



## THE HOURGLASS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WILLINGTON

Vol. XIII

Willington, Connecticut May 1984

No. 4

### MAY PROGRAM

#### HISTORY OF MUSIC IN NEW ENGLAND, IN SONG

In researching music for our Fourth Annual Music Festival, Harriet Marco found that the psalmody of the New England settlers was the first American music.

The early settlers sang only one tune, "Old Hundred" traced back to 1551.

"A deacon or elder would 'set the tune' at the proper pitch (if he could) and sing the psalm one line at a time, the congregation repeating what he had just sung. The lack of deacons with a good sense of pitch and an ear for music was one of the contributing factors in the gradual deterioration of congregational singing." George Beal, who lived in Willington in the early 1700's was a singing master who taught congregations in Hartford by this method. There is no record that he performed this service in Willington but it is certainly possible.

Most music was religious until the minstrel shows started about 1820. Arthur Loesser stated that "Americans like to laugh, and they like to sing. Moreover, they like to laugh when they sing."

The instruments used in the early days were the mouth organ, the accordion, guitar, drum, trumpet, Jew's harp, and the piano which was invented in 1774.

Our program will begin with a psalm which will be directed by Marlene Carr, who will "set the tune". Our harmonica trio will perform again - they have participated since the first Musical Festival in 1980 and are everybody's favorite. They are Al Hunyadi, Alec Duhansky and Alex Kuchinsky. There will be a number of other performers who will bring some of the oldest New England music back to life.

THIS PROMISES TO BE A FUN EVENING -  
COME AND BRING A FRIEND OR TWO.

TIME: 7:30 p.m.  
PLACE: Center School  
DATE: May 18, 1984

#### GRAVESTONE PRESERVATION

Our program last March was well attended. Fred Fradette showed his pictures of early eastern Connecticut gravestones and told about their carvers and the symbolism involved.

He was able to identify the carver for the Daniel Fuller stone in the Willington Hill Cemetery as Peter Buckland from Bolton.

His purpose in speaking to our Society was two-fold. Not only is he interested in the symbology of gravestones, but he is also interested in their preservation and security. Gravestones have become a collector's item and Connecticut is one of the few states that has no legislation making it a crime to take them from a cemetery and sell them to antique dealers. He has found them advertised in catalogs, much to his dismay, and has been able to prove that many of them came from Connecticut cemeteries. In most cases he has been able to get them back to the town in which they belong but those responsible cannot be prosecuted under the present law.

Fred has been responsible for drawing up new legislation to rectify this situation and it was in process of being reviewed by the Judicial Committee. We have not heard whether he was successful in seeing this passed but he is a determined man with a good cause so we are sure he will continue to pursue it to a successful conclusion.

#### ECHOES IN AMERICA

A professional British touring group came to Willington in March and portrayed life in a textile factory in England using actual recollections of people who worked in the mills early in the 20th century. The people who attended were mesmerized by the quality of the actors and actresses, their ability to bring the persons they were portraying to life and the clever use of mime and simple props. They presented a vision of the past in the direct, everyday speech of those who remembered it, not mediated in the manner of a scholarly text book. Virtually every word in the final script came from the mouths of the 40 or so contributors. What people remember most vividly was the monotonous and tightly ordered everyday routine, coupled with those unusual experiences of laughter, or grief which lifted their lives out of the ordinary. Life was not so different from that experienced in this part of the country

in the early days of the textile mills. Members of the troupe were accommodated overnight by members of the Society as well as the Library Directors. Everyone agreed it was a wonderful, worthwhile experience.

#### THE CONNECTICUT TEXTILE INDUSTRY (adapted from The Iron Glad Rag by Joseph Chopaitis)

Connecticut utilized its abundant swift streams and rivers to provide water power for its early industries, including the textile industry and the allied industries of thread, hatters etc. The early colonial attempts to produce cloth were limited because the American market for it was too small to stimulate large-scale production. However, the foundations of Connecticut's future pre-eminence as a silk producer began in Mansfield in 1759.

With the establishment of the republic, Connecticut claimed the first woolen mill in New England in 1788 at Hartford. Soon General David Humphreys built a complete factory town in Seymour in 1806 to produce woolen cloth, and his example was emulated by over 200 fulling mills spread over the state. Connecticut began cotton production successfully in 1794 in Manchester, and the cotton textile industry expanded particularly after 1807 when the price of raw cotton and foreign competition declined. factories were established at Pomfret, Killingly, Plainfield, Thompson and Woodstock. Willington's factories came along a little later beginning in about 1820 with a woolen mill.

