

NATIONAL
HERITAGE
CORRIDOR

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In Touch

with The Last Green Valley

FALL 2016

MEMBER MAGAZINE

Gearing up for Walktober 2016

A Place of

Juxtapositions

Celebrating
The
Black Tavern
on Dudley Hill

LOST &
FOUND
IN OXFORD

Blue Slope
Country
Museum
brings

**Farm
History to Life**

PLUS Sharing and Loving Our History
Dr. Ashbel Woodward Museum
Volunteer Ranger Lucille Langlois
Benedict Arnold: Asset or Embarrassment?



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Care for, Enjoy and Pass on The Last Green Valley's Treasures

Welcome to the second edition of *In Touch*, The Last Green Valley's new member magazine. We hope you enjoy this issue's focus on historic preservation, and are enticed by these stories to delve deeper into our region's past. We also hope that you will be inspired to take an active role in preserving those stories for future generations.

We are pleased to announce that The Last Green Valley is taking some important steps to ensure that this organization's work continues long into the future, so that we can continue to celebrate and protect our historic, cultural, and natural resources.

First, we are establishing a Last Green Valley Legacy Society. The Legacy Society includes anyone who wishes to benefit The Last Green Valley in his or her will or estate plans, no matter the size or simplicity of the bequest. A legacy gift is a thoughtful way to ensure that all the things you love about The Last Green Valley live on.

We have four inaugural members of the Legacy Society, and we hope that if your bequest plans include The Last Green Valley, you will let us know so we can add your name to the list. You can remain anonymous if you wish, or you may let us publicize your name to inspire others.

Second, we are making it easier for you to feel confident in the long-term stability of this organization by ensuring that any bequest or gift you make will benefit this region into the future. We are excited to be partnering with the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut to establish two agency endowment funds specifically designed for nonprofits like us.

These funds are an important step towards the sustainability of our organization and the region. By establishing these funds, we hope to increase our visibility and capacity to secure major gifts, and to obtain high quality investment management services. We invite you to contact us, or contact representative from the funds directly, to learn more about them.

Finally, we challenge you to look with us into the future. Please help us ensure that The Last Green Valley's heritage is passed on to future generations by making a donation directed towards one of our new agency endowment funds. Every dollar you contribute will have a substantial and meaningful impact on our ability to celebrate and protect our region's treasures.

With your help we can care for and enjoy The Last Green Valley, but even more important, together we can pass it on.



Bill Jobbagy, Chairman
Board of Directors

In Touch

Fall 2016

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THANK YOU TO THE PHOTOGRAPHERS OF THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

In Touch photos by:

Marcy Dawley

Fran Kefalas

Laura Moorehead (including cover)

Norwich Historical Society

G. Leslie Sweetnam

It is a group

of 35 towns tied together inextricably by geography, culture and history, yet 35 towns standing separate and independent, each embracing its own unique history and culture.

It is a place

of rolling hills and lush landscapes, punctuated by steep, rocky and formidable ascents. It is a place with a rich farming history and a place that also shaped the modern factory and led the world in textile manufacturing.

The Last Green Valley – A Place of *Juxtapositions*

"The Last Green Valley is a microcosm of all of American History," said Bev York, a professor of history at Quinebaug Valley Community College and Education and Program Director at the Windham Textile and History Museum. "Things that happened in the history books aren't just everywhere else. They are right here."

That history is a significant part of why Congress designated the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley only the fourth National Heritage Corridor in the nation in 1994. Today, the region is officially known as The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor.

Larry Lowenthal worked for the National Park Service back then and was involved in the original studies used to determine whether the area deserved recognition. The area, however, forced the Park Service to reshape its thinking somewhat, Lowenthal said. The National Park Service had based its previous recommendations on standards similar to the National Register of Historic Places, which alone did not fit the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley.

Geography, Lowenthal said, is the tie that binds the area and informs the social, economic, cultural and political climate that leads to the rich and diverse history still present today.

"As a corridor there was no one thing that made it significant," Lowenthal said. "It has a distinctive set of characteristics that sets it apart."

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Juxtaposition - continued from page 1

The Quinebaug and Shetucket River Valleys were left largely untouched by the first generation of colonists. Norwich, founded in 1659, is the only town in the region founded before the end of King Philip's War in 1676. The rest of the region's towns were settled during the second wave of colonial settlement.

Lowenthal said until King Philip's War ended Native American power in Southern New England, the colonists saw the region as a "howling wilderness" and it took on some of the characteristics of an island that it still retains. When settlement did happen, it happened quickly, he said.

"None of the towns had a significant advantage over the others in terms of their development."

Larry Lowenthal

That sense of being separate, however, informed the area's early development and still exists today. Although the National Heritage Corridor as it was first designated only included 25 towns of Connecticut, Lowenthal said the thought was always that the towns in Massachusetts should be

included. All 35 towns are in the same watershed and share that sense of separation from other regions in their own states.

"In Connecticut the area was Connecticut's Appalachia, as it was referred to, and that was probably unfair and misleading," Lowenthal said. "The fact that it was somewhat isolated and neglected by the rest of the state is now part of its charm, and in Massachusetts it has its same problem. It doesn't fit well into the other regions of the state, but it's part of a fairly distinct area with the towns in Connecticut."

Those traits sparked a spirit of rebellion in the region's inhabitants from the power of the settlements that had come before them. The frontier spirit, although more genteel than that of later western frontier, was alive and well in the region, Lowenthal wrote in one of his assessments for the National Park Service.

