

NEW LONDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2009

Horses to the West Indies

Excerpt from Joseph Aitavale's Dissertation "The Atlantic World Economy and Colonial Connecticut," University of Rochester, 2009

Recent scholarship has established that the center of gravity of the Atlantic economy was in the Caribbean. Several works over the past 50 years have elucidated the importance of the West Indian trade to Connecticut's maritime economy. Though underlining the growth in the export of Connecticut commodities to the West Indies, these works devoted only passing attention to the export of horses to the West Indies. Horses were the most valuable Connecticut export to the West Indies.

The early horse trade is sketchy. After 1680, however, Connecticut's West Indian trade underwent a much more rapid period of expansion. Between 1680 and 1700, Connecticut exported at least 752 horses, almost all of which went to Barbados. From auspicious beginnings in 1700, the Connecticut horse trade with the West Indies expanded rapidly until 1776. Between the years 1768 and 1772, Connecticut exported over 21,000 horses to the West Indies, or around 74% of total horses exported from the mainland to the West Indies, while Rhode Island was the second largest exporter with 11% of the total. Some of Rhode Island's horse exports, however, were raised in Connecticut.

It is ironic that for such a large trade, records are lacking on its particulars. Customs officers only recorded the term horse. Merchants placing advertisements in newspapers were just as vague, employing lines like "horses fit for shipping" or "fat shipping horses." Scattered merchant correspondence demonstrates that there was no particular gender or breed exported. In December, 1767, New London merchant Nathaniel Shaw ordered a supply of 18 horses for export to the West Indies. Ten of these were mill horses, six saddle horses, and two "very neat" horses.

Joe Aitavale spoke at our annual meeting last September and graciously agree to share some of that information in a series of articles.

It is clear that the horse trade was fraught with considerable difficulties. Exporting any goods on relatively long voyages often resulted in losses, due to spillage and leakages. The shipment of animals entailed even more problems for merchants. Given violent

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NLCHS Annual Meeting 2009

New London and the Beginning of the Naval Air Corps

Everyone "knows" the history of how the New London Navy Yard became a submarine base after it was established by acting Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt in 1916. But how many of you are aware of the beginning of the Naval Air Corps and its connection to New London at the same time period? It's time you learned—and the NLCHS Annual Meeting, Sunday 13 September, at the Fort Trumbull Conference Center, will give you the perfect opportunity. Marc Wortman, author of *The Millionaires' Unit*, will be sharing the almost unknown story of how the Yale University Flying Club became one of the first flight wings of the Navy. His presentation, from 5:30 to 6:30, will follow a cocktail reception with hors d'oeuvres beginning at 4:30 and the annual business meeting. Call today 860.443.1209, to purchase tickets; members \$20.

More details on page 6.

“Ye Towne’s Antientest Buriall Place” *Christophers, Part 1*

The name of Christophers was prominent in New London and Connecticut in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries. Since the prominent Christophers were invariably named either “Christopher” or “Richard,” it can become a little difficult to sort out one’s accomplishments from another’s. Fortunately for the viewer of gravestones, however, there are not as many stones for Christophers in the burying ground as there were men with that name—only four Christophers and one Richard. Their wives are also commemorated with gravestones. In this newsletter we will cover the first Christopher and Richard and their wives, and next time the other two Christophers and a few other assorted family members buried in the Ancient Burying Ground.

The three Christophers’s stones with the earliest dates begin with Mary, wife of Christopher Christophers, who died July 13, 1676, “in ye 55th year of her age.” According to the *History of New London*, she came with Christopher and their three children to New London in 1665. One of these, Richard, had been born in Devonshire in 1662. Caulkins lists Richard as the first child, but John Totten’s Christophers genealogy claims the other two, John and Mary, were older. Forty is a little old to begin having children, so perhaps Totten is correct, though he offers no real evidence.

Mary’s husband Christopher was a mariner, who along with his brother Jeffrey traded with Barbados. Christopher bought a house lot on the Town Street, and built a house which was “one of the six fortified houses of

1676.” These were fortified in response to the threat of King Philip’s War. The house was taken down in 1851 so a larger one could be built on the site, even though the house was still in good condition (Caulkins, p. 316).

