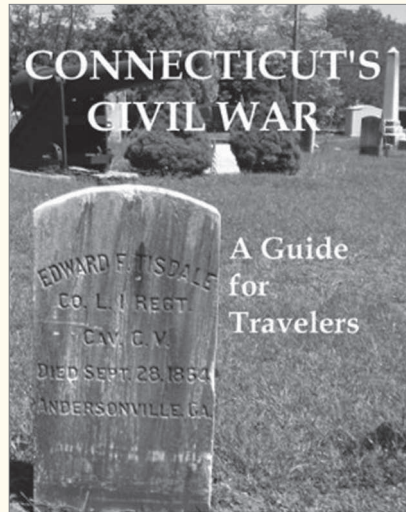


The Provision State and the Civil War

Tuesday, March 30 at 7:00 pm
in the Hubbard Room

Middletown first earned the nickname “The Provision State” during the Revolutionary War because it was a leading supplier of food and clothing to the Continental Army, particularly during the terrible winter of 1777-1778 at Valley Forge, when Connecticut beef saved lives. In addition, lead from a mine in Middletown was fashioned into the bullets used by George Washington’s men.

Connecticut’s role in provisioning the Union Army during the Civil War was no less important. Sharon Smith, author of *Connecticut’s Civil War: A Guide for Travelers*, will talk about how Connecticut factories produced war goods that covered the soldier from the top of his head (uniform caps from Danbury) to the bottom of his feet (shoes from Hartford), and to his horse’s feet (iron from Salisbury).



Sharon B. Smith

Middletown and other Connecticut towns armed the soldiers, producing hundreds of thousands of rifled muskets and carbines. Factories produced many of the artillery pieces and ordnance used in the war. As part of her presentation, Smith will exhibit examples of Connecticut’s wartime industrial output.

Smith spent the early part of her career as a broadcast journalist in Texas and New York before working at WTNH-TV in New Haven. She also worked at ESPN, anchoring “Sportscenter.” After leaving television, she has published six books, including *Connecticut’s Civil War*.

Her talk, which is free and open to the public, will be held on Tuesday, March 30 at 7:00 pm in the Hubbard Room of the Russell Library, 123 Broad Street, Middletown. She will have copies of her book to sell and autograph. The Hubbard Room is handicapped accessible. 🇺🇸

IT HAPPENED IN CONNECTICUT—AGAIN!

Some things never change about a Connecticut winter. A snowstorm forced the postponement of Diana Ross McCain’s talk about her book, *It Happened In Connecticut*. Although the storm did not rival the Blizzard of 1888, it was enough to keep modern day transportation at home, unlike the oxen pictured on the cover of McCain’s book. The program has been rescheduled for Tuesday, April 13, at 7:00 pm in the Hubbard Room of Russell Library, 123 Broad Street, Middletown.



What’s Inside:

Society News and Events

Calendar of Events

SOCIETY NEWS

President's Message

Presidential farewells have a history dating back to George Washington's message to the American people in 1797, in which he cautioned us to avoid foreign entanglements and offered other sage advice which we as a nation have almost uniformly ignored for two centuries. Perhaps the shortest farewell was delivered by Franklin Roosevelt, who said "I have a terrific headache," before collapsing with a cerebral hemorrhage that proved fatal.

I can't dream of matching the wisdom and eloquence of Washington, but I do hope to live longer than FDR after his final words. I would also like to take this opportunity to share some lessons I've learned during four years of serving as your president.

1. The Middlesex County Historical Society has a very dedicated core group of volunteers who love history and work very hard to maintain the Mansfield House and execute the Society's mission.
2. We have a terrific Director for whom we should all be thankful. Debby Shapiro has a love of history and a sense of pride and ownership in our organization that is invaluable to the Society.
3. Interest in local history will never be as popular with the general public as many of us think it should be.



No matter how hard we work and how interesting we think our programs are, we will never draw hundreds or thousands of people to a lecture on local history. We must set our sights on realistic goals and stay true to our mission. If we try to be all things to all people we will veer off course and appeal to no one.

4. History is fun and being an MCHS volunteer should also be fun. No one should feel overwhelmed or stressed while serving on our board or on a committee. We need to make certain we have enough volunteers so we don't overwork anyone.
5. The biggest challenge for my successor will be conceiving and implementing a process that will put the Society on sound financial footing and establishing an ongoing fund raising program. This task must be accomplished within the realistic framework I noted in my third observation.

I enjoyed the opportunity to lead the board for two terms and look forward to continuing to serve as a director. I am leaving you in good hands and look forward to seeing you at our events in the coming months.

