

NEW LONDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2010

Annual Meeting to Debut our NEW Classroom Plus: Jane Perkins Revealed!

The 140th annual meeting of the New London County Historical Society will be held at the Shaw Mansion Sunday 12 September beginning with an hors d'oeuvres and wine reception at 4 pm followed by the business meeting at 5:15.

Following the business meeting Jennifer Emerson and Penny Havard will share with members the process and the research that went into creating the “persona” of Miss Jane Perkins.

Let's say that “someone” has an idea to create a new first-person interpretive program for a unique historic site, that will “bring to life” an actual individual who once lived at the historic site. Now let's say a local foundation provides some funding to make this happen. Now what do you do? How do you make the idea a reality? How do you construct a life from the past? How do you make your interpretation of that individual believable? How do you create the clothes that will evoke the past, and position this individual in a certain time and place with a particular social standing and point of view? How do you create a setting where this person from

the past would have an opportunity to be in conversation with people from the present? Come find out.

The “Tea with Miss Perkins” program was recently featured at the Annual Conference of the Connecticut League of History Organizations. With the theme, “Bring on the Drama: Theater and Costumed Interpretation at Historic Sites,” more than 100 history practitioners were interested in finding out more.

Jennifer and Penny created two presentations for the conference that outlined the creation of Miss Perkins and the creation of the costuming for the production. For our annual meeting they will share their presentations with our members.

Starting from, “What do we really know about Jane Perkins?” Jennifer put in hours of research time — part detective, part playwright, part actor, Jennifer's inspiration will be revealed.

Penny's task was not so much mystery, but was daunting nonetheless; with her considerable knowledge of fashion from the period, how did she take what Jennifer found out, translate that information and create a dress and accessories that would help to tell the story? And a second dress for the maid ... there's a lot to this story.

Tickets \$20 for members. Call **today** to make reservations: **860.443.1209**.



“Ye Towne’s Antientest Buriall Place” *The Adams Family, Part 1*

There are several members of the family of the Rev. Mr. Eliphalet Adams who are either buried in the Antientest Burial Ground or have markers there. Their stones are grouped together next to the mound of the Winthrop tomb, to the left toward the rear of the burial ground if you enter from Hempstead Street. Mr. Adams has a “table,” or horizontal stone, a type reserved for important members of the community. In this newsletter we’ll cover the Rev. Mr. Adams, his wife and his in-laws, the Pygans. The next newsletter will explore the lives of the Adams children and grandchildren.

Eliphalet Adams was born March 26, 1677, in Dedham, Massachusetts, son of the Rev. William Adams and his first wife, Mary. She died two years later, and William Adams remarried, then died when Eliphalet was eight. His widow married James Fitch of Norwich, so it is probable that the young Eliphalet spent some time there. (The Fitches, between his, hers, and theirs, had close to 20 children.) Adams graduated from Harvard in 1694, at the age of 17. Two years later he was called to the Hartford church, but did not accept. Adams preached as an assistant at the Brattle Street Church in Boston for a couple of years, and used his knowledge of Indian languages to preach to different tribes. Later in his ministry he lectured at Mohegan and opened schools for the Niantics and Pequots.

In 1708 a committee of two deacons from the Congregational Church in New London went to Boston to get advice from ministers there on a candi-

date for the vacant ministry at New London. They were instructed “to mention to them particularly the Reverend Mr. Adams, who now preaches in Boston. . .” Adams arrived in late August, and was invited to “settle” in the ministry on September 8th. This was a very speedy call for that time, indicating that Adams was known to many in the congregation, or noted for his preaching, or both. He was ordained (Congregational ministers are not ordained until they have accepted a call to a church) in February of 1709, and began a ministry that lasted until his death in October of 1753.

This was a time of great growth in Connecticut, and many changes in the practice of religion. Adams was the last minister hired by the town. Baptist and Church of England congregations were established, leading to the incorporation of religious societies which then supported their own ministers. The Great Awakening in the 1740s brought dissension as the followers of the more emotional “New Light” preachers accused the settled ministers of insincerity and “dead” preaching. Adams soldiered on through it all, continuing to preach until about a month before his death.

In December of 1709 Adams married Lydia Pygan, the only daughter of Alexander and Lydia Pygan of New London. There is no stone for Alexander in the burial ground, but we know that he died in 1701. He was one of the early settlers of New London, and in 1667 married Rebecca Redfield (whose mother complained to the courts of him “for enticing away her daughter’s affections contrary to the laws of this corporation”).

