



THE HOURGLASS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER ~ WILLINGTON

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No. 4

OLD-TIME SONG FESTIVAL CENTER SCHOOL

May 22, 1981 - 7:30 P.M.

A real treat is in store for those who come to the May 22nd meeting and Old-Time Song Festival. Again, all musical selections will be over one hundred years old. Some of the performers will be last year's favorites, including the harmonica trio Alec Duhansky, Alex Kuchinsky, and Al Hunyadi; the Senior Citizens chorus, Norman and Hilda Desmarais, Carrie and Bill Kotrba, Catherine Vonasek, Louis Zaicek, and Dick Peterson, accompanied by Kit Peterson; Nancy King and Claudia Rondeau with their guitars; Mary King Belanger, who will also accompany her husband Paul.

Joining our program as soloists for the first time this year will be April Kosiba and Gretchen Schur. Jennifer Piatek will play a duet with Gretchen.

Mrs. Aldora Downing will be song leader, and we hope the audience will participate, with her help and encouragement, throughout the evening.

SPRING WALK TO THE FALLS IN DALEVILLE

Join us for the walk that was postponed in the fall because of lack of water on Sunday, May 31st, at 1:00 p.m.

We plan to leave from the Marco home on Eldredge Road. Their home is the fifth house on the right. If you miss the house that sets way back off the road just before the Marco's, count will be the fourth house.

Cars will be available to transport those walkers who don't wish to walk the entire distance back.

Everyone is welcome.

MEMORIAL BOULDER of 1927

The boulder used to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Willington came from the land of W. G. Ruby which was formerly a part of the Robbin's farm.

MORE ON TOWN RECORDS

We are pleased to receive communications from our readers. A letter from Paul and Phillip Bugbee clarifies our item concerning the storage of records prior to 1939 which we quote:

"Re: Your notation on where the Town Records were kept. In 1917 our father George P. Bugbee was elected Town Clerk of Willington a position he held until his death in 1939. Further he was elected Judge of Probate for the District of Willington and Tolland in 1920 serving until mandatory age of retirement (70) in 1934. During these terms of office first in the house directly across the Railway Tracks in West Willington from the old station now a Branch of The Tolland Savings Bank in a specially designed office in our home with Concrete floors for the Record Safes. In 1925 a new home was constructed on Route 32 just north of the intersection of Route 44 where one half of the basement was set aside for these offices. During those years the Records for these two offices were kept in these homes."

Editors note: The records were believed to have been kept in the general store mentioned in the previous article prior to 1917.

PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Willington Historic District Study Committee has completed their study and research involving the creation of an Historic District around the common or green on Willington Hill. A bound report complete with pictures of all the buildings around the green has been presented to the Planning and Zoning Board and the Connecticut Historical District Commission for approval.

The report represents the culmination of four years of work on the part of the committee. While there was no chairman, as such, Ernest Kline deserves a great deal of credit for the enormous amount of time and effort he put into the research of the buildings. Other members of the committee were:

Raymond Daley
Robert Helfgott
Thelma King
Mary Kline

Copies of the report will be available for sale after final approval by the above named Commissions.

PICKNIC IN JUNE

Frances and Ray Daley will host a picnic and walk in the Glass Factory Schoolhouse area on June 28th. We plan to eat a picnic lunch at 1:00 p.m. and then leave for a walk guided by Frances and Ray.

Rain date will be July 12th.

FELTING WORKSHOP

Four members of the Society attended the felting workshop at Center School in April directed by Beth Beede. Everyone completed two pieces and found the process challenging and rewarding.

Mrs. Beede has created a piece of felt art now hanging in Center School which is an abstract design of the Willington Green. The students helped her create the piece by picking the colors. She tried to pick a design that would be familiar to all the children, so she started by photographing the Willington Green. She abstracted the photograph in a drawing, selected the wool and shaped it into the design making layers of the wool until it reached the height of four inches. It was sewn between two pieces of material and then soaked in hot water until the fibers intertwine and lock together; this is the hardening process where the felt is created, she said.

"Feltmaking with images is really a lost art form that has currently been rediscovered," she said. "It is an ancient tradition, dating back to the nomadic shepherders of Central Asia. Wool was so abundant they used it not only for clothing, but also for felt shelters that could be rolled up and easily carried when they were ready to move on. The Scythians, a nomadic tribe living in Eurasia about 500 B.C. combined different colors of felt to make wall and ceiling design hangings."

Mrs. Beede has made masks and hats by shaping the thick felt over molds and plastic foam heads. Her work has been shown in New York, in New England and on the West Coast.

HOMEMADE SOAP

Harriet Marco wishes to remind members that the Society has soap for sale which is constantly being improved. It is cheaper, longer lasting, a more efficient cleaner and a bargain at 25 cents a bar. If you haven't done so already, it's worth trying. Soap will be available at the May meeting.

THE LOST IS FOUND !!

In the last issue of the HOURGLASS we announced that Mrs. Beatrice Malo Brett had written asking about a framed copy of a poem "Ode to the Backhouse" which her father had hung in the out-house at "Ye Olde Manse", now the home of Alice Cassells.

