



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER ~ WILLINGTON

Vol. 11

Willington, Ct., March 1975

No. 3

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Written History Committee met in February and decided that it will not be ready to publish a complete history of Willington by 1977. The plan now is for a smaller publication focusing on those topics which are adequately researched at that time.

Mrs. Weigold reiterated their interest in photographs, diaries, news clippings, etc., of local people, places, and events. People sometimes fail to recognize the historical interest of items collected during their lifetime. Since the town changes constantly items as recent as the 1950's and 1960's may have historical value. Anything shared with the research committee will, of course, be returned to the owners as soon as possible. If you have memorabilia or memories to share call Mrs. Weigold at 429-2656.

Ways and Means Committee chairman Barbara Shaw reminds us to think of the Society's third annual tag sale coming up in May (tentatively, May 17th) as we do our spring cleaning. Crafts and baked goods will also be welcome. You will be hearing more about this as the sale date approaches. If you want to

participate in a craft workshop or help with organizing the sale call Barbara at 429-3074.

### MINER MYSTERY--MISSING GEM

We are trying to identify a particular piece of property in Willington on which stands a Colonial-style 2-story frame residence built in the 1700's which is considered by the Connecticut State Historical Commission to be a prime example of 18th century architecture. It is supposedly known locally as the "Miner Property"; location in town unknown. It is included in the State Historical Commission's survey of Connecticut historical sites worthy of preservation but no one seems to know where it is. Do you? Call Mrs. Burns at 429-9956.

*Dalzell Prop Miner Grant*

### BICENTENNIAL PLANS DISCUSSED

Out of the Society's last Executive Committee meeting came a letter to the Board of Selectmen asking them to call a meeting on March 5th for representatives of all town boards and organizations to discuss Willington's plan for a bicentennial celebration. Having originally accepted responsibility for organizing the Bicentennial Festivities,

the Historical Society has now decided that a broader based effort is needed from the beginning. It is hoped that the March 5th meeting will result in the formation of a group which can represent and enlist the energies of all of our town's interest and age groups in this project.

#### HISTORICAL DISTRICT COMMITTEE VACANCY FILLED

It has been the Society's understanding that since shortly after its formation by the Board of Selectmen in August, 1973 the Historical District Committee has been short one member and without a chairman and, therefore, unable to operate. This has meant that its tasks of studying the desirability and laying the groundwork for historical districts in Willington are as yet unbegun. Recently, however, the vacant position was filled by the appointment of Ernest Kline, as the Society has urged for some months.

According to the First Selectman's office the Committee now consists of Isabel Weigold, Robert Cassells, Paul Bugbee, Paul Blakely, Rev. Howard May, and Ernest Kline. Some confusion still remains, however, over whether Rev. May wishes to continue as a committee member. While it had been understood by some that of the original 5 appointees Jerry Parizek and Rev. May had both declined, the Selectman's office reports that no official resignation was received from Rev. May and he may, in fact, only have declined the chairmanship. This confusion may have been the reason for the long delay in filling that slot. Even now it is unclear whether the Committee has 5 or 6 members. The propriety of Paul Blakely's membership also seems questionable as he is no longer a resident of Willington.

There is also some confusion over whether the Selectmen have the power to appoint a chairman or whether the chairperson is elected by the committee. It looks as though this unfortunate confusion may be the cause of further delay since at present there is no chairperson to take the initiative of calling a committee

meeting. In this case perhaps the Board of Selectmen, as the founding body, could call them together to select officers. In any case, we hope that this situation will not result in another year-and-a-half delay in consideration of the important matter of Historical Districts for Willington.

#### PROGRAM NOTES: MARCH 12th--GRAPHIC HISTORY PROJECTED

Paul Blakely, the Society's President, will report on the progress of his graphic history project with a slide presentation and talk on old buildings in Willington. This project was initiated by Mr. Blakely last year for the purpose of obtaining photographic records of local settings and buildings of historical or architectural interest.

Do come and see what your Historical Society is doing toward research and preservation of local history. Suggestions of buildings and areas to be photographed in the future are welcome. If you have pictures of old buildings or places in town that have now changed please bring them and share them with us. Coffee and traditional Easter breads baked by Society members will be served after the program.

#### A HOME FOR US?

Now that Willington's town offices are moving from the Town Hall a committee has been appointed by the Selectmen to study and recommend other uses of that building. Letters were recently sent to all organizations in town enquiring if, how and how often they would use such space. The Historical Society Executive Committee voted at its last meeting to request use of the back room and vault, which are presently used by the Town Clerk. According to committee member Susan Macko, their recommendations are to be turned in within the month so we should soon know if we have a home at last.

#### COURSE ON COLONIAL FAMILY LIFE

The UConn Non-credit Extension Service is offering another course in its excellent series on life in Colonial New England. Those who have attended or heard tell of earlier courses will appreciate the opportunity to attend these lectures by Blaine Cota called "Colonial Family in New England" on "17th and 18th century manners, morals, and social customs in the family unit". For registration information call 486-3235. The cost is \$24 for 8 weekly lectures beginning Wednesday, March 19.

#### WILLINGTON'S FIRST HIGHWAY

A highway ten rods wide was laid out in the 1720's by the original inhabitants of Willington. This began at the bridge over the Willimantic river in West Willington and extended to the Ashford line. Along this road the Common was laid out which still beautifies Willington Hill. This road was known as "the Old Walcott road."

In these earliest years Willington land was held in common by the people. On May 20, 1927, all lands were divided up in as nearly equal parcels as possible. Each owner insisted upon a share in the cedar swamp which then adjoined the Mansfield line and was considered the most valuable land in town.

#### CALENDAR OF AREA EVENTS

- March 11th: Stafford Historical Society presents a craft demonstration of chair caning. Tuesday, 8:00 p.m. in the Historical Society's Room at the Old Railway Station.
- March 12th: Willington Historical Society--Paul Blakely reports on Graphic History Project with slide presentation on local sites of historical interest. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall.
- March 14th: Mansfield Historical Society presents Prof. Francelia Butler speaking on "Skip-rope Rhymes American Style". Friday, 8:00 p.m., Mansfield Town Hall, Rt. 195.
- April 7th: Tolland Historical Society presents Wesley Reed with "Music from the Attic". Monday, 8:00 p.m., Savings Bank of Tolland.
- April 8th: Stafford Historical Society presents the film "Resolve to be Free" produced by the American Revolutionary Bicentennial Committee, on the topic of Connecticut's role in the American Revolution, narrated by Katherine Hepburn. Tuesday, time and place to be announced in the Stafford Springs Reminder and Stafford Press.