

# ROWAYTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**EXHIBIT HOURS**  
Tuesdays 9:30 am – 3 pm  
1st Sunday of the month  
1 – 3 pm  
and by appointment  
**Seaside Delights Gift Shop  
HOURS**  
Monday - Saturday 11 - 3  
and by appointment

177 ROWAYTON AVENUE, ROWAYTON, CT 06853

FALL 2019

## *Celebrating the Women of Rowayton*

This year the Rowayton Historical Society is commemorating the ratification in 1920 of the American woman's right to vote. We have done this by collecting, mounting and exhibiting the biographies and stories of the many women who have contributed to the growth and success of Rowayton. Politics, history, the arts, civic interests, sports, maritime endeavors, social causes, education, preservation, the library, and virtually any interest and occupation that can be named have had the immense benefit of the involvement and support of women in Rowayton.

We also note the passing this year of two women who played an outsized role in the development and betterment of our community: Former Commissioner Grace Lichtenstein (left), and co-founder of the Rowayton Historical Society Mary Cohn. Both women were energetic, forceful and brilliant. They contributed their time and passion to the Rowayton community, and their commitment has made a lasting and positive contribution to all our lives. We honor and cherish their memory.



### **MARY THOMPSON COHN** (1930–2019)

As a founder of the Historical Society and long-time volunteer on the Library and Arts Center boards, it's hard to summarize Mary Cohn's many contributions to our community. Her dedication, per-

*continued on page 2*

2019 has been an exciting year for the RHS. We are nearing completion of Phase I of our new maritime museum's renovation, working on a documentary on Village Creek, and the 9th annual Chili Cook Off, capping off a range of educational and fun events for all ages. For more highlights of 2019, please be sure to check out page 6 of our newsletter.

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 and Train Show and our Holiday Bazaar on November 30 and December 1st!

THE ROWAYTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Continued from page 1*

severance, and intellectual commitment to the preservation of over 300 years of Rowayton history is her legacy.

Mary carefully compiled documentation of the political, social, and economic history of Rowayton. These primary and secondary sources date from the mid-1600s to the present, and range in subject matter from property deeds, correspondence, and Revolutionary War broadsides to newspaper clippings, essays, interviews, invitations, and more. The Cohn Archives at the Historical Society were named in honor of Mary's invaluable work to preserve Rowayton's history and serve as an invaluable repository and resource for scholars and citizens of Connecticut.

She grew up in Mt. Clemens, Michigan and received a degree in Medieval History from Smith College. During World War II, she worked in Washington, D.C. for the National Security Agency as a code breaker.

In 1952, Mary married longtime family friend Tom Cohn. They lived in New York City initially, but their friends David and Virginia Bates, combined with the allure of sailing in Rowayton, convinced them to buy their beautiful and distinctive Victorian home at 259 Rowayton Avenue. Mary and Tom raised three children there and lived in the house for fifty years.

Mary struck up a friendship with Sandy Goennell outside the hardware store one day in the mid-1950s, and the two of them connected through their love of history. They decided to found the Rowayton Historical Society. At that time, there were still some oyster houses and boats on the Five Mile River, and living history permeated the town. They approached Allan McKissock who was then the President of the Rowayton Civic Association for funding who was delighted to help. Mary and Sandy attended monthly meetings of the Connecticut League of Historical Organizations, where they gained needed expertise. As a professional librarian in New Jersey, Sandy was a skilled archivist, and she and Mary set up the catalogue and preservation system that the Historical Society used for over 35 years.

At first, the Society was housed in a small room at the library, but by the early 1970s, Frank "Mr. Rowayton" Raymond had become involved in the preservation of Pinkney Park and the Seeley-Dibble-Pinkney house which had recently been purchased by the District. Frank shared a keen interest in preserving Rowayton history, and together McKissock, Raymond, Cohn, and Goennell advocated for the collection to be housed in the Pinkney House. The District Commissioners approved their request, and the RHS moved into the front half of the Pinkney House in 1972. The District rented out the back half of the building to various tenants over the years until 2008, when the RHS Board proposed taking over the whole building since the organization had grown so much. The proposal was approved, and the District funded renovations to the building to expand its exhibition and office space as well as adding climate control and security for safer storage of the archives. Today, the RHS campus includes the Antique Tool Barn, the Seaside Delights Gift Shop, the RHS Memorial Garden and the new Frank E. Raymond Boathouse and Maritime Museum.

