



MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 46, No. 2

May 2010

March floods, May flowers? Like many places throughout Connecticut, the Museum was not spared serious flooding in March. We are grateful to the Town of Mansfield for sending their maintenance crew to pump water out of the basements. Volunteers also came to bail water and move items stored in the basements to higher ground. In addition to Ann Galonska's tireless efforts, I want to thank Keith Johnson, Howard Raphaelson, Dick Roberts, Keith Wilson, Stephen Feathers, and Joan DeBella and her grandson for coming to our aid.

Unfortunately there was water damage to some of the items stored in the basements and to the kitchen display area in the main building. The kitchen exhibit will remain closed until repairs can be made. Progress on the new exhibits has also been slowed as we deal with the flood issues.

Despite these challenges, we will open on schedule on Saturday, June 5 with three new exhibits. We also have a full schedule of programs planned for the month of May. On May 7, Christopher Clark will speak on the Northampton Association, a utopian society in Massachusetts that drew members from eastern Connecticut. Two family history programs are also planned for May 8 and May 22. The first is an introduction to genealogy research to be presented by board members Richard Roberts and Keith Wilson. The second is an "Ancestors Road Show" at which individuals may consult with a professional genealogist about their own family research. Full information about these programs and a registration form for the genealogy sessions is enclosed. Many thanks to Dick Roberts and Keith Wilson for planning the family history programs.

We hope you will join us for these upcoming programs and visit the museum this summer. Please remember our new museum schedule: open every Saturday and Sunday, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., through the end of September. (It will no longer be open on Thursday.) Isabelle Atwood will be calling members to recruit hosts and hostesses to man the museum on our open days. We hope you will volunteer for this duty. Ours is a wonderful museum full of Mansfield's treasures; please help us share it with the public.

John Meyers, President

MAY MEETING AND PROGRAM

Friday, May 7, 7:00 p.m., Buchanan auditorium at the Mansfield Public Library

Christopher Clark, Professor of History at the University of Connecticut, will present a talk based on his 2004 book, *Letters from an American Utopia: The Stetson Family and the Northampton Association, 1843-1847*. The Stetson family of Brooklyn, Connecticut joined the Northampton Association in 1843. The discovery of 75 letters written by members of the Stetson family has revealed much about life in this utopian community in Northampton, Massachusetts, considerable numbers of whose members came from eastern Connecticut.

Clark will discuss the campaign for the abolition of slavery, and the difficulties faced by Connecticut abolitionists in the 1830s and 1840s. He will also speak to the Northampton Community's involvement in the silk industry and its connections with Mansfield silk producers, including Joseph Conant and Orwell S. Chaffee. Additionally, the lives of women and children in utopian communities, a subject on which the Stetson letters provide rare and valuable evidence, will be explored. James Stetson, described by one historian as "an ambivalent family patriarch with a wry sense of humor" spent many months away from Northampton selling the community's silk products. Dozens of letters sent him by his wife, Dolly Witter Stetson, and by his eldest daughter Almira, throw light on community and family life, and on the hopes and ambitions of women dedicated to reform in pre-Civil War New England.

Christopher Clark grew up near London, England, studied at the University of Warwick, and obtained his PhD in History at Harvard University. He taught at the University of York for eighteen years, and was Professor of North American History at the University of Warwick for seven years before coming to UConn in 2005.

FAMILY HISTORY PROGRAMS

Saturday, May 8, 10:00 a.m. – Noon, Mansfield Community Center: INTRODUCTION TO GENEALOGY WORKSHOP. Richard C. Roberts, former Unit Head, History and Genealogy Unit, Connecticut State Library and Keith Wilson, a genealogist with more than 30 years of family research experience, will present a program covering the basics of genealogy, including how to get started, finding the who-what-when-where, and what to do with the information once you have it. COST: \$5/person.

Saturday, May 22, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Storrs Congregational Church Parish House Auditorium: ANCESTORS ROAD SHOW. Members of the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council will offer participants approximately 30 minutes of individualized advice on how to get started in genealogy or solve a thorny research problem. Participants are strongly encouraged to pre-register for a time slot, start each half hour from 9:00 – 12:30 (e.g., 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, etc.) COST: \$10/person. For more information on these programs, contact Richard Roberts, 860-429-8751, Rroberts1861@Charter.net.

CONSULTANTS:

THOMAS HOWARD

Residence: East Granby, CT

Specialty: *Immigration Links, Dead-Ends, Irish Research, Heirloom Evaluations, Lecturer.* Usual area of Research - Connecticut and Western Massachusetts

VIRGINIA HOWARD

Residence: East Granby, CT

Specialty: *Seventeenth Century Genealogy Research, Connecticut, Immigrant Research-especially Irish and Polish.*

OLIVIA PATCH

Residence: Tolland, CT

Specialty: *Early Connecticut and Massachusetts genealogy; very familiar with all local genealogy repositories and libraries. Some immigration research, Lineage Society preparation, French-Canadian, consultations.*

Registrar for the Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor.

