town. Their interest in the past is often a revelation and opens a door to our need for information about the history of our hometown. Such was the communication that we received on our website from a woman researching a relative who lived here in the 1870's. Renee White of Mount Shasta, California (a town near the Oregon state line) contacted the Historical Society and asked if she could send what she had inherited as a legacy from a now deceased relative, in the hope that we could identify certain people for her. We began our correspondence with names and graduated to pictures with dates and addresses thrown into the mix to facilitate the search.

Renee was looking for information on a relation by the name of Nellie Bancroft, who lived in East Hartford and went to school in the area in the mid 1800's. She scanned and sent studio portrait photos of a lovely, dark haired, young woman and her fair-haired friend, Jennie Bidwell. But, it was the third photograph she sent that had us sit up and take notice.

This third photograph was of a serious and handsome young man by the name of John James McCook. He turned out to be THE John James McCook of the Hartford Butler-McCook House.

While Renee was unable to produce a connection between the two young ladies, the young man and East Hartford, our research locally turned up many references to John James McCook and his history with the area. I personally had seen pictures of the Reverend McCook as an older man, associated with Trinity College as a teaching theologian. But, his life was more interesting than a Wikipedia biography.

John James McCook, Jr. (born February 4, 1843 - January 9, 1927) was a chaplain in the Union Army during the American Civil War, and post-bellum lawyer, professor, and theologian. His mother, Elizabeth Lydia Shelden was born in Hartford, CT of an old New England family. He was a descendant of a Scots-Irish patriarch named George McCook, who had emigrated from Ireland in 1790 after he participated in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the English that could have resulted in his execution for treason. Settling in western Pennsylvania, George was an active, full participant in the Whiskey Rebellion until President Washington extinguished the rebellion in 1794. The so-called "whiskey tax" was the first tax imposed on a domestic product by the newly formed federal government. It became law in 1791, and was intended to generate revenue to help reduce the national debt, but remained difficult to collect. The events contributed to the formation of political parties in the United States, a process already underway. The whiskey tax was repealed in 1801. Benefiting from the President's leniency when the rebellion's leaders were pardoned and allowed to go home, George finally settled down, to the great relief of his wife and family, and devoted his efforts to business, raising a family, and to community development. An effort that included the founding of Jefferson College in Canonsburgh PA, the first college west of the Appalachians. George's three sons all participated in the Civil War, and were the fathers of the other male McCook members who served the Union.

John was the youngest member of the third generation, 'Fighting McCooks', a family of Ohioans who contributed 15 members to the Union army. The McCook family statistics are summarized in this statement from Charles Whalen's book's title page: "Seventeen McCooks fought for the North in the Civil War: three major generals, three brigadier generals, one naval lieutenant, four surgeons, two colonels, one major, one lieutenant, one private, and one chaplain. Four gave their lives to save the Union." Their tremendous commitment and courage brought fame to their family, and those who survived the war went on to add to that fame in civilian life, with prominent careers as doctors and lawyers, ministers and scholars. They were mostly the children of two brothers, Daniel and John McCook. Thirteen of their sons were actively involved in the army, making the family one of the most prolific in American military history. Their clans would become affectionately known as the "Tribe of Dan" and the "Tribe of John." The third brother, Dr. George McCook (1795-1873), and his son Dr. George Latimer McCook (1824-1874) served as unpaid, non-enlisted surgeons to the Union Army during the Civil War, making up the remaining members of this large family.

It was said of the McCooks that; *"They were born leaders; they were all men of noble bearing, such men as would naturally be selected in conflict requiring valor, judgment, and influence with men".*

Soon after the American Civil War began, John James McCook, Jr. was commissioned as a second lieutenant in Company D of the 1st West Virginia Infantry Regiment on May 15, 1861. Records indicate that McCook left the army when his regiment's three-month term of service expired later that year. He served in the 1st Virginia at Philippi, on General McClellan's staff as an assistant quartermaster. After leaving the army, McCook enrolled at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, where he graduated in 1863. While he was a student in Hartford, he roomed with his maternal aunt, Eliz Lydia Royse Sheldon, and orphaned cousin, Eliza Sheldon Butler, at the Butler family house on Main Street. McCook began the study of medicine, but abandoned it to enter the Episcopal ministry at the Berkeley Divinity School of Yale University, graduating in 1866. During the same year, McCook married his second cousin, Eliza, who was the daughter of John Butler, a wealthy mill owner. Butler died young and left his 7 year old daughter as his sole beneficiary. After they were married, McCook began his career in service to God.

