



DEANE HOUSE

WEBB HOUSE

STEVENS HOUSE

NSCDA-CT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3

FALL 2008

Message from the Incoming President

Torrey Cooke

When I first accepted the nomination to be NSCDA-CT President, my husband of forty-three years had died, followed closely by both my parents age 94 within a week of one another. I needed something I felt comfortable doing and that is communicating with like-minded ladies such as The Connecticut Dames.

We have embarked on an exciting era in our Society with plans to build a Visitors' Center. When funds are raised and endowment matched we plan to break ground.

The Area Meeting in September will be at Weir Farm followed by lunch at my home. You will have an opportunity to look at and hear about our building plans and what you can do to make the dream come true.

I am please to tell you that my sister Pinki Roe is serving as President of the Delaware Society at this time and we hope to have a visit during our terms together. Stay tuned!

Looking forward to seeing you.

Message from the Outgoing President

Anne Kuckro

It has been a privilege and honor to serve as President of the Connecticut Society for the past four years. I could not have managed without the help and advice of the Board and the support of the membership. I am especially grateful to each and every past president for their having come out of retirement to help the Society face the most challenging years since its founding.

Since public schools have minimized the time spent on the study of American history, historic house-museums are the best way to acquaint our youth with the people as well as the ideas and principles upon which our nation was founded. Our mission: "to educate our fellow citizens and ourselves in our country's history and to stimulate a spirit of true patriotism and genuine love of country" has never been more relevant and essential.

The Connecticut Society is rightfully proud. At a time when every house museum in our country is struggling to survive, we, a group of fewer than 300 women, are supporting a Museum that includes three 18th century houses, two of them National Historic Landmarks, because of their association with the American Revolution. With the expert advice and direction of our Museum's Director, Charles Lyle, the new addition will allow us to expand our educational programs year-round, and will allow us to move the modern museum support functions - staff offices, collection storage and archives - out of the historic houses. It is a very exciting time to be a Connecticut Dame. I am confident that Torrey Cooke will continue the tradition established by all of the presidents who served before us.

Message from two Presidents.....	page 1
Annual Meeting Report	page 2
Message from the Director.....	page 2
Sulgrave Manor.....	page 3
<i>In memoriam</i>	page 4
Oral History Project	page 5
Development Committee.....	page 5
Coming Events	page 5-6
Tags & Treasures Revisited.....	page 6-7
Building Committee Report	page 7-9
Fall Calendar.....	page 10

Annual Meeting

May 21st 2008 was a beautiful, clear, sunny spring day – perfect for our Annual Meeting, especially with Stuart Cobb, President of the National Society with us, The garden and grounds looked their best; a real credit to the Garden Angels and the Grounds Committee.

President Anne Kuckro opened the meeting by introducing the architects James Mellowes and Robert Palladino, who presented a slideshow of the preliminary plans for our planned addition. This was accomplished by a bit of deft toss and catch of the mike as they took turns explaining the slides. The overall reaction to the plans was positive.

After a brief question period, the seven Presidents, past, present and future, as well as National, took their places at the head table and the meeting was formally called to order. The colors were presented by Past President Judy Rowley and incoming President Torrey Cooke. They were later retired by Judy and outgoing President Anne Kuckro.

After reports were given, Stuart Cobb, National President, spoke briefly. She spoke of the founding of Colonial Dames of America by ladies in New York. They asked a group of ladies from Philadelphia to join them. The Philadelphia ladies were interested until they learned that all governance and control would remain with New York. This the good ladies in Philadelphia could not accept so they started their own Society – the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, the Society of which we are a member. She noted that our Society was unusual and fortunate to have four past Presidents still actively taking part in Society and museum activities. She encouraged the Historical Activities Committee to make the most of this opportunity by starting on an Oral History project (Diane Powell, Chair of Historical Activities, lost no time starting with Sally Ferguson in June.

And of course Stuart Cobb complimented us on Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum and our plans for expansion.

Reports given at the meeting are printed in this Newsletter.

