



Sign Post

Winter 2023

Volume 31, Issue 3



The Old House Corner

By Steve Marshall, *The Historic House Guy*



Details to Aid in Dating a House Part 1

Most old house owners want to have a sense of the age of their home. Some have dates well researched and confirmed while others are a mystery. Many details enter into the formula, location, style, original owners' status, material availability, use for the dwelling or even reuse as in Barns or other dependency outbuildings. Some parts or even whole sections may have been dragged in from elsewhere. The Hale ell is just that, parts of two or more smaller dependency buildings added to the back.

Dwellings were also built for personal use, extended family, indentured servants or perhaps slaves. For example, our own Strong Porter house started out at half the size it is (the east end) best we can tell in the 1730's then as time went by the west end was added mid-century for extended family.



A beautifully restored "Fan Light" window

Probably one of the earliest "two family" houses in town.

The most accurate dating technology available is Dendrochronology, which is a process where core

samples of sound timber are extracted and compared against other samples of known dates and locale for comparison. There has been enough data compiled to get the "fell date" of that timber and with that date it is known most timbers were worked into frames within a year before the timber dries.

Mark Your Calendars

Jan 11	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Jan 20	Trash or Treasure Appraisal Day, 1-4pm, location Weston's Auction Gallery, 2799 Rt 44
Feb 8	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Feb 15	Black History Month, 7pm, Strong Porter
Mar 14	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Mar 21	Stew & Story, 630pm, Second Cong Church Community House
Apr 11	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Apr 18	Coventry Cong Church & Its Splits, 7pm, Second Cong Church
May 4	Tag Sale, Strong Porter (details tba)
May 9	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
May 18	Historic Window Restoration Techniques, 1pm, Strong Porter
Jun 13	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Jun 16	Sundae on a Sunday, 1-3pm, Brick School
Jun 20	Witness Stone Talk & Dedication, details to follow
Jul 11	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Jul 20	Antique Car & Motorcycle Show & Swap, 12 noon, Strong Porter
Aug 8	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Aug	Caprilands Style Luncheon (details to come)
Sep 12	Executive Board Mtg, 630 pm, Strong Porter
Sep 15	Annual Meeting, 4pm, Strong Porter
Sep 21	Arts on Main, 11-3, Coventry Village

The other way to determine age is deed research. This is always interesting and sometimes confusing. Land transfers don't always coincide with improvements, names are misspelled, lot

(Cont'd. from page 1) descriptions are unclear over time. Sons and brothers with the same name? Why I guess that's where Newhart came up with Larry, Daryl and Daryl.

We can take the physical aspects of an old house and compare it to others, what we know for typical details and reference material available to builders in the period.

Listed here are some typical characteristics on the exterior of the house to look for;

Pre-Revolutionary;

Steep roof pitch, center chimney, simple trim, Crown molding adorned cornice and sometime the gable rakes with returns. Window fenestration; a five window or a nine window front two story house, one or two room deep format, size and style of a ell, A lean-to addition was quite common on the rear of two story homes. Often later removed for a larger Ell (Huntington House).

Story and a half (AKA Cape) similar details as above but obviously the window format is different. A Four window front for a full cape, a three-window front on a $\frac{3}{4}$ and a two-window front on a half cape.

Most early dwellings had smaller windows with 6"x8" or a bit later 7"x9" glass which was imported. With that in mind it was expensive. Paint pigments like white were also expensive other than the earth tones. This was the predominate color if any used early on. Reds, Brown, Ochre, Blue Green and blends of the base pigments. White became readily available around the time of the revolution.

Doors were of two types, paneled or batten. Generally, you will find a mix in any one house. Panel, the more formal and most stable construction usually for the front and side and a batten on the rear. There are many exceptions, panel doors cost more to make and took longer so

a "worker house likely had batten doors or a old used door from another building. Reuse is nothing new. Abandoned houses were often burned for the nails!

Next time we will enter the front door! In the next newsletter we will dive into more detail, especially the interior.

Trash or Treasure?

Many come out to find the answer

On Saturday, July 8, a number of locals came to the Strong Porter Museum for CHS' Appraisal Day with auctioneer RJ Weston. Not only did they learn whether their items were valuable, they also learned about curiosities lurking in the attics and basements of other townfolk. In all, RJ examined and offered opinions on nearly 50 items.

Based on response, we will repeat this event on Sat Jan 20 from 1-4pm at Weston's Auction Gallery, 2799 Boston Tpke (Rt 44), Snow Date Jan 21. Maximum 3 appraisals per person, first come, first served. Cost of \$5 for each verbal appraisal benefits CHS. Open to the public. For further details, watch your email and our Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/coventryhistory/>



Dudley Brand's Antique
Bicycle



RJ Weston

Caprilands Corner



By Michelle Heimall, CHS Board

The Caprilands Committee has stayed busy! In August we hosted 60 guests for our 3rd Annual Caprilands Style Luncheon under a big tent at the Strong Porter Museum. Guests were treated to several courses deliciously inspired by Adelma’s recipes and recreated by Chef Denise Reardon-Popp of Chow, LLC.