Mary will be remembered for the high standards she set for herself and others, and her determination to live a full life. She was elegant, gracious, and had a wonderful sense of humor. She will be sorely missed.

## **GRACE WALTERS LICHTENSTEIN** (1922–2019)

Grace Walters Lichtenstein's contributions to the City of Norwalk and to Rowayton were extensive. She was a political force in Rowayton for over half a century: the first female commissioner and a Democratic leader for more than 20 years. She was instrumental in arranging for the Rowayton train station to be leased by the City and then sublet to the Sixth Taxing District. She also worked to have the Community dock at Cook Street purchased by the Sixth Taxing District and initiated negotiations with the State to have trucks banned on Rt. 136 in downtown Rowayton.

From 1977 to 1981, Grace, a lifelong Democrat,

served two terms on Norwalk's Common Council. In 1983, she became the first woman to be elected as a commissioner of Norwalk's Sixth Taxing District (1983-1995). As the Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission in the 1980s, Grace was one of the driving forces behind the revitalization of South Norwalk. Along with other preservationists, Grace pushed back against calls to raze the historic buildings of South Norwalk to the ground and start anew. She received the "National Historic Preservation Award" from the National Preservation Trust for her work to preserve the cast-iron buildings in South Norwalk.

Using progressive zoning regulations and code enforcement, Grace protected the neighborhood's historic aspects, but her efforts to restore it didn't stop there. Grace was recognized for her work in saving the South Norwalk Historic District in the 1980s when she was presented with the Valle Weber Fay Preservation Leader-

ship Award in 2007. She also worked to save, maintain and fund the Lockwood Mathews Museum.

Grace was a powerful Democrat in Norwalk—getting people registered, organizing absentee voters, cultivating candidates, and working to make every voice heard. She served on the board of the Norwalk League of Voters and was the head of Voter Education/Registration. For this work, she received the Connecticut State Democratic Women's Award for Outstanding Contributions. In 2007, she was given the Award of Merit from the Sixth Taxing District for her contributions to Rowayton over the years. Her long-time friend Marilyn Deraney arranged for daffodil bulbs to be planted along the sign fence by the Old School Field on Rowayton Avenue in her honor for all her contributions to the District. Flags in Rowayton flew at half-staff immediately following her death.

## Please join the Historical Society

*As part of the RHS's ongoing commitment to present Norwalk's history, the newly renovated **Raymond Boathouse** at Pinkney Park will highlight the stories of the people and places that have made the maritime history of Norwalk unique. **But we need your help.** We are grateful to our members for their financial support and hope you will join us in the effort to bring the history of our fishermen, mariners, Native peoples, and ecology to the City of Norwalk.*

*Please consider a membership to the RHS or a donation towards the Raymond Boathouse. This newsletter is the only solicitation you will receive from the RHS, and we need our community's support.*





## FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES



### Residents Recall First Trolley Car

*The Norwalk Hour November 13, 1933*

### Institution of Busses Revives memories of Gala Celebration on September 29 1894

“Midnight Saturday saw the passing of the last trolley car through Rowayton, the Norwalk-Stamford line having changed to busses after thirty-nine years of continuous trolley service.

The passing of the last trolley brought back memories to the older residents of the village as they watched the passing of this last day the bus, which replaces the former means of transportation.

Old-timers in Rowayton are recalling today the advent of the first trolley on Saturday evening, September 29, 1894. With the burning of much red fire, the booming of the cannon, with the speeches by several prominent men of the Norwalks and ending with a supper served by the ladies of the village, the first trolley arrived at the terminus, Guilders Corner, now the corner of Rowayton Avenue and McKinley Street. The next year the terminus was advanced to the Darien town line but it was several years before the service was continued to Darien.

