



Past to Present

The newsletter of the
New Haven Museum and Historical Society

Summer 2007

New Haven Heritage Salon Explores Civic Issues

The New Haven Museum is embarking on a series of New Haven Heritage Salons -- our latest is entitled, **Prophet of Place: Rediscovering George Dudley Seymour's Civic Vision for New Haven and Connecticut.** Scheduled for July 12th in perfect timing with the latest Community Gallery exhibition, *The New Haven Bar: From the Colonies to Today*, where Seymour is featured as one of our city's most prominent lawyers.

The Heritage Salons are "After-Work" programs combing food for the mind and body; bringing museum staff together with outside scholars and experts to explore important aspects of our cultural heritage. The combination of learning, leisure, socializing and refreshments in our inviting downtown location makes for an inspiring mix.

Prophet of Place, a lecture by museum director William Hosley, will be followed by a panel discussion on "Imagining Connecticut Tomorrow" featuring renowned scholars and 21st century visionaries Mayor John DeStefano, Yale Professor Douglas Rae, State Senator Donald Williams and Governor Jody Rell (or a member of her administration). A review of Seymour's activism in city planning, historic preservation, forestry, antiquarian studies, and town/gown relations will provide a platform for discussing related current events and issues.

George Dudley Seymour (1859-1945), was raised in Bristol, Connecticut where as a boy he was captivated by the story of Nathan Hale. In 1883, following law school and a couple of years in Washington, he established a patent attorney practice in New Haven and over the next sixty years emerged as one of the most influential civic activists in New Haven's history. His



friendships with national figures such as President William Howard Taft, artist John Singer Sargent, first Chief of the U. S. Forestry Service, Gifford Pinchot, and his membership in the Walpole Society gave him national influence.

George Dudley Seymour



This program marks the Centennial of New Haven's City Plan, launched through Seymour's advocacy in June of 1907. The plan, developed by Cass Gilbert and Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., radically changed the look of New Haven, especially around the Green. The plan replaced private residences with public buildings, most notably the New Haven Free Public Library and the New Haven County Courthouse. It also led to the widening of streets, the building of a train station, and the expansion of the city's park system. New Haven became the first American city to engage a staff arborist charged with attempting to save the city's famous elms from the blight of Dutch elm disease. Seymour's fascination with Nathan Hale led to a twenty year campaign to install a statue of Hale on the Yale University campus. He was years ahead of his time. Seymour was, as visionaries often are, misunderstood and occasionally ridiculed by his peers and in the press. But he persevered and relentlessly pursued a vision for civic betterment -- the effects of which are widely apparent today.

The program is co-sponsored by the New Haven Bar Association, 1000 Friends of Connecticut, and ????

Date & Time: July 12, 5:30-7:30 pm
Registration: 203.562.4183 x.10, info@newhavenmuseum.org
Pre-registration recommended
Admission: \$20 members of *NHMHS*, *1000 Friends of CT*,
New Haven Bar Association
\$30 nonmembers

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NHMHS Vision

The Historical Society will be a catalyst for new experiences in local history and current events as an inclusive center in greater New Haven for historical investigation, discussion and interpretation.

Mission Statement

The New Haven Museum and Historical Society is committed to increasing knowledge and inquiry and providing an understanding and appreciation of greater New Haven history. Its programs, exhibitions and collections aim to stimulate discovery and interpretation of the past among a wide-ranging community of visitors, including families, students and scholars. The Society believes that an appreciation of the past will enable the public to make informed decisions and contributions to the future.

General Information

Museum & Library Hours:

Tuesday–Friday 10:00-5:00
Saturday 12:00-5:00

Admission

Adults: \$4.00
Seniors \$3.00
Students \$2.00
Children (6-17) \$2.00
Under 6 Free

Contact Information

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Director's Letter

The Whitney Library

Librarian James Campbell and I are grappling with challenges facing our Whitney Library. We have embarked on a vision for its future that takes into account an almost dizzying array of changes driven by changes in information retrieval, and especially in how family history is done. We now live in a time when Google has made accessible on-line *millions* of published works from the library at Stamford University. The American Antiquarian Society, for example, has most of the New England's old newspapers digitized. One can hear some experts say that "if it's not on-line it doesn't exist." How we are to sustain and make technologically accessible the Whitney Library's treasures must be addressed. We have already expanded our regular hours to include EVERY Saturday from noon to 5 pm.

