



Theresa Carmel Cover

Volume XVII

Willington, Connecticut

September 1988

No. 1

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

- THE WILLINGTON GLASS WORKS -
AND
P O T L U C K S U P P E R

Jesse Brainerd of Coventry, an expert on area glass works, will be our guest speaker. Jesse has a large collection of Willington glass which he will display and bring us up-to-date on his continuing research on the glass works in Willington, Coventry and Manchester.

He has suggested that anyone having examples of Willington Glass or old bottles or jars bring them to the meeting.

The meeting will be at Center School, Sept. 23rd at 6:30 p.m. Bring your favorite dish and invite a friend to enjoy the good food and entertainment.

ACQUISITIONS

School bell from the estate of Mrs. Harold (Neal) Wiggins. This bell was used in South Willington (Pinney Hill School) by a relative of Mrs. Wiggins, possibly her mother, Mrs. Homer Neal.

The bell had been given to the Windham Historical Society in 1975 pending the time when Willington had its own Historical Society. The note with it said "We are so very pleased that this school bell is going 'back home' as was the wish of the original owner".

Given May, 1988

A book - Sketch of a Village (Guilford, Conn.) given by FRANCES Daley - August, 1988.

BOOKS TO BE DONATED TO MARY D. EDWARDS LIBRARY.

The Society has ordered "Land of Steady Habits" by Bruce Frazer and "Connecticut History & Culture" by David Roth. These books will be of value for teachers as historical overview and resource guide in teaching Connecticut history and culture.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Frances Daley and Isabel Weigold were appointed as the nominating committee to recommend candidates to fill the positions of Vice-Chairman and Secretary. The offices are now filled by Raymond Daley and Harold Weigold respectively.

Each of these two-year terms expire as of September, 1988.

HUBBEL LOOMIS'S MEMOIRS

Isabel Weigold reported at the May meeting that she had recently received copies of Hubbel Loomis's memoirs from Yale University. Hubbel was 85 when he wrote his memoirs in the form of a letter to his son, Elias, who was then a Professor at Yale University. The letter is over 100 pages long, hand-written and difficult to read. Isabel has

HUBBEL LOOMIS'S MEMOIRS (continued)

been busy transcribing the writing and finds this first-hand information fascinating.

Hubbel was the fourth Congregational minister in Willington serving from 1804 to 1823 when he changed his mind about the proper mode of baptism and subsequently took about half his congregation with him when he, along with his followers, built a new church across the street which is now the Federated Church on the Hill.

Hubbel describes, in detail, the events leading up to his decision, the reaction of his congregation when he made his announcement, and his feelings regarding the split. The only clues we had regarding the situation was a brief record in the church minutes saying that Hubbel Loomis had been dismissed from the Congregational Church.

He later went to Illinois where he founded a seminary for training ministers. He describes his trip across country, the new sights he saw and how his son, while traveling on the Erie Canal, fell overboard and was rescued by the Captain who jumped in to save him.

Anyone interested in getting copies of this manuscript may contact Isabel. There will be a charge for copying the 75 pages. It would be helpful to know how much interest there is in order to determine how many copies to have made.

OLD HOUSE RESEARCH

Marion Doran and Isabel Weigold are working together on studying Willington's old houses. Marion is doing the sketches and Isabel the research, to determine the ages of the houses as well as learning about the people who lived in them. This has proven to be a lengthy project since the land descriptions are often vague, the writing difficult to read and one is never certain when the house appeared on the property. Isabel reports that it will not be possible to include every old house in Willington since the number of pages will have to be limited to what we can afford to print.

Anyone having information about an old house (built before 1869) is asked to contact Isabel at 429-2656. Also if you have pictures prior to 1940 of any of our old houses, please let us know.

CHRONOLOGY UPDATE

We are pleased to announce that we have two volunteers to help work on updating our Chronology; they are John and Ruth Blessington. We have a

great deal of information which needs to be put on cards, either typed or printed and still need other volunteers to help with this large project. We are interested in learning Willington's activities between the years 1927 to 1977. Anyone having information which would be of interest should contact John Blessington or Isabel Weigold.

COMING EVENTS

September 10 - Willington Flea Market

NOVEMBER PROGRAM - The Revolutionary War Soldier

Carl Daldon, a Willington resident and a teacher will be the guest speaker. He has been involved with Revolutionary War re-enactments, and is interested in the uniforms, musketry and war strategy of that time period. More details will be forthcoming.

November 11 - 7:30 p.m. - Center School

NEW USES FOR OLD MILL BUILDINGS

The Gardiner Hall Thread Co. building farthest north on Route 32 is being renovated for a Center for the Arts. Music, dance, weaving and other arts will be taught there. Plans are underway to have concerts and other forms of entertainment on a regular basis. It is hoped that it will become a center for the region which will include surrounding towns. We will be hearing more about this as they need support from all sectors, private and public.

