



SUMMER 2013
VOLUME 145

Our mission is to connect the local community and Denison descendants with the history, land, and environment of our 300 plus-year-old family farm.

The Denison Homestead ♦ Since 1654



Restoring the Historic Gardens



Donations were given to the Homestead from Mystic Garden Club and the Stonington Garden Club to help with the restoration of the 18th century herb garden and Victorian garden along the southwest stone wall. Master gardener, Nancy Feinstein, has cleaned out the herb garden and planted herbs that were historically accurate for an 18th century herb garden. Roses, irises and columbine were added to the Victorian garden along with a variety of other perennials. Plans are in the works to replace the pea stone paths in the herb garden with grass paths.

Eagle Scout Project at the Denison Homestead

Driving up Pequotsepos Road, visitors will notice the newly constructed split-rail fence in the meadow below the Denison Homestead manor house. Graham Hutter, working on his Eagle Scout Project, presented the split-rail fence project to the Denison Board. He researched the construction of 17th century split-rail fencing and located a



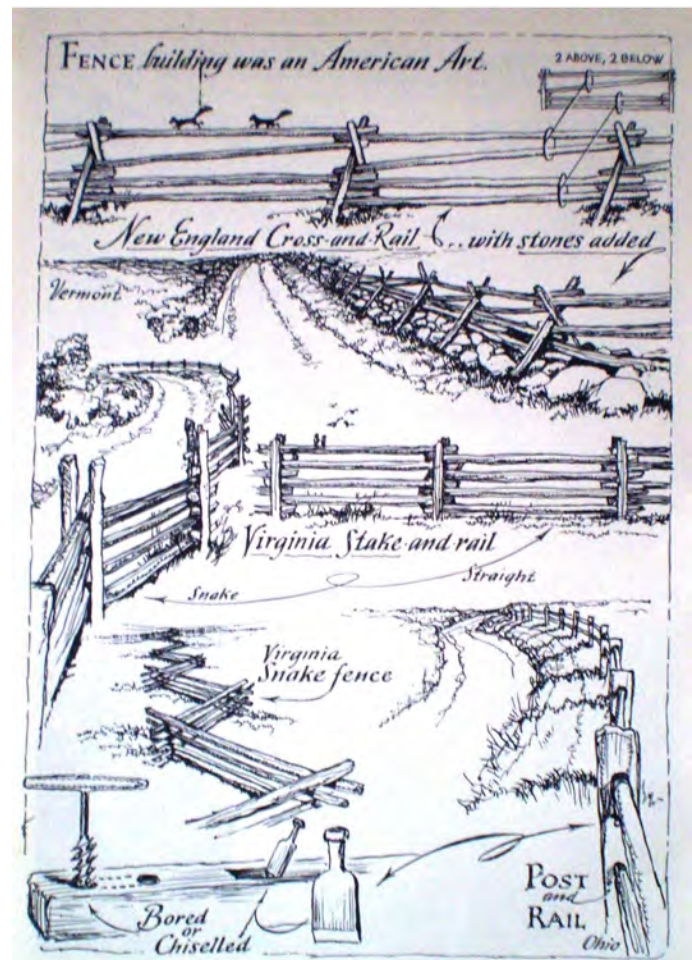
lumber mill that had the capabilities to split trees into rails. On a Saturday in June, Graham and his fellow scouts put the split-rail fence together. The fence runs along the field where the Farmer's Market is held each Sunday. This new addition of an authentic split-rail fence, enhances the natural surroundings. The Denison Homestead is grateful to Graham, his family, and fellow scouts for their efforts.

Split-Rail Fences

When colonists first arrived to America, there was an abundance of trees. In fact, wood was so plentiful, that two or three men could split rails and build a fence with them, close to a mile per week. A man skilled in using an ax and a wedge, could cut almost 200 rails in a day. The man could erect up to 200 yards of fencing in a day compared to two men laying a ten foot stone wall in the same amount of time.



