



Volume XIV

Willington, Connecticut

May, 1965

No. 4

MEETINGS PROGRAM

Annual Musical Program

A variety of old time musical selections, including one written and published in Ashford, will be played and sung by a group, followed by sing-along requests. This has proved to be a popular program, and we hope that you will come and enjoy some "live" entertainment.

COME AND BRING A FRIEND

Time: 7:30 P.M.

Place: Center School

Date: May 17, 1965

350th Anniversary

Betty Robertson has received a letter from Wilson H. Laude, Chairman of the Connecticut Historical Commission, which says, in part:

"As you are aware, the State of Connecticut will celebrate its 350th anniversary from May 1, 1965 to April 26, 1966 (the first session of the General Court). This period will be a time of sharing with all our citizens many of the events and activities that

make Connecticut a "State of Celebration".

As part of the celebration, Connecticut's history and the role we've played in our nation's development will be celebrated under the theme of "350 Years of People and Progress". Radio and television commercials are being developed.

To involve as many of Connecticut's citizens as possible in this celebration and to spread the spirit of history and celebration throughout our state, Governor O'Neill has asked each Mayor and First Selectman to establish a task force to determine how they can best participate. Each town will have the opportunity to highlight its past, present and future.

Our First Selectman, Dan Avery, has appointed the following people to serve on the task force: Linda Makuch, Carl Caiki, Phil Monte, William Bailey, Roberta Helfgott, Ernest Eline, Thelma King, Ray and Frances Daley, Christine Gooding, Denise Ferrari, Janice Johnston, Elizabeth Robertson, and Israel and Harold Helfgott.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography of Connecticut History is being compiled by the Committee for New England Bibliography, Inc. This Bibliography will make book, article, and pamphlet titles readily available for scholars, students and the general public, to ensure that the heritage of the Nutmeg State is passed to future generations. If you are interested in donating to this project, please see Betty Robertson.

COMING EVENTS

- May 17, 1985 Historical Society meeting - annual musical program.
- May 18, 1985 Walk Through the Centuries Tour of East Granby Homes for more information, please contact Betty Robertson.
- May 19, 1985 Jenfield Grist Mill will be open 12:00 - 4:00 and every Sunday thereafter.

PICKLE JAR

As a postscript to the article in the last Hourglass concerning the Pickle Jar donated to the Society by Mr. and Mrs. Donald Dionne; it has been discovered that the Pickle Jar was called a Cathedral Pickle Jar. They are pictured on page 214 of our Willington History although it would appear that the color was usually amber. The one we now have is a light green but definitely matches the style of those pictured.

SCHOOLBOY DISCOVERS GLASS.

Charles Lenart, a fourth grader at Hall School, was digging in his front yard on Eldredge Hills Road and discovered a large round chunk of light green slag with air bubbles visible. He thought it was a rock and brought it to school as part of his rock collection. It would appear to be a piece of Willington Glass and Charles has agreed to let the Willington Historical Society exhibit it when it so desires.

TAPE RECORDER PURCHASED

The Society voted to purchase a tape recorder in order to begin collecting oral histories from residents of Willington. Mrs. Georgianna Booth has agreed to interview some of our long time residents. These histories will be stored as part of our library collection and can be made available to students and residents.

If anyone has any suggestions regarding interviewees please contact Georgianna Booth or Isabel Weigold. This will be an ongoing project which should be a valuable addition to our archives.

STATUE OF LIBERTY FAIR AT HALL SCHOOL

The Historical Society had a table at the Craft Fair at Hall School on April 27th. Ten percent of the profits were donated to the Statue of Liberty Fund to restore the statue on Ellis Island where many of Willington's early residents entered this country in the early 1900's. About \$70.00 was realized from this table.

THE WILLINGTON GLASS COMPANY

By Harry Hall White Taken from the Antiques Magazine August, 1961.

Collectors generally agree that some of our most interesting glass was made in Connecticut. They also deplore the lack of specific data regarding it. Consequently, when I was given opportunity to study some documents pertaining to the Willington Company, I set to work to unravel the story of this Connecticut glass house with the greatest interest. The documents were made accessible to me by Henry E. Knowlton, a life time resident of that vicinity and a discriminating collector. This article records the results of my efforts.

Just about a year after the establishment of the Coventry works, in 1814 or 1815, a group was organized to make glass at near by Willington. Active operation apparently began in 1815. The stockholders were Frederick Rose from Coventry and Roderick Rose.

Willington Glass (continued)

Stephen Brigham Jr., Elisha Brigham, Spafford Brigham, John Burner, and Ebenezer Root, all from Mansfield, which is just south of Willington and east of Coventry. Stephen Brigham Jr. sold his 500 interest in January 1815, and Abel Johnson Jr., who is recorded as one of the organizers and first proprietor, was also a short time associate. Several family names that occur in connection with the Willington works are already associated with other Connecticut glass houses, and genealogical investigation reveals close family affiliations among the companies of Manchester, Coventry, Willington, Westford and Ellenville, N.Y.

Regarding this first period, from about 1815 to 1847, the records I have studied reveal little beyond what has been written in glasshouse history. Concerning the subsequent period they are nearly complete, containing the agreement of organization, stock subscriptions, stock transfers, and minutes of every meeting from 1847 to 1872. However, they omit all mention of glasshouse equipment which the enterprise must have had to start operating, and leave us only to assume that the entrepreneurs bought the original Willington outfit complete, with lears, furnaces, stables, and all the paraphernalia of a full-fledged, active glass manufactory.

