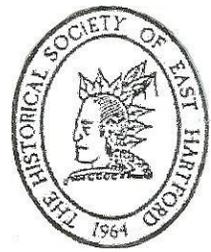


Historical Society of East Hartford

Newsletter, May 2018



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The March regular meeting and program at the Library had to be canceled due a storm that was not as bad as originally predicted. Earlier was the cancelation of the January program which made two in one winter season. That may have been a first for our organization. I promise you, the program on the Connecticut Civilian Conservation Corps Camps by author Marty Podskoch will be rescheduled. The nor'easters we had in March and the heavy rains in April also caused more problems with the Huguenot House roof. A patch came loose and more holes opened up. In the attic, I bailed rain water collected in containers more than once and asked Park & Rec maintenance for some help after it got too much for me to handle on my own. Hopefully, we will be successful on the roof replacement matching grant. We should know sometime in May where we stand with the 1772 Foundation.

The Historical Society will be involved in two state-wide events next month in June. Member participation is both appreciated and encouraged. Please note the following dates and times:

- On the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's 2018 Trails Day weekend, the Historical Society will again host an educational walk on Sunday, June 3rd from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. The tour will leave from the Elm Street parking lot near the entrance to Center Cemetery. After touring the Cemetery, we will walk the Hockanum River Linear Park Trail to the bridge at the back of Martin Park. Ruth Shapleigh-Brown and I will be co-leaders of this walk. This will be the third and last time we are offering this walk. The last two years, we had low attendance due to rainy weather.
- We will again participate in Connecticut Open House Day on Saturday, June 9th between 1:00 and 4:00 pm at Martin Park. All three of our Museum buildings will be open that day and if we get nice weather, we can expect to get a lot of visitors. It's our only museum opening in the month of June, so volunteers are really needed.

During the summer, we plan to have the museum buildings open for tours every Sunday afternoon during July and August. A sign-up sheet for volunteering as docents on Saturday, June 9th and for Sunday afternoons will be available at our May 16th meeting. Please check your calendars before arriving so that you can select a date or two on the sign-up sheets.

The Historical Society appointed three Executive Board members to the nominating committee to select a new slate of officers and directors for the 2018-2019 year. Pursuant to by-laws, two individuals from the general membership will be asked to participate so that the committee has its required members. Please consider helping us out.

Craig Johnson, President

MAY PROGRAM – FROM FLOOD PLAIN TO CONSTITUTION PLAZA

At our May 16th business meeting, we welcome back - for the third time - Historian and Manchester Community College Director, Jason Scappaticci. Jason entertained us two years ago with a contemporary presentation on the NYC World's Fair. He visited with us again last year and spoke at the Annual Dinner of one of the incidents that propelled our country into the "Great War of 1917": *The Sinking of the Lusitania*. This month, Jason will revisit a time that took place closer to home, and one many members will remember vividly; the Revitalization of the City of Hartford in the 1950's and 1960's. *From Flood Plain to Constitution Plaza* is the topic Jason centers his latest Power Point presentation around. Views of the original riverfront areas and what they were

supplanted with, plus an in-depth perspective of the politics of this ‘make-over’ of our state’s capital are the focus for another of Jason’s enlightening lectures. Don’t miss this one – it’s a ‘trip down Memory Lane’.

Our May 16, 2018 meeting will begin at 7:00pm in the Raymond Library, 740 Main Street, in Room #1 on the lower level. A short business meeting, followed by refreshments, will precede Jason’s program. The meeting and the presentation are free and open to the public. All are welcome!

See the accompanying flyer.

Bette Daraskevich, Vice-President/Programs

WWI DIGITIZATION DAY AT THE RAYMOND LIBRARY A SUCCESS



On April 7th the Raymond Library hosted a special event that is managed by the Connecticut State Library Archival Department. In honor of the anniversary of World War I the Library comes in with staff, volunteers and equipment, all to collect and preserve stories and items from World War I and the people who not only fought in the war but took care of those that did. See

CT in World War I, <http://ctinworldwar1.org/>



Photo 5: Richard Gentile (left) works with HSEH member Crawford Westbrook and panoramic photos of Crawford’s grandfather’s units. **Photo 6:** Member Thomas Hogan (left) works with a visitor’s box of family WWI memorabilia.



We are happy to report that the event was very successful as we had 28 visitors come in with items and stories to share.



