

Making History Every Day

June & August, 2019, Volume 1, Issue 34

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

Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum

60 Towner Lane, Oxford, CT 06478

Mr. Munn's 1850's Schoolhouse



Historical Society receives Valley Community Foundation grant for schoolhouse move.

The trail to saving and restoring the historic Munn Schoolhouse has moved another step forward. Currently located at 561 Oxford Road, this small structure was erected as a private school for boys in 1850. The children boarded in the nearby Beardsley house and were taught by Mr. Marcus Munn. Later the building was used as a high school for older children with Mr. Munn still in charge. Of particular interest are the initials, home towns and dates that the boys carved into the support beams in the cellar.

The Valley Community Foundation has granted the Oxford Historical Society \$9,000 to aid in the preservation of Mr. Munn's one-room schoolhouse. The grant will pay for the necessary carpentry and reinforcement to enable transport of the building safely from its present location to the Historical Society's Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Museum at 60 Towner Lane.

This generous VCF grant supplements what has been coming in this spring through donations to the Society's Honor an Educator Program which recently topped \$1000, mostly given in small amounts. Other funds have come from annual online donation cam-

paigns and local community funders. Members of the society will be at community events this summer highlighting the progress of this project. Following OHS on Facebook keeps supporters up to date on activities and developments. OHS members receive an online newsletter featuring activity calendars and updates. Weaving all these lines of support follows the society's familiar method for moving projects to completion.

Before the move, the roof of the 1850's building will be taken off to allow the building to pass under the power lines on Route 67 as it travels to its new location. Once at the site, the building will be placed on a newly constructed foundation and prepared for the winter season. The Society plans further restoration work in the spring. When completed, the schoolhouse will serve as a living history experience for Oxford children and adults. Working with educators and the school staff, the Society plans to offer third graders the authentic experience of a day in a one-room school as part of their social studies curriculum.

Oxford Town Historian Dorothy A. DeBisschop praised the generosity and help of the Valley Community Foundation, which has been an important supporter of the Historical Society for many years.

Established in 2004, the Valley Community Foundation distributes hundreds of thousands of grant dollars each year to support the local non-profit sector and the people it serves. In addition to grant making, VCF works in strong partnership with The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, to promote philanthropy in Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour and Shelton. To learn how your gifts of cash, life insurance, appreciated stocks, bonds, real estate, and other assets can help to support the quality of life in the Valley, please visit the website at www.valleyfoundation.org or contact VCF President, Sharon Closius, at sclosius@valleyfoundation.org or 203-751-9162.

We hope to soon have a firm date in September for the Munn Schoolhouse move.

Late August will see the schoolhouse roof disassembled, rafters and deck stored for reuse and a tarp over the top to keep out the rain. The sills will be repaired and floor joists put in, then plywood added to stabilize the base of the building.

Thanks to local generosity our Mr. Munn's Schoolhouse fund is growing.

Where do we stand?

Beyond the Valley Community Foundation grant, we are creeping toward an additional \$7000 in our Move the Munn Schoolhouse Fund:

\$\$ Honor an Educator campaign so far has reaped over \$1000 from area folks,.

\$\$ At the May 1 reception at Ion Bank in Naugatuck the Society picked up a check for \$650 from the annual **Ion Bank Community Support Campaign.**

\$\$ OHS garnered over \$1000 plus received prizes and bonuses to accrue \$1123.82 during the **Connecticut Community Foundation's Give Local** online fundraiser on April 23 and 24.

\$\$ Valley Community Foundation's Give Greater campaign for 2019 on May 1 and 2 earned OHS \$253.22- after prizes and bonuses were added to the online donations.

\$\$ Oxford Center Student Council donated \$500 to the OHS Honor an Educator Fund for the Munn Schoolhouse. This followed Town Historian Dorothy DeBisschop's annual visit to third grade classes. Learning about their state and town and its history is part of their social studies curriculum. This group is the prime target audience for the OHS Munn Schoolhouse and in future years the children will be able to visit and engage in a day in a real Oxford one room school.

\$\$ Oxford Board of Selectmen approved a Community Support grant of \$18,500 for the actual move of the schoolhouse.

COMING THIS SUMMER...

**Railroads & Oxford –
Monday, July 29, 7-9 pm**



Great Hill United Methodist Church

Former Oxford resident, Don Woodworth, celebrates trains and Oxford with lots of photos and tales to share. The railroad was key to the development and expansion of dairy farms in Oxford. Trains linked the town to area cities – New Haven, New York. Anyone interested in trains, Oxford, the 1800 and 1900s in New England – all will enjoy.

Admission: \$5, members \$3, under 12 free.

13th Annual Peach Festival

Saturday, Aug. 24 * 4-7 pm

*Great Hill United Methodist Church
225 Great Hill Rd. Seymour*

We build a peach shortcake with home baked biscuits, local sliced peaches and whipped cream with peach ice cream from Rich's Farm for just \$5.

Water, tea and coffee available. We offer take-out!

