



# The ICRC INSIDER

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**The Mission of the Indian and Colonial Research Center**  
is to preserve and make accessible to the public, the collected works of Eva Butler and additional historical materials of the people of Old Mystic, Connecticut and surrounding areas.



**Please join us for our  
ANNUAL LUNCHEON AND MEMBERSHIP  
MEETING**

**November 16 , 2019 at 11:30 a.m. at Go Fish  
Restaurant in the Olde Mystic Village.**

**Our guest speaker this year will be the Connecticut  
State Historian, Walt Woodward. Dr. Woodward will  
speak on "The Cost of Battles Not Fought: Wars and  
Rumors of Wars in Colonial New England."**

**We hope that you can attend this interesting and  
informative meeting and luncheon!  
Please respond promptly to the reservation form you  
will receive in hard-copy mail.  
We look forward to the pleasure of your company!**



**Once again our sincere thanks to Mr. Jon Kodama,  
who has made Go Fish available at no charge to the  
ICRC. All proceeds from our luncheon meeting will  
directly benefit our organization.  
We are very grateful to Mr. Kodama for his generosity  
and commitment to the community.**

## A Look Inside



Adventure at the Denison Homestead ....	2
Pilgrims in Old Mystic .....	2
Champion of Native American Rights.....	2
Ever Changing Groton Public Schools....	3
The Mysterious Thomas Stanton.....	5
Family Anecdotes, 1 <sup>st</sup> Hand Accounts.....	7



*Please watch the mail*

*in early October*

**for your membership renewal notice (if  
applicable), and the reservation form for the  
ICRC annual members' meeting!**

**The ICRC extends a warm welcome to our  
newest member, GERALYN McPhail!**



## Adventure at the Denison Homestead

By Cora Grunwald, ICRC volunteer

In August I was lucky enough to take a group of 7-year-old summer campers from Pequotsepos Nature Center on a tour of the Denison Homestead. We started off outside the house, and talked about what it was like 300 years ago.



They looked around for neighbors. There aren't any visible when the leaves are on the trees, but I pointed out the Native American encampment on the hill and soon we went up the path to what I now called a hunting camp. They started asking questions. What kind of animals could the Natives hunt? What else did they eat? Where did corn come from? If they lived here 300 years ago, could they visit the Natives at the hunting camp? Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoyed the tour that I was "leading."

After we left the hunting camp, we spent the rest of their time in the house, with them asking many more questions and really directing the tour to find out what they wanted to know.



I'm telling you this now to thank all of you for your donations to the ICRC and for keeping your memberships up to date. This is that time of year again, so when you get your membership renewal in the mail, please fill it out right away and send it in. This is how we can reach future generations to help them learn about our history. These campers asked lots of very, very good questions and talked to each other about the answers. Let's keep museums and libraries like ours going so our children can continue learning!

## Pilgrims in Old Mystic!

By Carol Sommer, ICRC volunteer



After undergoing a multi-year restoration process at the Mystic Seaport, the Mayflower II launched on September 7th. Her destination will be Plymouth Plantation in time for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pilgrims' arrival in America.

The ship symbolizes an astounding story. One hundred and two intrepid souls left Plymouth, England to find religious freedom in Virginia. Storms and human error landed them in Massachusetts instead. Five died at sea, and forty-five more perished during the first, bitter winter in New England.

In the spring the Mayflower's departure for England presented a chance to admit that it was all a terrible mistake and abandon the settlement. Instead they stayed. One wrote, "It is not with us as with other men, whom small things can discourage."

Today the General Society of Mayflower Descendants has nearly 100,000 members. The total number of living descendants is estimated at 20 million. At least two descendants live here in Old Mystic: ICRC members Joyce Tessier (from John Alden's line) and Joan Cohn (a direct descendant of Isaac Allerton). Both women signed treenails (wooden dowels) that were then forwarded to the Seaport for use in the ship's restoration!!

The Pilgrims may have had a tiny ship but their courage was immense.

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### A Champion of Native American Rights



Arthur Lazarus, Jr., died July 27, 2019. He was an attorney whose clients included the Blackfeet, Tuscarora, Seneca, Sioux, and Navajo. Here is a link to his obituary. It summarizes the achievements of a life of service.

