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# PAST AND PRESENT

*The Newsletter of the Haddam Historical Society*  
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## The Early Carvers of the Ancient Burial Ground of Thirty Mile Island Plantation

By David J. Malloy



#1 Gravestone of Edward Shipman, 1711  
Carved by William Stanclift



#2 Gravestone of Hannah Fisk 1723  
Carved by Thomas Johnson

Thirty Mile Island Plantation Burial Yard in Haddam was established in 1667. In its heyday, the late 17<sup>th</sup> century through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the cemetery would have been a wonderful site to behold. Its location in the center of the village set high on a sloping hill facing the Connecticut River to the east made for a fine focal point of interest for early residents and visitors. The burial yard is full of many wonderful and intricate headstones which are ripe with symbols and design derived from earlier European folk art tradition, that make them one of if not the first true American folk art forms.

Most early New England Colonial period towns had craftsmen who were skilled in a particular profession such as the tinsmith, blacksmith, stonecutter, furniture maker, or tanner. Early gravestones however were usually carved by stonemasons, quarry workers and craftsmen who provided stone for building purposes such as foundations, mantles or fireplaces. It wasn't until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that the lower Connecticut River Valley had tradesmen devoted solely to carving headstones. Early Haddam families may have ordered stones directly from the quarry or waited until a carver was passing through town. Many of the area's notable gravestone carvers, including members of the Stanclift and Johnson families as well as John Isham and Silas Brainerd, are represented in Thirty Mile Island.

The grave markers for the earliest settlers of Haddam are long gone and would have been made of wood or simple fieldstone. Starting in the early 1700's, gravestones in the area were primarily made out of large slabs of Portland brownstone, with the deceased's name and date of death carved onto the smoothed face of a simple arched stone. The oldest stone remaining in Thirty Mile Island is the Edward Shipman stone from 1711 (photo #1) which is a fine example of this early design. It was carved by William Stanclift, son of James Stanclift, of Portland and the first owner of the famous Portland brownstone quarries. The Stanclift family members carved stones for five generations and were one of the earliest and most prominent carving families of the lower Connecticut River Valley. The gravestone for Deacon Daniel Brainerd from 1715 is another fine example of William Stanclift's simple work and is characterized by an evenly round top and the use of all capital letters. The grave marker of Rebeckah Arnold from 1746 is attributed to William's brother, James Stanclift II and is distinguished by its flat rosettes in the finials and use of lower case letters. A third Stanclift, James III is believed to have carved the John Knowles stone in 1752. (Continued on Page 4)

## **Officers**

Joy Anderson- President  
Susann Costa- Vice President  
Helen Deag-Secretary

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Gardens-Cindy Sullivan &  
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Glista

## **Executive Director**

Elizabeth Hart Malloy

## **Education Coordinator**

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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](http://www.haddamhistory.org)

## **From the President.....**

I want to take this President's report to muse a bit on hospitality and how it relates to the work of the historical society and how it weaves through the history of our town. In my life, I work to live out a simple but fairly powerful definition of hospitality, to welcome the stranger knowing the stranger will change us. This is an ancient definition that the early Hebrew societies used to shape their diplomacy.

At our Founders Day dinner, we read the names of the founding families and the names of the Native Americans who sold the land for 10 coats. I am touched by this ritual as it reminds us of an early exchange of hospitality, one that we celebrate each Thanksgiving. They were strangers likely unaware of how both would be changed by the encounter.

How the early settlers were welcomed or not and how in return we offered or failed to offer hospitality to others is an early story of a perennial tension of how we treat strangers in our society. That story extends to immigration and migration, and the changing patterns of who comes to this town and why.

Haddam's position within the county, as the keeper of both the jail and the courthouse, created opportunities for much strange traffic through the town. Some stories of the jail tell of vagrants, strangers in town, some tell of how we treated the criminals amongst us, but others are stories about how the prisoners were integrated into the life of the town, handing out vegetables grown in the garden.

We're now in the early stages of making decisions about how we will use the gift of the jail from the State, how to preserve the story the jail tells of our history, and how we invite others to explore the that history with us.

Haddam has its own flavor. About seven years ago it welcomed me. The Historical Society was and remains the place where I have experienced the most welcoming hospitality.

I believe that the Historical Society has a unique role in the how we welcome strangers to town. We know history so we know how to think about change. But we also know the importance of preservation to be able to tell the story to new strangers well into the future.

If you haven't already taken it, you should check out our Haddam Tours. We designed them for newcomers to town who want to know about the historical sites and the background of the town we live in. We discovered that lots of folks wanted the tours, however long they have been here. Just call the office if you want to take one.

