

FALLS VILLAGE - CANAAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

April 2020



Editor: Dick Heinz

ANNUAL DINNER & MEETING

By Dick Heinz

The coronavirus has impacted every aspect of our lives. Even the most fundamental things, like family cannot be taken for granted. I was reluctant to hug my grandson (he's 13 years old) today, but when he threw his arms around me, I couldn't resist. Unfortunately, the Historical Society's Annual Dinner will not be held as planned in May. Kay Blass had made arrangements for May 21 for our gala, but it soon became apparent that there would be no such gathering at Geer. Residents can't go out and visitors can't go in. All gatherings like this have been banned in the State through May 20 at this time, to protect the vulnerable among us. This is a hardship that those of us who aren't old enough to remember World War II have never experienced and I'm not sure we have seen the worst yet.

We will have our annual meeting as planned on May 21 at 7:00 pm. We won't meet in person, but if you have a smart phone, chrome book, tablet or laptop you should be able to participate. We will use a technology that some of us have already used, Zoom. Use this link in your browser:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85843700916>

Or phone call: 1(301)715-8592 and enter Meeting ID: 858 4370 0916. Don't lose this contact info.

Peddlers Flea Market

The Historical Society's annual Peddlers Flea Market was planned for June 13 at our South Canaan Meetinghouse location. The Historical Society discussed moving the event to its former timing in the Fall, but decided at our April meeting to delay making a decision on this annual fund-raiser.

THE BEEBE HILL SCHOOLHOUSE

By Sally Greco, Curator

Dear Friends,

On account of the coronavirus we are waiting to see if we will be opening the Schoolhouse doors for its regular summer hours.

If you would like to visit the Schoolhouse please call ahead to make sure we are going to be open. (860-824-0655 or 860-824-8226)

Our tentative schedule is Saturday from 10a.m.-noon, July 11-August 29.

The President's Letter

By Dick Heinz, President

It was a disappointing year for me in my second year as your President. We had hoped to paint the 1804 Meetinghouse in South Canaan. It was a wet fall 2018 and spring 2019 and our contractor was never able to get to the job. Then as spring approached we were all impacted by the new coronavirus. Work at the Depot Museum in Falls Village has come to a near halt. But even worse, we have been forced to change our plans for this summer. We may not be able to hold any of our three fund-raising efforts with the public: the Peddlers Market, 1st Tuesday at 7 and Music Mountain book sales.

We had a successful Peddlers Market last June. Revenue continues to drop for that event but we still made nearly \$2000. We had set June 13, 2020 for this event but the Board decided at the April meeting that this timing wouldn't be possible and will discuss at the next meeting whether the event will be held in the Fall.

Last summer, the David M. Hunt Library offered the Historical Society the opportunity to sell books at the Music Mountain Saturday evening concerts and to keep all of the proceeds of our sales. Board members opened the tent for sales on all but two of the Saturday evening events. Thunderstorms kept us closed the other two. Book sales netted the Historical Society almost \$1000. We were invited back this year, but unfortunately all concerts have been cancelled for this summer. Our sincere thanks go out to the D. M. Hunt Library for that opportunity.

Board Members Frank Hadsell and Larry Bulson arranged to have Valley Restorations of Torrington paint two sides of the South Canaan Meetinghouse for less than \$20,000. Painters began scraping and painting in April. The results are impressive. Though painting was not completed when this letter went to press the north wall was starting to look pretty good. We need now hoping to raise funds to paint the other two walls.

Cheryl Aeschliman had arranged to meet a group of Hawaiian people at the Meetinghouse in South Canaan on October 21. At the last minute, Cheryl had to attend election training and asked if I could help. I had the most awesome, spiritual experience. About 40 Hawaiians, some native and some transplants came to the Meetinghouse to honor Henry Obookiah. A native Hawaiian, he was brought to New Haven in 1808 and then to Cornwall to be educated and taught Christianity to bring back to Hawaii. He died and was buried in Cornwall before he could return to Hawaii. The group of Hawaiians was in South Canaan to honor and celebrate Henry

Obookiah. The Meetinghouse in South Canaan is the only remaining Church where Obookiah attended. I

was invited to participate in a beautiful ceremony. They spoke about the importance of Henry Obookiah to Hawaiians, sang native Hawaiian and Christian songs. At the end I was honored (in Cheryl's absence) with the presentation of two leis made from kukui nuts. Telling the story still gives me goose bumps; it's an evening I will never forget.



Figure 1 Frank Hadsell inspects the work

The Canaan Union Depot

By Bunny McGuire

The Canaan Union Depot was the oldest depot in continuous use until it was heavily damaged by arson in 2001. The Depot, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, was restored by The Connecticut Railroad Historic Association.

We (Ruth Adotte, Pat Graf, Mary Monnier and I) began working on the interior of the Depot Museum in January of 2019, working every Saturday and sometimes during the week. The first phase of work was cleaning soot off of the many items returned to the Depot. This included several railroad lanterns, pictures, books, and many boxes of papers. When this was accomplished, we began to organize. A friend made special hangers for the pictures, and then more friends came in to help hang them. Showcases were donated to us; the first being given by the Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society. Many historical items are now on display and people enjoy coming in during visiting hours which are every Saturday from 10AM to 2PM. Tours can also be arranged during the week.



At present we are working on the upstairs room of the museum; this is designated as the Leroy Riva Train Room. We are hoping to raise enough money to build a diorama of the town as it was in the 1840's.

One of our main goals is to have children from surrounding schools visit the museum so that they may learn the Railroad history of North Canaan.

This is an ongoing project and we are proud to be part of it.

1ST TUESDAY AT 7

Our popular summer lecture series, 1st Tuesday at 7 is another victim of the novel coronavirus. Board members usually seek advertising commitments from local businesses in April. This year, the Board decided that we would not ask stressed businesses for donations. Speakers were arranged for three lectures when it was also decided that a June lecture would not be feasible. When decisions are made on opening the State, the Historical Society will look to starting the lectures for this season.

Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society
44 Railroad St, PO Box 206
Falls Village, CT 06031-0206

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THE FALLS VILLAGE DEPOT MUSEUM

By Midge Cortesi

From the Curator's Corner:

Co-curators Midge Cortesi and Kay Blass, along with their always faithful volunteers Belle Becker and Liz Germon, have continued to be busy with the never-ending task of filing new information into our files and reorganizing what is already there. We have also helped local students with their research projects. Betty Tyburski has been weeding her newspaper files in the Connecticut Room at the Hunt Library and was kind enough to donate them to us. Adding these to our collection has kept us busy and expanded the resources we have available to the community. Because of the quarantine orders we have had to close the museum and office to the public but Midge has continued to go there on Tuesdays, behind locked doors, to continue filing, reorganizing and inventorying new donations. She is still available to answer research questions and is only a phone call (860-824-8226) or email (fvchs8226@gmail.com) away. She did participate once again in the Connecticut History Day judging in March. The quarantine orders made it necessary for the judging to be done remotely. It was a new experience but because of the wonders of modern-day technology all the students were able to have their projects judged successfully. Once the quarantine is lifted, we invite anyone to visit us on Tuesdays from 9-12 or by appointment. You are welcome to browse through our files and resources at your leisure. We have many hidden treasures for you to uncover.



Find us at www.fallsvillage-canaanhistoricalsociety.org or “Like” us on Facebook