Jim Campbell and I recently made a presentation to the Historic Records Advisory Board of the Connecticut State Library on *Civic Research Libraries and Connecticut's Heritage: A Legacy at Risk*. We pointed out that the small, informal network of civic research libraries that preserve and provide access to the manuscripts, archives, unique images, and records that enable scholarship and inquiry are increasingly at risk. Most of these repositories are sustained by independent non-profit organizations. For the most part, these



are not supported by their municipalities, and yet they care for some of our unique and indispensable historical records. Instead of no financial support, they really should be recipients of the *first dollars* being devoted to library work in this state.

Low visibility and out-dated access methods diminish use ultimately chipping away at preservation standards and collection acquisition. Although municipal libraries are expanding and thriving across Connecticut, our historical repositories lack up-to-date accessibility. If we can reverse this, curiosity about our past will resume. Awareness of the past fosters citizenship, cultural achievement, and state pride—indispensable if public policy issues are to be managed judicially. As someone who wouldn't be in this business were it not for the influence a civic research library had on me as a college student, I can think of few things I cherish more than unique collections that open doors to discovery and inquiry about civic history.

Our young people are being raised in an increasingly homogeneous culture devoid of place markers. Burger King and the locations of Wal-Mart's video games are familiar. But what has happened to civic awareness, pride of place, a sense of local, regional, and state accomplishment, features not only neglected in textbooks and on TV, but increasingly invisible in their lives. Today's teachers and parents are increasingly unaware of the story of Connecticut's history. Furthermore, over the past half century, the radical transformation in mobility guarantees that more and more of us are transients – new-comers to places we know and understand only to the degree

that our civic and community stories are present in our lives.

Discussions now underway are exploring how the State Library might augment a survey begun by Yale. The goals would be acquiring a better handle on what's out there and grappling with current issues of access and preservation. One possibility is the formation of a state-supported network of regional repositories. Our Whitney Library would be an excellent candidate. We'd like to see a conference on Research Library & Archives issues that focuses on the challenges facing independent civic research libraries, including their need to build usership. Funding for digitization projects is imperative. Whether "virtual access" eventually supersedes the need for hands-on availability, our mission to stimulate scholarship and understanding of this city and region is urgent.

If you are interested in rescuing our outdated repositories, please be in touch. Our former Librarian, Ottilia Koel, who did so much to create the order and systems that make our Whitney Library so interesting and accessible (her Guide to the Manuscripts & Archives is invaluable), recently made a substantial contribution to launch "Project Pipeline." This initiative will improve the Library's use and the accessibility of its holdings. Jim Campbell will present the details of this initiative elsewhere. If more supporters join Otti in stepping up to the challenge, we can transform a national treasure into a 21st century beehive of New Haven scholarship and discovery.



Bill Hosley
Executive Director
hosley@newhavenmuseum.org

From the Whitney Library: Research in the Whitney Library

By James Campbell, Librarian & Curator of Manuscripts

Thomas Phillips (1805-1887) trained with New Haven's Ritter family of stonemasons and then bought out the firm. The Phillips Monument Company was located on High Street near what is now the Beinecke Library across from the Law School. This photograph is from volume 31 of the Dana Collection and is labeled:

Thomas Phillips Marble Works at No. 143 High St., about 1880. He lived at No. 141 in 1874-84 etc., and is here shown (with the stove pipe hat) in center of photograph ...

The Phillips Company continued to provide grave-stones and other monuments until closing in 1888. The Whitney Library was pleased to receive a substantial collection of the Company's business records through the effort of Peter Dobkin Hall.



While many researchers make use of our manuscripts regularly, it is unfortunately the case that some of our collections are underutilized. The Phillips Company papers are an example of this. The Historical Society has begun to seek funding for "Project Pipeline" which will attempt to market our collections more aggressively. The plan is to update the manuscript guide compiled by Ottilia Koel in 1988. Descriptions



Thomas Phillips Marble Works at No. 143 High St., about 1880
Whitney Library, Dana Collection volume 31

of the collections, photographs, indexes to the Papers and Journal of the Society and other finding aids are to be put on our web site in an attractive and inspiring manner. We hope to coordinate this endeavor with Yale and other academic institutions in the area to encourage significant research using these otherwise little known resources. The opportunities provided by advances in technology including the use of digitized images and the Internet are significant and we intend to make use of these effectively with this project.

