



MARCH PROGRAM

On March 20 Ronald and Penny Dionne of Glass Factory Schoolhouse Road will present a program on Connecticut Redware, the earliest American pottery, made from red clay or clay that turned reddish on firing. It is most abundant in regions offering the proper clay, including parts of New England. Come and bring a friend!

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Center School

DATE: March 20, 1987

WILLINGTON INDUSTRIES (continued) taken from a thesis written in 1976 by John Goodrich, a graduate of Yale University who lived in Willington during his childhood and school years.

DALEVILLE

This region was initially called the Toppliff district after the first settler, Clement Toppliff. His son built a saw, grist and cider mill where the present button factory stands (note: no longer standing) and also a brandy still north of what was then the schoolhouse. Coupled with his six hundred acre farm these interests warranted his hiring a great deal of help. Later, in 1825, a fulling machine and carder was established at the same site as the saw and grist mill. Still later, about the year 1840, Thomas Dale founded the Willington Silk Mill here. This business experienced varying fortunes during

the Civil War and in 1873 was sold to James Hoyle who changed over to the manufacture of woolen goods, and operated for some twenty-odd years, going out of business in 1900. In 1907, he sold his plant to Mr. C. Divorsky who began producing buttons on a small scale. The more recent history of this plant will be treated in greater detail under the history of the ocean pearl button industry.

EAST WILLINGTON -

This section in the first half of the nineteenth century was one of the most industrialized sections of town. It boasted a grist and saw mill on the water privilege. Nearby was a long one story shop used for the manufacture of horn combs. A buzz saw invented by Daniel Harts-horn, of Mansfield, Conn. in 1776 was first used for cutting the teeth of these combs. This business employed seven or eight workers whose job it was to boil in oil the hoofs and horns and press them into the shapes required for the combs.

Across the river from the saw and grist mill on the water privilege was the farm of Hosea Vinton, and his blacksmith shop where he made a large part of the farming tools used in that section. By far the most important industry in East Willington at the time was the tanning and shoe business operated by Amos Preston and sons.

The shoe business consisted largely of producing cowhide brogans for the southern slaves, and proved very profitable for a time. This establishment employed a relatively crude process of tanning which went as follows: upon removal of the hair,

EAST WILLINGTON (continued)

the raw hides were packed in a large vat, between layers of oak and hemlock bark. These were saturated with water and allowed to stand six months to a year until the hides were tanned through. Today the same process is completed in a few days. The building which is today the location of Squire's Store (Tulis' Store until recently now Willington Termite and Pest Control) was formerly a wagon shop owned and operated by two Morrison brothers. This eventually became a tin shop and was still later converted into a store.

CENTER

There has never been a great deal of manufacturing in this part of town. In colonial days, Mr. Ralph Holt operated a small tanning and custom shoe making shop. Nearby, his brother operated a small cabinet shop. In addition, at the corner near these buildings a tollgate was kept by Deacon Vinton. Outside of these businesses the Center has been void of enterprise. (The author did not mention a carding mill located on the green which was there in the 1960's and also a general store and post office run by Minor Grant and Jonathon Weston respectively in the early 1800's).

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Georgianna Booth is continuing her work on the oral histories. She reports that she is running out of people to interview, so if you would like to be interviewed, or know of someone who has been a long-time resident of Willington, please contact her at 429-0516.

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY -

Items given by Geraldine Novotny Hugg in December 1986 included Town Reports dating from 1908 to 1965.

Old Telephone Directories from Willimantic dating from 1930.

Programs for Graduation Exercises from Hall Memorial School dating from 1918 to 1951.

Account book of Perry Ice Co. reporting ice harvest in 1903.

Autograph book given by Alice Holman to William Holman in 1884.

List of Taxable Property in 1875 (Willington).

Miscellaneous other items.

Elmer Macfarlane son of Margaret Weigold Macfarlane asked his wife before he died to donate the following items to the Society -

File drawer of maintenance records kept by Elmer Macfarlane at the Gardiner Hall Jr.Co.

