

NEW LONDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2012

Connecticut and the War of 1812

Book and Exhibition Coming Together for Opening 6 July 2012

The Connecticut Humanities Council recently announced the award of a \$45,000 grant to the New London County Historical Society to provide funds for a bicentennial exhibit on the War of 1812 and its effects on Connecticut and the region. Scheduled to open just after Independence Day 2012 at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, the exhibit will feature items from the collections of the partners on the project – the Stonington Historical Society, Mystic Seaport Museum, the New London Maritime Society, and the Lyman Allyn, along with the New London County Historical Society – as well as from other museums and private collections.

“The Rockets’ Red Glare,” will focus on important local events including Commodore Stephen Decatur’s naval squadron taking refuge in the Thames River to avoid the British, the bombardment of Stonington, the raid on Essex, and the effects of the British blockade on New London and the region. The 16-star American flag that flew over the defenders of Stonington will be featured in the exhibit. Funding is also being provided by the Coby Foundation of New York which focuses its grants solely on the

exhibition of important textiles such as this rare flag.

An earlier Connecticut Humanities Council grant covered most of the planning for the exhibition, including the production of a companion history and exhibit catalog. Historian Glenn Gordinier of Mystic Seaport is the primary author of the book, and there are nine additional contributing authors. The book should be available in June.



First Shots of the War of 1812 Fired in Waters off of New London

Escape of the HMS *Belvidera*

23 June 1812, nine days after the outbreak of the War of 1812, the British ship *Belvidera*, commanded by Captain Richard Byron, was off New London, Connecticut. She was waiting for the French privateer *Marengo* to come out of the harbor, when at daybreak she saw the sails of five vessels to the south west. They were the American frigates *President*, the *Congress*, the *United States* and the sloops *Hornet* and *Argos*, effectively the entire American navy in commission at the time. The Americans gave chase and the *President* closed on the *Belvidera*. Commodore Rodgers of the *President*, fired the first shots himself.

Captain Byron moved his guns so he could fire through the stern windows and aft from the quarter-deck. Although the *President* could easily have moved to close action, she chose instead to fire her broadside repeatedly at the *Belvidera*'s retreating stern to little effect. Captain Byron meantime lightened his ship and gradually the *Belvidera* drew away from the *President*.

“Ye Towne’s Antientest Buriall Place”

Latimers, Latemers, Lattemores, Latamores

If you enter the Antientest Burial Ground from its main entrance on Hempstead Street and walk down the hill a bit and to the left, you will come to a group of three headstones with a weeping willow carved on them. The willow is a nineteenth century design, and these stones indeed mark the early 1800s burials of three members of the Latimer (spelled in any of the variations above, and probably more) family.

Two of the stones mark the graves of Daniel Latimer and his wife. Daniel died in 1823 “in the 84th year of his age.” Joshua Hempstead notes in his diary that Capt. Jonathan Latimer had a son baptized Daniel on September 30, 1739. Daniel’s wife Sarah, who lies next to him, “died July 28th, 1820, in the 74th year of her age.” The Latimer genealogy says that she was born a Douglass, and married Daniel February 24, 1765. Information from a Denison genealogy adds that she was born February 7, 1746, but gives no source for the information. Hempstead notes on March 23, 1746, “Wm Douglass a Child baptized Sarah.” Neither genealogy has any information about children of the marriage, and there are no stones in the burying ground for any children of theirs.

The third willow stone is for the grave of Samuel Latimer. If I read the Latimer genealogy correctly (the custom of eighteenth century parents to honor family members by naming children after them confuses things), Samuel was a cousin of Daniel’s, their fathers having been brothers. Samuel died June 7,

1808, aged 75. Hempstead has no mention of his baptism, being out of town at the time, but the First Church records give the date of February 18, 1733. Hempstead does note attending the wedding of Samuel’s parents, Elizabeth Hallam and another Samuel, on July 11, 1723. It must have been a lively time for the Hallams, as Mary Hallam married Nathanael Hempstead one week later. That wedding went on until 12 or 1 both that night and the following one. Unfortunately, Hempstead does not say if the Latimer/Hallam wedding followed the same pattern.