[www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/obituaries/arthur-lazarus-jr-dies.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/obituaries/arthur-lazarus-jr-dies.html)

# Ever Changing Groton Public Schools

By Angie Stanfield – ICRC volunteer

*Editor's note: Angie Stanfield teaches at the Northeast Academy in Groton. While volunteering at the ICRC last summer, she was also able to find information in our library about a topic dear to her heart. Thank you, Angie, on both counts!*



The Groton Public School system is currently undergoing tremendous changes. A new middle school that will serve the entire town, is in the process of construction adjacent to Fitch High School. It will replace Cutler and Westside Middle Schools. These two schools are projected to be demolished and replaced by two large elementary schools. Most, if not all, of the existing elementary schools built in the 50's and 60's will be closing in the next few years.

But change is not new to the Groton School system. As a military community with a diverse population the town has undergone more change than most. As I was exploring the numerous scrapbooks containing newspaper articles preserved at the ICRC and the books written by former town historian, the late Carol Kimball, I learned that the Groton Public Schools have a rich history characterized by ongoing changes through the years. Many of the today's issues have been faced by the town's residents before: population fluctuations, financial conditions, disagreements, state mandates, school closures, and redistricting, to name few. Numerous school buildings have come and gone over the years to accommodate the town's students and their educational needs. Some have been demolished, some remain as schools, while others have been repurposed.

The early schools Groton became an independent town in 1705 after breaking off from New London. The first school building to be erected was in Center Groton and John Barnard was the first schoolmaster. In 1766 the colonial government mandated that towns divide into school districts in order to receive their portion of state money. When Ledyard broke off as its own town, Groton had 12 districts and 12 small schools were built. Surprisingly, these separate school districts existed for 170 years virtually unchanged until

1941. Each district was autonomous, levied its own school taxes, had its own school committee and decided its own affairs independent of the town government. In 1798 the state required each district to have persons "of competent skill and letters" as school visitors who would evaluate the work of the teachers. Interestingly, the districts were able to appoint their own visitors, and their reports were printed in the local papers. While men and women were employed as teachers, the pay gap was large; men made \$36 a month including board, while women made a mere \$12. The school districts, many of which still exist today as fire districts or villages, were the following:

- District 1 - Groton Bank - Groton Heights School
- District 2 - North Lane, also called "The Lane" - Later Pleasant Valley
- District 3 - Center Groton
- District 4 - Burnett's Corner - a mill district at the intersection of Packer & Cow Hill Road
- District 5 - Mystic River - Portersville School and Mystic Academy
- District 6 - Upper Noank
- District 7 - Pequonnoc - Poquonnock Plains and Fort Hill Schools, Claude Chester
- District 8 - Shinnicosett - Eastern Point
- District 9 - Flanders - Fishtown School
- District 10 - West Mystic
- District 11 - Noank
- District 12 - Old Mystic - later merging into Stonington

Should Groton have its own high school? This was a question that plagued the town for many years and for a long time town leaders felt it was more economical to pay other towns to send their students there. While some could study high school curriculum in their districts, others had to travel. Their options were Stonington High School, Norwich Free Academy, or one of three New London schools; Chapman Technical, Williams Memorial Institute, or Bulkeley School for Boys. Travel to these locations was time consuming and the students had to arise early to catch trolleys and ferries. Finally, in 1929 a Groton merchant, Charles P. Fitch, issued the town a challenge. He gave \$50,000 to build a high school. It had to be built within a five year period of his wife's death, and it had to be named after his son, Robert E. Fitch. If the town did not accept these conditions, the money would go elsewhere. At the last possible minute, Groton accepted the money and the stipulations and the school was built next to the Groton Town Hall. The

town allocated an additional \$140,000. The first class graduated in 1931.

Consolidate our school districts or not? For years, this was a point of contention in Groton. In 1834 the towns of Groton and Bristol were the only towns in Connecticut with no plans to consolidate. The districts were reluctant to let go of the control of their schools. Residents feared that their neighborhood schools would close and their children would be sent to a distant centralized school, much as parents fear today. Many votes were taken and countless meetings were held to discuss the issue. Finally, in 1941, consolidation took place, S.B. Butler became the first town School Superintendent and to appease the different districts, the school board was to include elected officials from each of the districts. This happened just in time.

War time! In the early 1940's the war effort brought a huge population boom to Groton and swamped the existing schools. Between 1940 and 1950, the town's population increased by 100.7%. Between 1950 and 1960, the numbers jumped another 38%. As Carol Kimball wrote, "The war's effect on Groton schools was greater than on any Connecticut town." The schools were busting at the seams. Something had to be done, and done quickly. Where would the funds come from to build new schools? Many of the students lived on federal land which was not taxable. S.B. Butler was able to tap into federal funds and attain federal reimbursement for every child living on military bases and other federal land. New school buildings began to spring up. As fast as they were built, they were filled! Additions were built and then even these were added onto.

