

Making History Every Day

November and December 2020, Volume 2, Issue 6

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

Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum

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

Honoring Oxford's Men & Women Who Serve

November is one of multiple opportunities the U.S. takes to recognize people who have served our country. During the month of November Oxford Historical Society is running pictures of local veterans on its Facebook page.



In honor of Veteran's Day, we feature a photo taken of the American Legion in Quaker Farms in May, 1950. Thanks to the late Janet Rice Congdon for loaning it to us. Shown are Bob Moselle, Bishop VonWettberg, Ray Pope, Art Hoyt, Cliff Larsen, Paul Paradise, Frank Hummel, Bill Rice, Charles Lyons, Ben Samoker, Ed Dains, Paul Martin, Mitt Larsen, Ole Kinney, Charles Budris, and James Lyons.

The following is a list of local men and women who have served Oxford, Connecticut and the United States. Anyone with vets in the family that OHS should honor by including please contact the society and send us a photo.

Aiksnoras, Judith; Albro, David; Allen, Kenneth; Alling, Edwin; Anderson, Charles T.; Anderson, John E.; Avery, Erika S.; Barnes, Albert; Bednarcik, Bob; Belinsky, Howard; Belinsky, Mark; Belinsky, Sunset; Bice, Reid P.; Boudreau, Gerald F.; Boudreau, Kenneth; Brozek, Alan; Buckingham, Philo B.; Budris, Charles G.; Callaghan, Brandon; Carpenter, Brian; Cassidy, Edwin; Chiarella, Stephen; Chiarella, Tom Jr.; Chicowski, Joseph E.; Chicowski, Joseph S.; Clark, Karen Chicowski; Connor, Timothy; Coons, Hilary; Coons, Jacob; Copsey, James; Davino, Gerald; DeBisschop, Howard; DeBisschop, John; Domizo, Kyle S.; Douillet, Raymond; Doyle, Raymond Paul; Dressel, John; Dykstra, Joshua; Dykstra, Nicole; Dytko, Eve; Eames, Hugh Crawford; Fabien, Ed; Farnum, Peter; Fink, Jeremy; Flanders, Raymond; Fox, William; Fray, Herbert; Fritz, Bob; Fritz, John; Gabor,

Adam; Gibbons, Michael; Gilpin, Jim; Godshall, David Brad; Godshall, Raymond Joseph; Gray, Joseph; Griswold, Robert; Guard, David; Hanson, Albert O.; Hellman, Betsi; Hibbard, LeRoy; Hilton, Justin; Hilton, Nathan; Hoffman, Joshua; Hogerheide, John; Hotchkiss, Donald; Houlihan, William John; Hummel, John D.; Hunihan, John; Ives, Victor; Iwanski, Frank; Kaminski, Richard; Katrenya, Andrew; Keefe, Joseph V.; Laborde, Fred; Lakomski, Matthew J.; Lane, Lewis F.; Larsen, Clifford; Larsen, Donald; Larsen, Milton; Lavorgna, Jeremy; Lawrence, Erwin; Lisewski, Michael J.; Lovdal, Sigurd; Luskay, Louis A., III; McKane, Charles; Madorno, Nicholas Joseph; Magda, John; Magda, Joseph; Magda, Walter; Manley, Christopher Daniel; Manville, Charles Floyd; Maybury, C. Arthur; Miles, David S.; Miles, Edward U.; Miles, Franklin R.; Miles, H. Wilson; Miles, Rees E., Jr; Miles, Robert; Miles, Roger; Mitchell, Col. Kim; Moran, John; Moselle, Robert; O'Donovan, S.M.; Oczkowski, Theodore; Oleson, Earle S.; Olsen, Harold; Pelletier, Grace; Phillips, Frank C.; Paoli, Joseph; Ploch, John; Ploch, Lou; Pope, Raymond; Purcella, Frank; Randall, Nick; Rice, Captain William; Roberts, Clarence; Roberts, Gilbert; Robinson, Donald W.; Robinson, Mark; Robinson, Robert D.; Rodia, Ralph J.; Root, Alfred, Jr.; Rowland, David A. Rowland, Edward T.; Rowland, Edward; Rowland, Phillip; Rzeszutek, George; Rzeszutek, Joseph; Rzeszutek, Joseph, Jr.; Rzeszutek, Stanley; Saavedra, Kenneth, Jr.; Samoker, Benjamin; Sandanza, Bo James; Scianna, David; Serus, Carl; Seyler, David; Seyler, Paul; Shingara, Michael; Smith, Wesley; Soracin, Tanner J.; Spader, Richard; Spader, Erick; Spader, Richard, Jr.; Stachelczyk, Anthony; Stanton, Edward; Stanton, Lloyd; Stanton, Robert; Stebar, Ronald; Steinis, John; Stewart, Gary; Strong, Rowland; Taggart, Garrett; Tallberg, Lawrence; Tallberg, Robert L.; Tilquist, August; Tramontano, Erica; Treat, Robert; Turner, Melvin; Vaivoda, Albert; Vallee, Timothy; Verlezza, Andy; Walker, Calvin L.; Wilde, Alexander M.; Wooster, Col. William; and Wooster, Gen. David.