They had two daughters before she died in 1678. Alexander lived in Saybrook for a while after that, and married Lydia, the widow of Samuel Boyes, in 1684. They returned to New London with their daughter, and lived the rest of their lives there.

Alexander was a merchant, and well respected in town. He was one of the committee to deal with the workmen building the 1694 meetinghouse, and was part owner of at least three vessels. One of these, built in 1681, gives a hint that perhaps Alexander had a wife in between the two on record. The vessel’s name was the *Alexander and Martha*. Alexander was quite well off. His estate was valued at over £1900, £552 of which was debt owed to him. The inventory of his estate

(Continued on page 4)

New London County Historical Society Incorporated 1870

Officers

Deborah Donovan, President
Nancy Steenburg, Vice President
Denis O’Brien, Treasurer
Joe Selinger, Secretary

Board of Directors

2010
Marilyn Davis, Dean Macris
2011
Kevin Doyle, William Peterson
2012
Barun Basu, Richard Sigal

Staff

Edward Baker, Executive Director
Tricia Royston, Librarian

11 Blinman Street
New London, Connecticut 06320

860.443.1209
www.newlondonhistory.org
info@newlondonhistory.org

ISSN 1940-2074

Another Year

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Another year in the life of the New London County Historical Society will be ending at the end of August! This seems almost impossible to believe. It has, for the most part, been a good year indeed for our Society, although there have been a few disappointments.

Good news comes first. For the first year ever, we have met (and slightly exceeded) our Annual Fund goals. Since our income from the NLCHS endowment has taken a downturn, due to the economic woes of the world, it is certainly gratifying that our faithful members, our board, and our other supporters have stepped up with financial assistance. The distress of the economy does not just affect the NLCHS of course, it affects all of you as well, and so your continuing support could not be more welcome and appreciated. We especially thank both our board members, and all of our supporters who may be on a fixed income but who still have chipped in to keep our doors open, and our collections safe and interpreted.

On April 30 we cut the ribbon officially opening our renovated classroom and our terrific and terrifically-needed handicapped accessible bathroom! This project, overseen from beginning to end by Edward Baker, was long and involved. The funding for it was a result of hard work in grant writing by Edward culminating in gifts from the Palmer Fund, the Community Foundation and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, in addition to a matching grant from the State of CT Commission on Culture and Tourism. Our new facility makes the Shaw Mansion a much more useful venue for meetings, educational activities, and soon, we hope social functions. Good work to all who were involved!

The disappointments? One relates to our renovation, as it happens. Due to the State's financial woes, our grant from them did not include money to complete the renovation of the kitchen area of the mansion. The result is a bare room with a refrigerator and microwave and NO sink! Even the maids of long ago, as seen in this picture had a sink (or two)! We are looking for assistance to finish this part of the project in the upcoming year. Without a truly functioning kitchen, we will be unable to solicit users of the Mansion for the above mentioned social functions – not to mention poor “Miss and Mrs. Perkins” are hard pressed to make refreshments for those visitors who enjoy their invitations to Tea at the Mansion.

Another disappointment is that we were unable to release any new publications this year. In the works, or at least on the list, are volumes on State Pier, The Treasures of the Shaw Mansion, the Voyage of the Bark Laurens, and several others. We will be working hard in FY 2011 to get at least one of these documents into print for the edification of our audience and to fulfill our mission of making our collections accessible. If you think you may have time and talent to contribute to our publishing committee, please contact Edward or me to discuss our projects.

We hope to see you all at our Annual Meeting at the Shaw Mansion on September 12, to enjoy an engaging talk by Jennifer Emerson and Penny Havard, to partake of refreshments and to mingle and chat with your fellow lovers and supporters of New London County History. Thank you again for your support and engagement with the NLCHS this past year and always.



~ Deborah Donovan

The Adams Family Part 1 (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

included a salt house on the home lot, a warehouse wharf, and considerable other land. His will left his wife a life tenancy and use of his new dwelling house, barn, and lot. This property would go to Lydia on the death of her mother. The rest of his estate was divided among his three daughters, Sarah Hallam, Jane Green, and Lydia Pygan (later Adams). His stepson, Samuel Boyes, received 40s to purchase gloves and a ring.