Nowhere was growth more pronounced than in the Poquonnock area. In 1942, a new neighborhood of 1,110 small one and two family homes, called Fort Hill Homes, sprang up on an old potato farm. The houses were designed to be temporary and meant to be taken down once the war was over (many are still there today!). Suddenly in 1943 there were over 200 (later becoming 500) school-aged children and only a four room Poquonnock Bridge Grammar School! Ingenuity became the call of the day as the town waded through the red tape of federal bureaucracy to get federal money for a new

school. The schools went into double sessions and elementary classes overflowed into the community center, occupying even the pool room, and into Fitch Senior High. Some children were bussed to Eastern Point's new addition to keep class size to 35. A new addition was built onto the high school for this purpose and an emergency school was built, but the numbers continued to climb. In 1954, the year the Nautilus was launched, Groton had one high school and 15 elementary (1-8) schools:



Fitch High School - built 1929 - 14 classrooms  
Center Groton School - built prior to 1900 - 2 classrooms  
Claude Chester - built 1953 - addition 1954 - 17 classrooms  
Col. Ledyard School - built 1924 -  
Fort Hill School (temp) - built 1944 - 4 classrooms  
Groton Heights - built 1912 - 12 classrooms  
Mystic Academy - built 1910 - 10 classrooms  
Noank School - built 1949 - 8 class rooms  
Old Mystic School - 2 classrooms  
Pleasant Valley School - built 1933 (2 classrooms) - addition - 7 classrooms  
Pleasant Valley School - built 1948 - 11 classrooms  
S.B. Butler School - built 1953 - 7 classrooms  
West Mystic School - built prior to 1900 - 2 classrooms  
William Seeley - built 1954 - 9 classrooms  
William Trail School - built 1913 - 5 classrooms  
Eastern Point School - opened 1902

#### Under Construction at the time:

Campus style high school atop Fort Hill (the old building was converted to a junior high).  
New Junior High in "Borough of Groton" - Westside  
9 room addition to Eastern Point School

#### New school building and additions continued through the first half of the 1960's:

Northeast School - built 1960  
Cutler Junior High School - built 1961 -  
Mary Morrison School - built 1963  
New Col Ledyard School - built 1963 - old building sold to EB  
Freeman Hathaway School - built 1965  
Dr. Charles Barnum School - built 1965

Toward the end of the 1960's, the war effort ran down, the population of Groton leveled out and the building boom came to a halt. Several schools closed or were repurposed, but most of the schools remained unchanged, until 2007.

## The Mysterious Thomas Stanton

by Cora Grunwald, ICRC volunteer



The Stanton Davis Homestead Museum still standing in Stonington, Circa 1670, built by Thomas Stanton.

Thomas Stanton was a trader and an accomplished Indian interpreter and negotiator in the Connecticut Colony. His name appears often in old papers letters, court records, conferences, and town records in New England. In Virginia? Not so much. I started researching Mr. Stanton at the ICRC and at the Denison Homestead and came up with my own ideas about his life in New England. I don't think he came overland from Virginia to Boston; I don't think he spent any time in Boston at all. I was very interested in how he learned Algonquian. I wonder what you'll think after you read this!

January, 1634/5: Thomas Stanton's name is on the passenger list of the Merchant Bonaventure, James Ricroft, Master. He was 20 years old, and sailing to Virginia. Later in the fall of the same year, he was one of the first settlers on the upper Quinnehtukqut River. I believe he may have traveled there from Virginia with another Algonquian-speaking trader, Captain John Oldham. Oldham is listed as one of the first settlers of Wethersfield in 1633/34, and his occupation was a coastal trader. From about 1625 to 1635, Oldham traded along the east coast from Boston through Long Island Sound to Virginia to the Caribbean, making a very good living transporting molasses, sugar, horses and other livestock, and corn and other surplus crops.

In 1633, Oldham had traveled overland to the Quinnehtukqut River under orders from Massachusetts Bay to trade for furs and corn with the coastal Natives. He brought back enthusiastic accounts and tangible proof of animal, vegetable, and mineral resources: beaver skins, wild hemp, and black lead. This report was influential in convincing others to leave Massachusetts Bay to trade and settle in Connecticut. Oldham could speak local

Up to the present: In 2007, facing declining numbers, financial issues, aging school buildings and most glaringly, a state mandate calling for racial balance in the town's schools, the Groton school system faced another time of upheaval and tension. The town, with its wonderful racial diversity, found itself out of compliance with the state mandate and under obligation to come up with a plan to change this. The plan included the closing of four smaller neighborhood schools; (Noank, Col. Ledyard, Groton Heights, and Eastern Point), the building of 2 new larger elementary schools (Catherine Kolnaski, Northeast Academy) and the redistricting of the entire town to create the mandated balance. As a parent of an elementary student at Noank School, I lived through these changes and witnessed the turmoil that all this change brought to the community. As with past changes, emotions ran high as parents sought to protect their children and their familiar, loved schools. Fitch Middle School was closed in 2012 and Groton went down to two middle schools. Pleasant Vally School was closed in 2017. The new elementary schools became district magnet schools, to compete with other towns' seeking to draw our students to their schools and to further diversify the schools.