Powder Horn

Civil War Sword carried by Charles F. Morrison 1862-1865.

Sugar auger.

Picture of Gardiner Hall Jr. Co. undated - early 1900's probably.

Leather wallet belonging to C. F. Morrison with note stating "this pocketbook was carried by C. F. Morrison Sr. for a good many years".

Miscellaneous manuals, envelopes and letterhead stationery.

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Caroline Mirtl donated the following items in February 1987.

Annual reports for the Town of Willington dating from 1912 to 1983.

Graduation programs from Hall Memorial School and Hall Memorial Church - 1921 to 1961.

National Grange Song Book - undated.

Pictures of Center School and East Willington School.

*Poem "To Sabra" written October 30, 1961.

Pictures of dedication ceremony of Center School in 1953.

Other miscellaneous items.

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Edwin Sundt, son of Hazel Amidon Sundt, contributed the following items:

14 letters written between 1838 and 1886 - some undated.

Records of Young People's Society for Christian Endeavor kept by Alice Holt Amidon between 1899 and 1901.

Postcards.

Photographs - one of Ida Korner beside a music machine (Gramophone?).

Late snow storm April 14, 1953 near Ruby's house looking east.

Glass negatives of haying scene in Willington circa 1913 and house and barn of C. J. Lyon about July 14, 1913.

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" TO SABRA"

This poem was written by Caroline Mirtl on the occasion of the retirement of Sabra Stoughton who worked as a secretary in the Office of Rural Education in Willimantic for 36 years. She was well known among Willington teachers and had great respect for the unique character of Willington education in those years when the Hall family built Hall School and administered it until the town took it over. The town in those years owned their own buses, the only town in the area to do so.

TO SABRA

She progressed with us through each year
 Our stern, but pleasant Sabra, dear.
 Sometimes the going was quite hard
 Reports not in; the registers marred-
 But Sabra kept things orderly;
 As teachers figured, wearily.
 Superintendents came and went,
 But she maintained the office strength.
 First, there was Mr. Garrison-
 Who freely gave of his wisdom,
 With him she worked both long and steady-
 And everything was always ready.
 New methods and ideas appeared,
 Sometimes far-fetched and rather queer.
 Miss Le Roux, Miss Dunsmore and Isabelle Day
 Were here awhile, but didn't stay.
 And then Mr. Reilly came along-
 So life, again, was one sweet song.
 When principals in the office met,
 Piles of blue envelopes they would get.
 Just ten short years, and he was gone-
 And all of us had cause to mourn.
 But Sophie Jenkins joined the force,
 Now she with Sabra was the boss.
 The office was so gay and free-
 They bought a pot and served coffee.
 When Dr. Irvine came along
 Some things were changed, but not for long.
 For Bureau Chief Nybakken heard of the name
 of Dr. Carl Hempel of Wolcott fame.
 So soon he was here and memos dictating
 about salaries, budgets and merit rating.
 But 36 years is a long, long time
 and Sabra is leaving for a warmer clime.
 We see her go with deep regret-
 What she's done for us we'll never forget.
 We wish her luck and happiness, too
 In anything she plans to do;
 And hope that retirement to her will bring-
 The very best of everything.

October 30, 1961

Our sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Evelyn Hartley who died December 20. She was professor emeritus at the University of Connecticut and a long time member of the Historical Society. She helped the society in many ways and painted many of the maps (1869) which the society has for sale.

CHRONOLOGY UPDATE, etc.

Volunteers are needed to assist in the updating of the Willington Chronology. The first 200 years (1727-1927) have been covered, and now we are ready to go into the next 50 years - to 1977.

Other projects pending include placing of display cases for Historical items of interest; a marker for the seedling (now a large oak tree) of the Constitution Oak; and markers for the houses in the Willington Historic District.

COMING EVENTS

- March 20 - Connecticut Redware - Ronald and Penny Dionne.
- March 21 - Spaghetti Supper; St. Jude Church.
- March 28 - Ham and Bean Supper; Federated Church.