And it was that spirit that led so many residents from the region to join the Continental Army during the American Revolution. Connecticut's Governor, Jonathan Trumbull was the only Colonial Governor to support the revolution. He was also the only one to retain office after the war.

York said while no major battles were fought in the region — also a factor of its geography — the planning for the revolution happened here. Leaders such as Trumbull and Samuel Huntington of Norwich helped shape the war and the country. A signer of the Declaration of Independence, Huntington was also the first president of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation, the government that led the country until the Constitution was ratified.

It is not hard to argue the new nation's first leader was from the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley, York said. And that leadership continued as the country approached the Civil War. In 1833 to 1834, Prudence Crandall opened her home as a boarding school for "young girls of color." Crandall literally came under fire and was forced to close and stand trial for efforts. "Yes, she was forced to close her doors, but what she did was noticed all over the country," York said. "It reverberated well beyond this area. The region had strong abolitionist leaders long before the war, and it had strong opposition as well."

Lowenthal said the geography also allowed the region to become a place of “hills and mills” with farming on the hills and industrial development in the valleys. Norwich, Windham, Putnam and Southbridge became economic powerhouses. The farms and the mills worked together for the good of both, he said.

Joe Lindley of The Thompson Historical Society said the region’s history does not stop with the industrial revolution, but it also does not begin with the colonist. Thompson has hundreds of lithic sites, which are precolonial stone structures, as does Woodstock. “It’s important we start looking at that part of the region’s past,” Lindley said. “Our history doesn’t start with the white Europeans. There was a rich history here with the Native Americans thousands of years before the first colonists ever showed up.”

Lindley and York agree that in few places is it so easy to walk through history.

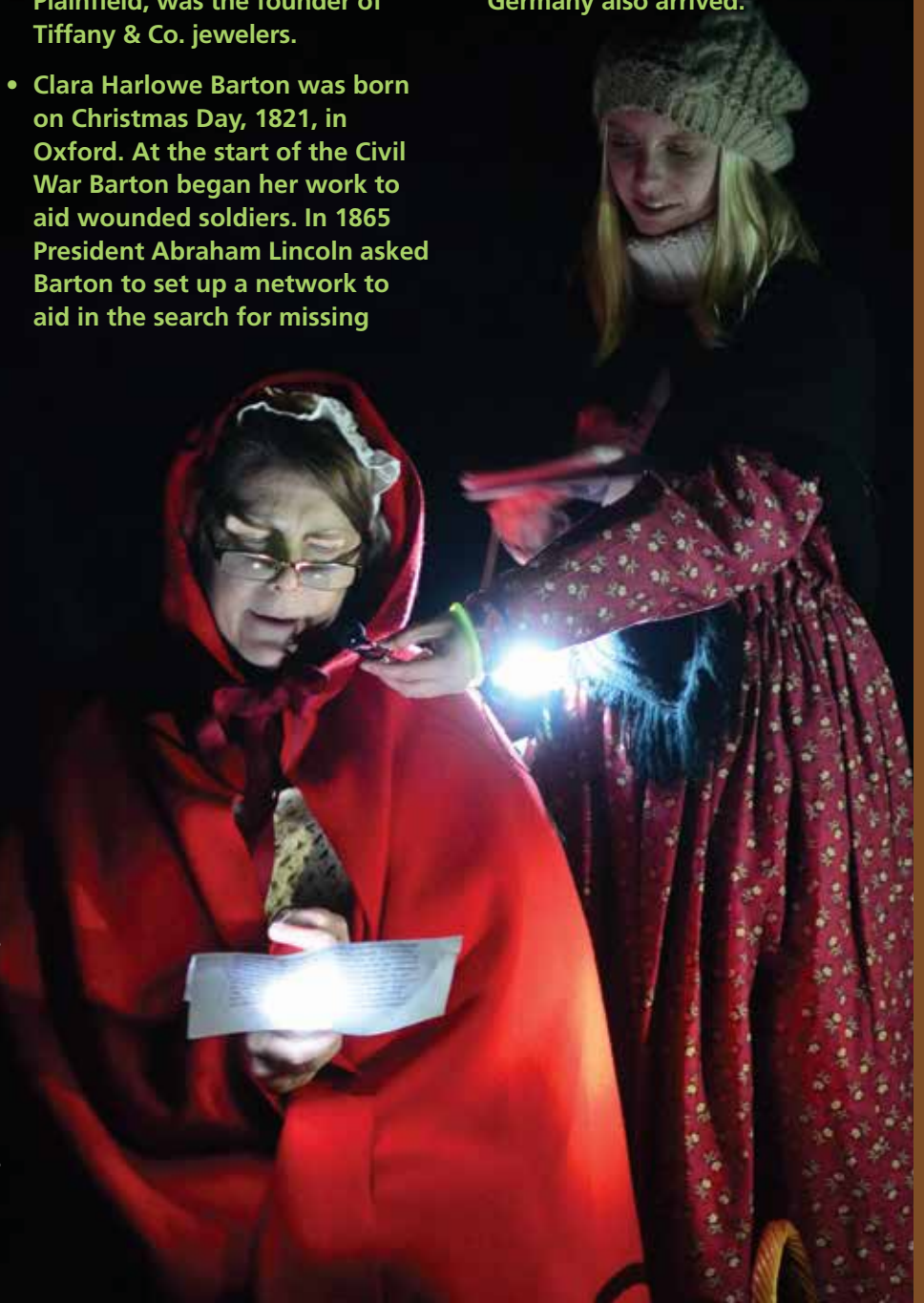
“We can literally still take some of the same steps today that shaped history. We live in the same places and we learn from that history. We cannot move forward today without understanding our history and where we came from. Those themes of race and independence and the environment that were all part of our history are still part of our lives today.”