Bill Ryczek, President

From the Executive Director

Dear Members,

It is with great excitement that I announce that the Maximilian E. & Marion O. Hoffman Foundation, Inc. has awarded the Society a grant of \$10,000.00 toward the Capital Campaign. It is extremely gratifying to know that the Foundation recognizes the importance of preserving local history through the collection of artifacts, documents, and photographs illustrative of that history and has faith in our Society's ability to properly care for our collection.

As I write, heat has returned to the Mansfield House. Although the air conditioning portion of the new system cannot be tested until the spring, the project is essentially completed. Volunteers will be cleaning the house from top to bottom, and artifacts moved for safekeeping during the construction will be reshelved. The Museum Committee, headed by Buck Zaidel, is working on a plan to store the collection in a more systematic way. Joe Samolis, our head of Buildings and Grounds, and his committee are working

on a maintenance schedule for the house and looking at ways to maximize our storage space. A house never had a better 200th birthday gift than this care and attention.

The Society was honored when Mayor Sebastian Giuliano asked me to represent the City of Middletown at the kickoff of the 375th Anniversary of the founding of the State of Connecticut at the Connecticut State Library on February 17. A series of events are planned throughout the year, so watch for notices of them in the news.

I would like to thank all the members of the Board of Directors for their many hours of service to the Society. Bill Ryczek has shown his belief in the mission of the Society by devoting hundreds of hours over the last several years in leading the Society through a time of transition. All the members join me in thanking him for a job well done.

Debby Shapiro, Executive Director

A Future for Our Past



Donors

General Joseph K. F. Mansfield Society—\$2500 or more

Lee and Welles Guilmartin
Maximilian E. & Marion O. Hoffman Foundation, Inc.
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Samuel Mather Society—\$1000-2499

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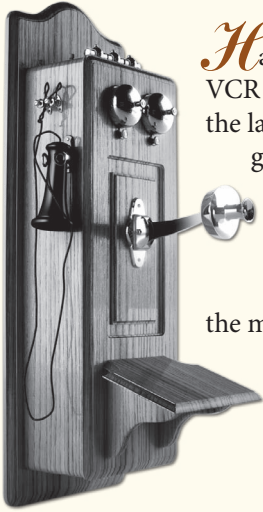
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*In honor of Deborah Shapiro's Special Birthday

MODERN TIMES?



*H*ave you ever asked your child how to stop the VCR from blinking 12:00 all the time...or how to use the latest technology? Don't feel bad, that has been going on longer than you think.

In 1906, Paul Smith wrote to his mother 3 pages of instructions on how to use the telephone.

Not only did he describe to her how to start the machine, but Paul went so far as to write the dialogue between the operator and his mother.

Paul, a recent Trinity College graduate, did not have much money so he wanted her to pay for the call, of course.

He helpfully advised, "you will drop in a 25 cent piece, 2 dimes and a nickel or one dime and three nickels or 5 nickels which you put in the slots marked..." and provided a sketch of the slots appropriately named. In the end, he added, "It really isn't anything—don't be afraid..."

The technology might have changed, but parents still ask their kids how to work the machine and kids still need the parents to pay for things. 🍀

Excerpt from the Smith Family Collection, letter from Paul Smith to Ellen Smith, December 8, 1906, submitted by Juliane Silver

Membership Renewal Time

*Y*our generous contributions and membership in the Middlesex County Historical Society help provide funding for the preservation of Middlesex County's, and particularly Middletown's, historical treasures as well as for your subscription to the *Historical Observer*. Membership renewals will soon be sent by Membership Chairman and Past President, Kathie Green. Please respond as soon and as generously as possible. If you have an e-mail address and wish to receive program reminders and other Society news, please be sure to put that on your renewal. The Mansfield House has been visited by a record number of people since the opening of the exhibit, "Hard & Stirring Times: Middletown and the Civil War." The Society is the "happening" place to be in

Middletown. Join us in making history come alive in Middletown.

We are pleased to welcome new members, Susan Berry, Jim and Jayne Bishop, Janet Buchanan, Hilary Burke, Robert Conrad, Robert Crawford and Kathleen Shea, Lila Creighton, Mark Donnelly, Adam Fleming, Emily Gifford, Erik Hesselberg, Mary Johnson, Indira Karamcheti, Jim Madar, Elaine McDonald, Peggy Morrissey, Shawn Murdock, Philip Pessoni, Nicholas Petrie, Ruth Purdy, Ethan Robinson, Joseph Samolis, Spencer Sheridan, Lynne Skead, Neva Small, K.C. Whelen, and Jerrold and Gloria Wisneski. New members bring vitality to our organization.

