



# Kent Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 8, Number 3

Kent, Connecticut

November 2007

## The History of Bulls Bridge, by Johnnie Lindberg, conclusion

*In the last installment of Johnnie's narrative of his beloved Bulls Bridge neighborhood, we left off in the middle of his description of the area across Route 7 from the Bulls Bridge Inn. In addition to a large tobacco field, there was an old country store.....*

South of the store was a very large house, owned at the turn of the century by a Mr. Stone. Mr. Stone's restless and planning mind made him the genius of the village, and was responsible for the great future which awaited Bull's Bridge. The best place to use the water power of the Housatonic. This laid the grounds for the canal which feeds the HydroElectric Plant.

This house of Mr. Stone's holds many memories for me, as it was the house I lived in after I was born. We moved from here in 1947. It then became the house of the Kenneth Beckley family. After Mr. Beckley's death, the house was torn down by the Connecticut Light & Power Co. 1958.

There were three houses south of the store. One of the houses was occupied by the Minot Stevens family. The third was occupied by the family of Joseph Wilcox. The foundations of these houses still remain, and one is in good condition, the other is strewn around. These foundations are found about twenty feet off the west side of the canal, just opposite our old house.

On the east side of the Bull's Bridge intersection, there stand two large houses. They stand on opposite sides of the South Kent Road. The house on the north was the home of Mott Judd. Mott Judd was born in Bull's Bridge, May 13, 1832. He was always a farmer. By his first wife he had two sons - Jerome, who was a teacher, and Charles,



Bulls Bridge Inn, from a postcard dated 1909 and addressed to John E. Lindberg (Johnnie's father)

who was a Clergyman. At this site there were three barns. A cow barn, a corn crib and a utility barn. The utility barn still stands. The house across the road was built by a Mr. Millspaugh. It was occupied by a Mr. Alanzo Mallory, a railroad man and farmer. This house later became the home of Gracie Seabury, and is now occupied by the Greenbaums. When Mr. Millspaugh built this house he laid out sixty-nine different kinds of flowers in the extensive flower garden. The southwest corner of this house, on the down level, which is still intact, the two walls are all

panes of glass. This was once the Bull's Bridge Post Office. Jim Pan, one of the local Indians, was one of the fastest carriers. The carriers received 39 cents per day for their efforts.

Just north of the Judd house stood a small cabin occupied by Mr. Frank Ashman. Mr. Ashman had one daughter, Agusta Ashman, and two sons, Nat Ashman and William Ashman. Nat Ashman ran the Brown's Forge in Gaylordsville for many years. William Ashman was employed by the Connecticut Light & Power Co. and lived in Norwalk. Agusta Ashman was the housekeeper for Jerome Judd. After his death, she inherited the homestead. After her death, it went to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Lucy Ashman, who makes her home there at present.

Just north of Mr. Ashman's cabin is where the Bull's Bridge School stood. During the height of the Iron Works the enrollment was very high. Two shifts were held each day to accommodate all the students. In the later years of the school, the seventh and eighth grades were bused to South Kent. They were bused by horse and buggy. In the winter the roads would become drifted and the buggies would have to go out into the fields to make it

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through. The old dirt road was much different than the paved road we have today. The drinking water used was carried in pails from the Seabury home. The Seabury home was the boarding place for a lot of the teachers. Spelling bees and speaking contests were one of the highlights for this school. They would compete against other district schools.

Just up the road from the school is the former Jerome Judd Farm. It was conveyed to him from his father, Mott Judd. On the Judd farm was a tenement house, occupied at the turn of the century by Patrick McGarry. As this farm was always let out on shares, some of the other families that worked the farm were the Thorp family, the Katan family, the Vanscoy family, the Parsons family and the Fingal family. In 1930 the horse barn burned to the ground and two horses perished in the fire. In 1940 the farm was conveyed to the Lindberg family. I closed my milk farm in 1973. At present it is very nicely being cared for by William Newton, who has been planting and keeping the crop field mowed and clean. Casey Parcels has her show horses on the other side of the road, so the place is still active. I hope in the near future to be able to work on the place again.

We go up the road another one quarter of a mile and turn left on the Spooner Hill Road. Here we find the former farm of Mr. Lyman Darling. Mr. Darling's farm was small. The barns have disappeared but the house remains. This farm was closed in the fifties, and was conveyed to Mr. Leroy Newton.

