

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 35, No. 1

Spring/Summer 2012

PROGRAM

Monday, March 26, 7:30 p.m.

“Sixty Years of Bovano: The History and Stories of a Cheshire Business”

Kevin Flood

Bovano, which has become a household name in Cheshire, is celebrating its 60th birthday this year. The company began in a Cheshire basement in 1952, but soon moved to the upper floor of the old foundry building off South Main Street that still houses the enameling studio and the Bovano Home Gallery today.

Kevin will describe how the Bovano enamel-on-copper process developed and how their line of metal sculptures has evolved. He also will relate stories from his grandfather, Dave Flood, who began partnering with John BonSignor, one of the original owners, in 1964, and became owner of the company in 1975, and his father, Jim Flood, who is company president today. In the Exhibit Room, there will be a special exhibit of old, and not-so-old, Bovano pieces loaned by Society members and friends.

Monday, April 23, 7:30 p.m.

Annual Meeting & Reception

“The 20th Conn. Regiment at Gettysburg”

Bob O'Brien

The 20th Connecticut Regiment monument on Culps' Hill at Gettysburg was dedicated in 1885, 20 years after the close of the Civil War. During the terrible, 3-day battle, the 20th played a critical role by holding Culp's Hill against a Confederate attack from the rear.

Bob O'Brien of Hamden, a retired lawyer, Civil War buff and new Society member, will present his research on the battle and the monument dedication, which took place over the July 4th weekend. A reception for all to honor new members and the newly-elected Board will follow in the dining room.

Spring/Summer Calendar

Except for holiday weekends, the Hitchcock-Phillips House will be open to the public every Sunday, 2-4 p.m., from April through the end of the year. It also is open by appointment on other days. Call 203-272-8771.

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|----------|---------------------|---|
| March 26 | Monday 7:30 p.m. | Membership Meeting & Speaker |
| April 1 | Sunday 2—4 p.m. | House reopens for Sunday visiting hours. |
| April 8 | Easter Sunday | House closed |
| April 16 | Monday 7:30 p.m. | Board Meeting |
| April 23 | Monday 7:30 p.m. | Annual Meeting & Speaker |
| May 21 | Monday 7:30 p.m. | Board Meeting |
| May 27 | Sunday | House closed for Memorial Day weekend |
| June 9 | Saturday | Antiques & Collectibles Sale Boutique-in-the-Shed Opens Strawberry Festival at Church |

Starting June 10 through October, the Boutique-in-the-Shed will be open during Sunday visiting hours, 2-4 p.m..

BOUTIQUE TO OPEN JUNE 9

The Boutique-in-the-Shed is getting ready for its Spring opening on Saturday, June 9, along with our annual Antiques & Collectible Sale and the Strawberry Festival. All of the proceeds from the sales go back into programs and upkeep of the Society. Come on in and poke around! The prices are right, and you never know what you might find. We have been collecting treasures all season and have brought in many unusual and interesting items.

After June 9, the Boutique will be open summer Sundays through October. Don't forget we are always looking for items, too. If you have collectible items that you wish to donate, call Assistant Curator Kathleen Connolly, 860-518-6156. Look forward to seeing you!

THANK YOU!

Special thanks to the following contributors who made donations to the Society in addition to their 2012 dues and to our valued Business/Professional and Supporting Members.

Major Contributors

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Julienne (Moss) Beier | John & Judy Knott |
| Mary B. Hobler-Hyson | George Adair & Cynthia McMillan |
| Ray & Eleanor Verner | Sally Bowman |
| Joe & Suzanne Robinson | New England Bank |

New Life Member

Valerie Joyce

Business & Professional and Supporting

| | |
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| Donald Baillie | O. J. Mann Electric |
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| Gerald & Adoria Corcoran | John Romanik, Sr. |
| Gordon Drazen | Inge Venus |
| Cara Luciani | D. Evelyn Watkins |
| Bob O'Brian | |

Members and Friends Loan Bovano Items for Spring Exhibit

Thirteen members and friends of the Cheshire Historical Society have loaned Bovano items from their homes for the spring exhibit, "Old and Not-So-Old Bovano from Cheshire Homes." The exhibit is in a locked, glass case in the Exhibit Room. Items were contributed by Vivian Berner, Marge Breen, Diane Calabro, Connie Field, Evelynn Henriques, Joy Hostage, Elaine Hume, Maryalyce Lee, Trudy Leaman, Jackie Parker, Charlotte Staybach, Eleanor Verner, and Janice Yusza.

