



THE HOURGLASS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER ~ WILLINGTON

Vol. 1

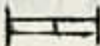
Willington, Ct., April 1974

No. 3

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We would like to apologize for the poor reproduction of our HOURGLASS masthead on the last issue. In an attempt to make it clearer we smudged it. Someone suggested, however, that it was a good picture of Willington Hill in one of our winter blizzards...

Janet Thomas
HOURGLASS Editor

What is it?  This mark is a part of our history.

Answer:

Willington's town brand to brand horses and other creatures, enacted by the Governor Council and Representatives, Colonial Records of Connecticut 1726-1735.

18th CENTURY WILLINGTON LAND RICH WITH TREES, MINERALS AND WILDLIFE

During the entire first century of Willington, the rich timber lands and deposits of iron and stone remained practically untouched. The price of land was then around \$2.00 an acre, but by 1805 it was to grow to \$10.00 per acre. Manufacture was limited to the production of necessary articles for home consumption. One of the first saw mills in Willington was erected by John Farley in 1727, and later became the Albert Sharp property on Mill Brook.

These pioneers were not alone in the wilderness as reminiscences in Cole's History of Tolland County show: "The black bear prowled around after his prey, the deer bounded away at the sight of the white man, the wolf came around the fold at night to test the quality of mutton that was brought from afar..." Also mentioned are moose, wildcat, snakes, and all the smaller animals most of us see here today.

RECENT DONATIONS

From Mr. Paul Bugbee:

Three copies of a 19th century newspaper called "Home Messenger" (by the same editor of "Grape and Cannister").

Old deeds, probate records, letters, agreements, programs from the town's 1927 celebration.

Samples of thread from the early thread mill.

From Mrs. Frederick Tyler:

A pictorial map, in color, printed in Willington in the 1930's, of historical sites in Connecticut. (Copies still available from Mrs. Frank Premo of Rt. 32).

Church service program for Willington's 200th anniversary in 1927.

Newspaper clippings of dedication ceremonies when the Soldier and Sailor Monument was put up on the town green in 1921.

MANCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE COURSE

From April 15 to May 20, 1974, a non-credit course entitled "The 19th Century Early American Home" will be offered by Manchester Community College; Division of Extension Services. Tuition is \$20.00. The class will be on Mondays, 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the Hartford Road Campus. Some of the topics to be discussed include: 19th Century domestic architecture in Connecticut; customs and costumes; Connecticut glass works; rug making in the home.

Anyone interested in further information may call Janet Thomas (429-7269) or MCC's extension office (646-2137).

HISTORY COMMITTEE REPORT

The History Committee has less than two years to complete the written history of the town of Willington in time for its 250th anniversary in 1977.

The Committee's Chairwoman, Mrs. Isabel Weigold, recently sent a plea to her 14 committee members asking for an evaluation of their progress but only

6 members showed up at the March meeting for this purpose. Mrs. Weigold said she has gained the impression that most of the committee members will continue to do as much work as they can on the 14 phases contained in the history's outline, but all of these sub-committees need help desperately.

It was the opinion of those that attended the committee's last meeting on March 26 that the committee may have to produce a condensed version of the history in time for the anniversary celebration and then produce a more finished product at a later date.

Mr. Ronald Demers, a teacher at Hall School, has volunteered to work on the political activities section of the history and it was decided to make 1950 the cut-off date for this section since events must be at least 30 years old to qualify as "historical".

The proposed outline for the town history includes the following sections and workers:

- Geography-Topography (Floyd Callward and Joseph Voboril)
- Indians (Mrs. Harriet Marco)
- Pioneer Settlement (Mrs. Isabel Weigold and Mrs. Jean Hatch)
- Economic Developments (Mrs. Grace Rovozzo)
- Political Activities (Ronald Demers)
- Wars (Mary Ann Kouyoumjian)
- Religious Developments (George Wallis)
- Population History and Genealogy (George Waller and Mrs. Carol Jordan)
- Sociological Development (C. Edward Noll)
- Czechoslovakian Influence (Miss Geraldine Novotny)
- Education (Mrs. Thelma King and Harold Weigold)
- Arts and Craftsmen (Still looking)
- Science and Technology (Mrs. Pat Tencza)
- Appendix

Committee workers are still needed to take over the section devoted to "Arts and Craftsmen" and "Recreation".