Next to Samuel’s stone and slightly behind it is a brownstone marker that has broken off six or eight inches above the ground. The footstone is still readable, confirming that the stone is for Elizabeth, the wife of Samuel Latimer. According to an 1899 book on the burying ground (see below), the inscription on the stone at that time read, “In memory of Mrs. Elizabeth _____ Latemer, wife of _____ A kind Parent and a faithful friend, aged 52 years.” Clearly the stone had begun to spall, or lose its front, by then. (This is a problem with brownstone, a layered stone that tends to flake and split.) The Latimer genealogy says that Elizabeth Prentiss and Samuel were married June 7, 1761. Hempstead notes the baptism of a daughter of John Prentiss, Elizabeth, on October 21, 1739, making her death date 1791.

According to the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Samuel and Elizabeth had five sons, three of whom have stones in the burying ground. Like many

parents, they lost at least a couple of children, and gave the same names to subsequent ones. In their case, they had two Samuels and two Johns. The first Samuel was baptized in 1763 and died young. He does not have a stone in the burying ground. The first John was born in October of 1764 and died the 29th of that month. His headstone is behind Elizabeth’s footstone, and is still legible. The second son John outlived Elizabeth, dying December 12, 1794, aged 29. His stone is to the left of his father Samuel’s, but the front has completely spalled. The inscription on it had read “He liv’d below’d and died lamented.” There is no indication, either on the stone or in the genealogies, that he had ever married.

John’s youngest brother Samuel has a story to go with his headstone. This

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Incorporated 1870

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ISSN 1940-2074

“Spring wether Some time.”

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

So wrote Joshua Hempstead in his diary on March 5, 1721. Of course the next day he recorded “Rain hail & Snow,” thus reminding us that even when winter seems to be at bay here in southern New England, it can come roaring out back at any moment. The timer I have on a lamp turned the light on today at 5:00pm quite startling me as it was still pretty bright daylight. Spring weather. Some time soon -- and time to look ahead to some spring and summer events that we are planning, some in concert with other regional groups.

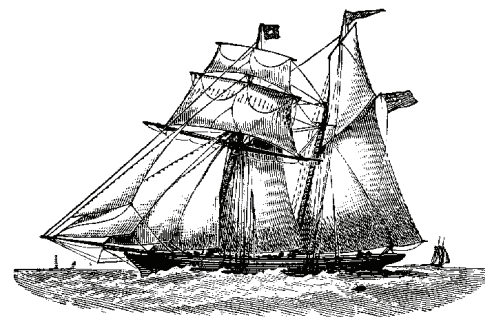
Flock Theatre is bringing Chekhov back to the Shaw Mansion in May, with a series of performances of “Uncle Vanya” – one of my favorites! In July we, with Mystic Seaport, the Custom House Maritime Museum, Stonington Historical Society and Lyman Allyn Art Museum will be opening “The Rockets’ Red Glare,” an exhibit at the Lyman Allyn commemorating the War of 1812 and its effect on southeastern CT. The exhibit opens on July 6th, the weekend of OpSail 2012, and runs to December. The centerpiece of this exhibit will be the historic Stonington Battle Flag. The New London County Historical Society plans a special evening for our members and friends at the exhibit. Stay tuned and watch your mail and email for more details.

Another date for you to save is October 20. That will be the day for our second annual Thames River Fun(d) Raising Cruise! We will cruise aboard one of Cross Sound Ferries vessels from New London to Norwich and back, and enjoy wine tastings, great food, music, scenery, camaraderie and a little history too, as we follow in the wake of the US Navy vessels that were blockaded in the Thames during the War of 1812. Put this on your calendar now and plan to join us for a visit with Commodore Decatur on a voyage on our beautiful River. And plan to bring friends too!

