

Trans-Atlantic Slavery to be Topic of Book Talk

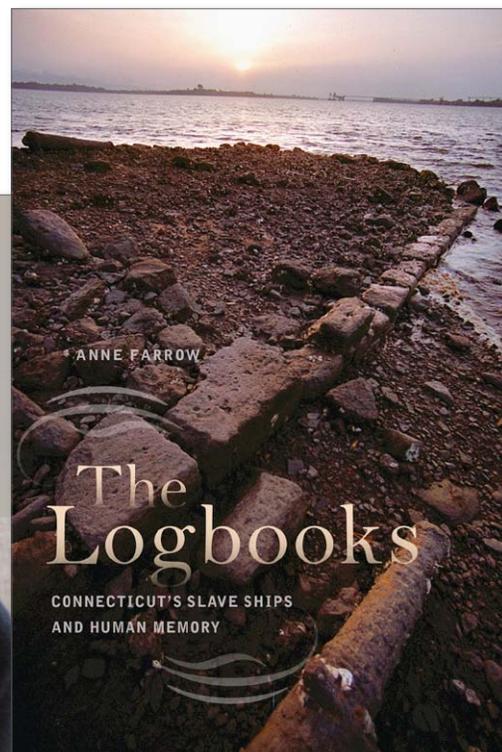
In 1757, a sailing ship owned by Gurdon Salstonstall, an affluent Connecticut merchant, and captained by John Easton of Middletown, sailed from New London to the tiny island of Bence in Sierra Leone, West Africa, to take on fresh water and slaves. On board was the owner's son, Dudley Salstonstall, on a training voyage to learn the trade. *The Logbooks: Connecticut's Slave Ships and Human Memory* explores that voyage and two others documented by young Salstonstall.

When writer Anne Farrow discovered the significance of the logbooks for the *Africa* and two other ships in 2004, her mother had been recently diagnosed with dementia. As Farrow bore witness to the impact of memory loss on her mother's sense of self, she also began a journey into the world of the logbooks and the Atlantic slave trade, eventually retracing part of the *Africa's* long-ago voyage to Sierra Leone. As the narrative unfolds in *The Logbooks*, published in October, 2014, Farrow explores the idea that if our history is incomplete, then collectively we have forgotten who we are—a loss that is in some ways similar to what her mother experienced.

Farrow is a career writer and editor, having worked for New England newspapers for 30 years, most of that

time at *The Hartford Courant*. She is the co-author of *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged and Profited from Slavery*, published by Random House/Ballantine Books in 2005. For *Complicity* she gave more than 100 presentations nationwide, and is a frequent guest speaker and panelist on subjects related to race and New England enslavement. She is a contributor to history publications, and her new research was featured in June on www.history.com. Farrow holds a master's degree in English literature, and was nominated three times for the Pulitzer Prize.

The Society is pleased to host Farrow on Thursday, December 4, at 7:00 pm at Congregation Adath Israel located at the corner of Broad and Old Church Streets. Following her illustrated presentation, *The Logbooks* will be available for purchase and inscription. Congregation Adath Israel is handicap accessible. ♿



President's Message

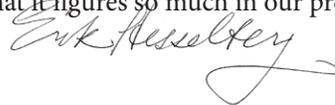
The trees are now bare from the recent wind storm. The brilliant yellow leaves of our ancient Ginkgo tree lie in heaps on the ground. As the days grow shorter, we can't help but remember that late summer day when we gathered in the old cemetery by the river to commemorate our own hero, Commodore Thomas Macdonough.

The ceremony was organized by our Executive Director, Debby Shapiro, at which Mayor Daniel Drew spoke eloquently about the importance of remembering our history. We thank Debby for bringing us together.

This poignant ceremony by the river seemed to signal a new era of cooperation between the City and the Historical Society, a subject that is being enthusiastically discussed at board meetings. We anticipate that as we work toward our exhibit, "Vanished Port," on Middletown's

grand seafaring days, this relationship will only grow stronger.

Having revived its handsome Main Street, Middletown is now looking to revitalize its riverfront, with new amenities at Harbor Park. The centerpiece of this exciting project will be a regional boathouse, perhaps with a banquet facility, overlooking the wide river. We have pledged to work with the City on adding a heritage component to complement initiatives now underway. The river was our past and we are heartened that it figures so much in our present.



Erik Hesselberg, President

Director's Message

Dear Members,

Fall has been full of activity at the Mansfield House with many researchers coming from across the country to seek their Middletown roots. Most notably, Jim and Regina Cornwall from Florida came every Monday morning for 8 consecutive weeks to seek the descendants of one of Middletown's founders, William Cornwall. They also donated a number of Middletown related documents that they had purchased on the internet. Members of the Altrusa, Soroptomist, and Civitan Clubs enjoyed an evening tour of the exhibits and a program on Middletown's early history. We had standing room only at our program about Commodore Macdonough and his victory at the Battle of Lake Champlain. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of a 200th Anniversary Medal to Thomas Macdonough Russell III, proudly wearing his naval uniform, by two national officers of the General Society of the War of 1812.

