



Kent Historical Society Newsletter

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Kent, Connecticut

June 2019

The Benefit Reception - A Fabulous Affair!

The 100/100 Benefit Reception was so named to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of GLN buying his majestic Seven Hearths home in 1919. And it was quite a celebration! Hosted by our Vice President Jeffrey Morgan and his husband Robert Couturier at their magical estate on Spectacle Lake, you really could not go wrong... The stage was set, the golf carts engines running, the weather, perfection; the passed hors d'oeuvres, exceptional and the spirits just put the icing on it all. As the sunsets over Spectacle Lake we say au revoir to a fabulous evening.



Above: Board members Roger Gonzalez, Allan Priaulx and his wife Jackie Markham.

Middle: Sunset over Spectacle Lake.

*Top right: Todd Porterfield and our Vice President and host, Jeffrey Morgan
Bottom right: Robert Couturier our host, with one of his babies, Dora!*



A Fabulous Affair...



*Photo above left: The GLN lithographs for silent auction
Left: (from left to right) Dan Alitowski, Chris Naples,
Amy Cheek and Paula Caceci. Enjoying the company
and the ambiance!*

*Above: (top) Wendy Murphy giving the thumbs up and
chatting it up with Jordan Jacobs*

*Above: (bottom) Benoit Bolduc and Edward Sadtler
both new members*



Photo top: The guests partying on the terrace

Photo above: Board member, Kent Freeman

Top right: Levon Olgang serenading us with great music for the evening

Right: Bonnie Hinkle (GLN's granddaughter) with her daughter Kerry Barrett and her granddaughter Avery Barrett - all saying farewell to a fab evening!

The Prolific Mr. Ransom: Fuller, Soldier, Father and Judge

by Marge Smith and Jeffrey Morgan

Our research journey around the Flanders neighborhood has given us a chance to become more familiar with the personal lives of Kent's founders. While some of the Proprietors bought land simply as an investment, never intending to set foot here, others saw a move to Kent as a chance to prosper off the land itself. One such early arrival was John Ransom of Colchester, who bought Lot 13 in 1738 from absentee owner Thomas Tozer. In 1740, he bought lots 8 and 9 from absentee Philip Caverly, followed at some point by lot 10, also from Caverly. Prosper he did! By the time John Ransom, Esq, died in 1797, his large holdings included a fulling mill, a hattery and a clothing shop as well as at least one dwelling, a barn and a hog house. This all was situated at and around the corner of Cobble Lane and Cobble Road on over 150 acres, though we don't know (yet) where his house actually stood. In addition to this area, he also owned a grist mill and a saw mill up in East Kent, which he had bought from Sylvanus Hatch.

By all accounts, Ransom was an honorable, humble and respected leader of town. He held many public offices over his long career, ranging from the lowly "Brander of Horses" to Constable, Justice of the Peace and finally Selectman. He signed himself "John Ransom, Esq" which indicates that he practiced law too. As JP, Ransom wielded great power as the civil authority of Kent, holding court "at his house by his fulling mill" according to

documents still in the Kent Town Hall. Author Charles Grant says in *Democracy in the Frontier Town of Kent Connecticut* that Ransom's cases were small, mostly involving "a hodgepodge of town quarrels" including a "spiteful dog" with a flock of sheep, and an attack by one resident with "clubs, fists and swords" on the body of another.

On rare occasion, he found himself to be the

violin of the law, as we documented in our exhibit *The Founders of Kent*. In June of 1775, an ad appeared in the Connecticut Journal in New Haven, in which John Ransom publicly admitted to "inadvertently using that detestable and obnoxious vegetable called East-India Tea" and that he had "much injured the cause of Justice and Liberty" in so doing. His sad confession was the result of his being caught by a local Committee of Inspection, under the authority of the Non-Consumption Agreements, which were

Personally appeared John Ransom, Esq; of Kent, and acknowledged himself guilty of a Breach of the Non Consumption Agreement of the Association, in drinking of Bobca Tea, and made the following Retraction :

I JOHN RANSOM, of Kent, being sensible of my being guilty of a Breach of the Non-Consumption Agreement of the Association, in once inadvertently using that detestable and obnoxious Vegetable, called East-India Tea ; now being fully persuaded of its being a Breach of a just Rule which ought to be kept as sacred as any Institution of Man whatever, to secure the Liberties of the oppressed Americans ; and am sensible I have done wrong in so doing, and have much injur'd the Cause of Justice and Liberty, which has given me the greatest Uneasiness, as I hold myself a staunch Friend to the Common Cause of America ; and ask Forgiveness of the Public, and desire this may be published in the public Gazette.
April 24th, 1775. JOHN RANSOM

a part of the 1774 Declarations and Resolves of the First Continental Congress. Known as Articles of Association, they proposed a boycott of goods produced in Britain and its colonies, which certainly included East India tea, and also provided extensively for the correct conduct of colonists during the boycott. As Kent's long time Justice of the Peace, Ransom surely should have known better. But tea is caffeine, and caffeine is addictive, so the elderly gentleman must have had quite a struggle with his conscience!

