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# PAST AND PRESENT

*The Newsletter of the Haddam Historical Society*

Volume 46 No.9, Late Fall 2008/Early Winter 2009

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## The Ku Klux Klan in Higganum!



Earlier this summer the Haddam Historical Society received one of the most interesting donations that I have seen in my tenure here as Executive Director. Given by an anonymous donor the pictured “uniform” was used by a Higganum resident in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Needless to say the piece has produced some astonished and surprised responses, the most common being “Could the Ku Klux Klan really have been meeting in Haddam?”

The answer is “Yes”!

About five years ago the Society received a 1924-1930 diary from a local Higganum family which had an entry dated October 25, 1924 which noted “Eddy\* and I went out to Candlewood Hill to big Klan meeting, very big crowd there.” I had never heard of the KKK having a presence in town and put the thought in the back of my mind until the costume showed up.

Research found a *Middletown Press* article from October 29, 1924 which reads “*The Ku Klux Klan closed its outdoor season Saturday night with a frosty gathering in Higganum. Three miles off the main road at Higganum in a lonely field the Kluxers gathered in their nightgowns, burned three fiery crosses, listened to denunciations of alleged enemies of the United States and a concert by a fife and drum corps.*” The article goes on to say that refreshments were served and that several hundreds of dollars in initiation fees were collected from the men, boys and women who were inducted into the Klan that evening. Sightseers came from miles around to view the ceremonies but were not allowed near without a ticket and were kept away by mounted KKK patrolmen. The State Police were called in but only to direct traffic. Why was the Klan meeting here?

When I think of the Ku Klux Klan I picture the Deep South, white robes, conical masks and white supremacy, not our quiet

little New England town along the Connecticut River. The Klan has a long history and three distinct phases since the Civil War. The First Klan was begun in 1865 by veterans of the Confederate Army who were resisting reconstruction and had a hatred for the Federal government. Their goal was to restore the rights of the southern white and limit the education, economic advancement, voting rights and right to bear arms of the blacks. Although not well organized this secret society practiced violent methods and was responsible for the murder and assault of hundreds. *Continued on page 3*

\* Name has been changed

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Helen Deag-Secretary  
Carl Conrad- Finance Chair



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Pat Hartman  
Robert Reynolds  
Steve Rocco  
Deborah Rutter  
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Barn Building-Leslie Starr

Newsletter-Elizabeth Malloy &  
Barbara Glista

**Executive Director**

Elizabeth Hart Malloy

**Education Coordinator**

Sarah Neal

# Founders' Day Award Given to Deborah Rutter

On Friday, November 7, 2008 the Haddam Historical Society honored long time volunteer Deborah Rutter at the annual Founders' Day Dinner held at the Riverhouse at Goodspeed Station in Haddam. Deb is a volunteer who has done almost everything for the organization from digging in the dirt to running a board meeting. She is a hands-on member, volunteer and board member who has spearheaded a number of successful committees, events and projects that have raised our profile in the community. She held many positions over the past years including President of the Board from 2003-2006, Vice-President, House Maintenance Committee Chair, Chair of Development and Membership, and now Chair of Events and Co-Chair of the Garden and Grounds Committee.

Deb is the epitome of a person who can juggle it all: family, job and community. She currently serves as Deputy Library Director at the Cheshire Public Library and formerly worked at Russell Library in Middletown. When not out jogging on Walkley Hill or working in her garden, she can be found driving her children to soccer games, swimming events, sleepovers and many other family activities. Deb values her relationships with family and friends and makes a special point to visit with them whether they are here in Connecticut or in another state. She is also known for her fabulous baking and healthy dishes, and our spirits improve immediately when she arrives with a plate of delectable cookies.