We will now continue up the Spooner Hill Road a short ways. Spooner Hill is so called because for over one hundred years Spooner families have resided

there. The view is beautiful, and from the top you can see in all four directions. Two states can be seen from here, New York and Connecticut. Three counties, Dutchess, Fairfield, and Litchfield. Also eight townships, Pawling, Dover and Amenia in New York State, and Sherman, New Milford, Cornwall and Kent in Connecticut.



On Spooner Hill is found one of the oldest and most beautiful houses in Kent. The story and a half dwelling was erected in 1790, and has sheltered four generations of Spooners. No lock was ever used on the doors. It was once used by the Russell family, and later was conveyed to Mrs. Naomi C. Giese. She enjoyed the dwelling for many years. It is now the home of

Mr. and Mrs. Swede Nelson.

We now return back on the Spooner Hill Road and proceed south where we meet the South Kent Road. This brings us to the Leroy Newton Farm. This farm is now owned by his son William. This farm was the biggest and most active of all the farms mentioned. Mr. Newton took over the milk route from the Peet farm in the forties, and delivered for many years. This past summer William pulled down the curtain on his dairy farm. In 1956 the farmers saw the passing of the dairy farms in Bull's Bridge. The passing of an era.

It used to be said that Bull's Bridge was noted for three things. Lamper eels, bull beef, - this was a hit on John Chamberlain, a butcher called Leather Wheels – and third, beautiful women.

John Lindberg, 1986

## An Important Volunteer Job

We have long thought about how to welcome new homeowners, especially those who have bought old houses. We want to make sure that people know about the history of their houses, their neighborhood and their new town. To that end, we have decided to put together a welcome package for newcomers. The package would include the history and old photos of the house (if we have any), some history of Kent and, of course, information about the Kent Historical Society. We need volunteers to create and assemble the packages and also to monitor the land transactions at the Town Hall on a regular basis. If you would like to help out with this project, please let us know.

# Was There Ever a Gold Mine in Connecticut?

The Annual Meeting of the KHS was held at the Swift House on Sunday, October 21<sup>st</sup>. The business part of the meeting was brief but important, particularly because of the election of two new Trustees to our Board. Long time trustee Gail Tobin has decided not to remain on the Board for another term, since she now spends much of her winter on the golf links and beaches around Charleston, SC! Joan Larned also declined to stay, due to an overly busy schedule. Our sincere thanks to both of these wonderful ladies. We will miss them at our meetings, but both have promised to continue to volunteer, and we will hold them to that promise.

Two equally admirable ladies have stepped in to fill the three vacancies on the Board, joining Beth Dooley who agreed to stay on for another term. Charlotte Lindsey is a faithful and stalwart supporter of the KHS, and we have been hoping to get her on the Board for a long time. Charlotte is one of those determined people who sink their teeth into a project and stay with it until it is done to near perfection. Her most recent effort was the amazing book about Kent's members of the Greatest Generation – "One Small Town in WWII" – carefully researched, written and produced in partnership with KHS president Fran Johnson and secretary Lynn Hicks. Charlotte and Fran are about to embark on the next volume, all about the Civil Defense program in Kent during WWII and the Cold War. Stay tuned!

Bonnie Fremgen is a newcomer to the Kent Historical Society. She was invited on to the Board specifically to chair the new George Laurence Nelson Art Committee (see related story).

Welcome Aboard, Bonnie and Charlotte! We are very excited about the energy flowing at the KHS now, and you both will make excellent contributions!

Once the business meeting adjourned, the fun part of the meeting began. The featured speaker was John Pawloski, President of the Connecticut Antique Machinery Association and Director of the Connecticut Museum of Mining and Mineral Science. Those of you who have heard John speak before or have visited his mining museum will know how entertaining he is and how passionate he is about his so-called "retirement."

John is an unbelievably deep fountain of information about the history of mining in CT. Mining? In Connecticut? You didn't know? You should have been at the meeting. You would have learned so many fascinating facts about the Nutmeg State.