What a night that was for Rowayton! Amid cheers from the citizens, the first car over the Norwalk Tramway Company's extension came to the end of the line and stopped. The car was decorated with electric lights from the tip of the trolley pole down to the roof, along all four sides of the car both inside and out. Red Fire was burning on top of the car. The trolley was not of the jumbo type, not so familiar, but a car which to the present generation would seem to rival the Toonerville Express.

What a blessing these little cars were to the residents of Rowayton;

previously the only means of reaching South Norwalk was a walk of a mile to the railroad station or a walk of three miles to the center of South Norwalk, if no horse or carriage was available.

Immediately behind this first car was another, also well illuminated and having as passengers officials of the Tramway Company, which was some years later absorbed by the Connecticut Company and several prominent municipal officers of South Norwalk and Norwalk and invited guests. The arrival of these cars marked the official opening of the line and the festivities. As many of the crowd as were able squeezed into the Guider's Hall, located over the store, which occupied the site of the Brooker Building. An orchestra furnished music.

### AMONG THE GUESTS

The guests who had arrived on the trolleys were escorted to seats on the stage in the hall. Among the group were the late Senator John H. Ferris, the late Mayor Edwin O. Keeler, the late councilman of South Norwalk, Charles F. Hallock. The late James Golden, General Russell Frost, was present as were also Attorney Light, now Judge Light, and K. W. Mansfield, now of Westport, but at that time secretary of the Norwalk Tramway Company.

The late Charles W. Bell acted as master of ceremonies and welcomed the guests. He extended the thank [sic] of Rowayton to the Tramway Company, which had completed this enterprise which would not only be a great convenience but would increase the growth and prosperity of the village.

Secretary Mansfield responded for the company. He stated that the company had long considered the project and that he hoped the line would be extended to Darien, Stamford, and still further to New York in a short time. He thanked the people of Rowayton for their support and stated that the fare would be five cents.

The representative of the company paid glowing tribute to several of the residents of Rowayton at that time, now deceased, who had given their support. Among them were Alvah B. Tuthill and Jacob B. Raymond, both of whom gave the company a right of way through property owned by them and transferred to the land donated by Mr. Burchard, which made possible a more direct route to Rowayton. The speaker went on to say that he hoped to see a broad boulevard as the main road to Rowayton.

Many of the remarks made by these speakers nearly 40 years ago are most interesting in the light of events which have happened during the intervening years. Mr. Mansfield's vision did not materialize but there has already been some conjecture

on the part of people here as to just what disposition would be made of this Burchard tract.

Some have even expressed a belief that the state would acquire the land and change the present location of the state road, eliminating several curves.

### TALKS OF CONSOLIDATION

The late Senator Ferris, a native of Rowayton, contrasted his boyhood days with the progressive ones of 1894. That the idea of consolidating the two cities was even then talk of, can't be seen by the fact that Senator Ferris made the statement that the trolley was a step toward the consolidation of the Norwalks.

### MAYOR KEELER PROPHETIC

The late Mayor Edwin O. Keeler of Norwalk was also very prophetic. He stated that every extension made cemented the town tighter together and he hoped that trolley roads would cross and re-cross the historic old town making it one city of greater Norwalk.

Colonel Russell Frost spoke along the same line as did his predecessors. He did mention the fight which the women of Rowayton carried on a short time before against the saloon which had operated in the village that was eradicated from the confines of the "beautiful village." The circumstances of that fight can still be recalled by some Rowaytonites.

The late Charles F. Hallock, councilman of South Norwalk, spoke upon the benefits which would accrue to the village through the trolley service.

Attorney Light, after speaking of the great good that he believed would come to the village as a result of the trolley service, vouchsafed the remark that on election day the handsome Republican majority that Rowayton always gave would be aided now as the voters could take the tramway and vote early."

