

# CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 30, No. 2

Fall 2007

## PROGRAM

### Monday, September 24, 7:30 PM

#### **"Antiques as Art"**

**Gene Coppa**

Gene Coppa is a highly respected antiques dealer and appraiser from Farmington. He specializes in 18th and 19th century American country furniture, paintings, and household items. He tells us he did his first show in 1973, and that he has done over 800 shows since. During his talk, Gene will display antiques from his own home, discuss how they were made, and how they were turned into "art." It should be a fun and fascinating program.

### Monday, October 22, 7:30 PM

#### **"Air Force Ground Operations During WW II"**

**Russell Baril**

Russell Baril served in the Squadron Operations section of a heavy bomber group in the Eighth Air Force (England) from May 1943—July 1945. He will talk about ground operations during the critical days in 1943 when the outcome of the daylight operations against Germany was highly in doubt.

A Cheshire resident, Russ taught public school (Social Science) in New Haven for 33 years. He is a founder and active member of the Army Air Force Roundtable of CT and a member of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and the 94th Bomb Group Memorial Association.

### Monday, November 26, 7:30 PM

#### **"Ives Farm History and Vision for Its Future"**

**Tim Slocum**

Tim Slocum, a past president and long-time active member of the Cheshire Land Trust, is now chairman of its Farm Subcommittee. He will tell us about the rich history of the Ives Farm since 1867 and the Land Trust's exciting plans for its future. You will hear how the Land Trust is borrowing some lessons from the past to help sustain this Cheshire Street landmark well into the 21st century.

## Fall Calendar

Sept. 17	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
Sept. 22	Saturday 2:30 p.m.	Moss Family Visit
Sept. 24	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker
Sept. 29	Saturday 9 a.m.—3 p.m. 11 a.m.—2 p.m.	Antiques & Collectibles Sale (rain cancels) House open to public
Oct. 14	Sunday 2—4 p.m.	DAR Meeting "History of Collection"
Oct. 15	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
Oct. 22	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker
Nov. 19	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
Nov. 26	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker

*Eff. Sept 9, the Hitchcock-Phillips House will be open to the public every Sunday afternoon, 2—4 p.m., through the end of May except Easter and the Sunday after Christmas.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members:

I hope your summer went well. I enjoyed mine, but it was too short.

Certain parts of the interior of the Society are in need of paint and perhaps other minor attention. I would like to form a work party to accomplish this. If any of you are willing to help, please call me and we'll work out a date and time (203-271-2378).

The Society is making an introductory DVD, which will be shown to people or groups before they begin their tour of our house. It will be short,

*(continued on p. 3)*

# Update on Great Fill & Stone Arch Culvert

*The following article is from Society member Jeanné Chesanow, who has been actively concerned about the future of this historic section of the Farmington Canal.*

Most Cheshire residents are familiar with Lock 12, but there is another little known and unusual section of the Farmington Canal in the north end of Cheshire. The Great Fill, built in 1826, is an elevated section of the Canal, along which boats traveled over the Ten Mile River.

Workmen moved by hand approximately 200,000 cubic yards of sand to form this 40-foot-high hill. Constructing this thousand-foot-long embankment saved the expense and labor of building and operating ten locks. Along the top of the Great Fill was the canal bed and the towpath where mules pulled the boats along the shallow waterway.

The culvert beneath the Fill is 165 feet long and faced with a cut stone arch on either end. This tunnel was built on top of a submerged foundation of chestnut timbers. The stone arches, one on each end, were made of hand-cut native stone and joined with hydraulic cement manufactured in Southington. The stone arches were set in place around wooden forms which were then removed. Of eight major Canal culverts, built 181 years ago, this is the only one to survive.

## Damage in April 16 Storm

During the April 16, 2007 storm, the Ten Mile River rose over the top of the culvert and washed away part of the Great Fill. Part of the roof of the culvert tunnel collapsed near the northeast end. Some of the embankment sand fell through the hole, partially obstructing the culvert tunnel and probably causing a backup of water that further eroded the Fill. The historic stone arches and tunnel still stand in spite of the storm damage but need repair.

