WHEN HOLIDAY SHOPPING WAS FUN
by Olive Tubbs Chendali

Halloween has barely passed when stores, newspaper ads and the
general public become obsessed with the ritual of Holiday gift-giving.
All else is on hold while we dash from one announced "bargain" to
another! Thanksgiving is almost lost in the frenzy. The muttering and
complaining grows louder as the calendar moves along, but we
dutifully persevere in performing our part in promoting the Nation's
economy! Time was once, however, when Holiday gift giving was not
as frenzied a time of year. We had time throughout the year to listen
to the "wish lists" making mental notes for the Holidays ahead. In
addition, it took time for Grandmothers to make a sweater or an afghan
or a long-to-be-cherished quilt. Father stole clandestine moments in
the cellar or workshop building Mother the bookshelf for which she
had been yearning. Precious pennies were hoarded from jobs and
errands performed for neighbors and relatives and these were juggled
mentally many times to cover our gifts.

From the time of primary grades, teachers helped with needle-
cases and pin cushions for Mothers and decorated match books for
Dad, and most homes were witness to the progress in our talents with
cross-stitched pieces and book shelves and magazine racks from
sewing and woodworking classes.

People who walk the Niantic Bay Boardwalk for the first time are
always engrossed with reading the outstanding educational signs.
What a treat to read titles such as “Where Rivers Meet the Sea”,
“The Nehantics”, and “Shellfish”. People are fascinated with this
story of life that enfolds with these signs.

When the Foundation began its work in the 90’s, one of the key
goals of the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation was to have an
educational component to the Boardwalk. Once it seemed clear that
the Boardwalk would become a reality, the Foundation immediately
set to work to obtain a grant that would help finance 16 educational
signs to be placed strategically on the Boardwalk.

After many years of work, in 2005, the Foundation was pleased
to report the completion of the Design and Installation of the Educa-
tional Signs on the Niantic Bay Boardwalk. In compliance with Long
Island Sound License Plate Project Grant (Niantic Bay Overlook
Signage) Identification No. P.S. 2003-30276, the Foundation used a
grant of $25,000 from the DEP to hire a consultant who worked with
artists to produce the signs and to partially cover the cost of instal-
lation.

Their choice of topics deftly blended history, geology, nature,
and home-town lore. The artists who ably worked on this project
were Larry C. Ayer, Daniel Price, Peggy Price, Susan Siegel, and
Susan Stone. The signage was produced by EHS Educational, LLC,
Niantic.

In addition, in 2005, the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation
donated $10,000 to help with the cost of manufacturing, mounting,
and installing the signs. A summary of the 16 educational signs plus
two entrance signs is available on the foundation's website at
publictrustfoundation.org/niantic-boardwalk-educational-signs

Of those 16 original signs, subsequent storms severely dam-
aged eight of them. In 2013, Amtrak re-installed the eight undam-

continued on page 3

continued on page 4
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From all of us at Guy’s!

We will be closed on Christmas and New Year’s Day but our Emergency Services will still be available.

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Now is the time to plan your heating needs for next winter!
aged, original signs on the eastern half of the Boardwalk when it completed its bridge reconstruction project.

In 2016, Kathie Cassidy, The Foundation Treasurer, ably augmented the efforts of Bob DeSanto, the President, to restore the remaining signs by successfully obtaining sponsors for each of the damaged signs.

The Foundation is deeply grateful to the businesses that contributed $800 for each sign in this project: Charter Oak Federal Credit Union-“A Glimpse of the Past”; Chelsea Groton Bank-“Hole in the Wall”; Dime Bank-“Fishes of Niantic Bay”; Dominion Energy-“Life in an Estuary”; Donna and Richard Gada and Family-“The Iron Horse”; Heritage Properties Niantic-“A Place for Play”; Lillian’s Café and Protek Auto-“McCook Point”; and Niantic Dairy Queen-“Shellfish”

The Restoration was completed by FourColor, Inc., Pannier Graphics, and Fast Signs, Inc. of Waterford.

The next time you are walking on the Boardwalk, stop to once again view and read these signs which tell us “The Stories of the Land”, “Fishes of the River and Bay”, and “The Glacial Legacy”. Both children and adults are educated by the wonderful stories told in this beloved place of Wind and Waves.

