

Grand Opening

Twitchell-Rowland Homestead

Oxford's First Museum!

60 Towner Lane, Oxford, Connecticut

Saturday, May 5, 10 - 4 p.m.

Sunday, May 6, 1- 4 p.m.

Free Admission



Meet David Humphreys, Saturday, May 5, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Appearing with his horse, Davod Loda has presented historical programs at national parks and various state and regional historical reenactment events.

David Humphreys was a Revolutionary War colonel and aide de camp to George Washington. After independence, Humphreys served as American minister to Portugal and then to Spain. He was also a member of the Connecticut state legislature. He won early fame as a poet and author, as one of the "Hartford Wits."

In 1802, Humphreys bought a herd of merino sheep in Spain and had them imported directly to Derby. The new breed became popular because of their superior fine fleece. Humphreys set up the first successful woollen mill factory in the new country.

Loda will portray Humphreys while in Europe planning to import the sheep and start the American woolen industry.

House Tours

Videos of 2006 House Move

And Exhibits Throughout Both days

Wool Fiber Demonstrations



Spinners:
Judy Norton
Leslie Alexander
Rose Garbien
Robert Owsiany

Wool Felting:
Karen Owsiany

***Try your hand at
spinning with a
drop spindle!***

Sheep Shearing Demonstrations

**Saturday & Sunday
1 p.m.**

Wickson Family

William and
Christina,

6th & 7th
Generation Sheep
Shearers



REGULAR MUSEUM HOURS ANNOUNCED:

The Museum will be open the first and 3rd Sundays of the month
from 2 to 4 p.m. and by appointment.

Group tours will available by request. For information,
please call Nancy Farnum, 203-888-0230

Thank You

VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS!

Restoring the Twitchell Rowland Homestead has truly been a community effort, with contributions of money and labor from over 500 individuals. The Historical Society would like to recognize the following donors for their extraordinary efforts:

Wally Archer, who provided dumpster service at the original Homestead site for removal of the house extension;

John Barlow, electrician, who donated our electric service box and pole;

Dan and Mike Bawlick, who provided trailer hauling equipment for site excavation prior to moving the Homestead;

Bernie and Jeanmarie Cayer, who plastered the meeting room ceiling and walls;

Fred D'Amico, who provided surveys for the Homestead property;

Eastern Water Solutions, who gave our water tank and well hook-up;

James Ernst and his fellow Boy Scouts, who built the accessible ramp;

Forest Construction, who screened soil for our lawn;

**Kathy Prowe, Girl Scouts Troop 157,
Robin Michalak and Master Gardener Interns**
for Colonial garden in front of the Homestead.

Guerrera Construction, who donated 2 loads of processed stone for the driveway;

Haynes Materials, who provided cement blocks and cement for the building foundation and chimney base;

Bill Kirhoffer, who loaned of excavating equipment;

Manuel Moutinho, Mark IV Construction,
Glendale Builder, who donated the Homestead building;

Mark Oczkowski, Earthworks, who gave crushed stone and provided flatbed truck transportation;

Oxford Paint and Hardware, who donated the paint for the Homestead exterior;

Oxbury Sanitation, who donated sanitary facilities for the use of volunteers and workers until our bathroom was completed;

Gary Pelletier, mason, who donated the construction of the Homestead foundation;

Planet Landscaping, who seeded our lawn;

Robbie Robinson, Fred Schiavi, Don Rich and Ron Stebar,
who excavated the site prior to moving the Homestead;

Ron Stebar, who provided carpentry work;

Ed Rowland, who constructed the equipment shed;

Fred and Myrtle Rowland, who donated the property for the Homestead's relocation;

Attorney William Ryan, who provided pro bono legal services for the land transfer agreement;

S & S Paving, who gave the driveway apron and the handicapped parking pad;

Fred Schiavi, Jr., who drilled the Homestead well;

Fred Schaivi, III and John Tuz, who installed the electrical service box pole.

