



THE HOURGLASS

MAY PROGRAM

Allen Brownlee, the author of our continuing series of articles on his experiences growing up in Willington, will be guest speaker for our May meeting to be held May 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Center School. Allen will show moving pictures of Willington taken in the 1920's which should help spark the memories of some of our older residents.

Letters have been sent to Willington residents inviting them to attend this meeting and to share with us their recollections of Willington. Anyone having pictures or other memorabilia are asked to bring them along. Selected photographs belonging to the Society will also be displayed.

HISTORIC DISTRICT REPORT

Clinton Press has completed the 2nd edition of the Historic District Report which had originally been printed in 1981. It contains pictures and descriptions of the buildings on the Town Common and was published when that area was declared an historic district. 150 copies are now available for sale. Anyone interested in purchasing a copy may contact Isabel Weigold or Betty Robertson.

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

Handforged hammer head - made in Willington given by Harry LaBonte - March 1988.

12 framed Pictures, autograph book, wedding announcement (1873) concerning the Williams

and Kies families who lived in South Willington sometime between 1860's and 1880's - given by Salmon Historical Society Granby, CT. Edith Williams and her sister Ruth, formerly of Granby, CT., had given these to the Granby Historical Society who, in turn, gave them to us. March - 1988.

A photo of Willington Historical Society members in 1973 - given by Mrs. Raymond Daley.

A photocopy of five photos of the Safranek family - given by Paul Kotrady - March 1988.

UNCLES, AUNTS AND OTHERS

by Allen Brownlee

1974

One thing that always impressed me as a child was the difference between two of my uncles. These were not my parent's direct relatives, they were my uncles by marriage. One was named Brackett - "Will" Brackett - and he was one of the most respected men of our community. He married my father's sister, Annie, when she first came over from the north of Ireland, and he became a foreman in the winding room of the Hall Thread Co. in Willington. He was also one of the top deacons in the church; The Federated Church in the village of South Willington. I remember that he was pleasant, but very firm.

Uncle Will was a little better off than

UNCLES, AUNTS AND OTHERS (continued)

the rest of my relatives, and he had one of the first phonographs in town. It was the old Edison type that had the roll on it; the cylinder, and it certainly wasn't hi-fi, but this was when I was so very young that it didn't matter to me; I was fascinated by the way it worked. Later he got the kind that played the 78 rpm bakelite Victor records, and one of the first things I remember about going to his house on Sundays, or for Thanksgiving dinner, was that I always asked if he would play for me, "The Preacher and the Bear." That song is still heard occasionally; about the Preacher that got chased up a tree with the bear at the foot of it, waiting for him to come down, or fall down, and the Preacher said, "Oh Lordie, if you can't help me, then oh! please, don't you help that bear."

He also had some Harry Lauder records and these always pleased my father; he got a kick out of Harry, who of course was a Scotsman, and had that old Scotch burr. One of the songs that I remember best was "Breakfast in Bed on Sunday Morning," and you know, I have that record - one of the few that I saved out of all of the old records I had access to. "Oh it's great to lie in your bed on Sunday morning." And another one I have is "When I meet McKay," and it went like this: "When I meet McKay and McKay meets me, I greet McKay and then McKay greets me. I like McKay, for McKay's true blue; and it's only when his ship comes in that I have one or two." I'm not sure this record came from Uncle Will because he was a teetotaler; which brings me to my other Uncle, Aunt Lizzie's husband, "Gib."

Gib Spicer was a boss on "the farm," so-called. The Gardiner Hall Jr. Co., who owned much of the village of South Willington had a big dairy farm, and they delivered milk to the people in the town, and naturally they had to have a lot of hay and grain for the cattle, and then they raised vegetables that they sold in the local general store, which they also owned. I later worked on the farm, and in the store, too, during summer vacations from high school. Anyway, "Gib" Spicer, Gilbert was his name, was in charge of the farm, and he had quite a few people working for him, with horses and equipment. He had one problem; sometimes he drank too much.

Now I never heard my father at any time refer

to whisky, or my mother either, but I do remember that when Gib Spicer had been drinking quite a bit, he would stop at the house and my mother would get him a cup or two of strong tea so that his hangover would wear off. When my father came home after work, my mother would tell him that Gib had been there; that he had "had a few too many." That was the expression - "he had a few too many," and it was the way the situation was referred to, not that he was drunk, or that he was "hung over" or "stoned", or anything of that kind.

My father liked an occasional shot of whiskey, at least that's what I suspected he had once in a long while when he came in when it was real cold, or when he was tired. He'd go down in the cellar and say "I'm going down to have a little medicine." He never let me go down with him and I never found where he kept his bottle. I do know from talking with him afterward that it was Golden Wedding whiskey, and he also liked 100 proof Old Overhold, which he had for special occasions.

I had two other uncles on my father's side - their names were Robert and William. I never saw Robert - he passed away a few years before I was born, and I understand he died from cirrosis of the liver. He was the black sheep of the family. There were six altogether; three brothers and three sisters. He was the one that drank too much. My mother's uncle, William, was the oldest one, and he worked in the thread mill with my father.

Because Robert Brownlee never married, and although William did, he had no children, it turned out that I was the only one to carry on the Brownlee name through children and grandchildren. Since when I was in grammar school I had plural pneumonia and was just barely saved by Doc Converse, it's lucky there are any Brownlees around.

It's interesting to note that all six brothers and sisters who left Ireland one by one when they were teenagers; left their parents there and came through Ellis Island to the little town of Willington, Conn., are all now buried there in the "hill" cemetery. There is one big granite monument, and on it is cut only this; "Brackett-Spicer-Brownlee," but there are marker stones flush with the ground on each grave, with the name, and year

UNCLES, AUNTS AND OTHERS (continued)

of birth and death. I can remember going down to that cemetery when the children were young, with my mother, my wife Dinny, and Johnny, Bobby, Billy and Judy, and the boys would go find the grave markers under which their namesakes were buried, and they would stand on the stones and say, "Here's Robert Brownlee" and "here's John!" and "Here's William!" Of course the last one to be buried there was my mother, Gertrude Allen Brownlee, who died in her 92nd year, and lies next to my father John.

(Next installment: Sunday Brunch).

FLEA MARKET

The Willington Federated Church will hold the annual Flea Market on the town green on Saturday, September 10 (rain date September 11), and as in former years, the Historical Society will have a booth. Volunteers for helping before, during, and after the Flea Market will be more than welcome. Please contact Isabel Weigold or Betty Robertson.

NOMINATIONS

A nominating committee for the offices of Vice-President and Secretary will be appointed at the May Meeting.

COMING EVENTS

- May 20 - 7:30 P.M. Center School
Allen Brownlee will remember
the Willington that was.
- May 21 - 10:00 A.M. graveyard Tour;
Tolland Burying Ground,
Tolland, and Nathan Hale
Cemetery, Coventry, CT.
- Sept. 10 - Federated Church Flea Market
on the town green.