



Sign Post

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The Coventry Historical Society Helps

Celebrate the Bidwell's Birthday

The Bidwell Tavern turns 200 years old this year and the Coventry Historical Society is helping coordinate the celebration and commemoration!

On **Thursday, October 27, from 3 - 8 pm** there will be a special evening of food, entertainment, music, and events at the Bidwell Tavern. Here is the link to the event on Facebook-

<https://fb.me/e/4POXOhkn5>



Solomon Bidwell, founder of your feast, buried in the Nathan Hale cemetery

Original Bidwell Tavern built by Solomon Bidwell in 1822



Today's Bidwell

Tavern was built in the 1890's as the Tracy Shoddy Mill



Headquarters. The building was Coventry's Town Hall from the 1930's through the early 1960's

The evening is certain to be fun and we hope to see you there!

Mark Your Calendars

Nov 10	Executive Board Mtg
Nov 11	Stories by the Fire 7pm Strong Porter (raindate Nov 12)
Dec 4	Christmas in the Village
Dec 8	Holiday Party 630pm Gorka home 179 Cooper Ln
Jan 12	Executive Board Mtg
Jan 19	Colonial Taverns Presentation 7pm Strong Porter
Feb 9	Executive Board Mtg
Feb 16	Native American-Coventry history & artifacts 7pm Strong Porter
Mar 9	Executive Board Mtg
Mar 16	Stew & Story (tales of Caprilands) – watch for details to come
Apr 13	Executive Board Mtg
Apr	House Tour – watch for details to come
May 11	Executive Board Mtg
May	First Cong Church tour & discussion – watch for details to come
Jun 8	Executive Board Mtg
Jun 10	Cemetery Tour – watch for details to come
Jun 18	Sundae on a Sunday, Brick School, 1-3pm
Jul 13	Executive Board Mtg
Jul	Appraisal Day – watch for details to come
Aug 6	Member Appreciation – watch for details to come
Aug 10	Executive Board Mtg
Aug	Caprilands Farm to Table Dinner -- watch for details to come
Sep 14	Executive Board Mtg
Sep	Arts on Main – watch for details to come
Sep 17	Annual Meeting
Executive Board meetings are held at 6:30 pm at the Strong Porter Museum, 2382 South St, Coventry	

Find Us Online & On Facebook

Make sure to visit and Like our Facebook page facebook.com/coventryhistory/ and website ctcoventryhistoricalsociety.org for lots of articles and information about Coventry's past, photos of items of historical interest, and occasional opportunities to offer an opinion about a "Whatsit" that's come our way.

Upcoming Events

We are pleased to announce the following upcoming events.

Spooky Stories by the Fire Fri Nov 11 @ 7 pm @ Strong Porter House Museum Listen to spooky stories around the fire. Outdoor activity - dress warm and bring a blanket. Warm refreshments will be served. (Raindate Nov 12)

Christmas in the Village, Sun Dec 4 12-4pm Watch for more information to come

Members Christmas Party Thurs Dec 8 @ 6:30 pm @ Dan Gorka's house, 179 Cooper Lane. Bring a favorite dish to share.

Colonial Taverns Thurs Jan 19 @ 7 pm @ Strong Porter House Museum Join Archivist Sue Way as she leads a lively discussion about Colonial taverns in Coventry.

Native American-Coventry History & Artifacts Thurs Feb 16 @ 7 pm @ Strong Porter House Museum See the artifacts in the Society's collection and learn about Native Americans in this area.

Stew & Story - Caprilands Roundtable Thurs Mar 16 @ 6:30 pm @ Second Congregational Church Community House Hear stories about Caprilands from former employees and friends of Adelpa Grenier Simmons. A selection of soups/stews, breads, desserts & drinks will be available. Cost \$10 general public, members \$5.

House Tour in April Watch for more information to come

First Cong Church Tour & history discussion in May Watch for more information to come

Cemetery Tour Sat June 10 With Town Historian John Holmy. Raindate June 11. Watch for more information to come

Sundae on a Sunday June 18 Brick School House Museum, 1019 Merrow Rd, 1-3pm Free sundaes for dads at our one room schoolhouse!

