



Volume XVIII Willington, Connecticut November 1989 No.2
NOVEMBER PROGRAM - NOV. 10, 1989

THE GREAT DEPRESSION STRIKES CONNECTICUT

We will present a slide show about the economic disaster of the 1930's that came to be known as the Great Depression and how it altered the course of American government and society. Photographs of Connecticut people and events of that era explore the impact of the Great Depression on the state. Come and bring a friend.

Date: November 10, 1989
Place: Center School
Time: 7:30 PM

REDEDICATION OF THE TOWN HALL

On November 12, at 2:00 PM a rededication of the Town Hall is planned with town officials present. At that time the Historical Society will present the final performance of the play written by John Blessington for the Historical Society. If you missed it at our May meeting, be sure to come. Refreshments will be served. The play is an informative and amusing vignette of life in 1727.

DEDICATION CEREMONY

About 15 attended the dedication of the plaque commemorating the planting of the Constitution Oak by William H. Hall, Willington's representative to the Constitutional Convention in 1902. Three generations of the Hall family were present and unveiled the plaque: Alice Hall Cassells, granddaughter of William H. Hall; Christine Stetson, great granddaughter; and Corky, great great grandson.

Betty Robertson, president, gave a talk on the history of the tree followed by the unveiling and concluding with the singing of "America the Beautiful."

The ceremony took place on the front lawn of Lyon Manor on Route 32 in South Willington where the oak tree stands.

WE STAND CORRECTED - THE TREE IS A PIN OAK - NOT A RED OAK

A letter to the editor of the Chronicle on Oct 5 by Ita Kanter, a member of the Connecticut Botanical Society, unequivocally states that the Constitution Oak is a Pin Oak which is substantially different from the information obtained from the

Connecticut State Library, which stated that it is a red oak. Our own chronology also states that it is a Pin Oak. We stand corrected and hope that those who come after us will not make the same mistake.

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

A half-pint Willington Flask was given by Kay Smith on Sept. 9, 1989.

Brass stencil - given by Elsie Hanks, Sept. 1989. Reads:

BINGO

Given by the Get-Together Club of So. Willington - 8:00 P.M. at the Clubhouse
Adm. 25 cents - Door Prize

Mounted samples of barbed wire believed to have been used in Willington - Given by Sheldon Childs, Sept. 1989.

The following items were given by Harry LaBonte: Adze, Steelyards, Fence wire tightener, Black Iron, 3 legged pot, Wood planes.

Purchased by the Society in Sept:

Ink well - made in Willington - for \$25.00
Stand-up writing desk from early 1800's - for \$35.00 (needs restoration!)
Glass bottle (amber) made in Willington - for \$20.00

STAGE COACH POSTER FOR SALE

Anyone interested in purchasing a reproduction of an 1842 poster listing the Stage Coach stops (Willington is included) may do so for \$3.00. It is 18" by 24" in size, black and white.

PLAQUES IN APPRECIATION

Betty Robertson, outgoing President, was presented with a polished cherry wood plaque and

pen holder in appreciation for her 10 years' service in that capacity.

Frances Daley, outgoing Treasurer, was honored with a similar plaque for 18 years in that office and Harold Weigold received a plaque for having served as Secretary for 10 years.

Isabel Weigold was given a floral centerpiece and a standing ovation in appreciation for her work in organizing the Exhibit on Flea Market Day.

FASHION SHOW

A committee, co-chaired by Vivian Carlson, Marge Brown and Nancy Desmarais are planning a Fashion Show for the May meeting. Anyone having wedding gowns, 19th or 20th century clothing which could be worn by the owner or modeled should contact one of the above. Girl Scout, Boy Scout, Brownie, 4-H, armed services uniforms for any era would be welcomed. That little girl's dress, the Buster Brown outfit, the knickers, high button shoes, etc., etc.....
WHAT TREASURES DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR ATTIC?!

