

# The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut — April 2014

## APRIL PROGRAM TO BE HELD AT HISTORY CENTER

### History and a Civil Society to be Discussed

Why study history? Of what use is it in our lives? The program on April 2 will answer by claiming that the study of history can impart the virtues necessary to end the culture wars, transform our ways of thinking about others, and, in some small way, bring meaningful change to the world. Tall order? Yes, but sure to stir your thinking.

Dick Pierce and Fannie Gabriel (WHS president and past-president, respectively) will share some thoughts about history before presenting a video about Anthony Burns, an escaped slave captured in Boston in 1854. The video will be followed by an excerpt from the diary of Charlotte Forten, a 17-year-old from Salem, who was deeply shocked at the events. The audience will join in a general discussion of Forten's comments and display of empathy, and try to discover what readers today can learn from her.

In America we have shown that we can educate people to participate in a capitalist economy, but what does it take to participate in a democracy? How can the study of history help us to live cooperatively with one another, respecting the differences which presently divide us? As Sam Wineburg has said, the past is a "foreign country." By visiting it we stretch and grow as we have to accept different people and deal with the good and bad within them. Mutual respect is intertwined with freedom.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

7:00 PM

BLOOMFIELD HISTORY CENTER

153 School Street

*History and a Civil Society*

Free public program

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**CURATOR'S CORNER / Fannie Gabriel**

Requests for information keep coming in. An item was sent off concerning the Peck family who rented a house on Brown Street. Lots of material about actor William Gillette has gone to a New York author who is writing a book about him. The *Courant* (which is celebrating its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary) has been publishing information on William Gillette almost daily. We were contacted by an Ann Arbor resident about the Goodrich family. A Brown Drum publication was sent to Iowa, to a person who thought he owned one. A telephone call from Salt Lake City turned out to be from a man named Brown who has a passion for building snare drums and finds that he had an ancestor in Bloomfield who did the same thing.

**2014 MEETING DATES**

All meetings will be on Wednesdays at 7:00 unless otherwise noted.

**Board of Directors** (at the History Center) Note: These are open meetings which any interested persons may attend.

March 12

May 21

August 20

October 15

**Programs** for all members and the public (at various locations):

April 2 at the History Center

June 11, 6:00, potluck supper, and annual meeting. 7:30, Program: Carolyn Ivanoff will speak on One Family's Civil War.

September 10

November 5

*Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.*

*—John Wesley*

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## WINTONBURY BAPTISTS SPARK STATE ORGANIZATION, 1823

In 1786 a group of religious dissenters withdrew from the Wintonbury Congregational Church, calling themselves Separatists. They were led by Deacon Ashbel Gillette and later became known as Baptists. They built a meeting house at the northwest corner of Park and Jerome Avenues, where the Shell gasoline station is today. The church was well-attended in the 1800s, even the balconies on three sides of the sanctuary being full. (*From Wintonbury to Bloomfield*, page 17)

George Grisevich of Hartford, a member of the Historical Committee of the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut, recently sent us an article he wrote which sheds further light on this Bloomfield church. In the early 1800s Connecticut's Baptist churches were loosely connected by regional organizations called "associations." On October 2, 1822, at the annual meeting of the Hartford Association, the Rev. Augustus Bolles, pastor of the Wintonbury church moved that a committee be appointed to consider the expediency of forming a convention of Baptist churches of the state. The committee was appointed and brought in a favorable report. A year later (1823) delegates from thirty churches met in Hartford's First Baptist Church (now Central Baptist Church) and adopted a constitution. Thus the first statewide Baptist organization arose out of the First Baptist Church of Bloomfield. The convention, now known as American Baptist Churches of Connecticut, continues to this day and for many years had its offices at 100 Bloomfield Avenue in West Hartford. The offices were moved a couple of years ago to 90 North Main Street, West Hartford.

In the early 1900s the Bloomfield church saw a declining membership and in October 1920 merged with a group from Hartford to form the Blue Hills Baptist Church at the corner of Blue Hills Avenue and Euclid Street in Hartford. More recently, this church moved to Bloomfield Avenue in Windsor and was re-named Sanctuary of Faith and Glory.

Thanks to WHS member George Grisevich for sharing this information.

### OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS

Bloomfield Garage, 689 Park Avenue  
Simsbury Free Library, 749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury  
Geissler's Supermarket, 40 Tunxis Avenue  
Sir Speedy Printing, 21 Old Windsor Road  
Williams Service Center, 56 Tunxis Avenue  
Windsor Federal Savings, 54 Jerome Avenue

**THANK YOU!**

### WHS TAG SALE

Saturday

April 26, 2014

9:00 to 4:00

At the Old Farm School

Rain date May 3



## Leaving a Legacy

The Wintonbury Historical Society is a nonprofit organization dependent on the generosity of people who value history and Bloomfield history in particular. Its mission is to identify, collect, organize, preserve and make accessible historical information about the diverse people, places, institutions and events of Bloomfield, Connecticut.

