
PAST AND PRESENT

The Newsletter of the Haddam Historical Society

Volume 45 No. 6 Fall 2007

Purveyors and Privateers Higganum Historic House Tour

On Saturday, October 6, 2007 The Haddam Historical Society will host *Purveyors and Privateers*, a historic house tour of seven distinguished Higganum homes. Five of the dwellings are located on Higganum Landing, a picturesque enclave at the end of Landing Road. Also featured on the tour is a home located along Saybrook Road, formerly the Middlesex Turnpike, and a mid-18th century farmhouse on Dublin Hill Road.

Higganum Landing was once a lively shipbuilding and trading center and between 1790 and 1845 close to 150 vessels were erected here. One of the most important people to play a part in the development of the Landing was James Child, a master carpenter from Warren, Rhode Island who came to the area in 1762 and created a shipbuilding dynasty. He and his father-in-law, John Kelly founded one of the most successful shipyards along the river which remained active for three generations and over 100 years. The Childs first built schooners and sloops which were primarily used in river trade. Products shipped from Higganum included cattle, hogs, hay, grain, shad, timber and stone. During the Revolutionary War business boomed and the yard expanded and built larger vessels including brigantines. After the war the larger ships were sold to New York or Nantucket merchants who used them on the open seas. A number of Higganum built vessels were used as whaling ships and traveled world-wide.

Architecturally the Landing reflects its early 19th century development with astounding accuracy. A number of the remaining structures have 18th century origins and colonial period styling. The more elegant and refined Federal period styling is displayed in varying degrees. Many of the homes on the tour were built or owned by the Child/Kelly Family including the 1769 **John Kelly House**, the earliest remaining building on the Landing. This simple gambrel roof dwelling features a massive end chimney with 4 fireplaces, exposed chestnut beams and wide pine board floors. The carefully modernized interior creates a remarkable living space with lots of light and fantastic views up and down the river. Kelly, who is said to have started privateering at the age of 14, also built the house across the street and may have boarded workers in this house. To the south is the **Hezekiah Child House**, a graceful Federal period dwelling dating from circa 1820. The highly ornate exterior reflects the wealth and prominence of the area's prosperity after the War of 1812 and the affluence of the Child Family. The interior has many interesting features including a painted wall mural of the Landing done by a local artist for the current owners. This well preserved home is a history treasure trove featuring many local artifacts and artwork of community landmarks by area artists. *(continued on page 4)*



Photos: Left: Jabez Brainerd House. Center: Mural of Higganum Landing featured in the Hezekiah Child House. Right: Interior of the John Kelly House.



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The Thankful Arnold House is open for tours
Wednesdays 9-3, Thursdays 2-8, and
Fridays 12 noon to 3.
Between Memorial Day Weekend and
Columbus Day Weekend the house is open on
Sundays 1-4.

Tours and access to the archives and collections
are also available by appointment.
Call 860-345-2400.
www.haddamhistory.org

Presidents Letter

Historical societies are not often thought of as hot beds of entrepreneurial activity. But, in your town, the Historical Society has a few ventures of which we are quite proud.

The Haddam Historical Society has a history of finding projects that both connect to our mission and bring in revenue. The Connecticut Spring Antiques show was the first example. As proprietors of the show we are able to pull off one of the premiere antique shows in the country and bring in revenue to fund the core mission of the Society. This show is one of the primary reasons we are able to have paid staff to provide creative programming and education programs for the community.

Our latest venture is to open a store in the Thankful Arnold House. We have opened a gift shop and gallery that will sell work of local artisans and items of historical interest. The store is located appropriately in the first floor room that was used by the Arnold's either as a storeroom or a shop. It is wonderful to have the room returned to its original use.

If you missed our opening art show in August, you will have plenty of opportunities to stop by the store. It will be open Wednesday 12-3, Thursday 3-6, Friday 12-3 and Sunday 1-4. And look for special occasions where the store will open for the upcoming House Tour in October, special events with local artisans and a fantastic art show for convenient holiday shopping later this fall. (Think: really great jewelry or perhaps a historical book or two) Members get a well-deserved 10% discount.

And, as you are doing your shopping allow some extra time to take a tour of the museum and learn more about the history of Thankful Arnold and our town.

