

# NEWS FROM THE SCHOOLHOUSE

[middleburyhistoricalsociety.org](http://middleburyhistoricalsociety.org)

## Newsletter of the Middlebury Connecticut Historical Society Summer 2018 Volume 5 No. 1

### Letter from the Editor

Dear Members and Friends,

It hardly seems possible that summer is here already. Your Historical Society continues its work at our beautiful home on Library Road. It's hard to say which of the four seasons is more beautiful here, but now after a long winter and with spring turning into summer, it has to be this one.

Our efforts are geared toward organization and we have had a big boost with that. Tom Teixeira, a Boy Scout applying for his Eagle Scout badge, organized a clean up of the basement, bringing in a group of friends to tackle 100 plus years of cobwebs, clutter, and dust. Sweeping was done, storage containers were filled, labeled and stored and trash disposed of. It was a major effort on the part of these young men. Bob Rafford and I were delighted to attend Tom's Eagle Scout Court of Honor where he and two others were awarded their Eagle Scout badges. These are tomorrow's leaders and the future looks good.

The Boy Scouts of America was founded in 1910 and was modeled after the Boy Scout Association in England. It absorbed other similar clubs in its early years and continued to grow. Today it is 2.3 members strong. Scouts earn merit badges for various activities. A Scout must earn a total of 21 badges in many fields including Citizenship in the Community, Life Saving, First Aid, and Camping to qualify for this highest of awards.

Our local Troop 5 began in 1979 and is sponsored by the Middlebury Congregational Church. More than 50 Eagle Scouts have come from this Troop. In 1992 it was awarded the Blue Trail of Excellence and in 2003, the Commissioners Cup for being the best troop in the district.

The Scouts have many fundraising projects including flower sales, pasta dinners, bottle and can drives, and Christmas tree removal. They also donate their time working at a local soup kitchen and have a Scouting for Food drive to fill the Middlebury Food Bank. I encourage you to support their efforts.

Have a wonderful summer.

Agnes Lutes  
Vice President  
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# The Cupolas of Middlebury

Cupolas are a familiar and charming sight in the town of Middlebury .. They are the crowns on our churches, schools, barns and businesses. The word itself is from the Italian word cupella meaning small cup and, although many of these are hemispherical, they can also be rectangular or even octagonal. They are an architectural detail whose function is to let in light, dissipate heat, house a bell, provide a view or simply adorn the building. They demonstrate many of the elements of their original form and function, a design that goes back to prehistory when simple mounds were used as huts.

The igloos of the Intuit or the teepees of native peoples, where fire was used for warmth and cooking, needed to be vented. They also required light. These small perfectly engineered structures were the ancient ancestor of the dome, as we know it today. The basic shape remained the same throughout its evolution, an open arched structure that was larger on the bottom than the top. As construction methods and materials advanced, large scale domes became possible, for example, the Pantheon in Rome. This dome had another familiar feature, a roof hole that functioned as a skylight. The Romans named this architectural feature the oculus (Latin for eye) to describe a circular opening in a ceiling. Their Pantheon is open to light from the sun which illuminates and warms and rain which quickly evaporates and cools the building. What performed well in hot dry Rome needed a functional modification for the wetter parts of Europe, America and elsewhere where rainy days were frequent.

Enter the cupola, a Renaissance development of the oculus that provided cover. Looking like tiny buildings atop roofs, they could be round or rectangular. They functioned as belfries, widows walks, and lanterns. These were structural, with access from inside. The word cupola itself began to take on different meanings to include the many forms we see today. Now they are used as decorative embellishments and are almost infinitely customizable.

There are many lovely cupolas throughout town. There are eight between the intersection of Clearview Knoll and Rt 64 and the intersection of Rt 188 and Rt 64 at Judd's Crossing. There are four around and in close proximity to the Green.

One final thought: Many people in town fondly remember the metal ice cream cone atop Johnnie's Dairy Bar in the center of town. Does that qualify as a cupola?



## Father of History

*These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done.* So begins Herodotus' nine volume record to which he gave the name *The Histories*. This word in his time signified inquiry or research, something that historians through the ages know well. Written in classical Greek in the fifth century B.C., *The Histories* is divided into 9 sections each named after the nine muses. Book I was called not surprisingly, Clio who is known as the muse of history.

Although historical chronicles existed before, his style differs from the traditional Greek method attributed to Homer whose two epic poems, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, were composed sometime around 800 to 700 B.C. They used complex meter and sometimes "inspiration" from the muses.

The writings of Herodotus are written in prose. He traveled widely within the Persian Empire from his birthplace Halicarnassus in what is now Turkey and north as far as the Black Sea. His travels included Egypt, Libya, Macedonia, Palestine, and Syria. His works are based on systematic and empirical research. He was interested in personal accounts, legends, geography and myths. This still was a time of oral history so he talked to people to hear their stories, and recorded them. He wanted his *Histories* to give future readers the opportunity to learn from the past.

Herodotus set the standard for all historians to follow. The much deserved title given to by Cicero is "The Father of History".

## Harold F. West , Jr.

Our friend and longtime Middlebury Historical Society member Harold F. West, Jr. passed away on May 13, 2017. Like his parents before him, he worked with the Historical Society for many years. Harold was a gentle man, large in stature and correspondingly gifted with many abilities. He was blessed with a memory that could retrieve the smallest of details across many years, a perfect quality in a historian. His kindness and friendliness are obvious to all who knew him. He was a gifted engineer with a love for all things mechanical. He was an expert on the trolley, automobiles, trains, planes, and ships and of course, town history. During the last years of his life, he put together many miniature metal models no larger than 4 inches with great detail. These are on display at our building as a tribute to Harold. He continued to come in to work with us on many days when it took so much effort for him, something deeply touching that demonstrated how much our group meant to him. He was a kind person who saw the best in everyone. Harold, we will miss you.

## Dairy Tokens

These coins functioned like today's debit cards. Dairies often used a token system. Customers could make advance payments to the dairy or milkmen through the purchase of tokens. The customer would then put empty milk bottles out for the milkman along with tokens which were redeemed for milk and other dairy products. The token system was useful for dairies as a low-cost form of advertising. It also aided in establishing loyalty among customers as the tokens could only be redeemed at the business where they were purchased. This ensured dairies were paid before milk was delivered.

These tokens were found in a garden bed on South Street and donated to us in 1996



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**History is to the nation as memory is to the individual. As an individual deprived of memory becomes dis-oriented and lost, not knowing where he has been and where he is going, so a nation denied a conception of its past will be disabled in dealing with its present and its past.**

**Arthur M. Schlesinger, Historian**

**Our hours are Monday from 2 to 5 and other times by appointment.**

Our Board of Directors meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to join us . If you are interested in a tour, joining the Society, or volunteering, please contact us at 203 206-4717 or middleburyhistoricalsociety.org .

**Officers and Board members**

President	Bob Rafford	Secretary	Open
Vice President	Agnes Lutes	Treasurer	Terry McAuliffe

Board members are Frank Mirovsky, Robert Scholl, Edward St John, and Dr. Raymond Sullivan.

**The Middlebury Historical Society building, just east of the Green in Middlebury, Connecticut.**