Thanks to All

Sincere thanks to all our members those who helped in any way. We appreciate all who volunteered, all who supported our fund-raising efforts, and all who encouraged us along the way. Thanks to the Town and the good people of Oxford, we have preserved the 250-year old Twitchell-Rowland Homestead, and can now open our museum.

Everybody Can Help Save Oxford's History *Don't Throw It In the Dumpster!*

Everyone who lives or has lived in the Town of Oxford, Connecticut is part of its history. Every family event, Little League game, every Scout and 4-H meeting, church activity, or local club activity is part of Oxford's history. We are ready to preserve this history. We are specifically looking for small advertising items, cookbooks published by Oxford organizations, Oxford ornaments, memorabilia or newspaper clippings.

As you're cleaning out your homes or the home of a loved one, think of the Oxford Historical Society. We'll even help you sort through things. For an appointment to bring them to the Oxford Historical Society, please call Marilyn Stebar, 203-888-3469.

We have very little storage space for large items. If anyone can help us with more storage space, it would be appreciated.

2012 Connecticut Award for Physical Preservation Celebrates Homestead

Built in 1755, this house has a long connection with prominent local families and is listed on the State Register of Historic Places. When development threatened the house, the developer was convinced to donate it to the Town. Moved to a new, town-owned site, the house received a new foundation and chimney base, and was restored by the Oxford Historical Society. A multitude of workers donated their labor to the project, including members of building trades, Boy and Girl Scouts, area foundations, and many local volunteers. The people of Oxford succeeded where many towns and small nonprofits fail by involving a wide range of people throughout the community. The task of managing so many different groups and individuals alone is a remarkable achievement.

Source: <http://www.cttrust.org/12635>

Oxford Historical Society and Our Membership

The Oxford Historical Society, Inc. is dedicated to preserving and encouraging community interest in the history of Oxford, Connecticut. We seek to ensure that present and future generations can share in and understand their rich heritage. To meet these objectives our goals include:

- Expanding interest in local history by presenting programs of interest to the public.
- Serving as a resource for local history education for both adults and children.
- Encouraging the dissemination of local history information through the news media, publications on local history, and use of the internet.
- Educating the public on the importance of the preservation and protection of buildings and sites of historic interest.
- Serving all ages, including the schools, youth organizations, adults of all ages.

Membership in the Society is open to all interested in Oxford's history. Our museum focus includes the general history of Oxford, the history of agriculture in the region and the history of water power technology and the mills which provided Oxford's early prosperity.

Membership categories and annual dues include:

- Individual Membership, \$15.00
- Family Membership, \$25.00
- Senior Membership (over 65), \$10.00
- Junior Associate (under 18), \$ 10.00
- Business Sponsor, \$ 200.00
- Lifetime Membership, \$500.00 (1-time donation)

The Society would appreciate new memberships. Your dues helps the Society provide programs for the community. Membership forms will be available at the Grand Opening, and are also available on the internet at <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org>

DIRECTIONS TO THE TWITCHELL ROWLAND HOMESTEAD MUSEUM

FROM THE NORTH (SOUTHBURY)

1. Take Route 67 South to the intersection of Route 188 at Route 67 in Southford (2nd traffic light).
2. Continue on Route 67 South for .8 miles to Towner Lane on the left. St. Thomas Church Rectory is on your right.
3. Turn left on Towner Lane.
4. Drive ½ mile on Towner Lane. The Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum will be on your right.

FROM THE SOUTH (SEYMOUR)

1. Take Route 67 North to Oxford Center. The S. B. Church Memorial Town Hall will be on your right.
2. Continue from the Town Hall on Route 67 for 2 miles.
3. Turn right on Towner Lane. St. Thomas Church Rectory is on your left.
4. Drive ½ mile on Towner Lane. The Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum will be on your right.

PLEASE NOTE: Parking onsite is limited, and will be available for elderly, handicapped or mobility challenged persons. On-street parking will be along the right hand side of the Towner Lane only.