### SUPPER IS SERVED

The guests and as many of the citizens of the village as could find seats then sat down to long tables which had been filled with good things by the ladies of Rowayton. The piece de resistance consisted of clam chowder for which Rowayton housewives were then famous.

To complete the festivities of the evening, after the serving of the supper, all the ladies who had prepared and served the supper were taken for a ride on the trolley to South Norwalk and return. [sic.]



## New Additions to the RHS Collection...

Wonderful prints by Jim Flora, Dale Murena, Sandy Aldrich, Lynn Stephens Massey, and Margo Packer as well as prizes from Roton Point, antique tools, and a movie of the opening of the Velotti Little League field at Bayley Beach were donated to the Archives this year, enriching our collection and helping to tell a more complete story of life in Rowayton.

The Society just acquired this fascinating tintype, the only known image of African Americans at Roton Point Amusement Park. The four women pictured here sat for this popular souvenir from the Park about 1905.

Not much else is known about these women at the moment, but we are excited to research and learn more about this wonderful photograph!



## 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 Seaside Delights, our award-winning gift shop in Pinkney Park, which features fun and creative gift ideas, Rowayton-wear, fishermen's finds, and plenty of new items perfect for the holidays! The shop is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 am until 3 pm through the holiday season. You can also order through the website [www.seasidedelights.com](http://www.seasidedelights.com) or by email at [seasidedelights@gmail.com](mailto:seasidedelights@gmail.com) and pick up your items at the store.



# HIGHLIGHTS *of* 2019



*Grace Walters Lichtenstein*

## Getting It Done: *Celebrating the Women of Rowayton*

In our exhibit this year, the Society featured over 100 women highlighting their contributions and achievements in Rowayton and greater Norwalk. The opening day reception hosted a number of honorees including Sandy Aldrich, Barbara Bair, Putsie Richie, Joan Ward, and Tammy Langalis as well as many friends and descendants. Our community is fortunate in continuing to benefit from the activism and foresight of these remarkable women.



**Who makes the best chili around?  
The 9th Annual Rowayton Chili  
Cook-Off was a tasty success.**

On October 19th, hordes of chili-lovers thronged to Pinkney Park for the RHS' 9th annual Chili Cook-Off, where teams competed for the honor of first, second and third prize. The competition was hot, with a wide range of participants, and this year there was a major upset with United Church Nursery School beating three-time winner Rowayton Fire Department. Plenty of cold beer, live music, and cornbread from Rowayton Market topped off the event.

**IT WAS A DELICIOUS DAY!**



**First prize**  
United Church Nursery School

**Second prize**  
Rowayton Fire Department

**Third prize**  
Rowayton Civic Association

**Best Restaurant Chili**  
Brendan's 101



NEWS FROM THE

## Pinkney Memorial Garden

The garden has never looked better. It was conceived of in 1996 and has been enjoyed by hundreds of people every year since, cherished as a beautiful, tranquil escape from the busy world. It is now one of the most beautiful spots in Rowayton and is a joy to experience. The RHS manages the garden and pays for its upkeep, and Rowayton Gardeners now tend to it, with Pamela Proctor on site almost daily. We are so grateful for all the help these wonderful gardeners provide. Volunteers are always needed to help keep the garden looking its best. If you would like to join the team, please contact the RHS at [info@rowaytonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@rowaytonhistoricalsociety.org)



## Historic RAYMOND CEMETERY Tour

On September 14th, more than 45 people stopped by the historic Raymond Cemetery, a private burial ground and one of the oldest cemeteries in Norwalk, established by the three sons of Gershom Raymond, Paul, Edward, and Gershom II, in 1782 for their family and friends. Visitors enjoyed talking with “Josephine Crow” (Page Morrison), founder of the Rowayton Library and featured in our exhibit *Celebrating the Women of Rowayton*, and Civil War veteran “John Bechold” (Brian Kammerer) about their life here.

