



# 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.



## Coming Soon: a New Name!

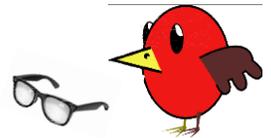
### *The Old Mystic History Center*

The Board of Directors of the Indian and Colonial Research Center plans to change the organization's name to 'The Old Mystic History Center.' The purpose is to attract a broader segment of the public with a name that reflects not only the priceless records and documents from the Indian and colonial periods, but the extensive collection of local 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century material as well. Right now this change is in the administrative planning stage. When it becomes official, we will let you know.



Once again the ICRC will participate in the annual Ct. Open House Day, when museums throughout Ct. will be open free of charge. Mark your calendar!

## A Look Inside



Picture that!

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### *Celebrating May Day with random acts of kindness*



When the late Carol Kimball was a girl, the delivery of baskets filled with flowers and candy to surprised recipients on May 1st, was a lovely custom. A family member might hang one on your bedroom door knob or a neighbor might place one outside your front stoop. Kimball was pleased that "May baskets have not been forgotten after all."

Ref. Scrapbook Kim07-060

## Picture That! ICRC images preserve local history

If pictures are worth a thousand words, the ICRC has a lot to say.

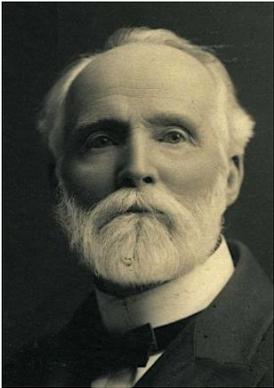
In February and March we mounted an exhibit about Charles Q. Eldredge, the Old Mystic Museum Man, at the Mystic Noank Library and held a reception there for the public. (That exhibit is now closed.)

Currently within the ICRC bank building there is an exhibit of pictures and old advertisements about Packer Tar Soap and its founder. Both exhibits are the work of volunteer Marcus Maronn. If you haven't viewed the Packer display yet, it should still be at the bank for a while after we reopen for business.

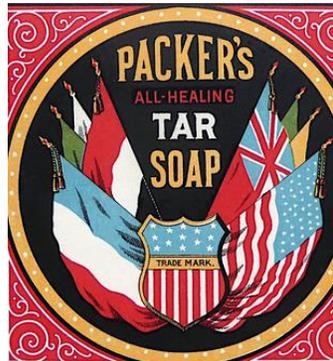
Another volunteer, Richard Burke, is busy digitizing glass plate photographs from the ICRC's Elmer Waite collection. The pictures are especially meaningful because they immortalize local places and people of the past.

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### *ICRC Gallery Exhibit featuring Packers Tar Soap*

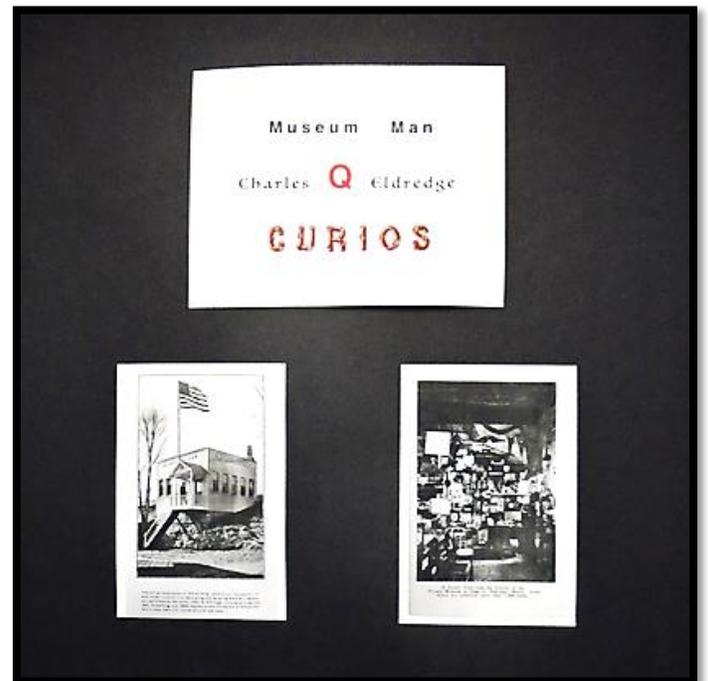


Daniel Packer



## *Charles Q. Eldredge Exhibit last winter at the Mystic Noank Library*

### *ICRC community outreach*



*Digitizing Photographs  
from the Elmer Waite Collection*

Elmer Waite was an Old Mystic man who lived on Packer Road near Burnett's Corners all his life. He was a gifted photographer who captured images of Old Mystic and its residents in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ICRC is fortunate to have an extensive collection of his work (Many can be seen on the ICRC website.) Volunteer Richard Burke is digitizing Waite's glass plate images to preserve them and make them more accessible for viewing. Here are just a few Richard has copied, showing the Methodist parsonage and documenting the construction of Route 184 that bypassed the old stage coach roads.



Constructing Route 184



Old Mystic Methodist Parsonage



Drilling ledge while making Route 184



Steam shovel in front of Elmer Waite's House, Burnett's Corners

*Volunteers make a difference!*

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.



New member have joined the ICRC. We welcome Gregory and Camilla Farlow, and Michael Saloon!

# Life in 17th Century New England

by Cora Grunwald



Imagine you are living in New England around 1640. It's not just the technology you're missing. There was very little MONEY. While the American colonies

accepted gold and silver coins from various countries when available, most British and European pieces went back to their issuing countries as payment for goods and services. Frequently, purchases were made for some colonists by their families (or a factor) in England and the purchases were shipped to New England.