CURRENT OFFICERS

President - John Blessington
V. Pres. - (to be appointed)
Secretary - Marjorie Brown
Treasurer - Harold Weigold
COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:
Membership - Harold Weigold
Program - Betty Robertson
Newsletter - Thelma King
Historic Sites and Research - Isabel Weigold

COMING EVENTS

Friday, Nov. 10, 1989 - Meeting and Great Depression (7:30 PM)

Sunday, Nov. 12, 1989 - Rededication of Town Hall and play (2:00 PM)

Thurs. and Fri., Nov. 16 & 17 -
St. Jude Bazaar (4 - 8 PM)

Friday, May ? - Fashion Show
(7:30 PM)

LETTER FROM FIRST SELECTMAN

The following letter was received
by Marjorie Brown, Secretary on
Sept. 18, 1989:

On behalf of the townspeople and
Board of Selectmen of our good
town, I extend to the Willington
Historical Society a sincere well
done on your exhibit which was
displayed at the Old Town Hall on
Saturday, September 9, 1989.

The time and effort which went
into the planning, setting up,
displaying and taking down of the
exhibit was certainly a huge
undertaking and could only have
been successfully completed by a
dedicated collection of the town's
best.

If this year's attendance and
laudable expression is any
indication of its worth and value
I believe this event should become
part of our proud heritage.

The town is served well by the
Willington Historical Society in
its efforts to recognize, preserve
and display our history.

Again, 'A Very Well Done!'

Sincerely,
Carlton R. Csiki
First Selectman

REPORT ON EXHIBIT HELD SEPT. 9, 1989

We are pleased to report that our
first Exhibit was an outstanding
success. We were struck by the
enthusiastic responses we
received. It could not have been
done without the cooperation of
all of you. Our guest book was

signed by 410 people but our
greeters reported that many people
went in without signing so we
estimate somewhere between 410 and
500 people attended. The Flea
Market had a paid attendance of
1400 so roughly 1/3 of that number
attended our exhibit.

We started setting it up on
Wednesday and finished on Friday
night. In contrast it took about
three hours to take it down.

For those of you who may have
missed it - we had four main
sections. One on a district
school (Glass Factory) about 1915,
chaired by Vivian Carlson. This
contained a bust of Jared Sparks,
our first national historian, a
wooden globe he carved when he was
ten years old marking the path of
the planets and comets, several of
his books written in the 1800's, a
teacher's table with an ink well
made in the Willington Glass Works,
and a school bell which had been
used in the Pinney Hill School, a
blackboard listing names of
students who attended the school
in 1915 and duties they would have
performed such as: bringing in
the wood, filling the water pail,
cleaning the hallway, filling the
inkwells, etc. Last, but not
least, was a mannikin dressed in
one of Rosa Hall's dresses of the
early 1900's.

Betty Robertson was chairperson
for the home section - this
included a blanket chest and china
closet which contained linens and
other items commonly used in the
home; a New Home sewing machine,
once used by the Baptist
Missionary Society; an Edison
Phonograph; flatirons, and
children's toys, and a table with
three place settings.

Vivian Carlson displayed her
outstanding doll collection and
Nancy Desmarais brought in some of
her hat collection as well as hat
boxes, gloves, hat pins,

handkerchiefs and other accessories.

A section on farm tools was chaired by Harold Weigold and assisted by Harry LaBonte. This included blacksmith tools, carpenter tools and general farming equipment including a corn sheller, and a corn chopper.

Eileen Griffin's photographs of Willington barns received a great deal of interest and compliments. This is an ongoing project since we think it is important to record these old buildings which are rapidly deteriorating.

The section on Industries was chaired by Isabel Weigold and included a display of Willington Glass, an unusual collection of buttons from the Masinda Button Shop displayed by Rita Masinda; items from the Gardiner Hall Jr. Co. including a Christmas box of thread, winding shuttle, examples of labels used through the years, card samples of colors of thread and various kinds of wrappers used.

Carl DalBon displayed his collection of Revolutionary War uniforms, muskets and accouterments used in that time period. This was well received, especially by the children.

The colorful Bicentennial Quilt crocheted by Frances Daley and embroidered by Emily Keeton and Anne Triska in 1976 was displayed and received many compliments.