We believe entrepreneurial spirit and experience will serve us well as we continue to help the town explore multiple uses for the jail. How can we think through a plan for the restoration and the sustainability of the jail that relies on a combination of gifts, grants, town support and earned revenue? How do we engage the town, and even Middlesex County more broadly, in identifying sustainable uses of the building that help preserve and promote the extraordinary history of the building as an agricultural jail?

It is a fine art, these days, in the nonprofit world to balance mission priorities and sustain the economics of an organization. The board and volunteers work hard to achieve this balance, to seek opportunities and stay focused on our core mission of preserving, interpreting the history of Haddam, Higganum and Haddam Neck.

We are lucky to be able to draw on the talent of our membership and the community. And, we thank you for your on-going support. This year we had our most successful annual appeal yet. Your investment in our Society allows us to continue to be creative, to invest in the history of our town and look for new opportunities to serve.

What are your ideas? Contact me at anderson@goodcap.net.

Joy Anderson

Education Update

Sarah Neal, Education Coordinator

There can be no doubt that the spring and early summer are the busiest time of year for the education programs sponsored by The Haddam Historical Society. Perhaps you saw boys flying kites down at Haddam Meadow State Park, or you discovered that your fifth grade neighbor had just learned to do cross-stitch. Perhaps a third grader knocked on your door to request permission to take a picture of your Colonial style home, or was there a boy measuring the circumference of an old tree on your property? Maybe you had to stop along Route 154 as a group of third graders crossed with the trooper from Meetinghouse Green to the Ancient Burial Yard. Did you see the Haddam History projects on display at this annual meeting or at Brainerd Library? I love how I always learn something new about this old town. If you traveled down to Killingworth in May, you might have heard the school bell outside the Union District Schoolhouse call the scholars inside where they spent a morning in the 19th century one-room school building (and meet a very strict schoolmistress!)

The Education Committee continues to make history come alive for the students in Grades 2-5 of Regional District 17. This year over 780 district students participated in at least one of our programs. Last fall we were busy with second graders who learned about the construction of Thankful Arnold's house and what her neighborhood looked like in late 1820s. We also offered two programs in the winter to homeschoolers and their families.

During the last week of June, we offered a half-day program to children ages 8-12 who wished to experience a week in the life of an Early American child. They learned how to make a copy book, churn butter, bake over an open fire, milk goats, spin yarn, sew, sing and dance to period songs. Our participants took on the role of a child living in Haddam in 1830, and they all rose to the challenge of making beds, emptying chamber pots and cleaning candlesticks. The week ended with a formal tea given by Mrs. Thankful Arnold as a celebration for Independence Day. Invited guests included Rev. John Marsh (played by our own John Anderson) and of course all the neighborhood children.

Of course, we could not offer these programs without the dedicated volunteers that The Haddam Historical Society is blessed to have. Over 20 individuals have given their time this year; some have helped with several programs. I want to let them all know how much their efforts are appreciated. And we are always looking for more volunteers! I invite anyone interested in finding out more about our school programs to contact me at The Haddam Historical Society.



Photographs from left: Emmalyn Lecky feeding a goat; Volunteer Linda Birch helping Victoria Dombrowik and Elizabeth Ellsworth cross-stitch; Vicktoria Schaff, Katherine Morasutti, Anna Roy and Erin Hughes petting a goat; Anna Roy and Katherine Morasutti cleaning candlesticks and helper Hannah Malloy helping Emily St. Lawrence and Alysen Wallor empty Chamber pots.

Continued from Page 1



Further south along Landing Road are three homes that display a similar house form, 5-bay center chimney colonial style but each has its own unique history and connection to the area's shipbuilding and trading past. The **Wilson-Child House** (left photo) dates from 1775 and was owned by the Child Family for four generations. The family shipyard and wharf were located directly across the road and dominated the Landing until the mid-19th century when the depletion of local forests, dominance of New York as a shipping center and the demand for deep-draft vessels led to the decline of area shipbuilding. The house which boasts the most original structure on the Landing has been meticulously restored by the current owners whose ancestors purchased the house in the early 20th century.

