



Historic Holley-Williams House Changes Hands

Preserving the House without Owning It

After establishing permanent preservation of the important historic features of the House, and waiting three years for the right buyers to come along, the Salisbury Association has finally sold the Holley-Williams House in Lakeville.

The new owners now assume responsibility for the preservation and maintenance of the House in accordance with restrictions administered by Historic New England (HNE), a nationally recognized preservation organization. Under the HNE Stewardship Program, historically significant features of the Holley-Williams property, both exterior and interior, will be protected in perpetuity, while allowing for modern upgrades for kitchens, baths, the heating system and the like. As HNE's senior stewardship manager Joseph Cornish put it: "We work with the property owner to ensure that important historic features are not altered or damaged in the process of an update." The 4.75-acre property cannot be subdivided.

The Holley-Williams House consists of the original Salisbury ironmaster's 1768 house and the connected Federal period home of the Holley and Williams families, built in 1808. Much of the historic character of the House derives from the fact that the same prominent family resided there for over 150 years. Family members played key roles in Salisbury's iron industry, pocketknife manufacturing, engineering, politics and civic activities.



From a House to a House Museum

In 1971 Margaret Williams bequeathed the HWH property to the Salisbury Association, which maintained and managed the house and its contents—including five generations of family furnishings, portraits, and a treasure trove of letters, diaries, and musical instruments—as an historic museum open to the public. To attract visitors and enrich the educational experience, a curator was hired to plan and execute programs. Guided house tours were offered on a regular basis. Concerts featuring period music were held in the house and garden, winter and summer. In 1994 the Association added a second museum, the Salisbury Cannon Museum, in the adjoining carriage house to tell the story of the important role of iron-making during the Revolutionary War. More recently, the Association sponsored a documentary film on the history of the house, its family members and their contributions to the town.

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A Financial Strain

Over time, as happens with all old buildings, the cost of repairing and maintaining the Holley-Williams House became a major strain on the Association's annual budget and its members' time and energies. In spite of fund-raising efforts (consistently disappointing) and generous donations from a few "friends" of HWH, the property continued to drain an unacceptable share of the Salisbury Association budget, diverting funds that could have been used for other history-related projects. Despite various marketing efforts, attendance at the two museums did not substantially increase.

Preservation Restriction Signed

With regret, the Association decided several years ago to take steps to relieve itself of the financial burden of owning and operating the HWH, while protecting the historically significant features of the house. The Association contracted with Historic New England, a non-profit preservation organization protecting 75 privately owned historic properties across New England, to prepare a stewardship plan with a Preservation Restriction Agreement. Under the agreement, HNE will regularly inspect the HWH property and enforce the restrictions.

With guidance from a professional curator, a complete survey of the Holley-Williams House collections was undertaken. Items of particular importance to Salisbury's history were retained by the Association and will be available for future exhibits. Objects without significant local relevance were put up for auction.

With historic preservation in place, the Association engaged local realtors to find an appropriate buyer—someone keen on living in an historic house, but agreeable to accepting the restrictions. After three years, a match was found.

Reflecting on the sale, Association president Dave Heck noted: "I think it's a win-win. We got a reasonable price, as did the buyers. And now the Association can expand its mission to bring local history to the community in new and interesting ways."

New Signs Tell Old Stories

Hikers, bikers and drivers can read about Lakeville's historic iron furnace on a new educational marker along Route 41 in Lakeville, next door to what will soon be the former home of the Lakeville Hose Company. Sponsored by the Salisbury Association Historical Society, the "Arsenal of the Revolution" marker is the first of four to be installed at historic sites in town.

The sign includes a reproduction of the 1762 handwritten contract establishing the Lakeville furnace. The original document, acquired at auction in 2008, is in the Salisbury Association's archive.

"Other markers will be installed at Ore Hill, the Williams forge and the former foundry in Lime Rock," reported Historical Society member Dick Paddock. Future plans call for publishing a printed guide/map to local historic sites.



Learning about Lakeville's historic iron furnace from a recently installed educational marker

Saturday History Talks

The Salisbury Association Historical Society and the Scoville Memorial Library are co-sponsoring three Saturday afternoon history lectures in the library's Wardell Room, 4:00. The public is invited.

September 18: Salisbury's First Residents



The Native Americans who inhabited the Tri-State area before European settlement were mainly hunters and food-gatherers. They worked with tools that had not changed very much over the 15,000 years during which they occupied New England.

Don Stevens, whose last talk focused on "Exploring for Hidden Treasure," will share his research and field work on a related topic: the tools used by early Native Americans in our area, how those tools were made and of what materials.

October 16: Lime Rock and Amesville

Continuing a series of talks on the history of Salisbury's small communities, Town Historian Katherine Chilcoat will present an illustrated lecture on the early years of Amesville and Lime Rock. Previous talks focused on the Lakeville and Salisbury communities and on Twin Lakes and Taconic.

The earliest settlement of Salisbury took place along the Housatonic River, which flows through Amesville and Lime Rock. Early European settlers, as well as Native Americans, searched out places where water was abundant. Living close to rivers provided easy transportation and water power for early industries. The Indian settlement at Weatogue was followed by Dutch settlers from the Hudson River area.



