Back by popular demand, Rick Spencer, of Henry Clay Work fame, will present his program, “Songs of the War of 1812,” on Thursday, March 8 at 7:00 pm in the Hubbard Room at Russell Library, 123 Broad Street in Middletown. He will include a discussion of the antecedents, causes, and significant events of the war, which began 200 years ago this year. However, the highlight of this program is his presentation of 12 songs which were popular during the period or which were written about some aspect of the war.

Included are songs used as recruiting tools to induce young British men to sign up for military service, and a song of lament from the perspective of a woman whose husband has been impressed into the service. Other songs describe seafaring battles during the war, the soldiering life, and the patriotism of the period.

Music has been an important part of every war that humankind has ever conducted. Music has provided encouragement for the cause, patriotic zeal, propaganda, and comfort to those whose lives have been changed by war. It has provided documentation (sometimes accurate, sometimes not) of the circumstances of the conflicts. This program presents music that was popular during the War of 1812, and gives insight into the personalities and events on both sides of the confrontation. The songs add an emotional, human, and cultural connection to the conflict, encouraging the listener to bridge the distance in time and adding color and depth to the facts of this war.

Rick Spencer has been in the business of historical performance for over 25 years. He worked for 20 years as a researcher, historian and presenter of traditional maritime songs and sea chanteys at Mystic Seaport and has performed widely in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Rick is best known for his work as a developer and presenter of theme-based historic music programs. He currently holds the positions of executive director and curator of the Dr. Ashbel Woodward Museum in Franklin, CT. 

Join us for an evening of song and commemoration!

Have you ever wondered what the inside of the Governor’s Residence looks like? Now is your chance to observe its elegance for yourself. Please join us for an evening of hors d’oeuvres and dessert, wine and punch at the Governor’s Residence, 990 Prospect Avenue, Hartford, CT on Tuesday, April 3, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Guests will be treated to tours of the public areas of the newly refurbished residence. If the weather permits, we will also be able to mingle on the terrace with breathtaking views of downtown Hartford.

The residence, in the Greek-Revival style of architecture, was built in 1909 for Hartford physician and industrialist, George C.F. Williams. The State of Connecticut acquired the property from the Williams estate in 1943. Beatrice Fox Auerbach, the owner of G. Fox and Co., lent her staff of decorators to assist in furnishing the residence. The first governor to occupy it was Raymond E. Baldwin, who was born, raised, and retired in Middletown.

Governor Dannel Malloy and his wife, Cathy, have graciously opened the Governor’s Residence doors to non-profit groups. Society President Pat Tully, Secretary

(continued on next page)
Nancy Bauer, and Director Debby Shapiro recently toured the home in preparation for the reception and can attest to its beautiful appointments. It is truly a home as it is decorated with the Malloys’ personal art collection and other family mementoes. They even met the family dogs.

Individual tickets are $65.00 for members and $75.00 for non-members with proceeds to benefit the Society’s Capital and Endowment Campaign, which supports programs of the Society and the maintenance of the Mansfield House. Space is limited so make your reservations early. We need to supply the names of our guests to the Residence’s event coordinator the week before, so reservations must be made by March 27. Parking is on the street, so carpooling is recommended.

Opportunities for sponsorship are available. All sponsors will receive a listing in the program and will be recognized at the reception.

Sponsorship categories are as follows:

**Governors from Middletown**

- **Gov. Raymond E. Baldwin** (1939-41; 1943-46) – $1000.00 - Sponsor receives 8 tickets
- **Gov. O. Vincent Coffin** (1895-97) – $750.00 – Sponsor receives 6 tickets
- **Gov. James L. McConaughy** (1947-49) – $500.00 – Sponsor receives 4 tickets
- **Gov. Wilbert Snow** (1946-47) – $250.00 – Sponsor receives 2 tickets

To purchase tickets or become a sponsor, please call the Society at 860-346-0746. Join us in this rare opportunity for what promises to be a very memorable evening.