Either through our gracious parties, such as the spring event we have planned, or through our ability to preserve and interpret the history for the town, so that newcomers and old timers can engage, the Haddam Historical Society hopes to continue to spur conversations in town that let us make sense of our history, together.

Thank you for your on-going support of the Historical Society.  
*Joy Anderson, President*

## Barn Survey Update

The town-wide barn survey continues. Our volunteers include Bob and Marcia Reynolds, Donna Turnage, Cheryl Westcott, Aleta Gudelski and Dianne McHutchison. The team has divided the town into sections and if you are interested in helping out in your neighborhood please contact us at 345-2400. Below are two more stories from the barns we have surveyed.

### Cyrus and David Hubbard Barn, Little City Road

This building may look familiar to many especially those who have attended the local school system or attended a local sporting event. This magnificent barn is located behind the Cyrus and David Hubbard House which currently houses the central office of Regional School District #17 and was once considered the grandest house in Ponsett District. The horse barn is Italianate in style and was erected around 1850 by Cyrus for his father David. When constructed it was considered the “finest building of its kind in New England.” It displays original board and batten siding and decorative eave brackets which mimic the house. An ornate cupola sits on top and provides ventilation to the building. Ventilation to a barn was extremely important particularly if it housed animals. Some farmers felt that if they could eliminate drafts and make a barn “tight” it would reduce the amount feed animals would need in the winter. A barn was made “tight” by covering cracks with “battens” or siding the exterior with clapboards or wood shingles. However a “tight” barn resulted in a number of unforeseen problems including damaging moisture, dreadful fumes and odors and poor air quality. Adding a ventilator helped purify and ventilate the air and many 19<sup>th</sup> century barns exhibit a cupola embellished in some manner.



### Noah Clark Tavern Barn

The Noah Clark Tavern Barn is a well preserved New England style barn located along Saybrook Road in the village of Haddam. The barn is a good example of a gable front barn which was embraced by New England farmers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century after 1830. The gable fronted barn offered a number of practical benefits for farmers. Rain and snow drained off to the side rather than flood the dooryard and because the main driving floor ran parallel to the roof ridge the size of the barn could be increased by adding bays to the rear gable end. The Clark Barn has an offset main door which allows for more space for the haymow on the north side. Note the ornate ventilation cupola in the center of the roof. The Noah Clark Tavern was erected around 1805 and operated as an inn for most of the 1800s. It was in the perfect location along the Middlesex Turnpike, the main road between Saybrook and Hartford to provide services for travelers. The house remained in the Clark Family until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and has been carefully restored and maintained.



### Looking for a Few Good Chairs!

The Society is looking for some examples of period chairs for a special loan exhibition at the Connecticut Spring Antiques Show scheduled for March 10 and 11, 2007. This year, for the first time, the Antiques Show Committee would like to design the entrance of our nationally renowned show with fine examples of various styles of American antique chairs. The title of the exhibit will be “Haddam Collects.” We are looking for examples of the following style of chairs: Pilgrim, Queen Anne, Chippendale, Wing Chairs (1720-1800), Corner Chairs (18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century), Windsor, and Sheraton. Chairs selected for this educational exhibit will be labeled with a special loan tag with name of exhibitor, style and history. Please contact the HHS office should you own such a chair that you would be willing to share with the over 1500 visitors to the show who come to learn as well as buy! Office 345-2400.

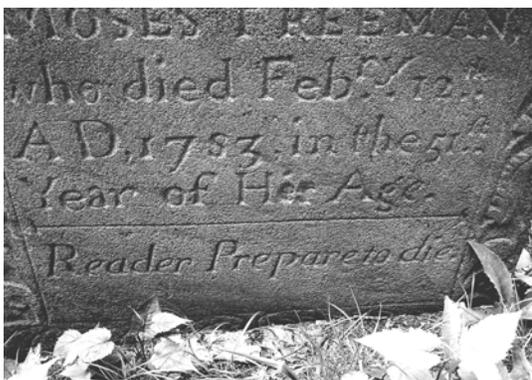
(Continued from Page 1)

Another family producing early gravestones was the Johnson's which constituted one of the great carving dynasties of eighteenth century Connecticut. In the early 1720's Thomas Johnson started carving gravestones in Middletown, with stone from the Portland brownstone quarries and soon took gravestone carving into the realm of true folk art. His early use of the skull, swirling rosettes finial and swirling side panels became hallmarks of his work from the early 1720's through 1734. Thirty Mile Island Cemetery displays one of Thomas Johnson's earliest known skull gravestone carvings. It is the Hannah Fisk (photo #2) gravestone from 1723, and is a simple stone with the skull design, swirling rosettes finial, but no border panels, or chain design as seen on a later Thomas Johnson brownstone carving, the Lieu. Jonathan Arnold gravestone (photo #5) from 1728.

