

Winter 2015



A Newsletter of the Old Town Hall Museum
624 South Britain Rd | South Britain, Connecticut, 06488

Old Town Hall Museum

Wednesdays 10—Noon
Other hours by appt:
(203) 405-3124

South Britain Library

Tuesdays 6—8 PM

Board of Directors

2014—2015

President:

Jim Flaherty

Vice President:

Jennifer Carey

Treasurer:

Bill Wilhelms

Secretary:

Vacant

South Britain Librarian:

Robin Stiles

Old Town Hall

Museum Archivist:

Kimberly Neuenschwander

Museum Administrator:

Leigh Graham

Board Members:

Joyce James

Suzie Fateh

Marty Ludorf

Don Meyer

Rebecca Dawn

Ian Lowell

Immediate Past President:

Joyce James

Georgia Sheron Interviewed for *Uncle John* Photography Book

On January 31, photographer and author Georgia Sheron was interviewed by the Southbury Historical Society about her photography book, *Uncle John: Portraits of a True Yankee Farmer*. Bill Wilhelms conducted the interview, and it was filmed by Uncle John's nephew, Marty Ludorf, at the Charter Communications Community Service building located in Newtown. The interview will broadcast on Charter's public service channel (date to be determined), and the SHS hopes to have it converted to DVD.

Georgia was a neighbor of John Ludorf, aka Uncle John, and began photographing his

daily farm life in the Purchase area of Southbury in the early 1970s. Her book is a fascinating chronicle of friendship and photography that lasted over 16 years until John Ludorf's death, a few month's shy of his 100th birthday. Published in 2013, *Uncle John* serves as a captivating time capsule of American farm life in a bygone era. The SHS is grateful for this visual record of Uncle John's life and work and hopes to continue honoring his legacy through future programs offered at the Ludorf Barn. Autographed copies of Georgia's book are currently available for purchase at the Old Town Hall Museum.



A photograph of John Ludorf with Georgia Sheron, from her book *Uncle John: Portraits of a True Yankee Farmer*



Bill Wilhelms and Georgia Sheron at the Charter Communications building before the interview

Archivist Joins Society

Kimberly Neuenschwander joined the Southbury Historical Society in October 2014. A native of North Carolina, she received her Bachelor's Degree in History from Belmont Abbey College. She earned her Master's Degree in Public History from Wright State University, soon after moving to Ohio with her husband Ethan, an Ohio native. Kimberly was an archivist in the Marianist Archives at the University of Dayton from 2002—2013. She and her husband relocated to Connecticut in early 2014. She's extremely excited to live in New England, an area she describes as rich in history. When not processing old papers, she enjoys traveling, baking, running, and spending time with her husband and two oversized "pups."





New “Loos” at Ludorf Barn

A very welcome addition was added to the list of completed renovations at the Ludorf Barn last summer — bathrooms! Excavation began in the spring of 2014 with septic, foundation, and roughing-in of wiring and water lines completed by the first week of July. After receiving special lumber from Vermont, carpenters began post and beam construction. The roof was installed by the first week of August, and the building was completed with plumbing fixtures, cabinets, and doors by August 29. Our special thanks to the following for their help in this endeavor: Wolff Engineering (septic design), Stone Construction Co., Inc. (septic), Conrad Richers (concrete foundation and walkway), Thomas Kowalski (electrical installation), Ray Massi of South Britain Oil (plumbing), Kerber Farms Lumber Co. (all-graded structural hemlock), and Sprain Brook Co. (carpentry). The restrooms will certainly be appreciated once the Historical Society holds public events at the Ludorf Barn. There are still some finishing touches needed, but the society is hopeful events will be a regular occurrence starting this summer.

*You never know what
you'll find buried
deep within the
archives...*

From the Vault

The following tidbit of historical information was found quite by accident while doing research for an unrelated topic. I mistakenly thought it was in reference to the great 1945 movie, “Christmas in Connecticut,” starring Barbara Stanwyck. Although unrelated, it’s still pretty interesting. Text has not been altered to correct errors and author is unknown.

