



Kent Historical Society Newsletter

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December 2021

Season's Greetings!



This lovely sketch by Laurence Nelson is a recent gift to us from a kind man named Mark Skelley, who found the original at an estate sale in Albany. He took the time to research it to find out who Laurence was, and then mailed it to us. It was a complete surprise, and a great way to celebrate the holidays here at the Kent Historical Society. We will miss greeting you at our beloved party at the Swift House, and hope we can gather together there next year.

We wish you all a happy, healthy and safe holiday season this year!

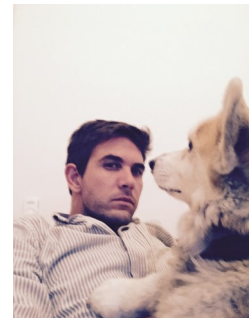
NEWS FROM TALLMAN HOUSE

We are delighted to welcome two new members to the Board of Trustees! Daniel Pereira and Robert Carey are fairly new residents of Kent, who have already developed great affection for our town and for the Society. They are volunteering on our committees and coming up with fresh ideas. Each has been asked to share a bit for this newsletter about himself which we think you will enjoy. We are very grateful to both of these busy men for giving their time to us.



Robert Cary has kept a home in Kent since 2018 but his affection for the town goes back to his first visit over 25 years ago. His interest in history and preservation was sparked by his move into a pre-Revolutionary home in Fairfield over a decade ago, and he looks forward to helping the Kent Historical Society continue its mission to collect, preserve and present the rich history of the area. Robert is a playwright, lyricist and screenwriter, and he shares his home in Kent with his husband, Jonathan Tolins, his children Selina and Henry, and his mother, Kim.

Born and raised in Hawaii, attending college and starting his career as an interior decorator in Los Angeles, and now living in New York City and Kent, Daniel Pereira brings unique passion for design and commitment to historical preservation to the Kent Historical Society. Daniel first delved into historical preservation while leading the restoration of a decaying Art Deco apartment building in the Hancock Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, bringing the 1929 building back to life. After moving to the East Coast in 2014, Daniel and his husband Andrew purchased an 18th Century eyebrow colonial on Kent Hollow Road that they were attracted to how much of its interior and exterior integrity it maintains. The home, which was owned by the family that constructed it for almost 200 years, promises to be a lifelong passion for Daniel. On any given day feel free to drive by and say hi to Daniel and his two Pembroke Welsh Cor-gis, the distinctly stalwart Toro and the irresistible, irrepressible Lambert.



Daniel & Ginger

There has been a change in the staff at Tallman House as well. After working here for four years, first as Assistant Director than as Executive Director, Patrice Galterio has resigned to focus on her art career. We thank her for her hard work, and wish her well as she gets her creative juices going again.

We have begun the search for a new Director. In the meantime, Marge Smith is covering some of the Director duties, with help from our former Assistant Director Lyn Stirnweiss. Our treasurer Sharon Cipolla has been an enormous help with other aspects of the job. **Thank you, Lyn and Sharon!!** We look forward to getting back to normal soon, but in the meantime, we really appreciate your support and patience! We are doing our best to answer emails and phone calls as quickly as possible, and hope to be able to resume programming eventually.

The good news is that the office is open again! We are here for you on Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons. We ask that you wear a mask if you are not fully vaccinated, and we look forward to seeing you!

SUMMER AT SEVEN HEARTHS

Because of Covid, we began the summer thinking we wouldn't be able to open at all. Jeff spent much of the spring and early summer continuing his paint removal project. The south parlor is a challenge, but he is making great progress, and it really looks good. The various layers of paint still visible are fascinating, and help to tell the story of the house. He also was able to get seven ancient windows repaired and back in order.

In late June, with the infection rates going down, we realized that maybe we COULD open up, but the big question was "With what?" There wasn't time to pull together an informative history exhibit such as we have in the past, so we had to get creative. Jeff and Marge had spent a good bit of the lockdown time going through our two collections storage areas, trying to consolidate the contents of various boxes in order to free up more space on the shelves. We actually found items that we hadn't seen before, as well as some that we rarely look at. It hit us that that might be a good theme for an easy-to-mount small exhibit. It worked! "Found in Collection" was a success! People enjoyed seeing some of the treasures we have, and probably also welcomed the small amount of reading that had to be done. We know we can get carried away with telling big stories that requires visitors to stand and read, but, really, that is our job - telling Kent's history. Still, this was a fun respite for all of us, and we will do it again. Here are scenes of just a few of the displays of hidden treasures we created.



THANK YOU TO OUR LOYAL EXHIBIT VOLUNTEERS!