As I drive down Fort Hill Road every day and see the steel beams of the new middle school going up and the land being cleared beside the high school, I am reminded that change continues as the Groton school system deals with the present day challenges of 21st century technological advances, changing demographics, aging buildings, financial limitations, state mandates and its continued responsibility to provide quality education to the children of Groton.

### Sources:

Kimball, Carol; The Groton Story

Carol Kimball "The Evolution of Robert E. Fitch school in Groton" The Day, May, 13, 1993 call # Kim05-007

Carol Kimball "Groton's school days, circa 1867, The Day, March 8, 1990 call # Kim03-04

Groton: Its Community Characteristics and Government - Report of Town Government Study Committee

Carol Kimball "Fort Hill was tight on space, big on learning, The Day, October 3, 2005 call # Kim10-053

Scrapbook #5: news clippings from the 1930's

And many other small articles, many by Carol Kimball, contained in the ICRC scrapbooks

Algonkian dialects and I think Stanton learned this skill from his association with Oldham from 1634/35 until the start of the Pequot War.

In 1635, Thomas Stanton was allowed by Massachusetts Bay Commissioners to trade with the Indians on the river in Wethersfield and Hartford. This was in effect a monopoly because all others attempting to do so would be fined. Stanton had a trading post and a house there.

In spring of 1636, Mr. Fenwick and Hugh Peter traveled overland to Wethersfield, where they met Stanton and Oldham waiting for them with a boat. They sailed down river to Saybrook Fort with the gifts that Sassacus and the Pequots had recently brought to Boston to negotiate a trade relationship with the English. Oldham and Stanton were instructed to act as interpreters at this meeting. These men were at the Fort to conduct a “peace” conference with the Pequots; the Governor of Mass. Bay wanted the Pequots to refrain from attacking settlers in the Quinnehtukut River Valley. When the Natives refused, the English lodged “a protest” with the tribe by returning the gifts that the Pequots had brought to Boston. This insult amounted to a declaration of war.

In less than a month, John Oldham and his crew were killed near Block Island by natives there. Thomas Stanton fought in the Pequot War, nearly losing his life in the Fairfield Swamp Fight in 1637, when he ransomed captives and attempted to negotiate a surrender.

In 1638, he was appointed by the General Court as a public officer to attend all the courts or meetings of magistrates, as an interpreter for the English and Indians, with a salary of £10 per annum for his services. Also in 1638, he was a delegate at the [Treaty of Hartford](#) that ended the Pequot War. In 1644, the General Court of Connecticut granted him free trade with the Indians on Long Island for 12 months.

Stanton appears to be absent from Hartford during 1646-7. In April, the General Court ordered that “whereas Tho: Steynton by his long absence is disabled to attend the Court according to his place, his salary shall cease.” In 1646, he is listed in Virginia as Thomas Stanton, merchant, where he authorized his attorney, Thomas Cooke, to “ask, demand, sue for, and recover all such sums of

money, tobacco, goods, and other merchandise, that are, or appear to be, or belong to me in Virginia.” It seems to me that Stanton was cutting his ties to Virginia at this point.

In 1650, Thomas Stanton petitioned the Colony of Connecticut for a trading post convenient to the Lantern Hill Pequots and the Eastern Niantics in what is now Stonington. He was granted six acres for planting, the right to use additional land according to his needs, and a 3-year trading monopoly for his trading post “at the wading place” on the Pawcatuck River. He moved his family there in 1658.

Stanton’s work as an interpreter is legendary. In addition to his actions at the Saybrook conference and the Treaty of Hartford, he was tasked by the United Colonies of New England to address problems that arose between Uncas (Mohegan) and Miantonomo (Narragansett). He was the one who had to make sure that the Natives followed the directives from the United Colonies Commissioners. He ransomed English captives from the Wabbaquasets and Pequot captives from the Narragansetts, and helped to settle many Pequots with Harmon Garrett and the Eastern Niantics. He helped Ninigret write letters to the Commissioners.