Appraisal Day in July@ Strong Porter House Museum Get information and estimated value of your treasures from a local auctioneer – Watch for more information to come

Member Appreciation in Aug @ Strong Porter House Museum Be our guest for an afternoon of socialization with Society members

Caprilands Inspired Farm to Table Dinner in Aug @ Strong Porter House Museum Watch for more information to come

Arts on Main in Sept Watch for more information to come

Annual Members Meeting in Sept The 61st annual meeting of the Coventry Historical Society. Business to be conducted includes election of officers and board members, receive and approve annual budget, and any other necessary and proper business.

David Hayes Sculpture Field

The 60th annual meeting of the Coventry Historical Society was held at the David Hayes Sculpture Field, 905 South Street. After a luncheon members were treated to a



tour of the sculpture fields and house by the artist's son, also named David Hayes.

We would like to express our appreciation to David Hayes for his warm hospitality.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

For the latest information about any meeting or program changes watch your email or our Facebook page [facebook.com/coventryhistory/](https://www.facebook.com/coventryhistory/).

Message from the President - Jim Murphy

For those who attended this year's annual general membership meeting at the David Hayes Sculpture Fields and house tour, it was extremely successful and we thank you for your attendance. With the new fiscal year moving away from Covid restrictions, we look forward to renewed programming efforts. We're making great progress on our archives, finally getting many donated things cataloged and accessioned. With your continued support we hope to continue (quoting from our by-laws):

“To discover, collect, and preserve whatever pertains to the history of the Town of Coventry and the surrounding area;

To promote and encourage historical research in all its aspects and to make available to the members of the society and to the public, the results of this research;

To hold meetings and to discuss such matters as are of interest to the members of the society and the public;

And, in general, to carry on any and all activities appropriate for a historical society.”

CHS Receives Grants

CHS is fortunate to have recently received two grants. One from the Town of Coventry American Rescue Plan 1% for the Arts will help us to archive a large number of Caprilands-related artifacts and materials, and a CT Humanities grant will help us to grow our ability to serve the community and the public. Support has been provided to CHS from CT Humanities (CTH), with funding provided by the Connecticut State Department of Economic and Community Development/Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) from the Connecticut State Legislature.

Second Annual Caprilands Inspired Farm to Table Dinner

CHS hosted this lovely dinner on June 25. Our chef partners, Blue Honey Group, prepared a delicious locally sourced meal.



Guests were treated to tales of Caprilands from Rick Ross, former Horticulturalist at the herb farm. Raffles and silent auction items rounded out the day.

Arts on Main Quilt Show

On September 17 CHS sponsored a quilt show as part of Arts on Main. Everyone who loaned a quilt or helped with



the exhibit seemed to enjoy the wonderful collection of old and new quilts whose creativity, skill, color and beauty had stories to tell. Visitors and quilters came through in a steady stream. We sent photos to descendants of the Morgan

family on the west coast who donated several quilts and posted photos on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/coventryhistory/>. We had

several requests for a second show and will see what the new year brings. Perhaps we'll include embroidery in the next show.



Many thanks go to Sue Grace for allowing us to use her building at 1153 Main and to all who contributed quilts and racks, especially Anne Burke at Coventry Arts and Antiques who kept going back to her shop for more quilt racks!

Membership Renewal

It's membership renewal time – please find a membership form attached to this newsletter and renew now. New this year – renew online!

Lifetime Members

Joyce Albro

Elizabeth Aschenbrenner & John Fortunato

Gary & Virginia Dilk

Jean Jennings

Tamara & John Kearney-Style & family

Sue & Stan McMillan

Mary Miller

Kerry Porter

Montgomery Shaw

John Sieckowski – special thanks to John for over 25 years of mowing at the Brick School!