Just to the south is the **Jabez Brainerd House** which was built in 1819 and features an ornate Federal period door surround. Chauncey Child, son of James Kelly Child and brother of Hezekiah lived here most of the 19th century. The Child Family shipyard erected over 100 ships including Nantucket Whalers, sloops, schooners and brigs. The house faces north toward the shipyard, where a number of skilled craftsmen were required for sawing, joining, trunnelling, making fittings, caulking and painting. Women were employed to sew the sails. Many of the workers either boarded in local homes or had their own homes farther out in the village. Pay could have been in cash or goods, but most likely with notes that were redeemable at the local store.

The last house on The Landing is the **Brainerd-Hubbard House** (photo on right) built in 1815. This dwelling was also owned by the Child Family for most of the 19th century and may have been used to house workers and laborers. The current owners have just finished an extensive renovation and landscape improvements. An interesting discovery during the restoration was a cloth baby shoe in the wall. Known as a concealment shoe it is believed they were hidden in the wall to protect the house from harmful spirits. Like most houses on The Landing, this dwelling was significantly flooded during the floods of 1936 and photographs showing the devastation will be on display during the tour.



The **Clark-Bailey House** along Saybrook Road dates from 1828 and was built for Silas Clark, who lost the house just a year later in a lawsuit. Later Asahel P. Bailey who resided here, worked at D. & H. Scovil as a blacksmith for 32 years. The Scovil Company was one of Higganum's most prosperous industries in the 19th century making planters' hoes and supplying many southern cotton plantations prior to the Civil War. The center chimney home features Colonial style form with Federal detailing. The current owner has carefully updated the house and property which features a four-season conservatory, built-in library, new stone walls and formal and informal gardens (photo on left).

Set above the Higganum River at the sharp bend of Dublin Hill Road, the **Charles Sears House** (photo of beehive oven on right) is one of the earliest dwellings remaining in Higganum. Dating from about 1750, this well-preserved 5-bay center chimney home was built by Charles Sears, a native of Middletown. A successful farmer and miller, Sears lived here with his first wife Lucretia Porter who died at the age of 26 and his second wife Sarah Clark. Later the house was owned by the Usher and Reed families, who both owned and operated local factories.



A highlight of the day will include the schooner The Mary E. which will be docked at the Landing. This historic 75 foot schooner from Greenport, Long Island is similar to vessels built in Higganum during it's heyday as a shipbuilding center. Local resident Jay Verney will also be speaking on the Landing's importance as a building/trading center at 11 am, 1 pm and 3 pm along the riverfront across from the Jabez Brainerd House.

Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 the day of the tour. Group discounts are available. A gourmet boxed lunch will be available for \$10 and must be ordered in advance. The tour will start at the Higganum Firehouse, 439 Saybrook Road where programs and maps will be distributed and the Historic House Tour Bus will pick up participants. Call 345-2400 to reserve your tickets.

SPECIAL EVENT

Historic Ship at the Higganum Landing

Join us for an exclusive preview of the Mary E., a 75 foot Authentic Clipper built in 1906

*Friday, October 5, 2007
5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
12 Landing Road South
Light Buffet and Beer and Wine
Outdoor Event- Rain or Shine
Casual Attire*



Tickets are \$30 per person- All proceeds to benefit The Haddam Historical Society. Reservations are accepted on a first come first serve basis – limit is 50. Please call in your reservation to 860-345-7891- please leave a message. Questions call Janet Verney at the above number.

FOUNDERS' DAY DINNER DANCE

Friday, November 9, 2007

Wadsworth Mansion at Long Hill Estate, Middletown

Silent Auction

Founders Day Awards

Looking for Silent Auction Donations

Please consider donating something to our Founders Day Silent Auction. Former Board member and long time volunteer

Carol Smith is heading up the auction and her committee is looking for top-notch and worthwhile items including antiques, fine art, weekend retreats, dinners, theater tickets or that special unique item to attract bidding and support our growing programs, educational activities and maintenance of the Arnold House. Please call Carol today at 345-3362.



The Board of Directors and staff of The Haddam Historical Society are pleased to introduce Karen Russo of Higganum as our new office assistant. Karen who has vast experience with office management and bookkeeping will be a great asset to the Society. Welcome Karen!

