

# Making History Every Day

September and October 2023, Volume 5, Issue 5

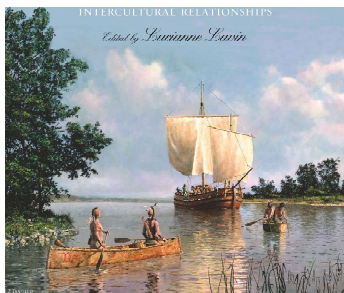
*Oxford Historical Society, a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization*

**Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum**

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

## Talk on Indigenous Peoples and the Dutch in this area.

***Dutch-Native American  
Relationships in Eastern  
New Netherland,***



**Saturday, September 23 at 2 pm**  
**“Trading Views”**  
**a new look at Colonial trade.**

Connecticut author **Lucianne Lavin** has a new book exploring the state's history of early Dutch traders' interactions with Native Americans of Connecticut. She will speak as a guest of the Oxford Historical Society at the Great Hill United Methodist Church in Seymour (at the rotary). Admission (\$5) will be charged. Refreshments will be served.

The new book, ***Dutch-Native American Relationships in Eastern New Netherland***, introduces the significant impact of Dutch traders and settlers on Connecticut history. This impact includes the continuing strong Dutch presence in Western Connecticut. It also touches on Dutch relationships with local Indigenous communities and the often long-term effects of those relationships.

Dr. Lavin has more than 50 years of research and field experience in Northeastern archaeology and anthropology. This includes teaching, museum exhibits and curatorial work, cultural resource management, editorial work and public relations. She is emeritus director of research and collections at the Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, CT.

GHUMC is handicapped accessible and has easy parking.

## Thanks for Your Support of the 2023 Peach Festival

**Thanks to our friends** – another successful Peach Festival! Nearly 200 people attended this OHS signature event on Saturday, August 26 held at Great Hill United Methodist Church in Seymour. This year we had sufficient ingredients to guarantee all comers were able to fill up on shortcakes, peaches and Rich Farm peach ice cream. In recent years the popularity of the event meant we ran short and folks were disappointed.

Thanks to the support of the community the society raised \$1500 to continue the work of keeping Oxford's historic past safeguarded. We are specifically grateful to our helpers from the community: Jen Miles, Marilyn Serus, Aimee Farnum, Dawn and Dave Rich, Spike Jones, Gazy Brothers Farm and to Great Hill UMC for the use of their kitchen and hall. Also our sincere gratitude to the society members and volunteers who each year peel, slice and prep pounds and pounds of peaches...and then return the next day to sample the results. We salute you all!

The feature of this year's festival was 'Oxford's Barns: Every Barn Has a Story.' Although this was an encore of the first year's theme in 2007, many new photos were added in the intervening 16 years. Barns that are in use and those that are losing ground in the battle with deterioration as well as some that have been saved and rehabbed were all documented thanks to members of the community. If there is a barn that should be included, please contact Dorothy DeBisshop to make arrangements. Send digital files to [photos@oxford-historical-society.org](mailto:photos@oxford-historical-society.org) or call Dottie at 203-910-4574. There may be a new society publication with these photos available this fall. Stay tuned and thanks again!



*Barns at the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead at  
116 Christian Street, now gone, were featured  
at our annual Peach Festival*

## Coming in October

**Don't miss the Tractor & Truck Show** at the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead at 60 Towner Lane on Sunday October 15, 1-4 pm. This free event for family fun features local farm vehicles of all ages. Drop by and check out this real blast from our past.



**OHS Pumpkin Contest at the OHS Tractor & Truck show.** Time to harvest your pumpkins and bring your finest, biggest, lumpiest, ugliest pumpkin to the OHS Tractor Show.



**Enter the Pumpkin Contest** at the OHS Tractor & Truck Show on Sunday, October 15, 1-4 pm. Entries are \$2 per pumpkin and can be made the day of the show. Remember, no commercially grown contestants – home or school gardeners only. Winners' pictures will be on show on the society's website and Facebook page – or come see them in person. The entry fees will be used to support the restoration of the Munn Schoolhouse.

In New England's historic farming tradition, prizes will be awarded in four categories for a wide variety of pumpkin appeal: families; kids pre-K thru Grade 12; 18 - 60 years and over 60 years! Options are largest, tallest, fattest, lumpiest, scariest and more creative descriptors. This is a mostly for fun event harking back to the agricultural fairs of Oxford's past!!

## Homestead Open Houses

We continue with the regular schedule of first and third Sundays from 2 - 4 pm on September 17 and October 1 and 15. Drop in and experience Oxford's living history. The 1755 Twitchell-Rowland Homestead was saved from destruction and relocated to its current site at 60 Towner Lane thanks to community support of a historic level. Pictures of the historic house move and regular monthly displays of Oxford life and living are featured. Books on Oxford are on sale, as well as photo notecards and T-shirts to support the ongoing maintenance of the Homestead and Society activities.