After Mary’s death Christopher married Elizabeth (Brewster), the widow of Peter Bradley. One of her sons married the younger Mary Christophers, and Elizabeth’s daughter Lucretia married Richard Christophers shortly after her mother married his father. (There will be a quiz.) Elizabeth and Christopher had apparently been having a long standing affair, since a 1673 county court session says, “Widow Bradley presented for a second offence, in having a child born out of wedlock, the father of both being Christopher Christophers, a married man.” Because Elizabeth was a widow, and therefore unmarried, they would not have been liable for the severe penalties that accompanied adultery. The marital status of the man involved was irrelevant. Besides the usual £5 fine, she was also sentenced “to wear on her cap a paper wheron her offence is written, as a warning to others, or else to pay £15.” She paid the £15. (Caulkins, p. 251)

Christopher died July 23, 1687, aged 55, which shows him to have been ten years younger than his first wife. Elizabeth outlived him, dying in 1708.

Richard Christophers, the son of Christopher and Mary, was the most prominent of the many members of the family. He was a merchant trading with the West Indies, prosperous enough to donate part of the Communion service to

the First Congregational Church, which is marked, “Presented by the owners of the Sloop Adventure in 1699.” He held numerous public offices. At various, and frequently overlapping, times, he was on the committee to build the 1694 meetinghouse, town clerk of New London, commissary (military provisions officer) for New London County, justice of the peace, deputy to the General Assembly, judge of the county and superior courts, judge of probate, first townsman (selectman) of New London, and one of the governor’s assistants, or member of his council. (Totten, pp. 52-3) His first wife, Lucretia Bradley, died in January of 1691, aged 29. He then married Grace Turner, who survived him. (Caulkins, p. 317)

Richard died “Suddenly in a few minutes Soon after he went to bed well

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"The Times They are A'Changin..."

Bob Dylan was on my mind as I started thinking about how to address the subject of this letter. The first lines of the song, quoted above, are "Come gather 'round people wherever you roam..." Those lines are my starting point; the title is my topic.

The New London County Historical Society has members all over country and indeed some as far away as Australia. Some of these far-flung members are researchers, who use our extensive collections for books, articles, or family histories. Some are descendants of the founding fathers and mothers of New London. Some are tourists who have visited us and have become supporters. To all of you, wherever you roam, including those of you who live right here in southeastern Connecticut, we address some news about changing times.

All of us are aware of the world's changing patterns in communication. How many of us have received, or sent, a real "letter" of late? How many of us use cell phones to text and send pictures as well as to talk? How many of us use our computers or cell phones almost exclusively to stay in touch with friends and family? How many of us have, or are thinking about buying, a Kindle or other "reading device?" Lots of us probably. Even I, who resist a lot of this new technology, find myself a Facebook member, due to nieces and nephews who almost exclusively "talk" to each other and to their aunt via cyberspace. (I never would have believed it, but there you are.)

Whether we love this new reality or we hate it, it is more and more difficult to be indifferent to it. For one thing, electronic communication is less expensive and faster than that of paper, and for another it is more environmentally responsible; saving trees and all that. Both of these realities, the first being the more timely, have become an issue for the board of the New London County Historical Society.

We have always operated on a very lean budget, but as we prepare for the upcoming year(s) we find the economy today simply demands that we pare things even closer to the bone. For that reason we are looking very closely at our costs of communicating with our members and the public. Those of you with email will have noticed that we now distribute announcements electronically, as well as in this newsletter and the daily papers. We have also encouraged members with computers to visit our new and really interesting web site (even Joshua Hempstead has a "blog" on it!). And we recognize the need to continue to improve our information distribution for the times we live in.

There are those of us who love getting newsletters in the mail, but "*the times are a changin'.*" And we must change with them. Starting in 2010 we will be sending our newsletter out quarterly instead of six times a year. And, we are asking our members and other readers to consider receiving it only electronically – either via email, or by reading and/or downloading it from our web site. If you do not have the capability of doing this, don't worry, we will still mail you information and our newsletter; but if you can help us save some funds (that we can use for programs and collections and preservation) and save a tree (that too), we would appreciate your considering it. Our "*old road is rapidly changin'.*" If you can, please join us on the new communication road – it's no fun traveling alone.

New and Renewed Members

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~ Deborah Donovan

Mother and Daughter (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

about 11 of ye Clock att night” on June 9, 1726. Hempstead “was deceived about the time being missinformed” and missed the funeral, but says “the great Ship fired .26. great guns 1/2 Minute distance 6 Bearers.” (Hempstead, p. 169) His will mentions two sons and seven daughters. At least four other sons had predeceased him.

All of the Christophers stones are close together, somewhat to the left and part-way down the hill if you enter from Hempstead Street. There are two types. The earlier, 1600s, stones are the work of John Hartshorne (see March newsletter). However, Slater says that “none was placed [in the burying ground] before 1720.” (Slater, p. 221) He does not explain his reasoning, although earlier (p. 6) he notes that Hartshorne moved to Connecticut about 1722. Joshua Hempstead frequently used Hartshorne

pre-decorated stones for his gravestone lettering, but the lettering on these is done in both capital and small letters, while Hempstead’s is generally all capitals.