An Episcopal mission, conducted by students from the Episcopal institution of Trinity College, Hartford, existed briefly in East Hartford in 1842. Ten years later other Trinity students resumed the mission, reaching immigrant mill workers of English origin whose background in the Church of England predisposed them toward the Faith. Two years later the group organized as the parish of Grace Church, holding services in several different East Hartford buildings over the next dozen years. 1865 brought a change in name to St. John's Chapel, and in 1868 the name was finally changed to St. John's Church. Early membership included people from beyond the limits of East Hartford. An important decision was taken in 1866 when John James McCook (1843-1927), a Trinity graduate who had been a lay reader at the mission, was invited to take charge of the parish from the time of his ordination on March 15, 1866. One year after becoming rector of St. John's he left to become rector of St. John's, Detroit, Michigan, but twelve months later returned to his first church. John McCook's wife, Eliza, was independently wealthy and it was possible for McCook to serve the Episcopalian diocese for 61 years, without pay.

John James McCook was the driving force behind the building of St. Johns Church. It was designed by Edward Tuckerman Potter, a famous New York architect, who began the process of designing and building the Church of the Good Shepherd on Wyllys Street in Hartford shortly after accepting the building contract in East Hartford. The similarities in architecture between the two parishes is clearly recognizable. Potter executed the smaller East Hartford parish with the same style and Gothic elegance that distinguishes the larger Hartford Church.

The widow of Samuel Colt, gun manufacturer, paid frequent visits to New York where she moved in Episcopal high society. She knew the major church architects and was familiar with their buildings. Toward the middle of 1866, Mrs. Colt chose Edward Potter as her architect for the Church of the Good Shepherd. She may well have been favorably impressed by the plans for Potter's small St. John's Church in East Hartford (the cornerstone there was laid several months before that of the Church of the Good Shepherd). Perhaps she attended some of the Reverend McCook's services while she resided in East Hartford. Incidentally, St. John's in East Hartford was erected under the aegis of the Reverend Mr. Doane, who was Mrs. Colt's adviser and friend. Edward Potter was connected with the Episcopal hierarchy through his father, the Bishop of Pennsylvania; his uncle, the Bishop of New York; and two brothers who were in the ministry. Subsequently, Potter came out of retirement in 1894 to design and build the Church of the Good Shepherd parish house. Edward Tuckerman Potter is best represented in the Hartford area more so than anywhere else in America. Besides the buildings already mentioned, Potter designed the library at Armsmead (the Colt Mansion in Hartford), Trinity Church in Wethersfield and two houses in the Nook Farm enclave at Hartford - one for George H. Warner (razed in 1959), and the excellently restored Mark Twain house. The Twain house is Potter's most noteworthy domestic building, and is recognized as one of America's great Victorian houses. Hartford is doubly fortunate in also having the finest ecclesiastical ensemble: the Colt Memorial buildings, which include the church and the parish house. Potter kept up his interest in St. John's and the Reverend McCook. In later years when he returned to East Hartford, he attended church there and sang in the choir.

In 1882 McCook was appointed to the faculty of Trinity College and served as a professor of modern languages at Trinity College for thirty years. Trinity's John J. McCook Professorship in Modern Languages was endowed in his honor. He taught languages until he retired in 1923, when he was elected to the Board of Trustees. Widely traveled and a man of many interests, McCook was particularly concerned with social conditions and reform. For many years he conducted investigations into the life of tramps, alcoholism and related problems.