In 1659, Thomas Stanton laid out the bounds of Southerton (now Stonington, so named in 1666) with neighbors George Denison, T. Minor, Sam’l Cheesebrough, and Thomas Parke. He was a commissioner of Stonington (1665), a member of the Connecticut General Assembly (1666-1674), and overseer of the Indians at Cossatuck in 1666.

According to Stonington Town Records, Thomas Stanton, George Denison, Thomas Wheeler, Samuel Cheesebrough, Nehemiah Palmer, Thomas Park, and John Bennet surveyed and recorded the description of the “Countrie highway beginning at the Mystick River on the east side 4 rod wide lieing between a white oak and a little beech tree marked on 3 sides and so running through the Indian Field at Quanachontaug to Mistucksucke on or neare the old footpath ... and from thence to the wading place at the Pawcatuck River known as Kitchamaug above the Indian weir in the common traveled highway. And this was laid out by us whose names are underwritten on the first day of April 1669 and the way is to be 4 pole wide from the Mystick River

to the Pawcatuck River according to town order the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1669.”

Thomas Stanton, Jr., was born 1638 at the Hartford settlement shortly after the Pequot War, and subsequently married Sarah Denison, daughter of Capt. George Denison of Stonington. Apparently, Thomas, Jr., and his brother John both spoke Algonquian fluently. In September 1654, the Commissioners of the United Colonies, recognizing his and his younger brother John’s facility in understanding and speaking the Indian language, ordered that the two Stantons be trained at Harvard “for future service . . . in Teaching such Indian Children as shall be taken into the Colledge for that end.”

**SOURCES:**

ICRC Documents: DOC.MVGND03271, DOC.1636-1673A (10 pages), DOC.1646-06-29B, DOC.1649-05-14A, DOC.1653-02-04A, DOC.1664-11-14A, DOC.1669-07-08B

Websites:

[www.olivetreegenealogy.com/ships;](http://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/ships;)

<https://connecticuthistory.org>

Books:

- History of the town of Stonington, county of New London, Connecticut, from its first settlement in 1649 to 1900 by [Wheeler, Richard Anson](#)
- A History of the Pequot War, or, A relation of the war between the powerful nation of Pequot Indians, once inhabiting the coast of New-England, westerly from near Narraganset Bay and the English inhabitants, in the year 1638, by [Gardiner, Lion](#)
- Denizens by K. Dimancescu, 2018
- Saybrook at the Mouth of the Connecticut – The First Hundred Years by Gates, Gilman C., 1935
- The American Genealogist, October 2006; Thomas Stanton of Connecticut by Zubrinsky, Gene

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## The Power of Family Stories and Firsthand Accounts

By Carol Sommer, ICRC volunteer



I’m lucky. My mother and grandmother kept our ancestors’ memories alive by frequently retelling family anecdotes. I was an adult before I realized there was no chance I’d ever meet the much discussed George Miller Avery, who was born in 1807. Not that I had a lot of interest in George at the time, but now I

treasure his story and appreciate how priceless every family memory is.

Mom put pen to paper and wrote a family narrative that preserves some of these stories, including her own childhood experiences in New London in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It isn’t an autobiography, but it does what autobiographies do: it brings the past to life and lets us hear the voices of people we would otherwise never know.

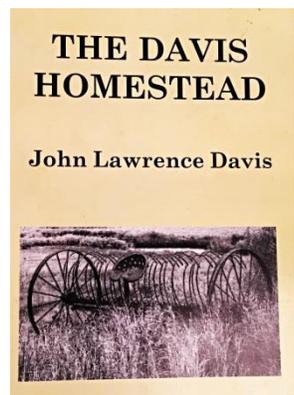
If you enjoy hearing people’s stories in their own words, the ICRC has some material that you’ll like. Here are just two examples:

### An excerpt from Samson Occum’s autobiography (call# Doc NDO1995).

Samson Occum was a Mohegan Indian who became a missionary and educator. Dartmouth College was founded based in large part on money he raised. This short account tells of his efforts to get an education

### “The Davis Homestead: A Farm Since 1680 in Lower Pawcatuck, Connecticut” by John Lawrence Davis (call # f104 585 dav29).

Davis was a direct descendant of Thomas Stanton, a Stonington settler and an Indian translator. The house was in the family in an unbroken line for 300 years. It and Davis have stories to tell.



Volunteers are always needed for a variety of interesting projects. Call on Tuesdays or Thursdays between 10AM and 4 PM at 860-536-9771 for more information.

