

Middletown's Veterans of the 110th AAA Honored at April 26th Event

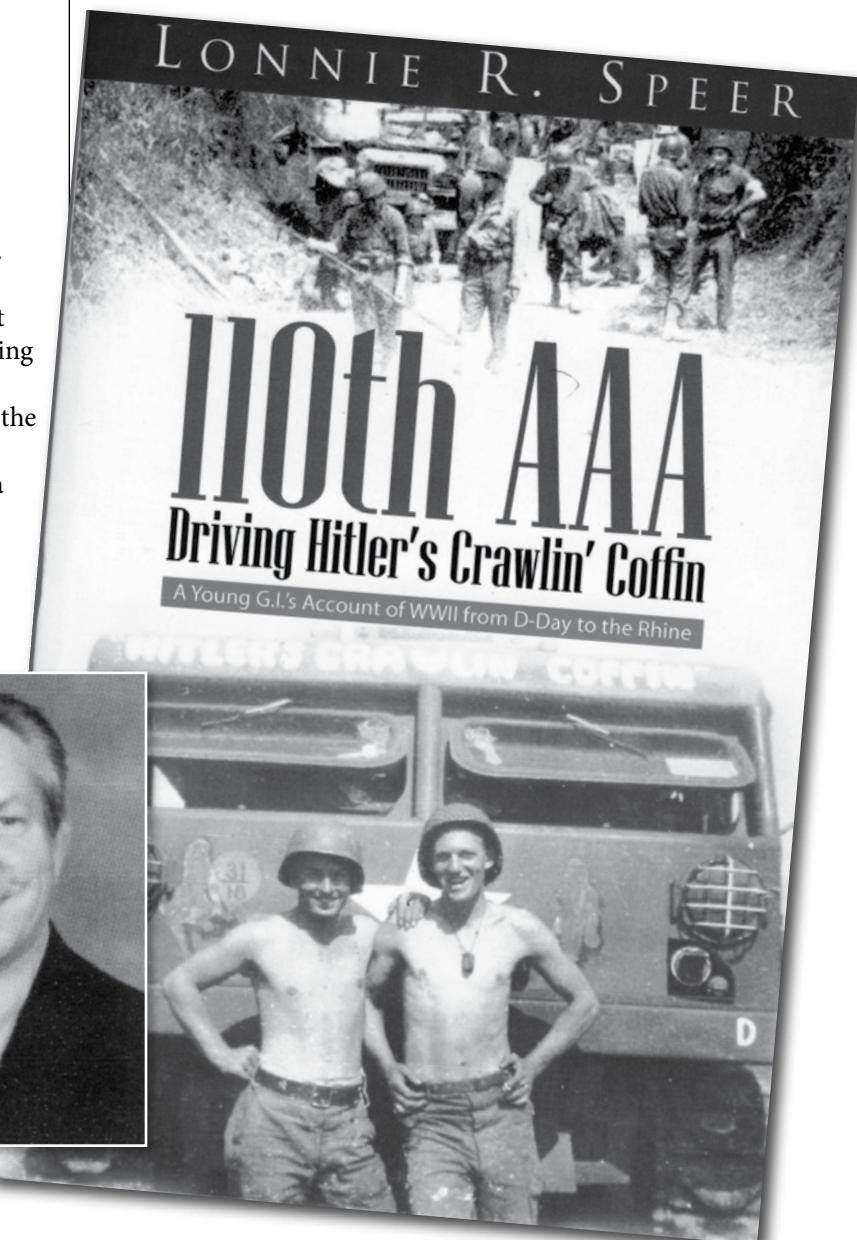
As America awaits Ken Burns' new documentary about the men who fought for our country in World War II, the Middlesex County Historical Society will honor the thirty-eight Middletown residents who served with the 110th AAA Battalion. On April 26, 2007 author and historian Lonnie R. Speer will be the featured speaker at the Society's annual Arthur M. Schultz Memorial Lecture.

Speer will talk about his most recent book, *110th AAA: Driving Hitler's Crawlin' Coffin* (2006), which describes the wartime experience of this famous unit. The book's title refers to the eighteen-ton M-4 high-speed artillery tractor that crept out of the surf onto Dog-Green Omaha Beach during the D-Day invasion. The 110th AAA was the first 90mm Gun Battalion to shoot down a German plane from French soil, the first American AA unit to enter Paris, and later served during the Battle of the Bulge.