The combined sales from the Flea Market and the Exhibit came to: \$302.35.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I wish to thank you again for making our first Exhibit

so successful. It would seem that this should become an annual event.

Respectfully submitted,
Isabel Weigold
Coordinator

P.S. The Exhibit was videotaped by John Daley for a permanent record.

**A WARM RECOLLECTION:
THE CENTER SCHOOL
BY EDWIN E. SUNDT
(CONTINUED)**

Several of us were persuaded to attempt piano lessons eventually, but it seemed that only a few of the girls persevered in this; probably the boys, like me, were too impatient with the scales and too eager to get outside and hike or target shoot with BB guns or walk with our dogs or play games. Whatever it was, there may well be an entire generation of Willington youth whose performing skills reached a zenith with hammering out patriotic war tunes like "American Patrol" or some of the Uncle Remus songs.

Learning the facts of school life, those necessary aspects of reality beyond the letters and the numbers, became a major part of each day. The Hollow School in East Willington (so-called, I presume, because it was down in the Hollow) had ceased being a school, and several students who had been there the year before were now at the Center School, delivered by bus each morning. The drivers, Laurence Amidon, RAY Squires (and, later, Art Deveraux on the South Willington run and the Willimantic run with the "boy's bus"--someone had divined that the sexes should not ride busses together during the high-school years), had finite patience, as I was to learn later, but they appeared at the same time

Each morning and students who seemed to me to have no home returned for another day of school. They had gotten onto the bus yesterday and gotten off it today. As far as this five-year-old knew, they had no lives in between.

Some of the students in my grade were older than I was, and I gradually understood that they had been "held back", a term I did not comprehend, for they seemed fine to me. We quickly became a group of children with wavering allegiances and friendships who would stay together for eight years, swelled by the blending with others when we went on to grade five at the Hall Memorial School, separating more and more as we went from there to Windham High School, the trade school, or moved out of town. Before those days of dispersal, though school was made comfortable simply by knowing everyone year after year. The fact that some of them were potential bullies merely became an accepted, frightening part of daily life, too.

But, back to the one-room schoolhouse. When we needed to visit the outhouse, we had to go to the blackboard by the door and write our initials in a box drawn along a crack in the lower corner of the blackboard. The purpose of this was probably not to inform the teacher who was missing, for she undoubtedly knew that anyway; more likely, the signing out and in (by erasing one's initials) was simply to insure that two people were not out at the same time. What crimes we little children might perpetrate by being out together I never understood, but adults are a suspicious lot. If two of them had been out together, they surely would have been up to something, so the same suspicion governed the lives of six and seven year olds. If you stayed out "too long", the teacher sent

someone out to tell you to hurry up and get back inside. The wooden outhouses ("two-holers") were not comfortable places, and few would voluntarily spend extra time in their dark and odiferous confines. Winter, of course, added a depressing dimension that needs no explaining. It did seem that their main purpose in life was to be toppled over by uncouth rowdies on Halloween night, an act of minor vandalism which riled the townsfolk in the vicinity and perplexed us who could not fathom any advantage in having an outhouse on its side.

We may also have had a weekly or bi-weekly visit from an art teacher, and may she forgive me for not recalling this more precisely. We hauled out the easels and paints and set to work with bright red and blues and greens and yellows and browns. We learned to make gorgeous trees and then accomplished true art by placing them at the sides of the picture so that each side had half a tree, thereby suggesting that the world we were painting was real and extended well beyond the limiting edges of our sheet of paper. Then came clouds, the sun (with many bright rays streaming from it), houses that looked like no actual house we had ever seen, curling smoke from chimneys, and birds, mostly crows, easy to make and life-like in appearance from a quick double swoop with black paint.

As World War II was on, we boys did our part for the war effort by learning to draw airplanes, tanks, artillery, and other movables which were always in action in our paintings and always victorious. Remarkably, each firing of a shot was visible in our art: a puff of smoke, a straight line to the target. Comic books had had their influence, and we truly believed that one could see a bullet in flight.

(TO BE CONTINUED)