



# From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 008, Volume 13, Issue 2

## Awards Presented at Annual Dinner

**A**nton Wohlert and Michael Sykes were honored at the Annual Dinner on May 29, 2008 at the Owenego. They received the Branford Historical Society Award which was established in 1999 to honor members of the Society for their outstanding contribution and dedication to the historical preservation of the town of Branford.

**Anton Wohlert** has been a member for 15 years. He first joined the Society in 1993. His first role was that of docent at Harrison House. When an opening for Chair of the Museum became available, Anton agreed to take on this job. In 2004, the Chair of the Guides became vacant and Anton reluctantly took on that role too. This job is a taxing one as it requires recruiting and training guides for the house, barn and grounds. His well known line at Board meetings is "I need more Guides". He manages to balance both positions, changing artifacts throughout the house and setting up and changing displays in the Museum periodically.

His hobby is lighting. This hobby is evident throughout the Harrison House. He is a member of the Rush Light Club, a national organization. He is extremely knowledgeable about the history of lighting. Anton

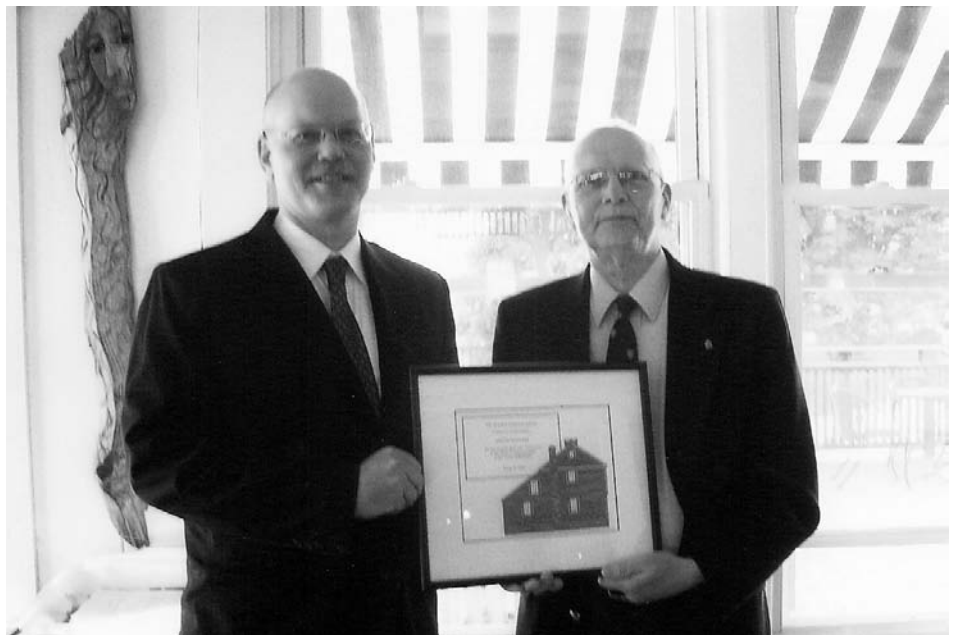
is always on call. His keen interest in Harrison House is self-evident.

**Michael Sykes** has been a long time member since 1980. He served on the Board as Treasurer and then as Hospitality Chair for programs held at the Community House and later at the Blackstone Library. Michael was instrumental in organizing the Harvest Festival on the grounds of Harrison House. The festival brought crafts people who showed how early settlers lived and provided for their families. House tours, children's games and baking of ginger bread

men were a part of the festival.

Michael co-chaired the set up of a colonial town encampment on the Green for a full weekend of educating the public about daily living in Colonial times. When the Strawberry Festival was first held at the Academy, you could find Michael contributing his time and effort. He has done so ever since. In 1985 Michael helped organized the Historic float for the 350<sup>th</sup> birthday of Branford. Michael has often dressed in Colonial attire at various Society special events. Unfor-

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*Anton Wohlert receiving Award from Peter Black, President*

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Historical Society**

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# History, Lore & Legacy of the CCC in Connecticut

The Branford Historical Society will present an illustrated talk by author and historian Marty Podskoch on the “History, Lore and Legacy of Civilian Conservation Camps in Connecticut” on **Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup>** at 7 pm at the Blackstone Memorial Library.

The program topic is pertinent this year because 2008 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding the CCC according to the speaker who resides in Colchester. The CCC began on March 31, 1933 under President Franklin Roosevelt’s “New Deal” to relieve the poverty and unemployment of the Depression. Camps were set up in many Connecticut towns,

state parks and forests. Workers built trails, roads, camp sites and dams, stocked fish, built and maintained fire tower observers’ cabins and telephone lines, fought fires and planted millions of trees. The CCC disbanded in 1942 due to the need for men in World War II.

