



From The Harrison House

The Branford Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2009, Volume 14, Issue 3

Earl Colter, Branford's Photographer

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EARL COLTER: BRANFORD'S PHOTOGRAPHER, A 20TH CENTURY VIEW OF BRANFORD

by Town Historian Jane Bouley
Thursday, November 19th, 7:00 p.m.
at the Blackstone Memorial Library

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The Branford Historical Society will present a slide lecture by Town Historian Jane Bouley on Thursday, November 19th at 7 p.m. at the Blackstone Memorial Library. The program is entitled "Earl Colter: Branford's Photographer, a 20th Century View of Branford."

Colter has been cataloguing life in Branford since 1948 when he established his photographic studio here after serving three years as personal photographer for Admiral Hyman Rickover in the Pacific during World War II.

His career has spanned more than 60 years and recorded much of Branford's mid to late 20th century history; its people, buildings, and events, during a period of rapidly changing technology and growth. Photographer for every school class in town for many years and he took photographs of hundreds of weddings and other family occasions

taking photos of individuals, families and town leaders. Active in several civic groups, he was a member of the Connecticut Professional Photographers Association, and was a charter member of Branford's Representative Town Meeting (RTM).

Earl Colter has donated his photographic collection of Branford scenes to the Branford Historical Society numbering about 700 prints and 1,500 negatives. Town Historian Jane Bouley has put together a prospectus of his work with commentary. The public is welcome to attend this program on Branford's "town photographer." Light refreshments will be served.



From the Harrison House

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Branford Historical Society
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Historical Society Awards Scholarship

Joe Bishop is the recipient of a \$1,000 scholarship from the Branford Historical Society. The award is given to a graduating senior at Branford High School. The son of Joseph and Sharon Bishop, he plans to major in international affairs at The George Washington University

While at Branford High, he was a member of the National Honor Society, the National World Language Society, Model Congress and the Young Republicans. He also was captain of the track team and the soccer team in his senior year.



Annual Holiday Gathering

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.

Join our Holiday Party on Sunday, December 6th from 1 - 3:30. Enjoy refreshments, entertainment and decorations in historic Harrison House to get into the holiday spirit.

Volunteers are needed to decorate the house on Saturday December 5th at 10 a.m. Evergreens boughs are also needed and can be dropped off at the back door of the house before Saturday December 5th. Donations of baked goods may be dropped off Saturday, December 5th from 10 a.m. - 12 or on Sunday, December 6th from 12 -1 p.m. A Christmas tree donated by Shelley's Garden Center is raffled off at the party.

Profiles of Historical Society Board Members: Part I

The following are profiles of Peter Black, President of the Branford Historical Society, Michael Russo, Program Chair and Kaitlyn Everson, Guides. Michael and Kaitlyn are the newest members of the Board.

Peter Black, President

Peter Black is beginning his third two- year term as president of the Branford Historical Society. Peter joined the Historical Society about ten years ago after attending our annual Strawberry Festival. His wife Patricia (Pat) is also active in the Society.

A lawyer specializing in real estate and probate matters, he also has been a member of the Representative Town Meeting for the past six years.

He is a senior chief petty officer in the US Naval Reserve and completed a tour of duty in Iraq as a Seabee in a construction battalion.

Peter's mother was born in Korea; her parents were missionaries. His father was born in Taiwan. After World War II broke out, his parents relocated to Canada. After completing his doctoral degree, Peter's father became a professor at Yale teaching microbiology.

Always a Nutmegger, Peter with his family moved to Branford in 1964 when he was four years old. He attended Branford High School and graduated from Choate. He is also a graduate of Yale and the University Of Connecticut School Of Law. His hobbies include gardening and kayak-

ing. Once a year, Pat, who is a physical therapist, donates her services to a hospital in Peru. Peter usually accompanies her on these trips.

Michael Russo, Program Chair

As a lifelong Branford resident, Michael has always had an interest in the history of the town. A member of the Historical Society since the 1980's, he decided to get more involved and volunteered to be Programs Chair. He has the task to come up with presentations that will be interesting to fellow members as well as to the community. Michael is also a member of the Branford Land Trust. He works for Zachry Nuclear Engineering in Groton, Connecticut as a mechanical designer.

Kaitlyn Everson, Guides Chair

For her undergraduate work at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island, Kaitlyn majored in American history with minors in European history, secondary education, and religious studies. During her junior year at SRU, she explored numerous ideas for her senior thesis. She became interested in the Branford Historical Society through this search and decided that volunteering as a docent would be extremely interesting and a strong educational experience. Recently, she has agreed to be Guides Chair. In addition, Kaitlyn is attending Quinnipiac University and is an intern at North Branford Intermediate School.

Membership

It has been a busy year for the Branford Historical Society. Michael Russo, Program Chair, arranged several interesting programs at the Blackstone Memorial Library this past year. The audience learned about Noah Webster from Christopher Dobbs. Dr. Nick Bellantoni entertained guests with informative and sometime humorous anecdotes about historic Connecticut tombs. Richard Clark presented a one-man show, "Great Scot! It's Andrew Carnegie" in October. The Society had a very successful Strawberry Festival in June, thanks to 60 members who volunteered.