Beverly York

Did you know...

- With the help of the New England Universalists, Amasa Nichols founded Nichols Academy in Dudley in 1815. It is now Nichols College.
- Naval Captain Samuel Chester Reid of Norwich, a hero from the War of 1812, designed the modern American flag in 1818.
- Comfort Tiffany built a mill on the west bank of the Quinebaug River in Brooklyn in 1820 to manufacture cotton. His son, Charles Lewis Tiffany, born in Killingly and educated in Plainfield, was the founder of Tiffany & Co. jewelers.
- Clara Harlowe Barton was born on Christmas Day, 1821, in Oxford. At the start of the Civil War Barton began her work to aid wounded soldiers. In 1865 President Abraham Lincoln asked Barton to set up a network to aid in the search for missing men. She was the first woman to head a federal agency. In 1881 Barton helped establish the Red Cross in America.
- In 1833, Prudence Crandall established a school for girls “of color” in Canterbury and was forced to close the school in 1834.
- Mills fueled immigration to The Last Green Valley in the 1840s and ‘50s when migrants from rural Ireland came to Connecticut fleeing the potato famine. Immigrants from industrialized England, Scotland, and northern Germany also arrived.

Photo courtesy Norwich Historical Society



Celebrating

The Black Tavern on Dudley Hill



Fran Kefalas

The Black Tavern, with its wide welcoming porch, looks like it could still be a functioning inn...

...but the historic structure, a symbol of 19th century life in The Last Green Valley, almost was lost to bulldozers. Built in 1804 as an inn by Capt. Hezekiah Healy on historic Dudley Hill in Dudley, Massachusetts, The Black Tavern was located on the stagecoach road half-way between Boston and Hartford and Providence and Springfield.

"Hezekiah was the son of the first male child born in Dudley," said Bob Ducharme, caretaker of the inn and a member of The Black Tavern Historical Society. "This place is an important part of Dudley's history."

The Black Tavern's history is not one of famous names and grand tales. It's the story of life as it was. When Healy died in 1817,



his wife Becca and two daughters continued to run the inn for about five years. After the economic power of the area shifted to Webster with the arrival of Samuel Slater's mill, the women closed the inn but continued to live there. The building stayed in the family until 1946 when Nichols College took ownership.

Ducharme said that although Nichols used it for dorms, the building remained largely intact, but it had fallen into disrepair by 1984. The Black Tavern was in such bad shape that Nichols planned to raze the building. Sandy Peterson, who has been involved with The Black Tavern for 14 years, said Dudley residents decided to take a stand and not allow their history to continue to disappear. Nichols sold the building to the historical society for \$1.

It is now Dudley's only structure on the National Register of Historic Places. Ducharme said the building was not ready to be opened to the public until 1990, but even then a lot of work was still needed. As caretaker, Ducharme lives with his wife Chris in an apartment at the back of the Tavern, much like the Healy's did when they owned the inn. A woodworker by trade, Ducharme has reproduced a number of historic pieces that are now housed in The Black Tavern, such as the tavern tables and a sideboard. The museum also houses several pieces, such as a clock case

and teapot set, from the Healy's. Living on the property and seeing history come back to life is a dream come true, Ducharme said.

Ten years ago, the historical society also purchased the adjacent historic barn from Nichols. The barn brought on a new level of effort. "We've been lucky that we've had a lot of people who are willing to do work for us," Ducharme said. "But it still costs money to maintain this place."

Restoration of the barn cost The Black Tavern Historical Society \$104,930. The Last Green Valley contributed a \$2,500 grant to the project. "It was really the first grant we got, and it showed us that we could go get more grant money," Ducharme said. "That grant was so important to us." Dudley's third graders also hold a penny drive every year and have raised about \$10,000 for The Black Tavern in the last eight years.

Linda Bazinet, chairman of the historical society's Board of Directors, said The Last Green Valley has been critical to helping spread the word about the work going on at The Black Tavern. The building is on its way to again becoming an important location in the region.

"It's here after 200 and something years," Bazinet said. "It's a look into the daily life of the past and it should be protected."



Pictured in photos above: Restoration at the Black Tavern barn. Photos courtesy of The Black Tavern Historical Society.

IT WAS REALLY THE FIRST GRANT WE GOT, AND IT SHOWED US THAT WE COULD GO GET MORE GRANT MONEY. THAT GRANT WAS SO IMPORTANT TO US."

Bob Ducharme, caretaker of the inn and a member of The Black Tavern Historical Society

Blue Slope Country Museum Brings Farm History



to Life



Sandy and Ernie Staebner never meant to be historians. It was passed down to them by Ernie's father, Alfred. But after coming into possession of Alfred's extensive collection of historic farm implements, the couple decided it needed to be shared and Blue Slope Country Museum in Franklin, Connecticut was born on the Staebner's working farm.

"Dad Staebner didn't like tape recorders, but I do wish I had sat with him more and listened to his stories and recorded them," Sandy Staebner said. "He was the type of man that if he didn't know an answer to a question about agricultural history he would disappear until he found the answer."

Blue Slope Country Museum may not have formally existed until 1991, but its roots date back to the days after Alfred and Vivian Staebner bought the farm on Blue Hill Road in Franklin in 1940. The previous

continued on page 8



Fran Kefalas

Left: Old-fashioned haying at Blue Slope Country Museum. Mower is being pulled by two of Blue Slope's draft horses.

Above: Sandy and Ernie Staebner, founders of the Museum, with their dog, Chip.