Speaking of fundraising, our Annual Fund appeal has been very successful this year and we are just shy of our goal. Thank you all who have contributed. The board of the Society is also exploring a planned giving program that would encourage our members and friends to remember the Society in a long term way. We have also taken an action to build our endowment. The dues from new Life Memberships now will be deposited into the endowment, where they will generate income for the New London County Historical Society in perpetuity. You might consider this type of membership as a gift to New London’s history that will keep on giving.

Happy soon-to-be-real spring and we hope to see you at the Shaw Mansion again this year!

~Deborah Donovan



New and Renewed Members

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(Continued on page 6)

Latimers, Latemers, Lattemores, Latamores (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

Samuel died October 26, 1771, “in ye tenth month of his age.” The lower part of the headstone, somewhat behind the first John’s, is still there, with the date “1771” and the word “month” visible. The upper part had broken off some years ago. A December 2011 story in *The Day* says that in 1968 a couple of young women visiting New London took the broken part of young Samuel’s stone from a pile in the burying ground. It ended up going home to Wisconsin in the trunk of one woman’s car, and was returned to the city clerk’s office this past autumn, when she and her husband visited New London. As of this writing, the stone is still in the clerk’s office, waiting for the funds and technology to be reunited with its base.

The fourth son of Samuel and Elizabeth was baptized George Grey on April 2, 1769. He does not have a headstone in the burying ground, and I have been unable to find any further references to him.

Another Latimer stone is much closer to entrance to the burying ground. It reads:

In memory of John, the Son of Peter and Hannah Latimer, who died Sepr 26th, A. D. 1768, in the 26th year of his age.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
and the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

John was baptized January 10, 1742. He was one of at least six children of Peter and Hannah. Peter was born about 1703. Hannah was born September 9, 1712. Hempstead notes on September 28th, “Jno Picketts Daughtr Baptizd Hannah.” Peter and Hannah were married April 23, 1732, according to the online Latimer genealogy. The genealogy unfortunately is riddled with errors that are minor in themselves (having the right birthdates but the wrong birth order for children, for instance), but that leave me uneasy about trusting it too much. Other Latimer information is elusive and similarly short on sources. The genealogy says that Hannah died in 1783, and Peter in 1790. However, it also has a son, Peter, dying in 1790. It is entirely possible that both the son and the father died the same year, but it is also possible the elder Peter died earlier and his death date is an error.

John’s is the only stone for that branch of the Latimer family in the burying

ground. It is not far below the hedge in front of the Jonathan Brooks tomb, near the Hempstead Street entrance. One of his brothers, Pickett, is buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery. He was born July 27, 1747, and died February 20, 1826.

In the next newsletter we will become acquainted with Peter’s father, Capt. Robert Latimer, and a later Capt. Robert Latimer and his family.

Patricia M. Schaefer

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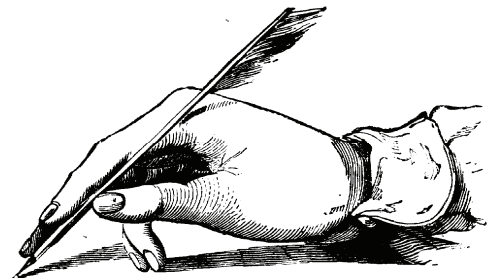
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Monday, 19 February

Was it Presidents Day, President's Day, or Presidents' Day?

According to some calendars and appointment books, Monday 19 February was Presidents' Day. Others said it was President's Day. Still others opted for Presidents Day. The bouncing apostrophe bespeaks a certain uncertainty. President's Day suggests that only one holder of the nation's supreme job is being commemorated—presumably the first. Presidents' Day hints at more than one, most likely the Sage of Mount Vernon plus Abraham Lincoln, generally agreed to be the two greatest presidents. And Presidents Day apostrophe-less, implies a promiscuous celebration of all forty-four—Thomas Jefferson but also Franklin Pierce, F.D.R. but also James Buchanan, Harry Truman but also Warren Harding.

So which is it? Trick question. The answer, strictly speaking, is none of the above.