The donations to the town of these signs on the Boardwalk were: $25,000 in Grants; $10,000 in Foundation Donation; $6,400 in Business Donations; Total Donations-$41,400

The East Lyme Public Trust Foundation appreciate the comments of readers. Be sure to follow them on Facebook and go to their website for further information: publictrustfoundation.org

Educational Signs from cover

The Post Road Review
is published, printed and distributed freeof charge to our readers. The entire process is funded exclusively by our advertisers.
If you enjoy reading our magazine, pleasepatronize these advertisers whenever possible.
Holiday Shopping

And let’s not forget the doorstops! Every home was equipped with at least one!

Playing an important part in this scenario were the Larkin catalog, Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs, all with dog-eared pages where the dream world of gift-giving reigned. Nor should we forget the Redemption Gift book for Green Stamps! How we did covet those stamps! Now that we look back, we can appreciate Mother’s sacrificing some of hers to complete those needed for a special purchase we wished to make.

How willing we were to make the Post Office trip when waiting for a catalog purchase. Something really big might have required shipment by railroad to arrive at the Freight Station which stood where the Apartment Building behind the Post Office in Niantic now stands (which has since moved). If it was a really big package and involved a surprise, much ingenuity went into bargaining with a relative or neighbor with a wagon or a car in order to keep the big secret from parents.

The General Stores - early there was Partlo’s in Flanders and later on York Ave. in Niantic, Hick's - Tubbs on Pennsylvania Ave. and later Wilson’s - first where the Golden Needle and Happy Carrot Bookstore are (no longer) located today and Segal’s where Smith Pharmacy (The Black Sheep now) stands - all offered solutions for the "store-bought" items on the Wish Lists.

In later years, the Village Store on Main Street, later located on Pennsylvania Ave., later to become Malloy’s, were the answer to relaxed shopping where clothing, jewelry, toys and everyday necessities could be found.

Meanwhile after school and on weekends we all earned money going into nearby Dodge Woods, Clark’s, Tubbs’ and George Simon Smith’s for evergreens, laurel and princess pine which would be taken to the woodshed or barn where we made wreaths, brightened with festive black alder berries for home and for sale.

As December progressed every rainy or snowy day Mothers kept youngsters busy stringing freshly popped corn and the new crop of cranberries. These we found in the bogs on Chesterfield Rd., at Smith’s on Boston Post Rd. and on the west side of Fairhaven Rd. I’ve also been told there was once a bog where the rifle Range near the Camp was Excavated.

With the first frosts of November the family hogs were butchered, with some of the meat smoked for bacon and hams, while the choicest fresh loins were kept for Holiday eating or gifts to "city" relatives.

TARGET 10:10 FOR FREEDOM

A Christ centered recovery group for those struggling with substance abuse, co-dependency, anxiety, anger, depression, eating disorders, sexual addictions or other issues.

The thief’s place is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all it’s fullness.’ John 10:10

Every Friday
Welcome & Fellowship @ 6:30pm
Worship & Sharing @ 7pm
Harvest Christian Fellowship
5 Freedom Way, Niantic - behind the former Bridal Mall
visit us at www.harvestcf.net or call:
860 442-7423 or 860 739-5723
Holiday Shopping

Some families were fattening up the chosen Holiday goose, and our early ethnic groups were gathering their Holiday specialties.

As our Nation recovered from the Depression after World War I, youngsters had learned the value of thrift, so many of us had our own Christmas Clubs where we deposited a certain little amount each week with checks distributed to us in November. Each of us had our little "windfalls" spent at least three different ways before the final decisions were made.

The anticipation of all this activity added to the Holiday spirit and the fun of gift-giving. The pace was slower--and spread out over more months so we were not so physically or emotionally - or financially exhausted with the rituals. We had time to think-to plan-and to make our own Holiday Cards and many of our gifts. We were grateful for the one gift from parents - not the entire wish list - and strange as it may now seem - we were grateful for the one orange in the bottom of the stocking for a supply of oranges in the dead of winter was unheard of. Simplicity, humility, sincerity ruled the process of gift-giving and set the Spirit of the Season.

