

2010 WINTER LECTURE SERIES

Place: Canton Library/Community Center on Dyer Avenue
Time: Sunday Afternoons a 2:00 p.m.
Admission: \$4.00 and \$3.00 for members and Students \$1.00

SCHEDULE

- January 17** **THE OLD LEATHER MAN** by Shirley Sutton – an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ has been interested in the Old Leather Man since 1974 and ever since has been researching and visiting those of his caves that are accessible.
- February 7** **CLOCK MAKING IN CONNECTICUT** by Mary Jane Dapkus , assistant curator of the American Clock and Watch Museum in Bristol. Ms. Dapkus has advanced degrees in science and American history. Her talk will focus on Connecticut's rich clock-making history spanning the craftsmanship era to the 20th century. The museum clocks will be on display and included in her talk.
- February 21** **MINERALS IN CONNECTICUT** by David Korzendorfer and Dr. Wilfred Talbot. Both men are members of the Bristol Gem and Minerals Club. Mr. Korzendorfer, a geologist, is president and Dr. Talbot, a past president, and former principal of Northwest Regional High School. People are urged to bring specimens for identification if they wish.
- March 7** **FARMINGTON RIVER INDIANS AND THEIR LEGACY** by Cynthia Griggs, a researcher and naturalist, who has spent many years researching the path of the Farmington River Indians after they left this area.



Canton Historical Society
11 Front Street
Collinsville, CT 06019

FIRST CLASS MAIL

NEWSLETTER

CANTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

11 Front Street
Collinsville, CT 06019



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www.cantonmuseum.org

January 2010

PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Hello, Museum Friends,

On behalf of the Museum board, I would like to extend best wishes for the New Year.

Over the past year, with your help, we have made good progress on our goals to improve the museum. We now have an up-to-date fire and security system which will better protect our collection. Our renovated general store is now handicapped accessible as we hope some day all of the museum will become.

Over the recent holidays the museum was open to many people throughout the area. The major attraction was the museum's "Gallery of Trees," a building fund event which was very successful. Special thanks to Marje Harmon, Chair of the Building Fund, and all her volunteers for their efforts.

Looking forward, we will continue to work on museum improvement projects as funds and help are available. I am looking for ideas and funds for the next exhibit space we can renovate. Please contact me for any help you can give or ideas you may have. It is our intention to go forward with any project only when we have funds available and without creating an unsustainable financial burden to our operating costs.

Your continued generous support to our annual membership drives allows the museum to operate. These are challenging financial times for all of us, but please help us to continue to serve our community. An envelope is enclosed for your convenience in renewing your dues.

Paul J. Therrien
President
Canton Historical Society, Inc.

THE GALLERY ON THE GREEN: Now listed on the State Register of Historic Places

Thomas Rickis, president of the Canton Artists Guild/ Gallery on the Green, was instrumental in getting this designation for the building which was built in 1872 and called "The Academy." It was later known as The Canton Street School House. In the interest of historic preservation, this is a significant designation and hopefully will help ensure its preservation for posterity in a section of the town which dates back to the first settlers who came from Simsbury to what was then West Simsbury to establish homes here. It was then called Suffrage. The first settler was Richard Case and wife who came in 1738 and settled on East Hill or Chestnut Hill. Soon after that 20 families followed and settled in Suffrage, Canton Center and North Canton.

In 1750 West Simsbury was incorporated as a parish and money was appropriated for schools. The first record is the appointment of Ezekiel Humphrey and David Adams to lay out money for "Woman Schools for the instruction of Children." When the School Society of West Simsbury was formed in 1749, three schools were built in North Canton, Canton Center and Canton Village. In 1745 records show a log school house built on East Hill. The first school house in Canton Village was built in 1759 on Albany Turnpike on property in front of R. G. Bradley. In 1775 a second school house was built and was later moved to become the upper part of John Butler's house. The third school house was built in 1808 on the Town Green and eventually was moved to become a residence near the cemetery. By this time the Town of Canton was incorporated, in 1806.

The Canton Street School House functioned as an elementary school until 1949 when it was closed by the Town of Canton. In 1950 it was loaned to the Canton Volunteer Fire Department for meetings, training sessions and social purposes. When they erected their permanent fire engine building with auxiliary facilities in 1958, the school house became vacant and dormant. In 1960 the Canton Artists Guild was formed and they used the building as an art gallery, and on July 13, 1971 the building was deeded over to them by the Canton Volunteer Fire Department by a quit claim deed for the value of \$1.00.

