

# Making History Every Day

January and February 2025, Volume 7, Issue 1

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

**Twitchell Rowland Homestead Museum**

**P.O. Box 582, 60 Towner Lane, Oxford, CT 06478**

## Special Thanks for All Our Supporters for Their Giving Tuesday Generosity

### Mr. Munn's Schoolhouse Preservation Funding Completed.

Thanks to many area people and a generous donor who provided matching funds, we were able to raise our \$7,000 goal to finish the interior of the schoolhouse basement. This will enable us to have the electrician begin the necessary work to meet the local building inspector's requirements. The Giving Tuesday Campaign was our most successful fund-raiser of the year. It was a wonderful culmination of a busy 2024. It caps previous years work to move, restore and preserve the 1850's one-room schoolhouse. The building will serve as a living history center for Oxford's children and adults, covering the history of public education.

Mr. Munn's Schoolhouse was originally a boy's private school. In 1850, the federal census listed the names and ages of each of the students living in the house at 561 Oxford Road, where Mr. Munn, his wife and her parents lived. It served for a short time as a high school in the First School District as a high school.

However the building's use as a schoolhouse came to an end after a few years, when Mr. Munn and his wife moved to New Haven. In the years that followed, the building was used mainly a storage shed until it was donated to the Society to serve as part of the Historical Society History Center at 60 Towner Lane.

### Thanks to YOUR Support:

#### We Had Donations All Year Long

**Ion Bank's Community Awards** program offers their bank customers a vote to support community non-profits. Each online vote garners one chosen group a \$25 donation from Ion Bank. One vote per person is the limit no matter how many accounts, but each signer on an account may vote. Check with the bank to vote without online access. Voting begins in February and runs into March.

Visit the Oxford Historical Society website for a link or speak with bank personnel. This is a wonderful way to support activities in your hometown and community – and with someone else's money! In 2024 we received 12 votes (\$300) and we are looking for a repeat for 2025.

**Connecticut Community Foundation's Give Local 2024** garnered us \$3300 from donations and matching grants plus prizes. We are registered to participate in this year's drive on April 29 and 30.

**Valley Community Foundation's Great Give**, held each May, earned us \$500. We are registered to participate in this year's drive on May 7 and 8.

In addition, funds were raised at society events and in our Donation Jars. We are nearing the finish line – almost – to open the Munn Schoolhouse for public visits. Stick with us to find out when we will open the doors – at last – and welcome kids – and adults - back to Oxford's last one room school.



### **You Made It All Happen! 2024 Was a Very Good Year.**

Thanks to our many friends, volunteers and supporters, the Oxford Historical Society was able to make remarkable progress on the Homestead and restoring the Munn Schoolhouse. Here's what happened at 60 Towner Lane in the past 12 months...

- Schoolhouse step's stone landing was donated by Pete Duncan from the S.B.Church Oxfordshire property and the stone was moved by Jim Weed.
- Gutters for the school were added: the front gutter donated and installed and the rear one added at a

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## All that happened in 2024

(Continued from page 1)

- reduced price all by Luc Boulanger.
- The wooden staircase and landing to access Munn school was constructed by the Stantons, Ray and Sam.
- Schoolhouse shutters were scraped, repaired, painted and re-hung by member volunteers Richard Crane and Bo Duncan.
- Munn basement walls were painted with DryLoc by volunteers Bo Duncan and Gary Anderson.
- Handicapped access ramp to the school was a multi-year Eagle Scout project by Caleb Burlison who provided the volunteer labor and donations of materials.
- Wooden stairs to the school were stained by Bo Duncan.
- Munn basement door was donated by Bob and Nancy Farnum and was sanded and sealed with clear finish by Bo. The door was installed, trimwork added and painted by society volunteer Bob Farnum. He also donated and installed the lockset.
- Munn basement walls had studs installed and a cracked beam was shored up and reinforced by Ron Merley and John Morrissey.
- Consultation for work on the Munn School was held with restoration carpenter Eric Iott.
- Replacement of the Homestead ramp railing was completed including repairs with materials supplied by Bob Farnum's donation and work done by Bob, Keith Nelson, Richard Crane and Ed Rowland.
- Homestead handicapped access ramp was sanded and painted by society volunteers Bo Duncan and Gary Anderson.
- Homestead basement water issues were resolved by drainage work done by Bob Winters and Eddie Cavallaro.
- Gutters on the Homestead were cleaned thanks to arrangements by society member, Ed Rowland.
- Grounds maintenance was provided by tenant and society member, Ed Rowland and by Andrew Cavallaro's Leapfrog Landscaping.
- A daffodil bed was dug and planted by members Nancy Farnum and Essie Lydon.



### Join Us - Help Preserve Oxford's Unique Rural Heritage

And one of the very best ways to support the Oxford Historical Society is to become a member. OHS membership applications can be downloaded at the OHS website and checks can be mailed to OHS, PO Box 582, Oxford, CT 06478. Forms can be printed from the last page of this newsletter, too.

Individual memberships are \$10, Seniors and Junior Associates (under 18) \$10, Families \$25 and Business Supporters (\$200).

Not only do member dollars help with society expenses and activities, the numbers of members are used by grant givers as an indication of involvement with the community. Also listed are opportunities for volunteering. Be sure to check those that appeal to you. Being a member really counts for us!

Use our Membership form on page 5 or find it on our website at [www.oxford-historical-society.org](http://www.oxford-historical-society.org)

### 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 Twitchell-Rowland Homestead and learn more about our activities.
- Sign up for special tours & programs.



## 2024 Society Events in Review:

Society events included a March program at the Oxford Library to celebrate Women's History Month, Dottie DeBisschop featured Oxford's Remarkable Women of multiple centuries.