A few weeks after this storm, the town dug a new culvert through the Great Fill, about 500 feet north of the historic culvert, to divert the highest

waters in a storm. Now the old aqueduct will not have to bear the entire brunt of rushing storm waters trying to pass through its archways.

## Proposed Plan for Area

Proposed for this parcel, in a recently submitted application, is an area of stores, restaurants and a cinema off Route 10, east of the Ten Mile River. West of the river would be a hotel and an apartment complex. The proposed plan, dated August 2, 2007, can be seen online at [shoppesatcheshire.com](http://shoppesatcheshire.com). Full plans can be seen in the Planning Office, Town Hall. As part of this proposal, there is a "Canal Path" located on top of the Great Fill and aqueduct and mention of repairs to the historic structures. The details of the proposed construction for this entire area will be discussed in the weeks to come in public hearings and in the press.

Because the entire CT portion of the Farmington Canal is on the National Register of Historic Places, preservationists want to be assured that the repairs of the culvert and Fill will be done correctly under the guidance of an archeological consultant. Representatives of CT Trust for Historic Preservation have visited the site and have met with the developer in an effort to preserve the historic structures in an appropriate setting.

Speaking only for myself, I find merit in the suggestion that an unpaved trail together with the river, including very wide forested riverbanks and floodplains, be a public park with a conservation easement placed upon it. This barebones proposal, if fleshed out, could help protect the river, provide recreation, and preserve history -- all in a beautiful setting.

Jeanné Chesanow  
August 25, 2007

***Proposed plan for  
area can be  
seen online at  
[shoppesatcheshire.com](http://shoppesatcheshire.com)***

## New Secretary

**Eleanor Verner has accepted the job of CHS Secretary following the resignation of Barbara Christoff. Thank you for stepping up, Eleanor! Also, many thanks to Barbara for her four years of service as Secretary!**

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- **Banquet lamp** with yellow-tinted, china ball shade and marble-and-brass base, a gift to Richard and Helena (Talmadge) Williams for their wedding, Oct. 16, 1901. The lamp was wired for electricity for their 50th wedding anniversary in 1951.  
*Gift from their grandson, Raymond Verner, and his wife Eleanor, Cheshire*
- **Large baby doll, c. 1920**, originally from Ives Farm, Cheshire  
*Gift from Robert and Michelle Porter, Poway, CA. He is a great nephew of the late Betty Ives.*
- **Two brown "Bennington" door knobs** and a vintage, **black ceramic door knob**.  
*Gift from Bob Cawood, Cheshire*
- **The Hitchcock Chair** by John Tarrant Kenney (Potter, Inc., New York), 1971.  
*Gift from the Cheshire Land Trust Board of Directors in appreciation for Edwin M. Kania's years of service on the Land Trust board*
- **Lithograph of the "Irish Brigade"** (28th Mass. Vols.) at Fredericksburg. Painted in 2002 by artist Don Troiani, Southbury  
*Gift from Edward and Gayle Kushner, Cheshire Ed posed for one of the figures.*
- **Christmas advertising brochure** for "Toy Town", distributed by DeBorde's Variety Store,

### President's Message *(continued from p. 1)*

perhaps six or seven minutes. Mary Ellen Kania is heading the project. Rick Smith has volunteered his talents as photographer/editor and Josiah Rowe is narrator. You can follow their progress on Rick's website: [www.budgetproductions.us/IntroductionHPHouse.html](http://www.budgetproductions.us/IntroductionHPHouse.html)

As always, the Society is seeking donations of items for display in the house or to sell in the boutique. If any of you have anything that you would like to donate, please call me at the above number.

We have some very interesting programs coming up this season, and I hope to see you.

Marshall K. Robinson  
President.



**THIS VINTAGE DOLL** has traveled to California and back. Last summer, after Betty Ives' great nephew and two great nieces divided the Ives Farm household items, great nephew Bob Porter and his wife, Michelle, took her to California for their children. In the spring, the Society was thrilled by an e-mail informing us that the Por-

ter children had decided the doll "really belonged in Cheshire." She arrived by mail in May. After a "beauty stop" with Curator Warren VanAlmkerk, she is now enjoying life in the Toy Room. Warren says that she is about 80 years old, but that her little shoes are "real shoes" and "much older."