Message from the Director

Charles T. Lyle

In addition to our exciting plans for the new Education Center, progress continues to be made on many different fronts at the museum.

We are particularly pleased with the work completed at the Webb House this past winter with our Save America's Treasures Grant. The project is a model example for the house museum and preservation fields. Our consulting engineers, Gibble Norden Champion Brown, came up with a simple yet ingenious solution to the serious structural problems we faced that does not result in any damage or unsightly changes to the historic building. Indeed, the only visible structural supports are in the attic, and they are not intrusive and enable us to interpret to our visitors the state-of-the-art work we have done to preserve this national treasure.

I'm also pleased to report that we completed the engineering, construction work, and related

asbestos removal significantly under budget. The total cost was \$79,355---leaving \$70,655 in federal grant funds for other needed restoration projects at the Webb House.

After completing the painting of the first floor hallway in its original colors and redoing all of the floors in the Webb House over the winter, long-time employee Felix Cruz resigned to take another position as an electrician for an apartment complex. We wish him well on his job. Richard Agne, a Wethersfield resident and retired former educator with buildings and grounds experience, started on June 30 as Maintenance Supervisor. He is here 20 hours a week and has already tackled a multitude of projects--including painting the arbors in the garden, fixing the picnic tables, replacing cracked and broken window panes, and dealing with a bat in one of the houses as well as various other forms of wildlife on the property.

Katie Sullivan, who has been handling the barn rentals for the past year, along with several of the

guides, has taken over Felix's responsibilities doing the weddings. In the spring, with the advice of Sally Given of the Properties Committee, we wallpapered, painted and redecorated the barn restrooms. We are also intensifying our effort to keep the structure, the kitchen and surrounding grounds in good condition. I am happy to report that the number of weddings has jumped from fifteen in 2007 to twenty-four this year--- and Katie has already booked thirteen for 2009.

Another bit of positive news. In June, we were notified by Katheryn P. Viens, the Executive Director of the New England Museum Association, that the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum won first place in its 2008 Publications Award for our web site. In announcing the award, the Summer 2008 NEMA newsletter states, "among the websites of museums with budgets below \$750,000, the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum stood out of the crowd. The judges commented that the site was very engaging with an attractive design that makes good use of photography." We were also judged on the quality of the graphic design, ease of use, and appropriateness for the intended audiences.

Finally, our visitation has been steady over the



Structural supports in the attic of Webb House summer months. Indeed, high gas prices seem to be encouraging more local people to come. I hope you will think of us and plan a visit to see the changes that are being made at the museum. We also value your support for our expanded museum shop. It is filled with attractive summer gifts and merchandise, and we recently added ten new post card views of the museum. Remember that the Connecticut Dames receive a twenty percent discount on their purchases.

Save the Date ~ Come to meet George Washington's ancestor in September!

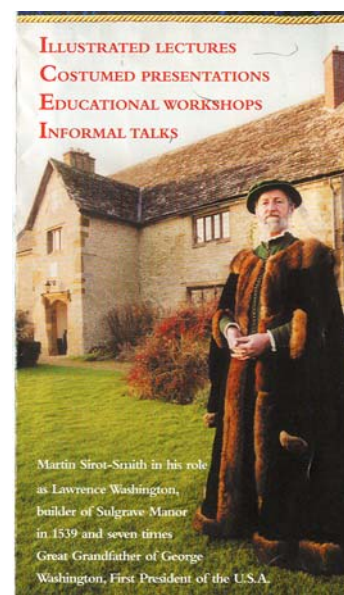
Penny Chittenden

You won't want to miss this rare opportunity to meet George Washington's "Ancestor." On Friday morning, September 26th, Martin Sirot-Smith, alias Lawrence Washington of Sulgrave Manor in England will visit Wethersfield.

He will come to America at the invitation of the NSCDA Sulgrave Manor Trustees to entertain and educate both adults and children about the Washington family and their ancestral home, which was build in 1539. Mr. Sirot-Smith has done this for thousands of English and American visitors at Sulgrave Manor in Banbury, near Oxford. For photographs and information go to their website: www.sulgravemanor.org.uk.