It is hoped that a new generation of students will be challenged to explore the history of New Haven and that the substantial work done by earlier scholars will be expanded through "Project Pipeline."

From the Collection: *George Washington & His Generals*

by Amy Trout, Curator

The New Haven Museum is in the process of raising funds for the cleaning and conservation of the extraordinary equestrian group portrait, ***George Washington and his Generals***. The painting is in need of cleaning and minor repair. Regular visitors to the Museum, including school groups, will remember this large painting which has hung in the Clement Room for many years. It depicts George Washington on horseback, encircled by eleven of his Revolutionary War generals, also on horseback in an undisclosed countryside site. It is remarkable for its portrayal of Washington as a military leader engaged in a reconnaissance with several of his army's elite officers. The group surrounds him in a position of protection and admiration.



George Washington and his Generals
Artist unknown

Oil on canvas c. 1800-1815

Gift of Frank Langdon Humphreys, 1938, 1971.135

Why do we care about a painting of George Washington? As Commander in Chief of the Continental Army and first President of the United States, Washington was a man who achieved a celebrity status unlike any other American of any era, of any time. George Washington was more than a political and military figure; he became a symbol of our nation. His contemporaries on both sides of the political spectrum praised him. Citizens of the young Republic saw him as the embodiment of noble ideals that our country stood for. He is larger than life now - his countenance and image are still used to represent our country.

Unfortunately, *our* George has some mysteries. Although the painting came to the Society with an attribution by artist Charles Wilson Peale (1741-1827), there is a strong possibility that it is not by that famous artist. So who did paint it? We don't know, but hope through conservation and rejuvenated interest, new leads in finding out who painted it, when, and why will be discovered. Regardless of the unknowns, what is known is that the painting is a fine example of American history painting, large in size and heroic in subject matter. It provides us with a view of Washington as the leader among leaders.

In case you're wondering, Washington DID sleep here, in New Haven, that is. George Washington vis-

ited New Haven three times in his life— once in 1756 as a young Colonel during the French and Indian War, again in 1775 as Commander in Chief when he stayed overnight at Beers Tavern, and lastly in 1789 as President of the United States (he stayed at Roger Sherman's house on Chapel Street). The power and legacy of George, however, lingers on in New Haven as well as every town in America. Since his death in 1799, Americans looked for connections to their great leader. During the first few decades of the Twentieth Century, Americans yearned for images, architecture, and material evidence of our colonial heritage, particularly anything relating to George Washington. The painting, ***George Washington and His Generals***, was given to the Historical Society in 1938 during the height of colonial celebration – the city's tercentenary. The donor, Frank Langdon Humphreys, was a biographer of one of Washington's aides, Connecticut's own David Humphreys.

There is hope that in the near future, there will be more space to devote to the topic of New Haven during the era of the Revolution and early Republic in an exhibition called *Patriots and Icons*. Stay tuned!

Periscope—Great Things to See and Do in & Around New Haven

Guilford takes historic preservation seriously. The town's historical society, known as the *Guilford Keeping Society*, recently added a new museum to its collection of civic attractions. This one is worth crossing state lines to see.

The Medad Stone Tavern (1803) is not yet for the uninitiated. It's not slick or packaged. But it has amazing architectural integrity and collections with organic continuity going back in an unbroken chain to the early 18th century in one community and two families.



Medad Stone Tavern, Guilford CT

Architectural integrity includes a staircase with breathtaking period grain painted decoration, entire walls with original paint and a variety of little cupboards, doors, raised panels and moldings – untouched and reeking of authenticity in ways one never sees. This house has not been restored and it's setting on Three Mile Course is an environment seemingly untouched by time.

Medad Stone (1754-1815) was a tavernkeeper, postmaster, stage company operator and real estate speculator who grew up in his father's tavern on the Guilford Green. He built this house on speculation anticipating a new turnpike road that was never built. It's location on the margins factored into its preservation.

The Keeping Society owns a rare tavern ledger kept by Medad Stone's father Daniel. Following Medad's death in 1815 the house, with some contents, was acquired by Joel Davis and remained in the Davis family until it was bequeathed to the Society by Len Davis Hubbard, a direct descendant, a few years ago.