A larger endowment would put the Society upon a firmer financial foundation. To this end the Society solicits contributions from individuals and businesses. You can make a difference by (1) setting aside a gift in your will to the Society, (2) naming the Society as beneficiary of an insurance policy, (3) remembering loved ones with gifts to the Society in their honor, and (4) naming the Society as beneficiary of an IRA or 401K.

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: GEISSLER'S SUPERMARKET



Celebrating over 90 years of service to Connecticut and Massachusetts, Geissler's is one of Connecticut's independently and family owned supermarkets. It all started in 1923

with A.F. Geissler delivering groceries to the village of Broad Brook in East Windsor. In 2006, many Bloomfield residents were glad to see Geissler's open a market on Tunxis Avenue. The location had been a Shop-Rite when the plaza was built and later became Frank's, a crafts and garden store.

Adolf Geissler was born October 12, 1900 and died on December 3, 1983. He was born and raised at the family home on Main Street in Broad Brook, the eleventh of twelve children. He received his ninth grade graduation certificate, which was the end of his formal education. He worked in tobacco and eventually learned enough to become a bookkeeper with the Hampden County Tobacco Growers. His younger brother had opened a grocery store on the lower level of the family home and, wanting to go back to school, sold the business to Adolf. He ran the store with the help of his sister, whom he employed full time. In those days, Adolf would ride around in his Model T Roadster collecting and delivering orders to the residents in town.

Adolf married Mabel McSweeney in 1926; and they had one child, a daughter Mary, born on August 12, 1931. Mary mar-

ried her high school sweetheart, James Nilsson in October 1951. After two years in the Marines, Jim asked to join the grocery business. In 1966 when Adolph retired, he turned the business over to his daughter and son-in-law. Mary and Jim Nilsson had four children – James Nilsson Jr, Kathleen (Nilsson) Rybick, Daniel Nilsson and Karen (Nilsson) Cudnik, all of whom are involved with the business. The seven-store chain is still owned and operated by the Nilsson family. The fourth generation has now also joined the business.

Adolf Geissler was a member of the Masons Lodge, Elks Club, Charter member of the East Windsor Historical Society, chairman of the School Board of East Windsor for four years, and a member of the Board for twenty-one years. James Nilsson Sr. was a United States Marine Corps veteran of the Korean conflict, life member of the American Legion Post 40 of East Windsor, member of the East Windsor Zoning Board, member of the Capital Region Planning Committee, and member of the Industrial Development of Commission of East Windsor. Jim also served as a director of the Windsor Locks Savings and Loan.



Adolf bought his second store in 1949 in Warehouse Point. Once Jim Nilsson joined the business, Adolph sold those two mom-and-pop stores and built the first Geissler Plaza supermarket in Warehouse Point. The store started as 9,800 square feet, and then moved to its current location in 1970. The Windsor store opened in April 1974, Granby in March



1986, South Windsor in May 1988, Agawam MA in November 1996, Bloomfield in April 2006, and Somers in December 2007.

Geissler's ensures that its stores are clean, well-stocked with quality merchandise, and that its employees give superb customer care. The company's motto is quality, freshness, variety, price and customer service. Word-of-mouth advertising through the years still has everyone talking about Geissler's meat program, its outstanding produce sections, quality food at the deli, and the artistic crafts of its bakery, along with some newer additions such as ready-made meals, prepared foods and the delivery service, where customers can order online or call in.

*By Jennifer Blanchard, Geissler's Supermarket*



Inside Geissler's, 1924

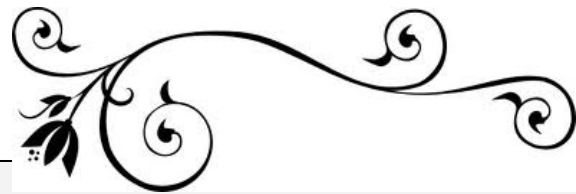


Geissler's in 1925

Historic photographs supplied by Geissler's Supermarkets, 110 Bridge Street, East Windsor, CT 06088, 860-623-0176



Geissler's Market in 1929



## In Remembrance

Recently we have lost two outstanding members. ● **Bruce Hale, Sr.** loved to talk about his family genealogy and was a mainstay at the Old Farm School during the summer months. A member since 1999, he was a faithful volunteer at our annual tag sale and other events. ● **Joseph McCormick**, a member since 1967, was well-known throughout the area. WHS members may remember his Prosser Library presentation. Never sitting down, he talked for an hour and a half about his sports, political, military, and professional lives.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIGHLIGHTS

Twelve directors of the Society met on Wednesday, March 12, at the History Center. President Pierce reported that 120 Metacomet third-graders had visited the Old Farm School on February 26 and 27. Thanks to Bart Ritson and Public Works, the snow was cleared away so that the students could walk over from Metacomet. Fred Hesketh spoke to the kids at their school on March 14.