## WHAT? NO MONEY??

Everything you needed had to be obtained without money. Business was brisk at the Trading Posts, and at many homes and farms. Land travel was unmapped and treacherous, so most trade and correspondence was by boat. Almost everyone had a boat, or access to one. New England's brooks, rivers, lakes, and shores were almost as congested as our highways are today. What did you need? Sugar? Nails? Bullets? Beef, pork, flour, bread, horses, cattle, sheep, swine, lumber were exchanged for rum, corn, flax, flaxseed, oats, sugar, molasses, and salt. Goods (corn, beef, and horses) were shipped to Barbados and the Indies, and sugar, molasses, rum, and slaves were brought back. Other provisions and necessities were sent to Newfoundland and the Grand Banks for salt fish.

Because early exploration had established the fur/wampum trade with the Natives along the Inland Waterway, both colonists and Native Americans were experienced with using a variety of substitutes for money. By 1633, John Oldham had traveled overland to trade for furs and corn with the coastal Natives for Massachusetts Bay. 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 people to leave Massachusetts Bay to trade and settle in Connecticut. Musket balls were assigned specific monetary value, and the colonists also adopted the "wampum" used in trade by many Native American tribes. Wampum were beads made from clam, conch or similar light-colored shells. Both Natives and Europeans traded wampum and furs to ransom captives, to make trade treaties, and to attempt to solidify peace, as well as to obtain necessary goods and services.

**Commodity Money:** Products valued at specific rates for transactions, something we call "Commodity money," consisted of hunting, construction or farm products – and was known as "country pay." A bushel of wheat might be valued at 4 farthings, a bushel of Indian corn at 3 shillings, and a barrel of pork at 3 pounds. These values depended on how much "stuff" you had to trade, or maybe how hungry you were, and could fluctuate from place to place. Hunting products used in commerce included beaver pelts, deer skins and moose hides – while construction products included iron nails and lumber, or a day's labor

**Colonial coinage:** In May 1652, the General Court of Massachusetts Bay boldly authorized Boston silversmith John Hull and his partner Robert Sanderson to set up a mint. The growing colony was hampered by a lack of hard money, and the audacious step of establishing a mint would solve the problem. Coinage was the right of kings, an age-old symbol of power and authority. By issuing coins, the colony proclaimed its independence. In the same May 27, 1652 law establishing the mint, the General Court also expanded the militia from one company to four, and required all inhabitants of Massachusetts Bay Colony to take an oath of loyalty.



New  
England  
Shilling:  
Hull and  
Sanderson  
began  
coining the  
"New

England Shilling" about September 1652, at the mint located on Hull's Boston property near present-day Downtown Crossing. It is probable punches for the New England coins were made by Joseph Jenks (Ienckes), a skilled ironworker at the Hammersmith foundry in Saugus, MA. At that time, this foundry was the only one in operation in the colony. The mint produced coins from 1652 to 1682 (or 83). The official contract for the mint expired in June 1682. A year later in 1683, British loyalist Edward Randolph traveled to London to present 17 charges against Massachusetts Bay Colony – the first being a "Publik mint in Boston."

The first coins struck in the English-American colonies were the "NE" or "New England" coins. These simple silver coins were punch-stamped with the letters "NE" on the obverse and the denomination in pence on the reverse ("III" or "VI" or "XII"). The simplicity invited clipping (cutting off pieces of the coins for the silver), and after a few months, these coins were replaced with more elaborate designs.

In 1775, the Continental Congress authorized the issuance of currency to finance the Revolutionary War. Paul Revere made the first plates for this "Continental Currency." Those notes were redeemable in Spanish Milled Dollars. The depreciation of this currency gave rise to the phrase "not worth a Continental."

After the U.S. Constitution was ratified, Congress passed the "Mint Act" of April 2, 1792, which established the coinage system of the United States and the dollar as the principal unit

of currency. By this Act the U.S., became the first country in the world to adopt the decimal system for currency. The first U.S. coins were struck in 1793 at the Philadelphia Mint and presented to Martha Washington.

#### SOURCES:

ICRC Library: Eva Butler notes: C NB 26, C NB 34; I NB 61 pages 2, 3-11, 34, 35; Pequot Plantation; the Story of an Early Colonial Settlement by Richard Radune, 2005, <https://yipp.yale.edu/search/node/trading%20post>, [www.littletoncoin.com](http://www.littletoncoin.com); [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org); [www.mycreditunion.gov/financial-resources/history-](http://www.mycreditunion.gov/financial-resources/history-)

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## Pandemics and Hard Times

By Carol Sommer

Human beings have suffered periodic pandemics throughout history. It may be some comfort to know that we've been down similar roads before.

My mother was about nine years old when the Spanish Flu hit New London in 1918. She remembered how horrible she felt and how she thought the sheets were so heavy they'd crush her to death. Thankfully she survived but I can only imagine how frantic my grandmother was, because she was a young widow and my mom was her only child. World War I added another level of horror to the situation, and in fact, troop movement associated with the war had helped spread the problem.

After I read my mother's description of the flu, I reread Barbara Tuchman's book, "A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century." It's an excellent book, but it won't cheer you up. Many people thought the Black Death literally heralded the end of the world; there was plenty of evidence to support that belief. Without minimizing the tragedies, Tuchman also explains how the plague brought down the feudal system and helped inaugurate modern times.

In 2000 Carol Kimball wrote a piece for The Day titled "Influenza Epidemics Periodically Return Throughput History to Wreak Deadly Toll." She discussed how a recent outbreak had been attributed to an unusually mild winter, and how the Pilgrims back in the winter of 1620-21 attributed their own epidemic to unseasonably warm temperatures. (It strikes me as cruelly ironic that the Pilgrims, who'd suffered so severely during their first brutal winter, would suffer in a different way when the cold was more moderate.)

Most importantly, the ICRC wishes all our members good health and safety during this very hard time.



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