



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

February 2016

## HOW BLACK MIDDLE CLASS AROSE IN HARTFORD

### Research to be Described at February Program

Wednesday, February 3, 2016,  
6:30 PM at Prosser Public Library,  
1 Tunxis Avenue. Don't miss it!

Barbara Beeching Ph.D. will be speaking about her upcoming book, *Hopes and Expectations: The Origins of the Black Middle Class in Hartford*. The program, sponsored by the Wintonbury Historical Society and held at Prosser Public Library, will take place on Wednesday, February 3, 2016 at 6:30 PM

Beeching came late to the study of history. When she retired from public relations work in the Connecticut tourism office, she enrolled at Trinity College and earned a Master's Degree in American Studies. She then went on to study American history at the University of Connecticut. She earned a Ph.D. in 2010, at the age of 82. The forthcoming book grew out of her dissertation.

She was born and raised in Gary, Indiana, and has lived in Missouri, Texas, Louisiana, and Connecticut. She now lives at Seabury and she is happy to be a resident of the town of Bloomfield.



Photo courtesy of B. Beeching

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIGHLIGHTS**

The president reported on the results of the 2015 year-end appeal for donations. Forty-two donors responded by giving a total of \$2,880. (See page 6.) This surpasses by 32% last year's total of \$2,185 from forty donors. Of this year's gifts, 33% were from \$100 to \$500, 22% were from \$50 to \$99, and 45% were from \$10 to \$49, with an average gift of \$69. In December, 254 letters were sent to present and past members, and 16.5% returned gifts. Postage expenses were \$144.55, but the paper and ink were donated. The amount received is about 42% of our projected annual budget, with the remainder supplied mostly by memberships and fund raisers. The year-end appeal provides us with a strong foundation with which to begin 2016.

The president further reported that the Society will be receiving two significant bequests. From the estate of **Jeanne M. Hunciker** we will be receiving \$52,964. Jeanne was a long-time history teacher and Social Studies Chairperson in the Hartford Public Schools. According to the April 2015 *Wintonbury Drummer*, she served as treasurer and president of the Society and "was a prime mover behind the production of the hardcover book *From Wintonbury to Bloomfield* in 1983. A second important bequest will be coming from the estate of **Fannie R. Gabriel**, who has stipulated that the Society receive \$50,000, plus certain other items yet to be determined. Fannie served as president of the Society for ten years, was instrumental in building the Bloomfield History Center in 2010, and served the Society and the town for many years. See the November 2015 *Drummer* for a biographical sketch. These two bequests will more than double the Society's total assets and help to secure its solvency well into the future.

The treasurer's report showed expenses from July through December of \$3,028, including utilities bills of \$1,552. Income was \$2,679. As of December 31, the checking account balance was \$6,871. Total assets, including investment accounts, totaled \$89,988.

The Board voted to restructure the membership categories as described in the November *Drummer*, page 2. In other old business, Mary Murray reported that the Town Council favors the idea of naming the History Center after Fannie Gabriel, but town policy is to wait for one year after a person is deceased before doing the naming.



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**we**   
**volunteers!**

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Windsor Federal Savings, 54 Jerome Avenue



# CATALOG OF CONGREGATIONS, #4 of a series

## FIRST CATHEDRAL, 1151 BLUE HILLS AVENUE

The First Cathedral is located on a forty-acre campus at 1151 Blue Hills Avenue, at the corner of Wintonbury Avenue in Bloomfield. Its present building, constructed from 1997-1999 and containing 3,000 seats, is not only the largest church meeting house in town, but the largest in all Connecticut. With 1,300 parking spaces, it can easily accommodate the hundreds of worshippers who come on a Sunday and for weekday events. Its All Purpose Playfields include an adult-size softball field, basketball courts, tennis courts, and other amenities designed with the community in mind. The church's senior pastor is the Rev. Dr. LeRoy Bailey, Jr.

First Cathedral's beginnings go back almost forty-eight years to April 12, 1968, when the Rev. Edward R. King and one hundred charter members formed a church in Hartford. In 1971, LeRoy Bailey, Jr., a recent college graduate, became pastor. Bailey soon challenged the church to transition from being a house church to owning its own building. In 1972, the church purchased Jonathan Temple and joined both the American Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention. According to the history written by King Hayes, the Sunday School grew, and church attendance was so great that people were turned away because of no standing room. The church name was changed to First Baptist Church of Hartford; and in 1975 a larger facility, the former Agudas Achim Temple on Greenfield Street in Hartford, was purchased and renovated.

