



CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

BRICK NOTES

FALL 2022

Letter from the President:

Well, here we are a bit late with our newsletter due to the pandemic. We've opened and closed and opened again. Many of our staff have been exposed to or had Covid. This has made it difficult to sit together and brainstorm *Brick Notes*, not to mention board meetings, programs, and event planning. We finally reopened our George Flynn Library and Museum Room in late Spring. Most of us are back just trying to catch up. I'd like to believe we are returning to a normal permanent schedule. It looks like all our hard work has paid off as we have a full calendar for the balance of 2022. Please see our Calendar on the last page of this issue of *Brick Notes*.

On Friday, May 6, 2022, CHS was finally able to hold its first Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner since May 3, 2019. This was held in the Green Room at Andrews Memorial and was well attended. We were also able to vote on new By-Laws and a full slate of our Board of Directors. Our Membership has remained robust and has increased during the past 2 ½ years. This is a testament to your dedication to Clinton's history and I thank you all for your continued support.

Also in May, after numerous postponements, David LeVasseur was finally able to present his long-awaited program "Clinton and Killingworth in the American Revolution". We had close to 70 attending David's presentation. This event was jointly sponsored by CHS as well as the Killingworth Historical Society, with many of their members in the audience in attendance. CHS looks forward to working more closely with KHS in the near future. The video is now up on the CHS website, www.clintoncthistory.org, (a first for us!).

Our steps to the Gardens and the Buell Tool Museum have been replaced and will last us many more years. Come into the gardens and check them out. Thank you to Andrew Pighills for doing another remarkable job for us. You might recall he was the artisan who rebuilt our smokehouse.

One final note: The Lafayette Trail (thelafayettetrail.org) is celebrating Lafayette's Farewell Tour of 1824-1825. CHS has now received a trail marker that will be placed on Main Street in Clinton. This marker commemorates his visit to Clinton on August 21, 1824. Feel free to go to their website to see examples of the Trail Markers that are already being placed throughout the Northeast.

We have much to celebrate and even more to look forward to. Thank you, again, for your participation in preserving Clinton's history.

Christy Pontillo
President - Clinton Historical Society

CHS Receives Grant from Connecticut Humanities

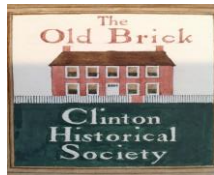
The CHS board is thrilled to announce that we have been awarded a Connecticut Cultural Fund Operating Grant by [Connecticut Humanities](http://ConnecticutHumanities.org), the statewide, nonprofit affiliate of the [National Endowment for the Humanities](http://NationalEndowmentfortheHumanities.org).

We will use these funds to improve our programming, expand our website and other technical capabilities, and cover certain operating costs. The entire CHS board would like to extend a sincere thank you to Connecticut Humanities for this wonderful opportunity!

Congratulations to the 2022 CHS Scholarship Recipients



Morgan Senior **Fabio Silveira** was awarded the CHS Ernest C. Burnham Scholarship. This scholarship is given to a student who has shown genuine appreciation for history and has demonstrated outstanding achievement in the field. The Victor Mays Art Scholarship, awarded to a student who has shown exceptional talent as an artist and has demonstrated a commitment to pursue a career in the visual arts, was presented to Senior **Angelina Comiskey**. CHS President Christy Pontillo met with the two award winners to congratulate them on their achievements



The Clinton Historical Society would like to thank the following individuals for their gift of items for our archives: Jean Loranger Bloom, Martha Miller Byrnes, William Brown, the Clinton Police Department, Priscilla Swain Jones, Jan Swanson, Sara Pontillo Johnson, Jerry Stannard, Charles Stannard, and the Westbrook Historical Society.

THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL, FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

George Flynn Library News

We mourn the passing of Scott Renfrew, who died on March 2, 2022. Scott was a dedicated member of the “library gang” for over 20 years and was always ready to help in any way he could. Scott took pride in his work getting articles from the Harbor News copied and ready for our archives and always made sure our OPEN flag was hung on Wednesday mornings. Thank you to so many who made donations to CHS in Scott’s memory. We will miss him.



THE MUSEUM ROOM IS OPEN!!!!

The CHS Museum Room, located in the Andrews Memorial Town Hall, is once again open most Thursdays from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM although it will be closed Thursday, November 25th for Thanksgiving. The room has been closed due to the pandemic. Anne Baker, the Museum Room curator, has spent countless hours revitalizing exhibits, improving signage, and getting the room’s lighting upgraded (at last!). This year’s featured exhibit is about the *History of the Masons in Clinton*. The room was open when the Connecticut Opera returned in August for several performances. Additional opportunities to enjoy this hidden gem will be during Christmas in Clinton on Sunday, December 5th from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. CHS would welcome anyone interested in being a docent in the Museum Room on an occasional Thursday to please stop by on a Thursday or contact CHS. There is a short docent training session that will help you ease into volunteering. Contact Anne Baker at anneb303@comcast.net for further information.



Times Change in Progressive Clinton

These things used to be standard equipment in Clinton homes. Today, electricity has made them old-fashioned, and they have been replaced by modern conveniences. This is just one of many examples of progress in Clinton, and electricity will continue to play an important part in the future of our town. Times are still changing, and Clinton is constantly becoming an even better place to work, to play and to live.
Ad placed by The Clinton Electric Light and Power Company in 1953

Let there be light! Did you know that Clinton’s first electric light and power company went into service around 1904? The good people of Clinton had quite a debate back in 1895 about connecting the town to an electrical system. As written in *The Shore Recorder* of November 20, 1895, “the subject of lighting Clinton by electricity was quite generally agitated about town. But like many public schemes, it was allowed to drop, and for the past two years that matter has not been heard of.” At that time kerosene was widely used to light homes and street lamps. The article stated that “electricity was used for the first time in Guilford for lighting its places of business last week. With electricity within eight miles of us, and the commercial reports of the past week announcing a rise in the price of kerosene oil, would it not be policy to inquire into this system of light? ... might it not be well to investigate its cost and some other matters connected with the system, with a view to its adoption?” A power plant was built in 1904, with its business office as part of the Swain home on West Main Street, where CVS is now located. The Merrill residence on East Main Street was demolished in 1930 to make way for Clinton Light and Power’s new large brick office building, which is now owned by Comcast. The first electric street lighting began in October of 1907, powering 126 15-candle power lamps. Prior to that a lamplighter made rounds twice daily, filling and cleaning each lamp, and then lighting them at sunset. The town paid for the lights on Main Street; otherwise, if you wanted a street light near your home you had to buy the kerosene and maintain it yourself. On September 25, 1953, First Selectman Henry Pierce turned on a number of newly installed street

lights at a ceremony on Main Street. This new lighting was described as one of the “most modern highway lighting installations in the state... one of the first lighting projects sponsored jointly by the state and a town”.

Around 1890 Clinton had a small-town water company and in 1907, all shoreline companies were consolidated, with John Moran as principal owner. “City water” was installed in 6 houses and, more importantly, a number of fire hydrants were put in place. Our volunteer fire department was formed shortly after in 1909. Several drinking tubs for horses were also built, however these tubs were very soon obsolete as automobiles became the predominant method of transportation. The 200th customer connection was made in July, 1915. In 1945, the Connecticut Water Company moved to its present location at 93 West Main Street. The building was originally an office and model home owned by the Clinton Lumber and Coal Company.

