



# THE HOURGLASS

Volume XVII

Willington, Connecticut

March 1989

No. 3

## MARCH PROGRAM - MARCH 17, 1989

### WINDHAM TEXTILE & HISTORY MUSEUM Laura Knott Twine - Guest Speaker

Laura Knott Twine, founder of the Windham Textile & History Museum in 1985, saw the need for a living museum to preserve the history of the textile industry for present and future generations. Interest in textiles led her to become a weaver and to establish a private textile school.

However, when she saw the visible parts of the industry's history fragment as the mills moved south, she determined to create a museum. The ultimate goal of this institution is to become a national and ultimately international textile center for educational, historical, and cultural study. This would provide a haven for buildings and memories of those people who worked in the mills.

Housed in two buildings, the cornerstone of the museum is the Dunham Hall Library. Today this beautiful panelled room, untouched by time, will continue its role of enriching cultural life. The library houses resources on industrial urbanization in Connecticut, the history of Windham County, and fiber arts.

Permanent displays in the Main Building, and in the Brick Mill will include mock homes and a replica of an 1880's mill complete with tools and machinery, including a 5,000 pound carding machine, spinning frames, and a cast-iron factory loom.

Plans also include Museum workshops and a textile school which will include classes in pre-industrial weaving, spinning and dyeing.

Laura Knott Twine will speak about the progress of the Museum and her goals for the future.

Come and bring a friend.

Date: March 17, 1989  
Place: Center School, Old Farms Rd.  
Time: 7:30 P.M.

## FOND MEMORIES OF VILLAGE LIFE 1915-1927

by Beatrice Malo Brett

Note: Beatrice Brett is the daughter of Walter and Fannie (Denman) Malo and lived in Willington in the early 1900's. Walter worked in the Gardiner Hall Jr. Thread Co. for many years as a toolmaker and machinist, among other things. He and his wife bought "Ye Old Manse," now owned by Alice Hall Cassells, and lived there for a number of years. Inspired by Allen Brownlee's articles she has submitted the following:

I have always felt privileged to have spent my early years in the country. When I was about twelve years old I visited in New York City with my aunt and uncle, Alice (Denman) and Walter Westerfield. During the several weeks there I soon learned from new playmates that their games took place on the sidewalks or in the large basements of apartment houses. Back home our games were greatly varied, depending upon the season.



During the summer we were free to roam through woods and meadows. It was fun to go swimming nearly every day in the "pond" opposite our house in South Willington. I often rode my mother's bicycle, or wandered far and wide picking the endless varieties of wild flowers. Luscious low-bush blueberries could be found near the pine grove across the river. Another treat was the red raspberries grown by great-uncle Phil Denman. They were worth the long walk to his little house in the woods off Pinney Hill Road.

Old-fashioned species of apples from the small orchard back of our house made tasty pies. Some were used for sweet cider made at a cider mill down the road (Route 32). I usually reminded my father that some apples might be wormy - hopefully those were discarded before reaching the cider stage.

Fall was the time to go nutting after school. There were several hickory trees conveniently close, near the dairy barn. We gathered many walnuts (as we called them) and usually got the boys to throw sticks up into the trees, hoping to shake down more. Then came the task of cracking all those nuts and carefully picking out the meats which went into my mother's delicious nut bread. Of course, it was always my Dad's luck to find a shell in his slice of bread.

Just in time for Hallowe'en a huge pile of pumpkins appeared outside the dairy barn, grown for food for the cattle. Usually an employee at the dairy allowed me to have one with which to make a jack-o-lantern. On Hallowe'en there was a party at the grammar school, where we went in our costumes to bob for apples, etc. Inevitably a few boys got out to put tick-tacks on house doors and/or play other pranks.

With the arrival of winter we were eager for ice on the pond to become safe for skating. The blades of our skates were sharpened by the ever patient men working in the machine shop at the thread mill. With snow on the ground, horsedrawn sleds brought birch logs from the woods to the mill to be made into spools for Hall's Best Thread. It was fun to hop on the sleds and hitch a ride, dragging our sleds behind.

During our recess at school we slid down Pinney Hill to the school, our teacher along with us, on a double-ripper made from a plank supported on each end by a small sled. A much longer ride on our sleds was from the Brackett home, down the main road, then turning down toward the railroad station. In those days traffic wasn't a hazard and usually the only cars to be seen were either Dr. Converse's or one of the Pierce Arrows owned by the Hall family.

A familiar winter sight was the presence of the "ice run," so-called, which was erected to convey huge cakes of ice from the pond to the ice house near the railroad tracks. The ice was then put in freight cars and sold in New London. From the storage in the ice house, a supply was also available to townspeople for their refrigerators during the summer.

Thus, "the ice man cometh" hoisting a cake of ice by tongs to place in our ice box in the kitchen. Cans of kerosene were delivered from the village store, for use in lamps or stoves. Luckily our house had electric lights and a nice bathroom. Those conveniences were not available in some of the other houses in the village until much later.

(to be continued in the May issue)

#### PANEL ESTABLISHED TO STUDY PLANNING

President Betty Robertson has been appointed to represent the Historical Society on a town committee established by the Board of Selectmen to prepare for the town's future growth and development.

The panel will consist of 20 members representing boards and organizations within the town.

The committee will be examining the residential and commercial development, educational needs and needs for other town services. It will also consider the type of government the town should have, as well as conservation, preservation, and fire protection among other things.



## ASHFORD'S 275th ANNIVERSARY

Ashford will be celebrating the 275th anniversary of its incorporation starting in April. Plans are under way to print a Chronology and they are looking for pictures of people and places both new and old.

They also plan a quilt exhibition and are contacting historical societies, churches and others to lend their quilts to the showing. Anyone having a quilt they would like to lend should contact Barbara Metsack at 455-9455.

## OLD TOWN HALL

First Selectman Carlton Csiki had applied to the Connecticut Historic Commission for a matching funds grant in the amount of \$10,000 to restore the Old Town Hall. The Historical Society has sent a letter to the commission in support of the application.

## MEMOIRS

Isabel Weigold is working on a publication of the memoirs of Hubbell Loomis who was the fourth pastor of the Congregational Church. He was ordained as pastor in 1804; in 1828 he announced a change in his views on religious matters and helped form a new Baptist Church. This promises to be an insight into one man's faith.

## HISTORICAL DISPLAY

The Historical Society is making plans to have a display in the Old Town Hall on the day of the Willington Flea Market, September 9, 1989. We will be asking for volunteers to move display cases, set up exhibits, and monitor the exhibits. Since we will also have a table at the Flea Market, more people than usual will be needed. If you can help in any way, please make your willingness to do so known to Betty Robertson or Isabel Weigold.

## THANK YOU, ELSIE!

Our special thanks go to Elsie Hanks for the many years that she has typed the Newsletter for us. She has done a great job graciously under sometimes adverse conditions. We were fortunate in enlisting Vivian Carlson to carry on for Elsie and are confident that you will continue to enjoy your newsletter as in the past.

## COMING EVENTS

March 15 - 7 PM Hall School Cafeteria: Open Space Meeting

March 17 - 7:30 PM Historical Society Meeting: Guest Speaker Laura Knott Twine of the Windham Textile and History Museum

April 8 - Hazardous Waste Collection, Mansfield Center Landfill, Rte. 89