To wit: Governor John Winthrop, Jr. could be considered the father of American mining. A physician, astronomer and chemist, Winthrop began CT's first iron mine in Branford, the first granite mine, the first *gold* mine (in the whole USA) in Middletown, and maybe the first lead mine, also in Middletown. Dedicating his talk to Gov. Winthrop, and calling Connecticut the cradle of America's mining industry, John continued to rattle off a long list of substances that were mined here, including cobalt, tungsten, copper, marble, barite and, of course, the brownstone that faces an extraordinary number of buildings on the streets of NYC. The base of the Statue of Liberty and much of the famous Fort Sumter were made from granite quarried in CT. We even have gemstones in our earth! John admitted that he had had a hard time tearing himself away from his morning's adventures - to get to our meeting on time – hunting for *amethysts* in Southbury! He had some with him, freshly dug, just to prove his point.

Beginning at the inquisitive age of 6, John has been collecting minerals and mining memorabilia all his life. Realizing that the floors in his house were at risk of collapsing under the weight of his treasured collection, he finally set about to establish a mining museum. Raising the money himself and gathering a cadre of loyal volunteers, John built a sizeable structure on the CAMA grounds behind the Sloane-Stanley Museum. But, as he puts it, "It was overcrowded the minute the doors were opened!" Undaunted, he began planning an addition, which has recently been completed. During the fundraising process, he developed an addiction to bricks, and collected so many that there was no place to display them – except by using them to pave the floor! So remember, when you visit the museum, be sure to look down at the floor as well as at the walls and up at the ceiling.

The museum is already filled to the rafters, again! It's a hands-on museum, with lots of things for children of all ages to play with. There are many intri-

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# KHS NEWS

## Welcome New Members!

Jim & Linda Anderson

Kip Armstrong

Pamela Atkins

Richard Barlow

Besmer Family

Tom Britton

Ann Callahan

Connecticut Antique Machinery Association

George Fullerton

Theodosia Grayson & John Funk\*

Nina Henderson

Vincent & Maria LaFontan

Hugh Mitchell

Michael Monsarrat

Katie & Jonathan Moore

Leigh Peet

Roger Peet

Elizabeth Ritchie

Peg Crosbie Seneca

Joan & Bill Silk

Charles Tomlinson

\* With the addition of Theo Grayson and John Funk to our membership list, we passed quite a milestone! One of them (we'll let them choose which one) became the **400<sup>th</sup>** member of the Kent Historical Society! Who knew, that we'd go from just 65 members in 1999 to 400 by 2007? It's even more fitting that Theo and John helped us to reach that point. They are both teachers at South Kent School, where they head the Third Form (9<sup>th</sup> grade) overseeing the entire curriculum for that class. They are very much looking forward to tapping into SKS and Kent town history and we are looking forward to working with them.

Theo also may have some ancient ties to Kent. Her middle name is Hatch and while her direct ancestors lived in Preston, CT, she is wondering if there is a connection to the Hatches buried in the *New Preston* cemetery, and perhaps even to Barnabus Hatch of Hatch Pond fame.

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## Mining Museum, cont.

children of all ages to play with. There are many intricate dioramas, painstakingly created by John himself. There's a fluorescent mineral exhibit, with otherwise dull looking rocks displayed under black light to reveal their richly hued mineral content. Most amazing of all are the life-size sculpted miners working in realistic mine shafts. John himself cleverly created the shafts out of Styrofoam, while the miners were fashioned from life masks made by Gaylordsville artist, Dayle Elsesser (whose Christmas crèche on Gaylord Road is a beautiful and popular twilight destination for masses of people in December).

Aside from needing a place to store his ever-expanding collection, John began the museum with the serious purpose of educating people about the importance of Connecticut mining on the national stage. While active mining in Connecticut has faded into our history books, the importance of minerals in our daily lives has not. Most of us are blithely unaware of the ubiquitous presence of minerals throughout America's infrastructure and in hundreds of thousands of articles of everyday use. The fact that mining in CT has disappeared, along with other mines throughout the US, disturbs John greatly. He has created a significant exhibit on one wall entitled "The Importance of Minerals," and worries that the continued outsourcing by the US for mined materials is putting the country in significant danger. He says that responsible mining must continue to happen in the US, and he is eager to engage in passionate discussion about just why this is so.

He states that CAMA is the finest machinery museum east of the Mississippi. It is no stretch to say that the little mining museum on the edge of the CAMA grounds is perhaps the most currently relevant and significant part of that whole museum complex.

