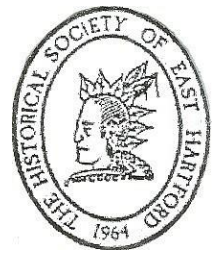


# *Historical Society of East Hartford*

*Newsletter, March 2017*



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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

The winter so far has not been too cold or snowy. The Huguenot House was snowed in for a while in February but the white stuff disappeared very quickly after we were blessed by some mild spring-like temperatures. The patchwork repairs to the roof made by the Town Park and Rec Maintenance have kept the attic dry. We received at least one written estimate for a new roof replacement. We are now moving ahead on submitting one or more grant applications. At the Selden Brewer House a team of dedicated volunteer members are making tremendous headway on organizing the collections and cataloging the donations we have upstairs. They usually meet Tuesday mornings and members are welcome to stop by and say hello. Special thanks to Jeff and Ruthie for coordinating this project.

Historical Society membership renewals have been slightly lower than last year, so we want to remind everyone receiving this newsletter who may have forgotten to send in their dues to please, please do not forget us. It is the support through your memberships that allow us to give free programs at the East Hartford Library to you and to the public. Dues also cover the cost of producing our newsletters. If no dues are received from existing members in over two years, we might have to limit the newsletters we send out to save on expenses.

Looking ahead toward the spring, we have some up-coming dates you should mark on your calendars. The 2017 Connecticut Trails Day sponsored by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association falls on June 3rd and 4th and the Historical Society will again participate on either Saturday or Sunday. The 13th annual Connecticut Open House Day sponsored by the Connecticut Office of Tourism will be on Saturday, June 10th. We will open our museum buildings at Martin Park from 1 to 4 in the afternoon, our only month of June opening. We hope to have as many volunteers as possible help us out that day.

Long time Historical Society member Raymond Johnson recently had to step down from his honoree title as East Hartford Town Historian because of health reasons. Raymond has a wealth of knowledge of East Hartford town history and he can always answer any questions I can ask. Ray, thank you again for your continued support as a member of our Society.

*Craig Johnson, President*

## **CAPTAIN STEPHEN BUCKLAND, LOCAL REVOLUTIONARY WAR BLACKSMITH**

### **March Presentation by Lance Kozikowski**

The Wednesday, March 15th membership meeting of the Historical Society will include a presentation by Lance A. Kozikowski of the Ripley Hill Forge and Metal Works in Coventry. His talk will center around the local Revolutionary War blacksmith who went off to war and came home to find his shop in ruins and no money to pay his taxes. He portrays Captain Stephen Buckland part of a large family that gave its name to the area called Buckland Hills Mall in Manchester; which prior to 1823 was part of East Hartford. Members of the Buckland family are buried in our Center Cemetery. The meeting in the lower level meeting room of the Raymond Library at 840 Main Street, begins at 7:00pm and is open to the public. We are welcome to check out the Revolutionary War uniforms, original documents, and artifacts displayed by our featured speaker. A short business meeting will precede the program; refreshments will be served.

*Bette Daraskevich, Vice President*

## PHOTOGRAPH DONATION MADE TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We are very grateful to a former resident of East Hartford who contacted us recently to ask if we would be interested in some photographs of the former United Homes housing project that once existed where the Coca-Cola Bottling facility now stands today. Ms. Kathleen Connolly of Hebron, CT spent her early childhood there. During the war years, with the massive amount of employment necessary at Pratt & Whitney, there was not enough housing available to accommodate workers. Permanent housing such as Mayberry Village was not enough so the federal government used temporary housing such as United Homes for Aircraft workers and their families. The following paragraph and pictures have been used with permission by Kathleen Naughton Connolly:

“My father, James Naughton and mother, Julia Laffey, both immigrated from County Mayo, Ireland. They met in New York and married. Because there was no work in New York, my father’s brother who lived in Rockville, CT told him that he would be able to get a job at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in East Hartford, CT. My father made the journey by train to Hartford and then made his way to Pratt & Whitney. He was hired immediately. He told the person doing the paperwork that he would have to find a place to live. He had left my mother in New York while he came to find a job. She was expecting her first baby (my brother). The person asked my father if he was a veteran. When he replied “yes”, he told him that there was housing for veterans down the road. The place was called “United Homes”. It was located about a mile from Pratt & Whitney on Main Street. I understand it was a training area for the Army soldiers. My father returned to New York and packed up my mother and they began their new life in East Hartford, Connecticut in 1943. My brother James was born in December 1943 and I, Kathleen, followed in May, 1945. We first lived at 56 United Homes. It was a two room home, with one bedroom and a combined living room/ kitchen. After some years, we moved to 86 United Homes. It had 2 bedrooms, living room and kitchen. In 1954/55 my father purchased a home on Colt Street. The United Homes was being knocked down.”

