



MAY PROGRAM

At the May 16th meeting, Thomas David King will sing a selection of songs in keeping with the celebration of Connecticut's 350 Years celebration.

Thom came to Willington at the young age of six weeks, graduated from the Willington schools and Windham High School. In 1978 he graduated from the Hartt College and did graduate work the following year. He has been a frequent soloist with the Connecticut Opera, a member of the Opera Express, and this year with the Connecticut Opera Touring Company. He has sung with the Santa Fe Opera, the Texas Opera Theater, The Green Mountain Guild, The Chautauqua Opera, The North Carolina Opera, and many local opera and church groups. Thom is married to Shazy Hopfenberg of Providence who is presently singing with North Carolina Opera.

COME AND BRING A FRIEND

TIME: 7:30 PM

PLACE: Center School Auditorium

DATE: May 16, 1986

APOLOGY

Apologies are in order for the past two copies of the Newsletter. Due to technical difficulties, the printing was below our usual standard. We hope to have a readable Newsletter to send you this time.

GRAVEYARD PHOTOGRAPHING PROJECT

Marcella Borkowski, Isabel Weighold and Harold Weigold will be working on photographing and mapping the gravestones in the oldest Willington cemeteries now that the weather conditions make it possible.

Jim Slater of Mansfield has photographed many of the Willington stones and identified their carvers for a book he is writing which will include cemeteries in the northeastern Connecticut area. He has made his photographs and other information available to the Willington committee which has been of great value to our work. Mr. Slater has offered to help us in any way he can since there are many more stones which he did not identify for his book but he recognized them as being similar to those he had seen elsewhere.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Georgianna Booth has announced that she has been interviewing Willington residents and getting their recollections on tape. These tapes will be transcribed and the tapes made available to the Willington Library so that interested persons can hear them. They will also be made available to the school children so that they can hear about Willington first hand, through the eyes of those who lived here in an earlier time.

The tapes will be a valuable addition to the Society's holdings and a wonderful source of information for future generations.

ORAL HISTORY (continued)

Georgianna reported that the recorder was repaired recently due to a malfunction but the cost was covered by the warrantee.

BROWNIES LEARN ABOUT WILLINGTON

The Historical Society will make their slides of "Old Willington" available to the Brownies in May for a project they are doing. The emphasis will be on how Willington's roads got their names. Since many of the road names were taken from the first people who lived on the road, the pictures will include the houses in which these families lived, such as:

Cisar Road - named after the Cisars who lived in the Marion Potz home.

Pinney Hill Road - named after the Pinneys who lived in the Rovozzo place.

Ruby Road - named for the Rubys who lived where John and Nancy (Avery) Pacyna live now.

Latham Road - was named for the Latham family who lived on the corner of Latham and Bert Latham Roads where the Treibers now live.

The list is too long to include all of them, but when you begin to look at the names you realize how many roads have followed the trend.

OLD HOUSES PUBLICATION

Isabel Weigold has been working on a new book which will be ready for publication in a few years. The subject of this work will be the old houses of Willington and the people who lived in them. Researching through old deeds trying to pin down when houses were built is an arduous task at best, and often leaves one lost in the records with no clear idea of dates, so guesswork, or word of mouth, or looking at the structure itself is the only way to find an approximate building date.

Willington is fortunate to have so many of the early houses standing, but little is known about their history. This book will be an attempt to incorporate as much information as can be obtained for future reference, and a photographic history as well.

Marion Doran, who has designed our note-paper and done illustrations for previous publications of our society has agreed to do

some sketches of our houses and some detail sketching of interior features that are unique to the house. Harold Weigold will be photographing some exteriors of homes.

If anyone is interested in helping with this project, please contact us.

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

1. Two quart size milk bottles from the Gardiner Hall Jr. Co., South Willington, CT. in excellent condition - given by Mrs. Barbara Ellison of Willington.

2. Two scrap books - one dating from 1935-1947 mostly dealing with WWII newspaper clippings. A few of the articles concern Willington people.

One dating from 1950-1951 dealing mostly with Willington people.

These were given by Mrs. Barbara Ellison. She had been given the scrapbooks by someone in Coventry who collects memorabilia and felt that they should be returned to Willington.

GOLD SEALS

Gold Seals for the 1985 awards of the Connecticut League of Historical Societies for placing on your copy of the History of Willington are available at no charge from the Town Clerks Office or from the Library. Isabel Weigold will also have them at the meeting.

TOWN PICNIC ON THE GREEN

The final event commemorating 350 years in Connecticut will be the first annual Town Picnic on the green, sponsored by the 350 CC Task Force Headed by Linda Makuch. This will be held on Sunday, May 25th. Watch for further information on what we hope will become an annual affair. On July 4th in 1868 a Town Picnic was held at Holt's Grove in the Hollow (East Willington). From 150-200 people were assembled. School children sang and recited and a cannon boomed. Tables were festooned and decorated presenting an elegant appearance. This will be an opportunity to get to know your neighbors!

PEN PICTURES - TOWN HILL (continued)

by Jennie Church
 taken from Stafford Press
 July 24, 1930

The old red schoolhouse was occupied for over a century, until 1913, when the new one was built. Across two mowing lots and the road was the schoolhouse moved and made into a bungalow by Frederick Tyler. The little red and sometimes white schoolhouses were a feature in each district, you came in through the entry where there was a pail of water and a dipper, from which the children took turns in drinking. In the winter the pail was removed to a corner bench in the school room, which was always wet from drippings as well as the floor, from the entry was a door leading to the woodshed, where great chunks of wood were piled. In the center of the schoolroom was the stove, which glowed red hot in winter and in warm weather was the receptacle for apple cores and chestnut shucks. A small bell rung by the teacher called the children together. A ferule lay on the desk and was a part of the regime. Boys sent after a birch to be used on their legs often cut the birch in various places, so that it soon broke and the flogging ceased. Each district had a committee and a school tax was required.

The teachers' wages were small, not over a dollar and a half a week being paid seventy years and more ago. They had to "board around" to supplement the salary, and according to the number of children the time acquired was apportioned. It seems a just way to tax according to the number of children who derive benefit from schools. From place to place the "schoolma'am" moved about and took "pot luck" with the family. Into the parlor bedroom, with the windows frosted white in winter, went the teacher, and usually one of the children shared her room.

Pupils of all ages attended school, and the three R's, reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic were considered the essential part of school work, and also spelling. There were some unruly, large boys of ages from 16 to 20 years of age, who went winter terms. We are told of one teacher, and she was a good one, who sometimes went home at noon leaving

boys so tall she had to look up to them, in their seats to eat lunch, and if told to remain there they did. The father of two boys, men grown, told the teacher if they did not behave to flog them and if she could not manage them he would hold them while she gave the punishment. There was usually a favorite, that is one who excelled in demeanor, and was called "teacher's pet."

Most of the children came from a distance, some of them miles. There were usually large families, but the children cared little for the cold, dressed in warm homemade clothes, heavy knitted stockings and mittens and fur caps with earlaps, usually of coonskin, which the boys tanned and their mothers made.

After badly drifted snowstorms the farmers broke out the roads to the schoolhouse with their ox-teams with no thought of pay. The rosy cheeked, happy children trudged through rain sleet and snow, and down icy hills, with a dinner pail bumping along and the single sled or double ripper dangled behind, or went zipping down the hills.