The preceding article was originally published in an early issue of THE POST ROAD REVIEW.

Many readers will not recognize some of the locations the author refers to in this story as so many have changed over the years since this article was written.

The author, Olive Tubbs Chendali, who passed away in 1999, was a regular contributor to our magazine in its early years and we preserve her work here as a memorial to the effort she contributed in helping to get our magazine off the ground some 25 years ago.

Do you have a recipe to share with our readers? E-Mail us at: postroadreview@aol.com or mail to: Post Road Review, Box 836 Colchester, CT 06415 Please include your name, address and phone number.
STARS TO STEM RECEIVES GRANT FROM CHELSEA GROTON FOUNDATION

In November, STARS to STEM, Inc. was notified that a $1,000 grant was approved for the purpose of start up from the Chelsea Groton Foundation, Incorporated. STARS to STEM, Inc. is a local non-profit corporation dedicated to renovation of the existing planetarium space at East Lyme High School to create a community and regional educational asset.

Currently the space (which has not been operational since 2013) requires a restoration and technology upgrade. Fundraising for this project is ongoing and will depend on private/corporate donations, the work of volunteers, and grant awards. No Board of Education funds or tax dollars will be used.

“STARS to STEM, Inc. is thrilled to announce this award as we continue to reach for the stars to restore the planetarium at East Lyme High School as a regional asset for all ages,” stated Diane Swan, President of STARS to STEM.

STARS to STEM is one of 136 organizations which have been supported by the Chelsea Groton Foundation that has donated nearly 1 million to date this year. In the words of Chelsea Groton Foundation President, B. Michael Rauh, Jr., these grants are provided “to enrich and support our shared communities,” which is especially in the current pandemic environment.

Donations can be made by mail to STARS to STEM, Inc., P.O. Box 616, Niantic, CT 06357. Interested parties with questions can email Diane Swan at starstostem@gmail.com. For more information visit online at www.starstostem.org.

Free Virtual Cooking Demonstration

The Estuary Council of Seniors is hosting a free virtual cooking demonstration on Dec. 4th at 6:30 pm. Food Service Manager, Aaron Pratt, will walk participants through how to make a simple steak pho soup, a delicious Vietnamese dish to warm everyone up this winter!

This is the first in what the Estuary Council hopes will be an ongoing program. This event will be interactive so participants will have the opportunity to cook along and ask questions throughout the demonstration if they wish.

This event is free and open to the public but registration is required. To register, please email events@ecsenior.org with PHO in the subject to sign up and receive the link to the demonstration as well as the recipe.
Niantic Light Parade in the Park

Saturday, December 12, 5pm - 8pm at McCook Point Park

This year marks the 32nd year of the Niantic Light Parade and some major changes are in store due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time in its history, the parade will not take place on Main Street, but instead will be held within the confines of McCook Point Park.

Participant floats will be on display in the upper part of McCook Point Park while viewers will drive through the park to view the stationary floats.

Patrons coming to view the floats will be allowed into the park via the main entrance beginning at 5 PM on December 12th. Patrons must be in a vehicle, no pedestrians will be allowed for this event. There is no entry fee, but collections for Care and Share will be accepted and are encouraged.

It is the hope of the event’s organizers that the drive-through format for this year will allow families to safely enjoy this fun holiday tradition from their car with floats, music and lights galore to kick-off the holiday season in brilliant style.

If you have any questions, or if you would like to create a float and participate in this amazing community event, please call East Lyme Parks and Recreation at 860-739-5828.

TED Talks Online:
“All About Vaccines”

Vaccines have always been important, but now this field of research is making headlines as scientists race to put the brakes on the COVID-19 pandemic. People all over the world are asking “How quickly can a vaccine be made?” “What challenges and concerns are we faced with?” and “How can we tell vaccine facts from fiction?”

Learn the answers to these questions and more with Henry Carter Hull Library’s selection of informative TED Talks curated by Lynn Hidek.