Our grant application has gone in to Connecticut Humanities to fund renewal of our website. An IT Committee of Dennis Hubbs, Greg Babal, Ralph Schmoll, Quentin Johnson, and Tom Daley has been formed, and a professional will be hired with the grant funds.

Fred Hesketh, Ron Marchetti, and Dick Pierce have met with town manager Phil Schenck and an ad hoc committee at town hall to discuss the preservation of the outbuildings at the Filley House.

The Board voted to adopt an Investment Policy prepared by a committee last fall and edited by Treasurer Judy Dahlgren-Dechand.

Some time was spent discussing fund raising, which hasn't been happening. The treasurer's report dated February 28 shows a checking balance of only \$1,565. Income since July 1 has been \$3,905 and expenses have been \$7,369. We will hold our annual tag sale on April 26, but need to have more ways to raise funds. A second meeting to plan the tag sale was scheduled for March 19, and all interested members are asked to attend.



Ringin the School Bell. R. Pierce photo

## BIRDS SEEN AT WINTONBURY HILLS GOLF COURSE

One part of Bloomfield history usually forgotten is its wildlife. What flora and fauna can be found in our town? How have these changed over time and why? With this issue we begin to look at our local wildlife by printing a list of birds seen at the Wintonbury Hills Golf Course on Terry Plains Road in 2007. The author of the list is former Bloomfield resident, Sam Fried.

A former president of Hartford Audubon Society, Sam has wide experience in birding. He has published over one thousand photographs and fifty-four feature articles in field guides, books, newspapers and magazines worldwide. He has also presented over five hundred slide shows, all illustrated with his photos, to a wide variety of organizations and birding festivals. Sam is founder of Flights of Fancy Adventures LLC, a birding, photography, and natural history company. He offers small group, low-cost, high quality trips to North, Central, and South American destinations. Before moving to Florida, Sam was naturalist-in-residence at Wintonbury Hills. We thank him for permission to publish, and we thank Steve and Sue Davis and Zellene Sandler for their assistance in obtaining the list.



Photo by Jean Buscarello

The following list contains bird species which Sam saw at the Golf Course. Of the 154 species listed, 50 are considered as common. This means commonly found on the Golf Course property in 2007. Other habitats and other years might bring about changes in these designations. Sam's lists of mammals and other species will be published in our next issue.

**KEY:** S = Summer only, F = Fall only, M = Migrant, PR = Permanent Resident, W = Winter only, \*\* = Nesting confirmed, \* = Possible nesting, C = Common, U = Uncommon, R = Rare

Blackbird, Red-winged | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Blackbird, Rusty | M, U  
 Bluebird, Eastern | PR, \*\*, C  
 Bobolink | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Bobwhite, Northern | PR, R  
 Bunting, Indigo | S, \*\*, U  
 Bunting, Snow | M, W, R  
 Cardinal, Northern | PR, \*\*, C  
 Catbird, Gray | S, \*\*, C  
 Chickadee, Black-capped | PR, \*\*, C  
 Coot, American | M, U  
 Cormorant, Double-crested | M, U  
 Cowbird, Brown-headed | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Creeper, Brown | M, PR, \*, U  
 Crow, American | PR, \*\*, C  
 Crow, Fish | M, U  
 Cuckoo, Black-billed | S, R  
 Cuckoo, Yellow-billed | S, R  
 Dove, Mourning | PR, \*\*, C  
 Duck, American Black | S, U  
 Duck, Ring-necked | M, U  
 Duck, Ruddy | M, U  
 Eagle, Bald | M, U  
 Eagle, Golden | M, R  
 Egret, Great | F, R  
 Falcon, Peregrine | M, R  
 Finch, House | PR, \*\*, U  
 Flicker, Northern | PR, \*\*, C  
 Flycatcher, Great-crested | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Flycatcher, Least | M, \*, U  
 Flycatcher, Willow | S, \*\*, U  
 Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied | M, R  
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray | S, M, \*, U  
 Goldfinch, American | PR, \*\*, C  
 Goose, Canada | PR, \*\*, C  
 Goshawk, Northern | PR, R  
 Grackle, Common | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Grosbeak, Blue | M, R  
 Grosbeak, Rose-breasted | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Gull, Glaucous | W, R  
 Gull, Great Black-backed | W, R

