THE HOURGLASS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER — WILLINGTON

Vol. I Willington, Ct., November, 1973 No. 1

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Any society can survive only so long as its members are willing to contribute to the common good. The production of THE HOURGLASS is one example of such a contribution. For their time and creative energy we express thanks to the Newsletter committee, and a special thanks to Mr. Leon Kouyoumjian for his fine creative interpretation of our Willington Green for THE HOURGLASS masthead.

It is hoped that this newsletter will provide an instrument to maintain communication between our society's active committees and the membership at large. More than a forum to display their progress, it is hoped it will act as a stimulus to prompt contributions of information and enthusiasm. The names and telephone numbers of the committee chairmen are listed below. Please feel free--even encouraged--to contact them.

An example of such a contribution is the continued generous effort of Mrs. Isabel Weigold to complete the history of Willington. Not just the society but the entire town is indebted to her for her remarkable effort. Any member who may have information, photographs, etc., pertinent to the history contact Mrs. Weigold at 429-2656.

The society notes with great sadness the passing of Mr. John Blessington, a contributing member from the first meeting and a warm friend of many.

Paul Blakely
President

NEWLY-ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Mr. Paul Blakely
Vice President: Mrs. Susan Mako
Recording Secretary: Mrs. Pamela Wheeler
Corresponding Secretary: Mrs. Janet Thomas
Treasurer: Mrs. Frances Daley
Historian: Mr. Raymond Daley

HISTORICAL SITES AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE

This committee has three distinct areas of concern in the society:

Old Homes: For research purposes the town is divided into nine school districts. We have a town map dated 1869 indicating the various buildings in existence at that time. We would like to know which of these buildings are still standing and learn names of all the owners from the present as far back as possible. We have an outline to follow for this purpose and anyone interested in doing any of this work please contact me at 429-9956. At present we have no one on the list to cover the Roaring Brook and Village Hill areas. Won't someone please help in these districts?

As I am new in this position, I shall review our current information and then call another meeting. All suggestions will be gratefully accepted.

Mrs. Emily Burns
Committee Chairman

Oral History: This committee is interested in collecting recollections about the past by interviewing citizens of Willington with a tape recorder or by taking notes. Anyone interested please contact Betsy and Paul McIlvaine (429-3477) who have worked with oral history techniques within the Pettesquamcutt Historical Society, South Kingdom, R.I. They would like to set up a tape library of oral histories in Willington.

History of Willington: Persons are still needed for two topics of the history--political activities, and Italian influence. Additional help is needed for the section on Arts and Craftsmen. If these subjects interest you please call Mrs. Isabel Weigold (429-2656).

MEMBERSHIP DUES PAYABLE NOW

Anyone interested in the position of membership chairman please contact Mr. Paul Blakely (429-0689) or Mrs. Frances Daley (429-9842). All members who have not paid their dues for the current year are urged to use the application form on the final page. New members are always welcome and may use the same form.

ST. JUDES BAZAAR WORKSHOP

The Historical Society will have a booth at the annual St. Judes Bazaar, Nov. 30-Dec. 1. There will be a special workshop at Barbara Shaw's house Nov. 7, at 7:30 PM, to make items for sale. Anyone interested (this sounds like fun) please call Mrs. Shaw at 429-3074. Also needed are craft items and Christmas idea books. Articles could be donated for sale at the booth as well.

Mrs. Barbara Shaw
Ways and Means Chairman

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

At the Executive Committee meeting, September 26, discussion focused on increasing community participation in the Society. In order to improve communication we decided to print a newsletter to be mailed to members four times a year before each meeting.

At the suggestion of Paul Blakely, President, a new project of obtaining detailed photographic records of local buildings of historical or architectural interest was initiated.

The Committee is trying to get some action on an historical plaque for Willington offered by the State Historical Commission. Suggestions from townspeople are welcomed for the location and wording of the historical plaque. Also of on-going concern is the establishment of our Historical Districts--now in the hands of the Historical District Committee recently appointed by the First Selectman. Ideas for areas to be included in the Historical Districts are welcome. If you have feelings on these topics please share them with us by calling Paul Blakely,(429-0689).

PROGRAM IDEAS WELCOME

Mrs. Marjorie Brown (429-5482), program chairman, would like more members to help plan programs and hospitality at each meeting. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for future meetings? Please let Mrs. Brown know.

EXTENSION COURSES OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

There are two new courses offered by the Continuing Education Services at UConn this semester. One is titled "Furniture: Unravelling our English Heritage" and will meet one evening a week for six weeks beginning on March 12. The other is "New England in the 19th Century" and is a 9 week interdisciplinary series also meeting one evening a week. Anyone interested in these courses should call the Office of Continuing Education Services at 486-3235.

GLASS DIGGERS IN WILLINGTON

Inspired by Jesse Brainard's talk on the Willington Glass Factory, some members of the Society braved one of the first cold days of November to dig for bits and pieces of old Willington glass. Mrs. Russell Sauer was kind enough to let the members dig through her garden. While most of us have rocks in our gardens, Mrs. Sauer has the rubbish of the old Glass Factory to contend with. The glass found there is the characteristic color of that made at the Glass Factory and the shape is that of irregular drips or blobs or glass trimmings.