In 1733/34 the style of the Johnson family carvers (Thomas's son Thomas II, and his son Thomas III, were all carvers) went through a radical change. The bleak skull is replaced by a rising cherubim and the spiral rosettes and swirls replaced with a much finer floral design. The Obadiah Brainerd stone from 1740 is a fine example of this transition period from skull to cherubim. The shift in style happens quickly throughout the Connecticut River Valley as if an outside influence made its way somehow into the Johnson family of carvers designs.

From this radical change in design many carvers start to make their own mark in the area with gravestone carvings. One such carver, David Miller from Middlefield has many stones represented at Thirty Mile Island Cemetery. Miller liked to make his cherubim's faces oddly shaped. His stones are beautifully carved and laid out with precise lettering, yet he purposely distorts the faces, such as the Caleb Brainerd stone from 1742. Another carver named John Johnson, no relation to Thomas Johnson, also has a few stones standing here. They are large brownstone slabs with large cherubim faces with a woeful look in their eyes, and either upraised wings or basset hound like down turned ears. The Mary Hazelton stone (photo #6) from 1777 is a fine representation of John Johnson's work.

Two later carvers who did make a living primarily carving gravestones were John Isham, and Silas Brainerd of East Haddam. Both have wonderful examples at Thirty Mile Island. Isham has both granite and brownstone headstones present, and the Silence Huntington stone from 1788 is a fine model of his early work in granite. Silas Brainerd has several stones in the cemetery including those of Martha Shailer and Heber Brainerd. His smiling bat winged cherubims are easily recognizable. The cherubim on the Lieutenant Daniel Ventres stone from 1801 seems to be grinning right back at you.



There are two must see gravestones in the cemetery. The first, located in the rear north end of the cemetery, is a David Miller brownstone for Susannah Freeman from 1783 with an epitaph at the base of the stone that reads "Reader Prepare To Die" (photo #3). The second is a curious stone, in that it is a wonderful Boston slate gravestone for Catharine Eliot sent here by her husband, Reverend Richard Roswell Eliot of Watertown Massachusetts (photo #4). Because of the brownstone tradition in the Connecticut River Valley, it is rare to see a Boston slate in one of the cemeteries. The design and carving of the stone are beautiful, and it makes you ask, who was she? Why was this wonderful stone sent here from Boston? Was she living here or was she passing through? We may never know, but by the looks of the stone that was erected for her, someone must have cared for her very much. Even today, over a hundred years later, the stone still evokes a strong sense of loss and love.



Many of the symbols used on the headstones had specific meanings. The angel flying signifies rebirth or resurrection; the angel weeping implies grief or mourning. The skull depicted on many referred to mortality and if the skull featured wings it symbolized the flight of the soul from mortal man. The skull with crossed bones implied the mortality of man and a skull with a wreath conveyed the victory of death over life. A winged face depicted the soul in flight. Later Victorian headstones displayed a wealth of additional symbols such as the willow tree, drapes and flowers all conveying some feeling or characteristic of the departed.

Top: #3 Gravestone of Susan Freeman carved by David Miller; # 4 Bottom: Gravestone of Catharine Eliot.

If you have the time, take a walk back in time. A stride through Thirty Mile Island Cemetery is akin to a walk through an outdoor art galley. These stones speak of struggle, pain, sadness, joy, life and death, of immortality and eternal rest. Beauty lies in these stones, in the carvings and design. They were meant to help relieve the pain of losing a loved one, by showing the journey of the spirit through simple design that spoke of hope and salvation.

These pieces of art and folklore are endangered due to exposure, age, lack of regular maintenance and vandalism. While historic artifacts such as antique furniture, chamber pots, clay pipes, are held in high regard by museums, historical societies and antiques lovers, thousands of beautifully hand carved colonial era gravestones, one of our earliest folk art forms, stand out in lonely fields, fighting the sands of time, slowly deteriorating. Stone art forms from other ancient societies, such as the Maya's or the Inca's are considered museum pieces, yet most of our colonial cemeteries, full of ancient artifacts, lie in a complete state of neglect, with no consideration for the wealth of information and value that they represent to present and future generations. The Cemetery Association for Thirty Mile Island has started a conservation project of cleaning the stones and removing damaging dirt and pollutants, but is in need of additional support.