The first burial in the cemetery was in 1783, at the end of the Revolutionary War. A number of Revolutionary War veterans are interred there. Among the departed are of members of many of Rowayton’s oldest families, including Captain William J. Crow and his wife, Josephine, many Vincents, Johnsons, Smiths, Bells, and Raymonds. Pictured at left are Jenny, Jack and Lori Raymond next to the headstone of Gershom Raymond II, Jenny’s great great great great great grandfather.

## Newly Plaqued Historic Homes

Over the past year, the RHS has issued four historic plaques to the following houses, and five more are in the works:

### ON PLANT COURT:

The Joseph A. & Harriet J. Freeman House,  
c.1883

### ON ROWAYTON AVENUE:

The John and Lauretta Sherer Flint House,  
c.1920

### ON YARMOUTH AVENUE:

The Timothy & Louisa Foster House,  
c.1886

1 BELMONT PLACE:  
(demolished)

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



## The Rowayton History Book Club

The History Book Club, co-sponsored by the Historical Society and Rowayton Library, continues to meet bi-monthly. We hope you will join us.

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, November 20th at 7pm at the Library and is open to everyone. The book is *TBD*.

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

## IN MEMORIAM WILLIAM PINKNEY III (1927-2019)

The Board was saddened to learn of the death of William Pinkney III formerly of Rowayton. Mr. Pinkney was the grandson of William and Gertrude Dibble Pinkney and spent many happy summers and holidays at the Pinkney House with the family.

He leaves behind a daughter, Kristen Pinkney (Thomas F. Bregani) of Greenfield, New Hampshire; his two sons William Pinkney IV (Bonnie) of Simsbury, Connecticut; and Jett Pinkney (Judy) of Coral Springs, Florida and four grandchildren.

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## Rowayton Historical Society

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# COMING ATTRACTIONS

# 2020

## RHS Holiday Bazaar

**Saturday, November 30 and Sunday, December 1**

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.

Admission: \$1 per person to support the new Raymond Boathouse Museum.

## Special Preview of the Holiday Train Show

**Sunday, December 1, 2-3:30pm**

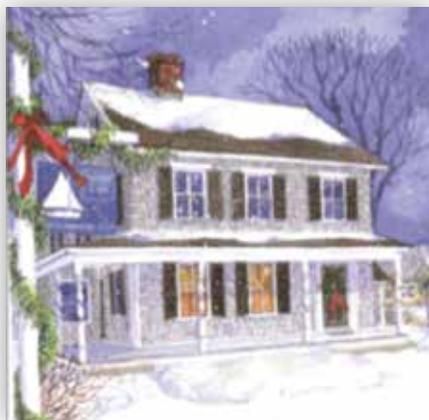
Enjoy a private preview of everyone's favorite train show.

Email [info@rowaytonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@rowaytonhistoricalsociety.org) for reservations.

Refreshments will be served. \$25 per family.

## Holiday Open House

**Sunday, December 1, 4-6pm**



*Pinkney House by Kassie Foss*

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

### "LIGHT UP ROWAYTON"

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

## January 2020

**History Book Club:** *Title TBD*

Wednesday, January 22 at 7pm at Rowayton Library.

Books will be available to borrow at the Library.

Refreshments will be served.

## March 2020

**War on Long Island Sound during the American Revolution**

Sunday, March 22 at 2pm at the Rowayton Community Center, 33 Highland Avenue. Refreshments will be served.

General admission \$5; RHS members free.

## April 2020

**Witches in Connecticut**

Sunday, April 19 at 2pm at the Rowayton Community Center, 33 Highland Avenue. Refreshments will be served.

General admission \$5; RHS members free.

The trials and executions of witches in Connecticut predated the more famous Salem witch panic by over 40 years. Hear the stories of some of the women and men accused, tried, and executed and learn how Connecticut successfully controlled the spread of witch accusations long before Salem erupted in panic and violence.

**AMAZON SHOPPERS:** When you order online, make RHS your Smile partner, and Amazon will donate a small percentage of every sale to the museum. Simply enter the Amazon website via [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) and make the RHS your recipient. Quick and easy, and every little bit helps.

THANK YOU!