Lydia Pygan (the elder) did not remarry, and outlived her husband by more than 30 years, dying July 22, 1734, “aged 90 years & 4 mo.” as her gravestone says. Joshua Hempstead said she was *the oldest woman in Town* when she died. He was one of her pallbearers. Unfortunately, we know almost nothing else about her. She made her will in March of 1727, apparently just as a precaution because she was old. Once again, Samuel Boyes was left 40s, to be paid three years after her decease, this time with the specification that it was his whole part of her estate. Everything else, from lands to “Effects & things of every Sort and kind whatsoever” was left to Lydia. The care with which the elder Lydia specifies this gives the impression that Samuel Boyes might have contested the will if he thought he could win. The will was recorded May 16, 1735.

We know a little bit more about Lydia Adams from Hempstead’s diary and because her portrait and Eliphalet’s are at the Shaw Mansion. Hempstead says that *Ms Adams was took into the Church* at a lecture on February 12, 1719. Mr. and Mrs. Adams were part of a group that

went to Fisher’s Island with the Winthrops (who owned the island) for a couple of days in June of 1719. They *Rode a[bout] West End to See ye Island & Deer &c.* Hempstead notes Mrs. Adams once receiving money for Mr. Adams. On August 30, 1749, Mr. and Mrs. Adams were part of a *great Entertainment* at Mr. Winthrop’s house, a dinner which was attended by Winthrop’s sisters, their husbands, and several of the town’s leading citizens, including Hempstead. Five days later, on September 4th, Lydia Adams was *taken with an apopletick fitt at Samll Edgcombe about 3 Oclock being out on a visit & as well or better in helth than She hath bin of Late. She had Just finisht drinking 3 or 4 dishes of Tea. . .* She died September 6th, “aged 64 years & 8 mo.” Her funeral was held on the 7th. *at 4 Oclock I Set out to go to Ms Adams funeral. both bells Tolling [Congregational and Church of England] & Continued untill the funeral was over. I was one of the Barers. a Great number of people.* Mr. Adams preached a funeral sermon using as the text Ezekiel 24:16, which reads in part, “. . . behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.”

Eliphalet Adams continued his ministry in New London. A few months later his only daughter, Mary Bulkley, died, and in September of 1753 his youngest son, Thomas, died at around age 37. Adams married Elizabeth Wass of Boston in 1751. She survived him. Eliphalet Adams died October 4, 1753, aged 76. Hempstead, who along with ministers and a deacon was one of the pallbearers, described him as *a Gentleman of a Quiet & peaceable Disposition & well Read in History as well as Divinity.*

~Patricia M. Schaefer

References:

Blake, S. LeRoy, *The Later History of the First Church of Christ, New London*. New London: Press of The Day Publishing Co., 1900.

Caulkins, Frances Manwaring, *The History of New London, Connecticut to 1860*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 2007. (Especially quotation in third paragraph, and information on Alexander Pygan.)

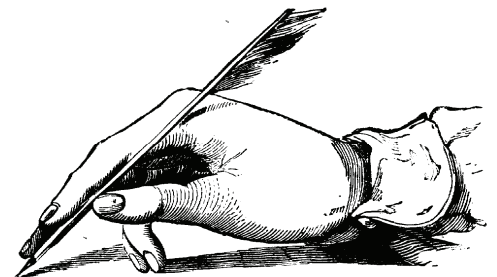
Hempstead, Joshua, *The Diary of Joshua Hempstead, 1711-1758*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 1999.

Prentis, Edward, *Ye Antient Buriall Place of New London, Conn.* New London: Press of the Day Publishing Co., 1899. (Quotations of gravestone markings.)

Information about inventories and wills from the probate records in the probate office of New London City Hall.

For more information on Rev. Mr. Adams and religion in general in colonial New London, see:

Schaefer, Patricia M., *A Useful Friend: A Companion to the Joshua Hempstead Diary 1711-1758*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 2008.



The Mitchell Negatives

A battered cardboard box resting on the floor of the vault had been the only storage for over 100 glass-plate negatives, donated to the New London County Historical Society in 1994 by the Mitchell family. Digging through the glass plates revealed striking images of members of the Mitchell family at play: picnicking in grassy fields, riding horses through mountains and valleys, and taking boats for an afternoon on the water. Some of the glass-plates contained images of Mitchell Hall, today the Administration building on the campus of Mitchell College in New London. That these negatives deserved to be digitized, properly stored, and shared was readily apparent; the best method to do so was not.