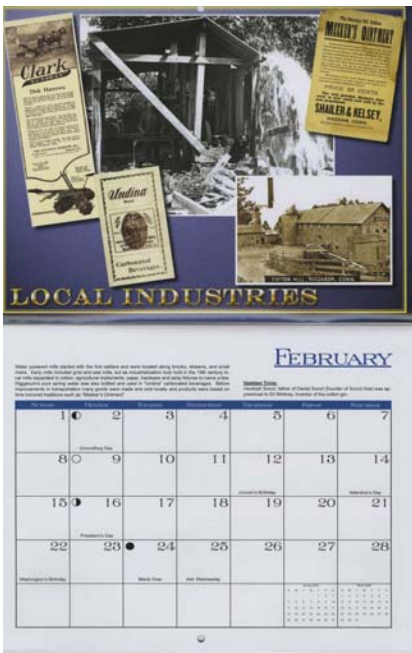
Recently she spent hours pouring over our archives and writing the text for our wonderful 2009 calendar and is already gearing up for next year's projects. We are a better Haddam Historical Society not just because of Deb's many accomplishments and contributions to the organization but because of the encouragement she offers to all with whom she works. Thank you Deb!

## 2009 Calendar Available

The Haddam Historical Society under the guidance of Board Member Bill Schneider has created a beautiful full-color, glossy 2009 calendar with over 50 historic photographs and images. Not only is the calendar visually stimulating but there are historic tidbits and trivia.

The calendar is available at the Thankful Arnold House or on our Web site: [www.haddamhistory.org](http://www.haddamhistory.org). It is also available at certain locations around town including Hi-Way Package Store and the Town Office Building. Check our Web site for other locations. The cost is \$10. This would make the perfect gift for teachers, neighbors and friends.

All proceeds benefit The Haddam Historical Society's educational programming, exhibitions, house maintenance and collections care.



Continue from page 1

By the early 1870s the Klan was starting its decline due to the opposition of influential southerners and the Civil Rights Act of 1871.

The second Klan which dates from 1915 to 1944 grew in response to urbanization and industrialization, immigration from eastern and southern Europe, migration of African Americans from the south to the north, and rural blacks moving to urban cities. The resurgence of the Klan was not just limited to the south but was strong in the mid-west, western states and even New England, including Middlesex County. The second Klan was much more organized with initiation fees and uniform costumes espoused nativism and preached racism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Communism, and anti-Semitism. It also prospered from a militant approach in support of the temperance movement. Although some chapters resorted to violence, most KKK members and groups used meetings and cross burnings to intimidate targets and send their message. At its peak in 1924 the Klan had four million members nation wide.

In Connecticut the Klan had a peak membership of 15,000-18,000 in 1924 and preached a doctrine of Protestant control and suppression of blacks, Jews and Catholics. It is believed that members were distressed and grieved for a disappearing way of life blaming immigrants for the changing world. Rallies were held across the state in the 1920s and the group was most active in the larger cities of New Haven, New Britain and Stamford which had large Catholic populations. Middlesex Country had its share of meetings with large gatherings in Middletown, Durham and Higganum. The *Middletown Press* reported that crosses were burned to frighten immigrants and Catholics.

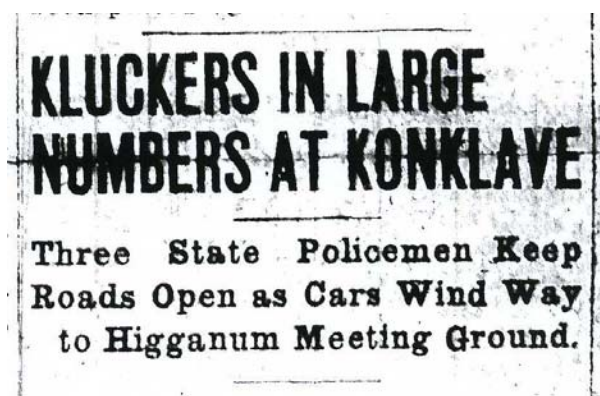
Many Connecticut residents and organizations including clergy, veterans, politicians and fraternal organizations openly protested the presence of the Klan. One local response to cross burning threats was a "Holy Name Society Parade" held in Middletown in 1920 by Catholics to show their strength and numbers and defend their faith. It is said that over 2000 marched.

