

Boothe Memorial Park & Museum

October 2024

End of the School Year Field Trip

It was a sunny spring day and a small van along with a few cars rolled into the parking lot at Boothe. The vehicle doors opened and out hopped about 25 youngsters from Catholic homeschool families in New York and Connecticut. Some parents joined them to help with transportation and brought along some younger siblings. They chose to visit Boothe Park because two of the teachers have grandparents who are long time Stratford residents, and they themselves have enjoyed the park over the years.

First, the children and their teachers enjoyed a picnic lunch and donuts from nearby Donut Crazy. The next treat for the students was to romp around the playground, choosing from various slides and swings, and especially the not-so-common climbing wall. Given the range of age of the students on this trip, the teachers were very pleased that the playground suited a variety of age levels: from the littles to the teenagers. Fun for all!



a brief history and tour of the building. While at the Meeting House, the priest who had accompanied the group, led them in prayer. They thought it was a perfect way to finish the end of the school year field trip.



They then followed the driveway back up to the parking lot so they could stroll through the green, noting the three crosses dedicated to Mrs. Boothe after her passing. The group observed the rose garden and the various buildings with architectural interest as they went. They continued past the Homestead, and arrived at the Putney Chapel Meeting House where President, Beata Hlinka, was there to greet them and provide

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Shakespeare in the Park



The Cast of the Hudson Shakespeare Company for “The Merry Wives of Windsor”

The Hudson Shakespeare Company performed, “The Merry Wives of Windsor” at Boothe Park on two consecutive weekends in July. It was staged in the Sunken Garden next to the Rose Garden, where previous Shakespeare plays have been performed. Under the creative direction of Jon Ciccarelli the actors were able to perform the entire show interspersed among the audience - a challenging scenario, that was admired by all attendees. It was like being part of the ensemble. There was wonderful weather this summer so only one of the performances was rained out. The remaining 5 shows were very well attended and enjoyed immensely. The witty conversations of the actors would have been appreciated by the Boothe brothers, who shared a sarcastic sense of humor. We are all looking forward to the Company coming back next year for another stellar performance that you won't want to miss.



Holiday Open House

The Friends of Boothe will again be holding their annual Holiday Open House. Every corner of the entire Homestead will be decorated with beautiful Holiday décor. And many 3-foot table-top trees will be creatively decorated and available for Silent Auction bidding. Join in the fun! The dates and time are as follows:

Friday, Dec 6th from 6:30-8:00 pm
Saturday, Dec 7th from 2-5 pm
Sunday, Dec 8th from 2- 5 pm
Saturday, Dec 14th from 2- 5 pm
Sunday, Dec 15th from 2-5 pm
Monday, Dec 16th from 6:30-8 pm

**Tickets can be purchased at the door: \$5/ Adults
Children are free.**



Photographs courtesy of Rod Jovanelly, A Touch of Color

A Wooden Wonder

by Stephen M. Korosh,
Friends of Boothe Park Clock-Keeper



If you're lucky enough to have access to the Boothe Clock Tower early on a sunny spring or summer morning, you'll likely be greeted by a mottled emerald and gold light cascading through the large rose window on the east side of the building. The magical illumination falls upon a mysterious assemblage of ruddy-brown wooden gears, pinions and framework. What is this odd object?

Among the Clock Tower volunteers it is known as "The Wooden Tower Clock" and it has a story to tell. It is one of the jewels of the Boothe brothers' collecting mania.

The large E. Howard Tower Clock is the mechanism that manages the outdoor clock and the chimes. But the Wooden Tower Clock is housed within the building and is a less-complex time-keeping cousin. Made of cherry wood, equipped with a recoil escapement and an hour-striking mechanism, the Wooden Tower Clock is powered by hand-wound weights. It still retains its original linen winding cords for time-keeping and hour-striking mechanisms, and except for a replacement bell, bell-striking hammer and one set of bearings, it is entirely original. It only requires some annual maintenance to keep it running.