Any attempts I made to digitize the negatives using a flatbed scanner produced rectangles of undecipherable blackness, not an accurate representation of the beautiful photography by any means. Improvising, I found that

holding the negatives up to overhead lighting and using a digital camera to capture the image worked significantly better than scanning. With a little help from Photoshop, inverting the color of the images transformed them from ghostly negatives to stunning blue-scale photographs.

The unexpected success of such an unorthodox process was encouraging, and I repeated it with the 20 film negatives that were donated along with the glass-plate negatives. A little retouching magic allowed me to digitally repair some of the damage and decay sustained by the negatives over the years, although not all of it. The end result is a digital version of what we would have were we able to develop the negatives, stunning and clear photographs offering glimpses into the life of the Mitchell family. With acid-free archival folders and storage boxes in hand, I set about numbering the negatives and storing them upright, as is recommended for glass-plate negatives. With

that, the Mitchell negatives had been documented and stored properly, and only one aspect of the project remained.

The negatives came into the Historical Society's collection from the Mitchell family without any positive identification of the people and places they contained, leaving me to speculate about whose lives were captured on these slides of glass. Some genealogical digging led me to Alfred Mitchell. When his father, the Reverend Alfred Mitchell, passed away in December of 1831, his mother, Lucretia M. Woodbridge Mitchell, accepted her uncle Elias Perkins's offer to occupy his home in New London (the Shaw Mansion), where Alfred was born in April of 1832. In 1871 Alfred married Annie Olivia Tiffany (sister to Louis Comfort Tiffany), and the couple had two daughters, Alfreda Mitchell and Charly Tiffany Mitchell. Several photographs of two young girls, close in age and often dressed alike in matching hats or dresses are part of the collection; could they be of Alfreda and Charly? Some of the more tropical backdrops seen in some of the images, complete with palm trees in some cases, may have been taken at the family's estate "The Folly" at Port Antonio, Jamaica.

A selection of the Mitchell negatives, as they've been edited, have been uploaded to the "Picturing New London" section of the Historical Society's website and are available there for viewing.

~Laura Boynton



Second Sunday Programs Scheduled For September through December

September 12 — NLCHS Annual Meeting

Shaw Mansion, beginning at **4 pm** with wine and hors d'oeuvre reception.

Speakers — Jennifer Emerson and Penny Havard — *Jane Perkins Revealed*

\$20 for members, \$25 non-members — please call to make reservations

October 10 — Anthony Brandt, Author of, *The Man Who Ate His Boots*

Shaw Mansion, presentation beginning at **3 pm** — followed by reception

Free for members, \$5 non-members

November 14 — John Busch, Author of, *Steam Coffin: Captain Moses Rogers and The Steamship Savannah Break the Barrier*

Shaw Mansion, presentation beginning at **3 pm** — followed by reception

Free for members, \$5 non-members

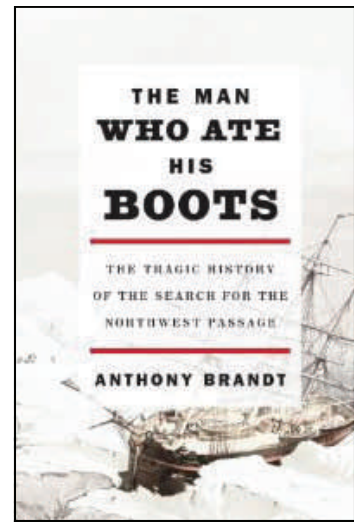
December 2-12 — Flock Theatre Production of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*

Tuesdays-Thursdays \$25 for adults, \$20 for students and seniors;

Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays: \$35 for adults, \$30 for students and seniors

Limited seating — NLCHS members get advance notice via email news

Check www.newlondonhistory.org for further details in November



New and Renewed Members

Contributing

Anne Farrow	Higginum
Howard and Alicia Wayland	Lebanon
Candy and Frank McNally	North Kingston, RI
Michael Kane	Groton
Denis O'Brien	Mystic
F.M. and J. Durrschmidt	Mystic
Samuel and Elise Childs	Niantic

Friend

Mary E. Baker	New London
Abigail Van Slyck & Mitchell Favreau	Pawcatuck
Shelley and William White	Stonington
Mrs. Patricia P. Sikes	Pensacola, FL
Fawn Walker and Ric Ricci	Quaker Hill