A beautiful Capriland’s inspired punch and salad by Deb Comeau

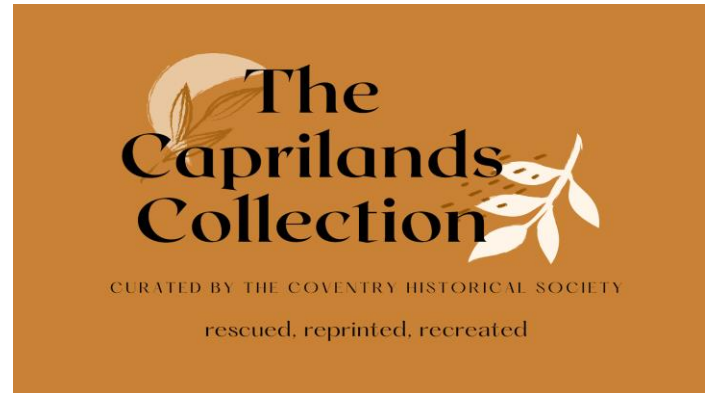
The highlight, we think, was the Marigold Soup. Many local businesses including Nathan Hale Farm and Feed, Edmonson’s Farm, Woodland Gardens and Coventry Arts and Antiques provided raffle prizes and décor. Generous sponsorships from Ackert Electric and Meadowbrook Wine and Spirits carried our event. In very exciting news, the Coventry Historical Society is now officially the owner of the Intellectual Property rights that remained in Adelma’s estate meaning that we are



able to carry out the mission of preserving and furthering the legacy of Adelma and Caprilands. Guests of the luncheon also received a newly

printed copy of Adelma’s first book “Some Favorite

Capriland’s Herb Recipes”. Several other titles have been resurrected including the wildly popular and hard to find “A Witch’s Brew” as well as herb charts and garden plans. A Witch’s Brew was rolled out at the annual Spooky Stories event where members of the Caprilands Committee treated guests to recipes from the book. Successful pop-up appearances at the church fairs at First and Second Congregational Churches in Coventry as well as many local businesses show that people have not forgotten Caprilands. The Caprilands Committee has informally adopted a tagline for the newly expanding Caprilands Collection- “rescued, reprinted, recreated”.



Walktober Walks Along Main Street in Historic Coventry Village

By John Holmy, Town Historian

As part of the Last Green Valley’s “Walktober”, the Historical Society sponsored two walks along Main Street in the Historic Coventry Village. We met at the First Congregational Church on Main Street, where I started our walks by saying, “Let’s imagine it’s 1800 and we are on our way to Church”. The twist being the First Congregational Church on Main Street had not yet been built in 1800.

(Cont'd from page 3) The original center of Coventry was around the Town Green where the original Meetinghouse/Church was located on the corner of High Street. So up the hill on Main Street we marched towards the Green. We only went about half way before turning around and heading back down Main Street for our walk. During our walks we talked about the architecture, civic



buildings, old mills, and the history of Main Street.

Ionic Columns on the First Congregational Church

!



Special Thanks to the volunteers of the Village Improvement Society for opening and staffing the 1876 Building Visitors Center during our walks!



The attendance was fantastic! 60 people attended the two walks in mid-October and early November



Historic maps of Main Street were displayed so we could compare today to the past.

The 1869 map. Notice the gap in the middle of Wall Street

I want to thank Bill Jobbagy for his inspiration in developing this walk!



Italianate architecture (pronounced "uh-talinate") of the Methodist Church

I enjoyed meeting many people while preparing for and leading these walks. I'm looking forward to next Walktober! Where do you want to walk next?

Upcoming Events

Trash or Treasure? Appraisal Day Sat Jan 20 Are you a fan of Antiques Roadshow? Wonder what that odd thing in your attic or outbuilding is or whether it has any value? Find out from auctioneer RJ Weston at Weston's Auction Gallery, 2799 Boston Tpke (Rt 44), 1-4pm. Maximum 3 appraisals per person, first come, first served. Cost of \$5 for each verbal appraisal benefits CHS. Open to the public.

Black History Month Presentation Thurs Feb 15 Explore how slavery affected Coventry and discuss those enslaved in the town. See description on page 6. Strong Porter Museum, 7pm, free, open to members and guests.

Stew & Story Thurs March 21 Enjoy a variety of delicious homemade soups, stews, chowders, breads, desserts and drinks, followed by a program about Hank Keene and his Connecticut Hillbillies. See description on page 6. Second Congregational Church Community House, 6:30pm. Cost \$10 for members, \$20 for nonmembers.

