



HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WILLINGTON

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No. 2

As we enter a new year of publication we hope that readers of THE HOURGLASS are finding it enjoyable and informative. You will find frequent requests for information, opinions, or help in these pages to which we hope you will respond as this is the only communication which reaches all of our members. Much of our history exists only in the memory of townspeople which we attempt to tap in this way.

Finally, we would like to thank Janet Thomas, the outgoing HOURGLASS chairperson, for her initiative in getting this paper started.

Pamela Wheeler
Chairman

NEW OFFICER ELECTED

Paul McIlvaine was elected Recording Secretary of the Society at the November 11th General Meeting.

HALL'S BARN TRANSFORMED

In case you haven't noticed, Hall's Barn in South Willington has taken a new lease on life as Jury's Tavern. It is a pleasure to note that in spite of modernization and change in function attention has been paid to its original character and purpose.

According to the informative flyer published by the owners, the cow barn was built in 1912 by Col. William Henry Hall to house his herd, following the destruction by fire of his previous barn. Its grandeur of scale, efficiency, and excellence of construction were partly an expression of personal style and partly a competitive response to his neighbor, Joseph Merrow's, large barn. The paper points out that Merrow's barn is now Chuck's Steak House, so the competition carries on.

Col. Hall's barns were apparently a well-known showplace of modern dairy practice and his herds, which traveled by train to agricultural fairs, were the best in the state. His 40 Holsteins, which provided milk for the entire S. Willington community, were cared for by 4 cowhands who actually had rooms in the barn itself.

After his death in 1922 the herd was gradually dispersed and the barns fell into disuse and disrepair, although parts of the building have since housed several businesses. While the interior of the present restaurant is hardly barnlike some farm equipment can still be seen in the dining room and the stone silo and handsome exterior have been preserved and restored.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Oral History Committee

The Oral History Committee is in the process of compiling names of people who would be willing to develop the oral history of Willington. We will be contacting likely candidates towards the end of January.

If anyone has a cassette tape recorder they can lend us until we can get our own, please call the McIlvaines at 429-3477.

Ways and Means Committee

The Ways and Means Committee had great success at the St. Jude's bazaar, thanks to the efforts of many. A total of \$86 was made at the Historical Society table. Ways and Means chairwoman Barbara Shaw wishes to thank all those involved in this money-making endeavor and encourages all to plan for the third annual Historical Society tag sale in May. Articles from your attic, crafts, baked goods--anything and everything is welcome. Volunteers are needed for a committee to plan this as well as to organize a workshop to make craft items. Anyone interested please contact Mrs. Shaw at 429-3074. Remember your junk may be someone else's treasure!

Written History Committee

Because of slow progress in researching Willington's history Mrs. Weigold doubts that her committee will complete the written history by 1977 in time for our 250th anniversary. A smaller pamphlet may be published instead. Someone is needed to work on sociological aspects of local history covering the town's shifting population, institutions, and organizations.

It has also been suggested that we might publish a booklet of pictures and history of old houses in town. If you would like to work on these publications, please call Mrs. Weigold at 429-2656.

THE BICENTENNIAL'S THREE THEMES

Since the Historical Society has offered to oversee the town's activities for the national Bicentennial celebration next

year, it should be aware that grants for planned projects will be given only if they fall into one or more of the three themes of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration.

The three themes are Heritage, Horizons, and Festival. Heritage '76 must focus on those activities which recall our Nation's heritage and give an historical perspective of the community, i.e., the role the town played in the events leading to and during the American Revolution; also, the historic houses, churches, documents and other objects which link us with the past.

Festival USA: this includes the areas of the arts, athletics, education, travel, exhibits, fairs and festivals; i.e., community craft shows and workshops, folk music and dance performances, dramatic productions, expositions and athletic events.

Horizons '76: covers activities through which Americans can commemorate their past by looking to the future, i.e., communities are asked to dedicate and define worthy goals which are intended to improve the quality of life--community development, better transportation, plans for improved learning, health and leisure activities, among others.

Your executive board will be speaking to the Board of Selectmen to ask them to name a "broadly based Bicentennial advisory group composed of local citizens" so that work on the town's bicentennial activities can begin.

PROGRAM NOTES--JANUARY 29TH MEETING

The Historical Society Meeting will be January 29th at the Town Hall. Please note that the meeting will be at 7:30 p.m., an half hour earlier than the previous meeting times.

A slide presentation of "Plymouth Plantation" - the living Folk Museum of 17th Century Plymouth - is our program. Rhoda Kagan and David Conroy, history graduate students at the University of Connecticut, will present the slides. Both have worked at "Plymouth Plantation" and should provide a refreshing over view of the story of the Pilgrims and early colonial life in America.

CALENDAR

January 29th, 1975 (Next Wednesday): Willington Historical Society General Meeting at Town Hall, 7:30 p.m. Program by Rhoda Kagan and David Conroy of Plymouth Plantation.

March 12th, 1975: Willington Historical Society General Meeting, Town Hall. Time and program to be announced.

HISTORICAL PLAQUE TEXT

The following is a proposed text for the historical marker the Society would like to erect on the town common. We would welcome any comments from our members and friends. The text can not exceed 100 words. Please forward your comments to the Society by the 15th of February.

WILLINGTON

(Inc. 1727)

In 1720 a party of 8 men, originally from England, bought 16,000 acres and called it Willington. One of these, Roger Wolcott, subsequently became governor of Connecticut (1750-1753).

After a century of farming the town gradually expanded industrially until 1845 when it boasted of a thread mill, a cotton mill, 3 silk factories, a scythe factory, 4 comb factories, button mills and a glass factory (1815-1871) producing demijohns and flasks with varying designs.

Men of distinction born here were Jared Sparks, (1789-1866) historian and biographer and president of Harvard University; Elias Loomis, professor at Yale, celebrated mathematician and astronomer.