THE OLD HOME TOWN

Written by Allen Brownlee.

THE OLD HOME TOWN

When I was a school boy, my "home town" of South Willington was a wonderful place in which to grow up! It had a Federated Church, fine school, a "swimming hole," sandbank, river for fishing, woods, and all the rest.

A few months ago I had occasion to drive through the town, which I had done rarely since my mother left there after my father's death in 1939. One of the first changes I noticed was in the old Hall dairy barn. It had been converted into a restaurant called "Jury's." I made up my mind that we would visit it as soon as we could and have dinner there.

We did go there a few weeks later, Dinny, John, Kathy and I. We found that this marvelous old barn, built by Henry Hall the year I was born, 1912, had undergone a complete renovation. The interior of the main building had been cleaned by sandblasting, and a mezzanine had been built under which a bar and lounge was installed. The restaurant itself was on the main floor and on the mezzanine. One of the two wings which originally housed the prize bull was occupied by the kitchen and the other had become "Molly Malone's Tavern," a place for relaxation, music and dancing used, I found out later, principally by the students and faculty of the nearby University of Connecticut.

The menu was a four page "newspaper" in which the history of the barn as well as that of the town and the Hall family had been sketched. The little articles in it brought back memories, particularly the one about the ice harvesting off the nearby pond which occurred every winter, with the heavy cakes of ice being transported by a long chute down across the field all the way to the railroad tracks, a quarter of a mile away, where it was stored in the ice house for sale to the Railroad for its dining and parlor cars.

My visit and my reading of the menu's history inspired me to write Mrs. Doris McBee, a daughter of Henry Hall. I didn't know it, but she was in Hawaii at the time, and my letter was forwarded to her there. I got a very cordial reply on a post card saying she enjoyed hearing from me, and would like to visit with me when she returned in May.

A few days ago, on April 21st to be exact, my daughter Judy was visiting us and I decided to take her down to Jury's for lunch. Having been born in 1941 she had scarcely ever seen the town, and I showed her all the old landmarks - the places of interest, or rather, those that were of interest to me.

I hadn't seen Fred Tomasko for many, many years but knew he ran an unusual antique shop located right in the center of town between the church and the old Hall mansion. To all appearances this place, which originally was the home of the Korpers and second in prestige only to the Hall family's residence, was now a store yard for what appeared ^{at first} to be nothing but junk, which presented a rather

Judy and I drove past the house where I was born and where my father died 27 years later. It was on the road between the Hall home and their car barn, and the closest one in the company owned "village" to the mill and to its pond. The houses here had become dilapidated to such a degree that I could hardly believe that they were once on a tree lined street, with green lawns on each side. There were, of course, no cars in those days to clutter up the yards as they did now.

We went up to the pond and saw the place where we kids all learned to swim and dive, and it hadn't changed much. It was now leased to and run by a sports and fishing club. No houses had been built on it and the woods on each side as the pond narrowed up old "Cungy" Hole hadn't changed in 50 years, except that the trees, and the pines particularly, had grown much bigger. Above Jury's across the road and up the hill was the old Brackett place which was in the process of being restored. This once belonged to my Uncle Will and I had spent many hours there, particularly for family dinners on Sundays and holidays. We also saw my Uncle Gib's place south of the center of town, where Aunt Lizzie used to give me cookies and tea. The "new" Hall Memorial School, where I went for my 7th and 8th grades had been enlarged and was in good condition.

South Willington, aside from Jury's, the church, and the pond, was certainly now not much to look at or be admired for, principally because it had become a hodge-podge. No longer did the Hall family who ran the Willington Thread Mills have jurisdiction over nearly every plot of land and house as they once did. They really kept that town up when I was a boy and before the thread business declined and came to an end. Now various individuals who have bought the houses and the land do as they please, and any character the place once possessed has just about disappeared. So it goes!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Willington Historical Society

Individual Membership.....\$2.50
Family (Husband-Wife) Membership..... 5.00
Corporate Membership.....10.00

Type of membership desired:.....

Name(s) of member(s).....

Mailing address:.....

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Please make checks payable to the Willington Historical Society and mail
with this slip to:

Mrs. Frances Daley
Glass Factory Road
West Willington, CT. 06279

Amount enclosed.....Date.....

I do not wish to join the Society, but would
like to continue receiving THE HOURGLASS for
\$2.00 a year, which I enclose.

DUES ARE PAYABLE BY SEPTEMBER 30.

ENCOURAGE A FRIEND TO JOIN ALSO.

THANK YOU.