Ever since 1968, when holidays were rejiggered to create more three-day weekends, federal law has decreed the third Monday in February to be Washington's Birthday. "Presidents Day," is rooted in nothing more than commercial promotion. Retailers discovered that a generic Presidents Day cleared more inventory than a holiday celebrating a particular one, even the, "Father of His Country." Now everybody thinks it's official, but it's not.

Just to add to the presidential confusion, Washington's Birthday can not be Washington's birthday. George Washington was born either on February 11, 1731 (according to the old-style Julian calendar, still in use at the time), or on February 22, 1732 (according to the Gregorian calendar, adopted in 1752 throughout the Brit-

ish Empire). Under no circumstances, therefore, can Washington's actual birthday fall on Washington's Birthday, a.k.a. Presidents Day, which, being the third Monday of the month, can occur only between the 15th and the 21st. Lincoln's birthday, February 12th, doesn't make it through the Presidents Day window, either. Nor do the natal days of our other two February Presidents, William Henry Harrison (born on the 6th) and Ronald Reagan (the 9th).

A fine mess!

*Adapted from the History
News Network*

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Your Help Needed

We are currently working towards a reprinting of our latest edition (1999) of *The Diary of Joshua Hempstead 1711-1758*. As part of this project, we would like to correct errors in the index of people that is part of that book. If you have found any error(s), such as someone not being on a page where s/he is listed, or showing up where not listed; or if you can furnish hints to clarify that one listing contains two people (such as a father who dies p. 300 not being the same person as the same name on p. 600); or if you can clarify other confusions; please contact me at pat@newlondonhistory.org. Future historians and genealogists thank you very much.

Patricia M. Schaefer

Some of our Recent Acquisitions

With our latest publication, *New London Goes to War*, now available for sale, World War II is very much on our minds at the Shaw Mansion and it seems also among some of our members. Last fall, Russell and Fran Vocalina donated a number of items, several of which were war related, including V-Mail Christmas cards and a 1942 Civil Defense Guide published by the US Submarine Service which was immediately put to use as an illustration in Clark's book. And in January, James Brooks brought us a suitcase containing a World War II Navy Uniform, canteen and several medals, including the Bronze Star awarded to Thomas Quinn of New London. Many of these new acquisitions and other World War II items from our collections such as an Air Wardens scrapbook and helmet,

V-mail cards and ration books can be seen in the hall display case. Come in and have a look and pick up a copy of the book – only \$10 for members!

Stretching back in time, we have recently been given three nineteenth century ledger books. East Haddam Historical Society gave us the Treasurer's Ledger for the Town of Norwich 1823-1830, a fascinating book detailing work done on many of the bridges in the town and payments to

those working from the poor house.

Carl and Carol Sommer have just recently donated a chandlery ledger from 1858-1862. And finally, from Charleston, South Carolina, John Custer sent an account book kept by John Downer of Preston, from 1801-1809. The book has musings as well as numbers and appropriately, the first lines written in it sum up the importance of our archives: *"The memory of man is fable and apt to forget...but the writing can't forget."*

~Tricia Royston

Coming soon ~ Flock Theatre's Shaw Mansion Series

~ May — Anton Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya,"

"The Rockets' Red Glare"

How those rockets would have been fired at Stonington

Did you know that the 30' by 42' garrison flag flown at Fort McHenry on 13 September 1814—ever since known as the Star-Spangled-Banner—was never actually fired upon by the British? In

New and Renewed Members (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

Paula Picken	Ledyard
Elsa Cole	Stonington
RADM Arnold and Joan Danielsen	Niantic
James M. Avery	New London
Thomas Althuis	Groton
Robert P. Hobron	Perris, CA
James R. & Jean Way	Haddam Neck
Elizabeth A. Noyes	Noank
Roberta & Charles Levandoski	Ledyard
Carl and Carol Sommer	Waterford
Frederick Shakir	Quaker Hill
Joan Prentice	Waterford
Lindsey Kieffaber	New London
Robert L. Sanders	Pensacola, FL
Barbara Kil	Ledyard
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Margaret Palmer	New London
Nancy & Tom Barnhart	Groton
Astrea Hupfel	Waterford
Judith & John Wood	Oakdale
Douglas Bjorn	Stonington
Marco Discordia	Waterford



Illustration from a book by Sir William Congreve, collection of the U.S. Naval Academy.

fact, that flag was raised by the fort commander after the bombardment ceased and he saw the British ships moving off. So although it DID inspire Francis Scott Key, it DID NOT wave over the ramparts the previous night in "the rockets' red glare." The Stonington Battle flag, on the other hand, did face that fury; and survived.