The 1900s also saw the arrival of the telephone. Originally there were four lines coming into Clinton from the Guilford exchange and then in 1903, the Southern New England Telephone Company placed an exchange in town with 93 subscribers. Clinton’s first telephone operator was Nellie Chapman. Nellie had the original telephone exchange installed in her home at 15 Pearl Street. Eventually she supervised several assistants, and the upstairs bedroom was transformed into a telephone exchange. On May 10, 1940, Clinton’s new dial system went into service, serving 650 telephones. Customers were advised that their “turn the crank” system would no longer be of use. This also involved a change in phone numbers and customers were informed that a new phone directory was available. Explicit directions on how to use a dial phone were distributed throughout town. A new telephone building was built at 47 Pearl Street and remains in service there today. One has to agree with the 1953 ad that “Clinton is constantly becoming an even better place to work, to play and to live.” Indeed, it is.



Clinton Light and Power Company



Connecticut Water Company



New Telephone Building

OLD BRICK HAPPENINGS

CHS took part in the 18th annual CT Open House Day on Saturday, June 11th. The Old Brick was open for tours and visitors also had the opportunity to enjoy our gardens, learn about the smokehouse, visit the Buell Tool Museum, and take in the display in the George Flynn Library of Clinton's Main Street as it has changed throughout the years. Thank you to Laraine Scherban for coordinating the event and to all the volunteers who helped that day. Are you interested in being a docent at the Old Brick? Whether for a one-time event, a special event, or on a more regular basis, CHS is always thrilled to welcome new volunteers. Laraine has a wonderful, simple training session to get you prepared. You can contact her at lscherban@hotmail.com to arrange a convenient time for your introduction to the Old Brick.



Photos from last year's event taken by Megan Stine

A Smokehouse Demonstration and Tasting with Jim Barnett will be held on August 27, 2022

In the spring of 2017, a stone smokehouse was moved, stone by stone, from the property of St. Alexis Orthodox Christian Church to the 'Old Brick'. It was skillfully reassembled by master craftsman Andrew Pighills. Last year's smokehouse tasting was a great success and we are happy that Jim Barnett offered to repeat this unique event again this year. This year's menu includes smoked baby back ribs, smoked trout, BBQ baked beans, tossed salad, cucumber salad, and bread. Prior to the tasting Jim will be demonstrating some 18th century smoking techniques. Reservations are required. Tickets are \$15.00 per person and will go on sale on August 1st on our website, www.clintoncthistory.org. Tickets are limited. Come enjoy a lovely summer afternoon.

CHS Gardens

Throughout the pandemic, and even in the heat of the summer, our faithful gardeners have been hard at work maintaining our beautiful gardens. The addition of the fairy houses last year was a huge hit and it appears that our little visitors will be a permanent addition to the vast array of perennials and herbs. Dianne Gustafson and John Quinn have been extraordinary in their efforts and many thanks to the small circle of volunteers who help. This year's plant sale in June was a huge success. Our thanks go to all who spent countless hours making that happen. Would you like to fine tune your gardening skills or become more educated about all the gardens have to offer? Contact Dianne Gustafson at gustafsondianne@gmail.com to volunteer on Tuesday mornings 10 AM – noon. If those hours don't work for you and you are still interested in helping, please let us know so special arrangements can be made for you.

The George Flynn Library recently received numerous items from the Clinton Police Department. There was an array of equipment from the 1940s and 1950s such as their mug shot camera and the equipment used for fingerprinting at that time. Also included was the plaque from the former police department building dedicated in June 1973, listing Hamlin Bell as Chief of Police. Thank you to Clinton Police Chief Vincent DeMaio for offering these items to CHS and to Sgt. Bryan Pellegrini for delivering them, allowing us to preserve this important part of Clinton's history. Do you love history and research? Willing to transcribe our age-old documents? The library gang meets Wednesdays 9 AM – noon. For more information contact Charlotte Neely at charneely@gmail.com.