*If you have not yet been to see it, simply stated – GO! You won't regret it.*

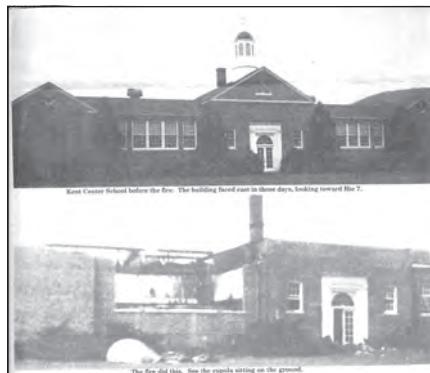
# Has it Really Been Over 50 Years??

## A Special Pull-out Section on the KCS Fire and its Aftermath

Early in the morning on April 20, 1956, Kent Center School caught fire. Gleeful children figured that they wouldn't have to go to school for a long time. But the townspeople pulled together almost overnight and found places to hold classes. Plans immediately began for the rebuilding of the school, and while the disappointed students toiled away in various locations around town, the new school arose from the ashes of the old, and opened its doors in April of 1957. For a slightly late tribute to that 50th anniversary, we looked in our files to see what we had. There is plenty of information about the fire itself and the building of the new school. We want to know more about where the students went to classes in the meantime and what they thought about it. We have recently collected a few anecdotes about what the fire meant to the students, and will print them here. But we want more!!! Call us or email if you would like to share your memories and photographs of the time this wonderful town pulled together to keep the education system in Kent on its feet!



Courtesy of Marie Camp



From the GTD  
 Top photo: "Kent Center School before the fire. The building faced east in those days, looking toward Rte 7."  
 Bottom photo: "The fire did this. See the cupola sitting on the ground."



Courtesy of Marie Camp



Word spread quickly that Saturday spring morning. "The school's on fire!" Our family, and all others went to Kent to watch the valiant efforts of the firemen to try and save the burning structure. Cliff's wrecker was pressed into service to pull down the wall at the North end of the building. The town leaders responded well to this tragedy and school resumed almost immediately. I was in the 4th grade at the time and we followed our teacher, Mrs. Peet, to the firehouse. She was very athletic in those days and quickly whisked a deck of cards and a playboy calendar out of a back room just as one of my classmates was finding them. There wasn't much room for recess. The girls jumped rope in the driveway and the guys played catch on the lawn in back of the library. Some of us took drumming lessons, placing our drumming pads on the back running board of the fire truck. My drumsticks and a favorite book survived the blaze. We were dismissed at 1:00 every day and no one minded. We had a great year and did so well that we went back to the firehouse with Mrs. Sleighter for 5th grade until the new school was completed.

**Billy Camp KCS '60**

**GENEROSITY CONTINUES IN SCHOOL EMERGENCY**  
 Minot Giddings has donated 24 softball bats from the stock of the old Chase & Giddings store. George J. Ganem of the Sportsman's Paradise, Torrington, has donated 6 bats, 4 softballs and 2 baseballs. The Center School athletic program has been further aided by gifts of \$50 from Kent Chamber of Commerce and \$10 from the Misses Tebbetts. Spontaneously, children from surrounding towns have moved to aid their Kent counterparts. In Sharon, 1st Graders searched their own home shelves, took out their favorite reading books and sent them to Kent, along with \$2 out of their personal savings. Fifth Graders in North Canaan also gave up their own treasured personal story books as a token of their neighborliness. Principal George Smith already has written 20 letters of thanks and says he has "umpteen" more to write.



PICTURE AT RIGHT: Andy Andrews, preparing for some gardening, buys a Roto-Tiller from John Turrill at Kent Lawn & Garden Service.

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 \* **EVERY LAWN SHOULD BE ROLLED** \*  
 \* **IN THE SPRING.** \*  
 \* It makes all the difference in the world in the appearance of your home! NOW is the time to do it. Summon us to the task!  
 \* **LARRY JONES**  
 \* Call WA 7-3131 after 6 P. M. \*  
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NOT A MODERN SCHOOLROOM BY ANY MEANS, but serving the need for temporary classroom space is this room in the Kent Community House used for the first time yesterday by pupils of Kent Center school. The school was badly damaged in a fire last Friday.