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**Membership News**

We welcome new members Susan Arsenault, Frederick Hart, Jr., Beth Schilke Kilian & John Kilian, Stephen Krewson, Dawn Levesque, Kath & Dan Novak, Susan & Sidney Rothberg, Molly Salafia, and Patti Anne Vassia. We hope to see you at our programs and events and thank you for helping us keep history alive in Middletown.
SOCIETY NEWS

Society Awarded Grant from Middlesex County Community Foundation

More than ever, Americans are bridging hundreds of years and great distances with improved access to genealogical and historical records. The Society has been fortunate over the years to receive a steady stream of researchers looking into their family histories, and its Frank Farnsworth Starr collection is legendary among professional genealogists. This information is just a small portion of our manuscript collection that documents the history of Middletown from its founding in 1650 to the present.

The way to make this collection more widely known and accessible is to enter summary finding aids on the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections at the Library of Congress. The NUCMC is a widely used tool that directs researchers to the institutions that possess information about their field of study. The Society recently received notification that its application to the Middlesex County Community Foundation to engage a professional archivist was approved.

The grant will allow us to catalog and produce summary finding aids for our extensive records of the Mansfield, Starr, Hubbard, and Lyman families. Members of these families were active in the economic life of the community as well as being leaders in civic affairs. These families impacted the history of the nation through their participation in aspects of the Revolutionary War, the abolitionist movement, and the Civil War.

Once these summaries are online many more researchers will contact the Society to access these collections, thus significantly increasing research fee revenues. It is also anticipated that the greater accessibility of the collections will raise the visibility of the Society, increasing the number of memberships and participation in the Society’s activities. We are thrilled that the Foundation is supportive of our efforts.

President’s Message

The year 2012 is a year of commemoration and remembrance here at the Society. Two hundred years ago, the War of 1812 began between the United States and Great Britain. By then, the 5-year embargo on international trade had begun to change Middletown’s economic base from trade to manufacturing. On Thursday, March 8 the Society is sponsoring an evening of the music of 1812, performed by Rick Spencer—it will be a fun and lively way to commemorate the era.

One hundred and fifty years ago, the Civil War was entering into its second year, which would prove a much bloodier one than the first. The battles of Shiloh, the Seven Days’, Antietam, and Fredericksburg, among others, brought the tragic reality of the war home to many Middletown families. The Mansfields were one such family; General Joseph King Fenno Mansfield was killed at Antietam in September of 1862. This September the Society will commemorate his death with several events.

Seventy years ago, the United States had just entered World War II after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The ‘One Book, One Middletown’ book for this year, Unbroken, by Laura Hillenbrand, tells the story of one young man’s experiences in the war. The Historical Society is contributing to ‘One Book’ events this year with a display of World War II artifacts, and a reception in honor of veterans of all wars on March 14.

Please help support the Society and our work to keep alive the rich history of Middletown. Consider making a donation or remembering the Society with a legacy gift. Contact Debby Shapiro at mchs@wesleyan.edu or 860-346-0746, or me, Pat Tully, at pres@middlesexhistory.org or 860-632-8618 for more information. In any case, thank you for your membership in the Society and the support you give to us throughout the year!

Pat Tully, President
The United States is in the midst of a four-year commemoration of events surrounding the Civil War, which occurred 150 years ago. But 2012 brings us the 200th anniversary of a less studied war, the War of 1812, sometimes referred to as the Second War of Independence. Many Americans remember this war as the one in which the British burned the Capitol and the White House, and Dolly Madison fled Washington with George Washington's portrait in tow. We envision Francis Scott Key composing the poem that became our national anthem while watching the battle at Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor, bombs bursting in air.

Amongst other offenses leading to the conflict, the British had been impressing American seamen into their navy and made advances into the U.S. through our waterways such as the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain. The war was largely won through naval battles fought by our fledgling Navy. One of those battles fought on Lake Champlain led directly to the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war. Its hero: Commodore Thomas Macdonough of Middletown, commander of the American fleet on Lake Champlain.