Bailey earned his master's degree at the Howard University School of Religion in 1971 and later completed his Doctor of Ministry degree at the Hartford Seminary Foundation. In 2006, he established the American Chapter of The International Bishops Conference. Baptists, who traditionally had emphasized democratic government within their churches, had never accepted the title of bishop, even though it occurs in the New Testament. Recently, however, the title has been adopted by a growing group of Baptist pastors, most of them African-American. According to James Farwell, professor at Bethany College in West Virginia, the 400-year-old fear of an all-powerful hierarchy has faded into a distant memory, and it now feels safe to borrow and re-appropriate historic practices that were once considered problematic. There are now twenty or so bishops in the International Bishops Conference USA, and LeRoy Bailey, Jr., the senior member of the conference, has become an Archbishop.



Archbishop Bailey

From 1978 to 1981, the church purchased a fifteen-passenger church van. A tutorial program, a karate school, and several community groups began using its facilities on an ongoing basis. Additional property was acquired nearby on Greenfield Street. The church gave gifts to Children's Village, supported the United Negro College fund, and donated to Morehouse School of Religion. In addition, hymnals were purchased for inmates at the Hartford Correctional Center, and Operation PUSH was supported. In 1982 the First Baptist School of Evangelism started, and the church began to house the CRT Headstart Program in its educational facility. The Telephone Company agreed to give First Baptist land for senior housing in 1983, and HUD approved a forty-unit complex. Progress was made in 1987 in liquidating the church's mortgage, breaking ground for elderly housing, and acquiring pews for the church balcony. A "Give Us This Mountain" Stewardship Campaign was initiated. A Door-to-door Outreach Ministry and a basketball league were established. The church bookstore opened in 1989. Forty additional units of senior hous-

Church website photo



First Cathedral's

Lancet window

(From Wikipedia)

ing were completed in 1990, and in that same year forty acres of land in Bloomfield were purchased on which to build a new complex.

With 11,000 members, First Cathedral is a busy place. On Sundays there are worship services at 8:00 and 10:45. Every Tuesday evening there is a Bible study, youth meeting, and a discipleship class. Church growth is not haphazard, as Kingdom Citizens Ministry provides an extensive, step-by-step process of assimilation for new members. There is an active music ministry, led by the Praises of Zion choir. The church also has a strong youth ministry, a singles ministry, and a radio ministry. The church offers a Christian bookstore on site and online. The eighty-unit Cathedral Manor Elderly Housing on Albany Avenue continues to serve. There is also a professionally-staffed Counseling Center. A nonprofit outreach arm called the Pillar Community Development Corporation focuses on enrichment programs for children, youth and families, on health and wellness, and on economic and community development. For more information call 860-243-6520 or go to [www.firstcathedral.org](http://www.firstcathedral.org).

--Thanks to Robin Smith and the Rev. LeRoy Bailey III for their cooperation in reviewing this article.

Sources:

>[www.firstcathedral.org](http://www.firstcathedral.org)

>[clericalwhispers.blogspot.com/2010/07/more-baptist-pastors-adopt-bishop-title.html](http://clericalwhispers.blogspot.com/2010/07/more-baptist-pastors-adopt-bishop-title.html)



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Marilyn Johnston reads her poetry at the November 4, 2015 program at the Bloomfield History Center.

—Austin White photo

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**April Program Announced**

On Wednesday, April 6, the topic will be Proslavery Ideology in the North before the Civil War. The speaker will be Dr. Sheila Culbert, Head of Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor. The program will be held at the Bloomfield

**New Video Ready**

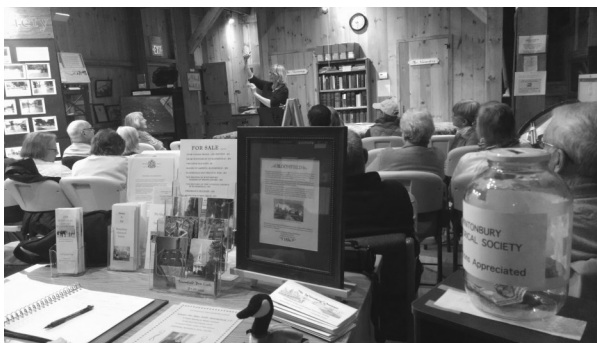
Ralph Schmoll says his new video on the Filley House is almost ready for release. It will soon be posted on the Society's website.

**WHS featured in *Journal***

Historian Fred Hesketh points out the valuable publicity the Society has been receiving from the *Journal*. For several months now, its front page has featured a photograph of old Bloomfield along with an explanatory text. Last year Andy Hart, publisher, visited the History Center, where Ralph Schmoll gave him a number of photographs. Since then, Andy has chosen one for each issue, written something about it, and submitted it to Ralph and Fred for approval and/or revision. Reports indicate that it has been a popular feature of the newspaper.

