



# Shelton History Center CHRONICLE



Summer 2011

Special points of interest:

Dining room interpretation shopping list

Father's Day car show winners

## Civil War Living History on September 10

On Saturday, September 10, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Shelton History Center will host Civil War interpreters ready to demonstrate their knowledge of the period during this 150th anniversary year of the start of the conflict. Joining Company F of the 14th Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Infantry will be President Abraham Lincoln, representatives from Civil War Monument, Inc., Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Wooster-Russell Camp #22, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Volunteer Infantry and Ladies Auxillary.

Irving Moy, president of Company F wrote the following recently to explain his interest in being a Living Historian:

*The May 31, 2011 edition of the Record-Journal carried a front page story entitled. "What's the use of taking social studies in high school? The article describes how the students in the two Wallingford high schools were taking fewer social studies classes than their peers at other districts. In the most recent set of data for 2009-10, 17.2% of Lyman Hall and 34.1% of Sheehan graduating seniors had taken four or more credits compared to the state average of 53.2% The superintendent of schools said that although more courses are now being offered, students aren't this appears to be part of a larger trend across the state*

*I gained an ap-sixth grade that has never tion and deep respect for known individuals who fabric of our country, I portant it is for a person history in order to come how we have come to be*



*and to appreciate the privileges we enjoy as Americans. Though our living history events and classroom presentations where our audience can see and touch the uniforms and equipment and be able to hear and ask questions about the contributions of both civilian and military and events that shaped that conflict, we hope to spark an interest where they will want to learn more about the Civil War and ultimately our Nation's history.*

*The article ends with a quote by John Tully, president of the Connecticut Council for Social Studies and a professor at CCSU, who believes that social studies teach students things they can't learn anywhere else, build critical thinking skills and teach how to analyze arguments, "It teaches the skills you need for the 21st century. You need these skills to be an effective citizen in whatever field you're going to be working in."*

*I thank all of you for the joy and commitment you have as living historians with Company F in conveying this to the public at our events.*

*Plan on meeting Irving who will represent Chinese soldier Joseph Pierce, along with Abe Lincoln and milliner Maeve Ryan at this year's Civil War Living History Day!*

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### In this issue:

Civil War Living History	1
Director, Curator comment	2
Dining Room Interpretation	5
Adventures in History	5



## From the Curator: Notes from the Underground

While getting ready for the renovation of the dining room in the Brownson House, curator Debbie Rossi and volunteer Stephanie Hancock made an exciting discovery, four boxes full of literally thousands of buttons. "I knew the buttons were in there," said Ms. Rossi, "but I haven't taken the time to go through the boxes and take a good look at the collection."

The buttons were originally collected by Dorothy (Blue) Wilson, wife of Wisner Wilson. The Wilsons were farmers who donated the land for the Shelton History Center in the early 1970's. Mrs. Wilson also contributed two of her extensive collections to the newly formed society; her salt cellars and her buttons.

In one of the boxes was a newspaper clipping of an article on Mrs. Wilson and her button collection from the Bridgeport Sunday Post which appeared on February 12, 1967. According to the article, "Mrs. Wilson likes to think of her buttons as symbols of friendship. She says many people have discovered her fondness for buttons, and often stop by the Wilson Farm stand on Ripton Road (where the Shelton History Center now is) to bring her a handful of buttons...The source of every button is listed on the back of each card in Mrs. Wilson's collection, bringing out thoughts of many friends as well as memories of trips and auctions when she reads about them."

The buttons have now been wrapped in acid free tissue by the curator and Ms. Hancock and boxed for storage until they can be cataloged properly. While re-housing the buttons, a rough inventory was done, and over 5,600 buttons sewn to cards, in bags, or loose are part of this collection.