His disgrace was fleeting. He continued to serve his town and his country with distinction, serving as Kent's Representative to the Connecticut General Assembly and rising to the rank of Lieutenant in the Continental Army in the Revolution. After the war, he returned to Kent - to his mill and his courtroom in his house next door. John Ransom, Esq, was a loving family man as well. His first marriage to Bethia Lewis produced 11 children, and his second wife (according to descendant Wyth C. Ransom) bore him 11 more. His affection for his family is clearly expressed in real estate deeds such as the one in which he gave his son Robert land in appreciation for Robert's great care of his ailing younger brother Benjamin. In his will, Ransom leaves a specific room in his house and a "convenient garden spot between my house and the fulling mill" to his "well beloved wife Rebekah." In spite of this large family he had to feed and clothe, his probate reveals a comfortable life with possessions such as a brass clock, 3 feather beds, a baize-lined serge cloak, a striped vest, 2 checked linen shirts, a pale blue coat, a bible and several other books, a pair of spectacles and a great

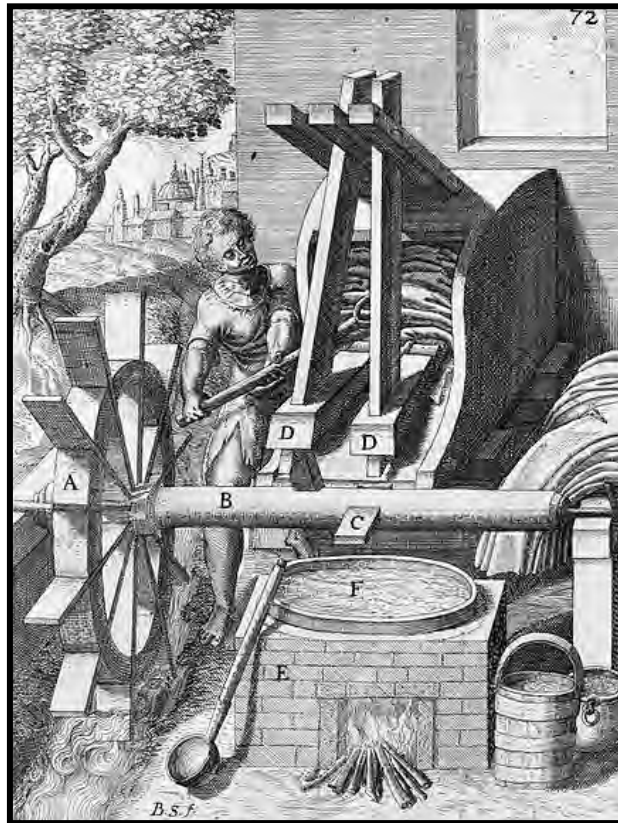


Image top: Fulling Mill Mechanism. Image above: Fulfilled fabric being stretched on tenter hooks

chair. These personal belongings represent his own portion of a multi-generational household.

The inventory and various deeds also give us a clear image of his industrial holdings, the principle of which was his fulling mill - used in the preparation of wool cloth. The items include a brass dye kettle; a plate, press, screw and box (for embossing designs on wool); clothiers shears; tenter hooks; weights and other rigging and an iron crowbar. Probably much of the wool that was worn by early Kent residents was processed here. The people would have spun and woven the wool at home and then brought it to Ransom to be de-oiled with fuller's earth and then stretched on tenter-hooks - but that's a topic for another story! The mill itself

was on the banks of Cobble Brook just about 50 feet east of where it crosses under Cobble Road. It's now a private residence.

John and Bethiah Ransom are buried in Good Hill cemetery, where his epitaph speaks well for him: "His faith was strong, his love was pure His heart was patient to endure Affliction's keenest rod The holy law was his delight And twas his study day and night To serve and please his God."