The Charles W. Barnum home in Lime Rock, called Hephzivilla (Beautiful Valley), burned down in the early 1900s.

November 20: The Beginning of Photography

Imagine that you have no photographs of your family or the events of your life. It wasn't that long ago that none of us could make a visual record of our lives, as we do so easily today with modern cameras. Yet few of us know anything about the fascinating beginnings of photography, a beginning marked by extraordinary trials and

tribulations in which pioneering photographers used rudimentary cameras and chemical processes that were crude and sometimes dangerous.

In his presentation, professional photographer Joseph Meehan will use projected images and print samples to illustrate how photography first developed. He will concentrate on the first 25 years or so as photography rapidly became a way of recording and preserving everything.



Photos left to right: Abraham Lincoln (Daguerreotype, Library of Congress); Grove Street School, Salisbury, CT, 1860 (from glass negative, Salisbury Association); Russian Peasants, c. 1875 (Albumen print, Library of Congress)

Land Trust Targets Invasive Plants . . . on the Land

The “natives” are restless. They are being out-competed and overtaken in our local landscape by a host of aggressive, spreading non-native invasive plants that are very difficult to control. Twelve of the most problematic invaders, the so-called “Dirty Dozen,” were the target of the Salisbury Association Land Trust’s spring exhibit.

To facilitate identification of these invasives, samples were displayed at the exhibit, along with informational panels explaining the negative impact that these plants have on native species and wildlife. Take-home materials detailed what homeowners can do to reduce the presence of these invaders in their gardens. A variety of alternative native plants, available at local garden shops, were also on view.

To accompany the exhibit, the Land Trust organized a series of three Saturday morning events: a field workshop demonstrating eradication methods, a PowerPoint presentation on alternative native plants, and a garden tour of a lakefront property to see ecologically sound landscaping near a water resource.



At the invasive plants exhibit a visitor noted with surprise: "I didn't know I had this in my garden! Once you know what these plants looks like, you see them everywhere!"



Jess Toro of Native Habitat Restoration (third from left) discusses techniques and materials for reducing invasive plants in home gardens. A practical demonstration followed.

... and on the Water

The Salisbury Land Trust manages its conserved properties to enhance wildlife habitat, remove invasive plants and replace them with native species and, where appropriate, to provide a recreational or educational opportunity, such as the hiking trails at Dark Hollow and the annual guided bird walk at the Schlesinger Bird Preserve.

Among the properties for which the Land Trust has responsibility is the pond and embankment at the Railroad Ramble (Bike Path). This summer, Land Trust monitors Margaret Hoag and Roger McKee set out in canoes to do a pond assessment, checking for regrowth of invasive plants that had previously been removed. Keeping these invasives under control requires ongoing attention and periodic action. As Margaret Hoag put it, "We don't want this to get away from us."

While enjoying some exercise on the pond, the monitors observed a great blue heron and some turtles, but also a few Phragmites (common reed) and a fair amount of Purple Loosestrife. They were able to pull out some of these by hand, but others were resistant. So again this year the Land



Salisbury Land Trust member Roger McKee out in his canoe (one that he built) to check the status of invasive plants at the Railroad Ramble pond.

Trust will bring in a professional service to remove the invasives and also thin other vegetation, keeping the water open for wildlife and maintaining the lovely view that hikers and bikers enjoy from the trail.

The Land Trust regularly expends funds for stewardship work at conserved properties. You can help support this ongoing effort with a contribution to the Salisbury Association Land Trust, 24 Main Street, Salisbury CT 06068.

(Right) Mary Silks hosted a Land Trust tour at her lake-front home. She discussed her rain garden landscape. (Below) Her landscape plan also provides a buffer zone of native plants along the shoreline to reduce runoff and protect lake water quality.



Phase-out of Some Barberry Invasives

Based on research done at UCONN, the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association has announced a voluntary phase-out over a three-year period (starting July 1, 2010) of the production and sale of high-seed-producing Barberry (*Berberis*) cultivars, acknowledging that the plants represent an unacceptable risk to Connecticut's environment.

The Quest for Salisbury Cannon

During the American Revolution, a Salisbury foundry cast at least 837 iron cannon barrels—from swivels to 18 pounders and even mortars—to aid the patriot cause. Now the Salisbury Association Historical Society is hoping to bring one of these historic cannons back to Salisbury.



Bill Morrill inspects a cannon at the Winchester Historical Society for clues that might identify it as made in Salisbury.

Other "cannon searchers" were
Lou Bucerri, Dave Heck and Tim Abbott.

In 1776 the Salisbury furnace supplied Washington's army with 40 cannon, some of which were likely used by General Knox at the Battle of Trenton. Another 69 cannon were sent to the Northern Army between October 1776 and January 1777. Salisbury cannon defended the Hudson Highlands and were probably used by General Gates at Saratoga. The Continental Frigates *Hancock*, *Trumbull* and *Confederacy* were armed with naval cannon produced in Salisbury, as were numerous privateers. Connecticut's militia and coastal fortifications also used Salisbury cannon, including Groton's Fort Griswold during Arnold's Raid.