Books available from the New London County Historical Society

<i>The Amistad Incident as Reported in the New London Gazette & General Advertiser.</i> (NLCHS)	\$5
<i>The History of the Amistad Captives.</i> (NLCHS) A reproduction of a pamphlet by JW Barber, 1840.	\$10
<i>Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900</i> by Barbara Brown and Dr. James Rose. (NLCHS) This republished book is a milestone in genealogical research of African Americans and Native Americans in New London County.	\$35
<i>The Diary of Joshua Hempstead 1711-1758.</i> (NLCHS) Revised 1999. Personal journal serves as fascinating and invaluable account of Connecticut life in early 18 th century.	\$75
<i>For Oil and Buggy Whips: Whaling Captains of New London County, Connecticut</i> by Barnard Colby. Biographical sketches of local whaling captains document New London's role in this industry.	\$18
<i>Greetings from New London.</i> (NLCHS) Collection of early 20 th -century postcards from our archives.	\$10
<i>Life on a Whaler</i> by Nathaniel W. Taylor. (NLCHS) Story of Taylor's two-year Antarctic voyage as physician aboard New London's <i>Julius Caesar</i> (1851-53).	\$25
<i>A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture.</i> (NLCHS) Autobiography of former slave Venture Smith, originally published in 1798. NLCHS facsimile of 1897 edition.	\$5
<i>New London Goes to War - New London during World War II</i> by Clark van der Lyke. Our newest publication: drawn from the records and correspondence of the New London City Council. (NLCHS)	\$11
<i>The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut</i> by James A. Slater. Fully illustrated with photographs, this book provides a description of and maps the burial grounds of eastern Connecticut.	\$40
<i>Common to this Country: Botanical Discoveries of Lewis & Clark</i> by Susan Munger. Illustrated volume exploring plants discovered by Lewis and Clark on their westward expedition.	\$23
<i>The Day Paper</i> by Gregory N. Stone. History of New London's award-winning daily newspaper.	\$30
<i>Steam Coffin: Captain Moses Rogers and the Steamship Savannah Break the Barrier</i> by John Lawrence Busch. New London native son Moses Rogers and the first crossing of the Atlantic by a steam-powered vessel.	\$35
<i>Murder of Mayhem? - Benedict Arnold's New London, Connecticut Raid, 1781</i> by Dr. Walter L. Powell. Excellent research in a small readable format.	\$10
<i>History of New London, Connecticut: from the first survey of the coast in 1612 to 1860</i> by Frances Caulkins With a new introduction and a revised index 2007 (NLCHS).	\$60
<i>Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676</i> Excellent new history from Walter Woodward, the Connecticut State Historian.	\$45
<i>"The Rockets' Red Glare:" The War of 1812 and Connecticut,</i> by Dr. Glenn S. Gordinier. Available in June 2012 (NLCHS).	\$18
<i>A USEFUL FRIEND—A Companion to the Joshua Hempstead Diary 1711-1758</i> by Patricia Schaefer (NLCHS) A truly useful resource guide, if you have the Diary, you should have this book; includes a subject index to the Diary.	\$25
<i>History of Norwich, Connecticut: from its possession by the Indians to the year 1866</i> by Frances Caulkins With a new introduction and a new index 2009 (NLCHS).	\$60

These *Images of America* titles available from NLCHS

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<i>Reinventing New London</i>	\$20
<i>Naval Submarine Base New London</i>	\$20
<i>Lighthouses and Life Saving along the Connecticut and Rhode Island Coast</i>	\$20
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