**Hope to Reopen Burned Out School by Next September**

**The KENT G.T.D.**

**School As Usual on Monday**

Despite the disaster the which struck Kent Center School in the pre-dawn hours of Friday, the education of Kent's children will continue without a break. Chairman Walter B. Crosbie of the Board of Education has announced:

**THE FIRST GRADE** will be taught in the Lecture Room of the Congregational Church.  
**THE SECOND AND FOURTH GRADES** will be taught at St. Andrew's Church.  
**THE THIRD AND FIFTH GRADES** will be taught at the FIRE HOUSE.  
**THE SIXTH, SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES** will be taught at the Community House.

SCHOOL BUSES will run as USUAL except that the central Loading and Unloading point will be the Community House rather than the Center School.... **WITH THIS EXCEPTION:** 2nd, 3rd and 4th Graders will be delivered to St. Andrews and the Fire House, respectively, and will be picked up at these places to be taken home after school.

This information is distributed as a public service by the Kent Publishing Co. The GTD, which refrained from putting out an EXTRA until all plans of the Board of Education and other Town authorities have crystallized, will have a fully comprehensive story - with pictures - in its regular edition this Thursday."

April 21, 1956 "Despite the disastrous fire which gutted the Kent Center School in the predawn hours of Friday, the education of Kent's children will continue without a break. Chairman Walter B. Crosbie of the Board of Education has announced: The FIRST GRADE will be taught in the Lecture Room of the Congregational Church, The Second Grade will be taught at St. Andrews Church, The THIRD and FOURTH Grades will be taught at the FIRE HOUSE. The FIFTH, SIXTH, SEVENTH AND EIGHTH Grades will be taught at the Community House. SCHOOL BUSES will run as USUAL except that the central Loading and Unloading point will be the Community House rather than the Center School.... WITH THIS EXCEPTION: 2nd, 3rd and 4th Graders will be delivered to St. Andrews and the Fire House, respectively, and will be picked up at these places to be taken home after school.

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I do not remember the fire itself, as I was only in first grade at the time. I do remember that I had borrowed my brother's smock for a project at school. It was not the usual old shirt smock, but a real smock that he had been given. I had promised to bring it home that same day, but had forgotten and left it hanging in the coat closet. My brother was upset, but I assured him I would return it the next day of school. Then the school burned, and the smock did not survive the fire. I heard about my failure to bring it home for years after that!

The first graders were housed at the back of the Congregational Church, in what were then the Sunday School rooms. I have no distinct memories of the time spent there.

For second grade, we were at the Kent School Field House. I remember dividers being put up, with maybe two classes being set up there. The playing fields made a lovely place to play at recess. I recall getting a whistle as a gift from someone, and blowing it at recess time. Everyone got in line because they thought it was the recess whistle. The SECOND time I blew it, it was confiscated!

Dianne (Camp) Lang KCS 1963

Kip Armstrong says he learned how to concentrate because of the open partitions separating the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in the Community House. The noise from the other "classrooms" was a distraction to overcome.

Susan Ritchie remembers going from her classroom at the Firehouse to the Milkbar for Coke at lunch time.

**KCS Alum Mike West wrote a long tome about his recollections of that memorable time. While too long to include in its entirety in this issue, we are printing here the parts that concern the fire and its aftermath, and will print the rest in our next issue....**

It was on a Friday in April, 1956, the last day of Spring Vacation of my sixth grade year, and my father awakened me, along with my brothers, Sam and Jim and my sister, Lynn, and marshaled us into the living room. Our home was directly across the Housatonic River from Kent Center School. "Your school is on fire and is already mostly burned down," Dad said. We looked out the windows of our living room and could see through the trees on the high bank of the east shore of the river, the fire trucks, the firefighters still pouring heavy streams of water on the burning and smoking building, hoses snaked about on the ground from the trucks to the firefighters' hands, with one going to the river to feed water to the trucks. We stood there to watch in stunned silence, except for the beginning of a new hope. I don't remember anything of what else we did that day, or Saturday, except gleefully look forward to the extension of the vacation. We weren't allowed to go to the school to gawk, either Saturday or Sunday: "Too dangerous. They don't want you in the way."

