

ROWAYTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

177 ROWAYTON AVENUE, ROWAYTON, CT 06853



EXHIBIT HOURS
Tuesdays 9:30 am – 3 pm
1st Sunday of the month
1 – 3 pm
and by appointment
**half shell gift shop
HOURS**
Monday - Saturday 11 - 3
and by appointment

FALL 2016

PEOPLE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE *at the* RHS

Fred Anderson, Grove Ely, Hank Gloetzner,
and Frank Raymond

Founders of The Frank E. Raymond Maritime Museum

The historic Barclay Boathouse is home to the Historical Society's maritime collection and helps to tell the story of the Five Mile River and the people and the businesses that have flourished here. Before being moved to its current home in Pinkney Park in 1992, it was located at the Jenkins/Ely Boatyard before being donated to the RHS by Grove Ely. RHS board members Frank Raymond, Hank Gloetzner, and Fred Anderson



*The Barclay Boathouse moving down
Rowayton Avenue to its new home in
Pinkney Park in 1992*

and others spent countless hours turning the old boathouse into a museum highlighting Rowayton's relationship with the sea.

The boathouse was built in 1861 for publisher George Palmer Putnam (among his clients were Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allen Poe), who owned a beautiful summerhouse on Rowayton Avenue where the Barclay estates are today. Although he only owned the property from 1861 through 1867, George Putnam's indelible influence upon Rowayton is still felt today. Probably first in his list of local accomplishments was his role in helping to bring the railroad to town.

Following the sale of the home in 1867 to stockbroker Robert Barclay and his family, the Gothic-style boathouse was used by the Barclay

2016 has been another successful year for the RHS. The *Keys to the Kingdom* exhibit, the screening of the first three documentaries on life in Rowayton, the summer cocktail party, and the 6th annual Chili Cook Off capped off a range of educational and fun events for all ages. For more highlights of 2016, please be sure to check out page 4 of our newsletter.

Plans are underway to update the interior and expand the Barclay Boathouse and Frank Raymond Maritime Collection to reinterpret the collection and include a history of the Five Mile River. We hope that local businesses and residents will consider a donation towards this effort.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Rowayton Turkey Trot, a trained archivist continues to painstakingly scan and rehouse hundreds of images from Society's rich archive of photographs dating back to the beginning of photography. It's our goal to have the entire collection professionally archived; please consider a donation towards this effort to preserve these photographs for future generations.

Your continued support ensures that we can enrich our community with interesting and relevant programming and events. Become a member and help preserve our shared history. We look forward to seeing you all at the Holiday Open House on November 27th!

THE ROWAYTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

continued on page 2

family. An enthusiastic yachtsman, Mr. Barclay was a loyal supporter of the Norwalk Yacht Club for many years, and his launch Lou was a familiar sight on the Sound. He was also the owner of considerable property, including Wood Island.



Frank Raymond

The Barclay estate was torn down after the house was destroyed in a fire in 1956, with only the boat-house and a barn surviving.¹

The Historical Society is fortunate in having a collection that illustrates Rowayton's connection to maritime history. Among our holdings, we preserve photographs, paintings, prints, models and objects that have been collected and donated for this purpose.



Hank Gloetzner

This year we are embarking on a project to renovate and reinterpret the boathouse and its collections. We intend to include an ecological history of the Five Mile River which will highlight the flora, fauna and marine life that flourish in our waters as well as the changes that have occurred as a result of our interaction with the environment. We hope to present a dynamic story of our place in the history, one that will appeal to all ages of the Rowayton community. Look out for updates on our exhibitions!



Fred Anderson



¹ The Barclay barn was remodeled into offices, most recently those of Dr. Shelley Trubowitz, D.D.S, and still stands, although unrecognizable as a barn.



FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES

A letter written (date unknown) by Felicia Doughty Kingsbury, granddaughter of Mabel Thomas, founder of the Thomas School:

Today is the anniversary of the birthday of my aunt Mable Thomas. The things that she did for me would fill a book, but perhaps I can make a beginning.

In the first place, she rescued me from the town where I was born. This was Winsted, Connecticut...a manufacturing town in a deep valley in the



Mabel Thomas

foothills of the Berkshires. Because it was a manufacturing town, except for a few old families, the inhabitants were immigrants [who spoke very little English.] I was an only child, very much the companion of my parents, and not a "mixer."

My father, John Gilbert Doughty, was in charge of the electric plant some distance out of town where he worked all night and came home to sleep all day. He and my mother had met in Winsted because my grandfather, the Reverend William Harrison Thomas, was for a time pastor of the Methodist Church there. Mother had come from Boston, where she graduated from B.U. in 1897.

I was a lonely child and had nothing in common with my schoolmates.

My mother, Sarah Eleanor Thomas Doughty, was a person of wonderful wisdom and resource. We were very poor, and she made house money by using the telephone to get orders for Larkin's Soap.