The Gallery on the Green is now celebrating its 50th year in 2010 and they are also celebrating the fact that the building has been designated as a historic landmark located in a section of the town that has over 250 years of history. Because of its location on a major thoroughfare, particularly when it became the Albany Turnpike, a major stage coach route from Hartford to Albany, together with the Litchfield Turnpike which spun off at the location of Old Canton Road, it became the business center of the town. All kinds of businesses sprung up to serve the growing community as well as hotels, inns and taverns as Canton was a major stopping place on the Stage Coach Route. Many of these buildings are still standing, such as The First National Bank of Litchfield which was Elmshade, a hostelry, and Hawkes Hotel, now Mark Lowell's law office.

The Canton Historical Museum now in its 40th year joins with the Gallery on the Green in celebrating their 50th anniversary and in continued furtherance of bringing to the citizens of the town a sense of culture and history. The Canton Historical Museum is planning an exhibit which will include the Canton Street School House, The Gallery on the Green and other points of interest in the area for the opening of the regular season of the museum in April.



Gallery on the Green



Canton Street School - 1904

PHOTO OF 1904 CANTON STREET SCHOOL HOUSE

In the photograph at the left the two girls marked with an "x" are the daughters of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Schell who were hired by the widow of the Honorable William E. Simonds to run the farm called Brookmead located on what is now Simonds Avenue. Mr. Simonds in 1888 was First District Congressman and an internationally well-known patent attorney. He was U. S. Commissioner of Patents from 1881 to 1893. As Congressman, he obtained passage of the first International Copyright Act of the United States. For this he was honored by the French government. Mr. Simonds died in 1902 and the Schells ran the farm for five years until Mrs. Simonds died in 1908. She was the former Jane Maria Mills whose family had lived on this property for many generations. It is now owned by the Town of Canton, except for the house.

WRAP UP OF 2009

The 2009 Winter Lecture Series was our first event of the year and has always been a successful event since its inception. Cindy Griggs has handled the series all these years and 2009 was her last year. She resigned because of the pressure of other duties which she has taken on. We are pleased that she will do the final lecture this year on Farmington River Indians. We held open house at the beginning of April for the opening of the regular season and also in June in connection with the statewide Open House Day. Sam Collins Day at the Museum was very successful this past year with over 300 visitors going through the museum. Dr. Larry Carlton demonstrated his old-fashioned toys that he makes and it drew a lot of enthusiasm, both on Sam Collins Day and at the statewide open house day in June. The Christmas Boutique and The Gallery of Trees took up most of November and December. This was the first time for the trees and plans are to repeat it next year. This was a fund-raising event for the Building Fund and response from the community was outstanding with 29 participants, including Collinsville Savings Bank with a tree decorated with 75 \$1 bills, and an elegant tree from the First National Bank of Litchfield. All the trees had a theme and all were enthusiastically admired and appreciated. A public reception was held on November 28 to view the trees with a drawing for the winners on December 12. This event generated \$2700.00 toward the Building Fund. Activity continued all through the year with fund raising for this fund beginning with a town-wide mailing which is expected to be repeated this year. The Building Committee continues to meet regularly on the proposed renovation plans. A professional grant-writer has been hired to work with the committee on getting grants which will be the main source of revenue for this very large project.

LIAISON WITH THE CANTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Canton Public Library, as one of its goals, has initiated cooperation with the Canton Historical Museum, particularly, in the area of the town's history. In line with this the museum joined in arranging the Farmington Canal Bus Tour on October 24, 2009. This was in response to the enthusiasm generated by the Library's exhibit of the Farmington Canal last spring. The day was a great success starting with a morning lecture by Carl Walter and Ruth Hummel, lunch and a bus tour starting at noon. The bus traveled the canal route from Farmington, through Avon, Simsbury and Granby to the State Line with stops along the way. Despite a rainy day, the full bus of canal enthusiasts enjoyed the trip which was narrated throughout by Carl Walter. One gentleman flew in from Michigan and was not disappointed. He thought it was great.

MUSEUM VISITS INCREASED IN 2009

The number of signed-in visitors to the museum increased substantially in 2009 over the previous year by about 500 to about 2,500. Open house days not only draw more people but are financially rewarding even though there is no admission charge, and people do sign in.

IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM LARRY CARLTON

On Thursday, February 4, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM we will begin a new series of guide and greeter training sessions. Our museum cannot remain open without these vital volunteers who man the museum during open hours. The guides give tours of the museum, but the greeters do not and act as receptionists while the tours are going on. Please consider responding favorably to this call for volunteers. Minimum duty requirement after training is only three hours a month. Call Larry Carlton at 860-651-6103 or email lawcarl@comcast.net for particulars. We recommend that all present greeters attend these sessions, and we also welcome any present guides wanting a "refresher."