By Steve Gurney

Three hundred fifty years ago, on the public square near what is now the intersection of Elm and Temple Streets, stood a simple one-room log cabin adorned with a large fieldstone fireplace. The square served many purposes and within a stone’s throw of this modest structure was the town graveyard and the local jail. Inside this small cabin, on hard oak benches, sat six or eight boys as young as eight years old, their Bibles on their laps. Throughout the day each was called upon to recite aloud a Latin or Greek passage supposed to have been memorized by candle or firelight the evening before. This was Hopkins’s first schoolhouse; these were its first students; this was their curriculum.

One can only marvel at the fierce determination required of a Puritan foremother on winter mornings as she pried a sleep-bound boy out of a warm bed in time to trudge to an unheated schoolroom with daylight still an hour or more away. One can assume she did not always succeed.

Six days a week, fifty-two weeks of the year, from six in the morning until four or five in the afternoon, a few young scholars labored at their lessons in the dim light. All could hear the ongoing burials of departed Christians in the nearby graveyard, the wails of convicted sinners in the jail, the grunting of hogs and the barking of dogs rooting among the graves. If these activities did not sufficiently inspire young minds to scholarly concentration, a handy supply of birch rods, locally cut and ably wielded by their schoolmaster, served instead.

Hope of redemption was admission to Harvard “Colledge,” such as it was in its third decade. There was as yet no alternative in the New World to Harvard. Yale was still over forty years in the future but it might be noted that in the decades after its founding, Yale immediately and overwhelmingly replaced Harvard as the goal of a Hopkins education – perhaps because Yale’s location in Saybrook and later New Haven entailed a considerably shorter and safer walk than the footpath to Boston.

Hopkins owes these humble yet purposeful and, in those times, successful beginnings to the Reverend John Davenport. In the spring of 1637, he
Daffodils may be blooming brightly all over downtown New Haven as March turns to April, but out on the East Shore, spring comes later. At the Pardee-Morris House, the 300 daffodils planted last fall by the Morris Cove Garden Club are barely beginning to push their leaves above the ground. The legendary north winds that sweep over Morris Cove and delay the spring really do exist. But within the next few weeks, the Pardee-Morris House will be coming to life.

A grand opening event is planned, with tours, food, and entertainment. Throughout the summer, there will be classes, exhibits, tours and other events. Depending on the availability of volunteers, we hope to have the Pardee-Morris House open to the public for visits and tours on weekends throughout the season. If you would like to volunteer, or if you know someone who would like to, please call Louise FitzSimons (203) 562-4183 ext 10. If you would like to exercise your green thumb helping clean up the lawns, trimming and planting, please contact the head of our grounds volunteers, John Cox at jcox@snet.net. And watch for the announcement of the Pardee-Morris House’s formal opening.

After many years—no one remembers exactly how long it’s been—live music is returning to the New Haven Museum. If you’ve been in the Clement Room lately, you will have noticed the magnificent six foot mahogany Steinway grand piano that recently arrived. It is on loan from piano restorer Brent Evans. Evans, who sells restored pianos from his shop on State Street, offered to lend the Museum the piano for use in our musical events. The Steinway is for sale and, when it is sold, he promises to lend us another.

Despite the number of venues for music in this city, local musicians tell us that there are never enough for the number of talented musicians who want to perform or for the audiences who want to hear good music.

For the first concert of the new series, we will welcome a group of local musicians: Sergio Pallottelli—flute; Joanna Becker—violin; Yaroslav Kargin—viola; Gretchen Frazier—viola; Tom Hudson—cello. They will perform: Flute Quartet in D Major (W.A. Mozart); Serenade for Flute, Violin and Viola (L.v. Beethoven); and Quintet in A Major for Flute and String Quartet (F. Kuhlau).

The concert will be followed by a reception. Please mark your calendar for Sunday May 16th, 3 PM.

