



THE HOURGLASS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER ~ WILLINGTON

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A PARTING

Betsy and Paul McIlvaine, president and secretary of the Historical Society are leaving Willington and have resigned their positions in the Society.

It is with deep regret that the Society accepts their resignation, but of course we all wish them well in their new endeavors - Paul has accepted a new position in New York City; they will be looking for a home in the Danbury area.

Both Paul and Betsy have made unique contributions as leaders in the Society and in other town activities as well. Active members of the Society since they came to Willington several years ago, Paul served as chairman for the 1976 Bicentennial Committee and chairman of the 250th Anniversary Committee in 1977. Both events were highly successful and would not have been possible without Paul's patience, perseverance and organizational talents.

Betsy has been president of the Historical Society for the past three years. Under her leadership it has developed a new constitution and by-laws so that the Society could become incorporated as a non-profit organization. During her term of office the "Chronology

of Willington" was published as well as the "Recollections of John Merrick," both of which are popular fund-raising books. Recently, thanks to Betsy's efforts, the Society has been granted use of the old Town Clerk's office as well as the vault for storage of papers and artifacts collected over the years.

In addition to their work on behalf of the Historical Society, Paul has served on the Board of Finance; Chairman of the Republican Town Committee and has been an active worker for the Boy Scouts. Betsy has served two years as an alternate member of the Planning and Zoning Commission. They both will be greatly missed.

A FAREWELL

In their letter of resignation, the McIlvaine's said "...The people of Willington seem always to have been friendly and remain so to this day. We'd like to thank everyone in the Society who helped make our stay here so pleasant and so much a learning experience and we wish the Willington Historical Society much luck in the future."

A SPECIAL GIFT

The Historical Society is greatly indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Clarke Ruby who have recently made a generous contribution that will enable the Society to hire a qualified historian to compose a written history of the town of Willington.

Margaret and Clarke Ruby were born and brought up in Willington and have a great interest in Willington's heritage. They feel a written history would also help others become aware of the heritage of this town.

As a result of this impetus from the Rubys, the Society has asked Ronald Demers to take on this project. Ron will analyze the research recently completed by Isabel Weigold and her study committee and then proceed with the written history.

Ron was a member of the Historical Research Committee when the Chronology was being put together and wrote the introductions to three sections of the of the book as well as a political history and other research papers. Ron taught 7th and 8th grade Social Studies at Hall School before he left two years ago for a teaching position in Somers.

Dr. Richard Brown, head of the History Department at the University of Connecticut, recommended Ron as the most qualified and able of his graduate students to take on this writing task. Mrs. Weigold, who has been involved for over 10 years in the information gathering process is excited about this project and believes a good history can be put together. Mrs. Weigold will work closely with Ron this summer and be available to chase down any other clues Ron might need along the way.

The first and most important step for this project is getting the history organized and written. But, the next step will be to raise funds to get it published. The Society will have to begin planning fund-raising projects as well as applying the profits from current publications to finance this new project.

AND MORE GIFTS

The Society has been given a scrapbook compiled by Mrs. Walter Malo (who once lived in Ye Olde Manse). It contains pictures of people who lived in Willington in the 1930's to the 1950's. The scrapbook was given to Mrs. J. H. Brett, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Malo. Mrs. Brett also contributed a handkerchief from France. This item was a gift to her as a choir member from Mrs. Alice Holman Hall about 55 years ago.

Another item contributed by Mrs. Brett is a sachet made from the wedding gown of Kitty Dimock. Kitty lived in the house now owned by Richard and Barbara Shaw on Moose Meadow Road. The wedding gown was made of lavender, gray and white plaid taffeta.

A NEW HOME

The Society is looking forward to moving into the old Town Clerk's office at the Town Hall. Some cleaning will need to be done and plans made for the use of the area. All those boxes of cards, maps, stationery, etc., now stored in members' homes may be moved into the vault. Shelves, storage cabinets, etc. will be necessary to organize this material. Old bookcases or other storage-type furniture are very much needed. Donations will be gratefully accepted.

At its May 7th meeting the Board of Selectmen agreed the Society could use the office if it were to pay 25% of the first year's electric bill, about \$15 per month.

AN OLD HOME

In reading old volumes of the Tolland County Press (now known as the Stafford Press), Isabel Weigold found a lead on the oldest house in Willington. If you thought it was the Ye Olde Manse (now owned by the Cassells on the Green), you are mistaken. The latest information, yet to be verified, says the oldest house in Willington was built in 1719, located on Rt. 44A and currently owned by Daniel Talmadge.

This is a lovely old Cape Cod house on the Mansfield-Willington town line. According to the newspaper account, the deed is on file at the State Library and the first owner was James Farlee.

SOCIETY MEETINGS

The Historical Society will meet Monday, June 4th at the Town Hall, 7:30 p.m. The nominating committee, composed of Mary Kline and Isabel Weigold, will present the slate of officers to replace those who have resigned. The slate will be voted on at the June meeting.

The nominees include:

President -- Betty Robertson; Secretary -- Barbara Shaw; Treasurer -- Frances Daley (her term expires in September 1979). Other nominations may be made from the floor.

The program for the June meeting will be a slide presentation of old houses and buildings around the Town Green by the Historical District Committee. Committee members will also tell of their experiences while researching this project.

Ernest Kline will discuss the "misplaced Green" as well as some of the dark secrets of the first builders of houses on the Green. The public will be urged to attend this meeting. Members of the Historic District Committee, along with Mr. Kline, include: Mrs. Mary Kline, Michael Helfott, Leonard Todd and Raymond Daley.

For the fall program, Thomas Mocko will speak on early roads; the first ones developed and how they differ from those we have now. He will also talk of the locations of old mills and residences. Mr. Mocko, employed as a town CETA worker, investigated the land records, drew up maps to illustrate and document the paths that were used before they became roads, and gathered information about the location of early residences.

TIDBITS

Willington Hill: Willington Hill was once known as Sawin's Plain. Deacon George Sawin owned much of the land on Willington Hill.

Certain Cure for a Cold: (from an old book entitled "Family Physician," loaned by Mrs. Earl Eldredge)

"Take three cents worth of liquorice, three rock candy, three of gum-arabic, and put them into a quart of water; simmer them till thoroughly dissolved, then add three cents' worth of paragoric and a like quantity of antimonial vine."

Sick Headache: Take a tea-spoonful of powdered charcoal in molasses every morning and wash it down with a little tea; or, drink half a glass of raw rum or gin and drink freely of mayweed tea."

MEMBERSHIP

Society Treasurer, Mrs. Frances Daley has announced that there are 50 paid members in the Society as of May 1979. We even have members from California, Kansas and Tennessee.

If you have not yet paid your dues, please be sure and fill out the enclosed membership application.

Remember, the Society calendar year runs from September 1 to August 31. Future copies of the newsletter will be sent to paid members only. For further information, call Mrs. Daley at 429-9842.

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