Hempstead did do two of the other Christophers stones. On August 26, 1726, he notes *I finisht a pr of gravestones for old Ms Eliz^x Christophers at ye charge of her 2 grandsons Capt Christophers & Richard. I Set them up. . .* Unfortunately, these are of brownstone, and the headstone has entirely lost its front, although the footstone is still readable. Hempstead also lettered the table stone (also brownstone) for Richard Christophers, Esq. For some reason this stone took him a long time to complete. He first notes *Cutting Letters in a Tomb-Stone for R. C Esqr.* in January of 1731. It is not until June of 1732 that he says *I finished Cutting Letters in the Tomb Stone of Richd Christophers Esqr.* Perhaps the family had trouble deciding the exact wording. The inscription is longer than usual, noting that he was “. . . an assistant in the Colony of Connecticut and Judge of the County Court and Court of Probates in New London. . .”

~Patricia M. Schaefer

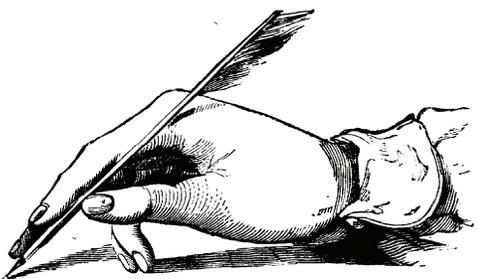
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Caulkins, Frances Manwaring, *The History of New London, Connecticut to 1860*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 2007.

Hempstead, Joshua, *The Diary of Joshua Hempstead, 1711-1758*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 1999.

Slater, James A., *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them*. Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1996. Revision of 1987 edition.

Totten, John R., *Christophers Genealogy: Jeffrey and Christopher Christophers of New London, Conn., and Their Descendants*. Reprinted by the New York Genealogical & Biographical Society from the successive issues of the *NYGB Record*, April, 1919, to July, 1921, inclusive.



New Website to Debut at Annual Meeting

The debut of a new and completely redesigned website for the New London County Historical Society will be featured at the NLCHS Annual Meeting. Live now, and still available at www.newlondonhistory.org, some of the new features include an ongoing “discussion” with Joshua Hempstead, online exhibits, and an extensive gallery of photographic images of New London. These will grow as we add images from our partners in this project.

NLCHS and Ledge Light Federal Credit Union Join Forces

Up until a month ago, one had to be an employee of Pfizer to be a member of the Ledge Light Federal Credit Union. Now, on the other hand, one needs to be either an employee of Pfizer or a member of the New London County Historical Society! This new benefit with excellent member loan rates is available to **YOU**. Check their website at www.ledgelightfcu.org for details

Horses to the West Indies (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

weather fluctuations and rogue waves, Connecticut merchants often experienced considerable losses when shipping livestock to the islands since most livestock were kept on deck during the voyage. On Christmas day, 1770, a terrible storm killed over 100 Connecticut horses on route to the West Indies. It would not be a stretch to suggest that over 500 horses died annually in transit between Connecticut and the West Indies during the 1700s.

Attempting to quantify the value of Connecticut's horse exports before 1768 is problematical, given the lack of data. Using a range of data on prices, I have estimated that Connecticut's total West Indian exports amounted to £568,933 (Sterling) and horse exports to £309,354 (Sterling), or 54% of the total for the years 1768-1772. This newer estimate suggests that horses were the single most valuable export from Connecticut and, more interestingly, horse exports were worth almost the entire New York export trade to the West Indies £341,873 (Sterling) and more than Rhode Island's entire export trade to the West Indies £253,724 (Sterling). It was not for nothing that one writer calculated, with probably some exaggeration, that between 1761 and 1771 the northern colonies earned a 50% profit on all horses exported to the Caribbean. In his editorial, the writer noted "How well worth pursuing is such a trade? And who would not kill all their sheep to enable them to raise horses?"

Why did West Indian plantations need Connecticut horses? First, horses powered sugar mills. The central machinery

of all sugar plantations was the mill, a complex device with three rollers that crushed sugar cane as it passed through. All freshly-cut cane had to be crushed in a mill to create a syrupy-like liquid, which once further processed became sugar. West Indian planters used three energy sources to power their sugar mills: animal, wind, and water. For animal powered mills, planters used oxen, horses, mules, or cattle, most of which were imported from the mainland colonies. It seems that most islands relied on livestock mills in the early years of sugar planting since wind and water mills were much more expensive. Over time, capital accumulation allowed planters to invest in wind and water mills to exact a higher proportion of juice from canes. A recent work has illustrated the transition on Barbados, which had 350 livestock mills in the 1650s and only 14 in 1773.