Special thanks go to the members of the Car Show Committee. Our new location at Palmer Field was welcomed by the exhibitors and spectators alike and the numbers of both attending were up from last year. The City of Middletown Public Works Department was most co-operative in preparing the parking lot for the show..

The next time you come to the Mansfield House you will notice that the side entryway porch sports a new coat of paint. When Ed Rubacha came to visit one day and saw that the paint had worn away, he came back over several

days to sand, prime, and paint. Those are the volunteers we love. Thanks, Ed! And speaking of volunteers, our new docents, Brandie Doyle, Ken Eckhart, Pat & Henry Malon, Diane Petras, and Nancy Rogalsky are ready for duty and join Pat Tully, Maria Weinberger, Jack Bolles, Laura Hobbs, and Rosemary Shea as our docent group who are keeping the Mansfield House open for tours every Saturday from 10 to 2.

The Society is honored to have had two images from our collection appear on the Connecticut State Library's archives poster "Connecticut Answers the Call," in commemoration of the anniversary of World War I. One is of a waterfront pass from our collection of over 100 such passes which were needed for individuals to be able to access the riverfront in Middletown. The second is of the program of a mass meeting to promote the formation of a league of nations with former president William Howard Taft as the principal speaker. These and many other documents are part of our extensive manuscript collection in which all members have free in-person research privileges.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events.



Debby Shapiro

The Middletown Garden Club Turns 100

by Irene Silberstein

*T*he Middletown Garden Club will observe its centennial in 2015. For 100 years, the club has been involved in conservation, education, and community enhancement.

The celebration begins with an exhibit at the General Mansfield House on Friday, November 28th, 2014 that runs through the end of January. The opening reception will be held on Tuesday, December 9, 2014 from 5:30 to 7 pm with all of the Historical Society members invited to attend.

The exhibit at the Mansfield House will highlight the Middletown Garden Club's impact on Middletown and the surrounding towns; it will include artifacts from its archives that showcase the club's participation in many activities that benefited the community. An exceptional feature of the exhibit will be flower arrangements that highlight the various styles of arranging that have been popular since 1915. In addition, the garden club will continue its longstanding tradition of decorating the Mansfield House for the holidays.

In 1915, twenty-five civic minded women established the Middletown Garden Club. Today, the club's thirty-eight men and women from thirteen towns have the same goals and interests as those original members: preserving land for conservation, respecting the environment, honoring the art and creativity of flower arrangements, disseminating knowledge of horticulture and just enjoying the pleasures of the garden.

Community service has always been important. As early as 1917, during World War I, the club assisted with the Juvenile Food Army, planted gardens for children on the Washington Green and sent money to France for the purchase of fruit trees.

Through the years, the garden club has had a close, rewarding relationship with the Russell Library. In addition to the donation of numerous gardening books to the permanent collection, the club has provided landscaping advice and hands on gardening participation. For many years, MGC donated fresh flower arrangements for the circulation desk.

Over the years, the Middletown Garden Club has planted hawthorn and laurel and thousands of daffodil bulbs, established and maintained the herb garden at the Historical Society and provided decorative barrels on Middletown's Main Street with seasonal plantings.



Middletown Garden Club plant sale at the Mansfield House

The club has worked with local schools, not only in the classroom but also with parent groups, offering leadership to schools that planted gardens for educational purposes. For the past several years, the garden club has partnered with the Community Health Center and MARC to create an amazing rooftop garden that has been a source of pride for all concerned. Because education is an important component of the Middletown Garden Club's mission, the club supports an annual scholar in the field of medicinal botany.

The Middletown Garden Club has been a primary partner in the rehabilitation of the grounds of the Wadsworth Mansion. It has protected and enhanced the only upland vernal pool in this area. The club has also joined the Rockfall Foundation, Wesleyan University and the City of Middletown to plant significant trees in the Kirste de Boer Arboretum designed by the Olmstead Brothers in 1909.

On the national scene, the club sends two delegates to Washington, D.C annually as part of the National Affairs and Legislation Committee of the Garden Club of America to facilitate the passage of pending legislation affecting environmental concerns including energy, agriculture, water, carbon emissions, forests, national parks, oceans and climate change. The club was a major participant at the Connecticut Assembly's passage of precedent setting open space legislation.