James & Joyce Wicks

From the Town Historian - John Holmy **Exploring Coventry's Past Through Local Walks**

It's been my privilege as your Town Historian to lead a couple of local history walks this year. The first took place on a blustery April day at the Nathan Hale Cemetery. The turnout was wonderful - Thank You! We learned about local Eastern Connecticut gravestone carvers like the Manning family, the prolific Gershom Bartlett, and Coventry's own 3 generations of the Loomis family carvers. Stories of Coventry citizens of the past were shared, such as Esther Meacham, abducted in the Deerfield Raid of 1704, and Asher Wright, Nathan Hale's boyhood friend who served as his orderly during the American Revolution until Nathan's famous and tragic end.



Nathan Hale Monument in the background



Coventry's Civil War Monument in the cemetery

As part of the Last Green Valley's Walktober event, 3 walks on Coventry's historic Depot Road along the Mill Brook are being held.



The Railroad arrived in Coventry in 1850



Getting a peek at the arches built to accommodate the arrival of the Trolley in 1909

During our walk we talk about the impact of Coventry's waterways on our history and the evolution of our roads before focusing more specifically on the historic Depot Road neighborhood. There is still one more opportunity to enjoy this walk on November 5. ! Look for walk number 56 in the Last Green Valley Walktober guide- <https://thelastgreenvalley.org/explore-the-last-green-valley/walktober/>

I look forward to exploring Coventry with you on future walks!

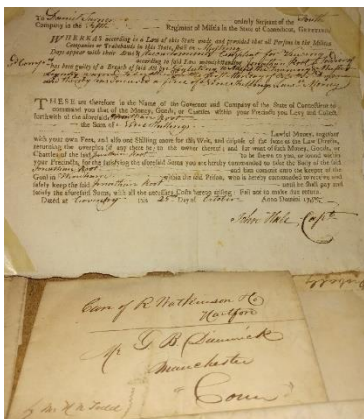
Archives Corner - By Sue Way

We have received a number of remarkable donations in the last few months. A box of mostly letters arrived in the Town Historian's box at Town Hall from the Dewey family of Poughkeepsie, NY. Many of the letters are addressed to or written by Roderick Dimock,



who became the last Tavern Keeper at the Brigham Tavern upon marrying Anna Brigham. The Dewey family are descendants of this Dimock family. Among the letters, which date back to the 1830s, is a militia document dated 1785. Every able-bodied man was required to join the local militia and to attend musters, which were held on a rotating basis near the Rose Tavern at the South Coventry Green, near the Pomeroy Stage House on the Boston Turnpike, or near the Brigham Tavern further east on the Boston Turnpike. This no doubt explains how this document ended up in the papers of the Dimock family descendants.

This interesting document is signed by John Hale Capt'n, and addressed to Daniel Turner, orderly Serjeant 4th company 5th Regiment of the Connecticut



Militia. The document instructs Serjeant Turner to collect 9 shillings from Jonathan Root for "Neglecting to Attend the Training Muster" and if he does not pay Serjeant Turner is to "take the Body of the said Jonathan Root

and him commit unto the keeper of the Goal in Windham . . . until he shall pay." The American States had only recently been at war with England. This was a responsibility that was taken seriously, and the taverns were an integral part of the militia system, hosting meetings and musters regularly with

refreshments afterwards. Tavern keepers were quite often officers.

The donation of this document has inspired us to reenact this event at the 200th Anniversary celebration of the opening of the Bidwell Tavern of Coventry in 1822.

A Caprilands Herb Garden at the Strong Porter Museum?

Last fall a group of about 35 of us were allowed by the new owner of the farm, David Parent, to go back to the overgrown herb gardens of Caprilands to dig what transplants we could find. By November we had cleared the existing herb garden at the Strong Porter Museum, which was badly in need of restoration. We added manure and lime, and a week later we planted our transplants hoping they would have enough time to establish themselves before the deep cold set in. The garden lay quietly through the winter and spring came. We watched as tiny leaves appeared and marveled at how many of our plants survived. Donated plants were added, and we have been amazed at how beautiful our garden became during the course of the summer. Everyone agrees that Adelma Simmons seems to be smiling down on our



efforts. We have discussed a possible name for our garden.

