



Civil War Sesquicentennial

War on the water an often overlooked aspect of Union Victory

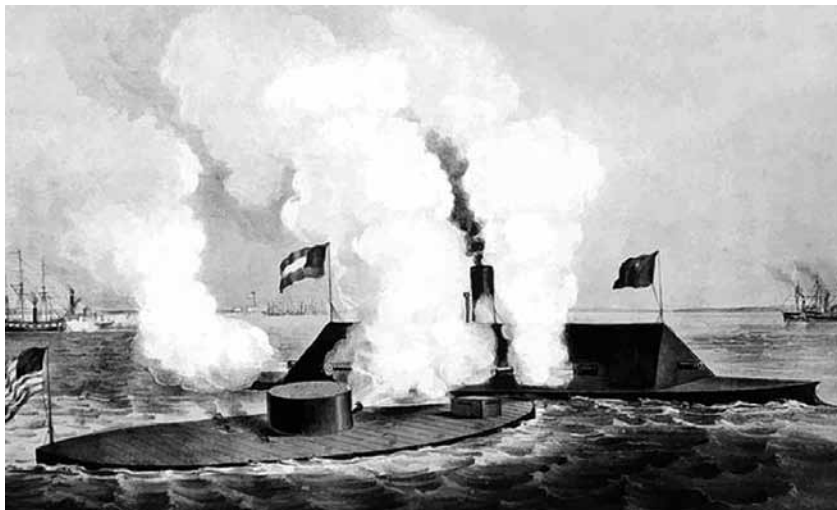
When Civil War came to seafaring Connecticut, it meant things here it did not mean inland. The navy would need many more ships and experienced sailors and this is where they could be found. The outbreak of war would put merchant ships at great risk from Confederate commerce raiders. Many men went off to the army, but like so many areas that touch the sea, the war would have special maritime dimensions here.

The Civil War navy was no more ready for war in 1861 than was the tiny army. It had but 90 ships – 42 on active duty and 27 others “available.” The navy included but 7600 men and 327 if its officers resigned and went south.

The Union strategy, Winfield Scott’s Anaconda Plan, called for a blockade of Confederate ports and a major attack down the Mississippi River. The blockade entailed 3500 miles of coast line and 89 major harbors and rivers. The day the blockade was declared, the Union had just three ships in port available for that duty and not enough men to sail them. The U.S. Navy was in for a growth spurt!

This came at a time when sea power was moving from the age of sail to the age of steam and steel. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles from Glastonbury bought or rented about anything that would float and threw it against the blockade. Naval architects came out of the woodwork with plans for new warships. The expansion was massive. In four years, the number of ships would grow from 90 to 670 and sailors from 7600 to 51,500.

Still, the blockade was ineffective – only 10% effective initially and by 1863 it still caught only a quarter of the blockade runners, swift ships from Havana, Bermuda and Nassau that provided a supply lifeline for the South. The Union tightened its grip, seizing



USS Monitor and USS Merrimack

the North Carolina inland sea, Port Royal and several South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands as well as inroads on the Florida and Mississippi coast. The biggest prize; New Orleans, the largest city in the Confederacy by far, fell in early 1862. But at almost the same time, the Confederate ironclad *Virginia*,

once *USS Merrimack*, shattered the Union blockade at Chesapeake Bay. The day was saved for the Union with the arrival of the *USS Monitor*, a new kind of ironclad that restored the balance.

The Confederates fought on, sinking one ship with a primitive submarine, attacking with torpedo boats and sinking more Union blockaders with home made ironclad rams and floating mines called torpedoes. Meanwhile the Union navy continued to play an important role in winning battles on rivers throughout the South.

Confederate commerce raiders seized and burned hundreds of Union merchant vessels on the high seas, but could not make the Union loosen its grasp on the blockade. Finally, Mobile, Savannah and Wilmington were captured and Charleston evacuated. Lee’s supply line was gone and the Confederacy would soon die.

Dave Smith, Civil War Historian

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President's Message

Remember being entranced by the song lyrics "Summertime and the living is easy"? Connecticut's warm summer days are calling and my motivation to work is definitely on the wane. I want to sit under a beach umbrella and watch the grandchildren build sand castles. But the Society has a full schedule of summer activities so....