EDWIN W. STRICKLAND II.

Residence: New Britain, CT

Specialty: *Early New England, Seventeenth Century-20th century, consultations, composing Family Histories.*

Genealogist for the Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor, President of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists.

JAMES LEATHERBEE

Residence: East Haddam, CT

Specialty: *Colonial period through to the 21st century. Consultations; Immigration, census information, speaker,*

Past president of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists and Vice President of the Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor. Frequently consults for the Genealogy Road Shows.

REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE FAMILY HISTORY PROGRAMS

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Number attending Introduction to Genealogy Workshop @ \$5.00: _____

Number attending Ancestors Road Show @ \$10.00: _____

Preferred consultant: _____

Preferred time: _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____ (Please make checks payable to "Mansfield Historical Society.")

Mail to: Richard C. Roberts, 596 Gurleyville Rd., Storrs, CT 06268-1408

MUSEUM OPENING AND NEW EXHIBITS

Saturday, June 5, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

The museum opening on June 5 will showcase our three new exhibits. At 2:30 p.m., singer-songwriter Donna Dufresne will perform songs that she composed about Wormwood Hill. She wrote these songs to accompany her 2004 exhibit about Claude McDaniels, a long-time resident of Wormwood Hill. We're delighted that she will reprise several of the songs at this year's opening. Peggy Church will also demonstrate weaving during the afternoon. We hope you will join us for this special event and will return during the summer with your family and friends. The museum will be open on Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m., through the end of September.

NEW EXHIBITS:

- **Celebrating 300 Years: Mansfield's First Congregational Church.** Organized in 1710, the First Church of Christ in Mansfield is the oldest Congregational church in Tolland County. The exhibit provides an overview of the church's history and its important role in the community. For many years, the meetinghouse served not only as a house of worship but also as the political center for the town. The display describes the architectural history of the current church and the succession of earlier meetinghouses. The current church, designed by Edwin Fitch, was built in 1866 after the previous meetinghouse burned. As the centerpiece of the exhibit, Jack Nardi, of the University's Dramatic Arts Department, has constructed a scale model of the second meetinghouse, based on John Warner's 1836 sketch and descriptions in the church records. Roberta Smith, Kay Holt and Winston Hawkins are preparing this exhibit.
- **American Coverlets, 1800 - 1850:** A colorful display of early to mid-nineteenth century coverlets occupies two rooms in the main building. The examples range from ones with simple geometric designs - some woven locally - to "fancy" patterned coverlets woven by professional weavers on jacquard looms. Several have the weaver's name and date included in the corner blocks – an early form of advertising. The display also includes a hands-on station where visitors can learn about the various weaving techniques used in making these coverlets. Peggy Church, Ann Galonska and Lisa Ferriere are working on this exhibit.

Mansfield Historical Society
P. O. Box 145
Storrs, CT 06268-0145

Web site: www.mansfieldct-history.org
E-mail: mansfield.historical@snet.net

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NEW EXHIBITS (continued):

The Villages of Wormwood Hill, Mount Hope and Atwoodville. This exhibit, located in the Old Town Hall building, covers the settlement of these villages, their growth and development, and some of their notable residents. Because Wormwood Hill was an agricultural community it relied on Mount Hope and Atwoodville, both mill villages, for part of its existence. The exhibit includes a wide variety of photographs and artifacts related to this area of Mansfield. The display is being prepared by Rudy Favretti who, with Isabelle Atwood, recently published a book on this subject.

SPRING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY MEETING & PROGRAM: Christopher Clark, Professor of History at the University of Connecticut - *Letters from an American Utopia: The Stetson Family and the Northampton Association, 1843-1847.* **Friday, May 7, 7:00 p.m., Buchanan Auditorium, Mansfield Public Library. Free Admission.**

INTRODUCTION TO GENEALOGY WORKSHOP: **Saturday, May 8, 10:00 a.m. - Noon, Mansfield Community Center. Admission: \$5.00**

ANCESTORS ROAD SHOW: **Saturday, May 22, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Storrs Congregational Church. Admission: \$10.00,** includes consultation with a professional genealogist.

MUSEUM OPENING: **Saturday, June 5, 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.** Donna Dufresne will perform songs of Wormwood Hill at 2:30 p.m. **Admission: \$2.00/adult.** Free for members and children under 12.