After Mr. Speer provides a historical over-view of the activities of the 110th, Middletown veterans including Leo Kania, Daniel Ciaburri, Norm Way, and Al Czajka will join him at the podium. The veterans will share their personal recollections of the unit and their lives during the war. Audience members are encouraged to participate with stories of their own.

Lonnie R. Speer has written dozens of newspaper and magazine articles and three books. His two volumes about the Civil War, *Portals to Hell, The Military Prisons of the Civil War* (1997) and *War of Vengeance, Acts of Retaliation Against Civil War POWs* (2002) were both named Alternate Choices for the History Book Club.

The April 26 program will be held at the First Baptist Church, 93 Main Street, Middletown beginning at 7:00 p.m. Admission is free. Everyone is invited across the street to the General Mansfield House after the meeting for refreshments.



SOCIETY NEWS

Letter from the Director

Early April marks the end of winter and my first spring as director of the Middlesex County Historical Society. These last five months have been busy and exciting for me, discovering the many wonderful resources stored in the Mansfield House and working with the generous volunteer Board members who keep the Society running. I am looking forward to watching the gardens come to life and welcoming visitors to the museum and archives.

In March, all members were sent a survey, so that the Board of Directors and I could learn more about the community of people who support the Society. Many thanks to all of you who have returned the questionnaire. Your responses will help shape future programs and exhibits. Having asked you about your experience with the Historical Society, I think I should tell you a bit about my background.

In addition to a life-long fascination with American history and academic training in history and education, I have more than thirty years experience working in museums. At Old Sturbridge Village, I worked first as



museum Registrar and then as Curator of Collections. Working with that huge collection of artifacts, many buildings, and lots of exhibits, I learned to be well organized, to work on multiple projects at the same time, and to love talking about stories from the past. Later as Curator at the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield,

I worked in a small museum where everyone needed to wear many hats. During this time, I became part of the Connecticut history network and realized that taking out the trash and finding a new artifact for the collection are equally important tasks.

All these experiences and skills will be helpful as the Middlesex County Historical Society moves ahead. We have many exciting projects underway—history of medicine and Civil War exhibits, expanded programs and benefits for members, and providing a better environment for our collections, among others. Your support is welcome and needed. Please come to events at Mansfield House, introduce yourself, and rediscover the treasure that is your Historical Society.

Donna Baron

Donna Baron, Director

In Memorium

It is with great sadness that we report the recent passing of Bernard (Bernie) Prue.

Bernie was a past President of the Middlesex County Historical Society and Middletown's Town Historian for many years. Under his leadership, the Society greatly expanded its outreach into the community by hiring former Director, Dione Longley, to work four days a week. During that time, our doors were opened to the wider community, and many new programs were initiated.

Bernie was an expert on local arms manufacturing, having published the book, *Nathan Starr Arms*. Bernie was also the founder of our annual antique car show and remained active on the committee until his death. Bernie was a treasure trove of local history and regaled the committee with his stories about Middletown's past at every meeting.

Despite Bernie's vast knowledge, his keen memory, and his many accomplishments, he was always modest and always had time to share his stories with his many friends. We will miss Bernie's expansive expertise of history and the flair with which he shared it.

We also share the news of the death of a long-time supporter of the Middlesex County Historical Society, Mrs. Loretta Ingersoll, who generously bequeathed a sum of money from her estate to the Society. This was not her first act of generosity toward the Society. Years ago, when the Society was expanding its exhibit space and needed an expensive secure display case, Loretta did not hesitate to pay for the entire cost when asked for a donation. She also was a major donor during the Capital Campaign to repair the General Mansfield House. Loretta was very interested in local history and in her own way helped us to preserve it.

Planned Giving

Mrs. Ingersoll's bequest reminds us that anyone can leave a legacy in the community. If you have an interest in helping to preserve the history and culture of Middlesex County, please consider making a donation or a planned gift to the Historical Society.

For additional information, contact the Society at 860-346-0746.

Collections News

Rediscovered:

Mary Fenno Mansfield's Bible. A Middletown native, Mary Fenno grew up in her father's tavern, which was located where Spear Park is now. In 1785, she married Henry Mansfield of New Haven. After following her husband to St. Croix, she filed for divorce in 1804 and brought her six children (including J.F.K. Mansfield) and her slave Venus home to the Middletown tavern. In her Bible, Mrs. Mansfield recorded the birth of her children, the birth of Venus' children, and the deaths of her brothers.