The large, flowered, wall plaque in the center of the exhibit case, c. 1970, is part of the Society's permanent collection. It belonged to the late Mona and Ernest Rumberg both longtime Cheshire residents. The plaque was included with items given to the Society in 2010 by their daughter and

New Town Historian Seeks Information On Dr. Nelson Wu's Summer Festivals

Nelson Ikon Wu, who died in 2002, was a Professor of the History of Art and Chinese Culture at Washington University, St. Louis, and an internationally recognized scholar of Asian art and architecture. But Dr. Wu also had a Cheshire connection. In the 1970s, at his home on Notch Road, he held summer arts festivals to which he invited writers, poets, painters, sculptors, dancers and many guests. As town historian, I would like to write about these unique events.

Do any of you remember these celebrations? Were you there? Were there programs and invitations? I would greatly appreciate hearing from anyone who was there or could tell me how to find out more. The extent of my reading has been a few *New Haven Register* articles.

Jeanné Chesanow, cheshirehistorian@cox.net

Also Seeking Girl Scout Memorabilia

Jeanné and Curator Mary Ellen Kania also are seeking **Girl Scout memorabilia** for an exhibit at the Historical Society to celebrate the Girl Scout's 100th anniversary this year. If you can loan or donate anything, email her at the above address or call the Society at 203-272-2574.

son-in-law, Jeannette (Rumberg) Williams and Dick Williams of East Aurora, NY.

The large 19-inch x 55-inch framed Bovano landscape on display below the exhibit case was donated by long-time member Doris Black, to be sold for the Society's benefit in the Boutique-in-the-Shed. It will be a featured item in the shop when it reopens on June 6.

In Memoriam

Priscilla S. Clark

February 25, 2012

Ann M. Massimino

March 10, 2012

We were deeply saddened by the deaths of these long-time members and extend our sincere sympathy to their families.

ARTSPLACE CHILDREN'S BOOK ON JOHN KENSETT USES SCENES FROM HITCHCOCK-PHILLIPS HOUSE

Led by Artsplace Director Joan Pilarczyk, Artsplace and the Cheshire Performing and Fine Arts Committee are producing a new activity book and teacher resource guide for Cheshire third graders, plus an adult multi-media presentation—all on life and works of Cheshire-born artist John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872)

Last year, Artsplace and CPFA received a \$9,000 grant from the Connecticut Community Foundation to produce instructional material about Kensett for all Cheshire third graders, who regularly study local history as part of their third-grade curriculum; also a Sponsorship Grant for \$1,000 to produce an adult-targeted multi-media presentation. A respected Hudson River School artist, Kensett's luminous landscapes hang in major museums throughout the world.

The grant wasn't enough to cover all the expenses so the Friends of CPFA/Artsplace donated money to the both programs to ensure that every third grader will receive a copy of the children's activity book for the next three years and to complete the multi-media presentation. The book, which includes art-related activity pages, tells the story of one exciting day in young Kensett's life in Cheshire in the 1820s. Kensett grew up in a

house (which later burned) located at 242 South Main Street, now site of the former Slater Funeral Home building. His father, Thomas Kensett, operated Shelton & Kensett Engravers on Blacks Road, and later received a patent for a food canning process.

Pen-&Ink Drawings to Illustrate Story

Local artist Tony Ruggiero is preparing pen-&-ink drawings to illustrate the story and—most exciting—the interiors of the Kensett home will be modeled after interiors at the Hitchcock-Phillips House! A real photo shoot with costumed models and two Springer spaniels took place at the house in November. Historical Society President Cara Luciani was in period costume to portray John Frederick's mother. The photographs, along with photos posed at other locations in town, will give the illustrations a true Cheshire touch. The book is already well underway and should be ready by fall. The Society hopes to carry copies in our "museum shop."

Anticipating new interest in Kensett, the Society also has had its small oil painting of Niagara Falls cleaned and handsomely re-housed in a specially made Plexiglas case. The painting hangs in the Exhibit Room with our two historic engravings made by Thomas Kensett's firm: "An Improved Map of the United States" and a hand-colored illus-

(continued on next page)



Artist Tony Ruggiero is using photographs taken at the Hitchcock-Phillips House during the Artsplace photo shoot to create original pen-&-ink illustrations for the new third-grade activity book.