While overhauling and restoring the clock nearly twenty-five years ago, I was awed to find the

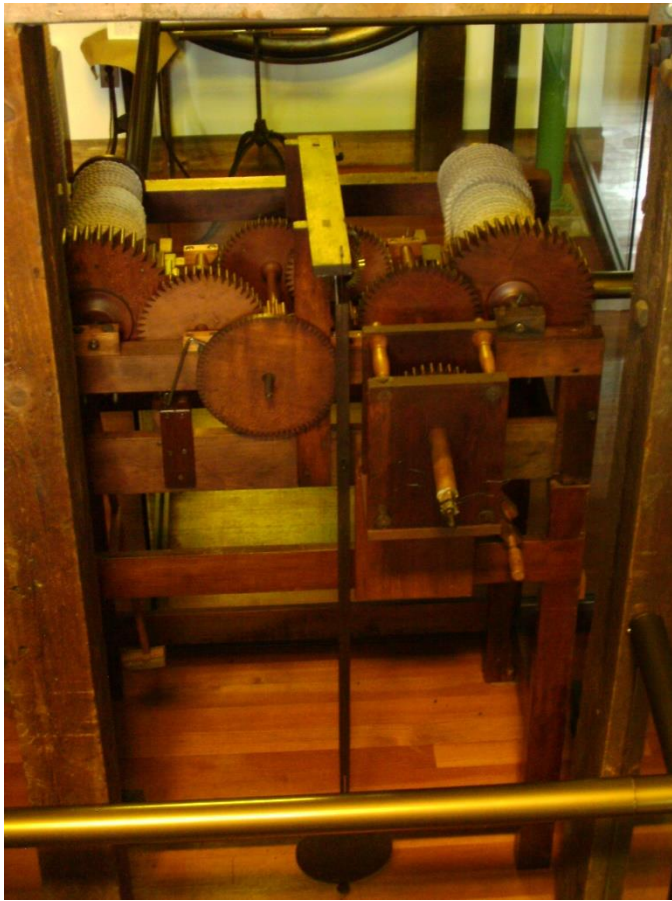
clockmaker's original, hand-scored roman numerals that he used to keep track of the proper position for various parts. This discovery created an intimate connection to the clockmaker who carefully constructed this magnificent machine so very long ago.

When I first encountered this clock in the museum, it carried a very brief signage that described it as having been built during the War of 1812, when brass, which was imported from England, was difficult to get, due to the conflict. That sounded plausible, yet it left me with the sense that it was pure conjecture. The reason I was skeptical was the fact that Connecticut had a long and distinguished history of clockmaking, and was well known for producing wooden clock mechanisms prior to 1840. With plentiful local hardwoods, it was cheaper to produce wood parts. It seemed that the War of 1812 played no part in the story. I decided to do some sleuthing.

As luck would have it, during a visit to the American Clock & Watch Museum in Bristol, CT several years ago, I was looking through their small horological library and came across a book entitled Early American Tower Clocks by Frederick Shelley. In it, I was startled to find photos of what appeared to be an exact twin to our Wooden Tower Clock. The clock was attributed to Elisha Hotchkiss Jr., a clockmaker in the Burlington, CT area who built wooden movement clocks in the first half of the nineteenth century. The clock in the photos was dated to circa 1820 and was originally installed in Burlington, where it remains today. So, now I had some reasonably reliable information about who built the clock, and when and where it may have been constructed.

But how did the Boothes acquire it? In a search through the Boothe archives I found only one clue. In a letter from David Boothe dated Dec. 18th 1919 to a "Mr. Hill", President of the Collins Co. of Collinsville, CT, David enquired about "an old Clock in your church at Collinsville." David spoke of the "most modern" E. Howard Tower Clock that they had purchased a few years earlier, and said he was interested in "an old Tower clock that we might get to place along side of our Howard to show the progress in clocks and clock-work."