Split-rail fence construction at Homestead



In early times, fence rails were cut (by law in some places) at a length of eleven feet. This was exactly one sixth of that old measuring device, *the chain*, which was a linked measure of sixty-six feet long and used by surveyors instead of the foot and inch calculations we use now.

Probably our first fences were the “worm”, “snake”, or “zig-zag”. These were portable rail fences requiring neither posts nor holes. This is exactly what Graham Hutter and his troop have recreated. Such split-rail fences, built in a zig-zag fashion, usually rested on a flat rock placed on the surface of the ground. This method has been used in New England since at least 1685, when the minutes of the Town of Salem, Massachusetts in that year record the construction of a “new worm fence about the meeting house at Alloway’s Creek.”

In 1871, the United States Department of Agriculture conducted a fencing survey finding 60% of all fencing in the U. S. was zig-zag. Commercially produced barb-wire was not used until the great plains were fenced in 1880’s.

One more piece of split-rail fence history pertains to our rail-splitting President, Abraham Lincoln. In his youth living on the American frontier of Kentucky, he split logs for rail fences for a living. Later as a Presidential Candidate in 1860, the newly formed Republican Party used the “rail-splitter” image to enhance Lincoln’s appeal to the working man.

Archaeology at the Denison Homestead

As French drains were installed around the exterior of the Denison Homestead manor house this spring, museum staff along with volunteers sifted through the mounds of soil excavated prior to the installation of the new drainage pipes. Hundreds of artifacts dating from the late 17th century to the 20th century were uncovered. Some of the more interesting pieces were early pieces of salt glazed pottery, kaolin pipe stems, and a musket ball.

Since we had so much fun finding all these wonderful historic objects, we developed an archaeology program for school groups coming to the museum. We had seventy-three

third graders book a field trip in June which included an hour tour of the manor house and an hour archaeological dig. We received positive feedback from teachers on how much they enjoyed this hands-on experience at the Homestead.

Piece of a horse shoe

Piece of a gun

Musket ball

Kaolin pipe stems

Also shown :

Slipware

Salt Glazed Pottery

Transferware



Denison Day 2013

Date: Saturday – September 7, 2013 **Time:** 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Activities: Guest Speaker
Annual Denison Society Meeting
Lunch
Afternoon Hike of Coogan Farm
House Tour/Archaeological Dig

Location: Tent in the meadow below the Denison Homestead
120 Pequotsepos Road, Mystic, CT

Denison Day 2013 - Reservation Form

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Kindly enclose check or credit card payment for:

Number of Adults _____ @ \$25.00 per adult = _____

Number of Children 6 – 18 yrs _____ @ 7.50 per child = _____

Names of those attending _____

Credit Card # _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ Exp. Date ____ / ____

Name on Card _____ Signature _____

Please submit payment to: The Denison Society, P.O. Box 42, Mystic, CT 06355
RSVP by August 31, 2013. Questions, please call (860)536-9248



Denison Homestead Museum
Post Office Box 42
Mystic, CT 06355

Denison Day - September 7, 2013

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO 4.
MYSTIC, CT
06355

The Denison Homestead is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization

From Colonial Times to the Electronic Age

Although the Denison Homestead is a historic landmark, we decided it was time to step out of the past and move into the electronic age. We are currently collecting email addresses from all our members. Our goal is to send all correspondence such as dues renewals and newsletters by email. Using email has the potential of saving the Homestead nearly \$3000 per year in printing and postage costs. Another benefit is our ability to keep our members up-to-date at all times.



Please email us your current email address to:

membership@denisonhomestead.org

If you wish to continue receiving paper correspondence by regular mail, please mail us a quick note with your current mailing address and telephone number to:

The Denison Society
P.O. Box 42
Mystic, CT 06355



Membership Dues

Just a friendly reminder to please submit your dues for the current year July 2013—June 2014. The majority of our funding for restoration and preservation of the Denison Homestead comes from the generosity of friends and family members such as yourselves. If you are unsure of the status of your membership, please call the office at **860-536-9248** or email us at **membership@denisonhomestead.org**.