Macdonough was born in New Castle County, Delaware, on December 31, 1783, the son of Thomas and Mary McDonough (Thomas, our hero, changed the spelling of his last name). Thomas Sr. was an officer in the Revolutionary War and the young Thomas grew up listening to his father's military tales. In his autobiography, the Commodore wrote, “On the 5th February, 1800 I received a Warrant as Midshipman in the Navy of the United States from John Adams, then President, through the influence of Mr. Latimer a Senator from the state of Delaware.” Thus at the age of 16 he embarked on his career of American service.

His first assignment was on the U.S. Ship Ganges while it was patrolling the West Indies against the French. He was one of the few crewmen to survive a bout of yellow fever, which had spread throughout the ship. Macdonough next served on the frigate, U.S.S. Constellation, commanded by Commodore Alexander Murray in the Mediterranean before being assigned by the Navy Secretary to the U.S.S. Philadelphia, commanded by Captain William Bainbridge.

The U.S. was at war with the Regency of Tripoli (a feud known as the First Barbary War) when the Philadelphia captured a Moroccan ship in August 1803. Macdonough transferred to the captured vessel to, in his words, “assist in taking her to Gibraltar.” On October 13, 1803, the Philadelphia ran aground while bombing Tripoli and the officers and crew were captured. Lt. Stephen Decatur devised a plan to burn the Philadelphia. Macdonough was instrumental in successfully carrying out the operation in February 1804 so the ship would not be used against American interests. He was promoted to Lieutenant and returned home a hero.

Macdonough next acted as assistant to Captain Isaac Hull in the building of four Navy gunboats in Middletown. It was here that he met Lucy Ann Shaler, the daughter of Nathaniel and Lucretia Ann Shaler (known as Lucy to her family) whose home stood on Main Street on the present site of Webster Bank. The couple courted over a number of years before marrying on December 12, 1812 in Christ Church (now Church of the Holy Trinity), presided over by the Rev. Abraham Jarvis with Henry Louis DeKoven as best man. Their grandson Rodney Macdonough wrote that thereafter Middletown (continued on next page)
was Thomas’s home when he was not on duty and all ten of their children were born here. Thomas had been placed in charge of the naval forces on Lake Champlain in September of that year, so the honeymooning couple made their way to Burlington, Vermont on the shores of the lake. The Macdonoughs later built a home on Main Street on land purchased from the estate of Nathaniel Shaler and Thomas became active in the civic life of Middletown when in town.

When the War of 1812 broke out, there were only two American naval vessels on Lake Champlain. Macdonough embarked on a building program at the shipyard in Vergennes, Vermont while converting other ships to war use. In May 1814, Macdonough repelled a British advance south of the border, sending the Royal Navy back into Canadian waters. Anticipating another attack, Macdonough moved his small fleet to Plattsburgh, New York, dropping anchor just off shore. On September 11, the British fleet under the command of Commodore George Downie sailed south of the Canadian border to engage the American fleet. Macdonough, operating from his flagship, the U.S.S. Saratoga, had strategically placed his ships, and in a two-hour, twenty-minute battle against superior forces, disabled the British flagship, the Confiance, and caused it to surrender. Rodney Macdonough wrote that his grandfather “repeatedly assisted in working the guns and was three times thrown across the deck by splinters.” What was left of the British fleet retreated back into Canada as did the advancing British ground troops that had lost the support of their navy.

Commodore Macdonough wrote that day to the Secretary of the Navy, William Jones, “Sir: The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on Lake Champlain in the capture of one frigate, one brig, and two sloops of war, of the enemy. I have the honor to be, very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant, T. Macdonough, Commanding.” He was just short of his 31st birthday. He received many gifts, including land, Congress struck a gold medal, and he was promoted to the rank of Captain, then the highest in the Navy.

