



Kent Historical Society

Newsletter



Volume 4, Number 3

Kent, Connecticut

Autumn 2003

A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity!

On Saturday, November 29, 2003, a rare occurrence in the world of art will take place in Kent. The Kent Historical Society will present a week long exhibit from their collection of George Laurence Nelson paintings, with the culminating event being an auction of 54 Nelson paintings along with 10 pieces of art work by Nelson's contemporary Robert Nisbet. The exhibit will be held at the Kent Art Association at 21 South Main Street. The Art Association, whose founding members included George Laurence Nelson, is celebrating its 80th anniversary.

The proceeds from the auction will be used to further the restoration project of the permanent Nelson collection owned by the Kent Historical Society. The process of restoring the vast collection that George Laurence Nelson left to the Historical Society began two years ago when a selection of paintings was sold to a private art dealer, raising \$74,000. At that time many voiced their desire to be able to purchase one of Nelson's works. With that in mind, the trustees of the Historical Society chose this one



Woman with Flowers
by George Laurence Nelson

opportunity to make the paintings available to the general public.

This year several prominent museums in the northeast received George Laurence Nelson paintings from the Kent Historical Society for their displayed collections. The New Britain Museum of American Art, whose collection is one of the best and most comprehensive in the nation, received two oil paintings, *H.C.N. In Brown Velvet* 1917 and *From the June Garden*, ca 1930. The Wadsworth Atheneum, the Newington Cropsey Foundation and the Mattatuck Museum

also received works.

This auction held by the Kent Historical Society will be the last time that Nelson's work will be offered for sale by the Society. Exhibit hours are November 24, 25, 26 & 28, Noon—5:00 pm, Saturday, November 29, 10:00 am—2:00 pm. The auction begins on the 29th at 2:00 pm. Payment options are cash, check or credit card. Refreshments will be served. For more information, please call the Society at 860-927-4587.

— Tamara Potter, KHS Vice President

A Great Old Tradition Revived

On Saturday, October 25th, the Community House was filled to the rafters last Saturday night with music, dancing and laughter as an old fashioned square dance and husking bee once again took place there. Sponsored by The Kent Grange and the Kent Historical Society, the evening began with dinner downstairs and games for all ages upstairs, and ended with the dance floor jammed packed with happy, laughing dancers trying to figure out the

next step (or was it the last one?). The Grange and the Historical Society had exhibits spread out on one side of the hall, and Grange members were on hand to answer many questions from our guests. Volunteers from the Kent Historical Society staffed the kitchen and buffet table downstairs, feeding the hungry hordes who so thoroughly enjoyed the roast beef dinner from Bulls Bridge Inn that we ran out of roast beef at the end! Tom Zaccara based the menu on the old Husking Bee menus of the 1930s and '40s, serving up roast beef and gravy, mashed potatoes, baked beans, corn, rolls, butter, apple pie with whipped cream, cider and coffee. Several hard working Girl Scouts kept coffee cups filled, pie served and tables cleared. What a feast we had!

While part of the crowd enjoyed dinner downstairs, others found themselves upstairs playing such old fashioned games as hopscotch, bobbing for apples, pin-the-nose-on-the-pumpkin, and a hilarious relay race which required teams of grown men to don women's clothing and race back and forth the length of the hall. The race caused so much noise and laughter that the diners downstairs thought that the dancing had begun.

When the dancing did begin, there was soon not a spare inch on the dance floor. The band members from Country Spice patiently led us all through the not too complicated steps of many well-known square dances. Mistakes were forgiven, help was given, and a terrific time was had by all. As band leader Myrtle Hayden put it, it was "so wonderful to see the familiar old Kent faces out



Vinnie Osuch, a former member of Walt Sheldon's band who played at earlier husking bees reunites with Myrtle Hayden of Country Spice.

there". The final figures are not in yet, but we think we had over 200 people in the Community House that night, and we couldn't be happier. You are all asking now if we will do it again next year we think we will!

None of this would have been possible without the tremendous help from all corners of the town. First and foremost is Tom Zaccara of Bulls Bridge Inn. Without his generous donation of most of the delicious meal, we would not have

been able to pull this off. Dave Arno's family donated the corn, Bill Newton the hay, the Kent Greenhouse supplied the pumpkins and mums, Ed Matson the bittersweet. Lily's Flowers sent a lovely floral arrangement for the front table. The Fire Department and the Congregational Church lent us their large coffee urns, Davis IGA donated cases of bottled water for the thirsty dancers. Some anonymous person left a large supply of corn stalks in Susi Williams' garage.

The set-up, decoration and take down was almost as much fun as the dance. People just kept showing up at the door, saying "Put me to work"! At the risk of leaving out some very important people, I am going to try to name names, in no particular order: Carol McCann, Bill Leo, Ky Anderson, Susi Williams, Dick Wyman, Lynne & Don Hicks, Dawn & Scott Stone, Mary Grusauski, Dan & Toni Soule, Leanne Soule, Elissa Whitmore, Jessica Taylor, Brittany Harvey, Ariel Levesque, Marissa Johnston, Ed Matson, Doug & Jackie Matson, Dave & Caralee Rochavansky, Pauline Hayes, Mary Ellen Nelson, Fran Johnson, Bill & Charlotte Newton, Ed Wathley, Johnnie Lindberg, Andy Olson, Dick & Charlotte Lindsey, Jerry Tobin, Bob & Betty Carlson, George & Elsie Heimbeucher, and last but not least, a group of generous dancers, including Steve Pener, Katy Armstrong, Mark Pener and Kati Bacon who pitched in after the last set to help get the hall broom-clean in record time. Thank you all!! See you next year!