Register now for this free virtual program for adults on Tuesday, 12/15 at 9:30 AM. To sign up, email sarah@hchlibrary.org. To view the talks in advance, visit: hchlibrary.org/event/ted

Free SCORE Webinar:
Marketing Fundamentals

Wednesday, December 9, 2020 | 5:00 - 6:30 PM

This interactive session with Business Executive and SCORE Mentor Margo Weitekamp provides marketing fundamentals for individuals with no formal training who want to grow their businesses.

Participants will learn to create customer engagement, define key elements of their marketing strategy, and discuss digital ‘must-haves’ for their on-line presence. There will be time for questions and feedback. Pre-registration is required. After registering, participants will receive an email containing information about joining the meeting. For further information, and for registration details, contact SCORE Southeastern CT at (860) 388-9508, or by email to scorechapter@gmail.com
HISTORY’S SANTA

by Jim Littlefield

Donder and Blitzen (German for “thunder” and “lightning”) first made their appearance in 1823, springing from the pen of Clement Clarke Moore in the classic poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” more commonly known now as “The Night before Christmas.” Up until that time Americans were pretty hazy regarding Santa Claus, the patron saint of Christmas. Moore would help define him as a sack-bearing, chimney-climbing gift-giver… a reindeer-powered sleigh operator; an overweight and jolly sojourner from the northlands and, despite Moore’s personal distaste for tobacco, a pipe smoking, wreath-encircled bearer of good will. It would take a later contribution during the trying time of America’s Civil War to put the finishing touches on that image.

Thomas Nast was born in 1840 in Germany, but moved to New York with his family in 1846. Unable to speak English early on and never learning to read or write well despite some early schooling, his prospects for gainful employment in his adopted land appeared quite remote. Physically he was described as short and fat, but despite those many shortcomings, Thomas had shown an early talent for drawing. At age 15, he somehow mustered enough courage to walk by the receptionist’s desk into the office of the famous Frank Leslie, requesting a job as an illustrator. Originally laughed at, he was given the seemingly impossible task of going down to the Manhattan wharf and drawing all the people there at rush hour. The young boy eagerly embraced the assignment and completed the picture by the next day. Young Thomas Nast was hired as an illustrator by Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper for four dollars a week, beginning a successful career that would span many decades.

It was during America’s Civil War that Thomas Nast came into prominence as America’s foremost cartoonist and illustrator. Unfit for military service, he became a war correspondent for Harper’s Weekly and his drawings of battles and conditions at the front soon began to reach into many America’s homes. In appreciation of his war effort, President Abraham Lincoln once proclaimed the young Nast to be “our best recruiting sergeant.”

It was in a picture entitled “Santa Claus Comes in Camp,” where Nast first prominently used the image of Santa Claus. For inspiration he had his wife Sarah read him the Clement Clarke Moore’s poem before starting the work. Nast would go on to create some seventy-six Christmas drawings over his lifetime and in the process, help define Santa Claus as we know him today. From Nast’s work came the concept of Santa being from the North Pole (thus being a citizen of the world, not from a specific country), the idea of a workshop staffed by elves, letters to be sent to Santa making requests and gifts being given exclusively to those children who had been good the previous year. Santa’s outfit was defined as red and white striped trousers, along with a blue coat splashed with white stars. A smallish funnel-shaped fur cap would don his patriotic head. It was this particular image created by Thomas Nast for the Christmas of 1862 that would capture the heart of well-known Civil War re-enactor Wilber D. (Willi) Runk.

Willi Runk was a born teacher and taught not only for a living, but also as a personal passion in his spare time. Until his recent retirement he taught history at the Talcott Mountain Academy in Avon, but also spent much of his spare time in “the hobby” (as it is called) of historic re-enacting. Willi started out doing Revolution-
History’s Santa

Willy War portrayals in the early 1990’s as a Hessian officer but after a while he and his wife Becky began Civil War era re-enacting, playing the part of a surgeon and later a union captain. Each part was carefully scripted with typical Willi Runk attention to historical detail… the clothing, the voice, the overall demeanor of the one being portrayed. He might be found at Gettysburg, mounted on a horse and giving orders to his troops or at another Civil War reenacting site perhaps commanding the cannons to fire…all high drama for those interested and willing to learn more about history.