Of Thomas and Lucy Ann’s ten children, only five lived to adulthood. Lucy Ann died August 9, 1825 at the age of 35, only six weeks after giving birth to a daughter, Charlotte. Thomas was in command of the Mediterranean fleet on the flagship, the U.S.S. Constitution, “Old Ironsides.” He was in failing health and gave up his command to return home to his family. Enroute to Middletown, he died at sea of pulmonary consumption on November 10, 1825 off Gibraltar. He was buried with civil, military, and Masonic honors in Riverside Cemetery next to his beloved Lucy Ann. Their graves are marked by an obelisk whose inscription reads in part: “They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death, they are undivided.” They enjoyed less than 13 years of marriage.

Descendants of Thomas and Lucy Ann are still alive today. Their daughter, Charlotte, married Henry G. Hubbard who was largely responsible for the early success of the Russell Manufacturing Company. Their daughter, Lucy Macdonough Hubbard married Samuel Russell, the grandson of China trader Samuel Russell, and named their son, Thomas Macdonough Russell, who later served as Mayor of Middletown from 1908 to 1910. Thomas Macdonough Russell, III currently represents the Russell family on the Board of Trustees of the Russell Library. Thusly, Commodore Macdonough’s legacy of service to his country and community continues.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we mark the recent passing of two longtime and very active members of the Society. Jean Craig Brooks was descended from a brother of General Mansfield and had a very personal interest in the preservation of the Mansfield House. She was the author of the Society newsletter for many years and helped in many ways around the house. Harry, “Hap” Dickerson was a longtime docent, served on the insurance committee, and was seen at every opening night reception for new exhibits. We will miss them very much.
One Book, One Middletown

This year’s selection of the One Book, One Middletown committee is “Unbroken” by Laura Hillenbrand. It is the story of Louis Zamperini, a lieutenant in the Army Air Force, and his struggle for survival against overwhelming odds. As a youth, he was constantly in trouble, breaking into homes, fighting, and running away from home to ride the rails. Then he discovered running. Louie trained hard, ran in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and was on the verge of the four minute mile when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Louie was the bombardier aboard a bomber that went down over the Pacific, in May 1943. The account of his days in a life raft, subsequent capture by the Japanese, and placement in several POW camps presided over by officers who displayed extreme cruelty is riveting. Louie’s story is a prime example of the resilience of the human body and will.

As part of the One Book, One Middletown project and to honor the many men and women from Middletown who served their country both in the military and as civilians, the Society will have an exhibit of World War II artifacts from our collection and from private collections. Veterans and their families along with our members are invited to a reception at the Mansfield House on Wednesday, March 14 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm to view this exhibit and our other ongoing exhibits, Hard & Stirring Times: Middletown and the Civil War and Within These Walls: One House, One Family, Two Centuries. Join us as we salute “The Greatest Generation.” 🏛️

2011 in pictures

The winners of this year’s Sheedy Memorial History Contest were honored at a reception on June 2, attended by proud parents, grandparents, and teachers. Winners were Erica Augeri, Michael Bjorklund, Andrew Brown, Jason Connelly, Michael Flynn, Jenna Ifkovic, Jayden Koski, Caroline Rocco, Lia Rosenbloom, Sarah Rydell, Shreya Seshadri, and Ryan Tobin.
We had to say goodbye to an old friend – the 100 year old magnolia tree in the back yard was so damaged by the hurricane and the October snow storm that the remainder had to come down. It was at its finest this spring.

Over 100 gathered for lunch under the gingko tree on August 17. They enjoyed a tasty repast, which ended with homemade ice cream and patriotically decorated cupcakes.

Civil War Day was a big hit this year, drawing a bus tour of Civil War enthusiasts in addition to many members of the public. They were treated to the music of Tom Callinan.

The car show again attracted many beautiful cars and spectators on October 2 at Middletown High School.