Kimberly N., Archivist

CHRISTMAS IN CONNECTICUT

CHRISTMAS WAS NOT CELEBRATED IN RURAL CONNECTICUT TOWNS UNTIL THE LATE 1800S. PRIOR TO THAT TIME, CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH LEADERS, I.E. TOWN FATHERS CONSIDERED CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS TO BE PAGAN. IN THE 1820S CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES BEGAN TO APPEAR IN OUR AMERICAN CITIES WHERE EPISCOPAL AND IRISH CATHOLIC NEIGHBORHOODS WERE GROWING. BUT MORE TIME HAD TO PASS BEFORE SUCH MERRY CELEBRATING AND EXCHANGING OF GIFTS WOULD BECOME PART OF RURAL LIFE IN SOUTHURY & SOUTH BRITAIN. THE CONGREGATION CHURCH DOCTRINE, WHICH WAS ROOTED IN EARLY PURITANICAL DOGMA CONTINUED TO DOMINATE THE WAY OF LIFE IN RURAL YANKEE COUNTRYSIDE UNTIL THE 1860S.



A ghoulish Marty Ludorf greets visitors

Tricks-or-Treats

All manner of ghoulies and ghosties visited the Old Town Hall Museum last October during the Society’s annual Trick-or-Treat event. Witches, zombies, and even Darth Vader were spotted in the dense fog on the evening of Saturday, October 25. The “haunted” museum was open for trick-or-treaters and their families from 6 –9 PM. Once inside, children were greeted with candy, cookies, cupcakes and apple cider. Those brave enough to venture up the creaky stairs to the second floor were treated to spooky stories read by SHS member, Rebecca Dawn.



The SHS Fright Crew from left to right: Rebecca Dawn, Marty Ludorf, Don Meyer, Leigh Graham, Joyce James, Kimberly and Ethan Neuenschwander

Santa and the Train



Largest of three train sets on display

Santa appeared not once, but twice, last December much to the delight of local children. The events took place on Sunday, December 14 and 21, from 1-4 PM. The Old Town Hall Museum was decorated for the holiday; board member, Don Meyer, was kind enough to display several of his elaborate and fully operational train sets. After telling Santa their Christmas wishes, children were allowed to play with the three train sets. The largest set was prominently displayed in the center of the museum; a second circled the Christmas tree; and a third, toddler friendly train, was placed near museum exhibits. Plenty of hot chocolate and cookies completed the event!



Santa with JJ and Ian Graham

Get Involved!

Membership in the Southbury Historical Society opens the door to Southbury's rich past. Join others who are passionate about our town's dynamic history, people, and places.

The Society is a volunteer organization and is continually seeking new volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks. Opportunities include: museum docents, property maintenance, exhibit assistance, administrative duties, and help with archival collections and research. No previous experience necessary—any help is greatly appreciated.

Every little bit helps our mission!

September's Attic Sale

Last September's Attic sale was a success for the Southbury Historical Society. Patrons donated many items ranging from antique furniture to decorative household items. Proceeds from the sale greatly benefit the Society and will help fund numerous events in the coming year. This year's attic sale is still a long way off, but please keep the Society in mind when doing your spring cleaning this year. Donations of a historical nature or antiques are always appreciated and preferred. The Society is unable to accept donations of electronics, bedding, clothes, and children's items. Please contact the SHS for more information. An exact date is yet to be determined, but stay tuned for a date in future newsletters.



The Southbury Historical Society

PO Box 124
Southbury, CT 06488

Contact Us

Phone:

(203) 405-3124

Website:

southburyhistory.org

Email:

info@southburyhistory.org

Facebook:

facebook.com/southburyhs

Address Label

Save the Date!

- ⇒ **March 17, *Bullet Hill School Docent Workshop*:** Bullet Hill School will be conducting a free docent workshop starting at 9:30 AM. The 1 1/2 hour program includes basic docent training and guidebooks, plus a tour of the facility. Participants will be able to sign-up for their preferred classes. Snow date is March 18 at 9:30 AM. Contact Maura Stanko at (203) 264-5290 or Melinda Elliott at (203) 264-2095 for more information.
- ⇒ **April 16, *History Bites*:** A presentation titled, *A Closer Look at Heritage Village* will be given at the Old Town Hall Museum in South Britain. The one-hour program begins at 12 PM. Space is limited.
- ⇒ **May 25, *Bullet Hill School Open House*:** Bullet Hill School will be open on Memorial Day Monday from 12—3 PM



Old Town Hall Museum