Cheshire, Conn. (c. 1940)

*Gift from Elizabeth M. Hyland, Cheshire*

- **Glass 5,000 Years** by Hugh Tait (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York), 1991 and **The Glass Gaffers of New Jersey** by Adeline Pepper (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York), 1971.  
*Gift from Connie Field, Cheshire*
- **Auger and metal container of hand-made nails**, handed-down from the late Harvey Boutwell's family in New Hampshire.  
*Gift from Peg Boutwell, Cheshire*
- **Collection of Abraham Lincoln books and memorabilia** that belonged to the late Frank Spurr (1921-2005) of Waterbury.  
*Gift from his daughter, Trudy Mason, Cheshire*
- **Two pairs of baby shoes** worn by Alida Durand (b. 1862) of Cheshire's "Five Musical Durands"; **1/3 quart milk bottle** and cap from Borgeson's Dairy, Waterbury; copy of **Old Historic Homes of Cheshire**, Edwin R. Brown, 1895.  
*Gift from Rose Borgeson, Cheshire. Her late husband, Harry Borgeson Jr., was a great nephew of Alida Durand.*

### Welcome, New Members!

Mrs. Shirley Brady, 224 Preston Road  
Mrs. Martha Connolly, 250 Cornwall Ave.

## More Titus Moss Letters, Two Letters Written by Jennette, New Pictures Are Found Among 1960s Gifts

While working on the Society collection, Curators Mary Ellen Kania and Kathleen Connolly have located 12 more Civil War letters written by Titus Moss to his wife Jennette; three letters from Titus to other family members; two letters from Jennette to Titus; and three new Moss photographs. Mary Ellen found the letters while examining the papers which had belong to Titus's older sister, Hannah Moss Humiston. They were given to the Society in 1969 by her granddaughter, Helen Williams Hastie Bristol. Kathleen came across Jennette's photograph (our first!) and two new photos of Titus in a Hastie family photograph album, donated to the Society by Mr. John Hastie of New Haven in 1968.

### New Information on Little Emma

The new letters from Titus were written in late March and April 1963. Although interesting, they add little to the information in the 32 letters already transcribed. However, Jennette's two letters to "My Dear Husband", dated Apr. 26 and Apr. 28, 1863, do give new insight into her life and the health of their little daughter Emma, who died in 1864. Titus was killed on the last day of the Battle of Chancellorsville, May 3, 1863, so the letters could not have reached him. They may have been delivered to Company A in Virginia after his death and brought back to the family by one of the Cheshire "boys."

On Sunday, Apr.26, Jennette wrote:

"Dear little Emma is lying in my lap very sick. Yesterday morning she seemed quite comfortable and ate a very good breakfast. Very soon after, she seemed to feel bad and continued to grow worse, and I was alarmed about her and sent for Emerett (wife of Titus' younger brother, Julius). She came up and we very soon decided to send for Dr. He came out between 3 and 4. Said the trouble was in the throat, and she has some cold...He has been out this morning and says he likes her looks better than he did yesterday... It is diphtheria. She is lying on the bed now and I am sitting beside her. She says she wishes mama would tell Papa that she did have her throat washed finally. It is a hard job for Mother and her to swab it, and I am afraid I cannot be as thorough as it ought to be...

"Church is out and I must stop for now. Father came this way from church and Howard (son) has gone over home with

him. He was pleased with the idea. I shall miss him but Dr. said he must not get very near to Emma, and it is next to impossible to keep him from her if he is here..."

On Tuesday, Apr.28, she wrote:

"I am sitting in our bedroom now with Emma in my arms....Dr. has been out this morning. Says her throat is comparatively well. I fear from what he does say he is afraid she is not going to gain as fast as I was in hopes she might if her throat got better. He says she is not very strong constitution and whooping cough had reduced her pretty well... (She) wants Howard to come home. I don't blame her for wanting to see him for I do. I expected to send him to school next Monday but have not as yet been able to make him any clothes which he will (need) before going.