The author and his wife raised their three children in an old farm house on the West Branch of the Delaware River in Delhi, New York. He taught reading for thirty-six years before retiring and has written books on the Catskill and Adirondack fire towers. He also writes a weekly newspaper column “Adirondack Stories”; 150 of these stories are now in book form.



*CCC Workers Constructing Road*



*CCC Workers at Rocky Mountain  
National Park*

## Annual Dinner, continued

tunately Michael was ill and not able to attend the dinner. The Award was given to him at a later date.

Anton and Michael have devoted many, many hours of their time to the Branford Historical Society.

They are true examples of outstanding members of the Society for their dedication to the historic preservation of Branford.

## Walking Tour of Branford Point

A walking tour in the vicinity of Branford Point is being planned by the Branford Historical Society on **Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>** from 1-2:30 pm. The rain date is Sunday October 5<sup>th</sup>.

The area is recognized as one of Branford's first historic districts.

Al Russell will lead the tour, which is limited to twenty-five persons. He will focus on the history of the town dock area, Parker Memorial Park and Hotel, Castle Rock and some of the homes on the area.

Tour goers are to notify Mike Russo at 488-8096 in advance. Parking will be available at Parker Park. Everyone will meet at the 350<sup>th</sup> Memorial at the dock.

## Illustrated History of the Thimble Islands

In 1970, *A Brief History of the Thimble Islands* by Archie Hanna, was published to benefit the Branford Historical Society. Now in its third printing, the book continues to sell, testament to the popularity and intrigue of the Thimble Islands.

A slide presentation, *An Illustrated History of the Thimble Islands*, will be given on **Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>** at the Blackstone Memorial Library. Jane Peterson Bouley, town historian and historical society board member will enhance the information in the book with a focus on the history of the buildings and families that came summers to the islands. Many outstanding photographs from the Society's collection will be used.

The islands were allotted in the fifth Branford land division and some remained in families for many years. After the Civil War, cottages were built and the islands began to develop into a summer resort destination, each with its own ambiance. At the turn of the century, people came from the industrial cities of Connecticut and beyond to stay at the islands' hotels, or take a steamer out of New Haven for a clam bake.

The program will begin at 7:00 pm on Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, followed by refreshments. A \$3.00 donation is requested to benefit the Branford History Society's high school scholarship.

## Branford Historical Society Scholarship

The Branford Historical Society has awarded a \$1000 Scholarship to Carole Lupi, a recent graduate from Branford High School.

Carole will enter Bates College in Lewiston, Maine to Major in Art History. She is the daughter of Nancy & William Lupi.

A four year high honors student, she was a member of the National Honor Society. She also earned swimming award, the Sally Slater Memorial Scholarship, for good character and leadership.

Carole was a peer counselor and captain of both the swim team and tennis team. She also volunteered as a counselor-in-training for the Branford Recreation Department. She previously had been quilting at St. Mary's Church for child cancer patients.



## Special Cut Glass Exhibit at Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society invites members of the Society and the public to visit the Harrison House which was built circa 1724 and is recorded on the National Register of Historic Places.

The house is furnished with period pieces in three of the five rooms with special displays in the other two.

The new glassware display in the lean-to is composed of items in the style that originally came from the area in Czechoslovakia known as Bohemia. In 1832 Freidrich Egermann perfected a way of permanently coating glass with colored stain. The color was then cut through with different patterns to reveal the colorless crystal underneath. There is now also a way of coating with another layer of glass. There is a ruby colored vase in the display that has been signed Egermann. The Egermann Company is still in business.

In one of the remaining rooms items from Branford's history are displayed. There is also a colonial and herb garden and a barn with antique farming equipment.

The house is open every Saturday from 2 to 5 pm until the end of September and is located at 124 Main Street Branford. Admission is free. For additional information call Anton Wohlert at 481-4665.



## Another Successful Strawberry Festival

After many weeks of preparation, the rain held out for us to have another successful Strawberry Festival at the Academy during Branford's annual festival on Father's Day weekend. Over fifty members and friends volunteer to organize, transport, hull, whip, sugar, and serve. The Society realized a profit of \$3,836 which provides the resources to maintain the Harrison House and preserve Branford's historic artifacts. We thank all the volunteers and the community's support.

## The Bible Box



The term “bible box” is loosely applied to any small wooden box of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England and is usually made of ash. These small boxes usually contained personal possessions of the owners, sometimes with the initial of the owner carved in the front panel including the date. Items such as laces, candles, and game pieces, sewing materials or goods of any description from the clutter of everyday life were kept in them.

The misleading term “bible box” was applied during the Victorian era when the descendants who later

inherited these boxes from previous generations pressed them into service as a convenient repository for the family bible. These bibles were among the most treasured possessions of the colonial settlers of New England. A few of the surviving boxes fitted with a lock and key, still retain the original printed patterns and lovely free flowing floral designs with which they were lined. The sheets, with decorative wood cut patterns were pasted inside the box.