Coventry Congregational Church & Its Splits, Thurs April 18 Why does Coventry have two Congregational churches? What happened to the original church on the town green by the lake? And

(Upcoming Events Cont'd) how does Andover fit in? Learn all about it at Second Cong Church, 7pm, free and open to the public.

Tag sale Sat May 4 Strong Porter House Museum, 8-4. Books, antiques, historical and Caprilands items, tools, household items, and more. Got donations? Call Sue Way at 860-712-4278 to coordinate a drop off at the Strong Porter House.

Historic Window Restoration Techniques Sat May 18 Historic preservation specialist Stephen Marshall will demonstrate techniques used in traditional restoration and repair of wood windows. See description on page 7. Strong Porter House Museum, 1-3:30 pm, free and open to the public.

Sundae on a Sunday June 16 (Father's Day) Celebrate Father's Day with our annual Ice Cream Social at the 1825 Brick School, (corner of Merrow Road & Goose Lane), open to visitors 1-3pm. Fathers get a complimentary sundae, others \$3 donation. Reservations not required, first come first served. Rain or shine, unless extreme weather.

Witness Stone Talk & Dedication TBA

Antique Car & Motorcycle Show & Swap Sat July 20 Strong Porter House Museum beginning at 12 noon. See description on page 7.

Caprilands Style Luncheon Watch for details about our 4th annual event coming in August.

Annual Members Meeting Sun Sept 15 – Strong Porter House Museum, 4pm

Arts on Main Sat Sept 21, 11-3, Coventry Village. Take a stroll and see what CHS will be displaying.

Archives Corner

By Sue Way

The CHS Archives has been very busy this year cataloging the Caprilands Collection with the help of Dylan Kearney. That work will be ongoing, but we have finished the books, the textiles and 14 of the document cases.

We have been doing an inventory of our Textile collections with the help of Rita Boravicka. With

her help we have identified pieces and sewed labels in where there were none, and created lists. Rita and I spent a morning at a Sturbridge Village textile workshop and learned many things including how to pad coat hangers which will be one of our next projects. This work was prompted by the additions to our collection from several donors including the Morgan Family descendants, the Edmondson Family and the Hutt Family.



The next project will be the

cataloging of the rest of the Hutt Family Collection. We have been given an amazing variety of interesting photos such as the photo included here of the Loomis house, diaries, account books and papers, carpentry tools, Bowler and Top Hat that could be the hats seen in the above photo. Of particular interest are an early 1800s musket converted to a percussion rifle, 2 bayonets and a Civil War sword.

John and Clara (Smith) Hutt lived on Broad Way in a house they had built in the 1950s. Architectural drawings and account of the expenses associated with the work are included in this donation. They had two children Bruce and Priscilla. It is through Priscilla Hutt Williams that we have received the Hutt Family Collection. Clara Hutt was the daughter of Charles and Amy (Loomis) Smith and the sister of Sylvia (Smith) McKinney. Clara and Sylvia were born in Manchester and lived near the Manchester Green where Charles Smith owned a vehicle repair shop. The girls went to the Green School and Clara's first memories of Coventry were of spending summers at her Grandparents farm across the street from the 2nd Congregational

(Cont'd from page 5) Church. History intervened when the great depression forced many people to stop driving cars and Charles Smith had to close his shop. The family moved to Coventry to be near Amy's family and lived in the house that stood about where the Key Bank is today. Charles set up a shop to repair furniture and Amy who was an expert seamstress took in sewing. We now have her sewing table and her account book. She also painted some of the furniture that Charles was repairing. Clara and Sylvia finished their education at Manchester High School as did all North Coventry students and then they went on to work for the Insurance companies in Hartford.

Charles Smith was an orphan, so we know nothing of his background. The Hutt family were immigrants from Germany and settled in Manchester and worked at the Cheney Mills. John Hutt after coming of age enlisted in the Navy and was stationed in Pearl Harbor. As it happened, his ship set sail some time before the attack on Pearl Harbor. We have a few of his letters and a picture of his ship, and John in uniform. We still have organizing, reading and then cataloging to do.