Willi later joined “The Society of Europe,” an umbrella organization for all portrayals, and began to do more civilian impressions of the time. He portrayed a Prussian ambassador to the U.S. by the name of Baron von Gerolt for many years, but then he stumbled on, of all people, Santa Claus.

For those who are familiar with the Smith-Harris House, East Lyme’s mid-19th century museum, it definitely has a certain magic about it, especially during the holiday season. Willi Runk sensed that right away. Many times during the year while doing impressions on the grounds for Heritage Weekend or other events, he would comment on the feel of the place and would often say that of all the many historic places where he had visited or performed, this was his favorite.

“I remember many conversations Willi and I have had over the years,” said Georgia Lee Littlefield, architect of many of the Smith-Harris House historical programs. “Willi would often comment on the attention to detail we gave the place and that was high praise coming from someone of his historic stature. One day we were continued on page 11
Virtual Events for Adults from the Waterford Public Library

Guest author Jeff Benedict: Wednesday, December 2, 7:00 pm - Author Jeff Benedict will talk about his newest title - The Dynasty. How was the Patriots dynasty built? And how did it last for two decades? In The Dynasty, acclaimed journalist Jeff Benedict provides richly reported answers in a sweeping account based on exclusive interviews with more than two hundred insiders.

Guest author Marian Lindberg: Monday, December 7, 6:30 pm - Waterford library will welcome Marian Lindberg, author of Scandal on Plum Island: a commander becomes the accused (2020). Deeply researched, involving historical figures as contrasting as Theodore Roosevelt and Susan B. Anthony, Scandal on Plum Island traces Major Benjamin Koehler’s career from respected officer to vilified outcast and turns up provocative information about his defense. Author Marian Lindberg is a lawyer and award-winning journalist.

Speculative Fiction Book Discussion Series: The Time Machine by H. G. Wells (1895) Monday, December 14, 7:00 pm - A gentleman inventor living in England, traverses first thousands of years and then millions into the future, before bringing back the knowledge of the grave degeneration of the human race and the planet. Pam Bedore facilitates this discussion series. Pam is a professor of English at UConn, Avery Point.

The Bobcat – Connecticut’s Secretive Wild Cat: Wednesday, December 16, 7:00 pm - Paul Colburn, a certified Master Wildlife Conservationist (MWC) will give this presentation which focuses on the natural history of bobcats in Connecticut. An overview of bobcat habitat, diet, behavior, reproduction, and current research efforts and Mountain lions will also be discussed.

Advance registration is required for the above events. Participants can register online in advance with the Zoom Links available on the library’s Calendar of Events at www.waterfordpubliclibrary.org.
History’s Santa continued

talking about our Christmas program and I remember saying it was too bad we did not have an accurate period-correct Santa to offer the public. Willi said he would give that some thought (and research) and get back to me. It might be a way, he said in parting, for him to bring history to the ‘little ones’.

And it was a short time indeed before Thomas Nast’s 1862 Santa was re-born, complete with patriotic clothing and demeanor. “Happy Christmas!” Willi Runk would announce as visitors entered the house. Children would crowd in around him, some sitting on the floor while others vied for a place on his lap. His cookies and tea would be on the table beside him. The story of the historic Santa Claus would then begin to unfold before them, with both young and old people in attendance captivated by the man’s knowledge and warm delivery. “Mall Santas can be frightening to some children,” Mrs. Littlefield related, “but I never once saw any child do anything but gravitate to our Santa. It was a tribute to Willi Runk’s skill and who he was as a person.” Wilber D. “Willi” Runk died of a heart attack August 30, 2012.

A poem entitled “Oh, Santa Please” was composed by a grateful Smith–Harris House several months earlier to celebrate Willi’s retirement from teaching. Looking back, it now appears quite prophetic.

“Oh, Santa Please”
Oh, Santa please...say it ain’t so,
That our Willi Runk would now want to go.
What will he do when he leaves us here?
Maybe board a sleigh with eight tiny reindeer?
With memories of us all sifted and sorted,
He’ll take to the skies, no mission aborted.
With many talents and his Becky beside him,
That sleigh will land safely with her there to guide him.
So let us proclaim as he drives from our sight,
Our good wishes go with you and to you a good flight!