Curator's Corner

by Marge Smith

A lot has happened in my corner since our last newsletter! The Belfor team kicked us completely out of Tallman House in March so that they could remove the damaged and moldy sheetrock in the Art & Archives Storage space and scrub the air in the whole building. Then they rebuilt the walls and art storage bins, giving us a bright clean space again.

Meanwhile, Patrice and I set up a makeshift "office" in the kitchen at Seven Hearths so that we could continue the necessities of running your historical society. The Collections Committee was forced to take a break for a couple of months because we couldn't access the collections at all. Finally, after what seemed like forever, we are back in business! The artwork is tucked safely in the bins, and the archives boxes are not only back on their shelves but are also sorted and stored in much more logical order than ever before.

To celebrate, we have applied for a grant from the Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board and the CT State Library to hire a consultant to guide us through the proper processing of the large Marie Camp



Collection of Kent history documents. Keep your fingers crossed! We've never been given a large archival collection before, and - while I know the basics of handling such a quantity of items - there's much that I want to learn about the best way to do it. So with the expert guidance of museum consultant Moira Conlon, the Collections Committee is planning to tackle the job this summer.

At the same time, as I reported in my last column, we're getting ready for a double exhibit at Seven Hearths during July and August. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Laurence Nelson's purchase of Seven Hearths, we'll showcase some of his work that you've never seen before. It will include the very touching portrait of his brother (shown here) that we just acquired at auction a few weeks ago, and the heartbreaking story behind it will be told in the exhibit. The Fur Trading Post will also feature things that are new - walls, stairs, furniture and a variety of pelts all in place to make Daniel Beebe's shop come to life. We hope to see you there!



Volunteers Needed



We are having an exciting GLN art exhibit at Seven Hearths (see story) and we need docents! Saturdays and Sundays in July and August 1-4 - Thanks in advance!

For more information: call us at 860-927-4587, or email curator@kenthistoricalsociety.org.

...WE THANK YOU!



Goodbye to two pillars of Kent history

Small towns like Kent usually have a handful of people at any given moment who are known and loved by everyone who crosses their path.

Our community has lost two pillars of the history that makes up our town.

Ky Anderson has volunteered for KHS for over ten years – coming in faithfully twice a week to clip



newspaper stories, stuff envelopes and do whatever else we needed done. For the last few years, her focus has been on photocopying decades' worth of news clippings onto acid-free paper. But she was much more than a mundane scissor-wielder!

Having lived for over 90 years at her beloved family

horse farm – Anderson Acres in Kent Hollow – Ky was an extraordinary repository of so much Kent history! She and her sister Clare taught riding to generations of Kent kids and some adults. There wasn't much about Kent – past and present – that Ky didn't know!

We were so lucky to have Ky working quietly along side us. She shared stories and answered questions. Ky gave us one last chuckle, too. She had made it clear to her family that she wanted no memorial service and *no obituary!* The last major task that she had assigned for herself was to organize, photocopy and file a large collection of obits! She stuck to it doggedly for months, growling that it seemed like it would never end. But she did finish it so we're sure that she can rest easy now, and that she was happy that no obituary of hers was going to be added to anyone else's endless to-do list. *Ave atque vale*, dear Ky!

Francelia Cota Johnson peacefully passed away on April 9, 2019. She was a force of nature!

Fran's world was her family and her decades of documenting the history of Kent and supporting the Kent Historical Society, of which she was long-time President. She stopped by the office every day that it was open, kept track of our expenses in her



neat handwriting, helped Curator Marge Smith learn the more obscure stories of the town's past, and taught her a few tricks in deciphering 18th century script and vocabulary. Not a day goes by that we don't wish we could still turn to her for historical answers!

In addition to her various other municipal duties, Fran proudly served as Town Historian for 20 years. She authored 2 books on Kent history: *A Register of Some of the Families that have lived in Kent, CT 1739-1999* and *One Small Town in World War II: Kent, Connecticut*, which she did in collaboration with Charlotte Lindsey. She was one of the key people behind the Veterans Memorial on Maple Street. She knew almost every gravestone in Kent from the first settlement on, because she visited every cemetery and noted the stones. Fran was brilliant at using vague old maps along with modern soil surveys and topographical maps to accurately determine where roads, pastures, and ponds would have been. That skill was a huge help in her ability to understand old deeds. And she was generous in sharing how she did it. Rest well, Fran. We are all the better for your work and will try to do you proud as time goes by and research goes on.





Kent Historical Society

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

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