

The Cheshire Historical Society

Volume 24, No. 2

November 2000

KENSETT PROJECT AT MATTATUCK MUSEUM

The Connecticut Humanities Council has announced that it will support an important exhibit at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury featuring the work of nineteenth century landscape painter, John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872). Kensett, a native of Cheshire, is acknowledged as a master of Luminism, an artistic perspective he developed while studying the shoreline from his country home at Contentment Island in Long Island Sound. The exhibit, which is scheduled for the fall of 2001, will bring together the artist's paintings from museums around the country.

Early this fall, a committee from the Society, Dottie Drufva, Ron Gagliardi, and President Pat Vita met with Ann Smith, a Curator at the Mattatuck. We anticipate being involved in their exhibit and, indeed, the museum may hold a special Cheshire Day, with Cheshire residents having special guest privileges for the day. Don't forget to take another look at our Kensett when you visit the Hitchcock-Phillips House.

UPDATE ON OUR OLD HOUSE

We've all been waiting patiently for our house to be painted. The weather and the economy conspired against us—too many people wanted painting done, and we had too much rain this summer. The contractor seized the day early in November, and although he cannot complete the job, the house is primed and ready to go in the spring.

NEW YEAR'S EVE, DECEMBER 31, 2000

Join us on the Green for First Night opening ceremonies at 4 p.m. and then on to the Hitchcock-Phillips House for refreshments. This will be our members' holiday celebration and an opportunity to wish each other a Happy New Year.

AN EXCITING DONATION

Sterling Jewett recently donated a book on the Durand Family of Cheshire. Sterling collected and compiled information from Durand family members and then wrote much of the book himself. It is a labor of love and contains some fascinating information on the Durands. Sterling very graciously gave the copyright to the Cheshire Historical Society. The book was printed, bound, and published, with the help of Clayton Crabtree, by The Weidner Publishing Group. You will enjoy it thoroughly. Many thanks to STERLING JEWETT.

PROGRAMS

Unfortunately many of you missed two very exciting fall programs. Tom Grimshaw of Cheshire, president of the American Watch & Clock Museum of Bristol, spoke on Connecticut clocks. Nancy Brown, who is with the Guilford Keeping Society and director of the Thomas Griswold House, displayed and discussed her wonderful collection of dolls.

Don't miss our lecture on Genealogy by Nancy Doans, Executive Director of the Godfrey Memorial Library, on Monday, November 27.

We don't meet in January or February, but on March 26th, our own Elizabeth Giordano will speak on the Amistad, and Ron Gagliardi will join her. Most of you know that whatever Elizabeth does, she does well, and Ron is always creative. It should be a fine evening.

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES to Board Members Scott and Linda Libengood on the birth of their first child Rachael Anne born on October 24, 2000 and weighing in at 7 lbs. 11 oz. This is a first for our board!!!

GARDEN CLUBBERS ARE SPECIAL

We'd like to thank both the Suburban Garden Club of Cheshire and The Cheshire Garden Club for taking such good care of our gardens. Both Lucille Williams and Alice Jupp would be very proud of the beautiful flowers planted in their memory and lovingly cared for by club members.

We are now looking forward to holiday decorations being provided by the Suburban Garden Club

Due to the efforts of our curator, Edgar Johnson, our Vice President, Clayton Crabtree, and board member, Lois Jean Meek, the Society has been open on Sunday afternoons from 2 to 4 p.m. We are seriously indebted to all three. The building would be closed if not for them. Wouldn't you like to help? If you are available on a Sunday afternoon, please give Lois Jean (272-5247) or Pat Vita (272-3963) a call.

We are also grateful to Lois and Warren VanAlmkerk for being contact persons for dealers renting spaces from us on the last Saturday of the month for the Antiques & Collectibles Sales. We continue to try to expand our scope by looking for more dealers. Anyone interested in the Society's shows should contact Lois at 272-5937.

The Boutique in the Shed has been open at each sale due largely to the efforts of Edgar Johnson, Clayton Crabtree, Stephanie Casner, and Doris Black. Again, what would we do without them? Remember, should you have anything to donate to the Boutique, call Pat Vita. Thank you to all of you who volunteer and all of you who have donated merchandise.

UTILITIES COME TO CHESHIRE

Our first was the telephone in 1882, four years after the "Bell Company" in New Haven opened. Child labor was prevalent, and young men, often under age 18, manned it. Our exchange opened with 24 subscribers on Main Street. When subscribers fell below 13, the service was switched to the New Haven exchange. The Cheshire exchange reopened in 1904 with 79 subscribers. After moving several times and subscribers grew to 263, it moved into the Town Hall above the Fire Department. The New Haven exchange took over all operations in 1934 with 565 subscribers.

The next utility to arrive was electricity. In 1893 the state legislature passed a law that only those specifically authorized by the state could produce electricity. We began getting electricity in 1901, and it took another 8 years until most of the town was completed.

The third utility was water. Beginning with the construction of the reservoir circa 1907-1908 in Prospect, it was designed to be a gravity supply. A 16" pipe was laid running to two large tanks beginning at the reservoir and then to various parts of town until the first water was available in 1912. We are no longer on the old system.

The last utility to arrive was gas coming from the gas works in Meriden, arriving here at the end of the '20s.

Note: This article, researched and written by Clayton Crabtree, appeared in the *Cheshire Herald*. It has been condensed in the interest of space.

Newsletter credits to President Pat Vita and Sally Clark

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