“W

HEN WE GOT THE COLLECTION WE HAD NO THOUGHT OF MAKING A MUSEUM.

IT WAS JUST A FLUKE THAT IT HAPPENED THIS WAY.”

Sandy Staebner

Blue Slope - continued from page 7

owner had left behind a crowbar that Alfred was using to remove rocks from the fields, when one day it broke, spilling out buckshot. A closer examination of the crowbar revealed a date of 1779 and the realization that a musket from the American Revolution had been repurposed into a crowbar. “It’s that old phrase ‘swords into plowshares’,” recalled Sandy. “It was true and we think that’s what really started Dad Staebner down the road of collecting.”

The museum is filled with almost anything you can imagine a farm needing, from horse drawn plows, sickles, milk bottles, rakes, hoes and other tools to authentic military weaponry, including a civil war musket. Much of it is displayed in a building built for the collection and dubbed “Ernie’s Toy Box.” Ninety percent of the collection came from Alfred Staebner, but it was Ernie who artfully displayed the items.

The museum also features a 1740s era kitchen and a school room; both are important aspects of the educational programs Blue Slope offers for area school children. The museum has programs for kindergartners through eighth-graders, led by teacher and daughter-in-law Anne Staebner. Sandy also dresses in period costume from 1740 and plays “Granny Lathrop” for the school children. “We feel it’s important to educate children about farming and agricultural history,” Staebner said. And they’ve done it while running a working farm, with dairy cows, maple syrup, goats and draft horses.

In 1998 the Staebners built a bank barn to house the draft horses on the first level and a collection of antique wagons on the second level. The bank barn also plays host to square dances. In 2009 the Staebners restored the 200-year-old stone spring house, which can be seen during wagon rides.

Sandy noted that a \$10,000 grant from The Last Green Valley in 2004 was important to help assess the



Pictured in photos above: Farm life on display at Blue Slope Country Museum. Photos by Fran Kefalas.

collection. With \$12,650 in matching funding, Blue Slope purchased a computer and software and began the process of formally cataloging artifacts at the museum.

The Staebners have also participated in StEPs-CT, a capacity-building program for smaller Connecticut museums, historical societies, and other cultural organizations offered by the CT Humanities Council and the CT League of History Organizations.

“When we got the collection we had no thought of making a museum,” Sandy said. “It was just a fluke that it happened this way. But there came a time when we decided we should share it.”

Sharing Our History Through Collaboration

There are historic treasures hiding throughout The Last Green Valley, many of them under the care and protection of local historical societies. But sometimes, those organizations are not utilizing one another's expertise. The Last Green Valley is hoping to connect the many historical organizations and shed light on the resources and collections available throughout The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor.

"Our goal is to bring people together to share information," said Marcy Dawley, program administrator for The Last Green Valley. "Instead of them working in little pockets they can come together. Hopefully, they will know they are in the same boat and maybe it will be easier for them if they have these connections."

To that end, Dawley has begun organizing a quarterly meeting hosted by one of The Last Green Valley's historical societies. The Killingly Historical Society and the Thompson Historical Society have each hosted one meeting. The most recent meeting, in August, was hosted by The Huntington Homestead in Scotland.

Marilyn Labbe, executive director of the Killingly Historical Society, discussed the society's extensive genealogical records at the first meeting. "It's not just records from Killingly," Labbe said. "We have the largest genealogical

collection east of the Connecticut River and we're here to help people with their research." Building the collection has been a painstaking effort over the last 21 years, since the society took possession of the old town library on Main Street. It's been a work of love and care, and there is still so much left to do.

The Thompson Historical Society is the caretaker of its own surprise collection. Tourtellotte Memorial High School houses what is believed to be the largest in-school museum in the country on the second floor of the old 1909 building. The museum has the school's original auditorium and grand piano, an 1894 Steinway which has had its workings restored. "We wanted to leave the body unrestored," said Joe Lindley, a member of the society. "We figured every scratch and nick was made by a student and is a part of the history of the piano."

The piano alone is worth tens of thousands of dollars. The art collection across the hall, housed in a memorial room created by Harriet Tourtellotte in 1909, is worth millions. By the 1990s, however, the room and the art were in a terrible state of deterioration because of a leaking roof. "We were only a few years away from losing everything," Lindley said.

In 2009, Thompson made the difficult decision to separate the management of the museum

from the school district and along with the separation went the trust the Tourtellottes created for the 1909 building. Lindley said \$700,000 of that trust enabled the historical society to restore the 1909 building and the art within it. The site is one of only several the historical society manages.

Lindley said the society tries to work with other historic organizations, but the help of The Last Green Valley in connecting them is welcome. "We all know each other but we don't always think to work on projects together," Lindley said. Thompson has the Ramsdall family collection of photos and information on steam engines, believed to be the largest of its kind in the country, but the society has needed the help of others in identifying parts of the collection. "We've got people who come in and just know exactly what they're looking for," Lindley said.

Dawley said she is pleased that connections are already being made. The goal is to help the organizations thrive with one another and also attract more interest in them. "We know a lot of these organizations are struggling to get volunteers," Dawley said. "We want to help them connect with the community and find ways to get a younger generation interested in their work."

Below: Quarterly meeting participants learn about the Memorial Room at Tourtellotte Memorial High School.



Lost & Found IN OXFORD

HUGUENOT HALL

History has a way of making its way back home. The Oxford Firefighters Association in Massachusetts has had an incredible run of luck with its artifacts finding their way back home ever since the association took possession of the Huguenot Steamer No. 1 Fire House in 1999 with the intention of turning it into a museum.