THE FOUNDING OF WILLINGTON

The area now known as Willington was settled by various families in the early 18th century, some of whom had received the land as thanks for military services. Early settlers came to the region principally, however, under the guidance of Robert Fenton and John Merrick who brought them from Springfield, Mass. Another group is said to have come with a Mr. Holt from Hampton, CT. This pioneer settlement was further enhanced when, on May 20, 1720, this area of about 16,000 acres was sold by the governor of Conn. for 510 lb. sterling to eight men: Roger Wolcott, John Burr, John Riggs, Samuel Gunn, George Clark, John Stone, Ebenezer Fitch, and Peter Pratt.

By 1727 the area had at least the requisite number of inhabitants (592) so that a town could be organized. It was part of Hartford County until Tolland County was established. There is some evidence that the name of the town was intended to be "Wellington" but the writing style of the time was often unclear and "Willington" appears on many colonial records and thus it has remained.

The next issue will include more about the life of these early Willington settlers.

CALENDAR OF LOCAL EVENTS

February 13, 8:00 P.M. Town Hall
A program by Sue Mako and Mrs. Jessie Marshall of Coventry on Spinning and Weaving.

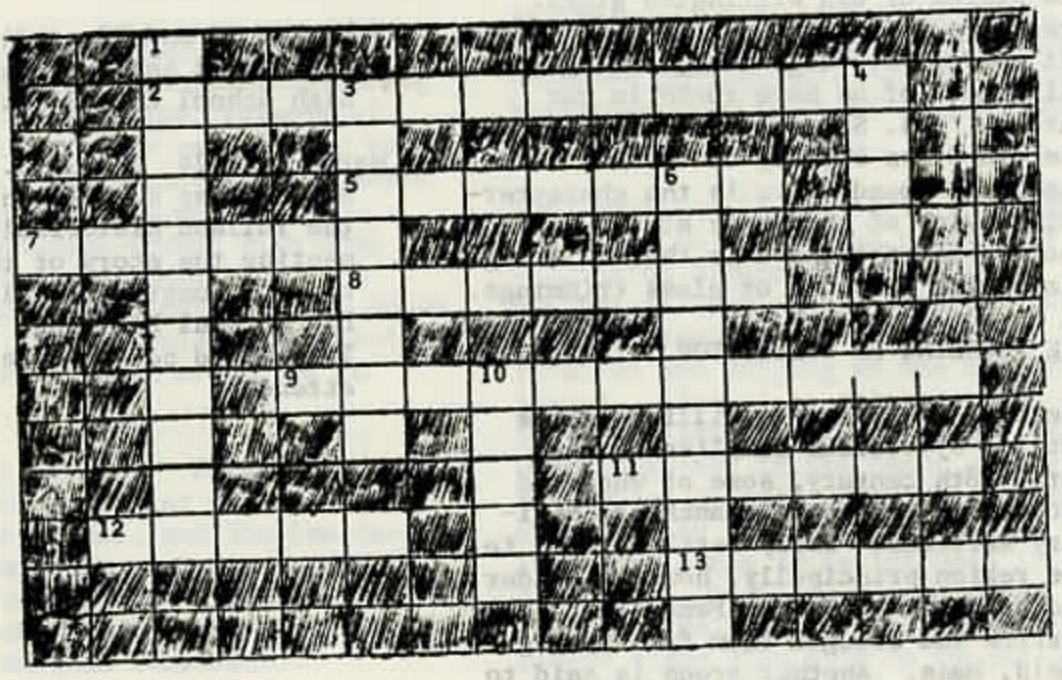
February 16 and 17, 1974
8th Annual Antiques Show, Tolland High School Cafeteria.

March 4, 1974 8:00 P.M.
Mrs. Thomas H. Glennon will speak to the Tolland Historical Society, presenting the story of the Hitchcock chair, Congregational Church, Educational Building, Tolland Green. Interested persons are invited to attend.

"GRAPE AND CANISTER"

Have you ever seen this design before? If so, then you can probably help us. This is a facsimile of the masthead of a paper published in Willington in the late 19th century by John D. Taylor of Burma Rd., "Opposed to Rum, Tobacco, and all Evil." Most of our information comes from our one copy, published in April, 1882. We are especially interested in the significance of the paper's name, when and how it was begun, and how long it was published. If you have other issues or knowledge of this or other local publications of the past, please let us know.

HISTORIC CROSSWORDS



ACROSS

2. Once needed for buttons
5. Rt. 44's early road name
7. Family and river name
8. Jared Sparks' school
9. An early industry
11. Nettie is one of the last
12. Merrick, first town _____
13. Minister and teacher

DOWN

1. State senator, with military title
3. No longer a church, but still in use
4. Necessary item for early industry
6. A prominent family business not too long ago
10. Grist mill and pond owner

(Answers are on page -2-)