"Adelma's Midsummer Magic" has been suggested. We'd be happy to hear other suggestions as well as your thoughts about

next year. Shall we expand this garden or concentrate our efforts on the peach tree garden? Shall we have a plant sale? It looks as if we'll have enough to divide plants.

CHS extends many thanks to those who helped and donated plants to round out our garden, including Nathan Hale Farm and Feed for pots and potting soil.

Meeting Minutes CHS Annual Membership

Meeting 10/3/2021

David Hayes Sculpture Fields Property 3:00 pm

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order at 3:25 PM.

2. Roll call of board members present.

Board Members Present: President: Jim Murphy, Vice President: John Holmy, Treasurer: Joyce Wicks, Secretary: Dan Gorka, Archivist: Sue Way; Members at Large: James Wicks

3. Board Member Elections

Ballots were handed out to all members present.

There was no nominee for the secretary position on the ballot. However, Steve Marshall offered to be secretary and so was nominated.

Joyce Wicks and Dan Gorka resigned from the Treasurer and Secretary positions, respectively. Dan Gorka was nominated to the Treasurer Joyce was nominated as member at large in order to focus on re-establishing the programs committee.

There were eight nominees for members-at-large nominees, but the bylaws only allow seven members-at-large. New nominees included Deb Comeau and Peter Hershonik as well as Joyce Wicks, former Treasurer. Deb Comeau agreed to decline the nomination in favor of joining the forthcoming Caprilands committee.

The nominees were elected as follows:

President: Jim Murphy
 Vice President: John Holmy
 Secretary: Steve Marshall
 Treasurer: Dan Gorka
 Archivist: Sue Way
 Members at Large:
 Rachel Dawkins
 Michelle Heimall
 Peter Hershonik
 Bill Jobbagy
 Jill LaChance
 Jim Wicks
 Joyce Wicks

3. Other Business

Sue Way discussed a David Hayes painting acquired by CHS at a recent auction. Sue inquired to David Hayes Jr. the purpose of the daffodils in the painting. He thought that they were probably ones picked for his wife.

Sue discussed the new exhibit in town hall.

John Holmy discussed the upcoming Walktober walks that he has organized. A facebook event will be created.

3. Budget

The budget was discussed with emphasis on grants, donations and membership fees and our heavy reliance on the former two funding mechanism. It was noted that membership dues have not increased in some time, with the goal to make membership affordable to all that wish to join also noting that the membership dues represented only \$1200 of the total proposed budget revenue of \$31,552.

Also, the budget expenses were offset by an 'expense credit' carryover of the prior year's excess revenues. The importance of the Caprilands tag sales was mentioned with respect to being able to have a balanced budget over the last two years. It was noted that the items acquired from Caprilands for tag sales have been mostly exhausted.

It was mentioned that a grant was provided, relating to COVID and museum closures. The grant will help support archivist hours and a brochure that will be mailed to all town residents as a membership and donation drive effort.

John Holmy motioned to pass the budget. All present voted in favor of approving the budget.

3. Meeting Closing remarks

David Hayes Jr. was introduced and spoke a few minutes, giving a very warm and hospitable welcome. He welcomed anyone to come back and visit anytime. He offered a tour of the house after the dinner.

Sue announced that Bill Jobbagy will be presented a Coventry flask bottle for his longstanding service to CHS over the years.

The meeting was adjourned and dinner was served. Afterwards, David Hayes Jr. gave a tour of the sculpture yards and provided some very informative insight into his father's works. Guests were able to see the house and rooms where other artwork was created as well as the barn where sculptures were fabricated.

Support CHS While You Shop Amazon

Log on to www.smile.amazon.com, select Coventry Historical Society, Coventry, CT, as your preferred charity, and a portion of the cost of your Amazon purchases will be donated to us.



Supporting CHS With a Legacy Gift

Estate planning helps you protect the people and causes that are important to you. Please consider leaving a legacy gift to CHS as part of your estate plan. Your support will help sustain our research and programs for generations to come.