



# THE HOURGLASS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WILLINGTON

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**MAY PROGRAM - MAY 19, 1989**

**ORIGINAL PLAY ABOUT WILLINGTON'S  
EARLY YEARS - written by  
John Blessington**

You may recall that last November the Historical Society was asked to present a program appropriate for the 350th celebration of Connecticut's Fundamental Orders. Marge Brown and John Blessington volunteered to see what they could do. They have come up with this play which, if it is well-received at this meeting, may be shown elsewhere in town. Members of the society will read or recite the various roles after a presentation by Marge Brown on town history and points to look for in the play. The play is still being written as we go to press. It is an informative and amusing vignette of life in 1727 and we are sure that you will enjoy it and perhaps have some input to offer. Come and bring a friend!

**Date: May 19, 1989  
Place: Center School  
Time: 7:30 P.M.**

**FOND MEMORIES OF VILLAGE LIFE  
1915-1927**

**by Beatrice Malo Brett**  
(Continued from March Issue)

Many long freight trains went through on the Central Vermont Railroad (C.V. - nicknamed "Creeping Vermin") but there were a few passenger trains which also carried the mail. Lots of cinders flying when I was sent to Stafford Springs each Saturday for piano lessons at the home of Miss Eaton. In addition to sheet music, I always came home laden with library books. I've always loved to read and there was no library in South Willington until the completion of the new school which I never attended.

My eight years in grammar school were spent in the two-room school, four grades and one teacher in each room, hours nine to twelve and one to four, inadequate heating, and the two privies out back. Unlike the present day, the school never closed on account of snow. We walked through the drifts, treading carefully if paths were icy, and usually arriving wet and cold. Sometimes when the classroom became uncomfortably

cold, the teacher would permit us to run up and down the aisles to restore circulation.

In June the graduation exercises for all the district schools were held in the Hall Memorial Church with a program of speeches, memorized recitations by graduates, and awarding of prizes to the girls for sewing and to boys for drawing. Those of us who went on to enter Windham High School in Willimantic were transported by bus driven by Art Devereau whose wonderful personality and careful driving "made our day." Needless to say, we never missed a day on account of bad weather. During prior years, high school students rode on the train.

#### A Few Other Recollections of By-gone Days:

Homemade Valentines and homemade May baskets; Miss Dunning coming to school to teach music and singing; church suppers and socials; the big Christmas tree in the Sunday School room with a filled stocking for each child; the Fourth of July ice cream, homemade by grandmother Denman; no ice cream, cigarets, or beer were sold in South Willington! movies shown for a time in the room above the general store and post office with my Dad operating the projector (held much too infrequently for my taste). Someone undertook the starting of a Girl Scout Troop which apparently did not arouse much interest as it was quite shortlived. Also, for one season we girls attended cooking classes and prepared meals in the kitchen at the new school, I believe under the auspices of a member of the Farm Bureau.

For real excitement there were well-attended basketball games in the school gym when local boys competed with out-of-town

teams.

When I became somewhat older I was allowed to occasionally attend the dances at the Bohemian Hall on Saturday evenings. I was surprised to find that some of the girl's fathers were the best dancers.

On Sundays we regularly attended Sunday School and church services, where I eventually became a member of the choir; rehearsals were under the direction of Mrs. Henry Hall.

One summer it was arranged that our Sunday School class go to a church school camp in Northfield, Mass. With our suitcases and a couple of adults, we piled into that school bus with our favorite driver, Art Devereau at the wheel. We spent the week in tents in a wooded grove where there was a building housing a kitchen and open-air dining room which proved to be unsuitable so we had meals in the nearby church building then attended daily services and meetings. During one of these, Madam Homer, the opera star, sang for the audience.

That week of "tenting tonight" was my first and last experience! Besides, we all came down with diarrhea and had to hurriedly climb a hill carrying flashlights at night to reach the much-needed facility (privey to you)! I rather doubt that the religious experiences which were the purpose of the seminar overcame these less than welcome aspects of camping.

In closing, with the passage of time, no more will one see our South Willington village as it once was. At the risk of being overly sentimental may I say that I feel blessed for having had a very happy childhood and

the best of all parents, good schooling, a fulfilling business career in Hartford, a happy, prosperous marriage, and delightful travels abroad with my late husband.

**Editor's Note:**

Thank you, Beatrice, for this nostalgic and charming contribution to the "Hourglass".

Anyone wishing to make a similar contribution to this column should contact Thelma King or Isabel Weigold.

**COMMENTS FROM A READER:**

Elizabeth Martin of Alexandria, Va. writes: "First I want to say that the Hourglass continues to be one of the most interesting historical/genealogical publications that I get. I am fascinated with the information on the Windham Textile and History Museum, and think Beatrice Brett's 'Fond Memories of Village Life' are delightful."