Oxford's Agricultural and Industrial History Developed from David Humphreys' Importation of Merino Sheep.

David Humphreys was the first successful importer of Merino sheep to this country. His mills at Humphreysville (later Seymour) became famous for the excellence of their work, and the concern Humphreys showed his employees drew the attention of the industrial community. Before the importation of the Merinos, sheep raised throughout New England did not produce the best wool. They also tended to be small in size, making for less meat production as well.

Humphrey's importation changed the agriculture and the economy of Oxford and the entire Naugatuck Valley. Merino sheep are bred for their fleece. Each fleece weighs between 15 to 20 pounds. Fleece strands are fine and long. They can measure up to six inches long across the back and side of the sheep.

While Colonel Humphreys was in Madrid he wrote to an old friend, Dr. Timothy Davis, and asked him to find a good location for a farm. It was Humphrey's intention to import Merino sheep to Connecticut to establish a farm for himself. He also wanted encourage other American farmers to improve their farms, so the new nation could become self-sufficient.

Humphreys purchased 25 rams (males) and 75 ewes (females) from one to two years old. With special permission from the Spanish government and with a small escort of Portuguese soldiers, the flock was driven across Spain and Portugal to Lisbon. On April 10, 1802, they were boarded on the ship *Perseverance*, bound to New York. The journey lasted nearly 50 days, and during the voyage, four rams and five ewes died.

Arriving in New York, the sheep were put on a sloop bound for Derby. Farmers from near and far came to view the sheep. Humphreys extolled the breed's advantages to all who came to see them. Interest in the breed soared and the Colonel agreed to sell some of the sheep.

The Merino breed is what is known as a "fine wool type" sheep. The individual fibers of wool are much finer and smaller in diameter than other groups of sheep. In addition, there is a greater amount of wool per sheep in this group. With the introduction of the improved sheep breed in the area, the farmers of the Valley region provided a large quantity of high quality fleece. Colonel Humphreys was not satisfied to have simply started an improved agriculture - he put his efforts into developing a woolen industry. Humphreys explained his desire to start the industry was both for the benefit of the area farmers and for the young nation, who up until that time had been dependent on foreign nations for its wool supplies. His work was a success.

Oxford and other area towns enjoyed a period of great prosperity due largely to Colonel Humphreys' introduction of Merinos. The good times did not last forever. In the 1870s, sheep breeders all over the state began to suffer from sheep kills inflicted by wandering dogs. As economic conditions changed, and with the development of power other than water power, the mills of the area were gradually closed down. With their demise Oxford's period of unprecedented prosperity drew to a close.

*(The above article is abridged from the Historical Society's newest book, **Oxford History Remembered**. Limited quantities of the book will be available for sale during the Grand Opening.)*

Oxford Books and Maps on Sale at Grand Opening

Oxford History Remembered, \$20.00
In Those Days \$20.00
Images of Oxford \$20.00
Shady Side \$12.00
Historical Personalities of the Naugatuck Valley, \$10.00
Oxford 1798, \$8.00
Colored 1868 Oxford Map \$5.00

Shirts, Note Cards, Prints Also Available



Merino ewe will be on exhibit at Grand Opening, May 5 & 6

In Appreciation:

The Oxford Historical Society thanks these foundations for support in preserving the Homestead.

Naugatuck Savings Bank Foundation
\$5,000: Grant for moving expenses

Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Valley Neighborhood Grant, \$3,000: History of Oxford program, writing workshops, Shady Side republication, computer, printer and scanner.

Katherine Matthies Foundation
\$10,000: Heating for Homestead

Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Valley Neighborhood Grant, \$1,000: Oxford Historical Drama at Oxford High School, on June 7, 2008

Naugatuck Savings Bank Foundation
\$1,500: Plumbing for Homestead

Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Valley Neighborhood Grant, \$1,495: Television, DLP projector, speakers, wireless pointer

Valley Community Foundation
\$2,000: Town-wide mailing designed to increase public support of local non-profits

Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Valley Neighborhood Grant, \$3,000: Homestead electricity installed for first floor (Museum area)

Katherine Matthies Foundation
\$5,000: Expenses for opening the Museum

Valley Community Foundation
\$3,073.04: The purchase and delivery of exhibit case in Twitchell Room.