As Colonial Dames we are part owners of Sulgrave Manor and are thus entrusted with its preservation. In fact, in 2008, our donations went to the replacement of the 450-year old slate roof. Each spring the Manor welcomes our members on Dames Day.

A performance/lecture by Sirot-Smith will be held at the Keeney Memorial Center (Wethersfield Historical Society), followed by light refreshments to help raise money for this special property. Watch for your invitation and bring your friends and family. You will be glad that you saved the date!



Martin Sirot-Smith welcoming visitors to Sulgrave Manor

In memoriam: “BITEY”

Elizabeth Dudley Hubbard Grimes, known to us as Bitey, died in her sleep on July 5, 2008. Unprepared and deeply saddened, we are thankful that she was granted her wish to go in this way when the time came.

There was never a more devoted and loyal Dame than Bitey. She became a member in 1971 and in a very short time was elected to the Board of Managers, where she served as Patriotic Services Committee Chairman. She served on a number of committees before becoming President of the NSCDA-CT in 1987.

Her interest in our Society never flagged. From the end of her presidency to the present, she regularly attended Board meetings, most often as a non-voting observer and adviser. She was the first Past President to serve, *ex officio*, on the Executive Committee. Her attendance at Society meetings, committee meetings, Board meetings, Executive Committee meetings and other special events was rivaled only by her attendance at her grandchildren’s school events, especially their sports contests.

Bitey was not afraid to speak up. She was quick to praise and quick to note error. Her critical comments could be pointed but never mean and always softened and spiced with humor. Her contributions of time, clear thinking and ideas to our Society are without measure. We can best honor her by taking on her devotion and dedication to our Society and its museum. Bitey cared deeply for the “Dames.”

Photograph by Charles T. Lyle



Bitey Grimes with past and current Presidents of the NSCDA-CT and the President of the National Society, Mrs. James Cobb, at the Annual Meeting in May. From left to right, Sally Ferguson, Bitey Grimes, Dorothy Venter, Stuart Cobb, Judy Rowley, Anne Kuckro and current President, Torrey Cooke.

Development Committee

Judy Rowley

In 604 B.C. Sophocles said, "Success is dependent on effort."

During the past year in true Dames fashion you have responded to the call. The newly created *Colt Society* already has several members, and I know that many more Dames are in the process of designating gifts, which will sustain the Museum into the next era. The relationship with the Hartford Foundation Planned Giving Design Center underscores how well thought-of the Dames are and provides gift-planning sophistication far beyond what would typically be present in an organization of our moderate size.

The Dames continue to generously support the Museum's current operations through the Annual Fund as well as the Endowment.

As regards the new addition, the Dames have already given major gifts totaling more than 1/2 of the campaign goal (\$1,722,000.00). Now that we have these superb architectural renderings we know where we are going and what we have to do to construct, landscape and furnish the proposed addition.

I am confident that this time next year I will stand before you reporting that you, the Connecticut Dames, have met the challenge and raised \$3,000,000.00. Your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will come to the Museum and see your name on the Wall of Giving and know what you cared about in your lifetime.

There has never been a better time to be a Dame!

Oral History Project

Starting with interviews of available past Presidents, Dr. Diane Powell, Chair of the Historical Activities Committee, with the assistance of Charles Lyle, Executive Director/Curator, has undertaken an Oral History project about and for the Connecticut Society. Diane interviews while Charles records (audio/visual).

Sally Ferguson, President 1984-87 was the first interviewee. "I was prepared for the audio, but not the visual and could have been taken for the cleaning lady. Also, I had thought the questions would be related to my Dames memories and experience, but the interview started with my childhood and progressed rapidly through the years until we reached NSCDA-CT."

Coming Events this Fall



Photograph by Charles T. Lyle

Sal Carmosino as Silas Deane

Spirits of Old Wethersfield

Celebrate Halloween at the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum by taking a step back in time to meet characters from the past. Visitors will take a guided candlelight tour of our three historic houses.