We will continue honoring veterans each day this month. If you have a veteran's photo to submit, please email digital photos to photos@oxford-historical-society.org with name and service information, or call Dottie DeBisschop at 203-910-4574 to arrange for scan-

Holiday Gift Suggestions



Homestead Jams for Sale

The Oxford Historical Society is pleased to offer its tasty homemade jams for sale, just in time for holiday giving. Choose from these flavors: peach, strawberry rhubarb and strawberry peach. Our supply is limited.

To arrange to purchase and pick up jam in a COVID-safe environment, please call Nancy at 203- 888-0230.

Historic Buildings of Oxford, Past and Present



A limited number of copies of the 2017 published paper covered book are now available. The color photos include well over 100 houses, schools and other buildings in Oxford that date to 1900 or before. The popular history sells out regularly so anyone interested in copies for holiday giving are advised to contact Nancy at 203-888-0230 to arrange payment and pick-up in a COVID safe environment.



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.

Enjoy this bite of history:

Jessie Dunn's Orange Ice-Box Pie

4 egg yolks
¾ cup sugar
5 tablespoons of orange juice
The rind from a small orange
½ teaspoon lemon juice
1 angel food cake, sponge cake or 2 dozen lady fingers (purchased)

1 whole egg
1 pint whipping cream

Put the white of one and the yolks of five eggs in the top of a double boiler with the sugar. Set white and yolks over hot water and beat with a mixer or whisk while they cook gently for 10 minutes. Then beat the cream until very stiff. Slowly beat in the orange juice, grated orange rind and lemon juice and reserve about ¾ cup of the cream mixture. Mix the remaining flavored whipped cream with the egg mixture.

Line a large bowl with slices of sponge cake, lady fingers or angel food cake. Put the egg mixture on top of this and top that with the reserved whipped cream. Set in the refrigerator for several hours or until the filling stiffens. This dessert can be made the day before. The reserved whites of the 4 eggs can be frozen and used for another dessert.

Jessie Dunn lived an incredible and full life. She owned a restaurant on Wall Street in New York, and while taking breaks at lunch time, made her way to a local airport and flew over the City. She and her sisters purchased Halcyon Hill on Newgate Road as a vacation home, but lived in Oxford full time for many years. She was well known as the receptionist at the Oxford Town Hall, as an indefatigable member of the Elderly Commission, and as an extraordinary cook.

Jessie's recipe file is now part of the archives of the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Museum. This recipe for Orange Ice-Box Pie was one she clipped from a long-ago copy of American Home Magazine. OHS

Homestead Open Houses

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 an area to allow for adequate social distancing and has other space constraints.

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 membership form at <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org/membership.pdf>



Community Funders Support Work on Schoolhouse and Homestead

Oxford Historical Society is pleased to report the Mr Munn Schoolhouse restoration project is moving forward now that 2020 grants have been distributed by area

funders.

In July the Valley Community Foundation presented the OHS with \$12,400 to fund the work on the corner post of the schoolhouse. This stage also requires the replacement of the floor beams before the floor can be repaired and floorboards replaced.

This work is continuing with area restoration carpenter Eric Iott of Seymour who did the initial repairs including stabilizing the building before its move from the Oxford Road site where it had been for two centuries. He also replaced the rafters, then redecked the roof with plywood and tarped it to withstand the previous winter.

A local roofer has been lined up to cover the schoolhouse with a period appropriate roof so the building will be ready to face the coming winter. This portion of the project is underwritten with funds from Oxford's Community Support grants for 2020.

Did You Know?

As of 1818 Oxford CT residents still used and recorded accounts using British currency of pounds, shillings and pence.

A recent review of documents donated to OHS reveals a statement from August 5, 1818 for various itemized charges with the total of 5.8.9 in the pound - shilling - pence format. The last line shows the amount actually paid out translated into dollars and cents: \$11.00

This is only one of many interesting details revealed through reading and sorting of this collection.

The handwriting is challenging in places although the ink on the centuries old paper remains clear. Common usage of the time includes quirks such as 'flower' for 'flour.'

The antique 'f' for 's' is frequently found and abbreviations are often used ('do' for 'ditto').