How did Higganum react to having the Klan meet here? Our community had all the ingredients necessary to attract the Klan and their opposition to Catholics and immigrants. The 1920 Census of Haddam's Second District (Higganum) shows over 50% of residents being first or second generation immigrants, many coming from Sweden, Ireland, Italy and Bohemia. Higganum was also home to a number of large manufacturing plants including Clark Cutaway Harrow, D & H Scovil Hoe and Russell Manufacturing which required a large number of laborers. The 1920s was a time of change: the automobile was readily available allowing easy travel and mobility, movies and radio were a new form of entertainment, and jazz and dancing were the amusement of choice. The Roaring 20s was also a time of unprecedented industrial growth. This evolution brought a significant change in lifestyles and challenged long standing traditions; many long time residents and families may have felt threatened by the change.

First hand experience of the Klan in town is limited. Some long time Higganum residents recall hearing that crosses were burned on Candlewood Hill and Swan's Hill (behind the Haddam Elementary School) and that residents were protesting immigrants taking up jobs. It was also noted that members may have met in the "Clubhouse" on Jail Hill Road and later down at the Sheriffs Shack in Haddam Meadows.

The Klan however did not last long in the area. By 1926 they had lost strength due to internal division and ultimately disappeared from Connecticut. The third phase of the KKK was formed in the 1950s and 1960s to oppose the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation. With approximately 7000 members nationwide they continue today on an independent basis with the majority of members residing in the south.

The Klan's presence in Haddam is not a proud moment in our town's history but one that did occur primarily as a result of changing times from a traditional agricultural society of long time families to an industrial based economy that employed many immigrants who brought new and unknown traditions and way of life.



~Elizabeth Malloy

Middletown Press, October 29, 1924

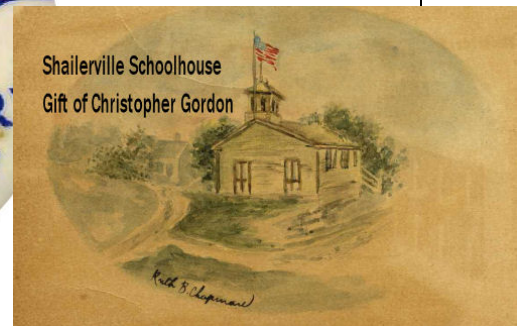
## New Members, December 2008

The Haddam Historical Society welcomes:

Ken Agud, Higganum  
Claude and Nancy Albert, Haddam  
Kay Baker, Haddam  
Andrea Bouge, Middletown  
Joan Brick, Higganum  
Eugene Clay, Milford  
Eleanor Eckert, Flintridge, CA  
Jessica Hartke, Higganum  
Rick Johnson, Higganum  
Brittany Kletter, Haddam  
Kimberly and Jason Labbe, Haddam  
Sarah Mabry, La Grange, TX  
Prema Manohar, Haddam  
Cheryl Parmelee, Haddam  
Willi Sirles, Haddam Neck  
Donna Turnage, Higganum  
Deborah Umba, Higganum  
Paul and Mia Vallor, Higganum  
Joseph Zipoli, Higganum

## New Collections Donations!

Below are a few examples of recent items donated to the Haddam Historical Society. Please keep us in mind when you come across an item related to our community.



## The 36<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Spring Antiques Show: New England's First Premier Show in 2009!

The 36<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Spring Antiques Show described as 'one of the most important antiques shows in the nation' by *Antiques and the Arts Weekly* will take place in Hartford on March 14 and 15, 2009 at the Connecticut Expo Center. Portrayed as 'an Americana treasure trove' the show features pre-1840 American furniture and appropriate accessories with over 70 of the country's finest and most respected antiques dealers some of whom have been with the show for over three decades. Saturday hours are 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday hours are 11 am to 4 pm. Admission is \$10 and parking is free. The Connecticut Expo Center is located at 265 Rev. A. Moody Overpass, (I-91, Exit 33) in Hartford, CT.

