



Vol. XI

Willington, Connecticut March 1983

No. 3

BED RUGS BY JESSIE MARSHALL

We are fortunate to have Jessie Marshall of Coventry as our speaker for the March meeting. She is an authority on the subject of bed rugs which are rare items, most of which are now in museums. Her talk will be accompanied by slides showing the design and construction of the bed rug.

As far as is known no bed rugs had been made since 1833 until 1976 when Jessie completed one in time for the 1976 bicentennial celebration. The rug took approximately three years to complete and contained 14,000 yards of yarn which she carded, dyed, spun and sewed. This bed rug will be on display for the meeting.

Bring your friends to this interesting program on Friday, March 18, at 7:30 p.m. at the Center School.

BACK BY POPULAR REQUEST

The November program presented by Isabel Weigold and Ernest Kline on two aspects of Willington's history, the formation of an historic district and historic old photos going back as far as 1862 was repeated in January for those who were unable to attend the first presentation.

Since that time we have been requested to repeat the program once again. Plans have not been finalized but it will probably take place in April. If you are interested please call Millie Marco (429-4154) or Isabel Weigold (429-2656).

OLD TIME MUSIC FESTIVAL

CENTER SCHOOL

May 20, 1983

7:30 p.m.

One of the most popular programs offered by the Society will be presented again this May. Music composed between 1880 and 1930 will be featured.

Vocal groups, singers, musicians, instrumentalists, old and young are invited to participate.

A sing-a-long is planned. Come and join in the fun and camaraderie.

If you are interested contact either Harriet Marco, 429-2300, or Georgianna Booth, 429-0516.

HISTORY NOW DUE IN MARCH

We had hoped to have our books by January but that was not to be for a number of reasons. Some of the staff at Stanley Press became ill with the

flu, a Christmas vacation intervened and the fact that many more pictures and pages have been added contributed to the delay. It is expected that the book will be ready for the bindery by Feb. 28th and that will take anywhere from two to three weeks thus bringing the actual delivery date somewhere in the middle of March.

We are just as anxious as you are to see it in it's entirety and know you will be as pleased with it as we are. Studley Press has done an excellent job of guiding us through this whole process and have been very conscientious about all the detail involved. We've had an excellent working relationship and would recommend them to anyone contemplating publishing a book.

RECENT GIFTS

Approximately 15 snapshots of South Willington, taken in the early 1900s, were donated by Mrs. Beatrice Majo Brett, now of Westbrook, Conn. January, 1983.

Mrs. Brett was daughter of Walter and Fannie Majo who lived in Ye Olde Manse on Willington Hill for a number of years. She went to school in South Willington and has contributed many other pictures to the Society in the past.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

We wish to thank Ernest Kline for his assistance in proofreading, organizing and typing the index; Betty Robertson and Harriet Marco for their assistance in the indexing; Kathy Weigold and Edward Williams for their help with proofreading, Mrs. Mary Kline for providing refreshments on numerous occasions, and Francis Daley for keeping our accounts straight.

We also thank all those who contributed pictures and helped with identifying the people.

PUBLICATION PARTY

Tentative plans have been made for a publication party as soon as we know when the books are ready.

It will be held on a Sunday from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Center School Cafeteria, either March 27 or April 10.

The author and researcher will be

available for those who would like their books autographed.

Those who ordered books at the advanced subscription price will be notified by phone when the books are available.

Those who are unable to attend the publication party should watch for announcements in the newspaper as to the place and time when books may be obtained. Tentative plans have been made to have pick up places at the Town Office Building, the Senior Center, the Hall Memorial School Library or by appointment.

FOURTH OF JULY ADDRESS

(delivered by Seth Zaton of Willington in 1874 in a grove near the Glass Factory Schoolhouse)
(The first of a continued series)

For a hundred years after the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock the territory which we call Willington remained unoccupied. Even the wild red man departed from the limits and it was one dark, desolate, tenantless forest. Before the year 1720 the towns of Stafford, Ashford, Mansfield and Pollard were formed and their settlements commenced. In Mansfield, especially, considerable progress in settlement had been made. Thus it happened that there was a blank space of about 25 square miles surrounded by those towns, the home of no man and without a name.

The land, by virtue of King Charles the Second's charter of 1662, was vested in the Governor and Company of His Majesty's Colony of Connecticut. In many parts of the colony persons bought land of the Indians, and thus conflicting claims arose between the grantees of the Indians and the grantees of the Governor and Company. But no such trouble ever existed in this town. The general assembly, in May, 1720, voted to grant the whole tract, except a few isolated previous grants which were quite small and unimportant, to Roger Wolcott of Windsor, John Burr of Fairfield, John Riggs of Derby, Samuel Green and George Clark of Willford, John Stone of Stamford,

FOURTH OF JULY ADDRESS (continued)

Ebenezer Fitch of Windsor and Peter Pratt of Hartford, making eight proprietors in all, and the governor executed the deed. The consideration paid to the colony was 510 pounds. These gentlemen were some of the principal men of the colony. Of Roger Wolcott, especially, it may be said that he was the foremost man of the colony in his day. If there was trouble in a church, if there was a disputed boundary, if there were conflicting titles to land, he was the man almost invariably selected by the assembly to go and adjust matters. He was by profession a lawyer, held in succession all the military titles, was commander in chief of the Connecticut forces in the expedition against Louisberg, was judge in the highest court and finally, in 1750, became governor of the colony.

He was a young man when he became interested in Willington land, and generally in our records he is called "Major Wolcott, Esq." Whether the motive of these original proprietors in buying the land was to make the desert bloom and to extend the wealth and resources of the colony, or whether it was a speculation, I am unable to say. Perhaps a little of both. At any rate they didn't lose anything. They soon took in a partner, John Reed, who then lived on a great estate of his own in Fairfield county. He called his place there "Lonetown," as it didn't belong to any town. Thus there were nine proprietors in all.

One of their first acts was to lay out a highway from Willimantic River to Ashford line. This road was, no doubt, intended to be part of a grand east and west thoroughfare across the colony, as it was laid out 10 rods wide throughout. (This is now Route 74, previously 44).

(To be continued)

JURY'S TAVERN SITE DAMAGED BY BLAZE

Jury's Tavern, once the dairy barn of William H. Hall built in 1912, was severely damaged in a fire on November 26, 1962. The exact cause of the fire is unknown and an investigation is still in progress.

The building was a landmark on Route 32 nestled in a valley and could be seen just as one entered the South Willington village.

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 18 -- Bed rugs by Jessie Marshall

Place: Center School

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Tentatively March 27 or April 10

Publication Party

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: Center School

May 20 -- OLD-TIME SONG FESTIVAL

Place: Center School

Time: 7:30 p.m.