The summer exhibit, Hardships and Hardtack – A Civil War Sampler was opened with a bang on June 12th. The material on display comes from the private collections of members and friends. Member Robert Boody read our winter newsletter and started looking through his family's Civil War memorabilia. He has loaned many of these items for the exhibit. Included is a piece of hardtack (biscuit like c-ration) with a hand-written note by his great-grandfather that Robert has framed in a shadow-box. Great grandfather, Robert Milton Boody served in a New York Calvary Regiment. He was wounded four times and won the Medal of Honor twice. Robert's section of the exhibit brings a personal connection to the war. The exhibit includes a 1861 era display of antique guns, swords, costumes, an antique train set, period schoolbooks and reproductions of recruitment posters and a hand-written letter by President Lincoln. You will be amazed at what comes from our members collections and attics. The Hart House and gallery is open Saturday and Sunday 1-4 p.m. - through Labor Day weekend. (Please see Tedd Levy's report). The exhibits opening reception also included "champagne in the cellar" where David McFarlin gave a talk on the exceptional renovation work recently completed on the foundation and basement of the Hart house. Over fifty people descended the old stairs to view the changes. It was really fun. The Society held a very successful dinner and tour of the former home of legendary actress Katharine

Hepburn on the evening of June 18th. We are deeply grateful to Barbara & Frank Sciamie for offering their beautiful Fenwick beach house for the fundraiser. A special thank you to Bill Childress for helping to arrange the event and to Donna DiBella and her committee for making it a success. (Please see Donna's report).

It seems Civil War activities are happening everywhere in recognition of the sesquicentennial year. We will be involved in a day of period costumes, demonstrations, children games and musket firing on Saturday July 16th, when Company F, 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry Inc. a living history and preservation organization, sets up camp on the Hart House grounds. Company F is unique in offering both the military and civilian aspects of the Civil War Era. The Company's website is www.cof14thcvi.com. Plan to attend & bring the kids, it's free and a good way to spark an interest in history.

On August 24th we celebrate Centennial Connections: Crossing the Connecticut, the 100-year anniversary of the first bridge connecting Old Saybrook and Old Lyme. It will include an antique auto procession that will begin at 10 a.m. on Main Street, cross the bridge and return to Saybrook Point where the cars will be on exhibit until 2p.m. At 12 noon a celebration luncheon program will take place at the Dock & Dine Restaurant. Space is limited please make your reservations early. Finally, I am deeply saddened to announce the loss of our dear friend and Archive Registrar and Librarian Dorothy Swan. Everyone who knew Dorothy was impressed by her intelligence and genuine kindness. She will be greatly missed. A celebration of Dorothy's life will be held in the Hart House garden on September 18th 2-4 p.m. for all to attend.

Sincerely, Linda

Garden Report

So far this season our gardens have shown splendidly. Thanks to a gift from a descendant of Robert Chapman, (one of the Saybrook Colony founding families) we now have two new 6-foot Chippendale benches and 2 armchairs. Many visitors have already enjoyed the sun-warmed comforts of these teak seats. Even we gardeners take an occasional rest in them.

The bearded irises were glorious in their prime around mid-May, followed by the Siberian irises. Lilacs put on the best show in years thanks to lots of dead-heading, pruning, and removing of volunteer vines. The woodland garden was resplendent this year. Particularly outstanding were the trilliums which everyone noticed and exclaimed about; it is always worth wandering through the woodland garden and seeing what's coming up. Our newly renovated historic rose garden is coming along thanks, again, to Marianne Pfeiffer's and Debbie Ferrer's hard work. Marianne, the mastermind behind our new "old" rose selections, got the plants in and Debbie mulched and re-weeded the area. The activity around the bird baths is always impressive' the birds do come and they are thirsty and dusty - ready for a good session in H₂O. They dunk fully in the water, flap their wings and drink mightily every day. We scrub and refill the birdbath at least once a week just to keep the bath fresh for our feathered friends. I have also been busy edging various beds, giving our beds a more tailored look. A couple of weeks back, we planted the herbs in the new herb garden area; they are still small, but growing fast.

Marianne, with Sarah's assistance, has made new labels for these herbs. Let's all keep an eye on this garden - keeping these baby plants watered, mulched, and weeded. Thanks to new volunteers, including Andrea Waanders, for her hard work in areas we hadn't always considered, but should, like under the elm tree. Also to Sheila Graham-Smith's daughter, Sarah, for pinch hitting in every direction, including the labeling project. Ann Kloter has quietly kept things watered whenever she walks by. Christine Yanelli will be with us in July, once her schedule opens up. Beverly Kegler is making a comeback, helping us in more ways than we can count. Her son, Ben, also comes when he can and is especially helpful in moving heavy things which are hard for us to handle. Marie McFarlin is our fairie godmother, sending us new volunteers wherever she can find them.

We are always in need of more gardeners for help. Everything needs water, dead-heading, weeding, and mulching. The garden is truly glorious this year, but it takes lots of work, all of which is much more fun to do with a group such as our garden gang. To all our friends who have declared how extraordinary the garden looks this year, thank you! Keep coming back and bring your friends. We want the community to use this asset, and we're trying to get the word out. Anyone who is interested in gardening in a historic setting, whether you are new to gardening or an old hand, please give me a call to find out more, or just show up!