"We cataloged and safely packed away Mrs. Wilson's salt cellars several years ago with the diligent work of volunteers, but the buttons are still waiting for the right person to come along and properly organize them," stated the curator. *"Any button collectors out there looking for an interesting project?"*



## From the Director: Housekeeping

—Tracey Tate

As we compile this newsletter, much of Shelton, including my own home, is still without power due to the effects of Hurricane Irene. Last week, staff and a few hearty volunteers emptied lower bookshelves, disassembled our signpost, squirreled away small things that had the potential of turning into unidentified flying objects, and reinforced what we could, realizing that it all might prove to be in vain against forces greater than mankind.

A day after the storm, with much trepidation and armed with a flashlight, I unlocked the door to the basement office here at the History Center and was ecstatic to find a dry and secure environment. The sump pump had done its job, uninterrupted by a power failure. I held my breath as I flipped the light switch. It worked, as if no wind had been blowing up the coast for the past 36 hours!

Nevertheless, an important lesson in disaster planning had clobbered me over the head: Lucky as we were, we were not entirely prepared. The one-of-a-kind artifacts and documents, letters, books, and diaries that we hold might have been lost under other circumstances. A checklist will be a priority, lists of sources from contractors to freezer space will be compiled, our dearest possessions will be tagged, volunteers will be enlisted and trained, and we will make friends with first responders.

Ironically and prophetically, an appointment with Donia Conn, a disaster planning specialist with Northeast Document Conservation Center had been made for September 1. We'll share what we learn as staff and board members will have questions to ask that are fresh in our minds and practical lessons to be learned to better prepare our unique collections and historic structures for the Next Time.



# BULLETIN

*A Page to Save*



## Can you donate any of the following for the dining room?\*

We are seeking the following items for use in the new interpretation of the dining room and would appreciate help locating some of these vintage items. Ideally, they will be from the early part of the 20th century. \* See article on page 5.

Chairs: 2 armchairs, 8 side chairs golden oak. Armchairs should have canted and curved back with lyre shaped splat. Arms curve into back with spacious handrest and a box frame seat with leather upholstery.

Sideboard: 4' high, deep drawers

China cabinet: golden oak with 5 shelves, straight-not curved-glass front and sides, decorative back appears to be shaped like half and ogee curve, 6"-8" feet, 64" high, narrow 12"-15" deep

Stand: candle stand w/doily

Lighting: decorative kerosene lamp on sideboard, kerosene fixture w/decorative shade

Fire screen: curved fine mesh screen

Window: Nottingham lace or fabric coordinated with wallpaper

Dresser scarf on sideboard

Silver tea set: tray, teapot, sugar bowl, cream pitcher, slop bowl

Samovar: silver also displayed with above tea set

Decorative objects: Silver pedestal cake basket

Porcelain coffee and tea service: coffeepot, teapot, sugar, cream, slop bowl, cups/saucers, plate

2 cake plates with shaped edges

Cut glass, covered ceramic bowls

Vase, tulip shaped glass

### Wish List

*These donations always help!*

*Drop them off in the office or in the tub by the office door.*

Galvanized **buckets and tubs**, any condition

Someone willing to help mark and inventory merchandise for the gift shop, and to coordinate schedules for opportunities to open for visitors and students. Once/month +/-

**Got wood?** I'm sure some of you are cleaning debris from the recent storm. We will gladly accept 2' cut logs for our quarter cord woodpile. You drop off, we'll stack.

Small peat pots for use in the school program

## SHELTON READING CIRCLE

Meet the second Tuesday of each month from 7-8:30pm at the Huntington Branch Library  
41 Church St  
Shelton CT, 06484

**September 13:**

***Someone Knows My***

***Name*** by Lawrence Hill

(203) 925-1803 for information.

It's free and open to the public. In general, books tend to have an historical theme. Consider joining us!