Valley Community Foundation
\$2,700: Quilt restoration, Past Perfect museum software, acid free boxes and storage, training, Peer Advisor Network, and AASHL dues.

Connecticut Community Foundation
\$550: For collections storage material and training

Valley Community Foundation
Small Grant Program, \$1,575: for VOICES insert to announce our Grand Opening in May, 2012

Katherine Matthies Foundation
\$3,820: Towards chimney repair in 2012

Valley Community Foundation
\$4,999: Towards roof repairs in 2012

Connecticut Community Foundation
\$750: For program expenses at Grand Opening

Naugatuck Valley Savings & Loan Foundation
\$250: For program expenses at Grand Opening



Girl Scout volunteers break ground for Colonial garden in front of Homestead. Thanks to them for their good work!

From "Most Threatened" to "Celebrated"

The Saving of the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead.

*From Oxford Historical Society's Latest book, **Oxford History Remembered***



Homestead starting down Towner Lane from Christian Street, Sept. 26, 2006. (Cindy Joy photo)

When Joseph Twitchell built his saltbox home on Christian Street in Oxford in 1755 for himself and his family, he did so with pride and care. Chestnut paneling surrounded the fireplaces. Floors were planed smooth. Glass filled cabinet doors. For generations, the house served his descendants and other families. Children who were born there worked the surrounding fields and grew old in its shelter. But by 2004, the house stood empty, vandalized for copper piping and in the path of an over-55 community. The Twitchell-Rowland Homestead was slated for demolition.

Society determines to save Homestead

At a February 19, 2004 meeting, the Oxford Historical Society, at the suggestion of President Sue Pettinella, voted to form three committees to investigate the possibility of moving and preserving the Homestead, then sited at 116 Christian Street, near the intersection with Towner Lane. Areas to be studied included determining moving expenses, locating real estate on which to place the building, and finding ways to raise the funds that would save the 250- year- old struc-

ture. The Society's dream was to open Joseph Twitchell's home to the public as Oxford's first museum.

Homestead Placed on Threatened List

By October, 2004, the Homestead was listed as one of the "Most Threatened Historic Places" by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. The Trust was aware of the building's historic significance but skeptical of the potential for the project to be completed. "Because of the costs and complexities involved in moving a building, few such offers actually come to fruition," the Trust had noted. Happily, Oxford was able to overcome those odds and save the Homestead.

Society Honored for Homestead Preservation

In recognition of the Society's accomplishment in moving and upgrading the house to meet modern building codes while retaining its colonial character, the Connecticut Trust presented the Oxford Historical Society with a Connecticut Preservation Award at its annual awards program on April 4, 2012.

Working for more than six years, the Oxford Historical Society accomplished the moving, restoration, and pres-

ervation of the 250-year-old farmhouse. Included on the State Register of Historic Places, the 1755 house has been associated with prominent people and families in the Oxford area.

History of the Homestead

Joseph Twitchell's grandson, Jeremy Twitchell, married Anna Candee, the third generation to live in the family home. The house later passed to Jeremy's son-in-law, D.C. Riggs, a leader in the Oxford Agricultural Society during the 1860s and 1870s, when it was the largest agricultural fair in the area. Riggs was also a First Selectman in Oxford. The house next belonged to Owen Buckingham, who operated a meat and butchering business, supplying homes and stores in Oxford, Seymour, and vicinity with fresh beef, pork, lamb, and poultry.

Homestead During the 20th Century

After Buckingham, the house was owned by Gordon and Abigail Crofut before being purchased by Philip and Elizabeth Rowland in 1903. The farm was known for the high quality of the milk. It was among the first accepted to produce milk for the Southbury Creamery.

