

Making History Every Day

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Oxford Historical Society, a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization

Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum

P.O. Box 582, 60 Towner Lane, Oxford, CT 06478

Work on the Munn Schoolhouse Suspended but ... We're Able to Start Again Now!

History has been changed by the surprise arrival of a pandemic on the shores of the United States. The Coronavirus has brought abrupt changes to many lives across the state, country and world. In response to the enormous economic and health impacts, charitable groups and foundations have redirected their fundraising efforts and fund distributions to improve the lives of the many who have had enormous disruptions.

Members of the OHS were impressed to see how quickly the Valley Community Foundation moved to create a new fund and solicit donations to support the activities. This left the Society with a schoolhouse in need of work and a major source of funding in the early spring. But that was not the end of things. It is just that priorities had to be realigned by both the applicants and the funders. Plans for the next stages of the schoolhouse renovation have been pared back to two significant projects. And these have received the necessary funding. The Munn Schoolhouse will receive urgently needed repairs, thanks to a recent grant from The Valley Community Foundation and The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

Located behind the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Museum at 60 Towner Lane, the building was moved to the site from Oxford Road in November, 2019, a donation from Mr. and Ms. Daniel J. Sears. It is Oxford's last remaining one-room school, the others having been converted into private homes, repurposed, or demolished.

The monies from The Community Foundations will allow the Society to replace a damaged corner post, tie it into the roof plates and install new floor beams. The work will be done by restoration carpenter Eric Iott. The improvements will make the building safe for volunteers to work inside the schoolhouse in the coming months.

Renovated to its present size about 1850 from an earlier building belonging to Elam Beardsley, the structure was used first as a private school for boys taught by Marcus Munn. Aged 5 – 15 years, students received their lessons in the small classroom and boarded in

the house beside it at 561 Oxford Road. Using pocket knives, the pupils carved door jambs, window casings and floor beams. Their initials, names, dates and hometowns can still be seen in the cellar.

This private school venture did not last long, but the building was later used for tutoring Oxford students who wished to go on to high school. Mr. Munn also taught those children.

The Historical Society will continue to seek donations and grants and sponsor fund-raising events to prepare the building for future use. When the pandemic restrictions are lifted, exterior clapboards, roofing, and installation of windows and additional door will be added as funds are received.

Once the schoolhouse has been restored, the Historical Society intends to use it to offer children from the Oxford Schools an authentic "Day in a One Room School" experience.



Above: Photo shows original wooden peg joining rafters, taken when schoolhouse roof was reinstalled after the move.

Keeping Up Appearances:

Thanks to local contractor Ed Rowland and Guerrero Construction for arranging for a load of new topsoil to remedy the landscaping flaws that were created by the heavy equipment last year. Massive trucks, earth movers, building moving vehicles and stones all left the land around the newly relocated Munn Schoolhouse in a mess of depressions and ruts.

Now the surrounding area has been graded and raked to improve the appearance of the area.

New to Museum Collections

June found a new donation to add rich local flavor to the archives of the Oxford Historical Society.

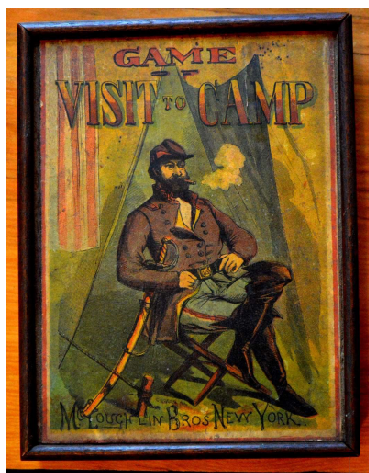
Letters, a Victorian photo album (no names), cookbooks, recipes, almanacs, and a little automotive guide from 1901 plus several diaries in at least 2 hands, a day book and personal letters were part of the contents given to the society on June 28, 2020 by Ken and Tom Biondi. The memorabilia belonged to life-long Oxford resident, Edna Sears.

Pictured here are 2 of the cookbooks: a Rumford Fruit Cook Book from 1927 and a Knox Gelatin dessert, candy and salad cookbook from 1931. The Rumford Company produced baking powder.



Edna Sears was born in 1901, daughter of Clayton and Sarah (Hawley) Sears. She lived near the intersection of Route 67 and Great Hill Road. Her father worked for the telegraph company and was later a mechanic. Edna's grandmother was Laura Davis Hawley. The society owns an 1856/7 diary from Laura and just received another from 1865.

Edna gave the box of papers to the Biondi brothers' step-mother for safe keeping. In cleaning out Mrs. Biondi's home, the box came to light. Additionally the Sears' box offered a Civil War era children's game "Visit to Camp."



to Camp."

