

Making History Every Day

November & December, 2019, Volume 1, Issue 6

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

Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum

60 Towner Lane, Oxford, CT 06478

THE DATE WAS SET – and moved – and then moved again. And finally set for Tuesday, November 12 only to be postponed by the threat of snow – and rescheduled to Wednesday Nov. 13 – **LUCKY THIRTEEN!**

Last minute needs were provided by good neighbors. We were required needed to have the classic “Wide Load” sign and would be asked to supply the flashing light for the truck plus walkie talkies (not cell phones) for communicating. Yet over and over appeals to Society friends and supporters came up with just what was needed.

Here we share the photos taken by the press on the day of the move.



VOICES photo shows house entering Oxford Road on its way to Towner Lane.



CT POST photo shows Dan Sears, Sr. with two rocks. The bottom larger rock has a boot scraper and the upper rock is inscribed with the initial of the stone mason who worked on the foundation of the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse and the stones were donated to the Society by Daniel Sears, Jr., who owns the house in the background. A few days later, the inscribed stone was put into the new foundation and the two men delivered the large stone to the Historical Society. It will be placed at the entrance when the schoolhouse is opened.

Mr. Munn’s schoolhouse dates back to the 1850, when Elam Beardsley’s daughter married him. Beardsley’s house was built cica 1782, and the schoolhouse may have been originally built around that time, though the exact date is unknown. The school opened in 1850 as a private boys’ boarding school with the students living in the house.



Schoolhouse entering Homestead site.



View from Twitchell-Rowland Homestead as schoolhouse arrives, from Waterbury Republican-American featured video and photos of the moving day.



The Schoolhouse stands on I-Beams above the foundation. The blocks have been installed with gaps to allow for the I-beams to be removed and the building lowered onto the foundation. Masonry work and excavation was done by Sinopoli Contractors, Inc., of Hawley Rd., Oxford.

Photo of stone from the original foundation. The letters EEH are believed to be the initials of the local stone mason who worked on the schoolhouse about the time that the building was fitted to become a private school. We are hoping to determine the meaning of the triangle etched into the stone.

ON MOVING DAY....

Mr. Munn's schoolhouse traveled safely to the destination with the assistance of the local police, the Oxford Town Crew and volunteers, including Ron Stebar who drove the escort vehicle. Thanks also to Dan Bawlick and Kevin Krusewski for the loan of equipment for the day.

The building was moved from the travel vehicle onto blocks which hold it above the foundation which has been built by Sinopoli Contractors, Inc. of Oxford.

Three courses of block were installed above the existing foundation, working around the I-beams that now support the building. Soon the beams will be removed and the remaining gaps will be completed.

Restoration carpenter Eric Iott, who prepared the building for the move, will install the original rafters and new roof sheathing. At that point the roof and gables will be covered with a tarp until spring work.

The Historical Society received financial support for the move through their fund-raising, the generosity of local people, and significant funding from three other sources. The Valley Community Foundation provided \$9,000 to pay for the preparation of the building for a safe transport, which included bracing the building to withstand travel, and removing the roof so that the building could pass below power lines enroute to its new location.

The Katherine Matthies Foundation provided \$9,000 to supplement costs incurred in the preparation, the move and the future restoration of the building.

The Community Support Committee of the Town of Oxford provided the \$18,500 paid for the actual move and relocation of the building. The mover was Nicholas Brothers of Hopewell Junction, a company experienced in moving older historic buildings. This was the mover who successfully moved the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead from its original location on Christian Street to Towner Lane.

When the building is completely restored, the Historical Society will be able to provide a hands-on living history experience for Oxford School children and for exhibits and activities for adults and families.

Help support the Society's work with an online donation on GIVING TUESDAY. See the Society webpage <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org> for a donation link.

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>

Local History in Print

A selection of books is also on sale including the new *The Railroad in Oxford* (2019), *World War II Revisited* (2018), and *Historic Buildings of Oxford, Past and Present* (2017). Over a dozen other titles are on display as well as copies of the 1868 colored town map featuring school districts with notations on businesses and property owners. Maps are \$5, prices of the books vary.

New Notecards Available



Available at the Homestead now - Stevenson Dam notecards. A set includes ten different vintage photos from the 1916-1919 construction of the area landmark. Each card is labeled with a unique historic caption on the back. A set of ten with ten envelopes is available for a \$5 donation. Stop into the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead to pick up these and shop other styles of unique cards.

Farewell to a Friend...

Fred Schiavi, a lifelong Oxford resident, passed away Nov. 6, 2019. Retired from the Northeast Utilities



Co., Fred had formerly done construction work, and water well drilling with the S.B. Church Co. of Oxford. Later he formed his own well drilling company which he ran for several years. In

retirement he volunteered his time and equipment to drill the well for the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Museum according to Oxford Historical Society member, Nancy Farnum, saving the Society a significant expense.