"We're always keeping our eyes out for pieces of our history, but it really has been amazing how some of these things have turned up," said Earl Holmberg, a member of the firefighters association. The firefighters association took over the old fire house, built by the town in 1884 to serve the northern end of town, after years of neglect had begun making it a hazard. The Oxford Fire Department had moved out in 1974 when their new station was built across the road.

The town used the structure as a storage shed until a microburst sent a tree crashing into the side of the building.

Holmberg said the firefighters association, originally formed as a fraternal organization, had been wanting to take over the fire house for a number of years. The microburst persuaded the town to hand it over for \$1. Not only was the building unfit for use, it also was devoid of the artifacts that had been a part of its history, including the original steam engine the fire house had been built for.

The Silsby Steamer fire engine represented a major upgrade in firefighting for Oxford, Holmberg said. But like its predecessor,

an 1857 Jeffers Hand Tub, it had disappeared from Oxford decades before anyone considered restoring the old fire house.

Holmberg said the Steamer went out of service in 1923 but remained in Oxford until 1941 when it disappeared from the records. The Hand Tub served the town until 1918 when it was replaced by Oxford's first motorized fire engine. It was donated to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in Boston in 1948, but disappeared from records after that.

Holmberg said having both pieces now reside in the fire house is remarkable. The Hand Tub pump, known as the Colonel DeWitt, reappeared first, turning up in a barn on Cape Cod after the property owner passed away. Oxford approved repurchasing "The Colonel" at a 1989 town meeting for \$3,500. Two lanterns bearing the

"We're always keeping our eyes out for pieces of our history, but it really has been amazing how some of these things have turned up."

Earl Holmberg, a member of the firefighters association



name "Colonel DeWitt" now sit on the front of the Hand Tub, but were missing when the town purchased it from its owners on the Cape. Those lanterns were found by a member of the association at a flea market in Connecticut.

The Silsby Steamer, known as Huguenot Steamer No. 1, was found in 2000 as the centerpiece of the New England Fire and History Museum's collection in Brewster, Massachusetts. However, after the death of its founder, the fate of the museum was uncertain. After many negotiations and a 2001 special town meeting approving purchase of the apparatus for \$52,000, the Huguenot Steamer returned to Oxford on March 5, 2002.

Those are just the big items. Holmberg said photos, postcards and other memorabilia from Oxford's firefighting past

have a way of turning up too.

Holmberg said although the town was willing to pay for the return of the apparatus, the firefighters association raised all the money to restore the building, which is an ongoing process.

The first floor was ready for the public in 2006, after the association successfully landed several grants. In 2003 The Last Green Valley provided a \$10,610 grant, which was matched with \$11,810 in additional funding, for the carriage house doors. In 2004, another \$8,720 grant from The Last Green Valley was matched with \$9,720 in

additional funding for the window replacements. Holmberg said other grants have also allowed the fire department to restore the second floor back to its original purpose as a meeting hall. The next step is restoring the wooden hose tower, which in itself



Opposite page: The Huguenot Hall banner hangs on the second floor of the museum.

Above left: Residents asked the town to construct a second floor to the fire barn to allow for a meeting place for the residents of North Oxford. The second floor has been restored and is still in use.

Above top: The original gas lamps from the Colonel DeWitt had disappeared but were found at an auction on the Connecticut shoreline.

Above bottom: The pressure gauge from the 1884 Huguenot Steamer.

Photos by Fran Kefalas.

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“...to be able to do all of this restoration work we need the funding from grants and donations, and we’ve been able to get them and preserve this place.”

Above: The Oxford Fire Department's original Colonel Dewitt Hand Tub from 1857. Below: Earl Holmberg outside of the restored Huguenot Steamer No. 1 Museum, which served the town as a fire barn from 1884 until 1974. Photos by Fran Kefalas.



Lost & Found - continued from page 11

is a historic part of the fire house. The association already has the grant money in place.

“To have a wooden hose tower like this still standing is very unusual,” Holmberg said. “The association makes sure the lights stay on and the heat works. But to be able to do all of this restoration work we need the funding from grants and donations, and we’ve been able to get them and preserve this place. It’s part of Oxford’s history, but it also shows how fire departments all over the area worked.”

Shining a Spotlight

on Volunteer Ranger Lucille Langlois

Lucille Langlois likes to fuel her curiosity. If she hears of an interesting event, she goes. If she learns of anything from a museum to a walking trail that she has not been to, she goes. It's that spirit of exploring the region that has made Langlois, a lifelong resident of The Last Green Valley, a dedicated volunteer for the National Heritage Corridor for almost 20 years.

"I keep learning more," Langlois said. "Whatever we do we're trying to make people aware of what we have, and we have a lot to offer." Langlois, who lives in the Quinebaug section of Thompson, Connecticut, began her work with the Heritage Corridor as an extension of her work with a Southbridge, Massachusetts organization hoping to convert an old railway line into a walking trail. That trail connected to the Corridor in Connecticut and Langlois started attending monthly meetings in an effort to get the trail approved in Massachusetts.

The nine Massachusetts towns of The Last Green Valley had not even been absorbed into the Heritage Corridor when Langlois began volunteering to link the efforts across state lines. Before she knew it, Langlois was on the Corridor's trails and open space committee. "One thing led to another," Langlois said. "I was on the committee, then they asked me to help with an event here and then another one there. I kept saying yes."