#5 Gravestone of Jonathan Arnold 1728/29. Carved by Thomas Johnson I

#6 Gravestone of Mary Hazelton 1777. Carved by John Johnson

*Editors Note: To support the ongoing maintenance and preservation of The Ancient Burial Yard at Thirty Mile Island Plantation you may contact the Cemetery Association at P.O. Box 189, Haddam, CT 06438 or if you are interested in joining the Friends of Thirty Mile Island Plantation Cemetery call Jan Sweet at 345-4246.*

## ***Can You Offer a Bed and Breakfast?***

***Dear Society Members,***

***The Haddam Historical Society Board and members take great pride in the warm welcome we provide our guests and visitors!***

***As our major fundraiser, the Connecticut Spring Antiques Show, approaches (scheduled for March 10 and 11, 2007) we would once again like to offer Beds & Breakfasts to the fine Antiques dealers who exhibit at our show and make it the masterpiece event which it is.***

***If you can provide an extra pillow or two and some granola for a dealer or two (Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights) over this weekend, please contact Isabelle Seggerman (Dealer Hospitality Chairperson) at 860-345-3441.***

***Warm Regards,  
Isabelle Seggerman***

## New Board Members

**Bill Schneider**, a resident of Higganum, has lived around the world and studied architecture, graphic design and commercial art at Syracuse University and Pennsylvania School of the Arts. A model railroad enthusiast and expert, Bill has worked in the hobby industry for over 20 years. He, his wife Theresa and two daughters live in a late 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse where he spends “a lot” of time restoring his 1973 Mustang convertible.

**Dennis Unites** has been a Haddam resident since 1978. He is an environmental geologist and has had an interest in history since high school. His work in environmental clean up has stimulated an interest in the history of industrial operations, particularly manufactured gas plants. His other interests include bicycling, gardening, and fly fishing.



### **The Haddam Historical Society welcomes new members:**

**Steve Bailey**, Howard, PA

**Paula Bertuch**, Higganum

**Jeffrey & Lois Dobratz**,  
Higganum

**Robert & Lorraine Langer**,  
Higganum

**Sue Oehl**, Higganum

**Kristin & Michael Powers**,  
Haddam Neck

**Julia R. Richmond**, Groton, CT

**Michael Schade**, Watertown, CT

**Jay & Janet Verney**, Higganum

## Founders' Day Award 2006

On November 3, 2006 the Society held its annual Founders' Day Dinner and Dance at the beautiful and elegant Wadsworth Mansion in Middletown. For the past 28 years the Society has honored one or more members who have performed outstanding service to the Society and further its mission “to preserve, collect, interpret and promote the history and heritage of Haddam for present and future generations.” This year the Founders' Day Award was presented to two long time volunteers whose work behind the scenes has made a significant contribution to the Society resulting in the success of many of programs, events and fundraisers.

Terry Smith has been a member of the Society since coming to Higganum 15 years ago. He and his wife Carol (1999 Founders' Day Award recipient) have been actively involved with almost every aspect of the organization from stuffing envelopes to collecting admission at the Connecticut Spring Antiques Show. Although Terry travels extensively for his job with IBM he finds time to serve as clerk for the Higganum Congregational Church as well. A former member of the Board of Directors, Terry stepped up to the plate this past year when he agreed to take on the responsibility of being treasurer for the Antiques Show. During this period of transition he has taken on this task in a very professional manner and the Society owes him a great debt of thanks.

Amy Roper is the type of hard working volunteer any organization would be blessed to have. She and her husband Douglas have opened their home for many social and fundraising events including the extremely successful 2005 house tour of which she was co-chair. She also has served on the Board of Directors and currently volunteers for the social, garden, Antiques Show, program and community outreach committees. This past year she devoted countless hours supporting the organization including 12 hour days at the Spring Antiques Show, holding down a tent at the Haddam Neck Fair and promoting the society at Haddam River Days. Although Amy has a busy work schedule at

Higganum Dental Associates she was instrumental in making the Fall Family Apple Festival and Auction a rousing success and was a key player in orchestrating the Founders' Day Dinner Dance. She is always ready to pitch in and help out in any manner.



## Fall Apple Festival and Auction a Great Success!

On October 14 the Society hosted its first fall family apple festival which featured crafts, music and demonstrations on the grounds of the Arnold House. The Double Eagle String Band serenaded visitors with Southern Appalachian country music while Vivienne McGarry of Cold Goats Farm showed both the young and old how to needle felt an apple. Society members demonstrated how to press apples using an authentic Clark Cutaway press made in Higganum. In the evening a fundraising auction was held at the Higganum Firehouse which raised over \$6000. Many thanks go to Committee members and volunteers Amy and Doug Roper, Sue and David Costa, Carol and Terry Smith, Deb Rutter, Sarah Neal, Marge DeBold, Ron Chambers, Mary Bird, Jo Brann, Ron and Mary Alice Matulevich, Flo Courtright, Beth Hartke, Barbara Glista, Kathy Stanton, Alicia Sessa, Kristin Millard, Ron Chambers, Kathy Sullivan, Dick and Carol Matregrano, Joy Anderson and Gil Febos, Paul Morasutti, Oliver Neal, Emily Neal and Jessica Wilcox. Special thanks to auctioneers Kevin Cross and Dale Wilcox.