Middlesex County Historical Society Membership Application

Membership Levels

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life \$500 |

Please make checks payable to:
The Middlesex County Historical Society

Detach and send to:
General Mansfield House,
151 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457

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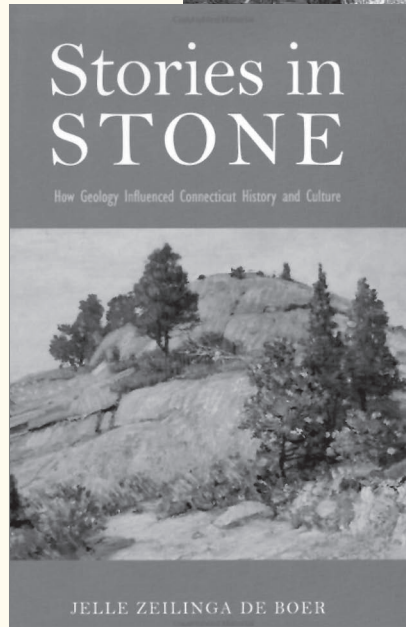
*You can also join or renew online on our web site
www.middlesexhistory.org*

Stories in Stone

Historians often write about the ways in which individual people affected the course of events, and what affect these events had on people as a whole; but in an interesting new perspective, geoscientist Jelle Zeilinga de Boer explores how geology contributed to Connecticut's historical and cultural landscape in his recently published book, *Stories In Stone: How Geology Influenced Connecticut History and Culture*.

Stories in Stone describes how early settlers discovered and exploited Connecticut's natural resources, and how their successes as well as failures form the very basis of the state's history: Chatham's gold may have played a role in the acquisition of its Charter, and Middletown's lead helped the colony gain its freedom during the revolution; fertile soils in the Central Valley fueled the state's development in agriculture, and iron ores discovered in the Western Highlands helped trigger its manufacturing eminence. Geology not only shaped the State's physical landscape, but also provided an economic base and played a cultural role by inspiring folklore, paintings, and poems.

Dr. Zeilinga de Boer retired from Wesleyan University as the Harold T. Stearns Professor of Earth Sciences in 2005. His early research dealt with paleomagnetism, the science that enabled determination of the movements of the continental plates across the



earth. He was the first to show, by using Connecticut's rocks, that North America not only moved westward, but also significantly northward. What is now Connecticut moved from the subtropics into cold New England, explaining how dinosaurs could have lived here 200 million years ago.

On Tuesday, April 27, 2010, Dr. Zeilinga de Boer will deliver the Arthur M. Schultz Memorial Lecture at the Historical Society's annual meeting. His presentation will be followed by a book signing. The program, which is free and open to the public, will be held in the Hubbard Room at Russell Library, 123 Broad Street, Middletown. The Historical Society will hold a brief meeting at 6:30 pm, immediately followed by the program. 🌱

Annual Meeting Agenda

Preceding the Arthur M. Schultz Memorial Lecture on April 27, the Society will hold its annual meeting at 6:30 pm in the Hubbard Room of the Russell Library. The business portion of the meeting will include the approval of the minutes of the 2009 Annual Meeting, the presentation and approval of the 2010-2011 operating budget, and reports from the Treasurer and President. Also on tap is the report of the Nominating Committee, chaired by Ron Schatz. He and his committee members, Richard Kamins and Buck Zaidel present the following slate of officers and board members for two year terms ending March 31, 2012:

President – Patricia Tully
 First Vice President – David Wolfram
 Second Vice President – Richard Kamins
 Secretary – Nancy Bauer
 Treasurer – Richard Adelstein
 Chairman, Buildings and Grounds – Joseph Samolis
 Chairman, Museum Committee- Buck Zaidel

Directors at Large
 Mark Davis Elizabeth Santangelo
 Siobhan McLaughlin Ronald Schatz
 William Ryczek Catherine Stebbins



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| | | | |
|---|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The Museum at the Mansfield House | OPEN | Tuesdays – Thursdays Fridays | 10:00 to 3:00 10:00 to 12:00 |
| “The Provision State and the Civil War” Hubbard Room, Russell Library, 123 Broad Street Middletown | | Tuesday, March 30 | 7:00 pm |
| “It Happened in Connecticut” (rescheduled) Hubbard Room, Russell Library | | Tuesday, April 13 | 7:00 pm |
| Annual Meeting Arthur M. Schultz Memorial Lecture, “Stories in Stone” Hubbard Room, Russell Library | | Tuesday, April 27 | 6:30 pm |
| Reception to Honor Winners of the Sheedy Contest | | Thursday, June 3 | 6:00 pm |

visit us on the web at www.middlesexhistory.org