Langlois was born in Southbridge and moved to Quinebaug at age 11. The transition was difficult at the time because her bicycle was no longer enough to get her all the places she wanted to go in her new, more rural town. As she grew older, however, Langlois began to appreciate the rural nature of her hometown. "There will never be a house across the street from me," Langlois said. "I like the rural setting." But she also appreciates how close she is to major urban centers. Boston is just over an hour away. Providence and Hartford are less than an hour away and New York is just more than two hours away. "Where else in the country can you be so close to so much and still be in such a rural place?"

Langlois appreciates the rolling hills, dark skies and history of the region. She sees her role as a Volunteer Ranger for the Corridor as an educational one. She often helps to staff events for The Last Green Valley, such as the Woodstock Fair, Celebrating Agriculture, and Bike Night in

Killingly. When she's not staffing an event for The Last Green Valley, she's enjoying one of the many programs and events the Heritage Corridor towns offer.

Langlois said she enjoys volunteering for Walktober, but she also likes participating in the walks, especially those that highlight the region's history. She also supports many of the organizations that are a part of The Last Green Valley, such as Old Sturbridge Village, where she has been a member for many years, and The Black Tavern in Dudley.

Langlois said she enjoys meeting people and sharing the knowledge she's gained over the years about the region. "People ask me how I became a Ranger and I tell them they can be too," Langlois said. "I didn't do anything special but attend events and offer my help. Yes, I've been doing it a long time now, but it wasn't always that way. I've learned as I go and I've gotten to work with great people."



VOLUNTEER

Bring New Technology to Dr. Ashbel Woodward House Museum

Laura Moorehead

Ginger Steiner grew up in Franklin, Connecticut with a passion for history. She majored in Maritime History at UConn, worked at Mystic Seaport as an interpreter and educator, was part of the restoration team for the Charles W. Morgan, the only surviving ship from America's whaling past, and sailed on historic tall ships as a crew member.

Steiner knows history, but "I never knew there was a museum here in Franklin," she said, the shock still evident on her face even after more than a year of volunteering for The Dr. Ashbel Woodward House Museum. It was actually her fiancé, Dan Walls', love of the Civil War that led Steiner and

Walls to the Woodward House. Walls, a native of Baltimore, and Steiner had just moved to Franklin when her grandfather, a Norwich resident, suggested Walls go to the Woodward House's annual Civil War encampment reenactment.

"After we came here we thought we could really help this place," Steiner said. "We're all volunteers here pulling together to preserve this piece of history." Walls and Steiner bring something to Woodward House many small historical organizations do not have — professional museum experience. The couple met working for a historical organization and both make their living with museums and history.

Steiner said Walls enjoys developing programs for children with interactive activities, and she is passionate about cataloging and interpreting Woodward House's collection and digging further into the past of Franklin's historic doctor.

Steiner's experience helped the museum, which is owned by the town, to secure a \$2,500 grant from The Last Green Valley that must be matched one-to-one. Steiner said the funding is already being put to use, helping the museum purchase a computer and collections software to catalog its growing collection. The grant will also be used to create an interactive touch-screen kiosk that

continued on page 16



Laura Moorehead



Fran Kefalas

*Opposite page:
Activities at the
Dr. Ashbel Woodward
House include Civil War
encampments, such as
the one pictured here.*

*Top: Model display of
the Civil War at the
museum.*

Center: Ginger Steiner.

*Below: The Dr. Ashbel
Woodward House.*



Laura Moorehead



will enable visitors to virtually "Explore the Surgeon's Room," a portion of the museum that is inaccessible to the public.

"You don't see too many small museums with touch screen displays," Steiner said. "But this was a way for us to actually expand our offerings. We don't have a surgeon's kit from when Ashbel Woodward was practicing medicine, and we can't give the public access to portions of the house. This allows us to create an exhibit we couldn't do otherwise."

Woodward is a fascinating character in the area's history. Born in Ashford, Connecticut to farmers, no one is truly sure how or why Woodward settled in Franklin in 1829. Steiner said it's unclear when Woodward's home was built; however, he seems to have moved in sometime in 1831. The son of an American Revolution soldier, Woodward was one of the few trained doctors in the area, having received formal medical training. Woodward was held in high esteem by his peers, serving as the President of the Connecticut Medical Society. He received an honorary degree from Yale in 1854.

"We know he was highly regarded in the community and beyond," Steiner said. Woodward served as deacon of the church, town clerk, town treasurer and was involved with the town schools. In 1862, at the age of 58, he joined the 26th Infantry and served as surgeon in the Civil War, rising to the rank of major.

One of Woodward's sons lived in the house until 1941. For a time, the state took it over to use as the caretaker's home for its abutting wildlife refuge until it was turned over to the town. The house was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.



"There really is so much more left to discover here."

Ginger Steiner



"This house is a lot more isolated than many historic properties," Steiner said. "It had few owners and wasn't changed much. There really is so much more left to discover here."



Pictured in photos above: Scenes from the Civil War encampment at the museum. Photos by Laura Moorehead.

TLGV Members Share Their Love for Local History

Elaine Knowlton's passion for history is clear moments into any conversation with her. She and her husband, Keith, have made preserving history an integral part of their lives. From the home they live in and a rare car they have lovingly restored, to the Quaker records passed down through generations, to their volunteer work and financial support of organizations promoting and preserving the region's past, the Knowltons are committed to preserving history.

"History matters," Elaine said. "Local history is so important, and it should be preserved and protected." The Knowltons moved to Brooklyn, Connecticut in April of 1983, having bought one of the oldest homes in the center of town. Keith said the family wanted to move closer to his business, Fiberoptics Technology in Pomfret, and were interested in a historic home. They got a little more than they bargained for when they discovered the previous owner had been duped into paying for shoddy work by a questionable contractor.