There were no playmates to come to the house. My father had wanted a boy but made out by treating me as one. When Mother and I visited him at the electric light plant where there were makeshift bedrooms on the second floor, he would explain to me the way the plant worked,



Thomas School 1922

its dangers, function, etc. From this I learned about direct and alternating current, transformers, insulation, etc. This was not the usual child's fair, but it was very interesting to me. It was only at school that I was unhappy.

From this, Aunt Mabel rescued me. She took me to Cambridge at the

age of seven to go to school at Miss Winsor's School as it was then called. The school had been erected out of two private houses joined together by doors, and she taught biology in a little room in the basement. Although she also graduated from B.U., she had also taken science courses across the river at M.I.T.

She first taught high school in Concord, Mass, then at St. Agnes School in Albany, then back in Cambridge at the reconfigured Winsor School. She rented us an apartment at 3 Phillips Place. Our landlady at Phillips Place was a Mrs. Tilton who had inaugurated "votes for women."

Our apartment held two bedrooms, in one of which Aunt Mabel slept and a larger one which I shared with Dorothy Millar. Aunt Mabel brought Dorothy to Cambridge because when she was collecting paintings from Silvermine to exhibit in Rowayton on the second floor of what was then the firemen's hall [today Rowayton Art Center] for an admission fee to raise money for the Rowayton Library, the buggy containing Dorothy and her parents was struck by a train at a railroad crossing. Both parents were killed. Aunt Mabel felt somewhat responsible and took Dorothy in and treated her like a daughter as she did me.

Aunt Mabel's new job was at on Longwood, and one could walk from it past Mrs. Jack Gardener's "palace" and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Mrs. Gardener's palace was a replica of an Italian one [with] a glassed-over courtyard full of flowers. It held a balcony and this often contained an orchestra with beautiful music. Under the balcony near the entrance, was a portrait of Mrs. Gardener by Sargent.

When Aunt Mabel reached [the retirement age of] 60, she came back to her father's place in [Rowayton] and started a school which she called the Thomas School, after her father.

At first this school was held in the two summer cottages built by her father. These were called *Graycote* after the weathered cedar shingles which covered it, and the *Annex*, later called *Little House*.

He had had the *Annex* built to hold the maids who served *Graycote*. It also held a kitchen, dining room, and laundry.

At this time there was neither heat, running water, or electricity

in either house. Water for dishwashing and washing clothes came from a reservoir between the two houses which collected rain-water from the waterspouts. Drinking water came from an old

Indian spring by the "upper gate." Rainwater, being soft, was thought to be superior for washing clothes.

There were two bedrooms upstairs in *Graycote*, where teachers slept. An outside privy stood on land towards the boathouse.


There were three fireplaces in *Graycote* and one in the *Annex*. All heat came from them. Light was from Kerosene lamps.

MT sent me to architectural school, called the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture for Women. It as founded by the professors of architecture, etc. of Harvard and was of course intended for college graduates, but the Winsor School had such a high academic standard that I was allowed to enter. The Harvard professors felt that women could do domestic work but not that requiring conferences about plans for public building accompanied by cigars and drinks. Fortunately my work at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts permitted my final thesis to be good enough so that I was given my final year to be free in return for allowing the thesis to be sent around the country to other schools.

Miss Thomas' school in *Graycote* and *Little House* prospered enough so that one day she came to me and said, "I now have money enough for a new building." This is how "the new building" got its name, and I was proud and happy to design it for her.

In doing so, I tried to make it as safe as possible from fire.

There is only one chimney, and that is on the outside. The boiler room in the basement is in its own brick enclosed room.

The Assembly Hall had its own stage, with Monks' cloth curtains. The whole school gathered in the Assembly Hall before school in the morning. Pupils sat on the floor and faculty set on chairs in the rear. There were class plays as well as the Christmas play, and these were well attended by parents. 



Thomas School 7 year olds rest on the terrace



Thomas School — new building 1927

²Mr. Millar was a painter who had married his favorite model.

Highlights of 2016



Norwalk Lock Company



Keys to the Kingdom: Pete the Locksmith's personal collection of vintage locks

Pete has been a locksmith in Darien for over three decades, collecting important vintage locks and ephemera including a number from the Norwalk Lock Company. The manufacturing of locks and keys played an important role in the industrialization of Connecticut, and they have an important artistic and design element that have fascinated collectors for hundreds of years. Pete's shop represents small business at its finest. His idiosyncratic aesthetic makes a visit to his shop a joy. The RHS was honored to host Pete as he shared his collection publicly for the first time.