PHOTO AT LEFT: Posing in the Hitchcock-Phillips dining room: Cheshire Historical Society president Cara Luciani (left), portrays Mrs. Kensett, mother; and Raul Camejo (right) from Southbury, a fourth-generation Kensett descendent, is Thomas Kensett, father. From the left, the five Kensett children are modeled by Sarah Taylor, Claire Lasher, Rory McCormack, Peter Levens, and Eric Levens, all from Cheshire.

...ARTSPLACE (continued from previous page)

tration, "The Prodigal Son Claiming His Patrimony." The Society hopes to have Joan Pilarczyk as one of our fall speakers so that we can learn more about this fascinating and ambitious project.

Research on Cemetery Brings Freedom Trail Committee Here

The Connecticut Freedom Trail Committee held an afternoon meeting at the Cheshire Historical Society on March 8 as a result of new interest in Hillside Cemetery created by a research paper written by Society Director Christine Pittsley. Christine led tours of the cemetery for committee members both before and after the meeting.

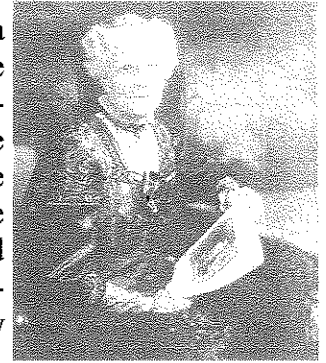
Identifying the people of African descent who are buried in Hillside Cemetery has been a long-term project for Christine. Her new research paper, "Hidden Patriots: The Forgotten Black Soldiers and Souls in Cheshire's Hillside Cemetery," was written for the committee in September. It documents that the cemetery holds over 100 Cheshire residents of African descent who were buried there between 1726 and 1935, most in unmarked graves. A copy of the paper is now the Society library, Cheshire Collection.



HOORAY FOR ALICE! Volunteer member Alice Santello has made unbleached muslin covers for over 100 padded hangers to better conserve hanging garments in the Society's "costume" collection. With advice from Assistant Curator Kathy Connolly, she also is arranging and cataloging the hanging portion of the collection.

Society Receives Treasured Outfits Worn by A Great Grandmother

This lovely, satin tea dress with ribbon lace panels, c. 1915, will delight visitors when the Hitchcock-Phillips House reopens April 1. The dress, skillfully restored by Assistant Curator Warren VanAlmkerk, is now on display in the Parlor.



It was owned by Lydia Cushing Tower Hall (1841 - 1933), shown wearing it in the photograph above. She was the great grandmother of Judy Grabar of Cheshire.

While preparing for a move to Elim Park Place, Judy gave the dress and several other treasured outfits inherited from her great grandmother to the Society. Her great grandmother's handsome, black wool "walking suit" with braid trim will be on display upstairs in the Victorian Room. Lydia Cushing Tower was born and grew up in Hull, MA. She married her local minister, Rev. Linville John Hall (not a "Cheshire Hall"), in 1871. Later, they lived in Wethersfield, CT, where the Rev. Hall was chaplain of the Connecticut State Prison.

Jane Richards Gives Society Pair of Small Antique Pistols

Member and docent Jane Richards has given the Society a wonderful pair of antique Deringer pistols that belonged to her grandfather, Thomas Maxwell.

The little pistols are the kind that an 18th century gentleman might have carried in his pocket, or a lady concealed in her hand bag. They were loaded with black powder and fitted with a special cap which ignited the powder when the gun was fired at close range.

According to Jane, her grandfather was mayor of Marion, VA, and later lived much of his life in Nashville, TN. As a hobby, he collected all types of antique firearms and other weapons. About two years ago, Jane gave us his antique walking cane, which has fascinated young visitors to the house. When the handle is pulled, the cane produces a hidden stiletto.