**Remember Sunset Sounds?**

If you have any photos or memorabilia from the Sunset Sounds concert series at CIGNA, please loan them to the Society for its next exhibit. Call 860-243-1531.



Marilyn Johnston at the History Center, November 2015

—Janis Langston photo



It's February!



## The Last Thing

(in memory of Fannie Gabriel, 2015)

by Marilyn Johnston

The last thing  
I learned from Fannie  
Gabriel is with the unending  
schemes still excitedly  
percolating and the urgent tasks  
still arising, pressing to be done:  
we just stop

sit or lie with the untouched  
dishes in the dishwasher  
caught leaning forever  
in some part  
of the cycle, newsletters folded,  
envelopes scattered, the plants  
just watered or needing  
water, the bed made up  
or unmade, jumbled relics  
of a lifetime still partly-organized  
uncleared. The lesson seems to be  
in the still exhilarating rush: We just stop

at the beginning—or midway  
through the lists of names still left  
to call, people to visit, ideas to clarify,  
half-formed, the latest  
book-club-book unopened or  
finished on the shelf,  
the latest vision of a community ideal  
still being reborn with fresh  
hope . . .

The last thing  
I learned from Fannie  
Gabriel is, in the end  
we just *stop*

but the Dream

we were dreaming  
with our heart's blood  
poured for others

steps out in a lonelier light  
clearly revealed—

and goes on

## Honor Roll of Year-End Donors

Baker, Janet and Donald  
Baram, David and Paula  
Beeching, Barbara  
Buscarello, Jean  
Clarke, Martha and Ronald  
Cobb, Frances  
Cohen, Lawrence and Sherri  
Cooney, David and Joan  
Curran, Kathleen  
Gardner, Barbara and Robert  
Goodwin, Barbara and Charles  
Gough, Kevin and Paula Jones  
Granger, Winifred  
Grisevich, George  
Guilmartin, Homer  
Hager, Lois and David  
Hauptman, Angela  
Hendrickson, Alice and Carol  
Hubbs, Dennis and Donna  
Hunt, Dorothy and Kimball  
Isaacson, Jacqueline and Louis Blumenfeld  
Johnston, Marilyn and Raymond  
Jones, Jeremy and Carolyn  
Kelliher, Marion  
Kramer, Nancy and Kurt  
Marchetti, Ronald and Ruthanne  
Merrill, Barbara  
Neaverson, Julianne  
Ott, Richard  
Pierce, Richard and Jean  
Schenck, Philip  
Schmoll, Louise and Ralph  
Schulman, Sydney and Elba  
Smith, Robert and Sharon  
Space, Theodore  
Stiles, Agnes and Robert  
Sullivan, Patrick  
Taylor, Beatrice  
Thompson, Shirley and William  
Tinto, Gail  
Walker, Patricia

THANK YOU!

## FANNIE GABRIEL MEMORIES

The memorial service for Fannie Gabriel on Sunday, January 10, at Seabury's Heritage Hall was well-attended, with an estimated 175 or more in the hall and others outside in the corridor. Chaplain Robert Bergner welcomed everyone on behalf of Seabury. Richard Pierce read the scripture lessons, and Marilyn Johnston read her poem about Fannie (see page 6). Gregory Babal provided wonderful piano music and a solo. Reminiscences were given by Joan Duffy, president of the Connecticut Federation of Women's Clubs and Cindy Lovell, Executive Director of the Mark Twain House. Nicholas Panke spoke for the Bloomfield Republican Town Committee, and Sydney Schulman gave an appreciation from the Town of Bloomfield. Linda Dranoff represented the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries, and for the Historical Society Louise Schmoll and Janis Langston spoke.