At the Stevens House they will learn the about 19th century mourning customs as one family attempts to cope with the loss of a loved one. Meet Silas Deane at the Deane House as he squabbles with the servants in his household. At the last stop, visitors will meet some of the women who influenced the history in the Joseph Webb House.

This event will take place on October 24th and 25th from 6:30-10 p.m.

Wethersfield Witch Craze

On September 28th, from 2-4:00 p.m., in conjunction with Connecticut Landmarks and The Wethersfield Historical Society, the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum is hosting an afternoon of history exploring the 17th century witch craze in Wethersfield. The Judy Dworin Performance Project will reprise excerpts from the critically acclaimed performance of *The Witch Hour*. Webb-Deane-Stevens staff will conduct tours of the famous Buttolph-Williams House, which is the setting of the Elizabeth Speare George's book *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.

Tours are free to the public and will be available from 2-3 p.m. At 3 pm, get on the bus for a driving tour of Historic Wethersfield and see the places mentioned in the book like the Cove Warehouse and the Meadows.

Silas Deane and the American Revolution



Please join us on Thursday, November 6th at 5:30 p.m. at the New Britain Museum of American Art for a lecture by Robert H. Patton, author of the book *Patriot Pirate: The Privateer War for Freedom & Fortune in the American Revolution* (2008).

He will be discussing the role of Silas Deane in the American Revolution. This lecture is co-sponsored with The New Britain Museum of American Art. A wine and cheese reception will start at 5:30 followed by the lecture at 6:00.

An Afternoon with the Gillettes

Just in time for Halloween, William and Helen Gillette will pay a visit to the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Historic Wethersfield, Connecticut. Was Sherlock Holmes fact or fiction? Who were William and Helen Gillette and what was their connection to the greatest fictional detective of all time? What is the story behind the image of Holmes.... the cape.... the pipe.... the lens? These questions and more will be answered as Harold and Theodora Nivers portray Connecticut's famous couple: William and Helen Gillette.

They will also perform several songs from the English Music Hall Era.

This delightful autumn program will take place on Sunday, October 19 at 3:00 p.m. The cost is \$10 per person or \$8 for current museum members.

Reservations are encouraged, but walk-ins are also welcome.

Light refreshments will be served after the performance.



Harold and Theodora Nivers as William and Helen Gillette

Tags & Treasures in Retrospect

By Sally Kernan

Let me start by thanking all of you for your help and support – in so many ways, you all contributed to making Tags and Treasures come together. You all scoured your homes, attics and basements for items to be sold – many of you contributed time, some contributed money, some contributed all of the above!!

I'd like to thank Muffy Barhydt and Faith Warner, Franny Reynolds and Morrie Killian and Torrey Cooke for hosting luncheons in their lovely homes. This served the dual purpose of accumulating Treasures, as well as getting Dames together to enjoy each other's company in a beautiful setting with excellent food – what could be better?

I'd like to thank all of you who helped with the actual sale – the set-up and pricing – working on the days of the sale – and the packing and cleaning up. The list is long, and I won't go through it all here, but I am most grateful. I'm a bit slow with the thank-you notes, but they are coming!

(Continued on page 7)

I'd especially like to thank Nonnie Redway for the wonderful preview party, which was a great success, for the moral support and for being there every day, all day! I would not have made it through the weekend without her. In addition, Judy Rowley was a wonderful help: first, in securing some terrific donations; secondly, driving back and forth constantly, working tirelessly, buying a lot, and, most of all, providing comic relief with her toy beeping driving machine!

The publicity was excellent, thanks to Charles and Pita Communications. Charles was also a great sport posting signs all around the town. The weather was great and we had lots of items to sell. Unfortunately, the economy is NOT great, so it seems that every sale was like pulling teeth. Nonetheless, we raised a respectable amount, which hopefully will be quite a bit more when we complete the sale of the Whistler etching which was so generously donated. It will be offered to several Galleries and Dealers in order to realize the best sale possible. The total income, after later sales and a nice donation, was \$8,706.25.