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
- Join the Historical Society. Download a membership form at <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org/membership.pdf>
- Visit the Homestead and learn more about our activities
- Sign up for special tours & programs

Oxford Schoolhouse Profile: Quaker Farms Schools #1 & #2

Quaker Farms, the area along Route 188 (also known as the Woodbury Path) which links Oxford to Seymour and Woodbury, has been developed since early settlers came to Oxford.

Joseph Hawley was the first to make reference on record of the term Quaker's Farm when he claimed lands (150 acres) in June 1683 and Lt. Johnson laid out 170 acres in March 1688.

In 1692 Ebenezer Johnson deeded his land in Quaker's Farm to Dr. John Butler of Stratford who occupied it several years later and was probably the first permanent white settler. It is said his house stood 40 rods south of the old Quaker's Farm burial ground on the west side of the brook (Seven Mile Brook). The location is on the road now known as the Captain Wooster Road.

In 1711 a committee was formed to lay out the lots on the Quaker's Farm Purchase.

This area was bought around 1689 from the Indians and financed by a group of men known as "Proprietors of the Quakers' Farm Purchase." This property ran to the Seymour border near the Naugatuck River.

In 1722 Abraham Wooster purchased lands at Quaker's Farm – a separate and smaller tract than the Purchase - and 'erected a mansion house, and also had a saw mill and soon after, the Griffin, Perry, Hawkins, Hyde and Nichols families settled here.'

These families were the early core of the school children who used the schoolhouse.



Interior of the first Quaker Farms School, from the Litchfield/Hoyt History of the Town of Oxford.

Quaker Farms Schoolhouse #1 was originally built on the east side of Quaker Farms Road just north of Hogsback Road. Flora Olsen lived at 410 Quaker Farms Road until 1979. Teachers from Quaker Farms School boarded at her home and



Exterior view of Quaker Farms School #1 1902, Miss Olive Pratt, teacher, later Mrs. E. B. Harger

water for the children to drink was carried from her house across the road in a pottery jar.

Built in 1911 the two-room Quaker Farms School #2 cost \$2000 to construct after purchasing the land for \$75. It was discontinued in 1948 and now serves as the Quaker Farms Firehouse at 403 Quaker Farms Road. (See 1938 photo below)



The QFS #1 building was moved south toward Barry Road to what was then Congdon property. Later, the town crew used it as a storage shed. After the roof collapsed from snow in February 1963, the town burned the building to demolish it. The school had been replaced by Quaker Farms School #2.

In 1948 the Oxford Centralized School serving the students of the entire town was opened on Oxford Road. It is still in use today.

Information in this article is from Litchfield's *History of the Town of Oxford, Connecticut* and *Historic Buildings of Oxford Past and Present*.

HOMESTEAD OPEN HOUSE:

Sunday, July 21, 2 - 4 pm

Sunday, August 4, 2 - 4 pm

Sunday, August 18, 2 - 4 pm



ON DISPLAY: Native American stone axe heads and arrow points found in Oxford as well as a stone mortar (bowl) discovered in a stone wall.

These amazing examples of tools handmade and used by local Indians were turned up in yards, fields and garden excavations with regular tools – and by sharp eyes!

Atwater Treat found his treasures while working the soil on his farm on Chestnut Tree Hill Road. Digging a vegetable garden led Diamond Rosa to unearth small mullers (resembling stone eggs these were used to grind grains) as well as axe heads. These were found off the southern portion of Rte 67.

Native Americans found various uses for axes in their culture and agriculture. Each axe head had unique characteristics depending on its purpose. They were used for ceremonies, digging gardens and planting seeds, stripping bark off trees for various uses and harvesting trees for building structures.

FREE Admission * Tours available
Twitchell-Rowland Homestead
60 Towner Lane, Oxford



As seen in Voices and on Facebook and Valley Independent Sentinel online -

The Oxford Historical Society has been honored with a gift of \$2500 for the Munn Schoolhouse Project. The gift honored the teachers who educated the donor's daughters.

Now, family and friends of generations of Oxford's children can recognize teachers, past and present, by making a donation toward the Munn Schoolhouse Project. In return for a gift, donors will receive a note card showing the Munn School to notify the educator of the contribution in his or her honor. Donors will have their names inscribed on an honor roll displayed in the relocated and restored Munn School.



The gift cards may be purchased in the Town Clerk's Office or at The Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Museum Open House (2-4 pm) on the first and third Sundays of each month. For further information please call 203 888-0230.

Mail donations to Oxford Historical Society, PO Box 582, Oxford, CT 06478. Make checks out to Oxford Historical Society, with "Munn Schoolhouse" in note field.

We are Sincerely Grateful to Oxford's **Stanton Brothers**, Ray and Sam for their work on the Twitchell Rowland Homestead this spring. They did basic maintenance and repair work on the interior and exterior at minimal cost to the society.

Practicing classic carpentry and crafting skills, the repairs are barely noticeable in the fabric of the centuries old house. Their generosity is greatly appreciated.