The two photographs shown from the donated collection give a good view on how the housing looked. Kathleen lived in East Hartford for 70 years. She and her husband raised 4 children here before moving to Hebron in 2015.

*Craig Johnson, President*



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## HEMAN BAKER, REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOLDIER, BURIED ALONGSIDE WILLOW STREET

The following article was copied and updated from the original article printed in the May 2009 newsletter of the Historical Society of East Hartford.

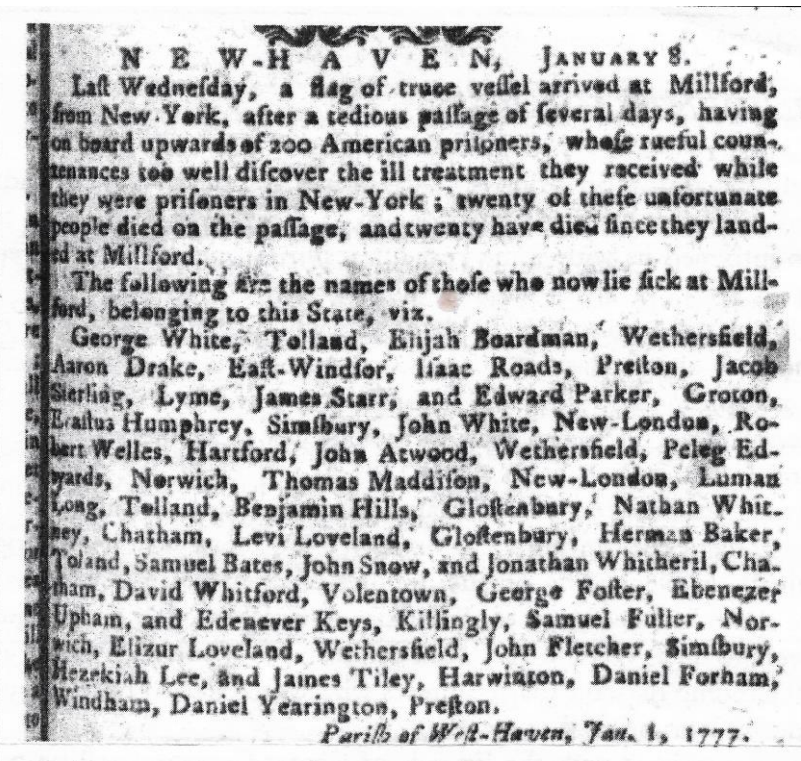
On the northern side of P&WA's property, on the left side of Willow St as you travel east and about 0.3 miles from Main St, is a lone, well maintained gravesite. This is the gravesite of American, Revolutionary War soldier Heman Baker.

"From old histories and service records we have put together what seems a reasonable overview of Heman's service. Some records refer to Heman Baker and others to Herman Baker. All seem to refer to the same person. Heman was 27 years old, a farmer and single when he signed up with the men from Tolland to go to the relief of Boston in the Lexington Alarm of April 1775. His record says he served for 14 days. He was a clerk.<sup>i</sup> ... Herman Baker fought as a "Serjeant" in Gen Spencer's 2nd Reg. He served from May until Dec 1775.<sup>ii</sup> He was at Roxbury<sup>iii</sup>



Photo William Knose, 2009

... In the summer of 1776 the CT Assembly issued a call for reinforcements for Washington's army to serve under Brig Gen Wadsworth. Heman once again signed up. He was a corporal. His battalion served in New York City and



on Long Island. The fighting there turned against the Americans and his battalion was caught in the retreat from the city on Sept. 15, 1776. That day he was recorded missing.<sup>iv</sup> ...He had been captured and spent his captivity quite likely on a prison ship in New York harbor or crowded into an unheated, overcrowded barn. He and the other prisoners had refused the amnesty offered by the British. They refused to switch their allegiance and fight for the king<sup>v</sup> ...We next find Herman Baker of Toland in a Jan 1777 newspaper article (left) listing CT soldiers lying sick in Milford.<sup>vi</sup> "Late in the day of the first of January 1777 a British ship flying a flag of truce was seen off Fort Trumbull. Later that evening, 200 ragged, shivering men were found at the shore, most of them desperately ill of smallpox. They were American soldiers who had been prisoners of the British and had been put ashore by them in what perhaps may be called an early form of germ warfare. The Milford residents did the best they could to shelter the men from the intense cold