Over the years, the Knowltons have painstakingly restored the home, built between 1780 and 1790, to its historically accurate grandeur and have filled it with bits of history they have collected along the way. Together, through Keith's photography and Elaine's cataloging of every discovery, the couple has created a meticulous account of their efforts to revitalize their own home. Those records will be passed on to the next owner. "The history should stay with the home, where it belongs," Elaine said.

The home, along with the entire Brooklyn Village Center District, is on the National Register of Historic Places. Elaine said some of the



structures with colorful pasts have been lost to time.

The Knowltons had a front row view to one of Brooklyn's sadder moments. In August 1984, one of the wolf heads on the massive monument to Israel Putnam sitting across the road from the Knowltons' home was stolen. A year later the second wolf's head was also stolen during the fair. "The town is so busy during the Brooklyn Fair," Elaine said. "The state troopers asked us if we saw anything unusual, but during the fair everything is unusual."

The Knowltons also had a front row seat just a few years ago when the original wolf heads were found and returned. They now sit on display in the Brooklyn Historical Society's Museum. That museum owes much to the Knowltons, who through volunteer hours and financial support were part of a small volunteer group that propelled the museum from a roving small display to its permanent home in a historic structure on the green.

The couple got involved with the historical society in 1988 and Elaine has since been its vice president and president. She is currently the curator of the museum. Keith said getting involved in local history made sense. Before moving to Connecticut they lived in Brimfield and supported historical organizations there and have been supporters of Old Sturbridge Village for more than 40 years. Keith said many years ago they decided to offer a grant to support field trips for Connecticut third graders to visit Old Sturbridge Village.

Elaine said The Last Green Valley offered yet another way for the family to support an organization dedicated to preserving local history. Elaine was a member of the Board of Directors for 8 years, from 2007 to 2015, and the couple regularly gives a gold sponsorship for Tastes of The Valley, The Last Green Valley's largest fundraiser. "We believe strongly in education," said Elaine, who taught literature in Sturbridge for more than 20 years. "We support organizations that believe in education like we do."

"Local history is so important, and it should be preserved and protected."



BENEDICT ARNOLD

Enticing Asset or Embarrassment?



It's a debate that has raged among the historians and historical organizations of Norwich for decades. In recent years, however, the Norwich Historical Society has taken a strong stand and embraced Arnold's complicated life with the realization that as the country's most notorious traitor, Arnold still has the ability to capture attention.

"We're not saying he's wonderful or should be celebrated," said Regan Miner, consultant with the Norwich Historical Society. "We are saying he was born here and is part of our history. And if his name can attract visitors so we can share more of that history, then we think

we should use him as the hook to bring people to Norwich."

As such, Arnold is the subject of a permanent walking trail in Norwich, which also highlights other parts of the city's rich history. He is the subject of the historical society's Second Saturday walking tours of the city and a major draw to its Walktober events.

The fact that Arnold is regularly linked to Norwich is in itself a harbinger of changing times. For decades, Arnold's name was a curse to be uttered only by the blasphemous. It was the late historian Bill Stanley who first championed the idea in the late

1990s of lifting up Norwich's native son in all his messiness for the world to see. Stanley urged city leaders to use Arnold's notorious life as a way of attracting visitors and spurring economic development. It happened slowly, and the debate over Arnold has not stopped, but he is no longer Norwich's dirty little historical secret.

The shift in thinking over Arnold coincides with a shift in thinking over how the city's plethora of history can best be shared, celebrated and used as an economic engine. Norwich has 15 different organizations acting as guardians of its past. For years, they acted largely alone.

Miner said it was Jason Vincent of the Norwich Community Development Corp. who first suggested coordinating efforts for The Last Green Valley's Walktober.

When pulled together and coordinated, Norwich had more walks than any other community and needed its own section of map on the Walktober brochure. That effort led the groups to understand that together they can do much more than they can alone. The Norwich Historical Society has picked up the mantle of coordinating. With that effort also came the realization the time was right to open a visitor's center.

Bill Champagne, president of the Norwich Historical Society, said it was actually Charlene Cutler, former executive director of The Last Green Valley, who first gave Norwich the idea of creating a visitor's center. "Charlene said she would like to see four visitor's centers in the Heritage Corridor and suggested Norwich would be the right spot for one on the southern end," Champagne said. "It got us thinking about the idea."

The Norwich Heritage and Regional Visitors' Center on the Norwichtown Green is now open for its second season. Champagne said much of the credit for the changes can go to Miner. Bringing Miner on as consultant propelled the efforts to professionally promote Norwich history.

He points to the visitors' center's Discover Norwich exhibit as proof. With a grant from the Sachem Fund and almost eight years, the exhibit was making progress but far from complete. With a second Sachem Fund grant, the historical society was able to bring Miner on board and in six months the exhibit was done.

Miner grew up in Norwich and her family enjoyed attending the various events put on by the local

historical organizations. She had just graduated from the University of Connecticut with a degree in history and was already on the Board of Directors of the Norwich Historical Society when she and Champagne had a discussion about how she could make a living doing what she loves. Miner is now getting her master's degree in public history from Central Connecticut State University. Her work with the historical society and the visitor's center is mutually beneficial; Miner gets more hands-on experience, while the center and historical society have a trained professional at their disposal.

Miner is busy writing grants and planning phase two of the Walk Norwich program, which already features the Benedict Arnold Trail and the Uncas Leap Trail. Phase two will include the Freedom Trail, focusing on Norwich's Abolitionist movement, and the Millionaire Mile, celebrating the city's past as an industrial power. The idea, Miner said, is to connect the trails with one another, creating an interactive way for visitors to explore the many facets of the city's history.

