



MAY PROGRAM

The subject of our May meeting will be "Old Phonographs". William Kocher Jr. of Vernon and Mrs. Vaughn Shaw of Willington will show phonographs and demonstrate their use. The first practical working phonograph, able to reproduce and record the human voice and other sounds was invented by Thomas Alva Edison in 1876 and patented in 1877. The first grooved disc-type record was made in 1887 by Emile Berliner; thus we will be celebrating one hundred years and more of recording history. If you have at home any acetate or clay-type 78 RPM records that you would like to have played, please bring them to the meeting and share them with us.

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Center School

DATE: May 15, 1987

NOMINATIONS

A nominating committee will be appointed at the May meeting for the offices of President and Treasurer, to be voted on in September. A volunteer for Program Chairman would be very welcome.

WILLINGTON INDUSTRIES (continued) - taken from a thesis written in 1976 by John Goodrich, a graduate of Yale University who lived in Willington during his childhood and school years.

GLASS FACTORY

Glass manufacturing was a very important industry in Willington during the first half of the nineteenth century. A Glass Factory was established in 1815 by Deacon Turner who also owned a glass factory in Coventry, Connecticut. His reason for building in what is now the Glass Factory District of Willington was the location nearby of a supposedly large supply of white sand which was essential to be production of white glass. Unfortunately, this supply proved to be only a surface pocket. Since the construction of a glass factory required considerable capital it was found expedient, after the pocket of white sand had been exhausted, to haul a coarser red sand by team from the sand hills on the east side of Vernon, Connecticut, which was eight miles distant. This switch to red sand resulted in changing the color of the glass produced from white to brown. The finished items made from this glass were mostly bottles, although prior to the change in the color, experiments had been made in the manufacture of plate glass. Other materials used by this factory were wood ashes, salt, and chestnut wood as fuel. Two of these items, wood ashes and the chestnut wood were supplied by the local farmers.

After the middle of the nineteenth century, this glass factory, like so many others in New England, went out of business because it was unable to compete with those operating further west. One of the reasons

GLASS FACTORY (continued)

behind this situation lay in the change from wood to coal as a source of fuel.

The only other industry in this district was a saw and shingle mill located at Sharp's Mills. Captain Sharp, the owner of the business, and a carpenter by trade later add a grist mill and an undertaking business for which he made coffins at his home. (Note: This is where Rita and Emil Masinda now live). These businesses were later taken over by Albert Sharp who gave up the saw mill business and concentrated on grain trading. After having changed hands in 1895, the mill was sold in 1903 to Mr. Masinda who operated a grist mill and a button factory in the building until it burned down in 1906. The recent history of this section from 1906 is treated under the history of "The Button Industry".

SOUTH WILLINGTON

Around 1820, the Willimantic River in the southwest section of the town was wing dammed and used as a source of power for the operation of a grist mill and a saw mill. Later around 1830 a woolen mill was established at this site by a partnership consisting of Johnson and Phillips. It operated until washed away in the flood of 1848. The development of this section to the present economic structure will be dealt with under the history of "The Cotton Thread Industry."

From this point on, in order to bring this coverage of this town's economic development up to date, the method of treatment by regions will be abandoned and a more simplified method of treatment by industries and businesses will be used. As a rule, wherever industries and businesses are considered in this paper the firms of the fabricating industries will be treated before the firms of the service industries.

LUMBER INDUSTRY

The lumber industry is without doubt the oldest industry in Willington today. As has already been noted, saw mills were among the first productive establishments in the town. The early type sawmill was a stationary establishment which, due to its dependence upon water power, was built near a stream. According to records, the first saw mill in Willington was erected around 1727. Subsequent years saw the establishment of mills in other parts of the

town until by the turn of the century there were six mills in operation.

Nearly all the produce of these mills, until around the middle of the 19th century was consumed locally due to the lack of an adequate means of overland transportation. In the 1840's the laying of the Central Vermont Railroad through West and South Willington remedied this situation by supplying relatively cheap transportation to outside markets. An almost immediate result was the shipping of native ash lumber to New London and thence to California to be used in ship building. A further benefit realized by the wood cutters more than the lumber producers, lay in the market for fire wood created by the railroad itself, which had not begun to use coal for its engines at that time. After 1840, the railroad supplied still another market in the form of a demand for chestnut railroad ties. Some of these were cut in the saw mills, but as the sources near the water mills were used up it became profitable to hew them out by hand right on the lot.

This job was performed by farmers as well as men who specialized in buying chestnut logs and making ties. From 1880 to 1900 the average price paid these men for a tie was seven cents. Although after 1870, portable steam saw mills gradually displaced the old stationary water mills and facilitated the movement of the saw mill to the wood lot, many ties continued to be hewed by hand until 1901.
(to be continued).

OLD BAPTIST CHURCH RECORDS

The American Baptist Historical Society, upon our request, recently made copies of all the records they had concerning Willington's Baptist Church established in 1828. These records were originally given to the Baptist Historical Society by Rev. Edwin Sundt in 1931. They consist of the following:

1. "A History of the Baptist Church in Willington, Connecticut 1828-1928" by Edwin E. Sundt 1931 (uncorrected copy). (This is essentially the same as the book published in 1932 written by Sundt).
2. Original records of the Baptist Church of Christ in Willington, Connecticut dating from 1828 to December 29, 1844. (This includes baptismal records, additions and dismission of members, those excluded and those

OLD BAPTIST CHURCH RECORDS (continued)

who died, as well as records of proceedings of the church.)

3. Copy of the first Manual of the Baptist Church which includes a brief history of the church on Village Hill whose pastor was David Lillibridge, and a list of original members.

4. Minutes of the Baptist Ecclesiastical Society dating from October 30, 1828 to July 1866.

5. Lists of marriages and deaths from the "Christian Secretary" a weekly newspaper published at Hartford for the Connecticut Baptist Convention dating from 1829 to 1845.

6. Funeral records of the Rev. Elisha Cushman, 2d - copied from records of the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, dating from 1840 to 1845. This record is valuable since it tells the cause of death and indicates relationships. In some cases where the present gravestones are badly eroded this record clarifies the dates and ages at time of death.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to work on updating the present Chronology. We need Typists and persons to record information on cards. Most of the information has been collected but we need help in sorting and making decisions about what should be included. We need a person to act as a chairperson. Please call Isabel Weigold if you are interested. She will help anyone who is interested in taking on this project.

CURRENT RESEARCH

A book on old houses and historic buildings of Willington is still in the research stage. Approximately 66 houses have been, or are in the process of being researched, to date. All houses which are still standing and which appeared on the 1869 map are being researched, as well as people who lived in them through the years. If you have information about any of the old buildings in town or wish to know if your house is (or has been) researched, you may contact Isabel Weigold - 429-2656. We are also looking for volunteers to work on this project.