From John Herricks' Recollections we have this description of the glass works as he knew it:

"The factory consisted of a large square building in which was the furnace containing the melting pots, or crucibles, as I suppose they would now be called, either four or six in number, but I think only four, as one of the pots would accommodate two or three of the blowers of the bottles. On two or three sides of the furnace building were long, low sheds for the annealing ovens, the drying ovens for the wood which had to be thoroughly kiln dried, and the mixing oven, where the material was mixed and heated to a red heat before being carried to the pits in the furnace. The pots as I recall then would hold from 40 to 50 gallons of melted glass, which had to be renewed every night and meant lots of hard work, and in the long winter evenings

was a nice warm place for the boys of the neighborhood to gather to watch the process of making of the glass.

The material used in the manufacture of the glass was two kinds of sand, the fine sand from Esq. Daniel Glazier's gold mine in his pasture at the foot of the hill, just across the meadow east of James and Timothy Holt's, that being the only sand pit in the town suitable for any kind of mason work. Esq. Glazier always charged a good price, and the glass company used large quantities of it every year. The coarser red sand was obtained from the sand hills in the east part of Vernon, which had to be drawn by team.

The other principal ingredients were wood ashes unbleached and salt. The ashes were gathered usually in the spring, when the farmers had a good supply and were willing to sell them. Many of the farmers, like my father, refused to sell them, considering them worth more as a fertilizer for their land.

While wood was the only fuel in use ashes could be readily obtained, but many years later, after coal came to be used, the company had to cover a much larger territory to obtain their supply.

The amount of wood required was such that at that early day much of the original forest chestnut had already been cut off. The process of making of the bottles was interesting. Long blow pipes were used, some six feet long, one end fitted conc shaped, round and smooth, to be inserted in the mouth; the other end of the pipe was thrust in the pot of melted glass, withdrawn quickly and the glass at end of the pipe was revolved quickly upon an iron plate, while the man at the other end blew through the pipe till it was evenly expanded to such size as required to fill the mold when it was placed in the mold, which was closed by stepping upon a spring, and the glass was then blown till the mold was filled. It was then removed, laid upon a frame, and with an iron dipped in water touched on the neck of the bottle a light tap would snap

the neck, and a quick movement of the hand would reverse the bottle and the workman would touch it with the end of his pipe, pick it up, insert the end of the neck in the furnace and then finish it off with a pair of pincers fitted for the purpose. The bottle was then taken on the end of a small iron rod by a boy and carried to the annealing oven, where it was gradually allowed to cool, which required several hours. The bottles manufactured were for the most part the old-fashioned quart jugs used in the olden times as liquor bottles, in the time of the use of Santa Cruz rum which was up to near that time in v very common use, and a flat, square bottle about two by three inches and about five inches deep, known as snuffs, in common use among the snuff manufacturers for yellow snuff in the retail trade".

HOW THE TEDDY BEAR GOT HIS NAME

-- A Fable by Dere Boles

Once upon a time, God asked all the animals to meet him at the edge of the forest. He had to choose one animal for a very important position, and each beast had a chance to be the special, chosen one.

So all the furry, scaley, feathery, sleek, fuzzy, bumpy, big and little animals lined up at the edge of the woods. God paced back-and-forth, up-and-down, examining each of his precious creatures.

"I have decided," he finally announced, "to give a special gift to the children of man. These little ones grow up more slowly than your own animals babies, and while they are growing, they play with objects they call 'toys'. I often watch them. It gives me great pleasure to watch the children play."

God stopped for a moment in front of the handsome fox. None of the other animals stirred. Even the wind stopped whispering through the leaves.

"I want to give the children a special toy," said God, thoughtfully, "in the shape of one of my beautiful animal creatures. This toy will be a companion to any child who is lonely. He will be my gift to man."

The fox sat up straight and flicked

his bushy tail so it shone like red gold in the mornin' sun.

"The animal I choose for this honor," continued God, "must be humble."

The fox looked down at his front paws, suddenly embarrassed, then tucked his fine tail between his legs and ran off into the woods.

"He must be soft and furry," God said.

At that, the snake slithered away the turtle lumbered off.

"He must be round all over, with no sharp edges or points."

The hooved and antlered animals backed out of the line. The pointed-eared wolf raced away into the forest.

"He must love to play, and be willing to do so for hours, just for the sake of having fun."

With those words, most of the rest of the line faded, away, into the shadows, disappointed not to be chosen, but eager to see whom God would pick.

Only the bear and the otter remained standing at the edge of the forest, flashing silly grins at God and at each other. Both were soft and fuzzy and round and playful.

"And," finished God, "most important of all, he must be huggable, wanting only to hug and be hugged."

The bear reached out his shaggy paws, ready to embrace the otter in a warm bear hug. But the otter turned on his back, laughing, and slid his sleek body along the dewy, morning grass, down the hill, and away. Now, the bear stood alone.

"You, Brother Bear!" called God. "Are you ready to be my gift to the children of man?"

Humbly, the bear nodded his head.

"Then so it shall be, henceforth and forever," proclaimed the booming voice of God. "I shall call you 'Theodore Bear', because 'Theodore' means 'gift of God'. And you will be a symbol of love and understanding to all men."

And that, my friend, no matter what else you may have heard, is how the "teddy" bear got his name.

(Spring 1964)