Previews of Some of Our Upcoming Programs

Black History Month program

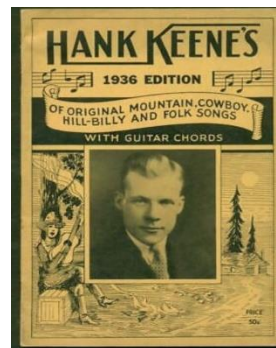
By Daniel Gorka, Treasurer

Find out more about Coventry's Caesar and Louis Peters, Amy and Timothy Caesar, Tamar and others. Join us on Thursday evening, February 15th as we explore how slavery affected Coventry and discuss those enslaved in the town. Mark your calendars

This Year's Stew & Story Event March 21, 2024

By Sue Way

Coventry music teachers and owners of Song a Day Ruth O'Neil and Jim Hammitt were given a stack of Hank Keene music by Rose Fowler, quite a few years ago, when she retired as Town Historian. Ruth hoped that someday she would be able to organize performances and modern recordings of Hank Keene's music. She applied for a grant from the Town to pay the costs involved, and it was approved. Ruth and several other musicians have been rehearsing and are ready to perform for us. The Coventry Historical Society will present to you Hank Keene and the Story of his Connecticut Hillbillies and Ruth and her musicians will play his music for us. Hank Keene "wrote and recorded many songs, and had a radio program on WTIC in Hartford that was heard on most of the large stations. He published more than 200 pieces of original music and by 1933 had his own traveling Tent Theater." He signed onto his show by saying,



"This is Hank Keene's gang on the air. We hope our friends are listening everywhere. And the reason that we're here is to try to bring you cheer, and drive away your worries and your cares."

We hope you'll join us for a great hot meal of soups and stews, breads and desserts with program and music to follow. Coventry actually has quite a long history of home-grown music. Hank Keene's music is perhaps the best known. Thursday, March 21. Second Congregational Church Community House, 6:30pm. Cost \$10 for members, \$20 for nonmembers.

Historic Window Restoration Techniques Sat May

18

By Stephen Marshall, Secretary

We will be providing a free demonstration between

1:00 and 3:30 p.m. We

will be demonstrating

techniques used in

traditional restoration

and repair of wood

windows in particular.

Some of the work

carries over to other

facets of Old Home

repair.

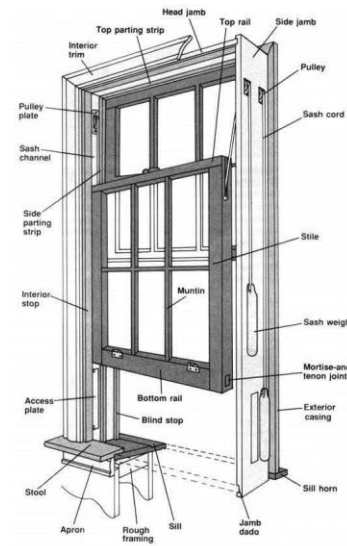
We will cover;

Historical Significance

Evaluation

Maintenance

Stabilization



- Wood repairs
- Weatherization
- Window Replacement
- Resources

"Back in Time" a 60's, 70's and 80's car/bike cruise event

By Jim Murphy, President

July 20th, 12 noon at the Strong-Porter Museum
2382 South St. Coventry CT

See cars and bikes from the period! Everyone with any vehicle (including farm tractors and trucks) from this period or before is invited to participate.



There will be trophies for the best vehicles in classes, prizes will be awarded. This event will be open

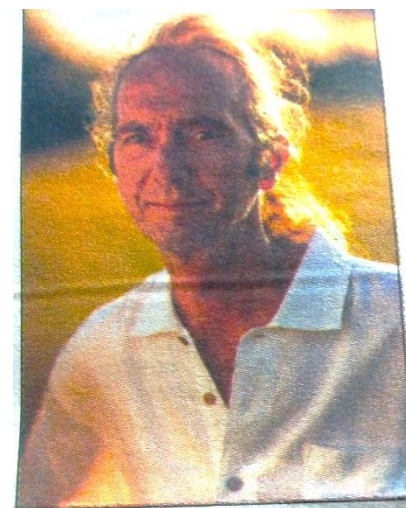
to the public. Traders and swappers are welcome. There might be food available, period music will be provided.

This event is being sponsored as a fund raiser by the Coventry (Connecticut) Historical Society; all proceeds are to benefit CHS, donations are welcome. There will be a \$10 charge for participating vehicles. Period dress is preferred but not necessary. For questions on pre-registration: please contact Jim Murphy at: irishbrit0471@ att.net (preferred) or by phone 860-965-9663.

Remembering Bruce Ingraham

The Coventry Historical Society would like to take note of the passing of longtime resident, auctioneer, artist, Bruce Ingraham last May 15th and now the closing of the Ingraham Auctions. Bruce helped to make Coventry an Auction destination in the local Antiques and Collectables world and enriched the community in many ways in the process.

When an antique oil portrait of local Tavern keeper Eleazer Pomeroy was consigned to



Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford, Conn. 2016, Amelia Ingraham.

Ingraham's Auction, Bruce stopped at the old tavern to let the current owners know it would be available. Today that portrait hangs in their front hallway as it probably was originally intended to greet his patrons.

Bruce was a friend to CHS and the town of Coventry and we'd like to express our appreciation and condolences to his family and his many friends. He will be missed.