Our heartfelt thanks go to our exhibit docents, without whom we would never be able to open Seven Hearths. Many of our stalwarts returned: Bill & Catherine Bachrach, Darlene Brady, Roger Gonzales, Fran Goodsell, Karen Ianucci, Charlotte Lindsey and Lisa Weinblatt. Two new volunteers joined the ranks: our board member Guy Peterson, and Merryall resident Frank Tosto, who immediately signed up to sit EVERY SUNDAY! As a former docent at the busy American Folk Art Museum in New York, Frank showed immense patience while waiting for the much less frequent visitors to our tiny little corner of New England. We are very grateful for his new loyalty. A huge shout out goes to Nancy Schaefer for her countless hours of help in setting up the various costumes in the exhibit. There is no way we could have displayed so many lovely garments without her expertise and great sense of humor. **Thank you all!**

Farewell to a Dear Friend, by Marge Smith

Thursday, May 27, 2021, was a sad day for the town and for the Historical Society. Susi Casey Williams-Wyman passed away at her home on Lane Street. Susi's contributions to the KHS were endless. She volunteered whenever and wherever she was needed; served on the board, even as president, for many years; answered historical questions from her incredible memory and left us a nice bequest in her will. I was honored to give one of the eulogies at her memorial service. Here are some excerpts:

My friendship with Sooz goes back so far that I don't really recall when it began. Probably at South Kent School, where I grew up and where she was a Faculty Wife while her husband Jan was teaching there in the late 70s...The membership of the KHS was at a dangerously low level when I first began volunteering in the late 90s, and board president Emily Hopson was wondering what to do with the assets of the Society when it folded. "WHEN", not "IF"! I wanted to start a newsletter to see if we could get some new members. Miss Hopson wasn't interested, but Susi said, "Let's do it! I'll pay for it!" We did, and it worked. Our membership has been growing ever since, thanks to Susi's generosity.

Susi's mother and sister had been among the founders of the society, and she was proud of that. She loved her hometown, its history, its people and its everyday doings. Her recall of past events was encyclopedic, and she answered every history question I ever asked her with many a story and a good bit of harmless gossip tossed in for good measure, all with that irrepressible laugh and twinkle in her eye. That became one of our favorite past-times! She loved to laugh, and to make other people laugh. [Her daughter] Margie and I were looking at pictures a couple of weeks ago, and kept coming back to one of Sooz and Art Seabury. Those two were looking at a photo, and just busting each other up over some story about it – good gossip, I have no doubt. It's one of my favorites.

Losing Susi, Ky Anderson and Fran Johnson in the last three years has been a huge blow to the KHS. Their combined knowledge of the history of our town can never be matched. Their loyalty to and support of our little nonprofit was a true gift. Three strong women, with vastly different personalities, left an imprint on us that I hope will never fade. I miss them all every day.



Above left: Susi volunteering at one of our Husking Bees at the Community House



Above right: Art Seabury and Susi in his office at the Sewer Plant.

5 Bridge Street in Bygone Days



The annual Kent Gingerbread Festival is in full swing! One place where you can go to see the beautiful creations is at 5 Bridge Street. Recently the home of Backcountry Outfitters and Annie Bananie Ice Cream, and soon to be Kent Wine & Spirit, the site has an interesting history.

Above are photos of two buildings that stood, one after the other, on the site.

Francis Atwater, in his 1897 *History of Kent*, described the older one: "The old house is supposed to have been the oldest one in town. It was demolished in 1895. A Dr. Raymond lived there a long time ago. After him John McCoy operated it as a hotel. Next Asa Slade lived in it and kept a store in one part. This was in the time of the famous Maine law and Slade used to sell an equally famous 'Schiedam Schnapps' for sickness. When a customer wished to buy, he would say, 'I suppose it is for sickness.' The reply was usually in the affirmative. After Slade, Frederick Mallory lived there until his death in 1895." Mrs. Mallory apparently had run a hat shop there at one point as well.

The shingled building in the other photo was built as a pharmacy by Dr. Walter C. Barnum, who built the beautiful Victorian house on the corner. After Dr. Barnum died, it was taken over by Mr. Winchester, who continued it as a drug store. Many young people in Kent had jobs working the counter at Winchester's, and the porch was a favorite after-school hangout. It finally was torn down and replaced by the double bank described in the Festival's poster at left.

If you have any stories about Winchester's, we'd love to hear them!




The former site of Barnum's Pharmacy. This building was torn down around 1958 to make way for the current building you see now.

Why does this building have a drive-through window?

This building was built for Colonial Bank & Trust and New Milford Bank & Trust in 1959. One was on the left side and one was on the right. There was a wall separating them that had a big glass display case in it. A collection of old cast iron mechanical coin banks was visible from both sides. All the kids loved to look at them! The eagle above the door is original, and is thought to represent the "Colonial" idea. Original both sides of the building had a drive-through window.

Did you know there are 3 giant room-sized safes in this building!

Thank you to Curator Marge Smith and John Casey for the details of this history lesson.

Poster in the Gingerbread Fest window



Kent Historical Society

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Become a member!
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**Please remember the Kent Historical Society
in your will or estate plan.
We are incredibly grateful for the visionary
donors who have remembered us.**



Our Mission:

We are a donor-supported nonprofit organization. Our mission is to collect, preserve, interpret and present the rich history of Kent as well as to provide educational and research material to enrich the public understanding of Kent's artistic and cultural heritage.

Kent Historical Society

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Officers

Jeffrey Morgan, Acting President
Sharon Cipolla, Treasurer; Allan Priaulx, Secretary

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Deborah Chabrian, Kent Freeman, Roger Gonzales,
Melanie Marks, Guy Peterson, Daniel Pereira, Rob Cary

Curator/Archivist ~ Marge Smith

Hours at Tallman House at 10 Studio Hill Road
Tuesdays 9am - noon, Fridays 1 - 4pm
or by appointment.

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