Cooking in the 19th Century

In our last newsletter, we asked for, among other things, old cookbooks, and we have been given several wonderful ones by Mary Van Valkenburg and Ginny Smith. The most recent addition, from Betty Bertine, is a copy of an 1894 edition of the **White House Cook Book**. It is well spattered, and was obviously well used. In addition to recipes for dishes we recognize today, there are some that are rather obscure. There are also menu planners, directions for laying a table such as would be fit for a State Dinner at the White House, and advice on preparing food for the sick. One in particular caught my eye: "**Relief from Asthma**. Sufferers from asthma should get a muskrat skin and wear it over their lungs with the fur side next to the body. It will bring certain relief. Or take powdered licorice root, powdered elecampane root, powdered anise-seed, each one drachm, powdered ipecac ten grains, powdered lobelia ten grains; add sufficient amount of tar to form into pills of ordinary size. Take three or four pills before going to bed."

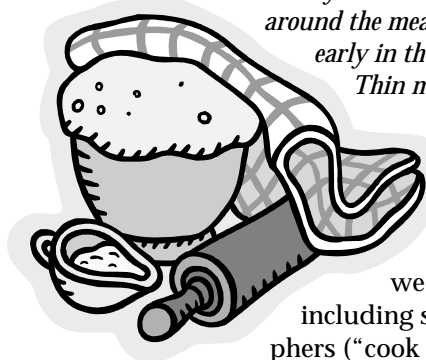
There is advice for dealing with problems which we no longer have, thanks to modern technology. One such entry is entitled **To Keep Meat From Flies**. "Put in sacks, with enough straw around it so the flies cannot reach through. Three-fourths of a yard of yard-wide muslin is the right size for the sack. Put a little straw in the bottom, then put in the ham and lay straw all around it; tie it tightly and hang it in a cool dry place. Be sure the straw is all

around the meat, so the flies cannot reach through to deposit the eggs. (The sacking must be done early in the season before the fly appears.) Muslin lets the air in and is much better than paper.

Thin muslin is as good as thick, and will last for years if washed when laid away when emptied." One final recipe sounds good for those of us who cannot eat shellfish:

Veal Collops. "Cut veal from the leg or other lean part into pieces the size of an oyster. Season with pepper, salt and a little mace; rub some over each piece; dip in egg, then into cracker crumbs and fry. They both look and taste like oysters."

There are many more recipes we will share in upcoming newsletters when we have space. What strikes me is the frugal use of every part of every animal, including some that we would not even consider eating today, like chipmunks and gophers ("cook them as you would a squirrel").....



Wine Goes Well With Art

For the past three years, we have held a special wine tasting at the Swift House on the first Saturday of December. We have decided not to do it this year. The previous weekend will be the Art Auction at the Kent Art Association, and we are busy with preparations for that event. There will be a nice selection of wine available at the Preview Party for the auction, so we hope you will join us there instead.

A Gentle Reminder: Your dues were due October 1st. Please stay with us and send in your check as soon as you can. We need each and every one of you!

Need an Idea For a Christmas Present?

Why not shop at the Kent Historical Society? For the history buffs on your list, we have an assortment of booklets about the history of Kent. Our series, *Kent Tales*, includes the following titles: *Sherm Chase Remembers (A Kent Life 1900 to 1983)*, *The Pratts of Macedonia*, *Rufus Fuller and the South Kent Ore Bed*, *Barzillai Slosson's History of Kent and Other Bits of Kent History*, and *The Journal of John Adam Concerning the Operation of the South Kent Ore Bed 1792—1802*. The Adam diary is \$40, while the rest of the *Kent Tales* are \$10 each.

The latest addition to the *Kent Tales* series is in the works and should be ready by Christmas! In response to many requests, we are in the process of publishing our collection of veteran's letters which was on exhibit at Seven Hearths last summer. Please call for more information.

We also offer George Laurence Nelson's remarkable account of his loving restoration of Seven Hearths. Entitled *New Life For Old Timber*, it sells for \$6. Along with his story, we sell packets of greeting cards made from his art work—a perfect gift for the not-so-historically minded people on your list. The packets of cards are \$6 each as well.

Last, but not least, you can buy Fran Johnson's Register of Some of the Families That Have Lived in Kent, CT 1739—1999, a must-have for any genealogist on your Christmas list. If our hours are not convenient for your shopping schedule, call 927-4587 for an appointment.

Kent Historical Society

PO Box 651, Kent, CT 06757

Est. 1954

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Hours

Tuesdays 9 AM to Noon, Fridays 1 to 4 PM ,
first two Saturdays of each month 10 AM to Noon
at the Swift House

This newsletter is compiled by Marge McAvoy,
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Kent Quiz: There was a ferry across the Housatonic River north of the present day center of Kent. Jonathan Rowley owned land where Olga Kennedy now lives in the Flanders section of town. In the 1740s, when Rowley established the ferry, Flanders was the center of town, and he did a brisk business ferrying people and wagons across the river there.

Next question: Who was involved in "Getting Connecticut Out of the Mud" ?

Kent Historical Society

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