A crowded Heritage Hall

—Janis Langston photo

~ 1 ~

Langston read a message from Genie Lyman, who lives in Michigan: "George Gabriel and my husband's father, Richard Lyman, Jr., were first cousins who always had kept in close touch. When my father-in-law passed away twenty-three years ago, Fannie reached out to us and invited us to visit. Things fell into place that spring when we travelled east to attend a Dartmouth College class reunion. We spent several days with Fannie at her home on Prospect Avenue where she filled us with stories and family history that we'd not heard. What a treat! After that initial visit we saw her regularly and kept in touch through phone calls, emails and letters. She was a great communicator; often sending newspaper or magazine clippings on subjects ranging from the Civil War (which may have pertained to my great grandfather) to current events involving our hometown of Grand Rapids, MI, to books we had both read, and even recipes she thought we might enjoy. Fannie arranged VIP tours of the Mark Twain House and Museum where my husband's grandmother had played with her childhood friend Susy Clemens. Other excursions included visits to the Lyman house, now the Town and Country Club, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum and a day trip to Essex to see old family homes. We loved worshipping with her at the Congregational church, seeing her beloved Wintonbury Historical Museum being built, spending a morning sorting cartons of books at the library book sale, and playing bridge with her at Seabury. We will always remember Fannie as an amazing woman with a kind and generous spirit, a bright and curious intellect and filled with boundless energy. She carries a special place in our hearts, was a wonderful blessing in our lives, and is dearly missed."

~ 2 ~

Louise Schmoll, who, with husband Ralph, worked alongside Fannie in the History Center every



Greg Babal at piano

—Janis Langston photo

week, related the following anecdote. Fannie diligently searched through WHS files and her own remarkable memory to answer requests for information. One such request came from the other side of the world, from a man named Sam Wong in Hong Kong. Sam was the great-great-grandson of Kwong Chiu, one of China's pioneering educational reformers, who would go on to write the first Chinese-English dictionary. In 1877, while in Hartford with the Chinese Education Mission, Chiu's young wife contracted an illness and died, leaving him with a young son. At that low time, Jay and Julia Filley opened their home in Bloomfield to Chiu and his son and provided motherly kindness for several years. When Sam Wong learned about his ancestor's

experience, he contacted the Wintonbury Historical Society, which led him to Fannie. She was able to provide him with a lot of information about the Filleys from our records and from the research that Sharon Steinberg had done years ago. Sam Wong and Fannie corresponded over the years, and Sam visited Fannie in Bloomfield several times. The most recent was last summer, when the Schmolls happened to be at the History Center with Fannie. Wong was effusive in his gratitude to Fannie for spending so much time and effort on his research into his great-great-grandfather's life. Louise Schmoll commented that she and Ralph had emailed Sam about Fannie's death. He replied: "I am so shocked. Fannie was such a nice and caring person. Even though I was initially a stranger, she was so helpful. I would often receive letters from her [in Hong Kong], and she would send me materials that she thought would be helpful."

~ 3 ~

Linda Dranoff met Fannie in early 1990 in the library. "I guess I was showing an interest," she muses. Fannie had a way of finding people who showed an interest—and getting that interest mobilized. Back in 1990 the Prosser Library Friends group was moribund. Library administration was not even receptive to such a group. But Fannie and Linda had a small group of people committed to beginning a Friends group. For years they met in one another's homes. Fannie was the first president, and flyers were posted in the library inviting people to join. Dues were minimal. Today there are over 400 members of the Friends.



Linda Dranoff of Prosser Friends

—Janis Langston photo

The biggest fund-raiser was always the book sale, and there never was a shortage of books. Fannie used her house on Prospect Street as the main storage area for books. Many people remember that Fannie left her breezeway door open just so that people could drop off books at any time. They were then taken down to the back room in the library. Fannie's back seat and trunk were always full.

Fannie, we like to think, was a saver, not a hoarder. One time she learned that Linda's daughter was an archivist at the Bushnell Memorial. Well, Fannie had a collection of many years' worth of Hartford Symphony programs and wondered if this might be of interest. She was delighted to bring the programs to Linda's house (all the programs in chronological order) so that her daughter could take them to the Bushnell Archives.

Eventually, Fannie's Prospect Street house was packed up and brought to Seabury, books, cape, piano and all. In her 2000 Holiday Letter, Fannie wrote, "I've been in my apartment a bit over a year now and find it's time for me to re-arrange my stuff. I just don't feel my day is complete unless I get rid of at least one thing. People ask me how I like it here; and I can honestly say, 'It's just like Prospect Street: I'm never here!' Also, I can't honestly say I miss the house, but I do miss the neighbors. I was lucky in that respect."

Rather than basking in the glow of compliments, Fannie's response was always to be appreciative of the contributions of others. She got her thank-you notes and calls done faster than most; and even when she was named Bloomfield's Citizen of the Year, she attributed any successes she had had to how "lucky" she was to have so many people working with her. In the June 1994 *Bloomfield Journal*, Fannie said, "Working together in committees you understand that people in town, no matter from what party, are interested in working for the good of town." Fannie lived this, and by her joyful example she inspired and then encouraged hundreds of people to find their own way to be joyfully engaged.



Programs and more

—Janis Langston photo