The latest addition to our museum is a Steinway Model A-2 grand piano, on loan from Brenton Evans Pianos.
The Museum continues to move forward, reaching out and attracting new audiences. Since the first of the year, we have hosted a number of successful events that were very well attended: The January 21st talk by Carleton Loucks on “What Railroads Have Meant to New Haven,” the presentation on February 4th, researched in the Whitney Library, on Mrs. F. B. Scranton, a New Havener who went to Korea in 1885 and founded a girls’ school which has grown into today’s Ewah University, the largest women’s university in the world. This event, which was co-sponsored by the First and Summerfield Methodist Church, drew a large crowd, most of whom had never been in the Museum before. We also hosted a Yale Club-sponsored presentation on scientific writing and state-wide annual meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Our new series “New Haven/Safe Haven” on the changing patterns of immigration in our city has held two events to date, one an overview of the changing face of immigration in Connecticut, “Welcoming the World,” on March 4th and on March 11th, a previously snowed-out presentation by IRIS (Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services) on the new Iraqi refugees who are being resettled in New Haven by the U. S. State Department. On February 25th postcard and ephemera collector Joe Taylor presented a “finale” to our East Shore Reflections exhibit, which closed on February 28th. We anticipate that portions of this popular exhibit will be transferred to the Pardee-Morris House later this spring so that it can continue to be enjoyed during the Pardee-Morris House season, when we have events scheduled.

In early April we will open an exhibit on Hopkins School, which is celebrating its 350th anniversary. We are reviving our traditional “Seal of the City” award and will present it to Hopkins School at a ceremony at the Museum on April 15th. We will continue to make annual “Seal of the City” awards.

Another new development at the Museum is the arrival of a beautiful, recently-restored Steinway grand piano on loan. This will enable us to host musical events for the first time in many years. A performance by a string quartet and flute is scheduled for Sunday, May 16th to inaugurate the new series.

We continue to offer a variety of evening programs designed to attract new and diverse audiences. An example is our “Irish Movies-Irish Beer” festival, which features three evenings of films set in the crucial years of the Irish War of Independence.

On Tuesday, April 20th, we will welcome Prof. James O’Gorman, Emeritus Professor of Art at Wellesley College, and author of a prize-winning book on architect Henry Austin. He will discuss the architect whose work is prominent at many sites in New Haven, including the gate of Grove Street Cemetery. And on Tuesday May 18th we will hear from the distinguished editor of The Jonathan Edwards papers, who will speak on “Jonathan Edwards in New Haven.”

As part of the overall master plan for the museum in the coming years, we are working closely with the city’s Canal Dock project. We want to make the Museum the focus of Canal Dock’s emphasis on the harbor, the Freedom Trail, the Farmington Canal, and the Amistad. In this regard, we are working closely with Canal Dock planners and architects as well as the City.

Walter R. Miller, Jr.
From the Photo Archives  By Jason Bischoff-Wurste, Director of Photographic Archives

This photograph was taken by T.S. Bronson as the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad constructed its most extensive rail yard here in New Haven. The Cedar Hill Terminal and Yards covered 880 acres extending from the area of East Rock Park to what is now Universal Drive in North Haven.

The yard stood at the intersection of four major routes; the New York Division, the Air Line Division to Boston; the Canal Division to Northampton and the Hartford Division. After the New York Division was electrified in 1914, the yards handled the switch between steam/diesel freights and trains running on the line, and could hold more than 15,000 cars at one time.

Today the Cedar Hill Yards are still in use, albeit on a smaller scale. The surrounding neighborhood is a somewhat isolated pocket of New Haven, separated from East Rock and Fair Haven by Interstate 91.

Free First Sunday Takes Hold

After struggling through snow and sleet in January and February, the Museum’s new Free First Sunday policy is finally taking hold. Opening the Museum to the public free of charge from 1 to 4 PM on the first Sunday of the month began on a very snowy January 2nd. Volunteers Mary Alice Hurley, Nancy Ahern and Louise FitzSimons, backed up by volunteer Bill McKeon, braved icy winds and sleet to put out our new welcome sign (see photo). Despite the weather, seven brave visitors showed up on that First Free Sunday. Weather on the first Sunday of February was almost as bad. But by the first Sunday of March, with our publicity starting to take hold and thanks to a fine spring day, the Museum welcomed a total of 60 visitors! Please help us spread the word that the Museum is now open to the public free of charge on the first Sunday of each month from 1 PM to 4 PM.
“Your obliged friend & brother” – Mr. Davenport writes to Mr. Cotton, 1650

John Davenport of New Haven and John Cotton of Boston were two of the leading first-generation ministers of New England. They shared similar backgrounds in theology and faced similar problems in church and state matters.

Following Cotton’s death in 1652, Davenport requested his late friend’s son to return the letters which Davenport had written to Cotton over the years. It is believed that this correspondence was then destroyed by Davenport. The rationale for this action is not known. As a result, only one letter from Davenport to Cotton is known to exist. That letter, from 1650, is in the Whitney Library.