Leading figures of the antiques trade will display outstanding and unique examples of early American furniture, porcelain and pottery, silver and pewter, fine art, brass and ironware, textiles, prints and more. The show, 'a rare survivor from an earlier era of collecting,' has made a concerted effort to maintain its offering of highest quality early American antiques while making the content more diverse. The show attracts serious collectors, supports new collectors, and brings both together with knowledgeable dealers and experts who share a passion for period American antiques and decorative arts. The Connecticut Spring Antiques Show has earned a reputation not only as a destination show with quality merchandise but also as an educational experience for visitors. Three Booth Chats will be held. On Saturday March 14 at 2:00 pm Ron Bassin from A Bird in Hand Antiques will speak on "Stoneware: The Tupperware of the 18th Century". On Sunday, March 15, at 1:00 pm Don Heller from Heller Washam Antiques will present "Contrasting Connecticut and Massachusetts Furniture Styles, Construction and How They Intersect in the Connecticut River Valley" and at 2:00 pm Sandy Jacobs will speak on "Memorial and Georgian Jewelry from the 1690s to 1830s".



The show is managed by Karen DiSaia, who is also responsible for The American Antiques Show (TAAS) in New York and the ADA/Historic Deerfield Antiques Show. Show co-chairs are Rusty Clowes and Mary Bird of The Haddam Historical Society. For additional information call 860-345-2400 or visit [www.ctspringantiquesshow.com](http://www.ctspringantiquesshow.com).

# Haddam Neck Barn Tour

On October 4, 2008 the Society hosted a Barns and Farm Tour of Haddam Neck. The weather cooperated and we had an outstanding day with a respectable turn out. We would like to thank all the barn owners for opening up their properties and sharing their stories.

John and Phyllis Kruger  
Bob and Carol Johnson  
Stanford Brainerd and Nancy Foltz  
Jane and Mark Aldieri  
Kristin and Michael Powers  
Randy and Kathy Spencer  
Bob and Vivienne McGarry



A big thank you to Peter Smith of Haddam Neck who hosted a talk out on Brainerd's Point. We hope he will do it again for the volunteers who didn't get a chance to attend.

We would also like to thank the Ladies Aid Society of the Haddam Neck Congregational Church who provided a delicious lunch and the Haddam Neck Fair Association for allowing us to use the Fair Grounds. HHS member and artisan Vivienne McGarry led a needle felted craft while juggling spinning, herding goats and sheep, and keeping the chickens from running amok.

We could not have done it without out all our dedicated Barn Hands (Volunteers). Thank you again.

Joy Anderson and Julia Febos  
Paul and Carol Bischoff  
John Anderson  
Emily Carrow  
Ron Chambers  
Rusty and Diane Clowes  
Carl Conrad  
Sue and Dave Costa  
Kathleen Curran & Patrick Pinnell  
Marge DeBold  
Sue DeCarli  
Anne Farrow  
Taylor Garewski  
Rogene Gillmor  
Cynthia Goetz  
Charlotte Gradie  
Rachel Hendrick  
Beth Hartke  
Jamie Kulig

Hazel Kurlansky  
Sarah MacDonald  
Elizabeth and David Malloy  
Grace Malloy  
Hannah Malloy  
Ron and Mary Alice Matulevich  
Dianne and Annie McHutchison  
Paul Morasutti  
Gabby Narowska  
Oliver Neal  
Sarah and David Neal  
Joanne Nesti  
Cynthia O'Neill  
Robert Reynolds  
Linda Rigono  
Annemarie Rocco  
Caroline Rocco  
Amy Roper  
Deborah Rutter

Bill Schneider  
Kayleigh Schneider  
Laura Schneider  
Carol and Terry Smith  
Missy Steinhilper  
Barbara Stellenwerf  
Elaine Stephens  
Gail and Mark Stephens  
Jan Sweet  
Liz Yorke  
Jamie Verney  
Janet Verney

*The Society welcomes new and returning Board Members:  
Robert Reynolds  
Deborah Rutter  
Leslie Starr*

## 2008 Annual Appeal Donors

### \$1000 +

Jan Sweet

### 250+

Mark Dubois and Leslie Starr

### 100+

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Carl and Marijean Conrad

David and Sue Costa

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Betsy McManus

Sarah and David Neal

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Richard and Nancy Thompson

Rick and Mary Todzia

Esther Tyler

Camille Van Saun

Ed and Adele Vynalek

Arthur Wensinger

## 2009 Winter Events

January 17, 2009

### Janteenth Night

6:30 pm

Join us for our annual post-holiday pot-luck dinner social at the beautiful home of Town Historian Jan Sweet. Warm your toes by the fire & enjoy the company of good friends and neighbors.