Finally, we have packed up and stored all of the nicer unsold items, and plan to run a one-day sale in October at the time of the town-wide Arts and Crafts Fair. Again, Thanks!

Report from Museum Building Committee

Anne Kuckro, Chair

Since the architects, James Mellows and Robert Paladino, made their presentation at the Annual Meeting in May, they have continued to refine the plans and elevations for the new addition to the Museum. Here are two of those drawings: an exterior and the interior floor plan.



EAST (STREET) ELEVATION:

From Main Street, the proposed addition will appear to be a one story structure built behind the 18th century woodshed. The window and clapboarded gable ends that you see rising above the roof of the woodshed will be 15 feet beyond the back walls of woodshed and the Deane House ell. The brick gable-end will be 20 feet further back. The woodshed will be set upon a higher foundation, so that its floor is level with the floors of the Webb House. The connector between the woodshed and the Webb House will be of glass with views of the Colonial Revival Garden behind. The historic character and integrity of the 18th century woodshed will be preserved by the addition of a glass entry, through which the woodshed's old arched doorway will be visible. Its distinctive design will indicate to visitors that this is the main entrance to the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum

North Elevation

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

NORTH (GARDEN) ELEVATION:

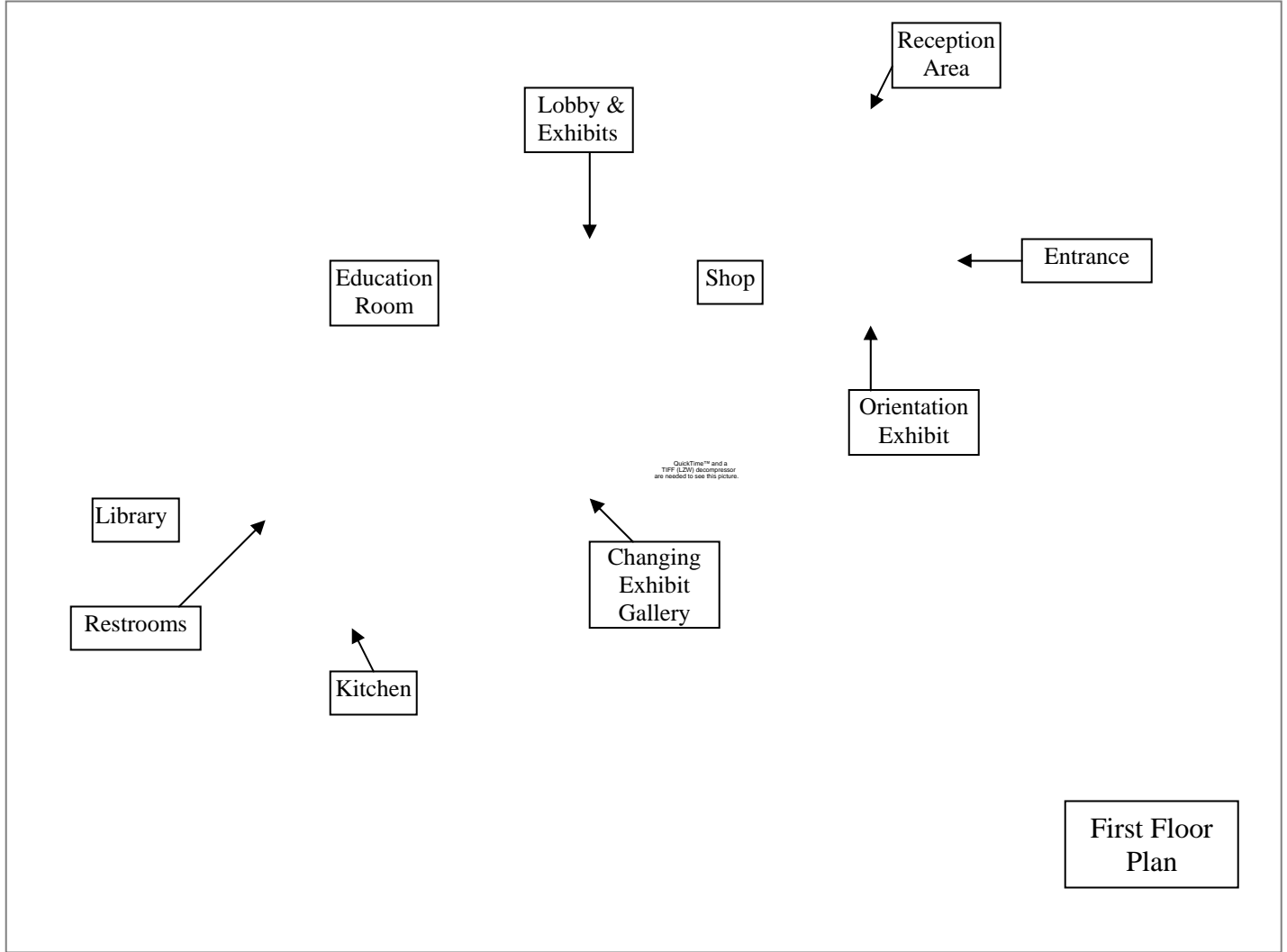
The north side of the addition overlooks the Colonial Revival Garden, which is a prominent focal point in the design. The large windows, French doors and an elevated walkway along this side of the building feature garden views. Along the basement-level, plant materials will grow on the lattice shown under the railing to help soften the high foundation walls so that they will blend in with the garden. The Education and Meeting Room is the most prominent feature on the north elevation with its greater height and handsome brick façade. The balcony outside of this room is covered by a pergola, which will also have greenery growing on it to provide a subtle and attractive backdrop to the Colonial Revival Garden. The window openings shown on the basement level provide light for the curatorial office and work areas. At the far right in front of the library is a raised terrace for parties and events.