Remember Towner Lane is almost across from Rich Farm on Oxford Road, so consider a stop after you visit The Homestead!

### Hold On to Your Hats!

The OHS display cases will soon be changed for our holiday celebration. So visit soon to ensure you do not miss the current show offering vintage headgear on loan from society members and friends. See flower bedecked hats from the '70s, girls' hats from the '50s, Jughead caps and baby bonnets from the '30s, a steel battle helmet from WWI and Stephen B. Church's top hat from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century among many other fun offerings.

Displays also describe the beaver hat making trade thriving in Oxford and many other towns and cities in the early 1800s.

### Memberships 2023.

Individuals (\$15), Seniors and Junior Associates (under 18) (\$10), Families (\$25) and Business Supporters (\$200). Applications can be downloaded at the OHS website and checks can be mailed to OHS, PO Box 582, Oxford, CT 06478.

Not only do member dollars help with society expenses and activities, the numbers of members are used by grant givers as an indication of involvement with the community. So being a member really count for us!

### Join the Effort to Preserve Oxford's Historic Rural Heritage

- Follow us on Facebook: @oxfordhistoricalsociety
- Like our Facebook page to let foundations know the Society has your support.
- Join the Historical Society. Download a membership form at <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org/membership.pdf>
- Visit the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead and learn more about our activities
- Sign up for special tour & programs



# *Heritage Recipes*

## **VIRGINIA KIEHL**

Virginia Kiehl could write a book about Oxford history. Except for a brief period when her husband was in the Army, she has lived here all her 91 years since her parents, Charlotte (Smith) and Harold Cassidy bought the farm at the corner of Christian Street and Route 67 in 1925. Virginia was born May 30, 1932.

Mr. Cassidy raised the Holsteins and Mrs. Cassidy cared for the turkeys and the chickens. Virginia named the cows. One was called Nancy after a cousin she didn't particularly care for. Her favorite was Lulu. When Ginny's father tired of dairy farming and sold the cows, she took off with Lulu and hid in the woods with her until the cattle dealer was gone. On the way she tripped and fell, and Lulu stepped on her shoulder, leaving a painful bruise. Eventually the herd was built back up again to please her after Virginia made a deal with her father: she would do the morning milking if her father would take the afternoon shift. That didn't work out because there wasn't enough time for her to get a shower before she went to school. They switched jobs, but eventually she gave in, and the cattle were sold.

Ginny lived with her parents until she married Roger Kiehl when she was 19. Roger was a year behind her in school and dating another girl named Dolores. In Ginny's yearbook Dolores wrote:

"I leave you Roger. On second thought, I'll keep him for future reference." Dolores reappeared at Roger's 40th high school reunion, and the family has a photo of the two of them together. Ginny tells her children, "Don't laugh. That could have been your mother."

They were married by Father Callahan at the original St. Thomas Church in 1952. Roger was in the Army, and Virginia lived with her parents until Roger could find a rental near his base in Virginia and return home to bring her and baby Craig to their new apartment, perfect except it had no kitchen sink. Virginia's parents visited on their way to and from Florida, and Harold Cassidy was not happy with where they were staying, complaining about no cross ventilation.

They moved to a motor court, but that didn't please her father either when he burned his rear on a heater and worried that little Craig would get hurt. So, they moved again to a 2-bedroom apartment behind the motel. Since they couldn't afford 2 bedrooms, the owner locked one. Ginny says it took Roger two minutes to open the door.

Although this was the time of the Korean conflict, all of Roger's service was stateside, a real blessing to the

family. They had lost Virginia's older brother, Edwin, in World War II.

Eventually the couple made plans to return to Oxford, buying a trailer. They towed it home behind a "weak" car and Ginny prayed every mile of the way. They made it and cleared off a lot on the Cassidy's property, eventually building the house in 1958 where Virginia still lives. They added an in-law apartment for Charlotte Cassidy when she lived with them until 1962. Four children filled the home: Craig, Cindy, Laurie and Sherry. Roger worked first at Sikorsky and then at Farrell's for 35 years, retiring in 1995.

The family were active at St. Thomas's Church, with Virginia and the three girls singing soprano in the choir. They contributed their famous German Squares from a recipe inherited from their father's Danish mother to bake sales, and Ginny cooked for the church's Cares and Shares program. She still makes and contributes prayer shawls.

She remained home with the children until the youngest, Sherry, was in first grade. Then she found a job driving a big station wagon, transporting special needs students to and from different schools. The job had its challenges with fires in the back seat and children who took off various items of clothing, but Ginny's motto was "Drive the car first" and she weathered close calls with other cars and sliding down hills in snowstorms.