THREE Documentaries on Life in Rowayton Completed

Three short films on Rowayton premiered in April to a packed house at the Community Center. Crafted from oral histories of long-time residents and photographs from the RHS Archives, the films will soon be available to watch on the RHS website. The Oral History Committee, made up of Donna Gauthier, Francine Hubbell, Peter Morrison, Wendell Livingston and Professor Joe Alicastro, worked with graduate students at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield to craft the films, entitled *Growing Up in Rowayton*, *Rock Ledge*, and *Growing Up on Bell Island*. The Committee is already working on more documentaries to be released in the Spring of 2017.



Clockwise from top left: Rowayton school girls c. 1950s; Carpenter family on a hammock c. 1910; Rowayton school boys c. 1937; Swim race at Community Beach c. 1938

A rare oil painting of “Hart Castle in Farm Creek”

Thanks to donations from Connie and Michael Boll, Seeley and Anne McCormick Hubbard, and Lisa Wilson Grant, this oil by former Rowayton resident Albert F. Michini is now back in Rowayton, preserved for future generations to enjoy.

The Hart Castle, also known as the Venetian Castle, was built in 1907 by Theophileus Euphrat, one of Rowayton’s first developers, and purchased by the Hart family in 1917 as a summer home. Edward Francis Hart was president of four businesses in New York City at the time of the purchase. Mr. Hart and his wife, Ellen Maher Hart, enjoyed countless summers looking over the pristine Farm Creek with their two children, Alice and Edward.

The beautiful stone house, which included a turret that gave it a castle-like appearance, was one of the grandest homes in Rowayton in its day. When the Castle wasn’t the centerpiece of entertainment, its other, quieter existence made it the subject of many a painting and photograph, particularly with its magnificent backdrop of Farm Creek and its treasure trove of wildlife. The only houses on the Creek at that time other than the castle were the two former DeKlyn houses, #73 and #75 Roton Avenue, and the beautiful sandy beach wending its way alongside the road was a favorite spot for local children to collect tasty bait for fishing and crabbing.

Tragically, the beautiful historic Hart Castle was severely damaged in a fire in January of 1980, when a spark from a fire in the library fireplace ignited the old frame, and a fire burned unnoticed in the attic for some time. Edward, Jr. and his wife Jimmie were living in the house at the time with their grown son Eddie.

Following the fire, which was big enough to require the Rowayton Fire Department to call in the Darien Fire Department for assistance, the Castle was torn down. The Harts rented a house on Crest Road for four years while they built a new home on the same location. They sold the peninsula to the City in June of 1983. The Hart family moved into their new house in 1984 living a reclusive existence until Mr. Hart’s death in 2001 at the age of 83. (His wife, Jimmie, had died a few years earlier.) Upon the death of their son, Eddie, in June 2005, the property was purchased by Rowayton resident Charles Schoendorf to prevent development. Mr. Schoendorf worked with the Norwalk Land Trust to enable them to purchase the property from him.

During the early 1970’s Mr. Michini also fought to prevent development of the wetlands of Farm Creek. As an illustrator, he produced paintings and drawings for the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader’s Digest*, for paperback covers, and for books from many of the East Coast publishing houses. Mr. Michini graduated as an illustrator from the Hussian School of Art. After working three years as a board man at Ad Studio, he accepted a position as art director at Barol & Israel Advertising. He then became a freelance advertising illustrator. At the time of his death, Mr. Michini was freelancing as an illustrator and was represented by the Chadds Ford, PA Gallery. During World War II, he served in the Army and received the Purple Heart.



Newly Plaqued Historic Homes



Over the past year, the RHS has issued an historic plaque to:



The Rowayton Beach Association
Clubhouse and Boathouse,
c. 1931
on Rowayton Avenue

Four more plaques are
in the works.



If you think your house may qualify for a plaque,
and you would like more information,
please email us at
info@rowaytonhistoricalsociety.org.



**WHO MAKES
THE BEST CHILI
AROUND?**



**The 6th Annual
Rowayton Chili Cook-Off
was a tasty success.**

On October 23rd, hordes of chili-lovers thronged to Pinkney Park for the 6th annual Chili Cook-Off. The competition was hot, with a wide range of participants, including a number of Rowayton organizations. Plenty of cold beer, live music, cookies from the Spicy Cookie Company, and corn bread from Rowayton Market topped off the event. It was a delicious day.

Congratulations to the winners!

First prize: United Church Nursery School

Second prize: Rowayton Fire Department

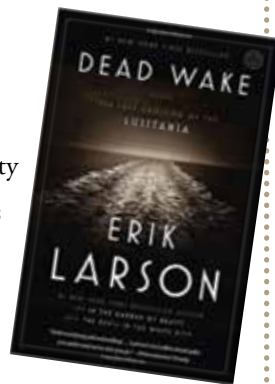
Third prize: Greg's (Reichman) Harmonious Heat

The Rowayton History Book Club

The History Book Club, co-sponsored by the Historical Society and Rowayton Library, continues to meet bi-monthly and has a good-sized group of readers. We hope you will join us!