Newly acquired:

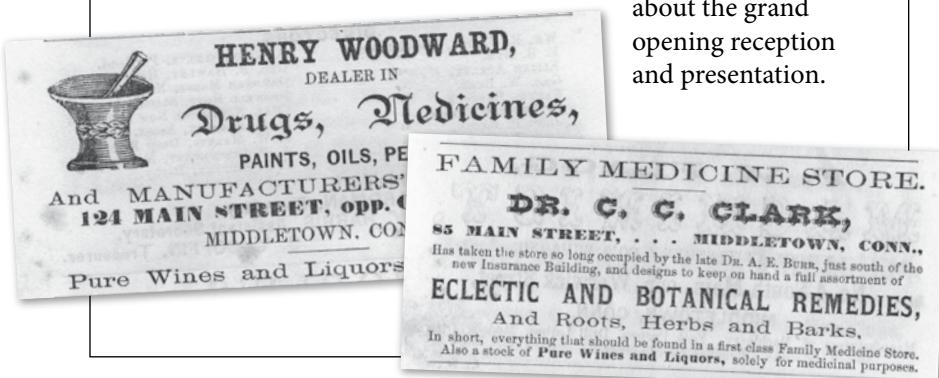
The Middletown Fire Department has donated the copper box and its contents that were installed in the wall of the Main Street fire station during its construction in 1898. The photographs and ephemera provide a picture of the units that were about to move into the new facility.

Descendents of Middletown's Ward family have donated costumes (including an unusual circa 1870 lady's silk coat) and family accounts and ledgers, important additions to the Society's collections of textiles and documents.



Exhibit Opening in the Fall

A new exhibit at the Historical Society will explore the history of medicine in Middlesex County focusing on women as patients and care-givers. Images, artifacts, and documents will tell the story of how medical care changed between the American Revolution and the First World War. Watch for announcements about the grand opening reception and presentation.



Membership Renewal Time

As the Middlesex County Historical Society enters an exciting year of growth, all its members have an important role to play. In order to be part of the excitement, you need to renew your membership. Renewal notices are on their way. Please return yours as soon as you can and please consider making an additional contribution.

If you would like to receive announcements of events and activities by email and save the cost of postage for the Historical Society, please add your preferred email address to your membership renewal form. Soon, we will be keeping you up-to-date via the internet as well as through the newsletter.

Please consider becoming a supporter of the Capital Campaign today.

The General's Commanders	\$1,000 and up
Benefactor	\$500-\$999
Patron	\$250-499
Contributor	\$100-249
Donor	\$50-99
Friend	up to \$49

YES. I want to ensure A Future for Our Past and preserve Mansfield House for future generations. Please list my name as:

Please make checks payable to the Middlesex County Historical Society and send to Mansfield House, 151 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457
Donations are tax deductible.

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Membership Levels

<input type="checkbox"/> Student \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Business \$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> Life \$500

Please detach and send to: The Middlesex County Historical Society and send to Mansfield House, 151 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Museum at General Mansfield House	OPEN Wednesdays 1:00 to 5:00 and Thursdays and Fridays 11:00 to 5:00	
Annual Meeting Speaker: Lonnie R. Speer, author of <i>Driving Hitler's Crawlin' Coffin</i> Panel discussion: Middletown Veterans Remember World War II First Baptist Church, 93 Main Street Reception to follow at General Mansfield House	Thursday, April 26, 2007	7:30 pm
Reception: Sheedy History Contest participants General Mansfield House	Thursday, June 7	6:00 pm
22 st Annual Antique & Classic Car Show at Pat Kidney Field, Middletown Rain Date	Sunday, October 7	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
	Sunday, October 14	

*Note: All events will be held at General Mansfield House unless otherwise noted.

Annual Meeting Agenda

Come out and vote! The Middlesex County Historical Society will elect a nominating committee at its annual meeting on April 26, 2007 at the First Baptist Church at 93 Main Street, Middletown.

The Board of Directors recommends election of the following to the committee.

Michael Cubeta—chair
Ronald Schatz
Peter Zaidel



www.middlesexhistory.org

(860) 346-0746

151 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457

THE MIDDLESEX COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

