

Making History Every Day

March and April 2024, Volume 6, Issue 2

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

Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum

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



WOMEN IN OXFORD'S HISTORY

On Tuesday, March 12, at 6 pm join Town Historian Dorothy DeBisschop at the Oxford Library for her presentation "Women Throughout Oxford's History", a program in honor of Women's History Month. Sharing photos of the women of our town from the Historical Society collection, her talk will illustrate the changing role of women as well as their lasting influence on the community and on their families. Admission is free and all are welcome. The Oxford Library is at 49 Great Oak Road. More information is available by calling the Library at 203-888-6944.

Mrs. DeBisschop compares the female residents of Oxford's earliest indigenous communities with the women who came to the area in the early years of European settlement, delineating their different roles. Early settlers came with wives who were expected to care for the house, the children, and often dairy cows, chickens, and other livestock. Their scope of activity in the community was largely limited to neighborhood gatherings.

This talk will show how various women either fit in or challenged the gender roles of their day. Inspired by determined women who sought to overcome boundaries, the changing legal standards over time affected the roles

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Ion Bank's Community Awards Program 2024 Thank You! We are grateful to Ion bank customers who have voted to support community non-profits with funds from the Ion Bank Foundation, sponsor of this event for the past 15 years. Voting closes March 1st, and we will announce the results in a future newsletter. We appreciate the support of our members and friends in all of our fund-raising efforts, and especially of Ion Bank their annual Community Awards Program.



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Oxford Historical Society's Fiber Fest

Take a peek into Oxford's agricultural past at the annual Oxford Historical Society Fiber Fest on Saturday, April 20, from 9 am to 4 pm and Sunday, April 21, from noon to 4 pm. This unique free program will take place on the grounds of the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead, located at 60 Towner Lane off Route 67 across from St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church. Look for the OHS sheep signs around town!



FIBER FEST

Weavers, spinners, live animals, and artisan vendors will return to the museum grounds for this annual event for all ages. While the event is held rain or shine, weather permitting there will be shearing of goats or sheep for the spring.

Local folk will demonstrate using fibers for knitting, crocheting, weaving, crafting and more. The New England Lace Makers Guild members will be showing their timeless skills, keeping this craft alive after centuries. Cobweb-like threads are knotted and twisted into astonishing products with the help of colorful bobbins.

Join the Spin-In from 1-3 pm on Saturday under the big tent, or just come and watch the rapidly moving hands and feet as the raw fibers are twisted into threads and yarn. If your spinning wheel is mobile, come join the fun.

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CCF Give Local April 24 through April 25 Online Fundraising Campaign

Help OHS earn bonuses and prizes as well as contribute to Society events and programs. From 7 am on Wednesday, April 24 through 7 pm on Thursday, April 25 friends can click on the **CCF website** (givelocalccf.org) and register a donation to benefit chosen non-profits. In 2023 the OHS earned \$77 in bonuses and collected nearly \$1,100. With a goal for 2024 of \$1500 in donations and \$200 in bonuses, connect online using your credit card or Paypal to make a donation and make a difference. Help us grow!

of all members of society and all families.

One of Oxford's own remarkable women, Dorothy DeBisschop, Oxford Municipal Historian since 1987, has a long history of work to preserve Oxford's past. She was a charter member and first secretary of the Oxford Historical Society in 1975. In 2004, she served as chairperson of the Historical Society drive to save and relocate the 1750 Twitchell-Rowland Homestead. That Building now serves as the Historical Society's headquarters and museum. Mrs. DeBisschop also worked on the 1975-76 Bicentennial celebration.

She was instrumental in saving and relocating Mr. Munn's one-room school in 2018 from its original site on Oxford Road to the museum campus on Towner Lane. This building is currently the focus of Society efforts to provide a new opportunity for hands-on education for Oxford children and adults. As chair of fundraising and development of the Oxford Historical Society, Mrs. DeBisschop currently maintains daily history notes on Facebook (@oxford-historical) and has over 3,000 followers.

She is the author of *Historic Personalities of the Lower Naugatuck Valley*, *Oxford History Remembered*, and *Images of Oxford*. These books and more titles will be offered for sale at the event.



Open Houses Scheduled

Open Houses Scheduled – Join us on the first and third Sunday each month when the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead is open to the public from 2 pm to 4 pm. Docents chat about the history of the house and the items found inside as well as other topics of interest to the community. There is no charge for these open days: March 3 and 17; April 7 and 21.

Books produced by the Society are available for purchase as well as the unique notecard sets created using local art and photographs. In addition, this spring a unique collection of vintage handkerchiefs is on offer. Proceeds benefit society's events and activities as well as maintenance of the buildings and grounds.

On Display: Postcards from the Idella Jane Andrew Osborn Collection are on display through the end of March are only a sample of those sent to Idella by her friends and family in the early 1900s.

Idella Jane Andrew, daughter of Nehemiah and Nancy Alling Andrew, was their third child, born in 1852. She was one of nine children although only three grew to adulthood. The family moved from Bethany to Oxford around 1855.



FIBER FEST



FIBER FEST

On Sunday, from 1-3 pm, the Knit-In offers anyone with needles and fibers the opportunity to pull up a chair and knit or crochet and chat with other creative people.