Kacey Constables

General William Hart House Committee Report

The House was cleaned thoroughly following the basement renovation and we were open by the 10th of June. During this month we have had visitors from California, Idaho, Ohio, New York as well as various towns in Ct. Part of our collection of transfer ware is set on the kitchen table. This has received many positive comments. We are proud to have the Elizabeth Bull Hart's rocker on permanent display in the Hart Parlor. This was recently gifted to us by Elizabeth Titus Putnam and is one of our most treasured gifts.

The basement work has drawn much attention and

everyone, who has seen it, commends the Society for its commitment and efforts to preserve this outstanding historical home.

We are now in the process of refurbishing the dining room rug. It needed extensive work and cleaning after many years of service.

This summer we will work on a five year plan so that we continue to do what needs to be done and work with our treasurer so that we budget wisely.

Donna DiBella and Marie McFarlin

Dorothy Swan

1923 - 2011

After a long career with the Acton Library, Dorothy Swan came to help the Historical Society. With Don Swan as President, they worked hard at their jobs. The Society is lucky to have had her help for all of these years. She was a font of knowledge. Nobody had a memory like hers.



It wasn't that she was always there, conserving the collections, answering questions, and working on the never-ending computer issues. It's that she was always so good natured about everything. Any ordinary person would have thrown in the towel in the unending battle with nomenclature and accession numbers. Any ordinary person would have given up coping with various ailments, but not Dorothy. She was the epitome of grace, never complaining, and always cheerful. We learned a lot from her about perseverance and fortitude.

We learned from her how to cope with injury and age. We learned from her how to die gracefully and with humor. We will now have to learn how to get along without "asking Dorothy".

Polly Timken

[We plan a celebration of Dorothy's life on Sunday afternoon, September 18th from 2 to 4 pm in the Hart House gardens. Contributions to a Dorothy Swan memorial fund may be sent to the Old Saybrook Historical Society, Box 4, Old Saybrook, CT 06475.]

A special thank you to Norman Legasse of Stepping Stone Antiques for appraising the recently-gifted transferware and china on display in the Hart House kitchen.



Nursery school children enjoy a story in the garden.

New Members

4/1/2011 - 6/28/2011

Philip & Joan Broadhurst, Old Saybrook
 Jo Ann Holt, Lake Jackson, TX
 Robert Johnson, Old Saybrook
 Richard Kalapos, Deep River
 Norman Legasse, Old Saybrook
 Gerald Perry, Old Saybrook
 Dorothy & Moshe Shalev, Old Saybrook

"I've been involved in the Student Volunteer Program since the summer of my 8th grade year. I've fallen in love with the history of Old Saybrook and this program as well. The people that I've met and the things that I have learned are so important to me and I wouldn't trade these experiences for the world."

Briana Bardos, a student volunteer and recent high school graduate. She will attend UCONN next year as part of the Honors Program with a major in political science.

Hardship & Hardtack: A Civil War Sampler

It's not quite the same as exhibiting an Egyptian mummy, but the Old Saybrook Historical Society is displaying an old and unusual artifact -- an actual piece of 150 year old Civil War food known as hardtack.

The long-lasting cracker is one of several items on loan from Society member Robert Boody that were originally used by his Great Grandfather Robert M. Boody, a Civil War veteran of the 40th New York Volunteer Infantry and two-time recipient of the Medal of Honor.

Displayed along with the hardtack are medals, his revolver and cartridge box, field binoculars, a belt with its patriotic buckle, and letters. Other highlights in this notable exhibit include a display of a Brunswick rifle and a trap-door Springfield rifle along with revolvers used during the 1860s and a very large 'spy' glass.

For clothing fanciers, there is a collection of Civil War uniforms including an artillery shell coat, a great coat, cavalry boots, and brogans (shoes with heel plates).

There are also several documents showing enlistment, promotion and discharge papers, a book given to soldiers on how to fight skirmishes, and Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) ribbons and buttons from area towns.

An imposing poster on the back wall of the exhibit

area declares "Mounted Men Wanted for the U.S. Army." The smaller print announces that the monthly pay for a private is \$14 but, in addition, a "bounty of \$100 will be paid each soldier at the close of the war."

In the early days of the Civil War, soldiers were given the 3 by 3-inch hardtack that had been stored from the 1846-1848 Mexican-American War. Made from flour and water, it was commonly used in place of perishable food and called "dog biscuits," "sheet iron," "worm castles" or "molar breakers."

Hardtack was notorious infested with insects and the men would drop it into their morning coffee to soften it and get the insects, mostly weevil larvae, to float to the top. They could then skim off the insects and finish their drink. Troops that were too impatient to wait reportedly ate in the dark so they wouldn't have to see what they were eating.

Society volunteers who contributed to the exhibit include Karen Emack-Dolson, David McFarlin, and OSHS student intern, Molly Faulkner.