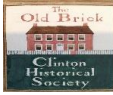
Updates from Buildings and Grounds Team

The Buell Tool Museum has benefited greatly from the efforts of Dave Rainey and John Quinn, who have spent countless hours repairing windows, painting, reorganizing the museum contents, and upgrading the lighting inside. John painted a portion of the exterior of the Flynn Library and two of the library's windows have been replaced. The Old Brick bulkhead door was replaced and the basement hatchway has been cleaned and painted. Craftsman Andrew Pighills replaced the stairway to the Tool Museum as well as to the gardens, which had become increasingly unstable and challenging to use safely. Christy Pontillo and Dave Bautz have been integral in arranging for the numerous repairs needed at the Old Brick, including some upgraded electrical work, particularly in the kitchen. To assist with the never-ending list of repairs that come with maintaining three buildings, Andrew Piazza has been hired to help periodically with our upkeep. If you are handy, or if you know of someone who is, please consider joining this active committee in keeping our CHS buildings and grounds safe, functional, and in good repair. Contact Dave Bautz at dmbautz@comcast.net or Dave Rainey at drainey77@comcast.net for further information.

CHS Board of Directors

President: Christy Pontillo
First Vice President: Regina Wohlke
Treasurer: Jack Scherban
Recording Secretary: Gail Webster
Corresponding Secretary: Mary Jane Morelli
Auditor: David Rainey
Buildings and Grounds: Dave Bautz
Librarian: Charlotte Neely
Museum Curator: Anne Baker
Old Brick Curator: Laraine Scherban

Publicity/Website: Megan Stine
Facebook Page: David Perrelli
Newsletter: April Shuman
Garden: Dianne Gustafson and John Quinn
Hospitality: Shora Rainey and Sue Schreck
Membership: Marion Martinez
Buell Tool Museum: David Rainey
Collections Curator: David Perrelli
Programs: Carrie Allen
Gifts and Grants: Carrie Allen and David Perrelli



Clinton Historical Society

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Find us on Facebook
Clinton Historical Society
www.facebook.com/CHSOldBrick

Volunteers Needed: As you read through this newsletter you can see that CHS has numerous ways for you to be a more active member of the Clinton Historical Society. Whether it's a one-time event like helping with our bake sale on Memorial Day, our plant sale in June, or a late afternoon on a Thursday in our Museum Room, or joining on a more regular basis, we more than welcome your help. Every committee is on the look out to find folks to fill in the ranks. Would that be you?

Thank You for Your Support

We wish to thank you for your continued support of CHS through your membership, pledges or any donations. Another way you might consider would be to mention the Clinton Historical Society in your will. You can also donate stock any securities that you've held for more than a year and gain a tax benefit. You'll be able to deduct the current fair market value of the stock, even if you paid less for it, and you won't pay capital gains taxes. If you are age 70 1/2 or older and have an IRA, consider making a tax-free donation directly to CHS from your retirement account. A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) will count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). Such a donation should not affect your taxable income as long as the money is transferred directly from the IRA to the charity. We encourage you to speak to your tax professional prior to any gift. If you would like more information about donating from your IRA or donating securities, please contact our investment adviser, Sam Pappas, at Mystic Asset Management. You may call him at 401-453-5558 or email him at sam@100shares.com.

CHS Calendar of Events Fall 2022

Smokehouse Tasting with Jim Barnett

Saturday, August 27, 2022

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Reservations required

CHS Annual Garden Party

Sunday, September 11, 2022

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Blacksmith Demonstration

Saturday, September 24, 2022

Details to come

Restoration 101 Program

presented by Preservation CT

Thursday, October 6, 2022

Details to come

Christmas in Clinton

Sunday, December 4, 2022

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Christmas Lunches at the Old Brick

Wednesday December 7 and Thursday December 8, 2022
at noon

Christmas Dinners at the Old Brick

Friday December 9 and Saturday December 10, 2022
at 6:00 PM

CHS Mission Statement: The Clinton Historical Society seeks to acquire, preserve, and organize documents, photographs, and other artifacts that relate to Clinton's history, and to inform the public about and promote interest in the history of Clinton through educational programs, exhibits, and collections.