Fibers of all kinds as well as finished goods may be purchased from nearly a dozen crafters and tradespeople who share their work and ideas. The museum will be open for free tours.



Homemade treats will be on offer. Also available are books and notecards produced by the Oxford Historical Society members. These titles feature the old houses and buildings in the town, the history of local railroads, and the veterans of various

wars and conflicts. The society's notecards offer both photo-based selections of the Stevenson Dam construction a century ago as well as historic shots from the Society's collections, and the newest designs, Claudia Farkas's architectural prints of five local historic homes.

All sales and donations from this event benefit the Oxford Historical Society and are focused on bringing electricity to the Munn Schoolhouse. This will allow the building to open to the public at last.

On March 24, 1969, Idella was 16 and married Orlando Cable Osborn in St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Oxford. The house they lived in had been in the Osborn family for over 150 years. The Osborns had six children. Orlando's grandfather, Hiram, was active in Oxford and served multiple terms as an Oxford selectman. Both Orlando and his father, Joel, were Oxford selectmen and Orlando also served one year in the Connecticut legislature.

In 1871 Orlando took over the family farm when his father died. Idella and Orlando had one grandson and five granddaughters: one, Alice, married William Schreiber. Two of their daughters were Idella and Nancy. Nancy lives in Shelton and has been sharing her family's history, through papers and photographs, with the Oxford Historical Society. Idella's postcards on display were donated to the society by Nancy.

A portrait of Orlando's sister Bessie hangs in the Rowland Room at the Homestead Museum. We are very grateful for the archival information the society has been given to enrich our view of local families and history.

In April our special display for the Fiber Fest features sewing baskets, a staple of daily life for decades and now treasured antiques.

Oxford Heritage Recipe

JUDY'S CHEESECAKE COOKIES



OXFORD'S QUAKER FARMS' HOMEMAKERS

The Quaker Farms Homemakers began in 1970. Alice Boudreau was one of its founders, and her daughter Marilyn Stebar remembers that the organization was

partly social and partly educational.

Meetings were usually held at Mrs. Boudreau's house at 420 Quaker Farms Road, although occasionally others took a turn at hosting. Topics for discussion were wide ranging, varying from a lesson on understanding grocery store pricing to a bread baking demonstration.

Although the name of the group designated them as Quaker Farms' Homemakers, the women were from all corners of Oxford. One list includes 34 members. The treasurer's account book ends in 2000, so it may be assumed that the group ceased to exist at that time. Aging members and their health issues and the changing lives of younger women who might once have joined but who now were busy with the dual roles of motherhood and jobs all must have contributed to its end.

In 1976 Oxford celebrated the National Bicentennial. About that time, the Homemakers created "The Cooky Cook Book," perhaps to sell at town-sponsored events as a fundraiser. It measures 5" x 7" and is bound with metal rings and a blue and white flowered oilcloth cover that was hand trimmed with pinking shears. Typed, edited, and reproduced by Southbury Business Services, it is 95 pages long.

OHS memberships are up for renewal now. Forms can be downloaded at the OHS website and checks can be mailed to OHS, PO Box 582, Oxford, CT 06478. Individual memberships are \$10, Seniors and Junior Associates (under 18) \$10, Families \$25, and Business Supporters (\$200).

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. Also listed are opportunities for volunteering. Be sure to check those that appeal to you. Being a member really counts for us!

Twenty-three members contributed to the first 53 pages of the book with their favorite recipes that delighted their families and friends. The international holiday cookie recipes in the second half of the book are transcribed from a magazine or cookbook. Jessie Dunn, a professional chef, was a member of the organization, and this may have been her effort to enlarge the collection.

Recipes vary from no-bake "Chinese New Year Cookies" to Flora Olsen's locally famous "Filled Sugar Cookies." Here we offer "Judy's Cheesecake Cookies" for the 2024 baker to try. *Note: This recipe was tested before publication.*

JUDY'S CHEESECAKE COOKIES

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 6 tbsp. butter or oleo, softened
- 1-8 oz. package cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp. Milk
- 1/4 tsp. finely shredded lemon or orange peel
- 2 tbsp. lemon or orange juice
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 tbsp. chopped walnuts or sunflower seeds

In large mixing bowl, combine flour and brown sugar. Cut in oleo or butter until mixture forms fine crumbs. Reserve 1 cup crumbs for topping. Press remainder over the bottom of ungreased 8x8x2" pan. Bake at 350 degrees 12-15 minutes or until lightly browned.

In the same bowl, cream together cream cheese and sugar. Add egg, milk, lemon peel, lemon juice, and vanilla. Spread the batter over the baked crust. Combine nuts with reserved crumb mixture and sprinkle overall. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 20-25 minutes. Cool before cutting. These freeze well. This recipe can be doubled.


POWERED BY The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

Valley Community Foundation's GiveLocal. May 1 and 2

This online giving event for area non-profits offers OHS (uniquely able to be serviced by both VCF and CCF) an opportunity for more donations. Last year's \$1000 gives us a starting point to aim for \$1500 for 2024. Bonuses can be earned as well.

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.