*Nancy Hendricks*

## Accessions

Since January 2008, the Branford Historical Society has received five donations. The donation from Duanye Spayd, a lithograph of Branford, is one to be mentioned. The lithograph titled “View of Branford,” dates 1881 and predates the others in our collection. The hand painted map and key highlights forty-three sites located in and around the center of Branford. The lithograph is currently on display at Harrison House. The Society would like to thank the Connecticut Historical Society, Jane Bouley, Duanye Spayd, Anton Wohlert, and William and Mary Hitchcock for their donations.

*Kaitlyn Everson, Chair*



## New Board Members

**M**ichael Russo has volunteered to be Program Chairman. As you can see from this Newsletter, he has lined up several programs for the fall. Our new Accessions Chair is Kaitlyn Everson. She has an interest in history and asked if we needed any help. She also volunteered to be a Guide.



## Membership Update

**I** am pleased to report that all members have renewed their membership to the Branford Historic Society. Total membership now stands at 242 individuals and families.

Welcome to new members Joan Krieder, Claire C. Dudley, Bruce & Regina Wilson, Kaitlyn Everson and James & Elizabeth McMahon.

One of our recent events was the Annual Dinner held at the Owenego. There was a solo performance by Richard Clark who gave a “delightful look at the life and work of America’s foremost humorist”, Mark Twain. He held the audience’s interest by presenting “a one-person play full of wit and wisdom and a special brand of story telling that made him a legend in his time”. After the performance, Richard spoke about Mark Twain’s life and his importance in history.

The Historic Society is helping the Branford Garden Club celebrate their 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on August 23<sup>rd</sup> from 2-5 pm at an old fashioned Garden Party on the lawn behind Harrison House. The Branford Garden Club planted and maintains the herb and colonial gardens behind the house.

Each year members move away and our membership declines or stays about the same. If you are a member, I know you care about the Branford’s history, its monuments and historic places. If a member of your family, friend or neighbor cares about Branford too, ask them to consider joining the Historic Society. Let me know their name and address and I will send them a letter inviting them to become a member.

*✍️ Jeanne McParland  
Membership Chair, 468-5433*

## The Branford Garden Club Celebrates 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**M**embers of the Branford Historical Society have been sent an invitation to the Colonial Garden Party to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Branford Garden Club on Saturday August 23, 2008, 2-5 pm (rain date August 24<sup>th</sup> at Harrison House). There will be old fashioned refreshments served on the lawn behind the house. Several local artists will exhibit their works. The house, museum and barn will be open for tours. The event is free and open to the public.

## Publications & Prints

Contact Winnifred Judge, 488-8755 for details.

Indian Neck CD-Rom, 120 Vintage Postcards <i>in short supply</i> .....	\$15.00
<i>The History of Damascus Cemetery</i> , by Jane Bouley and Martha Bradshaw .....	\$25.00
Reprint of <i>Malachi Linsley's Diary</i> , by Betty Linsley and Elizabeth Radulski .....	\$25.00
<i>Early History of Branford</i> .....	\$5.00
<i>Thimble Islands Book</i> , by Archie Hanna.....	\$7.00
Bird's Eye View of Branford (Print) <i>in short supply</i> .....	\$5.00
Post Card Prints of Early Branford (Downtown, Stony Creek/Pine Orchard, Short Beach, Indian Neck/Pawson Park).....	\$3.00 Each
Montowese Program DVD <i>in short supply</i> .....	\$20.00

## Branford Historical Society Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

- Business            \$50.00
- Contributing        \$50.00
- Sustaining         \$25.00
- Family              \$15.00
- Individual          \$10.00
- Student             \$5.00

Additional donations, or contributions to our Memorial Fund are also appreciated. Please make checks payable to Branford Historical Society and return this form to us at:

Branford Historical Society  
P.O. Box 504  
Branford, CT 06405

*Thank you for your support.*

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

# Important Dates To Remember

## **SATURDAY, AUGUST 23RD, 2-5 PM**

Colonial Garden Party at Harrison House 124 Main St. Parking at Richlin Parking Lot, shuttle cars available.  
Rain date August 24th.

## **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH, 7 PM**

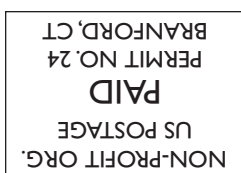
Civilian Conservation Camps (CCC) in Connecticut at the Blackstone Library.

## **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH, 1-2:30 PM**

A Walking Tour of Branford Point, meet at 350th Memorial, parking at Parker Park. Limited to 25 persons.  
Contact Mike Russo at 488-8096 for a reservation. Rain date October 5th.

## **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16TH, 7 PM**

An Illustrated History of the Thimble Islands at the Blackstone Library.



Branford Historical Society  
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