Welcome our new members Dr. & Mrs. James Marks, Margaret Iacobellis who has volunteered to be a Docent and Elana Kaufman, a student. As a graduation project Elana needed to complete a senior exhibition project. As an "aspiring writer" or "possibly a teacher", she wanted to incorporate writing into her project. She has decided to write a book for elementary school students about Branford History.

There has been a wonderful response to the letter sent out recently regarding the 2010 dues. Whenever I meet a person who seems interested in preserving Branford's History, structures and monuments, I ask them to join the Society. It is my hope that you will help me to increase our membership by asking your friends and acquaintances to become members. I care about Branford and I know you do too.

*Jeanne McParland
Membership Chair*

Historic Home on Hillside Avenue to be Demolished for Development

The home called “Hillside Place” for which Hillside Avenue is named will be demolished as part of the development approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission at the north end of Hillside Avenue. The flat roofed, white home overlooking the center of town was built by Colonel Levi Parson about 1850. He was a merchant associated with the Branford Lock Works and was married to Elvira Squires of Branford. Elvira’s father Orrin D. Squire was one of the founders of the Lock Works. Parsons was a Branford Probate Judge and died in 1870.

After Parson’s death, the home was purchased by Henry D. Linsley, Branford’s postmaster and a charter member of Battery A. His son, Henry Guy Linsley, also the postmaster for many years, lived in the house until his death in 1934. While postmasters, the post offices at 1070 Main Street (now Darbar Restaurant) and 1111 Main Street (Board of Education offices) were built in 1912 and 1927 respectively. The Linsley family were active members of Trinity Episcopal Church.

J. Alden Linsley and his wife Clare were the third generation of the Linsley family to live at Hillside Place. Sold after Clare Linsley’s death, Hillside Place will be among the nearly one hundred pre-1930 structures demolished in Branford since 2000.

Jane Peterson Bouley



Quod felix faustumque sit: “May it bring you happiness and good fortune”

Origin Of Education in Branford

David Davenport, a founder of the New Haven Colony, was a proponent of education in the colony. Grammar schools of the time generally prepared young men for college, but the puritan colony was too far from England for its citizens to attend existing English schools. Davenport asked a friend, Edward Hopkins, Governor of the Connecticut Colony, to found a traditional grammar school that would teach Latin, Greek, and Hebrew grammar. Hopkins died in 1657 and bequeathed money to found a school dedicated to the “breeding up” of hopeful youths for “public service in future times.” Connecticut officials wanted Hopkins’s bequest to remain in Connecticut and “The Hopkins Fund” was created. The historical records indicate that Hopkins Grammar School was founded in 1660 in a small building on the New Haven Green. Hopkins is the fifth oldest sec-

Continued on page 6.

Publications & Prints

Contact Winnifred Judge, 488-8755 for details.

Indian Neck, Short Beach, Thimble Islands & Double Beach:

CD-Rom Vintage Postcards..... \$15.00 each

The History of Damascus Cemetery, by Jane Bouley and Martha Bradshaw \$25.00

Reprint of *Malachi Linsley's Diary*, by Betty Linsley and Elizabeth Radulski..... \$25.00

Early History of Branford \$5.00

Thimble Islands Book, by Archie Hanna..... \$7.00

Post Card Prints of Early Branford (Downtown, Stony Creek/Pine Orchard,
Short Beach, Indian Neck/Pawson Park).....\$3.00 Each

Montowese Program DVD \$15.00

Branford Historical Society Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Please indicate the area(s) in which you would like to volunteer:

() Building/Grounds () Hospitality () Museum/Accessions () Guides () Holiday Party () Strawberry Festival

- Business \$50.00
- Contributing \$50.00
- Sustaining \$25.00
- Family \$20.00
- Individual \$15.00
- 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: _____

Origin Of Education in Branford, continued

ondary school in continuous operation in North America.

In Branford Connecticut, parents were more concerned with spending their money on essentials and viewed education as an extravagance. About 1812 the Rev. Timothy P. Gillett, Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Branford, opened a "select" school in his house where he taught subjects equivalent to the grammar school of today. "Seamanship" was a mandatory course added for young seafaring men of the Town of Branford. It was unseemly for the ministers who were entrusted with the ecclesiastical order of the church to deal with the buying, selling and administration of the land purchased

from the Indians. Various men in the church were empowered to handle these matters as the First Ecclesiastical Society of the Town of Branford.

The Society then assembled a group of men of the sea and as a result of this meeting on April 20, 1820, permission was granted to build an academy on the Green. Rev. Gillette was the moving figure in the erection of the building and had paid a large percentage of the cost himself. He taught at the school for nearly twenty years, charging a nominal fee of twenty dollars a term per pupil.

Nancy Hendricks

Important Dates To Remember

NOVEMBER 19, 7 PM

"Earl Colter: Branford's Photographer, a 20th Century View of Branford," at the Blackstone Memorial Library.

DECEMBER 6, 1:30-3 PM

Holiday Party at Harrison House. Entertainment, refreshment and fun!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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