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, November 30th at 7 pm and is open to everyone. The title is *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*. On May 1, 1915, with WWI entering its tenth month, a luxury ocean liner sailed out of New York, bound for Liverpool, carrying a record number of children and infants. The passengers were surprisingly at ease, even though Germany had declared the seas around Britain to be a war zone. As German U boats and the *Lusitania* made their way toward Liverpool, an array of forces both grand and achingly small—hubris, a chance fog, a closely guarded secret, and more—all converged to produce one of the great disasters of history.

Copies of the book will be available at Rowayton Library. Admission is free and refreshments will be served.



AN EXCITING NEW ADDITION
TO OUR COMMUNITY:

A Rowayton Oysterman's House in miniature

The RHS has acquired a Victorian doll's house that we intend to furnish and decorate. To do this, we ask interested miniaturists and artists in the Rowayton community to join us in a planning meeting. We want the house to reflect the history of our town and the whimsy of the people who've lived here.

Please contact us if you are interested in joining our committee. info@rowaytonhistoricalsociety.org.



NEWS FROM THE Pinkney Memorial Garden

There's a wonderful new addition to the Pinkney Garden: historic wrought iron fencing which originally stood at the Rowayton Railroad Depot, built in 1867. The fence, which had been removed by Metro North and salvaged by the RHS and 6th Taxing District, was totally restored and additional pieces made to fit the garden as a memorial to George Garfield by his loving family.

The garden was conceived of in the late 1990s and has been enjoyed by hundreds of people over the years, cherished as a beautiful, tranquil escape from the busy world. The RHS manages the garden and pays for its upkeep, and Rowayton Gardeners now tend the garden. Volunteers are always needed to help keep the garden looking its best. If you would like to join the team, please contact the RHS or Erin Combs at erinbaylis@gmail.com.



THE Place to Shop to Find the Perfect Gift! The RHS Gift Shop

Looking for something new and different to give as a hostess or birthday present? Stop by the [half shell](#), our gift shop in Pinkney Park, which features [Seaside Delights](#), filled with fun and creative gift ideas, Rowayton-wear, fisherman's finds, and plenty of new items perfect for the holidays! The shop is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 until 3 pm through the holiday season. You can also order by email at seasidedelights@gmail.com and pick up your items at the store.



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Coming Attractions

RHS Holiday Bazaar & Holiday Open House

Sunday, November 27 4-6pm

HOLIDAY BAZAAR One-stop shopping to find that perfect something for everyone on your list, hand-crafted by local artisans: Nautical Vintage Postcard pillows; unique Rowayton gifts; children's clothing and accessories; jewelry; placemats, napkins, and runners; seaside ornaments; and candles for every room in the house.

RHS HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Including Brian Kammerer's amazing model trains and an exhibit of a vintage Rowayton Christmas.

"LIGHT UP ROWAYTON" After you've been to the model train show, join your neighbors immediately afterward in Pinkney Park for the annual tree holiday lighting sponsored by the RCA.



January 2017

History Book Club: Title to be selected at the November Book Club meeting

Wednesday, January 25 at 7 pm at Rowayton Library. Books will be available to borrow at the Library. Refreshments will be served. General admission \$5; RHS members free.

Lecture: *The Archeology of Fairfield County* by Professor Ernie Weigand

Sunday, January 15 at 3 pm at the Rowayton Community Center, 33 Highland Avenue. Refreshments will be served. General admission \$5; RHS members free

February 2017

Lecture: *Sea Glass: History and Mystery* by Alyssa Shapiro

Sunday, February 12 at 3 pm at the Rowayton Community Center, 33 Highland Avenue. Refreshments will be served. General admission \$5; RHS members free.

March 2017

Lecture: *The History of Buttons* by Lynn Bassett, Guest Curator, Wadsworth Athenaeum

Sunday, March 12 at 3 pm at the Rowayton Community Center, 33 Highland Avenue. Refreshments will be served. General admission \$5; RHS members free.

April 2017

Lecture: *The History of Long Island Sound* by Joe Schneirline

Sunday, April 9 at 3 pm at the Rowayton Community Center, 33 Highland Avenue. Refreshments will be served. General admission \$5; RHS members free.

May 2017

New Rowayton Documentaries:
Oral histories of life in Rowayton

Sunday, May 7 at 3 pm, Rowayton Community Center

May – November 2017

Exhibit: *Wish You Were Here: Vintage Postcards from the RHS Collection*

2017

AMAZON SHOPPERS: Make RHS your **AmazonSmile** partner, and a percentage of your purchase will be donated to the museum. Simply enter the Amazon website via **www.smile.amazon.com** and make the RHS your recipient. Quick and easy, and every little bit helps. **THANK YOU!**