Though some islands employed wind and water to fuel their mills, not all islands could escape their dependence on livestock-powered mills. With generally flat lands, Barbados and Antigua had few barriers to the free flow of wind, allowing the widespread adoption of wind mills. Other islands either lacked available sources of water for water mills or had encumbrances (hills) preventing the use of wind mills, necessitating the use of animal-powered mills. The more mountainous Jamaica relied on animal power to an extent not seen on either Barbados or Antigua. In 1763, Jamaica had 566 sugar plantations, 382 or 67% of which relied on animal-powered mills and the rest on either wind or water power.

In 1766, St Croix, the largest Danish

plantation colony, had 101 sugar mills powered by horses compared to only 63 windmills. The sugar industry of the French West Indies relied overwhelmingly on animal power. Maps of Martinique in 1732 and 1762 show only two and five plantations using windmills respectively, while the rest relied on livestock, and only two of the 252 mills on Guadeloupe were powered by wind in 1739. Though it is impossible to quantify the total number, it is clear that horses continued to power West Indian mills down to the American Revolution and most of these horses were raised in Connecticut.

The second role for horses was for the application of dung to fields for fertilization. Dung was vital in restoring overworked sugar fields. All contemporary writers considered dung a vital resource for West Indian plantation exhausted soils. According to William Belgrove's treatise on sugar planting, "As to Dung, the Article upon which the success of a crop almost entirely depends, it is I think impossible to prescribe a particular Rule for making it... The want of a sufficient stock of cattle and Horses, to make the Dung within due Time is attended with many Inconveniences, and a manifest loss." Belgrove further noted "The litter from the stable, if a sufficient number of horses on an estate, will be always enough for the pens." Manure requirements forced planters to keep a large number of livestock on hand. Belgrove put livestock requirements on a 500 acre plantation at 150 cattle, 25 horses, and 50 sheep. Not only were livestock vital for the creation of dung, but they also applied it to the fields more efficiently than humans. Accord-

Horses (continued)

ing to Martin, "Ten mules or horses, and two light tumbrels with broad wheels and ten able negroes, may, by the common use of spades, shovels, and light mattocks, make more dung, than sixty able Negroes can do in the present methods."

Finally, horses were used for draft services around the plantation. Barbadian planter Henry Clay made sure his plantation had the proper number of horses "sufficient to carry down all my sugar to Bridge-Town." Using livestock for draught was a more efficient employment of plantation resources. According to Martin, "Some planters are so ingeniously thrifty as to carry their canes upon negroes heads; not only degrading human nature to the toil of brutes, but acting in that respect diametrically opposite to their own apparent interest, which cannot be served more effectually, than by having the labour of human hands where the labour of brutes can be substituted."

Annual Meeting (continued)

The Millionaires' Unit is the story of a gilded generation of young men from the zenith of privilege: a Rockefeller, a Morgan, the son of the head of the Union Pacific Railroad, several who counted friends and relatives among presidents and statesmen of the day. They had it all and, remarkably by modern standards, they were prepared to risk it all to fight a distant war in France. Driven by the belief that their membership in the American elite required certain sacrifice, schooled in heroism and the nature of leadership, they determined to be first into the conflict, arriving in France ahead of America's declaration that it would join the war.

At the heart of the group was the Yale flying club, six of whom are the heroes of this book. They would

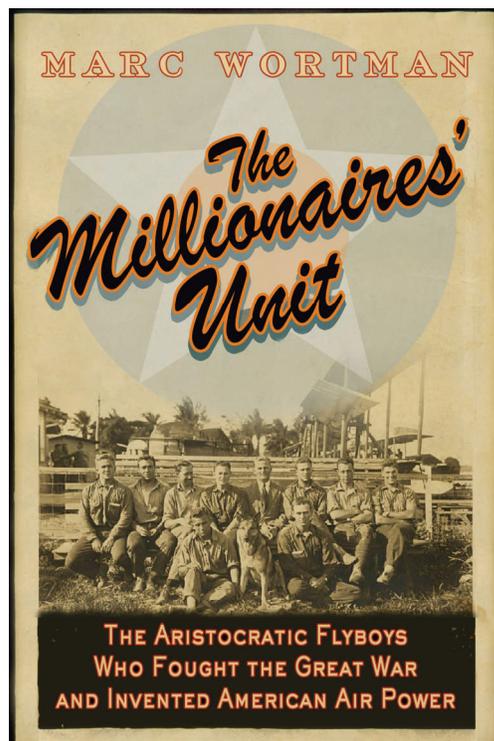
Almost all of the Caribbean demand for horses had to be met through imports. Given the limited availability of lands for raising horses, the harsh climate, and terrible working conditions, horses died off quickly in the Caribbean. The only island that made a determined effort to internally raise a supply of horses was Jamaica. Despite the growth in the number of pens on the island from 73 in 1684 to 300 on the eve of the American Revolution, Jamaican pens never supplied all of the livestock needs of the island. In the period 1762-1768 for which only partial records survive, Connecticut exported a total of 1,583 horses, 814 pigs, 619 cows, 1,127 sheep, and 99 oxen to Jamaica. Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774) bemoaned Jamaica's reliance on outsiders for livestock, assigning the cause to the lack of good internal roads on the island and the insufficient number of "industrious inhabitants" willing to set up breeding farms. If the one