The house contains dozens of objects and furnishings as old or older than the house. In a society famous for its frugality and resourcefulness, it is never a surprise

to find objects passed down through generations. Here, such items include a circa 1720 square dining table, a circa 1700 turned chair, early blanket chests and painted cupboards, and, a grungy old desk (illus.) that would add value to any museum collection in America.

Medad Stone Tavern,
197 Three Mile Course,
Guilford, CT
Open Saturdays
June-August, 11am-4pm
203 453-2263

This desk, made from local poplar, pine and maple, was made as early as 1730. A desk valued at \$10 appears in Medad Stone's estate inventory. It is otherwise undocumented but has been in this house from the beginning and was probably always owned and made in Guilford.

The desk has an unrestored "untouched" quality anti-quarians love with Original surface, original hardware, and original paint, including little hand-inscribed labels on the interior drawers - a kind of filing system for the pre-modern age.

The desk is an untutored example of the William & Mary style introduced into Boston about 1695 and rarely seen in Connecticut cabinetwork. Its sliding interior storage well (the slide now missing) and panel-molded top are sophisticated design elements. It lacks feet and may never have had any – a close inspection under bright lights was inconclusive.



Stone Tavern Desk

The desk connects with one of the most intriguing aspects of early Connecticut art.

The furniture made along the coast in Milford, Guilford, Saybrook and New Haven is characterized by elaborately decorated painted flowers and vines, often, like this, in local poplar wood (NHM&HS owns an exceptional painted high chest and separate chest with drawers from the Pardee Morris House). It's a diamond in the rough and well worth visiting the Medad Stone Tavern in Guilford to see.

William Hosley

Special thanks to Heather Galli, Curator, Guilford Keeping Society

The Federal Arts Project Exhibition Inspires Kids' Korner Programs

Kid's Korner is in its third season of bringing art and stories to families with young children! This year's programs are funded through a grant from NewAlliance Foundaton, supporting programs associated with the *Federal Art Project* exhibition.

Drop by on Wednesdays in July and August to participate in activities, stories and gallery exploration.

This summer, each program is inspired by the art and events of the Federal Art Project era. Learn about murals, sculpture and the 1930s decade as you explore this special exhibition gallery with your children and work together to design your own works of art.

Kid's Korner Programs are designed for children ages 3–9 and their adult caregivers. Programs are free of charge, funded through NewAlliance Foundation.



Rip Van Winkle
original watercolor
sketch
New Haven Public
Library
by S. DeMaio
c. 1934
NHMHS 1999.420

Welcome New Board Members

As a non-profit institution, the New Haven Museum & Historical Society is governed by a Board of Directors. These volunteers come to the Historical Society from many backgrounds and walks of life. As community representatives they work to broaden awareness, raise funds, assist with programs and events, and oversee financial, personnel and facilities needs for the organization. We welcome our newest Board members and look forward to working with them.

Norman Bender is Co-Owner of Bender Plumbing Supplies in New Haven, Waterbury and Bridgeport. He has worked at this family business since he was eleven years old. Mr. Bender has a history degree from Yale University and served in the US Army during the Vietnam War. He volunteers for the Farnum Neighborhood House, is on the Yale School of Nursing Advisory Council, coaches boys basketball and even serves as co-host for Grand Stand Inside Yankee Baseball on WELI.

Program Dates and Times

Wednesday from 10:30-11:30

July 11: Mural Art & Stories—Rip Van Winkle
Salvtore DeMaio's study art for the Rip Van Winkle mural leads us on a discovery of this famous story and how the artist created the painting.

July 18: Make It & Shape It—Art Projects in 3D
Explore Federal Arts Project sculpture and create your own masterpiece.

July 25: Murals—Make it BIG! Learn how the artists made murals and make you own REALLY BIG art.

August 1: Mural Art & Stories—New Haven Heroes
Many New Haven murals tell stories of famous local people and events. Come here some of these exciting stories, see the art and be inspired to create your own.

August 8: Murals—Make it BIG! Learn how the artists made murals and try your hand at REALLY BIG art.

August 15: Celebrate—New Haven History on Parade
New Haven and Connecticut celebrated their 300th anniversaries in the 1930s. Make a hat, design your own mini -parade float and see how the citizens of New Haven celebrated their city's history.