April was our annual two-day Fiber Fest. Over 150 people of all ages visited to see animals, weavers and crafters. The event brought in \$1000 for repairs on the Munn school.

In June we offered a Tag Sale. The society's Homestead was one of the town wide sites and showcased special donations from the estate of Fred and Myrtle Rowland, bringing in over \$800.



The annual Peach Festival normally held in August was postponed until September due to the results of the August 16 flood that damaged so much of the town and its roads. The photo displays gave guests unique views of Oxford's Russian Village – homes, gardens

and artwork by immigrants who settled along Five Mile Brook, Punkup Road and the Housatonic River. The homemade peach shortcakes sold out as usual. We earned over \$1500.

Our popular Tractor Meet in October brought about 100 visitors and 20 vintage tractors and farm equipment to rally at the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead and helped us raise funds for ongoing repairs to the Munn School.



The society year ends with its annual meeting in November. This year Connecticut State Library employee Kevin Johnson portrayed Connecticut Black Revolutionary Jordan Freeman with great vigor and enthusiasm.



In December the Oxford Garden Club decked the halls of the Homestead for three Holiday Open Houses as we celebrated with folks from far and near.

History on Display produced interesting exhibits featuring "Postcards" collected by Oxford resident Idella Jane Andrew Osborn in the winter; "Sewing Baskets & Notions" for the spring and "Dolls: Young & Old" for the holidays. All items are supplied by society members and friends who enjoy sharing their vintage treasures.

Counting the visitors of all ages who signed into our Guest Book we tallied nearly 500 people from far and wide: Arizona, Florida and even Europe.

**Our local woman of note, Adeline Gray, was featured in "Scuttlebutt" a publication of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association, written by Stephen Couchman. Adeline, who grew up across from Oxford Center School, was a parachute tester in World War II – the first to use a nylon parachute. Research for the article was done originally by Dorothy DeBisschop.**

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## 2024 In Review

(continued from page 3)

The society's renovated website: [oxford-historical-society.org](http://oxford-historical-society.org) was overhauled thanks to funding support from a state grant. The group's activities and newsletters are available for easy viewing and access to historical sites and research including cemetery information and items the society offers for sale are all on view. Member forms can be printed from the site as well, although online payment is not an option.

A shocking chapter of Oxford history occurred on August 18, 2024 when the Little River and other small watercourses throughout the town overflowed from non-stop torrential rain. Ultimately bridges and roads were washed out and took weeks and months for flood repairs to allow travel from one side of town to the other. Severe damage was done to homes and businesses. St Peter's Episcopal Church is still not usable at this date (January 2025). The start of the new school year was delayed for two weeks and bus routes were disrupted through November 2024. Sadly two women were victims of the uncontrolled water.

Four members of the Oxford Historical Society were stranded on Route 67 following a routine board meeting. They found themselves at the Oxford Congregational Church parking lot – with over two dozen other folks determined to wait the storm out and to allow the flood waters to recede. The church's fellowship hall was opened by these members who also belonged to the church. The open doors were met with gratitude by those two dozen flood victims seeking relief and electricity to recharge cell phones. Fresh coffee and leftover coffee hour cookies were an added plus! After 5 hours the last refugees left and the church doors were re-locked.

We all benefited from the support of local police, fire crews and members of town departments who found safe routes for reaching destinations. Over the coming weeks grateful refugees sent thank you notes – and donations – to the church, recognizing the small town values on display.



### Coming in 2025:

Watch this space for progress in 2025, or better yet, stop by for a visit on the first and third Sundays of each month from 2-4 pm and see for yourself at a Homestead Open House. Docents chat about the history of the house and the items found inside as well as other topics of interest to the community. There is no charge for these open days: January 5 and 19; February 2 and 16; March 2 and 16. Books written by the Society are available for purchase as well as the unique notecard sets produced using local art and photographs. In addition, this spring a unique collection of handkerchiefs is on offer. Proceeds benefit the society's events and activities as well as maintenance of the buildings and grounds.

### Events Scheduled for 2025

Fiber Fest 2025 will be Saturday, April 12 and Sunday, April 13. Weavers and fiber crafters, vendors and live animals are back at the Twitchell-Rowland Homestead for this free event offering hands-on opportunities for all ages, demonstrations by crafters and tours of the Homestead. Weather permitting, there will be goats or sheep being sheared for the spring. Take a peek into our agricultural past. The Homestead is located at 60 Towner Lane which is across Route 67 from St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church. Look for OHS sheep signs around town!

Be sure to check the society's Facebook page and website for other events that may be scheduled.



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## Oxford Historical Society, Inc. 2025 Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:

- Individual Membership \$ 15.00
- Family Membership \$25.00
- Senior Membership (over 65) \$10.00
- Junior Associate (under 18) \$10.00
- Business Sponsor \$200.00
- Lifetime Membership \$500.00

Please make checks payable to: Oxford Historical Society, Inc. Mail this form and payment to:

Oxford Historical Society, P.O. Box 582, Oxford, CT 06478

Additional donations are welcome! I am enclosing a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Volunteer Opportunities

The OHS needs volunteers to help out with on-going activities and special events. If you would like more information on these opportunities, please check one or more of the boxes below so we can follow up with you:

- Museum Docent  Fundraising  Curator Assistance
- Special Events Planning  Setup/Cleanup for Special Events
- Community Outreach  Munn Schoolhouse Education Program
- Twitchell-Rowland Homestead Preservation Activities

For more information on the Oxford Historical Society and its activities, please visit our website at <https://www.oxford-historical-society.org> or follow us on Facebook.