The letter has been published twice, by Isabel Calder in her 1937 edition of Davenport’s correspondence and again by Sargent Bush, Jr. in his 2001 edition of Cotton’s letters.

Editor Bush introduces the letter with this word about its content and context:

“Beyond the personal friendship established many year before this letter, Davenport (and the New Haven Colony generally) looked to John Cotton as a voice of authority on matters of colonial government. Cotton’s code of laws, known in the Bay as “Moses His Judicials,” had been adopted as the foundation of the New Haven Colony’s legal system. This may help explain why Davenport seems so anxious to have Cotton’s prompt ruling on the issue he raises near the end of this letter regarding the legality of evidence produced by sole witness against accused individuals. In Davenport’s mind, Cotton’s word on such questions was as good as law.”

Communication among the towns of New England in the 17th century was not swift or sure. Davenport wrote a postscript to the letter:

“I am told that this vessel will speedily returne again I hope ergo that you will returne an answer by him, if no other passenger come sooner, with speed, which I earnestly desire.”

Cotton did respond quickly and that letter to Davenport is also in the Whitney Library’s collections.
and wealthy London merchant Edward Hopkins shared both the ideology of the Puritans and the perils of an Atlantic passage to Boston aboard the small square rigger "Hector". After exploration, Davenport led 300 or so Pilgrims south to form a new haven for Puritans at the mouth of the Quinnipiac River. He believed firmly that only an educated ministry and lay community “fitted for public service” could sustain the purity of faith and strictness of governance necessary for his new colony to survive in a wilderness.

In 1972 Hopkins merged with New Haven’s private school for girls, Day Prospect Hill School, itself the product of an earlier merger. After a period as Hopkins Grammar Day Prospect Hill School, the School is now known simply as Hopkins School, in honor of its first benefactor, secure at last in its location overlooking the city of New Haven where it was born.

Many Hopkins School graduates have served the nation and their communities with distinction as cabinet officers, U.S senators, state governors and college presidents, as teachers, in professions and in business. Graduates include Abraham Pierson 1664, Yale’s first President (then Rector), and Jacob Heminway 1700, Yale’s first student; later Yale Presidents Theodore Dwight Woolsey 1816, Timothy Dwight 1845, and Arthur Hadley 1872; Jared Ingersoll 1762, member of the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention; Senators James Hillhouse 1769, Roger Sherman Baldwin (also governor) 1807, and Orris Ferry 1840; Connecticut Governors Henry Edwards 1793, Charles Ingersoll 1835 and Simeon Baldwin 1857; William Hoppin 1824, Governor of Rhode Island; Postmaster General Wilson Bissell 1865; U.S. Attorney General Edwards Pierrepont 1833, Science Professor Benjamin Silliman 1833, the founder of the modern petroleum industry and who introduced gas lighting to New Haven; Augustus Street 1808, who endowed the Yale Art School which became the first Yale school to admit women; Civil War Major Generals Joseph Mansfield 1817 and Alfred Howe Terry 1838 (Terry also served as Lt. Colonel George Custer’s commanding officer against the Sioux in the Dakota territory); Edward Bouchet 1870, the first African American to earn a Ph.D. in an American University (Yale); Walter Camp 1876, the founder of modern football; Composer Charles Ives 1894; Judge and former Law School Dean Guido Calabresi 1949; aeronautical engineer and human flight pioneer Paul MacCready 1943; Harold Hongju Koh 1971, Yale Law School Dean and Legal Advisor to the U.S. Department of State; and, for Yale alumni, Henry S. Durand 1877, author of Bright College Years.

The New Haven Museum commemorates and congratulates Hopkins School for its 350 years of service to the New Haven community, the State of Connecticut and the nation.
Upcoming Programs  April-May

April

8th: Last of this year’s “Irish Movies-Irish Beer Festival:” The Wind that Shakes the Barley. 6 PM. Movie plus two complimentary Irish beers and snacks with $10 contribution to the Museum.

20th: James O’Gorman, Professor of Art Emeritus of Wellesley College, will speak on architect Henry Austen at an event co-sponsored with the New Haven Wellesley Club. Professor O’Gorman will also sign copies of his prize-winning book on Austin. A reception will follow. 5:30 PM. Free of charge.

May

16th: Museum Musicale: Music returns to the Museum! Concert with string quartet and flute. Music of Mozart, Beethoven and Kuhlau. 3 PM. Reception follows. $10, $7 members.

April

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For more information on upcoming programs and events, call (203) 562-4183, or visit www.newhavenmuseum.org.