and make them comfortable, and the town hall was converted into a temporary hospital. [Note: Forty-six would die there, and also one of their caregivers, Capt Stephen Stow of Milford. Milford would bury them all together in one grave.] Those of the men who were physically able attempted to reach home.<sup>vii</sup> Brothers Timothy and Seth Doan are believed to have been among these soldiers released by the British. Both, while seriously ill, tried to reach home in Chatham (today Portland and East Hampton). Timothy survived but Seth died almost on his parents' doorstep.<sup>viii</sup> Others may have succumbed on their way home and were buried where they died. ... Goodwin's East Hartford history describes the lone grave and its old marker on Willow Brook "On the south bank, near Willow Brook, and many rods east from Main street, stands a leaning flag-stone with the inscription: 'In memory of Serg't Heman Baker, Ju', of Tolland, he was captivated by y<sup>e</sup> British troops, Sept 15th 1776, son of Mr. Heman Baker & Lois his wife he died on his way home with y<sup>e</sup> small-pox Jan<sup>r</sup> 21st, 1777, in y<sup>e</sup> 29th year of his age."<sup>ix</sup> Goodwin continues "He came up the river on a vessel, and was put ashore at Hockanum. He died shortly afterward, and was buried here."<sup>x</sup>

"Goodwin's marker is long gone. A simpler stone one, installed in the 1930s, has taken its place. Over the years since P&WA purchased the land and its accompanying gravesite Heman was remembered on Memorial Day [and

his grave cared for] by P&WA employees, then a daughter of one of these employees, and later by veterans from the Rochambeau VFW Post. Several years of neglect followed [and the site deteriorated] until 2 P&WA employees from Tolland, Ron Usher and Richard Field, began the renovation and care of the site we see.”<sup>xi</sup> Today Pratt & Whitney employees continue to care for this site.

When you pass Heman’s grave perhaps take a moment and remember him and the Milford prisoners.

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i Record of Service of Connecticut men in the I. – War of the Rebellion. II. – War of 1812. III – Mexican War, compiled by authority of the General Assembly under direction of the Adjutants-General. The Case Lockwood & Brainard Co., Hartford, 1889, pg 23.

Heman’s age, occupation, marital status are from Barbara Cook, Tolland Historical Society; see article *A Big Company, A Small Town*, Campbell, Susan, *Hartford Courant*, Sept 5, 2007, pg D1.

ii Ibid, pg 45, 48. The name used here is Herman Baker.

iii *The Early History of Tolland, An Address Delivered Before the Tolland County Historical Society, at Tolland, Conn., on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Day of August and 27<sup>th</sup> Day of September 1861* by Loren P. Waldo, President of Said Society, Published by Press of Case, Lockwood & Company Hartford, 1861. This reference has information similar to that in footnote ii with specific mention of Roxbury. Barbara Cook of the Tolland Historical Society provided this information. Heman Baker is the name used here.

iv Record of Service of Connecticut men in the I. – War of the Rebellion. II. – war of 1812. III – Mexican War, compiled by authority of the General Assembly under direction of the Adjutants-General. The Case Lockwood & Brainard Co., Hartford, 1889, pg 392, 398, 400.

v *Honoring the Smallpox Victims*, Speech given in Milford by Richard Platt, Milford Historian, May 27, 2006.

vi Milford Historian Richard Platt emailed us a copy of this article. The newspaper is unknown. But this article appears elsewhere (without the last line “Parish..”) in New Haven Jan 8, 1777, *Connecticut Journal*, pg 3; in Hartford Jan 13, 1777, *Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, pg 3; in New London Jan 17, 1777, *Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, pg 2. These last three papers refer to ‘Herman Baker, Tolland’, not ‘Toland’

vii *Honoring the Smallpox Victims*, Speech given in Milford by Richard Platt, Milford Historian, May 27, 2006.

viii. Ibid.

ix East Hartford Its History and Traditions, Goodwin, Joseph O., Picton Press, Camden, Me, 1992, pg 118.

x Ibid.

xi *Journal Inquirer*, Nov 12, 2004. Newspaper clipping from the Historical Society of East Hartford file, “Baker, Heman”.

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## Historical Society of East Hartford

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individual \$15, all at one address \$20

student \$10, patron \$50

**Deadline May Newsletter – Apr 28, 2017**

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## Mar Program

**Date:** Wed, Mar 15, 2017

**Time:** 7:00pm

**Program:** Captain Stephen  
Buckland, Rev War

**Speaker:** Lance Kozikowski

**Where:** Raymond Library Rm 1

**Fee:** No cost

**Info:** 860-568-5188