## September

10—10:00 —4:00  
Civil War Living History Day

13—7:00 Shelton Reading Circle

20—7:30 Board meeting

# Calendar of Events

## October

2—10:00-4:00 Shelton Day, downtown

11—7:00 Shelton Reading Circle

18—7:30 Board meeting

(School programs all month, 9:30-11:30  
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays)

Keep in mind that the office is staffed part time on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays (though we frequently are with visitors away from our desks) or by appointment. To contact us, please call (203) 925-1803 or email

Tracey Tate: shcdirector@gmail.com

Debbie Rossi: shccurator@gmail.com

Ellen Kolesk: shclibrarian@gmail.com

and please check [www.sheltonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sheltonhistoricalsociety.org) frequently.



## Join Our Gang!

### Membership in the Shelton Historical Society

Your financial support through membership in our organization is greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in becoming a member to support our missions and programs, please send completed form with a check payable to:

Shelton Historical Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 2155

Shelton CT 06484

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

New Membership: \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Membership: \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership: \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ (Number in family \_\_\_\_\_) Individual: \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to know about our Volunteer opportunities? \_\_\_\_\_  
Ask your company about their matching program and submit the information to us to match your  
Membership and other Contributions.

Shelton Historical Society is a 501© 3 Non-profit organization

# Turning Back the Dining Room

—Paula Anthony

After extensive planning, the much anticipated restoration/reinterpretation of the Brownson House, the centerpiece of the Shelton History Center, is finally underway. Through research, photographs and personal histories much has been uncovered about the house during the time it served as the residence of Harry and Gertrude Brownson. The overall goal of this project is to reinterpret the House to visually evoke the pre-WWI era through the presentation of objects and décor documented in the Brownson House Furnishing Plan prepared by consultant Marianne Curling.

The preservation of the Brownson House as a pre-WWI era farmhouse will fill a gap in interpretative history in our state, both in terms of the time period depicted and the status of people represented. In addition, the ability to present an accurate representation of this era will allow the Society to further enhance its educational programs, which it presents in conjunction with the curriculum of the Shelton School District, to students at various grade levels in the community.

Although the complete restoration of the Brownson House is multi year project, the first phase will focus on the restoration of the dining room. The Restoration Committee has been busy shopping for furnishings, wallpaper, lighting and decorative items, and expects this first phase of the restoration project to be completed by the end of the year.

The Restoration Committee would like to thank Iroquois Gas, the City of Shelton and the Brownson Family, for their generous support of this phase of the project, as well as interior designer Beth Santa, of Nest of Southport, for her expertise and assistance.

## Father's Day Vintage Vehicles Antique & Classic Car Show Winners



**Best in Show**  
Manny Dragone



**Best Antique**  
John Curtiss



**Best Truck**  
Rich Conklin



**Best Muscle Car**  
Alan Zelanski

**Joe Maffe's 1968 Chevy Corvair won Best Classic (photo unavailable)**

# Lucky 13 Attend Adventures in History

—Betsy Grant

It was 1911 during the week of August 8<sup>th</sup> for thirteen campers who attended Adventures in History. This year's theme involved how immigrants arrived in Shelton, Connecticut and began their new lives in America.

Campers started the journey to the United States through a simulated Ellis Island arrival. Each child was given a persona, passport, and a suitcase. After going through the necessary checkpoints, campers were involved in ethnic days from several cultures. Games, foods, and crafts reflected Italian, Irish and Polish cultures and the hard work needed to succeed in this new country. Our final day concluded immigrating to Shelton with the celebration of becoming a United States citizen for family members.

Adventures in History is coordinated by our Shelton History Center staff and relies on volunteers to help coordinate the theme. Thank you to all who supported this educational endeavor.

## Shelton Historical Society

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*To study the flow of common  
life is to discover the electricity  
of history.*

*- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich*

Please visit our website: [www.sheltonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sheltonhistoricalsociety.org)

# QUILTERS WANTED



Looking for volunteer quilters to participate in the piecing and quilting of a Civil War inspired quilt. This quilt will be the prize in a 2012 raffle giveaway during an event next September.

Each participant will be asked to complete one 12" block to be joined together with sashing and border.

Pass this along family, friends, to any known quilter! All interested please call Beth Urso at 203.984.4599.