Gull, Herring | W, U  
 Gull, Ring-billed | W, U  
 Harrier, Northern | M, W, U  
 Hawk, Broad-winged | M, U  
 Hawk, Cooper's | M, W, U  
 Hawk, Red-shouldered | PR, \*\*, R  
 Hawk, Red-tailed | PR, \*\*, C  
 Hawk, Rough-legged | W, R  
 Hawk, Sharp-shinned | M, W, U  
 Heron, Great Blue | S, C  
 Heron, Green | M, \*, U  
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Jay, Blue | PR, \*\*, C



Photo by Jean Buscarello

Junco, Dark-eyed | W, C  
 Kestrel, American | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Killdeer | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Kingbird, Eastern | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Kingfisher, Belted | S, M, \*, C  
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned | M, W, U  
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned | M, W, U  
 Lark, Horned | W, U  
 Longspur, Lapland | M, W, R  
 Loon, Common | M, U  
 Mallard | S, \*\*, C  
 Meadowlark, Eastern | S, M, \*, U  
 Merganser, Hooded | M, U  
 Merlin | M, U  
 Mockingbird, Northern | PR, \*\*, C  
 Nighthawk, Common | M, U  
 Nuthatch, Red-breasted | M, W, U  
 Nuthatch, White-breasted | PR, \*\*, C  
 Oriole, Baltimore | S, \*\*, C  
 Oriole, Orchard | S, U  
 Osprey | M, U



Ovenbird | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Owl, Great Horned | PR, \*\*, U  
 Parula, Northern | M, U  
 Phoebe, Eastern | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Pigeon, Rock | PR, \*\*, C  
 Rail, Virginia | S, R  
 Raven, Common | U  
 Redpoll, Common | W, R  
 Redstart, American | M, U  
 Robin, American | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Sandpiper, Least | M, U  
 Sandpiper, Solitary | M, U  
 Sandpiper, Spotted | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Sandpiper, White-rumped | M, R  
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied | M, R  
 Shrike, Northern | W, R  
 Snipe, Wilson's | M, U  
 Sora, | M, R  
 Sparrow, American Tree | W, U  
 Sparrow, Chipping | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Sparrow, Clay-colored | M, R  
 Sparrow, Field | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Sparrow, Fox | M, U  
 Sparrow, House | PR, \*\*, C  
 Sparrow, Lark | M, R  
 Sparrow, Lincoln's | M, R  
 Sparrow, Savannah | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Sparrow, Song | S, PR, \*\*, C  
 Sparrow, Swamp | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Sparrow, White-throated | M, W, C  
 Starling, European | PR, \*\*, C  
 Swallow, Bank | S, M, U  
 Swallow, Barn | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Swallow, Cliff | M, U  
 Swallow, Northern Rough-winged | M, U  
 Swallow, Tree | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Swan, Mute | S, U  
 Swift, Chimney | M, U  
 Tanager, Scarlet | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Teal, Green-winged | M, U  
 Thrasher, Brown | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Thrush, Swainson's | M, U  
 Thrush, Wood | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Titmouse, Tufted | PR, \*\*, C  
 Towhee, Eastern | S, M, \*\*, C

Turkey | PR, \*\*, C  
 Veery | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Vireo, Red-eyed | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Vireo, Warbling | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Vulture, Black | M, R  
 Vulture, Turkey | M, C  
 Warbler, Black-and-white | M, U  
 Warbler, Blackburnian | M, U  
 Warbler, Blackpoll | M, U  
 Warbler, Black-throated Blue | M, U  
 Warbler, Black-throated Green | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Warbler, Blue-winged | S, M, \*\*, U  
 Warbler, Canada | M, U  
 Warbler, Chestnut-sided | M, \*\*, U  
 Warbler, Magnolia | M, U  
 Warbler, Nashville | M, U  
 Warbler, Palm | M, U  
 Warbler, Wilson's | M, U  
 Warbler, Yellow | S, M, \*\*, C  
 Warbler, Yellow-rumped | M, W, C  
 Waterthrush, Northern | M, U  
 Waxwing, Cedar | M, PR, \*\*, U  
 Woodcock, American | M, \*\*, U  
 Woodpecker, Downy | PR, \*\*, C  
 Woodpecker, Hairy | PR, \*\*, C  
 Woodpecker, Pileated | PR, \*\*, U  
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied | PR, \*\*, C  
 Wood-pewee, Eastern | S, \*\*, C  
 Wren, Carolina | PR, \*\*, U  
 Wren, House | S, \*\*, U  
 Wren, Winter | M, W, U  
 Yellowlegs, Greater | M, U  
 Yellowlegs, Lesser | M, U  
 Yellowthroat, Common | S, M, \*\*, C



Photo by Shannon McMahon