Inquiry to Historical Society about Two 18th Century “Beakers” Brings Historical Surprise for Congregational Church

In January, after viewing the Cheshire Historical Society website on the Internet, Catherine Collins of Santa Barbara, CA, telephoned Curator Mary Ellen Kania with some interesting questions. Had Cheshire ever been called “New Cheshire”? Were we located anywhere near the town of Wallingford? She explained she had been browsing in a Santa Barbara antique store in 1997 and had come across two old silver “beakers.” She was considering their purchase when the sales person told her to buy them right away or “that the man who just came in the door” was planning to. On impulse, she bought them.

One beaker, 4.5 inches high, was engraved:

The Gift of Capt. Samuel Cook
and Mrs. Hannah Cook to the
second Church in Wallingford.
1745

The other beaker, 4.25 inches high, with the maker’s mark “BW”, was engraved:

The Gift of W Phinius Atwater to the Church New
Cheshir Sept. 29.1773

Where was New Cheshir?

A California native, Mrs. Collins had no idea where New Cheshir or Wallingford were located. For a dozen years, she did nothing with her purchases. More recently, however, she became interested in genealogy and the possibility of connecting the “beakers” with one of her many Massachusetts ancestors. She feels the maker’s mark “BW” is for Bilimius Ward, the Guilford, CT silversmith who was the father of Phineas Atwater’s first wife, Mary.

Mary Ellen was intrigued. Could they be from the Congregational Church? How did they get to California? After preliminary research, she contacted Martha Lape, archivist at the Congregational Church, who was able to identify the silver pieces exactly. Both are listed in the 1974 Church History compiled for the church’s 250th Anniversary by Historian Edward Charles Gumprecht. On page 40, he describes a silver

“tankard” that Captain Samuel Cook gave by will to the church in New Cheshire. A wealthy shipping merchant from the port of New Haven, he died in 1745. Under early communion pieces, the History also lists a cup presented to the church by Phineas Atwater in 1773.

The History (p. 40) goes on to explain that “in later years” the communion service was kept at the home of Mrs. Susan Bradley, who lived in the house at the northeast corner of the green. This house was destroyed by fire in 1875, at which time the cups were rendered unfit for use. They could not be repaired, and were sold for the value of the old silver. The money received was presented to the donors of a new communion service. The Bradley house was replaced by the present Victorian house at 25 Church Drive, next door to our Society house—and obviously, *all* of the old cups were not melted down.

Thrilled to Get Exact Information

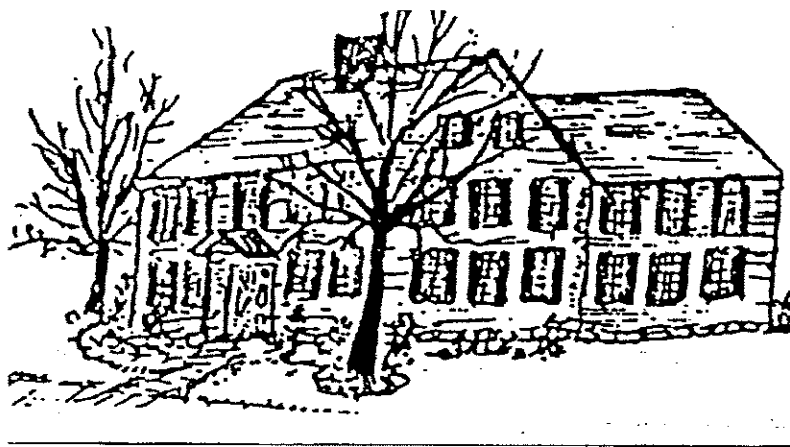
Mrs. Collins, of course, was thrilled to get the exact information from Martha and sent photos of the two cups to both the Historical Society and the Church. Mary Ellen has e-mailed her photographs of the over-mantle painting in the Society dining room of the Second Meeting House (1736-1826), the old structure where the cups were actually presented. We have invited Mrs. Collins and her husband to visit both the Historical Society and the Church whenever they come East—and we certainly hope they will!

E-Mailed Photographs from Catherine Collins of the two silver “beakers” she purchased at an antique store in Santa Barbara, CA, over a dozen years ago.



**CHESHIRE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWS**

If your membership is still unpaid for 2012, you'll find a dues envelope enclosed. Please remit.



SPRING/SUMMER 2012

Cheshire Historical Society
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Spring Meetings—Public Invited

March 26 - "60 Years of Bovano in Cheshire"

**April 23 - "20th CT Regiment at Gettysburg"
& Annual Meeting**