### “Spirit of Freedom”

Eagle Art Display, February 17 and 18, 2007

In conjunction with the Connecticut Audubon Society’s 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Eagle Festival on February 17 and 18, 2007, the Haddam Historical Society will host “Spirit of Freedom: Eagle Art and Antiques” at the Thankful Arnold House. Similar to our Community Collections exhibits we are asking friends, neighbors and members to share their Eagle art or antiques for this two day event. Since 1782 the Bald Eagle has been the emblem of the United States of America and represents freedom, strength, courage and immortality. The eagle is frequently featured on coins, stamps, and paper money as well as fine art, furniture, clothing, household goods and accessories. Displayed in the front parlor of the Arnold House is a magnificent “Girandole” looking glass with eagle finial displayed in the front parlor dating back to when America was a new country. If you have an item you would like to display please call Lisa at 345-2400 or look for further information on our web-site at [www.haddamhistory.org](http://www.haddamhistory.org).

### Basket Making Workshop

On Sunday, March 25 the Society will host a day long basket making workshop with nationally recognized basket maker Sosse Baker at the Thankful Arnold House. Co-owner of the Chester Gallery, Sosse is known for her patterns and colors and has had her work published in many national publications. Participants will create a “four dancing frogs” Cherokee pattern flat bottomed basket. Fee: \$25. Bring your lunch. Light dessert and beverage provided. For more information and reservations call 345-2400.

The Connecticut Spring Antiques Show Committee and Haddam Historical Society are pleased to announce the launch of the show’s official Web site at [www.ctspringantiquesshow.com](http://www.ctspringantiquesshow.com) which includes information on the events, schedules and dealers.

Thank you to all those who donated to the auction including:  
**Gail and Jerry Powell’s Hi-Way**

#### Package Store

Dino’s Pizza

Pizzeria Da Vinci

Higganum Feed Store

Tiger and Yvonne Carlson

Greg Beach

Bennie’s Farm Market

Ron Chambers

Carl and Marijean Conrad

Flo Courtright

Melissa Gibson

Nancy Hart

Higganum Physical Therapy

Kim’s Skin Care, Old Saybrook

Sue Oehl

Sue and Rich Pedemonti

Barbara & John Stellenwerf

Patti Vassia

Lorena & Peter Walsh

*Connecticut  
Spring  
Antiques Show*

**March 10 and 11, 2007**

**Connecticut Expo Center**

**Hartford**

**10-5 on Saturday**

**10-4 on Sunday**

**\$10 admission**

*Keynote Lecture on Saturday at  
1:00 pm*

**Edward Maeder** of Historic Deerfield, “The Chicken and the Egg: Fashion and Furniture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.”

*Booth Chats on Sunday*

**Karen Wendhiser**- “Decorated Northeast Native American Baskets” at 11 am.

**Colette Donovan**- “The Hearth as the Heart of the Early American Home” at 12:15 pm

**Grace Snyder** – “To Ornament the Home: A Brief Guide to the Development & Dating of American Hooked and Sewn Rugs” at 1:30 pm.

**Upcoming Events**

**January 24 – Winter Woolies**, Sunday 1 pm to 3 pm in the kitchen of the Thankful Arnold House. Knitting Bee with Beth Hartke and other enthusiastic knitters. Light refreshments and free admission. Register at 345-2400.

**February 4 – Winter Woolies**, Sunday 1 pm to 3 pm. Knitting Bee continued.

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**February 17 & 18- “Spirit of Freedom”- Eagle Art and Antiques Display** at Thankful Arnold House. Saturday and Sunday 1 pm to 4 pm. The Society invites neighbors, members and residents to share and display art, antiques and other objects which feature our nation’s emblem, the Bald Eagle. This display will be held in conjunction with the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Eagle Festival.

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**March 10 & 11- 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Connecticut Spring Antiques Show**, Connecticut Expo Center, Hartford. Saturday 10 am – 5 pm; Sunday 10 am – 4 pm. Premier Early American Antiques Show featuring over 65 of the nation’s most prominent dealers. Admission \$10.

*Keynote Lecture on Saturday at 1:00 pm*

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