The employees at the state's largest cotton mill, in Taftville, worked 67 hours weekly and their average pay was \$8.25 to \$9.00 per week. Taftville had only one store, allegedly company-owned, and the workers lived in company-owned tenements or boarding houses. These conditions led to a strike in 1876, and to a growing body of state labor legislation designed to improve working conditions and to reduce child labor.

In the 20th century, the 1920s and

Conn. Textile Industry (continued)

the Great Depression had a dramatic impact as mills closed or moved to the American South. As the industry withered, the last significant strike occurred statewide in 1934 when workers at 48 plants joined the national textile strike; violence ensued at Putnam and Daniclson and the strike ended inconclusively. Connecticut's textile industry (e.g. lace) today is limited to a few plants producing a lessening share of the state's wealth.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

1. Photographs from Mrs. Beatrice Malo Brett (3).
2. Records kept by Mrs. Pike relating to the A-H Clubs in Willington in the late 1950's. (Given by Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Pike).
3. Copies of 9 handwritten letters concerning the Curtis family written the years 1860 and 1869. (Given by William Utermohlen of Washington, D.C.)
4. A series of cards called DAILY REPORT - Connecticut State Dept. of Health - in which individuals are listed, the disease (measles), their nationality and their source of infection all dated March 1935. Those listed as having had measles: June Amidon, Lester Amidon, Aleck Janiak, Helen Drobney, John Goodrich, Virginia Becker, Helen Bugboe, John Davis, Charlotte Service, Jean Pobuda, Henrietta Pobuda, Mary DeCicco, Evelyn Pokorny, Mildred Downes, Arlene Pobuda, John Marko, Malcolm Amidon, Ethel Triska, Clifford Woodworth, Brigham Service, Rose Novotny, Jerry Novotny, John Service, Louise Safranek, Sidney Goodrich, Sonda Misky, Charles Wochamarka, George Bazala, Edward Ehret, Virginia Haskell, Clifford Safranek, Helen Choma, George Choma, Mary Safranek, Alice Safranek, Mary Pokorny, Eleanor Cavar, Richard Cavar, Theodore Pokorny, Helen Majnich and Mrs. Ralph Parizek had scarlet fever.  
(Given by John Dvorsky of Whitestone, N. Y.)

WITH ACHING HEART AND STREAMING EYES  
(letter written by Wm. Austin and Ann Curtiss to William and Laura Curtis 10 Nov. 1965 from Howard, Cass County, Michigan)

Dear Parents and Sister:

Once more with an aching heart and streaming eyes I take my pen in hand to try and write you a - our letter before this written since the death of our little girl in which I stated that Herbert was sick last Sabbath morning at twenty minutes just one Nov. the 5 he went to join his little sister where there is no more sickness so loving in life and not long divided by death. How can I portray to you the loneliness and desolation of our home - no little feet patterning about, no little voices chatting in our ears. Where ere we stay where ere we move we miss objects of our love. He was sick two weeks, was taken the next day after sis was buried, for the first week we had hope - he seemed to get a little better on Saturday, Sunday he got worse on Tuesday the doctor came and said his fever was of a typhoid character and treated it as such, but I don't think he understood the disease - I think it was the putrid sore throat that set in with the flux for his throat was very sore when the doctor came and I told him about it but he said it was from his stomach and did nothing for it untill Saturday night when it had become badly swollen on the out side and had gone to his lungs and rendered his breathing very difficult and very much like the croup, we could hear him breathe in any part of the house. Oh it was so hard to see him suffer when we could do nothing to relieve him. He had his senses as long as he lived and his judgement and patience were a wonder to all; he was buried on tuesday - his funeral was preached by rev. Mr. Critendon from acts second Chapter thirty ninth verse, it is from the bible and the precious promises it contains that we are to derive our comfort in this life, if I could only see you it seems to me it would be a great relief and if we were only Able we would winter with you for it is so lonely here, the

vacant chairs, the idle shoes and play things here and there continually remind us of our buried treasures. I am very much disappointed in not getting the children's likenesses for I had intended to send them to you but your disappointment is nothing to our bereavement. If you can get Herbert's likeness copied and send it to me I will be very thankful