Any society members interested in working on any phase of the town history are urged to contact Mrs. Weigold.

CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

Members who attended the General Meeting in February may remember being warned to expect ballots soon in the mail regarding revision of our Constitution. This is part of our effort to qualify the Society for tax exempt corporate status (not yet accomplished--n.b. tax payers).

So that you will not think that this was another false start without sequel, we are still working on the revisions with our lawyer. Due to circumstances beyond our control the process was delayed past our earlier deadline of March 15. We still hope to have the changes formulated sometime this spring and will poll members at that time.

ORAL HISTORY TAKING PROJECT

The oral history taking contingent of the Historical Sites and Research Committee consists mostly of Paul and Betsy McIlvaine. We are lucky to benefit from the enthusiasm and experience of this couple, recently moved from S. Kingston, R.I. where they taped oral histories from residents, some of which were transcribed and published in book form.

From this experience they have worked out a method which seems to make things easier for both interviewer and interviewee. First they arrange to visit the person without a tape-recorder to introduce themselves, explain the project, and help to focus everyone's thoughts on topics of which the interviewee is particularly knowledgeable. Topics range from experience with some industry in town to family history to memories of daily life in the past. About two weeks later they return with the recorder for the interview, giving the person time to organize his thoughts and perhaps make some notes. The taped interview

itself typically lasts about an hour--but there may be return engagements as the speaker often finds he has more to say than he realized, once it is evident that the listener is genuinely interested.

Paul and Betsy's style is relaxed and flexible with dual purposes of clarifying the account and following it in new directions. As might be expected, people often have difficulty getting used to the tape-recorder at first--feeling self-conscious, unsure of their "facts", and doubting the significance of their experiences. It is the interviewer's task to dispell these doubts as this is often our only source of information on broad aspects of Willington's past, and is in the process of disappearing daily!

The McIlvaines regard their product as a legitimate form of history in its own right not just as a way of gathering facts for a more abstract written history. Tapes will be available in the library for public reference (unless the person requests that parts be considered confidential). They hope that eventually selected transcripts may be published as a book.

So far this year they have taped interviews with two life-long area residents, Paul Bugbee and Monroe Usher, who would, no doubt, attest to the amount of hard work involved in gathering and organizing so much knowledge. Hopefully, they also feel satisfaction that this has been shared with others and that their efforts are much appreciated by the Society as a whole.

If you know of people knowledgeable about Willington's past and who might be willing to give their time and energy to this project (or if you yourself are such a person) please write to Paul McIlvaine, c/o the Willington Historical Society. Help is also needed with taking interviews, so if this interests you, let us know.

LOCAL HISTORY NIGHT

Residents should enjoy our next program, April 10 on reminiscences of Willington. Given in two parts by the Research Committee, Mrs. Burns will review the history of homes and families on the Green and Mrs. Weigold will share her research of Willington's bicentennial celebration in 1927. In keeping with the upcoming celebration of Easter, traditional breads from old family recipes, such as mazanec, will be served.

A CALL FOR HERBS

The Ways and Means Committee would like to see the Historical Society feature herbs at the St. Judes Bazaar next winter. The call is out early so those with a green thumb might lend a hand by growing herbs this year. Herb seeds will be distributed at the next general meeting to those interested. A workshop will be held later in the year to organize the herbs for sale. They could be sold in pots, dried, featured in recipes or any interesting way of using them.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wednesday, April 10 - Willington Historical Society General Meeting, "Local History," 8:00 p.m., Town Hall.

Saturday, May 18 - Willington Historical Society 2nd Annual Tag Sale, rain or shine, on the Green or in the Town Hall, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. There is a request for any type of item you might wish to donate. Baked goods or plants may also be brought. The Town Hall will be open Friday night, May 17 after 6:30 for donations.

Wednesday, June 12 - Willington Historical Society Pot-Luck Picnic Supper at Hall Pond, and hiking on Gungy Trail. Home-made ice cream will be served.

*Mr. + Mrs. Harold Weigold
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