With much love and appreciation,
The Smith-Harris House

Postscript - Willi always had his pipe with him whenever he played Thomas Nast’s Santa at the Museum, but he would never light it when the “little ones” were around. Afterwards, however, still in character, he could often be spotted contently smoking that pipe as he sat back in a rocking chair out on the front porch. There are any number of folks who claim to have witnessed this and cannot be dissuaded from their belief that the smoke from the pipe curled in an odd sort of way over his bespectacled head... “Almost like a wreath,” one of them said.
Niantic Jingle Bell 5K

So many things have changed in 2020 but some things remain the same. Help to keep the tradition of one of the best road races in Connecticut alive. Your participation in this year’s event will allow the mission of the Brian Dagle Foundation, which is to provide grief support groups and programs for anyone who has lost a special someone in their life as well as to educate schools, businesses and our community on mental health and suicide prevention to continue. Now more than ever there is need for the healing, hope, and support they provide.

You can help by participating in the NJ5K Virtual Run/Walk. The Virtual Run/Walk means you pick the time, route, and distance you want to run/walk. The cool thing about the virtual event is you can complete it anytime between Thanksgiving and Christmas. After you have completed your race/walk, post on social media using #njb5k and you’ll be recognized as a NJB5K competitor! There is even an app for that! Download the ITS YOUR RACE app.

You can also participate in the live event. To help maintain a safe race environment the Niantic Jingle Bell 5K will utilize a rolling start from 8:30am to 9:30am on December 12th. This means you can start from the start line anytime between 8:30am and 9:30am (the finishing line closed at 10:30am). Please consider your start time so you complete the course by 10:30 if you want to receive an official time and receive your NJB5K finisher medal. There is no MASS start as has been done in the past. You will cross a timing mat at the start and end of the race. Your race time and results will be posted on line at itsyourrace.com.

There is NO race day registration per state COVID regulations. Registration must be done on line before the race. There will be bib pick up available at McCook Park the day of the race or in days preceding the race (more details on that as the time gets closer).

State COVID regulations mandate that there be no awards ceremony. Awards will be announced and winners will be notified. The awards can be picked up at Brian’s Healing Hearts or mailed to the winners. Awards given for top 3 males/females overall and top male/female in the following age groups: 10 and under, 11-14, 15-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+. Awards and finisher medals will be given to participants in the live race only.

There will be bottled water available at the start/finish line area but there will be NO water on the course. You are responsible for any hydration that you need during the race/walk.

This year event organizers have also added a family friendly scavenger hunt. This is free, but a donation is suggested. When you sign up, you will receive a scavenger hunt card with clues leading you to Elves throughout Main Street and town. Finish the whole hunt and be entered to win some raffle prizes. This scavenger hunt can be completed from Thanksgiving through Christmas.

For further information and registration details, please visit discovereastlyme.com

[Niantic Jingle Bell 5K]

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Library Selected as a Stop & Shop Beneficiary

Mystic & Noank Library has been selected as a beneficiary of the Stop & Shop Community Bag Program for the month of December. The program, which launched in May 2019, is a reusable bag program that facilitates community support with the goal to make a difference in the communities where shoppers live and work.

The Mystic & Noank Library was selected as the December beneficiary of the program by store leadership at the Stop & Shop located at 91 Voluntown Road, in Pawcatuck. As a beneficiary, the library will receive a $1 donation every time a $2.50 reusable Community Bag is purchased at this location during the month of December, unless otherwise directed by the customer through the Giving Tag attached to the bag.

“We are so grateful to be chosen as a recipient of this program” states Karen Wall, Executive Director of Mystic & Noank Library. “Initiatives like these enable us to continue providing quality programs and services to our community free of charge, and in these times of uncertainty this is more important than ever.”

Mystic & Noank Library is a non-profit based in Mystic, CT. Founded in 1893, Mystic & Noank Library aspires to support each individual’s cultural and creative interest to enable our community to better understand the past, succeed in the present and prepare for the future. Learn more about Mystic & Noank Library by visiting mysticnoanklibrary.org. For more information on the Stop & Shop Community Bag Program, visit stopandshop.bags4mycause.com.