On Sunday, my hopes changed. From the pulpits and the gossip vine, the grown-ups announced that school would commence as scheduled on Monday, with classes divided among various buildings including the basement of St. Andrew's church, the upstairs of the Fire House and two levels of the Community Building. At last the Community House would get full use, having been saved mostly for Bingo parties, local play productions, square dances and, downstairs, the crafts room and meeting place for the boy scouts, Swede Nelson and Earl somebody in charge. Scout meetings had to move to an old building just south of Winchester's Drug Store on Route 7. That building, and the store, are long gone now. Hopes for more vacation dashed, I was thoroughly surprised - and impressed - at how much had been done in only two days to prepare for the continuation of classes. Mr. Fritz had painted large plywood boards a bright green and mounted them on big tripods to serve as blackboards, once the paint was thoroughly dry, which occurred by Wednesday of that week. We had brand new text books from the first day.

In sixth grade at the Community Building after the fire, Mr. Keene was still the teacher for the rest of the term, mid-April to mid-June, with the last day of school something of a hoax because we had cleaned out our desks the day before, cleaned the Green Boards and clapped the erasers clean making everything ready for summer vacation. So, on the last day we sat on the lawn in front of the Community Building, where Mr. Keene, sitting against the trunk of one of the big maple trees, his lower legs showing white above his socks because his pant cuffs pulled up a bit from sitting on the ground, told stories for the better part of the morning so that we could get in the required hours to meet the state's 180 days of school schedule.

The next fall, in seventh grade, our class was upstairs on the east side of the partition in the Community Building, with the eighth grade on the other side. Robbie Chase - he of the crazy, mischievous grin - from the eighth grade liked going to the front of the partition to peer around and make mocking faces at us taking our lessons from the stern Miss Sault, whose steel gray hair, brushed straight up from the back of her long, tanned neck, never changed in all the years that I was there. In fact, I never even saw the expression on her face change either, unlike Miss Tracy or Miss Sleighter, and especially not Miss Tobin whose happy countenance and animated mannerisms made her fun to be around, at least until she left to have a baby. We all missed her then. Mrs. Peet filled in for her for the rest of the year, and while she was not Miss Tobin, now Mrs. Ed Kirby, she was a good teacher and good to us.

We still got a full education and had fun, despite the 'hardships' of overhearing noise from the class on the other side of the partition. We even started a class newspaper, The Skool Noos, copied on the mimeograph machine with its good-smelling blue ink. Though it caused something of a tiff between two of our classmates over who should be Editor-In-Chief, the paper was a good project for everyone that participated. I don't recall when it was that we moved into the beautiful new school, with its polished floors and expanded wing for an auditorium. Everything was new except the lower outside walls of the original building, which had been saved, but the bricks were definitely of a different color from the new bricks. It soon took on the familiar smell of a school building with waxed floors, packages of paper, textbooks and, on rainy days the smell of wet clothes and oil cloth raincoats. The playground was modified, with the softball fields and asphalt basketball court moved from in front of the old building to the back, south of the new building.

Classmates back then included: Geraldine Austin, Susan Brown, Andy Chase, Frankie Chase, Peggy Crosbie, Claire Dingman, Susan Gawel, Donna Hall, Danny Jacobowski, Linda Jack, Ted Kingsbury, Roger Peet, Russell Place, Lisby Ritchie, Bobby Rundall, Charles Smith, Helen Swanson, Michael Tanner, Michael West, Gloria Wolinski, until she was kept back for one year

I never have heard any theories about the cause of the fire at our school - and it wasn't me! Then, there were several big fires in the area of the village of Kent, including Blink Potter's house down Schaghticoke at noon one summer day, the original school building of Kent School, also down Schaghticoke and the Kent School farm one winter night, sometime in the '70s.



**HERE'S THE MAN** who built the new school. Joseph Gawel, local contractor was low bidder on the new school construction. Most of the labor and know-how that went into the new school came from Kent.



**GOOD MORNING**, and it was a good morning yesterday for these were among the first pupils to move into the new school here. On the blackboard of Miss Constance Tracy's room is a message telling the children that many of the old class items have also moved into the new school with the

children. Children standing with their teacher under the "Good Morning" greeting are, left to right, Heidi Hyde, Marcia Peet, Ann Bumstead, Cathy Turril, Kay Geddings, Jed Sakren, John Casey, Ricky deVillafranca.



**THERE WERE PLENTY OF SMILES** yesterday as the first pupils moved into the new Kent School. These second graders in Mrs. Mae Maddock's class can't help but show their happy emotions at being back in a real school after nearly a year at attending classes in the Congregational Church lecture room.