The exhibit will be open through Labor Day on Saturday and Sunday from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. There is no admission fee but donations are welcomed. In addition to the exhibit, the heritage gardens that are maintained by Society volunteers are open daily, without charge, for the enjoyment of the public.

Tedd Levy

Exhibit Sub-Party - Champagne in the Cellar



Salli & Robert Boody



Keith & Sandy Dauer with Edie Gengras



Randi Bradbury & Marge Anderson

100th Anniversary Auto Drive and Show



Centennial Connections: Crossing the Connecticut
Wednesday, August 24, 2011
 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
 Old Saybrook, CT

Calling all Antique Auto owners to join this historic commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the bridge between Old Saybrook and Old Lyme over the Connecticut River. Re-drive this historic journey and then exhibit your classic auto at beautiful Saybrook Point.

A parade of antique autos will cross the Baldwin Bridge on August 24 from Old Saybrook to Old Lyme and back to mark the 100th anniversary of this major highway bridge over the Connecticut River. Sponsored by the Old Saybrook Historical Society, the event, “Centennial Connections: Crossing the Connecticut,” will feature an antique auto parade and show and a luncheon.

*** *What is the time and location for the drive and show?***
 Registered vehicles should arrive BEFORE 10:00 a.m. at Old Saybrook Middle School, Sheffield Street, Old Saybrook. The procession will move through Old Saybrook, over the Baldwin Bridge, through Old Lyme

and return to Old Saybrook. Upon their return the vehicles will be on display at Saybrook Point until 2:00 p.m.

*** *Who is eligible to participate?***

All owners of pre-1976 vehicles are welcome. We especially welcome early antique autos, trucks, fire engines, motorcycles or other antique vehicles. No modern cars please. Registration is required by August 17, 2011 to reserve space in the drive and show. Information is available by contacting auto coordinator Ed Mosca at: emosca@comcast.net or calling 860-388-2512.

*** *Can I attend the luncheon?***

Sure... join us as we commemorate this event at a luncheon at Dock and Dine at Saybrook Point. Brief talks will be given by State Historian Walter Woodward and transportation dignitaries. Reservations are required and seating is limited. Luncheon begins at approximately 12:00. Reservations are \$35 per person and must be received by August 10, 2011. Reservations may be made by sending a check payable to “OSHS Centennial Connections,” to: Centennial Connections, Old Saybrook Historical Society, P.O. Box 4, Old Saybrook, CT 06475

Ways & Means Committee

This year, the Old Saybrook Historical Society held its Hosting for History event at the former home of Katharine Hepburn in Fenwick. One hundred and seventy five people attended and enjoyed food, and drink (provided by local businesses) as well as a tour of the home. Those who attended had a wonderful time and rave reviews have been coming in!! We were fortunate to have Bill Childress make the initial contact with the present owners, Barbara and Frank

Sciame. They in turn were extremely generous in hosting this event to benefit our Society.

Although we do not have final numbers to report (invoices are still coming in), our expectations were more than met. A GIANT thank you to the committee and all the volunteers who helped make it such a success. Don't know how we will "top" this for next year... but we will try.

Donna D. DiBella, Chair



Irmey Hermanson, Bob Pedemonti, Suzanna Otto manage tickets.



Ways and Means Committee



Sponsor Tables

Calendar of Events

July 16th- Civil War encampment-
Living History 10a.m.-3p.m.

July 20th- Trustee meeting 5p.m.

August 24th- Centennial Connections-
Crossing the Connecticut
Antique auto parade, show and luncheon
10-2p.m.

September 4- Summer exhibit closes

September 18th- Celebration of Life:
Dorothy Swan, Sunday 2-4
Hart House Gardens

September 21- Trustee meeting 5p.m.

October 19- Annual meeting 5p.m.

October TBA - Showtime at the cemetery-
TBA

November 16- Trustee meeting 5p.m.

December 2- Saybrook Stroll -
Hart House open 5-7p.m.

December 10 Torch-light parade 6p.m.

December 11 Wassail Party 5-8p.m.

December 21 Trustee meeting 5p.m.



The Old Saybrook Historical Society

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Hart House Garden Volunteers Needed

Marianne Pfeiffer writes: Today not a single volunteer showed up. But several hordes of school children came through and I told them all about our rose “Rosamundi” that is named after the girlfriend of Henry II of England, Rosamund, who was poisoned by Henry’s jealous wife. Marianne has many other interesting tales to tell as well as a lifetime of gardening wisdom to share. Join us please any Thursday morning 9-12.

This newsletter is generously
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History Around Town



Can you locate and identify this Old Saybrook image?

Send your responses to www.saybrookhistory.org or to Box 4, Old Saybrook, CT 06475. The winner will be pulled from all entries on August 1st. The winning prize is two tickets for admission to Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge MA. The tickets were donated by OSV in support of local history. Please check their website for more information on programs and events, www.osv.org.