We didn't find the framed copy after asking all the previous occupants of the house, but our Librarian was able to unearth a copy of it in someone's desk at the State Library. It is too lengthy to reproduce here but it is entitled "The Passing of the Backhouse" and was written by James Whitcomb Riley.

A BOOST FOR THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE

Mrs. Brett sends her "sincere thanks" to those who donated Xmas cards. She makes gift enclosures which sell for 6 for 25¢ for the benefit of the Animal Welfare League in Westbrook.

RECENT GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

26 volumes of Conn. Register Manual dating from 1922 through 1972.

Map of the Town of Willington with the locations of all the houses in Willington in 1952 and revised in 1954 -- by John Blessington (from the family of John Blessington)

Pictures dating in the early 1900's of West Willington from Mrs. Charles Cobb of West Willington including Hansen's Store (now owned by Floyd Phelps). The ice works in South Willington. South Willington Depot Station Boarding House, South Willington Mills in S. Willington
Town Hall
Village of South Willington
Two reproduced from glass slides of S. Willington houses

GIFTS (continued)

Others are on loan which will be re-produced.

A legal notice (handwritten) notifying the voters of District No. 8 that a meeting was to be held June 25th, 1895, given by Mrs. Furness of Stafford.

LETTER FROM JASON BUGBEE (Final Installment)

There were six of the old style saw mills once running in Willington but like their owners they have passed into history. Other places still linger in my memory. At Willington Hollow, John Heath made combs; S. T. Preston did a thriving business making leather. At Daleville, Lewis Lee, an Englishman was engaged in the silk business; that was about sixty-five years ago. At Eldridge Mills, sawing lumber; grinding grain and making hand hay rakes was once done there.

In a reminiscent mood, I might mention Uncle John Fuller who was a veteran in the Revolutionary War. He was wounded at the battle of Saratoga and witnessed the surrender of Gen. Burgoyne. I just remember Uncle John who was nearly ninety seven at the time of his death.

Thomas Knowlton, another one of my neighbors, lived to be upwards of ninety years of age. His father was Col. Knowlton, who was killed at the battle of Harlem Heights. (sic) Col. Knowlton was one of Washington's favorite officers. I think that in any history of Willington these honorable men are worthy of mention.

I sincerely hope that the lady who contemplates writing a history of Willington will be successful in a large measure. I was well acquainted with her father* and regarded him as a worthy citizen of Willington. Such a History, I anticipate will be of great interest to me. Willington is the land of my birth and that of my children. Many of my kindred are buried there and to me my old home is seen through memories and tears.

From your old neighbor and friend.

J. Bugbee

Jason Bugbee letter (continued)

* The author to whom he refers is Clara Sharp Potter. Her father was Albert Sharp who lived in the house now owned by the Emil Masinda family on Kollar Road.

SYMPATHY EXTENDED

We extend our sympathy to the family of Mrs. John Blessington who died in March. Mrs. Blessington had been a member of the Society for many years and had contributed a number of articles of historical interest to the Society.

DOLLS ARE EASY TO FEED

Vivian Carlson spoke to the Society in March about the history of dolls in America and brought examples of dolls dating back before the American Revolution. The "Penny Wooden" doll, popular in the late 1700's and early 1800's was whittled out of wood and its arms and legs attached to the body by string. Most of the settlers' children played with "Penny Wooden" while the wealthier settlers in the mid 1800's bought dolls from Germany. These dolls, however, were no longer imported with the advent of World War I, and Americans began making their own dolls out of china, she said.

In the 1930s, rubber and plastic dolls were developed. Vivian displayed a popular doll of this period, a 12 inch high vinyl Shirley Temple doll, dressed in an outfit called "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm."

Dolls were brought by members and friends of the Society for hints on how to repair them and for information on their age and value. One of particular interest was a wax head doll which was in excellent condition. Vivian pointed out that dolls of wax are rarely in good condition since they are usually stored in attics or cellars where they become melted or chewed by rodents.

"What you have to remember about dolls is that they are easy to feed, and they never talk back," she said with a smile.

COMING EVENTS

- May 22 - Old-time Song Festival
7:30 p.m.
Center School
- May 28 - Informal talk at Mansfield Museum by Jan Scottron on early libraries in Mansfield
Come at noon and bring a sandwich
- May 31 - Spring Walk to Daleville
1:00 p.m.
Leave from Nick and Harriet Marco's home
- June 11 - Informal talk by Jim Barnett concerning Edwina N. Whitney, the first librarian of the Univ. of Conn. Another noon and lunch affair.
- June 28 - Picnic at the home of Frances and Fay Daley followed by a walk in the Glass Factory School House area - 1:00 p.m. - Rain date July 12th.
- September 12 - Flea Market at the Town Green sponsored by the Federated Church of Willington. The Historical Society will have a booth as usual. Workers will be needed during the day.
- September 18 - 7:30 p.m. Center School - election of President and Treasurer and planning for the year will take place.