Can you identify any of these happy faces?

Do you have any photos of the interior of the *old* school? The classrooms? The gym? The cafeteria?

There was a mural in the lobby, painted by Kent artist Spencer Nichols, in gratitude to the townspeople for rebuilding his house on Studio Hill Road after it burned in the 1930s. Ironically, that mural was lost in the fire of 1956. We'd love to know what it looked like.....!

We have a scanner, so would only need to borrow your photos of they are treasures.

## SCHOOL OPEN





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## The George Laurence Nelson Art Committee

For many years, the KHS was fortunate to have art historian Robert Austin on the Board of Trustees. While doing research for his informative book, *Artists of the Litchfield Hills*, Robert spent countless hours becoming intimately familiar with the treasure trove of George Laurence Nelson's artwork that fills the nooks and crannies of Seven Hearths. He inventoried a good bit of the collection, oversaw the conservation of many important paintings and generally helped us to recognize the status that Nelson once had in the global art world. Robert's retirement left a gaping hole on the board in terms of our Nelson collection. Not long after Robert's departure for warmer climes, the Society completed a Long Range Strategic Plan, part of which focuses on Seven Hearths and its significance as Nelson's home for much of the 20th century. Realizing that there are way too many Colonial House Museums in CT (176 to be exact), we know that we must be able to set 7H apart from the rest. Because of Nelson, we can! In his time he was world famous, even being invited to paint portraits for the King of England, and we want to try to restore his reputation to that level.

In order to do so, we have created the George Laurence Nelson Art Committee, which will be chaired by new KHS Trustee, Bonnie Fremgen, of Sherman. We have also recruited Kent resident Bob Lenz to work with her, and together they already have some exciting ideas about how to proceed. In our next newsletter we will pursue this venture further, so stay tuned. In the meantime, here are some excerpts from Bonnie's and Bob's impressive resumes:

**Bonnie Fremgen**, who recently joined the board, has had extensive art experience. She has studied with several nationally known artists, including Tom Lynch and Tony Couch. She has also studied sculpture at the Detroit Institute of Art. Currently she has focused her art work on botanical paintings, working with Betsy Rogers-Knox of Bethlehem, Connecticut, and has had her botanical paintings included in several art exhibitions. She has been an active member of the Monday morning art group in Kent ever since moving here in 2001.

In addition to her art background, Bonnie is the author of a series of medical textbooks published by Prentice-Hall, including Medical Law and Ethics and Medical Terminology. She has taught business ethics and other business courses at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Detroit, and St. Xavier University in Chicago.

Bonnie is a native of the Chicago area, receiving her doctorate from the University of Illinois in Chicago. Coincidentally, Bob Lenz, who will serve as a very important advisor to the art committee, graduated from the same high school in the Chicago suburbs one year after Bonnie.

As a painting and Fine Arts major at the University of Illinois, **Bob Lenz** exhibited oil and watercolor landscapes and still lifes throughout the Chicago area during the late fifties and early sixties.

Upon graduation he migrated directly to New York City and began a career as an Art Director in the Advertising business at McCann Erickson. In 1979 he, and four other partners, founded an advertising agency named Backer & Spielvogel.

In 1997, after a highly successful career in advertising, Bob retired and returned to his first love, painting; after a 36 year hiatus. Since then he has studied at the Silvermine School of Art in New Canaan, CT, the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League in New York City. Now living in South Kent, CT, and Manhattan, with his wife Carol, he has returned to exhibiting, and has resumed a vital and prolific career as a painter and print maker. Examples of his work can be seen on his web site: [rlenzart.com](http://rlenzart.com). Of his work, he says: "my paintings are not profound, they do not protest, they do not satirize... they are mere expressions of pure joy, because that is the way I feel while painting them, and that is the way I want people to feel while viewing them."