But the names on the documents and the varied signatures relate to the early town fathers found in local histories. All in all it offers a 'blast from the past' for history fans.

Sharing town history: Sears Family Donations/

Recently Tom and Ken Biondi donated Edna Sears' collection of newspaper clippings and other memorabilia from her family.

Of special interest are Edna's father Clayton Sears' diaries from the 1930s recorded in paper covered Composition books. 1931 is complete in one notebook but 1934 and 1936 only cover July to November of each year.

His style is rambling, his handwriting indecipherable in places and his spelling is phonetic yet functional but hardly 'correct'. All of this combines to create a challenge for a transcriber. Yet while puzzling over the folksy record of life in small town Oxford (population 1,141 in 1930, 1,375 by 1940) the reader can almost hear Clayton's voice rambling on...entertaining his listeners.

Born in Naugatuck May 1869, by the 1930s Clayton was over 60 years old. Long hours (8 hour days) of manual labor at Depression wages are recorded, include cutting brush, cutting and baling hay and cleaning rotten fallen apples from the Hale Farm orchard. Walking, riding train and trolley, horse and wagon - Clayton records his travels from Seymour through Valley towns and up to Danbury, New Haven and Waterbury.

August 29, 1931 he '... along with one Ed Tucker went down the Valley to Derby Shelton Ansonia for to Peddel [sic] Apples Peaches returning home at 130 then to Danbury did go for to see about the Danbury Fair...'

And on Sept. 1 '... again was out and again stopped at the Great Hill Graveyard and to day marks the end of the clean up days at that institution and guess will call it a good job well done...'



Virtual Cemetery Tours Online

Using the new popular technology on the Zoom platform, OHS has combined readers and photos to create three short videos of local cemetery headstones and biographies of a dozen local residents. These are featured in this media available on the OHS website or on YouTube. The gravestones can be found in the St Peter's and Oxford Congregational Church Cemeteries at the foot of Governor's Hill Road, off Route 67 in the center of town. A shoemaker, an inn keeper, farmers, soldiers, business men and leading lights of early Oxford are included. Tune in and get some background on our hometown. <https://www.oxford-historical-society.org/>



We are Thankful...

This has been a very unusual year, full of unexpected issues for Oxford's residents and our members and friends. As the summer ended and fall arrived, the work on Mr. Munn's Schoolhouse was somewhat delayed due to the pandemic, and the problems of having groups of volunteer working on the building. We are thank-

ful for the local support we have received from area foundations, including the Valley Community Foundation, the Connecticut Community Foundation, and the Katherine Matthies Foundation for their support, as well as the Town of Oxford and the Community Support Committee, and the many various donations received from individuals to help us continue work on the schoolhouse. Work on the corner post is underway, and when completed roofing will be installed. Work will also be finished on the floor beams to support the first floor safely. Through all this support, our work continues and we are confident we will have a schoolhouse ready for children to visit and for adults to enjoy.

Volunteer Needed to Paint Signpost

Although we have not been able to schedule group volunteer sessions, we do have one opportunity for a volunteer to work individually on a Homestead project.

The museum signpost at the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead is badly in need of scraping and a new coat of paint. All needed materials will be supplied. If you can lend a hand, please call Nancy at 203 888-0230. Your help would be greatly appreciated

Recalling Christmas Past

For the first time since we opened the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead for visitors, we cannot host visitors in our specially decorated colonial house. Because of the pandemic, our volunteers and our friends from the Oxford Garden Club are unable to decorate the Homestead, and we are unable to welcome our usual guests.

Although we are disappointed to be unable to offer our usual holiday festivities, we are confident that Santa will find his way into the homes of Oxford residents this year, and we will find new ways to enjoy the holidays. We have cooked up a plan to share some Christmas history with our members and friends.



Apples, raisins, citron, cloves and cinnamon...the ingredients for mince pie are getting more expensive each year. But in New England's early years indulging in the savory pie could result in pay-

ing a fine! Intrigued?

Then be sure to click on the OHS Facebook or website link for more holiday lore. Each Tuesday (Dec. 1,8,15,22) a new short video will be released, unfolding 'Christmas in America' and featuring historic information and local photos.

The script for the program is prepared, and we are looking for volunteers who would like to help narrate the program. Volunteers will be emailed a script, and they will read their parts over a zoom meeting to be recorded. The recordings will be set to synchronize with holiday photos. Together, they will trace the history of holiday celebrations in Connecticut.

If you are willing to join in this holiday fun, please email dottie@oxford-historical-society.org, and we will send you a script and make arrangements for a convenient recording time. Let's see how many people will help us spread some holiday cheer!

Memories of Christmas Past at the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead.