Patricia Crisco is tax collector for the town of Woodbridge. Ms. Crisco attended UCONN, has worked at Hopkins School and raised her family here in the New Haven area. For fifteen years she owned Singer Travel. Originally from California, she feels very strongly about New Haven culture.



Patricia Crisco & Norman Bender

Marta Moret is President of Urban Policy Strategies in New Haven. Ms. Moret has served as an assistant professor at Quinnipiac College, an Instructor at Yale University School of Medicine and Lecturer at the University of Connecticut. She has worked with the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven, The Connecticut State Department of Social Services and a other social service organizations in the region. Ms. Moret is a graduate of Western Connecticut State Uni-

Backyard Tourism: *The Art, Architecture & American History of Norwich & New London*

It is often said that people never visit the sites in their own backyards... Now you can! The New Haven Museum and Historical Society is offering a new adult program series for members and friends to explore the hidden wonders of our state and region. Climb aboard our travel coach and join us in a day of discovery as we uncover the hidden treasures and learn the stories of American history in Norwich and New London.

Our day will begin with a departure from NHM&HS at 8:30 am to arrive in New London at 9:30. In New London we will tour the historic Customs House Maritime Museum and ride in comfort on an architectural highlights tour visiting such noted sites as the Nathan Hale Schoolhouse, Winthrop Mill, Hempstead Houses and others.

Once we have completed our tour, it is off to Groton for a visit to the Monument and Museum and Fort Griswold. Walk the ground of this Revolutionary War era fort and imagine the British invasion in 1781.

We will then journey on to Norwich for a lunch and tour at the Slater Memorial Museum. Home to an amazing

collection of art and artifacts ranging from fabulous casts of Ancient Greek figures to American decorative arts. After lunch we will tour the Lef-fingwell House Mu-seum and explore the community with an architectural tour by Bill Hosley and a guided visit to the old burying ground and dramatic Indian leap.



Slater Memorial Museum

Our bus will return us to New Haven by 6:00 pm.



Date & Time: Saturday, September 22
8:30 am– 6 pm

Registration: 203.562.4183 x.10, or
email: info@newhavenmuseum.org
Pre-registration required

Registration Deadline: September 1

Admission: \$80 members
\$90 nonmembers

Admission includes all museum and tour fees, box lunch and refreshments.

The Wishing Well

This year the New Haven Museum will celebrate its 145th birthday. For generations we have served this community by preserving its treasures, operating a unique and content-rich research library, and providing an array of school and adult education programs that touch thousands of lives each year. We are New Haven's first and only civic museum - a beacon for inquiry, reflection, preservation, and civic pride.

We need your help and invite you to do something transformational that will affect the quality and character of our culture and community.

Please experience the joy of giving. Drop by to see changes underway, experience some of our innovative new programs, and learn about opportunities involving our programs, museum and library. You and your contribution make *more* of a difference here.

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Emerita*

NHM&HS Calendar of Events for Summer & Early Fall 2007

July

- 11: Kids' Korner: *Mural Art & Stories–Rip Van Winkle*
10:30-11:30
- 12: New Haven Heritage Salon: *Prophet of Place:
Rediscovering George Dudley Seymour's Civic Vision
for New Haven and Connecticut*
5:30-7:30 pm
- 18: Kids' Korner: *Make it and Shape It–Art Projects in 3D*
10:30-11:30
- 25: Kids' Korner: *Murals–Make it BIG!*
10:30-11:30

August

- 1: Kids' Korner: *Mural Art & Stories– New Haven Heroes*
10:30-11:30 am
- 8: Kids' Korner: *Murals–Make it BIG!*
10:30-11:30
- 15: Kids' Korner: *Celebrate–New Haven History on Parade*
10:30-11:30

September

- 17: Whitney Library Associates Program–
New Haven Theatre Programs
5:30pm (see below for registration information)
- 22: Backyard Tourism: *The Art, Architecture &
History of Norwich & New London*
8:00am–6:30pm

October

Upcoming Fall Programs:

- November 14: Whitney Library Associates Program–
5:30 pm
- November TBD: Annual Meeting

Pre-registration encouraged for all programs, please call 203.562.4183 x. 10 or info@newhavenmuseum.org

For Whitney Library Associates Programs please call: 203.562.4183 x.15 (\$10 NHM&HS members, \$15 non members)

For more information on upcoming programs and events, please visit www.newhavenmuseum.org.



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