*Welcome Bonnie and Bob! We look forward to this new venture with you!*

# The Kent Historical Society GIFT SHOP

- One Small Town In World War II . . . . . \$25
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- G.L. Nelson Note Cards\* . . . . . \$6 for a packet of 8, or \$1 apiece
  - \*These note cards and "New Life" are done by George Laurence Nelson, noted Kent artist, and previous owner of Seven Hearths
- Photo cards of Seven Hearths . . . . . \$1 each
- Color Copy of 1874 Map of Kent . . . . . \$10 each
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To Order from the Gift Shop:  
 Write to: Bookstore  
 Kent Historical Society  
 PO Box 651  
 Kent, CT 06757 or Call: 860-927-4587



*For mail orders, please include \$5 S&H for One Small Town and \$3 S&H for all others*



## Christmas Open House

For the past 6 years we have been hosting an open house to help kick off the Holiday season in Kent. It is also our chance to say "Thank you" to everyone who has supported us throughout the year, and for all of you to mingle with each other. The Swift House is decorated, the tables are laden with wine and hors d'oeuvres, and everyone always has fun.

So, please plan to join us on Saturday, December 8<sup>th</sup> between 5 and 7 PM at The Swift House for the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Colonial Christmas Celebration (We're taking alliterative liberty here - the colonials in New England didn't celebrate Christmas). Admission is free, but of course donations are always welcome. We also always enjoy the savory goodies that many people like to bring - so make your favorite finger food and surprise us!

See you on the 8<sup>th</sup>!

# KHS NEWS, continued

## A New Face in Our Office

As many of you may know by now, we have a new Assistant Director. In 2006, thanks to a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council, with matching funds provided by generous KHS members, we were able to create a second part-time staff position to help with the increasing workload of our energized, ever-growing society (see “Welcome New Members” on page 4). We hired Dawn Stone, who had been volunteering with our clerical jobs for some time. Dawn worked very hard for a year, learning the Past Perfect museum software program (not an easy process), and beginning to bring order out of the chaos that seems to follow me wherever I go. But Dawn has a very special talent that unfortunately lies outside of the KHS. As her letter of resignation states, “After working with the KHS a year, I have decided to devote more time to some of the elder individuals in our community who seek my assistance. Therefore, at this time I will have to give up the position as Assistant Director. I look forward to resuming as a volunteer once again when time allows. Many thanks, Dawn Stone.” Dawn is a dedicated companion to several of Kent’s elder residents. She cherishes her time with them, and when the opportunity arose to spend more time each week with her favorite elder, she logically said yes. That meant saying no to us. But she stops in periodically to say hello, and someday will be back to help out at the computer.

But I like to look for a silver lining in every cloud, and in this case I found a bright one! Her name is Lisby Ritchie, and she has already made me wonder how I ever got along without her. Picking up with gusto where Dawn left off, Lisby has mastered the basics of Past Perfect, caught up with a 2 year backlog of acquisitions paperwork, quickly learned the names of the frequent visitors to our office, and accomplishes every little job assigned to her with a sunny smile on her face. Undaunted by the complexity and busyness of our Swift House quarters, especially on Tuesday mornings, Lisby is clearly tapping into her years of work experience (19 years in the Princeton University Annual Giving office where she was the office manager, processor of all gifts of securities to the University, and assistant to the Director of AG - there were about 25 people in the department and she supervised 11 support staff). When she retired they replaced her with 2 people, and I can sure see why!

Lisby is living proof that the old saw “You can’t go home again” has no teeth! Lisby happily spent the first 12 years of her life as a “faculty brat” at Kent School. Though very sad when she had to move away, she has managed to reestablish contact with several of her childhood pals now that she is back in Kent. Several of them gathered recently at the Fife and Drum (Roger Peet, Peggy Crosbie Seneca, Sue Gawel, Jan Pacocha Weiss, Donna Hall) for a small reunion. Apparently, they had lots of laughs and plan to get together again soon. If walls could talk – the stories we’d hear (maybe I’ll sneak in next time and hide a tape recorder!)

So please stop by and welcome Lisby to our fold. Set a spell, swap stories and get to know this great new addition to our team.

## Kent Historical Society

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**Hours** at the Swift House  
Tuesdays 9 AM to Noon, Fridays 1 to 4 PM,  
Saturdays by appointment

This newsletter was designed by Lynne Hicks,  
and is compiled by Marge McAvoy,  
& sponsored by Moore & More Printing, Millerton, NY

## Kent Quiz

**Where was the first building to  
house the Congregational Church?**

**Answer to the last quiz:**

Maggie Wells correctly answered that when  
Todd Tufts of Automatic Sign Co. restored the  
old podium used at Town Meetings and other  
events, he added teats on  
the cow. Thank you, Mag-  
gie.

Still need ne

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