Ann Curtis

#### PRESENT OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

President - Betty Robertson  
Vice President - Raymond Daley  
Treasurer - Francis Daley  
Secretary - Harold Weigold  
Membership Chairperson - Nancy Desmarois  
Program - Harriet Marco  
History Research Committee - Isabel Weigold  
House Research - Ernest Kline

#### TWO MEMBERS HAVE PASSED AWAY SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER

Jean McDowell, wife of Robert McDowell, was a charter member of the Society, died on March 2nd at Hartford Hospital after battling cancer for many years. Jean was secretary to the Superintendent of Schools in Willington for more than 10 years and was conscientious, expert in her technical ability and had an unusual ability to work with a variety of people and situations. She had nearly completed a large typing job for the Society which will enable us to mimeograph a wealth of information regarding those who held town offices in the earliest days - offices that were not listed in the History of Willington because there were so many of them. We extend our sympathies, though belated, to Joan's family.

Paul Bugbee of Rt. 32, W. Willington, died March 22nd at the age of 82. He was also a charter member of the Society and assisted us in developing our History by contributing numerous pictures, letters, scrapbooks, etc. which enabled us to chronicle much information that would otherwise not have been available. He spoke to the Society on at least one occasion

concerning the History of Willington and the role of the railroad in our town. His contributions to the Tolland Savings Bank of railroad memorabilia may be seen at the Depot and add a bit of nostalgia for the "good old days".

He was associated with his brother, Harold, in the automotive business in Willington for a number of years and also worked at Pratt and Whitney Aircraft.

The bell that is now located in front of the Town Hall on the Common was a result of Paul's leadership and concern. The bell had been shunted from one place to another inside the Town Hall, always in the way and unappreciated. It was Paul's feeling that it should be given a place of prominence as part of Willington's legacy and led a committee to raise money, design the pedestal on which to place the bell. The ceremony of dedication was held July 4, 1973.

We extend our sympathies to Paul's family and his several nieces and nephews.

#### SYLVIA CARMEN FUND

The Executive Committee voted to recommend to the Society that a contribution of \$50.00 be made to the Sylvia Carmen Fund. Individuals are also encouraged to contribute. Sylvia and her husband Eugene have been members of the Society for several years and have always been willing and eager to assist in many ways when the occasion arose. We are sorry to report that Sylvia has been hospitalized for over a year and is virtually helpless and unable to communicate.

Any donations you wish to make should go to the Tolland Savings Bank, West Willington, Conn. and checks should be made payable to the Sylvia Carmen Fund.

#### FALL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Tentative plans are being made to hold an Open House at the Town Hall and Old Town Clerk's Office to exhibit

Full Membership Drive (continued)

our holdings and encourage new members to join the Society, possibly in the Fall. Volunteers will be needed to sort our holdings, make labels and plan the layout of such an exhibit.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We wish to thank the following people for their assistance in making this Newsletter possible:

Elsie Hanks - typing of stencils

Nancy Desmarais - running it off and collating

Mary and Ernest Kline - for addressing and mailing

Your editor is looking for someone to take her place. She has been responsible for putting out four letters a year and has been doing this since 1979.

She is willing to continue researching and contributing historical background for articles but would like someone to edit and organize the Newsletter. Volunteers would be greatly appreciated.

COMING EVENTS

May 18 - HISTORY OF MUSIC IN NEW ENGLAND IN SONG.  
7:30 p.m. - Center School

May 19 - TAG SALE - sponsored by Willington Teacher's Association.

The Historical Society will have a table and will be selling our notepaper, tiles, books, soap, etc.

June 2 - Connecticut League of Historical Societies program in New Canaan.  
Program: Something new for old Societies - the Connecticut Archival Directory and "New England and the China Trade by Hiram Tindall, curator, Stratford Historical Society.

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
(Call I. Weigold for further information 429-2656)

June 22 to 24 - The Annual meeting and Conference of the Association for Gravestone Studies, Trinity College, Hartford, Conn.

Topics to be discussed are Early Conn. Markers and their carvers, gravestone rubbing techniques, photography, epitaphs and their sources.

(Call I. Weigold for further information)