It was also supported by our Historical Society in that members worked to help Tom Hogan put together a display on the first floor of helmets, badges, tools, photos and more memorabilia as well as setting up on the day of the event with their own display of what the Historical Society has to offer, including a photo of East Hartford Red Cross ladies on parade (left). **Photos 1, 2, 3, 4.**



Photo 7: Some event volunteers are (left to right) members Victoria Hart and Karen Johnson, member Elizabeth Morin, HSEH President Craig Johnson and Mary Ann Meade. We especially thank Victoria and Karen for their time and effort in setting up and manning the HSEH table.

Ruth Shapleigh-Brown, Director

The 1950s brought national legislation and federal dollars to the City of Hartford in the form of the Housing Act of 1949 and the Highway Act of 1956. Federal and state governments allocated funds for the removal of slums and blight in inner cities. The purpose: to replace distressed areas with office buildings, parking garages, hotels, retail shops, and industrial areas that enhanced and revitalized faltering cities. Considered a slum due to flood damage in the 1930s and lack of general maintenance, Hartford's East Side (including Front and Market Streets) became a prime location for renewal.

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

7:00 p.m. Raymond Library Room #1

Guest Speaker - Jason Scappaticci

Historian and MCC Director of New Students and First Year Programs

Sponsored by the Historical Society of East Hartford

A short business meeting will precede our program

Open to the Public



Refreshments Served



"From Flood Plan to Constitution Plaza"

FLORA PICKLES RANNEY

It was with much sadness that I learned of the passing of Flora Pickles Ranney who died on April 23, 2018. She and her husband, Richard “Dick” Ranney, who died in 2012, were long time members of the Historical Society. You have heard that once we are gone, all that is left is our story. Well, boy, did Flora Ranney and Dick Ranney have a lot of stories to leave with us.

Flora was a collector. She collected fans, she collected spoons and she collected bells. I am sure she collected more than those, but her passion was bells. She had the privilege of serving as President of the American Bell Association International and, in Flora, the ABA had a woman of history and knowledge to lead them.

Back in 1993, members of the Historical Society were given the opportunity of viewing Flora’s bell collection when she invited us to tour her home museum. And when I say museum, it really was a museum. While she had bells displayed throughout her house, there was one giant room that had been added to the house as a place to store and display her bells. The bell collection was of a scope and nature that was almost hard to comprehend. Betty Knose reminded me that one bell that she remembers seeing was from ancient Persia and she believes it was a cow bell that was perhaps 3000 years old. There were bells that were glass, milk glass, porcelain, metal, you think of the material and there was a bell to admire. She had practical bells – like bicycle bells, and cow bells and dinner bells, and bells that were from trains and ships. There were beautiful bells and not so pretty bells, giant bells and teeny bells, but Flora had a story for every bell that she displayed.

Before writing this piece, I googled Flora and found that in 1989 there was an article in the New York Times featuring the American Bell Association and spot lighting Flora for her collection of bicycle bells. She had over 100 of these.

After our tour of the Bell Museum, I was so inspired that I went home and wrote a poem about Flora and her bells and gave it to her. She was so happy with it that she hung it in her museum and offered me the opportunity to have my family tour the museum. In May of 1994, my mother and father and my sister, Sheila, came from Forestville to see the bells. My sister, Sheila, was overwhelmed with the bells and Flora gave her one of her elephant bells. Sheila was thrilled to pieces. A week or so later, my sister had a stroke and died on June 12. The tour of the museum was the last time that I was together with my sister in a happy time. I will always remember Flora for her kindness to me and for her kindness to Sheila.

If only we could relive those special times in our lives. Those bells were beautiful in and of themselves, but the stories Flora shared of the history of those bells is what was worth a million. May Flora’s memory remain with us. She will be sorely missed.

While we are on the topic of Flora– we should include the memory of Dick. One of the best programs we ever had, that if it had been filmed, probably could have won an Emmy for comedy, was Dick displaying and speaking about his water collection. Again, it wasn’t just the water, but the stories he told related to the water. If any of you were there that evening, I’m sure you remember how interesting it was. Betty Knose reminded me that Dick had been a printer by profession and was able to print his Christmas cards with an old hand printer.

Flora and Dick were a talented and caring couple. Happy we had them for as long as we did.

Eileen Driscoll, Secretary

Historical Society of East Hartford

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Deadline Sept Newsletter – Aug 31, 2018

HARTFORD

May Program

Date: Wed, May 16, 2018

Program: Hartford Revitalized, 1950s-1960s with Jason Scappaticci

Where: Raymond Library, Room #1,
740 Main Street, E Htfd

Time: Meeting 7:00 pm

Fee: No cost, **Info:** 860-568-5188