The cannon were mass produced, with no known record of any unique identifying marks. Neither is there any record of a Salisbury cannon bursting when fired. A significant number may have survived the war, but tracing existing examples of American-made

Revolutionary War cannon back to Salisbury will be a difficult task.

Aside from the absence of maker's marks, authentication presents challenges. Metallurgical analysis of cannonballs and other items made with Salisbury iron have, to date, not yielded a unique signature or "DNA," though it is well known that the iron was of very high quality with unusually high manganese content. Nonetheless, the Salisbury Association Historical Society is starting what many expect to be a lengthy process of researching and tracking down antique cannon that may have come from the Northwest Corner.

The "cannon searchers" will take field trips to Revolutionary War sites and museums to compile the physical characteristics of what are now reputed to be surviving examples of Salisbury cannon, and to document their provenance. They will also search historical records to try to track the disposition of cannons after leaving the foundry. For example, historical records show that the Massachusetts-made frigate *Hancock* carried 22 Salisbury 12-pounders in her full complement of 28 guns. The British captured the *Hancock* and brought her into their service as the *Isis*. Research may reveal the fate of the *Isis*, and her ordnance.

Although many old guns were melted for scrap during the wars of the 19th and 20th centuries, the searchers hope to find an authentic, surviving Salisbury cannon and acquire it for return to the town. *Tim Abbott*



This 9-inch long miniature cannon, made of Salisbury iron, was gifted to the Salisbury Association in 1996 by Robert Scribner. Cast at the

Joiceville Furnace (closed in 1854) at Sage's Ravine, the cannon can be loaded with black powder and fired.

It is thought that only two miniatures were cast at this furnace. One, owned by the Knickerbocker Family, was fired and exploded. The other, shown here, was loaded with powder from a shotgun shell and fired by Robert's father on the 4th of July, which happens to be Robert's birthday.

Forest Bird Initiative



Audubon Sharon has launched a program to focus attention on two interdependent and key components of the environment: our forests and the migrating and breeding birds that depend on them.



In June Audubon conducted a field workshop with participants from the Salisbury Association and Mt. Riga, among others. The group joined forester Curtis Rand at a Mt. Riga site, where he explained the forest management practices that have been applied to this 800-acre parcel. Audubon Director Scott Heth, Land Manager Mike Dudek, and State Audubon Bird Director Patrick Comins identified the bird species that use this forest for feeding and nesting, and discussed their specific habitat requirements.



Audubon Sharon is planning a variety of workshops to inform forest landowners in our community.



Why is Northwest Connecticut so rich in bird diversity?

Northwest Connecticut lies in a transition zone between the Atlantic Northern Forest and the Mid-Atlantic Forest, resulting in an extremely high diversity of plant and bird species.



The forests of Northwest Connecticut provide a unique blend of



Photos from top to bottom: Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Canada Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Wood Thrush, Pileated Woodpecker

nesting and foraging sites for a three-month period each year for a suite of birds living much of their lives in the southern U.S. or Central and South America. During the time that these birds are here, they are constantly eating to replenish fat supplies from their long trip north, to feed their young, and to fatten up again for their return trip to points south.

How can we increase forest bird habitat?

- **Create and enhance vertical structure:** different birds use different tree heights to breed and forage
- **Retain early successional habitat:** this is young forest comprised of seedlings and saplings
- **Maximize forest interior:** large forest patches (50 acres or more) will increase the diversity of birds that the woodlot can support
- **Keep forest buffers along streams:** they provide key habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life
- **Retain deadwood:** snags and downed trees have significant wildlife value and are good for forest regeneration
- **Limit management activities during breeding season:** Northwest CT birds breed from April until about August, so delaying summer harvesting allows first and second broods of young to fledge

Land Trust Conducts Bird Walk



Tom Schaefer (center) leads the Salisbury Land Trust's annual bird walk at the Schlesinger Bird Preserve on Scoville Ore Mine Road. Tom is flanked by George Kiefer and Ingrid Schaefer, both avid birders.

Salisbury's Independent Schools

Salisbury's independent educational institutions have played an important role in the town's heritage, as seen in the current Salisbury Association Historical Society exhibit. A second exhibit, on Salisbury's public schools, is planned for 2011.

Widely recognized as providing an excellent education for their students, Salisbury School, The Hotchkiss School, and Indian Mountain School also contribute to the life of the community by sharing recreational and cultural facilities with the public. The exhibit highlights the schools' history and key figures, many of whom have served in town government and civic organizations.



Visitors can also learn about the independent schools that no longer exist, such as the Taconic School for Girls and the Salisbury Academy (1833-c.1865), now home to the Salisbury Association.

The exhibit will be on view through October, with weekday hours 9:00-1:00 and Saturdays 10:00-12:00. Extended visiting hours are planned for the Fall Festival weekend.



*Taconic School for Girls (1806-1914),
now the Wake Robin Inn*

The Salisbury Historical Society invites
the public to attend a reception for the
Independent Schools' Heritage exhibit.
Academy Building
Saturday, September 25, 4:00-6:00.

The Salisbury Association

24 Main Street
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