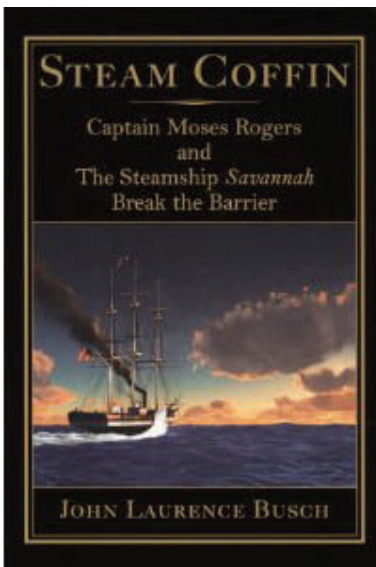
Family & Individual

Scott Andrew Bartley	W. Roxbury, MA
Sara Munro	New London
Jeff Dickens	New London
Edmund and Ann Leete	Lebanon
Judith G. Dupont	Mystic
Mr. and Mrs. James Diaz-Saavedra	New London
Jeana Shappee	Jackson, MI
Jane B. Schoonover	Groton
Lawrence H. Hall	Mystic
Paul Devendittis	New London
Christian McBurney	Kensington, MD
Penny Parsekian	New London
Shawn Hathaway	Waterford
William E. Davidson	Potsdam, NY
Constance Crump	Lafayette, CO
John and Karen Madlon	New London
Evan Andriopoulos	Jessheim, Norway
Kathleen B. Wick	New London
Stephen J. McCarthy	Lincoln, MA
Kathleen and Allan Jacques	Waterford
Louise Bea	San Francisco, CA
Mrs. Helen C. McGuire	New London
Jennifer G. Hillhouse	Old Lyme
Mathew Reardon	Tolland
Crystal Cooper	Gladstone, OR
David L. McCue	N. Stonington
Elizabeth R. Sims	Atlanta, GA
Eugene and Carole Gray	East Lansing, MI

Thank You and Welcome to New Business Members

Nathan Liverant and Son Antiques	Colchester
Tobin Carberry O'Malley Riley & Selinger	New London

Nancy Stone	Atlantic Beach, FL
Dorothy A. Downing	Virginia Beach, VA
Richard Sigal	New York, NY
David Cruthers	Groton
Elizabeth Whitley	Old Lyme
James Wyman	Ashford
Peter and Dawn Glankoff	Ashaway, RI
Daniel Woodhead III	San Francisco, CA
Marian Dickson	Jacksonville, FL
Kevin Phillips	Litchfield
Andrew Perkins	Royal City, WA
Thomas F. Howard	East Granby
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Shultz	Lisbon
Lisa Claire Perrin	New London
Nancy Winship	Darien
Mr. and Mrs. Russell De Marco	New London
Ted Phillips	Niantic
Robert J. Doyle	Groton
Dr. William Willoughby	Chicago
Olivia C. Patch	Tolland
Michael Matias	Groton
Janice Bucko	New London
Paul Baran	Tolland
Wayne G. Tillinghast	Groton
Allyn and Linda Self	Shawnee, KS
Chris Hurtgen	Madison
Ryan Coats	Salem
Pete Reynolds	Uncasville
Lee Fontanella	New London



Books available from the New London County Historical Society

<i>The Amistad Incident as Reported in the New London Gazette & General Advertiser.</i> (NLCHS)	\$5
<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
<i>A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture.</i> (NLCHS) Autobiography of former slave Venture Smith, originally published in 1798. NLCHS facsimile of 1897 edition.	\$5
<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
<i>The Day Paper</i> by Gregory N. Stone. History of New London's award-winning daily newspaper.	\$30
<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
<i>Leviathan The History of Whaling in America</i> by Eric Jay Dolin A good one-volume history of an important local maritime enterprise.	\$28
<i>A USEFUL FRIEND—A Companion to the Joshua Hempstead Diary 1711-1758</i> by Patricia Schaefer (NLCHS) A truly useful resource guide, if you have the Diary, you should have this book; includes a subject index to the Diary.	\$25
<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

These *Images of America* titles available from NLCHS

<i>New London</i>	\$20
<i>New London Firefighting</i>	\$20
<i>Reinventing New London</i>	\$20
<i>Naval Submarine Base New London</i>	\$20
<i>Lighthouses and Life Saving along the Connecticut and Rhode Island Coast</i>	\$20
<i>Groton</i>	\$20
<i>Groton Revisited</i>	\$20
<i>Mystic</i>	\$20

Members Receive a 10% Discount.

If ordering by mail, please add \$5 shipping and handling for the first four books
and \$1 for each additional book.