Remarkable Women in Haddam's History
A Continuing Series

NINA HUDSON ARNOLD
CONNECTICUT'S FIRST WOMAN CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

By Barbara Glista

Nina Hudson Arnold, named to “Who’s Who in Industry”, “Who’s Who in the East”, “Who’s Who Among Women” and “International Who’s Who”, was an exceptional woman of Haddam.

Nina (pronounced with a long ‘i’) Pearl Hudson was born in 1881 to Henry and Hannah Adams Hudson in Providence, Rhode Island. She received her early education at the St. Johnsbury Academy in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and La Salle University in Philadelphia. Her first career, of more than twenty years, was as a teacher of commercial subjects in Hartford. With her brother she ran Huntsinger Business School on Asylum Street; she also taught at Morse Business College. Nina was a dynamic and beloved teacher. She maintained the attention of her mathematics students by rapidly firing off a problem and calling on one of her students at the crack of her stocking darning on her desk! She also taught penmanship and her classes wrote their Palmer Method upstrokes and downstrokes in unison to the rhythm of her count. Nina had exquisite penmanship, and is the only woman to have had penmanship plates published for five consecutive years. In addition to engrossing diplomas and other documents, her perfect handwriting led to a career as a handwriting expert. She served the courts of Hartford where her handwriting analysis was used in forgery and other criminal cases.



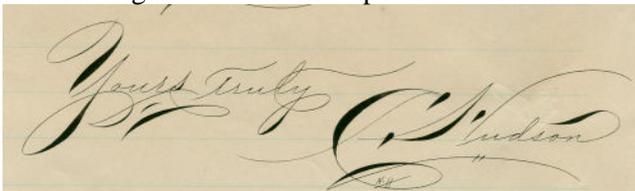
Nina Hudson Arnold

In 1921 Nina Hudson married Philip Corbin Arnold, a widower and great, great-grandson of Thankful Arnold, who was a lifelong resident of Haddam and in the lumber business. Their son Ephraim Philip, born the following year, was found to have congenitally defective vision. After just five years of marriage and with a son with a disability, Nina became a widow. Young Phil was unable to participate in school and was tutored at home. At age 12 he became interested in leathercrafting, and eventually opened a variety store in the family home on Saybrook Road. The country store, run by Phil under the supervision of the Connecticut State Board of Education of the Blind, was a favorite daily stop for the village children.

In 1923 Nina Hudson Arnold was a “non-traditional” student earning a degree from the National School of Accounting at age 42. She also received degrees from the University of Chicago, the School of Accounting of Portland, Maine, and the Zanerian Art School in Columbus, Ohio, which was recognized as a premiere institution for ornamental penmanship.

Nina Hudson Arnold was Connecticut’s first woman Certified Public Accountant and only the fifth in the United States. She was honored in 1935 as a Life Member of the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants and the American Society of Women Accountants. She was affiliated with Petze and Company, New Haven accountants, and maintained more than 300 personal accounts from her home office.

The widowed Mrs. Arnold successfully juggled professional career, family responsibilities and community service for more than 35 years. She served as Haddam Postmaster for ten years and was Chairman of the Haddam Board of Finance for five years, retiring in 1952 at age 71 for health reasons. The petite Mrs. Arnold was a loving, quick-witted bundle of energy who even in her later years needed only five hours of sleep. Her living room was an inviting and lively town meeting place, with accounting clients, post office patrons, general store customers and town official visitors all contributing to a vibrant atmosphere.



Sample of Nina Arnold's penmanship

In a Hartford Courant interview in 1953, the 77 year old Mrs. Arnold said “I am thankful that the Lord has permitted me to accomplish what I have.” Nina P. Hudson Arnold’s extraordinary life of accomplishment ended at age 80; she is interred in the Haddam Center Cemetery.

Art Gallery and Craft Store

The street level room of the Thankful Arnold House has a new, old look. Our recently opened gift and crafts store has transformed the ground floor space that was once Joseph Arnold's commercial space and returned it to its original use. In addition to offering books and other items relating to Haddam's history the store carries a constantly evolving selection of artwork and craft items from local artisans. Be sure to stop in and take a look. The store is open Wednesday 12-3, Thursday 3-6, Friday 12-3 and Sunday 1-4 and during special events when the house is open; check the web site for more details: www.haddamhistory.org. (HHS members receive a 10% discount; be sure to ask for it).