"I do feel anxious about the dear little creature. Have written to you just as she is near as I can. Hope you may hear good news but as you said by Frank (a cousin serving with Titus, who died Mar. 17 ) I knew you would rather hear that she was very sick than to hear bad news suddenly.

"Good morning. From you aff. wife Jennette"

The new photos are with the Titus Moss exhibit in the case in the Exhibit Room. The newly located letters are stored with other original Moss documents in the office files.



**PHOTO OF JENNETTE MOSS**, wife of Civil War soldier Titus Moss, was located by Assistant Curator Kathleen Connolly in a Hastie family photograph album stored in our third floor "archives."

**ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**April 2006—March 2007**

If you require  
 specific information  
 about our financial statement  
 please contact our Treasurer,  
 Ed Kania, available at e-mail:  
 edwinkania@cox.net

***Thank You—***

**Town of Cheshire** for making very necessary repairs to our leaky roof and replacing the upper gutters on the front and side of the house. In August, a roofing contractor hired by the town added new copper flashing around the chimney and in the alleys, which had become badly eroded. The workers also installed larger gutters with leaf guards on both the front and north sides.

**Peg Boutwell, Barbara Christoff, Martha Connolly, Judy Knott, Jane Richards**, who ably guided third-grade tours from Chapman and Doolittle schools in May and June.

The Cheshire Women's Club Parks Committee, especially **Inge Venus**, chair, and **Susan Vining**, who did a wonderful job this summer taking care of the Lucille Williams Memorial Garden .

**Betty Shaw** in Westborough, MA, for sending us a clipping of an Associated Press item from the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* about the "discovery" of Roger Sherman's signature in an old autograph album. It was found by the Cheshire Historical Society "Diggers" (**Ron Gagliardi, Mike Raucci, and Rick Smith**). In addition to the wonderful publicity in area newspapers, it was exciting to know how far the Society's good news had traveled!

President **Marshall Robinson** for his timely repairs to the customer door in the Boutique- in- the- Shed.

**Rita Giannotti**, civic chair of the Suburban Garden Club, for exciting plans to add new shrubbery in the front and on the side of the south wing. The old bushes have been removed, and the new plantings, which will include more "period plants", should be in this fall.

**IN MEMORIAM**

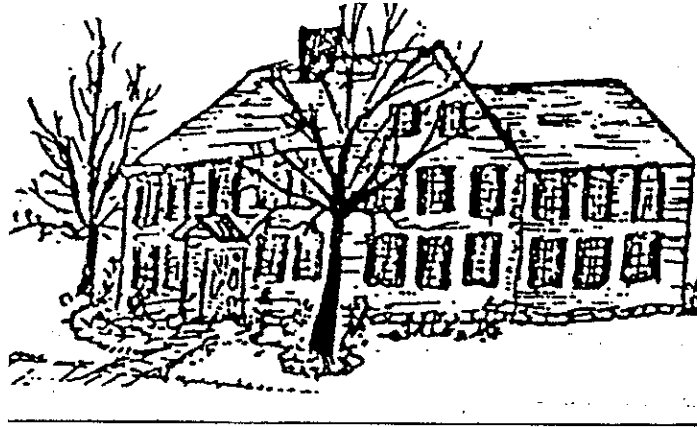
**Joe May** April 18, 2007

**Hazen H. Jones** May 13, 2007

**Amy Cellucci** August 25, 2007

We were deeply saddened by the deaths of these members and extend our sincere sympathy to their families.

**CHESHIRE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWS**



**FALL 2007**

Cheshire Historical Society  
PO Box 281, 43 Church Drive  
Cheshire, CT 06410  
[www.cheshirehistory.org](http://www.cheshirehistory.org)

***Society Officers***

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Marshall Robinson

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Gerald Devine

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Cara Luciani

Brad Zambruski

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**Curators**

Edgar Johnson, *emeritus*

Mary Ellen Kania

Warren VanAlmkerk

Kathleen Connolly, *asst.*

**Webmaster**

Diane Calabro

**Newsletter Editor**

Mary Ellen Kania

**NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, SEPT. 24**  
**7:30 p.m "Antiques as Art" Gene Coppa**