**HUBBEL LOOMIS MEMOIRS COMPLETED**

The transcription of Hubbel Loomis's Memoirs has been completed and copies may be obtained at a cost of \$6.00 plus postage. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy should contact Isabel Weigold. There are a limited number of copies available at this time but more can be made if there is enough interest.

Loomis recounts his life from childhood to the age of 85 years. Of particular interest to us is his first-hand account of the reaction of his congregation to his announcement that he had, upon much research and reflection, decided to renounce sprinkling as a method of baptism. Half the congregation made the same

decision and within a year had built a new church across the Town Common. This building (built in 1828) is still standing and is now the Federated Church of Willington on the corner of Rt. 74 and 320.

**REDEDICATION OF THE FEDERATED CHURCH**

**MAY 21, 1989 AT 10:00 A.M.**

The Historical Society has been asked to participate in the Rededication of the Federated Church ceremony which is being conducted Sunday, May 21st at 10:00 A.M. Isabel Weigold will give a brief history of the church and it's influence over the years.

The ceremony is being conducted as a result of extensive renovations, painting and repairs made possible through provisions in the wills of Floyd and Fern Callward.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ON A NUMBER OF PROJECTS**

Workers are needed during the summer to review our holdings to determine which items will be suitable for display in September (during the Flea Market).

We have some volunteers but more are needed both for the organizational process and to supervise the display during the day.

Plans are underway to ask residents to display their private collections, such as buttons made in Willington, Willington Glass, flat irons, hats, photographs and other similar collections.

We also need volunteers to help on the Willington Hill Cemetery photography project. Harold Weigold has devised a gridding

plan to divide the old cemetery into sections which will then be useful in plotting the location of stones as they are photographed. This will probably take four or five hours. We have one photographer, Marcella Borkowski, but she would appreciate some help.

The photographs will be put into an album and preserved as a record of the stones as they are presently. Faces of many of the stones have already eroded away and more will be lost to us soon as the eroding process continues.

#### **DEDICATION OF CONSTITUTION OAK PLAQUE**

Plans to dedicate the Plaque commemorating the Constitution Oak will be made at the May meeting (suggestions welcome).

Allan Lyon, owner of Lyon's Manor, has erected a black marble stone and mounted the bronze plaque which the Historical Society had made to mark the Constitution Oak which stands on the front lawn of Lyon's Manor (once the William Henry Hall home). The oak seedling was given to town representatives to plant in their respective towns at the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1912. William Henry Hall, Willington's representative at the time, saw fit to plant the seedling on his front lawn.

The oak is a fine, healthy tree whose dense root system made it impossible to place the plaque in the ground as was originally intended so Mr. Lyon purchased this attractive stone and mounted the plaque as an alternative.

**PTA FAIR - MAY 20, 1989**

The Historical Society will have a booth at the PTA Fair on May 20th, at Hall Memorial School. In addition to the crafts fair, there will be special events for children during the day and refreshments will be for sale.

#### **GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY**

Tolland County Map dated 1857 based on actual surveys by William Eaton and H.C. Osborn, published by Woodford and Bartlett, Philadelphia - given by Alice Hall Cassells, February 1989. The map is badly in need of restoration and inquiries are being made as to persons or agencies who do this kind of work.

1903 - Willington Grand List - given by Eleanor DuPilka, Town Clerk, March 13, 1989.

#### **GRAVEYARD TOURS**

The tour schedule for Connecticut Gravestones 1989 includes two tours which might interest people in this area. On Saturday, May 13, there will be a tour of the Woodstock Hill Burying Ground, and on Saturday, July 15, there will be a tour of the Montville Burying Ground. These tours always start at 10 AM and visit three or more old burying grounds. Bring a picnic lunch. A donation of \$5 is appreciated but not required. For more information on these and other tours please call Betty Robertson.

#### **WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL**

On Sunday, June 11, the Museum of Natural History at the University of Connecticut hosts its Fourth Annual Wildflower Festival with more than 150 varieties of living wildflowers, plus lectures, workshops and demonstrations starting at 1:00

PM that stress the importance of preserving wild plants of Connecticut. Admission is \$3 for the general public, free for museum members.

#### **COMING EVENTS**

**Sat. May 13, 10 AM** - Tour of Woodstock Hill Burying Ground

**Fri. May 19, 7:30 PM** - Center School, Meeting and Play

**Sat. May 20** - Hall Memorial School PTA Fair

**Sun. June 11, 1 PM** - Museum of Natural History, UConn - Wildflower Festival

**Sat. July 15, 10 AM** - Tour of Montville Burying Ground

**Sat. Sept. 9** - Willington Flea Market