Now available at the store is one item that has long been high on our list of asked-for items; the hardcover book "Portrait of a River Town: The History and Architecture of Haddam". This book features photos and histories of historic homes and other buildings in Haddam. This book has been out of print for many years and is demanding a premium when it appears for sale as a used book, The Society has been able to locate a limited number of NEW copies which are available through the store until sold out. Only \$50.00 while they last.

Old House Enthusiasts Group

The Society would like to thank Rogene and Stewart Gillmor and Lisa and Bill Cowan for opening their homes for our Old House Group. Although one was extremely old and the other brand new, both were fascinating to tour and we thank our hosts for their hospitality.

100 Years Ago, September 1907

"The incorporators of the Brainerd Memorial Library Association held their first meeting at the parlors of the Congregational Church".

"The continued drought is causing distress to many. The brooks are notably suffering and many wells are dry. Trout brooks never known to fail have become dry and the fish are killed."

-Hartford Courant

October 10, 2007, Wednesday, 7:30 pm, The Venture Smith Dig!

Archeological Team who conducted digs at Venture Smith homestead and gravesite will present findings. Cooperative presentation by East Haddam Historical Society, First Church Cemetery Association and Haddam Historical Society. 7:30 pm at First Church of Christ, Congregational, East Haddam, 499 Town Street, East Haddam, CT 06425

Breaking News!

Venture Smith Conference to be held in Haddam!
October 11, 2007
Haddam Town Hall

The Historical Society is working with the Beecher House Center for the Study of Equal Rights and their President, Chandler P. Saint to host the 2007 Venture Smith Conference here in Haddam.

The Haddam Historical Society Welcomes New Members

Alan and Myra Aronow, Haddam
Marlene Case, Foxboro, WI
Lynne Cooper and Russell Pekrul, Higganum
Ava Crayton, Higganum
Kevin and Laurie Cross, Higganum
Pat Hartman and Michele St. Marie, Haddam
Joan Merton, Haddam
Max Olmstead and Marie-Laure Grillet, Higganum
Elaine Stephens, Haddam
Kristin Tolles, Haddam
Richard and Edith Williams, Higganum

Thank You

Thank you to Yvonne and Tiger Carlson for lending their tent for a number of events. We appreciate their generosity.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that the Haddam Historical Society notes the passing of Board member Deborah Adams on February 24, 2007. Deb was a vital part of the Society and played an instrumental role in the Connecticut Spring Antiques Show and was Chair of the House Maintenance Committee. She will be greatly missed.

Haddam Historical Society Calendar of Events

October 5, 2007- Friday, 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Historic Ship at The Landing

Preview the Mary E, an authentic clipper built in 1906. Light buffet and beer and wine at 12 Landing Road South. \$30 per person. Call Janet Verney for reservations at 345-7891.

October 6, 2007 – Saturday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Higganum Historic House Tour, *Purveyors and Privateers*

Tour seven historically and architecturally significant homes in the beautiful village of Higganum. Also tour the schooner Mary E. Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 the day of the tour. A gourmet boxed lunch is available for \$10 and must be ordered in advance. For reservations call 345-2400. Tour headquarters is at the Higganum Firehouse, 439 Saybrook Road, Higganum.

October 6, 2007- Saturday 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Sail the Connecticut River on the Schooner Mary E from Higganum to Essex. Coordinated by Higganum resident Jay Verney. \$40 per person. \$30 per person for payment received by September 30th. Please contact Jay for information on transportation at 345-7891. Reservations call 631-662-7925.

October 10, 2007-Wednesday 7:30 pm

The Venture Smith Dig!

Archeological Team who conducted digs at Venture Smith homestead and gravesite will present findings. Cooperative presentation by East Haddam Historical Society, First Church Cemetery Association and Haddam Historical Society. 7:30 pm at First Church of Christ, Congregational, East Haddam, 499 Town Street, East Haddam, CT 06425

October 11, 2007-Thursday

Venture Smith Conference, Haddam Town Hall

Visit www.haddamhistory.org for additional information.

November 9, 2007-Friday 7:00 pm

Founders' Day Dinner Dance

Wadsworth Mansion at Long Hill Estate in Middletown. Silent Auction. Founders' Day Awards. Look for the invitation in the mail.

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