"I've always had a passion for history," Miner said. "It's exciting to be a part of this. There's so much history in Norwich and we have a lot of plans for how we can best share it and attract people to the city."



Above: Regan Miner, consultant, standing outside of the Norwich Historical Society welcome center.

Below: Guests visiting during Connecticut Open House Day.

Far below: Ribbon cutting ceremony.

Photos courtesy of the Norwich Historical Society.





Gearing Up for the 26th Annual

Marcy Dawley, TLGV's project administrator, said the lineup this year has about 240 unique adventures in 260 time slots because some of the walks are repeated. "It's by far and above bigger than ever," Dawley said. "A lot of favorite walks will be back and a lot of new ones are lined up. We have a lot of new walks in Massachusetts."

The Last Green Valley saw about 20,000 walkers and another 30,000 event participants for the 25th Annual Walktober in 2015. It featured 190 individual walks with a number of those walks repeating, resulting in more than 200 events for visitors.

This year, Southbridge will be joining Norwich, Willimantic and Putnam, in holding numerous coordinated walks.

Dawley said Norwich created the model and other towns have followed suit. Southbridge, thanks to the effort of TLGV member Scott Benoit, will have numerous Walktober events, including a bike ride, nature hikes, programs by the library and the recreation department. "They're promoting themselves to their own community and putting it out there for the rest of us to see what Southbridge has to offer."

In Norwich, the Historical Society is once again helping to coordinate the efforts of the many organizations in town hosting events. Regan Miner, consultant with the Norwich Historical Society, said the Norwich Community Development Corp. started the effort several years ago and the Historical Society has taken over the effort.

Dawley said the work that has gone into creating a model for other communities to follow has garnered Miner and Historical Society Secretary Dianne Brown the honor of being Team Walktober for 2016. "It's the first time we've ever had a team and



Walktober

they deserve it," Dawley said. "They've done such wonderful things to promote all that Norwich has to offer."

Miner said Norwich's organizations now hold their Walktober walks throughout the year on the second Saturday of the month. "It's a chance for our walk leaders to perfect their walk for the really big crowds we get during Walktober. We can test out a new walk, or improve an older one we've done before. We get more people for Walktober but we get 30 to 40 people for most of the second Saturday walks and sometimes we get a lot more."

Keith Knowlton, a volunteer with the Brooklyn Historical Society in Connecticut, said Walktober helps shine a light on organizations throughout The Last Green Valley. "We definitely see a spike in attendance during October."

Bob Ducharme, caretaker of The Black Tavern in Dudley, Mass. and vice president of the Black Tavern Historical Society, said the organization held its first Walktober event in 2015 and was astounded at the turnout. "We want people to know about us and see what's here," Ducharme said. "Walktober was great and we're excited to do it again."

Former Ms. Walktober Bev York said Walktober gives people the chance to literally walk through history. "It's an event people all over the country are trying to copy. That should tell us how wonderful Walktober is."

To obtain a copy of the 2016 Walktober brochure which contains a complete list of walks, paddles, events and more please visit thelastgreenvalley.org or call 860-774-3300



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Did you know...

Portions of The Last Green Valley are believed to have been first settled in 8,000 B.C.

Norwich was founded in 1659.

In 1706 colonists constructed a sawmill and gristmill at Willimantic Falls in Windham, where the Willimantic River dropped 90 feet in just over a mile.

Israel Putnam, born in 1718, is well-known for his exploits in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. He is credited with the saying "don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes" and slaying the last wolf in Connecticut at Wolf Den in Pomfret.

In the 1730s a mill was built at what is now the site of Cargill Falls Mill. While the original mill is gone, its foundation is still part of the current mill complex, making it the oldest known remnants of a mill in the country.

Dr. Daniel Lathrop and his younger brother Joshua opened the only apothecary shop between Boston and New York in 1737 in Norwich.

Nathan Hale was born in 1755 in Coventry. He was hung for treason by the British on Sept. 22, 1776, saying before his execution, "I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

In 1767 Manasseh Cutler, of what was then Killingly, published his treatise on the flora of North America. He became known as the Father of American Natural History.

Jonathan Trumbull Sr. of Lebanon was elected Governor of Connecticut in 1769, an office he retained throughout the American Revolution and until 1784. He was the only colonial Governor to support the revolution.

Ebenezer Craft built "The Elms," now called the Publick House, on the common in Sturbridge in 1771. The inn and tavern have served the public for 243 years. The common was also the location where Craft drilled the local militia.

Mohegan Samuel Ashbow was killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775 while serving in the Norwich Militia and was the first Native American to die in the American Revolution.

Woodstock native Jedidiah Morse wrote the first American textbook on American geography, "Geography Made Easy" in 1784.

Samuel Huntington was elected Governor of Connecticut in 1786 and retained the office until his death in 1796.

The Courier, which would become known as *The Norwich Bulletin*, and now *The Bulletin*, was founded in 1798. It is the second longest continuously published newspaper in the country.

Killingly's Mary Dixon Kies was the first woman in the country to receive a patent from the U.S. Patent Office. The patent was for a technique of weaving straw with silk and thread to make affordable work bonnets. The document was signed by President James A. Madison in 1809.

Samuel Slater, known as the "Father of American Manufacturing," brought his ingenuity to Webster in 1812, starting with cotton manufacturing and later adding wool and iron. In 1824, he and his brother began a cotton manufacturing company in Jewett City.

Go to page 3 for more TLGV fun facts!