West Elevation Facing Barn



WEST (REAR) ELEVATION:

The west side of the addition will not be visible from a public street, but it shows how the new addition will help to connect the Webb and Deane houses as integral parts of the larger Museum. The addition relates to the historic 18th century buildings with its use of vernacular forms and materials, but it is honestly 21st century in its complexity and



FIRST FLOOR PLAN:

The first floor will provide the public spaces necessary for the daily operation of the Museum. Visitors will approach the Museum from the courtyard on Main Street. They will enter through the old arched doorway of the woodshed, where they will be greeted by one of the guides. While they wait for a tour, they can browse in the Museum Shop, view the orientation panels in the Reception Area or look at a changing exhibit in the new gallery. Those attending lectures, workshops and other educational programs can gather in the Education Room. The Library at the west end of the addition will serve as the Dames' Board Room and meeting room and as a research center. There will also be up-to-date rest rooms, a service kitchen and an elevator.

Fall Calendar

Monday, September 8	Board Meeting 10:00 a.m.
	Executive Committee Meeting 1:00 p.m.
Week of September 15	Area Meeting
Monday, September 22	Development Committee Meeting 10:00 a.m.
	Finance Committee Meeting 1:00 p.m.
Sunday, September 28	“Wethersfield Witch Craze,” 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Monday, October 6	Board Meeting 10:00 a.m.
	Executive Committee Meeting 1:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 19	“An Afternoon with the Gillettes,” 3:00 p.m.
Monday, October 20	Development Committee Meeting 10:00 a.m.
	Finance Committee Meeting 1:00 p.m.
Wednesday, October 22	Semi-Annual Meeting
Friday & Saturday, October 24 & 25	“Spirits of Old Wethersfield,” 6:30 -10
Thursday, November 6	“Silas Deane and the American Revolution” – Lecture by Robert H. Patton, 5:30 p.m. at The New Britain Museum of American Art

Visit www.webb-deane-stevens.org for program info. Make reservations at 529-0612, ext 12 or lsillitto@webb-deane-stevens.org.



Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum
 211 Main Street
 Wethersfield, CT 06109