The Middletown Garden Club: proud of 100 years of service to the Middlesex community. 🌱

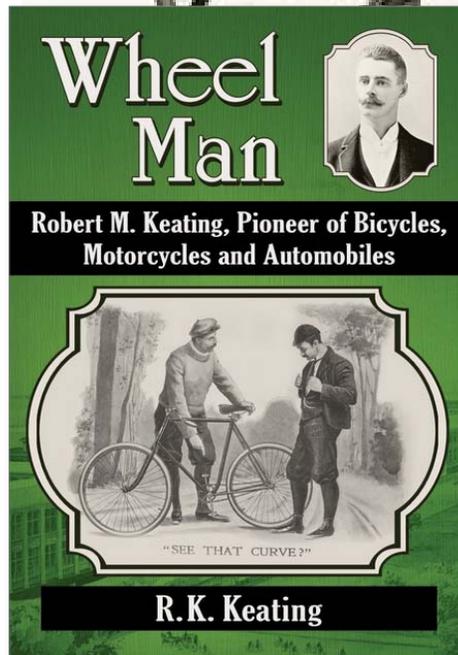
All Historical Society members are invited to the Garden Club exhibit opening reception on Tuesday, December 9 from 5:30 to 7:00 pm

Newly Published Book Chronicles the Story of Robert Keating

Wheel Man: Robert M. Keating, Pioneer of Bicycles, Motorcycles and Automobiles written by R.K. Keating has hit the bookstores and is available online. Keating, who is not a relative of the subject of his book, was nonetheless fascinated about the man and the impact he had on national transportation and industrial Middletown. Robert Keating in his lifetime held 49 patents from bicycle and motorcycle designs to the rubber home plate used in baseball.

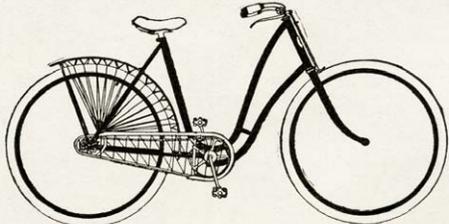
The late 19th century saw a revolution in transportation from the development of the modern lightweight and motorized bicycles to the first automobiles, and Robert Keating was at the forefront of this development. In 1897, he built a state-of-the-art factory in the north end of Middletown where Griffin's Trotting Park had been, having moved his operation from Springfield, MA. The factory was 1000 feet long and had great open halls with large windows that allowed additional light and ventilation for the workers. It used another new technology of the era — electric power.

The Keating Wheel Works boasted in its advertisements that its designs were so advanced that they were "365 days ahead of them all — in strength, ease of propulsion, graceful lines and lightness." Keating was so inventive that in 1900 he filed a series of patents for a motorized bicycle. The Penny Press newspaper reported in April, 1901 that "Samples of the Keating motor bicycle are now ready for inspection at the factory on North Main. A general invitation is extended to the public...to call at the factory and inspect the wheel or try it if they desire... The motor has frequently been seen on the streets about the city." Indian Motorcycle of Springfield, which claimed



THE KEATING Bicycle

For 1899



is the embodiment of the highest ideals in Bicycle construction, beauty of outline, and quality of material employed.

Your inquiry would please us.

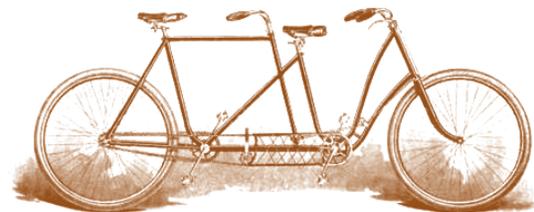
**KEATING WHEEL CO.,
Middletown, Conn.**

P.S.—By the way, we would mention that we build the finest pneumatic-tired Carriage in the world. Please mention HARPER'S.

to make the first motorcycle, did not patent its product until 1902. In fact, Keating won lawsuits against the Indian and Harley-Davidson motorcycle companies for patent infringement.

Keating planned to manufacture automobiles as well, but his company ran into financial difficulty. In June, 1901, the plant was sold to a new automobile maker, the Eisenhuth Horseless Vehicle Company.

Later, Noiseless typewriters were made in the factory that is now known as the Remington Rand Building. Author Keating chronicles the story of a man and his inventions that have had a lasting impact on the country's transformation into a modern society. 🌱





This picture was recently donated by Joe Barone. Can you identify any of the ladies pictured? They appear to be school cafeteria workers. Call if you know.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Museum at the Mansfield House OPEN Monday–Thursday and Saturday
10:00 to 2:00

Holiday on Main Street Open House..... Friday, November 28, 2:00 to 5:00 pm
Garden Club decorations and exhibit

The Logbooks book talk by Anne Farrow Thursday, December 4, 7:00 pm
Congregation Adath Israel

Middletown Garden Club Opening Reception Tuesday, December 9, 5:30 to 7:00 pm
General Mansfield House