Fred was a volunteer firefighter, and lifetime member of the Quaker Farms Company and will be remembered for his generosity and knowledge. Previously he had proudly donated land that became a town park honoring his wife Agnes Tetlak.

The members of the Oxford Historical Society share their gratitude and sympathy with the Schiavi family.

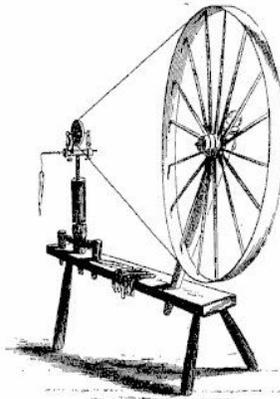


Honor an Educator notecards make a great holiday gift or what a wonderfully special holiday greeting card for a friend or teacher.

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 also may be purchased in the Town Clerk's Office or at The Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Museum Open House (2-4 pm) on the first and third Sundays of each month. 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.



FIBER FEST 2020!

**Saturday April 18
&
Sunday April 19**

Crafters wanted – are you a fiber artist? Planning is underway for the society's annual celebration of all things

fiber. The two new co-chairs Society members Christine Lesko and Valerie Nelson are looking for fiber artists who are interested in sharing their crafts with visitors: weavers, spinners and dyers; rug makers, knitters and felters. New crafters are invited to participate and obtain more information by emailing to



FiberFest@oxford-historical-society.org.



“Christmas Collections” the Theme of the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Holiday Open Houses

The Twitchell-Rowland Homestead will open its doors for its annual holiday open houses beginning Sunday, December 1. The 1755 saltbox farmhouse will also welcome visitors on Sunday, December 15 and on Sunday, January 5. Hours are from 2-4 p.m. The Homestead is located at 60 Towner Lane, off Route 67 in Oxford.

Following the theme “The Collections of Christmas”, members of the Oxford Garden Club have decorated the 3 rooms of the museum with seasonal trimmings. Commemorative ornaments honoring a variety of United States presidents enhance one tree. Other treasures on display include vintage Christmas books and greeting cards, a gathering of Santa Clauses and hand blown ornaments from the early 20th century.

Visitors will also be able to see the exterior of Mr. Munn’s 1850 schoolhouse, recently moved to the Towner Lane site and now located beside the museum.

Admission to the holiday open houses is free. Refreshments will be served.

For further information contact Nancy Farnum at 203 888-0230.



**Black History Month:
Ebenezer Bassett
Saturday, Feb. 15 *
1:30-3 pm
Oxford Public
Library
Great Oak Road,
Oxford**

Meet the Derby born Bassett who was named America’s Ambassador to Haiti in 1869. As a child he attended Five Mile School in Oxford where

he was an outstanding student. In 1853 he was the first black student to attend the Connecticut Normal School (now Central Connecticut State University).

Appointed by President U.S. Grant, Bassett was the first African-American diplomat and the fourth U.S. Ambassador to Haiti since the two countries established relations in 1862.

The great-grandson of slaves, Bassett’s grandfather Tobiah, was sold to John Wooster of Oxford. Tobiah won his freedom through his service in the American Revolution. Tobiah had a reputation for honor and intelligence in both the white and black communities and was elected a black governor, an honorary leadership position, by the black community of Derby in 1815.

His son, Eben Tobias, was also elected and served as a black governor from 1840 to 1845.

Seymour Town Historian Marian O’Keefe and U.S. State Department member Chris Teal will share a video about the life of this remarkable man.

The free program is presented by the Oxford Historical Society and the snow date is Sat. Feb. 29.

**Women’s History Month:
Rosie the Riveter
Saturday, March 7 *
1:30-3 pm
Oxford Public Library
Great Oak Road, Oxford**

Oxford’s Adeline Gray is one of the women celebrated in this program presented by Gretchen Caulfield of the CT chapter of the American Rosie the Riveter Association.

Rosie the Riveter is a cultural icon of World War II, representing the women who worked in factories and shipyards during World War II, many of whom produced munitions and war supplies. These women sometimes took entirely new jobs replacing the male workers who joined the military. Rosie the Riveter is used as a symbol of American feminism and women’s economic advancement.

Adeline Gray, who grew up in Oxford, is noted as the first to test the non-silk parachute manufactured in the CT factory where she worked. Determined to learn how to fly, her parents agreed to fund the lessons, provided she finished high school. She was valedictorian! She was a barnstormer performing parachute jumps and skills in pre-WWII air shows. When the war effort prevented air shows, she went to work for Pioneer Parachutes where she headed the repair shop. She did the test dive with the nylon parachutes at Bradlee Field, becoming an icon for the war effort and appearing in Camel cigarette ads and even comic strips. Her story was featured on state and national radio programs.

The free program is presented by the Oxford Historical Society.