share rivalries over girlfriends, jealousies over membership in Skull and Bones, and fierce ambition to be the most daring young man over the battlefields of France, where the casualties among flyers were chillingly high.

Marc Wortman is an award-winning freelance writer whose work has appeared in numerous national magazines. He lives in New Haven. His new book, *The Bonfire*, on the Civil War burning of Atlanta has just been released.

island with such large farms devoted specifically to raising draft animals for plantations could not achieve sufficiency, it is unlikely that any other island in the plantation Caribbean was able to either.

The West Indies were the center of the Atlantic economy. Horses were vital to the sugar industry. Connecticut was the dominant supplier of horses to the islands. Scholars have overlooked Connecticut's contribution to the Atlantic economy. It is clear this colony constituted a vital element in the chains of Atlantic commerce.



"*The Millionaires' Unit* is a fascinating tale of heroism and adventure that builds to a soaring, page-turning climax."
-- Nathaniel Philbrick, author of *In the Heart of the Sea* and *Mayflower*

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| <i>The History of the Amistad Captives.</i> (NLCHS) A reproduction of a pamphlet by JW Barber, 1840. | \$10 |
| <i>Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900</i> by Barbara Brown and Dr. James Rose (NLCHS) This republished book is a milestone in genealogical research of African Americans and Native Americans in New London County. | \$35 |
| <i>The Diary of Joshua Hempstead 1711-1758.</i> (NLCHS) Revised 1999. Personal journal serves as fascinating and invaluable account of Connecticut life in early 18 th century. | \$75 |
| <i>For Oil and Buggy Whips: Whaling Captains of New London County, Connecticut</i> by Barnard Colby Biographical sketches of local whaling captains document New London's role in this industry. | \$18 |
| <i>Greetings from New London</i> (NLCHS) Collection of early 20 th -century postcards from our archives. | \$10 |
| <i>Life on a Whaler</i> by Nathaniel W. Taylor (NLCHS) Story of Taylor's two-year Antarctic voyage as physician aboard New London's <i>Julius Caesar</i> (1851-53). | \$25 |
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| <i>Tapestry: A Living History of the Black Family in Southern Connecticut</i> by Dr. J.M. Rose and B.W. Brown An introduction to the role of African Americans in early New England history. Contains genealogies. (NLCHS) | \$5 |
| <i>The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut</i> by James A. Slater. Fully illustrated with photographs, this book provides a description of and maps the burial grounds of eastern Connecticut. | \$40 |
| <i>Common to this Country: Botanical Discoveries of Lewis & Clark</i> by Susan Munger. Illustrated volume exploring plants discovered by Lewis and Clark on their westward expedition. | \$23 |
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| <i>In the Footsteps of George Washington</i> by William G. Clotworthy. A guidebook to Washington sites along the East Coast, including the Shaw Mansion. | \$25 |
| <i>Murder of Mayhem? – Benedict Arnold's New London, Connecticut Raid, 1781</i> by Dr. Walter L. Powell. Excellent research in a small readable format. | \$10 |
| <i>History of New London, Connecticut: from the first survey of the coast in 1612 to 1860</i> by Frances Caulkins With a new introduction and a revised index 2007 (NLCHS). | \$60 |
| <i>Peter Strickland: New London Shipmaster, Boston Merchant, First Consul to Senegal</i> by Stephen Grant A New London connection to maritime trade with Africa at the end of the 19 th century. | \$18 |
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| <i>History of Norwich, Connecticut: from its possession by the Indians to the year 1866</i> by Frances Caulkins With a new introduction and a new index 2009 (NLCHS). | \$60 |

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