This wooden box contains "Visit to Camp." A Civil War era children's game, it stores game pieces and a storybook plus an instruction book.

This game is one of many produced by publishing company McLoughlin Bros. of New York. They made blocks, paper dolls and children's toys such as Tiddly-

Winks. They also created a long inventory of games printed with brightly colored illustrations. In 1920 the company was bought by Milton Bradley.

"Visit to Camp" combines the reading of a convoluted story book and the featured 12 printed character cards with color illustrations for Colonel, Captain, farrier, surgeon, rifleman, sutler, sapper, riding master, musician, artillery man, Zouave and vivandiere.

Many of these terms are no longer in common use. Sapper is a combat engineer who would build and repair roads and bridges, he was an infantry member. A sutler is a civilian merchant who sold provisions to the army and followed the troops into the field or camp. A farrier is a blacksmith/vet who shod the horses used in moving the troops and supplies. Vivandiere is a female sutler or canteen keeper who followed the army to provide support for the troops. She wore a uniform and often also cared for the wounded on the battlefield. Zouaves were light infantry in the Union army patterned after the French troops who wore picturesque uniforms of baggy white trousers and red jackets. The artillery in the Civil War were cannon and small mobile guns on wheeled caissons (carriages).

The game had additional cards representing 6 accoutrements (related equipment and gear) for each of the 12 characters used in the story. Sadly the character cards are missing.

The Oxford Historical Society is very grateful to Tom and Ken Biondi for their generous gift.

Milk Bottle Received



Also received recently was a milk bottle to add to the Museum's collection. This one in collector's lingo is: Vintage Kissell's red pyro square 1 Quart milk bottle; the red printed label reads 'Sure it's Pure Oxford CT'

We are grateful to all who donate items related to Oxford's heritage to the Society, so that they will be available to future generations to appreciate and enjoy. If you have old photos, documents, or other Oxford memorabilia that you would like to donate please contact Nancy Farnum by phone at 203-888-0230.

Cooking & Baking Stand the Test of Time Enjoy this bite of history:

This Oxford heritage recipe came from Flora Olsen who lived her entire life in Quaker Farms. Flora's delicious filled cookies were well known at Christ Church bake sales and holiday fairs

FLORA OLSEN'S FILLED COOKIES

1 cup granulated sugar	½ cup brown sugar
1 cup shortening	2 eggs
1/3 cup milk	3 ½ cups flour
3 tsp. baking powder	½ tsp salt
1 tsp. Vanilla	Walnut halves.

Cream sugar and shortening. Beat in eggs, then milk and vanilla. Add flour, baking powder and salt. Roll out to ¼ inch thick on lightly floured board. Cut half the dough into 3 inch circles with a round cutter. Place the circles on a greased cookie sheet. Place 1 tsp. filling in the center of each cookie, not allowing it to spread to the edges. Cut the remaining dough circles with a doughnut cutter with a hole and place them on top of the filling. Press down the edges of the cookies. Put ½ of a walnut on the filling. Bake at 300 degrees about 15 minutes.

FOR THE FILLING:

Mix ½ cup sugar and 1 tbsp. flour. Add 1 cup raisins and ½ cup water. Cook until thick. Cool before using. Makes about 24 cookies. These freeze well.

HOMESTEAD OPEN HOUSE:

Previously held on first and third Sunday afternoons, these tours have been suspended due to the limits imposed on interior space. The Homestead is too small a space to allow for adequate social distancing and has other space constraints.

We look forward to the future when Open House Sundays can resume and friends of the Oxford Historical society can visit again.



Honor an Educator

Inspired by a gift of \$2500 honoring the teachers who educated the donor's daughters to benefit the Munn Schoolhouse Project, the notecards have become popular with local families.

The gift cards may be purchased from The Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Museum. For further information please call 203 888-0230.

Mail donations to Oxford Historical Society, PO Box 582, Oxford, CT 06478. Make checks out to Oxford Historical Society, with "Munn Schoolhouse" in note field.

Facebook Keeps Society in Touch with Supporters

Many fans of the Oxford Historical Society check in with the society's Facebook page regularly to see what has been newly posted. Our daily posts cover a wide variety of topics and are viewed by several thousand people. We have over 1800 followers on facebook. Our individual posts have reached as many 7,000 people.

Our most popular posts, judging from the number of likes, comments and shares, include the following topics: 1) The Stevenson Dam and the history of Lake Zoar. 2) Southford Falls State Park and its manufacturing history. 3) Railroad stories. Also popular were school photo, animal photos, a series of photos and memories of the 1976 Oxford Olde Tyme Fair, and a feature of "Recalling Hard Times in Oxford," with a story and a depression era photo each day.

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- Join the Historical Society. Download a membership form at <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org/membership.pdf>