Your \$10 contribution will automatically place your name in the gift basket drawing and help support the organization and its programs.

Please bring an appetizer, side dish or dessert, and we will provide the main course. Soft drinks will also be provided but feel free to bring your choice of spirits to enjoy.

946 Saybrook Road, Haddam,  
r.s.v.p. 860-345-2400

January 25

February 8

### Winter Woolies

1 pm to 3 pm

Do you have a knitting or needlework project that has been sitting around waiting for you to finish? Join master knitter Beth Hartke to work on that neglected piece or start a new one and enjoy the company of others with NO modern day intrusions.

Registration is required, since space is limited. Admission is free. For further information call Lisa at Haddam Historical Society 345-2400 or

contact@haddamhistory.org.

Thankful Arnold House Museum  
14 Hayden Hill Road, Haddam,  
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We encourage members and residents to support our new and existing business members. For more information on our business members visit our Web site at [www.haddamhistory.org](http://www.haddamhistory.org) and click on the "Come in, we're Open" sign.

#### Barton's Landscaping

189 Turkey Hill Road  
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860-345-4052

#### Bates Masonry Service, LLC

162 Walkley Hill Road  
Haddam, CT 06438

#### Hi-Way Package Store

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860-345-2315

#### Matulevich Carpentry, LLC

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Haddam, CT 06438  
860-345-2025

#### New England Publishing Associates

P.O. Box 361  
Chester, CT 06412  
860-345-7323

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Basements, Brush, Estates  
135 Skunk Misery Road  
Higganum, CT 06441  
860-345-4896

#### School Market Research Institute

1721 Saybrook Road  
P.O. Box 10  
Haddam, CT 06438

#### Town and Country Nurseries

1036 Saybrook Road  
Haddam, CT 06438  
860-345-8581



### It's A Thrill To Quill Valentine Craft

Join Executive Director Elizabeth Malloy on February 1, 2009 at 1 pm to make a Valentine using the technique known as quilling.

Quilling or paper filigree is the art of rolling thin strips of paper into different shapes and using the shapes to form designs.

For Ages 10 and Up.

\$5 for members, \$8 for non-members. Space is limited. Call 345-2400 to reserve your space.

### The Hermit of Higganum

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century "Deafie Smith" was an elderly gentleman who lived in a hut in the Brainerd Hill District near the Middletown line. "Deafie" whose name was William B. Smith had lost his hearing and had very poor eyesight. The only way to communicate was in writing. He raised berries and small fruit for a living and would walk into town twice a month to get supplies. In 1849 Mr. Smith went to California during the Gold Rush but ultimately returned to Connecticut. He had two sons, one in California and one in Connecticut, but he preferred to live in the woods alone.

In the winter of 1906 "Deafie" was assaulted outside his hut while gathering wood. This attack came shortly after someone stole \$45 his son had sent him. He was able to crawl to his hut and was found later and fixed up by Dr. Kellogg.

## Upcoming Events 2009

January 17- Janteenth Night, 946 Saybrook Road, Haddam, 6:30 pm- Potluck Winter Social

January 25- Winter Woolies, Thankful Arnold House, 1 pm to 3 pm- Knitting Bee

February 1 – Quilling Craft, Thankful Arnold House, 1 pm to 3 pm- Valentine Craft

February 8 – Winter Woolies, Thankful Arnold House 1 pm to 3 pm- Knitting Bee

March 14 and 15- Connecticut Spring Antiques Show, CT Expo Center, Hartford

## E- NEWSLETTER

The Haddam Historical Society has started a periodic electronic newsletter which announces the latest events, news and information with members. If you have not been receiving it and would like to please send us your email address at [director@haddamhistory.org](mailto:director@haddamhistory.org). The e-newsletter will keep you up to date with the most current news and happenings.

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