Later she worked at the polls for 40 years under the direction of Mrs. Beardsley and Beulah Renker in the days when there were so few people in town that names of voters were ticked off by hand. When Linda Crowe became Registrar of Voters, Virginia became responsible for absentee ballots.

In 1968 the family began camping in a trailer, traveling to Black Rock State Park, Hammonasset, and Rhode Island with relatives Johnny and Rowena Miller. The kids slept in tents near the trailer. One memorable rainy night with the children soaked by a downpour, they packed up and came home, continuing their "camping" under a dry roof.

When Roger turned 70, the families began renting beach houses instead, with their daughters and their families joining the fun. They divided the cooking on vacation with "Quick Spaghetti" made with stewed tomatoes and ground beef, Ginny's signature dish.

The Kiehls hosted Fresh Air children for many summers, first boys when Craig was growing up, and then girls after he became an older teenager. They are still in touch after all these years with one boy, Vinnie. While a child was never returned home early for bad behavior, sometimes the kids had problems getting along. After too many squabbles, Virginia finally sat her daughter Sherry and one girl down to try to resolve their conflicts, asking them to write down what they liked about each

other. Both wrote the same thing: "She has nice hair."

More poignant are the memories of the youngsters who had always lived with food insecurity until they sat at the Kiehl's table at mealtime. One girl asked, "How long will the food last?", expecting that they would run out. Another kept standing up while she ate because she needed "to make room for the food to go down." Recently Ginny spoke on her experiences as a Fresh Air mom at "Storytelling in Oxford," a history forum held at the Grange.

"A tradition," says Ginny's daughter Cindy, "becomes a memory." This is especially true for the Kiehl family at Christmas time. On Christmas morning they still go to church as they have always done, and then open their presents. For years Virginia and her three daughters made double batches of the family's favorite cookies and traded them: cut outs, those with date and nut filling, cookies with cherries in the middle, and thumbprints topped with raspberry jam. Now they confess they drive to the Christ Church Cookie Walk and buy their baked goods.

Below are two recipes the Kiehls make for every important family gathering. The Baked Beans are from Carrie Kiehl, although she never cooked them. The Cheese Pie recipe originated with Frank and Trudy Wilwal who lived on Condon Road. Trudy passed it on to Virginia's sister-in-law, Rowena Miller. Cindy always makes two of these desserts and confesses that there is always a piece missing when she brings it to the table because the pie is so good hot, she can't resist cutting herself a taste. The second pie is for the day after the holiday because it is delicious for breakfast.

### Baked Beans

350 degrees for 5-6 hours in the oven or 6-8 hours in crockpot.



Soak beans overnight, drain water and add new water and boil for 20 minutes. Keep water that you boiled beans in to bake beans in oven, also keep reserve bean water for later (if beans dry out while baking).

2 lbs Yellow Eye Beans.	2 medium onions, chopped
¾ cup white sugar	¾ cup dark brown sugar
2 tablespoons salt	Dash of pepper
2 teaspoons dry mustard	8 strips of bacon, chopped

Mix all ingredients with beans. Pour leftover bean water to cover the beans. If beans dry out while baking, add

extra bean water. Cook at 350 degrees in covered dish till they bubble. Then turn down to 250 degrees for 3 hours. They will be done but should be cooked longer. Five to six hours is usually good. A crockpot may take as long as 8 hours. They can never cook too long, just don't let them dry out.

### Cheese Pie

350 degrees for 1 hour and 10 minutes

1 lb. cottage cheese	2 tablespoons sour milk
2½ tablespoons butter, melted	½ teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar	2 ½ tablespoons flour
¾ cup whole milk	1 egg, beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla	Cinnamon to sprinkle

over the pie before baking  
1 pie crust ( Cook the pie crust for about 8 minutes until it is half baked.)

Blend all other ingredients well and pour the batter into the baked pie crust. The pie is done when a butter knife comes out of the pie clean.

Note: To make sour milk, just add a dash of white vinegar to the 2 tablespoons of milk.



*The Oxford Historical Society wishes to thank Virginia Kiehl and her daughter Cindy for their information and efforts that made this article possible.*



## Looking Ahead:

### November 19 Annual Meeting - TBA

**November 28** Giving Tuesday – Online donations for local non-profits support activities in your hometown and community. Visit the Oxford Historical Society website for a link or check on Facebook. OHS is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit and donations are tax deductible. Your support allows us to make a difference, thank you.

### Help Wanted

Love history? Fascinated by old houses? What a great opportunity to share your passion by becoming a docent at The Homestead. Volunteers of all ages including teens and students are welcome to participate.

We will provide training and you can share the fun with other volunteers. You do not need to be a member to qualify. For more information contact: Nancy Farnum 203-888-0230.