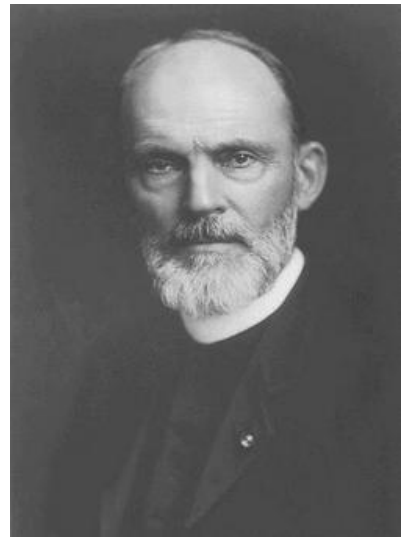
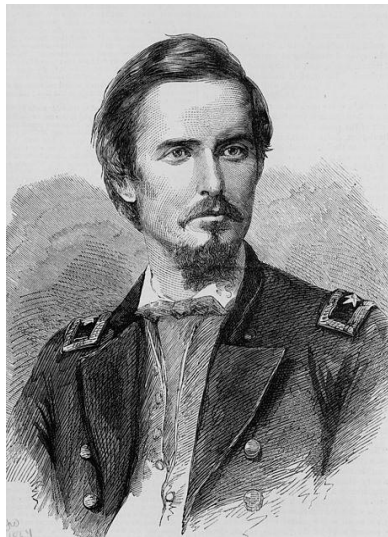
The Rev. John J. McCook may have made his home in his wife's house, but his great love was for his church in East Hartford. He frequented the various schools that taught the young women and men on both sides of the river advising and assisting the various instructors in their work. The McCooks purposefully stayed on Main Street

while their neighbors moved to Asylum Hill, a far more fashionable residential area. They remained loyal to the Main Street location – a marked contrast to their customary observance of social fashion. The Butler-McCook Homestead, built in 1782, is the oldest extant building in the city of Hartford. The family also spent many summers at the Connecticut shoreline in a cottage built near what became known as McCook's Point¹. The McCook family,



seen above in 1916, had summered on the Niantic shore since shortly after the Civil War.

John James McCook died on January 9, 1927 in his 84th year. He is buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery, Hartford, Connecticut in the McCook family plot. Thank you, Renee for sharing!



The tinted photo (left) is the studio portrait taken in Hartford sent by Renee White of Mount Shasta, CA

References:

"John James McCook (Professor)." (2016) In *Ohio Civil War Central*, Retrieved May 1, 2016; Meunier, Stephen J.,

¹ Read about the now completed Niantic Bay Boardwalk and McCook's Point in Peter Marteka's article "Soaking Up Sound Waves" in the *Hartford Courant, Sunday CT* (section B), pg B2, Sunday May 8, 2016.

"John J. McCook and Social Management in Victorian Age Hartford" (2002). *Hartford Studies Collection: Papers by Students and Faculty*. .

The Fighting McCooks: America's Famous Fighting Family. Charles and Barbara Whalen. Bethesda MD: Westmoreland Press

Paquette, Lee, "Only More So", The History of East Hartford, East Hartford: Raymond Library Co., 1976.

Photos and drawings courtesy of Connecticut Landmarks and Renee White

FRIENDS OF CENTER CEMETERY CLEAN UP DAY

Saturday May 14 10am – 2pm

Come on down and visit or help volunteer to clean up our historic cemetery. We'll do some work to clean stones and reset toppled ones with the help of Tony Roy and his students from Goodwin College. Please if you have ancestors buried in our old section this would be a good day to come out and pay a visit. Members will be on hand to help you find ancestors and answer your questions

For more information contact Ruthie Brown V.P of Friends of Center Cemetery at 860-643-5652 or at Shapbrown@cox.net Ruth Shapleigh_Brown

HSEH MEMBERSHIP DUES PAST DUE SEPT 1, 2015 – AUG 31, 2016

January 2016 was the past due date for members to pay their 2015-2016 dues. Unfortunately some members have still not paid their dues. For those in arrears on their HSEH memberships please do send in your dues to the Historical Society. The Society depends on your financial support to keep doing our community projects, sharing our town's rich history, paying for programs open to the public, and keeping our historical buildings open. Thank you.

NAME: _____ CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

ADDRESS: _____ PHONE: _____

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

Historical Society of East Hartford

Mail: PO Box 380166, E Hartford, CT, 06138-0166

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Web site: <http://www.hseh.org>

Membership: 860-528-0716

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

Deadline Sept Newsletter – Aug 9, 2016



New York State Observation Towers

May Program

Date: Wed, May 18, 2016

Time: 7:00pm

Program: Jason Scappaticci –
1964 NY World's Fair

Where: Raymond Library

Fee: No cost

Info: Craig, 860-568-2884

Image: NY state Observation

Towers, 1964 NY World's
Fair, courtesy Jason
Scappaticci