The land passed to their son, Edward P. Rowland. Edward was active in community activities. He was the moderator at many Oxford Town meetings. He was one of the first Masters of the Oxford Grange and also one of the organizers of the Oxford Boy Scout Troop #1. He served as Selectman in 1930.

Obstacles to Preservation

Eventually, Manuel Moutinho's Mark IV Construction Company acquired the property for development. He planned to tear down the Homestead. Through the willingness of Moutinho to allow the Historical Society to move the Homestead, and the generosity of Fred and Myrtle Rowland to donate land on Towner Lane for the house, demolition was avoided. The Town of Oxford supplied half the cost of the approximately \$60,000 spent on moving day, and the rest was raised through private donations, grants, and society fund-raising. Said one member, "We'd rent our souls if it would raise money for the Homestead."

The move was threatened by three-phase power lines at the driveway of the property. For a time it was feared the

building would have to be destroyed. Through local publicity and letters sent to the president of CL&P, the Homestead was moved on September 28, 2006, thanks to the cooperation of CL&P, Valley Cable, and SNET, whose crews worked together to raise and lower all the utility wires to allow the move.

The house trundled three-tenths of a mile from its original location to 60 Towner Lane escorted by Society members and neighbors. There it was placed in a trench that had been prepared by volunteers who used construction equipment loaned by local contractors.

The movers left the house on I-beams supported by blocks. The Society hired two restoration carpenters to install new sills. Thanks to the donation of thousands of dollars of concrete and concrete blocks from Haynes Materials, plus the volunteer labor of a local mason, Gary Pelletier, the foundation was raised under the old saltbox.

The Society financed the replacement of sills and the chimney base. Local electrician John Barlow donated the service pole and local electricians Fred Schiavi III and John Tuz donated the installation of electrical service. The plumbing was installed by Emmett O'Brien Technical School students. Over 500 Oxford residents donated or volunteered on the project.

The final removal of the I-beams was accomplished on June 1, 2007. Since that time, the Society has been blessed with the gift of a well from a retired well-driller. All the excavation work on the site has been done through volunteers Robbie Robinson, Fred Schiavi, and Don Rich, using equipment loaned by local contractor, Bill Kirhoffer.

Girl Scouts and master gardeners have worked on the

period-appropriate garden in the front yard. Boy Scouts worked together on Jay Ernst's Eagle project to install an accessible ramp. Major grants from the Valley Community Foundation, the Naugatuck Savings Bank Foundation, and the Katharine Matthies Foundation greatly helped the project. In addition, grants from the Connecticut Community Foundation and the Valley Community Foundation enabled the Society to purchase museum software and storage facilities to bring our artifacts to the Homestead in preparation for our grand opening.

In addition, grants from the Valley Community Foundation and the Katharine Matthies Foundation covered most of the costs of repairing and rebuilding the chimney and installing a new roof on the building. These projects were completed in the spring of 2012.

Thanks to overwhelming community support, the Homestead now meets current building standards. The second floor serves as a residence for the Society's caretaker and tenant, and the museum on the first floor will open on May 5 and 6.

Joseph Twitchell's home is once again a show place, ready to share its beauty with museum guests of all ages.

(NOTE: We have a list of major donors and foundations whose support was critical to our success. We appreciate all our donors and volunteers, regardless of the size of the gift. To list all of them would take more space than an entire book. To all who helped in each and every way, the Society is deeply grateful. The opening of the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead is a testament to the generosity and helpfulness of Oxford and its residents.)



October 11, 2006. The Homestead rests in a trench, supported by I-beams, held in place by blocks of wood, awaiting installation of a foundation and chimney base. (Joy Photo)



The Colonial flower garden at the front entrance of the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead is a reminder of the proud history of the 250-year-old farmhouse. (Photo by Cathy Helm)

Join us as we celebrate the preservation of the historic Twitchell-Rowland Homestead, May 5 and 6.