

FALLS VILLAGE - CANAAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

April 2026



Editor: Dick Heinz

Annual Dinner

By Kay Blass

In this 250th anniversary year of our country, it is fitting that the Annual Dinner Meeting of the Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society feature a talk about Canaan in the Revolution. Tim Abbott, one of our favorite local historians, will highlight stories from his research about the units in which local men served. Tim is the Executive Director of the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), a multi-state watershed organization and accredited land trust based in Cornwall Bridge, Connecticut. He is a Revolutionary War scholar who regularly publishes in the *Journal of the American Revolution* and has made a particular study of the military and social experiences of people of the Berkshires and Northwest Connecticut during the Revolutionary and early Federal eras. His first book - *The Additional; Spencer's Regiment and the American Revolution* - will be published by Oklahoma University Press in early 2027. He lives in North Canaan and will be joined for dinner by his wife, Dr. Talya Leodari, curator of the Stockbridge Library, Museum and Archives.

The dinner and meeting are open to the public. Doors will open at 5:00 p.m. and a buffet dinner provided by Theresa Freund will be served at 5:30 p.m. The cost is **\$35.00** per person. *Payment* may be made at the door but **reservations must be made by May 22**. Come early to survey the broad array of raffle items available and to buy tickets for a chance to win.

Call Kay Blass at 860-824-7259, or email her at kay.blass@gmail.com to make your reservation (**by May 22**).

The Beebe Hill Schoolhouse Bell

By Betty Tyburski

For 33 years, my family lived in the brick house on the corner of Route 7 and Beebe Hill Road in Falls Village CT. Within a stone's throw across Route 7 stands the historic and precious Beebe Hill Schoolhouse. I had the privilege of seeing that school every day. It captured my heart. Absolutely.

In September of 1990 I happened to be casually reading a local newspaper and saw an ad for a tag sale to be held nearby in the Taconic section of Salisbury. There was a short list of some of the items that would be in the sale and to my total surprise, listed was the Beebe Hill Schoolhouse bell! I nearly fell out of my chair. I read the ad a couple of times to make sure I wasn't hallucinating!

The night before the sale, I had disturbing thoughts of the bell being bought by a bell collector and having it completely disappear forever.



On the day of the sale, I woke up at the crack of dawn and was at the site by 7:00 a.m., two hours before showtime. No one was in the house. I sat on the front steps and waited for the sale to begin. Slowly, a long line had formed. No early-bird buying was allowed.

Just before the doors opened one of the workers who knew I had been waiting a long time, came up to me with a warm smile and quietly told me which room the bell was in and how to get there. Within a few minutes after the doors opened I had the Beebe Hill Schoolhouse bell in my hands! I was one happy Dude! I don't remember the price.

I found out that the bell was put up for sale by Arthur D. Stein, Jr. I am not sure if he was a Falls Village resident, but I know his Mom and Dad were. I wrote to Art, who had moved to Florida, and he kindly sent me a letter with information about the bell when it once was in the possession of members of his family.

Over the years, the bell was used at several celebratory occasions in and out of our area. It once spent time in the St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands and in Brighton, Maine.

Along with the bell, I gave Arthur D. Stein Jr.'s letter to the Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society. The bell has finally come home! It will be cared for by Mary Margaret (Midge) Cortesi, the excellent curator of the Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society.

The bell will ring once again at the Beebe Hill Schoolhouse. Curator Bill Beebe, a descendent of the Town's founding fathers, can be counted on to keep a sharp eye on the bell. All is well with the bell!

The Beebe Hill Schoolhouse will be open Saturday mornings during the summer months.

1st Tuesday at 7 Summer Talks With a Revolutionary War Theme

We are continuing our popular 1st Tuesday at 7 Summer Talks this year! In honor of our Country's 250th anniversary, we are featuring talks with a Revolutionary War theme.

Join us on the 1st Tuesday of the month at the South Canaan Meetinghouse, 12 Rte. 63, Falls Village. For more information, contact Cheryl Aeschliman at 860-824-5607. Here is our lineup for this summer:

June 2: Canaan's Revolution, 1774-1787

With Peter Vermilyea

July 7: Ethan Allen's Brothers Heman and Ira

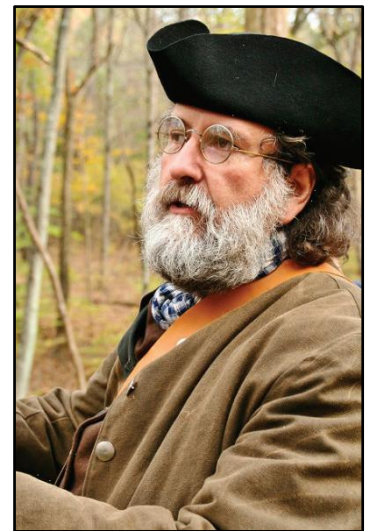
With Lou Bucceri

Aug. 4: Search for the Signers: Visiting the Graves of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence

With Jennifer Epstein

Sept. 1: Provisioning the Continental Army

With Dennis Picard



Historian Dennis Picard

The President's Report

By Judy Jacobs

Every year at this time, I reflect on how much we get done at the Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society. This year is no exception. Our volunteers have been so busy! Midge, Kay and other volunteers work every Tuesday morning organizing the files, doing research and showing visitors around the museum. We also open on the first Saturday of each month and Bill Beebe opens the caboose for tours. Our annual First Tuesday at Seven Summer Talk has become very popular as well as our Housatonic Area Heritage Walks tours, and the tours of the Beebe Hill Schoolhouse on Saturday mornings in the summer.

One of the most important things to happen to us this year was the donation of the complete Donald Connery collection of the Peter Reilly/Barbara Gibbons murder trial and Peter's personal photos. We are honored that Peter Reilly himself reached out to me to say he felt it belonged in our collection, in our care, and in the town where the terrible murder of his mother took place in 1973.

Over twelve large boxes of information were delivered to us by Peter himself and we are taking on the task of organizing, cataloging and preparing a display with many of these pieces. We are very thankful that the Wellner Fund provided us with a grant to help us with these endeavors.

Our other big project has been organizing events for America's 250th celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Many thanks to the Canaan Foundation for a grant to help out with the cost of the Cemetery Tours.

Here is a list of the Historical Society's events:

June-Sept. First Tuesday at 7 Summer Talks all feature a Revolutionary War theme.

June 14: Falls Village & North Canaan Cemetery Tours of Revolutionary War soldiers' graves.

August 15: Falls Village Historical Festival featuring historic demonstrations, house tours, period music & dance, food, horse drawn carriage rides, Beebe Hill Schoolhouse reenactment, cannon firing and more!

Check out our website or follow us on Facebook for updated information!

In closing, I want to thank all those who have contributed to the Historical Society, not only monetary contributions or donations of items for our collection, but those who have donated their time to us. Volunteers are the backbone to many nonprofit organizations, and I can honestly say we would not exist if we didn't have such a dedicated group of volunteers. Thank you all!

The New Haven Railroad Caboose

By Bill Beebe

The caboose was placed and restored by Denny and Judy Jacobs with the help of Bill Beebe in 1996. It took a lot of long weekends and nights. Two years ago, with the help of the HVRHS FFA class doing a lot of the prep work, Denny and Bill gave the Caboose a new paint job. It has been open on the weekends and during events in towns with many visitors. It is fun telling people what it was used for and why. When I hear people tell me that their grandfathers worked on a railroad and how the kids like to climb into the cupola to wave at Mom outside for pictures, makes all the hard work worthwhile.

Use the QR Code to make your donation today



Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society

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TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Use the handy envelope included in this newsletter or renew online!

Find us at www.fallsvillage-canaanhistoricalsociety.org or “Like” us on Facebook

The Falls Village Depot Museum

By Midge Cortesi

Once again we have had a very busy year at the Depot. The process of transferring and reorganizing our files from one set of filing cabinets to another has been very time consuming but we are almost finished! At last. We have reached the W's.....the end of the alphabet! Once this is finished, we can concentrate on a much-needed upgrading of our work station which houses our computer, printers, copy machine, scanners etc. Because of a generous donation we will be able to purchase a much larger work table to replace our very cramped work space. This will greatly increase the efficiency and comfort for those who work at our computer doing research, scanning photos etc. Jill Godburn has been working tirelessly inputting data into a program that will house information on our entire collection. We received a loan of a large number of old photos of the Dean family which Barbara Riley has spent hours scanning into our computer.

Sadly, we lost one of our very dedicated volunteers this year, Liz Germon. Liz would make the journey every Tuesday from Winsted to help us with the never-ending task of filing new information. We miss her, not only for the hard work that she put into our organization but for her sense of humor and the stories and pictures she shared of her grandchildren.

We have had many visitors stop in for a look at our museum or to work on research. We have fielded many email requests for family information. We have helped school children on projects, both local students and students from nearby Salisbury School. We have an abundance of historical information to share. Anyone is always welcome to stop in, sit down and browse through our books and files. We are here every Tuesday from 9-12. We can always arrange for an appointment if that is not convenient. We love visitors!