(Cont'd)



The Hotchkiss Wooden Tower Clock

Collinsville is just a few miles to the northeast of Burlington, where Elisha Hotchkiss worked. I have not located any records that a deal for this "old Clock" was consummated, but the details all seem right that this could have been the source for the Wooden Tower Clock in the Boothe collection.

When you visit the clocktower you will notice a large, black clock dial with gold Roman numerals across the display area from the Hotchkiss clock. We believe that this was the original dial for the clock. It is displayed separately from the clock to enable easy viewing of the intricate clock mechanism and the fascinating motion of the gearwork when the clock is running, which we demonstrate on special occasions, like Opening Day.

The Hotchkiss clock has also enjoyed a career in the movies! The clock, along with a few other artifacts from the Boothe collection, was borrowed for use as a prop in Steven Spielberg's 1997 film *Amistad*.

I promised that this jewel in the Boothe collection had a story to tell. I hope you have enjoyed the tale!

Hi there! Want to be involved at Boothe Park and Museum? There are many opportunities!

You can become a tour guide in one of the historic buildings.

Teach children about life a century ago by participating in the School Program.

Assist with publicizing, decorating, or staffing events.

Learn to be a blacksmith assistant, a rose gardener, or a weaver of rugs.

All these opportunities are available whenever YOU are available.

Contact us at 203-381-2046 or friendsofboothepk@gmail.com

ANNUAL BOOTHE PARK PUMPKIN FESTIVAL!

CELEBRATE STRATFORD

The Great Pumpkin Festival

Sponsored By COMCAST

SATURDAY 12-4PM
OCTOBER 19, 2024

BOOTHE MEMORIAL PARK • 5800 MAIN ST. PUTNEY • STRATFORD
Parking Available at Boothe Memorial Park

Pumpkin Carving Contest • Costume Parade • Entertainment
Food • DJ • Piano Concert • Prizes • Circus Acts
Face Painting • Roaming Railroad • Historic Buildings

(203) 385-4029 • www.CelebrateStratford.com

Boothe School Program - Continues to Entice Teachers and Students Alike

The Boothe School Program was begun decades ago by then Director of the Park programs, Bessie Burton. The local elementary schools were invited to join in for the day, touring the Homestead and partaking in the many areas of daily chores on the farm. The schools were thrilled to participate because the field trip was free. That offer still stands today, as we are visited in the spring and fall by every elementary school in Stratford, along with students from other towns ranging in age from 3 – 17 and totaling about 400 children each year.

The school visits begin at 9:30 and end about 12:30. Some schools bring their lunches and eat in the Coliseum before heading back to school. Some take some time for “recess” in the playground as well.

As the students tour the buildings, they are primarily focused on stations where daily chores took place at the turn of the century. In the kitchen, students learn about activities and appliances of that time. Using those tools, they are then instructed on how to make cornmeal pancakes. They are then treated to the finished product.



Further along in the Homestead, students hear stories in each room about the lives and interests of David and Stephen Boothe from child to adult. Clocktower, and Technocratic Cathedral have many examples of wildlife, nature, and antiques.

The Americana Barn has many devices which give vivid examples of what life was like on a working farm. The horse-drawn carriages are on display in the Carriage House. And the working forge in the Blacksmith Shop is

a highlight of this tour, helping to explain the necessity of caring for their hardworking horses.



Students also have a chance to help weave part of a rug on our 200 yr. old loom. They are shown the finished rugs that are placed on sale in the Homestead. In the side buildings, antique cars, and the president’s model-size homesteads are on display, along with the antique car in the garage.



While touring the grounds, the students see the Trolley station, the Sunken Garden, the crosses and thorn tree, and the aviary with its friendly parakeets. The students are also treated to some children’s games of the time period. And of course, the three-seater outhouse is always met with a gasp!

Stay Connected to Boothe

This **FREE** Friends of Boothe Newsletter will keep you up to date on upcoming events, historical topics, and previous activities. Anyone who would like to be added to our distribution list can send a request to friendsofboothepk@gmail.com.

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